

From the Cantor

וְעָשָׂו לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָם:
Ve'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham

“They will make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them (Exodus 25:8).”

For these upcoming High Holy Days, when it will be impossible to gather safely as a community in the OZ sanctuary, it is all the more important for us to think about how to create our own “sanctuaries” within our homes. I want to share some wisdom and guidance from my colleague, Cantor Matt Axelrod, to help inspire you to prepare your own sacred spaces at home -- and to prepare your hearts and souls—for the Holy Days ahead.

Cantor Axelrod gives us this charge:

“For however long services last, you need to transform some place in your home into a makom kadosh—a holy place.”

Here are some ways that our OZ community can cultivate deeper prayer experiences from our own homes:

The Space

“Find somewhere in your house that’s spacious enough for everyone to sit comfortably and see the computer. Even better—and well within most people’s technical capability—connect your computer to your big screen TV so you aren’t all crowding around a small monitor.”

Surround your physical space with ritual objects such as a kiddush cup, challah, and candles for evening services (with a Yizkor candle on Yom Kippur). You might want to keep pictures of loved ones close at hand during the services, to provide the comfort and the memories of shared High Holy Days in years past. Consider other objects or changes to your prayer space to give you the *kavannah*, directing your hearts and minds during this year’s High Holy Day services.

Participate

“You may very well find it strange to sing along as the cantor sings a congregational melody when all you hear is your lone voice. Try anyway.”

Although it may feel strange, I will encourage you this year to sing as loud as you want! Sing out of tune! Create your own harmony! Shout! Cry! Sway! Dance! If it feels right, follow some of the traditional choreography for which Rabbi Amy and I will be giving prompts, but also feel free to create your own *embodied* prayer this year. Remember that the prayers are a vehicle for your own emotional and spiritual experiences.

The Machzor

If possible, I recommend that you obtain a copy of the *machzor* (High Holy Day prayer book). The machzor is available for purchase here:

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/order-mahzor-lev-shalem-time-high-holidays>, but we have also set aside times for people to come pick up copies from the synagogue to borrow. **If**

you would like to borrow a Machzor, please come to Ohavi Zedek for drive-by pickup on Wednesday, September 9 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm or on Thursday, September 10 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. For those members who cannot come to the synagogue due to any issues of mobility or health, we will make sure to deliver the machzor to you. Please be in touch with Eric and Karen (G'MaCh team): ecorbman@gmail.com.

There is also an opportunity to pay for an electronic version, for those who prefer. Having the text at hand will enable you to feel more like a participant rather than an observer for these Holy Day Services. The Machzor Shalem that we will be using has wonderful translations, expansive alternative readings, and insightful explanations on the page and in the margins.

Get Dressed

“Months of nothing but Zoom meetings have required all of us to make sure that we look professional on screen—from the waist up”

For these High Holy Days, be intentional about choosing clothing that separates these special days from the rest of the days of the week. Your personal attire can help to create a sense of sacred time and space.

Though we will not be physically together in the sanctuary this year, I hope that we will each be able to create our own *makom kadosh* (sacred place) as we pray together in *kehillah kedoshah* (sacred community).

L’shana Tova! Wishing you a year of health, wholeness, hopefulness, and peace.

Cantor Steve