



**YISE**  
 YOUNG ISRAEL  
 SHOMRAI EMUNAH  
 of  
 Greater Washington

RABBI DOVID ROSENBAUM

RABBI BINYAMIN SILVER  
*Assistant Rabbi*

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Dear Friends:

One of the greatest challenges of the situation in which we currently find ourselves is balancing important life priorities with an essential one, our safety. We are all grappling with that challenge in one way or another, and we are certainly dealing with it regarding the question of when to reopen YISE. The shul sent a message last month stating that our hope was to reopen the shul two weeks after our county had begun Phase One. We are looking with anticipation towards a reopening on Monday, June 15. We will only reopen the shul on that date after consultation with, and approval by, a medical professional.

Though we wish we could open the doors wide and return to everything which we all miss so much, we know that would be irresponsible, and halachically and medically inappropriate. Our plan is to open for minyanim on the 15th with the following provisions:

- We plan to hold minyanim at different times at four different locations inside the shul building. Each one has strong air circulation, and we plan to have all davening areas cleaned between uses.
- Unless gloves are worn, every person should make sure to clean his hands upon entering the building, whether by using hand sanitizer available upon entrance or thoroughly washing hands with soap at a nearby sink. When turning off the water one should do so with a paper towel.
- We will limit the attendance at each minyan to 12 people. We have been informed by an official in the Infectious Disease Unit of the Montgomery County Health Department that this limit would be acceptable to the county, even though the executive order limits gatherings to 10 people.
- Everyone will be required to wear a mask which covers the mouth and nose, and must continually wear the mask while inside the building. Anyone who neglects to wear a mask will be asked to leave the building.
- Everyone will be asked to stay at a distance of at least 8 feet from anyone else. We will have spots marked in each minyan as to where people can daven.
- We ask that people bring their own siddurim. We will plan to have printouts of the parsha available for Shabbos. Each one should only be used by one person and put in a collection box after use.
- We insist that anyone exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in a way that quarantining is advised, not attend minyanim. We cannot emphasize

this point enough. **Even if one's decision to stay home will mean there will not be a minyan, DO NOT COME TO SHUL.**

- The duration of the tefillah will be shorter than that to which we are accustomed. People will be asked to daven *pesukei dezimrah* at home and the chazzan will begin with Yishtabach. There will not be singing during davening, even on Shabbos, and there will be no divrei Torah.
- We must request that people leave promptly after davening is over, with appropriate distance between people.
- Though we do plan on cleaning the restrooms during the day, there is no way we can plan for a thorough cleaning each time the facilities are used. We encourage people to try to avoid using the shul's restrooms.

With the significant limit being placed on the number of people in a gathering, we are forced to say that during this initial phase the minyanim will be for men only, as we will need that number of men to ensure a viable minyan. Please know that we look forward to creating options for women to join once the maximum number for attendance at a minyan is raised. Unfortunately, due to the length of Shabbos morning davening, we are only planning to have three minyanim on Shabbos morning.

We plan over the coming days to send out instructions for signing up for minyanim on-line. One of the significant ways to minimize potential spread of the virus is to limit the potential transfer of the virus from one group to another. Therefore, we will request that each attendee at a weekday minyan commit to only attend that minyan during the week, and not attend another minyan, at YISE or elsewhere. For example, a person who registers for the 7:00AM minyan should only daven at the 7:00AM minyan on the days that he is assigned to attend. Even on a day for which there is not sufficient room for him to attend, he should not attend another shacharis minyan, whether at YISE or elsewhere.

Priority will be granted to those who are saying kaddish or observing yahrtzeit for a relative for whom they sat shiva. We will provide a link through which people who are not able to attend minyan can submit names for whom kaddish can be said. Especially with the limited numbers at the beginning, the rest of us will have to rotate. We regret that, due to our inability to service all who will be interested, minyan attendance will be limited to shul members and the members of their households. We are also sorry to say that for various reasons, minyan attendance will be limited to those bar mitzvah age and up.

It is essential to note that our reopening the shul is in no way a statement that COVID-19 is behind us. Though we are following guidance to minimize it, there is certainly a risk in attending shul. Many of us are at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 than others, whether it be because of age or unique medical history. Please consult your medical health professional before deciding to attend minyan. **It is a greater mitzvah to stay safe than to daven with a minyan, even if one is saying kaddish or has yahrtzeit.**

We are all adjusting to new normals in various aspects of our lives, and, unfortunately, our return to shul will not be an exception. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we slowly return to the experience we have been waiting for. We would like to thank Rabbi Ariel Sadwin of Agudath Israel of Maryland and Rabbi Yosef Singer of the Vaad Harabanim of Greater Washington for their efforts in facilitating our plans. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Dovid Rosenbaum

Yale Ginsburg, President