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**On the First Yarzeit**

**Of Covid’s Arrival,**

**A Personal Letter**

**By Rabbi** [**Mendy Kaminker**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12111/jewish/Kaminker-Mendy.htm)



**Illustrated by the Rivka Korf Studio**

 We are just about to mark the first *yahrzeit*of when Covid-19 introduced death and mayhem into our lives. (Unfortunately, it is still very much here ... but you know what I mean). So here's my eulogy, a year later.

 Dear Mr. Covid,

 It is hard to believe that only a year has passed since we met you close up. You feel so much a part of my life. Wherever I go, I see people thinking and talking about you. Whenever I put on my face mask or have to go on another Zoom, I think of you.

**You Had that Exotic-Sounding Name**

 I remember when you were far away. You had that exotic-sounding name. They called you “Corona.” You were almost like a curiosity; we didn’t know what you were going to look like.

 A few weeks before you officially arrived in our lives, I brought Corona beer to our Chabad in Hackensack. At the *kiddush* reception, we all enjoyed some beer.

 "Anyone who drinks Corona beer will not have a Coronavirus," I joked, and we all laughed.

 A few weeks later, no one was laughing.

 Schools and workplaces were shut. Everyone was home, and there was an endless stream of sad news: death, illness and overcrowded hospitals. Frankly, wherever you went, you wreaked havoc.

 You have changed how people live, travel, work and study. You've changed everything.

 Now, hopefully, you will be gone soon. Maybe you should take with you some of the "gifts" you brought. Working at home, for example, sounds like an attractive idea on paper. But ask anyone with young kids and a small living space what they think about it. So many of your other “gifts” are not necessary either.

 Still, there are some developments that we will cherish.

**Learning to Appreciate the Under-Appreciated**

 You taught us to appreciate the under-appreciated.

 You taught us a new perspective of life.

 You taught us to have patience and think outside the box.

 And you taught us to once again embrace our homes.

 You see, your *yahrzeit*is right around when we read in the Torah how G‑d told Moses: "They shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them."

 The sages point out that G‑d does not say, "I will dwell in it," but, "I will dwell in them." Because while G‑d expects us to build a massive, communal sanctuary, he also asks and empowers us to build our own holy place.

 For so many years, the "Jewish stuff" has been relegated to synagogues and study halls. We prayed in the synagogues; we attended Torah classes in academic institutions; and we participated in the communal holiday celebrations at community centers.

 That's great, but that's not how G‑d designed it.

**The Need to Have Holiness in**

**Our Own Homes and Spaces**

 He wanted us to create our own sanctuaries and not solely to rely on the community. To have holiness in our own homes and spaces.

 And because of you, we have done exactly that.

 A few months after you came and messed up our lives, a religious Jew told me, "I never knew that I could pray at home with as much devotion as I did in the synagogue. I always relied on the ambiance, on the people next to me, on the singing. And here I was alone at home, rediscovering G‑d in a new way."

 He is not the only one.

 This past Rosh Hashanah, I was thinking how instead of the thousands of synagogues around the country, we now have millions of mini-synagogues ... in kitchens, in living rooms, in dining rooms. People have created holy spaces.

 You taught us to embrace the home and realize its holiness.

 Mr. Covid:

 As we say goodbye, I don't want to say "until we meet again" because I hope I'll never will.

 I do not want to say that I will miss you because I won’t miss you one bit.

 I cannot even bring myself to say that your memory will be a blessing.

**May Your Memory Be a Lesson**

 All I can say is this: May your memory be a lesson, and may the lessons we have learned remain with us forever. And let us say, “Amen.”

 P.S. "But it's a virus! He has no feelings, no intention, or consciousness!" I know. I guess it's all Covid's fault!

 P.P.S. "Why Mr. Covid"? Not sure. For some reason, Covid sounds more like a male, and Corona like a female. Makes sense?

***Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org Magazine.***

# Rav Avigdor Miller on

# The Real Home Insurance



 **QUESTION: What does it mean when it says (Eiruvin 18b) that a house where the sound of the Torah is heard at night, that house will not destroyed?**

 **ANSWER:** Now, that’s like all the statements in the scriptures and in the gemara – it depends on various factors this is one of the factors. Many times, many times we suddenly see, chas v’shalom it shouldn’t happen, that a house is broken up.  Sometimes an illness suddenly strikes, chas v’shalom, or another tragedy and the parents are gone; both parents are gone.  It happens.  Sometimes, there’s a breakup.  A tragedy.  One parent, the father runs away.  It happens, chas v’shalom.  There are all kinds of ways that a house can be attacked.

 Now a house is a very precious building block of our nation.  Every Jewish home is of inestimable value to us, besides for being the greatest value to the members of that house.  And therefore we have to utilize all factors available that will stabilize such a house.

 And one of the big factors is if the sound of the Torah is heard there at night.  Hakodosh Boruch Hu is going to try preserve a house like that; it means He has a personal interest in that house, so to speak.  He is interested that this house should continue.  And therefore it’s going to be protected against many vicissitudes which otherwise would come in and break up a house.

 Chas v’shalom, when a house breaks up, a Jewish house, it’s a churban of a little Beis Hamikdash.  And one of the ways of ensuring the survival of that house is, at night to take out a gemara; if you don’t know gemara take out a chumash and say Torah aloud at night – even a little bit – at your table.  You don’t realize – the entire atmosphere changes in that house.  And Hakodosh Boruch Hu already has a very big interest in preserving that house.

***Reprinted from the February 12, 2021 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #133)***

**Every Jew’s Connection**

**To G-d’s Sanctuary**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 When it came time to construct the Sanctuary's vessels, discussed in this week's portion, Tetzave, Moses was unsure of how to make the gold Menora. G-d instructed him to throw the gold into the fire, and the Menora miraculously took shape by itself.

 Many of the Sanctuary's vessels were far more complicated to construct than the Menora, but Moses had no difficulty with them. What then did Moses find so troublesome about the menora, especially since G-d had already shown him what it looked like on Mount Sinai?

**Moshe’s Difficulty in Comprehending the Menora**

 What Moses found difficult to understand was not the menora's form but its function. How could a physical object -- any object -- serve as a "dwelling place" for G-d and become holy? What do a table, an ark, a menora or an altar have to do with the Divine Presence?

 Indeed, King Solomon posed the same question in the verse, "The highest heavens cannot contain You; how then can this House?"

 Logic seems to dictate that a "dwelling place" for G-d be constructed of spiritual building blocks: learning Torah, praying with the right intention, loving and fearing G-d, etc. But how can physical objects bring sanctity into our lives?

**A Testimony to all Mankind that**

**The Divine Presence Rests in Israel**

 It was this concept that Moses found troubling, which found expression most particularly in the Menora. The purpose of the Menora was to serve as "testimony to all mankind that the Divine Presence rests in Israel." By means of the Menora, the light of holiness was to disperse throughout the world; Moses wondered how any physical object could perform such a tremendous function.

 G-d's answer was that, in truth, this task is indeed beyond the ability of human beings. Only an infinite and unlimited Creator can grant a golden Menora the power to light up the entire world with holiness; the only reason it does is because such is G-d's will.

 This was alluded to when the Menora took shape in the fire without human intervention. Similarly, the entire concept of the Sanctuary serving as a dwelling place for G-d is Divine in origin and not human.

 This provides us with an eternal lesson for today, for despite the fact that the physical Temple has not yet been restored (may it be rebuilt by Moshiach immediately), every Jew possesses a "Sanctuary to G-d" in his heart. Furthermore, the Jew's primary function in the world is to imbue all he comes in contact with holiness.

**Transforming the Most**

**Mundane Aspects of Our Lives**

 The Torah tells us that it's not enough to bring sanctity into life's spiritual dimensions; even the most mundane aspects of our lives must serve as a "Sanctuary" for G-d's Presence. This can be achieved miraculously if we throw ourselves into the "fire" of love for our fellow Jew -- just like the Menora that took shape in a supernatural manner.

*Reprinted from the 5756/1996 Tetzaveh edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**R’ Aharon Bakst, z”l,**

**Hy”d (“Reb Archik”)**



 Reb Archik was born in 1869 in a suburb of Vilna. At age 14, he joined the yeshiva in Volozhin, and later he studied in Rav Yitzchak Blazer’s yeshiva in Slobodka. However, the person that Reb Archik considered to be his true mentor was Rav Simcha Zissel, the “Alter miKelm.” This teacher held Reb Archik in equally high esteem, saying that Reb Archik was the most suited of his students to carry the mussar movement to another generation.

 The essence of mussar (character improvement), according to Reb Archik (as reported by his son), is to not be a hypocrite. Mussar also teaches us how to understand Chazal’s teachings, as opposed to “finding” our own ideas in Chazal’s words.

 Along these lines, Reb Archik objected to those who invent new approaches to mussar, saying that these were products of the ego, not genuine mussar. After his marriage, Reb Archik briefly engaged in business (at his father-in-law’s insistence), but he knew that his real calling was the Torah. His first rabbinic position was in a small, but difficult, town. His opponents there, actually opponents of the mussar movement, even took to the newspapers to vilify him.

 In 1895, Reb Archik was invited to serve as rabbi of a distant Russian town. When he asked how they knew of him, they cited the newspaper articles mentioned above. Reb Archik later served as rabbi and rosh yeshiva in other towns, including Shadova, Suvalk, and Lomza. His last position was in Shavli, where he served until he was murdered by the Nazis.

 Only a small portion of Reb Archik’s written legacy survives. He turned down a chance to send his writings to London at the outset of World War II because he felt that they required additional editing. A halachic work, Torat Aharon, has been published, as has Lev Aharon, a volume containing mussar discourses. Reb Archik was killed on 15 Tammuz 5701 /1941 (Hamaayan)

*Reprinted from the Purim-Parshat Tetzaveh 5781 email of whY I Matter parsha sheet of the Young Israel of Midwood in Brooklyn as compiled by Reb Yedidye Hirtenfeld.*

**Thoughts that Count for Parshat Tetzaveh**

 "Because Moses had previously asked G-d to 'erase his name from this book' [unless He forgave the Jewish people], Moses' name does not appear in this Torah portion," comments the Baal HaTurim.

 From this we learn that it is forbidden for a person to curse himself. If Moses, who was motivated purely by self-sacrifice, caused his name to be omitted by merely saying "please erase my name," how much more damage can occur when a person curses himself in anger...*(Siftei-Kohen)*

 *That they bring to you pure olive oil* (Ex. 27:20)

 "Pure olive oil" is an allusion to the Torah, implying that the Torah in its entirety was given to Moses at Mount Sinai: The Hebrew word for "pure," "zach," has the numerical equivalent of 27 -- the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, plus the five letters that have a different form when they come at the end of a word. *(Ohr Torah)*

 *And you shall bring near to you Aaron your brother* (Ex. 28:1)

 Moses and Aaron were of entirely different natures. Moses was given to seclusion and contemplation, as it states, "And Moses took his tent and went outside the camp," whereas Aaron was a social being, involved with his fellow man and pursuing peace. G-d's directive to Moses implied that he should emulate his brother's ways, for a true Jewish leader cannot remain apart from his people. *(Rabbi Meir of Premishlan)*

**The Final Farewell**

**By**[**Giti Fredman**](https://www.aish.com/authors/163515216.html)



*We don’t get to choose the departures of our loved ones.*

 Jews have a hard time saying goodbye. Getting off the phone or leaving a Shabbat dinner can be a major project.

 But the sudden passing of my father-in-law didn't give us the chance to say goodbye. We went from planning a road trip for a weekend visit with him to rushing to his funeral in a matter of seconds. Saying any kind of goodbyes, sadly, wasn’t in the cards. We felt we were ghosted.

 We wished in vain that we could have said goodbye. Have some closure. I wish I would have called more often, and encouraged my kids to do the same. I wish I would have surprised him and put some baked goods in a box and shipped them to him – just because! I wish we would had visited Thanksgiving weekend and not wait until the winter break because by then it was too late. I wished I could have thanked him one more time for raising my husband to be the man he is today. There were so many words left unsaid.

 What a contrast all this is to my mother-in-law's passing. Proceeded by a prolonged illness and ending in a prolonged departure, we kept saying goodbye. Each holiday during her illness, we celebrated and quietly wondered, is this her last Sukkot? Is this her last Hanukkah? Each visit ended in emotional goodbyes and silent musing, *is this “the” goodbye?*

 When the illness took over her body and the end was imminent, she could no longer communicate and modern medicine was artificially performing for her major organs. Each day a family member would say the *shema* and *viduy* confession, the parting prayer for Jews from this world to the next.

 We sang, we cried, we talked to her, we played her favorite music. We sprayed her signature scent perfume, we hung pictures. Her holy soul wasn’t ready to leave her failing body. The days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months. And we kept trying to say goodbye.

 We started switching our goodbyes into permission to go. *Mom it's okay, you can let go, you fought a good fight, we love you, ve’ll stay close, we’ll take care of Dad*. We encouraged the whole medical team to do the same, but Mom hung on.

 I removed her red gel polish pedicure. My mother-in-law, a member of the *Chevra Kadisha*, certainly wouldn’t want to inconvenience the women performing her *tahara* (Jewish purification ceremony that prepares the body for burial) with the extra time and labor of dealing with that. So acetone was brought into the ICU and I played manicurist. Sans red gel, mom prevailed.

We kept saying goodbye in every way we knew how in what seemed to be the longest farewell.

 It's debatable whose departure was better – the sudden passing of my father-in-law or the protracted farewell of my mother-in-law. In any case, we don’t get to choose our departures or the departures of our loved ones.

 In the weeks after my father-in-law's passing I felt an increased awareness to seize opportunities, to prioritize my relationships with the people who matter the most, to stop procrastinating.

 This is why the Talmud tells us to repent one day before you die. Since none of us came onto this earth with an expiration date stamped on our wrist, Jewish wisdom tells us to live with a focus of living our best version of ourselves, of loving ourselves and the people around us and deepening our relationship with God each day, because we never know if today will be our last.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Tetzaveh 5781 email of the Aish.com website*