



COVID-19 Update **May 20, 2020 - 9 Sivan 5781**

It is with great joy and pride that we write this letter. COVID-19 has affected many of us on profoundly deep levels. Through it all, we have strived to keep YIOP a place to maintain our meaningful mitzvot while taking the necessary precautions to keep everyone safe. With gratitude to Hashem, our healthcare workers, and rabbinic guidance, the inoculation of our community, and the general society at large, has now allowed us to consider what we've all been waiting for.

As of this Shabbos, Parshat Naso, May 21-22, any individual who is fully vaccinated (ie, 2 weeks after their final shot) is no longer required to wear a mask or social distance in our building. It may, nonetheless, still be prudent to keep some space between you and the next person. In addition, some who are vaccinated may still feel that they want to wear their masks and/or keep distance. There will be designated spaces in the back of both the men's and women's sections within which one must still mask and distance. Anyone who is unvaccinated and would like to attend **MUST** sit in these sections. This in accordance with medical, rabbinic, and governmental guidance. Anyone else who is vaccinated but still wants to maintain these precautions is invited to sit in these sections as well. In the same vein, the early, 8:15 minyan on Shabbos will continue as a masked-only minyan for a short time. During this process we know many people have different opinions but have nonetheless compromised in either direction for the sake of safely davening and coming together. We trust that these changes will bring the same respect and sensitivity as well.

We understand that for many this change may take some getting used to. Towards that end, we will not restart everything all at once, but we are excited to slowly reintroduce other opportunities week by week. Next Shabbos, May 28-29, we plan on having a buffet Kiddush, with eating and socializing outdoors. We encourage individuals who are still apprehensive about unmasking to attend an outdoor function like this to ease oneself into the new/old environment. One week later, on June 4-5, we plan on having Seudah Shlishit in the Social Hall. We hope to reevaluate and continue moving in that direction for the coming weeks as well.

We began this process on Friday, March 13, 2020, when we closed the Shul building indefinitely, in fulfillment of Chazal's instruction "You shall live by them [the mitzvot], and you shall not die by them" (Yoma 85b). Out of an abundance of caution, and with recommendations from local and national medical and rabbinic guidance, we determined that davening with a minyan presented a significant risk to life. Since then, we have taken pride in our ability to maintain safety precautions and gained a well-deserved reputation of being a safe place to daven. But "to live by them" does not simply mean the *negation of death*; it can also mean *to truly live* with the mitzvot as fully as possible (See Haamek Davar, Vayikra 18:5). Baruch Hashem, we have merited to fulfill the first interpretation, and we are now excited to fulfill the second more and more as we move forward.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions, suggestions, or feedback, to myself or the other members of the Reopening Committee.

Rabbi Katz & The Reopening Committee