

**A Jewish Prayer**  
**Curriculum**  
**For Seventh Graders**

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## Rationale

אדני, שפתי תפתח, ופי יגיד תהלתך

My God, open my lips, so that my mouth may declare your praise.

Jewish liturgy is a reflection of key Jewish ideas and values. If Judaism is about understanding the details of our lives by putting them into a of larger context, our liturgy represents the essence of Jewish teachings: we say a blessing and acknowledge the miracle of Creation, the miracle of our existence, or our connection with God and the world around us. If Judaism is about the history of our people, our liturgy retells our stories in song and poetry. If Judaism is about understanding how we are commanded, our liturgy invites us to reaffirm our sense of commandedness and לדהתפלל, to judge ourselves, as people and as Jews. And if Judaism is about reading the lines between the stories, adding our own קדושים to what has come before, Jewish liturgy challenges us to read a fixed set of prayers over and over and still bring an authentic, spontaneous part of ourselves to this conversation with God and community. Lastly, prayer offers an opportunity to encounter Hebrew and build positive connections with לשון הקודש.

Jewish prayer opens the door to all these ideas and values. To study prayer provides the learner with an opportunity to encounter all these facets of Judaism. There is a saying that Torah offers something to all kinds of people: the legalistic scholar may find herself captivated by priestly laws, while someone who loves stories may be engaged by the narratives of Genesis and Exodus. So it is with Jewish prayer: it has enough dimensions to engage many different kinds of needs. The prayer service offers a structure for an individual to encounter God. But I would argue that even if one does not believe in

God or is not interested in theology, there is an opportunity to appreciate the world around us, commemorate and celebrate Jewish history, consider the meanings of our lives, or learn Hebrew.

This curriculum focuses on teaching core Jewish prayers to seventh graders. The first step is to offer the tools that will allow learners to experience prayer in the different ways mentioned above. One cannot fully participate in a prayer service without being able to decode the words and understand “where other congregants are” in terms of the words and choreography of the service. Understanding at least the Hebrew keywords of the prayers adds comprehension. In addition, it is important to study the themes of the prayers which focus on key Jewish values and ideas.

Although experiencing prayer is critical to understanding it, this curriculum recognizes that learners may not have a regular experience of prayer, or may not feel engaged by the experience of prayer that the synagogue provides for them. This curriculum reflects my answers to this difficult question. First, if we consider prayer as a form of conversation with God, it is clear that many seventh graders do pray, and in fact may be more open to connecting with God than adults. A curriculum about Jewish prayer should aim to nurture students’ existent spirituality and connect it with the traditional Jewish prayers. Second, Jewish prayers should be approached as a storehouse of Jewish values, such as *Mitzvah* and *Kiddusha*. For example, whether or not students regularly participate in *Tefilla*, they can be engaged in a discussion about the *Shema* and its message of monotheism and the wholeness of the universe. Prayers can also be examined as a lens to understanding key moments in Jewish history such as Creation and receiving the Torah.

I have examined many curricula which attempt to teach Jewish prayer to students of all ages. I am dissatisfied with most of these curricula because I find them too narrow in scope. Curricula which fail to integrate Hebrew into teaching about prayer deprive students of the practical ability to say the prayers, or rob them of the ability build connections with Hebrew language. Conversely, curricula which focus only on Hebrew do not offer students the many dimensions that Jewish prayer encompasses.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this curriculum is that it attempts to integrate Hebrew into the learning about prayer. Beyond reading drills and discussions of keywords and *שורשים*, the school or the class must create some “Hebrew cultural space” for prayer and other activities, so that students begin to feel more connected with Hebrew expression. This is an aspect of the curriculum that will strengthen students’ relationship with Tefilla, and give them a greater ability to connect with important Jewish texts.

To teach seventh graders about Jewish prayer is to give them a lasting gift. This gift allows them to join a Jewish community in prayer and feel that they belong because they know the words and the melodies. This gift gives them the language and the stories to develop a deeper understanding of Judaism. Lastly, studying Jewish prayer lets all people connect their fears, hopes and desires with the communal destiny of the Jewish people. As students mature and change, it is hoped that this curriculum will have strengthened students’ ties with Judaism and Jewish community, encouraging students to continue the journey of struggling with the deeper questions that Judaism asks.

## Curriculum Goals

1. To give students the tools to feel a deeper connection with Jewish prayer and feel comfortable with the words and choreography of the service, through understanding the words of the prayers and understanding how the themes of the prayers address their experience as a Jew and a human being.
2. To convey the idea that Jewish liturgy reflects key Jewish ideas and values.
3. To introduce students to the idea that Judaism and Jewish prayer involve putting the details of our lives into a larger context.
4. To teach about key moments in Jewish history and some of their meanings as expressed in Jewish liturgy.
5. To encourage students to struggle with the idea of commandedness and commandment.
6. To encourage students to view Jewish prayers as texts which are continually open to new interpretations and new connections.
7. To familiarize students with the Hebrew words and keywords of the prayers.

## Outline of Units

### Unit 1: What Is Jewish Prayer?

This unit explores the traditional blessing formula and some new ones. It teaches the concepts of *keva* and *kavannah* and encourages students to examine the implications of Judaism's change from sacrifice to prayer.

### Unit 2: Prayer as a Means to Put the Details of Our Lives Into A Larger Context

The unit teaches the concept of *kedusha*/holiness and examines the way that prayer creates or recognizes holiness.

Prayers covered: *Modeh Ani*, Morning Blessings, *Ma'ariv Aravim*

### Unit 3: Prayer as a Retelling of Jewish History

This unit looks at specific historical events that are invoked in Jewish prayer and has students grapple with the meaning of these events as well as some of the reasons that history is central to Judaism and Jewish prayer.

Prayers covered: *Mi C'mocha*, *Kiddush* for Shabbat Evening, *Avot V'Emahot* from the *Amidah*, *Aleynu*

### Unit 4: Prayer as a Struggle with Commandedness

This unit looks at the idea of *mitzvah* in the blessing formula and specific Jewish prayers, exploring the implications of commandedness for our lives as Jews.

Prayers Covered: *V'ahavta*, *Ahavah Rabbah*, *Ahavat Olam*, *Aleynu*

### Unit 5: Prayer as a Way of Bringing Ourselves into Conversation with God and Community

This unit looks at the communal aspect of prayer through studying the concept of *minyan* and the ways that prayer encourages or demands community.

Prayers Covered: *Sh'ma*, *Barchu*, *Amidah*

## Curricular Notes for the Teacher

- In each unit, objectives are labeled with letters, and in the activities section, each activity is listed by which objective(s) it meets. If you want to find an activity which meets a particular objective, you need only look under the heading for that objective in the activities section.
- Within each unit, activities build on one another. If you choose to do the activities out of order, you should consider what kind of additional information you need to add in.
- Most units contain a synthesis activity at the end. This should help students to put the major ideas of the unit together.
- Each suggested learning activity is marked with at least one of the following codes:

*Conceptual:* activities that focus on the basic concepts, including the history of the prayer, or factual information about its meanings.

*Experiential:* activities that give students the opportunity to experience prayer, either by saying the traditional prayers or writing their own.

*Reflective:* activities that have students reflect on the prayer and integrate it within the larger framework of Judaism

Each unit should include a combination of all types of activities. Conceptual and experiential activities should be done before reflective ones if possible.

- Units 2-5 can be done in any order. If there are additional prayers you want to teach, they can certainly be integrated into the framework suggested by these units.

### A Note about the Bibliography

Fortunately, there are many excellent resources for teaching about Jewish prayer. These are discussed in more depth in the bibliography, but two in particular are invaluable in teaching about prayer: first, Teaching Tefilla from ARE Publishing, which gives extensive explanations about Jewish liturgy and provides a broad range of activities for learning about prayer. Second, Shema Is For Real from Torah Aura, which provides comprehensible translations, imaginative drawings, and coherent explanations to explain the service.

In my opinion, it is possible to create a successful curriculum using this curriculum guide in conjunction with the two resources mentioned above: this curriculum guide provides a loose structure and a rationale for using it, Teaching Tefilla gives more in-depth information about the prayers and additional activities, and Shema is for Real provides the texts themselves in a form that seventh graders can understand.

## On-going Projects

A rewarding way to reinforce class material and allow students to express themselves is to put aside regular time, perhaps the last five or ten minutes of class, for writing in **individual journals**. By reading and commenting on students' journals, the teacher lets the students know that he/she cares about their personal growth and changing ideas, opening up another mode of dialogue between teacher and student. Sample journal questions are included with each unit, or they can flow naturally from a question raised in class discussion demanding further thought.

A project that allows students to have a tangible record of what they have learned and worked on is **to make their own prayerbooks**. I think that the best way to do this would be to collect the projects that students work on as they study various prayers. Then, students assemble the texts and projects into a book, including creating a front and back cover. Alternately, another way to do this would be to have the class as a whole write commentaries on different prayers, and then assemble these into a class prayerbook. This could be copied for each student.

### End of the Year Project

A project which can assess students' mastery of the curriculum is an **end of the year culmination service** which students plan and lead. This project makes the four categories about prayer discussed in this curriculum more tangible, and gives students an opportunity to apply the framework of these four categories about prayer to something that they create. This project is a powerful one which should definitely be included as part of the curriculum. Here are some guidelines for how this project might work:

- The teacher will need to assess the class' mastery of the material and ability to work independently in deciding how much this project needs to be structured by the teacher:
  - One way of beginning this project would be to review the skeletal structure of the service, and then assign students to write commentary or readings for the various prayers based on the four categories the class has studied over the course of the year.
  - Another way to run this project would be to have students divide into four groups. Each group is responsible for one theme that emerges in prayer, selecting prayers and readings that express this theme. At the end, the four groups would come together and integrate their ideas into a service for the congregation.

## Unit 1: What is Jewish Prayer?

### **Introduction**

This unit is titled, “What is Jewish Prayer?” The paradox of such a question is that one could spend a lifetime and never come to a satisfactory answer--does this refer to personal, individual meanings of Jewish prayer (something that may change over time), or what it has meant to Jews throughout the ages, or that which constitutes the body of Jewish prayers?

This unit’s aims are more modest: it begins quite literally by exploring the blessing formula, the most familiar words of Jewish prayer. Then it presents newer blessing formulations which have been created as feminist or less hierarchical responses to the traditional blessings, and encourages students to create their own blessings. The framework of *keva* and *kavannah* helps students examine the continuum between “just going through the motions” of prayer and improvisation which veers far away from Jewish tradition...or does it? By understanding that prayer has replaced sacrifice, students can study the historical context of prayer and compare different modes of communication with God that Judaism has used over the centuries.

A deeper theme of this unit is that Jewish prayer, like Jewish tradition itself, has a pattern of text and commentary, of call and response, of that which is fixed, such as the prayers themselves, and that which is more spontaneous, such as our varying responses to prayer and moods with which we approach prayer. As the basic words of prayer become more natural and less foreign, the hope is that this familiarity and understanding will allow students to immerse themselves in the words of Jewish tradition and connect themselves and their experiences with the prayers.

### **Goals for this Unit:**

To review the traditional blessing formula and review different examples of prayers in which it is used.

To explore the wording of the traditional blessing formula and examine some modern alternatives, using the contrast between the traditional and modern formulas to help students understand each better.

To introduce students to the concepts of *keva* and *kavannah*

To encourage students to write their own prayers, thereby connecting more deeply with the idea of prayer.

To teach that prayer has replaced sacrifice in Judaism, and explore the implications of this change.

**Objectives: At the end of this unit students will be able to:**

(Because there are so many objectives, I have given each objective a letter, and organized my activities by which objective(s) it meets.)

- ◆ explain the meaning of the Hebrew blessing formula. (A)
- ◆ explain some ways that they are blessed (B)
- ◆ explain why we say that God is blessed. (C)
- ◆ explain the meaning of the terms *keva* and *kavannah*, and explain both are recognized and valued in Judaism. (D)
- ◆ explain that in the last twenty years some alternatives to the traditional blessing formula have been created, give one reason why there was an interest in alternate blessings, and give an example of the kinds of blessings that have been created. (E)
- ◆ analyze the way that new blessing formulas fit into the keva/kavannah framework. (F)
- ◆ create their own spontaneous prayers. (G)
- ◆ suggest some reasons why people pray. (H)
- ◆ explain that within Judaism, prayer has replaced sacrifice. (I)

### Concepts covered in this unit

blessing formula--The Talmud teaches that, "A person is forbidden to enjoy any of the pleasures of the world without first reciting praise to God. (*Brachot* 35a). In order to assure that we do not take the world for granted, Jews recited *brachot*, blessings.

A special formula, attributed to the sages of the Great Assembly (circa 2nd century BCE) introduces each brachah: בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, *Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech HaOlam, Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe.*

This formula contains three elements:

- a statement of blessing,
- God's name,
- and the affirmation of God's sovereignty.

According to Maimonides, there are three types of brachot:

a. *Birchat HaNehenin*--brachot of enjoyment said before eating or experiencing a pleasure connected to one of the five senses. Among these brachot are:

*HaMotzi*, for eating bread

*P'ri HaGafen*, for drinking wine

*P'ri HaEytz*, for eating the fruit of the trees

*P'ri HaAdamah*, for eating fruit of the earth

*Minay M'zonot*, for eating cookies or cakes

*Shehakol Nih'yeh Bidvaro*, for eating food other than the above

*Minay V'samim*, for smelling spices

*Oseh Ma'aseh V'raysheet*, for seeing lightning, shooting stars, and other natural phenomena

*Birchat HaMazon*, eating a meal

b. *Birchot HaMitzvot*--brachot recited before the performance of a mitzvah. Examples of this type of brachah include brachot said for lighting Shabbat, holiday, and Chanukah candles; washing one's hands; blowing the shofar, sitting in the sukkah and reciting Hallel.

A בְּרַכָּה, *Brachah*, which is recited for the performance of a mitzvah contains the additional phrase: אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ , *Asher Kidshamu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu* "who has made us holy with his mitzvot and commanded us..."

c. *Birchot Hoda'ah*--brachot that express gratitude to God, with praise and/or petition, in order to remind us of God's presence in the world. Among the *brachot* in this category are *Birchot HaShachar*, the brachot of the Amidah, and the Shehechyanu.

While brachot are traditionally said in Hebrew, they can be recited in any language. They are usually recited prior to the pertinent act; no pause should occur between the *brachah* and the act.

*Brachot* should be recited aloud, although if one says them silently, it is acceptable. A person who responds "Amen" to the brachah of another also fulfills the obligation for reciting the brachah (Brachot 1:13).

Rabbi Meir said that a person should recite 100 brachot daily. Although this appears to be a lot, one who follows the tradition of praying three times daily and also reciting the appropriate brachot before and after eating would have easily recited at least 100 brachot.<sup>1</sup>

New Forms of the Traditional Blessing Formula--in the past twenty years, several new forms of the blessing formula have been created. These attempt to address the masculine reference to God in the traditional blessing formula, and the fact that God is referred to, hierarchically, as a king. While most Jews who strictly follow *halacha* would not consider these new blessing formulas as fulfilling the commandment to recite *brachot*, some Jews find these new blessing formulas more meaningful than the traditional ones. (Examples of new blessing formulas can be found on page 27.)

Keva--Literally means "fixed," this word is used to describe the "fixed" or constant prayers of the service that we say every time we pray.

Kavannah--the spontaneous, "from the heart" impulse we bring to prayer. This word can be used to describe both prayers we write ourselves as well as the spontaneity and enthusiasm we try to bring to prayer even though we may have said the same prayers thousands of times in the past.

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<sup>1</sup> All of this taken from Teaching Tefilla, page 22.

## Suggested activities

### Objective A

Review the Hebrew words of the blessing formula by dividing a mural sized paper into sections, with one word to each section. Encourage students to draw or write associations they have with each word on the appropriate section. (conceptual, reflective)

Teach or review the blessings mentioned above that are said at different occasions. Then play a quiz game (or concentration) which has students match up the prayers with the occasions on which they are said. (conceptual)

Discuss the root ברכ. It has the same root as the word *berech*, meaning knee, reflecting the connection between being on one's knees in front of God and praying. The word *b'ryachah*, meaning pool or pond, also has the same root. What is the connection between praying and being on one's knees? (We come to prayer with humility.) How is a blessing a reflection of oneself? (We can use prayer to bring out what is inside of us.) (reflective)

### Objectives B&C

Discuss: What are some ways that we are blessed? Why does the blessing formula say that God is blessed? (We say the blessing formula as a reminder to love and respect God. As we are created in God's image, we hope we will be blessed too.) Who is doing the blessing, and who is the blessee? (We bless God, and we hope we will be blessed as well.) (conceptual)

### Objective D

Explain the concepts of *keva* and *kavannah* from the definitions above. To check students' comprehension, hand out index cards with examples of *keva* (such as "The Sh'ma" or "The Amidah") and examples of *kavannah* (such as "a conversation with God about a sick friend" or "asking God for strength") and have students identify whether each is *keva* or *kavannah*. (conceptual)

Have students read the stories about *keva* and *kavannah* (see pages 28-30) and answer the questions on their own or with a partner. Then, have students debate *keva* vs. *kavannah*, giving each group appropriate quotes from "Fixed Versus Spontaneous Prayer" attached. (reflective)

### Objectives E&F

Distribute the new blessing formulas found in Kol HaNeshamah (pg. 27 of this guide) or Marcia Falk's New Blessings. How are these different from the traditional blessing formula? What could explain the changes? Have students practice saying these blessings.

How does it feel? Should these prayers be considered *keva* or *kavannah*? (reflective, experiential)

#### Objectives G&H

Go on a “prayer walk” in which students write prayers as they notice the wonders of nature (or the city) around them. Write these prayers down and add them to the class prayer book. (experiential)

#### Objectives H&I

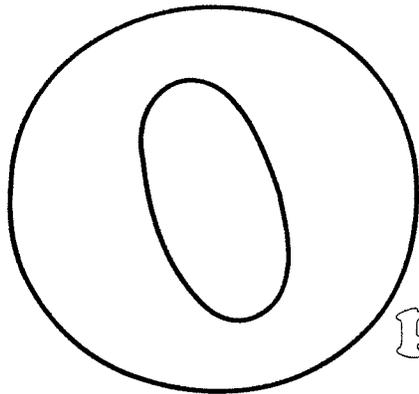
Give students background information about the sacrifices that were made to the Temple. Then have students imagine that they are Rabbis at the time of the destruction of the second Temple. (They can research this period if necessary) One group wants to continue with sacrifices, another to substitute prayer. Conduct a debate among the “Rabbis”.(reflective)

Read the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis ch. 4) with students. Explain that sacrifices have replaced prayer. Ask students why sacrifices no longer are appropriate and have students write the prayers that Cain and Abel might have said to God. (reflective)



## Resource Materials for Unit 1

Openings are Not Closings: The Blessing Formula	16
Blessings said on Different Occasions	17-23
Information about Keva and Kavannah	24-26
Examples of New Blessing Formulas	27
▫ Stories about Keva and Kavannah (See the third activity for Objective D)	28-30



**Petikhta:** *xxxx* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
 Blessed are You, ADONAI, Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos xxxxx

**Hatimah:** *xxxxxx xxxxxx* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה  
 Blessed are You, ADONAI xxxxx xxxxxx

## penings are Not Closings.

The BARUKH-formula used for a PETIKHTA is "longer" than the BARUKH-formula used for a HATIMAH—the words "Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam" are missing. The missing words teach us a lesson about the way that services work.

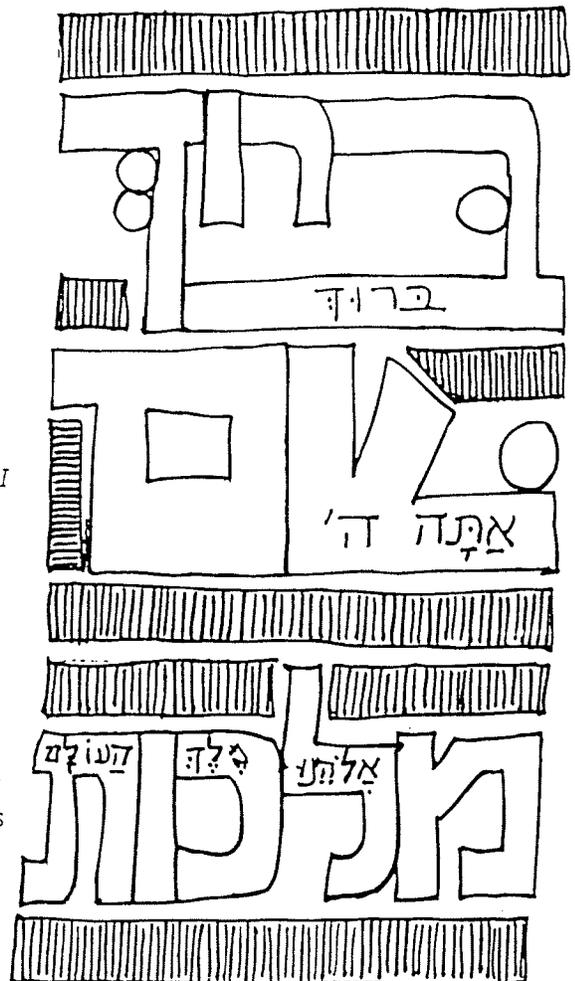
The rabbis divide the BRAKHAH-formula into three parts.

**BARUKH:** *Barukh*. The word "BARUKH" means "bless" or "praise." This word defines the direction in which we are going to be pointing-our-HEARTS. It tells us the purpose of this prayer is to connect to that which is "to be blessed" or "to be praised" about God in our life. In other words, it tells us to

- experience the good things about/from God which we have ever felt.

**SHEM:** *Attah Adonai*. SHEM means "name." ADONAI is the "name" we call God. Jews don't pronounce God's actual name—its pronunciation is a mystical secret—but ADONAI (My Master/Mistress) is the nick-name we use when we want to speak directly to God. When we say the SHEM part, we think of God as Up-CLOSE-&-Personal.

**MALKHUT:** *Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam*. MALKHUT means "rulership." It comes from the root [מלך] and is used to build the Hebrew words for Queen and King. Eloheinu means "our God." God is ADONAI'S job. ADONAI is God's name. Elohim is what ADONAI is and does. In the MALKHUT section we address God by formal titles. When we say the MALKHUT part we think of God as POWERFUL-&-Universal.



In the Talmud, the rabbis make it clear that a BRAKHAH should use all three parts: BARUKH, SHEM, & MALKHUT. But, when we look in the SIDDUR, SHORT brakhot are minus-MALKHUT.

This missing-MALKHUT is the key.

they kept alive the knowledge of the Torah and Jewish traditions. Blessings were formulated for practically every contingency: for the usual experiences of daily life, such as arising from sleep, dressing, eating, and drinking, and for the unusual happenings, such as escaping from danger, recovering from illness, or seeing something wondrous in nature.

The Hebrew word for blessing, *berachab*, is generally understood to be derived from the Hebrew word *berech* ("knee"). The bending of the knee while praying was one of the ways of honoring God. The Rashba, a talmudic scholar (*Teshuvot* 5:51), states that the word *berachab* is derived from the Hebrew word *braichab*, which means "spring" (of water). Just as a spring flows constantly and its waters increase, so, too, when we bless God we are proclaiming our desire to display God's ever-increasing presence in the world. As to the number of blessings required for daily recitation, it was Rabbi Meir, a second-century scholar, who stated that it is the duty of every Jew to recite one hundred blessings daily.

Blessings come in many different forms. The shortest form is *Baruch ata Adonai* ("Blessed is the Lord"). King David is quoted as saying, "Blessed are You, Lord" (I Chronicles 29:10), a phrase that eventually became an important key to the prayer. A second form of the blessing is *Baruch ata Adonai Eloheimu melech ba'olam* ("Praised are You, O Lord, Sovereign of the universe"). The model for this phrase may have been the opening line of the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

The longest form is for those blessings that are recited in conjunction with the performance of a specific reli-

gious obligation (*mitzvab*). It adds the phrase *asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu* ("who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to . . ."). One interesting feature of this longer blessing formula is the switch within the blessing from second-person voice to third-person. At the beginning, God is addressed directly: "Blessed are You." This is immediately followed by a change of the person of the blessing from second to third, when speaking about God: "who sanctified us with His commandments." This change allows for the realization on the part of the person uttering the blessing that God is both near and far—or, in theological terms, both "immanent" and "transcendent." Abudarham, a fourteenth-century scholar, relates the use of both the second and third person in the blessing to the hidden and revealed aspects of God. To that which God reveals, we use the more familiar second person, while the third-person voice reminds us that God's essence will always remain a mystery.

### Purposes of Blessings

The genius of the blessing formula is the opportunity it provides for the worshipper to establish a close relationship with God by speaking to Him directly. Steve Brown, in his book *Higher and Higher: Making Prayer a Part of Us* (United Synagogue Department of Youth), identifies several important purposes of the blessing formula:

To thank God for the blessings that a person has received.

To assume an ethical responsibility for our blessings. For example, when one recites a blessing thank-

ing God for giving bread, there ought to be an expectation of taking on an ethical responsibility for one's food, which would include that of not wasting food.

To help sensitize people to the beauty and joy of the world that God has given people. By saying "thank you" to God for one's blessings, a person does not take life and life's blessings for granted. To help imbue an experience with spirituality. Reciting blessings helps a person to change the common variety of experience, raising it, and, in the process, making a person closer to the image of God.

### Kinds of Blessings

Maimonides, the medieval philosopher, distinguishes three kinds of benedictions according to their content: those recited before and after the enjoyment of a pleasure, such as eating; those preceding the performance of certain religious duties, such as listening to the *shofar* (ram's horn); and those that are forms of thanksgiving and praise. The blessings of the morning, which express a person's gratitude for awakening in possession of all his or her faculties, were originally of the third type. Many of the benedictions in these three categories, though obligatory, are essentially of a private character. Accordingly, no *miryan* (quorum) is required for their recital. An exception is the Grace After Meals, which, when said in company, is preceded by an invitation to those present to offer their thanks in unison.

Here is a summary of the major blessings, listed by category.

### Genres of Prayer

#### Blessings for Taste

##### Bread

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם. המציא לחם מן הארץ.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ba'aretz.*

*Food (other than bread) prepared from wheat, barley, rye, oats, or spelt*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם. בורא מיני מזונות.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates different kinds of nourishment.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei meivnei mezonot.*

##### Wine

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם. בורא פרי הגפן.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri hagafen.*

*Fruit*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'eitz.*

*Foods that grow in the ground*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, בורא פרי האדמה.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates the fruit of the ground.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei p'ri ha'adamah.*

*Other food and drink*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, שהכל נהיה בדברך.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, at whose word all things come into existence.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shebakol nihiyeh bidvaro.*

*Blessings for Smell**Upon smelling fragrant spices*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, בורא מיני בשמים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates different kinds of spices.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei minei besamim.*

*Upon smelling the fragrance of shrubs and trees*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, בורא עצי בשמים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates fragrant trees.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei atzei besamim.*

*Upon smelling the fragrance of plants and herbs*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קלך העולם, בורא עשבי בשמים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates fragrant plants.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei isvei besamim:*

*Upon smelling fragrant fruit*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. הַטּוֹחַן רֵיחַ טוֹב כְּפִרוּחַ.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who gives a pleasant fragrance to fruits.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam hanoteyn rei'ach tov ba'peyrot.*

*Upon smelling fragrant oils*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. בִּרְאֵי שֶׁמֶן צֶרֶב.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who creates fragrant oil.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam borei shemen arev.*

*Blessings for Sight**Upon seeing a rainbow*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. זִכֵּר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמַן בְּבְרִיתָהּ וְתוֹם בְּמִאֲמָתָהּ.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who remembers the covenant and is faithful to all promises.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam zocher ha'berit vene'eman biurito vekayam bema'amaro.*

*Upon seeing trees blossoming for the first time in the year*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁלֵמַ חֶסֶר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ קִבֵּר. תִּבְרָא בּו כְּרִיחַ מִסְכַּח וְאֵילָנוֹת מִסְכִּים לְהַטִּיחַ בְּהֵם כִּי אָדָם.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who has withheld nothing from the world and Who has created lovely creatures and beautiful trees for people to enjoy.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shelo chisar be'olamo dauar uvara vo briyot tovat ve'ilanot tovim lebanot babeym benei adam.*

*Upon seeing the ocean*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׁעִשָּׂה אֲרֻחָיִם הַיָּהוּל.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has made the great sea.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam she'asah et hayam bagadol.*

*Upon seeing trees or creatures of unusual beauty*

קִרְדָּךְ אֱתָהּ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׂכַדָּה לּוּ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has such beauty in the world.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shekakh lo be'olamo.*

*Upon seeing someone of abnormal appearance*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, משנה הבדיות.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who makes people different.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam mesbaneh habriyot.*

*Upon seeing lightning, shooting stars, mountains, or a sunrise*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, עשה מעשה בראשית.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, Source of creation.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam oseh ma'aseh veresheet.*

*Upon seeing a synagogue restored*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, משיב נסל אנקיה.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who restores the borders of the widow [Zion].

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam matziu gevul almanah.*

*Upon seeing a person distinguished in Torah knowledge*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, שנתן מקבצתי לראי.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given wisdom to those who revere God.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam shechalak meichokhmato lirei'au.*

*Upon seeing a person distinguished in secular knowledge*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, שנתן מקבצתי לקשר הים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given wisdom to mortals.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam sbenatan mechokhmato levasar vadam.*

*Upon seeing a head of state*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדך העולם, שנתן מקבצתי לקשר הים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given glory to mortals.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ba'olam sbenatan mikvoddo levasar vadam.*

*Upon seeing a friend after a long separation*

כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. מִתְּחֵלָה הַמָּוֶתִים.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who brings the dead back to life.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam mechayeh ha'meyitim.*

**Blessing upon Hearing***Upon hearing thunder*

כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. שְׂכַחוּ וּנְכַוְתוּ מִלֵּא עוֹלָם.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, whose might and power fill the entire world.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shebocho ugevarato malei olam.*

*Upon bearing good news*

כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. הַטּוֹב וְהַמְשִׁיב.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who is good and causes good things.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam hatov vebameytiv.*

*Upon bearing tragic news*

כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. הֵן הַאֲמֵת.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who is the true Judge.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam dayan ha'emet.*

**Other Blessings of Gratitude***After leaving the bathroom*

כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּךְ הָעוֹלָם. יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּהַקְמָה וּבְרָא בֹ  
זָכָיִים וְזָכָיִים הַלּוּלִים הַלּוּלִים נָלַי וְהִרְעֵנוּ לִפְנֵי כְּסֵא כְּסֵדָה שָׂאֵם יִסְחֵה אֶת־  
מִקְוֵה אוֹ יִסְחֵם אֶת־מִקְוֵה אוֹ אֶת־מִקְוֵה לְהַקְמֵם וְלִקְמֵם לְפָנֶיךָ. כְּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי  
רוּחָם כֹּל בְּשָׂר וּפְסִילֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has formed people in wisdom and created in them many orifices and hollow tubes. It is well known that if one of them were to be obstructed or broken, it would be impossible to stay alive. Blessed are You, Healer of all flesh, who does wondrous things.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher yatzar et ba'adam bechachbama uvara vo nikavim nikavim chalulim chalulim galui veyadua lifnei kisei kevodecha she'im yipate'ach echad meibem ob yisatem echad meibem ee'tefshar lehilkeyem vela'amod lifanecha. Baruch ata Adonai rofei koi basar uma'flec la'asol.*

*Upon affixing a mezuzah to the doorpost*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדוש ונורא. אשר קדשנו בקצותינו וצונו לקבוע קונו.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has made us distinct with commandments and commanded us to attach the *mezuzah*.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kid-shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu likboab mezuzab.*

*Upon obtaining a new item, tasting a new food for the first time, entering a new home, and many other new and special occasions*

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו קדוש ונורא. שדלקתנו וקדמתנו וצונו לתנו יוקה.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and helped us to reach this day.

*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shebechey-anu vikimanu vibigyanu lazman hazeh.*

**Notable Blessing Quotations**

A variety of statements related to blessings have been presented over the centuries. Here is a selection of some of them.

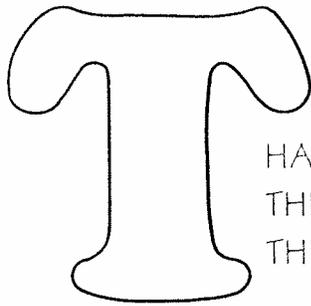
1. The person who utters blessings is blessed. One who utters curses is cursed (Ruth Rabbah 1:3).
2. Israel enjoys blessings in this world because of the blessings of Bilaam, but the blessings wherewith the

Patriarchs have blessed them are preserved for the World-to-Come (Deuteronomy Rabbah 3:4).

3. A person should taste nothing before uttering a blessing. Since "the earth is the Lord's, and all that it holds" [Psalms 24:1], a person embezzles from God when making use of this world without uttering a blessing (Tosefta *Berachot* 4:1).
4. Rabbi Yose says: "The person who changes the formulas the sages have fixed for blessings has not discharged his duty" (Tosefta *Berachot* 4:4-5).
5. Let not the blessing of a lay person be light in your eyes (*Berachot* 7a).
6. From a person's blessings, one may know if one is or is not a scholar. (*Berachot* 50a).
7. Just as one has to bless God for the good, one has to bless God for the bad (*Berachot* 48b).
8. There is no vessel that holds blessedness more securely than peace (Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 2:4).

**PIYYUTIM****The History of Piyyutim**

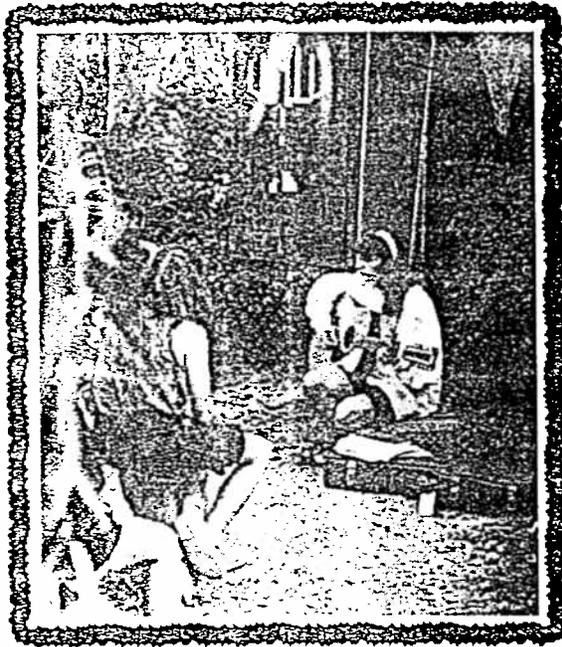
Although the word *piyyut* is derived from the Greek term for poetry, it generally denotes religious poetry; hence, *piyyetan* signifies a liturgical poet. In ancient times, these liturgical compositions were intended to replace or substitute for many of the set versions of prayer. Although the majority of *piyyutim* were intended to be



## THIS ALL MEANS:

HAT WHEN WE STUDY JEWISH PRAYERS, WE CAN'T JUST LOOK AT THE WORDS AND WHAT THEY MEAN—RATHER, WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE ORDER AND THE CONNECTIONS, TOO.

### WHY CAN'T WE JUST ALL MAKE UP OUR OWN PRAYERS?



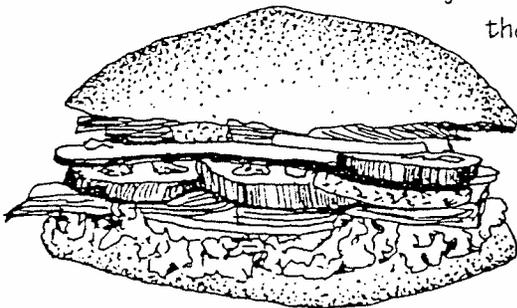
The Hebrew word **KAVANAH** sort of means “spontaneous.” CW (*Conventional Wisdom*) teaches (and so does the Jewish tradition) that “spontaneous” prayer—straight from the HEART—is the best. The famous statement in the Talmud is: “DON'T make your prayers fixed!” (Avot 2.13)

The Hebrew word **KEVA** means “fixed.” If you are now reading this book about the ORDER of Jewish Prayer (SIDDUR) it is no surprise to you that Jewish prayer is heavily rooted in KEVA. We pray set formulae in set orders at set times using set rituals.

In other words, we want it both ways.

**KAVANAH** really means “AIMing.” It is best understood as “HEART-pointing.” The Talmud puts it this way: “One who prays must AIM his/her HEART at heaven.” (Brakhot 31a) Spontaneity comes with association and intention, not with improvisation.

The key is TRUTH. All Jewish prayers must be TRUE statements; well meant, but false or misleading statements are problematic. They don't correctly TESTIFY to God's gifts. That lesson is learned in the Case of Benjamin's Sandwich (Brakhot 40b).



Benjamin eats a salami sandwich and then says a BRAKHAH which thanks the “MAKER-of-the-Sandwich.” It doesn't testify that ADONAI, the ONE God is that MAKER. In evaluating this case, the rabbis express the conclusion that a wonderfully spontaneous BRAKHAH said with perfect intention wasn't the best possible BRAKHAH, because the actual words might mislead others. People could make the wrong assumptions about the “MAKER-of-the-Sandwich.” The same lesson is also learned about a correctly formed BRAKHAH said in the wrong situation. (Brakhot 6.1)

*In other words, Brakhot are paths to Truth. It is our job to bring them alive by HEART-pointing. The fixed formulae of Jewish prayer form the path; our HEART and experience guide our own individual journey along the pilgrimage they define.*

Many contemporary Jews are reciting *berahot*/blessings in ways that reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. At any place where a blessing occurs in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas for *berahot*. This can be done by selecting one phrase from each group to form the introductory clause.

I	Baruḥ atah adonay	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are you Adonay
	Beruḥah at yah	בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ	Blessed are you Yah
	Nevareḥ et	נְבָרְךָ אֶת	Let us bless
II	<u>elo</u> hey <sup>nu</sup>	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
	hasheḥinah	הַשְּׁכִינָה	Sheḥinah
	eyn haḥayim	עֵין הַחַיִּים	Source of Life
III	<u>me</u> leḥ ha'olam	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of all worlds
	ḥey ha'olamim	חַי הָעוֹלָמִים	Life of all the worlds
	<u>ru</u> aḥ ha'olam	רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Spirit of the world

tends to gently suggest a variety of meanings in its words. The prayer writers often chose symbols and metaphors to express their true feelings. In this way, the words of the prayerbook mean different things to different people and continue to evoke new impressions and ideas in the minds of the worshippers.

### FIXED VERSUS SPONTANEOUS PRAYER

One of the great debates in rabbinic times, as well as in our own, has been whether prayers ought to be fixed in a specific order or whether it is more advantageous for worshippers to create their own original prayers each time they wish to pray. The question, in a nutshell, is: Which is better, fixed or spontaneous prayer? The debate continues today. Although the norm is clearly to pray in a structured setting (i.e., synagogue) using a fixed order of prayers in a prayerbook, the rabbis gave ample opportunity for personal prayer and meditation. Today, there are prayer groups that continue to use this rabbinic dispensation by writing and creating new and original prayers that they use in a less structured setting in their own group settings.

Twenty centuries ago, rabbinic scholars discussed the need for a fixed and detailed order to liturgy. Here are several incidents recorded in the Talmud that relate to the importance of the fixed, structured prayer system:

1. They entered a town and found a cantor who recited, "The great, powerful, awesome, mighty, dauntless God," and they silenced him. They said, "You are not allowed to add to the phrasing that the rabbis have

established for blessings" (Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 9:112d).

2. Rabbi Yose says, "Whoever changes the phrasing that the sages determined for blessings has not fulfilled his obligation" . . . Rav said, "Any blessing that does not mention God's name is not a blessing" (*Berachot* 40b).
  3. A person reading the Shema prayer in the evening is required to mention the Exodus from Egypt as part of the prayer *Emet v'Yatziv*. Rabbi Judah the Prince says, "One must mention God's kingship in it." Others say, "One must mention the parting of the Red Sea and the plague of the killing of the first-born sons." Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says, "One must mention them all, and must say, 'Rock of Israel and his Redeemer'" (Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 1:3d).
- Here are several citations related to the importance of enthusiasm and spontaneity in prayer:
1. Be careful when saying the Shema and *Amidah* prayers. When you do pray, do not make your prayer fixed, but rather compassionate and supplicatory before God (*Ethics of the Fathers* 2:18).
  2. "Bless God." Resh Lakish said, "Whoever responds 'Amen' with all his strength, the gates of the Garden of Eden are opened up for him, as it is written, 'Open the gates and the righteous nation that keeps the faith will enter'" (*Shabbat* 119b).
  3. A person who is praying must feel in his heart the meaning of the words on his lips, and consider that

God's presence is opposite him, and put aside all thoughts that distress him, until his thoughts and intentions are clear in his prayer. He must give consideration. If he were speaking to a sovereign, he would organize his words and give them proper attention so that he would not make errors. How much the more so before the Sovereign of sovereigns, the Holy One, blessed be He, who explores all thoughts (Chayyim, *Code of Jewish Law* 98).

4. If a person wants to add to each of the intermediate blessings [in the *Amidah*], he may do so. How? If he is concerned about someone who is ill, he seeks compassion for him in the blessing of the sick, according to his own effectiveness. . . . It is done in this way in every blessing (Maimonides, *Laws of Prayer* 6:2-3).
5. The three daily services may not be shortened, but a person may add to them. If a person wants to pray all day, he may do so. The prayers that he adds are like a free-will offering. Thus, one must make an appropriate thought as if it were new in each of the intermediate blessings [of the *Amidah*] (Maimonides, *Laws of Prayer* 1:9).
6. If a person prays only according to the exact fixed prayer and adds nothing from his own mind, his prayer is not considered proper (*Berachot* 28a).
7. Rabbi Abahu would add a new prayer to his worship every day. Rabbi Aha in the name of Rabbi Yose said: "It is necessary to add new words to the fixed prayers each time they are recited" (*Berachot* 4a).

8. Every word of your prayer should be like a rose that you pick from its bush. You continue to gather the roses until you have formed a bouquet and can offer it as a beautiful blessing to God (Bratzlaver Rebbe).
9. The Holy One, blessed be He, desires the heart (*Sanhedin* 106b).

### MUSIC AND PRAYER

Words do not constitute the only form of prayer in Judaism. Music's power to arouse the emotions has made it a factor in prayer since biblical times. The biblical verse, "Sing to God with thanksgiving, sing praises upon the harp to our God" (Psalms 147:7), points to an illustrious tradition of both vocal and instrumental song among the early Israelites. Psalm 150, known as the "musical psalm," describes the many instruments that were used during Temple times. Exodus records the exultant song of prayer that Moses and the Israelites sang after crossing the Red Sea.

The Talmud (*Arachin* 11a) considers song to be a way of serving God in joy and gladness. It is not surprising that, during Temple times, musical instruments were used to enhance worship. Although the use of instrumental music in services was banned as a sign of mourning after the destruction of the Second Temple, vocal music has remained an essential component of prayer and Bible reading, as can be evidenced by the chanting from the Torah.

The first written fragments of ancient synagogue melodies discovered by musicologists date from the twelfth century. These fragments were found in the Cairo Genizah,

## Story #1

A long time ago in the land of Ephraim there was a man named Elkanah who had a wife named Hannah. Hannah loved Elkanah and wanted so much to have children..but for many, many years she was unable to have children, until she almost felt that maybe she should give up the idea of ever having a family. One day, Hannah was thinking about not having a family and began to cry, and her husband found her sitting in their house crying.

“Hannah, why are you crying?” he asked. “You seem so sad these days, you seem to have lost your appetite as well. Isn’t our relationship just as good as having ten sons?”

Hannah continued thinking about her sadness, and later that day, she went to the temple of God. She cried, and spoke to God, saying, “God, if you hear my prayers, and bring me a son, I will give bring him to serve God as a Jewish priest.”

Eli, the priest at this temple, watched Hannah as she sat in the temple. He didn’t know that she was praying from the heart; he only saw that for a long time, her lips moved, but she made no sound. After a while, Eli decided that Hannah was drunk. He went up to her and told her she shouldn’t be coming to the temple drunk, and that in the future she should put away the wine.

Then Hannah explained that she wasn’t drunk, she was just very sad, and had poured out her soul to God asking God hear her prayer and bring her a child.

So then Eli told her to go in peace and that God would grant her request. Before long Hannah did have a son, and she called him Samuel, because God listened to her prayers.

### Questions:

1. What did Hannah want?
2. What was Hannah doing at the temple?
3. Why did Eli think that Hannah was drunk?
4. Do you think Hannah’s prayers were *keva* or *kavanah*?
5. How did God respond to Hannah’s prayers?
6. What does God’s response tell us about *keva* or *kavannah*?

## Story #2:

Once, there was a Jewish farmer who had never studied at a Yeshiva, but he loved to talk to God. When he got up, he would say, "Thank you God, for the bales of hay in my barn." When he crossed the creek in the middle of his farm, he would say, "Thank you God, for this cool rushing water." And when he picked carrots, he would say, "Thank you, God, for these beautiful carrots which will feed my family lots of vitamin C." And so on.

God heard the farmer's prayers and was happy; the prayers were sincere.

One day, a *Hassid*, on his way to a long day of Jewish study, happened to walk by the farm and hear the farmer uttering his prayers thanking God for all of the creations of the world. He listened closely: what were these prayers about carrots and hay?

The *Hassid* couldn't resist: he ran up to the farmer. "What are you saying?" he shouted. "Those aren't prayers! Stop that at once."

"I'm so sorry," said the farmer. "I myself am a man of little Jewish learning. But if you tell me these are not prayers, I will say no more of them." The farmer stopped thanking God or all the beauty he saw on his farm. It wasn't easy, but he wanted to do the right thing.

Now God was sad; God missed the farmer's wonderful prayers which had made the universe a little more special and complete.

That night, the *Hassid* had a dream that God came to him and yelled at him for taking away the farmer's prayers. He woke up and was afraid, but couldn't remember his dream. The same thing happened the second night: he woke up terrified, but didn't know what his dream had been about. But on the third night, he woke up and remembered that God had asked for the farmer's prayers back. The *Hassid* jumped out of his bed in the middle of the night, knocked on the farmhouse door, and told the farmer that he had been wrong about the prayers.

## Questions

1. What did the farmer do to pray?
2. What did the *Hassid* think the farmer was doing wrong?
3. Why did the *Hassid* think that the farmer was doing something wrong?
4. How did God respond to the farmer's prayers?
5. How did God respond when the farmer stopped praying?
6. Were the farmer's prayers *keva* or *kavannah*?
7. What does the story tell us about God's response to *keva* or *kavannah*?

### Story #3

A simple man came to the synagogue once. During most of the service, he just sat and listened, because he did not know very much. He could not even read the Hebrew of the prayerbook.

All around him members of the congregation were standing in prayer, each person speaking with God in a whisper. And the simple man wished to speak with God, too. He wanted to tell God how magnificent the world that God created was. He wanted to thank God for the blessings of health and life. But he could not find the right words to say.

When he thought his heart would break from shame and sadness, he said, "O God, I cannot speak a beautiful prayer for You because I am a simple man and I have forgotten what I studied. But You, O God, know how to do everything. So I will give you the *Alef Bet* and You can make a beautiful prayer for Yourself. Then he recited, "*Alef...Bet...Gimel...Dalet...*"

Of all the prayers spoken that day, this one was dearest to God.

### Questions

1. What did the man want to express?
2. Why was he having difficulty expressing this?
3. Were the man's prayers *keva* or *kavannah*?
4. How did God react to the man's prayers?
5. Have you ever had an experience like the one described in the story? What do you do when you don't know the prayers?

## Unit 2: Prayer as a Means to Put the Details of Our Lives Into A Larger Context

### Introduction

One who sees the sun rising and does not pronounce the blessing to “God who creates light,” who sees it setting and does not bless, “God who brings on evening,” who eats and drinks and does not say the appropriate blessings, is considered as though not truly alive.

-Midrash Tanhuma, “Vezoth Haberacha” 7.

As the title of this unit indicates, this unit is about the way that prayer puts the details of our lives into a larger context. This larger context may be Jewish tradition, or reciting prayers that Jews have recited for thousands of years, or feeling a connection with God or some Force in the universe. Such routine acts as waking up, getting dressed, and watching night fall all become chances to thank God for all we have, to acknowledge that we are part of many generations of Jews who have said these prayers, and to appreciate living.

The difficult aspect of this unit, for seventh graders, is that being part of this larger context suggests doing something different than the wider secular culture, and seventh graders are developmentally at a stage where conformity is desired. In addition, the idea that we emulate tradition is at odds with seventh graders’ adolescent rebellion and attempts to break with what has come before.

When we pray, we create holy space, or holy time: for example, when we say a prayer before eating, that meal becomes a moment for connection with God. But is holiness something that seventh graders can appreciate? Clearly, it will not work if imposed by authority. But we can teach seventh graders about prayer and *kedusha*, holiness, if we encourage them to build on the positive connections they already feel, encourage them to teach each other, and provide a non-judgmental atmosphere in which questions and doubts are encouraged. For example, if the class discusses holiness, journal entries could ask students to describe a moment that they experienced holiness, and a time that they had trouble finding holiness even though they were supposed to experience it. If nothing else, they should know that they are part of a long line of Jews who struggled to find their connection with God, and that prayer is as much about the “hits” as the “misses”.

### Goals for this Unit:

To deepen students' understanding of *kedusha*, holiness, and its connection to Jewish prayer.

To explore the ways that saying a prayer changes an act or a moment.

To encourage students to experiment with saying Jewish prayers at appropriate times.

(For each unit, the goals include teaching the prayers and concepts mentioned in "Prayers Covered in this Unit".)

### Objectives: At the end of this unit students will be able to:

(Because there are many objectives, I have given each objective a letter, and organized my activities by which objective(s) it meets.)

- ◆ give a definition for holiness/*kedusha*, and give various examples where this concept is found in the Bible. (A)
- ◆ explain that prayer is a way of saying thank you or recognizing the miracles of daily existence. (B)
- ◆ sing Modeh Ani. (C)
- ◆ explain that the morning blessings thank God for all that we appreciate as we wake up in the morning. (D)
- ◆ write their own morning blessings. (E)
- ◆ explain that Ma'ariv Aravim describes God as a Force in the universe who brings on the night (F)

### Concepts covered in this unit

holiness/*kedusha*--There are at least two important aspects of *kedusha*: one is connection with God, and the other, separation or contrast.

Connection with God may involve prayer or other communication with God, or acting in a way that acknowledge we are created in God's image (בצלם אלהים).

The idea of separation or contrast acknowledges that some things (Shabbat, a synagogue, a loving relationship) are holy whereas others are not. While we cannot live every moment as "holy time" and probably wouldn't want to, we can strive to create holiness in the way we live and in our relationships with others.

*Kedusha* may involve trying to be like God, trying to bring God and humans together, doing what is best for the world in the long term, or striving to be unique and different as an individual and a community. Prayer is one way of bringing *kedusha* into a moment or a situation which may be *hol*, profane.

## Prayers Covered in this Unit

Modeh Ani--According to the Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer, this prayer is recited immediately upon awakening so that one will be made aware of God. This prayer appeared for the first time a sixteenth century mystical commentary on the siddur. (See prayer, translation, and commentary from Kol HaNeshamah on page 38.)

Morning Blessings--The *Birchot HaShachar* are part of the preliminary morning service. (Sometimes the term is also used to refer to the whole preliminary morning service, before *P'sehei Dzimrah*, but I am not using it this way.) Originally, these blessings were said at home when performing one's regular daily morning routine of arising from bed, washing, dressing, etc. In later years now they were moved to the synagogue service with the idea that worshippers may not be able to do them at home. The term *Birchot HaShachar* refers to the prayer which lists a series of blessings thanking God for vision, strength, freedom, etc. This series of fifteen blessings is based on Tractate Berachot 60b, in which the rabbis teach that as one experiences the phenomena of the new day, one should bless God for providing them. A central concept of this prayer is that the routine elements of our lives, including our ability to wash and dress ourselves, should not be taken for granted. These abilities have been given to us by God, and are daily miracles for which thanks must be given. (See pages 41-42.)

Ma'ariv Aravim--This prayer praises God for bringing on the evening, controlling the flow of light and darkness, for the seasons, and for ordering the stars in heaven. This is the first blessing after the *Barchu*, said before the *Shema*.

## Suggested activities

### Objective A

Divide students into groups, and have each group read a few of the biblical texts (see list on page ----) that mention holiness. Each group should prepare a presentation for the class which

- (a) summarizes the texts they read
- (b) gives a definition of holiness based on these texts
- (c) explains how one of these texts relates to Jewish prayer (conceptual, reflective)

### Objective B

Have students talk about something miraculous, amazing, or extremely memorable that they experienced. (A beautiful sunset, a great conversation with a friend...) What did they say at the time? (Wow, cool..) Then talk about: how is being alive and healthy miraculous? (All of the bones, muscles, and organs of our system function correctly, we remember and learn...) And what should we say? Teach the Modeh Ani, which thanks God for returning our soul to us in the morning. (conceptual)

Ask students to list the kinds of things they say when they first wake up. How might saying the Modeh Ani every morning change one's day? Have students try this for a week and report back. (conceptual, experiential)

Ask students to remember when they learned to say "thank you", and discuss. When do we say "thank you" now? When is it hard to say "thank you"? What might be some of the reasons that it's hard to say thank you? (We're too busy, we don't really want to make the effort...) How is prayer a way of saying "Thank you" to God? (conceptual)

### Objective C

Start a tradition of beginning every morning class with Modeh Ani. (experiential)

### Objectives D&E

To teach the Morning Blessings, have students list everything that they do from the time they wake up until the time they leave for school. Then have them compare this list with the traditional morning blessings. Are some of the actions that they described similar to the traditional blessings? Which ones are different? Why might this be? Have students write at least one new blessing in the form of the traditional morning blessings. Collect these new blessings and share them with the class the following week, and/or add them to the class prayerbook. (See worksheet, pgs. 39-40.) (conceptual)

### Objective F

Read through the Ma'ariv Aravim as a class. Then have students act out a Ma'ariv Aravim "machine." Each student is assigned a different motion described in the prayer, such as "mixes the mixtures", "opens the gates," etc. Students stand in a line and act out their part while saying the motion that they are acting. Then discuss: what did students see? Did this machine remind them of night falling? Who is running the machine? (God) Have students draw what they saw. (experiential, reflective)

Have students list as many cycles as they can. Then ask students to find the line in the Ma'ariv Aravim that expresses the idea of cycles. (conceptual, reflective)

### Follow-up/Synthesis Activities

Give students a list of blessings that they can say during the day; ask students to try to say one of these blessings each day over the next week. Then have students report back the following week. What happened? (experiential)

Prayer is a way of creating holiness, or making our routine acts more holy. But holiness is an amorphous concept which is difficult to define and understand. Do an exercise in synectics to explore the meaning of holiness:

- Have students list on the board qualities of “light”. (It is warm, it may give off warmth, life would be scary without it...) Encourage students to think of light in its natural context and as electricity.
- Next, provide students with the following six qualities of holiness: being close to or like God; being unique or doing unique things either alone or as a community; just “feeling right”; thinking about the world in the long term; bringing people together and thinking about others’ needs.
- Ask students to explain how holiness is like light. (They both make the world better, they both came from God, without them the world would be scary...)
- Have student work individually to come up with their own analogies for holiness-- have them write a paragraph that explains what they are comparing to holiness. Then have students share their analogies with the class, or read them anonymously. (reflective)

## Resource Materials for Unit 2

Biblical texts on holiness	37
Modeh Ani	38
Morning Blessings Worksheet	39-40
Traditional Morning Blessings	41-42
Ma'ariv Aravim	43-44

## Biblical Quotes About Holiness

*There are over 100 biblical references to holiness. They include people, places, actions and God being holy. Below are only a few selections. Use a concordance (such as The new Brown-Drivers-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon) for a more exastive list.*

And God said, "do not come closer, remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand in holy ground." (Exodus 3:5 -- said to Moses at the burning bush)

Who is like You, O Adonai, among the mighty. Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11 -- Song of the Sea)

You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be made holy in the midst of the Israelite people -- I am the Lord who made you holy. I will bring you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am Adonai (Leviticus 22:32-33 -- God is telling Moses to tell to the Israelites about the laws)

They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer Adonai's offering by fire, the food of their God, and so must they be holy. (Leviticus 21:6 -- about the priests)

You shall be holy, for I Adonai your God, am holy. (Leviticus 19:2 -- said to the whole Israelite community)

You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy, for the Lord am your God. You shall faithfully observe my laws, I Adonai made you holy. (Leviticus 20: 7-8 -- said to the whole Israelite community)

On that same day you shall hold a celebration, it shall be a holy occasion for you, you shall not work at your occupations. And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your fields, or gather the gleanings of your harvest, you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger. I am Adonai your God. (Leviticus 23:21-22 -- said to the whole Israelite community concerning holidays)

## מוֹדָה / מוֹדָה אַנִי

לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ הַיּוֹם שֶׁהוֹחֵרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמַתִּי בְּחִמְלָה רַבָּה אֲמוֹנָתְךָ:

Modeh/Modah ani lefaneha meleḥ hay vekayam shehehezarta bi nishmati behemlah rabah emunateha.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחִמְקֶיךָ וּבָרָא בּוֹ נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים:

גְּלוּי נִדְרֹעַ לִפְנֵי כֹסֵא כְבוֹדְךָ שָׂאֵם יִפְתָּח אֲחֹד מִקָּם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֲחֹד מִקָּם אִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהִתְקִים וּלְעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי רּוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לְעִשׂוֹת:

Baruḥ atah adonay elohey<sup>nu</sup> meleḥ ha'olam asher yatzar et ha'adam behohmah uvara vo nekavim nekavim halulim halulim. Galuwi veyadu'a lifney hisey hevodeha she'im yipate'ah ehad mehem o yisatem ehad mehem i efsar lehitkayem vela'amod lefaneha. Baruh atah adonay rofey hol basar umafli la'asot.

COMMENTARY: According to the Talmud's teaching, "sleep is one-sixtieth part of death"—that is, the experience of awakening each day is considered a new creation of life, a miracle to be greeted with wonderment and gratitude. This passage (*Modeh/Modah ani*) also associates the notion of a person's soul or spirit with the physical experience of breathing, an activity one is especially capable of appreciating in those first moments of awakening.

J.R.

I give thanks before you, sovereign who lives and who endures, because you have renewed my breath of life, with providential kindness.

How abundant is your faithful care!

Blessed are you, THE ARCHITECT, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who shaped the human being with wisdom, making for us all the openings and vessels of the body. It is revealed and known before your Throne of Glory that if one of these passage-ways be open when it should be closed, or blocked up when it should be free, one could not stay alive or stand before you. Blessed are you, MIRACULOUS, the wondrous healer of all flesh.

COMMENTARY: This blessing expresses wonder at the simple but necessary functioning of the human body. We do not need to stand before any greater wonder of nature than our own bodies in order to appreciate the intricacy and beauty with which our world is endowed. A sense of awe at our own creation is a starting point of prayer.

A.G.

KAVANAH: Gratitude, with its overtones of serenity and indebtedness, is the most effective way of experiencing the reality of God. M.M.K. (Adapted)

### Morning Blessings Worksheet

Make a list, in detail, of everything you do from the time you wake up to the time you leave for school. Start with opening your eyes, and try to list at list 25 different things you do.

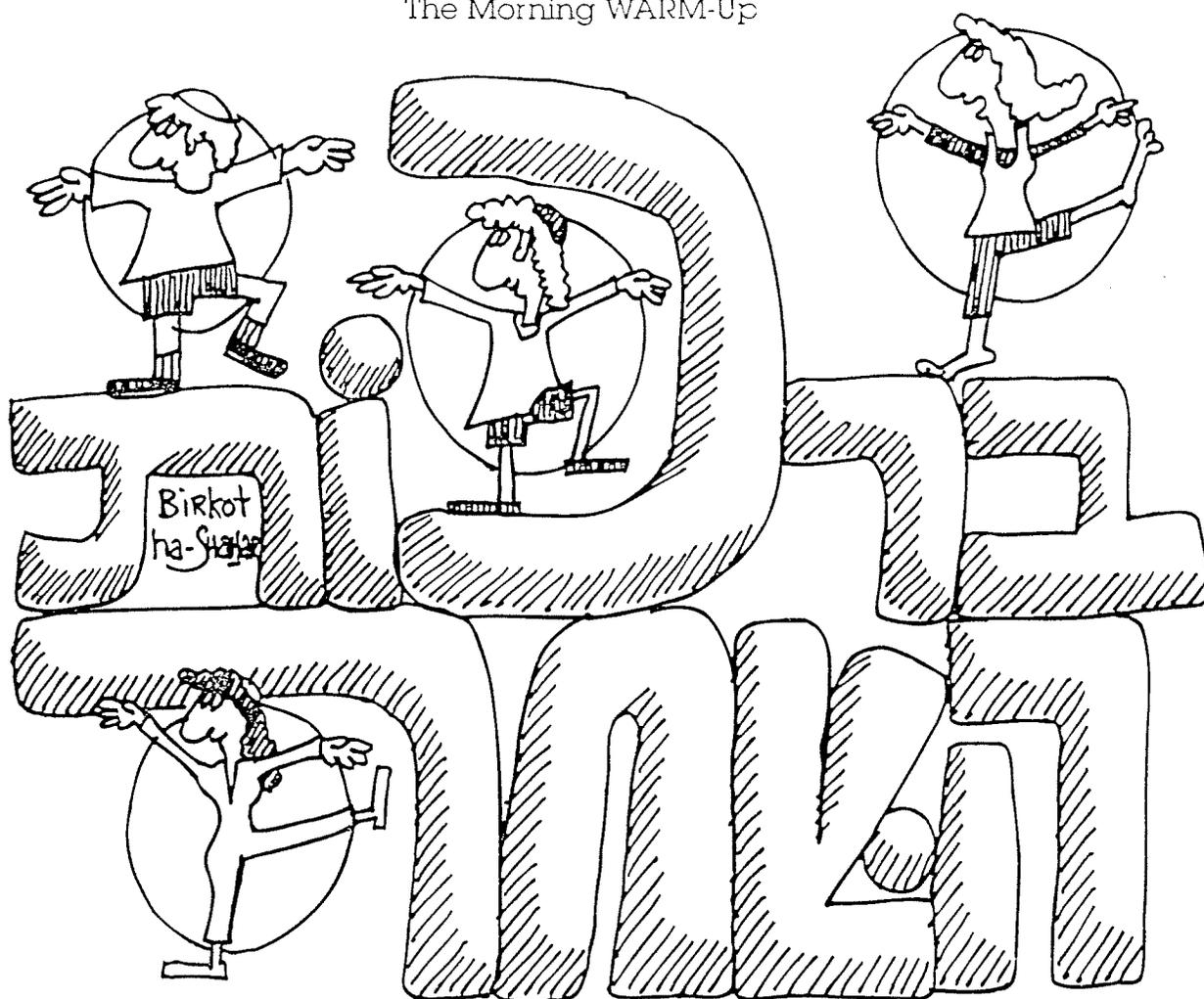
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	

Now open to 286 in Gates of Prayer. The ברכת הבקר, For Our Blessings, is a prayer that we say to thank God for our blessings. It is on page 286 and 287. See if you can match some of the blessings with actions you do as you wake up. Copy at least 2 of these blessings below, with the matching number from your list above.

over

In Hebrew or English, write at least one new blessing in the same format as the ברכת הבקר to thank God for something you do in the morning.

## The Morning WARM-Up



**B**IRKHOT ha-SHAHAR are a Jewish WORKOUT, a set of Jewish morning spiritual—*start the day the right kind of way*—exercises. In other words, they are a chain of brakhot which are connected to the process of waking and preparing for the day. They also reveal a process of rabbinic association which allows ordinary actions and experiences to conjure the sacred. They reveal a deep connection.

**THE CORE KAVANAH:** Think of a ZOMBIE movie which uses the ASSOCIATIVE PRINCIPLE. This is the mind set. When you sleep, you are like a DEAD person—you know from nothing. Waking is coming back to life. You don't just come back all at once. Morning RESURRECTION happens in a bunch of stretches, eye rubs, yawns, and movements—just like in a ZOMBIE movie.

If you take the image a ZOMBIE coming back from the dead and add the ASSOCIATIVE PRINCIPLE, you get BIRKHOT ha-SHAHAR. This is how it works. At each one of our wake-up moves, we say a BRAKHAH. The brakhah makes an ASSOCIATIVE connection. We intentionally CONNECT to the things that make life worth living. We OPEN our eyes and thank God for being "The One-Who-Opens the eyes of the blind." (It is as is we have performed the entire Rock Opera TOMMY inside a one-line Brakhah.)

But the ASSOCIATION doesn't stop there. I make a deeper, connection, too. I say, "I can be like God, and help other people to see new things, too." When you do BIRKHOT ha-SHAHAR, the ZOMBIE comes back as "YOU," complete with God's IMAGE.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה      Praise are You, Adonai,  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם...      Our God RULER of the COSMOS...

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכּוּי בֵּינָה	<i>The One-Who-Gave the rooster INTELLIGENCE</i>
לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.	<i>to tell the DIFFERENCE between DAY &amp; NIGHT.</i>
שֶׁלֹּא עָשִׂנִי גּוֹי.	<i>The One-Who-Did-Not-Make me a NON-JEW.*</i>
שֶׁלֹּא עָשִׂנִי עֶבֶד.	<i>The One-Who-Did-Not-Make me a SLAVE.*</i>
שֶׁלֹּא עָשִׂנִי אִשָּׁה.	<i>The One-Who-Did-Not-Make me a woman.*</i>
פּוֹקֵחַ עֵינַי.	<i>The One-Who-OPENS the EYES of the BLIND.</i>
מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים.	<i>The One-Who-CLOTHES the NAKED.</i>
מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.	<i>The One-Who-FREES the CAPTIVE.</i>
זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.	<i>The One-Who-RAISES-UP those who are BENT OVER.</i>
רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם.	<i>The One-Who-SPREADS the LAND over the water.</i>
הַעוֹשֶׂה לִּי כָּל צְרָכַי.	<i>The One-Who-MEETS all my NEEDS.</i>
הַמְכִּין מַצְעָדֵי גִבּוֹר.	<i>The One-Who-MAKES people's FOOTSTEPS firm.</i>
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוֹרָה.	<i>The One-Who-GIRDS Israel with STRENGTH.</i>
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאָרָה.	<i>The One-Who-CROWNS Israel with GLORY.</i>
הַנוֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ.	<i>The One-Who-GIVES STRENGTH to the TIRED.</i>

\* The tradition says that these are appropriate morning statements. They are not statements that your author makes. I, personally am happy to be a Jew, who is Free, and Male. The Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative siddurim modify these three brakhot to positive statements.

### **A Home Fitness Program: A Birkhot ha-Shahar Epilogue**

Once, a long time ago, the rabbis of the Talmud, the ones who designed the basic forms of the Judaism we now practice, came up with this morning exercise program called: *Birkhot ha-Shahar*. It wasn't quite Jane Fonda: it was a spiritual wake-up process, where a series of blessings were said in connection with ordinary wake-up activities. There were blessings for hearing the rooster, stretching, putting your feet on the floor, getting dressed and so on. Each of these blessings made a double connection, both reminding the sayer of the gifts which God had bestowed and setting an ethical agenda of the ideals that should be fulfilled in the coming day. It was a great plan and it didn't work.

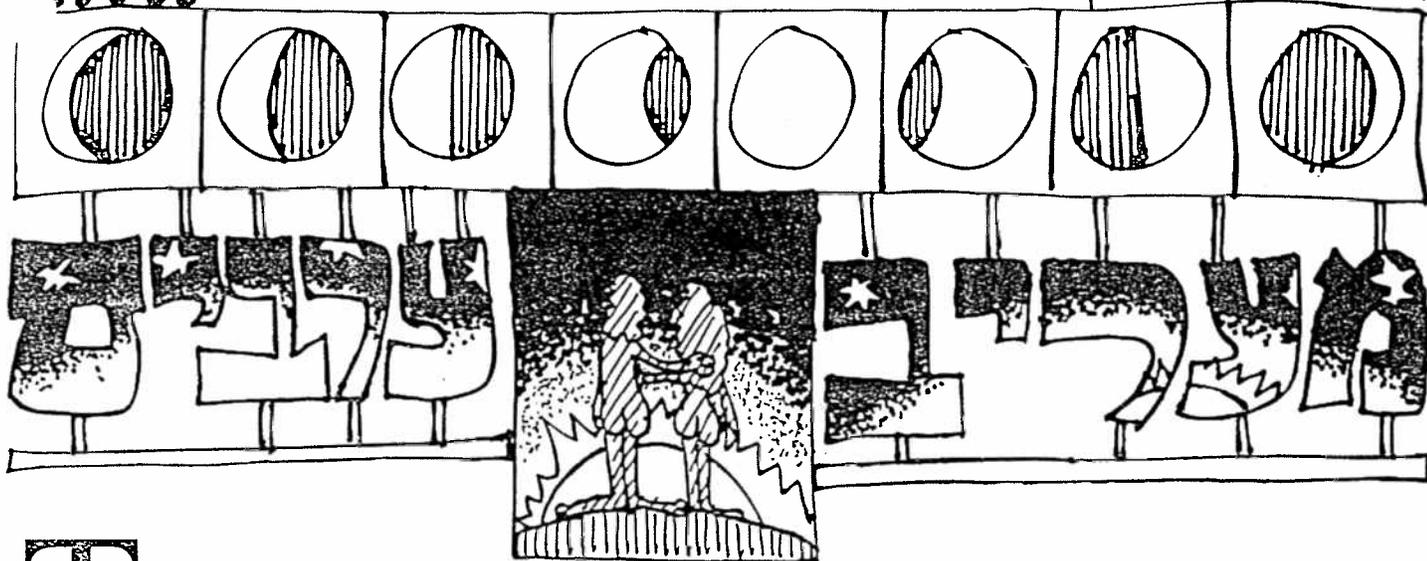
Like most home exercise programs, people couldn't stay on it. Then the rabbis worked out a modification—they left it a *mitzvah* for Jews to do it alone when they actually woke up in the mornings, but added it to the collective ritual when Jews got together for morning services. In those days, the rabbinic in-crowd all went to services every day.

We, who have dieted alone, failed and then joined Weight Watchers—we, who have bought exercise devices to use at home and then joined a gym to improve our workout frequency—understand the power of community. So did the rabbis. The story of *Birkhot ha-Shahar* teaches us that communities sustain our rituals and help us to remain Jewish despite any personal ambivalence or doubt.



The SHEMA-&Her-BRAKHOT: The EVENING Edition  
The 1st BRAKHAH Before the SHEMA

MA'ARIV ARAVIM



**T**he sun rose today. It set tonight. Tomorrow the sun will rise again. The world goes on DAY then NIGHT. Winter changes into Spring. Spring turns into Summer. Summer then slowly fades into Fall. Then, winter comes again. A YEAR happens every single YEAR. Every DAY I get up and start again. LIFE comes in CYCLES. I can learn from YESTERDAY and change in time for TOMORROW. The world goes on DAY then NIGHT, DAY then NIGHT.

MA'ARIV ARAVIM teaches us that time doesn't just happen. It says that God has to reMAKE & reCREATE the world every day. We have to do the same thing. The MA'ARIV says "Thanks for toDAY and for toMORROW." To really say thanks to God, is to ask: "Am I using my time well?"

**THE CORE KAVANAH:** Here is a Jewish truth—NIGHT comes before DAY. Think back to the first day—first there is darkness, then God creates LIGHT. At the end, the chorus line goes: "There was EVENING, THERE WAS MORNING—ONE Day!" In the TALMUD (*Brakhot* 11b) we are told, "There we say MA'ARIV ARAVIM at night and YOTZER OR in the morning, so that we can talk separately about the uniqueness of DAY and the uniqueness of NIGHT. So let's talk about night.

NIGHT is dark and lonely and scary. NIGHT is when we feel most alone. NIGHT has no colors and many shadows. Yet, DAY starts at nights. So, remember all the good night cliches, "Rage against the coming darkness." "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." REMEMBER the sunset which just flashed against the sky, and remember that the dawn is coming. When you can really believe that God is always around. When you know that there is always light no matter how dark it seems. And, when you are again ready to CREATE something out of nothing—then you are ready to pray MA'ARIV ARAVIM.

**ORIGINS:** I don't know any classical text which says this, but I know it is true. MA'ARIV ARAVIM is a prayer which happened on the first EREV SHABBAT. ADAM and EVE had a big day, their first day, that Friday. As the sun set, they had some fear of the dark, and some fear of the future. They knew that come Saturday Night, they would have to leave the Garden. Amidst all those mixed feelings, God had them kindle SHABBAT lights and they rested together, the first SHABBAT. In the Midrash we are told that God braided e's hair and tucked them in. I know, God also showed them the constellations and they lay on their backs, amazed at the endless universe that stretched out ahead of them. I think EVE & ADAM, the first people to see the SUNSET and the first to star gaze, said MA'ARIV ARAVIM in their hearts.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	BLESSEd are You, ADONAI,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Our God, RULER of the COSMOS,
אֲשֶׁר בְּדָבָרוֹ	The ONE Who by WORD
מַעְרִיב עֶרְבִים	<b>MIXES</b> the mixtures (and <b>EVENINGS</b> the evening).
	The ONE Who
בְּחִכְמָה פּוֹתֵחַ שְׁעָרִים	with WISDOM <b>OPENS</b> the GATES
וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים	with UNDERSTANDING <b>CHANGES</b> the TIMES
וּמַחְלִיף אֶת-הַזְּמַנִּים	and <b>SWITCHES</b> the SEASONS
וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת-הַכּוֹכָבִים	and <b>ORDERS</b> the stars
בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ	in their heavenly ORBITS
כְּרָצוֹנוֹ.	according to plan.
בוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה	<b>CREATOR</b> of day and night,
גּוֹלֵל אוֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ	The ONE Who <b>ROLLS</b> light into darkness
וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אוֹר.	and darkness into light.
וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם	The ONE Who <b>MAKES</b> day pass
וּמְבִיא לַיְלָה	and <b>BRINGS</b> on evening.
וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה	And the ONE Who <b>DIVIDES</b> between day and between night.
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ.	This ONE's name is ADONAI TZ'VA-OT
	(ADONAI, The Warrior Against Evil).
אֵל	God—
חַי וְקַיִם	The ONE Who is life and continuity—
תָּמִיד וּמֶלֶךְ עָלֵינוּ	Please, always rule over us
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.	—forever and always.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	BLESSEd are You, ADONAI
הַמַּעְרִיב עֶרְבִים	The ONE Who mixes the mixtures (and evenings the evening).

### Mr. Choreography

MA'ARIV ARAVIM shouldn't be said until after dark. By-and-large, the entire EVENING service is a "sprint" (as we explained in (נהוג נהוג)). Unlike morning services we make no pauses for repetitions or responses except for a few "AMENS" and a Yhei Sh'mei <sup>2</sup>abbah or two. Officially, though your synagogue may have its own MINHAG, there is no fixed posture or dance steps for the <sup>2</sup>rakhot which precede the SHEMA.

## Unit 3: Prayer as a Retelling of Jewish History

### Introduction

The central role of prayer in Judaism becomes apparent through a perusal of the contents of the *Siddur*, a work that faithfully reflects the total collective historical experience of the Jewish people. One wonders whether any other liturgical canon has so wide and inclusive a range. Somehow it touches on every single stage in the life of the individual and in the history of the people. From the Creation of the world, the election of Abraham, and the Exodus from Egypt, down to our own times, all major events have found expression in one form or another in the *Siddur*. The Jew relives his history through prayer and doing so strengthens his identity.

--from Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change

Judaism is obsessed with history. We are a "People of the Book" who rereads our history on a weekly, or even daily, basis. For Jews, history may have taken place in the past, but crucial historical events are timeless. The traditional Jewish pattern of text and commentary demands that we read our history and respond, stitching the events of ancient times together with our lives in the modern period. As we stitch together ancient and modern, we pause to examine both the seams of connection, the places where Jewish history and law inform our lives today or our lives today help us understand our past better, as well as the places where the ancient and modern swatches of fabric do not meet, and we must understand each on its own terms.

Jewish prayer draws on moments of past triumph. Professor Moshe Zilberstein calls this rhetoric "audacious covenant theology": we thank God for the good that has come before with the hope that good things will continue to come to us. Another explanation is that these historical events are included because they add to the emotional character of prayer which makes it possible to sing God's praises. Sometimes, such as in the *Avot v'Emahot*, history is mentioned to give us context: we appeal to God for personal and communal health and prosperity only after we have reminded God that we continue a tradition of belief and connection.

This unit has two dimensions: the first is to explore the Jewish emphasis on communal memory. The activities below encourage students to explore their personal and communal memories and compare their own ways of remembering with Jewish memory. Secondly, this unit takes a closer look at different historical events mentioned in Jewish liturgy, examining how these events contribute to our experience of prayer and our understanding our ourselves as Jews.

### Goals for this Unit:

To teach students that Judaism emphasizes history, particularly key defining moments, and these moments are invoked in Jewish liturgy.

**Objectives: At the end of this unit students will be able to:**

- ◆ explain the idea of communal memory and how it differs from individual memory. (A)
- ◆ explain that the *Mi C'mocha* comes directly from the Song of the Sea which the Israelites sing after they cross the Reed Sea. (B)
- ◆ outline the story of the seven days of Creation and explain the connection with Shabbat. (C)
- ◆ Analyze why the departure from Egypt is mentioned in the Friday night kiddush and explain the implications of celebrating Shabbat as a remembrance of leaving Egypt. (D)
- ◆ Describe the different relationships with God that are suggested in the *Avot V'Emahot*, and analyze why these different relationships are necessary and important. (E)
- ◆ Describe their vision for the oneness of the world which is mentioned at the end of the *Aleynu*. (F)
- ◆ give examples of historical events that are mentioned in Jewish prayers, and explain why Jewish prayer celebrates historical events. (G)

### **Concepts covered in this unit**

Memory/Zicaron--Memory is a key aspect of Judaism. Retelling our history is an important part of our present and our future. However, within Judaism memory is not merely an existential "sitting and thinking," it is, rather, an impetus for action. Because we remember the miracles that we have encountered as a people, we pray to God that these kinds of miracles will continue. Because we remember our covenant with God, we continue to try to uphold it through study and ethical conduct. In Jewish prayer, as in all Jewish practice or ritual, we remember specific events in Jewish history and connect our own lives with those of our ancestors.

Redemption/Geulah--According to Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, "the act of redemption is the process of exchanging something for what it is really worth. When a slave becomes a free person, the slave is redeemed."<sup>2</sup> When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and made them free people, God redeemed them, and we celebrate this redemptive and miraculous act in prayer and ritual. We also strive to imitate God's actions and redeem ourselves and others from any kind of slavery that oppresses us.

### **Prayers Covered in this Unit**

*Mi C'mocha*--This prayer is found immediately before the Amidah, at the end of the *Sh'ma v'Berchotecha* section. The words of this prayer (Exodus 15:11) are part of the Song of the Sea, which the children of Israel sang when they crossed the Reed Sea after leaving Egypt. The whole song can be found in Exodus 15. The major ideas are that there are none that can compare to God, that God is holy and worthy of praise because God performs miracles, and that God is a Redeemer of Israel.

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Kushner, The Book of Words, Jewish Lights Publishing, p. 40.

celebrate Shabbat because I was a slave in the land of Egypt... (2) If I celebrate Shabbat because I want to rest like God rested... Have students share their essays.

#### Objective E

Have students do the Avot V'Emahot worksheet (see pg. 59). This worksheet examines why Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are each mentioned in the first blessing of the Amidah by encouraging students to compare their relationship to their grandparents with that of a cousin, and to compare their relationship with God to that of their parents. Discuss the answers to the last question as a class: What might be some of our possible relationships to God? (we might feel connected to God, or angry, or apathetic, or different feelings at different times...)

#### Objective F

Study the last few lines of the Aleynu, beginning with *v'neh-eh-mar*. Discuss: what is meant by the idea that, "on that day God shall be one and God's name shall be one"? Have students write skits about waking up on that day.

#### Objective G--Synthesis Activity

This unit has explored three "events" in Jewish past and future: Creation, Exodus from Egypt, and the Messianic time that the end of the Aleynu envisions. Each of these can be considered "beginnings" in Jewish history. Have students make a list of their own personal beginnings, or beginnings for their school, country or family. Then discuss: what do students remember about beginnings? (They're difficult, things are uncertain, yet there is a sense of possibility...) Why would Jewish prayer invoke beginnings? (There is a process that we must continue to complete with God, we also look back or forward to a time of possibility.) In what ways are our lives as Jews a continuation of these beginnings? (We must continue the process of Creation, celebrate our freedom and show we value it through the way we live our lives, and strive to break through to a new age of wholeness for the world.) Have students write in their journals about something they began recently which was important and holy to them.

## Resource Materials for Unit 3

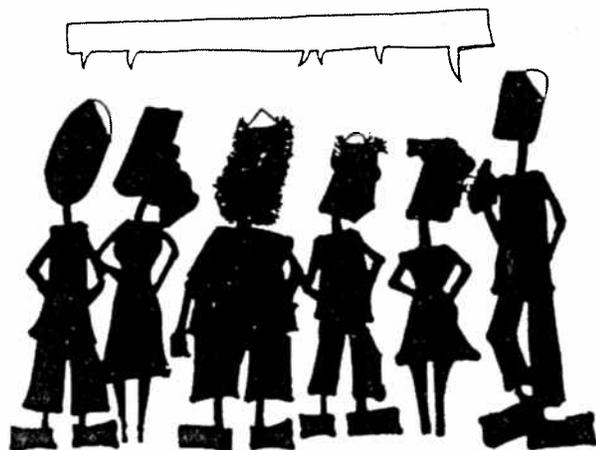
Texts of the Mi C'mocha	51-52
Worksheets for Kiddush Lail Shabbat	53-55
Information on the Kiddush	56-58
Avot V'Emahot Worksheet	59
Commentary and Text of Avot V'Emahot	60-64
Text and Commentary of the Aleynu	65-68

שְׁבַחוּ וְהוֹדוּ לְשֵׁמוֹ  
 וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּרָצוֹן קִבְּלוּ עָלֵיהֶם.  
 מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 לָךְ עָנוּ שִׁירָה בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה  
 וְאָמְרוּ כָּלָם.  
 מִי כַמֶּכֶה בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה  
 מִי כַמֶּכֶה נְאֻדָּר בְּקֹדֶשׁ  
 נוֹרָא תְהִלַּת עֲשֵׂה פֶלֶא.  
 מַלְכוּתְךָ רָאוּ בְּנֵיךָ  
 בּוֹקְעִים לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה  
 זֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאָמְרוּ:  
 יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.  
 וְנִאָּמַר:  
 כִּי פָדָה יְהוָה אֶת-יַעֲקֹב  
 וַיִּגְאֹלוּ מִיַּד חֲזָק  
 מִמֶּנּוּ.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה גֹּאֲלֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

They **PRAISED** God's **NAME**  
 and God's **RULE** they willingly accepted this on themselves  
 Moses and the **FAMILIES-of-ISRAEL**  
**ANSWERED & SANG** to You with great joy.  
**THEY** all said.  
 Which of the other (false) gods is like You, Adonai?  
 Who is like You, **GLORIOUS** in holiness,  
**AWESOME** in praises, **DOING** miracles. Exodus 15:11  
 Your **FAMILIES** saw your **RULE**  
 when you **DIVIDED** the sea before **MOSES**:  
 "This is **MY GOD**" they answered & said: Exodus 15:2  
 "ADONAI will rule forever and ever." Exodus 15:18  
 And it is written:  
 "ADONAI will **FREE** JACOB  
 and **REDEEM** him from a hand  
 mightier than his own." Jeremiah 31:10  
 Blessed be You, ADONAI The **ONE-Who-REDEEMED** Israel

**RESPONSIVE** (antiphonal)  
**CHANTING**. The end of the **G'ULAH**  
 turns into a mini-**DRAMA** where  
 the **SHALI-AH TZIBUR** (service  
 leader) turns into **MOSES** and  
 the **CONGREGATION** becomes the  
**FAMILIES-of-ISRAEL**; together we  
 act out the original performance  
 of **MI KHA-MOKHA** which is part  
 of the **SONG** of the **SEA** and was  
 originally sung responsively mid-  
**EXODUS**.

### Mr. Choreography



מִי־כִמְכֶמָּה בְּאֵלִים יִהְיֶה מִי בְּמִכְבָּה נֶאֱדָר בְּקֹדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תִהְלֵל  
עֲשֵׂה־פֶלֶא:

\*שִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה שֶׁנֶּחֱזוּ גְאוּלִּים לְשִׁמְךָ עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּם:

לִיחַד בְּלָם הוֹדוּ וְהִמְלִיכוּ וְאָמְרוּ:

יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:

\*צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל קוֹיָמָה בְּעִזְרוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּפְדָה כְּנַאֲמֶךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

גְּאֻלָּנוּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה גְּאֻל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Mi hamohah ba'elim adonay. Mi kamohah nedar bakodesh  
nora tehilot osey feleh.

Shirah hadashah shibehu ge'ulim leshimeha al sefat hayam.  
Yaḥad kulam hodu vehimlichu ve'ameru.

Adonay yimloh le'olam va'ed.

Tzur yisra'el kumah be'eizat yisra'el. Ufdey hinumeḥa yehudah  
veyisrael. Go'aleynu adonay tzeva'ot shemo kedosh yisra'el.  
Baruh atah adonay ga'al yisra'el.

DERASH. Most congregations stand at *tzur yisra'el* rather than wait for the blessing. Thus we are already on our feet when we request that God *emeh / arise*. We cannot ask God to rise up to help Israel unless we have done so ourselves.

E.M.

"Who among the mighty can compare to you, ETERNAL ONE?"

Who can compare to you,  
adorned in holiness,  
awesome in praises,  
acting wondrously!"

A new song did the redeemed ones sing out to your name,  
beside the Sea.

Together, all of them gave thanks, declared your sovereignty,  
and said:

"THE HOLY ONE will reign forever!"

Rock of Israel, rise up to the help of Israel,  
redeem, according to your word, Judah and Israel.  
Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, the champion of Israel.

DERASH. Rabbi Judah said: [At the sea] each tribe said to the other, "You go into the sea first!" As they stood there bickering, Nalshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water. God said to Moses, who had been praying, "My friend is drowning—and you pray!" "What can I do?" Moses asked. God responded, "Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to go! Raise your staff..."

TALMUD SOTAH 37a

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Ten Commandments are found in two different places in the תורה. The two versions are not exactly the same. The biggest differences are commandments about Shabbat. Underline the words that are the same in both versions

### EXODUS VERSION

Remember the Shabbat day to make it holy. Six days you shall work, and do all of your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai your God. On it you shall not do any work, not you, or you son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the stranger that is with in your gates. For in six days Adonai created heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore Adonai blessed the Sabbath day and make it holy

Exodus 20:8-11

### DEUTERONOMY VERSION

Keep the Shabbat day to make it holy as Adonai has commanded Six days you shall work, and do all of your work, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai your God. On it you shall not do any work, not you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your ox, or your donkey, or any of your cattle, or the stranger that is within your gates, that your male servant or your female servant will rest as well as you. Because you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Adonai brought you out of there with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. Therefore Adonai your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

1. In the Exodus version, what is the reason for the creation of Shabbat?

---

---

What did God do that we are also supposed to do on Shabbat?

---

---

2. In the Deuteronomy version, what is the reason for the creation of Shabbat?

---

---

What did God do for the Jewish people that we are also supposed to do on Shabbat?

---

---

3. Look on pages 84 & 85 of your textbook.

Which lines (just put the number) remind us of the Exodus version of the ten commandments?

---

---

Which lines remind us of the Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments?

---

---

Why do you think it is important that on Shabbat we remember both that God rested and that God lead us out of Egypt?

---

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Name ANSWER SHEET

The Ten Commandments are found in two different places in the תורה. The two versions are not exactly the same. The biggest differences are commandments about Shabbat. Underline the words that are the same in both versions

### EXODUS VERSION

Remember the Shabbat day to make it holy.  
Six days you shall work, and do all of your work,  
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai your God.  
On it you shall not do any work, not you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the stranger that is with in your gates. For in six days Adonai created heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore Adonai blessed the Sabbath day and make it holy

Exodus 20:8-11

### DEUTERONOMY VERSION

Keep the Shabbat day to make it holy as Adonai has commanded  
Six days you shall work, and do all of your work, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai your God.  
On it you shall not do any work, not you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your ox, or your donkey, or any of your cattle, or the stranger that is within your gates, that your male servant or your female servant will rest as well as you. Because you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Adonai brought you out of there with a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. Therefore Adonai your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

1. In the Exodus version, what is the reason for the creation of Shabbat?

the creation of the world -- God made it holy when God rested

What did God do that we are also supposed to do on Shabbat?

rest; cease from creation

2. In the Deuteronomy version, what is the reason for the creation of Shabbat?

because we were slaves in Egypt

What did God do for the Jewish people that we are also supposed to do on Shabbat?

God freed us when we were slaves, so we should let our servants rest so their slavery is not too difficult

3. Look on pages 84 & 85 of your textbook.

Which lines (just put the number) remind us of the Exodus version of the ten commandments?

10 & 11

Which lines remind us of the Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments?

16-17

4. Why do you think it is important that on Shabbat we remember both that God rested and that God lead us out of Egypt?

opinion question

Family Shabbat Table Service

There are three symbols for bringing Shabbat in to our homes: the candles, the wine, and the hallah. (the bread should be covered before you begin with a napkin or hallah cover)

The Candles

(light the candles first then cover your eyes and say the blessing)

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת

Ba-rukh A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh Ha-Olam a-she kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-va-nu l'had-lik ner she! Shabbat

Blessed are You Adonai Our God Ruler of the Cosmos Who makes us holy through the mitzvot and makes it a mitzvah for us to kindle the lights of Shabbat.

The Wine

(hold the Kiddush cup up)

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

Ba-rukh A-tah Adonai E-lo-heinu Me-lekh Ha-Olam Bo-rei p-rei ha-ga-fen

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם

Ba-rukh A-tah Adonai E-lo-heinu Me-lekh Ha-Olam

אשר קדשנו מצותיו ורצה בנו

A-she kid-shanu mitz-vo-tav v-ra-tzah va-nu

ושבת קדשו באהבה וברצון הנחילנו

V-sha-bat kad-sho b-a-ha-vah uv-ra-tzon hin-hi-lanu

זכרון למעשה בראשית

Zi-ka-ron l'ma-a-seh v-rei-shit

כי הוא יוסתחלה למקראי קדש

Ki hu yom t'hi-lah l-mik-ra-ei ko-desh

זכר ליציאת מצרים

Ze-kher li-tzi-at mitz-ra-yim

כי בנו בחרת ואותנו קדשת מפל העמים

Ki vanu va-har-ta v'o-tanu k-dash-ta mi-koi ha-a-mim

ושבת קדשך באהבה וברצון הנחלתנו

V'sha-bat kad-sh'kha b-a-ha-vah uv-ra-tzon

hin-hal-ta-nu

ברוך אתה יהוה מקדש השבת

Ba-rukh A-tah A-do-nai M-ka-desh ha-Sha-bat

Blessed are You Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Cosmos Who creates the fruit of the vine. Blesses are You Adonai Our God Who makes us holy through the mitzvot and wants us. The holy Shabbat with love and wanting is our inheritance, A reminder of making creation. A holy gathering Remembering going out from Egypt. You chose us and make us holy from all the nations. Your holy Shabbat with love and wanting is our heritage. Blessed are You Adonai Our God Who makes the Shabbat holy.

(drink the wine)

The Hallah

(uncover the hallah)

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ

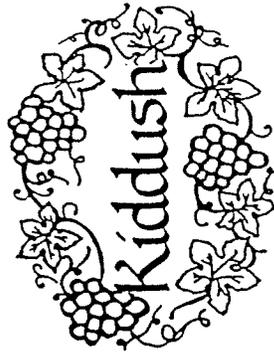
Ba-rukh A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh Ha-Olam Ha-motzi le-hem min ha-a-retz

Blessed are You Adonai Our God Ruler of the Cosmos who puts out bread from the earth



COMMENTARY. The Kiddush recalls two reasons for the celebration of Shabbat—the rhythm of creation, when God rested on the seventh day; and the going forth from Egypt, when human observance of Shabbat began. Shabbat is part of nature and of history, of the cycle and the unfolding of time. The Kiddush thus illustrates how Jews discover the essence of nature through their experience of history.

D.A.T.  
NOTE. Hillel and Shammai argued about the order of the two blessings that comprise the Kiddush. Shammai held that the blessing of the day should come first because God ordained Kiddush as part of the order of the universe. Hillel claimed that the blessing over wine must come first because only when we taste the wine do we really begin to experience Shabbat. We follow the school of Hillel, for the metaphysical reality of Shabbat only becomes significant when we take it into ourselves. D.A.T.



## PRELUDE / KAVANAH

The commandment to bless this wine is a commandment to drink life as deeply as we drink from this cup.

It is a commandment to bless life and to love deeply.

It is a commandment to remember with Shabbat heart, to act with Shabbat hands, to see the world with Shabbat eyes.

It is a commandment to laugh until we are all laughter, to sing until we are all song, to dance until we are all dance, to love until we are all love.

This is the wine that God has commanded us to bless and drink.

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

## Kiddush for Shabbat Evening

☞ *Wine and grape juice are equally "fruit of the vine."*

WE HOLD THE CUP AND SAY:

'Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is consecrated to the Eternal One, your God.' With the fruit of the vine, our symbol of joy, we celebrate this sacred day, on which cares and sorrows fade from our minds. We give thanks for life and its blessings, for work and rest, for home and love and friendship. On Shabbat, eternal sign of creation, we rejoice that we are created in the Image of God.

<i>Va-y'chu-lu ha-sha-ma-yim v'ha-a-retz</i>	וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ
<i>v'chol tz'va-am, va-y'chal Eh-lo-him</i>	וְכָל-צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים
<i>ba-yom ha-sh'vi-i m'lach-to</i>	בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ
<i>a-sher a-sa, va-yish-bot ba-yom</i>	אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם
<i>ha-sh'vi-i mi-kol m'lach-to a-sher</i>	הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר
<i>a-sa. Va-y'va-rech Eh-lo-him et yom</i>	עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם
<i>ha-sh'vi-i va-y'ka-deish o-to, ki vo</i>	הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ
<i>sha-vat mi-kol m'lach-to a-sher</i>	שָׁבַת מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-
<i>ba-ra Eh-lo-him la-a-sot.</i>	בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Now the whole universe—sky, earth, and all their array—was completed. With the seventh day God ended the work of creation, resting on the seventh day, with all the work completed. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, this day having completed the work of creation.

SHABBAT, FESTIVALS AND SPECIAL DAYS

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
*meh-lech ha-o-lam, bo-rei* מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא  
*p'ri ha-ga-fen.* פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

*Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-nai, Eh-lo-hei-nu* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
*meh-lech ha-o-lam, a-sheer ki-d'sha-nu* מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ  
*b'mitz-vo-tav v'ra-tza va-nu, v'shabbat* בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וּרְצָה בָּנוּ, וְשַׁבַּת  
*ko-d'sho b'a-ha-va u-v'ra-tzon* קִדְּשׁוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן  
*hin-chi-la-ta-nu, zi-ka-ron l'ma-a-sei* הִנְחִילָנוּ, זָכוֹרֹן לַמַּעֲשֵׂה  
*v'rei-sheet. Ki hu yom t'chi-la* בְּרֵאשִׁית. כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה  
*l'mik-ra-ei ko-desh, zai-cher* לְמִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ, זָכוֹר  
*li-tzi-at Mitz-ra-yim. Ki va-nu* לְיִצְיַאת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי-בָנוּ  
*va-char-ta v'o-ta-nu ki-dash-ta mi-kol* בְּהִרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשַׁת מִכָּל-  
*ha-a-mim, v'sha-bat kod-sh'cha* הָעַמִּים, וְשַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁךָ  
*b'a-ha-va u-v'ra-tzon hin-chal-ta-nu.* בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרִצּוֹן הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ.  
*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, m'ka-deish* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מְקַדֵּשׁ  
*ha-shabbat.* הַשַּׁבָּת.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe: You call us to holiness with the Mitzvah of Shabbat: the sign of Your love, a reminder of Your creative work, and of our liberation from Egyptian bondage: our day of days. On Shabbat especially, we hearken to Your call to serve You as a holy people. We praise You, O God, for the holiness of Shabbat.

*Before partaking of food*

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu* בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
*meh-lech ha-o-lam, ha-mo-tzi* מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא  
*leh-chem min ha-a-retz.* לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, for You cause bread to come forth from the earth.

אבות ואמהות -- Avot V'Emahot

work on this worksheet as a group

Who are/were your grandparents? Write their names here.

How would you describe your relationship with your grandparents?

How is this relationship different than your brother or sister's relationship to them? (If you don't have any brothers or sisters, you can talk about a cousin's relationship to your grandparents.)

**Look at the Avot v'Emahot, the first blessing in the Amidah. It's on page 37 of Gates of Prayer. The Avot v'Emahot mentions the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob." Just as your relationship to your grandparents is different than anyone else's, so too did each of our forefathers and foremothers have a unique relationship to God.**

How do you think your relationship to God is different than your father or mother's? Discuss as a group.

**ABE**

Abraham discovered God. No one told him anything about God. Everyone around him was into idols, but Abe started talking to God. Abe started talking and arguing, questioning and talking honestly, deep down to the guts, with God. That was the way Abraham knew God.

**IKE**

Isaac never did much on his own, but he did go along with what Abraham said. If Abe said, "God wants me to sacrifice you to Him," then Ike would say "O.K., if that's what He wants." Never did much on his own, but did a good job of holding on to Abraham's God and passing Him on to Jacob.

**JAKE**

Jacob ran away from home. He got into a fight and picked up and left his father, his father's God and everything else behind. He had to re-find God on his own. He did it by dreaming.



**T**he AVOT is the first BRAKHAH in the AMIDAH. In the traditional text of the AVOT, thanks are given for the favors which God has done for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their family. In some modern versions, Sarah, Rebekkah, Leah, and Rachel are added to the list. The AVOT then asks God to continue and to expand these blessings.

At the core of this BRAKHAH is a concept which the rabbis call ZKHUT AVOT, the "merit of the Ancestors." It suggests, that even though we may not be good enough to "merit" favors from God, as the children of God's chosen family, we have a special "merit" we have inherited from our ancestors.

**THE CORE KAVANAH:** Saying the AVOT is like saying to GOD: "Come on, you know who I am—you remember my parents and all the things You three did together. You remember them. You were really good to them and they were good to you, too. So You should know me, too. (And You could be good to me, too. I'm their kid.\*)" In Israeli slang, it is asking GOD for PROTEKZIA. NOW go deeper. IMAGINE Moses just got you with the GOLDEN CALF. You feel bad. You want to get back into God's good graces, but every time you call, GOD hangs up. Finally, you burst into GOD's office—and you want to do everything possible to just get GOD to listen. You decide to start with the fact that GOD & your family go back a long way...The AVOT should be said with that kind of desperate desire.

**THE CORE KAVANAH II:** (Meditative Ushpizin) Look in the mirror & THINK ABRAHAM. Gather in all you know of ABRAHAM. My favorite thing is the 4-DOOR tent where anyone in need could always find a way in. Then ask, "What is my way of being more like ABRAHAM?" NEXT, conjure up your vision of SARAH. Wander through all the SARAH stories. Personally, I love her LAUGH. Inside, I know just how it sounds. Then ask, "What is my way of being more like ABRAHAM?" In a similar fashion work through all people you have on your FOUNDING PROGENITORS' List.

**THE CORE KAVANAH III:** BE like HANNAH. The whole AMIDAH comes from a Hannah place. OPEN up SAMUEL 1.1. READ all about her prayer. STUDY her. UNDERSTAND her. PRACTICE being like her. The RABBIs of the TALMUD say that HANNAH is the model for the AMIDAH. When you can say your prayers with the same kind of humble desire—then you know the way to voice the AVOT.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,	<i>Blessed are You, ADONAI</i>
אֱלֹהֵינוּ	<i>our God,</i>
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,	<i>and God of our <b>PARENTS:</b></i>
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם,	<i>God of <b>ABRAHAM,</b></i>
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק,	<i>God of <b>ISAAC,</b></i>
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.	<i>and God of <b>JACOB.</b></i>
אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה,	<i>God of <b>SARAH</b></i>
אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה,	<i>God of <b>REBEKKAH</b></i>
אֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה,	<i>God of <b>LEAH</b></i>
וְאֱלֹהֵי רָחֵל.	<i>God of <b>RACHEL</b></i>
הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל	<i>The <b>GOD, The GREAT One</b></i>
הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא,	<i>The <b>HERO, The AWESOME One—</b></i>
אֵל עֲלִיוֹן,	<i>God on High.</i>
גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים,	<i>The <b>ONE-Who-NURSES</b> with <b>GOOD KINDNESS,</b></i>
וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל,	<i>and the <b>ONE-Who-OWNS</b> everything,</i>
וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת וְאִמּוֹת	<i>and the <b>ONE-Who-REMEMBERS</b> the kindness of the Parents,</i>
וּמְבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם	<i>and brings a <b>REDEEMER</b> to their children's children</i>
לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.	<i>for the sake of God's <b>NAME.</b></i>
מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר	<b>RULER, HELPER—</b>
וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגֹן.	<i>and <b>SAVIOR</b> and <b>PROTECTOR.</b></i>
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,	<i>Blessed are You, ADONAI,</i>
מְגֹן אַבְרָהָם	<i>The <b>ONE-Who-PROTECTS</b> Abraham</i>
וּפּוֹקֵד שָׂרָה.	<i>And The <b>ONE-Who-REMEMBERS</b> Sarah.</i>

**ORIGINS:** The story of Abram smashing the idols is found in midrash. In another midrash, Nimrod, the local king tries to punish Abram by burning him in a huge fire, but God shields him and he is not harmed. This is when the angels first sang the BRAKHAH which ends MAGEN AVOT.

### Mr. Choreography

When we say the AVOT, we bow twice. Once during the פְּתִיחָה, the opening "בְּרוּךְ-formula" and once during the חֲתִימָה, the "בְּרוּךְ-formula" which seals the prayer.

### Special Recitation Customs

The last line of *Mi Kamocha*, which constitutes the blessing *Baruch ata Adonai Ga'al Yisrael* ("Blessed are You, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel") is chanted by the reader in a low tone. This is done in a symbolic gesture not to interrupt the redemption from the *Amidah* prayer that immediately follows.

### Amidah

#### Background

The *Amidah* (i.e., the standing prayer), also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei* ("Eighteen"), is the central element of the three daily services. It is spoken of in the Talmud as *Hatefillah*, the prayer par excellence, on account of its importance and its antiquity. According to tradition, it was composed by members of the Great Assembly in the early period of the Second Temple.

Originally, the *Shemoneh Esrei* consisted of eighteen blessings. In its present form, however, it contains nineteen blessings. The addition of the paragraph concerning the slanderers and enemies of the Jewish people was made toward the end of the first century C.E., at the direction of Rabban Gamaliel II, head of the Sanhedrin (High Court) at Yavneh.

The Talmud offers a variety of reasons for the number eighteen. It corresponds to the eighteen times God is mentioned in Psalm 29, as well as in the Shema. Also, the three Patriarchs of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are mentioned together eighteen times in the Torah. The number eighteen is also said to correspond to the essential eighteen vertebrae of the human spinal column (*Berachot* 28b).

Today this prayer is generally referred to as the *Amidah*, so named because it is recited in a standing position. The name *Amidah* accurately describes this prayer for Sabbaths and Festivals, when it consists of seven blessings only. In Orthodox synagogues and in some Conservative synagogues, the *Amidah* of *Shacharit* and *Mincha* is first recited in an undertone by each person in the congregation, and then aloud by the reader on behalf of the congregation. This repetition of the *Amidah* is for the benefit of those who cannot read the *Amidah* for themselves. The *Amidah* is never repeated aloud by the reader during the *Ma'ariv*. This is because the rabbis held that the evening *Amidah* was optional, not obligatory.

On the Sabbath and Festivals, the first three and the last three blessings of the *Amidah* are the same. The thirteen petitions of the weekday *Amidah* are eliminated on the grounds that no personal requests may be made on the Sabbath or Festivals.

The middle paragraphs of the weekday *Amidah* contain petitions for the fulfillment of needs, including wisdom, repentance, healing, prosperity, and restoration of justice, to name a few.

The *Amidah*, like *Barechu*, requires a quorum of ten in order for it to be recited aloud by the reader.

### Concepts

Here are the basic themes of each of the nineteen blessings of the weekday *Amidah*.

1. *Avot* (Ancestors): God is the God of our ancestors;

He was their Protector, and He continues to be our Protector.

2. *Geurot* (Power): God's power in nature is great, and extends to giving life to the dead.
3. *Kedushab* (Sanctification): God is unique and is a holy God.
4. *Da'at* (Knowledge): We petition God in this fourth blessing for knowledge and understanding.
5. *Teshuvah* (Repentance): We ask God to accept our repentance.
6. *Selicha* (Forgiveness): We ask God to grant us forgiveness.
7. *Ge'ulah* (Redemption): We praise God for redeeming the Israelites.
8. *Refu'ab* (Healing): We praise God for healing our people, and ask that we be healed.
9. *Birkat Hashanim* (Blessing the Years): We praise God for satisfying us with many years of blessing.
10. *Kibbutz Galuyot* (Ingathering of the Exiles): We praise God for gathering the dispersed.
11. *Tzedakah U'Mishpat* (Justice and Mercy): We petition God to sustain us with justice and mercy.
12. *Malsbinim* (Maligners): We ask God to humble the arrogant and frustrate the hopes of those who malign us.
13. *Tzaddikim* (Righteous Ones): We ask God to sustain righteous people.

14. *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem): We ask God to rebuild Jerusalem.
15. *Dovid* (David): We ask God to bring to flower the shoot of David and ensure our deliverance.
16. *Shome'ab Tefillah* (Hears Our Prayers): We petition God to listen to our prayers.
17. *Avodab* (Worship): We ask God to accept our prayers.
18. *Hoda'ah* (Thanksgiving): We thank God for the daily miracles of life, and acknowledge their Source.
19. *Shalom* (Peace): We praise God and pray for peace in the world.

### Prayer Motions

1. Before beginning the *Amidab*, the custom is to take three steps backward and then three steps forward while saying the introductory words, *Adonai sifatai tiftach ufi yaggid tehillatecha* ("Open my mouth and my lips will proclaim Your praise"). This is a symbolic way of bowing before God the Sovereign.
2. At the end of the *Amidab*, it is customary to take three steps backward on the words *Oseh shalom bimromav* ("May He who brings peace to the heavens") and then bend left at the waist. On the words *hu ya'aseb shalom* ("He will grant peace"), it is customary to bend right at the waist. At the words *aleyenu ve'al kol yisrael* ("for us and all of Israel"), it is customary to bend forward at the waist. This is the reverse of the approach to God at the beginning of the *Amidab*, for one is now taking leave of God.

3. There are four times when one customarily bows during the *Amidah*. Bowing in these places is a sign of humility toward God, the Sovereign One. They include:
- At the beginning of the *Amidah*, on the words *Baruch ata Adonai Elohaynu vaylobay avotaynu* ("Blessed is the Lord, the God of our ancestors").
  - On the words *Baruch ata Adonai magen Avraham* ("Blessed is the Lord, Shield of Abraham").
  - On the words *Modim anachnu lach* ("We gratefully thank You"), a phrase from 1 Chronicles 29:13.
  - On the words *Baruch ata Adonai batov shimcha ulecha na'eh lehodot* ("Blessed are You, O Lord, Your Name is the beneficent One, to Whom all praise is due").
  - On the words *Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* ("Holy, holy, holy") in the *Kedushah*, the custom is to rise to one's tiptoes, thus symbolically reaching toward heaven.
  - The *Amidah* is said while standing with feet touching. Standing at attention when praying is a mark of respect. A biblical basis for this requirement is found in Ezekiel 1:7: "And their feet were as a straight foot." This is interpreted in Tractate *Berachot* 10b to mean that the feet of the angels in Ezekiel's vision appeared as one foot. When a person stands to speak to God, that person ought to assume the position of the ministering angels.

### *Elobat Netzor*

○ God, guard my lips from speaking evil . . . .

#### **Background**

Several different rabbis wrote closing prayers to the *Amidah*. This one, called *Elobat Netzor*, was composed by Mar bar Ravina, a fourteenth-century scholar. Originally it was said as a private meditation, asking God to guard our tongue from speaking evil. The prayer is unusual in structure in that it was written in the first person, whereas most communal prayers are written in plural form.

#### **Concepts**

- A person's words are capable of perpetrating evil.
- Humility and modesty are Jewish virtues.
- God will answer our prayers because He is an all-powerful and compassionate God.
- God will bring peace to the world.

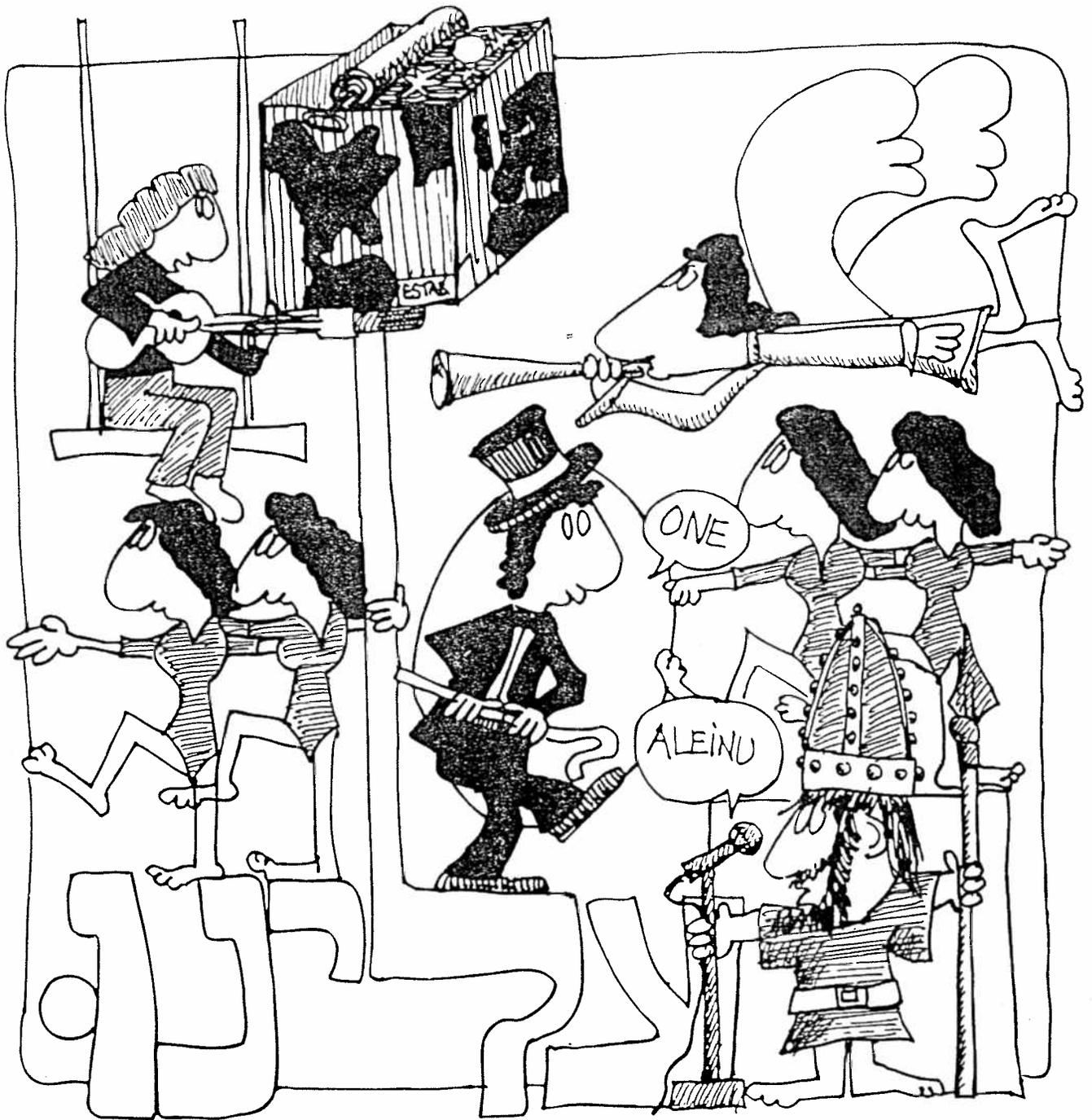
### *Tachanun*

He, the merciful One, grants atonement from sin and does not destroy.

#### **Background**

Jewish tradition provides for optional and personal prayer as well as obligatory prayer. The prayer known as *Tachanun* (Supplications) includes supplications and

Concluding Prayers: *Aleinu*



**T**he ALEINU is the big stage production, monster number, which brings back the high points of the whole service. It starts out with we/us (everyone) thanking God for creating things (CREATION) and then thanking God for Choosing Israel (REVELATION). We go on with thanking God for all He's done throughout history (REDEMPTION). I think of the ALEINU as the final friendship circle where we all join together and sing the age old chorus one more time. "ON THAT DAY THE LORD SHALL BE ONE AND HIS NAME SHALL BE ONE." (The SHEMA in disguise.) When everything we have dreamed about: PEACE, FREEDOM, everyone living together (The AMIDAH) is really going to come true, then Israel's job is finished.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לַאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל,      It is ON us to praise The MASTER-of-ALL  
 לַתַּת גְּדֻלָּה      To grant GREATness  
 לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית,      to the ONE-Who-Stages The CREATION  
 שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂנוּ      The ONE-Who-Didn't-MAKE-US  
 כְּגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת,      like the other NATIONS-of-the-LANDS  
 וְלֹא שָׂמְנוּ      & didn't PUT our fate  
 כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה;      with the other FAMILIES-of-the-EARTH  
 שֶׁלֹּא שָׂם חֶלְקֵנוּ בָּהֶם      & didn't PUT our PORTION with theirs  
 וְגוֹרְלֵנוּ כְּכֹל הַמוֹנִים.      & our LOT with the MANY.

וְנִגְחָנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים      & we BOW & BEND & LIE FLAT-in-THANKS  
 לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מְלִכֵי הַמְּלָכִים      before the RULER-of-RULERS,  
 הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.      The HOLY-ONE-Who-is-to-be-BLESSED

שֶׁהוּא נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם      The ONE-WHO-Spread-out the HEAVENS  
 וַיּוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ,      & laid the earth's foundations  
 וּמוֹשֵׁב יָקָרוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל,      & has the SEAT-of-Homage in the heavens above  
 וְשִׁכִּינַת עֲזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים.      & NEIGHBORHOOD-of-Power in the Highest Heights.  
 הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין עוֹד.      God is our God—there is none other.  
 אֱמֶת מְלַכְנוּ אֶפֶס זֹלָתוֹ,      In TRUTH God is RULER—NOTHING compares  
 בְּכַתוּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ:      AS it is WRITTEN:  
 וַיִּדְעַת הַיּוֹם וְהִשְׁבַּת אֶל לִבָּבָהּ,      “& You are to KNOW today in the thoughts of Your HEAR  
 כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים      that ADONAI is the ONE God  
 בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת,      both in HEAVEN ABOVE & on EARTH below—  
 אֵין עוֹד:      NONE can COMPARE.”

Deuteronomy 4

**Mr. Choreography**

The ALEINU is a standing prayer. In TEMPLE times, and on the BIMAH during YOM KIPPUR, people actually, bent, bowed, and laid themselves flat (at the appropriate words). Today we bend our knees and bow at the words: “וְנִגְחָנוּ כּוֹרְעִים..”

על כן נִקְוָה לָּךְ	BECAUSE of this, we WISH from You
יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	ADONAI our God
לְרֹאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֵרַת עֲזֹךְ,	to soon SEE the WONDER of your strength
לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ,	to terminate idolatry from the earth
וְהַאֲלִילִים כָּרוֹת יִכְרְתוּן,	& completely cut off the false gods—
לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי.	to do TIKKUN OLAM in God's EMPIRE
וְכָל בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ	& all humanity will call Your NAME
לְהִפְנוֹת אֵלֶיךָ	to RETURN to You
כָּל רָשָׁעֵי אָרֶץ.	all the WICKED of the earth.
יִכִּירוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל,	They will REALIZE & KNOW
כִּי לָּךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרֶךְ,	that every KNEE must BEND to You
תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לָשׁוֹן.	& every TONGUE must SWEAR allegiance to you.

Isaiah 45

לִפְנֵיךָ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	Before ADONAI, our God
יִכְרְעוּ וַיִּפְלוּ,	they will BOW & LIE DOWN-in-thanks
וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ	& give HONOR to Your precious NAME
יִקְרְאוּ יָתֵנוּ, וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָּלֵם אֶת	& they will accept on themselves
עַל מַלְכוּתְךָ,	the YOKE-of-Your-EMPIRE
וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.	& You will quickly RULE over them for EVER & ALWAYS.

**ORIGINS:** The ALEINU was originally said only on Rosh ha-Shanah. But then it became a hit. People wanted to hear it and sing it over and over. It became part of every Jewish worship service (*Rokeach*).

Everyone who had known Egypt except for Joshua was dead. Everyone who had seen God's power directly at Mount Sinai was gone. All they had to go on were the old stories and the family dreams. We know how they felt. Finally, after all those years of walking and camping and waiting—they got to set foot on the long-promised Land. This is when JOSHUA first led the Jewish people in ALEINU (echoing the angels). That is the feeling we should bring to our saying of the ALEINU. There is still much more work ahead, but now we can take actual steps towards making Jewish dreams come true (*Pirkei de Rabbi Eleazer*).

**The CORE KAVANAH I:** When we say the Aleinu, we are like Joshua and the Jewish people when they burst across the Jordan river, headed toward the Battle of Jericho. The story of Joshua is the story of an ending and a beginning. It is also the story of this prayer which is the "ending" of the service and the "beginning" of our taking the meaning of our service into the world of every day.

**The CORE KAVANAH II:** Like the dancers in a CHORUS LINE who strut "ONE-Singular Sensation." we are on our feet, belting out a final song & summing up everything which has gone on during the service. We take all the hopes & all the memories we have touched while praying together, and draw them together into a call for ONE God, ONE world, ONE Humanity, ONE way of treating everyone. ONE ONE ONE ONE ONE—someday!

כי המלכות שלך היא  
ולעולמי עד תמלך בכבוד  
ככתוב בתורתך:  
יהוה ימלך לעלם ועד:

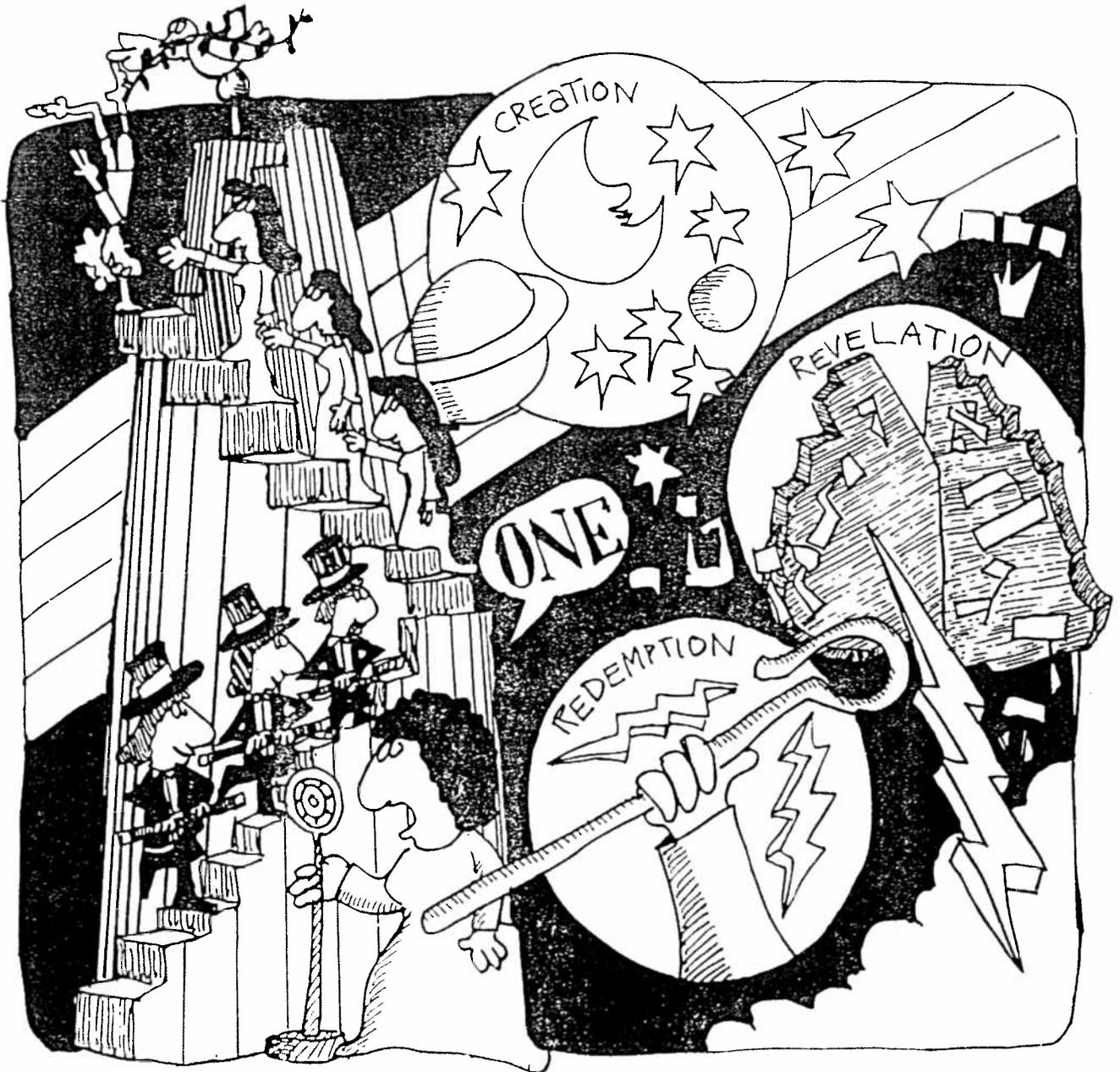
BECAUSE Your's is the EMPIRE  
& You will RULE beyond forEVER in HONOR.  
That is what is written in Your TORAH:  
"ADONAI will RULE for EVER & ALWAYS."

Exodus 15:1.

ונאמר  
והיה יהוה למלך על כל הארץ,  
ביום ההוא יהיה יהוה אחד  
ושמו אחד:

As it is said:  
"ADONAI will be the RULER over the whole earth—  
On that day ADONAI will be ONE  
and ADONAI's NAME will be ONE."

Zachariah 14.



## Unit 4: Prayer as a Struggle with Commandedness

### Introduction

The concept of mitzvah is perhaps the most troubling religious issue to the Reform movement. Literally meaning “command”, it seems to inherently imply the necessity of living an Orthodox lifestyle. If indeed God did command certain actions--such as not mixing milk and meat, observing Shabbat, or doing acts of loving kindness--how can we ignore those commandments and still claim to know and love that God?

--“And makes us Holy...: An Exploration of Mitzvot.”  
(curriculum guide), Michelle Shapiro Abraham.

There is no question that the idea of commandment is central to Jewish prayer and Judaism. As discussed in Unit 1, traditionally Jews are commanded to recite 100 blessings a day. Jews are commanded to pray three times a day, and the Mishnah and Talmud go into detail about which prayers Jews must recite, and in what frame of mind Jews must recite these prayers, in order to have fulfilled the obligation of prayer. The standard blessing formula begins, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech HaOlam, Asher Kidishanu B'Mitzvotav V'Tzivanu*, Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us in his commandments and commanded us to...

If we are to read and understand the prayers (and by extension, Judaism as a whole) with integrity, we must discuss the implications of this commandedness. Perhaps, as Reform Jews, we believe that commandedness implies “informed choice”, in which each Jew needs to learn about and experience the mitzvot, and then choose to follow those that are personally meaningful. Perhaps we will differentiate between *mitzvot shel ben adam l'chavero* (*mitzvot* between a person and another person, that seem moral or value based) and *mitzvot shel ben adam l'makom* (*mitzvot* between a person and God, that are difficult for humans to understand), deciding, as many Reform Jews have, that the former are binding whereas the later depend on an individual's choice. And perhaps we will, as Abraham Joshua Heschel, view *mitzvot* as acts that build a bridge between us and God. The important thing, for seventh graders, is to understand that we are commanded, and to examine the implications for their practice as Jews and their interpretations of Jewish prayers.

If the idea of commandedness is difficult for modern people who live in a world that bases itself on individual choice, it is that much more difficult for seventh graders who are beginning to rebel against structure and create their own identity. The activities in this unit offer some concrete answers to what it might mean to be commanded, as the prayers studied in this unit explore the implications of commandedness. For example, the V'ahavta we affirm that we love God, and then acknowledge what we will do to prove that love, and the Ahavat Olam discusses the connection between love and rules.

**Objectives: At the end of this unit students will be able to:**

- ◆ give a rough translation for the traditional blessing formula and explain what it might mean to be commanded.(A)
- ◆ explain the meaning of the word mitzvah, explain that within Reform Judaism mitzvot are seen as Jewish Opportunities, and explain their own connection to mitzvot.(B)
- ◆ give some reasons for doing mitzvot.(C)
- ◆ explain that the *V'ahavta* is about the things we do because we love God and Judaism.(D)
- ◆ discuss what it means to be the “chosen people” as mentioned in the *Aleynu*.
- ◆ discuss the connection between love and rules which is addressed in *Ahavat Olam*.(F)

### **Concepts covered in this unit**

Mitzvah--the root of the word mitzvah literally means “command”. (It does not mean “good deed”. ) For Reform Judaism, mitzvot can mean Jewish Opportunities; opportunities to connect with God, follow Jewish tradition and/or live as a better human.

### **Prayers Covered in this Unit**

*V'ahavta*--This is the first paragraph after the *Shema*. It come from Deuteronomy 6:5-9. The central ideas are (a) that it is a *mitzvah* to love God with all of one’s heart and soul; (b) It is a *mitzvah* to teach one’s own children Torah; (c) It is a *mitzvah* to wear tefillin; and (d) it is a *mitzvah* to affix *mezuzot* to the doorposts of one’s home.

*Ahavah Rabbah*--This prayer is the second blessing before the *Shema* which we say as part of the morning service. We thank God for the light of Torah and pray that God will grant us the wisdom to understand the Torah properly. The prayer also recalls God’s unending love to our ancestors in entrusting God’s sacred teaching to them. Important concepts include the fact that God chose Israel and that Israel reciprocates and shows God its love by following the *mitzvot*.

*Ahavat Olam*--This is the second of two blessings said before the Sh’ma as part of the evening service. It says that because we feel, respect and appreciate God’s love, we will follow God’s rules or commandments.

*Aleynu*-- This prayer is sung at the conclusion of the service. We praise God for creating our world and for choosing Israel. We also pray and hope for a day of ultimate oneness, when God’s name will be one and the world will be one. (The historical themes of this prayer are addressed in Unit 3.)

## Suggested Activities

### Objectives A, B & C

Review the *brakhah* formula with students (Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, that makes us holy through Your mitzvot, and makes it a mitzvah for us to...) in Hebrew and English. Ask students the following questions: When do we use this blessing? According to the prayer, what makes us holy? What is a mitzvah? What is Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Explain to students that though mitzvah literally means “commandment”, Reform Judaism views mitzvot as Jewish opportunities. We are “commanded” to engage in informed choice to choose those mitzvot that help us pursue holiness. (conceptual)

Discuss the following quote with students:

“I try to walk the road of Judaism. Embedded in that road there are many jewels. One is marked “Sabbath” and one “Civil Rights” and one “Kashrut” and one “Honor Your Parents” and one “Study of Torah” and one “You Shall Be Holy.” There are at least 613 of them and they are different shapes and sizes and weights. Some are light and easy for me to pick them up, and I pick them up. Some are too deeply embedded for me, though I get a little stronger by trying to extricate the jewels as I walk the street. Some, perhaps, I shall never be able to pick up. I believe God expects me to keep on walking Judaism Street and carry away whatever I can of its commandments. I do not believe that God expects me to lift what I cannot, nor may I condemn my fellow Jew who may not be able to pick up even as much as I can.”

--Arnold Jacob Wolf<sup>3</sup>

Is Judaism a road for students? What other metaphors can they think of to describe their connection to Jewish commandments? (a television with cable, a buffet table, a library...) Have students discuss one of these metaphors with a friend and then write a paragraph similar to Wolf's. (reflective)

Set up the following scenario for the class: You are in PR groups and a Reform Jewish family comes to you asking for your help. They wish to publicize doing mitzvot. They do not believe that all Jews must do all mitzvot, but Jews must learn about mitzvot and do those that are meaningful to them. Your ad campaign must compel people to take all mitzvot seriously. They've come up with six ideas why they think people may want to do mitzvot: they could bring you closer to God, it is good to be unique and do unique things either alone or as a community, they just “feel right”, it is good for the world in the long term, they can be good for other people and bring you closer to others.

Break students into six groups, with each group assigned to one of these ideas. Each group must brainstorm why this reason might be compelling and create a poster and skit and share their idea with the rest of the class. After each group shares, discuss: Which of these ideas is most compelling? Are some ideas more applicable to certain mitzvot?

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<sup>3</sup> from The Book of Words, pg. 93.

Create a poster beginning with the six ideas and encourage students to add any ideas of their own. (conceptual)

#### Objective D

Have students do the worksheet on the *V'ahavta* (on page 74), which asks students to consider an ideal that they love and what they would do to protect it, and then think about what the *V'ahavta* says they need to do to show we love God. Discuss: if someone does not believe in God, does the *V'ahavta* still apply to them? (I think so. Judaism values action more than faith, so doing the things we're supposed to do to be good Jews is important whether or not we believe in God.)

#### Objective E

To examine the concept of chosenness, tell the class that you have something very special for a few students to do, and that you need to choose the students who will do this task. Choose two or three students, and tell them that they will be doing their special thing later. Ask students how they felt being chosen and being not chosen. Ask students to suggest on what basis you chose the students, writing their suggestions on the board. Add to the list so that all of the following are included: random choice, best students, oldest students, students who could best do the task, students whom the teacher likes best. Explain that it is often not possible to know why a person or group of people has been chosen. Ask students if they have heard the Jews being referred to as the chosen people. What does this mean? Review the first part of the *Aleynu* and discuss how it reflects the idea that the Jews are the chosen people. (conceptual)

#### Objective F

To study the *Ahavat Olam*, have students explore the connection between love and rules. Do they have certain rules with their friends, in what ways are these rules necessary for a healthy friendship? What about rules with their parents? How do we follow Judaism's rule of "Honor Thy Father and Mother" when our parents' rules may not make sense? Similarly, do all of Judaism's rules make sense, and might we still choose to follow certain Jewish practices when we do not exactly understand the details of a particular *mitzvah*? Conduct a debate between those who feel that rules are necessary and those who feel they are not.

#### Synthesis Activity--Objective B & C

Have students compose a reply to the following letter in their journals, answering the following questions:

- (1) What do you think God means by "talking about and studying my laws?"
- (2) Are you doing this? How?
- (3) How do you feel about getting a letter like this?

(4) Do you think this letter has more relevance for someone who is about to be Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Just wanted to tell you to talk about and study my laws and commandments.

Remember, I loved the Israelites, and I love you too.

God

## Resource Materials for Unit 4

Worksheet on the V'ahavta	75
Text of the V'ahavta	76-77
Ahavah Rabbah commentary and text	78-79
Ahavat Olam Commentary and text	80-81

note: The text to the Aleynu is in the Unit 3 resource materials on pages 65-68.

וְאָהַבְתָּהּ--V'ahavta

work on this worksheet with a partner

Pick an ideal that you love--such as peace, justice, or freedom. Write it below.

What do you need to do to make sure that this ideal comes to life?

What would life be like without your ideal?

Now, look at the V'ahavta.

What do we say we love in the V'ahavta?

What do we need to do to show we love this?

What would life be like without this?

### 1ST PARAGRAPH: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל

This paragraph is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It starts with *SHEMA YISRA-EL*, inserts *BARUKH SHEMA K'VOD*, and then continues *v'AHAVTA*.

In the very first paragraph of the *SHEMA* we declare our acceptance of the "YOKE" of God's *RULERSHIP*. This consists of three elements: (a) an *AFFIRMATION* of belief in God's *ONENESS* and in God's *RULERSHIP*, (b) a deep, relentless, unconditional *LOVE* of God, and (c) a commitment to study *TORAH*—God's teachings (Maimonides, *Laws of Shema*, 1.2).

This paragraph contains 10 *MITZVOT*: (1) Accepting the Yoke of Heaven, (2) Proclaiming God is One, (3) Loving God, (4) Studying Torah, (5) Teaching Children, (6) Reciting Shema at Night, (7) Reciting Shema during the Day, (8) Putting Tefillin on the hand, (9) Putting Tefillin on the head, & (10) Mezuzah. (Avrohom David, *Metzudah Siddur*).

### 2ND PARAGRAPH: וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַי

This paragraph comes from Deuteronomy 11:13-21. It is essentially a restatement of the first paragraph, the first is a move to addressing a plural audience, the second is a statement of rewards and punishments to be allocated in response to *MITZVAH*-performance. (A "making a list—checking it twice" passage.)

Whereas the 1st paragraph of the *SHEMA* emphasizes the study of Torah, the 2nd paragraph emphasizes the observance of Torah. Whereas the 1st paragraph is in the *2ND PERSON SINGULAR*, the 2nd paragraph is in the *2ND PERSON PLURAL*. In the 1st paragraph, Moses addresses the *INDIVIDUAL* Jew. In the 2nd paragraph, he addresses the collective body of Israel (Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, p. 151).

### 3RD PARAGRAPH: נִיאמַר יְהוָה

This last paragraph comes from Numbers 15:37-41. It centers on the *MITZVAH* of *TZIT-TZIT*.

This paragraph contains 6 important things: (1) the *MITZVAH* of *TZIT-TZIT*, (2) a review of Exodus, (3) a call to observe the *MITZVOT*, (4) a warning against heresy, (5) a warning about lust, and (6) a warning about idolatry. (*Brakhot* 12b)

Blessed is Israel because The Holy One surrounds them with *MITZVOT*, *TEFILLIN* on their *HEAD* and *HAND*, *TZITZIVOT* on their clothes, and *MEZUZOT* on their *HOUSES* (*Menaḥot* 43b).

1

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
יְהוָה אֶחָד.  
בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם  
כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ  
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְאַהֲבַת אֵת יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ  
וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ  
וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מֵצַוְהָ לְיֹמֵךָ  
עַל לִבְבְּךָ.

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם  
לְבָנֶיךָ  
וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם  
בְּשֹׁבְתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ  
וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ  
וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ  
וּבְקוּמְךָ.

וּקְשַׁרְתָּם  
עַל-יָדְךָ  
וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפוֹת  
בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ.  
וְכָתַבְתָּם  
עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ  
וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

*LISTEN ISRAEL*  
*ADONAI is Our God*  
*ADONAI is the ONE (and Only) God.*  
*BLESSED be the NAME—*  
*that God's HONORED EMPIRE—*  
*will last FOREVER and ALWAYS.*

*You should LOVE ADONAI*  
*your God*  
*with all your HEART,*  
*with all your SOUL,*  
*and with all your STUFF.*

*And these words that*  
*I make MITZVOT for you today*  
*shall be on your HEART.*

*You should TEACH them*  
*to your children*  
*and you should TALK about them*  
*when you SIT at home*  
*and when you are GOING out*  
*when you LIE down*  
*and when you get UP.*

*And you should TIE them*  
*as LETTERS on your HAND*  
*And have them as SYMBOLS*  
*between your EYES.*  
*And you should WRITE them*  
*on the DOORPOSTS of your HOUSE*  
*and on your GATES.*

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

The V'AHAVTA is the CHECK-List for the SHEMA. It asks, are you LOVing GOD? Are you making GOD ONE? In your HEART? (True or False) In your SOUL? (Yes or No) With all your might? (Yup or Nope). In other words, I am loving GOD and acting as if there really is ONE GOD for all people (a) always, (b) everywhere, (c) with everyone, (d) completely?

YUP NOPE



- HEART
- SOUL
- MIGHT
  
- these WORDS
- this DAY
  
- TEACH
- SPEAK
- SIT
- WALK
- LIE
- RISE
  
- HAND
- EYES
- DOORPOST
- GATE
  
- REMEMBER
- DO
- be HOLY

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ מִצְוֹתַי  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוְהָ אֹתְכֶם הַיּוֹם  
לְאַהֲבָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
וּלְעַבְדוֹ  
בְּכָל-לִבְבְּכֶם  
וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם.  
וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר-אֲרָצְכֶם  
בְּעֵתוֹ  
יּוֹרֵה וּמְלֻקוֹשׁ  
וְאִסְפַּתְּ דָּגְנְךָ  
וְתִירְשֶׁה וְיִצְהַרְךָ.  
וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדֶךָ  
לְבִהֶמְתֶּךָ.  
וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ.  
הִשְׁמְרוּ לָכֶם  
פְּרִי-יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם  
וּסְרֹתֶם  
וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים  
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם.  
וְחָרָה אַף-יְהוָה בְּכֶם  
וְעָצַר אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וּלֹא-יִהְיֶה מִטֶּר  
וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת-יְבוּלָהּ  
וְאֲבַדְתֶּם מְהֵרָה  
מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה  
אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם.  
וּשְׂמַתֶּם אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים  
עַל-לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם  
וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יַדְכֶם  
וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפוֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם.  
וּלְמַדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם  
לְדַבֵּר בָּם  
בְּשֹׁבְתֶךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ  
וּבְלִכְתֶּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ  
וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.  
וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת  
בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ

2

Let it BE, that when you HEAR My MITZVOT  
which I make a MITZVAH for you, today,  
to LOVE ADONAI, Your God,  
and to serve God  
with all your HEARTS  
and with all your SOULS—  
I will give your land rain  
at the right times,  
early autumn rain and late spring rain  
and you will harvest your grain  
and your wine and your oil.  
And I will put grass in your fields  
for your cattle  
and you will EAT and be FULL.  
(However) be on GUARD  
that your HEARTS aren't changed  
and that you don't turn away  
and serve other gods  
and bow to them—  
(If that happens)—  
ADONAI'S anger will burn against you,  
God will close the skies  
and there will be no rain,  
and the earth will not provide produce  
and you will quickly vanish  
from the good land  
which ADONAI is giving you.  
PUT these words of Mine  
in your HEARTS and in your SOULS—  
TIE them as LETTERS on your HANDS  
and have them as SYMBOLS before your EYES.  
TEACH them to your CHILDREN  
by TALKING about them  
when are SITTING in your HOMES  
and when you are GOING out,  
when you LIE down and when you get UP.  
And you should WRITE them on the DOORPOSTS  
of your HOMES and on your GATES—

The SHEMA-&Her-BRAKHOT: The MORNING Edition  
The 2nd BRAKHAH Before the SHEMA



AHAVAH RABBAH is a wedding ceremony. Once again, we are back at Mt. Sinai. Once again, we are about to receive the TORAH. Everything we have said about this moment when we studied AHAVAT OLAM is still TRUE, but there is more.

In the EVENING-Edition, AHAVAT OLAM, we praise God as the "Lover of Israel." In AHAVAH RABBAH, the MORNING-Edition, we praise God as "The ONE-Who-Chose Israel in Love." This time, the relationship is a lot more defined and a lot more permanent. It is a marriage between God and Israel. TORAH is the KETUBAH—the wedding contract.

**THE CORE KAVANAH:** Saadia Gaon taught: "YOTZER OR speaks of God in the 3rd person. AHAVAH RABBAH shifts to the second person. The relationship is now much more intimate."

In other words, the idea of this prayer, is that daily we say to GOD, "I \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in Your Name) take YOU, ADONAI, to be my DIETY—to LOVE and CHERISH, to HONOR and OBEY." That is the ULTIMATE expression of MT. SINAI and the foundational voice for AHAVAT OLAM.

**THE CORE KAVANAH II:** Yehuda ha-Levi taught in *The Kuzari*. To find the core KAVANAH for AHAVAT OLAM: Think of God's LOVE as being LIGHT and each JEW being a MIRROR...

אֶהְבֶּה רַבָּה אֶהְבַּתְנוּ, יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ,	With much LOVE You have LOVED us Adonai, our God,
חֲמֵלָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּתֶּרָה	With great COMPASSION and more
חֲמֵלַת עָלֵינוּ. אָבִינוּ מְלַכְנוּ,	You have had COMPASSION for us Our PARENT, our Ruler
בְּעִבּוֹר אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבִטְחוּ בָּךְ	for the sake of our PARENTS who trusted in You—
וַתְּלַמְּדֵם חֻקֵי חַיִּים,	and whom You taught the RULES of life—
כֵּן תִּחַנְּנוּ וַתְּלַמְּדֵנוּ.	(A) be gracious also unto us and TEACH us.
אָבִינוּ, הָאֵב הַרְחֻמָּן	Our PARENT, the <b>MERCIFUL</b> PARENT
הַמְּרַחֵם, רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ	The ONE-Who-is- <b>MERCIFUL</b> , (B) have <b>MERCY</b> on us.
וַתֵּן בְּלִבֵּנוּ	(Please) (C) give our hearts
לְהִבִּין וּלְהַשְׁכִּיל, לְשִׁמְעַ,	(1) to understand (2) to reason (3) to hear
לְלַמֵּד וּלְלַמְּד לְשׁוֹמֵר	(4) to be TAUGHT (5) to TEACH (6) to keep
וּלְעֲשׂוֹת, וּלְקַיֵּם	(7) to perform (8) to make permanent
אֵת כָּל דְּבָרֵי תְּלִמּוּד תּוֹרַתְךָ בְּאַהֲבָה.	all the words of the TEACHING of your Torah, in LOVE.
וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ,	(D) Enlighten our eyes with Your Torah
וְדַבֵּק לִבֵּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ,	& (E) make Your Mitzvot stick to our hearts
וַיַּחַד לְבַבֵּנוּ לְאַהֲבָה	& (F) unify our hearts to LOVE
וּלְיִרְאָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ,	& to be in AWE of Your <b>NAME</b> —
וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.	& (please) (G) don't let us be embarrassed, ever—
כִּי בְּשֵׁם קֹדֶשְׁךָ	because in Your holy <b>NAME</b>
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא בְּטַחְנוּ,	which is GREAT and AWESOME we trust.
נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמַחָה בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ.	We will REJOICE and we will be HAPPY in Your <b>SALVATION</b> .
וְהִבִּיאֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם	(H) & (please) bring us in peace
מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנֻפּוֹת הָאָרֶץ,	from the four corners of the earth
וַתּוֹלִיכֵנוּ קוֹמְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ.	& make us go and establish our land—
כִּי אֵל פּוֹעֵל יִשׁוּעוֹת אַתָּה,	because You are God, the ONE-Who-Works-at <b>SALVATION</b>
וַיִּבְּרָךְ בְּחֵרַת מְכַל עַם	& You have CHOSEN us from all peoples
וּלְשׁוֹן,	& language groupings
וְקִרְבַּתְנוּ לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל	& You have brought us close to Your GREAT <b>NAME</b> —
סֵלָה בְּאֵמֶת,	in TRUTH, so be it,—
לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ וּלְיַחַדְךָ בְּאַהֲבָה.	to give thanks to You and to Your ONENESS in LOVE.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוּה,	Blessed are You, Adonai,
הַבוֹחֵר בְּעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה.	The ONE-Who-CHOOSSES The People Israel, in LOVE.

The SHEMA-&-Her-BRAKHOT: The EVENING Edition  
The 2nd BRAKHAH Before the SHEMA



**A**HAVAT OLAM is a visit to MT. SINAI, it reCREATES and reREVEALS the moment when God gave the TORAH to Israel as a precious gift and a valuable inheritance. The Midrash tells the story two different ways:

In one version every other nation in the world rejects the Torah, feeling its COMMANDMENTS "would limit our style." ISRAEL, alone, jumps at the chance, chanting: "NA'ASEH v'NISHMAH" which really means, "We sign now, read the small print later" (*Mekhilta, Yitro 5*).

In the other version (*Shabbat 88a*), Israel isn't so happy about accepting the Torah. God "freaks," lifts up Mt. Sinai, holding it over Israel's heads "like an open coffin" and asks, "Do you accept the Torah or do I put the mountain down?" Then Israel goes into their "NA'ASEH v'NISHMAH" routine.

We all feel two ways about "law." And, let's face it, Torah is the LAW. There are times we see the police as OFFICER FRIENDLY. There are times when we are lost or scared or hurt—and the police are a source of comfort and support. And there is the police officer who catches us running a red light at 2 A.M.—when we thought no one else was around. AHAVAT OLAM is when we work through the ambivalence we feel about a life of TORAH rules, and see it as a gift of wisdom, comfort and support. It is the TORAH as a LOVE gift. It is the OFFICER FRIENDLY side of the MITZVOT.

ORIGINS: Jeremiah was a prophet with two voices. For most of his book, he bays on ISRAEL, telling them that they are BREAKING every COMMANDMENT that matters in the BOOK. He keeps on explaining that "GOD is making a list and checking it twice" BUT no one listens. No one is willing to live NA'ASEH v'NISHMAH. Eventually, like 3/4s of the way through the book of JEREMIAH, the other shoe falls and the BABYLONIANS are at the gates. Within a chapter, Jerusalem is conquered and the Temple is destroyed. It is here that Jeremiah adopts VOICE TWO—the comforting Jeremiah. He teaches, "RELAX, God is a GOD of 2nd chances. RETURN to TORAH, and GOD will RETURN you to the LAND." The words AHAVAT OLAM come from a BOOK of COMFORT Jeremiah wrote for Israel to take with them in exile. Saying AHAVAT OLAM brings Jeremiah's two voices into our hearts. VOICE ONE says: "You made a COVENANT. You've got obligations. Live up to them." VOICE TWO says: "You've made a mistake. Everyone does. Start over. AND just don't do it again."

אֶהְבֵּת עוֹלָם	With Cosmic <b>LOVE FOREVER:</b>
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אֶהְבֵּת.	You <b>LOVED</b> Your People, the Families of Israel.
תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים	Torah and Mitzvot, <u>Hukkim</u> and Mishpatim
אוֹתָנוּ לְמַדַּת.	You have taught us
עַל כֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	Because of this, ADONAI, our God,
בְּשֹׁכְבֵנוּ וּבִקְוֵמֵנוּ	when we <b>LIE DOWN</b> and when we <b>GET UP</b>
נְשִׁיחַ בְּחֻקֶיךָ	we will talk about your <u>HUKKIM</u>
וְנִשְׂמַח בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ	and celebrate the <b>WORDS</b> of Your <b>TORAH</b>
וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ	and in your <b>MITZVOT</b>
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.	<b>FOREVER</b> and <b>ALWAYS.</b>
כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ	Because—They insure our <b>LIVES</b>
וְאַרְךְ יָמֵינוּ	and they extend our <b>DAYS</b>
וּבָהֶם נִהְגֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה.	and about them we will <b>THINK DAY</b> and <b>NIGHT.</b>
וְאַהְבַּתְךָ אֵל תִּסִּיר מִמֶּנּוּ	<b>PLEASE:</b> never take your <b>LOVE</b> away from us
לְעוֹלָמִים.	not <b>EVEN EVER.</b>
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	<b>BLESS</b> ed are You <b>ADONAI</b>
אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.	<i>The-One-Who</i> <b>LOVES</b> Israel.

**THE CORE KAVANAH:** When we say the second brakhah before the **Shema**, we are like Moses going up the mountain to get the Torah.

When Moses got to the top of the mountain and started up the ladder to heaven, the angels said to God, "Ruler-of-the-Cosmos, what is this man, born of woman, doing among us?"

God answered them, "He has come to receive the Torah."

They said to God, "Are You really going to give him the secret treasure which You have hidden for nine hundred and seventy-four generations—since before the world was created—You are going to give that to flesh and blood?"

God said to Moses, "Answer them!"

Moses said, "Ruler-of-the-Cosmos, I am afraid that they will burn me up with their breaths of fire."

God said to Moses, "Hold on to my Throne-Of-Glory and answer them!"

Moses said to the angels, "It says in the Torah **I am the Lord Your God Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt'** (Exodus 20). Did you go down to Egypt? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours?"

Instantly, the angels loved Moses. They voiced no more protests. Each angel taught Moses a secret. Even the Angel-Of-Death taught Moses his two secrets: *tzedakah* and *t'shuvah*.

We learn from Moses, that even though we are not perfect like angels, only we can understand the Torah to its full meaning because only we can truly live it. We understand that Torah is both a gift and a challenge (*Shabbat* 88b).

## Unit 5: Prayer as a Way of Bringing Ourselves into Conversation with God and Community

### Introduction

“Communal worship provided a cohesive influence in the Jewish community. It added meaning to the fact that most of the prayers were formulated in the plural and not in the singular--stressing the responsibility that Jews have for one another. It seemed to make the community more aware of and responsive to the needs of the individual.

Communal worship made it possible to note the major occasions in a person's life. An individual's grief was shared by the congregation. So were his joys...”

-Hayim Halevy Donin, To Pray As A Jew, pg. 14.

Community is a central aspect of Jewish prayer. According to most Rabbinic opinion, communal prayer is of greater significance than individual prayer. One is permitted to pray alone, but there is more merit in praying as part of a congregation. In fact, within Judaism, communal prayer is considered so significant that Jewish law actually encourages individuals to pray *at the same time* a congregation is praying if one is unable to physically pray with the congregation.

At its best, praying as part of a community creates an energy, chemistry and spirit that one may not encounter praying alone. The act of prayer involves a chorus of voices which reach toward God and each other. So, having more voices that communicate the message of prayer in their diverse individual ways strengthens the force and dimension of this message.

Jewish prayers recognize the power of community through the importance placed on *minyan*, a quorum of ten Jews who must be in attendance in order to say certain prayers. Many prayers are written in plural forms, emphasizing that prayer is a communal act. In addition, the prayers themselves speak of wholeness, of people coming together and living as one.

**Objectives: At the end of this unit students will be able to:**

- ◆ define the term *minyan* and give examples of when a *minyan* is necessary to say certain prayers. (A)
- ◆ explain the importance of the *Sh'ma* and give two key facts about it. (B)
- ◆ explain that the *Barchu* is the “Call to Worship” that brings the congregation together after individual prayers. (C)
- ◆ explain that the petitions of the *Amidah* begin with individual requests and move to requests for the community, and give examples of each. (D)

## Concepts covered in this unit

*minyan*--this is a quorum of ten Jews that is necessary to say the Barchu, the Mourner's Kaddish, and the repetition of the Amidah according to traditional Judaism. In some traditional congregations, only men are counted as part of a minyan, whereas congregations that call themselves "egalitarian" count both men and women. The term *minyan* is also often used to describe a group that meets for prayer, i.e. a morning *minyan*. Literally, this Hebrew word comes from the root meaning "to count".

## Prayers Covered in this Unit

*Sh'ma*--A declaration of faith which is recited twice a day, in the morning service and in the evening service. It is considered to be the "watchword of the Jewish people," the Torah's classic statement of monotheism which affirms God's Unity in the world. (For more information, see the questions and answers on pages )

*Barchu*--The "Call to Worship" which makes the transition from the more individual opening sections of the service (which in the past were done at home) to the communal sections. The words mean, "Blessed is God who is to be praised." Traditionally, this prayer requires a *minyan* to be recited aloud by the service leader.

*Amidah*--Also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei*, this is the central element of the three daily services. In the Talmud it is called *Hatefillah*, "The Prayer," because of its importance and its antiquity. It has the name *Amidah* because we stand when we say this prayer.

## Suggested Activities

### Objective A

To examine the concept of *minyan* in greater depth, have students read the story of Sodom and Gemorrah. (Genesis chap. 18) Explore: why did Abraham try to bargain with God? What is special about the number ten that God agreed to save the city if ten righteous people were found? (he didn't want the city to be destroyed, he believed that these ten people could influence others...) Should God have saved the city for five righteous people for two? Can students imagine a similar argument taking place in today's big cities?

What does the story suggest about the power of community? (that there is power in community, and even a community of ten can draw strength from one another and influence the outside world.) (conceptual)

### Objective B

Most students will already be familiar with words of the *Sh'ma* and the experience of saying it. To go into more depth about its meaning and history, do the following activity.

(You will need copies of the question and answer sheets from the resource pages, blank paper and pens, and a volume of Talmud.)

- Ask students to come up with questions that they have about the *Sh'ma*. Try to guide them toward the questions listed below by reminding them that questions involve who, where, what, when & how.
- Show students a page of Talmud and explain that they are going to make their own Talmud pages about the *Sh'ma*. In the middle, they should copy the *Sh'ma* in Hebrew. Then, they should pick two questions that interest them, and for each, write the question, a *summary* of the answer, and their response. (See samples on resource pages )
- Distribute the ten question and answer sheets. The questions are as follows:
  - How important is the *Sh'ma* in the lives of Jews?
  - What's the history of the *Sh'ma*?
  - When do we say the *Sh'ma*? Why those times?
  - Do we say the *Sh'ma* standing or sitting?
  - Why do we cover our eyes when we say the *Sh'ma*?
  - Is the *Sh'ma* really a prayer? How loudly should we say the *Sh'ma*?
  - Why are the last letter of the first word and the last letter of the last word written in big print?
  - Why do we say the second line of the *Sh'ma* silently?
  - What are the blessings said before and after the *Sh'ma*?
  - Do we really have to say those blessings (like the *V'ahavta*) as well?
- Have students share their work with the rest of the class. (conceptual, reflective)

Use micrography (or a micrography hybrid) to add meaning to the *Sh'ma*. Have students draw a picture of what the *Sh'ma* represents to them, either including the word שמע in their drawing or making their drawing out the word שמע. (See example on page .....

### Objective C

Explain that the *Barchu* is like the whistle which signals the start of a soccer game; encourage students to think of other sounds that signal something. (a school bell, a car horn, a telephone ringing, etc.) Then “act out” the *Barchu* by having students pray as individuals until the teacher blows the whistle, signaling that the class should come together to pray the *Barchu*. (experiential)

### Objective D

Show students the thirteen middle blessings of the Amidah. List them on the board--do certain blessings share certain characteristics? (The first group are more individual requests, and the later ones requests for the community.) Have students create a mnemonic to remember the names of the blessings. Then have them pick one that they feel attached to and draw a picture of what it represents. (conceptual)

## Resource Materials for Unit 5

Sample “Talmud pages” about the <i>Sh'ma</i>	86-87
Questions and Answers about the <i>Sh'ma</i>	88-97
Sample micrography drawing for the <i>Sh'ma</i>	98-99
Text and Commentary of the <i>Sh'ma</i>	100
Text and Commentary of the <i>Barchu</i>	101-102
Text and Commentary of the Amidah	103-117

שְׁמַע יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד

יְיָ אֶחָד!

כִּרְרַב יְיָ הַמְכִבֵּד לְעוֹלָם

יְיָ אֵל:

① What's the history of the Shmā?

Summary

The Shmā was originally said after the Ten Commandments. The rabbis decided to put it in both the morning and evening services.

My thoughts

I think that the Shmā is a good prayer to come after the ten commandments. It sort of ends it.

② How important is the Shmā in the lives of Jews?

Summary

The Shmā is the prayer a young child learns as his/her first prayer. It is also the prayer that someone says before one dies.

My Thoughts

To me I see the Shmā as the beginning and end of life.



# How important is the Shema in the lives of Jews?

The Shema has become the watchword of the Jewish people. It is one of the first prayers that a young child learns, and it is traditionally said as the last prayer before one dies. Its first six words are recited during the *Kedushah* prayer in the *Amidah*, during the prayer service for taking out the Torah scroll, and at the end of every Yom Kippur service before the final blast of the *shofar*. It is the Torah's classic statement of monotheism (belief in one God).

**T**HE SHEMA is not a prayer in the ordinary sense of the word, but for thousands of years it has been an integral part of the prayer service. The Shema is a declaration of faith, a pledge of allegiance to One God, an affirmation of Judaism. It is the first "prayer" that children are taught to say. It is the last utterance of martyrs. It is said on arising in the morning and on going to sleep at night. It is said when one is praising God and when one is beseeching Him. The faithful Jew says it even when questioning Him. The Shema is said when our lives are full of hope; it is said when all hope is gone and the end is near. Whether in moments of joy or despair, in thankfulness or in resignation, it is the expression of Jewish conviction, the historic proclamation of Judaism's central creed.

# What's the history of the Shema?

The Shema was also once read as part of the ancient Temple service. All three paragraphs were then recited aloud by the kohanim following the daily morning offering (Tamid 5:1). The people assembled in the Temple courtyard did not join in this reading, but on hearing the first sentence of the Shema, they responded with:

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

*Barukh shem kyod malkhuto l'olam va-ed.*

Blessed is the name of His Glorious Majesty forever and ever.

The Shema prayer was publicly recited in the ancient Temple during the service following the recitation of the Ten Commandments. The rabbis included it in both the morning and evening services of the synagogue.

In the Temple service the Ten Commandments were read before the Shema. This custom, however, was not adopted outside of the Temple, on account of the Sectarrians who said that only these commandments were divinely revealed (b. Ber. 12a). In the Nash-Papyrus of about the first century c.e. found in Egypt, the Ten Commandments are given before the Shema.<sup>30</sup>

When do we say the Shema?  
Why these times?

The obligation to recite the Shema is independent of the obliga-

tion to pray. It is spelled out in the ensuing verse: "And these words that I command you this day . . . talk of them . . . when you lie down and when you rise up." This was interpreted to mean at night and in the morning (Berakhot 1:3).

Reading the *Shema* (*Keri'at Shema*) twice daily is a precept of the Torah, as it is written, "And you shall speak of them . . . and when you lie down (*besokhbecha*) and when you rise up (*uvekumecha*),"<sup>5</sup> which is interpreted to mean in the night and in the morning.<sup>6</sup> Another reason for *Keri'at Shema* is that it alludes to the Ten Commandments.<sup>7</sup>

Actually reading various sections of the *Shema* takes place more than twice a day at different parts of the service as well as before bedtime.

# Do we say the Shema standing or sitting?

Unlike the Amidah, which must be said while standing, the Shema may be said while standing or sitting (Berakhot 1:3). For a long time the Jews of Eretz Yisrael stood up for the Shema (a) because of its importance and (b) because it was an act of witnessing

God (and testimony in a Jewish court is always given while standing). But in ninth-century Babylonia, during the days of Amram Gaon, the Karaites exploited the widespread practice of standing for the Shema to demonstrate that only the Shema passages of the Torah (and, as we have seen, the Ten Commandments) were important and of Divine origin. To disavow such views, the religious leaders ruled that the Shema be said while seated. And so it has remained. If one has been standing throughout the prayer service, one may continue to stand for the Shema. But if already seated, one should not deliberately rise for it.

Whether to stand or sit when reading the *Shema* was controversial from the early Tannaitic period through the period of the *Amora'im*. In the Geonic period those in Eretz Yisrael stood and those in Babylon sat. Rav Amram Gaon (ninth century) of Babylon ruled that sitting was proper because the Karaites said that standing at *Shema* is to demonstrate that only *Keri'at Shema* is from the Torah (as they claimed concerning the Ten Commandments), and therefore the custom remained to say the *Shema* and its blessings (see KEDUSHAH DE-YESHIVAH) in a sitting position.<sup>46</sup> Thus, someone who wishes to act stringently and stands up when he happens to be sitting, so that he can read the *Shema* standing up, is termed a transgressor.<sup>47</sup> Another reason for sitting is that when God came to visit Abraham on the third day of his circumcision, he attempted to rise but God did not permit it. Abraham protested and God said, "Just as you are sitting and I am standing, so shall it be when the Israelites will read the *Shema* in My honor—they will sit while I will reside therein as written, 'God standeth in the congregation of God' (Ps. 82:1)."<sup>48</sup>

Why do we cover our eyes when we say the Shema?

### *Prayer Motions*

1. The custom is to cover one's eyes when reciting the opening line of the Shema: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." This keeps the worshipper away from distraction and allows him or her to concentrate on God's Oneness.

Jewish law requires a greater measure of kavanah when saying the first verse of the Shema. The need for this higher degree of kavanah has led to the custom of closing one's eyes or covering them with one's hand when reciting it. This is to eliminate every distraction and to help one concentrate on the meaning of what is being said. Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi first set the example for the practice. The Talmud says that "when [he] covered his face with his hands, he would affirm the yoke of Divine rule" (Berakhot 13b).

It is customary to put the right hand over the face when reading the first verse, in order not to look at anything that might be distracting. In this way a person is able to concentrate entirely on the thought of the unity of God.<sup>49</sup> Sephardim of Israel place

the fingers of the right hand in such a position as to form the word *Shadai* ("Almighty").<sup>50</sup>

Is the Shmā really a  
prayer? How loudly should  
we say the Shmā?

The Shema may be said somewhat more audibly than the Amidah. In prayer, which is said very quietly, we address ourselves to God, and for Him we do not need to raise our voices. It is in fact a shortcoming (Berakhot 24b, 31a). But the Shema is instructional; by saying it we reaffirm and teach ourselves principles of Jewish faith. "For this, one should clearly hear what one is saying" (Berakhot 15a; OH 62:3).

Why are the last letter of the first word  
and the last letter of the last word  
written in big print?

The last Hebrew letter of the word Shema and the last Hebrew letter of the word *echad* ("one") often appear enlarged in various prayerbooks. These two large letters form the Hebrew word *ayd* ("witness"). Thus every Jew, by pronouncing the Shema, becomes one of God's witnesses, testifying to God's Unity in the world.

# Why do we say the second line of the Shema silently?

1. The second line of the Shema, *Baruch shem kavod malchuto le'olam va'ed* ("Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom forever"), is recited silently, except during the High Holy Days (with the theme of God as the Sovereign of sovereigns), when it is chanted aloud for added emphasis. One reason given in the Midrash (Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:36) for its silent rendering is that Moses heard this prayer from the

angels, and taught it to Israel. People dare not to say it aloud, because people are sinful and, thus, unworthy of uttering an angelic formula. This response, first used in the Temple during the Yom Kippur service, was later made the accompaniment of the opening verse of the Shema.

Various reasons are given for saying *Barukh Shaym* in a hushed voice all year and in fortissimo on Yom Kippur. Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the "end of the days" (the final universal redemption), and on his deathbed he asked them regarding their belief in One God and they answered, "Hear, O Israel [referring to their father], the Lord our God the Lord is One." Jacob responded with, "Blessed be the Name of His glorious Kingdom forever and ever." Thus it was enacted to be read quietly.<sup>39</sup> This mode of response is either because it is not biblical, as the rest of *Shema* and/or it is said merely because Jacob said it<sup>40</sup> in a whisper, so we, too, say it in a low voice.

Scholars believe that this insertion dates from the period of Roman rule, when emperor worship was practiced. The insertion was intended to emphasize that only God, who is eternal, is to be praised. As a matter of prudence it was said quietly.

What are the blessings said before and after the Shema?

The Mishnah prescribes that the Shema' should be preceded and followed by benedictions at both the morning and evening services (*M. Ber.* 1:4). The morning service has two benedictions before the Shema' and one after. The first benediction begins with יוצר אור. Since the Shema' proclaims the unity of God, this benediction forms an appropriate opening. Based on Isaiah 45:7, it offers thanks to God for creating the light of day, and for renewing His creation each morning. The second benediction praises Him as the giver of the Torah, and the third, as the redeemer of Israel.

The sages did, however, formulate blessings reflecting central religious ideas of Judaism to accompany the twice-daily recitation of the Shema. The Mishnah rules: "In the morning, one recites two blessings before the Shema and one after it. In the evenings, two blessings before and two after" (*Berakhot* 1:4). The blessings surrounding the Shema emphasize: God as the creator of the universe; God's revelation and eternal love for the people of Israel; and God's redemption of Israel. The two blessings before the Shema serve as theological stepping stones to the Shema's proclamation of faith, while the blessing following the Shema refers to the anticipated result of such faith. Though worded somewhat differently, the same basic themes run through both the morning and evening services.

These blessings each have a name. Before the morning Shema, the first blessing is called the blessing of *Yotzer* ("Creator"); the second is called the blessing of *Ahavah* ("Love"); and the one after the Shema is called the blessing of *Geulah* ("Redemption").

Before the evening Shema, the first blessing is called *Maariv*, the same as that of the service. The names of the next two blessings are the same as those said in the morning. After the evening Shema, the second blessing is called *Hashkiveinu*. Its theme is retiring for the night and the need for Divine protection.

Do we really have to say those  
blessings (like the V'ahavta)  
as well?

It was the view of Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi, compiler of the Mishnah, that the Torah enjoins us to recite only this one verse (Berakhot 13b). Others, however, were of the opinion that the Torah obligation encompasses much more than that, yet they differ on how much more. Whatever the case, three passages are now said mornings and evenings to fulfill the mitzvah of saying Shema.

### 1ST PARAGRAPH: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל

This paragraph is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It starts with *SHEMA YISRA-EL*, inserts *BARUKH SHEMA K'VOD*, and then continues *v'AHAVTA*.

In the very first paragraph of the *SHEMA* we declare our acceptance of the 'YOKE' of God's *RULERSHIP*. This consists of three elements: (a) an *AFFIRMATION* of belief in God's *ONENESS* and in God's *RULERSHIP*, (b) a deep, relentless, unconditional *LOVE* of God, and (c) a commitment to study *TORAH*—God's teachings (Maimonides, *Laws of Shema*, 1.2).

This paragraph contains 10 *MITZVOT*: (1) Accepting the Yoke of Heaven, (2) Proclaiming God is One, (3) Loving God, (4) Studying Torah, (5) Teaching Children, (6) Reciting Shema at Night, (7) Reciting Shema during the Day, (8) Putting Tefillin on the hand, (9) Putting Tefillin on the head, & (10) Mezuzah. (Avrohom David, *Metzudah Siddur*).

### 2ND PARAGRAPH: וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעְתָּ

This paragraph comes from Deuteronomy 11:13-21. It is essentially a restatement of the first paragraph, the first is a move to addressing a plural audience, the second is a statement of rewards and punishments to be allocated in response to *MITZVAH*-performance. (A "making a list—checking it twice" passage.)

Whereas the 1st paragraph of the *SHEMA* emphasizes the study of Torah, the 2nd paragraph emphasizes the observance of Torah. Whereas the 1st paragraph is in the *2ND PERSON singular*, the 2nd paragraph is in the *2ND PERSON plural*. In the 1st paragraph, Moses addresses the *INDIVIDUAL Jew*. In the 2nd paragraph, he addresses the collective body of Israel (Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, p. 151).

### 3RD PARAGRAPH: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה

This last paragraph comes from Numbers 15:37-41. It centers on the *MITZVAH* of *TZIT-TZIT*.

This paragraph contains 6 important things: (1) the *MITZVAH* of *TZIT-TZIT*, (2) a review of Exodus, (3) a call to observe the *MITZVOT*, (4) a warning against heresy, (5) a warning about lust, and (6) a warning about idolatry. (*Brakhot* 12b)

Blessed is Israel because The Holy One surrounds them with *MITZVOT*, *TEFILLIN* on their *HEAD* and *HAND*, *TZITZIYOT* on their clothes, and *MEZUZOT* on their *HOUSES* (*Menaḥot* 43b).

1

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

יְהוָה אֶחָד.

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם

כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ

לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְאַהֲבַת אֵת יְהוָה

אֱלֹהֶיךָ

בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ

וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ

וּבְכָל-מְאֹדֶךָ.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם

עַל לִבְבְּךָ.

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם

לְבִנְיָךְ

וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם

בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ

וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ

וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ

וּבְקוּמְךָ.

וְקָשַׁרְתָּם

עַל-יָדְךָ

וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפוֹת

בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ.

וְכָתַבְתָּם

עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בְּיַתְדְךָ

וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

LISTEN ISRAEL

ADONAI is Our God

ADONAI is the ONE (and Only) G

BLESSED be the NAME—

that God's HONORED EMPIRE—  
will last FOREVER and ALWAYS.

You should LOVE ADONAI  
your God

with all your **HEART**,

with all your **SOUL**,

and with all your **STUFF**.

And these words that  
I make *MITZVOT* for you today  
shall be on your **HEART**.

You should **TEACH** them  
to your children

and you should **TALK** about them  
when you **SIT** at home

and when you are **GOING** out  
when you **LIE** down

and when you get **UP**.

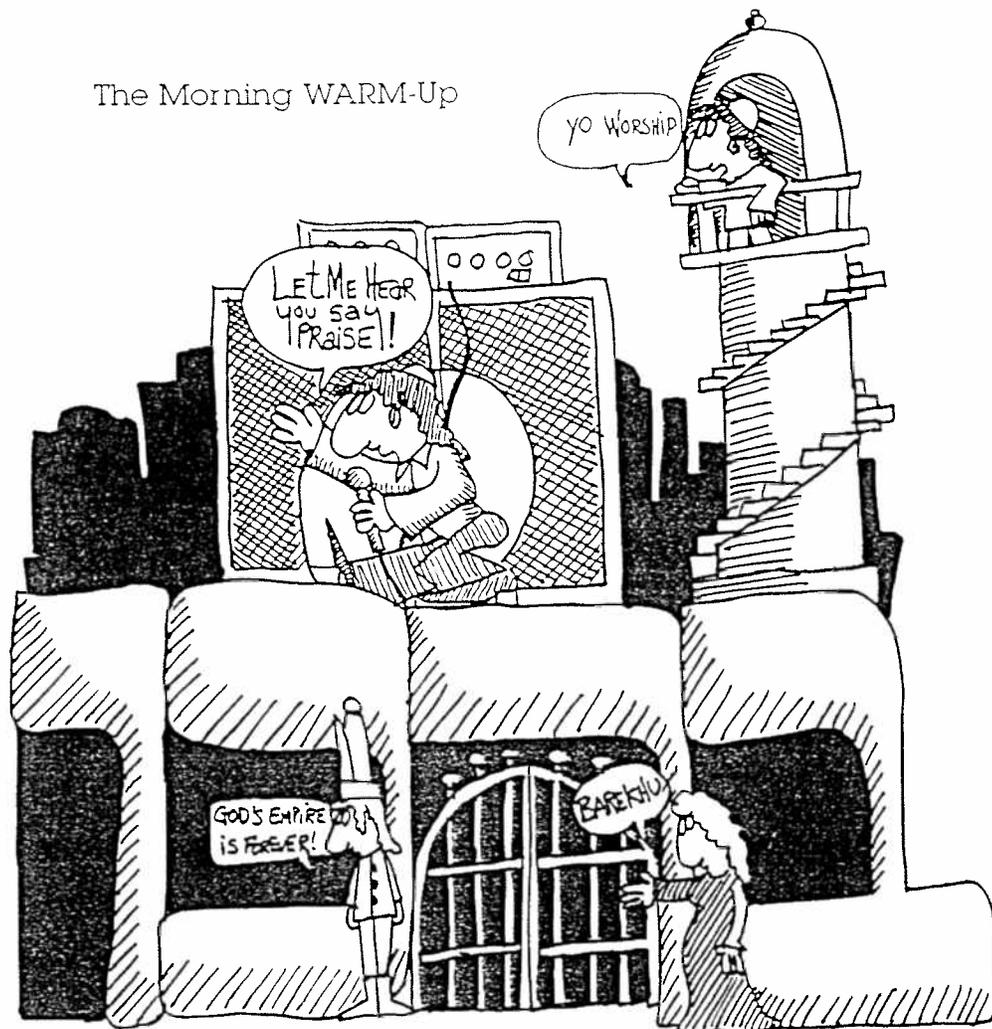
And you should **TIE** them  
as **LETTERS** on your **HAND**

And have them as **SYMBOLS**  
between your **EYES**.

And you should **WRITE** them  
on the **DOORPOSTS** of your **HOUSE**  
and on your **GATES**.

Deuteronomy 6

## The Morning WARM-Up



**T**he BAREKHU is like the gates of the service. You have to walk through these gates in order to enter the garden of prayer. At the gates, a guard asks you a question, "Are you ready to BLESS God?" In order to answer, you must answer, "Yes, BLESS God who is to be BLESSED." In that sense, the BAREKHU is sort of a blessing over all the other blessings.

In the Islamic world, their Hazzan, the muezzin, goes to the top of the Mosque Tower and begins to broadcast the prayer service over the P.A. system. When they hear this, all the Moslems stop their day, take out their prayer rug, face Mecca, and respond. This is their BAREKHU.

The BAREKHU is like going to a Rock Concert where the rock star comes down stage, and screams at the audience, "Let me hear you say 'Yeh!'" And then the whole audience screams "Yeh!"

### Mr. Choreography



The BAREKHU is both responsive singing and responsive bowing.

When the leader says the BAREKHU she or he bends his knees and bows. The congregation is not supposed to join in the bow, though they often do by mistake. They are supposed to bend their knees and bow when they sing (or say their response) BARUKH SHEM...



בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה הַמְבָרָךְ. Are you READY to BLESS God,  
because God's stuff is to BE BLESSED

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַמְבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. (YES! I am READY) BLESS God,  
for God is always-&-forever the SOURCE of all BLESSINGS.

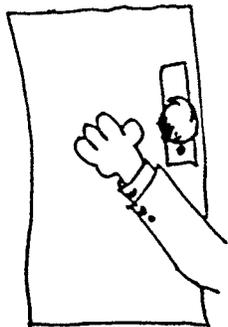
**THE CORE KAVANAH:** Saying the **Barekhu** is like being Lot or Noah... The **Barekhu** is the way we build a **minyan**. Before the **minyan**, we are just a group of at least ten people with a leader. When the leader calls out the first part of the **Barekhu** and we answer, the group becomes a community—a **minyan**—and the Talmud teaches that part of God, the part which can become our neighbor, joins us. We call the neighborly part of God the **Shekhinah**. It takes a story to understand why the magic number for a **minyan** is ten. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were really bad places filled with wicked people doing terrible things. God felt the need to punish the people and wipe out the cities. God also felt the need to share the plan with Abraham. Abraham didn't like the idea of innocent people dying with the wicked. He argues with God, asking God not to destroy the city if Abraham can find fifty righteous people. God says, "Yes." Abraham keeps bargaining. He drops the number to forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and then ten. This is one true story of why Abraham stopped at ten. Abraham counted on his fingers that Lot, Lot's wife, Lot's four daughters, and Lot's four sons-in-law all lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. That made ten. Abraham was sure that six of them were righteous and he hoped that the sons-in-law came up to the family's ethical standards—because he knew that less than ten wasn't enough. Noah and his wife, and his three sons, and his three daughters-in-law were righteous and God didn't stop the flood for their sake. A **minyan** is ten because God won't save the world for less than ten people who are trying to be righteous. Noah had a drinking problem. Lot was selfish. They were not perfect people—but they tried to be good. God respected their efforts. They were good enough people to be considered righteous. Righteous isn't perfect. (Unfortunately for Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's sons-in-law weren't even good enough people.) When we finish the **Barekhu**, we become part of the **minyan** and invite the **Shekhinah** to join us. A **minyan** is a support group of at least ten people who want to save the world through their best efforts (*Genesis Rabbah* 24.13).

# THE AMIDAH

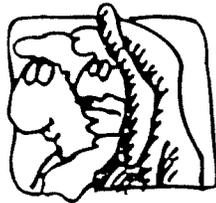
The Talmud tells us that we should connect the end of the SHEMA-&-Her-BRAKHOT directly to the beginning of the AMIDAH—without pause or interruption.

To what can failing to join G'ULAH to AMIDAH be compared? To a friend who came to the KING's palace, knocked at the door, and then left before the king could answer it.

*Tur on Yerushalmi Brakhot 1.1.*

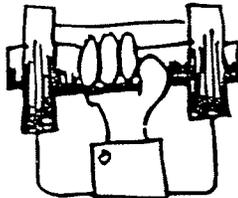


## PRAISE



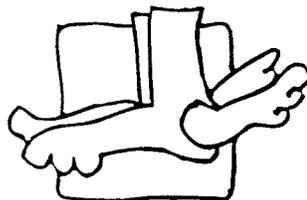
### 1. AVOT

You are The ONE-Who-Did-GOOD for our Ancestors



### 2. G'VUROT

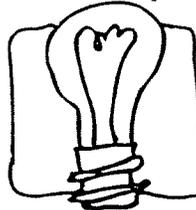
You are our HERO



### 3. KEDUSHAH

You are the source of HOLINESS.

## PETITION: Personal Requests



### 4. BINAH

We need WISDOM



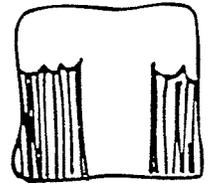
### 5. T'SHUVAH

We need REPENTANCE



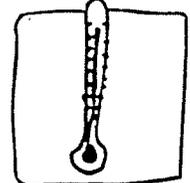
### 6. SLIHAH

We need FORGIVENESS



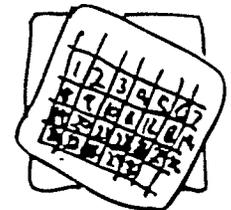
### 7. G'ULAH

We need REDEMPTION



### 8. REFU'AH

We need HEALING



### 9. BIRKAT ha-SHANIM

We need a YEAR of BLESSINGS

## The Structure of the AMIDAH

In the Talmud, Brakhot 34a, we find this explanation:

Rabbi Haninah: While saying the first three BRAKHOT one resembles a servant who praises his master. During the middle BRAKHOT one resembles a servant requesting gifts from her master. During the last three BRAKHOT one resembles a servant who has received his gifts and takes his leave.

We still use Rabbi Haninah's metaphor as a way of thinking about the AMIDAH. We divide the AMIDAH into three parts:

**PRAISE:** The first three BRAKHOT in the AMIDAH are considered prayers of praise. We begin to approach God (in order to ask for additional blessings) by first praising the wonderful things God is and God does.

**PETITION:** The middle thirteen BRAKHOT in the AMIDAH are prayers which ask God to do things for us. They are a series of requests for things we need.

Often these petition BRAKHOT are divided into two parts: The first six (BINAH through BIRKAT ha-SHANIM) are personal requests; the last seven BRAKHOT (KIBBUTZ GALUI-YOT through SHOMEAH TEFILLAH) are considered national requests.

**THANKSGIVING:** The last three BRAKHOT in the AMIDAH are considered prayers of thanksgiving. After having made our requests, we thank GOD in advance, for any of the blessings which will come to be.

**THE SHABBAT VARIATIONS:** On SHABBAT and the Festivals, the petition BRAKHOT are not said. It doesn't seem right to demand action on a day of rest. So, instead of saying those blessings, a single AMIDAH which thanks God for the unique holiness of the day is substituted.

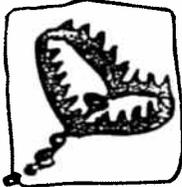
**PETITION:**  
National Requests



**10. KIBBUTZ GALLUYOT**  
We need a return from EXILE



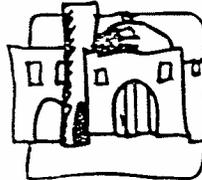
**11. DIN**  
We need Justice



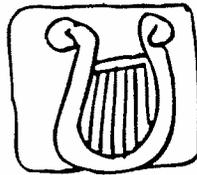
**12. BIRKAT ha-MINIM**  
We need our ENEMIES DEFEATED



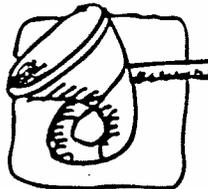
**13. TZADIKIM**  
We need RIGHTEOUS role models



**14. BINYAN YERUSHALAYIM**  
We need JERUSALEM REBUILT

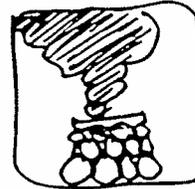


**15. MALKHUT BET DAVID**  
We need the EMPIRE of DAVID again



**16. SHOMEI-AH TEFILLAH**  
We need our PRAYERS ANSWERED

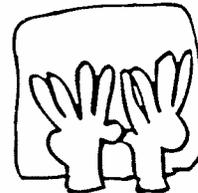
**THANKSGIVING**



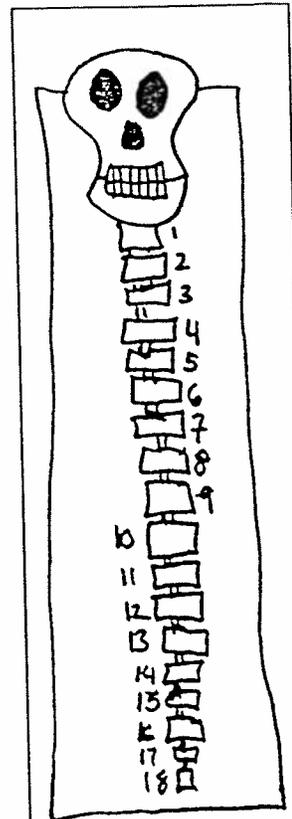
**17. AVODAH**  
THANKS for letting us SERVE GOD



**18. HODA-AH**  
THANKS for letting us PRAISE GOD



**19. BIRKAT SHALOM**  
We need PEACE



According to the Talmud, a spine is made up of 18 Bones. The AMIDAH, which was originally made up of 18 BRAKHOT, is the spine of the Jewish people. The BRAKHOT of the AMIDAH is the way we stand up straight as Jews—and it is the way we orient ourselves.

**THE HISTORY OF THE AMIDAH**

**How Sacrifices Became Prayers**

Back when Israel was first its own country and kings like David and Solomon ran the show, there was only one Jewish TEMPLE, The Temple in Jerusalem. (Shuls, Synagogues, and neighborhood

“Temples” came later.) Jerusalem was the one and only place where Jews could go to worship. While they could come every day (just as we can), the big crowds came three times a year, on the pilgrimage festivals; SUKKOT, PASSOVER, and SHAVUOT.

In the TEMPLE, the major form of **WORSHIP** was SACRIFICE. A SACRIFICE was a lot like a barbecue. A family would bring a sheep or a cow, or some other animal, bird, or even flour, and the KOHANIM, the “priests” who ran the TEMPLE, would cook it or

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,	Blessed are You, ADONAI
אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God,
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,	and God of our <b>PARENTS:</b>
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם,	God of <b>ABRAHAM,</b>
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק,	God of <b>ISAAC,</b>
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.	and God of <b>JACOB.</b>
אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה,	God of <b>SARAH</b>
אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה,	God of <b>REBEKKAH</b>
אֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה,	God of <b>LEAH</b>
וְאֱלֹהֵי רָחֵל.	God of <b>RACHEL</b>
הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל	The <b>GOD, The GREAT One</b>
הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא,	The <b>HERO, The AWESOME One—</b>
אֵל עֲלִיוֹן,	God on High.
גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים,	The <b>ONE-Who-NURSES</b> with <b>GOOD KINDNESS,</b>
וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל,	and the <b>ONE-Who-OWNS</b> everything,
וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אָבוֹת וְאִמּוֹת	and the <b>ONE-Who-REMEMBERS</b> the kindness of the Parents,
וְמַבִּיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם	and brings a <b>REDEEMER</b> to their children's children
לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.	for the sake of God's <b>NAME.</b>
מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר	<b>RULER, HELPER—</b>
וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגִּן.	and <b>SAVIOR</b> and <b>PROTECTOR.</b>
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,	Blessed are You, ADONAI,
מַגֵּן אַבְרָהָם	The <b>ONE-Who-PROTECTS</b> Abraham
וּפּוֹקֵד שָׂרָה.	And The <b>ONE-Who-REMEMBERS</b> Sarah.

**ORIGINS:** The story of Abram smashing the idols is found in midrash. In another midrash, Nimrod, the local king tries to punish Abram by burning him in a huge fire, but God shields him and he is not harmed. This is when the angels first sang the BRAKHAH which ends MAGEN AVOT.

### Mr. Choreography

When we say the AVOT, we bow twice. Once during the פְּתִיחָה, the opening "בְּרוּךְ-formula" and once during the חֲתִימָה, the "בְּרוּךְ-formula" which seals the prayer.

אַתָּה גִבּוֹר      You are a HERO  
 לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי,      forever, my Master:  
 מַחְיֵה מֵתִים אַתָּה,      You give LIFE to the dead  
 רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.      You are GREAT to bring SALVATION

וּמוֹרִיד הַטֶּל      The ONE-Who-Makes the dew come down  
 מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם      The ONE-Who-RETURNS the wind and makes the rain come down

מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד,      Cultivating LIFE in kindness,  
 מַחְיֵה מֵתִים      Giving LIFE to the dead  
 בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים,      with much mercy.  
 סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים,      The ONE-Who-LIFTS UP the fallen  
 וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים,      and HEALS the sick  
 וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים,      and FREES prisoners  
 וּמְקִיֵּם אֱמוּנָתוֹ      and ESTABLISHES faith  
 לְיֹשְׁנֵי עָפָר.      with those who sleep in the dust.  
 מִי כָמוֹךָ בְּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת      Who is like You, Master of Strength?  
 וּמִי דוּמָה לָּךְ,      And Who has Your Image?  
 מְלֶכֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחְיֵה      RULER of DEATH and LIFE  
 וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה      and The ONE-Who-Plants salvation.

וּנְאֻמָּן אַתָּה      And YOU are faithful  
 לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים.      to give LIFE to the dead.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,      Blessed be You, ADONAI,  
 מַחְיֵה הַמֵּתִים.      The ONE-Who-GIVES LIFE to the dead.

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 22, Abraham takes Isaac up to Mt. Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice. In the end, God stops him. According to a midrash, this when the angels first sang the G'VUROT which ends: m'HAYYEI ha-METIM (Praised are You, ADONAI the ONE-Who-Revives the Dead).

### Mr. Choreography

From the AMIDAH of the "additional (MUSSAF) service" on the eighth day of SUKKOT until the AMIDAH of the "additional (MUSAF) service" on the first day of PESAH, we add: מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם between the first and second paragraphs of the second BRAKHAH in the AMIDAH. During the months when this phrase is not said, Sefardim substitute the words: וּמוֹרִיד הַטֶּל. Ashkenazim add nothing.

## Silent Kedushah

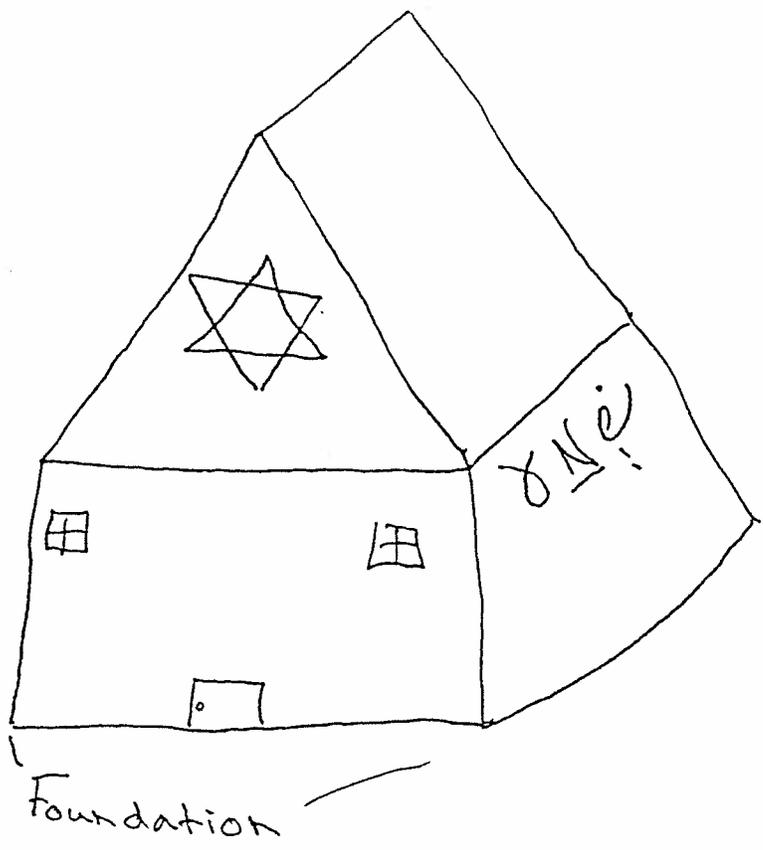
אַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קְדוֹשׁ  
וְקְדוּשָׁיִם בְּכָל-יוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ סֵלָה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה  
הָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ

You are HOLY & Your NAME is HOLY  
& HOLINESS is in every day praising of You. Selah.  
Blessed are You, ADONAI,  
The God, The HOLY (One).

## Shabbat Keddushah

נִקְדַּשׁ אֶת שִׁמְךָ בְּעוֹלָם,  
כְּשֵׁם שִׁמְקְדִישִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשָׁמַי מְרוֹם,  
כַּפְתּוֹב עַל יַד נְבִיאָךָ:  
וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה וְאָמְרוּ:  
קְדוֹשׁ, קְדוֹשׁ, קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת,  
מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:  
אִזּוּ בְּקוֹל רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל אֲדִיר וְחֹזֵק  
מִשְׁמִיעִים קוֹל  
מִתְנַשְּׂאִים לְעַמַּת שְׂרָפִים  
לְעַמְתָּם בְּרוּךְ יְאֻמְרוּ.  
בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:  
מִמְּקוֹמָהּ מְלֻכְנוּ  
תּוֹפִיעַ וְתִמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ כִּי מְחַכִּים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ:  
מַתִּי תִמְלוֹךְ בְּצִיּוֹן.  
בְּקֶרֶב בְּיָמֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד תִּשְׁכּוֹן:  
תִּתְגַּדֵּל וְתִתְקַדַּשׁ בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָךְ  
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר וּלְנֹצֵחַ נְצַחִים:  
וְעֵינֵינוּ תִרְאֶינָה  
מַלְכוּתְךָ בְּדַבַּר הָאֱמוּרָה בְּשִׁירֵי עֲזָה  
עַל-יְדֵי דָוִד  
מְשִׁיחַ צְדָקָה:  
יְמֻלְךָ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם . אֱלֹהֵיךָ צִיּוֹן  
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר . הַלְלוּיָהּ:  
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר נִגִּיד גְּדֻלָּהּ.  
וּלְנֹצֵחַ נְצַחִים קְדַשְׁתָּהּ נִקְדִישׁ.  
וְשִׁבְחָהּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפִּינוּ לֹא יִמוּשׁ  
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.  
כִּי אֵל מְלֵךְ גָּדוֹל וְקְדוֹשׁ אַתָּה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ:

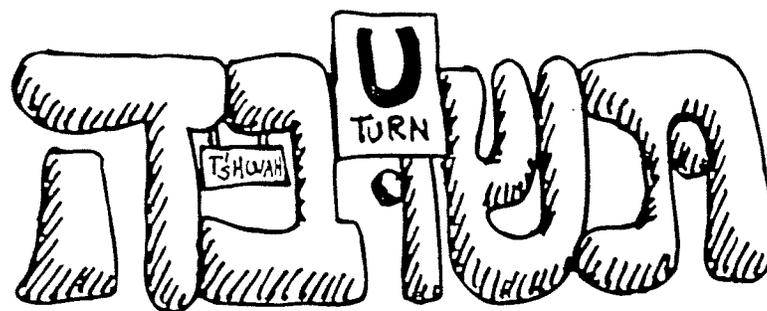
Let us make Your NAME HOLY in the Cosmos  
Just like they make it HOLY in the Heavens of the Heights—  
As it is written by the hand of Your Prophet:  
“And they called, one to the other, and said:  
HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is ADONAI of Hosts,  
all the earth is full of God’s Honor”  
Then in a voice, NOISY, BIG, KIND & STRONG  
they make their voice heard,  
lifted up toward the seraphim  
those facing the seraphim say: “BARUKH.”  
Blessed be ADONAI’S honor from God’s place.  
From Your Place, our Ruler  
Appear to us and Rule over us because You make us wise.  
When will You rule in Zion?  
Soon? In our days? Forever and ever come. Be our neighbor  
Be made BIG & be made HOLY inside Jerusalem Your city  
from generation to generation & from gladness to gladness.  
And let our eyes see it—  
Your Kingdom as it is said in the songs of Your strength  
written by the hand of David,  
the Anointed One of Your Righteousness:  
ADONAI, Rule forever, “You are the God of Zion  
from generation to generation. Halleluyah.”  
From generation to generation we will tell of Your greatness  
from gladness to gladness Your holiness we make Holy  
and Your Praise, Our God, doesn’t stop flowing from our mouths  
forever & ever.  
Because You are The God, The Ruler, The Great One, and The Holy One.  
Blessed are You, ADONAI, The God, The Holy One.



I think the Shema serves as a piece to the foundation to the Jewish religion.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 4: *Binah*

**IGINS:** In Genesis 41, Pharaoh sends for Joseph so that Joseph can interpret his dreams. According to a midrash, the angels taught Joseph the seventy languages spoken in the world and other secret knowledge just the previous night. In this midrash we also learn that this is when the angels first sang BIRKAT BINAH.

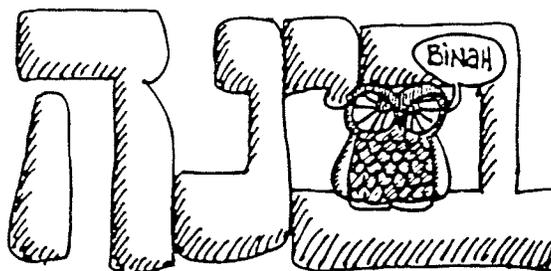


אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת  
 וּמְלַמֵּד לְאָנוּשׁ בִּינָה.  
 חַנּוּנוּ מֵאַתָּה  
 דַּעַת  
 בִּינָה  
 וְהַשְׂפִּיל.  
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
 חוֹנֵן הַדַּעַת.

You favor people with KNOWLEDGE  
 and teach humans UNDERSTANDING.  
 (Please) favor us from You (with)  
 KNOWLEDGE  
 UNDERSTANDING  
 and INTELLIGENCE.  
 Blessed are You, ADONAI  
 The-ONE-Who-MAKES-a-GIFT of KNOWLEDGE.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 5: *T'shuvah*

**Origins:** In Genesis 35, we learn that Reuben stole from his father. According to a midrash, BIRKAT T'SHUVAH was first said when he repented. It ends, Praised are You, ADONAI the ONE-Who-WANTS REPENTANCE.

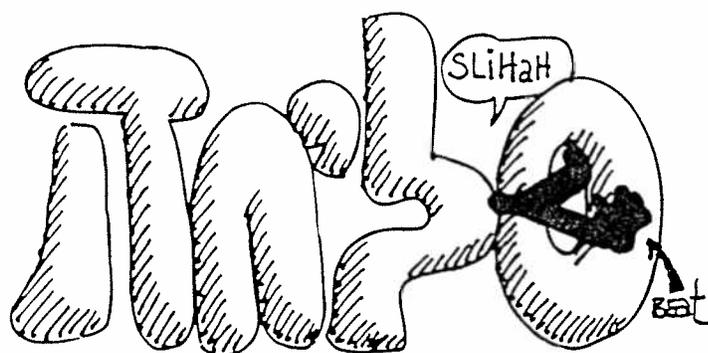


הַשִּׁיבֵנו אֲבִינוּ  
 לְתוֹרָתְךָ  
 וְקַרְבֵנו מִלְּפָנֶיךָ  
 לְעִבּוּדְךָ,  
 וְהַחְזִירֵנוּ  
 בְּתְשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה  
 לְפָנֶיךָ.  
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
 הַרוֹצֵה בְּתְשׁוּבָה.

RETURN us, Our Parent  
 to Your Torah  
 and BRING us CLOSE, Our Ruler,  
 to Your work/service  
 and RETURN us  
 in complete REPENTANCE  
 before You.  
 Blessed are You, ADONAI  
 The-ONE-Who-WANTS REPENTANCE

## The AMIDAH—Brakhot 6: *Sliḥah*

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 38, Judah is responsible for his daughter-in-law Tamar being harmed. The midrash tells us that Judah accepted all responsibility for the incident and that God forgave him—and that this is when the angels first sang BIRKAT SLIḤAH. It ends: Blessed are You, ADONAI, The GRACIOUS-One, The ONE-Who-MULTIPLIES opportunities to FORGIVE.



סְלַח לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ,  
מַחַל לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ,  
כִּי מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אַתָּה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
חֲנוּן  
הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַלֵּחַ.

*FORGIVE* us, Our Parent, because we sin.  
*WIPE US CLEAN*, Our Ruler, because we do wrong.  
Because You *WIPE CLEAN* and *FORGIVE*.  
Blessed are You, ADONAI,  
The *GRACIOUS*-One,  
The *ONE-Who-MULTIPLIES* opportunities to *FORGIVE*.

## The AMIDAH—Brakhot 7: *G'ulah*

רְאֵה בְּעַנְיֵינוּ,  
וְרִיבָה רִיבֵנוּ,  
וּגְאֲלֵנוּ מִהָרָה  
לְמַעַן שְׁמִיךְ,  
כִּי גוֹאֵל חָזֵק אַתָּה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
גוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

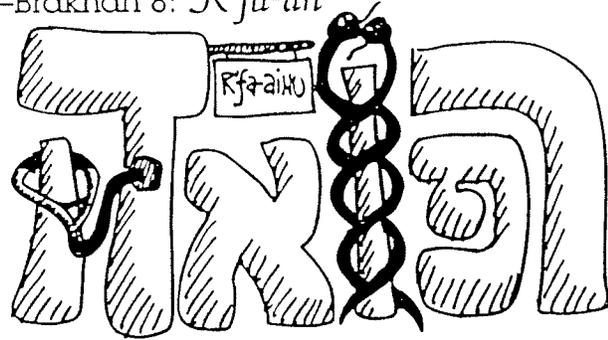
See our suffering  
and make problems for those who cause us problems  
and *REDEEM* us quickly  
for the sake of Your *NAME*  
because You are a Strong *REDEEMER*  
Blessed be You, ADONAI  
The *ONE-Who-REDEEMS* Israel.

**ORIGINS:** In chapter 14 of Exodus, the Jewish people cross the Reed Sea and are *REDEEMED* from slavery in Egypt. According to one midrash this is when the angels first sang BIRKAT G'ULAH. It ends: Blessed be You, ADONAI, The *ONE-Who-REDEEMS* Israel.



The AMIDAH—Brakhah 8: R'fu-ah

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 17, Abraham is circumcised at the age of 99. According to a midrash, God helped him heal quickly and then the angels sang BIRKAT R'FUAH: Praised are You, ADONAI, The ONE-Who-HEALS the sick of Israel.



רְפָאֵנוּ יְהוָה וְנִרְפָּא,  
 הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִשְׁעָה,  
 כִּי תִהְלֹתֵנוּ אִתָּה,  
 וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה  
 לְכָל מַכּוֹתֵינוּ,  
 כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ רוֹפֵא  
 נֶאֱמָן וְרַחֲמָן אַתָּה.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
 רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

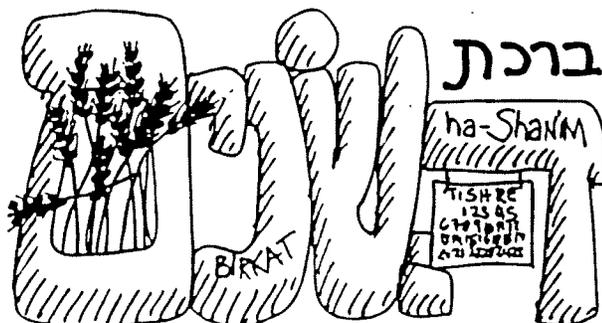
HEAL us ADONAI and we will be HEALED  
 SAVE us and we will be SAVED.  
 Because You are our PRAISED-ONE.  
 And please bring on us complete HEALING  
 to all our hurts  
 because GOD-RULER-HEALER,  
 FAITHFUL-One-&-MERCIFUL-One are YOU.  
 Praised are You, ADONAI,  
 The ONE-Who-HEALS the sick of Israel.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 9: Birkat ha-Shanim

בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת  
 וְאֶת-כָּל-מִינֵי תְבוּאָתָה לְטוֹבָה  
 וְתֵן בְּרָכָה  
 וְתֵן טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרָכָה  
 עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה  
 וּשְׂבַעֵנוּ מִטוֹבָה,  
 וּבְרַךְ שְׁנֵתֵנוּ כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
 מְבָרַךְ הַשָּׁנִים.

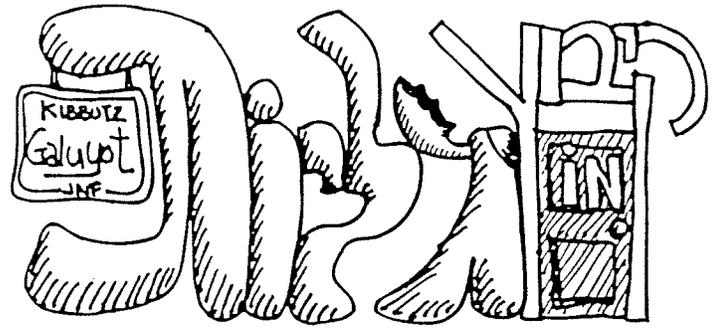
ADONAI, our God, BLESS  
 THIS YEAR for us—  
 and all kinds of PRODUCE—for GOOD  
 and give us BLESSING  
 and give us dew and rain as a BLESSING  
 on the face of the land.  
 and SATISFY us with its GOODNESS  
 and BLESS OUR YEAR as one of THE GOOD YEARS.  
 Blessed be You, ADONAI,  
 The ONE-Who-BLESSES the YEARS.

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 26:12 we are told, Isaac planted the land and harvested a hundred times more—GOD Blessed Him. According to a midrash, when Isaac was blessed with this great harvest, the angels first sang BIRKAT ha-SHANIM.



The AMIDAH—Brakhah 10: *Kibbutz Galuyot*

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 47, Joseph brings his father Jacob up to Egypt. For the first time in many years, the entire Jewish family is reunited. According to a midrash, this is when the angels first sang KIBBUTZ GALUYOT.

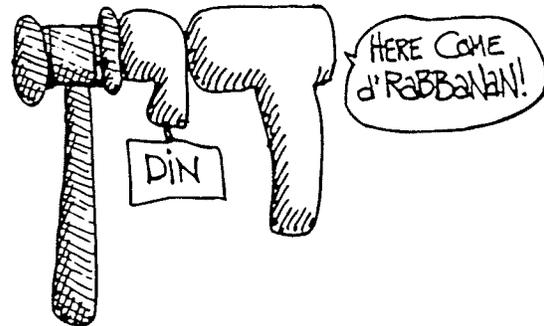


תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵרוּתֵנוּ,  
וְשֵׂא נֵס לְקִבְּץ גְּלוּיֵינוּ,  
וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד  
מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Sound the big SHOFAR for our FREEDOM  
and lift up a FLAG to signal the INGATHERING of the E  
and GATHER us TOGETHER  
from the four corners of the earth.  
Praised are You, ADONAI  
The-ONE-Who-GATHERS the EXILES of Israel.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 11: *Din*

**ORIGINS:** In Exodus 20, God teaches Moses the first Jewish law code. According to a midrash, this is when the angels first sang BIRKAT ha-DIN. It talks about judges and ends: Blessed are You, ADONAI, The RULER-Who loves RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE.



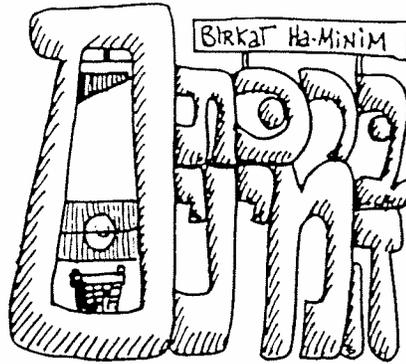
הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ כְּבַר אֲשׁוּנָה,  
וְיֹעֲצֵינוּ כְּבֵתחֶלְהָ,  
וְהַסֵּר מִמֶּנּוּ יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה,  
וּמֶלֶךְ עָלֵינוּ  
אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ  
בְּחַסֵּד וּבְרַחֲמִים,  
וְצַדִּיקְנוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
מֶלֶךְ אֱהָב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט.

Return our JUDGES as in the beginning  
and our ADVISORS like at the start  
and take away from us pain and moaning  
and rule over us.  
You, ADONAI, UNIQUE,  
in KINDNESS & MERCY  
& do with us RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE.  
Blessed are You, ADONAI  
The RULER-Who loves RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUSTICE.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 12: *Birkat ha-Minim*

Reform Judaism chose to eliminate this brakhah from its Siddur. It has been retained in both Conservative and Traditional Siddurim.

**ORIGINS:** In Exodus 14, the Egyptians and their chariots are drowned in the Reed Sea. According to one midrash, this is when the angels first sang BIRKAT ha-MINIM.



וְלַמְחַלְלֵי  
אֶל תְּהִי תִקְוָה,  
וְכָל הַרְשָׁעָה כְּרָגַע תֵּאבֵד,  
וְכָל אוֹיְבֵי עַמּוֹךְ מְהֵרָה יִכָּרְתוּ  
וְהַזְדִּים מְהֵרָה תִעְקַר  
וְתִשָּׁבֵר וְתִמָּגַר וְתִכְנֹיעַ  
בְּמְהֵרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
שׁוֹבֵר אוֹיְבִים  
וּמְכַנְיַע זֵדִים.

As for the INFORMERS

don't let there be hope.

And let all the EVIL ONES disappear in a flash.

And all the ENEMIES of Your people quickly cut them off.

And the WICKED quickly uproot

and break, and drag down, and oppress—

quickly in our day.

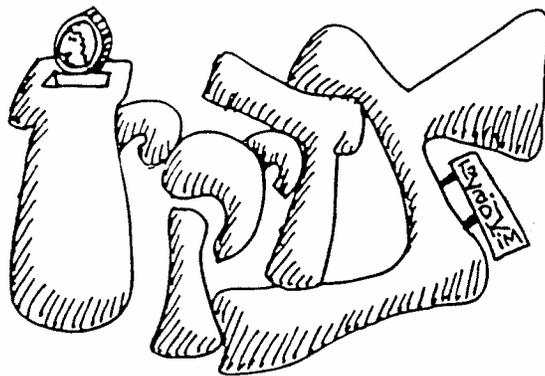
Blessed are You, ADONAI,

The ONE-Who-Shatters the ENEMIES

and oppresses the WICKED

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 13: *Tzadikim*

**ORIGINS:** In Genesis 49, Jacob gathers his sons for a final blessing before he dies. This is when he knows for sure that God's promises about his family's great future will come true. According to the midrash, this is when the angels first sang AL ha-TZADIKIM.



עַל הַצְּדִיקִים וְעַל הַחֲסִידִים,  
וְעַל זְקֵנֵי עַמּוֹךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
וְעַל פְּלִיטַת סוֹפְרֵיהֶם,  
וְעַל גְּרֵי הַצְּדָק וְעַלֵּינוּ,

For the RIGHTEOUS and for the PIOUS

& for the ELDERS of Your people of the FAMILIES-of-ISRAEL

and for the Remnant of the SCRIBES

and for the RIGHTEOUS JEWS-by-choice and for US—

יְהִימוּ בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ,  
וְתֵן שָׂכָר טוֹב לְכָל הַבוֹטְחִים  
בְּשִׁמְךָ בְּאֵמֶת  
וְשִׂים חֶלְקֵנוּ עִמָּהֶם לְעוֹלָם,  
וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ כִּי בָדָה בְּטַחְנוּ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
מְשַׁעַן  
וּמַבְטֵחַ לַצְּדִיקִים.

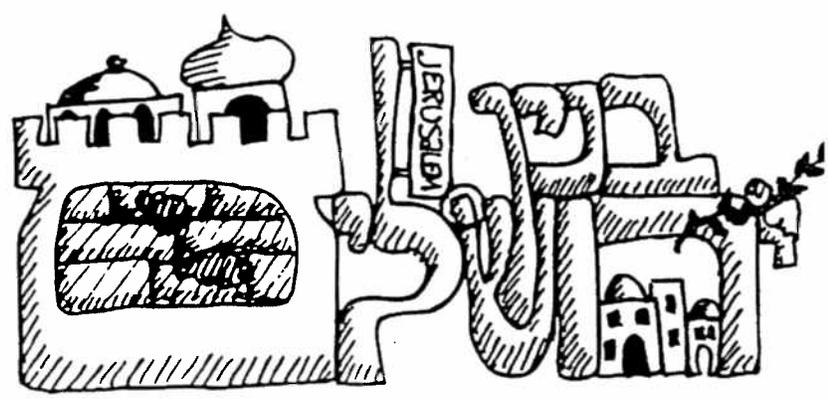
surprise us with Your mercy, ADONAI, our God  
and give a good reward to all WHO TRUST  
in Your name in TRUTH  
and give them a portion in eternity  
and don't let us be embarrassed because we TRUST in You.  
Blessed be You, ADONAI,  
The ONE-Who-Supports  
and The ONE-Who-is-the-TRUST of the RIGHTEOUS.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 14: *Binyan Yerushalayim*

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָךְ  
בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב,  
וְתִשְׁכַּן בְּתוֹכָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ,  
וּבְנֵה אוֹתָהּ בְּקֶרֶב  
בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּנֵן עוֹלָם,  
וְכִסֵּא דָוִד מְהֵרָה לְתוֹכָהּ תִּכְוֵן.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
בוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

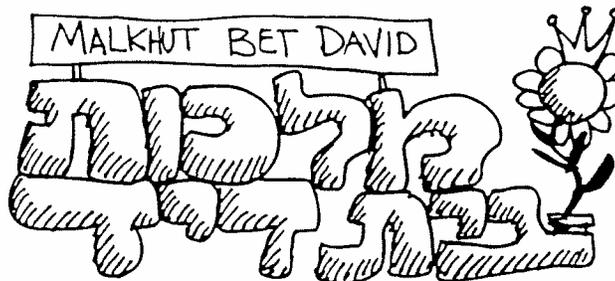
And to JERUSALEM Your City  
RETURN in mercy  
and DWELL in Her as You have said  
and BUILD her soon  
in our days—an eternal BUILDING  
and in Her FIX David's chair quickly  
Blessed are You, ADONAI,  
The ONE-Who-BUILDS JERUSALEM.

**ORIGINS:** When King Solomon finally built the Temple in Jerusalem, a midrash says that the angels first sang BIRKAT YERUSHALAYIM which praises god for building up Jerusalem.



The AMIDAH—Brakhah 15: *Malkhut Bet David*

**ORIGINS:** When Israel sang God's praise at the Reed Sea, singing the Song of the Sea, a midrash says that then the angels knew that this would be the first of many redemptions. This is when they first sang ET TZEMAH DAVID, a prayer about the era of the Messiah



אֶת צֶמַח דָּוִד עֲבַדָּה  
 מְהֵרָה תִצְמַיֵחַ  
 וְקַרְנֵנו תְּרוּם בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ,  
 כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוֹיֵנו כָּל הַיּוֹם.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,  
 מְצַמֵּיחַ קַרְנֵנו יְשׁוּעָה.

The SEED of DAVID, Your servant,  
 quickly PLANT  
 and the HORN of REDEMPTION lift up—  
 because—for Your SALVATION we wait all day long.  
 Blessed be You, ADONAI  
 The ONE-Who-PLANTS the HORN of SALVATION.

The AMIDAH—Brakhah 16: *Shomei-ah Tefillah*

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ  
 וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן  
 אֶת-תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ,  
 כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת  
 וְתַחֲנוּנִים אַתָּה,  
 וּמִלִּפְנֵיךָ מִלְּכֵנוּ  
 רִיקִים אֵל תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ,  
 כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת  
 עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים.  
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.

HEAR our VOICE, ADONAI, Our God  
 care for us and be merciful on us  
 and RECEIVE in mercy and with desire  
 our prayers  
 because You are the God who HEARS prayer  
 and petitions  
 And from before You, our RULER,  
 don't sent us away empty (handed)  
 because You HEAR the prayers of  
 Your People, Israel, in mercy.  
 Blessed be You, ADONAI, The ONE-Who-HEARS prayers.

**ORIGINS:** The FAMILIES-of-ISRAEL were slaves in Egypt for four hundred years. All the while they prayed to God for salvation. When God finally heard and is ready to answer their prayers, a midrash says, the angels first sang Blessed be You, ADONAI The ONE-Who-HEARS prayers.



רְצֵה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	ADONAI, our God, want
בְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִתְפִלָּתָם.	YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL, & their PRAYERS
וְהָשֵׁב אֶת-הָעֲבוּדָה לְדַבֵּיר בֵּיתְךָ	& RETURN worship to the porch of Your house
וּתְפִלָּתָם בְּאַהֲבָה	& the People of Israel & their Prayers
תִּקְבַּל בְּרָצוֹן.	in LOVE accept in <b>YOUR WILL</b> .
וְתִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן תָּמִיד	May it always be <b>YOUR WILL</b>
עֲבוּדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ.	the worship of Israel, Your People,
וְתַחֲזִינָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוּבָךְ	& RETURN our eyes in REPENTANCE
לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים.	to ZION, in mercy,
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,	Blessed be You, ADONAI,
הַמְחַזֵּיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.	The ONE-Who-RETURNS God's NEIGHBORLY ASPECT to ZION.

#### COMMENTARY

In the days of the Temple, sacrifice was the primary form of Jewish worship. When the Temple was destroyed, prayer came as a temporary replacement for sacrifice. Both the idea of prayer and the hope that the Temple would be rebuilt became part of the RETZEL. The Reform Movement believes that animal sacrifice should remain a thing of the past, and therefore removed that idea from its version of this prayer. The Conservative Movement chose to leave the words the same, but finds new ways (or in this case older ways) of understanding it. Orthodox Judaism, of course, believes that the Oral law was given by God and cannot be changed.

**The CORE KAVANAH:** Imagine yourself as the KOHEIN ha-GADOL, the one who gets to go into the HOLY-of-HOLIES once a year and get "up close and personal" with God. Imagine that you could actually feel God listening to your prayers (and maybe get brushed by an angel's wing.) After all these years of praying and wondering if anyone was listening, suddenly you KNOW that God is there, that God cares about your every word, about your every wish & hope & thought. Imagine how grateful you are—that God loves you that much. NOW: Say "THANK YOU."

**ORIGINS:** At the end of the book of Exodus, the Jewish people set up the Tabernacle for the first time. For a while, God had been angry about the Golden Calf and had not been close to Israel. But when the Tabernacle was built, God's SHEKHINAH, the side of God that was Israel's neighbor, again came close. A midrash says that is when the angels first sang RETZEL.

#### Mr. Choreography

On every Jewish holiday and on ROSH HODESH, an extra prayer known as יַעֲלֶה וְיִבֹּא is added to the RETZEL of every AMIDAH except for MUSSAF.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ      We give thanks to You  
 שְׂאֵתָה הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ      That You are The ONE, ADONAI, Our God  
 וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד,      & the God of our ANCESTORS for EVER & ALWAYS  
 צוּר חַיֵּינוּ, מָגֵן יְשָׁעֵנוּ      ROCK of our lives, SHIELD of our salvation  
 אֵתָה הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר.      You are The ONE from generation to generation.

נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ      We give thanks to You & tell of Your Praises  
 עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ,      For our LIVES which are ordered in Your hands  
 וְעַל נְשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ,      & for our SOULS which You visit with us  
 וְעַל נִסֵּיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ,      & for Your MIRACLES which are every day with us.  
 וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל עֵת,      & for Your WONDERS & Your GOODNESS at every time  
 עֶרֶב וּבֹקֵר וְצַהֲרָיִם.      EVENING & MORNING & AFTERNOON.  
 הַטוֹב כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ,      It is GOOD that You don't take away Your MERCY  
 וְהַמְּרַחֵם כִּי לֹא תִמּוּ חַסְדֶּיךָ,      & it is MERCIFUL that You don't end Your KINDNESS  
 מֵעוֹלָם קוּיֵנוּ לָךְ.      forever—You are our direction.

וְעַל כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִתְרוֹמַם שְׁמֶךָ      & for everything blessed & high will Your NAME be  
 מְלַכְנוּ תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.      Our RULER—Always—For EVER & ALWAYS.  
 וְכָל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֵלָה,      & all life THANKS YOU, SELAH.  
 וַיְהִלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאֵמֶת,      & PRAISES Your NAME in truth,  
 הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ וְעֲזָרָתֵנוּ סֵלָה.      The God, Our Savior & Our Helper. SELAH.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,      Blessed be You, ADONAI  
 הַטוֹב שְׁמֶךָ      The Good-ONE is Your NAME  
 וְלֶךָ נֶאֱמָה לְהוֹדוֹת.      & it is beautiful to THANK YOU.

**The CORE KAVANAH:** MODIM means THANK YOU. We know (if we think about it) that "THANK YOU" really means, "Please do it again." So when we say thank you to God for all the neat stuff which God does—we are really asking that God keep it up. (Meanwhile, back at ourselves, we know that anything we ask God for, we have to work at ourselves. If we tell God that God is neat because God is kind and merciful and because God takes care of us all the time, we know a lot more about what we have to do.)

**ORIGINS:** After King Solomon built the Temple and it was dedicated, the people offered the first sacrifices and sang praises to God. According to a midrash, this is when the angels first sang MODIM.

שְׁלוֹם רַב Much PEACE  
 עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֶה תִּשִּׂים לְעוֹלָם. on Israel, Your People, You will put forever  
 כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ because You are the ONE, the RULER  
 אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם. The Master of all PEACE.  
 וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ And may it be good in Your eyes,  
 לְבָרֶךְ אֶת-עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל to bless Your people, Israel,  
 בְּכָל-עֵת וּבְכָל-שָׁעָה בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ. in all times and in all hours with Your peace.  
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה Praised be You, ADONAI,  
 הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת-עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם: The ONE-Who-BLESSES God's people Israel with PEACE.

שִׁים שָׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה Put PEACE, GOODNESS & BLESSING  
 חֵן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים FAVOR, KINDNESS & MERCY  
 עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֶה. on us & on all Israel, Your people.  
 בְּרַכְנוּ אָבִינוּ כָּלנוּ כְּאַחַד BLESS us, our PARENT, all of us as ONE  
 בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיךָ, in the light of **YOUR FACE**  
 כִּי בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיךָ נָתַתְּ לָנוּ because in the light of **YOUR FACE** You gave us,  
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ADONAI, our God  
 תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד, the TORAH of life, & the LOVE-of-KINDNESS  
 וְצְדָקָה וּבְרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים & JUSTICE & BLESSING & MERCY  
 וְחַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם. & LIFE & PEACE.  
 וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ & (may it be) good in **YOUR EYES**  
 לְבָרֶךְ אֶת עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל to bless Your people Israel  
 בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ. in all times, in all hours, with Your PEACE.  
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה Praised be You, ADONAI,  
 הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם. The ONE-Who-BLESSES God's people Israel with PEACE.

### Mr. Choreography

In the Ashkenazic tradition, SIM SHALOM is said only at morning services, a second "peace prayer," SHALOM RAY is said at MINHAH and MA'ARIV. Sefardim only say SHALOM RAY.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer by Ronald H. Isaacs

This readable, informative volume could be used as either an introduction to Jewish prayer or a resource guide. It addresses such topics as *The Language of Prayer*, *Synagogue Geography*, *Prayer Garments*, and *The Prayerbook*. It provides less detail than the Encyclopedia mentioned below, but would probably be enough for a layperson seeking a deeper understanding of Jewish prayer.

### The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer by Macy Nulman

As the name suggests, this is an exhaustive guide to hundreds of Jewish prayers. It includes historical information, major themes, traditions surrounding a particular prayer, and a comparison of Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions.

### To Pray as A Jew by Hayim Halevy Donin

Donin approaches the subject of Jewish prayer from an Orthodox perspective. The best thing about this book is that it is a "nuts and bolts" guide to prayer, explaining the ritual, the words, the choreography, in short anything someone would need to know to feel much more knowledgeable in a synagogue. Donin is comfortable expressing the faith involved in prayer (something the above two resources shy away from), however, do not look for a liberal perspective here.

### Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change edited by Gabriel H. Cohn and Harold Fisch

This is a series of essays about shifting traditions in Jewish prayer over time.

tional (*Musaf*) gathering at noon and a *Neilab* ("closing of the gates") prayer assembly at day's end were also held. The prayer gatherings themselves were called *ma'amadot* (from the Hebrew for "stands" or "posts").

Long after the Second Temple was destroyed and the system of watch posts abandoned, pious worshippers would remain after synagogue services to read portions of Genesis that were once part of the original Temple reading. Even today, certain prayerbooks have retained a section called *Ma'amadot*, which preserves the verses once read during Temple times.

The destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 c.e. effectively ended sacrifices as a form of Jewish worship. The rabbis, led by Yochanan ben Zakkai, ruled that study, prayer, and the performance of good deeds were acceptable substitutes for sacrifices. The Hebrew term *avodah*, which referred to the service in the Jerusalem Temple, was reinterpreted in Tractate *Taanit* 2a to refer to "the service of the heart"—prayer.

## PRAYER IN THE BIBLE

Although sacrifices were the primary mode of communication with God in the Bible, prayer also appears as a form of communication between God and human beings. The concept of prayer in the Bible is based on the assumption that God exists, listens to prayers, and, at times, answers them. In general, biblical prayer consists of personal spontaneous pleas to God, since fixed liturgy did not exist during these times. Although no particular gestures in connection with prayer are mandated in the Bible, certain postures developed naturally to add emphasis to the prayer content: kneeling (Daniel 6:11), prostration (Joshua 7:6), bowing one's head (Genesis 24:26), lifting one's hands (1 Kings 8:22), and so forth. Often prayer was accompanied by fasting, mourning, and weeping, but the ultimate criterion remained sincerity of the heart (Isaiah 58:2-5). Later, biblical prayer gave rise to liturgical patterns, prayer formulas, and musical

renderings, which will be discussed in a later chapter of this book.

Because the needs of people in biblical times were so numerous and complex, prayer often came to reflect a variety of human moods, hopes, fears, feelings, and desires. Biblical prayer takes on a variety of forms, including petition, confession, meditation, thanksgiving, praise, and intercession.

What follows is a partial listing of the earliest recorded prayers in the Bible. Each prayer will be listed in the following order:

Prayer: The words of the prayer and the prayer's biblical source.

Object: The goal or object of the prayer.

Speaker: The person who stated the prayer.

Outcome: The outcome of the prayer.

1. Prayer: And Abraham drew near and said: "Will You sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city, will You indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (Genesis 18:23-24).

Object: Abraham petitions God to forgive the sin of the Sodomites for the sake of righteous people.

Speaker: Abraham.

Outcome: God agrees that He will forgive the sin if ten righteous souls are found.

2. Prayer: And he said: "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray You, good speed this day,

and show kindness to my master Abraham" (Genesis 24:12).

Object: Eliezer petitions God to help in the search for a suitable wife for Abraham's son Isaac.

Speaker: Eliezer, Abraham's trustworthy servant.

Outcome: Eliezer finds Rebekkah, whom Isaac marries.

3. Prayer: Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren (Genesis 25:21).

Object: Isaac petitions God to let his barren wife Rebekkah be able to bear children.

Speaker: Isaac.

Outcome: Rebekkah gives birth to twin sons, Jacob and Esau.

4. Prayer: And Jacob vowed a vow, saying: "If God be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God" (Genesis 28:20-21).

Object: This conditional vow asks God for prosperity in return for devotion to God.

Speaker: Jacob.

Outcome: No immediate outcome occurs, but Jacob ultimately becomes Israel, the third Patriarch of the Israelites.

5. Prayer: And Jacob said: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me:

'Return to your country, and to your kindred, and I will do you good.' I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth that You have shown your servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two camps. Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau . . . " (Genesis 32:10-11).

Object: Jacob petitions God to protect him from Esau.

Speaker: Jacob, Esau's brother.

Outcome: Jacob and Esau reconcile, and Esau forgives Jacob.

6. Prayer: And he said: "O Lord, send, I pray You, by the hand of him whom You will send" (Exodus 4:13).

Object: Discouraged by his mission, Moses petitions God to choose an alternate leader.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God becomes angry at Moses's reluctance to accept his charge.

7. Prayer: Who is like you, O Lord, among the mighty? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, revered in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11).

Object: Moses and the children of Israel sing this praise of God after being liberated from Egypt and crossing the Red Sea.

Speaker: Moses and the Israelites.

Outcome: As a result of the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea, the Israelites are saved, and they sing a song to God.

8. Prayer: And Moses cried to the Lord, saying: "What shall I do to this people? They are almost ready to stone me" (Exodus 17:4).

Object: The Israelites grow angry in the desert because of their lack of water, and blame Moses for their predicament.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God hears the plea of Moses, and tells him to strike a rock with his rod. Moses does so, and water comes forth so that the people are able to quench their thirst.

9. Prayer: Moses returned to the Lord and said, "This people have sinned a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold. Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written" (Exodus 32:31-32).

Object: Moses entreats God to forgive the Israelites for their sin of constructing a golden calf.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God will not permit Moses to suffer vicariously for the sins of his people. God then punishes the Israelites.

10. Prayer: I pray You, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your ways, so that I may know You, to the end that I may find grace in Your sight . . . (Exodus 33:13).

Object: Moses entreats God to reveal His attributes to him.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God reveals the thirteen Divine attributes.

11. Prayer: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance to you and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

Object: This is a formula for a blessing to the Israelite people.

Speaker: God speaks to Moses.

Outcome: This blessing becomes the official Priestly Blessing with which the priests bless the people of Israel. It continues to be used in modern times when parents bless their children on Friday evening.

12. Prayer: Moses cried to the Lord, saying: "Heal her now, God, I beseech you" (Numbers 12:13).

Object: Moses cries to God to heal his sister Miriam, who has been struck with the dreaded disease of leprosy.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: Miriam is cured after seven days.

13. Prayer: And now, I pray You, let the power of the Lord be great, according as You have spoken, saying: The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. . . . Pardon, I pray You, the sin of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, and according as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now (Numbers 14:17-19).

Object: Moses petitions God to forgive the Israelites for believing the spies who presented the negative report of the Promised Land.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God pardons the people of Israel.

14. Prayer: And I besought the Lord at that time, saying: "O Lord God, You have begun to show your servant Your greatness, and Your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth, that can do according to Your works, and according to Your mighty acts? Let me go over, I pray You, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan . . ." (Deuteronomy 3:23-25).

Object: Moses prays to God to let him see and enter the Promised Land.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: God tells Moses to cease petitioning Him about this matter. Moses ultimately sees the Promised Land from the banks of the Jordan River, but he is not permitted to enter it.

15. Prayer: The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without sin, just and right is He . . . (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Object: Moses ends his life of service to God and the children of Israel with a hymn of joy in which he praises God for His dependability and justice.

Speaker: Moses.

Outcome: Moses is told that he will be allowed to see the Promised Land from a distance.

16. **Prayer:** And she vowed a vow, and said: "O Lord of hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will grant Your maidservant a male child, then I will dedicate him to the Lord all the days of his life . . ." (1 Samuel 1:11).

**Object:** The barren Hannah petitions God to allow her to give birth to a son, whom she vows will be dedicated and totally devoted to God's service.

**Speaker:** Hannah.

**Outcome:** Hannah gives birth to Samuel.

17. **Prayer:** And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of the whole community of Israel, and spread the palms of his hands toward heaven; and he said: "O Lord, the God of Israel, in the heavens above or on the earth below there is no God like You, who keeps Your gracious covenant with Your servants, that walk before You in wholehearted devotion" (1 Kings 8:22-23).

**Object:** Solomon entreats God to bring His Presence to earth, focused in the Jerusalem Temple.

**Speaker:** Solomon.

**Outcome:** God causes His presence to dwell in the Temple.

18. **Prayer:** And when it was time to present the evening offering, the prophet Elijah came forward, and said: "O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your request. Answer me, O Lord, answer

me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God . . ." (1 Kings 18:36-37).

**Object:** Elijah entreats God to destroy the pagan god Baal.

**Speaker:** The prophet Elijah.

**Outcome:** Fire from God descends and consumes Elijah's burnt offering, thus proving to the people that there is only one God in the world.

19. **Prayer:** Jonah prayed to the Lord from the belly of the fish. He said, "In my trouble I called to the Lord and He answered me" (Jonah 2:2-3).

**Object:** Jonah, having been swallowed by the big fish, prays to God for deliverance.

**Speaker:** Jonah.

**Outcome:** God hears Jonah's prayer and commands the fish to spew Jonah forth onto dry land.

20. **Prayer:** I prayed to the Lord my God, making confession, thus: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love You and keep Your commandments. We have sinned, we have gone astray. . . . The shame, O Lord, is on us . . . because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him" (Daniel 9:4-9).

**Object:** Daniel asks that God rebuild Jerusalem.

**Speaker:** The prophet Daniel.

**Outcome:** Jerusalem is rebuilt in seventy weeks.