



# A MESSAGE FROM HILLEL ON THE UNIVERSITY'S COVID-19 ANNOUNCEMENT

March 13, 2020

Dear students,

As you may have already seen, the University of Michigan shared [an additional announcement](#) with all students today. We wish to reinforce President Schlissel's message and encourage students to return home to their permanent residence and to avoid large social gatherings.

**What does this mean for Hillel?** We care about the safety and wellbeing of all of our students and staff and as such have made the difficult decision to suspend all in-person programs, religious services, and classes until April 6. The Hillel building will remain closed until April 6. We will revisit our situation based on CDC, University of Michigan, and state recommendations and update you again before April 6.

**What does this mean for Shabbat?** We are still supporting Shabbat in the Home and are so thrilled that over 400 students will be supported by meals through Hillel tonight for small gatherings (less than 10) in your homes. If you ordered kosher meals through Hillel, please drop by between 4:30-6:00pm for pick-up. We will revisit this model and let you know on a weekly basis if it will be continuing.

As of now, all religious services will be cancelled until further notice. This is aligned with the recommendation from the Michigan Board of Rabbis and all communities providing services in the Ann Arbor area. If you have any questions about Reform or Conservative services, please be in touch with **Rav Lisa at [lstella@umich.edu](mailto:lstella@umich.edu)**. If you have any questions about Orthodox services, please be in touch with **Rav Jared at [ravjared@umich.edu](mailto:ravjared@umich.edu)**.

Aligned with the university, we are discouraging students from gathering in large groups. We hope you will use this Shabbat to spend time with your roommates, speak with your family, and consider how to best navigate the coming weeks.

**What does this mean for our relationship?** We know that information is coming at you quickly and is changing regularly. Please remember we are here to talk if you need anything, even if it will be via online platforms. We are committed to still being a supportive, pastoral, social, and educational resource for you in this time of social distancing. While we may be apart physically, there are many ways we will continue to check in with you and offer programming and resources in the coming weeks.

*Pikuach Nefesh* – saving a life – is not just a value that we hold in Judaism. It is a mitzvah for each one of us to perform. Saving a life is so valued in Judaism, it takes precedence

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over all other mitzvot that we would otherwise be fulfilling in our Hillel work. We ask that in your interactions in the coming days and weeks, for you to really consider what actions you can take that may save someone's life and to have that value take precedence over all other actions. This will mean difficult choices that limit our social interactions. But in the end, it will make us a stronger, more compassionate and supportive community.

Thinking of you all,

Tilly and the Hillel staff team

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March 11, 2020

Dear Students,

We know that you are all taking in a lot of information about Coronavirus/COVID-19 and making some tough decisions based on the [email earlier today from President Schlissel](#). We want to make sure that you know Hillel remains a supportive resource for you on campus during this challenging time of disruption. As we just read in Megillat Esther, Purim is a reminder that life can quickly get turned upside down and flipped on its head. This time may feel very disorienting to many of you and we want to answer your questions about how Hillel can support you.

**Use of the Hillel Building:** The building will remain open for limited services, weekday meals, meetings, and small scale programming. Each program is being evaluated on an individual basis of whether it will happen in person or virtually. Accommodations will be made to be as inclusive as possible of students who are not on campus. If you are not sure if a program is continuing, please be in touch with the appropriate staff person or student leader, or email our general mailbox here. Please be patient with us as we continue to make decisions as we receive more information. We will update information regularly on our website.

When entering the building, as usual, the front desk worker will buzz you in before you need to push the entry button, but just in case, the entry buzzer will be cleaned regularly. Rather than using the tablet at the front desk to check in, our front desk greeter will be taking down your information. This may take more time, so we ask for your patience.

We know for some of our students and community members, it is customary to kiss the mezuzah when you enter our building. We are encouraging you to consider instead the advice of Rabbi Lau, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, who has instructed Israelis to reflect on the verses in the scroll instead.

**Shabbat & Host at Home:** Based on the University's and Governor's restriction to gatherings over 100 people, we will not be hosting Shabbat dinner at Hillel this week and for the remainder of the semester. We are encouraging students to gather in small groups (up to 10 people) for a meaningful Shabbat experience. Please [RSVP here to have Shabbat dinner](#) in your homes, residence halls, etc. Kosher meals can be picked up at Hillel and MUST be ordered by Thursday at 6:00 pm. Students may also choose to be reimbursed up to \$15 per person for up to 10 people. There will be no dinner served at Hillel or late walk-in meal pick-up.

This week (March 13) we will be holding all Shabbat services.

**Jewish Penicillin Hotline:** Due to certain restrictions put into place by the University, we are unable to deliver soup to any of the dorms on campus until further notice. For those who live off-campus, we will be [delivering soup and leaving it at your door](#). We will not be delivering to students who are in mandated self-isolation.

**Birthright and Onward Israel Experiences:** Hillel International (our Birthright provider)

and the Jewish Agency For Israel (Onward organizer) have received several inquiries from applicants and parents about the upcoming summer season. They have shared with us that currently, all Birthright Israel trips and Onward programs starting from May forward are continuing as scheduled. For more information about Birthright, please click [here](#). For more information about Onward, please click [here](#).

**Virtual Engagement:** We know that many of you will be going home but will still want to participate in our great programming. Our staff and student leaders are excited to explore new platforms to deliver great content and keep engaging with you while you're all over the country. Coffee dates, program planning, classes, and live streaming services will all be offered in different ways this semester. If you have ideas of what you'd like to see, please email us at [michiganhillel@umich.edu](mailto:michiganhillel@umich.edu).

**Washing and Sanitizing Hands:** Additional hand sanitizers and new signage will be placed around the building. Please take the 20 seconds to wash your hands. It's a great time to hum Hail to the Victors in your head!

**Work Stations:** Tables, chairs, and doorknobs throughout the building, including the office, will be cleaned and sanitized more regularly.

**Staff at Work:** We have encouraged our staff to monitor if they are not feeling well and to use either sick days or options to work remotely from home. If you have meetings scheduled with staff who are working from home, we have great access to be able to host zoom calls with students.

**Students Who Aren't Feeling Well:** If you are not feeling well, we encourage you to stay home! Please do not enter the building! Staff will reschedule meetings with you, or keep the meeting by Zoom instead. Our student groups can also have access to our Zoom account to host their meetings virtually if one of your members isn't feeling well.

**Self-Care:** With all of the uncertainty you are experiencing, please remember to take care of yourself first. Hillel staff and student leaders are still here for coffee - in person or virtually. Just be in touch with your favorite staff person or email [michiganhillel@umich.edu](mailto:michiganhillel@umich.edu) if you want to be paired with a staff member or student to talk.

This challenging time may make some of you feel you are missing your interactions with your community, and for others make you feel you need to isolate yourself and separate from community. Whatever you are feeling is right for you. There are resources we'll continue to send to you to help you during this time.

If you'd like to receive regular links and suggestions for self-care best practices, join our Wellness Remind Channel by texting @hillelwell to 81010.

**For Questions:** We will continue to update [this page on our website](#) as the situation continues to unfold. We appreciate your patience with us. If you have more questions and would like to speak with a staff person, please email [michiganhillel@umich.edu](mailto:michiganhillel@umich.edu).

As our students, you, your health, and your wellbeing are our top priorities. Please take care of yourself and take care of each other. And come back to us soon.

Warmly,  
Tilly Shames, Executive Director  
Susan Slabotsky, Chair, Board of Trustees  
Sarah Pomerantz, Chair, Governing Board



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