

Backyard Minyanim FAQs

In light of the latest email from Rabbi Adler, following the announcement by the RCBC regarding backyard minyanim, I wanted to provide the following information based on questions we've received. *Please note that several adjustments have been made to RCBC protocols.* As always, the situation may change at any point so this is based on the latest instructions.

Additionally, given some of the recent conversations, I wanted to echo Rabbi Adler's instructions. *There is an honor system in effect. No one is policing anyone else's conduct. There are no monetary fines to be levied. But as a Torah community, our emphasis must be on everyone's welfare. I appeal to you, please do not deviate from these directives.*

1. When exactly do backyard minyanim begin?

Minyanim may commence beginning with **mincha** on Thursday June 4th. At that point, minyanim may convene for all tefillot, weekday and Shabbat. The first shacharit minyan will be **Friday June 5th**.

2. What safety protocols need to be in place?

- Proper social distancing of at least 6 feet.
- **Masks required for everyone.** If too difficult, the shliach tzibbur and ba'al kriah may remove their masks.
- The maximum number of minyan participants has now been **expanded to 35.**
- Everyone needs to bring their own siddur/chumash.
- If you are between the ages of 60 - 65, in relatively good health and your doctor has no objection to your attendance, you may participate.
- **Anyone above the age of 65 is allowed to join backyard minyanim but only after consultation with and approval from a physician. We recognize the strong desire to participate in tefilla b'tzibbur but the heightened health risks cannot be taken for granted. Please exercise due caution.**

3. How will backyard minyanim be organized?

Given the complexity of scheduling individual minyanim of up to 35 people at different start times across a broad geographic expanse, it is impossible for the shul to serve as a central repository to arrange minyanim across town. We will try to assist individuals searching for a minyan, and minyanim searching for people as best we can. **If you are hosting a minyan in your backyard, please forward (1) your address, (2) the start time for weekday shacharit and (3) the responsible party's name and email address to gabbai@rinat.org.** We will publish this information to our membership which will allow those in close proximity to the various minyanim to contact the minyan owner themselves. It will also allow two minyanim in close proximity to compare lists should a shortfall or overage occur, and enable expansion of participant lists should the current 35 person restriction be relaxed.

4. At what point in the davening does shacharit begin?

Tefilla b'tzibur for shacharit begins with the chazzan's recitation of chatzi kaddish prior to borchu. **People should arrive at minyan already wearing talit and tefillin and already having recited birchat hashachar.** The first two recitations of kaddish (following korbanot and mizmor shir) will not be said. Removal of tallit and tefillin should occur back at home as we all attempt to minimize exposure as much as possible.

5. What about krait haTorah?

Minyanim should proceed without krait haTorah. This is true for Shabbat as well as during the week. Sifrei Torah will not be provided by the shul.

6. What about if I own my own sefer Torah?

For those individuals who have a sefer Torah in their homes, Rabbi Adler has instructed on the following protocol:

- Only the ba'al kriah should handle the sefer Torah including peticha, hagbah and gelila (which should simply occur on the table where the leining takes place).
- The ba'al kriah will receive all aliyot and will make a separate opening and closing bracha for each aliya.
- Unless the ba'al kriah is a kohen, all kohanim should leave the davening temporarily while the first aliya begins.
- On Shabbat, there's no need for a maftir aliya or for chatzi kaddish following the kriah.
- On Shabbat, the ba'al kriah recites the brachot before and following the haftarah, but someone else may lein the haftarah if so desired.
- Under no circumstances should a sefer Torah be loaned to an additional minyan.

7. We're having a simcha and we'd like to use the shul parking lot to accommodate our minyan of only 35 people?

While we certainly appreciate the request, the shul leadership has determined that no minyanim should occur on the premises prior to the reopening of the shul building. The decision was based on a concern for the optics of holding services on shul grounds. Our neighbors may not be able to distinguish all of the strict guidelines in place and we want to avoid even the hint of appearance of a potential chilul Hashem (chas v'shalom).

8. I have a varying work schedule and need to daven at 6:30 am on Mondays and Tuesday and 7:30 am Wed-Fri. Can I join two separate minyan groups?

Guests are now permitted to participate in our minyanim. What this means is that people can join other minyanim if necessary for work or other commitments, or for Shabbat company. This does not mean that people should randomly jump from minyan to minyan. ***Please continue to exercise caution in this***

regard. As well, anyone who will not be present at the minyan at which they are registered should please alert the minyan leader to ensure that the existing minyan has the requisite attendance.

9. What are the requirements regarding a mechitza?

As per Rabbi Adler, women should occupy the last row of seats and there should remain at least 4 *amot* (8 feet) from the person seated in front of them. No mechitzah is required.

10. Does it matter where the minyan is located on the premises?

Ideally, minyanim should occur in the backyard in as private a location as possible. In conducting these minyanim, we're trying to be respectful of our neighbors and certainly not attract any negative attention. The Jewish community is under scrutiny regardless, so we need to set an example and comply with any and all restrictions, to the letter, with no exceptions.

11. My neighbor and I have adjacent backyards. We'd like to host a minyanim providing amply room for men in one yard and women in the other. Can we have fit 35 people in each location?

: **Yes.** Given the relaxation in NJ State guidelines, minyanim in adjacent yards (or those that might serve as an ezrat nashim) is permitted. Each yard, however, should not exceed 35 people. Please be mindful of all guidelines, especially those regarding proper social distancing and the wearing of masks. We continue to require that individuals remain with their designated minyanim and not "minyan hop" at this juncture in order to minimize the risk of contamination.

12. What should we do in case of rain?

Minyanim are to take place exclusively outdoors. If inclement weather is expected, minyanim should not take place - proper judgement needs to be exercised. If it is raining 15 minutes before davening is scheduled, one should assume the minyan is cancelled. Under no circumstances should a minyan move inside, even in the middle of davening.

I hope this provides some additional degree of clarity to the established guidelines. May our tefillot be accepted by the Ribono shel Olam, and may we soon be able to return to our regular makom tefilla. Many thanks.

David

These minyanim operate under the guidelines established by the RCBC.