



Sukkos, 5781

Dear Talmidim,

The recent uptick in Covid-19 prompts this letter. The Torah requires that we avoid dangerous activity. The protection afforded to Mitzvah performance does not apply when danger is prevalent (Pesachim 8b).

In all gatherings, masks covering everyone's mouth and nose must be worn. In addition, appropriate social distance between attendees (except for members of the same household) must be maintained. Hands must be washed with soap and water or with proper hand sanitizer. On Shabbos and Yom Tov liquid soap or sanitizer may and must be used.

On Simchas Torah, the usual hakafos and dancing are prohibited. At the discretion of every local rav, hakafos may be limited or eliminated. Any dancing must be done while wearing masks and socially distanced.

Upon advice from medical experts, we recommend that the sefer Torah *not* be passed from one person to another. Preferably, one person should circle the bima 7 times. After each hakafa the tzibur should join in an appropriate nigun and "dance" in place. The practice of everyone getting an aliya is a minhag, not a din, and may be adjusted or eliminated at the discretion of the local rav (see links [here](#) and [here](#) for similar horaos).

Similarly, at weddings the usual dancing is prohibited. Any dancing must be done while wearing masks and socially distanced. Chasanim and their families are urged to limit the size of weddings and to insist upon and enforce masking and appropriate distancing by all their guests.

Adherence to all the above is required by the halacha which demands great caution to protect life and good health. It is also a Kiddush Hashem, a public statement that the Torah's commandments based on medical experts must be followed even, and especially, at the expense of usual practices and minhagim.

We are confident that our talmidim will rise to the occasion and follow these instructions scrupulously. We hope that others will take all appropriate precautions as well. We continue to pray for the health and welfare of our talmidim and all of Klal Yisrael.

*Roshei Kollel & Roshei Yeshiva*  
Rav Hershel Schachter  
Rav Dr. Michael Rosensweig  
Rav Mordechai Willig

*Roshei Yeshiva*  
Rav Assaf Bednarsh  
Rav Yosef Blau

Rav Daniel Feldman  
Rav Meir Goldvicht  
Rav David Hirsch  
Rav Dovid Miller  
Rav Yaakov Neuberger  
Rav Ezra Schwartz  
Rav Eliyahu B. Shulman  
Rav Zvi Sobolofsky

Rav Daniel Stein  
Rav Michael Taubes

*Menahalei HaYeshiva*  
Rabbi Menachem Penner  
Rabbi Dr. Yosef Kalinsky