

AWAKEN : STRENGTH

ROMEMU HIGH HOLY DAYS 5781

My Strength, To You I Sing • אוזי אליה אינפננה



Welcome to your Romemu @Homemu Digital Guide to the High Holidays

Shana tova u'metuka—wishing you a year of goodness and sweetness ahead. As we prepare for our first remote High Holy Days prayer experience as a community, we hope that these suggestions will provide inspiration for setting up your Mikdash Me'at, or home prayer space—your own Romemu @Homemu.

If you received a Romemu @Homemu High Holy Days Kit, we hope that the items included there may further enhance this process—and if you have not received one but would like to, please be sure to sign up and become a member at romemu.org.

We invite you to read this guide slowly, entering into the contemplative frame of mind and heart that its components encourage for building your sacred space and approaching the High Holy Days.

Notice thoughts and feelings that arise as you read, welcoming and taking cues from them as beloved partners in creating and inhabiting your sanctuary. If it's helpful, gently allow yourself to experience a felt sense of the in-person services and communal experiences that we are all missing at this time.

May these memories strengthen us in virtual community and shepherd us into prayer—for the heart-opening and healing that we and the world need right now.

PREPARATION OF YOUR PRAYER SPACE

שָׁלַּוְאַלְךָ מֵאַלְּ רָגְלֶיךָ כִּי הַמִּקְומָם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹמֵד עָלָיו אַדְמָת-קָדֵשׁ הוּא.
Shal na'alekha me'al raglekha ki hamakom asher atah omeid 'alav admat kodesh hu.

Take off your shoes from upon your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground. (*Exodus 3:5*)

- 1. Cultivate presence:** Before logging onto services, take a moment to cultivate presence. Find a comfortable seat. Close your eyes, and let everything else go. Allow yourself to take a few deep, long breaths. Give yourself a few stretches, neck rolls or shake out your limbs to refresh your energy. Notice, without judgment: the sensations arising, the movement of your breath, the content of your thoughts and the overall state of your being. You might choose to set a timer here for 5-10 minutes.
- 2. Adorn your bodily temple:** Wear clothing that makes you feel ready to inhabit sacred space and embark on a personal and communal journey with Spirit. Kippah and tallit are welcome if they help you feel and express connection to this special worship.
- 3. Divinity is in the details:** How will you ground yourself physically in your space? No detail is too small. Plan out ahead of time what chair you will sit on. Consider each item that you'll come into contact with in this space as part of your sanctuary. How can you make them feel special? Put a cushion or festive pillow on your seating place of choice, or drape it with a tallit, special piece of fabric, or scarf.
- 4. Choose wonder:** Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said: "I asked for wonder, and he gave it to me." As you open your eyes, imagine you're viewing your space for the first time. Is there an area or table that pops out at you? Something you never noticed before? Is there a way you can place your computer or Zoom device to somewhere you've never placed it before? Allow yourself to practice curiosity about your surroundings--no matter how much time you've spent in them these past few months! Consider who, if anyone, will share the space with you during services. Select a section of your space that you will cultivate as your Mikdash Me'at, your small sanctuary.

5. Gather ritual objects: Find meaningful Jewish objects to grace your space. On Rosh Hashanah include holiday objects like candlesticks and kiddush cup, apples and honey. On Yom Kippur you can place cherished mementoes, family heirlooms, and photos of loved ones to surround you. If you own a shofar, put it where it is visible.

RECOGNIZING THE PRESENCE OF DIVINITY: SACRED SCREENTIME

אָכֵן יְשֵׁה בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאָנֹכִי לֹא יְדַעַּתִּי. . . מַה-פֹּרֶא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין ذֶה כִּי אֶמ-בֵּית
אֱלֹקִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם.

*Akhen yesh H' bamakom hazeh v'anokhi lo yada'ti. . . Mah nora hamakom
hazeh; ein zeh ki im beit Elohim v'zeh sha'ar hashamayim.*

Surely the Eternal is in this place, and I did not know! . . . How awesome is this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! (*Genesis 28:16-17*)

Our mystical tradition suggests that divinity enters into this world from behind veils and, yes, screens. The High Holy Days are a time when divine light pours more readily through the screens of this world, granting us increased spiritual intimacy. In this time of Zoom fatigue and social distancing, experiment with relating to your screen as an access point for divinity - feeling gratitude for the pixels that channel images of the Divine right into your home. If possible, move your Zoom device space back so that you are "watching" or "witnessing" the screen more than "manipulating" it. Set yourself up to be able to have a posture that feels different than just another day at the home office, and consider connecting your computer to a TV screen so it feels less like a work device. You can do this on most TVs with an HDMI cord (note that on Macs you will likely need a separate HDMI adapter), or with Smart TVs by utilizing your device's casting/internet options.

In the remaining days leading up to Rosh Hashana, try taking spontaneous moments during other Zoom calls and screentime to direct a softer gaze and loving attention toward the people and other blessings that your screen is bringing to you. Playfully establish a new connection with your screen, cultivating a gentle awareness of the divinity behind and within everything. As Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi loved to teach about

this sense of Omnipresence, in words that ring all the more true in our current moment, *this call is being monitored for quality assurance purposes*. Especially in prayer, even on Zoom and right now as you read these words, we are always in God's Presence.

SANCTIFYING THE SANCTUARY YOU HAVE PREPARED

ברוך אתה ה', אלְהַיָּנוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחִינָנוּ וְקִמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזָמָן הַזֶּה.
Barukh atah Adonai, elo-hei-nu melekh ha'olam, she-he-hi-ya-nu v'ki-yi-manu v'hi-gi-yanu la-zman ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Indwelling Life of Worlds, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.

ENTERING INTO PRAYER SPACE

Immerse in the words of our ancestors, and in the words of your own heart. Consider the following verses as contemplative tools to transition into the sacred space of the holiday and express wonder upon entry.

מה טוב אָקְלִיר יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁקָנְתִיךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
וְאַנְּיִ בָּרְבָּ חֲסִידָךְ אָבָּא בֵּיתְךָ אֲשַׁתְּחֹווֹ אֶל הַיכָּל קָדְשָׁךְ בִּירָאָתְךָ.
הֵ, אֲהַבְתִּי מַעַן בִּיטְךָ וָמָקוֹם מִשְׁכָּן כְּבָדָךְ.
וְאַנְּיִ אֲשַׁתְּחֹווֹ וְאַכְרֹעָה אָבָרְכָה לִפְנֵי הֵ עָשֵׂי.
וְאַנְּיִ תִּפְלֹתִי לְךָ הֵ עַת רָצְוֹן אָלְקִים בָּרְבָּ חֲסִידָךְ עֲנֵנִי בָּאֶמֶת יִשְׁעָךְ.

*Ma tovu ohalekha Ya'akov, mishk'notekha Yisrael.
Va'ani b'rov hasd'kha, avo veytekha, eshtahaveh el heikhal kodsh'kha
b'yir'atekha.*

*Adonai, ahavti m'on beitekha um'kom mishkan k'vodekha.
Va'ani eshtakhaveh ve'ekhra'ah, ovar'ka lifnei Adonai osi.
Va'ani t'filati l'kha Adonai et ratzon, Elohim b'rov hasdekha aneini be'emet
yish'ekha.*

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob; your encampments, O Israel! (*Numbers 24:5*)

As for me, through Your abundant grace, I enter your house to worship
with awe in Your sacred place. (*Psalm 5:8*)

Adonai, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where your glory
dwells. (*Psalms 26:8*)

I shall prostrate myself and bow; I shall kneel before the Eternal, my Maker.
(*Psalms 95:6 adapted*)

To You, Eternal One, goes my prayer: may this be a time of your favor. In
Your abundant love, O God, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.
(*Psalms 69:14*)

IN PRAYER SPACE

השִׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשְׁׁבוּה חָדֵשׁ יָמֵינוּ כָּקָדָם

Hashiveinu Adonai eilekha v'nashuvah chadesh yameinu k'kedem.
Return us to you O Source and we will return; renew our days as of old.
(*Lamentations 5:21*)

There is a part of us that always knows and yearns to return to its Source. Returning to this part of ourselves in loving awareness is the central act of prayer that enables the broader returning - *teshuvah* - of this holy time.

If there is a moment when you feel lost in the words and the liturgy, know that in these ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the soul is on a pilgrimage to connect with its true essence. Just as the monarch butterflies travel each year along their migration path, just as the salmon swim upstream to lay their eggs, we are also returning to our humble and most dignified origins - recalling our unbreakable connection with the Divine. These are potent days to enable yourself to "reset" to the simple origins of your soul. Allow Mary Oliver's Wild Geese poem to remind you:

*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.*

If there is a time when you feel distracted or unfocused, receive gentle comfort in the awareness that loss and yearning are ingredients to a prayerful concentration. In feeling and recognizing any pain or alienation, your heart is already awake. You have already been recalled to consciousness.

Discover new strength and encouragement from the wisdom of our teachers:

“There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.”
—Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

“If you believe you can damage, believe you can repair.”
—Rebbe Nachman of Bretzlov

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Wishing you a powerful and rich prayer experience with Romemu. May all of your prayers be answered for a happy, healthy and sweet new year.