

JOINT STATEMENT TO THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY REGARDING PESACH

Rabbinic leaders and organizations across the Orthodox spectrum have, individually, declared the health threat presented by COVID-19 a mortal threat (sakanas nefashos). We, leaders of major American Orthodox Jewish organizations, join together again to further clarify our shared and firm guidance for our communities.

We have heretofore urged not only full compliance with all health guidance issued by federal state and local governments, but have gone beyond those pronouncements in urging our communities to remain at home and avoid, to the maximum extent feasible, any outside interactions.

With regard to the upcoming Pesach holiday, we note specifically the following critical mandates, shared in consultation with leading Infectious Disease and Public Health experts:

1. We are accustomed to honoring Pesach to the fullest degree, including taking haircuts, purchasing new clothing and tableware, and preparing the fullest menus. This year's public health crisis mandates us to significantly limit all of the above. Our responsibility is to refrain from any NON-ESSENTIAL outside interactions, including especially in-store shopping. If there is a need for truly ESSENTIAL purchases, send one family member only – who is neither ill, vulnerable, nor of known exposure to COVID-19 - as rarely and as briefly as possible. Every effort should be made to utilize home delivery of pre-ordered food, or pick-up such orders outside in a parking lot, where possible. Stores serving the community should shift to home delivery or drive-by parking lot pick-up of pre-orders, and – to the extent this is not possible - must take substantive steps to minimize crowding, maintain hygiene, and maximize social distancing.

We will truly honor Pesach by limiting our purchases to the truly ESSENTIAL, ensuring that all of us – especially the vulnerable – are able to celebrate Pesach in good health. We must STAY HOME; SAVE LIVES.

2. The Pesach plans of many have been completely upended. This creates severe difficulty for so many. We are deeply sympathetic to this enormous difficulty. Nevertheless, public health demands strict adherence to the current guidance. Travel to other cities must be cancelled, whether to vacation venues (Florida etc.) or to family. Everyone must plan to celebrate Pesach where they are currently.

Individuals living alone or those absolutely unable to prepare for Pesach may choose to self-quarantine for 14 days, and then – if asymptomatic – may join with a welcoming local family that is similarly asymptomatic and that has been disciplined in staying home and limiting their interactions outside the home to the absolute minimum as described above. These guests may join one family only for the duration, without additional company, and must carefully observe the mandated standards of scrupulous hygiene and social distancing. The elderly and high risk must seek medical advice before considering this.

STAY HOME; SAVE LIVES

We urge one and all – while strictly maintaining the prescribed guidelines – to look out for each other by reaching out to and providing for each other, especially those living alone.

We hope and pray that our sincere Tefillos (prayers) and Chassadim (acts of kindness) will move Hashem to swiftly remove this plague from the world and bless us all with health, peace and tranquility.



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