

Dear JCCP/CBT Family,

The expression “desperate times call for desperate measures” is believed to have originated with a saying coined by the ancient Greek physician, Hippocrates. In his work *Amorphisms*, he wrote: “For extreme diseases, extreme methods of cure, as to restriction, are most suitable.”

I have reflected often in the last several days on this well-known saying as our nation, our local communities, and even our beloved synagogue have been forced to confront the many challenges posed by the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Each day has brought new information, and new warnings, making yesterday’s plans obsolete and the need to react quickly all the more necessary. Yesterday we took the unprecedented step of closing down the synagogue in it’s entirely for a week.

It was the right thing to do. Yet at the same time, it feels strange on many levels. I am confident that this necessary step will prove to be both wise and prudent. Even as many of our members have emailed me to share their approval of our decision, they at the same time lamented the fact that this step needed to be taken. To lose ability to connect with each other on Shabbat through the experience prayer, through the kiddush luncheon, or even to connect personally as we face this health crisis is a real loss. I look forward, God willing, to resuming our full range of synagogue programs, activities and especially religious services as soon as safety permits.

I want to encourage you to use this time on Shabbat to nonetheless observe Shabbat to the best of your abilities in your homes. Take the extra effort to light Shabbat candles, to pray with conviction and intensity, study Torah, and allow yourselves to enjoy the freedom that this change in our schedules and routines may allow. Take time to think how we can plan for the coming week, how we can better protect the safety and health of our family, as well as look out for neighbors, especially elderly neighbors, who are particularly homebound at this time. Judaism is best observed when we wrestle with the tension between the particular and the universal. This is a time for thinking about what we need to do for ourselves, as well as our responsibilities to others.

I have no doubt that taking the time to reflect on these questions during this Shabbat will be not only of great use to us right now, but in the days and weeks to come. I intend to stay in touch with the members of the congregation during this week through emails like this. Let me remind you that our entire professional staff is available by phone and by mail throughout the week as well. Together we will get through this.

Rabbi Arthur Weiner