

**Making Baby time into Jewish time:
Infusing Spirituality into the first
year of your child's life**

Rabbi Jordana Chernow-Reader

May, 2011

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Rationale	5
Letter to the Teacher	9
Unit One: Morning	11
Lesson One: Awareness	13
Lesson Two: Daily Miracles	26
Lesson Three: Morning Rituals	38
Lesson Four: Feeding	50
Lesson Five: Early Morning/Middle of the Night	58
Lesson Six: Reflection and Preparing the Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual	74
Unit Two: Day time	89
Lesson One: Martin Buber “I/Thou” Relationship and Moments	91
Lesson Two: Sacred Relationships	100
Lesson Three: Friendships	103
Lesson Four: Community	107
Lesson Five: The sanctity of time	113
Lesson Six: Making Sacred Moments out of the Daily Routine	117
Lesson Seven: <i>Shemirat Haguf</i> (Taking Care of Oneself)	122
Lesson Eight: Reflection and Preparing the Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual	126
Unit Three: Night time	129
Lesson One: Story time	133

Lesson Two: End of the Day Activities	141
Lesson Three: Bath time	156
Lesson Four: Bed time Rituals	166
Lesson Five: Prayer for Healing	177
Lesson Six: Reflection and Preparing the Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual	182
Unit Four: Shechecheynu Moments (Fully Scripted Lessons)	187
Lesson One: This is the child I prayer	190
Lesson Two: Parents' blessing at the Shabbat Table	204
Lesson Three: Shabbat Can Be	213
Lesson Four: Shechecheynu Moments	226
Lesson Five: Reflection and Preparing the Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual	254
Concluding Lesson	258
Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual (Memorable Moment)	264
Annotated Bibliography	266

Acknowledgements:

I would all Rhea Hirsch School of Education faculty, and especially Eve Fein, for all of their help and support throughout my curriculum guide writing process. I would also like to thank my pod Gregory Weisman and Aimee Irshay for their thoughtful guidance and feedback

I want to thank my friends who shared their stories about parenting, expressed their fears and frustrations with being a parent and articulated their unconditional love for their children. These insights helped me develop my curriculum guide.

I would like to thank my parents, Eli and Arlene Chernow who started me on my spiritual journey at a young age and modeled meaningful Jewish practices in our home. I would like to thank my sisters, Rabbi Mari Chernow and soon to be Rabbi Ilana Mills for helping me develop my “half-baked” ideas into full lessons and for reminding me to enjoy the writing process.

I want to thank my husband Luke Reader for supporting me through another capstone project and for traveling on this spiritual journey with me.

Finally, I want to thank my son Julian Micah Reader for inspiring me to write this curriculum guide. Julian opened my eyes to the daily miracles of being a parent and helped me deepen my own spiritual practices. I am continuously awed by my ever increasing love for him. I look forward to experiencing the next phases of growing together.

Rationale

“Anna remembers the first night she brought her baby home from the hospital. ‘I walked around the house for hours and hours, just sensing her presence. I kept thinking, this is like being in a temple! I am dwelling in sacred precincts! It was not that my daughter was God but just that the divine was somehow in our midst.’”¹” The first year as a parent can be full of chaos, sleep deprivation and stress, but it can also be a spiritual, awe-fill and miraculous. Watching a tiny helpless baby grow into a semi-independent toddler can feel wondrous to parents. As parents experience this daily awe, they seek spiritual language to understand and articulate their experiences.

The aim of this curriculum guide is to build a bridge between new parents’ experiences and Jewish tradition. This curriculum guide provides tools and resources for new parents to explore Jewish concepts of spirituality and heighten their spiritual awareness. It aims to enable new parents to have an increased appreciation of the daily blessings and miracles of parenting. This curriculum guide will explore texts, liturgy and rituals to help parents convey their gratitude for these daily miracles. Lawrence Kushner explained spirituality in the following way. He wrote:

In our generation there is much confusion over the meaning of the word ‘spirituality.’ The English word ‘spiritual’ which has its roots in Greek and Christian thought, implies a split between the material and the realm of the spirit. It subtly suggests leaving this everyday material world in order to enter some other spiritual or holy domain. Classical Hebrew lacks such a distinction; for Jews there is only one world, which is simultaneously material and spiritual. To paraphrase Psalms 24:1, the whole world is full is of

¹ Nancy Fuchs, *Our Share of Night, Our Share of Morning*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, (1996), xix.

God. Jewish spirituality is a mode of living in which we are constantly aware of God's presence and purpose.²

This attentiveness to spirituality can enhance new parents' connection to Judaism and strengthen their Jewish identity.

This guide is intended to be used at a synagogue or JCC in a parent and baby class. This guide does not focus on the details and dilemmas of caring for a new baby, but it uses the daily reality of parenting as an avenue into the spirituality of parenthood. As the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'our faith comes in moments... yet there is a depth in those brief moments.' "Parenting teaches us about the faith that comes in moments, if we are willing to give those moments authority."³ This curriculum guide is a recognition and exploration of these moments. This guide seeks to help new parents make the activities they do daily into sacred Jewish time they spend with their child.

As new parents adjust to the reality of having a baby, there is a complete shift in reality of their lives. This can be stressful, frightening and lonely. This curriculum guide seeks to acknowledge the sometimes difficult transition to parenthood and to help new parents find ways to cope with these new stressors based in Jewish tradition. Through an exploration of the liturgy, texts, traditional and non-traditional rituals, this curriculum guide aims to be a source of strength, guidance, and comfort for new parents.

Becoming a parent is also heartwarming, uplifting and rewarding. Parents seek the language to express their appreciation for the wonder of caring for a new baby and the joy of

² Lawrence Kushner, *The Book of Miracles: A Young Person's Guide to Jewish Spirituality*, UAH Press, New York (1987), xii.

³ Nancy Fuchs, *Our Share of Night, Our Share of Morning*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, (1996), xv.

watching their child grow, change and develop. This curriculum will help parents verbalize their feelings of gratitude for the blessing of their new child through Jewish spiritual methods.

Parents as learners, according to Erik Erikson, seek love and affiliation. Erikson theorized that individuals in the sixth stage of development, when the majority of people become parents, are focused on caring for their families and long for community.⁴ This curriculum provides an opportunity for new parents to connect with others in a meaningful way as they collectively unpack their experience of new parenthood through a spiritual lens.

This curriculum guide includes tools for families to create their own rituals and traditions. Ideally these rituals will become an integral part of the families' Jewish life and will be the building blocks of their Jewish homes. Engaging individuals at the beginning of parenthood in Jewish tradition will lead to an enduring connection to Judaism for both parents and children and make being Jewish a central part of their families.

Each class session ends with an opportunity for the student to reflect on the topic. The students will create a journal for themselves which will allow them to chronicle their private thoughts about the various class topics. The students will also create a spirituality scrapbook to share with their child. The aim is for the student to begin the spirituality scrapbook during the class with the hopes they will continue to use it after the class concludes. The scrapbook is intended to be a special keepsake for the families to look back on together as the child grows up.

The curriculum guide concludes with a spiritual birthday celebration. This is an opportunity for students to celebrate the beginning of their spiritual journey as parents through a

⁴ Hebrew Union College, Human Development Class Notes, Fall Semester, Professor Lawrence Garf, September 3rd 2010.

ritual the student design throughout this class. Each unit of the curriculum guide ends with a lesson designed for reflection. This concluding lesson is an opportunity for the clergy from the congregation, if the class is taught at a synagogue, to visit the class to help the students develop their rituals incorporating themes from the unit they just concluded. Students will be encouraged to tailor the ritual to fit their personalities, familial needs and personal preferences. Students will be invited to read some of the blessing, prayers and rituals they have developed in the class as part of the spiritual birthday celebration. Students will be encouraged to invite their family, friends and community to this special occasion.

The Enduring Understandings of this curriculum guide are:

- Spiritual learning heightens our appreciation of the miracles around us every day.
- Increased spiritual awareness enables Jews to unpack their experiences *of yirah* (fear and awe), *ahava* (love), and *hoda-ah* (*thankfulness/gratitude*).
- The Jewish spiritual tradition can facilitate a connection to community, God, and Torah.
- Jews understand small and peak moments in their lives through Jewish tradition.
- Jewish tradition can be a source of strength, wisdom and encouragement to parents.

Letter to the Teacher

Dear Educator,

Thank you for choosing to teach *Making Baby time into Jewish time: Infusing Spirituality into the first year of your child's life*. Being a new parent is an exciting, scary, overwhelming, wonderful, daunting, inspiring, awe-filled and miraculous time. This curriculum guide is an opportunity for new parents to share their experiences with one another and to create community and to learn from Jewish tradition. This curriculum guide seeks to help parents appreciate the moments as they happen to enable them to be present for the miraculous experience of watching a newborn baby grow, change and learn. Throughout this curriculum guide students have the opportunity to draw from their experiences as parents to create their own prayers, blessings and rituals based on Jewish tradition.

This is curriculum guide intended for a “parent and me” class taught at a Jewish institution. It is aimed for parents with a child aged one and younger. Each session is timed to be about an hour to an hour and half allowing for some *smooze* time. The sessions are designed to engage parents while including some activities for children. Many of the session include suggestions for the students to try to home. Even though it is not built into the timetable of the lessons, I recommend the teacher begin class sessions with an opportunity for students to share their experiences with one another.

Each lesson concludes with opportunities for students to write in their journals and add to their spiritual scrapbooks. To encourage the students to write in their journals, I suggest giving the students journal at the first class session. I also recommend bringing in a scrapbooking specialist from the community as a resource for students. The expert could have suggestions for ways the students could make their spirituality scrapbooks in fun and meaningful ways without taking too much time. Some students might prefer to keep a blog or to create home videos rather than to journal or make scrapbooks. The goal of these activities is to give students time to reflect on the topics and to create a keepsake for their child. I encourage students to find the ways to do this that feel comfortable for them.

All of the materials you will need to teach this class are included in this curriculum guide. I have used NJPS translation of the Tanakh unless otherwise specified. I have included all of the hand-outs, reading material as well as sources for additional reading if you or the students would like more information about a particular topic.

I hope you enjoy teaching this class,

Respectfully,

Rabbi Jordana Chernow-Reader

Morning time Unit

This unit focuses on finding the spirituality in the daily morning activities. This first lesson of this unit frames this curriculum guide through activities aimed to help students become more aware of the daily miracles of parenting. This unit utilizes the chaos of morning activities and aims to harness them to become meaningful experiences for parent and child. This unit includes suggestions for the students to try at home and allows for students to share their new practices with the class. The unit ends with an opportunity for reflection and time to incorporate the themes from this unit into the spiritual birthday celebration.

Enduring Understandings

- Embedded within the chaos of the morning are opportunities for spiritual connections or experiences.
- Appreciation of daily miracles can increase spiritual awareness and strengthen connections to Jewish tradition and God.
- Expressing thankfulness for the ability to provide for others enhances the meaningfulness of the moment.

Knowledge

- A *Midrash* from *Exodus Rabbah* about the parting of the Red Sea acknowledged the majority of the Israelites appreciated the miracle of the event, but two individuals did not notice it.
- The fixed Morning Liturgy in the Jewish tradition includes a list of Daily Miracles.
- Jewish rituals can help with separation.
- Judaism appreciates the ability to feed others.
- The Jewish tradition includes mechanisms for finding and maintaining calmness.

Skills

- Students will be able to begin to pay attention to the miracle of parenting.
- Students will be able to develop their own lists of daily miracles based on the *Nissim B' Chol Yom* (The Daily Miracles).
- Students will be able to create a brief morning ritual to ease the separation from partners/spouses and/or child.

- Students will have the opportunity to design a method for thanking God or a higher power for the ability to feed their child.
- Students will have a chance to explore methods for creating calmness.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will be given journal prompts to write about based on the topics of the lessons in this unit.
- Students will be given prompts for their spiritual scrapbook as the keepsake for themselves and their child based on the lessons in this unit.
- Students will have an opportunity to reflect and to designate practices from this unit for the spiritual birthday celebration.

Lesson One: Awareness

Objectives:

- Students will be able to define spiritual awareness.
- Students will be able to compare their moments of spiritual awareness with the characters in the text.
- Students will be to apply the concept of spiritual awareness to their daily lives.

Core Learning Experiences:

Pre Set Induction:

This is the first session in this class series so the teacher will spend the first moments of class introducing the goals and objectives of curriculum. The teacher will ask the students to introduce themselves and their child(ren) to the class. The teacher will also ask the students why they decided to sign up for the class and what they hope to learn from it. The teacher will also introduce him/herself and explain why s/he wanted to teach this class and his/her hopes for the class.

The teacher will also explain that s/he hopes to create a safe space in the class. The teacher will continue by stating we might discuss personal or difficult issues with the hopes that the class with support and help one another. Having a new baby requires significant adjustments to every aspect of life, this class is a place to talk about the difficulties this can create along with the heart- warming moments that occur as a new parent. This class is a place to talk about the experiences and to learn from one another. This class is also an opportunity to connect with Judaism and Jewish tradition and to allow Jewish tradition to help guide the student as they adjust to their new lives as parents.

Set Induction

The students will reenact the Midrash about the Israelites the Red Sea. The teacher assigns different roles to the students in the class. Students are invited to get up and move around the room. They are encouraged to speak their thoughts aloud and to try to put themselves into the

mindset of the Israelites. The teacher can use the words below as the basis for a script, while changing it as s/he wishes.

The teacher will ask the students to pretend they are the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. The Israelites are escaping slavery in Egypt and they running for their lives because they are being chased by the Egyptians. When the Israelites come to the Red Sea and they do not know what is going to happen. They can't go back to Egypt and they can't move forward. They begin to panic. They struggled for so long and they thought they were on their way to freedom, but now it might all have been for nothing. Just when all hope is lost, Moses raises his staff and the sea parts. The Israelites can now safely cross on dry land between the water. They are so overjoyed; they have never experienced anything like this before. It is truly an awe-filled moment.

The teacher reminds the students this is the greatest miracle that has happened. As stated in Lawrence Kushner's book "The Book of Miracles" "the Israelites saw a sight more awesome than all of the prophets combined. The sea spilt and the water stood like walls, while the Israelites escaped to freedom on a distant shore. Awesome. But not for everyone.

Two people, Reuven and Shimon, hurried along the crowd through the sea. They never once looked up. They noticed only that the ground under their feet was still a little muddy – like a beach at low tide.

(The teacher assigns students to play these roles)

"Yuuch!" said Reuven, "there's mud all over this place!"

"Bleech!" said Shimon, "I have much all over my feet!"

"This is terrible," answered Reuven. "When we were slaves in Egypt, we had to make our bricks out of mud like this!"

"Yeah" said Shimon, "There is no difference between being a slave in Egypt and being free here."

And so it went, Reuven and Shimon whining and complaining all the way to freedom. For them there was no miracle. Only mud. Their eyes were closed. They might as well been asleep."⁵

Activity One: The Mud and the Miracles

⁵ Exodus Rabbah 24:1 as quoted by Lawrence Kushner in "The Book of Miracles" page 4-5

The teacher has the group come back together to talk about their experience with this exercise. The teacher asks the students to reflect on it because this idea of the miracles and mud is going to continue to be discussed throughout the day and the whole class series.

Sample discussion questions:

- What do you think is the main idea of this Midrash?
- In your opinion, why did Reuven and Shimon focus only on the mud?
- How do you think they could have seen the miracle around them?
- In what ways is this Midrash application to your experience as new parents?

Activity Two: Mud and Miracles of Parenting

The teacher instructs the students to break up into small groups. The teacher explains they are going to continue with the metaphor of the mud and the miracle. As a group, students are asked to make a list of the mud of being a new parent and a list of the miracles.

Prompt Question:

- What is the mud for you about being a new parent?
- What are the miracles?

The teacher brings the class back to together to compare their lists.

Activity Three: Kushner Quotes

After hearing these lists, the teacher brings the group together to discuss a Kushner quote. This quote can help students to begin to think about how they can focus on the miracles around them while walking through the mud of parenting.

“To be a Jew means to wake up and to keep your eyes open to the many beautiful, mysterious and holy things that happen all around us every day. Many of them are like little miracles: when we wake up and see the morning light, when we taste food and grow strong, when we learn from others and grow wise, when we hug the people we love and feel warm when we help those

around us and feel good. All these and more are there for us every day, but we must open our eyes to see them; otherwise we will be like Rueven and Shimon, able to see only mud.”⁶

The teacher asks the students to analyze this quote:

- Which of the activities mentioned in the quote do you do on a regular basis?
- Do you see the items mentioned in this quote as miracles? Why or Why not?

How do you think we can begin to see them as miracles to be like the majority of the Israelites and not Reuven and Shimon, especially as we care for new babies?

Activity Four: Ways to recognize and acknowledge these miracles

One way Kushner suggests of recognizing and expressing appreciation for miracles all around us is through saying blessings. The teacher acknowledges this might be a familiar practice for some of the students and not for others. The teacher will ask the students to brainstorm ways they to look for, appreciate and express gratitude for the miracles of parenting to avoid focusing on the mud.

The teacher will write down this list on the board if there is one, on a flip chart if not. The teacher will keep this list and revisit it with the students throughout the class.

Activity Five: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- I sometimes only see the mud of parenting when...
- It can be difficult to appreciate the miracle of parenting ...
- My child feels like a miracle to me because...
- When I reflect on the miracles in my life I think about...

⁶ Book of Miracles 6

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- I think you are a miracle because...
- Every day I am amazed to the miracle of being a parent when you...
- The most miraculous thing about being a parent so far is...

Resources:

Lawrence Kushner's "The Book of Miracles" (chapters 1 and 2) are included in this lesson.

For further reading:

Lawrence Kushner's "The Book of Miracles"

Exodus Rabbah

“Yuuch!” said Reuven, “there’s mud all over this place!”

“Bleech!” said Shimon, “I have much all over my feet!”

“This is terrible,” answered Reuven. “When we were slaves in Egypt, we had to make our bricks out of mud like this!”

“Yeah” said Shimon, “There is no difference between being a slave in Egypt and being free here.”

And so it went, Reuven and Shimon whining and complaining all the way to freedom. For them there was no miracle. Only mud. Their eyes were closed. They might as well been asleep.”

“To be a Jew means to wake up and to keep your eyes open to the many beautiful, mysterious and holy things that happen all around us every day. Many of them are like little miracles: when we wake up and see the morning light, when we taste food and grow strong, when we learn from others and grow wise, when we hug the people we love and feel warm when we help those around us and feel good. All these and more are there for us every day, but we must open our eyes to see them; otherwise we will be like Reuven and Shimon, able to see only mud.”

(Lawrence Kushner)

The Book of Miracles

*A Young Person's Guide
to Jewish Spiritual Awareness*

*For parents to read to their children
For children to read to their parents*

LAWRENCE KUSHNER

illustrated by
DEVIS GREBU

UAHC Press | New York

Chapter 1

Opening Your Eyes

When the people of Israel crossed through the Red Sea, they witnessed a great miracle. Some say it was the greatest miracle that ever happened. On that day they saw a sight more awesome than all the visions of the prophets combined. The sea split and the waters stood like great walls, while Israel escaped to freedom on the distant shore. Awesome. But not for everyone.

Two people, Reuven and Shimon, hurried along among the crowd crossing through the sea. They never once looked up. They noticed only that the ground under their feet was still a little muddy—like a beach at low tide.

“Yucchi!” said Reuven, “there’s mud all over this place!”

“Blechh!” said Shimon, “I have muck all over my feet!”



DEVIS GREBU

“This is terrible,” answered Reuven. “When we were slaves in Egypt, we had to make our bricks out of mud, just like this!”

“Yeah,” said Shimon. “There’s no difference between being a slave in Egypt and being free here.”

And so it went, Reuven and Shimon whining and complaining all the way to freedom. For them there was no miracle. Only mud. Their eyes were closed. They might as well have been asleep. (*Exodus Rabbah* 24:1)

People see only what they understand, not necessarily what lies in front of them. For example, if you saw a television set, you would know what it was and how to operate it. But imagine someone who had never seen a television. To such a person it would be just a strange and useless box. Imagine being in a video store, filled with movies and stories and music, and not even knowing it. How sad when something is right before your eyes, but you are asleep to it. It is like that with our world too.

Something like this once happened to Jacob, our father. He dreamed of a ladder joining heaven and earth. Upon it angels were climbing up and down. Then God appeared and talked to Jacob. When he awoke the next morning, Jacob said to himself, “Wow!

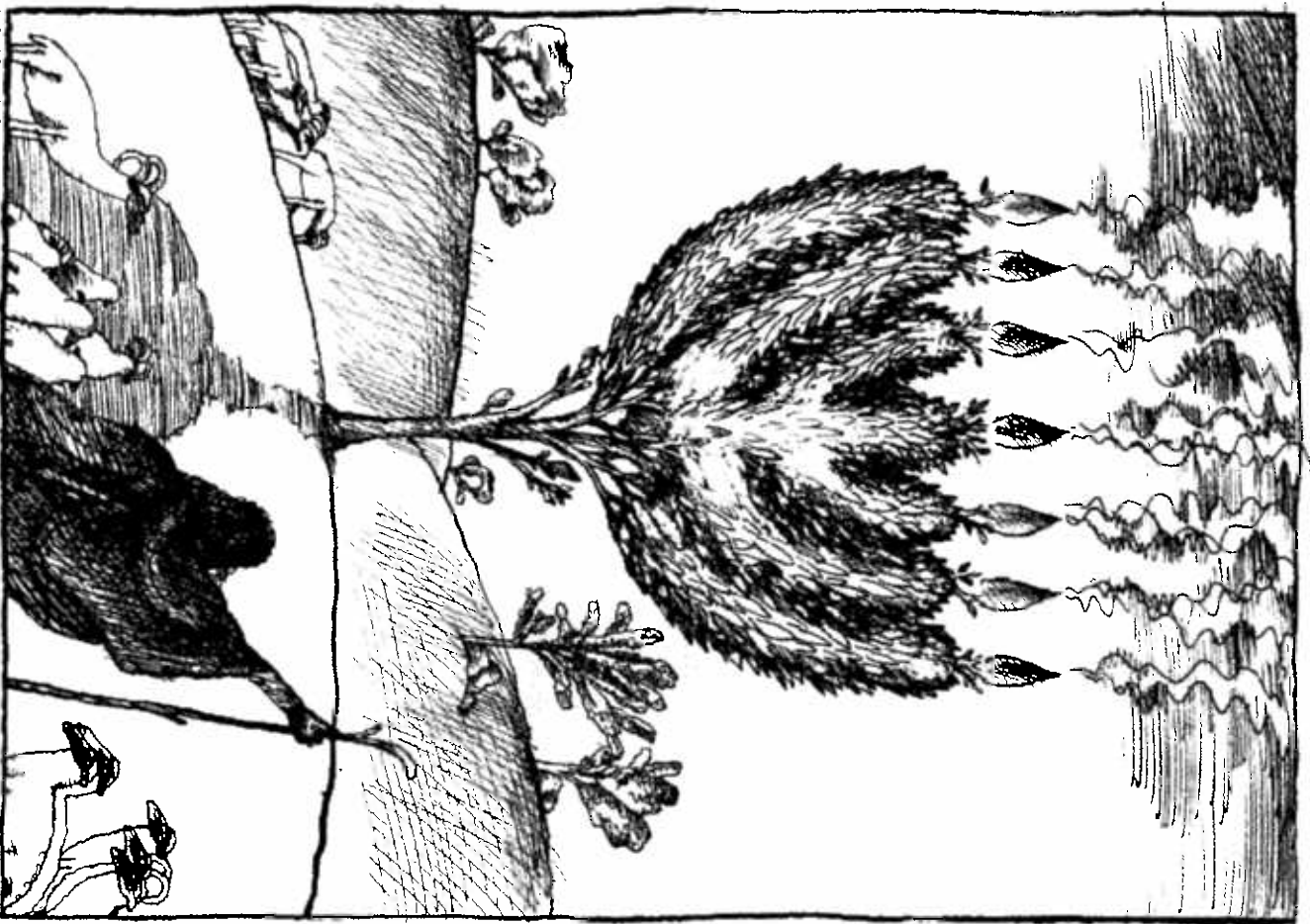
Chapter 2 ◆

Paying Close Attention

Before Moses was a leader of the Jewish people, he was a shepherd. One day, while tending his flock, he came upon a bush that was burning but didn't burn up. As Moses stared at this awesome sight, God spoke to him for the first time. (Exodus 3:1–6)

People usually explain that God used the burning bush to attract Moses' attention. But suppose you were God and could do anything you wanted—split an ocean, make the sun stand still, or set up a pillar of fire. Compared to such spectacular displays, a burning bush is not very impressive. So why did God choose such a modest miracle?

Maybe the burning bush wasn't a miracle but a test. God wanted to find out if Moses could see mystery in something as ordinary as a little bush on fire. For



DEVIS GREBU

Moses had to watch the flames long enough to realize that the branches were not being consumed and that something awesome was happening. Once God saw that Moses could pay attention, God spoke to him.

Much later, when God was ready to give Moses the Torah on Mount Sinai, God said, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there." (Exodus 24:12) Rabbi Menachem Mendl from the town of Kotzk (whom we call, the Kotzker Rebbe) asked: "If God told Moses to come up on the mountain, then why did God also say, 'be there'? Where else would he be?" The answer, suggests the Kotzker, is that not only did God want Moses to be up on the mountain, God wanted him to pay close attention; otherwise he would not really be there. Often people are physically in a place but, because they are not paying attention, they might as well be somewhere else.

Jews have a special way of remembering to pay attention. It is called a *berachah* or a blessing. It begins, *Baruch Atah Adonai*, "Holy One of blessing." *Elohemu Melech ha'olam*, "Your presence fills creation." Then we add words appropriate for the occasion like: "who brings forth bread from the earth," or "who removes sleep from my eyes and slumber from my eyelids," or "who spreads the shelter of peace over us."

Each time we say a *berachah*, we say to ourselves, “Pay attention. Something awesome is happening all around us.” And then we realize that the ordinary world conceals mysteries.

Chapter 3

One Who Is Hidden Everywhere

If you pay close attention, you will discover that wonders and mysteries are hidden everywhere.

The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, used to tell a story about how God is concealed in the world. Once there was a king who was a master of illusion—he could make people see things that weren't really there. More than anything else, the king wanted his people to come and be close to him. But the people were always too busy. The farmers needed to milk the cows, the sailors had to scrub the decks, and the shopkeepers had to sell their wares. So the lonely king devised a plan.

He built around himself a magnificent but illusory castle. Then he sent out invitations to everyone in his kingdom: “You are personally invited to come and be

Lesson: Two Daily Miracles

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze prayers from the morning liturgy.
- Students will be able to apply the ideas of the prayers to their daily lives.
- Students will be able to develop their own version of these prayers.

Core learning experiences:

Set induction:

The teacher asks the students about what they do first in the morning. Students will answer they go to the bathroom, brush their teeth, get a drink of water etc. The teacher will then ask the students what they do first in the morning with their children. Many of the answers will be the same. Student will most likely say they change their babies' diapers.

The teacher will ask the students if they know there is a blessing for going to the bathroom in the morning. Some of the students might be aware of this blessing, but some might not. The teacher will explain this lesson will provide students with an opportunity to learn more about the morning blessings.

The teacher will hand out copies of pages from Mishkan T'filah for students to look at.

The Literal translation of the Asher Yatzer prayer:

“Praise to you, Adonai
Our God, Sovereign of the Universe,
Who has formed the human body with skill
Creating the body's many pathways and openings,
It is well known before Your throne of glory
That is one of them be wrongly opened or closed,
That is would be impossible to endure and stand before You.
Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh, working wondrously.”⁷

⁷ Mishkah T'filah, CCAR, New York, 2007 page 32-33.

The teacher will lead the students through a discussion about this prayer that highlights the euphemisms in it. For example, the throne of glory is the toilet, but the compilers of the prayer book did not want to include the word toilet in a prayer.

Sample discussion questions:

- What do you think are the themes of this prayer?
- In your opinion, why would there be a prayer thanking God for the body working correctly (being able to go to the bathroom)?
- Have you ever considering thanking God for this ability before you learned about this prayer?
- How do you think your experience of changing your child's diaper would be different if you were reminded of this prayer?

Activity One: Decoration of Asher Yatzer for students' homes

Students will be invited to make their own version of the Asher Yatzer prayer to put up on their changing table. The teacher will hand out copies of the prayer in Hebrew, English and transliteration. Students will be given rectangular strips of paper to write out the prayer and to decorate around it.

While having the prayer posted on the changing table might not make changing a full diaper any more enjoyable, it might be a reminder that the baby's body is working correctly. When a baby's body is working as it is supposed to that is something for which parents feel grateful, even if it means changing a smelly diaper.

Activity Two: *Nisim B' chol Yom* (The Daily Miracles)

Students will continue learning about the morning liturgy as the discussion moves on to the *Nisim B' chol Yom*. These blessing are an opportunity to thank God for our daily miracles. The rabbis said people should strive to say one hundred blessing each day. Saying so many blessing encourages people to express thanks to God and helps create an awareness of the wonder and miracles around us every day. As new parents, these blessing can help remind us of the miracles in our children we encounter every day.

Students will be given a copy of this prayer in Hebrew, English and Transliteration.

Students will look through the prayers individually. As the students read through these prayers they will highlight with a highlighters or marker the actions they do each day.

After giving the students a few minutes to read the prayers, the teacher will bring the group back together to discuss them.

Sample discussion questions:

- Which prayers did you highlight and why?
- Do you see a similarity between God's role in these prayers and your morning routine with your child?
- If so, do you think the composers of the prayer intended to make this link why or why not?
- In your opinion, in what ways are the actions mentioned in these prayers miracles?
- How has being a parent changed your perception of daily miracles?

Activity Three: Making a personal version of *Nisim B'chol Yom*

After reviewing the *Nisim B'chol Yom* from the prayer book and discussing how their perception of daily miracles has changed as parents, students will be given time to make a list of the daily miracles they experience as parents. (Students can put these in the spiritual scrapbooks when they are finished)

As preparation for this activity the teacher will ask the students:

- When you think of the words miracle and your child what do you think of?
- What something miraculous you noticed about your child today?
- What is something miraculous you notice about your child everyday?
- What has been the most miraculous experience of parenthood you have had thus far?

After giving the prompt questions, the teacher will give the students a chance to free write. Once the free write is completed, the student will be invited to transfer the ideas from their lists into the prayer formula.

Blessed are you Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe who...

Or

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Haalom...

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- My child has changed my view of miracles by...
- The miracles I most want to remember from this time I have with my young child are...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- Everyday, I think of you as a miracle because or when you...
- Watching you...has felt like a miracle to me because...

Resources:

Mishkah T'filah pages 32-33 (*Asher Yatzer*)

Mishkah T'filah pages 36-40 (*Nisim B'Chol Yom*)

Baruch atah, Adonai
 Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
 asher yatzar et haadam b'chochmah
 uvara vo n'kavim, n'kavim,
 chalulim, chalulim.
 Galui v'yadua lifnei chisei ch'vodecha
 she-im yipatei-ach echad meihem,
 o yisareim echad meihem,
 l'efshar l'hitkayeim
 v'laanod l'fanecha.
 Baruch atah, Adonai,
 rofei chol basar umaffli laasot.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה
 וּבָרָא בּוֹ נְקָבִים, נְקָבִים,
 חֲלוּלִים, חֲלוּלִים.
 גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ
 שֶׁאִם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם,
 או יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם,
 אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם
 וְלַעֲמוֹד לִפְנֶיךָ.
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי,
 רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

ברוך אתה, יי
 אלהינו, מלך העולם,
 אשר יצר את האדם בחכמה
 וברא בו נקבים, נקבים,
 חלולים, חלולים.
 גלוי וידוע לפני כסא כבודך
 שאם יפתח אחד מהם,
 או יסתם אחד מהם,
 אי אפשר להתקיים
 ולעמוד לפניך.
 ברוך אתה, יי,
 רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
 our God, Sovereign of the universe,
 who formed the human body with skill
 creating the body's many pathways and openings.
 It is well known before Your throne of glory
 that if one of them be wrongly opened or closed,
 it would be impossible to endure and stand before You.
 Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh, working wondrously.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.
 Baruch atah, Adonai, rofei chol basar umaffli laasot.

sons to peek
 into and the
 first that
 left

MY GOD I thank You for my life, body, and soul;
help me realize that I am something new,
someone who never existed before,
someone original and unique in the world.
For if there had ever been someone like me,
there would have been no need for me to exist.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, רוֹפֵא כָּל בֶּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Baruch atah, Adonai, rofei chol basar umafli laasot.

BLESSED ARE YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe.
With divine wisdom You have made our bodies,
combining veins, arteries and vital organs
into a finely balanced network.
Wondrous Maker and Sustainer of life,
were one of them to fail —
how well we are aware! —
we would lack the strength to stand in life before You.
Blessed are You, Adonai,
Source of our health and strength.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, רוֹפֵא כָּל בֶּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Baruch atah, Adonai, rofei chol basar umafli laasot.

Why is it important to pause and count our blessings? Because of the human temptations to pray only prayers of asking for something at those times when we are aware of the pain and the unfulfilled yearnings in our life. We can only begin to accept the *all* of life, and affirm that life is worth its price, if we lift to consciousness all the *good* in our lives. *Samuel E. Karff*

נְסִים בְּכָל יוֹם

NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

BARUCH atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
asher natan lasechvi vinah
l'havchin bein yom uvein lailah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְשִׁכּוּי בֵינָה
לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.

For awakening

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has given the mind the ability to distinguish day from night.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
pokei-ach ivrim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
פוֹקֵחַ עֵוְרִים.

For vision

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who opens the eyes of the blind.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
matir asurim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.

For the ability
to stretch

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who frees the captive.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
zokeif k'fufim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.

For rising to the
new day

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who lifts up the fallen.

נְסִים בְּכָל יוֹם *Nisim b'chol yom . . . For daily miracles . . .* These morning blessings evoke wonder at awakening to physical life: we open our eyes, clothe our bodies, and walk again with purpose; spiritual life also, we are created in God's image, are free human beings, and as Jews, celebrate the joy and destiny of our people, Israel.

Ashkenazi tradition places the "identity" blessings near the beginning; Maimonides puts them at the end.

Though they are intended literally, we may perceive each blessing spiritually.

Inspiration for blessings three to five comes from Psalm 146:7-8.

Modeh / Modah

Ani

Tzitzit

T'fillin

Mah Tov

Asher Yatzar

Elohai N'shamah

Nisim B'cbol Yom

Laasok

V'haarev Na

Eilu D'varim

Kaddish

D'Rabanan

IN MY HALF-SLEEP, O God,
in my yawning confusion,
I thank you with a croaking voice.

How strange and spectacular
this body you have granted me
and fill with awareness each morning.

For tongue, tendon, teeth and skin,
for all the chemicals and connections
that make this collection of cells

into a being who can stand and sing,
who can seek Your love
and offer love in turn,

for the mechanisms and mysteries
You have implanted within me
I will thank You

and set about the task of being human
as the sun rises
and my eyes begin to clear.

Religion embraces both faith and action.
The primary quality is action, for it lays the foundation for faith;
the more we do good, the more readily do we grasp the meaning of duty and life,
and the more readily do we believe in the Divine from which stems the good.

Leo Baeck

E
El
asl
l'h

Bar
Elc
pol

Bar
Elof
mat

Baru
Eloh
zokei

ל
at aw
spirit
joy ar

Ashke
the en

Thou;

Inspira

נְסִיִּים בְּכָל יוֹם
NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
roka haaretz al hamayim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who stretches the earth over the waters.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hameichin mirzedei gaver.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמַּכִּין מִצְעָדֵי גֹבֵר.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who strengthens our steps.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
malbish arumin.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who clothes the naked.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hanorein laya-eif ko-ach.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַנּוֹתֵן לַיָּעֹף כֹּחַ.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who gives strength to the weary.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
hamaavir sheinah mei-einai,
ui numah mei-afapai.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמַּעֲבִיר שְׁנָה מֵעֵינַי,
וְתַנּוּמָה מֵעַפְעָפַי.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who removes sleep from the eyes, slumber from the eyelids.

let this be my thought:
may my day be filled with acts of lovingkindness.
Let me be drawn to learning and discernment,
and may my actions be shaped by mitzvot.

Nisim B'chol Yam

Keep me from iniquity, disgrace and sin;
May I not be overwhelmed by temptation or despair.

Distance me from evil people and false friends.
Let me cultivate a life of goodness.

May my hands reach out in kindness,
and I will serve God through acts of righteousness.

Today and every day, may I merit Your mercy,
by living my life with compassion and love.

Holy One of Blessing, draw me to Your words;
teach me the art of sacred living.

ברוך אתה, יי, המלמד חסדים טובים לעמו ישראל.
Baruch atah, Adonai, ham'lamed chasadim tovim l'amo Yisrael.

לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים
לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים

baseiter uvaglal.

umodeh al ha-emet.

vdover emet bil'vavo.

לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים
לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים
לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים
לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים

may each person revere God
in private and in public,
acknowledge the truth aloud,
and speak it in one's heart.

Character is the architecture of the being. And once you go into inner being, you will find
everything you encompass, in any direction you choose, is your own. *Louise Nevelson*

לעולם ירא אדם ירא שמים *Always, may each person...* *Tanna Dvrai Eliyahu*

נְסִיִּים בְּכָל יוֹם
NISIM B'CHOL YOM — FOR DAILY MIRACLES

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam.
she-asani b'tzelem Elohim.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂנוּ בְּצַלֵּם אֱלֹהִים.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who made me in the image of God.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam.
she-asani bein/bar chorin.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂנוּ בְּנוֹ/בֵּית חוֹרֵין.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has made me free.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam.
she-asani Yisrael.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has made me a Jew.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam.
ozeir Yisrael big'vurah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוּרָה.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who girds Israel with strength.

Baruch atah, Adonai
Eloheinu, Melech haolam.
oreir Yisrael b'tifarah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאַרֶה.

PRAISE TO YOU, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who crowns Israel with splendor.

שֶׁעָשָׂנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל *She-asani Yisrael . . . For being a Jew.* Israel was the name Jacob acquired after wrestling with the angel, and this name became that of our people; we are the Children of Israel. The name Israel implies wrestling with God; to be a Jew and have faith in God is an ongoing challenge, and we are encouraged to question and delve into the nature of a faithful life.

Shema Yisroel

Shema

Shema

Shema

Shema

Nisim B'chol Yom

Shema

Shema

Shema

Shema

I am a Jew because
the faith of Israel demands no abdication of my mind.

I am a Jew because
the faith of Israel requires all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because
in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because
at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because
the word of Israel is the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because
Israel's promise is the universal promise.

I am a Jew because
for Israel, the world is not completed; we are completing it.

I am a Jew because
for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.

I am a Jew because
Israel places humanity and its unity
above the nations and above Israel itself.

I am a Jew because, above humanity, image of the divine Unity,
Israel places the unity which is divine.

In prayer, "Israel" often refers to the Jewish people.

Lesson Three: Morning Rituals

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the how rituals can help with separation.
- Students will be able to identify opportunities to incorporate rituals into their morning routines.
- Students will be able to apply Jewish ideas about the importance of ritual to their daily lives.

Core Learning Experiences

Set Induction:

The teacher asks the students about all of the things that they need to do in the morning before leaving the house. The teacher writes out this long list on the board or a flip chart.

The list will include things like:

Waking up myself

Waking up my spouse/partner

Taking a shower

Dressing myself

Dressing my child

Feeding my child

Feeding myself

Helping my spouse/partner get ready for his/her day

Cleaning up from breakfast

Doing housework

Getting ready for work/school

Preparing to spend the day with my child

And the list goes on...

Activity One: These activities as prayer

The teacher will ask the students how they feel about these morning routines.

Some discussion questions:

- What do you think is enjoyable about your morning routine?
- What do you find difficult about it?
- In what ways is your morning routine meaningful or prayerful to you?
- How do you think you could enhance the spirituality of your time in the morning as a family?

Activity Two: Separation Anxiety

The teacher asks the students what they find difficult about the morning. For some students it might be saying good-bye to a partner or spouse as s/he leaves to go to work or school. This moment can be daunting as the partner leaves for the day. Even though the parent who is home loves their child dearly sometimes a whole with him/her without help can seem overwhelming. Even a very happy stay at home parent might have some jealousy or hostility towards the partner who goes to work. Likewise, the parent who works outside the home might be jealous of the parent who gets to spend all day with the child.

For other students it might be leaving for work or school. Separating from a child can be difficult for the child and the parent. Sometimes as the parents leave, the child will cry and scream this tends to make the parent feel guilty and sad. The moment of leaving can be heart wrenching for the parent. However, often a few minutes later, if the child has positive feeling for his/her care taker and the child may be smiling again soon.

This class session will discuss ways to make the morning separation from a spouse/partner or a child routine into a ritual. Making a brief ritual to add into these moments might make the separation a slightly easier.

Spouses/Partners could try to spend a few minutes together over breakfast before separating. This could give the adults some time to spend together and to remind each other how much they

appreciate the hard work the other person does every day. This point of connection in the morning could make it easier when they come together again in the evening.

To help the students think about ways to ritualize their good-byes with their child, the teacher provides a sample suggestion of reading aloud a special book. This will give both the parent and the child a few minutes of special time together before separating.

As an example the teacher reads aloud the book “I love you through and through” or another book of the teacher’s selection.

Activity Three: Ritual Suggestions

The teacher hands out copies of a *Havdallah* ceremony, a ritual to separate the end Shabbat from the rest of the week. It includes three main prayers (for the candle, spices and wine). The ritual a prayer hoping the prophet Elijah will come and an opportunity for participants to wish each other a good week. This ritual can be a sample for the students with the acknowledgement that most students will not have time to do such a long ritual in the morning.

The teacher divides the class into small groups to discuss the idea of adding a ritual or making a ritual out of the morning separation. The teacher asks the students to brainstorm ideas of things they could do to ritualize the morning good-byes.

Suggestion for the Jewish components of the ritual could be singing a prayer from the morning liturgy, singing favorite Shabbat or holiday song, chanting the Shema together etc. Other suggestions could be reading a favorite book or playing with a favorite toy.

The ritual could be repeated in the same order each day. This repetition could create a sense of routine to avoid fears of chaos. Creating this extra time together does not take the pain away from the separation, but it provides special time for the family to spend together before separating.

Activity Four: Students make their own morning rituals

After the small groups have brainstormed ritual ideas, the teacher brings the group back together. The teacher asks each group to share some of their suggestions with the whole class. After talking about these suggestions, the teacher provides quiet time for the students to think about which aspects of these rituals they would like to try with their family. The students will be invited to share their experiences with doing these rituals at a subsequent class.

Activity Five: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- The hardest part about leaving my child in the morning is...
- When my spouse leaves in the morning I feel...
- Each morning I look forward to...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- Our morning ritual is...
- I love to spend time with you in the morning when we...

Resources:

“I love you through and through” words and publishing details

Or a book of the teacher’s choice to read to the class

Havdallah ceremonies

Mishkan T’filah prayer books or any available prayer book easily accessible at the location of the class

“I love you through and through”

I love you through and through

I love your top side

I love you bottom side

I love your inside

I love your outside

I love your happy side

I love your sad side

Your silly side

Your mad side

I love your fingers

And toes,

Your ears

And nose

I love your hair and eyes

Your giggles

And cries

I love you running

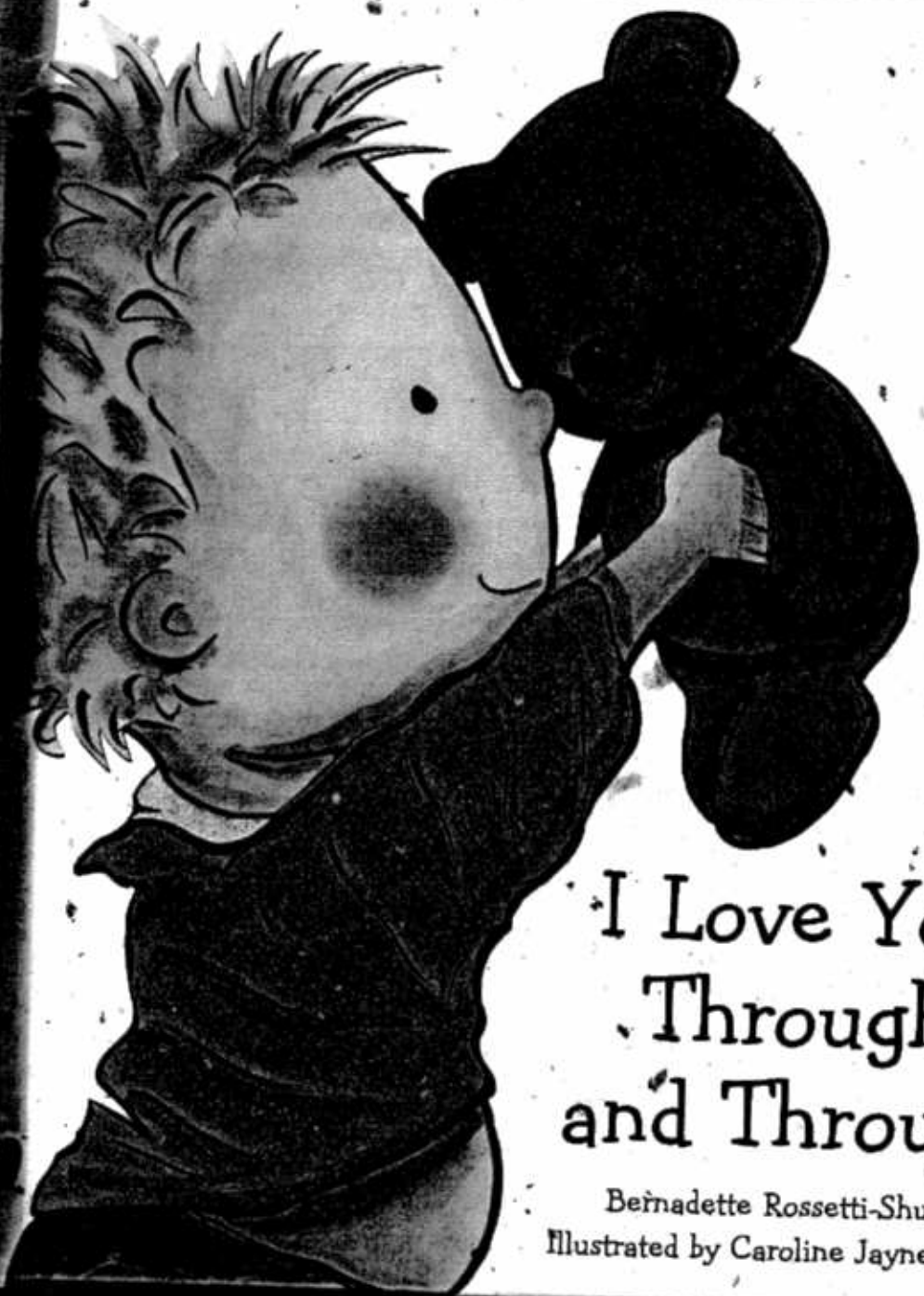
And walking

Silent

And talking

I love you through and through

Yesterday, today and tomorrow too.



I Love You
Through
and Through

Bernadette Rossetti-Shustak
Illustrated by Caroline Jayne Church

6/4

Also Available:



A book about how much we love our little ones!

No part of this publication may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Text copyright © 2005 by Bernadette Rousetti-Stuart. Illustrations copyright © 2005 by Caroline Jayne Church. All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc. SCHOLASTIC, CARTWHEEL BOOKS, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.



an imprint of

SCHOLASTIC

www.scholastic.com

ISBN-13: 978-0-439-67363-1 ISBN-10: 0-439-67363-1
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 08 09 10 11 12

Printed in China

First printing, January 2008

\$8.95
9 780439 673631
ISBN 0-439-67363-1



Edited by Chaim Stern

with

Donna Berman
Edward Graham
H. Leonard Poller

Central Conference of American Rabbis
5755 New York 1994

45

Havdalah II

☛ *The following is an interpretive version of Havdalah.*

In the Torah we read: The Eternal One spoke to Aaron: 'You shall distinguish between the sacred and the profane.' Like Aaron, first of the priests, we who were called at Sinai to be a kingdom of priests are charged to make Havdalah.

We must distinguish between sacred and profane, between holy and common.

To this end has Shabbat been set aside:

Shabbat, most precious of days; Shabbat, the day of holiness; Shabbat is blessed rest from daily toil. More than rest, Shabbat is freedom:

To reach out to God, to family and friends.

To search and hope to find goodness and beauty, holiness and truth. Our fathers knew Shabbat as refuge from this world's complexities, from the brutalities and hurts of competition.

It was refuge, haven, oasis for our mothers: a day of release from earthbound pursuits, from the relentless struggle for daily bread.

A foretaste of heaven which they called: 'Yom sheh-ku-lo Shabbat,' a time that is all Shabbat.

But our Shabbat is here on earth, this day's earth, and end it does.

With all reluctance we say farewell to this foretaste of heaven. Let us carry into the coming week some Shabbat hope and joy, and bring them into our offices and shops, the choices we make, our hours of leisure.

VERSES OF THANKS

The ancients took words from Scripture to voice their thanks to God who sustains us during the week. Within their words of praise was the hint of prayer for life and health in the week to come. May their loving faith be ours, as we make their words of praise our own.

שַׁבָּת, FESTIVALS AND SPECIAL DAYS

שָׁבַע יָמֵי עֲבוּר תַּעֲבוֹר,
יָמֵי אֲתוּמָל כִּי יַעֲבוֹר, וְאֲשַׁמְרָה בְּלַיְלָה.

שָׁבַע טוֹב . . .
*Tzid-ka-t'cha k'har ta-vor, al cha-ta-ai a-vor ta-a-vor,
k'yom et-mol ki ya-a-vor, v'ash-mu-ta va-lai-la.
Sha-vu-ah tov . . .*

הַעֲתָר, נוֹרָא וְאִיִּם, אֲשַׁע, תִּנְה פְדוּיִם,
בְּנֶשֶׁף, בְּעֶרֶב יוֹם, בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה.

שָׁבַע טוֹב . . .
*Hei-a-teir, no-ra v'a-yom, a-sha-vei-a, t'na fid-yom,
b'neh-shef, b'eh-rev yom, b'i-shon lai-la.
Sha-vu-ah tov . . .*

You teach us to distinguish between the commonplace and the holy: teach us also to transform our sins to merits. Let those who love you be numerous as the sands and the stars.

Day has declined, the shadows are gone; we call to the One whose word is good. The sentry says: 'Morning will come, though the night seems long.'

Your righteousness is a majestic mountain: forgive our sins. Let them be as yesterday when it is past, as a watch in the night.

Hear our prayer, O awesome God, and grant redemption: in the twilight, in the waning of the day, or in the blackness of the night!

שָׁבַע טוֹב . . .

Sha-vu-ah tov, Sha-vu-ah tov, Sha-vu-ah tov, Sha-vu-ah tov.

*A good week, a week of peace,
may gladness reign and light increase.*

God of the hosts of heaven,

happy is the one who trusts in You!
Save us, Eternal One,

answer us, when we call upon You.

Give us light and joy, gladness and honor,

as in the happiest days of our people's past.

Then shall we lift up the cup to rejoice in Your saving power,
and call out Your name in praise.

THE LEADER RAISES THE CUP OF WINE OR GRAPE JUICE AND SAYS:

The fruit of the vine gladdens the heart. In our gladness, we see
beyond the ugliness and misery which stain the world. Our eyes
open to unnoticed grace, blessings till now unseen, and the promise
of goodness we can bring to flower.

*Ba-ruch a-ta Adonai, Eh-lo-hei-nu
meh-lech ha-o-lam, bo-rei p'ri
ha-ga-fen.*

° We give thanks for the goodness of fruit, for sun, air, and earth,
and for all who labor on the soil.

THE LEADER HOLDS UP THE SPICE-BOX AND SAYS:

The added soul Shabbat confers is leaving now, and these spices
will console us at the moment of its passing. They remind us that
the six days will pass, and Shabbat return. And their boughet will
make us yearn with thankful heart for the sweetness of rest and
the fragrance of growing things; for the clean smell of rainwashed
earth and the sad innocence of childhood; and for the dream of a
world healed of pain, pure and wholesome as on that first Shabbat,
when God, finding all things good, rested from the work of cre-
ation.

° This signifies that the English is a variation on the theme of the Hebrew.

THE LEADER LIGHTS THE CANDLE AND HANDS IT
TO THE YOUNGEST PERSON PRESENT.

תָּרַח אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
אֲבֹטָה וְלֹא אֲפֹחֵד.

בְּיַרְעֵי וּמִקְרַת יְהוָה יִדְוֶה,
וְהִרְיֵלִי לִישְׁעָה.

וְשִׂאֲבַתְּהֶם קוֹסִים בְּשִׁשְׁוֹן
מִמַּעַנְוֵי הַיִּשְׁעָה.

לִידְוֶה הַיִּשְׁעָה,
עַל-עַמְּךָ בְּרִבְתְּךָ, פִּלְה.

יְדוּה עֲבָאוֹת עִמָּנִי,
מִשְׁבֹּגְ-לֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, פִּלְה.

יְדוּה עֲבָאוֹת,
אֲשֶׁרֵי אָדָם בָּטַח בְּךָ.

יְדוּה הַיִּשְׁעָה,
וּמְפֹלֶה יַעֲנֵנִי בַיּוֹם-קָדְדְּאֲנִי.

לִידְוֶהִים הַיְהוָה אוֹרְהָ וְשִׁמְחָהָ
וְשִׁשְׁוֹן וְיִקְרֵי:

בֶּן תְּהִיָה לֵנִי,
בֵּית-יִשְׁרָאֵל וְיִשְׁעוֹת אִשָּׁא,

וְיִקְשֶׁם יְדוּה אֶקְרָא.

Behold, God is my Help,
trusting in the Eternal One, I am not afraid.
For the Eternal One is my strength and my song,
and has become my salvation.

With joy we draw water
from the wells of salvation.

The Eternal One brings deliverance,
and blessing to the people.

The God of the hosts of heaven is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

SEPARATION

The light will soon be gone, and Shabbat with it, yet hope illumines the night for us, who are prisoners of hope. Amid the reality of a world shrouded in deep darkness, our hope is steadfast and our faith sure. There will come a Shabbat without Havdalah, when the glory of Shabbat, its peace and its love, will endure for ever.

THE CANDLE IS HELD HIGH AS THE LEADER SAYS:

בְּרִדָּךְ אֶתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶּךָ הַמְּבַרְכֵנוּ בְּיַד קֹדֶשׁ לְדוֹלָהּ, בְּיַד אֱוִר לְדִשְׁרָךְ, בְּיַד וְשִׁרְאֵל לְעַמֵּנוּ, בְּיַד יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְעִשְׂתָּהּ יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

◦ We give thanks to the One who makes distinctions, teaching us to transform the commonplace into the holy; creating light and darkness, Israel and the nations, the seventh day of rest and the six days of labor.

ALL PRESENT SIP FROM THE CUP.

THE CANDLE IS EXTINGUISHED BY IMMERSING IT IN THE CUP

Elijah!

Week after week we wait,

at Sabbath's end we wait for you,

we wait to be redeemed:

from guilt and oppression redeemed;

from empty nights redeemed,

and from the stuttering of our hearts,

from that, too, redeemed.

Do you wait for us?

Do you await one sign,

one deed, one surprise?

Yes, yes! You wait for us,

you wait for us to wait no more.

Your presence now we invoke in song:

בְּרִדָּךְ אֶתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מְלֶכֶךָ הַמְּבַרְכֵנוּ בְּיַד קֹדֶשׁ
וְשִׁרְאֵל לְעַמֵּנוּ, בְּיַד יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
לְעִשְׂתָּהּ יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

◦ We give thanks for this world and its sweetness, and for Shabbat, which gives fragrance to all the days.

THE SPICE BOX IS CIRCULATED AND ALL PRESENT INHALE ITS FRAGRANCE.

THE LEADER HOLDS UP THE CANDLE AND SAYS:

The Rabbis tell us: As night descended at the end of the world's first Sabbath, Adam feared and wept. Then God showed him how to make fire, and by its light and warmth to dispel the darkness and its terrors. Kindling light is a symbol of our first labor upon the earth.

Shabbat departs as we kindle fire and the workday begins. We, who dread the night no more, thank God for the flame by which we turn earth's raw stuff into things of use and beauty.

The Havdalah candle's double wick reminds us that all qualities are paired. We have the power to kindle many fires, some useful, others baneful. Let us be on guard never to let this gift of fire devour human life, sear cities, forests, and fields. Let the fire we kindle be holy; let it bring light and warmth to all humanity.

בְּרִדָּךְ אֶתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מְלֶכֶךָ הַמְּבַרְכֵנוּ בְּיַד קֹדֶשׁ
וְשִׁרְאֵל לְעַמֵּנוּ, בְּיַד יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
לְעִשְׂתָּהּ יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

◦ We give thanks for all that gives light and warmth to flesh and blood.

For the New Moon

קידוש לכתה

✽ It is customary, at the beginning of the new (Iunar) month, to go outdoors in celebration of the first appearance of the New Moon, and to recite the following:

הלליתון
הללנו את-יהוה מוד-השמים,
הללנו במרומוים.
הללנו שמול ורחם,
הללנו כל-פוכבי אור.
הללנו את-יהוה מוד-הארץ.
תננינים וכל-תהמות,
אש וברד, שלג וקטור,
רוח סערה עשה דברו.
תהרים וכל-גבעות
עץ פרי וכל-אדוים,
ההיה וכל-בהמה,
רמש וצפור כנף,
מלכי-ארץ וכל-לאומים,
שורים וכל-שפטי ארץ,
פחדרים וגם-בתולות,
ומקים עם-דעורים.
יהלל את-שם יהוה,
פרינשגב שמו לברו,
הודו על-ארץ ושמים.
הלליתון

Praise the Eternal One!

Praise God in the high heavens, give praise in deep space. Give praise, sun and moon, give praise, you shining stars. Let earth resound with praise of God: teeming oceans, fire and hail, snow and mist, storm and wind, mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars, wild beasts and cattle, reptiles and birds, rulers of nations, judges and

אלהוה הנביא, אלהוה התשובה,
Ei-li-ya-hu ha-na-vi, Ei-li-ya-hu ha-tish-bi;

אלהוה, אלהוה, אלהוה הגלעדי.
Ei-li-ya-hu, Ei-li-ya-hu, Ei-li-ya-hu ha-gil-adi.

במהרה נקמנו, ונא אלנו,
Bi-m'hei-ra v'ya-mei-nu, ya-vo ei-lei-nu;

עם משית בן דוד, עם משית בן דוד.
im ma-shi-ach ben Da-vid, im ma-shi-ach ben Da-vid.

אלהוה הנביא . . .
Ei-li-ya-hu ha-na-vi . . .

שבת טוב . . .

Sha-vu-ah tov, Sha-vu-ah tov, Sha-vu-ah tov.

A good week, a week of peace,
may gladness reign and light increase.

**Lesson Four:
Feeding a Child as a Holy Experience**

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze Jewish texts and compare it with their experiences of feeding a young child.
- Students will be able to develop their own way of thanking God for the ability to feed their child.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction and Introduction:

The teacher begins this lesson by asking the students what their favorite home cooked meal is. The teacher follows up by asking who cooks this favorite meal for the students. After the students have said their favorite foods, the teacher asked the students what they enjoy about it. The teacher asks the students if they think this meal would taste the same eaten in a restaurant.

After the set induction the teacher explains this session is about feeding a child. The teacher reminds the students the decision about how to feed a child is very personal and it can be a difficult or painful decision. For this lesson, feeding a child can be defined by nursing, but it also includes giving a child a bottle or food of any kind. Nursing is not an option for all women and some women choose not to nurse, it is important not to judge other students' decisions about feeding their child, but to focus on the sanctity of being able to feed another person.

Activity One: Text study

The teacher assigns a text to each student. The students will have a few minutes to read over the texts, the answers questions about it. The students will present their text to the rest of the class. Students will have an opportunity to discuss their opinion about the text they study.

The texts are:

“And who would have believed and told Abraham that Sarah would nurse her child? (Genesis 21:7)

(FYI- Abraham and Sarah, who are important in Jewish tradition because they are considered to be the first Jews, were extremely old when they had a baby. The Bible states Sarah was past the time of having her period and she laughed when she overheard angels tell Abraham she was

going to have a baby. Given the lateness in life when she had a child, no one would have believed that she would have the opportunity to be a nursing mother).

“Moses heard the weeping at the entrance of his tent. Moses was distressed. And Moses said to Adonai ‘why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor that You have laid this burden of all his people upon me. You said to me ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nursing mother carries an infant. They whine before me. I cannot carry all of them, for it is too much for me. (Numbers 11:10-14)⁸

(FYI- In this scene, Moses is exhausted with his leadership role. He is worn out and fed up with the people. He feels like his is giving all of himself to the people and they are not responding to him the way he wants them to. Moses is disheartened and discouraged and he is feeling disrespected by the Israelite people.)

Elijah (the prophet) lay down and fell asleep under a broom brush. Suddenly an angel of God touched him and said to him ‘Arise and eat.’ He looked about; and there besides his head, was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He drank, and lay down again. The angel of Adonai came a second time and touched him and said ‘arise and eat.’” (I Kings 19:5-7)⁹

(FYI- Elijah had been wandering and he was exhausted from his journeying. Just before this scene, he lies down distressed and unsure if he is going to get up again. Biblical scholars associate the angel of God with a nursing mother who restores the prophet to health again. Scholars credit the angel with Elijah’s survival. Biblical scholars remark on the intimacy depicting in these verse with the angel nursing Elijah.)

Sample discussion questions:

- What is the image of nursing presented in this text?
- In your view, what is the character’s opinion about nursing in this text?
- Reflecting on your own experience of feeding a child, in what ways can you relate to the character in the text?
- In reviewing all of the texts, which one of these can you identify with the most? Why?

Activity Two: Paper-tear Midrash

⁸ Adapted NJPS translation

⁹ Adapted NJPS translation

Midrash is a form a biblical interpretation that allows students to explore and understand the text for themselves. Midrash is an opportunity to fill in gaps in the texts or to explain unanswered questions. Midrash has been done for thousands of years and continues today.

Today, students will be given the opportunity to create their own midrashim about the texts about nursing through art. Some students are comfortable with art and others are not so the form of art we are going to do is called paper tear midrash. This is an opportunity to create art through tearing paper. Students are not allowed to use pen, pencils or markers, all of the images are created through tearing papers without scissors. Students are encouraged to be creative in their interpretation and to explain it their pictures to the rest of the class when they are finished.

Students will be making paper tear midrash interpretations of any of the texts they studied about feeding. Students will be able to choose which text they like best, can relate to or intrigues them the most.

Additional texts about nursing:

“That you may nurse and be satisfied with the breast of comfort, may the milk delight you with its abundant glory” (Isaiah 66:11).

“And the people will nurse on the abundance of the seas and the treasures hidden in the sands” (Deuteronomy 33:19).

Activity Three: Blessings for feeding a child

The teacher will provide the students will sample blessings for feeding a child. The teacher will invite the students to try saying these blessings before feeding and to share their experience with the class. The teacher will give students a few minutes to react to these blessings and to think about how it would feel to add saying them to the feeding rituals.

The blessings are:

Blessed are You who provides food for all.¹⁰

God of our mothers Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah, You remembered me when I longed for this child and in the pain of labor and You have brought me, rejoicing, to hold this infant in my arms. Now I turn to You again, hoping to feed this child as You feed all living creatures out of Your boundless loving kindness; and I trust in You, that in Your goodness You surely will not let

¹⁰ The Book of Jewish sacred practices pages 58-59.

my child lack substance, neither now nor ever, for the sake of Your great Name. Let any pain that I feel as I nurse this child be submerged in my joy as I watch the miracle of my flourishing baby; and keep is from any misfortune that may cause suffering to my child or to me between now and the time my child is safely weaned. May Your goodness teach me to help my child grow both now in my arms and in all the years You grant us together. For You are God who has always given me good things. Blessed are You, God who sustains all¹¹.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- When I feed my child I feel...
- As I feed my child I think about...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- When I feed you I hope/pray...
- As we spend time together when I feed you I feel grateful that I can...

Resources:

Texts for text study

Sample Blessings

Nursing Ritual from The Book of Jewish Sacred Practice

¹¹ Elisheva Urbas "The New Jewish Baby Album

For future reference or further information:

Jo Milgrom “Handmade Midrash”

Tamara Eskenazi and Andrea Weiss “The Women’s Torah Commentary” URJ Press, 2009 Texts for text study

“Moses heard the weeping at the entrance of his tent. Moses was distressed. And Moses said to Adonai ‘why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor that You have laid this burden of all his people upon me. You said to me ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nursing mother carries an infant. They whine before me. I cannot carry all of them, for it is too much for me.

(Numbers 11:10-14)

Elijah (the prophet) lay down and fell asleep under a broom brush. Suddenly an angel of God touched him and said to him ‘Arise and eat.’ He looked about; and there besides his head, was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water! He drank, and lay down again. The angel of Adonai came a second time and touched him and said ‘arise and eat.’”

(I Kings 19:5-7)

“That you may nurse and be satisfied with the breast of comfort, may the milk delight you with its abundant glory”

(Isaiah 66:11).

“And the people will nurse on the abundance of the seas and the treasures hidden in the sands”
(Deuteronomy 33:19).

“And who would have believed and told Abraham that Sarah would nurse her child?”

(Genesis 21:7)

Sample Blessings

Blessed are You who provides food for all.

(The Book of Jewish sacred practices pages 58-59)

God of our mothers Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah, You remembered me when I longed for this child and in the pain of labor and You have brought me, rejoicing, to hold this infant in my arms. Now I turn to You again, hoping to feed this child as You feed all living creatures out of Your boundless loving kindness; and I trust in You, that in Your goodness You surely will not let my child lack substance, neither now nor ever, for the sake of Your great Name. Let any pain that I feel as I nurse this child be submerged in my joy as I watch the miracle of my flourishing baby; and keep is from any misfortune that may cause suffering to my child or to me between now and the time my child is safely weaned. May Your goodness teach me to help my child grow both now in my arms and in all the years You grant us together. For You are God who has always given me good things. Blessed are You, God who sustains all,

(Elisheva Urbas “The New Jewish Baby Album”)

NURSING

Just as God nurtures us, sustain-
ing us with food and all that we
need, we who nurse or feed our
babies sustain them. The experi-
ence of nursing a child brings
the text of *Birkat*

ברוך אתה יהוה
הנותן את הכול

(Grace after Meals) to
Elisheva S. Urbas
of New York City,
published origi-
nally in *Shema*.

Barukh atah Adonai
hazan et ha'kol

Blessed are You who
provides food for all

Meditation

God of our mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,
You remembered me when I longed for this child and
when I was in the pain of labor, and You have brought
me, rejoicing, to hold this infant in my arms. Now I turn
to You again, hoping to feed this child as You feed all
living creatures, out of Your boundless lovingkindness.

Ritual

Each time you nurse or feed your child, whisper this
blessing for food so that it will become a quiet, deep
memory. And do not forget to nourish and care for
yourself!

Blessing

(As you nurse or feed your child)

ברוך אתה יהוה הנותן את הכול.

Barukh atah Adonai hazan et ha'kol

Blessed are You who provides food for all.

(Grace after Meals)

Teaching

And who would have believed, and told Abraham,
that Sarah would nurse her children?

(Genesis 21:7)

That you may nurse and be satisfied with the
breasts of comfort, may the milk delight you with
its abundant glory.

(Isaiah 66:11)

And the people will nurse on the abundance of the
seas and the treasures hidden in the sands.

(Deuteronomy 33:19)

**Lesson Five:
Early Morning/Middle of the Night**

Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare and contrast experiences of the authors of the text with their own.
- Students will be able to identify ways they can appreciate the time in the middle of the night with their child.
- Students will be able to express a new way of thinking about power and powerlessness.

Core Learning Experiences

Set Induction:

The teacher asks the students to close their eyes. With their eyes closed, the teacher asks the students to imagine that it is 3 in the morning. Your child is wide awake. You have tried everything you can think of to get your child back to sleep. You have changed his/her diaper. You have feed him/her. You have played with him/her. You have rocked him/her. You have walked him/her. You have even driven around in the car. Nothing is working. Luckily you do not have to work in the morning so you will be tired, but you do not have to be up at any particular time. You feel a bit frustrated, but you also know this is part of your life as a parent of a young child... You smile to yourself. You wonder who else is up at this hour and wonder why they are not sleeping. You used to stay up until this time fairly regularly. You used to be out until this time. But now your life is different. Now you are up with your child. Part of you also enjoys the middle of the night wake ups. You think of it as special time for you and your baby.

Does this sound familiar to anyone?

Activity One: Power and Powerlessness Chapter One from “Our Share of the Night, Our Share of the Morning.”

The teacher passes out copies of Chapter One from Nancy Fuchs’s book. This chapter focuses on the middle of the night time when parents are awake with their young children. Since this is only a short chapter, the teacher gives each student asks each student to skim the whole chapter. After spending a few minutes reading the chapter, the teacher brings the students back together for a discussion.

Sample discussion questions:

- What do you think are the main ideas Fuchs highlights in this chapter?
- How do the stories from the parents in this chapter compare with your experience?
- How has becoming a parent changed your perspective about power and powerlessness?
- What would you like to teach your child about power and powerlessness?

Activity Two: Power, Powerlessness and Patience

The teacher will ask the students how they cope with the feeling of powerlessness that is sometimes associated with parenting. The middle of the night wake up can be a time when parents feel especially powerless because they cannot force their child to go back to sleep. Parents can encourage their children to sleep, but it is impossible to try to reason with a child only a few months old to make them sleep. This can be frustrating for parents, as they learn to accept the lack of control. Especially for parents who are used to being in control this can be a significant adjustment.

The teacher will read a few sentences aloud and to complete in thought:

The sentences are:

I feel like I am in control when...

I like to be in control over a situation because...

Before becoming a parent I was in control over...

As a parent I feel in control when...

As a parent I have learned to think about control as...

When I feel like things are out of control I...

After reading the sentences, the teacher gives the students an opportunity to share their answers with the group.

Activity Three: Mussar

The teacher introduces a concept in Judaism called Mussar. This movement focuses on Jewish values and behaviors. Mussar takes a value such as gratitude and provides Jews with ways to use this value in their daily life. The idea behind the Mussar movement is the living these values are

a way for individuals to connect with Judaism on a deep level and to improve their quality of life. It can add a sense of awareness, calmness, patience and spirituality to all aspects of life.

One of the core values of the Mussar movement is calmness. The Mussar movement aims to help individuals find calmness in the chaos of daily life.

The teacher gives the students a few excerpts from a Musar chapter about patience. Each student reads a specific section and teaches the rest of the class about what they read.

Activity Four: Brainstorming Session

After the students teach each other, the teacher brings the class back together for a discussion and brainstorming session.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- How does the Mussar movement encourage people to incorporate calmness and patience into their daily life?
- In what ways do you think it would be possible to live according to these principles?
- What do you think would be difficult about it?
- If you could set a goal for yourself to incorporate one of these ideas into your daily life which one would you choose?

After the general discussion, the teacher asks the students to brainstorm ways to incorporate patience into their daily life, especially the middle of the night wake ups, when they are feeling out of control or powerless. The teacher will record the students' answers and give them a copy of the list to keep with them.

If the students do not have any ideas, the teacher can provide a few sample suggestions such as practices deep breathing, close eyes for a moment and picture something calming such as an ocean or a blue sky, stretching the body, yoga movements, meditation etc. All of these practices can be done at any time of day or night and might only take a few minutes, but it could help to keep the students calm, centered and grounded as they deal with the chaos, sleeplessness and powerlessness of parenting a young child.

Activity Five: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- The hardest part about waking up in the middle of the night is...
- When I think about the middle of the night wake ups I feel....
- As I try to incorporate calmness and patience into my daily life I wonder...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- My favorite thing about being up in the middle of the night with you is...
- You helped to teach me about patience by...

Resources:

Nancy Fuchs's Chapter: Power and Powerlessness from "Our Share of the Night, Our Share of the Morning"

Alan Morinis "Everyday Holiness the path to Mussar"

FOUR A.M.

Power and Powerlessness

"I was God for this child, and I still couldn't get her to sleep when I wanted."

When I asked Chuck, a retired law professor and the father of three grown children, how he remembers the first few months of his children's lives, he waved his hand toward the porch. "Did you notice that rocking chair as you came in?" he asked me. "That's the chair in which I rocked all my children in the middle of the night. We have redecorated and moved often in the last forty years, but we would never part with that rocking chair."

With or without a rocking chair (and testimony suggests that "with" is preferable), nursing is one of the most powerful, lasting memories of early parenting. In Britain, the word *nursing* is not specifically reserved for the act of providing milk via the breast. Rather, it encompasses the acts of holding, comforting, and feeding a baby. I use the word that way, because the nursing experiences I heard about were not reserved for mothers who lactate. I spoke to fathers, to mothers who adopted children, to parents who chose to bottle-feed. All of them talked about nursing, and what they remember especially is the 4:00 A.M. feeding.

When I was in the hospital after my first daughter was born, I loved the feeding time in the dark between midnight and dawn. It seemed like the whole city was sound asleep except the mothers and babies on the fifth floor of Pennsylvania Hospital. Only hours ago, many of these tiny creatures were still in the womb. Now they were snuggling up to the freshly engorged breasts of their mothers. These newly-in-love couples finding each other in the midst of a silent, dark world were incredible. Samantha

said about her nights with her baby, "It was the closest I have ever come to experiencing sacred time."

In the quiet night, a mother links eyes with a tiny soul who needs her ministrations literally to survive another few hours. A father gazes at a creature he helped to create whom he now must sustain. Parents feel enormous and small, important and vulnerable. They confront the essential paradox of parenting.

The paradox is as trivial as it is profound. Chuck remembered how the baby would fall asleep on his shoulder as he rocked him. Then the internal debate would begin. "It seems like it was yesterday," Chuck laughed. "Can I make a transfer to the crib now, or will that wake him up? But if I wait longer, will I fall asleep in this rocking chair and then drop him? I gave this child life, but I cannot make him stay asleep for thirty seconds as I lay him back in the crib."

We smile at the image of a successful law professor debating with himself on the subject of putting his baby to bed. But the issues grow more serious.

"Years later," Chuck continued, "I would lie awake at night while my son slept, obsessing over much more momentous decisions concerning the life choices we made for him or with him, and I felt exactly the same way. This kid was counting on me. I had power over his life. I always wanted to make the perfect choice, the perfect play. But there were always so many wild cards."

Parents begin to learn the limits of their power the day they first decide to have a baby or, alternatively, discover that one has been conceived despite other plans. Either way, control is not what it used to be. Liz, an older mother for whom deciding to get pregnant was a difficult choice, had trouble realizing the goal. "I was so surprised not to be able to make my body do what I wanted. By the end, it was high tech and letting go. A roller coaster. It had been years since I had even considered prayer as an activity in which I indulged. But sometimes, I found myself wishing so hard that I would conceive that it occurred to me that I was praying, whatever that meant. I remembered something a minister had said when I was a child—that when you can't do anything else to alter a situation, you can always still pray. So that is what I did."

Janet, a high-powered lawyer, told me, "My first pregnancy looked like it might end in a miscarriage. I had a huge trial coming up, and I did not

want to miss it. If the miscarriage happened soon, I would be fine in time for the trial. I went to the doctor and asked him to give me a date by which it would surely be over. He looked blank. It suddenly dawned on me that he had no idea if and when I would miscarry. I ended up bleeding for months. The trial went on without me. It was during one of the many ultrasound tests when the technician kept saying, 'Oh, no!' and then 'Never mind,' that I knew the stakes were higher than they had ever been, and I was out of my league. In the end, I delivered a healthy baby, but before I even met this child, I had begun learning about my limits. That day at the doctor's office I had been handed an ultimatum in bold print: abandon control, you who enter here."

During the early months of a child's life, parents seem to fall into three main groups. For the first group, the predominant emotion is joy. For those fortunate parents, the early months of witnessing the growth of the baby's body and of their own love while breast or bottle do their work are mostly magical. "It was like being pried open with a can opener," Vivian said. "I was just leaking everywhere, overflowing. My breasts, my vagina, my heart."

Malcolm told me, "I loved getting up in the middle of the night to provide transportation for the baby to my wife's bedside. It gave me a role. I felt really needed, terrifically important. I was part of something so significant! Despite losing all that sleep, I felt grounded, whole, happy."

Pearl was also ecstatic. "I was in the Bahamas on vacation and the minute I conceived, I just knew it," she recalled. "I felt it was something greater than anything I could have just willed or made happen. As I came through customs back in the States they asked me, 'Do you have anything to declare?' and I shouted out, 'Yes, I do! A baby!' From the moment of birth, I was impressed by how much I loved him. Absolutely filled up. How could I have brought this incredible being into the world? All of a sudden, I had a clarity of purpose. I guess some people go to war to feel this. I now had a sense of my place in time and space."

For the second group, the first months of parenthood are primarily a trial. Rachel described her situation. "I was a career woman, thirty-nine years old, used to knowing what was what. Suddenly, I was isolated, overwhelmed, stuck with an impossible job assignment. I lay on the bed between nursings and tried to figure out why I had ever gotten into this mess. I started teaching myself Russian. It was something I could master, unlike the baby, and that was a great comfort."

Hank felt as though a romance was going on in which he was the odd man out. It had nothing to do with breast feeding, because he and his wife were sharing bottle feeding. It just *was*. "In the early months, I was miserable."

Lori reported, "Parenting evoked nothing spiritual in me. I felt like my self was being devoured. If anything, I would say my spiritual life began as a search for a place *away* from the parenting, for an oasis where I could find myself."

The third group is the rest of the parent population. They check: *all of the above*. For most parents, ambivalence and confusion characterize the early days of parenthood. Parents feel both ecstatic and exhausted, filled up and empty, powerful and vulnerable, thrilled and scared to death. Said one of the ambivalent many, "It was like being on a six-month honeymoon with someone who couldn't talk. It was intimate but unsettling."

Parents are unsettled by their power—and their powerlessness. On the one hand, children provide parents with a sense of potency. Sarah recalled, "There is an old story in our family about my great-aunt who weighed ninety pounds. One day a big chest of drawers fell on her small child. The tiny woman lifted the piece of furniture off the child by herself! What I got from that story was that parents have more power than they imagine. It turned out to be true. The third hour I was trying to get my infant back to sleep (a parent's version of a religious vigil!) I knew that I was too tired to go on. But I also knew that I would keep going anyway. I would think back to when I was pushing her out of me a few weeks before. I knew I could not go on, but I did. It expanded my sense of what I can do. I have more resources than I thought!"

Joan added, "To have another human being need me so much was transformative. I found out how much I could give. I loved this being so much, and it was just so incredible that she loved me back. She was so perfect and she loved *me!* For that little child being brought toward me, I was the Goddess. I held within me all she needed to sustain her life. I had never felt so full of primordial power."

Carl reminisced fondly about his short stint as the all-knowing deity. "Those early years were my one and only chance to feel what it is like to be God. When my child was in nursery school, the teacher would write parents a note on the door of the classroom each day describing what the class had done during the morning. Driving home from school, I would

ask my daughter questions like 'How did you like "The Farmer in the Dell"?' Never once did she question how I was so well informed about things that had gone on in my absence. I finally realized that to her it seemed entirely appropriate that I simply knew *everything!*"

But being the one in charge is also frightening. Dora recalled her first parenting crisis: "Our daughter got a very high fever when she was three months old and needed to be taken to the hospital. I'll never forget standing there in the emergency room with my husband after the doctor had examined her. The doctor turned around and said, 'Who is responsible for this child?' We both turned around, looking behind us. Then we realized with a start, 'Oh, my God, he's talking about *us!*'"

Many parents feel humbled by the task, not quite sure if they are ready. Zoe joked, "All I can remember from the early days was the line from *Gone with the Wind* when the terrified slave Prissy shrieks, 'Me! I don't know nothing about no babies, Miz Scarlett!'"

George, a six-foot-tall gym teacher, said, "At work I got sixty strapping adolescents to jump when I blew a whistle. Then I came home and I couldn't get a twelve-pound infant to stop crying." Parents of older children continue to marvel at that paradox. Said Morris, "I can organize a convention for twelve hundred people for my organization, but when I found out I had to direct a birthday party for twelve ten-year-old girls, I was running scared. Whenever I think I am doing well as a human being, I spend a full day with my daughter and my humility is restored."

A father I met learned about limits from his child. Bert described himself as a "love junkie." "It never occurred to me that love couldn't conquer everything," he recalled. After having three healthy children of their own, Bert and his wife decided to adopt Neil, a four-year-old with serious emotional problems from his years of inadequate foster care. Despite tremendous love from the entire family, Neil's problems only worsened. "We all went to therapy and we all benefited, except him. He kept getting more difficult to control. We saw over twenty specialists. We didn't want to believe we could not fix him. He was kicked out of one school after another. Life grew darker and darker. Finally, we met a psychologist at a cocktail party who had heard our story. He said, 'Neil needs to leave your home. I will help you arrange it.' I knew we were out of our depth."

"Parenting brought me to a place of emptiness and failure," said Bert. "But ultimately, from the cauldron of this experience came learning and

growth. An old religious aunt of mine said that our experience with Neil was so profound she just knew it must have meaning. I actually understood what she was trying to say. I now believe there is meaning in everything, but I no longer believe love conquers all."

Mary, too, found in parenting the wisdom to know and to accept what she could not control. In her early thirties, Mary gave birth to a Down syndrome child. After a month of grieving, she went into overdrive, signing her son up for every program and intervention available in three counties. She took him to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy. "I kept thinking to myself, I brought this child into the world, I am the one responsible for making things right for him." One day, when Jonny was six months old, Mary was with him in the swimming pool at a special class for children with mental handicaps. A mother walked in with a fourteen-year-old girl, recently disabled by a head trauma. "I said to myself, 'After all these classes, Jonny could get hit on the head! Joe—my other child—could get hit on the head!'"

It was a turning point, Mary recalled. "I didn't stop trying to make things better for Jonny, but I did give up the frantic pace. I knew I couldn't manage everything. So I decided I would do the best I could and let the rest go. For the first time in my life, I felt at peace. Having Jonny taught me that no matter what I did, it might never be enough. It takes so much energy just to do what is needed, I have none left for worrying or trying to control what I can't control."

When I was pregnant, I thought a lot about raising my children. I had developed a system for dealing with life that had worked well for me thus far. Before approaching something new, I read books about it, I took courses, I worked hard, and eventually I mastered it. All of a sudden, I had wandered into a territory in which effort and results had a more tenuous connection.

One of my favorite writers is the influential monk and spiritual genius Thomas Merton. Let's suppose I wanted my child to be the Jewish Thomas Merton. How would I arrange for that result? I looked at Merton's biography. It turns out that while pregnant with Thomas, Merton's mother read compulsively in the literature of child rearing. So would I! It also turns out that Thomas's mother died when he was four. What made him who he was? The skilled parenting of his first years or the loss of his mother when he was still a preschooler?

Whenever I think about the early days of parenting, I see myself standing on the edge of a boat with my six-year-old daughter. Seth and I had taken the girls on a day cruise to go snorkeling in the ocean. As soon as the boat stopped, Seth and my older daughter, holding hands, jumped out. Then the rest of the passengers, one or two at a time, leaped into the water. Finally, I realized that the only people left on the boat were me, my daughter, and the boat captain, and he was not planning to snorkel. We stood on the edge where people had jumped. I kept fiddling with my fins and mask. My daughter tugged on my arm, "Let's go!"

Although we were both good swimmers, I suddenly realized: *I cannot jump in.* My child was holding my hand, looking into my eyes with complete trust and eager expectation. But the water was very deep; we could not stand. How could I go in water over my head with my child? I was totally paralyzed.

As we stood there, my anxiety began to creep through my hand to my daughter. "Maybe we should stay on the boat," she suggested tentatively. Then I knew: like it or not, I *had* to jump in. Over my head. My child was relying on me. I had the power to communicate my fears to my child, to make her afraid of the water. I also had the power to transcend my own fears and teach her courage. What I did not have was the power to guarantee the world would be safe. I had to trust the water would hold us up. Without waiting another second, we jumped.

It was the same during those first weeks of parenthood. The only difference was that on the snorkeling boat I could have chosen not to jump. In life, once my daughter was born, I *had* to jump, taking my child with me—into my life as a parent, into her life as a person. I had to believe the water would hold us up.

As new parents, we find ourselves jumping in over our heads, suddenly granted lifetime tenure in a job for which we have no degree, perhaps have never even taken a course. We have the power to make profound choices for someone else, choices that involve basic values and beliefs. Some of those choices are daunting.

Susan, a women's health expert, was director of a large prenatal program. Not surprisingly, she had researched and prepared meticulously for every aspect of her first child's early life: pregnancy, delivery, breast feeding, vaccinations. All went according to plan until something caught her off guard. During that first week at home with her son, she found herself

struggling each night with an unanswered question: the religious identity of her child.

Jewish law requires a male to be ritually circumcised on the eighth day of his life. While neither Susan nor her husband had ever denied their identity as Jews, neither had they ever made much of it. All of a sudden they were confronted by a question that was in no way theoretical. The circumcision on the eighth day would either happen—or not. Nothing had prepared them for how difficult this issue would be to resolve.

As part of her work, Susan had been reading a great deal about circumcision. At that time, the women's health community was questioning its appropriateness and safety as a medical procedure. As a professional, Susan opposed circumcision. But now that they were parents, both Susan and her husband were beginning to value their Jewishness in a way they hadn't before. All things were not rational.

Between feedings, Susan and her husband discussed the pros and cons. By the eighth day, they had made a decision. They would bring their son "into the covenant" in the three-thousand-year-old manner. They were not prepared to "break the circle." They invited only their parents and siblings, their two midwives, and the ritual expert to perform the circumcision. The ceremony was held in their bedroom, with morning sun streaming in. "It was loving and intimate," Susan recalled. "It brought the birth experience, which had been so immediate and personal, into the context of our families and our history.

"We had done it! We had negotiated the first encounter between our child and the world around him. It felt great! We had made an important decision on his behalf. And having made it, we lifted the whole experience of giving birth from the plane of the physical and mundane. When the ritual was over, I turned to my sister and said, 'Now I am not only a descendant, I am an ancestor!' Those are lofty words, but that is how I felt."

Hannah, telling me about her son's baptism, said, "It was this immense relief. Until that day, I felt like I was the only one in charge of the life of this innocent, totally vulnerable baby. Now I had introduced him to God and I had a partner in my work. The priest gave us a wonderful image that day to hold on to. In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, there is a scene where the astronauts are lost in space. Two of them end up outside the spaceship. They are trying desperately to get back in. But even if they do, they'll still be lost! There's a difference, however, in being lost outside the spaceship

or inside. Our religious traditions are our spaceships as we hurtle through the unknown."

The tension between power and powerlessness makes some parents want to feel part of something larger than themselves. One mother told me that when she first read the Bible as an adult with two young children, she couldn't get over how the characters sounded like the roster of her daughter's yuppie preschool—Sarah, Rebecca, Joshua. Of course, she realized it was the nursery school parents who were borrowing from the Bible, not the other way around! It occurred to her that in naming children, this very secular, postmodern generation was expressing its yearning for tradition. The sociologist Peter Berger speaks of religion as a "sacred canopy" under which the believer lives her life. Parents often find themselves reweaving their canopies, sometimes borrowing threads from afar, in order to create for their children—and themselves—a place to take shelter.

That is not all. The heightened sense of vulnerability pushes some parents to think more about the Power in the universe that is not themselves. In the major religious paths of the West—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—God has often been imagined, metaphorically, as a parent. When people become parents, that metaphor often leaps off the page for the first time. One mother recalled, "Those first few nights, I hired a nurse so that I could get some sleep. I put three closed doors between myself and the baby. In the middle of the night, I would wake instantly when she cried. I thought about the prayer—'Lord, hear our cry!' Before, I didn't believe that God *hears* cries. But God is supposed to be our parent, and parents, I discovered, have incredibly good ears."

As Anna put it, "I was totally unprepared for the feeling of total love for this child. I finally realized that if God were my parent, this is how God must feel about each and every one of us. It makes more sense to me now."

Perhaps, as we hold and rock the fragile little ones, we too need to be held and rocked. Rocked by the Parent who, unlike us, is truly powerful. Gazing into the eyes of a child, we find the idea more plausible: that Power might be addressed as "Thou."

Not all of us can relate to a God who is called upon as "You." For many, that is an enormous leap. Nevertheless, we may still sense a Power beyond ourselves, in the world. Though we may not choose to imagine that Power as a mother or father, we may know it to be a real force in our lives.

Mara said, "With my child I experienced the strongest, most unambiguous, pure love. If that's what God is all about, then I certainly knew something of God that I had never known before."

Chuck, finishing the interview on the porch while ensconced in his old rocker, mused about those long-ago 4:00 A.M. feedings. "I could not believe it," said Chuck. "We would link eyes and it could last a half hour or more. I had always suspected that on some deep level, I was fundamentally alone in this world. But now I knew I was wrong. Being together with my child was the realest thing I had ever known. Something I had read years before by Martin Buber began to make sense. God was here in the space between our linked eyes, in the relationship, the encounter."

When recalling those early days of parenting, some mothers and fathers mainly remember the fear, others the elation. Some parents already possess a sturdy cocoon of tradition in which to raise their children. Others have to build one painstakingly, over many years. Some chat with God throughout the day; others catch only glimpses of "something more"—and that only at 4:00 A.M.

But most are filled with wonder and wondering. Wonder at the miracle of gallons of milk alchemized into yet another pound of baby. Wonder at the linked eyes (and we thought we had known something about love!). And wondering. Wondering if we have what it takes to do this job, if we can fulfill the trust. Wondering, too, after a long 4:00 A.M. feeding, how in the world we will greet the day again in just three hours.

Chapter 2

DAWN

Birth

*"When the world was first created,
it probably looked just like this morning."*

When I told people I was writing a book about the spiritual experiences of parents, many assumed that I meant the experience of giving birth. It seemed clear to them that participating in the arrival on earth of a new human being would be a "religious high." The drudgery of the next eighteen years has a less obvious connection to holiness. This chapter is about both—the extraordinary, unique experience of birth and the ordinary, quotidian experience of waking up early each morning with children. Both evoke the mystery that religious people call "creation."

For many years, on Friday mornings I went with my child to "play group." (In the interest of honesty, we should have called it "talk group" since the adults' agenda was clearly central.) One winter, we moms spent weeks on a single topic: How did other women combine children and jobs more efficiently than we? *What did they know that we did not?*

One week, Joan arrived at play group full of excitement. She had met a professional woman with three children who was publishing articles at the same rate as when she was childless. What was more, she had told Joan her secret. "All you have to do," Joan explained to a hushed and attentive audience, "is set your alarm to wake up two hours before the earliest rising child."

We were dumbfounded. It was brilliant! Why hadn't any of us thought of that? We were so desperate (and sleep deprived) that we actually believed it would work.

Everyday Holiness

The Jewish Spiritual Path of
Mussar

Alan Morinis



Trumpeter
Boston & London
2007

rightfully to occupy that you need to stretch into? Your answers are the measure of your humility and define how humility figures into your spiritual curriculum.

The goal would be to have it said of you (as it was of one of the Mussa masters of the nineteenth century), "He was so humble he didn't even know he was humble."¹⁶

A small deed done in humility is a thousand times more acceptable to God than a great deed done in pride.

—*Orchot Tzaddikim* (The Ways of the Righteous)

Patience

SAVLANUT

Whatever may obstruct me from reaching my goals, it is possible to bear the burden of the situation.

Woe to the pampered one who has never been trained to be patient. Either today or in the future he is destined to sip from the cup of affliction.

—Rabbi M. M. Lefin, *Cheshbon ha'Nefesh*

NOT A DAY GOES BY when we don't face some sort of frustrating delay or obstacle, and too often our response is to strain against how things are. That tends to happen to me when I'm rushing somewhere in my car, but my feelings may suddenly sneak up on you while the water fills the tub over so slowly, or as your child struggles with clumsy fingers to master the complexity of a shoelace, or on those days when nothing—not your Internet server, not your spouse, not the postman, *nobody!*—does things when you want.

Impatience seldom makes things happen faster or better and usually only causes us grief. It's like an inner blaze that burns us up without giving off any warmth. That would be bad enough, but it is also a short step from impatience to rage, and we all know what harm can come to ourselves and others because of uncontrollable anger.

I'd be remiss not to point out right at the outset that there are circumstances where we should not be patient and where patience is not a virtue. When confronted with injustice or the needs or suffering of another person or other situations where our actions could make a difference, we have no business patiently taking our time. Patience comes into play when

it is our own burden we are bearing, or when there really is no course of action available to us at that moment to alleviate the situation.

Walking in God's Patient Way

Who wouldn't be delighted to deepen their ability to meet life's challenges with more patience? We get very clear support for doing so from the Bible, where it tells us that we should "walk in His ways."¹ This simple but forceful idea—sometimes called *imitatio dei*, emulating God—is the ultimate blueprint for the spiritual life and tells us that we should model our lives on godly virtues. That's how we move ourselves closer to the highest potential we have from birth, and when we act with heavenly virtue in our personal lives, we help to make this world a little more like heaven.

In practical terms, we emulate God by practicing virtue or, as I like to call it, living in "virtuous reality." The sages tell us: "As God is called merciful and gracious, so be you merciful and gracious; as God is called righteous, so be you righteous; as God is called holy, so be you holy."² As God is forgiving, so too should we strive to be forgiving. We are guided to emulate God in all the divine attributes of mercy and righteousness, though not the attributes of severity and justice that we can also find in the Torah. Because we want the world to be infused with qualities of goodness, we have a responsibility to become vessels for those same virtues. That prescription includes the trait of patience.

No matter how you may conceive of God or the creative force that stands behind the universe, there is no doubt that this ultimate source of life is endowed with patience, especially when compared to us. Think of the pace of earthly eras, creeping along as slowly as glaciers advancing and retreating in an ice age. Stars and galaxies are born, mature, and pass away. And as for us, what the Mussar tradition offers as evidence for God's patience is the fact that our lives are sustained, even when we do wrong.³ It's not hard to imagine a universe where there is absolutely no margin for error, where punishment is instantaneous and total, but that isn't the world we live in. God is patient and preserves our lives even when our actions happen to hit way off the mark, to give us time to come to deeper realizations, make amends, and return to a straighter way.

"From this, man should learn to what extent he, too, should be patient and bear the yoke of his fellow."⁴ Since God is patient, then we, who

are encouraged to guide our lives by "walking in His ways," should also be patient.

Suffering Impatience

Where we get into trouble with impatience is in our reactivity. The problem: confronting you may be entirely real: You're late. You need it now. There will be consequences. But whatever the problem, no matter how great or how small, it is one thing to face those life issues just as they are, and quite another to slop grief, worry, regret, impatience, and other such mental condiments all over the situation. Reactions like these only increase our burden by adding a whole extra dimension of inner suffering (and often hurtful behavior) to an already difficult experience.

Can you identify situations that tend to try your patience?

In the chapter on patience in the classic Mussar text *Cheshbon ha Nefesh* by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Leffin,⁵ the author sets up his discussion by pointing out that there are many cases of people extracting delight from what we'd agree are painful and unsavory experiences. By way of illustration he mentions the experience of tasting vinegar and pepper, which are sour and sharp but which can add zest and flavor to food (when used in the right way) and be a delight to the palate.

But "towering above all these are the spiritual delights in which the spiritual soul [*nehamta*] exalts—for example, the wondrous, sublime pleasure of acting righteously with everyone." He is pointing to something that we have all experienced because it is innate within us, which is the deep and satisfying pleasure we get from doing good, especially with other people.

Continuing to work toward his consideration of patience, he points out that in many situations we can do right by planning and careful action. But for "those serious incidents which come upon us unavoidably and which we were powerless to prepare for or which we could not deal with once they transpired, God has provided us with a remedial regimen—patience."⁶

Patience is here depicted as a tool we can call on to help us endure when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances we did not choose and could not avoid. In this he is revealing something essential about patience as this attribute is understood in the Jewish tradition. The Hebrew word

72

for patience is *savlanut*, which can also mean "tolerance." The same root gives rise to words that mean "suffer" and "endure" and also the noun for a porter who carries goods. We can learn something fundamental from this pool of words that derive from the common source: patience means enduring and tolerating, and the experience may even bring us elements of suffering.

We get a hint of the same message in the English word "suffer," which means both to experience pain and to tolerate, or put up with. So patience is not just about waiting, it's about bearing. A story told by a Mussar student reflects on this core aspect of patience. She had been in a car accident that caused her back problems and that, in turn, had an impact on her ability to work. "I think about all the patience I have had to have to get to this point. Patience with my back and physical limitations. Patience with the legal process. Patience with my attorney, who wasn't always available exactly when I had a question or a need."

She realized that the root of her problem with being patient was "accepting what I cannot control. It is not that difficult to surrender and say to myself, 'I have done all I can; it is in the hands of God.' What is so much more difficult is to be at peace about it and to really let go. I find that tolerating the uncertainty of the outcome, and accepting the burden of an outcome that is unwanted, are both hard." Here is the "bearing" that is essential to patience.

The converse is that if you are the kind of person who finds it easy to be joyful in traffic jams and to whistle happily in mile-long bank lines, then you have little need for patience. You're already well equipped with tranquility or equanimity, and so you are not that reactive to the delays and obstacles that tend to send most people spinning into a rage. Patience comes into play when you are already ticked off, when the situation already has you starting to fume. It's then that you reach into your pocket to pull out your patience, which helps you bear the burden that is pressing on you.

Opening the Space between the Match and the Fuse

The problem with impatience is that it usually takes only a split second for its first glowing embers to ignite into flames that course through us even before we've become aware that they have started up. Impatience snuffs

out consciousness, and before I even know it's happening, I'm leaning on my horn, or you're going hoarse yelling at your child or cursing the postman. At this point we don't even recognize ourselves, and there is little to be done but to try to rein in these feelings enough to minimize any damage we might do.

It's so much better to be able to catch our impatience as it is arising and to nip it in the bud. To do this we need to recognize the fact that we are getting impatient and then take responsibility for our impatience. This is much easier said than done.

For example, it is common that when a couple is getting ready to go out for a pleasant evening, one of them is always ready before the other. And it is always the same one who is ready first and waiting at the door while the other one has to make one more phone call, or change shoes or tie or dress one last time, or check on something or other. Time passes, impatience grows, and by the time they are both in the car heading out for the evening or to visit friends, they are not even speaking to each other.

The tendency is for the one who is always ready first to become righteous and blame the other one for bad behavior. While it surely isn't good to be unpunctual and to waste other people's time, what the impatient person tends to be blind to is that he or she has the personal freedom to choose to call upon the power of patience in that moment, in order to bear the situation without smoldering and then igniting and acting out.

When you find yourself in a situation that is triggering your impatience, instead of giving all your attention and energy to finding fault with the person who is so clearly at fault, you can choose to be patient and take responsibility for your emotional response to that situation. You make the choice of whether you buckle or call on patience to help you bear the burden of the situation. My teacher, Rabbi Perr, calls this awareness and exercise of choice "opening the space between the match and the fuse."

Witnessing and Naming

Being able to call on patience in the way I am describing depends on having cultivated your awareness of the telltale signs of impatience so you can spot them right in the instant that they begin to stir. The practice is to witness and name the feelings just as they come up, which requires that you say to yourself, "I'm feeling impatient" or "There's impatience." Just by forming

those words, you are holding open at least a tiny crack through which the light of consciousness can still shine, and if you can do that, then at that point what is going to happen to that impatience is suddenly no longer so certain.

There are obstacles to the sort of awareness I am noting here. One is the common condition of simply being disconnected from one's own feelings. Too often people who are impatient and act it are unaware of their own behavior. When the inner lights are dimmed like that, spiritual progress is stopped in its tracks. Another equally common obstacle is denial. In this case, people actually do know their patterns but refuse to acknowledge and take responsibility for them. Rather, they deflect what is real and could be painful and difficult, and instead cling to false analyses and excuses.

Truth and consciousness are preconditions to exercising free will. Only when the light of awareness is glowing brightly can we see the truth and choose to follow a course that is guided by our values and goals, not by our "animal soul":⁸ instincts, emotional reactions, and habits. And the brighter awareness glows, the more freedom of choice we have.

Many techniques work to increase the strength of conscious awareness to open that space between the match and the fuse. Meditation does this, and it is also one of the main outcomes of the "Accounting of the Soul" practice that is described in part 3 of this book. The challenging thing is, you have to commit yourself to doing these sorts of practices at those times when awareness is *not* being tested, so their effects will be there right at hand when it is. This tests your discipline. If you suddenly found yourself having to climb up many flights of stairs, you'd be very glad that you had kept up your physical conditioning before it was called on. If you were a gunfighter in the Wild West, you'd work on your draw before you needed it for a shoot-out. The same is true for the inner life. As my first meditation teacher repeatedly said, "Do spiritual practice now, so you'll have it when you need it!"

Patience and Humility

The situations in which we can feel impatience are numberless, but there is one common factor that unites them all. We only burn with that partic-

ular fire when the focus in the situation is on *me*. You are delaying *me*, misleading *me*, berating *me*. You are interfering with *my* plan or standing in the way of *my* needs. Sometimes the only inner voice I can hear is my ego, loudly promoting all its important needs and plans and drowning out any other voice that might whisper within.

We all tend to see ourselves as the prime actor in a drama that swirls around us. Some of us believe that all that heavy action is playing out according to a script we ourselves have written. Others see it the opposite way, playing the victim to the forces that press in on their own little stronghold. Despite the obvious differences, both these attitudes see the whole of life as pivoting around a separate identity that stands at the center of a very personal universe.

But the truth is different. We are neither so central nor independent as all that. We are actually wired into all kinds of larger circuits and systems, from the molecular to the social, and we don't control many of the factors that have a role in shaping our lives. Least of all can we expect to rule the timetable according to which life takes place.

The Mussar teachers encourage us to contemplate these truths, because when we realize a deeper understanding of our rightful place in the universe, this helps us avoid getting all worked up when things don't go just precisely as we'd like. Why should everything go our way, considering how small we are and how many other agendas and needs are always involved? When we do hold in sight how integrated we are within the grand schemes that make up and sustain the world, we see ourselves situated amid the large wheels turning and rivers flowing, moved by hands that are not our own. Whatever pleasure or pain we may experience, our lives are taking place within great cycles of time, space, and material, even though we often have our eyes focused so directly in front of our noses that we don't perceive the truth of that largest picture.

We truthfully have so little control over so many features of our lives that it doesn't make any sense at all to put ourselves through useless suffering as if we did have control. And that's just what we do when we slip into impatience.

It's important to sort out what is actually within our power and what is not. And the remarkable thing is that in both cases, we are better off to be patient—the things that are within our control to change, and patient with those that aren't.

TM

Lesson Six:
Reflection and Preparing the Ritual

Objectives:

- Students will be able to synthesize the ideas discussed throughout this unit.
- Students will be able to reflect on what they have learned in the previous lessons.
- Students will be able to apply themes from this unit into the developing spiritual birthday celebrations.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set induction

The teacher will review the ideas from the previous lessons in this unit with the students. The teacher will list these topics of the lesson and remind the students about the main ideas of this unit. If any of the students were absent, it is also an opportunity to fill the student in and the material s/he missed. The teacher will have copies of the lessons to hand out to students who missed classes.

- Lesson One: Awareness
- Lesson Two: Daily Miracles
- Lesson Three: Morning Rituals
- Lesson Four: Feeding
- Lesson Five: Early Morning/Middle of the Night

Students will be invited to reflect any changes they have made to their routine based on the class in this unit. This could also be an opportunity for students to bring up issues or concerns they are experiencing as new parents and encourage the students to make suggestions to help each other.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- As we review the class topics, have any questions come up about these topics? If so, what are they?
- Has your experience of any of these issues changed after addressing it in class? If so, in what ways?
- Would you like any further information about any of these topics? If so, what type of information would be the most helpful?
- If the class is being taught at a synagogue, are there ways the synagogue can continue to support you and your exploration of these topics?

Activity Two: Review Journal and Spiritual Scrapbook

The teacher will give the students some time to review at their journal and spiritual scrapbooks. This is also an opportunity for students to finish their entries in either the journals or the spiritual scrapbooks. Students will be invited to continue to their personal reflections on these topics and to write about these topics if the altered their behaviors because of the class and how they felt about their new activities.

Activity Three: Preparing Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Students will have an opportunity to continue developing the spiritual birthday celebration for their child. Students can pick a few of the topics discussed in the unit decide which of them they would like to include in the spiritual birthday celebration. The teacher will hand out copies the afterward of the book Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, "Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones. This chapter includes specific steps and suggestions designed to help people develop their own personal rituals. Students can begin the process of creating their own spiritual birthday celebrations by reading this chapter.

Students can include something they have written or read in the class to be read aloud during the spiritual birthday celebration. This is an opportunity for the students to share their original work with their community. Students can include music or others readings in their rituals as they see fit.

This is a class session clergy could attend to be a resource and answer any questions the students have about creating rituals or the topics discussed in the unit. The clergy could bring additional books, articles, readings etc to give students ideas for their spiritual birthday celebrations. This could be a time for students to begin to develop relationships with the clergy at the institution in a meaningful way. This is also an opportunity for the students to connect with a musical person to help them add music to the spiritual birthday celebration.

The teacher could encourage the students to be creative as they plan their rituals. Ideally the students will design rituals that are meaningful to them and their community and reflect the amazing journey they are on as new parents.

Resources:

Copies of previous lessons, handouts, journal prompts and spiritual scrapbook prompts should be available for students to review.

Copies of the chapter from Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones,” “How to make a ritual” to be handed out to students.

If students would like sample rituals, material is available in Unit 4 Lesson 4. This includes everyday rituals and lifecycle rituals.

Journal Prompts:

- I sometimes only see the mud of parenting when...
- It can be difficult to appreciate the miracle of parenting ...
- My child feels like a miracle to me because...
- When I reflect on the miracles in my life I think about...
- My child has changed my view of miracles by...
- The miracles I most want to remember from this time I have with my young child are...
- The hardest part about leaving my child in the morning is...
- When my spouse leaves in the morning I feel...
- Each morning I look forward to...
- When I feed my child I feel...
- As I feed my child I think about...
- The hardest part about waking up in the middle of the night is...
- When I think about the middle of the night wake ups I feel....
- As I try to incorporate calmness into my daily life I wonder...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompts:

- I think you are a miracle because...
- Every day I am amazed to the miracle of being a parent when you...
- The most miraculous thing about being a parent so far is...
- Everyday, I think of you as a miracle because or when you...
- Watching you...has felt like a miracle to me because...
- Our morning ritual is...
- I love to spend time with you in the morning when we...
- When I feed you I hope/pray...
- As we spend time together when I feed you I feel grateful that I can...
- My favorite thing about being up in the middle of the night with you is...
- You helped to teach me about calmness by...

LIFECYCLES



*Jewish Women on
Life Passages and Personal Milestones*

VOLUME I

EDITED AND
WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

Rabbi Debra Orenstein

WILSTEIN INSTITUTE FELLOW

JEWISH LIGHTS PUBLISHING
WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

79

That *Rosh Hashanah*¹⁶, I sat in synagogue, while all around, people pressed hands in greeting. And on that day, it seemed to me some strange ritual, as if the men and women were desperate to seal in the life left in them.

As if one of them might know what is written in the book.

Who would be next and after that.

Now, approaching the seventh year since her death, I look out at the end-of-summer garden and see, in gritty photos, the mothers parted from their children, healthy to the right, condemned to the left. She always thrust to one side, I to the other.



Afterword: How to Create a Ritual



Creating a Ritual¹⁷

DEBRA ORENSTEIN

"Turn [the tradition] over and over again, [to study and review it]. Everything is in it."

—MISHNAH AVOT 5:24

While some people have a natural talent for authoring new rituals, the art of creating rituals can also be taught. Like other forms of creative expression, ritual-writing has a body of rules and skills, gleaned from both the theory of the discipline and the trial-and-error of its practitioners.

What follows is a seven-stage process toward the creation of rituals. It reflects the lessons of master liturgists and anthropologists; my observations of the, usually unconscious, steps in formulating a ritual; and the ritual theory I have developed. It is meant to make the endeavor of creating a ritual more accessible and, at the same time, more predictable, in terms of quality and outcome.

¹⁷Rabbi Debra Orenstein, editor of *Lifecycles*, fellow of the Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, and instructor at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, regularly writes and speaks on Jewish spirituality and gender studies.

Do not feel wedded to this structure, however. You are engaging in a creative process and must do what it takes for *your* creative juices to flow.

Sometimes, rituals, like poetry or melodies, come suddenly and easily, by inspiration. If you wake up in the middle of the night and rush to your desk to write out a ritual you literally dreamed up, chances are it is an excellent one. You may then want to use some of my questions and suggestions as a check, but you will not need them to *create* a ritual. When the muse does not strike immediately, however, it may be useful to have a system for organizing your thinking.

Step One: What Is a Ritual—And Do I Need One?

The terms blessing, prayer, ceremony, and ritual are generally used loosely, if not interchangeably. Technically, however, they refer to different genres, one of which is probably more suitable than the others for marking a particular passage or milestone.

Blessings in the Jewish tradition follow a strict formula, beginning with the words *barukh atiah adonai* (blessed are You, *Adonai*) and often continuing with *eloheinu melakh ha'olam* (our God, Ruler/King of the universe) and still further with *asher kiddeshanu be'mitzvotav v'etzivanu* (who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us...). There are a variety of modern adaptations to the traditional formulation, most of which use either gender neutral or feminine God language, and many of which eliminate the notion of sovereignty altogether, in favor of the image of God as creator. Whatever formulation is used, blessings usually consist of just one line. They can accompany a specific behavior (e.g. ritual washing of the hands), occasion (e.g. wearing a suit for the first time), time (e.g. beginning of Sabbath), or natural phenomenon (e.g. rainbow or earthquake). They may also serve as the *petihah* (opening) or *hachmah* (seal or closure) of a prayer. Prayers, longer liturgical expressions with a still wider array of applications, may or may not include a *berakhah* (blessing). Both blessings and prayers feature prominently in rituals and ceremonies. They are fitting for these public, communal occasions, but may also (or instead) be said privately.

In recent years, the terms "ritual" and "ceremony" have been

applied increasingly broadly. Psychologists Ewan Imber-Black and Janine Roberts name five purposes of rituals: (1) To shape, express and maintain relationships; (2) to make and mark transitions; (3) to heal from betrayal, trauma, or loss; (4) to voice beliefs and create meaning; and (5) to honor and celebrate individuals and life, generally.² In classical anthropological understanding, the second task named is highly emphasized, and is divided between ritual, which makes the transitions, and ceremony, which marks them. Ceremonies are said to celebrate an existing status, while rituals ideally help to effect a transition and transformation from one status to another. Thus, miscarriage "rituals" are technically ceremonies because they mark a status already established, but the circumcison "ceremony" is actually a ritual, because it changes the child's status, physically, spiritually, and socially. Even according to these strict (and admittedly artificial) definitions, the line between ritual and ceremony is not always so clearly drawn. In the days of arranged marriages, weddings were pure ritual, transforming single persons into married ones. Today, they are also part ceremony, acknowledging and celebrating a change that has already taken place in the status of a couple's relationship and commitment.

Ceremonies and rituals both make use of symbols and physical behaviors to concretize their messages. However, rituals need and tend to do this more strongly and reliably, since they endeavor to create a noticeable change, a "before-and-after" picture, that will be meaningful to both individual and community. Along the way, between "before" and "after," there is a transitional, liminal state, discussed in this volume by Rabbis Geller and Holub. At that point, one is, to return to our wedding example, neither married nor unmarried, but somewhere in an ambiguous, even dangerous interim. It is dangerous because the end result has not yet been established, but the status quo has already been abandoned. Yet this volatility offers the opportunity for identification with both past and future, and the benefit of encouraging keen and inquisitive focus on the actors in the ritual drama. The "after" stage does not usher in an utterly new status, unconnected with the old, but rather represents a re-embodiment and a re-incorporation of a transformed self.

Many anthropologists and liturgists now reject strict divisions between ritual and ceremony and argue that there has been an

over-emphasis on the liminal—as if becoming were somehow more important than being. I like to stress the liminal, however, and believe that what is over-stressed, especially in the Jewish context, is the “after” stage, the reaggregation and coming to a new status quo. Liminality, which is sometimes called the threshold stage, is especially important for women, who as Marge Piercy writes in *The Sabbath of Mutual Respect* are “the doorways of life.” The body of a woman was a physical threshold that each of us crossed in entering the world.³ Traditionally, women have spent a great deal of their lives standing on thresholds and helping children and men across—by preparing children for rites of passage, orchestrating other lifecycle and holiday celebrations, and serving as the women “behind” men’s transformations in status.

Victor Turner associated liminality with a time of intense egalitarianism and comradeship, as well as minimized sex role distinctions, due to the shared experience of *communitas* and the lack of structure and hierarchy during transition.⁴ One of the reasons that feminists have taken so to ritual and seek out liminality is that these are precisely the qualities that we value. From a social activist point of view, it is in leaving behind our structured, hierarchical society and entering a fluid, inchoate state that we allow for the possibility of transforming gender roles.

If it is clear to you that you want to create for yourself or someone else a transformation in status, witnessed and honored in any case, many of the “how-to” steps which follow will apply to all forms of liturgical expression.

Step Two: What Resources Are Already Available? (or, Avoid Reinventing the Wheel)

You will want to ascertain what other rituals and liturgies already exist. Consult traditional Jewish sources, either directly or via secondary readings. You can begin with those listed in the bibliography and/or ask your local rabbi and Judaica librarian for suggestions. Organizations and resource centers that deal with women and Jewish lifecycle can be helpful, as well.⁵ Be sure to investigate aspects of the tradition with which you may be unfamiliar, including Sephardic, Ethiopian, Hasidic, and mystical texts and customs.

Afterword

If relevant traditional or modern rituals are available, you will want to trace these to their most original source and adapt them, as necessary, in line with the suggestions on creating ritual, below.

Step Three: Creating a Ritual from the Ground Up

If you have few or no models and wish to create an entirely new ritual, I recommend that you ask and answer two questions to clarify your purpose in preparation for writing. First, what is the transformation you wish to effect? Second, if you conceive of your ritual in three stages—(1) before/status quo, (2) during/liminality, and (3) after/new state—what are the main characteristics of each stage, in your particular case? Once you have addressed these questions, engage in a “Jewish brainstorming” session. What are your Jewish associations to the transformation and to each stage? What Jewish heroes, texts, historical movements, symbols, ritual objects, songs, do they call to mind? Do not hesitate to ask rabbis and other Jewishly knowledgeable friends for their input.

As in any brainstorming session, simply let the ideas flow without judging them. You will be able to reject, use, alter, or combine them later on. First, just get them on paper. You will also generate associations from other sources and disciplines, such as women’s studies, ethnography, and your own life story and imagination. This is all to the good. The list you create will contain within it the raw materials of a ritual.

If you wanted to create a ritual for taking on a new name, for example, you might end up with these lists—or something like them—before you:

Transformation I wish to effect: I wish to change my name and my spirit.

Associations: Abrahm becomes Abraham; Sarai becomes Sarah; Jacob becomes Israel; Asher Zvi Ginsberg becomes the Zionist thinker Akkad Ha’am (literally, one of the people); a good name is a significant acquisition in this life (Mishnah Avot 2:8); the crown of a good name is superior to the crowns of Torah, priesthood, and royalty (Mishnah Avot 4:17); to gossip is to be *motzi shem ra* (giving out a bad name); God’s name can be desecrated or honored; God has many names, including The

Name; the blessing for doing anything new (including taking a new name) is *Shehechyanu*; there is a folk custom to change the names of sick people, so the angel of death will not know where to find them.

Before: I am attached to my old name, which represents my way of life before I was clean and sober...my ex-husband's family...my abusive father...my life before I was an observant Jew...the "old me" in some other respect.

Associations to "before": _____ (This will depend significantly on the nature of the "before.")

During: I release my old name and stand without a new one.

Associations to "during": I am like a baby boy who has already been circumcised, but not yet been named; I am like the woman in the Jewish feminist short story "The Woman Who Lost Her Names;"⁶ I am like Abraham after he left Haran and before he understood where he was going.

After: I choose my identity and have come into my own.

Associations to "after": I am like the double-named Hadassah / Esther when she reveals her true self; I am like David following his pretense of having been crazy; I am like Jacob who emerged wounded, but with a blessing, a new relationship with God, and a new name, after battling with forces of the night.

Next, associate to the items on each list. As before, research them in your Judaica library and/or with experts. It is extremely helpful to look up the key words on your lists in a biblical and/or a Talmudic concordance. Many libraries also have Rabbinic literature on CD-ROMs. These sources will lead you to verses containing the same key words, which may be of use in fashioning prayers, or in choosing holy figures to "join you" at your ritual. It is common for lifecycle rituals to include Jewish heroes of the past as "special guests." For example, Elijah, who accused the Israelites of neglecting *brit* (covenant), is said to join participants at every *Brit Milah* (covenant of circumcision ritual), and a special chair is reserved for him at circumcisions. Likewise, Adam and Eve, the first human couple, and Isaac and Rebecca, the first Jewish couple

whose meeting and love story are recorded, are implicitly invoked as guests at every Jewish wedding, when they are referred to in the *Sheva Berakhot* (seven marital blessings) and the *hadeken* (bridal veiling ceremony), respectively.⁷

At this stage and with your ritual in mind, read through the Book of Psalms. Psalms are the source of a significant portion of our traditional liturgy. Since psalms speak of and from a personal relationship with God and reflect a wide range of emotions, the Book of Psalms is a likely source of liturgy for a variety of personal passages.

Look through the traditional prayerbook, as well, and especially at blessings we say on uncommon and/or special occasions. Many prayers and blessings may have open or double meanings that make them appropriate for use with ritual innovations. For example, the blessing traditionally said upon seeing wonders of nature, such as lightning, shooting stars, and sunrises, can be loosely translated as "Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, continual Source of creation." Treasure Cohen uses this blessing as a *hatimah* for her tree-planting ceremony in honor of newborns. Similarly, Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso uses a *hatimah* from the High Holiday *Amidah* (series of blessing which is the centerpiece of every prayer service) for a blessing of healing after miscarriage. Of course, from an Orthodox point of view it is forbidden to offer blessings which are not required, as they are therefore considered to be recited in vain.⁸ To use an old text in a new way, however, is in keeping with Rabbinic sensibilities and hermeneutics. New rituals, ceremonies, blessings, and prayers that incorporate ancient ones tend to ring right and true not only because the words are authentic, but because the method is as well.

Repetition of a "tag line" you find in the prayer services or through concordance work can be a powerful liturgical tool. "Tag lines" and refrains function both to reinforce an idea and, by the context and placement of the repetition, to show its various meanings. They also function as a mantra. They may appear at the beginning of a line, phrase, or paragraph (as does the phrase *hayim shel* [a life of] in the Prayer for the New Month and New Year and in Rabbi Pam Hoffman's birthday prayer in Chapter Five) or at the end of same (as does *ki le'olam hasdo* [for God's lovingkindness endures forever] in Psalm 118 and the *Hallel* [Psalms of praise]).

Now, review your lists: The list of associations to the topic, the list of associations to its stages, the sacred guest list, the list of concordance verses, and the lists of relevant Psalms, prayers, blessings, and possible tag lines/refrains. Reflect on any patterns you may see, and on how you might weave different elements together. Remember that while I have delineated three stages, and will, for purposes of clarity, continue to address them each in turn, your ritual is a whole. Try to avoid gaps or seams between stages, but do not become over-occupied with the stages, or push to make them all "come out even." Even anthropologists who distinguish rigidly between different stages, point out that the stages in a particular ritual are not necessarily of equal weight. The best themes, heroes, verses, etc. are those that speak to every aspect and stage of the ritual—wherever they appear—and resonate on many levels, not just one.

Step Four: Distinguishing the Stages of Ritual Jewishly, and Incorporating Them in Deed as Well as Word

I have been referring to the three stages of ritual as "before, during, and after," but actually the process is more complex. By the time you have gathered a group for a communal ritual, you are no longer really in the status quo. You have already begun to separate from it. Thus, the "before" stage is not so much the stage of one's previous status, as the stage of separation from one's previous status.⁹

The anthropologists' before, during, and after have their Jewish equivalent in creation, revelation, and redemption. During creation, God was *ma'odil* (separator). God separated Godself from the totality of all existence, as well as day from night, sea from land, the earth from the human, etc. Thus, separation enables creation and establishes our initial status. Moreover, this remains our contemporary reality: Birth is creation by separation, just as psychological health is characterized, in part, by individuation.

Revelation corresponds to the "during" stage. It represents transition—from a gang of slaves to a people with a purpose, from lawlessness to holiness. Revelation, the receiving of Torah, is the mid-way point between being born and being reborn. At this limi-

nal stage of the ritual, Torah—the essential teaching of the ritual—must be given.

Redemption is, obviously, "after." It comes after the end of time and the world as we know it. It includes, whether physically or metaphorically, the ultimate re-embodiment and re-incorporation: The resurrection of the dead. It brings creation full circle, just as the new status achieved by a ritual is a completion, rather than a contradiction, of one's "before" state.

Traditional Jewish historiography recognizes creation, revelation, and redemption as the indispensable stages of development, to which everything else is commentary. Many Jewish liturgies—from the blessings before and after the *Shema* prayer to the seven marital blessings—make use of the three themes. You should certainly consider incorporating the themes into the stages of your ritual.

You will want not only to bear in mind the anthropological stages and their Jewish equivalents, but somehow to move the participants from one stage to the next. This is not accomplished by an announcement: "Now we are entering the transitional stage." In general, the less your ritual explains itself, the better. Rituals are not primarily teaching opportunities, though we sometimes use them that way; they are meant to be lived, not learned. Ritual, like liturgy, is more dramatic than scholastic.

Thus, the best way to effect stages is by affect. For example, to begin separating from your existing status in the "before" stage, create a sense—literally via the senses—that a dramatic change is coming. Depending on what is appropriate to the context, you might gather in a special place, cast a sacred circle, use chanting, prayer, spices, or a *karavanah* (intentional meditation) to carry the community to a new place. The traditional formulation *hineni mukhan/mukhanah umezumman/umezummet lekayem mitzat...* (Behold, I am prepared and ready to fulfill the mitzvah [commandment] of...) is a "before/creation" prayer. By devotion and assertion, by saying "Let there be readiness," it creates readiness, and begins to separate participants from the status quo.

Of all three stages, the during/revelation stage most requires a physical act. The communal response in ritual, as at the Sinaitic revelation, is *na'aseh venishma*: We will act and thereby we will understand. The fact that we have not yet found or agreed upon a

physical act for girls' naming ceremonies accounts, in my opinion, for their being less viscerally powerful than *Brit Milah* (covenant of circumcision ritual). As you look over your list of associations, see if there is a behavior that grows naturally from the tradition which you can incorporate into this stage. The behavior must resonate with the ritual occasion, as well as with the tradition. (The rituals in this book provide a variety of examples of how this can be done. See the index to rituals and blessings.)

The after/redemption stage requires affect to effect closure. Again, the use of symbols, ritual objects, and concrete behaviors will be helpful. Remember, as in all the stages, to appeal to all the senses. Where appropriate, use traditional or innovative music, chanting, *niggunim* (wordless melodies), scents, candles, foods, wine, dance/choreography (including hand motions, bowing, etc.). In the course of your ritual, you may don a *tallit* (prayer shawl), use a washing cup, hold a Torah, immerse in the *mikveh* (ritual bath), drink from a *kidush* cup (special cup or goblet used when reciting the blessing over wine on sacred occasions), etc.

Before/creation, during/revelation, and after/redemption are equivalent to tonic-dominant-tonic in the world of music. Just as the first stage geared participants up, the last stage should in some measure "gear them down." Ideally, we end, as we began, with a sense of safety and familiarity, however great the transformation. In fact, the greater the transformation, the greater the need for group safety. The more the individual has changed, the more we need to connect this new self with the old, to see that the new is ultimately a fulfillment, not a subversion of the old. Many third stages involve blessing the new state, to confirm and grow comfortable with it. Invocations of peace and peacefulness are common. It is appropriate for these after/redemption blessings to anticipate and address the future, as well. They may offer a charge, as well as a blessing, to participants, so that participants emerge with purpose and energy, as well as serenity.

Step Five: Putting It All Together (And Some Pitfalls to Avoid)

You now have the raw materials to create both the words and the actions of your ritual. Next comes the part that cannot really be taught. Sit down and have a quiet moment. Reflect on what you have learned, and on the passage you seek to mark. Ask yourself, "What do I *most* need to say and to do for this ritual?" and see what answer comes.

At this stage, you mostly need to select. By now, you have done significant research and have, we hope, found a variety of moving and effective associations, quotations, behaviors, heroes, and symbols. Resist the temptation to somehow incorporate all of them into your ritual. If you pick two themes/strands that run throughout the ritual, justify to yourself why they work together. If you have three or more separate themes, you are almost certainly mixing too many ingredients into the stew. Remember, too, that when it comes to ritual, shorter is always better.

Ideally, you will be able to use one theme, object, hero, etc. in more than one context *and* to have its meaning operate on more than one level. In the example of the naming ritual, you might incorporate or refer to the presence of Jacob in all three ritual stages, since Jacob went from being a young man who did not know himself, to becoming the Jacob whose self-consciously constructed self caused grief and chaos, even as it contained great potential; to emerging as the wounded but brave *Yisra'el* (literally, one who wrestles with God), after his battle with forces in and outside himself. This might be done by referring explicitly to Jacob's story, by quoting or playing on some of his words, and/or by offering to the newly-named person some of the blessings given to and/or by Jacob in the Bible. If the naming ritual in question is meant specifically for a convert to take on her Hebrew name, a blessing in which she is declared "*bat yisra'el*" (daughter of *yisra'el*), refers both to her joining the tribe of the "children of Israel" and to the Godwrestling to which she, like the newly-named *Yisra'el*, stands committed.

If you find yourself unable to choose among the array of options you have generated, the following questions may help to get you "unstuck": What would a Martian think of the passage

you are seeking to mark? What is Jewish about the passage? What is male about it? What is female about it? What identities does it (and do *you* wish to) promote and deny? What are its worldview and message? If you made this passage the center of your life, how would it affect your beliefs and behavior? If it could talk, what would it be saying? What possible meanings do you find in it, when you look at it—insofar as possible—with fresh eyes, naively and without preconception? These questions, intended to help you set priorities, can be asked of existing rituals and passages, as well.

Along with including everything-plus-the-kitchen-sink, another temptation is to explain your ritual act, heroes, liturgy, etc. and your reason for choosing them. However, your task is to choose ritual acts, heroes, and liturgies that are rich in and of themselves, that require, as it were, little or no introduction. You may wish to write an essay on how and why you came to choose the elements you did, but that is a separate matter for liturgists and other interested parties.¹⁰ In a community that gathers to witness and experience transformation, those kinds of explanations take away from the ritual, rather than add to it.

Another word of caution: The best innovative rituals, ceremonies, prayers, and blessings come from the heart *and* are grounded in Jewish sources and ritual theory. If you are missing either the personal or the scholarly component, or if the balance between them is grossly uneven, your innovation will suffer. A scholarly approach that discusses symbols and events "objectively" is unengaged and unengaging.¹¹ No matter how carefully researched and how resonant the Jewish connections included in such a ritual, it tends to become a laundry list of associations. Personal perspectives are the passion that drives ritual innovations; they not only deserve to be honored, they are essential to the creative process.

On the other hand, a personal perspective without a thoroughgoing basis in theory, methodology, and traditional sources can degenerate into autobiographical indulgence. New rituals created in and for a particular community may be profound religious experiences for the people involved, but the recording of these experiences will not, by itself, necessarily make them accessible or meaningful to others. A chronicling is not grounded, and will

often float away when the effort is made to apply it in other situations or settings. Of course, if you are aiming to do something completely idiosyncratic, this is irrelevant. However, my experience is that most ritual innovators create the ritual because they sense that others also need it, or something very like it, and they want to make a contribution to the Jewish community. Lack of grounding can make a ritual seem unweighty even for the first, and perhaps only, generation of celebrants.

Another potential pitfall is to undervalue the role of community in ritual. Most people creating rituals today are creating them for personal life passages; thus, the focus is on the individual. But if our focus on the individual takes the personal out of the communal context, we have gone too far. It is as if we have declared that our individual lives are personal and our communal lives, impersonal, and that the two are unconnected. In fact, lifecycle ritual transforms personal *and* communal status, and can be seen as the nexus of the personal and the communal. What event is more private *and* more public than a wedding—unless it is a circumcision or a funeral? What is more an issue of family than a Passover *seder* (ordered readings and meal), and, at the same time, what is more an issue of *peoplehood*?"

It was the feminist movement, following Virginia Woolf, that declared the personal to be political. To so declare is to acknowledge the connection between our corporate and private lives. The most compelling personal lifecycle rituals are those that draw the community in, as witnesses and as participants. As in a good theatrical performance, the fourth wall of the proscenium stage collapses, the boundary between performer and audience disappears, and all are drawn into the drama.¹² A good personal ritual is felt vicariously by everyone present, and carries the feeling and the message that the Jewish people will be just a little bit different and more complete because the ritual took place. Ritual not only requires community, it can re-enforce and even create it.

Finally, consider the ethical import of your ritual. What do you endorse, deny, or denounce—implicitly and explicitly? Anticipate some likely effects on the individuals involved and on the larger community. Is the ritual blaming? Healing? When you contemplate creating a ritual, imagine first preparing for it, then performing it, and later reflecting back on it.¹³ Will you be satisfied with

the ritual's moral message and communal impact at each stage, or in a worst case scenario, will you be sorry you undertook it, because you have ended up hurting people and misrepresenting your own values? Some good questions to ask in advance: Are there people whom the ritual affects directly who should be in on the planning, or see the text beforehand? Would the full gamut of the Jewish community—including converts, young children, single people, infertile couples, the disabled, gay men and lesbians, men and women generally, the Orthodox—feel welcome at the ritual, based on its language and messages? If not, can you live with that—and potentially with their hurt? On a microcosmic level, is there a group of friends or a side of your family that you are excluding and/or making uncomfortable—and, again, can you live with that? A week after the ritual is over, how do you want people to summarize its tenor, meaning, and mood? How do you want it remembered ten or twenty years from now?

Bearing all this in mind, write a draft of the ritual, including "stage directions" for when cups are lifted, a *kittel* (garment traditionally worn on one's wedding day, various Jewish holidays, and for burial) is donned, spices are smelled or passed in a circle, etc.

Step Six: Critiquing Your Own Ritual—A Checklist

Now that your ritual is before you, ask yourself some review questions:

- Does the ritual have three stages?
- Do they merge naturally and seamlessly, one into another?
- Does any part read awkwardly, "explain itself to death," or force an image or association?
- Are some parts of the text so general they could be about anything? Are others so specific to your experience that someone has to know your history to find meaning in them?
- Do the behaviors flow from the words and vice versa?
- Are there stray images that do not seem connected to anything else?
- Does the ritual move you?
- Will the person undergoing the ritual emerge differently than s/he entered it?
- Will the observing/participating community likewise feel transformed?

Afterword

- How is the community addressed, implicitly and explicitly?
- How does this lifecycle ritual relate across time, forward and backward, to other passages and rituals? What liturgical and symbolic vocabulary, if any, does it share with them?
- Are both women and men addressed in and by this ritual?
- Is the ritual practical as well as symbolic? Can it be reproduced in a variety of settings and communities, without extraordinary expense or special equipment?
- Will many, if not all, segments of the community feel included and welcome to participate?
- Is there a richness and a layering to the ritual, such that it resonates with Jewish tradition and personal experience on a number of levels?

Make revisions based on your answers to these questions, if you find your ritual lacking.

Step Seven: Enacting and Sharing the Ritual

Many Jews, and especially women, who create new liturgies or rituals feel hesitant about performing them in their own prayer community, much less disseminating them to strangers.

Every prayer was new at one time. Some new rituals and prayers will "take" immediately and have the feel of having been around forever. These will likely spread quickly and be with us for a long time. It will be clear with other rituals, on first performance, that the text and behaviors feel forced, and that the current form needs to be revised or abandoned. Still other rituals may serve an immediate, idiosyncratic purpose, but not transfer, travel, or keep well. Only time will tell.

Barbara Myerhoff notes that all ritual is effective to some degree simply by virtue of bringing people together.¹⁴ At the very least, you will have investigated a passage and attempted to tie it to the tradition. You will have learned some *torah lishmah* (Torah for its own sake). You will have gathered a community together to share and celebrate those efforts. And you will have honored our ancient tradition by expecting and seeking within it the answers to every life passage and life question.

Honoring Your Efforts in Prayer

"Sing unto Adonai a new song:"

—PSALMS 96:1

Working on this book and teaching liturgy-writing workshops, I have had numerous occasions to witness ritual and liturgical innovations. When a ritual is used for the first time, especially when it is used for a joyous occasion, there is a tremendous sense of excitement. Participants feel joy and relief, not only around the passage being traversed and marked, but around the (we hope, successful) debut of a new prayer or ceremony. When a liturgical or ritual innovation feels immediately "right," the author and community often have the impulse to celebrate the creative process itself, as well as the life passage it honors.

The following prayer may be said on the occasion of creating liturgy, or at the time of the first liturgical use of a prayer, ritual, blessing, or meditation. It is meant to be read responsively, and thus to allude to the silent (and sometimes verbal and explicit) conversations that transpire between liturgists and the communities they serve. In the case of a "liturgy committee" or a creative prayer group, the group can divide itself in two, and recite the prayer twice, so that each half of the group speaks the words of the creator(s) and of the community. A lone author of private prayer might recite both halves on her/his own. The prayer should be followed by a traditional *Shehehyanu* (blessing for reaching a new or momentous occasion).

The creator(s) of the prayer say(s):

אֲתָהּ לְמַעַל צוֹיָי, אֶפְתֵּחַ בְּכֶנֶר חֲדָשִׁי.

Atteh lemeshal ozni, efiah bekhinnor hidati

I will incline my ear to a parable; I will lay open¹⁵ my mystery¹⁶ to the music of a lyre (Psalms 49:5).

The community answers:

כִּי תִגַּע-בָּא (וְעִמְתִּי בְתוֹכָהּ), טָאָם-וְ.

Ki himeri-va veshakhanti vetokhekh, ne'um-adonai

"For, here I am, I come, and I will dwell inside you," says Adonai (Zachariah 2:14).

The words recited by the liturgist(s) are meant to evoke the experience of creating prayer. *Atteh*, translated here as "incline," comes from the verbal root n.t.h, which variously connotes stretch out, spread out, extend, lean, or bend. It thus suggests the physical/spiritual action—the crouched position of one looking deeply inward—that typifies the deep listening required for prayer and prayer authorship.

Creating prayer is a highly personal act, which one can only do based on one's own perceptions and questions (*my ear, my mystery*). At the same time, the juxtaposition of "*the music of the lyre*," as against "*my mystery*," introduces a universal element—and expands the breadth and applicability of any answer arrived at. Of course, liturgists hope to find answers not only for themselves, but for a whole community. The music of the lyre alludes to God's own voice, the sweet sounds of the Psalmist, and a singing congregation, chanting new and old prayers. And, notwithstanding the foregoing "how-to" on creating rituals, there is something mysterious about this, and every, creative process.

The response of the community is meant to validate the efforts of the liturgist(s). The assembled affirm, in God's voice, as it were, that God dwells inside the one who writes a new prayer, as well as in the midst of the community that recites it. The new prayer is thus declared to be an expression of God and the Godly. (This validation is anticipated in the context of the verses recited by the liturgist[s], since Psalms 49:4 states: "My mouth shall speak wisdom and the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.")

The literal translation "Here I am, I come" retains the urgency and immediacy of the Hebrew. It also highlights the idea that "God is right here" at the place where you incline your ear to create a prayer or lift your voice to recite one.

The word *betokhekh* ("you" in the phrase "God dwells inside you") is a feminine form of the second person pronoun. The first part of the verse (Zachariah 2:14) reads: "Sing and rejoice, daughter of Zion," Zion's daughter being a personification of the entire

community. Thus, while this "feminine language" does not exclude men, it does allude to and recall women, in a way that makes any automatic mental picture of "the generic male Jew" impossible. The unspoken part of the verse also expresses the joy of the liturgical occasion.

I hope that creators of new liturgy, rituals, and ceremony will use this brief prayer, when they see fit, to celebrate their efforts. Authoring rituals and liturgies is itself a devotional act, and merits religious acknowledgement. It can also be an intimidating enterprise, and the more positive reinforcement, the better!

*Th
des
Juc*

*Cl
Lil
to
ha
chi
Sar
lat
Ha
bac
fail*

Daytime Unit

This unit focuses on activities and issues parents deal with during the day. It is a time when individuals tend to reflect on the relationships in their lives. This unit provides an opportunity for students to focus on the sanctity of these relationships and to acknowledge the changes in them after having a baby. The other theme of this unit is time. After having a baby, individuals often think about how to spend time differently. This unit addresses these changes framed in Jewish tradition. This unit continues with a discussion about rituals in Judaism to encourage students to develop them for their daytime activities with their child. It concludes with an exploration about the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* or taking care of oneself to remind the students to care for themselves during the day when they have the opportunity.

Enduring Understandings

- Mindfulness increases appreciation of spirituality in daily daytime activities.
- Meaningful relationships can enhance connections between people and with God.
- Intentional use of time fosters spiritual practice.

Knowledge

- The philosopher Martin Buber developed a theory of two different types of relationships and moments which he categorized as I/Thou and I/It.
- Judaic texts discuss creating and maintaining sacred partnerships, friendships and communities.
- Jewish texts express views on time.
- Judaism uses rituals as a method for marking time
- *Shemirat Haguf* is a Jewish value which urges us to take care of our bodies and ourselves.

Skills

- Students will be able to consider Buber's ideas about relationships and connect them with their experiences. This might help students reframe how they think about these relationships and moments in their lives.
- Students will be able to engage in text study about relationship and time and apply it to their experiences.
- Students will be able to develop their own rituals for daytime activities.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will be given journal prompts to write about based on the topics of the lessons in this unit.
- Students will be given prompts for their spiritual scrapbook as the keepsake for themselves and their child based on the lessons in this unit.

Lesson One:
Martin-Buber “I/Thou Moments and Relationships”

Objectives:

- Students will be able to articulate Martin Buber’s concept of I/Thou moments
- Students will be able to apply Buber’s ideas to their own relationships
- Students will be able to recount examples of I/Thou moments in their lives.
- Students will reflect on ways to foster I/Thou connections with the important people in their lives.

Core Learning Experiences:**Set Induction: Meaningful relationships in our lives**

The teacher will ask the students to think about the people in their lives they have meaningful relationships with and what makes these relationships meaningful. The teacher also asks the students to consider how these relationships have changed after having a baby.

Sample discussion questions:

- What do you think makes a relationship meaningful?
- Who are the people in your life you have meaningful relationship with?
- In what ways have these relationships changed since you had a baby?

Activity One: Introduction to Martin Buber’s Philosophy

The teacher will explain a simplified and condensed version of Martin Buber’s philosophy of I/Thou and I/It as it applies to relationships and how the meaningful relationships can be a way to connect to God.

Buber wrote there are two types of relationships I-It and I-Thou. Over simplifying Buber’s complex ideas, I-It relationships are surface level connection between people. As a contrast, I-Thou relationships are based on a strong and meaningful connection between the individuals. The goal is to form I-Thou relationships with the important people in our lives.

Buber believed there are moments when people connect with each other on an especially deep level (I-Thou moments). These moments are to be cherished and appreciated.

Buber believed when people connect on a deep level to each other, it is a way to connect to God.

Teacher will use Buber’s philosophy as a starting point for discussions about I/Thou and I/It relationships for the students. As new parents, students might be experiencing I/Thou moments with their child. For example, when the students look deeply into their child’s eyes, it can be a

moment of true and deep connection between them. The new parents might also be experiencing these moments with their partner as they share the experience of parenting. Some of the students might be experiencing them with their friends, siblings, parents etc. The teacher will have Buber's book available for students to look at during the lesson. A few pages from this book will be included in the resources section of this lesson. The students will be invited to read more of Buber's writings if they wish to learn more about his ideas.

Sample discussion questions:

- How would you explain in your own words Buber's categorization of relationship?
- When you have experienced these different types of relationships or moments?
- How has this changed since you had your child?
- When have you had these I-Thou moments since having a baby?
- Where was God or a higher power for you in your I-Thou moments?

Activity Two: Discussion about Buber's ideas in our relationships

Teacher will lead a discussion about ways to maintain I/Thou connections with the important people in the students' lives.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Have your relationships with people changed since you had your baby?
- Is it a surprise to you who you can connect with on an I-Thou level since having your baby?
- Are there people in your life you used to have I-Thou moments with that now you can only have I-It connections?
- How do you feel about these changes in your ability to connect to others?

Activity Three: Pictorial Representation of It-Thou moments or relationships

The teacher instruction the students to make an artistic representation of the I-Thou connections they are experiencing. This can be done through symbols, pictures or words. The students can focus either on moments they have had since having a baby or on people in their lives who they are in I-Thou relationships with. This is an opportunity for the students to process the I-Thou moments/relationships in their lives through artistic expression.

Activity Four: Assessment:**Journal Prompt**

- When I have experienced I/Thou moments since having my child?
- I feel connected to others an I/Thou way when I...
- I hope to increase my I/Thou connection with...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- My first I/Thou moments with my child were when I...
- The first I/Thou moments we experienced as a family were...
- I felt I/Thou connection to you (my child) when we...

Resources:

Explanation of Buber's I/Thou Relationships for teacher's reference and to hand out to the students.

For more information about Martin Buber consult his book "I and Thou."

Sample pages from Buber's book "I and Thou."

I/It vs. I/Thou Relationships:

Buber believed that in order to understand our relationship with God, we must first understand how human beings relate to each other. Buber believed that all relationships can be divided into two categories. The first he called I/It, which is basically a relationship of objectification. In the I/It relationship, the “I” views the other person as an object (an It) to be used, or to be studied without getting involved on any in depth level.

Examples of I/It Relationships:

Customer–waiter/waitress,
Customer-barista at Starbucks,
Customer-bank teller

Families can also have I/It interactions – it does not have to be I/It all the time (For example a child can ask a parent to take them to a friend’s house, or a husband/wife can ask his/her husband/wife to pick up their dry cleaning for them or to go to the grocery store and buy milk)

Not all I/It relationships are the result of negative intentions by either party. A waitress is someone whom brings a person food in exchange for money. This is a transaction, nothing more. It doesn’t mean that transactions can’t be friendly. They simply aren’t involved, in-depth, or intimate.

The second type of relationship in Buber’s theory is the I/Thou relationship. In an I/Thou relationship, the Self is part of the other and so the I and the Thou, the me and the you, identify with each other; we have similarities; we recognize things that we have in common; we see ourselves in each other. In essence the I and the Thou have a relationship when we can see beyond our differences and still understand, relate to, and engage with each other. It is also when we can accept a person for who he or she is, with his or her faults as well as strengths, that we have an I/Thou relationship. These are moments of meaningful and deep connection with the others.

Examples of I/Thou Relationships:

Spouse-spouse
Parent –child
Teacher-student
Friend-friend

(For example, when husband/wife have a meaningful conversation with his/her partner about something important to them. When a child speaks to a parent about an issue on his/her mind and the parent listens to him/her. When friends share in an important experience together)

Buber believed these moments of connection can enable people to experience God's presence in their lives. He believed that connecting with others, especially in an I-Thou way can be path to experiencing God in our lives.¹²

¹² Sacred Choices: Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Ethics, Middle School Module, Friends and More than Friends, URJ Press, (2007), urj.org.

I AND THOU

Martin Buber

A NEW TRANSLATION
WITH A PROLOGUE "I AND YOU"
AND NOTES

BY

WALTER KAUFMANN

A TOUCHSTONE BOOK
Published by Simon & Schuster
New York London Toronto Sydney

stream of irresponsible distortions that most people find refreshing although on the morning after, or at least within a week, it will be stale and flat.

On a higher level we find fictions that men eagerly believe, regardless of the evidence, because they gratify some wish.

Near the top of the ladder we encounter curious mixtures of untruth and truth that exert a lasting fascination on the intellectual community.

What cannot, on the face of it, be wholly true, although it is plain that there is some truth in it, evokes more discussion and dispute, divergent exegeses and attempts at emendations than what has been stated very carefully, without exaggeration or oneness. The Book of Proverbs is boring compared to the Sermon on the Mount.

•

The good way must be clearly good but not wholly clear. If it is quite clear, it is too easy to reject.

What is wanted is an oversimplification, a reduction of a multitude of possibilities to only two. But if the recommended path were utterly devoid of mystery, it would cease to fascinate men. Since it clearly should be chosen, nothing would remain but to proceed on it. There would be nothing left to discuss and interpret, to lecture and write about, to admire and merely think about.

The world exacts a price for calling teachers wise: it keeps discussing the paths they recommend, but few men follow them. The wise give men endless opportunities to discuss what is good.

Men's attitudes are manifold. Some live in a strange world bounded by a path from which countless ways lead inside. If there were road signs, all of them might bear the same inscription: I-I.

Those who dwell inside have no consuming interest. They are not devoted to possessions, even if they prize some; not to people, even if they like some; not to any project, even if they have some.

Things are something that they speak of; persons have the great advantage that one cannot only talk *of* them but also *to*, or rather *at* them; but the lord of every sentence is no man but I. Projects can be entertained without complete devotion, spoken of, and put on like a suit or dress before a mirror. When you speak to men of this type, they quite often do not hear you, and they never hear you as another I.

You are not an object for men like this, not a thing to be used or experienced, nor an object of interest or fascination. The point is not at all that you are found interesting or fascinating instead of being seen as a fellow I. The shock is rather that you are not found interesting or fascinating at all: you are not recognized as an object any more than as a subject. You are accepted, if at all, as one to be spoken at and spoken of; but when you are spoken of, the lord of every story will be I.

•

Men's attitudes are manifold. Some men take a keen interest in certain objects and in other men and actually think more about them than they think of themselves. They do not so much say I or think I as they do I.

They "take" an interest, they do not give of themselves.

They may manipulate or merely study, and unlike men of the I-I type they may be good scholars, but they lack devotion.

This I-It tendency is so familiar that little need be said about it, except that it is a tendency that rarely consumes a man's whole life. Those who see a large part of humanity—their enemies, of course—as men of this type, have succumbed to demonology.

This is merely one of the varieties of man's experience and much more widespread in all ages as a tendency and much rarer as a pure type in our own time than the Manichaean fancy.

There are men who hardly have an I at all. Nor are all of them of one kind.

Some inhabit worlds in which objects loom large. They are not merely interested in some thing or subject, but the object of their interest dominates their lives. They are apt to be great scholars of extraordinary erudition, with no time for themselves, with no time to have a self.

They study without experiencing; they have no time for experience, which would smack of subjectivity if not frivolity. They are objective and immensely serious. They have no time for humor.

They study without any thought of use. What they study is an end in itself for them. They are devoted to their subject, and the notion of using it is a blasphemy and sacrilege that is not likely to occur to them.

For all that, their "subject" is no subject in its own right, like a person. It has no subjectivity. It does not speak to them. It is a subject one has chosen to study—one of the subjects that one may legitimately choose, and there may

be others working on the same subject, possibly on a slightly different aspect of it, and one respects them insofar as they, too, have no selves and are objective.

Here we have a community of solid scholars—so solid that there is no room at the center for any core. Theirs is the world of It-It.

There are other ways of having no I. There are men who never speak a sentence of which I is lord, but nobody could call them objective. At the center of their world is We.

The contents of this We can vary greatly. But this is an orientation in which I does not exist, and You and It and He and She are only shadows.

One type of this sort could be called We-We. Theirs is a sheltered, childish world in which no individuality has yet emerged.

Another perennial attitude is summed up in the words Us-Them. Here the world is divided in two: the children of light and the children of darkness, the sheep and the goats, the elect and the damned.

Every social problem can be analyzed without much study: all one has to look for are the sheep and goats.

There is room for anger and contempt and boundless hope; for the sheep are bound to triumph.

Should a goat have the presumption to address a sheep, the sheep often do not hear it, and they never hear it as another I. For the goat is one of Them, not one of Us.

Righteousness, intelligence, integrity, humanity, and victory are the prerogatives of Us, while wickedness, stu-

pidity, hypocrisy, brutality, and ultimate defeat belong to Them.

Those who have managed to cut through the terrible complexities of life and offer such a scheme as this have been hailed as prophets in all ages.

•

In these five attitudes there is no You: I-I, I-It, It-It, We-We, and Us-Them. There are many ways of living in a world without You.

There are also many worlds with the two poles I-You.

•

I-You sounds unfamiliar. What we are accustomed to is I-Thou. But man's attitudes are manifold, and Thou and You are not the same. Nor is Thou very similar to the German *Du*.

German lovers say *Du* to one another, and so do friends. *Du* is spontaneous and unpretentious, remote from formality, pomp, and dignity.

What lovers or friends say Thou to one another? Thou is scarcely ever said spontaneously.

Thou immediately brings to mind God; *Du* does not. And the God of whom it makes us think is not the God to whom one might cry out in gratitude, despair, or agony, not the God to whom one complains or prays spontaneously: it is the God of the pulpits, the God of the holy tone.

When men pray spontaneously or speak directly to God, without any mediator, without any intervention of formulas, when they speak as their heart tells them to speak instead of repeating what is printed, do they say Thou? How many know the verb forms Thou commands?

The world of Thou has many mansions. Thou is a preachers' word but also dear to anticlerical romantic poets. Thou is found in Shakespeare and at home in the English Bible, although recent versions of the Scriptures have tended to dispense with it. Thou can mean many things, but it has no place whatever in the language of direct, nonliterary, spontaneous human relationships.

If one could liberate I-Thou from affectation, the price for that would still involve reducing it to a mere formula, to jargon. But suppose a man wrote a book about direct relationships and tried to get away from the formulas of theologians and philosophers: a theologian would translate it and turn *Ich und Du* into *I and Thou*.

II

Men love jargon. It is so palpable, tangible, visible, audible; it makes so obvious what one has learned; it satisfies the craving for results. It is impressive for the uninitiated. It makes one feel that one belongs. Jargon divides men into Us and Them.

Two books appeared during the same year. One was called *Ich und Du*, the other *Das Ich und das Es*. Rarely have two books of such importance had such simple names.

Both books proposed three central concepts: the former also *Ey*, the latter also *Über-ich*. But neither book was trinitarian in any profound sense. Both were dualistic. The wise emphasize two principles.

Freud's *Ich* was the conscious part of the soul, his *Es* the unconscious part, and his *Über-ich* a third part which he also called the *Ich-Ideal* or the conscience. But it was part of his central concern at that time to go "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and introduce a second basic drive.

Lesson Two: Sacred Relationships

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze texts about partnership.
- Students will be able to apply the messages from the texts about relationships to their own partnerships, friends or support system.
- Students will be able to compare their own experiences to the description of relationships in the text.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction:

The teacher will begin class with a free association about the words holy, sacred, partnerships. Students will give the first answer that comes to mind. After free associating, the teacher will ask the students to define these terms in their own words emphasizing what it means to them personally.

Activity One: Text Study

Students will participate in a text study about relationships. These texts will highlight the sanctity of partnerships. In this context, partnership can apply to any close relationship; it does not need to be limited to a romantic partner or spouse. (It is important for the teacher to keep in mind there might be single parents participating in this class). After the birth of a child, these relationships might be strained with the stress of a new baby and lack of sleep. This text study provides the students with an opportunity to talk about the new stresses on in their relationships. The teacher will lead a discussion with the class about partnerships based on the texts.

A new baby can also strengthen a relationship between partners as they marvel at the miracle of parenting. This text study can be an opportunity to reflect on the past relationship with their partner, to acknowledge the current state of it and to consider what each partner can do to strengthen their relationship. This study will also encourage participants to spend time nurturing their relationship with their partners in the midst of the chaos of adjusting to being parents.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- What do you think these texts are trying to teach about relationships between partners?
- How do these texts compare to your experience with your relationship with your partner?
- In what ways has your relationship with your partner changed after having a baby?
- How do you feel about these differences?
- What do you need from your partner now? What do you think your partner needs from you?

- What are two ways you trying to retain the sanctity in your relationship?

Activity Two: Making a new marriage/partnership contract

The teacher will begin this activity with a very brief explanation of a *ketubah*. A *ketubah* is a legal document Jews sign before they get married. Traditionally a *ketubah* outlined the monetary value of the marriage to the bride if the marriage were to be ended. In recent times, this has been changed to highlight the emotional aspects of marriage in an egalitarian way.

After having a baby marriages/partnerships can change. Based on these texts studied in the text study, modern *ketubah* texts and experiences of the students, the students have the opportunity to write out what they would like/need from their spouse/partner/support system. This is a chance to express these needs in a positive way and another to think about what they can give to the important people in their lives at this important time.

Students will have an opportunity to decorate these contracts.

The teacher will also allow the students to have some quiet time for their own reflection and give them an opportunity to write in their journals.

Activity Three: Assessment

Journal Prompts:

- How has my relationship with my partner changed after having a baby?
- Insights have I learned about partnership from these texts and discussions are...

Resources:

Texts for the teacher to hand out to the students

For a variety of *ketubah* texts, the teacher could consult Anita Diamant's book "The New Jewish Wedding Book"

Texts for text study

“...For Adam there was no fitting helper/partner. So the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, God took one of his ribs and closed up the wound on the spot. And the Lord God fashioned the rib that God has taken into a woman; and God brought her to the man. Then man said:

The one at last
Is bone of my bone
Flesh on my flesh
This one shall be called woman
For from man was she taken.

Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:21-24)

“Mine is my beloved and I am his.”
(Song of Songs 2:16)¹

You captured my heart,
My own, my beloved
With one glance of your eyes,
With the coil of your necklace.
For sweet is your love,
My own beloved!
How much more delighted your love
than wine,
Your ointments more fragrant
Than any spice!”

(Song of Songs (4:9-10)

“I sought out the one I love

I sought but found him not.
Through the streets and
through the squares

I must seek out the one I
love.”

(Song of Songs 3:1-2)¹

Lesson Three: Friendship

Objectives:

- Students will be able to interpret texts about friendships.
- Students will be able to describe how their friendships have changed after having a baby.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the texts with their experiences of friendship before and after becoming parents.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction:

The teacher asks the students to think about their best friend. This can be a best friend growing up, a best friend from High School or College and a current best friend. The teacher will ask the student to reflect on their friendship with this person. The teacher will ask what the student and his/her best friend like to do together and to think about some of the fun times they have shared. The teacher will also ask the students to consider if this person has been there for them during difficult times and if they have been there for their friend. The teacher will invite the students to share some of their reflections about their best friend with the rest of the class.

Activity One: Text Study

Students will explore texts and quotes about friendship. Each student will select the quote they agree with the most. They will explain why they choose the quote they picked. They will also choose the quote they disagree with the most and explain why. Student can keep these quotes to put either in their journal or their spirituality scrapbooks.

Activity Two: Discussion about Friendships

This will be a jumping off point for students to discuss changes in friendships after having a baby. Some of the friendship might have become closer, while others feel more strained. This class is an opportunity to discuss these changes and how the participants feel about them.

Sample Discussion questions:

- Do these quotes reflect your friendship?
- How have your friendship changed after having a baby?
- If your friendships have become strained after having a baby, have you talked to your friends about this tension? If so what happened, if not what would you like to say to your friend?
- Are there new friends you especially appreciate now, if so have your talked to them about this new connection you feel with them?

During this discussion, students will have the opportunity to reflect on what qualities they look for in friendship and how these needs might be different now that they have a child.

Students in the class can also discuss ways to approach talking to friends when the relationships become strained because of a new child. This is an opportunity for the students to help each other and to support each other adjust to the changes in their friendships. Students can also brainstorm ways to thank new friends for their support and to acknowledge a new closeness with friends at this time.

Activity Three: Making a recipe for friendship

The teacher will invite the students to make a recipe for friendship. This is way for the students to articulate their friendship needs in a fun and silly way. This recipe can be placed into the students journals as a reminder of the class session.

Sample recipes for friendship:

½ cup of sweetness
1 cup of supportiveness
1 teaspoon of humor
2 cups of love
3 tablespoons of laughter
1 cup of loyalty
Etc.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompts

- The quotes made me appreciate some qualities in my friends such as...
- I am longing for friends that I can connect with about...
- Since having my baby I seek friends who...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt

- When you grow up I hope you have friends who...
- I hope you will be the type of friend that...

Resources:

Friendship Quotes for the teacher to hand out to the students on the following page.

1. There are three types of friends: those like food, without which you cannot live; those like medicine, which you need occasionally; and those like an illness, which you never want. *Ibn Gabirol*¹³

2. When you make a friend, begin by testing him, and be in no hurry to trust him. Some friends are loyal when it suits them, but desert you in time of trouble. Some friends turn into enemies and shame you by making the quarrel public. Another sits at your table but is nowhere to be found in time of trouble. When you are prosperous, he will be your second self and make free with your servants, but if you come down in the world, he will turn against you and you will not see him again.

*Wisdom of Ben Sira 6:7–11*¹⁴

3. Hold your enemies at a distance, and keep a wary eye on your friends. A faithful friend is a secure shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price; his worth is more than money can buy.

*Wisdom of Ben Sira 6:12–15*¹⁵

4. Do not desert an old friend. A new one is not worth as much. A new friend is like new wine. You do not enjoy drinking it until it has matured.

*Wisdom of Ben Sira 9:10*¹⁶

5. Be first to greet your fellow man; invite him to your joyful occasions; call him by complimentary names; never give away his secrets; help him when he is in trouble; look after his interests when he is away; overlook his shortcomings and forgive him promptly; criticize him when he has done wrong; respect him always; do not deceive him; do not lie to him; pray for him and wish him happiness; attend to his burial if he dies.

*Menorat haMaor*¹⁷

6. Do not judge your friend until you put yourself in his position.

*Pirkei Avot 2:4*¹⁸

¹³ Sacred Choices: Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Ethics, Middle School Module, Friends and More than Friends, URJ Press, (2007), urj.org.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

Lesson Four: Community

Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare different concepts of community.
- Students will be able to apply the ideas of community to their experience of it.
- Students will be able to develop methods of finding and creating community.

Core learning Experiences:

Set Induction:

Students will listen to the Dan Nicolas song *Kehilah Kadoshah*. Teacher will hand out the words so students can follow along with the song. The teacher will give a brief explanation of the song. The title means holy community. It is based on a Torah portion when the Israelites declare themselves ready to accept the Torah to become a holy community. The song outlines an ideal holy community.

Activity One: Defining Community

After listening to the song, the teacher will ask the students for their definition of community. The teacher will ask the student to define the word community and compare it with the one in the dictionary and the song. Teacher will have the dictionary definition to hand out to students.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- How do you define the word community?
- How does your definition of community compare with the dictionary definition?
- How does your definition of community contrast with the community Dan Nicolas idealized in his song?

Activity Two: Discussion of quotes about community

The teacher will transition the discussion to address individual's desire for community after having a baby. The students will be given a handout with two quotes about community on them. One quote express the opinion from a woman was seeking community but did not find it after having a baby, the quote highlights the support a new mom felt from her community. The students will be given the opportunity to read the quotes and compare them to their experience of the need for community after having a baby.

Sample discussion questions:

- What role does community play for the authors of these quotes?
- Why do you think having a community at the transition to parenthood is important?
- What has been your experience in finding a community as a new parent?

Activity Three: Brainstorming ways to build and find community

After the teacher has lead the students in a discussion about their needs for community since having a baby, the teacher will encourage the students to brainstorm ways to help each other find community. The teacher will ask the students what they have done to find community, what worked, what did not, and how they think this class can be a source of community for them.

Sample discussion questions:

- After listening to the song and discussing the dictionary definition of community, how would you phrase what a community is or should be?
- Are there ways you wish the community could be more supportive?
- What have you most appreciated about your community after becoming a parent?
- Where have you sought our community?
- How do you think this class can help each other find community?

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- I feel grateful for the community because...
- I am seeking a community that...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- The members of my community since you were born are...
- I hope you are part of a community that...

Resources:

Words to the song Kehilah Kadosheh,

Definition of community

Quotes about community on the following pages for the teacher to hand out to students

com·mu·ni·ty

1. a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.
2. a locality inhabited by such a group.
3. a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists (usually preceded by *the*): *the business community*; *the community of scholars*.
4. a group of associated nations sharing common interests or a common heritage: *the community of Western Europe*.
5. *Ecclesiastical* . a group of men or women leading a common life according to a rule.
6. *Ecology* . an assemblage of interacting populations occupying a given area.
7. joint possession, enjoyment, liability, etc.: *community of property*.
8. similar character; agreement; identity: *community of interests*.
9. the community, the public; society: *the needs of the community*.¹⁹

¹⁹ Dictionary.com

Quotes about Community

“The main thing I missed when I became a mother was the community. It felt lonely.”

(Nancy Fuchs, *Our Share of Night, Our Share of Morning*, p. 47).

“All life is within community and each of us is inextricably connected to those around us... Within community, we hope to be nourished and sustained so we can create, reach our goals, and be transformed. Within community, we may experience the “whole” becoming greater than the sum of the parts. The power of community has been an essential theme in the story of the Jewish people.”

(Rabbi James L. Mirel and Karen Bonnell Werth, *Stepping Stones to Jewish Spiritual Living: Walking the Path, Morning, Noon and Night*, as quoted in The Editors at Jewish Lights, *The New Jewish Baby Album Creating and Celebrating of a Spiritual Life*, p. 34.)

KEHILAH KEDOSHAH

words by dan nichols and rabbi michael moskowitz, music by dan nichols

If you are “atem,” then we’re “nitzavim”
We stand here today, and remember the dream

Kehilah kedoshah, kehilah kedoshah (2X)
Lai dai dai dai dai, lai dai dai dai dai, lai dai dai dai dai dai, Oh (2X)

Each one of us must play a part
Each one of us must heed the call
Each one of us must seek the truth
Each one of us is a part of it all
Each one of us must remember the pain
Each one of us must find the joy
Each one of us
Each one of us

Kehilah kedoshah, kehilah kedoshah (2X)

Each one of us must start to hear
Each one of us must sing the song
Each one of us must do the work
Each one of us must right the wrong
Each one of us must build the home
Each one of us must hold the hope
Each one of us
Each one of us

Kehilah kedoshah, kehilah kedoshah (2X)

It’s how we help, it’s how we give
It’s how we pray, it’s how we heal, it’s how we live

If you are “atem,” then we’re “nitzavim”
We stand here today, and remember the dream

Kehilah kedoshah, kehilah kedoshah (2X)
Lai dai dai dai dai, lai dai dai dai dai, lai dai dai dai dai dai, Oh (2X)

Lesson Five: The Sanctity of Time

Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare different views about time.
- Students will be able to contrast their views of time as parents to how they thought about it before becoming a parent.
- Students will be able to interpret their own use of time.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction: Thinking about time

The teacher asks the students to reflect on how they think about time before and after having a baby. The teacher provides prompt questions to help the students think about their views on time. The students will line up around the room depending on their answers. One corner of the room is always, another is never and the sometimes is in the middle.

Sample Questions:

Before having a baby, I was always on time.

Before having a baby, I felt in control of the way I spent my time.

Before having a baby I thought about how I spent my time.

After having a baby, I think about how I spend my time.

After having a baby, I feel in control of my time.

After having a baby, I am always on time.

Activity One: Movie Clip

Students will watch clips from the movie “About a Boy” that highlight Hugh Grant’s thinking about time. Hugh Grant describes a day broken down into half hours blocks as units of time. These units need to be filled. Hugh Grant does this at the beginning and the end of the movie the way he thinks about time changes as his character develops.

Sample discussion questions:

- How does Will Freeman (Hugh Grant) thinking about time change through the movie?
- Why do you think his attitude changes in this way?
- How does Freeman’s thinking about time compare with yours?

Activity Two: Text Study

Students will explore views of time in Ecclesiastes. This text talks about how there is a time for everything. In this text, there is a time for each specific thing to happen. This text suggests that time is sacred and each purpose for time is also holy.

Sample discussion questions:

- What do you think the text is trying to say about time?
- Can you identify with this view? Why or why not?
- How does the text's view of time compare with your own thoughts about time?

Activity Three: Parents and time

Students will discuss how they think about time now that they are parents. Students will explore if they feel like they are in control of their own time, if it is decided by their child, and how they can become more in control of time given the reality of having a baby.

Sample discussion questions:

- In what ways has your view about your use of time changed since having a baby?
- When do you feel like are in control or how you spend your time and when are you not in control?
- Do you feel like the movie character or the texts reflect how you use your time?
- Is there sacredness in your use of time? How?

The teacher will invite the students to make a time map of their day. This will give students of visual representation of how they spend their time. Students can color code the map based on the activities, whom they spend their time with, or what they enjoy most about that particular period of the day.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- As a parent, I think about time new ways, for example...

Spirituality Scrapbook Prompt:

- You have taught me to think about time as...
- My time with you is...

Resources:

Movie Clip from “About a Boy”

Quotes for the teacher to hand out to students on the following page.

Text for text study

A season set for every purpose under heaven
A time for being born and a time for dying
A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;
A time for slaying and a time for building up;
A time for weeping and a time for dancing;
A time for wailing and a time for dancing;
A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stone,
A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;
A time for seeking and a time for losing,
A time for keeping and a time for discarding;
A time for ripping and a time for sewing,
A time for silence and a time for speaking;
A time for loving and a time for hating;
A time for war and a time for peace¹”

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Lesson Six:
Making Sacred Moments out of the Daily Routine

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify the rituals in their daily activities.
- Students will be able to analyze the Passover Seder as an example of a Jewish ritual.
- Students will be able to compare their daily rituals with rituals in Jewish tradition.

Core learning Experiences**Set induction: Discussion of daily routine**

Teacher asks about the daily activities the students do with their child. The teacher will ask the students about these activities and routines. The teacher will ask the students if they do the activities in the same order each day. The teacher will also ask the students if there is any reason they do the activities in the order they do and if there is any ritual associated with these activities.

Sample discussion questions:

- Are there activities you do with your child each day?
- Do you do these activities in the same order each day?
- Is there significance to this order?
- How would you define a ritual?
- Is your definition compatible with the dictionary definition of ritual?
- Would you categorize these activities in the same order as a daily ritual?
- If so, was this intentional or did it happen naturally?

Activity One: Rituals in Judaism

Students will examine the Passover Seder as an example of a ritual in Judaism. Even though this ritual is only conducted twice a year, examining the Seder can be a jumping off point for the discussion about rituals in Judaism. The Seder is a ritual many of the students might be familiar with and might have experienced.

Sample Discussion questions:

- Have you been to a Passover Seder?
- If so, what are some of the rituals in a Seder?
- How would you define a ritual?
- How would you define a sacred moment?

Activity Two: Making sacred moments or rituals out of daily activities

The teacher will ask students to reflect on their daily routines to see if there is a way to make them into a ritual or a sacred moment. This does not have to be a big organized affair like a Passover Seder, it could be a small addition to their daily activities.

For example the students could recite blessing before engaging in their daily activities with their child like going to the park or playing “peek a boo”. Alternatively, a parent could take a moment to thank God for the ability to share in a child’s daily adventures. The students could recite a prayer of gratitude to God for the gift of time with a child.

Adding these blessings in could begin the process of making these daily activities into rituals or sacred moments. The teacher explains there is no correct or incorrect way to say a blessing. While there is a traditional formula or pattern to blessing, you do not have to follow it. Many blessings are creative and heartfelt words of praise, thanks or appreciation.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- What would it look like for you to turn these daily activities into a ritual?
- How might this enhance your experience of doing these activities with your child?
- Where could you make the connection between Judaism and these daily rituals?
- Is there a simple way for you to thank God for your ability to share in these moments with your child?

To help the students think about rituals they have attended or participated in as models for the students’ rituals, the teacher will ask some guiding questions.

Sample Guiding Questions:

- What rituals do you like?
- Which rituals do you not like?
- What works for you about rituals?
- What does not?
- Are there patterns?
- Are there certain settings you find more spiritual than others?
- How can you incorporate your preferences into the ritual you create? ²⁰

After allowing the students to answer these questions, the teacher gives the students some time to brainstorm ways to add small rituals into their daily routines. Students can work together in small groups or as a class.

²⁰ <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/planningaritual/>

The teacher will encourage the students to share their ideas with one another and to try their rituals or blessings over the next weeks.

Activity Three: Assessment

Spiritual Scrapbook:

- My favorite way to spend time with you is...
- The ritual I developed for our time together is...

Resources: for teacher to hand out to students

Definition of ritual


Passover Seder Order

If students would like further reading:

Copies of the chapter from Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones,” “How to make a ritual” to be handed out to students.

If students would like sample rituals, material is available in Unit 4 Lesson 4. This includes everyday rituals and lifecycle rituals.

Definition of ritual

rit·u·al  (rītch'oo-əl)

n.

1. a. The prescribed order of a religious ceremony. **b.** The body of ceremonies or rites used in a place of worship.

2. a. The prescribed form of conducting a formal secular ceremony: *the ritual of an inauguration*. **b.** The body of ceremonies used by a fraternal organization.

3. A book of rites or ceremonial forms.

4. rituals a. A ceremonial act or a series of such acts. **b.** The performance of such acts.

5. a. A detailed method of procedure faithfully or regularly followed: *My household chores have become a morning ritual*. **b.** A state or condition characterized by the presence of established procedure or routine.

adj.

1. Associated with or performed according to a rite or ritual: *a priest's ritual garments; a ritual sacrifice*. **2.** Being part of an established routine: *a ritual glass of milk before bed*.²¹

²¹ Definition from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com>

The Order of the סדר

1. Sanctify the Name of God	קִדְּשׁ
2. Wash the hands	וּרְחַן
3. Eat the green vegetables	בְּרַפֵּס
4. Break the middle matzah	יֶחֱן
5. Tell the story of the Exodus	מַגִּיד
6. Wash hands before the meal	רְחֹצָה
7. Say ha-motzi	מוֹצִיא
8. Recite blessing for matzah	מַצָּה
9. Eat bitter herbs dipped in charoset	מָרֹר
10. Eat matzah and maror together	בוֹרֵךְ
11. Festival meal	שְׁלֶחַן עֹרֵךְ
12. Eat afikomen	אָפִיקֹמֶן
13. Recite Birchat HaMazon	בְּרָךְ
14. Recite Hallel	הַלֵּל
15. Conclude seder	נִרְצָה

22

²² <http://scheinerman.net/judaism/pesach/sederorder.html>

Lesson Seven:
***Shemirat Haguf* or Taking Care of Oneself**

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf*, taking care of the body and its importance.
- Students will be able to compare the ideas presented in this this value to their daily routines.
- Students will be able to articulate it is important for them to take care of themselves.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction: Deep breathing exercises

Students will begin this class session with some deep breathing techniques. This is an opportunity for the students to take a moment to relax, to breathe and to center him/herself. In light of all of the chaos of having a new baby, it is even more important parents take the time to care for themselves.

Activity One: Shemirat Haguf

The teacher introduces the students to the idea of Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* or taking care of oneself. This Jewish values and it incorporates all aspects of taking care of the body from exercising to eating healthy to resting etc. (Definition provided in the resources)

Sample discussion questions:

- Explain in your own words this value and why you think it is important.
- What are the theological implications of this value? (our bodies are a gift from God).
- How do you feel about these theological ideas? Does it change how you think about your body?

Activity Two: Shemirat Haguf as parents

The teacher will emphasize the need for parents to look after their own physical, emotional and mental well being. The teacher will remind the students they cannot properly care for their child if they are not taking care of themselves. Finding the time and energy to take care of oneself with a new baby can be very difficult, but it is extremely important for the new parents and for the children. Taking care of the body is another ways to appreciate the wonder and miracles of

our bodies, especially after having a baby. Caring for ourselves can also be a way to connect to God and to remind ourselves of the precious gift of life.

Sample discussion questions:

- Have you found it difficult to take care of your body after having a baby?
- Do you think about your body differently now?
- What are you doing to take care of your mental health?
- What is one thing you can do to take care of yourself each day?

Activity Three: Brainstorming Session

The teacher will lead the students in a brainstorming session about ways they can take care of themselves each day such as exercise, eating right, sleeping etc. Students will be invited to share their resources with each other for example exercise classes, helpful websites, babysitting services etc. The teacher will compile the list of ideas and give it out to each student. The students will pick which of these activities they are going to do and report on what they did and how they felt about it in the next class session.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

- Each day I... to honor to the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by...
- Every week I... to honor the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by...
- I want to teach my child about the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by

Spirituality Scrapbook Prompt:

- I want to teach you to honor the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by...

Resources:

for the teacher to use in class and to hand out to students to use at home

Deep breathing exercises

Definition of Shemirat Haguf

Deep Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that can be self-taught. Deep breathing releases tension from the body and clears the mind, improving both physical and mental wellness.

We tend to breathe shallowly or even hold our hold our breath when we are feeling anxious. Sometimes we are not even aware of it. Shallow breathing limits your oxygen intake and adds further stress to your body, creating a vicious cycle. Breathing exercises can break this cycle.

The importance of good posture cannot be overstated. While sitting, we tend to slouch, which compresses the diaphragm and other organs, resulting in shallow breathing. Slouching also strains muscles in the neck and back. It is helpful to sit in a chair with good back support to avoid fatigue that leads to slouching.

How to do deep breathing exercises:

Sit up straight. (Do not arch your back) First exhale completely through your mouth. Place your hands on your stomach, just above your waist. Breathe in slowly through your nose, pushing your hands out with your stomach. This ensures that you are breathing deeply. Imagine that you are filling your body with air from the bottom up.

Hold your breath to a count of two to five, or whatever you can handle. It is easier to hold your breath if you continue to hold out your stomach. Slowly and steadily breathe out through your mouth, feeling your hands move back in as you slowly contract your stomach, until most of the air is out. Exhalation is a little longer than inhalation.

After you get some experience you don't need to use your hands to check your breathing.

You can also do the above breathing exercise lying on your back. Deep breathing exercises can help you to relax before you go to sleep for the night, or fall back asleep if you awaken in the middle of the night.

You can also practice deep breathing exercises standing – e.g. while sitting in traffic, or standing in a lineup at the grocery store. If you are really tense and feel as if you are holding your breath, simply concentrate on slowly breathing in and out.²³

²³ <http://www.stress-relief-exercises.com/deep-breathing-exercises.html>

Shemirat HaGuf

Taking care of your body - is viewed as a spiritual as well as a physical act. The wellbeing of the body has to be maintained as the vessel of the soul, the repository of that which most closely connects us with God. Our body is a gift from God, a divine creation which is to be respected, cherished and cared for. With awareness of Shmirat HaGuf, even the simplest activities, such as eating, walking, or sleeping become acts of holiness.

The following prayer is said as part of the Birchot Ha-Shachar, the daily morning prayers:

Praised are You, our Eternal God, who with wisdom fashioned the human body, creating openings, arteries, glands and organs, marvelous in structure, intricate in design. Should but one of them, by being blocked or opened, fail to function, it would be impossible to exist. Praised are You, Eternal One, healer of all flesh who sustains our bodies in wondrous ways.²⁴

This prayer expresses a clear sense of awe at the functioning of the human body, which, despite all we know from medical science, is still essentially a mystery. But we do know that our minds, bodies and souls must all be nurtured and care for because they are a wondrous gift to us.²⁵

²⁴ http://www.kolel.org/torah2go/9.shmirat_haguf2go.pdf

²⁵ [ibid](#)

Lesson Eight: Reflection and Preparing the Ritual

Objectives:

- Students will be able to synthesize the ideas discussed throughout this unit.
- Students will be able to reflect on what they have learned in the previous lessons.
- Students will be able to apply themes from this unit into the developing spiritual birthday celebrations.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set induction

The teacher will review the ideas from the previous lessons in this unit with the students. The teacher will list these topics of the lesson and remind the students about the main ideas of this unit. If any of the students were absent, it is also an opportunity to fill the student in and the material s/he missed. The teacher will have copies of the lessons to hand out to students who missed classes.

- Lesson One: Martin-Buber “I/Thou Moments and Relationships”
- Lesson Two: Sacred Relationships
- Lesson Three: Friendship
- Lesson Four: Community
- Lesson Five: The sanctity of time
- Lesson Six: Making Sacred Moment out of the Daily Routine
- Lesson Seven: *Shemirat Haguf* or Taking Care of Oneself

Students will be invited to reflect any changes they have made to their routine based on the class in this unit. This could also be an opportunity for students to bring up issues or concerns they are experiencing as new parents and encourage the students to make suggestions to help each other.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- As we review the class topics, have any questions come up about these topics? If so, what are they?
- Has your experience of any of these issues changed after addressing it in class? If so, in what ways?
- Would you like any further information about any of these topics? If so, what type of information would be the most helpful?
- If the class is being taught at a synagogue, are there ways the synagogue can continue to support you and your exploration of these topics?

Activity Two: Review Journal and Spiritual Scrapbook

The teacher will give the students some time to review at their journal and spiritual scrapbooks. This is also an opportunity for students to finish their entries in either the journals or the spiritual scrapbooks. Students will be invited to continue to their personal reflections on these topics and to write about these topics if they altered their behaviors because of the class and how they felt about their new activities.

Activity Three: Preparing Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Students will have an opportunity to continue developing the spiritual birthday celebration for their child. Students can pick a few of the topics discussed in the unit decide which of them they would like to include in the spiritual birthday celebration. The teacher will hand out copies the afterward of the book Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones. This chapter includes specific steps and suggestions designed to help people develop their own personal rituals. Students can begin the process of creating their own spiritual birthday celebrations by reading this chapter.

Students can include something they have written or read in the class to be read aloud during the spiritual birthday celebration. This is an opportunity for the students to share their original work with their community. Students can include music or others readings in their rituals as they see fit.

This is a class session clergy could attend to be a resource and answer any questions the students have about creating rituals or the topics discussed in the unit. The clergy could bring additional books, articles, readings etc to give students ideas for their spiritual birthday celebrations. This could be a time for students to begin to develop relationships with the clergy at the institution in a meaningful way. This is also an opportunity for the students to connect with a musical person to help them add music to the spiritual birthday celebration.

The teacher could encourage the students to be creative as they plan their rituals. Ideally the students will design rituals that are meaningful to them and their community and reflect the amazing journey they are on as new parents.

Resources:

Copies of previous lessons, handouts, journal prompts and spiritual scrapbook prompts should be available for students to review.

Copies of the chapter from Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones,” “How to make a ritual” to be handed out to students.

If students would like sample rituals, material is available in Unit 4 Lesson 4. This includes everyday rituals and lifecycle rituals.

Journal Prompts from previous lessons:

- When I have experienced I/Thou moments since having my child?
- I feel connected to others an I/Thou way when I...
- I hope to increase my I/Thou connection with...
- How has my relationship with my partner changed after having a baby?
- Insights have I learned about partnership from these texts and discussions are...
- The quotes made me appreciate some qualities in my friends such as...
- I am longing for friends that I can connect with about...
- Since having my baby I seek friends who...
- As a parent, I think about time new ways, for example...
- Each day I... to honor to the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by...
- Every week I.... to honor the Jewish value of *shemirat haguf* by...

Spirituality Scrapbook Prompts from previous lessons:

- My first I/Thou moments with my child were when I...
- The first I/Thou moments we experienced as a family were...
- I felt I/Thou connection to you (my child) when we...
- When you grow up I hope you have friends who...
- I hope you will be the type of friend that...
- The members of my community since you were born are...
- I feel grateful for the community because...
- I hope you are part of a community that...
- My favorite way to spend time with you is...
- The ritual I developed for our time together is...

Night Time Unit

This unit highlights the meaningful moments in night time activities. This unit suggests ways to ritualize this family time at the end of the day. As the day winds down, this unit acknowledges gift of a parents reading to their child. The unit views bath time not only as a physical cleaning, but a metaphorical cleansing from the day and any mistakes made. This unit includes suggestions for bed time rituals based on Jewish tradition and concludes with a lesson on the prayer for healing. Any parent who has been up in the middle of the night knows the heartache and worry of caring for a sick baby. This unit seeks to provide prayers for parents to say during those difficult moments.

Enduring Understanding

- Creating rituals for winding down the day and at bed time can enhance students' experience of those moments.
- Cleaning the body can be a metaphor for forgiving of ourselves and others.
- Prayers for healing can be a source of support for caregivers at difficult moments.

Knowledge

- Jewish tradition encourages Jewish to express thanks and gratitude for ability to read to a child.
- Judaism includes methods for expressing appreciation for the important people in our lives.
- Judaism encourages forgiveness of ourselves and the people in our lives.
- Specific prayers are traditionally recited before going to sleep.
- Jewish liturgy acknowledges the need to ask God for healing when loved ones are unwell.

Skills

- Students will be able to create their own prayers of thanksgiving to God for being able to read to their child.
- Students will be able to explore the value of appreciation in Judaism and reflect on their actions.
- Students will be able to view bath time as an opportunity to learn about forgiveness.
- Students will be able to develop their own bed time rituals based on the traditional liturgy.
- Students will be able to write their own prayers for healing.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will be given journal prompts to write about based on the topics of the lessons in this unit.
- Students will be given prompts for their spiritual scrapbook as the keepsake for themselves and their child based on the lessons in this unit.
- Students will have an opportunity to reflect and to designate practices from this unit for the spiritual birthday celebration.

**Lesson One:
Story time****Objectives:**

- Students will be able to summarize why the ability to read to their child is a special gift to be cherished.
- Students will be able to rewrite traditional prayers to express appreciation for the ability to read to their child.

Core Learning Experiences**Set Induction:**

In the previous class session, the teacher asked the students to bring in their favorite book they like to read to their child. Each student explains why this book is their favorite. The class takes a few minutes to pass around the books to allow everyone to look at each others' books. The teacher is invited to share his/her favorite book with the class.

Activity One: Reading as a Jewish experience

The teacher introduces the topic of the day's lesson is books and reading to your child. The teacher begins this section of the lesson with a discussion.

Sample discussion questions:

- If you can tell, what does your child enjoy about being read to?
- Does your child have a favorite book, if so, what is it?
- What do you like about reading to your child?
- In your opinion, is reading to your child was a Jewish activity? Why or Why not?
- In what ways could you make reading to your child a Jewish, spiritual or prayerful experience?

Activity Two: "Forever Young"

After facilitating this discussion, the teacher provides some small ways students can incorporate Judaism, blessing of different kinds or prayers into their reading routines.

For example, the teacher can read aloud the illustrated version of Bob Dylan’s song “Forever Young.” The teacher hands out the words to the song for the students to look at during their conversation about the book. (The front and back cover of this book are included in the resources for this lesson.)

After reading the book, the teacher asks the students questions about it.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- What are the messages Dylan is trying to convey to his children in this song?
- In your opinion, how is this book like a prayer from Bob Dylan to his children?
- What other books do you think are also blessings for children?
- In what ways would thinking of “books as blessing” change your experience of reading to your child(ren)?

Activity Three: Blessing for the ability to read

While reading might be something the students and teacher take for granted, it is an ability which the students can give thanks. There are many people around the world who do not know how to read and others who cannot read due to injury or blindness.

The teacher hands out a quote from Lawrence Kushner about saying blessings. The adapted quote is as follows:

“Jews have a special way of remembering to give thanks to God. It is called a berachah or a blessing. It begins Baruch Atah Adonai, “Holy One of blessing, “Eloheinu Melech ha’olam,” “Your presence fills creation.” Then we add the words appropriate for the occasion like: “who brings forth bread from the earth” or who removes sleep from the eyes and slumber from the eyelids,” or “who spreads the shelter of peace over us.” Each time we say a berachah, we say to ourselves, “Give thanks and be aware” something awesome is happening all around us.” And we realize that the ordinary world is full of amazing moments.”²⁶

²⁶Lawrence Kushner “The Book of Miracles” UAHC Press, New York, 1987 pages 9-10.

As a group the students can make up blessings to say before reading to their child. It can use the traditional blessing formula or not depending on the students' preference.

The traditional formula mentioned in this quote is:

Baruch Ata Adonai Melech ha olam...

Blessed are you Adonai our God creator of the Universe who...

If the students are having difficulty making up a prayer, the teacher can add suggestions like:

Baruch Ata Adonai Melech ha olam who has given me the ability to read

Baruch Ata Adonai Melech ha olam who has given me the time to spend with my child to read to him/her

Baruch Ata Adonai Melech ha olam who has enabled me to bond with my child through reading

Baruch Ata Adonai Melech ha olam who has allowed me to experience the joy of reading to and with my child

The teacher will write down the blessing the group creates. The teacher will give copies of the new blessings to the students at the end of the class. The teacher will encourage the students to try saying or thinking about these blessing before reading to their child. Students will be invited to share their experience with these blessings at the next class session.

The teacher can also recommend the students read Jewish books to their children. If the teachers has access to Jewish books for young children, the teacher can bring these books to class and allow the students to borrow them and read them to their children.

Suggested books include, but are not limited to:

“Adam and Eve’s First Sunset”

“Cain and Able”

“God in Between”

“In God’s Hands”

“In Our Image”

“Daughters of Z”

“Noah’s Wife”

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt...

- My favorite book to read to my child is.... Because...
- Reading to my child can be a prayerful experience for when...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt...

- What I like best about reading to you is...
- Through reading to you every day I hope and pray that....

Resources:

Forever Young Book (if possible to find it)

A book of the teacher’s choice to read aloud to the class

Lyrics for “Forever Young”

Quotes from “The Book of Miracles” by Lawrence Kushner

Jewish books for young child such as the ones list above

Bob Dylan "Forever Young"

May God bless you and keep you always
May all your wishes come true
May you always do for others
and let others do for you
May you build a ladder to the stars
and climb up on every rung
May you stay forever young
Forever young, Forever young
May you stay forever young

May you grow up to be righteous
May you grow up to be true
May always know the truth
and see the light surrounding you
May you always be courageous
Stand-up right and be strong
May you be forever young
Forever young, Forever young
May you be forever young

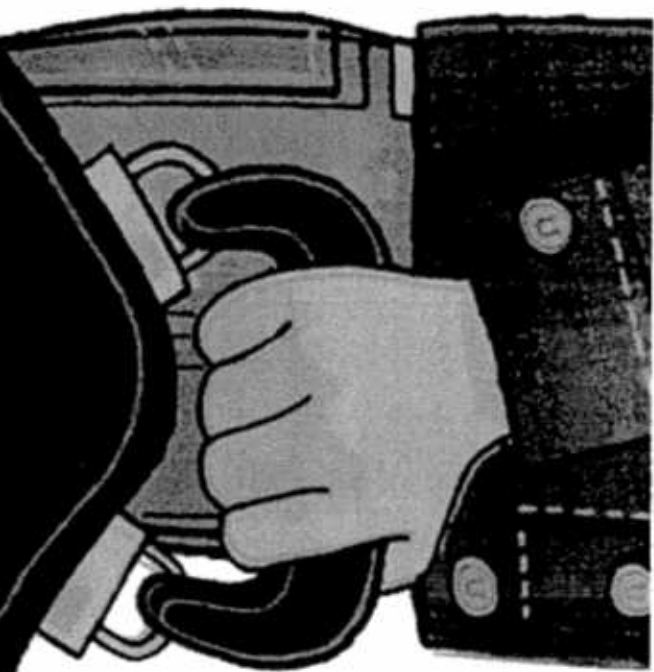
May your hands always be busy
May your feet always be swift
May you have a strong foundation
When the winds of changes shift
May your heart always be joyful
May your song always be sung
May you be forever young
Forever young, Forever young
May you be forever young

“Jews have a special way of remembering to give thanks to God. It is called a berachah or a blessing. It begins Baruch Atah Adonai, “Holy One of blessing, “Eloheinu Melech ha’olam,” “Your presence fills creation.” Then we add the words appropriate for the occasion like: “who brings forth bread from the earth” or who removes sleep from the eyes and slumber from the eyelids,” or “who spreads the shelter of peace over us.”

Each time we say a berachah, we say to ourselves, “Give thanks and be aware” something awesome is happening all around us.” And we realize that the ordinary world is full of amazing moments.”¹

(Lawrence Kushner)

By **BOB DYLAN**



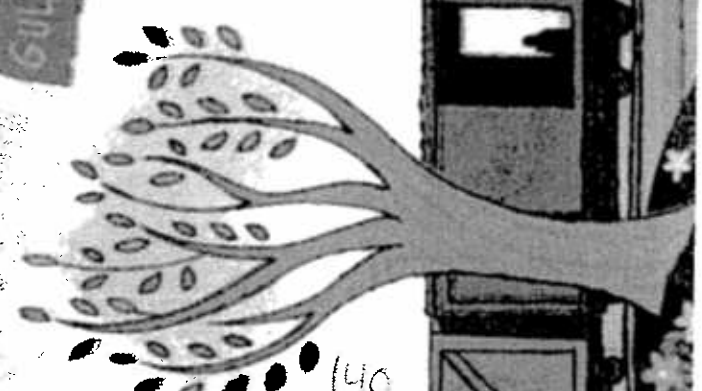
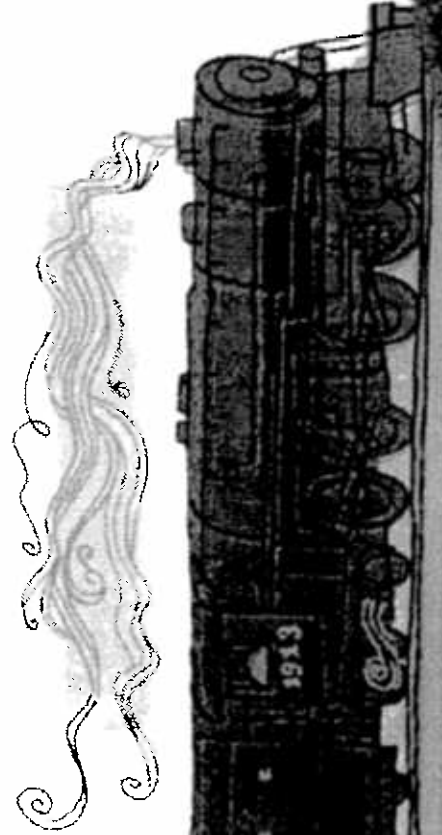
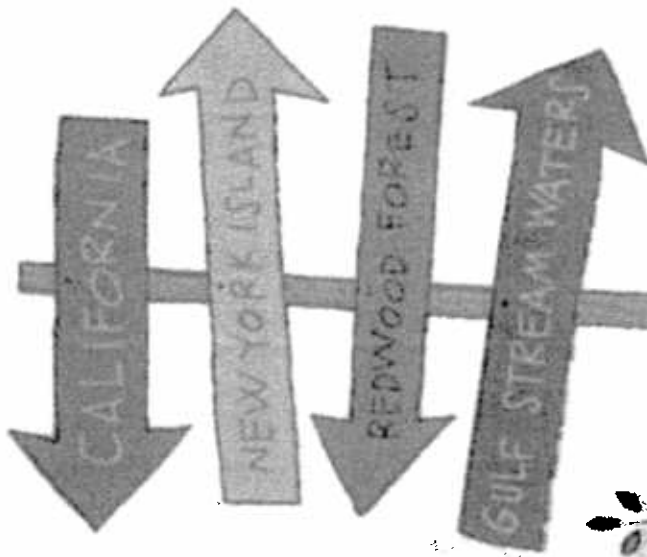
**FOR EVER
YOUNG**

Illustrated by

**PAUL
KODARIS**

The lines just came to me. They were done in a minute, and that's how the song came out. I certainly didn't intend to write it—I was going for something else. The song wrote itself. Some songs are like that."

—Bob Dylan



**Lesson Two:
End of the Day activities**

Objectives:

- Students will be able to apply ideas of appreciation in the Mussar movement to their daily lives.
- Students will be able to compare ideals of appreciative behavior with their actions.

Core Learning Experiences

Set Induction:

The teacher explains we are going to play a word association game. The teacher will say a word and the students will respond with the first thing that comes to mind.

The teacher says the words:

6:00 p.m.

End of the day

Arriving home from work or school

Tiredness

Dinner time

Reuniting with partner/spouse

Activity One:

The teacher will ask the students to think about how they feel at the end of the day as they wind down the day with their child. After the word association, many of the students might be thinking about the tiredness they feel at this time of day. Some of the students might be irritated with their child, themselves or their spouse/partner in the evening. This can be the time of the day when the students' patience begins to diminish.

Keeping the tiredness and all of the other feelings in mind, this is also an opportunity to think about the values of gratitude, and compassion. As mentioned in a previous class session, there is

a movement in Judaism called Mussar that focuses on living by Jewish values. This movement encourages people to incorporate these values into their daily life. While it would be extremely difficult to be gracious and appreciative every moment of every day, the Mussar movement suggests little ways people can integrate these practices into their daily routines.

After introducing these concepts, the teacher will ask the students to divide themselves up into small groups to learn more about how the Mussar movement and the value of gratitude. The teacher hands out Mussar material on each topic and gives the students a few minutes to skim it. The teacher poses some guiding questions for the readings.

Sample Guiding Questions:

- What are the main ideas/themes of the reading?
- What are some of the practices suggested in the reading?
- Were any of the ideas in the reading troublesome to you?
- Which of the practices could you see yourself trying to incorporate into your daily life?

After providing time for the students to read the material, the teacher brings the group back together again. The teacher asks the small groups to discuss the readings.

Activity Two: Mitzvot of appreciation

To build on the idea of appreciation, the teacher will provide the students with a list of numerous daily and weekly mitzvot they can do to show their appreciation of their spouse/partner, friend/family member(s). This list includes multiple little ways of showing appreciation. The idea of list is to create a cycle of appreciate for the important people in the lives of the students. If the students vocalize their appreciation of their loved ones, hopefully this will lead to a greater appreciation of the students by their loved ones, which will in turn create a greater appreciation of the loved ones and so on.

The teacher will give the students a few minutes to look over the list and to decide which ones s/he would like to try over the course of the week. Students will be invited to share their experiences at the following class session.

The list will be included in the resources (it includes ways to integrate spiritual practices throughout the whole day. The appreciation portion of this list is in the evening section of the handout. I have included the entire packet as a reference for the students. Students are invited to try other suggestions from this handout, but they will not be discussed directly in this curriculum guide.)

Activity Three: I appreciate...

After thinking about which items from the list of mitzvot the students are going to try over the course of the week, the teacher encourages the students to begin to think about what they appreciate about themselves, their spouse/partner/friend/family member and child. The teacher will start sentences and encourage the students to write down their answers. These answers will not be shared with the class; instead this is an exercise for the students to complete for themselves.

Sample sentence starters:

Since having a baby I appreciate my spouse/partner/friend/family because...

What I appreciate most about the important people in my life is...

What I appreciate the most about myself right now is...

What I appreciate about my child is...

I appreciate my community because...

I show my appreciation by...

Activity Four: Assessment**Journal Prompt:**

- I appreciate my support network because...
- It can be difficult to express my appreciation for my loved ones because...
- I have learned many new things about myself since becoming a parent, I appreciate myself when I...

Scriptural Scrapbook Prompt:

- I appreciate being your parent because...
- What I appreciate the most about you and our time together is...

Resources:

Mussar hand outs

Spiritual Approaches to an ordinary Day handout . The teacher will instruct the students to focus on the evening time, but will hand out whole packet for future reference

Further information about the Mussar movement can be found in at the Mussar Institute or in books by Alan Morinis

SPIRITUAL APPROACHES TO AN ORDINARY DAY

A Suggestion Sheet

UPON AWAKENING

1. **Modeh Ani prayer:** Modeh ani lefanecha, melech chai ve-kayam, she-he-che-zarta hee nishma-tee be-chemlah, raba emuna-techa.
(might be said outdoors, breathing in the fresh morning air)
I give thanks in Your presence, O living and enduring Majesty, that You have returned my soul to me with love; how great is Your faithfulness!
2. **Washing away sleep:** with the waters of life
(Pour water over each hand and say the berachah as you dry them)
Baruch atta Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam, asher kiddshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzi-vanu al ne-tilat ya-da-yim.
You are praised, Adonai our God, Majesty of the universe, who has shared Your holiness with us through Your mitzvot, commanding us about the washing of our hands.
3. **Morning prayer at home or at work:** Services in Gates of the House (pp. 3-5) or select from Gates of Prayer (pp. 72-110)
4. **Breakfast:**
 - a) Eat a dairy breakfast as a step in experiencing kashrut
 - b) Appropriate beracha (blessing) over food
5. **Arrange to do one or more tasks during the day that your spouse or roommate usually does, empathizing with that person as you do it.**
6. **While driving a carpool or to work:**
 - a) Offer berachot (blessings) over sights observed while driving
 - b) Try to recognize the Godliness of people you encounter while driving
 - c) Place a verse from the week's Torah portion on the dashboard, considering every day how it helps to interpret the week's events (the verse might also be placed on a mirror or refrigerator at home). If you keep a journal, you might want to record at week's end the insights the verse gave you
 - d) Play music as suggested in Afternoon #5 to prepare you for the day
7. **Other suggestions:**

AT WORK OR AT HOME

- 1) Work on resisting the following impulses, or on transforming them into positive acts (e.g., try to shape the desire to gossip about someone into looking for positive qualities, or sensitively helping the person to correct the behavior people gossip about):
 - a) Stealing (another person's time, by being late, or a person's reputation by maligning them).
 - b) Lying
 - c) Oppressing a colleague or a friend
 - d) Gossiping, bad-mouthing, spreading rumors
 - e) Standing idly by a person in trouble
 - f) Hating someone in your heart (instead, imagine that, like the High Priest, such a person has "Holy to God" written on his or her forehead)
 - g) Refraining from rebuking a wrongdoer
 - h) Taking vengeance
 - i) Bearing a grudge
 - j) Acting toward others in a way you would not like them to act to you (Hillel's interpretation of "Love your neighbor as yourself")
 - k) Neglecting to show respect to the elderly or to teachers and rabbis
 - l) Failing to show honor to your parents (and failing to inspire your children to honor you)
 - m) Other impulses to resist:

Positively:

- i) Make conscious efforts to listen carefully to people
- ii) Ask forgiveness of someone you have wronged; seek to make amends
- iii) Visit someone in the hospital or in a nursing home (might also be done at lunch time)
- iv) Call a person to whom you have not spoken for a long time
- v) Clean your house in the spirit of the priests who cleaned the Temple (your house is a temple in miniature)
- vi) Seek to make peace at home and among your friends
- vii) Pursue opportunities to work for peace in this community and around the world
- viii) Other positive acts:

LUNCH TIME

1. Take time to go outside just to look at trees, flowers, the ocean.
2. Allow yourself to spend 15 minutes (or more) in total silence.
3. Take another step in experiencing kashrut by eating lunch in a kosher restaurant (if you eat in a non-kosher restaurant, try to avoid mixing milk and meat or eating pork or shellfish).
4. Say a Motzi or other appropriate blessing before your meal.
5. Study the weekly Torah portion with a friend or by yourself (or organize a weekly study group in your office or among friends; ask your rabbi or cantor for assistance).
6. On your return from lunch offer the afternoon Mincha service (Gates of Prayer, beginning on page 111).
7. Other suggestions:

AFTERNOON

1. Take time to study how the view outside your window has changed with the lengthening shadows.
2. Work on resisting a different impulse than you did in the morning.
3. Driving home, or picking up children, be aware of the sunset on the hills or trees, and offer the appropriate berachah.
4. Take another step in experiencing kashrut by buying meat in a kosher butcher shop, asking the butcher to explain the cuts of meat to you.
5. If your car has a tape deck, play a tape of spiritual Jewish music or other uplifting music to prepare you for the reunion of your family at home, or, if you live alone, for the ending of the day.
6. Other suggestions:

EVENING

1. Study with your family or a study group.
2. Give Tzedakah before dinner (have a tzedakah box in your house and once a year determine where the monies will go).

3. Express your appreciation for the members of your family, or others who live with you.
4. Take another step in experiencing kashrut by designating your dishes as either meat or dairy and using paper for the other kind.
5. Say Motzi and a short Birkat Ha-Mazon, the Blessings after the Meal (Gates of House, pp. 17-18) to frame your meal as a religious act.
6. Try to interject into your dinner conversation some insights you have gained through the spiritual exercises you have done during the day; encourage others to do the same (you might want to write these in a journal).
7. Offer Maariv (Evening Service) from the services on pp. 72-110 in Gates of Prayer.
8. Go outside and look for some moments at the moon and the stars.
9. At bedtime say the Shma (or prayers in Gates of the House, pp. 3-5) and recount what you would like to thank God for in the day that is ending.
10. Other suggestions:

Prepared by Rabbi Richard N. Levy

Upon seeing the ocean:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה אר-תים
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, she-oseh et-ha-yam
ha-gadol.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has made
the great sea.

Upon seeing a person distinguished in
four studies:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
ליראיו.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, she-yotzi me-
yohannato lire'ov.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has shared
of His wisdom with those who reverse Him.

Upon seeing one who is distinguished in
worldly learning:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, she-aton
is-(hokhamato l'vesser ve-dam.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has given of
His wisdom to flesh and blood.

Upon hearing good news:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, ha-tov v'ha-metiv,
raised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who is good and
emolent.

Upon hearing bad news:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, dayan ha-emet,
raised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, the true Judge.

BERAKHOT FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS

Upon seeing wonders of nature, including
lightning, shooting stars, vast deserts, high
mountains, and a sacrifice:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, oseh ma'aseh
v'reshit.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Source of
Creation.

Upon hearing thunder (or upon seeing a storm):

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, she-kolho u-g'vurto
me-le olam.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose power and
might fill the whole world.

Upon seeing a rainbow:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, זוכר
הברית ופנאיה.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, zokher ha-b'rit
v'ne'eman bi-v'rito v'ha-yoman b'v'ne'emoto.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who remembers
His covenant, is faithful to it, and keeps His promise.

Upon smelling the fragrance of trees or shrubs:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוקינו קלך טעלם, פנאיה
הגדול.

Barukh atah edonoi elohelnu melekh ha-olam, bo-re atzei v'samim,
Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who creates
fragrant trees.

Fruits of Patience

Patience doesn't mean that we become passive. We still need to make a genuine effort to set the pace and trajectory of our lives, but we don't need to react to every delay or deflection as if it were a denial, whether that means a denial of our selves or a denial by God. In those moments when I am good at being patient, I live in the here and the now, without straining against reality. I walk a middle path, not leaning to the one extreme of being inactive and fatalistic—because that way I negate the powers I do have, limited though they might be—nor veering to the other, where impatience reigns.

There is a story in the Talmud⁹ about Rav Preida, who had a student who was so slow that he could not grasp a lesson unless his teacher taught it to him four hundred times. One day, while Rav Preida was teaching this student, someone came and told the rabbi that he needed his services when he had finished teaching. That day, after he had completed the four hundredth repetition, Rav Preida asked the student if he had grasped the lesson, to which the student replied that he had not. "Why is it different today than other days?" the teacher asked, and his student answered that from the moment the other person had come to speak to Rav Preida, the student had been distracted, thinking to himself, "Soon the master will have to get up . . . Soon the master will have to get up . . ." Rav Preida then replied, "If that is so, let me teach you the lesson again." He then repeated the teaching an additional four hundred times. When he had finished, a heavenly voice called out to Rav Preida, "Which reward do you want? Either four hundred years will be added to your life, or you and your generation will be received into the World-to-Come." He answered, "I request that my generation and I merit the World-to-Come." To this the heavenly voice replied, "Give him *both*!"

Such are the fruits of patience.

9

Gratitude

HAKARAT HA'TOV

Awaken to the good and give thanks.

Ben Zoma used to say: "A good guest says, 'How much my host toiled for me! He put so much meat in front of me, so much wine, so much bread—all his exertion was just for me!' A bad guest says, 'What did my host toil for me? I ate just one roll, just one piece of meat, I drank just one cup—all his exertion was for his own household!'"

—Babylonian Talmud: *B'rachot* 58a

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.
For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

—Psalms/Tehillim 100

THE HEВЯEW TEPM for gratitude is *hakarat ha'ton*, which means, literally, "recognizing the good." The good is already there. Practicing gratitude means being fully aware of the good that is already yours.

If you've lost your job but you still have your family and health, you have something to be grateful for.

If you can't move around except in a wheelchair but your mind is as sharp as ever, you have something to be grateful for.

If your house burns down but you still have your memories, you have something to be grateful for.

If you've broken a string on your violin, and you still have three more, you have something to be grateful for.

What's Good in Your Life?

When you open yourself to experience the trait of gratitude, you discover with clarity and accuracy how much good there is in your life. Whatever you are lacking will still be missing, of course, and in reaching for gratitude no one is saying you ought to put on rose-colored glasses to obscure those shortcomings. The obstacles to appreciating the good can also be very real, especially when life is riven by suffering. But it is worth the effort to practice gratitude, especially since the one who benefits most is the one who is suffering. Recognizing the good affirms life, and more, because when you see the good in the world it sets your heart free to soar, to shout, and to sing a song of life.

Most of us tend to focus so heavily on the deficiencies in our lives that we barely perceive the good that counterbalances them. This tendency is bolstered by advertisers who attempt to convince us of just how inadequate and lacking we really are, in the hope we will try to plug our wants and needs by buying some product or other.

There is no limit to what we don't have, and if that is where we focus, then our lives are inevitably filled with endless dissatisfaction. It is also true that even if we are aware of our gifts, we tend to grow callous to those fine things that pepper our lives, so that after a while we no longer even see that they are there. We come to take the good for granted. When gratitude is a living reality well established in our hearts, however, we constantly refresh our vision so that we make accurate note of the good that surrounds us. This is the ethos that lies behind the ancient proverb, which asks, "Who is rich?" and then answers, "He who rejoices in his own lot."¹

Live like that and you will suddenly discover that you want to give thanks for anything or anyone who has benefited you, whether they meant to or not. Imagine a prayer of thanks springing to your lips when the driver in the next car lets you merge without protest, or when there is electricity to light your room, or the food is adequate. Giving thanks can become a flow that waters the fields of life.

When gratitude is well established and flowing, it is a sign of a heart that has been made right and whole. Gratitude can't coexist with arrogance, resentment, and selfishness. The Chassidic teacher Rebbe Nachman of Breslov writes, "Gratitude rejoices with her sister joy and is always ready to light a candle and have a party. Gratitude doesn't much like the old cronies of boredom, despair, and taking life for granted."²

Grateful to Whom, or What?

To what and whom should we feel thankful? In the Torah, when Moses is bringing down the plagues on Egypt, it isn't he who initiated turning the Nile River into blood and bringing frogs from the river. His brother Aaron invokes those plagues. The medieval commentator Rashi explains that the river had protected Moses when he was an infant, and therefore he could not send a plague against it. God was teaching Moses a powerful lesson in gratitude: we can open in gratitude even to inanimate objects.

Whenever Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, the Kotzker Rebbe, would replace a worn-out pair of shoes, he would neatly wrap up the old ones in newspaper before placing them in the trash, and he would declare, "How can I simply toss away such a fine pair of shoes that have served me so well these past years?" I felt the same way when I gave away my old Honda that had ferried me and my family so reliably for eighteen years.

There is a story about the Mussar teacher Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian,³ who was talking to a student after prayers and at the same time was folding up his *tallis* (prayer shawl). The *tallis* was large, and he had to rest it on a bench to fold it. After he had finished the folding, Reb Elyah noticed that the bench was dusty, and so he headed out to fetch a towel in order to clean the bench. The student to whom he was speaking realized what Reb Elyah was doing and ran to get the towel for him. Reb Elyah held up his hand. "No! No! I must clean it myself, for I must show my gratitude to the bench upon which I folded my *tallis*."³

Now if we learn from these stories that we can be grateful to rivers, shoes, cars, and benches, which help us involuntarily, how much more so to human beings who have free will and who help us consciously out of the goodness of their hearts? Or to the mysterious source out of which our lives have come?

When Leah, wife of the patriarch Jacob, had her fourth child, she named him "Yehuda," which means "I am grateful."⁴ The name Jew derives from "Yehudi," the people of "Yehuda," revealing that gratitude is intrinsic to being Jewish. This idea is confirmed in the prayer book, where so many of the prayers express gratitude to God for all we have. Astonishingly, the prayer to God, "Who is good and does good,"⁵ which is part of the blessing after eating, was introduced directly after the defeat of the Bar Kochba revolt and the fall of the fortress of Betar, where thousands of people were slain by the legions of Rome.⁶ When the remains of the martyrs of Betar finally received proper burial, the sages ordained the recitation of this blessing for the goodness of God, as they found the goodness even within—maybe especially within—a catastrophe. This is their lesson to us.

In our lives, the Torah asks us to recite blessings for everything, from the most mundane activities, like eating, to the most extraordinary, like seeing a rainbow or the ocean, all of which help us focus on and appreciate that which we might otherwise take for granted.

Leah was thankful to God for the gift of another son, and our daily blessings focus on God's bounty as well. The fact is, however, that many people find it easier to thank God than to acknowledge the gifts received from other people. People are complex, and they give in such confounding ways. This can make it so much harder to feel grateful for their gifts or to thank them. But we need to be ready to give thanks to a fellow human being, even if he or she has not done anything special for us. Why? Because the soul-trait of gratitude holds the key to opening the heart. It is an elevated soul-trait, and a fine orientation to the inanimate, human, and divine dimensions of the world. The refined soul is a grateful soul.

Gratitude Doesn't Come Easy

Yet gratitude often doesn't come easily to us, and it usually takes some effort to develop this quality through practice. When we practice gratitude,

we make an effort to heighten our awareness of the gifts we already possess, and so relieve ourselves of the exhausting pursuit of the ever-receding targets of those things we think we lack. No wonder gratitude mistifies the soul. It frees us from compulsive grasping, and so gives us back our lives.

In the Mussar classic *Duties of the Heart*, Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda tells us that there isn't a person alive who hasn't been given gifts, if only the gifts of life and hope, but we tend to suffer a kind of blindness that keeps us from seeing and appreciating what we have. He identifies three reasons why we fail to see the abundance in our lives for which we ought to be grateful, and it's worth paying attention to what he says because his insights are as true for us today as they were nearly one thousand years ago when he wrote them. As you read these points, see if you can identify how these factors play out in your own life and keep you from the gratitude that is the soul's satisfaction.

First, he says we tend not to feel appreciative because we are too absorbed in worldly things and in the enjoyment of them. He points out that physical pleasures can never be fully gratified and so we pursue them endlessly, which keeps us from gratitude for what we have.

Second, we are so used to our gifts that we don't even really see them any more. We have grown so accustomed to them that they appear to us as typical, permanent, unremarkable features of our lives. Because we just take them for granted, we don't see all the good that is in our lives, for which we really could and should be grateful.

And third, we are so focused on the travails and afflictions we suffer in this world that we forget that both our very being and all we own are among the good things that have been gifted to us.

The result of this foolishness, Rabbi Ibn Pakuda concludes, is that "many good things are left unenjoyed, and the happiness to be had from them becomes tainted either because people do not recognize the good in it, or they do not realize its value."⁷

This voice from a millennium ago is saying things that seem to be equally applicable to our lives today. Isn't he pointing to the common feelings of entitlement that keep many of us from recognizing the good and being grateful? We are experts in wanting and complaining, and even if the problems are real and things aren't perfect, we don't give due appreciation to what we already have in hand. Yes, the glass is certainly half empty, but

it is also half full. Someone once challenged me, "What could a prisoner in a concentration camp be grateful for?" "Being alive," I answered.

Even for the Challenges

The poem "Thanks," by W. S. Merwin, includes the lines:

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you
in a culture up to its chin in shame
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you⁸

And it goes on to describe all sorts of other contemporary issues, and still the chorus resounds, "We are saying thank you."

How can that be? Why on earth would anyone want to say thank you for the police at the back door, the beatings, the crooks, the animals dying around us, the forests falling faster than the minutes?

Merwin is challenging us to stretch to a very radical kind of gratitude. What he is proposing won't be easy or natural for us, because he is throwing open the simple certainties of "good" and "bad" through which we tend to see the world. But how useful and even true are these categories? We cheer for the good that happens to us and mourn for the bad, but are we really in a position to pass such clear judgment as to which is which? How certain can we be that something that happens to us is really for our good, and something else bad?

A story about the sage Rabbi Akiva says this perfectly. He used to say, "A person should always make it a habit of saying, 'Whatever the All-Merciful does, He does for the good.'" He backed this up with a story from his own experience.

Once, Rabbi Akiva was walking along the way accompanied by a rooster, a donkey, and a lamp. He came to a certain place and looked for room at the inn, but he was turned away. When that happened, he said, "Whatever the All-Merciful does, He does for the good." So he went with his rooster, donkey, and lamp and spent the night in an open field.

The wind came and put out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, a lion came and ate the donkey. He said, "Whatever the All-Merciful does, He does for the good."

On that very night, a marauding troop came to that town and took into captivity everyone in the town. Rabbi Akiva was spared.⁹ Had his rooster crowed, had the donkey brayed, had the light glowed, he would have been discovered.

The message is clear. How can we evaluate what is happening right now when we don't know what will happen next? It's only against the contours of that bigger picture that we can grasp the meaning and direction of our present circumstances. Only then can we possibly know what is good and what is bad—and even then we can't really be sure because events continue to unfold. "Did I not tell you?" Rabbi Akiva concluded. "Whatever the All-Merciful does, He does for the good."

Blessings in Disguise

It isn't hard to find real-life examples of terrible things that befell people that turned out in the end to be "blessings in disguise."

What spared my teacher Mrs. Perr's family from destruction in the Holocaust was the "disaster" that occurred when the invading Russians expelled her family from Poland to Siberia early in World War II. It was this harsh fate that took them out of the path of the Nazis and spared their lives.

I met a Holocaust survivor who had emerged from the war penniless, stateless, and traumatized. He left Europe behind and made his way to Uruguay. He and his family lived in South America for many years, until they left that unstable place to settle in the United States. They were able to immigrate because they had become quite wealthy. The source of their wealth was a veritable monopoly the family held on the manufacture of soap in Uruguay. The patriarch of the family had learned how to make soap as a forced laborer in a concentration camp.

In my own life, had it not been for the painful downturn in my own business fortunes that I wrote about in *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, I never would have discovered Mussar, and I would not be writing these words today.

As we continually try to make sense of our experiences, there is wisdom in receiving whatever comes our way with an attitude of thankfulness. This

attitude reflects an “advanced” level of gratitude practice. The method here is to set ourselves to seeing that even in the troubles we face in this world, we can find good and something to be grateful for. Just because our limited human eyes don’t permit us to perceive that the apparent disaster that has landed in our lap will turn out to be for the best, when we cultivate that very attitude, its truth begins to become visible to us. The Mishnah goes so far in this direction as to instruct that “one is obligated to say a blessing for evil.”¹⁰ The sage Rava explained that this teaching was given “to indicate that one must accept [evil] with gladness.”

The rabbis challenged him, asking for examples of how this can be the case. The answer that comes back is that our limited vision doesn’t permit us to know with any certainty what is good and what is bad, despite appearances:

For instance, if a flood took one’s land. Eventually that will be a good thing, because his land gets covered with sediment and becomes more fertile. Now, however, it is a bad thing. And in regard to a good thing, like, for instance, if one found something, it appears for the moment as a good thing even though it will become a disadvantage to him because if the government hears about it, it will confiscate the object from him.¹¹

From where we stand at this moment, we just can’t know which is which, and so we bless for the good and we bless for the apparently bad, too.

There is a famous individual in the Talmud,¹² named Nachum Ish Gamzu, who personifies this attitude. He is a righteous person who comes to the last days of his life destitute, blind, without the use of his limbs, and beset with illness. And yet as each of these devastating conditions descends on him, no matter what is happening to him, he always says of it: “*Gam zu l’rovah*”—“And that is also for the good.”¹³

One story involving Nachum Ish Gamzu took place when the Jews wanted to send a gift to the court of Caesar and the pious Nachum was chosen to be the emissary. He set off with a chest filled with gems and pearls. Along the way, some people secretly made off with his jewels and refilled the chest with ordinary dirt. When he discovered the switch, Nachum’s response was only to say *gam zu l’rovah*—this too is for the

good—and to carry on with his mission. Other equally disastrous events take place and he responds in just the same way. How could that be? How could it be for the best to find yourself having just presented a gift of a bucket of dirt to an enraged Roman emperor? The answer is that at this point, the story isn’t over.

Enter prophet Elijah (in disguise). He reveals that the dirt in the chest actually has magic properties. Caesar is overjoyed and rewards Nachum by refilling his chest with jewels and sending him on his way with great honor. *Gam zu l’rovah*—that too is for the best.¹⁴

Here is the practice. When something apparently “good” happens to you, you offer the blessing, “And that is also for the good.” And if something “bad” happens to you, “And that is also for the good.” On the last broadcast of his television show, when the comedian Jerry Lewis was being thrown off the air, he quoted the saying that Nachum Ish Gamzu referred to above, which Lewis had learned from his mother: “*Gam zu l’rovah*,” he said on camera. “And that is also for the good.” No doubt this is a difficult spiritual practice, but when done sincerely, it has a powerful impact on your life.

Saying Thank You

Though there is great spiritual value in seeking the good in everything that happens, we have to be careful not to set ourselves up to being too much of a Pollyanna. All we want is to affirm that in everything that happens there is the possibility of good, if only we could perceive it, and while it may not be visible now, perhaps in time we’ll see the bigger picture. And perhaps that bigger picture will include dimensions that are beyond this world and beyond our known experience, as the Jewish tradition affirms repeatedly in telling us that the real recompense for our lives is not in this world but in the World-to-Come.

We have a tendency to live our lives mired in our feelings of deprivation. No one has to look far to find someone who has more money, or is taller, healthier, or luckier in love. Comparing ourselves like this can create bitterness in the soul, as we poison ourselves with judgment, grasping, and self-recrimination. Cultivating gratitude counterbalances this tendency. When we take on the curriculum of reminding ourselves to be grateful, we

change our perception of our lives, and with that, we actually change our lives, too.

In undertaking to practice gratitude, it is important to call thankfulness to mind and then to express and act on the feeling of gratefulness we have fostered.

This is just what I found myself doing one week when I was working on the soul-trait of gratitude. During that very week, I got an e-mail from a student who was very unhappy because of all the things she saw to be wrong with the Mussar course she was taking. As far as I could tell, all the problems were on her end, like the fact that she had an old computer that didn't like attachments, and that she seemed to be so overwrought that she was blaming instead of problem-solving. Taking the whole situation into account, I offered her a partial refund on her course fee. That seemed fair to me, but obviously not to her, because she sent me back an even more aggressive response, one that got under my skin. Even though what we were arguing over was less than \$100, I sat down to write her a blistering reply that would be sure to put her in her place. Just then, the unbidden thought of "gratitude" flickered into my mind. Remember that you are cultivating gratitude, I reminded myself. What can you find to be grateful for in this situation? Nothing was evident to my eyes at that moment, so I determined that I would not reply to her until I could begin my response with the words "I am grateful to you for . . ."

The first few ideas that came to my mind had to be thrown out. "I am grateful to you for being an idiot." "I am grateful to you for showing me just how wrong a person can be." Meanwhile, I calmed down, and then it struck me that there was, in fact, one thing in this vein that I could validly say. I could say to her, "I am grateful to you for showing me what this situation looks like from your point of view." This was true. She was telling me what the unsatisfactory situation looked like to her (even though it was her radically different viewpoint that was so infuriating).

Once I had settled on articulating my gratitude to her for sharing her perspective, I was able to see that her position actually had validity, too. If I had bought a toaster at the department store, I told myself, and I took it back after a few weeks because it wasn't working for me, I'd expect a full refund. That's just how she saw this situation. Standing on my rights, we had a fight on our hands. Liberated by the practice of gratitude, I could see the situation from two perspectives, both of which had merit.

I gave her back her money, and we both came away from the situation satisfied.

An Attitude of Gratitude

You can see from this story that gratitude does not just mean uttering a polite thank you when someone confers a benefit. The goal is to do the work it takes to weave thankfulness deeply into the very fabric of your being, permeating everything you do. To achieve that level, said Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz,¹⁵ you must "keep talking like a fishwife" (i.e., endlessly) about everything you receive.

Although gratitude practice requires that we put our feelings into action, the essence of the soul-trait is the inner attitude we maintain. We learn this from a story told about this same Rabbi Levovitz. The rabbi had a special fund from which his yeshiva students could borrow money. One year a young man borrowed some money to travel home for Passover.

On returning to the yeshiva, the student returned the money and expressed his thanks. Immediately his teacher reproached him because there is a Jewish value that when a beneficiary expresses gratitude, he or she diminishes the good deed and undercuts the selflessness of the doer. The boy got the message.

The next year, the same boy again borrowed money from the fund to travel home. This time, though, he had learned his lesson and returned the money without a word.

"Where's your gratitude?" Rabbi Levovitz chided him.

The baffled student burst out, "But Rebbe, last year I thanked you, and you rebuked me. This year, I didn't thank you, and again you rebuked me. What am I supposed to do?"

His teacher explained, "It is certainly forbidden for you to express any verbal thanks in this situation. But the *feeling* of gratitude inside you should have been so strong that it would have been hard for you to remain silent. I didn't see you experiencing any struggle to remain silent."

This story points out that the very essence of gratitude lies in the heart and not in behavior. An inner attitude or stance of thankfulness provides us with resources that help us face whatever we encounter in our lives. A grateful heart is a solid platform from which to reach out to take care of

Lesson Three: Bath time

Objectives:

- Students will be able to summarize Nancy Fuchs' chapter about Bath time as an opportunity for forgiveness
- Students will be able to evaluate their processes for seeking and granting forgiveness
- Students will be able to identify some aspects of what they would like to teach their child about forgiveness and what they have learned from their child about forgiveness.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set Induction: "It's Bath time"

The teacher reads the text from the book by Sandra Boynton "It's Bath time" aloud to the class.

"Its Bath time
Is your washcloth nice and wet
Let's get going ready set
Wash the duckies
Wash the cow
Scrub the piggies you know how
Wash the sheep
And chicken too
Silly chicken now wash you
A little scrubbing get us clean
Thank you Thank you jelly bean"

After reading the book, the teacher asks the students what they normal do during bath time with their child. The teacher asks if there are games the families like to play together during bath time or if there are songs they like to sing. The teachers asks if there are specific toys the children like to play with or books they like to read. Bath time is can be a chance for the person who is not home most of the day with the child to bond with him or her or to spend some special time together.

Activity One: Bath time as a metaphor for forgiveness

After learning more about what the students and their babies do during bath time. The teacher will explain today's topic is bath time. The class will not focus on the activity of bath time, but more of the metaphorical values of cleansing and forgiveness. To give into the mindset of talking about forgiveness, the teacher will split the students into small groups. In these groups the students will be asked to list as many songs as they can think of that have the words forgive, forgiveness, sorry or apologize in them. After allowing a few minutes for the students to make their lists, the teacher calls time. Each group takes a turn singing a song from their list. Once a song is sung it cannot be repeated by another group. The object is to have the more songs on the list than the other groups.

Activity Two: Exploring Fuchs' Chapter from "Our Share of the Night, Our Share of the Morning."

After the "singdown" is completed, the teacher explains an overview of the philosophy Nancy Fuchs' presented in her book "Our Share of Night, Our Share of the Morning." In this book, Fuchs suggests that bath time is an opportunity for cleansing the soul as well as the body. It is an opportunity to wash ourselves of the day's mistakes and to prepare for the next day. It is also a chance to look after our bodies in accordance with the Jewish value *shemat ha guf* – taking care of the body that we discussed during the daytime unit. Bath time can be a chance start fresh and to begin the process of making amends.

Fuchs continues her theory by reminding the readers how quickly young children forgive their parents mistakes. She suggests adults can learn by watching children forgive and move on. While mistakes parents make often stay with them for days, child can forgive them almost instantly. Fuchs argues parents should try to be more like their children and forgive themselves more easily.

After this introduction, the teacher will hand out copies of Fuchs' short chapter to the students. The teacher will divide the reading among the students so each person is only responsible for reading a few pages. Each student will be given a copy of the whole chapter to keep and read at their convenience.

After the students have the opportunity to read the assigned pages, they will present the main idea of the reading to the rest of the class. Upon completion of the presentation the teacher will lead a discussion.

Sample discussion questions:

- If you were to summarize Fuchs' ideology about forgiveness, what would you say?
- Compare Fuchs' views on forgiveness with your own experience.
- If you could teach your child one thing about forgiveness what would it be?

- What have you learned from your child about forgiveness?

Activity Three: Forgiving ourselves and forgiving others

The teacher reminds the students forgiveness is an important idea in Judaism. Forgiveness is one of the main themes of the High Holy Days. During the High Holy Day period, Jews are encouraged to ask people they have hurt to forgiveness. Jews are also encouraged to forgive the people in their lives that have hurt them. The teacher will have resources to suggest to the students if they want to read more about Judaism and forgiveness.

The teacher will also provide the students with an opportunity to reflect on how they approach forgiving themselves and others. The teacher will ask questions aloud and allow the students to free write in response.

Suggested questions:

Do I forgive myself easily?

Do I forgive other easily?

Am I more or less forgiving now that I am a parent?

I wish I could forgive myself for?

The message I want to teach my child about forgiveness is?

The teacher will encourage the students to think of bath time as an opportunity for forgiving themselves and others.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompts:

- I will learn from my child to be more forgiving of myself...
- I will learn to be more forgiving of others by...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompts:

- Bath time is a special time for our family because...
- Bath time can be an opportunity to cleanse ourselves from the day and to forgive the mistakes made. I learned about forgiveness from you when you or because you...

Resources:

Pages from “Our share of the Night, Our Share of the Morning”

For further reading:

High Holy Day materials such as Revuen Hammer’s “Entering the High Holy Day”

Lawrence Hoffman’s “My People’s Prayerbook”

ing out against an
ngerous situations
w fewer parents of
hose things.

nan and was again
devoted a certain
ne I did less than I
lu conception that
appropriate to dif-
chapters" (as Elton

to be the kind of
tunities to address
one more paradox.
lace, the demands
fluence and leave
e of that work for

Chapter 11

BATH TIME

Forgiveness

"What if children were not washable?"

Most adults don't think much about baths. We usually take showers to get clean, and that is the end of the matter. Children challenge that utilitarian perspective. For the parents of small children, baths have only a little bit to do with getting children clean and a lot to do with the actual process of giving a bath. It is an integral part of the cycle of the day. Parents speak not about a "bath" but about "bath time." It is a time for soaking away the stains of the day (or sometimes the week), watching our children becoming clean, fresh, and pure once again. As we wash away our children's grime, we can let ourselves believe that our hearts, too, may become clean again.

We begin our lives floating in the waters of the womb. According to the biblical creation story, the primeval waters are gathered together into what Genesis 1:10 calls a *mikvah*. Since we originate in water in two different ways, it is no wonder that from ancient times a convert to Judaism had to be immersed in a pool of water—called a *mikvah*—in order to be reborn as a Jew. Later, Christians transformed this rite into baptism. So for a very long time, water has been the medium for birth and rebirth, beginning and beginning again.

Take a filthy child and put her in the tub, and eventually you will remove a clean one. "Did you ever consider how difficult life would be," asks S. Adams Sullivan, the author of *The Quality Time Almanac*, "if children's skin were no more washable . . . than . . . a pair of sneakers?" Then consider: we could have been so constituted that we never changed. If we felt angry, we would always feel angry; if we hurt, we'd always hurt; if we had a falling out with someone, we could never be friends again. But happily,

that isn't the way we are made. Souls are washable. Children, in particular, remind us of our capacity for change because they move so rapidly from one mood to the next, cleaning up their emotional messes as easily as they create them.

Children do this daily, but especially in baths. One thing is clear: Children often can forget their sins and ours as rapidly as hot water removes large quantities of peanut butter and jelly from their faces and hair. Seeing children's ability to change makes some parents realize that change is possible for them as well. Watching how quickly children can give up anger and moods helps us loosen our grip on our own hurts and worries.

The average child is probably "given" about 1,800 baths by the time he is six. If each time we gave a bath we thought about the wonder of washability, how strongly the reality of renewal would grow in us! Giving children baths has no sacramental status in any religion I know of, but it can be a powerful opportunity for awareness. We need to work each day on our sense that transformation is possible.

Children teach us about forgiveness, first by being forgiving themselves. Gail, like most parents, cannot believe how quickly her child can move from insults to hugs. One night when Gail served dinner later than usual, her six-year-old was out of sorts and whiny. He complained about everything and broke all the rules of proper table behavior. Finally, Gail sent him in tears to his room. He slammed the door yelling, "I hate you all." After dinner, she went up and found him sprawled across his bed, fast asleep. Gail tossed and turned all night, guiltily replaying the scene in her mind. But the next morning, there was her son at her bedside, smiling happily and wondering, "Do you want to hear a neat riddle?" It wasn't that he had forgotten the incident; it is just that for him, it was completed.

Children are also forgiving of others. Samantha told me about a conversation she had with her four-year-old, Amanda. Every day as they drove out of their neighborhood, they passed a grumpy-looking older man sitting on his stoop. Amanda would wave cheerily from the window; the man would not respond. Amanda kept asking her mother, "Why won't that man wave to me?" Samantha responded that she really did not know. But Amanda persisted. "Why?" Samantha expected Amanda to get angry with the man, but instead, Amanda came to her own resolution of the problem. "It isn't his fault," she decided. "He must be handicapped in his heart."

Children teach us a matter-of-fact acceptance of the world as it is. Reba's husband was dying of cancer and had moved from their home to a

hospice. Several weeks later, Reba took their one-and-a-half-year-old son Sidney to visit his father. She was worried: Would her husband be able to respond the way Sidney hoped? Would Sidney be frightened by his father's appearance? Although there was hardly a question of "fault" here, Reba was afraid Sidney might be angry at his father, if he recognized him at all.

But her fears proved unfounded. The minute Sidney saw his dad in a wheelchair at the end of the hall, he shouted out joyously, "Daddy! Daddy!" Sidney's love for his father could see right past the physical changes. Sidney saw the essence, not the externals, and his love was unconditional.

We also learn about forgiveness when we find ourselves forgiving our children. Brenda recalls a particular incident of "murderous rage" toward her son, Dan. "We were hiking, and seven-year-old Dan ran out ahead of the group on the trail," recalls Brenda. "He came to a long, slippery log stretched across a creek three feet below, and as we came around the bend, there he was rather nonchalantly walking across this mossy log. I was just furious. How could he be so stupid? He could break his neck! I wanted to throttle him. Instead I began to scream.

"Of course, within seconds, I realized that was the worst thing I could possibly do. My screaming might frighten him and cause him to fall. I needed to call upon every ounce of strength and patience within me to handle this in a way that would keep Dan safe. Suddenly it hit me: I was so angry only because I loved him so much. I wanted to kill the kid because I was afraid he might die. The whole incident turned around. I looked at Dan again. This time, instead of seeing a cocky, impudent brat, I saw this terrific kid full of his power, taking on the world with joy. The son who swaggered fearlessly onto that log making me so furious also made me so proud.

"Once Dan was safe again, I held him tight and cried. I told him how much I loved him. He was growing into a courageous young man. It was my job to teach him to combine his courage with caution. I told him I had been extremely angry but that I was not angry anymore. I had found the recipe to heal future blowups: if in the heat of anger I could call up my love for this child, the love that fueled my caring enough to be this angry, then I could respond appropriately and, more important, move on."

Some parents also experience forgiveness flowing in the other direction—toward their own parents. Parenthood gives them new humility, new compassion, a new ability to understand and forgive other parents in general

and their own parents in particular. Marvin observed, "I was pretty judgmental before I had kids. It was easy then to see what parents were doing wrong. But now that I know how hard it is to make the right decisions, how tired you are, I am much more generous in my evaluations of others."

Vicki told me how her mother never had time for her when she was growing up. "When I left home, I was still very angry at my mother. There was just so much that I felt I never got from her. Even later, when I understood all the valid reasons why my mother had so little to give at that point in her life, I could not let go of my hurt." Vicki's heart finally softened toward her mother when Vicki had a child. "At that point my mother was in a position to give energy and caring to my baby." The first time Vicki returned from leaving her baby with her mom, she saw them playing together through the window. She began to cry. When she stopped crying, she realized that something dramatic had shifted within her.

Joanie forgave her mother when she found herself in the identical situation her mother was in—and acted differently. "My grandmother was an Orthodox Jew, an immigrant to this country. When my mother menstruated for the first time, she ran to her mother to tell her the news. My grandmother said not a word but simply slapped my mother across the face. Apparently, this is an old Jewish custom. My mother was hurt, not physically but emotionally. So when I came to her with the news of my first period, although she was tempted to slap me, she did not lift a hand. Instead, she told me the story of how her mother had hit her. Unfortunately, the story had almost as much effect as being hit. I still spent my adolescence wondering about the slap I did *not* get. I resented my mother for telling me the story at all.

"The moment of truth came when my daughter got her period for the first time. I felt not the slightest urge to hit her, but I did feel the words of the story rising in my mouth. I came within an inch of telling her the story my mother told me. I swallowed hard. I realized that not only would I not slap my daughter but through an act of will—much like my mother's in not slapping me—I would not even tell her the story. Now that I knew how easy it would have been for me to do what my mother did, I was impressed with my mother's courage in breaking free from *her* past. She had made it possible for me to take the next step. Further, now that I knew that I did not have to do what my mother did, I was suddenly full of love and gratitude to her for beginning a process which I continued."

Sometimes we can forgive our parents and our children simultaneously. Stella remembered the moment her heart softened twice: a double forgiveness. She was in her parents' house with her brother. Although Stella and her brother were both parents themselves, they still could go at it on occasion. At this particular moment, she was furious with him. She was just about to unleash a torrent of sarcasm when she noticed her mother watching from the kitchen table. The look of sheer pain in her mother's face was strikingly familiar. It was Stella's pain, the pain she felt every day as she watched and listened to her own son and daughter fight. It was so awful to see two people she loved so much hurt each other. At that moment it hit her: that was exactly how her mother must be feeling!

She clammed up, stopping the fight before it got under way. She wanted to put her arm around her mother and say, "Don't take it so hard. We really love each other. It's just that siblings are safe targets. They are so ready at hand, so available, it is easy to try out different emotions, to let go of some of the constraints we have with people who are more distant."

At that moment, she felt warm and loving toward her long-suffering mother whose pain she now knew. She could even forgive the intolerant way her mother had handled those fights when she and her brother were small. She understood her mother's rage.

She also felt a flood of love and forgiveness toward her children. Everything she had wanted to say in her own defense was true, and she could see that her children were, indeed, doing the best they could. Having forgiven both her mother and her children, Stella felt great. She realized that forgiveness is not something you do for the people you are mad at; it is a gift to yourself. It frees you from carrying around the hurt any longer, from being the victim. A person who can forgive easily finds life less painful. Parents try to teach their children how to be forgiving people not only because it is a "virtue" but because parents want their children to enjoy their lives.

I find it possible to forgive my children (once the angry moment has passed) and have been able to forgive my own parents. But what I find most difficult as a parent is forgiving *myself*. While I have made many mistakes in my life—at work, in relationships, in taking care of myself—the mistakes that hurt the most are those I have made with my children. I feel that I have betrayed a trust. Parenthood has evoked for me, more than anything else in my life, a sense of needing forgiveness.

In fact, guilt was my problem in the only interview I could not complete. Rhonda was married for twenty years before she had her child. She was a teacher, and a good one. For the first decade of her marriage, she did not want children. Then she had trouble conceiving. Finally, at the age of forty she gave birth to her one and only child, a healthy girl named Claire. Rhonda had done a huge amount of reading during her pregnancy and had made certain basic decisions about how she wanted to raise Claire. First, Claire would nurse as long as she wanted, when she wanted, till whatever age she wanted. Second, at night, Claire would sleep with her mother and nurse at will. Third, Rhonda would leave Claire as infrequently as possible until she was four. When Claire was old enough to understand separation without anxiety, Rhonda would consider possible group activities for her. Of course, Rhonda was investigating home schooling.

When I met Rhonda, Claire was two and a half. Mother and daughter had rarely been apart. The nursing was still going strong. As I sat and tried to conduct the interview professionally, I found it increasingly difficult to ask appropriate questions or to type the answers.

Instead, my mind filled with memories. There was the first time Seth and I left our child and went to the movies alone. I fled in the middle after a scene in which someone milked a cow. All through the scene I was sure I heard cries (fifteen city blocks away) and that they were for me. There were the nights I lay in bed listening to my daughter crying in the next room in her crib while I read and reread *Helping Your Child Sleep Through the Night*. The author, Dr. Ferber, said the baby would only cry for a few nights, at the most two weeks. Mine cried for three. Every farewell, every tear came flooding back and literally overwhelmed me with guilt. An inner dialogue began.

MY RATIONAL SELF: *You could never have slept in a family bed or stayed home all day when your girls were small.*

MY EMOTIONAL SELF: *But maybe I should have.*

MY RATIONAL SELF: *Look. Parents have different styles. What this woman does is extreme. Why can't you just listen to this story without feeling personally threatened? She's not telling you her way is the only way. Every mother who makes choices about work and children is constantly looking over her shoulder at the road not taken. It's a sickness. In our culture right now, it's an epidemic!*

I realized that this internal dialogue was taking so much energy that I could not focus on the interview. Nor could I ring a buzzer to end the debate in my head. So I ended the interview.

I now know I am not alone in feeling guilt as a parent. When I was showing drafts of this chapter to some friends, I learned how prone to remorse parents—particularly mothers—can be. Although this chapter is about forgiveness, it seemed to have the paradoxical effect of inducing guilt. On reading it, several mothers reported the same reaction: they felt guilty that they did not give their children more baths! On a deeper level, some friends with grown children shared with me a sense of regret evoked by this book. Said one, “I felt sorry that I hadn’t done more when my children were younger to encourage their spiritual lives.” Guilt seems so pervasive a part of parenting, it is no wonder that this chapter is among the longest in the book.

What helps parents with guilt? Friends, especially older ones, can provide saving perspective. Isabel told me about a visit from an older friend that changed her life as a mother. One day, Isabel had just put her baby in his upstairs crib and had sat down in the kitchen for a much-needed cup of tea and a chat with her friend. At the first squeak from the Fisher-Price intercom, Isabel, as usual, leaped to her feet. Her friend leaned over and turned off the machine. “What are you doing?” Isabel cried. “I read a study that *proved* that children during the first nine months should be responded to promptly. They actually cry less that way.”

“I read that study too,” her friend said calmly. “But you need this cup of tea. You had better balance your needs with the studies, or you will be dead before this kid enters nursery school.”

Sometimes, it is precisely in dealing with our children that we learn to forgive ourselves. Marianne told me this story about a giant meltdown of anger: “My seven-year-old was always losing things. One day we were on our way out the door to school, and I asked her where her mittens were. I had already bought her three pairs that winter. She wasn’t sure, although she *thought* she might know where *one* was. I completely lost it! How could she have lost *another* pair of mittens? I started to make caustic jokes—I’ll have to take out a second mortgage to keep you in mittens—but what I really was saying in a thinly veiled way was ‘You are an incompetent, disorganized slob, and I can’t stand you.’”

“Of course, she heard my real message loud and clear—you are no good. She was crying and crying. And I had to stop myself and think, What

is going on here? Do I really believe a seven-year-old is a bad person because she can't keep track of her mittens? Of course not. So why am I saying that? Because that's what my mother said to me. That's the tape that is playing in my brain. And I believed it. Even now when I lose my gloves (several times already this winter, come to think of it!), I really *do* think I am a bad person. But I'm not bad—no more than my daughter is. It is just a bad tape.

"I was so thrilled by the realization that I wasn't the awful person I had always thought I was that I began to smile happily," remembers Marianne. "My daughter, still crying and feeling horrible about herself, looked at me, glowing like a fool, and stopped crying to stare in amazement. Why did Mommy look so joyous if she had this horrible child? I explained to her that I had just realized that I was a much better person than I had thought all these years and that she was a pretty wonderful person for helping me to realize it. She seemed satisfied, and went happily off to school with two mismatched mittens."

I thought this story was powerful because it was about the kind of healing revelation that sometimes comes when we temporarily lose control. At moments like this (and children provoke so many), the insight seems to come from a source beyond our busy brains. At the risk of giving the illy, I couldn't resist adding a bit of crafted insight to her gut experience. "There is a postscript to your story, don't you see?"

Marianne looked at me blankly. I asked her, "What do you think *your* mother was doing when she excoriated you in those damaging ways so many years ago?"

Marianne smiled. "I guess she was doing what her mother did to her. Just playing her mother's tape. Now that you mention it, when her mother was a little girl, losing her mittens probably *was* a catastrophe. I remember my grandmother telling me how she was so poor as a child that when the cat ate a dollar bill, the family went into serious mourning for a week.

"I guess," she concluded, "when my mother was a little girl they may not have had TV yet, but they sure had mental tape recorders." So the story turned out to be about forgiving her mother as well. Once you pull on one strand of the web of hurt, the whole thing begins to unravel.

Sometimes, however, parents feel deep and long-lasting remorse for real suffering they cause their children. Jed came to me seeking rabbinical counseling. He had recently been through a harsh and acrimonious di-

vorce. "I really should have had more therapy *before* I had children," he confessed. "I definitely did not learn everything I needed to know in kindergarten! One of the most shameful memories of my life is the night I left my marriage for good. I was really out of control, screaming and yelling at my wife, saying things I wish now I had never said. Just as I was about to slam the front door, I looked back to see my twelve-year-old daughter standing at the top of the stairs. I didn't know how long she had been standing there, but the look on her face told me she had heard plenty.

"I have gotten my own life in order now, and my daughter is doing well too. But I cannot stop thinking about her face that night—the pain, the disappointment, the real sense of betrayal. I have not been able to forgive myself, and I am afraid I never will."

It was clear to me that Jed had done everything humanly possible to repent. He had spent many difficult hours repairing his relationship with his ex-wife and his daughter. If confronted with the same situation again, he would handle it better. He had asked for and received the forgiveness of the people involved. Now he needed to forgive himself. I believe that the moment of true remorse, of true desire to repent, is one of the deepest moments of our lives, one when we are most fully authentic. I told him he was touching the most fearless, the most genuine place in himself as he longed for forgiveness.

I also told him that I believe forgiveness, beyond all the interpersonal work we must accomplish, is ultimately a miracle, an act of grace for which we can only pray. When parents need forgiveness, they often turn to resources outside themselves. Catholicism has an ongoing discipline of confession. I encouraged Jed to use the upcoming days of repentance, culminating in Yom Kippur, as a time to seek "atonement."

Each year, as summer turns to fall, we rabbis tell our congregations that they too can turn a corner in their lives and let the past go. When I first began rabbinical work, this seemed to me to be asking a lot of people. I knew I was asking a lot of myself. It is tough facing what is deepest and truest inside ourselves and admitting we haven't always or even usually acted from that place, admitting our reckless treachery to our best selves, our fierce loyalty to our worst impulses. Every year as I reviewed my own misdeeds, I wished not only that I hadn't done them but that I were, in essence, the sort of person to whom it would never *occur* to do them. But I was not.

It was enough to make me suspect that the pagans were right, that life is all about endlessly recurring cycles and that Judaism merely taunts us when it teaches about a line that one can reverse and then follow through to a new and better self and world. To believe that it is really possible to change, to leave the old muck behind forever, was an enormous stretch for me.

Many people come to synagogue only on Yom Kippur. This seems to me like missing all of elementary school, then dropping in on a graduate seminar. Most of the year in synagogue we practice the ABCs: thankfulness, hope, moral duty. But this is the hard stuff: turning around, letting go of hurt inflicted and hurt sustained; having the courage to face once again the same list of sins in the prayer book, knowing that we did it last year—worse still, knowing we'll have to repeat the process next year—and still be able to pray, to try to turn. Yet this is the day that synagogues have standing room only.

Parenting may make it easier for us to understand this process.

Several years ago, just before the Day of Atonement arrived, I read in the newspaper about a sixties radical activist who had just surrendered to the police. She was wanted by the FBI for her part in the murder of a policeman, and she had lived underground for twenty-three years. Her parents—who hadn't seen or heard from her since the day they watched her on the evening news escaping from the shooting—were asked by reporters how they felt about their reunion with their child. They said simply, "We're her parents." What more was there to say?

The issue was not blame or forgiveness. What mattered most was the reunion itself, the connection, the homecoming. That's what would matter to me if my child were far away and in trouble. And that, I believe, is what matters to God.

When I saw that article, I knew why we chant a hymn entitled "Our Father, Our King" in preparation for the Day of Atonement. It is a prayer in which we call on God as our parent (in our synagogue we sing "Our Mother, Our Queen" as well). The ritual of confessing our sins presumes the unconditional, unqualified, nonnegotiable love of a mother or father for a child. And I also knew why, since becoming a parent, Yom Kippur had made more and more sense to me. Because of my children, I knew what it meant to love unconditionally, and I could finally experience that love for myself as well. Ultimately, I agree with my friends who say that

God is the love with which we forgive. We know this love to be real through our love for our children and their love for us. Although I have not experienced it, I expect that a similar process goes on for Catholics in the confession of sins. Perhaps this is part of the reason priests are called "Father."

The palmists surely believed we could be forgiven. One spoke about it in the language of the bath:

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin. . . .
Create me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Ps. 51)*

Experiencing the washability of skin and of spirit is perhaps one of the aspects of life that most affirms our sense that our time here has meaning. In the difficult dynamics of family life, we learn that we can "become new." When we know forgiveness in a family, we know that the universe is at least hospitable to our search for healing.

In the Christian tradition, forgiveness is central. "How many times should you forgive?" the disciples asked Jesus. And he responded, "Seventy times seven." Parents might want to double that number, for there is so much forgiveness waiting to happen. Our children may need to forgive us; we may need to forgive them; forgive our parents, forgive ourselves. And yet it is the ongoing grace of family life that it can happen.

At this point, you might assume that my children love to take baths. After all, baths are such a rich spiritual metaphor. But that's the tricky part about kids. The metaphor may be great, your ideas may inspire others, but do your kids care? Just as I was completing this chapter, my seven-year-old decided that she *hated* taking baths. And so the bath became a mighty (OK, a weekly) struggle. That is one of the great challenges and strengths of writing theology based on parenting. It keeps me humble. I can't take any of my ideas too seriously. My children won't let me.

HASHKIVEINU, Adonai Eloheinu,
 l'shalom, v'haamideinu shomreinu l'chayim,
 ufros aleinu sukot sh'lomecha,
 v'takneinu b'eitzah tovah milfanecha,
 v'hoshi-einu l'maan sh'mecha.
 V'hagein baadeinu,
 v'haseir mei-aleinu oyeiv, dever,
 v'cherev, v'raav, v'yagon,
 v'harcheik mimenu avon vafesha.
 Uv'tzeil k'nafecha tastireinu,
 ki El shomreinu umatzileinu atah,
 ki El chanun v'rachum atah.
 Ushmor tzeiteinu uvo-einu
 l'chayim ul'shalom,
 mei-atah v'ad olam.
 Baruch atah, Adonai,
 haporeis sukot shalom aleinu
 v'al kol amo Yisrael v'al Yerushalayim.

הַשְּׂכִיבֵנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
 לְשָׁלוֹם, וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ שׁוֹמְרֵינוּ לְחַיִּים,
 וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סִבְתַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ,
 וְתַקְנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ,
 וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ.
 וְהִגּוּ בְּעַדְנוּ,
 וְהִסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב, דֶּבֶר,
 וְחָרֶב, וְרָעַב, וְיָגוֹן,
 וְהִרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ עוֹן וּפֶשַׁע.
 וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתֶּינָנוּ,
 כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אַתָּה,
 כִּי אֵל חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה.
 וּשְׁמֹר צִיּוֹנֵנוּ וּבֹאֵינוּ
 לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם
 מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,
 הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִבְתַּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
 וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.

בָּרְכוּ
 מַעֲרִיב עֲרָבִים
 אֲחֻבַת עוֹלָם
 שְׁמַע
 וְאֲחֻבַת
 לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ
 אֲמִית וְאֲמִינָה
 מִיִּבְמַחַח
 הַשְּׂכִיבֵנוּ
 וְשְׁמֹר

GRANT, O GOD, that we lie down in peace,
 and raise us up, our Guardian, to life renewed.
 Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.
 Guide us with Your good counsel; for Your Name's sake, be our help.
 Shield and shelter us beneath the shadow of Your wings.
 Defend us against enemies, illness, war, famine and sorrow.
 Distance us from wrongdoing.
 For You, God, watch over us and deliver us. For You, God, are gracious and merciful.
 Guard our going and coming, to life and to peace, evermore.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Guardian of Israel, whose shelter of peace is spread over us,
 over all Your people Israel, and over Jerusalem.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִבְתַּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
 וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.

Baruch atah, Adonai, haporeis sukot shalom aleinu
 v'al kol amo Yisrael v'al Yerushalayim.

Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace . . . Following a reading from *Seder Rav Amram*, our first known comprehensive prayerbook, circa 860 C.E.

Bar'chu

Maariv Aravim

Ahavat Olam

Shina

V'ahava

Umaan tzk'ru

Emet Ve-Emunah

Mi Chamochah

Haahkiveinu

V'hanru

LET THERE BE love and understanding among us.
Let peace and friendship be our shelter from life's storms.
Adonai, help us to walk with good companions,
to live with hope in our hearts and eternity in our thoughts,
that we may lie down in peace and rise up waiting to do Your will.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.

Baruch atah, Adonai, haporeis sukat shalom aleinu
v'al kol amo Yisrael v'al Yerushalayim.

GIVE US A PLACE TO REST, Adonai, our God.
Bring us into shelter
in the soft, long, evening shadows of Your truth.
For with You are true protection and safety,
and in Your Presence are acceptance and gentle love.
Watch over us as we go forth.
Prepare for us as we return.
Spread over us Your shelter of peace,
over all we love — over our Jerusalem and Yours.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם.

Baruch atah, Adonai, haporeis sukat shalom aleinu
v'al kol amo Yisrael v'al Yerushalayim.

Lesson Four: Bedtime rituals

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the Jewish bedtime rituals.
- Students will be able to compare Jewish bedtime rituals with their current bedtime routines.
- Students will be able to synthesize traditional Jewish rituals.

Set Induction: Current Bedtime Rituals

The teacher asks the students what they normally do now at bedtime with their child(ren). The teacher invites each of the students to share how they get their child(ren) ready for bed and the order in which they do it.

The teacher takes notes as the students are talking and highlights the commonalities in the bedtime rituals.

Activity One: Exploration of Jewish Bedtime Rituals

The teacher asks if there is anything Jewish about the current bedtime rituals the students do with their child. The teacher asks the students if they know what traditional Jewish prayers are said at bedtime.

The teacher explains Jews traditionally recite the Shema at bedtime. The Shema is the central prayer of Jewish tradition because it states the God of Israel is one. This is an important distinction during periods in Jewish history when Jews were surrounded by polytheistic faiths. Saying the Shema as bedtime is an opportunity to connect with Jewish tradition and God just entering into the vulnerable state of sleep.

Saying the bedtime Shema can be an opportunity for a family to reflect on the day that is ending and to think about the next morning. This is a way to make bedtime into a Jewish moment.

The teacher will pass out packages with Jewish bedtime rituals using for the students to examine. Students spend a few minutes reading the materials on their own. The teacher brings the group back together to discuss their reactions to the various bedtime rituals options. Materials for the bedtime rituals are in the resource section of this lesson.

The teacher invites the students to try doing pieces of these rituals for a week and see how it feels. The students will have an opportunity to share their experiences with the class at the next session.

Activity Two: *Hashkeinu*

The teacher introduces the *Hashkeinu* prayer which is another prayer traditionally recited at bedtime. This is prayer asks for God's protection and shelter during the night. In a time without electricity night was very scary. At night, especially just prior to sleep is a time when people felt vulnerable. Jews asked to be protected and looked after during this dangerous time. The teacher hands out copies the Mishkah T'filah pages for the students to look at as they discuss the prayer. Copies of this prayer in Hebrew, English and Transliteration are in the resources section of this lesson.

Literal Translation of the *Hashkeinu* Prayer

Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace,
 And raise us up, our Guardian, to life renewed.
 Spread over us the shelter of your peace.
 Guide us with your good counsel;
 For Your Nake's sake, be our help.
 Shield and shelter us beneath the shadow of Your wings.
 Defend us against enemies, illness, war, famine and sorrow
 Distance us from wrong doing.
 For You, God, watch over us and deliver us.
 For You, God, are gracious and merciful.
 Guard our going and coming, to life and peace evermore.
 Blessed are You, Adonai, Guardian of Israel.²⁷

Sample Discussion Questions:

- How would you restate the main themes of this prayer?
- What did the authors of this prayer seek from God at night?
- What are you afraid of at night?
- Where do you look for comfort from your night fears?
- In what ways do you try to protect or spread a shelter of peace over your child at night?

²⁷ Mishkan T'filah URJ Press, New York, 2007, pages 18-19,

- What does it feel like for you to be taking on this protective role for your child?

Activity Three: Writing personal versions of the *Hashkivenu*

The teacher will give the students an opportunity to write their own versions of the *Hashkivenu*. This can be a personal prayer for their child(ren) based on the traditional prayers. The teacher will also have resources available for the students to look at if they would like more information about the prayer. The students will be invited but not required to share their prayers with the class. This is an opportunity for the students to take a moment to reflect on what they would like to ask God for as their child sleeps and to think about the ways they can spread a shelter of peace over their child(ren).

Students can choose to add the Hashkeinu to their bedtime ritual.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompts:

- At night I fear...
- I wish I could keep my child safe from...
- As a parent, night time/bed time is a time for...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompts:

- When I see you sleeping I think...
- While you sleep my prayer for you is...
- I try to protect you at night by...

Resources: (to be handed out to the students)

Pages from Mishkan T'filah

Information from Ritualwell.org

Brochure from URJ is online at urj.org

For further reading about the *Hashkeinu* prayer read:

Lawrence Hoffman's "My People's Prayer book"

Bedtime Ritual Options

By Rabbi Rona Shapiro²⁸

Even families who are not at all religiously inclined will often have a bedtime ritual. Here are a few ideas for a Jewish version:

- Once pajamas are on, teeth brushed, clothes for the next day laid out and stories read, we say *Sh'ma* (the first two lines and the *v'ahavta* paragraph) outloud to our children. Some families also add the traditional prayer invoking the presence of the angels surrounding the sleeping child and *Shechinat El*, God's holy presence, at the head of the bed. Debbie Friedman has a melody to this prayer which can be found in this section as *Lullaby/The Angels' Blessing*.
- After saying the *Sh'ma*, we tell each of our children, "*Ema* and *Abba* and your other siblings (by name) love _____ so much." My husband concludes by asking each child to appreciate something about him or herself and he then appreciates something about them.
- Many parents add a lullaby in Hebrew, Yiddish, or Ladino. A few possibilities: *Lailah, Lailah; Duerme, Duerme; Rozinkes Mit Mandlen* ("Raisins and Almonds"); *Numi, Numi; Oif'N Pripitchik*. There are several music collections of Jewish lullabies: *Jewish Lullabies* and *Lullabies and Love Songs* by Tanja Solnik are both excellent.
- One family, described in Yosef Abramowitz and Susan Silverman's excellent book, *Jewish Family and Life*, describes the following bathtime/bedtime ritual. After getting out of the bath, drying off and putting on pajamas, the parents bless their children: "Thank You, God, for a clean, fresh body and this time to rest." This blessing helps focus the children on transitioning from the day to the night.
- Meg Cox in her wonderful book, *The Heart of a Family*, describes a bedtime ritual created by Lucinda Herring called, "Grateful and Grumbles": "The idea was to tell the grumbles first so we could shed them before going to sleep. We would end with what we were thankful for in our day, so we could take the grateful with us to sleep. If the grumble was something too big to really let go of, then we asked to receive guidance help with the problem while we slept" (215). Whatever form this ritual takes in your house, it is clear that bedtime is a unique time for talking – children often open up and say things that are rarely said by the light of the day.
- I have always enjoyed staying with my children until they fall asleep and escorting them, as it were, from the world of waking to the world of dreams. This can definitely be time-consuming

²⁸ Ritualwell.org

and is frowned upon in many child-rearing books, but I believe it gives my children a sense of security – they know that we will parent them through the night, as we have through the day.²⁹

²⁹ Ritualwell.org

Lullaby/The Angels' Blessing as Part of a Bedtime Ritual

By Debbie Friedman

Lullaby

Lyrics by Debbie Friedman

Music by Debbie Friedman

Before you close your eyes
And lay your head down on your pillow
I know that God will keep you safe throughout the night
It seems the light has gone to sleep as you will
Now darkness has a turn to be
And you'll be safe throughout the night

So many things to think about
Before you go to sleep
You did so many things today
And you'll do so many more tomorrow
So many things to feel about
Before you go to sleep
God will take care of the ones you love
And keep you safe throughout the night

Shechinah come to you
And stay with you until the morning comes
The angels all around you
Will keep you safe throughout the night
So now just close your eyes
And lay your head down on your pillow
I know that God
Will keep you safe throughout the night.³⁰

³⁰ Ritualwell.org

The Angels' Blessing as part of a Bedtime Ritual

Lyrics by Deborah Lynn Friedman, based on the text of prayers said before retiring to rest at night

Music by Deborah Lynn Friedman

*M'y'mini M'kha'el, u-mismoli Gavri'el
U-m'l'fanai Uri'el, u-mei'achorai R'fa'el
V'al roshi Sh'khinah. (4x)*

May our right hand bring us closer to our Godliness.
May our left hand give us strength to face each day.
And before us may our visions light our paths ahead.
And behind us may well-being heal our way.

All around us is *Shechinah* (4x).

May Michael be at my right hand, Gabriel at my left,
Before me Uriel, behind me Raphael,
And above my head the Divine Presence.³¹

³¹ Ritualwell.org

Nighttime Prayer: A child's evening prayer as part of a Bedtime Ritual

Music and English lyrics by Juliet I. Spitzer from a translation by Judy and John Spitzer

For Mom and Pop, who showed us the solace of nighttime prayer

En Istenem

Jo Istenem

Lecsukodik mar a szemem

De a Tied mindig nyitva

Vigyazz a kis...

Mire a nap ujra felkel

Csokolhassuk egymast reggel

My God

My good God

My eyes are closing, but Yours are always open

Watch over all of my beloveds.

When the sun rises again

When the sun rises again

May we kiss each other

May we bless each other

When the sun rises again.³²

³² Ritualwell.org

Lesson Five: Prayer for healing

Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare different versions of the prayer for healing.
- Students will be able to contrast their experiences of praying for healing with Debbie Freedman's and Rick Recht's interpretation of the prayer.

Set Induction: Singing of Debbie Freedman's *Mi shebeirach*

For this set induction, the teacher might need to ask a musical person to come to the class for a few minutes if the teacher does not feel comfortable or want to lead the class in singing this prayer. The teacher has copies of the words of the prayer to hand out to students as they sing.

After the singing the *Mi shebeirach* the teacher asks the class a few questions about it.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Have you heard this prayer before? If so, when?
- What feelings or ideas do you think Debbie Freedman's interpretation of this prayer is trying to convey?

The musical person will sing Rick Recht's version of the *Mi shebeirach* as a comparison. The teacher will have the lyrics of this song to hand out to the students. The teacher will ask the students to compare the two versions of the prayer.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- In what ways are these versions of the prayer similar?
- In what ways are they different?
- Which one of these versions did you connect with more easily?

The teacher explains that within the Jewish tradition, there are prayers for healing. These prayers can be said by anyone, it does not have to be a rabbi or member of the clergy. These prayers can be said for a person at any age or with any ailment. It is not a prayer for a cure, but for healing. Saying this prayer can be a way for the community to help a person who is ill and to show support for his/her family.

The first recorded prayer for healing was in the Bible when Moses prayed for healing for his sister Miriam. Moses spoke from the heart and asked God to heal her. Moses said, El Na Refa Na La” God please heal her please (Numbers 12:13)

Activity One: Caring for a sick baby

The teacher explains this class will focus on prayers for healing. The teacher asks the students if they have ever dealt with an ill child (this session is aimed for children with minor illness, if any major issues seem to come up for the students, the teacher should contact the clergy members of the congregation). The teacher allows the students some time to discuss their experiences. If the students have not dealt with illnesses of their own children, they discuss experiences of their friends or people in their community.

Sample discussion questions:

- Has your child been ill? If so, what did it feel like for you to care for your sick child?
- When your child was ill, how did you try to comfort him/her?
- What was the hardest part for you about having a sick baby?
- What was God’s or your higher power’s role for you as you dealt with your sick baby’s illness and recovery?

Activity Two: Different versions of the prayer for healing

Dealing with an illness is always difficult and can be especially painful if it is a child who is ill. The Jewish liturgy, the collection of blessing and prayers, provides opportunities for people to offer prayers on behalf of those who are ill. One, the eighth blessing in the *Amidah*, is part of the daily worship service, is recited by some three times each day, and may or may not be said with a specific individual in mind. The other, *Mi Shebeirach*, is said during the service for the reading of the Torah, and said specifically for individuals who are in need of healing. While both of these prayers ask God for healing, the language, placement in the worship service, and usage are different.³³

Sample Discussion Questions:

- What words or phrases do the prayers have in common?
- What differences in language do you notice? What meaning do you give to those differences?

³³ Adapted from Greg Weisman’s curriculum guide 2011

- What does saying this prayer on a regular basis tell you about the prayer or the need to pray for healing?
- What does it mean that this prayer is said once for the entire community, aloud, and in the presence of the Torah?³⁴

Activity Three: Free write about the *Mi she breichah*

The teacher explains s/he hopes the students child(ren) do not get ill or are not in need of healing. However the teacher wants the students to know about the prayers for healing within the Jewish tradition if and when they are needed.

The teacher gives the students an opportunity to free write about the concepts of prayer, healing, illness, the worry parents feel when their child is unwell, or any of the other topics discussed in the class.

Before the end of the class, the teacher should check in with the students to see if any of them were upset by the topics discussed and to help connect them with additional support as needed.

Activity Four: Assessment

Journal Prompt:

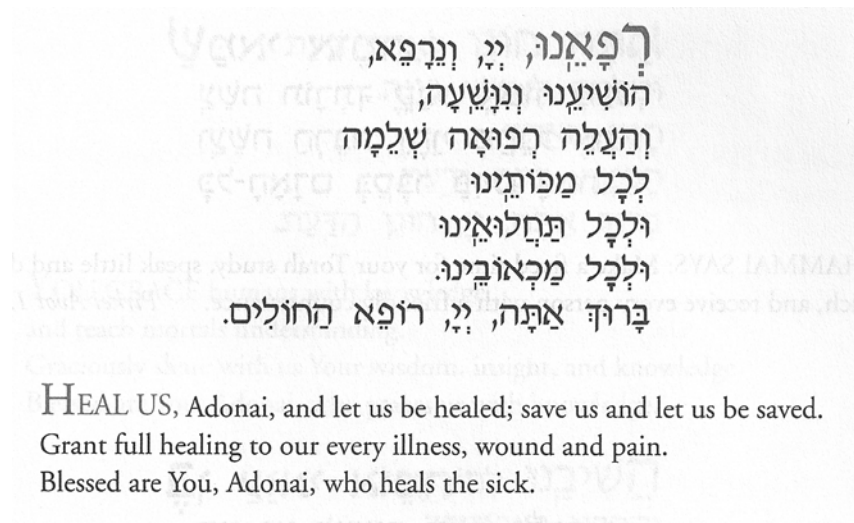
- One of my biggest worries as a parent is...
- I would consider asking God for healing if...
- Healing means to me...

Resources:

Pages from Mishkan T'filah

Song Lyrics

³⁴ Adapted from Greg Weisman's curriculum guide 2011

The prayer for healing from the weekday *Amidah*:*Mi Shebeirach*, read during the Torah service:

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
 אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה, רֵבֶקָה,
 רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרַךְ אֶת הַחֹלִים
 [names]. הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִמְלֵא
 רַחֲמִים עֲלֵיהֶם, לְהַחֲלִימָם וְלִרְפְּאָתָם
 וְלְהַחֲזִיקָם, וְיִשְׁלַח לָהֶם מְהֵרָה
 רְפוּאָה, רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
 רְפוּאָת הַנְּפֹשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף, הַשְׂתָּא
 בְּעִגְלָא וּבְזַמְנו קָרִיב. וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.

MAY THE ONE who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are ill [names]. May the Blessed Holy One be filled with compassion for their health to be restored and their strength to be revived. May God swiftly send them a complete renewal of body and spirit, and let us say, Amen.

35

³⁵ Greg Weisman Curriculum Guide 2011

“Mi Shebeirach” by Debbie Friedman

Mi shebeirach avoteinu
 M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu
 May the source of strength,
 Who blessed the ones before us,
 Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,
 and let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu
 M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu
 Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah,
 The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,
 And let us say, Amen

“El Na R'fa Na La” by Rick Recht

El na r'fa na la
 r'fua shlema
 El na r'fa na la
 please heal this soul

mi sheberach
 Avraham v' Sara
 Yitzchak v' Rivkah
 Ya'akov Rachel v' Leah

with faith and love
 together we bring
 hope and healing to
 those in need

without judgement
 without explanation
 for we are all G-d's
 creation³⁶

³⁶ Greg Weisman's curriculum guide 2011

Lesson Six: Reflection and Preparing the Ritual

Objectives:

- Students will be able to synthesize the ideas discussed throughout this unit.
- Students will be able to reflect on what they have learned in the previous lessons.
- Students will be able to apply themes from this unit into the developing spiritual birthday celebrations.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set induction

The teacher will review the ideas from the previous lessons in this unit with the students. The teacher will list these topics of the lesson and remind the students about the main ideas of this unit. If any of the students were absent, it is also an opportunity to fill the student in and the material s/he missed. The teacher will have copies of the lessons to hand out to students who missed classes.

- Lesson One: Story time
- Lesson Two: End of the Day Activities
- Lesson Three: Bath time
- Lesson Four: Night time Rituals
- Lesson Five: Prayer for healing

Students will be invited to reflect any changes they have made to their routine based on the class in this unit. This could also be an opportunity for students to bring up issues or concerns they are experiencing as new parents and encourage the students to make suggestions to help each other.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- As we review the class topics, have any questions come up about these topics? If so, what are they?
- Has your experience of any of these issues changed after addressing it in class? If so, in what ways?
- Would you like any further information about any of these topics? If so, what type of information would be the most helpful?
- If the class is being taught at a synagogue, are there ways the synagogue can continue to support you and your exploration of these topics?

Activity Two: Review Journal and Spiritual Scrapbook

The teacher will give the students some time to review at their journal and spiritual scrapbooks. This is also an opportunity for students to finish their entries in either the journals or the spiritual scrapbooks. Students will be invited to continue to their personal reflections on these topics and to write about these topics if the altered their behaviors because of the class and how they felt about their new activities.

Activity Three: Preparing Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Students will have an opportunity to continue developing the spiritual birthday celebration for their child. Students can pick a few of the topics discussed in the unit decide which of them they would like to include in the spiritual birthday celebration. The teacher will hand out copies the afterward of the book Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones. This chapter includes specific steps and suggestions designed to help people develop their own personal rituals. Students can begin the process of creating their own spiritual birthday celebrations by reading this chapter.

Students can include something they have written or read in the class to be read aloud during the spiritual birthday celebration. This is an opportunity for the students to share their original work with their community. Students can include music or others readings in their rituals as they see fit.

This is a class session clergy could attend to be a resource and answer any questions the students have about creating rituals or the topics discussed in the unit. The clergy could bring additional books, articles, readings etc to give students ideas for their spiritual birthday celebrations. This could be a time for students to begin to develop relationships with the clergy at the institution in a meaningful way. This is also an opportunity for the students to connect with a musical person to help them add music to the spiritual birthday celebration.

The teacher could encourage the students to be creative as they plan their rituals. Ideally the students will design rituals that are meaningful to them and their community and reflect the amazing journey they are on as new parents.

Resources:

Copies of previous lessons, handouts, journal prompts and spiritual scrapbook prompts should be available for students to review.

Copies of the chapter from Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones,” “How to make a ritual” to be handed out to students.

If students would like sample rituals, material is available in Unit 4 Lesson 4. This includes everyday rituals and lifecycle rituals.

Journal Prompts

- My favorite book to read to my child is.... Because...
- Reading to my child can be a prayerful experience for when...
- I appreciate my support network because...
- It can be difficult to express my appreciation for my loved ones because...
- I have learned many new things about myself since becoming a parent, I appreciate myself when I...
- I will learn from my child to be more forgiving of myself...
- I will learn to be more forgiving of others by...
- At night I fear...
- I wish I could keep my child safe from...
- As a parent, night time/bed time is a time for...
- One of my biggest worries as a parent is...
- I would consider asking God for healing if...
- Healing means to me...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompts

- What I like best about reading to you is...
- Through reading to you every day I hope and pray that....
- I appreciate being your parent because...
- What I appreciate the most about you and our time together is...
- Bath time is a special time for our family because...
- Bath time can be an opportunity to cleanse ourselves from the day and to forgive the mistakes made. I learned about forgiveness from you when you or because you...
- When I see you sleeping I think...
- While you sleep my prayer for you is...
- I try to protect you at night by

Shechecheynu Moments

This unit focuses on times when the students might say the Shechecheynu prayer, thanking God for allowing us to reach that moment. This unit begins with a narrative from the Tanakh recording a woman's (Hannah) struggles to conceive a child. Hannah expresses her gratitude for reaching that moment by naming her child Samuel, meaning "for this child I have prayed." This unit includes a study of the obligation parents and children have to each others. The unit continues with an exploration of Shabbat. This unit highlights parents' blessing for their children at the Shabbat table and ways families can spend Shabbat together. The unit concludes with a lesson designed to help students develop rituals for Shechecheynu moments in a child's development.

Enduring Understandings

- Jewish tradition includes prayers to express thanks and appreciation for reaching specific moments in time.
- Shabbat is an opportunity for parents to articulate their hopes for their children and can be a special time for families to spend together.
- Rituals can be developed to acknowledge milestones, growth and change.

Knowledge

- Jewish tradition has specific obligations parents are supposed to fulfill for their children.
- Judaism includes specific blessings for parents to give their children at the Shabbat table.
- Shabbat is a time set aside for rest, rejuvenation and relaxation.
- Jewish tradition uses rituals to celebrate special occasions, milestones or accomplishments.

Skills

- Students will be able to analyze traditional obligations of parents to children and children to parents and to develop their own list of obligations.
- Students will be able to evaluate the traditional parents' blessing during the Shabbat meal and write their own blessings for their children.
- Students will be able to assess their Shabbat practices as a family.
- Students will be able to create their own rituals to mark their child's special moments.

Evidence of Learning

- Students will be given journal prompts to write about based on the topics of the lessons in this unit.
- Students will be given prompts for their spiritual scrapbook as the keepsake for themselves and their child based on the lessons in this unit.
- Students will have an opportunity to reflect and to designate practices from this unit for the spiritual birthday celebration.

**Lesson One:
For this child I have prayed**

Objectives:

- Students will be able to develop their own interpretation I Samuel 1:1-22
- Students will be able to compare obligations parents have to children and children's obligation to parents.
- Students will be able to contrast the Jewish textual parental obligations to children to their obligations to their children

Set Induction:

Activity One: Bibliodrama text study (15 minutes)

I Samuel 1:1-22

The teacher begins this lesson with an introduction to Bibliodrama. The teacher can use the following introduction to explain the midrashic method of biblical interpretation called Bibliodrama.

Today, we're going to study the birth of Samuel –an approach to Torah study which is both the oldest and the newest - - a midrashic approach. This approach looks at the gaps in the text -- the things the text doesn't tell us--such as gaps in the narrative, or actions that seem puzzling. The midrashic approach involves asking questions about a text, and then imagining different answers to them. There is a long tradition of these questions and answers, going back over 2,000 years and continuing until today.

There are many ways of doing Midrash. One way is simply to open the text, read it, and start asking questions. Those of you who saw the Genesis series on TV -- that's one example. Another way is to study traditional midrashim. We're going to get to these eventually, but we're going to start with a different kind of midrashic approach, called Bibliodrama first devised by Peter Pitzele

Bibliodrama takes its starting off point the fact that many of the Torah narratives are short and description and full of dialogue. We're going to read the dialogue as though it's a play, and ask ourselves questions about the characters' motivations.

The text in Bibliodrama format is in the resources section of this lesson.

We're going to study the Hannah prayer to conceive a child. Hannah is a barren woman who desperately wants to have a child. The chronicles her pain and suffering as a result of her barrenness.

We will be using the shortened verbatim translation of the Torah, just reformatted as a play The text divided into parts like a play will be included in the resources section of the lesson.

In order for this to work, we need a volunteer to be:

The narrator

Hannah

Elkanah

Eli, the priest

As we read the text or after finishing reading the teacher will ask questions about the text and the person responding to the question has to answer in the first person³⁷

Discussion questions are:

- Elkanah, what do you love about Hannah?
- Hannah, why do you long for a child so deeply?
- Eli, why do you think Hannah is drunk?

³⁷ Introduction to Bibliodrama by Dr. Isa Aron, Professor of Jewish Education at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

- Hannah, how do you feel when you found out you were pregnant?

(Answers:

I love Hannah because she is the love of my life. I married my other wife just so I could have children.

I want a child it is almost every woman's heart wrenching wish to be a mother.

Hannah is moving her lips, but not speaking, it is a natural assumption to think she is drunk. But I know I was wrong about her.

I am so deeply grateful and overjoyed to be pregnant and have a child of my own!)

After discussing the texts as the characters, the teacher will ask the students to switch and interpret the text as themselves and not as the characters.

Sample discussion questions:

- In what ways is Hannah's longing for a child something you can relate to either out of personal experience or from watching others?
- In your opinion, was the name Hannah choice for her son an appropriate way for Hannah to express her gratitude?

(Answers:

I have seen friends struggle with infertility and they are overjoyed if and when they get pregnant. It is similar to Hannah's experience.

I think the name is a beautiful way for Hannah to name her child.)

Activity One: (10 minutes)

The teacher transitions from the text study to the ideas of parents' obligations to their children. It is unclear why Hannah longed for a child so deeply and what this child meant to her after he was born. It is also unclear what Hannah's obligations toward this child were after Samuel's birth. The text tells the readers that Hannah visited Samuel every year and brought him a coat, but we do not know her motivation for doing this. She might have felt obligated to keep some ties with Samuel even if they were distant. She might have felt bringing Samuel coat was fulfill an obligation to protect her child and keep him warm and safe. Now we are going to study the tradition obligation a parents has towards a child.

Teacher begins this section of the lesson with a few opening questions:

- When Hannah prayed for her child, do you think she was considering the obligation of parenting in her prayer?
- When I say obligation what do you think of?
- How do you feel about the obligations in your life?
- What is one way you fulfill these obligations?

(Answers:

Perhaps, many people just think about the joys of parents when praying for a child and do not consider the obligations. Some people look forward to the obligations such as caring for and looking after a child. It is clear Hannah enjoyed her child enough to delay weaning him, but it is difficult to know what she was thinking about her obligations because the text does not explain.

I think of obligations as something I am required to do. Something I have to do. Sometimes obligations are things I want to do or feel like I should do.

I feel like some of the most meaning aspects of my life come with obligation such as my marriage, my child, my family of origin. I am also obligated to fulfill my duties to my employer or to my country. Reward and obligation sometimes come together.

I fulfill these obligations through actions every day. For example, I feel obligated to care for my child, I do this my feeding, changing, watching, bathing him/her. I fulfill the obligations to my spouse my being a loyal and loving supporter of him/her. I fulfill my obligations to my job by performing my duties to the best of my ability. I fulfill my obligations to my country my voting, following the laws, serving jury duty.)

Activity Two: Obligations from the Jewish tradition (15 minutes)

The teacher will explain there are specific obligations mothers and fathers have towards their sons or daughters in Jewish tradition. The teacher will hand out the list of obligations to the students. Each student will pick the four obligations they think are the most important. The students will rank their chosen obligations in order of importance.

After the students have made their own order, they will break up into small group and decide on an order of importance they can all agree on. Students should be able to explain why they picked the order they did and what values are associated with these obligations.

The students will come back together as a group to explain what they picked and why.

- A father is obligated to do the following for his son: to circumcise him, to redeem him if he is a first born, to teach him Torah, to find him a wife, and to teach him a trade. Others say: teaching him how to swim as well. (Kiddushin 29:a)
- Denying a child religious knowledge robs the child of an inheritance. (*Talmud Sanhedrin 91b*)
- Every parent is obligated to train his/her children in the observance of *mitzvot*, for it is written: "Train a child according to his way." (*Proverbs 22:6*)
- Mothers should introduce their children to the Torah. (*Exodus Rabbah 28:2*)
- Anyone who does not teach his son a skill or profession may be regarded as if he is teaching him to rob. (*Talmud Kiddushin 29a*)
- A father must provide his daughter with appropriate clothing and a dowry. (*Code of Jewish Law, Even haEzer 71*)
- A father should be careful to keep his son from lies, and he should always keep his word to his children. (*Talmud Sukkah 46b*)
- If a small child is capable of shaking the *lulav* correctly, his parents should buy him his own *lulav*. (*Talmud Sukkah 28a*)
- Anger in a home is like rottenness in fruit. (*Talmud Sotah 3*)
- Rabbah said that a parent should never show favoritism among his/ her children. (*Talmud Shabbat 10b*)
- A parent should not promise to give a child something and then not give it, because in that way the child learns to lie. (*Talmud Sukkah 46b*)
- The parent who teaches his son, it is as if he had taught his son, his son's son, and so on to the end of generations. (*Talmud Kiddushin 36*)
- The parent who instructs by personal example rather than mere words, his/her audience will take his/her counsel to heart. The parent who does not practice what he/she so eloquently preaches, his/her advice is rejected. (*Commentary to Ethics of Our Fathers*)

- A father once came to the Baal Shem Tov with a problem concerning his son. He complained that the son was forsaking Judaism and morality and asked the rabbi what he could do. The Baal Shem Tov answered: "Love him more." (*Hassidic Tale*)³⁸

After hearing the students' obligations of choice, they teacher will ask the students question about the applicability of these obligations in today's world.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What are the main themes of these obligations?

- In your opinion, how applicable are the ideas presented in the texts to your obligations as a parent?
- What obligations would you add to the list if you are making an equivalent list of parental obligations?

(Answers:

I think the themes are: loving a child, passing tradition to them, teaching them the tools to survive, protecting them and treating them with kindness I think the ideas behind these obligations are extremely relevant today. These are the goals I am trying to achieve as I parent my child. I want my child to be self reliant, loved, cared for and aware of his/her heritage.

Answers to this question will vary depending on what is important to each student. Some students feel obligated to read to their child every day, others want feel obligation to teach their children about sports, the arts or other specific skills).

Activity Three: Comparison of Obligations (10 minutes)

The teacher will ask the students to review the obligations they chose with their groups. The teacher asks the students if they can guess what was important to the people who specified this to be an obligation of a parent to their children. The teacher will ask the student to think about the values that are emphasized with this obligation.

The teacher will continue by asking the students for a list of obligations they think parents today have towards their children. The teacher writes down these obligations on a board or a flip chart.

³⁸ http://www.usci.org/What_Parents_Owe_The5462.html

The teacher asks the students what values they think are highlighted in the obligations they listed.

Activity Four: Obligation of children to parents (10 minutes)

The teacher introduces the idea that not only do parents have obligations to their children, but children have obligations to their parents.

“Honor your father and mother, that you may endure on the land that Adonai your God is assigning to you.”³⁹ (Ten Commandments)

“Each shall revere his mother and father and keep My Shabbats: I am Adonai Your God.”⁴⁰ (Holiness Code)

The teacher leads the class in a discussion about these quotes:

- What is the difference between these quotes?
- Compare the idea of honoring and revering.
- In your opinion, why is there a commandment specifying the need to honor parents?
- Can this be difficult, why?
- Has your ability to/interest in honoring your parents changed since becoming a parent?

(Answers:

The first one lists the father first and the mother second and the second one is the reverse. The verb is different honoring and revering. The rest of the obligation is different – entering the land and keeping Shabbat.

These words are similar, but there is a different nuance to them.

I think there a commandment to honor parents because it is something easily forgotten. When child separate themselves, they can sometimes do this in painful ways. While this separation is

³⁹ Adapted NJPS translation

⁴⁰ Adapted NJPS translation

necessary and important, honoring parents is also important. Sometimes children, no matter the age, need a reminder to honor their parents even when they disagree with them.

This can be very difficult depending on the situation. In abusive relationships children have to be very careful about how they honor their parents without harming themselves. It can also be difficult when there is conflict or issues. Even when parents and children have good relationships, it can still be difficult to honor one's parents all the time.

My relationship with my parents has changed since becoming parent. The rest of the answer will change depending on the students' relationships with their parents, but most students will indicate some change in relationship with their parents after becoming a parent.)

Activity Five: Creating a picture -reflection on obligations (10 minutes)

The teacher will invite students to take some quiet time for themselves to reflect on the idea of obligation. They can put the work obligation in the middle of the page and fill in the rest of the page with words and images about the topic. The idea is for this activity to be as stream of consciousness as possible. Students will not have to share their work with another one because this is an activity to students to focus on themselves and the obligations in their lives.

Activity Six: Assessment: (5 minutes)

Journal Prompts:

- When thinking about my obligations to my child I feel...
- Reflecting on the obligations in my life I...
- Ideally, I would fulfill my obligations by...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- My obligation to you my child is to...
- I fulfill these obligations by...
- If you have your own children, I hope you feel obligated to...

Resources:

Texts for text study

Lists of obligations

I Samuel 1:1-

Narrator:

There was a man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. And he had two wives, the name of one was Hannah and the name of the second was Peninah. Peninah had children, but Hannah did not have children. This man went up from his city year to year to worship and sacrifice to Adonai of hosts in Shiloh and there the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to Adonai.

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed he gave Peninnah his wife and all of her sons and daughters portions. To Hannah he gave double portion *because* he loved her and the Adonai closed her womb. And her rival wife caused her grief in order to humiliate her because Adonai closed her womb.

So it was year after year: when she went up to the House of Adonai, (Peninnah) would vex her (Hannah) and she would weep and would not eat. And Elkanah, said to Hannah:

Elkanah:

Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart so distressed? Am I not better to you than ten sons?

Narrator:

And Hannah got up after they ate and drank in Shiloh, and Eli the priest was sitting in a chair at the doorpost of the temple to Adonai. And she wept greatly, and she prayed to Adonai, she wept and bewailed. And she vowed a vow to Adonai of hosts saying:

Hannah:

If you will really see the affliction of your maid-servant and remember me and not forget your maid-servant and if you give your maid-servant a male child, I will give him to Adonai all the days of his life and no razor shall be brought to his head.

Narrator:

While she continued to pray before Adonai, Eli watched her mouth. And Hannah spoke in her heart and only her lips quivered and her voice was not heard and Eli thought she was drunk.

And Eli said to her:

Eli:

How long will you make yourself drunk? Remove yourself from your wine.

Narrator

And Hannah answered and she said:

Hannah:

No my lord, I am a woman with a sorrowful spirit, I have not drunk wine nor an intoxicating drink, but I poured out my soul before Adonai. Do not take your maid-servant as a worthless woman; because of the abundance of my complaint and vexation, I have spoken my words until now.

Narrator:

And Eli answered and said:

Eli:

Go in peace, and may the God of Israel give you what you asked of him.

Hannah:

Let your maid-servant find favor in your eyes.

Narrator:

And the woman went on her journey and she ate and her face was no longer sad. And they rose early in the morning and worshiped before Adonai, and they returned to their house in Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and Adonai remembered her. And the days passed, and Hannah conceived and she gave birth to a son and she named him Samuel, meaning

Hannah:

I asked God for him.

Parents' Obligations to Children

- A father is obligated to do the following for his son: to circumcise him, to redeem him if he is a first born, to teach him Torah, to find him a wife, and to teach him a trade. Others say: teaching him how to swim as well. (Kiddushin 29:a)
- Denying a child religious knowledge robs the child of an inheritance. (*Talmud Sanhedrin 91b*)
- Every parent is obligated to train his/her children in the observance of *mitzvot*, for it is written: "Train a child according to his way." (*Proverbs 22:6*)
- Mothers should introduce their children to the Torah. (*Exodus Rabbah 28:2*)
- Anyone who does not teach his son a skill or profession may be regarded as if he is teaching him to rob. (*Talmud Kiddushin 29a*)
- A father must provide his daughter with appropriate clothing and a dowry. (*Code of Jewish Law, Even haEzer 71*)
- A father should be careful to keep his son from lies, and he should always keep his word to his children. (*Talmud Sukkah 46b*)
- If a small child is capable of shaking the *lulav* correctly, his parents should buy him his own *lulav*. (*Talmud Sukkah 28a*)
- Anger in a home is like rottenness in fruit. (*Talmud Sotah 3*)
- Rabbah said that a parent should never show favoritism among his/ her children. (*Talmud Shabbat 10b*)
- A parent should not promise to give a child something and then not give it, because in that way the child learns to lie. (*Talmud Sukkah 46b*)
- The parent who teaches his son, it is as if he had taught his son, his son's son, and so on to the end of generations. (*Talmud Kiddushin 36*)
- The parent who instructs by personal example rather than mere words, his/her audience will take his/her counsel to heart. The parent who does not practice what he/she so eloquently preaches, his/her advice is rejected. (*Commentary to Ethics of Our Fathers*)

- A father once came to the Baal Shem Tov with a problem concerning his son. He complained that the son was forsaking Judaism and morality and asked the rabbi what he could do. The Baal Shem Tov answered: "Love him more." (*Hassidic Tale*)⁴¹

⁴¹ http://www.usci.org/What_Parents_Owe_The5462.html

Children's Obligations to Parents

“Honor your father and mother, that you may endure on the land that Adonai your God is assigning to you.”¹ (Ten Commandments)

“Each shall revere his mother and father and keep My Shabbats: I am Adonai Your God.”¹
(Holiness Code)

Lesson Two: Parents' Blessing at the Shabbat Table

Objectives:

- Students will be able to recite the traditional parent's Shabbat blessings.
- Students will be able to explain the themes behind the traditional blessing.
- Students will be able to reflect on their experience of blessing their children at the Shabbat table.

Set Induction: (5 minutes)

Watch a clip from Fiddler on the Roof when the parents bless their children at the Shabbat table. Teacher gives out the words for students to refer to while watching the video. After the video the teacher leads a discussion about what they watched.

Sample discussion questions: (5 minutes)

What did the parents say to bless their children in the video?

What three words would best describe your reaction to this scene?

In watching this video as a parent, how do you feel about watching the parents bless their children?

(Possible answers:

Parents bless their children to be like the foremothers in the Bible. Parents bless their children with their hopes for the future. Parents bless their children with who they want them to be.

Reactions: connection to tradition, touching scene, meaningful experience for parents and children, very Jewish

As I parent I want to be able to create a similar experience for my children. I am not sure if I know the words to bless my child at the Shabbat table.)

Teacher introduces this class session: (5 minutes)

The teacher explains the goal of class today is to explore the traditional Shabbat blessings and the other options for blessing children at the Shabbat table. The idea is to help parents (who do not already blessing their children at the Shabbat table) become more comfortable with this ritual. Students will be invited to try blessing their children at the Shabbat table over the next few weeks and to share their experiences with the class at the later class session.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Were you ever blessed at the Shabbat table by your family?

- Have you thought about blessing your child?
- What, if anything, would help you feel more comfortable with blessing your child on Shabbat?
- Are you more comfortable with saying a traditional or a non-traditional parents blessing for your children? (Either answer is acceptable – this goal is to understand the opinions of the students in the class)⁴²

(Answers:

I was blessed by my parents at the Shabbat table. My parents always said the traditional blessing. My parents made up their own blessing. My parents did not bless me at the Shabbat table.

I thought about it and I bless my child every week. I thought about it, but I do not know what to say.

I would be more comfortable if I knew the words to the blessing. I would be more comfortable if I knew more about the blessing. I would be more comfortable if I could just say what was in my heart or on my mind.)

Activity One: Tradition Blessing for Boys (10 minutes)

Teacher and the students study the traditional Shabbat blessings over children

For boys it is (teacher give a hand out with the information on it to students)

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

The teacher asks if anyone in the class knows who the biblical characters Ephraim and Menashe are. The teacher allows the students to explain first and fills in with more information as needed.

Teacher explains Ephraim and Menashe were Jacob's grandsons. They were the first set of siblings in the Torah to live harmoniously with one another. They were not plagued with the sibling rivalry that was so detrimental to the other siblings in Torah. Just for a brief recap- Cain killed his brother Abel, Jacob stole his brother, Esau's birthright and had to flee from him, Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him but did not, instead they pushed him into a pit and sold him into slavery.

⁴² Ibid

Joseph wanted to end this sibling rivalry. The blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh ended the rivalry between oldest and youngest son that afflicted previous sets of siblings. Parents say this for their sons with the hope they will emulate their forefather harmonious with siblings and others.

Contemporary Israeli Rabbi Mordechai Elon interpreted this blessing in this way. He wrote “They lived in harmony and were the first pair of brothers in the Torah not to see each other as competitors. They do not struggle for power, and their dynamic as a family never seems to be the source of great difficulty in either of their lives. By blessing our children to be like Ephraim and Menashe we seek to bestow upon our children the legacy of peace and harmony between brothers.”⁴³

Teacher leads students in a discussion about the traditional blessing.

Sample discussion questions:

- How would you rephrase this blessing in your own words?
- Why do you think this is the traditional blessing for boys?
- Why do you think these themes were significant or important?
- What type of blessing would you like to give your son? What would be included?

(Answers:

I think this the traditional blessing for boys because boys tend to fight and this is an example of brothers getting along and not fighting. I think the tradition blessing is identifying role models of brothers who get along as an example for boys to try to emulate.

I think these themes are important to try to combat violence among boys. This is giving boys positive role models of how they can live their lives peacefully.

I think this is the type of blessing I would want to give my son. I would also include blessings for intellectual and spiritual growth, compassion, curiosity, courage, happiness, long life etc.)

Activity Two: Traditional Blessing for Girls (10 minutes)

⁴³ Lisa Langer’s Family Education Shabbat Blessing Lesson

The teacher hands out the traditional blessing for girls. (Teacher passes out handout included in the resources section of the lesson)

The traditional blessing for girls is:

May God make you like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.

These are the foremothers of Judaism. Sarah was the first matriarch of the Bible. She is described as beautiful even in her old age. She is a strong woman who plays an active role in her domestic affairs. She is a character that readers of the Tanakh can empathize with since she has flaws.⁴⁴

Rebekah married Isaac, Sarah's son. She is described as being beautiful, generous and independent. Rebekah is loved by her husband and she helps him find comfort after his mother's death. She prays to God when she is barren and eventually she conceives twins. Rebekah is a dedicated mother who is portrayed as a strong and virtuous woman in the text. Even though some consider Rebekah to be a flawed character who tricks her husband into giving a blessing to the younger rather than older son, she is presented by the text in a positive light.⁴⁵

Rachel is described as beautiful and Jacob fell instantly in love with her. Leah is described as being kind and sensitive. Rachel and Leah were sisters and their father married them to the same man. There was rivalry between the sisters, especially around child bearing, but they also cooperate with each other and help each other. It is thought there was still love between the sisters even under difficult circumstances.⁴⁶

Sample discussion questions:

- What themes do you think are included in the blessing?
- Do you think these are important? Why or why not?
- What attributes do you think the blessing is trying to bestow on future generations?
- Do you think there is anything you would like to add to these blessing?

(Answers:

⁴⁴ Alice Ogen Bells, "Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women's stories in the Hebrew Bible"

⁴⁵ Bellis

⁴⁶ Bellis

I think these themes were included to try to provide role model of strong women who played an active part in their own lives.

I think these themes are important because I want my daughter to be strong and to make her own decisions. I know these characters were complicated so I am not sure I really want my daughter to be like them.

I think the tradition wants girls to be intelligent, beautiful, loving, compassionate, loyal etc.

I want my daughter to be all of these things and more. I want her to be strong, independently minded, generous, etc.)

Activity Three: Second half of traditional blessing (5 minutes)

Teacher states the second half of the traditional Shabbat table blessing from parents for both boys and girls is priestly blessing. The second half of the blessing is as follows:

May the Holy One bless you and keep you.

May the Holy One cause light to shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May the Holy One grant you the most precious gift of peace.⁴⁷

Teacher leads the students in a discussion. Sample discussion questions:

- What do these words mean? What are they trying to convey?
- Why do you think this part is the same for both boys and girls?
- Is there anything you would like to add to it?

(Answers:

I think these blessings are asking God to watch over and protect my child.

I think parents of all children, boys and girls, want their children to be protected by God.

I would ask God to make sure my child is loved, supported and cared for all the days of his/her life.)

Activity Four: Alternatives to Traditional Blessings (5 minutes)

⁴⁷ Ritualwell.org

Teacher presents an alternative to the traditional parents' blessing presented by Marcia Falk, a contemporary feminist liturgist offers her own version of this blessing. Instead of wishing that the child be like someone else, this blessing asks that the child be as s/he is.⁴⁸ This alternative has a similar feel to the traditional blessings, but changes whom the child should grow up to be.

Teacher can add in this quote to the conservation to support Falk's ideas:

There is a famous Jewish story of a Rabbi Zusya's statement: "When I go to heaven God will not be asked: 'Why were you not more like Moses?' I shall be asked: 'Why were you not more like Zuzya?'"

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Falk suggests making these changes?
- In what ways can you connect with Falk's changes and in what ways do Falk's alternations seem inauthentic to you?
- If you could talk to Falk about these changes what would you say?

(Answers:

I think Falk wanted to make the blessing more personal about the child and less focused on the tradition.

I found myself compelled by these changes. I am more likely to say the blessing now. These new blessing were difficult for me to say, but I'll try it.

I would ask Falk what inspired her to write the blessing and if she uses them at her Shabbat table.)

Activity Five: Blessing Page (15 minutes)

Students have the opportunity to make a blessings page for their children. Based on the lesson and the parents blessings at the Shabbat table students are invited to make a blessing pages. The teacher will have artistic materials for the students to use to decorate their pages. Students have the opportunity to finish any of the sentences below as blessings for their children or to make their own.

⁴⁸ Ritualwell.org

This Shabbat my blessings for you are...

This Shabbat may you be blessed with...

As you grow, my pray and blessings for you are...

As you grow may you by blessed with...

I pray to God for you to be....

Activity Six: Assessment (10 minutes)

Journal prompts:

- When I think about blessing my child at the Shabbat table I feel...
- My blessing for my child at the Shabbat table is...

Scrapbook prompts:

- My Shabbat blessings for you are....
- These are my blessings/hopes/prayers for you because....
- Our family Shabbat blessing tradition is ...

Conclusion: (5 mintues)

Teacher asks what Shabbat traditions have you started with your family so far and what they would like to begin to do. Teacher asks students if they have any Shabbat blessing traditions from their family of origin that they want to bring into their new family

Ask the students to share their experiences the next week

Resources: for the teacher to hand out to students on the following pages

Shabbat Prayer
Fiddler on the Roof

[MOTHERS AND FATHERS]

May the Lord protect and defend you.
May He always shield you from shame.
May you come to be
In Israel a shining name.

May you be like Ruth and like Esther.
May you be deserving of praise.
Strengthen them, Oh Lord,
And keep them from the strangers' ways.

May God bless you and grant you long lives.
(May the Lord fulfill our Sabbath prayer for you.)
May God make you good mothers and wives.
(May He send you husbands who will care for you.)

May the Lord protect and defend you.
May the Lord preserve you from pain.
Favor them, Oh Lord, with happiness and peace.
Oh, hear our Sabbath prayer. Amen

Questions to consider:

What did the parents say to bless their children in the video?
What three words would best describe your reaction to this scene?
Have you ever watched this scene before? If so, in what ways did you react to it differently watching it was a parent?

This blessing is traditionally used every Friday evening by parents when blessing their children.

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe.

or

May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

May the Holy One bless you and keep you.

May the Holy One shine light upon you and be gracious to you.

May the Holy One turn towards you and give you peace.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ritualwell.org

Lesson Three Shabbat Can Be...

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain Abraham Joshua Heschel's ideas about Shabbat in their own words.
- Students will be able to apply Heschel's philosophy about Shabbat to their own Shabbat practice.

Activities:

Set Induction: Mediation (10 minutes)

The teacher will lead the students in a meditation. The teacher will ask the students to lie down and close their eyes. The teacher will reassure the students that s/he will watch the children during this activity to allow the parents to have a few minutes to relax and participate in this activity.

The teacher can use any mediation s/he prefers. The resources for this lesson will include a sample mediation the teacher could choose to use.

Following the mediation the teacher will lead a discussion with the students. Sample discussion questions:

- What was the mediation experience like for you?
- In what ways were you able to relax?
- How do you think this experience of Shabbat compares with your Shabbat practices?
- As new parents how do you think you can incorporate Shabbat rest into your week?

(Answers:

I enjoyed this mediation. I felt relaxed. I appreciated the chance to close my eyes and think about my breathing. I almost feel asleep because I am so tired.

I listened to your voice and the words you were saying. I felt the tension leaving my body. I was still aware of my child, but I could relax at the same time.

It was similar because I spend Shabbat with my family and friends. I am still developing a Shabbat practice because we don't do much for Shabbat now. It was something I would like to do more of but it is harder now.

I think it is possible to still have Shabbat, but it is complicated. I can't just relax and watch TV anymore, but we have a new kind of Shabbat. It is family time for us. I am trying to find ways to make Shabbat for myself even with the craziness of having a young child. We are still working on it.

Activity Two: Discussion of Shabbat Practices (10 minutes)

The teacher will lead a discussion about how students typically celebrate Shabbat and how it has changed since having a child. Today we are going to learn more about Shabbat and brainstorm ways to celebrate it with a new baby.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Did you celebrate Shabbat as a child? If so, what did you do?
- Describe what you normally do on Shabbat.
- In what ways has your Shabbat celebration changed since having a baby?
- How do you carve out Shabbat for yourself amongst all of the chaos of parenthood?

(Answers:

This will vary depending on the participants' experience, but hopefully some of the students grew up spending Shabbat with their family and friends. Hopefully some of the students had a nice meal and it was a special time for them.

Again this will vary, but Shabbat is a time when people spend time as a family. The students might go for walks, go out to coffee, go out to a special meal, cook a meal etc. Other students might watch sports.

Shabbat used to be a time when I would sleep in and relax for the day, but now I still have to go all of the things needed to care for my child. I miss being able to relax for a whole day, but we make it a special day to spend time together.

I make Shabbat for myself when my child is napping. I read a book or watch TV. If someone else is home, I can a bath or go to the gym. I made it a goal to make time for myself; this also makes it easier for me to care for my child.)

Activity Three: Heschel Text Study in small groups (10 minutes)

The teacher explains today we are going to focus on Shabbat and how to celebrate it with a small child. We are going to look for ways to help each other find the quiet, the space between within chaos of our lives. One way we are going to do that is through reading quotes the Judaic scholar and theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel.

To begin with the teacher provides some biographical information about him.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), a descendant of two important Hasidic dynasties, was born in Warsaw. After receiving a thorough Jewish education in Poland, Heschel entered the University of Berlin, where in 1934 he received his doctorate for a study of the biblical prophets. In 1937 Heschel became Martin Buber's successor at the *Judisches Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt and head of adult Jewish education in Germany, but the following year, he and other Polish Jews were deported by the Nazis.⁵⁰

After stays in Warsaw and London, in 1940 he came to the United States to teach at the Hebrew Union College. In 1945 Heschel became Professor of Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and began to publish a series of works, ranging from studies on the piety of East European Jewry and the inward character of Jewish observance, to religious symbolism, Jewish views of humanity, and contemporary moral and political issues. Before his untimely death, Heschel had become highly respected among American religionists of many faiths not only for his writings but also for his active role in the civil rights and peace movements of the 1960s and in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.⁵¹

Heschel is well known for several of his books "The Prophets" "Man is not alone" "God in search of Man" and more. The one we are going to focus on today is titled *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. This book focused on the nature and celebration of Shabbat. It is rooted in the thesis that Judaism is a religion of time, not space, and that the Sabbath symbolizes the sanctification of time.⁵²

After the introduction, the teacher divides the class into small groups to discuss quotes from Heschel's book *The Sabbath*.

"The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of the soul, of joy and reticence"

⁵⁰ My Jewish learning.com

⁵¹ My Jewish Learning.com

⁵² My Jewish learning.com

“In great living, as in great music, the art may be in the pauses. Surely one of the enduring contributions which Judaism made to the art of living was the Shabbat, ‘the pause between the notes.’ And it is to the Shabbat that we must look if we are to restore to our lives the sense of serenity and sanctity which Shabbat offers in such joyous abundance.”

Questions for discussion:

- What are the main ideas Heschel is trying to convey in these quotes?
- Compare Heschel vision of Shabbat with your celebration of Shabbat.
- If you could imagine Shabbat celebration that embodies Heschel’s ideals what would you do?

(Answers:

Heschel is trying to explain the holiness of Shabbat. Heschel is explaining that Shabbat is a time for rest and relaxation. Heschel sees Shabbat as the quiet in the chaos of the week.

This will vary depending on the person answering, but hopefully the participants have experienced the holiness of Shabbat rest at some point in their lives. Some students may talk about Shabbat as a child with their family of origin. Some students might talk about experiencing Shabbat at a Jewish camp or in a teen youth group or in college. Some students might talk about Shabbat with their spouse or friends. Some students might explain a recent Shabbat experience with his/her child.

Again there could be a wide variety of answers to this question depending on the students’ preferences. Ideally students will be able to envision a holy day of rest doing activities they enjoy with people they love. Students might also mention activity they enjoy doing for themselves as a way to relax.)

Activity Four: Shabbat Can Be (10 minutes)

The teacher will bring the group back to together and invite the small groups to summarize their discussion. The teacher will explain there are many ways to celebrate Shabbat and numerous things Shabbat can be. To illustrate this point, the teacher will read aloud the book “Shabbat Can Be.” Although this book is outdated with the pictures, it still illustrates different possible ways for celebrating Shabbat. The information about this book will be scanned in the resources section of this lesson. The text of the this books is typed into this lesson. It is a family friendly

book with big print and pictures. Students will have the opportunity to listen to the book as they consider their own Shabbat practices. This book provides suggestions for ways to spend time as a family celebrating Shabbat.

Students can begin to imagine what Shabbat can be for them as a family.

Text of the book:

“Shabbat can be different from any other day. Shabbat can be many things. Let’s see what Shabbat can be for you.

Shabbat can be your mother’s eyes as she lights the Shabbat candles.

Shabbat can be singing Kiddush and tasting a sip of sweet wine.

Shabbat can be biting into a piece of soft, golden challah.

Shabbat can be loving hands upon your head.

Shabbat can be you saying amen lots of times.

Shabbat can be the special way your stomach feels when you see and smell your favorite foods.

Shabbat can be singing *zemirot* with people you love.

Shabbat can be thank you, God, for making me me.

Shabbat can be hearing Rabbi tell a story.

Shabbat can be warm in synagogue with your family and your friends.

Shabbat can be resting.

Shabbat can be a queen who spends the day with you.

Shabbat can be a special day for Jews near and Jews far away.

Shabbat can be when everyone is fair to everyone else.

Shabbat can be reading a wonderful Jewish book.

Shabbat can be like standing on the top of a mountain.

Shabbat can be when everyone is free.

Shabbat can be feeling rich without a penny in your pocket.

Shabbat can be your happiest dreams.

Shabbat can be a joy so big that it takes two of you to hold it.

Shabbat can be the nice way you feel just before you fall asleep.

Shabbat can be many things. What can it be for you?"

Questions for discussion:

- What was the main idea of this book?
- How do you think you could incorporate some of these suggestions into your Shabbat practice?

(Answers:

This book gives various examples of ways to celebrate Shabbat.

Some of these are simple things that we can do as family like reading a book, having challah or lighting Shabbat candles. Hopefully we will be able to rest as part of our Shabbat celebration. It gives the idea that Shabbat is a special day that people can celebrate in many different ways.)

Activity Five: Making a personal version of Shabbat Can Be (15 minutes)

Students will have an opportunity to make their own version of the book “Shabbat Can Be”

Students can write out the words “Shabbat can be...” and they can fill it out with whatever they think Shabbat can be. This can be ways they celebrate Shabbat as a family or ideas about ways they would like to celebrate Shabbat. Students will be invited to illustrate their own versions of Shabbat Can Be.

Activity Six: Assessment (5 minutes)

Journal Prompts:

- I hope to create Shabbat for myself by....
- When I think about creating a personal Shabbat I feel...
- As a parent Shabbat is...

Scriptural Scrapbook Prompts:

- My favorite way to spend Shabbat as a family is...
- Our Shabbat practices are...
- If I could do anything with you on Shabbat I would...

Resources:

Text for mediation

Heschel Quotes to be handed out to students

Information about the book the Shabbat can be

For further readings:

Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Shabbat*

raymond a. zwerin / audrey friedman marcus

illustrated by yuri salzman



This series of holiday books for young children
dedicated to Mildred and Matthew H. Ross

is made possible by

The Blum Family Publication Fund

Max and the late Ida
Helene and the late Sidney

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 75-10669
ISBN 0-8074-0281-8

© Copyright 1975
by the Union of Professional Publishers Corporation
852 Fifth Avenue New York, N. Y. 10022

Manufactured in the United States of America

Text for meditation

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie and begin to enter a state of being, leave doing behind. To help Shabbat enter our entire being, take a few deep breaths, with each breath exhale the worries and cares of the weekdays and breathe in the spirit Shabbat, the spiritual of refreshment and renewal of rest and relaxation of joy and exaltation of the soul...

After a minute or two of winding down, let your eyelids become heavy, let your eyes close, feeling the heavy on your eyes...Roll your eyes back into your head a bit and feel yourself becoming drowsy and in a deep state of restful consciousness... Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe out

You feel the stress leaving your body. You feel the tension evaporating. All the stress of running around all week is fading away...

You listen to your breathing. Breathe in, Breathe out. Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in Breathe out.

After the hectic week, you decide you want to make this Shabbat extra special by treating yourself so you buy your favorite foods. Your house is filled with the smells of delicious foods. You pour yourself a glass of wine.

Your child is sleeping so you sit and you talk to your loved ones. You are not rushed, instead you sit and relax. You are happy, content, comfortable. You are full from the delicious food and wine. You smile to yourself when you think about your evening.

Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe out.

Shabbat morning is a beautiful day. So you continue your enjoyment of a relaxing Shabbat. You go to a park, to the beach, to the mountains or on a hike. There is blue sky around you. You feel the sun on your face. You are happy, relaxed, calm. Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe out,

Shabbat is a special time. A time for yourself, for family and friends. A time to relax, to become centered again. A break from all of the chaos. A pause, the white space between the notes.

You feel the calm, at peace, relaxed. You want this feeling to stay with you. You focus on savoring this feeling. This moment. Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe, Breathe in, Breathe out, Breathe in, Breathe out

Slowly when you are ready, open your eyes. Look around the room and when you are ready begin to sit up.⁵³

⁵³ Adapted from a guided meditation in “Jewish Guided Imagery”

Quotes from *The Shabbat*

“The seventh day is a palace in time which we build. It is made of the soul, of joy and reticence”

“In great living, as in great music, the art may be in the pauses. Surely one of the enduring contributions which Judaism made to the art of living was the Shabbat, ‘the pause between the notes.’ And it is to the Shabbat that we must look if we are to restore to our lives the sense of serenity and sanctity which Shabbat offers in such joyous abundance.”

(Abraham Joshua Heschel)

Lesson Four: Shechecheynu Moments

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify Shechecheynu moments in their daily life
- Students will be able analyze the Shechecheynu prayer
- Students will be able to synthesize the Shechecheynu prayers with milestone moments in their children's lives.

Core Learning Experiences

Set Induction: (10 minutes)

The teacher begins the session by asking the class to list some of the milestones babies experience in the first years of life. Some of the babies might not have experience these milestones yet, but students can still list them.

Sample Answers:

First tooth

First smile

First word

First time baby sits up

First food

First sleep through the night

First crawl

First steps

The teacher leads the students in a discussion about how they felt when their children reached these milestones.

Sample questions:

How did you feel when your child reached this milestone?

What did you think when you saw your child reach this step?

Did you mark the milestone? If so, what did you do?

(Answers:

I felt pride at the accomplishment. I was very happy to see my child.... I felt a little sad because my baby was growing up already. I felt like I am not ready for a child who...

I was thinking my life is going to change again now that my child can... I loved watching the learning process. I can't believe that my child is already able to...

I did not mark this transition. I am not sure what I would do.)

Teacher explains today's topic is figuring out ways to mark transitions of watching a child grow. This can emphasize the sanctity and holiness of watching a child grow.

Activity One: Shechecheynu (15 minutes)

The teacher asks the students if they know of a prayer that is said when people want to thank God for allowing us to reach this moment.

If the students are familiar with the Shechecheynu prayer, the teacher can ask the students when they have said it.

If the students are not familiar with the Shechecheynu prayer, the teacher can explain it.

The Shechecheynu is a prayer that can be said almost anytime or anywhere. It expresses our thanks to God for enabling us to reach this moment in time. Reform Jews say this prayer at life cycle event such as a baby naming or at the beginning of a holiday like Hanukkah. It praises God and articulates gratitude for a moment in time.

The teacher will hand out copies of the prayer in Hebrew, transliteration and translation for the class to study together.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are You,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	our God, Creator of time and space,
שֶׁחַיָּנוּ וְקִיּמָנוּ	who has supported us, protected us,
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.	and brought us to this moment.

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higyanu lazman hazeh

The class studies this prayer and discusses it with a conversation lead by the teacher.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Restate the themes of this prayer in your own words.
- In your opinion, what is the link between the three parts of this prayer?
- Reflect on how this prayer expresses your experience of milestone moments?

(Answers:

This prayer thanks God not only for giving us life, but for keeping us healthy and allowing us to reach specific moments in time.

I think the parts of this prayer are linked because we need to be alive and sustained in order to reach a particular moment or experience.

It reflects my experience because this prayer expresses how I feel when I reach these moments. I feel thankful to God for allowing me to reach them. It does not because it would not occur to me to say it when I have these experiences. For me, a special moment is more complete when I say the Shechecheynu.)

Activity Two: Group discussion about special moments (5 minutes)

The teacher continues to discussion. The teacher leads a discussion about the importance of distinguishing special moments in time.

Sample discussion questions:

- Can you think of moments in time that Judaism separates out as marks as special?
- What do you think is the significance of these moments?
- What have been your experiences of these special moments in life and what role did Judaism play in them?

(Answers:

Weddings, baby naming, bar/t mitzvah, Shabbat, havdallah,

Some of these are usually once in lifetime such a wedding, bar mitzvah etc. It is a special day with lots of preparation. Others are moments that occur on a regular basis like Shabbat, but are still special. These special moments are more distinct when they are marked by ritual.

I have experienced many of these moments and they were deeply enhanced by the Jewish rituals associated with them.)

Activity Three: Study of rituals (10 minutes)

The teacher continues the discussion about special moments and the Shechecheynu through an exploration of the idea of rituals in Judaism.

One of the ways we mark these special moments is through ritual. In the examples of the special moments we discussed in class such as a wedding or baby naming there are Jewish rituals associated with them. The teacher divides the class into different small groups to look after various life cycle ceremonies. Each group will study a different life cycle event and become “experts” on that event. The students will analyze these lifecycle events to make a list of the components of them. After making this list the groups will come back together to share their findings with the rest of the class.

The groups are (baby naming, bris, wedding).

The teacher will hand out a question sheet for the students to think about as they study the life cycle events.

Questions to study in the lifecycle events are:

- What are they various aspects of the life cycle event?

- Is there a Shechecheynu included? If so, who says it?
- Is there room for creativity in this ritual?
- How does the ceremony begin? How does it end?
- What did you like about it? What did you dislike?

After allowing the students to study the various rituals, the teacher brings the class back together again to share and teach each other about their rituals.

(Answers:

The answers will vary depending on the lifecycle event and the students' opinions, but there will be some overlap.

The rituals include parts for the service leader, participants, expressions of thanks for God, acknowledgement of the sanctity of the moment, blessings, prayers, singing, creative words etc.

There is a Shechecheynu

While this is ceremony, there seems to be room for creativity such as in the words from the rabbi or alternative readings or songs.

It begins and ends different depending on the lifecycle events, but generally with words, prayers, songs and quiet time for reflection.

The likes and dislikes will depend on the students' opinions. Some of it might be language or particular parts of the ceremony that students either like or dislike.)

Activity Five: Everyday rituals (10 minutes)

The teacher will acknowledge that we have been studying rituals for major life cycle events such as weddings and bar/t mitzvah, but this was to give an idea about what makes up a ritual. There are also rituals for small events that occur on a regular basis. The teacher will pages from the book "The book of Jewish sacred practices CLAL's guide to everyday holidays rituals and blessings." In the same small groups, students will analyze these rituals. The rituals are less formal than the lifecycle events.

In these examples students will explore what makes up these rituals. Students will explore the same questions they studied about the lifecycle rituals. Again students will have different examples and they will teach the rest of the class.

Sample Discussion Questions

- What are the various aspects of the ritual?
- Is there a Shechecheynu included? If so, who says it?
- Is there room for creativity in this ritual?
- How does the ceremony begin? How does it end?
- What did you like about it? What did you dislike?

(Answers:

The answers to this question will vary depending on which ritual the students study. But there will be some overlap in the answers. The ritual all include saying blessings.

Again this will vary, some of the rituals have the Shechecheynu in it and some do not. This prayer can be added to any ceremony.

There is room for creativity in it. The freedom of creativity is one of the things I like about this ritual.

The answer to this question will vary depending on the ritual.

The likes and dislikes will change based on the student's personal opinion, but hopefully there will be a range of answers to give the class a diversity of opinions about how to create rituals.)

Activity Six: Making their own rituals (15 minutes)

After exploring the idea the numerous firsts babies experience, discussing the Shechecheynu prayers, exploring significant lifecycle event rituals and every day rituals, students will have the opportunity to put it all together to create their own ritual to mark the milestones in their child's development.

Students can use the list of part of a ritual from the lifecycle rituals or what they found from the everyday rituals. Students can include the Shechecheynu they can if they want to, they can also think about songs, reading or poems might like to include in their rituals. There is no right or

wrong answer, it is an opportunity for the students to personalize a ritual as it fits their needs and individual style.

The teacher might have ideas for creative readings or a computer at the class for the students to look them up as part of their process.

Activity Seven: Assessment (5 minutes)

Journal prompt:

- Designing this ritual I felt...
- When my child reaches the next milestone I want to...

The rituals can be included in the spiritual scrapbook so there is not a separate scrapbook prompt for this lesson

Resources:

Copies of a baby naming ceremony

Copies of a bris ceremony

Copies of a wedding ceremony

Pages from “The book of Jewish sacred practices CLAL’s guide to everyday holidays rituals and blessings”

Shechecheynu Prayer

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are You,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	our God, Creator of time and space,
שְׁחַחֵנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ	who has supported us, protected us,
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.	and brought us to this moment.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shecheyanu
v'kiy'manu v'higyanu lazman hazeh*

Questions for the lifecycle events:

- What are the various aspects of the life cycle event?
- Is there a Shechecheynu included? If so, who says it?
- Is there room for creativity in this ritual?
- How does the ceremony begin? How does it end?
- What did you like about it? What did you dislike?

THE BOOK OF JEWISH SACRED PRACTICES

*CLAL's Guide to Everyday &
Holiday Rituals & Blessings*



Edited by
Rabbi Irwin Kula and Vanessa L. Ochs, Ph.D.

JEWISH LIGHTS Publishing
Woodstock, Vermont

HEARING GOOD NEWS

How automatically our words celebrate the blessing of hearing good news. "Oh my God!" "Thank God!" "I can't believe it!" Later, with more

deliberation, more reflection, our hearts and minds acknowledge the Divine Source of Blessing that our words so readily locate.

דַּשְׁנֵת בְּשִׂמְחָת רֵאשִׁי,
כִּסִּי רִוִּיחַ

Dishanta va'shemen
roshit, kosi r'vaiah

You anoint my head with
oil, my cup overflows

Meditation

Whoever says the blessing over a full cup is given an inheritance without bounds, as it says in Zechariah, "And full with the blessing of the Lord, you shall possess the sea and the south."

(Babylonian Talmud: Brakhot 51a)

Ritual

Alone, or with people who celebrate your good news, fill a beautiful cup with wine or grape juice, letting it overflow into the saucer below. This is the cup of abundant blessing. Raise it up, fixing your eyes on it. After the blessing, share your cup with those who share your good news.

Blessing

כִּים יִשְׂעוּתֵךְ אֵשֶׁת וּבָשִׂם ה' אֲבִיךָ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַגִּבּוֹר.

Kos yeshuot esah, u'v'sheim Adonai eka. Barukh atah Adonai elohetnu melekh ha'olam borei pri hagafen.

I raise the cup of abundant blessing and invoke the name of God. Blessed are You, Sovereign of the World, who created the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַטוֹב וְהַמְכֵיב.

Barukh atah hatov v'ha'meluv.

Thank God for this good news. *L'chaim!*

Teaching

Why did the rabbis connect their discussion of the blessing we say for good news with their discussion of the blessing we say for rain? "Because hearing good news is like cold water to a thirsty soul."

(Jerusalem Talmud: Brakhot 9:2)

You have changed my grief into dancing! You have taken off my sackcloth and dressed me with celebration.

(Psalms 30:12)

230

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

The world has a birthday on Rosh Hashanah. The trees have a birthday on Tu B'Shevat. On my birth day, I declare a

holy day, a day to celebrate my uniqueness, my connection to all that is born, and the completion of another year.

עך מאה ועשרים

Ad me'ah v'esrim

May you live until
one hundred and twenty

Meditation

May this coming year be filled with health, happiness, kindness, peace, growth, and learning.

Ritual

Light the candles on your birthday cake with people you love. As you light each candle, recall a specific blessing of this past year. Blow out the candles! *Yom huledet same'ach!* Happy birthday!

Blessing

(Your loved ones say)

מזל טוב!

Mazel tov!

May you look forward to a good and blessed year.

(You say)

Blessed are You who has sustained me for another year and who provides me with opportunities to begin anew.

(All say)

**הרחמן הוא יחדש עלינו
את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה.**

*Harachaman hu y'chadeish aleinu et hashanah hazot
l'to'vah v'livracha.*

May the Merciful One renew this year for goodness and for a blessing.

Teaching

The older scholars grow, the more wisdom they acquire, for it is said, "With age comes wisdom, and with length of days, understanding."

(Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat 152a)

Teach me to number my days so I may develop a heart of wisdom.

(Psalm 90:12)

CELEBRATING A PRIVATE MIRACLE

While Jews everywhere celebrate the national miracles of Chanukah or Purim, individual Jewish communities and families have long had a tradition of re-

Modim anachnu

We thank You for the miracles we celebrate each day

כודים אנחנו

"Days of Thanks" or "Purim Katan," Special Purims.

Meditation

כודים אנחנו.

Modim anachnu.

We thank You for the miracles we celebrate each day and for the wonders of every season and every moment.

Ritual

At the Shabbat table, before *kiddush*, invite people to share a private miracle that happened to them in the past week.

You may deepen your awareness of a private miracle that you wish to mark by creating a *brachah*, a blessing that affirms, "Yes! I know how fortunate I have been, again and again." Your *brachah* can explain how the miracle has enriched or altered your life, led you from vulnerability to strength, opened your eyes and heart.

Blessing

(After you have told the story of your private miracle)

ברוך אתה שעתה לי נס.

Baruch atah she'asah li nes.

I bless You for this miracle You have given me.

(After you say this blessing, try to recall other miracles with which you and the people you love have been blessed in the past.)

Teaching

May a people recite a blessing at places where miracles occurred to their ancestors or their teachers?

(Jerusalem Talmud: Brakhot 9:1)

There was once a man who was traveling through the valley of Aravot. He was thirsty, and a well was miraculously created for him. Another time, he was traveling through Machoza when a wild camel attacked him, and at that moment the walls of a house collapsed to form a hideout and he escaped inside. From then on, whenever he came to Aravot he would say, "Blessed are You who caused the miracles of the well in Aravot and the miracle of the camel in Machoza." When he passed through Machoza, he would say, "Blessed are You who caused the miracles of the camel in Machoza and the well in Aravot."

(Adapted from Babylonian Talmud: Brakhot 54a)

GUIDING OUR GROWING CHILDREN TOWARD INDEPENDENCE

A message to my children: Your that we will always be open to one life will be filled with challenges, another: that after all arguments, for you and for me. My hope for there will be reconciliation and you, as you grow in independence and make your own decisions, is

ברוך שפטרני
מעונשו של ה'.

a reconciliation
to the love that
holds us together.

*Barukh she'petarani
me'onsho shel zeh*

Blessed are You who pre-
pares me to release my
child at the right times

Meditation

May you flourish as you become who you are meant to be.

Ritual

As your children step out on their own for the first time—walking, sleeping in a bed, going to school, riding a bike, dating, traveling on their own, going to camp, graduating, going to work, marrying, having their own children—pause to acknowledge how much courage they have.

Blessing

(As you are privileged to witness your child's independence)

ברוך שפטרני מעונשו של ה'.

Barukh she'petarani me'onsho shel zeh

Blessed are You who prepares me to release my child
at the right times.

Teaching

Why did God decide to create humans? Out of loneliness? Curiosity? A need to be loved? A need for creative, thinking, feeling partners? Whatever the reason, God had some fine hopes and pinned them all on the Big Plan: Give us freedom and make us images of God. God then lived through the generations of humans who were disappointing, who fell short, who denied or undermined the Plan, or who were just plain evil—along with folks who were loving and cared and stood up to injustice and fought suffering. The miracle of life, the real miracle, is that God stuck with us for so long, instead of throwing in the towel and just giving up the whole painful, frustrating exercise. Talk about patience! Apparently God has simply never given up the hope, planted before Eden, that with our freedom and our independence we will eventually perfect the world.

(CLAL Faculty)

SEEING NATURAL WONDERS

We had seen spectacular mountains in the Alps and the Rockies in Colorado. We didn't think Yosemite would be much different. More mountains, maybe some waterfalls, we thought, and it will all be nice—at least we'll get out of the city. Driving from San Francisco through the dry heat of the

desert, we pulled into the heart of Yosemite as the sun began to set. We got out of the car and were surrounded. What we saw were trees five times bigger than any we'd ever seen, spectacular rocks climbing to the heavens, waterfalls cascading into lush valleys. We were struck silent.

ברוך אתה שכבך
לֹא כַעוֹלָמוֹ

*Barukh atah
she'kaktah lo b'olamo*

Praised are You who has
created such beauty
in Your world

Meditation

The world is God's intensely holy place. Hear God's voice in the waters, in the thunder. Hear God's voice in the tall trees, in the forest, in the wilderness.

קוֹל ה' בְּכַח קוֹל ה' בְּהַרְרֵי.

Kol Adonai ba'ko'ach, kol Adonai be'hadar.

Hear God's voice in power; hear God's voice in beauty.

(Adapted from Psalms 29:4)

Ritual

In silence, take off (or imagine taking off) your shoes, allowing your feet to touch the ground. As you witness the majestic beauty of high mountains, vast deserts, sunrises, lightning, and shooting stars, take as much time as you need to acknowledge that you stand on holy ground.

Blessing

ברוך אתה עשה מעשה בראשית.

Barukh atah oseh ma'aseh u'reishit.

Praised are You, Renewer of the works of creation. Let me be attentive to the wonder of Your world.

הַלְלוּהוּ שֵׁשׁ וַיְרַח. הַלְלוּהוּ כֹל כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹר.

*Halleluhu shemesh u'yarei'ach. Halleluhu
kol kochvei or.*

Praised is God, sun and moon. Praised is God, all bright stars.

(Psalms 148:3)

Teaching

And God called the dry places "earth," and the water-springs God called "seas," and God saw that it was good.

(Genesis 1:10)

RABBI
זאת בריתך אשר חשקתו בריתי ובריתכם וברית
ורצתו אחרתך... וברית שלמה נאמר ואלו לכם קול-זכר
לדורותיכם. אגיד-אל אשרי: התהלך לפני והיה תמים.

RABBI

The rite of circumcision is a *mitzvah*, a sign of our Covenant with God, as it is written: "God said to Abraham, 'You shall keep My Covenant, you and your children after you. He who is eight days old shall be circumcised, every male throughout your generations.'" (Genesis 17:10-12)

ASSEMBLY

May we, like our ancestor Abraham, obey the commandment of God: "Walk before Me, and strive for integrity." (Genesis 17:1)

(Choose one of the following responsive readings.)

1

RABBI

When Israel stood at Sinai to receive the Torah, the Holy One said: "Present to Me good guarantors that you will guard My Torah, and then I shall give it to you."

הכנסת בן לברית (ברית מילה)

COVENANT SERVICE FOR A SON
(CIRCUMCISION)

(To be held at home or synagogue.)

(Rabbi's remarks might be made here.)

(Infant is brought in and might be held in a specially designated chair.)

RABBI

This is the chair of
Elijah, whose spirit is
with us. May his
remembrance be for
good, bearing the
promise of God's
redemption.

Blessed is he
who comes here in
God's name.

ברוך ה' אלהינו
ה' אלהינו

ASSEMBLY

We rejoice! A child has come into the world. We rejoice as we bring this child into the *Berit*, the Covenant between God and the Jewish people.

(Continue with "PARENT(S)," page 10)

II

RABBI

The Psalmist said:

הָאֵלֹהִים נִתְּלָהּ בְּיַד מַלְאָכָיו הַקְּדוֹת.

ASSEMBLY

"Children are a heritage of God, the fruit of the womb is a precious reward." (Psalm 127:3)

RABBI

Our God, and God of all generations, we thank You for all blessings:

ASSEMBLY

For the mystery of creation, for Torah and *mizvot*, for companionship and love, for the warmth of family, for the joy and sacred privilege of parenthood.

PARENT(S)

As have generations of parents before us, we joyfully bring our son into the Covenant of circumcision.

ASSEMBLY

They said: "Our ancestors are our guarantors."

RABBI

The Holy One said: "Your ancestors are not sufficient guarantors. Bring Me better guarantors, and I shall give you the Torah."

ASSEMBLY

They said: "Ruler of the universe, our prophets are our guarantors."

RABBI

God said to them: "The prophets are not sufficient guarantors. Yet bring Me better guarantors and I shall give you the Torah."

ASSEMBLY

They said: "Our children will be our guarantors."

RABBI

The Holy One said: "They are certainly good guarantors. For their sake I give the Torah to you."

11 Covenant Service for a Son (Circumcision)

(All rise.)

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, who
hallows us with *mitzvoth*
and who commands us
concerning the *mitzvah*
of circumcision.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו,
מלך העולם, אשך קדשנו
במצוותיך על הפילה.
ומצונוך על המצוה.

(The circumcision is performed.)

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, who
hallows us with *mitzvoth*
and commands us to
bring our son into the
Covenant of Abraham,
our father.

PARENT(S)
ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו,
מלך העולם, אשך קדשנו
במצוותיך וצונוך להביאנו
בבריתך של אברהם
אבינו.

*Baruch Ata, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam, asher
kideshamu bemitsvotav, vetsivanu lehachniso b'brito
shel Avraham avinu.*

Covenant Service for a Son (Circumcision) 10

ברקם ערות בניכם, ותורה עם בניכם, אשך
צנה את-אבותינו להודיעם להקדים. למען ידעו דור
דור את-אבותינו ואת-אבותינו.
אשר נתת לנו, יי אלהינו.

God, You have given a Teaching to Israel, instruct-
ing our ancestors to teach it to their children, that
the generations to come might know it.

PARENT(S)

RABBI

God remembers the
Covenant forever, the
word commanded to a
thousand generations.
God made this Cove-
nant with Abraham,
renewed the bond with
Isaac, and established it
as a statute with Jacob,
an everlasting Covenant
with Israel. We praise
You, O God, who estab-
lishes the Covenant.

ונר לעולם בריתך, וברך
צנה לאליה דור. אשך ברך
את-אבותינו ואת-אבותינו
לישמך. ויצמידה ליצחק
לחך, לישראל ברית
עולם. ברוך אתה, יי,
כורת הברית.

May God who blessed
 our ancestors, Abraham,
 Isaac and Jacob; Sarah,
 Rebekah, Rachel, and
 Leah, bless this infant
 who has been circum-
 cised, and bring him
 speedily to full healing.
 May his father and
 mother have the privi-
 lege of raising him,
 educating him, and encouraging him to attain wis-
 dom. May his hands and his heart be faithful in serv-
 ing God. And let us all say, Amen.

RABBI
 We praise You,
 Adonai our God, Ruler
 of the universe, Creator
 of the fruit of the vine.

*(Wine is touched to infant's lips.
 Family shares the wine.)*

RABBI
 Our God, God of our
 mothers and our fathers!
 Sustain this child
 through his parents' lov-
 ing care. Let him be
 known among our peo-
 ple Israel by the name
 _____ May
 his name be a source of
 joy to him, and inspire
 him to serve our people
 and all humankind. May
 his parents rejoice in his
 growth of body and soul. As they have brought him
 into the Covenant, so may they, with wisdom and
 patience, lead him to the study of Torah, to a life of
 good deeds, and to a marriage worthy of God's bless-
 ing. And let us all say, Amen.

*(Significance and family derivation of Hebrew name
 might be mentioned by parent(s) or reader.)*

15 Covenant Service for a Son (Circumcision)

May God bless you and keep you.
May God's presence shine upon you
and be gracious to you.

May God's presence be with you and
give you peace.

*(If the mother cannot be present at the circumcision,
the following prayer might be offered by or with her
when the child is taken to her.)*

O God, we give thanks to You for the gift of our
child, _____, who has entered into the
Covenant of Abraham. Keep him from harm, and
grant that he may be a source of joy to us and to
all who love him. Be with us and give us health and
length of days. Teach us so to raise our child with
care and affection, with wisdom and understanding,
that he may be a faithful child of our people and a
blessing to the world. We give thanks to you, O God,
the Source of life.

Covenant Service for a Son (Circumcision) 14

PARENT(S), GRANDPARENT(S), AND
THOSE PRESENT

We praise You,
Adonai our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who has given us life,
sustained us, and
brought us to this
joyous time.

קדוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁתַּתִּינֵנוּ
וְתַשְׁמַנֵּנוּ וְתַחַיֵּנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

*Baruch Ata, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam,
shehecheyanu vekiyemenu vehigi-anu lazeman hazeh.*

RABBI

בָּרַכְךָ יי וַיְשַׁמְנֶךָ.
יְאֵר יי פָּנֶינוּ אֱלֹהֵי רַחֲמֶיךָ.
יְשָׂא יי פָּנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי יְיָשָׁם
לְךָ שְׂלָוִים.

ASSEMBLY

We rejoice! A child has come into the world. We rejoice as we welcome this child into the *Berit*, the Covenant between God and the Jewish people.

RABBI

When the people of Israel stood at Mt. Sinai, ready to enter into the *Berit*, God addressed these words to Moses: "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob, and tell the Children of Israel. . . ." Our rabbis taught: "House of Jacob" refers to the women of Israel, and "Children of Israel" refers to the men. (Midrash Rabba, Exodus 28:2)

ASSEMBLY

May we, like all the men and women at Sinai, obey the commandment of God: "You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy people." (Exodus 19:6)

(Choose one of the following responsive readings.)

הכנסת בת לביתה

COVENANT SERVICE FOR A DAUGHTER

(To be held at home or synagogue.)

(Remarks might be made here.)

(Infant is brought in and might be held in a specially designated chair.)

RABBI

This is the chair of
Elijah, whose spirit is
with us. May his
remembrance be for
good, bearing the prom-
ise of God's redemption.

זו הכסא של אליהו

זכור לטוב.

remembrance be for
good, bearing the prom-
ise of God's redemption.

Blessed is she who
comes here in God's
name.

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותך
הגדולה

ASSEMBLY
They said: "Our children will be our guarantors."

RABBI
The Holy One said: "They are certainly good guarantors. For their sake I give the Torah to you."

(Continue with "PARENT(S).")

II
RABBI
The Psalmist said:

וְהָיָה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה
וְיָרָא לְךָ אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה

ASSEMBLY
"Children are a heritage of God, the fruit of the womb is a precious reward" (Psalm 127:3).

RABBI
Our God, and God of all generations, we thank You for many blessings:

I
RABBI
When Israel stood at Sinai to receive the Torah, the Holy One said: "Present to Me good guarantors that you will guard My Torah, and then I shall give it to you."

ASSEMBLY
They said: "Our ancestors are our guarantors."

RABBI
The Holy One said: "Your ancestors are not sufficient guarantors. Bring Me better guarantors, and I shall give you the Torah."

ASSEMBLY
They said: "Ruler of the universe, our prophets are our guarantors."

RABBI
God said to them: "The prophets are not sufficient guarantors. Yet bring Me better guarantors and I shall give you the Torah."

bring our daughter into the Covenant of our people, Israel.

Baruch Ata, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam, asher kideshanu bemitsvotav, vetsivanu lehachnisah biverit am Yisra-eil.

RABBI

Our God, God of our mothers and our fathers! Sustain this child through her parents' loving care. Let her be known among our people Israel by the name _____.

May _____ her name be a source of joy to her, and inspire her to serve our people and all humankind. May her parent(s) rejoice in her growth of body

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
ואבותינו, קיים את הילדה
הזאת לאהבה ולאקה,
והיא תשרתנו באהבה
והיא תהיה ידועה
בשם זה ביהודים.

ישמח שמה יהיה מקור
שמחה לה, ותשרתנו
באהבה. תשרתנו
באהבה ובהנהגה
טובה. תשמח בהתפתחות
גופה של הילדה.

ASSEMBLY
For the mystery of creation, for Torah and mitzvot, for companionship and love, for the warmth of family, for the joy and sacred privilege of parenthood.

PARENT(S)

We joyfully bring our daughter into the Covenant of Israel.

RABBI

God remembers the Covenant forever, the word commanded to a thousand generations. We praise You, O God, who establishes the Covenant.

זכור לעולם קריתו, דבר
צוה לאמר דור. קרויך
אפה, יי, בנרת הקרית.

PARENT(S):

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot and commands us to

קרויך אפה, יי, אלהינו,
קלך העולם, אשך קדשנו
תמצותיך וצונו להנהיגה
בקרית עם ישראל.

We praise you,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, Creator
of the fruit of the vine.

(Wine is touched to infant's lips.)

Family shares the wine.)

PARENT(S), GRANDPARENT(S), AND THOSE

PRESENT

We praise You,
Adonai our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who has given us life,
sustained us, and
brought us to this
joyous time.

*Baruch Ata, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam,
shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi-anu lazeman hazeh.*

קָרִיבְךָ אֱתָהּ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ,

מְלִיךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פֶרֶךְ
הַיַּיִן.

and soul. As they have brought her into the Covenant, so may they, with wisdom and patience, lead her to the study of Torah, to a life of good deeds, and to a marriage worthy of God's blessing. And let us all say, Amen.

*(Significance and family derivation of Hebrew name
might be mentioned by parent(s) or rabbi.)*

RABBI

May God who blessed
our ancestors, Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob;
Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel,
and Leah, bless this
infant. May her father
and mother have the
privilege of raising her,
educating her, and en-
couraging her to attain
wisdom. May her hands
and her heart be faithful
in serving God. And let
us all say, Amen.

מִי שֶׁבְרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
וְרַבֵּקָה, רָחֵל,
לֵאָה וְרָחֵל, הוּא יְבָרֶךְ אֶת
הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת. וְיִזְכֶּנּוּ
אָבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְבָרְכָהּ,
לְחַנְּכָהּ וּלְחַמְּקָהּ. וְיִזְכֶּנּוּ
לְדָוֶתָהּ לְאֵל אֱמוּנָה,
וּלְאַסֵּד: אָמֵן.

O most awesome, glorious, and blessed God, grant
Your blessings to the bride and groom.

Surrounded by loved ones whose joy and prayers
are with you here, you stand at this *chupa*, symbol of
the Jewish home. May your home be a shelter against
the storm, a haven of peace, a stronghold of faith
and love.

Let us all join in our prayer of gratitude:

We praise You,
Adonai our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who has given us life,
sustained us, and
brought us to this
joyous time.

קָרָנוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהֵיְתִיב
וְתִתְּנֵנוּ (הַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה,

*Baruch Ata, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha-olam,
shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi-anu lazeman hazeh.*

WEDDING SERVICES

Service I

RABBI

(Some or all of the Hebrew verses might be sung.)

Blessed are you who
have come here in the
name of God. (We bless
you in this House of
God.)

בְּרַחֲמֵיךְ הָיִיתָ אֵתנוּ
(בְּרַחֲמֵיךְ הָיִיתָ אֵתנוּ).

Serve Adonai with
joy; come into God's
presence with song.

עֲבַדְתָּ אֱתֵינוּ בְשִׂמְחָה.
לֵבְבֵינוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּרִנָּה.

We rejoice that _____ and _____ join
in marriage in the presence of God and loved ones.

מִי אֲדִיר עַל הַכֹּל. מִי קָדוֹךְ עַל הַכֹּל. מִי גָדוֹל
עַל הַכֹּל. הוּא יְקָרְךָ חֵטָן וְנִשְׂתָּה.

and consecrates this marriage. We praise You, Adonai our God, who sanctifies our people Israel through *kiddushin*, the sacred rite of marriage at the *chupa*.

הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹדֵינוּ
עַל יְדֵי (תְּפִלָּה) וְשִׁבְעָה
עֲרֵב אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֱדֹנָי
עַמּוּנוּ, הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
עַל יְדֵי שִׁבְעָה וְעַל יְדֵי
כִּדּוּשֵׁי הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בְּמִצְוַת הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

And now I ask you, in the presence of God and this assembly: Do you, _____, take _____ to be your wife, to love, to honor, and to cherish?

And do you, _____, take _____ to be your husband, to love, to honor, and to cherish?

_____ and _____, speak the words and exchange the rings that make you husband and wife. _____, as you place the ring on the finger of the one you love, recite the words that formally unite you in marriage.

In this union, the sacred work of creation goes on: God joining man and woman; God planting the divine likeness within them. "Man and woman were created in the Divine image. Male and female God created them." May the union of _____ and _____ animate the Divine in each of them, and may each help the other to grow in God's likeness.

(*Rabbi's remarks here or before the Sheva Berachot.*)

(*Birkat Erusin might be read here.*)

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, Creator
of the fruit of the vine.

פָּרְסֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מְלֶכֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרִי
הַיַּיִן.

(*Bride and groom drink from the kiddush cup.*)

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, who hal-
lows us with *mitzvo*

פָּרְסֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מְלֶכֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
הַמְּקַדְּשֵׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹת

We praise You,
Adonai our God, who
hallows our people Israel
through this sacred rite
at the *chupa*.

RABBI
בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ, יְיָ קַדְוֶה
עַמּוֹ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַל יְדֵי (הַקֶּדֶשׁ)
(קַדְוֶה) וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

Sheva Berachot

RABBI (*lifting cup*)

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, Creator
of the fruit of the vine.

We praise You,

Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, Creator
of all things for Your
glory.

We praise You,
Adonai our God, Ruler
of the universe, Creator
of man and woman.

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרִי
הַיַּיִן.
בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שׁוֹפֵר לְפָנֶיךָ
לְכַבֵּדוֹ.

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר הַאָדָם.
בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שׁוֹפֵר לְפָנֶיךָ
אֶת-הַיְצִיָּה וְאֶת-הַיְצִיָּה, בְּאֵמֶל

*(Bride and groom face each other and
say successively:)*

Be consecrated to me
with this ring as my
wife/husband in keeping
with the heritage of
Moses and Israel.

הָרַי אִתָּךְ (אִתָּךְ) מְקַדְשֶׁנִּי
(מְקַדְשֶׁנִּי) לִי בְּטַעֲמֶיךָ זֶה פְּדִי
לְפָנֶיךָ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

(Or:)

Be wedded to me with this ring as my
wife/husband in keeping with the religion of the
Jewish People.

(Bride and groom might say:)

"I betroth you to me
forever; I betroth you to
me with steadfast love
and compassion; I
betroth you to me in
faithfulness."
(Hosea 2:21-22)

וְאִשְׁתְּךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם,
וְאִשְׁתְּךָ לִי בְּצִדִיק
וּבְרַחֲמִים וּבְחַסְדִּים
וּבְאֵמֶל וּבְרַחֲמִים וּבְחַסְדִּים.

RABBI OR ASSEMBLY

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of joy and gladness, bride and groom, love and kinship, peace and friendship. O God, may there always be heard in the cities of Israel and in the streets of Jerusalem: the sounds of joy and of happiness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride, the shouts of young people celebrating, and the songs of children at play. We praise You, our God, who causes the bride and groom to rejoice together.

פָּרַדְךָ אֱתָהּ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
מְלִיךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא
אֶשְׁרֵךְ וְשִׂמְחָה, חֵטֶן וְכֵלֶה,
צִלָּהּ, רִנָּה, דִּיצָה וְתוֹרָה,
אֶהְבֶּה וְאֶחַבְהָ, שְׁלֹם
וְרַעוּת. מְהֵרָה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
יִשְׂמַע פְּעִרֵי יְהוּדָה
וְקוֹצוֹצוֹת יִרְדְּשָׁלַיִם קוֹל
אֶשְׁרֵךְ וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה, קוֹל
חֵטֶן וְקוֹל בְּלִיָּה, קוֹל
מְצַדְדֵיחוֹת חֲתוּנִים מְחַפְּזִים
וְנִצְרָרִים מְשֻׁמְחֵה גְּיָעָתָם.
פָּרַדְךָ אֱתָהּ, יי, מְשֻׁמְחֵי חֵטֶן
עִם-הַבְּלִיָּה.

(Groom and bride drink from the kiddush cup.)

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates us to share with You in life's everlasting renewal.

We praise You, Adonai our God, who causes Zion to rejoice in her children's happy return.

We praise you, Adonai our God, who causes bride and groom to rejoice. May these loving companions rejoice as have Your creatures since the days of creation.

יָמֵנוּ מְבַרְכֵינוּ, הַהִתְקַדֵּךְ לֵךְ
מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵיךְ עַד עַד. פָּרַדְךָ
אֱתָהּ, יי, יוֹצֵר תְּאֵדִים.
שׁוֹשׁ פְּשִׁישׁ וְתִגְלֵי צִיּוֹן
מְקַבְּלִין מְהֵרָה לְחֻבְרָה
פְּשִׁישְׁתָּהּ. פָּרַדְךָ אֱתָהּ, יי,
מְשֻׁמְחֵי צִיּוֹן מְבַרְכֵיךָ.
שְׁמָהּ מְשֻׁמְחֵה רְעִים
הַעֲזוּהוֹבֵרִים מְשֻׁמְחֵךְ יִצְרָדְךָ
מְבַרְכֵיךָ מִיָּמֵינוּ. פָּרַדְךָ
אֱתָהּ, יי, מְשֻׁמְחֵי חֵטֶן
(בְּלִיָּה).

RABBI

יְבָרֶכְךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.
יְאֵר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִחַנְךָ.
יִשְׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשְׂא
לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

May God bless you and keep you.
May God's presence shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
May God's presence be with you and
give you peace.

(The glass is broken.)

קִוֵּל טוֹבו!

RABBI

As you have shared the wine from a single cup, so may you, under God's guidance, share contentment, peace, and fulfillment from the cup of life. May you find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and each of its moments hallowed by true companionship and love.

(Rabbi might read the Ketuba here.)

In the presence of these witnesses and in keeping with our tradition, you have spoken the words and performed the rites that unite your lives.

_____ and _____, you are now husband and wife in the sight of God, the Jewish community, and all people. I ask you and all who are gathered here to pray in silence, seeking God's blessings upon your marriage and your home.

(Silent prayer.)

Lesson Five: Reflection and Preparing the Ritual

Objectives:

- Students will be able to synthesize the ideas discussed throughout this unit.
- Students will be able to reflect on what they have learned in the previous lessons.
- Students will be able to apply themes from this unit into the developing spiritual birthday celebrations.

Core Learning Experiences:

Set induction

The teacher will review the ideas from the previous lessons in this unit with the students. The teacher will list these topics of the lesson and remind the students about the main ideas of this unit. If any of the students were absent, it is also an opportunity to fill the student in and the material s/he missed. The teacher will have copies of the lessons to hand out to students who missed classes.

- Lesson One: This is the child I have prayed
- Lesson Two: Parents' blessings at the Shabbat Table
- Lesson Three: Shabbat can be
- Lesson Four: Shechecheynu Moments
- Lesson Five: Reflection and Preparing the Ritual

Students will be invited to reflect any changes they have made to their routine based on the class in this unit. This could also be an opportunity for students to bring up issues or concerns they are experiencing as new parents and encourage the students to make suggestions to help each other.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- As we review the class topics, have any questions come up about these topics? If so, what are they?
- Has your experience of any of these issues changed after addressing it in class? If so, in what ways?
- Would you like any further information about any of these topics? If so, what type of information would be the most helpful?
- If the class is being taught at a synagogue, are there ways the synagogue can continue to support you and your exploration of these topics?

Activity Two: Review Journal and Spiritual Scrapbook

The teacher will give the students some time to review at their journal and spiritual scrapbooks. This is also an opportunity for students to finish their entries in either the journals or the spiritual scrapbooks. Students will be invited to continue to their personal reflections on these topics and to write about these topics if they altered their behaviors because of the class and how they felt about their new activities.

Activity Three: Preparing Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Students will have an opportunity to continue developing the spiritual birthday celebration for their child. Students can pick a few of the topics discussed in the unit decide which of them they would like to include in the spiritual birthday celebration. The teacher will hand out copies the afterward of the book Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones. This chapter includes specific steps and suggestions designed to help people develop their own personal rituals. Students can begin the process of creating their own spiritual birthday celebrations by reading this chapter.

Students can include something they have written or read in the class to be read aloud during the spiritual birthday celebration. This is an opportunity for the students to share their original work with their community. Students can include music or others readings in their rituals as they see fit.

This is a class session clergy could attend to be a resource and answer any questions the students have about creating rituals or the topics discussed in the unit. The clergy could bring additional books, articles, readings etc to give students ideas for their spiritual birthday celebrations. This could be a time for students to begin to develop relationships with the clergy at the institution in a meaningful way. This is also an opportunity for the students to connect with a musical person to help them add music to the spiritual birthday celebration.

The teacher could encourage the students to be creative as they plan their rituals. Ideally the students will design rituals that are meaningful to them and their community and reflect the amazing journey they are on as new parents.

Resources:

Copies of previous lessons, handouts, journal prompts and spiritual scrapbook prompts should be available for students to review.

Copies of the chapter from Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, “Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones,” “How to make a ritual” to be handed out to students.

If students would like sample rituals, material is available in Unit 4 Lesson 4. This includes everyday rituals and lifecycle rituals.

Journal Prompts:

- If I could do anything with you on Shabbat I would...
- When thinking about my obligations to my child I feel...
- Reflecting on the obligations in my life I...
- Ideally, I would fulfill my obligations by...
- When I think about blessing my child at the Shabbat table I feel...
- I wonder what Shabbat would be like if we...
- My ideal Shabbat experience with my child would be...
- I hope to create Shabbat for myself by....
- When I think about creating a personal Shabbat I feel...
- As a parent Shabbat is...
- Designing this ritual I felt...
- When my child reaches the next milestone I want to...

Spiritual Scrapbook Prompt:

- My obligation to you my child is to...
- I fulfill these obligations by...
- If you have your own children, I hope you feel obligated ...
- My Shabbat blessings for you are....
- These are my blessings/hopes/prayers for you because....
- Our family Shabbat blessing tradition is ...
- My favorite way to spend Shabbat as a family is...
- Our Shabbat practices are...

Concluding Lesson

Objectives:

- Students will be able to reflect on their experience throughout the curriculum.
- Students will be able to express their prayers and blessings for one another.

Core learning experiences:

Set induction: *Lehitraot*

The teacher explains the concept of *lehitraot*. This means instead of saying good-bye, Jews say *lehitraot*, meaning until we meet again. Since this is the last class session, the students will not be meeting every week, but hopefully they are formed a bond with one another and will want to be friends long after the class is over.

Activity One: Sharing Journal Entries and Spiritual Scrapbook Pages

Students will be invited to share some of the work they have created over the course of the class. This can be material from the students' journals or spiritual scrapbooks. This will be an opportunity for the students to reflect on their own growth over the course as well as the class to reflect on the process they have experienced together.

After the student share from their journals and spirituality scrapbooks, the teacher will lead a discussion to help the students reflect on the curriculum.

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Which of the class sessions did you find the most meaningful?
- What new practices have you and your family begun in your home?
- In what ways has the students in this class helped you to feel like you were part of a community?

Activity Two: Sharing Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Students will be given the opportunity to share excerpts from their spiritual birthday celebration rituals. This will be a chance for the students to share their parts of these rituals with one another. Even if the students attend each other's rituals (hopefully they will) the class is a more intimate setting. Students might take this sharing time to ask each other questions about their rituals to help each other finalize them. It could also be a time when the students share any concerns they have about their rituals and to brainstorm with each other ways to handle these

issues. Students can also take this time to share parts of the ritual they are most proud of and what they have learned from the process.

After the sharing the teacher can lead a discussion (if these topics were not discussed during the sharing).

Sample discussion questions:

- What were the most challenges aspects of planning the spiritual birthday celebration?
- What are the components of the ritual you are most proud of?
- What has been the most meaningful part of the planning process for you?
- What aspects of this process do you hope to keep with you as your child grows?

Activity Three: Group blessing

The teacher explains there is a special prayer Jews say before beginning a journey. In recent times, this prayer is said at the end of an experience as the participants prepare to go their separate ways. The teacher will hand out copies of the prayer to the students. The teacher will ask the students to recite this prayer together to mark the end of their class time, but hopefully the beginning of new experiences the students will have together.

Adapted Tefilat Haderech - The Traveler's Prayer

“May it be Your will, Eternal One, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, emplace our footsteps towards peace, guide us toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You guide us through difficult time and give us the strength to persevere. May You send blessing in our every handiwork, and grant us peace, kindness, and mercy in your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our prayer, blessed are You, Eternal One, who hears prayer.”

After reciting the Traveler's Prayer, the teacher will invite the students to bless each other. Students can offer words from their heart to one another expressing their hopes and blessing for each other. The teacher can add in his/her own blessing for the students after the students have blessed one another.

Activity Four: Singing of the Travelers Prayer and Reciting the Shechecheynu

The teacher will explain to the students, the Jewish musician Debbie Freedman wrote adapted the Traveler's prayer and put it to music. The teacher will hand out copies to the words of this prayer to the students and invite the students to sing this prayer together.

The teacher will thank the students for participating in this meaningful curriculum. Hopefully this will have been a meaningful experience for the students and the teacher. Ideally the teacher

will express his/her appreciation for the students' willingness to try new things and for their willingness to share their experiences with one another.

The teacher will conclude the class by asking the students to recite the Shechecheynu prayer together. This will allow the students to thank God for allowing them to reach that moment in time and for all of experiences they shared together.

Shechecheynu Prayer

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are You,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	our God, Creator of time and space,
שֶׁחַיָּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ	who has supported us, protected us,
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.	and brought us to this moment.

*Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam shecheyanu
v'kiy'manu v'higyanu lazman hazeh*

Adapted Tefilat Haderech - The Traveler's Prayer

May it be Your will, Eternal One, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, emplace our footsteps towards peace, guide us toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You guide us through difficult time and give us the strength to persevere. May You send blessing in our every handiwork, and grant us peace, kindness, and mercy in your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our prayer, blessed are You, Eternal One, who hears our prayer.

(hillel.org)

T'FILAT HADERECH

(Debbie Friedman)

May we be blessed as we go on our way,
May we be guided in peace,
May we be blessed with health and joy,
May this be our blessing, amein.

CHORUS:

Amein, amein, may this be our blessing,
Amein (2X)

May be sheltered by the wings of peace,
May we be kept in safety and in love,
May grace and compassion
Find their way to every soul,
May this be our blessing, amein.

CHORUS (2X)

Spiritual Birthday Celebration Ritual

Each student will be working on designing their own spiritual birthday celebration ritual throughout this curriculum guide. The spiritual birthday ritual is an opportunity to celebrate the growth of the child during their first year of life and the students as they complete their first year of parenting. This ritual can, but does not have to be done at the child's birthday; it is intended to be held at the conclusion of the class as a culmination/memorable moment for this curriculum guide. This ritual can be held over Shabbat, or at a time when friends and relatives are in town. It could be after a child reaches a specific milestone that is meaningful to the parent. The timing of the spiritual birthday celebration can be decided by each student to best fit with their specific ritual.

At the conclusion of each unit of this curriculum guide, there is a lesson designated for the students to reflect on the material studied. As part of this reflection process, students can decide what material from each unit they would like to include in the spiritual birthday celebration. This can be the traditional liturgy, blessings, texts or prayers, the original work written by the students, or a combination. Ideally, the clergy from the congregation, if this class is held in a synagogue, will visit the class during the reflection lesson to be a resource for the students about Jewish rituals and to help them design their own spiritual birthday celebrations.

Students will be invited to have their spiritual birthday celebration in a special location such as the synagogue sanctuary or chapel. Students may choose to have the rituals in their homes, at the park, at the beach or some other location that is meaningful to them. Ideally the location of the ritual will be a place where the students feel comfortable or spend time as family.

Each ritual will be different and unique since students will be encouraged to design their ritual to fit their interests, needs and personal preferences. In addition to traditional Jewish material and the students' original work, students are invited to add in readings, music etc to their rituals.

Students are encouraged to invite family, friends and people from their community to this special celebration. Ideally the students in the class will have become a community and will want to invite each other to their spiritual birthday celebrations.

Annotated Bibliography

Buber, Martin, “I and Thou” A Touchstone Book Published by Simon and Schuster: New York, 1996.

This book explains Martin Buber’s philosophy of “I and Thou.” Buber’s ideology is complex and difficult to understand at times. A simplified version of Buber’s theory of I and Thou frames the conversation about relationships for this curriculum guide. Buber’s writings are worth reading even though it might take a few rereadings of the same paragraph to fully comprehend Buber’s ideas.

Eds. at Jewish Lights, “The New Jewish Baby Album: Creating and Celebrating the Beginning of a Spiritual Life – A Jewish Lights Companion,” Jewish Lights Publishing: Woodstock, Vermont, 2003.

This is a template scrapbook for parents to use for a first few years of a child’s life. It includes quotes from Jewish sources, ritual ideas and lines for parents to record specific information about their child. This book includes Jewish holidays and has suggestions for further readings. It provides a sample of what a scrapbook of Jewish events in a child’s life could contain. The quotations were helpful in setting the tone of spirituality for the book.

Fuchs, Nancy, “Our Share of the Night, Our Share of the Morning,” Harper Collins Publishers: San Francisco, 1996.

This book was written by a Jewish woman and it is intended to be a spiritual guide for new parents. This book includes excerpts from hundreds of interviews with parents Fuchs conducted over a period of a year. Fuchs takes everyday activities and elevates them to a spiritual level. The chapters of Fuch’s book inspired the unit design of my curriculum guide.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, “The Shabbat,” Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1951.

This book described Heschel’s ideals about Shabbat. In this book, Heschel reminds Jews about the essential importance of celebrating Shabbat. Heschel aims to inspire Jews to keep Shabbat and make the holy time it is intended to be. Heschel’s ideals helped to shape the lessons in this curriculum guide about Shabbat.

Hoffman, Lawrence, “The Art of Public Prayer Not for Clergy Only” Sky Path Publishing: Woodstock Vermont, 1999.

This book aims to breakdown the idea that public prayer must be conducted by clergy. It attempts to make public prayer seem more accessible to the readers. While this curriculum guide focuses more on private prayer and rituals, Hoffmans's ideas are still useful to make prayer feel attainable to students.

Compiled by Klirs, Tracy Guren, "The Merit of Our Mothers," Hebrew Union College Press: Cincinnati, 1992.

This book includes prayers written by women over the centuries. The majority of these prayers in Yiddish and discuss issues women deal with on a regular basis. These prayers give contemporary readers an idea of the concerns and interests of women in the past. Drawing on the tradition of women's spirituality and prayer was a helpful perspective for writing this curriculum guide.

Edited by Kula, Rabbi Irwin and Ochs, Vanessa, "The Book of Jewish Sacred Practices: CLAL's Guide to Everyday and Holiday Rituals and Blessings," Jewish Lights Publishing: Woodstock, Vermont, 2000.

This book includes short rituals, teaching and blessings for everyday moments to celebrate and appreciate. It is intended to be accessible and understandable to people with a wide range of Judaism knowledge. This book includes sample rituals for feeding a child and other everyday events that I included as templates for the rituals the students could create.

Kushner, Lawrence, "The Book of Miracles: A Young Person's Guide to Jewish Spirituality," UAHC Press: New York, 1987.

This book outlines Kushner's basic ideology of spirituality in an accessible and articulate way. Kushner includes a wide variety of material from a range of Jewish sources. It intended to be for families to read together and begin conversations about spirituality. This book was useful to me throughout my curriculum guide writing process as it helped me think about my spiritual awareness and practices.

Kushner, Lawrence, "Eyes Remade for Wonder," The Jewish Lights Publication: Woodstock, Vermont, 1998.

In this book, Kushner focuses on different ways people can view the world and be more aware of the wonder around them on a daily basis. Kushner's writing is articulate, clear and poetic. This book is an easy read that inspires deep thinking.

Kushner, Lawrence, "God was in this Place and I I did not know," Jewish Lights Publishing: Woodstock, Vermont, 1991.

Similar to the other books by Kushner, this book helps to make the readers more aware of God's presence around them in daily activities. Like Kushner's other books, this one is also well written and easy to understand.

Morinis, Alan, "Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar," Trumpeter: Boston, 2007.

This book explains how to develop a practice of Mussar daily, weekly and in stages. It also summarizes specific values within the Mussar movement in a clear and understandable way. This book was useful because it clearly outlined the ideas of the Mussar movement which enabled me to incorporate it into this curriculum guide.

Edited and Introduced by Orenstein, Rabbi Debra, "Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones," Jewish Lights Publishing: Woodstock, Vermont, 1994.

This book highlights events and milestones for women that might not be included in more "mainstream" Judaism. Orenstein included rituals and ways for women to mark turning points in their lives. Orenstein encourages people to develop their own rituals with a section at the end of the book specifically outlining steps to help people with this process. This was useful as it providing guidelines for creating rituals that I could include in my curriculum guide.

Edited by Stern, Chaim, Berman, Donna, Graham, Edward, Pollar, Leonard, "On the Doorposts of Your House," Central Conference of American Rabbi, 1994.

This book includes prayers and ceremonies to be used in the home. This book has the Hebrew texts for the ceremonies as well the English translation. It is useful book as a resource for home ceremonies, celebrations and rituals.

Other Sources:

Jewish Publication Society "Hebrew-English Tanakh," The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 2003.

Mishkan T'filah, Central Conference of American Rabbis, New York, 2007.

Rabbi's Manuel, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Central Conference of American Rabbis: New York, 1988.

Ritualwell.org

Myjewishlearning.com