



CORONAVIRUS What's really going on

During these difficult times many are asking, "Why is this happening?!" "What does Hashem want from us?!" "How can we end this once and for all?!" I've heard many theories to answer all of these questions from many different people, but none as succinct and to the point as from the following author:

...This is from the ways of teshuvah. For when a trouble comes, and they cry out about it... everyone will know that it was because of their aveiros, that this bad was done to them and this is what will cause them to remove the trouble from upon them. But if they do not cry out... but rather say, "What has happened to us is the way of the world, and this trouble is merely happenstance" – it is surely the way of cruelty, and it causes them to stick to their bad deeds. And this trouble will bring other troubles. (Rambam Hilchos Tannis 1:2,3)

But what does it mean that Hashem is punishing us so that we'll do teshuvah? Some imagine this to be like a master threatening his servant into submission. However, Chazal paint us a picture that shows us nothing can be further from the truth. Let us explain with a parable:

There once was a benevolent king who ruled over a small kingdom he had inherited from his father. Beloved by his subjects for his kindness and generosity, he ruled with a fair hand over all his subjects. One thing however marred his happiness and that was the fact that he and his queen were childless. The pain he felt affected every aspect of his life, for without a child to inherit him, all the toil and effort on behalf of his kingdom would eventually go to someone else. His only comfort was in the hope that one day he would be blessed with a child. With this hope constantly on his mind, he continued to run the affairs of his kingdom. He strengthened and expanded his country, conquering the major kingdoms that surrounded his, benefiting their subjects from his kind and fair rule. All this he did with the ever-present thought that all his work will hopefully be for the benefit of his future children who will inherit his kingdom.

The happiest day of the King's life was the day his queen relayed the news that she was expecting. To him this was the culmination of his life's work. The fulfillment of his dream that all his toil would eventually benefit his own beloved child. Later that year the entire kingdom celebrated the birth of a healthy boy, and there was none happier than the royal couple. The queen constantly hovered over the child with love whilst the king continued to run the affairs of state but with an energy and happiness he had never experienced before, knowing now with certainty that his beloved son would



אני לידך לידך לי

indeed be the beneficiary of all his toil. Every night he would make sure to personally tuck him into bed telling him, even though he still could not understand, all he had done that day all with his great love for him constantly on his mind.

Years past and the prince grew older. Spoiled by scores of servants who catered to his every whim it slowly became apparent that his character traits were not being molded in the image of his kind and caring father. As he entered his teenage years, he became more and more self-centered. He would yell at his teachers and wile away his days and nights partying. He began to favor the company of the lower elements of society. Eventually he turned into a drunkard like his friends, constantly walking around in a drunken stupor, and moved out of the palace to the other side of town to be in their company. Now he had little care for anything but his next drink. So fallen into drunken debauchery was his son that he barely remembered who he was. He viewed success in the same terms as his newfound friends, completely forgetting from where he had come.

The King was devastated. His life's work was heading right down the drain. How could his son give up being the prince of the kingdom, having his every wish fulfilled and eventually inheriting all that was his. Every child could only dream of such a life, and yet his son, the love of His life, for whom he had worked so hard his entire life, was throwing it all away for a bottle of wine.

In a last desperate attempt, the king decided to go across town to visit his son. He would bring with him the most famous doctors and wisest men of the kingdom. Together they would sit down and explain to him how he was destroying his life, how his present feelings and desires were merely due to his uncontrolled addiction, how his friends didn't have much to lose by their present way of life, but he was oh so different, he had the entire kingdom to lose. If he would just get help, he would realize he was giving up everyone's dream for every person's nightmare.

The following day trumpets were heard on the seedy side of town. To the shock of all who witnessed, the king and his entourage headed towards a shabby one room house and knocked on the door. There was no response. The king knocked louder crying out to his son, "Please open, my beloved son the love of my life! I've come all the way out here just to see you, please open! As the king put his ear to the door, he heard his son's drunken voice saying, "Please, leave me alone, I love my life and I don't want to come back."

Upon hearing this the king burst into uncontrollable sobbing. He cried out to his son, "Please, for my sake mend your ways. Remember, my entire life I toiled to enhance my kingdom just for your sake! Out of my great love for you I wanted





you to inherit a great and mighty kingdom! Everything is on the line right now. If you'll just take control of your life you could still save yourself, but if you don't, soon it'll be too late, and you will never be able to return to me. I will live out the rest of my life in mourning, yearning for you, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week until I pass from this world. Please don't destroy my life by destroying yours after all I've done for you. The entire kingdom awaits you. It was in fact all developed just for you. If you'll just open your door a bit...!"

Is each one of us not the beloved prince of the King of the entire universe?! Did He not create the entire universe just for us? As Chazal (Sanhedrin 31a) say, "One is obligated to say, 'The entire universe was created for me!'" He created the whole world just to serve as a place where by our doing mitzvos for the few seconds we are here (in relation to the eternity of the Next World) He will be able to give us the greatest pleasure and happiness forever—one second of which is greater than the sum total of all the pleasures ever experienced by everyone who ever lived, combined (Michtav M'Eliyahu, vol. 1 p. 4). Do we not all know deep down that there is nothing that hurts us more in this world and eternally than distancing ourselves from our Father in heaven, and there is nothing that benefits us more than drawing closer to Him?! Have we not forgotten who we are, the princes of the universe, just like the drunk prince in our story?! Are our desires and life's pursuits not more like one who has fallen into a mundane, shortsighted drunken stupor?! Do we not waste our lives, day after day, giving up our princely status and the infinite reward our Father in heaven craves to give us for what we know deep down is nothingness, here today and gone tomorrow!? Do we not ignore the King of the universe as He desperately bangs on the doors of our soul each day saying, "My dear son! It's Me your Father, consumed with a love for you beyond anything you can imagine. I created the entire universe for you! I sustained you 24/7/365 from before you were born until this moment, can fulfill your every request, crave (see Yevamos 64a and Rishonim there) for your every word of prayer, and have no greater pleasure in the universe than when you look into My Eyes and I look into yours!" (Tur, O"Ch 121)

Do we not give up the greatest relationship with the Master of the universe, for the animal instincts of the lowest of his creatures! Do we not ignore His pleas that as ma'aminim bnei ma'aminim we all still hear in the depths of our souls despite all our efforts to close our ears to them?! We all know we won't live forever! We all know soon we'll go the way all that have come before us, and that only Torah and mitzvos we will take along for all eternity! But, "Just a little more money, a little more sleep, just leave me alone! Let me chill!"



אני לדודי ודודי לי

The above is what is really going on with the Coronavirus we see taking over our lives, as we see from the following words of Shir HaShirim:

I am sleeping—I have slumbered in my service of Hashem, and my heart—HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who is the strength of my heart and my portion, is awake —ever watchful to protect and benefit me. Now that I have distanced myself from Him, He, out of His great love for me, is coming to me, and - My Beloved is knocking - at my door and telling me, “Out of my love for you I have come to you laden with all that is good, from one end of the world to the other, to benefit you. If only you will - open for me - an opening of teshuvah as small as the tip of a needle, I will open up for you gates through which loaded carriages can pass.” My sister, my wife, my dove—Hashem is comparable to the dove, which upon identifying her mate does not let him consort with any other bird, so too, He will never let me leave Him. My perfect and innocent one, my twin—just as twins feel each other’s pain, so too, Hashem says, “I am with you in your suffering.” Therefore, all we must do is open the door, so that Hashem can lead us into His Chambers to rejoice with Him for all eternity.”

(Shir HaShirim, 5:2 with explanations of Rashi and the Midrash)

Perhaps Hashem is telling us: You refuse to open the door for Me even a bit, for your own sake?! Midah k'neged midah I will send an invisible, miniscule virus that will not allow you to open your doors and go on with your lives, ignoring My pleas to mend your ways so that I may fulfill the purpose of Creation, granting you, my dearest son, the greatest rewards for all eternity!

Hashem is not asking us now to be the biggest tzaddikim. Rav Yisrael Salanter zt”l writes that the greatest punishments are given to the “small” sins that aren’t as hard for us to overcome and these should be the focus of our Teshuva. No one’s asking us to learn another five hours a day but what’s our excuse not to pay a little more attention when we talk to Hashem during the tefillos and brachos we’re saying anyway? To be mekabel to learn mussar and cheshbon hanefesh a few minutes each day to focus upon what life’s all about!? To think what steps we can easily take, even on our current level, to bring us closer to our Father in heaven?! All He is saying is, “Open up for Me, your Father, an opening like the tip of a needle...so we can have infinite enjoyment together forever and ever!

