

Conservative/Masorti Movement Statement on Gatherings and Communal Expectations of Leadership

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In this unique and challenging moment, the Conservative/Masorti movement calls on its clergy, professionals, lay leaders, and participants to adhere to guidance provided by government and medical authorities and cancel or postpone all physical gatherings, and maintain practices that adhere to all national and local governmental directives.

We do this based on the Jewish legal principles of *Dina D'Malkhuta Dina* (the law of the general government is the law), as well as *Pikuah Nefesh* (preserving life), which can nullify the requirement to fulfill most mitzvot.

Based on prevailing health guidelines and government directives in much of the world, people in places affected with COVID-19 should stay home and maintain physical proximity only with people from their own households. This means:

- Public in person prayer gatherings, life cycle celebrations, meetings, and other events should not take place. People should follow local directives and remain in their own homes except for fulfilling basic survival needs.
- People should remain in their own households for Shabbat meals and for sederim.
- Burials should follow local guidelines, which often include only graveside services, limiting physical attendance to 10 or fewer people (more may attend virtually), using appropriate physical distancing practices, and avoiding the sharing of objects (such as shovels).
- Clergy, professionals, and other leadership should also remain at home except for funerals (as above), meeting people's pastoral needs by virtual means or by phone.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has [developed guidance](#) for daily and Shabbat worship using various electronic platforms, and will issue further guidance on [Passover kosher preparation](#), shopping, and [seders](#) in coming days.

As we focus our collective prayers and efforts on maintaining everyone's health, safety, and spiritual strength, we also remind congregations and other communities to preserve

the mental and physical health of their spiritual and communal leaders.

- Clergy who are considered at risk (e.g. older than 65, those with underlying medical conditions) should not officiate at funerals or at other events outside their home.
- Communities should also note that remote work includes unique burdens, and ensure the ability of clergy and professionals to maintain appropriate balance and boundaries between family and community needs.

Jewish life is so dependent on being in community, and these directives are so challenging for all of us. We know that restrictions on the seder are particularly difficult, as it is so powerful for families and communities to gather together. However, while we are physically distant, we are together virtually and -- most importantly -- spiritually as we make efforts to prevent the spread of this virus. We wish everyone health, strength, and blessings in coming days and weeks, including wishes for a joyful, if very different, Passover celebration this year, and be blessed to celebrate truly joyous holidays and occasions going in the future.

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