

Coronavirus Guidance & Directions

Dear *Shluchim*,

May *Hashem* bless you and protect all of *Klal Yisrael*.

Many new queries have arisen and due to the severity of the virus many restrictions should be adhered to, as per *Pikuach Nefesh*.

It is important to reiterate that everyone is obligated to carefully follow the medical advice and recommendations of the doctors and the Department of Health, as clearly stated in letters written by R' Akiva Eiger during a Cholera Epidemic in 1831 (see *Iggeres Sofrim*, letter 31).

In communities where *shuls* have been officially closed, **one should not try to circumvent the rules** and go to *shul*. There is a renowned letter from the *Shem MeShmuel* of *Sochochav* written to a sick person who was dejected because he was ordered by his doctor to eat on *Yom Kippur*. The *Shem MeShmuel* explained to the sick person that the same *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, Who commanded us to fast on *Yom Kippur* also commanded us to eat on *Yom Kippur* when medically warranted due to *Pikuach Nefesh*. Therefore, said the *Shem MeShmuel*, "You should eat with *Simchah*, knowing that you are fulfilling *Hashem's mitzvah*." Likewise, in our situation today, one should know that by forgoing a *minyan* and *kriyas haTorah*, he is thereby fulfilling a *Mitzva D'Oiraisa*, which is cause for joy and not sadness *chas v'Shalom*.

1. **Tfilla**: As per the authorities, people should refrain from going to *shul* and should remain home even on *Shabbos*. Men should preferably *daven* at the same time that the congregation *davens* in *shul*, regularly (*Orach Chaim* 90:9).
2. If one *davens* at home Friday night, one should add *וְלִי וְלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל* after *ברוך אתה ה' וכו'* and the passage of *שמונה עשרה* and *ויכולו השמים* until *מגן אבות* until *מעשה בראשית* after *Shemoneh Esrei*, but not the *bracha* before and after *שבע* and *ויכולו* that follows.
3. A person *Davening* in private without a *minyan* does not recite the second *יקום פורקן* passage and the *mi shebeirach* that follows.
4. One may say *Birchas HaChodesh* (*bentch Rosh Chodesh*) without a *minyan*.
5. For hygienic reasons, one should not spit during the *tfilla* of *עלינו לשבח* (when saying the verse *שהם ריק* (משתחוים להבל וריק), as one might normally do.
6. If a congregation did not perform *kriyas haTorah* one *Shabbos*, they should continue on Monday and Thursday with the regular weekday *kriyah*, and they should make up the missed *parsha* on the following *Shabbos*, by beginning *kriyas haTorah* from the previous (missed) *parsha* and continuing with the new *parsha* from that week (see Rama, *Orach Chaim* 135:2 with *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid.* §8; see also following paragraph).

If only a minority of the congregation missed *kriyas haTorah* one *Shabbos*, there is no need to make up the missed *parshah* the following week (*Shaarei Ephraim* 7:10).

When reading a make up *parsha* from the previous week, the entire previous *parsha* plus (at least) 3 *pesukim* from the new *parsha* are read during the first *Aliyah* (*Kohen*), because each person called to the *Torah* that week must read from the *parsha* of the present week (*Sefer HaShomer Emes* 15:1; *Pesach HaDvir* §4; *Kaf HaChaim* §5).

There is a disagreement among the *Poskim* as to whether it is proper to read *parshiyos* from two different *Chamushim* on the same *Shabbos*. Thus, some say that if *Parshas Pekudei* (or *Vaykeil* and *Pekudei*) was missed, we cannot read *Pekudei* and *Vayikra* the following week since we do not read from two different *Chamushim* on the same *Shabbos*, while others say that even in such a case, the missed *parsha* (*Pekudei*) can be read the following week together with the new *parsha* (*Vayikra*). There is no clear-cut decision in the *poskim* as to which custom should be followed in this case (*Mishnah Berurah* 135:7).

Even if we say that we may read the missed *parsha* from the previous *Chumash* (such as, *Pekudei* and *Vayikra*), there is a disagreement among the *poskim* if it is possible to make up a missed double *parsha*, such as *Vayakeil* and *Pekudei*. Some rule that a congregation cannot make up more than one missed *parsha*, and thus if *Vaykeil* and *Pekudei* were missed, the congregation reads only *Vayikra* the following week, and they do not make up the missed double *parsha* (*Magen Avraham* *ibid.* in the name of *Maharam Mintz*; *Olas Shabbos* 282:4). Others, however, disagree and maintain that the congregation should read three *parshiyos* the following because they hold that it is possible to make up more than one missed *parsha* (*Elya Rabba* *ibid.* §2; see also *Mishnah Berurah* *ibid.* §7). According to this latter view, it is also possible to make up several missed *parshiyos* from several weeks (*Elya Rabba* *ibid.*; *Aruch HaShulchan* *ibid.* §6). *Teshuvos Maharam Schick, Orach Chaim* §335 writes: "I heard from my *Rebbi* (the *Chasam Sofer*) that *Hagaon HaChasid R' Nossan Adler zt"l* conducted himself *halachah l'maasah* according to this view and he once read many missed *parshiyos* on one *Shabbos*.

7. **Kissing:** One should refrain from directly kissing a *Sefer Torah*, *mezuzah*, or *sforim*. Rather, one should merely kiss them from afar. One should also not kiss the *Sefer Torah* when called to the *Torah* for an *Aliyah*.
8. **Mikveh for Men:** Men should entirely **refrain** from using the *mikveh* now. A man can fulfill the *mikveh* obligation through the pouring of nine *kabbim* of water over himself (*Teshuvos Shevet HaLevi* 1:24 and *Minchas Yitzchak* 4:21). Nine *kabbim* water is approximately 11 ½ liters, and others say it is 20 liters of water. This can be accomplished by taking a shower for approximately 3 minutes. Nine *kabbim* of water are a valid substitute for *mikveh* only when the water is poured over oneself, as in a shower, but not when he immerses himself, such as in a bath. However, if one sits in a bath with half his body above the water line and nine *kabbim* of water is then poured over his head, it is valid (*Mishnah Berurah* 88:4).
When the nine *kabbim* water are poured over someone, the person should stand straight with his two hands (spread apart a bit) nears his heart, so that the water lands on his hands too (*Mishnah Berurah* 88:4, citing *Mateh Ephraim*).
When taking a shower for this purpose, one should first stand under the shower spout and then open the water, so that the water immediately goes over him as he opens the faucet.
Some say that pouring 9 *kabbim* water is beneficial even for one who [did not experience *tumah*, but] wants to immerse himself in a *mikveh* for the sake of *תרופת טהרה*, *additional purity* (see *Tashbatz* §122, דיני ערב יהו"כ, *Sefer Maavar Yabok* מאמר ה' *Imrei Noam* ch. 18). Alternatively, if one cannot immerse in a *mikveh*, he may instead learn some *Mishnayos* from *Seder Taharas*. It is particularly beneficial for one to learn *Mesechtas Mikvaos*, as the *Rebbe zt"l* writes in *Iggeres Kodesh* (9:153).
9. **Mikveh for Women:** Women may go to the *mikveh*, unless she is quarantined when she may not go. It is advisable to shower after the *mikveh*. However, they should take a shower only after arriving back home, and not in the *mikveh* building (see *Rama, Yoreh Deah* 201:75, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 162:9 and *Taharas Yisrael* §161). [This is the opinion of *Shevet HaLevi*.]

If there is a woman who refuses to use the mikveh (out of fear of the virus), we may permit her to immerse herself in the sea (at the beach). However, another woman must accompany her there to ensure that her entire body with all her hair is properly immersed in the water. It is worthwhile for her to go into the water while wearing Crocs (which should be removed before she immerses) to avoid any *chatzitzah* adhering to her feet.

10. **Bris Milah:** The holy practice of *metzitzah b'peh* should be continued. The *mohel* should rinse his mouth with Listerine, as this destroys the virus. The Herpes virus is more dangerous to infants than the Corona virus, and *Boruch Hashem* no child has ever been infected with Herpes due to *metzitzah b'peh*. Therefore, there is no reason for a *mohel* to discontinue this practice at this time, provided of course that he is not ill and takes the necessary precautions. If the child's parents (are not religious and) refuse to allow *metzitzah b'peh*, the *mohel* should perform *metzitzah* with a tube instead, and he should not make an issue about *metzitzah b'peh* at this time.
11. **Pitom ha'Ketores:** During this difficult crises, one should try to say the passage of *pitom ha'ketores* with a *minyán*, every morning and afternoon (at *shacharis* and *minchah* time). Moreover, the *Alter Rebbe* writes one should recite the *ketores* passage שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום, reading the *pesukim* twice and the *Targum* once (see the *Tzemach Tzedek's Ohr Torah* p. 240; see also *Rav Y. Mundstein's* article in *Kovetz Ohr Yisrael, Gilyon 18*, p. 177).
12. **Brochos:** One should make a great effort to say 100 *brochos* daily with devotion (see *Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21*).
13. **Charity:** One should increase the giving of charity because צדקה תציל ממות, *charity spares from death*, and provides one with *Olam Habah*. One should also increase saying of *Tehillim* and his trust in *Hashem*.
14. **Visiting:** Many *poskim* rule that one may not visit a person infected with the virus so as not to endanger himself, but should instead fulfill the *mitzvah* by calling on the phone. A doctor, however, is obligated to treat such patients (see *Kovetz MeBais HaLevi, Gilyon אי ניסן תשנ"ב* pgs. 147-148).
15. **Weddings:** Weddings should be held as scheduled, and should not be postponed on account of a small crowd size.
16. **Hygiene:** It is extremely important to wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with water and soap. It is permitted to wash hands with liquid soap on *Shabbos*. If the soap is heavy, it should be diluted with some water before *Shabbos*. It is permissible to wear a mask outdoors on *Shabbos*, and is not considered carrying.
17. **Handling Money:** After handling money, it is extremely important to wash your hands before eating, touching food, or touching your face. One should certainly not touch money during mealtime.
18. **Communal Eating and Drinking:** One must refrain from eating or drinking from the same dish as his friend, as this is a matter of *pikuach nefesh* (see *Orach Chaim, 170:16* and *Taz ibid. §8*).
19. **Shiva:** If a family is sitting *shiva* ר"ל, the *aveilim* should not sit close together, in a small room. One can fulfill the *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim* even over the phone, hence this should be the suggested practice.

I conclude with the prayer מנחלתך מנע מגיפה מנחלתך, *our father, our king, withhold a plague from your inheritance*. May we yet merit in this Month of *Adar* – whose acronym is **אניני דיי ריפואיך**, *I am Hashem, your healer* – to מהסירתי מחלה מקרבך, *I will remove sickness from your midst*, and we should emerge from darkness to great light with the coming of *Moshiach*. May we merit to see the building of the *Bais Hamikdash* and be able to partake of the *korbonos* and the *korbon Pesach* speedily in our days, *mamash*.

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