

Transitioning to Holy Space at Home: A New Ritual to Prepare for Virtual High Holy Day Services

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Note: This ritual is intended to be performed just before participating in virtual services, in the space where you will be praying. You can do this ritual on your own or use this sheet to follow along with the accompanying recorded meditation on the CRS website. For further ways to transform your space for prayer, refer to the "Sacred Space" worksheet, also on the website.

Preparation: For this ritual, each worshipper—or set of worshippers who will be praying together—should have the following ready:

- ❑ One or more candles, and something to light them
- ❑ A *havdallah* spice box with spices, or another pleasantly-scented item
- ❑ An object that evokes a personal connection to the sacred, the Divine, prayer, or the holiday. For multiple worshippers: each person should have an object that is significant to them. (ex: a tallit, a family photo album, a rock from the Grand Canyon, a pomegranate, etc.)

The Divine is present in every space, and prayer can happen anywhere. But when we are praying in the same spaces in which we work, eat, relax, and live, it can be difficult to transition ourselves from ordinary time to sacred time.

The *havdallah* ritual that we enact at the conclusion of Shabbat and holidays helps us to transition from sacred time to ordinary time. With this ritual, we will separate ordinary time from sacred time, transitioning our physical and emotional space in preparation for prayer and the challenging soul-work of *teshuvah*, repentance.

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*Leader:*

As the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they constructed the *mishkan*, a portable dwelling place for God's presence, using the best of their own possessions. With their intention to make a space in which God's presence could be felt, those items transformed into conductors of holiness. Hold, or fix your gaze upon, an object in your space that conducts holiness and connects you to your purpose in prayer, as we say together:

*All:*

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְאֶשְׁכְּנֵתִי בְּתוֹכָם:

*Va'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham;*

"Let them make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8)

With this gift of sacred intention, I sanctify this space as a place for prayer.

Leader:

Light, the first creation, has the power to transform space through illumination and revelation. As we light our candles, we say:

All:

וַיִּקְצֹץ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכֵן יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי:

מֵהַנּוֹרָא הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וְזֶה שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם:

Vayekatz Ya'akov mesh'nato, vayomer: "Achein yeish Adonai bamakom hazeh, v'anochi lo yadati! Mah norah hamakom hazeh; ein zeh ki im beit Elohim v'zeh sha'ar hashamayim."

"Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely, the Eternal is in this place, and I did not know it! How awesome is this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gateway to the heavens." (Genesis 28:16-17)

As I light this candle, I am awakened to the presence of the Divine in this space. May its light illumine a path for my prayers to ascend heavenward.

Leader:

The strong and sweet scent of spices strengthens our souls and roots our senses in the present. Close your eyes and take a deep breath through your nose, filling your body with their scent. Hold your breath for a moment, and feel the ground beneath your feet. Exhale, and open your eyes as we declare:

All:

וְאֶשְׁמַע אֶת־קוֹל אֲדֹנָי אִמַּר אֶת־מִי אֶשְׁלַח וּמִי יֵלְךְ־לָנוּ וַאֲמַר הִנְנִי שְׁלַחְנִי:

Va'eshma et kol adonai omer, "Et mi eshlach, u'mi yeilech lanu?"

Va'omer, "Hineini; sh'lacheini."

I heard the voice of my Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"

And I said, "Hineini, I am here; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Each breath connects my soul to its Source, and returns my intention to Your service.

Leader:

With clear minds and ready hearts, we are ready to begin.

All:

Hineini; I am here, ready to pray.