

Dear Kahal

As I sit at home, day three of the government imposed "lockdown", I wanted to take the opportunity to reach out to each and every one of you in what is a very anxious and uncertain time for everyone.

There is no question that as the pandemic starts to move towards its peak here in the UK, each and every one of us will have been effected either directly or indirectly by COVID-19. I have heard many stories including of people I know, now seriously ill and with no current end in sight I wanted to share some personal thoughts with you. Partly because it is cathartic for me, but also in part, to let you all know that no one should feel or indeed is, alone. Even if you are physically on your own, isolated within your house, although you are physically confined, emotionally and spiritually as a Kahal we are all together.

Having the time to sit and contemplate has made me appreciative and grateful for the things that are really important in life - family, friends and the importance of good health. We should all use this time to reflect on what really matters.

Since I sent my initial notice out, my 'call to arms', the response from the community has been nothing short of staggering. There have been literally dozens of volunteers who have put themselves forward to help those in need, far too many individuals to mention here by name. The outreach work of the Rabbis to telephone hundreds of members of the community has been fantastic, and the calls have been gratefully received. They have been producing videos and live streaming shiurim, bringing their wisdom and thoughts into everyone's home, helping everyone to find some spiritual guidance during a time of need. The board of trustees have also been hugely supportive, making calls to the more vulnerable members of the community and letting them know that we are all here to help. We will continue to be there for all members of the community, especially those who are more vulnerable, and therefore feel more isolated during this time.

Finally I read something recently, purportedly to be from Bill Gates (unconfirmed) a very powerful piece on his view of what this pandemic is really teaching us – I thought I would paraphrase/summarise and share with you as, in my view, it says it all:

'I'm a strong believer that there is a spiritual purpose behind everything that happens, whether that is what we perceive as being good or being bad. As I contemplate upon this, I want to share with you what I feel the Corona/ Covid-19 virus is really doing to us:



- It is reminding us that we are all equal, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. This disease treats us all equally, perhaps we should to. If you don't believe me, just ask Tom Hanks.
- It is reminding us that we are all connected and something that affects one person has an effect on another. It is reminding us that the false borders that we have put up have little value as this virus does not need a passport.
- It is reminding us of the shortness of life and of what is most important for us to do, which is to help each other, especially those who are old or sick. Our purpose is not to buy toilet roll.
- It is reminding us of how materialistic our society has become and how, when in times of difficulty, we remember that it's the essentials that we need (food, water, medicine) as opposed to the luxuries that we sometimes unnecessarily give value to.
- It is reminding us of how important our family and home life is and how much we have neglected this. It is forcing us back into our houses so we can rebuild them into our home and to strengthen our family unit.
- It is reminding us that our true work is not our job, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.'

Keep well, keep safe and look after one another.

David

CEO S&P Sephardi Community

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The home of the Sephardi community since 1656

S&P Sephardi Community is the working name of charities in connection with the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue  
Registered charity number 212517



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