

Dear Greater Washington Jewish Community:

STAY HOME. SAVE LIVES.

Unfortunately, there has been a significant rise in the number of COVID -19 cases in the Greater Washington Jewish community, and more generally in Maryland and East Coast metropolitan areas.

While we are all affected and unsettled by the current unprecedented challenge, we remain steadfast in our faith that Hashem will bring us all the strength to serve him properly even as we face this difficult time. While it is not possible to be together and enjoy each other's company this year as we normally would on Pesach, we should be mindful to try and strengthen each other and seek ways to reinforce each other even if remotely, by davening simultaneously albeit privately, as mandated in these times.

We pray that Hashem grant a speedy and complete recovery very soon to all those affected by this horrendous virus and by the ripple effect of the pandemic.

We express our incredible hakaras hatov, gratitude, to all of the healthcare workers and to all those involved in the many acts of chessed, Torah learning, and Tehillim throughout our community. It is spectacular to see how strong our community is at this time.

With that in mind, we must reinforce how important it is to protect everyone in our community. The threat of infection and life-threatening illness is very real. It has come to our attention that there are community members who are ignoring the directives of medical professionals and are still planning on having guests to their homes on Pesach whether local or from out of town.

We, therefore, feel the need to clearly and concisely review the precautions which we feel are critical for the members of our community to adhere to in this time in order to literally save lives. This represents not only the view of the rabbis below but the view of doctors and major poskim from around the country, across all sectors:

1. **There are to be no minyanim under any circumstances.** Social distancing protocols must be strictly observed at all times.
2. Individuals who have tested positive must share that information with the proper authorities and with those individuals with whom they have had recent close contact.
3. **We must insist that Seder and Yom Tov meals include *only* those living in the same household** unless one has express clearance from your health care provider due to their unique circumstance. By having any company – even close family and friends from out-of-town AND even in-town – you are potentially endangering your own life and the lives of your neighbors and community.

Those who follow these directives fulfill the mitzvos of לא תעמוד על דם רעך and וחי בהם . Those who do not are putting their own lives and the lives of their brethren in danger.

Our Jewish tradition teaches that our appropriate response in times of magefah is to increase our study of Torah and performance of Tzedakah and other mitzvos, in addition to obviously heeding the directives of our government and healthcare leaders in a most scrupulous manner.

We encourage you to increase in the matters of Torah, Tefillah, Tzedaka and Ahavas Yisroel. Specifically:

Torah – We remind you to maintain and increase your daily shiurim. There are many online resources. Perhaps find a phone Chavrusa. Ensure that your children, תינוקות של בית רבן, have some daily Torah study.

Tefillah – Although we are not davening with Minyanim, please be careful with all the Tefillos and Zmanei HaTefillah. Our children should daven in an age appropriate manner. We suggest that you add a few chapters of Tehillim every day.

Tzedakah – Chazal tell us that צדקה תצל ממות. We should all give Tzedaka on a daily basis. Please support the local organizations who are assisting people in need.

Ahavas Yisroel – Although we are physically separated from each other, we are not isolated and alone. Reach out to a friend, a colleague with a phone call or message to see how they're doing and give them support. This is especially necessary for people who are without family. If they cannot procure their Pesach and Seder needs, please contact your local rabbi.

May Hashem grant us all רפואות וישועות בקרוב, speedy healing and salvation. May this month of Nisan and the upcoming holiday of Pesach be one of true שמחה, happiness, even as it will be very different this time, and one in which we see Hashem bring further redemption to the Jewish people and the world.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Nissan Antine
Rabbi Eli Backman
Rabbi Shlomo Beitsh
Rabbi Mendel Bluming
Rabbi Yitzchak Charner
Rabbi Mendel Deitsch
Rabbi Sholom Deitsch
Rabbi Yechezkel Deitsch
Rabbi Leibl Fajnland
Rabbi Michoel Frank
Rabbi Sender Geisinsky
Rabbi Yehuda Glick
Rabbi Yaakov Greiniman
Rabbi Yehoshua Hecht
Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld
Rabbi Amram Hes
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Rabbi Zev Katz
Rabbi Herzl Kranz
Rabbi Eliezer Kreiser
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Rabbi Shmuel Leigh
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Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky
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Rabbi Levi Raskin
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