

Immortal Medicine

Bacteria seems to be winning the battle against antibiotics, which were hailed as the savior of mankind. Is there anything that really works? Is there anything immortal?

The Battle Against Bacteria

1928 was the year which changed the face of humanity. Until that year, any cold could kill, and any pneumonia could cause death. Life expectancy was 58 in Canada and 34 in Brazil. There seemed to be no solution.

This was true until the morning Alexander Fleming made a discovery that led to the invention of penicillin ten years later. Antibiotics changed the face of modern medicine.

Over the years, more and more antibiotics were manufactured; it seemed that humans had the upper hand in the battle between bacteria and humanity. But as the years go by, it is becoming increasingly clear that bacteria have been developing serious resistance to the antibiotics; it's getting worse from year to year.

In 2019, 1,200,000 people lost their lives due to antibiotic resistance; their bodies had become so accustomed to antibiotics that they were no longer effective.

Modern medicine has been battling this new problem by producing stronger drugs, but the bacteria seem to be winning; they multiply far too fast for drugs to be invented to suppress

them.

The main reason for this is the rampant overuse of antibiotics even when unnecessary. Often, people decide themselves to take medication; who doesn't have some pills at home "from last time"? Every person thinks he knows his body well enough to diagnose the problem, when in reality, he might have a virus which antibiotics will not be able to cure.

The second reason is that antibiotics are used as food supplements for animals to increase their growth rate. Since the 1950s, animals and even fish have been given antibiotics regularly, in addition to being used for animals as preventative medicine. In fact, most of the antibiotics produced in the world are for the animal industry!

Scientists fear that in the end, the drug that saved the world will become ineffective; some claim that the age of antibiotics is almost over, and afterwards, the coronavirus pandemic will look like child's play.

The Missing Moses

This week we read Parshas Tetzaveh. In this Parsha, we find a phenomenon not found in any other: The name of Moses is not mentioned at all. This is very unique; from the beginning of Exodus — where Moses is born — to the end of Deuteronomy, Moses is mentioned in every single Parsha, with one exception: Tetzaveh.

Why?

The answer is found in next week's parsha, Ki Sisa, where we

read the story of the Sin of the Golden Calf. After the children of Israel sinned by worshipping idols, G-d said to Moses, “Leave me alone; let my anger flare up against them... and I shall make you a great nation” (32:10).

Moses did not “leave G-d alone.” Instead, he presented an ultimatum in chapter thirty-two, verse thirty-two (spelling the word *lev*): “And now, if You will bear their sin, [then good], and if not, erase me from Your book that you wrote.”

The commentators explain that the curse of a righteous person — even on condition — could be fulfilled even in the absence of the condition (Makos 11a). When Moses said, “Erase me from Your book,” it had an effect despite the fact that G-d forgave the people. In one parshah — this week’s parshah — the name of Moses is erased.

By Divine providence, the parshah which omits the name of Moses is read every year in the week of his *yahrzeit*, 7 Adar. The week he is missing from the world is the week he is missing from the parshah...

Birthday and Yahrzeit

But, my friends, the week Moses died is not a week of mourning. Because, as not too many people know, Moses died on the day he was born, one hundred and twenty years earlier. The seventh of Adar is not only the day of his death, but also, and most importantly, the day of his birth.

In most cases, the day of a person’s death is remembered more than the day of his birth; that is the day that is marked with the

lighting of a candle and a visit to the grave. But Moses is different; in his case, the day of his birth is more important than his day of death.

In Judaism, there are two people who have a unique distinction: the Torah says about them, “They did not die.” One person is our ancestor Jacob: the Talmud says, “Our ancestor Jacob did not die — just as his descendants are alive, so too, he is alive” (Ta’anit 5b). The second is Moses; the Talmud says a similar expression: “Moses didn’t die; just as he stood in service there, he stands in service here” (Sotah 13b).

The Rebbe asks: what is so unique about them that they received this distinction? Why are they the only two righteous people who never died?

Jacob is somewhat understandable; he lives on because he gave the world an eternal gift: he established the people of Israel which will exist for eternity. True, he is no longer physically alive, and he was indeed eulogized and buried, but his contribution to the world — the Jewish people — is eternal.

What is special about Moses? Why is he considered to have not died? The Rebbe explains that Moses gave us the Torah. Just like Jacob, he transmitted an eternal gift; G-d’s Torah.

This brings us back to the beginning of our talk. Alexander Fleming invented antibiotics and received the Nobel Prize for saving humanity. But less than a hundred years later, it turns out that the drug might become completely irrelevant and new drugs will be necessary.

Languages that were spoken by millions of people have been completely forgotten, at best, immortalized in museums. Music that millions of people sang has been lost from the world. Nothing is eternal, except for two things: the people of Israel and the Torah of Israel.

We sit here in the year 2022 and study and live according to the Torah given 3333 years ago. Today, the Torah remains as relevant as the day it was given. This Torah was taught to us by Moses, and therefore, he still lives with us. His body was buried thousands of years ago, but every day, when a Jew says "Shema Yisrael," a verse from the Torah, he reveals the spark of Moses inside himself. (Likutei Sichos 26 pg. 6).

What is the message for us? A person who wants to immortalize himself should connect to the Torah. Rashi wrote a commentary on the Torah nine hundred years ago, and until today, every child who studies Chumash in day school learns his commentary. Rashi is not dead, because he is connected to eternity; he continues to live on in all those who study Torah. This is true for all of us as well; when we study Torah or fulfill a mitzvah, we perpetuate that moment.

People like to say that a photograph immortalizes a moment. But in truth, even a picture is not forever; one generation passes and no one knows or cares to recognize the people in the picture. To truly perpetuate a moment, there is only one way: by studying Torah or doing a mitzvah.

When you connect to the eternal, you become eternal.