



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

I Am Hashem, Your Healer

Fresh off our liberation from Mitzrayim, we arrived at the desert encampment of Marah—just a few stops from Sinai and only weeks before the great encounter at the mountain. The water there was bitter, undrinkable. Hashem instructed Moshe to cast a tree into the water, and it became sweet.

That act of healing was more than a practical solution to a physical crisis. It served as a metaphor for a broader message. If we accept Hashem's will and live by His commandments, we will be spared the sickness and affliction that marked life in Mitzrayim. Hashem was not only rescuing us from bondage; He was revealing Himself as our Healer.

A DISEASED EMPIRE

Fresh off the horrific scenes of Egypt, the imagery of healing and restored health was deeply comforting. We had watched a great empire collapse into ruin over the course of a single year, battered by relentless Divine

plagues. Egypt endured the breakdown of hygiene, shortages of food, contagious disease, a sweeping animal epidemic that nearly crossed into the human realm, and finally death in every household.

We lived among them, witnessing health steadily erode and death ultimately descend. Against that backdrop, Hashem assured us that we would not be exposed to the same fate. We would be protected and kept whole and healthy. His mitzvot were presented not only as pathways to religious meaning, but as a regimen for physical health and human well-being.

ALIGNMENT

This was not an isolated promise. We were being conditioned to recognize the alignment between Divine will and human well-being. Just weeks before Har Sinai, Hashem was already demonstrating that Torah would lead to human health and elevate the human condition. The horrific illnesses we had witnessed in Mitzrayim would be prevented by a life shaped by Torah and mitzvot.

COMPASSION, NOT ANGER

At the same time, Hashem was reorienting our understanding of Him, not only our appreciation of mitzvot. Two centuries of slavery had eroded the theological world that the Avot had built. When Moshe stood at the sneh, he was uncertain how to describe

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Hashem to a people whose religious memory had grown faint. Gradually, we began to relearn who He is—a G-d who cannot be seen or fully described. We learned that He is a Redeemer. On the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim, as the firstborn of Egypt were struck down, we also learned that He is our Father.

Yet over the course of the “Year of the plagues” we had witnessed relentless retribution, punishment raining down from the heavens. There was a real danger that we would come to see Hashem as an angry God, a deity who takes satisfaction in punishing humanity. That danger was not new. That image was precisely what Avraham had labored tirelessly to undo.

For the first two thousand years of history, humanity was burdened by the mistaken belief that God was wrathful and vengeful. That was all they saw—expulsion from Gan Eden, natural catastrophes, collapsing towers. From these events, they concluded that God was perpetually angry. Avraham worked to introduce a different vision: a compassionate and caring G-d.

Now his descendants had lost touch with that tradition and were encountering Hashem primarily as a punisher. It was therefore crucial that, at the first possible moment after Keriat Yam Suf, Hashem changed the script. Instead of punishing, He provided life. Instead of turning water into blood, He healed bitter water. Hashem was announcing that He is a Healer, not a Punisher.

HEALING SIN

Over time, the metaphor of healing in religion took on an added depth. Both Yeshayahu and Hoshea adopted healing as a metaphor for *teshuva*, reframing repentance not as punishment, but as restoration.

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Hoshea writes:

אָרֶפָא מִשְׁׁוֹבְתָם אֶחָבָם נִדְבָּה כִּי שָׁב אֶפְיִ מִמְּנִי

“I will heal their waywardness; I will love them generously, for My anger has turned away from them.”

Yeshayahu writes:

שָׁלוֹם שָׁלוֹם לְרוֹחָק וּלְקָרוֹב אֶמְרָה הִ וּרְפָאָתִי

“Peace, peace to the far and to the near, says Hashem—and I will heal him.”

By describing *teshuva* as healing, these nevi'im reshaped how we understand sin and moral failure. Just as illness does not define a person, and healing restores someone to their natural state, sin does not define who we are. When we stumble, we are not essentially corrupt or broken. We remain the upright and dignified beings Hashem created, momentarily pulled into something unhealthy and unnatural.

Teshuva restores us to our original

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condition of moral and spiritual health. Sin is not intrinsic; like disease, it afflicts us and sets us back. And like disease, it can be healed.

HEALING HISTORY

While Yeshayahu and Hoshea spoke of *teshuva* as healing a fractured moral spirit, Yirmiyahu spoke of healing a broken Jewish world. In perek 30, Hashem promises that we will be redeemed from the fallen state of galut:

כִּי אָעֵלָה אֶרְיוֹנָה לְךָ וּמִמְּכֹוֹתֶיךָ אֶרְפָּאֶךָ נָאָם ה' כִּי
נְדָחָה קְרָאוֹ לְךָ

"For I will bring you healing, and I will heal you of your wounds, declares Hashem. For they have called you an outcast.

By casting redemption as healing, Yirmiyahu reminds us that galut is not the natural state of Jewish history. Exile can last a long time. For a people thousands of years removed from the Jewish homeland and from Jewish sovereignty, galut can begin to feel normal, even permanent. When exile grows comfortable, we risk forgetting that it is exile at all, mistaking it for a substitute for life in Israel.

By framing redemption as healing, Hashem defines galut as a sickness. Through our betrayal, history was damaged, and we became historically unwell. Until we return to Israel and to redemption, we remain in a diseased state. We can function as *yirei Shamayim* and build a rich, serious religious life, but it is still a compromised condition of religious health. Only with our return to Israel do we recover fully.

HEALING HEARTS

Hoshea and Yeshayahu speak of *teshuva* as healing. Yirmiyahu describes redemption as healing. David HaMelech applies that same language to the inner life of the individual:

הַרְפָּא לְשִׁבּוּר־לִבָּן וּמִתְּבָשֵׁל עַצְבֹּתָם

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

Here, healing is not about repairing a broken historical script or reshaping moral will through *teshuva*. It is something more internal. Hashem promises to help us through moments of emotional fracture and pain. When the heart is broken, when a person feels alone or worn down, we rely on Hakadosh Baruch Hu to enter our inner world and walk with us through our darkest moments.

For David HaMelech, Hashem is the ultimate Healer—not only correcting behavior or guiding history, but restoring broken identity and stitching together fractured hearts.

Our Land and our people are filled with the brokenhearted. During this war so many have suffered, on every level, and the trauma will linger for years. We do what we can to recover—through spirit, faith, courage, and by caring for one another through these hard days.

We also turn in *tefillah* to the Healer who promised us long ago that He would heal us and sweeten bitter waters in the desert. Thankfully, we have enough sweet water to drink; Israel has been blessed by G-d with the technology to provide it. What we now ask is something deeper. We need Hashem to be part of the healing process—to help rebuild the broken inner worlds of so many among our people.

We need Hashem to be our Healer. ■



OU Press is honored to partner with Rabbi Moshe Taragin on his new volume in Hebrew regarding the recent war ('Emunah B'toch Hahastara). This remarkable book is also available in English, "Dark Clouds Above, Faith Below"