

Let The Healing Begin

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I'm choosing to write about this for *Parashat Shekalim* because part of the story takes place on a Shabbat *Parashat Shekalim* long ago, and because I had the privilege of being in Uman this week to say the *Tikkun HaKlali* (General Rectification/Remedy) at Rebbe Nachman's gravesite.

For those of us who don't know, the *Tikkun HaKlali* is a set of ten Psalms* that Rebbe Nachman prescribed to be said in the event of a "nocturnal emission" (onanism). I almost wrote "unlikely event," but that would be incorrect. The Rebbe commented that "three parts" (i.e., 3/4) of mankind are ensnared by this sin. In a number of places, the Rebbe referred to the holy *Zohar's* comment that controlling this drive was the most difficult challenge a person faces.

We won't go into the specifics, but many classic Jewish works decry this sin, detailing the damage it causes and warning about the spiritual, and even material, catastrophes that onanism brings in its wake. The holy *Zohar* not only calls it the worst possible sin a man can do (for some momentary pleasure, he's willing to kill even his own children!), but it also states that *teshuvah* (return to God) for this sin is impossible (*Zohar* I, 188a, 219b). Again, many of our classic works say that *teshuvah* is possible even for this sin. Rebbe Nachman concurs and even goes as far as to say that he is the

only one who truly understands this statement of the *Zohar* (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #71).

In addition, Onan's older brother Er was guilty of the same sin. The Torah says Er was *ra* (bad, evil) in God's eyes (Genesis 38:7). The *Zohar* (I, 57a) and Rebbe Nachman (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #249) both asked why he is termed *ra*, rather than *rasha* (villain). The Rebbe says that one reason is that a person who commits the sin of Er, God forbid, is generally bad-tempered, unpleasant, disagreeable, and irritable. This can be better understood when we take a closer look at the meaning of the word *ra*, usually translated as "bad" or "evil." The same root also means "shatter" (Psalms 2:9). The nature of *ra* is to fragmentize, to detach in a negative, counterproductive way. *Ra* is disagreeable.

One might expect that such a harmful, horrible misdeed would call for a difficult, severe, and perhaps somber process of *teshuvah*. One should be, and people often are, surprised that Rebbe Nachman says that, in fact, the *teshuvah* for this is rather easy and enjoyable. Just say some Tehilim (Psalms) and be in a good mood. "Sing along with Dovid HaMelekh," as it were. Think positive and sing? How can that possibly undo the enormity of what's been done?

Fantasizing about committing immoral acts—bad thinking—creates more bad thoughts and bad thinking. As the Ramchal writes in *Mesilat Yesharim* (*Path of the Just*), when one does not see clearly, he misidentifies what he sees. As a result, he makes poor judgments and even worse decisions. Fantasy also displaces reality. By thinking about things that aren't, things that may never be and perhaps should never be, one displaces his thoughts about reality, piling them up in disarray. The technological temptations we face today are not just the cause of the problem—they are a result of the chaos of the mind. (See *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #25 concerning the order of thoughts.) Finally, fantasizing indicates that deep down, a person is dissatisfied and unhappy with his reality.

So being in a positive frame of mind is critical. The stronger and more enduring it is, the more it prevents fantasy from taking hold or even starting. Instead of a shattered, disjointed thought process, one can have a clear, flowing, and seamless stream of thought. This is also part of the musical *tikkun*. Music is about harmony, about determining what really fits with what and organizing the notes into an integrated whole. By connecting to song—singing or playing music—one becomes infused with the essentials of song. The happiness and the healing lead back to holiness. Amen.

* The Psalms are: 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, 150. They are to be said specifically in this order.

a gutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

—Based on *Sichot HaRan* (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom) #141