

22 Adar 5780

March 18, 2020

Dear Community Members,

We, the undersigned Rabbis, are sharing with you the following guidelines that we believe are of the utmost importance. As this current crisis grows in scope each and every day, we believe that it is crucial that all of us commit to doing all that we can to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in both our community and in New York City at large. These guidelines are being made in consultation with preeminent medical professionals and are consistent with what numerous other neighboring communities have taken upon themselves as well. With heartfelt Tefillah, we pray that this plague should end soon and we look forward to being together once again in our Shuls and communal institutions.

Minyanim outside of the Synagogue/House minyanim

- Our members should not convene or attend minyanim in their homes, or in common spaces in their buildings. Davening should be done exclusively alone in our own homes.

Mourners/Yahrtzeit

- Anyone who is a Mourner or who is observing a Yahrtzeit should not seek out a minyan to recite Kaddish.
- In observance of a Yahrtzeit one should light a candle, recite a Kel Maleh Rachamim, say Tehillim 16 and learn Mishnayot in memory of their loved one.

Shabbat/Simcha Preparations

- As social distancing continues, we should plan to have our Shabbat meals alone with our families. We should not be inviting guests.
- Smachot, when necessary, should be limited to the minimum number of guests following these guidelines:
 - Shalom Zachor: Shalom Zachor should not take place at all.
 - Bris: A Bris should be made in the house with only the immediate family living in that house present. Additional guests should not be invited to the Bris. If desired, technology can be used for others to join virtually.
 - Weddings should be limited to the immediate family of the bride and groom, with additional people to comprise an exact Minyan if needed, two acceptable witnesses, and one Rabbi to be Mesader Kiddushin. The Kiddushin should be done outdoors, weather permitting, and a festive meal can be made at a later point in time. We recommend that elderly grandparents should not be at the wedding.
 - Sheva Brachot: Sheva Brachot should not be taking place at all.

- Naming Girls: Girls may be named privately; please reach out to your Rabbi for the nusach that should be used to do this properly. After naming a girl, the baby's name should be publicized using electronic communications.
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations should not take place at this point. For a Bar Mitzvah boy who prepared for a whole year there are a couple of options dependent on each Rabbi. There may be options for making up the Kriat HaTorah at a future date when the epidemic passes and for making a celebratory party then as well.
- Funerals: Funerals should only be graveside with only immediate family and an exact Minyan. If the family does not comprise a minyan, please contact your Rabbi to help facilitate a minyan at the graveside.
- Shiva: Shiva visits should be made by phone and video and should not be made in person.

Please note: Even when family members are included, elderly individuals and those who are most vulnerable should not be present as part of the Minyan or Simcha.

Clearly these are unprecedented times. Let us take every opportunity to increase our Tefillot, intensify our study of Torah and find safe ways to be supportive to others. Hillel teaches (Pirkei Avot 1:13) "Im Lo Achshav Ematai?-If not now, then when?" In the merit of our genuine commitment to protect ourselves and our families both physically and spiritually, may we merit to Yeshuot VeNechamot, God's salvation and consolation

With blessings for safety and good health now and always,

Rabbi Eli Babich, Fifth Avenue Synagogue
 Rabbi Gavriel Bellino, Sixth Street Community Synagogue
 Rabbi Aviad Bodner, Congregation Ramath Orah
 Rabbi Naftali Citron, The Carlebach Shul
 Rabbi Shlomo Farhi, Congregation Beit Edmund
 Rabbi Yitzchak Gettinger, Young Israel of the West Side
 Rabbi Jason Herman, Hudson Yards Synagogue
 Rabbi Shlomo Kugel, Chabad of the West Side
 Rabbi Yosie Levine, The Jewish Center
 Rabbi Adam Mintz, Kehilat Rayim Ahuvim
 Rabbi Shaul Robinson, Lincoln Square Synagogue
 Rabbi Allen Schwartz, Congregation Ohab Zedek
 Rabbi Yonasan Shippel, The Beis
 Rabbi Gideon Shloush, Congregation Adereth El
 Rabbi Daniel Sherman, West Side Institutional Synagogue
 Rabbi Benjamin Skydell, Congregation Orach Chaim
 Rabbi Mark Wildes, Manhattan Jewish Experience