

Creating your Sanctuary

Make for Me a sanctuary,
that I may dwell in your midst.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם.
V'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham.

In the wake of the destruction of the Beit haMikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, our sages envisioned a new way of being Jewish that roots us in our own homes.

Without access to the physical space of their Temple, these spiritual leaders re-envisioned the concept of mikdash, holiness in sacred space. They invited Jewish people to see their own home as a mikdash me'at – a small sanctuary. Over 2000 years later, we are being called to do the same. How might you create a mikdash me'at, your own “small sanctuary,” in your home?

Here are some aspects to consider.

Pick your prayer space. A sanctuary is holy, “set apart” and special. Make a decision in advance about where in your home you want to be for services.

Set an intention. Say a blessing or *kavannah* (“intention”) over your space to mark it as your *mikdash me'at*. A few options are listed at the end of this list, or you can offer your own words.

Choose your chair. You want comfort, but not so much comfort that you snooze - the High Holy Days invite us into an elevated experience - how might you elevate your seating?

Decorate! Buy flowers, tape up images and meaningful messages and photos of friends and family.

Grace your space. Gather ritual and other objects that will help you get into the mood - candlesticks and a kiddish cup, apples and honey, a shofar if you own one.

Invite your friends. Print out photos of friends (or Jewish celebs!) that you'd love to invite to join in the holiday with you. Consider a text chain with the people you always sit next to during services.



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Continued

Dress for the occasion. Decide what that means for you this year. Perhaps you wear your tallit or kippah. Perhaps you wear your “dress sweatsuit.”

Whatever you choose, wear something that helps you get into the mood.

People often wear white on Yom Kippur.

Embrace this moment and have some fun with it. Take High Holy Day front porch photos. Turn down your thermostat to simulate our sanctuary temperature and designate a blanket to serve as your “worship warmer.” Block off your kitchen with caution tape during Yom Kippur.

Set an intention

Inscribed above the doors of Temple Beth El’s ark, these words remind us that God is present, if only we remember to look:

אֲכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאַנְכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי.

Genesis 28:16

These instructions, spoken by God to the Israelites in the wilderness, teach us that we are capable of creating sanctuary in which God might abide. Check out the September edition of Charlotte Jewish News for a poster containing these words which you may use to help decorate your prayer space:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם.

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Exodus 25:8

We offer this blessing at the beginning of many of our services, metaphorically creating the prayer tent in which we join together for worship.

מִה־טֹבֵי אֹהֲלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

How good are your tents, O Jacob, Your sacred places, O Israel!

Numbers 24:5

Finally, this prayer hangs on the walls of Jewish homes throughout the world:

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.

-*Birkat Habayit*