

“FREUD'S BEST PRESCRIPTION”

In the poet D.J. Enright's book *Interplay* he tells a wonderful story about Sigmund Freud:

“In 1904 Freud was consulted by a young poet and university student, Bruno Goetz, who suffered from persistent headaches. After an hour's discussion, in which it emerged that Goetz spent what little money he had on books, Freud gave him a sealed envelope, containing a prescription, and also warned him that psychoanalysis might not be good for poetry. When Goetz opened the envelope, he found both diagnosis and cure: the headaches were caused by hunger, and money was enclosed to spend on food.”

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter wisely said that we spend too much time worrying about our own bodies, and other people's souls, when we should be worrying about our own souls and other people's bodies. Although social ills are complex, and no single bromide will solve problems of hunger or homelessness, there is also a realm in which simple giving can make a difference.

I like to think that Freud's prescription was inspired by our tradition, which insists that we not close our hand against the needy in our midst. We may not live by bread alone but there are times, as Freud understood, when all the analysis in the world will not fill an empty stomach.