

KORACH – 5773

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In many non-Jewish faiths there is a belief that because illness comes from G-d therefore, a physician may not render a cure because that would be going against the will of G-d. Baruch HaShem, Judaism believes otherwise. Our Torah HaKedosha commands the physician “*VERAPOH YE’ RA’PEI*” (Shemot 21:19), that not only is it a Reshut [permissible] but in fact it is a Chova, a Mitzvah for him to do whatever is in his medical power, to cure the ill person. Our theological position is that we must do what We can, and the Ribbono Shel Olam will do what He wishes. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Our parasha takes this one step further. Following the death of Korach and his followers, we read in the Torah (17:6-15) that all Bnei Yisrael complained to Moshe and Aharon saying “You have killed the people of HaShem”! HaShem then says to Moshe “Remove yourselves from among this assembly and I will destroy them in an instant”. Moshe then says to Aharon, “Take the fire-pan and put on it fire from upon the Mizbei’ach and place incense –and go **quickly** to the people and provide atonement for them, for the anger has gone out from HaShem –**THE PLAGUE HAS BEGUN!**”.

Now here we clearly know why the people are dying. Should Moshe and Aharon interfere with the Will of G-d and seek atonement for the people. We could easily understand if Moshe were to pray for their forgiveness. But to do something to stop the plague that HaShem began- is that appropriate? Here is what happens: Aharon took as Moshe had spoken and **RAN** to the middle of the congregation, and behold the plague had begun among the people. He placed the incense and provided atonement for the people. He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was checked. But in those few moments the plague had claimed the lives of fourteen thousand seven hundred Jewish lives.

What is most interesting in this event is the scene of Aharon running to atone for the people. We would not expect an individual of Aharon’s age and stature [he was 85 years old at that time [see Shemot 7:7], to engage in such undignified activity. This is the only time in the Torah that Aharon is described as running. We are here being taught that Pikuach Nefesh, when life is at stake, is important enough that one’s dignity is suspended. Lives were at stake and Aharon did all he could, **AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE**, to save as many lives as he could. For every few seconds, hundreds more were dying.

Divine retribution is G-d's business—healing the sick is man's business. If G-d wants to punish someone He can arrange for the punishment. He needs no support from us. If we are confronted with dangerously ill patients, our only agenda is to heal them as quickly as possible. *LO TA'AMOD AL DAM REI'ECHA (VaYikra 19:16)* applies even when the Ribbono Shel Olam is the source of danger. Our task is to heal and prevent death whenever possible.