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THE FAMILY NEWSPAPER

RABBIS WARN: DON'T KISS MEZUZOT OR SIFREI TORAH

WORLD JEWRY FACES UP TO CORONAVIRUS

BY SIMCHA ABIR

Chief Rabbi of Israel, David Lau, has told orthodox Jews not to kiss the mezuzah when entering a building or a room.

The rabbinic update comes as Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt has advised affiliated synagogues against kissing a Sefer Torah, mezuzah, communal taleisim and siddurim.

As the number of cases continues to climb globally - currently it is over 90,000 - Chief Rabbi Lau was clear on the way ahead.

"During these days, when we are witness to the spread of a serious disease, there is no doubt that one should not kiss the mezuzah or touch it at all," said Lau.

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Meantime, Israel's Health Ministry announced Israelis arriving from France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Spain must enter a two-week period of quarantine.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking at the Ministry in Jerusalem, said that Israel was one of the only countries in the West in a "relatively good place".

"We've taken severe measures in order to prevent the spread", he said.

The Conference of European Rabbis (CER) has taken the stance after consulting with a specialist on infectious diseases and in Public Health.

"The coronavirus has been spreading all over the world," Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt noted. "The coronavirus can stay on hard surfaces for hours and days."

While it is essential not to panic, as the probability of catching the virus through the air, CER advises a person not feeling well to stay at home even if they have to say Kaddish. It is also advisable not to kiss other people nor shake hands if not necessary.

People should wash hands especially after touching surfaces that have come into contact with large crowds.

CER advises to have hand sanitisers in public places like a shul or school entrance, and if travelling by plane, passengers should take sanitising towels to clean armrests and tables.

If someone is in quarantine, CER advises against visiting unless you are protected.

The United Synagogue has issued further



Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

guidance to its communities following government, NHS and FCO advice.

Members should not attend shul if they have recently visited or been in contact with someone who has recently visited one of the areas listed in government guidance where there are coronavirus clusters.

They also should not attend if they have been in contact with someone who has suspected or confirmed coronavirus or flu symptoms.

Anyone unable to say kaddish for a loved one should consult with their Rabbi to find an appropriate solution.

The US has followed CER guidelines on hygiene in terms of shaking hands and kissing mezuzot, communal siddurim, chumashim and sifrei Torah until the threat is over.

