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Parshah BeShalach **January 15, 2022 – 13 Shevat 5782**

Amidst the present state of Covid, seeking medical help or support via doctors is the norm. As a matter of fact, most people when they are ill seek out a doctor. The mandate to heal the sick is taken from the Book of Sh'mot 21:18-19: “⁽¹⁸⁾ If two men are arguing, and one hits the other with a stone or his fist, and he didn't die but fell to his bed (meaning injured or sick). ⁽¹⁹⁾ If he gets up again and walks around on his staff the person that hit him (aggressor) will be acquitted; however, he (the aggressor) must pay for the injured party's loss of work and he must be completely healed”. Rashi comments that the physician's fee must be paid.

There are controversies concerning medical help within this context for in Parshah Be'Shalach it is written: “...for I am HaShem your healer”. The physician and all who participate in the patients' care are G-d's agents who have been sent to address the physical ailments with the “medicine of the day”. It is G-d who determines how successful the physician is.

There are many famous stories regarding trust in physicians, trust in HaShem, and trust in HaShem who sends the doctors. There was a sage who lived from 1748-1800. He was known as HaRav Mordechai m'Neshchiz (from Nesxchiz). He was known for his piety, faith, and blessings. He never said a negative word about another person.

There was once a person who was very ill. He went to all kinds of specialist doctors to no avail. He could not be healed. Finally, in his last hope, he went to Rav Mordechai for advice. Rav Mordechai told him to go to the city of Annipole and he would find his answer there and a cure. The man had an arduous trip and arrived in Annipole. He asked where he could find the famous doctor who would heal him. Everyone in town told him there are no doctors in Annipole and there is no sickness. He was dejected and returned to Rav Mordechai and asked him why he sent him to Annipole. Rav Mordechai responded with a question: “What do the people do when they are ill?” The man answered: “They pray.” Rav Mordechai said: “prayer is the medical specialist. It asks G-d to heal. It is either through G-d directly or G-d's messenger (the doctor) indirectly.”

The message is clear. Prayer is the first line of defense, and sound medicine is next.

Good Shabbos!
Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

