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## Religious School: a message from Lisa and Sarah

Sarah Gluck <sarahgluck@templebethelnj.org>  
To: Sarah Gluck <sarahgluck@templebethelnj.org>

Fri, Mar 13, 2020 at 4:30 PM

Cc: Rabbi Arnie Gluck <RabbiGluck@templebethelnj.org>, Cantor Emily Simkin <emilysimkin@templebethelnj.org>, Amy Rubin <amyrubin@templebethelnj.org>, Leigh Miller <leigh.miller@ey.com>, Gary Cohen <cohengarym@gmail.com>, Andrea Bradley <abradley616@gmail.com>, Melissa Pyle <melissapyle@hotmail.com>, "Wolff, Sharon" <rswolff@aol.com>

March 13, 2020 / 17 Adar 5780

Dear Parents,

As you undoubtedly already know, our temple leadership has made the decision to suspend all programs and activities at TBE, including Religious School, through Passover. The two of us, along with your children's teachers, our clergy, and our lay leaders are here to offer support during this unprecedented and stressful time.

This is new for all of us, and we imagine you have questions.

The social and emotional well-being of our community is, as always, at the forefront of our thinking and planning. We are actively exploring various options that can help us all stay connected over the next few weeks. This Sunday morning, we will be working with our faculty to strategize how to maintain your children's Jewish learning in a meaningful and manageable way, without adding to anyone's stress.

We are also planning a school-wide Virtual T'fillah. Joining together in worship and song during turbulent times can be a source of calm and great comfort. This service will be for all our students, from our littlest ones to our teens — and for you, as well. Mark your calendars now for 6:00 next Wednesday, March 18, and watch your email for information about how to participate online.

Lastly, we offer the following resource to help guide your conversations at home: <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Above all, stay safe and healthy, and please don't hesitate to reach out to either of us for anything you might need. We are here for you.

Wishing you a peaceful Shabbat,  
Sarah and Lisa



March 13, 2020

17 Adar 5780

Dear Friends,

We are reaching out to update you on our response to the threat posed by the novel coronavirus. We are taking every step to minimize the risk of infection at Temple Beth-El and to encourage you to join us by taking every reasonable precaution. (See [below](#) for guidance.)

Jewish teachings make our responsibility in these matters abundantly clear. The preservation of human life is the highest value, taking precedence over almost every other obligation, including Shabbat and even Yom Kippur. The Talmud cites the verse in Leviticus 18:5: "You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live..." To which the Rabbis added: "...shall live by them, and not die by them."

This mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh*, preserving life and health, is the principle that must, and will, guide us during this current crisis.

As clear as this value is, it is unclear exactly how and when to apply it to our current circumstances, especially when doing so conflicts with other cherished values, like coming together for Religious School, Shabbat and holy day observances, and doing communal acts of kindness. It is hard to make a decision to suspend the precious fellowship of our community under any circumstances. It is especially hard in a time of anxiety and worry - a time when we most need each other's warm embraces and reassurance.

That being said, our love and concern for each and every member of our community has led our temple leadership to make the following decisions after conferring with infectious disease experts and NJ public health officials. Though we hope and pray that the tide will turn soon, at the current moment we must do all that we can to protect the health and wellbeing of our community, of those who share our facility, and do our part in the collective effort to address and contain this threat to public health.

Therefore, we are enacting the following measures effective immediately:

- 1) All public events at TBE will be suspended through Passover, including Friday night and Saturday Shabbat services, Festival services, Religious School, adult classes, and Shabbat dinners. We are exploring distance-learning options for Religious School, adult classes, and other activities.
- 2) B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies may be held as scheduled. Decisions regarding these events will be made with each family on a case-by-case basis. Ceremonies that are held in our sanctuary will be livestreamed, with links available for congregants, family, and friends. B'nei mitzvah tutoring and rehearsals will go forward, but may be done virtually.
- 3) Temple offices will remain open and committee meetings will continue to be held in person, but a call-in option will be offered for those who wish to remain remote.
- 4) We are asking the other religious groups that share our facility to follow our guidelines. Non-religious rentals have been suspended.
- 5) All who enter our building are being asked to utilize the hand-sanitizing stations we have placed throughout our facility.
- 6) All commonly used surfaces (doorknobs, door frames, light switches, table surfaces, keyboards, phones, etc.) are being cleaned on a regular basis, using both anti-bacterial and anti-viral cleaning agents.
- 7) If you are not well or exhibit any symptoms, including fever or respiratory stress, please do not come to temple (or go to other public venues). Authorities are asking those who exhibit such symptoms to call their doctor and stay home and follow doctor's orders.
- 8) Our rabbi, staff, and lay leaders are all here for you and available to offer support and solace in any way we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us at:

Amy E. Rubin (Executive Director); x310: [AmyRubin@TempleBethEINJ.org](mailto:AmyRubin@TempleBethEINJ.org)  
Sarah Gluck (Education Director); x313; [SarahGluck@TempleBethEINJ.org](mailto:SarahGluck@TempleBethEINJ.org)  
Lisa Friedman (Education Director); x327; [LisaFriedman@TempleBethEINJ.org](mailto:LisaFriedman@TempleBethEINJ.org)

Leigh Miller ([President](#))  
Gary Cohen ([First Vice President](#))  
Andrea Bradley ([Second Vice President](#))

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and modify these plans as indicated by developments and the guidance of public health officials.

It is important that we make every effort to remain calm and optimistic that all will be well. With proper measures on the part of the authorities and the cooperation of our fellow citizens, we can hope to limit the impact of the virus on our community.

If you or your family are personally affected by the virus, please let us know so we can offer our support and good wishes for a speedy and complete recovery. If you are healthy, please do all you can to remain so!

As people of faith, let us place our trust in God and pray for a speedy deliverance from this crisis. Let us pray, as well, for a refuah shleimah, a full and speedy healing of body and spirit, for all who are sick.

Thank you for your understanding, cooperation, and support,



Rabbi Arnie Gluck



Leigh Miller  
President



Amy E. Rubin  
Executive Director

## Information about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

To help you do your part to slow the spread of the disease, we are sharing information distributed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), about the virus, and tips for preventing exposure and transmission.

### **How the Disease Spreads**

Understanding how the disease spreads is helpful in minimizing the risk of transmission. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet); and
- through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Though this is not considered to be the primary way the virus spreads, following standard handwashing guidelines and not touching your face are recommended common-sense protocols.

### **Changing Our Behavior to Prevent Transmission**

According to the CDC, measures for avoiding the Flu are the best ways to avoid exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19:

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick. ("Close contact" is defined as standing within 6 feet, physical contact, or handling common objects and then touching your face.)

- **Avoid touching your face**, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Despite how often we wash our hands, many people don't wash their hands long enough or thoroughly enough to rid the palms, fingers, and fingernails of germs. The CDC website includes information on [proper handwashing techniques](#).
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer** with at least 60% alcohol. Consider carrying your own supply of hand sanitizer and wipes.
- **Stay home when you are sick**, even if you might have "toughed it out" in the past. See this page of the CDC site for details of the symptoms of COVID-19. Keep your child or teen home if they are sick. If anyone in your household is sick, the rest of the household should stay home to avoid spreading the illness.
- **Stay home if you are in a high-risk group**. High risk groups are designated as older adults, people with chronic health issues, and people with compromised immune systems.
- **Cover your cough or sneeze** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If a tissue isn't available, cover your cough or sneeze with the inside of your elbow, not your hand.
- **Maintain social distance**, standing several feet apart.
- In public spaces, including TBE, **greet people without physical contact**. Instead, offer a warm smile, words of welcome, an elbow bump (elbow-to-elbow), a slight bow, a heart-touch, or an "air embrace." As awkward as it may feel not to kiss or hug, we must protect those who are vulnerable by expressing our warmth and affection in other ways.
- **Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently**. This can't be repeated enough. *It is the most recommended step to avoid spreading germs.*

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**Sarah Gluck**

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