**HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION**
**NEW YORK SCHOOL**

**FINAL THESIS APPROVAL FORM**

**AUTHOR:** MELISSA SILVERMAN COHAVI

**TITLE:** The Role of Rite of Passage Rituals in the Religious School Setting

**SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR(S)** 2/27/06 **Date**

**SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR** 2/27/06 **Date**

**ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE YOUR THESIS WILL BE CONSIDERED ACCEPTED.**

***PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION ON THIS FORM.***

2005

# THE ROLE OF RITE OF PASSAGE RITUALS IN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL SETTING

MELISSA SILVERMAN COHAVI

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Religious Education Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Education
New York, New York

March 1, 2006
Advisor: Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman
Advisor: Dr. Lisa Grant

# The Role of Rite of Passage Rituals in the Religious School Setting

This thesis consists of eight chapters in the main document, plus ten sections in the "Ritual Handbook for Congregational School Educators.

The goal of my thesis was to prove that a more effective use of rite-of-passage rituals in the religious school setting would create a more meaningful experience for both the students and families who are involved. I proved this by looking at the history of ritual, ritual theory and the current role of rite-of-passage rituals in the religious school setting. I pout together a handbook for Educators which consists of three rituals that can be used in supplementary religious schools. The rituals are: a second grade family rite-of-passage ritual which is based upon the medieval schooling initiation rite; a fourth grade Yom HaSiddur Family rite-of-passage ritual; and a sixth grade hand-made siddur and personal theology rite-of-passage ritual. Each ritual involves both the students and their families.

This thesis is divided into two main sections. This first part looks at ritual theory, the ritual theorists, the history of ritual in Judaism and the role of ritual in religious schools today. The second part of this thesis is A Ritual Handbook for Congregational School Edcuators. My hope is that these rituals can be used to create more meaningful experiences in religious school for our families today.

I would like to thank Jo Kay for all of her support and guidance during my three years at Hebrew Union College. She is has been my guide and mentor.

*"It's all about relationships."*
*--Jo Kay*

## Table of Contents

## Introduction

**The ritual moments of life mark changes from moment to moment, day to day, year to year, and from one stage of being to another. The conscious acknowledgement of these changes is called rites of passage. Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8 states it best:**

***For everything there is a season,***
***And a time and purpose for every matter under heaven:***
***A time to be born, and a time to die;***
***A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;***
***A time to kill, and a time to heal;***
***A time to weep, and a time to laugh;***
***A time to mourn, and a time to dance;***
***A time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;***
***A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;***
***A time to seek, and a time to lose;***
***A time to keep, and a time to throw away;***
***A time to tear and a time to sew;***
***A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;***
***A time to love, and a time to hate;***
***A time for war, and a time for peace;***
***For everything there is a season,***
***And a time and purpose for every matter under heaven.***

ג לַכֹּל זְמָן וְעֵת לְכָל־חֵפֶץ תַּחַת
הַשָּׁמָיִם׃* ס
2 עֵת לָלֶדֶת וְעֵת לָמוּת
עֵת לָטַעַת וְעֵת לַעֲקוֹר נָטוּעַ׃
3 עֵת לַהֲרוֹג וְעֵת לִרְפּוֹא
עֵת לִפְרוֹץ וְעֵת לִבְנוֹת׃
4 עֵת לִבְכּוֹת וְעֵת לִשְׂחוֹק
עֵת סְפוֹד וְעֵת רְקוֹד׃
5 עֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים וְעֵת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים
עֵת לַחֲבוֹק וְעֵת לִרְחֹק מֵחַבֵּק׃
6 עֵת לְבַקֵּשׁ וְעֵת לְאַבֵּד
עֵת לִשְׁמוֹר וְעֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ׃
7 עֵת לִקְרוֹעַ וְעֵת לִתְפּוֹר
עֵת לַחֲשׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדַבֵּר׃
8 עֵת לֶאֱהֹב וְעֵת לִשְׂנֹא
עֵת מִלְחָמָה וְעֵת שָׁלוֹם׃ ס

This thesis researches the role of ritual, specifically rites of passage, in the supplementary religious school setting. Too long overlooked, rites of passage should be seen as a necessary part of the religious school curriculum – a crucial way to bring meaning into the lives of our families by celebrating important points along the road to their becoming lifelong Jewish learners.

The current use of ritual and rites of passage in the supplemental religious school setting is deficient. Not only is the *use* of ritual deficient, but the topic has received scant attention in the professional literature as well. Jewish educators should draw upon ritual more regularly and effectively than they currently do at the majority of Reform synagogues today. Why? The use of ritual would reinforce our families' connection to the Jewish people, would create tangible Jewish experiences, would help our families mark time Jewishly, and would encourage Jewish enculturation.

That ritual matters can be deduced from the fact that our families currently find great meaning in the rite of passage of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It has become a milestone that most Jewish children do not do without. Clearly, if other rituals were introduced earlier in the educational and religious school experience, overall family satisfaction, Jewish enculturation, and Jewish identity would benefit. Ritual creates a shared language, culture, and community among those who participate in it. Rite of passage rituals would be a welcome addition to Reform religious school programs.

What does all of this mean for Judaism and Jewish ritual? It suggests to me that ritual and rites of passage should be a necessary part of the religious school curriculum. Ritual accomplishes everything that we, as Jewish educators, hope to bring to our students: community, feeling, meaning, text, history and language. Ritual can also serve families in the religious school even if parents are just observers of their children's actual participation. The use of rite of passage rituals can create connection points for our families within the Temple community, and help in relationship building with other Temple families. Ritual celebrates important points along the long road to becoming a lifelong Jewish learner. If only for those reasons alone, Jewish educators bear the responsibility of introducing ritual that is innovative, exciting, meaningful and purposeful. We currently live in an age of communal fragmentation, isolation and rootlessness. To me this indicates that our families need ritual in their lives more than ever before. Rite of passage rituals can create a feeling of community among its participants. In addition, ritual creates a shared language and culture among its "members." "Ritual languages replace (or frequently supplement) words with specific gestures, ways of dressing and eating, or of shaping the most ordinary tasks of everyday life, such as preparing for sleep at night or getting up in the morning, of courtship patterns, life transitions and the like."[1] Ritual creates community and community creates ritual, and the use of ritual in religious schools can help create a stronger sense of community among a synagogue's members. Sharing a ritual also means sharing an identity. Ritual is used to transmit a culture's identity from generation to generation. Ritual is also a powerful pedagogic device that can be used more effectively in the

[1] Neil Gillman. *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 224.

synagogue setting. The Jewish educator lives with a heavy responsibility regarding the use of ritual and his/her work with American, Reform Jewish families in the twenty-first century. Jewish educators also live with the responsibility of producing future lay leadership who are schooled in Torah, inspired by Jewish tradition, and motivated to deepen the Jewish character of their lives. Rite of passage rituals can be used as an effective educational tool that will help Jewish educators to reach this end.

In order to support my theory that bringing ritual into the supplemental school setting will enhance the experience of both students and their families, I have prepared three rituals which, I suggest, can be used in grades two, four and six, and at varying times during the school year. My hope is that by adding these rituals to the religious school curriculum, our families will become more connected and will find that each year and each point along the way is just as important and meaningful as the preparation for, and the day of, the child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. My goal is to help provide families in Reform settings with the kind of meaning that will keep their children connected to Jewish life though high school, college and beyond. I hope to have families in the school building, involved and on committees, and learning how to bring Judaism into their lives. Ultimately, the *Ritual Handbook for Jewish Educators* can be used as a tool to bring these lofty goals to fruition.

***What is Ritual? Why is the Study of Ritual important? The Ritual Theorists:***

In order to understand a culture in its completeness, the study of its rituals and customs are necessary. The study of ritual in general offers a perspective from which we can see how a culture looks at the world, and how the world looks at a culture. Ritual includes not only religious rites in the home or synagogue/church, but all conventional gestures that are routinely expressed in the life of a particular group. The word "ritual" can be interchanged with custom, rite, and ceremony, and it can include words as well as gestures. Ritual mediates between the unexpressed inner world of the "self," and through gestures, words, and props that are open for the world to see, hear, and participate. Ritual is "a visible expression of the individual's unseen values, beliefs, and attitudes, and is a way of conceptualizing the world. It also offers a way of understanding the social implications of inner moods and thoughts...Rituals evoke shared values that are expressed in public."[2] For example, while Jews pray they not only recite or read the words, but their bodies sway and move in specific ways. This movement is an expression of the power of prayer in Judaism and represents Jewish values, beliefs, and attitudes in viewing the world.

---

[2] Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 4 – 5.

Even though the formal study of ritual is a relatively recent phenomenon, human beings have engaged in ritual activities of some kind since the earliest hunters and gatherers. The following was written by *Xunzi*[3] in the third century BCE:

> *The meaning of ritual is deep indeed.*
> *He, who tries to enter it with the kind of perception that distinguishes hard and white, same and different, will drown there.*
> *The meaning of ritual is great indeed.*
> *He who tries to enter it with the uncouth and inane theories of the system-makers will perish there.*
> *The meaning of ritual is lofty indeed.*
> *He who tries to enter with the violent and arrogant ways of those who despise common customs and consider themselves to be above other men will meet his downfall there.*[4]

Ritual theorists are concerned with what ritual accomplishes as a social phenomenon, and more specifically, how ritual affects the organization and workings of the social group. According to Catherine Bell, ritual is "a definitive component of the various processes that are deemed to constitute religion, or society, or culture."[5] In addition, "Ritual is a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces come together. Examples include the ritual integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal."[6] Bell describes ritual in detail as a "thoughtless action – routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic – and therefore the

---

[3] Xunzi was a Chinese scholar who lived from 298-238 BCE. He developed a new version of Confucianism. Xunzi saw people as having an inherent evil nature that required control by education, ritual and custom. Xunzi developed his theories in a logical way in a book of some 32 chapters, which is regarded as the first collection of philosophical essays in China.
[4] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1.
[5] Bell, 16.
[6] Ibid., 16.

purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expression of logically prior ideas."[7] "Beliefs could exist without rituals," says Edwards Shills, "but rituals could not exist without beliefs."[8] That may or may not be the case – there is some evidence that ritual does exist without belief – but Shills is correct to draw our attention to the effective way that ritual transmits belief across generations.

Ritual theorist, Max Gluckman, asked how society succeeded in staying the same, despite forces that threatened to tear it apart. He emphasized ritual's role in cementing common beliefs, describing ritual as, "the affirmation of communal unity in contrast to the frictions, constraints, and competitiveness of social life and organization."[9] Rituals are those special activities that "mediate or orchestrate the necessary and opposing demands of both *communitas* (a state of social being without rules at all – to which we will return) and the social order (which, by definition, is governed by order)."[10]

Ritual theorist Clifford Geertz links "any religious ritual, no matter how apparently automatic or conventional" to "the symbolic fusion of ethos and world view."[11] By "world view," he means the way a given society thinks things "are"; but "ethos," he denotes is the way that the social group thinks things ought to be. Geertz sums it up rather well when he contrasts "outsiders," who "see ritual only in the mere presentation of a particular religious perspective that they may appreciate aesthetically or analyze scientifically," with actual "participants," for whom, "rites are 'enactments,

[7] Ibid., 19.
[8] Ibid., 19.
[9] Ibid., 20.
[10] Ibid., 21.

materializations, realizations' of a particular religious perspective – 'not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it.'"[12] The fusion of thought and action within ritual generates activity and meaning for cultural insiders who may be participants or observers.

Arnold Van Gennep was an early ritual theorist whose *Rites de Passage* (1909) drew our attention to the larger context in which rituals occur. The sequence of ritual events matters deeply; any "main ritual," that is, comes after another ritual that is preparatory, and before another one still that completes the ritual action that the main ritual intends. The meaning of a particular ritual thus depends upon the entire sequence of rites in which it occurs and on the purpose of the sequence as a whole. Van Gennep was especially interested in those rituals that accompany life-cycle and life-crisis events – those critical moments in social life when individuals move from one status to another.

> Van Gennep argued that these life crisis rites display a three-stage sequence: separation, transition and incorporation. Through this sequence of activities, rituals effect the person's removal from one social grouping, dramatize the change by holding the person in a suspended 'betwixt and between' state for a period of time, and then reincorporate him or her into a new identity and status within another social grouping.[13]

Van Gennep argued that rites of passage serve to order chaotic social changes that could threaten to disturb the order of society. "Rituals are the means for changing and reconstituting groups in an orderly and sanctioned manner that maintains the integrity of

---

[11] Ibid., 26.
[12] Ibid., 28.
[13] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 36.

the system."[14] Van Gennep himself wrote, "Life itself means to separate and to reunite, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn."[15] But crucial to us is Van Gennep's realization that the individual's well-being is not simply a matter of biology; it depends instead on the sociocultural world that an individual occupies. Van Gennep specified three stages: leaving one's former status; being incorporated into the new one; and a liminal "moment: of betwixt and between."

Ritual theorist Victor Turner was a student of Max Gluckman. Turner focused (famously) on the transitional stage – a period of *liminality* (betwixt and between, so therefore, ruleless). Turner saw ritual as the passage from an old place in the social order to a new one, and emphasized the immensely creative use of rites of passage and of liminality and the liminal period within it. "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony."[16] Liminality is likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or the moon.[17]

Turner was a serious Catholic, as interested in theology as in anthropology. He borrowed theologically from Buber. But Turner preferred *communitas* to Buber's "community," explaining:

---

[14] Bell, 37.
[15] Ibid., 37.
[16] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Illinois: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 95.

> Buber (1961) uses the term community for *communitas*. Community is being no longer side by side but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens.[18]

*Communitas* arises for Turner because it characterizes the middle stage of life-cycle ritual: liminality, the betwixt and between stage of ritualized change that is so ripe with possibilities, precisely because it is without structure and rules. In the liminal stage, the underling is raised to the same level as the master; or, more precisely, the supreme authority may be lowered to be portrayed as an ordinary man or woman, but forced into the ritualized role of submissiveness and silence. The underling in the *rites of passage* must submit only to the authority of the community as a whole, the holder of the culture's values, norms, attitudes, sentiments and relationships.

The community's representatives in a specific rite therefore represent the authority of tradition. An example of this in Judaism would be the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a rite of passage for the thirteen-year old child. He or she is about to become a "Jewish adult," and the representative of the community's traditions, values, norms and attitudes would be the Rabbi and the synagogue. Turner could have had Bar/Bat Mitzvah in mind when he wrote,

> The pedagogics of liminality, therefore, represents a condemnation of two kinds of separation from the generic bond of communitas. The first kind is to act only in terms of the rights conferred on one by the incumbency of office in the social

[17] Turner, 95.
[18] Ibid., 126-127.

structure. The second is to follow one's psychobiological urges at the expense of one's fellows.[19]

Many religious traditions orchestrate the whole of human life as a canonized series of ritual passages and obligations. As Reform Judaism has evolved, the ritual canon begins with the Brit Milah for boys and a parallel ritual for girls; it then follows with Bar/Bat Mitzvah; and (for some) marriage; finally, it manages death. Of course there are other rite of passage rituals that happen in the life of a Jewish person, but these are the main four that currently structure the life of many Reform Jews. As we will learn later on in this paper, these four rites of passage were not always the main rituals looked to in Judaism. As times changed, so did the priorities and the rituals. But these rituals are what history has bequeathed to us at this moment in time.

---

[19] Ibid., 105.

## Rituals Enrich Our Lives

Rituals are intrinsic to communities, be they as small as a family or a baseball team, or as large as the United States Army or the Jewish people. Two therapists, Evan Imber-Black and Janine Roberts describe how we, today, can use ritual to enrich our lives. Rituals are built around common symbols and symbolic actions. Their familiarity provides a comfort zone in which to live. "Rituals bestow protected time and space to stop and reflect on life's transformations. They engage us with their unique combination of habit and intrigue."[20] Rituals are therefore commonplace, much more a part of our lives than we can even imagine. There are birthday rituals, family holiday rituals, mealtime rituals, and more. Ritual is a lens through which we emotionally connect with our parents, siblings, spouse, children and the greater community-at-large.

> Rituals give us places to be playful, to explore the meaning of our lives, and to rework and rebuild family relationships. They connect us with our past, define our present life, and show us a path to our future as we pass on ceremonies, traditions, objects, symbols, and ways of being with each other, handed down from previous generations.[21]

---

[20] Evan Imber-Black and Janine Roberts, *Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating, Healing, and Changing Our Lives and Our Relationships* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 3.
[21] Imber-Black, 4.

Most important, perhaps, rituals afford us the means to be symbolic makers and interpreters of our own lives. Symbols embrace meaning that transcend mere words. They convey powerful sensory memories – smells, textures and sounds. We recall previous times when similar rituals took place; we remember the people who were together, the music that was involved, and the smells of the foods that were cooked.

> Because of their action and sensory elements, rituals appeal to all ages. They create special time out of ordinary time to make meaning out of where our lives have been and where they are going.[22]

Ritual life happens both within the family and within society. It is greatly influenced by society and societal expectations, conveyed by media pressures, religious pressures, gender expectations and subtle social cues that influence how we think about ourselves. Imber-Black and Roberts draw on Victor Turner to define ritual as the "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not yet given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers (in which) the symbol is the smallest unit."[23]

In general, most rituals appeal to custom or tradition in some way, and many mark a culture's selective perception of history. To function successfully, moreover, rituals claim to have their roots in tradition; otherwise they may be considered inauthentic and unsatisfying. This is also very true in Jewish ritual, and more specifically, in the lives of American, Reform Jews. We shall see later that in actuality, we create ritual all the time, but when we do, we try to find precedent that convinces us that the rituals we invent are

---

[22] Ibid., 6.

really very old. Tradition matters to ritual to the point where an activity or moment may seem like ritual, if tradition is a part of them.

Imber-Black and Roberts accept Arnold Van Gennep's three-part stages of separation, liminality and reintegration. They also agree that ritual is not only the ceremony, or actual performance, but the whole process of preparing for it, experiencing it, and then being reintegrated back into everyday life.[24] A working definition of ritual that Imber-Black and Roberts created is the following:

> Rituals are co-evolved symbolic acts that include not only the ceremonial aspects of the actual presentation or ritual, but the process of preparing for it as well. It may, or may not, include words, but does have both open and closed parts which are "held" together by a guiding metaphor. Repetition can be a part of rituals through the content, the form, or the occasion.[25]

The ability of rituals to link time, promote inter-group stability, and to provide a controlled and safe place to solve personal and social problems are all extremely important. Ritual does not just *mark* a transition, but also *makes* a transition at the same time. Ritual and (most especially) rites of passage show and allow the construction of a map that explains those parts of the cosmos to which none of us can be indifferent: birth and death, night and day, changing of the seasons, war and peace, separateness and togetherness, etc... Rituals carry inherited meaning from generations past, making it real by embedding it in the ritualized present. "Ritual works as both a maintainer and

---

[23] Evan Imber-Black and Janine Roberts, *Rituals in Families and Family Therapy* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), 6.
[24] Ibid., 8.
[25] Ibid., 8.

creator of social structure for individuals, families and social communities, as well as a maintainer and creator of world view.[26]

---

[26] Imber-Black, Rituals in Families and Family Therapy 15.

## Creating Ritual

It is not too much to say that Judaism exists today because of an openness to change and evolution over thousands of years. Jewish rituals have evolved over time, allowing each generation to find new meaning through them. Not all rituals are old. We have frequently invented new ones, and then, through the natural course of cultural innovation, have forgotten their origins. At times, even those behaviors originally thought of as "not Jewish," became Jewish, and were passed down through the generations as Jewish ritual/rites of passage. At the very least we have initiated ritual, not by borrowing from foreign practice, but by developing customs of our own based on cultural models available to us. Bar Mitzvah is itself an example, rooted as it is in the high medieval innovation of concentrating on the age at which children become adults. Similarly, Confirmation was added to our ritual repertoire only in the nineteenth century. Jews, who believe that they are altogether loyal only to traditional rabbinic or biblical precedents, are actually observing rites that were at one time innovations for the Jewish community!

Ritual is important in our lives on levels other than marking Jewish identity. As individuals, they afford us the means to be symbolic makers and interpreters of our own lives. In American society, as in other highly industrialized countries, ritualized rites of passage tend to be less universal than in pre-modern cultures. America celebrates rite of passage rituals in subcultures, with coming-of-age rites like owning a car, beginning to

date, registering with the military, getting a first job, leaving home, going to college, obtaining a driver's license, among others. Other rituals, however, are official and have a national ritual associated with it. These are officially marked on such calendrical moments as Memorial Day, Labor Day, or the Fourth of July. Ritualized actions are attached to each of these, but some more than others. For example, fireworks on the fourth of July are a ritual that is expected, but the Memorial Day parade and visit to the cemetery is not as widely practiced anymore. Many people today do not feel connected to ritual practices within their religions, often because they feel that the religious traditions that they knew and grew up with do not connect for them in their lives today. They feel that traditional religious traditions have not adjusted to include changing societal values and family relationships.[27] But Judaism has always been open to change. Its ritual, too, has evolved over the years, so that each generation, in its turn, finds renewed meaning as old traditions touch new lives.

The tendency to think of ritual as essentially unchanging has gone hand-in-hand with the idea that effective and new rituals cannot be invented. People have traditionally assumed that no one actually dreams up a new rite de novo. But in fact new rituals come into being all the time, even though (as we saw above) they are linked to tradition to make them seem authentic. Bastille Day, for example, celebrates the 1779 overthrow of the infamous monarchical prison during the French Revolution; but it entered the French national calendar only in 1880. But today there is social legitimacy for many types of ritual improvisation and invention. Some examples are women's seders; the Brit Bat that features dipping a baby girl's feet into water to symbolize

[27] Imber-Black, Rituals in Families and Family Therapy 9.

generations of important women in Judaism; and adult men's Bar Mitzvah classes and adult women's Bat Mitzvah classes. Reform Judaism Magazine recently featured a newly invented Reform practice by Rabbis Nancy and David Wechsler-Azen. The ritual is really quite new, yet it includes many parts of the medieval school initiation rite, which will be discussed in detail later on in this paper. The incredible novelty of the haircutting can be seen in the altogether new symbolism cited by its inventors: the Wechsler-Azen's write, "While our older children do revert from time to time to untamed behavior, they seem to have absorbed some sense of the essential upsherin teaching. Once the caveman/cavewoman aspect of their appearance was trimmed, a portion of their inner wildness was subdued... Yet, with all the benefits of upsherin, introducing this tradition does carry a social cost."[28] To be sure, ritual haircutting to mark the beginning of a boy's formal Jewish education is a widespread practice within the Hasidic community, but the rationale of the Wechsler-Azen practice is altogether new. The development and openness to new rituals indicates that the time is ripe for other ritual innovations in Jewish life – especially in the synagogue school setting, where ritual serves many ends.

---

[28] Nancy and David Wechsler-Azen, "Taming the Wild Beasts with Jewish Rituals," *Reform Judaism Magazine* Summer, 2005, 11.

## The History of Ritual in Judaism

The rituals that we celebrate and turn to today, in the twenty-first century, are not the same as those celebrated by the Jews of medieval Europe. Although we see Judaism as an age-old and never-changing religion which is full of tradition, that is, in fact, not the case. Throughout the centuries, Jews have adapted to survive under the local ruling power and culture of the times in which they lived.

> The study of life cycle rites sheds light on the dynamic processes through which Judaism and Jews persisted as communities of a recognizable religious culture. They did this in two stages. Jews first negotiated with majority cultures that were pagan or Christian, Muslim or secular, adapted some customs, and rejected others. Future generations then regarded the products of those cultural interactions as part of the Jewish tradition that they transmitted to the next generation. Then the twofold process of negotiation and transmission began again."[29]

As a result of this process, Jews remained Jews rather than Greeks, Christians, or Muslims. In addition, Jews adopted behaviors that had originally not been Jewish, but became so. The Passover Seder, for instance, started as a Greco-Roman banquet. Future generations that inherited these customs from the past often forgot their non-Jewish origins.

Among the customs and rites that are not mentioned in the Bible or Talmud is the role of the *sandek* in the Brit Milah ceremony; the Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremony as it is today; the text of the *ketubah*; and the destruction of the glass at the end of the wedding ceremony. Each of these practices is common and traditional today, but at some point

each one was an innovation for Judaism. Even customs found in the Talmud were often adaptations of ancient near-Eastern or Greco-Roman practices. The secret to the continuing growth and existence of Judaism is the many ritual innovations that were adopted and created throughout the centuries.

> The very process of constant ritual innovation is itself a characteristic feature of Jewish traditional practice, although various periods and places set different limits to what would change and what would not. The same is true today, even if the contexts are different. Ironically, the view held by some Orthodox circles today that innovation is forbidden, is itself an innovation!"[30]

Since rituals bond people together, they tend to impart a shared memory of a common past, a common present, and anticipation of a common future. For example, Jews around the world mark each day, week, and year with synagogue and home rituals that contain common prayers, religious customs, and practices. Rites of passage go further, in that they exhibit the structure that Van Gennep and Turner discuss. The tendency to innovate takes place in Jewish rites of passage no less than in Jewish ritual. Every age has contributed to the creation of new life cycle events. Jews today sometimes assume that until the modern era there was a single, Jewish traditional approach to everything, and that this tradition has been preserved by the religious behavior of those who call themselves "Orthodox" or "Haredi." As I have written above, this is not true.

> Far from being living remnants of ancient or medieval Jewish life, the Ultra-Orthodox world is really a neo-traditionalist, modern form of Judaism. It is impossible today to find pre-modern, traditional Jews untouched by modernity as

[29] Ivan G. Marcus. *The Jewish Life Cycle: Rites of Passage from Biblical to Modern Times* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2004), 4.
[30] Marcus, 10.

> it is for a cultural anthropologist to locate an aboriginal tribe in the heart of Africa or the Australian outback.[31]

The history of Jewish ritual practice shows that the wide range of changes and improvisations made today are but the latest examples of a continual process of ritual innovation that has been happening in the Jewish world from biblical times through to today. Every generation has negotiated between earlier practices and the norms and needs of the day, just as the Jewish community continues to do today.

---

[31] Ibid., 28.

## The Medieval Schooling Initiation Rite

An especially good example of a rite of passage ritual that has changed and evolved based upon the needs of the community is the medieval schooling ritual. At age five or six, a Jewish boy living in medieval Germany or France might have begun his formal schooling by participating in a special initiation ceremony to Jewish learning. It went as follows:

> Early on the morning of the spring festival of Shavuot, someone wraps him in a coat or *talit* (prayer shawl) and carries him from his house to his teacher. The boy is seated on the teacher's lap, and the teacher shows him a tablet on which the Hebrew alphabet has been written. The teacher reads the letters first forwards, and then backwards, and finally in symmetrically paired combinations, and he encourages the boy to repeat each sequence aloud. The teacher smears honey over the letters on the tablet and tells the child to lick it off. Cakes on which biblical verses have been written are brought in. They must be baked by virgins from flour, honey, oil and milk. Next come shelled hard-boiled eggs on which more verses have been described. The teacher reads the words written on the cakes and eggs, and the boy imitates what he hears and then eats them both. The teacher next asks the child to recite an incantation adjuring POTAH, the prince of forgetfulness, to go far away and not block the boy's heart. The teacher also instructs the boy to sway back and forth when studying and to sing his lessons out loud. As a reward, the child gets to eat fruit, nuts and other delicacies. At the conclusion of the rite, the teacher leads the boy down to the riverbank and tells him that his future study of Torah, like the rushing water in the river, will never end. Doing all of these acts, we are told, will 'expand the child's heart.'[32]

This medieval initiation ceremony grew from a confluence of two traditions: the rabbinic idea that a father is religiously obligated to teach his son Torah when he is ready at a certain age; and the second tradition, derived from ancient mystics, that Shavuot is a good time for a special, ritualized study of Torah because that is when God gave Moses

[32]Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 1.

the law at Mount Sinai. During medieval times, Jewish ceremonies such as the brit milah, marriage, and mourning the dead were brought out of the home and into the synagogue and community. This transfer of rituals from the home to the synagogue also included the school initiation rite, which was described in detail above. Among other Jewish life cycle events of childhood, no special ritual to mark a person's attainment of religious majority, or age, existed in late antiquity – either in the home or the synagogue. In terms of rites of passage, the school initiation ceremony is important because entering school was considered a Jewish boy's next stage of life, after brit milah and prior to the later stages of social maturity at age 13, marriage, and then full adulthood. This is another example of Van Gennep's rites-of-passage theory. The school initiation ceremony became a point at which the Jewish culture – Judaism – marked the next stage in a young boy's life. Elements of the school initiation ceremony persisted in schools, but not in most localities. If anyone continued to eat letters baked on cakes or written on eggs during Shavuot, it was the adults – not the children. Elements and fragments of the ceremony continue to exist, even to today. For example, the custom of giving school children honey cakes has moved from Shavuot to Rosh HaShanah. Also, part of the honeyed alphabet custom has recently been revived in Ultra-Orthodox Jewish circles in Israel and America. Children tended to enter school, as it was during ancient rabbinic times, whenever they were ready – and not just on Shavuot. Adults continued to associate special foods with all the holidays. The Jewish school initiation ceremony eventually disappeared, although parts of it remained and are used until today. The school initiation ceremony was paralleled by a different initiation rite at the age of

thirteen – the Bar Mitzvah. These rituals developed because of the acculturative processes taking place in the Jewish community.

The school initiation ceremony seems to be a folk custom, traces of which survived into the 19th century school *heder*, or Jewish primary school. This ceremony is a highly articulated initiatory rite of passage, with a defined structure that may be read in many ways because of the many symbolic associations embedded in it. A parallel ceremony appeared and disappeared during specific times in Latin Christendom. As far as the Jews are concerned, there were other variations on this school initiation rite in the Sephardic community. As mentioned above, the Ashkenazi took place on Shavuot.[33] By contrast, the Sephardic versions do not mention a specific time of year when this ceremony took place. They imply that the child's age or maturity level, not the calendar, was the determining factor. Both the Ashkenazic and Sephardic versions of this ceremony compare the child's initiation into the Hebrew language with the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Therefore, all versions of this ceremony associate it with Shavuot in some way. Rabbi Elazar b. Judah of Worms (1160-1230) wrote, "It is the custom of our ancestors to sit the children down to study (the Torah for the first time) on Shavuot because that is when the Torah was given."[34] Although Rabbi Judah refers to "ancestors," this ceremony is unattested to prior to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Following the themes of Israel and God at Sinai, the rest of the ceremony is no longer linked to scripture. Instead, specific biblical verses were to be written on the school tablet, on a cake and on an egg. The verses were: Leviticus 1:1, Isiaiah 50:4 – 5,

[33] Marcus, 25.
[34] Ibid., 26.

and Ezekiel 3:3. Other versions of this ritual included Psalm 119, which was to be written on a hard boiled egg. As Rabbi Judah explained the ceremony, he left most of the ritual's main features unexplained, and he did not cite any Talmudic sources.

> The omission of rabbinic sources about the ritual suggests that had Elazar been able to cite texts that supported his specific claim, he certainly would have done so. From the citations in the text, then, we have reason to wonder what Elazar means by his opening remark that the ritual is the 'custom of our ancestors.'[35]

The Prince of Forgetfulness (mentioned first by Amram with regard to Havdallah) was added to the end of the initiation ritual in some versions (Sefer Ha-Asufot). In addition, Proverbs 5:16 is referred to when the boy is brought to the river side – so that he will have an "expanded heart." Two other features that are mentioned as possible endings to the ritual are: (1) the boy is to be covered up on his way home so that he is not seen by a "dog, pig, ass, or gentile;" or (2) the boy is to be given nuts and fruits to eat as a reward for participating in the ceremony and completing it.

The French-Jewish versions of the ceremony vary slightly. The text stipulates that the child is to sway with his body when studying and is to use a melody when learning. Therefore, learning to chant the Torah, and not just read it, received special emphasis and importance. Once the boy chanted Leviticus 1:1 through 3:17 at the synagogue, a festive celebration and meal was held in honor of his accomplishment. This part is not mentioned in the German-Jewish texts. The Sephardic version also includes a comparison between the father bringing his son to the teacher for the first time, and Moses' receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai – which is traditionally celebrated on the

Shavuot festival. The Sephardic version also includes the letters of the Hebrew alphabet being written on a parchment or a tablet, covered with honey, and licked off by the child.

This school initiation rite was a new way of concretely acting out the biblical vision of the prophet Ezekiel – who pictured himself literally eating God's words in the form of a scroll (Ezekiel 3:1-3). The school initiation rite also placed special emphasis on eating symbolic foods at a time when Christian culture was focused on the significance of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the form of sweetened wafers and wine. Ironically, the Jews knew everything about the Eucharistic sacrifice because they sold the Christians everything they needed to enact it![36] In addition, the overlap among the various references to cake and wine in the ceremony suggests, according to Rigord, King Phillip Augustus's court biographer around 1200, that this rite and the Christian Mass shared a ritual vocabulary.

Another short, related rite reports that a child who learned the Hebrew alphabet was to recite the Aleph-Bet in groups of four-letter combinations, but was to recite twice as a word, only the last four letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[37] There is one ancient text that discusses elementary education during Second Temple times. This text was found at Qumran, and in the *Rule of the Congregation*, it says, "until age ten, and then, 'according to his age they shall instruct him in the laws of the covenant...for ten years, until age twenty."[38]

---

[35] Ibid., 29.
[36] Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, 71.
[37] Marcus, 72-73.
[38] Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 43.

There are a number of other symbolic readings of the school initiation ceremony that may have meaning for us today. When the boy was first taken from the home and away from his mother, he was being brought to the male study circle, which was to become, symbolically, his new "mother." After the very beginning of the ceremony, the mother is only present at home and in the background of the initiation rite activities. In addition, as a Jewish father is required to circumcise his son and may appoint a mohel to do so in his place, he similarly brings his son to a teacher as his religious surrogate. This tradition comes from the rabbinic texts, and can be found in Kiddushin 29a. Marcus wrote the following:

> The journey from the private Jewish space of the home to the public Jewish space of the school or synagogue is a liminal or boundary zone, an in between time in which harm may befall the child as well as the community. In Victor Turner's phrase, the person is 'betwixt and between,' no longer part of his prior status of being at home not yet part of the social structure of life as a schoolboy. As a result of his indeterminate status he is in a state of danger, and the danger is expressed as a state of potential pollution from Christians...[39]

The child's being wrapped in a talit or a coat, serves to protect the boy from liminal danger, and also symbolizes the end of his first stage of childhood and his "rebirth" into the next stage as a schoolboy. The boy being wrapped also likens him to a Torah scroll. This part of the school initiation ceremony developed further in Ashkenazic culture with the introduction of the wimpel. A wimpel was a cloth in which the baby was held during his Brit Millah. The cloth was set aside, and later the boy's name was embroidered onto the wimpel. The wimpel was saved, and it would later be used as a Torah binder during

[39] Marcus, *The Rituals of Childhood,* 76.

the child's public Bar Mitzvah ceremony at age thirteen, which, as a rite of passage, was only developed in late medieval Ashkenaz.

The traditional use of the wimpel has been revived at many Reform synagogues today in an effort to bring more ritual, rites of passage and tradition into the lives of congregants and families. The making of the wimpel is done through family education programming, in preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and for the express purpose of creating meaning through rites of passage in the religious school setting. This is an example of the use of ritual working in the supplemental religious school. At the end of the medieval school initiation ritual, the boy walks on his own, signifying that he has been initiated and is now a schoolboy who can stand on his own two feet. The child's personal journey to school is a symbolic re-enactment of the Exodus from Egypt, the desert trek, the approach to Mount Sinai, sand that alludes to the River Jordan and beyond. In this way, the child's personal rite of passage was a symbolic representation of Israel's formative national experience recorded in the collective memory of leaving, journeying, and receiving. As a result of this connection between the ritual and the biblical narrative, the child who experienced the ritual became a symbol of the biblical people of Israel.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah

The process of forming a boundary between childhood and adulthood can be seen in the development of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony as a rite of passage. The idea that there should be a single age of majority in Judaism is less explicit than it would first appear. If anything, the age of twenty is biblically mandated, as rabbinic sources continued to emphasize the age of twenty as the age of majority for males. The Mishnah Avot, a rabbinic text written in the year 200, stated that the proper age of majority for males is thirteen – which meant that at the age of thirteen it was time for Jewish boys to begin fulfilling the commandments. Where did this come from? In the late antique world of Rabbinic Judaism that passage in the tractate Avot was not yet considered to be part of the Mishnah.[40] Therefore, there was considerable latitude as to the age of majority for males and when one might begin to observe certain rituals of adult Judaism. By the central Middle Ages, the age of thirteen began to gain influence in Germany as the one and only age of religious majority in Judaism. Prior to the thirteenth century, boys who had not yet reached the age of thirteen were permitted to perform the religious obligations of adult Jews, if they so chose. The specified ages were merely guidelines. The earliest time that an action of any kind was associated with a boy who reached the age of thirteen is from late antique Palestine in Midrash Beresheet Rabbah. There we are told, ": whomever has a son who has reached the age of thirteen years should say the blessing: 'Blessed in the One who has exempted me from responsibility for this one's punishment.'"[41] The Midrash refers to the age of thirteen, at which the boy, and not the

[40] Marcus, 37.
[41] Marcus, *The Jewish Lifecycle*, 87.

father, is legally responsible for his own religious acts. By the thirteenth century the Mishnah Avot was considered to be a part of the ancient Mishnah, so feelings began to change about the age of majority and when a boy was considered to be a Jewish adult. Rabbi Moses Isserles wrote, "The custom is in accord with the author of the *Ittur* – that minors should not put on *tefillin* until Bar Mitzvah, that is, thirteen years and a day."[42] The Talmudic term *Bar Mitzvah* originally meant an adult Jew who was responsible for particular religious obligation. By the time of Moses Isserles (1525-1572), the term Bar Mitzvah came to mean a boy who had reached the minimum age for performing all religious obligations – and that is was defined as thirteen and a day.

By the late fourteenth century, Bar Mitzvah was increasingly associated in Germany with the boy reading the Torah at age thirteen; for the first time German Jews also began a formal learning process prior to the Bar Mitzvah rite of passage. Rabbi Shlomo Luria (1570-1637) wrote, "when a boy reached age thirteen, 'the German Jews make a Bar Mitzvah feast,' and 'there is no greater feast than this.... one offers praise and gratitude to God that the young boy has been able to become Bar Mitzvah.... that the father has been able to raise him until now and initiate him into the entire Torah covenant.'"[43] By this time there was some demonstration of the boy's learning through a Bar Mitzvah *Derashah,* or learned speech. As a result of this demarcation in age, males under the age of thirteen were required to be children. A boundary was created at age thirteen between childhood and adulthood. Age thirteen and a day now meant something – it was the first time that a Jewish boy put on tefillin and had an *aliyah* to the Torah in

[42]Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood,* 120.
[43] Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood,* 122.

synagogue. He would also be counted as part of the male prayer minyan at age thirteen. By the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries – or even a little later – modern Jews adopted the elaborate Bar Mitzvah rite that we know today.

An effort was made in early nineteenth century Germany to replace the traditional Bar Mitzvah with a new Jewish ceremony for both boys and girls at age fifteen or sixteen. This experiment was the confirmation ceremony, which focused on introducing both boys and girls to the principal teachings of Judaism at a slightly later age. Jewish teenage confirmation was introduced in France in the 1840s, with girls wearing the same white dresses that Catholic children wore when they celebrated their first communion at a much younger age. In England Confirmation was also introduced in the 1840s at the West London Synagogue. Their confirmation ceremony was held annually on Rosh HaShanah, after the blowing of the shofar. In the United States, American Reform congregations also began to replace the Bar Mitzvah with the more egalitarian and education-oriented ceremony of confirmation. Temple Emanu-El, in New York City, instituted confirmation in 1847. People opposed to Bar Mitzvah felt that there should be a ceremony similar for the girls, but there was no Bat Mitzvah ceremony at that time. Conservative congregations added the confirmation ceremony in addition to Bar Mitzvah to mark the graduation of those children who continued their Jewish schooling in supplementary Jewish High School programs. Both Reform and Conservative confirmation ceremonies were usually held on Shavuot (and usually still are). At about this time, the discussion began about adding some kind of a Bat Mitzvah celebration to mark a girl's coming of age at thirteen, which then enabled Jewish educators to set a goal

for girl's religious educations' in the supplementary school setting. Reform and Conservative synagogues adopted a Bat Mitzvah ceremony at which a girl read the Haftarah portion of the week at the end of the Friday night service. By the 1970's and 1980's, and as the egalitarian movement grew in the United States, the egalitarian Bat Mitzvah service on Shabbat morning became more common.

In 1987 Judith Davis studied the Bar (or Bat) Mitzvah as a ceremonial rite of passage for a 13 year-old Jewish boy (or girl). She looked at how the process defines a place for the child now becoming more like an adult, and moving into a different status within his/her family, peer group, and community. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah child has to demonstrate competency in the sacred language: Hebrew. S/he has to show that he can lead the congregation in prayer for a short period of time. He also becomes a "person of age" within the community who can now be counted as part of a *minyan*. In addition, the new status for the family is acknowledged by the presence of extended family and friends who gather together as implicit witnesses, through their presence and their gifts, to what is occurring. The ritual of Bar/Bat Mitzvah also connects the family to the entire community to the family, and to the larger religious and cultural traditions of Judaism. Readings from the Torah are given, and certain elements of the ritual are the same as those that happened centuries ago. The ceremony works on a number of levels at the same time: making and marking individual, family and group transitions. Past, present and future are linked through the historical context of Jewish tradition, through the

acknowledgement of the accomplishments of the child and family, and through the new status of the child/man.[44]

Davis followed four families through the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. The families and their circumstances differed, but commonalities of ritual, and ritual process were observable. Davis determined that the six-month period prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah day was divided into three phases – planning, ceremony/weekend, and aftermath – three phases that parallel the Van Gennep model of separation, transition and incorporation. The phases also paralleled Turner's associated phases of preliminal, liminal and post-liminal emotional conditions.[45] Phase one of the Bar Mitzvah focused on decision-making in preparation for the ceremony itself. Phase two focused on the emotions brought out of the family through the impact that the ceremony had on them. Phase three explored the family's own interpretation of the experience. The result of Davis' study was a series of portraits that revealed a circular pattern of family development that she summed up in ten conclusions to her study, which are the following:

1. The Bar Mitzvah facilitates developmental change.
2. The Bar Mitzvah effects developmental change differently in each family.
3. The process begins and continues for months before and after the public ceremony.
4. In the context of these multiple levels, it is during the planning period that much of the developmental work is begun.
5. The Bar Mitzvah ceremony is the family's public statement of its private process.
6. The developmental work begun in the two earlier stages of the process continues during the period following the ceremony.
7. The Bar Mitzvah ritual speaks directly to the developmental tasks of the contemporary family whose first child is becoming an adolescent.

[44] Imber-Black, *Rituals in Families and Family Therapy*, 18.
[45] Imber-Black, 178.

8. The Bar Mitzvah is a natural coping mechanism for families facing the normative crises of adolescent transition in that it potentates internal resources.
9. It is the paradoxical nature of the Bar Mitzvah that allows for its power to facilitate developmental change.
10. To the extent that the family is disconnected from its culture and the meaning of its rites and symbols, the family modifies these rites and symbols, adds new ones, and generally makes the meanings more explicit.[46]

No matter what else happens after the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a statement has been made by the family. The child has acknowledged his/her role, and his/her family's role, in Jewish ritual and in rites of passage, and has made a statement for the future.

Another study of the rite of passage of Bar/Bat Mitzvah was completed by Lisa Grant, who studied adult Bat Mitzvah as a rite of passage for women who either never had the opportunity to read from the Torah in a public setting, or those who wanted to reaffirm their Judaism by having an Adult Bat Mitzvah experience. "This adolescent rite of passage has been adapted to serve adult Jewish women's needs."[47] For women who never had the opportunity to become Bat Mitzvah and read from the Torah in a public forum, this rite of passage becomes so much more meaningful as an adult. In terms of our religious school families, if the Educator can involve a man or a woman on such a level that he/she decides to become an adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah, then hasn't the goal of bringing more ritual into the lives of our families succeeded? In the same way that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of a thirteen-year-old is a family event, it becomes a family rite of passage event for an adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well. In some ways, an adult becoming

[46] Ibid., 195-202.
[47] Lisa Grant. "Finding Her Right Place in the Synagogue: The Rite of Adult Bat Mitzvah,", 1.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah is more meaningful than a thirteen-year-old because a conscious choice was made that a rite of passage in Jewish life was wanted, and needed, by this person.

## The Role of Ritual in Jewish Education Today

Communal support for Jewish education is stronger than it has been in decades. As a result of this attention, many innovative curricula and programs are being created for the part-time religious school. However, even with this flurry of creative activity there is still an enormous gap between what Jewish education is today, and what it can be in the future. According to Jonathan Woocher, there are a number of areas that need to be examined:

1. The modernization and Americanization of Jewish education
2. The persistence of Jewish schooling as a Jewish norm
3. The reemergence of intensive, all-day Jewish schooling
4. The creation of a Jewish education 'counter-culture': camps, youth movements, Israel programs
5. The move beyond children: family education and adult Jewish learning
6. Unclear and unrealistic goals that our institutions and programs attempt to fulfill
7. A continuing pediatric focus
8. Fragmentation of educational efforts
9. Limited time allocations for Jewish learning
10. The growing shortage of quality personnel
11. The isolation of Jewish education from 'real living'[48]

The above list demonstrates the many challenges that lie ahead for Jewish education. In addition, the challenges that Woocher lists above are challenges that Jewish education has faced for the past hundred years. There are, of course, some new challenges that face the Jewish community today such as intermarriage, assimilation into American culture and society, over-programmed children, geographically dispersed communities and the impact of technology on society as a whole. As we know, there are no magic bullets --

Day School, an Israel trip, or Jewish camps won't do it alone. Each of these are extremely important to the overall scheme of what Jewish education can and should be.

Another issue that Jewish educators face in the twenty-first century is that as Judaism burst through its own boundaries and entered American society and culture, the boundary between Jewish and American life has became more permeable. Once it was important that American Jews were like their Christian neighbors, but not anymore. The role of the Jewish educator is now to create distinctions between choosing Judaism and choosing the other. Placing students in the position of having to choose will almost always result in a choice of the non-Jewish culture.[49] Jewish Educators need to create atmospheres in their schools where a total Jewish education is offered. What I mean by this is somehow relating Jewish heritage to the non-Jewish, which can create a point of contact between Jewish and non-Jewish values. "The Jewishly educated Jew is anchored in Judaism, but that very anchorage enables her or him, without loss of Jewish selfhood, to reach outward to the human community and forward to the universal goal."[50]

The role of ritual in Jewish education is also extremely important. Traditionally, most Jewish ritual was home-based. Only recently, in the spectrum of Jewish history, have Jewish rituals moved out of the home and into the synagogue. Even Bar Mitzvah has taken place in the home since the Middle Ages, only recently has it become a synagogue rite of passage. Currently, besides Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation as

---

[48] Woocher, Jonathan S. "Jewish Education in the Twenty-First Century: Framing a Vision," *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's Handbook* (Denver: A.R.E. Publications, 2003), 29-30.
[49] Michael Meyer, "Reflections on the 'Educated Jew' from the Reform Perspective," *CCAR Journal, Spring 1999*, 10 – 12, 20.

formal rites of passage, there are religious schools around the United States creating their own home-grown rites of passage for religious school students and families. The idea of creating new points of contact for our families has begun, but has not yet been formalized. I hope to be a pioneer in this area of Jewish Education through the writing of a Ritual Handbook, which follows this thesis. Some religious schools currently offer their school programs on Shabbat, which helps to create an automatic community for traditional ritual observance. Jack Wertheimer wrote:

> Indeed, if the primary goal of religious schools is to prepare young people for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah and other forms of participation in synagogue life, mandatory school attendance on the Sabbath is a highly efficient strategy to foster religious socialization: young people whose parents would not otherwise bring them to religious services now are required to attend school and inevitably observe worship in the main sanctuary on a regular basis.[51]

Shabbat schooling insures congregations of a youthful presence on Saturday mornings, a time when it is difficult to woo more than a minority of members to the synagogue, and it also provides an opportunity to integrate young people into the religious and ritual life of the congregation. I do not believe that the informal learning that takes place in the sanctuary and through other forms of programming on Shabbat mornings is an adequate substitute for formal learning, but it is a wonderful addition. Wertheimer wrote it so elegantly:

> If Jewish education is vague, unfocused and often over-ambitious in its goals, it is primarily because those concerned – parents, professionals, institutional leaders, religious authorities – can rarely agree on what is important to achieve. What do

[50] Meyer, 20.
[51] Jack Werthiemer, "Jewish Education in the United States: Recent Trends and Issues" *American Jewish Yearbook: 1999* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1999), 68.

> we want our educational efforts to produce: A Jew who prays? One who can speak Hebrew as well as an Israeli? One who can read a blatt of Gemara? One who will give to UJA? One who won't intermarry? All of the above, or none of the above?[52]

In his article, Wertheimer agrees that although there is no consensus, the field of Jewish education, as never before, is the most dynamic sector of the American Jewish community.[53] Proof of this is in the number of new initiatives that have been developed and financially supported for the purpose of revamping both educational and synagogue-wide programs (Re-Imagine, Synagogue 2000, Synagogue 3000, Synaplex). The support of Educators themselves through the Leadership Institute of Congregational School Principals is also proof of new innovations in the field of Jewish Education. These new and innovative programs will enable Educators to bring ritual and rites of passage into our religious schools more frequently. Our families thus will be enabled to find more meaning in both Judaism and the Jewish education that their children are receiving. John Dewey stated,

> I believe that it is the business of every one interested in education to insist upon the school as the primary and most effective interest of social progress and reform, in order that society may be awakened to realize what the school stands for, and aroused to the necessity of endowing the Educator with sufficient equipment properly to perform his task.[54]

Yes! What John Dewey wrote in 1897 is still relevant for Jewish educators today. Once we have sufficient resources, such as curriculum, programming, more money, new and

---

[52] Wertheimer, 114.
[53] Ibid., 115.
[54] Dewey, www.infed.org, August 16, 2005.

innovative ideas such as rituals, perhaps the religious school will be viewed as "the place to be" for Jewish education.

Dr Joseph Reimer defines informal Jewish education as experiential and voluntary. He writes, "The power of informal Jewish education, I am suggesting, lies in creation of lasting Jewish memories.... (participants) are doing Jewish and not feeling strange or awkward about it. Is it any wonder that these moments stade out and are not forgotten?" Dr. Reimer goes on to say, "Informal education has its spontaneous moments, but on the whole its programs have to be as carefully and thoughtfully designed as lessons in the classroom curriculum. Informal educators – at their best – are artful designers of other people's experiences."[55] Reimer echoes Dewey by saying that we must provide meaningful experiences for our students (or congregants) in order to create Jewish meaning in their lives. I propose, that one way to accomplish this be through adding creative ritual and rites of passage to the religious school curriculum.

Barry Chazan wrote, "The great challenge of education is to examine existing paradigms and dream of new ones."[56] It is my hope that my project, which follows, will be the beginning of a new paradigm of learning for the supplemental religious school setting.

---

[55] *V'shinantam: The Union for Reform Judaism National Teacher's Newsletter,* "Lessons from Informal Education," Number 5, 5764. www.urj.org/articles.index.cfm, August 20, 2005.
[56] Barry Chazan. "The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education," www.infed.org/informaljewisheducation/, August 18, 2005.

# A Ritual Handbook for Congregational School Educators

***Ritual and rites of passage can be used very effectively in the congregational school setting. This handbook offers three rites of passage programs for grades two, four and six, with the overall goal being to create more meaning in the school experience for our students and their families. For previous generations of American Jews, Jewishness was a given; striving to become American was a more pressing need. This is not so today. The Jewish community is fully American, and we, as Jewish educators, must create meaningful Jewish experiences for our families so that they will continue to make Judaism a priority in their lives. The American Jewish community's way of identifying as Jewish is extremely complex and varied. My hope is that through the use of the rituals/rites of passage in this handbook, our families in congregational schools, and their children, will choose to identify as Jews as a result of the meaningful experiences they had at their synagogues.***

**Enduring Understanding:**

Ritual and rites of passage in the religious school experience add meaning and importance to the overall Jewish educational program for each, individual family. This meaning is added through reinforcement of our families' connection to the Jewish people, through the creation of meaningful and tangible Jewish experiences, by enabling our families to mark time Jewishly, and through the use of ritual to encourage Jewish enculturation. Ritual creates a shared language, culture and community among those who are participants. Rite of passage rituals bring the kind of meaning into people's lives that are never forgotten. Rituals create a connection among individuals that can not be spoken or written, but felt through experience.

*Rituals are timed by beats of the heart, not ticks of the clock.*
*Most of our major holidays are connected to seasons.*
*They are flexible feast days adapted to human needs.*
*Heart time is not clock time – rituals should never be hurried.*

*Rituals are frames around the mirrors of the moment.*
*Rituals are the coin by which attention is paid to the moment.*
*Nobody lives without rituals. Rituals do not live without somebody.*

*The function of ritual is paradoxical: both to anchor us to high places on the steep slopes of this world on which we are always losing our footing and to free us from the despair of being stuck in the world's mud.*

*Ritual behavior softens the phases of life when we are reminded how hard it is to be human. Ritual behavior enriches the phases of life when we are reminded how fine it is to be human.*[1]

**Essential Questions:**

1. What are rituals and rites of passage?
2. Why are rituals important in my life?
3. How can ritual and rites of passage enrich my life as a Jew?
4. What role does ritual play in my children's religious school and educational experience?

**Evidence of Understanding:**

1. Family participation in each ritual can indicate the level of involvement and importance of Jewish education to the family.

[1] Robert Fulghum. From Beginning to End: The Rituals of Our lives. (New York: Ivy Books) 112.

2. Continued and/or further involvement of the family in synagogue life after participation in a rite of passage ritual can be an indicator of the meaning of the experience for each individual.
3. Joining Temple committees, attending adult education programs, attending youth group programs, participation in post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah schooling are all indicators that the religious school experience was enriched by the addition of rituals and rites of passage into the curriculum.

**Target Audience:**

The target audience for this curriculum is students in grades two, four and six and their families.

**Set Induction:**

On the opening day of Religious School, the Rabbi and/or Educator should speak about ritual and rites of passage as an integral component of the school curriculum. The meaning and importance of ritual/rites of passage in both our Jewish and secular lives should be discussed, and the three rituals in this handbook should be introduced: ***the Second Grade School Initiation Family Ritual, the Fourth Grade Yom HaSiddur Family Ritual, and the Sixth Grade Hand-Made Siddur Family Program and Ritual.*** The Rabbi/Educator should speak of these new rituals in connection with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah rite of passage. Once, Bar/Bat Mitzvah was a "new" ritual, and now it has become tradition, perhaps these new rituals, too, will become tradition.

In the Midrash (*Kohelet Rabbah 12:10)*, compiled in the eighth century C.E., we read:

***"The words of the wise are like a young girl's ball. As a ball is flung by hand without falling, so Moses received the Torah at Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets delivered it to the Great Synagogue."***

That is one way which the ancient Rabbis imagined the ***shalshelet ha-Kabbakah***, the great chain of tradition that went from generation to generation: as a ball tossed, playfully, from teacher to student.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah is a time when our young people get possession of the "ball." It is our job to make sure that they catch it, run with it well, and have enough knowledge and commitment to be able to throw it to their children, the next generation of ball throwers and ball catchers. It's the least we can do for God, for ourselves, for our children and their children and the Jewish future.[2]

---

[2] Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin. Putting God on the Guest List: How to Reclaim the Spiritual Meaning of Your Child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005) 25.

The introduction of new rituals and rites of passage in the religious school curriculum is of great importance to me – as an Educator and/or Rabbi. We want to make sure that each step along the path of your children's religious school education is as important and meaningful as the preparation for and day of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We believe that we can do this for you, and with you, as partners in the Jewish education of your children, and your entire family. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is not an end point, but a step along the road in the Jewish education of both your child and your family. Although we place great importance on Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a community, it is important to stress that there are many more wonderful rites of passage that you and your family will share together along your paths in life. Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be viewed as an entrance to the wonderful world of adult Jewish learning.

**Activities:**

The activities for this curriculum are described in detail in each of the rituals/rites of passage that continue.

**Reflection:**

The purpose of introducing the three new rituals/rites of passage at the beginning of the school year is to get families excited about what is awaiting them, to get them excited about Jewish education, and to help them begin to find meaning in the entire religious school experience.

## Second Grade Curriculum in Preparation for Ritual

**The focus of the second grade curriculum is on holiday customs and symbols, bible stories, the synagogue and its symbols and an introduction to the Hebrew Aleph-Bet. The objectives for each area of study are as follows:**

**Holidays:**

Students celebrate and learn about each of the following Jewish holidays as they occur during the year: Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Hanukkah, Tu Beshvat, Purim, Passover and Shavuot. The learning will take place by reading holiday stories, singing songs, tasting holiday foods, doing holiday craft projects, playing holiday games, and viewing holiday videos. The text book for this part of the curriculum is My Jewish Year (Fisher), Behrman House Publishing Company.

**The Synagogue and Its Symbols:**

The students will be able to explain the purposes of a synagogue: a place where Jews pray to God, learn about our religion, and meet other Jews. The students will also be able to identify and define the purposes of the following: Ner Tamid, Aron HaKodesh, Bimah, Torah, Yad, Breastplate, Siddur, Kippah, Tallit, Menorah, and other art motifs in the sanctuary such as Hebrew letters, a Magen David, etc... Students will also learn about the Rabbi, Cantor, and Educator and be able to explain what each one does.

Activities that the class will participate in order to achieve the above goals are: take a tour of the sanctuary; examine and discuss each of the synagogue symbols and their purpose; look closely at a Torah scroll, touch the mantle, breastplate and yad; hold a service in the sanctuary and learn the *Shema*; examine the mezzuzah on the front doorpost of the synagogue and discuss its meaning; make a mezzuzah case; invite the Rabbi, Cantor, and/or Educator to the class; draw a picture of the synagogue and sanctuary; put on a kippah and tallit and learn the meanings and purposes of each.

Resources for this part of the curriculum are: My Synagogue (Weisser, Behrman House), Teaching the Jewish Holidays (ARE Publishing), A Jewish Holiday Copy Pak K – 3 (ARE Publishing)

**Bible Stories:**

The students will demonstrate knowledge of key biblical personalities: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Joseph, Moses, Miriam and Aaron. The students will use the text A Child's Bible (Behrman House) as the basis of learning for this part of the curriculum.

**Hebrew and Hebrew Names:**

The class will begin letter recognition and simple vocabulary words based upon prayer. They will also learn that Hebrew is the holy language of the Jews. They will

learn the Shema and the Shabbat Brachot. The text that will be used for this part of the curriculum is Shalom Aleph-Bet (Behrman House). The students will be asked to find out what their Hebrew names are and after whom they were named (if they were named after a relative). Part of the study of Hebrew will be looking at their Hebrew names, learning how to write them, and the meaning of the names. This part of the curriculum will then be used for the second grade family ritual.

The Students will participate in a weekly prayer service at the end of each Sunday School session. The purpose of this prayer service is to familiarize the second graders with the order of the service, the melodies that are used for each prayer, and how to act in the sanctuary and on the bimah.

**********

***The second grade ritual, which you will see below, is based upon the learning that the second graders and their families will do throughout the school year. Although the first year of formal studies offered in the supplemental school setting is Kindergarten, many families do not register their children until the second grade. It is for this reason that I have chosen to begin with a second grade ritual for my thesis project. The focus of the Kindergarten and first grade years are somewhat similar to second grade. They look at holidays, bible stories, mitzvot, and have a special focus on Shabbat and its meaning and importance. In terms of Hebrew, the Aleph-Bet is introduced, although not in a formal way. They also sing the Shabbat blessings each week and attend weekly tefillah on Sunday mornings, where they hear the Barechu, Shema, Mi Chamocha and V'Ahavta (sung). The second grade is the beginning of formal Hebrew studies. Family involvement in the education of the children is a main goal of this second grade curriculum and ritual. In order for the full meaning of the ritual to be felt, families need to be involved in the learning process all throughout the year. At least one formal family education program should be scheduled, with many other opportunities for parents to come into the classroom offered throughout the year.***

## Second Grade Family Ritual

**POPULATION:**

This ritual is for second graders and their families. It should happen at the beginning of the school year.

**GENERAL CONTENT & FOCUS:**

This ritual is based upon the traditional medieval ritual for the beginning of school studies at age five.

**Enduring Understanding:**

The second grade students and their families will understand that the beginning of a child's Jewish studies is extremely important. So much so, that this ritual has its roots in the medieval period. This ritual will bring meaning and depth into the school studies in the second grade year and will connect the families to the chain of Jewish tradition. Meaning and depth will develop for both the students and their families in the following ways: (1) by parents learning about the medieval school initiation rite will connect them with their past and the chain of tradition in Judaism; (2) the students will find meaning through their preparation for this ritual and through participation in the actual event itself. Participation in this ritual will create a shared meaning and language for the second grade families, and will be the beginning of the creation of a community of learners.

**Essential Questions:**

1. Why is it important to mark the beginning of my child's religious studies?
2. What meaning will this ritual have for my family and me?
3. Why is having a Hebrew name important?
4. How can I build (or maintain) a connection to the Jewish community and to my home synagogue?

**Evidence of Understanding:**

1. Family participation in this ritual.
2. Knowledge of the historical source of this ritual through participation (Ivan Marcus) in the ritual itself.
3. Further participation in school and synagogue activities.

**Activities:**

This ritual will take place in the synagogue sanctuary and/or social hall, either at a Shabbat service or at Religious School assembly/service. Families will gather together

and the ritual will begin by the students and their parents walking into the sanctuary together in front of the entire congregation. They will all take seats at the front of the sanctuary, and will sit together as a family.

The second graders will open the ceremony with the singing of "Al Shelosha D'varim" on the bima. This text comes from *Pirke Avot 4:14* and says the following:

***Rabban Simeon said, "There are three crowns: the crown of learning, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty; but the crown of a good name excels them all.***

(יג) רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר · שְׁלֹשָׁה כְתָרִים הֵן · כֶּתֶר תּוֹרָה
וְכֶתֶר כְּהֻנָּה וְכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת · וְכֶתֶר שֵׁם טוֹב עוֹלֶה עַל
גַּבֵּיהֶן :

The second graders should then recite or sing the ***Shema*** as a group, and return to the pews in the congregation with their families.

The Rabbi and Educator will welcome the students and their families, and then tell the following story:

***At the age of five or six, a Jewish boy living in medieval Germany or France might begin his formal schooling by participating in a special ritual initiation ceremony. Early on the morning of the Spring festival of Shavuot, someone wraps him in a coat (tallit) and carries him from his house to his teacher. The boy is seated on the teacher's lap, and the teacher shows him a tablet on which the Hebrew alphabet has been written. The teacher reads the letters first forwards, then backwards, and finally in symmetrically paired combinations, and he encourages the boy to repeat each sequence aloud. The teacher smears honey over the letters on the tablet and tells the child to lick it off.***

***Cakes on which biblical verses have been written are brought in. They must be baked by young women from flour, oil, honey, and milk. Next come shelled hard-boiled eggs on which more verses have been inscribed. The teacher reads the words written on the cakes and eggs, and the boy imitates what he hears and then eats them both.***

***The teacher next asks the child to recite an incantation adjuring POTAH, the Prince of Forgetfulness, to go far away and not block the boy's heart. The teacher also instructs the boy to sway back and forth when studying and to sing his lessons out loud.***

***As a reward, the child gets to eat fruit, nuts, and other delicacies. At the conclusion of the rite, the teacher leads the boy down to the riverbank and tells him***

***that his future study of Torah, like the rushing water in the river, will never end. Doing all of these acts, we are told, will "expand the child's heart."***[3]

*This ritual that you are partaking in today is based upon the rite of passage that was just described to you. This rite of passage was developed in Medieval Europe, and we are going back to its roots today. Yes, we have made some changes, but the idea is the same: we welcome your children into our religious school, and your family into the lives of our congregational family. We look forward to sharing your joys and your misfortunes together, just as a family would. We initiate you into the life of the Temple.*

The classroom teachers should now be invited up to the bima. At this point, the Torah should be removed from the ark by the Rabbi, Educator, and teachers, and should be walked around the sanctuary. At the end, the Torah should be placed on the reading table on the bima. All of the second grade students should then be brought up to the bima, and a chart of the Aleph-Bet should be on display. The students and their teachers should read the Aleph-Bet together (or sing it), after having practiced it prior to the day of the ritual.

<u>The following verses from Ezekiel should then be read by the parents:</u>

***He said to me, "Mortal, eat what is offered you; eat this scroll, and go speak to the House of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He gave me this scroll to eat, as He said to me, "Mortal, feed your stomach and fill your belly with this scroll that I give you." I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey to me.***

***Ezekiel 3:1-3***

ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־אָדָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תִּמְצָא
אֱכוֹל אֱכוֹל אֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת וְלֵךְ
דַּבֵּר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ 2 וָאֶפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי
וַיַּאֲכִלֵנִי אֶת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת׃ 3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי
בֶּן־אָדָם בִּטְנְךָ תַאֲכֵל וּמֵעֶיךָ תְמַלֵּא אֶת
הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֵלֶיךָ וָאֹכְלָה

Each student will be given a Hebrew name at this point in the ceremony, if they do not already have one. Every child will be called by his/her Hebrew name, and as this happens, the parents will join their children on the bima. The Rabbi will then recite the Priestly Blessing over the students and their parents together as a group, as they all stand under a *tallit* and together as a community.

The Rabbi or Educator should then explain that the study of Torah can be sweet on the lips of all of our students and their families and that as we watch our students grow and learn, we will all grow and learn together.

Following this, the second grade teachers will have prepared some kind of presentation for the children to do at this ceremony, such as singing a few songs or

---

[3] Ivan Marcus. <u>Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe.</u> (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1.

showing off art work, which should demonstrate the knowledge they have gained already in their Jewish education.

Following the presentation, the Torah should be put back into the ark and everyone is invited to a festive meal in the social hall.

In the social hall, each student should receive a plate with honey, and on the plate should be written each student's name in Hebrew. Once all students have received this, they should lick the honey off of the plates at the same time. The following foods will be placed on a table for everyone to eat and enjoy together: honey cakes with icing, hard boiled eggs, dried fruits and nuts, and if possible, cakes or cookies inscribed with the students' Hebrew names. Each child will go home with a Naming Certificate[4], even if they already have one, which will identify that the naming happened at the child's second grade Religious School Initiation Ritual.

**Materials:**

Honey, Aleph-Bet Chart, honey cake, hard boiled eggs, dried fruits and nuts, plates, napkins (or wet-wipes)

**Reflection:**

This ritual represents the individual child's personal entry into Torah study, and symbolically reviews the biblical story of Israel's journey from Egypt into Sinai. This is a rite of passage moment for the children and their families. The children represent the Jewish people at its formation, and are entering into the culture of the Religious School and of studying Torah. The honey is symbolic of the sweetness of the Torah that they will learn in their years of Religious School, and the students' Hebrew names are representative of the Torah itself. Also, the Torah being walked around the room shows the importance of Torah in the community.

[4] The naming certificate can be purchased from either A.R.E. Publishing Company or the U.R.J. Press.

## Second Grade Ceremony Hand-Out

*Rabban Simeon said, "There are three crowns: the crown of learning, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty; but the crown of a good name excels them all.*

(יז) רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר · שְׁלֹשָׁה כְתָרִים הֵן · כֶּתֶר תּוֹרָה
וְכֶתֶר כְּהֻנָּה וְכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת · וְכֶתֶר שֵׁם טוֹב עוֹלֶה עַל
גַּבֵּיהֶן :

*Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohaynu Adonai Echad*
*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto L'olam Va'ed*

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יהוה אֶחָד!

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד!

*At the age of five or six, a Jewish boy living in medieval Germany or France might begin his formal schooling by participating in a special ritual initiation ceremony. Early on the morning of the Spring festival of Shavuot, someone wraps him in a coat (tallit) and carries him from his house to his teacher. The boy is seated on the teacher's lap, and the teacher shows him a tablet on which the Hebrew alphabet has been written. The teacher reads the letters first forwards, then backwards, and finally in symmetrically paired combinations, and he encourages the boy to repeat each sequence aloud. The teacher smears honey over the letters on the tablet and tells the child to lick it off.*

*Cakes on which biblical verses have been written are brought in. They must be baked by young women from flour, oil, honey, and milk. Next come shelled hard-boiled eggs on which more verses have been inscribed. The teacher reads the words written on the cakes and eggs, and the boy imitates what he hears and then eats them both.*

*The teacher next asks the child to recite an incantation adjuring POTAH, the Prince of Forgetfulness, to go far away and not block the boy's heart. The teacher also instructs the boy to sway back and forth when studying and to sing his lessons out loud.*

*As a reward, the child gets to eat fruit, nuts, and other delicacies. At the conclusion of the rite, the teacher leads the boy down to the riverbank and tells him that his future study of Torah, like the rushing water in the river, will never end. Doing all of these acts, we are told, will "expand the child's heart."*[5]

[5] Ivan Marcus. Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe. (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1.

## Letter to Second Grade Parents

**Date**

Dear Second Grade Families (or personalize),

On _____ you and your children will participate in Temple _____'s Second Grade Family Ritual. As a part of this very important rite of passage in the lives of your children, we ask that you provide us with their Hebrew names. If your child was not given a Hebrew name, or you can not remember the name, please let me know. Rabbi _____ will meet with you and your child in order to help in the choice of an appropriate Hebrew name.

Please provide us with the Hebrew name information by _____ so we can plan the program accordingly. We are very much looking forward to sharing this family ritual experience with you and your children. If you have any questions, please to do hesitate to contact me.

L'Shalom,

Temple Educator

## Second Grade Ceremony Hand-Out

***He said to me, "Mortal, eat what is offered you; eat this scroll, and go speak to the House of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He gave me this scroll to eat, as He said to me, "Mortal, feed your stomach and fill your belly with this scroll that I give you." I ate it, and it tasted sweet as honey to me.***

***Ezekiel 3:1-3***

ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־אָדָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תִּמְצָא
אֱכֹול אֱכוֹל אֶת־הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת וְלֵךְ
דַּבֵּר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ ב וָאֶפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי
וַיַּאֲכִלֵנִי אֵת הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת׃ ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי
בֶּן־אָדָם בִּטְנְךָ תַאֲכֵל וּמֵעֶיךָ תְמַלֵּא אֵת
הַמְּגִלָּה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן אֵלֶיךָ וְאֹכְלָה
וַתְּהִי בְּפִי כִּדְבַשׁ לְמָתוֹק׃ פ

List all second grade students names here.

## Fourth Grade Curriculum in Preparation for Ritual

**The focus of the fourth grade curriculum is on holiday customs and symbols, the Jewish life cycle, values & ethics, and Hebrew prayer. Fourth grade is the first "official" year of Hebrew learning in the Religious School, although exposure has been great prior to this year. The objectives for each area of study are as follows:**

Holiday Customs and Symbols:

Students will learn about the origins, history, vocabulary and concepts of holidays and their relevance to contemporary Jewish life. There will be an emphasis on Jewish holiday worship and learning the prayers/blessing that come with each holiday. For example, they will learn the Hanukkah blessings, and the Four Questions for Passover. They will briefly celebrate each of the major Jewish holidays as they occur in the Jewish year and discuss customs and traditions related to each holiday.

Jewish Customs and Practices/Lifecycle:

The Jewish life cycle events that the fourth grade will cover are: Brit Milah/Brit Bat and naming, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Marriage, Death and Mourning.

Students will demonstrate an understanding of Jewish life cycle events. They will be able to tell in their own words the history, ritual and folklore of Brit Millah, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Marriage, and mourning customs in Judaism. Students will demonstrate an appreciation for, and an understanding of, Jewish life cycle experiences as a manifestation of Jewish identity. Students will become familiar with laws and customs relating to the Jewish life cycle experiences. Students will create alternative life cycle ceremonies, and students will experience themselves as links with generations of Jews past, present and future. This will happen though the making of family trees, telling family stories, sharing family photographs, and eating ethnic foods.

The textbook that the students will use for this part of the curriculum is The Jewish Lifecycle Book, published by the URJ Press.

Hebrew and Prayer Studies:

The fourth grade is the "official" beginning of Hebrew prayer studies in the religious school setting. The students will attend a weekly prayer service during Hebrew School, and they will learn the following: The Aleph –Bet (if not already known), the Candle blessing, the Friday night Kiddush, and the Motzi, the Barechu, the Shema, the Mi Chamocha, and beginning the V'ahavta and Avot v'Emahot.

The students will also be able to define prayer and kavanah, and explain why people pray. They will also know the meaning of each of the prayers that they have learned to read in Hebrew. The students will be able to describe different kids of prayers, and students will reflect on whether or not God answers our prayers. The students will be

able to describe personal reasons for praying and consider what prayer means to them. The students will learn the body movements that accompany each prayer, and analye how these movements enhance worship. The text for this part of the curriculum is Hineni 1, which is published by Behrman House. They will also use the Hineni 1 Workbook, word cards and computer CD-ROM.

Values and Ethics

For this part of the curriculum, students will use The Kid's Mensch Handbook: Step By Step to a Lifetime of Jewish Values (Scott Blumenthal), which is published by Behrman House. They will learn about Mitzvot, tzedakah, and what it means to be a "mensch" in Jewish life.

**********

***Through the students' study of the Jewish life cycle and calendar and the beginning of a serious Hebrew prayer study experience, is a natural lead-in to the Fourth Grade Family Ritual which follows.***

## Fourth Grade Yom HaSiddur Family Ritual

**Population:**

This ritual is for fourth grade students and their families.

**Enduring Understanding:**

Fourth Grade students and their families will continue the process of community building and Torah study that was started in the second grade ritual. Through use of the siddur, community will be built through the feeling of being connected to generations of Jews before – ***shalehelet hakabala.*** The fourth grade families will create a connection to their Jewish heritage and identity through the siddur.

**Essential Questions:**

1. What does the siddur mean to me?
2. Why does my child need a siddur?
3. Why does my child need/want a Bar/Bat Mitzvah?
4. Why are Hebrew studies important for my child?
5. Why are Hebrew studies important to me?

**Evidence of Understanding:**

1. Use of the siddurim for the children's Hebrew studies.
2. Family Shabbat service attendance.
3. Knowledge that the siddur is a connection to both past and future generations of Jews.

**Activities:**

The students will receive a siddur as gifts from the synagogue congregation to mark the beginning of the process of formal Hebrew studies in preparation for both B'nai Mitzvah and becoming a literate Jewish person.

This process will begin by the children creating book covers for their siddurim in their religious school classrooms. The book covers will have Jewish themes, and can be made from blue construction paper or blue felt (depending upon the art inclinations of the teacher), contact paper, copper sheets for etching designs, and paint pens. While the students are working on their book covers, the Educator should send a letter to the parents informing them of this rite of passage for their children and when it will be taking place. In addition, the Educator should request that the parents create a personal blessing for their children that will be placed in the front cover of the siddur as a special piece to this ceremony. The parents may request help from the educator in creating/writing their blessing, but it is important for all parents to participate, as this is a very important part of this ritual. It is important because having a message from parents in the siddur creates

personal meaning and connection for the families in this ritual. It also connects the family to the synagogue in a very tangible way.

As the siddur covers are completed and the parent's blessings are collected, everything should be put together in preparation for the special Yom HaSiddur Family Service.

In addition to the book cover preparation in the classroom, the teachers should talk about the outline and structure of the Friday evening Shabbat service, and why the giving of siddurim is significant in the fourth grade year. In order to show use of the siddur and not just the receiving of it, the fourth grade students will prepare to help lead the service on the evening of Yom HaSiddur. Due to the fourth grade curriculum and level of Hebrew ability, the fourth graders should prepare to lead the following prayers:

Choose and sing an opening song (Ma Tovu)
Barechu
Shema
V'ahavta (depending upon ability, or sing "And Thou Shalt Love" in English)
Mi Chamocha
Avot v'Emahot
Gevurot in English
**other prayers led by clergy or educator**
Choose a closing song

The teachers may also ask some of the students to say a few words (prepared prior to the service) about their feelings regarding the receiving of the siddur, the importance of Judaism in their lives, etc...

On the evening of Yom HaSiddur, but prior to the service, the families should meet as a group with the Rabbi and Educator. The purpose of this meeting is to help the fourth grade families make the connection between the receiving of the siddur and their Jewish heritage. Present the following questions to the group:

1. How do you feel about receiving this siddur through your child?
2. Did you ever receive a siddur as part of your Jewish education growing up? (or the non-Jewish equivalent?)
3. How do the memories that you have of your own prayerbook connect to your Jewish identity today?

Spend some time sharing as a group, and also ask the students how they feel about receiving siddurim from the synagogue on this very special evening. Then ask each family to share the personal prayer/blessing that they wrote for their child, with their child. Once this group experience has been completed, everyone should walk into the sanctuary together as a group.

The Yom HaSiddur ceremony should take place at a Friday evening service, and should be a main focus of the evening. The Rabbi and Educator should welcome the families and speak about the importance of the beginning of our students' Hebrew studies in the fourth grade.

At the appointed place in the service, the Educator and fourth grade teaching staff should go up to the bima and call each child's name individually and ask them to also come up to the bima. Although, the fourth grade students will be involved in leading the service all along. The process of how the book covers were created should be explained at the service, as well as the marking of the beginning of the fourth graders Hebrew studies. It should also be announced that the siddurim are a gift from the congregation to the students. The Educator should also explain that each family wrote a blessing for their child, and it has been placed in the front of the siddur. As each child is called, he/she should be handed the siddur and stay on the bima. At this point, the Rabbi should recite the Priestly Blessing over the students. The Rabbi should then invite the parents to join their children on the bima, and quietly read the personal blessing to their children.

A festive meal or special Oneg Shabbat should be planned for this evening, as it is an important rite of passage for our fourth graders and their families.

**Materials:**

Siddur, contact paper, copper sheets, blue construction paper, paint pens, scissors, tape, food for Oneg Shabbat, parents' blessings

**Reflection:**

Although this may not seem like a very important time in the life of a religious school student and their family, in actuality it is. The fact that each of these families has made a commitment to join a synagogue and send their children to learn Hebrew – which is also a big financial commitment – is very important to remember. It is most likely the first year that these students will attend religious school twice weekly, which is in and of itself an important rite of passage. The preparation for the B'nai Mitzvah will begin in the fourth grade year, and even if some students choose not to become B'nai Mitzvah, having a siddur will help them become literate Jews in their adult lives.

## Sample Letter to Fourth Grade Parents

**Date**

Dear Fourth Grade Families (or personalize, if possible),

I am writing to you today to tell you about a wonderful rite of passage that you and your children will be taking part in on Friday, April _____.

This evening is called *Yom HaSiddur*. Each fourth grade student will receive a siddur as a gift from the synagogue at services that evening. The siddur is a symbol of the beginning Hebrew studies at Temple _____. In preparation for this wonderful evening, your children will be making their own, personalized book covers for their siddurim. The book covers will be placed on the siddurim prior to April ____, and will be part of the presentation.

In addition, we ask something of you – the family. We ask that you write a prayer, message, or poem to your child that will be placed on the inside cover of the siddur. This will be a wonderful memory for both you and your children, and something to look back upon as they use the siddur throughout their years in Hebrew School. I ask that you e-mail your message to me no later than February _____. If you need any help or guidance in the preparation of this personal message, I am always here for you and will be happy to help.

I look forward to sharing this meaningful rite of passage experience with your family. Again, please do not hesitate to contact me.

L'Shalom,

Temple Educator

## Template for Siddur Book Cover

Materials Needed:
Blue construction paper or blue felt
Contact paper
Square copper sheets and frames (can be purchased through S & S Supply Company)
Paint pens
Scissors
Tape

## Sixth Grade Curriculum in Preparation for Ritual

**The focus of the sixth grade curriculum is on holiday customs and symbols, the Jewish values & ethics, Jewish History and Hebrew prayer and God. The sixth grade is a very important year in that it is the year prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Families take on a larger role in the Religious education of their children and their role in the synagogue family during this critical year. The objectives for each area of study are as follows:**

Holiday Customs and Symbols:

In the sixth grade year, the students will focus on the origins, history, vocabulary, concepts of holidays and their relevance to contemporary Jewish life. Students will celebrate briefly each of the major holidays as they occur throughout the year, and they will learn and recite the brachot related to holiday worship. They will learn holiday vocabulary, and be able to briefly describe the origins and history of each holiday. The students will define concepts related to each holiday, and they will identify the relevance of each holiday for modern Jews today. Students will also be able to differentiate between Jewish holidays and Christian holidays. Teacher references for this part of the curriculum are The Jewish Holidays, by Michael Strassfeld (Harper & Row Publishing) and Teaching Jewish Holidays, by Goodman (A.R.E. Publications).

Jewish Values and Ethics:

Students will demonstrate understanding of the concepts of Tikkun Olam, Kavod, Tzedakah, Gemilut Chasidim, Ahava, Mazon, Chesed shel Emet, Bikur Cholim, and Ba'al Tashchit. The students will define "mitzvah" as a commandment, and will demonstrate an understanding Maimonides' of the eight rungs of tzedakah. Students will research tzedakah and tikkun olam opportunities in their community, and choose a class project to work on throughout the year.

Jewish History:

The study in the sixth grade is American Jewish History. They will learn about the three waves of Jewish immigration to America, as well as more recent immigrations. The students will be able to identify Jews who made a significant contribution to American life. They will take a field trip to Ellis Island in an attempt to feel the immigration experience themselves. Students will also study the origins of their own families and learn about where they came from and how and when they arrived in America.

Hebrew Prayer and God:

In the sixth grade year, students will demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the Torah service and concluding prayers. They will be able to lead both a Friday night and Saturday morning service. They will have some degree of fluency in both the reading and chanting of the major prayers in the prayer service, and will have an understanding of the structure of the prayer service. They will recognize the words

*parasha* and *sedra* as names for the weekly Torah portion. They will begin a study of trope and trope markings in preparation for Bar/Bar Mitzvah training in the seventh grade year. Textbooks for this year can include the *siddur* and Hineni 2 & 3 (Behrman House) for prayer review and service structure.

## Sixth Grade Family Personal Theology Ritual and Hand-Made Siddur

**Population:**

Sixth grade students in a congregational school setting and their families.

**Enduring Understanding:**

Students and their families will be able to put into words some of their beliefs and thoughts about God and Judaism as the beginning of creating their own personal theologies.

**Essential Questions:**

1. How do I put my feelings and beliefs into words?
2. Why should I put my feelings and beliefs about God into words?
3. What are my feelings and beliefs about God?
4. Do I/we believe in God?

**Evidence of Understanding:**

Students and their families will complete this ritual with a hand-made siddur and personal writings about their own personal theology in relation to God and Judaism. Creating and realizing a personal theology can take a lifetime, so this will be the first of many steps towards a personal understanding of God and Judaism.

**Activities:**

This ritual will be a first step towards the B'nai Mizvah rite of passage, which usually takes place during the seventh and eighth grade year. The program will begin with a family education activity, and will culminate in a family ritual.

Prior to the first meeting of this program, send a letter home to the families telling them about the exciting program they are about to experience with their children. In addition to the letter, send home the preface to the book Minhag Ami: My People's Prayerbook, The Shema and Its Blessings, Volume 1, edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman. The purpose of sending this letter and information home to the families is two-fold. First, many families who belong to Reform synagogues today have very little background on Jewish prayer and liturgy and the importance of the prayerbook in Judaism. In addition, it is supplying them with information and educating them in an area where they will need to support and educate their children in the coming years. (see attached letter)

***Meeting #1:***

Begin the family activity with a story:

***A story is told of a 4 year old awaiting the birth of the second child in the family. All through the pregnancy the child asked, "When the baby is born, will I be able to see it?" "Yes," replied the parents. "Will I be able to talk to it?" the child continued. "Yes, of course," the parents answered. At last the day arrived for the parents to bring the infant home, and the mother and the father observed their child quietly enter the new baby's room. Standing outside the door, they overheard their child ask the baby: "Can you tell me about God? I am beginning to forget..."***

The Educator or Rabbi (facilitator of this part of the program) should then ask the families to think about the following questions:

1. How do you believe in God?
2. When do you believe in God?
3. How do you "feel" Jewish?
4. When do you "feel" Jewish?
5. When is being Jewish important to you?

Pass out paper and pencils and ask the group to quietly think about the story, and then spend a few minutes writing down their feelings, thoughts and impressions. Introduce the families to the different names of God as found in the Torah, and see if they can make a connection between God and Jewish life. (see hand-out attached) Another way to connect the idea of God and Jewish life would be through prayer. Introduce the idea of prayer in their personal lives and see if there is a connection to God.

Then ask each family to sit together and share their thoughts about God and Judaism. If some participants are timid, two families may be placed together for this part of the program.

Offer other medium to express how the families are feeling about God and Judaism. They may make a collage with magazines, glue, tape, newspapers, photos; they may write a story; they may write a song or a dance.

Bring the group together and ask those who wish to share, to respond to the following questions:

1. How do you feel differently about anything that we have discussed than when you walked in the door?
2. Why is this type of discussion difficult for you & your family? If it is not difficult, then why?
3. Was this something that you thought about – individually or as a family – prior to this ritual? When? Where? Why? How?

Ask the group to consider the following question: If God had an "800" (toll free) phone number or an e-mail address, what would you talk to God about?

At the end of this exercise, collect all of the writings, pictures, songs, etc... and use them at the next meeting of this group.

***Meeting #2:***

The purpose of this second meeting is to take all of the writings about God, and create a sixth grade siddur for use at a service that the sixth graders and their families will lead. Divide the students and their families into groups, and give each group responsibility for a certain part of the service. Ask them to weave the drawings and writings into the service and to find places that they feel are appropriate for each piece of work.

The theme of "doing Torah" will be threaded throughout the service. Because this is a family project, the Educator and sixth grade teachers will work with the families as a group to prepare and assign parts in the service. As parts are assigned, each group should also look at and discuss the prayer(s) that they will be leading. They should reflect on the connection between the liturgy and their discussions about God. Each family should take their personal writings about God, and try to find at least one prayer in the liturgy that makes a connection. Ask: what is the connection between the liturgy and your personal thoughts about God? Is there a connection? How is prayer meaningful to you, and how does prayer connect to God?

The students and their parents will lead prayers together, and will read their personal theological writings that they put together during the making of the siddur. They should also incorporate their thoughts and writings about the prayer(s) that they will be leading in the service.

For this particular evening, the entire congregation will use the sixth grade hand-made siddur for services. In addition to the hand-made siddur and personal writings, there will be an art and music component to the service related to the theme. The art and music pieces will be based upon a quote from Pirke Avot. The students and their families will work with their teachers and Educator to create a visual interpretation of what **Pirke Avot 1:17** means to them. The same will happen for music, although help from the Cantor will be solicited for this portion of the service. The purpose of using the above quotation is to get the students and their families thinking about the upcoming Mitzvah and Tzedakah projects that they will need to complete in preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The Educator should then take all of the materials and put together a hand-made siddur by the sixth grade and their families. Each family will get a photocopy of the siddur, to be used at a service led by the sixth graders.

The following order of liturgy will be used in the creation of this siddur:

Opening Song
Chatzi Kaddish
Barechu
Shema/V'ahavta
Mi Chamocha

Avot/Gevurot
V'shamru
Shalom Rav
Mi Shebeirach
Oseh Shalom
Aleynu
Mourners Kaddish
Closing Song

***Meeting #3/Sixth Grade Service***

The sixth grade service is the culmination of the personal theology and hand-made siddur program.

The theme of the sixth grade family led service is from Pirke Avot:

***"Study of Torah is not the main thing; the doing of Torah is."***
***Pirke Avot 1:17***

(יז) שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר: כָּל־
יָמַי גָּדַלְתִּי בֵּין חֲכָמִים וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לַגּוּף טוֹב מִשְׁתִּיקָה
וְלֹא הַמִּדְרָשׁ עִקָּר אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה וְכָל־הַמַּרְבֶּה דְּבָרִים מֵבִיא
חֵטְא:

**Materials:**

Paper, pencils, tape, glue, scissors, magazines, markers, crayons, pens, newspapers, photos

**Reflection:**

There are a number of purposes to the hand-made siddur program and sixth grade service ritual. It will bring the sixth graders and their families together, in preparation for the students' upcoming B'nai Mitzvah. They will begin to think about the student's Mitzvah/Tzadakah Project (something that the students will work on together with the Rabbi while preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah) in a new and more serious way. The act of preparing a siddur and service together, although this time as a grade, will help each individual family to think about the importance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah rite of passage on a new, liturgical and philosophical level. In addition, each family will have a copy of the creative siddur that the group worked on. The preparation for this ritual also forces families to think about their belief in God and in Judaism. These can be taboo subjects, so the facilitator should be experienced in working with families.

## Sample Letter to Sixth Grade Families

**date**

Dear Sixth Grade Families,

I am writing to you today because you are about to embark on a very exciting adventure with your children. On _____ we will begin the *Sixth Grade Family Personal Theology Ritual and Hand-Made Siddur* program. This will be the first of our three meetings together, which will conclude with a sixth grade family-led service using your own siddurim (prayerbooks)!

We will think about and talk about the meaning of God, the meaning of prayer, and the meaning of Judaism in our lives. You will be given the opportunity to discuss these topics with your sixth grade child, as you begin to think about the rite-of-passage of Bar/Bat Mitzvah that your family will experience in the coming year.

The other two dates we will be meeting are _____ and _____. Please put these dates in your calendars, as it is very important that everyone attend and participate in this program. It will have meaning and significance in your life that you will remember for years to come.

I have also enclosed the preface of the book Minhag Ami: My people's Prayerbook, The Shema and It's Blessings, Volume 1, by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman. This article will give you some background regarding prayer in Judaism and the beginnings of prayer, and prayer and spirituality.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I look forward to seeing you on _____ for our first meeting of the *Personal Theology and Hand-Made Siddur program.*

L'Shalom,

Temple Educator

**Names of God Exercise**

***Look at the following names of God and write down what meaning each name evokes for you. In addition, if the name means nothing to you, put that down as well.***

| | |
|---|---|
| *YHWH:* | *unpronounceable name of God* |
| *HaShem:* | *the name* |
| *HaDavar:* | *the word* |
| *Adonai:* | *Lord* |
| *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh:* | *I am that I am* |
| *El:* | *most high* |
| *Elohim:* | *most common name of God in the Hebrew Bible* |
| *Elyon:* | *supreme* |
| *Shaddai:* | *protector* |
| *Shalom:* | *peace* |
| *Shekhinah:* | *presence of God* |
| *Yah:* | *unpronouncable* |
| *Avinu Malkaynu:* | *our father, our king* |
| *Emet:* | *truth* |
| *Melech HaMelachim:* | *the king of kings* |
| *Ha Kadosh Baruch-hu:* | *the blessed one that is* |
| *HaMakom:* | *the place* |
| *El HaGibbor:* | *God the hero* |

When and where have you heard or seen these names of God before? What do they mean to you? What feelings do different names of God evoke for each of you individually? Can you connect any of these names of God to your understanding of God? Do any of these names of God put a gender on God for you?

**Are there other names that you have for God?**

In Judaism, the name of God is more than a distinguishing title. It represents the Jewish conception of the divine nature, and of the relation of God to the Jewish people. The numerous names of God have been a source of debate amongst biblical scholars. Some have said that the variety of names is proof that the Torah had many authors, while others say that the different aspects of God have different names. Depending upon the role that God is playing, the context in which God is referred to, and the specific God-like aspects that are emphasized.

*Another way to connect to God is through prayer, and this is what we hope to accomplish in the creation of a hand-made siddur that you and your children will create together.*

## Hand-Made Siddur Worksheet

The theme of the sixth grade family led service is from Pirke Avot:

***"Study of Torah is not the main thing; the doing of Torah is."***
***Pirke Avot 1:17***

(יז) שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר, כָּל־
יָמַי גָּדַלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לַגּוּף טוֹב מִשְׁתִיקָה
וְלֹא הַמִּדְרָשׁ עִקָּר אֶלָּא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה וְכָל־הַמַּרְבֶּה דְּבָרִים מֵבִיא
חֵטְא׃

## Service Outline

| Reading/Text | Name of Participant(s) |
|---|---|
| Opening Song (Hinei Ma Tov) | |
| Chatzi Kaddish | |
| Personal Creative readings | |
| Barechu | |
| Shema | |
| V'ahavta | |
| Personal creative readings | |
| Mi Chamocha | |
| Avot | |
| Gevurot | |
| Personal creative readings | |
| V'shamru | |
| Shalom Rav | |
| Personal creative readings | |
| Mi Shebeirach | |
| Oseh Shalom | |
| Personal creative readings | |
| Aleynu | |
| Mourners Kaddish | |
| Closing Song | |

# Bibliography


1. Arthur, Linda B. Religion, Dress and The Body. Berg Press: New York, 1999.

2. Bell, Catherine. Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions. Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford, 1997.

3. Bell, Catherine. Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford, 1992.

4. Chazan, Barry. "The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education." www.infed.org/informaljewisheducation/.

5. Dewey, John. "My Pedagogic Creed." www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/.

6. Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger. Routledge Books: New York, 1966.

7. Dykstra, Craig and Parks, Sharon. Faith Development and Fowler. Religious Education Press: Birmingham, Alabama, 1986.

8. Fishman, Sylvia Barack. Jewish Life and American Culture. State University of New York Press: New York, 2000.

9. Fowler, James W. Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning. Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.: San Francisco, 1981.

10. Fulghum, Robert. From Beginning to End: The Rituals of Our Lives. Ivy Books: New York, 1995.

11. Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures. Basic Books: New York, 1973.

12. Gillman, Neil. Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew. The Jewish Publication Society: New York, 1990.

13. Goodman, Roberta and Louis and Blumberg, Sherry H. Teaching About God and Spirituality. ARE Publishing, Inc.: Denver, Colorado: 2002.

14. Gordis, Daniel. Becoming a Jewish Parent: How to Explore Spirituality and Tradition with Your Children. Three Rivers Press: New York, 1999.

15. Heilman, Samuel C. Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20th Century. University of Washington Press: Seattle/London, 1995.

16. Heilman, Samuel C. Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1976.

17. Heilman, Samuel C. The People of the Book: Drama, Fellowship, and Religion. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1976.

18. Imber-Black, Evan and Roberts, Janine and Whiting, Richard. Rituals in Families and Family Therapy. W.W. Norton and Company: New York: 1988.

19. Imber-Black, Evan and Roberts, Janine. Rituals for Our Times: Celebrating, Healing, and Changing Our Lives and Our Relationships. Harper Collins Publishers: New York, 1992.

20. Marcus, Ivan G. Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1996.

21. Marcus, Ivan G. The Jewish Life Cycle: Rites of Passage from Biblical tro Modern Times. University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 1984.

22. McDevitt, Theresa M. and Ormord, Jeanne Ellis. Child Development: Educating and Working with Children and Adolescents. Merrill Prentice Hall: New Jersey and Ohio, 2004.

23. Meyer, Michael A. and Plaut, W. Gunther. The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents. UAHC Press: New York, 2001.

24. Moskowitz, Nachama Skolnick. The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's Handbook. A.R.E. Publication: Denver, Colorado, 2003.

25. Roxburgh, Alan J. The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality. Trinity Press International: Pennsylvania, 1997.

26. Schmidt, Leigh Eric. Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays. Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1995.

27. Singer, David. The American Jewish Yearbook 1999. The American Jewish Committee: New York: 1999.

28. Stow, Kenneth R. Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe. Harvard University Press: Cambridge and London, 1992.

29. Turner, Victor. From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play. PAJ Publications: New York, 1982

30. Turner, Victor. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Aldine Publishing Company: Illinois, 1969.

31. Wechsler-Azen, Nancy and David. "Taming the 'Wild Beasts' with Jewish Rituals," Reform Judaism Magazine. Summer 2005, Volume 33, Number 4, 2005.