

Seder Kriat HaTorah

A Curriculum Guide for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student
in a Home or Healthcare Setting

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Rationale

As a child approaches the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah we begin to impress upon him his or her responsibilities to the *kehilah*. We eagerly await the ceremony in which he leads his own community in prayer. But in that moment when we marvel at the young person's performance for the *kehilah*, we are in fact seeing so much more. Each prayer that he or she recites has the potential to represent a particular part of the young person's Jewish growth and the study Seder Kriat HaTorah – the prayers surrounding the reading of the Torah – has the potential to be truly powerful part of this growth.

The Torah reading itself and the dvar Torah upon a child's becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah are indeed wonderful moments, but the rituals surrounding these can be even more powerful learning experiences. Unlike the dvar Torah, these are prayers that he or she will be able to repeat with the community – indeed with any Jewish community – each time the Torah is read. They will forever connect the young person to his or her values and people. In addition, these prayers contain the history, values, wisdom and hopes of generations of Jews before us. To study Seder Kriat HaTorah is to study Jewish identity through the ages. Given that adolescence is when we begin to struggle in earnest with our own values and our place within our community, an in depth study of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* is perfectly suited to the emerging adolescent.

However, for those children who are unable to physically join the *kehilah* to pray because of illness or disability, becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah often lacks the valuable element of community. If it is felt that a student would be physically unable to join the *kehilah* to lead a Torah service they may not study *Seder Kriat HaTorah* at all, missing an invaluable opportunity to examine and strengthen their own Jewish values and identity. This course is designed with these students in mind. It addresses both the structure and content of the *Seder Kriat HaTorah* as well as the questions of how and why we should make a spiritual connection to the liturgy. It also specifically addresses the tension between the student's physical separation from the community and the communal nature of the *Seder Kriat Torah*. Alternative methods of joining the *kehilah* to lead a Torah service using technology are explored, as well as ways to use the liturgy more fully

when there is no way to physically join the kehillah. Throughout the course of study, the student is encouraged to actively engage in finding alternative ways of engaging with the liturgy.

The curriculum is based upon the following enduring understandings:

- . 1. Both the structure and content of the *Seder Kriat Torah* can serve as a common thread connecting Jewish people across a variety of movements and ideologies and across vast space and time.
- . 2. The *keva*, or fixed wording and choreography, of the *Seder Kriat Torah* allows Jews to engage in the Jewish social drama of the revelation of Torah at Sinai and encourages us to make personal decisions about whether and how to accept Torah in our own lives.
- . 3. By engaging in the *Seder Kriat Torah* with *kavanah*, intention, we can strengthen our relationship with God, Torah, and the Jewish people, three intertwined and inseparable elements that make up Judaism.

Because parents of children with special needs often have difficulty finding a professional Jewish studies teacher, this curriculum is designed to be taught by a parent or other layperson. Rather than assuming expertise on the part of the parent or tutor, it is designed to facilitate side-by-side learning and growth for both the teacher and the student. In this way the student can begin to acquire a sense of community through Torah as he or she learns with another.

A Note to the Teacher

This curriculum is designed to be taught by a parent or layperson with little teaching experience. The first three units are fully scripted, with self-contained lessons designed to be read aloud by you and your student. As you read each chapter aloud with your student, there are questions posed throughout the text. Some have places for you and the student to write your answers, as the curriculum is designed to encourage you both to learn and grow together. Of course, if writing is difficult for the student, you may choose to write his or her answer as he or she dictates it to you or you both may choose to answer verbally. Many of the questions are intended to be answered verbally and to spark discussion between the two of you. This curriculum is specifically designed to encourage such discussion.

The last two units are designed with two additional goals in mind. The first is to allow you to grow as a teacher while simultaneously modeling the process of passing Torah from generation to generation. The second is to allow you to concentrate on the unique talents and interests of you and your student. These units begin with one scripted lesson and are followed by suggested activities. There is a bibliography of general resources included, should you need them.

Because the focus of this curriculum is not Hebrew, important Hebrew terms used within the text are transliterated. For purposes of practicing chanting and recitation, integral to participation in the service, the Hebrew text of each prayer is included. The curriculum assumes that the student can read but not understand Hebrew, so the Hebrew text is alongside a line by line translation. If necessary, a transliteration of the Hebrew text used in any given lesson can be found at the end of that lesson

The metaphor of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* (The Torah Service) as a reenactment of the revelation at Sinai is one that I originally encountered in a curriculum entitled *S'fatai Tiftah* (Volume 3), by Torah Aura Productions, and can be found more fully explained in Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman's *My People's Prayer Book*. This curriculum is designed to encourage students to understand *Seder Kriat HaTorah* as part of a timeless social drama in which Jews have participated for generations, and to allow them to begin to acquire the tools they will need to participate with intention. In each unit they will be asked to consider both *keva* (set practice and the language of the prayer) and *kavanah* (intention and internal focus).

In terms of *keva*, I recognize that even being physically in the presence of a community may be difficult for a sick or disabled student. In the closing activity you and your student will be asked to discuss with your Rabbi or congregational leader various options for leading a service. These include, but are not limited to:

- leading the service via video conferencing, using resources such as www.illuminate.com/ or <http://skype.com/>
- leading a service in your home or healthcare setting with a smaller minyan
- lead a service at the synagogue, which may entail waiting until the student's personal situation allows for the student to

You will need to contact your Rabbi and prepare in advance for this session.

A final note about customs of individual congregations: Communities vary in individual customs

pertaining to Hebrew, recitations of particular prayers, and melodies used. It is suggested that you contact a leader of your student's community before beginning to discuss what your student will be expected to recite in Hebrew, and to which melodies. Many congregations can provide you with that information as well as audio recordings, which will be necessary for your student to practice their prayer skills.

It is my hope that this curriculum provides you with most of the support that you need, but please remember that a learning experience is only enriched when student and teacher engage fully in the process. To that end, I encourage you and your student to bring whatever personal experience you have to each, and add even to those lessons that are fully scripted.

B'Shalom,

Unit 1

Standing at Sinai

Goals: This unit is intended:

To introduce students the connection between *Seder Kriat HaTorah* and the event of the Jewish people standing at Sinai to receive the Torah.

To introduce the students to the idea that the three elements of God, Torah and Israel are all present within *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, and to demonstrate that these three elements are intertwined and inseparable.

To introduce students to the concepts of the *keva* and *kavanah*.

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast *Seder Kriat HaTorah* with the event of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.
2. Discuss how *Seder Kriat HaTorah* is a reenactment of standing at Sinai.
3. Explain the importance of experiencing this reenactment within a community.
4. Define the Hebrew terms *keva* and *kavanah*.
5. Articulate the importance of both *keva* and *kavanah* in prayer in general.

Understandings:

1. *Seder Kriat HaTorah* is a reenactment of the Jewish people standing at Sinai to receive the Torah.
2. The ritual and meaning behind *Seder Kriat HaTorah* brings together the three elements of God, Torah and the people Israel.
3. Meaningful Jewish prayer involves both *keva* and *kavanah*.

Lesson 1:1

A note to the teacher:

In this lesson the student will compare *Seder Kriat HaTorah* with the event of receiving the Torah at Mount. Sinai. They will examine the idea of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* as a social drama in which they take part, and through which they reenact the most sacred event of the Jewish people.

You will need extra paper and pencils for this lesson.

1:1

Together at Sinai

Introduction (5 min.)

Imagine that you are about to set out on a road trip to a place that you've never been. You know that your destination will be wonderful, and you plan to take pictures and videos when you get there. You also know that the trip itself will hold lots of surprises, so you plan to gather lots of souvenirs from the road, too. When you get home you collect everything to keep in a special box. You have pictures of everything, from the drive to the final destination. You've saved little souvenirs from roadside stands, and even things that might not mean anything to other people. They have meaning to you though, because you know that they represent the whole journey. You keep everything inside the box, so that some day other generations can look through it and really get the feel of your journey. Maybe they'll even take the journey themselves!

The Torah Service, ***Seder Kriat HaTorah*** is a reenactment of an amazing journey - the one on which the Israelites received the Torah. What makes this journey so unique is that it has been experienced again and again by Jews through countless generations. When we participate in ***Seder Kriat HaTorah***, we are reliving that journey. The easiest way to explain this is by seeing ***Seder Kriat HaTorah*** as a social drama - a sort of reenactment or play in which the whole community participates together. In this social drama we all relive the experience of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, as if we were all there.

Together with our community, we proclaim God's greatness while moving toward Mount Sinai. We ready ourselves for the moment of the revelation of the Torah and receive God's wisdom through Torah. As we, the People of Israel, stand before Mount Sinai with God and Torah, we realize that God, Torah and Israel are inseparable. We find different ways to express this in our lives as a Jewish community. Finally, we proclaim the Torah's greatness and return again to face Mount Sinai.

Questions (15 min.):

Why would a community want to reenact a part of its history?

Imagine a Torah service that you have seen. In what ways is participating in the Torah service similar to receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai? Make a list.

Torah Service

Receiving The Torah at Mount Sinai

Why is it important for Jews to remember the things that happened at Sinai?

Sacred Texts (10 min):

Here are some quotes from our Rabbis and Sages about Mount Sinai and the Torah. Answer the questions after each quote.

“When we study Torah with the congregation, we are returning to Sinai.” (*The Rokeach*)

What do you think the speaker meant by this statement?

“Every Jew should try to imagine the event at Sinai.” (*Emet v’Emunah*)

Why should Jews try to imagine the event at Sinai?

Summing Up (25 min):

Now that you have answered the question of why Jews should try to imagine the event at Sinai, you try to imagine the event. Together with your teacher, talk about how the Israelites might have felt when they were introduced to the Torah for the first time.

Now imagine that you are about to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah and lead *Seder Kriat HaTorah* for the first time. How do you think you will feel?

How might your feelings be similar to those of the ancient Israelites?

Lesson 1:2

A note to the teacher:

In this lesson the you and your student will read the biblical account of Moses receiving the Torah at mount Sinai. This account is found in Exodus 19 (the entire chapter). In addition, the 10 Commandments are found at the beginning of Chapter 20. The biblical text can be challenging for anyone, especially a young person, so take your time reading through the text and commentary, and talk about questions that interest you and your student as you go. The purpose of this entire lesson is for you and your students to familiarize yourself with the story.

You will need a Tanach for this lesson.

1:2

The Revelation Story

With all of this talk about *Seder Kriat HaTorah* being a reenactment of the story of the Israelites receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, it would probably help if we reviewed the story! The story is found in chapter 19 of the book of Exodus. Carefully read the story in the Tanach with your teacher and answer these questions together.

(Story Reading: 15 min)

Questions (25 min.):

Who are the characters in the story?

Retell the story in your own words.

Why do you think that the story begins by mentioning the Israelites' time in Egypt?

What did the people have to do to prepare to receive the Torah?

Why do you think they had to do this?

Why do you think that the Israelites agreed to accept the Torah even before Moses went up to bring it from Mount Sinai?

Discussion (10 min):

The Israelites agreed to accept the Torah even before Moses went up to bring it from Mount Sinai. Imagine that you are there with the ancient Israelites and ask your teacher to imagine that he or she is also there with you. Each of you decide whether or not you would accept the Torah before reading it. Discuss your answers with one another.

Lesson 1:3

A Note to the teacher:

In this lesson the student will be introduced to the idea that the three elements of God, Torah and Israel are inseparable within Judaism, and intertwined within *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

This idea will be a recurring theme throughout each unit. These first lessons and the first project will lay the groundwork for the lessons and activities to come, in which the student will examine both the communal meaning of, and his or her personal connection to, *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

1:3

God, Torah and Israel

(Introduction: 15 Min.)

We began our unit by talking about why it was important for the Jewish people to remember certain events in our history. What are some of the reasons that it is important to remember the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai?

In the last lesson you read and talked about the story of the Israelites receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. Can you retell the story to your teacher in your own words?

In this lesson, you will learn about a very special relationship that is formed when the Israelites receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. This event brings together three very important elements: God, Torah, and the people of Israel.

Questions (25 Min.):

Write a sentence that describes the relationship between God, Torah and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai.

Seder Kriat HaTorah is a reenactment of this event, so it also brings together these three elements.

Write a sentence that describes the relationship between God, Torah and the people of Israel in *Seder Kriat HaTorah*?

How are these relationships the same? How might they be different?

If you took one of the three elements, God, Torah or Israel, out of the sentences how would the relationship change?

Summing Up (5 min.):

Look back at your answers about the relationship between God, Torah and Israel. What do you think that they mean about the relationship between God, Torah and Israel?

Lesson 1:4

Note to the teacher:

In this lesson you and your student will explore what it means to be both a Jewish individual and part of a Jewish community. It is a lesson based mostly on a hands-on activity in which the student will express what it means to him or her to be Jewish and to be part of a community.

For the first activity you will need:

- a box big enough to hold a small scrapbook and a number of other small items - about 12 X 12 inches should be fine
- markers
- images to cut out
- any other decorations that can be easily glued on to decorate the box
- glue

*** The student will be asked to decorate the outside of the box with images and decorations that represent his or her own personal Jewish journey, so decorations or images with a Jewish theme would be appropriate.

1:4

Connecting With Our Past and Ourselves

(Introduction: 5 min.)

We began our lessons talking about a personal journey and moved on to talk about the journey of the entire Israelite people. Throughout this course we are going to think about both kinds of journeys: personal and communal. The Jewish people, the people Israel, reenact their journey each time they read together from the Torah, and that journey is sacred and wonderful! You, as an individual, have also been traveling. The way in which you thought of yourself as a Jew was different when you were in kindergarten than it is now, and that is your personal Jewish journey.

Now, you are about to decide to take the Jewish journey as a Jewish adult. You will decide whether or not to receive the Torah at Sinai, and you will decide what it means to accept the Torah. As you take your place as an adult within the Jewish community, you are accepting that Jewish memory, history and values are important to you. You will also bring to the community your own memory, history and values. How will they fit together? Each time you participate in ***Seder Kriat HaTorah*** you will answer that question again, reaffirming your relationship with God, Torah and Israel.

Activity (40 min.)

This project will help you explore your own Jewish journey and will set the stage for your learning about the historical journey that the people of Israel took when they accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai. Inside the box you will place a variety of finished projects that you will work on later in the course. Each project will represent a part of the journey of the Israelites. The outside of the box will represent your own personal Jewishness and Jewish journey.

Using whatever art supplies you choose, decorate the outside of the box to represent who you are as a Jew. Try to answer these questions with your artwork:

1. What were some very important moments in your Jewish life?
2. What are some ways that you express being Jewish at home, in the synagogue, and with non-Jews?
3. What is your favorite thing about being Jewish?
4. What do you find difficult about being Jewish?
5. What is special about your family's Jewish history?
6. How do your teacher and this course fit into your Jewish journey?

Summing up (10 Min):

Explain your artwork to your teacher using the guiding questions when you have finished. When you have completed your work, you will have a work of art describing your journey toward Jewish adulthood. As you fill it with other articles representing the communal journey of the Israelites, the two journeys will become represented in one artifact.

Lesson 1:5

Note to the teacher:

In this lesson, the student will learn about *keva* and *kavanah*, two ways of focusing ourselves in prayer. *Kavanah* is an internal focus on the deeper meaning of the prayer. *Keva* refers to the scripted words, melodies and body movements we use when we pray. Both are equally important. For some children with mobility impairment, body movement may be quite difficult and so the topic has the potential to be very sensitive. It is important for the student to know that Judaism would never require that someone do something that hurt or put them in danger, and so it is okay if his or her body language in prayer is different. Prayer from a chair, wheelchair or a bed is perfectly acceptable. This will be a topic that we will discuss many times throughout the course, and the student will be encouraged to find ways to express their own *keva* and *kavanah* safely and meaningfully.

1:5

Praying With Our Mind and Body

(Introduction: 10 min.)

You may still be wondering, “How have Jews who were never physically at Mount Sinai experienced this journey? Are they doing more than just imagining or remembering?” They have experienced it through participating in *Seder Kriat HaTorah* with *keva* and *kavanah*.

Keva is the fixed part of your prayer: the words in the prayer book, the melodies we chant, and the movement of your body, such as standing or bowing.

Kavanah is your internal focus and concentration on the deeper meaning of the prayer.

By focusing your whole mind and whole body, you can experience prayer as more than just words in a *siddur*. ***Kavanah*** can help you to focus on what the prayer is trying to teach us about ourselves and about God. There are many stories about how ***kavanah*** is important in Jewish prayer. Here is one:

Once there was an illiterate shepherd boy who went into synagogue to pray. The boy was deeply moved by the service, but frustrated that he could not read the prayers. He started to whistle along with the congregation's praying, the one thing he knew he could do beautifully. He wanted to offer his whistling as his own gift to God. The people were very angry and yelled at him to stop. The Ba'al Shem Tov (a great rabbi) quieted them "Until now," he said, "I could feel our prayers being blocked as they tried to reach the heavenly court. This young shepherd's whistling was so pure, however, that it broke through the blockage and brought all of our prayers straight up to God."

Questions (25):

What was more important to the people praying in the synagogue, *keva* or *kavanah*?

With his whistling, which one was the shepherd boy demonstrating?

Why do you think that the Ba'al Shem Tov said that the boy's whistling sent the congregation's prayers straight to God?

Do you agree with his statement? Why or why not?

What does your teacher think about this statement?

6. How are your opinions similar to and different one another?

(Text Study with questions: 20 min.)

Even though the Rabbis felt that **kavanah** was important, they also felt that **keva** and **kavanah** should be balanced. **Keva** connects us with our history and with the other people praying around us. It also helps us when we are unsure of what to say when we pray. Here are two rabbinic quotes which seem to contradict one another. They demonstrate that the Rabbis understood how difficult it was, and still is, to find balance in prayer.

...Rabbi Yose says, "Whoever changes the phrasing which the sages determined for *b'rachot* [blessings] has not fulfilled his obligation" [to recite the blessing]... (*B'rachot* 40b)

Rabbi Eliezer said: If a person prays only according to the exact fixed prayer and adds nothing from his own mind, his prayer is not considered proper. (*B'rachot* 28a)

Questions:

Sum up Rabbi Yose's statement in your own words?

Sum up Rabbi Eliezer's statement in your own words?

Can you identify which statement is about the importance of *kavanah* and which is about *keva*?

Summing up (5 min):

In your own words, write a few sentences about how *keva* and *kavanah* help us when we pray.

As we learn about the individual prayers within *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, ask yourself which you will need to focus on more to get the most out of prayer. It is different for everyone, and different for every prayer!

Unit 2

Preparing to Receive the Torah

Goals: This unit is intended:

To encourage students pray with *kavanah* as well as *keva* while reciting the prayers and blessings which begin *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

To enable students to identify and discuss the relationship between God, Torah and Israel as found in the opening liturgy of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

To encourage students to articulate their own personal beliefs about the meaning of Torah in their lives.

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

1. Chant the prayers and liturgical elements that make up the beginning of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.
2. Describe the content of each individual prayer in their own words.
3. Compare the beginning of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* to the historical narrative Israelites preparing to receive the Torah at Sinai.
4. Describe, in their own words, the nature of the relationship between God, Torah and Israel within the opening liturgy of the of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.
5. Compare and contrast the values and beliefs stated within the liturgy with their own beliefs.
6. Describe ways in which they can focus their own *kavanah* as they participate in this part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

Understandings:

1. The prayers recited at the opening of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* serve as an introduction to important beliefs and values that Jews hold about the Torah.
2. These beliefs and values have the power to connect us to Jews across time and space even denomination.
3. The prayers recited at the opening of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* represent a preparation stage in the social drama of the Israelites' receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. As we participate in this part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, we prepare ourselves to accept the Torah into our own lives.

Lesson 2:1

A note to the teacher:

In the next two lessons the student will analyze the opening prayers of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*. For this as well as all future liturgy studied within this course, the student will be asked to find and discuss the elements of God, Torah, and Israel within the prayer, and to analyze the prayers' themes and contents. The student will also be asked to examine the *keva* and *kavanah* of each prayer.

In these and all subsequent lessons, any Hebrew texts and their translations are provided, however it is important to note that there are different customs for every congregation, pertaining to melody as well as how much of the Hebrew is actually utilized within the service. To practice chanting, you will need to contact the student's congregation for an audio recording if you are not familiar with the community's custom.

2:1

Making a Good First Impression: Part 1

(Introduction: 25 min.)

Imagine that you are going to introduce your teacher to someone who is very important to you.. You want them to meet in person and become good friends, so you think carefully about what you are going to say to your teacher before you begin. Now try this exercise: Imagine that this person is on his or her way, and write a paragraph about him or her for your teacher. Ask your teacher to read the paragraph and tell you what he or she thinks about the person. See if your teacher can point to specific words in the paragraph that are important. Don't interrupt or correct. Just listen.

Were there things that your teacher missed?

Were there things that you forgot to add, or didn't write because you ran out of room?

Do you think your paragraph made a good first impression? Why or why not?

(*Ein Kamocha and Questions: 15 min.*)

First impressions are important! *Ein Kamocha*, the prayer with which we begin *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, is like the Torah's introduction to the Jewish people before they receive it at Sinai. It is as if we are saying "We are about to meet someone important! Here are some things we should remember about them."

In the very first lesson we talked about the idea that *Seder Kriat HaTorah* brings together the three essential elements of God, Torah, and Israel. Read the translation of *Ein Kamocha* below and mark the places where you find God, Torah and Israel talked about in this prayer. You may want to use different colored pens or pencils for each of the three, God, Torah and Israel.

Ein Kamocha

There is none like you among the gods, Adonai	אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בִּאֱלֹהִים, יי,
and there are no deeds like yours.	וְאֵין כַּמַּעֲשִׂיךָ.
Your kingdom is a kingdom for all eternity,	מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל עֲלָמִים,
and your reign is for all generations.	וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר.
Adonai reigns, Adonai has reigned,	יי מֶלֶךְ, יי מֶלֶךְ,
Adonai will reign forever and ever.	יי יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.
Adonai will give strength to His people,	יי עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן,
Adonai will bless His people with peace.	יי יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם.

Questions:

Which of the three elements of God Torah and Israel did you find?

Can you write a sentence describing the relationship among these elements?

Do you think that it is strange that the word “Torah” is not in this blessing? Why or why not?

How might you include Torah when you say this prayer without changing the words?

What is your teacher’s answer to this question?

Practice (20 min.):

Practice reading and chanting this text with your teacher. When you are fairly good at the *keva* of these prayers, begin to focus on your *kavanah*. See if you can add the element of Torah to your prayer with *kavanah*.

Transliterations

Ein Kamocha

Ein kamocha ba'elohim, Adonai,
v'ein k'ma'secha.
Mal'chut'cha mal'chut kol-olamim
umem'shal't'cha b'chol-dor vador.
Adonai melech, Adonai malach,
Adonai yimloch l'olam vaed.
Adonai oz l'amo yitein,
Adonai y'vareich at-amo vashalom.

2:2

Making a Good First Impression: Part 2

(*Av HaRachamin and Question: 15 min.*)

Even though all of the prayers we recite in *Seder Kriat HaTorah* contain all three elements of God, Torah and Israel, some of those elements are in the **keva** and some are in the **kavanah**. In other words, some are in the text itself, while others are found in the intention with which we pray. In the last lesson, you learned about *Ein Kamocha*. You looked for the relationship between God, Torah and Israel and had to think about both *keva* and *kavanah* to find that relationship. Here is another prayer that we recite right after *Ein Kamocha* where we encounter the same situation. This is *Av HaRachamin*.

Av HaRachamim

Source of Mercy,	אב הַרַחֲמִים,
favor Zion with your goodness,	הִיטִיבָה בְּרַצוֹנְךָ אֶת צִיּוֹן,
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.	תִּבְנֶנָּה חוֹמוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.
For in You alone do we trust,	כִּי בְּךָ לֵבָד בְּטַחֲנוּ,
King, high and exalted God, Eternal God.	מֶלֶךְ אֵל רַם וְנִשְׂאָ, אֲדוֹן עוֹלָמִים.

Which of the three of God, Torah and Israel elements can you find within the text?

Write a sentence about the relationship among these elements.

Look back at *Ein Kamocha* from the previous lesson. Write a sentence or two about how *Ein Kamocha* and *Av HaRachamim* fit together?

Practice (30 min.):

Practice reading and chanting both texts with your teacher. When you are fairly good at the *keva* of these prayers, begin to focus on your *kavanah*. See if you can add the element of Torah to your prayer with *kavanah*.

Transliterations:

Av Harachamim

Av harachamim,
heivivah birtzon'cha et-tzion;
tiv'neh chomot y'rushalayim.
Ki v'cha l'vad batach'nu,
melech eil ram v'nisa, adon olamim.

Lesson 2:3

A note to the teacher:

In this section the student will continue to analyze the opening prayers of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*. The student will be asked to find and discuss the elements of God, Torah, and Israel within the prayer and to analyze the prayer's theme and contents.

At this stage in the service *keva* begins to become a more complicated issue. Specifically, we will move forward in the service, concentrating on the prayers that are recited while the Holy Ark is first opened. Body movements such as bowing become part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*. Here is where the student must take the initiative to balance *keva* and *kavanah* so that they are able to lead their congregation while keeping prayer is meaningful for himself or herself. The student will again be asked to examine the *keva* and *kavanah* of each prayer and encouraged to describe how each works for him or her.

As usual, any Hebrew texts and their translations are provided, however it is important to note again that there are different customs for every congregation, pertaining to melody as well as how much of the Hebrew is actually utilized within the service. To practice chanting, you will need to contact the student's congregation for an audio tape if you are not familiar with the community's custom.

You will need a Tanach for this lesson.

2:3

Hakafah: Bringing the Torah to the People

(Introduction, Text, and Questions: 30 min.)

Now the Israelites are standing at the foot of Mount Sinai awaiting the Torah. Do you remember some of the things that they were told that they should and should not do in preparation to receive the Torah? (If you need to look reread the story, remember that it is in Chapter 19 of Exodus.)

Why do you think that God asked them to do these things?

At this point in *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, we have opened the Holy Ark and are preparing to carry the Torah out into the congregation. You may remember that the Israelites were told not to go up to the mountain with Moses. Instead, the Torah would come to them. The idea that the Torah is to go out among the people is also found in the book of Isaiah. It is so important, that we have put it into our liturgy. It can be seen in the text of the prayer on the next page that we read as we open the Holy Ark.

This is also the first time in *Seder Kriat HaTorah* that we see the Torah mentioned. Read the English translation of the prayer. Write two sentences about what this prayer says about the Torah.

1.

2.

Write a sentence about the relationship among God, Torah and Israel in this prayer.

For from Zion will come the Torah,	כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה,
And the word of God from Jerusalem.	וַיְדַבֵּר יְיָ מִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Blessed is God who gave Torah	בָּרוּךְ שֶׁנָּתַן תּוֹרָה
to His people Israel in His holiness.	לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִדְשׁוֹ.

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One	שִׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.
Our God is One,	אֶחָד אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
Adonai is great, His name is holy.	גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵנוּ, קְדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ.

Exalt Adonai with me,	גְּדָלוֹ לִי אֱתִי,
let us praise God's name together.	וְנִרְמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדָּו.

Discussion Questions (10 min):

Just as Moses brought the Torah to the Israelites, we, the Jewish people, bring the Torah out to others. What are some ways that the Torah has gone out from Jerusalem?

You too are part of the people of Israel. In what way can you bring the Torah to people around you?

Practice (20 min.):

Practice reading and chanting these texts with your teacher. When you are fairly good at the *keva* of these prayers, begin to focus on your *kavanah*. When focusing on your *kavanah*, try to focus on how you bring the Torah to the world around you.

Transliterations

Ki mitziyon teitzei Torah,
ud'var-Adonai miy'rushalayim.

Baruch shenatan torah
l'amo Yisrael bik'dushato.

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.
Echad eloheinu gadol adoneinu kadosh sh'mo.

Gad'lu l'Adonai iti,
un'rom'mah sh'mo yach'dav.

Lesson 2:4

A note to the teacher:

In this lesson the student will begin to meld his or her own experience with Torah with that of the communal Jewish experience. The student will explore the questions of what it means to him or her to accept Torah as an individual, as part of his or her family, as part of his or her community, and as a link in the chain of Jewish history. The student will explore these questions via art and musical interpretation. This lesson includes a quick review and an activity, including a CD and guiding questions.

For this activity, you and your student will be expressing yourself through art. Enjoy the experience as you learn from one another!

For this lesson you will need:

- the CD
- a CD player
- plain white paper for both you and your student
- markers, paints and brushes or finger paint (whichever medium you prefer)
- newspaper to protect your work area (if you choose to work with paint)

L'Dor V'Dor: From Generation to Generation

“In this scroll is the secret of our people’s life from Sinai until now. Its teaching is love and justice, goodness and hope. Freedom is its gift to all who treasure it.”

(Introduction and Questions: 20 min.)

In our last lesson we talked about the Torah going out from Jerusalem to the world. You also thought about your own role in bringing the Torah to the world. Here are just some of the ways that the Torah goes out into the world. Together with your teacher, try to think of examples of each one of these.

1. Jews bring the Torah and its lessons with them as they make their lives all over the world.
2. Jews live the values of Torah and teach Torah to those around them by setting an example.
3. Jews hand down the Torah’s lessons from generation to generation, and those lessons spread with each new generation.

When you were thinking of examples, did you realize that you and your teacher are an example of the third way that Torah goes out into the world? The Hebrew phrase *L'Dor V'Dor* means “from generation to generation.” When you and your teacher are studying together, Torah is being passed *L'Dor V'Dor*, a process that has been going on since the Israelites accepted the Torah at Sinai!

There are many songs that congregations sing together as during the ***hakafah***, the part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* during which the Torah is carried around the synagogue. One of the most popular is *L'Dor V'Dor*. It is especially appropriate when someone is becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. At a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony you may also hear the rabbi say the quote at the top of the page.

What do you think the connection is between *L'Dor V'Dor* and the quote at the top of the page?

What do they both have to do with becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah?

Activity (40 min) :

This lesson includes a CD of musical selections about L'Dor V'Dor. Listen to the first track of the CD with your teacher, then talk about what you heard. Both you and your teacher should talk about your impressions. Some questions to guide your discussion are:

1. Can you restate the lyrics in your own words?
2. What parts of the song did you like best and why?

3. What do you think the musicians were trying to say in this song, with both the music and the words?

Now prepare your workspace to draw or paint. As you and your teacher listen to the next track, each of you should create a picture that describes the music using the above questions for guidance. You may want to listen to the song more than once. When you are both finished, explain your artistic rendering of L'Dor V'Dor to one another.

Because this unit is about L'Dor V'Dor, you should place your own artwork as well as your teacher's artwork in your box. Together they represent generation after generation of teaching and learning Torah.

Unit Three

Reading the Torah: Blessings and Customs

Goals:

.This unit is intended to:

- Encourage students to pray with *kavanah* as well as *keva* while reciting the blessings recited before and after the reading of the Torah.
- . Encourage students to connect the reading of the Torah with God's revelation of Torah to the Jewish people.
- . Enable students to understand that certain prayers said for the community are particularly meaningful when recited during Seder Kriat HaTorah.

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- . 1. Chant the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah.
- 2. Identify the ideas of God, Torah, and Israel within the text of the Torah blessings.
- . 3. Chant the Mi Shebeirach
- . 4. Describe the content of the Mi Shebeirach in their own words and discuss what it means to ask God for health and healing.
- 5. Describe different ways in which we can derive healing from our Jewish community and from Torah.
- . 6. State the name and describe the contents of Birkat HaGomel, also chanted during an *aliyah*.
- 7. Explain the reasoning behind reciting Mi Shebeirach and Birkat HaGomel with a community around the Torah.
- . 8. Define the following Hebrew terms used when describing the blessing and reading of the Torah: *bimah*, *brachah* and *aliyah*.
- . 9. Compare the blessings recited before and after reading the Torah with the receiving of the Torah, one part of the larger social drama God's revelation to the Jewish people at Sinai.
- . 10. Articulate ways to direct their own *kavanah* while reciting the blessings.

Understandings:

- . 1. The reciting of the blessings before and after the Torah represents the giving of Torah within the social drama of revelation at Sinai. The reading of the Torah represents the receiving of the Torah.
- . 2. When we recite the Blessings over the Torah and read the Torah, we are engaging in an act that has brought together God, Torah and Israel for generations past.
- . 3. There are certain prayers said on behalf of our community that take on special meaning when said during an *aliyah*. By reciting these prayers at this time we bring together the three ideas of God, Torah, and Israel.

Lesson 3:1

A Note to the Teacher:

In this lesson, you and the student will compare the blessing and reading of the Torah to Moses' receiving of the Torah at Sinai. Particularly for students who are mobility-challenged, it may be difficult to talk about ascending a mountain or even ascending the *bimah* (pulpit) to read the Torah. However, every person has undertaken a difficult task with a great reward. Moreover, we all have the potential to feel awe, wonder, and holiness even when we have not literally climbed a mountain.

This lesson is designed to encourage the student to think about that awe, wonder and holiness as it relates to the event of the receiving of the Torah. It is also designed to encourage them to direct their heart and mind to those feelings as they participate in that part of Seder Kriat Ha Torah, whether or not they are leading the service.

3:1

Aliyah: Going Up

(Introduction: 15 min.)

In order to receive the Torah from God, Moses had to go to the top of Mount Sinai. Already, he and the Israelites had been on a long journey. They were tired and unsure of themselves, but there was still farther to go. Why do you think that Moses had to climb a mountain to receive the Torah?

Remember a time when you had to work very hard to achieve something. How did you feel as you were working?

Student_____

Teacher_____

How did you feel when you had finished?

Student_____

Teacher_____

How do you think Moses felt about having to climb to the top of Mount Sinai?

How do you think he felt standing at the top of the mountain?

Aliyah (20 min):

When a person is called to read the Torah we say that he or she is receiving an *aliyah*. *Aliyah* means “going up” in Hebrew. Why do you think we call it an *aliyah*?

One reason it is called an *aliyah* is because you usually have to go up several steps or a ramp to get to where the Torah is. The stage where most of the service takes place is called a *bimah*. Sometimes the Torah is not read from a *bimah*, though, and even then we still call people up for an *aliyah*.

Big Question: How is it possible to “go up” if we are not physically raised up?

You may have already guessed that there is another reason that it is called an *aliyah*. The part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* where we bless and read the Torah is like the part of the Israelites’ journey where Moses climbs mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Even though we are not really there, we direct our hearts and minds to that moment in Jewish history.

Given what you have learned about the symbolism of this part of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, What might you think about to direct your *kavanah* while you are blessing and reading the Torah?

Student _____

Teacher _____

Additional Thoughts About Kavanah (10 min):

Most people stand when they read from the Torah, because it helps focus their thoughts and create *kavanah*. Some people are unable to stand because they are sick, injured, or disabled. How might standing up help you focus on your prayer?

If you cannot stand when you pray, how else might you remind yourself to keep your *kavanah*?

Make a list:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Lesson 3:2

A note to the teacher:

This lesson is an art activity designed to encourage the student to further explore the special meaning of going up to receive the Torah. It is essentially a continuation of the last lesson. Begin by reviewing the word *aliyah* - going up - and talking about the fact that Moses had to go up to receive the Torah. Once you and your student have reviewed the last lesson, proceed to the activity.

Materials needed:

- a stapler
- several pieces of heavy paper
- magazines to cut out
- pencils
- crayons or markers

Of course, you can purchase other materials and make the scrapbook as elaborate as you wish!

3:2 Moses' Aliyah

(Introduction: 5 min.)

In Unit 1 you read the biblical story of the Israelites receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. What role did Moses play in the story?

Can you imagine how Moses may have felt during all of this?

As you work on the next activity, keep in mind the role that Moses played in receiving the Torah at Sinai. Try to imagine what he experienced and how he may have felt.

Activity (50 min.)

Scrapbook: Have you ever made a scrapbook to remember a journey or a special event? What would a scrapbook of Moses' journey to receive the Torah? Make a scrapbook of how you imagine the event. You can write journal entries, create art or use objects to depict what Moses might have felt and thought. Make at least 4 pages:

- . Setting out on the journey
- . Climbing up the mountain
- . Receiving the Torah
- . Climbing back down

When you have finished, retell the story with your parent or teacher.

Lesson 3:3

A note to the teacher:

In this lesson the student will learn to chant the blessings before and after the Torah and will analyze the contents of those blessings. If you do not have audio recordings provided by your congregation and you are not sure, check with someone from your community to be sure of the usual melody.

This would be a good time to discuss with your student his or her options for reading the Torah for his or her community. These options include, but are not limited to:

- Reading Torah at the synagogue, if this is physically possible
- Reading Torah from a home or healthcare setting while being linked to their congregation via video-conferencing technology
- Reading Torah for a small community gathered at the student's home or healthcare setting.

With each of these options, remind the student that it is perfectly fine to wait until they are physically ready to take on their choice of action. Talking to the student's rabbi or congregational leader will help the student to decide what will work best.

3:3

Brachot HaTorah

(Introduction: 10 min)

On Shabbat morning the Torah portion is divided into several sections or *aliyot* (plural of *aliyah*). For each *aliyah*, a ***brachah*** is said before and after we read from the Torah. ***Brachah*** is the Hebrew word for blessing. The plural of ***brachah*** is ***brachot***. In the last lesson we compared the reading of the Torah to the moment where Moses climbs up the mountain to receive the Torah for the Israelites. Look at the English translation of the blessings for the Torah reading on the next page. Mark the places where you find God, Torah and Israel talked about in this blessing. You may want to use different colored pens or pencils for each of the three, God, Torah and Israel.

After you have marked the places where you find God, Torah, and Israel, answer the following questions about the ***brachot***.

Questions (15 Min):

What do these ***brachot*** say about God?

What do these ***brachot*** say about the Torah?

What do these ***brachot*** say about Israel?

Write a sentence about the relationship among God, Torah and Israel in these ***brachot***.

Practice (25 min):

It is important to keep in mind both *kavanah* and *keva* when studying prayer. Remember that *kavanah* is your internal focus and concentration. *Keva* is the fixed part of your prayer: the words in the prayer book, the melodies we chant, and the movement of your body. Practice reading and chanting the *brachot* over the Torah on the next page.

Brachah Before the Torah Reading

We bless Adonai who is blessed.	בָּרְכוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ.
congregation replies: Blessed is Adonai who is blessed forever and ever.	בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
you continue: Blessed is Adonai who is blessed forever and ever.	בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
Blessed are you Adonai	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
our God, ruler of the Universe	אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
who has chosen us from all the peoples	אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים
and has given us his Torah.	וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.
Blessed are you Adonai, who gives the Torah.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Brachah After the Torah

Blessed are you Adonai	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
our God, ruler of the Universe	אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
who has given to us the Torah of truth	אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,
and planted within us eternal life.	וַחַיִּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.
Blessed are you Adonai, who gives the Torah.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Transliterations

Torah Blessings:

Before:

Congregation, then Reader:

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach

l'olam va'ed -

Reader:

Baruch atah, Adonai

eloheinu, melech ha'olam,

asher bachar-banu mikol ha'amim

v'natan lanu et-torato.

Baruch atah Adonai noten hatorah

After:

Baruch atah,

Adonai eloheinu, melech ha'olam,

asher natan lanu torat emet

v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.

Baruch atah, Adonai, notein hatorah.

Lesson 3:4

A Note to the Teacher:

In the next two lessons the student will learn about other blessings and prayers traditionally said while the Torah is out of the Ark. *Mi Shebeirach*, a prayer for asking God for health and wellbeing, and *Birkat HaGomel*, a prayer said after experiencing a dangerous or life-threatening situation, are both prayers that can evoke strong feelings in anyone. For this reason they can be a difficult topic for a sick or disabled young person. While being able to recite the prayers for one's community is important, it is equally important that the student is allowed to explore and voice his or her feelings about God and illness.

As for the recitation of the prayers themselves, while the full text is included in this curriculum, not all congregations recite the full *Mi Shebeirach*. If you do not have audio recordings provided by your congregation and you are not sure, check with someone from your community to be sure of the usual custom.

Blessings and Customs: Part 1

Introduction and questions (15 min):

There are other *brachot* that are traditionally said during an *aliyah*. One is the *Mi Shebeirach*, which asks God to for help and protection. In this lesson we will study the traditional version that is chanted after the Torah reading, but it is important to know that there are many different texts. Some ask for healing for anyone in the congregation. Some are longer and some are shorter, and there are different melodies. What text and melody does your own congregation use for the *Mi Shebeirach*?

The *Mi Shebeirach* is an interesting prayer, both because of what it says and because of when we recite it. Read the translation of the text and answer the following questions.

Mi Shebeirach

May the one who blessed our ancestors,	מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob	אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah,	שָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה
may God bless __ (insert name) __	הוּא יְבָרֶךְ אֶת _____
since he (she) has come up to the Torah in honor of God	בְּעִבוּר שְׁעָלָה (שְׁעָלָתָה) לְכָבוֹד הַמָּקוֹם,
and in honor of the Torah.	וְלְכָבוֹד הַתּוֹרָה.
May he (she) be rewarded from God	בְּשִׂכָר זֶה, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
may he (she) be protected and rescued	יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ (יִשְׁמְרֶהָ) וְיַצִּילֵהוּ (וְיַצִּילֶהָ)
from all misfortune and hardship,	מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה
and from all plague and illness,	וּמִכָּל נֶגַע וּמַחֲלָה,
and may God send blessing and success	וְיִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה וְהַצְלָחָה
in all that he (she) does,	בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו (יָדֶיהָ),

May the one who blessed our ancestors,	מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ
with all Israel. And let us say Amen	עִם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

What are we asking God for when we recite this prayer?

Why might we ask God for these things when we are reading the Torah?

Why might we ask God for these things when we are together with the whole community?

Learn from each other (15 min.):

There is another version of *Mi Shebeirach* that we recite when someone is sick or hurt. In it we ask God to heal those who are sick. Why might we ask God for healing during *Seder Kriat HaTorah*?

Have you ever visited someone who was sick or hurt? Do you think that your visit was good for them, even if it didn't heal their illness? Why or why not?

Trade stories with your teacher about a time that you visited someone who was sick or hurt. Talk about what you did when you visited and why. Listen as your teacher tells their story. In what ways are your stories alike and in what ways are they different?

Personal Reflection (15 min.):

What kinds of things help us to heal when we are sick?

In what ways do you believe that God helps heal people from sickness?

How can Torah help us heal?

In what ways can our community help us heal?

Practice (15 min):

When you are finished, practice reciting the Mi Shebeirach according to your community's custom.

Transliterations

Mi Shebeirach

Mi sheberach avoteinu v'imoteinu,
Avraham, Yitzchak v'Ya'akov,
Sarah, Rivkah v'Leah.
Hu yevarech et ha'cholim
Ba-avur she'alah l'kavod makom.
v'likvod hatorah.
Bishkar ze, hahadosh baruch hu
Yish'mrehhu v'yazilehu
Micol Zarah v'tzukah
U'micol negah U'machalah
V'yishlah brachah v'hatxlachah
B'col ma'aseh yadav,
Im kol Yisrael echav.
V'nomar Amen.

3:5 Blessings and Customs: Part 2

Birkat HaGomel

Introduction and questions (15 min.):

In the last lesson we learned about the *Mi Shebeirach*, which asks God to for help and protection. Here is another *brachah* recited during *aliyah*, right after the blessing after the Torah reading. It is called *Birkat HaGomel* and is said by a person who has just survived a dangerous situation or illness. Read the English translation and answer the questions that follow.

The person having an *aliyah* says:

Blessed are you Adonai our God, ruler of the universe	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
who has given us every goodness.	שֶׁגָּמְלָנוּ כָּל טוֹב.

The congregation replies:

Amen. May the one who has given us every goodness	אָמֵן. מִי שֶׁגָּמְלָךְ כָּל טוֹב,
continue to give us every goodness forever.	הוּא יִגְמְלֶךְ כָּל טוֹב סָלָה.

What is this prayer thanking God for?

What does it have to do with surviving a dangerous situation or illness?

Why do you think that the congregation says a part of this blessing?

Discussion Question (15 min.):

The *brachot* that we have studied in these last two lessons are about frightening things that happen to individuals. Why do you think that Jews have developed the custom of praying about these things together, as a community, while gathered around the Torah?

Practice (25 min):

Practice reading *Birkat HaGomel* from this lesson and the *Mi Shebeirach* from the previous lesson. Remember that it is important to keep in mind both *kavanah* and *keva* when studying prayer. Remember that *kavanah* is your internal focus and concentration. *Keva* is the fixed part of your prayer: the words in the prayer book, the melodies we chant, and the movement of your body.

Transliterations

Birkat HaGomel

Birkat Ha Gomel:

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, Hagomel lechayavim tovot,
shegemalani kol-tov.

Congregation replies:

Mi shegmalcha kol-tov hu yigmalecha kol-tov selah.

Lesson 3:6

A note to the teacher:

This lesson sums up the portion of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* where the Torah is read and honored. It will include a short prayer, but the study of that prayer will take up only part of the usual hour allotted for the lesson. The rest of the time is intended for the student to practice the reading and chanting of the Hebrew prayers covered thus far in this unit. Of course, you should feel free to take time between lessons to practice as needed.

As usual, chanting practices vary by congregation, so use whatever audio materials that you have obtained from the student's congregation.

3:6

Hagbahah Ug'lilah

(Introduction: 10 min)

Finally we have come to **Hagbahah Ug'lilah**, the place in *Seder Kriat HaTorah* where we lift up and wrap the Torah. As we've studied each part of the liturgy thus far, we have looked to find God, Torah and Israel in each prayer. Sometimes it was not obvious, but each time you wrote a sentence about the relationship between God, Torah, and Israel. This time the sentence is already written for you!

Read the prayer below and answer the questions that follow.

This is the Torah which Moses placed	זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה
before the people of Israel,	לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
God's word through the hand of Moses.	עַל פִּי יְיָ בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה.

Why do you think that it is not until the end of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* that this relationship between God, Torah and Israel is spelled out so clearly?

Do you think that it helped you to develop your own **kavanah** to have to search for God, Torah, and Israel within the text? Why or why not?

Kavanah (10 min.):

We have talked a lot so far about **keva** and **kavanah**. Much of the **keva** of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* involves standing and sometimes lifting the Torah, and for some people this is difficult or impossible. You should remember that it is certainly okay for someone not to stand if they have difficulty doing so, but this means that you should pay even closer attention to your **kavanah**. People usually stand and face the Torah while the Torah is lifted. If you are unable to stand, how do you create more **kavanah** for yourself as you watch the Torah lifted and here the prayer above recited?

Practice (30 min.):

This unit has included a number of prayers that you have been learning to recite and chant in Hebrew. Use the remaining time for this lesson to focus on the places where you need more practice. As you practice, remember that prayer requires both *keva* and *kavanah*.

Transliteration

V'zot HaTorah, asher sam Moshe
Lifnei B'nei Israel
Al pi Adonai, b'yad Moshe.

Unit 4

The Haftarah Blessings

Goals:

.This unit is intended to:

Encourage students to pray with *kavanah* as well as *keva* while reciting the blessings recited before and after the reading of the Haftarah.

. Enable students connect the reading of the Haftarah with the part of the biblical narrative in which Israelites learn Torah from Moses.

Allow students to explore the roles of biblical prophets and their own relationships to those figures.

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- . 1. Chant the blessings before and after the reading of the Haftarah.
2. State that the Haftarah readings come from the Prophets, called *Nevi'im* in Hebrew.
3. Identify the ideas of God, Torah, and Israel within the text of the Haftarah blessings and describe the relationship between those elements.
- . 4. Compare the blessings recited before and after reading the Haftarah with the Israelites' learning Torah from Moses, one part of the larger social drama God's revelation to the Jewish people at Sinai.
- . 5. Identify characteristics and responsibilities of biblical prophets.
6. Discuss ways in which they (the students) embody those characteristics and take on those responsibilities.
7. Articulate ways to direct their own *kavanah* while reciting the blessings.

Understandings:

- . 1. The reciting of the blessings before and after the reading of the Haftarah represents the Israelite's learning of Torah from Moses within the social drama of revelation at Sinai.
- . 2. When we recite the blessings over the Haftarah and read from the Prophets, we are given the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which we teach and learn Torah within our community, and the ways in which this has been done for generations.
3. The reciting of the blessings over the Haftarah, the people of Israel take an active role in the relationship between God, Torah, and Israel.

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Unit 4

A note to the teacher:

This is the first of the two units of this course which are less scripted, allowing you to more fully utilize your own Jewish knowledge and interests, your unique personality, and your special relationship with your student! The first lesson in the unit will be fully scripted, to give you a solid base from which to begin teaching and learning with your student. After the first lesson there will be a list of essential questions and ideas, along with the text and translation of the Haftarah blessings, to guide your teaching and learning. You will also find several sample activities to choose from.

You can choose to incorporate the discussion of the essential questions with any of the activities in any way you choose.

This list of questions is by no means exhaustive, and I encourage you to explore the Haftarah as fully as you are able. The same is true of the sample activities. This is your chance to highlight the talents and interests that you and your student share!

Remember that there is a resources section to help you prepare and augment your own knowledge.

You will need a Tanach for this unit.

4:1

Haftarah: In Need of a Prophet

(Introduction and reading: 10 min.)

When Moses first returned from talking to God on Mount Sinai, God began to speak to the Israelites. God began by teaching the Israelites the Ten Commandments, but the story becomes complicated. Suddenly, the Israelites seem to need a prophet, someone to deliver God's words to the people. Read Exodus chapter 20:1-19 and answer these questions.

(Questions: 35 min.)

Summarize what God tells the Israelites in the first part of the story?

What is another name for these statements?

What do the Israelites see and hear?

How do the Israelites react when God speaks to them?

Why does Moses say that God speaks to the people in this way?

What solution does Moses find to help the Israelites?

Do you agree with the solution? Why or why not?

Write a sentence about the relationship between God, Torah and Israel within the Haftarah blessings.

(Summary: 10 min.)

There were many prophets after Moses who spoke to the people on God's behalf. Sometimes they spoke to the people about justice and treating each other with love and dignity. Sometimes they warned the Israelites about misbehavior and prophesied that they would be punished if they did not change their ways. In every case, they listened to the word of God and had the courage to speak to the people, even when it was difficult.

Their words are collected in *Nevi'im*, Hebrew for prophets. *Nevi'im* comes right after the five books of the Torah, and from it we get the *Haftarah* readings. *Haftarah* does not mean "half Torah." The word comes from the Hebrew word for conclusion. We begin to conclude *Seder Kriat HaTorah* with the reading of the *Haftarah*, a selection from *Nevi'im*.

Why do you think that the conclusion of *Seder Kriat HaTorah* starts with our reading from *Nevi'im*?

More on Haftarah

Blessings:

Blessing Before Reading Haftarah

Blessed are you Adonai	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי
our God, ruler of the universe,	אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
who has chosen good prophets.	אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנְבִיאִים טוֹבִים,
and was pleased with their words	וְרָצָה בְּדְבָרֵיהֶם
that were said in truth	הַנֶּאֱמָרִים בְּאֵמֶת.
Blessed are you Adonai, who chooses Torah;	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַבוֹחֵר בַּתּוֹרָה
and Moses, his servant; and Israel, his people;	וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ, וּבִישְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ,
and the prophets of truth and justice.	וּבְנְבִיאֵי הָאֵמֶת וְצֶדֶק.

Blessing After Reading Haftarah

Blessed are you Adonai	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי
our God, Ruler of the Universe,	אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
rock of all eternity,	צוּר כָּל הָעוֹלָמִים,
righteous in all generations,	צַדִּיק בְּכָל הַדּוֹרוֹת,
the God of faith who says and does,	הָאֵל הַנֶּאֱמָן הַאֹמֵר וְעֹשֶׂה,
who speaks and fulfills,	הַמְדַּבֵּר וּמְקַיֵּם,
whose every word is true and just.	שֶׁכָּל דְּבָרָיו אֵמֶת וְצֶדֶק.

For the Torah, for worship,	עַל הַתּוֹרָה, וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה,
for the prophets and for this Shabbat,	וְעַל הַנְּבִיאִים, וְעַל יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה,
that you, Adonai our God, gave to us,	שֶׁנָּתַתָּ לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ,

For the Torah, for worship,	עַל הַתּוֹרָה, וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה,
for holiness and for rest,	לְקֹדֶשׁה וְלַמְנוּחָה,
for honor and for glory,	לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאַרֶת,

for everything, Adonai, our God,	עַל הַכֹּל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
we thank you,	אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ,
and we bless you.	וּמְבָרְכִים אוֹתְךָ.
May your name be blessed from the mouths of all that lives	יִתְבָּרַךְ שִׁמְךָ בְּפִי כָּל חַי
always and forever.	תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
Blessed are you Adonai, who sanctifies Shabbat.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

Essential questions:

1. What is the relationship between God, Torah, and Israel in these texts?
2. How does the reading from the *Nevi'im* fit into the story of the Israelites' receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai?
3. What do you think that the authors of this text intended your *kavanah* to be?
4. How do you focus your own kavanah when reading or reciting these blessings?

Transliteration

Before Haftarah:

Haftarah:

Baruch atah, Adonai eloheinu, melech ha'olam,
asher bachar bin'vi'im tovim v'ratzah v'divreihem hane'emarim be'emet. Baruch
atah, Adonai, habocher batorah uv'mosheh av'do uv'yisrael amo u'vin'viyei
ha'emet vatzedek.

After Hatarah:

Baruch atah, Adonai eloheinu, melech ha'olam, tzur kol-ha'olamim, tzadik
b'chol-hadorot, ha'eil hane'eman, ha'omer v'oseh, ham'dabeir u'mkayeim,
shekol-d'varav emet vatzedek.

Al hatorah v'al ha'avodah v'al han'vi'im v'al yom hashabat hazeh shenatatah lanu,
Adonai eloheinu, lik'dushah v'lim'nuchah l'chavod ul'tif'aret; al hakol, Adonai
Eloheinu, anachnu modim lach, um'varchim otach. Yit'barach shim'cha b'fi
kol-chai tamid l'olam va'ed.

Baruch atah, Adonai, m'kadesh hashabat.

Sample Activities:

Prophet Wanted

In this activity the student will be asked to think about what makes a good prophet. When they are finished, they should be able to answer questions such as:

- A prophet often served to communicate God's will to the people. If the people had the Torah, why did they need a prophet?
- What were some challenges that a prophet may have faced?
- What do you think life was like for a prophet?
- What qualities or talents do you think that a prophet needed to do his or her job well?
- Which of those qualities do you see in modern-day public figures?
- Which of those qualities do you see in yourself?

Resources:

Abraham Joshua Heschel. The Prophets. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

The first chapter, *What Manner of Man is the Prophet*, is a good resource for the teacher to read before the lesson. The section headings can be used to create a list of attributes that describe a prophet. A photocopy is included following the annotated bibliography.

Supplies you will need:

- Construction paper or heavy white paper
- Markers and pens
- Jewishly themed stickers (optional)
- Stencils (optional)

Instructions:

1. Begin with a discussion about what the life of a prophet might have been like.
2. Make a list of attributes that you think a person would need to be a good prophet.
3. Now create a flier advertising "Prophet Wanted." In your advertisement, be sure to state which qualities and skills you want your prophet to have. Decorate it as much as you like.
4. Now discuss with your teacher why you chose to word and decorate the advertisement as you did.

Kavanah: Bring Light and Color to Prayer

Supplies you will need:

- Crayola Color Explosion Paper (black) and Markers
- The text and translation of the blessing after the Haftarah reading
- colored pens or pencils

Instructions:

1. Read the translation of the blessing after the Haftarah and underline each of the things that we are thanking God for. Use a different color for each item.
2. Choose which one directs your personal *kavanah* the most when you recite this blessing.
3. Using the Crayola Color Explosion Paper, draw your interpretation of this phrase.

4. If you have time, do more of them. Hang them up in the order that they appear in the prayer. You can use them to focus your *kavanah* while you practice your *keva*, reciting the prayer.

Creating Keva: Write Your Own Blessing

Supplies you will need:

- The text and translation of the blessing after the Haftarah reading
- lined paper
- pencil
- colored pens

Instructions:

1. If you have not already, read the translation of the blessing after the Haftarah and underline each of the things that we are thanking God for. Use a different color for each item.
2. Decide which of the things that we are thanking God for speak to you.
3. Now think of your own Jewish journey, or even the journeys of your friends and family members. Is there anything you would like to add? If so, write those things down on your paper?
4. Do the same thing for the first part of the blessing, where you will read many descriptions of God.
5. Now create your own blessing, combining those parts of the original blessing with your own thoughts.

Practice Makes Perfect Keva

Supplies you will need:

- The text of the blessings before and after the Haftarah reading
- an audio recording of the blessings as your congregation chants them

Instructions:

Practice chanting the blessings before and after the Haftarah until you can do so without making mistakes. Start with the first line, and add another as you master each one. Remember, practice makes perfect!

Unit 5
Conclusion: Returning the Torah to the Ark

Goals:

.This unit is intended to:

Encourage students to pray with *kavanah* as well as *keva* while reciting the blessings recited to conclude the Torah service.

. Enable students to see and articulate the similarities between the opening and the conclusion of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

Enable students to view *Seder Kriat HaTorah* as a whole, and as a reenactment of the Israelites' receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

- . 1. Chant the blessings recited to conclude the Torah service.
2. Compare *Seder Kriat HaTorah* with the Israelites' receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.
3. Identify the ideas of God, Torah, and Israel within the blessings recited to conclude the Torah service.
4. Articulate ways to direct their own *kavanah* while reciting these blessings.

Understandings:

- . 1. The blessings that conclude *Seder Kriat HaTorah* are in many ways a reflection of the opening blessings, and serve to remind us of several important ideas within *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.
2. The Torah will always lead the people of Israel back to God.

Unit 5

A note to the teacher:

This is the second of the two units with this course which are less scripted, and the last unit of the course. As in the previous unit, the first lesson in the unit will be fully scripted, to give you a solid base from which to begin teaching and learning with your student. After the first lesson there will be a list of essential questions and ideas, along with the text and translation of the closing prayers of *Seder Kriat HaTorah*, to guide your teaching and learning. You will also find a list of resources, and several sample activities to choose from.

This list of questions is by no means exhaustive, and I encourage you to explore the ideas presented in this unit as fully as you are able. The same is true of the sample activities. This is your chance to highlight the talents and interests that you and your students share!

5:1

Conclusion: Coming Full Circle

(Introduction and questions: 10 min.)

Seder Kriat HaTorah ends in much the same way it begins. As we return the Torah to the Ark, we sing the prayer below. Restate the prayer in your own words.

Gods's glory is above the earth and sky.	הוֹדוּ עַל אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם.
And God will lift up the pride of God's people,	וַיָּרִם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ,
causing God's devoted people to be praised,	תְּהַלֶּה לְכָל-חֲסִידָיו,
for Israel, a people close to God.	לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם-קָרְבּוֹ.
Hallelu Yah!	הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה!

Ein Kamocha, the prayer with which we started the Torah service, has been reprinted below for this lesson. Reread the prayer above and compare it to *Ein Kamocha*. What do these two prayers have in common

Ein Kamocha

There is none like you among the gods, Adonai	אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בָּאֱלֹהִים, יְיָ,
and there are no deeds like yours.	וְאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ.
Your kingdom is a kingdom for all eternity,	מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל עֲלָמִים,
and your reign is for all generations.	וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר.
Adonai reigns, Adonai has reigned,	יְיָ מֶלֶךְ, יְיָ מֶלֶךְ,
Adonai will reign forever and ever.	יְיָ יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.
Adonai will give strength to His people,	יְיָ עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן,
Adonai will bless His people with peace.	יְיָ יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם.

Why do you think it is important to end a journey by reviewing where you have been and what you have said and done?

(Talking about the Torah: 20 min.)

After we have reviewed where we have been, we finally conclude by celebrating the Torah! You have probably heard the words of song below many times. It is sung to many different tunes and is a joyful song celebrating what the Israelites have gained on their journey, and what we have gained on ours. It is so important that we often sing it at times other than *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.

Read the blessing below. Have you heard it sung before? Can you sing it to a tune you know?

Eitz Chayim

It is a tree of life	עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא
for those who hold fast to it,	לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ,
and all of its supporters are happy.	וְתַמְכֶיהָ מְאֻשָּׁר.
Its path is a path of pleasantness,	דִּרְכָּהּ דִּרְכֵי נֵעַם,
and all of its paths are peace.	וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם.
Return us to you, Adonai, and we will return;	חֲשִׁיבֵנוּ יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה,
renew our days as before.	חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם.

What does this blessing say about the Torah?

What does it mean to say that all who support the Torah are happy?

Do you agree with the statements made in this blessing? Why or why not?

How do you think that the lives of the ancient Israelites might have been different without Torah?

(Summary: What Torah means to me: 15 min)

How might your life be different without Torah?

Why do *you* think that it is important to study Torah?

Transliterations:

Conclusion:

Hodo al eretz v'shamayim, vayarem keren l'amo
t'hilah l'chol chasidav, livnei Yisrael am kerovo
Halleluyah.

EitzChayim:

Eitz chayim hi

lamachazikim bah,

v'tom'cheha m'ushar.

D'racheha dar'chei no'am

v'chol n'tivotaha shalom.

Hashiveinu Adonai eilecha, v'nashuvah.

Chadeish yameinu k'kedem.

Sample Activities:

Climbing the Mountain

I highly recommend this activity, as it gives you and your student a chance to synthesize of of the knowledge that you have gained over your course of study. You should take more than one session for this activity. The finished product has the potential to be as beautiful as its creation is meaningful.

Supplies you will need:

- Large piece of white poster board
- pencils
- markers
- lined paper

Instructions:

1. On the lined paper, make a list of all of the prayers in *Seder Kriat HaTorah* that you have studied. Skip a few lines between each prayer.
2. Go back and write about some of the themes and **kavanah** each prayer.
3. On the large poster board, use your pencil to sketch the outline of a mountain.
4. Think about the idea that *Seder Kriat HaTorah* is a reenactment of the Israelites' receiving of the Torah at mount Sinai. Write the names of each of the prayers that you have studied in the place where they would be on the journey (*tip: they received the Torah at the top*).
5. Now fill in your drawing and illustrate the mountain with pictures and words that reflect the **kevah** and **kavanah** of each prayer.

The Torah On One Foot

Supplies you will need:

- parchment paper
- black pen
- two large popsicle sticks or tongue depressors
- scissors
- glue or tape

Instructions:

1. Review your answers from the previous lesson about how life would be different without the Torah.
2. Cut the parchment paper into several pieces so that it is slightly shorter than the popsicle sticks. You want the popsicle sticks to be like the two rollers of the Torah. On the paper you will write your own Torah.
3. On each piece of parchment paper, write a way that the Torah has changed the lives of Jews, either past or present.
4. Tape or glue the pieces together and attach them to the popsicle sticks.
5. When you are finished, roll up your mini-Torah and put it in your keepsake box.

Practice Makes Perfect Keva

Supplies you will need:

- The text of the prayers concluding *Seder Kriat HaTorah*.
- an audio recording of the blessings as your congregation chants them

Instructions:

Practice chanting the prayers concluding *Seder Kriat HaTorah* until you can do so without making mistakes. Start with the first line, and add another as you master each one. Remember, practice makes perfect!

Closing Activity

A note to the teacher:

For this activity you will need to contact your rabbi in advance and make an appointment for him to visit you and your student. Of course, this meeting can take place in the synagogue or any other setting that you find appropriate. There are two parts to this meeting, each with a different objective.

The first objective is for the student to meet the Torah and interact with it personally. Ask the Rabbi to bring the Torah to the meeting and be prepared to talk to your student about the congregation's connection with this particular sefer Torah. Some things the Rabbi might want to talk about include:

- How did your congregation acquire this Torah?
- What was the Torah's history prior to being acquired by your congregation?
- How many generations have read from this Torah?

This is also the Rabbi's opportunity to discuss ways in which we treat the Torah with *kavod* (respect). You might even ask the Rabbi to answer the big question you and your student have been wrestling with in this course: What does the Rabbi think is the relationship between God, Torah and Israel?

The second objective is to talk with the Rabbi about options for celebrating your student's Bar or Bat Mitzvah, such as

- leading the service via video conferencing, using resources such as www.illuminate.com/ or <http://skype.com/>
- leading a service in your home or healthcare setting with a smaller minyan
- lead a service at the synagogue, which may entail waiting until the student's personal situation allows for the student to

By now you and your student have likely discussed some of these options and have opinions on what might work best, so bringing your Rabbi into the conversation is the natural next step in preparing your student to pass the *Torah L'dor V'dor!*

Annotated Bibliography

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. S'fatai Tiftah: Volume 3: Teacher's Guide. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2003. This curriculum also teaches *Seder Kriat HaTorah* as a reenactment of the Israelite's standing at Sinai. The curriculum is very text-based and a wonderful resource for Jewish stories to start conversation.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. The Prophets. New York: Harper and Row, 1969. The first chapter is a wonderful resource for the teacher to read prior to the activity in which you and the student discuss the nature of a prophet. Because it is needed for a specific activity, I have included a photocopy of the chapter after this bibliography

Hoffman, Rabbi Lawrence A. My People's Prayer Book: Volume 4. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.

Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007. Both the structure and content of the prayers covered curriculum come from *Seder Kriat HaTorah* in this siddur.

*Hear this, you who trample upon the needy,
And bring the poor of the land to an end,
Saying: When will the new moon be over
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
That we may offer wheat for sale,
That we may make the ephah small and the shekel great,
And deal deceitfully with false balances,
That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals,
And sell the refuse of the wheat?*

Amos 8:4-6

Indeed, the sort of crimes and even the amount of delinquency that fill the prophets of Israel with dismay do not go beyond that which we regard as normal, as typical ingredients of social dynamics. To us a single act of injustice—cheating in business, exploitation of the poor—is slight; to the prophets, a disaster. To us injustice is injurious to the welfare of the people; to the prophets it is a deathblow to existence: to us, an episode; to them, a catastrophe, a threat to the world.

Their breathless impatience with injustice may strike us as hysteria. We ourselves witness continually acts of injustice, manifestations of hypocrisy, falsehood, outrage, misery, but we rarely grow indignant or overly excited. To the prophets even a minor injustice assumes cosmic proportions.

The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:

*Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.
Shall not the land tremble on this account,
And every one mourn who dwells in it,
And all of it rise like the Nile,*

Be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?

Amos 8:7-8

*Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
Be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord.*

*For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters,
And hewed out cisterns for themselves,
Broken cisterns,
That can hold no water.*

Jeremiah 2:12-13

They speak and act as if the sky were about to collapse because Israel has become unfaithful to God.

Is not the vastness of their indignation and the vastness of God's anger in disproportion to its cause? How should one explain such moral and religious excitability, such extreme impetuosity?

It seems incongruous and absurd that because of some minor acts of injustice inflicted on the insignificant, powerless poor, the glorious city of Jerusalem should be destroyed and the whole nation go to exile. Did not the prophet magnify the guilt?

The prophet's words are outbursts of violent emotions. His rebuke is harsh and relentless. But if such deep sensitivity to evil is to be called hysterical, what name should be given to the abysmal indifference to evil which the prophet bewails?

*They drink wine in bowls,
And anoint themselves with the finest oils,
But they are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*

Amos 6:6

The niggardliness of our moral comprehensions, the incapacity to sense the depth of misery caused by our own failures, is a fact which no subterfuge can elude. Our eyes are witness to the callousness and cruelty of man, but our heart tries to obliterate the memories, to calm the nerves, and to silence our conscience.

The prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden upon his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man's fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a

voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet's words.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIVIALITIES

"Human affairs are hardly worth considering in earnest, and yet we must be in earnest about them—a sad necessity constrains us," says Plato in a mood of melancholy. He apologizes later for his "low opinion of mankind" which, he explains, emerged from comparing men with the gods. "Let us grant, if you wish, that the human race is not to be despised, but is worthy of some considerations."^{*}

"The gods attend to great matters; they neglect small ones," Cicero maintains.[†] According to Aristotle, the gods are not concerned at all with the dispensation of good and bad fortune or external things.[‡] To the prophet, however, no subject is as worthy of consideration as the plight of man. Indeed, God Himself is described as reflecting over the plight of man rather than as contemplating eternal ideas. His mind is preoccupied with man, with the concrete actualities of history rather than with the timeless issues of thought. In the prophet's message nothing that has bearing upon good and evil is small or trite in the eyes of God (see pp. 464 f.).

Man is rebellious and full of iniquity, and yet so cherished is he that God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is saddened when forsaken by him. Profound and intimate is God's love for man, and yet harsh and dreadful can be His wrath. Of what paltry worth is human might—yet human compassion is divinely precious. Ugly though the behavior of man is, yet may man's return to God make of his way a highway of God.

LUMINOUS AND EXPLOSIVE

"Really great works," writes Flaubert, "have a serene look. Through small openings one perceives precipices; down at the bottom

there is darkness, vertigo; but above the whole soars something singularly sweet. That is the ideal of light, the smiling of the sun; and how calm it is, calm and strong! . . . The highest and hardest thing in art seems to me to be to create a state of reverie."^{*}

The very opposite applies to the words of the prophet. They suggest a disquietude sometimes amounting to agony. Yet there are interludes when one perceives an eternity of love hovering over moments of anguish; at the bottom there is light, fascination, but above the whole soar thunder and lightning.

The prophet's use of emotional and imaginative language, concrete in diction, rhythmical in movement, artistic in form, marks his style as poetic. Yet it is not the sort of poetry that takes its origin, to use Wordsworth's phrase, "from emotion recollected in tranquility." Far from reflecting a state of inner harmony or poise, its style is charged with agitation, anguish, and a spirit of nonacceptance. The prophet's concern is not with nature but with history, and history is devoid of poise.

Authentic utterance derives from a moment of identification of a person and a word; its significance depends upon the urgency and magnitude of its theme. The prophet's theme is, first of all, the very life of a whole people, and his identification lasts more than a moment. He is one not only with what he says; he is involved with his people in what his words foreshadow. This is the secret of the prophet's style: his life and soul are at stake in what he says and in what is going to happen to what he says. It is an involvement that echoes on. What is more, both theme and identification are seen in three dimensions. Not only the prophet and the people, but God Himself is involved in what the words convey.

Prophetic utterance is rarely cryptic, suspended between God and man; it is urging, alarming, forcing onward, as if the words gushed forth from the heart of God, seeking entrance to the heart and mind of man, carrying a summons as well as an involvement. Grand-

^{*} *Laws*, VII, 803.

[†] *De Natura Deorum*, II, 167.

[‡] *Magna Moralia*, II, 8, 1207, 1208, 1209.

^{*} Quoted by F. Kaufmann, *Thomas Mann, The World as Will and Representation* (Boston, 1957), p. 272.

deur, not dignity, is important. The language is luminous and explosive, firm and contingent, harsh and compassionate, a fusion of contradictions.

The prophet seldom tells a story, but casts events. He rarely sings, but castigates. He does more than translate reality into a poetic key: he is a preacher whose purpose is not self-expression or "the purgation of emotions," but communication. His images must not shine, they must burn.

The prophet is intent on intensifying responsibility, is impatient of excuse, contemptuous of pretense and self-pity. His tone, rarely sweet or caressing, is frequently consoling and disburdening; his words are often slashing, even horrid—designed to shock rather than to edify.

The mouth of the prophet is "a sharp sword." He is "a polished arrow" taken out of the quiver of God (Isa. 49:2).

*Tremble, you women who are at ease,
Shudder, you complacent ones;
Strip, and make yourselves bare,
Gird sackcloth upon your loins.*

Isaiah 32:11

Reading the words of the prophets is a strain on the emotions, wrenching one's conscience from the state of suspended animation.

THE HIGHEST GOOD

Those who have a sense of beauty know that a stone sculptured by an artist's poetic hands has an air of loveliness; that a beam charmingly placed utters a song. The prophet's ear, however, is attuned to a cry imperceptible to others. A clean house or a city architecturally distinguished may yet fill the prophet with distress.

*Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own, . . .
Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, . . .
For the stone cries out from the wall,*

*And the beam from the woodwork responds.
Woe to him who builds a town with blood,
And founds a city on iniquity!*

Habakkuk 2:6, 9, 11-12

These words contradict most men's conceptions: the builders of great cities have always been envied and acclaimed; neither violence nor exploitation could dim the splendor of the metropolis. "Woe to him . . ."? Human justice will not exact its due, nor will pangs of conscience disturb intoxication with success, for deep in our hearts is the temptation to worship the imposing, the illustrious, the ostentatious. Had a poet come to Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, he would have written songs exalting its magnificent edifices, its beautiful temples and worldly monuments. But when Amos of Tekoa came to Samaria, he spoke not of the magnificence of palaces, but of moral confusion and oppression. Dismay filled the prophet:

*I abhor the pride of Jacob,
And hate his palaces,*

he cried out in the name of the Lord (Amos 6:8). Was Amos, then, not sensitive to beauty?

What is the highest good? Three things ancient society cherished above all else: wisdom, wealth, and might. To the prophets, such infatuation was ludicrous and idolatrous. Assyria would be punished for her arrogant boasting:

*By the strength of my hand I have done it,
And by my wisdom, for I have understandings, . . .
Isaiah 10:13*

And about their own people, because "their hearts are far from Me, . . . the wisdom of the wise men shall perish" (Isa. 29:13, 14).

*The wise men shall be put to shame,
They shall be dismayed and taken;
Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord,
What wisdom is in them?*

Jeremiah 8:9

Ephraim has said,

*Ah, but I am rich,
I have gained wealth for myself;
But all his riches can never offset
The guilt he has incurred. . . .
Because you have trusted in your chariots
And in the multitude of your warriors,
Therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people,
And all your fortresses shall be destroyed, . . .*

Hosea 12:8; 10:13, 14

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord Who practice kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord" (Jer. 9:23-24 [H. 9:22-23]).

This message was expressed with astounding finality by a later prophet: "This is the word of the Lord . . . : Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit . . ." (Zech. 4:6).

ONE OCTAVE TOO HIGH

We and the prophet have no language in common. To us the moral state of society, for all its stains and spots, seems fair and trim; to the prophet it is dreadful. So many deeds of charity are done, so much decency radiates day and night; yet to the prophet satiety of the conscience is prudery and flight from responsibility. Our standards are modest; our sense of injustice tolerable, timid; our moral indignation impermanent; yet human violence is interminable, unbearable, permanent. To us life is often serene, in the prophet's eye the world reels in confusion. The prophet makes no concession to man's capacity. Exhibiting little understanding for human weakness, he seems unable to extenuate the culpability of man.

Who could bear living in a state of disgust day and night? The

conscience builds its confines, is subject to fatigue, longs for comfort, lulling, soothing. Yet those who are hurt, and He Who inhabits eternity, neither slumber nor sleep.

The prophet is sleepless and grave. The frankness of charity fails to sweeten cruelties. Pomp, the scent of piety, mixed with ruthlessness, is sickening to him who is sleepless and grave.

Perhaps the prophet knew more about the secret obscenity of sheer unfairness, about the unnoticed malignancy of established patterns of indifference, than men whose knowledge depends solely on intelligence and observation.

*The Lord made it known to me and I knew;
Then Thou didst show me their evil deeds.*

Jeremiah 11:18

The prophet's ear perceives the silent sigh.

In the Upanishads the physical world is devoid of value—unreal, a sham, an illusion, a dream—but in the Bible the physical world is real, the creation of God. Power, offspring, wealth, prosperity—all are blessings to be cherished, yet the thriving and boasting man, his triumphs and might, are regarded as frothy, tawdry, devoid of substance.

*Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
And are accounted as the dust on the scales; . . .
All the nations are as nothing before Him,
They are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness.*

Isaiah 40:15, 17

Civilization may come to an end, and the human species perish. This world, no mere shadow of ideas in an upper sphere but not absolute; the world's reality is contingent upon conformity with God. While others are intoxicated with the here and now, the prophet has a vision of an end.

*I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void
To the heavens, and they had no light.*

*I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
All the hills moved to and fro.*

I looked, and lo, there was no man;

All the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and lo the fruitful land was a desert;

All its cities were laid in ruins

Before the Lord, before His fierce anger.

Jeremiah 4:23-26

The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears. He experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither "a singing saint" nor "a moralizing poet," but an assaulter of the mind. Often his words begin to burn where conscience ends.

AN ICONOCLAST

The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome. Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretensions. To many a devout believer Jeremiah's words must have sounded blasphemous.

To what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba,

Or sweet cane from a distant land?

Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,

Nor your sacrifices pleasing to Me.

Jeremiah 6:20

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them: Obey My voice and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

Jeremiah 7:21-23

The prophet knew that religion could distort what the Lord demanded of man, that priests themselves had committed perjury by bearing false witness, condoning violence, tolerating hatred, calling for ceremonies instead of bursting forth with wrath and indignation at cruelty, deceit, idolatry, and violence.

To the people, religion was Temple, priesthood, incense: "This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord" (Jer. 7:4). Such pious Jeremiah brands as fraud and illusion. "Behold you trust in deceptive words to no avail," he calls (Jer. 7:8). Worship preceded or followed by evil acts becomes an absurdity. The holy place is doomed when people indulge in unholy deeds.

Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered!—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I Myself have seen it, says the Lord. Go now to My place that was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Jeremiah, 7:9-15

The prophet's message sounds incredible. In the pagan world the greatness, power, and survival of a god depended upon the greatness, power, and survival of the people, upon the city and shrine dedicated to his cult. The more triumphs the king achieved or the more countries he conquered, the greater was the god. A god who would let enemies destroy his shrine or conquer the people who worshiped him would commit suicide.

A tribal god was petitioned to slay the tribe's enemies because he

was conceived as the god of that tribe and not as the god of the enemies. When the Roman armies were defeated in battle, the people, indignant, did not hesitate to wreck the images of their god.

The prophets of Israel proclaim that the enemy may be God's instrument in history. The God of Israel calls the archenemy of His people "Assyria, the rod of My anger" (Isa. 10:5; cf. 13:5; 5:26; 7:18; 8:7). "Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant" whom I will bring "against this land and its inhabitants" (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). Instead of cursing the enemy, the prophets condemn their own nation.

What gave them the strength to "demythologize" precious certainties, to attack what was holy, to hurl blasphemies at priest and king, to stand up against all in the name of God? The prophets must have been shattered by some cataclysmic experience in order to be able to shatter others.

AUSTERITY AND COMPASSION

The words of the prophet are stern, sour, stinging. But behind his austerity is love and compassion for mankind. Ezekiel sets forth what all other prophets imply: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather than he should turn from his way and life?" (Ezek. 18:23.) Indeed, every prediction of disaster is in itself an exhortation to repentance. The prophet is sent not only to upbraid, but also to "strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees" (Isa. 35:3). Almost every prophet brings consolation, promise, and the hope of reconciliation along with censure and castigation. He begins with *a message of doom*; he concludes with *a message of hope*.*

The prominent theme is exhortation, not mere prediction. While

*See *Sifre Deuteronomy*, 342, beginning. Some modern scholars maintain that the pre-exilic prophets had no message except one of doom, that true prophecy is essentially prophecy of woe. Yet such a view can be maintained only by declaring, often on insufficient grounds, that numerous passages are interpolations. See H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord* (London, 1952), p. 125.

it is true that foretelling is an important ingredient and may serve as a sign of the prophet's authority (Deut. 18:22; Isa. 41:22; 43:9), his essential task is to declare the word of God to the here and now; to disclose the future in order to illumine what is involved in the present.*

SWEEPING ALLEGATIONS

If justice means giving every person what he deserves, the scope and severity of the accusations by the prophets of Israel hardly confirmed that principle. The prophets were unfair to the people of Israel. Their sweeping allegations, overstatements, and generalizations defied standards of accuracy. Some of the exaggerations reach the unbelievable.

*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
Look and take note!*

Search her squares to see

If you can find a man,

One who does justice

And seeks truth, . . .

But they all alike had broken the yoke,

They had burst the bonds. . . .

From the least to the greatest of them,

Every one is greedy for unjust gain;

And from prophet to priest,

Every one deals falsely. . . .

There is nothing but oppression within her.

Jeremiah 5:1, 5; 6:13; 8:10; 6:6

In contrast to Amos, whose main theme is condemnation of the rich for the oppression of the poor, Hosea does not single out a particular section of the community.

*See the divergent views of R. H. Charles, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford, 1929), p. xxvi, and A. Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination* (London, 1938), pp. 111 f. See also H. H. Rowley, *loc. cit.*

There is no truth, no love, and no knowledge of God in the land; Swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery, They break all bonds, and blood touches blood.

Hosea 4:1-2

Isaiah calls Judah a "sinful nation, . . . laden with iniquity" (1:4), "rebellious children" (30:1), "a people of unclean lips" (6:5). Indeed, the prophets have occasionally limited the guilt to the elders, princes, and priests, implying the innocence of those not involved in leadership. The assurance given in the name of the Lord,

*Tell the righteous that all shall be well with them, . . .
Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him,
For what his hands have done shall be done to him,*

is emphatically addressed to the righteous men in Israel, spoken of in the plural, as well as to the wicked individual in Israel, spoken of in the singular (Isa. 3:10-11). The exclamation in the name of the Lord, "Wicked men are found among My people!" (Jer. 5:26), betrays, it seems, a more sober appraisal of the situation and may be kept in mind as a modification of the numerous extravagant qualifications uttered by the prophets in *their own names*.*

Great orators in Rome had frequently manifested courage in publicly condemning the abuse of power by individuals. But the prophets challenge the whole country: kings, priests, false prophets, and the entire nation. The historical accounts in the books of Kings would certainly have referred to the moral corruption, had it been as grave as the prophets maintain.

In terms of statistics the prophets' statements are grossly inaccurate. Yet their concern is not with facts, but with the meaning of facts.

*Rhetorical exaggeration is a frequent mode of the biblical style of writing. Rabbi Simeon ben Gamliel, who lived in Palestine in the first half of the second century A.D., asserted that Scripture employs hyperbolic phrases, citing Deut. 1:28 as an example, *Sifre Deuteronomy*, p. 25. A similar view was expressed by Rabbi Ammi of the third century, *Tamid* 29a. Cf. also E. König, *Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik in Bezug auf die Biblische Literatur* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 69; C. Douglas, *Overstatement in the New Testament* (New York, 1931), pp. 3-36.

The significance of human deeds, the true image of man's existence, cannot be expressed by statistics. The rabbis were not guilty of exaggeration in asserting, "Whoever destroys a single soul should be considered the same as one who has destroyed a whole world. And whoever saves one single soul is to be considered the same as one who has saved the whole world."

Extremely minute, yet vital entities formerly unknown to the mind were suddenly disclosed by the microscope. What seems to be exaggeration is often only a deeper penetration, for the prophets see the world from the point of view of God, as transcendent, not immanent truth.

Modern thought tends to extenuate personal responsibility. Understanding the complexity of human nature, the interrelationship of individual and society, of consciousness and the subconscious, we find it difficult to isolate the deed from those circumstances in which it was done. But new insights may obscure essential vision, and man's conscience grows scales: excuses, pretense, self-pity. Guilt may disappear; no crime is absolute, no sin devoid of apology. Within the limits of the human mind, relativity is true and merciful. Yet the mind's scope embraces but a fragment of society, a few instants of history; it thinks of what has happened, it is unable to imagine what might have happened.

FEW ARE GUILTY, ALL ARE RESPONSIBLE

What was happening in Israel surpassed its intrinsic significance. Israel's history comprised a drama of God and all men. God's kingship and man's hope were at stake in Jerusalem. God was alone in the world, unknown or discarded. The countries of the world were full of abominations, violence, falsehood. Here was one land, one people, cherished and chosen for the purpose of transforming the world. *This* people's failure was most serious. The Beloved of God worshiped the Baalim (Hos. 11:1-2); the vineyard of the Lord yielded wild grapes (Isa. 5:2); Israel, holy to the Lord, "defiled My land, made My heritage an abomination" (Jer. 2:3, 7).

Defining truth as the conformity of assertion to facts, we may censure the prophets for being inaccurate, incongruous, even absurd; defining truth as reality reflected in the mind, we see *prophetic* truth as reality reflected in God's mind, the world *sub specie dei*.

Prophetic accusations are perhaps more easily understood in the light of the book of Job's thesis that men might judge a human being just and pure, whom God, Who finds angels imperfect, would not.*

Can mortal man be righteous before God?

Can a man be pure before His Maker?

Even in His servants He puts no trust,

His angels He charges with error;

How much more those who dwell in houses of clay,

Whose foundation is in the dust,

Who are crushed before the moth. . . .

What is man, that he can be clean?

Or he that is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?

Behold God puts no trust in His holy ones,

The heavens are not clean in His sight;

How much less one who is abominable and corrupt,

A man who drinks iniquity like water!

Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16

"For there is no man who does not sin" (I Kings 8:46). "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins" (Eccles. 7:20).

It is with a bitter sense of the tremendous contrast between God's righteousness and man's failure that the psalmist prays:

Enter not into judgment with Thy servant;

For no man living is righteous before Thee.

Psalms 143:2

Men are greatly praised when worthy of being reproved. Only a strong heart can bear bitter invectives.

*Eliphaz' thesis is accepted by Job (9:2); see also 25:4.

Above all, the prophets remind us of the moral state of a people: Few are guilty, but all are responsible. If we admit that the individual is in some measure conditioned or affected by the spirit of society, an individual's crime discloses society's corruption. In a community not indifferent to suffering, uncompromisingly impatient with cruelty and falsehood, continually concerned for God and every man, crime would be infrequent rather than common.

THE BLAST FROM HEAVEN

To a person endowed with prophetic sight, everyone else appears blind; to a person whose ear perceives God's voice, everyone else appears deaf. No one is just; no knowing is strong enough, no trust complete enough. The prophet hates the approximate, he shuns the middle of the road. Man must live on the summit to avoid the abyss. There is nothing to hold to except God. Carried away by the challenge, the demand to straighten out man's ways, the prophet is strange, one-sided, an unbearable extremist.

Others may suffer from the terror of cosmic aloneness; the prophet is overwhelmed by the grandeur of divine presence. He is incapable of isolating the world. There is an interaction between man and God which to disregard is an act of insolence. Isolation is a fairy tale.

Where an idea is the father of faith, faith must conform to the ideas of the given system. In the Bible the realness of God came first, and the task was how to live in a way compatible with His presence. Man's coexistence with God determines the course of history.

The prophet disdains those for whom God's presence is comfort and security; to him it is a challenge, an incessant demand. God is compassion, not compromise; justice, though not inclemency. The prophet's predictions can always be proved wrong by a change in man's conduct, but never the certainty that God is full of compassion.

The prophet's word is a scream in the night. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven.

THE COALITION OF CALLOUSNESS AND AUTHORITY

The prophet faces a coalition of callousness and established authority, and undertakes to stop a mighty stream with mere words. Had the purpose been to express great ideas, prophecy would have had to be acclaimed as a triumph. Yet the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history.

It is embarrassing to be a prophet. There are so many pretenders, predicting peace and prosperity, offering cheerful words, adding strength to self-reliance, while the prophet predicts disaster, pestilence, agony, and destruction. People need exhortations to courage, endurance, confidence, fighting spirit, but Jeremiah proclaims: You are about to die if you do not have a change of heart and cease being callous to the word of God. He sends shudders over the whole city, at a time when the will to fight is most important.

By the standards of ancient religions, the great prophets were rather unimpressive. The paraphernalia of nimbus and evidence, such as miracles, were not at their disposal.*

LONELINESS AND MISERY

None of the prophets seems enamored with being a prophet nor proud of his attainment. What drove Jeremiah, for instance, to being a prophet?

*Very few miracles are ascribed to the prophets; see Isa. 38:7-8. Miracles have no probative value; see Deut. 13:1-3. What is offered to Ahaz (Isa. 7:11) is a sign rather than a miracle. On the meaning of this passage, see M. Buber, *The Prophetic Faith* (New York, 1949), p. 138.

Of Samuel it is reported that he called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:18). Gideon (Judg. 6:36-40) and Elijah (1 Kings 18:36-38) implored God for miraculous signs. The miracle of the sundial (Isa. 38:1-8) was not performed for the purpose of verification. Miracles did not always have the power to put an end to uncertainty, since the magicians were able to duplicate them (see Exod. 8:7 [H. 7:11, 22]). The only medium of the prophet was the word or the symbolic act to illustrate its content. Even predictions of things to come did not always serve to verify the prophet's word.

*Cursed be the day
On which I was born! . . .
Because He did not kill me in the womb;
So my mother would have been my grave, . . .
Why did I come forth out of the womb
To see toil and sorrow,
And spend my days in shame?*

Jeremiah 20:14, 17, 18

Over the life of a prophet words are invisibly inscribed: All flattery abandon, ye who enter here. To be a prophet is both a distinction and an affliction. The mission he performs is distasteful to him and repugnant to others; no reward is promised him and no reward could temper its bitterness. The prophet bears scorn and reproach (Jer. 15:15). He is stigmatized as a madman by his contemporaries, and, by some modern scholars, as abnormal.

*They hate him who reproves in the gate,
They abhor him who speaks the truth.*

Amos 5:10

Loneliness and misery were only part of the reward that prophecy brought to Jeremiah: "I sat alone because Thy hand was upon me" (15:17). Mocked, reproached, and persecuted, he would think of casting away his task:

*If I say, I will not mention Him,
Or speak any more in His name,
There is my heart as it were a burning fire
Shut up in my bones,
And I am weary with holding it in,
And I cannot.*

Jeremiah 20:9

Jeremiah, when chosen to become a prophet, was told by the Lord: "And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of

Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land" (Jer. 1:18). And later he was reassured: "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you" (Jer. 15:20).

The prophet is a lonely man. He alienates the wicked as well as the pious, the cynics as well as the believers, the priests and the princes, the judges and the false prophets. But to be a prophet means to challenge and to defy and to cast out fear.

The life of a prophet is not futile. People may remain deaf to a prophet's admonitions; they cannot remain callous to a prophet's existence. At the very beginning of his career, Ezekiel was told not to entertain any illusions about the effectiveness of his mission:

And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit upon scorpions, be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, . . . Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. Like adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead; fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, . . . The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God. And whether they hear or refuse to hear . . . they will know that there has been a prophet among them.

Ezekiel 2:6; 3:8-9; 2:4-5; cf. 3:27

The prophet's duty is to speak to the people, "whether they hear or refuse to hear." A grave responsibility rests upon the prophet:

If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me.

Ezekiel 33:6-7; cf. 3:16-21

The main vocation of a prophet is "to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8), to let the people know "that it is evil and bitter . . . to forsake . . . God" (Jer. 2:19), and to call

upon them to return. But do they attain their end? Publicly Jeremiah declared to the people:

For twenty-three years . . . the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the Lord persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets, saying, Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and wrong doings. . . . Yet you have not listened to Me, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 25:3-7

Yet being a prophet is also joy, elation, delight:

*Thy words were found, and I ate them;
Thy words became to me a joy
The delight of my heart;
For I am called by Thy name,
O Lord, God of hosts.*

Jeremiah 15:16

THE PEOPLE'S TOLERANCE

The striking surprise is that prophets of Israel were tolerated at all by their people. To the patriots, they seemed pernicious; to the pious multitude, blasphemous; to the men in authority, seditious.

*Cry aloud, spare not,
Lift up your voice like a trumpet;
Declare to My people their transgression,
To the house of Jacob their sins.*

Isaiah 58:1

In the language of Jeremiah, the prophet's word is fire, and the people wood, "and the fire shall devour them" (Jer. 5:14; cf. Hos. 6:5).

How could the people endure men who proclaimed in the name of God,

*I will send a fire upon Judah,
And it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem!*

Amos 2:5

*Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
And the mountain of the house a wooded height!*
Jeremiah 26:18; cf. Micah 3:12

It must have sounded like treason when Amos called upon the enemies of Israel to witness the wickedness of Samaria.

*Proclaim to the strongholds in Assyria,
And to the strongholds in the land of Egypt,
And say: "Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria,
And see the great tumults within her,
And the oppressions in her midst!"*

Amos 3:9

It is strange, indeed, that a people to whom the names of Sodom and Gomorrah were charged with extreme insult would brook a prophet who did not hesitate to address his audience as "you rulers of Sodom . . . you people of Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:10).

*And on that day, says the Lord God,
I will make the sun go down at noon,
And darken the earth in broad daylight.
I will turn your feasts into mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth
upon all loins,
And baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning
for an only son,
And the end of it like a bitter day.*

Amos 8:9-10

AN ASSAYER, MESSENGER, WITNESS

The prophet is a watchman (Hos. 9:8), a servant (Amos 3:7; Jer. 25:4; 26:5), a messenger of God (Hag. 1:13), "an assayer and tester"

of the people's ways (Jer. 6:27, RSV); "whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me" (Ezek. 3:17). The prophet's eye is directed to the contemporary scene; the society and its conduct are the main theme of his speeches. Yet his ear is inclined to God. He is a person struck by the glory and presence of God, overpowered by the hand of God. Yet his true greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought.

The spiritual status of a diviner, not to be confused with a prophet, is higher than that of his fellow man; the diviner is regarded as more exalted than other members of his society. However, the measure of such superiority is that of individuality. In contrast, the prophet feels himself placed not only above other members of his own society; he is placed in a relationship transcending his own total community, and even the realm of other nations and kingdoms. The measure of his superiority is that of universality. This is why the essence of his eminence is not adequately described by the term *charisma*. Not the fact of his having been affected, but the fact of his having received a power to affect others is supreme in his existence. His sense of election and personal endowment is overshadowed by his sense of a history-shaping power. Jeremiah, for example, was appointed "a prophet to the nations" (1:5). He was told:

*See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.*

Jeremiah 1:10

It is common to characterize the prophet as a messenger of God, thus to differentiate him from the tellers of fortune, givers of oracles, seers, and ecstasies. Such a characterization expresses only one aspect of his consciousness. The prophet claims to be far more than a messenger. He is a person who stands in the presence of God (Jer. 15:19), who stands "in the council of the Lord" (Jer. 23:18), who is a participant, as it were, in the council of God, not a bearer of dispatches

whose function is limited to being sent on errands. He is a counselor as well as a messenger.

*Surely the Lord God does nothing
Without revealing His secret
To His servants the prophets,
Amos 3:7*

When the secret revealed is one of woe, the prophet does not hesitate to challenge the intention of the Lord:

*O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!*

Amos 7:2

When the lives of others are at stake, the prophet does not say, "Thy will be done!" but rather, "Thy will be changed."

*The Lord repented concerning this;
It shall not be, said the Lord.*

Amos 7:3

It is impossible for us to intuit the grandeur of the prophetic consciousness. A person to whom the spirit of God comes, becomes radically transformed; he is "turned into another man" (1 Sam. 10:6). The vastness and gravity of the power bestowed upon the prophet seem to burst the normal confines of human consciousness. The gift he is blessed with is not a skill, but rather the gift of being guided and restrained, of being moved and curbed. His mission is to speak, yet in the vision of consecration Ezekiel, for example, was forewarned of the inability to speak. "Cords will be placed upon you . . . and I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be dumb and unable to reprove them; . . . But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord God" (Ezek. 3:25-27).

As a witness, the prophet is more than a messenger. As a messenger,

ger, his task is to deliver the word; as a witness, he must bear testimony that the word is divine.

The words the prophet utters are not offered as souvenirs. His speech to the people is not a reminiscence, a report, hearsay. The prophet not only conveys; he reveals. He almost does unto others what God does unto him. In speaking, the prophet reveals God. This is the marvel of a prophet's work: in his words, *the invisible God becomes audible*. He does not prove or argue. The thought he has to convey is more than language can contain. Divine power bursts in the words. The authority of the prophet is in the Presence his words reveal.

There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses. The greatness of the prophet lies not only in the ideas he expressed, but also in the moments he experienced. The prophet is a witness, and his words a testimony—to *His* power and judgment, to *His* justice and mercy.

The contradictions in the prophetic message seem perplexing. The book of Amos, out of which come the words, "The end has come upon My people Israel" (8:2) and "Fallen no more to rise is the virgin Israel" (5:2), concludes with the prediction:

*I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel,
And they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant them upon their land,
And they shall never again be plucked up
Out of the land which I have given them,
Says the Lord your God.*

Amos 9:14-15

What hidden bond exists between the word of wrath and the word of compassion, between "consuming fire" and "everlasting love"?

Does the apparent contradiction within the assertions of a prophet destroy the validity of his message? It would if prophecy dealt

only with laws or principles. But the prophet deals with relations between God and man, where contradiction is inevitable. Escape from God and return to Him are inextricable parts of man's existence. Conformity to logical standards is not characteristic of man's conduct, which is why contradiction is inherent in prophecy.

We will have to look for prophetic coherence, not *in what* the prophet says but *of Whom* he speaks. Indeed, not even the word of God is the ultimate object and theme of his consciousness. The ultimate object and theme of his consciousness is God, of Whom the prophet knows that above His judgment and above His anger stands His mercy.

The prophetic utterance has, therefore, no finality. It does not set forth a comprehensive law, but a single perspective. It is expressed *ad hoc*, often *ad hominem*, and must not be generalized.

THE PRIMARY CONTENT OF EXPERIENCE

What is the primary content of prophetic experience, the thought immediately felt, the motive directly present to the prophet's mind? What are the facts of consciousness that stirred him so deeply? Is it a sense of anxiety about the fate and future of the people or of the state? An impulse of patriotism? Is it personal irritation at the violation of moral laws and standards, a spontaneous reaction of the conscience against what is wrong or evil? Moral indignation?

In a stricken hour comes the word of the prophet. There is tension between God and man. What does the word say? What does the prophet feel? The prophet is not only a censurer and accuser, but also a defender and consoler. Indeed, the attitude he takes to the tension that obtains between God and the people is characterized by a dichotomy. In the presence of God he takes the part of the people. In the presence of the people he takes the part of God.

It would be wrong to maintain that the prophet is a person who plays the role of "the third party," offering his good offices to bring about reconciliation. His view is oblique. God is the focal point of his

thought, and the world is seen as reflected in God. Indeed, the main task of prophetic thinking is to bring the world into divine focus. This, then, explains his way of thinking. He does not take a direct approach to things. It is not a straight line, spanning subject and object, but rather a triangle—through God to the object. An expression of a purely personal feeling betrays itself seldom, in isolated instances. The prophet is endowed with the insight that enables him to say, not I love or I condemn, but God loves or God condemns.

The prophet does not judge the people by timeless norms, but from the point of view of God. Prophecy proclaims what happened to God as well as what will happen to the people. In judging human affairs, it unfolds a divine situation. Sin is not only the violation of a law, it is as if sin were as much a loss to God as to man. God's role is not spectatorship but involvement. He and man meet mysteriously in the human deed. The prophet cannot say Man without thinking God.

Therefore, the prophetic speeches are not factual pronouncements. What we hear is not objective criticism or the cold proclamation of doom. The style of legal, objective utterance is alien to the prophet. He dwells upon God's inner motives, not only upon His historical decisions. He discloses a *divine pathos*, not just a divine judgment. The pages of the prophetic writings are filled with echoes of divine love and disappointment, mercy and indignation. The God of Israel is never impersonal.

This divine pathos is the key to inspired prophecy. God is involved in the life of man. A personal relationship binds Him to Israel; there is an interweaving of the divine in the affairs of the nation. The divine commandments are not mere recommendations for man, but express divine concern, which, realized or repudiated, is of personal importance to Him. The reaction of the divine self (Amos 6:8; Jer. 5:9; 51:14), its manifestations in the form of love, mercy, disappointment, or anger convey the profound intensity of the divine inwardness.

From the descriptions later in this book of the part pathos plays

in the lives and messages of the great prophets, we will discover its meaning as a conception and as an object of experience.*

THE PROPHET'S RESPONSE

In view of the insistence by the prophets of Israel upon the divine origin of their utterances, one inclines to agree with the ancient conception of the prophet as a mere mouthpiece of God. A careful analysis, however, compels us to reject the characterization of prophetic inspiration as a mere act of passive and unconscious receptivity (see pp. 456 f.). What, indeed, was the nature of the prophet's transmission of what he perceived? Was it an impersonal reproduction of an inspired message, a mere copy of the contents of inspiration, or did prophetic experience involve participation of the person in the act of transmission or even inspiration? Is prophecy to be thought of as a technical activity like divination? Is the prophet a person whose consciousness, in consequence of divine influence, utterly dissolves in surrender to the divine word, so that all spontaneous response and reaction is excluded?

The conception of the prophets as nothing but mouthpieces, the assumption that their hearts remain unaffected, would almost compel us to apply to them the words that Jeremiah used of the people:

*Thou art near in their mouth
And far from their heart.
Jeremiah 12:2*

The prophet is not a mouthpiece, but a person; not an instrument, but a partner, an associate of God. Emotional detachment would be understandable only if there were a command which required the suppression of emotion, forbidding one to serve God "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might." God, we are told, asks not only for "works," for action, but above all for love, awe, and fear.

*See especially pp. 297 f. and the Appendix: A Note on the Meaning of Pathos, p. 627.

We are called upon to "wash" our hearts (Jer. 4:14), to remove "the foreskin" of the heart (Jer. 4:4), to return with the whole heart (Jer. 3:10). "You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). The new covenant which the Lord will make with the house of Israel will be written upon their hearts (Jer. 31:31-34).

The prophet is no hireling who performs his duty in the employ of the Lord. The usual descriptions or definitions of prophecy fade to insignificance when applied, for example, to Jeremiah. "A religious experience," "communion with God," "a perception of His voice"—such terms hardly convey what happened to his soul: the overwhelming impact of the divine pathos upon his mind and heart, completely involving and gripping his personality in its depths, and the unrelieved distress which sprang from his intimate involvement. The task of the prophet is to convey the word of God. Yet the word is aglow with the pathos. One cannot understand the word without sensing the pathos. And one could not impassion others and remain unstirred. The prophet should not be regarded as an ambassador who must be dispassionate in order to be effective.

An analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a *sympathy with the divine pathos*, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos. The typical prophetic state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos. Sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation.

Prophetic sympathy is a response to transcendent sensibility. It is not, like love, an attraction to the divine Being, but the assimilation of the prophet's emotional life to the divine, an assimilation of function, not of being. The emotional experience of the prophet becomes the focal point for the prophet's understanding of God. He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God's voice and feels His heart. He tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos. As an imparter his soul overflows, speaking as he does out of the fullness of his sympathy.