



To pray. To learn. To live. Together.

How to be in Tefillah from Home

Rabbi Josh Levy

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Jewish prayer is a communal experience so we are inevitably experiencing a sense of loss from the lack of call and response, of harmony; the loss of social connection

Yet our prayer life is still important.

It can still be rich, joyful, meaningful.

It provides a fixed point, transcending the present experience (whatever else is happening, this is still happening)

To make the best of this, we need to be thoughtful and intentional, working to create meaningful experiences for ourselves in a way that is not normally required of us.

Make home a sacred space for prayer

Give thought to the physical space that we are using for prayer

If possible, don't use the same space that we work in, make it feel different

If possible, don't use a space where there are other demands (if you are in the kitchen and making dinner, then making dinner will interfere with prayer)

Remove distractions, including other electronics
(use a copy of the siddur/machzor)

Make the space tidy and special – clear clutter away

Sit in a decent, upright chair so it doesn't feel like watching TV

We need to be intentional about how we come to the experience

Think about what to wear so it feels like a service

If possible, try to avoid screen time for a period before coming to prayer to counter screen fatigue

Be on time – be there at the beginning

Begin the service with awareness - ritualise the coming in:

Wear a kippah and tallit. Say the blessing for tallit out loud.

Name for ourselves that this is a service

Kavannah as sit down? Say 'Hineini' – 'Here I am'

Feel physical presence - feet on the floor, think about body, face East

How we interact with others really matters in our prayer life, so we need to think about this too

Will the experience be better for being with others in person – if so, with whom can we pray?

If we invite others to be with us, how do we make this a prayerful experience so we are together but not distracting one another.

Online, what will help us to be aware of others without being distracted by them? How to feel safe/not exposed, but in connection?

How do we articulate in our behaviour that we are in relation with others even if we are on our own?

Orient towards the East

Join in with the choreography

Prayer needs to be an active, participative experience even at home

Prepare in advance the items needed to join in at key moments

– candles, apple and honey

Make sure you have a machzor so you can follow along – ideally don't follow online unless you can still avoid other distractions.

Join in - say amen, read along

Sing along

(this may feel strange at first but will make the experience much more grounding)

Stand up and sit down at the appropriate moments

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 25:8

How do we make sure that our homes are a sanctuary, capable of allowing God's presence to dwell with us?

אפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה ששכינה עמו

Even one person who sits and engages in Torah, the Shekhinah is with them

Babylonian Talmud, B'rachot 6a

How do we engage in our Jewish life in such a way that we welcome Shekhinah even if we are on our own?

כל ישראל מכוונין את לבם למקום אחד.

All Israel will direct their hearts towards one place.

Babylonian Talmud, B'rachot 30a

How do we direct our hearts as part of one people while we are separate?