

Corona: Chassidic Health Guidelines

A Serious Purim Meditation

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Rabbi Ginsburgh's Purim 5780 Discourse in Tel Aviv

Health Ministry Recommendation: Repentance

During the period of time preceding the coming of Mashiach, which the sages called, “the footprints of Mashiach” (עקבותא דמשיחא), we experience various phenomena that are signs of the imminent redemption. Some of these phenomena seem positive and some seem to be negative. The corona virus spreading around the world—an international threat requiring an international response—is also a sign of the coming redemption. On a simple level, the fear of a pandemic is a negative sign of the approach of Mashiach. It can, however, metamorphose into one of the positive signs of the imminent redemption. How so? If all the news broadcasts would open with the Israeli Health Ministry’s recommendation to do *teshuvah*, to return to God, citing the “handwriting on the wall” (in Hebrew, the word for “wall” is *kir* cognate to ‘corona’) it would be a sign of the days of Mashiach for Israel itself and for Israel in its role as a “light unto the nations.”

Beyond God’s general call to us to return to Him, one of the main ways to read God’s signs to us is to contemplate the saying of the sages, “There is nothing that is not alluded to in the Torah.”¹ By meditating on the name of the virus as it is written in Hebrew (קורונה) as well as its numerical value, 367, and the allusions to this word and this number in the Torah, we can perceive guidance and *segulahs* that should be recommended by the Health Ministry.

Not sufficiently cooked

Some explain that corona is alluded to in *Rashi* on the verse regarding the Passover offering, “Do not eat from it *na*.”² *Rashi* explains the meaning of this word, *na*, “If it is not sufficiently cooked it is called *na*” (שאינו צלוי כל צרכו קוראו נא בלשון ערבי). Some have noted that when the words, “it is called *na*” (קוראו נא) are pronounced very similarly to “corona.” However, there is a second allusion to corona in this part of *Rashi*’s commentary can be found in the first word, “If it is not” (שאינו), since its value is 367, the value of “corona” (קורונה), as above.

Eating meat that is partially raw testifies to sinking into the lusts of this world and a craving for food even before it is properly cooked (as in the universal Noahide prohibition to eat a limb or organ taken from a live animal, a prohibition that obligates

¹ *Ta’anit* 9a.

² Exodus 12:9.

all human beings). It is reported that this illness began with the consumption of meat that was not sufficiently cooked, in a state of *na*, perhaps even as limbs taken from living animals. Thus, the Divine recommendation here is to beware of animalistic eating, of sinking into the lusts of this world. Instead, we must ensure that the meat that we consume is properly prepared.

Corona Allusions in all the Sefirot

Following this preface, we will contemplate upon other instances and allusions to the number 367, which is the numerical value of corona. We will look at 11 different allusions that correspond to the *sefirot*, and bring them in the order of the *sefirot*. Each analysis will be followed with a practical recommendation that can be extrapolated from that allusion.

Keter (Crown)

The virus is called “corona,” which means “crown” in Latin, because of its crown-like appearance. In the *gematria* method known as primordial numbering (*meespar keedmee*), each letter is given the value of the sum of all letters from *alef* to itself. Applying this calculation method, “crown” (כֶּתֶר) becomes (אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקרשת) (אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקר), which equals 2365. When each unit of 1000 (*elef*) turns into the letter *alef* (a method called “the revolving wheel [from 999 to 1]” and based on the the secret of the verse, “how can one chase a thousand”³) whose value is 1, the 2000 turns into 2, and the word “crown” then equals 367, the value of corona (קורונה).

The *keter* contains the three superconscious powers of the psyche: **faith, pleasure and will**. Thus, corona calls upon us to uproot our doubts about **faith**. In the context of Purim, eliminating doubt (ספק) is the same as annihilating Amalek (עמלק), since both words have the same numerical value, 240. In addition, we must take **pleasure** in God (as opposed to the pleasures of this world) and fulfill the sages’ adage, “Make your will like His will”⁴—God’s will as it manifests in the Torah.

Chochmah (Wisdom)

367, the numerical value of “corona” is also the value of, “sound mind”⁵ (שכל טוב), which is a description of the Torah (“There is no good other than Torah”⁶). The Torah’s sound mind is occupied with thoughts of how to bring good into the world and not, God forbid, how to employ our intelligence to bring evil into the world. To counter corona at the level of wisdom, we must strengthen our Torah study in general and our study of the inner dimension of the Torah, in particular. This study should be the precursor to actually performing good deeds in reality.

³ Deuteronomy 32:30.

⁴ *Avot* 2:4.

⁵ Psalms 111:10.

⁶ *Avot* 6:3.

Binah (Understanding)

367 is also the value of the phrase, “And he saw rest, that it was good”⁷ (וַיֵּרָא מְנוּחָה כִּי טוֹב) from Jacob’s blessing to the tribe of Yissachar. Yissachar places himself in voluntary self-quarantine. He sees that the absolutely best thing that he can do is to learn Torah with serenity (by perceiving the reward for this in the World to Come and planning his life accordingly). In particular, the *Zohar* explains that these words, “And he saw rest, that it was good,” refers to the Written Torah, while the rest of the verse, “and the land, that it was pleasant,” refers to the Oral Torah. To counter corona on the level of understanding, we must strengthen our Torah study with serenity, particularly the Written Torah, which includes learning all the books of the Bible, which are all considered part of the Written Torah.

Da’at (Knowledge)

Regarding the commandment to keep Shabbat, the sages say that “Remember [the Shabbat] and Safekeep [the Shabbat] were said in a single utterance.”⁸ The words “remember” (זָכוֹר) and “safekeep” (שָׁמַר) share some of the same letters, but the letters that are unique to each word are *zayin* and *chaf* (זך) for “remember” and *shin* and *mem* (שם) for “safekeep.” These four unique letters equal 367. To counter corona on the level of Knowledge, we must strengthen our remembrance and safeguarding of the Shabbat.

Chesed (Lovingkindness)

367 is also the value of the phrase, “Indeed, charity is for life”⁹ (כִּן צְדָקָה לַחַיִּים). The sages teach that charity saves us from death, so the first *segulah* or “charm” during days that we must increase our merits in order to be saved, is to increase our charity-giving.

Gevurah (Might)

The prophet Isaiah describes the Jewish people as, “an awesome nation from its beginning onward”¹⁰ (עַם נִרְאָה מִן הוּא וְהַלְאָה). The numerical value of, “an awesome nation” (עַם נִרְאָה) is 367, the same as “corona” (קוֹרוֹנָה). From its inception, the nation of Israel has been awesome in the sense of being special and noteworthy, when it fulfills God’s will, as in the verse, “And all the nations of the earth will see that God’s Name is called upon you and they will fear you,”¹¹ they are an awe-inspiring nation in the eyes of the world. Jew-haters throughout history have accused the Jews of spreading all the plagues and troubles of the world (this continues even today). But this verse also refers to God’s leadership of the Nation of Israel, which is a wondrous and awesome leadership. To counter corona at the level of might, we must strengthen our observance of the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*, which Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkanos corresponded

⁷ Genesis 49:15

⁸ *Mechiltah* on Exodus 20:7.

⁹ Proverbs 11:19.

¹⁰ Isaiah 18:7.

¹¹ Deuteronomy 28:10.

to the verse, “And all the nations of the earth will see that God’s Name is called upon you and they will fear you,” explaining that the verse refers to the head-tefillin.¹²

Tiferet (Beauty)

When Moses’ sister, Miriam, became leprous and was put in quarantine, Moses prayed for her, saying, “Please God, please heal her” (אל נא רפא נא לה). The crux of this short prayer is the three words, “Please heal her” (רפא נא לה) whose numerical value is 367. During these days, we must awaken compassion (the inner dimension of the *sefirah* of beauty) for the entire world by praying for healing. Moses’ prayer is called “a short prayer,” which rises from identifying with the person who is ill. (It is difficult for ill people to pray at length). Wherever we go, we can quietly say with all our hearts, “*Refah na lah*” (while being careful not to speak [or even think] negatively about anyone, which was the cause of Miriam’s illness in the first place).

Netzach (Victory)

The inner dimension of the *sefirah* of victory is confidence. The sage with the greatest trust in God was Nachum—the man of Gamzu (איש גם זו), who asserted about whatever happened, “This too [*gamzu*] is good” acting with absolute trust in God to actualize the good. The value of, “Ish Gam Zu” (איש גם זו) equals 367, the value of “corona” (קורונה). To counter corona on the level of Victory, we must strengthen our trust in God and act on that trust.

Hod (Acknowledgment)

When the match was made between Isaac and Rebecca, her father and brother, the evil Betuel and Lavan, admitted that “This has come from God,” telling Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, “Here is Rebecca before you, take her and go and she shall be a wife for the son of your master as God has spoken”¹³ (הנה רבקה לפניך קח ולך ותהי אשה לבן אדניך כאשר). The value of the words, “Here is Rebecca” (הנה רבקה) also equals 367. This equality suggest that to counter corona at the level of acknowledgment, we must do our best to help those who need to find their match do so.

Yesod (Foundation)

367, the numerical value of “corona” (קורונה) equals the Hebrew word for the eye’s pupil (אישון). The verse says, “He who curses his father and mother, his candle will be extinguished in the blackness of darkness.”¹⁴ To counter corona at the level of foundation, we must be careful to honor our parents. Particularly, we must safeguard the elderly, who are more susceptible to this virus. The *tzaddik* who is the foundation of the world sees himself as a “miniature man” (another meaning of the Hebrew word for pupil) who is obligated to honor and safeguard those greater than him.

Malchut (Kingdom)

Whenever there was a time of trouble, the Lubavitcher Rebbe would instruct, as per the sages, to check the *mezuzahs*. The Zohar says that the plural form of *mezuzah* (מזוזות)

¹² Brachot 6a.

¹³ Genesis 24:51.

¹⁴ Proverbs 20:20.

is an anagram for “death has moved” (מָוֶת הִתְחַנְּנָה). The *mezuzah* is a *segulah* to safeguard the home from negative intruders. To counter corona at the level of the sefirah of kingdom, we must be particularly vigilant with the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah*, checking to ensure that it is kosher if it has not been checked in the past year.

On the parchment inside the *mezuzah* the verses of the Shema are written, beginning with the verse of the unification of God, “Hear Israel, God is our God, God is One.” The holy Names written on the interior of the rolled parchment are paralleled in the *mezuzah* by exchanged letters written on the exterior of the rolled parchment. Each letter of the holy Names is exchanged for the letter that follows it in the alphabet. Thus, parallel to “*Havayah* is our God, *Havayah*” (הוּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוּי) becomes, “כוזו במוסכו כוזו” whose numerical value is 367. The holy Names in the *mezuzah* are a very potent *segulah* for safeguarding us from this virus.

In summary (in addition to being careful not to eat improperly cooked meat):

Keter (Crown)

Eliminating doubts in faith
Finding our pleasures in God
“Make His will your will”

Chochmah (Wisdom)

Learning Torah in order to do good for Heaven and for God’s creations

Binah (Understanding)

Learning Torah with serenity of the soul

Da’at (Knowledge)

Remembering and safeguarding the Shabbat

Chesed (Lovingkindness)

Giving abundant charity

Gevurah (Might)

Tefillin

Tiferet (Beauty)

Prayers for healing “*Refah na lah*”

Hod (Splendor)

Matchmaking

Netzach (Victory)

Trust in God that “This is also good.”

Yesod (Foundation)

Extra honor and care for parents

Malchut (Kingdom)

Checking mezuzahs

Our proper approach to this epidemic will safeguard us and we will be a model for the world, exemplifying the right approach to God’s will and the Divine protection



that it merits. Then this severity will be turned into sweetness and the epidemic will metamorphose into one of the positive signs of the imminent redemption.