



# DOES TRADITIONAL JEWISH MEDICINE EXIST?

A FASCINATING CONVERSATION WITH  
DR. YEHUDA FRISCHMAN

The crisis that sparked his foray into Jewish medicine, and the journey he took to become the beloved messenger of healing he is today.

By Shiffy Friedman

All the way back in 1990, life was good for Yehuda Frischman. A Los Angeles native, he and his wife were raising their young family, while he was running a successful business. And then, his wife had a seizure—her first of many hundreds to follow.

“Over the course of the next 9 years, we literally travelled around the world to find a cure. We travelled across the United States, and then to Switzerland and Israel. We met with approximately 200 doctors and practitioners, but most of our travels led to dead ends.”

Having been thrown into the medical scene on behalf of his wife, Dr. Frischman immersed himself in the research with a desperation that emanated from his burning desire to help her. “I found that many Western and alternative practitioners were cut from same cloth. No one was really offering an insight as to why she was having the seizures. Conventional medication was not an answer, because her allergy to medication was severe. Her convulsive, life-threatening reaction did not allow us to take that route.”

As his wife’s health continued to fail, Dr. Frischman’s frequent travels and necessary involvement in the home took a toll on his messenger service business, the revenue of which was precipitously dropping. “During that period, when the seizures were getting more frequent and all options of treatment had been explored, I realized it was time for me to become a messenger of a different kind. Perhaps Hashem was sending me a message to be that messenger of healing we had been looking for all those years.” And so, Dr. Frischman knew it was time to close the business.

“I gave my accounts away to a friendly competitor considered my options for medical school,” says Dr. Frischman.

At first, Dr. Frischman considered going to regular medical school, then osteopathic medical school. “But upon further research, I found that the modalities that most addressed the mind-body connection, as well as treating and trying to figure out the causes rather than treating symptoms, were Chinese medicine and craniosacral therapy.”

While Dr. Frischman felt content with his decision to pursue a career that would allow him to help others, he still needed a source of livelihood to sustain the family during his schooling period. The solution? He simply scanned the classifieds in the local paper. “I saw an ad from a cheder in Los Angeles that was looking for a rebbi to teach the *mechina* class. I applied, and I was hired.

“When I later asked the *menahel* why he hired me, a person without any experience, he told me he saw that I love children. ‘That’s 70% of the teaching,’ he told me, ‘the rest you could learn.’”

For the next four years, Dr. Frischman taught his stu-

dents Torah while attending Chinese medical school.

Throughout the time he was learning Chinese medicine, as well as while attending seminars in craniosacral therapy, one question bothered Dr. Frischman intensely: Why was there no Jewish medicine?

“Here I was,” he recalls, “living as a *frum* Yid. I saw the profession of medicine is highly thought of in our circles and beyond. Were there no codes of Jewish medicine we could follow? I discussed this with many people, from professionals to friends to *rabbanim*. Many of them said that although there is much mention in *Chazal* about *refuah*, the methods mentioned don’t work anymore, that the medicine of the time is what we use. But I couldn’t accept that.”

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In his quest to find answers directly in the Torah, Dr. Frischman came across a *Rambam* in *Hilchos Dei’os* that has since become his mantra. “There, the *Rambam* writes that a person is obligated to direct his heart to know Hashem. However, he continues, it’s impossible to have knowledge of Hashem if one is hungry, sick, or in pain. This, I realized, is the essence of Jewish medicine. Healing and preventing illness is what helps us not be distracted by our bodies.”

Later, Dr. Frischman found a *Ramban* in *Parashas Bechukosai* that explains that when *Yidden* follow the ways of Hashem, the purpose of doctors will be to educate people to keep themselves in balance. This, he concluded, would be his goal as a Jewish healer: to help people stay in balance so they can focus on their most important purpose in this world.

With this clarity, Dr. Frischman looked forward to his next phase in life as a health practitioner who would do exactly that. Using the tools he studied, such as Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and craniosacral therapy, he helps his patients bring their body into balance so they can feel Hashem’s presence without being distracting by their body. And over his years as a messenger of healing, he established the ten principles of Jewish medicine (see sidebar).

In his practice, Dr. Frischman explains to patients that everything that happens in our life, including to our body, is a message from Hashem. He could say this because

he lives it. One of his most important principles in Jewish medicine is recognizing that Hashem, not the doctor, is the One Who heals. For a physician who has invested years of study and has witnessed the success of his intervention time and again, only true *emunah* allows for this clarity. “Although I have a doctorate in AOM, Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, from a university in California, and I’ve invested intensive study—about 20 four-day seminars—in the craniosacral curriculum, I learn much more from my patients,” says Dr. Frischman.

“The three things that limit our ability to help us get well are fears, imagination, and a lack of *da’as*—that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the real doctor.”

Because Dr. Frischman understands that every individual receives precisely the message Hashem wants him to hear, every patient must be seen with a holistic approach. “The physician must determine all the factors leading into the illness in order to get the right treatment that will help the person get whole. The patient shouldn’t be getting a treatment that’s effective in 60–70 percent of cases. Why isn’t it 100%? I call this statistical outlook ‘Las Vegas medicine.’”

When a condition is treated exclusively, explains Dr. Frischman, and the patient’s lifestyle and overall health are not taken into account, he may be impeding his own recovery. Thus, Dr. Frischman sees himself as the medical detective. “I listen for clues that patients give me to determine which factors to take into account in order to help facilitate their healing.” He also sees himself as a tour guide, taking the patient where they may or may have not gone before. “I never leave them at an unsafe place, or have them do something they can’t handle,” he is quick to add. “I’m also a translator of symptoms, with a focus on understanding the chaotic language that the body is expressing.”

Sadly, by the time Dr. Frischman completed his studies, his wife’s condition had deteriorated. While he did help ease her pain, she passed away after 25 years of suffering, in 2013. Now remarried, Dr. Frischman relocated to Yerushalayim, where he sees only two patients daily and devotes the rest of his day toward his *avodas Hashem*.

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In preparation for this cover feature, my husband and I had the honor of having Dr. Frischman and his wife, Yochved—a writer friend, pay us a visit in our home. The child of non-observant but traditionally oriented parents, Dr. Frischman embraced Orthodoxy while still in high school and then attended Yeshiva University. When we meet at our interview on Motzaei Shabbos, he wears the full *chassidish garb* and speaks of his Rebbe and his connection to Chassidus with an awe-inspiring fire in his eyes.

Conversation flowed freely as Dr. Frischman regaled my husband with tales from his practice, the history of

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Chinese medicine, and the many sources he has found in the Torah supporting his approach to healing.

And then it was time for Dr. Frischman to get to work on a complimentary Chinese medicine session for my husband. The sincerity with which he approached his work was awe-inspiring. Before taking my husband’s hand into his, he spent a few minutes in intense prayer, beseeching Hashem to allow him to serve as a messenger of healing. Here was a sincere Yid who sees himself as an emissary of Hashem. Despite his vast knowledge in the field of natural medicine, the humility with which Dr. Frischman regards his work is remarkable.

“In Judaism, and especially in Chassidus, we are encouraged to look at everything that happens to us as a sign from Hashem. Nothing happens by coincidence. We’re not Hashem’s bookkeepers, and we shouldn’t delude ourselves into thinking that we are, but we must ask ourselves what we can do differently so that the body doesn’t get in the way. A twitch in the shoulder, a rash on the skin—these are ways that Hashem speaks to us through our bodies.”

Chinese medicine is one of the modalities Dr. Frischman has been using since 2004 in helping the patient determine what’s going on inside his body and healing it. In Chinese medicine, the pulses are enormously important toward determining the root of an issue. Dr. Frischman explains that there are three pulses in each wrist, each of which corresponds to a different organ system. The right hand pulse, for example, corresponds to the adrenals, digestive system, and lungs. Each pulse also has three depths, the amount of pressure the practitioner places on the spot. The most surface touch tells about the status of the surface of the organ; a level of pressure deeper, the middle pulse, tells about the blood—how the blood is flowing through the particular organ; and the deepest pressure tells of the organ itself. “Every depth is important,” Dr. Frischman stresses. “Each is unique and enormously important in terms of a diagnosis.”

The surface lung pulse, for example, tells if there are superficial manifestations of a problem, such as if the patient is coming down with a cold or flu, before a doctor or the patient himself feels it. In the middle pulse, the Chinese medicine practitioner feels if there are irregularities

in the quality of the blood. For instance, a choppy pulse is an indication of a blockage in that particular organ system. A too-rapid blood flow is an indication of a heat pathogen going up, which may exhibit in nose bleeds and mouth sores. A slow pulse may be an indication of a blockage from cold stagnation. “Often,” Dr. Frischman adds, “I’ll feel that the pulse is empty. This means that I could feel a pulse on the surface, but when I press harder it disappears. This is an indication that the organ is not getting the nutrition it needs. “Shlomo Hamelech says in *Shir Hashirim*, ‘Kol dodi dofek.’ Perhaps we can understand this to mean that the voice of Hashem is in the dofek, the pulse. Hashem speaks to us through our body.”

While Dr. Frischman has seen how helping his patients balance their pulses improved their health, he also acknowledges that not every issue can be solved in this way. “Sometimes,” he notes, “an issue emanates due to body mechanics. An imbalance of the jaws, hips, gait, and knees, for example, can affect health enormously.”

As a case in point, Dr. Frischman tells of a patient who had undergone knee replacement surgery and was still in excruciating pain. When he went to see his doctor because he wasn’t getting better, he was advised to exercise in order to strengthen the muscle.

“I felt this was the wrong approach,” Dr. Frischman relates, “because the patient’s knee was swollen. So I told him, ‘Do me a favor. Humor me for one week and don’t do any exercise during this time. When the week is over, come back to me.’”

When the patient returned, the swelling had gone down significantly. “I felt the knee cap and all the musculature around it,” says Dr. Frischman, “And I was wondering why I was feeling so much crunching. I realized that the replaced cap was the wrong size. The patient went to a different

orthopedic surgeon who validated this finding.”

Craniosacral therapy is another modality of treatment that Dr. Frischman turns to as a means to help his patients heal. “In craniosacral therapy, we work with the two types of tissue called fascia: elastin and collagen. The network of fascia connects the entire body from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet. A skilled therapist is able to feel the different parts of the body by holding the fascia. Any kind of interruption with the body’s flow of cerebrospinal fluid, which we call craniosacral rhythm, indicates a physical or emotional problem. By holding the tissue of the body at the spots where fascia accumulates, such as in the abdomen, liver, shoulders, and neck, the therapist is able to feel blockages. By applying very light force—only 5 grams, about the weight of a nickel, the therapist can make dramatic changes.”

As a case in point, Dr. Frischman used craniosacral intervention to help a high school girl who had been taking psych meds essentially her whole life and really wanted to go to overnight camp—without the meds. “When her mother came to see me, she told me that the child had been born with a wild look in her eye, that she was never the same as the other kids. This girl made her way through school on meds, and she was fairly successful at it. But now, they wanted to try something else.

“As soon as I examined this girl, I saw that the bones in her head were out of balance. I started doing craniosacral work, and we saw dramatic changes in her behavior.” Dr. Frischman also gradually reduced her meds while giving her Chinese medicines to replace them. Within one month of this patient’s first visit, she was off medication completely. But there were still outbursts and some dysfunctional behavior. “Three weeks before camp started, I told the parents that their daughter wasn’t ready yet. They said to me, ‘You have three weeks to make it happen.’ I saw her twice weekly, and on that last session, I was working on temporal bones in her skull, which I felt were jammed, when we both heard a pop. When I freed the bone with craniosacral work, the girl felt like a different person.

Her first words were, ‘Am I normal now?’ This girl’s behavior changed completely, and she ended up being the model camper that summer.”

According to Dr. Frischman, addressing the physical aspects of a patient, such as their craniosacral structure, helps put them in balance. However, he is quick to point out that in order to maintain the balance, the individual must be adjusted emotionally, mentally, and spiritually as well. “When a person holds on to trauma, for example, it will turn into an energy cyst, which may cause them to develop an illness later in life. An individual must allow their body to release these cysts.”



By using various modalities in his capacity as a practitioner of what he calls Traditional Jewish Medicine, Dr. Frischman's objective is to heal his patients so that they don't have to return. "I don't want my patients to have to keep coming back to me, but I will never abandon them if I feel they need something."

As a practitioner who is deeply connected to his spirituality, Dr. Frischman admits that seeing his patients heal can be a challenge to his humility. "Whenever a patient comes back to tell me that the treatment brought about his recovery, and I start feeling heady, Hashem reminds me who the Ultimate Healer is. I appreciate the reminders."

In order to help people other than his patients, Dr. Frischman has a Google group, which was set up by his wife, Yocheved (also the hostess of the *frum* writer's Goo-

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gle group, *Soferet*) where people ask how Jewish medicine addresses their issues. In his answers, he helps members empower themselves to be more tuned in to what their body needs.

When I ask Dr. Frischman if he focuses on treating a particular illness, he answers simply, "I treat people, not diseases." With this approach, he's helped patients with issues ranging from cancer to Crohn's to type 1 diabetes, and beyond. "Chinese medicine is one of the tools I use, but the main thing I use is Jewish medicine, which teaches me how to listen to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* in order to bring balance to our body."

It follows, therefore, that the first thing Dr. Frischman does before examining or treating a patient is to say a *tefillah*, in which he acknowledges that he is only a messenger and asks that it be the will of Hashem to cure the patient. In the same vein, after providing a diagnosis and a treatment plan, Dr. Frischman reminds the patient of the importance of *sur mei-ra*, of staying away from foods and lifestyle habits that aren't good for them.

"It's very important to make sure that our diet is balanced. I tell my patients to eat breakfast like a prince, lunch like a king, and dinner like a prisoner. I advise not eating solid foods after dark and no fruit at nighttime, which affects the blood sugar. Based on what we've realized is good for us, we live like this in our home. Because raw vegetables aren't good for us, my wife Yocheved sprouts and ferments them."

Although Dr. Frischman himself adheres strictly to a

healthy lifestyle that includes sprouted vegetables and green foods based on a principle of balance between animal and plant-based foods and healthy fats, one of his principles is to meet each person where they are. "If a patient doesn't like certain foods, I won't push them. At the same time, we try to figure out the reason for their repulsion. There are always ways around an issue. It's never a one size fits all."

Interestingly, Dr. Frischman notes that even when an individual is allergic to something, they could desensitize themselves to the allergy through a combination of acupuncture and manipulation of the spine. "I had a patient who was allergic to wine," he shares. "She would break out after taking a few sips. She came for treatment and a few weeks later, on Pesach, she drank the *arba kosos* without a problem."

Among Dr. Frischman's achievements is his translation of *The Garden of Healing*. "This book," he says, which was originally written by Rabbi Shalom Arush, "is not for those looking for quick fixes or who attribute illness and pain to natural phenomena. The original text was entitled, '*Hashem Rofecha*,' which means 'Hashem is your Doctor.' As I often say, it's a book whose goal is to get the reader to think differently, and to learn to listen to illness, pain, and adversity as Divine messages, given to wake us up and make changes in the way we relate to ourselves, those whose lives we impact, our environment, and, of course, Hashem. Illness is a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in the pure unpolluted waters that nourish and cultivate the garden of healing."

Dr. Frischman shares a particular example in support of his understanding of medicine. "One can take the path that Western biomedicine has taken, looking with greater micro-detail at disease, play with molecules, and tweak genes in order to attempt to confound and trick disease. But, believe me when I say it won't work. I remember, growing up in the 50s and 60s, hearing that soon the war on cancer would be won. What a lie that was, and how deceitful Western medicine has been to con innocent people into shelling out billions of dollars with nothing to show. Nobody gets well from disease without addressing the fundamental aspects of our lives: How we eat, how we hydrate ourselves, how we move our bodies, how we breathe, how we sleep, and how we nurture ourselves spiritually and make ourselves happy."

"To say why epidemics or global tragedies occur would be to arrogantly say that I can see the larger picture. That would be a lie. But for myself, for my patients, and for those whose lives impact me, yes, I believe I can begin to tune into the messages we are given. We are given the choice: If we choose to address it as such, disease can be a process of nature. In fighting nature, not only will we not succeed, but we'll die miserable, empty, and alone. But I choose to take a very different approach, and I am constantly learning, growing, and connecting from the remarkable messages I am sent on a daily basis."

# TEN PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL JEWISH MEDICINE

## 1. “KNOW HASHEM IN ALL YOUR WAYS” (MISHLEI 3:6).

This verse teaches us to integrate Hashem into our lives in whatever we do. The *Baal Shem Tov* tells us a novel understanding of the verse in *Tehillim*, “*Hashem tzilcha*—Hashem is your shadow.” Hashem responds to us according to how we involve Him in our lives. It’s our job, with the help of our physician, to learn to fine tune our receivers to be able to pick up and understand the messages that Hashem constantly sends us. It’s the physician’s role to guide his patient, first by asking Hashem to help him, and then, practically, by helping him engage in healing activities that promote sound, restful sleep, sound digestion and elimination, and appropriate exercise, in order to sensitize him to better involve G-d in his life.

Before seeing every patient, I say the following prayer:

Master of the Universe, assist me to help bring a complete healing from Above, a healing of body and soul to \_\_\_\_\_ the son/daughter of \_\_\_\_\_. May the *malach Raphael* help me so that I don’t stumble with any treatment or advice that I give. And may the pleasantness of Hashem Our G-d be upon us, so that the works of our hands be established, and may He establish the works of our hands.

## 2. “TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD” (TEHILLIM 34:15).

We learn from this verse to consider if how we are living our lives is making us sick, and that before we initiate new therapies or new strategies, we must first stop the old patterns that cause inflammation.

## 3. HEALING THERAPIES MUST TAKE PLACE ON FOUR LEVELS.

The patient’s health needs to be assessed physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. On the physical level, he must be treated biochemically, biomechanically, and bioelectrically.

## 4. SHVIL HAZAHAV—THE GOLDEN MEAN.

Our therapeutic goal is to promote balance. If the patient is in a state of repletion, we need to sedate or reduce the excess. If the patient is in a state of vacuity, we need to supplement in order to fill the void. If he has been exposed to a pathogen, whether physical or otherwise, we must expel it. If he is blocked or in any way restricted, we need to open and unblock him.

## 5. HISBATLUS (OVERCOMING EGO) AND HISKASHRUS (MELDING).

For the physician, there can be no room for ego, or any agenda or preconception. Even though the physician must have knowledge and experience, he also must recognize that he is an agent of G-d, who is the True Healer of all flesh. Therefore, the physician’s goal should be to connect himself with Hashem, as well as his patient, and listen well.

## 6. HASHEM ALWAYS CREATES THE HEALING BEFORE THE ILLNESS.

The physician and patient must never give up, knowing that the Al-mighty has already prepared the patient’s healing. It is only a lack of knowledge that stands in the way of the physician’s success: a knowledgeable and correct assessment of the patient’s complete picture; the knowledge of what needs to be done therapeutically; as well as the knowledge that G-d is the Ultimate Physician, Who has already prepared the cure.

## 7. SHABBOS.

The *Talmud* tells us (*Shabbos* 12b): “If one refrains from expressing pain on the Shabbos, then healing will quickly come.” This statement expresses the awesome healing potential contained within Shabbos—that complete immersion into the Shabbos will bring healing! Though technology enables us to accomplish



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our tasks more efficiently, freeing us to use our time better, we nonetheless multitask and become slaves to that which should be serving us. Shabbos frees us from those chains. When we actively prepare ourselves before Shabbos, and we liberate ourselves this one day a week from weekday occupations, neither thinking nor talking about them, we effect a profound paradigm shift toward healing.

### 8. PAIN IS A GIFT.

We must differentiate between pain and suffering. The *Talmud*, (*Berachos 5a*) tells us that pain is a wake-up call for us to introspect. Physiologically, pain is the expression of extensive or even partial blockage: blockage of blood; blockage of phlegm, lymph, or body fluids; blockage of one's breathing or energy; or even blockage of one's emotions. So, one of the physician's goals is to facilitate the release of those blockages, to effect permanent and lasting healing.

### 9. HONESTY.

In order for a patient to get well, he must first acknowledge that he is sick. That acknowledgement must be to G-d, to his physician, and to himself. If he is not prepared to admit that he is out of balance, he can never completely heal.

### 10. TESHUVAH.

There almost always was a time before the patient was sick. To get well, the physician enables the patient to retrace his steps back to that seminal event or decision that changed his life. The patient is helped to understand that he has the freedom of choice to decide to respond differently.