



National Council of Jewish Women

Jewish Values and Coronavirus
Compiled by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg for NCJW

- ***Pikuach Nefesh* (saving a life).** Our tradition teaches that saving a life takes precedence over just about anything else we might do. The preventative measures that we take to minimize the chances we might become COVID-19 carriers who could unwittingly infect those most vulnerable to the disease are essential acts.
- **Love our neighbors.** The Torah commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18), which the great sage Rabbi Akiva taught was its greatest principle. Now, in this time of pandemic, how we practice that love has to look different than what we're used to. Love, now, means choosing not to come together as often as we would like. It means staying home more, fewer handshakes and hugs, more handwashing, and remembering how much we can still accomplish towards a more just world, even with less physical proximity.
- **Don't rely on miracles.** The Talmud (Pesachim 64b) reminds us not to rely on miracles. It's tempting to think that we could remain immune, that our area is less impacted, that things are safer. But Judaism always demands that we remain pragmatic and thoughtful, and to take appropriate precautions (even when they don't feel urgent in the moment.)
- **"All of Israel is responsible for one another."** (Talmud Shavuot 39a) We have a duty to care for one another, not only by practicing appropriate hygienic and social distancing practices, but by looking out for everyone in our community — especially those who are most vulnerable now — and fighting for comprehensive testing and health care, paid sick leave, and access to nutrition assistance so that as many of us can be cared for as well as possible through this difficult time.