

CREATING A SACRED SPACE AT HOME

2000 years ago, the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Up until then, it had been the central place of worship for the entire Jewish world. In the wake of destruction, the Rabbis declared that it, and the sacrificial altar at its core, would be replaced by a *Mikdash Me'at*, a small sanctuary. That new, small sacred space wasn't the synagogue, but rather our homes. In Judaism, holiness begins at home.

At the same time, we know that it can be tricky to truly experience our homes as sacred space. Synagogues are set up to help us focus on our prayers, and just being in a special, designated spot can help us feel like we're truly in a sacred place. Even though we know that God is everywhere, it can be hard to feel God's prayerful presence in the same places that we eat breakfast or watch TV. So, how do we turn our homes into places which *feel* sacred?

Here are some tips and suggestions for how to set up our homes in ways which will help us find meaning during the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, this year.

SACRED SPACE

Choose a space, carefully and in advance, that you're going to use as your sacred space.

- Don't just plop down in any convenient spot when the time comes; instead, be intentional with your choice.
- If possible, pick a space you don't usually use for work or school.
- Try to pick a space which has good lighting—too dark might make you sleep, too bright can make you feel like you're in an office.
- If you can, decorate that area with items which bring you joy, and which bring you a sense of holiness. Judaica, heirlooms, meaningful artwork, favorite thoughtful books—anything that moves you.
- Think about your seating. You want to be comfortable, but not so comfy that you drift off!

SACRED TECHNOLOGY

Our devices are designed to distract us (literally!). We all know the temptation of checking Facebook or our email during meetings, classes, and even while chatting with friends. It will be easier to focus if we take away those distractions.

- If possible, use a large screen across the room, rather than a computer, tablet, or phone right in front of you. It makes those other distractions harder to get to, so less tempting.
- If you can't do that, at least plan on having your device as far from you as possible, while still being able to see the screen.
- Turn off all notifications—nothing will pull you out of a moment like the beep of an incoming text or email!

SACRED DRESS

Ritual is about showing on the outside what is happening on the inside. How we dress is one part of that.

- Many of us love being able to spend all day in casual clothing, but dressing up can sometimes be a signal that a moment is special. Even if you're not going to wear your "finest," think about wearing something which feels special.
- If it's your practice, a kippah and tallit can help define a moment as prayerful.

SACRED INTENTION

When we make a conscious decision to direct our hearts and minds in a certain direction, it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Setting a *kavannah* (intention) is always an important part of prayer.

- Once you've chosen and set up your space, you can dedicate it with a prayer or a reading, to officially make it your space for prayer.
- When you walk into that space on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, stop at the entrance, and offer a short prayer, or a thought, to make a separation from the ordinary.
- If you are likely to get distracted (and, most of us are), have something with you that will be productively distracting, like a book of poetry, or a personal journal you can peruse.

SACRED SOUNDS

Prayer is like exercise—no one else can do it for you. Watching someone else do it isn't the same as doing it yourself. Plan on *participating* in services.

- When there is an English reading, read along closely, and maybe read it out loud. That can be a focusing device.
- Sing! It doesn't matter how good your voice is (nobody can hear you)!

This isn't going to be a High Holy Day season like any other. But, with a bit of effort, it can special, and even wonderful. We look forward to making sacred spaces, and sacred moments, with all of you.

L'Shana Tova,

Rabbi Jason Rosenberg

Cantor Tanya Greenblatt

Milt Orkin, President of CBA

SACRED TEXTS

You might want to use some of these texts as you are dedicating or entering your sacred space

NUMBERS 24:5

מה־טובו אהליך יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

How good are your tents, O Jacob, Your sacred places, O Israel!

BIRKAT HABAYIT (HOME BLESSING):

בְּזֶה הַשַּׁעַר לֹא יָבוֹא צַעַר

Let no sorrow come through this gate.

בְּזֹאת הַדִּירָה לֹא תָבוֹא צָרָה

Let no trouble come in this dwelling.

בְּזֹאת הַדְּלֵת לֹא תָבוֹא בְּהִלָּה

Let no fright come through this door.

בְּזֹאת הַמַּחְלָקָה לֹא תָבוֹא מַחְלֹקֶת

Let no conflict come to this section.

בְּזֶה הַמָּקוֹם תְּהִי בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם

Let there be blessing and peace in this place.

EXODUS 20:21:

בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּר אֶת־שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ
וַיְבָרְכֶיךָ

In every place where My name is mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.

EXODUS 3:5

כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתִּי־קֹדֶשׁ הוּא

Indeed, the place on which you stand is holy ground.

PSALMS 121:8

יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר־צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מִעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם

Adonai will guard your going and coming, now and forever.

PIRKE AVOT 1:4

יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בַּיִת וְעַד לַחֲכָמִים, וְהוּי מִתְאַבֵּק בְּעַפְרֵם
רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהוּי שׁוֹתֵה בְּצִמָּא אֶת דְּבָרֵיהֶם

Let thy house be a house of meeting for the wise, sit at their feet, and drink in their words.

HAVDALLAH

The last line of the blessing said at *havdallah* separating Shabbat from weekday can be used to “separate” this sacred space:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל

*Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh
lechol.*

Blessed are You Adonai, who separates between
holy and ordinary.

HEALING

The traditional prayer for healing can be used to “heal” a space too:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר, וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת

*Baruch atah Adonai, rofeh kol basar, u'maflee
la'asot.*

Praised are You Adonai, healer of all flesh, doing
wonders.