# How to Stream Services (Or Anything Else): A Guide for Jewish Communities

Being Jewish means being in community. When our communities find ourselves facing physical limitations and social distance, opportunities to be in community are few and far between. Connecting online in real-time, through streaming services (for Shabbat, holidays, *minyanim*, meetings, school classes, and more) can create community in lieu of the possibility of in-person gatherings, bringing solace and comfort to those in isolation. This is an opportunity to show the power of community, not the lack of it.

Each community should discuss, identify, and uphold its own standards of comfort in terms of streaming (such as what and when they are comfortable "going live"). This universal resource is designed to focus on the "how" of streaming as a resource for congregations that are entering this sphere for the first time or as a short-term consideration.

## Tips for Planning Your Online Experiences

1. **Be clear on your intention for this experience.**
   Before bringing your community together in this way, ask yourself how you want attendees to feel. If you're focused on spiritual healing, you may wish to offer printable prayers or links to relevant content.

2. **Keep it familiar.**
   Keep in mind that this is likely not the time to introduce new elements or experiences to your worship services or classes. To make the overall experience as comfortable and accessible as possible, choose prayers and melodies that are familiar to your online attendees.

3. **Choose your music.**
   Be thoughtful about the music you are choosing to help create a communal environment. Encourage virtual attendees to sing along from home to or to simply listen and allow the melodies to provide them comfort. If you're using a webinar-style service, be sure to turn off participants' microphones before encouraging them to sing along from home.

4. **Consider various opportunities for gathering. What might you offer young families?**
   Use this time as an opportunity for creative programming. For example, how might you offer worship/experiential moments for young families during times we don't or can't typically gather in person? For example, a #BedtimeOnline program might include telling a Jewish story from the Stories We Tell podcast, then singing *Sh'ma* and *Hashkivenu*; during a #BreakfastTogether program, you could sing *Modeh Ani* and *haMotzi*.  Offering a printable prayer or iyyun that families can share together or with you is also a way to help with spiritual healing during challenging times. Worship leaders wearing bright colors, or standing in front of something brightly colored will be engaging for children. And, remember, familiarity offers comfort.  Use tunes that kids/families know from the worship experiences they have when they are in the same place, during tot-Shabbat or education programs.

## "How can I conduct services without a *siddur* and room full of people?"

- **CCAR Liturgical Resources:**
  - Flipbook, Mishkan T'filah for Shabbat: Access a free online flipbook, perfect for following along at home. You can send this link to your community in advance for easy access to the siddur.
  - Ebook, Mishkan T'filah for Shabbat: Use this link for a 50 percent discount on the Kindle version of this publication, also ideal for following along from home.
  - "Liturgical Resources for Responding to the Coronavirus": This document includes eight original pieces of liturgy addressing everything from handwashing, to anxiety, to the safety of medical professionals.

## "What do we need to know about copyrights and video streaming?"

Before creating online videos (whether live or pre-recorded), it's critical that congregations educate themselves on copyright considerations and legally allowable use of copyrighted materials, including music, lyrics, prayers, and more.

- **When Sharing Text...**
  It is a violation of copyright law to use large amounts of copyrighted text (including prayers, liturgy, etc.) without written permission of the copyright holder. You may, however, quote a small amount of text (no more than two paragraphs) without permission, though you must include prominent attribution to the author. This usage falls under the legal category of "fair use."

- **When Sharing Music...**
  Much of the music and lyrics we use in our worship services is copyrighted and owned by individual artists or publishers. In order to use these copyrighted materials streamed services, you must acquire a license that compensates the owner of the copyright.

- **J•License** helps congregations be copyright compliant and ensures that the creators responsible for your program and worship content are paid fairly for your use of their work. J•License offers annual and limited licenses, allowing you to legally stream covered songs in worship services and other events. Most congregations' musical selections are available in the J•License database; if you want to use a song that is not in the database, J•License will do its best to add it. Special prices are available to URJ member congregations.

## "What do we need in order to conduct online gatherings?"

The following needs will apply to all online streaming, regardless of whether you are planning to livestream worship services or hold online meetings and classes. Make sure you have:

- **Strong wifi or mobile cellular data** from the streaming location (i.e. the synagogue, a clergy member's home, or someplace else). Here are some tips on checking wifi speeds on a computer and mobile device (you'll want a minimum of 4-6 Mbps upload speeds in order to avoid overly pixelated video or choppy audio).

- **An audio and video-enabled device(s)** with up-to-date software and hardware. Any recent-model mobile phone, tablet, or laptop likely has this functionality built in. There are also standalone products made just for streaming, like the popular Mevo (note that you will need to control Mevo from a mobile app) and other add on, webcams that you connect to your desktop computer.

- **An in-person helper** (other than the subject of the video) who can troubleshoot technical issues and monitor comments, feedback, and questions during the livestream.

- **A recording location that is quiet, well-lit, and appropriate.** (Don't, for example, stream from a loud coffee shop, a dark basement, or the computer in your kitchen.) Choose a location where you can set your streaming device on a stable surface or stand that is close enough to capture clear audio of the subject.

- **Check the system you are using in advance** to learn how to enable the closed captioning option.  Be sure to check the captioning afterwards to make corrections due to Hebrew and liturgical language.

## "What are the options for streaming online?"

When it comes to streaming, options are available to suit every budget and level of sophistication.

### 1. Dedicated Streaming Platforms

Services that offer dedicated streaming are designed for video-sharing and should largely run without a hiccup for your audience. Such services are also be a great long-term solution for congregations or communities that have made the decision to stream on a regular or semi-regular basis. Consider the following options (each of which offer extensive support documentation):

- StreamSpot: A URJ-preferred vendor used by many congregations, StreamSpot sends your congregation the equipment you need (if you need it), and its user-friendly interface allows you to embed the stream on your website and/or share a link for viewers to watch. StreamSpot's interface allows for easy sharing of videos, plus an amazing tool to edit videos into clips. StreamSpot also has seamless integration with Facebook Live, YouTube and ReStream, as well as great support. URJ congregations can get a 25 percent "lifetime" discount on StreamSpot service and a 10 percent discount on equipment.

- YouTube Live: The king of video-sharing now provides streaming—with some caveats. Anyone can go live with just a computer and webcam, but to stream from a mobile device (phone or tablet), your channel must have a minimum of 1,000 followers.

- Boxcast: This organizational streaming platform provides equipment and unlimited, dedicated streams to share with your audiences. All content is stored indefinitely within your administrative archive.

### 2. Social Media Streaming

Social media platforms, especially Facebook, have invested time and money to encourage users to share videos on their platforms, going so far as to reconfigure their algorithms to prioritize video-sharing.

Facebook Live is free and relatively easy to use from a mobile device (using the Facebook app) or a computer (using a Chrome browser). Viewers can engage with your videos both during and after the broadcast through commenting, liking, and sharing. This can be a powerful way to connect with one another, but, it is important to have someone monitoring the page during the webcast.

Both Instagram and Twitter offer (less simple) streaming options, as well, but most congregations have larger audiences and reach on Facebook. What's more, these other platforms require viewers to register in order to watch livestreams, and their videos aren't automatically available to be shared when the webcast ends.

### 3. Webinar-Style Streaming

Video conferencing solutions such as Zoom, a URJ-preferred vendor, offer free video-streaming options that make it easy for viewers to watch on any internet-enabled device, using either an internet browser or a dial-in phone number. Hosting is as easy as using your computer's built-in web cam and mic (or hooking up an external one).

This kind of streaming is ideal if you're streaming a gathering that has multiple leaders/facilitators joining from different locations, or if you're holding a smaller gathering in which everyone needs to see and/or interact with each other. Note that call-and-response and group singing will not be ideal here due to audio lag times so just have one person at a time 'leading' your service or gathering (and mute everyone else).

The free version of Zoom places limitations on the number of online attendees and the length of the webcast, while paid versions vary depending on the expected size of your audience. Zoom discounts are available in The Tent for URJ member congregations.

Other videoconferencing services include GoToWebinar, Google Hangouts Meet, and BlueJeans. All of these services offer extensive support documentation and, in cases of the paid products, actual support.

## "Which video streaming option is the quickest for us to set up?"

Set-up times will vary on a case-to-case basis, as each community's capacity differs in terms of equipment, internet access, staff/volunteer availability, online audience, and other factors.

Does your congregation already have a Facebook page? (Start with Facebook Live.) Do you have a well watched YouTube channel? (Start with YouTube Live.)  Experience with video conferencing? (Try out Zoom or your preferred web conference solution.) A G Suite (Google for Business) account? (Try Google Hangouts Meet). These answers and others might influence your ultimate decision.

## "We want to use Facebook Live. Now how, exactly, do we do it?"

Use these step-by-step instructions to go live from a mobile device using the Facebook app. (See Facebook's support articles for even more details.)

Before going live, make sure the device you will stream from is that of a page administrator; this is the permission needed in order to go live on a congregational page. You'll also want to appoint someone other than the subject of the video to interact with viewers and commenters.

To begin your live broadcast from a mobile device in the Facebook app:

- First make sure all other apps and services are closed, the phone is plugged in, and the phone is set to 'do not disturb' mode.
- Start a new Facebook post by tapping the camera/live icon.
- If/when prompted, allow Facebook access to your camera and microphone. If you are setting the device up selfie-style, click the camera icon with the arrows to turn on the selfie lens.
- Choose your privacy and posting settings.
- Write a compelling description of your video that will appear on your page's timeline and in fans' newsfeeds.
- If you'd like, tag friends or followers, choose your location, or add an activity.
- Turn your camera's orientation to landscape (horizontal or "long-ways").
- Click the blue "Start Live Video" button to begin your broadcast. You're live!
- When you're done, click "Finish" to end the broadcast.
- The video will take a few moments to process and will then post to your page's timeline. Afterward, if you'd like, you can adjust its privacy settings and update the description. Leave a comment to thank viewers for joining you.

To begin your live broadcast from a laptop or desktop computer:

- Go to the Facebook page from which you want to go live (your congregation's, your individual profile, etc.), then choose "Live Video," as if you're writing a new post.

- Write a compelling description of your video that will appear on your page's timeline and in fans' newsfeeds.

- When promoted, allow Facebook permission to use your computer's camera and microphone.

- Make sure your description and video view are finalized, and double-check that your computer is accessing the correct camera and microphone.

- Press "Go Live" to start your broadcast. You're live!

- When you're done, click "Finish" to end the broadcast.

- The broadcast will appear on your Page's Timeline, where you can edit it by tapping the drop-down arrow in the upper-righthand corner.

- Click "Finish" to end the broadcast.

- The video will take a few moments to process and will then post to your page's timeline. Afterward, if you'd like, you can adjust its privacy settings and update the description. Leave a comment to thank viewers for joining you.

## Tips for Presenting Online

Now that you've chosen your streaming service and planned your program, you're ready to begin! Consider the following.

1. **Be yourself.** Do your best to lead naturally and comfortably, as though you're together in person. This will allow your viewers to focus on the content rather than the medium.

2. **Practice.** If possible, do a practice run before going live to test for audio quality, camera position, etc. Practicing will also help you feel more comfortable on camera, making the video feel more natural.

3. **Name the elephant in the room.** It is likely different/unusual for your community to gather in this way—and it's perfectly acceptable to acknowledge that!

4. **Look into the camera.** When using Zoom, you may feel inclined to instead look at the faces on the screen, but doing so will make it appear as if you're looking down. A sincere look, right into the camera, goes a long way toward creating the feeling of virtual connection.

5. **Use simple language.** The easier it is for you to say, the easier it will be for them to follow along and feel a part of the community.

6. **Consider a teleprompter.** Free versions are available for iPads and iPhones (resources below), but using a teleprompter adds another detail to the process – so if you're not comfortable with it, it may not be worth it.

7. **Prepare in advance.** You may find it more helpful to write out bullet points than to use a teleprompter. Use them as notes, the way you would during a regular service, or write them on a large poster board propped up just beyond your screen or camera. It's important not to look as though you're reading from a screen, which is distracting to viewers (and is one of the dangers of using a teleprompter).

8. **Create a compelling environment.** Think about your framing (you don't want too much space above your head) and even about your background. What will convey the atmosphere you are hoping to share? Do you want books or plants in the shot? Aim for an environment that is neither too busy nor too plain.

9. **Don't get too personal.** Viewers will certainly understand the need to film or lead *t'filah* or a class from home, especially during unusual circumstances—but they still shouldn't be able to see into your personal life. As such, bedrooms, kitchens, etc., are not ideal spaces for filming.

10. **Ready yourself.** As is the case any time you lead services, you'll want to consider how to present yourself. Most importantly, you just want to look and feel like yourself. What makes presenting online different? Remember that the camera emphasizes elements that may, in person, feel more subtle. Try not to overdo it on makeup, hair, jewelry, or other accessories that will look unnatural or distract online viewers – and if you're running a practice video before the real thing, use that time to test out your own look and, if necessary, modify accordingly.

## Last-Minute Technical Checklist

1. If you're using a mobile device, turn off all other services and apps and set the phone to "Do not disturb" so that incoming calls and messages don't interrupt your stream.

2. Check your tablet/phone's video settings and set them to the highest resolution available. (1080 HD or 4K, the highest). If you have the option to set frame rate, use the highest number available.

3. Clean your lens with a microfiber cloth.

4. Always position your filming device horizontally (landscape or "long-ways").

5. Use a tripod or other means of stabilize tour recording device.

6. Frame your shot and check it for distractions. Remove any extraneous objects.

7. Frame yourself within the shot, too, making sure that the camera is viewing you from a relatively straightforward position. No nostrils or tops of heads!

8. Make sure you're well-lit. Lighting should come from behind the camera and/or both sides; avoid backlighting.

## Helpful Technological Tools

You may wish to purchase tools to help improve the overall quality of your video. Consider:

• Video Teleprompter Premium: This app is available in the Apple Store.

• Professional Lavalier Microphone: This mic connects to your phone or can be clipped on to your lapel for improved sound quality.

• Adjustable Tripod: This small tripod, designed for use with mobile devices, minimizes turbulence and makes it easy to set up shots.

• Light Ring: This light can be used on a phone or laptop to improve background lighting.