

Funeral and Shiva Protocol Update

As we grapple with the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and all that it entails, each of us will be called to make changes and perhaps difficult decisions. As a deeply committed faith-based Jewish community, we know it is our sacred obligation to do everything within our power to limit the spread of this virus, and to protect the most vulnerable in our community. In light of the threat that the virus poses, we must apply to our funeral and mourning practices the *halakhic* principle of *pikuach nefesh*, “safeguarding human life.”

Jewish law is clear: *pikuach nefesh doheh et ha-kol*, “the saving of life outweighs every other principle.” And as the Sages have taught countless times in the Talmud and classical literature of Codes and Responsa, this is an expansive principle, not restricted only to actual moments of saving one individual’s life. Therefore, starting today, we are implementing the following protocols in keeping with best information available to us from local and national authorities, and Jewish communities throughout the United States.

Funerals:

- We will be limiting attendance at funerals to immediate and close family members
- We strongly advocate having graveside funerals
- Should an inside space be needed, we will work with families individually to assure that recommendations for proper social distancing are followed
- We will help to schedule a more inclusive memorial service when we are past this public health threat

Shiva:

- In accordance with local and national public health policy, we will no longer organize in-person shiva minyans. Instead, all shiva minyans will be conducted virtually in accordance with our online minyan guidelines.

During these uneasy times, may our unwavering communal and spiritual connection to each other continue to be among our greatest blessings at Beth Abraham. Should a loss occur, we will do all we can to diligently follow the twin principles that guide the Jewish approach to death and mourning: *Kavod v’Nichum* – honoring the dignity of the deceased and comforting the mourners. Through the embrace of our caring Beth Abraham community, we will share the grieving journey together.