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Singing



*Breaks
The
Spiritual
Deadlock*

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If we are going to heal from illness we need to break two kinds of spiritual illness. One paralyzes us so that we become passive and resigned; the other steals the very song from our throats, leaving us only with a groan. The spirit evaporates from our souls and we become submissive and flat. Psalm 105 teaches two positive ways to heal, and healing is the essence of health.

First, when illness de-activates us, we follow a prepared script and act like victims – we become couch potatoes, helplessly watching ourselves get weaker. We are fed and injected and analyzed and tested and predicted and watched over and prayed for and spoken of behind our backs. It is a gridlock that paralyzes us and makes us feel worse. Psalm 105 tells us: “Don’t act like a victim.”

Notice how the Psalmist erupts and fires off ten staccato charges in five sentences (1-5) give thanks; declare His name; make known His acts; sing to Him; make music to Him; tell of Him; glory in Him; search for His presence; seek Him; remember Him! To heal, to become whole, we must respond even ten times; energize our minds; and not allow ourselves to sink into victimhood.

Pain focuses our mind marvelously, a thinker once said. It will require heroism to take our mind off our condition, to take control of our souls, to be courageous, to feel empowered again.

32. He turned their rains into hail,
with flaming fire in their land.
33. it struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees in their borders.
34. God spoke and locusts came,
beetles beyond number.
35. They ate every herb in their land,
they ate up the fruit of their soil.
36. He struck all the firstborn in their land,
the prime of their strength.



37. He brought them out, carrying silver and gold,
and none among His tribes stumbled.
38. Egypt rejoiced when they departed,
for their terror had fallen upon them.
39. He spread out a cloud as a sheltering cover,
and a fire to illuminate the night.
40. They asked and He provided quail,
and satisfied them with bread from Heaven.
41. He opened a rock and waters gushed out,
they ran through dry places like a river .



42. For He remembered His holy word,
to Abraham, His servant.
43. And He led out his people with gladness,
His chosen ones with joyful singing.
44. He gave the lands of nations,
they inherited the toil of the nations.
45. So that they might keep His statutes,
and treasure His teachings,
Halleluyah!

*"When life is not a song, sing."
King David*

*"He who sings, frightens away his ills."
Cervantes*

*"To groan when we are ill is common,
to sing is courageous."
Rabbi M. Lamm*



Even if all we do is chant “Oy vay,” over and over, to a tune we improvise - “Sing to Him.” Even a melancholy song somehow takes us out of ourselves and gives expression to our inner being. Sometimes I break out in a tune – a melody that uses sounds shaped only by my emotions. It articulates a groan that forces its way out of my interior; sometimes, it expresses an indescribable joy inside me that’s in search of an audience.

Sometimes we sing a familiar tune with friends with whom we sway in closeness. It crystallizes our common despair, and the sadness gets dissipated in fellowship. It harmonizes our own souls with the souls of those who empathize with us. The harmony, in magical ways, transfers the energy of the group to us fragile individuals as we lift up our voices and keep time together.

Sing what you like; help others by offering to sing with them. Especially effective may be a mother’s lullaby, one that she sang for us at bedtime or when we were sick. We can sing from religious songs; old nursery rhymes; oldies but goodies; college songs – if they make us smile or help us to express our anxiety. If you feel the onset of despair, sing out your despair with a melody.

To groan when we are ill is common; to sing is courageous. Think actively, sing passionately. It will break the most common gridlocks of illness, and let our souls soar to new heights.

Psalms 105

1. Give thanks to the Lord, declare His name;
make His acts known among the peoples.
2. Sing to Him, make music to Him;
tell all about His wonders!
3. Glory in His Holy name;
be glad of heart, be glad of heart, you who seek God.
4. Search for God and His might,
seek His presence always!
5. Remember the wonders He has wrought
His miracles, and the judgments of His mouth.



6. Seed of Abraham, His servant,
Children of Jacob, His chosen ones.
7. He is the Lord, our God;
His judgments are over the whole earth.
8. He remembered His covenant forever,
The word He commanded to a thousand generations
9. That covenant which He made with Abraham,
and His oath to Isaac.
10. He established it as a statute for Jacob,
For Israel as an everlasting covenant.
11. Saying,
“To you I will give the land of Canaan,
The portion of your inheritance.”

12. When they were only a few in number,
and had hardly dwelled there;
13. They wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people –
14. He permitted no one to wrong them;
He admonished kings on their behalf:
15. “Do not touch my anointed ones,
And to my prophets do no harm.”





You may say, "I can't think of anything else." Perhaps you can't, but try it. I urge you to keep your mind active on other subjects. Your brain does have a mind of its own – but you can control it. Times like these call for combat, not resignation.

Now break the second gridlock. In the ten charges of the psalmist, one appears not to fit – "Sing to Him!" What's the value of a song? In our sophistication, we think of singing as an art form; but the Torah teaches that to sing is a blessing. In terms of the spirit, singing is on a higher level than speaking – it is why the Levites sang in the Temple. When we sing we raise our souls to God, and we gain insight into Him. Through song we address God.

And through song we learn to better endure our hardships. When life is not a song, sing! When King David was ill, he sang; when Cervantes, the great writer was ill, he said: "He who sings frightens away his ills." Ask yourself: Why do people always smile when they sing? Singing is an antidote to panic. The pious elders taught us that. It lightens the burden, lessens the fear, steadies the nerves. Singing gives voice to our deepest feelings; it enables us to express ourselves even if we are the only ones who hear it. And we will have made ourselves heard. Singing lifts the heart.

16. He called a famine in the land,
and broke every staff of bread.
17. Before them He sent a man –
Joseph was sold as a slave.
18. They tortured his feet with fetters,
his soul was laid in irons.
19. until the time that His word came to pass,
the word of God purified him.
20. The king sent messengers and released him,
a ruler of many peoples who set him free.
21. He appointed him master over his house,
and ruler over all his possessions,
22. to bind his ministers to his soul,
to make his elders wise.



23. Thus Israel came to Egypt,
and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24. And he caused His people to be extremely fruitful,
He made them stronger than their oppressors,
25. whose hearts He turned to hate His people,
to conspire against His servants.



6. He sent Moses, His servant,
Aaron, whom He has chosen.
7. They brought the words of His signs among them,
and wonders in the land of Ham.

28. He sent darkness and it was dark;
they did not rebel against His word.
29. He turned their waters into blood,
and He killed their fish.
30. Their land swarmed with frogs,
in the very chamber of the kings.
31. He spoke, and wild beasts came,
lice throughout their borders.

