Healing and Comfort in the Talmud  
Source Sheet by Student Rabbi Janine Jankovitz Pastor

**Berakhot 5b:10**

The Gemara continues to address the issue of suffering and affliction: Rabbi Yoḥanan’s student, Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba, fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Do you desire to be ill and afflicted? Rabbi Ḥiyya said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward, as one who welcomes this suffering with love is rewarded. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Give me your hand. Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba gave him his hand, and Rabbi Yoḥanan stood him up and restored him to health.

**Berakhot 5b:11**

Similarly, Rabbi Yoḥanan fell ill. Rabbi Ḥanina entered to visit him, and said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward. Rabbi Ḥanina said to him: Give me your hand. He gave him his hand, and Rabbi Ḥanina stood him up and restored him to health.

**Berakhot 5b:12**

The Gemara asks: Why did Rabbi Yoḥanan wait for Rabbi Ḥanina to restore him to health?

**Berakhot 5b:13**

The Gemara answers: A prisoner cannot generally free himself from prison, but depends on others to release him from his shackles.

**Berakhot 5b:14**

The Gemara relates that Rabbi Elazar, another of Rabbi Yoḥanan’s students,
fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan entered to visit him, and saw that he was lying in a dark room. Rabbi Yoḥanan exposed his arm, and light radiated from his flesh, filling the house. He saw that Rabbi Elazar was crying, and said to him: Why are you crying? Thinking that his crying was over the suffering that he endured throughout his life, Rabbi Yoḥanan attempted to comfort him: If you are weeping because you did not study as much Torah as you would have liked, we learned: One who brings a substantial sacrifice and one who brings a meager sacrifice have equal merit, as long as he directs his heart toward Heaven. If you are weeping because you lack sustenance and are unable to earn a livelihood, as Rabbi Elazar was, indeed, quite poor, not every person merits to eat off of two tables, one of wealth and one of Torah, so you need not bemoan the fact that you are not wealthy. If you are crying over children who have died, this is the bone of my tenth son, and suffering of that kind afflicts great people, and they are afflictions of love.

**Berakhot 5b:15**

Rabbi Elazar said to Rabbi Yoḥanan: I am not crying over my misfortune, but rather, over this beauty of yours that will decompose in the earth, as Rabbi Yoḥanan’s beauty caused him to consider human mortality. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Over this, it is certainly appropriate to weep. Both cried over the fleeting nature of beauty in the world and death that eventually overcomes all.

**Berakhot 5b:16**

Meanwhile, Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Is your suffering dear to you? Rabbi Elazar said to him: I welcome neither this suffering nor its reward. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Give me your hand. Rabbi Elazar gave him his hand, and Rabbi Yoḥanan stood him up and restored him to health.