



# Strengthening Ourselves, Healing our World

**T**his has been a very challenging year for the Jewish people. Our sense of collective and individual vulnerability has been on display for the entire world to see.

A common refrain we have heard throughout the year is “I have no words.” And while that feeling may be true, the truth is we need words. In our darkest moments, we need to find words of self-expression, words of comfort and healing. In our tradition, we are blessed to have great repositories of these words.

The book I turn to in these moments, is Tehillim, the Book of Psalms.

In Psalms chapter 147 we read:

הַרְפָּא לְשִׁבוּרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעֵצְבוֹתָם:  
*God heals their broken hearts and binds up their wounds.*

God is described as the healer of broken hearts and the mender of our wounds. And looking out at the Jewish people, this is the form of divine comfort we so desperately need in this moment. But how is this achieved? Two directions are suggested in the psalm.



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בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם ה' נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְכַנֵּס:  
*The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; He gathers in the exiles of Israel.*

הַרְפָּא לְשִׁבוּרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעֵצְבוֹתָם:  
*He heals their broken hearts, and binds up their wounds.*

God gathers in all those suffering in exile, all those who feel homeless, rootless, disconnected, and disenfranchised. Healing begins with a sense of community. With knowing

that none of us are alone but we are here with each other and for each other.

Then Tehillim adds something else in the next verse:

מוֹנֶה מִסְפָּר לַכּוֹכָבִים לְכֻלָּם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא:

*He reckoned the number of the stars; to each He gave its name.*

God gives each star a name. What does that mean? God is not a scientist who classifies each star and galaxy in the universe. I would suggest that name here refers to purpose. *L'chulam sheimot yikra*—everything around us, and within each of us has a purpose. And sometimes when we are most broken, our lives can feel purposeless, empty and lost. *L'chulam sheimot yikra* – each person, every difficult story, every period of pain in our lives—each has a name, each has a purpose.

We heal through our collective identity by coming together and we heal by giving names to our struggles, by discovering the purpose of our individual lives, and creating meaning even in the darkest moments of our lives.

This is the central theme of Pesach, the holiday in which we anchor our individual identity within the context of our national identity. While Pesach is the celebration of the birth of the Jewish people, the Rabbis teach that each individual is to experience this night as if he or she was liberated from Egypt. In a broader sense, our personal stories are not only part of the greater whole but also run parallel to the story of redemption. We too have our struggles and triumphs. We too at times feel the weight of our surroundings and moments of liberation.

Perhaps this year, more than others, our individual feelings mirror those of the entire Jewish people. When our soldiers are at risk, we are all in fear. When our brothers and sisters are still being held in captivity, we are all in turmoil. When Israel is at war, we are all called to service.

We pray to the *rofei l'shevurei lev umechabesh l'atzvotam*, the healer of broken hearts and binder of their wounds: May he bring the hostages home, protect our soldiers and bless our students and families, our children and families. May we find the words, the strength, and the purpose to bring healing individually and collectively. May Hashem mend our wounds. And bring redemption to all.



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