

Photographing and Videotaping During Services
Statement of Principles
February 1, 1996

QUESTION:

Under what conditions may videotaping and still photographing of religious services take place?

ANSWER:

Shabbat and holiday services as well as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, and other life cycle events held at the Temple are each a worship service and a time for prayer. Nothing may distract the worshipper from worship.*

It is of the utmost importance that the decorum and spirituality of the entire worship service be maintained, including the mood of members and guests as they enter the sanctuary or chapel to attend a religious event.

It is also important to provide a permanent family record of life cycle events and other notable religious occasions. Furthermore, videotapes or photographs may enable those who are too old or frail to attend the service to enjoy it at home or in the hospital.

Based on these guiding principles, videotaping and photographing during a service or ceremony at Temple B'nai Israel can occur only if it is unobtrusive and does not interfere with the mood and decorum of the worship service.

No flashbulbs, flood, or spot lights will be used during the worship service or during the thirty minutes before the scheduled start of the service.

Any person taking photographs or videotaping during the worship service or during the thirty minutes before the scheduled start of the service must do so against the back wall of the sanctuary or chapel. It is not acceptable for anyone to stand in any aisle or sit in any of the seats while taking photographs or videotaping.

Photographing or videotaping may be done without the above restrictions during the rehearsal, more than thirty minutes before the scheduled start of the service, or after all members and guests have had an opportunity to leave following the close of the service.

* Contemporary American Reform Responsa, Walter Jacob, II: 134

The shamus will ensure these principles are observed. There will be no exemptions, please.

All Temple members and any others using our facilities for a worship service or religious ceremony are responsible for complying fully with these principles and for making all of their guests aware of the policy. Please understand that Temple B'nai Israel is a religious building. Therefore, the emphasis must necessarily be on worship, spirituality and prayer for all of us. We appreciate your respect for and compliance with these principles. Thank you.

Approved by the Temple Board on
February 1, 1996, based on
recommendation from the
Religious Practices Committee and the Rabbi