

Q&A with The Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig Shlita

Motzay Shabbat Ki Tavo

1. In a city where the government has imposed a very strict lockdown, but new cases are very low by global standards (eg. Melbourne), how does dinah demalchusah dinah interplay with other halachik obligations (eg minyan, shofar etc) which would be illegal by secular law? Does it depend on halachik definition of pikuah nefesh or do we just accept whatever the government imposes as the requirement?
2. Can you cover a shofar with a mask or similar while blowing to prevent spreading germs? Using a regular surgeon mask doesn't dramatically affect the sound, but the N95 mask that is recommended by the government, does lower the sound significantly a creates more wind than sound.
3. When minyan numbers are limited, what would be halachik guidance for priority of allocation? Frum vs non-frum/ Men vs Women/ regular attendees vs irregular (NOTE: Most of our communities are 80%+ non-shomer Torah u'Mitzvot)
4. If minyanim are limited in time- what parts of the service should be prioritised for RH? Shacharit or mussaf? Kriat HaTorah ?
5. Which piyyutim can be skipped- is there a logic of which ones should be skipped if needed?
6. If we need to run 2 kol nidrei services- could the second one start after tzeit? Can we start neilah from plag and allow 2 services before tzeit?
7. How do we marry up the concept of imposing Beit Din punishments when chazal consistently find "loop holes" to exonerate perpetrators from punishment?
8. Can one shake a lulav and Esrog with gloves? Like if people want to share their set with others can they use gloves?
9. How will we celebrate Simchat Torah this year when dancing is prohibited by law and with social distancing? Also we can't hand Torah from person to person. Seems the normal celebration of Simchat Torah would flout all the current legislation.
10. Based on the 2 reasons for the minhag not to blow shofar on erev Rosh hashona why don't we blow shofar this year when erev RH falls on Friday?

Non-Yom Tov related Shailos

11. How do non-academic, intellectually challenged adults and kids excel in the Torah world when so much emphasis is placed on Torah learning and hasmada as the exemplar and pinnacle of success. Are these type of people more at risk of leaving the fold because they naturally don't resonate with and/or feel uncomfortable in the world of the 'beis midrash'? If so, how do we counteract this?
12. In issues relating to cooking- both bishul on shabbat and bishul akum- we see that there is considerable differences in regard to chumras and kullot for ashkenazim and Sephardim. What should be do if you're having ashkenazi guests in a Sephardi home and vice versa? If a Sephardi leniency is applied in a case of bishul, would it be an issur for your ashkenazi guests to eat the food?