

**PRESS RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

## **Unprecedented joint call from Chief Rabbis of the world for Jewry to unite this Shabbat**

**(Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020):** Chief Rabbis from across the globe have today called for world Jewry to unite and keep this Shabbat to support one another and pray for each other's welfare.

#KeepingItTogether is a call to unite the Jewish community worldwide in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that have been brought in to protect everyone's welfare. The united call is from the Chief Rabbis of Israel, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Argentina, South Africa, Moscow, Rome, Brussels, as well as the Conference of European Rabbis.

In a signed letter, the coalition of Jewish leaders urges the global Jewish community to use Shabbat Hagadol – the “Great Shabbat” immediately before Pesach – as an opportunity to tap into the transformative power of Shabbat and to unite in the face of the current crisis.

The Chief Rabbis are calling on Jews in every corner of the globe to:

1. Call or message each other with words of support before Shabbat;
2. Pray for each other, and all humankind just before candle-lighting;
3. Keep this Shabbat together.

Each of these three actions is intended to have a far-reaching impact and to connect the global Jewish community, whilst at the same time, calling on world Jewry to uphold the vital social distancing measures set out by world governments and health authorities.

**Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein** of South Africa said: “The unprecedented nature of the crisis that COVID-19 has caused requires an unprecedented show of unity. This is the first-time that there has been a joint call of Chief Rabbis on this level, united in our message for world Jewry to come together in support of one another. We urge organisations all over the world to work together so that we can emerge from this incredibly challenging time stronger than ever. This alliance of Chief Rabbis will going forward continue to work together in partnership to make the world into a better place.”

**Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di-Segni** of Rome said: “Over the last few weeks we have witnessed first-hand the devastation that COVID-19 can cause. In Italy, our community is mourning and many people have been unwell, we must support each other to find a way through this crisis. I would urge every Jew to

support their community and take this opportunity to reach out and show solidarity to one another. We are blessed to have Shabbat and the more special we can make it for ourselves and our households the more strength we will get from it to fight this virus.”

For more information visit: <https://www.keepingittogether.world/>

**ENDS**

**Please find attached the joint letter from the Rabbis.**

Spokespeople are available for interview. To arrange, please contact:

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**An open letter from the Chief Rabbis of the world**

This Shabbat – the Shabbat before Pesach – is called Shabbat HaGadol, the Great Shabbat.

It was first celebrated at the birth of the Jewish people, moments before the dawn of our deliverance from Egyptian slavery.

Every Jewish family, alone in their homes in Egypt, sat fervently anticipating the united dream of deliverance and nationhood.

3332 years later, this Shabbat HaGadol, we too sit, isolated in our own homes, once again united in our fervent prayer for relief from the global pandemic that has shaken our world to its core.

**We call on Jews around the world to adhere – with total commitment – to the health and safety protocols as set out by their country.**

We call on Jews around the world to make this Shabbat HaGadol a Shabbat of kindness, a Shabbat of prayer and a Shabbat of connection to the Divine – tapping into the transformative power of Shabbat.

We call on Jews in every corner of the globe to do these three things:

**Call or message each other with words of support before Shabbat**

In our heroic global quest to protect each other, we find ourselves physically cut off from one another. So many of us are completely alone. Call or message someone you know who is alone or struggling, wish them Shabbat Shalom and offer them words of support and encouragement. There is so much we cannot do at this time – but let's not underestimate the power we have to uplift, encourage and support one another.

**Pray for each other just before candle-lighting**

As the devastation of COVID-19 sweeps across the world, so many people need our prayers. Let us pray to our Father in Heaven together – for each other and all humankind.

**Keep this Shabbat together**

Let us bring this Shabbat into our homes together and harness its immeasurable invigorating power. Let us connect to light and love and disconnect from the relentless news cycle for a precious 25 hours. Let us fill our homes with the radiant light of Shabbat candles together. Let us proclaim G-d Almighty's sovereignty over the world, and feel his loving embrace, as we recite Kiddush together. Let's cook before Shabbat, put away our car keys, dress up, switch off all electronics, eat, sing, pray, hope and dream together.

This is a time for us to rally together in unity. This is a time for us to be together – to welcome Shabbat in together – **as one people with one heart.**

May we all find comfort and strength in Shabbat and each other.

May it be a Shabbat HaGadol – a Great Shabbat – in the fullest sense of the words.

And may G-d bring health and healing to His world,

Rabbi David Lau  
Chief Rabbi of Israel

Rabbi Yizchak Yosef  
Chief Rabbi of Israel

Rabbi Berel Lazar  
Chief Rabbi of Russia

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt  
Chief Rabbi of Moscow  
President of the Conference  
of European Rabbis

Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

Rabbi Haïm Korsia  
Chief Rabbi of France

Rabbi Gabriel Davidovich  
Chief Rabbi of Argentina

Rabbi Yosef Chechebar  
Chief Rabbi of Argentina

Rabbi Dr Riccardo Di Segni  
Chief Rabbi of Rome

Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis  
Chief Rabbi of the  
United Kingdom

Rabbi Albert Guigui  
Chief Rabbi of Brussels