

Coronavirus and Jewish Life FAQs 1 – as of March 20, 2020

Below are some questions and answers which we hope will provide practical guidance at this challenging time, assist us in helping each other and feeling as great a sense of community as we can.

Our local communities and the US centrally are here to assist as best we can.

May God bless us and protect us and all humanity. We wish you all well.

If I want pastoral or rabbinic support, what should I do?

Please approach your rabbi, rebetzen or community care co-ordinator. If you are not a community member, please call the **US Coronavirus Helpline on 020 8343 5696**.

What prayers should I say now that my shul has closed?

You should say all of the prayers other than those which require the presence of a minyan, e.g. Kaddish, repetition of the Amida, Reading of the Torah and the Haftarah.

Some communities may livestream weekday prayers, with an individual praying at home providing a leading focus through their own prayers, should this prove feasible. This will allow you to remain connected to the synagogue and its prayers. People following a livestream do not count for a minyan though and you should not say the parts of the prayers which require a minyan to be present.

I am saying Kaddish. What should I do now that my shul is closed?

As noted in the answer to the previous question, Kaddish can only be said in a minyan. For a minyan to take place 10 men over the age of Bar Mitzvah need to be present in the same place. A virtual gathering whether by phone or tele-conferencing does not constitute a minyan.

It is very unsettling not to be able to say Kaddish. A worthy alternative is to study a Mishna for each service at which you would otherwise say Kaddish. So, on a weekday that would mean one Mishna in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. On Shabbat, you would study a further Mishna corresponding to Musaf. We suggest you study the Mishna of Pirkei Avot, which is found in the green siddur starting on page 524.

Your own community might be setting up a virtual group for such study. Otherwise, please look at the US Facebook page for Mishna study with one of our rabbis. You do not need a Facebook account to access the US Facebook page.

Are there specific prayers that I can say in response to the Coronavirus?

Chapters 23, 121 and 130 of Tehillim (Psalms) are appropriate daily prayers in this situation. In the green siddur, these psalms are found on pages 574, 510 and 516 respectively. Our daily prayers also cover circumstances such as the current ones, so we would suggest bearing this in mind when reciting those prayers as well. We suggest further that during your prayers you bear in mind all of those who are suffering from Coronavirus, be it physically, emotionally or economically and pray that God helps us all.

You may also recite the 'Avinu Malkeinu' prayer (page 98 in the green siddur).

[If I am concerned about Coronavirus on Shabbat or Yom Tov, may I call for medical assistance or access the internet?](#)

The best approach is to stay up to date with government guidance in advance of Shabbat or Yom Tov and to follow that guidance. If you are concerned that you are genuinely in a life-threatening situation, you must seek medical assistance as if it was not Shabbat or Yom Tov.

[What should I do if I sadly suffer a bereavement and cannot attend the funeral?](#)

Your community rabbi will be your first port of call for advice and support, along with the US Burial Society. If you do not have a community rabbi, please call the US Coronavirus Helpline on 020 8343 5696. The US Burial Society intends to provide a livestreaming service when feasible.

[What bereavement and shiva support is available in the current circumstances?](#)

Your community rabbi or rebetzen will support and advise you either in person or by phone, even if the normal shiva services and visits cannot take place. If you do not have a community rabbi, please call the US Coronavirus Helpline on 020 8343 5696.

[Do I need to take any precautions about mikva usage?](#)

If you are ill or self-isolating, you must not enter the mikva building until you are fully recovered and no longer contagious. Please contact the mikva you intend to use for specific information about the measures taken there to combat the spread of Coronavirus or see the information displayed at each mikva when you visit.

Pre-Pesach matters

[Where can I find out more information about Kosher for Pesach food and medicines?](#)

KLBD Pesach information for 2020, including approved products lists, articles, FAQ's and timings will be available from **19th March** at www.kosher.org.uk/passover. Those who do not have internet access can request information to be posted to them from the KLBD office free of charge by calling 020 8343 6248 (please leave a message on answerphone). KLBD Pesach product listings will also be searchable from 19th March at www.passover.isitkosher.uk.

[How can I sell chametz if I cannot go to my rabbi?](#)

You can either contact your community or use the online service provided by the United Synagogue at www.kosher.org.uk/article/sale-chametz-2020 . If you do not have internet availability, you can also call the US Coronavirus Helpline on 020 8343 5696 to speak to a team member who can arrange for the sale on your behalf.

[If I cannot get to shul before or during Pesach, how do I find out more information about preparing for Pesach?](#)

Be in touch with your community rabbi or rebetzen. In addition, US social media and the website will be updated with short divrei Torah, music, Pesach preparation and Seder information. You do not need to have signed up to Facebook to access the US Facebook page.

[Can I make and participate in a siyum for Taanit Bechorot even if I cannot be physically present with others, especially the person making the siyyum?](#)

Participation with your community via livestreaming is considered as if you had joined the siyum. In any event, you do not fast on Taanit Bechorot if you feel unwell.

Can I say Yizkor at home if I cannot get to shul on Pesach?

Yes. After Yom Tov, you can give charity online or in person when you are able to, should that be your practice.

The US Coronavirus Helpline is on 020 8343 5696

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Compiled for the US by Rabbi Michael Laitner, US Jewish Living Division. This guidance has been approved by the Chief Rabbi and the London Beth Din. With thanks to the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue.