

Tisha B'Av 5779

A Time To Weep

A Time To Love

**A Time
To Start Listening**

Introduction

Today, Tisha B'Av is the saddest day of the year. It is the day that we experienced ultimate churban, the destruction of both Batei Mikdash, and on which we were exiled from Eretz Yisroel. It also proved to be a day of additional pain and suffering throughout the ages. Furthermore, we are told that all our suffering has its roots in Tisha B'Av.

After the Holocaust of World War II, many people wanted to declare a day of remembrance for the atrocities which occurred during that period. The Gedolim of the day were approached and almost unanimously opposed the idea. All suffering, they stated, is rooted in Tisha B'Av. We don't need an additional day. We need to mourn on Tisha B'Av.

And indeed, numerous new kinnos were composed in remembrance of the Shoah, supplementing the already long, moving, and sad list of kinnos which are said on Tisha B'Av.

What were the events which led to this terrible destruction? What lessons can be learned? What were subsequent events which occurred throughout history, as a result of the fact that we are repeating the same mistakes over and over again?

It behooves us to understand the nature of the sins which have caused our churban. Let's go through some history together, and analyze the events which are recorded in Tanach, and which occurred in later generations as it pertains to the chronology of Tisha B'Av, as well as the theme of the day.

With this deeper goal, let us now attempt to embark on our journey in exploring relevant incidents from the Torah.

Meraglim

The B'nai Yisroel had asked Moshe to send messengers to Eretz Yisroel to scout the land before entering. Agents who would determine if the land is safe, and if it would be a wise decision to enter.

And so Moshe Rabbeinu acquiesced. He gathered together *anashim*, people of stature. Rashi tells us that they were all *chashuvim*, reputable "kosher" individuals. They were the heads of the shevatim.

The men were sent, and came back forty days later with their reports.

What did they discover? That the land was *eretz ocheles yoshveha*, a land which consumed its inhabitants. People were dying left and right. It was a dangerous place. *V'gam yelidei ha'anak ra'einu sham*, the citizens were giants, literally, who were scary and dangerous. Surely it would be suicide to enter such a land.

When we learn the Torah as a child, we are taught in a very simplistic way. We may still have pictures of cartoon-like photos created by our Morah's in our minds. Yet as adults, we need to have a more realistic and factual understanding of what actually occurred.

The fear which the Jews experienced at that time was genuine. They were concerned about an existential threat. What did they think would happen to them? Were they afraid of catching a disease which may kill one in a thousand who gets sick? Was it something else? No. They were afraid of unilateral death. Unequivocal and indiscriminate genocide. Decimation. The entire nation would be annihilated. Every last one. The *kina'anim*, they thought, were the Nazis of the time.

That was what was reported to them by ten of the twelve *meraglim*. This report gave way to creating a bonafide fear which was instilled in their hearts.

Kaleiv tried to assure them that the reports were distorted. That the land which Hashem had promised them would prove to be amazingly good. But the crowd was so riled up that they wouldn't even listen, were he to present it as is.

Va'yahas Kaleiv es ha'am. Kaleiv quieted the crowd. Rashi tells us that the only way he was able to succeed in getting the crowd even to listen was to pretend, chas v'shalom that he wanted to say something negative about Moshe Rabbeinu. "And you know what else Ben Amram did for us?!", he said. He opened his remarks using a disparaging

appellation for Moshe Rabbeinu, referring to him condescendingly by only mentioning his father's name, and not referring to him as Moshe.

This got the crowd silent, at least temporarily, for the hysteria had already kicked in. The fear of death at the hands of the *Kina'anim* had been instilled in their hearts, so they were prepared to listen to anything else which they could use to attack Moshe Rabbeinu.

Kaleiv continued: "He split the sea for us, brought us the *mann* and the quail..." and began listing the tremendous chassadim which Moshe had done for the Bnei Yisroel. We don't need to fear Eretz Yisroel. The land that Hashem is giving us is "*tovah, mi'od mi'od*", amazingly good. Moshe hasn't failed us before, and he always listens to Hashem, who loves us, cares for us, and would never harm us in any way. We need to look past this negative and distorted piece of lashon harah and proceed to enter Eretz Yisroel as planned, because that's the ratzon Hashem, and He will not let us down.

But the moment that Bnei Yisroel recognized Kaleiv's true and altruistic intentions, they stopped listening to him. His words fell upon deaf ears. Their minds were made up. The fear of death had succeeded in creating panic and hysteria which surpassed the reason and logic needed to deal with the situation rationally.

They all ran to Moshe Rabbeinu. The pasuk says, *vatikrivun alai kulchem*, they all approached Moshe. Rashi says that the gathering was done *bi'arbuvia*. It was a commotion. It was a tumultuous crowd. Most likely people were screaming and yelling. It was probably full of chaos. It probably wasn't responsible people addressing their concerns to Moshe in a polite, respectful fashion, speaking coherently. And it certainly was not a crowd willing to listen to the answers. They were not looking to be placated, or to have their concerns or fears allayed. It was probably more like an angry mob.

Sadly, their fears were unfounded, as Hashem would have performed miracles on their behalf to save them from the savage kina'anim. But that's not how they saw it. They saw it as a problem. A very palpable one. And so they cried. They cried over a problem which didn't exist.

And so Hashem said, "you cried over nothing, so I will give you something to cry about for generations."

That night was Tisha B'Av. It would prove to be a sad day for generations. The first beis hamikdash was destroyed on that day. So was the second. Today, we sit on the floor to mourn these tragedies. And to mourn *all* tragedies which have befallen us since that day. The Holocaust. The Spanish Inquisition. The Crusades. The massacres of *tach vi'tat*. And so many others, big and small. Personal tragedies. Death and sickness, depression, and tzaros within our communities today. These all stem from the churban habayis, which has its roots in the chet of the meraglim.

But what did they do wrong? They were concerned about dying? Wouldn't you have been? Would you enter an enemy land after hearing a report given to you by responsible, loving *anashim* and respectable community members who tell you that entering the land would be tantamount to suicide? Wouldn't it have been downright irresponsible *not* to have listened to the meraglim?

Don't we follow the majority? After all, it was ten against two. Shouldn't we listen to the ten?

There are many answers given by the meforshim. But one thing that we see clearly is the following: They didn't listen. They didn't listen to Kaleiv. He couldn't even get a word in edgewise. They didn't listen to his logic. They didn't listen to the fact that perhaps the report of the meraglim was wrong. They didn't use reason. They gave into fear and hysteria. They let that overcome them and take on a world of its own, impeding their natural faculties to do what would otherwise be deemed right and appropriate, based on common sense and *ehrllichkeit*.

Had their concerns been valid, they would have approached Moshe differently. Not *bi'arbuvia*, but with *mesinus*, with deliberation. Hearing the *whole* story comprehensively. Not just the part that they wanted to hear. It would've been a very different dialogue.

The Chet HaEgel

Moshe Rabbeinu went up to Har Sinai and remained in Heaven for forty days. It was time for his descent. Or was it? But that's what B'nei Yisroel thought. Why hadn't Moshe returned? It was just after they had received the Torah. They were on the highest level imaginable. The entire world had waited twenty-six generations for that very moment. The moment that would give life and meaning, and was indeed the very purpose of creation and which would enable the continued existence of the universe. And so it happened.

Presently though, there was a dilemma. What were they to do, since Moshe was no longer with them? Did he die? The *satan* showed them a fake image of Moshe having died. Now what?

Some people decided that they ought to make an idol and appoint a new leader. This, they argued, would be the right thing to do in this situation, in light of Moshe's disappearance.

And so, many people, although not all, got caught up in the idea, and began preparing for it. The idea began to spread, and people got more involved and caught up.

But there was one person who saw the truth. His name was Chur. He spoke to the people and told them not to create the Golden Calf. It would prove to be a terrible aveira, idol worship, which was not sanctioned by the Torah in any way.

Chur was a gadol in his own right, and in Moshe Rabbeinu's absence, his word should have been heeded. Yet it wasn't. Worse yet, they killed him. They murdered him in cold blood over the fact that he dared rebuke them and tell them not to sin.

Aharon wanted to rebuke them too, but he chose not to, out of fear that he too would be killed. It wasn't merely his own life for which he feared; he was afraid for the whole tzibbur. Were Bnei Yisroel to kill him too, they would not be spared punishment, for then they will have killed the *kohen gadol* and a *navi* on one day, which would be unforgivable.

While only some of Bnei Yisroel sinned, the results were tragic. At that time, many Yidden lost their lives in punishment for the grave sin. But that wasn't the end of it. Hashem wanted to destroy all of bnei yisroel. Moshe pleaded with Hashem, and recited the yud gimmel middos, the thirteen attributes of mercy, begging Hashem to spare

them. Hashem finally agreed, saying, "*salachti kidvarecha*", I have forgiven them according to your word.

But things were not so simple. The world had undergone a permanent change. The world after the chet ha'egel was not the same as the one prior to it. The luchos which were written by Hashem had been shattered. They needed to be reconstructed. The seconds ones were not quite the same. We lack the purity of Torah that we once had. We have Torah with shich'cha, forgetting. We have galus. Our spiritual existence is not the same. We would've been able to enter Eretz Yisroel with Moshe Rabbeinu and build a permanently standing beis hamikdash. But that was no longer to be.

And the punishment was just the beginning. The forgiveness granted by Hashem to bnei yisroel at the time was limited. Hashem said to Moshe, "וּבְיָוֹם פְּקֻדֵי וּפְקֻדֹתַי" "עֲלֵיהֶם הַחַטָּאת". The punishment given at that time was but a small part of the duly deserved retribution. The remainder would be administered over year of galus that lay ahead. The seeds for galus had then been planted.

We continue to experience this "*uviyom pakdi*" to this day, throughout all the tzaros which we have endured in galus, today, and throughout the generations, including ones in recent times. Rashi tells us that any suffering which we experience is due at least in part to the *chet ha'egel*.

But what if they would have listened to Chur? What if they would have given him the time of day to explain his concern? What if they would have been respectful and addressed his points with sensitivity? Perhaps the *chet ha'egel* would not have occurred.

Again, we suffered because the people simply didn't listen.

Let's move on in history...

Mordechai

It was towards the end of the era of Galus Bavel. Hashem promised bnei yisroel (though the nevei'im) that they'd be returned to Eretz Yisroel after seventy years. That seventy year date was approaching, and according to some calculations it had already arrived. Yet they were still in Galus. The Babylonian empire was succeeded by the alliance of Paras and Madai. The king was none other than Achashveirosh, with whom we are all familiar. While we may view him as a dictator, and to a large degree he most probably was, there was definitely some type of political system that was in play at the time, which consisted of some mechanism compelling the king to comply with various laws of state and protocol. He may have been the one on the throne, but there were definitely other forces at power as well. It definitely had the ring of quasi-democracy, albeit with specific powers limited to a few, under the hood.

Regardless, two particular aspects of the Purim story are of particular importance on this day of mourning.

The first was the seudah which Achashveirosh made. This party was one to be remembered. It was elegant. It was ostentatious. The finest foods of the land were served. It was unlimited. It was a conglomerate of all the pleasures of this world, both permitted and those which are deeply *assur*, combined in one setting--this ongoing affair which lasted for many days.

The second incident was that of Haman's decree that everyone bow down to him. This decree in of itself did not seem nearly as egregious, albeit perhaps arrogant.

Many leaders, including Rabbonim from the Sanhedrin permitted people to attend the party. How could we possibly defy the king? What a Chillul Hashem it would be to go against his wishes? How could we not comply with the law of the land to bow down to Haman? What a Chillul Hashem *that* would be! We need to be devout citizens and follow their laws. Surely that's what Hashem wants of us.

Ironically though, nothing could be further from the truth. Their philosophy was actually the very antithesis of Hashem's desire. And so many Jews at the time succumbed to one or both of these challenges.

But there was one Yid named Mordechai. He saw something that others had not. He saw through the *sheker*. He saw what was truly *ratzon* Hashem and what wasn't. He

begged them not to attend the lustful and despicable party of the king. And he defied Haman and did not bow to him.

The story of Purim evolved. A decree was signed to annihilate the Jews from all lands. It was a real threat. Not like the one imagined by those who listened to the meraglim. This time it was real.

We don't know how events unfolded at that time beyond what Chazal tell us. Perhaps they ridiculed Mordechai. Perhaps they blamed him for their woes. Perhaps they felt that the troubles they were experiencing were *because* of his attitude. Perhaps they alledged that the anti-semitism of the time was due to his defiance, and unwillingness to go with the flow, and to assimilate into Persian society according to societal norms and expectations of the time. Perhaps people even attacked Mordechai verbally and called him a rotzayach, for being the supposed cause of their suffering and inevitable death would invariably ensue due to the king's decree to have them all murdered in cold blood.

We don't know. But what we do know is that he was ignored. And consequently, the decree was enacted against them. We have the hindsight of Chazal who tell us quite the opposite. That it was because of those who *didn't* listen to Mordechai that they had suffered the decree.

"We have a sister in the palace," they thought. Esther, the queen, is one of us, and she will surely save us. We need to play the politics the right way. Perhaps they had a Jewish political organization, maybe something equivalent to today's Agudas Yisroel, which was started by the Chofetz Chaim and other Gedolim of the time.

Eventually, a spirit of teshuvah was stirred deep within them, and they began to listen. *Leich kinos es kol hayehudim*. They all gathered to do teshuvah. They gathered in prayer and repentance. They embraced the Torah with love. They fasted and mended their ways. The horrific decree was nullified, both in Heaven as well as on Earth. In this merit we celebrate Purim to this day.

The tragedy was ultimately averted, but it sure came mighty close. We were almost annihilated. Why? Because they wouldn't listen to Mordechai. He was outnumbered. He was not in the majority. They thought that they were right. *And they simply refused to listen.*

Another tragedy due to not listening.

Shabsai Tzvi

It was in mid 1600's. Klal Yisroel had just endured the torture and suffering from the horrendous Cossaks, the infamous Chmielnicki Massacres which occurred during the Hebrew years of Tach V'Tat, gzeiros tach v'tat, as they have become known. The massacres wreaked havoc on entire Jewish communities across Europe. The pain and destruction was indescribable. We as Jews had suffered so much over the years, yet this was a chapter of its own in the book and long saga of galus. Perhaps it was finally time for Mashiach to arrive.

And so began the next era of destruction in Jewish history.

A man named Shabsai Tzvi started a following. He was quite a learned man, one that by most standards would have granted him the title of Talmid Chacham.

He was deeply involved in the mystical aspects of Jewish thought, Kabbalah. His prayers, his actions, and his approach. His following grew stronger and larger with time.

Finally he "revealed himself", claiming to be Mashiach. We know from history that nothing could be further from the truth, but at the time, he had a very real and large following. Ordinary, "regular", devout, ehrliche Jews began flocking to him. Disputes broke out within Jewish communities across Europe debating the legitimacy and authenticity of his claim to be Mashiach, and indeed of his very caliber.

There were definitely many red flags which were present. Yet, on the heels of previous massacres and the hope to turn the pages of suffering, and to put galus to its final end, many succumbed to Shabsai Tzvi's evil ways. He was no tzadik. In fact, he was a most horrible rasha. Yet many were swept along in the excitement. Slowly, more and more individuals, communities and Rabbonim of the time were caught up in it too.

His true colors were ultimately revealed, and his plans defeated when it all came crashing down with a crescendo, when he converted to Islam.

At that point, it became apparent to most religious Jews that Shabsai Tzvi was an evil and dishonest man, a conman at best, and certainly not the Mashiach.

But what happened throughout the episode? Much machlokes in Klal Yisroel had been generated. Much anti-semitism had been stirred in its wake. Battles occurred, amongst Jews as well as with non-Jews. People were even killed.

Could it have been avoided? Most certainly. But why wasn't it? Because well-meaning people were too caught up by something sensational to even bother listening. Perhaps there were *kol korehs* at the time which were signed by venerable Rabbonim, endorsing Shabsai Tzvi for his remarkable accomplishments. But few bothered to do a first-hand, independent investigation to identify who this man really was, and who he wasn't. Once again, fear, or perhaps a hysterical, misplaced excitement caused people not to think carefully. The results proved to be devastating. Even after the original Shabsai Tzvi movement had died, spinoffs continued for years to come, as we shall see in the next section.

R' Yonasan Eibeshetz

It was now the 1700's. Klal Yisroel had just gotten over the horrific Shabsai Tzvi debacle. And so the pendulum began swinging the other way. Presently, R' Yonasan Eibeshetz, the venerable ga'on and talmid chacham, had been accused of being a secret Sabbatean, a student of Shabsai Tzvi, and one who was looking to promote the corrupt values of the latter. To be sure, he wasn't. And today, one would be hard-pressed to find a beis medrash which doesn't have the sefer Urim ViTumim, or one of the many other beautiful works composed by R' Eibeshetz. Notwithstanding, that was the accusation.

The basis for the accusation was based on various kabbalistic acts which he performed. The details are out of the scope of this work, but suffice it to say that he was a true tzadik.

The controversy eventually reached the stage of intense and bitter antagonism. The machlokes once again wreaked havoc within the Jewish community causing devastation for years to come.

An innocent man, a genuine gadol, his life was destroyed by callous disregard to the underlying facts.

In an effort to be overzealous and correct the wrongdoings of the previous generation which blindly followed Shabsai Tzvi the rasha, many blindly went along with the claim that a true tzadik was in fact a talmid of Shabsai Tzvi, when in fact he wasn't.

But did the ones making the accusations do proper fact-checking? Did they listen? Were there distortions of truth? Clearly there were. Was sensitivity given to ensure that we act only with evidence-based information and not to make assumptions before destroying his life and creating enormous machlokes in Klal Yisroel?

Ramchal

A similar incident happened at that time with another outstanding Jewish leader, the Ramchal, R' Moshe Chaim Lazzatto. He was also a venerable talmid chacham of the highest caliber. His seforim are revered today by Jews around the world. Perhaps his most famous work, the Mesillas Yesharim, is enjoyed by Chassidim, Litvish and Sefardic Jews to this day.

He also published many other seforim. Yet many of them are no longer available. They were burned and destroyed by other Jews. Other Jews who incorrectly believed that he too was a Sabbatean. Moreover, the Ramchal was certainly not Yeshivish. He definitely did not fit the mold. He hosted plays which were used to teach about Hashem and Yiras Shamayim and in many ways did not fit the typical mold.

He was put in Cherem and forced to stop much of his teachings and flee Europe. He eventually resettled in Eretz Yisroel. But the seforim which were burned were gone forever.

A similar narrative had occurred years earlier with the Rambam. He too, was "different" and did not fit the mold. For a variety of reasons, many of his seforim were burned as well. Today, we know that the Rambam was one of the greatest Rishonim whoever

lived. The Chazon Ish writes that the mesorah of Klal Yisroel is channelled through a chain from Moshe Rabbeinu through the Rambam and other leaders until this day.

Yet their reputations and works were destroyed in their lifetime. They were persecuted by their very own brethren due to unfounded charges. Charges which were invoked and promoted by people who refused to listen. People who believed that zealousness overrides one's career, reputation, livelihood, and dignity. Even if the subject was a talmid chacham of the highest caliber. The interest of zealousness overrode logic, *seichel*, sensitivity, and basic *derech erez*.

What Can We Learn?

If there's but one common thread in all these stories it is that *we need to start listening*. We can always make mistakes, but when we're making decisions that affect the lives of others, we need to assume the prudence and responsibility needed to make those decisions. We need to hear all sides before we act. Surely all those who acted wrongly thought that they were correct. Perhaps they thought that they were performing the greatest mitzvah. Perhaps they justified following the majority. Perhaps there were additional justifications. If our actions are wrong, perhaps we can repent. But what if we just didn't listen? There's never a justification for that. Perhaps this is why we're still in galus.

Sinas Chinam Today

Very recently, our community has been and indeed remains faced with a medical controversy. Many feel that the responsible medical approach is to vaccinate their loved ones. Yet there are others who disagree. This disagreement is hardly new. It has existed for many decades, if not for over a century. Yet the intensity of it, and specifically how it affects our community to this day is quite devastating. It is a true social crisis, and it's not going away anytime soon unless we do something to solve it.

It is particularly complicated because those who believe in vaccines feel that the opposing position is not merely wrong, yet dangerously wrong, and puts the entire community at risk of disease.

Yet those who hold the opposing position feel quite differently. In fact, they feel that they are the subject of bona fide *sin'as chinam*.

The responding sentiment of the pro-vaccine groups is: Sinas Chinam?! What does that have to do with anything?! This is not sin'ah for no reason. And frankly, it's not even sin'ah at all. This is a health issue. And we just don't want to get sick!

But before we dismiss the issue off-handedly, let us recognize that no story of sin'as chinam ever occurred in our history, wherein the perpetrators acknowledged that it was truly sin'ah, much less sin'as chinam. It was *always* under the guise of something allegedly genuine. And the meraglim too, although not a story of sinas chinam, also asserted their position stating that they had a legitimate fear of death which loomed ahead were they to enter Eretz Yisroel. Yet there was something wrong with their position.

We've also seen how over history, quick, rash judgements can have catastrophic results, as things aren't always how they appear. So, today, as we mourn galus, the beis hamikdash, and the Churban, let's take a deeper look before we jump to conclusions.

Questions

Pro-vaccine advocates have posed numerous questions over time. Some have been expressed explicitly, and others merely implied. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the main questions which they pose. Most, if not all are extremely valid questions, all of which call for an answer.

- Why does your position matter if you're not a doctor?
- Vaccines have saved us from devastating fatal and life-altering diseases of previous times. Why in the world would you want to take the world back to that black and terrible place?
- Why are you being petty and concerned about some very silly issues, some side effects which are so remote, inconsequential, and highly infrequent, putting us at risk of things much more serious, such as real, and debilitating disease?
- The entire origin of the concerns of the "anti-vaxxers" comes from a fraudulent paper written by a doctor over twenty years ago claiming that vaccines cause autism. The doctor subsequently lost his license as a result of the fraud. Why is this still even a conversation?

- If there would be real issues with vaccines, why wouldn't we hear about it in the news? There would be lawsuits. Congress would do something.
- Like all drugs, vaccines are tested by the FDA. They're all safe and very effective.
- Why are you going against the CDC?
- Why don't you follow Halacha? All or nearly all Rabbonim say to vaccinate.
- How can you honestly claim a religious exemptions to vaccines? The claim is such *sheker!* Where in Halacha does it say that there's a problem vaccinating? On the contrary, nearly all Rabbonim say that one is Mechuyev to vaccinate!
- Don't you care about others? You're putting others at risk. Are you taking advantage of others who vaccinate, allowing them to get the immunity, while you reap the benefits without doing so yourself? That's just selfish!
- Vaccines have been a victim of their own success. The reason why you're not afraid of the deadly diseases of yesteryear is because we no longer have these diseases, precisely *because* of vaccines. If people would stop vaccinating, we *would* be getting these diseases back!
- The measles kills 1 in 1,000. Even more can become seriously compromised/hospitalized temporarily or long-term. Why would you want that?
- Why are you adopting such strange, weird views which are cult-like, which come from newly-formed ideologies, based on misinformation spread by ignorant people on the internet?
- Why don't you care about the Chillul Hashem that you're making?

These, and perhaps more, are some of the very valid and warranted questions being asked by pro-vaccine advocates. It is deeply commendable that these questions are being asked. It is proper and appropriate that we ask questions in life. We grow through asking. We need to ask. In fact, it would be callous, imprudent, and downright irresponsible if we *wouldn't* ask.

But since when is the existence of a question used as a basis for not willing to hear the answer to said question? On the contrary. A question is the beginning of a conversation, not its end. A question is an opportunity to listen to an answer, not to squelch it.

Did you say, "You know, my neighbor/*chavrusah*/sister-in-law/etc. is such a nice, normal person. Why would they take such a strange, and irresponsible view, namely, to be an 'anti-vaxxer'? Why don't I sit down with him/her, have a heart-to-heart conversation, and start listening. Perhaps I will learn something."? Or did you say, "This person is nuts. I

will suppress their very opportunity of being able to explain their position. I used to be really close to him, but now I will keep my distance." Or even, "I will no longer be inviting my sister to my simchas."

Is that Menschlichkeit? Is that family? Is that achdus? Is that love? Is that listening? You don't have to adopt their views. You don't need to be in physical proximity of someone who may cause you physical harm, but don't Yidden deserve the benefit of the doubt? Ask them your questions. Ask away. But ask questions, not statements. Listen to the answers. Then, and only then, decide.

Those who oppose vaccines actually have deeply compelling answers to the aforementioned equally deeply compelling questions, as well as to additional questions not mentioned above. But they haven't been given the opportunity to present their views in a reasonable fashion.

As mentioned, pro-vaccine advocates claim that they are merely acting for the benefit of their health. That is their true, altruistic and only goal. Not chas v'shalom to hurt another Yid.

But is that true? Let's take a look at some of the actions which were taken in our community and see. Perhaps the actions taken do not match up with the stated purpose of said actions, which should raise concern.

Stories

- A proud and upstanding member of a shul for over ten years was kicked out of the shul when it was discovered that their children were not vaccinated. The parents told the Rav, "But my children pose no risk, as they already got the actual disease. We have blood work to show that they have titers and cannot hurt anyone in any way. What's the issue?" But the cries and pains of the family fell upon deaf ears. Even though it was biologically impossible for the family to pose any medical threat to other families in the shul, they were expelled. The Rav was screaming over the phone at the parents in a nasty way.
- A sixth-grade girl was kicked out of her school for having been unvaccinated, and had to remain home for the remainder of the year. At the end of the year, all girls submitted stories and memories which were to be shared in a printed calendar that the class had worked to produce. All girls contributed to the project, except

for this unvaccinated girl who was not allowed to contribute. *Is measles communicable via a printed calendar?*

- Many schools kicked out kids who had not received vaccinations for measles. These schools could have allowed the students to continue learning with the class, remotely, via Skype, yet many didn't. *Is measles communicable via Skype?*
- A prominent Rav told someone that "the 'anti-vaxxers' should be lined up in front of a firing squad and shot". *Is this the way for a human being to talk, much less a Yid, much less a Rav? Does this rhetoric help promote public health? Whether it was said in jest or meant to be taken literally, either way, is such hurtful talk permitted or appropriate?*
- A Rav in New Jersey publicly told his congregation: It's better to spend ten hours watching shmutz on the internet than to go to an "anti-vaxxers" rally. *Al eileh ani bochia.*
- A vaccine-skeptic journalist said the following (paraphrased): "I have attended many vaccine-safety awareness rallies, and I've often been attacked by pro-vaccine advocates who raise valid questions about the views which I hold. But never before have I been so viciously attacked as I have by ultra-Orthodox Jewish pro-vaccine advocates who simply jumped on me with personal attacks and baseless statements that don't even address the issues. I told all of them that I'd be happy to address their questions one by one, but they weren't interested in that. They just wanted to attack." *Frum, Jewish pro-vaccine advocates share the same beliefs as non-Jewish pro-vaccine advocates, yet in this epic display of Chillul Hashem, the non-Jewish journalist recognized the utter nastiness displayed by the Jewish ones which took things to an entirely new level.*
- An eighth-grade girl was kicked out of her school for having been unvaccinated, and had to remain home for the remainder of the year. At the end of the year, it was time for the graduation. The teacher decided that it was OK for the girl to attend graduation as well as graduation practice. (After all, the girl was 100% healthy; she was just unvaccinated, allegedly being able to spread disease were she to get sick). However, there was a 45-minute private meeting which was held between the teacher and her students. The teacher refused to allow the girl to attend that part, *just to be mean*. During that time, the girls were offered warm wishes, goodbyes, and ices (treats) to be enjoyed. As instructed, the girl showed up only for the actual practice, was handed a container of liquid (melted) ices which she was unable to eat then anyway since graduation practice had just begun. When later questioned by the parent as to why the girl was not allowed to

attend that gathering (since she was to attend later anyway), the teacher merely blushed and walked away.

- A rally was held in the frum community to help promote vaccine safety awareness. In a cynical, cunning, and intimidating fashion, multiple frum news sites posted an article telling would-be attendants to "dress nicely", as their picture would be taken at the event and posted on social media, so that we could know who's truly an "anti-vaxxer". *A non-Jewish journalist once again proclaimed sheer shock over the existential threat to Jews by their own brethren.*
- A Ba'al teshuva and active member of the local community and school had a number of concerns regarding vaccinations, not the least of which was that his older child was verifiably vaccine-injured and he didn't want to vaccinate his other children. Understandably, the school was concerned with his position, as, in their view, the unvaccinated pose a threat to the vaccinated. He completely understood their position too, and wanted to address it in a way that addresses the concerns of all parties. So they arranged a meeting to discuss it. But at the meeting, they were downright nasty to him, mean, and uncooperative, completely invalidating his view without even hearing his position. They made him crazy, and lied to him about what their intentions and plans were (because he was a supporter of the school and they needed his money, so they couldn't be straight about it, for fear of losing support). *Afterwards, he said to himself, "What do I need this for? I was moser nefesh to come to a life of Torah, only to be berated by my own kind? I don't need this. I will just send my kids to a non-Jewish school. They too may be pro-vaccination, but at least they will be more menchlach and more understanding." Al eileh ani bochi'a.*
- At a local neighborhood women's gathering, one woman got up and started yelling at another woman and blaming her for spreading misinformation and the measles. This was due to the fact that some of her children were unvaccinated. *Yet she didn't listen to the facts. She didn't listen to the facts that there already was a vaccine injury in the family. She didn't listen to the facts that the children already got the measles and as such pose no risk to anyone. She didn't listen to many other things as well. She simply jumped to conclusions and took matters into her own hands and decided that it was permitted to scream at, humiliate, and embarrass another Yid without doing fact-checking. The fact that Rabbeinu Yona says that one is required to give up their life before embarrassing someone apparently didn't matter to her.*
- One person said: "Every shul should ban anti-vaxxers. They are not practicing Judaism and are actually heretics. Their kitchens should be deemed to be treif

and they should be put in real *cherem* for the safety of the community". *Is this promoting health? Is there halachic basis for rendering one's kitchen treif? Is this founded?*

- Another one said: "The truth is that the anti-vaxxers are *din rodef* [sic] and it would be a *mitzvah* to kill them all were it not for the fact that secular law makes that illegal" *Did HaRav Elyashiv zt"l say this too?*
- Two friends, Reuven (for vaccines) and Shimon (opposing vaccines) had a conversation via text messaging. First, Reuven forwards a copy of an article indicating the severity of a vaccine-preventable disease to his friend Reuven. Shimon responded: If you want to have a scientific discussion, we can. But just to send drive-by shooting clips or links without willing to hear the whole story, and to agree to only speak with *derech erez* and not to be *over on onaas devarim* is unacceptable.
Reuven replies (word for word): Like the nations of the world said to Hashem when he asked them to accept the Torah, and *that*, I cannot accept, so you'll have to have that conversation with someone else.
Meaning, to request that we have a scientific conversation about vaccines and wanting to see the whole picture and being unwilling to accept something blindly, that is akin to the secular nations telling Hashem that they won't accept the Torah blindly, without knowing what's in it. Yikes!
- A Rav who had previously come out with a letter saying that one must vaccinate later spoke with doctors and professionals on the other side. He also met with parents whose children clearly had vaccine injuries. After careful thought, he recognized that it's not so simple, and vaccinating isn't necessarily the right route, or at least not for everyone. Yet he refuses to get involved at this point, saying that he just doesn't have the head or time for it. He later said that he cannot publicly come out saying that he has hesitations with vaccines, even though he admits he does, because he has children who work for a particular pediatrician, and if he would do so, they'd lose their jobs.
- From a mother: My name is Faigy and I have two sons in a well known cheder. My sons had been out of school for nearly a month. I worry very much about my children falling back in their academics. My boys have a physical disposition that could and did cause them to have an adverse reaction to vaccines, but I am not eligible for a medical exemption. The day they were "removed" from school, they were not allowed into their classrooms. The principal claimed he was getting a lot of pressure from teachers and parents. How do these unknown "people" know my children are not immune to MMR? I feel my privacy of choice has been defied-

why is it anyone's business besides my doctor's what medical approach I decide to follow- especially not the parent body in my child's school- I wouldn't dare ask them what diagnosis and treatments their child is receiving! Can you imagine standing by the principal's office waiting to be picked up by your parents for no fault of your own- at least let them finish the day. If the school was afraid of contamination then it's too late, they were in the school building already. I specifically asked the school when they called that my children are by the office waiting to be picked up, "can they at least stay till the end of the day, so as not to embarrass them." They said, "absolutely not", reminiscent of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza...

Additionally, my sons have suffered peer humiliation. They were constantly talked about by peers and teachers. Both sons had an MMR shot when they were younger but only Dovid showed immunity on a titer. Dovid was asked publicly by teachers "oh, how is your brother Chaim, what's he doing, is he learning? Dovid, of shy nature, came home embarrassed and upset daily. After presenting information to the principal to return my Chaim back to school and discussing his medical situation, he first agreed but then changed his mind the next day saying that based on new undocumented measles cases my son must stay home. He also said that he no longer has any power to return him to school, that this is a decision that was made by the "board." I have taken a great financial loss for all the days I took off to entertain my son. My poor Chaim has started to misbehave from boredom. It's been difficult without a structured school schedule. Will we be able to ever return back, it seems like the "tricks" to keep these children home will never end.

- A Rav said: "Klal Yisroel in America is being run by a *meshugana* Rebbitzen", *disgracefully referring to the wife of a venerable Rosh Yeshiva who opposes vaccines. The implication was that this Rosh Yeshiva's position is not based on facts but merely on the fact that his wife has a holistic approach to health in general, and thus their fears for vaccine safety is highly and pathetically exaggerated, in his eyes. What the Rav didn't do though, is ask the Rosh Yeshiva what his views are based on? Are they based on a preconceived holistic position, or perhaps they're based on the fact that this same Rosh Yeshiva spoke to over thirty MD's who've confided in him that vaccines may be quite dangerous and unnecessary but they're afraid to state so publicly in fear of losing their license? Did this Rav fact-check, or did he just disparagingly repeat what he heard everyone else repeat?*

- From a parent: Our two sons both had immediate reactions to their MMR shots. One couldn't walk, he kept losing his balance and falling over. The other's lips turned blue. They both subsequently developed a lifelong condition that I don't wish upon anyone. One immediately and one gradually. Currently, we were now forced to vaccinate my 5-year-old daughter for her to be allowed back to playgroup (despite her medical exemption). We cannot vaccinate my 3-year-old son and he is home with his mother.
- From a parent: My 2 year old son attended a certain playgroup. After investigation we discovered that the frum pediatrician himself had called the morah and told her that it's dangerous for other kids to have my son in the playgroup. My son is a NICU baby and has a medical history of pulmonary hypertension. Four parents threatened to pull out and after weeks fighting the morah just gave in to them and said her rov told her to ask us not to come. Said would only accept a medical note from this particular pediatrician, not anybody else.
- From a parent: My 7-year-old daughter was a trauma victim having drowned as a toddler and being in a coma. As a result she is unable to be vaccinated. One afternoon I was waiting for my 7-year-old's school bus. When it pulled up the doors opened up... and no one came out. I immediately called the school and was told that she was in the kept in hallway from 9 o'clock in the morning until 3:40 dismissal. Subsequently she still wasn't allowed to board the bus because she's expelled from school... Nobody from school besides her morah had the decency to call us even once with any sympathy.
- From a parent: My 11-year-old Moshe has an intrinsic asthma and many allergies. He has a medical exemption as he truly had very severe reactions to vaccines. His Yeshiva refused to accept our medical exemption and said that they would only accept medical exemptions from Dr. A., Dr. B., or Dr. C. I told them that Dr. A. is the one who time and time again would not attribute my sons conditions to vaccines despite evidence to the contrary; Dr. B. has no practice at all. He is an emergency room doctor, and Dr. C. is a pediatrician in Monmouth Hospital who does not know my child. I cannot understand why out of the whole world they picked these three doctors, one not even a pediatrician, from the whole NJ, while ignoring my doctor who knows my child and says that he cannot receive the vaccine.
- From a parent: After I told my school that it's illegal, they said, "Keep low, if you want us to deal with you. Otherwise, will not even talk to you." In simple English, threatening one not to take legal action is called obstruction of justice, and

keeping a child out of school for no reason is called retzicha. The school claims that they will call me when I can come back... I'm still waiting.

- From a parent: Our family chose not to vaccinate for personal reasons. With my son out of school during the measles outbreak, we decided to deliberately expose him the way our parents did, and this way he would be immune for life. After he recovered, we went ahead and did blood work to show that he had adequate titers to measles. The blood work came back positive and he returned to school. Afterward, I got a call from the school that Dr. A. said that only titers that were from before the measles outbreak are acceptable. But titers that appeared within the last 3 weeks are unacceptable. *The logic escapes me. Is this the way we value teaching our children Torah?*

- From a parent: My 16-year-old daughter has a congenital autoimmune disorder which makes her severely immuno-compromised. After getting a couple of vaccines as a baby and getting very severe reactions such as compromised breathing and multiple instances of pneumonia and almost losing her when her body shut down so severely, we realized together with our pediatrician that she was unable to tolerate vaccines as her immune system was way too compromised. Besides the fact that she has multiple medical conditions that rendered her sick more often than not as we were in and out of hospitals and surgeries, we were constantly struggling to keep her healthy without adding in any additional live viruses and allergens (as she was allergic to eggs among others) from vaccines.

With the recent outbreak of measles, we were devastated when the school refused to let her attend since she hadn't gotten an MMR shot. No amount of explaining about her condition or speaking to her doctor helped as this was officially an "outbreak" even though there hadn't been a single case in her school. My daughter was crushed as she was already suffering so much from her genetic condition as it is, should she now be punished as well for being born with this?? She had a clear medical exemption and yet it didn't suffice. Being a teenager, she tried so hard to fit in and not be different and now everyone would know why she's absent for so long besides that she missed a major melava malka that she helped organize and a full week of testing! The school told me they're not forcing me to vaccinate her. I said but if you're not letting her come to school that is forcing me. You're pushing me into a corner.

- From a parent: We sat with our pediatrician for hours trying to come up with a solution but concluded that it's way more dangerous for her to receive the vaccine being it's a live virus that she cannot fight off than the small possibility of

her catching the measles. He showed me all the contraindications on the insert of the MMR vaccine label from the CDC and he said it fully states here that someone with your daughter's condition is NOT ALLOWED to receive this shot. He said he'd be stupid and can be held liable if he gave it to her and something chaililah happens. He told me I have no choice but keep her home. After 2 full weeks of seeing her wither into herself and become withdrawn and angry, I begged the school to reconsider once again, explaining how there is a 2-4% of the population that are unable to be vaccinated and that's why everyone else needs to be to protect those who cannot. My child is of that 2% and if 96 to 98% is immune then it's enough to protect her. They said they will have a meeting with some doctors in town (not mine who knows her best and I trust) to see what they advise.

That night, at midnight, I got a call that since she's immuno-compromised she should get the single measles only vaccine. and not the mumps or rubella since those are worse and this way she will be able to tolerate it. I spoke to my doctor who couldn't believe which doctors suggested this since this option has been off the market for almost 20 years! He said he used to administer single vaccines 20 years ago and they are no longer available. Then he said that even if it was available he would never give it to my daughter as the measles vaccine is a live virus, as the rubella one, and in his experience from giving that one even as a single it was the worst from all 3. He was incredulous that doctors can even suggest this and said either they don't know what's going on and, in that case, shouldn't be advising anyone or they are trying to fool people into thinking that they're getting a single vial measles vaccine when in reality not. This begs the question, did he actually read the package insert of a vaccine that doesn't exist and arrive at the conclusion that this vaccine doesn't have side effects that would possibly kill my child? Is my child's life so hefker that based on utter nonsense, he would put her into such danger?

To make a long story short Chasdei Hashem my daughter is back in school at this time, but it still took lots of time and we needed to get the rabbanim of the school involved so the school can agree to take her back. I cannot describe the pain and agmas nefesh we went through. How our arms were twisted so many times to try to get us to vaccinate when it was clearly against medical and legal advice. Would they agree to take responsibility if anything should happen to my child? Of course not. But we need you to vaccinate to attend school. Do you make sure that no one with the flu, fever or strep or any illness comes to school before they're really well so that my daughter won't get sick from them?? Are all

the foreign workers in the school and stores, janitors, bus drivers immunized? What about all the adults that are no longer immune despite having been vaccinated. Are you worried about them?? Is this how we treat each other fellow yidden?? Is moshiach supposed to come like this?? Will he say if you weren't vaccinated you can't come to Yerushalayim?? Where is Hashem in this picture? Does everyone believe that there's Hashem in this world and you cannot catch ANY disease, measles or anything without Him saying so?

There are so many more stories to share, each conveying a slightly different idea, perhaps one more shocking than the next. But the overall message should be very clear. The side opposing vaccines has not been heard. Saying that you know what their position is and as such you know that their position is wrong does not in any way constitute listening. Saying that you spoke to a doctor who told you that their side is wrong does not constitute listening to their side. Saying that you spoke to a Rav who told you that you don't need to listen to their side does not constitute listening.

It's time to start listening. Notice that we haven't answered a single one of the questions previously mentioned, which are often raised by pro-vaccine advocates. The reason for this is because that's not the avodas hayom of Tisha B'Av. It's not about the answers. It's about how we deal with the questions. This is not a medical compilation. It is a human one. One about interpersonal acts. It's about how we go about obtaining answers. There are answers to *all* the aforementioned questions. But you won't know them if you don't listen. It all starts with listening.

Some say, "I don't have time to listen." But is it really about time? Don't we have time for all kinds of meaningless things in life? It is both sad and shocking to see how people in our community who are otherwise the most loving, warm, giving, and selfless people can transform into entirely different, nasty, vindictive, subhuman individuals when it comes to suppressing vaccine hesitancy. Almost as if this is a gezeira mi'shamayim.

What about a husband or wife who disagree on this issue and the pro side refuses to even listen to their spouse who is of the opposing position? Is that what marriage is about? Is that what will bring the shechinah to a home or to klal yisroel? Listening doesn't mean agreeing. It just means being a mentch. Emes is not afraid of sheker, and when two genuinely sincere and truth-seeking individuals work together on an issue and research thoroughly, they will come to the emes, regardless of their previous position.

So I ask two questions: 1) Yes, there's a health concern, but did you hear the other side? 2) Is your response commensurate with your claim that the reasons for your actions is because of health, or is there a mismatch? Is there an over-zealousness for other reasons which perhaps have nothing to do with thwarting an immediate health concern?

כִּצְאֹתֵי אֶת־הָעִיר: Middah Kinnegged Middah

There are a number of events which occurred over the last several years which appear to be connected, both politically as well as hashkafically. On this sad day, it behooves us to see the Yad Hashem in daily events and see if we can connect the dots where applicable. To say that things are merely coincidence, *mikrah*, is a terrible sin, in that we are denying *hashgacha pratis*. Let us glean from these recent events and come out with a more profound understanding of our surroundings and hopefully have a better understanding of Hashem and our mission.

| בְּצִאֹתֵי מְמַצְרִים | בְּצִאֹתֵי מִירוּשָׁלַיִם |
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| NY State issued new laws which would directly impact our Yeshiva system as we know it, insisting that we teach more secular studies than would be possible under our current chinuch model. If implemented, our talmidim and talmidos would all be out of school. | A mere few days prior to that, unvaccinated children were kicked out of Yeshivos, even though they were perfectly healthy. The two events occurred during Chanukah season, at a time in history that the ancient Greeks wanted to destroy Torah from Bnei Yisroel. |
| Mr. X, an overly-zealous and anti-religious man with an orthodox background is responsible for bringing the issue of yeshiva education to the attention of the NYS Department of Education. | Overly-zealous people within our community went to the government of their own volition and helped facilitate the expulsion of unvaccinated kids from yeshivos. These measures were above and beyond current legislation and safety measures recognized even by our own health departments. |
| He is the individual referred to in an Hamodia op-ed, entitled "Not When It Comes To Our Children!" where... | Leading rabbanim call parents who don't vaccinate rodfim and rotzchim. These |

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| <p>“columnist Rabbi Abraham Y. Heschel cited the Chofetz Chaim, as saying that when Jews “seek to harm the Chinuch system ... [T]hey are considered to be rodfim! When they seek to thrust a knife into the children, we are obligated to be moser nefesh [self-sacrificing] to save them!”</p> <p>https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/is-it-a-threat-to-call-someone-a-rodef/</p> | <p>same rabbanim deny these unvaccinated children a Jewish education...</p> |
| <p>The education issue became more and more intense.</p> | <p>More and more, kids were being kicked out of Yeshivas by their own brethren, without the opportunity for them to show from their own doctors or scientists whether there was any validity to their claims. Kids were simply deprived of the right to learn Torah, in a guilty-until-proven-innocent fashion, or perhaps a guilty-end-of-story fashion.</p> |
| <p>Eventually the education issue subsided, after much heated community, political, and legal debate.</p> | <p>This occurred as slowly, children were being allowed back into Yeshivos.</p> |
| <p>Shortly thereafter, the education issue was back on the table again.</p> | <p>On June 13, 2019, NY State passed a law repealing religious exemptions for vaccines. The education issue reopened at that same time.</p> |
| <p>Leading Rabbonim including talmidim of the venerable Roshei Yeshivos of yesteryear (R' Pam, zt"l, R' Reuven Fein, zt"l) spent countless hours away from their beloved gemaras in an effort to help a tzibur who was going through a chinuch crisis.</p> | <p>These same Rabbonim refused to have even a single private meeting with parents of medically-verified vaccine-injured children to see if there would be a way for them to have a viable chinuch option for their children too, in a way which won't put each other's health at risk. They said that they didn't want to get involved, but this was after they already told many (in public) that the “anti-vaxxers” are</p> |

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| | rotzchim, all without having heard the other side. |
| When Metziza BiPeh was an issue, all frum forces came together with a united front to help save Metziza BiPeh, even those who halachically or otherwise oppose MBP, since we cannot have the government dictate rules pertaining to religion. | The same groups who fought for Metziza BiPeh refused to publicly address the Religious Exemption issue in NY State, denigrating all those who claim a religious exemption to vaccines, without giving them an opportunity to explain their position. Apparently, it was more important to be anti the "anti-vaxxers" than to protect religion. As a result, the law was passed, and now, the government wants to mandate the Gardasil (HPV) vaccine. This vaccine, besides being one of the most dangerous on the market (with pending lawsuits all over the world), is used to protect from an STD, a prevention which is not needed in our community. We could have used the religious exemption to exempt our children from this vaccine, but now we lost that option. |
| The fight against MBP was spearheaded by Tom Frieden, the then head of NYC Health Department. The frum community fought him tooth and nail. | Tom Frieden was then promoted to become the head of the CDC and continued to promote vaccines and remove religious exemptions. The frum community blindly accepted what he said. |
| Everyone was appalled at the State, and effectively cried out in unison: "What are we to do without the Yeshivas; it's not like we can just homeschool everyone!" | Everyone said to those who don't vaccinate, "Just homeschool your kids. What's the big deal?" |
| Torahdig newspapers unite for a cause, to fight against the government's edicts against chinuch or MBP | Torahdig newspapers make fun, deride, and cajole other frum Jews who have a different view regarding vaccinations. |
| Top Jewish Doctors fight the government tooth and nail on medical issues pertaining to MBP, showing that the CDC | Top Jewish doctors and askanim blindly follow the CDC, even as more and more whistleblowers (including Dr. William |

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| <p>and the NY Department of Health were clearly lying and had misconstrued the data, showing that the CDC cannot be trusted.</p> | <p>Thompson) from the CDC have come forward and have stated that the CDC has committed "scientific fraud" and has systematically manipulated the data, and that in reality vaccines are far less safe and effective than officially claimed.</p> |
| | <p>Top Jewish doctors blindly follow Dr. Paul Offit, an anti-religious Jew, one of the largest vaccine-pushers of our time, (who helped develop a vaccine and receives royalties from it) who stated openly that he's against all forms of bris milah (not just MBP).</p> |
| | <p>Top Jewish doctors blindly follow Dr. Stanley Plotkin, an anti-religious Jew, one of the largest vaccine-pushers of our time, (who holds many vaccine patents) who stated that he hopes his book on vaccines will prove to be more accurate than the Bible, R"L.</p> |
| <p>Klal Yisroel united to fight the education issue</p> | <p>Rabbonim, laymen, and everyone in between mocked, scorned, spoke <i>ona'as devorim</i>, belittled, didn't give the benefit of the doubt, vilified, marginalized and had outright <i>sin'ah</i> against those who refused to vaccinate.</p> |
| <p>Torah newspapers united to fight the education issue</p> | <p>Torah newspapers united to demonize those who oppose vaccines. No known group of ehrliche Yidden have ever been demonized so relentlessly and in such a negative and unprecedented fashion. They chose to foster dischord instead of understanding. Scores of examples are available, yet we abstain from providing further details due to the nature of the day.</p> |

In an effort to oppose religion and religious values, NY State violated their own laws and manipulated their own courts, legislative, and other branches of government in order to procure an indictment against Yeshivas with regards to secular education.

Is it possible that some Yidden who issued *piskei halacha* may have been in violation of the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch which states that one cannot *pasken* a question without hearing both sides? Saying that a given doctor said that the other side need not be heard is no different than a situation wherein Reuven and Shimon disagree, and the beis din refuses to hear Reuven's side because Shimon said that Reuven's side does not need to be heard. Or for the beis din to say that Shimon is a tremendous tzadik and couldn't possibly lie and therefore chooses to rule in Shimon's favor without having heard Reuven's side. Is it possible that this would fall under the category of *eevus hadin*, perversion of judgement, a great sin indeed, which is one of the causes of galus?

Yosef

One final thought. In Sefer Bereishis, we are told of the story of Yosef and his brothers. They tried killing him. They sold him. But we are told by the meforshim that they believed that they were correct. They believed, based on actions which Yosef had committed that their responses were justified.

Later, when they were standing before the Egyptian viceroy whose identity was still unknown to them, they made a *cheshbon hanefesh*. The pasuk in Parshas Mikeitz (Bereishis 42:21) tells us:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֲבָל אֲשֵׁמִים אָנַחְנוּ עַל אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהִתְחַנְּנוּ אֵלֵינוּ
וְלֹא שָׁמְעֵנוּ עַל כֵּן בָּאָה אֵלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת

They said, each one to his brother, we are guilty regarding our brother because we saw the pain of his soul as he cried out to us and we didn't listen; that's why this tzarah has befallen us.

Clearly, they felt that they were right. But Yosef had called out to them in pain. And they didn't listen. They ignored him. When someone calls out in pain, if you're a Yid, you listen. It doesn't matter what you think.

Those who choose not to vaccinate have not had their position truly heard. I mean listened to *for real*. Not like when your wife is talking to you and she says, "Are you listening?" and you say, "I'm listening, I'm listening" as you continue scrolling through your smartphone. I mean listening for real. They might actually have validity to their position. It may surprise you. The quieter you are, the more you hear.

They may be wrong.

But you won't be punished if you listen and then act accordingly.

But what if they're right? Anyone can be wrong. The Torah tells us that even Moshe Rabbeinu made mistakes, because we're all humans. And you may not be held accountable after a hundred and twenty years if you made an honest mistake. Perhaps. Because you're human. But what if the mistake was because you simply chose not to listen to someone crying out in pain?

Let's repeat and state unequivocally. The medical questions being raised are very, very compelling. The questions are genuine and they demand answers. But no one is willing to give the opportunity to allow for the answers to be answered. Rabbonim are not listening. Doctors are not listening. Laymen and community members are not listening. And we're still in golus. You won't be punished for being a listener. What will you say after 120 years knowing that you could have listened, but chose not to? Let us bring the geulah today.

For questions or comments, please contact rodef.shalom.613@gmail.com