

Suggested format for Shiva prayers using Zoom (or similar)

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These ideas have been prepared by the US Jewish Living and Community Divisions, with the help of RCUS (Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue). Particular thanks go to Rabbi Daniel Epstein and Rabbi Elchonon Feldman for their input.

Communicating with mourners ahead of the shiva

- Mourners should be consulted on how they would like to be contacted during the shiva - whether by phone, by email or by other technology and at what times. Online messaging or video-conferencing can be overwhelming so thought should be given to its best use.
- If the custom of the community is to send a 'Nichum Aveilim' card to mourners' homes, a PDF should be sent by email. The PDF can be printed and displayed.
- If Shiva chairs are not available the Rabbi (or administrator) should give advice to mourners on what seating at home would be appropriate e.g. a sofa with no cushions.

Before all prayers, we suggest the host telling all participants that they will be muted during the prayers since when people are unmuted, their noise and conversations can be clearly heard by others.

If just Maariv is to be said

1. Before prayers, family member to 'welcome' as 'host' on Zoom and then the Rabbi to introduce as he usually would. Rabbi to share by Zoom the pdf of Sefer Hashiva made available online to US rabbis or a similar version.
2. Rabbi or appropriate mourner to recite Maariv out loud word by word, or at least the Shema aloud, omitting the sections which require a minyan to be present. Psalm 49 (or 16 when applicable) to be recited as usual. The rabbi to say the psalm line by line out loud. If appropriate, suggest that participants recite alternate verses along with the rabbi.
3. Rabbi to read memorial prayer. It might sadly be necessary to recite this prayer for more than one person. If so, it is suggested that a separate memorial prayer is read for each person. Alternatively, one memorial prayer could be read in the plural to memorialise more than one person. If the latter option is taken, the rabbi might consider reading the specific individual parts of the memorial prayer in English afterwards, so that each deceased person is mentioned individually.
4. After the memorial prayer, rabbi to teach a Mishna (for example, from Pirkei Avot as found at the end of Sefer Hashiva) in lieu of Kaddish. (Also consider saying a chapter of Tehillim instead, after the Memorial Prayer, if that is more suitable for a particular shiva).
5. Eulogies/speeches to be given as appropriate for the particular date or time of year.
6. Rabbi to lead online nichum aveilim.
7. If feasible, use chat features in Zoom to make people feel 'together' at the shiva'.
8. Suggest that mourners are available by Zoom for people to call in at set times during the

shiva. People could 'arrive' and 'leave' the call as if they were entering or leaving a shiva house and add the words of nichum aveilim. This would require the rabbi, a family member or a volunteer to set up the Zoom facility.

If both Mincha and Maariv are to be said

1. Ideally, timings to be around either plag hamincha or sunset if that is feasible. If that is not feasible, follow the usual practice of Mincha followed by Maariv. Otherwise, just Mincha or Maariv to be recited, depending on the time.
2. Before prayers, a family member to 'welcome' as 'host' on Zoom. The Rabbi then to introduce as he usually would and to share PDF of Sefer Hashiva or a similar version by Zoom.
3. Rabbi or appropriate mourner to 'lead' Mincha, saying Ashrei aloud, Amida quietly and Aleinu aloud, omitting sections which require a minyan.
4. Rabbi to lead recitation or singing of Psalm 23 in lieu of Kaddish.
5. Rabbi or appropriate mourner to recite Maariv out loud word by word, omitting the sections which require a minyan to be present and then follow the guidelines in the section above for Maariv only, since those guidelines would apply in the same way here.

Shacharit

1. Before prayers, Rabbi to introduce as he usually would.
2. Rabbi or appropriate mourner to 'lead' prayers, omitting the sections which require a minyan.
3. After Shir shel yom, rabbi to teach a Mishna in lieu of Kaddish.
4. Rabbi to lead Psalm 49 (or 16 when applicable).
5. Rabbi to recite Memorial Prayer.
6. Rabbi to lead online nichum aveilim.
7. Suggest that mourners are available by Zoom for people to call in at set times during the shiva.

Some technical suggestions for all services

1. If at all possible, arrange for a family member to run the technical side of matters. These can include:
2. Scrolling down the prayers when necessary;
3. As mentioned above, muting participants in advance of the service, other than the rabbi;
4. Towards the end, unmuting family members who wish to speak;
5. Unmuting all for 'nichum aveilim' so that the rabbi can lead all in this and translate what it means;
6. At this point, the rabbi can end the service and participants can then communicate with each other and the mourners in particular. Alternatively, messages can be posted in the chat
7. Recording the zoom session allows the family to keep the messages and speeches which have been made.
8. Please note that a standard Zoom session last for 40 minutes and take this into consideration unless the session has been organised by the family or the rabbi using an account which allows for longer.

As we say in the memorial prayers, "He [God] will cast away death for eternity, wipe away the tears from all faces..." (Isaiah 25:8).

May God send safety, health and blessing to the whole world.