



Resources & Ideas

COVID-19 Resources

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Streaming Seder

Please find below a letter from Rabbi Joshua Heller by COVID-19. Thanks to Rabbis Aaron Alexander, official responsum of the CJLS.

In many communities, medical professionals advise staying home for the next year. We urge all Jews to follow this advice. As a result, many cannot celebrate Passover, and many congregations that may want to do so will be unable to do so. The nature of COVID-19 this Passover, whether by staying home or gathering, or will face psychological harm by being unable to do so. Many communities will try to minimize these risks by co-

Our committee has already [addressed the issue of video participation](#) via video in many weekday rituals, and we do not consider using electronic means of communication to be a violation of prohibitions in the face of a truly unprecedented and dire situation. Those who are wrestling with the question of video access for Passover are offering Yizkor-like service over Hol Hamoed as an alternative.

The questions of electronics on Shabbat and Yom Tov are different. In-person seder gatherings are truly unsafe, and many communities are not. Furthermore, there are specific leniencies for those with illness, and many in our community fall into that category. These questions will apply in future years.

Ideally, the video option should be accessed in a way that keeps the stream active for the duration of use, or using a virtual assistant to list different videoconferencing options and their key features. This is the CJLS's recommendation, and is certainly viable for first seder.

If this is not possible, ways to minimize, but not eliminate, the risk are:

1. Arranging in advance for a non-Jewish person to be present at the seder, such as a caregiver, workers or a household with non-Jewish members.
2. Using a virtual assistant, like Siri or Alexa, to activate the stream.
3. Logging in through a simple press of a button, rather than a voice command, and without having to "wake up" or turn on the device.
4. Doing so only after dark of 2nd day Yom Tov.

There is more leniency to activate the stream in order to avoid a health risk, such as COVID-19 infection, or suffers from a disability.

Activating a recording device on Yom Tov or Shabbat is prohibited. On Shabbat, it should absolutely be with recording disabled. If a person must interact via speech and video, rather than typed messages, they should not be tempted to perform forbidden labor if something goes wrong. If a device fails, and we urge people to be mindful of ways to avoid this.

We understand that even if a stream or videoconference is not used, it may also be accessed by those who choose to do so. We urge those who offer a stream to do so in a way that minimizes the risk of a real-life situation where one might invite people to a seder.

Ideally, there would be a seder plate at each location with wine, grape juice, three matzahs, carpas (any green vegetable), and water. If a Haggadah is not physically available, it should be downloaded and printed before the start of the seder. The seder should be done safely.

There are two main types of video presence: two-way and one-way. It is possible to fulfill the requirements of the seder also with a one-way stream, but it would clearly provide more comfort and safety.

There are [specific times set for the seder to take place](#)

enough for all involved to fulfill their obligation, or

These guidelines are specific to this year when the
safety, and, G-d willing, in Jerusalem.

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