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Orthodox Tel Aviv synagogue begins virtual online prayer services

Senior rabbi gives approval for kaddish, 'barchu', other prayers to be said in Kehillat Yachad's virtual minyan

By [JEREMY SHARON](#) MARCH 18, 2020 17:13



Father and son in a synagogue
(photo credit: GABE FRIEDMAN (JTA))

The Yachad liberal Orthodox [synagogue](#) at 20 Zeitlin Street (in the Zeitlin school) in Tel Aviv has begun holding virtual prayer services over the Zoom online video conferencing service in light of the [coronavirus](#) pandemic and the danger of spreading and becoming exposed to the virus at communal prayers.

On Wednesday morning, the community held its first virtual Shaharit prayer service which attracted 100 worshipers, men and women, who participated remotely.

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By SUSAN HATTIS RO

Yachad has now decided to hold daily prayer services in the morning and evening during the coronavirus crisis.

The morning prayer services will be held at 7:30 a.m., followed by a Daf Yomi Talmud lesson at 8:00 a.m., and a children's prayer service at 8:30 a.m.

Aviad Friedman, who runs the synagogue, wrote on his Facebook page that the evening prayer service will be held at 8:00 p.m., followed immediately by a Torah study lesson at 8:10 p.m.

Communal Jewish prayer is traditionally performed with a quorum, a minyan in Hebrew, of 10 men older than 13, and there are central parts of the prayer service including the kaddish prayer for the deceased which can only be said with a minyan.

Jewish law generally stipulates that a minyan cannot be formed without the individual worshippers being in the same place and vicinity as each other.

Rabbi Benny Lau, a prominent liberal religious-Zionist leader, who participated in the Wednesday morning service, sent a request to Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, a respected arbiter of Jewish law, asking which communal prayers could be said in Yachad's virtual minyan.

Melamed said that due to doubts regarding the exact meaning of the terms "place" and "voice" in the context of communal prayer and Jewish law, a virtual gathering (via Zoom) "cannot be defined as a minyan in all aspects."

Nevertheless, he ruled however that both the mourners kaddish - recited by those who have recently lost close family members - and the rabbis kaddish may be recited in such a minyan.

He further said that the Barchu blessing can be recited in a time of need "when there is value for all the virtual community to pray together."

Lau noted that Melamed had said that at difficult times it was perfectly permissible to pray alone and not in a minyan as is customary.

"There is a great gap between the language of religion and the language of Jewish law," said Lau.

"In the language of religion there are internal, spiritual needs that reach to the depths and root of a person's soul," he continued, in explanation as to why he and others who pray three times a day on a daily basis feel the ongoing need to pray in a minyan.