

Dear Members of Beth Shalom-

You have been in my thoughts this week as we recognize the state of our world in the midst of COVID-19.

This week, we are shifting to a new format for our Shabbat Services. We will be gathering in the virtual world. The question then becomes how we maintain community during this time of true virtual reality. Our Torah portions of V'Yakeil Pikudei teach us what to do.

In Exodus 35:1-3 from this week's portions, we are taught that

Moses assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and said to them: These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do: For six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day.[1]

As I have stated before, there are no coincidences when it comes to Torah. It is as if we are being given a reminder that even in the most difficult of times, we are to make Shabbat special for all times.

Let us take this time to gather together virtually and to keep the Shabbat special and holy. Yet, do not let the only time that we are gathering virtually be Shabbat. In today's world when we are physically isolated and separated from each other, we need to reach out to our neighbors and to each other.

Fortunately, there are many ways to let someone know you are thinking about them in today's world. Suggestions include Zooming a Shabbat meal together before or after joining with BST's virtual Shabbat Service. Plan a religious school class gathering with parents and students via Zoom or FaceTime or another platform. Form a text chat group. Use WhatsApp to ensure that everyone is feeling okay and not getting shpilkes (antsy) from being cooped up. One can also make phone calls to others.

In whatever manner we choose, as we transition to online and virtual gathers for BST, let us continue to strengthen our community and our friendships with each other. May we heed the message from Torah to keep Shabbat and to make it special.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and safe Shabbat!

Rabbi Jennifer Weiner

---

[1] <https://bible.oremus.org/>