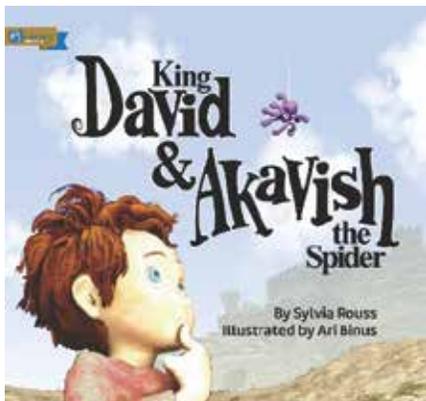




# Global Day of Jewish Learning

Curriculum — Under the Same Sky: “The Earth is Full of Your Creations”



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[www.theglobalday.org](http://www.theglobalday.org)

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**Facilitator's note:** This class can be taught in either a 60-minute or a 90-minute session, depending on your time limitations. For a 60-minute class, omit Part Two. For a 90-minute class, include Part Two and allow more time for discussion.

## Introduction (2 minutes)

Welcome to the Global Day of Jewish Learning.

This unit explores traditional Jewish sources that show how humans are inclined to make changes to the natural world, particularly when things seem to be going wrong. These texts navigate the tension between the idea of an all-powerful God who grants life and healing on the one hand, and the practice of medicine by humans on the other. Is it “unnatural” to interfere and make changes in the “natural” world? Is healing a human endeavor, or is it divine? Together, we will study the sources that express this tension, and explore how we might make space for the divine within our own lives, even as we embrace our understanding of modern medicine.

## Part One: Intervening in Nature (10 minutes)

Our first text comes at the end of the story of the exodus from Egypt, immediately following the crossing of the Red Sea.

### Text #1: Exodus 15:22–26.

#### שמות ט"ו:כ"ב-כ"ו

כב ויסע מלשה את-ישׂראל מים-סוף, ויבאו אל-מדבר-שׁור; וילכו שלשת-ימים במדבר, ולא-מצאו מים. כג ויבאו מרתה--ולא יכלו לשותת מים ממרה, פי מרים הם; על-כן קרא-שמה, מרה. כד וילנו העם על-מלשה לאמר, מה-נשתה. כה ויצעק אל-ה', ויורהו ה' עץ, וישלך אל-המים, וימתקו המים; שם שם לו חק ומשפט, ושם נסהו. כו ויאמר אם-שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך, והישר בעיניו תעשה, והאזינת למצותיו, ושמרת כל-חקיו--כל-המחלה אשר-שמתו במצרים, לא-אשים עליך, פי אני ה', רפאך.

**22** Then Moses caused Israel to set out from the Sea of Reeds. They went into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water. **23** They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; that is why it was named Marah. **24** And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” **25** So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There He made for them a fixed rule, and there He put them to the test. **26** He said, “If you will heed the LORD your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the LORD am your healer.”

## Healing: A Natural Practice?

### ➤ Ask:

1. How did the bitter (poisonous) waters of Marah become drinkable? Was that an act of God or an act of Man?
2. What does it mean to say that God is a healer? How does God (or Moses) “heal” in this story? Does the image resonate with you?
3. Does verse 26 change the way you see the role of modern doctors? Do you think being a doctor is an imitation of God — *imitatio dei* — and is that a positive or negative thing?

The core of this story is about intervening to improve upon nature. God gives Moses the power to “heal” the water so that it is potable. This is clearly a positive change, and speaks to the reality that we often find ways to change nature in order to meet the survival needs of human beings.

In light of this story, let’s focus on the idea that God is a healer. There are nuances in this text that allow it to be read in multiple ways. The emphasis on listening to God in the first part of verse 26 might imply causation, and that it is God’s Torah/teaching that is somehow a healing force in our lives. If this is the case, then this verse is about spiritual healing, rather than the physical healing which is the purview of the medical profession. However, the reference to the diseases placed on Egypt may imply that this verse speaks about physical illness and physical healing. Perhaps it sets God up as a model to emulate, much as we are instructed to emulate God’s ways of kindness and mercy. Or perhaps this is an exclusive role, and by implication no human can be a true “healer” if God occupies this role.

## Part Two: The Problematic Role of the Doctor (20 minutes)

As we have seen in Exodus, the role of healers has always been unclear. Are they doing what God commands or are they going against the way God created the world? Let’s look at the specific role of doctors: physicians who use knowledge and skill not only to heal but to prevent sickness and diagnose problems.

### ➤ Ask:

1. The Hebrew word *rofeh* (רֹפֵא) can be translated as healer or doctor. What is the difference to you between a healer and a doctor?

Let’s read a text from the Talmud about doctors and a commentary by Rashi. Rashi lived in France in the 11th century. He is the most important commentator on the Bible and Talmud, and one of the most famous scholars in Jewish history.

**Text #2: Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 82a.** English translation [**bold text**] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

אָבָא גּוּרְיָן אִישׁ צְדִיק אָמַר מְשׁוּם אָבָא גּוּרְיָא: לֹא יִלְמַד אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ חֲמֹר, גְּמֹל, קָדָר, סָפֵן, רוֹעֵה, וְחַנְנִי – שְׂאוּמְנוֹתַן אוֹמְנוֹת לִיִּסְטִים. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר מְשׁוּמוֹ: הַחֲמֹרִין – רוֹבְנֵי רְשָׁעִים, וְהַגְּמֵלִין – רוֹבְנֵי כְּשָׁרִין, הַסָּפְנִין – רוֹבְנֵי חֲסִידִים. טוֹב שְׂבוּרָפָאִים לְגֵהֵנָם, וְהַכָּשׁוּר שְׂבִטְבָּחִים – שׁוֹתְפוֹ שֶׁל עַמְלֵק.

Abba Guryan of Tzadyan<sup>B</sup> says in the name of Abba Gurya: A person may not teach his son the trades of a donkey driver, a camel driver,<sup>N</sup> a pot maker, a sailor, a shepherd, or a store-keeper. The reason for all these is the same, as their trades are the trades of robbers; all of these professions involve a measure of dishonesty and are likely to lead to robbery. **Rabbi Yehuda says in Abba Gurya's name: Most donkey drivers are wicked,** since they engage in deceit, **and most camel drivers,** who traverse dangerous places such as deserts, **are of fit character,** as they pray to God to protect them on their journeys. **Most sailors are pious,** since the great danger of the seas instills in them the fear of Heaven. **The best of doctors is to Gehenna,<sup>N</sup> and even the fittest of butchers<sup>N</sup> is a partner of Amalek.**

► **Ask:**

1. Do you find the statement that “the best of doctors is (go) to Gehenna (hell)” to be surprising? Why or why not?
2. What do you think could motivate such a statement?
3. Think about the stereotypes that you have heard about doctors. Do you think of doctors as people who are changing nature when they have no business doing so, or do you consider doctors to be helpers? What are the implications about medicine and doctors raised by the text?

**Text #3: Rashi. Commentary on Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 82a.**

רש"י על קידושין פ"ב א

טוב שברופאים לגיהנם — אינו ירא מן החולי ומאכלו ומאכל בריאים ואינו משבר לבו למקום ופעמים שהורג נפשות ויש בידו לרפאות העני ואינו מרפא:

**“The best of doctors is to Gehenna [hell]”:** For the doctor does not fear sickness and feeds the patient medicines rather than instructing him to repent [lit. break his heart to God]. And sometimes he kills people. And sometimes he has the ability to heal a poor person but does not.

► **Ask:**

1. Rashi offers a few explanations for why the best doctors go to “hell”. Which do you find the most compelling?
2. How does this compare with modern stereotypes about doctors?
3. Medicine is a way for humans to combat sickness or pain, which are part of the world as created by God. Do you think Rashi's distaste for doctors comes from his mistrust of doctors' abilities to heal every time, from a belief that doctors are meddling in God's affairs, or from some other source?

## Healing: A Natural Practice?

Rashi mentions two kinds of problems with doctors. One seems to be a problem of the doctor's lack of spirituality; doctors are arrogant and don't fear mortality the way others might, and they focus on the physical rather than encouraging the patient to examine his or her whole life. The other type of problem is more pragmatic: doctors sometimes make mistakes and do more harm than good, and doctors often provide their services only to those who can pay. Clearly there is a tension between the power to do good, and the moral and ethical challenges that are inherent within the role of the doctor.

### Part Three: Permission to Heal (15 minutes)

**Text #4: Exodus 21:18–19.** English translation adapted from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*.

שמות כ"א:י"ח-י"ט

יח וְכִי-יִרְיֹבֶן אָנָשִׁים — וְהָקָה-אִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ, בְּאֶבֶן אוֹ בְּאֵגֶרֶף; וְלֹא יָמוּת, וְנָפַל לְמִשְׁכָּבוֹ. יט אִם-יָקוּם וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחוּץ, עַל-מִשְׁעָנָתוֹ — וְנָקָה הַמַּקָּה: רַק שְׂבָתוֹ יִתֵּן, וְרִפְאָה יִרְפָּא.

**18** When men quarrel and one strikes the other with stone or fist, and he does not die but has to take to his bed — **19** if he then gets up and walks outdoors upon his staff, the assailant shall go unpunished, except that he must pay for his idleness and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

#### ➤ Ask:

1. How do you understand verse 19 and the instruction to “cause him to be thoroughly healed”?
2. Does it relate to the practice of medicine? Who is supposed to cause whom to be healed, and how?

Texts #5 and #6 will offer interpretations of this verse.

**Text #5: Babylonian Talmud *Bava Kamma* 85a.** English translation [**bold text**] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

בבא קמא פ"ה א

נתניא דבי ר' ישמעאל אומר (שמות כא, יט) ורפא ירפא מכאן שניתן רשות לרופא לרפאות

**As it is taught** in a *baraita* that **the school of Rabbi Yishmael says:** When the verse states: “**And shall cause him to be thoroughly healed [verappo yerappe]** (Exodus 21:19), it is derived **from here that permission is granted to a doctor to heal**, and it is not considered to be an intervention counter to the will of God.

**Text #6: Rashi. Commentary on Babylonian Talmud *Bava Kamma* 85a.**

רש"י על בבא קמא פ"ה א

נתנה רשות לרופאים לרפאות — ולא אמרינן רחמנא מחי ואיהו מסי:

Permission has been given to doctors to heal — and we do not say: God gives life, and God will heal.

## Healing: A Natural Practice?

### ➤ Ask:

1. Based on Text #1 (Exodus 15:22–26), would you think that doctors have permission to heal? Why or why not?
2. According to Rashi, why was this permission necessary? What misconception was being dispelled?

The house of Rabbi Yishmael teaches that in this verse (Exodus 21:19), God explicitly gave doctors permission to heal people. According to Rashi, had the verse not provided this permission, Judaism's approach to the practice of medicine would have been very different. One might have assumed that a religion that believes in an omnipotent Creator, who gives life to all living things, would espouse prayer and repentance as the path to physical health. These texts imply that humans have a role to play, and permission to intervene by treating a disease or injury.

## Part Four: Partners in Healing (25 minutes)

- **Ask participants to read Texts #7 and #8 and answer the questions in *chavruta*.** *Chavruta* is partnered learning. Learning with a friend or two allows you to share ideas and insights with one another as you learn together.

Let's look more closely at the role of human healers. Text #7 is from *Midrash Temurah*, a late midrashic collection dealing with the changes (*temurot*) in the world and in the life of man. This story invokes two famous rabbis from the time period of the Mishnah. Text #8 is from *The Strife of the Spirit* by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. One of the leading scholars of this century, Rabbi Steinsaltz is best known for his commentary on the entire Talmud and for his work on Jewish mysticism.

**Text #7: Midrash Temurah.** From *Otzar Hamidrashim*, ed. Y. D. Eisenstein, p. 580.

אוצר המדרשים (אייזנשטיין) תמורה [עמוד 580]

מעשה בר' ישמעאל ור"ע שהיו מהלכין בחוצות ירושלים, והיה עמהם אדם אחד, פגע בהם אדם חולה, א"ל רבותי אמרו לי במה אתרפא, א"ל עשה כך וכך עד שתתרפא, א"ל ומי הכה אותי? א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא. א"ל ואתם הכנסתם עצמכם בדבר שאינו שלכם, הוא הכה ואתם מרפאים, אינכם עוברים על רצונו? א"ל מה מלאכתך, א"ל עובד אדמה אני והרי המגל בידי, א"ל מי ברא את הכרם, א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא, א"ל ואתה מכניס עצמך בדבר שאינו שלך, הוא ברא אותו ואתה קוצץ פירותיו ממנו, א"ל אין אתם רואים המגל בידי, אילולי אני יוצא והורשו ומכסהו ומזבלו ומנכשו לא תעלה מאומה, א"ל שוטה שבעולם, ממלאכתך (צ"ל מימך) לא שמעת מה שכתוב אנוש כחציר ימיו (תהילים ק"ג: טו), כשם שהעץ אם אינו מנכש ומזבל ונחרש אינו עולה ואם עלה ולא שתה מים ולא נזבל אינו חי והוא מת, כך הגוף הזבל הוא הסם ומיני רפואה ואיש אדמה הוא הרופא.

There is a story about Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva, who were walking on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and there was another person with them. A sick person approached them, and said: My rabbis, tell me how I may be healed! They said to him: Do such and such, and you will be healed. The person replied: And who afflicted me? They replied: The Holy Blessed One. The person said: And you inserted yourself into a matter that is not your affair! God afflicted me and you are healing me?! Are you not violating God's will? They said to the person: What is your profession? The person replied: I work the land, and behold the sickle is in my hand. They asked: Who created the vineyard? The person replied: The Holy Blessed One.

They said: And you inserted yourself into a matter that is not your affair?! God created, and you cut God's fruit from it?

The person replied: Do you not see the sickle in my hand? If I did not go out and plow it, and cover it, and fertilize it and weed it, not a single thing would grow! They responded: Fool! Have you never heard that which is written (Psalm 103:15), "A person's days are like grass..." Just as a tree, if one does not weed and fertilize and plow, it does not grow, and if it grows and isn't watered and fertilized it will not live and it will die — so too the body! The fertilizer is the drug, and types of medicine, and the worker of the land is the doctor.

### ➤ Ask:

1. What is the "patient" concerned about in this story? Why do you think he sought the advice of rabbis and not a doctor?
2. What does the response of the rabbis teach us about their approach to the practice of medicine?
3. In the metaphor of a doctor as a "farmer" who tends the "field" of human health, what other parallels can we draw? Are rabbis "farmers" of the soul, or is each of us individually responsible for our own "garden"?

Notice that there is a disconnect between the question and the answer received. Based on the ensuing conversation, it seems that the questioner was looking for a spiritual answer because he believed that God caused the affliction. This would explain why he asked the rabbis for help to begin with, rather than approach a doctor.

The human relationship with the natural world is often expressed in terms of trees and planting. We often think of farmers as those who care for the land, but we don't usually think of doctors as farmers tending the "land" of human health. This metaphor of our bodies as a land that needs tending gives further credence to a doctor's positive role in the world. While land that grows wild can flourish untended by man, to bear more fruit and be more bountiful it must be cultivated. Likewise, the human body will do as it is built to do, but with tending, such as "intervention" by doctors and an active interest in health, the body can live longer and be more productive.

### **Text #8: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. "Religion and Mystical Powers." *The Strife of the Spirit*.**

Once, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa went to study Torah with Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Yochanan's son fell ill and Rabbi Chanina asked for mercy for him, and he lived. Rabbi Yochanan said, "If Yochanan had beaten his head and held his legs all day long, he would not have been noticed." His wife then asked him, "And is Chanina greater than you?" To this he replied, "No, except that he is like a slave before the King and I am like a prince before the King" (*Berakhot* 34b). From this it can be seen that in the encounter between the two types — Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the great sage, the superior personality, and Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, gifted with the supernatural faculty for healing and for other extraordinary things — Rabbi Yochanan is by no means able to do what Rabbi Chanina does so easily. This does not mean that Rabbi Chanina is greater than Rabbi Yochanan; he is merely gifted with a certain talent or capacity to make contact with God, which makes it possible for him to perform these miracles. It does not make him "a prince before the King"; he remains "a slave before the King" (which may even be the nature of his extraordinary power). In other words, there is an evaluation here of the essence of the mysterious power to exceed the limits of nature. Admitting that it is truly a marvelous power, it is not considered one that necessarily makes the bearer of it superior to ordinary mortals.

## Healing: A Natural Practice?

### ➤ Ask:

1. What do you think it means that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa is described as “a slave before the King”? What characteristics or practices might someone possess to be described this way?
2. What do you think it means to say that someone who heals “exceeds the limits of nature”? Is this a positive characteristic?
3. How is this model of a healer/doctor different from the model presented in the previous source?

### ➤ Reconvene the group.

In *Midrash Temurah*, doctors were presented as partners with the Divine, taking care of nature and bringing it to its fullest potential. In this description, the healer is someone who is “a slave to the King,” perhaps possessing great humility, perhaps in all ways someone who is meticulous about serving God, or perhaps a mere shadow of the King, the ultimate Healer. While this is different from the doctor-farmer analogy presented in the previous source, in both cases doctors are in relationship with the Divine and are clearly seen as causing powerful changes in the course of nature, changes that require skill and effort. Rabbi Steinsaltz describes the healers/doctors as “exceeding the limits of nature,” which is a strong phrase — one that almost pits the doctor against the forces of nature.

### ➤ Ask:

1. How do you relate to these two models — of doctor as farmer or healer/doctor as slave to the King?
2. Does one resonate more? Why?

## Conclusion (3 minutes)

We began with Exodus, which presented healing as a way of intervening in nature. In that story, God is the healer and healing is a model for the physical healing that doctors do. In *Kiddushin* and Rashi’s commentary on the text, problems emerged where the role — and value — of doctors were called into question. The Talmud, in *Bava Kama* and through Rashi, clarified the role of doctors by demonstrating the doctor’s “permission” to heal — Judaism endorses a medical system in which people turn to other people when they are ill, and do not simply trust that God will heal them. The final sources provide two very different models for understanding the way in which humans work in service of the preservation and improvement of human life, both in concert with and against the forces of nature, but in some way, imbued with Divine blessing.

## Part One: Intervening in Nature

### Text #1: Exodus 15:22–26.

שמות ט"ו:כ"ב-כ"ו

**כב** ויסע מלשה את-ישראל מים-סוף, ויצאו אל-מדבר-שור; וילכו שלשת-ימים במדבר, ולא-מצאו מים. **כג** ויבאו מרתה — ולא יכלו לשותת מים ממרה, כי מרים הם; על-כן קרא-שמה, מרה. **כד** וילנו העם על-משה לאמר, מה-נשתי. **כה** ויצעק אל-ה', ויורהו ה' עץ, וישלף אל-המים, וימתקו המים; שם שם לו חק ומשפט, ושם נסהו. **כו** ויאמר אם-שמוע תשמע לקול ה' אלקיך, והישר בעיניו תעשה, והאזנת למצותיו, ושמרת כל-חקיו — כל-המחלה אשר-שמתי במצרים, לא-אשים עליך, כי אני ה', רפאך.

**22** Then Moses caused Israel to set out from the Sea of Reeds. They went into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water. **23** They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; that is why it was named Marah. **24** And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” **25** So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There He made for them a fixed rule, and there He put them to the test. **26** He said, “If you will heed the LORD your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the LORD am your healer.”

## Part Two: The Problematic Role of the Doctor

### Text #2: Babylonian Talmud *Kiddushin* 82a. English translation [**bold text**] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

אבא גורין איש צדין אומר משום אבא גוריא: לא ילמד אדם את בנו חמור, גמל, קדר, ספן, רועה, ודונני – שאומנותן אומנות ליסטים. רבי יהודה אומר משמו: התמרין – רובן רשעים, והגמלין – רובן בשרין, הספנין – רובן חסידים. טוב שברופאים לגיהנם, והבשר שבטבחים – שותפו של עמלק.

Abba Guryan of Tzadyan<sup>8</sup> says in the name of Abba Gurya: A person may not teach his son the trades of a donkey driver, a camel driver,<sup>n</sup> a pot maker, a sailor, a shepherd, or a store-keeper. The reason for all these is the same, as their trades are the trades of robbers; all of these professions involve a measure of dishonesty and are likely to lead to robbery. Rabbi Yehuda says in Abba Gurya's name: Most donkey drivers are wicked, since they engage in deceit, and most camel drivers, who traverse dangerous places such as deserts, are of fit character, as they pray to God to protect them on their journeys. Most sailors are pious, since the great danger of the seas instills in them the fear of Heaven. The best of doctors is to Gehenna,<sup>n</sup> and even the fittest of butchers<sup>n</sup> is a partner of Amalek.



# Healing: A Natural Practice?

## Text #3: Rashi. Commentary on Babylonian Talmud *Kiddushin* 82a.

רש"י על קידושין פ"ב א

טוב שברופאים לגיהנם — אינו ירא מן החולי ומאכלו מאכל בריאים ואינו משבר לבו למקום ופעמים שהורג נפשות ויש בידו לרפאות העני ואינו מרפא:

“The best of doctors is to Gehenna [hell]”: For the doctor does not fear sickness and feeds the patient medicines rather than instructing him to repent [lit. break his heart to God]. And sometimes he kills people. And sometimes he has the ability to heal a poor person but does not.

## Part Three: Permission to Heal

### Text #4: Exodus 21:18–19. English translation adapted from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*.

שמות כ"א: י"ח-י"ט

יח וכי-יִרְיֹבֵן אֲנָשִׁים — וְהָקָה-אִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ, בְּאֶבֶן אוּ בְאֲגָרֶף; וְלֹא יָמוּת, וְנָפַל לְמִשְׁפָּב. יט אִם-יָקוּם וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחוּץ, עַל-מִשְׁעָנָתוֹ — וְנָקָה הַמִּקָּה: רַק שָׁבְתוֹ יָתֵן, וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא.

18 When men quarrel and one strikes the other with stone or fist, and he does not die but has to take to his bed — 19 if he then gets up and walks outdoors upon his staff, the assailant shall go unpunished, except that he must pay for his idleness and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.

### Text #5: Babylonian Talmud *Bava Kamma* 85a. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

בבא קמא פ"ה א

דתניא דבי ר' ישמעאל אומר (שמות כא, יט) ורפא ירפא מכאן שניתן רשות לרופא לרפאות

As it is taught in a *baraita* that the school of Rabbi Yishmael says: When the verse states: “And shall cause him to be thoroughly healed [*verappo yerappe*] (Exodus 21:19), it is derived from here that permission is granted to a doctor to heal, and it is not considered to be an intervention counter to the will of God.

### Text #6: Rashi. Commentary on Babylonian Talmud *Bava Kamma* 85a.

רש"י על בבא קמא פ"ה א

נתנה רשות לרופאים לרפאות — ולא אמרינן רחמנא מחי ואיהו מסי:

Permission has been given to doctors to heal — and we do not say: God gives life, and God will heal.

## Part Four: Partners in Healing

**Text #7: Midrash Temurah.** From *Otzar Hamidrashim*, ed. Y. D. Eisenstein, p. 580.

אוצר המדרשים (אייזנשטיין) תמורה [עמוד 580]

מעשה בר' ישמעאל ור"ע שהיו מהלכין בחוצות ירושלים, והיה עמהם אדם אחד, פגע בהם אדם חולה, א"ל רבותי אמרו לי במה אתרפא, א"ל עשה כך וכך עד שתתרפא, א"ל ומי הכה אותי? א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא. א"ל ואתם הכנסתם עצמכם בדבר שאינו שלכם, הוא הכה ואתם מרפאים, אינכם עוברים על רצונו? א"ל מה מלאכתך, א"ל עובד אדמה אני והרי המגל בידי, א"ל מי ברא את הכרם, א"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא, א"ל ואתה מכניס עצמך בדבר שאינו שלך, הוא ברא אותו ואתה קוצץ פירותיו ממנו, א"ל אין אתם רואים המגל בידי, אילולי אני יוצא וחורשו ומכסהו ומזבלו ומנכשו לא תעלה מאומה, א"ל שוטה שבעולם, ממלאכתך (צ"ל מימך) לא שמעת מה שכתוב אנוש כחציר ימיו (תהילים ק"ג: טו), כשם שהעץ אם אינו מנכש ומזבל ונחרש אינו עולה ואם עלה ולא שתה מים ולא נזבל אינו חי והוא מת, כך הגוף הזבל הוא הסם ומיני רפואה ואיש אדמה הוא הרופא.

There is a story about Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva, who were walking on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and there was another person with them. A sick person approached them, and said: My rabbis, tell me how I may be healed! They said to him: Do such and such, and you will be healed. The person replied: And who afflicted me? They replied: The Holy Blessed One. The person said: And you inserted yourself into a matter that is not your affair! God afflicted me and you are healing me?! Are you not violating God's will? They said to the person: What is your profession? The person replied: I work the land, and behold the sickle is in my hand. They asked: Who created the vineyard? The person replied: The Holy Blessed One.

They said: And you inserted yourself into a matter that is not your affair?! God created, and you cut God's fruit from it? The person replied: Do you not see the sickle in my hand? If I did not go out and plow it, and cover it, and fertilize it and weed it, not a single thing would grow!

They responded: Fool! Have you never heard that which is written (Psalms 103:15), "A person's days are like grass..." Just as a tree, if one does not weed and fertilize and plow, it does not grow, and if it grows and isn't watered and fertilized it will not live and it will die — so too the body! The fertilizer is the drug, and types of medicine, and the worker of the land is the doctor.

**Text #8: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. "Religion and Mystical Powers". *The Strife of the Spirit*.**

Once, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa went to study Torah with Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Yochanan's son fell ill and Rabbi Chanina asked for mercy for him, and he lived. Rabbi Yochanan said, "If Yochanan had beaten his head and held his legs all day long, he would not have been noticed." His wife then asked him, "And is Chanina greater than you?" To this he replied, "No, except that he is like a slave before the King and I am like a prince before the King" (*Berakhot* 34b). From this it can be seen that in the encounter between the two types — Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the great sage, the superior personality, and Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, gifted with the supernatural faculty for healing and for other extraordinary things — Rabbi Yochanan is by no means able to do what Rabbi Chanina does so easily. This does not mean that Rabbi Chanina is greater than Rabbi Yochanan; he is merely gifted with a certain talent or capacity to make contact with God, which makes it possible for him to perform these miracles. It does not make him "a prince before the King"; he remains "a slave before the King" (which may even be the nature of his extraordinary power). In other words, there is an evaluation here of the essence of the mysterious power to exceed the limits of nature. Admitting that it is truly a marvelous power, it is not considered one that necessarily makes the bearer of it superior to ordinary mortals.



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