בס"ד

עש"ק פרשת משפטים א' דר"ח אדר תשפ"א

**PURIM & THE PANDEMIC – LAWS & GUIDEANCE FOR PURIM 5781 - 2021**

Dear Kehilla Members שיחיו

There are six Mitzvos pertaining to Purim, two of them are fulfilled before Purim and the remaining four on the day of Purim itself. Due to the exceptionally difficult world situation at present, I have put together a sheet of Halochos (Laws) in an attempt to assist you with the performance of each of these Mitzvos. If you still have any questions, please feel free to contact me on 020 8202 7838.

1. **PARSHAS ZOCHOR**

Anyone who can come to Shul on Shabbos, for one of the various readings, should endeavour to do so. It is expected that there will be ample social distancing to enable all except those who are required by law to isolate, to be able to come.

For those who are still unable to come, we will iy”H arrange a **daytime** catch up Krias Hatoroh,at a later stage, to be announced.

1. **MACHATZIS HASHEKHEL**

The *Minhag (custom)* is for every man over the age of 20, to give 3 x 50 Pence at Mincha on Ta’anis Esther . Although we normally provide 3 such coins sellotaped together, we will not do this year, to avoid any risk of cross infection as a result. Instead, each man should bring his own 3 x 50 Pence. The various bowls will be put out at the back of the Shul as normal. Please take care however, to maintain social distancing. Anyone unable to come to Shul, could make a bank transfer (of £1.50) to the Shul Tzedokoh fund, giving it the reference ‘MH’ or request that someone else gives Machatzis Hashekel in Shul for them.

1. **KRIAS HAMEGILLA – MEGILLA READING**

For both the night and the day, there are three options.

a) To come to Shul (and if necessary, fully dressed up! in PPE,) to one of the two \* ^ readings; ample social distancing will be incorporated at both. (Booking will be essential) For those who feel particularly vulnerable, and as a result are not coming to Shul at all at present, we are potentially offering a third Megilloh reading where there will be *super* social distancing (Please contact Mr Bernhard Bergman to express interest and request attendance). All, except those who are required to isolate by law, are expected to avail themselves of this option.

b) Anyone who is isolating could arrange for someone standing outside to Lein for them, provided of course, that it isn't raining or snowing at the time!

 c) Recordings of the Megilloh are available on the Shul website or Kol Halashon and a link to it will be provided. A kosher Megilloh can be made available. (Please contact Mr Gershon Hepner if you require this) and you could listen phrase by phrase to the recording (pausing it) and then read it aloud yourself. It is important that someone else follows your Leining from a pointed Chumash to make sure that there are no mistakes. This could either be done by a member of the household or by someone else listening on the phone.

**Please note:**

1. It is **not** possible to fulfil this Mitzvah by listening to the Megilloh on the phone or by zoom, since one is not actually hearing the voice of the Ba’al Koreh. It would only serve to give the listener some feeling of association with the Megilloh reading.
2. If the Megillah is read without a minyan, omit the *berochoh* said in Shul after laining the Megillah (the Brochoh *horov es riveinu*).

\*This year, there will be a Minyan for Ma’ariv at the second Leining of the Megillh, for the men who could not book and fit into the Shul for the first Leining (due to COVID constraints).

^Anyone coming to the second Leining/minyan for Ma’ariv, need not fast until then, however they cannot have a proper meal of bread until they have heard the Megilloh.

1. **MATONOS LO’EVYONIM**

The minimum requirement to fulfil this Mitzvah is for each adult (**husband and wife have separate obligations**) to give a donation to two poor people, on the actual day of Purim. It is however possible and indeed advisable to make a bank transfer to the Shul Tzedokoh fund in advance, so that these donations can be given to the poor on your behalf on the day of Purim. This can be done already, giving the reference ‘ML’. Charitable funds can certainly be used for this purpose. The value of the funds that you have transferred will be given in cash to at least 2 poor people on the day of Purim on your behalf, by our devoted Tzedokoh Gabbay, Mr David Friedman. This is a perfect solution for those isolating, but it is in fact available and preferable for everyone. Alternatively, cheques, vouchers or cash can be handed into the Shul plate or given to Mr Friedman. The earlier that you can do this, the easier the task will be for Mr Friedman, so that he can know in advance how much money is available to be distributed.

**Note: There will not be any ‘schpielers’ this year, consequently there will be less opportunities to give Tzedokoh. Consider giving a little more as a result or reaching out to other good causes that would normally come round to you on Purim.**

1. **MISHLOACH MONOS**

The minimum required to fulfil this Mitzvoh, is to give one Mishloach Monos containing at least two different ready-to-eat foods, (one of which could be a drink) to one person. It must be given and received on the day of Purim. This obligation applies to both men women and children over bar or bas mitzvah. Again, husbands and wives have separate obligations in this respect.

Those isolating can either

1. Order a Mishloach Monos remotely, to be sent by a shop or fruiterer to be delivered and [knowingly!] received on the *day* (sunrise to sunset) of Purim, to a non-household member. Alternatively,
2. Make up their own Mishloach Monos and a Shul member will pick it up and deliver it/them on their behalf. Please do make sure to choose a *local* recipient to whom it is to be delivered and please do not send much more than the minimum number of Mishloach Monos in this situation, so as not to overly burden the kind Shul member volunteering to assist you.

It also seems correct that all Mishloach Monos be delivered by car where possible, and that we should not be visibly dressed up, if out in the streets, so as not to be seen to be violating the lockdown rules.

1. **SEUDAS PURIM**

Although this Seudoh can be eaten at any time during the day (sunrise - 6.52am to sunset - 5.35pm), because it is *erev* Shabbos it is preferable to have the Seudah in the morning, such that the main course is eaten by midday (12:13pm). Due to the current COVID situation one should only join up with family bubbles (or whatever is permitted by law).

If need be, you can still eat the Seudah later, but should endeavour to finish by 2.42pm (tenth seasonal hour of the day). If a later option is still necessary, one could have the Purim Seudah later and then append it to the Shabbos Friday night meal and make *kiddush etc* in the middle [you will need some *halachik* guidance for this option, please be in contact].

P.S. **Take care** that you do not get late for Shabbos as a result of any Purim activity.

Finally, although Purim is undoubtedly going to be a challenge this year, try to make a special effort to compensate by making yourselves and everyone else lebedick (jolly), in celebration of Hashem’s miraculous deliverance from Homon Horosho. (the wicked Haman)

With best wishes

Good Shabbos and good Chodesh

Rav Cohn

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| **THIS SECTION WAS ISSUED BY OUR GABBAI BERNHARD BERGMAN - Pre-booking & seating arrangements** |
| Shabbos Zachor | Four separate readings of Zachor: |   |
|   | 1. Hashkomo (at apprx 8.30am) | No pre-booking required |
|   | 2. Second Service (at apprx 10.45am) | Pre-booking essential (bar mitzvah), allocated seating |
|   | 3. 12.40pm (5 minutes before early Minchah) | No pre-booking required |
|   | 4. 4.55pm (5 minutes before second Minchah) | No pre-booking required |
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| Taanis Esther |   |   |
| Shacharis | TBC whether 1 or 2 minyonim |   |
| Early Minchah | 12.45pm | No pre-booking required |
| Second Minchah | 5.00pm | No pre-booking required (overflow men’s seating upstairs) |
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| Purim Night |   |   |
| Megillah 1 | Maariv 6.05pm followed by Megillah | Pre-booking essential, allocated seating |
| Megillah 2 | Maariv 7.40pm followed by Megillah | Pre-booking essential, allocated seating |
| Megillah 3 for "shielders" | Megillah only 9.00pm  | Pre-booking essential.  Very limited capacity. |
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| Purim Morning |   |   |
| Megillah 1 | Shacharis 6.15am followed by Megillah | Pre-booking essential, allocated seating |
| Megillah 2 | Shacharis 8.10am followed by Megillah | Pre-booking essential, allocated seating |
| Megillah 3 for "shielders" | Megillah only 9.55am  | Pre-booking essential.  Very limited capacity. |
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| Notes: |  |  |
| 1 | "Shielders" megillah readings will be limited to under 25 people in the whole shul (downstairs and upstairs).  It is obviously not open to those who are meant to be isolating. |
| 2 | Preference for the megillah readings will be given to shul members.   |
| 3 | The usual Covid protocols will apply, including face coverings (mouth and nose) - no exceptions (not for children nor for adults) and good ventilation (dress warmly). |
| 4 | No trumpets/wind instruments in Shul. |
| 5 | We hope to have a “catchup” Zachor later in the year for those who are shielding or having to isolate. |