

# Va'ad HaRabbonim of Greater Cleveland ועד הרבנים דקליוולאנד

בס"ד  
כ"ה אייר תש"פ  
יום מ' לספירת העומר  
5/19/20

## Re: COVID-19 Shul Update

The past few months have been challenging on many levels. The gaping void left by our inability to daven with a minyan, attend shiurim in person, send our children to school, and interact socially with our family and friends, has confounded an already precarious health and economic situation. We admire the patience, perseverance, and compliance of our community members, and we shoulder the responsibility to guide them with the utmost love and reverence.

The combination of divine providence, and the community's adherence to safety protocols, has spared us the gloomy projections that many predicted. Thankfully, the State of Ohio was proactive and aggressive at the front end of this pandemic, as was the guidance of the Va'ad HaRabbonim, closing shuls and restricting travel, amid other community issues. Throughout this time we have been in touch with medical professionals, and have remained alert to the community's needs.

It is not yet safe to return to normal, and continued adherence to health guidelines remains crucial, but the State of Ohio is a few weeks into its gradual reopening. Our community has also begun phasing back into some of our essential practices. We have cautiously begun "Yard Minyanim" for Mincha/Maariv, and added Shacharis, all with carefully crafted guidelines in place (SD, masks, outdoors, limited capacity, etc.).

We have until now administered our guidance on a communal level, but at this time we have collectively deemed it appropriate, to move toward restoring the autonomy of our shuls. We are blessed with many vibrant and responsible Kehillos within the greater Cleveland community, and beginning Shavuot (5/29/20), each Kehilla will be responsible for its own administration. Shuls will decide for themselves if to open, and the best way to open. A myriad of factors, including diverse constituencies and venue size, create different situations and call for different courses of action. It is in the interest of spirituality and safety that shuls tailor guidelines to meet their own complex needs. We ask that you refer to your shul leadership for specific details.

# **Va'ad HaRabbonim of Greater Cleveland**

**ועד הרבנים דקליוולאנד**

The Va'ad HaRabbonim will maintain general oversight to ensure that fundamental safety precautions are established in the shuls that decide to open. This will include safe social distancing, masks, hand washing, limited capacity, staggered minyanim, no children, and more. Shuls may decide to daven indoors, if deemed safe by leadership and keeping to the agreed upon protocols. Please do not expect your shul to be 'back to normal'; it will be far from that. Also, please be in touch with your Rov and/or doctor if you are immuno-compromised, or have any other concerns about attending.

The unity and loyalty of our community has been key to our health, and an inspiration to other cities across the country. As we restore shul autonomy, we ask that all continue to be united in consideration of others, and non-judgmental as to how specific Kehillos choose to proceed.

As of the writing of this letter, the Governor has lifted his restriction on interstate travel, but is still discouraging it. We understand how difficult it has been for families not to visit with each other, especially for Yom Tov, and refer you to the Governor's guidance. Anyone who does choose to travel to Cleveland for Shavuot will not be allowed to enter into any shul or public minyan.

We take this opportunity to remind the men, women and children of our community, that although restrictions on shuls, businesses, and other entities are slowly relaxing, it remains critical to refrain from non-essential movement or outings, and to follow social distancing recommendations at all times and in all places (e.g. wearing masks in public, six feet distance, etc.). This includes, but is not limited to, families congregating outdoors, essential outings to purchase food or household items, and employees in their workplaces.

We will continue to monitor the safety and feasibility of this course, and address other pertinent communal matters.

Let us pray that Hashem send good health to all, and that He continue to protect our community,

May we merit *Yeshuos* and *Refuos* soon,

**Va'ad HaRabbonim of Greater Cleveland**