



10 Ways to Make Your Home a Sacred Space for Worship **(Adapted advice from Beth Israel Judea Rabbi Emeritus Danny Gottlieb)**

If you choose to observe part or all of the High Holy Days at home this year, note that every home can be transformed into a “*mikdash m’at*,” a miniature sanctuary, a holy place. What can help us create both the spiritual mindset and the spiritual refuge that transform the space from “ordinary” to “sacred” while we sit in front of our computers on Zoom or Facebook Live?

Here are ten suggestions to help you enhance the High Holy Days experience at home, while creating a communal atmosphere for us all. Families can easily adapt these activities to involve children in making a special *mikdash* space. You can find good resources [here](#) and [here](#) (on-line only).

We appreciate the time and effort it takes to make your *mikdash m’at* a reality. Think of it as a “work in progress!”

May these ten suggestions add joy and meaning to your observances...

1. Choose your prayer space carefully in advance, by spending a few moments of individual contemplation/family discussion. Look at any possible space and think about some ways to make it different and special.
2. Once you have chosen your space, say a blessing or *kavannah* (“intention”) over it to mark it as your *mikdash m’at*. Suggestions of verses and blessings are below.
3. What chair will you sit on? Put a cushion or festive pillow on it, or drape it with a *tallit*, special piece of fabric, or scarf.
4. Change where you put your computer from a work space to a contemplative space by covering the desk or table with a white tablecloth, white runner, or white placemat, and a vase of flowers.
5. Find meaningful objects to grace your space. On Rosh Hashanah, include holiday objects like candlesticks and *kiddush* cup, apples and honey. On Yom Kippur you can place cherished mementoes, family heirlooms, and photos of loved ones. If you own a *shofar*, put it where it’s visible.
6. If possible, move the computer space back so that you are “watching” the screen more than “manipulating” it. Consider connecting your computer to a TV screen so it feels less like a work device.
7. Try to limit or disconnect auditory distractions. You can turn off your email and text message ping sounds, and/or close your email program and other apps so you can be fully present during the service.
8. Wear clothing that makes you feel as if you are entering a spiritual space. A *kippah* and *tallit* are welcome if they help you express a connection to this special worship.

9. You may want to have a *machzor* (High Holy Days prayer book) with you. As you feel its cover and edges and flip its pages, remember the times you've used it before—whom you sat with, what moved you in the service, the first time you used it, etc. The prayers will be on the screen, but even so, having a *machzor* means you can participate more fully.

10. Historically, many synagogues have decorative work on the walls to adorn the sanctuary and mark it as sacred space. You may wish to find some Jewish artwork or to make a poster to decorate your worship space and establish it as “sacred space” for the High Holy Days.

Please don't be overwhelmed or hard on yourself if you cannot do all these things. Do whatever is possible and comfortable for your own living situation. There are no “musts” and no judgement!

Five verses and blessings to help create your sacred space/*mikdash m'at*:

1. Numbers 24:5

Ma Tov u'ohalecha Yaakov, miskenotecha Yisrael

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

2. Birkat Habayit (home blessing):

Bazeh hasha-ar lo yavo tza-ar

Let no sorrow come through this gate.

B'zot hadirah lo tavo tzarah

Let no trouble come in this dwelling.

B'zot hadelet lo tavo behalah

Let no fright come through this door.

B'zot hamachlakah lo tavo machloket

Let no conflict come to this section.

B'zeh hamakom t'hi brachah v'shalom

Let there be blessing and peace in this place.

3. Exodus 20:21:

B'chol hamakom asher azkir et shemi avo eylecha u'veyrachticha

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

4. Psalms 121:8

Adonai yishmor tzeytcha u'vo-echa mayatah v'ad olam

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

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

Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol.

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