



Coronavirus shuts 770 Eastern Parkway, HQ of Chabad, for first time ever

Celebration on Saturday night drew 100 followers, but then it became clear that Crown Heights was emerging as an NYC virus hotspot

By **PHILISSA CRAMER**

18 March 2020, 8:30 pm



Followers of the Chabad movement dance on March 14, 2020, days before 770 Eastern Parkway's closure because of the coronavirus. (Youtube screenshot)

JTA — As the world shut down around it, the Brooklyn headquarters of the worldwide Chabad movement carried on as usual — until late Tuesday night, when its neighborhood's rabbinic leadership ordered synagogues closed to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

All week, men came and went from the massive building in the Crown Heights neighborhood, crowding in for prayer services and study sessions.

After news broke that the headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway would close amid global efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus, there was a final prayer service where worshippers stood shoulder to shoulder. A raucous dance party stretched late into the night.

The building, known among followers of the Hasidic Jewish movement as 770, has never closed, according to [Chabad.info](https://www.chabad.info), a movement website that confirmed the closure.

The closure, which was first reported by the Orthodox news service COLive.com, came after days in which it was unclear how seriously some in the neighborhood were taking the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as other synagogues

around the globe curtailed their Purim parties more than a week ago and called off Shabbat services last weekend, 770 and the surrounding neighborhood continued to bustle.

Chodesh Adar Dancing Motzoey Shabbos Parshas Ki Tisa 5780



A celebration Saturday night drew at least 100 men to the building, according to a video Chabad posted on YouTube. And COLlive reported that the head of 770 said on Tuesday that he had no plans to close the building, though visitors over 65 had been discouraged from entering.

Then it became clear that Crown Heights was emerging as a coronavirus hotspot in New York City. The New York Times also reported about a wedding in South Williamsburg, another Brooklyn neighborhood with many Hasidic residents, that drew at least 200 people in violation of city regulations barring large gatherings.

On Tuesday afternoon, the Beth Din of Crown Heights, the neighborhood's Orthodox rabbinic council, issued a decree requiring synagogues and men's mikvahs, or ritual baths, to close.

The decree came nearly a week after the first coronavirus-induced local rabbinic prohibition on communal Jewish activity, in Bergen County, New Jersey, and did not go nearly as far. While the rabbis in Bergen County explicitly prohibited in-home group prayer, the Crown Heights decree does not mention home minyanim, or prayer quorums, for example.

"May we be zoche [worthy] to the eradication of all illness with the coming of Moshiach NOW," the Crown Heights ruling concludes, using the Yiddish word for the Messiah.

JOIN US!



A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR OF TIMES OF ISRAEL



DAVID HOROVITZ

For as little as \$6 a month, you can help support our independent journalism — and enjoy an **ADS-FREE** experience, as well as special benefits and status as a Times of Israel Community member!

Read more 

JOIN THE TIMES OF ISRAEL COMMUNITY

[Already a member? Sign in to stop seeing this](#)

READ MORE:

- [Jewish Times](#)
- [coronavirus](#)
- [Chabad Lubavitch](#)
- [New York](#)
- [Crown Heights](#)
- [Orthodox Jews](#)