

VIRTUAL VICTORY OVER COVID-19

Bat mitzvah from Singapore

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COVID restrictions opened new opportunities for Australian student Chloe Schueler – now based in Singapore – to have a truly international bat mitzvah when she was called to the Torah.

Chloe took part in her bat mitzvah from her home in Singapore, where her father has been based with his work, and where she is now studying at the International School.

The Torah scroll from which she recited her parasha was provided by the United Hebrew Congregation, Singapore's Progressive synagogue, led by Rabbi Nathan Alfred.

Under the technical direction of Rabbi Gersh Lazarow, Chloe was virtually called to the Torah at Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne by Rabbi Kim Ettlinger and Cantor Michel Laloum, as part of the congregation's ongoing live streaming of services.

Chloe and her parents Roger and Nici were called to the Torah from their home in Singapore, while her grandparents received their aliyot from their home in Adelaide. Other family members and friends were able to participate from London and New York in the July 11 Shabbat service.

Chloe's father Roger Schueler

told *The AJN* that while the bat mitzvah was "not exactly what we originally envisaged ... in many ways it turned out to be even more meaningful as so many more people from around the globe were able to be part of the celebration. Family and friends were able to participate or watch from Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, Singapore, Hong Kong, London and New York."

Chloe's grandfather Norman Schueler, former longtime president of the Jewish Community Council of South Australia, said he and his wife Carol invited a small number of friends in Adelaide to their home to watch

the bat mitzvah and take part in a kiddush. While they enjoyed the event immensely, Norman told *The AJN* he and Carol "felt deprived of seeing our granddaughter face-to-face on her special day and at this stage of our lives".

Rabbi John Levi, a TBI emeritus rabbi, reflected, "It was a formidable mixture of geography, time zones, talent, family loyalty and ancient prayers."

TBI's online Shabbat services, which have been up and running for several years, have gained in significance since the COVID-19 pandemic forced severe restrictions on attending Melbourne's shules.



Chloe Schueler with her parents Nici and Roger celebrating her bat mitzvah in Singapore.