

# EIGHT CHAPTERS □ CHAPTER 3:2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

We live in a cynical, distrusting age in which everything is suspect and little seems assured. Let anyone in authority say something -- nearly anything -- and he or she is immediately open to question. Yet we're usually quick to see a doctor if we're ill, and while we might ask for a second opinion or challenge particulars, as a rule we succumb to a doctor's advice in the end.

Now, what doctors do, at bottom, is determine just what's wrong, tell us how to treat it, and advise us about changes we might have to make in the future. The doctor might, for example, warn us not to eat this or that or to avoid doing certain things that we'd like to go on with, or to do or ingest things we'd rather not. And while we might cringe or avoid following orders at first, when we do though, we (generally) find ourselves feeling better and are glad we assented.

In much the same way then we're counseled to go to a sage -- a healer of the Spirit -- when our Spirit is unwell and our very being is off-kilter; when as we said above, we "imagine sweet things to be bitter, and bitter things to be sweet", i.e., when we make poor ethical and spiritual choices, and "imagine bad ... to be good, and good ... to be bad".

Along the same lines as the above instance, a sage will then determine just what's wrong in our Spirits, tell us how to treat it, and advise us about changes we'd need to make on whole other levels. And we'd be wise to acquiesce.

But sometimes we just don't know when our Spirit is off, or we refuse to submit to treatment since we'd have to change one way or another, and our inner-inertia gets the best of us. We're warned here though that while we might think at least we wouldn't have affected our health and well-being, in truth spiritual mediocrity can be fatal, too! And that in the end we'll be glad we decided to heed a sage's warning.

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