

18<sup>th</sup> November 2016 / 17<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan 5777

With grave concern and a heavy heart, I write these words in response to allegations made from the pages of Newspapers and social media. BES is a religious, Zionist, centrist Modern Orthodox Community, which endeavours to provide a religious, meaningful, spiritual experience to every Jew, no matter what their background or level of observance. Every one of us is important and is a "Tzelem Elokim" (created in the image of G-D) and is to be treated with respect and dignity. We are inclusive and accepting, tolerant and understanding of one another within the context of Halachah, which in our Shul is defined by me as the senior Rav.

B'H in a community of this size we have members to the right and to the left, strictly observant and less so. None-the-less our aim and goal has always been to live in harmony and unity. This does not mean that we agree all the time or even some of the time but that we adhere to the principle of mutual respect and adherence to Halachah. Those to the left are valued as are those to the right and centre.

Decisions are made taking all sides into consideration, and assessing the Halachah. As a Modern Orthodox Rabbi trained in Modern Orthodox institutions and flying its banner in the Rabbinate of this country for nearly two decades, the cause of those who participate in what has become known as a "Partnership Minyan" is close to my heart. Women do need to be engaged better in areas of learning and Tefillah. Education is nowhere near where it should be and parity should be applied in many areas. We have set several plans in motion to address these issues.

However it is my Halachic opinion that the "Partnership Minyan" is against the Halachah, as it is a breach of "Tzurat Beit HaKnesset" (the set out structure and order of a functioning Shul). Although it is presented as Modern Orthodox and Halachic this is simply not the case. For a Rabbi, thousands of miles away, to rule on the application of such a shift and change in the norms of worship, is a breach of the code of Jewish law, in and of itself, and as the Marah De'atrah, the senior Halachic authority of Borehamwood I rule that this Minyan is indeed a breach of Jewish law. Accordingly one should not attend, lead or partake in these Minyanim.

I do not say this lightly and this has been my position for some time. I have consulted senior Modern Orthodox authorities on this, amongst them my late Rosh Yeshivah Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ZT"l and the current Rosh HaYeshivah, his son, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein Shlita as well as many other authorities including Rav Shlomo Riskin and Rav David Stav, who have all concluded as I have.

Furthermore, Chief Rabbi Mirvis Shlita is of the same opinion and has prohibited the taking place of such activities in our Shuls.

Having said this, I do believe that the individuals involved are well meaning and intentioned and in the main seek closeness to Hashem and spiritual upliftment, even if they have chosen an

**Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue**

PO Box 47 Croxdale Road Borehamwood Herts WD6 4QF

**Tel:** 020 8386 5227 **Fax:** 020 8386 3303 **Email:** info@borehamwoodshul.org **Web:** www.borehamwoodshul.org  
Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue is under the umbrella of the United Synagogue Registered Charity No 242552

erroneous avenue through which to achieve this end. Accordingly, I fervently hope that they do attend our shul and feel welcomed and appreciated.

None-the-less there are Halachic limitations which I have put in place, which I, together with the Honorary Officers feel are appropriate for these circumstances. The first is that one who leads services at the Partnership Minyan should not be leading services in our community over the High Holy Days. Standards of those who lead services over this period are higher than the rest of the year and this has good Halachic basis. The Shaliach Tzibbur, leader or reader needs to be acceptable upon the entire congregation. In the case of those who are associated with the Partnership Minyan there is significant unease amongst a not insignificant number of our members when they lead prayers.

Furthermore, there are concerns that individuals who attend these services despite the knowledge that the Marah De'atrah rules that this is against the Halachah, however well-intentioned they may be, will be in a position to teach and instruct Torah matters in our community.

Although in the interest of Communal harmony and togetherness I am not placing a limitation on this I urge the various Minyanim and groups to ensure that any Divrei Torah and talks they arrange are in line with the principles of BES. If in doubt consult me and I shall make a decision on a case by case basis depending on many different considerations and factors.

Attitudes and statements such as "actions have consequences" and accusations that the Partnership Minyan is divisive and separatist, elitist or trouble causing are unhelpful and are wrong. Any attempt to apply censure beyond what has been discussed is I feel unjust and would be a tragic error. Instead the pursuit of togetherness and friendship should replace mistrust and antagonism.

Our love of every Jew should be not only a basic tenet of our Judaism but an aim and goal that we aspire to, alongside the tenet that Halacha and its integrity must always be maintained to ensure the continuity of our Orthodox belief system.

Rabbi Chaim Kanterovitz  
Senior Rav, Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue