



DR. MARC SICKLICK SHARES COVID UPDATE AS POSITIVITY RATES CLIMB

By: Marc J. Sicklick M.D.

Most past coronaviruses tended to decrease in mid-spring, in May, and return in the early fall. There is no reason to think that COVID-19 will be different. The summer drop off in numbers and deaths was not the end of the epidemic. It was a brief, expected lull that has ended.

This is not the time to ease up, neither because of a misguided feeling that "it's over" which is unfathomable to me, nor because of burn out. It is the time to increase vigilance and prevention.

The disease will be here for the foreseeable future and we have to adapt to the new reality.

If a doctor tells a patient that they have a horrible, potentially fatal

disease, but if they are willing to go through a year or two of absolute misery they will be cured and go on to have years of normal life, does anyone think the patient would not be willing to go through it? We're being asked, not to go through misery and suffering, but rather to go through inconvenience and annoyance. How can we say no to that?

Local numbers from the Five Towns showed that the percentage positive, which was below 1% all summer and went up to about 1.5% over the past week, jumped to 3.5%. Far Rockaway jumped to 5.2%. It doesn't take a mathematician to see where this is going if we don't ALL do the right thing immediately. We are heading towards disease spread and to government ordered lockdowns.

If a vaccine came out tomorrow, and if (IF) it were perfect, it will still be about a year until enough people develop immunity to protect us. The vaccine is not coming out tomorrow,

and I don't expect a vaccine to be anywhere near 100%, and do not expect it to offer lifetime immunity. I expect that we will need boosters on a regular basis. I can't define a regular basis from this distance.

It's important to define some basic terms.

Isolation is for someone who has the disease. It is for a minimum of 10 days and the person must be well for at least several days. Isolation means staying away from everyone. It does not mean going around wearing a mask. It means not going around.

Quarantine is for someone who has had exposure to a disease source. It is for 14 days since that is the window for developing COVID-19 after exposure. Less than 14 days is not enough. Less than the full 14 days increases the risk of spread. One cannot test themselves out of quarantine. The 14 days are sacrosanct. If during this 14 day window someone develops COVID, they change to isolation from quarantine and begin their 10 day (minimum) count.

The criteria for needing quarantine is being less than 6 feet from, and more than 10-15 minutes near, a positive person. Obviously, more intimate contact such as sharing food or utensils or a face to face conversation would require quarantine even with less than ten minutes spent together. Both the Nassau County Board of Health and New York City Board of Health have mentioned 12 feet spacing for religious services where there is singing, "chanting", or loud sermons.

We are into a significant uptick now. If you look at the numbers, the Five Towns and Far Rockaway are real hotspots. It is only a matter of time before, unfortunately, we see deaths again.

People have told me that the virus seems less virulent, less damaging. This is not true. First of all, the deaths and severe complications can lag several weeks behind the case number increase.



Second, younger people are being hit now. We aren't having nursing home deaths so the population is less likely to die. It may look like things are less dangerous, but the optics can be very deceiving.

The University of Washington's updated predictions show a curve moving up in New York from the current handful of daily deaths to as high as several hundred per day towards the end of the fall.

What must we all do?

Everyone needs to mask. Everyone needs to maintain distancing. Everyone needs to avoid unnecessary close contact, even with close relatives who don't live in the same house. Children and grandchildren will spread the disease and biologic ties do not prevent it. This isn't a personal choice. This is an obligation as a member of society to protect other people.

If you walk into a room and it's overcrowded, meaning the minimum of 6 feet in all directions is not there, walk out. This applies to social gatherings or religious services. Don't go in and if you're already there, walk out.

If you walk into a store and people aren't wearing masks, don't be shy. Tell the owner to follow the guidelines. If they don't comply, walk out. You may save a life. It may be your own. It may be a friend, relative, or neighbor.

It's not just about you. It's also about your contacts.

There have been no major breakthroughs in the past few weeks. No new magic drugs. No scientific news pointing to an imminent vaccine release. The only news is of the uptick in numbers.

THE JEWISH MUSIC PICTURE OF THE WEEK



CHOL HAMOED 2013 CONCERT AT QUEENS COLLEGE

PHOTO CREDIT: ARI HIRSCH

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Rav Hershel Schachter

SUKKOS TOPICS: SHIFTS IN COMMUNAL SUKKAHS, EATING BEFORE NIGHT THE FIRST DAYS OF SUKKOS

It is expected that an individual begin to plan and prepare the necessary arrangements for performance of any mitzvah thirty days in advance. If one has no shofar, machzor or sukkah locally, one must plan accordingly to ensure that they have the opportunity to fulfill these mitzvos. Due to the important consideration of social distancing, there are many communal sukkos that will be arranging multiple shifts for their membership to have a chance to eat in the sukkah.

On the first two nights of Sukkos, we generally do not make kiddush or eat the meal before tzais hakochavim. However, this year there is room to be lenient to allow the first shift to accept Yom



Tov early and make kiddush following davening. Ideally, the first shift should be sure to eat a kzayis of bread in the sukkah after tzais hakochavim. However, if it is necessary to begin the second shift

before tzais hakochavim, one may be lenient to complete the meal entirely before tzais hakochavim. If there are many who need to use a communal sukkah and the shift must be very short, each shift

may make kiddush, eat bread and bentch, leaving the rest of the meal (fish, meat, vegetables, etc.) to be eaten inside at home (without bread).

If one shift must wait a very long time for its turn, the delay may cause a situation of mitzta'er, and members of that shift are potentially exempt from sukkah. However, this would not apply on the first two nights of Sukkos, when even a mitzta'er must eat in the sukkah. Should there be rain, or a similar uncomfortable

situation (on the first two nights of Sukkos) that affects the experience while sitting in the sukkah itself, the bracha of Leishev B'Sukkah should not be recited.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter, a noted Talmudic scholar, has had a distinguished career with YU RIETS for nearly 50 years. He joined the faculty in 1967, at the age of 26, the youngest Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS. Since 1971, Rabbi Schachter has been Rosh Kollel in RIETS' Marcos and Adina Katz Kollel (Institute for Advanced Research in Rabbinics) and also holds the institution's Nathan and Vivian Fink Distinguished Professorial Chair in Talmud. Rabbi Schachter also serves as the Posek for the OU's Kashruth Division. Reprinted with permission from TorahWeb.org.



Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

SUCCOS: JUST DESSERTS

The Talmud in Gemara Avodah Zarah talks about the future. It details for us a scenario that will occur after the final redemption, when the G-d of the Jews and His Torah are known and accepted by all of mankind. The entire world will see the great reward meted to the small nation that endured an incessant exile while following the Torah scrupulously. Then the idol-worshippers from other nations will line up before G-d and complain, "what about us?" Had we been given the Torah we, too, would surely have kept it! Why are you only rewarding the Jewish people?" The Talmud tells us that G-d makes a deal. "All right," He tells them. "I'll give you one easy mitzvah. If you observe it correctly, fine. However, if you do not, then your complaints are meaningless. The Talmud tells us He will give them the mitzvah of Sukkah. G-d will then take out the sun in all its glory and the protection of the Sukkah will be no match for its rays. These idol-worship-

pers, predicts the Talmud, will kick the walls of the Sukkah and flee in disgust. There are many mitzvos in the Torah. 613 to be exact. And there are quite a number of difficult ones. Some are conducive to despair and disheartenment without a broiling sun. Why, then, was the mitzvah of Sukkah chosen to be the cause celebre that differentiates our commitment to that of an idolator?

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in his first book of the Magid Series tells the story of a Reb Avraham who was about to enter a restaurant one late spring afternoon. Upon entering, he noticed a familiar vagrant Jew, known to all as Berel the beggar, meandering outside.

Reb Berel, rumor had it, was a formidable Torah scholar back in the old country, but had his life shattered physically and emotionally by Nazi atrocities. He was a recluse, no one knew exactly where or how he lived; but he bothered no one, and not too many people bothered with him.

Reb Avraham asked the loner to join him for a meal. He was about to make a business trip up to Binghamton and figured that he might as well prepare for the trip with more than a hot meal

— he would begin it with a good deed. Reb Berel gladly accepted the offer; however, when it came time to order, he asked for nothing more than two baked apples and a hot tea. Reb Avraham's prodding could do nothing to increase the poor man's order. "All I need are two baked apples and a steaming tea," he insisted.

Reb Avraham's trip to Binghamton was uneventful until the rain and the darkness began to fall almost simultaneously. As if dancing in step, the darker it got, the heavier the deluge fell. All Reb Avraham remembered was the skidding that took him over the divider and into oncoming traffic on Route 17 in Harriman, New York. He came to shortly after two tow trucks had pulled his wrecked car from a ditch and lifted him to safety. Refusing hospitalization, he was driven to a nearby motel that was owned by the Friedmans, a Jewish couple who were readying the place for the summer migrations.

Mr. Friedman saw the battered Reb Avraham and quickly prepared a comfortable room for him. His wife quickly prepared a little something for him to eat. She brought it out to a shocked

and bewildered Reb Avraham. On her serving tray were two baked apples and a glass of steaming tea.

When the Jews left Egypt, they had nothing to look at in the vast desert but faith. They built simple huts, almost in declaration: "Hashem we will do ours, we are sure You will do yours." And those simple huts, those Sukkos, protected them from the heat, the cold, the wind, and the unknown. Hashem tells the prophet Jeremiah to tell his folk, "I remember the kindness of your youth as you followed Me in an unsowed desert." (Jeremiah 2:2)

Perhaps when the final redemption arrives, it will again be the simple Sukkah that will stand as the protectorate and advocate of the People who stood for 2,000 years in the face of idolaters, who invited the Jews to join them... or die. So, when we enter the Sukkah this year, let us remember that it is only a small Sukkah stop on a long journey home. And when we arrive there, the Sukkah will be there once again to greet us as it was more than 3,300 years ago in the Sinai Desert. After all, it's nice to be served at the end of a 2,000-year-long journey with just desserts.

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