



Rabbinical Council of Victoria

Religious Leadership for the Jewish Community

ועד הרבנים דויקטוריה

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Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick

Sunday, 13 September 2020

24 Elul 5780

Letter to the community re Rosh Hashana – Melbourne

Dear Members of our Melbourne Jewish Community,

One of the central features of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the Shofar.

Synagogues around the world will be filled with people eagerly awaiting the 100 blasts, just as it has been in Melbourne since the first Jews arrived in Victoria. Sadly, this year the hearing of the Shofar in your synagogue is not possible due to the current Stage 4 COVID restrictions.

Over recent months, members of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria (RCV) have worked tirelessly with representatives of DHHS, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Multicultural Affairs along with the amazing support and guidance of both State and Federal members of Parliament, to put together submissions which we had hoped would have allowed us to be in our Synagogues.

It was with a heavy heart that the RCV received the news on Wednesday, that the Government guidelines keeping all Places of Worship closed for in person services would remain in force. We can assure the Community that our submissions addressed in detail the social distancing and health issues which currently apply and the fact that our religion holds as vitally important the sanctity of life. Those with whom we met were made fully aware of the impact that the closure of Synagogues would have on the Jewish Community. It was acknowledged that our submissions were made with clarity and passion, however, sadly we are faced with the reality that our Synagogues will, for the first time be closed on Rosh Hashanah.

Having received this determination, the RCV firmly pursued its submission for our Community to be allowed to perform the mitzvah of hearing the Shofar, even without a Synagogue service.

On Wednesday night, we received the news that even though our Synagogues will be closed, the sound of the Shofar will not be silenced.

The RCV is now able to announce that DHHS representatives have accepted a proposed set of protocols that will allow members of our Jewish Community to hear shofar on second day Rosh Hashana, Sunday, 20 September.

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Hundreds of trained volunteers will be allocated scheduled walking routes and times to blow shofar outside homes throughout Melbourne. Members of the community will be afforded the opportunity of hearing shofar whilst remaining within their own properties.

Additionally, in the outlying areas of Jewish Melbourne, members of the community will be able to book to hear shofar at various parks, whilst observing strict timetabling and social distancing.

A detailed schedule of Shofar blowing times and locations will be published on the Project High Holyday website www.phh.org.au in the coming days. Please go to this website for all relevant information regarding when you will be able to hear Shofar.

The RCV acknowledges and shares the Community's deep feeling of disappointment that our Synagogues are closed this Yom Tov, and that is why the RCV is undertaking one of its largest ever projects. Instead of you coming to the Synagogue to hear the Shofar, the Shofar will come to you!

We are sure that the combined efforts of hundreds of dedicated shofar blowers, the support of the Community and the prayers and blessings of tens of thousands of Jews as they hear shofar on the day we coronate Hashem as King, will resonate to the eternal credit of the community and guarantee us a New Year filled with simcha, nachat and good health.

We acknowledge the steadfast and continuing support of David Southwick, MP for Caulfield, who has literally been in touch with us every day through this process and has exemplified leadership and represented our Community with a strong and clear voice. We also express our gratitude to Josh Burns, Federal MP for Macnamara, Nina Taylor MP for the Southern Metropolitan Region and Paul Hamer MP for Boxhill.

In closing, the RCV continues its dialogue with the Government in relation the Community's requirements and in particular its needs for the remainder of our Tishrei Chagim.

Wishing you and your family a *כתיבה וחתימה טובה*

May the coming year bring only peace and blessing to *כלל ישראל*

Sincerely



Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn OAM
President, Rabbinical Council Victoria

For further information please contact executive@rcv.org.au