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FOR ALL Q & A SEE THE SEPARATE PUBLICATION: CORONA Q & A

Core of Coronavirus

The Release of the “50th Gate of Impurity”

Let us try to understand a little, with the help of Hashem, about the way Hashem is running the world today.

Anyone can see that there is a certain force which has entered our world so that there can be an equal counterbalance between the forces of good (holiness) and evil (impurity).

The Sages teach that “the world was created with 50 gates of understanding (*shaarei binah*), and all of them were given to Moshe, except for one.”¹ According to some views, Moshe merited the 50th gate of understanding at the time of his death. This means that at the end of his life, Moshe received the 50th gate of understanding, the highest level of holiness, and this is a hint that in the final days, in the time directly preceding *Mashiach’s* arrival, the 50th gate of understanding will become available to us.

In the final days, when the 50th gate of understanding becomes revealed in the world, there must be an equal counterbalance between good and evil, and therefore the 50th gate of understanding is countered in the final days by the 50th gate of impurity, which is essentially the war of Gog and Magog. When the 50th gate of impurity reaches its total and absolute level, the “light of Mashiach” comes.

Each of the 50 gates, both in the sides of holiness and impurity, have another set of gates within them; each of those 50 gates contain another 50 gates within them. In the 50th gate of impurity, the first 49 gates are at one level, while the 50th gate within the 50th gate of impurity is at an entirely different level. The first 49 gates within the 50th gate of impurity are logical to understand, while the 50th gate within the 50th gate of impurity is so hidden and concealed that it is totally beyond comprehension. It is a kind of *tumah* (impurity) that goes beyond logical understanding. The 50th gate within the 50th gate, both in the side of holiness and in the

¹ *Talmud Bavli Rosh HaShanah 21b*

side of impurity, cannot be logically understood. They are beyond our level of comprehension.

The 50th gate within the 50th level of impurity is otherwise known as the force of the “*Erev Rav*,” the mixture in this world. It is also known as the evil kind of *daas* (human comprehension), the mixture of good and bad *daas* which was contained in the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge), a kind of knowledge which is illogical.

Media Use Is The 50th Gate of Impurity

Anyone who is aware of the situation in the world today can recognize this quite well. The world today is a terrible and disturbing mixture of the worst kinds of influences, with everything bombarding us all at once. The entire world, especially since the year 5760 and even more so in the recent years, has become enveloped in a certain spiritual darkness. It is all the presence of *tumah*, an invisible but spiritually present force of defilement, which surrounds everything in Creation, bringing confusion to everything that it touches. It affects us in the depths of our souls. It supersedes anything else that came before it.

The confusion and mixed-up values created by all of the *tumah* has entered into the places of Torah, penetrating even into our innermost circles, where people are the most careful to observe Torah and *mitzvos*. It has entered our once-sheltered society in the sneakiest way possible, and it destroyed everything. From a spiritual standpoint, it has destroyed the entire generation already.

Without getting into all the details, this is all a general force known as “the 50th gate of impurity” (*shaar ha'nun d'tumah*) It's all the media and all of the “smart” devices which have entered our environment, and into our direct social circles, and into our homes. Some people have a “*hechsher*” on their use of social media, by using filters to make it “kosher,” but any sensible person understands that although this was well-intentioned, all it has done is to totally uproot Jewish *neshamos* from within.

Everything in the world of social media—all the messages, all the videos, and all of the terrible *peritzus* (obscenities and immodest images) that people can view today through it—has reached an abysmally low point.

The recent epidemic has now forced people to stay in their homes, resembling the verse, “Go my nation, come into your rooms, close the doors behind you, reflect for a moment, until the wrath passes,”² and all places of Torah (*yeshivos* and *shuls*) have been closed, forcing everyone to stay at home. And what happened now? There are places where *bochurim* in yeshiva can go to so that they can hear *shiurim* on the Internet being given by their *Rebbeim*, so that they shouldn’t miss any *shiurim*....!

It’s true! The generation today has become so spiritually deadened!!

This is all the 50th gate within the 50th gate of impurity itself, the lowest point to be on. The wonder is that things have been like this for a while, yet Hashem didn’t send us any wake-up calls like this until now.

What Hashem is sending us now is all *rachamei* Hashem, it is all in Hashem’s great compassion for us that He has sent us this! The generation simply cannot continue the way it is. It is all filled with the influences of *tumah* coming from all directions.

The Sages teach that at the time when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, every rooftop had an idol on it. Today it is the same idea: there is *tumah* everywhere. And now that people are being forced to stay in their homes, what is everyone remaining with? People are remaining with nothing but their smart devices and their connection to social media, and that’s all they have in their life right now! Naturally, people can’t be alone, they can’t feel so separated from the rest of the world, so they are spending all their time communicating through Internet and media. This is all the 50th gate of impurity.

At the Core of the Coronavirus

It is clear to anyone that the world will not return afterwards to the way it was before. There have been easier times and harder times that we have seen, but the world simply will not go back to the way it was, for now the 50th gate of impurity has been released with full force. That changes everything. It is no longer hidden! It is obvious that there has never been anything like this before.

² *Yeshayahu 26:20*

The Coronavirus is not the problem. Rather, it is just a physical manifestation ,an outer appearance, of a deeper issue. The real issue here is that the entire world has become infected by the widespread influence of the most depraved elements possible, which is called the “*Keser d’kelipah*.” The world today is a “generation entirely guilty,”³ as the Sages said long ago regarding the final generations.

All that is left for a person now, for one who has become so infected by the impurity of the world today, is to be stuck in his house where he can be connected to the “50th gate of impurity,” connected to the media, which supplies all of his news, all of his communication, and all his needs....

Even when people learn Torah from the Internet, it is all coming from the most impure source possible, the “*Erev Rav*.” It is all a Torah being nursed from the *Erev Rav*! The *Erev Rav* stood far away from Har Sinai at the time of the giving of the Torah, as the Ramban says. But in our generation, it is not that way. Today the *Erev Rav* is mixed right with us.

People are secluded in their homes and still connected to the Internet and to the media, connected to the deepest filth of the 50th gate of the 50th gate of impurity, to various degrees, whether they know it or not.

The Way Out

But ultimately, it is all being countered by the light of Hashem that is shining strongly now .

There is a verse, “My soul desires You at night,”⁴ which refers to the inner depths of holiness of the soul that are available now, in the darkest times. Even when where we are at the lowest spiritual level possible, we have the opportunity to attain extraordinary closeness to Hashem.

The innermost point of our soul is called “*Yechidah l’yachdecha*,” (a “*yechidah* to declare Your oneness”).⁵ We have a soul in us which contains a *nefesh, ruach*,

³ *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a*

⁴ *Yeshayahu 26:9*

⁵ *a term recited in the Hoshanos on Succos*

neshamah, *chayah*, and *yechidah*. The Sages teach that the *nefesh* is seated in the liver, the *ruach* in the heart, the *neshamah* in the brain, the *chayah* rests on one's clothing, and the *yechidah* is accessible through one's home. The verse, "Close the doors behind you...until the wrath passes,"⁶ the entire idea of being secluded in our homes, is really the light of *Mashiach* that counters the "50th gate of impurity."

How long will this period last? That is unknown, because "matters of the heart are not revealed by the mouth."⁷ But one thing is certain: During this period, a person can connect to Hashem more strongly than ever, through being secluded in his house. It is the opportunity to reveal the depths of our *neshamos*, to become connected in our souls, earnestly and simply, with Hashem. To recognize how *Ain Od Milvado*, there is nothing other than Him.

Throughout our history, there were always times of joy and times of crises. The *Gemara* says that *tzaros* come to in order to awaken us to do *teshuvah* and return to Hashem and to pray to Him for salvation. But the *teshuvah* which Hashem wants from us now, and the kind of *tefillah* which He wants from us now, is the kind of *teshuvah* and *tefillah* which is usually not accessed by most people. The kind of *teshuvah* that Hashem wants to see from us now is that we should choose a kind of life that is eternal, to choose what we want our souls to become forever connected to, for all of eternity .

There are two sides of the coin before us. Now is the time in our world when we are bombarded by the worst kinds of *tumah*, the availability of knowledge and media connection which is all the "*daas* of the Serpent," the terribly harmful mixture of the *Erev Rav*, the evil knowledge contained in the *Eitz HaDaas*. But on the other hand, we are being given now the chance to have eternal life, the chance to live forever, the *Eitz HaChaim* .

What We Need Now Is Teshuvah, Tefillah, and Deeper Connection to Hashem

⁶ *Yeshayahu* 26:20

⁷ *Midrash Shochar Tov* 9:2

This is the deep choice which each person has now, to be able to choose to live our life for Hashem. The first step we need to do is *teshuvah*, and the second step is *tefillah*. But we also need to reach a third step: to attain a deeper and absolute bond with Hashem !

If one does this, one will pass through all of this in the correct way, and he will see miracles beyond miracles, seeing Hashem's Divine Providence We will pass it all with the light of Hashem accompanying him, going through this entire ordeal while being connected with Hashem! This is what it means to merit eternal life, the light of *Mashiach*, the light of the resurrection of the dead and the state of the World to Come.

Understanding the Seriousness of Today's Situation

It is a grievous mistake if a person thinks that this is just another difficulty we are facing, and he attempts to make some improvements, being *mechazeik* (strengthening) himself in certain areas which he knows he can use *chizuk* in. That is nice, and it is a truthful thing to do, but he must understand that merely making improvements in our life is just the first step. If one takes a more truthful look at the situation in the world today, he will see that this is not just another *tzarah* happening to us. Nothing like this has ever happened!

People are so connected with *tumah* all over the world with an unbridled desire to know everything as quickly as possible. This has unleashed this epidemic which has quickly swept through the entire world.

We should understand that Egypt was being stricken with plagues right before we got out of Egypt and we left Egypt amidst wonders and miracles. We were almost in the 50th gate of impurity, and we wouldn't have been able to escape from Egypt had we remained one more moment. In our times, we are indeed in the 50th gate of impurity, as the Ohr HaChaim says, but we still have the power of the Torah with us, something we did not have with us in Egypt. The power of the Torah can take us out of even the 50th gate of impurity, and this power is essentially the pleasure that one can find in Godliness. This 50th gate of holiness can take a person out of the 50th gate of impurity .This is what lies behind the test that we are going through in these times.

If someone today is totally superficial, he is busy only with what to do practically: what to eat, where to get food, where to get household items, what to do with all of his time so that he shouldn't be bored, etc.. Someone a little more inner oriented will look to strengthen himself in some area. Although this is truthful, it doesn't get a person to the root. A person may want to recite 100 berachos a day, recite *Ketores* (incense) every day, avoid speaking *lashon hora*, increasing love to other Jews, thinking about Divine Providence each day. All of this is good to do, and it is all true, but this alone doesn't get to the root of this *tzarah* (plague).

One needs to know the depth of the *tzarah* we are in and then one can know the depth of how to come out of it. Hashem is yelling at us from every direction, that the entire lifestyle of the last couple years is unacceptable. The entire connection that people have to the whole world, to all of the entertainment and restaurants and social mingling, all under the name of "kosher" entertainment, is really all *sheker* (falsity). It is like a *sherez*, an impure creature, which we cannot ever make *tahor* (pure) no matter how many reasons we can come up with. The entire way of life today, even amongst the Torah observant, in which people have become too connected to the way of life of the world today, is totally unacceptable! It just cannot exist by us!

Hashem has shown every person now that he cannot depend on anything, not on his money in the bank, not on his doctors, and not on the army. How can an army fight an epidemic!? There is nothing we can depend on now, other than Him. There is an awesome revelation taking place today, for anyone who doesn't stubbornly refuse to see it, in which we can see that the entire way of living of the last couple of years is totally against Hashem's will, period. Hashem doesn't want us to live the way we are living, because He finds it totally unacceptable.

Weddings Today

There are endless details that we can elaborate on, but here is one example which happened this week.

Many people could not make *chasunahs* (weddings) normally. People who made weddings had to find 10 people to make a *minyan*, and that was it. If you think about this, this was to show us that all of the *chasunahs* being made today are really *sheker*. There is too much extravagance, too much food, too much materialism, and

terrible *peritzus* in the clothes that people wear at *chasunahs* today. All of the food at weddings today is kosher, but the sheer abundance of it and the variety of food today at weddings is not.

There is no *simchah* by any of these *chasunahs*. The entire way in which weddings were done is all against what Hashem wants, and Hashem has no *simchah* in these *chasunahs*. One of the phrases said at a *chasunah* is that there is “joy in His abode,” but Hashem does not rejoice at a wedding that goes against His will.

Separating from Extravagant Lifestyles

Today, everything centers around restaurants, which are usually of the strictest kashrus standards, and now Hashem has come and shut them all down. The magazines were filled with advertisements to spend Pesach in hotels in countries like Cyprus and Greece, and people think, why not? Is there anyone who thinks that this is the will of the Creator? The wonder is that all of this falsity was able to continue until now, not that everything has suddenly been halted.

Anyone with the heart of a Jew, with a heart that is open to the spiritual, is pained that, in the last couple of years, many Jewish souls have been lost. “We have been sold, I and my nation, to be killed and destroyed.”⁸ It is like when everyone enjoyed the party of Achashveirosh. Hashem is telling us, “Stop everything! Think ”!

And don’t go now into your rooms where you can be alone so that you can connect to all of the media! Disconnect from it already!! A person thinks that he will get everything he needs from there, all of his guidance and all of his security. Woe to the person who thinks that his *yeshuah* will come from there! As if Torah will come from there, as if everything that *Klal Yisrael* needs to know will come to them through the use of the media!

Hashem is showing us now that “that is not how I think. This is all the thinking of the Serpent, the thinking of the *Erev Rav*.”

Hashem has given each person the opportunity to be secluded in his house. True, it’s not always easy to be home all day with the kids and to have some quiet

⁸ *Esther* 7:4

and calm. But it is the house where a person can find his “*Yechidah*.” It is there where a person can be in solitude and reflect, and to understand that the Jewish people are a “nation that dwells alone.”⁹

When the Jewish people entered *Eretz Yisrael*, they needed to conquer the seven nations living there because they needed to become a nation that dwells alone. The Torah was given in the desert, precisely because it is far from civilization, and it was given at Har Sinai, from the word *sinah* (hatred), because it is there that we gained a sense of revulsion towards the nations of the world.

There is a separation between us & the other nations! There is a *mechitzah* between us and them! There is a life of *kedushah* for us! There is such a thing as the reality of Hashem’s presence in our heart! There is a bond that we can have with the Almighty God! That is what our soul really needs to look for now.

The deepest choice is now being given to each and every one of us. Each of us has gone through many choices in our lives, and it seems that we don’t know how long this period will last for. But we now have the *bechirah*, the power of choice, which is being given to us in the Final Days.

This is the choice: Will a person choose eternal life, a life of the World to Come, in which there will be no eating and no drinking, just the *tzaddikim* enjoying the rays of the *Shechinah*? Or will people just hold onto whatever they have now and keep enjoying whatever they can still enjoy...?

To enjoy the radiance of the *Shechinah* is what a Jew is supposed to want to live for! Any physical pleasure is only for the purpose of calming our body a bit so that we can immediately return to serving the Creator (as the *Mesillas Yescharim* teaches).

If one wants to see the salvation of Hashem and to see the Redemption, to see the return of the light of Hashem (which really shines within us), one must return to the power of free will, by separating and distancing himself from everything that he has been used to until now. It was all going to fall apart anyway. And if a person *chas v’shalom* isn’t prepared to cut off from all of it, it means that he is trying to hold onto the innermost level of *tumah* within the 50th gate of impurity itself...

⁹ *Bamidbar* 23:9

One must recognize and reflect on the absolute falsity that has been with us for so many generations and to disconnect from all connections with falsity, and to return to the ways of Moshe, Aharon, David, and all other tzaddikim. One needs to connect to the depths of the Torah and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, with a true bond, to recognize that there is no power in control other than Hashem, as the *sefer Nefesh HaChaim* describes.¹⁰ This is the simple thought that one needs. But that is not the end. The goal of this thinking is to form a deep bond in our soul with the Creator. If we do this, we can become a *ben Olam HaBa* already now.

Conclusion — The Rav's Blessing

May Hashem merit us to separate from all of the falsity in the world, and that we should not wish that the epidemic should go away so that “everything can return to normal again.” That would be an absolute curse. That would be much worse for the world than the situation we have now.

May the Creator merit us to see the light of Hashem, and that He should stop the epidemic today, by destroying the innermost level of the 50th gate of impurity. And may we merit to be in the category of the verse, “*Upon you, the light of Hashem shines,*”¹¹ that the light of Hashem should shine, where there will be the revelation of Mashiach, when our eyes will see the return of Zion. Amen, and may Hashem will this to be.

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¹⁰ *sefer Nefesh HaChaim: Gate III: Chapter 12*

¹¹ *Yeshayahu 60:2*

Corona & Revealing Your Individuality

The First Redemption Was About the Nation, the Final Redemption Is About the Individual

The *Gemara* says, “If there is a plague in the city, bring your feet inside the house”¹² which the *Gemara* proves from the verse, “Go my nation, come into your rooms, close the doors behind you.”¹³

It is known that the Sages state that the final redemption will be like the first redemption. Just as there were miracles and wonders when we left Egypt,¹⁴ so will there be miracles and wonders in the final redemption. The Baal HaTurim says that just as in Egypt we had to stay indoors, so will this happen in the time of the final redemption.

Note carefully that the Baal HaTurim’s words are that the final redemption will be “similar” to the first redemption, not exactly the same. The difference is that in the first redemption, when we left Egypt, the *korbon pesach* could only be done in *chaburos*, with groups of families or with others who join; it was not brought by a *yachid* (individual). But in the final redemption, there will not be *chaburos*. Instead, each person as an individual will bring the *korban*.

“Come into your rooms” implies that the final redemption will not only require us to be secluded in our homes, but in our rooms, which is more private. A *chabura* can eat the *korbon pesach* in the house, because the house isn’t yet the most private place possible and therefore, groups of people may be found there. But in your room, there is utter privacy, with no other people there, where no *chaburos* may enter. The room is a place for the individual to be alone in private. That is the implication of the words of the verse, “Come into your rooms.” Don’t just enter into your homes—seclude yourself in your room and reveal your holy individuality there.

¹² *Talmud Bavli Bava Kamma 60b*

¹³ *Yeshayahu 26:20*

¹⁴ *See Trei Asar: Michah 7:12 and Midrash Tanchuma parshas Toldos 17*

A prime example of this was the *Beis HaMikdash*. There was the *Har HaBayis*, the *Ezras Nashim*, the *Ezras Yisrael*, and the *Ezras Kohanim*, where all people were allowed. The innermost room was the *Kodesh Kodashim*, where only one person was allowed, on one day of the year, when one stands before Hashem. In terms of our own souls, there exists an inner place in our own soul where there can be only one person: the individual himself.

The difference between the first and last redemption is that in the first redemption there were mainly *chaburos*, groups of people, but in the last redemption, it is mainly each person by himself.

For everything that Hashem created, He created a corresponding power to oppose it.¹⁵ The *Gemara* says that on Tisha B'Av, *Mashiach* is born.¹⁶ On Tisha B'Av, when we read *Eichah*, we say, “We sit alone.” At that time, we are like individuals who sit alone in mourning. This is the power of individuality being revealed on the “fallen” side, on the side of devastation, which came as a result of sinning. But on that very same day, *Mashiach* is born! At the very time when we become individuals as a result of a ruined state, we are also able to reveal the “holy individuality,” represented by *Mashiach*. Through revealing the power of holy individuality, one can reveal the very inner reality of life, a kind of life in which a person can become a *yachid*, an individual.

Let us see the roots of this and then let us see how to act practically, with the help of Hashem.

Our Essence Is to Be an Individual

On the first day of creation, there was “evening and then morning, one day.” At first, there was Hashem alone. On the sixth day, Hashem made man. *Chazal* explain that the angels said, “Hashem is a *yachid* (Individual One) in Heaven and now there is a *yachid* (individual) down below (man).” Likewise, *Chazal* say, “Man was created as an individual.”¹⁷ The inner essence of man is to be created alone.

¹⁵ *Koheles* 7:4

¹⁶ *Talmud Yerushalmi Berachos* 2:4, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:7

¹⁷ *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin* 37a

Man (*Adam HaRishon*) was originally one, and later he became two, when Adam wanted a helpmate, Chavah. But in essence, he was created to be an individual. A fetus is usually born by itself, as an individual. Sometimes, twins are born at once, and in Egypt, six babies were born together. That is also why when we left Egypt, we left in *chaburos*. But this was not our root nature. At our root, each person is alone. We can exit our individuality and join with others, just as in Egypt when we left in *chaburos*, but in our essence, each person is an individual.

Moshe's soul is equal to all of the souls of *Klal Yisrael*, and this is the power of the *klal*, the collective whole. The *Shechinah* (Hashem's Presence) resides only on *Klal Yisrael*, and the *Gemara* says that the *Shechinah* is present when there are 10 people.¹⁸ This is the power of a *tzibbur*, a congregation of Jews, the power of the collective whole of *Klal Yisrael*.

There are two different pathways on the way to the final redemption: the power of the *klal*, of being part of a collective whole, and the power of a *yachid*, the power to be an individual.

There is a concept of 10¹⁹ and a concept of 1. The concept of 10 is that the world was created with 10 expressions, and this is reflected by what we see now, since no more than 10 people are allowed in a room. That is a return to our root creation of 10. But each person also needs to be an individual now, secluded in his home. This corresponds to the concept of 1, which is the fact that man was created as an individual. This is the more inner approach.

As mentioned, at first man was an individual, and later he gained a helpmate, Chavah. The fact that Adam left his individuality is what led to his downfall. The Serpent saw Adam and Chavah together and became jealous of them and enticed them to sin. This was only because Adam had allowed himself to become two. Adam allowed himself to become Adam and Chavah, and Chavah communicated with the Serpent, which led to disaster.

¹⁸ *Talmud Bavli Yoma 21b*

¹⁹ *Drasha delivered when the instructions of the Israeli Health Ministry were to have no more than 10 people congregating except for bris & levaya.*

Ever since, we became infected by the “*daas* of the Serpent,” as *Chazal* teach: “Yesterday, you had My *daas*, but today you have the *daas* of the Serpent.”²⁰ This caused our power of *daas* (which is essentially our power of outward connection) to fall into a ruined state. When Adam later connected to Chavah (as the Torah says, “And Adam knew Chavah his wife”), his power to connect was affected by the impurity of the Serpent. And since then, whenever one connects outward with others, his power of connecting to others is affected by the Serpent.

The Power of Connection

There were times in history when we repaired the power of connection: when we left Egypt in groups, when we stood together at Har Sinai, and when we rejoiced together in the times of Purim. We then reaccepted the Torah out of love for Hashem because of the miracles, which occurred since we all joined together, as Esther decreed to gather all Jews together.

But, as the generations continued, especially in the times of *ikvesa d'meshicha* (the generations directly preceding *Mashiach's* arrival) and especially in our generation, the entire world uses the power of connection towards others. People became more and more centered around this social scene, with having friends, because we have a need for companionship.²¹ *Chazal* teach that a human being needs companionship, which is a legitimate need, ever since Adam requested a helpmate to live with. But this need for companionship became greatly exaggerated and overblown in recent times, ever since social media and mass communication entered our lives.

It used to be that a person's social circle was very small. He had a few friends and that was it. But in recent years, with social media, a person can have a lot of friends and connections with others. A person can now be connected all the time to people. It became the total and absolute antithesis to our power to be individuals. There was never a time when people have been so connected to others. However, it is not the refined connection, like when everyone stood together at Sinai to receive the Torah, and it is certainly not like the complete unity that will be in the times of

²⁰ *Beraishis Rabbah* 19:9

²¹ *Sefer Resisei Leilah (Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin) 1, based on Talmud Bavli Berachos 6b*

Mashiach and *Olam HaBa*. At *Har Sinai*, everyone was unified to hear Hashem. But in our times, people are very connected to others through social media and people feel their entire sense of existence through their connection with others. One doesn't have any individuality.

We are not even speaking now about the actual content that's found on these social media sites. (That is the 49th level of *tumah* and it goes all the way until the 50th!) The entire lifestyle of the world today has become a lifestyle of connecting to others and communicating with others. If someone uses this power of companionship for *kedushah*, he connects to Hashem and realizes that Hashem is his true companion. But today, this power of companionship is generally not being used for *kedushah*. It is instead found in the 49th level of *tumah*, and even at the bottom of the 50th level, where people are using it in social media by feeling a sense of companionship with the whole world. A few people have no connection to social media, but it is the reality for the rest of the world.

This power of connecting outward to people has reached its total and absolute level. There is a concept that whenever something reaches its total and absolute level, it self-destructs. It hits its breaking point and then it is finished. The power of connection to people has reached its breaking point. Connecting to other people has now become one's very identity, to the point that many people feel that if they cannot communicate with others, there is no point to their life. Simply put, this is the *shaarei maves*, the gates of death. It is a kind of living that feels like death.

This overwhelming power of connection is resulting in the world reaching its breaking point. This destruction leads to the next stage, which is our redemption. In the exodus from Egypt, we left in *chaburos*. There was true connection between people. When our exile has reached its breaking point and we are redeemed from it, we regain true connection and true unity with others.

The *Gemara* says that the exodus from Egypt is only secondary to the miracles that will accompany us in the final redemption.²² However, this refers to the outer aspect of the exodus, where there is a holy power of connection by joining together in groups. Right now, people cannot be found in groups more than 10, while with

²² See *Pesikta Rabasi* 31

others it is not more than 2, and those who are contaminated by the virus have to be alone.

There is a rule that “the end is reflected by the beginning.” The ending period of the world is like the beginning point of the world. When we don’t reveal how the end reflects the beginning, we are left with just the end. Right now, we are at the end of the world—each person has become alone from others, separated from everyone else. It resembles death, which separates people from each other. This separation is the lower use of the power to be alone, it is the power of alone in a state of devastation, which is even worse than the ruined state of connection, when people connect too much. The ruined state of being alone resembles heresy, which is the root of serving other gods.

But to counter all of this ruination, there is also the light of *kedushah* which penetrates into the world, known as the “light of *Mashiach*.” The original light at the beginning of Creation, where man was created alone, comes back again at the end. Now there is also a holy power to become alone, to return to the beginning state of man at the beginning of Creation.

Connection between people has two stages. At first, a person is drawn after his environment, as the Rambam teaches. People are easily drawn after the *daas* of others. Ever since Adam listened to the Serpent, after man became infected by the “*daas* of the Serpent,” people are drawn after the *daas* of others. But with the explosion of technology and communication, everyone’s opinion is shaped by others. Because of social media, no one has his own opinion, and instead people are thinking entirely based on how others think. (Some people have their own thinking only because they like to go against everyone else’s thinking.) The lifestyle of almost everyone is based on herd mentality. Most people simply buy new clothes or new gadgets based on what others have.

Examples of Following the Crowd

In the past decade, people have been entirely following the thinking and opinions of others and people have stopped being individuals who have their own *daas*. Although *Chazal* say that each person has his own *de’os* (ways of thinking),²³

²³ *Talmud Bavli Berachos 58a*

people today are not thinking for themselves and instead they formulate their thinking and their behavior entirely based on how others think and behave. If others are buying something, they want to buy it, too.

As an example, vacations became much more popular in recent years. It began with the Gentiles and it slowly spread to the *frum* world, where people go on trips and vacations to exotic locations, just because they see others doing it. It first affected those who were not *frum* and then it eventually spread to the *frum* and eventually even to the *bnei* Torah. People slowly became drawn into it, following what others are doing simply because others do it. It is "in style," because they want to be seen in a certain way by others. Of course, people try to keep it all within the boundaries of *halachah*, but the guidelines which they make for themselves are a big compromise to their *ruchniyus*. It is simply in order to copy how others act.

Another example is when people ride bikes in the neighborhood. It became the style. Slowly people began copying it. A person may have all kinds of reasons why he does it and there can be all kinds of arguments if it's the right thing or the wrong thing, or if it's right for some people and wrong for others, but that's not the issue. It's all being done because others do it and people are drawn after what others are doing.

This is all the outcome of the ruined power of connection with others. It is really the power of being in a *chaburah* for *korbon pesach* that is being misused. It is a kind of *chaburah* that is not from *chibbur*, connection, but from the word *cherev*, destruction, and a kind of *chaburah* which connotes a *makkah*, a wound. It is the 50th gate of *tumah*, which connects everyone together in a state of destruction.

The "50th gate of *tumah*" surrounds most people in the world today. Most of the world is now in the depths of the 50th gate of *tumah*. Anyone connected to the media is buried, may Hashem save us, in the 50th gate of *tumah*. But there is a small percentage of *bnei* Torah who, with Hashem's help, are not connected to the depths of the 50th level of *tumah*.

Separating from the World to Discover Individuality

However, leaving this exile does not only depend on not being connected to the innermost level of the 50th level of *tumah*. It also depends on the step that

proceeds falling to the 50th level of *tumah*. People need to avoid simply following what everyone else is doing.

Now the reality has become the verse, “Go my nation, come into your rooms, and close the doors behind you...” This does not only apply to those who are quarantined in their homes or who are staying home because they think they have symptoms. The inner reality behind all of this is that we are at the end, and since the end of the world is like the beginning, we are going back to the beginning state of the world, when man was alone.

The words here mainly apply to *bnei Torah* who aren't connected to the media, who are not connected with the 50th level of *tumah*. The *avodah* for these few *bnei Torah* is to rethink their life and begin life over again from the start. Access your individuality! Begin life again anew! Become an individual again, to know what your personal portion is. Differentiate between your own personal portion and what you have gained from others! Know how you are unique!

In the privacy of your house, you can now discover your uniqueness, as *Chazal* teach that each person has his own *de'os*. The personal *avodah* now is to clarify how you are unique from others and how no one else can do what you can do and no one else has your exact *middos* and your exact *avodah*.

General Mesirus Nefesh vs. Private Mesirus Nefesh

At the exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people separated themselves from the Egyptians through *mesirus nefesh*, by putting the blood of the *korbon pesach* on the doorpost. (The Egyptians worshipped sheep and by using the blood of the sheep on their doorpost, they were angering the Egyptians and they risked being killed. But they did it anyway because they had *mesirus nefesh*.) Now, a person's *mesirus nefesh* is to disconnect from the world totally and reveal his individuality, to be a *yachid* (individual).

At the time directly before our final redemption, every person needs to reveal his true self, his individuality, his own private *mesirus nefesh*. In Egypt, everyone had the same *mesirus nefesh* by putting the blood on the doorpost, but today the *mesirus nefesh* is not just to close the doors and be at home; it is to find your own individuality, to find how you are unique from all other people, to become alone, a *yachid*.

No creation is exactly like another, and we each have our own individuality to uncover. The verse of “Close the doors behind you” really means to enter into your heart, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* says—that there is a *Kodesh Kodashim* in your heart.²⁴ This is said not just for inspiration. That is just the first stage. It means to enter within, into your individuality. To the extent that you reach your uniqueness, you can find the *Yechidah* in your own soul, which is called the inner “house.”

During this time, when the world has become alone in the external sense, there is a deep *avodah* for every individual.

There was once the event of *Matan Torah*, when we all stood together. There was the decree in the times of Purim, when we were all decreed for destruction, and we all gathered together. Now, when there is an epidemic, the main factor in this *mageifah* (pandemic) is that we cannot be together now. This is the true *mageifah*! Some people are being *moser nefesh* to somehow be together and *daven* in a minyan while standing distanced from each other, and this is *mesirus nefesh* of a *tzibbur* (congregation). And that is one part of showing *mesirus nefesh*, which is *mesirus nefesh* on the level of the *tzibbur*.

But it cannot be emphasized enough that the main part of how we will be saved from this *mageifah* will not come through being together. The main point now is for each person to become a *yachid* and to reveal his own private *mesirus nefesh*.

When Hashem sent the prophet Yonah to get the people of Ninveh to do *teshuvah*, they all needed to *daven* together and reveal *mesirus nefesh* on the level of a *tzibbur*. But today, every *yachid* has to call out to Hashem from his own individuality, to call out to Hashem from his own inner place in his soul, to call out from his own private “*yachid*” in himself. Each person must call out according to his heart, according to how much he recognizes Hashem. There is a verse, “All who call out to you in truth,”²⁵ and that is one level of closeness to Hashem, where the general *tzibbur* is calling to Hashem. But there is also a deeper and more inner level, the level of calling out to Hashem that must come from the innermost place of the heart of each *yachid*.

²⁴ *Nefesh HaChaim*, 14:

²⁵ *Tehillim* 145:18

The final redemption depends on each individual calling out to Hashem from the innermost place of his heart.

Now Is the Time to Access Your Innermost Level of Closeness to Hashem

Chazal say that in the future, Hashem will make a *machol* (a circle) for the *tzaddikim* and Hashem will be in the center, and each one will point with his finger to Hashem and say, "This is G-d that I hoped for."²⁶ They will all be connected to each other. But they are pointing with their finger, and the *Gemara* says that not every finger is equal. So each person will also have his own recognition of Hashem.

If a person lived his life in the 50th level of *tumah*, it will *chas v'shalom* be like the words of the *Gemara* in Rosh HaShanah that those who are not worthy will become "the dust under the feet of *tzaddikim*."²⁷ But even if one lived a life of *kedushah*, a personal recognition of Hashem in the future will be possible only if he reached his own individuality. Copying others prevents one from reaching one's own private and personal *avodah*.

Hashem is preparing the world so that each person can become a *yachid*. One needs to disconnect from media and such communication, but even more so, to become a *yachid* in the depths of his soul! One can connect from the depths of his soul to Hashem, as it says, "*Yechidah l'yachdecha*" (the innermost part of the soul will declare Your Oneness), for he becomes a *kli* (vessel) for the Individual One of the world.

One who is overwhelmingly involved with "the world" and is thinking constantly about what is happening and will happen tries to relieve his boredom through various means that are all part of the *alma d'shikra*, the world of falsity.

But one who lives inwardly in this time, discovering his own individuality in the privacy of his home and in his room, will merit the words of the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* that a person is able to love being alone and secluded, because in

²⁶ *Talmud Bavli Taanis 31b*

²⁷ *Talmud Bavli Rosh HaShanah 17b*

seclusion a person can connect to his innermost depths and connect on the deepest level to Hashem.

In Conclusion

May Hashem merit all of *Klal Yisrael* that each person should connect to *Klal Yisrael* at this time, to feel a deep connection to the whole of *Klal Yisrael*, but even more important, that each person should find his own individuality, to find his *Yechidah*, “the *Yechidah* to declare Your oneness.”²⁸ In this way, each of us will find the light of *Mashiach*, and to merit that which is said, “And upon you, the light of Hashem will shine.”²⁹

²⁸ *Hoshanos said on Succos*

²⁹ *Yeshayah 60:2*

The Time to Find Your Inner Light

The Spiritual Significance of the Number 10

We are now in the month of Nissan.

Chazal teach us that Rosh Chodesh (the first day) of Nissan was when the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle) was established. That was a day that took ten “crowns” (ten great things occurred on that day),³⁰ which was the root of the 10 days from Rosh Chodesh Nissan to the 10th of Nissan. From the 10th day of Nissan until Pesach, a lamb was tied to the bedpost in each home to be designated as a *korbon pesach* (Passover sacrifice), and it was inspected for four days to check if it had any blemishes. Following that, it was slaughtered on the 14th of Nissan and eaten on the 15th, when there was a commandment that no one should leave his place until morning.

The 10 “crowns” and the ten days from Rosh Chodesh Nissan to the 10th corresponds to the 10 Commandments, the 10 Expressions with which Hashem created the world, and the 10 plagues in Egypt. Through the 10 plagues in Egypt, the forces of impurity were subjugated and this allowed for the word of Hashem to be revealed when the people stood at *har Sinai* (Mount Sinai) to receive the Torah, where the 10 Commandments were revealed.

The spiritual power of the number 10 is manifest in the world in a *beis haknesses* (*shul*, synagogue), where there must be at least 10 people. For this reason, the *Gemara* says that when Hashem comes to the *beis haknesses* and 10 people are not there, He becomes angry.³¹

Right now, we are in a trying time, in which our *shuls* have become closed. The power of 10 in the Creation has become diminished and concealed.

The Power of 10 Has Now Become Diminished

³⁰ *Shabbos 87b*

³¹ *Berachos 6b*

There are two different aspects to the Exodus from Egypt. One is that on the night of the Exodus, the holy night of Pesach, the families of *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people) were found in their homes. The other aspect is that the next morning, they entered the desert. Just as the first redemption was followed by journeying into the desert, so will the final Redemption be preceded by a sojourn in the desert, according to some of our Sages.³² In the desert, the Jewish people were still a community, but they weren't in their homes; they were outside in the world.

That is what is taking place right now. At this time, the connection between people is similar to the level of being in the desert, not on the level of being in the house. Of the house, it is said, "Go my nation, come into your rooms, and close the doors behind you."³³ As mentioned, the *shuls* are now closed, and this means that the power of 10 has become concealed, because there is no place for the community to gather right now.

The Closing of the Batei Midrash – The Revelation of Sod/Secret Understanding of Torah

Besides closing *shuls* now, there is something else occurring: the closing of the *batei midrash* (houses of Torah study). What is the power of the *beis midrash*? It is the power of *chiddush* (novelty), because the *Gemara* says that "there is no *beis midrash* without *chiddush*."³⁴ A *chiddush* is the idea of *yeish m'ayin*, to create something from nothing.

From a simple perspective, which is the lower perspective toward this situation, the closing of *batei midrash* is a punishment for "weakening our hands from Torah study,"³⁵ thereby preventing us from producing *chiddushei Torah* (as *Chazal* teach that Amalek's attack on the Jewish people came as a result of "weakening their hands from Torah study").

³² See commentary of Raavad to *Eduyos* 2:9

³³ *Yeshayah* 26:20

³⁴ *Chagigah* 3b

³⁵ *Sanhedrin* 106b

But from a higher perspective, the closing of the *batei midrash* implies that there is now a “closing” of the level of understanding of Torah that is called “*drash*” (expounding),³⁶ as implied in the term “*beis midrash*.” Of the Torah learning in the *beis midrash*, Chazal said, “*Drosh, v’kabel schar*,” “Expound it, and receive reward for it.”³⁷ In the *beis midrash*, only the level of *drash* in Torah is revealed. Now that the *batei midrash* are closed and we are forced to remain in our homes, the verse of “Go my nation, come into your rooms, close doors behind you” applies more powerfully to us, for the level of *drash* has become concealed.

In its place, there is now more of a revelation of a deeper understanding of Torah, the level that is called “*sod*,” the “secret” understanding of Torah. This is above the level of *drash*/expounding. The power of *chiddush* of the *beis hamidrash* has now become concealed, but in its stead, a more inner power has become revealed, the secret level of understanding.

Whenever something is done in front of 10 people, it becomes known to the world. The *Gemara* says that the name of Hashem is only sanctified in front of at least 10 people.³⁸ A secret, though, is all about being alone, being an individual.

On the external level, the closing of the *shuls* and *batei midrash* is all the doing of the *Sitra Achra* (the Other Side, the forces of impurity), which is particularly manifest today through the powers of *tumah* (impurity) that come from the “*Erev Rav*” (impure souls that mingled into the Jewish people). But from a more inner perspective, the closing of *shuls* and *batei midrash* is actually revealing the level of *sod*, the secret understanding of Torah.

There is a verse, “With knowledge, rooms are filled”³⁹—one can become filled with *daas* when he must be confined to his private “rooms,” where he can be alone

36 There are four levels of understanding in Torah, which are called PaRDeS: (1) pshat (simple, surface understanding of Torah), (2) remez (hints in Torah, such as gematrias [insights based on numerical values] and roshei teivos [acronyms]), (3) drash (expounding the Torah, such as the derashos found in the Gemara and in the Midrash, and (4) sod (the “secret” level of Torah, referring to the inner level of understanding).

37 Sanhedrin 71a

38 Sanhedrin 74b

39 Mishlei 24:4

and access the secret levels in Torah. And *Chazal* teach, “The heart is not revealed by the mouth”⁴⁰ (*liba l’puma lo galya*), matters of the heart are a secret which cannot be revealed to others. Now is the time to go into the heart, to enter the very “secret” of one’s soul.

A Time for Non-Action: Tasting the Light of the Eternal Shabbos of the Future

During the weekday, a person goes out of his home for action; if a person works, he needs to go out to earn a livelihood, returning to his home at the end of the day. On Shabbos, there is a commandment for a person to stay within the *techum* (boundary), as the Torah says, “A man shall not go out from his place.”⁴¹ Shabbos is about staying in one place. Hashem said about Shabbos that it is “a good gift from My hidden treasury.”⁴²

During the final plague in Egypt, *makas bechoros* (the plague of the firstborn), there was a commandment that no Jew should leave his place. On the external level, this was because there was a plague, and Hashem was killing all the firstborns, so everyone had to stay inside to avoid the danger. But the inner reason was that it resembled the idea of Shabbos, when “a man shall not go out from his place.” This was similar to the state of the future, when each person will be learning Torah peacefully “under his grapevine,”⁴³ staying in his place, with no need to go anywhere.

At present, we are being confined to our houses due to the pandemic. If a person lives his life superficially, he doesn’t leave because he is afraid of catching the virus. He is tense from constantly following all the news of what’s happening in the world, all the repercussions, and he’s listening to all of the various different “false prophets of the Baal.” He is staying at home simply out of fear and worry. In this way, one attaches to the superficial, negative manifestation of the situation.

⁴⁰ *Zohar Chadash, Bereishis 14b, Midrash Tehillim 9:2*

⁴¹ *Shemos 16:29*

⁴² *Shabbos 10b*

⁴³ *Michah 4:4*

But there is really an inner way to handle this entire experience. It is a time in which Hashem is giving each person a unique and inner kind of *avodah*, to be alone with your family in the house, and this is because the “light of Hashem” is shining strongly at this time now in our houses. It is the level of *sod*, the “secret” level of understanding in Torah, which is above the level of *drash*, the level of the *beis midrash*.

The spiritual light that is shining now resembles the “day that is entirely Shabbos.”⁴⁴ In our current level of Shabbos, we desist from work and then we return to work on *Motzaei Shabbos* (after Shabbos) and on the six days of the week. But there is a deeper level of Shabbos, which is not followed by any action, work, or weekday. That will be the Shabbos of the future, which will be entirely Shabbos, the level of the Next World, where there is no return to work afterwards. In the Shabbos of the future, there is no *Motzaei Shabbos*, there is only Shabbos. In *Olam HaBa*, each *tzaddik* has his own chamber.⁴⁵ which no one else can enter. In the time which we are in now, we are able to have a semblance of this perfect Shabbos of the future, which is not followed by any weekday or work.

The light of the perfect Shabbos of the future is shining now. In our own souls as well, everyone has the choice right now of how he will go through this period. Either a person will choose to go through this entire period with fear, tension, and worry, or one will choose to connect deeply in his soul to Hashem, to the inner “secret” in one’s soul, to the inner world of the spiritual light which is “a day that is entirely Shabbos.”

Hashem has now made a reality in which many don’t have what to do with all the time they have now at home. For those who were anyhow immersed in the *tumah* of the Internet, nothing has changed for them, because they can ease their boredom by spending all their time on the Internet and connecting to social media and all the news. But those who are not so immersed in the *tumah* of the Internet are currently facing a difficulty: they are terribly bored, and they don’t know what to do with all their time.

⁴⁴ *Sanhedrin 97a*

⁴⁵ *Shabbos 152a*

People are so used to working and being involved with action that they can't handle the change of not working. It is similar to the pain the soul experiences upon transferring to the next world, if the person was too connected to this world of action and he doesn't want to let go of it. If a person lived his entire life for work and action, it is very difficult for him to suddenly disconnect from all that work and action.

(For this reason, there are also many people who have a hard time on Shabbos, because they love work and action, and Shabbos makes them feel confined. They suffer from boredom and lack of meaning and purpose to their life on Shabbos, when there is nothing for them to “do.”)

The reality is that most people are too connected in their souls to action, and therefore they have difficulty now with not being able to do everything they want to do.

On a larger scale, the six millennia of this world are like the six days of the week; we live in a “world of action.” In the Next World, there is no action, there is no eating or drinking, or any physical activities of enjoyment; there is only enjoying the rays of the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence). In order to enjoy the Next World, the soul first needs to go through a stage of disconnecting from this entire world of action so that it can enjoy a spiritual world in which there is no action.

Right now, people for the most part cannot really do anything. Of course, it's not totally like that, and people are certainly doing some things, but most people feel like they can't do anything. They are not getting all the work and action that they are used to. Many people are looking for what to do with all their time at home, and they are desperate to fill their boredom. But what people need to understand is that we really live for the Next World, where there is no action. This is the stage the world is traversing right now—a preparation stage for the Next World, where there will be no action. Hashem is directing each person now on a path in which he can be led toward the true perspective: that we do not live for this world of action.

When people can't do all the action they are used to, they are naturally bored. They feel a void, which in Hebrew is “*chalal*,” from the word “*chol*,” (weekday),

because the entire concept of work during the weekdays essentially represents the spiritual void in our world. Boredom is a terrible void, and *Chazal* teach that “boredom leads to sin.”⁴⁶

Instead, a person can use this current period of no action in an entirely different way. One can find how Hashem’s glory fills every space of our world, as is written, “And His Glory fills the world,”⁴⁷ and how there is really no void at all. This is all because, in the deeper reality of things, “There is no place empty from Him” (*Leis asar panuy minei*).⁴⁸

Utilizing the Current Time Properly

When a person is at home all day, there is usually one of two very bad outcomes: either he becomes further immersed in *tumah* (in the Internet and social media), or he becomes immersed in boredom, the *chalal* (void). The *avodah* now for each person is to enter the inner world, to enter within yourself, and to find a whole world of how “the secret of Hashem is revealed to those who fear Him.”⁴⁹

The inner light which is shining now in the world is that a person is not found in the “world of action.” Simply speaking, this means that a person is not involved with any work or action, and therefore he can get more in touch with the layers in the soul that are beyond action, such as one’s emotions, feelings, *middos*, and thoughts. But on a deeper level, it is so that a person can enter inward, to find the hidden gift, a state of Shabbos, to desist from action, to separate from all the action of the world, and to connect to the level of the “day that will be entirely Shabbos,” which is not followed by any weekday or work. The light of the future level of Shabbos is shining, and this is similar to the state before Creation, when there was only Hashem.

When one connects to Hashem on this level, it is the level of the soul that is called *sod*, the “secret.” It is the secret level which reveals to a person the *taamei To-*

⁴⁶ *Kesubos 59b*

⁴⁷ *Yeshayah 6:3*

⁴⁸ *Tikkunei HaZohar 57a*

⁴⁹ *Tehillim 25:14*

rah, the inner reasons, understandings, and “tastes” of matters of Torah, and allows him to enjoy the rays of the *Shechinah*.

The Avodah of Each Person Now

The *avodah* now is for a person to connect to a spiritual world, in which there is no need for any action or work. If a person doesn't do that during this time, then he will simply be afraid of the virus that's circulating. When that is all that's on his mind, either he will find himself connecting further to the *tumah* of the Internet, the news, and social media, or he will become immersed further and further in boredom, which is the *chalal*, the void of the world.

One needs to find the inner light, which is found within oneself, to bond simply with Hashem at this time, to know and be aware that Hashem's presence fills everything, that “there is no place empty of Him.” There, a person encounters only the presence of Hashem and nothing else.

Most people, of course, cannot live all the time at this level. But every person needs to be able to touch it at times. There is a rule of *ratzo v'shov* (advancing and retreating), which means that a person needs to access the higher level, then return to his normal level, and then at a later time access the higher level again, in a cycle, back and forth. So even though a person cannot live all the time with such a high level of awareness that Hashem fills the entire world, a person still needs to have times of the day in which he is in touch with this exalted level.

This is really a taste of the Next World, which is eternal, where a person is alone with Hashem, with no one else. Now, if a person would be told that he will be spending his eternity alone with Hashem, would most people want this...? This is not what most people have in mind. Most people would wonder, “But what will I do then? I will be bored. There's nothing to do...”

The current period is not simply a time to stay in the house, avoid catching the virus and being cautious, nor is it a time to simply clean and organize the house and prepare for Pesach. Certainly, a person needs to organize and clean the house and prepare for Pesach, but that's not what this period is mainly about. It is mainly a time to connect on the deepest level to Hashem. It is about spending your life

with Hashem, realizing that there is more to life than going to weddings and attending *simchos* (celebrations) and running to various places to take care of all your different needs.

May Hashem bring the wondrous and spectacular final Redemption, in which we will merit miracles and wonders as we had when we left Egypt. And may our stay at home not only be spent contemplating the *hashgachah peratis* (precise Divine Providence) of Hashem, but also connecting inward, to a deep place in ourselves, to enter within the secret of our souls, to find our individuality, to recognize Hashem on our own private and secret level that no one else can know of.

Being in the house all day clearly is a challenge for us to connect inward with ourselves, and it is certainly noisy with the family, and that is all a part of the *galus* (exile) we are in now. This is due to the pandemic in the world today which is forcing the entire world to go into *galus*. This is the external layer of this entire experience—the fact that the virus is causing everyone to go into a state of exile within their homes, and to endure all of the challenges that are involved with spending all day at home with the family. This is not always easy, and a person needs to learn how to get along with everyone peacefully. Everyone needs to go about this intelligently to be able to manage with the family.

But we also need to understand that behind all of this is a very inner spiritual light which Hashem is shining now upon the world. One who has this perspective lives with *gadlus hamochin* (expanded consciousness). One will then live in a joyous state of being close to Hashem. Instead of going through this experience simply in a state of panic and worry, one can experience it all with joy. Certainly, the situation is complicated, and every person needs to deal with that, but at the core of all of this is the opportunity to enter into the world within oneself.

That is the depth of the choice we each have now. On one hand, the *shuls* and the *batei midrash* have been closed, and on some level, this resembles the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple). But we also know that *Mashiach* is born on the day of destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

When we view today's situation from the external perspective, we see it all as the “work of the Satan,” and how it is all coming from the forces of impurity of the *Er-*

ev Rav which dominates. But when we view it all from an inner perspective, we can actually learn to see that these are all just the “messengers of Hashem” who have brought it all about. Had we been worthy, we would have deserved that our Redemption would come through Moshe Rabbeinu, but since we were not worthy, it is all coming to us in the garment of the “*Erev Rav*” and in the form of a pandemic raging through the world.

And if we have an even more inner perspective, we can view the closing of *shuls* and *batei midrash* as the birth of a new, inner spiritual light, which demands of us to enter inward, and to connect to the inner reality behind all that is taking place now.

In Conclusion

We need to live these words, not just to know them, and to the extent that we are living this way, we will pass through this entire period in the correct way. How much we succeed in entering inward into ourselves is the second step, but the first step for us is to become clear about all of this. It should be with the same clarity as a person who goes to a wedding, who is fully aware that he is going to a wedding. So too, we are going towards the great “wedding” that will take place between the Jewish people and Hashem, to that great, inner union.

May the Creator grant us that the situation now should become transformed, not simply that the pandemic should go away. We should not merely fulfill, “When there is a plague, bring your feet inside”;⁵⁰ we want to resemble the verse, “Follow Me into the desert,”⁵¹ when we had tremendous closeness with Hashem. May we merit to transform this *dever*/plague into *dvar* Hashem (the world of Hashem), by hearing His word that is ringing throughout the world now. It should be like the verse, “The King has brought me into His chambers.”⁵² One who hears this inner word now will be able to live through and cope properly with this current period in the most complete way.

⁵⁰ *Bava Kamma* 60a

⁵¹ *Yirmiyahu* 2:2

⁵² *Shir HaShirim* 1:4

Understandably, this is a complicated period to deal with, but one can pass through it all with the light of Hashem accompanying him. One can bask in the pleasantness and radiance of Hashem, with the complete revelation of Hashem's presence in his heart. This should fill the heart of every Jew and spread throughout the entire world, so that all the world will know Him, from the most prominent to the least.

Rising Above The Final Epidemic

The Concept of Mageifah (Epidemics)

Let us try a little to understand about the concept of illness in the world, and to understand with *siyata d'shmaya* what the root of a *mageifah* (plague) is. A *mageifah* (plague) is also known as a *nagif* (epidemic).

The word *mageifah*, from the word *negef*, comes from the same letters as the word *guf*, body, The Torah says that if a slave incurs physical damage to his body, *b'gapo yeitzei*, he goes out of slavery due to the attack on his body.⁵³ Rashi explains that the slave goes free just from receiving this blow alone. Thus, the word *b'gapo*, from the word *guf*, and which is the root of the term *negef* (epidemic) is associated with the concept of being alone, or the concept of seclusion.

The Sages also taught explicitly that a plague causes people to go into seclusion, to be alone in their houses: “When there is a plague (*dever*) in the city, bring your feet inside your house,” as it is written “*Close the doors behind you...until the wrath passes.*”⁵⁴

The word *mageifah*, which is rooted in the term *gaf*, also means to become covered and concealed. A *gaf* is a covering. This implies that when the inner spiritual light becomes covered over and concealed, the result is a *mageifah* (plague or epidemic) in the world.

Getting subtler, the sin of Adam by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, according to one view, was that he (and Chavah) ate from a grapevine,⁵⁵ which in Hebrew is called *gefen*, also from the term *gaf* (covering). What is the connection between *gefen* (grapevine) and *gaf* (covering)? Although the grapevine produces wine, which causes revelation, for “When wine enters, secrets come out,”⁵⁶ wine is also associated with covering (*gaf*), because wine needs to be covered in a barrel in order to ferment properly. Also, the sin of Adam caused the body's hold to take over the

⁵³ *Shemos 21:3*

⁵⁴ *Yeshayah 26:20*

⁵⁵ *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 70b*

⁵⁶ *ibid*

soul, and the body is the *guf*, from the word *gaf* covering.

Thus, the word *mageifah* (epidemic), which is from the word *gefen* (grapevine) which was an element in the first sin that caused man's spiritual level to become covered over and concealed by the body's hold, implies that there is a connection between *mageifah* and the concept of becoming covered over (*gaf*), which is rooted in the *body* (*guf*) that covers spirituality, the soul.

The Connection Between Mazal & Mageifah

... A *mageifah* is repaired only when we repair the very essence behind *mageifah*. Where can we learn about the essence of *mageifah*? The root of the word *mageifah* is mentioned in the Torah in the verse regarding the laws of damages, where a bull pushes its body in order to attack another bull: *ki yigof shor*⁵⁷.

Why does the Torah use the word *yigof* here, which is from the root word *mageifah*? In other words, what is the connection between a bull and *mageifah*? It is a hint to the sin with the golden calf,⁵⁸ which was the “bull” on the side of evil which counters the holiness of Yosef, who is called the holy “bull” in the blessing of Yaakov *Avinu*. Thus, a *mageifah* is countered by the holiness of Yosef, who is the “bull” on the side of holiness.

How can we see the connection between a bull and *mageifah*? The Gemara says that a bull has no *mazal*, and therefore when a bull pushes another bull,⁵⁹ it was done without intention to damage the other bull, since the bull has no *mazal*. [Rashi explains that an animal does not have *daas* (mature intelligence) and therefore it has no *mazal*, whereas a person has *daas* and therefore a person getting damaged is a result of having a bad *mazal*. Hence, the concept of *mazal* is connected with *daas*].⁶⁰ Thus, the root of all *negifah* (pushing) is an absence of *mazal*, and that is why a cow gores or attacks another animals. We can learn from this that a *mageifah* thrives whenever there is no *mazal*.

⁵⁷ *Shemos 21:35*

⁵⁸ *A calf later grows into a bull, hence the golden calf is the “bull” on the side of evil and impurity*

⁵⁹ *the act of gores is called negifah, similar to the word mageifah*

⁶⁰ *Talmud Bavli Bava Kamma 2b*

The Jewish People Can Transcend Mazal & Mageifah

Now we can understand the difference between *mageifah* of the Jewish people and the Nations.

When the Nations of the world are in the midst of a bad *mazal*, when they are without a good *mazal*, the result is a *mageifah*. However, regarding the Jewish people it says that “There is no *mazal* for Yisrael”,⁶¹ and the Baal Shem Tov explained that “no *mazal*” for the Jewish people, which is spelled as *ain mazal* (there is no *mazal*) can be read as “*ayin mazal*”, meaning that the *mazal* for the Jewish people is **precisely** the higher dimension known as *ayin*.⁶²

In other words, the Jewish people have a higher mode of conduct (or a higher *mazal*) than the nations which have a lower *mazal*. When we rise to the level that is above the jurisdiction of *mazal*, which is essentially the higher dimension, *ayin*, then we can be above the dangers of a *mageifah*.

As a hint, Dovid *HaMelech* who is called *bar nafli* (stillborn),⁶³ which also means “fallen one”, is a hint that he had a fallen *mazal*, for his life was destined to be fraught with perils, all kinds of danger and suffering. He had no *mazal* protecting him, so he was vulnerable to *mageifah*, and that is why there was a *mageifah* in his times. But ironically, his very disadvantage of having no *mazal* was actually the key to his survival and his ability to save the Jewish people from *mageifah* in his times. Having no *mazal* also meant that he could rise above *mazal*!

Dovid *HaMelech* [through his humility and righteousness] reached the level of *ayin*, and Dovid *HaMelech*'s very level became *ayin*, the dimension of the spiritual which is above the level of the human being. Thus, Dovid *HaMelech* rose to the

61 Talmud Bavli Shabbos 156a

62 **Editor's Note:** The term “ayin” (nothingness) refers usually to *bittul*, self-nullification. The term *efes* literally means “zero”, a term that implies absolute nothingness, and a level higher than *ayin*. The Rav explains about *ayin* and *efes* in the *shiurim* on *sefer Nefesh HaChaim shaar II*. Although *ayin* and *efes* both refer to the concept of *bittul*, perhaps we can also understand the difference between *ayin* and *efes* as follows. The Rav explains in *sefer Da Es Nishmasecha* that there are different levels of *bittul* (self-nullification). The ‘standard’ level of *bittul* is when nullifies his desires to Hashem, when one feels that his existence is nullified by Hashem's. At this level, one acknowledges that he has an “I”, a self, and it is just that his nullifying that self to Hashem. The higher level of *bittul* is *Ain Od Milvado*, which is when one does not feel his existence at all, because he is aware that there is only Hashem and nothing else. At this higher level of *bittul*, there is no sense of one's self at all, because there is only the awareness of Hashem's presence and nothing else.

63 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 96b

level of *ayin*, essentially being above *mazal* and, by extension, transcending *mageifah*. He fully reached the level of *ayin* that is above *mazal*: the very root of the Jewish people, *ayin*, which places the Jewish people above the plane of *mazal*.

Key To Rising Above Mageifah In The Jewish People

There were four times in the Torah where there was a *mageifah* in the Jewish people: 1) by the sin with the golden calf, 2) by the sin with the Spies, 3) by the sin with worshipping the idol Peor, and 4) by the dispute of Korach and his followers. The first event of *mageifah* happened as a result of sinning with the golden calf, so this event was the root of *mageifah* in the Jewish people. The *mageifah* that resulted after sinning with the golden calf was a situation in which there was no *mazal* in the Jewish people - causing them to get “damaged” by the evil “bull” - the golden calf (just as a bull pushes another bull in order to attack it).

The sin with the golden calf was the root of *mageifah* for the Jewish people alone, whereas the sin of Adam was the root of *mageifah* for the entire world, Jew and gentile alike. According to one view, the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge) that Adam ate from was a grapevine, a *gefen*, which has the same root letters as the word *mageifah*. The sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* caused mankind to lose its higher *daas* and fall to the level of an animal, as in the statement of the Sages, “They were comparable to animals” [which is the detrimental effect of sin]. Thus, *mageifah* is the result of losing *daas*.

The root of *mageifah* in the Jewish people, however, was uniquely the sin with the golden calf, which brought *mageifah* only to the Jewish people. After sinning with the golden calf, they essentially fell from being on the perfected level of man, to the level of animals – in particular, the “bull.” By the sin with the calf, the members of the *Erev Rav* rebellion declared about the golden calf, “*This is the god which took you out of Egypt.*” The golden calf was the “bull” that brought *mageifah* to the Jewish people.

But the Jewish people can rise above *mazal* and thereby be above *mageifah*. A bull can get pushed around by another bull, but a person does not get pushed by a bull. This is a hint that a *mageifah* only affects a person who falls to the level of the “bull” - an animal (which is when one loses his *daas*, when one is not on the desired level of a human being).

Even more so, Dovid *HaMelech* was compared to Adam אָדָם, which stands for Adam, Dovid, Mashiach,⁶⁴ מָשִׁיחַ – דָּוִד – אָדָם a hint that Dovid contained the illumination of Mashiach, which is above even the level of a human being. The illumination of Mashiach, personified by Dovid *HaMelech*, is the ability to rise to the level that is above a person, the level of *ayin* – the root of the Jewish people which is above *mazal*.

Mageifah In The End Of Days Reflects The Mageifah In The Times of Dovid HaMelech

The *Poskim* discuss what defines a *mageifah*- how many people have to be dying in order for it to be considered a *mageifah*, how many cities are being affected, and how quickly, etc. There are also certain *halachos* that apply during a time of *mageifah*, but we are not getting into that discussion here since is a separate discussion.

But it is clear that in the end of days, there will be a *mageifah* like in the times of Dovid *HaMelech*, who also represents the Mashiach *ben* Dovid. Just as there was a *mageifah* in the times of Dovid *HaMelech*, so also there is *mageifah* in the time directly preceding the arrival of Mashiach *ben Dovid*, who corresponds to Dovid *HaMelech*.

The *mageifah* in the end of days is like the *mageifah* in the times of Dovid *HaMelech*: It is a result of the concealment of Hashem's Presence. Mashiach *ben* Dovid will soon be revealed, and he will reveal the *ruach apeinu* (the spirit, so to speak) of Hashem, which will be the revealed level of Dovid *HaMelech*. Whereas Dovid *HaMelech* was all about concealment (*ayin*), Mashiach will be the revealed Dovid *HaMelech* (a revealed level of *ayin*), which will be the level that is above the human being- above *daas* (human comprehension).

Dovid was called *bar nafli*, one with a fallen *mazal*, and this was connected with the concept of the *mageifah* that appeared in his times, which caused people to feel concealment of Hashem's Presence. During a *mageifah*, people will be exceedingly worried of what's going to be, what troubles are going to be next, etc.. They become disoriented and they lose their *daas*.

⁶⁴ *Baal Shem Tov al HaTorah parshas Nitzavim, and cited in many places in Shelah HaKadosh*

Connection Between Purim & Coronavirus Pandemic

The *mageifah* in the end of days started at around the time of Purim. This tells us about the spiritual nature of this *mageifah*. Purim is a festival that is above *daas*, it is entirely a festival of losing our regular *daas* and rising above our *daas*. Thus, the root of the *mageifah*, which started shortly before Purim, was coming from a time in which there was an absence of *daas*. The root of a *mageifah* shows us how to repair it. Since the *mageifah* started from a point where *daas* was absent, the way to transcend the *mageifah* is therefore by going above *daas* – by rising above the level of the human being (*daas*) and accessing the level beyond the human being, which is *ayin*.

Going Above Mageifah, Mazal & Daas - Through Emunah, Temimus, Ayin

The *mageifah* that takes place in the end of days [which is currently taking place] is not like *mageifos* of the past, where the concern was simply about how many people are dying in each city, etc. The *mageifah* in end of days is a *mageifah* spreading to every corner of the earth.⁶⁵

The way to spiritually repair [and transcend] the *mageifah* in the end of days is by reflecting the *avodah* of Dovid *HaMelech*, who personified *emunah* (faith in Hashem), and namely *temimus* (simple, unquestioning faith and loyalty to Hashem), which is the level above *daas*. The entire root of *mageifah*, as explained, is when there is no *mazal*. The way out of the problem, then, is to go above *daas* which is by developing *emunah* and *temimus*. This will place us above *mazal*, where we will not be affected by *mageifah*.

⁶⁵ See Tosefta Taanis 2:11, “Hashem will never bring a *mabul* (deluge) of water again upon the world...but He will bring a *mabul* (deluge) of *dever* (epidemic) *l'ovdei kochavim* (to the gentiles) to the entire world during the period preceding *Mashiach*.” This Tosefta states that the epidemic will affect only gentiles. If it is referring to corona, than Jews as well suffered so why does it say that only gentiles will be affected? For an answer to this see *The End Illuminated* by Rabbi Yisrael Sorotzkin. (See also *Emek HaNetziv* on *Sifrei Parshas Behaaloscha*, that the final war of Gog and Magog will be an epidemic that will shake up the entire world.)

Being Safe From The Birth Pangs Before Mashiach - By Being Like A Fetus Inside The Mother

To be more specific, in the end of days, our *avodah* of connecting closer with Hashem is deeper than the level we achieved at our first redemption, which was the exodus from Egypt. Our redemption from Egypt was personified by the connection we have with Hashem that is depicted in the verse, “*Like an infant on its mother’s lap*”⁶⁶, where we were receiving all of our sustenance from Hashem. But during the final days, when we are on the way from the final exile into the final redemption, our *avodah* is to be “*like a fetus inside its mother*”⁶⁷, which is a deeper level of closeness.

At the exodus, we left with the power of Moshe, and in his merit we received the *manna*, we were nursing our sustenance directly from Hashem Who sent us *manna* from Heaven. But at the final redemption, when we are on the way out from this final exile, we can receive an even deeper power than *manna*, the power of Dovid *HaMelech*, who has no existence of his own, who survives only because he is completely with Hashem.

The essence of *mageifah* comes from the concept of concealment of Hashem’s Presence, which entered the world ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Concealment was the level reflected by Dovid *HaMelech* (whose entire life was the epitome of concealment). For this reason, there was an epidemic in the times of Dovid *HaMelech*, but the salvation from the epidemic was also due to the merit of Dovid *HaMelech*. Thus, the root of being saved from an epidemic is to reflect the level of Dovid *HaMelech*, who was like a “fetus inside its mother” - to be concealed from the rest of the world.

Dovid was called a “stillborn” because he was destined to die at birth, and his entire survival was miraculous. What was the depth of how he survived? He survived because he was like the fetus in its mother, which has no place of its own because it cannot survive if it enters the world. It’s only chance of survival right now is to be inside its mother, where it is protected and where it can be nourished. Although having no place is a disadvantage for the fetus, this in itself is also the very

⁶⁶ *Tehillim 131:2*

⁶⁷ *a terminology mentioned many times in the Talmud, such as in Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 57b*

remedy and the very source of survival for the fetus. It can only be inside the mother, if it is to survive!

When a *mageifah* - epidemic is raging, there is nowhere in the world to run to, because it is spreading all over the world to little "nook and cranny." The verse says that during an epidemic, "*Come into your rooms and close the doors behind you.*"⁶⁸ The verse is really giving us the deep answer to be saved from an epidemic. We need to "close the doors" to the world outside of us, meaning that we need to be like the fetus in its mother, concealed from everything in the world.⁶⁹ This is the way to survive the "birth pangs" before Mashiach's arrival – by being like the fetus in its mother! And that is the deeper meaning of "close the doors behind you."

We are currently in the "birth pangs preceding Mashiach's arrival." If we want to survive and to be safe from this *mageifah* that rages in the world around us, we need to be like the fetus in the mother! If we are found "outside" in the world, then we have nowhere to run to. But if we are found on the "inside" - being like the fetus in its mother [alone with Hashem and depending solely on Him for our survival, recognizing that we have nowhere to run to other than Him], then we will be safe. There is no real place in the world to run to, except for Hashem, for only Hashem is called the true "Place" of the world.⁷⁰ There is no place to run to, there is only Hashem, Who is the only "Place" to be in.

A fetus eats and drinks and survives only by getting all its sustenance from its mother. It has no *mazal*. With the exodus from Egypt, we were like an infant nursing from its mother, protected by Hashem, receiving our food through the *manna* that Hashem sent from Heaven. But in the final redemption, we can reach an even deeper level than this: we can be like a fetus **inside** the mother, which is not found on the outside world at all, where we have no place to be in other than being with Hashem! That is the depth of transcending a *mageifah*.

68 *Yeshayah 26:20*

69 *where our only place of refuge is to be alone with Hashem, where we are getting all of our nourishment from Hashem, and we are entirely found with Hashem.*

70 *Nefesh HaChaim shaar III*

When we actually merit to enter this level of being a fetus in the mother,⁷¹ the birth contractions before Mashiach's arrival will lead us to the birth that we are waiting for, the birth of the final Redemption. May it come quickly. *Amen.*

ג-פ מגפה-בלבביפדיה מחשבה English translation from the original Hebrew shiur

71 Editor's Note: The Rav explained in response to a question that, practically speaking, one can become like a fetus in the mother (and thereby be saved from mageifah and the birth pangs preceding Mashiach) "By having absolute bittul (self-nullification) to Hashem – not just to feel that our whole life and vitality comes from Hashem, but to actually be completely nullified to Him, that only He is the true reality."