

Parsha Thought

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 לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע - משה צבי בן גדליה
 לרפואה שלמה דוד בן פנינה

BESHALACH

After Hashem saved the Jewish people from the Egyptians by splitting the sea, they sang a song of praise to Hashem. They traveled for three days without any water, and finally reached Marah, which had water, but it was bitter, and they couldn't drink it. Hashem directed Moshe to take a special tree and throw it into the water which became sweet, and they had what to drink. There, Moshe taught the Jewish people the first set of mitzvos that they were to do. Then the posuk says, ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקים, he said, if you will listen carefully to the voice of Hashem, והישר בעיניו תעשה, and do what is proper in His eyes, והאזנת, כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא, לשמרת כל חקיו, and guard all His decrees, לא, then any diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring on you, כי אני ה' רפואך, for I am Hashem your healer. The Ohr Hachaim asks if Hashem has just said that He will not bring sickness upon them, then why does the posuk end with, I am Hashem your healer? If we won't get sick, we won't need a healer! He answers that there are sicknesses that are not direct from heaven but are due to human negligence, like exposure to the elements of heat and cold that a person should protect himself from. Therefore, Hashem says, "I am your healer, meaning not only will I not decree illness upon you, but even if you encounter self-inflicted illness, I will heal that too".

The Even Moshe answered this question a little differently by way of a story. Two men, who didn't know each other, ended up at the same hotel. However, it was more like a youth hostel where one rented a bed, and ended up sleeping in the same room with people he didn't know. These two men ended up in the same room for the night. In the middle of the night, one of the men saw the other one's wallet was unguarded and while the man was sleeping, he stole the wallet. However, before he could get away with the theft, the other man realized what happened and confronted him and demanded his wallet back. The thief said, "I don't know what you are talking about. I didn't take your wallet". The other man said, "there are only the two of us here in the room; it's missing; so, it has to be you. There is no one else here that could have stolen my wallet that had one thousand dollars in it." As they are fighting, the man tells the thief, "If you don't return my wallet, I will punch out all your teeth". The thief answers him, "Even if you punch out my teeth, it's not the biggest deal, because I heard that, in the next town, there is an expert dentist who is very inexpensive. Even if you knock them out and I need to fix them, from the thousand dollars in the wallet, it will only cost me two hundred to fix them, so I will make eight hundred dollars clean profit."

The man looks at him and says, "what are you talking about? You fool, I'm that dentist! I can break your teeth and I can fix them. And obviously I won't fix them until you return every last penny, so why go through all the pain just to have to give back all the money anyway? Wouldn't you rather just return the money, so you can go eat now in peace with your original teeth intact?"

The Even Moshe continues that this is what the posuk is telling us. Hashem tells us, "Listen to my mitzvos and everything will be good". However, someone might say, "I will do whatever I want and there are tons of medicines and remedies to help me if I get sick, so I'll take my chances". Therefore, the posuk ends with, "I am Hashem your healer; I am the one who heals all flesh. Without Me, you have nothing; so, once you're going to have to come to Me anyway, wouldn't it be better to follow my mitzvos and no get sick to begin with?"

Obviously not all sickness is a punishment. Some are for an atonement for the klal and some Hashem gives out of love to give more merit in the next world. We have no way of knowing. All we can do when a challenge comes up, is strengthen ourselves in Torah and mitzvos, and know that Hashem will always help us!