

Information about Davening at Home

Shalom L'Kulam - Greetings to all,

A New Halakhic Ruling On Virtual Minyanim: Due to it being a *Sha'at Dehak* (Urgent times) and because of sources cited below, I have decided to permit at Beth El the joining of ten Jewish adults to constitute a *minyan* through Zoom (video conference), where at least 10 Jewish adults can see each other, in order to say *kaddish yatom* (Mourner's Kaddish).

One of the most important ways we as Jews seek hope, inspiration, and connection - both with each other and with God - is through prayer and ritual. It is therefore particularly jarring and difficult that we cannot gather in person to pray. There is a term in Jewish law for conditions such as these, when there is disruption that poses a significant threat and forces us to change our practices. This term is *Sha'at Dehak* - A time of great urgency. According to Jewish law, the presiding rabbis have more latitude in making adjustments to Jewish law, in order to preserve core elements of our practice.

It is true that Jews can officially fulfill their obligation to pray by doing so individually at home. However, the spiritual/emotional component of *davening* as a community (especially when we feel so isolated) paired with the need for many to recite Mourner's *Kaddish* carries special resonance. It is already widely accepted that if there is a physically constituted *minyan* of ten, others can join the *minyan* to say *Kaddish* virtually, by video conference or even by phone if necessary. In addition, the classic sources themselves (*Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayyim* 55:14) open the possibility that there may be an exception to requiring ten to be *physically* present for a *minyan* by allowing people to make *minyan* even if they are apart, as long as one can see the faces of the other participants: "One who is standing behind the synagogue, with a window between that person and the congregation, even if it is several stories up and less than four cubits wide, and who shows his face to them, may combine with them to form a *minyan* of ten."

Additionally, as the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards writes, "The possibility of a *minyan* being constituted by people who are not physically near each other is further expanded by Rabbi Yitzhak Zilberstein in *Hashukei Hemed* on *Berakhot* 21b (p. 135), where he permits constituting a *minyan* for *kaddish yatom* (Mourner's Kaddish) where people are scattered in a field but can still see each other. Very recently Rabbi Haim Ovadia called attention to this source, arguing in favor of constituting a *minyan* by means of real-time video and audio connection between ten Jews. **Due to it being a *Sha'at Dehak* and because of these sources I have decided to permit at Beth El the joining of ten Jewish adults to constitute a *minyan* through Zoom (video conference), where at least 10 Jewish adults can see each, in order to say *kaddish yatom*.**

Therefore, starting Sunday we will hold daily *minyan* via Zoom both in the morning at 8:45 and in the evening at 7:30. See the links below:

Daily Morning Minyan:

Shacharit at 8:45 am via Zoom check here for Zoom link: <https://www.nssbethel.org/about/nssbehome/>

Daily Evening Minyan:

Evening Minyan at 7:30 pm via Zoom - Check here for Zoom link: <https://www.nssbethel.org/about/nssbehome/>

We will daven out loud but mostly follow the order of services for an individual. We will join together for Mourners *Kaddish* at the end. Please contact me at (mschwab@nssbethel.org) with any

questions, you may download outlines of daily services here:

<https://www.nssbethel.org/about/nssbehome/>

Over Shabbat we cannot use electronic platforms but we are offering services right before Shabbat and Havdalah right after!

**Join us tonight at 6pm for Rinat Shabbat Kabbalat Shabbat services
and Saturday at 8pm for Havdalah services**

on Facebook Live. <https://www.facebook.com/NSSBE/>

In addition your clergy would like to learn with you! We bring you **5 at 5** when you can connect with your Beth El clergy every day. At 5 PM, the clergy will share a brief (under 5 minutes) thought about the *Parsha* or something else Jewish that's on their minds. Tune in on Facebook Live on our Facebook page to join in.

Finally, we will be offering once a week **Lunch and Learn** programs. I will offer the first on Wednesday 3/25 at 1pm when we can discuss the issue of virtual *minyanim* in more depth.

We may have to distance ourselves physically but let's do all we can to come together in every other way possible! Shabbat Shalom!