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Report on the Rabbinic Dissertation Submitted by

Susan Freeman

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

Jewish Theology of Healing from a Talmudic Perspective

Healing has become a major metaphor for our human needs and the desired help we seek of others. Its particular relevance to the clergy is very high when intellectual certainty is difficult to come by and therapeutic procedures seem to disclose better than much else does what rabbis seek to do with people. Surprisingly, there has been little written about the Jewish theology of healing as contrasted to the Jewish attitude toward medicine or on specific bio-ethical issues. This thesis was undertaken to remedy this situation and to see what our tradition might teach us about a proper human and Jewish approach to healing in its fullest religious dimensions.

Susan began a lexical search of Talmudic passages which used one of a number of words dealing with healing or healers. As she had anticipated, this yielded a considerable body of material and confirmed her intuition that this matter had been of considerable significance to the rabbis and their community. After an initial survey of Biblical motifs regarding healing, she had something of a base from which to determine the extent to which the rabbis continued their inherited tradition -- substantially -- and where they innovated -- as it turned out, more in detail and articulation than in fresh theological creativity.

She studied the Talmudic passages in terms of the chief actors in them, namely, God activity, the sick person and the community. This turned out to be a happy arrangement for though it did involve overlap in a considerable amount of the data, it also clarified the various relationships involved in the Talmudic understanding of the healing process. God's rule was, not surprisingly, pivotal to all else and human action, individual or communal, took its direction from the context of the Divine order. This led to one of the most interesting problems of the investigation.

The rabbis substantially deal with the issue of healing in terms of God's justice, many of the references serving as theodicies to explain the conflict between the expected and the occuring. The clash with modern sensibilities could not be avoided and forced Susan to confront the extent to which the assumptions she had brought to this issue, that is, her own feelings about Judaism and healing, were more a result of her modern values than of the **Thesis**

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Jewish tradition. After her intial recoil, she was able to face this issue without denying it existed or dismissing the Jewish past as primitive and outmoded. Instead, summoning proper scholarly disinterest, she sought to learn what she could from what, as she had discovered, the rabbis actually seem to have thought even though that differed from her own point of view. And she went on to learn from them how complex and multi-faceted is the problem of working out for our time a satisfactory Jewish theology of healing.

Susan carried out her study with exemplary diligence, great personal sensitivity, fine academic skills and rare spiritual openness. I am therefore happy to recommend the acceptance of this thesis.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Eugene B. Borowitz
Referee

April 2, 1990

Jewish Theology of Healing from a Talmudic Perspective

Susan Freeman

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

March 16, 1990

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is theology of healing from a Talmudic perspective. The thesis analyzes how the Rabbis of the Talmud perceived healing and what the theological implications are.

Healing in the Bible

As a point of reference, it is necessary to review what the Rabbis inherited from the Bible; that is, what was their starting point for discussion. There are significant references to health-related issues in the Bible. Information can be gleaned about how the body is put together, diseases, injuries, preventive and sanitary measures, and remedies (ie. medicines, bandages, washing, and bathing).[1]

Besides some ideas about medical practices in the Bible, Rabbis of the Talmud inherited the notion of God as supreme healer. Though there were biblical individuals who treated patients, only God was seen as the one who could "heal" sickness. There are numerous instances in which God was referred to as rofeh, "healer."[2] As God was called rofeh, those who treated patients in the biblical era did not presume that title for themselves.[3]

There are several ideas about God's role in healing in the Bible upon which the Rabbis base their theology of healing.

[1] Rosner, Fred. Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc.), 1977, p. 4-7.

[2] Some examples are: Gen. 20:17, Ex. 15:26, Num. 12:13, Dt. 32:39, Job 5:18, Isaiah 19:22, Isaiah 57:18 and 19, Jeremiah 30:17, Jeremiah 33:6, 2 Kings 20:5 and 8, Hosea 6:1, Psalms 103:2-3, Psalms 107:20, and 2 Chronicles 30:20.

[3] Ibid., p. 7-8.

These ideas include: 1. God as the Source of all healing; 2. God as one who responds to the prayers of the sick; 3. God as sustainer of the sick; 4. God as exemplar of appropriate behavior towards the sick; and 5. mixed attitudes toward human healers. While the meaning of some of the verses about healing is taken literally by the Rabbis, other ideas from biblical passages are applied more indirectly to healing.

There are numerous statements in the Bible which clearly establish God as the Source of all healing. Examples of these types of statements follow.[4] The first example establishes both the ideas that God is the Source of sickness and healing, and that there is a direct relationship between obedience to God's path and health:

> {God} said, "If you will heed the Lord your God diligently, doing what is upright in {God's} sight, giving ear to {God's} commandments, and keeping all {God's} 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." (Exodus 15:26)

Other statements having to do with God's healing powers include: "I {God} wounded and I will heal" (Deuteronomy 32:39); "I {God} note how they fare and I will heal them" (Isaiah 57:18-19); "Turn back, O rebellious children, I {God} will heal your afflictions!" (Jeremiah 3:22)[5]; "{God} forgives

[4] Quotes from the Bible in this section will use translations in Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures, (Philadelphia, New York, and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society), 1985. Hereafter, this translation will be referred to as NJPS. Also, insertions which are not NJPS are indicated by information enclosed in these symbols { }. More on translations can be found in the last section of this chapter.

[5] Note the connection between repentance and healing; another concept the Rabbis inherited from the Bible.

all your sins, heals all your diseases" (Psalms 103:3); "{God} gave an order and healed them; {God} delivered them from the pits" (Psalms 107:20); "{God} heals their broken hearts, and binds up their wounds" (Psalms 147:3); "{God} injures, but {God} binds up; {God} wounds, but {God's} hands heal" (Job 5:18).

Being the Source of all healing, God is the one people pray to when they seek healing. Some examples are: "Abraham then prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his slave girls, so that they bore children" (Genesis 20:17); "So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, 'O God, pray heal her!'" (Numbers 12:13); "Heal me, O Lord, and let me be healed; save me, and let me be saved; for you are my glory" (Jeremiah 17:14); "I said, 'O Lord, have mercy on me, heal me, for I have sinned against You'" (Psalms 41:5)[6]; "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I languish; heal me, O Lord, for my bones shake with terror" (Psalms 6:3); "{God} fulfills the wishes of those who fear {God}; {God} hears their cry and delivers them" (Psalms 145:19)[7]; "At that time Hezekiah fell deathly sick; he prayed to the Lord, who responded to him and gave him a sign" (II Chronicles 32:24; also see Isaiah 38).

The Rabbis draw on another biblical idea which sees God as a sustaining presence during sickness: "The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed; you shall wholly transform his bed of

[6] Note the connection between sickness and sin; another concept the Rabbis inherited from the Bible.

[7] Though this quote doesn't mention the actual word "healing," the Rabbis do use this quote to support the belief in God's healing powers.

suffering" (Psalms 41:4).

That God is the exemplar of appropriate behavior towards the sick, ie. visiting the sick, is an idea derived more indirectly from citations in the Bible. After Abraham's circumcision, it says:

> The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. (Genesis 18:1)

The Rabbis claim God's appearance to Abraham shows the value of visiting the sick (see: Sotah 14a). Another verse the Rabbis invoke when claiming the importance of visiting the sick is:

> ...and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go {"to walk"} and the practices they are to follow. (Exodus 18:20)

The words "to walk" are said to mean to visit the sick, as are the same words in the following: "{You shall walk after} the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 13:5). That the Rabbis "inherit" the value of visiting the sick from these citations is debatable. It seems that a more accurate claim would be that the Rabbis base some of their ideas directly on material found in the Bible, but for some of their ideas (such as visiting the sick), they look back to the Bible for material which authenticates their values and practices (though the values certainly may have been present in biblical times as well, even if this is not found stated directly).

As far as human healers go, there is limited material in the Bible upon which the Rabbis can base or develop their attitudes. In order to justify that humans have been given permission to heal the Rabbis have no direct biblical text.

They do, however, draw on a text indirectly to support this assertion (Exodus 21:18-19 and Baba Kamma 85a, 85b). There are examples in the Bible in which human healers get involved in the healing process, but the exact balance between their role and God's role is not resolved explicitly. This delicate and often ambiguous balance between God's and human healers' roles in healing is something which the Rabbis have to deal with. Two passages referring to human healers follow. In the first there is negativity towards healers, and God's healing powers are not recognized:

> In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa suffered from an acute foot ailment; but ill as he was, he still did not turn to the Lord but to {human healers}. Asa slept with his fathers. He died in the forty-first year of his reign. (II Chronicles 16:12)

In the next passage God's role in healing is acknowledged (through prayer), but a human healer is active in bringing about healing:

> {Elisha} went in, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. Then he mounted {the bed} and placed himself over the child. He put his mouth on its mouth, his eyes on its eyes, and his hands on its hands, as he bent over. And the body of the child became warm. He stepped down, walked once up and down the room, then mounted and bent over him. Thereupon, the boy sneezed seven times, and the boy opened his eyes. (II Kings 4:33-35)

In the Talmud God continues to be seen as the ultimate healer. Like the Bible, the role of the human healer in relation to God is delicate and often ambiguous. Still, humans are accorded an important role in the healing process, including the title rofeh, "healer."

Methodology

The primary way material was found for this thesis was through a concordance to the Talmud. References to the Hebrew word rofeh, the Aramaic word asya, and their derivatives were studied and evaluated as to their relevance to the discussion of a theology of healing. Specific formulas for remedies, sometimes "bizarre" and other times "reasonable" in terms of modern understandings of medical knowledge, are not included as they do not seem primary in facilitating the understanding of theological beliefs.

One of the greatest difficulties of interpreting the Talmudic material is understanding the tone in which certain statements were made - whether as straightforward beliefs or hyperbole. If hyperbole was at work, the purpose of employing it may have been for emphasizing a moral injunction, intensifying a threat, and even at times being humorous. The use of hyperbole simply may have been a popular style of expression alien to the modern ear, about which only speculations can be offered as to its contemporary nuances. Despite the issue of hyperbole, there are themes which come across strongly enough as to justify the reality of the importance of certain beliefs; eg. God as just and merciful, the system of reward and punishment, and the importance of meritorious behavior. Throughout the thesis, there is the attempt to focus on those beliefs which seem to have been operating with certainty in the world of the Rabbis.

Content of the Thesis

The first chapter of the thesis will begin with a

presentation and analysis of materials relevant to God's presence in healing. It then will continue with an exploration of how the individual in need of healing reacts and responds to sickness, especially in terms of that individual's relationship with God. Finally, the role human healers and visitors play in the healing process will be examined.

The chapters which follow will present pertinent Talmudic material and include some analysis. The analysis may touch on these three levels: 1. interpretation of what the Rabbis were saying in their own terms, 2. highlighting some of the theological ideas which may have been implicit in the texts but were not stated directly, and 3. pointing out some modern issues and problems which were not particularly relevant to the world of the Rabbis.

A Note about Translations

Many texts will be quoted throughout the thesis. Predominately, the Soncino translation to the Talmud is relied upon. British spellings and verb tense usage are changed to those common in the United States of America without note as are the words "thy" and "thou" to "your" and "you." Often when biblical citations are used as part of the Talmudic text in the Soncino translation, rather than using Soncino's words, the New Jewish Publication Society translation is inserted. This insertion is indicated by - (NJPS). Also, there are times in which I use my own wording. My own wording is indicated by the use of these symbols { } or by a footnote. If a translation is my own, the reference will be inserted in

{ } rather than the usual parentheses. Bracketed words and phrases reflect additions made in the Soncino translation; sometimes these bracketed insertions reflect additional information Soncino provides in a footnote rather than within the written text itself.

There are different ways of translating the words rofeh and asya. In keeping with the views of one scholar of Talmudic medicine, Julius Preuss, these words will be translated consistently as "healer":

> ...it seems that the names rofeh and asya in the Talmud do not denote one's profession in the modern sense, but possibly encompass the term "learned physician" and certainly "lay practitioner." Thus one should be careful to translate the word rofeh as "healer," and not as "physician." [8]

As an aside, it is interesting to note Preuss points out that whereas in other languages the name "healer," if it is not identified with a magician, is derived from the word "knowledge;" in Hebrew the word for "healer," rofeh, is derived from the root "alleviate, assuage." [9]

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[8] Preuss, Julius. Biblical and Talmudic Medicine, translated and edited by Fred Rosner, (New York and London: Sanhedrin Press, 1978), p.21.

[9] Ibid., p. 30.

GOD'S PRESENCE

Healing begins within the framework of God's Rule. That God is present and involved actively in the healing process is the framework in which discussions of healing take place. Many passages about healing emphasize God's presence as transcendent; other passages emphasize God's presence as immanent.

Though the idea that God is the Source of all things is the foundation of a Talmudic theology of healing, even at this very beginning level, tensions which have ambiguous resolutions present themselves. (For example, if God is the ultimate authoritative Source, what meaning does authorization of human healing have; how can God's authority be ultimate if God gives away some of God's authority; why does God wound if God intends to heal?) Rather than attempt to respond to these and other theological questions as the primary texts are presented, the foundation material will be laid down with an eye towards the issues which seem to have been most relevant to the Rabbis. The Rabbis may deal with some of the same difficult theological questions a modern individual might have, but not necessarily all.

The Transcendent God as Source

God's transcendent healing presence goes beyond immediate human access. God is perceived to be the Creator of healings:

> Resh Lakish has said: The Holy One, Who is blessed,[10] does not smite Israel unless (the

[10] The phrase HaKodesh Barukh Hu is usually translated as The Holy One, blessed be He. In an effort to maintain as much as possible gender-neutral language for God, I use "Who is blessed" instead of "blessed be He" throughout the thesis.

> Holy One} has created for them a healing beforehand. (Megillah 13b)

As Creator, God is the Source of healings; God is responsible for the creation of healings.

God is not limited to cures however, but is the Source for the whole framework in which the healing process operates. God is claimed to be responsible both for bringing disease and healing:

> Raba opposed {two phrases}: It is written, "I kill, and I make alive" (Deuteronomy 22:39); seeing that {God}[11] even resurrects, how much the more does {God} heal! But the Holy One, Who is blessed, said thus: What I put to death I make alive, just as I wounded and I heal [the same person]. Our rabbis taught: "I kill, and I make alive": You might say I kill one person and give life to another, as the world goes on. Therefore it is stated, "I have wounded, and I heal": just as the wounding and the healing [obviously] refer to the same person, so death and life refer to the same person... (Pesahim 68a)

The dialectic in the above passage deals with the nuances of who and how God wounds and heals, but the underlying assumption is that at their origin both wounding and healing

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[11] In an effort to maintain gender-neutral language, "He" is substituted by "God." Some might argue that "God" (as well as "Lord" which I do not refrain from using either), is as masculine a word as "He;" furthermore, by not using the pronoun "He," I am changing, even if subtly, the way the rabbis in their own time perceived God. My response is that I don't think the term "God" stirs up the imagery of masculinity in the same way the term "He" does. The impression of the term "God" as gender-neutral is not based on linguistics, but on connotation. I recognize that this position is more personal than linguistically accurate, but given a limited number of translation possibilities, I have to make some subjective choices. As far as altering the way the rabbis perceived God goes, I have two responses. First, I don't think the rabbis ever would say or believed outright that God is male. Secondly, by continuing to use gender-specific language for God, even in translation, I feel I perpetuate theological sexism. I would be willing to give up some accuracy (which I don't think I really do) in order to preserve as best I can my feminist integrity.

belong to God's domain; God does both.

The Talmud relies upon a biblical verse in a way that underscores the idea of God's all-encompassing role in both bringing disease and healing:

> {God} said, "If you heed the Lord your God diligently, doing what is upright in [God's] sight, giving ear to {God's} commandments and keeping all {God's} 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." (NJPS, Exodus 15:26)

The Talmud expands upon the above verse:

> Rather [should you] say: If one has the opportunity to study the Torah and does not study it, the Holy One, Who is blessed, visits {the person} with ugly painful sufferings which stir {the person} up. For it is said: "I was dumb with silence, I kept silence from the good thing, and my pain was stirred up" (Psalms 39). (Berakhot 5a)

Indicated above is the notion that God is responsible for bringing disease and healing, and bringing on suffering and keeping it away. This is not to say that the individual is not involved in the process. But the idea that God can "visit" and bring "painful sufferings" presumes that the source of God's actions is God's justice system; that is, sickness is brought upon those deserving punishment.

The Talmud draws on a biblical verse to support its position that God grants authorization for humans to heal. God as Source is expressed insofar as it is God who does the granting. Humans may be involved in the process of healing, but their involvement is due only to the One who is the Source of permission:

> The School of R. Ishmael taught: [The words] "And to heal he shall heal" (Exodus 21:19) are [the source] from which it can be derived that

> authorization was granted [by God] to the healer to heal. (Baba Kamma 85a)

Several passages with references to the Future World include statements that there the sun is a means by which God carries out healings (Nedarim 8b, Avodah Zarah 3b-4a). Though the Rabbis refer to a Future World (rather than this one), the content of the passages is pertinent to the present discussion as it reinforces the belief that it is God who oversees and directs the way in which healings are facilitated:

> "There is no Gehenna in the Future World, but the Holy One, Who is blessed, brings the sun out of its sheath, so that it is fierce: the wicked are punished by it, the righteous are healed by it." (Avodah Zarah 3b)

Still in the realm of transcendence, besides being the Source of healing, God is perceived as Judge. Rabbi Hanina asserts, "No one bruises a finger here on earth unless it was so decreed for that person in heaven" (Hullin 7b).

The Rabbis believe that there is prescribed right behavior determined by God who is Judge. If people behave according to set criteria, they will be judged favorably; if not, they will be judged unfavorably. The insistence on following God's ways makes an impact in the realm of healing; that is, one is to follow God's ways or face the affliction of disease:

> R. Abba said to Rabbah b. Mari: It is written, "I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer" (NJPS, Exodus 15:26). But since {God} has brought no {disease}, what need is there of a cure?-- He replied: Thus has R. Johanan said: This verse is self-explanatory, because the whole reads, "{God} said, 'If you will heed the Lord your God diligently'": thus, if you will heed, I will not bring [disease upon you], but if you will not, I will; yet even so, "I the Lord am your healer." (NJPS and Soncino, Sanhedrin 101a)

At the core of this passage is the knowledge, based on Revelation, that God is the Source of healing, both preventing disease and bringing it about. Furthermore, this passage elucidates the primary motivation for the way God acts upon humans; that is, by evaluating human deeds.

The Transcendent God as Judge

Whether it is before one is struck by disease or after, when one is trying to regain health, God's judgment plays a role in determining the final outcome of the disease. The Talmud builds on the position that "all depends on one's merit" (Kiddushin 4:14). For example, the following pronouncement is made:

> R. Isaac the son of Rab Judah said: Let one always pray for mercy not to fall sick; for if {one} falls sick, [that person] is told, Show your merits [rights] and be quit. (Shabbat 32a)

Two previously quoted examples offer further support to the claim that God is Judge. It is stated in Berakhot 5a that the Holy One brings ugly and painful sufferings if a person has neglected Torah study. That is, God judges if a person has been neglectful of Torah study. In Nedarim 8b there is reference to there being no Gehinnom in the world to come, to the Holy One drawing forth the sun from its sheath, healing the righteous, and judging and punishing the wicked thereby. God's judgment is associated with healing on the one hand and punishment on the other, depending on a person's merit.

A major way in which God's role is Judge is in terms of responding to prayer and repentance. God judges when and to whom prayers should be responded to (eg. Berakhot 34b and Rosh Hashanah 18a), and when repentance should be permitted to

affect a judgment decreed (eg. Rosh Hashanah 17b). A detailed presentation of the categories of prayer and repentance will be given in chapters about the self affecting the Divine Realm.

The Immanent God as Merciful Partner

God's immanent involvement in the healing process typifies that of a merciful partner. The word "merciful" is used to describe that in God to which people can appeal, (eg. through cries of affliction or true repentance). What is meant by "partner" is that God is One who is involved and engaged in the lives of people (rather than existing solely on some removed Divine throne). The impression of God as distant Judge and unfathomable Source co-exists with the notion of God as a merciful partner either with the sick person and/or with the healer. In short, God is also One who is roused and involved.

While God may judge how to respond to individuals' prayers and repentance, that position captures only part of the essence of what takes place when individuals call upon God. On the one hand, God is the transcendent Judge of people's prayers and repentance; on the other hand, God, by being engaged in the process, is not simply a distant Judge. In modern terms God is both transcendent and immanent. The interactive processes of prayer and repentance bridge God's distance, highlighting God's "steadfast and loving" partnership. The following statement responds to a question - from what biblical verse(s) can it be proven that one who recovers from an illness is to offer thanksgiving:

> Because it is written: "Crazed because of the way of their transgression, and afflicted because of their iniquities, their soul abhorred all manner of food... They cried unto the Lord in their trouble. {God} sent {God's} word unto them and healed them... Let them praise {God for God's} steadfast love and wondrous deeds for humankind" (Soncino and NJPS,[12] Psalms 107:17-21). (Berakhot 54b)

As an aside, there is somewhat of a gap between biblical verse and Talmudic ruling above. That is, the verse speaks of those who are ill praying and when healed, giving thanks; the ruling of the rabbis here deals only with those healed giving thanks (without highlighting the initial act of prayer by those who are in need of healing). Regardless of the way the rabbis employ the biblical verse, what is key here is that God responds to cries of affliction with steadfast love. It should be noted, however, that the notion of God's steadfast love is mentioned in the biblical verse (rather than in the body of the Talmudic text); whether or not the Rabbis would have brought up "steadfast love" had it not already been in the biblical verse is not clear.

The dialectic between God as Judge and God as Merciful Partner presents itself succinctly in the following passage in which two positions stress different aspects of God's relationship with human beings:

> ...Why does one escape death {ie. by disease} and the other not? Because one prayed and was answered, and the other prayed and was not answered. Why was one answered and the other not? One prayed with the whole heart and was answered, the other did not pray with the whole heart and was not answered. R. Eleazar, however, said: The one person was praying before

[illegible]

[12] Up to the three dots (...) is Soncino's translation; after that is NJPS.

> a final sentence had been pronounced [in heaven], the other after a final sentence had been pronounced. (Rosh Hashanah 18a)

While the anonymous view emphasizes God's accessibility through heartfelt devotion, R. Eleazar accentuates God's role as the One who pronounces judgment. Still, in either case some ability to make an impression on God by appealing to God's mercy is admitted; only, R. Eleazar limits this ability to the time before final judgments are decreed. A more thorough analysis of Rosh Hashanah 18a is given in the chapter "The Self Affecting the Divine Realm: Through Prayer."

God's role as Merciful Partner extends to the area of visiting the sick: "The Holy One, Who is blessed, visited the sick..." (Sotah 14a). The image of God on the throne of judgment is absent in the following passage, replaced by the image of God as an intimate Presence:

> Those[13] who enter [a house] to visit the sick may sit neither upon the bed nor on a seat, but must wrap themselves about and sit in front of {the sick person}, for the Divine Presence is above an invalid's pillow, as it is said, "The Lord will sustain those on their sickbeds" (NJPS, Psalms 41:4). And Raba said in Rabin's name: How do we know that the Holy One, Who is blessed, sustains the sick? Because it is said, "The Lord will sustain those on their sickbeds" (Ibid.). (Shabbat 12b)[14]

Here no distinction is made between God sustaining the righteous but not the wicked, though the Rabbis might assume God always makes those distinctions. Still, an interpretation

[13] The whole passage, including the Biblical quote, has been changed to the plural in order to maintain gender-neutral language.

[14] This same passage is discussed in a different context, under the section entitled "Visitors to the Sick."

worthy of consideration is that God's sustenance extends to all who are suffering on their sickbeds. Furthermore, the Rabbis might be trying to convey the message that human beings are not the ones to determine who is worthy of Divine sustenance, (and therefore are instructed where to sit in order not to obstruct the Divine Presence). The dialectic between God as transcendent Judge and immanent Merciful Partner remains and will be explored more in detail later in this paper.

Theodicies

Implicit in some of the texts in this chapter, as well as chapters which follow, are theodicies. The Rabbis can be seen vindicating the justice of God, something which is especially problematic in the face of suffering because of illness. Though the Rabbis themselves never use the word "theodicy," this term is applied to describe the process in which the Rabbis defend or explain God's actions.

A typical type of theodicy is found in the section "The Transcendent God as Source," in Berakhot 5a. It says in effect, "If you obey God, God won't punish you; if you don't, God will." Since God afflicts only those deserving of affliction, God's justice is defended. The essence of this direct reward and punishment theodicy comes up in many of the texts. The theodicy is oriented to present experience; that is, what a person does now will have an effect on every day life. In that this theodicy deals with the here and now, when it appears throughout the thesis, it will be pointed out as "first-level" theodicy.

Despite the clarity of the "first-level" theodicy, the Rabbis are aware that it is not completely satisfactory. The main struggle the Rabbis have with this theodicy is how to explain what is happening when it seems righteous, "obedient" behavior is being practiced; yet nevertheless, a person's illness prevails. In the previous section, "The Immanent God as Merciful Partner," in Rosh HaShanah 18a, the Rabbis confront this struggle. Their explanations point to the belief that somehow the seemingly righteous behavior is flawed, either in the manner or at the time in which the behavior is carried out. While in Rosh HaShanah 18a, the Rabbis do probe more deeply into the question of God's justice, they still defend God's justice on the "first-level," the here and now. In other words, here and now, what seems to be right behavior really is not; therefore, God's justice is made known in the present situation.

But there is another way the Rabbis deal with the struggle of why the "good" suffer. They realize that there are those who are truly righteous, yet suffer terribly from illness. They recognize that the "justice system" would not seem just if no matter what, it were asserted that if people are ill, their behavior necessarily is flawed. Another type of theodicy deals with this difficulty. This theodicy is a refinement, an extension of the "first-level" theodicy oriented to present-day experience. This theodicy builds on the first, adding another dimension to it by considering the implications of the world-to-come. What is different about this theodicy is that the meting out of reward and punishment

is not understood as being limited to this world; rather, the fulfillment of God's justice may extend to the world-to-come. In the next chapter are many examples of theodicies centered around the idea that suffering is a result of special attention from God which will bring future reward. Because reward and punishment are seen to involve not just present-day experience, but a second level of experience, life in the world-to-come, this theodicy will be referred to as "second-level" theodicy throughout the thesis. God's justice is vindicated in "second-level" theodicies because by including the world-to-come, it is ascertained that God does reward those who are deserving of reward, regardless of what it may seem from a superficial evaluation of present suffering.

Besides defending God's justice itself, sometimes the Rabbis defend their defense of God. For example, they ask about those who cannot withstand the suffering even though it will bring future reward? The defense (of this defense of God) is that God only brings this special kind of suffering upon those who can withstand it. Some Rabbis assert that God does not require everyone to accept suffering willingly and lovingly. There may be those who will endure suffering, (that is, suffering which is not the result of punishment), and reap future reward, but those who cannot endure the suffering are not viewed as lesser individuals. In fact, it is claimed that some of the greatest Rabbis did not welcome their sufferings, nor their reward (Berakhot 5b).

THE ROLE OF THE SELF

In Covenant with God

At this point three main aspects of God's role have been discussed: Source, Judge, and Partner. Reference to God as Judge and Partner necessarily involves human beings; that is God judges humans and is in partnership with humans. While the previous chapters focused on how God functions in the healing process, detailed discussion of the basis on which God relates to human beings was put aside. Now, however, with the focus on human beings, a full discussion on the nature of Divine-human relationship is called for. It has been established that the framework for any discussion of a Talmudic theology of healing begins with God; that is, the source of disease, and therefore of all healing is God and all healing takes place within God's Rule. With the framework of God established, the next step is to determine how the self fits in. Only then is it possible to explore how the self in relationship to God contributes to the healing process.

According to the Talmud and based on the Bible, God commands. If these commandments are not followed, problems arise. In other words, Jews are bound in a covenant with God-- if they follow God's ways, God will respond with justice and mercy. This is not to say that God's justice and mercy always are comprehensible to the human mind; nevertheless, the covenant with God exists, with all of its subsequent responsibilities. (God also has a covenant with non-Jews, ie. the "Noahide Laws." The Talmud, however, addresses itself primarily to what is required of Jews.)

One of the requirements God has of Jews is certain conduct; another is Torah study (closely related to conduct):

> Raba [some say R. Hisda] says: If a person sees that painful sufferings visit him{/her}, let him{/her} examine his{/her} conduct. For it is said: "Let us search and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord" (NJPS, Lamentations 3:40). If {the person} examines and finds nothing [objectionable], let him/{her} attribute it to the neglect of Torah study. For it is said, "Happy is the {one} whom You discipline, O Lord, the {one} You instruct in Your teaching" (NJPS, Psalms 94:12). (Berakhot 5a)

This passage reflects the usual case of God's justice: the contractual sense of Covenant. Punishment for transgression is part of the contract and fits into the idea of a "first-level" theodicy[15] (ie. God punishes those who deserve it). In effect God says to human beings, "We have a deal. If you aren't getting what you expected, see if you did what you were supposed to." In that certain conduct and Torah study are expected by God, if a person is afflicted with painful sufferings, a first step in reacting to this affliction would be self-examination in these areas.

The passage continues with a more exceptional case: the assurance of God's love even when empirically God's justice is not clear. In effect God says to human beings, "You are suffering because I love you." Theory (God's love) supercedes experience (of the seeming injustice of painful sufferings). The very strong faith in God's love supports the idea that people can do what they believe their responsibilities to be, but then must trust that God is following through on God's

[15] For more information regarding theodicy refer to the section "Theodicies," the last section in the chapter "GOD'S PRESENCE."

part of the covenant. "God's part" is not simply justice, but loving "justice;" that is, the loving attention God gives may mean pain now, but greater reward later. This is an example of a theodicy,[16] explaining seeming injustice:

> If he{/she} did attribute it [thus], and still did not find [this to be the cause], let him{/her} be sure that these are chastenings of love. For it is said, "For whom the Lord loves, {the Lord} rebukes" (Proverbs 3:12). (Berakhot 5a)

Trusting that God follows through on God's part of the covenant requires the integration of the question of why painful sufferings attack those who truly have examined their deeds and find nothing objectionable. The first idea calls for self-examination. A second idea, (quoted directly above), suggests painful sufferings are "yisurin shel ahavah," "chastenings or visitations of divine love." These visitations suggest that God puts a person through a trial or gives a person a warning, but does so out of love for the person, (ie. for the person's own good). But these visitations might be extended beyond present trials or warnings (or what modern jargon might call "constructive criticism" with a Divine purpose). The visitations are associated with future reward, a "second-level" theodicy.[17]

[16] For more information regarding theodicy refer to the section "Theodicies," the last section in the chapter "GOD'S PRESENCE."

[17] On the surface it might seem that modern perspectives would reject the notion of pain now, reward later. However, there are many who give much attention to the idea of the necessary pain of personal growth. Personal growth perhaps is what some modern individuals would perceive as "spiritual reward."

The two ideas, self-examination and "chastenings of love," support the belief that if people follow God's ways, God will respond with justice and mercy. This belief is subsumed in the workings of reward and punishment, aspects of God's covenant. In a third approach the idea of reward and punishment is less a result of deeds and more a result of "attitude," that of loving acceptance. Implicitly in the next passage the Rabbis defend a theodicy; that is, God doesn't give "chastenings of love" except to those who can withstand them. The Berakhot text continues:

> Raba, in the name of R. Sahorah, in the name of R. Huna, says: If the Holy One, Who is blessed, is pleased with someone, {that person} is crushed with painful sufferings. For it is said, "But the Lord, pleased with him, crushed him by disease" (Isaiah 53:10). Now, you might think that this is so even if {the person} did not accept the [painful sufferings] with love. Therefore it is said, "To see if his soul would offer itself in restitution" (Isaiah 53:10). Even as the trespass-offering must be brought by consent, so also the sufferings must be endured with consent. And if {the person} did accept them, what is the reward? "He might see offspring and have long life" (Isaiah 53:10). And more than that, {the person's} knowledge [of the Torah] will endure with {the person}. For it is said, "And that through him the Lord's purpose might prosper" (Isaiah 53:10). (Berakhot 5a)

Another passage also stresses the notion of adopting a proper attitude. The following is the comment R. Johanan makes on his visit to R. Eleazar who has fallen ill:

> Why do you weep? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? Surely we learnt: The one who sacrifices much and the one who sacrifices little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to heaven. (Berakhot 5b)

Rabbi Akiba affirms the position concerning painful sufferings having to do with God being "pleased with a person"

(Berakhot 5a). In other words, painful sufferings do not mean punishment necessarily; ie., they can be the result of God's love, yisurin shel ahavah, (a "second-level" theodicy, explaining God's seeming injustice). Rabbi Akiba says:

> As long as I saw that my master's wine did not turn sour, nor was his flax smitten, nor his oil putrefied, nor his honey become rancid, I thought, God forbid, that he may have received all his reward in this world [leaving nothing for the next]; but now that I see him lying in pain, I rejoice [knowing that his reward has been treasured up for him in the next].
>
> (Sanhedrin 101a)

This text reflects the complexities of the system of reward and punishment, including yisurin shel ahavah. Rabbi Akiba rejoices that his master is in pain. What empirically looks like punishment, (being in pain), in fact may be reward (to be granted in the world to come). The seeming punishment of pain coupled with the notion of reward to be granted provides an explicit example of yisurin shel ahavah. The system of reward and punishment cannot be understood solely by examining the prosperity or grief a person experiences in this world. Rather, reward and punishment function on a grander scale. That reward and punishment function justly and mercifully within God's Role is a premise assumed in the concept of covenant, even though empirical proof is not always evident.

Reacting to Painful Sufferings

Within the discussion of the self in covenant with God, many possible reactions the self might have when afflicted with painful sufferings were introduced. Many of the ideas in passages quoted in the previous chapter overlap each other; therefore, a review will be given of the possible reactions

gleaned from the texts. After reviewing these reactions, the next stage will be to examine how the self contributes to the healing process.

The following four ideas all assume that reward and punishment are effectively at work within God's Universe; however, reward and punishment may not be what they seem. The reactions to painful sufferings gleaned from the last chapter are as follows: 1) Self-examination of deeds (ie. conduct and Torah study); 2) Adopting the proper attitude (ie. loving acceptance); 3) Considering that the pain is the result of "chastenings of love;" 4) Speculating that reward awaits in the world to come (for suffering endured in this world).

The discussion concerning the meaning of painful sufferings is further complicated by yet another text. Ideas in the following passage offer a counterpoint to two reactions mentioned above (attitude and reward awaits):

> R. Johanan once fell ill and R. Hanina went to visit him. He said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward. He said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand and he raised him.
>
> (Berakhot 5b)

R. Johanan does not bear an attitude of "loving acceptance" of his sufferings, nor appreciate the potential reward that awaits him (in the world to come); yet, he is "raised." A critical mitigation presents itself; saintliness is not required in order for a healing to take place. A fifth reaction to healing emerges - 5) Rely on the power of a great rabbi. In this case the great rabbi who provides a healing is R. Hanina. This particular text does not say explicitly

where R. Hanina's power comes from, but throughout the Talmud, rabbis often are depicted as righteous and pious people who are able to do extraordinary things. Those who are righteous and pious follow God's ways. God's ways exist within God's Rule. It follows logically that fundamentally God would be the source of the power any great rabbi might exhibit. In the case of R. Johanan and R. Hanina (as in the case of healers who are not Rabbis), God's healing power is "once-removed," but from the passage studied, it is not clear why. (To go into more detail about what is special about God's relationship with the Rabbis in the Talmud is beyond the scope of this work.)

The Berakhot 5b passage above affirms God's justice: R. Johanan, being a righteous rabbi, does not seems to be suffering as a result of punishment[18], and since the sufferings that promise future reward[19] are not endurable to him, he will not continue suffering without reason; he is healed. God does not cause suffering without purpose; God's justice is vindicated.

With possible reactions a person might have to illness delineated, it is appropriate to examine the next step - how the Talmud suggests an ill person contribute to the healing process. The principal way is suggested by the idea that "all depends on one's merit" (M. Kiddushin 32a). (This idea gives further support to the belief that justice is at work within God's Rule.) Contributing to the healing process has to do

[18] Ie. "first-level" theodicy.

[19] Ie. "second-level" theodicy.

with affecting the Divine Realm through meritorious acts, by proving worthiness:

> R. Isaac the son of Rab Judah said: Let one always pray for mercy not to fall sick; for if someone falls sick, {that person} is told, "Show your merits and be freed [of the illness]." (Shabbat 32a)

In effect the threat R. Isaac makes is that a person who falls sick will have to prove that he/she does not deserve the "punishment" of illness. Under the justice system the righteous deserve to be healed. The passage seems to assume the reason for sickness is punishment. (Implicit in the passage is a "first-level" theodicy, God punishes those who deserve it. When a person proves that he/she is no longer worthy of the punishment, the punishment is lifted, the person is freed of the illness.)

THE SELF AFFECTING THE DIVINE REALM: THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer before Illness Occurs

The effectiveness of prayer is well attested to by the Talmudic Rabbis. They believed that requests for God to do specific acts could get specific, active responses on God's part. The importance of prayer is claimed not only during the illness itself, but as a precaution before an illness appears as well. As R. Isaac the son of Rab Judah said, "Let one always pray for mercy not to fall sick..." (Shabbat 32a). More specifically, a Talmudic passage gives a prayer to be uttered before a medical procedure practiced at the time, that of letting-blood:

> May it be Your will, O Lord, my God, that this operation may be a cure for me, and may you heal me, for you are a faithful healing God, and Your healing is sure... (Berakhot 60a)[20]

Prayer during Illness

More often addressed in terms of prayer on one's own behalf, is prayer during illness itself. The Talmud, in quoting Psalms during a discussion related to healing, identifies crying out to God as part of the experience of illness:

> They cried unto the Lord in their trouble. {God} sent {God's} word unto them and healed them..." (Psalms 107:17-21). (Berakhot 54b)

[20] The passage continues by saying, "since {people} have no power to heal, but this is a habit with them." This comment stirs up a protest by Abaye who claims that people have been granted permission to heal. The whole issue of the authorization for humans to heal will be dealt with when the role of community is discussed. All that is being claimed now is that there was a position supporting the belief in the importance in praying before a medical procedure.

Another comment reflects the practice of prayer during illness:

> ...One (person suffering from a disease) prayed and was answered, and the other prayed and was not answered... (Rosh HaShanah 18a)

Shortly, more attention will be given to the whole passage from which the above was quoted. At the very least the passage affirms the practice of prayer during illness.

At this point two aspects of prayer and healing have been covered: 1. the importance of prayer before illness occurs or a medical procedure takes place, and 2. indications of the expression of prayers during illness. Now it is appropriate to present some of the material which deals with the effect of prayer on the Divine Realm.

The Results of Prayer

Though on the surface it may seem that the Rabbis are convinced of the effectiveness of prayer since several of them advocate it even when there is near certainty of death (Berakhot 5a and 10a), the issue gets more complex when the effectiveness of prayer is addressed head on (ie. in terms of illness). Many factors are touched on concerning whether or not the prayer helps bring about healing; including who the person who prays is, and how much effort the person puts into prayer. The following passage directly addresses the issue:[21]

> On the question of the final sentence[22] of an

[illegible]

[21] Part of this passage was discusses in the section "The Immanent God as Merciful Partner." At that point the passage was presented to illustrate different aspects of God's relationship with human beings.

[22] The "final sentence" (gezar din) is a reference to the judgment of an individual for the New Year.

> individual there is a difference between Tannaim, as it has been taught: R. Meir used to say: Two men take to their bed suffering equally from the same disease, or two men are before a criminal court to be judged for the same offence; yet one gets up and the other does not get up, one escapes death and the other does not escape death. Why does one get up and the other not? Why does one escape death and the other not? Because one prayed and was answered, and the other prayed and was not answered. Why was one answered and the other not? One prayed with a whole heart {tefilah shleimah} and was therefore answered, the other did not pray with a whole heart and was not answered. R. Eleazar, however, said: The one man was praying before his final sentence had been pronounced [in heaven], the other after his final sentence had been pronounced. Rabbi Isaac said: Supplication is good for a person whether before the final sentence has been pronounced or after. (Rosh HaShanah 18a)

The above is a three way debate with different positions presented by R. Meir, R. Eleazar, and R. Isaac. The question as it refers to healing is - who recovers and who does not? The three positions can be summarized as follows.

1. R. Meir. On the one who recovers: That person's prayer, a "whole-hearted prayer," is answered. On the one who does not recover: That person's prayer, not a "whole-hearted prayer," is not answered. Exactly what is a "whole-hearted prayer" (tefilah shleimah) is not delineated in the text. Besides "whole-hearted prayer," the phrase could be translated as "perfect prayer."

2. R. Eleazar. On the one who recovers: That person's prayer is expressed before the "final sentence" (gezar din). On the one who does not recover: That person's prayer is expressed after the "final sentence." Presumably, if the final sentence has not been decreed, a prayer (appeal?) still could have an effect on God, the One who decrees. After a

final sentence has been decreed, a prayer has no effect.

3. R. Isaac. His position seems to mediate between R. Meir's and R. Eliezar's. Whether or not a final sentence has been decreed, and despite the so-called distinctions of "whole-hearted prayer," supplication is good for a person. Why it is "good" R. Isaac does not say. But judging from rabbinic attitudes on this matter (as seen previously in this paper), likely supplication is considered good because it is meritorious behavior, and meritorious behavior has its rewards.

The debate between these three rabbis touches on several areas which influence the effectiveness of prayers. For R. Meir the key is tefilah shleimah, the whole-hearted prayer. His emphasis is on a certain quality the prayer must have. To him there exists a kind of perfect prayer. But what is not clear is why and during what circumstances some people can pray this perfect prayer while others cannot. R. Meir seems to believe that God responds only to a certain kind of prayer; yet, though he explains that a "whole-hearted" type of prayer is required, he does not explain why this is the only type to promote healing. In short, R. Meir leaves the reader with several major questions including - 1. Who can say the "whole-hearted" prayer? 2. What is it about them that gives them the ability (to say this kind of prayer)? 3. When can this prayer be said? All three of these questions; who, why, and when, put the focus on the self. The onus falls on the one who prays; that person bears the responsibility concerning the type of prayer and the manner in which the prayer is

expressed. By putting the onus on the one who prays, R. Meir releases God from the blame individuals might impose on God when their prayers are not heeded as requested; (ie., R. Meir gets God "off the hook").

Whereas R. Meir focuses on the self's responsibility, R. Eleazar's position originates more with God's system. According to R. Eleazar, there are times when God can be influenced and times when God cannot be. If the difference in effectiveness has to do with when a final sentence has been pronounced in heaven, the responsibility of the self is limited; that is, at a certain point a person can do no more. The onus is lifted as God's involvement is intensified (through the power of God's decree). Like R. Meir, R. Eleazar also leaves the reader with questions, including 1. Can people know the times in which God can be influenced? 2. If so, how can they know? 3. At what point does God decree a final sentence (or when is the onus lifted from the one who prays) and why? 4. Does who a person is and how that person prays make a difference as to when God will decree a final sentence?

The third rabbi in the debate, R. Isaac, mediates between the positions of R. Meir and R. Eleazar. He maintains that supplication is good for a person whether before the final sentence has been pronounced or not. What exactly he means by "good" or "yafeh" is left open to interpretation.[23] What R.

[23] Marcus Jastrow, (in A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature, New York: The Judaica Press,Inc., 1971), gives many possibilities for translating the word "yafeh," including - appropriate; strong, healthy; handsome, beautiful, fine (of build);

Isaac does is affirm the worthiness of supplication without providing reasoning. In effect for R. Isaac it is enough to say, "Supplication is good, do it." Still, a modern reader might be troubled by these questions: 1. Can supplication be "good for a person" but not have an effect on God? (The Rabbis might answer, "Supplication is recognized by God as meritorious behavior which is rewarded.") 2. Why is supplication good for a person if it doesn't lead to recovery? (Again, the Rabbis might answer by saying, "The good of supplication is that it is meritorious behavior which leads to reward"). 3. What is the benefit of supplication after a final sentence has been decreed? Is it different for the one who recovers as opposed to the one who does not? (The Rabbis might respond by saying, "Reward is granted not only in this world, but in the world-to-come.")

Although the previous discussion expounds on the value the rabbis attached to prayer during illness, the rabbis were well aware of the problem of calculating the results of prayer, on having expectations of how their prayers will affect a situation at hand. (Baba Batra 164b). They face the special problem of exhorting prayer and extolling its value on the one hand, but warning not to have expectations of this activity on

auspicious; well, right. By using the word "good," Soncino has chosen a translation which doesn't limit what the meaning is. But by being general, Soncino leaves the reader without much information as to what exactly R. Isaac meant by his choice of words. Of course, if Soncino had been more specific, it would be adding a level of interpretation to the text which may not have been the intent of the rabbis. For example, "supplication is auspicious for a person" says something more than "supplication is good for a person," so that using the term "auspicious" possibly would reflect an inaccurate interpretation of the rabbis' intent.

the other (Berakhot 32b).[24]

A Synthesis of the Process of Prayer during Illness

A simplified version of the message one would get by combining the ideas presented about prayer would be something like this: If you are sick, it may be the result of who you are or something you have done. Exhibiting meritorious behavior may help your condition as God who is a just and merciful Judge responds to righteousness. Prayer is one means of expressing righteous behavior. The right kind of prayer is very effective. But you may not know how or on what level the "effectiveness" takes place, (eg. whether a physical healing or reward in the world to come...). The important thing is to pray but not to have expectations as to what will be the result of prayer. You must have faith in prayer and trust that God listens.

Again, the message as stated is simplified. As has been presented, many debates take place within the material from the Talmud. Still, the above seems to glean the important

[24] The passage from Berakhot 32b follows:

R. Hanin said in the name of R. Hanina: If one prays long, {that person's} prayer does not pass unheeded. Whence do we know this: From Moses our Master; for it says, "And I prayed unto the Lord, (Dt. 9:26)" and it is written afterwards, "And the Lord hearkened unto me that time also" (Dt. 9:19). But is that so? Has not R. Hiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: If one prays long and looks to fulfillment of his[/her] prayer, in the end he[/she] will have vexation of heart, as it says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12)?"... R. Hama son of R. Hanina said: if [someone] sees that he[/she] prays and is not answered, [that person] should pray again, as it says, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and of good courage! O wait for the Lord!" (Soncino and NJPS, Psalms 27:14). (Berakhot 32b)

ideas from the texts, highlighting the issues of greatest significance. It is recognized, however, that a level of judgment occurs whenever a summary or synthesis is offered, and the subjective nature of the statement is acknowledged.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Besides prayer prior to illness and prayer during illness, one more category of prayer that relates to healing is thanksgiving. The following passage indicates the obligation for giving thanks after recovery from an illness:

> Rab Judah was ill and recovered. R. Hanna of Baghdad and other rabbis went to visit him. They said to him: "Blessed be the All-Merciful who has given you back to us and has not given you to the dust." He said to them: " You have absolved me from the obligation of giving thanks." But has not Abaye said that he must utter his thanksgiving in the presence of ten!- There were ten present. But he did not utter the thanksgiving? - There was no need, as he answered after them, Amen. (Berakhot 54b)

There is some disagreement in this passage, concerning method of giving thanks. The points of discussion concern 1. uttering a prayer of thanksgiving oneself, 2. having the prayer said by someone else (on one's own behalf), and 3. having a minyan in either case. Despite the discussion, there is no argument that one who has recovered does have an obligation to give thanks.

While the above passage is specific in its reference to someone who has recovered from illness, another discussion is more general in its association of health with prayers of thanks. Each time a person goes out of the lavatory, he/she is to say a specified blessing thanking God for a working

body.[25] In deciding how to end the prayer the following discussion takes place:

> How does the blessing conclude? Rab said: "{Blessed are You who} heals the sick." Said Samuel: Abba has turned the whole world into invalids! No; what he says is, "{Who} heals all flesh." R. Shesheth said: "Who does wonderfully." R. Papa said: Therefore let us say both, "Who heals all flesh and does wonderfully." (Berakhot 60b)

These words are not directed specifically towards an illness; rather, they are part of a prayer included in daily living. By praying in the way the passage instructs, God's healing powers are recognized and acknowledged on a regular basis in the format of a prayer of thanks.

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[25] This is the blessing form that became traditional to recite to this day.

> "Blessed is {God} who has formed {human beings} in wisdom and created in {them} many orifices and many cavities. It is fully known before the throne of Your glory that if one of them should be [improperly] opened or one of them closed, it would be impossible for a {person} to stand before You." (Berakhot 60b)

THE SELF AFFECTING THE DIVINE REALM: THROUGH REPENTANCE

Repentance and Prayer

In many ways repentance is similar to prayer. Primarily, both involve addressing oneself to the will of God. The issue of repentance is contained in the following discussion of the shemoneh esrey prayer[24]:

> What reason had {the rabbis} for mentioning repentance {in the fifth blessing of the shemoneh esrey} after understanding? Because it is written, "Lest they, understanding with their heart, return and be healed" (Isaiah 6:10). If that is the reason, healing should be mentioned next to repentance? - Do not imagine such a thing, since it is written, "And let {them} return unto the Lord {who} will have compassion upon {them}, and to our God {who} will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). But why should you rely upon this verse? Rely rather on the other! - There is written another verse, "[God] forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases, [and] redeems your life from the Pit" (NJPS, Psalms 103:3-4), which implies that redemption and healing come after forgiveness. But it is written, "Lest they return and be healed?" That refers not to the healing of sickness but to the healing [power] of forgiveness. (Megillah 17b)

By examining the various prooftexts presented, different nuances concerning the connection between repentance and healing can be discerned. In short, this is what the prooftexts say: 1. Have understanding, return (ie. repent), and be healed. 2. Return, God will (have compassion and) forgive. (In the prayerbook redemption, then healing follow.) 3. God forgives, heals, and redeems. (In the traditional prayerbook healing comes after redemption.) 4. Return, be

[24] In order to help put into context the discussion which takes place, the order of petitions in the shemoney esrey as it exists in the traditional prayerbook should be noted - 1. for understanding, 2. for repentance, 3. for forgiveness, 4. for redemption, 5. for healing.

healed. Here healing is associated not with physical illness, but to healings invoked by forgiveness. Why healing is attached to forgiveness here, but dissociated with physical illness is not clear.

In the four prooftexts from the Bible, healing follows repentance. There seems to be agreement that repentance is important, and perhaps even essential, in promoting healing. What is cause for discussion is how understanding, forgiveness, and redemption fit into the pattern. Also, as far as the fourth position is concerned, what the meaning is of the word "healing" (refuah) comes into question.

Besides being associated with forgiveness, there are other instances in which the word healing is not connected with the healing of physical illness. Here, in a passage dealing with repentance and healing, a statement is made that repentance can have the power of rescinding a final sentence, and that process is called a "healing":

> R. Johanan said: Great is the power of repentance that it rescinds a {person's} final sentence, as it says, "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they seeing with their eyes and hearing with their ears and understanding with their heart return and be healed" (Isaiah 6:10). Said R. Papa to Abaye: Perhaps this was before the final sentence? - He replied: It is written, "and [it] be healed." What is it that requires healing? You must say, the final sentence. (Rosh Hashanah 17b)

Again, why healing is not attached to physical illness is unclear. In the chapter about prayer was an opinion that tied prayers' effectiveness in promoting physical healing with whether or not a final sentence had been pronounced (Rosh Hashanah 18a). A juxtaposition of the passages from Rosh

Hashanah 17b with 18a reflects differing ways of approaching the meaning of healing (whether physical or not) and understanding the fixedness of the final sentence (at the New Year).

That "healing" is associated with forgiveness and the rescinding of the final sentence is noteworthy. There are different possibilities of how to understand the overlap of the word healing into the worlds of the healing of physical disease and forgiveness, notably: 1. Physical healing and "spiritual" healing are closely related. 2. Physical healing and "spiritual" healing are two separate things; yet, the same word is applied in both cases since healing in either case implies moving from one state to another (whether sickness to physical health, guilt to forgiveness, or negative judgment to final sentence rescinded).

Sickness Atones

While the Talmudic discussion of the shemoneh esrey was detailed, another text is quite direct in its claim that as sickness atones for sins, healing takes place:

> R. Alexander said in the name of R. Hiyya b. Abba: Sick people do not recover from their illnesses until all their sins are forgiven them,[27] as it is written, "Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases" (Psalms 103:3). (Nedarim 41a)

When sins are forgiven (by means of sickness atoning for sins), healing follows in the Nedarim passage. As an aside, it is interesting to note, that a related belief suggests - if a person has suffered, it means that all the person's sins

[27] The Soncino translation of this statement has been changed from the singular to the plural.

have been forgiven (Berakhot 5b).[28] For purposes of highlighting the theological challenge, (that is, even though the following passage does not directly deal with the suffering of physical illness), the idea of suffering as a result of being bereft of children is compared with the suffering of someone in need of "healing." Whereas in the Nedarim passage when there is forgiveness (when sickness atones), healing follows; here when there is forgiveness, suffering persists:

> A Tanna recited before R. Johanan the following: If people[29] busy themselves in the study of Torah and in acts of charity and [nonetheless] bury their children,[30] all their sins are forgiven them.[31] (Berakhot 5a-b)

What the two passages have in common is that forgiveness is

[28] Since the person implied in the passage is a sage, R. Johanan, the equation of suffering with forgiveness of sins may be more limited than it appears in the Talmudic passage.

[29] This passage has been changed to the plural in order to maintain gender-neutral language.

[30] Soncino adds in a footnote, "An allusion to R. Johanan himself, who was a great scholar and charitable man, and was bereft of his children."

[31] The passage continues by presenting prooftexts:

> "R. Johanan said to him: I grant you Torah and acts of charity, for it is written: 'By mercy and truth iniquity is expiated' (Proverbs 16:6). 'Mercy' is acts of charity, for it is said: 'The one who pursues righteousness and mercy, finds life, righteousness, and honor' {Proverbs 21:21}. 'Truth' is Torah, for it is said: 'Buy truth and never sell it' (NJPS, Proverbs 23:23). But how do you know [what you say about] the one who buries his children? - A certain Elder [thereupon] recited to him in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: It is concluded from the analogy in the use of the word 'iniquity.' Here it is written: 'By mercy and truth <u>iniquity</u> is expiated.' And elsewhere it is written: '{You, God} recompense <u>iniquity</u> of parents upon their children' {Jeremiah 32:18}. (Berakhot 5b)

the end result. What follows is a projection of how the Rabbis may have explained their assertions concerning forgiveness: Forgiveness is a most highly regarded value. That is, whether or not sufferings (physical or otherwise) are diminished, if there is forgiveness, that is most important. If you are forgiven by God you somehow have been reconciled to God. If you are not reconciled to God, you cannot reap the rewards you would deserve (by "contract" or Covenant with God[32]). If you are reconciled, forgiven, your merit is increased, and meritorious behavior is worthy of recognition by God who judges and rewards.

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[32] Note that the Rabbis do not use the terms "contract" or "Covenant." These words facilitate modern ways of trying to verbalize the theological beliefs of the Rabbis.

THE SELF AFFECTING THE DIVINE REALM: THROUGH TORAH

Torah as It Relates to the Onset of Illness

Besides prayer and repentance, the study of Torah also is considered meritorious behavior and influences sickness and healing. Stated positively by R. Simeon b. Lakish, Torah study is a means by which to prevent the onset of painful sufferings (Berakhot 5a). Stated negatively by R. Johanan- lack of Torah study may result in the onset of painful sufferings:

> If one has the opportunity to study the Torah and does not study it, the Holy One, Who is blessed, {brings upon that person} ugly and painful sufferings, which stir {the person up}. For it is said: "I was dumb with silence, I kept silence from the good thing, and my pain was stirred up" (Psalms 39:3). "The good thing" refers only to the Torah, as it is said: "For I give you good doctrine, do not forsake My teaching" (Proverbs 4:2). (Berakhot 5a)

Raba (some say R. Hisda) includes neglect of Torah study as one possibility among several that may be the cause of painful sufferings (Berakhot 5a).[33]

In a case in which R. Eliezer had fallen sick and R. Akiba was visiting him, the two engaged in dialogue. Their discussion supports the belief that neglecting Torah is related to sickness, but mitigates against the power of the idea by recognizing and asserting that even the just sin (and are rewarded for suffering in the world to come). R. Eliezer who had fallen sick said to R. Akiba:

> "Akiba, have I neglected anything in the whole

[33] The other possibilities he mentions are [objectionable] conduct and chastenings of love.

> Torah?"[34] - {Akiba} replied, "You, O Master, have taught us, 'For there is no just person on earth who does what is best and does not sin'" {Ecclesiastes 7:20}. (Sanhedrin 101a)

Simplified, ideas presented so far having to do with Torah and healing in effect say the following: 1. Study Torah, and you won't get sick. 2. If you don't study Torah, you will get sick. 3. If you get sick, neglect of Torah study may or may not be the cause. 4. Even if you study Torah diligently, you can't avoid sin completely; you may suffer from sickness, (but you'll be rewarded in the world to come). At what level the rabbis believed the first two types of statements is difficult to judge - whether as literal beliefs or as exaggerations with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of Torah study. Still, the belief in God's justice prevails.

Torah for Alleviation of Pain and Promotion of Healing

Not only is Torah study claimed important, meritorious behavior before the onset of illness, but it is also said to play a role once illness has come into effect. While the above section included warnings that lack of Torah study may result in illness, here Torah study is endowed with curative effects:

> For those[35] who feel pain in their heads, let them engage in the study of Torah, since it is said, "For {the words of Torah} are a graceful wreath upon your head" (NJPS, Proverbs 1:9). For those who feel pain in their throats, let them engage in the study of Torah, since it is said, "{the words of Torah are} a necklace about

[34] Soncino adds: "That you {Akiba} say that I {Eliezer} now suffer for my sins, so that I may have nothing but reward in the world to come?"

[35] To maintain a gender-neutral tone the passage has been changed to the plural.

> your throat" (NJPS, Proverbs 1:9). For those who feel pain in their bowels, let them engage in the study of Torah, since it is said, "{Torah} shall be a healing for your navel" (Proverbs 3:8). For those who feel pain in their bones, let them engage in the study of Torah, since it is said, "{Torah shall be} tonic for your bones" (NJPS, Proverbs 3:8). For those who feel pain in their whole bodies, let them engage in the study of Torah, since it is said, "Healing for {the} whole body" (NJPS, Proverbs 4:22). (Erubin 54a)

The healing effects of Torah are emphasized in the continuation of the passage in a remark by R. Judah. The benefits of God's Torah is accorded much more healing power than that of drugs administered by human beings:

> R. Judah son of R. Hiyya remarked: Come and see how the dispensation of mortals is not like that of the Holy One, Who is blessed. In the dispensation of mortals, when {someone} administers a drug to {another}, it may be beneficial to one limb but injurious to another, but with the Holy One, Who is blessed, it is not so. {God} gave a Torah to Israel and it is a drug of life for {the whole} body, as it is said, "Healing for {the} whole body" (NJPS, Proverbs 4:22). (Erubin 54a)

Also, similar to statements in previous passages (ie. Torah study prevents illness and lack of Torah study brings on illness), the level at which the rabbis understood the curative effects of Torah is unclear (whether more or less literally). It is "logical," but not textually justifiable, to link what has been presented here about Torah study and healing with previous material concerning meritorious behavior as it relates to reward and punishment. To make that link Torah study would become the meritorious behavior and reward would become healing. A statement such as the following would be the result: Torah heals because Torah study is meritorious; meritorious behavior is rewarded by God; since

healings are rewards, Torah study is responsible (by way of God) for providing healings. Again, the rabbis never synthesized the ideas in the way the preceding statement attempts to do; such a synthesis is "logical" but speculative.

Another, less "logical" but as viable a speculation of how the rabbis may have explained why Torah heals is exemplified by this statement: Torah heals because Torah is God's remedy.

GOD'S RESPONSE TO MERITORIOUS BEHAVIOR

Effectiveness of Prayer, Repentance, and Torah Study

Though the previous three chapters discussed the self affecting the Divine Realm, the word "effectiveness" is tricky. The self may have an effect on the Divine Realm, but not necessarily in terms of effectiveness meaning 100% physical recovery. More precisely, the effect seems to be that the self receives Divine Justice through God's response to meritorious behavior, principally in God's dispensation of reward and punishment.

Receiving Divine Justice through Meritorious Behavior

This section is built on the texts presented in the previous chapters about the self affecting the Divine Realm. In order to understand properly what follows, the reader will need to have been exposed to these texts as no detail is given here about what exactly the texts say.

Being in covenant with God includes the belief that God responds to meritorious behavior. Furthermore, when God responds, God does so justly. God's justice encompasses mercy and love (ie. after sin). Prayer, repentance, and Torah study all are subsumed under meritorious behavior deserving of God's response.

There are numerous general accounts of God responding to prayer in the Talmud, (eg. Yebamot 64a, M. Ta'anit 15a-15b). In addition, there are accounts of God responding to prayer with healings. God responds to spontaneous prayers, ie. to "cries of affliction" (Berakhot 54b) and to fixed prayer, ie.

to petitions in the shemoneh esrey (Megillah 17b).[34] Also considered significant is who says the prayer and the manner in which a prayer is expressed (ie. Berakhot 32b).

For repentance, God is there for people to "return to" when they examine their self-conduct as a result of being afflicted with painful sufferings (Berakhot 5a). The belief that God responds to repentance with healing is reflected in a discussion on the shemoneh esrey (Megillah 17b).

God responds to Torah study as well. God both prevents the onset of illness through Torah (Berakhot 5a) and heals through Torah (Erubin 54a).

Through God's response, justice is done; God's justice reflects a system of reward and punishment. While God's justice reigns, it must be reiterated that God's justice encompasses mercy and love. God's justice, as it relates to healing and reward and punishment, is touched upon more and less directly in numerous discussions. The discussions include those about the rewards of painful sufferings (Sanhedrin 101a, Berakhot 5a, Berakhot 5b), the punishment for neglecting Torah study (Berakhot 5a), and rescinding a final sentence (Rosh Hashanah 17b, 18a).

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[34] Besides responding to an individual's own prayer for healing, God responds to prayers said on behalf of a sick person (eg. Berakhot 34b, Ketubot 62b).

THE COMMUNITY

Introduction

The role of the community in healing is played out in several areas, including prayers on behalf of the sick, the role of the healer, and visitors to the sick. Even though there are accounts of a sick person relating directly to a member of the community, ie. a healer or a visitor, these scenarios all take place within the domain and consciousness of God's Rule.

Relating to God

Within the realm of healing, as in rabbinic Judaism generally, the community has a special relationship with God. The relationship an individual has with God extends beyond that person him/herself; that is, a Jewish individual is part of the community Israel. According to the Rabbis, as God has specific requirements of Israel, God's response to that community is unique. In the following passage it is clear that the Source for all healing is God, but how God's healing power works within different communities varies:

> "After these things" (Esther 3:1). After what: - Raba said: After God had created a healing for the blow [which was about to fall]. For Resh Lakish has said: The Holy One, Who is blessed, does not smite Israel unless [The Holy One] has created for them a healing beforehand, as it says, "When I have healed Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered" (Hosea 7:1). Not so, however, with the other nations; {God} smites them first, and then creates for them a healing, as it says: "The Lord will smite Egypt, smiting and healing" (Isaiah 19:22). (Megillah 13b)

As God has a special relationship with Israel generally, so too the belief that God relates to Israel in a special way as

regards healing. While to modern eyes the notion of a certain people being in a more favorable position with God may seem objectionable, this Talmudic rabbi, Resh Lakish, expresses his beliefs from an ethnocentric viewpoint.

Relating to the Sick Person

The valuable role individuals outside of the sick person play in the healing process is taken seriously. The metaphor at the end of the following passage highlights an assertion that the sick person needs help in healing him/herself:

> R. Johanan fell ill and R. Hanina went in to visit him. He said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward. He said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand and he raised him. Why could not R. Johanan raise himself?[37] - They replied: {Prisoners} cannot free {themselves} from jail. (Berakhot 5b)

Prayers on Behalf of the Sick

There are numerous accounts of individuals praying on behalf of one who is in need of healing. The accounts include praying on behalf of a rabbi, a spouse, and a relative of a colleague or friend. In addition, there is reference to a healing performed in the Bible (II Kings 5) by the holy man Elisha on behalf of Naaman, the commander of the army, sent by a neighboring king. The Talmud associates the manner in which Elisha heals with praying on behalf of another:

> R. Johanan said: [Elisha] healed the leprosy of Naaman which is the equivalent of death, as it is written, "Let her not be as one dead" (NJPS, Numbers 12:12). (Sanhedrin 47a)

The citation from Numbers is Aaron's plea to Moses on account

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[37] Soncino adds in a footnote, "If he could cure R. Hiyya b. Abba, why could he not cure himself?"

of Miriam who had been stricken with snow-white scales. Moses responds to Aaron's plea by crying out to God, "O God, pray heal her!" (NJPS, Numbers 12:13). In both biblical verses referred to by R. Johanan, it is notable that the ones associated with healing prayers are considered holy men.[38]

Whereas in the above passage there is no discussion as to what quality a healer must have in order to make a prayer effective; passages from Berakhot 34b offer some insight into this matter:

> Our Rabbis taught: Once the son of R. Gamaliel fell ill. He sent two scholars to R. Hanina b. Dosa to ask him to pray for him. When he saw them, he went up to an upper chamber and prayed for him. When he came down, he said to them, "Go, the fever has left him." They said to him, "Are you a prophet?" He replied, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I learnt this from experience. If my prayer is fluent in my mouth (shegurah tefilati befi), I know that he is accepted (mekubal); but if not, I know that he is rejected (metoraf, literally 'torn')." They sat down and made note of the exact moment. When they came to R. Gamaliel, he said to them, "By the temple service! You have not been a moment too soon or too late, but so it happened: at that very moment the fever left him and he asked for water to drink." (Berakhot 34b)

R. Hanina b. Dosa claims that for him a certain kind of prayer, one that is fluent in his mouth (shegurah befiv) indicates that the prayer is accepted and a healing will take place. However, R. Hanina b. Dosa does not claim that it is he who is responsible for creating the experience of fluency in the mouth. That experience is an indication of a healing,

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[38] Not all the time are healing prayers associated with holy men in the Bible. For example, in Psalms healing prayers are offered, but not by specifically identified persons ("holy" or otherwise).

but not an experience he necessarily has control over. Though it is not asserted directly that R. Hanina b. Dosa's prayer caused the recovery, it is clear that he was thought to have special abilities regarding prayer.

In the passage that follows the previous one R. Hanina b. Dosa's ability to pray is accentuated even more:

> On another occasion it happened that R. Hanina b. Dosa went to study Torah with R. Johanan ben Zakkai. The son of R. Johanan ben Zakkai fell ill. He said to him: Hanina my son, pray for him that he may live. He put his head between his knees and prayed for him and he lived. Said R. Johanan ben Zakkai: If Ben Zakkai had stuck his head between his knees for the whole day, no notice would have been taken of him {by God}. Said his wife to him: Is Hanina greater than you are? He replied to her: No; but he is like a servant before the king [who has permission to go in to him at any time][39], and I am like a nobleman before a king [who appears before him only at fixed times]. (Berakhot 34b)

This passage ascribes to R. Hanina ben Dosa "special access" to God through the use of the court etiquette metaphor. A direct relationship is drawn between Hanina's prayer and the recovery of Ben Zakkai's son. It was the prayer of Hanina, rather than that of someone else (even his sage Ben Zakkai, the father of the sick person), that is assumed to have had a direct effect in bringing about healing. This passage probably intends both to emphasize the extreme piety of R. Hanina and to clarify a rabbinic belief that the prayers of some are more "worthy" and/or effective than those of others.

To make the issue of whose prayers are answered more complicated another text will be examined. In this instance

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[39] This and the following bracketed addition appear in Soncino as footnotes.

neither the praying person's holiness (like Elisha) or piety (like R. Hanina b. Dosa) are mentioned. The context is a disagreement between R. Shesheth and R. Ahadboi.

> [R. Ahadboi] made his objections in a mocking manner which deeply wounded R. Shesheth, and soon after R. Ahadboi b. Ammi lost his speech and forgot his learning. His[40] mother came and wept before {R. Shesheth}, but in spite of all her cries {R. Shesheth} paid no attention to her. At length she said: Behold these breasts from which you sucked. Then at last {R. Shesheth} prayed for {R. Ahadboi} and he was healed. (Baba Batra 9b)

It is possible that the reason the rabbis would claim R. Shesheth's prayer was effective was because of R. Shesheth's righteous rabbinic stature, but this is not stated in the text. What is in the text is that R. Shesheth had a "special" relationship with the one who was sick; that is, he was the recipient of the insulting remarks R. Ahadboi spoke. R. Ahadboi's insulting remarks are associated with his ensuing "illness" (lost speech and forgetfulness). Why does the mother go specifically to R. Shesheth rather than another (including herself) to intercede on behalf of R. Ahadboi? Is it only R. Shesheth's prayer that can promote R. Ahadboi's recovery? If so, is R. Shesheth's prayer needed because R. Shesheth must relent his feeling of being "deeply wounded" before R. Ahadboi can be healed; and that R. Shesheth prays for him shows that he has relented his negative disposition? It seems that R. Shesheth as the injured party first had to forgive before R. Ahadboi could be cured. The connection here

[redacted]

[40] There is disagreement concerning whose mother is being referred to, but it seems on the surface to be R. Shesheth's mother.

between forgiveness and healing fits into the Rabbis' strong sense of justice. God's system of justice is not just between humans and God, but must operate in interpersonal encounters as well.

Two other accounts of praying effectively on behalf of another involve a husband praying for his wife. The husband in each scenario is a scholar returning home after spending twelve years in the academy. The first scenario concerns the son of Rabbi:

> {After the marriage}, he departed and spent twelve years at the academy. By the time he returned his wife had lost the power of procreation. "What shall we do?" said Rabbi. "Should we order him to divorce her, it would be said: This poor soul waited in vain! Were he to marry another woman, it would be said: The latter is his wife and the other his mistress." He prayed for mercy to be vouchsafed to her, and she recovered {her fertility}. (Ketubot 62b)

The second scenario concerns R. Hanania b. Hakinai after he returns from twelve years at the academy:

> [When they reached the house] his wife was sitting and sifting. She lifted up her eyes and seeing him, was so overcome with joy that she fainted [literally, "her spirit fled"]. "O, Lord of the universe," [the husband] prayed to {God}, "this poor soul; is this her reward?" And so he prayed for mercy to be vouchsafed to her and she revived. (Ketubot 62b)

A last example of praying on behalf of another involves rabbis praying on behalf of one of their colleagues:

> Our Rabbis taught: No one should eat onion on account of the poisonous fluid it contains; and it once happened that R. Hanina ate half an onion and half of its poisonous fluid and became so ill that he was on the point of dying. His colleagues, however, begged for heavenly mercy, and he recovered because he was needed at the

time.[41] (Erubin 29b)

In this case the role of the praying rabbis is not as much in the fore as the role of the one in need of healing. The piety of the rabbis is not mentioned; rather, the importance of R. Hanina's role at the time is the reason given for his recovery. Circumstance is focused on instead of personal qualities of those praying (such as holiness, piety, or spousal devotion). The rabbis' prayers seem to have been effective mostly because of who R\ Hanina was; presumably, a rabbi of great and pious stature. To balance the picture it is important to note that every Jew was seen as capable of and expected to pray for the recovery of specific persons who were ill. Evidence for this assertion is from the fifth petition (the prayer for healing) of the shemoneh esrey, which clearly was in place at the time.

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[41] My translation. The Hebrew is mipnay shehasha-ah tzrihah lo, literally "because the hour (or time) needed him."

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY: THE ROLE OF THE HEALER

Within the Framework of God's Rule

The efforts of human healers are recounted scores of times throughout the Talmud. However, these efforts take place with the consciousness of God's authority. God's authority is present in terms of both granting permission to heal and maintaining the ultimate control over whether or not the healing will be effective.

That a person even is involved in the realm of healing requires special permission granted by God since God sends the sickness, generally as punishment. One of the verses rabbis rely upon in order to support the permission to heal is from Exodus 21:19, "...and to heal he shall heal." The double mention of the word "heal" gives an opening for interpretation:[42]

> "The School of R. Ishmael taught: [The words] 'And to heal he shall heal' (Exodus 21:19) [are the source] from which it can be derived that authorization was granted [by God] {to the healer} to heal." (Baba Kamma 85a)

The opinion that God grants healers permission to heal is seen in another passage as well:

> On going in to be cupped {blood-letting} one should say: "May it be Your will, O Lord, my God, that this operation may be a cure for me, and may You heal me, for You are a faithful healing God, and Your healing is sure, since {human beings} have no power to heal, but this is a habit with them." Abaye said: A {person} should not speak {that way}, since it was taught in the school of R. Ishmael: [It is written],

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[42] Other rabbis use this same verse to support another idea as well, one concerning compensation for injury.

> "And to heal he shall heal"[43] (Exodus 21:19). From this we learn that permission has been given to the {healer} to heal. (Berakhot 60a)

Though God is the ultimate healer, Abaye objects to the deprecation of the human side of healing.

In passages from Berakhot 60a, Baba Kamma 85a and 85b are outright statements that God has granted the healer permission to heal. But because of the contexts of these statements, that is, because the statements are surrounded by arguments, their status is not obvious. The passage from Baba Kamma 85b includes a series of arguments concerning the meaning of the Exodus verse:

> R. Papa said in the name of Raba: Scripture says, "And to heal he shall heal," [thus enjoining] payment for healing even in the case where {damage, "nezek"}[44] is paid independently. But is not that verse required for the lesson taught at the School of R. Ishmael that [the text] "And to heal he shall heal: [is the source] from which it is derived that authorization was granted {by God} to the {healer} to heal? - If so, Scripture would have said, "Let the {healer} cause him to be healed." This shows that payment for healing should be made even in the case where {damage} [is paid independently]. But still, is not the text required as said above to provide a double mention in respect of healing? - If so, Scripture should have said either "to cause to heal and to cause to heal" or "he shall cause to heal [and] he shall cause to heal." Why say, "and to heal he shall heal" unless to prove that payment should be made for healing even in the case where {damage} [is paid independently]. (Baba Kamma 85b)

Arguments in the Talmudic passages about the meaning of Exodus 21:19 seem to point to one of three possibilities: 1. [illegible]

[43] This translation of the Exodus 21:19 verse is used by Soncino in B.K. 85a. The translation Soncino uses here for the same line is, "{God} shall cause him to be thoroughly healed."

[44] Soncino translates this word as "depreciation."

The verse "and to heal he shall heal" may mean something besides permission to heal (ie. having to do with compensation), but the interpretation that humans are granted permission to heal is also valid and applies. 2. The verse may mean something besides permission to heal, and the interpretation that humans are granted permission to heal is not valid and does not apply. 3. The interpretation that humans are granted permission to heal is not textually valid here, but still does apply.

Despite the possibilities presented above, the predominant belief was that humans have been granted permission to heal. This conclusion is based on three things: 1. Tannaitic positions, such as those held by the School of R. Ishmael were held in high esteem and authority. 2. There are numerous accounts in the Talmud in which human healers, generally sages, practice healing techniques effectively and without concern that they are somehow transgressing. 3. The continuing practice and high esteem of healers not only throughout, but beyond the Talmud (both in parallel Jewish literature at the time and in post-Talmudic literature).

Even if human beings have been granted permission to heal, God's healing powers surpass the abilities of human healers:

> R. Judah son of R. Hiyya remarked: Come and see how the dispensation of mortals is not like that of the Holy One, Who is blessed. In the dispensation of mortals, when {someone} administers a drug to {another}, it may be beneficial to one limb but injurious to another, but with the Holy One, Who is blessed, it is not so. {God} gave a Torah to Israel and it is a drug of life for {the whole} body, as it is said, "Healing for {the} whole body" (NJPS,

Proverbs 4:22). (Erubin 54a)[45]

Social Standards for Healers as Authorities and Experts

Besides working within the framework of God's Rule, healers are subject to standards recognized by the community. Standards upon which a healer's expertise and authority are based include skill, experience, wisdom, and righteousness.

The opinion that a healer is an expert worthy of consultation when pain appears, is stated in a straightforward manner by R. Ashi:

> Is it not common sense that if a {person} is in pain {that person} should visit the healer? (Baba Kamma 46b)

Samuel Yarhina'ah, Rabbi's healer, was highly regarded. In the following passage it is clear that Samuel was able to draw on a wealth of medical wisdom in order to heal Rabbi:

> Samuel Yarhin'ah was Rabbi's {healer}. Now, Rabbi having contracted an eye disease, Samuel offered to bathe it with a lotion, but he said, "I cannot bear it." "Then I will apply an ointment to it," he said. "This too I cannot bear," he objected. So he placed a phial of chemicals under his pillow, and he was healed. Rabbi was most anxious to ordain him, but the opportunity was lacking. "Let it not grieve you," {Rabbi} said: "I have seen the Book of Adam, in which is written, Samuel Yarhina'ah shall be called "Sage" but not "Rabbi," and Rabbi's healing shall come through him." (Baba Metzia 85b-86a)

The passage shows that Samuel was able to come up with several alternatives in order to heal Rabbi. Presumably, someone who is able to come with so many alternatives has great knowledge; indeed, Rabbi regards him as "sage" and furthermore wants to recognize his special abilities by

[45] This passage also is discussed in the chapter "The Self Affecting the Divine Realm: Through Torah."

ordaining him "rabbi." What also seems special about Samuel is his "sensitivity" to his patient, (admittedly a modern reading which may or may not be intended in the text). What is meant by sensitivity is that when the patient (Rabbi) says he cannot bear the remedy, the healer (Samuel) is responsive. It is as if the healer is working with the patient in order to find a remedy that will work but will not be intolerable to the patient. In short, the patient isn't forced either to accept a stated remedy or else to continue suffering; rather, the healer and the patient agree on treatment satisfactory to both.

One of the most highly regarded healers in the Talmud is Abba. Because of his status, he is said to have been recognized by the greatest sages of all time - those who reside in the "Heavenly Academy":

> Abba was a {blood-letter} and daily he would receive greetings from the Heavenly Academy. Abaye received greetings {only} on every Shabbat[46] eve, Raba {only} on the eve of every Day of Atonement. (Ta'anit 21b)

The Talmud then leads into an explanation as to just what is so special about Abba the Blood-letter:

> Abaye felt dejected because of [the signal honor shown to] Abba the {Blood-letter}. People said to him, "This distinction is made because you cannot do what Abba does. What was the special merit of Abba the {Blood-letter}? When he performed his operations, he would separate men from women, and in addition he had a cloak which held a cup [for receiving] blood and which was slit at the shoulder and whenever a woman

[illegible]

[46] The Hebrew term "Shabbat" will be used throughout this document rather than the English "Sabbath." Changes to this effect will include, without additional note, references in Soncino translations of Talmudic passages (which use the term "Sabbath").

> patient came to him he would put the garment on her shoulder in order not to see her [exposed body]. He also had a place out of public gaze where patients deposited their fees which he would charge; those that could afford it put their fees there, and thus those who could not pay were not put to shame. (Ta'anit 21b)

Two aspects of Abba's special merit have been described: 1. his respect for modesty, and 2. his sensitivity to the poor. His system for payments reflects his respect for the dignity of his clients and his trust in them. Despite the debatable imposition of modern wording for describing Abba's behavior (ie. "sensitivity," "respect for dignity," etc.), it is not debatable that his behavior was considered righteous and worthy of the highest recognition. He was not merely a technician but had a rabbinic sense of human propriety.

In addition to the two aspects of merit ascribed to Abba above, there is a third: 3. The special consideration given to scholars:

> Whenever a young scholar happened to consult {Abba}, not only would he accept no fee from him, but on taking leave of him he also would give him some money at the same time adding, "Go and regain strength {with this}. One day Abaye sent to him two scholars in order to test him. He received them and gave them food and drink and in the evening he prepared woolen mattresses for them [to sleep on]. In the morning the scholars rolled these together and took them to the market [for sale]. There they met Abba and they said to him, "Sir, value these, how much they are worth," and he replied, "So-and-so much." They said to him, "Perhaps they are worth more?" He replied, "This is what I paid for them." They then said to him, "They are yours, we took them away from you; tell us, pray, of what did you suspect us." He replied, "Perhaps the Rabbis needed money to redeem captives and they were ashamed to tell me." They replied, "Sir, take them back." He answered, "From the moment I missed them I dismissed them from my mind and [I devoted them] to charity." (Ta'anit 21b - 22a)

Elsewhere, healers may be consulted for other reasons besides treatment for a physical ailment. Two other areas in which healers are involved are 1. giving advice for "burning desire" (Sanhedrin 75a) and 2. forensic medicine; ie. decisions concerning liability and just compensation (eg. Baba Kamma 85a), procedures affecting personal status (eg. Ketubot 74b)[47], and treatment of injuries though a rabbinic ordinance will be broken (eg. Yoma 83b, Avodah Zarah 22b and 28a).

Although a certain amount of authority and expertise is recognized in healers, they do not make decisions autonomously, in a vacuum. As already has been seen in the case of Samuel treating Rabbi (Baba Metzia 85b), the patient refused several remedies before a satisfactory one was agreed upon by healer and patient. In liability cases a patient is permitted to reject certain healers. The rejection has more to do with legal considerations; nevertheless, the passage is evidence of an injured party having some say in who will treat him/her:

> If the offender says to the injured person: "I can personally act as your healer," the other party can retort, "You are in my eyes like a lurking lion." So also if the offender says to {the injured party}, "I will bring you a {healer} who will heal you for nothing," {the injured} might object, saying, "A {healer} who heals for nothing is worth nothing." Again, if {the offender} says to {the injured party}, "I will bring you a {healer} from a distance, {the injured} might say to {the offender}, "If the

[47] Ketubot 74b deals with a woman who was under a vow at the time of her betrothal:

> Our Rabbis taught: If she went to a Sage [after her betrothal] and he disallowed her vow, her betrothal is valid. [If one went] to a {healer} who cured her, her betrothal is valid. (Ketubot 74b)

> {healer} is a long way off, the eye will be blind [before {the healer} arrives]." (Baba Kamma 85a)

There are limits, however, (at least in legal cases), as to what the person in need of healing can request. In other words not every "healer" is permissable to the injured person:

> If, on the other hand, the injured person says to the offender, "Give the money to me personally as I will cure myself," {the offender} might retort, "You might neglect yourself and thus get from me too much."[48] (Baba Kamma 85a)

In one passage an assertion is made which reflects a recognition that when the healer's and the patient's input in the healing process conflict, sometimes the one is listened to and sometimes the other. The patient's expressed needs are taken into account, but not necessarily followed:

> A sick person is fed at the word of experts.[49] R. Jannai said: If the patient says, "I need [food], while the {healer} says, "{The patient} does not need it," we {listen} to the patient. What is the reason? "The heart knows its own bitterness" (Proverbs 14:10). But that is self-evident? You might have said: The {healer's} knowledge is more established: therefore the information [that we prefer the patient's opinion]. If the {healer} says, "{The patient needs food} while the patient says that {it is not needed}, we listen to the {healer}. Why?

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[48] The passage continues:

> Even if the injured person says to {the offender}, "Make it a fixed and definite sum," {the offender} might object and say, "There is all the more danger that you might neglect yourself [and remain a cripple], and consequently I will be called 'A harmful ox.'" (Baba Kamma 85a)

The passage as a whole reflects the sensitivity given to getting both parties' "rights" into the ruling.

[49] The context of this discussion is fasting on Yom Kippur.

> Stupor seized {the patient}. (Yoma 83a)[50]

Besides the issue of the input of the patient versus the healer, it should be stressed that the central issue is sustaining life; that is, when life is at stake (ie. needing food though it be a fast day) certain laws and opinions can be over-ruled.

Besides expressed needs, a good healer takes into account a patient's unexpressed needs (eg. financial). Compassion upon the patient is highly valued (Ta'anit 21b).

Even though at times it may be considered meritorious to help scholars or the poor by healing without payment, in the usual case it is acknowledged that healers are worthy of payment:

> {If an} offender says to {the injured party}, "I will bring you a {healer} who will heal for nothing," {the injured} might object, saying, "A healer who heals for nothing is worth nothing. (Baba Kamma 85a)

In another instance it is noted that for physical pain one goes to a healer and pays for treatment (even if the person is not cured):[51]

> Said R. Abbahu: ...If people have pain in their eyes, they pay away money to a {healer}, and they may be cured or they may not be cured... (Ketubot 105a)

Someone who can carry out difficult medical procedures may be more apt to be given (worthy of being given?) large fees. Although the following statements are said in an argument

[50] A lengthy discussion continues concerning the phrase, "A sick person is fed at the word of experts."

[51] The passage is changed to the plural in order to maintain gender-neutral language.

which stirs up emotional and perhaps exaggerated comments; still, it probably is fair to say, (but not provable from this context), that healers got fees, and that better healers got better fees:

> "You have called me wicked," {Gebiha b. Peisa said to the sectarian}, "if I stood up I could kick you and strip you of your hump!" "If you could do that," he retorted, "you would be called a great {healer} and command great fees." (Sanhedrin 91a)

Limits to the Healer's Authority

Assuming a healer does demonstrate skill, experience, wisdom, and righteousness; still, within the framework of social standards, the healer's expertise and authority are subject to limits. More specifically, the patient, the Rabbis, and the community may impose restrictions on the healer.

As far as the patient is concerned, the clearest example of a patient's opinion overriding a healer's opinion already has been discussed. The text refers to a patient being listened to if he/she requests food, despite an opinion a healer might have that food should not be given. (Yoma 83a)

The Rabbis limit healers most notably in terms of their lengthy discussions and debates concerning which laws (halakhot) may be broken for the sake of healing. One major issue concerns profaning Shabbat. The Rabbis agree that it is permitted for a healer to profane Shabbat by transgressing rabbinic ordinances. Whether or not Shabbat can be profaned (by transgressing rabbinic ordinances) in order for a heathen to heal, there is disagreement. There is a tremendous amount of elaboration, discussion, and detail devoted to the issue of

when Shabbat can be profaned, for what kinds of sores, and so on. (Ie. see: Yoma 83b, Shabbat 133b, Avodah Zarah 22b and 28a.) There are also other halakhic topics which arouse debates related to healing, such as giving a patient untithed food (Yoma 83b) and "wounding" for the sake of healing (Sanhedrin 84b).[52]

In an area other than halakhah, is an instance in which healers' opinions are subject to the discernment of the Rabbis. The case involves "burning desire":

> Rab Judah said in Rab's name: A man once conceived a passion for a certain woman, and his heart was consumed by his burning desire, his life being endangered thereby. When the {healers} were consulted, they said, "His only cure is that she shall submit." Thereupon the Sages said, "Let him die rather than that she should yield." "Then," {said the healers}, "Let her stand nude before him." [They answered], "Sooner let him die."[53] (Sanhedrin 75a)

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[52] "Wounding" is a sin and honoring parents is a commandment. Examples of questions (in which the response was negative) related to wounding for the sake of healing are: 1. Can a son extract a thorn from his father's flesh (since in drawing the thorn out, he might cause a slight wound)? 2. Can a son lance a fester for his father (since in doing so he might wound him)? About the issue of a son letting blood for his father, there is more of a positive opinion (Sanhedrin 84b).

[53] The passage continues:

> "Then," said the {healers}, "let her converse with him from behind a fence." Now R. Jacob b. Idi and R. Samuel b. Nahmani disputed {about the matter}. One said that she was a married woman; the other that she was unmarried. Now, this is intelligible on the view that she was a married woman, but on the latter, that she was unmarried, why such severity? - R. Papa said, "Because of the disgrace to her family. R. Israel said, "That the daughters of Israel may not be immorally dissolute. Then why not marry her?- Marriage would not assuage his passion, even as R. Isaac said, "Since the destruction of the Temple, sexual pleasure has been taken [from those who practice it lawfully] and given to sinners, as it is written, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in

Rabbis also give opinions regarding how healers should be incorporated into communal life. Included in a list of ten things a city should have in order for a scholar to reside there, is a healer (Sanhedrin 17b). But a limit is given to the role a healer should be given in communal matters:

> Rab said to R. Assi: Do not dwell in a town in which no horses neigh or dogs bark. And do not dwell in a town where the leader of the community is a {healer}... (Pesahim 113a)

Why exactly it was felt that a {healer} should not serve as leader of the community is not given. A reasonable, but not provable, speculation would be that community leaders are too busy to be fully attentive to giving adequate treatment to the sick, thus endangering them.

As far as attitudes about healers go, there is one last comment worth mentioning. It is notable that though the comment is in the Mishnah text, it is not taken up for discussion in the Talmud, (though later commentators struggle with its meaning):

> The best of {healers} are destined for Gehenna. (M. Kiddushin 82a)

The meaning of the comment in the Mishnah and why the comment is not discussed in the Talmud remain unclear. Nevertheless, because of the potency of the statement, it is presented without an attempt to evaluate it; there is simply not enough information to do so justifiably.

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secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:17). (Sanhedrin 75a)

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY: VISITORS TO THE SICK

Within the Framework of God's Rule

At first glance it may seem that healing enhanced by visitation involves only human beings; that is, people visit people. However, instances are given in which it is made clear that it is from God's example that human beings learn this important (if not indispensable) aspect of the healing process:

> The Holy One, Who is blessed, visited the sick, for it is written, "And the Lord appeared {to the recovering Abraham after his circumcision} by the oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18:1)," so do you also visit the sick. (Sotah 14a)

A verse from Psalms is referred to in another passage in order to show God's involvement in visitations to the sick:

> Those[54] who enter [a house] to visit the sick may sit neither upon the bed nor on a seat, but must wrap themselves about and sit in front of {the sick person}, for the Divine Presence is above an invalid's pillow, as it is said, "The Lord will sustain those on their sickbeds" (NJPS, Psalms 41:4). And Raba said in Rabin's name: How do we know that the Holy One, Who is blessed, sustains the sick? Because it is said, "The Lord will sustain those on their sickbeds" (Ibid.). (Shabbat 12b)

God's Presence takes precedence over human visitors. Visits are to be made within the framework of an awareness of God, the Divine Sustainer (whose powers are beyond all human "sustainers").

Besides God setting an example, the Rabbis cite biblical verses to show how God teaches in a more direct way the requirement to visit the sick. The Rabbis refer to a verse in

[54] This whole passage, including the Biblical quote, has been changed to the plural in order to maintain gender-neutral language.

which Moses is counseled by his father-in-law on how to instruct the Israelites:

> ...and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go {"to walk"}, and the practices they are to follow. (NJPS, Exodus, 18:20)

The words, "the way they are to go" (or "to walk") are said to mean visiting the sick (Baba Metzia 30b, Baba Kamma 100a).

That visitors should be aware of God's Rule and God's Presence comes through during a discussion having to do with special considerations for visiting the sick on Shabbat, a day decreed holy by God.

> R. Simeon b. Eleazar said {...} on the authority of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel: ...nor may the sick be visited on Shabbat; that is the ruling of Beit Shammai; but Beit Hillel permit it. (Shabbat 12a)

The text continues with more information regarding visits on Shabbat:

> Our Rabbis taught: If one enters [a house] to visit a sick person [on Shabbat], {that person} should say, "It is Shabbat, when one must not cry out, and recovery will come soon." R. Meir said, [One should say], "It [Shabbat] may have compassion." R. Judah said, "May the Omnipresent have compassion upon you and upon the sick of Israel." R. Jose said, "May the Omnipresent have compassion upon you in the midst of the sick of Israel." Shebna, a citizen of Jerusalem, on entering would say "Peace;" and on leaving, "It is Shabbat, when one must not cry out and healing will come soon, {God's} compassion is abundant and enjoy Shabbat rest in peace... R. Hanina also said: It was [only] with difficulty that comforting the mourners and visiting the sick was permitted on Shabbat. (Shabbat 12a - 12b)

<u>The Injunction to Visit</u>

There are numerous instances recorded in which people visit the sick (eg. Sanhedrin 101a, Berakhot 5b and 46a,

Avodah Zarah 18a). To do so is an injunction which is worded in ways which stress personal obligation and responsibility. Akiba likens the one who doesn't visit the sick with someone who sheds blood; R. Dimi claims that those who visit the sick cause them to recover, while those who do not visit the sick, cause them to die (Nedarim 40a). The claims made by Akiba and R. Dimi, whether exaggerated or not, at the very least, reflect their strong belief that each individual should be involved in the healing process by visiting the sick.

Two interpretations of the meaning of the statement, "There is no measure for visiting the sick" underscore the imperative for the individual to visit the sick. R. Abaye associates "no measure" with the idea that a great person must visit a lowly person who is sick; Rava, invoking hyperbole, claims the statement means that a person must visit the sick even a hundred times a day (Nedarim 39b). Furthermore, visiting the sick is associated with the practice of loving deeds (Baba Metzia 30b).

Besides the sense of command to visit the sick and the negative results listed for not visiting, there is further motivation for visiting the sick - the promise of reward. R. Jose associates the statement, "There is no measure for visiting the sick" with unlimited rewards for doing so (Nedarim 39b). This idea is reinforced by what several Rabbis list as actions worthy of reward:

> R. Judah b. Shila said in R. Assi's name in R. Johanan's name: There are six things, the fruit of which {people eat} in this world, while the principal remains for {them} in the world to come, viz.: Hospitality to wayfarers, visiting the sick, meditation in prayer, early attendance

> at the Beit Hamidrash, rearing one's {children} to the study of the Torah, and judging one's neighbor in the scale of merit." (Shabbat 127a)

During Visits to the Sick

Some guidelines are given as to what is proper conduct during a visit. There is discussion about whether or not certain visits should be made standing or sitting (Nedarim 39a), and what the proper place is for a visitor to sit (Shabbat 12b). Furthermore, there are visits described in which visitors (Rabbis) engage in the following activities: conversation with the patient (eg. Berakhot 5b, Avodah Zarah 18a, Sanhedrin 101a), calling upon God (eg. Shabbat 12b), making a vow (eg. Berakhot 46b), extending a hand to the patient (eg. Berakhot 5b), and weeping with the patient (eg. Berakhot 5b, Sanhedrin 101a). After some, but not all, of these activities, healings are recorded.

Conversations with the patient are varied. In the first example the discussion centers around the problem of why R. Eliezer was "struck" with sickness:

> Rabbah b. Bar Hana said: When R. Eliezer fell sick, his disciples entered [his house] to visit him. He said to them, "There is a fierce wrath in the world." They broke into tears, but R. Akiba laughed. "Why do you laugh?" they inquired of him. "Why do you weep?" he retorted. They answered, "Shall the Scroll of the Torah [ie. R. Eliezer] lie in pain, and we not weep?" -He replied, "For that very reason I rejoice. As long as I saw that my master's wine did not turn sour, nor was his flax smitten, nor his oil putrefied, nor his honey become rancid, I thought, God forbid, that he may have received all his reward in this world [leaving nothing for the next]; but now that I see him lying in pain, I rejoice [knowing that his reward has been treasured up for him in the next]." He [R. Eliezer] said to him, "Akiba, have I neglected anything in the whole Torah?" - He replied, "You, O Master, have taught us, 'For there is no

> just person on earth who does what is best and does not sin'" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). (Sanhedrin 101a)[55]

Akiba's words seem reassuring as he states with confidence that R. Eliezer will be rewarded in the world to come and reminds him that even a just person sins. Akiba's words reinforce the belief that God's justice reigns, the "second-level" theodicy of everything being made right in the next world. Weeping is also mentioned as being engaged in by some of the visitors.

In another instance as well, R. Akiba's words seem to be considered most pertinent by the sick person:

> Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eliezer fell sick, four elders went to visit, viz. R. Tarfon, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba. R. Tarfon observed, "You are more valuable to Israel than rain; for rain is [precious] in this world, whereas you are [so] for this world and the next." R. Eleazar b. Azariah observed, "You are better to Israel than a father and a mother: these are for this world, whereas my master is for this world and the next." But R. Akiba observed, "Suffering is precious." Thereupon he [the sick man] said to them, "Support me, that I may hear the words of Akiba, my disciple, who said, "Suffering is precious..." (Sanhedrin 101a)

While some of the rabbis engage in conversation by highly praising R. Eliezer, it is R. Akiba's comment which provokes a verbalized response from the sick person. Akiba associates the suffering of the righteous with future reward. Whether or not Akiba <u>means</u> his statements to be comforting is debatable; nevertheless, his statements do, at least indirectly, provide reassurance that God's system of reward and punishment is at

[55] In two other chapters of this thesis, parts of this passage are discussed - in "The Self in Covenant with God" and in "The Self Affecting the Divine Realm: Through Torah."

work. That is, a person does not suffer for nothing, and suffering indeed may indicate something quite positive. The issue of reward and punishment often comes up in conversation during visits to the sick.

In a section in Berakhot several conversations during visits with the sick end with the visitor[54] extending a hand to the sick persons and "raising them." While one position, reflected by R. Akiba's statements, may consider sufferings precious, this position is balanced or even challenged by other statements which reflect a certain realism acknowledged by and acceptable to the Rabbis - patients, even great rabbis, do not necessarily welcome their sufferings, and they are neither chastised nor condemned for their attitude:

> R. Hiyya b. Abba fell ill and R. Johanan went in to visit him He said to him, "Are your sufferings welcome to you?" He replied, "Neither they nor their reward." He said to him, "Give me your hand." He gave him his hand and {R. Johanan} raised him. (Berakhot 5b)

Immediately following the above passage is one (worded almost exactly the same way) in which R. Johanan is raised by R. Hanina. The passage about R. Johanan being raised ends by asking the question why R. Johanan could not raise himself, (seeing as he just raised R. Hiyya b. Abba). The answer given is, "{Prisoners} cannot free {themselves} from jail." The insertion of this comment at a point in which a visitor promotes healing, gives reinforcement to the value of visiting

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[54] It is worthwhile noting that the visitors who "raise" the sick individuals are all great Rabbis. Though it is not stated directly, that these visitors are not "ordinary people," but rather great, holy men is a significant consideration in terms of understanding their ability to promote healing.

the sick.

The last passage in this Berakhot 5b series relays more extensive conversation and shows the visitor weeping with the sick person:

> R. Eleazar fell ill and R. Johanan went in to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room, and he bared his arm and light radiated from it.[57] Thereupon he noticed that R. Eleazar was weeping, and he said to him, "Why do you weep? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? Surely we learnt: The one who sacrifices much and the one who sacrifices little have the same merit provided that the heart is directed to heaven. Is it perhaps lack of sustenance? Not everybody has the privilege to enjoy two tables. Is it perhaps because of [the lack of] children? This is the bone of my tenth son!" - He replied to him, "I am weeping on account of this beauty[58] that is going to rot in the earth." He said to him, "On that account you surely have a reason to weep;" and they both wept. In the meanwhile he said to him, "Are your sufferings welcome to you? - He replied, "Neither they nor their reward." He said to him, "Give me your hand," and he gave him his hand and he raised him. (Berakhot 5b)

The tone of this passage seems to be that of a teaching story.

Insofar as visiting the sick is concerned, R. Johanan's presence is invaluable to the sick R. Eleazar; he reassures him, weeps with him, and extends his hand in order to raise him. A visit aids the healing process.

The last example to be presented of conversations during visits with the sick is of a completely different nature. The discussion centers around the visitor's activities during the current tumultuous political situation and the sick person's

[57] Soncino adds in a footnote, "R. Johanan was supposed to be so beautiful that a light radiated from his body, v. B.M. 84a."

[58] Soncino adds in a footnote, "Ie. the beautiful body of yours."

response to him. Neither reassurance, empathy, nor sympathy seem to be motivating elements for the visitor's comments:

> Our Rabbis taught: When R. Jose b. Kisma was ill, R. Hanina b. Teradion went to visit him. {R. Jose} said to him, "Brother Hanina, do you not know that it is Heaven that has ordained this [Roman] nation to reign? For though {Rome} laid waste {God's} House, burnt {God's} Temple, slew {God's} pious ones and caused {God's} best ones to perish, still is {Rome} firmly established! Yet, I have heard about you, {R. Hanina} that you sit and occupy yourself with the Torah, publicly gather assemblies, and keep a scroll [of the Law} in your bosom!" {R. Hanina} replied, "Heaven will show mercy."- "I," he remonstrated, "am telling you plain facts, and you say, 'Heaven will show mercy.' It will surprise me if they do not burn both you and the scroll of the Law with fire." "Rabbi," said the other {R. Hanina}, "How do I stand with regard to the world to come?" - "Is there any particular act that you have done?" {R. Jose} inquired. {R. Hanina} replied, "I once mistook Purim-money for ordinary charity-money, and I distributed [of my own] to the poor." "Well then," said {R. Jose} would that your portion were my portion and your lot my lot." (Avodah Zarah 18a)[59]

Although a very lengthy and involved passage is presented above (and the continuation of the story is also lengthy), the passage teaches several things about visiting the sick. Primarily, the passage shows that the sick may teach the visitor and that the visitor may bring spiritual insights to the patient. Furthermore, via the scenario, spiritual insights are taught to the outside reader as well.

Making a vow in the presence of a sick person is something which may be done during visits:

[59] A few days later R. Jose dies and great lamentation is made for him. No mention is made of life in the world to come for him. Then, R. Jose is captured by the Romans and set on fire, but a voice from heaven promises him a place in the world to come.

> R. Zera once was ill. R. Abbahu went to visit him, and made a vow, saying, "If the little one with scorched legs[60] recovers, I will make a feast for the Rabbis." He did recover, and he made a feast for all the Rabbis. (Berakhot 46a)

Prayer in the presence of a sick person is referred to in a discussion of visits during Shabbat, with the subsequent limitations of that day. Two prayers which rabbis suggest be said follow:

> R. Judah said, "May the Omnipresent have compassion upon you and upon the sick of Israel." R. Jose said, "May the Omnipresent have compassion upon you in the midst of the sick of Israel." (Shabbat 12b)

God is ultimately responsible for all illnesses and all healings. Yet, from the above series of passages, it is clear that visiting the sick is highly valued by the Rabbis. The Rabbis would assert that the value they attach to visiting reflects God's instructions and God's example. Not only does visiting benefit the sick, (ie. "{prisoners} cannot free {themselves}" - Berakhot 5b), but visiting benefits the visitor as well (ie. he/she fulfills a commandment, avoids being likened to "those who shed blood...", and is rewarded greatly). Most importantly, visiting is what God requires.

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[60] Soncino adds in a footnote, "A nickname of R. Zera, explained in B.M. 85a.

CONCLUSION

God's Rule

God's Rule is primary in a theology of healing from a Talmudic perspective. Healing is always within the framework of God's Rule. Healing is never separate from or outside of God's jurisdiction. God's healing powers are enduring and present during any process of healing, including healings assisted by humans.

Within God's Rule are times in which human beings relate intimately to God, especially through prayer, repentance, and Torah study. But God's Rule extends beyond human relationships with God, (ie. communication through prayer and learning through study). Though human beings may encounter God in intimate ways, God is not limited by human understanding.

What is difficult to understand is the tension and paradoxical co-existence of immanence and transcendence. The sense of God's presence on the one hand, and God's omnipresence on the other is reflected particularly in these ways in which the Talmud views people's relationship with God: 1. As merciful partner and detached judge; 2. as one who grants authorization to the healer to heal, but maintains ultimate responsibility for all sickness and healing; and 3. as one who supports and sustains the sick, yet is the one who brings sickness in the first place.

The Rabbis do not spend their energy on long philosophical discourses which try to resolve paradoxes in healing. What they do focus on are stories, scenarios, and teachings in

which God's justice is defended. What the Rabbis believe they do understand about God and God's actions is that God's justice prevails; it is this belief that comes through again and again throughout the material on healing.

God's Justice

The belief in God's justice underlies the Rabbis' attitudes towards healing. God's justice rests on the idea of covenant - God makes demands on human beings and promises justice in return. In nearly all of the texts having to do with God's involvement in healing, is the theme of God's prevailing justice. The exceptions are the texts dealing with God granting permission to humans to heal (which establish the sense of God's Rule), and texts in which God's example and commandments are the source for teachings on visiting the sick. Implicit in the texts dealing with God's justice are theodicies, especially these: 1. God brings sickness on those deserving of punishment; and 2. when the righteous are affected by sickness, it is the result of God's love, a love which will bring reward in the world-to-come.

Besides texts which clearly reflect the above theodicies, there are numerous texts dealing with the effects of prayer on healing. Though the texts having to do with prayer do not bring to mind directly the two mentioned theodicies above, that prayer is given so much credence in the process of healing does strengthen the power of the belief in God's justice. God's justice is flawless because it encompasses mercy and love. That this is so is "proven" by the writings about God listening to and responding to prayer.

Besides God's attentiveness to prayer, God's mercy and love come across in assertions by the Rabbis that God does not require people to welcome suffering (though it be for future reward). Some of the most pious rabbis cannot endure suffering, and they are not condemned. The integrity of God's justice is reinforced; the system is just, but not cruel, demanding righteousness, but not saintliness.

How the Human Role Fits into Healing

The reason it seems that humans can be involved in healing (ie. as patient, healer, or visitor), is because God makes some of God's healing powers available in the context of human living. People may call upon God, even encountering and influencing God as they work toward healings. But all healings are contained within the expanse of God's Rule. While the Rabbis believe that justice reigns, there is the recognition that people do not have access to the full expanse of God's Rule, to alter God's judgments.

The covenantal system requires people to be committed to a path of righteousness and holiness. It allows human beings some direct involvement with God, but requires them to trust in the integrity of God's justice. God will keep faithful to God's side of the covenant - the promise that the Source of all things is a just Judge. At the core of a Talmudic theology of healing is trust in God (ie. by following God's covenant) and God's faithfulness in return. That justice, tempered with mercy and love, prevails is a principle which extends beyond healing and points to what the Rabbis believe is the promise of life's meaning.

AFTERWORD

In this closing section I offer my own reflections on the material studied for this thesis. These reflections are based on my own experience and observations. My assertions are tentative; I expect they will change as I continue to learn and experience.

There are several issues which came up in the material which I did not expect before I started my research. Though I assumed the issue of sickness as punishment would arise, I did not expect that so often this idea would be the starting point of explaining illness - sickness was considered punishment or reasons would need to be given or implied as to why this assumption did not hold in certain cases. The main reason given for sickness not being punishment was that sickness was one of God's ways for providing reward in the world to come. With the Rabbis' unwavering belief in the world to come, their theology was complete; illness could be explained, (ie. within this world or the next, justice finally prevails). Still I did not expect the Rabbis to challenge their own theodicies in the way they did, taking them to deeper, more sophisticated levels. The Rabbis' implicit theology of healing is reasoned logically when a certain faith is taken for granted (ie. God's justice and that there is a world to come).

I was surprised by the absolute all-encompassing "Rule" ascribed to God. I expected that, similar to some modern Jewish positions, that the Rabbis would see healing as a partnership - God does God's part, humans do their part, and together they bring about healing. I had what turns out to be

a modern bias when I approached the material, that of human autonomy. Everything the Rabbis assert about healing is rooted in the consciousness of God's will. That is, humans do not have an independent or autonomous role in healing. Presumably, sickness in every age encourages self-reflection, and reflection on "big questions." While it seems that the modern question which tends to be asked is, "What do I want from life," it seems the Rabbis asked, "What does God want from me in my life?" While I am not sure how successful people always can be in separating their will from God's will, I do think the Rabbis' profound awareness of God is worthy of trying to emulate. I think the Rabbis teach something very valuable - that the more we are able to sustain a conscious awareness of God's presence, the more we will deepen our understanding of God's will.

That sickness is punishment from God for sin is not an idea often asserted by liberal Jews, at least in public forums and writings about Judaism and healing. Speaking for myself, I might see an illness as a consequence for certain behavior, (eg. lung cancer as a result of smoking), but I would hesitate always to assign to God direct responsibility for bringing on an illness. In other words I would tend to say, "I got cancer because I smoked too much," but probably would not say, "God is punishing me with cancer because I sinned (eg. I didn't study enough Torah"). In the modern age I, maybe erroneously, but probably like most liberal Jews, have seen myself as more independent. I can imagine a scenario in which I would get a disease (such as that which might result from a vitamin

deficiency) and get cured (by taking the vitamin missing from my diet) without much thought about God's ultimate responsibility for "all wounding and all healing." Now, however, I am encouraged by the Rabbis to think more about deep and difficult questions during illness and to realize that a change in "spiritual" behavior may enhance the healing process. In addition I am challenged to question my own "independence" in ways that may lead me to alter greatly my preconceived notions.

I found it interesting that instructions for visiting the sick so strongly stressed how visiting "benefits" the visitor. It seems that most modern individuals think of a visit to the sick as a favor to that person, as a good deed, but are not as influenced by the idea that visiting is something which benefits themselves as much as, if not more than, the sick person him/herself. The Rabbis' attitudes toward visiting are certainly worthy of further reflection.

I think the major difference between the Rabbis' views on healing and those of modern liberal Jews is that the Rabbis have a theology of healing which "works." What makes the system work is that God's justice and the existence of the world to come are not debatable. While I do have some sense of an afterlife, I have difficulty in believing that the afterlife is a "place" in which a Supreme Being metes out reward and punishment. In terms of God's justice and a world to come, I think we are faced with ambiguities in defining these concepts in the ways about which the Rabbis' felt certain.

I do think there are liberal Jews whose faith is as strong as that of the Rabbis. But modern faith is less structured. The modern intellect has struck down successfully every theodicy. There is no satisfactory theodicy from a modern perspective. In fact, many Jews view theodicies as inappropriate and even offensive, especially in light of the Holocaust. Similarly, there is trepidation in defining God's role in human affairs. On the other hand, I think the theodicies presented by the Rabbis were seen as "adequate." While they surely discovered some flaws in their theodicies, they were able to reconcile them enough in order to structure them into a working theology. Assuming that this impression is true, the Rabbis' religious life was grounded in "logic" as much as in faith. Believing made sense - because even for those sufferings which at first could seem incomprehensible, the "fact" remained that everything would "even-out" in the world to come. For the modern person, without a satisfactory theodicy, religious life must be grounded more in faith, feeling, and experience.

I expect I never will "resolve" the puzzle of how exactly the process of healing works. I am humbled in the face of all the questions and mysteries which still remain despite these efforts in academic research and personal soul-searching.

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