

## Halachic Guide for Running Minyanim on the Return to Shul

Dear all,

As you are all aware the updated government guidelines allow the resumption of communal Tefilla in shul from this Shabbat, 4<sup>th</sup> July.

The shul lay leadership have been working tirelessly to allow us to make the return as soon as it is possible in a safe way, and to accommodate all those who wish to return to shul, within the parameters that are set.

I will leave it to them to outline the measures that have been put in place and to explain the booking system, but for now I simply want to thank all those who are engaged in the massive logistic operation necessary for planning and equipping the shul to reopen. I cannot mention every name, but I do want to highlight our chair Moshe Shatzkes, our former chair Jonathan Marriott, Simon Bolsom, our treasurer Simon Gold, Steven Mann, Benjy Trent who leads on security, Ari Goldberg, Dov Nevies and the team of Gabbaim. I also want to express appreciation, as always, to the amazing Louise.

As exciting as this next stage is, all change comes with challenges. We will initially return to a shul very different to the one we left. Communal life will be very restricted for now: no Kiddush after davening, no opportunity to socialise as a group, and none of the vast number of daily shiurim and other events that, in more normal times, make Ner constantly buzzing. Even Tefilla itself will feel different – rooms that feel half empty, lots of smaller Minyanim, shortened services and limited singing.

I want to urge everyone to follow the shul guidelines which are necessary for everyone's safety.

More generally, I also want to reiterate the importance of continuing to follow government guidelines, including the restrictions that remain on socialising inside each other's homes, making Minyanim indoors (other than in Shuls) and even limits on numbers outdoors in gardens.

We must follow government rules – Dina DeMalchuta Dina – and Halacha expects us to follow mainstream medical opinion in looking after our health.

The thought of being able to resume Tefilla in our shul is very exciting, but clearly there are those for whom medical advice will continue to mandate that they do not attend. **No one should feel pressured to resume shul attendance if they feel concerned in so doing.**

Government guidelines and medical advice are constantly changing but for now, both medically and Halachically, there are significant restrictions in how we will run our Minyanim:



### Government and Medical Guidelines

- Social distancing is maintained, with at least 1.5 metres between each participant
- Facemasks must be worn whilst in shul, and singing will be kept to a minimum
- Anyone with COVID symptoms, or members of their household, must not join a minyan.
- Attendance is via pre booking only
- Only children in the Bat or Bar Mitzva year and above (Year 7 & 8 respectively) can join
- Please bring your own Siddurim and Chumashim since the communal ones will be sealed off

### Tefilla Guidelines

- On Shabbat, communal Tefilla will start after Pessukei DeZimra. Whilst the Ba'al Tefilla will start leading from Shochan Ad, individuals should privately daven up to and including Yishtabach, since that is the optimal place to pause. After Mussaf davening will conclude with Ain KeElokeinu, immediately followed by Aleinu and the final mourner's Kaddish. We will not say Anim Zemirot or Adon Olam
- On weekdays, Tefilla will start at Mizmor Shir, followed by mourner's Kaddish and Baruch SheAmar
- No tables will be available, so Tallit and Tefillin bags should be hung from the back of your chair. If need be, they can be placed on the floor when empty and in a double plastic bag
- Layening /Keriat HaTorah:
  - The Sefer Torah should be removed and returned to the Aron by the Ba'al Koreh
  - The Gabbai should remain at his regular seat during. No Aliya call ups or Mi Sheberachs will be said.
  - An Aliya can only be given to someone who is standing next to the Sefer Torah. Given social distancing guidelines, in practice this means one can only call up the Ba'al Koreh and members of his household. This applies even in the presence of a Cohen. This means:
    - If there is only one person (the Ba'al Koreh) he should receive all the Aliyot
    - If several family members are present, the Aliyot should be rotated between them. Under these circumstances, two close relatives can be called up in succession (e.g. father & son or two brothers)
    - In any situation where there are not enough participants to allow for 8 separate aliyot, Maftir is omitted. Hagbaah takes place immediately after the 7th aliyah, followed by the Haftorah. The Berachot of Haftorah (before and after) are read by the person who received the 7th aliyah, but the Haftorah itself can be read aloud by someone else. In this situation half kaddish is not said in its usual slot – between Layening and Haftorah – but after Haftorah
- Hagbaah and Gelila:
  - If possible, the Baal Koreh should do Hagbaah
  - Only members of the same household should do Hagbaah and Gelila together
  - If only one person is available for this, then they should do both Hagbaah and Gelila. This is achieved by lifting and rotating the Sefer Torah and then laying it back down on the Bima to roll up and cover

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge the difficult times that many in the community have been through over the last few months. Many of us have suffered ill health, bereavements, loneliness or financial challenges. I also want to recognise that there have been many different experiences too, and for some this was a positive time out of routine, offering extra time with the family, and a chance to experience a different work-life balance.

All change is daunting. Whilst the start of lockdown was frightening and unsettling, we have perhaps become used to it, so that emerging from lockdown can also feel challenging. Whether returning to work, the shops or shul, we may find ourselves worrying about the health implications, experiencing mixed feelings about the return to routine or even feeling inconvenienced *schlepping* to shul, having become used to being able to daven in a garden next door.

Similarly, some of us have received medical advice that we cannot yet re-join regular communal life, and with everyone else back in action, we can feel "left behind". My wife and I are there for you — **please** feel free to be in contact. The shul will continue to stream weekday Tefilla and all shiurim via Zoom, and will continue to offer an exciting and varied array of social events and programming on line, so everyone should feel able to make the changes and adjustments at the rate that is right for them.

Finally, as we return to regular life, hopefully we can reflect and draw some insight. These are personal matters, and no doubt everyone has their own thoughts. In the context of shul life, however, many have said to me that recent experiences have left them with an enhanced appreciation of community, a determination to take advantage of Tefilla with a Minyan, to daven with as much Kavana as possible and to be particular about Kavod Tefilla, decorum and the sanctity of our Beit Knesset.

Clearly, these are all sentiments I would endorse, and I would encourage all of us to be meticulous in these areas now that we are privileged to slowly return.

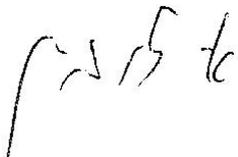
I would also recommend the Rebbetzin's mini-series on Tefilla which she has been releasing via the shul WhatsApp groups and which can now be found on YouTube [HERE](#). These are brief three-minute messages packed with thoughts and ideas to make our prayers more meaningful.

מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנותיך ישראל

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwellings, O Israel! (Parshat Balak)

This refers to the Shuls and Batei Midrash (Gemara Sanhedrin)

With the Tefilla that we should all share only good health, in friendship,



Rabbi Zobin