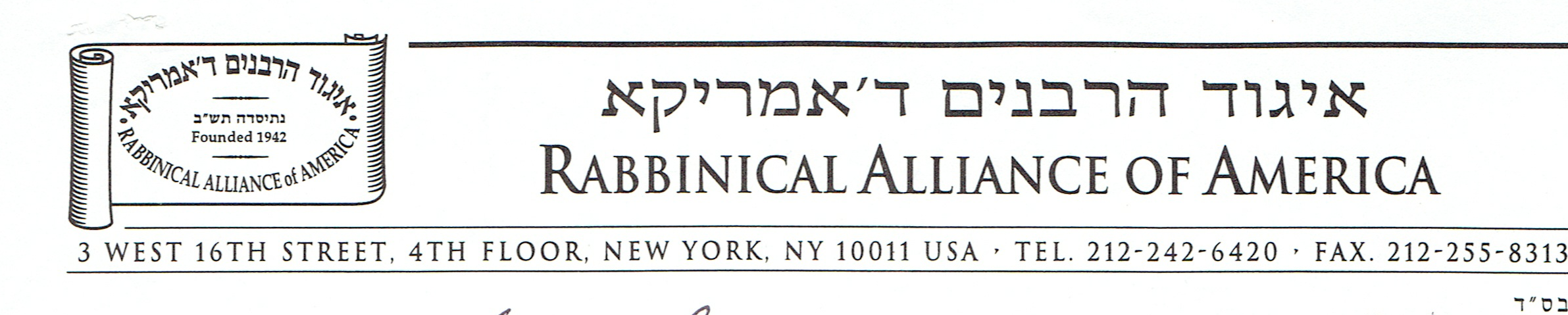
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**Vaccination is Pikuach Nefeh**

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**Igud Harabbonim**

There is a small, yet very vocal and influential group of “anti-vaxxers” living in our *heimeshe* communities. While I am not questioning their love for their children, they are indeed making a tremendous chilul Hashem and putting all Jews at great risk, both from measles, and rachmana leztlan, anti-semitism. I plead that everyone reads this critically important *pikuah nefashos* article.

All the cases of measles identified so far in this very large ongoing outbreak are traceable to ***our*** communities in Eretz Yisroel, Europe, New York, New Jersey Michigan and elsewhere. This has made countless headlines in the medical and secular press, all revolving around orthodox / ultraorthodox Jews spreading disease. Imagine what the headlines were in the Dark Ages regarding the Jews and Black Plague. *Hashem yerachem.*

All the cases are directly related to *heimeshe* unvaccinated persons - not housekeepers, janitors and people not from our community, as has been incorrectly suggested.

There is absolutely no one who disagrees with the *psak* that a parent must remove his or her child to safety when danger is present. Indeed, this *psak* serves, in part, as the basis for the ruling of HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zt”l*, that providing normal childhood vaccinations is a parental obligation.

HaRav Asher Weiss, *shlita*, *poseik* for Shaare Zedek Hospital, maintains it’s a mitzvah and *chiyuv* to get vaccinated. HaRav Weiss further states that yeshivas have the right – and even obligation – to protect students and should not admit unvaccinated children. HaRav Yitzchok Zilberstein, *shlita*, as well as HaRav Elyashiv have ruled that parents may insist that unvaccinated children be excluded from class so that their children are not put at unnecessary risk.

HaRav Moshe Shternbuch, shlita, head of the Eidah HaCharedi in Eretz Yisroel, has written an extensive teshuva stating exactly the same *psak*.

Almost all other *gedolei Yisroel* – including HaRav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt”* l, HaRav Yehoshua Newirth, *zt” l*, and, *yibadeil bein chayim lechayim*, HaRav Elya Brudny, HaRav J. David Bleich, HaRav Reuven Feinstein, HaRav Hershel Schachter, and HaRav Mordechai Willig, *shlita* – have all ruled that there is no basis in *halacha* for suggesting that vaccinations be avoided. All strongly require children in our outbreak setting to be vaccinated immediately.

It is downright dishonest to officially attest that Jewish law forbids vaccination, which is the only way to avoid mandatory state vaccination laws in NY and NJ. No poseik ever has stated vaccination is against Jewish law.

It is ignorant to state that vaccinations contain non-kosher materials and are therefore assur (forbidden). All the great *poskim* permit porcine (pig) valves for people with heart disease, and pig or non-kosher beef insulin to be used by diabetics.

The MMR has been conclusively shown in numerous carefully done scientific studies in millions of patients to be absolutely unrelated to autism. Indeed, the most recent study looking at over 600,00 children followed for years demonstrated autism was actually less common in vaccinated children.

These are just three examples of misinformation provided by orthodox antivaxxers. Why do we let such incorrect non-halachic non-scientific positions to be the cause of a huge chilul Hashem?

Why are people not following the medical experts as *halacha requires*? Why are precious children unnecessarily exposed to lethal illnesses? “Orthodox Jews Cause Disease” is the lead story on major print and other news media? Why are health departments and governments in our “*medina shel chessed*” talking about fining Jews and closing Yeshivas? Why are non-Jews afraid to sit next to us on trains or go to our stores?

Why have hundreds of unvaccinated Jewish children in the US, and thousands more in Israel, contracted measles, a potentially fatal disease. Two have tragically died in Israel, with many more hospitalized. Are we living in the 1950s?

In my humble opinion – as a community *rav* and board-certified infectious diseases physician expert – it is because we somehow have forgotten basic *halacha*. *Halacha* states that if a dispute exists on whether a patient should eat on Yom Kippur, or if Shabbos desecration is necessary to save a life, we must follow the most competent and/or majority of expert physicians.

On the question of vaccinating children against the major vaccine preventable illnesses, *both* the most competent and the majority of experts hold *the same view*. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, all 50 State Departments of Health in the U.S., the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society, the American College of Physicians, plus every other major professional infection control organization in the world, are unanimous in their opinion. “*Leis man depalig*.” No expert organization disagrees.

The evidence is overwhelming that vaccination is the only way to control these preventable fatal diseases. *B’chasdei Hashem*, no one dies anymore of smallpox; polio is almost wiped out. Why? Solely because of very successful vaccination programs. *Rachmana leztlan*, why should anyone in 5779 die from measles?

Imagine if parents were to insist their child come to school armed with a revolver. Would even the most ardent gun rights activist defend them? Of course not. *So why are we letting children come to our shuls, schools, and camps spreading serious potentially life-threatening illness that could have been prevented by vaccination?*

We are living in very scary times, replete with anti-Semitism, chilul Hashem, fatal contagious illnesses. I feel compelled to publicly speak out (again) against “vaccination hesitancy”, and the grossly inaccurate halachic and medical information being publicized by well-meaning but totally ignorant orthodox Jewish anti-vaxxers. It’s a matter of *pikuach nefashos.*