

### A Healing Whisper

Special thanks to revach.net for the article

Rav Avraham Trop, z'tl, who was the Rosh Yeshivah of Karlin in the United States, used to relate to others about the time he became deathly ill when he was a bochur learning in Radin. His friends ran to the Chofetz Chaim and said, "What are we going to do? Avraham Trop is close to death!" The Chofetz Chaim instructed the bochurim to whisper in Avraham's ear that if he would commit himself to spreading Torah to Jewish children his entire life, he will be cured from his illness.

The bochurim hurried to carry out the instructions but when they arrived by Avraham's bedside, he had already lost consciousness. They ran back to the Chofetz Chaim and explained the situation to him. The Chofetz Chaim said that he himself would go to Avraham's bedside.

When the Chofetz Chaim reached Avraham's bedside, he requested that everyone leave the room. The bochurim left the room, but they strained their ears behind the door and peered through the keyhole to see what the Chofetz Chaim was doing. They saw and heard the Chofetz Chaim standing next to the wall and calling out the names of Avraham's ancestors, who were known tzaddikim. He said, "Go to the kесеi hakavod and announce that your grandson Avraham accepts upon himself to teach Torah all his life to Jewish children."

The Chofetz Chaim then left the room. Shortly later, Avraham began showing signs of life, and his condition gradually improved until he was completely cured. (Shaal Avicha Veyegadcha) ♦

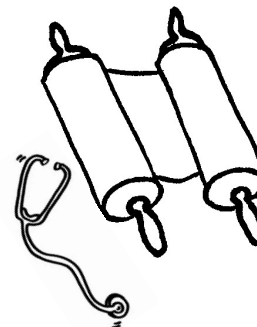


## Halacha Challenge

*"His strength (referring to Moshe) is only in [the words of] his mouth..."*  
- Rashi to this week's parsha [Bamidbar 22:4]

### To Heal With the Words of Torah

by Shlomo Epshteyn  
reviewed by Rav Chaim Malinowitz



On a Shabbos afternoon, Yissochar had a frown on his face. "What's wrong?" asked his father. "Abba, I have a headache. I can't go Avos and Bonim." His father thought for a moment and answered, "Let's try to heal you. As a s'gula, I will sit next you and say the p'sukim from the Torah that talk about healing. Let's hope that the power of those p'sukim will bring you a refuah quickly so that you can go to Avos and Bonim."

**Question:** May the father try to heal Yissochar in such a way?

**Answer:** There is no Shabbos transgression involved in trying to heal someone using words. Nevertheless, Yissochar's father cannot say p'sukim of the Torah (i.e. Tanach) as a s'gula for healing (i.e., it is prohibited to do so even on a weekday, unless it is done for someone whose life is in danger, ר"ל. See the Explanation section below for the reason)\*. Yissochar's father can, however, engage in the mitzva of learning Torah, and have an intention that the merit of this mitzva should help his son to feel better.

\*When we say Tehillim for a sick person, we do it in a form of tefilla and not in a form of s'gula<sup>1</sup>.

### Explanation

In general, as a rabbinic g'zeira, one cannot take medicine for minor ailments on Shabbos (e.g., taking a Tylenol for a headache)<sup>1</sup>. However, using speech as "medicine" does not fall under this g'zeira. The poskim explain that since this g'zeira was enacted due to the fear that people might make medicine on Shabbos by grinding herbs (s'chikas samemonim), it applies only to medicine that has a physical form, like medicinal food and drinks, tablets, etc.<sup>2</sup>.



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## Halacha Challenge

☞ Why can't we say *p'sukim* from Tanach as a *s'gula* for *refuah* (even on a weekday)? The Gemora Shavuos (15b) cites the ruling of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: "It is forbidden to get healed using the words of Torah." Based on this Gemora, the Shulchan Aruch (Yore De'ah, 179:8) states that there is a prohibition to say a verse of the Torah as a *lachash* (incantation) over a wound or over a sick person. [The Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) rules, however, that it is permitted to do this in a case of *pikuach nefesh*.]

Interestingly, the same Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi who said that it is forbidden to get healed using the words of Torah is quoted in Gemora Eiruvin (54a) as saying that someone who has a headache should learn Torah, as the verse says (Mishlei 1:9) "For they (the words of Torah) are a gracious accompaniment to your head." Moreover, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says that someone who feels pain in his entire body should learn Torah, as the verse says (ibid. 4:22) "(the Torah) heals the entire flesh." The Achronim<sup>3</sup> explain that there is no contradiction. A person is not permitted to say the words of Torah as an incantation to bring *refuah*. However, it is permitted—and even recommended—to engage in the study of Torah to fulfill the *mitzva* of *talmud* Torah while having in mind that the merit of the *mitzva* should help a person feel better.

Chaza"l in the Gemora Shavous (15b) specify that only healing someone with the words of Torah is prohibited, but to say verses from the Torah in order to create a protecting shield is permitted (e.g., saying *p'sukim* before going to sleep, before embarking on a journey, etc.). This is also reflected in the Shulchan Aruch (ibid, 179:10). The Maharsha<sup>4</sup> explains that it is a disgrace to the Torah to use it for healing, because by doing so, one is equating the Torah to other worldly medicines that also have the "power" to heal. But in fact, the Torah is much more than that – through its study and fulfillment the Torah can protect a person so that an illness (i.e., any illness) doesn't even come upon a person. This power is only present in the Torah. ♦

\*1. ים החכמה שנת תשע"ב שו"ת שימוש בדברי תורה 1. שו"ע סימן שכח סעיף א 2. מ"ב סימן שו ס"ק לו 3. תורת חיים שבועות טו: ד"ה אסור, וכו"נ מתפארת ישראל סנהדרין פרק י משנה א (אות י) 4. מהרש"א סנהדרין קא. ד"ה הלוחש

## Kids Ask, Zeidy Answers



Zeidy, since we are Hashem's children and He is the king of the world, why do bad things happen to us sometimes?



You're asking a good question, kids - since Hashem's love for us is eternal\* and nothing happens in the world without Hashem's will, why do "bad" things happen to us sometimes? The Derech Hashem says that "bad" things happen to the Jewish people **only** due to Hashem's goodness, and these things come upon us due to the following two reasons: (A) Hashem is waking us up to do Teshuva or/and (B) Hashem is cleaning us from our *aveiros*.  
\*[Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu ch.6]

## Wonders of Creation

### Hawaiian Caterpillars

By Alex Isaacson



Hawaiian caterpillars are the only insects that live as readily in water as on land. While some other caterpillars can survive for short periods under water, Hawaiian caterpillars are possibly the only air-breather that can thrive exclusively under water.

These caterpillars don't have gills or anything that covers the trachea to operate marine mammals' surface-to-breathe technique for respiration. Instead they appear to absorb oxygen directly through pores in their "skin" from the enveloping water. As such, these caterpillars require flowing water to provide sufficient oxygen. To make sure that they don't get washed away, Hashem gave them an ability to spin silk tethers to attach themselves to the sides of rocks. They cover themselves with these silk "cases" in a variety of shapes and sizes that they add to as they grow. ♦



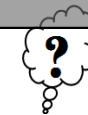
## Riddles

### Riddle

"Behold I see – the blindness is the portal to vision!"

Who else besides Shakespeare could have said this?

Hint: Thou can find me in this week's parsha



### Answer to last issue's riddle:

(Riddle: When a water from a sea and an atonement that was like a cow met, they said to each other "Hey, we have something in common!" What do they have in common?)

In Hebrew, these are homographs - pairs of words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

Water / From a sea = Mayim / Miyam

Atonement / Like a cow = Kapara / K'para