# Class 16- Spiritual Healing – The Secret of the Bitter Waters

# Senior Fellowship Leadership Program

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<https://youtu.be/W81pWSpopAM> **Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker recounts moment he escaped from synagogue gunman.**

CNN's Wolf Blitzer speaks with Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, who recounts the moment he and three others escaped after a gunman held them hostage for 11 hours at Congregation Beth Israel, a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas.

1. When Rabbi Cytron–Walker thanks G-d during the interview, is he referring to his training or Hashem’s intervention?
2. Is security training a practical necessity, a mitzva or both?

(1) Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of God - for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator, if he is ill - therefore, he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is healthful and helps the body become stronger. [Rambam, Laws of Character Traits 4:1]

1. Why does the Torah have such a strong concern for the health of the body?
2. Why do we call maintaining health: “the way of God”?

“If one sees that someone is pursuing him with the intention to kill him, he is permitted to defend himself and take the life of he who is pursuing him” (**Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 125:1**)

“It is a mitzvah for all Jews who are able to come and help defend their brethren to do so, and it is forbidden to delay their coming until after Shabbat.” Rambam (**Laws of Shabbat 3:23**)

When a person sees a *rodef* pursuing a colleague to kill him, or a woman forbidden as an *ervah* to rape her, and he has the potential to save the victim and yet fails to do so, he has negated the observance of the positive commandment: "You must cut off her hand," and has transgressed two negative commandments: "You may not show pity [on the pursuer]," and "Do not stand idly by while your brother's blood is at stake." Rambam (**Laws of Murder and Saving lives 1:15**)

1. In the context of self-defense, which additional mitzvot are relevant and applicable?

**Shemot 15:23-26**

They came to Marah, but they could not drink water from Marah for it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.(24) The people grumbled against Moshe, saying, "What are we to drink?"(25) He cried out to Hashem, and Hashem showed him a piece of wood and he cast it into the water and the water was sweetened. There He set for them statutes and ordinances; and there He tested them.(26) He said, "If you surely listen to the voice of Hashem, your God, and you do what is right in His eyes, and you heed His commandments and keep His statutes, all the diseases that I put upon Egypt I will not put upon you, for I am Hashem your healer."

1. Why did Hashem lead the Jewish people to an area without drinkable water?

Ramban comments:

**Vayoreihu Hashem Eitz' and Hashem showed him a piece of wood** The meaning is that G-d showed Moses a tree and He told him, "Throw this tree into the waters, and they shall become sweet." ... It appears by way of the plain meaning of Scripture that this tree had a natural property to sweeten water, this being its uniqueness, and He taught it to Moses. Our Rabbis have said that the tree was [naturally] bitter, but that this was a miracle within a miracle, [i.e., that He healed the bitter waters with something which was bitter], just as the salt which Elisha cast into the waters. Now if so, the word *'vayoreihu' (and He instructed him)* indicates that the tree was not found in that place, and the Holy One, blessed be He, taught him where it was to be found, or perhaps He made it available to him by a miracle. I found further in the Yelamdeinu: "See what is written there: *Vayoreihu hashem eitz*. It does not say *vayar'eihu* (and He showed him) but *vayoreihu*, which means that He taught him His way." That is to say, He instructed him and taught him the way of the Holy One, blessed be He, i.e., that He sweetens the bitter with the bitter.

1. What can we learn from the fact that instead of performing a miraculous intervention, Hashem instructed Moshe about the special properties of a specific tree to purify the bitter waters?

**He set for them statutes and ordinances** -It may mean that Moses instructed them in the ways of the wilderness, namely, to be ready to suffer hunger and thirst and to pray to G-d, and not to murmur. He taught them ordinances whereby they should live, to love one another, to follow the counsel of the elders, to be discreet in their tents with respect to women and children, to deal in a peaceful manner with the strangers that come into the camp to sell them various objects. He also imparted moral instructions, i.e., that they should not become like bands of marauders who do all abominable things and have no sense of shame...

The expression, [*a statute and an ordinance*], does not refer to the statutes and ordinances of the Torah, but rather to the customs and ways of civilized society...

1. Why was the event of purifying the water the opportune moment to educate the Jewish people about the fundamental principles of righteous living [proto-mitzvot]?"

**Rashi wrote:** "*all the diseases that I put upon Egypt I will not put upon you, for* ***I am Hashem your healer****."*

But according to the plain meaning of Scripture, the verse is to be understood in the sense of a person who says, 'I am the physician who warns you not to eat certain things which might bring a man back to his state of disease.'"

1. According to Rashi, in what way is Hashem our healer?
2. How does Rashi’s explanation of “Hashem our healer” fit into the Ramban’s idea that Hashem educated Moshe in the Tree’s special properties purify the waters?
3. Scenario # 1 - Jane MJE’er wants to get a promotion in her marketing company. She feels that she is a strong employee, yet she feels like she is being passed over. Based on Rashi’s understanding of “*I am Hashem your healer”,* what should she do*?* Should she check her Mezuzah? Say more Tehillim?
4. Scenario # 2 – Joe MJE’er frequently fights with his older brother Steven. There has always been a sense of sibling rivalry in the family. Based on Rashi’s understanding of “*I am Hashem your healer”,* what should Joe do*?*
5. Scenario # 3 – Stacy MJE’er has become more religious over the last number of years. Yet, her friends and family surprisingly find her a bit more selfish and abrasive than she was before she became more “religious”. What does the fact that Hashem taught the ways of “proper and righteous living” even before he gave them the 613 mitzvot at Sinai indicate how Stacy should reevaluate her conduct?