



the Ray of Connection

A SOCIETY OF SOULS® NEWSLETTER OF INTEGRATED KABBALISTIC HEALING®

Reflections on the Minyan Healing

Brenda Blessings

The Minyan Healing began as a suggestion made by Jason at the 2000 graduate seminar. He offered it as a means of working as a group to help clients with cancer. This idea was taken up by a team of us from my graduating class and was presented at the 2001 graduate seminar. It has continued to be developed through ongoing conversations I've had with Jason in supervision, as well as Minyan Healings with clients.

Many others in the community have also continued to experiment with this healing. This article is not meant to serve as a complete description of the steps involved in giving a Minyan Healing nor as an explanation of its diagnostic

process. It is meant to offer a glimpse into the developing nature of this healing, as well as some of our current understandings.

We began this process of coming together out of love: love for one who was a part of our community and whom we thought might be helped by forming a minyan, as well as love for God, this work and the joys of exploration. The Minyan Healing has been an open-hearted inquiry into reality.

During last year's graduate seminar, Jason said the following: "We can say that the world reveals its perfection to us the more we understand the *takhlit* of God. In other words, as we understand ourselves and the world more, we begin to see that

the world is filled with and aims towards God's beneficence.

"Everything that happens to us—if we have the Heart to see it—is aimed at unfolding God's Love. This beneficence or goodness is always there, was always there, and remains hidden only when we do not enter the search whole-heartedly. A true teacher is one who has reached the stage of knowing that—despite the world's deep sorrow—it is essentially perfect and good; it is essentially Whole, though we don't live that way.

"A person who knows this, listens to the questions of all beings differently, hearing in them the constant quest for the deepest happiness. This type of happiness is the happiness that is fulfilled only by knowing

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An Open Letter to the ASOS Community

Jason Shulman

On Sunday, June 8, I received Dharma Transmission or *inka shomei* from my Zen teacher, Shaka Kendo Rich Hart, the Abbot of the Clear Mountain Zen Center in West Hempstead, Long Island.

This transmission and ceremony, in which the teacher acknowledges the mastery of the student and gives his blessing and authorization to the student to be a Dharma teacher, bears witness to the relationship between student and teacher and the student's level of realization.

This event was the culmination of almost thirty years of study.

I first met Rick as a seventeen-year-old young man as I sought out a zen teacher I heard had a storefront zendo on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. Through that small center, and subsequent ones we founded with other like-minded students in Brooklyn, I continued my study with Rick for almost ten years. After a hiatus of some years, I resumed my contact with Rick. Our continuing conversation about reality and our response to the Real led to this transmission event.

I have included below the text of the letter I wrote to Rick concerning this event. I will be speaking about the whole concept of lineage at our community meeting on June 20th in New Jersey. I hope to see you there.

If you live on Long Island (and even if you do not), I encourage you to visit the Clear Mountain Zen Center at 519 Hempstead Avenue on Long Island. To meet Rick and hear him speak the Dharma is a breath of fresh air. The atmosphere in the zendo is one of kindness, openness and frank dialogue. The CMZC and its abbot are a treasure that should not be missed.

As for myself, my teaching will not change in its essence. My Dharma is the work I teach: IKH, IM, and the Work of Return. I remain completely committed to bringing this work ever more fully into the world. My hope is that I can become clearer and clearer as time goes on, so that what I teach truly inspires people to heal themselves and heal others. May it be so.

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the secret of life: That all things in life are the beneficence of God themselves. In fact, that all things are an expression of God.”

The Minyan Healing, when approached in this way, reveals many deep layers in the search for happiness and the sorrow/struggles of humanity.

When someone comes to us in deep agony, whether it is with cancer or some other life-threatening or deeply debilitating difficulty, we want truly to meet them in their agony. And yet as healers, we must also admit our struggles in doing so. We are often overwhelmed with the depth of agony and sorrow we encounter. We cannot bear to look at it directly. We cannot see the beneficence or goodness that is always there. We struggle to see the face of God. We want to call out to our friends, our fellow healers, to help us and to help this one who has come to us with their suffering.

This is an important admission: to know that we cannot look at this agony alone. It is a place of deep truth to realize that we cannot face this alone and, indeed, need others. It is also a place of integrity, offering the opportunity for true mercy and the beginning of the journey and the diagnostic process for the Minyan Healing.

It is important at this point to look carefully at our desire to escape the pain and see the minyan as magic. We also need to be aware of our tendencies to jump into this healing when we feel a certain helplessness or urgency to DO something about our agony and the client's. One of the first indicators of the need for a Minyan Healing is agony. We need time to know more fully the nature of this agony and not jump too quickly to fix or change it.

When we listen to our client, we must listen then with the ultimate *takhlit* in mind, while staying in deep relationship with ourselves and our client. We want to hear God's *takhlit* in their voice, questions and actions as they reveal themselves to us in the moment. We want to listen to the one who is crying out and the one who is calling.

One of the next indicators for a Minyan Healing is dramatic conflict between the

needs of the individual and the family or community. There is an element of being made small or having to be larger than who they are, of not being true to one's essential nature and of ongoing betrayal of one's self for the sake of the family or community. The family myths of, “This is how life is,” often go unquestioned. Due to its long-standing nature, this conflict has usually gone underground.

When the client is in great distress with cancer or other illness, they are often not even aware of this deeper conflict. As the healer, we must listen ever more deeply, keeping the *takhlit* in mind, to hear if this struggle emerges within the diagnostic process.

“We want to listen to the one who is crying out and the one who is calling.”

When we are made into something other than who we are, we cannot carry on the work of being as God made us to be. We find our lives moving away from true fulfillment/happiness (God's *takhlit*) towards a life of meaninglessness and self-betrayal.

We are in deep conflict within the community of our own body/mind/spirit, as well as in relationship to our families, work and community. Thus, deep, meaningful relationship is not truly possible, nor is an open-hearted inquiry into the nature of our sorrow or our relationship with the Whole.

When we look at the Tree of Life, we recognize that each sephiroth is meaningful in relationship to its opposite, such as Hesed to Gevurah, to each of the other sephiroth, and in relation to the whole Tree. When we look even further at the relationship paths and on a holographic level, the Trees within the Trees, we see an ever-changing and infinitely complex relational matrix. We also recognize that it is through this relational matrix that images of reality are formed and from a holographic standpoint, the body of God is revealed.

The *takhlit* of humanity is relational life. Life is constantly creating a form of life that can be in relationship.

When we have the illusion of being separate only, divided against the whole; when we feel we have to fight continually to be ourselves, we then find ourselves divided against our essential nature, the Whole. The ultimate *takhlit*—the beneficence of God, God's delight—cannot be revealed.

The process of Minyan Healing reveals these deeper human struggles. It transforms the healers and the client, as we sink into our sorrows and our humanity, banding us together into One. The Minyan Healing can then offer the opportunity for true mercy and compassion, revealing the deeper sorrow—the agony of being divided against the Whole. The sorrow that could not be named can now be named. The false gods are revealed.

It requires a deep level of commitment of the healers to God's *takhlit*. We begin, move through and end the process in Wholeness, honestly recognizing and working with our struggles as they appear. We are doing the work of God. We attend to ourselves, our client and our community. As we do this, we get to a place where we realize that life can be trusted enough for us to be exactly who and where we are in the moment.

The Minyan Healing thus calls upon us to join together not only for a healing but for communion. We commune with each other and our client in the agony, sorrow and joy of being human. There is an alchemical transformation. We go from separate-only individuals who resist being who we are to One body: the body of God. ○

Please note: The Minyan Healing will be taught in a clinic at the 2003 graduate seminar, offering a fuller picture of the diagnostic process and the steps involved. This healing should be done only by graduates, not students.

Brenda Blessings is Program Director of A Society of Souls. She is an assistant teacher in the current Year Two class and has a healing practice in the Shenandoah Valley of VA and the Washington, DC, area.

An Open Letter to the ASOS Community

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17 March, 2003

Dear Rick,

To ask to be part of your lineage is to come out of some final shadow into the light.

It is to reincarnate fully, here and now.

I have understood that to be part of a lineage is to completely acknowledge the mixed nature of humanity and of my own soul, to see completely, on a body basis, that both night and day constitute the totality of creation, that I will forever fall and reappear and fall again and reappear again, from beginning-less time to end-less-end.

It also means that even if I had the choice for it not to be so, being in lineage means that I receive endless help from those who have gone before, those who have fallen and gotten up—since both activities are the essence of human life—and that, taking my place in this lineage, I do the same for others.

None of this is new to me. It is what I have done with my life since I was your student thirty years ago.

What is new is that now I can accept support.

I always had to do things for myself. By myself, I saved my life as a young child; by myself I grew to understand my wounds and understand awakening from my wounds.

Even when kind teachers were available to teach me, I was still centered in a consciousness that I had to do it myself: to take the help gratefully, but somehow remain isolated within that help.

What has changed is that now I am human enough not to be alone, not to need to be alone any longer.

That realization brings me closer to people and lets me teach in a more tender-hearted way, not as someone who has earned his position by hard work only, but as someone who has finally fallen into the arms of the other, committed to being completely human to be completely awake.

I have always known this and acted in this manner. But now, in publicly acknowledging this to you, and asking for your blessing/*inka* something else is added.

This something is at once both a deepening of my tender-heartedness and a strength that can come only from publicly depending upon others.

Here are the reasons I ask this of you, of all my teachers:

You understand that there is no difference between God and Buddha-nature.

You understand that to have Christ as a friend is to sit as Buddha with Buddha.

You have never separated your suffering from your attainment. There is no essential conflict between the two.

You didn't so much teach me Zen as teach me, by your example, that humanness is *tathagata*, that coming-from-suchness is coming from Jason and coming from Rick.

You have always been as honest as possible.

I have learned from you by listening in my memory to your laugh, which is freely given and includes yourself as well as the situations you find yourself in.

In asking and receiving your Heart, I intend to claim publicly this right to teach. Since I have already claimed this for myself, what new thing am I claiming?

I am announcing that I have a spiritual father, that I am part of a lineage that has nothing to do with perfection and everything to do with being human.

In asking and receiving this from you, I am putting enlightenment aside, I am putting awakening aside, I am putting questions and answers aside in favor of working on this endless task until I die...and then afterwards again.

I am gaining strength, the strength I need to go on.

I also stand by you. I know your life has not been easy. I know your struggles, your limitations, your pain.

I see in them and the way you handle them, your Buddha-nature, your real self and your greatness. There is nothing too big for us if we are willing to be small. You are small enough to fit in God's Heart.

By publicly claiming you as my spiritual father, I can stand by you and help you as well. I am part of your lineage and as such, my job goes backward and forward at once: you help me and I help you.

To ask to be part of your lineage, I am taking refuge in your friendship. To find refuge means that I know who I am: Someone who needs sanctuary, who cannot make the journey across the water without a boat.

To need sanctuary means that I have come to the beginning of trusting life more fully, that I am no longer blinded by naked ambition and starved by fear.

The young boy, the boy in the picture, is eternally glad we met.

This man before you is proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you and the endless men and women who came before and will come after.

In asking for your blessing and public acknowledgment, I am telling you that I love you, that you are an example of the fruit for me: The seed, the tree and the fruit.

May I be that as well.

In love,

Jason Shulman

Letter from a First-Year Student

Martin Javinsky

Hello, everyone. It's been one month now since our last weekend together, though in truly kabbalistic fashion, it feels like one second and one year at the same time. I miss you all and want to know how you are doing.

I've noticed that right after our first two weekends, the emails were flying with deep sharing and support, only to subside as time went on. I say, let's stay connected. No doubt, there are many rich threads of thought and spirit we can explore together—let's do so!

Personally, I want to thank everyone for your outpouring of support after my initial post-weekend sharing, when I spilled my guts all over your computer (yes, it was messy but it sure felt good). I received responses of blessing and support from nearly 20 people. That's nearly half the class! Just the number of responses touched me deeply, not even accounting for the insightful intuitive content of the messages. I even got a couple of phone calls.

As I begin to move into the more personal part of this email, I feel my heart begin to pound. My jaw clenches as if wired shut. A voice in my head screams, "Don't go there! Stay on the surface, where I can see you, where I can breathe! Don't go under!"

I have felt shattered since our last IKH weekend. I am a Picasso work of art, arm jutting from head, legs twisted into ten broken pieces, mouth grinning out from belly in an absurd grimace that indicates great ironic revelations and a touch of insanity.

Fool that I was, it never occurred to me when I signed up for this school that healing the ego meant seeing its wounds more clearly than I thought possible, feeling them with such exquisite pain that the years I spent writhing in therapy seem now like a skinned knee by comparison.

I am at the core of it all now, where life burns ever bright without consuming, and, like Moses, I cannot look upon the grandeur and simplicity of God. I do not have the tools nor the right. I fall to my knees, bury my face in my arms, and rock myself like a helpless babe.

I spend days at a time avoiding this place. Movies, internet, and food carry me down the great river of blissful ignorance, where I play out my illusions of separation, worthlessness, and victim. Then I do something silly like connect with my wife and child, go to my IKH session, talk intimately with a friend, pull out my journal or, horror of horrors, do form anxiety meditation.

"A voice in my head screams, 'Don't go there! Stay on the surface, where I can see you, where I can breathe! Don't go under!'"

Now I actually notice where I am: I'm in soupy limbo again. I notice a blue fog floating and rolling around me, smoky tendrils flicking me just on the edge of my skin. My head spins dizzy, my gut swims nauseous, my heart pounds with terror.

I have lived most of my life here and it's been terrible. I don't know where I am, only that I'm not anywhere. I'm not on Earth, connected to this body, living a fully human life; and I'm not pure spirit, living on the astral plane, connected to all that is. Body pulls me down to Earth, soul lifts me up to heaven, and like some flotsam of the universe, I am buffeted back and forth between worlds, never fully existing in either. I believe this is hell.

When I sit and do nothing, give up saving myself, I begin to feel what it's like. What it's been like since I was very little and decided life on Earth was not for me. I went away, leaving just enough of myself to keep this body functioning.

My battle cry for the last few years (a couple of decades) has been, "Heal the wounded child. Accept him, love him, welcome him back into the fold, and you will right yourself."

Now I see that I rejected my humanity. All of it, not just the wounded child. I see that I am not victim to any cruel universe. I chose to exile myself from Earth, but I (thankfully) did not choose to kill the body. Instead, I left it lingering without passion, direction, prosperity, possibility, life. I CHOSE this, choose it still, and that is the most painful realization of all.

As I sit and do nothing but feel dizzy and nauseous, I begin to weep for myself and my choices, and my lost life in limbo. I feel the grief I have fought so hard to avoid. It seems so elegantly simply that my deepest tears are not for the boy who was abandoned by father, abused by mother, but for the human being who abandoned his own life. There is nobody else but me in this play.

That realization strikes me hard in the face, leaves me cold, alone, naked in the chaos of the unknown moment. Life truly is ever-changing. No moment is the same as the one that preceded it. If I am to have any chance at living fully, my only hope is to fall. Surrender to the terror of not knowing who or what or where I am, and find my safety in the CHOICE of falling.

Down through the blue fog I tumble, head and gut swimming, eyes filled with tears, mind numbed with fear. Courage. I will not save myself from the fall any longer.

With a thump, I land on solid Earth, my feet shod and steady, my body lithe and strong, my heart full of wonder. I'm here! Oh, glorious God, you have blessed me with precious life again, and I shall not leave it for one second! I will live completely, be here for every instant of my daughter's life, use all the gifts you have given me to serve you on Earth! I will live, live, LIVE!

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Until ego edges its way back into my consciousness, which usually takes only a few minutes. Then I'm back to the play of illusions, my thoughts resting in the dullness of me, and how horrid I am.

But something has happened. I have touched deeply into life, even for a few minutes, and I am changed, even if I don't notice it, even if I feel edgy and angry at the rollercoaster I am on.

I will not give up surrendering. I am desperate for integration and I now know that feeling my choices, letting go of my stronghold on the moment may be my only hope. I am only in charge of falling. Where I land is up to God.

My mind jumps with a thousand questions now, and I could write for hours more; but I will leave it for another time.

Thank you, beloved friends and fellow fallers, for receiving my inmost process with compassion and support.

I love you all,
Martin



Martin Javinsky is a first-year student in ASOS with a healing practice in Minneapolis, MN.

If You Really Knew

*If you really knew what it is I want,
you'd lay down your sword and
unspike your tongue.*

*Your fists would fall gently
to your sides
where the hand
naturally opens
to receive.*

— Erin Minta

Erin Minta will enter Year 3 this fall. She lives in Warwick, NY.

A Moment of Respite

Stephanie Schuster

Dear Classmates,

I have always felt cradled in your prayers and they sustain me. Lest you think this journey has all been one dark hole, I want to seize the moment of exhilaration to share some of the good stuff.

I finished the last chemo today before doing CAT scans and the bone scan on Monday. Never thought I would make it through this challenge. That's it for drugs for the moment! The tests will tell if I respond to the drugs (Navilbene+ Herceptin) that I have been on.

With these results I will see a radiologist at Fox Chase with the intention of doing targeted treatment of the liver. Liver mets can kill, or at the minimum, shut down the whole system. Even if the liver looks all clear, he believes this treatment would address any microscopic residue of tumor left. I expect to have this all dealt with before we re-adjourn in May.

Meanwhile, there have been the most astonishing breakthroughs. Mostly, I haven't felt that badly physically. In fact, all these expensive supplements have helped me to feel better sometimes than I have for years! The difficulty with the chemo drugs has been the havoc they wreck [*sic*] (rec? as in I'm their "recreation?") on my brain chemistry, making me excessively depressed and even suicidal at times. (I'm not proud to admit this, and it took a while for me even to be honest with myself.)

Antidepressants helped a great deal; it just took ages to get the dose right (much higher than expected). It was noteworthy that my oncologist didn't seem to register how miserable I was until I actually told him I was suicidal. I would never have carried it out, but no other verbiage could convey to him how I was hurting myself with my terrible attitude. It was a red flag enough for me to hear myself thinking that everyone

(especially my darling family—*i.e.*, co-operators of my primary bonding patterns, or co-dependents; co-defendants (I could have a little too much poetic fun, here)—would be better off without me.

This was twisted code wording for a profound pattern of negativity and self-abuse that I have been dancing with/untangling and re-knotting for years and thought I had dealt with.

In moments of extreme vulnerability I beat myself up. If no other egoic tricks worked, my dark self whips this one out to tantalize me. I don't succumb if I'm centered or balanced. (How conditional does that sound?) But all the shifts and openings I've been holding have me in a much larger space where the unknown seems closer, looms larger, or just sneaks around the cave corners of my prehistoric (a-historic? hysteric?) mind like the golem or that imaginary friend whose name I forgot.

The sabbatical has been a huge blessing. First, I realized how much the mess in my house bothered me, so I successfully created a much longer and complex to-do list than ever before. I throw the list out and cultivate doing absolutely nothing.

I love/hate to clean. It's a great distraction and coping strategy for me. Whenever I'm really stressed and have excess energy I can't direct to a "higher" task (whatever I think that means), cleaning something has been an outlet. On 9/11 when I got back from an aborted bus trip into the city having watched the towers burn from the not-so-far-off Jersey Turnpike, I helplessly cleaned my house. Grieving and in despair, I could take comfort only in the humbleness of the task. Mindful tending of this tiny portion of dust was all I had to offer the divine. A form of prayer in motion, I suppose. Like a microscope when you raise the level of magnification—closer scrutiny (of my life, as well as my

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house) reveals a terribly pockmarked moonscape of issues, clutter, defects, and just plain dirt inviting heroic efforts to clean, purge, throw the baby out with the bathwater, etc.

So I come to a theme I've been pondering in this respite from my usual life; after many shatterings, holding the unknown; embracing the unsolvable, glee, laughter, tears, purring cats and walking the dog: INTEGRITY. Walking with the ineffable, holding that luminous emptiness in my heart, I re-consecrate my life, my mortality. How precious was that "aha" about my heart being both the divine in me and the way home. How surprised was I that this concept my head held so long is so differently held now. Slippery stuff, this.

One day I shocked myself by enjoying the feeling of cruelty. How desperately I tried to disown this dark part of me. My healer commented that broadening the emotional range invites the joy. Being shut down narrows the range to mid-tone grey. (A broadband heart—what a concept!) The trick is to hold the joy and the cruelty together. Oh yeah, THAT'S why we're doing this stuff, and why it's so wrenching.

This epiphany vanishes. A residue of its splendor is left behind, with the scent of magnolias. Integrity as a paradigm for walking in the valley of the shadow of death. What is this INTEGRITY? What does it mean to be integrated with oneself, one's heart, the small and the boundless? Ruminations for dogwalking and dishwashing.

Rich stuff, this. My cup runneth over.

I love you all,
Stephanie



*Stephanie Schuster lives in Flemington, NJ.
She is graduating ASOS this June.*

About Community

Richard Slocum

During the 1970's I belonged to a therapeutic community in Toronto called Therafiels. We had about a thousand members, 26 houses and 3 farms. Founded by young Priests and Nuns who wanted to find more effective ways of helping their flocks and who eventually left the Church, the therapy was based on leading-edge thera-drama techniques combining individual sessions with group therapy, work (farm and construction) therapy, house (living together) therapy, bioenergetics including abreactive work [in which trauma is re-experienced in order to heal it], hypnosis and intensive project work. What came out of all this was a thriving community of individuals devoted to working together on their emotional problems. The lasting memory for me was the sense of belonging and community. It arose out of a strong core of caring individuals and a variety of therapeutic venues available where one could be with others in the community feeling free to feel and express emotions. It was so great that few wanted to leave, and a better-than-the-rest-of-society atmosphere evolved. I left because Therafiels seemed to be on an endless cycle of emotional cleansing without any reference or connections to spiritual truth.

What I was left with was a longing for community based on honesty and caring, feeling very fortunate to have belonged at Therafiels for a part of my life.

So what can I bring to ASOS from my experience? I can bring insight that we have all the ingredients here to have a great community, but it will happen only if we want it, if we are willing to give of ourselves, to care about others here, to stay in connection, to love one another. I am reminded of what Christ said about people taking the time to be with Him; He basically told them that the poor will always be with us, but He would not, so take advantage of the moment.

How does this translate into your daily life of stress and too little time? Take a giant step out of time, be in the moment moving from your heart: If you are thinking or feeling about someone, call them, e-mail them, be with them, get into connection. You will be deeper, they will be deeper and our sense of community will be ever deeper. And a paradox will result, in the time you have remaining in your day, you will be deeper, more alive and you may even feel like you have more time. When I am connected with myself and others, I feel like I am moving through life in a Red Maserati. ○

Richard Slocum lives in Osgoode, ON, and graduated from ASOS in 1999.

Prayer

*I sat down to pray in front of my house
though I only gazed in the distance
becoming aware of how
the clouds work together with the wind
in colouring the hills
then I knew my God, You are there*

*I sat with my feelings
my fear and cramped body
trying to surrender
calming down my mind
and between all my thoughts
I met You, my God*

*In the silence of no-thing
the space between stars
I could only find lines of connection
making the deepest dark light again
in these moments of nothing
I know my God, You are there*

*And when I give up my expectations
my dreams filled with despair
when I can bear my tears
and not knowing
then I feel, my God, You are here.*

— Jan Huinck

Jan Huinck is a 1998 graduate who lives in Maastricht, The Netherlands.

