



Rabbi Yaakov Hopfer
President

25 Elul 5780
September 14, 2020

TO OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY,

We hope this letter finds you well. It is hard to believe that the Yomim Noraim are upon us. B'ezras Hashem this year will bring refuah and bracha for our community, our people, and the world. It is always important to remain optimistic and hopeful for a beautiful and bright future. As a result of the chesed of Hashem and our communal vigilance we have been able to avoid significant illness and hospitalizations. It is our sincere hope and desire to see this trend continue. We were truly delighted that our local schools and yeshivos were able to open on time and although there have been some partial closures, we are confident that IY"Y things will get back on track. Keeping our yeshivos and schools open is of utmost importance. It is important for the spiritual, physical, and intellectual well-being of the children and adults of our community. But for our schools to remain open we must each do our part. The battle against COVID-19 is not over and becoming complacent puts us all at risk. If we are careful with a few intuitive measures and steps, we can keep the virus from spreading.

As such we are asking our entire community to be mindful of and vigilant with the following things:

Masks and Social Distancing – Masks must be worn at any indoor gathering and at outdoor gatherings where social distancing cannot be maintained. Masks should cover both the mouth and nose. No one enjoys wearing a mask. It is uncomfortable and stifling, but it is a small ask considering the enormous benefit to the wearer and those around him/her.

It is normal to want to be close to your friends, physical connection is an incredibly powerful force. But a little distance makes all of the difference. This is especially important as we head into the Yomim Noraim and will spend many hours davening together. We request that our Shuls please plan for the Yomim Tovim and especially Simchas Torah in a way that is safe and responsible.

Men's Mikvaos – Using the mikvah before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is an important part of our Yomim Noraim preparations. It is with great anticipation that we prepare for Yom Tov. Part of this sacred preparation is the tevila by the men of the community, which under normal circumstances would be done Erev Rosh Hashana. This year, in order to assure that there is no crowding at the Mikvah, the following arrangements have been made.

We ask that the men proceed to tovel already starting early this week. The Mikvah at Machzikei Torah ("Rav Sternhell's"), will be open every day from 5 am to 11 pm. The Mikvah at



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Rabbi Taub's shul will be open daily from 5 am to 11 am and 6 pm to 11 pm. For both Mikvaos please shower at home first to minimize time spent at the Mikvah.

One who is unwell, or who has symptoms, or who has tested positive, or who has a member of his household in any of the above categories, or one who has been instructed to quarantine, may not come to the Mikvah. In those cases, one may rely on the Tisha Kavin of a seven minute shower in his home. One should maintain his tahara status from after the tevila. Where this is not possible or practical, then one would make sure to take a seven minute shower prior to Yom Tov.

Simchas – Sharing happy occasions and events is something we all relish. We must maintain the above mentioned (masks/social distancing) protocols by all of our simchas. Unfortunately, over the last few weeks we have seen multiple positive cases from weddings in which masks were not worn and social distancing was not observed. If you are making a wedding in-town it is imperative that you incorporate these guidelines as you plan your simcha. If you are invited to an out-of-town simcha decide carefully if you really need to attend. Should you decide to attend, please make sure to wear a mask and social distance.

Travel Out-of-Town – We must all make wise and informed decisions regarding out of town travel. Try to limit “non-essential” travel. If you must go out of town, please take the necessary precautions.

Out-of-Town Company – Yom Tov is a time when families get together. It is important that our guests respect our community guidelines. Furthermore, please only have family if you know they are exhibiting care and vigilance in their respective community.

We are all tired. We are tired of the virus, we are tired of restrictions, but if we each put in just a little more effort, then, together with the Ribbono Shel Olam's help we can keep our community healthy and our schools open. If we do not do our part, we run the risk of having our precious yeshivos and schools shut down. This will place incredible strain and hardship upon our entire community.

We thank you for your continued strength and commitment and hope for a beautiful year filled with simcha and bracha. As we endeavor to prepare in purity and safety for this auspicious day, may the Ribbono Shel Olam hear our tefilos on behalf of all, and may everyone be inscribed for a k'siva v'chasima tova.

Respectfully,

Yaakov Hopfer on behalf of the Vaad Harabanim of Baltimore