SPECIAL INTERACTIVE EDITION - LIVE LINKS THROUGHOUT



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RABBI'S MESSAGE:

As we sit in quarantine, waiting for the medical prophets to finally determine that we may be freed from our loneliness, and remain impervious to the villainous Covid-19 - parallels to the plight of the *Metzora*, the leper, and his 'dwelling in isolation' are inevitable.

The *Metzora* covering his '*lips*', echoes the donning of masks in preventing airborne germs from infiltrating our's or other's respiratory tracts.

His calling out: "Contaminated, contaminated", mimics our best efforts to maintain social distance, keeping others at bay.

Yet, many commentators assert that any comparison is simply inaccurate, as the diseases pertaining to *Negaim*, the leprosy the Torah speaks of, was purely of a spiritual nature, which developed from the *Metzora*'s innermost character flaws that found miraculous expression in this deteriorative sickness that assaulted one's very physical being.

But there are many great luminaries, among them the Ralbag, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni, Tur, Abarbanel and others, who understand it as a contagious physical illness.

The great Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk seemingly tries to synthesize the two views.

He wonders why is it that the *Kohanim* specifically were entrusted with the examination and determination of the status of the *tzaraas*. He suggests that precisely because it was a highly contagious disease, only those who benefit a special divine providence and protection - as the *Kohanim* do - could risk exposure to these volatile 'germs'. Since the *Kohanim* are distinguished in their heightened levels of service and stature, they possess a 'spiritual immunity' to this infection.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch goes to great length in denying any hypothesis that this was anything other than a divinely directed disease, that required 'social distancing' to contain any bacteria.

Among the many questions on this theory he raises, two are very compelling.

The halacha states that a groom who was afflicted with leprosy, is exempt from being examined and classified as a *Metzora* for the entire week of his *Seven Days of Partying*. If this were indeed a contagious disease how could the Torah ignore, especially in a joyous time of so much social interaction, the possible spread of leprosy?

Even more intriguing is the suspending of any examining for *tzaraas* during the holidays, when literally millions of Jews made their pilgrimage to the Temple. Was there any greater potential for the transmission of germs than under those extremely crowded and unsterile circumstances?

May I suggest perhaps, in support of Reb Meir Simcha's contention, that just as those who live in a higher realm, the *Kohanim*, are privileged with an extra immunity, so too when we act appropriately as a community, with a greater sensitivity toward one another, that very same divine protection comes to play, giving us special antibodies to ward off contagion.

When Jews celebrate wholeheartedly in the joy of others, we arouse within the body of the Jewish people a veritable 'herd immunity' that can conquer the vilest of diseases.

Herd Immunity

During the days when the Temple stood, when we joined there with one heart, in the singular mission of serving the Almighty in unison, we gained an even greater 'herd protection', crushing the forces that fuel this very powerful sickness.

A dear friend of mine, Rabbi Yaakov Majeski, who lost his dear father, Rav Efraim Dov Ber z"l, this week, shared with me a powerful anecdote about his remarkable Tatty, who I was privileged to have been acquainted with.

He described how his father would not miss a Simchah - not just for his immediate family, but for their entire extended family. His face would glow from happiness, his eyes would light up for a niece, nephew, brother, and sister.

It was real, you could feel it.

He would often quote in the name of his beloved Rebbe, Reb Shmuel Charkover: "To feel someone's pain is a Tzadik, but one who can sense someone else's true simcha, is a malach - an angel."

This this is how he lived his life.

The way we shared in the sorrow of the too many families who have lost so many loved ones these past weeks, is a measure of how much we feel each other's pain.

The intensity of our prayers on behalf of those who are ill, reflects on an even deeper connection between us.

It is the level to which we adhere to the austere restrictions to protect one another that is evidence of our real commitment to each other.

But the true measure of our 'collective immunity' will only be achieved when we truly align with the joy of those who have recovered, and with our rejoicing authentically in each other's simchos and accomplishments.

Houses in the city of Jerusalem were exempt from being deemed afflicted with leprosy.

Stand firm did our feet within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem the built up is like a city united together. (Tehillim 122)

When we will be truly united, will we be equipped with the immunity we need to ward off the forces that stand in our way, and finally return to our true home.

> באהבה, צבי יהודה טייכמאן

Pirkei Avos Chapter Two

As we long for our return to the Shul, Pirkei Avos will be coming to you electronically instead!

<u>CLICK HERE for a printable PDF</u> of Rabbi Teichman's Pirkei Avos Essay for this week.

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To have your child's upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah listed here please email office@ohelmoshebaltimore.com with details and/or update your member profile.

YAHRZEIT Aryeh Dickstein, for his father, Rabbi Leonard Dickstein הרב אלייעזר חיים בן שלמה זלמן

Marc Berenson, for his mother, Louise Berenson לאה זלרא בת דוד

Members: Please keep your profile updated in Shul Cloud so we can celebrate and commemorate all our important dates with you! (And occasionally save you from forgetting one!!)

Ohel Moshe Virtual Shmoozing

Original anecdotes, thoughts, & observations from the Ohel Moshe family as we stay virtually connected! <u>SEE THEM HERE</u> & <u>CONSIDER SHARING YOUR OWN</u>

