



THE JEWISH WELFARE BOARD SINGAPORE

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IMPORTANT UPDATE ON COVID-19

Friday, 13 March 2020

Dear Friends,

In line with recent developments, the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) advises members and guests that the following will be implemented at the Maghain Aboth Synagogue (MAS) and Jacob Ballas Center (JBC) with immediate effect:

1. **Services** - Daily, Shabbat and Festivals Services will carry on as usual. However, we require all congregants to observe the following social distancing measures:
 - Do not sit closely together. Please sit at a reasonable distance from each other (6 feet is recommended).
 - Refrain from congregating in the Synagogue during services especially during communal prayer moments. Please maintain social distancing as far as possible.
 - Refrain from handshakes, hugs and other such normative greetings.
 - Refrain from kissing the Mezuzah, Sefer Torah and Torah scrolls.

If you are suspected of being unwell during Services, you may be asked to excuse yourself from Services for the wellbeing of the community at large.

These measures are in addition to existing measures that are ongoing and have been in place since February 2020 (including temperature taking on-premises, travel declarations, regular hand washing/sanitizing, reduced crowding, improving ventilation etc).

2. Travelers

- **Shabbat 13/14 March 2020:** any visitor to Singapore and any member of the Community that has traveled within 14 days shall be identified with a red sticker and shall be seated in a specially designated separated area in the Synagogue. As far as possible, these individuals will be asked to strictly avoid contact with other members of the Community.
- **Effective Sunday 15 March 2020:** any individual (or any individual with immediate family members) who has returned from any country on the government travel restriction list within 14 days

will not be allowed entry onto the premises of MAS or JBC without exception. Please refer to www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19 for more information.

3. Community Meals (including Shabbat Dinner and Lunch)

- **Shabbat 13/14 March 2020:** all participants will be assigned to tables with smaller groups of 6 to 7 people per table. Travelers will be seated in a separate area of the Grace Hall.
- **Effective Sunday 15 March 2020:** Community Meals (including Shabbat Dinner and Lunch) at Grace Hall and Awafi are suspended forthwith. JWB is exploring alternative options, including tented, open-air, standing meals at the carpark of the JBC, and at the other extreme, suspending Community Meals indefinitely. We will update members next week.

4. Mikvaot

- The Mikvaot will remain open, at the guidance of local health authorities.
- Men/Women under who are experiencing symptoms of illness, or who are under home quarantine, may not use the Mikvah. Please consult the Rabbis for further clarification or for specific questions.

5. Sunday School - Talmud Torah (The Hebrew Sunday School) at JBC will continue operations unless otherwise advised by the relevant authorities. The above restrictions will apply to all students.

6. Passover events and supplies - An update will be circulated shortly on the upcoming Passover events as well as all the Passover products.

This brief outline cannot guide every particular situation. JWB is continually monitoring the situation as it evolves and shall make necessary changes as required.

We take these decisions with a heavy heart but with the conviction, consistent with Halacha, that the wellbeing and welfare of our members and Jewish residents in Singapore is our utmost priority. We pray that these will be temporary measures. Please take these days as a critical opportunity to intensify our tefilot to the Almighty, the ultimate healer, that all those who are ill will be healed and that our community will be shielded from any harm.

And now to the spiritual call of the hour, The corona virus has spread from just a few individuals to the entire world and if not checked it can infect every person on this earth. This teaches us a powerful lesson concerning the power of a person performing even one mitzvah. The spiritual energy generated by one deed has the power to spread to the entire world and in doing so bring about the coming of Mashiach, who will bring about the ultimate and final redemption and usher an age of universal peace. More specifically the corona virus phenomenon should alert us to focus on its spiritual counterparts. The word called “corona” means “crown” which refers to the Torah as G-d’s kingship. As we pray for a swift end to

this terrible outbreak we should encourage each and everyone to rededicate themselves to the observance of Torah and Mitzvot such as the observance of the mitzvah of tefillin for men which is referred to in the Zohar as a crown and the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles for women before the onset of the Shabbat every Friday. By doing this, they not only illuminate their homes but also the world at large.

Wishing you and your loved ones a most enjoyable Shabbat and may we share in good tidings always.

Rabbi Mordechai Abergel

Chief Rabbi of Singapore

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mordechai Abergel', written in a cursive style.