

FROM "WORDS FROM THE RABBI"

...But, you may ask, a home is not a sanctuary, how can we pray there? The short answer is that your home can actually be a sanctuary. The Talmud at Megilla 29a tells us that God resides in synagogues, study houses, and even in homes where Torah is disseminated. The Talmud calls this sacred space a "Mikdash M'at", a "little sanctuary". This year, we have the unique opportunity to create a sacred space in our home for the High Holy Days. Rabbi Elyse Goldstein has ten suggestions meant to help us to enhance the High Holy Day experience at home, while creating a communal atmosphere:

1. Choose your prayer space carefully by spending a few moments of individual contemplation/family discussion. Don't wait for the last minute!

2. Once you have chosen your space, say a blessing or kavannah ("intention") over it to mark it as your mikdash m'at. Some suggestions are:

- A. Numbers 24:5 How good are your tents, O Jacob, Your sacred places, O Israel!

- B. Birkat Habayit (home blessing): 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.

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

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

- E. Psalms 121:8 Adonai will guard your going and coming, now and forever.

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

- G. The last line of the blessing said at havdalah separating Shabbat from weekday can be used to "separate" this sacred space: Baruch atah Adonai, hamavdil bayn kodesh lechol. Blessed are You Adonai, who separates between holy and ordinary.

3. Have a comfortable seat. Put a cushion or festive pillow on it, or drape it with a tallit, special piece of fabric, or scarf.

4. Change where you put your computer from a workspace to a contemplative space by covering the desk or table with a white tablecloth, white runner, or white placemat, and a vase of flowers. If possible, move the computer space back so that you are “watching” the screen more than “manipulating” it. Consider connecting your computer to a TV screen so it feels less like a work device. (If you need help doing this, reach out to me, I will find someone to help you.)

5. Find meaningful objects to make your space feel more holy. On Rosh Hashanah include holiday objects like candlesticks and a 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’s visible.

6. Since it is traditional to pray facing Jerusalem, try to pray facing east. If facing east is not possible, please feel free to pray in any direction.

7. Try to limit or disconnect auditory distractions. You can turn off your email and text message ping sounds, and/or close your email program and other apps so you can be fully present during the service.

8. Wear clothing that makes you feel as if you are entering a spiritual space. If it is your custom to wear a Kippah and Tallit, do so.

9. Be sure you have your Mahzor with you. We are using Mahzor Lev Shalem. The JCC has made the electronic version of the Mahzor available at no cost to you. You should use an Ipad or a laptop for the best experience with this electronic version. If you would prefer a physical copy of the Mahzor, you can pick one up, or the JCC can send you one for \$30.00 plus the cost of mailing.

10. Place a nice background behind you.

If you can take the time to make your Mikdash M’at special, you will add joy, meaning and love to your holiday.