

## ***What Should I Wear?***

### ***High Holy Days 5781***

Does this question sound familiar? You might be more inclined to answer yes if you have teenagers in your house. The question frequently goes along with feelings of frustration or even anxiety. Admittedly, in our home, I ask it more often than Rabbi Micah.

The reality of our times is that many of us have taken a fashion break since sheltering in place. I, too, am guilty of leading a Zoom Tot Shabbat in a blouse thrown over pajama bottoms.

A few weeks ago during a temple Board meeting when we were discussing the upcoming remote High Holiday services at Temple Beth David, one board member, Alyson Miller, asked, "What should I wear?! I want to dress up. It's not the holidays without dressing up. Cameron [her son and youth group president] will wear a suit!" While her comments invoked some laughter, I realized that there was a lot more to her question than just fashion.

How will all of us adapt this year from what we normally expect and look forward to for the holidays? Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are shaped by memories of family meals and break-fasts, the blasts of the shofar, powerful music, praying together surrounded by community, a reminder that we are not alone.

To be honest, I have no idea what it will feel like for the clergy to be alone in our sanctuary while we are livestreaming services. I imagine it will feel lonely and sad. While I hope that our prayers will reach you and connect with you, knowing that you are joining us safely from your homes will also lift me up.

The core of our Jewish prayer experience is communal. We are in this together. As we welcome in the New Year 5781 during a pandemic, we are all going to need to work harder to connect with one another, and to seek and discover personal meaning.

I encourage you to think about what it will take for you to make your home (or wherever you are joining us from) into a sanctuary, a holy and special place. I know you will be missing our beautiful Beth David sanctuary. We are going to do everything possible to bring the sanctuary spirit to you. We also need your help.

### ***What comes to mind when you think of a sanctuary?***

The dictionary defines it as "a place of refuge or safety," or "a holy place." The Hebrew word "*mishkan*" means "the place where God dwells." According to the Talmud, after the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem, synagogues and homes became "*mikdash me'at*," little sanctuaries, considered just as holy based on the actions within.

Even with this regard for holy place, the Jewish people over time became used to portable sanctuaries, and to preserving customs and memories despite challenging circumstances. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel repeatedly affirmed that Judaism is a religion of time rather than space:

"Judaism is a *religion of time* aiming at the *sanctification of time*. Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn... When history began, there was only one holiness in the world, holiness in time. The sanctity of time (Shabbat) came first, the sanctity of human beings came second, and the sanctity of space last."

In other words, you have the tools to create holy space and holy time right there in your homes. The holidays will come, like they do every year. What will you do to make them special?

Which brings me back to what to wear. Yes, we will livestream services into your homes. We are trying to think through every moment, melody, and technical support to make the experience as accessible and meaningful as possible. I hope that you will also think about how you can bring the sweetness of the New Year into your homes. What we wear is just one small way to make this time special. Special and holy time is often about making a change in our routine.

*Here are a few suggestions:*

Dress up (who cares if no one can see you) or be comfortable. Wear a *tallit* or *kipa* if that is your custom. Make a special recipe or meal. Set up your viewing sanctuary. Clear the clutter. Add flowers. Open your prayer book and join us. Sing out! Take a picture (for real or in your mind) of this different and special High Holy Days. Turn off your phone. Call a loved one or friend. Do a good deed. Model for and embrace your children. Dip apples in honey. Breathe fresh air. Hear the Shofar. Turn up the volume for Kol Nidrei. Be forgiving of yourself and others. Commit to repairing yourself and our world. Add your own thoughts and prayers. Accept that it will be different. Create a new memory. Know that we, and your whole temple community, are with you in spirit.

Rabbi Micah joins me in wishing you a sweet and healthy New Year.

*L'Shanah Tovah, Rabbi Karen Citrin*