DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF PRAYER

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Curriculum Guide

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CURRICULUM RATIONALE

Through my teaching, working at camps and other youth programs I have come across many children, teens, and young adults who are not engaged in prayer. When attending Shabbat or daily T'fillah with them it is clear that they have no connection with the prayers they are saying. More often then not, these individuals do not understand what they are saying, even when reciting the prayers in English. The intention of this curriculum guide is to change this. By using this guide, it is my hope that sixth grade students will gain an understanding of the prayers included in the Reform Shabbat liturgy. Students will connect with the prayers and find relevancy to their lives.

The focus of this curriculum guide is guiding students to develop an understanding and sense of meaning of the prayers in the liturgy. The words "understanding" and "meaning" are often used interchangeably but for the purpose of this curriculum guide, these two words each have a distinct definition. The "Understanding" of a prayer is the collective, agreed upon definition of the prayer. "Understanding" is the simple or constant definition. In many ways it is the *keva*, or fixed exactness of the prayer. In contrast, "Meaning" is the personal interpretation each individual gives to a prayer. The "Meaning" can change with mood and experience. An individual's sense of "Meaning" of a prayer is the *kavanah*, or intention of a prayer. By giving these words distinct definition, they become technical terms. To help you recognize them as such, they will be capitalized throughout this curriculum guide.

This curriculum is designed as a Judaic curriculum, not a Hebrew curriculum. While I believe it is crucial that students learn to read Hebrew, this curriculum is about Understanding the Meaning of the prayers, not translating words. The purpose of this curriculum is to guide students to make a connection with the intent of each prayer. Students should be able to personalize each prayer and say the words with a clear Understanding, not just words printed on the pages of the siddur. Hopefully, an

Understanding of each prayer will lead to praying with Kavanah. In the limited time usually allowed for Hebrew instruction, the Understanding and the development of a Meaning of the prayers often get lost. "We often assume that prayer and worship are purely emotional experiences. While emotions are necessary, they are not sufficient. There is also a strong intellectual element in Jewish prayer, as in Judaism itself. Understanding and insight are necessary too." (B'chol L'vacha, Harvey J. Fields) By Understanding the words of prayers we can explore the themes and develop a better Meaning of all aspects of Judaism.

This curriculum guide is based on these four enduring understandings about prayer.

1. The context and content of some prayers can help us recognize our role as part of a community.

When we pray from the siddur, most of the prayers are said as a community. The plural "we" is used more than the singular "I". This stresses the responsibility that Jews have for one another. Through this we also grasp that we are not alone. Even when prayers are said silently or individually, we are surrounded by others. When using the words of the siddur, we are part of the Jewish people. The words and thoughts expressed in the siddur are shared with the larger Jewish community. Fields points out that "many prayers contain phrases and sections that invite us to reflect on our relationships with others."

2. Understanding and developing a sense of Meaning of prayers can strengthen our relationship to God.

Prayer can help create a connection and conversation with God. It is through this conversation that we are able to build a relationship with God. The conversation we each

have with God can enrich our Judaism and in turn enrich our lives. In his book To Pray as A Jew, Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin states "we believe that every person has the same right and duty to approach God." Understanding and having a Meaning for the prayers we say can help each of us approach God. Harvey Fields writes in B'chol L'vavcha "Prayer is our opportunity to share our Jewish faith, to express our love of God and humanity…"

3. The concepts found in the Reform Shabbat liturgy can teach us Jewish ethics and values. These concepts can encourage us to better ourselves.

Judaism is a religion largely based on ethics and values. We are taught these values from our parents and/or at religious school. Many of the essential Jewish ethics and values are expressed within the Shabbat liturgy, as well. By learning to Understand the prayers, the student also learns Jewish values. Many of the values that are important to Judaism can become internalized by developing a Meaning of the prayers. Donin tells us, "It is the prayers themselves that have been the most popular vehicle for conveying to the masses the basic lessons of Jewish faith." In many ways we can use the siddur as a textbook for teaching Jewish values. Through prayer, one can learn some basic concepts such as the importance of saying thank you, the value of community, or the desire for peace. Prayer provides the opportunity for us to struggle with the gap between our ideals and our actions. Prayer is intended to help us become better human beings.

4. When we grasp the meaning of prayers we can make them relevant to our own lives.

Many people I have spoken with or taught say they struggle with prayer because the words do not mean anything personal to them. The words on the pages of the siddur were written so long ago, they do not feel relevant; there is no personal connection.

When I seek to make sense of what I am being told and push those I am speaking with to explain, they tell me the words don't hold Meaning for them. I often ask them what the prayer is about and they can't tell me. By examining the words of the prayers and comprehending the Meaning, the prayers can be made relevant to our lives. When the intention of a prayer is clear, the pray-er is not confined to the written words; he or she can supplement them with personal words or thoughts.

This curriculum guide is intended for sixth grade students. In sixth grade, most students are beginning their intense preparation for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Students have most likely been learning to read the prayers for the previous two years. Understanding the prayers should be a part of this B'nai Mitzvah preparation. At this point in their lives they are beginning to mature and make their own decisions. It is possible that they are in the process of defining (or redefining) their identity. Gaining an understanding of Jewish values, their relationship with God, responsibility to the community and the relevance of prayers are all part of this identity definition. Developmentally, sixth graders are usually able to think in the abstract as well as the concrete. This abstract thinking will allow them to look at prayers in a new light.

Through the Understanding of the prayers in the Reform Shabbat liturgy students will be able to fully participate in worship services. By developing a sense of Meaning, their participation can be enriched. My hope is that students will enjoy this journey of learning.

Enduring Understandings

1. The concepts found in the reform Shabbat liturgy can teach us Jewish ethics and values.

2. The context and content of some prayers can help us recognize our role as part of a community.

3. Understanding and developing a sense of Meaning of prayers can strengthen our relationship to God.

4. When we grasp the meaning of prayers we can make them relevant to our own lives.

Goals

- To encourage students to develop an Understanding of what prayer is
- To empower students to become engaged in Shabbat services and their prayer community
- To enable students to recognize the order of the service and to be familiar with the page layout in the siddur
- To invite students to form an individual and unique relationship to God by developing an Understanding and sense of Meaning of the prayers
- To provide tools so that the students can form their own Meaning of these prayers, such as mental editing
- To direct students to make a connection between their words and their actions
- To empower students to recognize how prayers are relevant to them and their lives today
- To facilitate movement between the Keva and Kavanah of prayer

Notes to Teacher:

The units of this curriculum guide are developed around the first three enduring understandings and book-ended by an introductory and closing unit. The fourth enduring understanding should filter through each of these units. The prayers included were selected because they help make the connection to one of the enduring understandings. Many other prayers could have been included but weren't, in order to make this realistically doable for you within the school year. Each unit begins with notes to the teacher, explaining the connection between the prayer and the enduring understanding.

In order to help prepare you for this curriculum, I urge you to read chapter 5: "The Heart's Work" in Finding Our Way by Barry Holtz. It provides some background material as well as a nice frame for this curriculum guide. The chapter is included in the "Teacher's Resources" section of this guide.

Each unit includes a list of suggested activities that are specific for that unit. Towards the beginning of the guide, right before the first unit, there is a section of "General activities." These activities can be used in any of the three middle units, with any prayer. The first two activities listed should be used with each prayer learned. These two activities help serve as authentic assessments. The activities listed are only suggestions. Please feel free to add your own. In order to keep students engaged use a variety of activities within the unit instead of using the same few for each prayer. I suggest using three or four activities for each prayer.

Outline of Units

I. Warming Up- Starting the conversation

- A. Checking out the siddur
- B. The structure of the service
- C. Defining prayer

II. Being Part of the Community

- A. Barchu
- B. Mi Chamocha
- C. V'shamru
- D. Avot v'Imahot

III. Strengthening Our Relationship with God

- A. Ma'ariv Aravim and Yotzer Or
- B. Ahavat Olam and Ahavat Raba
- C. Shema-V'ahavta
- D. Hashkivenu
- E. G'vurot

IV Discovering Jewish Ethics and Values in Prayer

- A. Nisim b'chol Yom
- B. Eilu d'varim
- C. Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom and Oseh Shalom
- D. Aleinu

V. Putting it all Together

- A. Kaddish Yatom
- B. Making prayer relevant to our lives today

General Activities

These activities can be used for any prayer in any unit. Prayer specific activities are included in each unit.

1. Have each student create a page for their personal Siddur- including the Hebrew of the prayer, student's interpretation, and an artistic representation of the prayer

2. Identify where the prayer is within the structure of the prayer service. This can be done on both a personal "map" or a classroom "map"

3. Have students work in small groups to create an advertisement or a commercial to demonstrate the theme(s) of the prayer

4. Have students create a rebus for the prayer- substituting pictures for some of the words. This works particularly well for Mar'ariv Aravim, Yotzer Or, or V'ahavta

5. Look at several different prayer books and see how the prayer is translated

6. After looking at other translations, have students write their own interpretation of the prayer

7. Teach students the sign language for a prayer

8. Discuss the theme/s of the prayer. *What is this prayer really saying? What is the big idea of this prayer? What can we learn from this prayer?*

9. Have students find a poem or song from pop culture that has a similar theme or message as the prayer

10. Have students work in small groups to create a dance or movement for the prayer. This can be done with or without props such as scarves

11. Have students draw or paint the images they get from the prayer

12. Have students create a tear picture that represents the ideas from the prayer

13. Have students write a poem that emphasizes the theme(s) of the prayer

14. Substitute words of a popular or Jewish song so that it fits the prayer

Unit I: Warming Up-Starting the Conversation

Elements in this unit include:

Defining prayer- What is prayer?
Becoming familiar with the siddur
The structure of the Friday evening Shabbat Service
The structure of the Saturday morning Shabbat Service

Notes to Teacher

The purpose of this unit is to introduce the students to prayer and the concepts contained in the rest of this curriculum. In order to Understand the different prayers and to develop a sense of Meaning of the prayers included in this curriculum, it is important for students to know what prayer is. In addition to developing both an Understanding and sense of Meaning of the prayers, students should be able to place the individual prayers in the context of the whole service. It is for this reason that students should have the opportunity to become familiar with the service. As students gain an Understanding of each prayer they should be able to identify where it is in the worship experience.

Another important aspect of this unit is allowing students the opportunity to become familiar with the siddur. You should use the siddur that the students are most likely to use in a prayer setting. You may want to create one large "map" to hang in the classroom. Draw this on butcher paper and create symbols to put on map for prayers learned.

Goals:

- To empower students to become engaged in Shabbat services
- To enable students to become familiar with how the pages are laid out in the siddur, to know where to find things on the page
- To guide students to recognize the order of the service
- To encourage students to develop an understanding of what prayer is
- To teach students the concept of mental editing (Barry Holtz describes this by saying "we mentally adjust the literal content of what we are saying to conform to our own beliefs and values."[1])

[1] Holtz, Barry; Finding Our Way, Schoken, 1990, page 120

Essential Questions:

What is prayer?

What does it mean to pray?

How can I mentally edit this prayer so that it makes sense to me?

How is my siddur structured? What is on each page or with each prayer?

Where in the service can I find the prayers learned in this curriculum?

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit 1

Goals:

- To encourage each student to develop an understanding of what prayer is
- To empower students to recognize prayer

Objectives:

- Students should be able to identify different ways of praying
- Students should be able to distinguish prayers of thanksgiving or praise and prayers of petition
- Students should be able to create there own prayer
- Students should be able to define prayer

00-05 Give each student several strips of paper or post it notes. Ask students to write a definition of prayer. Have students write each answer on one strip of paper.

05-20 Share their ideas in groups of 3-4 students. And have them discuss their answers using the following questions.
How are your answers similar?
How are they different?
Is prayer only one thing? Explain your answer.
Who is prayer for?
What would you add to your list after hearing ideas from others?

20-35 Combine the small groups so that the class is divided into two groups
Have students put their answers of what prayer is into different categories. This activity is done with out talking. As the group settles into categories have them talk about any that they disagree on and try to come to an agreement.
Ask students to create a descriptive title for each category

35-40 Bring the groups together and list the categories on the board.

(*Likely categories are prayers that ask for something, prayers before performing a mitzvah, prayers said at home, prayers said at the synagogue, thanking God)*

40-50 As a class, see if you can identify one or two prayers for each category. Have Siddurim available for students to look through

50-70 Share the following quote with students- hand it out and read it out loud.

[The person at prayer should] consider to whom it is that his prayers are directed and what he intends to ask and what he intends to speak in the presence of his Creator, pondering the words of the prayers and their meaning. Know that so far as the language of prayer is concerned, the words themselves are like the husk while reflection on the meaning of the words is like the kernel. The prayer itself is like the body while reflection on its meanings is like the spirit so that, if someone merely utters the words of the prayer with his heart concerned with matters other than prayer, then his prayer is like a body without a spirit and a husk without a kernel, because while the body is present when he prays, his heart is absent..."

--Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart,* Chapter 8, "Self Evaluation," Section 3:9

Ask students to reflect on this. Give students time to think about these questions on their own and then share answers with the class. *What does it mean? According to Bahya, what do we need to do in order to have fulfilling prayer experiences? Can you think of other metaphors besides husk and kernel or body and spirit? Why is it important understand the prayers we say? What is the purpose of Prayer? Who do you pray to? What do* ***you*** *need in order to have a fulfilling prayer experience?*

70-90 Using your own words, create your own prayer. Allow students that want to share with the class to do so.

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-- Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart,* Chapter 8, "Self Evaluation," Section 3:9

What does this mean?

According to Bahya, what do we need to do in order to have fulfilling prayer experiences?

Can you think of other metaphors?

Husk---- Kernel

Body---- Spirit

?----------?

Why is it important to understand the prayers we say?

What is the purpose of Prayer?

Who do you pray to?

What do **you** need in order to have a fulfilling prayer experience?

Activities

1. Create the front and back cover for a personal siddur. Throughout the year use this siddur for the prayers learned and the student's written and visual interpretations. Options for this include using acrylic paints on a 3 ring binder, making paper, decorating sheets of cardboard to use as covers, etc. (This activity is a memorable moment/object)

2. Have a scavenger hunt through the siddur- provide clues for students to find prayers in the siddur.

3. Provide a variety of siddurim for students to look at. *Find a prayer you that "speak"s to you. What do you like about it? Is there a prayer you dislike or disagree with? Which one and why?*

4. Provide a variety of siddurim for students to look at. Ask each student to write 3-5 questions they have about the siddur or a specific prayer. Collect all of the questions and use them as a starting point for discussion. Provide answers to the students' questions. When appropriate ask for ideas or opinions from the class. *What do you think about that? Do you agree? Why or why not?*

5. Look at the Mar'ariv Aravim or V'ahavta prayer in the siddur. What is on the page? What language is it written in? Are there transliterations? Is the translation literal? Are there notes included? Alternative readings? (This can be done with any prayer)

6. Explain the structure of the prayer book for students, identifying the different parts:
   Friday night- Kabbalat Shabbat, Shema and the surrounding blessings, Amidah, Concluding prayers
   Saturday morning- Birkhot Hashachar, P'sukei D'zimrah, Shema and her blessings, Amidah, Kriat ha Torah, Concluding prayers

7. Give students a list of the prayers they will learn in this curriculum. The list should be in random order. Ask students to put the list in order, using siddurim. This can be done in chevruta.

8. Using the correct order of prayers generated in activity #7, create a map showing the order of the service. The map should represent both Friday night and Saturday morning. Possibilities for this include a timeline or a AAA trip-tic with road signs. As prayers are learned throughout the year have students identify or mark them on their maps.

9. Compare the erev Shabbat service and the Saturday morning service. *Which prayers are included in both services? What do you notice about the order of the prayers that are the same? Which prayers are in only one service? If a prayer is in only one service, try to find a prayer with a similar theme in the other service.*

Unit II: Being Part of the Community

This unit includes the following prayers:

Barchu
Mi Chamocha
V'shamru
Avot v'Imahot

Notes to Teacher

This unit includes prayers that can allow students to recognize the importance of community. While this is not an all-encompassing list, each one of these prayers demonstrates, in one way or another, the theme of community.

- Barchu- This prayer is only recited when there is a minyan present. This alone demonstrates that there is a benefit of praying as a community. It is with the Barchu that we join together as a prayer community, warmed up and ready to pray, ready to have a conversation with God. The Barchu is structured as a call and response. The prayer leader calls or invites the congregation to pray and the congregation answers together, thus becoming a community.
- Mi Chamocha- Leaving Egypt is a major milestone in Judaism. The words of this prayer were sung by our ancestors, the families of Israel, when they crossed the Sea of Reeds. The Israelites crossed together and as a community praised God; as a community, they thanked God for redeeming them from slavery. Not only was this song sung by a community at the time of redemption, but we continue to sing the same words now, over 3000 years later. We are linked through time, a community with those that came before us and those that will come after us.
- V'shamru- The words of this prayer come from Exodus 31:16-17. While the intention of this prayer is commanding us as Jews to keep Shabbat- we are commanded as a community, not individuals. "And you (plural), the children of Israel will keep the Sabbath." This suggests that Shabbat should be observed in the company of others; we should celebrate together as a community.
- Avot v'Imahot- This prayer blesses and recognizes God as the God of our matriarchs and patriarchs. We ask God to take care of us because of the goodness of our ancestors and their relationships with God. As with the Mi Chamocha, community extends through the generations. Another way to look at this prayer as encouraging

community is to note the changes in this prayer. The traditional version of this prayer only includes the Avot/fathers- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Imahot/mothers, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah were added later in liberal siddurim in recognition that women are an equal part of our community.

Goals:

- To guide students to develop an Understanding of the four prayers in this unit
- To provide tools so that the students can form their own Meaning of these prayers
- To help students gain an understanding of how these prayers speak to the importance of community
- To encourage students to become part of their prayer community

Essential Questions:

What is a community?

How do you become part of a community?

What are your responsibilities towards your community?

What do these prayers (Barchu, Mi Chamocha, V'shamru, and Avot v'Imahot) Mean to you?

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit II

Goals:

- To teach students that the Barchu is a prayer that calls the pray-ers together as a community.
- To help students recognize the purpose of the Barchu as letting God know we are ready to pray.
- To guide students to understand that they are part of the larger Jewish community
- To help students develop an Understanding and Meaning of both the words and the intention of the Barchu

Objectives:

- Students should be able to identify the Barchu as the prayer that calls the community together to pray
- Students should be able to articulate that a minyan of ten people is required in order for the Barchu to recited and that the number ten represents a community
- Students should be able to demonstrate an Understanding of the words of the Barchu.
- Students should be able to express ways that they are part of a community.

00-15 Set induction: Divide the class into groups of three and give each group three decks of cards. (Prior to class prepare the decks so that one deck has all the 9s, one deck has all the 10s, and one deck has all the jacks.

If you need to do one group of two or four students in order to divide your students into groups:

exchange only 9s and 10s for a group of two

or exchange 8s, 9s, 10s and jacks for a group of four.

Instruct students to play a game of triple solitaire-

each student plays their own deck but the aces go in the center and all 3 players can build on the aces.

15-25 Lead students in the following discussion about what happened.

How was your game? What was different about this game than regular solitaire? What happened towards the end of the game? What would have happened if you played in groups of two instead of three? What did you need in order to win? Could you have played by yourself? How was this game like a community?

25-35 Have students do a free write (writing quietly and individually) on some different communities they are involved in. After they are done, have each student write one community on the board. (Band, school newspaper, Jr. Youth group, synagogue, Chavurah, sports team)

35-40 Ask students the following questions:
How well would your soccer team do if you were the only one who showed up for the game? How does an orchestra song sound with only one instrument playing? How would it feel if no one came to your birthday party? Describe a Passover Seder when you are the only one there? Would you enjoy drowning out Haman's name if you were reading the Megillah to yourself? Why or why not? Why do people go to funerals? What is missing in all of these examples? (Hopefully students will answer that other people are missing.) Use their answers to lead them to the idea of needing a community. Judaism is a religion that depends on community.

40-45 Working together, generate a list of things Jews do for or with each other within a Jewish community- i.e. Visiting the sick, being part of a minyan, going to a funeral or visiting mourners at home, cooking meals for families in need due to health or other circumstances, celebrate holidays together.
Where do you find a Jewish community?
What are some things we do here at this synagogue?

45-50 Instruct students to turn to the Barchu in their prayer book.
Explain to the students that this is the prayer that calls the congregation together

as a community. It signals that the main part of the service is about to begin Teach the students that the first line of this prayer is read by the prayer leader and the second line is then read by the congregation. This is a "call and response." It is in this way that this prayer calls everyone together to pray as a community.

50-60 Signal in what ever manner you usually use that it is time for class to start or for a switch in activities. (shutting the door, a bell, a phrase, etc). As soon as students are quiet ask the following questions: *What just happened? How did you know to give me your attention?*
Continue with this line of questioning until the class determines that you, as the teacher, gave some indication for everyone to pay attention. Ask students to brainstorm different methods of getting someone's attention, or signaling that something is about to start. Possible answers include- calling them on the phone, a bell ringing, calling their name, standing in front of them, tapping them on the shoulder, lights going off in a theater, etc.

60-70 Using the examples students came up with in the previous activity, ask students to pair up and demonstrate for the rest of the class what they do when the phone rings, someone calls their name, etc. Give each pair a chance to act something out. *How do you respond? Which is the call? Which is the response?*

70-75 Teach the students that the first line of the Barchu is essentially the call, calling everyone to pray and the congregation responds, essentially saying "Yes- we are ready to pray"

75-90 Have students look at the words of Barchu in their prayer book. Working in small groups, have the students identify words that they know. Walk around the room and help groups translate the prayer. Once everyone has the Barchu translated, ask students to say the words so that it sounds like a call and a response. Ask a few students (one at a time) to call the remaining students while the rest respond.

Activities:

Community

1. Have students participate in an activity alone and then repeat the same activity in two groups. Examples: Use your body(ies) to create a pyramid. Using two buckets (one full and one empty) spaced apart from each other, fill the empty bucket by taking cups of water from the full bucket. *How did you feel when you were doing this alone? How did you feel when you did this as a group? Which way did you prefer? Why? Was this easier to do alone or together?*

Barchu

2. The Barchu reminds worshipers that they need to be ready to pray. *What do you need to do in order to be ready to pray? What kind of mood do you want to be in? What helps get you in that mood?*

3. The Barchu reminds us that we need to get ready to pray. Imagine that you are a guard standing at a "checkpoint" called the Barchu and you could ask a person three questions before you decided if they were ready to enter the service. *What would those questions be?*

Mi Chamocha

4. Using CDs or the cantor or song leader introduce the students to different melodies for Mi Chamocha such as A. W. Binder, B. Shur, Debbie Friedman, L. Weiner, Klepper. *What are the moods are created by the different melodies?*

5. Create a skit that represents the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds and rejoicing in song.

6. Write your own poem or song to replace Mi Chamocha

7. The Mi Chamocha reminds us of the Miracle God performed at the Sea of Reeds. *What are some other miracles you think God performed in the past or performs today?*

8. Read Exodus 14 to the students. Sing Mi Chamocha and read Exodus 15:19-21. *Imagine that you were among the first Israelites who crossed the sea. Write what you saw and felt.*

9. Look at both the morning and evening translation of Mi Chamocha in several prayer books. How are they the same? *How are they different? Why do you think there is a difference?*

10. The Mi Chamocha was said when the Israelites crossed the Sea of Reeds- which was a major challenge. Have students recall and write about a major challenge in their life. *What circumstances lead to the challenge? How did you handle it? What would you do differently if faced with the challenge again? How does your challenge and your reaction to it relate to the experience of the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds? Who do you count on when facing a challenge?*

V'Shamru

11. Teach students the sign language for V'shamru. (see bibliography for sources on sign language

12. Look at several translations of V'shamru. *What does it mean to "Keep the Sabbath"? How do we keep the Sabbath?*

13. Ask each student to think of one way that they make Shabbat different than the rest of the week. If they are not currently doing anything, challenge them to try. (Even if it means Pizza night for the family, turning off the TV, or sleeping late- something that makes Shabbat special)

14. Point out the word V'shamru- And you (plural) will keep… Ask students *who is being addressed in this prayer. How can we, as a community be commanded to do something? What is our role in this? How are we part of the community in keeping Shabbat?*

15. Have students work in teams to create a project that they would like their community to do to "keep Shabbat." Have students advocate for their plan by presenting at the synagogue board or writing a letter to the head of the school, etc.

Avot v'Imahot

16. Look at Avot (v'Imahot) in both a traditional prayer book and a more progressive prayer book like Mishkan T'filah. Ask students *What is different about the prayer in these two siddurs?* (The Imahot were a later, progressive addition.) *How does the addition of recognizing our foremothers represent community? Why do you think the editors of Mishkan T'filah and Gates of Prayer- Gender Sensitive (Grey) felt it was important to add the Imahot?*

17. Have students create a family tree going back as many generations as possible. If possible do this as a family education day or a "generations" day, or send a letter home to parents so children have as much information as possible. Use copies of photographs to create the tree if possible. *Why is it important to remember our ancestors? In what way have your ancestors contributed to your life*? *In what way are the generations that came before us part of our community?*

18. Have students create a collage of generations using magazine pictures. *In what way are the generations that came before us part of our community?*

19. After reading a few translations of Avot v'Imahot ask students *why it is important to remember past generations. What can we learn from our past? Are there family traditions that have been passed from generation to generation?*

20. Ask students the following questions: *Does everyone in the community has to be the same? Can we each have a different relationship with God and still be one community? How is this exhibited in the prayer?* (God of Abraham, God of Isaac… instead of God of Abraham, Isaac…)

21. Do a visualization on the ancestors taken from Karov L'Chol Korav (included)

AVOT AND IMAHOT VISUALIZATION – THE ANCESTORS

FOR ALL AGES

As we recite "Elohai Avraham, Elohai Yiztchak V'elohai Yaakov..." we will induce a deep personal and intimate connection to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, our spiritual parents. Each of the ancestors forged a special relationship with God, the same God we turn to now!

Use one of the relaxation techniques from pages 28-33.

LEADER: As we stand ready to chant the Amidah, and we think of before Whom we stand, we very naturally think of ourselves as an individual before God. But we are connected to God in a much older and more intimate way than this.

As we begin the Amidah, I want to travel back in time together. We are going back to the time of Abraham and Sarah, Issac and Rebeccah, Rachel Leah and Jacob. There are no cars here, no planes, no skyscrapers. People live in simple homes or tents. The clothing is loose and modest.

Let's close our eyes. Imagine Abraham and Sarah, starting to daven. It is morning. First light just appeared over the eastern hills. Now the very top of the ball of the sun has risen over the horizon. They stand there, eyes closed, faces turned slightly upward. This is not just a man and a woman from a history book. These are members of our family speaking to their God.

Pause for ten seconds or so.

Let's move forward a bit to the next generation, to Isaac and

Rebecca. We are still in the open plains of Israel, but now the sun is high overhead, just starting to dip to the west. Isaac and Rebecca stand in a field of grain within the shade of several tall leafy trees. Their eyes are closed as they silently thank God. And they plead with God, for their needs and the needs of those they love. Let's stay for a moment with Isaac and Rebecca in prayer.

Pause for about ten seconds.

Let's travel forward one more generation, to the time of Jacob, Rachel and Leah.The sun has set in the land of Israel. It is dark and the stars are scattered across the sky. All three stand near an altar set up by Jacob. Barely aware of each other, they each sway silently and pour out their hearts under the expanse of the sky. They bless and praise and ask for all they need to care for their large family.

Pause for another ten seconds.

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah were all praying that we, their children, would continue to face God in praise and prayer. We begin the Amidah, together...

Such a long introduction is obviously a hefsek/technical break in the flow of prayer outside of an educational setting. If you are using this prayer in a classroom or meditative setting, you may want to adjust the ending slightly and finish by singing Mah Tovu or any other song that evokes images of the ancient Israelites.

Unit III- Strengthening Our Relationship With God

This unit includes the following prayers:

Mar'ariv Aravim and Yotzer Or
Ahavat Olam and Ahavah Raba
Shema/ V'ahavta
Hashkivenu
G'vurot

Notes to teacher

These prayers are included in this unit because they each, in their own way, show what God does for us, and our covenant with God. By Understanding what these prayers are about the students will be able to develop a personal connection with God. As students gain an Understanding and develop their own sense of Meaning of these prayers, they should be able to recognize the characteristics and attributes of God. Mar'ariv Aravim with Yotzer Or are combined as well as Ahavat Olam and Ahavah Raba. These prayers are in pairs because of their shared theme. One prayer is said in the evening, while the other is said in the morning.

- Mar'ariv Aravim and Yotzer Or- Both of these prayers speak of God's role in creation, not only at the beginning of the world but each day. The images of the light rolling into darkness and darkness becoming light can be absolutely awe inspiring.
- Ahavat Olam and Ahavah Raba- These prayers speak of God's love for us. One of the ways this love is manifested is through God's teachings and mitzvot.
- Shema/V'ahavta- This prayer in included in this unit for several reasons. The idea that God is our one God, the core principle of Judaism, can help students build a personal relationship with God. The V'ahavta reminds us to think of God with all of our actions. By thinking of God, we can build our relationship with God; God becomes a constant.
- Hashkivenu- This prayer also puts God in a very personal role. God is our protector. God shelters us through the night. This is another prayer that can allow for some incredible imagery.

- G'vurot- The words of this prayer provide the pray-er with very specific actions and attributes of God such as being compassionate and merciful, supporting the fallen, healing the sick, etc.

Goals:

- To invite students to form an individual and unique relationship to God by developing an Understanding and a sense of Meaning of the prayers in this unit
- To empower students to be engaged in the conversation with God called prayer
- To facilitate movement between the Keva and Kavanah of prayer
- To guide the students to an understanding of God's attributes and Characteristics

Essential Questions:

What are some of God's attributes?

What role has God played in the world?

How can people speak to God?

How can God be part of your life?

How does prayer connect us to God?

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit III

Goals:

- To lead students to develop an Understanding of the words and theme of Yotzer Or
- To provide students with the tools to create a personal Meaning of Yotzer Or
- To help students create a connection to God by understanding God's role in the creation of the world and each day.

Objectives:

- By the end of the lessons students should be able to describe God's role in renewing the world each day
- Students should be able to list several things that God created
- Students should be able to identify the three words that can be translated as "create" in the Yotzer
- Students should be able to explain the Meaning of Yotzer using sign language and words

00-15 Set induction: Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students. Assign each group an item such as an airplane, a loaf of bread, a medical instrument, etc.
What are all of the components of your item? Where did each part come from? How were the parts made? Determine the most pure elements involved in making your item. Who created these elements?
Each group should share with the rest of the class.

15-30 Introduce students to the three words for create found in Yotzer- עֹשֶׂה, בּוֹרֵא, יוֹצֵר
Have students find each word in the prayer using Mishkan T'filah
Have students read several interpretations/translations of Yotzer found in different prayer books. Discuss the different interpretations. *How are the various translations similar to or different from each other? Describe the picture these words paint for you? Which version do you like the best? What is this prayer about?*

30-45 Teach students Yotzer in sign language or create your own body language for it. Have them practice it several times while you read the prayer.

45-70 Have students create an artistic interpretation of Yotzer- they can choose to do this with tear picture, oil pastels, or water color paints.

70-85 Ask students to brainstorm all of the things that God has helped create. Go around the room until the ideas are exhausted.

85-90 Ask students to think of one sentence that describes how they value God's role in renewing the world each day.

Activities:

God

22. Have students create a list of characteristics or descriptions of God found in the prayers included in this unit.

23. Have some "God talk". *Who or what is God? How do you talk with God? How do you know if God answers you? Where is God? Is God something inside of you or outside of you?*

Mar'ariv Aravim and Yotzer Or

24. Arrange for students to recite Yotzer Or at sunrise or Mar'ariv at sunset. Ask students "How do you think God renews the work of creation every day?" Possibly during a class camping trip (this would be a memorable moment)

25. Look at collection of poems and prayers written about Yotzer Or in B'chol L'vavcha by Harvey Fields, pages. 42-47 (Included) *How do these help with your Understanding of the prayer? Which image from these poems do you like? Why?* Illustrate one of these poems

26. Compare the words of Yotzer Or and Mar'ariv Aravim. Use translations from different prayer books. *How are these prayers similar? How are they different? Describe the mental image you get from reading these prayers.*

Ahavat Olam and Ahavah Raba

27. Read translations of both Ahavat Olam and Ahavah Raba. *What is the theme of these two prayers? How are these prayers similar? How are these prayers different?*

28. After looking at the translation of Ahavah Raba and Ahavat Olam, create a list the things God does for us according to this prayer. *How does it make you feel to know that God does all of this for you? How do you know God loves you?*

29. Teach students to sing Debbie Friedman's version of Ahavtat Olam

Shema/ V'ahavta

30. Using CDs or the cantor or song leader introduce the students to different melodies used with the Shema such as Pik, Taubman, Sulzer, Debbie Friedman, etc.

31. Create a Mezuzzah with the students own interpretation of Shema and V'ahavta

32. Lead students on "Guided Meditation on the 6 Corners of the Shema: God Above, Below, and in the Four Directions" from Karov L'chol Korav For All Who Call, pages 76-77 (Included)

33. Teach the students how to sign the Shema (instructions included)

34. Read the first line of the Shema with the class. Give each student an index card and have them respond to this question: *What does it mean to say that God is One?* Collect the responses and redistribute them so that each student has a card that is not their own. Discuss the responses. *Do you agree or disagree with this response? Why or why not? How does this response align with your own?*

35. In the Shema, we are commanded to listen. *What should we be listening to or for? Who should we listen to? Is it possible to hear without really listening? Explain your answer.*

36. The V'ahavta commands us to teach the mitzvot to our children. In groups of 3 or 4 students, create a skit that demonstrates teaching Judaism to someone. *What would you teach?*

Hashkivenu

37. Using CDs or the cantor or song leader introduce the students to different melodies used with Hashkivenu such as Taubman, Helfman, Zweiback and Jonas

38. Write a prayer asking God to protect a friend or family member through the night.

G'vurot

39. Read translations of G'vurot. Illustrate the prayer.

40. After reading different translations of G'vurot, ask students: *What does this prayer teach you about God? What would you add to the list of what God does? Is God's power unlimited? Why?*

41. This prayer thanks God for everything God does for us. We call God "Gibor" which means hero. *Who else is your hero? How is God like your hero?*

YOTZER: CREATOR OF LIGHT

Yotzer יוֹצֵר

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ, עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת־הַכֹּל. הַמֵּאִיר לָאָרֶץ וְלַדָּרִים עָלֶיהָ בְּרַחֲמִים, וּבְטוּבוֹ מְחַדֵּשׁ בְּכָל־יוֹם תָּמִיד מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית. מָה רַבּוּ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, יי! כֻּלָּם בְּחָכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ, מָלְאָה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנֶךָ. תִּתְבָּרַךְ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, עַל־שֶׁבַח מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ, וְעַל־מְאוֹרֵי־אוֹר שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ: יְפָאֲרוּךָ. סֶלָה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, יוֹצֵר הַמְּאוֹרוֹת.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe. Your mercy makes light to shine over the earth and all its inhabitants, and Your goodness renews day by day the work of creation. How manifold are Your works, O God! In wisdom You have made them all. The heavens declare Your glory. The earth reveals Your creative power. You form light and darkness, bring harmony into nature, and peace to the human heart. We praise You, O God, Creator of light.

COMMENTARY

In Jewish tradition this prayer is called the יוֹצֵר, which means "Former" or "Creator," because it praises God as the Creator and Maker of heaven and earth. The title יוֹצֵר is taken from the first Hebrew word after the opening phrase: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר . . . Its theme is praise to God, who restores light to the earth every morning. This prayer was written over 2,000 years ago and may have been used as a part of the Temple service.

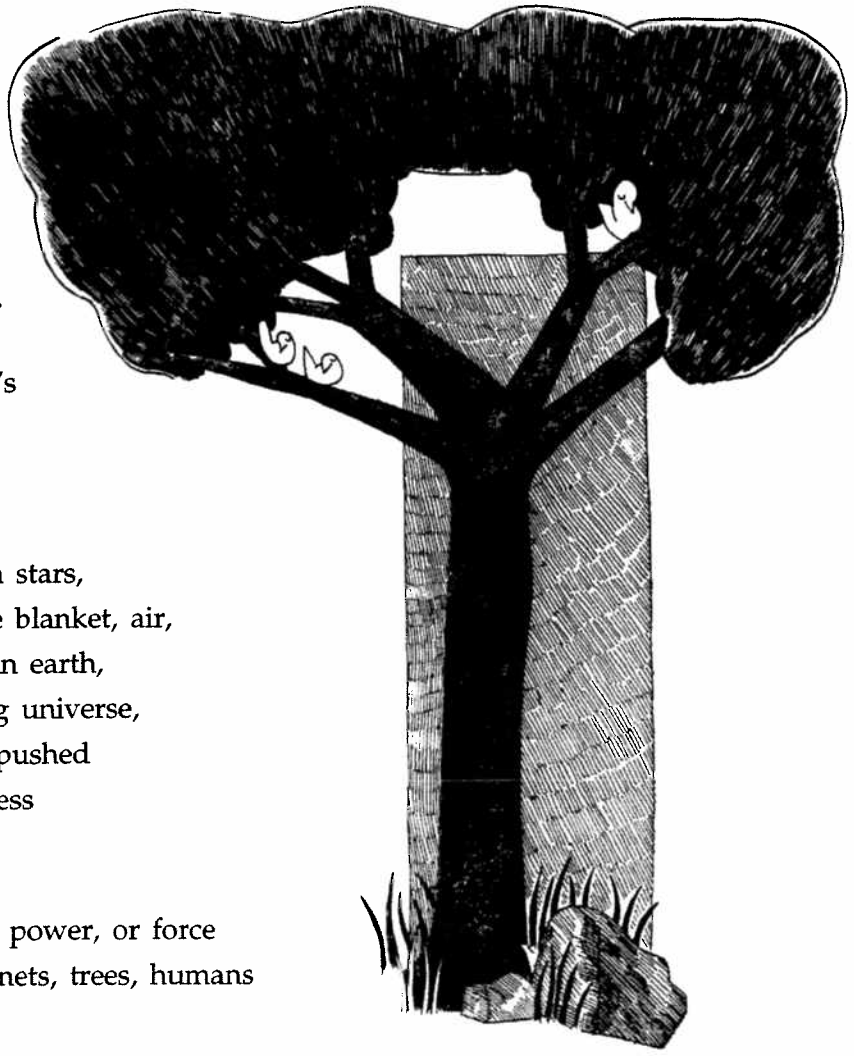
When we look at it carefully, we get a good insight into what its author had in mind.

Wonders of Nature

The wonder and order of nature have always stirred the imaginations of sensitive and poetic human beings. The Torah begins with the story of creation, and the prophets and Psalmists all wrote songs of praise to God as the Creator and Source of all nature. They believed that just as the paintings of artists reveal their talents so, too, do the beauties and wonders of nature reveal the powers of God.

The poet and philosopher Moses ibn Ezra, who lived in Spain from 1070 to 1138, wrote the following poem about God's relationship to nature:

O God, where shall we find You?
We see You in the starry field,
We see You in the harvest yield,
In every breath, in every sound,
An echo of Your presence is found.
The blade of grass, the simple flower,
Bear witness to Your wonderful power.



The modern poet Ruth F. Brin praised God's creative power in this poem:

In Praise: Genesis 1, 2

Hail the hand that scattered space with stars,
Wrapped whirling world in bright blue blanket, air,
Made worlds within worlds, elements in earth,
Souls within skins, every one a teeming universe,
Every tree a system of semantics, and pushed
Beyond probability to place consciousness
On this cooling crust of burning rock.

Oh praise that hand, mind, heart, soul, power, or force
That so inclosed, separated, limited planets, trees, humans
Yet breaks all bounds and borders
To lavish on us light, love, life
This trembling glory.

One of the important points made in the יוֹצֵר, in Rabbi Joshua ben Karhah's statement (page 44), and in Moses ibn Ezra's and Ruth Brin's poems is that

God Is in Every Place!

A man once asked Rabbi Joshua ben Karhah:

Why did God choose to speak to Moses through a common thorn bush?

Why not out of a great tree or from a noteworthy place?

The rabbi answered:

To teach us that there is no place, common or unusual, where God does not dwell!

Sh'mot Rabbah 2:5

God is not only the Creator of the huge and endless universe in which we live but that God's power extends to every star, every tree, and even the smallest blade of grass.

Today we are aware of atoms and many universes beyond ours. How might we express the ideas we find in Ibn Ezra's and Ruth Brin's poems in a modern prayer? Imagine yourself first studying a tiny particle of the world through a microscope and then looking out into space through a telescope. What words of prayer might you use to express what you have seen and felt?

Creator of All Things

The יוֹצֵר includes the phrase: "You form light and darkness."

These words, and this idea about God, were taken by the prayer's author from Isaiah. The prophet, speaking in the name of God, said:

> I am the Eternal One, and there is none else.
> I form light and create darkness,
> I make peace and create evil.
>
> Isaiah 45:6–7

Some ancient religions taught that there were two gods at war with one another for control of the universe. One was a god of light and good; the other was a god of darkness and evil. This idea is called "dualism"—belief in two gods. The followers of Zoroastrianism, a Persian religion founded about 600 B.C.E., believed that the world is a struggle between Spenta Mainya (the spirit of good) and Angra Mainya (the spirit of evil).

Judaism rejected dualism and taught that one God was the creative power responsible for everything.

Compare Isaiah's words with those found in our prayer. Notice how the author of the יוֹצֵר did not use the last phrase: "create evil." Why was this change made?

It could be that the author did not want to refer to God as a "Creator of evil" in the midst of prayer. Perhaps there is another reason. The author may have disagreed with Isaiah's belief that God creates evil and preferred to teach that nature is filled with many mysteries we may never fully understand, including the bad things that happen to good people. Can you think of any other reasons why the author of the יוֹצֵר deliberately changed Isaiah's words? Who or what do you think is responsible for the evils that we experience or encounter in life?

Light and Life

In the expression "Your mercy makes light to shine over the earth and all its inhabitants," we see the sensitivity of the prayer writer to nature and especially to the part played in nature by the power of light.

Have you ever tried to grow a seed or flower inside your house? What are the conditions you must provide for it to grow? What part does light play in the growing process?

Modern science teaches us that no living thing can exist without the immediate or, at least, indirect influence of light. It is the power of light that sets the forces of life in motion.

Creation Is Daily Renewed

In Jewish tradition, God is not thought of as a far-off machine that has nothing to do with nature and us. The author of the יוֹצֵר says that God's goodness "renews day by day the work of creation." What the poet is saying is that God is a Power, constantly at work, sustaining all the starry skies, the fields and forests, animal life, and the existence of human beings.

Can you think of examples in nature where renewal takes place? What about within the human body?

How Great Are Your Works

We have already mentioned that the Book of Psalms was one of the most important sources of prayer for Jews and Jewish poets. Often we find that the author of a prayer will borrow a line or a phrase from a psalm. Having called attention to the order and beauty of nature, the author of the יוֹצֵר quotes from one of the most lovely of all nature psalms (Psalm 104:24). Look at the whole psalm and then compare it with the יוֹצֵר prayer.

Two Thoughts

Prayer in Israel teaches man... to think, not of what the world owes him, but what he owes the world and God.

Solomon Freehof

Our prayers are answered, not when we are given what we ask, but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

Morris Adler

Four Prayers on the יוֹצֵר Theme

How Glorious Is Your Name

O Eternal, our God, how glorious is Your name in all the earth.
When we see the heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have placed there;
The gold of the sun, the silver of the moon, and the diamond sparkle of the stars;
The cool, green grass, the gentle flowers, the freshness of flowing streams,
We give thanks to You, who made them all;
And put beauty and goodness within them.
All the world sings its song to You:
The song of the trees, when the wind stirs their leaves,
The song of the sea, when the waves kiss the shore.
The song of human praise to You, O God, for all the works of creation.

Arranged by HJF

Let Us Imagine

Let us imagine a world without the grace of color, where regal red or leafy green would never more be seen.

We give thanks for the colors of the rainbow, for eyes that see, for the gift of beauty.

Let us imagine a world in deathlike silence, never knowing the joy of sound.

We give thanks for words that speak to our minds, for songs that lift our spirits, and for souls that know how to listen.

Let us imagine a world in which nothing can be known, where day and night, winter and summer, or the flow of the tides can never be predicted.

We give thanks for nature's wondrous order, for the stars in the sky to the pulsebeat within us.

Let us imagine a world without love, where each person is alone and unable to share with others.

We give thanks for the power of love within us. You, O God, have made it possible for us to know the joy of friendship and the benefit of reaching out to help those in need.

Based on a prayer by Rabbi Henry Cohen

We Praise You

We praise You
for breathing into us the breath of life.
Praised are You, Holy One, Who sculpts the moon and sprinkles
the stars above, who shapes the world, and life, and time.
Who plants wonder in our world each day.
Who wipes our brow when we are weary, and
gives us drink when we are dry.
Who lights our soul with dance and hope.
Who blows the flame upon us,
And delights in our glow.

Rabbi Vicki Hollander

GUIDED MEDITATION ON THE 6 CORNERS OF THE SHEMA: GOD ABOVE, BELOW AND IN THE FOUR DIRECTIONS*

FOR ALL AGES

** THIS GUIDED MEDITATION IS INCLUDED ON THE ACCOMPANYING TAPE*

One of the obstacles we face in trying to say our prayers with kavanah/intention is the fast speed of many of our services. There is a tradition going back to the Talmud to slow things down, especially when reciting the Shema: "Rabbi Yirmiyah was sitting before Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba and saw that he took a long time in saying the Shema. Rabbi Yirmiyah said to him: 'As long as you have accepted God as Ruler above, below, and in the four directions, you do not have to do anything else.' (Berachot 13b).

Let's take some time to truly accept God's presence everywhere as we say the Shema.

As we recite the first line of the Shema, we visualize God's presence "above," in the heavens, among the stars and faraway worlds, as high as we can imagine, and "below" -- down here on earth -- north, south, east, and west of us. Let's try it:

> LEADER: ***With your eyes closed, imagine your head tilting upwards, and your eyes seeing the blue of the sky, and everywhere you look, and you feel: God is there. Imagine you can see beyond the blue of the sky, as if you were tracing the flight of a rocket as it leaves the Earth's atmosphere, and slowly it gets darker and darker, with a few pinpoints of light appearing -- planets and stars slowly emerge from the blackness. And you feel: God is here. Your vision is able to continue beyond our solar system through vast distances in space as you see bright galaxies, clusters of stars and gases of every color, and nebulae of immense shape. And you feel: God is here too.***

Now: We return our gaze to the Earth. Picture the planet Earth as the astronauts have seen it: a beautiful bright blue and white ball slowly spinning free. As you come closer to the Earth's surface, you see lakes and long rivers, waves of water that stretch over measureless oceans. You feel: God is here. Your mind's eye travels over mountains, hills, plateaus, and fields, and you feel: God is here. Colors of plant-life greet you: Lots of green, but also yellow, and purple and red and violet and blue and brown and every combination, in every shape; flowers, leaves, vines, trees. God is here.

There are animals of every kind in front of you: Walking, running, burrowing, sitting, lying. And there are people. In the mountains and fields, and in the villages and cities. People whose faces are of different shapes and sizes. Millions of people. And God is here.

We are part of all of it. Turn your attention now back to your body and all the sensations you are feeling right now. And God is here...

Slowly recite the first line of Shema Yisrael...

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד׃

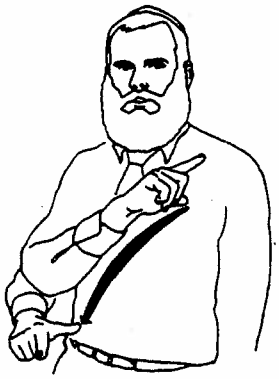
Return the group's attention back to their physical surroundings and move gently into the next activity.

The Shema

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is One.

Hear,

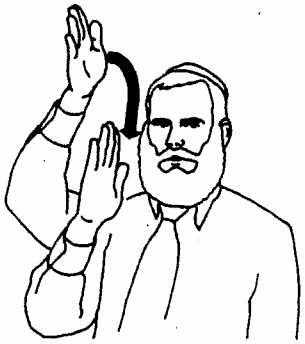
O Israel,



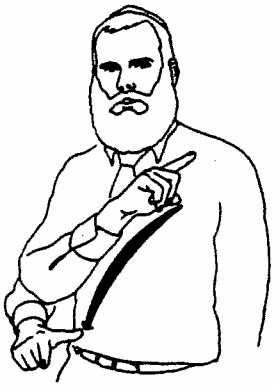
the Lord

is

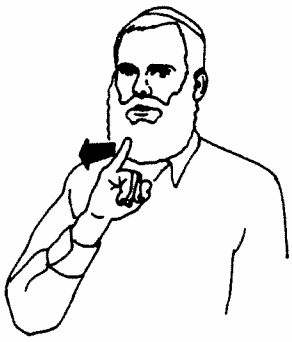
our



God.



The Lord



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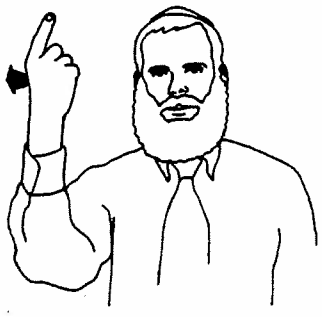

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Unit IV: Discovering Jewish Ethics and Values in Prayer

This unit includes the following prayers:

Nisim b'chol yom
Eilu d'varim
Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom and Oseh Shalom
Aleinu

Notes to teacher

Each of the prayers included in this unit help define values that are important in Judaism. In gaining an Understanding of these prayers students should be able to learn important Jewish values. As students develop their own Meaning for each of these prayers, they will also be able to internalize the Jewish values and ethics expressed within the prayers.

- Nisim b'chol yom- While the words of this prayer speak of God's miracles and we praise God for God's actions, each one of these miracles is something we can do to help others in the world. Understanding our role in bringing these miracles to light allows us to understand the values of helping others. Here are three examples of this:

  Opening the eyes of the blind can be the value of teaching others

  Clothing the naked teaches that we have to help those less fortunate

  Freeing the captive speaks of our role in advocating for others

- Eilu d'varim- This prayer is very explicit in what it can teach. As Jews it is important to honor your parents, act compassionately towards others, learn each day, welcome the stranger, visit the sick, celebrate a marriage, take care of the dead, pray with sincerity, and work towards making peace with others. This prayer also speaks of the importance of studying Torah. Each of these acts is ethical Jewish behavior. When the student Understands this prayer, the student also learns specific behaviors.
- Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom and Oseh Shalom- All three of these prayers share one theme. Each of these prayers is about wanting peace in the world. Behaving in ways leading to peace exemplify Jewish ethical behavior. Shalom Rav is said in the evening while Sim Shalom is said in the morning. Both of these prayers are said as part of the Amidah. They each ask for world peace as well as inner peace. Oseh Shalom, which is said both morning and evening follows the Amidah.
- Aleinu- This prayer praises God as the creator of everything. Part of this prayer is about the uniqueness of the Jewish people. We are chosen to do Mitzvot. It is also a

prayer of hope. There is hope that one day all human beings will be united. We will be united when there is no hunger, war, or jealousy. This hope leads to the concept of Tikun Olam. We need to work with God to fix the world. We need to do our part by living an ethical life and helping others. We need to act as God's partners to help unite the world.

Goals:

- To guide students to gain an Understanding of the prayers in this unit
- To present opportunities for students to develop their own personal Meaning of these prayers
- To reinforce specific Jewish values found in prayer.
- Help students learn and internalize some Jewish ethics and values through the development of their Understanding of these prayers
- To direct students to make a connection between their words and their actions

Essential Questions:

What are some specific actions I should take according to the prayers in this unit?
How can I make a connection between the words in these prayers and my actions?
Which Jewish values are expressed in Nissim b'chol yom, Eilu d'varim, Blessings of peace, and Alienu?

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit IV

Goals:

- To help students Understand three prayers that speak of peace- Sim Shalom, Shalom Rav, and Oseh Shalom
- To guide students in understanding their role in creating peace
- To help students recognize peace as a Jewish value

Objectives:

- Students should be able to Understand the Jewish prayers that speak towards peace
- Students should be able to express their ideas on how they can create peace for themselves, their community and the world
- Students should be able to recognize how modern leaders work for peace

00-10 Set induction: As students enter class room have Sim Shalom or Oseh Shalom playing (cantor, song leader or CDs). Play a variety of melodies. Possibilities include: The Hassidic melody of Sim Shalom or Oseh Shalom by N. Hirsch, Debbie Friedman, Jeff Klepper (these are only suggestions)

Most likely, students will recognize the prayer.

Ask students the following:

What are you hearing? What are some of the words you recognize/ what are key words? What is this prayer about?

10-25 Divide students into 3 groups

Group 1- Shalom Rav

Group 2- Sim Shalom

Group 3- Oseh Shalom

Using Hebrew text books and a variety of siddurim, have each group read several translations of the prayer and sum up what the prayer is about. *What is the main theme of this prayer? Are we thanking God for something or asking God to do something? What is Gods role? What is our role?*

25-30 Have each group share their findings with the rest of the class

30-35 Tell students that these prayers are all about making peace
Shalom Rav and Sim Shalom are part of the Amidah, with Shalom Rav in the evening and Sim Shalom in the morning. Oseh Shalom is sung at the end of the Amidah. Ask students to find the prayers in the prayer book.
Have someone mark the prayers on the T'fillah map (see Unit I)

35-50 Tell students that while the prayers speak of making peace- they are only words, we must act in the way of making peace. *How do these prayers provide guidance in pursuing peace? What do these prayers teach us?*
On a large sheet of butcher paper or the board create three columns-
Home, Community, World
Have students brainstorm specific ways of making peace at home, in the community and in the world. (This can be done in smaller groups if the class is large and if you have a madrich/a.)

50-65 Once the lists are made- tie the ideas to Jewish values such as shalom bayit, tikun olam, Erech Apayim (being slow to anger), Shmiat ha Ozen (being a good listener), etc. (Teaching Jewish Virtues-A.R.E. is a great resource for this, a list is included). Talk about these concepts. *Put this concept in your own words. Why is this important? What does it mean to act in this way? Think of an example when you have done this? Think of a time you could do this?*

65-85 Ask each student to choose one prayer- Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom, or Oseh Shalom to put in their creative Siddur (see unit I)
Give students a copy of the prayer they chose. Students need to write their own prayer about making peace and create a collage that represents the prayer using magazine pictures.

85-90 Ask students to share either their written prayer or their collage

APPENDIX 8

A LISTING OF MIDDOT

The earliest *Middot* are listed in the Book of Exodus, where they are seen as descriptors of God. "The Eternal, the Eternal God, is *Rachum* (gracious) and *Chanun* (compassionate), *Erech Apayim* (slow to anger), *Rav Chesed V'Emet* (abounding in kindness and truth), *Notzer Chesed L'Alafim* (assuring love for a thousand generations), *Nosay Avon VaFesha V'Chata'ah V'Nakay* (forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon)." (Exodus 34:6-7)

Middot can be found scattered throughout Jewish texts from all eras. For this book two main sources are drawn upon which actually list Jewish virtues per se. These are a passage in *Pirke Avot* (a tractate of the Mishnah) and *Orchot Tzaddikim* (an anonymous Hebrew work probably written in Germany in the fifteenth century).

From *Pirke Avot* 6:6 comes this statement and list of virtues:

Torah is greater than Priesthood and Royalty.
Royalty is acquired through 30 virtues,
Priesthood through 24.
Torah, however, is acquired through 48 virtues:

Talmud (study)
Shmiat HaOzen (attentiveness)
Arichat Sefatayim (orderly speech)
Binat HaLev (an understanding heart)
Sichlut HaLev (a perceptive heart)
Aymah (fear)
Yirah (awe)
Anavah (humility)
Simchah (joy)
Shimush Chachamim (ministering to the sages)
Dibuk Chaverim (cleaving to colleagues/friends)
Pilpul HaTalmidim (acute discussion with pupils)
Yishuv BeMikra (calmness in study)
Mishnah (study of Scripture and Mishnah)
Miyut Sechorah (moderation in business)
Miyut Shaynah (a minimum of sleep)
Miyut Sichah (a minimum of small talk)
Miyut Ta'anug (a minimum of worldly pleasure)
Miyut Sechok (a minimum of frivolity)
Miyut Derech Eretz (a minimum of worldly pursuits)
Erech Apayim (slowness to anger)
Lev Tov (a generous heart)
Emunat Chachamim (trust in the sages)
Kabbalat HaYisurin (acceptance of suffering)
Makir et Mekomo (knowing one's place)
Samayach B'Chelko (contentment with one's lot)
Seyag LiD'varav (guarding one's speech)
Eino Machazik Tova L'Atzmo (taking no personal credit)
Ahuv (being beloved)
Ohev et HaMakom (loving God)
Ohev et HaBriyot (loving all creatures)
Ohev et HaTz'dakot (loving charitable deeds)
Ohev et HaMaysharim (loving rectitude)
Ohev et HaTochachot (loving rebuke)
Mitrachayk Min HaKavod (shunning honor)
Lo Maygis Libo B'Talmudo (not boasting of one's learning)
Eino Samayach BeHora'ah (not delighting in rendering decisions)
Nosay V'Ol Im Chavayro (sharing the burden with one's fellow)
Machrio L'Chaf Zechut (influencing one's fellow to virtue)
Ma'amido al HaEmet (setting others on the path of truth)
Ma'amido al HaShalom (setting others on the path of peace)
Miyashev BeTalmudo (concentrating on one's studies)
Shoayl U'Mayshiv (asking and answering questions)

Shomaya U'Mosif (absorbing knowledge and adding to it)
Lomed al Manat Lelamed (studying in order to teach)
Lomed al Manat La'asot (studying in order to perform Mitzvot)
Machkim et Rabo (sharpening the wisdom of one's teacher)
Mechavayn et Sh'muato (being precise in transmitting what one has learned)
Omer Davar BeShem Omro (quoting one's source)

In the book *Orchot Tzaddikim/The Ways of the Tzaddikim,* numerous traits are discussed. We are instructed there to examine them all, the good and the bad, and to strive to improve ourselves. The benefits and dangers of the following traits are included in that book:

Ga'avah (pride)
Anavah (humility)
Bushah (shame)
Azut (arrogance)
Ahavah (love)
Sinah (hatred)
Rachamim (mercy)
Ach'zariyut (cruelty)
Simchah (joy)
Da'agah (worry)
Charatah (regret)
Ka'as (anger)
Ratzon (willingness)
Keenah (envy)
Zrizut (zeal)
Atzlut (laziness)
Nedivut (generosity/magnanimity)
Tzayekanut (miserliness)
Zechirah (rememberance),
Shichechah (forgetfulness)
Shetikah (silence)
Sheker (falseness)
Emet (truth)
Chanifut (flattery)
Lashon HaRa (slander)
Teshuvah (repentance)
Torah (learning)
Yirat Shamayim (fear of heaven)

Activities:

Nisim b'chol yom

1. Explain to the students that these blessings used to be said in the home each morning as a person got ready for their day. These blessings thank God for the miracles we experience every day. We often wake up and rush into our daily routine. These blessings make us pause and think about the miracles in each day. *Ask students what step of getting ready for the day corresponds to each blessing*. Tell students the corresponding act. These are listed on page 42 of Volume 5, My People's Prayerbook. (Included)
2. Ask students the following questions:

   How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?
   Do you wish you could go back to sleep?
   Are you worried about something that will happen during the day?
   Are you excited about something you have planned, or a new challenge?

During the Talmudic period, the Rabbis realized that we may feel a variety of emotions as we face each new day. At the same time, they wanted us to feel gratitude and wonderment at the miracle of life. Each blessing of Nissim b'chol yom recognizes a different miracle. Look at the blessings and ask students: *what the miracle is for each one?*

3. Have students share a miracle of their day (or week)

4. Look at the translations found in Mishkan Tifillah or Gates of Prayer for each blessing of Nisim b'chol yom and discuss it. *What does this mean? What do we need to do to in order to accomplish this? What do we have to do for ourselves? What do we have to do for others in order to make this miracle happen? How do these blessings remind us of our responsibility to help others? How can we help God?*

5. Divide students into groups of two or three and have them create and act out skits for each blessing.

6. Play charades- having students pick out one of the Nisim b'chol Yom. One student acts it out while other students try to determine which blessing it is.

7. Collect clothes the poor and discuss how this is related to the blessing of providing clothing for the naked.

8. Write letters to congress regarding the treatment of an oppressed society. Discuss how this is related to the blessing of freeing the captive.

9. After doing activity #4 and/or #5 have students think of other ways to put these words into action

Eilu d'varim

10. Learn or create sign language for Eilu d'varim

11. Look at several translations for Eilu D'varim. *Are they the same? If they are different, how?*

12. Let students read the list over for several minutes- then see if they can name all of the obligations. This can be done individually or as a group.

13. Have students create commercials to "sell" people on the importance of following of each of these obligations

14. List different ways we can honor our parents. Do a "sing down" type activity, having students list ways we can honor our parents instead of songs.

15. Take a field trip to a children's ward at a local hospital

16. Discuss how it feels for people to do these acts. *What does it mean to honor your mother and father? How do you think your parents feel when you slam your door? In what way are you honoring your parents when you talk about your day with them? Ask if any one has been visited while sick? How did you feel before anyone came to visit? How did you feel after the visit? Describe your mood after visiting someone who is sick. How can you support a mourner? What steps have taken to resolve a conflict with a friend? How did that feel? What was it like when you went to a new school or started with a new sports team? Did anyone greet you? How did it feel? Etc*

Prayers of peace- Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom, Oseh Shalom

17. Create a dance for one or all of these prayers.

18. Post the following 6 quotes about peace around the room on large paper (with room to write). Have students walk around the room and read the quotes. Students should then write comments about each quote. Afterwards read the quotes and student comments together.

Robert Fulghum: "Peace is not something you wish for, it's something you make, something you do, something you are, something you give away.

Yitzak Rabin: "Peace has no borders. You don't make peace with friends, you make it with enemies."

Bill Clinton: "We must teach our children to resolve their conflicts with words not with weapons."

Shimon Peres: "Peace is very much like love. As you cannot force love, so you cannot force peace."

Elie Wiesel: Mankind must remember that peace is not God's gift to God's creatures; peace is our gift to each other."

Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Peace cannot be achieved through violence. It can only be achieved through understanding."

19. Using the quotes from above, have students discuss each quote in pairs/chevrutas. Instruct students to come up with a quote of their own.

20. Create a new prayer or song for peace

Aleinu

21. Examine the translation of the Aleinu. This prayer is largely one of hope and courage. How is it a prayer of hope? What do we hope for when we recite Aleinu?

22. Aleinu Blessing Circle from Karov L'Chol Korov, p. 149 (included)

23. Look at a the translation of the Aleinu in your siddur and see if you can find one quote to fit each of these four themes:
    - God created the world
    - God gave the world Torah
    - God is One
    - God will redeem

24. Using the list of themes from activity #23, create a mural about the Aleinu

a. On arising: *Elohai n'shamah* ("My God, the soul You have put within me...")
b. On hearing the rooster crow: *hanoten lasekhvi* ("who gives the cunning rooste its ability to distinguish...").
c. While donning clothes: *malbish arumim* ("who clothes the naked").
d. While covering the head: *oter yisra'el b'tifarah* ("who crowns Israel witl glory").
e. While placing a hand over the eyes: *poke'ach ivrim* ("who opens the eyes o the blind").
f. While sitting up on the bed: *matir asurim* ("who frees the captive").
g. While placing feet on the ground: *roka ha'arets* ("who spreads out the lan on the water").
h. While standing up: *zokef k'fufim* ("who raises up the hunched over").
i. While washing hands *al n'tilat yada'im* ("about washing our hands").
j. While washing the face: *hama'avir shenah* ("who removes sleep") througl *gomel chasadim tovim* ("who rewards...with great kindness").
k. Upon leaving the lavatory: *asher yatsar* ("who has formed").
l. While putting on a belt: *ozer yisra'el* ("who girds Israel").
m. While putting on shoes: *she'asah li kol tsorki* ("who has provided me with a my needs").
n. While beginning to walk: *hameikhin mitsadei gaver* ("who makes firm man steps").

For Maimonides, these blessings are said in the order performed and only if th appropriate actions are actually performed. If one, for example, goes barefoo then one omits *she'asah li kol tsorki*. The general custom, however, is to say a the blessings at one time. If we do not perform the relevant actions, we are t visualize the acts involved, relying upon the fact that the blessings are part c general praise for God.

6. The status blessings ("who did not make me") are said daily.
7. In general, *Birkhot Hashachar* may be said as early as dawn. Earlier risers ma recite all the blessings, except *hanoten lasekhvi*, which must wait until cockcro or the break of dawn (since *sekhvi* means not just a rooster but the human min too and so represents our own ability to discern daylight).
   If one has neglected to say the blessings until after *Shacharit*, one may say ther then, with the exception of *n'tilat yada'im* ("washing our hands"), which mu accompany handwashing.

ALEYNU BLESSING CIRCLE

FOR ALL AGES

LEADER: ***In the first half of the Aleynu, we thank God for giving us a special role to play in humanity. We thank God for making us so unique and so separate from all the other nations. But in the second half of the Aleynu, we pray for something quite opposite. We ask God to inspire us to bring about the time when all people will play a part in our special mission. Today we will create together our vision of that time when all people understand the unity of all creation.***

Gather the group into a circle.

Let's think about the time referred to at the end of the prayer: When "God is One and God's name is Unity." What does that time look like? What will be healed? Who will stop suffering? Whose life will be better? How will we treat each other? (Pause)

Let's pray in a personal way today about what that time will be like. We pray to you, Holy One to see the time when... (Leader should open with a sample intention, such as "when every child will have enough food, when love will permeate every family and home, when there won't be diseases...")

Allow time for members of the group to articulate their blessings.

LEADER: ***Let's take a minute to really imagine the images we have heard today. See in your mind's eye how the world looks when it is healed in the ways we have expressed today.*** (Pause) ***May God grant us the strength to work towards that time!***
(Sing) ***V'ne-emar, v'haya Adonai..."***

וְנֶאֱמַר. וְהָיָה ה׳ לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ.
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה׳ אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

Unit V Putting It All Together

This unit includes the following elements

Kaddish Yatom
Dialogue about Prayer
Determining how prayer is relevant to each one of us

Notes to teacher:

This unit is meant as a wrap up. The intention of this unit is to allow for dialogue about prayer. By this point students should be able to reflect on different prayers and the emotions involved in prayer. The prayers and activities throughout this curriculum were intended to lead students to making prayer relevant to their lives. In this unit, students should have the opportunity to examine this relevancy.

While Kaddish Yatom is identified as the Mourners Kaddish- the words of the prayer praise God. In the Reform movement, many congregations recite the Kaddish Yatom together although traditionally the prayer is said by mourners or those individuals observing a yartzeit. This prayer could have been put in the unit with community, especially since it is said only with a minyan present. Kaddish Yatom is included here because in many ways it "wraps-up" the prayer service.

Goals:

- To help students Understand the Meaning of Kaddish Yatom
- To guide students in reflecting on the Meaning of prayer
- To provide students an opportunity to re-define prayer
- To empower students to recognize how prayers are relevant to them and their lives today
- To encourage students to continue to become pray-ers

Essential Questions:

Why is the prayer for mourners about praising God?

What is prayer?

Why might I want to pray?

How do I pray?

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit V

Goals:

- To introduce students to the words, essence, and rhythm of the Kaddish Yatom
- To guide students to develop an Understanding of Kaddish Yatom
- To introduce students to the different forms of Kaddish

Objectives:

- Students should be able to describe the mood of the Kaddish
- Students should be able to explain the essence of the Kaddish as praising God.
- Students should be able to locate the Kaddish Yatom in the siddur.

00-10 Introduce Kaddish Yatom by reading the prayer or playing a cd with it
Ask students: *What is the mood of this prayer? (Sad, slow, somber, mournful)*
Do you know what prayer this is? Tell students this is the Kiddish Yatom, or Mourner's Kaddish

10-30 In groups of 2 or 3 read the English translation of the Kaddish in the siddur.
Discuss with your group what the prayer means.
What is this prayer about?
Is this a sad prayer? Why or why not?
How many times is death mentioned in this prayer? (0)
Bring groups back together and share answers with class

30-40 *As you look at the prayer do any words or roots jump out at you?*
Notice that K-D-SH, the root meaning holy and B-R-Ch, bless, is in this prayer several times. These words are ways of praising or blessing God.
If this prayer is about praising God, why do we call it the Mourner's Kaddish?
Why do we praise God when thinking of our loved ones that have died?

40-50 Read “A Tale of Rabbi Akiva” and have students answer the attached questions; taken from Torah Aura’s Journeys Through The Siddur: Friday Evening (Included)Have students share their answers.

50-70 Using old magazines or things from nature create a collage that expresses either the mood or the words of the Kaddish.

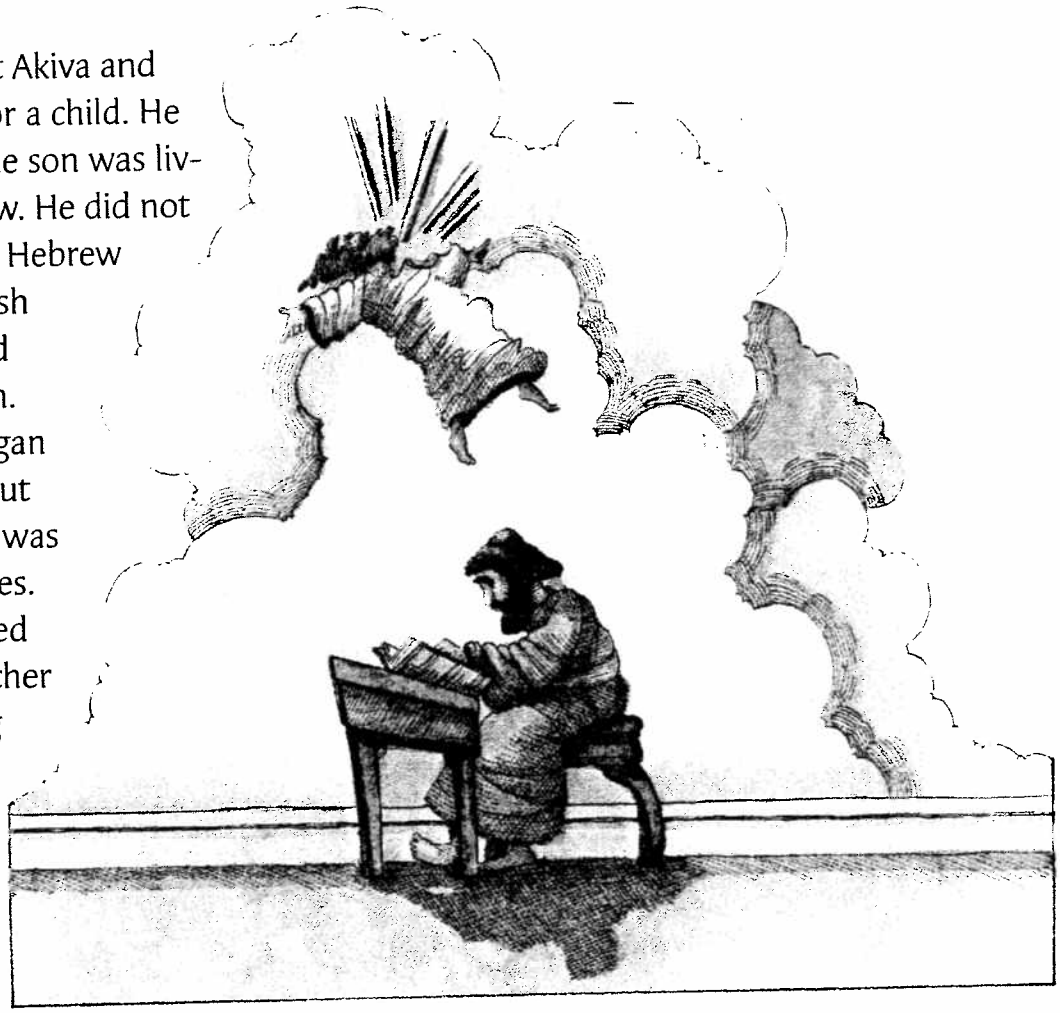
70-75 Tell students that the Kaddish Yatom is only one form of the Kaddish- Have students look through the siddur and see if you can find another form.

75-90 Introduce the 5 forms of Kaddish and when they are said: Kaddish Yatom, Chatzi Kaddish, Kaddish D’Rabbanan, Kaddish Shalem, and Kaddish L’itchadata. Help students find the different forms in the siddur. Show them that the Kaddish is always at the end of a section, with the Kaddish Yatom concluding the service. *How do you feel about this being the conclusion of the service? Is it an appropriate ending? Why or why not? How do you recognize other things that end? (Soccer Season, the school year) Which Kaddish should we use at the end of this unit, which ends the year?* Begin planning an end of the year celebration.

A Tale of Rabbi Akiva

Rabbi Akiva was walking through a cemetery. He saw a naked man, covered in soot, carrying a huge bundle of wood on his head. The man was running with the load. He was shouting the Aramaic version of "I'm late. I'm late. If I don't finish they will make it worse." Rabbi Akiva asked the man, "Is there anything I can do to help? If you are poor, can I buy you out of this debt to these masters who are way too demanding?" The man said, "You are talking to a dead man. I am in *Gehinom*, the place one waits before going on to the Garden of Eden. I will be here forever. Every night they boil me in oil using the wood I collect."

Rabbi Akiva asked, "What is your name?" The man answered, "Akiva." The rabbi asked further, "What was your crime? What will help you to move on?" The man answered, "I was a tax collector, and I took bribes from the rich and taxed the poor to death to make it up. They told me that my only way out of *Gehinom* was for a child of mine to say the קַדִּישׁ. I need that child to count as one of my good deeds." In those days one said the קַדִּישׁ only at the end of Torah study. It was not a mourner's prayer. The person with the best Torah insight led it.



Rabbi Akiva left Akiva and went looking for a child. He found a son. The son was living as a non-Jew. He did not know even one Hebrew letter. The Jewish community had abandoned him. Rabbi Akiva began to teach him, but the son's heart was not in his studies. Rabbi Akiva tried all his best teacher tricks—nothing worked.

Rabbi Akiva prayed to God and asked for the child's heart to be opened. Slowly the lessons went better. Once, when Rabbi Akiva brought the son to a Torah study, the son was picked to lead the קַדִּישׁ. When the prayer was over, Akiva went to the Garden of Eden.

That night Rabbi Akiva had a dream. In the dream he heard Akiva's voice. "You saved me from *Gehinom*. May your soul go quickly to the Garden of Eden in its time." In his dream, Rabbi Akiva said, "Eternal, Your NAME lasts forever, Your MEMORY is for all generations" (Ps 102.13). This is when the mourner's קַדִּישׁ began (*Mahzor Vitry*).

Questions

1. According to this story, what does the קַדִּישׁ do for the dead person?
2. According to this story, what does the קַדִּישׁ do for the person who says it?
3. How can remembering this story help you know where to point your heart when you participate in the mourner's קַדִּישׁ?

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Activities:

Kaddish

1. Provide students with copies Oseh Shalom and Birkat HaMazon. Ask students to find three lines of Kaddish Yatom that are also in Oseh Shalom and Birkat Hamazon. *What do these lines mean? Why are they in all three prayers? What does this teach us?*

2. Tell the students that Kaddish is actually not in Hebrew. See if anyone knows that the prayer is in Aramaic.

3. Allow students to experience the difference between the traditional manner of reciting Kaddish Yatom, with only mourners rising and saying the prayer and the liberal practice of the whole congregation standing and reciting it. Have students stand and recite the prayer together. Then ask for volunteers to say the prayer alone or in small groups. *How did it feel to read it alone? How did it feel to read the prayer with everyone together? How would you prefer to say Kaddish if you were a mourner?*[2]

Prayer

4. Ask students to define prayer. Compare their answers to the answers they gave during unit one (Authentic Assessment)

5. In small groups- create board games about the prayers learned and the order they are in

6. Help students prepare to lead a service for the synagogue- they can read the prayer as it is in the siddur or their own interpretation of it. (Authentic Assessment and memorable moment)

7. Give students strips of paper with one of the learned prayers on each strip. Ask the students to put them in order. This can be done individually or in groups

8. Share the following quote with students- hand it out and read it out loud.

   [The person at prayer should] consider to whom it is that his prayers are directed and what he intends to ask and what he intends to speak in the presence of his Creator, pondering the words of the prayers and their meaning. Know that so far as the language of prayer is concerned, the words themselves are like the husk while reflection on the meaning of the words is like the kernel. The prayer itself is like the body while reflection on its meanings is like the spirit so that, if someone merely utters the words of the prayer with his heart concerned with matters other than prayer, then his prayer is like a body without a spirit and a husk without a kernel, because while the body is present when he prays, his heart is absent…"

   - - Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart,* Chapter 8, "Self Evaluation," Section 3:9

[2] Taken from Teaching Tefilah, ARE

Ask students to reflect on this. *What does it mean? What do we need to do in order to have fulfilling prayer experiences? Can you think of other metaphors besides husk and kernel or body and spirit?*

This is a repeated activity from unit one- it allows students to see how they have changed and learned

9. Play "Name that Prayer." Give either the name or theme of a prayer and the students need to provide the opposite. Divide students into teams

10. Have students finish creating their own siddur based on what they learned in class.

11. Write your own prayer. *What would you add to the Shabbat liturgy?*

12. Ask students to do a free write on the following questions: *How does prayer affect me? What do I gain (or loose) by praying? How will this year help me in preparing for my Bar or Bat Mitzvah? How have my prayer habits changed from this year? What does it mean to me to pray?*

13. Write each of the following phrases on a large piece of paper (one sheet per phrase); Prayer is…, Prayer helps me…., I pray to…., When I pray…., God…. Hang the sheets of paper around the room. Give each student a marker and have them walk around the room and respond to the phrases. Allow time for students to go back and read their classmates responses.

14. Lead students through a synectics activity starting with prayer is…
(Synectics puts together two things that don't necessarily go together)
steps "a-e" should be done as a class and step "f" should be done individually
    a. Brainstorm words that describe "prayer"
    b. Pick one word from (a) and think of attributes of that word
    c. From the list generated in (b), create a list of opposites
    d. Pick one pair of opposites from (c)
    e. Think of other things that describe the pair
    f. Write a metaphor Prayer is like (e) when (or because)…

Suggested Resources

Books

Brown, Steven M. Higher and Higher: *Making Jewish Prayer Part of Us*. New York: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1980
A wonderful teacher resource that opens the door for engaging in prayer.

Costello, Elaine: *Religious Signing*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986
A very helpful resource that provides clear illustrations that show movement of hands, body and face to sign individual words and full prayers.

Donin, Rabbi Hayim Halevy. *To Pray as a Jew*. New York: Basic Books, 1980
A helpful resource of background material.

Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Jewish Virtues*. Denver, CO: A.R. E. Publishing, Inc., 1999
This is a good resource for tying values and ethics and to the liturgy.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *Shema is for Real*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 1993, 1973
An excellent resource for getting to the essence about what a prayer is about. It is worthwhile to get the original as well as the updated version.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie, and Golub, Jane. *S'fatai Tiftah Siddur Mastery & Meaning*. Los Angeles, CA: Torah Aura Productions, 2002
With beautiful illustrations, interpretations, and activities, this series helps readers understand the meanings of different prayers

Fields, Harvey. *B'chol L'Vacha: A Commentary.* New York: UAHC Press, 2001
This book provides some nice commentary on the prayers as well as interpretations and poetry based on the themes of the prayers.

Frankel, Tamar and Greenfeld, Judy. *Entering the Temple of Dreams*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000
This book is very useful to guide in ways of thinking about Hashkivenu and Shema,

Hammer, Reuven. *Entering Jewish Prayer.* New York: Schocken Books, 1994
This book provides commentary and background on the prayers.

Hoffman, Rabbi Jeff and Cohen-Kiener, Andrea. *Karov L'Chol Korav For all Who Call: A Manual for Enhancing the Teaching of Prayer.* New York: The Melton Research Center, 2000
A wonderful resource that provides interpretations and activities for many prayers.

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FIVE

THE HEART'S WORK

Prayer, we like to hope, is a moment of true speaking. At that instant we become the words we say: There is no deception, no ego to defend, no manufactured self. We speak from the heart. It is a plea for help, to be sure, but it is also a leap of joy, the expression of thanks for our very existence. We trivialize prayer if we think of it as a shopping list of requests. Prayer is carved-out time, the moments in which we allow ourselves to step out of ourselves, to look at the world not as an unending chain of little trials and triumphs, but to see as *largely* as we can. The time of prayer is when we say, "*This* is what matters to me the most."

It is not so difficult to accept this notion of prayer when the words we speak are the ones that leap from the mouth unbidden, when we say "Please!" or "Thanks!" spontaneously. But what about prayers written by someone else? What about the written liturgy, the prayer book? Is this also "true" speech? To think about Jewish prayer without also dealing with the prayer book, the siddur,[1] is an impossibility. But a liturgy also raises a whole set of complex issues at the heart of which is a simple question: What is my own relationship to the words that I pray?

Thus, one persistent problem is the every-present danger in a religion such as Judaism—with its emphasis on legislated behavior

in ritual life—that one's liturgical prayers would become so routinized that worship itself might turn into something virtually mechanical. The discussion of this problem, which Abraham Joshua Heschel aptly termed "religious behaviorism"[2]—plays an important role in rabbinic literature. One passage in the Talmud tries to explore the issue in more detail:

> *Mishnah* R. Eliezer said: One who makes his prayer a fixed routine (*keva*)—that prayer is no plea.
>
> *Gemara* What is *keva*? R. Jacob ben Idi said in the name of R. Oshaiah: Anyone whose prayer is like a heavy burden on him. The Sages say: Whoever does not say it in the manner of a plea. Rava and R. Joseph both say: Whoever is not able to insert something fresh in it. R. Zera said: I can insert something fresh in it, but I am afraid to do so lest I become confused.
>
> (Talmud, *Berakhot* 29b)

In typical fashion the Mishnah presents a short, unelaborated statement and the Gemara tries to mine the passage for its many meanings. Thus, we have four attempts at interpreting Rabbi Eliezer's view about *keva*, the term commonly used for a fixed routine[3] in prayer. First, there is the view of R. Jacob ben Idi quoting R. Oshaiah. The emphasis here is on the psychological attitude one brings to the *act* of prayer. Hence, according to R. Jacob, if you feel that the obligation of prayer is a burden, it will be hard to pray with intensity and concentration.

A different view is then presented by the Sages (that is, this tradition is attributed to a group of rabbis; no one particular person seems to be identified specifically with the interpretation). They also address the psychological dimension of the prayer experience. But they are less concerned with the attitude one brings to prayer than with the style of utterance within prayer itself. One who says the prayers in a mechanical—and perhaps they mean in an unemotional—way, is not really praying, according to this point of view.

More demanding is the next perspective, the joint position of Rava and R. Joseph. They are concerned with the need for inno-

vation in prayer. Even, one could argue, if you are successful in praying *without* a sense of burden and even if you *do* pray "in the manner of a plea," Rava and R. Joseph still require something more to avoid the charge of *keva*: You must creatively insert something new into your prayers.

The final comment in the passage reacts to the difficulties inherent in Rava and R. Joseph's argument. Here R. Zera appears to reject their view as overly radical. R. Zera asserts that indeed he has the ability to innovate in prayer, as Rava and R. Joseph desire, but he is concerned that focusing on innovation may distract him from prayer itself. The demand to innovate may inhibit one's ability to focus on the liturgy, thus, ironically, damaging that very concentration which one needs in an attempt to eliminate the problems of *keva*! And what about those people who do not have the religious genius that may be required to innovate? Is their prayer to be denigrated?

The quality of concentration that concerns R. Zera is called by the rabbinic literature *kavvanah*—being "directed"—and it is an idea that has a long and complicated history throughout Jewish religious life.[4] At its heart is the attempt to safeguard religious seriousness while retaining liturgical prayer. The question is, when we pray, what kind of relationship should we have to the words that we say, the words of a liturgy that are not of our own composition?

In one of the most important Jewish ethical and devotional works of the Middle Ages, *Duties of the Heart*, the writer, Bahya ibn Pakuda, addressed this specific matter:

> **[The person at prayer should] consider to whom it is that his prayers are directed and what he intends to ask and what he intends to speak in the presence of his Creator, pondering the words of the prayers and their meaning. Know that so far as the language of prayer is concerned, the words themselves are like the husk while reflection on the meaning of the words is like the kernel. The prayer itself is like the body while reflection on its meaning is like the spirit so that, if someone merely utters the words of the prayer with his heart concerned with matters other than prayer, then his prayer is like a**

> **body without a spirit and a husk without a kernel, because while the body is present when he prays, his heart is absent. . . .**
>
> **(Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart*, Chapter 8, "Self-Evaluation," Section 3:9)**

Kavvanah, from Bahya's point of view, seems to come down to knowing that you are standing before the Divine Presence, combined with a strong emphasis on understanding the meaning of the words you are saying. Bahya too is concerned with the problem of *keva*; he is worried about the phenomenon of people merely mouthing the words of prayer without being aware of what they are saying. After all, "the words themselves are like the husk while reflection on the meaning of the words is like the kernel."

But, of course, for most people, at least most people today, focusing on the meaning of the prayers does not really solve the problem of prayer. The bilingual siddur—and in some cases the use of the vernacular in prayer itself—has pretty much eliminated the difficulty that the worshiper would not know what the words mean. In fact, knowing what the prayers mean may be the *source* of problems about prayer! Particularly when we look at the understanding of prayer found in the passage from Bahya above. For here the author focuses on the idea most commonly associated with the word "prayer." As he says, the worshiper should concentrate upon "what he intends to ask" from God. It is the "asking" side of prayer that most often comes to mind when people think about prayer and it is precisely that petitionary act that troubles them.

Looking at the Jewish liturgy, it has often been pointed out, we can see two other dimensions of prayer in addition to the prayers of petition: prayers that thank God and, closely related, prayers that praise God. At times the prayers of thanksgiving overlap with the prayers of praise. When one says, "Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who supplies my every need," is that a prayer of thanksgiving or praise? Generally, the distinction seems to be that prayers of thanksgiving tend to be

specified—that is, God is thanked for a specific act—and prayers of praise are more generalized, such as "May His great name be praised throughout all eternity."

But knowing that there are three different kinds of prayer in the liturgy does little to help us in our own attempts at praying. Indeed, for people today all three types of prayer seem to be problematic and their difficulties are inherently connected to some of the theological issues that we have discussed in the last two chapters. To ask for something from God assumes the reality of a God who answers such requests. To thank God assumes that events that have occurred owe their existence to God's actions. To praise God is similarly to assert the reality of God's presence. But in a world without such theological certainties, prayer is bound to be difficult. And understanding the meaning of the words cannot help alleviate the problem; it can even exacerbate it. As someone once said, "I prefer not to read the libretto when I go to the opera. Then I might know what they mean with all that beautiful singing and it would ruin my entire evening!"

The classic Jewish sources were not unaware of the difficulties of prayer, as we have seen even in the texts above that deal with *kavvanah* and *keva*. And petitionary prayer raised other problems the rabbis tried to deal with, in particular the question of whether all petitions are legitimate. Thus, the Mishnah teaches:

> If someone cries out to God over what is past, this prayer is in vain. How? If a man's wife is pregnant and he were to say, "May it be Your will that my wife shall bear a male child," this prayer is in vain. If someone is walking along and hears cries coming from the city and prays, "May it be Your will that those cries are not coming from my family," this prayer is in vain.
>
> (Mishnah, *Berakhot* 9:3)

One can only pray for what is possible. Facts cannot be changed. History cannot be reversed. Petitionary prayer must make sense in a world of reason.

Praise and thanksgiving also presented difficulties for the classic sources, but we should remember that there are clear differences between their difficulties and our own. For us the problem of

praise and thanksgiving comes out of the doubt and theological uncertainty that are characteristic of modernity. For the rabbis the problem seems almost precisely the opposite: their belief in God's power, their lack of doubt, led them to question their own human adequacy to speak before the Ruler of the universe.

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in one of the central hymns of the Sabbath and Festival Morning Service, the prayer called Nishmat Kol Hai ("The Breath of Every Living Thing"). This prayer is one of the masterpieces of Jewish liturgy. Joseph Heinemann, an important scholar in this field, characterized the prayer as "the most exalted and eloquent prayer in the hymnic style to be found in the statutory liturgy."[5]

In a certain sense the underlying theme of the prayer seems to challenge the very idea of liturgy—how is it possible for human beings to praise God? It begins with an assumption about the nature of reality:

> The breath of every living thing
> shall praise your name, O Lord our God,
> and every mortal being
> shall ever glorify and exalt your deeds, O our
> King. From eternity to eternity
> You are our God.
> And we have no one but You as our King,
> our Redeemer, our Savior, our Deliverer
> in every time of trouble and distress.
> God of first things and of last things,
> Lord of all creatures, Master of all generations,
> You are endlessly praised.

The very fact of God's existence, the fact that God is "Master of all generations," makes it appropriate for Him to be "endlessly praised."

Yet there is something troubling here. The prayer is facing up to a difficult situation—a God who is endlessly praised, who is eternal and infinitely powerful, is a difficult standard for anyone to approach. God, after all, is a master of words Himself. It is through words that God created the universe: "Let there be

light." The worshiper is caught in the awkward situation of needing to use the medium of language, which is so closely associated with God, in order to praise God.

And God is more than a master of language; God is the source of language. How can a human being, so dependent on God—"our King, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Deliverer in every time of trouble and distress"—find an adequate way to praise the "God of first things and of last things, Lord of all creatures?"

In the second section of the prayer, this task of praise seems to overwhelm the worshiper:

> If our mouths were filled with song
> as the sea,
> and our tongue with joyful praise
> as the roaring waves;
> were our lips full of adoration
> as the wide expanse of heaven,
> and our eyes sparkling
> like the sun or moon;
> were our hands spread out in prayer
> as the eagles in the sky,
> and our feet swift as the deer—
> we should still be unable to thank You
> and bless Your name,
> Lord our God.

The sense of inadequacy is immense. Implied perhaps is an even more oppressive ignominy. It seems that the animals, the sea, all natural things *do* praise God. They praise simply by being—flowing or roaring or shining. But human beings feel their own voice to be weak. We do not have the words to respond to God's reality.

The prayer then turns to list God's great kindnesses throughout Jewish history. God liberated us from the bondage of Egypt and nourished us in times of famine and helped us in times of plenty and rescued us from sword and disease. All these acts are catalogued by the prayer and yet it is through the process of recounting God's deeds that the prayer finds its resolution. The worshiper realizes that we have no choice but to praise God, despite our

sense of inadequacy. In the same way that God's power makes us feel small, it inescapably compels and inspires us to make the effort to praise. Thus the prayer continues:

> Therefore
> the limbs which You have given us
> and the spirit and soul
> which You have breathed into our nostrils
> and the tongue which You have placed in our
> mouths—all will join in giving thanks
> and in praising Your name, O our King.

What is interesting here is that the transition from the historical recounting—that very striking "therefore" in the text—leads to the knowledge that indeed we can praise God. Why? Because it is God who has given us the very ability to pray. The prayer Nishmat suggests that by redefining our sense of our own selves, our own bodies, we can accept the burden of praise and make the attempt to speak. It is no longer merely "*our* tongue," as we had thought, but the tongue "which *You* have placed in our mouths." Thus, Nishmat becomes a kind of journey of self-discovery. We learn our place and our powers, and in doing so we learn how to praise. It is a prayer of praise, but it is also a prayer about the act of praising. We can pray, Nishmat argues, because it is God who is the source of prayer.

Nishmat, then, is well positioned in the structure of the liturgy. Appearing at the beginning of the Morning Service on Sabbath and Festivals, Nishmat leads the worshiper into the heart of the service itself, the Shema and the Amidah. Once one has said Nishmat Kol Hai and understood its meaning, lived through its process, the service is ready to begin.

This prayer, as I said at the outset, tries to deal with the problem of human inadequacy, a problem the rabbis felt was inherent in prayers of praise and thanksgiving. But what is our reaction today to its message that "we can pray because it is God who is the source of prayer"? For us this statement of "fact" is considerably more problematic, or at any rate a good deal less rooted in certainty.

What I have tried to do here is to walk through the meaning of the prayer, to focus on the words, as Bahya recommended, looking at the "kernel beneath the husk." But, as I have said above, focusing on the meaning will not solve our problems with prayer. To actually *pray* a liturgical piece that asserts the message of Nishmat ("we can pray because it is God who is the source of prayer") is different from analyzing a text that comes to the same conclusion. Unlike study, mustn't prayer involve the assent of the worshiper? In *studying* materials from the past we can look at the texts with distance; even if the texts speak to us only in part, we can edit out, so to speak, those sections with which we cannot connect. But praying reflects a more intimate relationship between person and text; in prayer, as I've said above, the text literally becomes *our* words. And how is distance possible in that case?

Of course, we have to consider how much we really "mean" the words when we say them. Is that what the prayer experience is all about? To focus on the meaning of the words, as Bahya recommends, means focusing on the straightforward, denotative meaning of the words, but such a view makes prayer a considerably more intellectual experience—closer to study, in other words—than in fact it actually is. First and foremost, as Bahya himself argues, prayer is standing before God. That is, prayer is essentially an *experience,* the experience of feeling oneself face to face with the holy. My understanding of the passage in the Talmud requiring that one's prayer be a "plea" is that it is another way of focusing on the emotional or nonrational aspect of prayer. Of course, as we have seen, there are differences in opinion over what constitutes a plea, but there is no debate about the primacy of the supplicatory nature of prayer.

In that case, how should we view the words of the liturgy? To begin with, it is clear from a historical point of view that the Jewish liturgy itself is a kind of "second-order" language. Like an autobiography "ghosted" by another, the liturgy represents those words we might want to say if we had the talent to compose them ourselves. It is language, in other words, written to deal with the inabilities we all have in standing before the Divine. And of course the traditional Jewish liturgy also was designed to ensure that the

statutory requirements of prayer—the times of prayer, the number and content of blessings, the order of the service—as developed by the rabbis, would be fulfilled.

Scholars of rabbinic Judaism believe that prayer originally was meant to be the spontaneous outpouring of the individual worshiper, but the content of that verbal expression was to be based on a set of fixed topics said in a certain order. Thus, how the individual's own words would express the topic like "God's Kingship" would vary according to the individual's own perception and ability. Eventually, a fixed liturgy emerged, although this was a slow process and the innovative, personal side of the prayers remained present for many years. In fact, we have in ancient sources different versions of particular prayers, existing side by side, each representing personalized efforts to fulfill the specified liturgical requirements.[6]

The history of the liturgy offers a kind of insight into how we ourselves might think about prayer. I do *not* mean to argue that we should abandon the traditional liturgy so that we can return to spontaneous prayer (although it's good to remember—as we often do not—that spontaneity in prayer is not something rejected by classical Jewish practice). Such a step would not solve our problems with prayer and it is likely that the same human inadequacies that led to the creation of a liturgy in the first place have not changed for the better over the centuries. Indeed, given the uncertainties about belief characteristic of modernity, we today would probably have more difficulty than our ancestors in creating our own personal prayers.

Rather, the "second-order" nature of the traditional language suggests a kind of *relationship* that we might adopt in connection to that liturgy. These are not, after all, our own words that we are speaking. Therefore, although they are words that can help us or guide us, our relationship to that language is different from our relationship to words of our own choosing. What we seek to develop, then, is a more flexible stance in our personal connection to the words of the prayers. The liturgy, in other words, is there to assist us; rather than letting our difficulties with the words hinder us, our goal should be to attain the ability to go *beyond* the

words while at the same time taking advantage of what they have to offer us. Most of us do not have the religious genius to compose poetic prayers, but the liturgy provides a different alternative: the basic skeleton that we ourselves fill out. The tradition provides the melody, so to speak, but our own personal improvisation upon that melody varies it, changes it, makes it different perhaps from its original intention, but it makes the song our own. What we need to consider next is how that improvising can occur.

Improvisation is always happening in prayer because we are constantly "editing" the words as we say them. Of course, in non-Orthodox versions of Judaism, this editing of the liturgy has occurred quite literally as certain phrases deemed "objectionable"—such as the concept of the chosen people in the Reconstructionist prayer book or some of the prayers for the restoration of the Temple sacrifices in the Conservative prayer book—have simply been eliminated or rewritten.[7] But my point is that even without such radical steps, during prayer all of us are *mentally* editing the liturgy as we walk through the prayers. We do it by simply tuning out the noise of those phrases that don't touch us or that we disagree with or even by establishing our own silent dialogue with the text as we speak the words. In that way, as I will try to show below, we create a kind of "countertext" to the liturgy, which is to say we mentally adjust the literal content of what we are saying to conform to our own beliefs and values. To put it another way, we think the words we *mean* to be saying as we are saying the words printed on the page. Perhaps it's not even "thinking" these alternative words; it may be more of a kind of "leaning" toward them, like whispers in the back of the mind.

Of course, one could say in response: "Why do you need all this mental editing—if particular words bother you so much, why not just eliminate them?" But as artificial as this strategy may sound, there may be reasons why it is worthwhile to retain those difficult phrases, and not just for the predictable reasons of sentiment or "tradition," though these too should not be underestimated. What I am suggesting here is that keeping the traditional

language means creating moments of tension between ourselves and the liturgy, and there is something in that very process that keeps prayer active and alive. The traditional liturgy throws down a kind of challenge to us; it forces us to assert who we are and what we stand for, even in "opposition" to the liturgy itself.

In a curious fashion the liturgy itself provides examples of this very tension in the way that it has adopted certain biblical verses into its own language. Of course, the siddur is filled with biblical allusion and the actual language of the prayers has often been taken from the Bible. Thus, large sections of the Book of Psalms, to take the most obvious example, have been incorporated directly into the liturgy.

But the tension that I have been alluding to can be seen in a more subtle example. At the center of the Morning Service is the following blessing: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates all." Yet the language of this blessing represents a kind of hidden midrash, for it is a direct allusion to a passage in Isaiah (45:5–7):

> I am the Lord and there is none else;
> Beside Me there is no god.
> I engird you, though you have not known Me,
> So that they may know, from east to west,
> that there is none but Me.
> I am the Lord and there is none else,
> I form light and create darkness,
> I make peace and create evil.

The last two lines were incorporated verbatim into the Morning Service with one significant change—the last word, "evil" (Hebrew: *rah*) was changed in its liturgical setting to "all" (*ha-kol*).[8] Of course, this is no small change, and it is obvious that the composers of the liturgy felt that to say in prayer each morning that God was creator of evil might have been more than any individual could bear in starting the day. But the *fact* of this adaptation (something that has often been noted in studies of the liturgy) is far less important than the *effect* of this change on the person who prays these words.

For the person who hears the "midrash"—that is, the change from the context in Isaiah to its use in the service—there is an inevitable tension that is created and a kind of "mental editing" forced upon us, in this case by the text of the prayer book itself. That is, every time one says the statement "God creates all" in the Morning Service, one is reminded in this tiny way that "creating all" means "creating evil" as well. We may not say the words out loud, but the tension between the hope for peace and the existence of evil (parallel here to the world of "light" and the world of "darkness" in the phrase directly before it) resonates in our minds. Here the change was made in the liturgy itself, but the active participation of the worshiper is engaged by just that tension.[9] Of course, "hearing the midrash" within the prayer assumes that one knows enough Bible to appreciate the subtle changes the liturgy has introduced. And because of that it is clear that *studying* the prayer book as a text can serve the purpose of enhancing the quality of one's worship.

It might be asked: Does a time ever come in which the liturgy itself should *actually* be edited or rewritten? I have suggested that the "tension" between the liturgical language and one's own thoughts is a healthy one, but there may come a point at which the tension is too great and the gap too deep between the liturgy and one's perception of reality. For each individual this gap may occur at a different point. In fact, in chapter 3 we discussed a midrash from the Talmud (*Yoma* 69b) that dealt with precisely this point—Jeremiah and Daniel change the actual text of Moses' prayer because they cannot bear the tension between the words, which assert God's power, and the reality of the alien conquest of the land that the two prophets had witnessed. As R. Eleazar said: "Since they knew that the Holy One, blessed be He, insists on truth, they were unable to say any false things about Him." It is only Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly who were able to restore the original prayer of Moses *by creating their own midrash on the original words*, in other words, by "mentally editing" the text. Thus, they asserted that when Moses' prayer talked about God's "might" it meant that God was so mighty that He suppressed His anger against the nations.

Since it is impractical for each person to carry around his or her own printed prayer book (although I have suggested that in essence we do this in our heads), we tend to rely on the institutions with which we identify to do the editing for us. Thus, there are certain Orthodox synagogues that will not say the Prayer for the State of Israel, while most Orthodox congregations do say it. And of course examples from non-Orthodox Judaism have been mentioned before. If you walk into a particular synagogue, you are likely to know (or find out very quickly!) where it stands on various issues concerning the liturgy.

The issue of an unbridgeable gap between text and self can be coupled with the traditional liturgical weight of the prayers in question. There are certain sections of the liturgy (for example, the Shema or the Amidah) whose liturgical status according to tradition is higher than others (for example, the introductory morning Psalms). By the traditional standard, then, making a change in the Shema would be very different from changing or eliminating one of those Psalms. The question then is: How do we balance the standards of the tradition with the values of today? But this is precisely the primary challenge of religion in a modern age. Liturgy in that sense is no different from any other area that one can address, although it may be somewhat more visible, since the prayer service has such a public function.

Of course, no liturgy could work if it simply functioned as a standard of *disagreement* and most of the experience of Jewish prayer, it seems to me, is not of the conflictive sort that I have been describing above under the rubric of "mental editing." More often than not the liturgy serves as an affirmative statement of what we *do* indeed believe, but the problem lies elsewhere: in the fact that the affirmation is stated in a specifically theological language with which we may not always be comfortable.

There is little doubt that the composers of the liturgy did believe the literal content of what they had written (although the midrash about Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly makes the matter somewhat more complex than it might at first seem), but if we follow the prescription suggested earlier, that the liturgy is a second-order language that is ours to reinterpret, we can look

at the formulae of the prayer book in a different fashion. We can look at the siddur as a way of *focusing* who we are, both in our tension with it, as I've suggested above, but even more clearly in our *connection* to the values of the liturgy. We may, in other words, take the theological language of the liturgy simply as a linguistic style, a kind of conventional structured framework, while we orient ourselves instead to the underlying values expressed by those words.

Look, for example, at some of the blessings that appear at the beginning of the traditional Morning Service:

> Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
> who clothes the naked.
> Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
> who releases those who are bound.
> Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
> who supplies my every need.

To look at the liturgy as a way of focusing means to say to oneself in repeating these blessings: Each morning I assert a set of basic values. I believe that it is crucial "to clothe the naked," which is to say, to try to take care of the poor and homeless; I believe that it is essential to work for "the release of those who are bound," which means to help people in need and those who desire to be free; I believe that "my every need is supplied"—in other words, I should remember to think more carefully about my "need" to buy something and to be satisfied by that which I have; and so forth.

Now of course each person will read the "values" of the prayer book in a slightly different way—for some, the phrase "releases those who are bound" may cause them to think about captives of war; for some, "supplies my every need" may make them think about the need to preserve the ecological balance in nature. But in every case the liturgy becomes a meeting place for the classic values of Judaism and the things we ourselves believe in and care about, but which we may often let slip from our minds. The existence of the liturgy ensures that each time we pray, we come

face-to-face with the deepest values of our lives. Prayer, then, becomes an opportunity for renewal. Like mental editing, "focusing" is a personal, individual process, but here it is a matter of how one interprets in a positive way the assertions and values of the liturgy. And these matters are not fixed in stone; indeed, each day you may read the same words in a different way and with a different understanding.

Focusing too is a kind of editing. What it does is place the weight of prayer on what we ourselves value (or want to value) rather than on what we might expect from God. These blessings from the Morning Service are written as statements about God. They are prayers of praise. In essence, I have suggested here that we put the emphasis in each line on the closing words "who clothes the naked" rather than on the "Blessed be You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who . . ." There is no reason, certainly, why one cannot do both simultaneously—people can praise God *and* assert those values that matter most in their lives. But for many the theological difficulties of these assertions (that is, does God *really* clothe the naked?) make the words difficult to say. My point is that the reinterpretation of the words in this case is a shift of emphasis from the first to the latter sections of blessings such as these. Like Jeremiah and Daniel, we try to speak truth.

I have said above that each day we may see the values of the prayer book in a different light. Clearly, this will depend upon the facts of one's own life at any particular time. Thus, if I go to sleep with news about the homeless in my ears, I may find myself thinking about that issue when I say "clothes the naked" in the morning prayers. And this phenomenon—the effect of one's own personal situation at any given time on the way the prayers are understood—leads me to another way of experiencing the traditional liturgy.

Up to this point I have focused on the issue of the content of the prayers—both how we might approach liturgical language we disagree with and how we can approach words whose values we do agree with, but whose theological formulations present difficulties. I have tried to look at the experience of praying and the

reality of what it means to pray through use of a liturgy. But the experience of prayer can also involve another relationship to the words of the liturgy, something beyond concentrating on their content. Prayer also gives us an opportunity for a more reflective or meditative experience and hence a different kind of connection to the words we say. I would call this latter experience prayer as "associative reverie." Let me try to explain what I mean in more detail.

Liturgical prayer is a meeting point between the community and the individual. For the individual this is most obvious when sitting in a synagogue, feeling oneself to be part of the community that surrounds one, but even when a person prays alone, as long as he or she is using the siddur, community—as represented by the book one is holding—is present. Of course, there are always varying degrees of distance and connection between the worshiper and the expressed values of the community, depending upon the words one is saying and the relationship one has to the content of those words.

But there are times in which the words of the prayer book can do something else: they can serve as a kind of catalyst for personal reflection. In those times the "individual" side of the individual-community continuum moves high up on the scale. The people around you matter very little; indeed, the denotative *content*—that is, the plain meaning—of the prayer book's words becomes secondary. What matters is the moment of reflection, the reverie, that occurs in prayer. Reverie is not without content; it lies somewhere between a daydream and a thought. I call this "associative reverie" because the moment of reflection is touched off by a *personal association* that one has with the words one is praying.

This sense of connection to the liturgy is something difficult to communicate to another person because the thread of association is too complex and too subtle to express easily in words. More often than not, this personal association is not really like a daydream (which tends to be elaborate and lengthy), but is rather a quick associative thought that flashes through the mind as one moves on to the next word on the page.

And these associations are bound to vary from day to day.

Indeed, it may be that very fact that keeps prayer from being routinized, as one sees in the following text:

> Faith is the basis of all worship;
> only the truly faithful can pray each day.
> And what is the basis of faith?
> "He renews each day the work of Creation."
> The faithful one sees
> that every day is a new Creation,
> that all the worlds are new,
> that we ourselves have just been born.
> How could we not want to sing
> the praise of the Creator?
>
> If we do not have the faith
> that God creates anew each day,
> prayer becomes an old, unwanted habit.
> How difficult it is to say
> the same words day after day!
> Thus scripture says: "Cast us not into old age!"
> May the word never become old for us.
> *(Degel Mahane Ephraim)*[10]

Of all the various movements within the history of Judaism, none placed a greater emphasis on prayer than Hasidism in the late eighteenth century. Here the author of the text, Rabbi Moses Hayim Ephraim of Sudylkov, stresses the need to feel oneself renewed each day in prayer. He bases his interpretation on a line from the morning liturgy quoted in the text above, "He renews each day the work of Creation," but he stresses here—in midrashic fashion—a reading of a verse from Psalms, "Cast us not into old age." The understanding of the verse is not its obvious meaning—the plea not to be abandoned in one's old age—but rather the desire that the words of prayer not become "old" and meaningless. But how does one do this work of renewing prayer? Through the personal associations that come to mind during prayer the dangers of *keva* can be overcome. Each day is new and thus necessarily each prayer is to be new as well.

If we return to our earlier example of blessings from the daily

Morning Service, we can imagine associative reveries that can occur when each of those blessings touches off images in my mind. I think about "clothing the naked" and my mind reflects, perhaps, on an encounter I had with a beggar on the street. I do not turn this reflection into a statement of belief or values, but that encounter with the beggar, the *experience* itself—and it can be either good or bad or neither—is what comes to mind. The blessing that ends "supplies my every need" may mean on one morning a thought about my own life and what my needs are; another morning I may reflect upon the world of nature and my connection to it. I may think about an incident from my life or a promise that I made or an experience that this blessing helps me put into perspective. And all of this may—like most passing associations—dart through my mind in an instant.

When I say the blessing about God as Creator of light, the word "light" may cause me to think about the light I see outside this morning and how it differs or resembles the light I see on other mornings. Or I may think of "light" as something symbolic of truth, and thus on *that* morning the blessing has nothing to do with light in its prosaic sense, while on the next morning it may lead me to reflect on sunlight itself. Or the blessing for "a new light to shine upon Zion" may on one day connect to something I read in the newspaper about contemporary Israel (I may think about issues concerning prospects for peace in the Middle East), while on another day it may have a completely different association. Thus, the liturgy—through the associative power of the worshiper's own mind—is constantly changing.

The distinction between the associations that come to mind under the rubric of "focusing," which I discussed earlier, and those I am referring to now has a good deal to do with the state of mind involved: here I am speaking of images or fragments of thoughts, a kind of dreamlike quality at times. "Focusing" was concerned with intellectual propositions, ideas, values that I ascribe to.

In a way, of course, the two are closely related. But the point I want to emphasize in making the distinction is that prayer is *not only* a matter of affirming intellectual beliefs. Most discussions of prayer tend to emphasize the "belief" side of prayer and the denotative content of the words. But prayer has a strong nonrational component as well. Associative reverie is an experience that Heschel described as "the imaginative projection of our consciousness into the meaning of the words."[11] Of course, it is hard to put this associative mode of prayer into words and for each person these associations will be different, but without this element one of the most important dimensions of prayer will be ignored or lost.

The early Hasidic writers also saw the potential danger in associative prayer. There was always the possibility that personal reflections could move a person *away* from prayer into a kind of banality. Thus, there is a considerable literature in these sources about the problems of *mahshava zara*, "alien thoughts," distractions in prayer that take the worshiper away from the task at hand. One should be careful not to forget that prayer is meant to be "sacred time" and not time for reflection on the stock market or the errands one has to do in the afternoon. Thus, in one text we are told:

> When a distracting thought comes to you in prayer,
> hold fast to God and break through
> to redeem the sacred spark
> that dwells within that thought. . . .
> *(Likkutim Yekarim)*[12]

And in another:

> As you stand before God in prayer,
> you should feel that you stand alone—
> in all the world only you and God exist.
> Then there can be no distractions;
> Nothing can disturb such a prayer.
> *(Ben Porat Yosef)*[13]

Looking at the words of the liturgy in an associative manner means trying to find the "sacred spark that dwells within," which to my mind means seeing the words as an opportunity to reflect

:riously upon one's life in a sacred context. When you see your-:lf as standing "alone" before God, the text implies, there are no istracting thoughts because you are facing up to your deepest :nse of yourself.

Associative prayer is still very much focused on the words of ıe liturgy, though in an open-ended fashion. But there is another imension of prayer that takes the experience one step further—rayer that seems to be *beyond* the words themselves. Here we nter a side of prayer that verges on the mystical, and yet it is an spect of prayer that is not as unfamiliar as it may first appear. For ıany people have had experiences in prayer that have little to do vith the words one is saying, times in which one is simply being wept up in the power of the moment. These experiences, which or lack of a better term I will simply call "beyond the words," re described by Hasidic texts in the following manner:

> When you focus all your thought
> on the power of the words,
> you may begin to see the sparks of light
> that shine within them.
> The sacred letters are the chambers
> into which God pours His flowing light.
> The lights within each letter, as they touch,
> ignite one another,
> and new lights are born.
> It of this the Psalmist says:
> "Light is sown for the righteous,
> and joy for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11).
>
> *(Keter Shem Tov)*[14]

It is clear in this text that the author is speaking of a very special type of prayer experience. And perhaps a special type of ability in the person who prays. The meaning of the individual words is insignificant; rather it is the "lights" one sees *within* the letters—in some way an aspect of the mysterious God—that one seeks to find. Values, associations, meanings seem very insignificant in such an understanding of prayer.

For most of us this kind of prayer seems impossible to attain.

But I want to focus upon the emotional aspect of prayer—the side of prayer that has no "content"—that the text above is advocating. Even without seeing "lights within the letters," a similar kind of purely emotional experience in prayer may in fact be something that we can encounter in our lives too.

Another text makes the point even more clearly:

> Do not think that the words of prayer
> as you say them
> go up to God.
> It is not the words themselves that ascend;
> it is rather the burning desire of your heart
> that rises like smoke toward heaven.
> If your prayer consists only of words and letters
> and does not contain your heart's desire—
> how can it rise up to God?
>
> *(Or Ha-Meir)*[15]

The "burning desire of your heart" is the side of prayer we often ignore. But prayer is as much that as it is the beliefs that we hold. When I said before that people are less unfamiliar with this side of prayer than they might think, I was thinking of one specific example (although there surely are others as well): namely, the kind of connection to *music* that seems to speak very directly to many people in a prayer service.

Some may have found this connection in the sound of singing during certain parts of the service—their own singing mixed with that of their fellow worshipers. Others experience it in the singing voice of the leader of the service, and for others it might be found in a choir or in musical instruments. Of course, music is only one example of the experience of being "beyond the words" in prayer. One of the strongest memories from my childhood of being swept up emotionally in synagogue is not so much of the power of singing, but of feeling the sheer numbers of people around me on the holiday evening of Simhat Torah.

We might wonder if such experiences can be "programmed" in advance. Is it possible to create such "beyond the words" time in one's prayer? In that light consider the following text:

There are times when you are praying
in an ordinary state of mind
and you feel that you cannot draw near to God.
But then in an instant
the light of your soul will be kindled
and you will go up to the highest worlds.

You are like one who has been given a ladder:
The light that shines in you is a gift from above.
(Likkutim Yekarim)[16]

As this text points out, these experiences of being "beyond the words" probably cannot be orchestrated (to continue my musical metaphor for a bit); more often than not, they come upon us in an instant. We can be singing in a congregation on Yom Kippur or we can be saying the morning prayers silently and alone while looking out the window. And suddenly, if not to "the highest worlds," we have at least gone beyond ourselves, no longer connected to the liturgy or even to any thoughts at all.

One of the curious aspects of contemporary Jewish religious life has been its lack of emphasis, its virtual antagonism, to fostering any nonverbal aspects of prayer, aside perhaps, from the performance side of synagogue music—the role of the cantor or the choir. This has been particularly true in the world of non-Orthodox synagogues. In general, the large suburban synagogues of the post–World War II era, have emphasized the communal dimension of the service at the expense of the individual side. That is, the focus of the service has been "to the front," so to speak, on the rabbi, the cantor, and the ceremony. But liturgical prayer, as I have tried to argue, is a complex balance between the communal and the individual poles. In what way, just to take one example, does the institution of the public "responsive reading" within the service foster the inwardness required for mental editing or associating (not to speak of being "beyond the words") in prayer? Very little, it seems to me.

In contrast, the style of prayer in a traditional setting—and here I do not mean the words but the way that the service is conducted—has helped create opportunities for that balance of the individual

and the communal. In the Ashkenazic service the leader will say the opening words of a particular prayer, after which the entire congregation continues saying the prayer, each person to himself, in a kind of half-chant, half-mumble undertone. The leader will then repeat the last line of the prayer, or the blessing with which it concludes. During that middle period—between the opening line and the closing phrase—the individual is free to focus on the liturgy in whatever way he or she desires. Thus, the communal and the individual are blended within each prayer.[17] The Sephardic rite is somewhat different, and there one finds a good deal of communal chanting. The entire congregation sings together, with the leader taking more of a pacing role. Nonetheless, the chant creates a kind of communal hum that still leaves room for individual reflection.

Nor can we underestimate the power of the Hebrew language as an evocative factor in such settings. Of course, ideally everyone in the congregation would understand the Hebrew of the prayers. Personal association, for instance, can only work when at least a modicum of linguistic knowledge is present. But even when the comprehension of the language is weak, Hebrew may invoke a kind of magical quality for the worshiper. One feels a sense of connection to the ancient words of the Jewish people and, at least in the realm of "beyond the words," this has the potential to make a compelling spiritual effect on the worshiper.

This is not to say that nontraditional models of prayer cannot work. What I want to suggest, however, is that those new approaches that might be developed try to take into account the reasons why the traditional style of prayer has been so powerful. One might consider, for example, the ways that associative reverie might be attempted using the English translation of the siddur, or the ways that music or communal chanting could be introduced into the synagogue service. The key point is to begin with the insights of tradition and then reshape them to contemporary circumstance.

Of course, the traditional style of prayer has its own problems, most of which can be found in the hurried pace of the service, which often leaves little time for the individual's own thoughts,

as one simply tries to keep up with the leader's pace. And in addition the sheer number of prayers can be overwhelming. But the concept of individual and communal interaction is what matters, even if the specific execution is not ideal in many congregations.

I began this chapter with a discussion of prayer and the issues that one faces in harmonizing the personal and emotional side of prayer (*kavvanah*) with the challenges of a fixed liturgy (*keva*). I have described four different stances, four ways of approaching the language of the traditional prayer book: "mental editing," which tries to deal with discontinuity between the worshiper and the liturgy; "focusing," which tries to center on the values embodied in the liturgy, irrespective of the theological language in which they are framed; "associative reverie," which sees the liturgy as an opportunity for one's own personal reflections and connections and experiences; and "beyond the words," which looks at those times in prayer when one is swept away by the emotional side of the experience.

In delineating these four stances, I do not mean to imply that there is a ladder of values here, that "beyond the words," for example, is a "higher stage" of prayer than mental editing (although I think it is fair to say that the Hasidic sources quoted before *would* make such a statement). These are points of relationship to liturgy, not steps to attain. And indeed throughout any service one is likely to float back and forth among all four of these points of relationship. Or, as the Hasidic literature is well aware, one might not be able to find any relationship to a particular service on a given day. "Alien thoughts" might rule.

But there is one final way of looking at the liturgy that I would also like to suggest. I am speaking of those times in which one is completely in harmony with both the sentiment and the language of the siddur, so much so that the liturgy requires no mental editing at all and the words one says are a simple "plea" from the heart. The four stances I have developed above are in some ways reactions to a sense of disconnection from prayer or the prayer book. But now I am speaking about the opposite phenomenon—

when we experience the language of the prayers as literally "our own."

This experience, to my mind, is connected to an idea mentioned in the last chapter: times when we relate to statements about God in their most elemental way, as literal fact, even though we know that is not what we "believe." In a similar fashion there are times that the liturgy will seem completely "true." Our theology will matter very little. We might say "Cast us not into old age" during a Yom Kippur service, and each word will ring true as a call toward a God who answers prayers in the most direct fashion imaginable. And it won't matter that our own rational beliefs about God are far more complex or far more full of reservations and qualifying statements than the prayer seems to imply. The experience may not be rational and will certainly not remain constant every time we pray, but at times the words and we are in harmony. And that too is an experience of prayer.