

Dear Chevra,

Someone the other day attempting to bring the COVID-19 crisis into perspective remarked: "It's not like it's the end of the world."

My son, Reuven sagely explained, "For some people it is."

Jewish tradition teaches in the hierarchy of Mitzvot, *Pikuach Nefesh*, the saving of life must always be our top priority. Our Torah commands the shunning of magical thinking and instead calls for reliance upon medical science. As such, our President, Laura Steinberg has heeded the warnings of the CDC and the executive order # 107 issued from the Governor's office only yesterday and has closed the building to meetings, classes, Religious School and religious worship services for safety's sake.

Hillel said, "Do not separate yourself from the community!" (Avot 2:4). As such, all meetings, classes, Religious School and religious worship services are going virtual. We can still stay connected but, unfortunately this means the postponement of several planned in-person events, like B'nei Mitzvah and our annual Congregational Pesach Seder. But we want to make clear, we are still a community and your Etz Chaim family of families is still here for you!

Information will be soon forthcoming as to how to stay connected via technology so we may share virtual Shabbat services, lessons, etc. Beyond that we remain present for one another in other ways, as well. A number of people, including our Board of Trustees, have stepped up to volunteer to support others during this crisis. These volunteers have begun checking in with our members to make sure you are OK and will remain so.

If you need someone to help with shopping, medications, doctor's appointments, etc. please let us know. In fact, you may feel free to call me directly on my cell phone: 908 420-2781.

May we all stay safe and healthy! May the Eternal grant strength to G-d's people, may the Eternal bless God's people with peace!

The Rabbi