

Dear Friends,

It is with great joy that we share with you our plans for reopening our shul. The Ottawa Public Health COVID-19 updates of the past few days, have been, thank G-d, very encouraging. There is no doubt that these developments are largely due to the efforts of Ottawa's residents to adhere to the social distancing guidelines of our health authorities, and each and every one of us is making a difference in stopping the spread of this dangerous virus.

We are delighted that our Province has green-lighted the reopening of Houses of Worship to operate at a 30% capacity limit. After having been shut out from our beloved Shul for a full three months, I'm sure many of you are excited to resume praying communally. I'm pleased to inform you that our morning Shabbat service will resume Saturday June 27, 2020 at 10:00 AM with the guidelines outlined below.

Please note: In this first phase of reopening only the Shabbat morning services will take place. We will eventually restart our Kabbalat Shabbat service as well.

Since this announcement, we have been in consultation with Ottawa Public Health, medical professionals as well as Rabbis to put in place the safety measures necessary for our gradual reopening with the utmost of caution from a medical and Halachic perspective.

Although we will be taking many precautions to create what we have been professionally advised is a safe environment, we also want to be abundantly clear that ultimately the decision to attend rests with each and every individual, as per the directives of their medical professional.

Additionally, the guidelines below are based on the current conditions and reality. As the situation is fluid and constantly changing, we will update protocol as things evolve or change. We will do our utmost to ensure the safety of everyone in attendance and we ask for your cooperation in making this a reality.

While the reopening of our shul is a wonderful opportunity, we need to be vigilant to an extraordinary degree to ensure that our gathering will not lead to any compromise whatsoever with regard to safety. As the Torah's mandate to preserve life is paramount, we need to feel confident that no one's life will be endangered on account of a communal prayer service. To do this properly, we need everyone's cooperation.

We pray that G-d shield and protect us all from any harm, that the members of our community – amongst the rest of the Jewish people – will know only of good health, prosperity and happiness.

Finally, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us by email or calling our office.

With best wishes for continued health and looking forward to praying together.

Rabbi & Dina Blum and the OTC Team

## OTC Protocol for Reopening Shul June 27 2020

This protocol was developed in accordance with guidelines and advice from the Ontario Ministry of Health, Ottawa Public Health, Toronto's Kol HaCovid website, local health professionals as well as Rabbis. We would like to thank the JFO and CIJA for facilitating numerous consultations for our community.

This protocol is designed to balance your experience at shul with best practices to help minimize health risks and to protect against the spread of COVID-19 within and beyond our doors.

### **Attendance Policy**

**Everyone who wishes to attend must be symptom-free.** If you are showing any symptoms, please do not come to shul for two weeks and please get tested for COVID-19 before your return to shul. You can use [Ontario's Self-Assessment tool](#) to confirm you are not showing symptoms of the virus. If you do test positive for COVID-19 after having been in shul please call Rabbi Blum immediately at 613-843-7770 x222.

### **Only healthy individuals may attend. Criteria includes but is not limited to:**

- Not running any fever whatsoever.
- Not coughing or sneezing.
- Anyone who has left the country in the past 14 days.
- Had a known exposure to somebody who tested positive for COVID-19.

**Disclaimer:** While we will be implementing wide-ranging limitations and multiple protocols to create what we have been professionally advised is a safe environment, we cannot take any responsibility for anybody's physical health or wellbeing. Each individual attending bears the responsibility of their own actions.

### **Contact Tracing**

We are asking attendees to register for services on the special form that has been setup on our website [www.theOTC.org](http://www.theOTC.org) and is accessible from the homepage or by calling the office 613.843.7770. This will ensure that we have accurate information to assist with contact tracing in the event of an outbreak. If you forgot to register, you can still attend the service. However, you have to make sure to tell Rabbi Blum when you arrive for services so that he will add you to the list of attendees after Shabbat should tracing be required.

### **Entry and Exiting**

Entry will be through the front entrance as usual with the same old code to enter. There will be a

table with disinfecting wipes outside the front door. Please disinfect the code pad as well as the door handle after opening the door and throw the wipe into the garbage can. Upon entry please disinfect your hands with soap or hand sanitizer. When entering or exiting everyone is asked to respect proper physical distancing and ensure no crowding takes place at the entrance by observing a two-metre distance.

All doors inside the building will be kept open to minimize touching of common elements.

### **Hygiene Protocols & PPE**

Prior to every service our building will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized by our custodian. This will include cleaning all surfaces, handwashing stations and washrooms.

Attendees will be required to disinfect their hands with soap or hand sanitizer upon entry to the shul building and be vigilant about their hygiene. Soap as well as hand sanitizers will be readily available throughout the building.

Most medical professionals recommend that mask wearing (of any type) will likely reduce the risk of droplet spread, especially as social distance may at times be inadvertently broken. As such, attendees will be required to wear a mask. Attendees are asked to bring their own masks. We will have some disposable ones at the entrance for those that did not bring their own.

While using the restrooms please wear a mask, wash your hands and use the disinfectant spray and paper towels/ wipes (available in the restrooms) to disinfect any surface you have touched.

### **Physical Distancing**

The back wall of our sanctuary will be open so that the chairs can be setup to follow the accepted physical distancing etiquette. This will ensure that everyone will remain two-metres away from each other at all times. The only exception will be for immediate family who are already living in the same household.

Please remain in your seats throughout the service unless you need to use the washroom. Please do not walk around the sanctuary or building.

### **Religious Articles**

No communal Kipot or Talitot will be provided at shul. Please bring your own kippah and Talit. A prayerbook and a Chumash will be prepared on each seat and will be disinfected after each service. Please use that prayerbook and chumash only and leave it on your seat when you leave.

## **Children**

Only older children who are willing and capable of remaining seated next to a parent at all times are permitted to attend. Consequently, the children's room will be closed in this first phase of reopening.

## **Torah Reading Procedures**

The Ark will be opened by the Rabbi who will remove the Torah, take it directly to the Bimah and return it to the Ark. The Torah will not be taken around the shul. No one is permitted to approach or kiss the Torah. Along the same lines we ask that no one touches the Mezuzah to kiss it. As per Rabbinic direction, Aliyas will be done from each individual's seat. No one will come up to the Bimah.

## **Food and Socializing Policy**

Until the circumstances change, there will be no Shabbat Kiddush nor lchaims. Although coming together socially and celebrating our Yiddishkeit communally (outside of prayer) has always been an important part of our uniquely warm and welcoming Shul experience, this is unfortunately not possible at present.

**In summation:** We would love to see you at Shul on Shabbat mornings starting June 27. Please wear a mask, sanitize your hands upon entering and use the Lysol wipes to sanitize anything you touch. Choose a seat in the shul and keep to it and bring your own Talit and Kippah (seats and books will be sanitized after each service). As of now there will be no kiddush/socializing or children's program and playroom. Older children who attend have to sit next to a parent throughout the service. The shul will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each service.