



Curing an Open Wound

An Israeli doctor's ingenious cure, and its spiritual reflection.

How to Fool the Body

Yigal Kushner, a 74 year old Israeli doctor, was riding his bike when he suddenly crashed and hurt himself. It wasn't his first sports-injury; he was very athletic and had already experienced his fair share of crashes, falls and scratches — but this time was different. As he pulled himself off the ground, he was struck with a great idea.

Normally, minor injuries heal within a short period of time, given the body's natural healing process. But he noticed during his years of practice that deep injuries seemed to be forgotten by the body. At some point, the healing process would simply stop and fail to complete itself.

As he brushed himself off from his collision, he realized that there was a solution to the problem; he needed to figure out a way to 'remind the body' that the injury was still there.

Under normal circumstances, a person has a clot of blood on the injury which signals to the body that there is a wound. This clot prevents blood loss and accompanies the healing process until new skin tissue grows, at which point the scab falls off. The problem is that sometimes, the body gets used to the wound and stops trying to heal it, and these types of open wounds and sores have severe consequences for the patient even leading to amputation.

What if it were possible to produce a new clot from a person's own blood and place it on the open wound? Kushner believed it might make the body believe that a large wound had just formed, 'awakening' the body's healing abilities.

As one who had already successfully created a number of novel treatments, he decided to pursue his idea and he successfully invented a quick, easy treatment to resolve the issue. A blood clot is formed from the patient's blood simply by collecting a tube of blood, and in just seven minutes it coagulates. It is then attached to the wound for the duration of one week. Each week the process is repeated, and within four to eight weeks, the wound heals. The success rate in trials submitted to the FDA was a whopping 78%, despite the fact that the patients who participated in the experiment had tried and failed all other available treatments to no avail. The company received FDA approval in November 2019.

The first patient in Israel who was treated is a person who has diabetes and severe vascular disease. He lost his right leg above the knee and is suffering from open wounds in his left foot as well. A wide variety of treatments failed to improve his foot's blood supply; despite undergoing surgery, his wounds remained large and open, refusing to heal.

The patient's doctor said, "Let's try this new treatment on the most difficult case — the one where the patient has nothing to lose." They began treatment, and the gaping wound that had exposed the bone slowly but surely shrunk, becoming a small hole. "I experienced a miracle," the patient declared.

The Spiritual Reflection

According to Jewish tradition, the physical world is a mirror of the spiritual realms. If this concept is true in the physical world, it is a sign that it is the same on a spiritual level. In fact, the spiritual reality is not

only indicated by the physical reality, but rather it is the root of the physical reality. Because something is so in the spiritual world, it is expressed similarly in the physical world as well.

For example: we all know that as parents, we will do everything — and beyond — for the sake of our children. What about the opposite? How far will we go for the sake of our parents? Most people will admit that they are willing to sacrifice more for their children than for their parents.

Why is this so? Why is a parents' love for children unconditional, whereas a child's love for his parents not?

The answer lies in the spiritual reality. G-d, who is our Father, loves us unconditionally, and therefore, we as parents love our children unconditionally. Contrarily, we as His children do *not* love Him unconditionally and are not always willing to fulfill His requests. This is therefore reflected in the relationship between us and our children; our children do not treat us with unconditional love either.

This is an example of the idea that everything in the physical world is a reflection of the spiritual realms. Chassidism often cites the verse, "From my flesh I will see G-d" (Job 19:26), explaining that from the functions of the human body and soul we can learn about the spiritual world functions.

Thus, if a physical body can be 'reminded' of its wound, there must be a similar, spiritual parallel.

Open Jewish Wounds

In the course of our Jewish journey, there are often "wounds." When we overlook a mitzvah, our spiritual body will immediately react and remind us to strengthen our connection to G-d, whether through awakening our guilty conscience or through inspiring us to do a

different mitzvah, leading us to correct the omission through “one mitzvah leading to another.”

But sometimes, a person grows up not knowing about his connection to Judaism; no one ever told him about Judaism; he is not in a position to feel the spiritual wound. He needs someone to explain to him that there *is* a wound and that it could be cured by connecting to his roots.

And just as the physical cure comes from his own body — from his own blood — the spiritual cure must also come from deep within himself. You cannot heal the wound with something external; dancing the hora, singing Hava Nagila and eating falafel is not going to make it work. The healing must come from a mitzvah, which is part of every Jew’s very own spiritual DNA. That will awaken his soul and bring it back to life.

The Chanukah Miracle

This Chanukah, Rabbi David Flinkenstein of Chabad in Chicago, received a phone call from a man who was not willing to identify himself. He asked if he could talk to the rabbi. He said that he was born Jewish; both of his parents are Jewish, but several years earlier he had converted to Christianity, and now he wanted to know how to undo his actions; he wanted to return to Judaism.

The Rabbi responded that a Jew always remains a Jew; it is impossible to change. But then he asked what had suddenly prompted him to return to Judaism at the moment. Why now? The fellow on the other line replied that on one of the Chanukah nights, he had noticed a car with a menorah on its roof. Inexplicably, he had suddenly felt the urge to cancel the conversion and return to Judaism, so he returned home, searched the internet for the number of a rabbi, and made the call to Rabbi Flinkenstein.

The new returnee realized that the rabbi was very moved by his story,

but he couldn't understand why. So the rabbi explained to him that the whole story of the Chanukah miracle is that they searched and found a one single small jug of pure oil sealed with the seal of a high priest. This is a new Chanukah miracle, the rabbi said. I've discovered a Jew on the other side of the line, inside whom there is a small jug of pure oil, a Jewish spark that nothing can defile. This Jew had seen the Chanukah candles, and a chanukah candle was thereby kindled in his own heart.

And that candle within him helped him begin his journey to recovery.

The General Jewish Body

This idea of a cure is also true for the Jewish people as a whole.

There is an interesting characteristic of Jews which isn't replicated among members of other religions. When Jews on a cruise see someone who seems Jewish, they try to find a way to pass by the person and find out if they are Jewish. They might throw out a Jewish word or food and see if they get a reaction. How does this happen? How do we manage to identify other Jews? What is the radar that detects other Jews? The answer is that we are all a part of the same spiritual body called "the Jewish people," and we all have one father (as explained in Tanya 32).

The connection of one Jew to another begins in this week's Torah portion. This week, we read how Joseph, the 'prime minister' of Egypt, tries to take Benjamin as a slave. Judah boldly faces Joseph and, in a long monologue, offers himself as a slave in exchange for Benjamin. Why did he defend Benjamin while the other brothers were silent? He says, "Because your servant has taken responsibility for the boy." He had personally guaranteed his father that he would bring Benjamin home at all costs.

And when Joseph heard those words, he finally revealed himself to his

brothers, “I am Joseph.”

There, in Joseph’s chamber, the Jewish responsibility for each other was born. Since then, every Jew feels a responsibility for the Jew on the other side of the world. We are called Jews, after Judah — because he was the one who exemplified Jewish responsibility. He taught us that we each have the power to be the cure for our fellow Jew.

In Hebrew, the word used for this connection is *areivus*. The Rebbe once explained that the word actually has three meanings: 1 - responsibility, 2 - intertwined, 3 - sweet. Jews are responsible for one another, our lives are intertwined with each other, and we are a pleasure for one another. One word expresses the entire depth of the Jewish connection.