

Why Kabbalists Emphasize Tikunim?

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Question:

Why do Kabbalists emphasize the recital of "Tikunim" like the "Tikun HaKlali?"

Answer:

Tikunim are special practices and prayers designed to assist an individual to atone for transgressions, especially transgressions of a sexual nature. Tikunim do not come to replace the standard requirements of repentance, which include confessing ones sins before G-d, heartfelt regret over them, and a commitment not to repeat them in the future. Rather, Tikunim are an additional path to atonement and t'shuva (repentance) to cleanse spiritual stains and blemishes that are difficult to rectify.

This is especially true in the case of spilling semen in vain (zera l'batelah) which results from nocturnal emissions or "wet dreams," masturbation, premature ejaculation, the use of condoms, and forbidden sexual relations, pre-marital relations, and the like. Tikunim, like Rebbe Nachman's "Tikun HaKlali," Rabbi Aharon Rota's "Tikun HaYesod," the "Tikun HaYesod" of the Ben Eish Chai, and Rabbi Leon Levi's "Tikun HaYesod Yeshuat Eliahu," are structured to help a person understand and feel the extent and gravity of his transgression, and to rectify the souls that were lost through the spilling of semen in vain.

This is because, according to the Divine Plan, G-d infuses each microscopic drop of semen with a soul. This soul is a living vitality of its own, the source of life, and cherished by G-d, who has commanded us not to waste it.

In addition, each soul possesses the potential to develop into a complete human being. For this reason, the Talmud and the Shulchan Aruch (the code of Jewish Law) equate masturbation with murder (Niddah 13A; Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer, 23:2).

Each drop of semen is more than a "potential" life - it is already a living soul. For this reason, the willful sin of spilling semen in vain is considered like the spilling of blood - like taking the life of a person.

When an "accidental" ejaculation comes about because a person has gazed upon forbidden images, or engaged in sexual foreplay, he cannot claim that he is innocent of wrongdoing. Also, while in certain circumstances, a nocturnal emission ("wet dream") is not as harsh, the souls that are lost must be rectified and returned to their Heavenly source in order to effect atonement, like in all other cases.

In addition to helping a person undertake a sincere and heartfelt course of repentance, Tikunim contain Kabbalistic codes that are designed to rescue the lost souls and return them to their Heavenly source, so that a person's t'shuva be complete, and so the spiritual blemishes he caused to himself, his family, his environment, and all the L-rd's creation be cleansed.