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A. Kaddish without a Minyan

Question:

I just saw an article that rav Eliezer melamed allows reciting Kaddish over a virtual hookup (but not of course Divrei kedusha).

Even allowing Kaddish seems to me outside the mainstream opinion. What would you say?

Answer:

Kaddish may only be said in the presence of a minyan of ten men who are above Bar Mitzvah age¹. There are exceptional cases where it may be said with 9 men and a child – see Bemareh Habazak 9, 1 for details.

For ten men to combine to be a minyan, they must be in one place, such as in the same room or nearby to one another.²

1 See note 1 on page 13

2 See note 2 on page 14

B. Responding to Kaddish or Kedusha heard over the phone

Question:

On a different note, I saw the write up of Eretz Hemda on the issue of hearing the Megilah over the phone, which most Poskim do not favor. However, is there value to answering amen or kedusha if a minyan is miles away and a person listens in on the phone or Skype. The Shulchan Aruch writes (55:20) that if there is a minyan, a person can answer amen, even if far away, and even a mechitza shel barzerl does not present a barrier. Is there a shiur to how far away one can be? In Alexandria they answered amen when the flags went up even though they could not hear. Would these halochos apply even when there are great distances. Almost all shuls are closed in Ameriuca. Can I listen by cell phone to davening in a shul in Israel and have the zechus to answer kaddesh and keddusha.

Answer:

If a minyan is taking place in one location and the minyan is broadcasting the davening by radio, phone or the internet, one who hears the live broadcast may answer amen to the berachot, and respond to the kadish, kedusha, barchu, and all parts of the davening..¹

1 See note 1 on page 15

C. Praying at the same time the community is praying

Question:

Shulchan Aruch 90:11 discusses davening at the same time as a minyan when a local minyan is unavailable because it is an eis ratzon. Does that apply for a minyan that is in a different city or country? Should we daven Mincha or maariv in America at the same time as minyanim in Israel?

Answer:

One who is unable to daven in a minyan, should ideally daven at the same time of the local minyan, as by connecting himself in this fashion to the prayers of the public, they are more accepted by Hashem. If one is in a place where there is no minyan at all, he should daven at the same time that other communities are davening the same tefillah that he is davening. However, if he is davening a different tefillah from those communities, for example if he is davening Shacharit in America when a communities are Israel are davening Mincha, it is not considered as if he is davening at the same time as the public is davening.¹

¹ See note 1 on page 11

D. Reciting Hagomel following recovery from the coronavirus

Question:

I am currently learning and writing about ברכת הגומל. Given that one should say this bracha after an illness which had some sakana (Rav Melamed emphasizes if you would be מחללי שבת for such an illness then it would warrant saying the bracha), I am wondering about coronavirus. What if you have a mild case, or no symptoms and find out after? Does one say הגומל? Should everyone who has had it say the bracha?

Answer:

Here are the guidelines on this matter from Rabbi Prof. Steinberg, author of the Encyclopedia of medicine and halacha and a member of the Halacha advisors of shut B'Mareh Habazak.

1. One who was infected with the coronavirus and suffered from pneumonia, and certainly one who was on a ventilator, is obligated to recite the “ha’gomel” blessing after they recover.
2. One who tested positive for coronavirus and suffered from minor flu symptoms does not recite the “ha’gomel” blessing if they are a generally healthy person. But if this is someone with pre-existing conditions, they may be allowed to say “ha’gomel.”
3. However, one who leaves quarantine but was not ill should not recite “ha’gomel.”¹

One who is obligated to recite the “ha’gomel” blessing, but there is no minyan, can do so in a video gathering, such as zoom, because the requirement for 10 to recite “ha’gomel” is not because it is a holy matter that requires a minyan in one house, but because of publicizing the miracle, and so it is enough for everyone to witness it by video. Although ideally one should recite “ha’gomel” within 3 days of recovery, if it is impossible – and during the coronavirus pandemic there were no minyanim – one can fulfill the obligation of this blessing any time it becomes possible, and hence he should recite the blessing upon returning to pray in minyan.

1 See note 1 on page 16

E. Automated hand washing system on Shabbat and Yom Tov

Question:

We are considering the use of a "Soapy" system to help our congregants wash their hands properly upon entering our synagogue when we reopen - hopefully sooner than later.

<https://www.soapy.care/>

We would like to know the potential issues and solutions to using this device on Shabbat and Yom Tov. All people would have to do is stick their hands inside and wash their hands - the machine works automatically with sensors, and the operations would be managed by our non-Jewish security and staff.

At the moment, we are working with our medical consultants to formulate guidelines for the reopening of the synagogue, and a hand-washing solution like this would be a critical component to the atmosphere of safety we are trying to create - especially if they would be usable on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Answer:

Under normal circumstances, it is preferable to use a mechanically operated system to wash hands on Shabbat and Yom Tov, which does not involve any electronic operations.

However, if medical experts advise you that using the "Soapy" system¹

1 לאחר בירור עם החברה, להלן תיאור אופן פעולת המערכת: מטרת המערכת היא לוודא שטיפת ידיים איכותית עם סבון, תוך כדי שמירת היגיינה בצורה מיטבית

המערכת מזהה כאשר יש זרימת מים דרכה, ומחממת את המים לטמפרטורה של בין 38 ל-42 מעלות צלזיוס. ניתן לתכנן את המערכת כך שהמים לא יחוממו בשבת.

המשתמש מכניס את ידיו אל חלל המערכת, אשר מזהה אותם באמצעות מכלול חיישנים. בצורה מתוזמנת, נפתחים ברז מים וברז סבון, הסגורים יתר הזמן באמצעות מערכת מגנטית. אין אפשרות לפתיחה מכנית של הברזים. הפתיחה היא אך ורק בעקבות פעולת החיישנים. אין ייבוש.

ישנם חיישנים, ביניהם חיישני נפח ומצלמה, שפועלים כל הזמן ומזהים שמישהו מתקרב. אם המערכת מחוברת לרשת- אז המידע נשלח אוטומטית למרכז בקרה ראשי; ואם היא לא מחוברת- אז המידע נשמר וישלח כשהיא תתחבר לרשת. אין זיהוי אישי של המשתמשים

will significantly improve the health and safety of your congregants while the Covid-19 pandemic is ongoing, it is permitted for use² under

אלא רק שמירת נתונים על מספר משתמשים ייחודים, ואיכות השטיפה שלהם. לדוגמא, המערכת תוכל לומר ש-50 איש שטפו ידיים באותו יום, ומה הייתה איכות השטיפה של כל אחד מהם. המערכת משתייכת לתחום ה- (IoT) internet of things.

ישנם נורות וחיוויים אך כולם ניתנים לכיבוי.

- 2 כאמור בהערה 1, על פי המידע שנמסר לנו מהחברה, ניתן לתכנן את המערכת כך שהיא לא תחמם מים בשבת וכן שלא יופעלו נורות וחיוויים במהלך השבת. היא תזהה את היום והשעה ותיכנס למוד שבת ויום טוב בעצמה, וניתן אף לתכנן אותה שהיא תציג חיווי שהיא נמצאת במצב זה. נשאר אם כן לדון על שני דברים: פתיחת ברז המים והסבון באמצעות חיישן, וכן המצלמה והחיישנים שאוספים מידע על המשתמש ואיכות השטיפה שלו.

לגבי פתיחת ברז מים באמצעות חיישן, עיין במאמרו של מו"ר הרב נחום רבינוביץ זצ"ל (תחומין לו, הפעלת חשמלית בשבת על ידי חיישנים, דיבור או מחשבה, עמ' 149) שכתב להתייר את השימוש בשבת בברז המופעל על ידי חיישן, מכיוון שבתוצאה של פתיחת הברז אין מלאכה כלל ואף לא דבר הדומה לידי מלאכה. ועיין גם במכתבו (אמונת עתיך תמוז תשע"ז עמ' 125) על דלתות מגנטיות שרמזו שוב להיתרו להשתמש בברז המופעל על ידי חיישן בשבת. ועיין עוד במאמרו של הרב אלי רייף, (אמונת עתיך תמוז תשע"ז, שימוש בדלתות מגנטיות ובכרטיס זיהוי דיגיטלי, עמ' 120-118) שהעלה שבמנגנון הפתיחה והנעילה של דלת מגנטית אין איסור דאורייתא, ואף איסור דרבנן גם כלל לא ברור שיש, ונראה שהדברים נכונים גם לגבי ברז המופעל על ידי חיישן. ועיין בתגובתו של הרב רוזן זצ"ל (אמונת עתיך תמוז תשע"ז עמ' 129-128) שרוב הפוסקים חלוקים על כך ולדעתם יש בכל הפעלה אלקטרונית לפחות איסור דרבנן. אולם גם הוא מודה שבמקום שלא נעשית מלאכה, יש להקל לצרכי רפואה.

לעניין המצלמה והחיישנים האוספים מידע, עיין תחומין יד, טלוויזיה במעגל סגור בשבת, חילופי מכתבים בין הרב רוזן לרב משה פיינשטיין ורב יהושע נויבירט (עמ' 432 ואילך); תחומין כה, מצלמות טלוויזיה במעגל סגור בשבת, מו"ר הגר"ז גולדברג והרב ישראל רוזן (עמ' 441 ואילך); תחומין כה, טלוויזיה במעגל סגור בשבת, הרב שמואל רבינוביץ (עמ' 450 ואילך); תחומין כו, שינוי זרם חשמלי בשבת, הרב ישראל רוזן (עמ' 83 ואילך); שו"ת במראה הבזק חלק ג סימן לד.

במקורות אלו נתבאר שכאשר ישנה מצלמה הפועלת, יש שחששו שאף על פי שמבחינה חשמלית עמידה לפני המצלמה אינה גורמת אלא לשינוי זרם, מכל מקום ישנו איסור של רושם ביצירת התמונה שעל המסך. אולם איסור זה הוא לכל היותר מדרבנן, כיוון שאינו מתקיים, וכן מטעמים נוספים, וכגון שאינו בגדר רושם כלל, וכן שהוא גרמא בעלמא. במקום בו האדם כלל איננו מכוון להצטלם על ידי המצלמה, וכגון במצלמות לצרכי ביטחון, ישנם צדדים נוספים להקל, משום אינו מתכוון ופסיק רישיה דלא ניחה ליה.

בנוסף, אם מה שצולם או הוקלט נשמר בזיכרון המכשיר, יש שחששו משום מתקן מנא. ועיין בשו"ת במראה הבזק חלק ט סימן יב הערה 4, שיש שחששו בכך למלאכת כותב. כפי שנתבאר שם, מסתבר שהחשש הוא לכל היותר לאיסור דרבנן.

לכן יעצנו כאן, שכל המידע הנאסף על ידי המערכת לא יוצג על שום מסך עד לאחר השבת, ובאופן זה יש כאן לכל היותר פסיק רישיה באיסור דרבנן, ואולי אף פחות מכך.

לכן, אם המומחים סבורים שמערכת כזו עשויה לסייע לשמירה על בריאות הציבור בזמן מגפת הקורונה, וזאת משום שעל ידי שהברז מופעל על ידי חיישן אין מגע של אנשים שונים באותו ברז, וכן משום שהמערכת מוודאת שטיפה איכותית של הידיים, יש להתייר

the following conditions:

1. The system will be programmed not to heat up water on Shabbat or Yom Tov.³ The company has informed us that it is possible to program the system not to heat up water when necessary.
2. All lights and indicators will be disabled for Shabbat and Yom Tov. The company has informed us that it is possible to program the system that all lights and indicators will be disabled when necessary.
3. The information collected by the system on the users will not be visibly displayed on any screen during Shabbat and Yom Tov.
4. A sign will be placed that the system has been modified for use on Shabbat and Yom Tov and use of it is permitted only for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

את השימוש בה בשבת. ויש לציין לדבריו המאלפים של מו"ר הרב ישראלי זצ"ל בעמוד הימיני ס' יז אודות פעילות המשטרה בשבת שביסס את העיקרון שמה שנוגע לשלום הציבור לעולם נחשב כפיקוח נפש.

ויש לתלות שלט שהמערכת הותאמה במיוחד לשימוש בשבת, על מנת שלא ילמדו מכך להשתמש במערכות אלו הגם שלא הותאמו לשבת, וכגון במקום שהם מחממות את המים, וכן במקום שאין צורך רפואי בכך.

- 3 על אף שמותר לחמם מים לרחיצת ידיים ביום טוב (שו"ע או"ח תקיא, ב), בעת פתיחת הברז המערכת מזהה את זרימת המים ומפעילה גוף חימום לחמם את המים ודבר זה אסור משום מוליד אש (שו"ע או"ח תקב, א).

F. Guidelines for hearing the Megillah for people in quarantine

These guidelines are written in response to inquiries from people who are in quarantine due to potential Coronavirus infection, and to inquiries from communities in the Diaspora where local authorities have forbidden public gatherings in places such as synagogues.

According to most authorities, it is not possible to fulfill the mitzvah of hearing the reading of the Megillah by hearing it over the telephone or any other electronic device.¹ This is the accepted halachic position under normal circumstances. However, there are authorities who are of the opinion that one fulfills the mitzvah by hearing the reading of the Megillah through electronic means (via live broadcast)², and some authorities state that at the very least we cannot rule out this possibility.³ Therefore, in extreme circumstances where it is impossible to be physically present at the reading, one should listen to a live broadcast of the reading via electronic means.⁴

Therefore, one who is in quarantine because of the Coronavirus and cannot go to the synagogue to hear the Megillah, should act in accordance with the following options listed in order of priority:

One should arrange for someone to read the Megillah close to one's home such that one will hear the reading directly, while maintaining the separation required for quarantine per the instructions of the local medical authorities.

One should read the Megillah himself out of a kosher scroll. One may use a recording of the reading for assistance

1 Responsa Minchat Shlomo 1:9; Responsa Yechaveh Daat 3:54; Responsa Minchat Yitzchak 3:38,16, and others. The ruling in Responsa Bemareh Habazak 1:26 is that one should not be lenient under normal circumstances. See further, Responsa Bemareh Habazak 5:62 regarding places where the practice is to read the megillah with a microphone.

2 Responsa Minchat Elazar 2:72

3 See Responsa Igrot Moshe O"C 2:108, O"C 4:91; Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 8:11; see further Responsa Minchat Shlomo (ibid.) in the footnotes, who indicates that the Chazon Ish was also unsure of this.

4 We understand that this is also the ruling of Rabbi Herschel Schachter for those asking in the United States.

and read along with the recording using the scroll. We can provide a link to a recording of the reading specifically designed for easy use in this scenario (contact: info@eretzhemdah.org)

One should hear the reading of the Megillah via a live broadcast, such as over the telephone or computer. One may answer “amen” to the blessings of the reader,⁵ but should not recite them oneself.

The custom is that one who reads the Megillah privately does not recite the blessing of “harav et rivenu” following the reading.⁶

5 Responsa Igrot Moshe O”C 4:91; Responsa Yechaveh Daat 2:68; see also Piskei Teshuvot 215:3

6 hulchan Aruch O”C 692:1; see also Piskei Teshuvot 692:4

G. How to conduct a quick Seder

Question:

How can one make a quick seder? What is the minimum that needs to be done? May one eat after chatzot?

Answer:

With all things being equal, it would of course be best to fulfill the obligation of the seder night as they are outlined in the hagadah. However, under extenuating circumstances, there is leeway to hasten through the hagadah by skipping over the songs and later added appendixes of the hagadah. Under extreme extenuating circumstances, one may fulfill the obligations of the night according to their respective level of importance. This order would be first and foremost defined by which obligations are biblically mandated, and which are only rabbinically mandated.

There are two biblically mandated obligations on the seder night (during these times whereby we are still lacking a beit ha'mikdash).

- 1) The obligation of saying over the hagadah – sippur yetziot mitzrayim.¹
- 2) The obligation to eat matzah.²

There are seven rabbinically mandated obligations.

- 1) Kiddush.
- 2) Eating of the bitter herbs – marror.
- 3) Eating of the bitter herbs with the matzah – korach.
- 4) Eating of the afikoman.

1 Practically, if someone does not have the time to say the entire hagadah, then the absolute minimum is to say “avadim hayuni” and “u'mitchila ovdei avodah zarah”. If there is more time then he should say “rabban gamliel haya omer”. If there is even more time then he should say the blessing of “asheir ge'alu”. (Nishmat Avraham 475:7)

2 One should make both blessing of hamotzie and achilat matzah. Additionally, one should lean on their left side while eating the matzah. Regarding how much to eat, it is best to eat the quantity of two olives worth, but the minimum is one olive worth.

- 5) Drinking of all four cups of wine.
- 6) The recitation of hallel.
- 7) Leaning during specific portions of the seder – ha'seiba.

Regarding the eating of the afikoman: One should not eat anything after the afikoman.³ However, it is permissible to drink water (or tea or soft drinks), whereby the taste of the drink does not eradicate the taste of the afikoman. There are more lenient opinions which permit any drink, such as even coffee and the like.⁴

There is an additional recommendation concerning a case whereby a person is pressured for time at the beginning of the seder night, but will have more time later in the night.⁵ In such a case, he should make kiddush, then recite the hagadah in short⁶ over the second cup of wine. From there he should move on to the eating of the matzah, marror, korach, and the meal itself⁷, followed by the afikoman.⁸ However, he should not yet say the birkat ha'mazon. Rather, from after the afikoman until halachik midnight it is forbidden to eat or drink anything, to the exclusion of what was mentioned above. After halachik midnight⁹ he may sit down to a proper festive meal, and after that he may eat a second afikoman. Upon finishing, he should recite the birkat ha'mazon. After this point, he should continue the seder as normal.¹⁰

3 Shulchan Aruch OC 478:1

4 Mishna Brura 481:1

5 Based on the Avnei Neizer OC 381.

6 See footnote 1.

7 There are two reason for this: honoring Yom Tov, and so that the afikoman should be eating on a full stomach. See Shulchan Aruch OC 477:1, and Mishna Brura 476:6.

8 Before the eating of the afikoman, one should make the following verbal condition: If the halacha follows R' Elezar ben Azarah then this k'zayit is being eaten for the purpose of the afikoman. And if the halacha follows R' Akiva, then this k'zayit is not for the sake of the afikoman.

9 One is not obligated to start immediately after midnight. The main halachik consideration is that one should finish eating the meal and afikoman by dawn, which is the end of the permissible time to eat the afikoman according to R' Akiva.

10 Birkat ha'mazon, the third cup, hallel, the fourth cup, etc.

H. Using a microphone for services on Yamim Noraim

Question:

We are thinking ahead to the Yamim Noraim. Since we have two buildings on our campus, plus a space across the street, our first thought was hosting three smaller minyanim for each tefilah. However, most of our congregation really comes to hear and be inspired by our particular cantorial service, and would be upset to not be at the "main" minyan. One solution we have thought of, because we already use a Zomet-approved sound amplification system, is simply bringing the sound of the sanctuary to the other locations. A few questions came up:

Would that fulfill tefilah b'tzibur, and would congregants be able to respond to devarim she'b'kedusha as such?

We typically blow shofar away from the microphone so that people hear the kolot directly. The same would be done in this case.

What would be your halakhic perspective on having a closed-circuit camera and screen set up from before Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur to run continuously so that people in other buildings can see the chazan and daven along with him, feeling more "part of things?"

Answer:

1. The Zomet sound system is based on our mentor Rav Yisraeli's ruling, published in Shut B'mareh Habazak volume 1 siman 27.
2. It is permitted to extend the Zomet sound system to additional rooms, provided that the extension meets all the conditions which the Zomet sound system meets. See footnote for details.¹ The main emphasis

1 Following are the conditions under which the Zomet system operates, copied from the Zomet website:

The system uses only transistors, without any glowing (or "burning") elements at all.

No electric current is ever manually turned on. It is turned on by a Shabbat timer, and once it is on the current flows continuously in the system.

The microphone is not "dynamic" (creating a new current when it operates) but is

is that the extension should work completely automatically, without any potential intervention on Shabbat. Should you need guidance as to whether the extension you are setting up meets these conditions, please contact either Eretz Hemdah or the Zomet institute.

3. The congregants hearing via the sound system may answer amen to the berachot, and respond to the kadish, kedusha, barchu, and all parts of the davening.²
4. If there is a minyan at the secondary space, it is definitely considered tefillah betzibbur. Even if there is no minyan at the secondary place, there are opinions that consider it to be tefillah betzibbur,³ and at

based on the use of a condenser (there is a continuous current which is modified by the sound of speech). This is essentially the same type of microphone as used in hearing aids. All prominent halachic authorities permit the use of hearing aids on Shabbat (including speaking directly into the ear of somebody fitted with such a device).

The systems are used for speech only and not for music. According to halachic rulings, an amplifier is not considered a "musical instrument."

All the lights and displays are disconnected, as are internal electronic circuits which are modified by the speaker's voice.

The system is locked, without any possibility of changing the settings on Shabbat. The on-off switches on the microphones are also disconnected.

In case of a disturbance or intolerable noise, the system can be turned off using a gramma (indirect action) switch. It cannot be turned on again, since the only way to reset the system is with a special key held by a person of authority, such as the rabbi. Thus, there is no need to fear that someone will attempt to fix the system on Shabbat.

As is true of many modern devices, there is no fear of the appearance of Shabbat desecration, since "everybody knows that the system was set up in advance" (RAMA, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 252:5). Once these systems are in common use, they will be no different from air conditioners or lights that are operated on a timer, which are commonly accepted without fears of mar'it ayin or avsha milta. A sign is prominently displayed stating that the system has been approved by The Zomet Institute, with appropriate explanations and operating instructions.

2 See note 17 on page 44

3 מדברי הפוסקים המובאים במשנה ברורה (סימן נה ס"ק נח) נראה שאף על פי שיכול לענות על דברים שבקדושה, אינו נחשב כמתפלל עם הציבור

"וכתב הח"א לפ"ז כשיש בית ולפנים הימנו חדר והחדר ההוא אינו פרוץ במילואו המתפלל שם כאלו מתפלל ביחידי ורק קדיש וקדושה יכול לענות כדלקמן בסעיף כ' ובתשובת הרדב"ז סי' תר"נ מצאתי שכתב דזה דוקא לענין צירוף אבל שיהיה כמתפלל עם הציבור אם אין לחדר פתח אחר רק דוקא דרך הבית הגדול חשיב כמתפלל עם הציבור."

the very least it has the status of praying at the same time as the tzibbur.⁴

5. The shofar must be heard directly from the shofar and not via the sound system.⁵ We would advise as well that the Torah reading be heard directly and not via the sound system.⁶
6. It is not permitted to have a closed circuit camera and screen broadcasting video on Shabbat and Yom Tov of the tefillot.⁷

אמנם במחזיק ברכה (אורח חיים סימן נה ס"ק ט) כתב:

"מי שביתו אחורי בהכ"נ וביניהם חלון קטן הנשמע משם כל מה שאומרים המתפלל שם חשיב כמתפלל עם הצבור מלכי בקדש דף קי"ב וע"ש שהאריך."

וכן כתב ערוך השולחן (אורח חיים סימן נה סעיף כג):

"וכבר נתבאר דכל זה הוא לענין צירוף אבל כשיש מנין במקום אחד יכולים העומדים במקומות אחרים לענות אמן וקדיש וקדושה וברכו ואם מתפללין עמהם נחשבים כמתפללים בצבור."

ולדבריהם נראה שכיוון שמצטרפים לדברים שבקדושה נחשבים כמתפללים עם הציבור.

4 See note 1 on page 11.

5 שו"ת אורח משפט סי' מח. ועיין במקורות שהובאו בהערה הבאה.

6 See note 1 on page 30.

7 See note 9 on page 42.

I. Automated Temperature screening on Shabbat and Yom Tov

Question:

Our medical advisors recommend strongly that checking people's temperatures as they enter the synagogue for Shabbat davening is critical to ensuring everyone's safety while there is still danger. They further recommend that a system by which this happens quickly and accurately is important because it prevents bottlenecks where people may spend too much time close together.

What is your perspective on Shabbat use of an infrared scanner such as this RichTech model:

<https://www.richtech-ai.com/product-page/automated-ai-temperature-screening-system>

The power-saving, sound, and data collection features would all be turned off for Shabbat by software. On Shabbat, it would be set up by the door, "on" constantly, so it would near-instantly and automatically register a temperature on-screen, without sound, when someone walks into the building and comes within range of its sensors.

Answer:

It is permitted to use the RichTech temperature screen system on Shabbat and Yom Tov during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, provided it is turned on before Shabbat and Yom Tov, operates completely automatically and is constantly on, and all power-saving, sound, and data collection features are turned off.¹ A sign should be placed that

1 The reasoning for permitting the use of this system under the above conditions is as follows. When a person stands before the system while it is already on it will have the following effects:

1. It causes a certain fluctuation in the electrical current. According to most pokim, this is only a שינוי זרם, which is permitted.
2. It will cause the person's temperature to appear in digital characters on the screen. This too does not seem to pose an issue, at the very least when there is a health need, for the following reasons:
 - A. Writing on a digital screen according to most authorities is rabbinically

the system has been adapted for use in a permissible fashion for Shabbat and Yom Tov.

prohibited at most.

B. The person whose temperature is being taken is passive, and thus according to some it is not considered that he is actively causing the writing (such a sevara was stated by some poskim regarding security cameras on Shabbat).

Therefore, as checking temperature is a necessary precaution for public health during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, it is permitted to use this system to check temperature on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Although in the previous teshuva we prohibited the use of cameras, here the camera is being used for medical purposes, and additionally it is not intended for broadcasting.

J. Participation in a Siyum by Skype

Question:

On Erev Pesach, I will be in a small Jewish community that will not have a siyum. Is it permitted for me – a bechor¹– to break the ta’anit bechorot² based on a siyum³ in which I “participate” via Skype?

Answer:

In the context of the halacha not to fast throughout the month of Nisan, Massechet Sofrim⁴ states that an exception is that bechorot fast on Erev Pesach. The Tur⁵ and Shulchan Aruch⁶ cite this practice as normative, and the Tur explains that it is in commemoration of the miracle that the Jewish firstborns were saved in Egypt.

The idea that one may eat at a seudat mitzva and thereby cancel the fast is debated among the Acharonim. The Magen Avraham⁷ does not allow firstborns to eat even at a brit mila on Erev Pesach. The Mishna Berura⁸ reports, however, that the minhag in his time was to allow eating at seudot mitzva, including the meal at a siyum. The idea that a siyum meal can serve this role as a seudat mitzva is found in the Rama⁹ regarding the permissibility of eating meat and drinking wine at a seudat mitzva during the Nine Days.

In these contexts, there is room to distinguish between those people who are the main individuals involved in the seudat mitzva, for whom the day is like a Yom Tov, and the other participants. For example, one who is a sandek on the day of his parent’s yahrtzeit may eat on that day, even if he ordinarily follows the minhag of fasting on that day, whereas a simple participant in the brit may not.¹⁰ Similarly, even those who

1 Firstborn

2 The fast of the firstborn

3 The completion of a significant section of Torah

4 21:1

5 Orach Chayim 470

6 Orach Chayim 470:1

7 Ad loc. in the introduction to the siman.

8 Ad loc.10.

9 Orach Chayim 551:10.

10 Mishna Berura 568:46.

do not allow firstborns to eat at another's seudat mitzva are lenient regarding a firstborn who serves as the mohel or sandek, as well as the father of the circumcised baby.¹¹ In any event, the minhag is to allow all participants at a siyum to eat at the siyum's meal, and as a result, to continue eating the rest of Erev Pesach.

The simple logic for this leniency is that each individual's participation makes the celebration more special, thus heightening the ba'al simcha's¹² event. Therefore, participation in the ba'al simcha's meal is what is crucial regarding our discussion. Indeed, some allow even a firstborn who missed the siyum itself to take part in the seudat mitzva.¹³ Following the logic that it is the enhancement of the ba'al simcha's event that matters, the Minchat Yitzchak¹⁴ says that even the Chavot Yair,¹⁵ who rules that a meal held the day after the siyum was made is still considered a seudat mitzva, is discussing only a seuda in which the one who made the siyum participates.

The gemara¹⁶ relates that Abaye was especially emotionally involved in the Torah successes of others, to the extent that he would make a party for the rabbis when a young scholar finished a massechet. Some¹⁷ understand that the halachic status of such a party extends even to one who is not present at all at the celebration of the one who finished the Torah section; the vicarious joy of all those who are happy about the siyum is equivalent to their participation in the seudat mitzva. The Minchat Yitzchak¹⁸ writes that according to this approach (which he discourages relying upon but considers legitimate), one can be considered a "participant" in the seudat mitzva even if he does not actually eat together with the main party.

In most cases, it would not seem logical to consider one who "takes part" in a seudat mitzva via Skype as being a halachic participant, certainly in regards to increasing the simcha of the one who made the siyum. However, according to the approach that anyone connected to the siyum is entitled to celebrate his happiness due to the occasion, it is

11 Ibid. 470:10.

12 The person to whom the happy event is directly related.

13 See Teshuvot V'Hanagot II:210.

14 VIII:45.

15 Shut Chavot Yair 70.

16 Shabbat 118b-119a.

17 See Az Nidberu XII:58.

18 IX:45

at least somewhat plausible to say that witnessing the event via Skype is sufficiently significant.

A number of authorities take a surprisingly lenient approach about siyum standards for ta'anit bechorot,¹⁹ relying heavily on the following two factors: 1) The fast is only a minhag. 2) For many people, fasting would have a significantly negative impact on the Seder. While not actually cancelling the minhag, some seem to lower the bar of who is included in the siyum, such that they enable almost anyone to eat. If one feels a need to be lenient, Skype participation can indeed be contemplated. If so, it is best to watch the siyum and celebrate it as a group, and/or to witness a siyum that brings one true simcha (e.g., based on one's connection to the person or to the level of accomplishment).

We now apply our past response to those under Coronavirus quarantine or limitation on gatherings if the present situation (as of the time of this writing) persists. There are important factors that indicate that it is fully permissible, even as a single participant, to eat based on remote participation in a siyum via live streaming. In the area of need, many people will be unable to take part in a siyum in person, which creates a she'at hadechak, as above. This is combined with the fact that doctors have raised reservations about the advisability of fasting during the time of a serious infectious outbreak.

On a more positive note, such remote participation in a siyum has much more power than usual. While normally, such participation is abnormal, which detracts from its efficacy, this is presently the "new (temporary) normal." Furthermore, the one who makes the siyum will be fully aware of his remote participants, and he will be honored and touched to share his personal simcha with many others, instead of being limited to a small group where he is. The remote participants will also feel part of the simcha, as the light of Torah, which unites us at happy times, like the recent siyum hashas, unites us as well in difficult times.

Undoubtedly then, taking part in such a siyum at this time is absolutely fine. In contrast, if one would have to break or even bend the instructions or advice of medical authorities and/or one's rabbi, chas v'shalom, to take part in a siyum in person, that is unacceptable.

¹⁹ Including Az Nidberu and Teshuvot V'Hanhagot op. cit.; Yabia Omer, I, Orach Chayim 26, is quite stringent.

K. 100 Blasts for the Homebound

Question:

Because I am in the “at-risk” population, I will not go to shul for Rosh Hashana. I know how to blow shofar. Should I blow for myself 30 kolot, as is usually done for those who cannot make it to shul, or is it better to do 100? If the latter, should I do 31-60 during Mussaf and the rest later, or all later?

Answer:

[We invite people to look at our website for our recommendation, based on professionals, for blowing shofar in shul. Presently we urge: only 30 kolot done outdoors (100 kolot for an outdoor minyan), with a mask held down by a rubber band to the opening of the shofar. This may be changed based on updated scientific findings.]

The basic mitzva of shofar blowing is independent of tefilla and minyan and is fulfilled with 30 kolot (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 590:1-2). Chazal added another element, with additional kolot and connected it Mussaf of Rosh Hashana, i.e., malchuyot, zichronot, and shofarot (Rosh Hashana 34b).

The gemara continues that the Mussaf blowing was instituted for the tzibbur, not the individual, as rule the Shulchan Aruch and Rama (OC 592:2). There are different opinions as to whether an individual at home may blow within his silent tefilla if he desires, or whether that is too sensitive a juncture (see S’dei Chemed vol. IX, pp. 92-95). One might want to connect this to the divergent minhagim (see Yechaveh Da’at VI:37) over whether in shul, 30 kolot are also blown during the silent Mussaf in addition to the 30 during chazarat hashatz. However, some reason that the silent tefilla of everyone in shul is considered a public tefilla, which is what justifies the shofar blowing then (see *ibid.*).

Is there a point of doing more than 30 at a different time? The Chazon Ish (OC 137:4) suggests that two possible ways to view the tekiot during tefilla – it is a mitzva of shofar, enhanced by to the tefilla; the shofar is a means to enhance the public tefilla. He suggests that the sign of which side is correct is whether it is permitted to talk between the beracha and the later tekiot – if it is forbidden, it is a sign that the Rabbinic

requirement is related to the mitzva of shofar, rather than to the that of tefilla. However, he argues that even if it is a mitzva of tekia, this element was only instituted in connection to a public tefilla and does not apply to those who did not take part in it.

As you alluded to, the clear minhag is that those who are excused from being in shul due to illness or taking care of children hear only 30 kolot. One can argue we do not want to

impose on the one doing the chesed of blowing should have to do 100 each time (a daunting task, especially considering how few small the pool of candidates is) or due to the infirmity or the women's exemption from shofar altogether. If you are happy blowing and hearing more, after davening, is there is only possible gain?

Note that the "more is not the merrier" regarding teki'at shofar. The Rama (OC 596:2) says that one must not blow after fulfilling the mitzva for no good reason. In *Living the Halachic Process* (V, D-1) we discussed the two main objections: it is under the prohibition of musical instruments on Shabbat/Yom Tov; it may be problematic adding on to a mitzva (bal tosif). Is there enough reason here?

Piskei Teshuvot (592:3) claims that the desire to have 100 kolot, an old minhag (found in the Aruch, Tosafot (Rosh Hashana 33b), and championed by Kabbalists (see Shelah, quoted by Mishna Berura 596:2) justifies it. However, he does not cite sources regarding our case, and it is likely that 100 kolot was instituted for the tzibbur, who are anyway obligated in 60-90 kolot. Therefore, we would not recommend for you to do any more than an extra set of tashrats to fulfill the main doubt left after 30 kolot (one or two breaths – see Shulchan Aruch, OC 590:4). If it is important for you to do more, we are not saying it is forbidden. This year, in many communities, with extra (outdoor) minyanim, people will be able to hear 100 kolot from their balconies or on the street, at a safe distance from others.

L. Covering a shofar with a mask

Question:

As we are getting ready to welcome students back to campus in the midst of Covid we are working with the university to ensure that our religion services meet health and safety requirements.

One of the issues that has come up is shofar blowing. To put it in context, the university has prohibited any wind instruments to be played and so the question of Teki'at Shofar is of concern.

my question is, is it permissible to put a piece of cloth over the wider end of the shofar (held in place by a rubber band?)

Answer:

Based on testing we have conducted and following consultation with experts,¹ placing a mask on the wider end of the shofar does not affect the sound of the shofar, and therefore it is permissible to blow the shofar in this fashion.²

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, as a safety precaution, we advise blowing the shofar with the wider end covered with a mask, and additionally the blower should stand outdoors or with the shofar pointed outside through a window.

1 See note 1 on page 50

2 See note 2 on page 50