

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Beshalach

February 7, 2020

A Taste of Torah Medicine Man

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

The Mishna (Kiddushin 4:14) teaches that “the best of doctors is destined for *gehinnom*.” Before those in the medical field stop reading and start sending hate mail, let us ponder these words for a few moments. Indeed, they seem difficult to fathom. Providing medical care for another is an enormous mitzvah, and is, in fact, explicitly recommended by the Torah. That being the case, even the accountants and lawyers ought to be wondering what exactly our Sages are trying to teach us with this provocative statement. There are, in fact, numerous explanations, and a verse in this week’s parsha opens the door to one approach that provides an important insight into the field of medicine.

The Torah tells us that, following the events of the Splitting of the Sea, the Jewish Nation arrived at Marah and discovered that there was bitter water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. They complained to Moshe, and he cried out to Hashem. Hashem responded by showing Moshe a tree. Moshe took a piece of wood from the tree and cast it into the bitter waters, which then miraculously became sweet. The Torah concludes its narrative with the enigmatic words (Beshalach 15:25), “There He established a *chok* (decree) and *mishpat* (ordinance), and there He tested it.” Rashi explains this to mean that in Marah, Hashem gave the Jewish People several important mitzvos of the Torah to study: Shabbos, the Red Heifer, and civil law. Shabbos and civil law are considered “ordinances” due to their logical nature, while the Red Heifer is a “decree” as it is the classic mitzvah whose reasoning cannot be comprehended by the human mind.

There is another approach offered by

the Sifsei Kohen (Shach) al HaTorah to interpret this verse. The Sifsei Kohen explains that when Hashem provided Moshe the means to “cure” the non-potable water, He also gave Moshe a great deal of medicinal information, providing Moshe with the knowledge of how to cure all sorts of ailments and illnesses. There are two major categories of remedies for ailments: one group includes those medicines whose efficacy can be understood based on the laws of nature, while the second group contains those regarded as *segulah*, items or methods whose ability to heal cannot be explained by science but are, rather, in the realm of the spiritual. The “ordinances” referenced in the verse refer to the former category, while the “decree” alludes to the latter, those remedies that cannot be scientifically explained. The verse continues that “he” - that is, Moshe - “tested” the various medicines Hashem had revealed to him.

The Sifsei Kohen continues that the next verse in the Torah adds an important message to this line of interpretation: “[Hashem] said, ‘If you listen diligently to the voice of Hashem... then any of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer.’” (Beshalach 15:26) Hashem is making a vital point to Moshe, teaching him not to place his faith in the many medicines he has just discovered. Rather, after utilizing the medicine, Moshe must still place his faith in Hashem, Healer of all flesh.

An individual who practices medicine can easily err into believing that he or she is the one healing people, saving lives, deciding who shall live and who

Stories for the Soul

Misplaced Trust

A man once came to the Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), explaining that he needed to marry off his daughter but lacked the funds to do so. The Rebbe gave the man a letter to bring to the wealthy Reb Moshe Chaim Rothenburg, brother of the the Kotzker’s Rebbe’s illustrious student Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rothenburg (better known as the Chiddushei HaRim, the founder of Gerrer Chassidus).

The poor man travelled for some time and finally arrived at the wealthy man’s house, whereupon he presented the letter, confident that his salvation was at hand. To his consternation, Reb Moshe Chaim gave him a mere pittance and wished him well. The poor man begged, pleaded and cajoled Reb Moshe Chaim, telling him that the Kotzker had sent him here so he could raise funds for the wedding. Alas, his words fell upon deaf ears, and, disappointed, he headed back the way he had come.

As soon as the poor man had departed, Reb Moshe Chaim went out and purchased clothing, utensils, furniture, and whatever else a young couple could need to set up their new home. He loaded up a wagon and hurried after the poor man. Upon catching up with him, Reb Moshe Chaim presented the astonished fellow with the wagon.

The poor man, after offering profuse thanks, asked Reb Moshe Chaim to explain why he had not simply provided him with everything at the outset.

“When you arrived,” explained Reb Moshe Chaim, “you had a letter in your pocket from the Kotzker Rebbe

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Kollel Happenings

SAVE THE DATE! KOLLEL 22ND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION ON MARCH 24

The Kollel will mark 22 years of bringing Torah to Denver Jewry with its annual Celebration, 2020 Vision, on March 24 at Aish of the Rockies. Kerry and Mindy Berman will be honored with the Aish Tamid Award for their steady and unwavering dedication to Torah and the Denver Jewish community.

TU BISHVAT SMORGASBORD ON MONDAY FEB. 10

The Kollel is holding a Tu Bishvat Smorgasbord this Monday, 2/10, at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor from 8-9 pm. There will be small-group learning followed by a synopsis and closing remarks from Rabbi Yosef Melamed for men, and a class for women from Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher. Ma'ariv at 9 followed by refreshments, including hot food. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, contact rsh@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

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| 1) One-fifth | 4) Frost |
| 2) Don't pray | 5) Corander |
| 3) Stay on the horse | 6) Wartime astrology |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part XI

Another famous controversy involving Reb Meir Simcha took place at a meeting of Rabbanim in 1910.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, the Czarist government of Russia would hold a

meeting of Jewish leaders from the Russian Empire (which, at the time, encompassed Lithuania, the Ukraine and much of Poland) in St. Petersburg to discuss the issues affecting the Jewish communities.

A Taste of Torah

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shall die. And the more successful the doctor, the greater the temptation to fall prey to haughtiness and start to play G-d becomes. The lesson of the Mishna may well be the very same message that Hashem gave Moshe: Hashem is the One who decides who shall live and who shall die, who shall be ill and who shall be healthy. Of course, one who is ill should seek medical assistance. Of course, it is a great opportunity to act as Hashem's agent to administer the proper medical treatment. Of course, a doctor should engage in the practice of medicine and use every means at his disposal to cure the patient. But if one believes he is, as the Mishna says, "the best of doctors," becomes haughty and conceited, and forgets that Hashem is the one calling

the shots, then he is on a dangerous path toward *gehinnom*. A truly good doctor is the one who recognizes his limitations and realizes that ultimately, Hashem is guiding him in his work. Both practitioner and patient, after going through the necessary steps - sometimes many steps, complex steps, difficult steps - to achieve health and wellness must turn their eyes Heavenward and beseech the One above that the effort invested bear fruit. Indeed, there is a prayer some people recite prior to taking medication, even something as simple as pain relief for a headache. Hashem has commanded us to guard our health, but once we have done our part in the process, we must remember, "I am Hashem - your Healer."

Stories for the Soul

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addressed to a wealthy Jew. You forgot that we have a Father in Heaven Who provides for our needs. I simply reminded you in Whom you must place your trust. After that was done, I was able to assist you."

In this week's parsha, the Jewish People are taught numerous times that Hashem is the One who takes care of all their needs, from defeating their enemies to providing water and food.

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| 1) One-fifth 13:18 s.v. vachamushim | 3) Stay on the horse 15:1 s.v. soos |
| 2) Corander 16:31 s.v. vithu | 2) Don't pray 14:15 s.v. mah titzak |
| 1) Frost 16:14 s.v. liffor | 3) Wartime astrology 17:12 s.v. ad bo |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers