

Dear Friends,

This is truly a surreal time. We are normally pleading with people to come join us for minyan, and we are right now pleading that everyone stay home. We are doing this with the strongest urging from the medical community as it has been demonstrated that the less congregating that takes place, the less the disease will spread, which will invariably save lives. Please keep this in mind as you choose what to do throughout the day and try to congregate with others as little as possible.

In line with the medical advice we have received, Ner Tamid has suspended all in-person programming until further notice. This includes all daily services and classes. Some of the regular classes will be streamed online and details will be sent out with access instructions in the coming days.

For those who are saying Kaddish or who have a Yahrtzeit – The source for saying Kaddish is a Medrashic passage that speaks of a child leading prayers and studying Torah in his father's honor and the great merit this brought his deceased father in Heaven. While we have traditionally perpetuated this custom by leading communal services and Kaddish, it is evident from the source that doing any Mitzvos in our loved one's honor is equally effective. Please consider saying some extra prayers, giving charity, or studying some Torah in your loved one's memory. May those deeds, together with taking care of your own safety, bring an elevation of the soul and much comfort to our loved ones.

Praying at home can be challenging, but there are also some benefits. Take advantage of praying at your own pace. If you are blessed with children, this is a wonderful opportunity for your children to watch you pray. Additionally, sometimes doing things in a strange fashion helps bring attention to what we normally take for granted. Hopefully, our praying at home will help us develop greater appreciation for prayer and for our sense of community which we, at times, take for granted.

In 1831, during a cholera outbreak in Eastern Europe, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the leading rabbi of the time, urged the Jewish community to take every precaution necessary but also not to despair. Let's follow his lead by being vigilant about our safety and by remaining calm. As soon as there are any updates about the shul opening its doors, we will let you know. In the meantime, I look forward to seeing each and every one of you soon. Please feel free to stay in touch by phone or text (410-775-6689) or by email (rabbi@nertamid.net).

With much love,

Yisrael Motzen

Rabbi, Ner Tamid!