

Paging Doctor G-d **Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

The final line of the Torah reading for the seventh day of Pesach seems to be a very positive prophecy for the Jewish people. Hashem promises us that he will not bring any of the plagues that He wrought on the Egyptians to the Jewish people. The pasuk ends, '*Ki ani Hashem rofecha.*' This is usually translated, 'because (or for) I am Hashem, your healer'. In fact, the best definition in this case of the word '*ki*' is probably 'rather.' The Gemara (Rosh haShanah 3a) tells us that the word '*ki*' has four different translations, depending on the context. The best translation for this pasuk would be, "All the plagues I placed on Egypt I will not place upon you; Rather, I am Hashem your Healer."

There is a very clear distinction being made between how Hashem relates to the nations of the world and how Hashem relates to us. But what exactly is this distinction? The plagues of Egypt have not been repeated to anyone in History; neither the Jews, nor any other nation. Perhaps the meaning is that the Jews will enjoy less plagues and hardship than other nations. We would be hard pressed to show such a Historical distinction. If anything, the Jews seem to have more than their fair share of difficulties. What then, is the meaning of this promise?

Rav Meir Lebusch Weiser (Malbim) makes a fantastic comment on the scroll of Esther (2:21) and relates it to the pasuk in question. His insight explains this pasuk well, and delineates a paradigm which describes the relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem. He explains that the structure of the book of Esther imparts an important message. Before Haman ever enters the scene, we are first told of two occurrences. Firstly, Mordechai foils the plot against Achashvierosh's life and his heroism is duly recorded. Secondly, Esther is made queen after being picked from among all the maidens of the kingdom. The Malbim explains that these were the seeds of the redemption which needed to be planted before Haman, the specter of our destruction, ever rose. This is an example of the principle of the *refuah* (healing/redemption) preceding the *makeh* (wound/difficulty). Due to Hashem's tremendous love for the Jewish people, He introduces the solution before the problem ever comes to the fore.

But this is just the surface understanding of this idea; The Malbim leads us far deeper. He explains that the reason the solution precedes the problem is that the 'problem' is itself part of the solution. In the Purim story the threat of imminent destruction became the catalyst for one of the greatest spiritual revivals in our History. When the Megilla opens the Jews seem content to join Achashverosh's party with all its revelry. The Purim miracle was not simply that we were saved from destruction but that there was a revival of spiritual Judaism culminating in a renewed effort to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash. This, explains the Malbim, is why the healing begins before the difficulty. It helps us to recognize that even the difficulty is meant as a catalyst for our own good; the difficulty too is part of the healing. While this may not be true for every difficulty experienced by an individual, the Malbim seems to be applying this concept on a national level.

The Malbim now turns to the pasuk from our Pesach Torah reading. Hashem promises that the national difficulties we will experience differ fundamentally from those which other nations experience. Although superficially they seem to be similar, if not identical, their purpose is different. When the Jewish people experience difficulties they are always a *'refuah'*; to be a catalyst in our spiritual revival and renewal. This is what is meant characterizing Hashem as our healer.

Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaare Teshuva 2:4) tells us that we should actually look at certain personal difficulties in the same light. They have been the catalyst for personal and spiritual growth, and as such should be celebrated. He explains that this is Dovid's message in the 116th chapter of Tehillim. Dovid ends two sentences with the same refrain "וּבְשֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא" – I will call out in G-d's name (in praise). However, the two verses speak of very different situations. The first time Dovid speaks of 'raising a glass of salvation' and the second time he speaks of 'finding sorrow and difficulty.' Rabbeinu Yonah explains that both when Dovid found salvation, and when he was faced with the many vicissitudes of life, he responded with appreciation to Hashem. He understood that the hard times were ultimately meant to heal.

When tragedy strikes, even on a national level, this attitude may be difficult. There is no question that we are not expected to ignore our feelings of grief and sadness. We certainly have a process of mourning and a blessing of *'Dayan haEmes'* which we proclaim when we face bad news. The Gemara (Pesachim 50a) tells us, however, that this bracha is only recited in this world. In the next world, we will be able to recite *'HaTov V'HaMeitiv'*, the bracha on good tidings, on each and every event. With our limited vision in this world, it is understood that we will find situations difficult. May we be granted the ability to overcome any difficulties we face and to face them with as much equanimity as possible. May our Healer bring the redemption speedily in our day so that we may only recite the bracha of *'HaTov V'HaMeitiv.'*