

And he said, “If you will hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d... any of the diseases that I placed upon Egypt, I shall not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer.” (15:26)

The *Talmud Sanhedrin* 101a questions the message of this *pasuk*. Inasmuch as Hashem has promised that He will not place any disease upon us (i.e. that we never become ill in the first place), then why do we have a need for His healing? The *Talmud* replies that the *pasuk* is self-explanatory. If one hearkens to Hashem’s voice and observes His *mitzvos*, he will not be stricken with disease. However, if he will not listen to Hashem and will not faithfully carry out His *mitzvos*, then the diseases of Egypt will be placed upon him. There is one “plus”: Hashem will cure you, because He is your Healer. This is the meaning of the seemingly contradictory language of the latter part of the *pasuk*.

The question seems to remain. The *pasuk* clearly implies that if one does not listen, he will be stricken with a disease. What is the purpose of the healing? Obviously, he is receiving the disease because he has rebelled against Hashem. There is a purpose in the punishment. *Eitz Yosef* explains that the purpose of the afflictions is to cure the person of the spiritual malaise that caused him to sin in the first place. Hence, the afflictions are therapeutic – not punitive. Thus, the healing comes after one has realized the purpose of the affliction.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that, while it is true that one who sins will be stricken, a distinction exists between the affliction meted on the nations of the world and that which is received by a Jew who has sinned. When Hashem afflicts a gentile, the disease is purely punitive. Hashem is taking revenge on those who scoff Him. When He afflicts a Jew, however, the disease has one purpose: to stimulate his *teshuvah*, repentance. The afflictions experienced by Jews are remedial. They are powerful motivational forces which inspire remorse and repentance.

The hands of two people may have to be cut off, yet their situations differ. The first one stole with his hand. He is incarcerated, awaiting punishment. His punishment is that his hand will be cut off. The second person’s hand is also going to be cut off, but it is being performed as a surgical procedure, administered in a hospital, to prevent an infection from spreading to the rest of his body. Two people – two hands – two surgeries – two disparate reasons. One is punitive; one is remedial.

If we do not listen – Hashem will afflict us. Since He is our Hashem, this disease will serve to expiate our sins – not simply hurt us. It is only concerning the Jewish People that affliction is a “good” thing.