

# DIVINE CHESD - WITH DIFFICULTY

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein*

*An affliction of tzora'as, when it will be in a man, he shall be brought to the kohen.*

Be'er Mayim Chaim: Earlier, the Torah used the opposite word order, first mentioning the person, and only then the nega with which he was afflicted. ("If a man will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis or a sapachas...")<sup>2</sup> Surely we must seek a reason for the inversion in our pasuk.

Many have puzzled over a verse in Shemos. "Any of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem your healer."<sup>3</sup> If Hashem pledges not to bring any disease upon them, they will not need His services as a Healer! He needn't heal any disease that isn't there! The proper explanation may involve some closer scrutiny of Hashem's self-imposed rules concerning the dispensing of Divine chesed. One of those rules requires that His chesed come at times only on the heels of Divinely ordained suffering and travail.

Here is why. In some cases, a show of His chesed must be triggered by some pressing, compassionate need. Once the chesed begins to flow, it keeps on going, overflowing beyond the original requirement for mercy.

Humans, lehavdil, often act in a comparable manner. There are people who sometimes pledge only a small amount of assistance. In the process of delivering it, however, they find themselves delivering far more than they originally promised.

So it is with HKBH. Sometimes, an excuse, so to speak, must be found to allow Divine intervention. Once that excuse is accepted, His midah of chesed, now released, manifests itself in rich abundance.

Surely, you will ask, He has no need for excuses to shower anyone and anything with His chesed! You will be correct - but only for some people, and not all. The difference is in satisfying the demands of a system in which all Divine decisions are conducted similarly to the deliberations of a human court. In the heavenly court, there are prosecutors (calling for the execution of din) and defense attorneys, who promote the application of chesed. Most often, both "sides" to the deliberation must be satisfied by a proposed decision and course of action.

Sometimes, it is fairly easy to arrive at a decision that Hashem should intervene with a display of His chesed. This is appropriate for a person whose own conduct is saturated with acts of clear,

unvarnished chesed that are manifest to everyone. Those actions justify a response of chesed by HKBH; the decision is made without any pushback or opposition.

Sometimes, however, a person's chesed is not so clear - or only exists in the potential. A person who wishes to do a mitzvah and is prevented from doing so by forces beyond his control is seen by Hashem as if he had performed that mitzvah nonetheless.<sup>4</sup> Rewarding non-performance as if the good deed had actually occurred computes only because Hashem can see what others cannot. He can testify, as it were, that had the person been given the opportunity, he would have followed through on his good intention. Because no one else can guarantee that, however, there is resistance in the heavenly court - the system of competing demands of din and chesed. This resistance would hamper and constrain a Divine response of abundant chesed.

At other times, the merit is obscured for different reasons. Merit may come from a potential to do good in the future, or even in the good that a future descendant will perform. Many other instances of meritorious conduct exist in which the merit is somewhat murky and less than compelling. While Hashem may see past the cloudiness and recognize some pure kernel in the action, there is still resistance in the Heavenly court to richly rewarding conduct that is fraught.

Hashem designed a workaround for such situations. If a person's actions do not amount to an unambiguous case of merit, Hashem creates a different reason to treat that person with chesed. He visits yesurin shel ahavah - "afflictions of love" upon the person. When the recipient of such afflictions remains steadfast in his commitment to Hashem, there is cause for Divine intervention - compassion that goes unopposed in the heavenly courts. Once Hashem responds with chesed to cure a malady that He brought upon a person, the chesed continues to flow. It offers that person blessing, life and peace that he would not ordinarily see.

All of this is hinted at in the inversion in our pasuk. The Torah uses adam for person, rather than ish. Adam often alludes to a person of significance, relating to edameh le-elyon/ "I will imitate what is Above." Our pasuk would then read as follows: "If a nega - some unexpected pain or affliction - should strike a person of significance, it might be so that he can be brought to the Kohen." The Kohen here is Hashem's chesed. The nega triggers a Divine response of chesed that leads to a continuing flow of berachah.

---

#### Sources:

1. Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Vayikra 13:9
2. Vayikra 13:2
3. Shemos 15:26
4. Kiddushin 40A

