



Rabbinical Council of Victoria

Religious Leadership for the Jewish Community

ועד הרבנים דויקטוריה

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Tuesday, 31 March 2020

6 Nissan 5780

Rabbinical Council of Victoria (RCV) Pesach Guidelines regarding Covid-19 Situation compiled in consultation with the Melbourne Beth Din

Following the Government's Guidelines

There are many difficulties and hardships we are all currently facing. Of those, there are significant challenges in regard to the physical distancing rules. However, the distancing and quarantining measures are vital in slowing the spread of this deadly virus. This, together with vigilant hygienic practices, including handwashing, are the most important and effective means that we have to protect ourselves. As per the guidelines shared by the Department of Health, social distancing is vital for everybody, at every age, healthy or otherwise.

We need to stay at home unless it is essential to leave as per the government's guidelines. These measures must not be compromised, and every individual has a role in their efficacy.

We would like to reiterate that as a matter of Halacha, it is absolutely mandated for everyone to follow as a minimum, all the government guidelines.

For our Jewish community, one which prides itself on closeness and togetherness, we need to be extra vigilant. At the same time, it is paramount that we continue remaining socially connected via the use of modern technology when possible.

We would like to highlight some significant matters in this regard.

Inviting guests for Yom Tov

In the national bid to slow the spread of Coronavirus and save lives, it is now against the law in Victoria to invite guests to your home and of course this affects guests for Shabbat or Yom Tov. A family (more than 1 person) cannot have ANY guests in their home. A single person can have a maximum of ONE other person, but it is not recommended. We understand how much of an impact this can have on families and we wish everyone strength and courage through these times. We need to focus on the fact that these measures, whilst extremely difficult, are about saving lives, the greatest act any of us can do.

Use of ZOOM for Pesach Seder

For those who will find themselves alone, and for all who will miss being with family and friends, we highly recommend hosting a Zoom conference call late in the afternoon on the eve of Pesach (prior to the commencement of Yom tov - 5:45 pm) , to sing the Hagaddah songs, tell stories, and share these special and traditional moments with family and friends.

Live streaming (Zoom and the like) is forbidden on Shabbat and Yomtov. There are certain specific circumstances when an exception can be made when life is in danger. (We have been informed that this was indeed the circumstances addressed in a widely circulated ruling on the topic from a number of Israeli rabbis). If you think that this applies to you or anyone you know, ask your rabbi.

If you do use Zoom, make sure to turn off the devices before 5:45pm.

Yahrzeit Commemoration

We also understand that for many, commemorating a Yahrzeit, or for those who G-d forbid need to mourn a loved one, these times will be significantly more difficult. We encourage you to reach out to your rabbi to ask for advice on different ways to honour your loved one.

Adhering to these new rules and guidelines and not being able to do the usual practice of Kaddish and other prayers, which are designed to save lives, is in itself a great honour for the soul.

Reaching out to the Vulnerable

Additionally, for those who are alone, we recommend a scheduled “check-in” each day of Yom Tov with a friend or neighbour. At a scheduled time, meet outdoors at a minimum 2- metre distance, one-on-one. This advice is subject to change with the current dynamic measure constantly being updated.

The goal isn't to mingle, but to make sure that everybody is safe and cared for. (This suggestion is for singles only! We urge families not to socialise or meet others, even at a distance, to maximise social distancing.)

Additionally, if you know anyone who is alone or vulnerable, please call them before Yom Tov and regularly through these times to ensure that they are okay.

Tzedaka – Charity

Finally, in this unusual and difficult year, how can we sit at the Pesach Seder and openly and genuinely declare **כל דפכין ייתי ויכול** — all who need should come and eat?

Understanding that our current circumstances are unique, one way to is to assist those in need with Pesach supplies, food and other urgent items. Fortunately, there are many wonderful organisations offering these services. If you are in a position to assist this is a beautiful way to help the many in our community who are struggling to provide for their needs.

One such organization is the Melbourne Jewish Charity Fund and they can be contacted here: <https://www.mjcf.com.au/>

With prayers for a speedy recovery to all those who need it.

In the merit of vigilantly observing the guidelines, may G-d protect us from this illness.

Chag Pesach Kasher V'Sameach

For further information regarding this statement please contact executive@rcv.org.au