

Publication: The Algemeiner (online)
Date: 04.03.2020
1/2

the **algemeiner**

MARCH 4, 2020 12:24 PM 0

Top Rabbis in Israel and Europe Urge Jews Not to Kiss Mezuzot Due to Coronavirus



by Benjamin Kerstein



A paramedic adjusts his protective suit as he prepares outside a special polling station set up by Israel's election committee so Israelis under home-quarantine could vote in the Knesset elections earlier this week. Photo: Reuters / Amir Cohen.

Israel's Ashkenazi chief 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.

Despite efforts to contain the spread of the virus in Israel, thousands in the country have been quarantined, including the entire student body of a high school and a large group of soccer fans.





Publication: The Algemeiner (online)
Date: 04.03.2020
2/2

the **algemeiner**

According to Israeli news site *Walla*, Chief Rabbi David Lau explained his stance on contact with *mezuzot* — small containers mounted on doors that contain scrolls, which traditional Jews touch and then kiss before they enter a room — in an official letter.

“These days, we are witnessing the spread of a serious illness,” Lau noted. “There is no doubt that *mezuzot* should not be kissed and it is forbidden to touch them at all.”

“It is enough for a person to think about the things written in the *mezuzah* upon entering and leaving, and this will accompany him on his way,” the rabbi said.

Lau explained that “there is no commandment and obligation to kiss a *mezuzah*,” because doing so is a Jewish tradition rather than a halachic law.

“There is a custom based on ancient sources that [Jews] would touch the *mezuzah*, and only later began to kiss it as well,” he said. “When they became aware of the fact that there was a danger there, as early as the nineteenth century one of the great rabbis published a ruling that one must be careful about this.”

Chief Rabbi of Moscow Pinchas Goldschmidt — the president of the Conference of European Rabbis — went further than Lau, saying his own official letter, “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*.”

Goldschmidt further recommended that hand sanitizers be placed at synagogues and “we cannot underestimate the importance of washing hands on all occasions prescribed by *Halacha*.”

“May G-d contain this epidemic, heal the sick, and guide the scientist to find a vaccine,” he added.

Also on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Israelis to avoid normal handshakes, and demonstrated the Indian “*Namaste*” greeting as an alternative.

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2020/03/04/top-rabbis-in-israel-and-europe-urge-jews-not-to-kiss-mezuzot-due-to-coronavirus/>

