



The Sweet Remedy

Millions of people throughout the world are closed inside their homes, waiting for some sort of remedy. Can the month of Nissan and the holiday of Pesach – when we celebrate the exodus from Egypt – bring us the remedy?

The exodus from Egypt culminates in the Splitting of the Red Sea. This is the pinnacle of Nissan (which alludes to the word ‘nes’ – ‘miracle.’) Nissan is the month of miracles of miracles.

But that is not all. The Jewish People did not stop after the Splitting of the Sea. They continued their journey until they reached a place called ‘*Marah*’ (‘bitter’), still during the month of Nissan. The water there was bitter – undrinkable. God showed Moses a tree, instructing him to throw it into the water: “And he cast it into the water and the waters were sweetened, There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them; And He said, ‘If you will listen to the voice of God your God...all the disease that I put upon Egypt, I will not put upon you, for I am God, your healer.’”¹

After all the miracles that broke through the boundaries of nature, suddenly bitterness appears. The Jewish People ask, “What about us? What about our illnesses and human troubles?” This is where the healing comes and sweetens everything. This is also the only time in the Torah where the root for ‘sweetness’ (סד) appears. The Creator of the World, Who took us out of Egypt, promises us robust health – true healing that prevents any disease! All that we have to do is to comply with His commandments.

The Secret Formula

Let us put together a short prescription for this healing, wonder-drug:

The first ingredient is to **listen to God’s directives**. Even though medicine seems very technical today, every illness must awaken us to repent. A person who falls ill must mend his ways, return to God and do good.

¹ Exodus 15:25-26.

The second ingredient is **faith in God**. Pesach is the holiday of faith. In the Zohar, *matzah*, the unleavened bread that we eat on Pesach, is called “the food of faith”. At the Splitting of the Sea, the description in the Torah says, “And they believed in God and in His servant, Moses.”² Right afterwards, however, concealment descends upon the Nation. The water is bitter and the Nation despairs. This is a trial: “And there He tested them.” Every trial that we experience is sent to us personally, to strengthen our faith in God. Faith has the power to heal! A person who has faith, is optimistic and happy will also be healthy. Besides being called “the food of faith,” *matzah* is also called “the food of healing.” Eating faith is the sweetest of all remedies!

Faith can sometimes remain ‘on high.’ We may declare that we have faith and even sing, “I’m a believer” without really knowing what it is we believe in or without the faith being part of us and directing all our actions. This is the purpose of trials: To encourage us to internalize our faith so that it will transform into knowledge: “For God your God is testing you (in order) to know...”³

Faith in God has to be learned. To this end, we have role-models. Leaders and tzaddikim, who personify and exemplify faith – like Moses, “the faithful shepherd,” who feeds us faith.

Worldwide Shabbat

The third ingredient is **Shabbat**. As in the verse above, “There He put for them a statute and an ordinance.” What statute did God put for them there? Shabbat, which we received before the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Shabbat has the power to heal. The sages would tell people who were ill that Shabbat would heal them. That they should safeguard the Shabbat and the Shabbat would safeguard them. The Shabbat candles, the Kiddush, the tasty Shabbat foods, the Shabbat rest, the Shabbat prayers – all of these contain wondrous healing power.

The commandments regarding Shabbat are concentrated into two words: The sages say that “*Zachor* (remember) and *shamor* (safeguard) were said in one utterance.”⁴ “Safeguarding” Shabbat is the passive keeping of Shabbat: Not doing those things that are forbidden. “Remembering” Shabbat is the active keeping of

² Exodus 14:31.

³ Deuteronomy 13:4.

⁴ *Mechiltah* on Exodus 20:7.

Shabbat, performing the various mitzvahs of Shabbat, such as *kiddush*.

The words '*zachor*' and '*shamor*' share some of the same letters. The letters that are unique to each word are *zayin* and *chaf* for *zachor* and *shin* and *mem* for *shamor*. These letters equal 'corona.' This is a timely reminder that the time has come to keep Shabbat. As the sages say, "If Israel keeps two Shabbats, they will immediately be redeemed."⁵

May this be a happy, healthy and redemptive Pesach!

⁵ Shabbat 118b.