

# Focus on Healing Insert



## Is help from a Higher Power waiting for us?

By Rabbi Billy Dreskin

I'm not an alcoholic. Never have been, and probably never will be. Can't stand the taste of alcohol. But if I were, *Alcoholics Anonymous* would be my bible.

Although alcoholism can't really be cured, doctors can treat it. But solutions that stick are hard to come by. Same thing is true for drug dependency. Same for over-eating (even worse because you can't give up eating). Same for any obsession/compulsion that takes over people's lives, destroys their families, and doesn't let up until someone is dead.

In 1939, along came Alcoholics Anonymous – “the Big Book” – and two extraordinary gentlemen (“drunks,” they would tell you) who stumbled (literally!) upon a system that, again and again (to the tune of multiple millions of men, women and teenagers) has rescued and restored those whose dependence on alcohol should only have earned them lives of despair and early burial. Over the past 67 years, Alcoholics Anonymous has found its way into more than 25 million homes (and is now also online at [www.aa.org/bigbookonline](http://www.aa.org/bigbookonline)).

The system is not a complicated one. It basically consists of seeking the camaraderie and support of other alcoholics, those who are themselves trying to find healing from their illness and – of utmost importance – those who *have* found healing and are, for the rest of their lives, trying to help others *get sober* so they themselves can *stay sober*.

And it works. Not for everyone. Because it takes work. Hard work. But what's amazing is that the support system it provides – others, who have been where you are now, lending a shoulder to help you through the night

– accomplishes the near-impossible. Never should we underestimate the power of nonjudgmental friendship.

There's more to it. It takes 12 steps to get to sobriety and stay there. Honest personal inventory, as well as humble apologies to those we've hurt, sound a lot like Yom Kippur. It is. And it demonstrates just how effective our own work during the High Holy Days *could* be, if we took it as much to heart as these folks do.

Of tremendous interest to me is the requirement that each participant make “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” Many Reform Jews who enter 12-step programs get caught up on this one. If we even believe in God, it's unlikely that God is one into whose care we can abandon ourselves. And I've sat with many an AA member to talk through this vital step toward recovery.

Why is it vital? Because, I think, the alcoholic lacks sufficient inner resources with which to beat this thing. And each time they think they can lick it, even if they succeed for months, even years, it eventually comes back. Allowing outside “powers” to do the hard work doesn't mean we're off the hook, but it does mean that the universe is conspiring to make us healthy ... if we'll just let it do so.

But how *does* a liberal, nonfundamentalist Reform Jew turn his or her will and life over to the care of God?

The best interpretation I've read comes from the Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. They write that to believe a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity means, at a practical level “there is hope if you let yourself be helped.”

And making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God can mean, “Try making decisions in a different way. Take others' suggestions. Permit others to help you.” They suggest that using the phrase “Helping Power” can, for some, be more accessible than “Higher Power.”

But here's the thing. I believe (deeply) that God's presence in the world is to be found not in some miraculous-supernatural-intervention prayed for by the pious and truly worthy. For me, God's presence is in the everyday beauty and goodness that permeate our world, a gift that is withheld from no one, not even the flawed, constantly stumbling folks who make up pretty much 99.9% of the world's population. And if we'd allow ourselves a leap of faith, there is an entire universe filled with possibilities for sustained healing. If we'll permit it, there are an infinite number of doctors, therapists, friends, family members, and just good people who *will* help us. But only if we allow it.

There *is* hope if you let yourself be helped. Make a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand God? That may not be such an impossible task for us doubters and skeptics after all. We just have to make sure to leave the God we *can't* believe in outside the door, and let the one we *can* believe in come inside.

You'll find a comprehensive list of 12-step programs at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Twelve-Step\\_groups](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Twelve-Step_groups).

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## Oh no! Here comes the rabbi!

By Rabbi Baruch HaLevi

It's a good thing rabbis tend to have healthy egos. I mean, frankly, it's a little challenging not to take it personally when you lead services and *no one* wants to sit in the first row (or first ten rows for that matter). It's hard not to think, “Is it me?” when *no one* wants to sit next to you when you are teaching a class. It is really quite difficult not to feel a little self-conscious when stopping in to someone's hospital room and *no one* says, “yeah, it's the rabbi” and worse yet invariably a family member lets out a groan saying the opposite: “oh no, here comes the rabbi!” But, alas, have no worries, rabbis are nothing if not filled with more than our share of ego so I'll be just fine.

Seriously, I know enough to realize that the seating preferences and groans aren't a commentary on my fragrance, personality or teaching abilities. I understand that the rabbi is often times associated with a sense of religious gravity, spiritual seriousness and in the hospital setting many think I'm the Grim Reaper himself. However, let me set the record straight – if you are ill, struggling or suffering and you get a call from this rabbi, or if you should be in a hospital and I stop by – it does not mean the end is near.

On the contrary, a particular area of passion for me is working as a healer. Drawing upon Jewish practices, Kabbalistic meditation and other spiritual disciplines I relish the opportunity to sit by someone's side sharing these insights, teaching these skills, and contributing to health – not hastening death.

For too long we have relegated Judaism to being a spectator sport. Judaism is something you do during services. It is what happens in our attendance in a synagogue, it is not usually thought of as something we do in the confines of our home, or hospital rooms, for that matter. When we are struggling with our health (physical, emotional or spiritual), in particular, Judaism is not something we think of as something we can engage to help facilitate the healing process.

The truth of the matter, however, is that Judaism has a tremendous amount to offer in regards to healing. Certainly when we are ill we need to engage doctors, therapists and all kinds of health practitioners. In addition to letting doctors do their work upon us, however, we also need to do our own part in the healing process. We need to eat healthfully, we need to act healthfully and we need to think healthfully. *Refuah Shleymah*, as we say, “complete health” is what we strive for and that doesn't just mean taking the right drugs. We are *b'tzelem Elohim* in the image of God and we need to learn the tools of our tradition to step up and do our part in unleashing our God-given powers of also healing ourselves.

So whether you, a loved one or a friend is struggling physically, emotionally or spiritually, at any level, feel free to draw upon this rabbi as a resource, spiritual companion and guide. I will share with you the healing benefits of meditation, guide you through the Chassidic practice of healing visualization and help you learn to help yourself through focusing your mind, your attention and your life upon healing, health and wholeness. We all need a coach at times and that is exactly what I can be to you – a spiritual coach to help you during the good times and the challenging times as well. Even if you continue to choose to sit in the back row, you can still feel free to draw upon me in this capacity.

Refuah Shleymah – to complete health

*Rabbi HaLevi is the spiritual leader of Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott, Mass. This is from their Nov 2007 bulletin.*

# Jewish Chaplaincy



## Holy bagpipes

By Leon H. Olenick

**T**he snow was melting in Minnesota. Spring was beginning to lighten and warm the darkness of winter. The snow on the ground was lingering and had turned black from the traffic. The birds were chirping, calling for the warmth of the coming season. The entrance of the hospital had a clear walkway, surrounded by mountains of decaying snow.

My first visit of the day was to the oncology unit. This unit's staff has a very difficult task. They provide presence to people who are dying and witness the patients' bodies deteriorating on a daily basis. They become close to the patients and caregivers. They cry inside, however on the outside they are professional and present, offering constant compassion and understanding.

It was requested that I see a Jewish patient in room 408. Upon entering the room, I was warmly greeted by a man in his early 70s. He was well groomed. His thick graying hair was neatly combed. His eyes were bright with hope. His name was Ralph. His wife of 40 years, Shirley, was present. Her attire reflected the Minnesota season. She was well kept and she wore a combination of bright and drab clothes.

Ralph, after numerous tests, had recently received his diagnosis of stomach cancer. We spoke at length about their feelings toward the cancer. They said they had been through many challenges in life, and this was only another. They were determined to beat it.

I allowed them the space to communicate their feelings. They spoke about their family, two sons and four grandchildren, with pride. They told me about their business and how delightful retirement had been for the last few years. Ralph was not a religious man, however he was very spiritual. He had explored the eastern religions and had his own way of reaching out to God. He would create his own meditations

from his heart. These came from a pure space of love. I subsequently addressed the issue of anger about the diagnosis. He said, "Hell yes, I have a lot of anger and a lot of living to do." I admired his down-to-earth attitude.

The surgeon was to operate later in the day. They requested I offer a *mishabayrech* (healing prayer) for him.

*Mishabayrech Avotaynu v emataynu, Robino Shel Olom (Master of our Universe God of our ancestors), I stand here with Ralph, who is about to have his surgery. Please guide the surgeon's hands as he operates on Ralph. Let him be mindful of his task and give him the fortitude and skill to remove the cancer from Ralph. Let Ralph's body endure the procedure, and send your angel Rafael to join with him. Please capture all the cancer cells, and grant him a "refuah shlema & refuah ha guf," a healing of body, mind, and spirit. Let the love that Ralph and Shirley have for each other energize their souls, and bring them close to you and each other. Amen.*

I hugged Ralph and Shirley and left the room. I later checked in recovery and Ralph was doing well. The doctor said he was able to remove most of the cancer and Ralph would receive chemotherapy and radiation in the coming months in an attempt to irradiate the remaining cells. Time passed, and Ralph received his treatments. He was an outpatient and would come three days a week for his treatment. I would visit Ralph at his home during this time.

I can compare his appearance to the passing seasons in Minnesota. As the fall and winter came, the weather turned dark and gloomy. The bitter cold pierced not only one's skin, but shook one's *neshuma*, and turned one's *kishkas* inside out. Ralph looked the same way. His hair was falling out more rapidly than the leaves on the frozen trees. His face was sunken, and you could see his cheekbones.

I thought of the bare branches of the trees, standing alone and naked. His once-strong body shivered as he wrapped himself in his blanket. His voice was faint like the wind coming through the desolate streets.

Ralph was losing his battle. I would visit him about once per month. Each time he grew weaker. He was always cordial and ready for my visit. Shirley would always make lunch and have some Jewish music playing on the stereo.

We came to the point in our relationship where Ralph was ready to speak about mortality. I felt we were facing death together, as we spoke about the soul and where it travels after it leaves the body. We talked about life, and I reminded Ralph that although he felt

**The days became weeks and Ralph was still lingering between life and death. I knew from past experience that sometimes a person will not allow themselves to die if they feel they have unfinished business. I sat with Shirley. She wanted Ralph to die so his soul would be released from his bondage. I prayed with her for this release.**

worn out, he was 100 percent alive. I encouraged him to live each second to the fullest. He spoke of his family, and of not being able to see his grandchildren under the *chuppa*. I assured him that he would be there in spirit to offer his blessings.

Winter turned to spring and once again the birds were chirping, however Ralph could not hear them. He was back in the hospital. He was comatose, and it was time for his soul to leave his body. I visited daily, bringing support and compassion to Shirley, his sons, and the staff that had become very close to him.

The days became weeks and Ralph was still lingering between life and death. I knew from past experience that sometimes a person will not allow themselves to die if they feel they have unfinished business. I sat with Shirley. She wanted Ralph to die so his soul would be released from his bondage. I prayed with her for this release.

*As I prayed I thought of how*

*the Israelites in bondage prayed for their freedom from bondage. I also realized that on some level we are all in bondage, and have to have a release in order to evolve.*

Her tears were few, her eyes were tired, and her face exposed her inner pain. I asked her if she could think of any unfinished business that Ralph had left. She said he was very content, and cleared all of his business in preparation for this day.

She said, with a nervous laugh, the only thing she could think of is that he always said he was sorry for only one thing that he did not accomplish in his life. He was sorry that he never became a bar mitzvah. This resonated with me. I told her to have her sons present in the hospital room the next day at 10 a.m. Ralph was going to be a bar mitzvah. She smiled and agreed.

asked the entire makeshift congregation to send their deepest energy to Ralph. I unwrapped the Torah from the tallit and called Ralph to the Torah. *Yamode Yamode Rafael ben Yaakov v Miriam Bar Mitzvah*. His oldest son proceeded to receive the honor for his father. I read *Shema* from the Torah, asking Ralph to hear the words deep in his heart and listen to the call of the angels that want him to join them. It was nearing *Pesach*, and I offered a short *D'var*. I spoke of *Pesach* being the time we are freed from *Mitzrayim*, the narrow spaces of confinement. I explained that during our lives we are all placed in these narrow spaces, and with strength and faith we have the capacity to be released from them. I gave Ralph permission to exit from *Mitzrayim* without any fear, and free his holy soul.

*Mishabayrech avotaynu v emataynu, we again stand before you with Ralph and his family. Master of the Universe, forgive him for anything he has done intentionally or unintentionally to offend you or hurt any person or anything in your Universe. Let his soul be in your deepest shalom. Guard his family and allow them inner peace knowing that he will be safe and let him feel confident that he did good here on earth during his lifetime and that his loved ones will be fine. Send signs to his family that he is safe and in your arms. Amen*

I then asked all to join me as we recited the shema together. The tears were of joy and sorrow. We raised the Torah, dressed it, and wrapped it in the tallit.

*I went over to Ralph, kissed him on his forehead and said, "Mazel tov, my dearest friend. You are a bar mitzvah." Ralph died 10 minutes later.*

May his memory be a blessing, and may the bagpipes always play his song.

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As I traveled the path to the hospital the next morning hugging the Sefer Torah, the sun was shining brightly and the birds greeted me with a beautiful *niggun*. I took the melody to be the "*biddenkins*" *niggun* (the song the veiled bride sang as she circles her groom prior to their wedding) and sung with them. I entered the elevator to go to Ralph's room. The *etz chaims*, the wooden posts around which the Torah scroll were wrapped, were prominent as they peeked through the *tallit* that covered the Torah.

*A woman on the elevator innocently inquired, "Do you play the bagpipes?" I smiled as I answered, "Today I do".*

Entering Ralph's room, I noticed bright decorations that the staff had taped to the walls. The dreary room had been transformed into a room for celebration to commemorate Ralph's bar mitzvah ceremony. The room was full to capacity with staff. Shirley and her sons were present.

I explained the intention of this miniservice, and its order. I



## The meaning of illness and healing in Jewish tradition

By Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky

Because Judaism is more of a religion of this world than it is a religion of the next, Jewish spirituality is a spirituality of the mundane as much as it is of the transcendent. Thus, it is not surprising to find that Jews look to illness as a spiritual teacher rather than relegating it exclusively to a challenge of the body that needs to be defeated and vanquished. Judaism teaches that we should embrace illness as a part of who we are, because it is an integral part of the world in which we live. As a result, I believe that Judaism teaches us that one suffers spiritually through illness only when we cannot find meaning in it. When we can find meaning in our illness, suffering is overshadowed, and we are in a better position to find spiritual healing at the same time.

### The Human Dimension

For me, the actual experience of illness is more important than any theoretical construct in Judaism. It is the human experience that matters, not the theoretical constructs that may be found in the classrooms of Jewish theology. However, as a teacher I feel compelled to confront God as the source of suffering in a theoretical framework of a sound theological system. If I acknowledge God as the source of all life as I do, I am more inclined to engage God as a healer. But what is most important is how Judaism considers the individual who is ill – and then helps him or her to galvanize personal resources in order to ameliorate the suffering.

Spirit is the bridge between mind and body that makes us human. As a result of our illness, we may not be able to stand upright in order to praise God – or do anything else. Because of the heavy burden that a serious illness lays on us, we may not even have the desire to stand upright and may resist praising God even when we are able to. However, the daily recitation of these prayers helps pave a path toward healing. It offers a prism through which to view our entire day and forces us to assume a posture that might otherwise

be overlooked in our quest for healing, the alliance between the body and the soul. I find these moments in the morning when I stand alone with God to say my morning prayers to be among the most powerful in the day, much more significant than the afternoon or evening service, or even the proclamation of the *Shema* before lying down to go to sleep.

### Spiritual Sickness

Illness represents a state in which a lack of spirituality negatively impacts on the physical well-being of the individual. Sickness can ensue when the nonsacred side of one's life dominates and smothers the other side, potentially severing one's connection with God. The writer of proverbs asks, "One's spirit strengthens oneself in one's illness, but who will lift up a broken spirit?" (Proverbs 18:4). The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel) offers an answer: "It is the spirit that sustains the body. And even if there is sickness in the body, the spirit has great enough strength to support the illness, giving [it] strength to bear (the illness) and renew [its] courage. But if the spirit is broken (referring to spiritual sickness) who will lift it up? For then the sickness will affect the body, too, as it is written, 'A depressed spirit dries the bones...'" (Proverbs 17:22). *Metsudat David* adds this explanation: "But when the spirit is broken by sadness and depression, who will lift it up? For the body does not lift it up to strengthen it; rather, it is the spirit that supports the body."

### Remembering God

In the midst of illness, it may be hard to remember how you felt before getting sick. Dr. Herbert Benson, a well-known leader in alternative or complementary medicine, suggests that the key to healing is to get the body and spirit to "remember (its) wellness." He works with his patients to achieve this. Dr. Benson argues that if we can get ourselves to remember what it was like to feel healthy before becoming ill, we will then be able to

move ourselves in the direction where healing takes place. At the same time, we have to block out everything that might prevent us from doing so. No negativity, no pessimism, only positive thinking. While this idea is still controversial in the medical community, it remains as a leading idea in the area of medical healing. But what of the spiritual side of this "remembered wellness"?

I believe that the key to remembering wellness, as per Dr. Benson, is to recall this original relationship with God. Here's how it works. I believe that all Jews possess "historical memory," the collective experience of the Jewish people that dates back to the Covenant at Sinai. If so, regardless of whether or not they have ever accessed it, even if it has receded deep into the unconscious, then it may be possible to reach back into that memory and "remember" it. Pregnant women understand this idea rather well. One friend told me that when she was pregnant, she kept misjudging how much room she would need to pass between two people or objects. She would constantly bump her belly into things, because she "remembered" her size before she was pregnant.

This is what the Passover *Seder* attempts to accomplish in the family context. The *Haggadah* for the *Seder* contains a step-by-step guide to help those sitting around the Passover table to reach back and participate in the Exodus again. It offers a model for the entire week of Passover and beyond. The Torah extends this idea, "If you listen to the voice of *Adonai* your God, and do what is right in God's eyes, and listen to God's *mitzvot*, and observe all of God's laws, all the diseases that I put upon Egypt, I shall not put upon you, for I, God, am your healer" (Exodus 15:26). For me, this "historical memory" is crucial to healing in Judaism. When we bring the relationship with God to the forefront of our consciousness by remembering it, we bring healing along with it.

### Drawing Close to God

Rabbi David Wolpe, spiritual leader of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and the author of

several bestsellers on spirituality and suffering, once wrote "Suddenly God seems closer to us because we are awake (sensitive to God's presence and to our illness)." Regardless of our mental or physical state, we are all in need of healing. And in order to achieve healing, we have to draw closer to God.

### A Curriculum for Healing

Drawing close to God involves four elements that are particularly important, especially for those who did not take the opportunity to foster such a relationship prior to illness. Admittedly, these elements are difficult to establish when ill, but they are key to spiritual wholeness and thereby lead to healing.

The first element is study. Divine light is reflected in the study of Torah; it illumines the dark corners of our souls and casts no shadows. If we believe that "Torah is healing to all flesh" (Proverbs 4:22), then we have to provide our students with the tools to explore it, to probe its depth for meaning, to find in it a rhythm for their own lives. As educators, we do not teach Torah in order for our students simply to learn more text, we teach Torah in order to help our students learn more about themselves.

The second is ritual. Ritual brings order into our lives, anchoring us as we travel through the up and down journey of life. According to Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, Judaism creates spiritual strength through the performance of *mitzvot*. Rituals are the avenue through which we come into close contact with the Divine. With the observance of Shabbat rituals, for example, Divine light is brought from the spiritual realm into the physical realm. Shabbat comes weekly, and its observance is considered equal to all other *mitzvot*. Out of Shabbat come special ideas, such as *Oneg Shabbat* (joy of the Sabbath), for with joy comes healing.

Third is the element of prayer. It is our way of communicating with God, of asking God for healing. The establishment of a regular prayer life helps to nurture the relationship with God. But we first have to help people to pray, to learn to pray before we can explore the liturgy. After the habit of prayer is established, then we may teach the words of prayer and explore their meaning. It is at that point that these words can be applied to real life situations, whether it be "*Mi Sheberach*" during a To-

rah service or the daily recitation of a healing prayer in the "*Amidah*." As educators, we have a responsibility to mine the resources of tradition with our students so that they may navigate their way through life toward healing.

Last is the element that combines the others: Presence – of God and of others – in the form of community. The presence of persons and God is what the Jewish tradition describes as *bikkur cholim*, visiting the sick. It is this visitation that makes an appreciable difference in the healing of a person. This idea of a social network sounds simple, rather obvious, but too many people are left to endure their illnesses alone. As educators, we can model community in our classroom and teach our students the responsibility to maintain it. These four elements then – study, ritual, prayer, and Presence – are the crucial components to awakening the spirit and drawing close to God.

Sometimes, the straightest route to healing takes us the long way around. Healing does not happen overnight, even when our disease is under control and no longer life threatening. The desert journey of our people taught us how to endure the desert in life for an extended period of time. It is like spiritual DNA. Like the tablets of the covenant, which were said to be written with black fire on white fire, the journey of our people is written with spiritual fire on our genes. It is part of the Jewish religious psyche. It helps fuel the historical memory of the Jewish people. Now we add our personal journey to the collective one of our people. In doing so, our experience helps others to face theirs. As fellow travelers – student and teacher – we make the spiritual trek together.

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# Embracing tradition: Our daily minyan

By Susan Baker

About a year ago, give or take a week or so, I came into this chapel early one morning to join this faithful group in a way many before me have begun attending minyan. My father had died.

Because he had lived in Houston, my brother and I had three days to close up his apartment. We went through an 83-year-old man's life in less than a week. Because of this burst of activity, neither of us had fully processed the fact that he'd died.

Then I came here, and I stood, for the first time, to say Kaddish. There were only a few of us, but we stood together, to recognize that someone had died, and to be recognized as one who had lost someone very close.

Some people I knew, some I didn't, but I felt an honoring given to my grief, and a closeness, as if someone had moved beside me and just touched my shoulder.

I began to understand minyan. I began to understand that it's more than just early risers and prayers being repeated. It's the recognition and the special friendship that is developed between people that we see one time a day for only an hour.

I began to understand the comfort of ritual, of following a time-honored tradition

that helps you step your way through the early days of loss, in the company of others. Alone, but never lonely. Solitary and quiet, but surrounded by voices and warmth.

I understand so much more fully that though it may be important and good to explore other ways to worship, other ways of exercising our spirituality and prayer, tradition should be fiercely embraced. It has held through time because it's important. It offers us something familiar when nothing makes sense. It offers comfort in its repetition. There is a strength in knowing that even if you stand alone, you are not saying a prayer alone. It's good to know that others grieve with you, in just the same way, and that others will follow.

Traditions offer a comforting clock. We are familiar with it, even if we've never done it before. It's been stumbled through by others before us, and many will follow.

Through the death of my father I have come to understand more closely the true meaning of ritual and tradition, and I will stand with a minyan always, so that others may experience the true meaning of being Jewish."

*Susan Baker attends Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis.*

# The Jewish Spiritual Companion for Medical Treatments

*A complete toolbox of spiritual resources to feed the soul for coping with medical tests and treatments*

**New York** — When we are sick, we look to medicine to heal our bodies...but what about our spirit? The very path of medical treatment can be a winding road: We may confront any number of challenges from feeling alone, dealing with uncertainty, confusion, and possible side effects, to the need to mobilize strength, courage, community and hope. We seek out those things that will provide comfort, help us cope and provide inspiration.

*The Jewish Spiritual Companion for Medical Treatments* (68 pp. \$12.95) was designed to be such a resource. This guide draws from the well of Jewish wisdom to provide care for the soul. Contributors from around the country have created this highly accessible compendium of resources for all who are touched by medical treatments—patients, family and friends, clergy and health care professionals. Four chapters are organized around the theme of a journey and offer contemporary and ancient reflections and narratives, prayers, psalms, rituals, tools and texts prepared by fellow travelers who have made this journey.

"Prayer can water an arid soul, mend a broken heart, and rebuild a weakened will," Rabbi Abraham Joshua Hes-

chel is quoted in the Chapter 2 – Calling Out: Prayers for Healing. This guide is filled with other gems, prayers for healing, tools to help sustain hope, and inspiring narratives and reflections on the healing power of community.

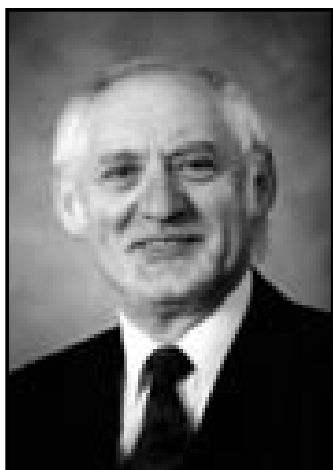
The guide is a collaborative project of The National Center for Jewish Healing (NCJH), a program of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, (JBFCS), and The Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program of the Jewish Family and Children's Service (JFCS) of Minneapolis and is published by The National Center for Jewish Healing. To order a copy of this essential work, go to [www.ncjh.org](http://www.ncjh.org) or call 212-399-2320 ext. 209.

The National Center for Jewish Healing (NCJH), a program of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services in New York, helps communities better meet the spiritual needs of Jews living with illness, loss and other significant life challenges. Working closely with a network of Jewish healing centers and programs throughout North America, it offers consultation, resource material, publications, training and referrals to community resources. Visit [www.ncjh.org](http://www.ncjh.org) for these resources and to find a local Jewish Healing Center near you.



The Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program is a program of Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis. The Healing Program helps ensure that no one needs to face illness alone. With trained volunteer visitors, clergy-on-call, and information and referral, and library resources, it helps answer the needs of many people encountering life-altering situations. The Twin Cities Jewish Healing Program also partners with a range of organizations and healthcare providers in the Twin Cities area.

The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services is one of the nation's leading voluntary mental health and social services which touches the lives of more than 65,000 people each year through a diverse network of 185 residential and day treatment programs.



# Choose your weapon

By Cantor Emil Berkovits

regularly." She proceeded to tell me about an article in the *Chinese Journal of Medicine* written about t'fillin. Right away my curiosity was aroused and I had her immediately bring me the article – and when I got it, I saw something unbelievable and amazing!

Who of us doesn't know about Chinese acupuncture? The Chinese discovered the medical treatment using needles to heal when they are

inserted at certain points in the body. They have mapped out and named all the points of the body. And the *Chinese Journal of Medicine* – to which everyone important in the field of acupuncture subscribes – published an amazing article, absolutely amazing.

The main article in volume 70 of the journal deals solely with the t'fillin of the Jewish people. The article conclusively establishes that the contact and

pressure points covered by the hand t'fillin (Shel Yad) and head t'fillin (Shel Rosh) are exactly those points at which the acupuncture needles are inserted in order "to increase spirituality and to purify thoughts."

The non-Jewish author of the article puts it that the points covered by the t'fillin are those where the acupuncture needles are inserted. I would reverse the statement to read: "The acupuncture needles are inserted in those points that are exactly where a Jew puts on t'fillin." The article details all of the acupuncture points that are the same as the points-of-contact of the head t'fillin – front and back – as well as the points of contact of the hand t'fillin on the arm and hand.

In the opinion of the expert

who wrote the article, these are the only acupuncture points that will achieve this result (to increase spirituality and to purify thoughts). In addition to following the Torah's command, as part of the Sh'ma that we read daily, this increased spirituality that happens by placing the t'fillin on the arm (hand) and head as a sign that God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand is likely the reason that Jews put on t'fillin. So ladies and gentlemen, choose your weapon. Needles or t'fillin. Absolutely amazing!

Oh, by the way, you are welcome to come and try some on at Shirat Hayam.

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