

Dear Friend:

I realize this email is a bit overdue. Please forgive its length. For the past three days I have been trying to get a message out to all our members. But as you may imagine, I barely have time to come up for air between phone calls, emails, text messages, Vaad issues and conference calls relating to the situation in which we find ourselves. I am not going to elaborate on my thoughts relating to this plague. I ask that if you are interested you can see them in the current issue of the QJL.

I begin by thanking all those officers and members of our shul, especially our president, who were so supportive of the lead role we took in closing the shul this past Shabbos. Yes there were some naysayers, but the correct decision was absolutely made. I received a call from someone late last night who davens elsewhere to thank our shul for taking the lead role in closing, which led his shul to close as well. "This may have saved countless lives", he said.

I must give special thanks to Stue Smolar for urging me to close the shul Friday and we went from there. I understand there were others as well who contacted me indirectly and I thank them as well.

I will list here important issues as we need to deal with them, but in no particular order.

1. Maos Chittin: We need to support our poor for Pesach, especially this year more than ever. Please send a check to the shul office 150-05 70th Rd, Flushing, NY 11367 or pay online on the shul's website (select Maos Chitim from drop-down menu from visitor's area). We have cancelled the Women's Maos Chittin Tea and will not conduct an appeal. We all know the importance of this appeal. Checks should be made to YIKGH and enter either Pesach or Maos Chittin in the memo line.
2. Mechiras Chametz: Following the guidelines of Rav Herschel Schachter shlita, in the name of Rav Soloveitchik zt'l, in the absence of a formal "kabalas kinyan" or exchange of an object to solidify the authorization to the rabbi to sell, one should either email Yoels@ou.org, fax 718-520-2976 or mail to the shul office, with the text as follows: I authorize Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld to sell my chametz that I possess in my home and office for the year 5780. MY SALE IS SERIOUS AND ABSOLUTE. Signed _____ Address_____. I will send out a separate email on this in the coming week IYH.
3. Tevilas Keilim: When purchasing a new pot, glass or silverware not made by Jews (almost all in the USA), they must be *toveled* in a kosher mikva prior to using, even for the first time. Usually Pesach is peak time for such purchases and the keilim mikva is inundated. This year with many people making Pesach at home for the first time, the keilim mikva will become even more crowded. That presents an obvious health hazard. In addition, the keilim mikva water is not sanitized, compounding the issue as hundreds of hands will dip into the same water as they immerse their utensil. While some suggest using rubber gloves, and swiping down the mikva, I do not believe that is enough protection. In any case it does not address the crowding issue. Alternatively, the following can be done. Use a lake such as Flushing Meadows or an ocean shoreline such

as along the Belt Parkway. If that is not feasible, then one should gift all those utensils to a non Jew and let him/her know that you intend on borrowing them for a while. Let them know that that if they are kind enough they may choose to return it to you in a few months. A utensil OWNED by a non Jew does not require tevila.

4. Mikva: Men should absolutely not use the mikva at this time. For those whose custom it is to go to a mikva, they should shower from head to toe having in mind Tisha Kabin (nine measures) of water which can replace such tevila. Women of course are a different story. They should bathe only at home, not in the mikva showers. They should walk in the mikva hallways on water proof slippers and immerse as usual. The mikva will be sanitizing approximately every two hours. The water is chlorinated. Any woman not feeling well must stay home and wait until she feels better. Don't be a heroine. You may affect the health of countless others. Should the city impose an early night curfew as is being proposed in NJ, then according to Rav Schachter women may go to the mikva daytime of the 7th count. If this happens to you please contact me to discuss.
5. Kashering for Pesach: This is a detailed discussion and I hope to cover in next week's email.
6. Minyanim: Until further notice no one should daven with a minyan no matter how small, indoors or outdoors. Rav Dovid Cohen shlita of Flatbush writes that one who davens with a minyan of any sort during these times, is guilty not of just a faulty mitzva (Mitzva haba'ah b'aveira) but is actually sinning to Hashem. Not worth the Gehenom for trying to be a hero. Plus it continues to jeopardize the life of others in the community, which you have no right to do. So stop now!
7. Marbeh Sedra: Of course there will be no public reading of the Torah during these times. That gives us the chance to read the parsha (this week Vayak'hel/Pekudei) plus Hachodesh Shemos 12: 1-20) and haftarah Yechezkiel(45:16) with all the commentaries, especially Rashi. At least look it over with a good translation.
8. Mevorchin Hachodesh: Mevorchin Hachodesh is recited, even without a minyan. Y'kum Purkan is not. Rosh Chodesh Nissan will be Thursday March 26.
9. Virtual shiurim: I am pleased to report that this past Monday night we were able to hold our Gemara shiur (Pesachim 108) via Zoom, an audio visual interactive program, thanks to the assistance of Pinny Verstandig. I plan to do the same this Sunday IYH for the Women's Halachic Household shiur which will include Q& A on Pesach. If interested in joining either shiur, email me and I will send you the link. Also Rabbi Glatt has been giving wonderful brief shiurim in halacha via WhatsApp. If interested in joining that shiur please email him at Ephraim.Glatt@gmail.com .
10. Siyum Bechoros: According to Rav Schachter one may fulfill his obligation for a siyum Erev Pesach via a radio or live internet broadcast of which there are sure to be many. Nachum Segal I believe has one every year.
11. Young volunteers needed. We desperately need volunteers under the age of 50 to help the elderly in our shul. Today is the 100th Birthday of one of our members. His wife is a mere 95 ble"h. They are both very fit mentally and physically but since they will be home-bound, due to Corona, they will need help shopping and setting up. The family is willing to pay as well. I have approached yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, but we'll see. *If we*

can get some of our Young Marrieds to help with anything relating to the home-bound, that would be great!

12. My own situation: As many of you have noticed, I have not shaken hands with people for a few months. I guess you can say I was ahead of the curve. I currently am undergoing a condition which is Baruch Hashem very manageable but it does affect my immunity. I have lost over 20 pounds but that is due to a strict low carb diet my doctor put me on as part of the treatment. I'm discovering everything has carbs! For this reason my immunity is adversely affected. Until this virus blows over I am not able to visit any health facilities as they are a hotbed for germs. The same applies during flu season. My participation at weddings or other simchos will be limited until I get the all clear from my doctor. I will not discuss funerals, as my fervent hope is they will be irrelevant until 120. I thank you for your understanding. **MY FATHER KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT MY SITUATION. PLEASE DO NOT ALLUDE TO IT AT ALL IN HIS PRESENCE!**
13. Nice Vort: I heard a very nice vort from Rabbi Daniel Korobkin of Beth Avrohom Yoseph of Toronto and current president of the RCA. He notes that the current parshios we are reading these few weeks, all relate to the construction and inauguration of the Mishkan. Yet this week's maftir of Hachodesh, the emphasis is on the home. See for example Shemos 12:22 in reference to the original Korban Pesach, "And no man shall leave his house until the morning". Or Pasuk 23 "He will not permit the destroyer to enter your homes..." and 27 "He saved our households". From here we see that before the mishkan was constructed, the mainstay of the Jew was his home. Now that our Mikdash Me'at (Mini Sanctuaries), our synagogues, have been taken from us we revert back to our homes where we can serve Hashem as well with a dedication to Torah, Tefillah and Mitzvos.
14. May we soon greet each other with open arms and health and happiness as we once again will restore the Korban Pesach in Yerushalayim, Amen!

Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld