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World's Chief Rabbis Issue Joint Call for *Achdus* before Shavuos

Seven Chief Rabbis from around the world issued a unique call to *kehillos* across the globe last week, to set aside their differences and unite in honour of Shavuos, and in recognition of the common challenges that have beset communities in the wake of COVID-19.

A letter signed by the Rabbanim encourages people to take "very practical steps" towards healing existing rifts and divisions with others.

"If you are in a situation of conflict, tension, resentment or anger with another," the letter says, "reach out to [that person] to peacefully resolve the matter. If you know of anyone in similar strife – encourage [him or her] to do the same."

Russian Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar explained that the initiative was inspired by the ideal of *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, exemplified by *Klal Yisrael at Mattan Torah*.

"Leading up to Shavuos," he said, "we are calling on Jews everywhere to do everything possible to return to this state of complete unity."

"The COVID-19 crisis has many dimensions – medical and financial, but also social and spiritual," said South African Chief Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein. "These are challenges we're all facing, no matter who we are or where we come from, and we saw it as a crucial time for Jews around the world to set aside our differences and overcome conflicts, both communal and personal."

Rabbi Goldstein emphasised that Jewish unity isn't an abstract idea – that it requires concerted action.

"The idea here is that unity is not a noun – it is a verb; it's not something we simply talk about – it's some-



Year 4 talmidim of Yesoiday Hatorah Manchester made a siyum on Mishnayos Sukkah, having continued their learning throughout the lockdown via conference call.

thing we do. If we are to settle our differences and create true harmony with our fellow, we need to love peace – and practically pursue it."

Rabbi Goldstein believed the time is ripe for these peace-making efforts.

"In our respective positions as chief rabbis across the world, we humbly call on Jews everywhere to seize this

unique moment in history to strengthen Jewish unity and togetherness in every way possible."

"In the merit of our joining together," said Rabbi Lazar in conclusion, "may we bring down Heavenly Blessing to each one of us, and to the entire world, for health and healing, and for the ultimate blessing of all – the final redemption of all humankind."

The signatories to the letter are: Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi David Lau Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef Chief Rabbi of France, Rabbi Haim Korsia Chief Rabbi of Russia, Rabbi Berel Lazar Chief Rabbi of Moscow and President of the Conference of European Rabbis, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt Chief Rabbi of Argentina, Rabbi Gabriel Davidovitch Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Rabbi Dr. Warren Goldstein

