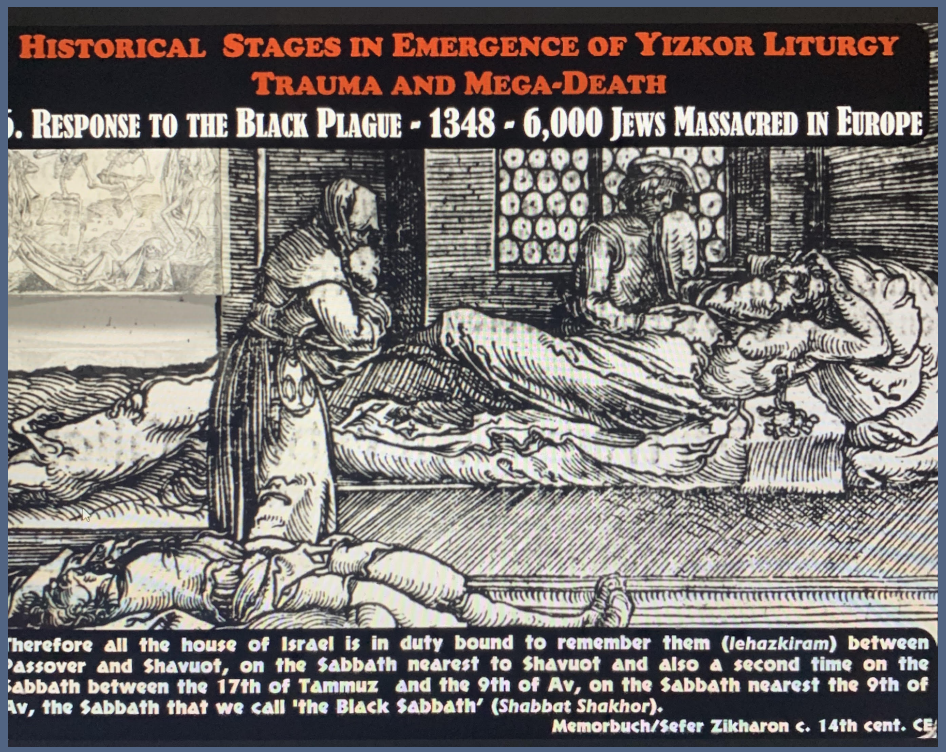
Yizkor emerges in the horror of the Black Plague – 14th century



- During an outbreak of cholera in 1831, people turned to one of the leading rabbis of the generation, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, for advice regarding large gatherings. His many rulings helped stem the tide of the epidemic, and in fact he later received a commendation from the government for his help. In one of his rulings he writes that there should be a schedule of different prayer times, starting from the earliest time one is permitted to pray, and each minyan should be limited to 15 people.
- Each group should pray and add some chapters of Psalms, and then the next group should enter. He adds that they should turn to the police and get a guard to limit the crowd, if need be.

Cholera – limit the gatherings

19th century Amulet against Plague

Attributed to Rabbi Teitelbaum

Notice that the mother of Abraham “Amtilai bat Karnevo” is invoked, as well as Search bat Asher – two powerful mythological woman considered to be healers …

R. Moshe Teitelbaum's Prayer 19th century

בזה השער, לא יבוא צער: **בזה הדלת, לא יבוא בהלת:** **בזה הפתח, לא יבוא רצח:**	**Through this gate, let no sadness enter:** **Through this door, let no fear enter** **Through this portal/opening, let no murder enter.**
וַיַּעֲמֹד פִּינְחָס וַיְפַלֵּל הַמַּגֵּפָה:	And Pinḥas stepped forth and intervened, and the plague ceased.[1]
רבש״ע כשם שפסחת על בתי בני ישראל במצרים ולא נתת המשחית לבוא אל בתיהם כן תעצור המשחית מלבוא אל בתינו ובבתי כל ישראל אמן סלה ועד:	Master of the Cosmos, Just as it passed over the houses of the children of Yisrael in Mitsrayim, rather than letting the Mashḥit (Executioner) enter their homes, so the Mashḥit will stop coming into our homes and the residences of all of Yisrael. Amen Selah Forever.
	[In the merit of the] Mother of our father Avraham:[2] [3]

OTTOMAN EMPIRE – MUSLIMS AND JEWS

- **Quran – Affliction and Plague come directly from God, there is no reality to the Transmission of an Infectious Disease…they simply didn't recognize**
- **Contagion – spread directly? …but by the 10th-11th century there was a debate (contagion or direct from God)**
- **No quarantine…very fatalistic in their containment of plague…kismet, accept one's fate – "If God touches you with Affliction none can remove it but He , and if he touches you with affliction, none can remove it but He, and God touches you with happiness (how fortunate) God has power over all things"**

19th century – community prayer?

Gatherings and Berakhot 19th century

- Rabbi Shaul Landau, the Av Beit Din (Chief Rabbinic Judge) of Cracow asked Hatam Sofer about the following incident in his community. During a cholera outbreak, the people greatly desired to recite kiddush levana (the blessing over the new moon). However, the moon was not visible during the halakhically allowed time for recitation. The community was greatly distressed and fearful that this was a bad omen. In light of the medically accepted fact that emotional distress and worry can have negative implications for one's health, R. Landau declared that there would still be an opportunity to bless the new moon on the 16th of the month (past the usual time for the blessing) if the skies were clear. As it happened the skies were cloudless and hundreds gathered to recite the prayer.

Cholera Pandemic in Europe
R. Akiva Eiger

- R. Eiger laments the continued spread of the epidemic, "practically in every province and in every city." He lays out a more detailed financial plan which is to include money for medications and medical services, sharply emphasizing the need to seek medical care immediately upon the development of even the slightest symptoms of disease, lest the rapid disease progression lead to one's demise. Coffee, tea, and spirits are to be provided for the poor while still healthy. Specific locations and dedicated staff are to be designated to care for the ill. His deference to the recommendations of the medical community is unequivocal: "He who violates the words of the physicians regarding health behavior has sinned greatly against God, for danger supersedes prohibitions (מאיסורא סכנתא גדול), especially in a case of danger to both oneself and others, which will lead to the spread of disease. His sin will be great to bear."

Summary – Response to Plagues…

- Working with the State -- "*Dinah d'Malkhuta Dina*" to prevent the spread of contagion
- Adopting the latest medical knowledge – slowly but eventually.
- Magical practices and rituals continued even into modern times
- Establishing Halakhic Guidelines that support public health for the Jewish community, in conjunction with the authorities
- Jews had double ***tzurot*** of dealing with the medical aspects of the plague and the concomitant anti-Semitism and violence
- The Halakha is flexible, as is the prayerful spontaneous response to Epidemic
- More research needed to find "creative" rituals that were deployed during plague times throughout history – i.e. vidui, tahara, graveside rituals.

- Today: Jews accused of spreading the Coronavirus .. New

Prayer for the Caregivers and for Healing

- ריבונו של עו,
- אנו פוחדים ולא מוכנים.
- אנו מתחננים ממך הדרכה ותמיכה.
- תן לחולים את הכוח להחזיק מעמד.
- תן למטפלים את האומץ לרפא.
- תן לחוקרים ולמומחים את ההשראה לגלות, לטפל, ולחסן.
- תן לאנשי הרפואה את היכולות לרפא כל מי שסובל.
- תן למנהיגים את האומץ לדבר אמת ולא לחבל באימון הציבור.

- Master of the Universe,
-
- Our Creator and Liberator of diseases
- We are afraid and unprepared.
- We beseech you for guidance and support.
- Grant victims the strength to persevere.
- Grant caregivers the courage to heal.
- Grant researchers and experts the insights to detect, to treat, and to vaccinate.
- Grant medical providers the abilities to heal all who suffer.
- Grant officials the courage to speak the truth and not to violate public trust.

Hoshia Na, Hatlikha Na, Refaenu Yah, V'Nivasheyah