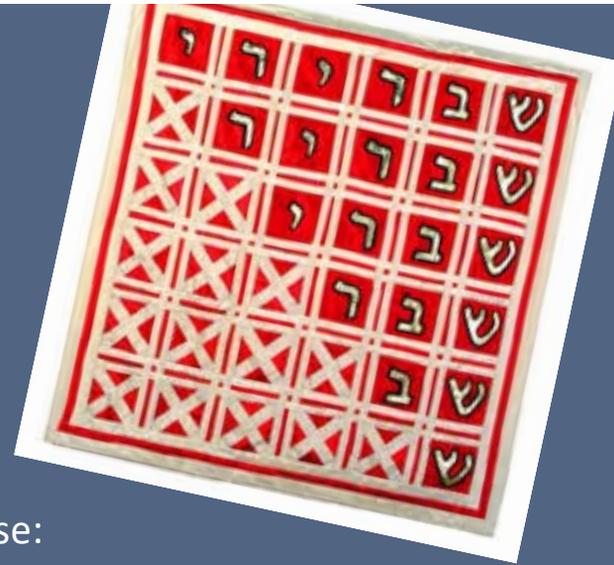


# SHRINKING a disease



## Three traditions of Jewish Magical Texts against Disease:

- Sacred, magical names...angels and nomina Barbara (nonsense syllables that are chanted) as well as permutations of letters in magical amulets and Sifre Segulot – the logic is fighting disease demons.
- Historiolae: calling upon victories over illness and plague in Jewish history and Biblical tales...and writing them on amulets which invoke and concentrate the numinous power of these stories and the channeling of Divine power over the illness.
- “Sword of Moses” – extensive magical text which includes all sorts of incantations against disease. The Sword cuts through disease and heals. A spiritual surgical tool wielded by the healer/magician ...even though Moses himself wields a staff in his battle with the Egyptian magicians in the book of Shmot .

Segulot “Treasured Remedy” –either for stopping plague or preventing its spread



- Drinking a cup of “secret occult healing” – mentioned in various magical handbooks. Ingredients not mentioned.
- Shutting the windows tightly and staying indoors (Raba in the Talmud used to close the windows)
- Increasing your periods of rest and enjoyment while at home and not stressing!
- Wearing masks – homemade out of various fabrics (from late antiquity onward)

SEGULOT –  
including the  
use of the  
modified  
ketoret during  
plagues

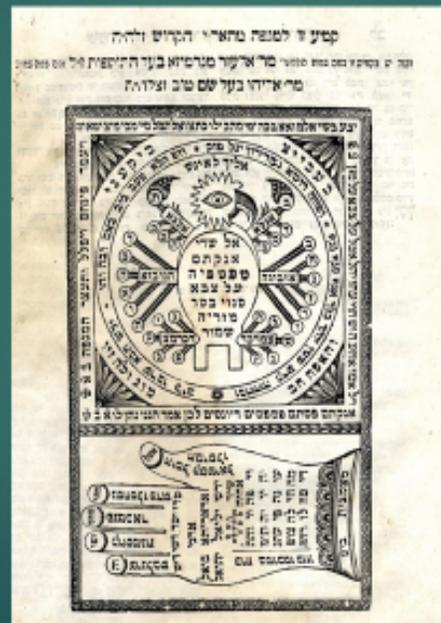


# Pitum HaKetoret – Efficacious?

- ▶ **The Rabbi's taught: how is the incense mixture formulated? Three-hundred sixty-eight maneh were in it: three hundred sixty-five corresponding to the days of the solar year — a maneh for each day, half in the morning and half in the afternoon; and three extra maneh, from which the Kohen Gadol would bring both his handfuls [into the Holy of Holies] on Yom Kippur. He would return them to the mortar on the day before Yom Kippur, and grind them very thoroughly so that it would be exceptionally fine. Balm, and onycha, and galbanum, and frankincense, each of these by a weight of seventy maneh, i.e., seventy units of one hundred dinars. Myrrh, and cassia, and spikenard, and saffron, each of these by a weight of sixteen maneh. Costus by a weight of twelve maneh; three maneh of aromatic bark; and nine maneh of cinnamon. Kersannah lye of the volume of nine kav; Cyprus wine of the volume of three se'a and three more kav, a half-se'a. If one does not have Cyprus wine he brings old white wine. Sodomite salt is brought by the volume of a quarter-kav. Lastly, a minimal amount of the smoke raiser, a plant that causes the smoke of the incense to rise properly. Rabbi Natan says: Also a minimal amount of Jordan amber. And if one placed honey in the incense he has disqualified it, as it is stated: "For you shall make no leaven, nor any honey, smoke as an offering made by fire unto the Lord" ([Leviticus 2:11](#)). If he omitted any one of its spices he is liable to receive death at the hand of Heaven.**
- ▶ **Rabbi Shimon says: The balm mentioned here is nothing other than a resin exuded from the balsam tree, not the bark of the tree itself. The Kersannah lye mentioned is not part of the ingredients of the incense itself, but it is necessary as one rubs the onycha in it so that the onycha should be pleasant. Likewise, the Cyprus wine is required as one soaks the onycha in it so that it should be strong. And urine is good for this purpose, but one does not bring urine into the Temple because it is inappropriate.**

Amulets and Shivitis – In the tradition of the Ari and Ba'al Shem Tov

The “Eye” counters the Evil of the Plague as “entity” and the Hand both wards off and heals .. Classical Magical formulae against Negativity





- Judging from his own expressions, Zahalon was convinced that his book supplied a great need. "In some towns," he tells us, "there are no physicians, but there is a scholar who is able to understand and to study closely and to seek cures for the sick in this book. Where the physician lives far from town and there is no time to be lost till he arrives, or again where several physicians visit a sick man and differ as to their treatment, the learned man can inform himself as to the valid and expert judgment of this book.
- This book will likewise be of benefit to physicians themselves, who will find a "table spread" for them without expounding differences of opinion at great length, as is the prevalent method of books of medicine. I have only given the most proper, accepted and well-tried methods of cure.





Hasidism – rejects new Epidemiology until 20th century.

Haredim and the Authorities –who do they Trust to make decisions?

- **Hasidism:** Rebbes mostly rejected Science, and new Epidemiological Measures, ....Relying on Prayer and Charity to ward off the Plague
- **Plague:** In late 1827 an epidemic broke out in the city of Orsha (near the city of Lubavitch), in which three or four people were dying daily. Since Rabbi Dovber of Lubavitch was out of town at the time, the inhabitants turned to his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, later known as the Tzemach Tzedek, for advice.

# Charity Saves From Death and Yizkor

- In addition to quoting a story in the Zohar about reading the portion of the *ketoret* during an epidemic, the Tzemach Tzedek suggested that, in light of the verse in Proverbs “And charity will save from death,”<sup>10</sup> they should add in charity. However, he stressed that, as is explained in Tanya,<sup>11</sup> it is preferable to give charity many times throughout the day (especially before prayer) in smaller denominations than just giving one large sum, even if it equals the same amount. Ideally, the total sum of each day should be a multiple of 18.<sup>12</sup>
- The Yizkor ceremony of recalling the names of the dead is linked to
- Giving Tzedakah...is this a system of indulgences in which the revered a
- Ancestors are “elevated” their descendants are blessed
- Charitable contribution, a communal tax, is linked to the deceased
- Memorializing the Dead is the origin of Yizkor/Tzedakah ritual

