



Tifereth Israel March 27 · 🌐

Rabbi Braver shares A Thought Before Shabbat Remaining a Community During these Uncertain Times

I'm used to helping out with Shabbat preparations on Friday. Alex tends to do most of the cooking, while I help chop vegetables, clean up around the house, plug in the hot plate, and set the table. Now, there's a new step: "Where should I set up the laptop for Shabbat services?"

It goes against all my instincts as a rabbi, and against so much of what I've ever taught or preached; Shabbat is a time where we disconnect from our screens and reconnect with the people that matter most in our lives. In my own personal life, I've tried to make this a very firm boundary, mostly because I know how screen-addicted I am during the week! When I first started observing Shabbat more traditionally in my early 20's, pulling myself away from technology for a day was a huge challenge. However, over time, it's become something that I crave every week.

Though now we find ourselves in a moment where the alternative to connecting via screens is to be entirely disconnected, so, we adjust. What's more painful than having to mess with my computer on Shabbat is the thought of an unknown number of weeks ahead completely cut off from our Shabbat community.

Our first Zoom Shabbat was both strange and beautiful. Remembering to mute and unmute ourselves and others adds a new and unfamiliar element to the service, but even more difficult is the fact that the lag-time inherent in video streaming technology means that it's pretty much impossible to sing together as a community. And delivering a sermon to a computer screen while seated on the couch with Alex and Ezra on one side of me and Benjy our dog on the other is definitely a new experience.

At the same time, seeing my screen filled up with face after familiar face (and some new faces, too!), and watching them rise and be seated and bow and sing (even on mute!) was just what my soul needed while living in isolation. We remain connected to one another in community through prayer and study, just as we continue to mobilize ourselves to help one another as the "Stay Home" order remains in place.

We learn a 2,000-year-old old statement from Hillel in Pirkei Avot: al tifrosh min ha-tzibur — do not separate yourself from the community. We're striving to live by these words today, in ways that Hillel could not possibly have imagined.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Alex Braver

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- Fill out our Tifereth Israel COVID-19 Assistance/Volunteering survey: <https://forms.gle/QbKZ97rYtDRev99j7>
- Volunteer to call or make cards for residents of Wexner Heritage Village: <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSeUPTkg4viM8qkCN.../viewform...>
- Struggling to make ends meet for Pesach this year? Connect with JewishColumbus for a free Passover chicken: <https://forms.gle/Sk8KNrXGG3rRvMpC9>
- Looking for a list of resources provided by city governments across Central Ohio? Check out this list compiled by BREAD: <https://www.breadcolumbus.com/.../List%20of%20resources%20dur...>

As always, stay tuned to the Ohio Department of Health website for the latest updates on COVID-19: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/>



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