

# Kinder Torah®

## Parashas Vayetze

בס"ד

### Refuah Shelayma

“Abba, I just found out that one of our neighbors is sick. I want to pray for him.”  
“It pains me to hear that he is sick, Avi, but it gives me great *nachas* knowing that you care enough for him to pray for him. The *sefer Yesod Vi'shoresh Ho'avodah* relates that you fulfill the mitzvah of ‘You shall love your fellow as yourself’ (Vayikra 19:18) when you pray for the *refuah* (healing) of another Jew.”

“Where and when do I pray for him, Abba?”

“Let us begin by looking into the eighth blessing of the *Amidah*, the blessing for healing. It dates back to Avraham Avinu, who needed a *refuah* from his *bris milah*. The *malach* (angel) Refael came and healed him. The other *malochim* proclaimed, ‘Blessed are You Hashem, Who heals the sick of His people Yisrael’. Based upon this, our Elders fixed this blessing in our daily prayers.<sup>1</sup> The source of the wording of the *bracha* is the verse, ‘Heal me Hashem, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved; for You are my praise.’<sup>2</sup> Rashi explains, ‘for You are my praise’ – I am praised and glorified because You saved me. It is a praise and glory for the Jew that he is dear to Hashem and important enough for the Almighty to save him (from the illness). When a person recites this *bracha*, he should *mechaven* (concentrate) on requesting that Hashem heal us so that we will be healthy and strong to toil in Torah and fulfill mitzvos.<sup>3</sup>”

“What an important blessing, Abba. I have some questions on its wording.”

“Go right ahead, Avi.”

“There seems to be a repetition in the words, ‘Heal us Hashem – then we will be healed; save us – then we will be saved.’”

“Excellent question, Avi! The Eitz Yosef asks this question and answers it with a citation from the Zohar (Parashas Balak). All healing ultimately comes from Hashem, however some cures are sent via *shlichim* (agents), and some come directly from Him. The disease healed by a *shliach* sometimes comes back (i.e. he may only relieve the pain and symptoms, but leave the illness uncured<sup>4</sup>), however, when Hashem Himself cures the illness it does not return. Additionally, Hashem’s cures are neither painful nor unpleasant, whereas the *shliach*’s operations or treatments make bring suffering. Therefore we request, ‘Heal us Hashem – Yourself – ‘then we will be healed’, ‘save us – Yourself – then we will be saved’ – a complete and painless cure. The Eitz Yosef himself<sup>5</sup> makes a differentiation between diseases of the body, and

those of the spirit. ‘Heal us Hashem’ refers to *refuas hanefesh*. You begin the healing process, Hashem, ‘then we will be healed’ we will finish it off and overcome the illness. Our spirit has the strength to prevail over the sickness with Your help. ‘Bring complete recovery for all our ailments’ – refers to *refuas haguf* – diseases of the body – which are totally in Your hands. We ask for complete healing from beginning to end from all of our ailments and wounds, for in this area we are helpless without You. The Iyun Tefillah explains that the words, ‘for all our ailments’ include both diseases of the body, and those of the spirit. The Ohr HaChama has a different approach. He asks the question, ‘save us – then we will be saved’ usually refers to a salvation, as in the previous *bracha* of the *Amida*. How is it relevant to *refuah*? He answers that we are requesting salvation from the ‘disease’ of being in the clutches of the *Yetzer Hara*, who hounds us to sin. Being freed from him is referred to *refuas hanefesh*.”

“Those are wonderful answers, Abba. Thank you very much. I have some other questions.”

“I hope to be able to answer them as well, Avi.”

“Why is Hashem called, ‘King, faithful, and compassionate healer?’”

“That is a very thoughtful question, Avi. The Achareis Lishalom<sup>6</sup> answers your question by citing another difference between the healing of a *shliach* and that of Hashem Himself. The *shliach* must sometimes administer bitter unpleasant medicine or painful procedures. He cannot have compassion on the patient’s suffering and withhold the treatment, for without it he cannot heal the ailment. However, Hashem has the might to heal the patient without any medicines or procedures. Therefore, he is called a ‘faithful and compassionate healer’ – even though He has compassion by not giving the painful treatment, He is nonetheless faithful to cure the patient.”

“Hashem’s mercy is endless. We keep hearing that the best cures come straight from Hashem.”

“True, Avi. However, even the treatments administered by *shluchim* have above natural curing powers for the Jewish body and soul. The Siddur Iyun Tefillah interprets the closing line of the *bracha*, ‘Who heals the sick of His people Yisrael’ to mean that Hashem’s cures for His nation Yisrael are beyond the laws of nature. The other nations receive healing that works within the framework of nature. Therefore, the *bracha* of ‘*Asher yatzar*’, which deals with general natural health, (the creation man with the ability to cleanse his

body), states, *‘rofeh kol bassar’* – the healer of all flesh (in the world). However, in the *bracha* of *refuah*, which deals with the supernatural healing to Klal Yisrael, we say *‘rofeh cholei amo Yisrael’*. This makes us realize that the treatment for the disease can only work with the permission of the Almighty.”<sup>7</sup>

“Abba, may I pray for healthy people to continue enjoying good health and not fall into the clutches of illness?”

“You certainly may, Avi. Firstly, if they have now become healthy after being sick, you should thank Hashem for their *refuah*. This thanks should be expressed in the closing line of the *bracha*, ‘Blessed are You Hashem, Who heals the sick of His people Yisrael’<sup>8</sup> Secondly, it is always good to pray for good health, as the Gemora<sup>9</sup> states, ‘A person should always ask for *rachmonus* (mercy) that he will not become sick.’ At what point in the *Amidah* should we include this prayer? The Pri Megadim<sup>10</sup> rules that the request belongs in the sixteenth blessing of *‘shomaya tefillah’*. Other authorities do not differentiate and allow its inclusion in *‘refaeynu’*.”

“Abba, you are an overflowing well of Torah! May Hashem always grant you the good health to continue learning Torah and fulfilling mitzvos!”

“Amen!”

#### Kinderlach . . .

*Oy how a sick person suffers! Oy how it pains us to see his suffering! What can we do for him? We can help him. We can join in his distress by praying for him, because all of Klal Yisrael is one soul and one body.<sup>11</sup> We fulfill the mitzvah of ‘You shall love your fellow as yourself’ when we pray for him. We pray that he should receive a *refuah* straight from Hashem – a complete cure without painful medicines, operations, or treatments. We pray that both his body and soul be healed. When he comes back to health, we thank Hashem for His *refuah*. And we also pray for continued strength for the healthy people, so they may carry on toiling in Torah and guarding Hashem’s mitzvos.*

<sup>1</sup> Levush as cited in Otzer HaTefillos

<sup>2</sup> Yirmiyahu 17:14

<sup>3</sup> Seder Hayom as cited in Otzer HaTefillos

<sup>4</sup> Siach Yitzchak as cited in Artscroll Siddur

<sup>5</sup> and also Maggid Tsedek

<sup>6</sup> as cited in Otzer HaTefillos

<sup>7</sup> Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch

<sup>8</sup> Yesod Vi'shoresh Ho'avodah

<sup>9</sup> Shabbos 32a

<sup>10</sup> Mishna Breura (1) on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 119:1

<sup>11</sup> Yaaros Devash