

✧ Advice & Segulos From Our Sages On Avoiding Epidemics ✧

Teshuva

Misfortune comes to the world for the sake of *Klal Yisroel* (**Yivamos** 63a) - to awaken them to do *teshuva* (**Rashi**).

Sometimes troubles occur in distant places for the sake of stirring *Klal Yisroel* to repent, by causing them to fear that the trouble [or other troubles] may reach their shores and also affect them. If they do not take the message and act upon it, then the source of danger is brought closer and closer to home! Therefore, in such times a person must do soul searching to improve himself - to heal his soul. [Being that *teshuvah* is the objective of the misfortunes], it must be taken even more seriously than efforts made towards the preservation of one's physical wellbeing! (**Drashos HaRan** z"l - drush 6).

In such times, one who desires life must repent for his sins! *Chazal* tell us that through *teshuva* and *maasim tovim* an evil decree of seventy years can be annulled. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** זט"ל - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 51).

Circumstances don't kill, rather sin kills! (i.e. the circumstances through which death occurs, *chas vishalom*, are merely a means of executing punishment for sin). (Brachos 33a). It has happened that efforts in eradicating an existing epidemic were successful, but soon afterwards an even worse and quicker moving sickness came. This is what Dovid Hamelech means when he says (tehillim 139,7) "to where can I run from before You?!" May Hashem, in His mercy, give us the merit to guard ourselves from sin and to conduct ourselves as He desires, so as to tilt the world's scale in favor of merit and bring upon us Heavenly compassion which will eradicate pestilence and save us from all forms of sickness. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 80).

The Arizal teaches that in a time of an epidemic, when one helps others do *teshuvah*, he thereby humbles the power of evil in the world and increases the forces of Holiness which causes the epidemic to cease. (Rav Chaim Palagi - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 37).

Tefillah

Whenever a misfortune comes upon the community, there is a positive commandment to cry out to Hashem in prayer. (**Ramban**, glosses on Sefer Hamitzvos - positive mitzva 5).

Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l wrote in a letter during an epidemic: "knock on the door of Hashem' with prayers and pleading!"

Tehillim

After daily prayers, in the morning and evening, recite chapters of Tehillim, according to the times and circumstances. The main thing is to recite them with pure heavenward intent. After saying the Tehillim, say [the prayers that are said at the end of סליחות]: "א-ל: רחום שמוך" "מי שענה", "ענני ה' עננו", and the יהי רצון that is said after reciting Tehillim. (Rav Akiva Eiger - Igros, letter 73).

The Badatz in Yerushalaim suggests that the following chapters of Tehillim should be recited daily after *mincha*: 20, 121 and 130.

[The Manchester rosh yeshiva, Rav Yehuda Segal zt"l, said that saying *perek* 20 ("ענן ה' ביום צרה") twelve times is a great *segula* to prevent all kinds of trouble. Rav Moshe Sternbuch *shlit"l*^a relates that this is tried and tested. During numerous times of distress, a group

of people performed this *segula*, reciting chapter 20 twelve times together one *pasuk* at a time, and they saw wonders.]

Torah Study

During an epidemic it is especially important to utilize one's time for Torah study (**Arizal**, as quoted by Bais Dovid - yoreh deyah 57).

The Gemora (Brachos 5a) states that forces of harm are repelled from a person who toils in Torah. (quoted by Refuah ViChaim - chapter 5 paragraph 38).

Chazal teach us (Menachos 41a) that in a time of wrath, one may also receive punishment for passing up the opportunity to do a positive-mitzvah in the same way that one is punished for transgressing a negative commandment. The *sefer* Reishis Chochmah (shaar hayirah - chapter 6) writes, accordingly, in a time of trouble one must be especially careful to utilize his time in Torah study, lest punishment come upon him, *chas vishalom*. Also, a person has the power to bring Heavenly compassion onto the world through Torah learning, to change the *midas hadin* to *midas harachmim*. Neglecting to utilize this opportunity may itself be something to be punished for, *chas vishalom*, [end quote].

Tzedokah

Increase *tzedokah*, for it saves lives (Mishlei 10,2). (**Rav Akiva Eiger** - Igros, letter 73). Also, Chazal (Tanchuma - Ki Sisa 14) teach us: great is *tzedokah*, for it changes *Midas Hadin* into *Midas Harachamim*. (quoted by Rav Chaim Palagi - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 54).

A person should always carry money with him for the purpose of giving *tzedokah* to the poor. This is a *segulah* for physical protection from all misfortunes. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 65).

The primary protection for oneself in the time of an epidemic is to give *tzedokah*. [In such times, holding onto one's] money should be of no concern. Wealthy individuals should give very generously to the poor. By doing this they can redeem themselves, so that no misfortune occurs to them or their household. (**Peleh Yoetz** - "Dever").

100 Brachos Daily, With Proper Intent

Make sure to make 100 brachos daily, for this is a *segula* to stop an epidemic, as is stated in the *Medrash* (Bamidbar Rabba 18 21). (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 41).

Making 100 *brachos* daily protects from the curses mentioned in sefer Devarim (**Sefer Rokeach** - Chapter 320).

The Chida zt"l (Divash Lifi 2 5) writes that for this to work *brachos* must be made with proper intent, not by rote.

(During the weekdays, one normally has 100 *brachos*, between the *tefilos* and *brachos* made on meals. On Shabbos, as there are 13 *brachos* less, one should make up for them with *brachos* on extra fruits and snacks).

Humbleness and Yielding

Rav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"a*, in a recent letter, wrote that in this period where there is concern over the Corona-virus, people should work on being humble and yielding, as the Rosh writes (Horayos 14a),

that since Rav Yosef humbled himself before Rabba, the merit of his humility protected him and his family, and they did not need any medical attention during all the years that Rabba was the leader.

Bitachon - Lessen Fear

It is brought in the name of Arizal that a plague does not have power over those who strengthen themselves in *Bitachon* (trust in Hashem). They should study Torah diligently and [recite] the *Ketores*, and this will help to eradicate the plague. (**Shomer Emunim** - Bitachon and Hishchazkus chapter 2).

Birkas "Asher Yotzar" With Intent Thank Hashem For Our Good Health

We have a tradition that making the brochoh "*Asher Yotzar*" with proper intent saves one from all sicknesses. (**Rav Moshe Sternbuch**).

Lack of gratefulness for the good that one receives from Heaven is a great cause for one to stop receiving that good. Although Hashem is the source of all blessing and is constantly giving with abundance, and He does not personally gain anything from our thanks, it is still incumbent upon us to praise, bless and thank Him for the good that He gives us. One must always thank Hashem, for He is the true source of any good that we have. (**Yad Yosef** - drush 2 on Bishalach). [Accordingly, in this period when there is fear of contracting Corona-virus, we should be especially careful to thank Hashem for the good health that we have.]

Each and every praise that we offer to Hashem causes the Shechinah's presence amongst us to increase [which causes our prayers to be answered more readily and brings Heavenly protection (Yefe To'ar). The more we praise, the more the Shechinah comes amongst us (Maharz"u)]. (**Bereishis Rabba** 48 7).

Avoid Lashon Hora

Lashon Horah is a very serious sin. We find (Bamidbar 14 37) that in the *midbar*, those who spoke *Lashon Hora* were killed through an epidemic. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 40).

Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita writes this as well regarding this epidemic, that we should all strengthen ourselves in avoiding *Lashon Hora* and *Rechilus*.

Pitum Hakitores

Recitation of *Pitum Hakitores* is a wonderful thing to do during an epidemic (**Arizal**); see Zohar (Vayera 100b-101a).

Rav Akiva Eiger zt"l (Igros - letter 71) wrote that during an epidemic people should say *Parshas Hakitores* by *Shachris* and by *Mincha*, and then say the following prayer:

רבון העולמים, גלוי לפני כסא כבודך אשר מדת הדין מותיחה עלינו בעוונותינו, ובאנו לחלות את פניך שתעצר המגפה והמשחית מעלינו, ולא תתן הפושחית לבוא אל בתינו, ורחם עלינו ועל טפנו ועל עוללנו ועל כל ישראל עמך, וקבל ברחמים וברצון את תפלתנו, כענין שזאמר (תהלים קמ"א ב) "תכון תפלתך קטרת לפניך משאת פפי מנחת ערב", וכמו שקבלת קטרת הסמים שהקטיר לפניך אהרן הכהן כאשר החל הגגה בעם, שזאמר (במדבר י"ז ט"ו) "ויעמד בין המתים ובין החיים ותעצר המגפה", וכמו שזאמר בפרקת (תהלים ק"ו ל) "ויעמד פינחס ויפלט ותעצר המגפה", וכן בידן (שמואל ב' כ"ד כ"ה) "וידן דוד מזבח לה' ויעל עלות ושלמים ויעתר לה' לארץ ותעצר המגפה מעל ישראל". כי אתה אבינו וזה תלוינו עינינו, רפאנו ה' וגרפא, הושיענו וננשעה כי תהלתנו אתה. שכן פתוב בתורתך (דברים ז' ט"ו) "והסיר ה' מפה כל חלי וכל מדוי מצרים הרעים אשר ידעת לא ישלםם קר ונתנם בכל שואה". לה' הושיעה על עמך ברכתך סלה (תהלים ג' ט').

Following the recital of *Pitum Hakitores*, one should also say the following *pesukim* three times each (**Rav Moshe Sternbuch**):

ה' צב-אות עמנו משגב לנו אלקי יעקב סלה: ה' צב-אות אשרי אדם בוטח בך: ה' הושיעה המלה יענינו ביום קראנו: הושיעה המלה יענינו ביום קראנו:

Mitzva to Guard One's Health

One who transgresses the direction of physicians in preserving one's health [during an epidemic] is a great sinner before G-d, for [halachically] a physical danger is treated more seriously than something forbidden (Chulin 10a). Especially when his actions can cause the spread of the sickness, his sin is greater than can be borne. (**Rav Akiva Eiger** - Igros - letter 73).

It is incumbent upon everyone to guard himself to the utmost of his ability (**Peleh Yo'etz** - "Dever").

Do Not Lie

One must be especially careful not to say a lie, for one who lies during an epidemic is in danger (**Arizal**, as quoted by Bais Dovid - yoreh deyah 57).

Avoid Machlokes

One must always be careful to avoid *machlokes*, but especially so during an epidemic. Avoid discord with any member of your household, and more so with your relatives and neighbors, as it is a cause for danger [during an epidemic]. The truth is that anyone with common sense will always yield to others regarding physical, personal or financial matters or honor, for he will end up gaining more than he loses. He will be richly rewarded in *Olam Hazeh* and *Olam Haboh* in the merit of pursuing peace. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 76).

Recite Parshas Hakarbanos

In the merit of *karbanos* one can be saved from an epidemic. Therefore, at such a time it is proper to be careful to recite *Parshas Hakarbanos*. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 64, based on Bal Haturim - Shemos 12 23).

Honoring Parents

By fulfilling the *mitzva* of honoring parents one can merit a long life (see Shemos 20 12), and in this merit one can be saved from an epidemic (**Chida** zt"l - Geualas Olam on Pesach Haggada).

Do Not Act Rebelliously Towards Torah Leaders

Be careful not to act rebelliously towards Torah scholars, especially Torah leaders, for we find that an epidemic came as a result of rebelling against Dovid Hamelech. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 39).

Keep Nails Well Trimmed

One should be very careful to keep one's nails well-trimmed, especially during the time of an epidemic. (**Rav Chaim Palagi** - Refuah ViChaim chapter 5 paragraph 47).

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