

BET MIDRASH
ARAM SOBA



בית מדרש
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To whom it may concern,

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Recently, I was approached by a group of community activists for advice on a sensitive halachic matter. Often patients in hospitals and rehabilitation centers are bedridden and physically unable to participate in weekday prayers in a Synagogue. With today's modern technology, a live hookup can be installed in a community synagogue with reception on a screen at a patient's bedside. Clearly this responsa is only in reference to weekday services, as it is forbidden to operate on Shabbat. Additionally, since the sound being heard by the patient is generated by electronic waves, the patient cannot satisfy his obligation of hearing the *Megillah* on *Purim*, hearing *havdallah*, or his obligation to make blessings before eating and the like. He is not even considered as one who participated in *tefilah* in a *minyan*. Nevertheless, the benefits of answering *Amen* to the prayers of a hazzan are very constructive. Aside from the great merit of answering *Amen* to a blessing, this project can provide a spiritually uplifting experience for the patient. Additionally, he can in some dimension maintain his regular schedule and continue to pray in his familiar surroundings.

The primary halachic issue is the time delay of 2.4 seconds for the electronic transmission of sound. Normally, answering *Amen* to another's blessing is permitted only within 1.5 seconds of the blessing's completion. Nonetheless, the time limitation for answering *Amen* is a matter of halachic dispute. Several leading halachic authorities maintain that according to the view of the Shulhan Aruch it is permitted to answer *Amen* without a time restriction. This more lenient view is important and is not to be dismissed, in lieu of the fact that additional halachic considerations and debates are applicable to our question.

As opposed to a standard delay of silence after a completion of a blessing in which we customarily refrain from answering *Amen* after 1.5 seconds, the same is not true with a live broadcast. When hearing a live broadcast, a person answering *Amen* performs his duty of answering immediately after he hears the completion of the blessing. Although 2.4 seconds of real time does elapse, the *Amen* is however answered immediately upon hearing the completion of the blessing. There are numerous Talmudic sources which allude to a time delay due to sound waves, and what seemingly emerges is that the time of 1.5 seconds is measured from when the listener hears the completion of the blessing.

Finally, the Chief Rabbi Hacham Ovadia Yosef *ztl*, regularly conducted *Selihot* services with a satellite hookup for all of Israel to participate, although he was clearly aware of the 2.4 second delay. While other Rabbi's differ with the Chief Rabbi's view, our community, along with the rest of the Sephardic Jewry, follow his teachings and rulings. I therefore endorse such an important project and pray that Hashem send a speedy recovery to the sick and ailing.

Respectfully,

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