

# Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton

קול יעקב - לזכר נשמת יעקב בן חיים זאב בלאט ע"ה

[www.yipc.org](http://www.yipc.org)

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Dear YIPC,

*As many of us prepare for an extended period of time with children at home, or under quarantine, I wanted to share some suggestions, based on my years of experience in informal Jewish education at NCSY:*

*Rabbi Yaakov Glasser*

## Tefilah

Creating a specific space will not only infuse greater structure to the experience overall, but will provide a more immersive experience for a particular religious moment. One idea is to consecrate a section of a room and create a "shul". The kids can design, decorate, and construct a *mechitza*. One can set out rows of (spaced) folding chairs, and create some sort of makeshift "*bimah*." Each family member can pick a particular tefilah that inspires them, print it out, and hang it up in the shul. The family can also name the shul, and hold a short *chanukas habayis*, which will dedicate its use, by reciting the perek of tehillim of *Mizmor Shir Chanukas Habayis Ledavid*, and then davening the first tefilah in it together.

I would recommend instituting a particular time for the family to daven together. A Shacharis time, and a Mincha/Maariv time. I would also suggest each family member choose a particular siddur for this experience, and make that their official siddur (good for germs and for a sense of personal connection). There are lists of cholim going around, and each family tefilah can include a chance to say the *mishebeirach* for these people, and you can take turns in appointing someone to do so.

One can also simulate some of the familiar idiosyncrasies of the shul Shabbos experience. One could create a "shul announcements" – listing the times for tefilah, and mazal tovs to members of the family for certain accomplishments. Programs during the week can be included as well, and a dvar torah can be submitted by a member of the family.

## Torah Learning

A second area can be established as the beis midrash. I would recommend placing a white tablecloth on a table, and intentionally spilling some coffee on it as the official consecration of this area ☺. This will be where we gather to study Torah, listen to shiurim online, and share Torah ideas. One could make a schedule of goals — both individual and collective. One could also create official "parent child learning" programs that include a short story read at the end, and a raffle for a prize. One could consider hanging posters in this area that relate to Torah — we are thinking of using a few of our Sukkos posters.

For those who are currently engaging in online learning, using poster board, one can create large frames for the computers so that the screens that the children are looking at do not appear so sterile, but

instead make the learning space fun. There could be different borders for different subjects that have imagery printed out from websites online and drawn by kids themselves, in order to make the subjects more engaging.

### **Chessed and Tzedakah**

Just because we are socially distancing does not mean we cannot, and should not, be engaging in chessed. One could line up the various tzedakah boxes in the home and provide each child with a certain amount of money, and encourage a discussion about priorities in tzedakah. One could identify older people in the community, and each child can adopt one of them — calling them daily, and emailing them to check on them.

### **A Happy Place**

Pick one area to be the “happy place.” An Amazon or Oriental Trading order can provide various decorations that can liven up the home. One can use streamers, balloons, decorations, posters, etc. to completely transform a space into a more animated and exciting place to hang out. This could be a dedicated recreational area — which can also be consecrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony — that provides an official start to our space of fun.

### **Music**

Music has tremendous power to impact the environment. Set up a music space in a central location and create different playlists that reflect different themes. One could vote on a family theme song to be played at the beginning and end of each day.