

Publication: The Jewish Star (online)  
Date: 05.03.2020  
1/3

# THE JEWISH STAR

## Stop kissing your mezuzot: Israeli chief rabbi

Caution also applied to mikvah use, hearing Zachor and megillah

Posted March 5, 2020



Chief Rabbi David Lau watches as Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev kisses a mezuzah at the inauguration of the minister's new offices in 2016.

By Israel Hayom

Israel's chief Ashkenazi rabbi ruled on Wednesday that Jews should not touch or kiss mezuzot, so as to avoid infection by the coronavirus, and the president of the Conference of European Rabbis said the same.

After he met with officials of Israel's health ministry to consider the disease's ramifications on public religious observance, Chief Rabbi David Lau issued instructions for the public to avoid kissing mezuzahs to avoid spreading infection.





Publication: The Jewish Star (online)  
Date: 05.03.2020  
2/3

# THE JEWISH ★ STAR

“Currently, as we are witnessing the spread of a serious disease, there is no doubt that mezuzahs must not be kissed or even touched. A person need only think about what is written on [the scroll inside] the mezuzah when he enters or leaves,” Rabbi Lau said, referring to the Shema Yisrael prayer, which is enclosed inside the outer part of the mezuzah, which is what is kissed.

Chief Rabbi of Moscow Pinchas Goldschmidt, president of the Conference of European Rabbis, went further, stating, “It is advisable not to kiss other people, as well as communal siddurim, communal taleisim, mezuzot, and Sefer Torahs.”

He also said that people who are ill, whether it is clearly due to the coronavirus or not, should stay home “even if they have to say Kaddish.”

Rabbi Shlomo Hecht, spokesman for the Beit Hillel rabbinical organization, ruled that women who are in quarantine must not visit the mikveh, and should contact the Nishmat organization about how to conduct themselves until they are permitted to leave quarantine and use the mikveh.

“Men who are under quarantine must not visit the mikveh at all,” Rabbi Hecht said.

Israel’s Religious Services Ministry has issued similar instructions.

Rabbi Hecht also said that anyone under quarantine must not violate it to attend public prayer or join a minyan, and that doing so would turn the fulfillment of a religious commandment into a violation.

“Memorial days can be postponed until it is possible to leave quarantine,” Rabbi Hecht said.

This coming Shabbat will be marked by a reading of the Zachor Torah portion. Listening to the reading, which deals with Amalek’s attempts to destroy the Jews during the Exodus, is a religious commandment. However, Rabbi Hecht explains that anyone under quarantine must remain so.

“No one [under quarantine] must leave their homes to hear Parshat Zachor. ... One can and should read the parsha at home,” he said.

Hearing the reading of the Book of Esther on Purim is also considered a “must,” so rabbis were forced to come up with creative solutions for those under quarantine.

“A minyan is not required to read the Book of Esther, but a ‘kosher’ scroll is needed,” Rabbi Hecht said.

“However, instructions are that the virus could be spread through objects, and therefore a scroll must not be delivered to anyone under quarantine and then taken back. Apparently, the scroll can be read to someone under quarantine through a door or window, if appropriate cautions are taken.”





THE PR OFFICE <sup>[PRO]</sup>

Publication: The Jewish Star (online)  
Date: 05.03.2020  
3/3

# THE JEWISH ★ STAR

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon backed up Rabbi Hecht's ruling that those under quarantine must not leave their homes to hear the Book of Esther, but offered a high-tech solution: setting up cameras and streaming the public readings of the scroll.

<https://www.thejewishstar.com/stories/stop-kissing-your-mezuzot-israeli-chief-rabbi,18896>

