



March 19, 2020 • 23 Adar 5780

Dear Members of Society Hill Synagogue,

We are living in a moment that is, for most of us, entirely unprecedented. That much is clear. The question now becomes how we respond to it.

Here at SHS, we see an opportunity. Judaism has a long tradition of being radically responsive to changing circumstances. When the Temple was destroyed, the primary locus of Jewish expression shifted from the altar to the study house, the temple grounds to the synagogue. While we don't know how long the current level of social distancing will last, we know that its effects —preventing us from showing up together, in person — are pushing us to explore new frontiers of Jewish expression and communal living.

To that end, we at SHS are rolling out the following comprehensive program to help families and individuals connect to one other, to their Jewish tradition, and to the Divine:

1. A Daily Weekday Minyan (Prayer Gathering): Every weekday evening – **Monday through Thursday – at 7:30 pm**, beginning Monday, March 23, we will gather on the Zoom platform (discussed further below) and by phone to conduct a brief, traditional Ma'ariv (evening) service that will last **approximately 20 minutes**.

Our ancestors found that, as evening settled upon us, and as, for some, fear and anxiety rose accordingly, each evening they would come together in community, expressing their affirmation of One-ness and interconnectedness through the words of the *Sh'ma* and its accompanying blessings. We will do the same in this fraught time, through virtual means.

While traditional prayer language does not speak to everyone, we will work to help give people the means to wrestle with this ancient modality, and we encourage everyone to participate.

The service will be led by a rotating group of clergy and volunteer leaders. Please be in touch with our clergy if you would like to help lead.

2. Continuing and New Adult Education Opportunities: A second pillar of our spiritual tradition is lifelong, deep learning. To that end, we are establishing multiple weekly Torah (and a range of Jewish teachings) study opportunities. In addition to weekly Shabbat Torah study (to be discussed further below), we will meet via Zoom and phone **every Monday and Thursday at 12:00 pm for approximately 45 minutes.**

We will explore a range of texts, continuing our ancestors' conversations about life, love, Torah, holiness, humanity, and justice. Please participate as you are able.

We will also continue our popular adult education series that include *Nuts and Bolts*, *Talmud Seminar* with Rafi Licht, *Torah Study* with Rabbi Marjorie Berman, and others. Upcoming opportunities listed below.

3. Ongoing Playschool, Sunday School, Hebrew School, and Hebrew High School Learning: Of course, the high value we place on learning applies to all ages, and so, our Playschool teachers have been leading daily circle time celebrations via Zoom and creating enriching videos with stories and songs for our children in ages 2-5. The weekly Friday morning Playschool Shabbat celebration moves to Zoom tomorrow.

Our Sunday School, Hebrew School, and Hebrew High School faculty have reached out to students and parents with video messages to say hello, share reflections, and ask how everyone is doing. They will start teaching remotely through Zoom this Sunday morning (March 22).

4. Friday Night Candle Lighting and Kiddush: Every Friday night at 6:00 pm, beginning tomorrow, Friday, March 20, we will gather for **approximately 15 minutes** for a virtual Candle Lighting and Kiddush. This will be an opportunity to see each other's smiling faces and hear a beautiful Jewish melody or two, and welcome in Shabbat, before dinner.

5. Saturday Morning Service and Torah Study: Each week, beginning this Saturday, March 21, we will hold a **virtual Shabbat morning service** beginning at **10:00 am**. Shacharit (the morning service) will be from 10:00-10:30, followed by Torah Study from 10:30-11:15, followed by concluding blessings and the Mourner's Kaddish from 11:15-11:30. We recognize that it is not within everyone's practice to use electronics on Shabbat, and we encourage everyone to do what feels

comfortable to them, but we think it's important that we present the congregation with this opportunity.

6. Online Siddurim (prayer books): The Conservative Rabbinical Assembly has generously made their prayer books (the same ones we use at SHS) available in PDF form online. We will distribute copies shortly.

7. Second Night Seder: The **evening of April 9**, we will hold the beginning of a virtual Seder, walking us through the symbols and teachings of our ancient Exodus to freedom. Details to follow.

8. Shabbat Shalom Phone Calls: Our leadership will work each week to try to make sure each family or individual in the community receives a phone call wishing them "Shabbat Shalom" and checking in on their well-being. We hope you'll let us know if any members are in need of particular attention.

9. Zoom Tutorials: As discussed above, the primary platform we will use to facilitate these connection points is Zoom. Zoom enables us to see live video of each other in large groups. Phone will also always be an option for folks who simply want to call in. While we are not expert users of Zoom, and while we encourage people to go directly to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) to sign up for an account and to rely on Zoom's support, we will schedule our own in-house Zoom help sessions to give people opportunities to practice the technology without the pressures of an ongoing program.

We know this is a lot. And yet, we think that is what this moment calls for. We hope that if anything positive comes from this moment — and we believe it will — it includes increased means to access our Jewish tradition, our Jewish community, and engagement with the holy.

Wishing you all days filled with love and light, and hoping to see or hear you this coming Shabbat.

Society Hill Synagogue Clergy, Staff, and Board of Directors

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

- **Candle lighting**, Friday, March 20, 6:00-6:15 pm. <https://zoom.us/j/714132696> Meeting ID: 714 132 696, Dial-in (929) 205 6099
- **Shabbat Service and Torah Study**, Saturday, March 21, 10:00-11:30 am. <https://zoom.us/j/960877637> Meeting ID: 960 877 637, Dial-in (929) 205 6099

- **Virtual Talmud Brunch**, Sunday, March 22, 11:30 am-12:15 pm. <https://zoom.us/j/642203425> Meeting ID: 642 203 425, Dial-in (929) 205 6099
- **Jewish Text Study**, Monday, March 23, 12:00-12:45 pm. <https://zoom.us/j/125607699> Meeting ID 125 607 699, Dial-in (929) 205 6099
- **Evening Minyan**, Monday, March 23, 7:30-8:00 pm. <https://zoom.us/j/702684711> Meeting ID 702 684 711, Dial-in (929) 205 6099

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