This week we read of how the Jews actually left Egypt; undoubtedly, the greatest historical event in history. Some 3 million abject slaves left, in broad daylight the most powerful (and spiritual) nation of all time. And as a grand finale, G-d split the sea for them, drowned the entire Egyptian army in it and the Jews sang in unison an epic song of thanks.

But after all this there was a strange story. The Jews got to a place called Mara where all the waters were undrinkable! So they cried out to Moses for help whereupon he miraculously sweetened the bitter waters of Mara and said,

"If you obey the word and commandments of G-d...the diseases of Egypt I won't put upon you because I am G-d your doctor." (15:26)

At first glance this makes no sense. Why did G-d not just provide them with water? Why torture them?

And why did Moses mention diseases and doctors? Three million Jews were stranded in the blazing desert without water and were thirsty, what is sick about that? And why did he say that G-d is the doctor? If anyone was the doctor here it was Moses. That's why the people cried out to him; they knew that he, as all doctors do, could bring G-d's power of healing into reality.

Also, every word in the Torah is a lesson for everyone. What do we healthy people care that G-d is a doctor? Isn't this a message for sick people only?

Also, tomorrow will be the Tenth of Shvat, the day that the Previous Rebbe passed away (in 1950) and that the Rebbe took over one year later. Is there a connection between these two seemingly private 'Lubavitch' dates and the Jews leaving Egypt?

To understand this here is a story and a letter.

The story, told by the Rebbe in 1951 ("Ma Sh'ciper li HaRebbe" vol. 4 pg 142) First a short preface.

The previous (and sixth) Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, besides being a great Torah scholar in both the Talmudic and mystic realms, single handedly battling (and eventually totally defeating) Communism in Russia and Jewish ignorance outside of Russia, did a lot of miracles that helped and healed a lot of people. When he passed away worry and fear entered the hearts of thousands of Jews.

To allay these negative feelings his son-in-law, who was to be chosen as his replacement and the seventh and final Lubavitcher Rebbe told the following story about himself just days before he assumed the leadership.

"A few days ago a Jew came into my room and complained about a serious medical problem; stones formed or entered into his kidneys. He told me that he had already seen a specialist who examined him and decided that it would be necessary make an operation.

"I told him that he shouldn't get excited or not worried and that he could even ignore the words of the doctor because surgery would not be necessary at all.
"But the man did not calm down. He left my office and went to consult with another doctor, a bigger expert than the first who also said to operate and even set a date for the operation.

"But the day before the operation this doctor unexplainably left his house on an extended vacation for an undetermined amount of time and the operation had to be postponed.

"But the man still did not give up. He was determined to wait until the new date. But then a very strange thing happened; just before the doctor was scheduled to return .... the stones left the kidneys on their own! Not only was surgery not necessary, it was as though nothing had ever happened."

Now the letter (Published by: The Avner Institute).

By the Grace of G-d 5715, Brooklyn, NY

To the Conference of Religious Physicians

Greetings and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of your conference, designed to create an organized body of Jewish religious physicians. Unification of religious forces was always desirable, especially in our generation, a generation confused and perplexed by the shattering events of recent years, as a result of which many thinking people have become completely disillusioned in the false ideas and ideologies which they had held in the past, and are now earnestly searching for the truth.

An organized body of religious physicians could make its influence to be felt in these circles through a declaration of its authoritative opinion on several issues, which have been the subject of confused and misleading controversy.

Such a declaration should, first of all, do away with the misconception about any conflict between science and religion. True science, the object of which is the truth and nothing but the truth, can lead to no conclusions which are contrary to our Torah, "the law of Truth." On the contrary, the more deeply one delves into science, the stronger must grow the recognition of the truth of the fundamental principles, as well as the ramifications, of our Jewish religion.

As physicians, in particular, you are in a position to refute decisively the materialistic philosophy, as is demonstrated by the fact that so much of physical health depends on spiritual health. If in olden days emphasis was placed on mens sanain corpore sana[healthy mind in a healthy body], in our days it is a matter of general conviction that even a small defect spiritually causes a grievous defect physically; and the healthier the spirit and the greater its preponderance over the physical body—the greater its ability to correct or overcome physical shortcomings; so much so, that in many cases even physical treatments, prescriptions and drugs are considerably more effective if they are accompanied by the patient's strong will and determination to cooperate.

This principle of "mind over matter," i.e. of quality over quantity, is further emphasized by the fact, which is continually gaining recognition, that the vital functions of the organism do not depend on quantity, inasmuch as the glands, and the hormones, vitamins, etc., which they produce, are quite minute quantitatively.

Parenthetically: It is written in our Holy Scriptures, "From my flesh I visualize G-d." Recognizing the preponderance of the soul in the physical body (the microcosm), there remains but a small step to the recognition of G-d, the "Soul" of the Universe (the macrocosm). And in the words of our Sages: "As the soul fills the body, vivifies it, sees, but is not seen—so the Holy One, blessed be He, fills the world, vivifies it, sees, but it not seen."

So much, speaking in general terms.

Specifically many are the questions directly relating to the practice of the physician, some of them of practical and immediate importance, on which your voice should be heard. To mention but a
few:

To declare the paramount importance of the observance of the laws of: Taharasha- Mishpacha (Family Purity i.e. Mikvah nd marital abstinence at proper times etc) the observance of the dietary laws and Circumcision.

With regard to operations particularly in connection with surgery on the prostate and genital organs: elimination of procedures likely to cause sterility and substituting for it other forms of treatment.

Prescriptions and drugs: many of them could be made in compliance with the laws of kashrut, and only through indifference or carelessness it is not done so.

Post-mortem: for purposes of study of anatomy, etc., surely it is possible to use artificial forms and models. For purposes of ascertaining the cause of death—in many cases it is not essential; where it may be of immediate necessity to save a life (as in the case of an accusation of poisoning, etc.)—mutilation of the body should be reduced to the essential minimum, and the parts should be buried afterwards.

And so on.

Needless to say, what has been mentioned above about pointing out the health benefits that are derived from the observance of the religious precepts should not be understood as an attempt to explain the precepts by their utilitarian value. For it is a dogma of our faith that the Divine precepts must be observed because they are the command and will of our Creator, and “the reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself,” for “this is the whole purpose of man”—to commune and unite with his Maker, through the fulfillment of His commands.

However, for the benefit of those who, by reason of spiritual “sickness,” cannot be induced to observe the precepts except by making them aware of their utilitarian value, we must do everything possible to urge them to observe the mitzvoh in daily life, even if we have to rationalize about the Divine commands, and emphasize their physical benefits.

I conclude with extending to you my prayerful wishes that your conference reflect the Scriptural words, “Then conferred with one another they who fear G-d,” and may your good aspirations materialize successfully and lead to practical accomplishments; and, as the Scriptural passage just quoted concludes, “and it was recorded in a memorial book, for remembrance before G-d,” so may your accomplishments have lasting benefits for the many—your great privilege.

Respectfully, and with Blessings for success,

[signature]

This answers our questions. After experiencing all the miracles of leaving Egypt and receiving the Torah the Jews still remained so basically unchanged and egotistical that they were able to worship the Golden Calf shortly thereafter.

So, all these miracles, as astounding and incomparable as they were, were only a preparation for the future and final redemption by Moshiach.

Moshiach will cause the Jews (and through them the entire world) to change (heal) themselves from the inside; so that their lives will be devoted solely and totally to feeling the Creator and His Torah. So G-d Himself will be the doctor.

That is what Moses was talking about when he said G-d is the doctor, will be truly "leaving Egypt" (Egypt: ' Mitzraim’ also means 'limitations').

The above story and letter taught us how to do this. Namely, to deal with (heal) difficulties (diseases).... something the Jews were not able to do when confronted with the Golden Calf:
The story about the kidney stones told us that one way is to turn to 'Tzadikim' (totally righteous Jews) and the letter showed that we must always turn to the Torah.

That is the meaning of the bitter waters in our Torah portion: they represent the bitter experiences and problems of life and they are sweetened by the Torah as it is explained by Tzadikim.

In other words; by internalizing the messages of the Tzadikim and of the Torah we will be able to see that really our problems are not problems at all but rather gifts from the true 'Doctor' ..... G-d.

This is the connection with the Tenth of Shvat. The Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, was not just a private person or the head of one group.

He had all the qualifications of Mashiach; the Jew who will 'heal' the entire world. Therefore he was able to experience and begin the transformation of the bitterest 'general' tragedies: the mass murders by the Communists in Russia, the destruction wreaked by the Nazis in Poland and the assimilation in the USA..... to the sweet waters of total redemption.

This all depends on us each and every one of us.... You and me!

Read the teachings of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (see your local Chabad House for details) take them to heart and then and then even one good deed, word or even thought can transform (heal) the world, sweeten even the bitterest of waters and bring.....

Mashiach NOW!

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