



Congregation Agudath Achim

ב"ה

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To whom this may concern:

Peace and blessings.

This letter concerns _____ and her objection to vaccination, including to the novel covid vaccines, based on her sincerely held religious beliefs.

I am an ordained orthodox rabbi and have served in the rabbinate for over twenty-six years.¹ Currently, I serve as the spiritual leader of an established congregation in Massachusetts that welcomes congregants to participate from afar via online sermons and services.

_____ is an active member of my congregation. She is a person of deep religious conviction and great integrity.

Please be advised that I discussed the matter of vaccination with her. She cites authentic scriptural sources that underlie valid objections to vaccination under Torah law with which I am in complete agreement. In fact, our congregation categorically opposes vaccination as a matter of religious tenet, for these very reasons:

1. Immorality of human cell lines:

Many vaccines made use of morally objectionable ingredients: making use of aborted fetal cell lines for the development, production, or testing of any vaccine is against what scripture teaches, and forbidden in Torah law.^{2,3}

Pfizer's and Moderna's covid vaccines were tested using fetal cell lines, developed from cells of aborted fetuses. Johnson & Johnson used fetal cell lines in its production stages.

By using a pharmaceutical product whose proceeds go to fund research and development of new human cell lines from aborted fetuses, one is effectively compensating the murderer for infanticide. This is strictly prohibited in Torah law.⁴

¹ I was ordained by renowned Rabbi Pinchas Hirshprung of Montreal in 1995, and by other prominent rabbis.

² "Whoever sheds the blood of a human being inside another human being shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made (each) human being." Genesis 9:6.

³ Making of use of a product whose safety or efficacy was tested on fetal cell lines constitutes illicit benefit thereof.

⁴ Abortion is tantamount to murder in scriptural law, and it is categorically prohibited to compensate the company for an abortion committed. Likewise, it is forbidden to make use of a product whose proceeds go towards research and development of new human cell lines. See Maimonides Mishne Torah, Laws of Murder 2:1.

Furthermore, it is Biblically forbidden to derive benefit from any human corpse, including from an unborn fetus.⁵

2. Immorality of the live dissection of animals:

The Torah prohibits removing the limb or organ of a live animal for the purpose of human consumption. This is known as *eiver min hachai*.⁶

The Torah also prohibits causing excessive suffering to animals. This is called *tzaar baalei chayim*.⁷

Used in the production stages of the COVID vaccines, bovine serum is tissue extracted from a calf in a cruel procedure of live dissection. Nearly all vaccines contain bovine extract, and many contain other animal ingredients, such as lung tissue harvested from living monkeys.

Scripture prohibits us from sanctioning such inhumane treatment of animals.

3. Immorality of vaccines' specific technologies:

Injecting a human being with DNA from animals violates the scriptural prohibition against forbidden mixtures, *isur kil'ayim*:

"Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind; thou shalt not sow thy field with two kinds of seed; neither shall there come upon thee a garment of two kinds of stuff mingled together."⁸ "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with two kinds of seed; lest the fulness of the seed which thou hast sown be forfeited together with the increase of the vineyard. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together."⁹ The Talmud devotes an entire tractate to the concept.¹⁰ Intentionally mingling one's own body cells with a foreign, unnatural, or genetically-modified substance – especially one that effectively co-opts one's cells into doing something it was not intended to do by nature – plainly runs afoul of *isur kil'ayim*.¹¹

In actuality, this issue is far worse than ordinary abortion by Biblical standards. The manner thought which contemporary human cell lines are produced are not considered "abortion" by scripture, but as murder. Known as the 'water bag method,' fully viable babies are delivered alive. As late-stage abortion is now legal in certain states, babies are often born alive at five or six months of gestation to be dissected alive. Lung tissue is harvested from suffering babies while their hearts are beating, with no pain medication. This is morally reprehensible.

⁵ Deuteronomy 21:23.

⁶ Genesis 9:4.

⁷ Exodus 23:5.

⁸ Leviticus 19:19.

⁹ Deuteronomy 22:9-11.

¹⁰ Mishna, Masechet Kil'ayim.

¹¹ Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv strictly banned cloning humans based on this principle, and only begrudgingly allowed the cloning and genetic engineering of animals for the purposes of "ורפא ירפא [and heal, you shall heal]"

Modified messenger RNA and recombinant DNA technologies used in current COVID vaccines both constitute a profound violation of the scriptural prohibitions against *isur kil'ayim* as well.

Injecting such forbidden substances directly into one's bloodstream directly challenges scriptural teaching that regards one's body as the repository of a soul made in God's image.

4. Immorality of self-immolation and Biblically-unindicated needle stabs:

In Torah law, one is not permitted to inject oneself with a vaccine that offers no significant medical curative benefit to the patient, even if it's allegedly good for others.

Scripture prohibits inflicting oneself with Biblically-unnecessary gashes, wounds or pokes:

"You are children of the Lord, your God. You shall not poke yourselves..."¹² "You shall not make incisions in your flesh for any soul... I am the Lord."¹³ It's further underscored in other scriptural verses.¹⁴ Needless to say, this is a serious Biblical injunction.¹⁵

5. Immorality of Biblically-unindicated exposure to risk:

Any vaccine that carries a risk to the individual, even the slightest risk, is Biblically problematic. Scripture does not permit exposing oneself to any risk unless there's a significant medical benefit to one's own self that outweighs the risk. The verse states: "Guard your own soul scrupulously."¹⁶

There is consensus among orthodox rabbis worldwide that the flu shot is not medically necessary for healthy adults. Likewise, vaccines for sexually transmitted diseases like hepatitis B and human papillomavirus are deemed medically unnecessary for a Torah-observant individual by all contemporary orthodox rabbis. Hence, these vaccines are strictly forbidden by scripture.

(Exodus 21:19), for example, for the purpose of producing replacement organs for humans who suffer from organ failure. Rabbi Chaim of Brisk observed that the principle of *ורפא ירפא*, "authority has been granted to doctors to heal," refers specifically to healing an individual diagnosed patient, not necessarily to prevention, and certainly not to an amorphous community. Modified mRNA and recombinant DNA technologies are prohibited since a) it's on humans, b) it's for a preventative measure and not a curative therapy, and c) the preventative benefit is mainly for others in an at-risk population, not for the individual discussed in this letter, for whom the actual disease poses negligible risk.

¹² Deuteronomy 14:1.

¹³ Leviticus 19:28.

¹⁴ Leviticus 21:5 and *ibid* 17-24.

¹⁵ According to Maimonides, this scriptural prohibition falls under the rubric of idolatry and consequently is related to the sin of *darkei emori*. See below.

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 4:9; *ibid* verse 15.

Torah-adherent individuals for whom covid – or any other disease – poses minimal or negligible risk are prohibited from exposing themselves to the risks of its vaccine.

Herd immunity is not a value in the Bible. Scripture authorizes a healer to heal an individual patient with a diagnosed condition, but not to impose preventative measures upon a community, especially not if the preventative measure entails the slightest medical risk to a healthy individual.

The Torah doesn't recognize the prevention of possible future harm as life-saving in and of itself, and consequently does not permit exposing oneself to risk by taking a preventative product right **now**.¹⁷

Every single vaccine on the market entails risk. How much more so with regards to the covid vaccine, a novel drug that carries well-documented risks and many unknowns, whose benefits are temporary and achievable in other ways.¹⁸ Hundreds of thousands of adverse reactions, including serious medical events and deaths, have been reported all over the world, and there is strong reason to believe that many more such events are being covered up or dismissed as unrelated. As of this writing nearly 14,000 US deaths have been reported to VAERS on the CDC website. A majority of these reports have come from ICUs, emergency rooms, physicians, and pharmacies. Seizures, encephalitis, microvascular infarcts, brain bleeds, disseminated intravascular coagulopathies, and sudden multi-system organ failure are just a few health issues observed post-vaccination by medical professionals around the world.

The Torah's default position is that proactive medical interventions, with the risks they necessarily entail, are forbidden and deemed unsafe until proven otherwise. Even reactive interventions must be proven through transparent, thorough, unbiased studies, and have benefits that clearly outweigh the risks for this specific patient. Speculation, even by those with degrees and certificates, is no substitute. Approval by governmental agencies is irrelevant in religious Torah faith. There are countless medical procedures that have state and/or federal approval and are still forbidden by scripture. Vaccines are no different.

6. Lack of full disclosure:

Adherents of the Torah are not permitted to ingest or inject a product whose precise ingredients are undisclosed, and some vaccines contain proprietary ingredients. For

¹⁷ See Radvaz in Responsa 3:625, cited in Pischei Teshuva, Yoreh Deah 157:15. See also Noda B'yehuda mahadura tinyono Yoreh Deah 210, cited by Mishne Halachos (Rabbi Menashe Klein), Mador Hateshuvos, 6:203, and Mahadura tinyono, 2:253. Scripture does not recognize preventative measures as justification for any of the grave Biblical violations delineated in this letter. See also Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 316, Magen Avraham 23, and contrast to *ibid* 330:1.

¹⁸ Many doctors worldwide have reported great success with a combination of vitamins and repurposed drugs, such as ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. These have been in use for many months, and potentially could have saved countless lives.

example, Moderna's COVID vaccine contains a proprietary lipid called SM-102. This ingredient is proprietary to Moderna, i.e. it's protected by secrecy and not disclosed to the public. There are countless ingredients that the Torah deems unfit for human consumption, and in some cases, forbidden to derive any benefit thereof. An unknown ingredient constitutes a *safek d'orayta*, a questionable Biblical violation, and a Torah-observant individual is obliged to avoid it.

7. Immorality of placing reverential trust in man-made ideologies, rites, or policies:

Rejection of idolatry comprises the core of Judaism.¹⁹ Included in the scriptural ban against idolatry is *darkei emori* (lit., the ways of the Emorites).²⁰ These prohibitions apply not only to actual pagan worship, but extend as well to following practices and mores which, in a given community or nation, are pursued with a zeal or reverence traditionally associated with religious modes of being. Such values are "gods" within the meaning of these commandments. The famous story of the Patriarch Abraham smashing his father's idols²¹ does not teach merely that bowing down to statues is wrong. It stands for a more fundamental principle: a categorical rejection of all man-made "gods."

For instance, the veneration of flags and adulation of sports teams are proscribed in Torah faith. Scripture requires the rejection not only of icons or objects of worship, but also of nominally secular belief systems, such as Marxism, which enlist idolatrous modes of thinking by elevating a single value above all else.

From the Torah perspective, a cult of scientism has emerged in recent decades as the most popular form of idolatry in the Western society. The phrase "trust the science" is repeated like a mantra. Enraptured members of the flock fall over themselves to be seen as right-thinking people who "trust the science." Conversely, the Torah exhorts us repeatedly to trust **only** in God and in none else.²² "Faith" and "trust" are closely intertwined in scripture. Polytheistic by definition, "trusting science" is a belief system that does not comport with Torah belief.²³

There's no sin to study or consult science, which, at its best, is a valuable method of inquiry. However, when a set of ideas or practices – even if they're allegedly science-based – begins to fulfill cultural and sociological functions similar to those associated with traditional religions, or are obeyed with a vigor and zeal that resemble religious fervor, the scriptural prohibitions against idolatry, *darkei emori*, and similar command-

¹⁹ "Whoever endorses idolatry, rejects the whole Torah; and whoever renounces idolatry, accepts the whole Torah." Chulin 5a. Maimonides Laws of Idolatry 2:7.

²⁰ Leviticus 18:3, Sifra ibid. Shabbat 67a.

²¹ Genesis Rabbah chapter 38. Genesis 11:28. Rashi ibid.

²² Psalms 21:7, 37:3, 115:9, 118:8, 146:3, Jeremiah 17:5, and many more scriptural references.

²³ Renowned Rabbi Moses Feinstein bemoaned the fact that nowadays "people place trust and faith in doctors like an act of idolatry, G-d forbid!" [Masores Moshe, page 313]. This was not hyperbole, but a solemn observation of contemporary attitudes in direct conflict with religious Torah faith, which does not permit its adherent to place blind or implicit trust in any human being, nor in any product or wisdom thereof.

ments come into play. At that point, deference to “scientific consensus” becomes imbued with religious significance, as one is in effect partaking in an idolatrous enterprise.

As mentioned above, herd immunity is not a Torah value but a secular one. The very fact that society dictates the allegedly “moral” duty of universal adherence to this secular value, i.e. when secular “science” encroaches into the arena of preaching “moral duties” and declares a vaccinated person morally superior, it has morphed into a belief system of sorts and has entered the realm of *darkei emori*.²⁴

In contrast to the secularist values of “greater good” and “community immunity,” scripture exhorts its adherent to take responsibility for one’s **own** health and the health of one’s children, not the “health” of the so-called “herd.” If a choice to safeguard one’s own health happens to coincide with practices that boost herd immunity, then so be it. However, if the two come into conflict, deferring to societally-revered consensus over one’s personal health benefit is a form of sacrifice to idolatry.²⁵

As I’ve observed in recent articles, contemporary public health policy obliges its adherents to objectify the vaccine as the key to life itself and regard the shot as a veritable object of polytheistic adoration. Individuals who dare to decline the jab are viewed as heretics, incorrigible sinners unworthy of any human dignity or individual liberties. An unvaccinated child is often expunged from the community like a leper, condemned to a life of illiteracy and alienation from communal life. This degree of superstitious fear of the unvaccinated is classic *darkei emori*.

Public health policy has been deified as an end that justifies all means, and children are to be offered up on the altar of “community immunity” in an act of blind faith and pious immolation. As such, contemporary vaccine policy should be cautiously regarded by G-d-fearing and Torah-adherent individuals as *darkei emori* and Molech worship.

Due to her deeply held religious belief in the Torah’s injunction against these practices, she has no choice but eschew vaccines as she would any relic of foreign worship. Instead, she places her trusts in God Almighty, healer of all flesh, for health and prevention.

²⁴ Shabbat ibid. See Responsa of the Rashba, 1:413 and Beit Yosef on Yoreh Deah 179:20. “If there is actual curative benefit “רפואה” to the particular custom, then the prohibition of *darkei emori* doesn’t apply – this means that its curative benefit must be perceivable to a person by natural observation. Otherwise, it is forbidden.” If a policy’s alleged medical benefit to the individual cannot be unambiguously demonstrated by natural observation – i.e. empirical evidence, or in legal parlance, strict scrutiny – then blind adherence to it is categorically prohibited under the rubric of *darkei emori*, irrespective of alleged societal benefit.

²⁵ As mentioned above, scripture does not regard statistical risks against a class as valid grounds to expose oneself or one’s family to the risk of a preventative measure, however miniscule. Rather, risks must be assessed on the basis of the individual patient. Insisting that an individual make decisions on the basis of secular values such as herd immunity is tantamount to coercing him to worship at the altar of pagan ideology.

8. Immorality of compulsory vaccine policies:

Scripture prohibits complying with any compulsory vaccine policy. The only preventative policy that the Torah might have sanctioned is a completely-voluntary one.

The very notion of a mandatory vaccine policy is an anathema and abomination since it usurps body sovereignty, a Biblical imperative.²⁶ Scripture requires its adherent to reject any and all forms of bodily subjugation to any human overlord, irrespective of alleged benefit to oneself or one's community.

Consequently, a vaccine **must** be a choice. If it's being imposed by any human authority, such as a government, employer, or school administration, a Torah-observant individual is obligated to resist, if for no other reason than to assert his or her Divinely-ordained freedom and body sovereignty.

9. Immorality of complicity with apartheid:

In today's panic-stricken society, the notion of "community immunity" has been exploited and used to condone discriminatory policies that marginalize a non-vaccinated minority. Scripture strictly prohibits apartheid policies.²⁷

Consequently, even if a particular vaccine were in fact ethically tolerable (i.e. if it were free of morally problematic ingredients), and even if it were incontrovertibly safe and effective, and **even** if it were indeed the only way to stop a deadly disease for which **no** curative therapy existed, nevertheless the very fact that it's being used to sanction discriminatory policies (against individuals who cannot or will not vaccinate for whatever reason) makes it morally odious and unacceptable according to Torah Law. By complying with -- thereby lending one's support to -- such a mandatory policy, one is effectively complicit in tyranny and discrimination, both categorically prohibited by the Torah.

In scripture, the ends do NOT justify the means. Discriminating against a minority is **never** okay, even if it's for the alleged benefit of community immunity. Tyrants throughout history used public safety as a justification for tyranny.²⁸

Irrespective of **any** other reasons for declining the vaccine, a policy that bans healthy individuals from school, workplace, travel, or venues of public access, is unethical, morally indefensible, and irreconcilable with her belief system. She could in no way support or comply with such a policy under any circumstances. It flies in the face of everything she believes in and is disturbingly reminiscent of persecution suffered by

²⁶ Leviticus 25:55.

²⁷ Deuteronomy 14:1, as explained in the Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 14a.

²⁸ See <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/07192004-nazi-racial-hygiene-bachrach.pdf>. See also <https://westbororabbi.blogspot.com/2021/01/a-holocaust-of-public-health.html>.

minorities in recent history. The Torah obligates her to live in accordance with her deeply-held values and moral conscience.

religious grounds for declining this vaccination are valid and should be honored in deference to our cherished First Amendment.

I am happy to discuss this matter with you further, and welcome a correspondence with you on this topic, or any other topics that pertain to Torah law. The best way to correspond with me is via email, rabbimichaelgreen@gmail.com.

In the merit of protecting religious freedoms, civil liberties, and the most basic human right to medical autonomy, may God Almighty bless you and all of us with health and protection in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rabbi Michael B. Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rabbi Michael B. Green
Director and spiritual leader
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