

CHAPTER EIGHTY-SIX

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

One of the most complex yet vital aspects of being a good doctor is the ability to diagnose a patient's illness. People will come into a doctor's office thinking that the problem is a cough or a rash, when in fact these may well be symptoms of something much deeper. A good doctor is one who can diagnose and prescribe for the underlying situation, not just that which is superficial.

Furthermore, even after a doctor has made a diagnosis, he has to be able to explain his findings to the patient. It isn't always easy for someone who is ill to accept what is happening. Often, as soon as he hears certain words or indications he turns off, not even taking in what is said.

This is true in every facet of life. In health matters one turns to a doctor, seeking the best he can find. "Best" in this context is one who has combined the art of diagnosis with an understandable, bedside manner that will help the patient find his way through his difficulties.

In matters of the soul, well, there one must go to a rav to whom he can speak. Just as in the physical realm not everything is as it seems, so it is in the world of the soul. In fact, it is all the more true, for when one talks in terms of the *neshama*, one is actually speaking about levels upon levels of that which makes us who we are.

Everyone in this world is an individual, and this makes the symptoms of malaise in the soul all the more difficult to discern. Take, for example, someone who feels anxious about his job and turns to his rav for a blessing. What is really happening here? Is it the job that needs looking at, or his attitude toward it? Is he really asking for help and a blessing in finding a bit more trust in Hashem? Maybe he really wants to leave what he is doing but is afraid to make that decision?

We all ask for Hashem's blessing regarding our children. What is it we really want for them? Do we want them to grow up as we perceive they should be, or as Hashem created them to be?

So you see, it's all very complicated and difficult. The human creation is a complex one, and our problems of the soul are tinged with every complexity we carry within us. The rav, the rosh yeshiva or rebbe must be able to discern all this while listening. He must hear what's not being said, and understand why it isn't said in the first place. Yes, a *manhig's* job is not a simple one; it goes beyond knowledge, into the realm of special *siyatta dishmaya*.

All of *Klal Yisrael*, in every generation, have the words of one great *manhig* who spoke to every heart at every level. David Hamelech understood what each of our hearts need, and he gave us his words

so we can articulate these needs. In this unique manner, he left us with the tools needed to approach Hashem within our hearts. This *kapitel* he called a *tefilla*, a prayer, and in it he touches on many of our fears and ills. *Hatei Hashem aznecha aneini...*, "Incline Your ear, Hashem, and answer me, for poor and needy am I." David calls himself both poor and needy. Being impoverished is difficult enough, but knowing that you are in need adds to your burden. David asks that Hashem incline His ear and stoop down to the lowly places where we find ourselves.

Shomra nafshi ki chassid ani..., "Preserve my soul for I am devoted; my G-d, deliver Your servant who trusts in You."

Watch what David prays for, and understand that he left this for us as well. Every Yid is devoted to Hashem; it is only the crassness of the material world that covers this devotion and cools its ardor. Thus David prays, "Preserve my soul, Hashem. Deliver me from this madness that I call reality, for I trust in You and realize that everything else is really a mirage."

Chaneini Hashem ki eilecha ekra kol hayom..., "Be gracious to me, my Master, for to You I cry out all the day." True, I may allow my focus to wander, but that loss of focus is in a sense a cry for help. No one who grasps even a bit of the greatness of Hashem could ever find anything else that is worth thinking about. But I am lost, so I ask for graciousness, even if undeserved.

Samei'ach nefesh avdecha..., "Make glad the soul of Your servant, for to You, my Master, I lift up my soul." Hashem, I am so far removed from where I should be that my heart is twisted and contaminated. If You would bless me with gladness, my soul would soar higher and higher.

These words are so beautiful - read them again and again. We ask Hashem, "Please, give me the gift of holy gladness, and my soul will fly oh so close to You. That's the one place it aspires to be, the one space that counts."

Ki ata Hashem tov vesalach..., "For You, my Master, are good and forgiving, and abounding in kindness to all who call upon You." David shares a brilliant blueprint for prayer with us. He asks nothing about material gain and everything about the soul. He teaches us that if the soul is full and rich in Heavenly love, everything else will find its place.

Good, forgiving, kindness - these are all attributes that are beyond the measure of true judgement. No one could survive being judged according to his actual deeds. We have all slipped in our time and need Hashem's special kindness.

Haazina Hashem tefilasi..., "Give ear, Hashem, to my prayer, and listen to the voice of my supplications." Doctors of flesh and blood will take time off, or decide that certain patients are beyond helping. How many times do they say, "Tell them I'm not in," or "I need a break." Hashem listens to the voice of every supplicant, even if that supplicant sometimes only voices his needs and doesn't truly focus on what his lips say. No matter, Hashem hears with His Divine Ear.

Beyom tzarasi ekra'eka..., "In the day of my distress I call out to You, for You will answer me." Gutte

Yidden have taught us that when a Yid is troubled, Hashem shares that pain with him. Hashem weeps when we weep, and goes with us into the galus we suffer. By calling out to Hashem in our day of distress, we seek His answer for His sake as well as ours.

Ein kamocha ba'elohim Hashem..., "There is none like You among the gods, my Master, and there is nothing like Your works." This seemingly simple statement is not at all that simple. In truth, many times we make ourselves into a bit of a god, expecting things to go the way we desire. How much thought and focus do we put into trying to tell Hashem how to run the world! But there is nothing, absolutely nothing at all, like Hashem and His works. Everything else is in fact nothing at all.

Horeini Hashem darkecha..., "Teach me, Hashem, Your way that I may walk in Your truth; let me be of one heart to fear Your Name." Our problems start when we stop learning. With this I mean learning about what Hashem is and who we are. Torah is the pathway that can give us this understanding, and when we stop learning we are spiritually dead. If we allow yesterday's insights to calcify into everyday normality, then we are no longer walking on the path. We have stopped and have begun to atrophy. The greatest fear we should have is that we think we know enough.

So we go to our rebbes and our rabbanim, and we ask, we hear, we live. Combined with the help of some thoughtful Tehillim, well, we may even become truly healthy.

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