

Message from 5 Towns Shuls - Creating Structure in our Religious Lives

כ"ד אדר תש"פ

March 19th, 2020

Dear Members of the Five Towns Community

We are all going through an unprecedented time in our lives communally and individually. There are certainly many blessings to count, but there are also many challenges that we would never imagine we would be facing. At the same time, we are seeing unprecedented Chesed and unity in the face of isolation and fear. As faithful Jews we seek and trust in God's protection, always, and especially now. With the Almighty's help we will emerge from this pandemic in good health, ready to reengage with each other as the wonderful, blessed community that we are.

Meanwhile, it is comforting to know that we are each, virtually, "here" for each other; witness the efforts of Shuls, schools and individuals to support and provide a friendly, helping hand – if only a welcome phone call – to friends and neighbors.

Please remember that our guidelines from our letter on March 15th are still in effect and we strongly recommend complete compliance with those guidelines for the safety of ourselves, our family, our community and the world.

We wanted to offer some guidance for the upcoming Shabbos and week.

The Coming Shabbos

One of the challenges about davening at home without a minyan is that besides for missing the Kaddish, Kedusha and Chazaras Hashatz, there are also other smaller details which can change which we take for granted when we come to shul. Here are some important pointers.

1. What setting should I be davening in?
 - a. It is important to remember that even though we are not able to be in shul, we need to be dressed for Shabbos.
 - b. It is best to choose an indoor location which has relative quiet if possible.
 - c. It is a special opportunity to daven and sing out loud as a family
2. What are the Zmanim for this Shabbos?
 - a. Candle Lighting: 6:49PM
 - b. Mincha Erev Shabbos: 5:51PM-7:07PM
 - c. Netz: 6:56AM
 - d. Shma should be before 9:58AM
 - e. Shmoneh Esrei of Shacharis should be before 11:00AM
 - f. Mincha on Shabbos can be anytime between 1:33PM-7:08PM

- g. Shabbos is over at 7:58PM
- 3. What is said after the Amida on Friday night?
 - a. One may say *Vayechulu* even alone. Preferably it should be said with another person.
 - b. One does not say the *Bracha* of *Magen Avos*
- 4. This week is Shabbos Mevorchim - what do I do?
 - a. One may say the blessing of Birkas Hachodesh even when alone.
 - b. Rosh Chodesh Nissan is on Thursday.
 - c. The Molad will be Tuesday, 10:14 am and 11 chalakim.
- 5. When should I be davening on Shabbos morning?
 - a. We should be davening at the same time as the minyan we would regularly attend so there is unity even if not in physical presence
- 6. What do I do about reading the Torah on Shabbos?
 - a. Reading the Torah is a Chovas Hatzibur - a communal responsibility which means without a minyan that responsibility does not exist.
 - b. However, one should certainly be *maavir sedra* - to read the Parsha and Haftorah themselves or together.
 - c. The Maftir is Hachodesh which can be found in Shemos 12:1-20, page 348 in the Stone Chumash.
 - d. The Haftorah is Hachodesh in Yechezkel 45:16-46:18 (45:18-46:18 for Sephardim). It is on page 1218 in the Stone Chumash.
 - e. The brachos for the Haftorah are not recited.
 - f. Artscroll has made the readings available for free download here: <https://artscroll.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/vayakhel-pekudei-download.pdf>.
- 7. Do I say Yekum Purkan?
 - a. Not when one is alone, neither the Mi Shebeirach for the community
 - b. Some have the minhag to say just the first Yekum Purkan paragraph
- 8. Is there Av Harachamim this Shabbos?
 - a. No, this is a Shabbos Mevorchim so this should be left out
- 9. Shabbos Mincha - is there any difference?
 - a. Yes, we would be saying V'Ani Tefilos even though one would not be reading the Torah
We would be saying Tzidkoscha
- 10. Can I say Kel Maleh this Shabbos?
 - a. Yes, one should be doing it this Shabbos. It can be said when one is alone.
PLEASE REMEMBER that this is the last Shabbos to say Kel Maleh before the month of Nissan.

The Coming Week

- 1. Can we make a Minyan over Zoom?
 - a. No, unfortunately minyanim cannot be created for 10 men who are remote from each other.

- b. However, we can daven at the same time and use Zoom to coordinate that effort in order to create unity and enhance kavana by davening at the same time.
 - c. It is important to remember that davening at the same time is not Tefilah Betzibur so it would not include:
 - i. Kaddish
 - ii. Kedusha
 - iii. Chazaras Hashatz
 - iv. Krias HaTorah
 - d. But it can certainly allow people to daven aloud together and recite part of the davening responsively.
2. When is Rosh Chodesh?
- a. Rosh Chodesh Nissan is this coming Thursday.
 - b. We need to remember Yaaleh Veyavo starting Wednesday evening
 - c. We need to remember the special inserts in Shacharis on Thursday(Hallel, Mussaf, Barchi Nafshi...)
3. Do we say Hallel on Rosh Chodesh when alone?
- a. One would say Hallel regularly even when alone
 - b. Sephardim have the practice not to recite a Bracha on Hallel for Rosh Chodesh.

Preparation for Pesach

1. What will happen with mechirat chametz if a face to face meeting cannot be done?
- a. Rav Hershel Schachter has strongly urged not meeting in person even if it is one-on-one.
 - b. Each shul will be addressing this in their own way and sending out forms for the Mechira in the way they see fit.
 - c. Please note that the actual sale of the Chametz from the authorized Rabbi to the non-Jew will take place in person and will include all the requisite kinyanim.
2. What should I do about Taanis Bechorim?
- a. Owing to the extreme circumstances of our mandated social distancing, and owing to fact that some poskim are in view of being more lenient with Taanis Bechorim because of health factors, there are two solutions which exist for the Taanis Bechorim:
 - i. Preferably, everyone can learn a mesechta themselves for the siyum
 - 1. Artscroll is offering a [free download](#) of one mesechta of a person's choice.
 - ii. People who have made a siyum may use a Zoom conference to be included in this Siyum.
 - b. Please note that no minyan is required and kaddish need not be recited.
 - c. Each shul will arrange this as it sees fit.
 - d. If one does not hear a siyum, one should not be fasting in the current situation. Please consult your Rabbi for guidance.

The Elderly at the Seder

We, as Rabbis, try to stay away from medical advice. We are citing the recommendations of Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt, Chairman, Department of Medicine at Mount Sinai South Nassau, Chief, Infectious Diseases and Hospital Epidemiologist

The question of whether adults over 50 or 60, and certainly above 70 (grandparents, great grandparents, elderly relatives or elderly friends with no family) capable of caring for themselves and having Pesach by themselves should nevertheless spend Pesach with people who they are not currently living with, is one of the most difficult questions to answer.

It is easy to answer that from a pure medical point of view that mixing of any type presents an unnecessary risk to these older people and therefore should be strongly discouraged.

However, the thought of a single older person spending Pesach and the sederim alone by themselves is such a tragedy. If a person is otherwise going to be totally alone, and they are willing to take the potential risk of mixing with another family (who have no symptomatic people in their house), they could join in with a family or friends for the sederim and/or all of Pesach if they wish. If they do this, they should not mix with different sederim on different nights or with different groups for the rest of Pesach. Thus, either they could eat alone the other times or still join with that same family for other meals. Again, ideally, no mixing. But this may simply not be an acceptable answer for an older single person.

One should consult one's Doctor and Rabbi for any specifics.

We hope that these guidelines are helpful in creating some framework in our daily lives. As we get closer to Pesach, we will try to send more united messages to help guide our dear community.

We are davening with you and for you and we hope Hashem will continue to protect us all. With deep care and concern.

Rabbi Shalom Axelrod, Young Israel of Woodmere

Rabbi Mordechai Benhaim, Sha'are Emunah, Sephardic Congregation of The Five Towns

Rabbi Hershel Billet, Young Israel of Woodmere

Rabbi Heshy Blumstein, Yismach Moshe

Rabbi Pinchas Chatzinoff, Congregation Tifereth Zvi

Rabbi Aaron Feigenbaum, Irving Place Minyan

Rabbi Aryeh Z. Ginzberg, Chofetz Chaim Torah Center

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt, Young Israel of Woodmere

Rabbi Kenneth Hain, Congregation Beth Sholom

Rabbi Simcha Hopkovitz, Young Israel of Hewlett

Rabbi Yudi Jeger, Chofetz Chaim Torah Center

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Beis HaKnesses of North Woodmere

Rabbi Simcha Lefkowitz, Congregation Anshei Chesed
Rabbi Avi Miller, Congregation Beth Sholom
Rabbi Jonathan Muskat, Young Israel of Oceanside
Rabbi Uri Orlan, Shaarey Tefillah
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