

Jewish Interactive comes to the rescue

AD Kahn

The UK organisation Jewish Interactive has been working around the clock over the past few weeks to prepare an emergency plan to help support Jewish schools, teachers and parents across the world with their rapidly changing educational needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

With a team of expert edtech trainers and an established home learning platform - jitap.net - used globally by thousands of teachers and students every week - JI is well positioned to spring into action and support schools as they venture into uncharted teaching territories.

Their educational resources including a platform (with over 11,000 educational games) have seen a large spike in demand and usage in recent weeks with many new school accounts being created each day as more and more schools seek online solutions to continue to provide Jewish education to their students remotely. Their support team has been working tirelessly to meet the needs of the many new users.

Edtech trainers have been running regular training webinars and remote support sessions for schools, teachers and parents and have trained hundreds of participants in the past weeks. Many more sessions on a variety of topics are being offered - all open to join.

JI appreciates the need to make things as simple as possible for its users at this time bearing in mind the pressures faced all round. In response to a need for easily accessible quality online content, the development team has created a central Home Learning Hub to provide users with simple access to all its support services in one place. They have also speedily built and are imminently launching a new dedicated site - Ji Bytes - featuring regularly updated content and offering teachers and parents a series of interactive learning activities on different topics that can be used each day with their children.

They are also continuing supporting and developing existing partnerships with schools around the world who all have an increased need for support during this time.

Federation's novel solution to immersing new keilim

Aviva Landau

As coronavirus brought routine services and public activities to a halt, pressing shailos began to flood the inbox of Shailatext, the Federation's text service for halachic shailos. Countless questions were raised about tevillas keilim. With keilim mikvaos closed and many people making their first Pesach unexpectedly requiring new dishes and pots, there was widespread worry and uncertainty. Rabbi Yisroel Moshe Guttentag, KF's Rabbinic Coordinator and Director of FedTech, has developed a revolutionary new way of dealing with this issue. Members of the public can fill out an online mechiras keilim form via the Federation website, and the Federation will then sell their keilim on to a non-Jew, with the understanding that the original owner may borrow them for an extended time. Since keilim owned by a non-Jew do not require tevillah, this temporarily exempts the items from tevillah, solving the problem of mikvaos being closed due to the health crisis. This creative procedure has been welcomed by members of the kehillah, who have used the service a staggering 500 times during the first week of its operation. This service is just one of several initiatives to preserve communal life and facilitate adherence to halocho during the COVID-19 crisis. The Federation has also been proactive

in sharing advice via online FAQs, created a video demonstrating hagolas keilim, set up online mechiras chometz and offered an online Shabbos Hagadol Droshe on Erev Shabbos Hagadol, as well as other long-distance shiurim.

Rabbi Guttentag is keen to point out that this response to tevillas keilim is a psak which has been developed under discussion with Rav Zimmerman, Federation Rav and Av Beis Din, and Dayan Hool, Federation Dayan. "This method of kinyan (and the permission to rely on the mechirah) is only acceptable during the current challenging times," he explains, "and the psak should not be applied to other scenarios. In an ideal situation, a kinyan is made by lifting an item, but in today's contactless reality, we have applied similar principles to mechiras chometz, to make this happen in a halachically acceptable way. Of course, once keilim mikavos reopen, the items must be toveled."

Rav Zimmerman commented, "Rav Moshe Feinstein zt'l used to say that "Halocho means how to move forward" - the Torah provides direction for a shomer mitzvos to navigate every situation. Throughout the ages, rabbonim have found solutions of how to traverse difficult situations; we are now living through uncertain times and must increase our bitachon in Hashem and absolute belief in Torah. In this zechus, we should all merit refuos and yeshuos b'karov."

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