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Chief Rabbi David Lau: Stop kissing mezuzahs to lower coronavirus risk

Israel chief Ashkenazi rabbi asks Jews to stop kissing mezuzahs because of coronavirus, European rabbinical group publishes own directives.

Contact Editor Orna Lipshiz, JTA, 05/03/20 08:09



Chief Rabbi David Lau

FLASH90

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi asked Jews to stop kissing mezuzahs because of the coronavirus, while a major European rabbinical group published its own directives to contain the spread of the illness.

Rabbi David Lau's statement on Wednesday said that "as we see the unfortunate spread of a



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terrible disease, certainly one shouldn't kiss mezuzahs or even touch them. Reflecting upon the verses written in the scroll will suffice."

Jews are commanded to place mezuzahs, small boxes holding a piece of parchment including selections of verses from the Torah about G-d's unity and the commandment to love G-d, on the doorposts of their homes. Many Jews have the custom to touch and kiss the object.

Also Wednesday, the Conference of European Rabbis published a list of recommendations — including avoiding kissing mezuzahs, Torah scrolls and other people — to worshippers on how to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The group said anyone feeling unwell should avoid coming to synagogue and that everyone should "avoid shaking hands if possible."

Its letter recommended washing hands frequently and sanitizing one's immediate surrounding. It also advised readers to "not panic" and to consider that "wearing masks is much less important" than the other directive as the virus' ability to travel airborne is limited.

About 3,200 people have died globally and more than 90,000 have been diagnosed as having been infected, the vast majority in China, where the virus emerged late last year, *BBC* reported.

The World Health Organization has so far stopped short of declaring a pandemic.

Israel has ordered all recent travelers from Italy, Germany and France to enter self-quarantine.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/276864>

