



A FOCUS ON HEALING



Jewish Chaplain

BY RABBI LEON OLENICK

Hallelujah

I was in a deep sleep when I heard my pager go off. I glanced at the clock on my night table. It was 3 a.m. I stumbled to the telephone and called the office. They told me that there was a death and a family was in need of spiritual support. They gave me the address. I washed my face and threw my clothes on and proceeded to my car. As I gradually faded out of the embrace of sleep, I realized that this address was in one of the more violent parts of town – there were often shootings and robberies and I was afraid to proceed, though I knew that I had to.

I locked my car doors as I searched the desolate and dark streets of this Miami neighborhood, for house numbers. The houses were falling apart, and there were no street lights. I thought I had entered a third world country. Signs of poverty were everywhere. My thoughts turned to the people in our world that are oppressed and who cannot live with dignity. How can we, a nation of plenty, allow this to happen? I knew this went on in our society, but was shaken when I found myself actually occupying the space where the richest country in the world had failed miserably.

Finally, I found the street I needed to be on, though it seemed like more of an alley than anything. The space was large enough for one car to drive into it from either direction. As I approached the house I saw many people in the street blocking the way. They were people of color. I am white, and was probably becoming whiter with fear. There were probably 30 people outside the house. I parked my car and made my way through the crowd and to the doorstep. I entered the house and introduced myself as the Chaplain. The house was neat and clean, the furniture reminded me of the furniture of my grandmother's house when I was growing up in Philadelphia. I was warmly greeted, and then escorted to the room where the body was kept.

In the bed I saw the remains of an elderly woman who had lived past 90 years. Her frail body revealed her bones and she could not have weighed more than 60 pounds. Her huge black eyes were

covered by strands of gray knotty hair, and she had a look of contentment on her face. I went to her side and invited the immediate family in the house to join me.

The family spoke of her with love and respect, and told me how she was the matriarch of the family. The family told me that she taught them about love, respect, dignity and honor. She taught them right from wrong, and always spoke of how lucky they were to have all that they had, and the blessing of being able to live free. She never complained when she came home from work after cleaning other people's houses all day. She provided for all their physical and emotional needs. They loved her. We all gathered at her bedside and joined hands.

"Holy One, here before us is Millie. Her soul has come to join you. Please open your arms and welcome her into your garden. Let her be greeted by familiar faces of her ancestors. Allow her soul to know she did good for her family and her values will live with them through the generations. Send your angels to escort her through the valley of the shadow of death without fear. Allow her family to know she is safe in your arms, and bless her soul."

After completing my paperwork and waiting for the funeral home to pick Millie up, I sat with this wonderful family and shared in their stories of life. I hugged them and bid them farewell.

I started to walk to my car. By this time there were well over 60 people in the street. I was no longer in fear – it melted away in the presence of this holy family. Millie's oldest son took my arm and asked that I please join them. We formed a circle, and held hands while we sang songs of praise, old fashioned gospel songs for God. The energy was sacred. My heart was completely opened as I became part of the extended family of these people. I feared them a few hours ago and now we traveled together into a holy spiritual space. Time stopped.

When I did return to my car it was about 6 a.m. I was not tired and I felt that I did not have to recite my traditional prayers this morning. I already prayed straight to the source.

Leon H. Olenick is a rabbi and board certified chaplain. He offers spiritual and pastoral care to his patients, families and caregivers spanning a multicultural and religious sphere. He currently is employed by VITAS Innovative Hospice in South Florida. He is married to Jackie Olenick, a Judaic artist. He has three children and nine grandchildren. The stories are taken from a



Why Faith Matters

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Some advice for people visiting shiva houses

Mourning is very personal. Some will weep, others will be stoic. Do not measure the depth of love by the degree of evident emotion. There is no 'right' way to grieve. You are there to comfort, not to judge.

Do not compare pain. "At least you had your husband for 40 years; my husband died after only 20 years of marriage" is, unsurprisingly, not a comfort to one who is in mourning. Respect the pain that is before you without diminishing it. We all know that things could be worse in virtually any situation. Saying it is no help.

Share any stories about the one who died. These are precious bits, the lifeblood of continual survival in this world. What you remember, relate.

Don't assume a false or exaggerated somberness. Be serious but not maudlin, unless that is how the family wishes you to be. Give space for the mourner to guide the reaction.

If you have a question – should I call/should I visit, will it be welcome? Here is the answer – call. Visit. Staying away will not be seen as delicacy, but as indifference. Better an unwanted visit than an unexplained absence.

As the poet Joseph Brodsky said, "If there is a substitute for love, it is memory." Help them remember. It is a great *mitzvah*.

Voted #1 rabbi in America by Newsweek (2012) and named one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world by The Jerusalem Post (2012), Rabbi David Wolpe is the senior rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and author of several books including Why Faith Matters. This teaching was posted on his Facebook profile on July 19, 2012: www.facebook.com/RabbiWolpe. ✨



book of short stories coming out this year, Encounters with the Last Dance. His intention in sharing his real-life stories is to help people who are facing difficult health, caregiving and end of life issues. The stories are true, only the names have been changed. ✨



Jewish Spirituality

By RABBI ELI MALLON

Healing prayer – Imagine desired outcome

The principle of how healing prayer works can be found in diverse Jewish sources.

Visualized Prayer

All of us pray for our personal needs. Sometimes in synagogue, during formal prayer, but more often – at almost any time during our daily lives, wherever we are.

I'd guess that many people, asked how they pray, would answer, "I don't know." The prayer might be nothing more than a wish, expressed within our own hearts, that G-d "take care" of a problem in our lives, or in the lives of those we love.

How do you pray?

With a minyan? Alone?

Walking? Standing? Sitting? Kneeling? Lying down?

Eyes open? Closed?

Speaking your words of prayer verbally? Mentally? Speaking words at all?

Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein, founder of the Society of Jewish Science, taught a form of personal, non-liturgical prayer called "Visualization" or "Visualized prayer." This kind of prayer can be done anywhere – but preferably where you can sit quietly, undisturbed, for 15 minutes or more.

In this type of prayer, you use your imagination – you choose a mental image. But unlike the familiar kind of petitionary prayer in which we ask G-d to please (maybe) help us with an overwhelming problem – in Visualized prayer, we choose a mental image not of the problem, but of the *solution*.

"In these mental prayers, there should never be formed any negative images... [one] should see always with his [or her] mental vision *only the state in which he [or she] desires to be...*"¹

Are you sad? Do you want cheer? Visualize yourself as cheerful.

Are you anxious? Do you want calmness? Visualize yourself as calm.

The Divine Mind in you – the level of your own mind that is both highest and deepest – invariably responds in kind to every thought you put before it.

I have much to say about this type of prayer, but one of its strongest points is that it's a definable skill that can be taught,

practiced and mastered with relative ease. So much so that Mrs. Tehillah Lichtenstein, the Rabbi's wife – his chief student, and his successor as leader of the Society of Jewish Science – writing almost 20 years after him, used language that clearly reflects the same principles:

"When we pray with the imagination, when we visualize our prayer, when we see with our mind's eye the state in which we wish to be, we are addressing our prayer to the Divine forces within ourselves; we are invoking them into action by the visualized declaration of that which we wish to attain."²

Some of my most satisfying moments as a teacher have been those in which I was able to impart this to individuals and groups.

¹Lichtenstein, Rabbi Morris; "Prayer"; *Jewish Science and Health* (c. 1925), p. 51

²Lichtenstein, Tehillah; "When to Pray and How to Pray"; *Jewish Science Interpreter*, Apr., 1940; p. 4

Avraham and Spiritual Healing

"...Three men stood opposite [Avraham]..."¹

*Three men [who were really angels] – "One to notify Sarah of the birth of [Yitzhak/Isaac], one to destroy Sodom, and one to heal Avraham. For one angel doesn't carry out two missions...But Raphael, the angel who healed Avraham, went from there to rescue Lot."*²

A story is told:

"On the very day that he assumed the Rabbinate of Brody, Galicia, the famous Rabbi Shlomo Kluger was asked to be *sandak* [godfather] at a *bris* [circumcision]. Arriving at the parents' home, he learned that the child's father was dying and that, according to a local *minhag* [custom], the *bris* would be deferred until after the father's death, so that the infant could be given the father's name. Rabbi Kluger quickly called a *minyan* and had the *bris* done at once.

To everyone's amazement, the father spontaneously recovered!

The entire city was astir at the miracle that had happened.

Rabbi Kluger explained that he'd based his action on the 'Rashi' cited above:

'Is there a lack of angels in heaven,' he'd asked himself, 'that the same angel sent to heal Avraham had to be sent also to rescue Lot?'

It seemed to him that the only explanation was: Lot's merits hadn't been enough to send an angel to rescue only him. So, the angel who healed Avraham was sent to help Lot, too, 'on the way.'

'It occurred to me,' Rabbi Kluger said, 'that the infant's father was being judged in Heaven and that his merits hadn't been enough for *Eliyahu ha-Navi* [the prophet Elijah] to come down to earth solely to

bring him healing. But since Eliyahu attends every *bris*, I had it done at once, so that Elihayu might come down immediately, bringing healing to the child and father, too, 'on the way.'³

The Tzemach Tzedek, too, once told the father of a child who was near death: *Tracht gut vet zein gut*; "Think positively, and the out-come will be good." [lit.: "Think good and it'll be good."] The child healed.⁴

Rabbi Kluger, roughly contemporary with the Tzemach Tzedek, wasn't a Hasidic teacher. [*] Yet, both were applying the same spiritual principle or "law," expressed in the Zohar as:

It'a'ru'ta d'l'ta'ta, it'a'ru'ta d'l'e'la – "An awakening (or "push") from below (creates) an awakening (or "push/response") from above."⁵

From this, we learn the essential principle of healing prayer:

G-d – present everywhere in and around us – responds in kind to the content of our belief.

As the Nefesh HaChaim said: "Just as G-d is *Elokim*, 'Master of all forces' everywhere, guiding and directing them each moment, so it [is] His Will to grant [us] sovereignty over countless forces and worlds through the way [we conduct ourselves] in [our] actions, words, and thoughts at every moment."⁶

Everyone else in Brody believed the father was about to die. Rabbi Kluger did, too, for a moment. But he immediately replaced this with the undiluted belief that Eliyahu, attending the *bris*, would be bringing healing. He also believed without any doubt – based on Rashi's comment on Ber./Gen. 18:2 – that an angel (in this case, Eliyahu) who brings help, can and will bring it to more than one person. Its mission still remains only "one."

In that instant, Rabbi Kluger's own thinking changed. In his "mind's eye," he no longer saw the father dying. Based on his belief and reasoning, he could only see the father as healed.

As Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein later taught:

"In these mental prayers, there should never be formed any negative images... [one] should see always with his [or her] mental vision *only the state in which he [or she] desires to be...*"⁷

The change in Rabbi Kluger's own thoughts brought about the healing.

Rabbi Kluger's explanation also demonstrated to himself and everyone else that his belief was based in Torah – therefore, on a higher level of awareness of the Divine Presence and Involvement.

What's more, the community's *minhag* of deferring the *bris* was reinforcing a belief by everyone, including the father
(see Mallon, page Healing 3)



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

Hospital blues

Being a senior citizen and moderately well informed (the two go together, you know) I'm frequently considered by youths as to career field choices – a catalog that runs from Aardvark Research to Zoologist. But when I come across a candidate with a heart for their fellow creatures and a brain that ticks strong and consistently, I recommend nursing – the best kept career secret of the decade.

Good pay, a great platform into other medical pathways, and strong demand. (Ever seen nurse unemployment figures?) I guess not. It's a non-statistic. And best of all, an opportunity to warm the cold world of those not as strong as we fortunates. My theories were put to the test last month. I was sentenced to five days in that multistoried hotel where all the attendants wore white and green and evidently had taken my career counsel to heart.

Yes, I know it's an old platitude that hospitals are for strong, healthy people – not sick, weak souls whose only desire is to be left alone to wallow in self pity and plot escape strategies. Hmmm, let's see if I could masquerade as a nurse – walk nonchalantly to the elevator and in 30 seconds I'm on the ground floor heading for the exit. Dreamer! They'd tackle me at the nurse's station that is staffed by the beefier, younger prodigies of Florence Nightingale that we escapees notice is always close by and guarding the escape elevator.

The urge to flee is provoked by the 24-hour regimen these nurse heavyweights impose. Like party girls, they don't know night from day. "Hey, that guy in 646 has been asleep for two hours now. Let's burst in the room – turn on the klieg light and do some obscenely unimaginable things with suppositories to him. And then when he's fallen asleep we'll awaken him to take his vital signs. That oughta do it."

I exaggerate, of course, a little bit, but it does seem that like bats they prefer night over day.

I tried to be a model patient. I never screamed when they showed up at the door equipped with needles that would seem made for a horse, not a human. And I admit I was infatuated with the Intravenous Concept (IV). What a great invention. No need to make a new hole in me that my Creator never imagined –

MALLON

(continued from *Healing 2*)

that the father would die. Performing the bris immediately strongly impressed and affirmed for everyone the counter-thought that the father would instead continue to live and be well.

The change in the community-thought contributed to the healing.

Finally, that Rabbi Kluger saw this process as involving an angel or Eliyahu means that his change in thought was taking place not in the "rational" or "conscious" part of his mind, but in his imagination – which in its deeper levels borders the Infinite:

"...G-d cannot be perceived through the mind alone. If you would know G-d, do not seek merely to prove His existence, but turn to Him with your heart; affirm your union with Him, affirm His responsiveness to prayer, pray to Him; if you actually turn to G-d ... speak to Him in your heart, you will be astonished to



just put it in that bottle that's dripping into his arm. So, why not a pomegranate martini once or twice a day? I tried the idea on one friendly, caring angel in white. She reacted like the drill sergeant when you suggested a picnic on your cross country march.

But I must admit that aside from this confusion I was treated with extreme tenderness. Of course, I came into the game with a great advantage. My wife was a nurse! So, in a way I was a sorority sister. It was a mantra. As my sister of mercy raised her arm equipped with needles, other sharp accessories, suppositories, or worse, I hollered, "My wife! She's one of y'all – she's a NURSE! Have mercy".

"Yes, yes, you told me that Mr. Roberts, last night and the night before, but we still must do this procedure."

"Sure, sure, I understand. My wife, she's a nurse, ya know. She explained it to me."

So that helped a little, but not enough. I'm ashamed to admit, that though I've logged many years of marketing – basically the art of persuasion – I never talked a single nurse out of a single procedure. Dedicated angels of mercy that they are. I couldn't help but rejoice at my good luck.

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find how close He is to you, you will feel His nearness, you will have found G-d."⁸

It's not that "we" ever heal another or ourselves. Healing always comes from G-d. But we *allow* healing to occur by seeing only that perfect state – just as Rabbi Kluger did:

"When we pray with the imagination, when we visualize our prayer, when we see with our mind's eye the state in which we wish to be, we are addressing our prayer to the Divine forces within ourselves; we are invoking them into action by the visualized declaration of that which we wish to attain."⁹

That's the principle: G-d is always responding in kind to our thoughts.

We apply it, then, by the thoughts that we intentionally choose in prayer.

And at all other times, too.

¹ *Bereishith/Gen.* 18:2

² Rashi on above

³ based on: Friedman, Alexander Zusia; *Wellsprings of Torah*; Alpert, Rabbi Nison L., ed. and Hirschler, Gertrude, trans.; The Judaica Press, Inc., 1974; vol. I, p. 37 (no further source is given for this anecdote)

⁴ See *Sefer HaSichos* 5687, p. 113 and sources cited there; explained in *Likkutei Sichos*, Parshas Shemos 5751; see also <http://rabbielimallon.wordpress.com/2011/01/16/hasidut-and-positive-words/>

* Rabbi Kluger (1783-1869) was a teacher of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (the "Beis Ha-Levi"), whose great-grandfather was Rabbi Chayim of Volozhin (chief disciple of the Vilna Gaon) and whose great-grandson was Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (the "Rov")

⁵ see Tanya; *Igeret Ha-Kodesh* # 4 (p. 405), citing Zohar 77b and elsewhere

⁶ Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin; *Nefesh HaChaim*; Rabbi A.Y. Finkel, trans.; Judaica Press, 2009; p. 32

⁷ Lichtenstein, Rabbi Morris; "Prayer"; *Jewish Science and Health* (c. 1925), p. 51

⁸ Lichtenstein, Tehillah; *Applied Judaism*; "Can We Prove That G-d Exists?"; p. 96 (originally part of "How Shall We Find G-d;" *Jewish Science Interpreter*, June, 1940; p. 4)

⁹ Lichtenstein, Tehillah; "When to Pray and How to Pray"; *Jewish Science Interpreter*, Apr., 1940; p. 4

Rabbi Mallon first came as an adult to Jewish learning, after experience with Transcendental Meditation (TM), Yoga, and other growth-producing modalities. He also studied Jewish Science and Visualization at the Society of Jewish Science in New York. Over the years, he has taught people of all ages as a bar/bat mitzvah instructor, Hebrew school teacher, cantor, pastoral counselor and rabbi, in addition to his work in public education. He resides in New City, NY. View other word works by him at: <http://rabbielimallon.wordpress.com>. ☆



Book Review

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Heartfelt love of life

Parkinson's, Shaken, Not Stirred! A Collection of Poems by Elaine Benton. Available as a Kindle E-Book from Amazon.com. 2011. Pp. 87.

Poet Elaine Benton, born in England in 1963 and made *aliyah* to Israel at age 21, proves to us in clever rhyme and wise insight that she cannot be defined by the two debilitating diseases with which she has been afflicted. Converting her private agony into a source of hope for others, reflects a noble spirit who in the midst of her own distress reaches out to those who presently suffer of whatever ailment and condition, or potential victims in life's uneven journey.

The first disease, Gaucher, a rare genetic disorder inherited from Benton's parents kicked in when she was only 5 years old, and the second one, Parkinson's – who both her father and her brother share with the latter also having Gaucher – touched Benton at the age of 44. All of us can learn from an indomitable will that does not bend to the deck of cards life dished her out, though she admits to the challenging and demanding coping with medical shortcomings that profoundly affect her and her family.

She freely relates to the adverse social impact as friends suddenly disappears from view, but chooses to blame ignorance rather than malice for the reversed attitude, while wholeheartedly acknowledging the kindness of strangers who are most helpful as she tries to maneuver with her wheelchair in public. Tenderly yet resolutely Benton urges disabled people who would benefit from using a wheelchair not to be vain and help themselves to it since it is bound to make a huge difference in their lives. What an indication of her down-to-earth rootedness away from impractical pretense!

Beholden to "darling" husband Brian for his loving understanding and support, she clearly and proudly states her own contribution to a healthy relationship

Finding healing, renewal in 2013

BY CAROLINE FLOHR

As a new year dawns, many Americans still grieve losses experienced in 2012. For some, it's very personal – the death of a parent, spouse or child. Others mourn the lives lost in one of the many tragedies we experienced together as a nation.

As a mother of a 16-year-old twin daughter killed in a car accident involving eight teenagers, I assure those of you who are still coming to terms with your loss and grief – it is possible to journey from



that has withstood a severe test of reality. Having some limitations does not imply the lack of abilities and even special gifts! Benton also lavishes praise on her daughter Tobi, family, friends and doctors who have stood by her side on a trying though fulfilling and lesson-filled journey which continues to unfold with contrasting reassuring hope and frustrating realism. Her gift of humor, and indispensable medication, is evident throughout the book whose poems pour out of a simultaneously aching and grateful heart.

"The Parkinson's Locomotion," for example, is bound to uplift many a downcast spirit with Benton able to laugh at herself with self-deprecation. "Drugs, help to a point, not complete satisfaction,/Get me through, each day, is some compensation,/My sense of humor, intact, a true salvation,/comical shaking, dancing, makes distraction" (pg. 57). She vents her frustration and anger which is therapeutic. "Much time, spent at the doctors, in deliberation,/The disease, speeds on, leaving devastation,/ Less able, to go out, feeling isolation,/ Why I have, Parkinson's? No justification!" (pg. 57).

The author's contagious and heartfelt love of life has grown and matured, no doubt, in the dark crucible of pain and doubt, turning her into a faithful teacher who insistently bids us not to take for granted our basic blessings, an approach born of an affirming, caring and compassionate Jewish heritage and Benton's soaring soul. She can be reached at ElaineBenton@elainebenton.net and her website: www.elainebenton.net.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman is spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Va. A Certified Pastoral Counselor, he is the first rabbi to earn a doctorate in Pastoral Care and Counseling from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1980. ✨

the unimaginable to acceptance and a spiritual peace. I urge you to embrace the healing power of family and community, love and faith. You will be surprised at how it can transform you.

You can find renewal in this new year.

I have learned that death defines not the end, but a beginning. I have learned that, by weaving tragedy into the fabric of our lives, we can be stronger, spiritually richer and, yes, even happier for it.

Here are some of the milestones I experienced on my journey to inner peace:

- **Deeper meaning:** Through the death of someone so important, you will be changed. The question is how you will be changed. Will you grow, or become diminished? I grew with the realization that death – so often viewed as an end – is just the beginning of another phase of existence. One of my favorite quotes is from poet Rabindranath Tagore: Death is not extinguishing the light. It is putting out the lamp because dawn has come.

- **Celebrate life:** When the bereaved are able to look at the life of a person who has passed and see more beauty than pain, they should rejoice. The reality of a person's absence will always have an element of sadness, but the joy of wonderful memories is even more powerful. When loved ones leave this Earth, graces are given to those relationships left behind. These are gifts. When we can acknowledge them, our lives can expand in the present.

- **Ready for anything:** Once you've experienced the worst and pulled through, you know you will be able to weather just about any adversity. Maya Angelou wrote, "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it." Have faith in that inner strength we all harbor.

- **Appreciate what you have:** Life as we know it will come to an end. This includes everyone we know, love and care about; it's a fact that we often forget, and it's as startling to remember as it is true. Come good or bad, we do not know what the future will bring, which means we should take every opportunity to fully embrace the present, and our loved ones.

Caroline Flohr is the author of "Heaven's Child," www.heavenschild.com. It details her spiritual journey beginning with the sudden death of 16-year-old twin daughter, Sarah. Flohr was forced to dig into the deeper meaning of existence and came away with profound edification and appreciation for the gifts left behind by those who leave us. Flohr lives with her husband and children on Bainbridge Island, a suburb of Seattle. ✨