**“They Trembled and Stood Afar Off” (Exodus 20:14)**

Suggestions for Using Digital Tools to Teach About and Foster Connection to Israel

Currently many of us are being asked to perform our emissarial work, including education and developing a connection to Israel, through means that we do not fully comprehend and which require that we employ virtual interaction in lieu of personal interaction. Indeed, this is a departure from the way that we normally operate. Yet there is no need to be concerned about this aspect since the internet and virtual space can serve as an environment for meaningful experiences and learning. This environment offers the emissarial world interactivity, simulations, and games; makes things more relevant to participants and gets them more involved; makes timing easier through creation of synchronous and asynchronous modalities; and also offers ways to educate in relaxed and entertaining ways. **We encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity (even if it has been forced upon you) to gain experience using new and relevant 21st century tools and the opportunity to create positive experiences for participants to connect with Israel, even if the experience is virtual and not face-to-face.**

In the document before you, you will find a number of suggestions for ways to take advantage of the challenging opportunity posed by the need to serve as emissaries educating and developing relationships **remotely**. The document seeks to do the following: introduce you to Jewish educational thought about “virtual” community activity; suggest technological tools that will enable you to converse and organize events remotely; and offer a sampling of virtual activities that you can put to use immediately.

**Dagan Livny, Director of the Shlichim Community Network in the School for Shlichut (Emissaries) ([daganl@jafi.org](mailto:daganl@jafi.org)) and the educational supervisors of the various Shlichim tracks are available to help you think about, prepare, and carry out activities in an online environment.**

**What Does Remote Jewish Communal Activity Look Like?**

Mobility impairment, inconvenient timing, and disinterest lead many Jews not to visit synagogues, schools, or communal institutions. Consequently, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous Jewish communities were looking for ways to address this issue. Many of their responses involved the development of Jewish communal life in the virtual sphere. This document provides information and links about the topic for use as springboards for conversation. It also supplies a number of examples of online Jewish communal life:

* This [link](http://jppi.org.il/new/he/article/aa2015/part3/video-game-policy/identity/" \l ".XmYeOKhvZPY) will take you to a short article from the 2014-2015 Annual Assessment of the Jewish People Policy Institute. The article describes the phenomenon of virtual Jewish communal life and the challenges that it poses for Jewish institutions (the article is available in both Hebrew and English).
* In the online virtual world offered by “[Second Life](https://secondlife.com/),” users can freely don a virtual identity, and build, explore, and chat with other “residents,” including those belonging to a Jewish community. This community has synagogues, yeshivas, museums, a virtual Jerusalem and even “Israel Island,” which advertises itself as “home to a community of people from around the word who have an interest in Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish people.”
* <Ourjewishcommunity.org> is a virtual Jewish community that “isn’t afraid to challenge convention.” It live-streams Sabbath services, and offers podcasts, blogs, and other resources.
* Is it possible to have a virtual *minyan*? Scholars who attended an international seminar for halakhic study held at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2019 addressed this issue from a Jewish legal perspective. For a video of the keynote lecture and access to additional resources on this topic, click on the following [link](http://www.jtsa.edu/a-virtual-minyan-communal-prayer-in-the-digital-age).
* Many American Jewish communities offer live streaming of their religious services. [An article](https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/255496/attending-synagogue-without-leaving-home) from the online magazine Tablet surveys this phenomenon.

**What Technological Tools are Recommended for Remote Dialogues and Events?**

Technology surrounds us. Therefore, it is unsurprising that substantial resources have been invested in efforts to integrate technology into education. However, technology-based initiatives in education, unlike those in other areas, have primarily enhanced extant structures and processes of teaching and learning. Contemporary events present an opportunity to start changing things. Below you will find information about a number of free, accessible, relevant tools:

* **[TES Blendspace](https://www.learntech.co.il/tes-blendspace/)** is a website that allows you to create interactive lessons incorporating video, links, and files. You can find a link to a training video on use of the website here; here is a [link to the website](https://www.tes.com/lessons) itself.
* You can easily prepare unique and interesting video clips featuring animation, pictures, music and recordings using **PowToon**. These clips can be uploaded to YouTube and shared. A link to the site can be found [here](https://www.powtoon.com/home/?) and a link to ideas about its use can be found [here](https://youtu.be/Gkeu9t-GPD4).
* Using **Padlet**, you cancreate post-it-like notes, place them on a virtual bulletin board and fill them with information. Using the virtual bulletin board, you can introduce or summarize topics, document aggregated knowledge, brainstorm, share information, and more. You can connect to this tool here. The following link offers information about how to best use this tool.
* **Quizizz** allows you can to create online quizzes or find inspiration from other quizzes that were created on other topics. Here is a [link to the website](https://quizizz.com/).
* You can create interactive worksheets integrating a variety of activities, such as short response questions, writing on pictures, matching exercises, table completion, classification and drawing using **Wizer**. After creating a worksheet, you can generate a link to it that can be used by others to easily access it. For more on how to use this tool, [follow this link](https://youtu.be/kV_YHdKhKeM); for the website, click [here](https://app.wizer.me/).
* **Spotify:** Yes, Spotify! You can use this app to prepare playlists that can be sent to participants as the basis for a class, for enjoyment, as a way to expose them to Israeli music, and more.

**There are also digital tools that can be employed to hold meetings, events, discussions and conversations online in real time:**

* Some good [tips for managing live online meetings](http://new.methodic.co.il/25-%d7%98%d7%99%d7%a4%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%9e%d7%a2%d7%a9%d7%99%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%a9%d7%99%d7%94%d7%a4%d7%9b%d7%95-webinar-%d7%9e%d7%a9%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%9d-%d7%9c-webinar-%d7%9e%d7%93%d7%94%d7%99%d7%9d/) can be found here.
* You can host 100 participants for up to forty minutes using the free personal version of **[Zoom](https://zoom.us/)**. The platform also offers screen sharing and chat. Those who subscribe to one of its plans can also divide large groups into smaller breakout groups.
* Up to 25 participants can be hosted using **[Google Hangouts](https://hangouts.google.com/)** with no time restrictions. We recommend it for discussion groups and dialogues.
* One can conduct a video chat with up to 50 participants using **[Skype](https://www.skype.com/he/)**. To do so, however, requires that you to download the application.
* A group of 25 registered users can meet using **[JITSI](https://jitsi.org/)**. The platform offers video, an interactive whiteboard, recording, screen sharing, live streaming, shared viewing on YouTube, and an option for panel discussions.

**Are There Existing Activities and Resources That Can Be Used Remotely?**

Below is a list of available resources that you can adopt or modify for creation of online activities or events, as well as resources that are ready for immediate use. You can share this information with participants, community members, students, and other constituencies, or you can use it to design virtual events that you take part in alongside members of these groups.

* The spread of COVID-19 led **[Ulpan-Or](https://www.ulpanor.com/)** to offer free access to all of its Hebrew teaching materials. On its website, you can find film clips and teaching booklets for use in distance learning.
* **[Makom](https://makomisrael.org/)** is offering an online course for college students and young people on the topic of [Challenging Israel Education](https://makomisrael.org/challenging-israel-course/). Interested parties should contact [Dagan](mailto:daganl@jafi.org) at **the School for Shlichut (Emissaries)**.
* **Duolingo**’s website [tinycards](https://tinycards.duolingo.com/decks/4ze65mu2/necessary-hebrew-phrases) offers interactive flashcards for Hebrew language study.
* By registering for free on the **[Quizlet](https://quizlet.com/300584929/israel-flash-cards/)** [website](https://quizlet.com/300584929/israel-flash-cards/), you gain access to a variety of prepared quizzes and games about Israel from which you can choose.
* By registering for free on the **Quizizz** website, you can gain access to [prepared quizzes about Israel.](https://quizizz.com/admin/quiz/590754db5701671000cdebd4/israel) When taking one of these quizzes, you can either take part independently or you can participate alongside others live (like Kahoot). The website displays the names of all group participants and you can test your knowledge against that of others.
* Those who register with the website futurelearn.com can take a [free online English-language course on Antisemitism](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/antisemitism) from its beginnings until today. There are multiple ways to participate in this course alongside others. You can use screen sharing to watch short course videos together, or you can register for the course as part of a group. When done this way, the course can function like a book club. Individuals can take the whole course or part of it independently, and then set a time to meet online to discuss course material with other members of their group.
* **[3D Israel](https://www.inisrael.com/3disrael/)** offers virtual tours of places in Israel places. These tours can be integrated into virtual meetings, they can serve as part of an online course, or they can perform other functions.
* Tel Aviv University offers a [free online course in English on Modern Israeli history](https://www.classcentral.com/course/history-israel-4791). Here too you can use screen sharing to watch short course videos with others, or you can register for the course as part of a group and employ the previously discussed book club model.
* The **[Israel Unpacked](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCU63EiU7Y-8xcRntPIRVrzA)** YouTube channel offers short film clips about Israel and Judaism that can be used to stimulate discussion or as part of a class.
* **[Jewish Interactive](https://www.jewishinteractive.org/)** offers games and short films about Hebrew and Israel that are ready for use, as well as the opportunity to create your own online games.
* The **[Israel Story](https://israelstory.org/he/)** podcast channel offers episodes in Hebrew and English, and they can spark discussions and conversations about varied aspects of Israeli culture and society. The format of the podcasts mimics radio play format and they are a lot of fun to listen to.

Wishing you good health and enjoyable and creative work!