Teaching Tefillah Through the Arts:
a curriculum guide

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NOTE TO THE TEACHER

WELCOME! This Curriculum Guide is intended for a Confirmation or High School aged class of students. The subject matter is tefillah and liturgy, the method of learning is through the arts.

I do not know of another curriculum that has combined liturgy and arts in quite this way, although I do hope that there are schools out there who do this! You, as the teacher, do not need to be a proficient artist to use this Curriculum Guide. In fact, you might even consider yourself "artistically challenged". This guide is not about who can dance the most beautifully or sing the best song. It is about the process of exploration: exploring oneself, one's understandings of prayer, and one's unique expressions.

This guide is written with the hope that the teacher will be willing to take risks. The very nature of it asks students to trust one another, trust their teacher, and trust themselves. *It will not work if the teacher is not willing to trust the students, too!!* An important part of the unstated goals is that the class as a group will bond and trust each other. Fond memories of religious school and special friendships are integral to learning Jewish information for the well-rounded and committed Jew.

Each unit of this guide might reveal different anxieties for different students. For me, music feels the most risky because I am far from being musically apt. In any given class there might be students who have trouble keeping time by clapping to a beat, students who are convinced they cannot sing, students who have never played a musical instrument and are unfamiliar with musical terms.

In the same class there might be students who have played instruments for as long as they can remember, students who march in a band, students who love to dance and understand rhythm. As with each unit in this guide, it will be helpful to remind students that there are very few people in the world (not to mention your class) who excel in all four of these arts. Struggling while using these media will help students understand the liturgy and process of prayer on a different level than if they were to always do what comes easy. This is as much true for the student struggling to snap in time as it is for the accomplished pianist -- even the "gifted" should set for themselves a standard by which to struggle.

A final note about fear: This guide was created with the intention that all four units would be implemented. However, I am sure that you know as well as I do that the discomfort that a teacher feels with certain art forms may actually be debilitating. In

some cases it is better to adapt the unit, restructure the art form or teach the prayer in your own creative way. It is okay not to use all four art forms... your personal challenge then becomes teaching the curriculum content in a way that is both comfortable for you and in the spirit of the classroom environment you have created by using creative expression. When you feel good about your lessons, the students will respond to your enthusiasm..

I hope that you enjoy using this guide and that your students find it exciting. Enjoy...and I would love to hear from you after you've put this guide into action.

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CURRICULUM RATIONALE

Meaningful prayer experiences may occur for a number of reasons. Whether spontaneous or fixed, prayer from the heart impacts the pray-er. One way to pray fixed prayers from the heart is for the pray-er to develop a personal understanding of the fixed liturgy. This curriculum helps Confirmation students find meaning in siddur liturgy through Drama, Music, Dance and Movement, and Crafts or Functional Art.

The ultimate goal of this curriculum is that the students will have more meaningful synagogue worship experiences. Although the liturgy in the sanctuary will not change, their connection to it will. The premise of using Drama, Music, Dance and Movement, and Crafts or Functional Art is that we are whole human beings with body, soul and intellect. Just as God created the wholeness of our being, understanding our prayers to God is an endeavor that can involve the whole human being, not just the mind. In his book *Kavvana: Directing the heart in Jewish prayer,* Seth Kadish explains "I do not advocate any revolution in how tefilla is conducted in synagogues. What I do favor is encouraging individuals to rethink how and why they pray and, perhaps, to change the way they pray in accordance with their conclusions." (pg. 357) I intend to facilitate students' new understanding of prayer by involving them in experiential learning. *How* to pray (standing, sitting, bowing, etc.) is <u>not</u> the focus. Rather, *how fixed prayer can be more meaningful* is the focus.

Many people learn to pray by attending services, following along, and figuring out the order of the siddur. It seems that there is a "right" way to pray. In watching people less familiar with liturgy or synagogue practice, I have observed nervous glances ("what am I supposed to be doing right now?"), uncomfortable reading ("where's the transliteration?" or "what did that phrase mean?") and fidgeting ("is this almost over?"). To feel comfortable enough in synagogue to have a meaningful prayer experience people must feel comfortable with the prayers and rituals. This happens by consistently following along and trying to participate in services and perhaps studying the siddur outside of the sanctuary. Kadish states that after siddurim were widely available in print, the attitude towards fixed prayer became that "someone able to pray the 'real' way needed nothing beyond the blessings established by *Hazal* and the other prayers from the siddur that were used in the synagogue." (pg. 349) Prayer literacy in synagogue has an important place in Jewish life. It is important for continuity,

community, and a sense of belonging to a larger religious group with real religious beliefs. However, participating by saying the right words is often not enough for a person to connect with God. By experiencing prayer study outside the sanctuary, liturgical comfort and understanding is more than trial and error during fixed synagogue time. It becomes a topic to question, discover and eventually own. Once the learner internalizes an understanding of a prayer's deeper meaning, he or she can say the words in a worship service while knowing on a very personal level how these words can pull him or her nearer to God.

It must be stressed that neither the learner nor the teacher need be proficient in Drama, Music, Dance and Movement, or Crafts and Functional Art in order participate in and gain from this curriculum. While there are ample opportunities for individual creation, the product is not the main value. The most important value to stress is that of using our different levels and types of creativity to express the liturgy. Students will be challenged to consider how they can enhance their communal worship experiences through looking at the creative potential of the liturgy.

Drama is a form of safe play. That is, adults do not think of drama as "play", but in fact participants go through much of the same processes as they do in other types of fun. It can be serious, silly, thought-provoking, experimental or just plain old-fashioned role playing. Using drama to understand prayer allows the participants to safely explore the history of a prayer, its sources, or how it connects people with God. From an early age children learn to mimic, role play and "play act". The idea is not to be professional performers, but rather to use imagination and empathy to gain a broader understanding of a prayer.

Jewish liturgical music has its documented roots in the times of the Temple. Over the ages liturgical music has varied and changed to reflect what the composer wishes to express. Particularly in liberal circles, Jewish liturgical music has achieved popularity with children and teenagers through camping and youth group experiences. In this curriculum, students learn about the liturgy, hear works composed by various artists, and have an opportunity to create their own music, beats, or rhythms that best express their understanding of a prayer. We are not necessarily talking about symphonies or Debbie Friedmans, though those may surface. A meaningful creation for a particular participant may be something as simple as snapping a finger or beating on a drum.

Dance and movement are simultaneously ancient and modern in Jewish liturgical expression. Although there is choreography in Jewish prayer, innovative dance and creative movement are relatively new. The Avodah Dance Troupe, based on the East coast, creates pieces to accompany various siddur prayers. The use of the body to "talk" to God can be seen in their work. In the book *Minding the Temple of the Soul: Balancing body, mind, and spirit through traditional Jewish prayer, movement, and meditation,* Tamar Frankiel and Judy Greenfeld give many suggestions for experiencing the words of our mouths through the movements of our bodies. They state that "The body must be viewed as a teacher, a friend, and an essential guide." (pg. 19) As whole human beings, we cannot ignore the importance of our bodies in understanding prayer through experience. The body is an essential component in gaining *shlemut* (wholeness). Prayer is a path to bring us closer to God and our entire being must partake in the journey.

Finally, crafts and functional arts have symbolic, historical and practical places in the Jewish liturgical heritage. From the adornments on the Sefer Torah to holders for yahrzeit candles, covers for siddurim to ornate kiddush cups, ritual art objects both guide us through prayers (when they are written on the object) and help us to feel close to the words we say. Kadish suggests that "People have a tendency to ascribe essential holiness to concrete religious objects; in this case [of the siddur] they ascribed holiness to a text." While the objects themselves are not holy, holiness can be found in them - both in their creation and use.

Through dramatizing a prayer, feeling it in dance or movement, understanding it in creating ritual objects, or putting it to a beat, liturgy can come alive. These moments of feeling the relevant and holy potential of our traditional words will bring the learners to a place of deeper understanding of the text. As a result, when they engage in communal prayer they will have a sense of ownership over the words. Pray-ers can raise themselves up to a higher sense of closeness with the God to whom we pray and the ancient and modern people with whom we share the prayers.

GOALS

This Curriculum Guide intends:

- To familiarize students with the history, meaning and sources of numerous prayers from the Shabbat liturgy (five in depth and three with less intensity)

- To encourage full participation of all students in a "safe" and supportive environment.

- To create a positive association between synagogue, prayer, and peer group.

- To cause students to think about the values of communal prayer.

- To help students feel closer to Jewish prayer and invested in liturgy.

- To assist students in exploring ways of communicating with God.

- To challenge students to rethink how and why they pray.

CONCEPTS FOR THE CORE PRAYERS

Each unit presents a different type of art but revolves around a core group of five prayers. These prayers are not necessarily the core prayers of Shabbat liturgy, however they will provide a framework for the curriculum and offer consistency for study. Units two, three and four will each introduce one additional prayer for study. For resources offering a more in depth discussion of the prayers used in this curriculum, consult the bibliography.

SHEMA AND V'AHAVTA

Traditionally the Shema is actually three paragraphs from Torah (Deut. 6:4-9; Deut. 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41). However, in *Gates of Prayer* and the Reform movement the Shema consists of the first paragraph and part of the third paragraph. This change was made for ideological reasons opposing the notion that God uses weather as a punishment or reward for Jewish behavior. This curriculum was written to follow with the Hebrew and English choices in *Gates of Prayer*, but will work just as well using the traditional Shema.

The Shema is sometimes referred to as "the watchword of our faith" because it contains primary tenets of Jewish belief. In the prayerbook the section containing the Shema is called "The Shema and Its Blessings". The Shema appears with the paragraphs as described above, its blessings are the two prayers which precede the Shema and the one that follows it. Together this section expresses the following Jewish principles[1]:

1. The unity of God (Shema)
2. The love and devotion to God (first paragraph/*v'ahavta*)
3. The duty of observing God's commandments (third paragraph/*l'ma'an tizkiru*)
4. God as the continuous Creator (first preceding prayer/*ma'ariv aravim* in the evening, *yotzer or* in the morning)
5. God's love of the people Israel (second preceding prayer/*ahavat olam* in the evening, *ahava raba* in the morning)
6. God as the Redeemer and Protector of Israel (prayer that follows/*geulah*)

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[1] this list is from A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*,, pg. 89, slightly modified to reflect *GOP*

While reciting the first two lines of the Shema some people follow the custom of covering their eyes with their hand, perhaps spreading their fingers to resemble the Hebrew letter *shin*. The Shema is contained on a scroll within a mezuzah. Often the outside of a mezuzah has the letter *shin* written on it. In addition to being the first letter of "*shema*", the letter *shin* also stands for one name of God: Shaddai.

The Shema may be said at times other than Shabbat evening and morning worship. It is a part of daily morning and evening prayer and may also be recited before sleep, to proclaim faith and to ask Shaddai to guard over us. In fact, the name Shaddai probably is an acronym for "the One who guards over the doors of Israel" or "*shomer deletot yisrael*". Many Jews will also try to say the Shema as their final words before death, a calling out to God of their undying belief.

MI CHAMOCHA

The prayer that we commonly refer to as "Mi Chamocha" is technically a part of the *geulah*, the prayer that follows the Shema in "The Shema and Its Blessings". However, this curriculum pulls Mi Chamocha out of the larger Redemption prayer, focusing exploration on the Torah verses where Mi Chamocha originates (Ex. 15:1-19, with the account of crossing beginning Ex. 14:21) .

Mi Chamocha has inspired many musical artists to express its story. The people of Israel, led by Moses, cross over the Sea of Reeds and then exalt God's greatness for redeeming them from the hands of Pharaoh and his army. The interpretations range from upbeat and joyous to slow and melancholy. While *GOP* says "full of joy, Moses, Miriam, and all Israel sang this song" and the Hebrew reflects the same happiness, not all compositions sound gleeful. This disparity provides a framework for discussion. We cannot be fully happy after the crossing because numerous Egyptians died in our rescue (from the tenth plague of death to the eldest child to the sea closing over the soldiers). Yet, we are freed from slavery. On the other hand, it can be scary to leave all that we have known for hundreds of years. Yet again, our children will never know the cruel work of slaves. The emotions that this story can evoke lend itself to expressions through drama, music, dance and art.

"ONE-LINERS"

The following three short prayers bracket the Amidah[2]. Throughout the curriculum it is suggested that the teacher treat them as their own mini unit. That is, do not take the time to teach each prayer on a different day.

Adonai Sifatai Tiftach - This introductory phrase is taken from Psalm 51:17 and means "Adonai, open up my lips that my mouth may declare your glory". The custom of reciting this phrase began in Rabbinic times, but I do not know why.

This one small phrase can serve many purposes. First, it gives an opportunity for worshippers to take three small steps forward as if approaching a king in reverence. Usually, a pray-er will take three steps back ("Adonai - sifatai - tiftach") and then three forward ("u'fi - yagid - t'hilatecha") as a show of humility and awe.

Second, this sentence helps to orient the worshipper by asking God for help in offering praise. In forming words, our lips and mouths can be used for holy or ordinary speech. During prayer we especially concentrate on making our words heartfelt and holy, directed towards the influence God has in our lives.

Third, saying this one line can remind the worshipper of the purpose of prayer: to communicate with God and sing God's praise. While the daily Amidah includes petitionary prayers, even these are couched in the midst of prayers which extol God. First and foremost we stand in loving awe, with our help coming from the Divine.

Yihiyu L'Ratzon Imrei Fi - Just as the Amidah opens with mention of our mouths and speech, so it may close with this line, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer." We open with asking God to help us form appropriate words, and we close with taking responsibility for the intent and structure of our prayer.

The attentive reader sees that the theme of God being our Redeemer extends beyond Mi Chamocha, as a recurring belief in Judaism. Also, Yihiyu L'Ratzon acknowledges that our meditations, or the intention of our hearts, is a viable Jewish way to communicate and connect with God.

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[2]For more on the Amidah, see Unit Three - Dance and Movement

After the silent, individual portion of the Amidah, congregations frequently bring their voices back together by singing either Yihiyu L'Ratzon or Oseh Shalom. Oseh Shalom is identified as a traditional part of the Amidah, while Yihiyu L'Ratzon is not.

Oseh Shalom - This is perhaps one of the best known phrases among Jews. It is popular to sing in prayer services, and the numerous melodies encourage participation. The teacher can expect that most students, if not all, will know at least one sung version of Oseh Shalom.

In addition to appearing after the Amidah, Oseh Shalom is also the concluding phrase in the Mourner's Kaddish and it is a part of the blessing after eating (Birkhat Hamazon). The words "May the One who causes peace to reign in the high heavens cause peace to reign among us, all Israel, and all the world" express a hope in peace on earth. It may be important to note that the Hebrew of Oseh Shalom does *not* include the phrase "all the world"; it concludes with "and upon all Israel".

When prayed silently or as a part of the Mourner's Kaddish, Oseh Shalom is the point where the worshipper may take symbolic steps as if leaving the presence of royalty. Whereas in Adonai Sifatai Tiftach the Divine Ruler is approached in reverence, here a person steps back and makes a slight bow to exit the "court" with respect. The choreography is described in Unit Three.

OUTLINE OF UNITS

Each unit expresses the same core prayers using a different art. The core prayers are: **Shema with V'ahavta, Mi Chamocha,** and three "one liners" as a unit - **Adonai Sifatai Tiftach, Yihiyu L'ratzon Imrei Fi,** and **Oseh Shalom Bimromav**. Units two, three and four each have an additional prayer to learn and explore.

UNIT ONE -- DRAMA

Prayers: Core group

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- dramatize the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds.
- explain how at least two of the "one liners" became a part of our liturgy.
- identify three different times when the Shema might be said.
- articulate at least three personal values expressed through communal prayer.

UNIT TWO - MUSIC

Prayers: Core group and L'cha Dodi

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- participate in different musical versions of each of the prayers.
- articulate the kind of tune, melody or beat that brings them closest to God. If the answer is dependent upon mood, that should be explained.
- create their own tune, melody, beat or rhythm to accompany a prayer.
- briefly explain the origins of L'cha Dodi.

UNIT THREE - DANCE AND MOVEMENT

Prayers: Core group and Amidah

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- recognize the traditionally appropriate places to stand, take steps, bow, and sit for the Amidah.
- justify their choices to follow or not to follow the traditional "choreography" of prayer, based on personal experience and knowledge of the meanings.
- show the dance that they would have done at the shore of the Sea of Reeds.
- dance at least one Israeli folk dance as a group.
- explain how praying (*lihitpallel*) can be a form of self-reflection or examination.

UNIT FOUR - FUNCTIONAL ART

Prayers: Core group and Hashkiveinu

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- identify ritual objects that conceptually correspond with different prayers.
- distinguish between an object being holy and finding holiness in an object.
- present at least one functional piece of art , created individually or as a group.
- state whether or not they believe that God shelters us. If they do, then how? If they do not believe this, then explain what the writers of Hashkiveinu believed and how it is not true for people today.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

For each unit the teacher should plan to create a "memorable moment". When reflecting upon their tenth grade Confirmation class, students will remember these moments because they added something different, something unique, something special to the routine of the class. Below are suggested memorable moments that the teacher can create.

For Each Unit:

The last class session for each unit is an opportunity for students to present their own artistic expression of a prayer. During the fifth of a six lesson unit, students independently or in small groups create this presentation. The teacher is there as a resource, an advisor, and an agent of encouragement, but the teacher is not the focus of the students' attention. The presentations during the sixth meeting will range in length and quality depending on the student. The most valuable role that the teacher can play is in reminding students that the *process* is more important than the product. The same student who gracefully presents a choreographed dance in costume may be the same student who stumbles through a three line dramatic presentation. Very few people will show proficiency in all four artistic areas of this curriculum.

Drama

The teacher can assign the students to bring or show up in specific costumes for the following week's lesson. For instance, if the following week they will act out the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, ask them to show up in robes and sandals. The teacher does not tell the students what the skit will be in order to build curiosity. For the actual meeting the teacher supplies additional props (matzah, broom handle pony, swords, dolls to carry like babies, etc.). The result is an actual mini-play with tactile reinforcement.

Music

The class is divided into small groups. Each group is given (or brings) a video camera and a CD or cassette of a prayer being studied. Consider giving each group a different version of the same prayer (like Oseh Shalom). The group then creates a short music video to illustrate their version of the prayer. This might occur during the second hour

of a two hour class, or more time may be allotted. In a six week unit, the videos could be shown in week six along with final presentations of the unit. (In a six week unit I suggest week five be devoted to individual creations and week six to presenting - this assignment could be done somewhere in weeks one through four.)

Dance and Movement-from *Torah In Motion* by JoAnne Tucker and Susan Freeman
"Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, part of the v'ahavta)

Motivating Movement

1. Divide into pairs. One person is to be the leader and the other the follower. They are to mirror each other moving slowly and carefully making it hard to tell who is the leader and who the follower. Reverse roles and repeat as many times as desired.
2. Improvise movement which symbolizes casualness and contrast it with movement that symbolizes importance or extreme caring.

Making Connections

Ask each person to describe a teacher from whom he/she learned a lot. Ask what the teacher's method and manner of instruction were. Ask each person to share, leaving nameless, a teacher he/she disliked. Did he/she learn from that teacher as well? Discuss what the ideal teacher would be like.

Dance Midrash

Divide into pairs. One person is to teach an eight count movement phrase[3] to the other person. The pairs are to create an improvisation about the learning process as the phrase is learned. One person clearly portrays how important it is to teach the phrase and the other responds in relation to how he/she is being taught. Encourage the pairs to explore different ways of teaching such as: teaching by example; dogmatic instruction during which the learner is told to do this or that; responding to the initiative of the learner; learning together. The learner can respond as he/she sees fit: being eager to learn; being resistant and stubborn; being cooperative, but unenthusiastic. Reverse roles and repeat.

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[3]a phrase is defined as "in dance terms a natural rhythm of the body like breathing or a heart beat, or a specified number of beats with given accents." p. xviii

Challenge

Have a person who does sign language teach the group to sign the V'ahavta prayer (Deuteronomy 6:5-9). Once the actual signs are learned, each person is to expand the signed arm and hand gestures into larger body movements creating a solo dance of the prayer.

Functional Art

If you live in an area that has a Jewish museum, arrange a field trip to tour it. After the tour hold class in one of the meeting rooms at the museum and create a type of art displayed at the museum. The chosen object should have something to do with the prayer curriculum. For instance, the group might work together to make a chuppah to stand under for Confirmation. This will remind them of God's sheltering peace (sukkat sh'lomecha) mentioned in Hashkiveinu. Of course, the chuppah can be created without visiting a museum.

Another memorable moment could be making mezuzot out of polymer clay. Sculpee or Fimo brands are popular and widely available. I recommend Sculpee as it is softer and more pliable with than Fimo. The students use the clay to sculpt a case for the mezuzah scroll. The casing can be cooked in an ordinary oven at the synagogue, painted or crafted out of different colors, and sent home with them that night. For the scroll, a field trip can be arranged to a Judaica store (so the students know where to go to provide for themselves), or the teacher can provide it. If a non-kosher scroll is acceptable, consider allowing the students to write their own scrolls, copying the words from a tikkun[4]. *The First Jewish Catalog* has a section on Scribal Arts and includes a very helpful guide to writing Hebrew calligraphy as it appears in our scribal texts.[5]

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[4] a book of Torah that has the vocalized text in one column and the calligraphied style that appears in the actual Torah scroll in a parallel column.

[5] Siegel, Strassfeld & Strassfeld, JPS 1973. pp. 184-209

UNIT ONE - DRAMA

Unit One introduces the students to the idea of exploring prayer through the arts. This unit also must set the tone for the rest of the year. Students must trust the teacher and one another to feel safe enough to exhibit their artistic sides to the rest of the group. The teacher must realize that for many students, art is a big risk. For this reason, we start with drama - a type of art with which most students have experience.

The first meeting of this unit, which is also the first class meeting of the Confirmation group, should address why we pray in communal settings. It should also set up the environment as a place where students will physically use their bodies throughout the year. From the very first session students should engage in some form of artistic (in this case, dramatic) expression.

Unit one presents the core group of prayers. Each class session can focus on a different prayer, with the "one-liners" taken as a whole. The teacher should plan to help the students learn about the history, meaning and textual sources of each prayer. In addition, each class session should have a drama activity led by the teacher that involves every member of the class. The more the students get used to taking artistic risks and expressing themselves to each other, the easier the subsequent units will be to lead.

The suggested outline for a six week unit is as follows:

> *Week One:* What are the values of communal prayer? How can we express these values through drama? Introduction to the idea of learning tefillah through the arts.
>
> *Week Two:* Teacher guides learning about the Shema and leads group in at least one drama activity.
>
> *Week Three:* Teacher guides learning about Mi Chamocha and leads the group in at least one drama activity.
>
> *Week Four:* Teacher guides learning about the "one-liners" and leads the group in at least one drama activity.

Week Five: Students choose a prayer presented in this unit and develop their own dramatic presentation of its meaning, history, or textual source. Resources must be available for deeper research and prop development.

Week Six: Students present their dramatic creations to one another.

Prayers: Core group

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- dramatize the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds.
- explain a prayerful intention of at least two of the "one-liners".
- identify three different times when the Shema might be said.
- articulate at least three personal values expressed through communal prayer.

Suggested Activities:

In a six week unit one class will not do each of these activities. I provide a number of creative options with the intention that the teacher will choose those that fit best with his or her group, comfort level, and available resources. Note that the suggested outline for a six week unit really only has four sessions of teacher led activities, one session of student creation, and one session of student presentations. The Drama Memorable Moment described earlier in this guide is not a part of this list; incorporate it where you feel is appropriate for your individual unit plan.

1. In small groups, students develop skits to show the benefits of communal prayer. They may also want to include the drawbacks of communal prayer.

2. Standing in a large circle, students (and teacher) take turns stepping into the middle of the circle, saying their name, and showing a movement or action or expression that symbolizes how communal prayer makes them feel.

3. Using the V'ahavta as a guide for what Jewish parents should try to do, small groups create skits that show a parent (or parents) trying to "do the right thing" for their children. Different groups may be assigned different scenarios. For instance, "the child does not want to be involved with Jewish learning or life." Conversely, a group may be

assigned the scenario that "the child cares deeply for Jewish living but the parents do not want to be bothered with creating a Jewish home."

4. Students pretend they are approached by a person who knows nothing about Judaism. What would they teach him/her? Model the idea from the V'ahavta and "teaching your children."[6]

5. Students re-enact the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Some should be Israelites and others should be Egyptians. Depending on the size of the class, some students could also be the Sea of Reeds that closes in on the Egyptians. After one enactment, students switch roles. What are the people saying to one another? Do they want to be where they are? What are they feeling?

6. The teacher presents the dilemma told in the midrash of Nachshon, the first Israelite to step into the sea[7]. Nobody wanted to go in first because they were all afraid, but Nachshon who didn't even know how to swim, trusted that God would indeed part the waters. Before they were split, Nachshon walked right into the water with the faith that God would take care of him and the sea. After presenting the problem, students act out their response and feelings. After the enactment the teacher finishes telling the midrash. Students should be encouraged to "change history." That is, maybe no one goes in and the Egyptians catch up with them resulting in a massive slaughter and the end of the Jewish people. Maybe a huge spaceship comes and beams them over the sea. This can be done as an improvisation with a preliminary group of three or four volunteers. The rule is that whenever one actor "sees" something in the environment or states a fact based on what they are experiencing, the other participants must also "see" or "realize" that fact. As others in the class watch the improv, they might want to join the scene.

7. Listen to "Miriam's Song" (by Debbie Friedman) or "Miriam's Slow Snake Dance" (by Linda Hirschorn) and discuss what the song says about Miriam. What else do the students know about Miriam. The class divides into three groups and each group reads a biblical passage about Miriam (Ex. 2..1-10; Ex. 15.19-20; Num. 12.1-16). Each group dramatizes what happens in the biblical passage they read. How does knowing more

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[6]Kadden & Kadden, *Teaching Tefilah:insights and activities on prayer.* A.R.E. Denver 1994

[7]*Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, pp. 72-73

about the people who crossed the Sea of Reeds add depth to understanding the prayer? Did the men and women have different experiences based on their gender roles?

8. Students use the "Group Investigation Model"[8] of learning to discover where each of the one-liners appears in Jewish prayer, where they originate, and other information about them. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group a different prayer. Using the resources available[9], each group must find out as much as they can about their prayer. This activity may lead them into Tanakh, different prayerbooks, or other sources. Each group then must present their prayer to the other two groups. As a part of drama, they can create a skit that expresses something that they learned about their prayer. For instance, the choreography that goes along with Oseh Shalom, or a reason why the rabbis may have wanted to include Adonai Sifatai Tiftach before the Amidah.

9. Students role play how they would approach a king or queen who is sitting on a throne. How does the royalty respond to different approaches? How is God like royalty? Is the image of God as a king or queen a comfortable analogy for them? Why might Judaism present God as a monarch?

If you find that your group has strong trust and comfort with each other by the end of the third session, you might want to try #10 for the fourth meeting. Note that it might be emotionally risky for some participants; adapt as needed.

10. Teenagers experience many types of love relationships from parent-child to friends to romance. Have them act out different ways that they can express their love for others. After everyone has dramatized such an expression (expect giggles and laughter), ask how they know that their expressions of love were well received. What happens when you do not receive an immediate response to a love note, "I love you", or an expression of affection? After we say the Amidah we often conclude with Yihiyu L'Ratzon, a plea for God to find our expressions of love, our prayers, acceptable. How do we know if

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[8]Joyce & Weil, *Models of Teaching*, ch.6

[9]Desired resources include books on prayer (see the bibliography), various prayerbooks, Torah, Encyclopedia Judaica. Consider using this as an opportunity for the students to explore the synagogue library.

God is pleased with our prayers? Does it matter? Does it change our love? Are there additional benefits to telling God about our feelings?

Recommended Supplies:

- Tanakh (Hebrew and English)

- Kadden & Kadden, *Teaching Tefillah: Insights, and Activities on Prayer*, A.R.E., Denver 1994.

- Klein, Isaac, *A Guid to Jewish Relgious Practice*, JTS, New York 1992. (for reference and prayer explanations)

- Idelsohn, A.Z. *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, Dover, New York, 1995. (for reference and prayer explanations)

- *The Book of Legends -- Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds. Shocken, New York 1992. Nachshon midrash pp. 72-73

- "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman, on her album "And You Shall Be A Blessing". Contact Sounds Write Productions, Inc., 6685 Norman Lane, San Diego, CA 92120; (619) 697-6120

- "Miriam's Slow Snake Dance" by Linda Hirschorn. Available through Sounds Write Productions, Inc.

- Copies of *Gates of Prayer* (or whatever prayerbook the congregation uses) for each participant to use as a resource and guide for each prayer.

UNIT TWO - MUSIC

Unit Two focuses on music -- both known liturgical music and how rhythm can be used as expression. In Unit Two we introduce **L'cha Dodi** in addition to the core prayers taught in Unit One. You may choose when you want to introduce L'cha Dodi in the first four weeks of the unit. Following a six-week unit (as in Unit One), the four initial weeks are devoted to the teacher guiding students through artistic (here musical) experiences with the liturgy, the fifth week is for students to work on their own creations, and the sixth week is for presentations.

L'cha Dodi[10] is a poem created in the 16th century. It might be interesting to note for the students the relative newness of this poem to our liturgy. L'cha Dodi was created around 1571 by Solomon Alkabetz who lived in the kabbalistic (mystically focused) town of Safed in the northern part of the land of Israel. Alkabetz's Hebrew name was Shlomo Halevi, which can be found as an acrostic in the first eight stanzas of the full poem (in *Gates of Prayer* we do not use the full poem). Isaac Luria, a famous rabbi and kabbalist, encouraged Shlomo Halevi to compose this poem. According to Idelsohn, L'cha Dodi has been the inspiration for over two thousand musical compositions.

Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12 both tell the fourth commandment, the commandment pertaining to Shabbat. However, one uses *shamor* (observe) and the other *zachor* (remember). Which one is the correct way to honor Shabbat? The Midrash teaches (Babylonian Talmud, Shavuot 20b) that God uttered both of these words simultaneously in giving the commandment. The first stanza of L'cha Dodi starts with "Observe and Remember" in reference to this midrashic explanation.

Genesis 2:3 recounts how the Shabbat was the final product of the creation of the world. If Shabbat is so hallowed, why was it not created first? The midrash in Breishit Rabba X:10 explains that all of the earlier creations were made with the purpose of leading up to Shabbat. Hence the second stanza of L'cha Dodi which includes the words "last in creation, but first in thought."

The third through eighth stanzas refer to the hope of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the coming of the messiah. In *Gates of Prayer* we do not include all of these stanzas. Rather, we have stanzas one, two, five, and nine. The fifth celebrates the glory of God

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[10] this explanation is selectively based on A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, p. 129

shining upon Zion. The ninth (the last verse in both Reform and traditional settings) welcomes the Shabbat as the crown of her husband. In metaphoric language, Shabbat is the bride for all of Israel, our crowning glory. For this last stanza we rise and face the door as if welcoming an honored guest into our midst.

Prayers: Core group plus L'cha Dodi

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- participate in different musical versions of each of the prayers.
- articulate the kind of tune, melody or beat that brings them closest to God. If the answer is dependent upon mood, this should be explained.
- create their own tune, melody, beat or rhythm to accompany a prayer.
- briefly explain the origins of L'cha Dodi.

Suggested Activities:

1. After learning different versions L'cha Dodi, Oseh Shalom, or another piece of liturgy, sing one song simultaneously in many different versions. The cacophony is a metaphor for the prayers that people offer in synagogue, in communal prayer. Think about what it would sound like if we could hear the intention behind everyone's prayer. The words are the same, but our hearts are very different. Conclude by singing one version of the song altogether, maybe in rounds.

2. Using any of the prayers, create sounds or rhythm to go with it. After discussing the different ways that a given prayer may make any of us feel at different times, students have the chance to "clap out" or "snap out" the rhythm of that prayer. For instance, when we sing the Amidah together in synagogue the group singing together might start soft (Adonai Sifatai Tiftach) and the get louder throughout, until silent prayer. Not only does the volume change, but so does the intensity for the group and for individuals. An example might be starting with Adonai Sifatai Tiftach there is a deep exhale and hum as the worshipper relaxes and tries to focus in on the soft melody. For the communal singing of Avot V'Emahot through Gevurah there might be rhythmic foot tapping or clapping that changes volume and tempo according to the point of prayer. Silent worship might be expressed with hands softly clapping to the beat of

one's heart. After silent mediation, while waiting for others to finish, fingers might tap in boredom or impatience. If asking students to develop these rhythms on their own, emphasize the shorter prayers to begin with.

3. Expose the students to at least one version of each prayer. Using CDs, videos, or live performance, use the different versions to discuss the unique intensity or mood associated with each. Which is the most prayerful for an individual? Which the least spiritually moving?

4. Provide students with an array of musical instruments. After introducing the instruments (students who play should introduce the ones they know), allow students time to experiment playing with different instruments -- especially those with which they are unfamiliar. Bring a cleaner for instruments with mouth pieces. Ask students to individually find or communally agree upon one note on an instrument that sounds "right" to go with a particular prayer. They should play that note and then explain why. Is it dragged out long or is it short? Is it high or low? Is it from a drum or a horn? Have the musicians in the group be leaders of small groups to express a mood that correlates with a prayer.

5. Have a seminar with recordings of liturgical music throughout the ages. Classic cantorial style through camp song leading. If they did not know what the words meant (you can even pick prayers with which they are unfamiliar), what would they guess? How do secular musical styles influence composition?

6. Bring in tambourines, cymbals, and drums. Reenact the crossing of the Sea of Reeds without using any words and without actually moving. Students may depict their crossing alone or with a friend, using the instrument as an aural picture of the crossing. Students can close their eyes.

7. Learn the prayers with different accompaniment. Are there instruments that seem inappropriate for synagogue prayer? Some people believe organs are too "church-like", others that guitars are too "campy".

8. Make songbooks to use during a retreat or special service. Be sure to include short introductions that explain the significance of each prayer or song.

9. Contact the rabbi and cantor to volunteer to lead certain musical pieces for a Friday night service. Decide as a group which versions might be the most prayerful for congregants. Are there other versions that they also want to include because they will be the most prayerful for them, but maybe not the congregation? What will they do about offering themselves prayerful moments as well? This is also a good way to help the students start thinking about their own appearance in synagogue at the Confirmation service.

Recommended Supplies:

- Sheet music

- *Gates of Prayer*

- A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*, Dover, New York 1995.

- Tapes, CDs, videos of liturgical music

UNIT THREE - DANCE AND MOVEMENT

Unit Three intends to assist the students in using their bodies to understand the liturgy. It is as much about comfortably moving in our bodies as it is about actual dance. The instructor need not be a dancer to teach this unit. As with all of the units in this guide, he or she must simply be willing to take a risk and try. After all, isn't that what we are asking of the students?

In addition to the core group from Unit One, this unit introduces the Shabbat Amidah.

Amidah - During the week, this set of prayers is also called the *Shemonah Esrei* which means "Eighteen". The irony is that the traditional weekday Amidah actually has nineteen benedictions. The Amidah is also alternatively called *"tefillah,"* meaning "Prayer" since it is the central component of the Jewish prayer service.

On Shabbat, the Amidah consists of seven benedictions. In relation to the weekday Amidah, the Shabbat Amidah has the first three and the last three prayers. In between these two groupings is the prayer called *Kedushat Hayom,* which means "Holiness of the Day." This prayer is not a part of the weekday service because it is Shabbat, as compared with Sunday through Friday, which is considered holy.

Reading through the English of Shabbat Evening Service 1 in *Gates of Prayer* should give the teacher a general idea of the topics covered. The benedictions included in the weekday Amidah which are omitted from the Shabbat liturgy are petitionary prayers; that is, prayers that ask God for something as opposed to the prayers of praise and thanksgiving of the Shabbat liturgy which exalt God and what God gives us.

A brief synopsis of the Shabbat evening Amidah:

> *Avot V'Emahot (God of our fathers and mothers)* - This opening prayer praises God in the name of our patriarchs. By invoking their names, we hope that God will see us as a part of the chain who upholds the covenant made with our ancestors and listen to our prayers appropriately.

Gevurot (the mighty God)- We praise God's power to influence the world and all that is in it. This benediction extols God's role in giving us strength, life, and salvation.

Kedushat Hashem (the sanctification of God) - Gives us the opportunity to declare God's holiness.

Kedushat Hayom (the sanctification of the day) - Recounts a section of Genesis which tells how God made the seventh day holy. Praises God for the Shabbat and expresses our hope that our Shabbat observance is worthy of God's intentions for the day.

Avodah (traditionally for the restoration of the Temple; in GOP for worship) - expresses our hope that our prayers will be received by God with the same love that they are offered.

Hoda'ah (expression of thanksgiving) - We bestow thanks onto God for all of the marvels of creation while simultaneously using a multitude of praiseworthy names for God. This benedictions underscores our thanks and appreciation covered in the others.

Birkhat Shalom (prayer for peace) - Also known as *Shalom Rav*, after the first two words in the benediction. This prayer affirms to God that "you see that it is good to bless your people Israel and all people in all times and seasons with your peace."

Elohai Nitzor L'shoni Mera (My God, guard my mouth from evil) - This is not one of the seven benedictions, but is a part of the conclusion. This beautiful benediction looks to God for the strength to refrain from *lashon hara* (gossip or even banal talk about others). This meditation comes from the Babylonian Talmud (Berachot 17a) and is based on the silent prayer of Mar ben Ravina, with additions from different places in Scripture.

The Amidah begins with Adonai Sifatai Tiftach and ends with Yihiyu L'ratzon Imrei Fi, and Oseh Shalom. As such, the teacher might want to teach the Amidah in the session following the "one-liners", or in conjunction with them.

The choreography of the Amidah begins with the worshipper taking three steps forward before Avot V'Emahot to signify stepping up before a King or Ruler. This is usually done during Adonai Sifatai Tiftach and may be preceded with three steps backwards both to emphasize the action and make the best use of space.

According to Isaac Klein[11]:

> "During the recitation of the Amidah there are four places where one should bow: at the beginning and end of the first benediction, and at the beginning and end of the [last] benediction (at the words *modim anachnu lach* and at the end of the paragraph *v'chol hachayim*[12]. The procedure is to bend the knee at *baruch*, bow down wile saying *atah*, and return to the erect position before uttering the name of God.[13]
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> "Throughout the recitation of the Amidah one should stand with his feet together as the angels stood in worshipping God[14]... The Amidah is recited silently and should be said with complete devotion. While this applies to all prayers, there should be an added measure of reverence during the Amidah[15].
>
> "...While reciting the last sentence, *oseh shalom*, the worshipper takes three steps back, and bows to the left, then to the right, and then forward."

In a non-Reform or Reconstructionist congregation, after the individually prayed silent Amidah the service leader will pray the Amidah out loud and the congregation responds.

If you do not know, ask the rabbi in your congregation about the way the Amidah is prayed. Do they follow traditional choreography? Is it prayed silently,

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[11] *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, pp. 22-23

[12] Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 34a; Orah Hayim 113:1

[13] Orah Hayim 113:7

[14] Ezekiel 1:7; Orah Hayim 95:1

[15] Orah Hayim 98

aloud or a combination of both? Are there any unique customs in your congregation? How were the decisions made about choreography?

Prayers: Core group and Amidah

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- recognize the traditionally appropriate places to take steps, bow, and sit for the Amidah.
- justify their choices to follow or not to follow the traditional "choreography" of prayer, based on personal experience and knowledge of the meanings.
- show the dance that they would have done at the shore of the Sea of Reeds.
- dance at least on Israeli folk dance as a group.
- explain how praying *(lihitpallel)* can be a form of self-reflection or examination.

Suggested Activities:

1. To start the unit, teach the students an Israeli folk dance where they all dance together[16] to reduce anxiety, take the focus away from an individual's body and build a sense of trust that no one will laugh at anyone else dancing. This is a group dance that is very communal, *and can be prayerful*, but is not directly "put to prayer". Although this may not be a dance that corresponds with our liturgy, using their bodies and learning how to take dance steps helps the students to relate to the rest of the movement unit and will hopefully help to reduce dance and movement anxiety.

2. Teach the choreography of the Amidah. Note that it is done by an individual, independent of others, but also communal with the potential for everyone to do it at about the same time. Pray the Amidah using traditional choreography. Discuss how choreographed prayer may enhance or inhibit a person's worship experience. Why do you suppose there is prayer choreography? Is there a value to using our bodies as well as our mouths when we pray? Do you think that it is authentic practice to choose to do some of the traditional choreography but not all of it?

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[16] for how-to and music selection, see Fred Berk *Ha-Rikud: The Jewish Dance*. I suggest a circle dance like Mayim Mayim as a particularly simple dance to learn and participate in.

3. Experiment with personal movements that correspond to a sung or chanted prayer. For instance, while listening to "Miriam and the woman danced and danced the whole night long" (from Debbie Friedman's "Miriam's Song") the girls should show what their dances looked like What did the dances of the men look like? Were they dancing, watching, or doing something else? Were these communal dances of celebration or individual? Did men and women dance together? Were there any physically disabled people or people otherwise challenged? How did they cross the sea? What did their dances look like, or what did they do while others danced?

4. The Shema says "Hear O Israel" - it calls out for each of us to pay attention to the centrality of Torah and prayer. If we really pray in the sense of the Hebrew word for prayer, lihitpallel, we look within ourselves. What is it that we want to pay attention to? What is it that we and all of Israel should hear? As an exercise in paying attention to ourselves and to others, find a partner and act as each other's mirrors. The teacher instructs that one partner should lead first, then the other, then both should follow and lead at the same time. In having someone else pay close attention to every move we make, we both must concentrate on our own movement and respond to their ability to focus on us. This can potentially lead us to look deeper into ourselves. This is a precursor to the suggested Memorable Moment.

5. *Yihiyu l'ratzon imrei fi v'hegyon libi l'fanecha, **Adonai tzuri v'goali***, May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, **O God, my Rock and my Redeemer**. In this verse, God is referred to as a rock, a stronghold, an eternally present personal Redeemer. Create a dance midrash based on this image[17]:

Motivating Movement

1. Have dancers trace imaginary rock shapes with their fingers. Continue by asking them to trace these shapes with various parts of their bodies: elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, feet head, etc.
2. Ask dancers to discover all the different types of rock shapes they can make with their bodies - explore boulders, pebbles, smooth rocks and rocks that are chipped and weathered.

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[17]this is from the New Moon dance midrash in *Torah in Motion*, p. 186. The significant change is that instead of "moon" and celebrating Rosh Chodesh, I have changed it to "rock" and celebrating God.

3. Have dancers move across the space along rock-shaped floor patterns while making different rock shapes with their bodies.

Dance Midrash

Designate an area in the center of the space as the place where offerings are brought to God. Have dancers begin by standing in a circle around the central place. Have each dancer in turn improvise the giving of an imaginary offering. The improvised phrase of movement should use only rock shapes and rock floor patterns.

Repeat the improvisation with dancers giving their imaginary offerings at the same time. Encourage dancers to interact with each other, especially in terms of creating new and more expansive rock images.

Making Connections

Ask participants to share the most unusual or spectacular viewing of a rock they have witnessed (perhaps the Grand Canyon at sunrise, Half Dome in Yosemite, or a crystal rock in a nature store). Why and in what ways did this viewing stand out to them? Ask them to come up with rituals or religious myths inspired by the image of God as a rock. Why do they think the rock image elicited such feelings of awe?

6. "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8) This is not from the liturgy of this curriculum, but this activity may help to foster a discussion about Shabbat and the context of all of the prayers. As an introductory dance and Shabbat activity, create a dance midrash based on the commandment to keep Shabbat[18]:

Motivating Movement

Teach the traditional gestures which accompany the Sabbath candle lighting blessing - circling the flames and covering the eyes. Have the group expand the gesture into dance movement. First, do it very slowly, then make it as large as possible, involving the whole body in the circling of the flame and the covering of the eyes.

Making Connections

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[18] *Torah in Motion*, pp. 90-91

Discuss the key words in this verse. Ask how members of the group will remember or remind themselves when Sabbath comes. How do they think their grandparents or great grandparents kept the Sabbath? In what ways do we make the Sabbath separate or holy? Guide the group to focus on the specific prayers by which we usher in and end the Sabbath.[19]

Dance Midrash

Divide the group. One half is the older generation, while the other half is a young generation. The youth are quietly watching the ritual of candle lighting done by the elders. The elders might come over and teach the youth, involving them in the ritual. Or, they might choose to be very mysterious about what they are doing. Reverse roles. Accompaniment for the improvisation can be the traditional blessing over the Sabbath candles repeated as many times as necessary.

Revise the dance midrash to reflect Amidah choreography instead of candle lighting. Note that some of the older generation may not "do" the traditional choreography and might want to pass down prayer without that choreography. This might be the case in your congregation. How does the younger generation feel about receiving different versions of the "way to pray"? Does learning one or the other help individuals to relate to the prayers or act of praying?

7. The v'ahavta instructs us to "love the Lord your God with all your might, with all your heart, with all your soul". After reviewing the v'ahavta, together the class creates a dance prayer that uses the entire body as an expression of what it might me to love God with the kind of completeness described in the prayer. For background music, use a recorded chanted or musical version of the v'ahavta.

The theme of total love can shape a discussion and then movements that will lead to the performance. For instance, just because we love or care deeply for someone does not mean that they will never disappoint us; they will. Is this true also for our relationship with God? When our soul is bound up in love for someone, and he or she gives us a beautiful gift that he or she made by hand, how do we hold and treat that object? What kind of an object might it be from a person? What kind of tangible things

[19]for our context, concentrate on the liturgy of Friday night studied in this curriculum

do we credit God with having given us? (answers might include nature, family, Torah) How do we treat those things? What about intangible things? (love, freedom, Judaism) How do we treat those things? You might want to consider expressly tailoring this conversation away from sexual expressions of love. Perhaps mention the love they feel for a best friend, a parent, or some other non-sexual relationship. Be clear that this discussion will lead to expressions of love for God.

After some discussion, and perhaps while discussing, have participants silently show how their body wishes it could react (and maybe does) when it feels disappointment in a loved one, complete love for another, when it proclaims that love to the loved one and/or to other people. Have them show how they hold the treasured gifts; how do they share the gifts or tell others of their sacredness (without words)? Encourage participants to expand their movements; if someone shows loving with all of her heart by putting her hands in front of her chest and moving them outward, have her show you what it would look like if the love started in her toes, rose up and finally emanated out of her heart -- focus on trying to get her to use her whole body. If someone points to an imaginary tree in wonder, encourage him move towards the tree, touch it, try to reach its branches, try to show how the tree grows, maybe he can run to bring a friend to the tree to show it to someone else and explain the wonder without words.

The choreography can be arranged in any number of ways: all participants simultaneously moving through their actions in conjunction with the appropriate words of the prayer; participants taking turns showing one part of their expression in a domino effect (or like "the wave" at stadiums); all of the group simultaneously moving through expressions in the background while in the foreground different people come up to show a part of their prayer and then recede as another person or group comes forward; instead of using a recorded chant, all participants can chant together as they go through the motions that express the words...ask the students, they might have some ideas, too.

Finally, we should all be aware of the students who look at the translation of the v'ahavta and oppose what it says. Maybe he does not believe in God. Maybe she is too angry at God to express love. There are numerous reasons why this prayer might be difficult for many people, including teenagers. These students (or this student) might have the role of "tempting" the loving people away from their expressions. Maybe this is the boy who just will not or cannot see the wonder of the tree that his friend is

pointing to. Maybe this is the girl who, when her friend is pouring love from her heart, pushes aside the hands, or turns her back on the expression. It is important that these students participate in some way, that the dance and movement has an element that expresses them as well. Struggle is not a reason to sit on the sidelines of Jewish prayer. These students present a big challenge to the whole group: how do they respect each other, their beliefs, and Jewish tradition, while still expressing autonomy and being true to where they are at emotionally, philosophically and theologically. What does the v'ahavta mean to these students as Jews who do not follow or believe its strict translation?

The final product can be videotaped and shown back to the group for discussion and as a way to see their creation.

Recommended Supplies

- Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice,* JPS, New York 1992

- JoAnne Tucker and Susan Freeman, *Torah in Motion: Creating Dance Midrash,* A.R.E., Denver 1990

- Tanakh

- *Gates of Prayer*

Hashkiveinu follows the Geulah prayer, the prayer for redemption, in an evening service. The Shema and its blessings have the following order leading up to Amidah:

Ma'ariv Aravim (God is revealed through nature)
Ahavah Olam (praises God for revelation through Torah)
Shema
Geulah (prayer for redemption which includes Mi Chamocha)

Traditionally, there should not be a break between Geulah and the Amidah. However, even in non-liberal prayerbooks the Hashkiveinu appears between the two. The explanation in the Talmud is that the Hashkiveinu is not an interruption in the order but rather an extension of Geulah.

In any case, the Hashkiveinu is a beautiful prayer that asks God to protect us through the night. Isaac Klein explains the poetic beauty of Hashkiveinu from Midrash: "The Talit, which symbolizes a protecting canopy, is not worn at night. Hence we pray that God spread His protecting tent of peace over us."[20] In addition, the Psalm 119:164 says "Seven times a day do I praise Thee" and adding Hashkiveinu makes a total of seven benedictions recited in the daily service: three around the morning Shema, three around the evening Shema and Hashkiveinu.

Another explanation of Hashkiveinu and its symbolism is through people's natural fear or distrust of the dark. In our *GOP* Hashkiveinu is in the evening service. Traditionally, it is a part of the afternoon minchah service which should be conducted by a Jewish man who follows Jewish law anytime between 12:30 p.m. and sunset. Imagine a group of men in eighteenth century Eastern Europe or a third century Roman territory who gathered just before sunset to pray minchah together. When they finished, each would walk home in the new darkness. Some would surely walk alone. In a town or area where there were crimes against Jews the darkness in which robbers or hoodlums could hide would be frightening. Hashkiveinu is an expression of this uncertainty; it asks God for a canopy of peace in a perhaps otherwise unprotected night.

Many students will know a melody or two for at least some of the words of Hashkiveinu. The second sentence, *ufros aleinu sukkat shlomecha* (spread over us a shelter of your peace), is common in many Friday evening services. If this is the case at

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[20] *Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, p. 37

your synagogue, it is a perfect line to capture the essence of the prayer and help the students understand the words. They should all know what a sukkah is, and *sukkat* is the same thing: a shelter. In the same vain, *shlomecha* is a combination of shalom and the suffix for "your", *cha.*. If your students are not already empowered with Hebrew, this could be quite positive for them.

Prayers: Core group and Hashkiveinu

Objectives: By the end of the unit, students should be able to

- identify ritual objects that conceptually correspond with different prayers.
- distinguish between an object being holy and finding holiness in an object.
- present at least one functional piece of art, created individually or as a group.
- state whether or not they believe that god shelters us. If they do, then how? If they do not believe this, then explain what the writers of Hashkiveinu believed and how it is not true for people today.

Suggested Activities:

Once again, it is incumbent upon the teacher to prepare for students who are "art shy". This means that whatever the activity, consider providing numerous media for creating the project. For instance, if you want students to illustrate something, try to have stencils and collage materials as well as markers and paints. If you are working on a project that includes sewing, provide appliqués, iron-ons, fabric glue and fabric markers for those who want to participate but are not ready to learn the more advanced skill.

Since this is the last unit before Confirmation, working together to make a canopy for the Confirmation service could be quite meaningful for a group that has bonded over the year. And, in fact, I recommend changing the structure of this unit (to be different from the previous three units) in order to accomodate the large amount of work that can go into making the canopy. See the Memorable Moments section at the beginning of this guide; making a chuppah could potentially occupy all six class sessions.

1. The events surrounding *Mi Chamocha* are central to Passover. To tie this in (especially in the Spring) illustrate a section of the haggadah that can be used separately from the whole book. For instance, using the text as a centerpiece, each student makes a

collage surrounding the four questions, a pictorial representation of each of the ten plagues, or a song sheet for Dayeinu.

2. Learn some basic Hebrew calligraphy and write out mezuzah parchments. Then, make cases for the students to attach their mezuzot at home. *The First Jewish Catalog* has suggestions for unusual casings such as clay (they say self-hardening or kiln firing; I say polymer such as Fimo or Sculpee brands which can be cooked in an average oven), sea shells, walnut shells (glued to heavy card stock), or clear tooth brush holders (p. 14). This *Catalog* also has an excellent section about mezuzot, their meaning, and ceremonies to attach them. Another option is a glass vile with a cork, which can be attached invisibly and without nails using Velcro.

3. The *Shema* proclaims God's oneness. Make papercuts out of a single piece of paper as a symbol of this. The papercuts can be mounted for decoration or laminated. Again, *The First Jewish Catalog* gives a great "how-to".

4. Many of the students have tallitot from their b'nei mitzvah. If they did not make their tallitot themselves, teach them how to tie tzitzit and make tallitot. Again, *The First Jewish Catalog* is a fantastic resource for this. They can use any materials they want (but probably should refrain from using both wool and linen together since this is a biblically prohibited mixture; alone, either is fine). There are beautiful tallitot people make out of old tablecloths, lace, tie-dye, almost any cloth. Although this curriculum focuses on Friday night prayers, except for the Hashkiveinu and L'cha Dodi, they are all also said in the morning, the time when one would wear a tallit.

5. Create calendars, address books, or computer screen savers that incorporate the words of *Adonai Sifatai Tiftach* or *Elohai Nitzor Lishoni Mera* (from the end of the Amidah). Both of these phrases can be constant reminders to use our speech in ways that glorify God, or respect other people. On telephone and address books, as a heading to a calendar, or before sending e-mail it can be a reminder against gossip and *lashon hara*.

6. Oseh Shalom is a prayer for peace. The Vilna Gaon stated that the prayer for peace refers to perfecting one's own character. Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer adds "Quality of character is truly the 'container' that seals in all other blessings because negative traits will spoil all a person's blessings, while good character traits will enhance them."[21] Rabbi Yehuda stated: "Do not look at the flask, but at what it contains."[22] Discuss: How can the perfection of one's character lead to peace? Have students give examples from their own lives and from those who work toward peace in their community and in the world. Some library research may be necessary. Conclude by creating a display with photos, biographies, posters, etc., of those who have worked for peace. [23]

Recommended Supplies

- Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, JPS, New York 1992.

- *Gates of Prayer*

- Tanakh

- Haggadah of your choice. For discussion topics and explanations, I prefer *On Wings of Freedom: The Hillel Haggadah for the Nights of Passover*, Richard Levy, ed. Ktav, Hoboken 1989.

- Siegel, Strassfeld & Strassfeld, *The First Jewish Catalog*, JPS, Philadelphia 1973

- Tikkun

- Kadden & Kadden, *Teaching Tefillah: Insights and Activities on Prayer*, A.R.E., Denver 1994

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[21] *Shemonah Esrai: The Amidah/The Eighteen Blessings*, pg. 262. The ArtScroll Mesorah Series, 1990. as cited in Kadden & Kadden.

[22] *Pirke Avot* 4:27

[23] From *Teaching Tefilah: insights and activities on prayer* by Bruce Kadden and Barbara Binder Kadden A.R.E. Denver 1994; also suggested by Kadden and Kadden as a resource is *1981 Songs NFTY Sings Chordster*, p. 6 to sing "Amar Rabbi Yehuda" as a closing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berk, Fred. *Ha-Rikud: The Jewish Dance.* UAHC 1972. History of Jewish dance with a leader's guide to Israeli folk dances. Includes how-to for twenty-five popular Israeli folk dances and suggestions for specific albums to purchase.

Bialik, Hayim Nahman and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah; Legends from the Talmud and Midrash.* Shocken, New York 1992. Anthology of non-legal rabbinic midrash, arranged in order of the Tanakh. Complete indexes arranged by both biblical citations and topics.

Frankiel, Tamar, and Judy Greenfeld. *Minding the Temple of the Soul.* Jewish Lights, Woodstock 1997. Suggestions and methods for "balancing body mind, and spirit through traditional Jewish prayer, movement, and meditation" (subtitle). Illustrated with pictures and diagrams; includes traditional source citations.

Idelsohn, A.Z. *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development.* Dover, New York 1995. A comprehensive explanation of Jewish liturgy including historical development, descriptions of prayers and related essays.

Joyce, Bruce and Marsha Weil. *Models of Teaching.* 5th edition. Allyn and Bacon, Boston 1996. This text book explains different models of classroom teaching. The "Group Investigation Model" in chapter six can be helpful in encouraging the students to self-teach some of the liturgical selections.

Kadish, Seth. *Kavvana: Directing the Heart In Jewish Prayer.* Aronson, Northvale 1997. Historical and contemporary thoughts on praying with meaning. Gives traditional sources, additional readings, convincing argument and practical suggestions for making siddur praying spiritually uplifting.

Klein, Isaac. *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice.* JPS, New York 1992. The Conservative movement's guide for legal Jewish practice. Includes descriptions of liturgy, choreography, explanations and history of prayers as well as information for all other aspects of Jewish life.

Levy, Richard N., ed. *On Wings of Freedom: The Hillel Haggadah for the Nights of Passover.* Ktav, Hoboken 1989. An in depth haggadah that can be useful for discussions about Mi Chamocha or as a reference for redemption and liberation topics.

Petuchowski, Jakob J. *Understanding Jewish Prayer.* Ktav, New York 1972. Essays by Petuchowski and others about the meaning of prayer in general, the merits and limits of prayer and considerations for praying. Excellent background information for questions that are sure to arise in discussing what prayer means and why we do it.

Siegel, Richard, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, eds. *The First Jewish Catalog.* JPS, Philadelphia 1973. Indispensable resource for creative Jewish expression and understanding Jewish concepts. A very readable and useable "how-to" guide. If you don't have it, get it.

Stern, Chaim, ed. *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat and Weekdays: a gender sensitive prayerbook.* CCAR, New York 1994. The newest prayerbook for the Reform movement which refrains from referring to God in gender-specific terms. Translations and structure in this guide are from or based on this version of *GOP*.

Strassfeld, Michael and Sharon Strassfeld. *The Second Jewish Catalog: sources and resources.* JPS, Philadelphia 1976. More how-to information for Jewish practice and living. Chapter four is specifically on "The Arts". Includes a directory with addresses and phone numbers for resources, but many are obviously outdated.

Tanakh - The Holy Scriptures. JPS, New York 1988. A readable translation. Does not include the Hebrew.

Tikkun. Ktav. The Torah and Haftarah written with the unvocalized Torah calligraphy text in one column and the regular typed Hebrew text (with vowels) in a parallel column. Other publishing houses aside from Ktav also make tikkuns. Good for learning calligraphy or copying portions of the shema for mezuzah scrolls.

Tucker, JoAnne and Susan Freeman. *Torah In Motion: Creating Dance Midrash.* A.R.E., Denver 1990. Excellent introduction on teaching dance and movement. Ofers suggestions for creating dance midrash in correspondance with each weekly Torah portion.