



GLOBAL

The latest Jewish coronavirus updates: Israel considering expanded quarantine requirements

BY [JTA STAFF](#)

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People wear face masks in Times Square in New York City, March 3, 2020, after the city confirmed cases of the rapidly spreading coronavirus. (Eduardo Munoz/VIEWpress via Getty Images)

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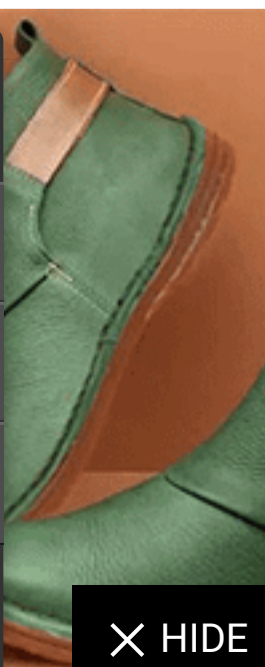
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NEW YORK (JTA) – The spread of COVID-19, a new coronavirus, is reshaping Jewish communities. We’re collecting the news flowing in from across the globe here.

As always, we want to hear from you. Have questions or tips? [Get in touch](#) or [let us know how your community is responding](#) to the coronavirus.

Sunday, March 8

10:00 p.m. All Israeli arrivals may soon be quarantined: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said Sunday night](#) that anyone arriving in Israel from anywhere in the world could soon be required to self-quarantine, as the number of Israelis affected by the virus climbed to 39. A decision on further quarantine measures is expected Monday.

9:58 a.m. Another canceled conference: The Jewish Funders Network is canceling its conference planned for the end of March due to the spread of coronavirus. “We are hoping to postpone until a later date and are exploring potential options,” JFN President & CEO Andrés Spokoiny said in an email obtained by JTA. The email noted “the significant financial burden cancellation on short notice will place on JFN,” and asked participants to donate their registration fee back to JFN.

7:50 a.m. It’s not just rabbis skipping their services: Pope Francis breaks with tradition and [delivers his weekly Angelus Prayer via livestream](#), which is broadcast in St. Peter’s Square where a fraction of the usual faithful have gathered.

6:58 a.m. Over 1,200 Israeli soldiers in quarantine: More than 1,200 Israeli soldiers [currently are under quarantine](#) for possible exposure to coronavirus, most having returned from overseas vacations. Some of the soldiers came into contact with someone in Israel who is confirmed sick with coronavirus. The Israel Defense Forces on Saturday [banned all soldiers from leaving the country](#). Meanwhile, the IDF has come under fire for holding a ceremony on Thursday at a military base in central Israel, involving thousands of soldiers, officers and civilians, the [Times of Israel reported](#). The ceremony marked the end of training for the Nahal infantry brigade. The soldiers receive their unit’s official beret at the ceremony.

6:30 a.m. Baltimore Orthodox Jewish schools cancel all extra curricular Purim events: Seven of Baltimore’s Orthodox Jewish community schools [announced in an email to parents](#) that it has cancelled all extra curricular Purim events. “After taking into consideration nationally published information by the CDC, state and local health departments, Johns Hopkins University’s recent precautionary measures to cancel public events, the precautions of other communities and institutions, and Torah Umesorah’s recent recommendations for schools provided by their medical consultants and Daas Torah, we have decided that it is unfortunately necessary to cancel all upcoming extra curricular Purim events for our schools. Regular classroom-based learning and activities will continue as normal, unless otherwise guided,” read the letter, signed by Bais Yaakov School for Girls, Bnos Yisroel, Cheder Chabad, Ohr Chadash Academy, Talmudical Academy, Torah Institute and Toras Simcha.

3:45 a.m. Rabbinical group in Israel will recite kaddish on behalf of mourners in quarantine:

Tzohar Rabbinical Organization in Israel is making itself available to help mourners in Israel and anywhere else where Jews are quarantined who are unable to get to prayers to recite kaddish for their loved ones. Mourners can send in details and a Tzohar volunteer will then dedicate himself to saying kaddish in place of the individual who is not able. [Register on-line](#) or e-mails can be sent in English to avelut@tzohar.org.il.

12:30 a.m. Division over Israel's U.S. travel restrictions, but no decision yet: Israel hasn't yet announced whether it is putting into effect restrictions said to be under consideration there that would require visitors from New York, California, and Washington state to enter self-quarantine. A Times of Israel report said [Israeli officials were divided](#) over the potential restrictions.

Saturday, March 7

11:07 p.m. SAR announces prolonged closure and quarantine: A New York day school that has been closed for more than a week informed families Saturday night that – per a directive from the New York State Department of Health – both its elementary school and high school would remain closed through Monday, March 16. “This date marks 14 days since the last exposure to a positive case within our buildings since our last day of school was Monday, March 2,” administrators from SAR said in a Saturday night message to parents and faculty.

The message added that the health department also directed that students and staff from both schools “should be under precautionary quarantine through Monday, March 16 due to the last possible exposure of a positive case within our buildings.” SAR expects a formal quarantine order to be issued on Sunday.

10:30 p.m. Mass exposure at a shiva gathering in Maryland: A person exposed to the coronavirus in Maryland attended a gathering for mourners at a retirement community before being diagnosed with the disease. As many as 100 people were present, according to [a Forward report](#).

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10 p.m. AIPAC coronavirus ramifications continue: A person who was at last week's AIPAC conference in Washington, D.C. [has tested positive for the coronavirus](#) in Los Angeles County, according to health officials there.

Earlier on Saturday, AIPAC officials [said health officials had informed them](#) that two other attendees who have tested positive in New York did not pose risk to others.

Also on Saturday, Israel's health ministry ordered Israelis who attended the annual conference to self-quarantine to prevent exposing others. Fewer Israelis attended this year because the conference coincided with Israel's national election; absentee voting is not permitted.

11:30 p.m. (Israel) Israel could quarantine visitors from some U.S. states: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday night called the spread of coronavirus a "global pandemic," and the director-general of the Health Ministry said some restrictions could be placed on Israelis returning from some parts of the United States. States being considered for travel limitations include New York, California, and Washington state.

Friday, March 6

5 p.m. (Central time) Shabbat shalom: We're pausing this feed for Shabbat, the first to have coronavirus fears reshape observance on a wide scale. Here are guidelines from the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements about how to participate safely in Shabbat observance, and here's the Centers for Disease Control's advice for protecting yourself from infection.

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5:45 p.m. New cases among AIPAC attendees: Remember the annual AIPAC conference, the convening of Israel advocates that happened earlier this week? The organization announced Friday afternoon that two attendees have tested positive for the coronavirus, raising questions about whether the conference could emerge as a nexus of infection.

Many elected officials and their staffers attended the conference alongside Jews from across the United States and beyond.

4:11 p.m. YU wins! Yeshiva University, which is closed right now because of coronavirus, just notched its first-ever win in the NCAA men's basketball tournament.

4 p.m. Travel between U.S. and Israel under debate: Israel has barred visitors from many countries with coronavirus infections. But so far it has left travel to and from the United States unrestricted, even as diminished traveling has forced the cancellation of some flights. That could change in the near future, according to a Times of Israel report, which says Israel's health ministry is pushing for a travel ban while politicians are hesitant to jeopardize the two countries' strong relations.

3:45 p.m. Moving online: Two new stories illustrate some of the solutions that communities are devising as in-person events are barred or discouraged. Our Ben Sales reports about how SAR, an Orthodox school in New York, [quickly scaled up an online learning program](#) when it had to close amid coronavirus concerns. The Wall Street Journal has [a deep dive on the virtual bar mitzvah](#) mentioned in our story.

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3:11 p.m. After a delay, Yeshiva U is winning at halftime: Here's some good news from Yeshiva University, which is currently closed because of coronavirus. Its men's basketball team is winning decisively at halftime in its first game in the Division III NCAA tournament. The Maccabees are leading Worcester Polytechnic Institute 50-31 during a game where no fans are present due to concerns about large gatherings.

2:45 p.m. Romemu goes live-stream only: The popular nondenominational congregation Romemu, which has both Upper West Side and Brooklyn branches, is canceling all of its Shabbat and Purim in-person programming. "While it may be completely unnecessary to take this precaution, and we are very conflicted about this decision, we have decided to err on the side of over-precaution for the safety of all," Rabbi David Ingber and his team [wrote on Facebook](#). "We do not knowingly or unknowingly want to increase the likelihood of accelerating the spread of the disease to members of our community, or anywhere, for that matter."

2 p.m. Festival scheduled for the end of March scrapped: The Reboot Ideas Festival, a Jewish arts conference scheduled for March 26-29 in San Francisco, has been postponed. The announcement signals that interruptions because of the coronavirus are likely to extend well into the future. We learned about Reboot's cancellation from [this roundup of Bay Area Jewish coronavirus news](#) from our friends at J Weekly.

12:50 p.m. An exhortation for sick shul-goers to stay home: An Upper West Side Orthodox rabbi has informed his community that he will be staying home this Shabbat because he is fighting a cold and decreed that others should do the same.

"Protecting and preserving communal health supersedes all other considerations," Shaul Robinson, the rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue, wrote in a message the synagogue sent to community members. "As I personally have been fighting a cold for the last few days, even though I feel fine, since I am sneezing and coughing, after speaking to my doctor I will NOT be attending Shul this Shabbat. If you are displaying any signs of illness I beseech you to follow my lead and my halachic ruling that you may NOT attend services either."

11:30 a.m. Canceling Purim carnivals but continuing with services: A synagogue on the Upper West Side of Manhattan has announced that it is canceling Sunday's Purim festival for children but will go ahead with services scheduled for the holiday early next week. The decision by Anshe Chesed, a Conservative synagogue, reflects one path that congregations without reported cases of the coronavirus might take in this time of uncertainty. ([Here's our story about the difficult choice that Purim presents.](#))

“Given that so many people come to the carnival from the wider community, and given the little hands playing and eating as they should, and given the reality of our limited ability to ensure hygiene in this freylach setting, we determined that it was prudent to call off this year's carnival and look forward to next year's fun,” the synagogue's rabbis wrote in a message to congregants.

But they said the Purim services scheduled for Monday night and Tuesday morning would go on as planned. “These are, of course, central to Jewish practice and our core mission as a shul in ways that the carnival is not,” the rabbis wrote.

11:20 a.m. First-person perspectives from the front lines: We just published two essays by people with firsthand experience with the coronavirus.

One is from Reuven Fink, the Westchester County rabbi who has tested positive with the coronavirus after being exposed through a congregant. His synagogue has been ordered closed.

Fink writes that while the ordeal is difficult for his community, there are silver linings. “We sometimes find ourselves victims of life’s fragility and tentativeness. This is one of those times,” he writes. “It can help us to reorient our ultimate goals in life. Contemplation is good for the soul.”

The other is from Uriel Heilman, a 70 Faces Media staff member who is one of 80,000 Israelis currently living under quarantine after his family returned from a vacation in Italy.

“When our seventh day of quarantine began with a knock on the door from a guy in a hazmat suit, it was almost a relief finally to have a visitor in the house,” Heilman writes.

8 a.m. March of the Living in Poland postponed indefinitely: The International March of the Living said this year’s event, set to take place next month in Poland, will likely be postponed indefinitely. The march, a commemorative annual event that brings together thousands of participants from more than 20 countries at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, “will apparently be postponed to a new time, when the disease and the medical risks are gone,” Aharon Tamir, the march’s deputy world chairman, on Friday wrote in an email to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “This is certainly not a cancellation but a postponement,” he added. “In these uncertain times it’s advisable not to commit.”

7:49 a.m. Yeshiva University team will play tournament game with no fans: Y.U.’s men’s basketball team will play its first-round NCAA Division III Tournament game against Worcester Polytechnic Institute today in an empty gym in Baltimore. Johns Hopkins University, which is hosting the game, announced that spectators would not be allowed in for any of the first- and second-round games taken place at its gym, scheduled for Friday and Saturday, because of Centers for Disease Control guidelines about large crowds. One Y.U. student has tested positive for coronavirus and in-person classes and events at the Manhattan-based university’s two college campuses are banned until next week. The game, set to start at 1 p.m. eastern, will be streamed.

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5 a.m. New York City woman who visited Israel has coronavirus: An American woman from New York City who visited Israel Feb. 23-27 was diagnosed with the coronavirus Wednesday night, the country’s Health Ministry reported. She stayed in Jerusalem, where she visited the Mamilla and Hadar malls, among other places. The woman, who is in her fifties, flew to Israel on flight LY8 from New York and left it aboard flight LY27. She has not displayed any symptoms, the Jerusalem Post reported Thursday night.

4 a.m. Rabbi for New Rochelle synagogue tests coronavirus positive: The Rabbi of the Young Israel Synagogue in Westchester County, New York, who also teaches two undergraduate classes at Yeshiva University's Washington Heights campus, has tested positive for the coronavirus. Rabbi Reuven Fink has been in self-quarantine after being in contact with a congregant who had previously tested positive, Yeshiva University wrote in a tweet Friday. "We have reached out to his students and recommended as a precautionary measure to self-quarantine until further notice," read the tweet. Yeshiva University has canceled all in-person events through at least March 10.

Thursday, March 5

9 p.m. New cases in New York: Three more members of the New York school community at the center of a local cluster have tested positive for the coronavirus, SAR school officials informed community members Thursday evening. The newly diagnosed individuals include two parents and one high school student. The school, which closed earlier this week until at least March 11, has been holding classes virtually.

9 p.m. Prominent New Jersey day school closed: The Frisch School in Paramus, New Jersey, will close until at least Wednesday after school officials determined that dozens of students had potentially been exposed to the coronavirus last month when they attended a bat mitzvah at Young Israel of New Rochelle. The students – some of whom since traveled on a school trip to Canada – began a self-quarantine period earlier this week and one who has developed symptoms is being tested for the virus, Principal Eli Ciner wrote in a letter to the school community Thursday evening.

8:30 p.m. All March Birthright trips canceled: Trips to Israel through Birthright Israel, the program that gives free trips to young adults, have been canceled at least through March. People who were scheduled to take trips this month received an email Thursday letting them know that they could have their \$250 deposits refunded or applied to trips in the future. (The program requires deposits to hold spots but returns the money after trips are complete.)

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7:07 p.m No rooms for Yeshiva University basketball players: The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Pikesville, Maryland, reportedly canceled the reservation of Yeshiva University's men's basketball team over coronavirus concerns. Y.U. is scheduled to play Friday against Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the first round of the NCAA Division III Men's Basketball Tournament. The AP reports that the team managed to make alternative

hotel arrangements.

4:08 p.m. Another school principal in quarantine: Rabbi Tomer Ronen, head of school at Yeshivat He'atid, an Orthodox elementary school in Teaneck, New Jersey, announced that he has decided to self-quarantine. In an email to the school community, Ronen explained that he had not been asked to quarantine himself by any medical authorities but was choosing to do so as a “precaution” because his wife, Deganit Ronen, is self-quarantined because she is the principal of Westchester Torah Academy, where a family tested positive for coronavirus.

4 p.m. Sticking with plans is also news: Ma'ayanot, an all-girls Modern Orthodox high school in Teaneck, New Jersey, has decided to move forward with its annual dinner on Saturday night. In an email to the school community, board president Daniel Altman said the decision was made in consultation with “medical personnel, including infectious disease specialists, and in accordance with guidelines set forth by the CDC.”

The school is asking people not to come if they are sick or symptom-free for less than 24 hours. Altman added: “[P]lease do not be offended if there are fewer hugs, handshakes and fistbumps than usual. Please further note, that similar to the town in Footloose, there will be no dancing at the dinner.”

3:45 p.m. Potential cancellations mount: The Jewish Funders Network is weighing whether to proceed with its annual conference, which brings together some of the world’s leading supporters of Jewish charitable causes and identity-building programs.

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This year’s gathering is set to take place in Palm Beach, Florida, March 22-24. Andrés Spokoiny, president and CEO of the organization, sent an email out to attendees saying organizers are holding “serious discussions about how to proceed, exploring a variety of options, including, but not limited to, cancelling or postponing the conference.”

2:50 p.m. Quarantine tally in Israel rises: After Israel added new travel restrictions, the number of Israelis estimated as being under quarantine because of their prior travel has risen to 80,000.

2 p.m. Options for synagogue-goers under quarantine: Some synagogues are canceling services — or having them canceled, in the case of one suburban New York Orthodox congregation attended by a coronavirus patient there. And some synagogue-goers may be wary of large gatherings right now.

So a crowdsourced list of synagogues offering livestreamed services could be a useful resource.

Participating in Shabbat services via livestream won't be possible for Orthodox Jews, for whom a strict interpretation of Jewish law precludes using technology during the weekly observance. But Orthodox rabbis have advised that anyone who is under quarantine can use a livestream to fulfill the requirement to hear the story of Esther read aloud on Purim, a holiday when using technology is allowed.

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11 a.m. First cases documented by the Palestinian Authority: Cases have been confirmed in the West Bank, where more than 3 million Palestinians live. The Palestinian Authority has barred foreign visitors for the next two weeks and closed some major tourist sites, including the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

The P.A. is working with Israeli health officials to contain the spread of the disease there, The Jerusalem Post reports.

10:21 a.m. Aliyah event canceled: A major gathering for Americans planning to move permanently to Israel has been canceled. The Nefesh B'Nefesh "Mega-Aliyah" event had been set for March 15 in Teaneck, New Jersey; 1,250 emigrants and their families were expected to attend. The group, which says it has helped more than 60,000 Americans move to Israel over the last 18 years, announced that it would instead hold an online event.

9:30 a.m Federation trips canceled: The Jewish Federations of North America, an umbrella group for local communal organizations, announces the cancellation of two upcoming group trips – one to the Balkans and Paris, and the other to St. Petersburg, Russia. It is evaluating whether to cancel another upcoming group trip to Israel and the West Bank.

8 a.m. El Al downsizing as travel restrictions mount: Israel's national airline is laying off workers, citing reduced travel because of the coronavirus. The airline has been in a financially precarious state for years, and travel restrictions imposed by the country's Health Ministry have led to lower-than-projected ticket sales this winter.



FIRST PERSON OPINION

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