

THE BEST DOCTORS

Last week we quoted the Mishna (Kiddushin 4:14) that stated "the best doctors go to hell." The meaning of this peculiar saying has been debated and there are numerous explanations, one of which we saw last week.

Rashi explains that the best doctors may be less inclined to help the poor who cannot pay his high fees. The callous doctor may be hell-bound due to his selection of paying patients only.

One of the more famous explanations is offered by Rabbi Shmuel Eidels in his seminal work the Maharasha on the Aggadic portions of the Talmud. He explains that the best doctor is the one who views themselves as an expert (correctly or otherwise) and therefore sees no reason to consult with any other expert doctor. Since each doctor, as talented and knowledgeable as they may be, only knows a certain amount of information and without consulting with others they are only giving their patients access to a limited amount of information and ability to diagnose the problem. Due to the stubborn unwillingness of the doctor to consult with their peers and even superiors there will be an increase in patients who do not improve, get worse and even die. All this as a result of the doctor viewing themselves as "the best doctor" and having an inflated view of their own importance and ability. The doctor who causes the

death of even one patient due to his pride and haughtiness deserves to be punished in hell.

This admonition is not only for doctors but all of us need to be willing and happy to consult with others and to accept their constructive criticism. No individual has a monopoly over the truth and therefore each person must see the importance of getting advice from others. It is imperative to seek counsel and evaluation from others.

As we draw close to Tish'a b'Av, when we mourn the Temple that was destroyed due to causeless hatred, we need to increase our concern for others and learn to listen to other people, even when they completely disagree with us. One of the essential elements of repentance is the willingness to hear criticism. Even when it is not clothed in the most positive language, the sentiment and the message may still be worth listening to and heading. We need to develop humility to be capable of asking others and listening to their advice.

May we increase compassion and causeless love to begin to rebuild the House of God.

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