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The Bread of Affliction

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Each Pesach we begin our Seder with the familiar words: Hashata Hacha Lishana Haba Biara Diyisrael; Hashata Avdi Lishana Haba Bnei Chorin "This year we are here, next year in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year, free men."

The formula is ancient, preserved in its original Aramaic from a time when Aramaic was the vernacular. How many centuries has it been since Jews spoke Aramaic? And yet we continue to say the same words, the same prayer.

Actually, it doesn't sound like a prayer. A prayer would begin Yehi Ratzon, or the Aramaic equivalent: Yehe Raava, let it be Your will – to bring us by next year to Jerusalem, to make us free men.

That is not what we say. We don't begin the Seder with a prayer. We begin with a confident statement of fact: This year we are here; but next year we will be in Jerusalem. This year we are slaves, but next year we will be free men.

And the years roll by, and the decades, and the centuries, and each year we are disappointed, each year our confident expectation fails to materialize. Last year we were here, and here we are still; last year we were slaves, and slaves we remain.

How is it then that we continue to make this confident prediction, year after year? Shouldn't we at least tone it down, allow for a little uncertainty? This year we are here, perhaps next year we will be in Eretz Yisroel; this year we are slaves, let us hope that next year we will be free men.

Why do we go on year after year, setting ourselves up for disappointment?

Another strange feature of this declaration is its opening: Ha Lachma Anya, this is the bread of affliction. After all, the Torah describes the matzoh as the bread of redemption, the bread that the Jews baked on their way out of Egypt because they were hurried out of Egypt so quickly that there was no time for

their bread to leaven. And later on in the Seder, too, we say: Matza Zu She'anu Ochlin Al Shum Ma, what does this matzoh signify? And we answer: Al Shelo Hizpik Batzeikem Lihachmitz Ad Sheniglah Aleihem Melech Malchei Hamelachim, because as they left Egypt there was no time for their bread to leaven, until the King of Kings revealed Himself to them. Why do we begin the Seder by describing the matzo, that symbol of our redemption, as Ha Lachma Anya?

A commonly given answer is that the matzo had two historical roles. It was, as the Torah says, and as we say later in the Haggadah, the bread of redemption that we baked on our way out of Egypt. But it was also, for centuries, the bread of affliction, the bread that we were fed as slaves in Egypt.

when we were not allowed the luxury even of waiting for our bread to leaven before being hurried back to our labors. And so the matzo is both the bread of geulah and the bread of affliction.

But this answer, at first glance, seems unsatisfactory. Even if it is true, as a matter of historical fact, that the Jews ate matzo as slaves in Egypt, that is not the reason that we eat matzo at the Seder! The Torah makes clear that the reason we are commanded to eat matzo this first night of Pesach is to commemorate the bread that we ate when we were redeemed. So why do we begin the Seder by emphasizing matzo's other, more melancholy and less important, aspect?

Matzo is, indeed, the bread of geulah. That is how the Torah characterizes it, that is the reason we eat it at the Seder, that is its essential nature. And therefore when the Jews in Egypt during their long years of slavery, under the lash, ate matzo, they were eating the bread of geulah. With every bite of matzo that they ate, they were celebrating their geulah. Every meal that they ate in Egypt, where they were fed nothing but matzo, was a Seder. Only they didn't know it yet.

Because the beginning of the process of geulah from Egypt was not the moment when Moshe arrived back from Midian. Nor did it begin when he smote the Egyptian overseer. It did not begin, even, when Moshe was born. The process of geulah began the minute the Jews arrived in Egypt.

We see this in the beautiful Midrash which relates that Yocheved, Moshe's mother, was born Bein HaChomos, between the gates of the walls of the city when Yaakov and his children first arrived in Egypt. At that moment – the very moment of our entry into Egypt – the geulah began to unfold.

That geulah was a long, drawn out process, and for two centuries it was invisible to human eyes. No one realized the significance of Yocheved's birth. No one knew, for that matter, the significance of Moshe's birth and adoption by Pharaoh's daughter. The beginning of the slavery, its intensification, Pharaoh's decrees, were public knowledge that filled our hearts with dismay. But beneath the surface – far beneath – the geulah had already begun.

The great R' Yaakov of Lisa, the author of the Nesivos haMishpat, in his commentary on the Haggadah, records a beautiful insight. The Haggadah says: Baruch Shomer Havtachtu LiYisrael, Shehakadosh Baruch Hu Chishev Es Haketz Laasos Kimo She'amer LiAvraham, Blessed is He who keeps His promise to Israel; for the Holy One, blessed be He, calculated the end, in order to do what He had promised to Avraham.

This is a difficult passage. What does the Haggadah mean by saying that He "calculated the end"? Why does He need to calculate?

R' Yaakov explains that all those years in Egypt the Ribono Shel Olam was busy bringing the geulah about. All those years, when all we saw was misery, He was directing the strands of history towards that end. And the slavery itself, with all its horrors, was a necessary part of that geulah, even if we could not – even if we cannot – understand it. All those year when we were calculating how long we had been slaves, He was calculating how long until we would be free, how much longer the process of redemption would require.

And therefore every bite of Lechem Oni, the bitter bread of slavery, was a bite of Lechem Geulim, the bread of redemption. The same matzo that we experienced as the bread of affliction, was really the bread of freedom – but only He knew it.

And that is the lesson that the matzo teaches us, and the lesson with which we begin the Seder. As we sit down to the Seder we take the matzo, that symbol of our freedom which is the centerpiece of our Seder table, over which we will soon recount the story of our miraculous deliverance, and we say: Ha Lachma Anya, this matzo was for many years the bread of our affliction. We ate it in abject despair, not knowing what it was. And all that time – it was really the symbol of our redemption. All that time – we were being redeemed. The mills of geulah ground slowly but relentlessly on and on.

Only the process was hidden, until that final moment when – Ad Shenigla Aleihem Melech Malchei Hamelachim, He revealed Himself to us. Until that time when He showed us that He had been there all the time – being Mechashev Es Hakeitz, calculating and counting down and bringing the redemption into being. The Geulah was there all the time, what we waited for was its revelation.

Ha Lachma Anya, today, too, we eat the bread of affliction. When we read of bombs and mortars, of the shattered lives and bloodthirsty threats that have become our daily fare – then we eat Lechem Oni, the bread of affliction. Haisa Li Dimasi Lechem Yomam Volailah, our tears are our bread, by day and night.

Hashata Hacha, this year we are here, still eating the bread of affliction – and there is so much affliction for our people today.

And yet we know that Hakadush Baruch Hu is here too with us, being Mechashev Es Hakeitz, bringing the redemption closer and closer, and this bread, this matzo, is for us today, too – not only Lechem Oni but also Lechem Geula, the bread of our redemption, which advances inexorably.

And sometimes we are even vouchsafed a glimpse of that advance.

And so with that same faith that our ancestors showed when they first made this declaration, with the same words that they used then, with the same undiminished confidence, we declare: Lishana Haba BiArah DiYisrael, next year in the land of Israel; Lishana Haba Bnei Cholim, next year indeed we will be free.

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Additional Piskei halacha from Rav Shachter on Coronavirus Shaylas
<https://torasravschachter.org/piskei-halacha-on-coronavirus/>

Tahara - The Unchanged Prohibition to Cremate, and Other Issues of Kavod HaMeis <http://www.torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-15-April-05-2020.pdf> (hasn't been translated to English)

Continuing to Recite the Invitation to the Poor During the Seder (2020)

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.

Reciting Berachos for a Simcha (e.g. sheva berachos, bris) over Zoom (2020) If a grandfather is participating in the bris milah of his grandson via Zoom, it is permissible for him to name the baby. However, he should not recite the bracha of "asher kidash yedid m'beten" via Zoom. Similarly, one who is participating in a wedding (or a Sheva Brachos) via Zoom may not

recite any of the Sheva Brachos, since he is not actually together with the baalei simcha. If there is no group of ten men present at the wedding, rather everyone is joining via Zoom, they certainly may not recite the Sheva Brachos.

Triage in Critical Care, version 3 (2020)

<http://www.torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-12-April-06-2020.pdf> (not translated into English)

Temporary Burial A family who is currently unable to use their burial plots in Eretz Yisrael due to the coronavirus, may perform a temporary burial in Chutz L'Aretz and when the situation permits, the body may be disinterred and moved to Eretz Yisrael as is indicated clearly in the Shulchan Aruch.

Shiva, Shloshim, and Related Issues (2020)

1. A mourner who will not attend the burial is no longer an Onen once he has completed all necessary phone calls and e-mails regarding arrangements with the Chevra Kadisha and cemetery. Shiva begins at this point. However, if the mourner who will not be personally attending the funeral, will still be involved in letting others know where they can watch or listen to the funeral and burial, then this is considered to be "involved in the burial process" and he would therefore remain an Onen until after the kevura. [However, it is not clear what the status should be of a mourner who will not be communicating with others about how to attend or watch the funeral, but will personally be watching or listening to the funeral.]

2. Shiva ends for a mourner immediately prior to Chatzos on Erev Pesach. If Shiva did not begin before Chatzos (i.e. burial did not take place until after Chatzos), the common practice is that the mourner does observe Shiva at that time until Pesach begins. (It is questionable whether this practice is correct because there is room to argue that the shiva shouldn't begin until after Pesach).

3. The common practice for Asheknazim is that one does not wear tefillin on the first day of Shiva, even if the first day of Shiva follows the day of the petira.

4. On the second day of Shiva, it is best for the mourner to put on his tefillin after ha'neitz ha'chama (sunrise).

5. Normally, a mourner may not prepare his own food for the first meal after the funeral. There are two reasons suggested for this prohibition. First, since part of the mitzvah of comforting the mourner is to provide food, by eating his own food, the mourner is preventing others from fulfilling their mitzvah properly. Second, by taking food from others the mourner is demonstrating his aveilus. It is a demonstration of mourning to show a lack of self-sufficiency to the point that one can't prepare his own food. A practical difference between the two approaches would be whether the mourner may eat from his own food on Chol Ha'Moed when we don't observe practices of mourning, though there remains a mitzvah of comforting a mourner. Since we generally assume that even on Chol Ha'Moed a mourner cannot eat his own food for the first meal, it seems that we assume the first explanation of this halacha to be correct. Consequently, in a situation such as the current one, where comforters are unable to come to the house due to social distancing, the mourner may eat his own food. He is not preventing others from doing the mitzvah of comforting him since they are unable to do so in person anyway. It would certainly be proper for the community to arrange for a meal to be delivered to the mourner's home right away.

6. If Shiva concludes on the morning of Erev Pesach, the period of Shloshim begins immediately and ends at chatzos on Erev Pesach. The Avel now begins the period of "Twelve Months" for a parent. Normally, one in this category of Aveilus may shave after eight days if he usually shaves daily, as this is considered, "yiga'aru bo chaveirav." However, because in this situation the Shloshim ended on Erev Pesach (while in reality thirty days have not yet passed), there is a dispute among the poskim as to whether it is permitted for the mourner to shave. The major poskim recommend that one be stringent on this matter, but Chacham Ovadia Yosef concludes that if a

person feels there is a great need he may rely on those lenient opinions who say that Shloshim is no longer in effect at all and one would be permitted to shave.

Anim Zemiros (2020) One who is davening alone does not recite Anim Zemiros for a variety of reasons. It seems that the custom to recite Anim Zemiros on Shabbos or Yom Tov was only instituted when davening with a minyan. Additionally, Rav Soloveitchik suggested that the recitation of Anim Zemiros constitutes a Davar She'bekedushah, just like Kaddish and Kedushah, which demands the participation of ten men in order to be recited. This is reflected by our custom to stand for Anim Zemiros and our practice to recite it responsively.

Praying for the Sick: On Shabbos, Yom Tov, and When One is Not Sure if the Person is Still Alive (2020) Even though we typically should not daven for cholim on Shabbos or Yom Tov, when there is an imminent danger it is permitted. Therefore, if necessary, a tefillah for a choleh can be inserted in our Shabbos and Yom Tov prayers at the conclusion of the Shemoneh Esrei. When davening at home for someone who is dangerously ill, and there is the possibility that the choleh has already passed away (Heaven forfend) without our knowledge, we should not pray for a refuah sheleimah (a complete physical rehabilitation) but rather for divine mercy. Since under all circumstances divine mercy is appropriate and necessary (even if the choleh has already passed away).

Showers on Shabbos & Yom Tov for Doctors, Nurses, and Women Returning from the Mikveh (2020) If a woman is scheduled to go to the mikvah on Friday night, she has two options regarding the concern of washing after immersing in the mikvah. Either she may shower in cold water, or, she may consider postponing her visit to the mikvah until Motzai Shabbos so that she will be able to shower comfortably in warm water.

If a woman goes to the mikvah on Yom Tov, and takes a shower when she comes home, the temperature of the water should not be hot or even lukewarm, but it does not have to be entirely cold. Rather, she may turn on the hot water a little bit to remove the chill of the cold water.

Doctors and nurses returning home from the hospital on Yom Tov may take a shower in water which is lukewarm or even hot. This can be permitted for doctors and nurses returning home on Shabbos as well, provided that they turn on the hot water in an unusual fashion, (with a shinui), by using the back of the hand or the elbow.

These leniences only apply to medical personnel who were required to be in the hospital on Shabbos or Yom Tov. (However, a woman who went to the Mikvah on Friday Night had the alternative of waiting to use the Mikvah on Motzai Shabbos, and we therefore would not be lenient in that case.)

https://halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Halachot_Related_to_Coronavirus

[Rabbi Yitzchak Sultan Editor]

Halachot Related to Coronavirus

All rabbinim agree that one should be cautious with all the health guidelines and social distancing[1] set up by the government and other local institutions in order to stay safe and help prevent getting others sick.[2] Coronavirus, as it causes a serious health threat to some people, inhibits any social gatherings and semachot, and has severely damaged the economy and livelihood of certain people, poses a serious challenge to everyone. We all need to daven and take advantage of the circumstances in order to best serve Hashem. As a thoughtful Jew, it is incumbent upon a person to take to heart some important lessons of life and re-strengthen himself in his commitments. [3] Additionally, on a practical level, COVID19 has many implications for people, and below is a small collection of the relevant halachot.

Tefillah When davening at home one should be cognizant of the following ideas: The best time to pray is Netz. According to many poskim this is equivalent to praying with a minyan.[4]

A person should daven in a makom kavuah.[5]

A person should daven in front of a wall so that there's no distractions in front of him.[6]

A person can and should daven near a window that serves as a means of being inspired to look towards heaven.[7]

A person can daven Shemona Esrei aloud if it helps his kavana. It also serves as a role model for children.[8]

A person shouldn't daven in a room that is usually used for frivolity.[9]

A person shouldn't daven in front of an open bathroom.[10]

At a time of a plague such as our times it is advisable to say ketoret which has the power to end a plague.[11]

According to some, at this time a person should recite Avinu Malkenu in Shacharit and Mincha,[12] while others emphasize how one must focus on Teshuvah and reciting all parts of the regular seder haTefillah first.[13] Avinu Malkenu should not be recited during Nissan.[14]

Eating a meal before davening when the time comes to daven a certain tefillah should be avoided since generally we are lenient about this since we go to established minyanim but for when that isn't possible we should be more strict about this.[15] See details here about eating and doing activities before davening.

When davening as a family, in a temporary fashion, some hold that it isn't necessary to have a mechitza and the men and women can simply daven on different sides of the room.[16] See Mechitza for more details.

A person shouldn't forget to recite Birkat Halevana by themselves when they see the moon. It can be said from indoors. See Birkat Halevana page for details

Parts of Davening to Skip On Friday night an individual doesn't recite Magen Avot after Shemona Esrei of Maariv.[17] However, one should recite Vayechulu.[18]

One doesn't recite Baruch Shemey when praying by oneself since it is part of the activity of removing the Sefer Torah.[19]

Minyan via Porches or Technology It is forbidden to have a minyan in person whether it is in a shul, shteibel, home, or backyard.[20] If there ten people standing on their own porches and can see one another, some say that one can not create a minyan in such a manner, while others hold that one can.[21] You can't create a minyan with a video (e.g. zoom or skype) or phone call but one can join a minyan of ten men in one room with a video or phone call in order to answer dvarim shebekedusha.[22] It isn't considered a minyan for people to join together to daven on a video conference but it is still somewhat spiritually valuable.[23]

Answering Amen Even if there is a time delay between the person reciting the bracha and the one answering it that wouldn't be considered an Amen Yetoma.[24]

Megillah There is a major dispute if a person could fulfill their mitzvah of listening to the megillah on the phone or through watching a live streamed video. Some rabbanim advised this,[25] while others hold that one can't fulfill one's mitzvah at all.[26] See this topic explained more fully here: Brachot_Through_a_Microphone.

Netilat Yadayim If a person wants to wash his hands with soap and wash Netilat Yadayim for a meal, one should first wash Netilat Yadyaim for the meal, dry the hands, recite the bracha, and then wash one's hands with soap and then recite the Hamotzei.[27]

Shabbat Davening Friday Night Although the reason for reciting Shalom Alechem on a Friday night is that the angels accompany you home from shul and you welcome them to your home, if one was unable to attend shul on a Friday night, he would still sing Shalom Alechem.[28]

Davening for the Sick It is generally prohibited to daven on Shabbat for our needs or for the well-being of a sick person. However, if the person is in a state of mortal danger one may daven for his well-being on Shabbat.[29] See Shabbat_Davenings#Personal_Requests for all of the details of this topic.

Kriyat Hatorah A person who is at home and can't be at shul should nonetheless read the parsha from a chumash between Shacharit and Mussaf as a way of remembering the concept of kriyat hatorah. He can use that reading as part of his reading of Shenayim Mikra Vechad Targum.[30] Some think this doesn't accomplish anything.[31]

When the congregation misses a kriyat hatorah they can make it up by reading two parshiyot next week in Shul. However, if they miss multiple weeks there is a discussion if they should or could make up all of the parshiyot that they missed.[32]

A person should not move a sefer torah out of a Shul for a home minyan.[33] See Respecting_a_Sefer_Torah#Transporting_a_Sefer_Torah for more details.

There still is an obligation of Shenayim Mikra Vechad Targum when the there is no congregation doing the Kriyat Hatorah in shul.[34]

One doesn't recite Baruch Shemey when praying by oneself since it is part of the activity of removing the Sefer Torah.[35]

Anim Zemirot A person davening alone doesn't have to recite Anim Zemirot.[36]

Hagomel A person who was quarantined and got out of quarantine doesn't recite Hagomel since they were in no danger.[37]

A person needs to recite hagomel in front of a minyan of ten men. Some suggest that this can be recited before ten people listening on a video or phone call and can answer amen. Even though they aren't present, the minyan in this context is purely to publicize the idea so it is permissible.[38] Others disagree and as long as the minyan isn't in the same room one can not recite hagomel.[39]

According to Ashkenazim, if a person is ill with a sickness to the point that he is a choleh sheyesh bo sakana, a concern of mortal danger, he should recite Hagomel, but if he is less sick than that there is no need to recite Hagomel.[40] Sephardic tradition is to recite Hagomel anytime someone was sick in bed such as with a flu or bad cold even for a short period of time.[41]

Bedikat Chametz and Biur Chametz A person should do bedikat chametz after praying by oneself at Tzet Hakoachavim and then immediately begin the bedika. They should not have a meal within a half hour of the bedika.[42] Because one can't do a large communal Chametz burning because gatherings aren't safe and even doing it with a few people at a time can look to non-Jews as unsafe. Rather one should just do biur chametz with a Kezayit by flushing it down the toilet.[43] A person should sell chametz in the house or office if he left there before he had the chance to do a bedikat chametz. By selling the chametz there he is absolving himself of having to do bedikat chametz.[44]

Selling Chametz If a person doesn't usually sell chametz and is afraid that if he doesn't sell chametz one year he isn't going to have food afterwards he can sell his chametz. He wouldn't require a hatarat nedarim.[45] A person can sell his chametz on the phone or online and if possible a kinyan can be made virtually in order to appoint the rabbi to sell the chametz. The kinyan would take place as follows: the rabbi would ask if there's someone standing next to the one who wants to appoint the rabbi and if there is then that person can give a pen or a utensil to the one who wants to appoint the rabbi as his shaliach. This is considered a valid kinyan between the person standing there and the one who wants to appoint the rabbi on behalf of the rabbi to be appointed. If that isn't feasible it isn't necessary. Nonetheless, one could stipulate in the document that this appointment of the rabbi is done with the full knowledge of its legal ramifications and it is accepted completely.[46] There is no issue with the selling of Chametz even though the Chametz is in a locked building or in a place that isn't accessible to the non-Jew because of the coronavirus situation.[47] Some poskim allow ordering chametz on Pesach if one is certain that it will only be delivered after pesach.[48]

Buying for Pesach If you have raw chicken or raw meat you don't have to worry that it is chametz even if it was processed in a place where there was chametz. You can simply wash it off to solve any question.[49]

Kitniyot Out of a concern of the coronavirus, this year some poskim permit taking vitamins which have additives of kitniyot in order to stay healthy and to strengthen one's immune system.[50] Someone with Crohn's disease and needs to drink an enriched milk with kitniyot additives for his health can do so on Pesach. Also, he can do so within 6 hours after eating meat (see Waiting between Meat and Milk).[51]

Kashering for Pesach Some poskim allow kashering a dishwasher for Pesach even though there are plastic and other materials in there that are questionable to kosher. One should wait 24 hours without using it and then use with just hot water and no soap. According to Ashkenazim this should be used to kosher it from Chametz but not from meat to parve or milk or vice versa.[52] Some hold that one can kasher plastic, while others disagree. See on the Kashering_the_Kitchen_for_Pesach# Which_materials_can_be_kashered.3F page.

Pesach Davening Hallel Pesach Night There is a custom of Sephardic and some Ashkenazic communities to recite Hallel Pesach night in Shul. However, being that the current situation demands that a person needs to remain inside there is no way to fulfill this minhag and should not recite Hallel after davening. Rather one should only recite it at the Seder.[53] Some Ashkenazic poskim would allow reciting a bracha.[54] According to Sephardim, one should recite Hallel the night of the seder after davening with a bracha even though one is davening at home.[55]

Shir Hashirim on Chol Hamoed Ashkenazim generally have the custom to read Shir Hashirim on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Pesach. This year since there is no minyanim available, when one davens at home individually, there is no obligation to read Shir Hashirim. One may do so but it isn't in fulfillment of the minhag.[56]

Tefillat HaTal One can recite the piyut for tal on Pesach was only instituted for a congregation, however if one wants to recite it one may do so.[57] In Mussaf everyone should stop saying Mashiv Haruach Umorid Hageshem and instead recite Morid Hatal because one is davening individually and one may not change from the practice of saying Mashiv Haruach of the congregation until the Shaliach Tzibur has done so and this year there are no minyanim switching at mussaf. After Mussaf, starting with Mincha, one should follow their regular minhag if they usually recite Morid Hatal

or not.[58] See Mashiv_HaRuach_UMorid_HaGeshem# When_to_Stop_Morid_Hageshem_and_Start_Tal for the background.

For Sephardim, one may begin to recite Morid Hatal in Mussaf even though he is praying individually and there is no minyan nearby.[59]

Machine Matza It is permitted under extenuating circumstances to use machine matza for the mitzvah of eating matzah on the seder night.[60]

Some say that there's no concern to have the hand baked matzot this year.[61] **Eruv Tavshilin and Eruv Chatzerot** A rabbi should establish an eruv tavshilin on behalf of his whole community. Even though usually he acquires it to another person who isn't a family member on behalf of the community, this year because of social distancing one can acquire it to one's wife. [62] An eruv tavshilin works to allow cooking from Yom Tov to Shabbat even though it isn't possible to have guests in most cases.[63] The communal eruv chatzerot continues to be effective even though the communal box of matzah's might not be accessible.[64] It is permissible to wear a surgical mask on Shabbat outside and it isn't carrying as long as it is fastened well and won't fall off.[65]

Birchat Ha'lanot One can recite birkat hailanot from indoors if one can see the trees but one may not recite them by seeing the trees on a video.[66] See the Birchat Hallanot for more details and sources.

Tanit Bechorot A person should try to finish a short masecheta to make his own siyum.[67] Some say that learning one masecheta with Bartenura is sufficient.[68] Many poskim say that he can rely on a siyum over the phone or video livestream.[69] Some say that in the event one can't make one's own siyum or even hear someone else's, one doesn't need to fast this year in order to maintain strength in this time of a health crisis.[70]

Birkat Halevana Ideally one should recite birkat halevana outdoors.[71] If one can not do so one can recite Birkat Halevana from inside but initially one should open the window.[72] See the Birkat HaLevana page.

Chol Hamoed One can't buy stocks or sell them on Chol Hamoed, however, if not selling them could lead to a loss of one's original capital that one invested one can sell it.[73] See Chol Hamoed for many details.

Using Zoom for the Seder Although a minority of rabbis allow using Zoom for this emergency situation in a very extenuating circumstance where an elderly single person is alone for the seder away from family because of the quarantines to use technology to leave a video conference going for Yom Tov to join with a family seder,[74] most rabbis consider this to be a breach of halacha.[75] There is a discussion if the first group of rabbis retracted.[76] It is suggested to perform a pre-pesach zoom seder for people who you can't invite to your seder in order to share divrei torah, songs, and the experience of the seder before Yom Tov.[77] For someone who is clinically depressed to the point that there is a concern of suicide or just losing one's mind it is permitted to use a phone to call him to cheer him up and check on him. However, if there's a way to check the patient before Pesach one should do so.[78] A person should check with his rabbi in each case. A person should recite Ha lachma anya this year as one would any other year, even though that phrase is a call for inviting guests and this year that is impossible.[79]

Sefirat Haomer If someone couldn't get a hair cut because the barbers were all closed before Pesach, then if one reached the point when it very noticeably long and people would tell him to get a haircut he can take a haircut during Sefira. Today it can be estimated that if it has been more than 2 months since his last haircut he can take a haircut during the Sefira.[80]

Mikveh Each community rabbi needs to decide these sort of questions however in theory it is possible for the Mikva to remain open and allow women who aren't having symptoms or aren't quarantined to go to Mikva. They should be extra careful about hygiene and prepare completely at home, go to the Mikva where there is no contact with anyone besides a brief contact with the water which has chemicals for cleanliness. Then upon returning home there are poskim who allow the woman to take a shower when she gets home to clean herself off.[81]

On Shabbat, if a woman goes to mikveh she can not take a hot shower when she gets back since turning on the hot water is causing cold water to enter the boiler and cook. Rather she should either decide to take a completely cold shower or delay the mikveh until Motzei Shabbat. She should also not decide not to take a shower at all because one shouldn't do something unsafe when there's an option to delay going to mikveh.[82] On Yom Tov, according to those who are lenient to permit showering on Yom Tov, when a woman returns from the mikveh should do so. Rav Schachter's opinion is that it is only permitted to take a shower on Yom Tov with water that is just hot enough to remove the chill from the water (less than lukewarm). If she decides she doesn't want to take such a shower, she should delay going to mikveh until after Yom Tov.[83] The OU has established health guidelines in order to allow a mikveh to remain open.

The RCBC also stated that Mikva's are remaining open for the time.[84]

The men's mikveh's should be closed at this time. Even if a person is careful to go to mikveh each day he can fulfill this custom by taking a 5 minute shower.[85] See [Preparations_for_Davening#Going_to_Mikveh](#) for details.

Tevilat Kelim Each community should decide whether or not close the kli mikveh out of a safety concern. You can do the tevilat kelim in the ocean.[86]

Alternatively, one can use tevilat kelim in the mikvah while wearing gloves, then throw out the gloves, wash off the kelim with soap and water. If the community has other procedures for safety one should observe them.[87]

As a last resort one can avoid tevilat kelim by giving the pots to a non-Jew and borrowing them back. One can rely on this until the virus passes.[88] If one can't sell or gift the pots to a non-Jew oneself one can do so online through Zomet.

Another option is for a person to declare the pots that need tevilat kelim to be ownerless (hefker) in front of 3 Jews. One has to have full intent that the pots are ownerless and if someone took them one would have no claim upon them. If these Jews can't be there in person it is sufficient if they are present through social media technology but they should be people who live in the neighborhood. They should then leave the pots outside their house for a few minutes so that if someone wanted to take them they could. [89] Others disagree.[90] If there's are no solutions, some poskim would allow using the pots without tevilat kelim in this extenuating circumstance.[91] Regarding a seder plate and kos shel eliyahu requiring tevilah, see [Tevilat Kelim](#) page.

Brit Milah A Brit Milah can be done without a minyan since gatherings aren't safe.[92] A grandfather or someone else involved in a brit milah via zoom can recite the naming of the baby but he should not recite the bracha of asher kidash yadid mbeten.[93]

Naming a Girl Although normally we try to name a baby girl at an aliya to the Torah, a person doesn't need a minyan in order to name a girl and under the circumstances should do so without delay.[94]

Bar Mitzvah's A message for Bar Mitzvah Boys in the Lockdown by Rabbi Pesach Krohn A bar mitzvah boy who missed the opportunity to read his parsha in shul when he became bar mitzvah'ed when it is next possible to go to shul he can add his parsha as a hosafa and read it then. Additionally, the haftorah can follow that hosafa.[95] The father of a Bar Mitzvah boy who couldn't layn should wait until he can do something that shows he's Bar Mitzvah like layn or daven as Shaliach Tzibbur to make such a bracha.[96]

Weddings Ideally a wedding shouldn't be pushed off if both parties are ready even though it means having a tiny wedding.[97] A rabbi should not officiate at a wedding that isn't abiding by the CDC guidelines of health because he is furthering unsafe practices.[98] It has been asked whether or not the poskim are more lenient this year regarding weddings during Sefira but the answer is that it is not determined because the situation is still unclear.[99] Some are lenient but it is best to schedule for Rosh Chodesh.[100] If in this dire situation it isn't possible to have a minyan, it is possible to have a wedding nonetheless without Sheva Brachot.[101] A minyan for sheva brachot can not be created via Zoom. Additionally, one can't recite a bracha of sheva brachot for the couple via Zoom.[102]

Fast Days If the rabbis declare a half fast day until Chatzot according to Ashkenazim an individual can recite Anenu in Mincha Shemona Esrei[103] assuming he is still fasting when he prays Mincha.[104] According to Sephardim one can only recite anenu if one fasts the entire day.[105] A person should accept the fast from the day before, as is traditionally done at mincha time. If one didn't do so, according to Sephardim one shouldn't recite anenu, but according to Ashkenazim one can recite anenu.[106]

Mezuzah A person should not kiss any mezuzah, or any siddur or chumash of a shul or a public area at this time because of concern of spreading COVID19.[107]

Shalom Bayit It is critical to be mindful of other people when everyone is under stress and no one is completely comfortable. Dr. Pelcovitz discusses the implications quarantine can have Shalom Bayit. It is forbidden for a couple to have tashmish at a night of famine[108] since everyone is in distress it is incumbent on everyone to take upon himself an aspect of distress.[109] The same is true for any time of societal distresses.[110] Others disagree.[111] It is permitted to have tashmish on mikvah night.[112] It is permitted to have tashmish for a couple who didn't yet fulfill pru urevu.[113] Once his wife is pregnant this leniency doesn't apply.[114] If he has a strong yetzer hara and there is a concern of hashchatat zera it is permitted.[115] There is what to rely upon to have tashmish at a time of war and there is no midat chasidut to be strict, especially for young couples even for someone who fulfilled pru urevu.[116] During the time then the plague of corona virus is rampant in the world there is a lot to rely upon to have tashmish. Someone who wants to be strict can do so.[117]

Laid off Workers Because of Corona If there's a employee that is unable to work because of a societal or national crisis the employees should continue to be paid by the employers according to many opinions or at least they should make a compromise.[118] This applies to contractors for cancelled events as well.[119]

If someone rented out an apartment to someone and then he wants to retract because of a concern that the potential tenants have the virus, some say that it is forbidden to back out of the contract.[120]

Bikur Cholim A person doesn't have to and shouldn't visit someone who has a virus that contagious such as corona.[121] A person fulfills the mitzvah of bikur cholim on the phone according to many poskim.[122] Someone who is praying for a mortally ill patient to get better and doesn't know if he is still alive should pray for his well-being and not specifically for him to get better.[123]

Burial and Mourning **Burial** Each place should follow the guidelines that are in place for safety. If a minyan isn't possible, then the next thing that is to try to have is Jews doing the burial. If they don't even let that, then afterwards a Jew should check that the burial by the non-Jews was done properly in the ground.[124] It is forbidden to cremate and it is still considered not dangerous to properly do a burial with no tahara and minimal involvement of the fewest people or simply the cemetery workers.[125] At this time the chevra kadisha should not perform a tahara for the deceased since it could lead to danger.[126] A person who was buried in America because of the corona virus but was planned to be buried in Israel can later when the virus isn't an issue be reburied in Israel, even though generally we don't rebury someone who was buried.[127] See the topic of reburying a corpse in general.

Kriyah The rabbi could do the Kriyah for the mourner with gloves and a mask or he can simply tell the mourner to do it.[128]

Avelut A person who is no going to be involved in the burial anymore because the deceased was given to the chevra kaddisha then he is not considered an Onen anymore and should begin Avelut (mourning). However, if he is going to call relatives to tell them about the levaya then he is still an Onen.[129]. If he is going to watch the burial with Zoom or listen on the phone it is unclear if he is still an Onen.[130]

On Erev Pesach if someone is buried before Chatzot (midday) the relatives should observe Avelut (mourning) before Chatzot and then at Chatzot it is considered like a Yom Tov and the rest of the Shiva is cancelled. If the person is buried after Chatzot they should observe Avelut before Yom Tov and then the Yom Tov will come and cancel the rest of Shiva.[131] A mourner shouldn't eat his first meal after the burial, the Seudat Havrah, from his own food; other should provide that food. If at this time when people are concerned for COVID19 and might not send food, if the mourner knows that he isn't going to be sent food, he can eat the first meal from his own food.[132]

Kaddish and Iylyu Neshama Under the circumstances a person can not recite the kaddish because minyanim aren't available. Therefore, a person should take upon himself to learn mishnayot for the deceased.[133]

See [Practices_in_the_Mourner's_House#Iylyu_Neshama](#) and [Kaddish](#) pages.

Kibbud Av Vem If one's parents ask him to do something which the department of health has deemed unsafe a person should not listen to his parents in such a case and that isn't a breach of Kibbud Av Vem.[134]

Violating Shabbat for Pikuach Nefesh On Shabbat or Yom Tov, if anyone has any concern whatsoever that they are in serious danger because of deteriorating health, they should immediately call a doctor or go to the hospital.

It is a well established halacha that it is not only permitted but even a mitzvah to violate Shabbat in order to save a life or to remove a situation that presents even a slight chance of danger.[135] The question is how to define the threshold of danger.[136]

In certain cases of emergency regarding corona virus it would be allowed to violate Shabbat.[137] Obviously every single case is different and one should learn the laws of Pikuach Nefesh from a rabbi in advance.

If a person is discharged from the hospital on Shabbat and they need him to leave because of the lack of space that they have because of the numbers of people who are ill, his family member can drive to get him. They should do a Shinuy when turning on the car like turning the key with one's weaker hand, or pressing the button on the key with one's knuckle. Also, when turning off the car one should use a Shinuy.[138]

Doctors Working in the Hospital Regarding the larger issue of halachic triage see [Rav Schachter \(Piskei Corona #15 Updated\)](#). Here is a relevant sourcesheet on Halachic Triage. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference April 6 2020, min 5-15) discusses triage in halacha and what doctors should do.[139] A doctor may and is encouraged to perform a life saving procedure if he is wearing the correct protective gear.[140] A doctor returning from the hospital on Shabbat and needs to shower for health reasons so as not to catch the corona virus on his body or clothing, may do so. If he can manage with a cold shower, he should do so. If he can't, he may turn on the hot water with a shinuy.[141]

Mesira and Rodef If your doctor actually ascertains that there is a sakanat nefashot, mortal danger, involved with a certain large gathering that someone is doing then it is permitted to tell the authorities. However, otherwise it is forbidden because of informing upon another Jew (mesira). This can be a very difficult measure to actually properly assess.[142]
Some hold that if a person is supposed to be in quarantine and they are not they are considered a rodef. However, obviously one should first speak to him and convince him to do what is safe.[143]

Links

Rav Nevinsal Q&A about Corona

Transcription of Q&A with Rav Schachter by Rabbi Dunner

RCBC letter calling for the closing of Shuls and Schools

TorahWeb hosts many resources for Corona halacha including Rav Schachter's Teshuvot

KoICorona.com a Torah resource, initiated by Rabbi Reuven Taragin, for those affected by Corona

Sources

1. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 34) interestingly describes the sources in general about the Jewish view on handshaking and whether it is a Chukot Hagoyim. The poskim hold that in it isn't however, at this time it is forbidden because of the health concerns.
2. Rav Yitzchak Yosef, Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22 2020), OU (March 20 2020), Rav Shmuel Fuerst (min 53), Rav Nevinsal, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Rav Shlomo Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 34), and RCBC letters. An article on kikar.co.il describes how the gedolim are currently davening privately including: the Gerer rebbe, Rav Shalom Kohen, Rav Gershon Edelstein, Rav Moshe Shternbuch, Rav Yitzchak Yosef, Sanser Rebbe, Rav Bakshi Doron, Rav Dovid Yosef, Bavian Rebbe, and Rav Sheiner.
 - * Endangering Oneself to Learn Torah: Ketubot 77b records and praises the practice of Reish Lakish to teach Torah to those ill with tzarot, some translate as leprosy, even though it is contagious. The gemara explained that he did so out of his love for Torah. Daf Al Hafad cites Mishnat Pikuach Nefesh 69:7 who asks how Reish Lakish could endanger himself and rely on a miracle. He answers that the disease he was concerned with was only dangerous to health but not life threatening.
3. Rambam Taniyot 1:1-3, Rav Reuven Epstein emphasizes that we need to take a lesson from corona since it overtly a hardship for Jews and humanity and a sign from Hashem. Rabbi Penner discussed how we can revitalize our strength in mitzvot at this time based on better appreciating the lessons of Shema. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22, 2020) introduced his shiur by discussing how we can strengthen our commitment to Ben Adam Lchavero. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha) wrote many lengthy pieces on the hashkafic questions related to COVID19.
4. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Laws of Praying Beyachid (Adar 5780) by Rabbi Yonatan Nacson p. 1 citing Yalkut Yosef 89:1
5. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz and Rabbi Moshe Heinemann around minutes 5-7
6. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
7. Shulchan Aruch 90:4 writes that there should be windows in a place where one davens. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz suggested that the same should be done for when we daven at home to daven in a place where there is a window.
8. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
9. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
10. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz
11. Laws of Praying Beyachid by Rabbi Nacson p. 2, Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz citing Rabbi Akiva Eiger teshuva 71
12. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz quoting Rav Schachter
13. Rav Bention Mutzafi (55:10)
14. Rav Nevinsal stated that one should not recite Avinu Malkenu during Nissan. See Divrei Yatziv OC 75 for different minhagim about saying Avinu Malkenu during Nissan. See discussion page.
15. Mishna Shabbat 9b, Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann around minutes 5-7 says that if one sets an alarm, that should be sufficient
16. Igrot Moshe 5:12:1 writes that regarding a Shabbos Sheva Brachos since it is just the family and it is a temporary situation no mechitza is necessary.
17. Laws of Praying Beyachid p. 10 citing Shulchan Aruch O.C. 268:8
18. Rabbi Moshe Heinemann at around 24:45. At around 34 minutes, he clarifies that this can be done even by yourself, though normally we try to say it with at least two
19. Mishna Brurah 134:13
20. OU, Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #14) writes that a person shouldn't try to make a minyan on his lawn spread out even if there's a small remote chance of spreading the virus. He also held that making a minyan with ten people standing on different balconies or porches doesn't count as a minyan. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 35) writes that certainly a person should not attend a minyan because of the danger and one may not rely on the zechut of a minyan to protect him, one needs to be safe.
21. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #14) holds that it isn't a valid minyan. However, Rav Shternbuch (teshuva Nissan 8 5780) held that it is a valid minyan. To satisfy all the opinions the shaliach tzibur should have in mind that when he does chazarat hashatz that he could be praying a voluntary tefillah. They can't join if they're across the street and within ten tefachim of the ground. The shaliach tzibur needs to be able to see everyone. For kriyat hatorah that is done with porches initially one should call up the baal koreh or anyone on his porch, then one can even call up to an aliya someone on another porch as long as he can hear the baal koreh. The kohanim should leave before retzah because they can't say birkat kohanim. Someone davening alone doesn't have to hear kriyat hatorah since it is an obligation of the community and not individual. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference with Aguda, April 2 2020) was also inclined to hold that it is possible to make a minyan with people on porches who can see each other.
 - * Mishna Brurah 55:48 based on Rascha responsa 1:96 holds that one can learn from the laws of zimman that if people can see each other they can join for minyan.
22. Rav Schachter (towards middle), Rabbi Nacson in Laws of Praying Beyachid p. 4 based on Yalkut Yosef 5775 ed Yamim Noraim p. 17, Yabia Omer 1:19:18, Chazon Ovadia Purim p. 56
23. Rav Schachter (towards middle)
24. Rav Schachter (towards middle), Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 35), Rabbi Nacson in Laws of Praying Beyachid p. 4 based on Yalkut Yosef 5775 ed Yamim Noraim p. 17, Yabia Omer 1:19:18, Chazon Ovadia Purim p. 56
25. Rav Schachter cited by Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 35) and Rav Aviner agreed.
26. Rav Dovid Feinstein cited by Rabbi Fink and Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 35)
27. Rav Willig (min 30-34)
28. Rabbi Moshe Heinemann at around 28:30 in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein, because Hashem will not punish you by not sending the angels when you weren't able to attend
29. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #25)
30. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz quoting Rabbi Willig, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann around minutes 7-10 agrees that you should do so on Shabbat, but that it is not necessary on Monday and Thursday.
31. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #8)
32. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz based on Rama and Magen Avraham
33. Rabbi Yonatan Nacson in Laws of Praying Beyachid (p. 10) citing Rav Asher Weiss
34. [https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/950291/rabbi-hershel-schachter/piskei-corona-8-krias-hatorah/ Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #8)]
35. Mishna Brurah 134:13
36. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #24) explains that anim zemirot was instituted only for a minyan, and according to Rav Soloveitchik was considered a dvar shebekedusha.
37. Rav Schachter (towards middle), Rav Nevinsal
38. Rav Schachter (towards middle)
39. Divrei Dovid 4:3
40. Rama 219:8, Rav Asher Weiss (March 15 2015, min 11)
41. Rabbi Mansour ("Saying Birkat Hagomel Within 3 Days and Laws of Birkat Hagomel Following A Sickness")
42. Rav Shmuel Fuerst (min 1-5), Rav Meir Elbaz (min 17-8)
43. Rav Herschel Schachter (teshuva Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5780), Rav Nevinsal. Rav Yitzchak Yosef and Rav David Lau said that one should not go outside to burn chametz or kasher pots.
44. Rav Elbaz (min 26), Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference, March 29 2020 11am)
45. Rav Schachter (min 20), Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 9-11). Rav Herschel Schachter (teshuva Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5780) explained the reason why the hatarat nedarim isn't necessary. Rabbi Moshe Heinemann at around 46:45 agrees that if there is a big loss one can be lenient and sell chametz and it would not require hatarat nedarim, although he isn't so sure that it would be a big loss to an individual.
46. Rav Herschel Schachter (Teshuva dated 28 Adar 5780 p. 2), Nefesh Harav p. 179, Rav Schachter (min 1-5) explained that the minhag is to make a kinyan to appoint a someone to sell something for you. This is classically done with a handing of a handkerchief from the rabbi to the one selling chametz. However, when they call on the phone that isn't possible. The Steipler held in such a case it isn't necessary to be careful about what minhag and simply have the person orally declare that he appoints the rabbi. However, Rav Soloveitchik felt that we should try to fulfill the minhag in any event. How can it be fulfilled? One can have someone standing in the room next to the person on the phone give something to the person on the phone on behalf of the rabbi. That is an effective halachic kinyan on behalf of the rabbi (see Kiddushin 7a). Rav Shmuel Fuerst (min 10) explained that one can appoint the rabbi to sell his chametz online. Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher Corona p. 66) agrees. Rav Nevinsal allowed appointing the rabbi online if he is a talmid chacham.
47. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #10)
48. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #17) explains that it isn't considered rotzeh b'kinyom, wanting the chametz to continue to exist, to order the chametz since one doesn't insist on any particular box of chametz that the company provides. However, one certainly may not acquire it with a kinyan such as picking it up or moving it. Even if it is delivered into one's property if one has intention not to acquire it, one doesn't acquire it. Yet, one can't even protect it since doing so is an issue of rotzeh b'kinyom. Rav Willig (April 1 2020, min 0-2) agreed in technical terms.
49. Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 11-15)
50. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #7)
51. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #7)
52. Rav Herschel Schachter (teshuva Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5780)
53. Rav Hershel Schachter (Piskei Corona #9)
54. Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher Corona p. 73-4) writes that a person who has the practice to recite the Hallel the night of the seder after davening can do so with a bracha even when davening individually.
55. Yachava Datat 5:34. Teshuva written by Rabbi Mordechai Lebahar author of Magen Avot (Erev Shabbat Hagadol 5780), Kaf HaChaim 487-38-42
56. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #13)
57. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #9)
58. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #9)
59. Kaf HaChaim 114:8 and Halach Av Brurah v. 6 p. 145 rule that the primary halacha is that there's no prohibition to begin to start to say Morid Hatal before the Shaliach Tzibur. It is only forbidden for an individual to begin Mashiv Haruach Umorid Hageshem before the congregatoin does. This is the approach of the Bet Yosef citing the Ran, Pri Chacham, and Maamar Mordechai, unlike the Raavad cited by the Tur 114:2. However, in a regular year, the Kaf HaChaim and Halach Av Brurah recommend being strict for the Raavad to have the Shaliach Tzibur announce before the Mussaf that everyone should begin to say Morid Hatal.
60. Rav Schachter (towards beginning), this is acceptable for Sephardim as well even with a bracha as described by Rav Ovadia Yosef in Yachava Datat 1:14 and Chazon Ovadia (Pesach Hilchot Leil Haseder 5763 Edition p. 76). Rav Ben Chaim holds that one should really use hand baked matzah but if one can't acquire any then one can use machine matzah. Rav Willig (min 2) has a similar approach.
61. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22 2020, min 19) said that there's no concern to use the hand-baked matzot since they were baked earlier in the year. His personal minhag is to have only baked matzot. In terms of using machine matzah he felt that it is only a chumra not to use them even for the mitzvah of botzi matzah and one could use them if there's no other option.
62. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #19)
63. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #19) explained that usually we use the concept of hoil, since guests might arrive who can eat the food one cooked, to permit cooking from one day of Yom Tov to Shabbat. However, this year that seems not to be applicable. Rav Schachter explained based on the Maharam Chalavah that hold doesn't necessitate that one actually have guests or even have the ability to have guests, it is rather a halachic principle since objectively it is possible to have such a situation.
64. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #19) explained that since theoretically it is possible to get the box alone for a few minutes, one should not be completely inaccessible (see Har Tzvi OC 2:16).
65. Rabbi Mansour
66. Ateret Paz p. 154-6
67. Rav Hershel Schachter (Teshuva dated 28 Adar 5780 p. 2), Rav Ben Chaim
68. Rabbi Mansour, Rav Ben Chaim
69. Rav Hershel Schachter (Teshuva dated 28 Adar 5780 p. 2), Rav Schachter (towards beginning), Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 1-4) explained that Rav Schachter and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach hold that it is enough to listen and join with the siyum over the phone or video call. However, other poskim don't like this leniency. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22 2020, min 7) agreed that one can be yotzei with a siyum over the phone or video for the tanit bechorot. Rav Shmuel Fuerst (min 6) agreed that this year you can be yotzei the siyum over the phone since it is an extenuating circumstance. Rav Avigdor Nevinsal agreed that you can be part of a siyum over the phone even on a tractate of mishna but if that's not possible one can listen on the phone.
70. Rabbi Mansour
71. Rama 426:4
72. Pri Megadim M"Z 426:4, Mishna Brurah 426:21
73. Rav Ben Chaim
74. Rabbi Elyahov Abergel and other rabbis
75. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22 2020 11am, min 39; teshuva in Minchat Asher Corona pp. 75-6), Rav Herschel Schachter (teshuva Adar 29 5780), Rav Mordechai Willig (min 20-22), Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon. Rav Willig's held that it is absolutely forbidden and it is a tremendous zilzul Shabbat besides questions of others prohibitions of Shabbat.
76. Rabbi Yair Hoffman describes how 3 of the original signers of the lenient ruling would only permit under life and death needs and not in general. However, another article describes how some of the original rabbis who were lenient confirmed their opinions.
77. Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon
78. Rav Herschel Schachter (teshuva Adar 29 5780). Rav Willig (min 24) agrees that we violate Shabbat for someone who is suicidal but they can use the phone.
79. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #21), Rav Nevinsal
80. https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/950659/rabbi-hershel-schachter/piskei-corona-16-haircuts-on-chol-haemoed-and-sef-purim/Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #16)
81. Rav Herschel Schachter (Piskei Corona #12), Rabbi Shay Tahan. Rav Asher Weiss (March 29 2020) said it is obviously permitted to overlook the chumra of not showering when the woman returns from mikveh at these times.
82. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #26)
83. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #26)
84. RCBC letter on veshivavaviv.com
85. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference March 22 2020, min 12)
86. Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 5-9), Rav Ben Chaim
87. Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 5-9), Rav Mordechai Willig (min 3-4)
88. Rav Aryeh Lebowitz (min 5-9), Rav Ben Chaim. Rav Nevinsal said that one could rely upon this if there was no other option. Rav Mordechai Willig (min 14-16) allows selling the kelim to a non-Jew. Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon (teshuva dated Nisan 5780) recommended this.
89. Rav Hershel Schachter (Teshuva dated 28 Adar 5780 p. 1), Rabbi Mansour
90. Rav Mordechai Willig (min 5-12) said that one shouldn't use the solution to make the pots hefker since you're using the kelim. See Sefer Tevilat Kelim p. 84 based on Maharil Diskin. See S'A Harav 445:1 that hefker that isn't meaningful since you plan to reacquire it isn't a solution. However, Rav Elyashiv and Rav Soloveitchik allowed it in extenuating circumstances. Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher Corona p. 72) writes that one should avoid using new pots and relying on this leniency to mafkir but in an extenuating circumstance one can rely on it.
91. Rav Asher Weiss (Teleconference, March 22 2020 11am), Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon (Teshuva dated Nisan 1 5780)
92. Rav Nevinsal

93. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #22)
94. Rav Neveztal, Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona Teshuva #11), Rabbi Moshe Heinemann at about 16:45
95. Rav Schachter (towards end)
96. Rav Nevinsal
97. Rav Nevinsal, (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 38)
98. Rav Schachter (towards beginning)
99. Rav Nevinsal
100. Rav Ben Chaim
101. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #18) explained that although it isn't possible to recite Sheva Brachot and seemingly they forbid the couple to each other without Sheva Brachot in this extenuating circumstance one can rely upon the opinion that the wedding is valid and they are permitted even without Sheva Brachot (see Nodah BeyeHUDA EH 1:56). For birkat erusin certainly having a minyan isn't critical (Shulchan Aruch E.H. 34:4) although it is preferable and in this circumstance unnecessary. From Bet Shmuel 64:4 it appears to be a dispute between the Shulchan Aruch and Rama whether one is allowed to have a wedding at all if it is extremely difficult to get a minyan, the Rama being lenient.
102. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #22)
103. Rama 562:1 writes that Ashkenazim hold that even for an incomplete fast one can recite anenu. Mishna Bruriah 562:48 references this Rama in discussing a fast that was accepted to fast until chatzot. The Mishna Bruriah 562:7 cites a debate as to whether one should omit the words וְיִרְדּוּ עִמָּךְ while reciting וְנָנוּ in such a scenario as many poskim argue that a half fast is not considered a fast and therefore one would not want to risk speak falsely, particularly when he is speaking to Hashem.
104. Rav Chaim Kaniavsky declared a half fast on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5780.
104. Mishna Brurah 562:6
105. Shulchan Aruch 562:10-11 holds that an incomplete fast is not considered a fast with respect to saying anenu. Therefore if one only fasts until chatzot one should not recite anenu.
106. Shulchan Aruch and Rama 562:5
107. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 35), Chief Rabbi David Lau
108. Gemara Tanit 11a, Shulchan Aruch O.C. 240:12
109. Mishna Brurah 574:9
110. Rama 240:12 based on Yerushalmi Tanit. Olot Tamid 240:6 (cited by Kaf Hachaim 240:85) understands the Rama to apply to any type of tragedy that we would declare a fast over.
111. Shaarei Knesset Hagedola (Hagahot Tur 240:5) writes that tashmish is only forbidden during a famine, plague of the crops, locusts and the like which cause a famine but not for other tragedies or troubles. Kaf Hachaim 240:85 rules like the Shaarei Knesset Hagedola either because that is the explanation of the Yerushalmi or we don't follow the Yerushalmi.
112. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 574:11 writes that it is permitted for a couple to have tashmish on mikva night. Mishna Brurah 574:11 cites the Magen Avraham who argues with Shulchan Aruch but then he cites the Bigdei Yeshua and Nahar Shalom who are lenient and there's what to rely on to follow Shulchan Aruch. Mishna Brurah concludes that certainly one can be lenient at a time when it isn't a famine and it is just another time of distress in the world.
113. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 240:12, 574:4, Mishna Brurah 240:47
114. Mishna Brurah 574:12
115. Mishna Brurah 240:46
116. Tzitz Eliezer 13:21
117. Rabbi Ehrman on yutorah. Rav Asher Weiss (Zoom Conference, March 22 2020, 11am, min 15) was lenient he said that the situation presently isn't one that rises to the level where we need to declare a fast. Also, since domestic violence recently has been on the rise because of the quarantines one shouldn't be strict in this area.
118. Rabbi Zylberman on yutorah. Mordechai b' m 343 writes that if there's a decree in the town that the teachers can't teach the teachers should still be paid. Rama C.M. 321:1 cites this Mordechai and applies it to any worker in 334:1. The Saros 334:2 argues with the Mordechai and holds that since the employee can't work and both aren't at fault and both couldn't foresee this the employer is exempt. Netivot 334:1 limits the idea of the Mordechai to a teacher and not other employees since a teacher is paid for sachar betela (see Laws_of_Learning_Torah#Taking_Money_for_Learning_and_Teaching_Torah). Shach 334 holds that this opinion of the Mordechai only applies if majority of the town ran away because of a crisis but if only a minority runs away then the employee isn't entitled to payment. Aruch Hashulchan 334:10 has another approach. If the situation prevents the worker from working then he is entitled to pay but if he runs away then he isn't. Rabbi Zylberman explained from Mishpat Posalim we think that this is a case of Hamotzei Mchavero Alav Harayah, whoever is holding onto the money can claim that he is exempt from paying or returning the money. Rav Asher Weiss in Minchat Asher 2:106 says that they should make a compromise, and Rav Bleich (Contemporary Halachic Problems v. 4) thinks that we follow the Rama. Once the Chofam Sofer had a case in his town and he felt that they should pay but he couldn't force everyone to pay it so he told them to pay half. Rav Yona Reiss had a case where they made a compromise.
119. Rav Asher Weiss (Zoom Conference, March 22 2020, 11am, min 21-25) thought that one should compromise and give the workers who aren't working 30% of their pay. This applies Jewish and non-Jewish workers. This is based on the Rama and Sama CM 221. As for the day schools and daycares that are closed and not providing services one theoretically should be exempt. Since it might be devastating to the schools one needs to wait until the government makes a decision. Either way, we should wait until there is a major decision from the government or authorities and follow that. Until then for the schools we should pay so that the teachers can have a salary for their pay.
119. Rabbi Zylberman on yutorah
120. Rav Yakov Sinai based on Rama in teshuva. Shach CM 312 and other sources
121. Rav Yakov Sinai (min 3) explains that although the Rama in a teshuva and Knesset Hagedola hold that one should visit the sick even if they have a contagious disease, the Shulchan Gavoha and others disagree and that is the halacha.
122. Rav Shlomo Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 34) citing Igrot Moshe YD 1:223 and Tzitz Eliezer 8:5. Rav Aviner added that the main idea of bikur cholim is to do what is best for the patient and in our context that is to call.
123. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #2)
124. Rav Mordechai Willig (min 26-8). Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #20) said that they should specifically have as few people as possible for the burial and maybe just the workers and that too fulfills the mitzvah of burial.
125. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #20)
126. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23)
127. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23)
128. Rav Willig (min 29)
129. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23)
130. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23) isn't certain if a person involved in the burial merely because he is watching via Zoom is still considered an Onen. Rav Asher Bush wrote based on MPeninei Harav p. 202 that he considers someone phoning into a burial to not be an Onen unless they're going to ask him questions about the burial.
131. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23)
132. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #23)
133. Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher Corona pp. 58-9)
134. Rav Schachter (Teshuva Afar 29 5780), Rav Nevinsal
135. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 328:13
136. Rav Asher Weiss (March 15 2020, min 18-22) to Beit Midrash Gavoha explained that the definition of danger in order to violate Shabbat isn't defined by statistics. For vaccinations we assume that it is a sakana not to vaccinate even though the odds of dying because of the measles is low. Since it is preventable it is incumbent upon us to vaccinate. He concludes that as long as it is a natural phenomenon and there is an action that we can do to prevent death we must do so.
137. Rav Zilberstein allowed a patient to answer the phone on Shabbat with a shinyovny to hear the results of a test and answer questions for epidemiological investigation. If the test results that show that a patient has the virus are produced on Shabbat it is incumbent for the health department to deal with the quarantine then and it is permitted to answer the phone for that.
138. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #6)
139. Rav Asher feels that there are only two factors that we consider for halachic triage: give precedence to someone who is in immediate danger, and give treatment to whoever has a better chance for survival. Age or spiritual need for the community are not factors for precedence.
140. Rav Asher says that for cholah shebifanenu the knowledge that another cholah is going to come in soon is considered pikuach nefesh if will with certainty be helpful. Therefore, if an older patient comes into the hospital but they know a younger patient is going to come in, they can consider them as though they came in together and treat

- according to who is in immediate danger and who has the better chance to live. Rav Schachter felt the same way in his teshuva.
140. Rav Asher Weiss (Aguda Teleconference, April 6, 2020, min 18-22) explains that you can't put yourself in danger. However, you can if you're saving someone from an immediate danger and you're putting yourself in minimal danger then it is a middat chasidut to do so. Therefore, a doctor should do mechanical ventilation CPR on a COVID19 patient if he has the correct protective gear.
141. Rav Asher (min 33) allowed sharing ventilators when the doctors see fit in order to save another life because moving a patient from a single ventilator to a shared ventilator isn't considered doche nefesh mipnei nefesh since it isn't proven to be dangerous to use a shared ventilator. He also cited the Chazon Ish regarding turning the arrow to the side killing fewer people to save more people.
142. Rav Willig (min 41)
143. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 36) citing Rav Zilberstein
140. Rav Asher Weiss (Aguda Teleconference, April 6, 2020, min 18-22) explains that you can't put yourself in danger. However, you can if you're saving someone from an immediate danger and you're putting yourself in minimal danger then it is a middat chasidut to do so. Therefore, a doctor should do mechanical ventilation CPR on a COVID19 patient if he has the correct protective gear.
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142. Rav Willig (min 41)
143. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 36) citing Rav Zilberstein
141. Rav Asher (min 38) said that a doctor who isn't in that particular field or is retired or has vacation doesn't have to volunteer but his doing so would be a middat chasidut. However, if he is endangering himself such as if he's over 70, he is immune compromised, or has a family member who is, then he shouldn't volunteer.
141. Rav Schachter (Piskei Corona #26). See there for how he distinguishes this from the woman returning from the mikvah on Shabbat.
142. Rav Willig (min 41)
143. Rav Aviner (Keter Yitnu Lecha p. 36) citing Rav Zilberstein
- https://www.torahweb.org/torah/2020/moadim/ryud_pesach.html
- Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - un-BELIEVE-able**
- The Alter of Kelm (Chachma Umusar, vol. 1, page 10) makes a very interesting observation regarding Moshe's initial encounter with Pharaoh. The Torah informs (Shemos 4:29) us that Moshe and Aharon gather the elders of Bnei Yisroel, shared with them Hashem's communication, and performed the signs that Hashem had given them. This is followed by the concluding verse in that chapter that the people believed that Hashem had remembered them and saw their affliction. This is immediately followed by the Torah relating that Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh, uninvited, and delivered the Divine message to free the Israelite slaves. The Alter asks, would it not have made more sense for Moshe and Aharon to go to Pharaoh, as they were told to do by Hashem, and subsequently report back to the people that the process of redemption has already begun? The people would have been so much more excited upon hearing that Moshe and Aharon daringly appeared before the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt unannounced. The answer is that it was only the merit of the emunah - faith that the people had upon hearing Moshe's report from Hashem that enabled Moshe and Aharon to go with confidence to Pharaoh. The exodus from Egypt began with the emunah of the Jewish people.
- Similarly, the miraculous salvation of krias Yam Suf, which was the culmination of the geulah for the Jewish nation, occurred based on the impetus of the peoples' emunah. This is taught explicitly by Rabbeinu Bachya in his commentary at the beginning at parshas Beshalach, where he says that the sea did not split all at once, rather they proceeded with the waters literally up to their nostrils and were motivated by their emunah to proceed further, and this is what produced the splitting of the yam. Moreover, Rabbeinu Bachya writes regarding the passuk (Shemos 12:13), "I shall see the blood and I shall pass over you, there shall not be a plague of destruction upon you when I strike in the land" that it was not the blood on the doorpost that protected them from any harm, but rather the Torah is teaching us that whoever had complete and total emunah/trust in G-d, and disregarded Pharaoh's decree and publicly slaughtered the god of Egypt, was worthy of protection that night.
- Note that in the Hallel that we will recite on the forthcoming yom tov, we contrast the emptiness and powerlessness of other gods with the infinite qualities of Hashem. Tehillim (115:8) states, "those who make them should become like them, whoever trusts in them". This powerful teaching of King David is describing the emptiness and moral values of those who adhere to idolatry and the richness of character for those who believe in Hashem, as His essence adorns and elevates them. The individual who believes in Hashem is transformed to the state of being a tsaddik, as noted by the prophet Havakkuk (2:4), "the righteous person shall live through his faith". It is most interesting to note that the Medresh (Shemos Rabba 3:4) teaches that what occurred in conjunction with our first geulah will repeat itself on the occasion of the final redemption. Thus, Hashem assured Yaakov

(Bereishis 46:4), "anochi - I shall descend with you to Egypt, I shall also bring you up", and similarly at the burning bush Hashem utilized the same word "anochi" (Shemos 3:6) to announce the forthcoming immediate redemption. So too, continues the Medrash, the Jewish people will once again be redeemed with "anochi", as promised by the prophet Malachi (3:23), "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of Hashem".

There are many things that we do at the Pesach Seder which, at first glance, are contradictory in nature. The first example is that we introduce the Maggid section of the Haggadah by presenting the matzah and describing it as the bread that we ate in the land of Egypt. Indeed, Seforno (Devarim 16:3) teaches that the Egyptians fed us matzah during our period of slavery. However, later on Rabban Gamliel mandates that we must explain that the reason for our eating matzah on this night is to remember our being hurried out of Egypt so quickly that we did not have time to sufficiently bake our chametz. Which one is it? Is it the bread of slavery or the bread of freedom? The answer, we know, is both! Imagine sitting at the very first Seder in Egypt and this is your thanksgiving dinner, and when you are told to celebrate with matzah your first reaction has to be - "impossible!" Yet, this is the incredible ability of the Jew to completely transform the same matzah from slavery to freedom.

I'd like to go back to that first Pesach Seder. Why is it that they had to finish the Seder before chatzos - midnight? It seems so strange! At that point in time nothing had happened. Moshe warned Pharaoh, and indeed the whole land of Egypt knew, that Hashem on or about midnight would kill all first born in Egypt. Until midnight, however, nothing happened yet, so what were they celebrating? And why did they have to finish their meal before chatzos, when makkas bechoros would occur? The answer is most powerful: they were celebrating their faith, their belief that Hashem would free them at chatzos. Therefore, it is so exciting that annually we finish our meal by chatzos and we eat the afikomen by chatzos to demonstrate our belief that just as He extracted our ancestors in the merit of their emunah, so too will He free us of our travails in accordance with our emunah.

Today, we are facing an unprecedented reality - never before has the entire world literally been shut down. If anybody were to say, "I don't see the Corona virus, so it is not out there", we would understandably describe it as idiocy. Similarly, we cannot see Hashem but only He could effect this total world shutdown. This idea is in the very words of the Haggadah that we will recite shortly in which our Rabbis explain the verse (Shemos 12:12), "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night" to mean, "I and no angel, I and no saraph, I and no messenger, I, Hashem, and no other!"

The above is not meant to engender fear and tension, but to remember that He is Avinu, our Loving Father, first and foremost and then Malkeinu, our King. I trust that the following story will help any who might be overwhelmed with nervousness. The Rambam was the doctor of the Sultan in Egypt. His having this prestigious position aroused the jealousy of many doctors. Word reached the Sultan, and he devised a method of determining who is the greatest doctor. He asked both the Rambam and the other contender for his position to each prepare a poisonous potion for the other to drink, and if they can save themselves that shows that they are truly a master of their profession. The Rambam drank first. I wish I could tell everybody what herbs and medications he took, but he survived. The other doctor drank the Rambam's drink and died 5 days later. The Sultan asked the Rambam what he put in the drink. The Rambam answered, He said, "bye your life, there was nothing but a glass of water"! The Rambam then went on to explain that the other individual died from nervousness. He was so concerned every moment, maybe it could be this, what's in there, maybe it could be that, that his nerves literally consumed him. We must all learn from the above. We left Mitzrayim because of our emunah. Rav Yaakov Emden z"tl teaches that there is only one miracle greater than that of the exodus, and

that is the survival of the Jewish nation. We survived because of our emunah. What's in your matzah? The Zohar teaches that aside from the flour and water there is one more ingredient, namely emunah. What is getting us through this great challenge is the matzah we ate last Pesach, and G-d willing the matzah that we will eat this coming leil haSeder will energize us in our emunah until the coming of Mashiach.

More divrei Torah and shiurim from Rabbi Yudin

More divrei Torah on Pesach

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Essential vs. Non-Essential: Dayeinu During the Pandemic by Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

Now is the crucial time to focus on what we have.

Most people around the world are under home lockdown, following "Stay Home, Stay Safe" emergency orders to combat the coronavirus. Individuals are allowed to leave their homes for certain "essential activities," which includes grocery shopping, medical needs, going to the gas station or bank. In Boca Raton where I live, the order emphasizes that only "essential retail and commercial activities" are permitted and only "essential" business can stay open.

The dictionary definition of "essential" is "absolutely necessary; extremely important." Synonyms are "crucial, necessary, key, and vital." Non-essential means "not completely necessary." Synonyms include "dispensable, gratuitous, inessential, needless, and unnecessary."

Reading the recent order got me thinking about what we consider essential. Each of us is the executive of our own lives; we give the orders and we define what is essential, crucial, and vital versus what is non-essential, what is dispensable and gratuitous, and what we can live without.

Obviously, none of us can live without our health or without the well-being of our loved ones. For those who are suffering or have experienced a loss, there are no words or platitudes, only our heartfelt empathy and love. And to those financially devastated by this pandemic, in addition to our commitment to help, provide and support, know that we care deeply and we are thinking about you.

For those fortunate to have their health and financial stability, the consequences and impact of this pandemic are still extremely challenging. So many aspects of this new normal can't help but frustrate, disappoint, aggravate and worry even the most even-tempered, confident, competent, and capable person.

Even if we are blessed not to be grieving loved ones, we are all grieving the loss of innocence, of certain assumptions and realities we took for granted and came to expect. Honor that feeling, lean into that pain, express that frustration in a healthy way, and then let it go and work to feel a sense of dayeinu.

Dayeinu's message is straightforward – we need to know how to say "enough," not in a caustic tone, but in an appreciative one. On this evening of the journey from slavery to liberty, we achieve our very freedom. By saying dayeinu, we focus on what we have, not what we don't: we have enough, we are satisfied enough.

Dayeinu means it is enough to enjoy this moment, to be present in this experience, to savor this gift and to cherish this opportunity without having to already look forward or crave the next one. Of course, each stage and each stanza of this song is incomplete, each is imperfect, but nevertheless, dayeinu; each is still enough. Enough to prompt us to say thank you and even enough to make us happy.

Like the stanzas of Dayeinu, our lives are often incomplete, they are imperfect. For most of us, this Passover is different from all others. There is so much missing, so many people absent from our table or people feeling our

absence from theirs. Yet, if we focus on what is missing, what we don't yet have or may never have, we become debilitated, deprived of happiness. On the other hand, if we find the capacity to sing Dayeinu, to focus on what is, to enjoy what we have, we set ourselves free to find happiness.

This pandemic has forced us to redefine "essential" and "non-essential."

Our Sages teach that he who has one hundred desires two hundred. An insatiable appetite for more, a voracious need for the latest, being unsatisfied without the newest, the best, the most, robs us of serenity, denies us happiness, and often distracts us from what matters the most.

We live with unprecedented freedoms: freedom to practice our religion, freedom of speech, freedom to pursue happiness. And yet, with all those freedoms, our generation remains enslaved. We are slaves to needing "more." We are dominated by needs. Our need for more money, more time, more things, the latest things, a better seat, a better room, more power, more friends, the need to have the last word, even our need to be needed.

Our needs, wants, and lack of contentment become our taskmasters. They occupy space in our head and in our hearts, they hijack our thoughts, they dictate to us how to feel and they command us to say things and do things that are self-destructive.

This pandemic has forced us to redefine "essential" and "non-essential."

With the proper frame of mind, many of us can be empowered in unprecedented ways to sincerely and genuinely sing Dayeinu from the essence of our being.

If my children have dedicated teachers and inspired Torah to learn, even if they are missing their campus and its amenities, dayeinu.

If we have each other, feel connected and part of a community working together, even if we can't get our haircuts, manicures or upgrade our wardrobes, dayeinu.

If we have simchas to celebrate, babies born and couples entering a sacred bond, even if they can't be marked with the usual pomp and circumstance, dayeinu.

If we can observe Passover, the holiday of Emunah, Faith, remembering that God runs the world and brings redemption, even if it isn't at a hotel or where we normally go or with the people we are normally with, dayeinu.

Above all, if we can breathe easily, if we and those we love have our health, even if we can't enjoy our full lifestyles, dayeinu.

On Passover we set ourselves free by singing Dayeinu. We are happy to pause to reflect on what we have and say thank you. Living with limits, finding happiness within what we have, maintaining the capacity to say "enough" is liberating, empowering, and enriching. When we always want more, we never pause to enjoy what we have, and we forfeit what is in the pursuit of what is next.

During this Passover, take a few moments to reflect. Look around your table, take stock of your life and don't notice what is missing, what you wish was there. Instead, sing Dayeinu, "enough", and hold tighter onto that which is there. This is a critical theme of Passover. It's the key to setting yourself free.

from: **Rabbi Yitzchak Zweig** <rabbizweig@shabbatshalom.org> date: Apr 5, 2020, 9:01 AM subject: Getting Ready for Passover --- Shabbat Shalom Weekly

Shabbat Shalom Fax Passover Edition

... Q & A: WHAT IS PESACH (PASSOVER) AND HOW IS IT CELEBRATED?

One of the overriding themes of Passover is the prohibition against consuming foods that are "chametz" – the literal translation being "fermented." This refers to any food that contains grain (made from wheat, barely, oat, etc.) whereby the leavening process ("fermentation") begins when water is added to it. This includes virtually any food that has a grain ingredient, they are all prohibited on Passover unless they have a reliable Kosher for Passover certification. Beverages that are made from grain are

also prohibited (e.g. beer, and most alcoholic spirits as well - sorry) and, because the majority of processed products have some trace elements of grain derivatives, no food or drinks should be brought into the home without proper Kosher for Passover certification.

Passover has an added stringency; Jews aren't even allowed to own these products during Passover. Herein lies the source for one of the greatest "workarounds" in Judaism: Any product containing chametz is sold to a non-Jew for the duration of the holiday. After the holiday, the chametz is purchased back. This is a legally binding sale, both in Jewish law and in civil law.

In general, the practice has been to go to the home of one's rabbi before Passover and authorize him to sell whatever products and chametz you own. In the twenty-first century, many of these transactions have shifted to ecommerce – meaning you can now conveniently sell your chametz online. Never has this been more relevant than in these days of social distancing. If you would like to sell your chametz, please visit www.talmudicu.edu/chometz.

GOOD MORNING! This Wednesday evening, Jews all over the world will begin to celebrate the holiday of Passover. For most of us, because we have made the choice to isolate ourselves from even our closest family and friends, this Passover will feel somewhat strange and perhaps a little dispiriting. Last week I wrote an article that might help you cope a little better under these trying circumstances. For those of you who missed last week's Shabbat Shalom Fax of Life, you can find it here <https://tinyurl.com/passover-1>.

Interestingly enough, the Passover Seder is a key Jewish life cycle observance – according to the Pew Research Center almost 8 out of 10 people who identify as Jews participate in a Seder. This same group had only about 5 out of 10 fasting (at least partially) on Yom Kippur and only about 2 out of 10 lighting Shabbat candles regularly. Surprisingly, more than 4 out of 10 Jews who don't have any religious affiliation (those that acknowledge some Jewish parentage but identify as atheists or agnostics) also participated in a Seder.

Because the Passover Seder experience is so universally observed and fundamental to Judaism, I decided to reprint a primer to the Seder from our beloved mentor and teacher, Rabbi Kalman Packouz, of blessed memory. Q & A: What is Pesach (Passover) and how is it celebrated?

There are five mitzvot (commandments) for the Passover Seder, two from the Torah and three from our Sages. The two mitzvot from the Torah are to eat matza ("In the evening you shall eat unleavened bread" -- Exodus 12:18) and to tell the story of our exodus from Egypt ("And you shall relate to your son [the story of the Exodus] on this day" -- Exodus 13:9). The rabbis added the mitzvot of drinking the four cups of wine, eating marror (bitter herbs), and reciting Hallel (Psalms of praise for the Almighty). During the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, there were 16 additional mitzvot associated with the Pesach offering.

All of these commandments are to help us re-experience the exodus and to feel and strengthen our sense of freedom. The mitzvot are to experience either the affliction or the redemption.

The matza is called "lechem ani" -- the bread of the poor man ... and "lechem oni" -- the bread of affliction. It has the dual symbolism of representing our affliction (we ate it while slaves) and our redemption (we hastily made matza to eat when we left Egypt).

The four cups of wine represent the four different terms for our redemption in the Torah (Exodus 6:6-7). Wine is the drink of free men! Bitter herbs is affliction (just look at the faces of those eating horseradish!) and Hallel is our thanks to the Almighty for our redemption and freedom.

Passover is the "Holiday of Freedom" -- spiritual freedom. The Almighty brought us out of Egypt to serve Him and to be free. Isn't this a contradiction? What is the essence of freedom?

Is freedom the ability to do what one desires unhampered and without consequence? That is license, not freedom. James Bond had a "license to kill," not the freedom to kill. Freedom means having the ability to use your free will to grow and to develop.

Our leaving Egypt led us to Mt. Sinai and the acceptance upon ourselves the yoke of Torah. This is the centerpiece of our freedom. It sets the boundaries of right and wrong; it sets forth the means to perfect ourselves and the world we live in; it defines ultimate meaning and satisfaction in life. Only with boundaries does one have the ability to grow and develop. Otherwise, with unlimited license, life is out of control.

People think they are free when they throw off the yoke of the Torah. However, unless one has the revealed wisdom of the Torah, he is at risk of becoming a "slave" to the fads and fashion of his society. Slavery is non-thinking action, rote behavior, following the impulse desires of the body. Our job on Pesach is to come out of slavery into true freedom and to develop a closer relationship with the Almighty!

During all eight days of Pesach we are forbidden to own or eat chametz (leavened bread -- i.e. virtually any flour product not especially produced for Pesach) or have it in our possession (Exodus 13:7). Why the emphasis on being chametz-free? Chametz represents arrogance ("puffing up"). The only thing that stands between you and God ... is you. To come close to the Almighty, which is the ultimate pleasure in life and the opportunity of every mitzvah and holiday, one must remove his own personal barriers. The external act bring

Who is Really Free and How Do We Gain Freedom?

The year is 1978 and the man's name is Yosef Mendelovich. The setting: a dank cell, deep within the bowels of the Christopol prison in the Soviet Union. The date is April 12. On the Jewish calendar it is the 14th of Nisan, one day before the start of Passover.

Yosef is a prisoner. He is a gaunt human shell, and he is about to light a candle. Made of hoarded bits of string, pitiful droplets of oil, and stray slivers of wax, this is a candle fashioned by Yosef's own hands. The candle is lit -- the search for chametz begins.

Sometime earlier Yosef had complained of back problems. The infirmary in hell provided him with mustard to serve as a therapeutic plaster. Unused then, this mustard would later reappear as maror -- bitter herbs -- at Yosef's Seder table. A long-saved onion bulb in water has produced a humble bit of greenery. This would be his karpas. And the wine? Raisins were left to soak in an old jelly jar, water occasionally added, and fermentation was prayed for. This was wine. The Haggadah that Yosef transcribed into a small notebook before being imprisoned had now been set to memory. The original was secretly passed on to another "dangerous" enemy of the State: Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky. Is Yosef free? He cannot do whatever he wants. He has been denied even the liberty to know when the sun shines and the stars twinkle. For Yosef the world of free men doesn't even begin to exist.

Yet, Yosef, perhaps, is more free even than his captors. Clearly self-aware, he knows exactly who he is, what he wants, and is prepared to pay any price to have it. Today he walks the streets of Israel, studies Torah, and buys box after box of matza to serve at his Seder. He is a free man now, but in many ways he was just as free when he was behind those lifeless prison walls.

Self-awareness means that we are able to stand outside of ourselves; to look within and assess our goals, values, priorities, direction, and truthfulness. Unaware of these things, we remain mired in a dense fog of confusion and doubt. Can we ever be fully self-aware? Probably not. But aware enough to set ourselves free? Yes, and this is one of life's most pivotal challenges.

Achievement and maintenance of freedom is available only through the ongoing struggle for self-awareness. This process of clarification, coupled with the conviction to follow wherever it may lead, is the only way to achieve a spiritually sensitive, value-driven life of liberty. Ironically, this freedom can land you in a prison where you are the captor, while your

guards are the prisoners. Just ask Yosef Mendelovich -- one of the freest people who ever walked the earth.

All of the above was penned by Rabbi Kalman Packouz, of blessed memory. I have chosen to include the story about Rabbi Yosef Mendelovich for two reasons: 1) R' Mendelovich came to speak in our University here in Miami Beach shortly after being released from communist Russia. The vast majority of what was written above is exactly as I heard it about 35 years ago and I can attest to its veracity. 2) As all of us now struggle emotionally with our extended "isolation" or "quarantine" (euphemistically referred to as "shelter in place"), I find the message of understanding what it means to be truly free more pertinent than ever.

With God's help I will publish a bonus Shabbat Shalom Fax of Life early next week on the current COVID-19 crisis and what is the message God wants us to learn. Because many of receive you it via fax, please not that you will not be able to get a second fax next week (it takes almost the entire week to send the many tens of thousands of faxes out) so it will be sent out exclusively by email and also available on our website ShabbatShalom.org -- if those of you who generally only receive it via fax wish to receive it by email, please send an email to my attention shabbatshalomfax@gmail.com.

from: **Rabbi Yaakov Bernstein** <yaakovb@torah.org>

to: haaros@torah.org date: Apr 7, 2020, 4:53 PM

subject: **Haaros - The Pandemic and Pesach**

The Pandemic and Pesach

It's quite amazing that the pandemic is here at Pesach time. We are apart from our kehilos, but Pesach always had to do with the home. In Mitzrayim, the sacrifice was offered at home, the door taking the place of the mizbe'ach (altar); even in the Beis Hamikdash, the meat was taken home and eaten in their houses. Today, of course, without korbanos, the seder is entirely at home. When else do we say Hallel at the table? Now is the time to realize that the center of Hashem's service begins at home.

The Source of the Galus (Exile)

We know the evil-doers, Doston and Avirom -- who reported Moshe Rebbeinu to the authorities. Moshe said, "The matter is known!" Rashi explains, "I wondered why slavery has befallen our people. Now (that I see they slander one another,) I understand." (Shmos, 2:14)

If we want to get to the root of loshon horah, we need to see the story in context.

The young Moshe lives in the royal palace, removed from his enslaved brethren. Here he is, giving orders to older, embittered slaves -- after his zealous act of killing an Egyptian officer, which endangered them all! Being law-abiding citizens, Doston and Avirom report the murderer to the police. (Shmos 2:13-15; see Rashi, *ibid*, 13)

This is not a far-fetched version of events. Years later, Doston and Avirom were Shotrim -- Jewish officers. They and their comrades were beaten in place of the Jewish men. When Moshe and Aharon first plead that Paroh should send Yisrael out, Paroh instead increases their burden. Doston and Avirom condemn Moshe and Aharon: "You have given them a sword to kill us!" Here, Doston and Avirom are suffering for the benefit of the congregation, and a couple of political novices try their hand at negotiating with the Emperor, making everything worse! (Shmos 5:4-21; see Rashi, *ibid*, 6)

The media would have seen Doston and Avirom in a positive light. But we know that Moshe was the great navi and anav, the giver of the Torah; Doston and Avirom went down in history as the arch-enemies of Torah and ethical behavior.

In the Middle Ages, Jews were blamed for the plague; now they are blamed for the current pandemic. Let's not criticize needlessly. There is always another side; politics and animosities slant every discussion... If you are certain that you are correct and the others are wrong, start an intelligent

discussion and try to convince your opponent; slandering him will not accomplish anything positive. We need to unite for the common good.

Hillel and the Rabbonon

There is a command to eat the Pesach korban with matza and moror: “They will eat the meat on this night, roasted in fire, and matzos; with moror they will eat it.” (Shmos, 12:8) Even though the main mitzva is to eat the meat, elsewhere we are told that there is an independent mitzva to consume matza: “On the fourteenth day of the month, at night, they will eat matzos...”

(Shmos, 12:18; Pesachim, 120a) The moror, though, is secondary — not an independent mitzva. (Ramban, Shmos, 12:18; Pesachim, *ibid.*)

In regard to the Pesach Sheni (the second Pesach sacrifice, one month later), we are told, “...they will eat it with matza and moror.” (B’midbar, 9:11)

Here, the mitzva only concerns the meat, both matza and moror are secondary, subject to the meat.

At the Seder, Hillel, the great Tana, would eat all three together: The Pesach meat, the matza and the moror. (See Pesachim 115a; Rashi and Rashbam there.) However, whenever Hillel is mentioned, the verse quoted is not from Pesach itself, rather, the verse regarding Pesach Sheni is used!

The Chasom Sofer explains: Hillel is of the opinion that the combination of the ingredients does not detract from the mitzvos, but enhances them. This point is driven home by the Pesach Sheni, where the only requirement is the meat. Even though the matza and the moror are each secondary, nonetheless, they do not detract from the mitzva of the meat. Surely, in regard to Pesach itself — where matza is a primary mitzva, just as the meat, Hillel would combine the three. (Teshuvos of the Chasom Sofer, Orech Chaim 140)

The Rabbonon did not require combining the ingredients (and according to some, forbid doing so). To commemorate the differing views, we eat the matza alone, then moror separately. Finally, we combine the matza and moror — to recall how Hillel would combine the mitzvos. (Pesachim, 115a)

The Bitter Herb

Even as we recall the redemption, longing for our own salvation, we must make a brocha on the bitterness. We must see the bitter taste as an important ingredient (although secondary). We will combine it with the Pesach and matza — symbols of the instantaneous redemption, may it come soon!

from: Lehrhaus <editors@thelehrhaus.com>

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(Re)reading Shir ha-Shirim during Covid-19

By **Tzvi Sinensky** - April 7, 2020

This year’s confluence of Passover and a pandemic has spurred countless halakhic questions. Among them: given that synagogue services are impermissible, should one praying individually still read Shir ha-Shirim on Shabbat Hol ha-Moed?

On one level, this can be analyzed as a strict halakhic matter. The question hinges on whether we view the custom of reading the five Megillot (except for Megillat Esther on Purim, which we can assume occupies a category unto itself) as incumbent upon the individual or the community. R. Hershel Schachter, for instance, recently ruled on the basis of a comment of the Vilna Gaon, that while the reading of Megillat Esther on Purim is an individual obligation, the readings of the other four Megillot (as well as weekly Shabbat Torah readings) devolve upon the community. Accordingly, he rules that an individual need not read Shir ha-Shirim this year. R. Schachter even discourages such private readings, citing his teacher R. Soloveitchik’s opposition to the observance of customs that lack halakhic basis. Following R. Schachter’s ruling (although arguably softening R. Schachter’s discouragement of private readings), the Rabbinical Council of America publicized a *luah* (calendar) for this year, which instructs that “the custom to read Shir HaShirim on Pesach was clearly instituted only for a *tzibur*. Nonetheless, there is nothing prohibited about reading Shir HaShirim on Pesach without a *tzibur*. One should be conscious of the fact that such a reading would not constitute a fulfillment of the original *minhag*.”

On the other hand, one might argue that the initial presentation in Masekhet Sofrim (14:18) seems to suggest that Shir ha-Shirim was originally read privately on the last two nights of Pesah, unlike the current Ashkenazic practice to read it in shul on Shabbat Hol ha-Moed, lending support to the view that it is a private obligation and should apply

this year. Further, one might maintain that even if the custom does not formally hold this year, it is best for us to approximate a typical Pesah experience so as to retain the flavor of the holiday — of course, while reading (even from a *kelaf*) without a *berakhah*.

Of course, given the high stakes of the many burning questions confronting us this year, this issue seems relatively minor. Yet the question of the recitation of Shir ha-Shirim must be considered not only on halakhic grounds, but also concerning whether its recitation is congruous with the mood of this Pesah. As one friend put it, referencing Kohelet and Shir ha-Shirim, “This Pesach הבל הבלים seems more appropriate than “שקני” מנשיקות פיהו.” Setting aside the question of individual versus communal obligation, doesn’t the youthful love story of Shir ha-Shirim stand in stark contradistinction to the grim scenes emerging from New York City hospitals and throughout the world?

Two answers come to mind immediately. First, we might insist while Shir ha-Shirim does not match our mood this year, our responsibility as halakhic Jews — or as Halakhic Men — is to experience Pesah fully as the holiday of redemption, no matter the circumstances.

Second, we might claim that Shir ha-Shirim, far from being a youthful love song brimming with verdant optimism, is in fact a far more complex story about the intense struggle of the Jewish people (or individual spiritual seeker) and our burning desire for redemption. Indeed, one group of commentators — including Rashi, Rashbam, Metzudat David, Lekah Tov, and Akeidat Yitzhak — see the book as the Jewish People’s retrospective, in which they reflect from exile and aspire to be reunited with their beloved God.[1] On this reading, Shir ha-Shirim is a sober work, one that ultimately offers a glimpse of hope into an otherwise dark and gloomy world. This reading is perhaps best exemplified by the verse, “My beloved is like a gazelle or like a young stag. There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the window, peering through the lattice” (Shir ha-Shirim 2:9). It is perhaps in this spirit that we can appropriately read Shir ha-Shirim in the throes of a pandemic.

Yet there is another response, one which opens the path toward a novel understanding of Shir ha-Shirim, as well as its relevance to Pesah, both in general and particularly this year. Ask the average reader, and he would likely say that, at least on the *peshat* level, the central drama of Shir ha-Shirim is the love story between the *dod* and *ra’ayah*. In fact, however, a closer reading of the sefer suggests that the real drama takes place inside the female protagonist, who undergoes a profound process of self-transformation throughout the course of Shir ha-Shirim.

To explain, let us briefly review Shir ha-Shirim from 10,000 feet. Many read Shir ha-Shirim as a single extended drama involving a *dod* and *ra’ayah*. Others insist that the book is more convincingly read as a series of distinct, loosely-related scenes that are bound together in a single work. In between these two positions, I would contend that there are two narratives that run in parallel throughout the sefer, one between the *ra’ayah* and a prince, and the other between the *ra’ayah* and a shepherd. Let us review the contours of each narrative in short.

The first, which is detailed in greatest depth in chapters 2-4 and 7, is blessed with “smooth sailing”: the couple does not grapple with any tensions, and consummates their relationship with marriage (chapter 4). The verses detailing this relationship focus on the physical aspects of their mutual attraction, particularly the beauty of the *ra’ayah*, as well as the couple’s communion in nature. The *ra’ayah* has no friends that we know of; we hear only of the women who unsuccessfully call upon her to rejoin the dance (7:1). She lacks a clear-cut biography. Finally, this relationship seems to climax in chapter 7 with an intensification of that physical attraction. This relationship is lacking in drama or complexity, and typifies an uncomplicated love story between man and woman.

The second narrative tells a different story, a *bildungsroman* of sorts. The woman’s beloved is a shepherd, and their relationship is plagued by drama. We are privy to both the physical and especially the emotional aspects of their relationship, and we know much more about the woman’s biography. Looking especially at the opening chapter of Shir ha-Shirim, we learn that she apparently has no relationship with her father; he has either died or is no longer involved in his children’s lives. Her brothers have taken advantage of her, subjecting her to brutal physical conditions by instructing her to guard their vineyards and not tend to her own. Her appearance and self-confidence suffer as a result. She begins the book as a self-conscious young woman, convinced that she is better off dreaming about a romantic relationship than actually attempting to engage in one, and twice adjures her friends, the Daughters of Jerusalem, to precisely this effect: “Do not wake or rouse love until it please” (2:7, 3:5). She wanders the streets searching for her beloved, but is physically harmed by the city’s watchmen (5:7).

Yet despite the considerable challenges she confronts, the woman ultimately recognizes that her beloved will disappear from her grasp if she does not act swiftly. After he knocks on her door and she opens it too late, she becomes determined not to allow him to disappear. Instead of satisfying herself with an idealized imaginary relationship, she

passionately describes the shepherd's qualities to her friends and begins to overcome her initial reservations.

By the end of the sefer, she has transcended her brothers' abusive treatment, asserting her physical and emotional maturity. Setting aside any concern about the public propriety of the relationship, she determines that her love is too valuable to squander over the possibility of social opprobrium. She declares her love to be as intense as death and that she prefers this love (represented by her vineyard) to a royal relationship (represented by Shlomo's vineyard). Most crucially, the dod recognizes her internal transformation: "Then I became in his eyes as one who had found peace" (8:10). Having reached a healthy self-understanding, she does not require the status of owning a royal vineyard in order to find internal validation; she is perfectly satisfied with the vineyard of her own (8:12).[2]

Of course, the woman's ability to find herself emerges not while in solitude, but through a series of interactions with others. But in the end, it is her own inner world, her determination not to permit her childhood traumas to interfere with her self-confidence and capacity to establish healthy relationships, which is the axis around which the true drama of Shir ha-Shirim revolves.

This reading of the sefer not only offers an innovative reading of the biblical book, but also opens a path toward a new appreciation of the connection between Shir ha-Shirim and Passover. The night of 15 Nissan centers on the gratitude with which we shower God for the redemption. This parallels the relatively uncomplicated relationship between the woman and the prince, and focuses on the loving intimacy between God and his beloved people. Indeed, some have the practice to read Shir ha-Shirim following the Seder (Hayyei Adam 130, Kitzur Shulhan Arukh 119), accentuating this dimension of the sefer.

But as we enter Hol ha-Moed and the final days of Pesah, the focus begins to shift from God's miraculous activities to the Jewish people's internal world, which was, to put it gently, a work in progress. From the moment they left Egypt, the Jews were wracked by internal doubts owing to the slave mentality they had imbibed. The very opening verse of Parshat Beshalah, which immediately follows the Exodus, explains that "God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer [to Canaan]; for God said, "The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt" (13:17). As Ibn Ezra (Peirush ha-Katzar s.v. "ve-ta'am") notes, "They had not previously encountered war, and were enslaved under the hands of others. And when Pharaoh would emerge after them, none of this [people] would lift a hand [in self-defense]. Similarly, Amalek came out against Israel with a small number, and snaked around [Israel], and [Israel] would have been weakened before [Amalek] if not for Moses His chosen one." [3]

Ibn Ezra (14:13 s.v. "va-Yomeru") reiterates the point a bit later on in the same narrative:

One has to wonder: How can a camp of six hundred thousand people fear from those who chase after them, and why not fight for their lives and their children? The answer: Because the Egyptians were masters of Israel, and this generation that came out of Egypt learned from its youth to suffer the burden of Egypt, and its soul was depressed, and how can he now fight with his masters? And Israel was weak and not skilled at war. You can see this, inasmuch as Amalek came with a small group of people, and if not for Moses' prayer, would have weakened Israel.

This also helps to explain the curious conclusion to the Torah reading on the seventh day of Pesah. Instead of concluding with the end of the Song of the Sea, we read five more verses:

Then Moses caused Israel to set out from the Sea of Reeds. They went on into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water.

They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; that is why it was named Marah.

And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There He made for them a fixed rule, and there He put them to the test.

He said, "If you will heed the Lord your God diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer." (15:22-26)

The seemingly unnecessary inclusion of this section in the keriat ha-Torah intimates that even after the Splitting of the Sea, the Jews still struggled to tear themselves away from psychological enslavement, disbelieving in God's ability or desire to provide materially for them. This, of course, is part of the purpose of Sefirat ha-Omer, which, as R. Soloveitchik explains, was intended to enable to Jews to gain mastery over time.[4] For this reason, it is appropriate that the Omer count toward Shavuot begins on the night

of 16 Nissan, immediately following the day of the Exodus: as soon as we leave Egypt, we begin the internal work of gaining self-mastery. The story of the Jews' march from Egypt is the beginning of their tortured attempts to shake themselves free of the psychological terror inflicted by a 210-year-long trauma.

The parallels between the stories of the ra'ayah and the Jews of the Exodus are as unexpected as they are tantalizing: both are coerced to engage in difficult work in the heat of a Middle Eastern day; both are subject to physical violence at the hands of enforcers; both struggle to act upon the obvious good of their beloveds; and, above all, both must struggle to achieve psychological freedom from youthful trauma. While Shir ha-Shirim and the larger arc of the Exodus end with intimacy (in the latter case, Matan Torah), both begin with an inner odyssey toward psychological freedom and self-discovery.

Seen from this perspective, we may appreciate a new dimension of the affinity between Shir ha-Shirim and Pesah. Each of these two storylines features not only relationships between caring parties, but an internal struggle in which one party (the woman or the Jewish people) struggles to overcome trauma in order to enter into a healthy relationship with her beloved. Shir ha-Shirim and the aftermath of the Exodus remind us that the process toward building healthy relationships, with God and any other loved one, begins from a journey within.

The past number of weeks have posed profound difficulties for nearly all of us, and trauma for far too many. In seeking to confront the sense of isolation so many of us are experiencing this year, perhaps there is at least something of a silver lining in the custom of reading Shir ha-Shirim on Pesah. We may turn to the model of the ra'ayah and the Jewish people, who were forced to turn inward in order to find the spiritual strength to establish full relationships with those surrounding them.

[1] This reading of Shir ha-Shirim is reinforced by the lesser-known opinion in a well-known midrash regarding Shlomo's age when he composed Shir ha-Shirim. A classic opinion (Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:10) asserts that Shlomo was a youth, but another view maintains that he composed the three books attributed to him in the rabbinic tradition, Shir ha-Shirim, Mishlei, and Kohelet, at the same time. To this midrash we may add that the Gemara Bava Batra 14b, in listing the sefarim in Tanakh, enumerates Mishlei, Kohelet, and then Shir ha-Shirim. Rashi (s.v. shir), seeking to account for the language of the Gemara, writes that it appears Shlomo composed Shir ha-Shirim close to his old age. This view may lend itself toward a more sober view of the challenges posed throughout Shir ha-Shirim, and toward seeing it as a work written out of a place of pain that desperately anticipates a period of reunion.

[2] See my discussion, <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/shiur-18-understanding-sefer-according-our-reading>.

[3] See Alex Israel, <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/beshalach-slave-mentality>.

[4] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Pesah, Sefirat ha--Omer, and Shavuot, 147.