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February 2021

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that we are nearing the one-year mark in our battle against Covid-19. Despite the difficulties of the past year, our community's unity and adherence to safety protocols have been the benchmark for communities throughout the country. We have much of which to be proud.

The holidays of Purim and Pesach will soon be upon us. While each rabbi will communicate directly with his congregation, we collectively believe it is important to reiterate a number of community-wide safety protocols.

Covid-19 Vaccine

Words cannot adequately express our immense gratitude to Hashem for enabling the discovery of vaccines for Covid-19. We **strongly** encourage every eligible individual to get vaccinated as soon as possible. At the same time, we know the frustration many are facing as they wait to be inoculated. We stress how critically important it is for everyone to register for the vaccine in accordance with the government guidelines. We have an opportunity to create a Kiddush Hashem by carefully following the vaccine distribution guidelines.

Social Distancing and Masks

Despite the advances, the virus remains active and is spreading in certain sectors of our community and beyond. We must remain vigilant in our observance of all CDC regulations. This includes social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, and quarantining when necessary. It is precisely because our community shuls have maintained a strict adherence to these protocols that our shuls have not been causes of contagion.

We empathize with the general feelings of "Covid-19 fatigue". However, we must continue to follow the guidance of our medical professionals. Until our community doctors advise to the contrary, our public safety measures will stay in effect in every RCBC-member synagogue. As we learn more information about the vaccine, each shul will communicate directly regarding changes in policy for those who are fully vaccinated.

Celebrating Purim and Pesach

We understand that many people are anxious to celebrate Purim and Pesach together with family and friends this year. **We urge everyone to exercise great caution when planning for these holidays, as the beautiful mitzvot associated with them do not override our paramount concern for safety.** For example, mishloach manot should be delivered with great attention paid to social distancing. Consider dedicating more funds to matanot l'evyonim and preparing fewer mishloch manot packages. The Purim seudah should not put anyone in a compromised health situation.

VA'AD HARABANIM RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC

<https://www.rcbcvaad.org>



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Similar considerations should be taken when making arrangements for the Sedarim and the week of Pesach. Our earnest desire to spend time with our family and friends cannot jeopardize anyone's safety. At the same time, to the extent it is possible, please keep in mind your relatives, friends and neighbors who will be alone during this holiday season. Even small acts of kindness, such as a phone call or a socially distant visit, can have a significant impact.

We recognize that some individuals in our community will be fully vaccinated by the time Purim and Pesach arrive; we encourage everyone to consult with their physicians for specific medical guidance.

We have been inspired by you, the members of our community, as you have continued to sacrifice not only for your personal well-being but on behalf of others. May Hashem see our commitment to safeguarding others and speedily bring us to a time when these types of measures will be a distant memory.

Wishing everyone a safe, meaningful, and happy Purim and Pesach.

The Rabbinical Council of Bergen County