



Magen Avot

2 November 2020

Dear Friends,

As you will all be aware by now, following the Government's announcement last night we have been forced to close our doors for physical services once again.

This is a painful but necessary step and we firmly believe that closing the shul premises at this time is the correct course of action from a legal, medical and Halachic perspective.

From the outset of the pandemic we made clear that the safety of each and every member of the community was and would remain our number one priority. We are grateful that we have been able to run services according to regulations in a COVID-secure environment over the past few months, including a wonderfully uplifting Chagim period. However, the data makes clear that cases are rising and risk is increasing. Expert medical opinion and government guidelines have thus set out that all places of worship are to be closed for communal services beginning this coming Thursday. This step is fully endorsed by the Chief Rabbi, whose statement can be found at the bottom of this email.

We are encouraged by the knowledge that our closure is a short-term measure. Hopefully by December the reality will allow us to reopen safely once again. We can all find comfort in the fact that we have been here before, and are better prepared.

Online programming is already part and parcel of our community offering, and this will be increased in the weeks ahead. Details of a full program will follow soon but some highlights include:

- The Friday morning Chabura each week at the new time of 8:40am.
- The Communal zoom Havdalah that we had last week will now be continuing every Motzei Shabbat.
- Rabbi Kenigsberg will be available each week on Mondays and Tuesdays in the zoom room and will be sending out a weekly Dvar Torah before Shabbat.
- Details of further Shiurim, virtual activities and social events will be published soon including a very exciting new home format for Horim V'Yeladim!

Once again, **nobody is alone!** The Chessed committee headed by Shoina Kass and David Berke, together with Rebbetzen Kenigsberg and volunteers from across the community, are here to help in any way we can. If anybody requires any assistance at all with shopping, transport, medical, or just to have a friendly chat, please email, message, WhatsApp or call them or any member of the Executive or Council who will be willing and delighted to be there for you. The full contact details are:

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We pray for a speedy end to this pandemic and for a Refuah Shleimah for all those who need it. Wishing you all good health and hoping to be together safely again soon.

Warm best wishes

Rabbi Kenigsberg

Simon Bentley

Joy Kay

Message from Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Over recent months, during times of unprecedented challenge, I have been inspired by our remarkable Rabbis, Rebbetzins, lay leaders, staff and communities as you maintained the vitality of our Synagogues through regular services, events and programmes. Public health professionals and government officials have recognised your determined commitment to protecting the sanctity of life before all else, in what has been a true Kiddush Hashem.

I have no doubt therefore that, whilst you will share my sense of profound pain, following the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday, that places of worship must once again close for congregational prayer, you will also share my desire to take whatever further action is necessary to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This directive from the government confers an imperative upon us to close our Synagogues from Thursday.

As I have noted at a previous time, it would be tempting to use the permission granted for Individual Prayer to open our Shuls so that we can daven privately in the presence of others which would certainly be a מצעלה (meritorious). However this is significantly outweighed by the potential for לפני עור (placing a stumbling block before the blind), because those present for Individual Prayer might be tempted to daven together in a חילול which would be a clear breach of the law and a חילול ה' - a desecration of Hashem's name.

Detailed guidance will follow shortly.

It is my fervent prayer that our shuls will very soon be able to safely re-open once again.

May the Almighty bless all of humankind with healing and a speedy end to the Pandemic and all the suffering that it has brought in its wake.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis