

# VA'AD HARABANIM RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC

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כז' ניסן תש"פ

Dear Friends,

We are writing to update you about the ongoing health situation and our approach thereto. We are very encouraged by reports that the spread of COVID-19 is beginning to slow in our neighborhoods and in New York. The physicians with whom we consult attribute this positive trajectory to our strict adherence to social distancing over the past number of weeks. However, they warn that it is too early to stop, as prematurely relaxing our guard can easily cause another dangerous spike. We must follow the guidance of our government and of the medical leadership at our local hospitals. Right now they are conveying consistent messages of caution. (If there were to be a discrepancy between these two voices, we believe that the *halacha* mandates that we follow the **stricter** of the two approaches.) While we certainly look forward to reopening our shuls and lives soon, it is definitely not yet the time. Now we need to continue to diligently distance ourselves, stay home as much as possible, wear masks, and follow all of the ongoing instructions of our government. When that time does come to reopen, we intend to map out a unified, gradual and safe path, with consultation with governmental officials and medical leaders.

**Until further notice, there will continue to be no *minyanim* in our shuls and there should be no *minyanim* anywhere else in our communities, including homes, yards, streets, etc.** It is certainly heartbreaking that we are unable to convene *minyanim* for funerals, *kaddish*, *shiva*, *Bar Mitzvas*, etc. However, we continue to have no choice. **Similarly, there should be no indoor or outdoor gatherings for *kiddush* or any reason.** Any breach of this community-wide policy endangers lives; violations cannot and must not occur for *davening* or any other purpose. Additionally, public gatherings, even at "safe" distances can easily trigger anger towards our entire community from our neighbors who have and will bring this to the attention of law enforcement.

We deeply appreciate the support and compliance of everyone in this community who has contributed to this effort and we continue to pray for the health of every single member of our community and world.

Sincerely,

The Rabbinical Council of Bergen County