



COVID-19 UPDATE 3

17 MARCH 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

The wellbeing of our community is our highest priority. We continue to monitor the Coronavirus situation closely and review our protocols based on the advice of the Federal Government and NSW Health as well as leading Rabbinic authorities.

As we communicated in our initial COVID-19 Updates (6 March, and 13 March 2020), we as a community value the opportunities to meet and be together for Shabbat, at services and celebrations.

Shul Services

It is with much sadness that we need to update the community that under the guidelines just released from the Sydney Beth Din, all Shule service will cease until further notice.

Please see the statement from Sydney Beth Din below.

The Shul will be open until 7:30 pm tonight and tomorrow between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm to collect your Tallit and Tefillin.

If you would like to borrow a Siddur or a Chumash, this can be done at Reception. A \$50 deposit is required.

Shabbat Mevarchim luncheon and Torah and Tea will not take place this week. All bookings will be refunded.

Classes/Shiurim

We will continue to be offering classes/Shiurim and inspiring messages via video. Full schedule will be sent out in the coming days. Visit ChabadHouse.org.au/Live to access the classes.

The first class will take place tonight (Tuesday, 17 March) at 8:15 pm. Tonight's 'Tuesdays with Rabbi' class, titled "3 steps to personal freedom" will be available via the link above. Rabbi Schapiro will also be sharing an inspiring message at these trying times.

Hebrew School

All Hebrew School, Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes will take place in an online classroom setting. If your child attends any of these lessons, you will receive an email with more details.

Mikvah

The men's Mikvah will be closed until future notice.

The women's Mikvah will remain open for the time being. Extra precautions have been put into place. Please see here for more details ChabadHouse.org.au/MikvahCOVID.

Help and Assistance

Our wonderful Chesed Committee volunteers as well as our Rabbinic team, are assisting people in need at this time.

If you, or someone you know is in need of assistance, please contact Rabbi Mendy Schapiro mendy@ChabadHouse.org.au or 0414 560 770.

If you are able to assist and volunteer please contact Rabbi Mendy as soon as possible.

For further information about the COVID-19 from the Department of Health, please visit health.gov.au.

If you are in need of anything, please don't hesitate to contact me at rabbi@chabadhouse.org.au or 0425 214 522.

We pray for all those who have been afflicted by this sickness. May Hashem contain this epidemic, heal the sick and guide the medical professionals to find a vaccine.

With prayers for the coming of Moshiach, speedily.

**Rabbi Nochum Schapiro**

Director, Chabad North Shore

President, Rabbinical Council of NSW

Vice-President, Rabbinical Council of Australia and New Zealand

בית דין צדק דסידני והמדינה

Sydney Beth Din

Jewish Ecclesiastical Court

3/17/20

Advice of the Sydney Beth Din re Covid 19

It is well known that danger to life, even doubtful danger to life, supersedes all commandments. It is the experience of Jewish communities around the world, including in the USA, that where Covid 19 appears the spread is rapid and exponential. Communities in the USA have taken extraordinary measures after a spike in infections has occurred, and they regret not having taken action earlier. Israel has even begun tracking citizens by cellphone to prevent gatherings of more than ten and ensure isolation when required. Our government too is taking extraordinary measures and those measures will become harsher as time goes on.

There are already confirmed cases of Covid 19 in the Melbourne Jewish community. Failure to maintain social distancing to date means that the virus will almost certainly have already been introduced to our community. The only way to prevent further spreading is via the most severe enforcement of social distancing.

Some might argue that we need not act now but rather wait for the government to increase restrictions. However, the experience throughout the world has shown that waiting may have been a grave error.

With that knowledge in mind, and watching the example of other overseas Jewish communities, we believe there is a halachic imperative to act now. If we are proven to be wrong, we will thank the Almighty, but if we are G-d forbid right, and we did not act decisively, the grave responsibility will be ours collectively.

Taking all the above into consideration, we make the following recommendations:

1. It is imperative at the barest minimum to strictly adhere to the guidelines mandated by the government. In the context of saving lives, they are as mandatory as any other Torah law. This applies to size of gathering, social distancing, self-isolation or any other requirement of government. Smachot (such as Brit Mila, Weddings) may be made within these government guidelines but limited only to immediate family and strictly maintaining social distancing. Every effort should be made to limit numbers to even below the government recommendations. Note that in Israel and the US the number is now no more than ten people.
2. Our particular concern is in relation to religious services in Synagogues. A Synagogue is a unique meeting place where people of all ages, from across a community gather. Bearing in mind the difficulty of maintaining social distancing in that environment, the difficulty of turning away the elderly, or the difficulty of enforcing fixed numbers, together with the confirmed cases of COVID 19 already in the Australian Jewish community, we recommend, and believe it to be a halachic imperative, that all minyanim in all Synagogues be suspended from now until further notice.
3. Appropriate arrangements have been made at all the mikvaot to enable their safe use. Please contact your Rebbitzin or Mikva attendant for further details.

We will continue to watch the situation closely. Together with all the Rabbis of our community, we will be there to advise and help particularly our elderly and particularly in relation to individual prayer at home. Stay safe, keep well, and always maintain your faith in Hashem.

May Hashem bring healing to all of mankind and usher in the era when there will be no more sickness for the light of His goodness will fill the world.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Y. Ulman



Rabbi M. Gutnick



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