



THE WINGS OF THE SUN

Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice

By [Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum](#)

Transcending Pain

Likutey Moharan I, 65:3-4; see Garden of the Souls pp. 43ff.

"Even when bad things happen and you are beset with troubles and suffering, God forbid, if you look at the ultimate purpose, you will see that these things are not bad at all. On the contrary, they are really a great favor, because all suffering is sent from God for your own ultimate good, whether to remind you to return to Him or to cleanse and scour you of your sins. If so, the suffering is really very beneficial, because God's intention is certainly only for good. Whatever evil and suffering you go through, God forbid, if you will just look at the ultimate goal - God's purpose - you will not experience it as suffering at all. On the contrary, you will be filled with joy at so much good when you look at the purpose of this suffering. For the ultimate purpose is entirely good, all unity. And the deep truth is: there is no evil at all in the world, everything is good.

"Why then do we feel pain when we suffer? People experience pain only because their da'at - divine awareness and understanding - is taken from them, making it impossible for them to focus on the ultimate purpose, which is entirely good. It is then that they feel pain. But when one has da'at and keeps one's attention fixed on the ultimate goal, one does not feel pain or suffering at all.

"This helps us to understand a deep mystery. Why is it a natural reflex-response for people to screw their eyes up and shut them tight when suffering intense pain, God forbid, as when having a limb amputated for example? We know from experience that when we want to look at a far-away object, we screw up our eyes in order to focus our vision on the object we wish to see. Vision is the agent of the mind sent to bring information about the object in question into the brain. But when something is very far away, our power of vision may be inadequate to reach there to bring it back into the brain. We tend to be distracted by the various things we see from the side, and in addition our vision is diffused over such a great distance. This is why we have to narrow our eyes to see a distant object: we have to limit our vision so that other things should not interfere, and we have to focus it on the desired object in order to strengthen our vision and avoid its being diffused. Then it is possible to see the far-off object.

"So too, when we want to look at the ultimate goal of creation, which is all good, all unity, we have to close our physical eyes and focus our inner vision - the vision of the soul - on the goal. For the light of this ultimate goal is very far away. The only way to see it is by closing our eyes and keeping them firmly shut. Then we can gaze on this ultimate goal. In other words, we must turn our eyes away from this world and close them to it completely. We must pay no attention to the vanity of this world and its mundane temptations. Then we can see and apprehend the light of the ultimate goal, which is all good. And then the suffering will disappear. For the main reason why a person suffers is that he is far from this goal.

"That is why it is a natural instinct to screw up one's eyes when undergoing pain - in order to escape the suffering and nullify the pain by gazing at the ultimate goal, which is entirely good. For the only way to see this goal is by closing one's eyes. And even though the individual may be totally unaware of what he is doing, the soul knows everything. That is why it is stamped within our nature to close our eyes when suffering pain. And it really is true that at the moment of bittul - the state of self-transcendence when one becomes nullified within the ultimate goal, which is all good, all unity - at that moment the pain and suffering are nullified and actually disappear. However it is not possible to remain in this state of bittul all the time, because that would be beyond the limitations of our human existence. In this lifetime bittul can be experienced only for limited periods, the way the angels in Ezekiel's prophecy of the Chariot are described as 'running and returning' (Ezekiel 1:14). They 'run forth,' transcending their limitations for a moment, rising towards God, but then they 'return' again to their separate selves.

"When a person returns from the state of bittul to normal consciousness, the conscious mind comes back to the brain, which is the seat of the mind. But the limited human brain is unable to hold the transcendent state of bittul, because the latter is Ein Sof, limitless Infinity, which is the ultimate goal: all unity, all good. As a result, the brain now feels the pain of the suffering, because it is in the brain that all sensations of pain and suffering are felt. Nerve passages extend from the brain to all the limbs in the body, and through them the brain is aware of pain in whatever limb is afflicted.

"Indeed, after returning from the state of bittul to normal consciousness, the pain and suffering may attack even more strongly than before. This may be compared to two fighters who are wrestling with one another. If one of them sees that the other is getting the upper hand, he fights back even harder. Similarly when the forces of judgment gripping a person see that he wants to overcome his suffering and nullify it through bittul, absorption in the ultimate goal, they attack even more strongly. This is why afterwards, when one returns from the state of bittul, the suffering is felt even more intensely than before, because the forces of judgment fight back against one, since one wanted to escape them.

"Afterwards, however, the suffering is lightened and we can derive a measure of consolation from the new spiritual insights we achieve as a result of the suffering. The reason why suffering leads to spiritual insight is that suffering brings one to bittul, and while in this state of nullification to the ultimate goal, one realizes that one's pain and suffering are actually of great benefit. As a result one becomes filled with joy, and joy is the 'vessel' for receiving new Torah insight. Then afterwards, even though one returns from bittul to normal consciousness, a trace of the bittul still remains, and from this trace comes Torah insight. It is the deepening of Torah insight resulting from the remaining joyous trace of the bittul that later cools the intensity of one's suffering. For Torah quenches the thirst of the soul, namely the experience of pain and suffering.

"Happy is the man whom God chastises and from Your Torah you teach him' (Psalms 94:12). The very chastisement - the suffering - is what brings one to greater Torah insight. And indeed, if out of suffering you come to enhanced understanding, this is a sign that you have accomplished something and that you have dealt with the suffering in the proper way. Your deepened spiritual awareness is a sign that you were able to use the suffering to attain the state of bittul, nullification to the ultimate goal, because the trace that remains after the bittul is what gives rise to the enhanced Torah understanding."

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