

# Visual T'filah FAQ

## What is Visual T'filah?

“Visual T'filah™ is a way to enhance prayer and help worshipers find new or deeper meaning in prayers. It utilizes contemporary technology, such as projectors and screens, to display liturgy for the community with art and other visual imagery. Visual T'filah™ is more than just a 'PowerPoint service;' it draws forth elements from Jewish history and tradition, such as art and visual awe in worship spaces as well as liturgical creativity and dynamic prayer.” – Central Conference of American Rabbis

Over 100 Union for Reform Judaism congregations use Visual T'filah, many for close to a decade. Many members of Temple Beth Am have experienced Visual T'filah at the URJ's Biennial Convention. For examples of Visual T'filah, please click [here](#). Cantor Victor Geigner has used Visual T'filah and streaming technology; he would be happy to share his experiences. Please contact our [office](#) to schedule times we can facilitate these conversations.

## What will be on the screens?

Primarily, Visual T'filah is the projection of the words of the prayers (Hebrew, transliterated English, and English translation) accompanied by images that can increase the meaning of the prayers themselves. Screens will NOT be projecting shots of our clergy or guest speakers during services, akin to a concert. We will also project lyrics, which can help introduce new music and save the amount of paper printed. We hope to use an overhead or handheld camera to project the actual Torah scroll when it is read.

Other communities have projected poetry and supplemental readings, art created by Religious School students for grade-level services, congregant-created photos and artwork, texts for group study, and presentations for guest lecturers. Our possibilities are endless, as expansive as the scope of our imaginations. To read descriptions and articles about the benefits and opportunities of Visual T'filah in other communities, please click [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#).

## When will the screens be installed? What will they look like and where will they be?

There is no date set for installation of the screens; we are still in the research phase. We will keep the congregation updated. We're exploring the technical specifications of the screens (size, resolution, TV vs. projection); however, we believe the screens will be on the side of the bimah as well as in the Social Halls. They will NOT block the ark, *ner tamid* (Eternal Light), or any of the windows. It is important that they visually fit within the current synagogue architecture.

## When will Visual T'filah and the screens be used?

We will initiate using Visual T'filah at Tuesday night Religious School services, beginning Tuesday, September 25, using portable screens. This year, Visual T'filah will be used during Friday night services only a handful of times when we experiment with new models of multi-generational worship. We will elicit feedback and assess how effective they were at those services. We will communicate before the Shabbat services where Visual T'filah will be used. We will also use the screens for other occasions, possibly including Purim, guest lectures, and movie viewings.

The three Experimental Multi-Generational Family-Friendly Shabbat Services will be on November 16, January 18, and June 21, each followed by a potluck. In these services, we will join together to try new things and experiment in Shabbat prayer that welcomes all ages. We will be playful, interactive, and

creative. While the screens will not be installed by the November 16 service, we will continue to experiment in other ways.

**When will online streaming be available?**

Our first stage will be the installation of the screens and Visual T'filah. We hope to follow with online streaming as the second stage but that timeline is not set yet. If you would like to support this effort, financially or technologically, please speak to Executive Director [Barbara Green](#).

**What was the process to decide upon adding this technology?**

There has been a growing conversation in the congregation about the inclusion of technology into our worship over the past few years. This current action is the result of the community's [Strategic Plan](#), adopted last year by the Board of Directors.

**What else is happening at Temple Beth Am in terms of worship?**

Visual T'filah is only one element of a larger conversation we seek to have over the next year. We encourage you to register for one of the House Parties that will be hosted at congregants' homes where we will discuss spirituality and what moves us in our Jewish experiences. For more details and to register, please visit [here](#).

**How can I help, either with the design or other forms of support?**

If you are interested, please contact [Rabbi Jason Levine](#) directly. He hopes to convene a Technological Innovation Task Force in order to work on Visual T'filah and discuss other possibilities to include technology at Temple Beth Am. If you are interested in supporting this effort financially, please contact our Development Director [Davida Sims](#) or Executive Director [Barbara Green](#).

**Will there be opportunities for feedback and review?**

Without a doubt, and not just for Visual T'filah. We value feedback, reflection, and growth as an organization as articulated in Temple Beth Am's [mission, vision, and values](#). Starting this year, we will have evaluation forms at almost every larger gathering at Temple Beth Am, which will help us better understand our successes and where we need to improve. Regarding Visual T'filah, please feel free to communicate with [Rabbi Jason Levine](#) with any discomfort, questions, or comments.

**Will Visual T'filah distract from prayer? Won't this send mixed messages when we ask to turn off phones during services? Can we talk about this more?**

This will be a change for us all. Our intention is to have Visual T'filah fit into services as a means to enhance prayer, not to take away from it. The use of technological devices today in our personal, professional, and spiritual spaces is complicated and differs from one situation to another. Each person and family navigates it differently. We will seek constant feedback in order to improve our approach to make it the best fit for our community.

