



COVID-19: Advice for Community Rabbis

In times of crisis, community Rabbis and lay leaders have a unique role in maintaining and nurturing personal and community resilience. Rabbis are inundated with halakhic questions regarding prayer gatherings, lessons, issues of closeness and distance. Behind each such question lies significant psychosocial concerns, anxieties, the need for support and maintaining continuity in the face of an unknown threat.

Here are some initial recommendations for Rabbis in dealing with the crisis:

1. **Leadership** - Speak to your community about the crisis, instruct them to follow government/municipal guidelines and model a personal example (maintaining social distance, avoiding physical contact, hand washing etc.).
2. **Resilience** - Deliver a resilient message. That this affects us all and we need to prepare emotionally and socially. This need not be social isolation we all need to reach out to make sure that others are connected.
3. **Connection** - Participate in leadership team discussions: community management / municipality / emergency teams and others.
4. **Love**- loving family and friends from a distance - especially grandparents. Encouraging grandchildren to call/Skype their grandparents.
5. **Information** - Issue messages in coordination with the leadership with halakhic-social guidelines adapted to updated Ministry of Health and local authority guidelines.
6. **Strength** - Encourage support systems, shared responsibility, listening and emotional support. Prepare materials to send to community members. Professional assistance should be encouraged when necessary.
7. **Team Support** - Provision of personal and professional support for teams operating in the community.
8. **Self-care**- Remember to look after yourself and those close to you.

This situation should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen the community with an emphasis on the following areas:

- ❖ Recruitment of a Corona Forum - Consult at regular times, once a day for decisions and on-going schedules.
- ❖ Collect information about isolated and in-home patients - Appoint a staff person responsible for daily updates based on qualified information.
- ❖ Operate volunteer teams to provide support and assistance and to supply basic necessities, medicines, home repairs and more.
- ❖ Establish remote support mechanisms - consultants, therapists, caregivers, friends, hot lines.
- ❖ Create religious content - reciting Psalms, learning Mishna by children, Talmud study daily / weekly study.

Remember - a time of crisis is also an opportunity to discover community resilience, strength and create social cohesion.