

# Positivity is Contagious

Rabbi Levi Perelmuter | Shul By the Shore

As the High Holidays approach, much thought is being given to religious services, community programming and other social events. How can they be conducted safely? Can we get together with our neighbors and communities at all? There has been so much focus on maintaining distance between people - it seems unnatural and very unfortunate.

Of course, in the present circumstances, we all understand the necessity of being physically safe. However, as a Rabbi, it is my duty to point out, that we are only concerned with physical distance during this very complicated time. G-d forbid, anyone should entertain the thought, that our separation is anything more than a simple safety measure.



One would think the above is obvious. But a cursory glance at the climate and spirit on social media and in our national news cycle, shows that there is a whole other pandemic occurring. A devastating outbreak of toxicity and negativity. And while the solution to the viral pandemic is physical distance, the solution to the more insidious spiritual pandemic is the near opposite, spiritual closeness! When interacting with anybody, be that in-person or online, be that a stranger or a family member, it is imperative to not be a spreader of disease, physical or spiritual. To be sure, for the physical virus, it's as simple as a few medical directives, a mask, a vaccine, and a few feet of space. No big deal. But to be open and connected healthily with our friends, family, and community? That takes a concerted effort.

Thank G-d, the spiritual solution has a very significant advantage over the physical vaccine. To protect from

the virus, each person must get inoculated, or be cautious. The vaccine is not contagious. But positivity is. When you do a Mitzvah for another human being, you have inoculated that person from a small measure of darkness. And likely, you have triggered a chain reaction of positivity that can spill over from one person to another ad infinitum. Every single effort to improve the world, to connect to others, has an incalculable effect on one's life, family, and community.

As we come to the High Holidays of the year 5782, let not the distance of the past year and a half be the focus of our attention. Just as a vaccine was deployed amazingly fast, so let us trigger a contagion of positivity. A contagion that will cascade through our communities and permeate our youth with optimism and enthusiasm for Jewish life and values. Chag Sameach and Shana Tovah! 