

CORONAVIRUS

OHR HACHAIM SPECIAL EDITION BULLETIN



MESSAGE FROM RABBI WEISS

Rashi on the very first possuk of Torah says the Torah should start with החדש הזה לכם, which is the first mitzvah given to us as a nation. To which the Ramban says, 'How can the Torah not open with בראשית - the foundation of אמונה and declaration that הקב"ה created the world? How can we not start at the beginning? In addition, why is this seemingly technical mitzvah of setting a calendar chosen to be the first mitzvah? And why is this מצוה set in Mitzrayim of all places, acting as a prelude to יציאת מצרים?

The Seforim explain that the בריאה went through an explosive Big Bang transformation at יציאת מצרים, in which the world order was completely altered. Up until then the world existed without עם ישראל and without Torah, the two components for בריאת העולם. The רבש"ע sustained the world בחסדו, independent of man's action and without merit. This הנהגה is represented by the 26 stanzas of לעולם כי לעולם שון הקב"ה את עולמו בחסדו for the 26 generations.

As ישראל prepares to leave Mitzrayim and accept the Torah, the world order is upended and a new בריאה of לפי מעשה is established - a world that reacts to man's action and deeds, dependent on כלל ישראל's abilities to harmonize with the Torah and the רבש"ע. This is the הנהגה of Torah demonstrated in the mitzvah of קידוש החדש that is הקב"ה handing over his creation to us, making us the stewards of the world and time.

The above was written last year for פרשת החדש, and none of us could have ever imagined the world as it is today one year later. Our Shuls closed, Yeshivos empty, schools quiet and our hearts bleeding. אה עת צרה when we need our Shuls and Torah study more than ever. A time when we need to embrace each other and yet we cannot.

Let us remember the message as we read the posukim of החדש. Especially in these fearful times of uncertainty, we must remind ourselves that we've existed in הקב"ה world from the moment of בראשית and that on this Shabbos He so gently and lovingly places the world into our hands. Charging us with the mission of sustaining and uplifting his בריאה, all the while inspiring and nurturing us to never stop believing in Him and in ourselves. It is in this month of ניסן that we take over, and it was now that the world saw its first global miracles. Through our faith and commitment to Hashem's Torah, and through our emulation of His compassion for others, this sacred month remains a unique opportunity to become the Miracle Makers and be empowered to bring about our own miracles.

So on this Shabbos, when humanity faces its greatest challenge, the world needs us. We must pick up the baton of the בריאה and play our role. At Shul or at home, on the day we testify that God is the Creator, a day we are gifted a יחירה, on our day of הבא עולם, let us stay focused on the task of enhancing our relationship with הקב"ה through זמירות, עונג, תפילה and תורה. May the רבש"ע come into each of our homes this Shabbos, keep us safe, and bentch us with נעזרת.

Have a good Shabbos,
יוסף צבי ווייס



SHABBOS ZMANIM

MARCH 20-21

פרשת ויקהל-פקודי/החודש

Earliest Shabbos.....	6:04 PM
Candlelighting.....	7:00 PM
Shkiah.....	7:18 PM
Zman Krias Shema.....	10:10 AM
Zman Tefillah.....	11:11 AM
Havdallah.....	8:04 PM

****Note this Shabbos is Mevorchim Nissan. Rosh Chodesh is Thursday, March 26 and the Molad will be Tuesday morning, 10:14 AM and 11 Chalakim.****

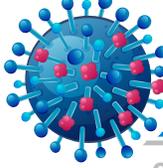


SHABBOS AT HOME

As we prepare for the unfamiliar experience of a Shabbos at home, let's go over some important things to keep in mind:

- If possible, efforts should be made to accept Shabbos 20 minutes early.
- One is encouraged to say Shir Hashirim and Hodu (Tehillim, Perek 107)
- It is suggested to recite Kabbolas Shabbos with the entire family.
- Pay special attention to Kedushas Shabbos, especially during the Seudos.
- Shabbos morning davening should preferably be at the same time Shul would have davened.
- Daven together and read the Parsha leining between Shacharis and Mussaf.
- Spend extra time and attention to our children who are going through this just as we are.
- Do not visit friends or neighbors or arrange play dates for your children. All social restrictions are to be adhered to over Shabbos just as during the week.
- Do not conduct or participate in a house or backyard minyan or kiddush.

We all know these are difficult times and emotionally challenging. We must remain vigilant in our separation to stop the spread and protect lives. The phrase to remember is "Stay Away, Stay Alive."



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A NEW PROBLEM, AN OLD SOLUTION

ESSAY BY ZW

It's been tough. For the elderly and unhealthy individuals it's been terrifying. For government officials and medical personnel it's been demanding. For all, it's been increasingly chaotic. Personally and less importantly, for me, it's been enough; this virus has tested my patience, placing it on edge. The only thing more contagious and widespread than Corona is discussing it. Initially, after hearing it all and then some more, willingly, I self-isolated myself (more than usual), hoping for at least one healthy day devoid of sickly talk. I extended my distance from over the recommended six feet to longer than an ear shot away, as I sought to deafen the tiresome talk. Deeming the topic not worthy of my cheap ink or simple words, I chose to disengage. Yet as pandemics go, there is no force enough to obstruct, relentlessly hauling along with it its endless, recycled and universal chatter. Being so I conquered my stubbornness, grabbed my pen, and delved into the on-going's on-going. It turns out if you are willing to listen and listen well, there's a lot you could hear. Through one of many lengthy arguments, comparing and contrasting Corona to a simple flu, I've learnt nothing about either but did discover the key to debating efficiently and sounding educated (even if by way of the School of Wikipedia), it being dependent on one's demeanor. Yelling isn't a guarantee, unless your opponent is one of soft skin and prone to intimidation; in this instance the raised decibels itself will win over. In an equal scenario the formula is to present your non-expertise medical opinion graciously, without hesitation and scatter in some makeshift numbers and percentages, their sources irrelevant. Also it may help if you're arguing the side that claims the flu to be worse, as it seems an ignorant theory resonates more with an ignorant crowd.

Life as we've known it has ceased. In all facets a new version has forced its way in; one of unity, formed through its ubiquitous decree of solitude; one of no toilet paper for some—too much for others. A life without sports, if we can call it that, honestly though it feels more like surviving, and barely at that. Freedom granted from captive schools—but now together confined to a jail called home. Days spent mostly on extra hygiene, or any hygiene, have become the norm and quite boring.

The other day, being a lawful citizen, I was minding to myself when an old friend and I crossed paths. We didn't get off to a great start as my outstretched hand was greeted by his twisted elbow. To my defense I determined it to be absurd to replace an act of formality like a firm handshake with a most informal elbow or chest bump; what's next, instead of hugs and kisses will we implement kicks and punches? From afar we began conversing; unfortunately the six feet distance for safety acted harmful to an already troublesome conversation, its core consisting of a Corona-themed rerun of factual dullness, shelled in

awkwardness. Trying to switch the topic, I casually pointed out the lengthy time since our last meeting, to which he promptly explained for precaution he quarantined himself. At first I was surprised that this social craver would proactively endure isolation; I then remembered his other trait: hypochondria. "The two weeks felt like forever," he exclaimed, "you can't imagine."

I can. I've been doing it for 23 years, I think to myself but don't say, instead offering nothing but a nod as a ploy to end the encounter, and it did.

By now though we've all began practicing quarantine; with a countrywide lockdown in effect, all forms of activity temporarily terminated. Sitting at home battling boredom—a battle we've all fought and lost before—I've identified its true meaning. It isn't the feeling of being totally unoccupied—rather it's being obsessively occupied with the fear of being unoccupied, a feeling capable of leading to unavoidable weariness and well, more boredom.

On a serious and more important note, there are graver concerns to tackle; the fear of the unknown that has gripped us brings about the questions we've been asking ourselves. What exactly is this we're going through? Will we ever know? And when will be it over? Are we doing enough; are we doing anything at all?

We as Jews have been down this road before; in our previous and new worlds where timing is still everything, we can look to the juxtaposition of this virus spread across the holidays of Purim and Pesach, and reading between this line, a revelation may be found. Turning to Purim, we are reminded of a moment of utter despair; they searched for a solution not in sight, yet their belief in a miracle to be performed by Him was never closer and held so tight. And to Pesach where it all began, the story of Exodus, a historic tale of exalted glory, but the proof of His shield and compassion eternally imprinting our souls; no matter what we face our ancestor's journey, led out through His strengthened hand, grants us all we ever need—belief.

Amidst a pandemic, among a widespread of illness, chaos, and despair, as we are guided by the elderly—the most vulnerable, yet the most calm, for having been around long enough, they've come to know Who's in charge, and how He protects—may we add to this another vital act, a further step along the many drastic measures, may we keep the very thing we need—faith.

So as we hunker down in lonesome ways, stripped of all opportunities of work and scholastic growth, with our life's mission abruptly hampered—we shall not lose that which we so desperately need—hope.

