**8. Healing**

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| Heal us, Adonai, so that we will be healed.  Save us, so that we will be saved.  For You are our praise.  Bring full healing to all of our wounds.  [If praying for a specific individual add:  May it be your will, Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, that you quickly send a full recovery from heaven, physical and mental healing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who is sick, along with others who are sick among Israel.]  For you are our King, a faithful and merciful healer.  Blessed are you, Adonai, who heals his people Israel. | רְפָאֵנוּ ה' וְנֵרָפֵא. הושִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה כִּי תְהִלָּתֵנוּ אָתָּה. וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל מַכּותֵינוּ.  יְהִי רָצון מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלהַי וֵאלהֵי אֲבותַי. שֶׁתִּשְׁלַח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם. רְפוּאַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וּרְפוּאַת הַגּוּף לְחולֶה (פב"פ) בְּתוךְ שְׁאָר חולֵי יִשרָאֵל:]   כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ רופֵא נֶאֱמָן וְרַחֲמָן אָתָּה.  בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', רופֵא חולֵי עַמּו יִשרָאֵל: |

This prayer was written at a time when medicine as we know it did not exist. Think about how your lives would be different without all of the advances of modern medicine.

* Why do we still thank God when healing comes from doctors and medicine?
* Are there still problems with our health that we must pray to God to help us heal?

**Medicine in the Jewish Tradition**

**Midrash Shmuel 4**

R. Yishmael and R. Akiva were walking through the streets of Jerusalem with a certain man, when a sick person confronted them and said: "Masters, tell me, how can I be healed?"

They replied: "Take such and such, and you will be healed."

The man accompanying the sages asked them, "Who struck this person with sickness?"

They replied, "The Holy One (God)."

The man said back, "Then why are you getting involved in something that doesn't concern you? God struck him with illness, and you are going to heal him?"

The sages said to him: "What is your work?"

He said, "I till the soil. You see, I have a sickle in my hand."

The sages said: "Who created the vineyard?"

The main replied: "The Holy One (God)."

The sages said: "Then why are you getting involved in a matter that doesn't concern you?"

The man: "If I didn't go out and plow the vineyard, prune the branches, fertilize it and weed it, nothing would have grown."

The sages said: "You are the biggest fool in the world. Don't you know that the verse says, 'As for a man, his days are as grass' (Psalms 103:15). A tree, if it is not fertilized, weeded and the area around it plowed, will not grow. And even if it does grow, if it's not given water to drink, it will die. So too the human body is a tree, medicine is the fertilizer and a doctor is the tiller of the soil."

* What conflicts are contained in this story? How do you feel about the characters in the story?
* How do we respond to people today who refuse medicine for themselves or their children because they believe their health is in God’s hands?
* What does this story teach about Judaism's view of the role of human beings in the world? What lessons can we learn from it?
* What mistakes did the man walking with Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael make?
* Do you believe that God causes or heals sicknesses?  How does God's involvement work with the things that modern medicine can or can’t do?  What roles does prayer have in keeping a person healthy?

**Healing in Jewish Law**

**Rambam's Commentary on the Mishnah**

According to Jewish law a doctor must heal a sick person and this is part of the rabbis' interpretation of the verse, "And you shall return it [the lost object] to him": this includes returning him his own [healthy] body. That if one sees him lost [i.e. sick] and he can save him, he must save him whether he uses his body, his money or his knowledge.

* According to the Rambam, the commandment to heal a person is part of the commandment to return lost objects.
* How is healing a person like returning a lost object? What has been lost?
* Why should it be a "commandment" for a doctor to heal? Why not just let it be voluntary?
* What responsibility do we have to keep ourselves healthy?
* Do non-doctors also have responsibilities to preserve the health of others? If so, who has this responsibility? Who must pay to keep others healthy? Is this a cost that all people need to share, or is it up to the individual to keep him/herself healthy?