

Preparing Your Home Sanctuary and Participating in Services from Home

* Note that if you're not able to create/prepare a special space for any reason, you can still say a blessing or kavannah (intention) for your space to mark it as a special for this holiday observance.

1. **Plan Ahead:** choose your prayer space in advance. Select a place where everyone can sit comfortably and see the computer screen. Even better, connect your computer to your big screen TV so you aren't crowding around a small monitor.
2. **Find East:** Most sanctuaries in North America are situated so that people face east when they pray—towards Jerusalem. Find out which direction east is when you're sitting in your designated prayer space? If possible, try to face east when you participate in services. Otherwise, it's nice if you at least know where it is.
3. **Makom Kadosh:** How will you make your space Kadosh? (special, sacred, set apart)? Some ideas:
 - a. Decorate your chair or couch with festive pillows, special fabric, or scarf, or drape it with a tallit.
 - b. Cover the desk or table that your computer is on with a special tablecloth or placemat to make it look and feel less like a workspace.
 - c. If you are creative, make art – you can write poetry, draw or paint a picture, or a blessing to hang in your space (suggestions for blessings and intentions below).
 - d. Place meaningful objects on the table or in your space – Include holiday objects like candlesticks and kiddush cup, apples and honey. If you own a shofar, put it where it's visible. Place cherished mementoes, family heirlooms, writings, and photos of loved ones to surround you. We'll be lighting our yizkor candles together at the start of Erev Yom Kippur. You can gather small stones to place in front of the photos or mementoes of those whom you are remembering at yizkor.
4. **Bless:** Once you have prepared your space, say a blessing or kavannah (“intention”) over it to mark it as your sacred space. Some suggestions for blessings and intentions are included below.
5. **Get Dressed Up:** You don't need to wear a formal and uncomfortable suit or dress, but put on clothing that makes you feel as if you are entering a spiritual space. Kipa and tallit are welcome if they help you express a connection to this special worship.

6. **Be Present:** Try to limit or disconnect auditory distractions. Turn off your email and text message reminders, and close your email program and other apps so you can be fully present during the service.
7. **Be On Time:** This year you don't have to arrive early to find parking or get one of the good seats, but you do need to navigate to www.solel.ca/live By the way, we realize that it's simply not realistic to expect you to remain engaged and attentive for long services on a screen, so we have created services that will contain the most recognizable and significant parts of the service.
8. **Participate:** Follow along with the prayers. We'll be putting all of the prayers up on the screen so you won't need to hold a machzor. Pray the texts and read the translations. It may feel a bit strange to sing at your computer or tv screen, but give it a try. Don't worry about your singing ability or volume - sing as loud as you want to. Respond Amen when appropriate. Stand up and be seated at the usual times.
9. **Be Open:** None of us could have imagined that we would be welcoming 5781 in this way this year. While it is not what we are used to, and may not be what we want, open your heart and mind to a new experience this year. Sitting in our homes, praying familiar prayers and singing familiar melodies, we are all in a makom kadosh, literally a place of holiness. Makom (place), is also one of the names for God, signifying God's immanent presence with us. In Exodus 25:8 we read "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I might dwell among them."

Shanah Tovah,

Rabbi Audrey S. Pollack

(With thanks to Rabbi Matt Axelrod and Rabbi Elyse Goldstein for their wisdom and inspiration)

Verses and blessings to help create your sacred space:

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8)

מֵה־טֹבֹו אֵהְלִיךְ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

How good are your tents, O Jacob, Your sacred places, O Israel! (Numbers 24:5)

Birkat Habayit (home blessing):

בְּזֶה הַשַּׁעַר לֹא יָבוֹא צָעַר
בְּזֹאת הַדִּירָה לֹא תָבוֹא צָרָה
בְּזֹאת הַדְּלֵת לֹא תָבוֹא בְּהִלָּה
בְּזֹאת הַמַּחְלָקָה לֹא תָבוֹא מַחְלוּקָת
בְּזֶה הַמָּקוֹם תְּהִי בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם

Let no sorrow come through this gate.
Let no trouble come in this dwelling.
Let no fright come through this door.
Let no conflict come to this section.
Let there be blessing and peace in this place.

בְּכָל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּיר אֶת־שְׁמִי אָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ

In every place where My name is mentioned, I will come to you and bless you. (Exodus 20:21)

כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתָּ קֹדֶשׁ הוּא

Indeed, the place on which you stand is holy ground. (Exodus 3:5)

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶצְאָתְךָ וּבֹאֲךָ מְעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם

Adonai will guard your going and coming, now and forever. (Psalms 121:8)

יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בַּיִת וְעַד לַחֲכָמִים, וְהָיוּ מִתְאַבְּקִים בְּעַפְרֵי רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהָיוּ שׁוֹתֵה בְּצַמָּא אֶת דְּבָרֵיהֶם

Let thy house be a house of meeting for the wise, sit at their feet, and drink in their words.
(Pirke Avot 1:4)

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

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל

Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol.

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