

אעלה את קורונה על ראש שמחתי?

Recent Theologies of Mourning and Rejoicing in a Time of Pandemic



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A Theology for Our Time of Crisis

1. R. Mosheh Lichtenstein, Letter "To My Dear Talmidim," 03.27.20;

To Our Dear Talmidim,

Our heads are spinning with thoughts in these troubling times. I wanted to share with you, with whom I feel close, some thoughts regarding the present reality, and our response to the situation.

These are disturbing times. Difficult emotions are raging, even threatening; not the usual anxiety that possesses us in a "normal" crisis, like the fear and trepidation of war, security threat, or illness. **This distress is different, a vague but consistent unease in the depths of the soul.**

Certainly, fear and trepidation from the danger of disease, and the concern about the potential disaster in a pandemic, are very real. Dread of the catastrophe we have seen in other countries is palpable, and enhanced by fear of the unknown. The unknown threatens us with the mystery of what the future holds for us – this is one of the most significant components of the fear of death with which we are all so familiar – and in this case, our inability to predict the magnitude of danger and enormity of threat reinforces our fear. Each of us feels threatened because we do not know what tomorrow will bring, and we all endangered by the pandemic.

However, there is another element at play in the current situation. Contrary to medieval or ancient society, modern man derives support and comfort from familiar routine in times of crisis. **When we feel threatened, we hold on to routine as an emotional respite.** Modern society encourages those who are ill to continue their routine even in times of sickness, and understands the importance of routine during wartime or security threats. I am reminded of the cleaning staffs that would arrive at the scene of mass terror attacks immediately after the removal of the wounded, washing the streets with powerful hoses, to enable a return to routine within hours of the event. **Routine is not only important, it's also comforting. Modern man views the natural order as a positive and beneficial force, and normative life sponsored by the natural world as safe. He has learned how to use nature to support his needs, and views nature as a source of provision and security.** With scientific knowledge, he understands nature to a great extent, and utilizes the technology he created to recruit nature to serve him best. The powers of nature are accessible and obedient. The laws of nature and course of regular life are not perceived as threatening or dangerous, but rather as a framework for personal and economic security. **Deviation from nature, whether through natural disaster, war, or economic crisis, is the primary threat to modern humanity; we are therefore comforted by that which is familiar and routine.**

This state of mind, which has become second nature to us, has been undermined in the current crisis. Suddenly, instead of offering comfort, nature is a threat, and routine – the cause of possible disaster. The crutch has become a beating stick, and the source of comfort has become a threat. In this new reality, only dramatic steps involving a complete break with routine and war against nature can save us. **Nature and modern lifestyle have turned against us, like a harnessed bull turning on its master. It is a world turned upside down, and this state shakes our equilibrium and undermines our existence.** Man has lost his anchor, and knows not how to navigate his own world; his work plan was knocked down, and the manual is no longer relevant.

This change carries significant spiritual ramifications. The panic and loss of control are threatening. Our trusted map or Waze have gone astray, and we feel helpless without them. **Like a small child lost in a mall, suddenly, without warning, the fun, familiar, bustling place of entertainment becomes threatening and frightening, inducing hysteria. He searches for a familiar face, store or sign, to return to a familiar framework, but can't find one. He cries out for his father and mother in his fear and distress, begging to be heard and rescued, and turns to an unseen redeemer.** Suddenly an adult reaches out and offers him a

hand – and he clings to him. If, God forbid, he follows the wrong adult, tragedy might ensue.¹ However, in the best case, the child might look up and see that it is his mother or father who have come for him, reaching out a loving, protective hand. If he had not been lost, he would not cling to them; he would have preferred his freedom. On the familiar road to kindergarten or school he might not even hold their hand at all. However, in this strange and foreign reality, he clings to his parent, his savior.

We are this child. In our present reality, we are threatened by the dangers of the pandemic, and frightened by an unfamiliar world. Fear of danger, dread of an unfamiliar world, and the loss of routine are all reflected in our souls. We cry to our father to reach out and save us from this frightening reality. If normally we would delight in man's independence and God-given autonomy to cultivate and keep the world, today we feel not only our weakened position, but also nature's hostility. This is not the kind world that is "desirable for gaining wisdom," but rather a "vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions... something your ancestors had never known." The snake and scorpion are one danger; the unfamiliarity is another, "something your ancestors had never known." One of the great challenges of Israel's journey through the wilderness was coping with the unknown and unfamiliar, waking each morning to a foreign world. The difficulty of living in a world "your ancestors have never known" is the key to understanding the nation's strange yearning to return to Egypt. Despite the fact that Egypt is a land of oppression and enslavement, it is a world 'your ancestors have known.'

The idea of coping with an unfamiliar reality resonates in our prayers. Each day we begin Amidah with turning to הגדול והגבור והנורא, הגדול והגבור, הגדול והגבור – the great, mighty, and awesome God. A special blessing is dedicated to each of these epithets. **The first two – הגדול והגבור – are two different attributes of divine providence. גדול is the distribution of divine abundance in the natural world.** As Maimonides diligently emphasized, there is great religious value to maintaining natural law and to divine governance within the framework of scientific constancy. **This is the normative route of God's governance and providence, and the foundation of natural order.** In this context, God "Who bestows good kindness ... and recalls the kindness of the patriarchs, and brings the redeemer to their children's children." These benefits, mentioned in the first bracha of Amidah, are provided within the normative and familiar world. God provides for us routinely in a world governed by natural law. This is normative divine providence, under normal circumstances.

The assumption at the foundation of the second bracha, אלה גיבור, is reversed – here, God's governance conflicts with nature, and subdues it. The might described here is the might of defeating nature, which commits God to conquer his desire to maintain natural law and defeat the rules of his own design.

Therefore, the bracha begins and ends with resurrection – "You are mighty forever, Hashem, You revive the dead, and greatly capable of liberating... and you are reliable to revive the dead." There is no greater contrast to natural law than resurrection. Here God benefits his creation by acting against natural law. This concept of defeating nature is inherently problematic, since it contrasts God's role as man's benefactor with his role as the creator, who commands the maintenance of the natural laws he designed. Despite this conflict, the rabbis instructed us to turn to this attribute of גבורה. They informed us that it is not impertinent to turn to God's might, and ask him to suspend natural law; in fact they positioned it in the introduction to Amidah. We turn to God as a father and merciful king, and ask him to hear our cry and defeat the laws of his own world for our benefit. The epithet גיבור denotes the ability of God's might to defeat a conflicting divine attribute. In other words, turning to a mighty God is turning to a merciful ruler who has the ability and desire to bend the rules of his own design, due to his compassion, and the acknowledgement that he has the ability to do so, when natural law cannot be relied upon.

The dichotomy of greatness and might when standing before God in prayer is expressed halakhically in the division between tractates Brakhot and Taanit; while both relate to prayer, one discusses routine, everyday prayer, while the other delves into prayer practices in a time of crisis. However, the two are differentiated not only in the sense of distress and the presence of danger, but also in the divine attributes that are employed. **Brakhot, with its normative prayer, turns to God who governs the world with the natural law he created, and benefits us through natural law, while Taanit pleads with the attribute of might –**

¹ This was indeed Israel's sin with the Golden Calf – they clung to the first element they believed would protect them an unfamiliar surroundings. In their panic and fear they failed to understand that what they looked to as a solution, was, in fact, the problem.

particularly relating to controlling rain,² which negates the natural order. When facing drought, plague, epidemic, and cessation of rain, man turns to God and asks him to overpower nature. Redemption cannot be found within the framework of nature, since it is nature that poses the threat; instead, in his distress, man asks God to suppress the natural order. He is compelled to go out of his comfort zone, and turn to God while deserting the familiar framework of beneficial nature and comforting routine. He leaves his protective home and prays on the street, as an expression of stepping out of the comfort of his routine – a last resort against the hostility of nature.

This sense of a hostile nature that requires overpowering and might is foreign to modern man. In the consistent tension between fixed natural laws and divine providence, modern man is accustomed to turning to God, who will kindly tend to his needs, livelihood, and health, within the natural framework.

The modern God-fearing man prays and pleads to God with passion and intensity, but his prayers emerge from an understanding that out of the natural possibilities pertaining to his personal reality, God will choose a positive outcome. He is reluctant to pray for the submission of nature; he prays for God to guide and hone nature toward the desired outcome.

Over the last few weeks, reality has changed, and this demands a parallel change in our emotional world, in prayer, and in religious experience. Man is no longer Adam I; nor is he Adam II, who trusts nature to provide his needs, even when this security creates the existential loneliness described in *The Lonely Man of Faith*. The state and perception of *The Lonely Man of Faith*, an essay based on modern philosophies that trust in nature, is a far cry from the current condition of the current isolated man. **R. Soloveichik describes man's conquest of nature in a world where technology provides man with control over the universe; but now what we need is prayer that turns to the attribute of גבורה to battle nature.** We need to acknowledge the new existential state, and pray to God, who heals the sick, while recognizing the new reality.

Our prayers today need to be founded on the mode of prayer described in Taanit, which expresses this perception. The primary relevant prayer from Taanit in this situation, which is embedded in our siddur, is אבינו מלכינו (followed by מי שענה). This certainly seems an appropriate prayer to include daily at this time.³

In this context we should note, that these prayers in Taanit are based on an acute sense of danger, based in a threat from nature. A threat from nature is usually severe. While the threat is sometimes gradual, and only becomes concrete over time (such as cessation of rain), it is no less severe. In the present reality, in which the threat emerged gradually, not everyone feels there is an individual threat, since the extent of the danger is amorphous. Contrary to an acute sense of trepidation, if it exists, the vague unease makes it difficult to utter these prayers. This requires one to internalize the dangers posed by nature, not to shirk our responsibility to respond with appropriate prayer.

In light of this analysis, the ramifications on the policy of psak must be determined as well. One of the primary approaches to current halakhic questions attempts to maintain a familiar routine to whatever extent possible, and is willing to be lenient to achieve this end. Of course, each situation requires individual attention, but the fundamental question of whether it is even correct to maintain routine in these trying times should be addressed. Should the individual and the community not be instructed that these are not usual times, and that we are faced with a new world and existential state; and for now, there is no spiritual or existential logic in maintaining a routine that befitted a different reality? **Familiar routine is a comfort; but when the world order has turned upside down, the objective should not be to seek calm or comfort, but rather to face reality, and understand that our relationship with the world around us has shifted. We must recognize the crisis and make the necessary spiritual adjustments.** Instead of holding on to the past, we must come to terms with a different present. **The aspiration to execute a halakhic policy which strives to maintain routine is not a question relating to a specific halakhic detail, nor is it a general question of leniency or stringency in policy, but rather a fundamental question of whether the crisis should be**

² The discussion of the rain as a feature of might which overcomes nature, instead of a natural force, is beyond the scope of this letter.

³ Another prayer from Taanit that is embedded in our siddur, to a lesser extent, is מי שענה . To me this seems an appropriate addition alongside ענוה ענוה ה' ענוה , in times that demand crying out to God (for example, in the fast day declared this week on Erev Rosh Hodesh), since all these additions have a deep connection with the Taanit mode of prayer.

acknowledged, and the aspiration to return to that which is familiar and routine abandoned. The world is changed, and this must be acknowledged.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that I don't believe fear of epidemic and disease are necessary to enhance the sense of man's dependence on God. Our dependence on the divine is crucial to our religious existence, no less in normal times, in our dealings with comforting routines and friendly nature. However, this dependence is no longer filtered through that which is familiar and routine, but rather through battling routine; we therefore need to turn to God as the only power that can conquer nature on our behalf. This is another form of divine providence; in order to merit this, man must recognize the specific need, and pray to God, while shedding the sense of security usually derived from the world that surrounds us.

May the great, mighty and awesome God hear our prayers, and remove illness from our midst and from the entire world.

With sincere and loving hope for physical and spiritual health,

Mosheh Lichtenstein (English Translation by Atara Snowbell of original letter in Hebrew)

2. R. Yaakov Taubes, Letter to Mount Sinai Jewish Center community, March 27

Dear Community,

Over the past few weeks, as the situation in the world has worsened and the extent of our new reality began to set in, many have tried to find meaning in the chaos. Some have pointed to this all being some kind of message from Hashem, telling us that we are not in control of our lives. We sophisticated 21st century people, with all our technology and knowledge, have witnessed our society as we know it brought down by a virus, by a plague, by a reality that humanity has been struggling with for thousands of years. We have been reminded that we in fact control nothing, that really Hashem alone runs the world despite the illusion of control which we sometimes feel.

But for many of us, finding Hashem in these extraordinary times has gotten harder not easier. Without our Shul, our friends, indeed without everything that helps makes a religious life worth pursuing for so many, connecting to Him has become more difficult. Davening at home, observing Shabbos without community, not seeing anyone - these can be impediments to achieving and enhancing proper Yiras Shamayim.

But even more damaging is the fact that most of us now look elsewhere for hope and for change. Every morning brings a frantic check of our phones to see if there is any update. Maybe restrictions are being lifted. Maybe a cure has been found. Maybe the number of those infected has begun to go down. Maybe the government officials are ready to provide something resembling a timeline. The lack of stability and the unknown about how long this will all last can be so incredibly stressful and many of us continue to check on things throughout the day; our Whatsapp and Facebook groups are exploding with content. Many of us are not looking upward to Shamayim, but downward at our phones.

This past Thursday was Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the beginning of the month of redemption, and often most importantly for many who are used to being in a rush in the morning, the beginning of a month with no recitation of tachanun. When Rav Hershel Schachter, Shlita, was asked about whether we should perhaps say tachanun during Nissan this year in light of the troubling times in which we find ourselves, he replied that the reason tachanun is omitted is that we are commemorating the redemption which our ancestors experienced from Egypt and projecting forward to the future redemption, which Chazal say will also take place in some form at this time. The significance of these ideas remains in place, despite everything going on at present.

With Pesach coming up and the questions pouring in, perhaps even more so than in the past, I have been reflecting on the strength of our people. **Our world has been turned upside down, but it nonetheless is time to get ready for Pesach and that is what we are going to do.** That ability to focus on the Yom Tov, to prepare for what may be one of the most difficult Pesach holidays in memory - that may be the greatest possible display of emunah, of our faith in Hashem. We may still be looking down at our phones for updates, but deep down, I believe, we do have our priorities straight about what really matters.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Yaakov Taubes

When Nissan 'Falls Out' During Coronavirus (*Tahanun*)

3. משנה תענית ג:

על אלו מתריעים בשבת: על עיר שהקיפוח גוים או נהר, ועל ספינה המטרפת בים. רבי יוסי אומר, לעזרה אבל לא לזעקה. שמעון התמני אומר, אף על הדבר, ולא הודו לו חכמים.

4. רמב"ם תעניות א:

(ו) אין גזרין תענית על הצבור לא בשבתות ולא ב'ימים טובים. וכן אין תוקעין בקו לא בשופר ולא בתצוצרות ולא זועקים ומתחננים בקו בתפלה.

אלא אם כן היתה עיר שהקיפוח עכו"ם או נהר או ספינה המטרפת בים...

5. Question and Answer from Rabbinic Email Group

QUESTION: We are about to enter chodesh Nissan where we would not normally have tachanunim. What would be appropriate to add to tefillah or have as stand alone tefillah due to the current circumstances?

ANSWER: I was asked by Rav Shay Schachter to send out the following note- Lots of people asking so maybe you can circulate:

Rav Schachter feels that Avinu Malkeinu should not be recited during Chodesh Nissan as it has always been considered to be a חודש הגאולה. Tachanun is not recited nor should Avinu Malkeinu.

6. Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, Publicized Letter to Yeshiva Har Etzion Alumni, March 29, 2020

Dear All,

...Regarding the question at hand, I can only speak for myself, but **I am definitely of the opinion that one should continue to say Avinu Malkenu and Tachnun in chodesh Nissan as well** and I personally do so. **Although there is a compelling halakhic case for this, that is not the main reason. The real reason is that there is a compelling religious and emotional need to do so. If in times like this we don't cry out to the KBH, then when should we do so?** Masekhet Taanis and its underlying religious perspective of crying to the KBH in times of need is not only an intellectual text to give shiurim about, but a religious reality that should inform our sentiments. None of the members of this list has experienced anything similar to this in his lifetime - had I described the current situation to anybody a year ago as a prediction, it is safe to say that they would be convinced that I had lost my rational faculties - and there is no doubt that a pandemic rages amongst us. Must there be any more need to recognize that there must be a corresponding response in our tefilla that recognizes the need to address this situation? This response requires the inclusion of tefilot whose essence is crying out to the KBH and not just routine tefilot. Two of the most prominent tefilot that answer this need are Avinu Malkeinu and Tachnun and therefore it is important to continue saying them now.

I have been wondering why there is such a deep reluctance to adopt a crisis mode in tefilla when everything else in our lives is in an unprecedented crisis mode. Is it only a halakhic conservatism/reluctance to deviate from conventional sources or is it something much deeper? The question is heightened by the contrast to the halakhic landscape in which, to the best of my impression, there is a recognition that these are special times with special needs and a much greater willingness to pasken out of the box, while the attitude to tefillah is not so. Is this simply a desire to make life easier for people which translates into halakhic *kulos* and an exemption from extra prayer or is there something more basic beneath the surface? Let me remind ourselves that the Rabanut Rashit's call to fast last week was only for half a day. Personally, I was astounded - **if the mishnah in Taanis and the idea of fasting in an עת צרה doesn't apply to this situation, when then is it applicable?** The Mishnah, as we all know, talks about fasting an entire day. Why then did the Rabbanut not follow the Mishnah? Is it only to make life easy - in which case another discussion is necessary and important to have - or is it unwilling to face the implication that we are in a bona fide עת צרה.

As is clear from the tone of my comments in the previous paragraph, and as the letter I sent last week also stated, **I believe that there is an emotional and religious unwillingness to admit the true extent of the crisis and to behave accordingly and that this creates a very unhealthy disconnect bet. our medical and practical behaviour and our religious awareness. All the attempts to seek the positive and to emphasize**

the normal can only be legitimate if they follow a deep and sincere recognition of our situation as a crisis rather than attempting to ward it off or paper it over.

In light of this, I am afraid that fasting half a day, not saying Avinu Malkenu in Nissan (if you said it before) etc. may be a form of denial of the extent of the current crisis or may encourage such a denial.

Let me now make the same point from a halakhic perspective and I'll allow myself to switch-hit to do that.

נראה פשוט דיש להמשיך באמירת אבינו מלכנו השנה וכן לומר תחנון בחודש ניסן. תפילה בעת צרה היא מצווה דאורייתא (עיין רמב"ן סה"מ מ"ע ה' ורמב"ם ריש הל' תעניות) בעוד אי-אמירת תחנון ושאר דיני חודש ניסן אינם אלא מנהג בעלמא - עיין טור סי תכ"ט ובית יוסף שם שהמנהג לא להתענות בניסן מקורו במ"ס, והב"י מבין דהבבלי חולק על כך ועכ"פ כל מעמדו הוא כמנהג, וק"ו לגבי אמירת תחנון ותעניות - וכיצד תידחה דין דאורייתא מפני מנהג בעלמא? ויש להבהיר שמצוות תפילה דאורייתא בעת צרה מחייבת תפילה המשקפת את עת הצרה ותגובתו עליה, ונראה שאם יתפלל בעת צרה את תפילתו הרגילה כמצוות אנשים מלומדה ולא ישתקף בה עת הצרה, אזי קיים מצוות תפילה שבכל יום אך לא מצוות תפילה בעת צרה. אמנם, אם יתכוין באופן מיוחד, מתוך פחד וזעקה, בברכות שבתפילה הרגילה כגון רפאנו, ברך עלינו או שמע קולינו כלפי הצרה שנקרתה, ייתכן מאד שיצא ידי חובת תפילה בעת צרה אך לענ"ד יש מקום לעיין בכך שכן מבנה התפילה הרגילה אינה משקפת את עת הצרה והמשנה בתענית חייבה הוספת ברכות מיוחדות בעת צרה. יתר מכך, תפילה בעת צרה היא בעלת אופי שונה מתפילה רגילה - זעקה וזעקה לעומת סדור שכחו של מקום ומבנה מסודר וקשיח (אולם קביעה זו מחייבת דיון הלכתי ומחשבתי עמוק שאין הזמן להאריך בה כרגע) - ועל כן ייתכן שצריכים תפילה המשקפת אופי זה כדי לצאת ידי חובת הזעקה הגלומה במצוות תפילה בעת צרה של "והרעותם בחצוצרות". עכ"פ, נראה פשוט שיש קיום דאורייתא של תפילה בעת צרה באמירת אבינו מלכנו לאחר התפילה, אף אם קיים את עיקר הדין והחיוב מדאורייתא בכוונה יתירה במסגרת העמידה הרגילה. ממילא, יש כאן ודאי מצווה דאורייתא אל מול מנהג נאה המתאים לימים כתקנם אך לא לעת הזאת, ועל כן פשוט לענ"ד שיש להמשיך ולומר אבינו מלכנו אף בחודש ניסן (למעט ימי החג עצמם) עד יעבור זעם.

גם לא יהיה מיותר להזכיר שמנהג אשכנז הרגיל (למעט מנהג הגר"א) מקשר בין תחנון לבין מגיפה ע"י הוספת פסוק הפתיחה של ויאמר דוד אל גד לפני הפרק מתהלים, ואם כן, היעלה על הדעת לא לומר בעת הזאת תפילה הקשורה בעיני המנהג באופן ישיר במגיפה? אתמהא.

7. עדה החרדית, ד' ניסן, פשקעוויל

מטעם רבותינו כ"ק מרנן שרי התורה הגאב"ד והגאון צ"צ הביד"צ שליט"א

מן המוצר קראנו

למרכה הכאב ולגודל הצער עדיין לא נושענו ממכה מהלכת רח"ל, וכל יום מתרבים שמועות על חולים מאחב"י בכל אתר ואתר ה"י ישלח דברו וירפאם, וכמה וכמה כבר נפלו חללים ה"י ומי יוכל שאת את השכר הגדול, אולם בכל אלו צריכים אנו להתחזק כי לא עביר קוב"ה דינא בלא דינא, ומאתו ית' לא תצא הרעות ח"ו ולפשפש כמעשינו וברקי לכבינו. וביותר חובה עלינו להמשיך להתפלל ולשפוך שיח בפני בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים שיאמר די לצרותינו ישלח רפו"ש לחולי עמ"י והבריאים יתמידו בכריאותם, וישיענו בתשועת עולמים.

ולעת כזאת מוצאנו חובה לפנות אל אהב"י דרי קודש ה"י ברוכים אתם לה', בכמה הערות נחוצות הנוגעות למעשה בימי ערבי פסחים וימי מועד חג המצות הקרב ובא ע"ש.

התפשטות החולי בעיר, וגדול עונו מנשוא".

ד) לגבי תפלה בציבור ובמנין: המתפללים במנין במקום פתוח ידאגו שיהיה הכל לפי ההוראות והכללים שנקבעו ע"י הרופאים, ומי שמתפלל בביתו ביחידות יתפלל גם הוא בכוונה הראויה ויאמר את כל סדר התפלה על הסדר כולל אבינו מלכנו ויחשב לו כאילו התפלל במנין (ובדאפשר ראוי להתפלל בשעה שהציבור מתפלל ולכוין עמהם כמבואר בשו"ע).

ה) לרגל אכירת חמצי. בני זמננו להעריב גופתם וזמור הבוואה לרבינו ולמורנו ומנוחנו שנוהגו בו וראוי רגירר וחס"ת יעירו ומתוך צרה ימציאו פרות ורוחה להושע בתשועת עולמים, ועוד חשאי נכה לאכול מן הכחם ומן הפחם אשר יגיע דמם על יור המזבח לרצון בביאת נו"ל ב"א. הכו"ח בצפיה לרחמי שמים המרובים, הביד"צ דפעיה"ק ת"ו, יום ראשון לסדר צו ד' ניסן תש"פ

נאם יצחק טובי' ווייס רב ואב"ד פעיה"ק ת"ו

נאם **אברהם יצחק אולמן**

נאם **משה שטרנבוך ראב"ד**

נאם **'הודהבמהגר"י פישר**

נאם **יעקב מענדל יאראוויטש**

נאם **יהושע ראזענבערגער**

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When Pesach 'Falls Out' During Coronavirus (Hagadah)

8. R. Herschel Schachter, כל דכפין, י' ניסן, כל דכפין

Rabbi Herschel Schachter
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הרה צבי שכטר
ראש ישיבה וראש כולל
ישיבת רבינו יצחק אלחנן

כל דכפין

בתחילת הסדר מוזמינים את העניים לאכול אתנו. ובמנצב שלנו של סכנת מגפה, אף שבדאי לא נניח לעניים ליכנס אלינו, מסתבר שעדיין אומרים נוסח זה, דהמקובל הוא שזאת האמירה היא רק זכר למקדש [ולא שבאמת אנו (צוה"י) מוזמינים אחרים לאכול אצלנו, והראיה, שאין אנו פותחים את הדלת לקרוא כן בקול], שבזמן הבית היו מוזמינים אחרים לאכול עמהם הק"פ, (כל דכפין ייתי ויפסח), ורק לאחר החורבן הוסיפו השורות שלצדק (השתא הכא וכו'), ואנו ממשיכים לומר הנוסח הזה (של כל דכפין וכו') זכר למקדש. וכמה דברים עושים צליל הסדר זכר למקדש. ואולי כדאי להסביר כן לבני הבית מראש.

At the beginning of the Pesach Seder, we invite all impoverished people to join us for the meal (ha'lachma anya). Although one would surely not allow guests into his home during this dangerous time, these words should still be recited at the start of the Seder. The reason we announce this invitation is in remembrance of the practice when the Beis HaMikdash stood. Then, Jews would invite anyone to join them in eating the Korban Pesach. Our recitation of these words today, is not meant as a true invitation, as is clear from the fact that we don't open the doors and announce it in the streets for guests to hear. After the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, there was an additional prayer added, that we return to the land of Eretz Yisrael. It is recommended to explain this to those at the table before reciting this paragraph.

צבי שכטר
מנצב"ק פ' 15
י' ניסן תש"פ

9. מרדכי אליאב, אני מאמין: עדויות חייהם ומותם של אנשי אמונה בימי השואה (1978), ד' 258

תפילת אכילת חמץ

„לפני אכילת חמץ יאמר בכוונת הלב: אבינו שבשמים הגה גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוננו לעשות רצונך ולחוג את חג הפסח באכילת מצה ובשמירת איסור חמץ, אף על זאת דאבה לבנו שהשעבוד מעכב אותנו ואנחנו נמצאים בסכנת נפשות. הננו מוכנים ומזומנים לקיים מצוותך וחי בהם ולא שימות בהם וליזהר מאזהרה, „הזהר לך ושמור נפשך מאוד“, ועל כן תפילתנו לך שתחיינו ותקיימנו ותגאלנו במהרה לשמור חוקיך ולעשות רצונך ולעבדך בלבב שלם — אמין.“

(חובר ע"י הרבנים במוחנה ברגן-בלזן, מאוסף בית לוחמי הגיטאות)

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10. David Block, “A Prayer for this Passover”, *Lehrhaus*, <https://thelehrhaus.com/holidays/a-prayer-for-this-passover/>

Thank God, most of us are in a position such that we do not have to compromise on any of the biblical laws (or even rabbinic restrictions and customs) of Pesah. Still, as we are set to begin a holiday bereft of some of the elements that are core to our celebrations – family, shul, *Yizkor*, inviting those less fortunate to spend the *Sedarim* with us – it is natural to feel sadness and disappointment. I think it’s okay to feel that, to “mourn” the loss. But I also wonder if it’s worth reframing our thinking by shifting from the sadness of what we aren’t doing to the *simhah*, joy, of what we are doing in its stead. In that spirit, I offer the following adaptation of the holy *tefillah* originally composed in Bergen Belsen. Hopefully, our inability to fulfill certain elements of Pesah due to our extreme care for health and life can also be experienced through a lens of religious meaning.

<p>Our Father in Heaven! It is open and known before You that it is our will to do Your will to celebrate the festival of Pesah with our communities, families, and friends, to pray and recite Your praises together with our communities, to have an intergenerational conversation about the story of the Exodus, to take care of the elderly, to sincerely invite those less fortunate to partake of the <i>Seder</i> with us, as the <i>Haggadah</i> says, “Anyonewho is hungry – come eat, anyone who is needy – come and partake of the Pesah offering.” With aching hearts we must realize that the current precautions around the COVID-19 pandemic prevent us from such celebration, since we find ourselves in a situation of <i>sakkanat nefashot</i>, of potential danger to our lives. Therefore, we are prepared and ready to fulfill Your commandment, “And you shall live by them (by the commandments of the Torah), but not die by them,” and we heed Your warning: “Be very careful and guard your life.” Therefore we pray to you that You maintain us in life and hasten to redeem us that we may observe Your statutes and do Your will and serve You with a perfect heart. Amen!</p>	<p>אבינו שבשמים הנה גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוננו לעשות רצונך ולחוג את חג הפסח עם קהילתנו ומשפחתנו וחברינו, להתפלל ולספר תהילתך בציבור, לספר את סיפור יציאת מצרים בשיחה בין-דורית, לטפל בזקנים, להכריז בלב שלם: “כל דכפין ייתי ויכל, כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח.” אף על זאת דאבה ליבנו שהמגיפה מעכבת אותנו ואנחנו נמצאים בסכנת נפשות. הננו מוכנים ומזומנים לקיים מצוותך “וחי בהם ולא שימות בהם” וליזהר מאזהרה, “השמר לך ושמור נפשך מאוד, ” ועל כן תפילתנו לך שתחיינו ותקיימו ותגאלנו במהרה לשמור חוקיך ולעשות רצונך ולעבדך בלבב שלם. אמן</p>
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11. Yitzhak Etshalom, “Our Bread of Isolation,” *Lehrhaus*, <https://thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/our-bread-of-isolation/>

My colleague, Rabbi David Block, penned a moving *tefillah* to give the celebrant a broad approach to the subdued feast. I have composed two “local” paragraphs which will hopefully give the participants a sense of context and meaning at this year’s restrained *Seder*. The first echoes the pain of *Ha Lahma Anya* and its forward-looking prayer: whereas every year we pray to be together in Israel, this year we simply pray to be together. The second prepares us, both inwardly and facing God, to sing a *Hallel* whose harmonies might have to be imagined and whose spirit will have to be “the power of one – praising the power of One.”

<p style="text-align: center;">Prayer Before <i>Ha Lahma Anya</i></p>	
<p>This is the bread of affliction that we are eating in solitude. All who are hungry – may approach but not enter. Those who are needy – may come and call out for help. This year, we are here; next year, among the communities of Israel. This year we are in isolation; next year – with a great public gathering.</p>	<p>הא לחמא עניא דאקלינו בסגרוהא קל דכפין ייתי ולא יעול קל דצריה ייתי ויפסח השתא הקא, לשנה הבאה בקהלא דישראל השתא בדידי, לשנה הבאה בפרהסיא רבא</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Prayer Before the Recitation of Hallel</p>	
<p>Our Father Who is in heaven, <i>who settles the solitary in a home</i>: It is revealed and known before You that it is our desire to extol You publicly and to sing about Your wonders before the congregation and the nation. This year, however, our Hallel is subdued, our praise is measured, and we sing as solo performers. Here we sit, each in his own house, so that in future years we will have the merit to beautify Your Name in public, and we will raise our united voices in song and praise to the God of Thanksgiving. Return, O God, the multitudes and thousands of Israel...</p>	<p>אבינו שבשמים, המושב יחידים ביתה, גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוננו לקלוסך ברבים ולרנן את נפלאותיך קבל עם ועדה. אף השנה, הלולנו שקט, שבחנו מתוך וקולותינו בודדים. ואנו יושבים בד בבד, קדי שלשנים הבאות נזכה לפאר את שמך ברבים, ונרים את קולותינו המאחדים בשירה ושבח לא-ל הודאות. שובה ה' רבבות אלפי ישראל... לא לנו</p>

When Sefirah 'Falls Out' During Coronavirus (Mourning)

12. R. Herschel Schachter, "The Avelus of Sefirah," YUTorah, April 19, 2020

רבי ח' שכתב
ש"י ש"ה ור"א ב"ו
ב"ת רבי'ן יצחק אלתרן

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10:42

All Inboxes Music During Sefi...



Music During Sefirah

In response to a *sheilah* from our *chaver* Rav Yoel Schonfeld:

In order to reduce some of the depressing atmosphere can we allow for the dispensation of the *issur* of music, at least the recorded kind, during *sefirah*. It's not clear how problematic recorded music is altogether. Perhaps this year we can be *meilkil*?

Rav Schachter said that it is a *minhag* not to listen to music during *sefirah*. It is self understood that a *minhag* doesn't apply under such unusual circumstances and this would be the same.

באצלות דימי הספירה

עמש"כ בס' בעקבי האלף (עמ' רס"ג) דג' סוגי אצלות יש, דבצבעה תקנו שינהוג האצל ציוול מרובה, בשלשים - ציוול במקל, וצ"ב"ח - צמיעוט חעגוגים, וכשינהוג האצלות שבצבעה גורמת לצער או לחולי, אשר זה כבר יותר ממנה שה" צריך להיות, אז כבר מותר לעבור על דימי שבעה, וזהו יסוד דין איסטיים. וכן ערמ"א ל"ד סוף ס' ע"ד (עפ"י תשו' מהר"ל) שבשעת המגפה יש שאין נוהגים אז אצלות, וצ"ב שמה בערוה"ש, שהכונה היא - שנהוג האצלות (שלא לרחוק ושלא לבגס בגדיו) צ"ב לדי חולי (עיי"ש בס' דעת תורה) וכן בשלשים, וכן צ"ב"ח.

ונראה שהמנהג שלא להקשיב למוזיקה בזמן אצילות מקורו בגמ' ערכין (יא). תחת אשר לא עבדת וגו', וברש"י שמה, שאין אדם שר שירה וכו', וע' גמ' גיטין (י). ומנהג האצילות דספירה גדרו כמו י"ב חדש דהיינו צתורת מיעוט תענוגים ועיי"ש בס' בעקבי האלף עמ' רס"ד. אצל צנד"ד שכל העולם שרוי בצער, ואצל כמה צ"א, מה שלא יקשיבו למוזיקה יגרום להם לדכאון הנפש ולעצבות, י"ל שזה כבר יותר מהמכוון צניהוג אצלות זה, (צ"ב להקשיב למוזיקה וצ"ב לנגן לעצמו).

וכנראה שמנהג זה היה לכתיילה רק למוזיקה שבדרך כלל מציאה לדי ריקודים, ואח"כ הרחיבו את המנהג לכלול אף שאר עיני מוזיקה ושמעתי מאלה שלמדו הל' אצלות אצל רבנו, ז"ל, שקלעטיק"ל מוזיק"ה אינה בכלל המנהג כל עיקר, דזה כבר ענין של אמנות (אר"ט) ולא של שמחה. וכשמרגשים שמוכרחים להקשיב למוזיקה מחמת דכאון הנפש, מן הנכון שלא להקשיב למוזיקה שמסוג הראשון שמציאה לדי ריקודים (וע' הליכות שלמה מועדים פי"א סי"ד).

ומסתבר דבערב שבת לאחר מנחה סמוך לקבלת שבת מותר לנגן בכלי שיר ולומר יגיונים חמירות לכבוד שבת, וסלק מנחת כבוד דהיינו, כל ההכנות שעושים בחול קודם כניסת השבת, לפי הגדרת הגר"א] הוא לסדר שלא יכנס לשבת כשהוא מעוהה, כדאיתא בעירובין (מ:), ולשמוע מקל"ת נגינה בערב שבת (במצב הנוכחי) זה ג"כ בכלל.

וכן אפילו בתוך שבעה ממש, אם אי-הקשבה למוזיקה יגרום צאמת לחולי הנפש, אפילו במקל"ת, זה כבר יותר מהמכוון, ואין זה בכלל האיסור.

In each of the three stages of mourning, Halacha mandates decreasing levels of stringency. During Shiva one refrains almost entirely from personal grooming and during Shloshim to a lesser extent. During the twelve months of mourning for a parent, one refrains from certain forms of pleasurable activities. Poskim explain that the respective guidelines of each period are suspended when they will cause undue pain or illness. For example, prohibitions against bathing or laundering must be suspended when a risk of contagious disease will ensue.

The custom to refrain from listening to music during the twelve months of mourning is based on the restrictions against pleasurable activities during this period. The laws of Sefira are patterned after these restrictions. The original minhag to avoid music only applied to dancing music. Later, it was extended to include even other forms of music as well.

During this time of global suffering, it would appear that for some individuals, refraining from listening or playing music may leave one in a state of sadness or emotional distress. This would appear to reach beyond the intent of this restriction. If the motivation to listen to music is not to put oneself in a cheerful mood but rather to ease the tension or pressure in one's home, and to help bring oneself back to a normal disposition, that would be permissible. One should still avoid listening to very cheerful music.

The same would even apply during Shiva, in rare instances when listening to music is necessary to avoid a depressed state of mind.

צ"ב שכתב

אשר זעליג ווייס
כגן 8
פעיה"ק ירושלים ת"ו
בס"ד

מוזיקה בימי הספירה בעידן הקורונה

כבוד תלמידי אהובי
האברך המופלא מאוד
הרה"ג ר' אברהם קאטץ נ"י

בדבר שאלתו שהיא שאלת רבים האם יש להקל בשתא דא להתיר שמיעת מוזיקה בימי הספירה עקב מחלת הקורונה.

אשיח לך את צערי, במה שנראה לי כמגמה בקרב ציבור נרחב, וגם אצל רבנים רבים להקל באופן גורף בכל תחום עקב מחלת הקורונה. אלה פטרו את הנשים מלנקות לפסח, ואלה התירו את אכילת הקטניות, אלה התירו את הדיבור ביו"ט דרך המחשב לקרוביהם שבמרחקים הנמצאים בבידוד, ואלה התירו לשתול פרחים בחול המועד, וכיוצא בזה בתחומים רבים, וכל המיקל מחבירו הרי זה משובח.

מגמה זו אין לה כל מקום וכל הצדקה, הלא בשעת צרה אנחנו, ובשעת צרה מוטל על כל אחד להתחזק ולנהוג בחומרות ולקדש עצמו במותר לו, ולא לזלזל באסור לו.

ומשו"כ פשוט, שאין להתיר באופן גורף וכללי את הנגינה ושמיעת מוזיקה בימי הספירה, אלא יש לדון בכל מקרה לגופו, ופשוט שאם כתוצאה מהבידוד החברתי וההסתגרות בבתי יש לאיש או לאשה, קושי נפשי כעין דיכאון, וע"י שמיעת המוזיקה דעתו תתישב עליו וימצא מרגוע לנפשו הסוערה, ודאי שיש להקל לו.

וכך גם לגבי הורים למשפחות גדולות שמתקשים להעסיק את הילדים המסתגרים בבית יש להקל להם, ובפרט כאשר מדובר במוזיקה מוקלטת ולא בנגינה בכלי זמר, וביותר יש להקל בזה כאשר לא מדובר במוזיקה שמחה כמו מוזיקת ריקודים אלא מוזיקה שקטה הקרוי בפי רבים שירי נשמה ודביקות דלא מצינו איסור אלא **בריקודין ומחולות** כמבואר במשנה ברורה (סי' תקנ"א ס"ק ט"ז) בשם אליהו רבה. אבל אין להורות בזה היתר כללי.

מי שאמר לעולמו די, יאמר לצרתינו די, ויגאלנו גאולה שלימה במהרה בימינו.

באהבת עולם

אשר ווייס



14. Shlomo Zuckier, FB Post, April 6



Shlomo Zuckier

April 6 at 1:21 PM · 🌐 ▼

How should religious ritual shift in response to crisis?

The crisis precipitated by COVID, as with so many cases of suffering in the past, has given way to many theological questions – Why is there evil in the world? Was there some sin that precipitated this? How should we respond to challenges of this sort?

There is a lot to discuss (and/or to refute) for each of those questions but I wanted to focus on a specific issue here – the practical-theological question of what attitude to have in the face of these challenges in terms of religious practice.

Essentially, the challenges posed by the novel coronavirus and the distancing measures it requires mean that, in several different ways, life is different from normal. Shuls and schools are closed, people are dying or at risk of dying, there is a poignant sense of mourning in the air.

That life is utterly different right now is a brute fact. The question is – should theologically committed individuals try to experience religious life as close to normal as possible, or should one rather embrace the change?

On the one hand, routine is generally healthy and helpful for people. Furthermore, thinking ahead to a time when things get back to normal, one would presumably want people able to return to their former routine without too much difficulty.

On the other hand, maybe times of crisis are not times for emphasizing the comfort of a routine. Maybe these are precisely the times when one should feel out of place, their religious life disjointed. If people are dying in one's community and around the world, is it appropriate to proceed ritually as normal?

This question manifests itself in a variety of more specific questions that emerge (which of course also depend on other factors and can be distinguished from one another, but which form a unified thread):

- If Halakhic Minyanim can't happen in person in Shul, should there be attempts to host "pseudo-Minyanim" where people daven "together but separately"? This doesn't fulfill any particular Halakhic obligation, but it keeps up a routine and a sense of normalcy – is this advisable?
- To what extent should new Tefillos be added? A plea inserted in Shema Koleinu? Adding Avinu Malkeinu daily? Daily communal Tehillim and Misheberach Lecholim over Zoom? Bentsching Gomel over Zoom?
- Should we celebrate holidays with the same joy as before? For example, does Nisan still mean we skip Tachanun or should we retain some somberness during this month?
- Should the Seder reflect our unique situation in some way? Should we add new prayers? Can we say "Kol Dichfin Yeisei Veyeichol," inviting people in, if they're actually not invited in an era of social distancing?

My sense is that many if not most Poskim and communal leaders, certainly in America, are focusing more on maintaining normalcy, on keeping regular structures in place as much as possible. This is probably the more intuitive or straightforward option – minimize disruption where you can.

One striking counter to this trend is the view of Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein, a Rosh Yeshiva at [Yeshivat Har Etzion](#) (my alma mater), who suggests that there is a need to acknowledge the crisis precisely by not trying to maintain routine.

He expressed his view in the matter (in the picture), as part of a larger essay on responding to the current crisis:

Whatever position one takes, this question of what attitude to take in responding to crisis is worthy of reflection. In our efforts to maintain structure and a semblance of normalcy, we must not lose sight of the broader crisis the world has been experiencing.