

Creating a Sacred Space for Shabbat Worship in Your Home

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because **we wanted to come to you**—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.

2 Timothy 1:4

As I remember your tears, **I long to see you**, that I may be filled with joy.

Romans 1:11-12

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.

These are the words of Rabbi Shaul which expresses his longing to see those he has ministered to and we certainly empathize with these feelings. We are quickly approaching the one-year mark where we voluntarily closed in-person services and moved strictly to on-line for three months. Thankfully, it was a smooth process since we had been streaming for a number of years. Wow how has almost a year gone by since we have seen some of you?! Shepherds missing their sheep have an unresolved longing.

But was it a smooth process for you? Has your faith stagnated during these months?

Suddenly, you found yourself without your familiar Shabbat morning routine, missing the faces of your friends and the warm bonds of companionship, the lively interactions over Oneg, and the stimulating discussions during your afternoon Torah study class (who is cat napping this week?).

Now you are within the confines of the four walls of your home with its dirty dishes in the sink, piles of laundry waiting to be washed (wait are those clean or dirty) or maybe folded, dust bunnies playing peek-a-book under the coffee table, unfinished homework, stacks of work papers – does this describe the scene at your house? Not exactly the sacred, worshipful space which helps center your heart, soul, and mind to meet your Creator.

I don’t think any of us imagined the length of time we would be facing this. So what we want to do with this communication to help provide some practical advice on getting a worship space at home (while at the same time hoping this is not necessary as more and more return to in-person services).

Worship, prayer, daily Bible study has always been **intentional**, but it is also something we do daily. Shabbat has been something we always have our focus on during the week, but we knew we were “going to” Shabbat. Now, for some of us, we have to create the sanctuary environment in our home. We have to be intentional otherwise the enemy is going to steal our focus.

Do you struggle to engage with God in the same space you work, attend school, and do everything?

What are some things you should do?

1. Find a space that can be your worship space that is free of distractions.

- Maybe a spare bedroom (this way you don't see the dirty dishes), your dining room, your finished basement.
- Make it presentable **before** Shabbat. Make sure it's clean (so you resist the urge to dust), have your bible ready.
- What are things that visually clue you that you are entering Shabbat? In the sanctuary, we have the Ark and the eternal light among other things. Having these things can help you and your family to call to mind the sacredness of Shabbat – Shabbat Candles, a Torah Scroll (like the one we have for the kids), etc. If there are physical distractions in the space, see if there is an easy way to move them. Even if they don't leave the room, maybe you can rearrange the space so they are out of your sight.
- Don't curl up on the couch with a blanket as if you're just watching TV, do everything in your power to create a clean and prayerful space.
- Have worship music playing before you connect online, don't have the radio playing or the TV blaring news.

2. Shabbat attire

This may seem silly. You're in your home. You've been living in sweats and yoga pants for the last week, your kids are still in their pajamas. It's not like anyone can see you. Why should you put on Shabbat clothes?

Dressing for the occasion helps to set the tone for what you are about to enter into. You and your children want to be full participants in the Shabbat service, and the best way to start is to dress the part. By doing this, it will be easier for every member of the family to remember what is happening on the other side of that screen.

3. No Distractions

Put your phone away. If you're watching Shabbat service on your phone turn your notifications off. Don't check text messages or emails and don't answer phone calls. Have your kids put away the toys and their snacks, only give them the items they would actually bring with them to service. Try and keep this time as sacred and normal as possible.

4. **Charged Devices**

Make sure whatever device you are watching Shabbat service on is charged and ready to go! This way you can start on time, and you don't have to worry about technical difficulties halfway through.

5. **Reflect on the Torah Readings**

This is a great habit to start even when we are attending Shabbat service in real life and not just virtually. Sit with your family and read, discuss and reflect on the Torah readings during the week before Shabbat to help you to be fully prepared for what you will hear once the service begins. If you have small kids, print out the Torah activities that are posted every week for them to work on during Shabbat service.

6. **Connect 5 Minutes Before**

Be sure to connect your device to live.bethadonai.com about 5 -10 minutes before our service goes live so you don't miss a thing! Chat starts 10 minutes before service so it's another way to connect with the body.

7. **Fully Participate**

Sit, stand, say the responses. Do all of the same things you would do if you were at the congregation sitting in a chair.

In closing, we hope these suggestions will enhance your worship at home as you make a separation between the work week and Shabbat, the holy and the profane.

As we opened with the words of Rabbi Shaul we also want to close with his words for Hebrews 10: 24-25 And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, **not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.**

Isolation and loneliness exacerbate depression, fear, and anxiety. When we feel the world is falling apart around us, it is even more important to associate with Believers so our faith can be strengthened. We hope to see in person to worship with us. Please let us know if you have any concerns.