

Updated CJLS Guidance for Coronavirus (COVID-19)



rabbinicalassembly.org/story/updated-cjls-guidance-coronavirus-covid-19

Please find information below from Rabbi Elliot Dorff, CJLS chair, Rabbi Pamela Barmash, CJLS co-chair, Rabbi Joshua Heller, chair of the Rites and Rituals Subcommittee, Rabbi Jacob Blumenthal, Chief Executive, and Rabbi Ashira Konigsburg, Chief Operating Officer, providing guidance for individuals and communities affected by Coronavirus. Please note that this is not an official responsum of the CJLS. We expect the CJLS to have conversations on the needs of this crisis and offer additional guidance in the near future.

In response to further queries posed to the CJLS and the Rabbinical Assembly about quarantines and closures of synagogues, schools, and organizations due to the COVID-19 (known as Coronavirus), we urge those whom civil and medical authorities have recommended for closure to follow civil and medical advice. Pikuah nefesh, protecting human life, overrides almost every other Jewish value. Those synagogues that are still having services in person should follow guidelines offered to us by the CDC, including having participants sit at 6 feet apart, sanitizing frequently, and eliminating handshaking, kissing of ritual objects, and other activities that might lead to transmission.

1. As we are now moving from live streaming services that have a minyan to a period where many buildings are being closed for all gatherings, our precedent states that a minyan requires 10 Jews gathering in person, and it is preferred for people to join a livestream of such a service if they cannot be present themselves.

2. There is joy and comfort that comes from being together (hevrah). Since many in our communities are looking for ways to connect their community together during this period, we recommend that communities gather a minimal number of people to constitute a minyan in person with a live streaming link. For communities that cannot meet in person, we recommend that they gather virtually to daven on weekdays, even if they do not technically constitute a minyan.
 - These virtual gatherings for shaharit, minhah, and ma'ariv may include the regular liturgy without devarim shebakedushah (no barkhu, kedushah, or kaddish). While there is not technically a repetition of the Amidah in the absence of a minyan, the "leader" may choose to recite the Amidah loud enough for others to hear, omitting kedushah, but encouraging congregational singing. This will be helpful to those who may not have ready access to a siddur.
 - We recommend an alternative to the recitation of kaddish yatom ([Prayers adapted from Lev Shalem and from Masorti Israel](#))
 - The Torah may be read from a printed text, such as a Humash or Bible, without aliyot. The *berakhah la'asok b'divrei Torah* may be recited before the Torah reading.
 - Since many are now at home, separated from their usual school, work, or social communities, communities should offer regular Torah study and/or davenning activities besides the ones at regular minyan times.
3. For communities that cannot meet in person on Shabbat and holidays, congregational leadership should provide guidance for home davening and Torah study.
4. Some may not have access to a siddur (or to the siddur that the linked virtual community is using) and may [request a pdf](#). Every attempt should be made to reduce potential violations of Shabbat. Ideally, a PDF could be printed out before shabbat. If this is not possible, a tablet or laptop should be put on airplane mode (before Shabbat starts), and the pdf should not be edited. For halakhah on the use of electrical devices on Shabbat, please see Rabbi Daniel Nevins' teshuvah: [The Use of Electrical and Electronic Devices on Shabbat](#).
5. Mourners during shivah will feel the lack of visitors, and communities are urged to extend special care via telephone calls and virtual visits to mourners.
6. We should be very mindful of the mitzvah of hesed (loving-kindness) and be especially concerned to assist the elderly and infirm in our communities.
7. Weddings should be postponed, if at all possible. Calligraphed ketubot with the previous intended date of the wedding can be present and on display, but a ketubah with the correct date should be used for the wedding itself.

We pray for healing for those who are ill and for health and wellness for us, our communities, and all people.