

# **iPray**

**A Curriculum Guide Created By:  
Lauren Luskey  
Spring 2010**

# Table of Contents

<b>Curriculum Rationale.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Dear Teachers.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Unit 1 – Why prayer?.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Lesson 1 – Prayer is Awe-some (Scripted)	
Lesson 2 – Prayer is about Questions	
Lesson 3 – Prayer is about God	
Lesson 4 – Prayer is Relevant to our Lives	
<b>Unit 2 – Why do people pray?.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Lesson 1 – We Say...	
Lesson 2 – The Prayers Say... (Scripted)	
Lesson 3 – History Says...	
Lesson 4 – Modern Sources Say...	
Lesson 5 – Our Synagogue Says...	
Lesson 6 – People Say...	
<b>Unit 3 – What makes prayer a Jewish thing?.....</b>	<b>71</b>
Lesson 1 – Our Beliefs	
Lesson 2 – Our Story	
Lesson 3 – Our Script (Scripted)	
Lesson 4 – Our Themes	
Lesson 5 – Our Structure	
Lesson 6 – Our Ritual	
Lesson 7 – Ourselves	
<b>Unit 4 – How do Jewish people connect to prayer?.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Lesson 1 – Through English Words (Scripted)	
Lesson 2 – Through Hebrew Words	
Lesson 3 – Through Individual Reflection	
Lesson 4 – Through Community	
Lesson 5 – Through Music	
Lesson 6 – Through Movement	
Lesson 7 – Through Nature	
Lesson 8 – Through Learning	
<b>Unit 5 – Why do I pray?.....</b>	<b>167</b>
Lesson 1 – <i>Keva</i> and <i>Kavanah</i>	
Lesson 2 – Are My Prayers Answered?	
Lesson 3 – iPray	
<b>Annotated Bibliography.....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>182</b>

# Curriculum Rationale

This is a sixth grade supplementary school *t'fillah* (Jewish prayer) curriculum. However, it will not teach your sixth graders the words to the prayers for their B'nai Mitzvah. It will not allow your students to memorize the prayers, word for word, devoid of any meaning. And it will not create a dispassionate detachment between prayer and the rest of your students' lives.

Supplementary school students often feel a significant sense of disconnect with *t'fillah* as they learn prayers required for B'nai Mitzvah simply as paragraphs to decode, with no practical application to their lives outside the walls of the classroom or sanctuary. Although they sit through hundreds of hours of Hebrew curricula that focus on teaching prayers, these curricula frequently center on the decoding and memorization of words, with little or no emphasis on making meaning of the decoded phrases. Often, B'nai Mitzvah serve as the only assessment and motivating factor for students in Hebrew classes. Jewish children often spend countless hours learning and memorizing prayers for this single "event," with little regard for the significance and applicability of their learning. As a result, after becoming B'nai Mitzvah, they immediately cease their Hebrew and *t'fillah* studies. Because these students do not learn the significance of prayer in Judaism, and have no context in which to apply prayer to their lives, they do not feel a need to continue their *t'fillah* practice after they become B'nai Mitzvah.

Indeed, many members of the Jewish community feel little connection to *t'fillah* in the synagogue, dreading services and paying scant attention to the

purpose of the words and melodies they recite. In congregational supplementary schools, the teaching of *t'fillah* often lacks a connection to the Jewish community and to God, to a context within Jewish history and traditions, and to an opportunity for personal interpretation. This education gap often leads to a group of bored and unengaged *t'fillah* participants who question the authenticity and purpose of prayer and lack a deeper connection to *t'fillah*.

Harvey J. Fields explains that at its best, *t'fillah* “is our opportunity to share our Jewish faith, to express our love of God and humanity, to judge our actions and relationships with others, and to seek ways of improving ourselves and the world in which we live.”<sup>1</sup> Essentially, *t'fillah* should provide an outlet for understanding Jewish values, beliefs, and ritual on both personal and communal levels.

This curriculum guide will aid B'nai Mitzvah students in finding meaningful and lasting connections to *t'fillah* by experiencing various ways of connecting to prayer. It will encourage them to explore why and how they pray, while providing a connection to the Jewish people and ultimately to God, and giving meaning both to their B'nai Mitzvah experiences and to their personal prayer practices. Instead of focusing on the words of the prayers, students will have the opportunity to explore and answer the question, “Why do I pray?”

According to Barry Holtz, *t'fillah* “raises a whole set of complex issues at the heart of which is a simple question: What is my own relationship to the words that I pray?”<sup>2</sup> Because of the personal nature of our relationships to prayer, this curriculum does not tell students what to think about prayer. Instead, it allows

---

<sup>1</sup> Fields, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Holtz, p. 110

students to explore their own ideas about prayer and to uncover meaning in *t'fillah* for themselves.

Students will gain a personal connection with *t'fillah* as they explore questions such as:

- Why do other people pray?
- What makes prayer a Jewish thing?
- How do Jewish people connect to prayer?

The teacher is a key component in the success of this curriculum. He or she should help guide the students through these questions, providing opportunities for meaningful reflection while also serving as an authentic example of a person who is engaged in *t'fillah* and constantly reflects on the meaning of prayer.

At this age, sixth graders are struggling to find their role and place in the larger social order.<sup>3</sup> B'nai Mitzvah catapults them into the Jewish adult world, which can come into tension with their role as a child in secular society. In order to help students navigate this tension, the curriculum allows students to control their own learning, reaching their own conclusions about prayer and how it fits (and will fit) into their Jewish and secular lives. Instead of giving students all the answers to their questions, this guide encourages students to explore a variety of motivations that drive *t'fillah*, making meaning out of prayer for themselves.

Through text study, prayer analysis, and interactive group activities, students begin to learn about the fundamentals of *t'fillah*. These activities build a foundation for unit-long projects that allow students to synthesize the information they have

---

<sup>3</sup> Crain, p. 280-281

learned. One such project is the creation of a Personal Prayer Plan in Unit 4. After students learn about eight different modes that Jewish people use to connect to *t'fillah*, they develop their own individual plan for connecting to prayer, both within the synagogue and in their daily lives. This project embraces the students' individuality and allows them to demonstrate their learning in a way that will ideally inform their future Jewish practice. By allowing students to discover on their own that *t'fillah* is engaging and applicable to their lives, supplementary school can help build a younger generation of involved participants in congregational prayer.

Although Hebrew learning is infused throughout the curriculum, this curriculum is not designed to teach basic Hebrew and prayer decoding. Thus, students should be able to recognize letters and vowels and have basic fluency in Hebrew decoding before beginning this curriculum.

In order to teach *t'fillah* as a valuable and significant Jewish experience, this curriculum guide will be animated by the following enduring understandings:

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

## Dear Teachers,

*T'fillah* can be an incredibly dynamic and exciting facet of Judaism. Prayer connects us to God, brings communities together, creates a window into our past, and gives us hope for the future. However, prayer is also one of the most challenging aspects of Judaism as well. Not only do we have to learn the prayers themselves, but we also have to find a way to make meaning as we struggle to chant the words along with the Rabbi/service leader. And who has the time or the focus to pray when our cell phones are buzzing and our to-do lists are pages long?

However, if we want our students to have a meaningful connection to *t'fillah*, we must attempt to connect to *t'fillah* ourselves. It is not enough to teach our students the words of the prayers they must know to become B'nai Mitzvah. Prayer is not simply an academic endeavor that can be mentioned and forgotten. We must also help our students achieve a spiritual level of prayer, by serving as an example, showing our students that we are willing to explore our own *t'fillah* choices and take spiritual risks.

I do not expect you to come into this guide as a "*t'fillah* expert," but I do hope that you will take on this journey with an open mind and a willingness to explore your own connection to prayer. You are a role model for your students. You do not have to pray on a daily basis, but you do have to be enthusiastic about exploring your own prayer practices, and engaging your students in discussing theirs.

As you embark on this journey, please remember that you are not alone. The rabbis, educators, and Jewish professionals in your community are a valuable resource for prayer. I have also filled the curriculum guide with activities and resources to help you help guide your students in connecting with prayer. Here are some important notes and ideas to help orient you through the guide:

- The title of this curriculum guide is **iPray** – drawing upon the students' generational attachment to the iPod, iPhone, and all forms of electronic communications gadgets. By comparing prayer to an object and idea to which sixth graders can easily relate, I hope to show students that prayer is also relevant to their lives.
- The success of this curriculum depends upon the students' ability to engage with their learning. This curriculum should ideally be used in conjunction with regular supplementary school services during school hours. You should attend these services as well, connecting the experiences shared during *t'fillah* to the lessons in the curriculum. In addition, students and their families should be encouraged to attend services outside of supplementary school hours. Ask students to share these experiences during class time as they relate to the lessons you teach.

- *T'fillah* cannot be divorced from the concept of God. Therefore, the idea of God is infused throughout the lessons in the curriculum. However, I do not make any assumptions of a specific belief about God. Throughout the curriculum guide, I have attempted to use God-sensitive language, so the students who “do not believe in God” are not alienated from *t'fillah*. Prayer does not have to center on God, but prayer can also be a path to discovering God. Regardless of the students’ or your beliefs, I encourage open discussion about all concepts of and beliefs about God.
- I have included in the curriculum guide all the teaching resources for the lessons (handouts, text studies, etc.), except for the text of the prayers. I have provided page numbers for every prayer in the guide using the Reform Movement’s *siddur* (prayer book), *Mishkan T'filah*. However, if your congregation does not use *Mishkan T'filah*, the prayers can be found in any *siddur*. I recommend using the *siddur* with which the congregation regularly prays, as long as it provides both Hebrew text and English translation for every prayer.
- Each lesson is structured to last between 1 and 2 hours. However, you can shorten, lengthen, change, or take out activities to fit your time constraints.
- One lesson in each unit is fully scripted, with a set timeline and a step-by-step description of each activity. In the scripted lessons, your speaking parts are written in **bold**.
- I have included my own notes to the teacher throughout the curriculum.

You will find these notes to the teacher in the boxes with the dotted lines.

- Ongoing projects are an important component of every unit.

Any time an activity should be saved for reference or will be mentioned in a later lesson in the guide, it will be written in a box with a solid line.

- Parent support is essential for students to fully embrace the ideas expressed in this curriculum. Parents are the people who take their children to services and encourage discussion and reflection at home. Therefore, I recommend that you choose two or three lessons and invite parents to learn with their students. Through this joint learning, parents will be able to support and understand the emerging notions of prayer their children will be hatching.
- Although I created this curriculum for a supplementary school setting, you can also adapt it for day school or camp settings.

I hope you and your students discover many meaningful connections to *t'fillah*.

B'Hatzlacha!

Lauren Luskey  
(*Lauren.Luskey@gmail.com*)

# Unit 1

## Why prayer?

Unit 1 serves as an introduction to the entire **iPray** curriculum. The lessons expose students to concepts that will reappear throughout the curriculum: discussing questions openly with one another, talking about God, and analyzing texts. In this unit, it is essential to establish a courteous classroom community, so students can engage with one another in meaningful conversations and feel comfortable sharing both their ideas and their questions about prayer.

Two ongoing assessments are introduced in this unit. The first is the Personal Prayer Playlist (Lesson 1), a daily summative activity in which students write a short journal entry to serve as a reminder about something they learned in the lesson. This assessment should occur at the end of each lesson throughout the curriculum. The second assessment (Lesson 4) explains the final project of the entire curriculum, in which students will answer the question, “Why do I pray?” Introducing this project at the beginning of the year will give students a purpose and direction for their learning, while helping to contextualize the information they learn.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

### **Unit Goals**

- To encourage students to begin talking about prayer.
- To allow students to voice their questions about prayer.
- To establish a warm and safe educational community.
- To excite students about the curriculum.
- To demonstrate that there are many different ways to talk about prayer.
- To help students realize that we all have questions about prayer and God.

## **Essential Questions**

- Why should we learn about prayer?
- Why is it important to talk about our ideas of prayer?
- How do we talk about God?
- What are my goals for learning about prayer?

## **Unit Overview**

Lesson 1	Prayer is Awe-some (Scripted)
Lesson 2	Prayer is about Questions
Lesson 3	Prayer is about God
Lesson 4	Prayer is Relevant to Our Lives

## **Memorable Moments**

- Group building activity (Lesson 2)
- Torn-paper Midrash (Lesson 3)

## **Authentic Assessment**

- The Personal Prayer Playlist (Lesson 1)
- Writing a *T'fillat Haderech* (Lesson 4)

# Lesson 1 (Scripted)

## Prayer is Awe-some

### **Essential Question**

- Why should we learn about prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Recall awe-some moments in their lives.
- List preconceived ideas they have about prayer.
- Provide reasons for learning about prayer.

### **Timeline**

0:00-0:15	Activity 1 – Questions about prayer
0:15-0:30	Activity 2 – Guided visioning
0:30-0:50	Activity 3 – Prayer text study
0:50-1:00	Activity 4 – The Personal Prayer Playlist

### **Activity 1**

**Say: This year, we will be learning about prayer. We all have different ideas about what prayer means, how we pray, and why we pray. So before we dive in to talking about prayer itself, I want us to get all our ideas out.**

Around the room, place four large sheets of butcher paper or poster board. At the top of each piece, write one of these questions:

- Why do people pray?
- What is Jewish prayer?
- How do Jewish people pray?
- Why do I pray?

Give students between five and ten minutes to walk around the room and write their responses to these questions on the butcher paper or poster board.

Have students read the responses to the questions on the posters.

Hang the posters on the wall to use in Lesson 2, and to serve as a reference throughout the year.

## **Activity 2**

Take students to a beautiful and quiet spot in or around the synagogue. This could be a garden, a park (if the weather permits), a chapel, or the sanctuary.

Ask the students to spread out, sit silently, and close their eyes. Lead the students in a guided visioning exercise. Say: **Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Think of a time when you felt amazed and inspired. Perhaps it was a time when you felt connected to God, to others, or to the world. Perhaps you were alone, or perhaps you were surrounded by other people.** (Pause.) **Where were you? What did you see? What did you hear? What did you smell? What did you feel? What were you thinking? Return to that time in your life and take a few minutes to relive that experience.**

Give students two or three minutes to sit in silence and envision this moment.

After a few minutes, ask students to form small groups and share their experiences with one another. After they share with one another, instruct them to compile a list of characteristics that these experiences have in common.

When students have shared their experiences with one another, the groups will share their lists with the class. Write their responses on the board to compile a class list of characteristics for these awe-some moments.

Say: **These moments were filled with awe (a feeling of respect and wonder), which is why we call them awe-some moments.**

Ask:

- **Why do you think all the awe-some moments share so many characteristics in common?** *(they were powerful moments, we have had similar experiences, we like the same things, etc.)*
- **How do you acknowledge an awe-some moment?** *(telling someone about it, taking a picture, writing about it, saying a prayer, etc.)*

Say: **One way to acknowledge awe-some moments in our lives is through prayer. How many of you said a prayer during or after your awe-some moment? What was your prayer like? For those of you who did not say a prayer, what would you have said?**

## **Activity 3**

Say: **As you can see, although we may have similar experiences, our ideas about prayer are very different. So why should we bother learning about prayer and thinking about why we pray?**

Divide the students into *chevrutot* (pairs). They will have 10 minutes to read the text in **Resource 1-1** and answer the questions on the page.

After 10 minutes, have students share the most interesting points of their *chevruta* discussion.

#### **Activity 4 (Authentic Assessment)**

##### **The Personal Prayer Playlist**

To serve as a daily summative activity and as an ongoing authentic assessment, have students create a Personal Prayer Playlist. At the end of each lesson, give students the opportunity to add a song to their Personal Prayer Playlist. The song can be any song the student wants (as long as it is appropriate) – Jewish, non-Jewish, classical, rock, etc. – but it must serve as a reminder for that something the student learned in the lesson. It can either sum up the lesson or elaborate upon one part of the lesson. Explain to students that they must write the title of the song and one or two sentences explaining why they chose that particular song for that particular lesson. Have students keep a journal of their songs throughout the entire curriculum.

## **Resource 1-1**

Prayer is a way to learn how to stop and notice the miracles around us. Prayer is a way to have a moment with God. Most people think that prayer is a way of asking for things from God, but only a very little bit of Jewish prayer is “asking prayer.” Most Jewish prayers get us to stop and notice. Prayer in Judaism is a way to learn mindfulness – how to pay attention to the miracles that are all around us.  
(*Edward Feinstein, in Tough Questions Jews Ask*<sup>4</sup>)

### **Questions**

- According to this text, what is the purpose of prayer?
- What do you think the author means by “asking prayer?”
- Can you think of some examples of “asking prayers?”
- How is it different from “stop and notice prayers?”
- What do you think might be some examples of “stop and notice prayers?”
- According to this text, why should we learn about prayer?
- What other reasons can you think to explain why we should learn about prayer?

---

<sup>4</sup> Feinstein, 15-16

## Lesson 2

# Prayer is about Questions

### Essential Question

- Why is it important to talk about our ideas of prayer?

### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Name one meaningful fact about each classmate (establishing the foundation for deeper relationships).
- Articulate their questions about prayer.
- List words and phrases that will help them talk about prayer.

### Activity 1 (Memorable Moment)

Because students will be engaging in deep conversations throughout the curriculum, it is important that they develop a working group dynamic in which they feel comfortable discussing significant issues with one another.

Lead the students in one or more group building activities. Some suggested activities are:

- **Human knot** – Instruct students to form a tight circle. Have each student extend both hands into the center, and grasp the hands of two different people. When this is complete, the group must untangle the knot they have created without breaking physical hand-to-hand contact. Grips may change and palms may pivot on one another, but contact must be maintained.<sup>5</sup>
- **Marshmallows and Hot Chocolate** - Lay two ropes on the ground horizontally, parallel to one another, with about seven giant steps in between. Have students line up on one side of the rope, and tell them that they are looking at a giant hot chocolate river. Explain that they must get their entire class across the hot chocolate river, but it is too hot to swim across, and too deep to walk across. (Obviously, they cannot walk around the river, since it does not end just because the ropes do). The only way to get across is by using the large, fluffy marshmallows that the teacher provides (carpet squares or sheets of paper). Give the students about eight or nine “marshmallows,” so that they have enough to get across with one or two left. Unfortunately, the current in the river is so strong that it actually sweeps the marshmallows away if someone is not holding them down (with a hand, foot,

---

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from: “Community Building Challenge Course,” p. 3

or other safe appendage). Also, the marshmallows swell up once they are placed in the river, and they become too heavy to move again, so they must remain where they are placed.<sup>6</sup>

- **Blanket Stand** – Spread a blanket on the ground. The whole class must stand on the blanket so that no appendages are touching the uncovered ground. Once the class completes the stand, fold the blanket in half and have them repeat the process. Continue folding the blanket in half and having the students stand on it until the task is no longer possible.<sup>7</sup>

Although a single activity cannot create a cohesive group, it will begin the group-forming process. These activities can be interspersed throughout the curriculum whenever a group building activity is needed.

### **Activity 2**

Share with students the text:

*The time of prayer is when we say, “This is what matters to me most.”<sup>8</sup>*

Give students 10 minutes to free write, responding to the question: **What matters to you most?**

Explain that students can write anything they want, as long as they continuously write. Do not collect these papers. Students tend to write more freely when they know they will not be evaluated or judged. The purpose of this free write is to allow students an opportunity to express their thoughts, not for them to write a perfect paper.

### **Activity 3**

Read the scenario in **Resource 1-2** to the class, or have the students divide into small groups to read the scenario to one another.

After the scenario has been read, ask the students the question at the bottom of **Resource 1-2**:

**If you were the rabbi, how would you respond to these students?**

Explain that questions are an essential part of Judaism.

---

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from website: “Hot Chocolate River”

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from website: “Blanket Stand”

<sup>8</sup> Holtz, p. 110

*In Judaism, you're allowed to ask questions. You're invited to ask questions. In fact, asking questions is the most important thing Jewish people do. In the Bible, Abraham, the first Jew, asks God a zinger of a question: "How can You, the Judge of all the earth, not do what's right?" (Genesis 18:25). The most important moment in the Passover Seder is the asking of a question: "Why is tonight different from all other nights?" The Talmud, the great encyclopedia of Jewish wisdom, teaches that if you're too embarrassed to ask questions, you'll never learn anything (Pirkei Avot 2:5).<sup>9</sup>*

Return to the posters from Lesson 1. Explain to students that the questions on the posters are a few of the questions that people might have about prayer, but that there are many other questions we can ask about prayer.

Create another poster (like those in Lesson 1). At the top, write:

- What questions do I have about prayer?

Give students 5-10 minutes to write the questions they have about prayer on the poster board. Hang the poster on the wall with the rest of the posters from Lesson 1.

#### **Activity 4**

Lead students in a discussion guided by the following questions:

- In our lives (across Jewish and non-Jewish spaces and settings), how do we go about answering our questions?
- Where do we find answers to our questions?
- How do we know if our answers are right or wrong?

Explain to students that in Judaism, talking about our questions and looking for the answers is more important than finding the right or wrong answers to the questions. Talking about our questions may be hard, especially when we are not sure exactly what we think. But there are certain words and phrases that we can use to make talking about prayer easier.

Give students **Resource 1-3**: a list of "Talking About Prayer Phrases," (TAPP). Have students brainstorm more phrases to add to the list. These phrases are the beginnings of sentences that will allow students to express their thoughts in a respectful, educative manner.

The TAPP list should include:

- I wonder...
- I notice...
- I appreciate...
- I agree/disagree with this...because...
- I understand what you are saying, and/but I think...

---

<sup>9</sup> Feinstien, p. 5

### **Activity 5**

Give students a chance to practice using their prayer phrases.

Divide students into two concentric circles. The students in the inside circle should face the students in the outside circle. Each student should be directly in front of another student. Read one of the statements below to the students. In their pair, the students should respond to the statement using at least one of their prayer phrases. After 1 or 2 minutes, students in the outside circle should move one space to their left, so they are in front of the next person in the inside circle. Read another statement, and repeat the process (asking questions and rotating the outside circle) until students have had a chance to respond to all the statements.

The statements should include:

- Prayer makes me happy.
- Prayer is boring.
- Prayer can only be done in the synagogue.
- Prayer is a way of talking to God
- I pray the same way as my parents.
- I pray the same way as my grandparents.
- I feel most Jewish when I pray.
- I feel least Jewish when I pray.

## **Resource 1-2**

They were the worst class anyone could remember. “Teacher-slayers,” they were called. It was only December and already they had sent three teachers into early retirement. Mrs. Goldberg, a veteran of years of teaching seventh grade, left after a month of their rude behavior and cruel practical jokes. Mr. Weinberg presented himself as a “cool” young teacher who rode a motorcycle to the synagogue and quoted lyrics from the latest songs. He lasted a week and a half. Ms. Alon, once a sergeant in the Israeli army, had survived real terrorists, but she couldn’t survive this class.

I was the last resort. I’m the rabbi. I’m supposed to know how to perform miracles.

I suppose it *was* something of a miracle that happened. The kids in the class realized that it was one thing to knock off a few ordinary teachers; it was quite another thing to get on the wrong side of your rabbi. After all, they all looked forward to celebrating a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in the coming year. And for that, you need a rabbi.

When I walked into the room, they were ready. Not with their usual greeting of foul words, bored looks, spitballs, and paper airplanes, but with a sort of petition.

*Dear Rabbi,*

*As you know, this is our graduating year in the Hebrew School. But we still have lots of questions that never got answered in the years we’ve been here. Instead of learning the stuff in the book, could we please spend the time we have left this year answering these questions?*

*Respectfully,*

*The Seventh Grade Class*

“Sounds like a great idea,” I responded. “Let’s begin right away. I’ll try to answer any questions you have. What’s your first one?”

There was a moment of silence, as if they hadn’t really expected me to go along with the idea. And then the girl who handed me the petition said softly, “I have lots of questions about God and stuff, but I’m afraid if I tell you, you won’t let me have my Bat Mitzvah. So I wonder, are we really allowed to ask you questions? Does it make God mad if we ask questions?

*(Edward Feinstein, in Tough Questions Jews Ask<sup>10</sup>)*

**If you were the rabbi, how would you respond to these students?**

---

<sup>10</sup> Feinstein, p. 1-2

## **Resource 1-3**

### **TAPP: Talking About Prayer Phrases**

- I wonder...
- I notice...
- I appreciate...
- I agree/disagree with this...because...
- I understand what you are saying, and/but I think...

## Lesson 3

# Prayer is about God

### **Essential Question**

- How do we talk about God?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Illustrate their own personal beliefs about God.
- Explain the benefits and limitations of using metaphors to describe God.
- List metaphors used to describe God.

### **Activity 1 (Memorable Moment)**

Have students create a torn-paper Midrash explaining their ideas about God.

Give the students the following instructions:

1. Think about the phrase: To me, God is..., and write your answers on a sheet of paper.
2. Choose your favorite answer to illustrate
3. Using ONLY construction paper and glue sticks, illustrate your answer from step 2 on a sheet of paper. You can tear the paper, but you can't use scissors or any type of writing utensil.

After students have completed the torn-paper Midrash, ask:

- How many of you have ever thought about God?
- How many of you are not sure what you think about God?
- How many of you have questions about God?

Say: It is impossible to talk about prayer without also talking about God. We all have many questions about God. I can't guarantee that you will find answers to all your questions this year, but I can guarantee that you will think. Because we will be talking about God throughout the year, we are first going to learn about *how* we talk about God.

### **Activity 2**

Read the book, *In God's Name* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso.

Because the book is geared toward a younger audience, invite students to read the book to a class of first or second graders. After sharing the story with the younger children, have students discuss both the reflective questions below and any questions the younger children raised.

After the reading the story, ask:

- Why do you think everyone had a different name for God? *(Each person, based on who they were, had a different way of relating to God; Each person connected to God in a different way)*
- Let's look at some examples of the names people used. The woman who cared for the sick called God "Healer." What does a "healer" do? *(Heals people who are sick, makes people feel better)*
- So what do you imagine that the woman who called God "Healer" thought God spent a lot of time doing? *(Healing, making people feel better)*

Repeat this quick exercise with the child who was lonely and called God "Friend."

Around the room place several large pieces of butcher paper, with one of the following phrases at the top:

- God is a rock
- God is a king/queen
- God is a shepherd
- God is a parent
- God is a shield
- God is a judge

Instruct students to walk around the room looking at the different metaphors for God. Have them use markers to write how God is like the name on the paper.

After students have written their ideas on the butcher paper, ask:

- What do (a rock, a king/queen, etc.) and God have in common?
- Which of God's qualities is a person thinking of when they refer to God as \_\_\_?
- How is \_\_\_ a good metaphor for God? How does thinking of God as being like \_\_\_ help us to understand God better?
- What if I decided that God was a rock (or a shepherd, or a parent, etc.), and only talked about God as a rock...would there be anything wrong with that?<sup>11</sup>

Read and discuss **Resource 1-4**, which discusses God and metaphors.

Say: Although a metaphor cannot describe God in God's totality, it can help us to understand God a little better.

### **Activity 3**

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. Have each student take a minute or two to share the history of his or her name: Where it came from, who they were named after, any special nicknames, etc.

---

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from: Saliman, p. 98-99

After name sharing, say: As you can see, names are very important. Just as what we call each other matters, what we call God when we pray matters as well. You will now have a chance to explore many of the different names for God.

Divide students into pairs. Give students 5-10 minutes to look through the prayer book to find as many names for God as possible.

Pass out the 70 Names of God sheets to each student (**Resource 1-5**). Students will have a few minutes to compare the lists they made to the names on the sheet. Instruct each student to mark his or her three favorite names for God on the sheet.

After a few minutes, ask:

- Were you surprised at how many names there are for God? Why or why not?
- What do all the different names for God tell us about God?

Have students respond to the following prompt:

Pick your favorite name for God from the prayer book. Why do you like this name for God? What does this name tell us about God?

## **Resource 1-4**

In some ways, God is like a rock. God is thought to be strong and steadfast, permanent and timeless, dependable and eternal.

Most God metaphors carry within them a kernel of truth, but they also distort the reality of God. If we spoke of God only as a rock, for instance, Jewish children would grow up thinking of God as a mineral – Mount Rushmore, the Rock of Gibraltar, or a stone to skim on the surface of a quiet lake.

Similarly, God is like a king or queen. Just as a king or queen can be a powerful force in people's lives, God can be a powerful force in our lives. We do not believe, though, that God wears a robe and a crown, or carries a royal scepter.

It is important, therefore, to realize that God is beyond metaphors, beyond labels, beyond names...we will find that God is so much more than "King," "Rock," an old man with a beard, or even...an elephant.

*(Paul Yedwab, in The God Book<sup>12</sup>)*

---

<sup>12</sup> Yedwab, p. 12

# THE 70 NAMES OF G-D

**Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, former chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary:** *Judaism is a wellspring that emits an endless profusion of names for God. The Bible contains some 70; rabbinic literature adds another 90 or more and no one as yet has bothered to tally the number added by Jewish mystics. As Gershom Scholem wrote more than a half-century ago: "In the last resort, the whole of the Torah [for the author of the Zohar] is nothing but the one great and holy Name of God." The layers of names bespeak an unbroken dialogue driven by love and mystery.*

1. Adonai (see YHVH)
2. Adonai Elohai = the Lord my God (Jeremiah 31:17)
3. Adonai Elohei kol basar (Jeremiah 32:27)
4. Adonai YHVH Genesis 15:2,8, Deuteronomy 3:24; 9:26)
5. Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9)
6. Angel (Genesis 48:16)
7. Arm of The Lord (Isaiah 53:1)
8. Beer Sheva, God of an indefinitely long time
9. Branch (Zechariah 6:12)
10. Cornerstone (Psalm 118:22)
11. country (Genesis 42:30), master of a slave (Genesis 24:96) and the
12. Covenant to the People (Isaiah 42:6)
13. Creator (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
14. Creator of Heaven and Earth (Genesis 14:19)
15. Creator of Israel (Isaiah 43:15)
16. Crown and Daidem (Isaiah 28:5)
17. Deliverer (Psalm 144:2)
18. Ehyeh asher Ehyeh = I am Who I am
19. El Brit Judges 9:46 and Joshua 8:30-35; 24:1-28 The God of the Covenant
20. El Chaiyai The God of My Life (Psalm 42:9)
21. El Chanun The Gracious God (Jonah 4:2)
22. El De'ot The God of Knowledge (1 Samuel 2:3)
23. El Ehad The One God (Malachi 2:10)
24. El Elyon The Most High God (Genesis 14:18)
25. El Emunah The Faithful God (Deuteronomy 32:4)
26. El Gibor The Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6)
27. El HaGadol The Great God (Deuteronomy 10:17)
28. El HaKadosh The Holy God (Isaiah 5:16)
29. El HaKavod The God of Glory (Psalm 29:3)
30. El HaNe'eman The Faithful God (Deuteronomy 7:9)
31. El HaShamayim The God of the Heavens (Psalm 136:26)
32. El Kana The Jealous God (Deuteronomy 4:24)
33. El Olam The God of Eternity, or the God of the Universe (Genesis 21:33) El Emet The God of Truth (Psalm 31:6)
34. El Rachum The God of Compassion (Deuteronomy 4:31)
35. El Rah'ee The God Who Sees (Genesis 16:13)
36. El Ro'i Genesis 16:13 Hagar calls YHWH this after Sarah kicks her out. The God of Vision or The God Who Sees Me
37. El Sali God of My Rock (Psalm 42:10)
38. El Shaddai, P, "Omnipotent or God of the Mountain, Genesis 17:1, used only with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
39. El Simchat Gili God The Joy of My Exaltation (Psalm 43:4)
40. El Tzadik The Righteous God (Isaiah 45:21)
41. El Yeshuati The God of My Salvation (Isaiah 12:2)
42. El Yeshurun The God of Righteousness (Deuteronomy 33:26)
43. El Yisrael The God of Israel (Psalm 68:36)
44. Elah Sh'maya God of Heaven (Ezra 7:23)
45. Elah Sh'maya V'Arah God of Heaven and Earth (Ezra 5:11)
46. Elah Yerush'lem God of Jerusalem (Ezra 7:19)
47. Elah Yisrael God of Israel (Ezra 5:1)
48. Elohai = my God (e.g. I Kings 8:28) My God who listens to the cry and plea of Your servant.
49. Elohai Yishi = the God of my redemption (Psalm 27:9)
50. Elohei Chasdi God of My Kindness (Psalm 59:11, 18)
51. Elohei Elohim God of Gods (Deuteronomy 10:17)
52. Elohei Emet = (II Chronicles 2:15)
53. Elohei HaRuchot LeKol Basar God of the Spirits of All Flesh (Numbers 16:22) Elohim Kedoshim Holy God (Leviticus 19:2, Joshua 24:19) Elohim Chaiyim Living God (Jeremiah 10:10)
54. Elohei Haruchot I'khol basar, Numbers 27:16
55. Elohei Hashamayim = the God of Heaven (Nehemiah 1:4)
56. Elohei Kedem God of the Beginning (Deuteronomy 33:27)
57. Elohei Kol Basar God of All Flesh (Jeremiah 32:27)
58. Elohei Marom God of Heights (Micah 6:6)
59. Elohei Mauzi God of My Strength (Psalm 43:2)

60. Elohei Mikarov God Who Is Near (Jeremiah 23:23)  
61. Elohei Mishpat God of Justice (Isaiah 30:18)  
62. Elohei Selichot God of Forgiveness (Nehemiah 9:17)  
63. Elohei Tehilati God of My Praise (Psalm 109:1)  
64. Elohei Tz'vaot God of Hosts (2 Samuel 5:10)  
65. Elohei Tzur God of Rock (2 Samuel 22:47)  
66. Elohei Yerushalayim = (II Chronicles 32:19)  
67. Elohei Yisheich = the God of your salvation  
68. Elohei Yisheinu = God of our salvation (Psalm 65:6)  
69. Elohei Yishi God of My Salvation (Psalm 18:47, 25:5)  
70. Elohim Chayyim  
71. Elohim Misgabi = God, my high tower (Psalm 59:17)  
72. Father (Isaiah 64:8)  
73. Fortress (Psalm 91:2)  
74. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob (Exodus 3:15)  
75. Great Mighty Awesome God (Deuteronomy 10:17)  
76. Hiding Place (Psalm 32:7)  
77. Holy One (Habakkuk 1:12)  
78. Holy One (Isaiah 40:25)  
79. Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 1:4, 5:19)  
80. Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41)  
81. Holy Spirit (Psalm 51:11)  
82. Husband (Isaiah 54:5)  
83. Immanu-El God Is With Us (Isaiah 7:14)  
84. King (Isaiah 6:5)  
85. King of Glory (Psalm 24:7)  
86. King of Israel (Zephaniah 3:15)  
87. King/King of Israel (Isaiah 41:2)  
88. Light (Psalm 27:1)  
89. Light of Israel (Isaiah 10:17)  
90. Light to the Nations (Isaiah 42:6)  
91. Lord of All the Earth (Micah 4:13)  
92. Maker (Psalm 49:2)  
93. Messenger of the Covenant (Malachi 3:1)  
94. Messiah the Prince (Daniel 9:25)  
95. Mikedem Adonai Elohai K'doshi = Perpetually my God, my Holy one,  
96. Most High (Deuteronomy 32:8)  
97. My Cup (Psalm 16:5)  
98. My Lovingkindness (Psalm 144:2)  
99. My Portion in the Land of the Living (Psalm 142:5)  
100. Name[HaShem] (Leviticus 24:16)  
101. Our Dwelling Place (Psalm 90:1)  
102. Portion of My Inheritance (Psalm 16:5)  
103. Potter (Isaiah 64:8)  
104. Redeemer (Psalm 19:14)  
105. Redeemer of Israel (Isaiah 49:7)

106. Refuge (Psalm 46:1)  
107. Rock (Deuteronomy 32:4, 18, 31)  
108. Rock (Habakkuk 1:12)  
109. Rock of Israel (2 Samuel 23:3)  
110. Rock of My Strength (Psalm 62:7)  
111. Ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2)  
112. Savior (Isaiah 45:15)  
113. Shepherd (Genesis 49:24)  
114. Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1)  
115. Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:2)  
116. Shield (Psalm 18:30)  
117. Shiloh (Genesis 49:10)  
118. Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2)  
119. Spirit of the Lord God (Isaiah 61:1)  
120. Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Strength, the Spirit of Knowledge and the Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2)  
121. Star (Numbers 24:17)  
122. Stone (Psalm 118:22)  
123. Stone of Israel (Genesis 49:24)  
124. Strength (Psalm 46:1)  
125. Stronghold (Psalm 18:2)  
126. Temple but replaced by Adonai by 3rd c. B.C.E.  
127. Tent Peg, Bow of Battle (Zechariah 10:4)  
128. Tower of Strength (Psalm 61:3)  
129. Tsur ma'uzcha = the Rock of your stronghold (Both Isaiah 17:10) Elohei Mishpat = A God of Law (Isaiah 30:18) Elohei Yisrael Many places Elohei David, (Isaiah 38:5) A God Near At Hand, Not a God Far Off (Jeremiah 23:23)  
130. Upright One (Isaiah 26:7)  
131. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)  
132. YHVH/Adonai = "The One who causes to be, The One who brings into existence" Spoken during 1st  
133. YHVH Elohim Lord God (Genesis 2:4)  
134. YHVH M'kadesh The Lord Who Makes Holy (Ezekiel 37:28)  
135. YHVH Nisi The Lord My Miracle, or the Lord My Banner (Exodus 17:15) YHVH Shalom The Lord of Peace (Judges 6:24)  
136. YHVH O'saynu The Lord our Maker (Psalm 95:6)  
137. YHVH Rofehcha The Lord Who Heals You (Exodus 15:26)  
138. YHVH Tseva'ot = The One who brings the hosts of heaven into existence  
139. YHVH Tz'vaot The Lord of Armies (1 Samuel 1:11)  
140. YHVH Tzidkaynu The Lord Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16)  
141. YHVH Yireh The Lord Who Sees (Genesis 22:14)

## Lesson 4

# Prayer is Relevant to My Life

### Essential Question

- What are my goals for learning about prayer?

### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Describe how prayer relates to modern forms of communication.
- Explain the end goal of the curriculum: to discover “Why do I pray?”
- Set learning goals for themselves.
- Create a personal *T’fillat Haderech* (Traveler’s Prayer).

### Activity 1

Ask students:

- How do you communicate with others? (*talking, hand gestures, writing, etc.*)
- What devices help you communicate with others? (*computers, cell phones, texting, instant messenger, PSPs, etc.*)
- How do these devices help you communicate with others?

Explain to students that like talking/typing with others, prayer is also a form of communication that we use. Ask:

- How is prayer like our cell phones, computers, etc.?
- What devices help us when we pray?

Show students the quote from Twitter:

**“Sign from a church: Prayer is the world’s greatest wireless connection.”**

Ask:

- How is prayer like a wireless connection?
- What does this Tweet mean to you?

Ask each student to complete the following phrase: **I think prayer is like (a communication device that the student uses) because...** Have them write their answer on a sheet of paper or an index card (this can be done anonymously).

Collect all the papers, mix them up, and pass them back out to the students, giving each student a random paper. Have each student read the phrase written on the paper out loud.

Collect the cards with the comments to use for future reference. This process can be repeated throughout the year as an assessment to see how students are growing and changing in their ideas about prayer.

## **Activity 2**

Explain the overall goal for the curriculum and the final project:

**By the end of this year, you will be able to answer the question, “Why do I pray?” Throughout the year, we will be exploring why people pray, what makes prayer a Jewish thing, and how Jewish people connect to prayer. As we explore these ideas, you will have the opportunity to think about why YOU pray. Your ideas about why you pray can – and will – change throughout the year and throughout your life. But this year will help you start thinking about why you pray.**

Have students brainstorm their own learning goals for the year. They can articulate their hopes and dreams,<sup>13</sup> discuss their goals in light of B’nai Mitzvah, or talk about what they want to learn. Keep the goals for future reference and evaluation.

## **Activity 3**

Divide students into *chevruta* (pairs). Give each *chevruta* copies of the Prayer Text Study Sheet (**Resource 1-6**). Explain that both prayers on the sheet are modern compositions found in *Mishkan T’filah*.

Each *chevruta* should read the text and answer the questions. After 10-15 minutes, reconvene the class. Ask students about specific questions that they discussed, or ask *chevrutot* to share the most interesting ideas that they talked about.

## **Activity 4 (Authentic Assessment)**

Give each student a copy of *T’fillat Haderech* – the Traveler’s Prayer. (*Mishkan T’filah* p. 378).

Read the prayer out loud as a group (preferably in Hebrew and English). Explain to students that *T’fillat Haderech* is typically recited before a person sets out on a physical journey.

Say: We will be setting out on our own journey – a spiritual journey – to explore the meaning that prayer has in our lives. But before we do, we will create our own *T’fillat Haderech*.

Have the students create their own Traveler’s Prayer. They can use the original prayer or the prayers from the *chevruta* text study for inspiration.

---

<sup>13</sup> See Charney, p. 123-138

Two options for enhancing the Traveler's Prayers:

- Allow the students to use a variety of mediums – writing, drawing, etc, to express their prayers.
- Provide students with business card-sized pieces of paper upon which to write their prayers. They can then keep their prayers in their wallets.

## **Resource 1-6**

Teach me, O God, a blessing, a prayer  
on the mystery of a withered leaf,  
on ripened fruit so far,  
on the freedom to see, to sense,  
to breathe, to know, to hope, to despair.

Teach my lips a blessing, a hymn of praise,  
as each morning and night  
You renew Your days,  
lest my day today be as the one before;  
lest routine set my ways.

*(Mishkan T'filah, p. 21)*

לְמַדְנִי, אֱלֹהִי,  
בְּרָךְ וְהַתְּפִלָּה  
עַל סוּד עֵלֶה קָמַל,  
עַל נֶגֶה פְּרִי בָּשֵׁל  
עַל הַחֲרוּת הַזֹּאת:  
לְרֹאוֹת, לְחוּשׁ, לְנֶשֶׁם  
לְדַעַת, לְיַחַל, לְהַכְשִׁיל.  
  
לְמַד אֶת שְׁכֻתֹתַי  
בְּרָכָה וְשִׁיר הַלֵּל,  
בְּהִתְחַדָּשׁ זְמַנְךָ  
עִם בְּקָר וְעִם לַיִל,  
לְבַל יִהְיֶה יוֹמִי  
הַיּוֹם כְּתִמּוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם,  
לְבַל יִהְיֶה עָלַי יוֹמִי הָרִגֵּל.

- **What does this prayer want you to think, believe, feel, or do?**
- **How does this prayer make you feel?**
- **How does this prayer want us to think about God?**
- **What does this prayer tell us about prayer?**

May the door of this synagogue be wide enough  
to receive all who hunger for love, all who are lonely for friendship.

May it welcome all who have cares to unburden,  
thanks to express, hopes to nurture.

May the door of this synagogue be narrow enough  
to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.

May its threshold be no stumbling block  
to young or straying feet.

May it be too high to admit complacency,  
selfishness and harshness.

May this synagogue be, for all who enter,  
the doorway to a richer and more meaningful life.

*(Mishkan T'filah, p. 124)*

- **What does this prayer want you to think, believe, feel, or do?**
- **How does this prayer make you feel?**
- **How does this prayer want us to think about God?**
- **What does this prayer tell us about prayer?**

## Unit 2

# Why do people pray?

Before students can articulate why they themselves pray, they must understand why other people pray. Unit 2 encourages students to think about the overall purpose of prayer, before they begin to explore characteristics specific to *t'fillah*. Using a variety of sources, from the *Tanakh* (Jewish Bible) to the Internet, students will discover others' motivations for prayer.

Although students will explore many of the reasons for prayer in class, each student will also complete an individual ongoing assessment outside of class: interviewing another person about why he or she prays. This project is introduced in Lesson 1. In the final lesson of the unit (Lesson 6), students will have the opportunity to analyze and compare their interviews with one another. If possible, the interviews should be presented to the students' families and the synagogue community.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

### **Unit Goals**

- To introduce students to a wide range of reasons for prayer.
- To encourage students to begin thinking about their own reasons for prayer.
- To encourage students to talk freely about prayer.
- To provide students with reasons to attend services.
- To show students that people can choose to pray for a variety of reasons.
- To illustrate that there is not a single, “correct” reason to pray.

## **Essential Questions**

- Why is it important to have a reason for prayer?
- What are the overarching reasons that people pray?
- How do the words of the prayers affect why we pray?
- How have the reasons people prayed in the past influenced our service?
- Why is prayer important in a modern society?
- What does our synagogue believe are the most important reasons to pray?
- Why do people pray?

## **Unit Overview**

Lesson 1	We Say...
Lesson 2	The Prayers Say... (Scripted)
Lesson 3	History Says...
Lesson 4	Modern Sources Say...
Lesson 5	Our Synagogue Says...
Lesson 6	People Say...

## **Memorable Moments**

- Living timeline (Lesson 3)
- Social media exploration (Lesson 4)
- Interview (Lesson 6)

## **Authentic Assessment**

- *Iyyun T'fillah* (Lesson 2)
- Synagogue advertisement (Lesson 5)
- Interview presentation (Lesson 6)
- The Personal Prayer Playlist (At the end of each lesson)

# Lesson 1

## We Say...

### **Essential Questions**

- Why is it important to have a reason for prayer?
- What are the overarching reasons that people pray?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Articulate the importance of understanding why people pray.
- List and categorize reasons why people pray.
- Describe methods for discovering why people pray – interviews, looking at prayers, etc.

### **Activity 1**

Show students the trailer or selected clips from the movie *Keeping Up with the Steins*.<sup>14</sup>

Explain that this movie gives us several (mostly comical) reasons for becoming B'nai Mitzvah, but there are also many other (more meaningful) reasons. Have the students brainstorm all the reasons that they are becoming B'nai Mitzvah. List the reasons on the board. Have each student pick the reason for B'nai Mitzvah that is most compelling for him or her and ask each student to share it with the class. *(Students can – and should – pick different reasons from their classmates.)*

Ask:

- Why do you think we all have different reasons for becoming B'nai Mitzvah?
- Why is it important to have a reason for becoming B'nai Mitzvah?
- What if we took all these reasons away, and the only reason was “just because?” Would you still want to have a B'nai Mitzvah? Why or why not?
- What are some other examples of times in your life when it is important to have a reason for doing something? *(going to school, writing thank-you notes, being nice to a sibling, etc.)* Why is it important to have a reason?

Teacher will say: Now, think about “prayer” for instead of B'nai Mitzvah.”

- Is it just as important to have a reason for prayer as it is to have a reason for becoming B'nai Mitzvah? Why or why not?
- If the only reason to pray is “just because,” would you still pray?
- How would having a reason for prayer help you pray?

---

<sup>14</sup> Website: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TKLR1\\_JVLU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TKLR1_JVLU)

Say: Just like we all have different reasons for becoming B’nai Mitzvah, we also have different reasons for praying. Just like having a reason for doing something can motivate us to do that thing, articulating our reasons for prayer can also motivate us to pray. For the rest of this unit, we will be exploring various reasons that people pray.

## **Activity 2**

Give each student a pile of post-it notes. Instruct students to think of as many reasons as they can that people might pray. Have students write one reason on each post-it note, large enough for everyone to see. (Students should have many notes with writing on them.) After 3-5 minutes, have the students place their sticky notes on an empty wall.

Give students a few minutes to walk around and look at all the responses on the sticky notes. After a few minutes, ask students to group similar ideas together. For example: they may arrange “give thanks” and “show amazement” in the same group. Students may move the notes around as many times as they would like within 5-10 minutes. Instruct students to remain silent while they are grouping. By the end of the 5-10 minutes, each note should be placed in a group.

Read each group of post-it notes out loud to the students. Have the students come up with a title for each group. (For example: “To show appreciation”). Suggested group titles are listed in **Resource 2-1: Suggested Reasons People Pray**. Write the title of each group at the top of a poster board, using a separate poster board for each group. Then, list all the reasons from that group of sticky notes on the poster board with the appropriate title.

Hang these poster boards on the wall. They will be used throughout the unit to keep track of all the reasons that people pray. Whenever a new reason that people pray appears in classroom discussion, add it to the appropriate poster board, or create a new poster board with a new category.

## **Activity 3**

Introduce a unit-long project, designed to explore why people pray.

Ask: How can we find out why people pray? *(by asking people, by reading articles about prayer, by looking at the prayers, observing people in prayer, etc.)*

In class, the students will be using all the above methods to explore why Jewish tradition and Jewish institutions (like our synagogue) say that we should pray. This interview project will allow students to discover why the people around them pray.

Have students select one or two people, whom they know, to interview. (The people can be Jewish or non-Jewish.) The recorded interviews will be analyzed on the final day of the unit and presented to the synagogue community.

Guide the students in brainstorming whom to interview and what questions to ask. Some ideas:

- Whom to interview:
  - Parent
  - Friend
  - Member of the congregation
  - Religious school teacher
  - Secular school teacher
  - Soccer coach, baseball coach, ballet teacher, etc.
  - Neighbor
- Questions to ask:
  - How often do you pray?
  - Why do you think praying is important?
  - Why did you pray when you were younger?
  - Why do you pray now?
  - Have your reasons for prayer changed? If yes, why? If no, why not?
  - Where does God fit into your idea of prayer?
  - Do you ever struggle with prayer? What do you do during those times?

Students should work on this interview project throughout the unit. The results of the interviews will be compiled and analyzed in Lesson 6. Please check in with students weekly to monitor the progress of the interviews. It is also advisable to inform the parents about the project, either with a letter or an e-mail home.

## **Resource 2-1**

### **Suggested Reasons People Pray**

To learn

To reflect

To become a better person

To belong to a community

To connect to the past

To give thanks

To celebrate

To show amazement

To mourn

To express anger

To heal

To express happiness

To talk to God

To feel close to God

To express hope

Etc.

## Lesson 2 (Scripted)

### The Prayers Say...

#### **Essential Question**

- How do the words of the prayers affect why we pray?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to...

- Identify key themes of prayers in the service: thanks/praise, petition, healing/comfort.
- Analyze how different prayers can serve different purposes in the service.
- Create an *ivyun t'fillah* (a reading about a prayer that incorporates the theme of a prayer) about one of the prayers in the service.

#### **Timeline**

0:00-0:10	Activity 1 – The purpose of the thing is...
0:10-0:24	Activity 2 – Prayers of petition
0:24-0:38	Activity 3 – Blessings
0:38-0:52	Activity 4 – Comfort/Healing
0:52-0:57	Activity 5 – <i>Ivyun t'fillah</i>
0:57-1:00	Activity 6 – Personal Prayer Playlist

#### **Activity 1**

Bring to class a selection of random objects. (For example: a hammer, a hat, a whisk, a pair of sunglasses, a cup, etc.). Hide the objects so students cannot see them. Place one object in a paper bag. Let one student look into the bag to see the object. The other students can then ask that student “yes” or “no” questions to determine what the object is. (For example: Is the object bigger than an apple? Is the object edible? Does the object have moving parts?)

Repeat the game multiple times using different objects.

After the game, ask:

- **How do an object’s characteristics affect its purpose?**
- **Did all the objects have the same purpose?**
- **Think of two similar objects that have different purposes. (For example: a spoon and a shovel). How do their unique characteristics affect their purpose?**

Say: **Like these objects, prayer also has many different characteristics. Although all prayers are similar, they have different purposes based on how they are written and what they say.**

**These characteristics of different prayers can give us clues as to why people pray. Today we will explore three of these characteristics.**

Activities 2-4 can be done as learning centers or as whole-class activities.

### **Activity 2 – Prayers of Petition – Asking for Help**

Have students read Shel Silverstein’s “Prayer of the Selfish Child” in **Resource 2-2**.

Ask:

- **What is the purpose of this prayer?** *(to ask God for something, for personal gratification)*
- **Is this child asking for the type of things we normally pray about?** *(not really; we do not normally ask to keep things away from others)*
- **What do we normally ask for when we pray?** *(peace, healing, strength, help for others, etc.)*

Say: **One of the most popular reasons for people to pray is to ask God for something. Often, we ask for personal things, but we also ask for things that we cannot accomplish on our own.**

Have the students look at the following prayers:

- *Sim Shalom – Mishkan T’filah p. 98*
- *Elohai Nitzor – Mishkan T’filah p. 100*
- *Hashkiveinu – Mishkan T’filah p. 160*

Ask:

- **What is each prayer asking for?** *(peace, using words appropriately, protection)*
- **What do these prayers have in common?** *(they are asking God for something: help and protection, making a better world)*
- **What do these prayers tell us about why people pray?** *(people pray to ask God for help and protection)*

### **Activity 3 – Blessings – To give thanks**

Divide the students into two teams. The students will play charades using words and phrases taken from the morning blessings (**Resource 2-3**).

Pick a student from one of the teams, and give the student one of the phrases. The student will act out the phrase, and the students on his or her team will have to guess what the student is doing. If the team guesses correctly, they get a point. If they guess incorrectly, the other team has a chance to guess. Once students have guessed the phrase, a student from the other team will have a chance to act out another phrase.

After charades, ask:

- **How many of you perform at least one of the tasks each day?**
- **Do you ever think about these tasks while you are doing them? Why or why not?**
- **Where do these phrases come from?** (*Birchot Hashachar - The morning blessings*)

**Say: Traditional Jews say these blessings every morning as they get out of bed and get ready for the day. In Reform Judaism, we often recite these blessings at the beginning of morning services.**

Pass out a copy of the morning blessings from *Mishkan T'filah* (p. 36-40) to the students. Give them 3-5 minutes to read over the blessings.

Ask:

- **Why do we say blessings over these tasks if they are so much a part of our routine?** (*to acknowledge that we are able to do them because many people cannot, to recognize the importance of these tasks*)
- **Whom or what do we recognize when we say these blessings?** (*God, ourselves, science, bodily functions, etc.*)
- **What do these blessings tell us about why people pray?** (*to give thanks, so show appreciation for daily miracles, to express wonder*)
- **What other tasks do you perform in the morning that could fit into this category of blessings (expressing thanks and wonder)?** (*eating, seeing your family, checking your phone for messages [technology], etc.*)

**Say: There are many other times in the service when we express our gratitude for the things we have in our lives. There is a specific formula that we use to show our appreciation for God and for the things that we are given in life. What is this formula?** (*A blessing*)

**When you are praying, or reading the prayers in our service, there is an easy way to find the blessings. You can look for six key words** (post the words on the board):

בָּרַךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam...*

Blessed are You Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe...

Instruct students to search through the Shabbat morning service in *Mishkan T'filah* (p. 287-337) to find a blessing that they think is interesting (using the blessing formula to recognize the blessings). Have students answer the following questions about their blessing:

- **How does this blessing show appreciation?**
- **When might someone recite this blessing (besides when they are sitting in services)?**
- **What does this blessing tell us about why someone might pray?**

#### **Activity 4 – Comfort/Healing**

Have students read the excerpt from the book, “*God...*”? in **Resource 2-4**.

After the students have read the excerpt, ask:

- **Why did this family feel the need to pray?** *(so God could help with healing, so they felt some control over the situation, etc.)*
- **How did this type of prayer help the family?** *(gave them peace of mind, gave them courage, etc.)*

Say: **Sometimes we pray because we need comfort, we need to feel better. In fact, there are prayers in our service that are designed to ask for and to help us with healing.**

Have the students read the *Mi Shebeirach* (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 109). Ask:

- **When do people pray for healing?** *(when they are physically sick, when they are hurt, when they are upset about something)*
- **Why would someone pray for healing, even if they are going to the doctor and doing everything medically possible?** *(prayer can help make a person feel better, it can give hope)*
- **What does the *Mi Shebeirach* tell us about why people pray?** *(for healing, to feel better)*

Have students read the following quote:

Prayer cannot mend a broken bridge, rebuild a ruined city, or bring water to parched fields. Prayer can mend a broken heart, lift up a discouraged soul, and strengthen a weakened will.  
*(Ferdinand M. Isserman)*

Ask:

- **According to Isserman, why do people pray?** *(for healing, for strength, for courage)*
- **How can prayer help us to do this?** *(by giving us hope, by getting us to think about something other than ourselves)*

### **Activity 5 (Authentic Assessment)**

Explain to students that they will now have an opportunity to create an *iyyun t'fillah*, a short reading about one of the prayers that they have just studied from the prayer book (*Sim Shalom, Elohai Nitzor, Hashkiveinu, Nisim B'chol Yom, Mi Shebeirach*, or one of the prayers that they chose on their own). Their *iyyun* should focus on why people pray, according to the prayer that they have chosen. The *iyyun* can be a poem or a story.

Provide students with some examples of *iyyunei t'fillah* from *Mishkan T'filah* and other prayer books. See **Resource 2-5**.

### **Activity 6**

Have students add a song to their Personal Prayer Playlist.
---

## **Resource 2-2**

### **Prayer of the Selfish Child** **by Shel Silverstein**

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,  
And if I die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my toys to break.  
So none of the other kids can use 'em...  
Amen

*(In A Light in the Attic<sup>15</sup>)*

---

<sup>15</sup> Silverstein, p. 15

## **Resource 2-3**

### **Morning Blessing Charades**

Waking up

Vision

Stretching

Rising to the new day

Standing upon the earth

Taking Steps

Putting on clothes

Finding strength

Opening your eyes

Being made in the image of God

Being free

## **Resource 2-4**

When I was in college, my mother was diagnosed with a brain tumor and had to undergo five days of intense radiation therapy. Like all believers in modern science, we attacked the problem medically: finding the best doctor, choosing a treatment option, making appointments, etc.

As Jews, we also attacked the problem spiritually. Our rabbi and cantor brought my mother into the sanctuary for a special blessing. Members of our congregation stocked our refrigerator with comfort food, which is always important in the midst of a crisis. We enlisted our non-Jewish friends to pray for my mother in their own places of worship. I prayed at exactly the time of her treatment each day, whether it was in my dorm room or with my own Jewish community at college. My father created a CD of my mother's favorite Jewish music and prayers to play during her treatment, including something sung or played by each of her children. My mother recited the Shema each time they aimed the radiation beam at her head.  
(*Leah Berkowitz, in God?*<sup>16</sup>)

---

<sup>16</sup> Barkin, p. 42-43

## **Resource 2-5**

### ***Nisim B'chol Yom***

*(Mishkan T'filah, p. 41)*

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.

***Nisim B'chol Yom***  
(Or T'filah, p. 38)

We praise You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of all time and space...

We call You *pokei-ach ivrim*—  
the Opener of blind eyes;  
Help us to see Your world in a new light.

We call You *malbish arumim*—  
the Dresser of those without clothing;  
Help us put on the garments of health and life.

We call You *matir asurim*—  
the Freer of captives;  
Help us to break free of the bonds which keep us locked within  
ourselves.

We call You *zokeif k'fufim*—  
the Straightener of bent backs;  
Help us to find the power to stand upright and proud.

We call You *ha-meichin mitz-adei gaver*—  
the Steadiness in our steps;  
Help us to understand our journey ever more clearly.

We call You *ha-notein la-ya-cifko-ach*—  
the Source of strength for the weary;  
Help us to be strong, and to be a source of strength for those we love.

**Hashkiveinu**  
(*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 161)

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, יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִבָּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ  
וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

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, יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִבָּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ  
וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

## Hashkiveinu

(Gates of Prayer for Young People, p. 14-15)

ברוך אתה, יהי הפורס  
סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ. Adonai, haporeis  
sukkat shalom aleinu.

We praise You, Eternal God.

You help us feel safe and secure,  
like being wrapped in a warm,  
soft blanket.

15  
EVENING  
SERVICE I



### ◆ GOD'S PROTECTION

Hashkiveinu,  
Adonai Eloheinu,  
l'shalom,  
v'ha-amideinu,  
malkein, l'chayim.

It is evening, and soon we will go to bed.

You are with us at all times, God,  
when we sleep and when we wake.

When it is dark,  
we turn to You for light.

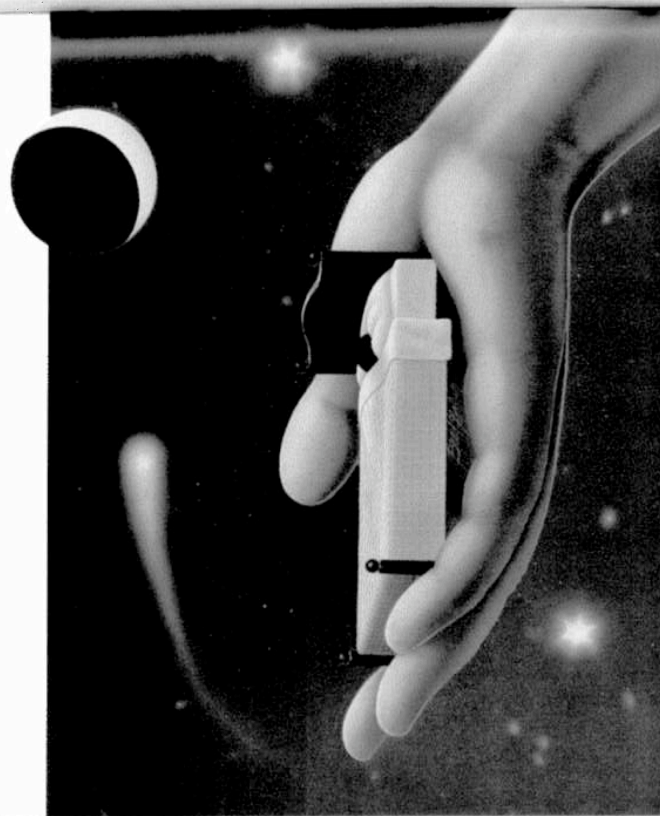
When we are afraid,  
we turn to You for courage.

When we feel weak,  
we turn to You for strength.

Be with us tonight and always.  
Help us to know You are there.

14  
EVENING  
SERVICE I

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ,  
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,  
לְשָׁלוֹם,  
וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ,  
מַלְכֵינוּ, לְחַיִּים.



***Sim Shalom***  
(*Or T'filah*, p. 76)

Grant us peace, Your most precious gift, Eternal Source of peace,  
and enable the Children of Israel to be its messenger  
unto the peoples of the earth. Bless our country, that it may ever be  
a stronghold of peace, and its advocate among the nations.  
May contentment reign within its borders, health and happiness  
within its homes. Strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship  
among the inhabitants of all lands. Plant virtue in every soul,  
and may the love of Your name hallow every home and every heart.  
Praised are You, *Adonai*, Source of peace.



What shall I ask of You, God?  
I have all I need; I lack not a thing.  
And I ask not for me alone, but for many mothers, children, and  
fathers.  
And not only in this land but also in strange and enemy lands.  
I wish to ask for peace. Yes, peace I want,  
and I know You will not refuse a single request from a young girl.  
You created a Land of Peace and in it is the City of Peace  
in which stood a Temple of Peace;  
but peace has not come yet...  
What shall I ask of You, God?  
Haven't I all that I need?  
I will ask only for peace,  
Peace.



A rabbi was asked by a farmer  
when the world would truly know peace.  
The rabbi replied, "Follow me."  
He then brought the farmer to the side of a brook,  
put his hand on the farmer's head, and pressed it into the water  
until the farmer came up gasping for breath.  
The rabbi then said: "This is your answer. When people want peace,  
when they want it as much as you just wanted air,  
when they come up gasping for peace,  
when they are ready to give up everything in themselves  
to have peace, as you have given to have air,  
then the world will have peace."

***Sim Shalom***

*(The Book of Blessings, p. 475)*

*E*ternal wellspring of peace—  
may we be drenched with the longing for peace  
that we may give ourselves over  
as the earth to the rain, to the dew,  
until peace overflows our lives  
as living waters overflow the seas.

---

*As we bless the source of life  
so we are blessed.*

***Elohai Nitzor***  
(*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 101)

LEND US THE WIT, O God, to speak the lean and simple word;  
give us the strength to speak the found word, the meant word;  
grant us the humility to speak the friendly word, the answering word.

And oh, make us sensitive, God  
sensitive to the sound of the words which others speak —  
sensitive to the sound of their words — and to the silences between.

I NEED STRENGTH, humility, courage, patience.  
Strength to control my passions,  
humility to assess my own worth,  
courage to rise above defeats,  
patience to cleanse myself of imperfections.

And wisdom: to learn and live by our sacred teachings.

Let me not be discouraged by my failings.  
Let me take heart  
from all that is good and noble in my character.  
Keep me from falling victim to cynicism.  
Teach me sincerity and enthusiasm.  
Endow me with perception and courage,  
that I may serve others with compassion and love.

## **Elohai Nitzor**

(*Gates of Prayer for Young People*, p. 88)

### **PRAYER**

I have many feelings, God.  
Some are good. Some are bad.  
Sometimes I like my feelings.  
Sometimes I don't.  
Sometimes I understand my feelings.  
Sometimes I don't.  
Sometimes I can control my feelings.  
Sometimes I can't.  
I like having good feelings.  
And I like to understand and control  
my feelings.  
Help me understand them.  
And help me control them as I grow.

Yihyu l'ratzon	יְהִי לְרָצוֹן
imrei fi,	אִמְרֵי־פִי
v'hegyon libi	וְהִגִּיֹּן לִבִּי
l'fanecha,	לְפָנֶיךָ,
Adonai, tzuri v'go-ali.	יְהוָה, צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.

May the words of my mouth  
and the thoughts in my heart  
be pleasing to You, O God.

***Mi Shebeirach***  
(*The Book of Blessings*, p. 481)

*For one in need of healing*

*For an individual:*

*As those who came before us were blessed  
in the presence of the communities that sustained them,*

*so we offer our blessings  
for one among us in need of healing.*

\_\_\_\_\_,  
(name)  
*may you have comfort and relief  
in the healing of body and mind,*

*and may you return in time  
to health and wholeness and strength.*

---

## **Lesson 3**

### **History/Jewish Text Says...**

#### **Essential Question**

- How have the reasons people prayed in the past influenced our prayers today?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to...

- Compare their personal growth and change to the growth and change of prayer throughout the centuries.
- Describe the basic historical development of the service.
- Analyze how the service has changed based on changing reasons for prayer.

#### **Activity 1**

Ask students to bring three photographs of themselves from home: One of them as a baby, one current photo, and one photo of them some time in between the other two photos.

Have the students tape their photos in order chronologically on a sheet of paper. Explain that the students will be taking a trip back in history to discover the origins of their thoughts and how they have changed since they were born. For each picture, have the students create a thought bubble. In the thought bubble, instruct them to write what they think they were thinking at the age in the picture.

Have students share their timelines with the class. After all the students have shared, explain: As we grow and change, our thoughts grow and change with us. Our experiences help shape what we think and how we view the world.

Similarly, as the Jewish people have grown and changed, their ideas about prayer and the prayers they say have grown and changed as well. The reasons the Jewish people pray have changed throughout the centuries.

#### **Activity 2**

Explain to students that they will create a living timeline illustrating the development of prayer and the changing reasons people pray.

Divide students into three groups. Each group will be responsible for creating a separate point on the timeline. The three points, and the resources each group will use, are:

- Biblical times – **Resource 2-6**
- Rabbinic times – **Resource 2-7**
- Current times – **Resource 2-8**

Give each group its particular resource. The groups will read through the text study, answering the questions in bold.

After the students have read through their texts, instruct each group to create a 1-2 minute skit to illustrate the text that they have studied, and to explain why people in that time prayed. The skits will be acted out on the timeline.

### **Activity 3 (Memorable Moment)**

Have students present their points on a timeline. First, have the group from Biblical times present their skit, followed by the Rabbinic group, and then the modern times group. After the presentations, ask:

- How have the reasons that people pray changed over time? Why do you think they have changed?
- How is the timeline of Jewish prayer like your personal timeline that you created?

## **Resource 2-6**

### **Biblical Times**

**Instructions:** In your time-period group, please read the following excerpt from the Tanakh. When you arrive at a question in **bold**, stop and discuss the question before you move on to the next paragraph.

---

*When the Israelites were wandering in the desert, Moses' siblings, Miriam and Aaron, began to gossip about Moses:*

They said, "Has Adonai spoken only through Moses? Has God not spoken through us as well?" Adonai heard it.

#### **How do people communicate with God in the Tanakh?**

Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth. Suddenly Adonai called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting." So the three of them went out. Adonai came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, "Aaron and Miriam!" The two of them came forward; and God said, "Hear these My words: When a prophet of God arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the Lord. How then did you not stop from speaking against My servant Moses!" Still angry with them, Adonai departed.

#### **How does God communicate with people in the Tanakh?**

#### **Why was God angry with Aaron and Miriam?**

As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales! When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales.

#### **How would you have felt if you were Aaron and saw your sister get sick and be punished by God?**

#### **How would you have felt if you were Moses?**

And Aaron said to Moses, "O God, do not hold us accountable for the sin which we committed in our folly. Let Miriam not be like the dead, who emerges from his mother's womb with half his flesh eaten away."

**How would you have responded to Aaron if you were Moses?**

So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “O God, please heal her!  
(Numbers 12:2-13)

**Why do you think Moses said this prayer of healing?**

---

To some extent, the men and women of the Bible (long before the Rabbis) had once prayed by whim. They prayed to God when they felt moved to, and in any way they felt comfortable. Moses asks for Miriam’s health in five simple Hebrew words, *El na r’fa na lah* (“God, please send her healing”).  
(Lawrence Hoffman, in *My People’s Prayer Book*<sup>17</sup>)

**What do the texts from the Tanakh and from Rabbi Hoffman tell us about why people prayed in Biblical times?**

**Now, create a 1-2 minute skit that illustrates the text that you studied, and explains why people in this time period prayed.**

---

<sup>17</sup> Hoffman, p. 4

## **Resource 2-7**

### **Rabbinic Times**

**Instructions:** In your time-period group, please read the following excerpt from the Mishnah. When you arrive at a question in **bold**, stop and discuss the question before you move on to the next paragraph.

---

From what time do they recite the *Shema* in the morning?

**Why do you think the Rabbis care what time people recite the *Shema* in the morning?**

From the hour that one can distinguish between [the colors] blue and white. Rabbi Eliezer says, "Between blue and green."\* And one must complete it before sunrise. Rabbi Joshua says, "Before the third hour. For it is the practice of royalty to rise [at] the third hour. [Thus we deem the third hour still to be 'morning.']" One who recites later than this [after the third hour] has not transgressed [by reciting a blessing at the wrong time, for he is viewed simply] as one who recited from the Torah.

**Which Rabbi do you agree with? Why?**

The house of Shammai say, "In the evening everyone should recline in order to recite [the *Shema*] and in the morning they should stand, "as it says [in the passage of the *Shema*], *When you lie down and when you rise* (Deuteronomy 6:7)."

**How did the Rabbis prove their point?**

But the House of Hillel say, "Everyone may recite according to his own manner [either reclining or standing], "as it says, *And as you walk by the way* (Deuteronomy 6:7)."

**Who do you agree with, the House of Shammai or the House of Hillel? Why?**

If it is so [that one may recite however he wishes] why does [the verse] say, *When you lie down and when you rise*? [It means that you must recite the *Shema*] at the hour that people lie down [night] and the hour that people rise [in the morning].

**How is the paragraph above reflected in our services today?**

---

\* More light is required to distinguish between the colors blue and green than the colors blue and white, so this second case must occur later in the day.

Said Rabbi Tarfon, “I was coming along the road [in the evening] and reclined to recite the *Shema* as required by the House of Shammai. And [in doing so] placed myself in danger of [being attacked by] bandits.” They said to him, “You are yourself responsible [for what might have befallen you], for you violated the words of the House of Hillel.”

*(Mishnah Berakhot 1:2-3<sup>18</sup>)*

### **Why do you think the Rabbis agree with the House of Hillel?**

---

The Rabbis transform private prayer of the moment into a public work like the [sacrifices at the time of the Temple in Jerusalem]: the honoring of God by the offering of our lips [our words].

First, [prayer] was set as to time. Second, there were rules about how to do it. And third, each service was structured as to a succession of themes that had to be addressed by the oral interpreters [the Rabbis].

*(Lawrence Hoffman, in My People’s Prayer Book<sup>19</sup>)*

### **What do the texts from the Mishnah and from Rabbi Hoffman tell us about why people prayed in Rabbinic times?**

**Now, create a 1-2 minute skit that illustrates the text that you studied, and explains why people in this time period prayed.**

---

<sup>18</sup> Neusner, p. 3-4

<sup>19</sup> Hoffman, p. 4

## **Resource 2-8**

### **Current Times**

**Instructions:** In your time-period group, please read the following excerpt from our prayer book. When you arrive at a question in **bold**, stop and discuss the question before you move on to the next portion.

---

#### **Prayer for Our Country**

O guardian of life and liberty,  
may our nation always merit your protection.

**Why do you think we say a prayer for our nation?**

Teach us to give thanks for what we have  
by sharing it with those who are in need.  
Keep our eyes open to the wonders of creation,  
and alert to the care of the earth.  
May we never be lazy in the work of peace;  
may we honor those who have died in defense of our ideals.

**What ideas and concerns are expressed in the prayer above?**

Grant our leaders wisdom and forbearance.  
May they govern with justice and compassion  
Help us all to appreciate one another,  
and to respect the many ways that we may serve You.  
May our homes be safe from affliction and strife,  
and our country be sound in body and spirit.  
Amen.

*(Mishkan T'filah, p. 376)*

**Who do you think wrote this prayer? Why do you think they wrote it?**

**If you could add another line to this prayer, what would you add?**

#### **Prayer for the State of Israel**

O Heavenly One, Protector and Redeemer of Israel,  
bless the State of Israel which marks the dawning of hope for all who seek peace.

**Why do you think we say a prayer for Israel?**

Shield it beneath the wings of Your love; spread over it the canopy of Your peace;  
send Your light and truth to all who lead and advise,  
guiding them with Your good counsel.

Establish peace in the land and fullness of joy for all who dwell there.

Amen.

(*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 377)

**Who do you think wrote this prayer? Why do you think they wrote it?**

**If you could add another line to this prayer, what would you add?**

---

*The State of Israel has a special hold on our soul. Israel is the very essence of our being. The Torah that spells out for us a way of life and a religious destiny also binds us to a land, and Jewish life cannot be sustained without Israel at its core.... Israel's pain is our pain; her safety, our gladness....*

(Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, President, Union for Reform Judaism)

To give voice to our communal sorrow and hopes for peace we include for your use Prayers for the State of Israel, Prayers On Behalf of Israeli Defense Forces, Prayers for Peace, Prayers in Song, and Modern Readings and Poems on Israel. They may be added to your Shabbat worship, read at home or used to create a "liturgy" for a communal gathering in support of Israel.

(*Union for Reform Judaism Website*<sup>20</sup>)

**What do the texts from the prayer book and from Rabbi Yoffie tell us about why people pray today?**

**Now, create a 1-2 minute skit that illustrates the text that you studied, and explains why people in this time period pray.**

---

<sup>20</sup> URJ.org

## Lesson 4

### Modern Sources Say...

#### **Essential Question**

- Why is prayer important in a modern society?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to...

- Describe reasons for prayer in modern society.
- Examine social media to determine why people pray.
- Analyze whether or not the reasons for prayer in modern sources have the same validity as more traditional Jewish sources (prayer book, Rabbis, etc.).
- Create their own “Statue Update” or “Tweet” explaining why people today pray.

#### **Activity 1**

Four corners: Place the categorized lists from Lesson 1 (People pray...to learn, for personal reflection, to heal, to give thanks, to belong to a community, to petition, etc.) along the walls of the room. Call out different scenarios involving prayer (see below), and the students will stand next to the person that they believe best explains why people in the scenario pray. After the students move, ask them why they chose that specific category for why people pray. Repeat with the rest of the scenarios.

The scenarios will include:

- A candlelight vigil for the victims of a school shooting
- A moment of silence before a football game
- A guided meditation
- A blessing over children on Shabbat
- A benediction at a political event
- A person who has just been through a natural disaster and says a prayer for help
- Etc.

Explain: Even in today’s society, people rely on prayer for a number of different reasons.

#### **Activity 2 (Memorable Moment)**

This activity involves the use of social media websites on the Internet. Students must be monitored carefully in their use of these websites. The teachers should complete their own research on these sites before this activity, so they can direct students to the appropriate destinations.

Explain to students that they will have the opportunity to explore the reasons that people today pray. Before the exploration, ask:

- Do you think the reasons for prayer that we discover in our social media exploration will be similar to or different from the reasons we have already discussed in this unit? How so?

Guide students through social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter. Once on these sites, search for the words “pray” and “prayer.” **Make sure to keep students away from sites that go against synagogue doctrine.** Encourage students to read and discuss the content of these sites.

If the Internet is not available, do a search before class and either print out web pages or compile them into a PowerPoint presentation for student analysis.

As students are exploring the sites, encourage them to consider the following questions:

- Who is this site designed for?
- What language does this site use to talk about prayer?
- According to this site, what are the reasons that people pray?

### **Activity 3 (Or Alternate to Activity 2)**

Find current articles in the news that address issues of prayer. Topics can include:

- Prayer and healing
- Links between prayer and science
- Prayer in school
- Prayer vigils after natural disasters or community tragedies
- Etc.

Ask students to read and discuss the articles, and consider the following questions:

- How do you feel when you read this article? Do you know why?
- What are the main points of this article?
- How does this article describe the purpose of prayer?
- According to this article, what are the reasons that people pray?

### **Activity 4**

Instruct students to create a “status update” that could be used for Facebook or Twitter, explaining why people today pray. The key is that this “status update” should be one sentence or less.

## Lesson 5

# Our Synagogue Says...

### **Essential Question**

- What does our synagogue believe are the most important reasons to pray?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to...

- Describe the synagogue's reasons for prayer according to its physical space and discussions with synagogue leadership.
- Compare the synagogue's reasons for prayer to the modern and historical reasons they have already learned about.
- Create an advertisement for their synagogue's services based on the synagogue's reasons for prayer.

### **Activity 1**

Begin class by showing a slideshow of a variety of spaces (bedrooms, living rooms, classrooms, churches, synagogues, etc.) with a variety of different atmospheres (dark, light, messy, heavily decorated, modern, etc.). As each slide is shown, ask:

- How does this space make you feel?
- Why does it make you feel that way?
- Would you want to spend time in this space?
- What do you think this space is used for? How can you tell?
- Why do you think people spend time in this space?

After the slideshow, explain: The way a space is arranged can tell us a lot about what the space is used for and why people spend time in that space. Looking at a space can give you clues as to what the people that use the space value. For example, people with a dark bedroom may value sleep, while people with a big, clean kitchen may value entertaining. Today, we are going to analyze our own space for prayer: the sanctuary. It will be your job, simply by looking at the space, to decide why people come to our sanctuary to pray. Some things you may want to consider<sup>21</sup>:

- How are the chairs arranged?
- Where is the Rabbi, Cantor, choir, musicians or band?
- Where do important people in the synagogue sit?
- Are there windows? Where are they?
- How is the sanctuary decorated?

---

<sup>21</sup> Brandt, p. 156-163

Give students graph paper and pencils. Take the class on a “field trip” to the sanctuary, where the students will have some time to sketch the layout of the sanctuary. As they sketch, they should consider the questions listed above. The drawings do not necessarily have to be to scale or accurate, but they should encompass the key features of the space. After the students have sketched the sanctuary, return to the classroom.

Have the students trade sketches. Give students **Resource 2-9** to guide their analysis and discussion.

Instruct the students to make a list of the things they learned from looking at their partner’s sketch of the sanctuary. After the lists are made, have the students pair up with the person whose sketch they have. Have the students compare lists and discuss what these lists tell us about why people in the synagogue pray. *(For example, if the chairs are arranged in a circle, the students may decide that this illustrates the idea that people come for community. If the choir or band has a prominent space in the front, the students may decide that people come to listen to music and to think.)*

The students can use the lists they have been compiling throughout the unit to help determine why people come to the synagogue to pray.

## **Activity 2**

Arrange for a classroom visit and discussion with the synagogue’s clergy or members of the synagogue worship committee. If possible, it should be a panel of members from both groups. The focus of the discussion should be the reasons they believe people at the synagogue pray.

Before the guest speakers come to class, have the students prepare a list of questions to ask. (They can use their interview questions from Lesson 1 as inspiration.) For example:

- Why do you think people come to services?
- What are your goals when you are leading services?
- What do you think the space says about why people pray?
- Where does prayer fit into the synagogue’s goals and mission?
- Etc.

After the guests leave, instruct students to compare the guests’ reasons for prayer with the reasons they have already learned about. Are they in line with the historical reasons that people pray? Did they learn about any new reasons that people pray?

### **Activity 3 (Authentic Assessment)**

Write the following text on the board:

*It is a great mitzvah to pray in a synagogue or in a house of study, as these are places of holiness.*

Shulchan Arukh 12:9

Say: Although we can pray anywhere, Jewish tradition says that it is important to pray in a synagogue (in addition to other places).

Think of the reasons that people would want to pray in our synagogue. You should consider why people choose to pray, what the clergy says about the synagogue's prayer values, and how the sanctuary is structured.

Instruct students to create a written advertisement or brochure for prayer services at the synagogue, incorporating the reasons that people pray. The advertisements can appeal to a specific group (perhaps people who choose to pray for a specific reason) or to the community as a whole.

If the students need inspiration, they can look at the advertising materials that the synagogue has published about services. They can also analyze other synagogues' advertising materials about prayer and services.

## **Resource 2-9**

### **What is a Synagogue?**

**Imagine you are an alien visiting from outer space. You know what humans are, but you have never seen a synagogue before. All you know about synagogues is the information included in the sketch from your partner.**

**What does his or her sketch tell you about why people use the synagogue?**

#### **Some things to consider:**

- How are the chairs arranged? What does that tell us about how people interact?
- Where are the Rabbi, Cantor, choir, or band? What does that tell us about their relationship with the people who pray?
- Are there windows? Where are they? What does that tell us about our interaction with the outside world?
- How is the sanctuary decorated? What does this show about the community's values?

**Make a list of the things you have learned about the synagogue from looking at your partner's sketch.**

## Lesson 6

### People Say...

#### **Essential Question**

- Why do people pray?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to...

- Analyze the results of their interviews for common themes and patterns.
- Compare individuals' reasons for praying to the historical and textual reasons in the previous lessons.
- Create a presentation for family, friends, and members of the congregation about why people pray.

In this lesson, students will compile their interview findings and create a presentation for friends, family, and/or members of the congregation. If possible, invite these constituencies to view the presentation (perhaps during an open-house night). If this cannot be arranged, however, the students can develop a display for the synagogue so that members of the community can view the students' findings and conclusions.

#### **Activity 1**

Instruct students to bring their transcribed interviews (described in Lesson 1 of this unit) to class.

Divide students into groups of three or four. Have each student share his or her interview with the members of his or her group. Give each group **Resource 2-10**: guiding questions for the discussion.

#### **Activity 2 (Authentic Assessment)**

Have the students reconvene as a class and compare the information they discussed in the small groups. List their responses on the board.

After all the groups have shared, ask:

- How do your interviewees' reasons for prayer compare with the reasons for prayer that we have been learning about in class?
- Are there any prayers that we have learned about in class that would fit your interviewees' reasons for praying?
- How would you explain to someone else what we have learned?

### **Activity 3 (Memorable Moment)**

Explain to students that they will now construct a presentation of the most interesting information that they have learned from their interviews. This presentation can be an oral and/or visual presentation for a group of visitors to the class, or for a display in the synagogue.

The interviews can be presented in any format that the teacher determines:

- Written with an oral presentation
- Videotaped and compiled into a YouTube video (if the teacher or a parent is technologically savvy or ambitious)
- Written with photographs and compiled into a PowerPoint presentation
- Acted out as a skit or puppet show
- Etc.

Encourage students to work together to incorporate the most significant patterns and most unique and interesting points from their interviews into the presentation.

## **Resource 2-10**

### **Why do People Pray? Talking About Interviews**

#### **Instructions:**

1. Read your interview to the members of your group.
2. Members of the group will ask you clarifying questions about your interview.
3. Members of the group will describe the part of your interview that they found most interesting or surprising.
4. You share what you learned from your interview.

**Each member of the group repeats steps 1-4.**

**After every member of the group has shared his or interview, discuss the following questions:**

1. What parts of the interviews stood out to you as particularly interesting or unique?
2. What similar themes do you notice in your interviews? Do certain types of people say the same things?
3. Into what category do most of the peoples' reasons for prayer fall? Can you detect any patterns?

## Unit 3

# What makes prayer a Jewish thing?

Unit 3 begins to explore issues unique to *t'fillah*. It specifically focuses on *keva* (the fixed nature of *t'fillah*), the meaning of the prayers, and the structure of a typical Jewish service. In addition, students will explore the relationship of God to *t'fillah* and the significance of becoming B'nai Mitzvah.

Because this unit is about the structure of *t'fillah*, students will participate in an ongoing assessment designed to convey the meaning and relevance of the prayers in the service. Students will create a visual representation of the prayers in a service (a prayer map), using symbols to illustrate the meanings of the prayers. Through peer consultation, students will develop display pieces that convey not only the themes of the prayers, but also the themes to which the students most relate.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

### **Unit Goals**

- To help students understand that there are set characteristics that comprise *t'fillah*.
- To teach students that *keva* provides a structure and meaning for *t'fillah*.
- To allow students to explore specifically Jewish aspects of prayer.

### **Essential Questions**

- What is Jewish prayer?
- How has Jewish tradition shaped *t'fillah*?
- How do fixed prayers help us connect to God and/or the Jewish people?
- What do the prayers that we recite during services mean?
- Why are the prayers in the service arranged in a specific order?
- What role do/can Jewish communal rituals play in *t'fillah*?
- How does my Jewish identity influence *t'fillah*?

## **Unit Overview**

Lesson 1	Our Beliefs
Lesson 2	Our Story
Lesson 3	Our Script (Scripted)
Lesson 4	Our Themes
Lesson 5	Our Structure
Lesson 6	Our Ritual
Lesson 7	Ourselves

## **Memorable Moments**

- Museum visit (Lesson 2)
- Dancing through the service (Lesson 5)

## **Authentic Assessment**

- Service map - Visual representation of the prayers in a service (Lesson 5, Lesson 6, Lesson 7)
- The Personal Prayer Playlist (At the end of each lesson)

# Lesson 1

## Our Beliefs

### **Essential Question**

- What is Jewish prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- List characteristics that comprise *t'fillah*.
- Analyze some of the beliefs about God that serve as a basis for *t'fillah*.
- Explain the root definition of *t'fillah* – to judge oneself.

### **Activity 1**

Ask students to bring their favorite Jewish artifact from home.

Have students write a response to the following questions about their artifact:

- Why did you choose to bring this artifact?
- What does this artifact symbolize for you?
- How is this artifact Jewish?

Have each student present their artifact to the group. List their answers to the third question (How is this artifact Jewish?) on the board. Mark duplicate answers.

Explain that while we may all have different ideas as to why an artifact is Jewish, but that there are certain characteristics that we can agree make something Jewish (point out the duplicate answers on the board).

The same is true for Jewish prayer. While prayer itself is not necessarily a Jewish practice, and while our ideas about what makes prayer Jewish may be different, we can agree that there are certain characteristics that comprise Jewish prayer.

Based on the list on the board, have students come up with a list of characteristics that make prayer Jewish. Write this list on a piece of poster board, and continue adding to it throughout the unit.

## **Activity 2**

Explain to students that one significant characteristic that makes prayer Jewish is the assumption that God is involved in prayer, that God hears our prayers.

Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to explore how Jewish thinkers believe that God, prayer, and our selves are related.

Give each student **Resource 3-1**: “Texts on Prayer.”

As a class, read each text on prayer, and draw a diagram on the board of how God, prayer, and self are related based on each text. For example, one diagram may look something like this:

*Prayer is Jacob’s ladder joining earth to heaven. (Joseph H. Hertz)*



After the class has diagramed all the texts, instruct students to think about how they personally believe that God, prayer, and our selves are related. Have them diagram their own thoughts, just as they did for the previous texts. (They can use the texts for inspiration.)

Have students share their diagram with one another. Ask:

- What are some of the Jewish beliefs about God and prayer?
- How can Jewish ideas about God help you pray?

## **Activity 3**

Ask students: But what if we do not believe in God? Can our prayer still be considered Jewish?

For this activity, students must already have some practice identifying Hebrew root words.

Write the Hebrew word *t'fillah* – תפלה – on the board, or hold up a poster with the word *t'fillah* on it. Explain that *t'fillah* is the word we use for “prayer” in Judaism, but that there is more to this translation.

Explain that the root letters of *t'fillah* are: peh, lamed, lamed – פלל. Give the students a Hebrew-English Dictionary, and have them look up the definition of פלל. (*To think, to judge, to intercede*)

After the students have completed the task, ask: Based on the definition of פלל, what do you think *t'fillah* means? (*judging, thinking*)

From the root of *t'fillah*, we learn that *t'fillah*, Jewish prayer, is about judging ourselves.

“So when we pray we are in essence presenting ourselves for judgment, or perhaps, judging ourselves. In this way, even those for whom God and Divine intervention have no meaning can find satisfaction in prayer.”<sup>22</sup>

Ask:

- How do you judge yourselves? (*grades, seeing how other people do, whether or not someone likes what you have done, etc.*)
- How can prayer help you judge yourself? (*by thinking about the things you have done, by helping you to appreciate the things around you, etc.*)

---

<sup>22</sup> Erani, p. 9

## **Resource 3-1**

### **Texts on Prayer**

Prayer is Jacob's ladder joining earth to heaven.  
*(Joseph H. Hertz)*

Prayer is an invitation to God to intervene in our lives, to let God's will prevail in our affairs; it is the opening of a window to God in our will, an effort to make God the Master of our Soul.  
*(Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel)*

God needs neither thanks nor hymns. God wants to hear the outcry of people...Prayer teaches a person how to behold the vision and how to strive in order to realize that vision, when to be satisfied with what one possesses, and when to reach out for more.  
*(Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik)*

When people come to you for help, do not turn them off with pious words, saying: "Have faith and take your troubles to God!" Act instead as if there were no God, as though there were only one person in all the world who could help – only yourself.  
*(Martin Buber)*

Prayer is not a shout into an empty void answered only by its own echo. Prayer is the spirit within us reaching out to the Spirit of the universe, and prayer is that Spirit responding to us.  
*(Robert I. Kahn)*

Prayer, then, is not merely a one-way street. It is a vehicle through which man [people] and God strengthen each other, as men and God, together, sanctify the world by serving each other. God has His work, as witness the endless power which He pipes into the universe, but there are certain tasks reserved for man, which man alone can do and must do in moving the mutual cause forward.  
*(Herbert M. Baumgard)*

## Lesson 2

### Our Story

#### **Essential Question**

- How has Jewish tradition shaped *t'fillah*?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify prayers in the service taken from the Tanakh.
- Explain how *t'fillah* helps us identify with other Jewish people.
- Analyze how *t'fillah* had both changed and remained the same throughout history.

#### **Activity 1**

Before this lesson, give students a short homework assignment:

Ask your grandparents, an elderly Jewish friend, or an older member of your congregation the following question:

**What is your most vivid memory of *t'fillah*/praying/services from when you were my age (11-13)?**

Have students share the responses that they received in completing the homework assignment. Ask:

- How are these responses similar to your own ideas of *t'fillah*?
- How are they different?
- How do you think *t'fillah* has changed since the people you talked to were children?

#### **Activity 2**

Explain to students that the origins of *t'fillah* extend back much further than when our grandparents were children. As we learned in the last unit (Lesson 3) many of our prayers originate in the Tanakh.

Have students read the *Shema* and *V'ahavtah – Mishkan T'filah* (p. 152-154). Ask:

- Where do you think this prayer comes from?

Give students a copy of the Tanakh. Have them locate and read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Explain that the *Shema* and *V'ahavtah* come directly from the Torah, in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses is giving the people of Israel his final speech before he dies, and he reminds the Jewish people of everything that they must do to remain Jewish.

Ask:

- How do the *Shema* and *V'ahavtah* apply to the people in the Torah?
- How do they apply to us today?
- Do you think the meaning of the prayer has changed since the time of the Torah? How?
- Why do you think we still recite this prayer today?
- How does learning about the origins of the *Shema* and *V'ahavtah* influence your understanding of the prayer?

### **Activity 3 (Memorable Moment)**

Explain to students that some of the prayers we recite today may have originated from the Tanakh, but Jewish tradition throughout the ages has shaped the way that we pray today.

Take students to a local Jewish museum or historical site. If there are no Jewish historical sites in your area, there are numerous virtual museum websites on the Internet that the students can “visit.” See **Resource 3-2** for website suggestions.

Explain to students that they will have an opportunity to discover where prayer has appeared in Jewish history and tradition. They will be going on a scavenger hunt through the museum to find evidence of prayer in Jewish history.

Give each student **Resource 3-3**, a *T'fillah* Scavenger Hunt worksheet. (This worksheet can be changed to fit the specific museum site.) Students will have a chance to explore the museum in small groups to complete the worksheet.

After the scavenger hunt, ask:

- What did you learn about prayer and Jewish tradition?
- How is what you learned about *t'fillah* similar to the way we pray today?
- How is it different?
- How does *t'fillah* help you identify with other Jewish people throughout history?
- Is there anything that you learned about in the museum that you would like to try during your own *t'fillah* practice? What?

## **Resource 3-2**

### **Virtual Museum Websites**

#### **The American Jewish Experience**

<http://www.americanjewisharchives.org/aja/aje/index.html>

*This online exhibit from the American Jewish Archives provides “significant documents illuminating the American Jewish experience.” Each sub-collection features primary documents to investigate. Visitors can examine the documents and read about their impact on American Jewry.*

#### **New York City Tenement Museum**

<http://www.tenement.org/>

(Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on “Virtual Tour of 97 Orchard”)

*The virtual tour of the Tenement Museum is a multimedia, interactive tour that guides visitors through the museum building. The museum teaches about Jewish immigrant life in New York beginning in 1863. The site offers pictures, videos, and stories about the families who lived in the museum building.*

#### **Museum of Jewish Heritage**

[http://www.mjhnyc.org/exhibitions\\_.htm](http://www.mjhnyc.org/exhibitions_.htm)

*The Museum of Jewish Heritage is “a living memorial to the Holocaust.” Its online exhibitions focus on the American Jewish experience during the Holocaust. The site features interactive multimedia text, video, and photos for each of its exhibitions.*

#### **Yad Vashem Exhibitions**

<http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/index.asp>

*The Holocaust museum in Jerusalem provides a variety of online exhibitions, ranging from music of the Holocaust to stories of Holocaust survivors in Israel. The exhibitions are interactive, with photos, video, and music.*

#### **Jewish American Hall of Fame**

<http://amuseum.org/jahf/virtour/index.html>

*This “Jewish Museum in Cyberspace” describes people, places, and events that impacted Jewish history. After clicking on a name, visitors are taken to a page that describes the significance of the person, place, or event. The pages provide visuals and quizzes about each subject.*

### **Resource 3-3**

#### **Museum Visit: *T'fillah* Scavenger Hunt**

1. List three places that you found prayer mentioned in the museum. How did the mentions of prayer relate to the rest of the exhibit?
2. What traditions related to prayer did you find? How are these traditions similar to what we do today? How are they different?
3. Did you see any prayer artifacts (*tallit*, *Torah*, *t'fillin*, etc.)? What were they, and how did people use them? Do we still use these artifacts in the same way today?
4. Why do you think people in this time period prayed? Were their reasons for prayer the same as our reasons today?
5. Why do you think prayer was important in this time period?

## Lesson 3 (Scripted)

### Our Script

#### **Essential Question**

- How do fixed prayers help us connect to God and/or the Jewish people?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Define the terms *keva* and *kavanah*.
- Explain why *keva* is an important part of *t'fillah*.
- Assess the reasons for including *keva* in *t'fillah*.

#### **Timeline**

0:00-0:15	Activity 1 – <i>Keva</i> and <i>kavanah</i>
0:15-0:45	Activity 2 – <i>Keva</i> text study
0:45-0:57	Activity 3 – <i>Keva</i> in the service
0:57-1:00	Activity 4 – The Personal Prayer Playlist

#### **Activity 1**

Play four different versions of Oseh Shalom for the students. Some suggested modern artists who have written melodies for this prayer include:

- The Beetniks – [www.thebeatniks.com](http://www.thebeatniks.com)
- Debbie Friedman – [www.debbiefriedman.com](http://www.debbiefriedman.com)
- E18hteen – [www.jewishrock.com](http://www.jewishrock.com)

Instruct students to fill in the *T'fillah* sheets (**Resource 3-4**) as they listen to each version of the prayer.

After the students have heard all four versions of the prayer, ask:

- **Which version of Oseh Shalom was your most favorite? Why?**
- **Which version was your least favorite? Why?**
- **Why do we have different versions of the same prayer?**

Say: **There are two different ways that we can pray as Jews. We can pray with *keva*, fixed words and meaning, or we can pray with *kavannah*, intention and feeling. The words of Oseh Shalom are the *keva* of the prayer, while the different melodies are the *kavannah*.**

## **Activity 2**

Ask students to think about the following questions (they do not necessarily have to give answers): **Why is it important to have set words when we pray? Why is it important to recite the words in the prayer book? Why can't Jews just pray with their own words, whenever they wish?**

Share with students the text:

**Change not the fixed form in which the Sages wrote the prayers.**  
*(Talmud)*

Ask:

- **Who do you think the Sages were?** *(The Rabbis, the people of the Torah)*
- **What is the fixed form that they created?** *(The keva of our prayers, what we have in our prayer books)*

Explain that this text comes from the Talmud. Show students an example of a page of Talmud (see **Resource 3-5**). Explain:

**The Talmud is a body of Jewish literature that was composed by the Rabbis (unlike our rabbis today, these Rabbis – with a capital R – were more like scholars, interpreting Jewish texts and laws) in the period from 200 C.E.-500 C.E. Talmud is essentially a commentary on another body of Jewish literature, called the Mishnah, which itself is a commentary on the laws in the Torah and on other legal aspects of Judaism.**

**The Rabbis would take a paragraph or so from the Mishnah, place it in the center of the page, and write their interpretations of the text around the edges of the page. Often, the Rabbis would converse with one another through their writings. Even if they were not all alive at the same time or living in the same place, many different Rabbis from many different eras could have a conversation together about Jewish law.**

Explain to students that they will now have the opportunity to act like the Rabbis and create their own page of Talmud.

Have students divide into six groups. Give each group one of the pages of **Resource 3-6**. The groups will read the text in the center, discuss the meaning of the text, and then write their interpretation of what the text means in a portion of the space around the text. (Students can agree or disagree with the central text, offer their interpretation, or provide examples.) After 3 minutes, the groups will pass their page to the next group, who will read the text and the comment, discuss both, and write their comments on another section of the paper. The passing and commenting will continue until all the groups have had a chance to comment on each page.

After the Talmud pages are complete, ask:

- **Based on everything you read, discussed, and wrote, why should we include *keva* when we pray?**
- **How does *keva* help us connect to the Jewish people?**
- **How does *keva* help us connect to God?**

### **Activity 3**

Explain to students: ***Keva* is like the script of a play or a movie. It helps the Jewish people know what to say when we pray.**

Give students a variety of different prayer books. Have them look through the prayer books to determine which prayers in the service are *keva*.

Ask:

- **Why do you think these specific prayers are included in every prayer book?**
- **How do you feel seeing the same prayers in every prayer book?**
- **Why do you think it is important to pray with *keva*?**

### **Activity 4**

Have students add a song to their Personal Prayer Playlist.

### **Resource 3-4**

#### ***Keva or Kavannah?***

	<b>What prayer is this?</b>	<b>This prayer makes me feel...</b>	<b>I would say this prayer when...</b>
<b>Prayer 1</b>			
<b>Prayer 2</b>			
<b>Prayer 3</b>			
<b>Prayer 4</b>			

**הקדמה עמוד פרק שלישי מגילה**

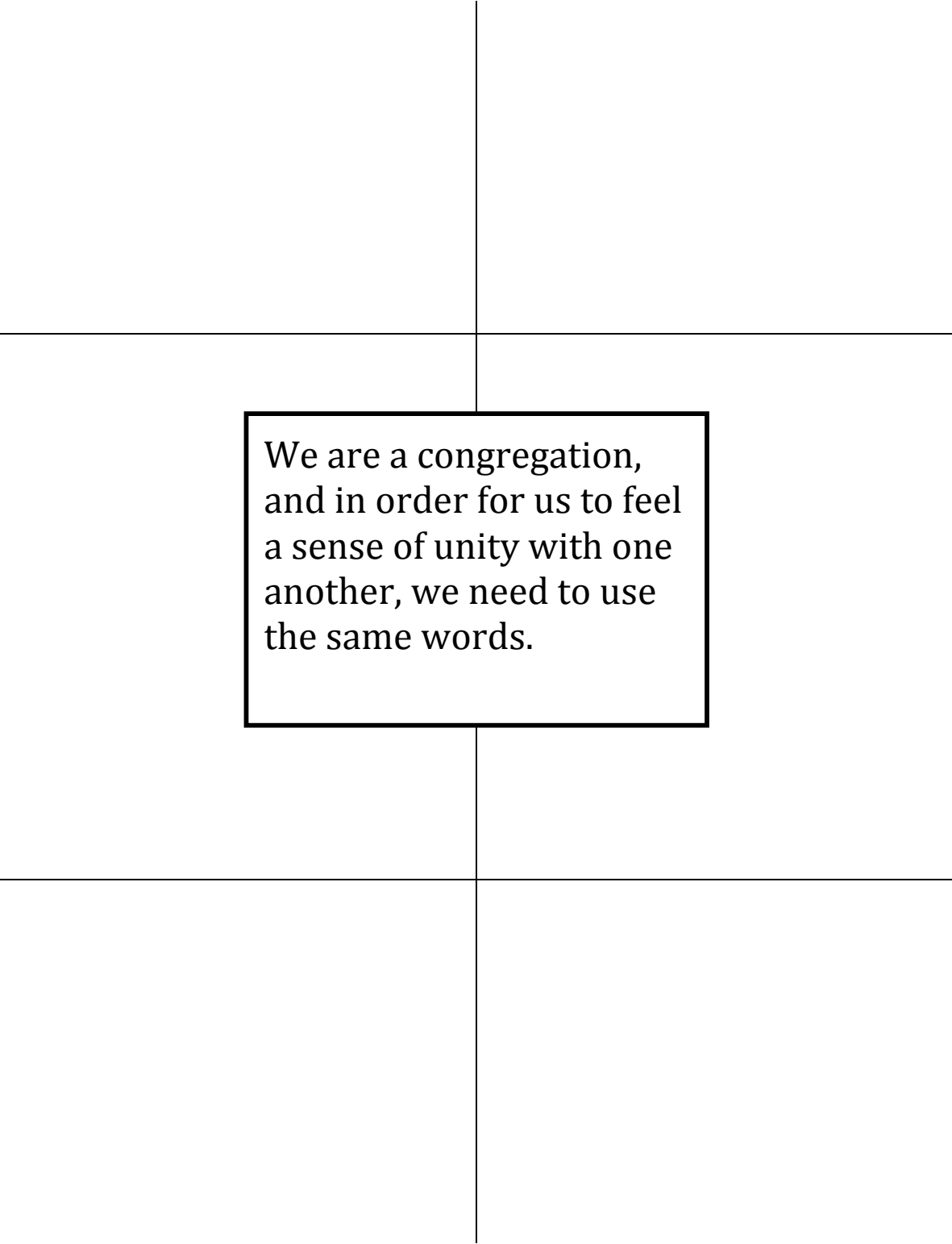
**מגילת**

1. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
2. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
3. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
4. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
5. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
6. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
7. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
8. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
9. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
10. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
11. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
12. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
13. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
14. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
15. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
16. וכן נראה כי המגילה...  
17. וכן נראה כי המגילה...

Detailed explanations of these numbers are to be found in the following pages. Large circles indicate the various texts appearing on the Talmud page. Small circles with arrows indicate references to the texts.

- 1) Page number. 2) Page heading. 3) Talmud text. 4) Indication of the Mishnah and the Gemara. 5) Punctuation. 6) Parentheses and correction of the Talmud text. 7) Rashi's commentary. 8) Tosafot. 9) References in Rashi and in Tosafot. 10) Rabbeinu Hananel. 11) *Ein Mishpat Ner Mitzvah*. 12) *Torah Or*. 13) *Ma'asot HaShas*. 14) *Haggahot HaBah*. 15) *Haggahot HaGra*. 16) *Gilyon HaShas*. 17) *Haggahot Rav B. Ronsburg*.

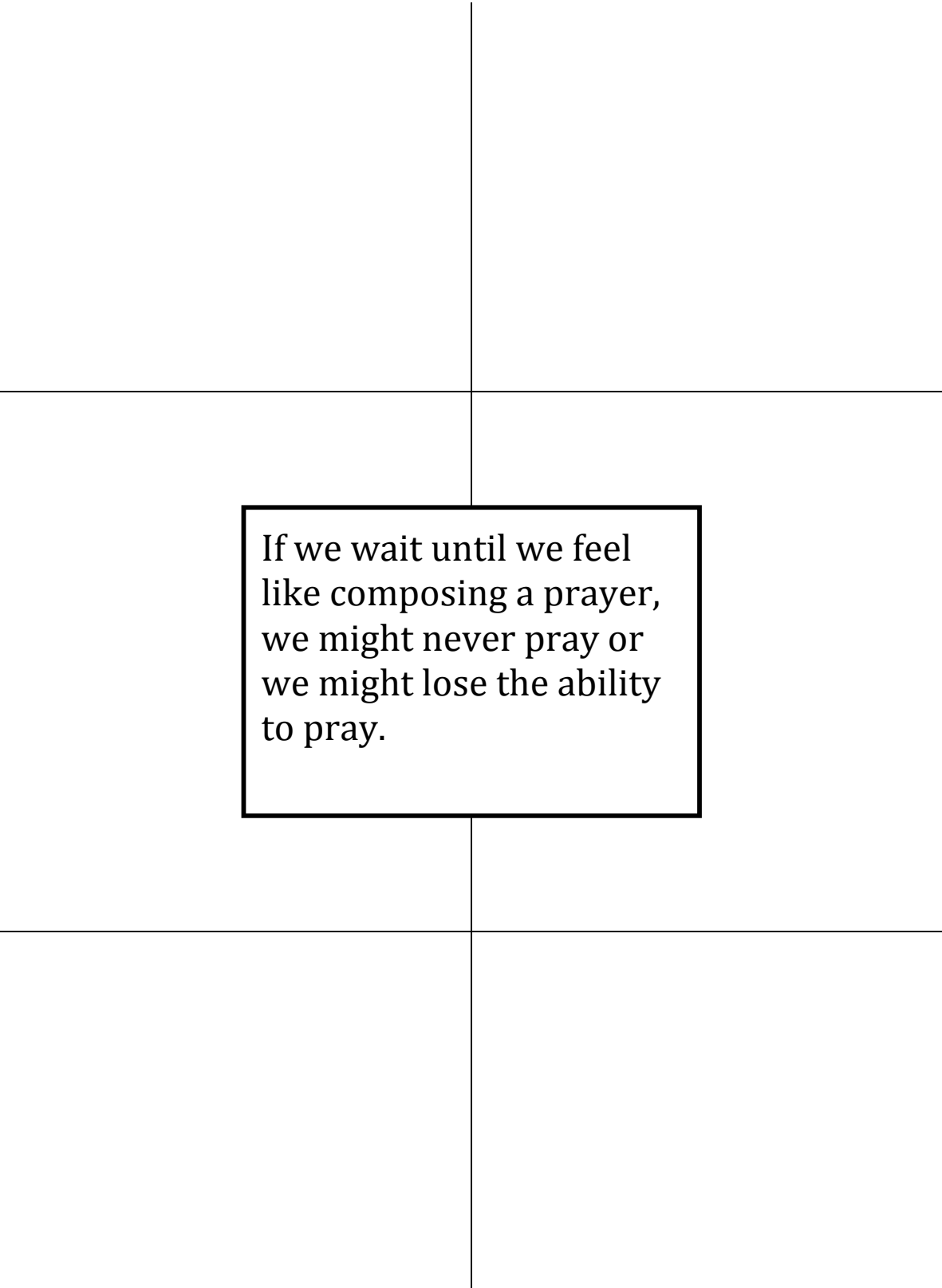
### **Resource 3-6<sup>24</sup>**



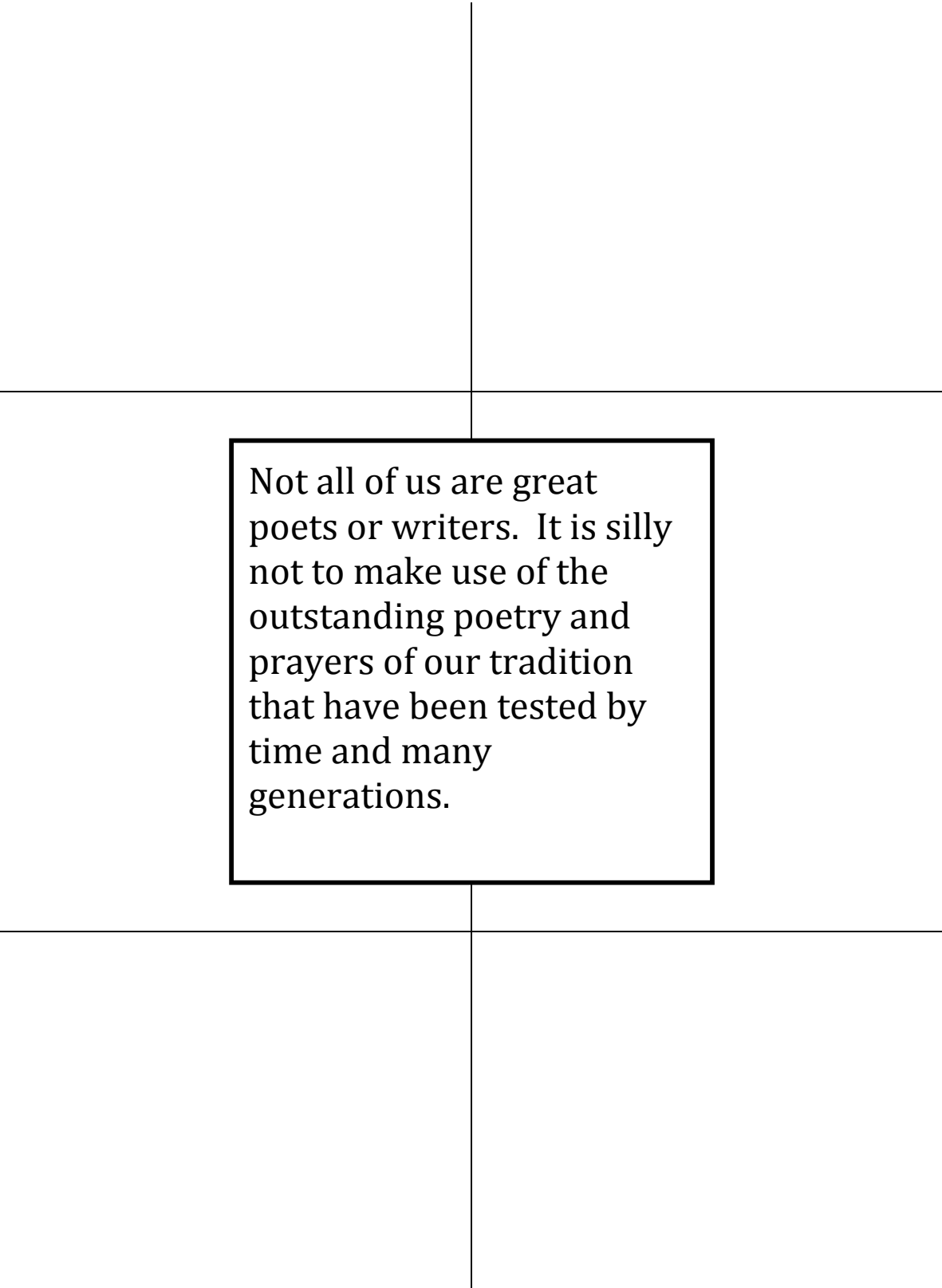
We are a congregation,  
and in order for us to feel  
a sense of unity with one  
another, we need to use  
the same words.

---

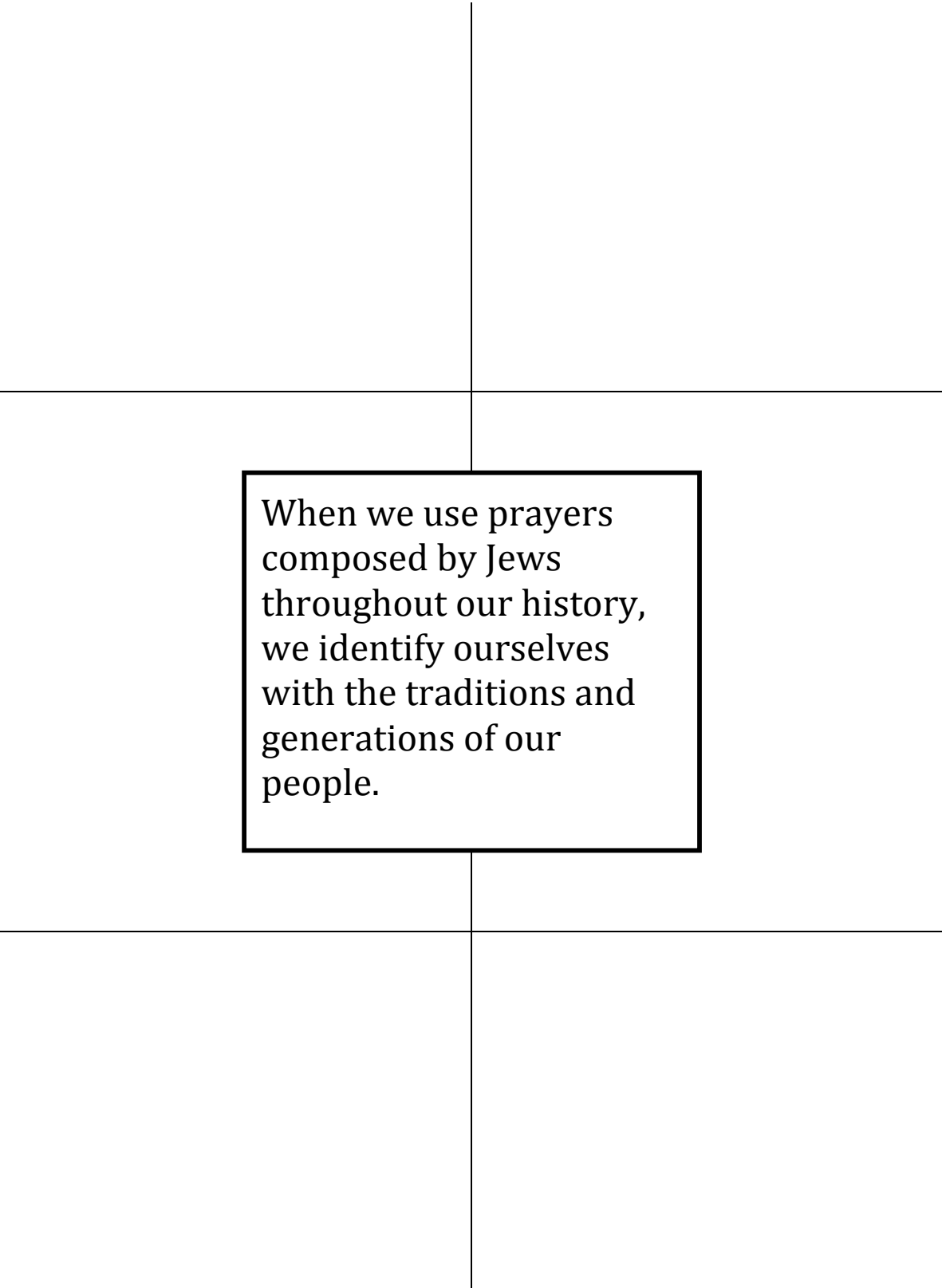
<sup>24</sup> Adapted from: Fields, p. 7-8



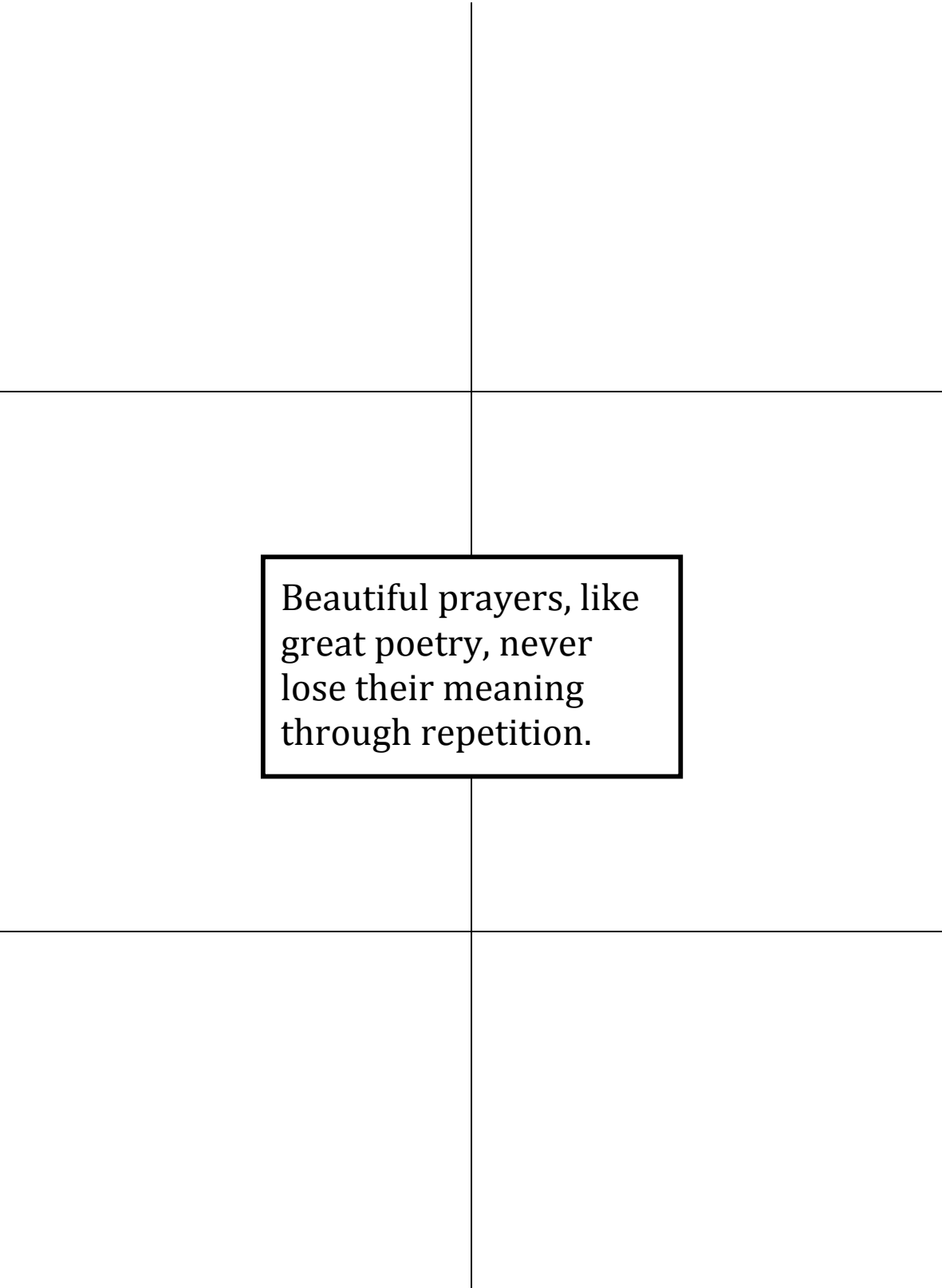
If we wait until we feel  
like composing a prayer,  
we might never pray or  
we might lose the ability  
to pray.



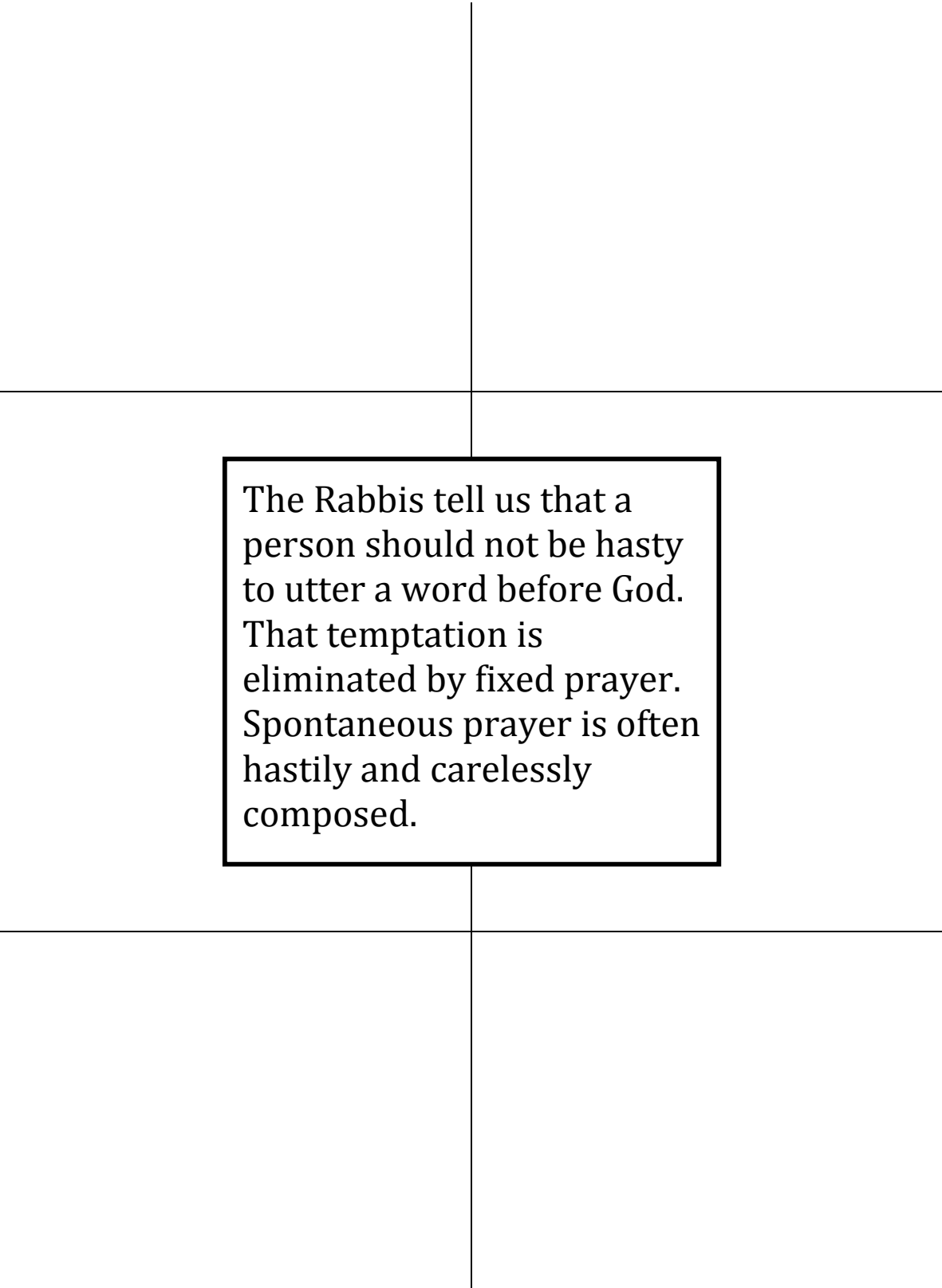
Not all of us are great poets or writers. It is silly not to make use of the outstanding poetry and prayers of our tradition that have been tested by time and many generations.



When we use prayers  
composed by Jews  
throughout our history,  
we identify ourselves  
with the traditions and  
generations of our  
people.



Beautiful prayers, like  
great poetry, never  
lose their meaning  
through repetition.



The Rabbis tell us that a person should not be hasty to utter a word before God. That temptation is eliminated by fixed prayer. Spontaneous prayer is often hastily and carelessly composed.

## Lesson 4

### Our Themes

#### **Essential Question**

- What do the prayers that we recite during services mean?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify the themes of the key prayers that they will learn for their B'nai Mitzvah.
- Explain how the theme of a specific prayer relates to their lives.
- Design images that visually represent the themes of specific prayers.

#### **Activity 1**

Explain to students: In the last lesson, we learned that the prayers we recite are like the script of the play or movie. We have a set script that can help us connect to God and/or the Jewish people.

Explain to students that they will now have the opportunity to think about their own script for prayer. Students should consider:

- What themes are important for the prayers to address? (Peace, healing, etc.) Why?

Students can work in *chevruta* to develop a thematic outline for a script of the service. They do not have to list specific prayers that embody these themes. Rather, they should focus on the themes themselves. (Ex: a prayer of thanks, a prayer for our families, a prayer for nature, a prayer for healing, a prayer for peace, etc.)

Explain that students will have the opportunity to compare their original thematic scripts for *t'fillah* to the actual script for *t'fillah* that is included in the prayer book that they will be studying for their B'nai Mitzvah.

## **Activity 2**

Divide students into seven (or more) groups. Assign each group a specific prayer to research and teach to their classmates. The prayers should include, but are not limited to:

- *Barechu* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 226)
- *Yotzeir Or/Maariv Aravim* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 228/148)
- *Shema and V'ahavtah* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 232-234)
- *Mi Chamocha* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 240)
- *Amidah* (First two blessings) – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 244-246)
- *Aleinu* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 586-590)
- *Kaddish* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 598)

Instruct each group of students to:

1. Read the prayer in Hebrew and English
2. Fill in the Talking about *T'fillah* form in **Resource 3-7**
3. Design an image that represents the theme of the prayer to present to the class.

Have each group present the prayer they studied to the class. They should focus on the theme of the prayer and the image that they chose to create.

As each group presents, have students fill in a chart about the themes of the prayers (see **Resource 3-8**). This will help students with the ongoing assessment project in the lessons that follow. Save the images of the prayers to use in the next lesson.

## **Activity 3**

Ask students to return to the thematic script for *t'fillah* that they created in Activity 1.

Ask:

- Which of the themes in your script are similar to the themes of the prayers that we find in our service?
- How are your themes different from those of the prayers in our service?
- What makes these themes Jewish?
- How does being Jewish help you to express these themes?
- How can you embody the themes of the prayers when you pray? In your daily life?

## **Resource 3-7**

### **Talking about *T'fillah***

**Our group's prayer is \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Instructions:**

1. Read your prayer twice in Hebrew and in English.
2. Answer the following questions:
  - a. What does this prayer want you to believe, think, feel, or do?
  - b. What is the central value of this prayer?
  - c. How does this prayer want you to think about God?
  - d. How can you connect the words of this prayer to something real in your own life?
3. Design an image that visually represents the central value of the prayer.
4. Prepare a short presentation for the class that includes:
  - a. A short description of the prayer
  - b. The central value of the prayer
  - c. An explanation of how you can connect the words of this prayer to something real in your own life
  - d. The image that you chose to represent the prayer

## **Resource 3-8**

### **Talking about *T'fillah* 2**

<b>Prayer</b>	<b>Central Value</b>	<b>How it Relates to My Life</b>	<b>Image Sketch</b>
<i>Barechu</i>			
<i>Yotzeir Or/Maariv Aravim</i>			
<i>Shema and V'ahavtah</i>			
<i>Mi Chamocha</i>			
<i>Amidah</i>			
<i>Aleinu</i>			
<i>Kaddish</i>			

## Lesson 5

### Our Structure

#### **Essential Question**

- Why are the prayers in the service arranged in a specific order?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Describe the order of the prayers in the service.
- Analyze why the prayers are arranged in this specific order.
- Create a rough draft of a visual representation of the structure of the service.

#### **Activity 1**

Give students the images of the prayers that they created in Lesson 4.

Instruct students to put the prayers in order based on how they think the themes of the prayers should flow from one to another. (Even if students know the order of the prayers in the service, they can do the activity based on the order that they think the prayers should be, not on the set order in the prayer book.) The students should work as a class.

After the order is complete, ask:

- Why did you choose to arrange the prayers in this specific order?
- What story are you trying to tell through this arrangement?
- Why do you think it is important to have the prayers arranged in a particular order?

#### **Activity 2 (Memorable Moment)**

Set up a life-size game board throughout the classroom. The board should look like a mountain range with two peaks (see **Resource 3-9**). This game board represents the structure of a morning service, with one peak representing the *Shema* and one peak representing the *Amidah*.<sup>25</sup> Place the names of the prayers on the game board, according to the figure in **Resource 3-9**.

---

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from: Singer-Beilin, p. 15-18

Students will move as a group (or the teacher can elect a few student representatives) to the first prayer place on the board – *Pseukei D'zimrah*. At this spot, the students will have to:

- Decide on the theme of the prayer (or group of prayers)
- Decide why the prayer is in this particular spot in the service
- Come up with a movement that symbolizes the theme of the prayer.

See Annotated Bibliography (p. 180) for resources that describe the themes of the prayers.

After the first prayer is complete, students will repeat the process with the next prayer (the movement should flow from the movement of the previous prayer into the movement of the next prayer), continuing through all the prayers in the service. Eventually, the movements will become a routine (the routine can even be performed to music. Song recommendation: *Seventeen Years* by Ratatat).

After the routine is complete, ask:

- Why do you think the prayers in the service are arranged in this particular order?
- What story do you think the prayers are telling in this order?
- How does this order reflect Jewish ideas?
- How does the actual order of the service compare to the order of the service that you created in Activity 1?

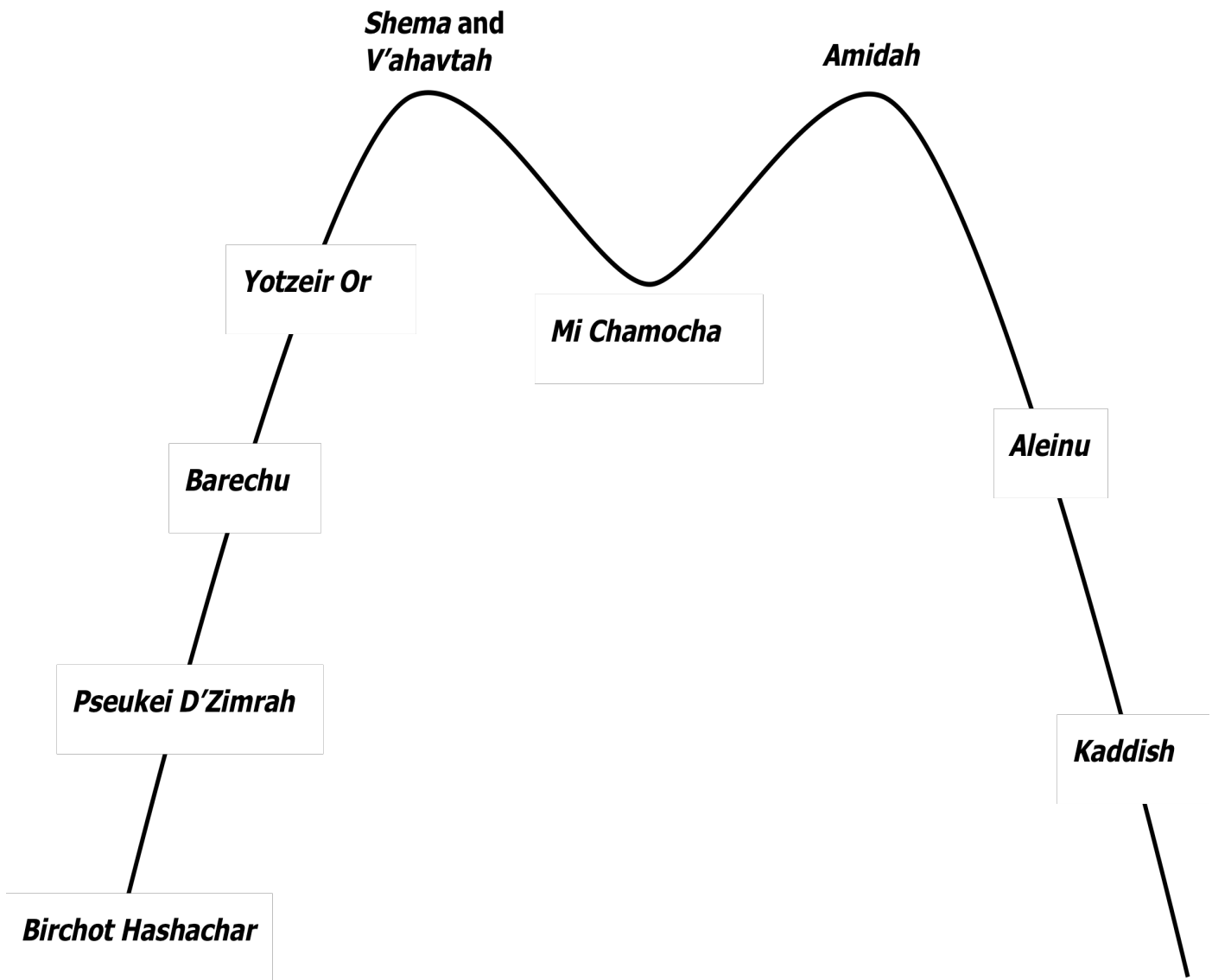
### **Activity 3 (Authentic Assessment)**

Explain to students that they will now create their own prayer map of the order of the service.

Instruct students to sketch a diagram of a service. This diagram should incorporate the themes of each of the prayers that the students have studied, as well as the overall flow of the service. Allow students to use the images of the prayers created previously for inspiration, but encourage them to be as creative as possible. See **Resource 3-10** for one example.

At this point in the unit, the students should only create a rough draft of the map of the service. They will have the opportunity to finalize their draft in Lesson 6 and Lesson 7.

## **Resource 3-9**



### **Resource 3-10**



## Lesson 6

# Our Ritual

### **Essential Question**

- What role do/can Jewish communal rituals play in *t'fillah*?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify key Jewish rituals that both influence and are influenced by *t'fillah*.
- Explain how Jewish rituals enhance and are enhanced by *t'fillah*.
- Explain how *t'fillah* enhances their B'nai Mitzvah experience.
- Gauge how they are feeling about the B'nai Mitzvah experience.

### **Activity 1**

Divide students into two teams. Have students play charades with rituals occur in their lives. Give one student a ritual such as:

- Singing happy birthday
- Lighting fireworks on the Fourth of July
- Eating Turkey on Thanksgiving
- Getting married (wedding)
- Etc.

The student will act out the ritual, and the other students on his or her team will have to guess what he or she is doing. If the team guesses correctly, they get a point. If they guess incorrectly, the other team has a chance to guess and get a point. Once students have guessed the ritual, a student from the other team will have a chance to act out a different ritual.

After the students have guessed several rituals, ask:

- How do these rituals make you feel?
- Why are rituals important? (List responses on the board.)
- What are some Jewish rituals that we perform? (*Bar Mitzvah, lighting candles on Hannukkah, the Passover Seder, etc.*)

Ask:

- How does *t'fillah* play a role in these rituals?

Explain to students that there are lifecycle rituals that help us to mark Jewish time.

Share with students the text:

*Five is the age for the study of Torah; ten is the age for the study of Mishnah; thirteen is the age for becoming subject to the mitzvot [becoming B'nai Mitzvah]; fifteen is the age for the study of Talmud; eighteen is the age for the bridal canopy [getting married]; twenty is the age for pursuing a living; thirty is the age for full strength; forty is the age for understanding; fifty is the age for being able to give advice; sixty is the age for being mature, seventy is the age for respect, eighty is the age of strength; ninety is the age for a bent body; at the age of one hundred, one is as good as dead.*

(Mishnah, Avot 5:24)

Ask:

- Why do you think each of these moments happens at a certain age? (*it is when a person is old enough to do or understand the rituals, or to understand why they are important*)
- What rituals in your life mark certain time periods? (*birthdays, B'nai Mitzvah, weddings, etc.*)
- How does *t'fillah* play a role in these rituals?

## **Activity 2**

Explain to students that they will now have an opportunity to explore some Jewish rituals, and the role that *t'fillah* plays in these rituals.

Create an open-classroom setup with three activity stations. Each activity will correspond to a Jewish lifecycle ritual: *Brit Milah*/baby naming, wedding, or funeral. Students (or pairs of students) will have to complete the activities at every station, but they can visit the stations freely, in any order they like.

Give students **Resource 3-11**, which details the instructions for the activities. Explain to students that they are now rabbis at “Temple *T'fillah*.” Their job is to plan three ceremonies for a family in their congregation. (The students can make up the members of the family.)

Each station will address a different lifecycle event, and will provide students with resources (reading materials) related to that event:

- *Brit Milah*/baby naming – **Resource 3-12**
- Wedding – **Resource 3-13**
- Funeral – **Resource 3-14**

At each station, students (or pairs of students) will read the information related to the lifecycle event, and will outline a Jewish ceremony for their “family.” The students should pay particular attention to the prayers that they would like to include in the rituals.

After students have completed the stations, have them share with the class their favorite ritual that they planned.

### **Activity 3 (Authentic Assessment)**

Ask students:

- What do all of these rituals (*Brit Milah*/baby naming, wedding, and funeral) have in common?
- How does *t'fillah* influence these rituals?

List the students' responses on the board.

Explain that every student will have the opportunity to participate in very special Jewish ritual – becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Refer to the list on the board. Ask:

- What characteristics does becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah share with other Jewish rituals?
- How does *t'fillah* influence becoming B'nai Mitzvah?
- How does *t'fillah* influence *your* idea of becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah?
- How do you feel about becoming B'nai Mitzvah? (*nervous, excited, resentful, proud, anxious, impatient, dreading, pressured, judged, celebrated, special, etc.*)

Have the students return to the rough draft of their service map from Lesson 5. Explain that the themes of the prayers in the service mirror many of the emotions that the students may experience as they prepare for their B'nai Mitzvah. The service is like a journey that flows from one idea to the next, much like life.

Have the students look at their rough draft and consider the themes of the prayers and how they flow from one to another. Ask students to think about where they would place themselves emotionally within the flow of the service (based on the themes of the prayers, the flow of the service, moments of calm vs. moments of excitement, etc.).

Instruct students to place (draw) themselves in their visual representation, based on where they feel they fall within the thematic flow of the service. This can be a literal or a figurative representation, but they should fit themselves somewhere in the larger design of their visual representation.

## **Resource 3-11**

**You are now the Rabbi at “Temple T’fillah,” and you have a busy day today! It is your job to plan three Jewish rituals for a family in your congregation:**

- **A *Brit Milah* or baby naming**
- **A wedding**
- **A funeral**

### **Instructions:**

1. Create a made-up family that belongs to your congregation. (If you have time, you can give all the family members names.) Some things to consider:
  - a. Who are the parents?
  - b. Who are the children?
  - c. Are there grandparents?
  - d. Is there an extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.)?
2. Visit each of the three stations set up in the classroom. At each station you will find some materials about a ritual to read and look at.
  - a. Read about the ritual.
  - b. Think what you like about the ritual, and what you would want to change about the ritual.
  - c. Create an outline of the ritual for a member of your made-up family. Write the outline on a sheet of paper.
  - d. **Think carefully about the prayers that you would like to include in the ritual (many are described in the materials). Consider why you are choosing these particular prayers.**
3. After you have visited all three stations, share your rituals with a classmate.
  - a. How are your rituals similar?
  - b. How are your rituals different?
  - c. Is there anything that you would like to add or change about your rituals after talking with your classmate?

## **Resource 3-12**

### ***Brit Milah/Baby Naming***<sup>26</sup>

#### ***Birth Story***



##### ***Shalom Zakhar***

After a Jewish child is born there are lots of celebrations. The first one takes place on the *Erev Shabbat* (Friday Night) right after the baby is born. Traditionally this was only for boys and it was called *Shalom Zakhar*, but today a number of families observe a girls' version of the celebration called *Shalom Nekeivah*. Believe it or not, the big thing about these celebrations is the eating of chickpeas.

##### ***Brit Milah/Simhat Bat***

Eight days after a boy is born there is a ceremony of circumcision called *Brit Milah*. At this ceremony the *k'vater*/ *kvaterin* (one of the godparents) brings

the boy into the room and hands him to a parent who hands it to the *sandek* (another godparent). Traditionally, the *sandek* sits in **Elijah's Chair**. The *Brit Milah* ceremony is performed by a *mohel*, a person specially trained to do this minor surgery. Today, in some communities a woman, a *mohellet*, performs the circumcision and leads the service. The community is invited, and a *minyan* (ten people) is needed. After the *Brit Milah*, there is a *Se'udat Mitzvah*, a meal celebrating the performance of this mitzvah.

While the *Brit Milah* is a ceremony for boys, today many families celebrate a parallel ceremony for girls called *Brit*



9

<sup>26</sup> Grishaver, p. 9-10, 19-20  
Cardin, p. 16-17



**Bat or Simhat Bat.** Because *Simhat Bat* is a new ceremony, there is no fixed ritual and many families write their own service. There is a *Se'udat Mitzvah* after this *simhah* (happy occasion), too.

### ***Naming***

While a boy is usually given his Hebrew name at a *Brit Milah*, it is a custom to name girls in synagogue on a Shabbat following their birth. Now girls are frequently named at their *Simhat Bat*, but still it has become a custom for boys and girls to be brought to synagogue to be named (or renamed) in front of the entire congregation on a Shabbat. This is a custom that

parents of boys have adopted from parents of girls.

### ***Pidyon ha-Ben/ K'dushat Pehter Rehem***

Thirty days after a first son is born, there is a ceremony called *Pidyon ha-Ben*, which means, "redemption of the firstborn." This is a biblical ceremony in which a father buys back his son from

Temple service from a priest (*kohein*). Not all Jews observe this ceremony. And as with other ceremonies that were previously "for boys only," a girl's or non-gender-specific version has been created called *K'dushat Pehter Rehem* (the holiness of the firstborn).



# *Simhat Bat Ceremony*

There is no such thing as an official *Brit Bat* or *Simhat Bat* ceremony. Many families write their own. Here are some pieces of one that was written in 1987.

Rabbi: May she who comes be blessed, Avital.

Reverence for life has been given to us as part of our covenant with God, as it is written: "And God said to Israel, 'Choose life, that you and your descendants may live.'" The birth of a daughter brings us joy and hope, and the courage to reaffirm our enduring covenant with life and its Creator.

Mother: (Lights one candle and takes the baby.)

Blessed are You, Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who does good for the undeserving, and who has dealt kindly with us all. May the One who bestows upon you good, continue to bestow upon you good. Let it be so! Joyfully I bring my daughter into the covenant of Israel, a covenant with God, with Torah, and with life. Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who sanctified us with mitzvot and commanded us to sanctify life...

Father: (Lights one candle and takes the baby.)

We asked God for life, and a new soul from God was placed within us. Our God and God of our fathers and mothers, Who has not withdrawn goodness from us, bless our daughter... We are privileged to educate her to a love of Israel and of humankind, to Torah, wisdom and the respect of God, to the pursuance of peace and of good deeds...



Parents: As it is written, "Her father and mother will rejoice and your birth will bring happiness." Blessed are You, God, Who makes parents to rejoice in their children.

Grandparents: (light one candle and take baby):

Grandmother: Binding ourselves and future generations to the past is a very important concept in Judaism. Many traditions have been dropped but we would like to retrieve one very lovely one that was begun in Germany, as a special honor and tribute for our first grandchild. This tradition was nearly extinguished by the Holocaust, but we should like to advocate its return as a symbol of our love. This wimple, or *mappah*, or a Torah binder, was originally made from the baby's first swaddling clothes. This, then, would follow the child through its life, as the Torah binder was used in the synagogue on the day of naming at *Pidyon ha-Ben*, at *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* and at the *huppah*. With this wimple we are binding ourselves to some four hundred years in a chain of tradition. Through the wimple we express our great excitement and thrill as we look forward to the days ahead as we and Avital grow together.



(There are pieces for each of the other three grandparents and a prayer said by all them.)

Everyone: Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has given us life, Who sustains us day by day, and who has brought us to this time.

© 1999 BY LAURA JANNER-KLAUSNER AND KOL HA-NESHAMA,  
JERUSALEM, ISRAEL. (KKH@NETVISION.NET.II)

1. How is this ceremony like the traditional *brit milah* ceremony?
2. In what ways is it different?
3. What is the big theme of this *Simhat Bat* ceremony?
4. What is the big theme of a traditional *Brit Milah*?

# The Brit Milah

1

When everyone is ready, the baby makes his grand entrance, carried by the *kvater* and *kvaterin*, the godmother and godfather—often a newly-married young couple.

2

Everyone rises as if the baby were a king or a great scholar. They greet him by saying, *baruch haba!*—"Blessed is the one who comes!"

3

Sometimes the baby is passed over the chair of Elijah. Other times he is placed directly on a table or on the lap of the *sandek*—the person honored with holding the child during the *brit milah* ceremony.

4

The *mohe* recites the following blessing: "Blessed are You, Sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us through Your mitzvot and commanded us regarding circumcision."



5

The circumcision—the cutting away of the foreskin in the ritually prescribed fashion—takes just a few seconds (and because the baby's nerves are not fully developed, doctors tell us, it hardly hurts at all!).

# Step



The ceremony concludes, and the child snuggles in his parents' arms. The guests are invited to a *se'udat mitzvah*, a meal of celebration. The Jewish people has grown by one!



With the circumcision done, the naming ceremony begins. Sometimes a family member or friend is given the honor of reciting the Kiddush—the blessing over the wine—a symbol of happiness and holiness. The prayers continue: “Blessed are You, our God, Sovereign of the universe, who sanctified this little one from the womb and had us mark the sign of the Holy Covenant on his flesh. . . . Blessed are You, who established the Covenant.” The one who is given the honor of naming the child then recites:

*Our God and God of our ancestors, protect this child and help his parents raise him well. Let his name be called in Israel...[the baby's name], son of...[the parents' names]. May his father be delighted with his offspring and his mother be overjoyed with her baby...Praise God, for God is good; God's kindness endures forever.*

## Resource 3-13

### Wedding<sup>27</sup>

# The Wedding Ceremony

**1** The community comes together and the ceremony begins. With music to guide their steps, the groom, then the bride (escorted by their parents) arrive at the *huppah*—the wedding canopy symbolizing the couple's new home.

**2** At some weddings, the bride circles the groom—sometimes three times, sometimes seven—symbolically creating a new family circle. At some weddings, the groom circles the bride as well.

**3** The *kiddushin*, or engagement, ceremony begins. Through *kiddushin*, the bride and groom promise themselves to one another and to no one else, just as the Jewish people were made holy to God—and to no other—at Mount Sinai. The blessings of *kiddushin* include a blessing over a cup of wine and the words:

*Blessed are You, God,  
Ruler of the universe,  
who has sanctified us  
through Your mitzvot  
and commands us...to  
be devoted to the one  
we have chosen....*



page 60>>



**4** *Kiddushin* continues as the groom presents the bride with a gold ring. While placing it on her right index finger, he proclaims, "Behold you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the laws of Moses and Israel." In most Jewish weddings today, the bride presents the groom with a ring and often recites the blessing as well.

<sup>27</sup> Cardin, p. 60-61

# Step

**5** The ceremony continues with the reading of the *ketubah*, the wedding contract that provides written proof that the couple was married on this day and in this place.

**6** The second part of the ceremony, the wedding itself—*nisu'in*—begins. It is composed of the *sheva brachot*—the seven blessings—which include the blessing over the ceremony's second cup of wine and prayers for the couple's happiness and well being.



**7** The final act of the wedding is the breaking of the glass. The groom—and sometimes the bride, as well—steps on and smashes a glass wrapped in a cloth. One reason for this tradition is that even at our most joyous moments we remember that Jerusalem and the Temple were twice destroyed, and that until a true peace comes to Israel and all the world, our happiness is incomplete. We are reminded that Jewish people are bound to one another throughout the world and throughout time.

**8** Everyone shouts, "mazel tov!" as the couple kisses.

The  
Celebration  
Begins

page 61 >>

## **Resource 3-14**

### **Funeral<sup>28</sup>**

# *Death*



This is the text of a prayer called *Eil Malei Rachamin*. It is the heart of both a funeral and a *Yizkor*, memorial service. Read its text

*God of compassion,  
grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence,  
among the holy and the pure who shine in the brightness of the firmament,  
to the soul of our dear \_\_\_\_\_ who has gone to his/her eternal rest.*

*God of compassion,  
remember all his/her worthy deeds in the land of the living.  
May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life.  
May God be his/her inheritance.  
May s/he rest in peace.  
And let us answer: Amen.*

1. What does this prayer say about God?
2. What does it say about death?
3. What does it say about life?

---

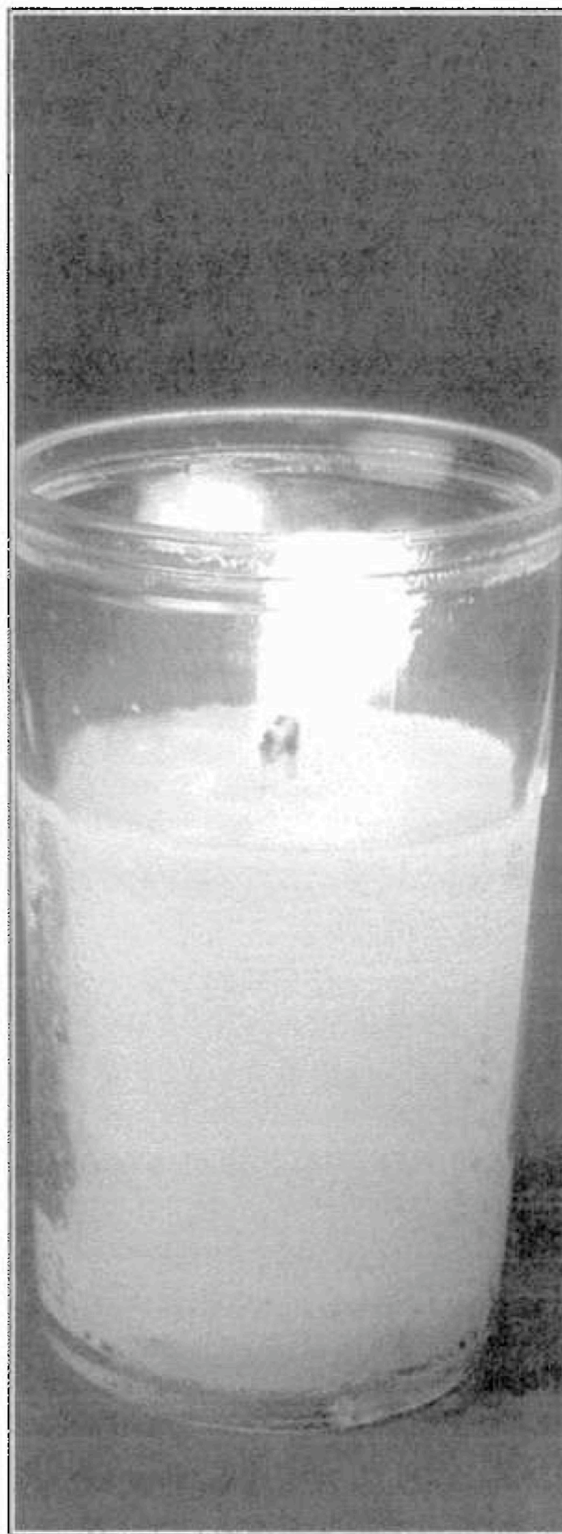
<sup>28</sup> Grishaver, p. 81, 84  
Cardin, p. 76

## ***The Periods of Mourning***

The first seven days are called *Shiva*. *Shiva* means seven. Traditionally, mourners would stay home for seven days following the funeral and let the community take care of them. Food was brought in. The *minyan* (the ten people needed to hold a service where *kaddish* is said) was brought to them. Today, many Jews sit *shiva* for less than seven days.

*Sh'loshim* (thirty days) is the next mourning period. Like *shiva*, it starts on the day of the funeral. It goes for thirty days. After *shiva* is over, people go back to work, back to their normal lives. But during *sh'loshim*, they do not go to parties or celebrations.

*Shanah* means "year." *Shanah* is the next period of mourning. *Shanah* lasts for eleven months following the funeral. During this time mourners continue to say *kaddish*. After *shanah* is completed, *kaddish* is only said at *yahrzeit*, the anniversary of the death. Some time after *shana* is completed, the family visits the cemetery and **unveils** the headstone that marks the grave. *Kaddish* is a prayer that is said, according to midrash, as a way of getting our beloved relatives eternal life. *Shanah* lasts less than a calendar year because none of our relatives could be so bad as to need a whole year of praying.



© MARK ROBERT HALPER

## A Kid's Guide to Bad News

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind if you receive news that someone has passed away:

- *There is no right or wrong way to respond.* Some people cry. Some become silent. Some go about their day as if nothing happened. Whatever your way of dealing with it is, as long as it's respectful of others, it's the right way.
- *Don't gossip.* Details about how someone died, or how they may have suffered, don't help those who are grieving. There's no need to dwell on the hows and whats—what matters is comforting those who hurt.
- *Express sympathy.* If the loss affects someone else, tell that person you're sorry. Or give a hug. To express sympathy is *hesed*—an act of true kindness.
- *Offer your friendship.* Maybe you can help with school-work. Or pay a visit during *shiva*—the first week of mourning, when the mourners' home is open for visitors. Just being there is often a great source of comfort.

page 76 >>

## Judaism's Guide to Healing Part I: Time to Say Goodbye

When a loved one dies, mourners may be too angry, too sad, or too stunned to talk to God. So during the period from death to burial—*aninut*—mourners are released from the obligation of prayer, and cannot be counted in a *minyan*. Their thoughts are elsewhere.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

### The Funeral

Jewish funerals generally take place the day after death. But if family members are coming from far away, or if that day is Shabbat or another holiday on which no work may be done, the funeral may be held as soon afterward as possible.

At the funeral, the rabbi, cantor, family members, or friends offer a *hesped*—a eulogy—that may include prayers, psalms, and words of comfort to the mourners. They speak of the one who died, what that person loved, accomplished, and hoped for. They talk of what made their loved one unique—best-known sayings, famous recipes, favorite jokes. Sometimes the

speakers tell stories that make us smile. Sometimes they tell stories that make us cry. Both have a place at the funeral.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## Lesson 7

### Ourselves

#### **Essential Question**

- How does my Jewish identity influence *t'fillah*?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Create and present a visual representation of a service.
- List several ways that they can incorporate *t'fillah* into their Jewish identities.
- Evaluate the benefits of praying with *keva*.

#### **Activity 1**

Lead students in a discussion:

- What makes you Jewish? (List answers on the board.)
- How do these things (on the board) make you Jewish?
- How do you define a Jewish activity?
- If Jewish people do an activity together, does that make it Jewish? Why or why not?
- How can we make an activity a Jewish activity?
- How is prayer a Jewish activity?

#### **Activity 2**

Explain to students that the prayer maps (from Lesson 5 and Lesson 6) on which they have been working are not only outlines of the service, but are also maps of Jewish values that many of us share.

Have students divide into pairs to discuss the rough drafts of their prayer maps.

Provide them with the following questions to discuss:

- Why did you choose to represent the prayers in this way?
- Where did you choose to situate yourself in the thematic structure of the service? Why?
- What have you learned about the structure of the service from this project?

Instruct students to offer feedback on the rough drafts using the “I notice, I wonder, I appreciate” model from Unit 1, Lesson 2.

### **Activity 3 (Authentic Assessment)**

Instruct students to create a final draft of their prayer map based on the rough draft upon which they have been working, making sure to situate themselves within the themes of the prayers on the map.

Provide students with as many art supplies as possible to enhance their project.

Once the projects are complete, have students present the projects to one another (and ideally to their families). If possible, display the prayer maps in a public place in the synagogue.

### **Activity 4**

Lead students in a final discussion:

- What makes prayer a Jewish thing? (*we pray in Hebrew, we pray the same way as our ancestors, we incorporate God into our prayers, we pray the same prayers over and over – Keva, etc.*)
- How do we pray with *keva*?
- Why is it important to incorporate *keva* into *t'fillah*?
- How do you feel about praying with *keva* (praying according to a specific structure)?

## Unit 4

# How do Jewish people connect to prayer?

Unit 4 transitions from *keva* (the fixed nature of *t'fillah*) to *kavanah* (the intention with which we pray). *Kavanah* allows us to explore how we can best connect to prayer. This unit presents a variety of modes through which we can make prayer more meaningful, including language, music, movement, and nature. Students will have the opportunity to try all these different modes of prayer. In addition, they will enhance their understanding of individual prayers by learning about the prayers that most naturally correspond with each mode.

Because every student will relate differently to the modes of connecting to prayer, the ongoing assessment for this unit will be to develop a Personal Prayer Plan. In these individual plans, students will explain how they best connect to prayer and how they can bring *kavanah* into their regular prayer practices.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

### **Unit Goals**

- To show students that *t'fillah* can take on many forms.
- To show students that experimentation is essential in finding a way to connect to *t'fillah*.
- To allow students to experience a variety of modes of *t'fillah*.
- To help students understand that praying through different modes can allow for different ways of connecting to God.

## **Essential Questions**

- How does language allow us to connect to prayer?
- Why is it important to pray in Hebrew?
- How do silence and introspection allow us to connect to prayer?
- How can praying with others help *me* pray?
- How does music allow us to connect to prayer?
- How does movement allow us to connect to prayer?
- How can we pray outside the synagogue?
- How can I best connect to prayer?

## **Unit Overview**

Lesson 1	Through English Words (Scripted)
Lesson 2	Through Hebrew Words
Lesson 3	Through Individual Reflection
Lesson 4	Through Community
Lesson 5	Through Music
Lesson 6	Through Movement
Lesson 7	Through Nature
Lesson 8	Through Learning

## **Memorable Moments**

- Silent reflection (Lesson 3)
- Drum circle (Lesson 5)
- Nature walk (Lesson 7)

## **Authentic Assessment**

- Praying in Hebrew or English (Lesson 2)
- Individual or group prayer (Lesson 4)
- Personal Prayer Plan (Lesson 8)
- The Personal Prayer Playlist (At the end of each lesson)

# Lesson 1 (Scripted)

## Through English Words

### **Essential Question**

- How does language allow us to connect to prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Recall the definition of *kavanah*.
- Compare the ideas of “focusing,” and “associative reverie.”<sup>29</sup>
- Explain how they can connect to the words of prayer, even if the words are not their own.

### **Timeline**

0:00-0:10	Activity 1 – Differing perspectives
0:10-0:24	Activity 2 – <i>Kavanah</i>
0:24-0:38	Activity 3 – Focusing
0:38-0:52	Activity 4 – Associative reverie
0:52-0:57	Activity 5 – Personal prayer chart
0:57-1:00	Activity 6 – The Personal Prayer Playlist

### **Activity 1**

Tape numbered pictures of optical illusions to the walls. (See **Resource 4-1**). Have students walk around and record on a sheet of paper what they see in each of the pictures.

After 3-5 minutes, have students share what they saw in each of the pictures. The pictures (in numerical order) are:

1. Young woman/old woman
2. Eskimo/Native American
3. Rabbit/duck
4. Woman looking in mirror/skull
5. Jazz player/woman’s face
6. The word “me”/the word “you”
7. Two faces/vase
8. Face/the word “Liar” (turn the page to the left)

---

<sup>29</sup> See Holtz, p. 134

Ask:

- **Did everyone see the same things in all the pictures?** (*no*)
- **Why did we all see different things in the pictures?** (*we all have different perspectives, we were looking at it in different ways, etc.*)

Explain: We all saw different things in the pictures, because each of us brings our own ideas and our own point of view to everything we see. Our experiences and varying perspectives influence how we feel, what we see (as exemplified in the illusions), and what we do. We all bring our own intentions into our experiences. For example, if we were thinking about ourselves, we may have seen the word “me” in image 6, while if we were thinking about others we might have seen the word “you.” This is similar to *kavanah*. We each bring our own intentions and our own spontaneity to *t’fillah*, so we all have different prayer experiences.

### **Activity 2**

Say: We will now have the opportunity to explore how *kavanah* (intention and spontaneity) impacts the *keva* (written, fixed words) of prayer.

Have students read the *Avot V’Imahot* and *G’vurot* in English. (*Mishkan T’filah* p. 76 and 78) As the students are reading, instruct them to write down phrases with which they identify and phrases that they have questions about.

After students have read through both blessings, ask:

- **What are the main ideas of these two prayers?**
- **Which phrases do you most identify with? Why?**
- **What questions do you have about the use of the words in the prayers?**
- **How do these prayers make you feel?**
- **If you had written prayers about these same themes, would you have used the same words? Why or why not?**

Explain: Sometimes it is hard for us to relate to words that are not our own. Because we did not write the prayers in the prayer book, it may be hard for us to identify with what the prayer writer was saying. However, there are ways that we can make prayer meaningful, even if we do not like, understand, or even agree with all the words of the prayers.

### **Activity 3**

Say: The meaning of a prayer can change with the words upon which we focus as we pray.

Assign each student one of the middle benedictions of the Amidah in both Hebrew and English. (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 84-90) Explain that each blessing asks God for something different. We can find the theme of the blessing by reading the *chatima*, the last line of the blessing.

Ask each student to read through his or her assigned blessing, focusing on the *chatima* ("Blessed is Adonai, who..."), and to come up with one word that describes the theme of the blessing. Have the students share their words.

Ask: **When you think about the last line of all the blessings, what do they say?** (*That God is the one who gives us these things/does these things*)

**But what if you do not believe that God gives us these things? What if you think that God plays a different role in the world? Can this prayer still have meaning for you?**

**Yes. We can focus on the value that the prayer presents, and how we can embody that value, rather than what we might expect from God.<sup>30</sup> If we put the emphasis on the closing words of the blessing, we can focus on the values that are most important in our lives.** (*For example: knowledge, forgiveness, righteousness, creating peace, etc.*)

Have each student write the value that their blessing emphasizes on the board. Then ask the students:

- **Which value do you most identify with today?**
- **Which part of the blessing do you focus on, the praising God part, the value part, or both? Why?**
- **Would you have focused on the same part of the blessing last week? Why or why not?**

Say: **When we approach blessings by focusing on the words that have the most meaning for us, the blessings can more easily fit our own lives and beliefs.**

#### **Activity 4**

Have the students play "Psychological Telephone." In this game, the students will sit in a circle. The first student will say a word out loud (for example: apple). The student sitting next to him or her will then say the first word that comes to mind (for example: tree). The next student will follow with the first word that comes to mind, and so on.

---

<sup>30</sup> Holtz, p. 125

The teacher will explain: **When we hear certain words, we often associate those words in our minds with entirely different images and ideas. The same is true when we recite the words of a prayer. We often read the words and then associate those words with something else. For example, when I recite the part about the *Avot v'Imahot*, the fathers and mothers, in the *Amidah*, I may think about my own father and mother, who are not directly related to the prayer. Not only is this association allowed, but also it can help you make a more personal connection with the prayer.**

Have the students read through the *Avot v'Imahot* and the *G'vurot*. As they do, they should pick out a word or phrase that has a powerful association for them. Once they have chosen a word or phrase, they can write or illustrate the association that the phrase inspires.

Explain: **Because we have different experiences every day, our associations will vary every day. One day one phrase may cause a powerful association, the next day another phrase, or even another prayer, may be more meaningful to us.**

### **Activity 5**

Explain: **Words are only one way for us to connect to prayer. We will explore other ways to pray in the next few weeks. At the end of our exploration of ways that Jewish people pray, we will be designing our own personal prayer plan.**

**Each of you will have a chart so you can remind yourself of all the different ways to pray. Take a few minutes to fill in the chart about using words to pray (see Resource 4-2).**

Have students fill in the chart after each lesson in this unit.

### **Activity 6**

Have students add a song to their Personal Prayer Playlist.

## **Resource 4-1**

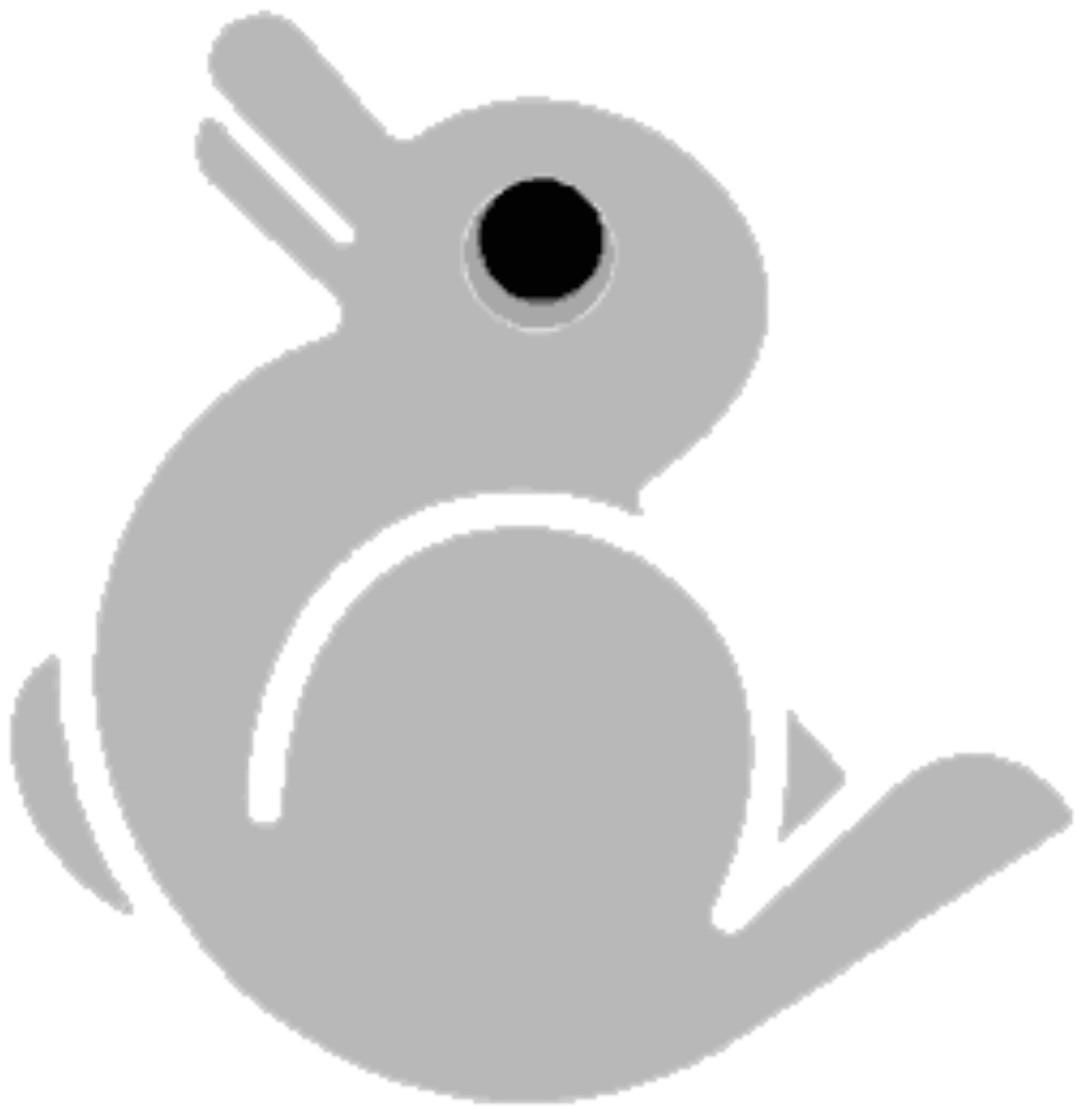
### **Illusion 1**



## Illusion 2



### Illusion 3



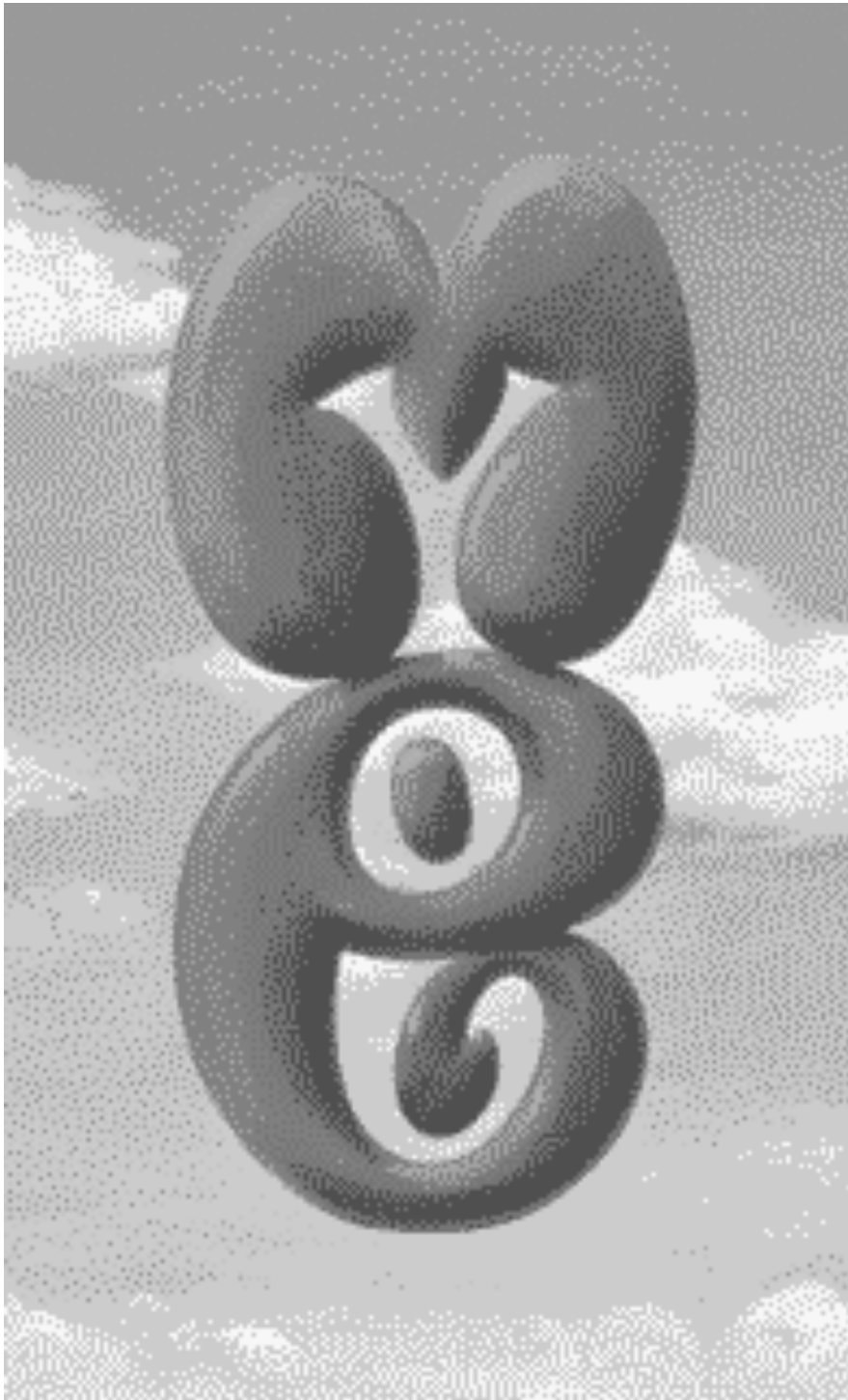
## Illusion 4



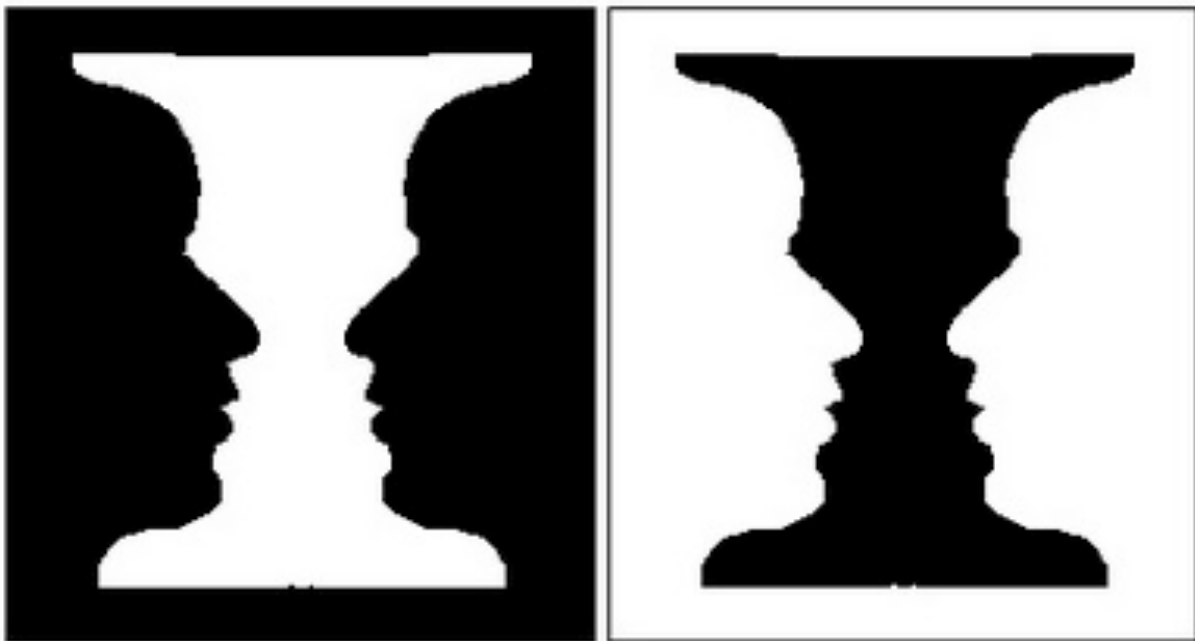
## Illusion 5



## Illusion 6



## Illusion 7



©MBE

©MBE

## Illusion 8



### **Resource 4-2**

<b>Way to Connect to Prayer</b>	<b>This way is helpful for me when I pray, because...</b>	<b>This way is challenging to me when I pray, because</b>
<b>English Words</b>		
<b>Hebrew Words</b>		
<b>Individual Prayer</b>		
<b>Communal Prayer</b>		
<b>Music</b>		
<b>Movement</b>		
<b>Nature</b>		
<b>Learning</b>		

## Lesson 2

# Through Hebrew Words

### **Essential Question**

- Why is it important to pray in Hebrew?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- List reasons that Hebrew is important to their identity as Jewish people.
- Compare praying in English with praying in Hebrew.
- Advocate for reasons why we should recite certain prayers in Hebrew.
- Create their own text explaining their views on language and prayer.

### **Activity 1**

Ask students to complete the following phrases:

- Hebrew is important to the Jewish people because...
- Hebrew is important to me because...

List the responses on the board.

Explain that Hebrew is an important characteristic of Jewish prayer. However, not all Jewish prayers have to be written in Hebrew, and not everything in Hebrew is prayer. But when you open the prayer book, there is Hebrew on nearly every page. Why?

### **Activity 2**

On the board, create a scale that ranges from “All English” to “All Hebrew.” It should look something like this:

All English  All Hebrew

Ask students to volunteer to read the texts in **Resource 4-3** out loud. After each text is read, have the students decide where the text would be placed on the scale (is it advocating for all English, all Hebrew, or somewhere in between?). This scale can be used for reference in Activity 4.

### **Activity 3**

Instruct students to create a chart that lists reasons why it is good to pray in English, and why it is good to pray in Hebrew. A sample chart is included below.

<b>Reasons to Pray in Hebrew</b>	<b>Reasons to Pray in English</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hebrew links Jews of all nations, regardless of their spoken language</li><li>• Hebrew infuses prayer with holiness and a connection to God</li><li>• Hebrew is the unique language Jews use to express their special relationship to God (Torah, etc.)</li><li>• Hebrew reminds us that our prayer is Jewish</li><li>• Hebrew links us to the Jewish people of the past</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• English allows us to understand the meanings of the prayers</li><li>• English allows for everyone to feel welcome in a service</li><li>• English allows us to express ourselves more fully</li></ul>

Have students read in Hebrew and English *Yihyu L'ratzon* and *Oseh Shalom* (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 100) to aid in the creation of their chart. They should read, chant, or sing the prayer in Hebrew; and then read the prayer in English. (If the teacher knows a melody in Hebrew and English, it can be included as well.)

Ask:

- What is the difference between the Hebrew and English versions?
- Why is it good to recite the prayer in Hebrew?
- Why is it good to recite the prayer in English?
- How does Hebrew help make meaning out of the prayers?
- How does English help make meaning out of the prayers?

Explain to students that most Jewish scholars have decided that some prayers should be recited in Hebrew, while others can be recited in English. It is important to create a balance between Hebrew and English, so that we can experience the benefits of both languages.

### **Activity 4 (Authentic Assessment)**

Explain that students will now have the opportunity to become Jewish scholars themselves by creating a statement on "Praying in Hebrew and English."

To begin the process, ask students, in *chevruta*, to look at their prayer maps from Unit 3 and reflect on the following questions:

- Which prayers do you believe should be recited in Hebrew? Why?
- Which prayers do you believe should be recited in English? Why?
- Are there any prayers that should be recited in both Hebrew and English?

Once students have had a chance to reflect on the prayers, they should create a short statement about praying in Hebrew and/or English. The statement should include which prayers should be recited in which language, and why the students believe this is the case.

After the students have created their statements, they can present them to the other “scholars” in the class.

## **Resource 4-3**

### **Hebrew or English?**

#### **Text 1**

The Mishnah in Sotah provides that the following may be recited in any language: the *Shema*, the *Tefilah (Amidah)*, and the benedictions over food [*HaMotzi* and *Birkat HaMazon*]. On the other hand, the following must be recited in Hebrew: the paragraph of the first fruits (Deuteronomy 26:3, 5-10), the words of *chalitza*, the blessings and the curses (Deuteronomy 27:15-26), the benediction of the priests, and the benediction of the high priest on Yom Kippur.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Text 2**

Our Rabbis taught: The *Shema* must be recited as it is written [in Hebrew]. The Sages, however, say that it may be recited in any language. What is the Rabbi's reason? – Scripture says: and they *shall be*, implying as they are [written in the Torah] they shall remain. What is the reason of the Sages? – Scripture says '*hear*', implying, in any language you understand.  
(*Talmud Berakoth 13a*<sup>32</sup>)

#### **Text 3**

Surely Abaye said: Secular matters [prayer] may be uttered in the holy language [Hebrew], whereas sacred matters must not be uttered in secular language.  
(*Talmud Shabbat 40b*)

#### **Text 4**

One can pray in any language that he [or she] wishes; and this is in a congregation, but when praying alone one should only pray in the Holy Tongue [Hebrew].  
(*Orach Chayim 101:4*)

---

<sup>31</sup> Klein, p. 19-20

<sup>32</sup> Talmud Excerpts taken from The Babylonian Talmud, Soncino Press

## Lesson 3

### Through Individual Reflection

#### **Essential Question**

- How do silence and introspection allow us to connect to prayer?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify moments in Jewish tradition in which silence is used to connect to *t'fillah* and God.
- Analyze how the *Shema* embodies the idea of listening.
- Consider how silence and introspection help them pray.

#### **Activity 1**

Ask students to lie down or sit in a comfortable spot with their eyes closed. Have students visualize the following scenario:

“You are the prophet Elijah. You have just gone into battle with the priests of Baal, a foreign God. The evil queen, Jezebel, has just threatened to kill you. You run for your life and find a cave to hide in. You are cold, tired, scared, and feeling hopeless. The word of God comes to you, saying “What are you doing here, Elijah?” You pour out your frustrations to God and God tells you to go out and stand on a mountain before Adonai. And you do. You slowly get up and climb to the top of the mountain. And Adonai passes by, and there blows a great and mighty wind, which splits mountains and shatters boulders before Adonai. But Adonai was not in the wind. And after the wind there came thunder, but Adonai was not in the thunder. And after the thunder, fire, but Adonai was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still small voice. What do you think the still small voice of God said to Elijah?” <sup>33</sup>

Ask students to sit up and open their eyes. Have the students fill in the blank:

“Adonai was not in the wind. Adonai was not in the thunder. Adonai was not in the fire. Adonai was in \_\_\_\_”

---

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from: Saliman, p. 55

Ask the following questions:

- How did God come to Elijah? (*in a still small voice*)
- What might we need to do in order to hear God's voice? (*pay attention, listen for it*)
- How can connecting to God through a still small voice help you when you pray? (*by allowing you to reflect, by allowing you to listen to the meaning of your prayers, etc.*)

## **Activity 2**

Have the students act out the skit in **Resource 4-4**.

After the skit, ask:

- According to the skit, why is silence important?
- How can you have a conversation if you are silent?
- What if you do not feel like having a conversation with God? How else can silence be important when you pray?

## **Activity 3**

Share with students the following quote:

Prayer is a surrendering to the stillness that surrounds us, a withdrawal from the marketplace, the honking of horns, the television set, the innumerable diversions and attractions which modern living thrusts upon us, and a yielding to the quiet that is everywhere. For there is another world about and within us which we neither see nor touch, a world which is as real as the flowers we smell or the ground we walk upon, as the mountains we behold or the rock we lean against. There is One who at all times and in all places speaks to us with love and guidance and concern; but God speaks in a tone barely audible and we must clear away the din of daily living and open our ears to hear God.

*(Samuel H. Dresner)*

Ask:

- What does it mean that we "must clear away the din of daily living and open our ears to hear God?"
- How can we do this in our daily lives?
- How can we do this when we pray?

Explain to students that there is a prayer that encourages us to listen to what is around us and to ourselves.

Have students recite the first line of the *Shema* in Hebrew and in English. Write the Hebrew root word *Shema* – שמע – on the board, or hold up a poster with the word *Shema* on it. Give the students a Hebrew-English Dictionary, and have them look up the definition of שמע. (*To hear, to listen*)

Ask:

- What is the difference between hearing and listening?
- Is it possible to listen without hearing?
- Is it possible to hear without listening?
- Why is it important to listen, and not only hear, when we pray?
- When we are instructed to listen in the Shema, what are we listening to and/or for?

#### **Activity 4 (Memorable Moment)**

Explain to students that they will now have the opportunity to experience a time of silence.

Take students to a comfortable, quiet place. This can be outdoors, in the sanctuary, or in another room in the building. Have the students spread out, and sit or lie comfortably.

Explain to students that they will sit in silence for 10-20 minutes. Provide students with a sheet of Jewish texts to reflect upon, if they would like (see **Resource 4-5**).

After the period of silence, ask:

- How did it feel to sit in silence for so long?
- Have you ever experienced other periods of personal silence that lasted this long (other than sleeping or watching movies/television)? What led to that silence and how did it compare to this time of silence?
- How can you incorporate silence into your personal prayer practice?

Have students create a list of the benefits of personal, silent reflection. Save this list for use in Lesson 4.

## **Resource 4-4**

**Rabbi 1:** God gave us the whole Torah, word by word, at Mount Sinai.

**Rabbi 2:** You have it all wrong. God gave only the ten sayings, commonly called the Ten Commandments, at Mount Sinai.

**Rabbi 3:** Actually, there is an old legend from the Talmud, which tells that God didn't give ten but only the first two sayings ("I am the Lord your God..." and "You shall not have any other gods besides me..."). After all, the first two sayings are the basis for all of Judaism. One who remembers that there is a God who frees people and that there are no other gods will probably be religious.

**Rabbi 4:** God only uttered the first saying on Mount Sinai, "I am the Lord your God."

**Rabbis 1, 2, and 3:** Yes, we agree that if God had given only one saying it would have been that one – that there is a God.

**Rabbi 5:** No, God didn't even say that much! All God said was the first word of the first saying, "I" [in Hebrew, *Anochi*].

**Rabbis 1, 2, 3, and 4:** Yes, we agree that if God had said only one word, it would have been *Anochi*, because it affirms the importance of self.

**Rabbi 6:** Actually, God didn't even say the first word. All God said was the first letter of the first word of the first saying – which in Hebrew is also the first letter of the alphabet, *Aleph*.

**Rabbis 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5:** But we thought the *Aleph* was a silent letter!

**Rabbi 6:** Almost, but not perfectly silent. You see, *Aleph* makes a tiny, little sound that is the beginning of every sound. Open your mouth and begin to make a sound.

*Rabbis open their mouth and begin to make a sound.*

**Rabbi 6:** Stop!

*Rabbis stop.*

**Rabbi 6:** That is *Aleph*. God made the sound of *Aleph* so quiet that if you made any other noise you wouldn't be able to hear it. At Sinai all the people of Israel needed to hear was the sound of *Aleph*. It meant that God and the Jewish people could have a conversation.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Adapted from: Kushner p. 41

## **Resource 4-5**

### **Silent Reflection Texts**

On three things the world is sustained: on the Torah, on service, and on deeds of loving kindness.

*(Pirkei Avot 1:2)*

Hillel used to say: If I am not for myself who will be for me? But, if I am for myself only, what am I? And if not now, when?

*(Pirkei Avot 1:14)*

Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from all men, as it is written (Psalm 119:99) "I have gained understanding from all my teachers.

*(Pirkei Avot 4:1)*

Hillel said: Do not separate yourself from the community, and do not trust in yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place. Do not say something that cannot be understood but will be understood in the end. Say not: When I have time I will study because you may never have the time.

*(Pirkei Avot 2:5)*

He also used to say: Despise no man and deem nothing impossible; for there is no man who does not have his day and there is no thing that does not have its place.

*(Pirkei Avot 4:3)*

Rabbi Matyah ben Cheresh used to say: Be first in greeting every man. Be a tail among lions rather than a head to foxes.

*(Pirkei Avot 4:20)*

## Lesson 4

# Through Community

### **Essential Question**

- How can praying with others help *me* pray?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Analyze why community is an essential aspect of *t'fillah*.
- Compare the benefits of praying alone to the benefits of praying with a group.
- Decide whether they pray better as an individual or with a group.

### **Activity 1**

Begin by asking a single student to make a consistent, repetitive sound. Then, have another student make a sound that reacts to and compliments the first. Have each student continue adding a sound, until each student is a part of the “orchestra.”

As the “conductor” of the “orchestra,” have students start and stop their sounds. If feeling ambitious, have the students “play” familiar songs.

After the “orchestra” performance, ask:

- Which was more powerful, when a few students made noises, or when the entire orchestra played together? Why?
- How did it feel to be a part of the orchestra? What are some other examples of times that you become a part of a larger group? (*sports teams, rock concerts, dance groups, etc.*)
- How does it feel to belong to a larger group?
- How do these group experiences relate to *t'fillah*? (*we often pray as a group in t'fillah*)

Share with students the text:

Hillel said, do not separate yourself from the community.

*Pirkei Avot 2:5*

Ask:

- How does this text relate to the orchestra we created?
- Why is it important to not separate yourself from the community?
- How does this text relate to prayer? (*we should be a part of a prayer community, etc.*)

## **Activity 2**

Explain that there are actually prayers in Judaism that cannot be said without a community. This community is called a *minyan*, and is comprised of 10 adults.

Ask: How did we decide that 10 people are required for communal prayers? (Have students share their guesses with the class.)

Share with students the origin of the *minyan* in **Resource 4-6**.

Explain that one prayer that requires a *minyan* is the *Barechu*. The *Barechu* is a call and response prayer that serves as the introduction to the *Shema* and its blessings – one of the main parts of the service.

Have the students read the *Barechu* (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 226). Explain that the leader reads the first line, the congregation responds with the second line, and then the leader repeats the second line after the congregation. "The leader asks, 'Are you ready to pray?' And we respond, 'Yes! Let us pray!'"<sup>35</sup>

Ask:

- Why do you think the *Barechu* requires a *minyan*? (*because it requires a communal response, because it makes sure that we are ready for the main part of the service*)
- Why do you think it is important to say the *Barechu* as a group? (*because we know we have enough people for the main part of the service, because we need to have a group big enough to respond to the leader, etc.*)

## **Activity 3 (Authentic Assessment)**

Have students compile a list of reasons why it is beneficial to pray as a community. List the reasons on the board. Share with students the texts on communal prayer in **Resource 4-7**. As students read through the texts, they can add more reasons to the class list.

Have students compare this list to the list of reasons for personal prayer from Lesson 3.

Ask students to write a couple of paragraphs explaining whether they pray better as an individual or a group, and why.

---

<sup>35</sup> Frishman, p. 59

## **Resource 4-6**<sup>36</sup>

### What Is a Minyan?

Notice that the emphasis of the **בְּרַכּוֹ**, and the words found in the Book of Nehemiah, is upon *calling the congregation* together for prayer. Jewish tradition emphasizes praying with a community. The Rabbis of the Talmud teach that “the prayers of those who pray with a congregation are answered.”

What is meant by “congregation” or “community” in Judaism? And why does Jewish tradition consider prayer with a congregation superior to praying alone?

According to traditional Jewish law and practice, ten men past the age of thirteen form a **מִנְיָן** (*minyan*), or “quorum.” In Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist synagogues today, women as well as men are counted in a **מִנְיָן**. A **מִנְיָן** may be ten men, ten women, or a mixture of the two.

39

---

<sup>36</sup> Fields, p. 39-41

We are not sure when or where this tradition of needing a מנין to pray developed. Some say that the number ten was taken from the first sentence of Psalm 82. It reads:

אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדַת-יֵאֵל.

God is present in the congregation of the Eternal One.

The word עֵדָה (*eidah*), "congregation," is used here in its Hebrew construct form עֵדַת (*adat*), "congregation of." So what does that have to do with the number ten? Well, the Rabbis point out that עֵדָה is also used by the Torah (Numbers 14:27) when it refers to the ten spies who were sent by Moses to explore the Land of Israel and then return with a report. Those ten spies were called עֵדָה.

Because עֵדָה is used in the spy story to refer to ten men and עֵדַת in the psalm to refer to "congregation [of]," Jewish tradition defined a מנין as ten adults.

### Why Pray with a מנין?

There are several answers that can be given to this question. We will discuss some of them further on in *B'chol Lvavcha*. One way of answering the question, however, is to make a list of the reasons why you prefer to share experiences with friends.

Make up such a list. Then discuss it, asking what reasons you have for praying with others. If someone wants to take the other side of the argument, you may want to arrange a debate. You may also wish to develop a sermon on the question and present it at one of your services.

Another way of answering the question is to look at the answers given to us by other Jews. Here is one response written by the great Jewish poet Y'hudah HaLevi. He lived in Spain during the years 1085 to 1140 and wrote many poems that have become a part of Jewish worship. In his book, called *The Kuzari*, he tried to answer many difficult questions about Jewish tradition, history, and faith. This is what he wrote about praying with a מנין:

Praying with a congregation has many advantages. In the first place, a community will never pray for something that is harmful to the individual, while sometimes an individual will ask for things that can be harmful to others. That is why it is taught that a person should recite prayers with a congregation.

A p  
his ho  
is the  
good c

Why does  
not fulfillin  
Is son  
How migh  
to others?  
The f  
another rea

When  
wave  
which

What  
Why is it  
than ourse  
Mordc  
God. How



A person who prays only for himself is like one who goes alone into his house and refuses to help others in the work of the community... It is the duty of each person to bear hardships for the sake of the common good of all.

Why does Y'hudah HaLevi make the connection between praying alone and not fulfilling one's community obligations? Would you agree with him?

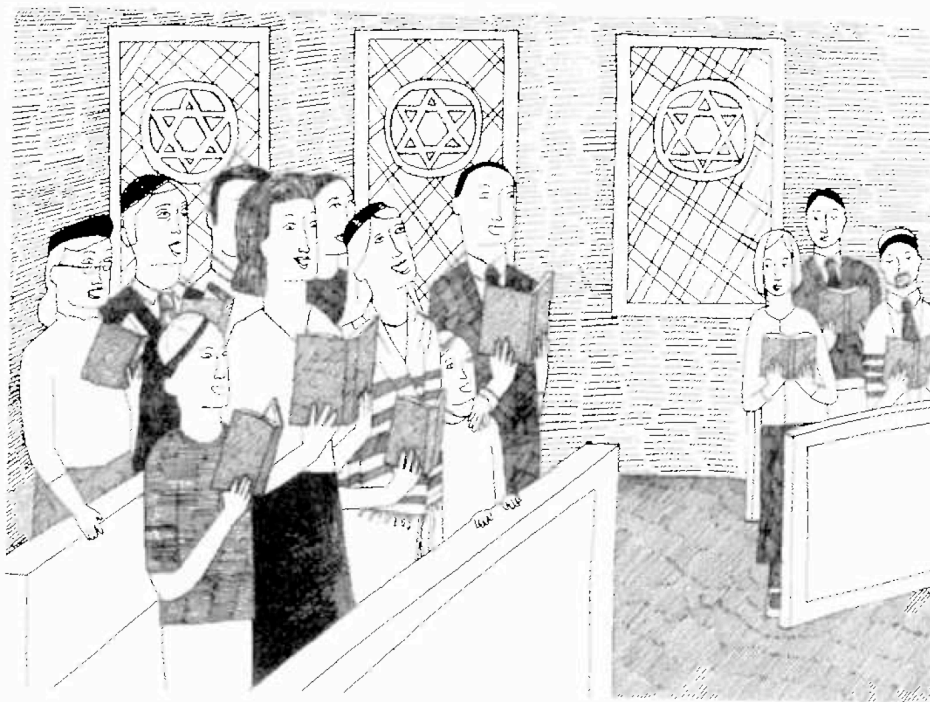
Is someone more apt to be selfish in prayers while praying alone? How might the presence of others remind us that we have responsibilities to others?

The founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Mordecai Kaplan, offers another reason for praying with a minyan:

When we worship in public we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being—this first-hand experience of that larger life which is God.

What does Mordecai Kaplan believe that we learn by praying in public? Why is it important to remember that we are part of something larger than ourselves?

Mordecai Kaplan says that by praying with a group, we can feel closer to God. How might praying with a מנין help us sense God's presence?



## **Resource 4-7**

### **Praying as a Community**

We pray, but we pray together. We blend our voices together in song. We share our lives with one another – happy moments and celebrations, as well as sad moments, tragedies, and the losses that come with life. We learn together – sharing our ideas about how life should be lived. When life is good, we share the joy. When life is difficult, we help one another find the courage not to give up, not to lose hope.<sup>37</sup>  
*(Edward Feinstein)*

---

Praying with a congregation has many advantages. In the first place, a community will never pray for something that is harmful to the individual, while sometimes an individual will ask for things that can be harmful to others. That is why it is taught that a person should recite prayers with a congregation.

A person who prays only for himself is like the one who goes alone into his house and refuses to help others in the work of the community...It is the duty of each person to bear hardships for the sake of the common good to all.<sup>38</sup>  
*(Y'hudah HaLevi)*

---

When we worship in public we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being – this first-hand experience of that larger life which is God.<sup>39</sup>  
*(Mordechai Kaplan)*

---

<sup>37</sup> Feinstein, p. 21

<sup>38</sup> Fields, p. 40

<sup>39</sup> Fields, p. 41

## Lesson 5 Through Music

### **Essential Question**

- How does music allow us to connect to prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Explain why *Pseukei D'zimrah* is included in the service.
- Analyze how music can reflect different moods and emotions in prayer.
- Propose how music can help create a connection with God.

### **Activity 1**

Bring in a selection of music (5-10 songs), ranging from classical to rock, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Have students listen to each of the songs. Using **Resource 4-8**, have students record how the music makes them feel, when they would listen to this song, and to whom they would recommend this song.

After the students have listened to all the songs (or clips from all the songs), ask students to share and compare their answers with one another. Explain that music can evoke different emotions in each person.

### **Activity 2**

Have students read and think about the meanings of the quotes in **Resource 4-9**. This can be done as a whole group, in *chevruta*, or with each student reading one quote.

After students have read and discussed the quotes, ask:

- Which quote is your favorite? Why?
- What role does music play in your life?
- How does music relate to prayer?
- Based on these quotes, why is it important to include music in prayer?

### **Activity 3**

Explain to students that music can help set the mood and prepare us for many different situations. For example:

- We play the “Bridal March” at weddings
- We play “Pomp and Circumstance” for graduation
- We play “Hail to the Chief” for the President
- Universities have “fight songs” for sporting events

In *t’fillah*, we use music to help set the mood for prayer and to help prepare us to pray. Before the main part of the service (*Barechu*, *Shema*, etc.), we recite a group of songs that praise God, called *Pseukei D’zimrah* – Verses of Praise.

*“Pseukei D’zimrah might be viewed as “prayer before prayer.” It functions as the warm-up for the morning service, a recognition that prayerfulness cannot be summoned on demand.”*<sup>40</sup>

The presence of *Pseukei D’zimrah* at the beginning of the morning service “demonstrates the attitude that one must first praise God before offering other prayers of petition and thanksgiving.”<sup>41</sup>

Ask:

- How can music help you prepare for prayer?
- How can praising God help you prepare for prayer?
- How are music and praising God related?

Explain to students that music often reflects the mood and emotions that words create. Have the students read through *Pseukei D’zimrah*, in English (this can be done as a large group, in smaller groups, or by assigning groups various individual prayers), identifying words that express emotion, and writing them on index cards. Once the students have identified words of emotion, they can sort those words into various categories (for example: beautiful, comforting, joyful, frightening.)<sup>42</sup>

Once students have created categories of emotions, ask:

- Based on your categories, what type of overall mood does *Pseukei D’zimrah* express?
- What type of music would you use for *Pseukei D’Zimrah*? (*Upbeat, sad, slow, etc. Keep in mind the emotions that the words express, and what type of mood you want to create.*)

Share with students various melodies for the prayers in *Pseukei D’zimrah*.

---

<sup>40</sup> Frishman, p. 50

<sup>41</sup> Kadden, p. 38

<sup>42</sup> Adapted from: Kadden, p. 40

#### **Activity 4 (Memorable Moment)**

Allow students to experience the power of music.

If available, invite a drumming specialist to come and teach the students rhythm and music, or provide your students with drums and other instruments and teach them yourself.

Create a drum circle in which students can chant and sing simple Jewish melodies:

- *Elohai Neshama* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 34)
- *Hallelu* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 643)
- *Gesher Tzar Meod* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 643)
- *Or Zarua* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 647)
- Etc.

### **Resource 4-8**

<b>Song</b>	<b>This song makes me feel...</b>	<b>I would listen to this song when...</b>	<b>I would recommend this song to...</b>

## **Resource 4-9**

"Music is what feelings sound like."  
*(Anonymous)*

"Music speaks what cannot be expressed, soothes the mind and gives it rest, heals the heart and makes it whole, flows from heaven to the soul."  
*(Anonymous)*

"Music and rhythm find their way into the secret places of the soul."  
*(Plato)*

"The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul."  
*(Bach)*

"Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."  
*(Berthold Auerbach)*

"Where words fail, music speaks."  
*(Hans Christian Andersen)*

There is nothing in the world so much like prayer as music is.  
*(William P. Merrill)*

Music is forever; music should grow and mature with you, following you right on up until you die.  
*(Paul Simon)*

## Lesson 6

# Through Movement

### **Essential Question**

- How does movement allow us to connect to prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate the basic choreography of *t'fillah*.
- Analyze why movement is an important aspect of *t'fillah*.
- Create their own movements for a prayer in *Birchot HaShachar*.

For this class, ask students to wear comfortable clothes conducive to movement.

### **Activity 1**

Have students read *Ma Tov* in Hebrew and English (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 30).

Teach students Judy Greenfeld's *Ma Tov* (See **Resource 4-10**).

After students have completed the prayer, ask:

- What is the meaning of *Ma Tov*?
- How did the movements relate to the meaning of this prayer?
- How did you feel including movements in this prayer?

### **Activity 2**

Explain to students that movement is a central component of *t'fillah*. As Jewish people recite prayers, they often stand, bow, and/or sway.

Teach students the basic choreography of *t'fillah* (see **Resource 4-11**). This should include movements for the following prayers:

- *Barechu* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 226)
- *Shema* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 232-234)
- *Amidah* (including the *Kedushah*) (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 244-248)
- *Aleinu* – (*Mishkan T'filah* p. 586-590)

Have the students stand up and practice the movements for the prayers. (Not only will this help teach the choreography, it is also a good review of the prayers.)

Ask:

- Why do you think movement is an important part of *t'fillah*?
- How can movement help you connect to *t'fillah*?

### **Activity 3**

Explain that many Jewish prayers actually correspond to the movements of our bodies.

Introduce the *Birchot Hashachar* (morning blessings), explaining that: We recite these blessings during morning services, before we begin *Pseukei D'zimrah*, so they are like the warm-up before the warm-up.

“These blessings reflect the activities one does in the morning from waking up, arising, getting dressed, etc., to going about one’s daily affairs.”<sup>43</sup>

“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.”<sup>44</sup>

Explain that *Nisim B'chol Yom* are one part of *Birchot Hashachar*. Read through the *Nisim B'chol Yom (Mishkan T'filah*, p. 36-40), as students pantomime the actions in the blessings.

Ask:

- Why is it important to say blessings over actions that we already do in the morning?
- Does incorporating movement make prayer more or less meaningful? How so?

### **Activity 4**

Explain to students that there are other prayers in *Birchot Hashachar* whose words address the idea of movement. Many of these prayers acknowledge our appreciation for our bodies and our souls. Whether students believe that God or some other power created their bodies, they can still acknowledge that the intricacies of the human body are miraculous.

---

<sup>43</sup> Kadden, p. 31

<sup>44</sup> Frishman, p. 36

Divide students into 4 groups. Give each group a prayer in *Birchot Hashachar*:

- *Modeh/ah Ani* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 24)
- *Asher Yatzar* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 32)
- *Elohai Neshama* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 34)
- *Eilu Devairm* – (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 44)

Have each group create movements for their particular prayer. They should read the prayer in English, talk about the meaning of the words of the prayer, listen to a musical version of the prayer, talk about the mood of the music, and then choreograph movements to correspond with the meaning of the prayer.

After the students have had time to develop movements for their prayers, have them present their choreography to the rest of the class.

## **Resource 4-10<sup>45</sup>**

### Creating Sarah's Tent



Following is the *Mah Tov* in Hebrew text, transliteration, and English translation. At the beginning, you may want to say the prayers first and then do the movements, because each may be unfamiliar. As you become more comfortable with them, you can integrate the movements into each line of the prayer. You will find your own tempo for saying the prayer and doing the movements, until they eventually flow together. With these exercises, you need not be concerned about breathing, as you will be occupied in saying the prayers.

---

<sup>45</sup> Frankiel, p. 41-46

מה-טבו אֵתְלִי, יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנִתִּי, יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּרֵב  
חֶסֶד אֲבָא בִּיתְךָ, אֲשַׁתְּחוּ אֶל-הֵיכָל קֹדֶשׁ בִּירְאֶתְךָ.  
יְהוָה, אֲהַבְנִי מִשְׁנֵן בִּיתְךָ, וּמִקֹּדֶשׁ מִשְׁכְּנִי כְבוֹדְךָ. נָאִי  
אֲשַׁתְּחוּ וְאֶבְרָשׁ, אֶבְרָשׁ לְפָנֶי יְהוָה עֹשִׂי, נָאִי תַפְלִי  
לִךְ, יְהוָה, עֵת רָצוֹן. אֱלֹהִים, בְּרֵב-חֶסֶדְךָ, עֲנֵי בָאֵמֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

*Mah to-yu o-ha-le-cha, Ya-a-kov, mish-ke-no-te-cha, Yis-ra-el.  
Va-a-ni, b'rov chas-de-cha, a-yo vei-te-cha, esh-ta-cha-veh el hei-chal  
had-she-cha b'yira-te-cha. A-do-nai, a-hav-ti m'on bei-te-cha, u-mia-  
kom mish-kan k'vo-de-cha. Va-a-ni esh-ta-cha-veh v'ech-ra-ah, e-  
vr'cha lif-nei A-do-nai o-si. Va-a-ni, t'fi-la-ti l'cha A-do-nai et ra-tzon,  
El-o-him b'rov chas-de-cha, a-ne-ni be-emet yi-she-cha.*

How fair are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwelling places,  
O Israel!

As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter  
Your house;

I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe  
of You.

Adonai, I love Your house and the dwelling-place of Your Glory.  
I will prostrate myself and bow, kneeling before Adonai  
my Maker.

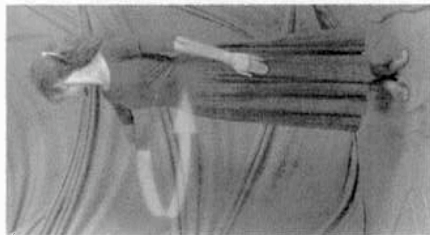
As for me, may my prayer to You be at a pleasing time.  
God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of  
Your salvation.

*You can stand or sit for this exercise.*

"How fair are your tents, O Jacob, and your dwelling places, O Israel!"  
This line of the prayer is said slowly, accompanying the movements of  
"drawing" the shape of the tent.

*"How fair..."*

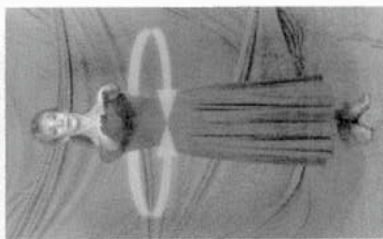
1. Before you begin, focus on the strong intent we need in our arms. They will be your "paintbrushes" drawing the energy around you. Extend them straight out and feel their strength, but without locking



them rigidly. Your fingers also point straight out from the line of the arm, as if they are sending out energy.

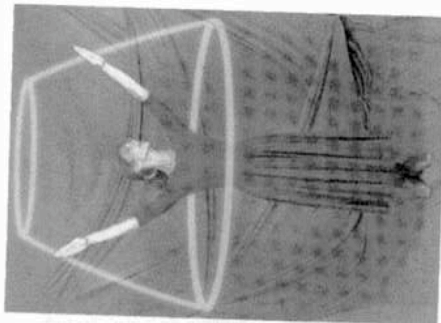
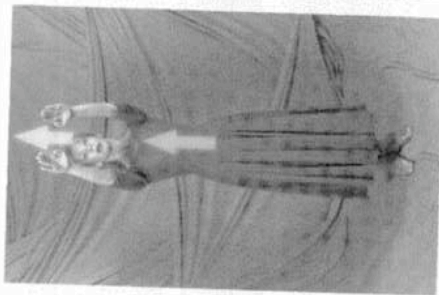
2. First, draw the sides of the tent as follows: Turn your upper body toward the right, twisting as far back as you can without straining, and extending your right arm behind you at the height of your chest. Turn your body slowly back toward the front, using your taut arm to draw a half circle in the air beside you. End with the right arm pointing directly to the front, still at chest height.

With the right arm still extended, turn your upper body to the left, extending your left arm behind you at the height of your chest, reaching back as far as is comfortable. Turn back to the front, drawing a half circle through the air on the left, ending with your left arm in front, parallel to your right arm.



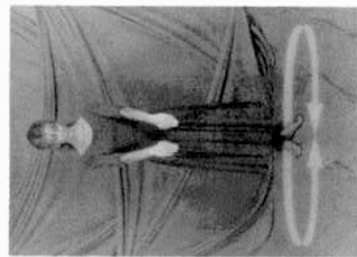
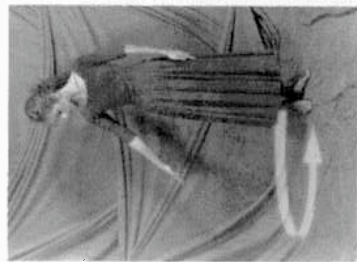
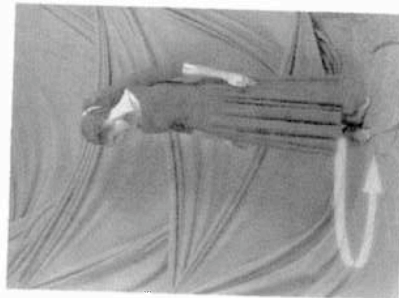
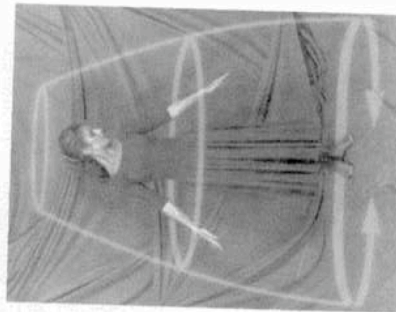
*"...are your tents, O Jacob..."*

3. Both arms are extended in front of the chest. Now you are ready to draw the roof. Raise your arms together, reaching straight up over your head. Hold them there while you look up and "see" the top of your tent. Bring your arms down to your sides, keeping them straight and ending with your fingers pointing toward the floor.



*"...and your dwelling places, O Israel!"*

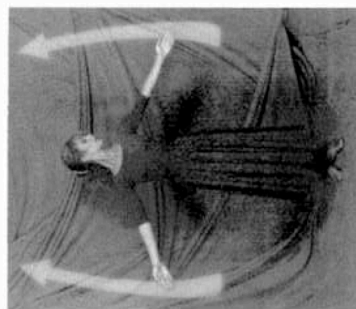
4. Now you will draw the floor of the tent. Turn your upper body to the right as you did when drawing the sides in step two, but this time your right arm is down, fingers pointing toward the floor. Reach back as far as you can, then slowly turn to the front and draw a half circle around you. End with your right arm in front of you, pointing at a spot



about one foot in front of your toes. Repeat the same movements on the left side, turning to the back, slowly turning forward while your fingers draw a half circle, and ending with your left arm in front, parallel to your right arm.

*"As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your house; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You."*

5. Raise your arms above your head again and look up, imagining an awesome shower of golden light, flowing in through your hands and your heart, filling you with love and acceptance. Hold this position to the end of this section of the prayer.



*"Adonai, I love Your house and the dwelling-place of Your Glory."*

6. Place your left hand over your heart, then cover it with your right hand. Become aware of the warmth of your hands.

*"I will prostrate myself and bow, kneeling before Adonai my Maker."*

7. Bow deeply, still holding your heart with both hands, in humble acceptance of the love of God.



*"As for me, may my prayer to You be at a pleasing time. God, in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation."*

Open your hands, stretch your arms forward, and turn the palms upward to receive God's light with your hands. Tilt your head up slightly as you once again imagine the light shining in through the top of the tent.

## ***Meditation***

*Take a deep breath and close your eyes. See Sarah's tent, surrounding you. See the beauty of this sacred space that is yours and God's. You have prepared your house, as if for a special and beloved guest, and it feels wonderful. Your Mishkan can go anywhere with you.*

*Lift your face slowly. Lift your chest slowly. Feel a shower of divine, unconditional love fill your heart. Feel yourself returning it with even more exuberance and passion. This is your relationship with God.*

*Finally, be aware of the power in the timing for making this connection with your community, with the Jewish people, with the grand design. Imagine the tents of each Jew in the world from all time, and imagine the thousands of tents that are opening this morning, like constellations in the heavens. You now have a bond with your Jewish community, past, present, and future.*

## **Resource 4-11**

### **The Choreography of a Service**

Many postures and movements accompany prayers. Some are traditional and date back to thousands of years, while others are more recent innovations.

Jews stand during prayer as we would stand before royalty. It is generally accepted by our tradition that we stand for the *Barchu*, *Hallel* (psalms of praise), and the *Amidah*. Many Reform Jews also rise for the *Shema*, but it may surprise you to learn that not everyone does—this is because *Shema* is an affirmation, and not a direct address to God. Our tradition also teaches that one must say the *Shema* with *kavanah*. Some Jews close or cover their eyes while saying the first line in order to concentrate better.

*Amidah* literally means “standing up,” and is traditionally considered the most important prayer. It is traditional to bow down on the words “*Baruch atah*” and stand back up on “*Adonai*.” Bowing is a small-scale simulation of falling to the ground during Temple times to prostrate oneself before God. When bowing, one bends the knees, but rises up at the waist up. Although we bow for “*Baruch atah Adonai*,” there is no traditional basis for bowing at “*elohei Avraham, elohei Yitzhak, v’elohei Yaakov*, etc.”

During the morning *K’dushah*, we rise up on our tiptoes three times for “*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*.” The Kabbalists were the first to suggest that the triple sanctification of God’s name is an indication that one must reach to God with one’s whole body. It is also an imitation of God’s ministering angels.

Some congregations will then sit and read through the remaining sections of the *Amidah* together. Others will instruct individuals to pray the rest of the *Amidah* individually—standing until one has completed the *Amidah*.

During the Torah service, we rise when the Torah is removed from the Ark, returned to the Ark, and when the Torah is raised for *Hagbah* and *G'lilah*. We sit for the Torah reading, in that it imitates Torah study in which a group might sit in a classroom or in a living room.

We stand for the *Aleinu*. The very words of this prayer tell us what to do: “*va-anachnu* (and we) *korim* (bend at the knees) *u-mish-tachavim* (and bow down) *u-modim* (and give thanks), (we then raise ourselves back up) *lifnay melech mal'chay ha-m'lachim ha-kadosh barchu* (before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He).”

We also stand for the *Kaddish Yatom*, the Mourner's *Kaddish*. Traditionally, only those who are in mourning or who are observing a *yartzeit* stand to recite this prayer. Many Reform Jews today stand in order to not single out the mourners, and to say *Kaddish* for those who do not have someone to say *kaddish* for them.

When praying, it is important to practice the postures that you feel most comfortable with. Try both traditional and non-traditional postures in order to decide which ones enhance your personal worship experience.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> “The Choreography of a Service”

## Lesson 7

# Through Nature

### **Essential Question**

- How can we pray outside the synagogue?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Assess how they can connect to *t'fillah* through nature.
- Analyze why nature is conducive to *t'fillah*.
- Write their own version of *Maariv Aravim* or *Yotzeir Or*, incorporating imagery from nature.

This session should take place in a natural setting. Teachers can take their students to a park, a wooded area, or anywhere that students can experience nature. Ideally, there would be room for a 20-minute (or so) walk. It would be helpful to survey the area before taking students out for this lesson.

### **Activity 1 (Memorable Moment)**

This nature walk is adopted from Rabbi Mike Comins in his book, *A Wild Faith*.<sup>47</sup>

Take students on a nature walk. Instruct students to refrain from speech of any kind as they walk along the trail.

Spread the students out along the trail and leave space between each student, so they are not tempted to talk to one another.

After 20 minutes of walking in silence, find a nice spot to sit and have a discussion.

Ask:

- As you were walking in silence, what did you notice?
- Did anything surprise you? What?

### **Activity 2**

Explain that nature is often an inspiration for prayer. Ask:

- As you were walking, did you notice anything prayer-worthy? What was it?
- Who (or what) do you acknowledge for this awe-someness in nature? Why?

---

<sup>47</sup> Comins, p. 58

Share with students Rabbi Nachman's prayer:

*Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone.  
May it be my custom to go outdoors each day among the trees and grasses,  
Among all growing things,  
There to be alone and enter into prayer.  
There may I express all that is in my heart,  
Talking with (the One) to whom I belong.  
And may all grasses, trees, and plants  
Awake at my coming.  
Send the power of their life into my prayer,  
Making whole my heart and my speech through the life and spirit of growing things,  
Made whole by their transcendent Source.  
Oh! That they would enter my prayer!  
Then would I fully open my heart in prayer, supplication, and holy speech;  
Then, O God, would I pour out the words of my heart before Your Presence.*

Ask:

- Why do you think Rabbi Nachman believes that nature is so important for prayer?
- How does Rabbi Nachman use nature to connect to prayer?

Explain that we also say prayers during services that connect us to nature. "The *Yotzeir Or* and *Maariv Aravim*, located directly after the *Barechu*, the Call to Worship, and before the *Shema* in the morning and evening services, respectively, are quintessential nature prayers. Before going on to the specifics of God's relationship with the Jewish people [in the *Ahavah Rabah* and *Ahavat Olam*], we recognize God's connection to the earth. To understand the intent of the writers, to make these words our own, we don't need to research their origins in the library. We simply need to see a sunset or explore a wilderness. Clearly, the liturgists [the people who wrote the prayers] of old felt wonder and awe in the natural world just like us."<sup>48</sup>

Give students copies of *Yotzeir Or* (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 228) and *Maariv Aravim* (*Mishkan T'filah*, p. 148). Have them spread throughout the outdoor space and read the prayers. Have the students look for examples in nature of the words in the prayers. After 10-15 minutes, ask the students return and share what they discovered.

### **Activity 3**

Explain to students that we can often find God and/or holy moments, in nature. When we focus on the small miracles around us, we can find prayerful moments in the awe-inspiring things we see.

---

<sup>48</sup> Comins, p. 108

Explain to students that they will return to the starting point in the same way they came – in silence. However, this time, students should make a point to notice the small miracles in nature. They should think about how these miracles reflect the prayers that they have been studying.

After the walk, ask:

- How did nature reflect the prayers we have been studying?
- How can nature help us connect to prayer?
- How can we bring our experience with prayer in nature to our indoor sanctuary?

## Lesson 8

# Through Study

### **Essential Question**

- How can I best connect to prayer?

### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- List reasons why study and continued learning are important aspects of prayer.
- Create a Personal Prayer Plan.

### **Activity 1**

Give the students a sheet of paper with the following sentence printed at the top:

**The most important thing I ever learned was...**

Students should take five minutes to write a paragraph completing the sentence, in as much detail as possible.

When the students are finished writing, have them share their paragraphs. As they are sharing, write the general idea of each student's learning moment on the board.

After all the students have shared, ask:

- What do all of these experiences have in common?
- Where did these learning experiences take place?
- How do we know that we learned something from these experiences?

Write the following quote on the board:

Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? One who learns from everyone, as is said,  
"Because everyone has been my teacher, I have gained understanding."  
(*Avot 4:1*)

Ask:

- What does this text say about learning?
- According to Ben Zoma, where does learning take place? Only in school?
- Who do you think the word "everyone" in this text is referring to?

Say: Many people connect to prayer through learning more about the prayers they say. As we just discussed, this type of learning does not happen in a classroom, or even from a teacher. Instead, we can learn as we experience the prayers that we say during services. Prayers can teach us about Torah, Jewish history, Jewish traditions, and Jewish values.

Ask:

- Why do you think that it is important to keep learning about the prayers we say?
- How can you continue to learn about the prayers we say?

### **Activity 2 – Personalized Prayer Plan (Authentic Assessment)**

Explain: One way to continue learning about prayer is by praying. We can learn from others and ourselves about how we connect to *t'fillah*, and the meaning that *t'fillah* has in our lives.

Have students create a Personal Prayer Plan, using the worksheet in **Resource 4-12**. This plan should list the ways that the student best connects to prayer, based on what he or she has learned throughout the unit. The plan should detail how the student likes to pray, where the student likes to pray, with whom the student likes to pray, and how the student can continue to embrace this way of prayer.

Students can use the Personal Prayer chart (**Resource 4-2**) that they created for reference.

After students have completed their Personal Prayer Plan, they can share them with a small group of classmates or with the entire class.

## **Resource 4-12**

### **Personal Prayer Plan**

**Create a plan for your own prayer practice. This plan should explain what you hope to do from now on when you pray, both during services in the synagogue, and outside of a formal service. You should use your Personal Prayer Chart to think about the ways that you best connect to prayer, and incorporate those ways into your Personal Prayer Plan.**

#### **Some things to think about:**

1. When do you feel the most connected to prayer?
2. When do you feel the least connected to prayer?
3. Where do you like to pray?
4. With whom do you like to pray (by yourself, with a group)?
5. How can you incorporate these ideas into services at the synagogue?
6. How can you incorporate these ideas into your everyday life?

## Unit 5

# Why do I pray?

The final unit of the guide serves as a synthesis for the entire curriculum. It begins by blending *keva* and *kavanah*, the central concepts from Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Students will use their ongoing assessments from the two units to determine how *keva* and *kavanah* can be combined in a meaningful way. Lesson 2 gives students the opportunity to discuss their personal beliefs in prayer, and how their prayers are answered.

Instead of an ongoing unit assessment, students will complete a whole-curriculum assessment. In this assessment, they will each answer the question, “Why do I pray?” (first explained in Unit 1, Lesson 1). Students will then coordinate a service based on their responses, and will lead the service for the entire community.

### **Enduring Understandings**

- A wide range of motivators – from the internal to the external– influence Jewish prayer.
- The reasons that motivate a person to pray can change from moment to moment, daily, and throughout the lifetime of the pray-er.
- Tensions in prayer generate meaningful and relevant prayer experiences.
- The idea of God infuses prayer with sacredness.

### **Unit Goals**

- To help students understand that a balance between *keva* and *kavanah* enhances the meaning of Jewish prayer.
- To provide students with an opportunity to synthesize everything they have learned in the curriculum.
- To give students the opportunity to share what they have learned in this curriculum.
- To wrap-up the curriculum in a meaningful way.

### **Essential Questions**

- How do we balance *keva* and *kavanah* when we pray?
- Are my prayers answered?
- What do I believe about prayer?

## **Unit Overview**

Lesson 1	<i>Keva and Kavanah</i>
Lesson 2	Are My Prayers Answered? (Scripted)
Lesson 3	iPray

## **Memorable Moments**

- *Keva* and *kavanah* cooking (Lesson 1)
- Prayer mural (Lesson 2)
- Leading a service (Lesson 3)

## **Authentic Assessment**

- Creation of a service part (Lesson 3)
- The Personal Prayer Playlist (At the end of each lesson)

## **Lesson 1**

### ***Keva and Kavanah***

#### **Essential Question**

- How do we balance *keva* and *kavanah* when we pray?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Recall the meanings of *keva* and *kavanah*.
- Evaluate the benefits of *keva* and *kavanah*.
- Explain how they can balance *keva* and *kavanah* in prayer.

#### **Activity 1 (Memorable Moment)**

Explain to students that they have had the opportunity to explore how two different ideas affect *t'fillah* – *keva* and *kavanah*.

Make two columns on the board. At the top of one column should be “*keva*,” at the top of the other should be “*kavanah*.” Ask students to list the characteristics of *keva* and *kavanah* in *t'fillah*.

After the lists are complete, explain to students that they will now have the opportunity to illustrate *keva* and *kavanah* through a different medium: cooking.

Provide students with sugar cookies, frosting of various colors, and various cookie toppings.

Explain to students that they must choose food materials to visually represent *keva* and *kavanah*, and must assemble them to show how *keva* and *kavanah* interact with one another. *(One possibility is that the keva is the base – the sugar cookie – which remains the same, while the kavanah is the frosting and toppings – the intention that makes prayer unique to each individual.)*

Before students eat their cookies, they should present them to the class, answering the following questions:

- Which materials represent *keva*?
- Which materials represent *kavanah*?
- How did you assemble the materials to illustrate how *keva* and *kavanah* work together?

### **Activity 2**

Students will divide into *chevruta* to study the text by Abraham Joshua Heschel in **Resource 5-1**.

Reconvene the class, and ask students to share the most meaningful parts of their discussion.

### **Activity 3**

Ask students to return to their Prayer Maps from Unit 3 and Personal Prayer Plans from Unit 4. Divide students into pairs or groups to discuss:

- How have your Prayer Maps and Prayer Plans changed since you created them?
- How could you combine your Prayer Plan and Prayer Map?
- What are the challenges in combining your Prayer Plan and Prayer Map?

Based on the Prayer Plan and Prayer Map, ask students to reflect on how they can combine *keva* and *kavanah* in their *t'fillah* experience.

## **Resource 5-1**

### ***Kavannah* The Need for Spontaneity in Prayer<sup>49</sup>**

There was a young shepherd who was unable to recite the Hebrew prayers. The only way in which he worshipped was "Lord of the world! It is apparent and known unto you, that if you had cattle and gave them to me to tend, though I take wages for tending from all others, from you I would take nothing, because I love you."

One day a learned man passing by heard the shepherd pronounce his offer and shouted at him: "Fool, do not pray thus."

The shepherd asked him: "How should I pray?"

Thereupon the learned man taught him the benedictions in order...so that henceforth he would not say what he was accustomed to say. After the learned man had gone away, the shepherd forgot all that had been taught him, and did not pray. And he was even afraid to say what he had been accustomed to say, since the righteous man had told him not to.

One night the learned man had a dream, and in it he heard a voice: "If you do not tell him to say what he was accustomed to say before you came to him, know that misfortune will overtake you, for you have robbed me of one who belongs to the world to come."

At once the learned man went to the shepherd and said to him: "What prayer are you making?"

The shepherd answered: "None, for I have forgotten what you taught me, and you forbade me to say, *If you had cattle.*"

Then the learned man told him what he had dreamed and added, "Say what you used to say."

Behold, here is one who had neither Torah nor words; he only had it in his heart to do good, and this was esteemed in heaven as if this were a great thing. *The Merciful One desires the Heart.* Therefore, let men think good thoughts, and let these thoughts be turned to the Holy One, blessed be he.

*(Abraham Joshua Heschel)*

1. Why do you think Abraham Joshua Heschel tells this story? What is the moral of the story?
2. Why do you think that praying with *kavanah* is important?
3. Being that our liturgy is mostly set, when you pray, do you feel there is enough time for spontaneous or personal prayer? If so, when do you take time for personal prayer? If not, how can you incorporate *kavanah* into your life?

---

<sup>49</sup> Heschel, p. 206-208

## ***Keva*** **Fixed Prayer**

Now, many of us are so much on the side of the shepherd-boy as to be opposed to the institution of regular prayer, claiming that one should pray when and as we feel inspired to do so. For such there is a story, told by Rabbi Israel Friedman, the Rizhiner, about a small Jewish town, far off from the main roads of the land. But it had all the necessary municipal institutions: a bathhouse, a cemetery, a hospital, and law court; as well as all sorts of craftsmen—tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, and masons. One trade, however, was lacking: there was no watchmaker. In the course of years many of the clocks became so annoyingly inaccurate that their owners just decided to let them run down, and ignore them altogether. There were others, however, who maintained that as long as the clocks ran, they should not be abandoned. So they wound their clocks day after day though they knew that they were not accurate. One day the news spread through the town that a watchmaker had arrived, and everyone rushed to him with their clocks. But the only ones he could repair were those that had been kept running—the abandoned clocks had grown too rusty!

*(Abraham Joshua Heschel)*

1. Why do we need to constantly “wind our clocks” as the story tells us? Why would we need to be finely tuned?
2. Why do you think Judaism places such emphasis on *keva*?
3. Do you think it is difficult for us to approach God if we only have spontaneous prayer? In other words, is it comforting to know that we can turn to a fixed liturgy for help with our prayers? Why?

## Lesson 2 (Scripted)

### Are my prayers answered?

#### Essential Question

- What do I believe about prayer?

#### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- List several ways that prayer can be answered.
- Explain their belief about the purpose of prayer.

#### Timeline

0:00-0:10	Activity 1 – So what?
0:10-0:35	Activity 2 – Are my prayers answered?
0:35-0:55	Activity 3 – I believe...
0:55-1:00	Activity 4 – The Personal Prayer Playlist

#### Activity 1

Before students enter the room, write on the board: **SO WHAT?**

Place a box labeled **Question Box** at the front of the room. Give students each an index card and instruct them to write one question on the card that they still have about prayer. This can be done anonymously. After they have written their questions, they can place them in the Question Box.

After 5 minutes, say to students: **We have just spent this entire year talking about prayer. We have talked about why people pray, what makes prayer Jewish, and how we connect to prayer. But so what? We still have many, many questions.** Read all the students' questions from the question box, adding the following questions if they have not already been asked: **Why does prayer matter? Why do we bother if we do not know who is listening? What if we do not believe in God? Does prayer really even work?**

Say: **We may never have the answers to these questions. In fact, we will probably just have even more questions as we continue to grow and change.**

## **Activity 2**

Say: **One big question that many of us have about prayer is: “Are my prayers answered?”**

**There are many Jewish scholars that believe that our prayers *are* answered, just maybe not in the way that we imagine, or would like. We will now take some time to explore this idea.**

Divide students into *chevrutot*. Give each pair the text sheet in **Resource 5-2**. Give students 10-15 minutes to read the text and discuss the questions on the sheet.

After students have completed the text study, ask:

- **How do the three people in our text study believe that our prayers are answered?**
- **How do *you* think our prayers are answered?**
- **Do you think it is important to know that our prayers are answered? Why?**

## **Activity 3 (Memorable Moment)**

Have students revisit their Personal Prayer Playlists that they have compiled throughout the year. (See Unit 1, Lesson 1 for a description.)

Lead students in a discussion about their Personal Prayer Playlists:

- **What patterns do you notice in your Personal Prayer Playlist? Have you included similar songs, or are all the songs very different?**
- **How have the songs you chose for your Personal Prayer Playlist changed since the beginning of the year?**
- **What title would you give your Personal Prayer Playlist?**

Instruct each student to write a short paragraph, beginning with the sentence:

**I believe that prayer...**

After 5-10 minutes, explain to students: **Although each of us has our own beliefs and ideas about prayer, when we pray together, we are all united as one Jewish community. Therefore, it is important to respect everyone’s beliefs. We will now combine all of our beliefs into one united community.**

Provide the class with a large piece of butcher paper with the word **PRAYER** written in large, block print. Give students paint and paintbrushes.

Instruct students: **It is now your job to create a prayer mural, illustrating all of your ideas about whether or not our prayers are answered. You must talk to one another and decide how each of your ideas will be represented. Everyone must contribute to the mural, and every single idea must be included in the mural.**

Allow students 15-20 minutes to create their mural. Display the mural in the synagogue.

#### **Activity 4**

Have students add a final song to their Personal Prayer Playlist.

## **Resource 5-2**

### **Are my prayers answered?**

To be heard by God is to be forgiven of our errors and changed into better people. Prayer does not insure that we get what we want, but only what God wants. It cannot cure cancer or win races, but it can change lives. It has.  
(*Rabbi Arnold Wolf, in Challenge to Confirmants*<sup>50</sup>)

- 1. What do you think Rabbi Wolf means when he says that prayer can change lives?**
- 2. How does Rabbi Wolf believe that God answers our prayers?**

I believe that God is always listening, and that our prayers are always answered with love, compassion, and a cosmic “Yes!” But I also believe that “yes” doesn’t always look like what we want it to.

In my own life I say a lot of petitionary prayers, but I try to shift them away from pure “gimme.” I might pray, “God, please help me get through this.” And I often pray, “God, please help me do what I need to do here.” If I want things to change in my life, I can and should ask God for help – and I should also take action. Because one of the ways God answers prayer, if you ask me, is by helping us answer it for and with each other and ourselves.

(*Rachel Barenblat, in God?*<sup>51</sup>)

- 1. What do you think Rachel means when she says that God’s response “doesn’t always look like what we want it to”?**
- 2. How does Rachel believe that God answers our prayers?**

---

<sup>50</sup> Fields, p. 246

<sup>51</sup> Barkin, p. 40-41

Perhaps an analogy will help. Like all analogies, it is not perfect and therefore should not be pressed too far. It tends to make God seem too mechanical and distant, yet it may clarify what we mean in asserting that the proper kind of prayer is answered. Each of us has a series of faucets in his home. These faucets are the terminal points of water pipes which are connected to mains, going back ultimately to a pumping station. When we feel thirsty and want a drink of water, what happens? We proceed to a faucet, turn it on, and help ourselves. Has the engineer at the pumping station met our needs? Obviously so, but not in the sense that he is aware of our thirst whenever we feel it. He has constructed and maintained an ingenious system of pipes and valves which makes it possible for us to have water – provided we understand the system and our relationship to it, provided we fulfill our responsibility of operating the system correctly. If we merely stand before the faucet, piteously begging for a drink but do nothing to activate the system, our thirst will never be slacked.

Similarly, God has initiated and maintains an incredibly complicated system through which most of our physical and spiritual needs may be satisfied. Here again, however, we must become knowledgeable as to how the system operates and must meet our responsibilities in activating it. In a sense, God has answered our prayers even before we utter them, even before we are aware of them. He sustains the system, keeping it in good working order, whether we pray or not. Our prayers affect, not His support of the system, but whether or not we shall reap full benefit from it. Prayer is the experience through which we remind ourselves of how our most urgent needs can be met and activate ourselves to “turn the faucet.” In this sense, mature prayer is always answered.

*(Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, in Wings of the Morning<sup>52</sup>)*

- 1. How does Rabbi Gittelsohn believe that prayer works?**
- 2. What do you think Rabbi Gittelsohn means by “mature prayer”?**
- 3. How does Rabbi Gittelsohn believe that God answers our prayers?**

**How are these three ideas about prayer similar? How are they different?**

**Which idea about prayer do you agree with the most? The Least? How so?**

---

<sup>52</sup> Fields, p. 247

## Lesson 3

### iPray

#### **Essential Question**

- Why do I pray?

#### **Objectives**

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Evaluate how their beliefs about prayer have changed since the beginning of the curriculum.
- Write a rough draft of a service part articulating what they believe about prayer.

#### **Activity 1**

Place two pieces of paper on either side of the room. On one piece will be the word “agree,” and on the other will be the word “disagree.”

Give the students a series of statements. The students will move between the “agree” and “disagree” signs (like a scale).

The statements will be:

- There is only one reason that I pray.
- The reasons that I pray change regularly.
- I have struggled with my beliefs about prayer this year.
- Prayer helps me connect to God.
- Prayer helps me connect to the Jewish people.
- Praying is an important part of being Jewish.
- I feel more prepared to take on the role of becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

After each statement, ask a few of the students (from either end of the spectrum and in the middle) to share the reason that they chose that particular spot on the scale.

#### **Activity 2**

Instruct students to look at the responses on each of the posters from Unit 1, Lesson 1 and Lesson 2:

- Why do people pray?
- What is Jewish prayer?
- How do Jewish people pray?
- Why do I pray?
- What questions do I have about prayer?

After 5-10 minutes, have the students reconvene and ask:

- What do you think about your responses to these questions that you wrote at the beginning of the year?
- How would you respond to these questions now?
- How have your beliefs about prayer changed since the beginning of the year?

### **Activity 3 (Memorable Moment, Authentic Assessment)**

Organize a service for students to conduct. Students should coordinate the service and lead prayers incorporating the ideas of both *keva* and *kavanah* that they learned throughout the year.

Each student should also create a part for the service that answers the question:

#### **Why do I pray?**

Use this class time to coordinate the service and the creation of parts. Encourage students to be creative!

Invite students' friends and family to the service, and celebrate!

## Annotated Bibliography

**Barkin, Josh, ed. *God? Jewish Choices for Struggling with the Ultimate*. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008**

*Because prayer and God are so intertwined within Judaism, the topic of God is bound to come up in classroom discussions. God? is a resource that addresses 13 questions about God, ranging from "Is there a God?" to "Does God make miracles?" The section about prayer offers four varying opinions for the efficacy of prayer, two of which are featured in the Resources for this guide.*

**Charney, Ruth Sidney. *Teaching Children to Care*. Turners Falls: Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc., 2002.**

*In Unit 1, Lesson 4, the teacher should guide students in creating personal goals for the curriculum. Ruth Charney provides one model of goal setting, that of articulating "hopes and dreams." (See Chapters 3 and 5.) This model relies on personal value-statements, by focusing on "what matters most." The book offers instructions and techniques for students of varying ages.*

**Feinstein, Edward. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.**

*Rabbi Feinstein addresses challenging Jewish questions, interweaving Jewish text with his personal story about teaching a seventh-grade class. The chapter on prayer discusses God's role in responding to prayer, whether or not prayer works, and praying as a community. The language is appropriate for a sixth grader but also engaging for adults.*

**Fields, Harvey J. *B'chol L'avcha*. New York: UAHC Press, 2001.**

*This t'fillah commentary provides an introduction to all aspects of Jewish prayer, from keva and kavanah to the origin of a minyan. It also includes descriptions of all the prayers in the morning service, and commentary about the prayers. Fields also provides numerous readings related to the prayers. This book is an excellent resource for anyone teaching about t'fillah.*

**Frishman, Elyse D., ed. *Mishkan T'filah*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007.**

*Mishkan T'filah is the newest Reform prayer book, published in 2007. All the prayers used in the curriculum guide come from this prayer book. In addition to the Hebrew prayers and their English translation, the prayer book offers numerous interpretative readings, explanations of Bible verses, and commentary from Jewish theologians and scholars.*

**Holtz, Barry W. "The Heart's Work." *Finding Our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives We Lead Today*. Philadelphia: Schocken Books, 1990. 110-135.**

*Holtz's article on prayer served as one of the foundational texts for this curriculum guide. The author explores the question, "What is my own relationship to the words that I pray?" The article presents four ways of relating to prayer, two of which are included in Unit 4, Lesson 1.*

**Kadden, Bruce, and Barbara Binder Kadden. *Teaching Tefilah*. Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, 1994.**

*This teacher-friendly book provides insights, suggested activities, and resource suggestions for every part of the prayer service. It begins each section with an explanation of the history and meaning of the prayers in the section, and follows with a list of activities about each prayer, appropriate for a variety of ages.*

**Salkin, Jeffrey K. *For Kids - Putting God on Your Guest List*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.**

*Rabbi Salkin has created a book that aims to keep the B'nai Mitzvah in perspective. He discusses the role of parents, Torah, and parties in the B'nai Mitzvah process. In addition, the book provides an outline to the Shabbat morning service. This would be an excellent book to give to sixth graders to read before their B'nai Mitzvah.*

**Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *In God's Name*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004.**

*Unit 1, Lesson 3 includes this storybook. The book is beautifully illustrated, and teaches that every person can have a different name for our God. Although meant for a younger audience (first through third grade), This is a great discussion-starter, and can even be acted out as a play.*

## Works Cited

- Barkin, Josh, ed. *God? Jewish Choices for Struggling with the Ultimate*. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008.
- "Blanket Stand." *Ultimate Camp Resource*. Web. 12 Apr. 2010.  
<<http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activity/blanket-stand.html>>.
- Brandt, James Moses. *Building on Tradition: The Design and Fashioning of Sacred Jewish Place*. 1998
- Charney, Ruth Sidney. *Teaching Children to Care*. Turners Falls: Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc., 2002.
- "The Choreography of a Service." *NFTY - Reform Jewish Teens*. North American Federation of Temple Youth. Web. 12 Apr. 2010.  
<<http://www.nfty.org/resources/rc/choreography/>>.
- Cardin, Nina Beth, and Scott Blumenthal. *The Time of Our Lives*. Springfield: Behrman House Publishers, 2003.
- Comins, Mike. *A Wild Faith*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007.
- "Community Building Challenge Course." *Bonner Curriculum*. Bonner Foundation. Web. 12 Apr. 2010. <[http://www.bonner.org/Resources/modules/modules\\_pdf/BonCurChallengeCourse.pdf](http://www.bonner.org/Resources/modules/modules_pdf/BonCurChallengeCourse.pdf)>.
- Crain, William. "Erikson and the Eight Stages of Life." *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000.
- Erani, Amy, ed. *Young Judea Prayerbook*. Young Judea, 1995.
- Falk, Marcia. *The Book of Blessings*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996.
- Feinstein, Edward. *Tough Questions Jews Ask: A Young Adult's Guide to Building a Jewish Life*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.
- Fields, Harvey J. *B'chol L'avvcha*. New York: UAHC Press, 2001.
- Frankiel, Tamar, and Judy Greenfeld. *Minding the Temple of the Soul*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997.
- Frishman, Elyse D., ed. *Mishkan T'filah*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007.

Grishaver, Joel Lurie. *The Circle of Jewish Life*. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2007.

*Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*. London: The Soncino Press

Heschel, Abraham J. *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1959.

Hoffman, Lawrence. *My People's Prayer Book*. Vol. 1. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997.

Holtz, Barry W. "The Heart's Work." *Finding Our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives We Lead Today*. Philadelphia: Schocken Books, 1990. 110-135.

"Hot Chocolate River." *Ultimate Camp Resource*. Web. 12 Apr. 2010.  
<<http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activity/hot-chocolate-river.html>>.

Kadden, Bruce, and Barbara Binder Kadden. *Teaching Tefilah*. Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, 1994.

Klein, Earl. *Jewish Prayer: Concepts and Customs*. Columbus: Alpha Publishing Company, 1986.

Kushner, Lawrence. *The Book of Miracles*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2001.

Neusner, Jacob. *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988

*Or T'filah*. Lafayette Hill, 2009

"Prayers for Israel." *Union for Reform Judaism*. Web. 13 Apr. 2010.  
<<http://urj.org/israel/prayers/>>.

Saliman, Rebecca. *Seeking God*. 2007.

Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg. *In God's Name*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004.

Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Singer-Beilin, Jake. *Adonai S'fatai Tiftach: Prayer and Spirituality at Camp and Beyond*. 2009.

Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006.

Walter, Roy A., and Kenneth D. Roseman. *Gates of Prayer for Young People*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1997.

Yedwab, Paul. *The God Book: A Necessarily Incomplete Guide to the Essence of God*. New York: UAHF Press, 2002.