בואו לפניו ברננה – *Bo'u L'fanav Birnana*
Integrating Liturgy and Music in the Teaching of *T'filah* in Religious Schools

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DEDICATION

האי עלמא בחרובא אשכחתיה, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי

Just as my ancestors planted for me, so too will I plant for my loved ones.

(B. Talmud *Ta'anit* 23a)

~

In memory of my grandfather, Rabbi Bernard Kahan, a man who loved Torah, Jewish music, and teaching. I feel honored to become Rabbi Kahan, and I know this achievement would fill him with *nachas*.

And in memory of my beloved grandmother, Sandra Solomon Ostrow, a woman who embodied strength and determination, honesty and beauty, and of course, love. I pray that I might follow her example as a person dedicated to family, committed to helping those in need, and devoted to Jewish life and heritage.

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DIGEST

Many religious schools incorporate a communal worship experience as part of their curriculum. However, these services are often disorganized, fraught with inconsistencies, and do not serve the educational needs or spiritual requirements of the children involved. There is a need for religious school *t'filah* curricula, providing deliberate, intentional religious school worship experiences which appropriately teach the *keva* of prayer as well as the *kavanah.*

Part I of this thesis provides the theoretical background for a religious school *t'filah* curriculum. The first three chapters are an examination of literature and academic research on the subjects of *t'filah*, educational theory and children's spirituality, and music as both a spiritual mode and teaching tool. The final section of Part I is comprised of interviews with Jewish professionals regarding their congregations' religious school *t'filah* programs.

Part II offers a practical approach to the problem of religious school *t'filah.* Chapter Five offers a rationale and explanation of a *t'filah* enrichment curriculum. A short pilot curriculum, comprised of six lessons each for three Hebrew grade levels, is included. The pilot curriculum was taught and tested in KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple's Hebrew school. A reflection and evaluation follows the pilot curriculum in Chapter Six.

Religious schools and congregations must offer students the learning experiences necessary to make them lifelong Jewish pray-ers. Organized, deliberate religious school *t'filah*, as well as *t'filah* enrichment programs in the classroom, form students who are comfortable and proficient in prayer, and who find meaning in worshiping as Jews.

INTRODUCTION

A significant number of congregational religious schools affiliated with the Reform Movement incorporate a prayer service as part of the school day. Presumably, these prayer services aim to immerse students in a regular prayer experience, familiarizing them with liturgy, music, and ritual. Many schools have their own special *siddurim,*[1] and numerous programs include the congregation's clergy members in leading the services. Some schools have organized plans or curricula for their religious school *t'filah* experiences, while others simply set aside time for communal prayer.

I have spent the last ten years teaching in Reform Movement-affiliated religious schools. In every school of which I have been a part, the entire school (or some large sub-set of students) participated in an organized worship/*t'filah* experience together. These *t'filah* experiences have varied from school to school, but all have had a few things in common.

First, they lacked organization. Having served as the songleader or even primary *shlichat tzibur,*[2] I observed firsthand the lack of lesson-planning, goal-setting, and guiding organization in these *t'filah* experiences. The leader sometimes, but not always, had an idea of the liturgy he/she wanted to complete during the given time, and sometimes, but not always, had planned additional teaching, a *d'var torah,*[3] or time to interact with the participants. Never in my time as a teacher directly involved with religious school *t'filah* was I given a plan, lesson overview, or even guiding principles with which to conduct services. This lack of organization leads to unnecessary repetition

[1] Singular is *siddur*. "Prayer book"
[2] Prayer leader
[3] Literally "a word of teaching." This refers to a sermon or teaching the service leader gives on the subject of week's Torah portion, an upcoming holiday, or important theme.

of material, exclusion of pertinent or otherwise desired information, and an overall lack of growth or forward movement for the *t'filah* experiences throughout the school year and from year to year.

Second, these experiences were fraught with inconsistencies. The *t'filah* programs with which I have been involved do not use the typical *siddur*[4] utilized by the congregation in which the school is based, nor do they use the liturgical music generally performed by the congregation and its musical leader. The liturgy was often truncated, not due to deliberate choices based on age-appropriateness or specific teaching goals, but was rather done on a whim or based in poor time management. These inconsistencies, though some may have been intentional, seem to distract from what is surely the purpose of these *t'filah* experiences: to teach students how to be knowledgeable prayer participants in their home congregations.

Finally, these experiences did not necessarily serve the educational needs or address the spiritual requirements of the children participating in *t'filah*. Most of these services were enjoyable, musical worship experiences but were not planned keeping in mind the needs of the children involved. An issue contributing to this larger problem is the possibility of inclusion of all students in a school, ranging from preschool through grade eight, in one service. Children, based on their level of knowledge and developmental stage, also approach God and spirituality differently than adults; many of these *t'filah* experiences were not designed with this in mind. Finally, students are always curious about the what, why, and how of prayer, and most of the school worship services in which I have been involved did not address these questions.

[4] Daily and Sabbath prayerbook

Based on my experiences, observations, and conversations with peers and colleagues, I have noticed a need for set curricula for religious school *t'filah.* These curricula should provide for deliberate, intentional religious school *t'filah* experiences which appropriately teach the *keva* of prayer (liturgy, *nusach* and music, ritual, and the "information"), as well as the *kavanah* (connection with God, relationship to the community, self-reflection, and spirituality).

Attempting to address these issues, this thesis project was undertaken using a process for "action research," developed by Kurt Lewin.[5] Hebrew College instructor of education Eric Golombek explains the steps as follows:

1. *Identifying a problem or need*: This step involves examining a real situation and identifying an area that needs correcting or improvement.
2. *Fact finding*: In this step, the researcher (ex. the teacher) investigates the problem in as many ways as possible: by examining current practices, peer discussions and/or observations, discussions with experts and/or research of literature.
3. *Developing an action plan*: After clearly defining the problem and carrying out fact-finding, the researcher creates an action plan and, equally important, a plan for observing and evaluating the success of the changes.
4. *Carry out action plan and observe*: The researcher carries out the action plan in a real- world context and carefully observes the results in as non-judgmental a way as possible.
5. *Reflect and evaluate*: In this important step, the researcher critically reflects on the success or failure of the action plan using data collected through observations.

[5] Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts; Selected Papers on Group Dynamics,* (New York: Harper Row, 1948)

6. *Amend plan*: the process of implementing change is an ongoing one. Based on the researcher's reflections, the practitioner returns to steps 2 or 3 and the process continues.[6]

The problem articulated at the opening of this chapter comprises the first of Lewin's six steps. The remaining steps are addressed as follows:

Fact finding

The problem was investigated in a number of ways. The fullest part of this investigation is made up of research of literature, both scholarly works and less formal writing, on the subjects of *t'filah*, education and development, and music. Current and best practices were examined through interviews with rabbis, cantors, educators, religious school principals, and other Jewish professionals. My own observations were carried out informally through my years of teaching in Reform Movement-affiliated congregational religious schools. The fact-finding process contributed the necessary research to develop an action plan.

Developing an action plan

Developing an action plan proved to be the most difficult part of my process. I originally intended to create a sample curriculum for religious school *t'filah*, as it currently exists in the congregational religious school in which I serve. At KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple, the school community participates in *t'filah* on Sunday mornings for thirty minutes at the start of the school session. *T'filah* is led by the rabbi or

[6] Eric Golombek, "Action Research Report on an Approach for Creating Meaningful Tefilla Experiences in Middle School," *Jewish Educational Leadership* 1 (2), 2004: 3.

rabbinic intern, as well as a songleader who provides musical leadership and accompaniment. I wanted to experiment with re-imagined *t'filah* on Sunday mornings, offering a communal prayer service that was deliberate in its educational goals, offered students a well-designed "diet" of sacred music, and provided intentional teaching moments in the areas of prayer "choreography," liturgical origins and history, and Hebrew vocabulary. In addition to utilizing recognized best practices for teaching, this curriculum would also have taken advantage of Jewish liturgical music as a major mode for students' learning.

A number of practical factors required a change to the action plan. Any action plan would require the testing or piloting of a *t'filah* curriculum. I was able to do this, thanks to the generosity and flexibility of Rockdale Temple. However, the piloting of a curriculum for Sunday morning *t'filah* could not be accomplished due to existing plans for *t'filah* during my piloting time-frame and the attendance at *t'filah* of a very wide age-range of students. Therefore, the action plan was instead developed as a "*t'filah* enrichment" program to be piloted in a Hebrew school setting, which offered the freedom to establish the pilot program as well as teach to smaller groups of students according to age and Hebrew level.

Carry out action plan and observe

The plan was carried out as *t'filah* enrichment in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew school on Tuesday afternoons during November and December 2013. I created a six-week curriculum consisting of lessons for Hebrew students in grades four, five, and six (Hebrew levels *Bet, Gimel,* and *Dalet*). The fifteen-minute sessions were designed as

combination learning/praying opportunities. Students both learned about the liturgy in a classroom setting as well as participating with their peers in organized, communal worship. Students in the 4th Grade/*Bet* Level, 5th Grade/*Gimel* Level, and 6th Grade/*Dalet* Level classes participated in the piloting of the curriculum. The students were informed that they were participating in this project. Each of the three classroom teachers for the involved classes not only participated in the program, but also served as observers and evaluators, adding to the reflection process. The classroom teachers for the three groups met with me before the start of the pilot, debriefed each session with me, and finally, met with me at the end of the six sessions in order to evaluate the program. The classroom teachers served as the main observers of the program in addition to me.

Reflect and evaluate

Reflection and evaluation were undertaken both by the classroom teachers of the involved groups and me. I asked each classroom teacher the same series of questions, in order to investigate the effectiveness and success of the pilot program. I reflected on the same set of questions, as well as additional issues that were apparent to me as the teacher of the sessions. The written evaluation of the pilot program is included in this thesis. The following are the reflection questions for the classroom teachers:

1. Which lessons/segments were most successful? Why?
2. Which lessons/segments were least successful? Why?
3. How was this experience for you as the classroom teacher?
    a. What could have made this experience better for you as the classroom teacher?

4. How was the pace of the six week unit?
5. Did you think that the material was appropriate for your students? Why/why not?
6. Did the sessions relate to your class work/curriculum? Why/why not?
    a. If not, what could have been done to improve the relationship to class work?
7. Describe the success of the integration of:
    a. Music
    b. Vocabulary
    c. Torah/Jewish tradition
    d. History/Prayer Origins
8. Which foci were most helpful for your students?
    a. Communal prayer
    b. Discussion of the prayers
    c. Understanding meaning
    d. Understanding origin
    e. Music
    f. Movement/choreography
9. Did you find any theological issues with the program?
10. What do you think the students have retained/carried over with them from this program?
11. What could be done to improve this program?

Amend Plan

Through my own evaluation and reflection, as well as those of the classroom teachers surveyed, I have found many areas in which this pilot program could be improved and developed so as to morph into a full curriculum that could be used by any classroom Hebrew School teacher. Based on these findings and the "action research" process, I will amend the pilot program in an effort to create a fuller, more successful religious school *t'filah* program. This process of developing a new and improved action plan for teaching *t'filah* in a religious school setting will be undertaken by me in my new role as Director of Life-Long Learning at Rockdale Temple, in an effort to use this thesis project to directly impact the learning of my students.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING T'FILAH

There is the *T'filah...* and there is *t'filah...* and then there is *T'filah.* Depending on its use and context, the Hebrew word for prayer can refer to a) a specific section of Jewish liturgy also called the *Amidah*, b) a general activity in which an individual or group may engage, or c) organized Jewish worship. This chapter will examine all three meanings of the word *t'filah*, ending with an examination of *t'filah* as an organized, Jewish, communal worship service in the context of religious school. I will then offer a definition of *t'filah* as it pertains to this project.

Different cultures and faiths use varying vocabulary to describe prayer. Rabbi Ronald H. Isaacs explains that "the Greek word that translates to 'to pray' means 'to wish' and the French word means 'to beg.' The English word means to entreat, implore, or ask earnestly."[1] The Hebrew word for prayer is *t'filah* (תפילה); the related Hebrew verb is *l'hitpallel* (להתפלל) – to pray. The root of these words not only implies prayer and/or the act of praying, but also judgment or assessment, and the act of judging. Rabbi Rueven Hammer teaches that "the one who prays is asking for God's judgment upon him [...]," meaning that the pray-er either puts him/herself in a situation of being judged, or rather, asks God to intercede on behalf of someone else or the community. Brody and Thaler offer a contemporary, homiletical definition of *t'filah*, explaining that "to pray is to judge oneself."[2] Rabbi David Wolpe offers an expanded version of this definition, asserting that "prayer is less about changing the world than it is about changing ourselves.[3]

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[1] Ronald H. Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), 1.
[2] David Brody and Dena Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati* (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), 3.
[3] David J. Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children about God: A Modern Jewish Approach* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1993), 154.

While "the word *t'filah* is sometimes used for any or all of our prayers, [...] technically it denotes a particular prayer that nowadays in usually called the *Amidah* or the *Sh'moneh Esrei.*"[4] Indeed, according to Rabbi Hammer, "the word *t'filah* is limited in rabbinic Hebrew to petition. The central part of the *Amidah* is petition." The *Amidah,* or alternately, the *T'filah,* consists of *Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedushah, Kedushat HaYom* (on Shabbat and holidays) **or** the thirteen intermediate prayers of petition (on weekdays), *Avodah, Hodaah,* and *Birkat Shalom.* Traditionally, the *T'filah* ends with *T'filat HaLev,* prayer of the heart or personal petition. Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman teaches that when we describe the *Amidah* as petitionary, "we really mean to affirm the natural inclination of human beings to turn to God for ultimate matters such as wisdom, forgiveness, healing, justice, and hope – the larger issues without which life would seem meaningless. [...] Judaism provides a conversation with God where we are encouraged to think beyond the present and imagine life at its best – which is to say, we dare to ask what seems impossible: that the God of all the cosmos should stop to listen to us."[5]

T'filah may also be understood as a general activity in which an individual or group may engage. Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon asserts that "prayer is the voice of religion, the language of faith and aspiration."[6] According to Samuel Rothburg, prayer is "an expression of religiousness for the supplicant."[7] Rabbi Isaacs believes that "prayer is the natural expression of people's religious feelings,"[8] and that "prayer is an attempt to

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[4] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000), 6.
[5] Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed, *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries. Vol. 2: The Amidah* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003), 14.
[6] Samuel A. Rothberg, "Toward a Psychology of the Prayer Experience of the Reform Jew" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion), 12.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* xiii.

establish a conversation with God."[9] *T'filah* is, then, not only a method of communicating religious thoughts and feelings, but also a method of communicating with God.

Historically, Jews first communicated with God less by means of prayer and more by means of sacrificial worship. Another Hebrew word used to define prayer, even today, is *avodah* (עבודה). Originally, the term was related to sacrifice, and referred to the service in the Jerusalem Temple. However, "the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE effectively ended sacrifices as a form of Jewish worship. The rabbis, led by Yochanan ben Zakkai, ruled that study, prayer, and the performance of good deeds were acceptable substitutes for sacrifices."[10] Today, the term *avodah* has come to define another form of worship. In the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit 2a, it is stated that *avodah* now refers to "'the service of the heart'—prayer."[11]

While it may be argued that one can pray without directing that prayer to a deity, monotheistic religions, including Judaism, utilize prayer as a means of communicating with God. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz asserts that prayer "is a direct and unequivocal act of relating to God. In whatever way it is performed, and in whatever manner it is uttered, prayer is essentially one thing: an explicit addressing by the human 'I' to the Divine 'Thou.'"[12] Essentially, explains Rabbi Steinsaltz, prayer is "direct speech, in which man confronts and addresses his Creator."[13] Rabbi Hammer frames the activity we call prayer differently, claiming that prayer is "an expression of our connection with God [...]"[14] Even so, he agrees with Steinsaltz, explaining that prayer amounts to the time we spend

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[9] Ibid, 1.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Adin Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer* (New York: Schoken Books, 2000), 9.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: a Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 6.

working on our connection God, which we do by "addressing ourselves to God, speaking about God, listening the words of God."[15]

In addition to the role of prayer in one's communication with God, prayer also serves to forge a connection with Jewish history, tradition, and values. Rabbi Hammer explains that:

> The distinctiveness of the Jewish prayer is to be found in the concept of the God to whom we pray [...] Formal Jewish prayer utilizes the words others have formulated before us in order to guide us. These words specifically reflect Jewish belief, Jewish ideals, Jewish history, and Jewish hopes for the future. They are based upon uniquely Jewish concepts of God, the nature of God, and our relationships to [God]. To pray in the words of traditional Jewish prayer is to be steeped in the thought and value system of Judaism.[16]

For Rabbi Hoffman, *t'filah* is:

> a response to my life of faith and an affirmation of my membership first in the Jewish People and more broadly in the human community as a whole. It is a manifestation of my certainty that this Jewish People to whom I belong matters in history and that I matter, too, because I enjoy a covenant with this God of history...[17]

When we speak about Jewish prayer specifically, we have to move towards the third definition of *t'filah* – organized, communal Jewish worship services. For while a Jew may certainly pray privately, on his or her own, with or without any Jewish liturgy acting as voice or guide, *t'filah* typically refers to the required, prescribed worship services mandated by *halachah* (Jewish law), and held three times daily and on the Sabbath, festivals, and other holy days. Each of these prayer services requires the recitation of a specific liturgy, adjusted for the time of day, season, and holiday occurrence. The presence of a *minyan* (ten adult Jews) is required in order to complete many of the required prayer rubrics. *T'filah*, then, may refer to organized, communal

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid, 11.
[17] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 17.

Jewish worship services, during which at least ten adult Jews gather to pray a specific liturgy in order to worship God, establish community (perhaps fulfill a legal obligation), and participate in a centuries-old tradition.

Rabbi Hayim H. Donin explains that Jewish prayer is that which "uses the idiom of the Hebrew Bible [...].[18] It also "reflects our historical experience and gives expression to our future aspirations." [19] Jewish spirituality is "primarily expressed through the liturgy of the *siddur*," and "goes beyond the spontaneous, personal prayer experience [...]"[20] As explained by Brody and Thaler in their teacher's guide for a religious school prayer curriculum, "Jewish prayer provides – and indeed, demands – a structure that specifies when and what one must say."[21] They go on to teach that personal prayer, though important and meaningful, is not sufficient. Rather, the communal recitation of Jewish liturgy, which is an expression of "Jewish culture and history," links "the individual to the entire Jewish people, past, present, and future." *T'filah*, defined as Jewish communal worship, must center on the *siddur* and prescribed Jewish liturgy. *T'filah* is regulated, not to be left up to the mood of the individual,[22] and our prayers serve to "remind us of the particular values to which we are bound,"[23] and "the central articles of Jewish faith."[24]

We might also define communal *t'filah* as based not just on the structure and specific wording of Jewish prayer but also on its tone and spiritual focus. Rabbi Donin

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[18] Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to the Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service* (Basic Books, 1980), 7.
[19] Ibid.
[20] David Brody and Dena Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati* (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), 2.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, 21.
[23] Brody and Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati,* 3.
[24] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew,* 7.

explains that *t'filah* is an expression of "Jewish ethics. This is what accounts for the optimistic and helpful tone of Jewish prayer." He categorizes *t'filah* as "a means of self-purification."[25] He teaches, based on *Olat Re-iyah*[26], that Jewish prayer is "a moment when one stops to self-evaluate, to consolidate spiritual gains, and to make them a lasting, durable part of oneself."[27] Rabbi Hammer asserts that "God's concern for us and the desire to serve Him through prayer invests our lives with meaning and significance."[28] Indeed, Jewish prayer not only allows us to serve God, but also to serve our own souls and feed and sustain them through our relationships with God and community. *T'filah* might be defined as "the human being's reaching out to God."[29] Danny Ben-Gigi agrees, stating that prayer "exalts the spirit, bringing it closer to the Creator," and also, "to other human beings."[30]

T'filah, as prescribed, communal Jewish worship, is also defined by its ability to link us to our history, sacred texts, and tradition. Rabbi Hoffman asserts that prayer "imparts Judaism's canon of great concepts and moves us to live our lives by them."[31] He teaches that every moment of a Jewish worship service – the recitation of liturgy, the reading of the Torah, the selections from the Prophets and *megillot* – helps us to "experience the history of the Jewish people through the eyes of the rabbinical Sages," and "proceed step by step along all of biblical history [...]"[32] *T'filah* is an opportunity to

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[25] Ibid, 359.
[26] Commentary on the prayerbook by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook.
[27] Ibid, 359.
[28] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 10.
[29] Ibid, 20.
[30] Danny Ben-Gigi, *First Steps in Hebrew Prayer* (Scottsdale, AZ: Living Israeli Hebrew, 1998), B1.
[31] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 104.
[32] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 22.

recite divinely-inspired words, connect with a vast tradition of communal worship, and acknowledge God's role in our history and our current lives.[33]

This thesis project focuses on the third definition of *t'filah*: organized, prescribed, communal Jewish worship services. The research contained within aims to inform successful, school-based *t'filah* experiences for pre-*b'nai mitzvah*-aged religious school students, grades three through seven. In these pages, *t'filah* will refer to Jewish worship services, specifically those that might occur as part of a religious school learning experience. In this chapter, I will examine *t'filah* further in an effort to provide an understanding of the purposes of *t'filah*, various modes of Jewish prayer, and other important issues related to the act of praying.

What is the purpose of *t'filah*? Is it to fulfill a *mitzvah*, a commandment? Is it to communicate with God? Is it to improve ourselves and our lives? Is it to connect with Jewish tradition and community? *T'filah* has many purposes, each valid in its own right. However, each pray-er undoubtedly engages in *t'filah* trying to fulfill a specific (or perhaps a few specific) purpose(s).

Avodat HaLev, the service of the heart, is understood to be prayer. This type of service is considered to be a substitute for the sacrificial service of the ancient Temple. When worship of God by way of animal sacrifice ended due to the destruction of the Second Temple, the Rabbis understood this service of the heart to be a worthy replacement for sacrificial worship. Referencing the book of Deuteronomy, Rabbi Ronald Isaacs explains that *You shall love God with all your heart, soul, and mind* (Deut. 11:13) was interpreted by the Rabbis to "refer to the act of prayer. Thus, for the Jews, prayer

[33] Ibid, 20.

becomes a mitzvah, a religious obligation."[34] This *mitzvah* replaces the obligation of sacrificial worship in the Temple. Indeed, "a committed Jew prays because prayer is one of the Jew's many obligations (mitzvot)."[35]

A Jew is required to pray the set liturgy three times a day in the presence of a *minyan*. Rabbi Hammer asserts that "there is a different element to prayer when one prays not as a lone human being but as a member of the people of Israel," in the sense that "worship is part of the duties of this priestly people."[36] *T'filah* is then both "a duty and a privilege."[37] Dr. Michael A. Meyer writes that "for many still today, prayer is a considered a mitzvah similar in its intent to serving God with sacrifices as was done in ancient times [...]"[38] But while Reform Jews in particular may see *t'filah* as a privilege, it very well might not be considered a duty or a commandment to be obeyed. Because many Reform Jews do not feel bound by *halachah* (Jewish law), *t'filah* is not an obligation but rather a religious and spiritual activity in which one might engage. However, explains Dr. Meyer, "even in Reform Judaism we continue to use the word 'service' to describe prayer, thereby implying that by our acts of prayer we do something for God [...]"

Another purpose of prayer, then, is to relate to God. Rabbi Isaacs teaches that "the concept of prayer in the Bible is based on the assumption that God exists, listens to prayers, and, at times, answers them."[39] Indeed, in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 9:1, we are taught that God says "When a person is in trouble, do not cry out to the angel

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[34] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, 1-2.
[35] Jules Harlow, et al., *Pray Tell: a Hadassah Guide to Jewish Prayer* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003), xiii.
[36] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 10-11.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Cited by Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 166.
[39] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, 11.

Michael or the angel Gabriel, but to Me and I will answer immediately."[40] Centuries later, commentator Joseph Albo wrote in his *Book of Principles* (4:18) that "God's assistance is dependent upon many different forms of human effort, including that of prayer."[41] Though they originated in different eras of Jewish history, each of these ideas about God's role in reacting to our prayers brings up theological issues, namely that God hears individual people's or congregation's prayers, and responds to them in kind. Nevertheless, whatever our theologies, "the first step to prayer," according to Rabbi Hoffman, "is overcoming the sense that the words are empty because the kind of God they seem to presuppose does not exist."[42] Rabbi Hoffman suggests that even if we do not believe in a God who responds to requests or answers specific prayers, "lack of certain knowledge has never stopped Jews from what is a supremely high aspiration: to become a prayerful person, and thus to be able to take part in the uniquely human enterprise of praying."[43]

Leaving theological issues aside, then, *t'filah* is a means of communicating with and relating to God. Rabbi Jules Harlow believes that prayer should be an "elevating experience," allowing people to "reach out toward the highest, the infinite, the Creator of the universe."[44] One side of communication with God is, in fact, our ability to speak to God. According to Rabbi Hoffman, prayer is "a way to elevate our thoughts to speech, and even to formulate better thoughts because of the power that speech has over the way we think."[45] Though we are speaking to God, the "purpose of our words" might not be to

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[40] Ibid, 26.
[41] Ibid, 30.
[42] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 18.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Harlow, et al., *Pray Tell,* xiv.
[45] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 37.

communicate with God, but rather to "sensitize ourselves so that we can better speak" to God, according to Rabbi Hammer.[46] The other side of this purpose of *t'filah*, then, is "the opportunity to hear God's message to us."[47] We might think that God's message comes directly to us from the Holy One. Alternatively, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel thought that Jews heard God by listening to the spirit of the people Israel, which is conveyed by the classic words of Jewish liturgy.[48] In that vein, Rabbi Harlow explains that "Jewish prayer is an act of listening, the self is silent."[49] Prayer is the "conscious expression" of our relationship with God, and we develop that connection by communicating with and relating to our God by way of "addressing ourselves to God, speaking about God, and listening to the words of God."[50] The purpose of *t'filah* can be defined as "an attempt to establish a conversation with God."[51]

A third purpose of *t'filah* is self-improvement and reflection. As Dr. Meyer explains, Reform Jews in particular have "long questioned whether the purpose of prayer is really to serve God."[52] While self-improvement and service to God are certainly not mutually exclusive, however, many Jews engage in *t'filah* for the personal experience of worship. Responding to an eighteenth-century statement by Isaac Abraham Euchel which formulated an early modern conception of prayer, Dr. Meyer explains that some Jews attend worship services "in the hope that prayer will in some way change their lives for

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[46] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 5.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Harlow, et al., *Pray Tell,* xv.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 6.
[51] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 1.
[52] Michael A. Meyer, trans., "The Origins of the Reform Concept of Prayer: An Eighteenth Century Essay by Isaac Euchel." *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly,* Summer 2012: 238.

the better."[53] He goes on to explain that "the notion that prayer is not for God but rather for the one who prays has an earlier point of origin... 1796, well before there was a definable Reform Movement."[54] Euchel, a founder of the Haskalah movement, asserted that "God does not desire our service; rather He allows us to engage in ritual acts as means in order to reach the important end of our own improvement and perfection."[55] Though Rabbi Harlow does not agree with Euchel's assertion that God does not desire our service, he teaches that "although prayer is addressed to God, a basic purpose of prayer is to improve human behavior and thought, to enhance the quality of the human spirit."[56] In that spirit, Euchel believed that *t'filah* can be a refuge for a suffering person, and that in prayer, "he will feel better during the greatest suffering [...]"[57]

Prayer can offer comfort, prayer can evoke appreciation,[58] and prayer can "express our desire to improve our lives."[59] In his book *The Star of Redemption*, Franz Rosenzweig agrees, writing that "the prayer is its own fulfillment... to be able to pray – that is the greatest gift presented to the soul in revelation."[60] Rabbi Hoffman believes that prayer "makes a difference because it sends us forth to lead lives that we might easily take for granted."[61] For Hoffman, prayer helps us to see the holiness in the world, to participate in making it a better place, and offers us an enhanced, miraculous view of life.[62] He declares that "prayer is the first step in the process by which we learn to

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[53] Ibid, 239.
[54] Meyer, "Reform Concept of Prayer," 239-239.
[55] Meyer, "Reform Concept of Prayer," 240.
[56] Harlow, et al., *Pray Tell,* xiv.
[57] Meyer, "Reform Concept of Prayer," 241.
[58] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 2.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Cited by Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 4.
[61] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 133.
[62] Ibid.

matter."[63] Indeed, "the importance of prayer is its influence upon our lives, which in turn can affect the society in which we live."[64]

In his study of the history and psychology of religion and prayer, Protestant theologian Frederich Heiler declares that "religious people, students of religion, theologians of all creeds and tendencies agree in thinking that prayer is the central phenomena of religion, the very hearthstone of all piety."[65] Along with *Talmud Torah*[66], it could be said that *t'filah* is at the center of what it means to be a Jew. Jewish life revolves around communal worship; *t'filah* is prescribed for every day, every season, every holiday, and every celebration. "Prayer adds routine and organization to life; it is also orientation away from everyday life, a momentary stepping out of time and of motion."[67] *T'filah* is also at the center of Jewish community and Jewish history. "To come to pray," says Rabbi Hoffman, "is to claim a place among a sacred people celebrating a covenant with God and committed to a destiny of perfecting the world."[68] For him, *T'filah* is "an affirmation of my membership first in the Jewish People and more broadly in the human community as a whole." For Hammer, it "is a manifestation of my certainty that this Jewish People to whom I belong matters in history, and that I matter, too, because I enjoy a covenant with this God of history [...]"[69]

Rabbi Hammer further explains that Jewish prayer in particular is "an integral part of the complete religious life of a Jew."[70] *T'filah* "interweaves with everything else to

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 4.
[65] Cited in Rothberg rabbinical thesis, 12.
[66] Study of *Torah* and other Jewish texts
[67] Harlow, et al., *Pray Tell,* xiv.
[68] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 73.
[69] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 4.
[70] Ibid, 3.

create the harmonious whole that is Judaism."[71] Jewish prayer is also a fundamental part of "that very complex relationship between God and Israel."[72] Jewish worship is not only an experience of God, but an experience of God "through the prism of Judaism."[73] A person might emerge from communal worship having fulfilled all of the purposes of *t'filah* outlined above: fulfillment of a *mitzvah*, communication with God, self-improvement and growth, and connection with Jewish tradition and community. Rabbi Hammer agrees, believing that "one should emerge not only spiritually enriched from prayer but also morally purified, more closely identified with the traditions and beliefs of Judaism, and committed to living according to its high standards of ethics and morality."[74]

Just as there are several purposes of *t'filah* so too are there several modes of Jewish prayer. The prayers themselves can be separated into three basic categories: praise, petition, and thanksgiving. There are also different modes of *t'filah*: prayer can be performed communally or privately, and worship might be defined by traditional prayers, as well as study of Jewish texts or even recitation of biblical verses such as psalms. As Rabbi Hoffman explains, [Jewish prayer] "services are made of prayers, but not all prayers are alike."[75]

In rabbinic Hebrew, the word *t'filah* refers to petition; this is a more limited definition of the term than that used today.[76] The central portion of the *Amidah* is

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, 10-11.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 4.
[75] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 20.
[76] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 26.

petition, as are many other prayers in the Jewish worship service. Petitionary prayers[77], explains Rabbi Isaacs, "express our desire to improve our lives."[78] Another type of prayer is that of praise or blessing.[79] Worshippers might praise God for the work of creation, God's role in the Exodus from Egypt, or for a variety of other reasons. A prayer of blessing is, according to Rabbi Hoffman, the vehicle for a response to "the presence of the sacred both in time and in space."[80] A third type of prayer is that of thanksgiving.[81] *T'filah* offers opportunities to thank God for what we have, for our blessings and our challenges, for our families and important relationships, for the ability to live as God's creations. Prayers of thanksgiving also serve to "remind [worshippers] to concentrate on what they already have, rather than on what they do not have."[82] In the *siddur*, all three of these types of prayers may be found formulated for both personal and communal recitation. There are many facets of *t'filah*, and during our prayer services, we might address ourselves to God in petition, in blessing, or in thanks.[83]

T'filah might also occur in a communal or a private setting. Though much of the prescribed Jewish liturgy must be performed in the company of a *minyan*, the Jewish prayer tradition recognizes the need for personal, private worship. Engaging in *t'filah*, especially in a private manner, is a deeply personal and intimate activity. Rabbi Steinsaltz admits that "this aspect of prayer – of direct speech addressed to God – is essentially very intimate in character [...] This address in the form of conversation, of direct speech of the human 'I' to the Divine 'Thou' [...] is based on the simple assumption that such dialogue

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[77] Prayers of petition are referred to as *bakashot* in Hebrew.
[78] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, 2.
[79] Prayers of blessing or praise are referred to as *shevachot* in Hebrew.
[80] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*, 135.
[81] Prayers of thanksgiving are referred to as *hodayot* in Hebrew.
[82] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, 2.
[83] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 4.

is possible."[84] Indeed, to engage in a prayerful moment with God is "an act of personal piety."[85]

It is of great importance to offer personal, private prayers to God. However, the "Jewish ideal of a prayerful person is someone who prays personally, privately, and passionately – but especially publicly." Ancient Israelite sacrificial worship combined both individual and communal sacrifices, and so too does our worship today incorporate both individual and communal prayer.[86] An individual may "express himself in whatever words he desires," but when praying with the community, that person enters into the framework accepted by the group for its *t'filah.*

Judaism places a huge premium on communal worship. As Rabbi Hammer affirms, "Religion is not what we do with our aloneness, but what we do with our togetherness."[87] The preferred mode of *t'filah* has always been communal; according to most rabbinic opinion, communal prayer is of greater significance than private prayer.[88] Engaging in *t'filah* with the community leads the individual to concern him/herself with "matters that affect the nation as a whole," and "recall the past history of the nation and its hopes for the future."[89] Jewish communal prayer serves to offer prayers on behalf of the entire group. This is evident in the grammatical framework of many prayers, which are written with the collective as the subject. This wording "insists that the prayer being uttered is not only for us here, in this particular community or congregation, but for all

[84] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 10.
[85] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 17.
[86] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 15.
[87] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 15.
[88] Ibid, 10-11.
[89] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 22.

the people of Israel, wherever they might be."[90] Rabbi David Wolpe teaches that Jews do not pray for themselves alone; "Judaism tries to shape us to think of ourselves as part of a group [...] the rabbis remind us that one should always include others in our prayers."[91]

Scholars suggest that communal prayer is more powerful than personal prayer. Rabbi Wolpe teaches that Jews prayer with a *minyan* because "God is best addressed by voices that rise together in prayer. When we request something from God, it is understood that there are others around us who also need, who are also in trouble."[92] Rabbi Hammer agrees, stating that "there is an extra dimension to prayer recited by the community." He teaches that according to the book of Proverbs (14:28) which says, *In the multitude of the nation is the glory of the King*, the collective prayer of many people together adds glory to the worship.

Communal *t'filah* also serves to connect Jews with our faith's history, traditions, and customs. Because Judaism offers a liturgical rubric for Jewish prayer, those who recite these traditional prayers are "bound up with the entire congregation of worshippers around the world, through both [sic] the prayer text, the time, and the orientation of the prayer."[93] Rabbi Hoffman agrees, believing that communal *t'filah* helps us overcome loneliness, since it "draws on traditional language [and] it roots us in the history of a hallowed past."[94] Engaging in communal *t'filah,* then, binds us "to a worldwide community that dares to 'dream in league with God.'"[95]

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[90] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 19.
[91] Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children about God,* 154-155
[92] Ibid, 155.
[93] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 17.
[94] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 37.
[95] Ibid.

Perhaps the most important feature of communal *t'filah* is its ability to create community. Wolpe teaches that "prayer heightens our awareness of others and helps create sacred community."[96] Rabbis agree that communal prayer forms bonds between people and between the community and God.[97] *T'filah* builds unity, demonstrates communal values, creates support systems, and "strengthens the ties of the individual with the Jewish community."[98] The Talmud insists that "all Israelites are responsible for each other."[99] Part of this communal responsibility is the forming of a *minyan*, in order to facilitate the recitation of particular prayers; this is perhaps most significant when a member of a community needs to recite *Kaddish Yatom* for a deceased relative.[100] Rabbi Hoffman understands that the need for a *minyan* actually encourages communal participation. He explains that "if people know the prayer of others depends on them, they may be more likely to see prayer not simply as a personal benefit that they may opt for if they wish, but as an obligation that they accept upon themselves for the sake of others."[101] *T'filah*, in its dimension of organized, communal Jewish worship, allows for the creation and strengthening of community, a deeper connection with the Divine, and a greater appreciation for Jewish tradition and history.

The act of praying, or rather, engaging in *t'filah*, "involves being in certain places at certain times, and practicing the art of saying things when the occasion calls for them." Rabbi Hoffman, in his important work *The Way into Jewish Prayer*, explains the

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[96] Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children about God,* 156.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 16.
[99] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 2.
[100] *Kaddish Yatom* is also known as the Mourner's Kaddish. It is the memorial prayer recited by Jewish mourners throughout the first year (11 months) of bereavement, as well as on the anniversary of a loved one's death.
[101] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 46-47.

necessary components that enable a person to engage in *t'filah.* The act of praying requires both *keva* and *kavanah*, understood as the fixity of prayer and the spontaneity of, and personal involvement in, prayer.[102] *Keva*, then, includes an understanding of Jewish liturgy, found in the *siddur*, and Jewish prayer rituals. *Kavanah*, by contrast, is the feeling, the soul, and the intention an individual devotes to prayer.

Keva is a necessary element of *t'filah.* Prayers, and even more so, communal worship services, are defined as Jewish through their fixed traditional wording and specific formulation. The nature of Jewish prayer is characterized by this fixed nature; "We are commanded to say basically the same words every day."[103] Rabbi Hammer insists that "to make the experience of prayer meaningful, it is important to gain a basic knowledge of the prayers in our Siddur."[104] Likewise, Rabbi Hoffman believes that "a certain amount of structure is desirable. All ritual depends on it."[105] Brody and Thaler teach that "the mitzvah of daily prayer insures that we relate to the spiritual dimension," understanding that if one waits to feel inspired to pray, that moment might never come![106] *Keva* is the set order of services and "the choice of the right rhetorical devices to fit the occasion on hand."[107] Just as the ancient sacrificial worship system of the Temple had a fixed nature, so too does prayer in its dimension as communal worship.

However, *t'filah* cannot be successful without the balance of *keva* and *kavanah.* Though Jewish liturgy is fixed, set, and ordered, an individual or community's *t'filah* is not complete without the proper intention. Our Sages taught that "the experience of

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[102] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 35.
[103] Brody and Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati,* 1.
[104] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 12.
[105] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 35.
[106] Brody and Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati,* 3.
[107] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 36.

prayer can and should be different for each individual every time [...] Jewish tradition dictates that it is precisely through the fixed structure of prayer that we can achieve this personal meaning."[108] *T'filah* should always be a combination of fixed liturgy performed with deep intentionality.

As Euchel wrote, "Woe to him [...] who believes that he fulfills his obligations through merely moving his lips or through loudly shouting out empty words."[109] The word *kavanah* literally means "to aim;" *T'filah* requires *kavanah*, "an aiming toward closeness to God."[110] Rabbi Hoffman teaches that once the *siddur* came into being and the prayers were fixed, *kavanah* became the way in which prayers were performed: "Every worshipper is like a musical performer, going about the task of saying words that are hallowed by tradition, but able to do so with newly discovered meaning each and every time."[111] *Kavanah* is hard to achieve; the Talmud teaches that "the person who prays must direct his heart to heaven (Berachot 31a)"[112] *Kavanah* requires practice, just as does *keva*, the understanding of the fixed worship in the *siddur* and the accompanying rituals.

Rabbi Steinsaltz offers the following definition of *t'filah*:

> Jewish prayer which is represented in the *siddur*, is essentially the prayer of the community and of the people as a whole. In principle, its structure, contents, and wording are geared to the needs, hopes, and sense of gratitude of the whole community, so that even the individual praying does so as part of the whole community.[113]

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[108] Brody and Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati,* 1.
[109] Meyer, "Reform Concept of Prayer," 241.
[110] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 13.
[111] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer,* 36-37.
[112] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 11.
[113] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 12.

This definition of Jewish prayer holds true regardless of the *siddur*, but it is important to note that there exists a plethora of different *siddurim.*[114] *Siddurim* are based on the liturgical framework set forth in the Talmudic literature and elaborated by Amram Gaon[115], who formulated his *siddur* in a written response to a question from the Barcelona Jewish community in the 9th century. Though this framework, as laid out in Seder Rav Amram, informs most Ashkenazi and Sephardi liturgies today, *siddurim* still vary widely based on locale, denomination, community traditions, and vernacular. Still, the liturgical rubrics remain consistent in virtually all *siddurim*, thereby linking Jewish communities across the world through shared *t'filah* experiences. The set and ordered prayers found in the *siddur* serve "as a means of expressing thoughts that man cannot think clearly for himself, or of feelings that are so blurred and confused that they do not even assume the form of thought."[116] The prayers in the *siddur* exist to guide the pray-er through the act of worship, giving voice to her concerns, needs, and feelings. It is important, then, for each Jew to understand the words of the liturgy in the *siddur*, in order to use it best.[117]

Ritual is yet another important facet of *t'filah,* for Judaism is undoubtedly "a religion of practices and rituals."[118] Rabbi Rachel Saphire insists that "rituals are the mechanism through which the divine can be comprehended and the sacred can be practiced in [people's] lives." She cites Thomas Driver, who, paraphrasing Jacob

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[114] *Siddurim* is the plural of *siddur*, prayerbook

[115] Amram ben Sheshna (d. 875) was a 9th century *gaon* (primary sage) of the Academy in Sura (Jewish Virtual Library)

[116] Steinsaltz, *A Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 23.

[117] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 5.

[118] Rachel Rivkin Saphire, "Making Ritual Count: A Study of Ritual Theory and *Sefirat Ha'Omer* within the Context of the American Reform Movement" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2009), 28.

Neusner, writes, "This world is not grounded primarily in theology, or even in Scripture... but in ritual. It is a world held together not only by ideas but of people following God's way."[119] Ritual defines the manner in which Jews pray, enabling the pray-ers to enact and transmit religious culture, tradition, and theology.[120] Specifically, Rabbi Saphire explains, "Jewish ritual... provides the opportunity to transform the ordinary into the sacred, marking certain moments and days by linking them to moments in Jewish history and to important values of the Jewish tradition."[121] *T'filah* in itself is a ritual; other rituals within *t'filah* include the delivery of a *D'var Torah,*[122] the shaking of the *lulav* and *etrog* during *Sukkot*[123], and the giving of *tzedakah*[124] before beginning prayer. Rabbi Saphire writes that "where Jewish text and law provide a script for Jewish practice, ritual provides an experience of Jewish living."[125] The *siddur* is the script for *t'filah*, and rituals provide for a whole experience of communal prayer.

T'filah, then, is defined by a multitude of properties. It has several possible definitions, though that which is pertinent to this discussion might be termed "organized, communal, Jewish worship." *T'filah* might be engaged in for a number of reasons; its purposes include: communication with God, connection with Jewish tradition and history, creation of community, and even self-reflection and improvement. *T'filah* requires both an adherence to its fixed, set, and ordered forms, and purposeful, deep intentionality. *T'filah* can be communal or private, though we have learned that praying with the larger

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[119] Ibid, 26-27.
[120] Ibid, ii.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Literally "a word of teaching." This refers to a sermon or teaching the service leader gives on the subject of week's Torah portion, an upcoming holiday, or important theme.
[123] The festival of *Sukkot* is a biblical holiday also known as the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. The *lulav* (gathering of palm, myrtle, willow) and *etrog* (citron) are shaken together based on Leviticus 23:40.
[124] Charitable contribution.
[125] Saphire rabbinical thesis, 4.

community is preferred and worthwhile. *T'filah* is made up of prayers, both prescribed and spontaneous, which fall into a number of categories; *t'filah* also relies on ritual. *T'filah* is central to the practice of Judaism, and certainly, is at the heart of the Jewish faith.

This project aims to move toward a deliberate, intentional, and meaningful program for teaching *t'filah* to pre-B'nai Mitzvah-aged religious school students. The goal of the project is to instruct and immerse students in *t'filah,* particularly through embracing its musical component. With that end in mind, I offer now a definition of *t'filah* that fits these purposes:

> *T'filah* is the Jewish communal prayer experience. This experience occurs in a communal setting, which enables pray-ers to build unity, love and support for those in the community, and offer prayers that have communal significance or which are enhanced by recitation together in community. *T'filah* allows Jews to connect with God and enter into a relationship built on communication and devotion. *T'filah* also serves to link Jews to their history and traditions, and in addition, to the larger Jewish world. *T'filah* requires a *siddur* containing prayers of different kinds which follow the liturgical framework set out by rabbinic tradition and continually innovated and developed throughout the Jewish experience. *T'filah* requires that the pray-ers not only adhere to the *keva* of the experience, but bring *kavanah* into their prayers each and every time they engage in *t'filah.* Rituals are to be used to most authentically perform the prayers, and *t'filah* must include appropriate liturgical music to both set the time and season of

the *t'filah* and enhance the experience of prayer.[126] *T'filah* is at the heart of Jewish religious life, and as such, must also be at the center of one's Jewish education.

[126] Music is an extremely important element of *t'filah*. A full chapter will be devoted to music later in this paper.

CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND SPIRITUALITY: RELEVANT THEORY AND CHALLENGES

This chapter will identify and discuss educational theory, developmental and learning concerns, and issues regarding the teaching of spirituality and prayer. The theoretical information found here serves to inform the practical aspect of this project: the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a program to teach *t'filah* in religious school settings. Modes and challenges of teaching *t'filah* will also be addressed at the end of the chapter.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner asserts that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development."[1] He admits that this is a hypothesis, but that nonetheless, it is imperative to believe this before one begins the process of curriculum creation. Bruner frames the teaching of children in terms of "translation." He explains that "the task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things."[2] Based on their current stage of development, children have a distinct manner of learning, understanding the world around them, and explaining it to themselves.[3] Children might then learn in a multitude of areas or subjects provided the teaching is appropriate to their stage of development. Similarly, instructors must be aware of the changes in a child's development in order to successfully lead students to progressive states of knowledge.[4]

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[1] James Mirel, "A Developmental Approach to Religious Education" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974), 12.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, 31.

The focus cohort for this pilot program for teaching *t'filah* is students in the 3rd through 6th grades. These children are roughly between the ages of eight and twelve years old, though of course, some students may be older or younger. This cohort was chosen because these children are most likely to be involved in a Hebrew program as well as a Judaic program within their congregation's religious school. This group is also within a few years of becoming *b'nai mitzvah.*[5] They are in the various stages of preparation for the service during which they celebrate becoming *b'nai mitzvah.* The developmental theory that follows focuses on this age cohort of eight-to-twelve year-olds.

Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson worked on psychosocial development and issues of identity. He places this cohort in his "industry versus inferiority stage," which includes six -through twelve-year-olds and is comparable to Freud's "latency stage." In this stage, a child's imagination becomes subdued as he begins school and is required to adapt to the school routine and environment. This "age" is a critical time in a child's development, as he might feel inferior if he is not successful in school. Erikson believes these feelings, of either industry or inferiority, will have continuing effects on a child's developmental growth.[6] When applying this developmental stage to consider a child's conception of and relationship with God, Ana-Maria Rizzuto explains that "if the child feels inferior, he/she will turn away from God, believing God to be 'destructive and a useless protector.'"[7] However, if the child instead has feelings of industry, this will allow the child to develop further God-imagery. Rizzuto writes that "God will be a

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[5] *B'nai Mitzvah* is the plural of *Bar Mitzvah*. *Bar Mitzvah* (*Bat Mitzvah* for girls) is the term for a young Jewish person who has reached the age of religious maturity. This is often marked in the synagogue with the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* celebrant leading the congregation in prayer and learning.

[6] Alison B. Kobey, "Teaching God to Children: Guidelines and Principles for Teachers and Parents of a Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2000), 25-26

[7] Ibid.

protector to the child and not only labeled as the Almighty, but also as the ideal Father (or Mother)."[8] She concludes that adults must give children in the "industry versus inferiority stage" the tools and ability to succeed and achieve these feelings of industry. This will not only have positive effects on the child's development, but in turn will also help him or her develop a positive relationship with God.

Groundbreaking developmental psychologist Jean Piaget names his stage for seven- through-eleven-year-olds the "concrete-operational stage." He believes that children experience three different levels of consciousness during this stage. A child believes that a) everything that exists is conscious, b) everything that moves is conscious, and c) she can accurately define "what is life."[9] David Elkind, a student and analyst of Piaget's work, translates this stage to religious understanding. He explains that a) the child looks at religious names like any other name (ie: a person must have only one name/identity); she does not understand that one can be both American and Jewish at the same time, b) religion is associated with action; Jews are people who attend services in the synagogue, and c) religion is connected with beliefs and actions. Children in the "concrete-operational stage" learn that their parents are not omniscient, but will continue to follow their instructions because their parents are authority figures. They require concrete props, but need to handle and experience objects themselves. Finally, children in this stage need "brief and well-organized instructions as well as familiar ideas to help them process more complex problems."[10]

Elkind, a child psychologist, offers his own theory of child development. He describes a developmental stage called "the child," which applies to those between the

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, 26.
[10] Ibid, 26-27.

ages of six and eleven. As children mature towards the eleventh year, they begin to judge people by intent and not merely by their actions. During this time, this child has strong ideas about "retribution, belief in punishment and reward, and immanent justice."[11] He also has similar ideas about prayer. The younger children in this cohort use prayer as an opportunity to ask for things from God, who is visualized anthropomorphically. If the child's prayers go unanswered, he becomes angry and feels bitter or abandoned by God. At the later end of the stage, children begin to understand prayer as "both asking for things and as a method to talk to God."[12] They also start to view God as the sum of God's attributes, as opposed to an anthropomorphic being. The older children in this group still feel disappointed when their prayers go unanswered, and work to figure out why this is so; if a child decides his prayer was unanswered because he was not good enough or didn't pray hard enough, then he will feel guilty and inferior (this is consistent with Erikson's theory).[13]

Social scientist James Fowler's stages of development align closely with Erikson's; he calls "stage two" "mythical-literal faith," an age group that ranges between six and eleven years. During this stage, children work to distinguish between what is real and what is fantasy. The child is also gaining skills in deductive and inductive logic and "has a heightened capacity to verbalize her/his experiences."[14] She has many different God concepts and images, though most notably, she views God as Creator. Her God is believed to "be with humanity at all times and is both in and outside of people."[15] This cohort has strong anthropomorphic images of God. The children in the "mythical-literal

[11] Ibid, 27-28
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 33-34.
[15] Ibid.

faith" stage also need literal interpretations, leading them to have inflexible views of morality, rules, and symbols – these are all viewed as absolute. Fowler identifies a developmental weakness for this cohort, explaining that they hold a "fervent belief in reciprocity and an over-controlling nature of God."[16] While these are, according to Fowler and many of his colleagues, age-appropriate beliefs, children will have problems as they grow into the next stage of their development. Elkind explains that children in "stage three" will have "cognitive conceit," meaning that their new understanding of material "leads to a dismissal of all previous teachings" and leads the child to believe that "only she has the right answer."[17] The children then struggle to reconcile seemingly conflicting ideas (i.e., Creation narrative in the Bible vs. scientific evolution).[18]

Many other scholars have created stages for this age group and identified developmental, educational, and spiritual concerns and issues for the stage. Gabriel Moran's "stage two" is called "acquiring a religion," and focuses on communal religious beliefs and potential disbelief.[19] The professor of educational philosophy notes that, in this stage, children learn to worship properly, and in this and other areas, how to succeed in general. Adults can help children succeed at this time by "teaching religious experiences and showing the importance of the symbols and rituals."[20] Child psychologist Richard Sears notes that "stage two" emphasizes family-centered learning, which is of the utmost importance when teaching God to children; this is because "lifetime learning occurs most effectively when a subject is taught through a variety of mediums and

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, 34.
[20] Ibid.

environments."[21] Since a relationship with God is ongoing throughout life, it helps children to "see their parents also grappling with theological issues via family education programs."[22] Sears believes "stage two" to be one of the most – if not the most – crucial times in a child's growth. Like Sears, Robert Coles notes that "stage two," which he calls "the Age of Consciousness" or "the elementary schools years," is the prime time to teach children "how and why one should behave in certain ways."[23]

A scholar of human development, William Damon explains that during "stage two," "one's early values still exist and serve as the ongoing basis for the child's moral development."[24] Morality is not based on rote learning or parroting, rather it is based on experiences and actions. With evidence based in a study by Harshorne and May, Damon explains that "even if one can recite the Ten Commandments, there is no bearing on [his/her level of] honesty."[25] Ronald Goldman created his own stages of religious development. His stage for seven-to ten-year-olds is "simultaneously the more realistic religious stage than the previous one and a more skeptical stage for children."[26] The child's concepts and images of God shed naïveté and shift to "technical artificialism."[27] The child will want new, different answers to questions he has already asked about God. The child's own answers to theological and spiritual questions contain some "leftover creativity," but are more logical and technical than those given in the previous stage. He

[21] Ibid, 28-29.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 32.
[24] Ibid, 31.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid, 34-35.
[27] Ibid.

no longer sees the Bible as absolute in truth; "instead, it is viewed as inspirational, but fallible, while being true in relation to the child's experiences."[28]

Modern Jewish scholars, rabbis, and educators have considered the topic of children's spirituality and prayer life. Jewish philosopher Martin Buber asserted the importance of prayer education in his book *Between Man and Man*, stating that, "The educator who helps to bring man back to his own unity will help to put him again face to face with God."[29] Rabbi David Wolpe insists that children are naturally instinctive when it comes to prayer. "Very early on, they learn the various sorts of prayers that we all share: praising God, thanking God, asking God for things."[30] He asserts that children's earliest prayers simply happen spontaneously; they look up at the sky and ask for help, pleading and praying.[31] Wolpe believes that children do not wait to pray until the concept is taught to them. Rather, they feel an urge to pray: "Prayer seems to arise naturally from life."[32] Instead of needing to be taught to pray from the beginning, Wolpe believes that education is needed to help one's prayer to grow and develop as he moves throughout life. "Whether it [prayer] grows with us depends on how well we understand it and appreciate its power."[33] Educators Brody and Thaler assert that everyone has a spiritual drive: "It is our assumption that at least seeds of this drive exist in all individuals from early childhood."[34] They understand that children won't frame or explain spirituality in the same way as adults, but nevertheless, "Children's constant search for understanding

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Cited in Mirel, "A Developmental Approach to Religious Education," 35.
[30] David J. Wolpe. *Teaching Your Children about God: A Modern Jewish Approach* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1993), 144.
[31] Ibid, 145.
[32] Ibd.
[33] Ibid.
[34] David Brody and Dena Thaler, *A Teacher's Guide to Ani Tefilati* (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), 2.

the world, how it works, and how it all 'fits together' seems to attest to the spiritual drive in them."[35]

Based on scholarly research and observation, it seems obvious that children are naturally spiritual; they need to understand their place in the world around them. It also seems obvious that children have some innate belief in God; that is to say, they personify the forces outside themselves to which they are subject. It is further apparent that prayer is an important activity for children. Of course, it is not only important for a child's spiritual, intellectual, and education growth, but also important to those adults in their lives who ascribe importance and meaning to an active prayer life. This information then begs the question: if children are naturally spiritual and interested in prayer, why must prayer be taught? This is the question I will attempt to answer now.

I believe that there are two major reasons to actively teach prayer. First, like any other skill or subject, a person needs education, practice, and experience to grow that skill and attain additional knowledge. If a child is not continuously taught how to pray and how to allow their prayer life to develop and grow, they will either stagnate in the prayer of their early childhood or lose the desire to pray altogether. The second reason to actively teach prayer is particular to Judaism, or at the very least, to individual religious groups. Jewish children must be taught prayer so that they may learn to pray in a Jewish manner. Prayer is a significant part of Jewish life, communal activity, and spiritual growth. Therefore, Jewish parents, clergy, and educators have a vested interest in teaching Jewish children how to pray Jewishly and to understand God according to Jewish theology.

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[35] Ibid.

Children must be taught prayer so that their spirituality, relationship with God, and ability to pray may develop and grow. Rabbi Wolpe explains that as people grow up, they tend to pray less frequently; when they do pray, the prayers are often offered in times of crisis or desperation, and they may not be done particularly comfortably. Children run the risk of becoming those adults, the ones who are not comfortable praying, who do not do so with any regularity, and who feel strange praying when they feel a true need to do so.[36] Rabbi Wolpe asserts that teaching a child to pray is a "lifelong gift."[37] "When we teach our children to pray, we are teaching them to go deeper into themselves."[38] Prayer helps individuals connect with their own selves, their communities, and their God. Rabbi Wolpe teaches that prayer is "a tool for strengthening and understanding who we are by establishing a relationship with others and with God."[39] Prayer can help a person teach themselves throughout their lives. Praying regularly "embeds beautiful and important ideas in us, creating a reservoir for later years." Prayer teaches a person what he/she needs, and helps each individual understand themselves. Regular prayer is important in a person's spiritual development. When prayer is repeated with regularity, the activity helps to create the mood that prayer requires.[40] For children in particular, this repetition serves to "teach children to establish a relationship."

Judaism values a person's spiritual growth and encourages a life of prayer that develops over time. Judaism also requires a specific manner of prayer, which has sustained the Jewish people throughout its history and connected the Jewish community with God. Jewish prayer, *t'filah*, is formal, organized, ordered, and mostly communal; it

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[36] Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children about God,* 145.
[37] Ibid, 158-159.
[38] Ibid, 157-158.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, 158-159.

is also diverse and exciting, offering many different kinds of prayer and settings for worship. *T'filah*, explains Rabbi Wolpe, "teaches us to pause, to appreciate, to teach our children that not only doing, but being, is sacred."[41] Formal Jewish prayer "is essential because it reinforces Jewish values and priorities." We understand that Jews must not only pray, but pray in a Jewish manner. Rabbi Amy Walk Katz believes that engaging in *t'filah* is a core Jewish practice, and that if Jews are alienated from this practice, then "we face the very real possibility of losing important connections to our Jewish past, present, and future."[42]

Therefore, we must teach children to pray according to the words of our *siddurim*; the prayers in our *siddurim* link pray-ers to the past and to tradition. In his guide for religious school curricula, Dr. Irving H. Skolnick asserts that the *siddur* must be used to develop the child's prayer ability. In studying children's needs in terms of religious education, Skolnick found that *t'filah* "serves as a strong integrating force in terms of both Jewish identification and God-awareness."[43] Rabbi Katz agrees with Dr. Skolnick's beliefs that it is "necessary to develop fluency in prayer reciting," and "one should not only learn about prayer, but actually engage in prayer frequently."[44] Rabbi Katz writes that "to derive true meaning from prayer, one must be able to appreciate the experience; to appreciate the experience, one must be able to understand the concepts; to understand the concepts, one must be familiar with a Hebrew language foreign to most Jews."[45] Therein lies perhaps the most important role for the religious school or Jewish educator: to teach the Hebrew

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[41] Ibid, 145.
[42] Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner, and Linda Dale Bloomberg, *What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice* (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008), 300.
[43] Irving H. Skolnick, *A Guide to Curriculum Construction for the Religious School* (Chicago: College of Jewish Studies Press, 1969), 67.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Goodman, et. al., *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, 300.

language and its place in *t'filah* so that children have the skills to be active prayer participants in a Jewish setting.

How might *t'filah* best be taught in religious school settings? Rabbi Reuven Hammer asserts that "the art of praying can only be experienced."[46] Many Jewish educators have offered ideas and practices based on their experiences, but based on the understanding that *t'filah* must be experienced and not simply taught in a classroom, it is important to explore the theoretical field of experiential education.

John Dewey believed that "all genuine education comes about through experience."[47] Rabbi Katz explains Dewey's views on school experience, stating that they are critical for students' learning and must be worthwhile for students in the present moment. "In order that students' future encounters with prayer will be meaningful, their experiences must not just prepare them for the future but must be meaningful for the present." Rabbi Katz asserts that the educator must take present needs and future goals into consideration when teaching. Indeed, educator Joseph G. Rosenstein, in an article by the same name, asserts that schools should be "teaching prayer to the adults that our children will become."[48]

Jerome Bruner subscribes to a hypothetical model that leads to students engaging in acts of discovery.[49] There are four defined benefits to this model: "(1) increasing intellectual power, (2) shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards, (3) learning the heuristics of discovering, and (4) making material more readily accessible in memory."[50]

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[46] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 25.
[47] David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), 12.
[48] Joseph G. Rosenstein, "Teaching Prayer to the Adults that our Children will Become," *Jewish Education News*, 31.
[49] Andrea J. Cosnowsky, "A Performative Model for Teaching Prayer to Adult Reform Jews in a Congregational Setting" (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2004), 53.
[50] Ibid.

Scholars of Bruner's model assert that "this mode is more congruent with and more likely to nurture the will to learn."[51] Psychologist Kurt Lewin, a contemporary of Piaget, developed a model called "field theory," which states that "fields of forces, patterns, stimuli, or events determine learning."[52] Lewin wrote that "immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process."[53] Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, scholars of education and development, explain that Dewey, Bruner, and Lewin all emphasize development toward a life purpose.[54] Education must serve to help individuals develop life-long skills, abilities, and knowledge, and an educational process which encourages students to experience will ultimately help them learn, retain, and develop those skills and knowledge.

Over time, Jewish clergy, educators, and scholars have tried, tested, and further developed methods for teaching *t'filah* to students in a religious school setting. All agree that experiential learning is a significant mode for teaching *t'filah*, though there are countless programs and ideas, and many diverse methods involved in teaching the subject as well as the practice thereof.

The first question is always, "In light of the limitations of time and money and considering the nature of our teachers, students, parents and the community," what

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Malcolm Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development,* 5th edition (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1998), 198.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Cosnowsky, "A Performative Model," 54-55.

should our children learn? [55] Rabbi Katz further stretches the question, asking "Ought we teach 'the basics' or ought we teach the ideas and concepts?"[56] When considering the teaching of *t'filah,* there are many factors to consider. Below are just a few:

- "How can we prepare a child to become a member of a *tzibbur*, a praying community?"[57]
- "How can we strike a balance between teaching understanding of the prayer and developing the skills to recite them properly?"[58]
    - "Do we teach the ideas first and hope that they will inspire students to acquire the Hebrew skills? Or do we teach Hebrew so that eventually students are capable of participating in public worship?"[59]
    - "Do we engage the pray-er intellectually? Or do we seek to create meaningful spiritual experiences that will inspire congregants to study the ideas of the liturgy?"[60]
- "How is the home contributing to the teaching of prayer?"[61]
    - "Are the students living in a home where they see their parents pray regularly?"[62]
    - "Do they attend synagogue with their parents?"[63]
    - "Do their parents have rich spiritual lives?"[64]

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[55] Goodman, et. al., *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, 305.
[56] Ibid, 306.
[57] Ibid, 305.
[58] Ibid, 305.
[59] Ibid, 300.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid, 307.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

- What can we learn from adults' past learning experiences?
    - "How were adults who *daven*[65] regularly taught to pray?"[66]
    - "Was the emphasis of their education on Hebrew skills, on conceptual ideas of the liturgy or on spiritual experiences?"[67]
    - "Were these individuals who are now comfortable in our synagogues taught to pray in classrooms or through prayer experiences?"[68]
- What are the issues and theological questions confronting Liberal[69] Jews specifically?
    - "To whom does one pray?"[70]
    - "Does God hear prayers? If so, will God answer them?"[71]
    - "If prayer is not heard and answered by God, then why pray?"[72]
    - "Why would an omniscient God need us to articulate our prayers? Shouldn't God just know what we are thinking?"[73]

Just as the factors influencing the teaching of *t'filah* are many and complex, so too are the related challenges:

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[65] "*Daven* is a Yiddish word that means 'to pray,' 'to recite Jewish liturgical prayers,' and/or 'to sway or rock lightly.'" (Nicole Michelle Greninger, "Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Tefillah Education in the 21st Century," *Journal of Jewish Education*, 76: 4 (2010): definition on p. 383.)
[66] Goodman, et. al., *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, 307.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Dorff uses this term to encompass the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative Jewish Movements.
[70] Goodman, et. al., *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, 301.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

- Prayer curricula must "help learners understand Jewish ideas and concepts about God while also helping them develop a personal relationship with God."[74]
- Existing, prepared curricular materials reveal an unresolved tension in the teaching of *t'filah*, between *keva* and *kavanah*, Hebrew and understanding, skills versus spirituality.[75]
- "Jewish educators are now responsible for teaching concepts and rituals that historically were learned at home and that derived meaning as a course of regular practice."[76]
- There are few hours for religious school instruction each week but teaching prayer takes a significant amount of time.[77]
- Most students do not get ample "practice" time for pray outside of religious school hours.
- "Modernity is accompanied by doubt that makes prayer problematic."[78]
- Theological questions are not easily answered, many teachers lack the necessary skills to respond, and these questions "often prevent liberal Jews from praying."[79]

How, then, do we go about teaching *t'filah,* given these questions, concerns, and challenges? What are the appropriate goals? What are the possible modes? Rabbi Nicole Greninger conducted a study of three Liberal American congregations' *t'filah* education

[74] Ibid, 303.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, 300.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid, 300-301.
[79] Ibid, 301.

models.[80] She concludes from her study that most *t'filah* education programs focus mainly on one of three areas: "believing," "behaving," or "belonging." While all of the programs have elements of all three, the programs each aim for one overarching goal that informs their educational model. With all the issues and challenges regarding teaching *t'filah* in mind, Rabbi Greninger concludes that successful programs aim to succeed in only one major goal area: "believing," "behaving," or "belonging."

Rabbi Greninger identifies the first program goal as "believing." Programs that adhere to the "believing" goal tend to focus on *kavanah* over *keva.* When looking at the model of the study congregation, which is affiliated with the Reform Movement, Rabbi Greninger found that it offers students a "shorter, more interactive tefillah experience" that better suits the goals of "engendering emotional, cognitive, and spiritual attachments to prayer."[81] She explains that the congregation's educators have made a conscious choice to focus on the "affective, cognitive, and spiritual elements of prayer."[82] This congregation's *t'filah* program does not teach students to *daven* in a traditional sense nor does it encourage rote memorization of Jewish liturgy. They are "not trained to become strong Hebrew readers or steeped in liturgical knowledge."[83] Rather, explains Rabbi Greninger, these students' education is based in *kavanah*, and revolves around beliefs, feelings, theology, and a sense of spirituality.

Another *t'filah* program goal is "behaving." These programs emphasize *keva* over *kavanah,* pushing students to develop proficiency in their *davening*. "The educational system is designed to enhance students' abilities to *daven* and serve as *shlichei tzibbur*

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[80] Nicole Greninger, "Believing, Behaving, Belonging."
[81] Ibid, 386.
[82] Ibid, 385.
[83] Ibid, 389.

(prayer leaders) in traditional Jewish settings," says Rabbi Greninger.[84] The focus congregation, affiliated with the Conservative Movement, believes that for its program to be successful, students must also learn *t'filah* in other Jewish settings, such as camp, high school in Israel, and youth group. The congregation's educator admits that the program teaches *t'filah* through "rote learning, not [through] the emotional piece of the tefillot."[85] The educator understands that her students "may not feel as connected to prayer as she would prefer," and "students who have a hard time with Hebrew or singing may never be able to connect with prayer in a deep way."[86] Rabbi Greninger writes that it is obviously very difficult to educate students in both *keva* and *kavanah* in the limited time afforded to a Jewish supplementary school, and that congregations focusing on *keva* have made a clear choice to achieve a specific goal.

The third *t'filah* program goal is named "belonging," for these programs' primary goal is to "create a sense of belonging."[87] These types of programs do not ignore the basic skills associated with the *keva* of prayer, nor do they ignore students' spiritual needs *(kavanah),* but they work to "teach children how to function in community for prayer – how to sit still during tefillah, how to behave in the sanctuary space, how to treat others in the community, and how to feel connected to the larger congregation."[88] The congregation Rabbi Greninger observed for her study is affiliated with the Reconstructionist Movement, and fosters community in a number of ways, including an

[84] Ibid, 394.
[85] Ibid, 396.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid, 402
[88] Ibid.

interactive reading of the *Kaddish* list[89], assigned seats for classes of various age groups in the sanctuary, and routine discussion of the State of Israel. This focus congregation, explains Rabbi Greninger, is "highly successful for building community and creating a sense of belonging."[90]

Rabbi Greninger's research attempts to answer the question, "How might we better prepare our children for entry into Jewish communal worship throughout their lives?"[91] Her case studies revealed, in addition to the goals on which each program is focused, a number of shared concerns, challenges, and strengths. It seems that though *t'filah* programs might have different goals in terms of achieving "believing," "behaving," or "belonging," they all share many similarities.

Each of the study congregations' programs shared some common strengths. First, they all exhibited serious intentionality and set realistic goals. Rabbi Greninger explains that "each congregation I studied has deliberately chosen one area of tefillah education to pursue, recognizing both the prize and price that come along with that decision."[92] In addition, all of the programs were directed by a collaborative leadership team. Rabbi Greninger admits that *t'filah* education is generally split in congregational life; the educator is in charge of students' learning *t'filah* during school hours, while the rabbi(s) and/or cantor(s) oversee congregational worship. Rabbi Greninger understands that there is often "a significant disconnect between what happens in the educational "silo" and what happens in the worship "silo," a situation that inevitably leads to fractured and

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[89] List of those whose *yartzeits* (anniversaries of death) occur in a given week, and for whom members of the congregation recite *Kaddish Yatom*, the mourner's prayer.
[90] Greninger, "Believing, Behaving, Belonging," 404.
[91] Ibid, 379
[92] Ibid, 405.

ineffective tefillah education."[93] Each of the study congregations, however, exhibit strong collaborative team work and plan and lead as a cohesive unit. Another strength of these programs is excellence in teaching. In each congregation, teachers are hired based on their comfort with and proficiency in the focus goal area of the *t'filah* program. These congregations all offered plenty of professional development opportunities to their teachers that focused on *t'filah*, and in addition, created time for communal worship within the professional development setting. These programs also each employ a high number of congregants as teachers; while this may seem counterintuitive to some, explains Rabbi Greninger, this ensures that the students' teachers are comfortable with the *t'filah* goals of the congregation and help provide a link between school-based worship and congregational worship. [94] Finally, Rabbi Greninger writes that in every study congregation, "there was significant consistency in the use of sources and special gimmicks for teaching tefillah." For one congregation, this means using the same prayer book for all family-based services, whether they occur during religious school hours, on Shabbat, or in other settings. For another of the study congregations, the clergy make sure to include all of the normative congregational customs in the students' prayer; this clergy team's goal is to get students acculturated to the traditions of the congregation. Finally, the third study congregation emphasizes consistency in the teaching and performance methods for specific prayers during religious school *t'filah.*[95]

Just as these three successful programs share many strengths, so too do they share challenges. The first is the obvious lack of time available to Jewish supplementary schools in general, which then affects the even smaller amount of time open for *t'filah*

[93] Ibid, 407.
[94] Ibid, 408.
[95] Ibid, 409.

education. The second challenge presented by Rabbi Greninger is adolescent *t'filah* education. She believes that *madrichim*[96] programs allow teenagers to continue to learn by serving in classrooms with younger children. However, "there are very few opportunities for adolescents to grow in any of the three areas of tefillah education I have highlighted..."[97] Rabbi Greninger admits that "the educators I met mentioned that teenagers are unlikely to attend programs about tefillah that are advertised as such."[98] A third challenge is the obvious tension between *t'filah* education and the teaching of Hebrew skills. Rabbi Greninger explains that "there is no doubt that Hebrew learning is fundamental to strong tefillah education (much of Jewish prayer is in Hebrew, after all), but there is still a lingering question of how much emphasis we ought to place on Hebrew."[99] Schools must make decisions about the amount of time spent in each area, in accordance with their ultimate educational goals. There is also a tension between teaching *t'filah* and training for *b'nai mitzvah.* Rabbi Greninger asserts that "synagogues feel obligated to prepare their students for b'nei mitzvah service, but I believe they also have the obligation to prepare students for a lifetime of Jewish communal worship. Unfortunately, the two goals become obscured in many congregations..."[100] Educational programs must find ways to achieve both goals, while giving students lifelong skills for communal prayer.

Rabbi Greninger identifies the final shared challenge by way of a question: "teach tefillah during tefillah?" In her research, she found that rabbis and educators were

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[96] *Madrichim,* lit. "guides." In religious schools, teens often serve as classroom aides, teachers' helpers, and extra "guides" for younger students.
[97] Greninger, "Believing, Behaving, Belonging,"410.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, 410-411.

generally in favor of teaching *t'filah* during *t'filah*, feeling it appropriate and helpful to "give people landmarks or signs about where they are on the 'roadmap' of a prayer service."[101] On the other hand, Rabbi Greninger found that cantors "tend to believe that tefillah should be left alone, that we should leave the teaching of tefillah to another time and place."[102] Cantors train as artists, she explains, so they do not want to interrupt what they see as "beautiful, meaningful worship experiences."[103] In contrast, rabbis and educators see themselves as teachers, and therefore don't mind giving instructions and offering guidance during *t'filah*.

The focus of Rabbi Greninger's study is to understand successful programs for teaching *t'filah* in order to "better prepare our children for entry into Jewish communal worship throughout their lives."[104] The goal of my thesis project is to find avenues to teach *t'filah* during *t'filah* with intentionality, consistency, and congregational collaboration, in an effort to meet this same objective. After consideration of existing scholarship in the fields of developmental psychology, children's spirituality, and educational theory, it is obvious that any program created for the teaching of *t'filah* to children must be developmentally appropriate, focused on spirituality as it pertains to children, and rooted in successful educational theory. My research in these areas will inform the creation of a program for teaching *t'filah* in religious school settings, particularly a strategy for teaching *t'filah* during *t'filah*.

In looking towards a successful program for teaching *t'filah* to 3rd through 6th graders in the context of a Reform Jewish religious school *t'filah* setting, I have come to

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[101] Ibid, 411.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 412.
[104] Ibid, 379.

the following conclusions in the areas of child development and spirituality, educational theory, challenges and concerns of teaching *t'filah*, and goal-setting:

The teaching of *t'filah* will be most successful when it involves concrete ideas and activities. Children at this stage require concrete props, organized instructions, structure, and familiarity in order to process complex ideas and solve difficult problems. An organized, deliberate *t'filah* program will help students achieve a greater level of success in their own prayer. This cohort also must be given opportunities to succeed in school settings lest they lose their sense of security and ability to accomplish goals and tasks. Therefore, *t'filah* instruction must be done in a manner that allows students to grow and accomplish tasks appropriate to each student's age and ability. By starting with basics and continually building off of students' basis of knowledge, these children will feel successful and therefore positive about prayer and God. Children in this stage of development have difficulty with conflicting viewpoints; therefore, it is somewhat inappropriate to teach, for example, that in the Conservative synagogue down the street, congregants sit down for the *Shema* while in our Reform temple, we are required to stand. These lessons *can* be successful for students at the older edge of this spectrum, who are continuously gaining skills in logic. However, as these children move toward the next stage in their development, they tend to dismiss old knowledge in favor of new, which can cause them to struggle to reconcile what they deem to be conflicting ideas.

The topic of God must be approached carefully with great consideration and deliberateness. Children at this age may feel abandoned by God when their prayers go unanswered; children at the older edge of this age group will start to learn that prayer is an avenue by which they can talk to God, not just ask for things, but may still feel inferior

or even guilty when their prayers are not answered. Teachers and clergy, along with parents, must be careful to teach that God does not abandon, ignore, or dislike any child. Children at this stage of development are working to figure out what is literal and what is "fantastic" or "mythical." They struggle with God imagery and concepts. Based on the synagogue and/or school's theology, instructors should take care to not introduce images or conceptualizations of God that will be hard to "un-teach" later, and should work to guide students in creating their own appropriate concepts of God. At this age, children begin to view religion and God more realistically, but at the same time, become more skeptical. *T'filah* programs must encourage students to redefine their views of God and prayer, while at the same time answering questions and offering support so that students are not lost to their skepticism. Morality is difficult to teach at this age, as children are fairly inflexible in their views of right and wrong, rules, and truth. This cohort does not get its morality from religious teachings, but rather through personal experiences and earlier actions. Therefore, children will not learn to "be good" through their understanding of the Ten Commandments; they will need to act out certain behaviors and learn through activity what is right and wrong. This cohort still views parents as the holders of truth, and therefore, family-based learning can be very effective. Adults can help children succeed during this time of development by teaching and reinforcing, as long-term retention occurs when material is taught by a variety of mediums. At this age, children also mirror their parents' actions and beliefs, so parents who demonstrate good listening and participation skills, as well as prayerful behaviors are easily able to influence their children in these areas.

Research in the areas of both formal and informal education has supported the use of experiential learning. Students' personal experiences in prayer will help their concepts of God, spirituality, and the power of prayer to take shape beyond the theoretical. This is especially important for children at this stage because they need concrete reference points to test their knowledge and skills. Experiential learning helps immensely with knowledge and skill retention, and in addition, ensures that students' learning experiences don't just give them information, but rather provide meaningful experiences in the present that will have later impact. Successful *t'filah* education will allow students to regularly experience prayer, and to learn about God, Judaism, the *siddur*, community, and spirituality within the context of a *t'filah* experience.

Jewish educators, clergy, and scholars agree that formal, communal Jewish prayer is a significant part of religious life, and therefore, must be taught to children. *T'filah* reinforces Jewish values and ethics, creates connections to history, community, and tradition, provides a framework for communal gathering and sharing, and even within its set structure, is diverse, exciting, and inspirational. It is generally agreed upon that religious schools should teach *t'filah,* but there are many viewpoints regarding the manner in which it should be taught and the goals on which *t'filah* education should focus.

Jewish religious education is challenging, and requires educators to overcome a number of obstacles. A successful *t'filah* program will have to address the disconnect between students' worship practice during school hours and their practice during synagogue services and with family. *T'filah* education will also have to take into account the various Hebrew abilities of students participating, and the immense shortage of time

allotted in many schools for teaching the language. Any religious school *t'filah* program will have to take into account the theological issues that are unique to the synagogue and movement affiliation. *T'filah* education may focus on *kavanah* ("believing") or *keva* ("behaving"), and of course, many schools will want to focus on both. There is also the goal of "belonging," teaching children to become active participants in a prayer community. There are a multitude of challenges and concerns to be taken under consideration when determining the nature of a religious school *t'filah* program.

What we do know is that children do not need to be taught to be spiritual; they form their own ideas about God and truly want to have that relationship. It is the job of the religious school, then, to nurture and develop each student's spirituality, relationship with God, and skills to communicate with God. We also know that experiential education is a great force in teaching a great number of subjects, not the least of which is prayer. *T'filah* is best taught when there is, at the very least, a strong experiential element. Therefore, the focus of this thesis project and its included pilot program will be on teaching *t'filah* through an actual *t'filah* experience in the religious school setting. By combining proven educational theory and practice, activities and lessons appropriate to the cohort's spiritual and development stage, deliberate and intentional processes and goals for learning, and an acute understanding and awareness of the related challenges, the creation of a successful program for teaching *t'filah* in a religious school setting may surely be achieved.

CHAPTER THREE: JEWISH SACRED MUSIC: ITS ROLES IN *T'FILAH* AND TEACHING

In the previous two chapters, we addressed *t'filah,* as organized, Jewish communal worship, as well as *t'filah* education, including teaching goals, educational and developmental stages, and spiritual concerns. *T'filah* is a central component of Jewish religious life, and as such, must be taught to children and continually experienced throughout life. Music plays a significant part in *t'filah*, and because of this important role, must also be addressed as part of *t'filah* education.

This chapter will focus on music and is divided into two major components. The first will focus on Jewish sacred music: its definition, history, and role in worship. The second section of the chapter will focus on music as a teaching tool and learning aid, focusing on the part music plays in helping individuals remember, concentrate, connect, and learn. The chapter will also address the important question: Why teach Jewish sacred music?

The word "music" comes from the Greek word "mousikos" which means "of the Muses."[1] "The Greeks regarded music as having a divine origin, being invented by the gods. They believed it could heal, purify, and work miracles and that it penetrated the soul."[2] In his book, *Training with a Beat: The Teaching Power of Music*, author Lenn Millbower asserts that music may have begun with groups of people in a community searching for a method for communicating with God. Citing Bruno Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, Millbower writes that "vocal music may have begun as a special way

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[1] Lenn Millbower, *Training with a Beat: The Teaching Power of Music* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2000), 15.

[2] D.J. Grout and C. Palisca, *A History of Western Music,* 5th ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 15-16.

of communicating with the supernatural; a way which shared many of the features of ordinary speech, but which was also distinctive."[3] Indeed, "history does suggest that music has always had a spiritual connection."[4]

Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman believes that "sacred music is not music that is sacred, but music that performs sacred acts. Music is sacred not on account of what it is, but on account of what it does."[5] Rabbi Hoffman asserts that Jewish and Christian sacred music involve a diverse array of characteristics, and include "chants and modern art songs, solos and hymns, biblical lyrics and melodies with no words at all, instruments and bans on instruments."[6] Regardless of its diversity, however, sacred music can be defined as music "that performs in a sacred way, and worship is one such performance."[7] We can then assert that Jewish sacred music is that which is utilized in the performance of worship.

The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's Project Curriculum Renewal developed a curriculum for Jewish sacred music called "Sing Unto God." In the introduction to the curriculum, the authors write that "the music that helps shape our worship experience has, like Judaism itself, been shaped by history and culture; both by social and political influences as well as by the cultural influences of our people's many homes."[8] Rabbi Reuven Hammer suggests that "music and ritual have been united since the most ancient times."[9] Indeed, many of the psalms themselves seem to be songs as

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[3] B. Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 15.

[4] Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music,* quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 15.

[5] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only,* 2nd ed (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub., 1999), 198.

[6] Ibid, 196

[7] Ibid, 185

[8] Project Curriculum Renewal, *Sing Unto God* (Cleveland, OH: Jewish Education Center of Cleveland, 2001), 3.

[9] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service* (New

well as poems, "as the headings of many of them indicate."[10] Rabbi Ronald Isaacs points to the biblical verse, *Sing unto God with thanksgiving, sing praises upon the harp to our God* (Psalm 147:7) as an illustration of a tradition of "both vocal and instrumental song among the early Israelites."[11] Additional biblical citations lead to an understanding of music's role in the worship of God, including Psalm 150 and *Shirat HaYam* in the Book of Exodus.[12]

In Temple worship, it seems that the Levites who managed the Temple were also its musicians; "they sang psalms, prescribed for each day, played the instruments, such as the harps [...], the Chatzotzera, the Chalil, the Ugav and the Shofar and the cymbals." [13,14] It is suggested that "a combination of string instruments and some wind-instruments were used, together with a responsive choir, by the Levites in the Temple worship."[15] It has been posited that both in the First Temple, and to a larger extent in the Second Temple, there were traditions of singing certain prayers, including the psalms of *Hallel,*[16] though it is not clear that these were recited communally or responsively. It is considered likely that the practice of singing prayers "would have been taken over when psalms and other liturgy came to be recited in synagogues."[17]

York: Schocken Books, 1994), 17.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ronald H. Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), 39.

[12] *Shirat HaYam*, or "song of the sea" consists of Exodus 15:1-18.

[13] Richard J. Neumann, "Introduction," in *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers* (New York: Board of Jewish Education, Inc., 1975), accessed August 14, 2012, http://urj.org/worship/worshipwithjoy/letuslearn/s8jewishmusic/

[14] Biblical instruments: "chatzotzera" – a long metal horn, "chalil" – a big pipe, "ugav" – a small pipe, "shofar" – a ram's horn (Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers*).

[15] Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers.*

[16] *Hallel* – Psalms of Praise recited on certain festivals and holidays as well as on the first day of the new month.

[17] Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 1994, 17-18.

In its "Jewish Music Guide for Teachers," the New York Board of Jewish Education asserts that "the two pillars of Jewish melodic continuity are: the cantillation[18] of the Torah and the chanting of certain prayers for a given liturgical function."[19] Various systems of cantillation were utilized throughout different communities, and it is known that the Tiberian system was systematized and transcribed by Aaron ben Asher in the 9th century.[20] Today, we still retain *nusach ha-t'filah*, the pattern of chanting specific prayers, as well as Torah cantillation, despite "unavoidable evolutions and regional adjustments to the tonality of the musical environment in the many countries of the Jewish Diaspora."[21]

Beginning in the 11th century, a group of melodies slowly evolved among the Jews of the Rhineland in Western Germany "which were to become the traditional *nusach ha-t'filah,* the prayer tunes for every occasion of worship" of Ashkenazi Jews; other communities used different melodies.[22] These melodies were further-evolved forms of the traditional modes which originated in the Middle East. The modes consisted of:

S'licha - mode (penitence)
Viddui - mode (confession and vows)
Adonai Malach - mode (after a prayer based on psalm 93)
Magen Avot - mode (Friday night, later used in many folksongs)
Ahava Raba - mode (Sabbath morning, a late mode, but mideastern)
The cantillation modes of many books of the Torah[23]

Another form of Jewish sacred music emerged in the 17th century, when Salamone Rossi composed the first Jewish choral music in a western style. He was a

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[18] "The 'cantillation' (in Hebrew: "Ta'amey Hanegina" or "Ta'amey Hamikra" or in Greek: "Trope") is the musical reading of the books of the Torah: the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, Book of Psalms, Book of Ruth, etc." (Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers*).
[19] Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers.*
[20] Ibid.
[21] Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers.*
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

court musician in Mantua, Italy, and worked with Monteverdi. Though the contemporary Jewish community was not ready for this change in sacred music, Rabbi Leone de Modena wrote of Rossi's music:

> I showed by evidence from the Talmud itself that there can be no objection to the introduction of choral chant in our Synagogues. This should surely close the mouths of the detractors. Despite all that these individuals can say, I invite all our faithful to honor, to cultivate and to propagate song and music in our synagogues; and, to continue to do so until that time when the anger of the Lord shall be turned away from us, and He will rebuild on Zion His Temple . . . May we all rejoice in the supreme happiness of our deliverance. Amen.[24]

In the 18th century, Jewish sacred music branched off into another direction with the Chassidic Movement. Velvel Pasternak traces the ideological origins of Chassidic music to Rabbi Isaac Luria and the Kabbalist movement; Chassidic music is profoundly rooted in Eastern European, particularly Slavic, music. Pasternak wrote that "The Chassidic movement, legitimate heir of the Kabbalists, assigned to music a position of primary importance."[25] Eighteenth-century Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav asserted that "all melodies are derived from the source of sanctity, from the Temple of Song."[26] Chassidic leaders believed that "vocal music is the best medium for approaching God. They felt that the power of *neginah*, melody, was such that it could reach the heavens faster and may be more acceptable to God than spoken prayer."[27] Rabbi Reuven Hammer writes of Chassidic Judaism's "further musical mutation," the *niggun*.[28,29] "These were usually

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] *Niggun:* worldess melody
[29] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 18.

based on native folk tunes that were not necessarily Jewish. They could be sung slowly at first, and then faster and faster to produce a group ecstatic state."[30]

More recently, in the nineteenth century, chief *chazzan*[31] of Vienna, Solomon Sulzer collected, wrote for, and influenced "the institution of permanent choirs in the synagogues, reaching all over the [Central and] Eastern European Jewish communities."[32] Around this time, Louis Lewandowski "added his setting for cantor and choir to the already established traditional tunes," and the French composer Samuel Naumbourg both utilized Rossi's music as well as wrote "his own volumes of choir music for the synagogue."[33] These nineteenth-century composers were influenced by and incorporated a western European musical aesthetic, utilizing harmonies and chanting. This development of synagogue music paired with a rebirth of the traditional *nusach ha-t'filah* and produced "the Golden Age of Chazzanut."[34,35]

At the time of its 1975 publication, the "Jewish Music Guide for Teachers" cited A.W. Binder, Max Helfman, Lazar Weiner, Reuven Kosakoff, Julius Chajes, and Ernest Bloch as important sacred music composers of the 20th century. To this list I would add composers Bonia Shur, Ben Steinberg, and Max Janowski. It then asks, "How can we determine today what, in the hundreds of new works written for the Synagogue, is now or will be 'relevant' to posterity?"[36] It is indeed impossible to know what will be relevant to posterity, but today, *chazzanut*, choral arrangements, contemporary compositions for voice and piano, and guitar-based folk and rock songs are all part of the Jewish sacred

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Cantor
[32] Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers.*
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] *Chazzanut:* the art of cantorial singing
[36] Neumann, *Jewish Music Guide for Teachers.*

music landscape. The "Jewish Music Guide for Teachers" concludes correctly that we can "determine that such music was written within the context of Jewish life of its time. As such, this music is an expression of Jewish creativity, Jewish identity and Jewish values."[37]

Rabbi Hammer writes that "over the centuries, music that accompanies worship has been developed into a high art."[38] It follows, then, that "music is essential to Jewish worship."[39] Rabbi Isaacs cites the Babylonian Talmud (Arachin 11a), explaining that the Rabbis "considered song to be a way of serving God in joy and gladness."[40] Rabbi Hoffman believes that music is essential to Jewish worship because of the roles it plays: "The music of worship does five things... it enhances the message of the words, evokes association of the flow of time in the sacred calendar, bonds together the worshiping community, stirs our emotions, and helps us know the presence of God."[41]

Jewish sacred music may enhance the message of the words we wish to offer or pray. Though the words of our prayers, whether in Hebrew or English (or the vernacular wherever the pray-er may be), may be meaningful and beautiful, they may still be an impediment to our ability to pray. Rabbi Reuven Hammer asks, "What words can adequately express our feelings about God?"[42] Words alone may not give rise to our prayerful emotions, whether they be feelings of joy, grief, contentment, or anger. The Chassidic practice of singing *niggunim* demonstrated "the extra semantic dimension of

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 17.
[39] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000), 166.
[40] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 39.
[41] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer,* 199.
[42] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 19.

prayer."[43] Additionally, some prayers may be difficult to read in normal voice or perhaps really do not feel meaningful on their own. "Music rescues such prayers from their apparent ordinariness. Once set to music, people look forward to them. They associate them with the feeling tone of the music in which they are set. Liturgy that is hard to read may more easily be sung."[44] By adding music to the words of our prayers, or even by leaving the words out altogether, we may better attain true prayerfulness.

Our sacred music also keeps us attuned to our holy times as Jews. Much of our worship music, no matter the style or origin, is intended for a particular holiday or *moed.*[45] However, the mode of Jewish sacred music that truly clues in the worshiper to an appointed time is *nusach.* Rabbi Isaacs defines *nusach* as "the accepted way of chanting the prayer-service liturgy. It consists of a series of musical modes – groups of tones within a musical scale."[46] Different *nusach* exists for a variety of holy times in the Jewish calendar: Shabbat, High Holy Days, Festivals, and weekdays, just to name a few. Rabbi Hammer explains that, similar to a leitmotif in an opera, "*nusach* sets a pattern for a particular service... these musical modes differentiate between one service and another."[47] The particular *nusach* of a holy day, Shabbat, or a festival helps to set the mood for that day's worship and observance. Rabbi Hoffman offers a picture of *nusach*'s role in setting the mood, using the example of Shabbat:

> The Friday night service, for instance, begins just before dark with a musical mode that is joyous and sprightly – even exuberant – anticipating the arrival of the Sabbath. But once nightfall occurs and Shabbat has arrived, the sound becomes

[43] Ibid, 18.
[44] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer,* 179.
[45] *Moed:* sacred time
[46] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 140.
[47] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer,* 18.

> calm and contemplative, a fitting atmosphere for the day set aside for rest and sanctification.[48]

"Similarly," explains Rabbi Hoffman, "each holiday has its own sounds, so that knowledgeable worshipers arrive anticipating not just prayers that are unique for the occasion but a musical rendition of them that evokes nostalgia, familiarity, and the appropriate seasonal mood."[49]

Music's third role in worship is to create communal bonds among the worshipers. In Jewish worship, community is not only desired but required. Because *t'filah* occurs mainly within the bounds of a communal experience, it is necessary to create feelings of community, cooperation, and group unity. Rabbi Hoffman asserts that the "single greatest need for worship is to connect individuals in community, that they may know the mystery of genuine meeting, and thereby the presence of God among us. Our single greatest lack is music of meeting."[50] Music has the power to bind people together, to "convert individuals into a group where they can experience together the message of the alternative world being established in their prayers."[51] Music, unlike mere words, has the power to unite individuals and facilitate the coming together of a community.

Sacred music, like all music, in fact, has the power to arouse our emotions. Scientific evidence already supports the notion that music is a powerful emotional force. Neuroscientist and musician Daniel Levitin asserts that "as a tool for arousing feelings and emotions, music is better than language."[52] Perhaps for this reason, "words do not

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[48] Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*, 93-94.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, 195.
[51] Ibid, 190.
[52] Daniel J. Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Penguin Group, Inc., 2007), 267.

constitute the only form of prayer in Judaism."[53] Rabbi Isaacs cites music's unique emotional power as one of the reasons music has been a part of prayer since biblical times.[54] Rabbi Hoffman continues the discussion of music's link to our emotions, stating that "music digs down deeply in our psyche; the old standbys of our youth echo in the chambers of our souls long after their sound waves have dissipated into space. The music we love is a symbol for us."[55] Music, especially that which we particularly like or enjoy or that which we have known for long periods of time, has the particular ability to touch our emotions.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, Jewish sacred music helps us to connect with God. Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller asserts that today's Jews come to services "in some way, to meet God."[56] In an article whose title asks the question, "How does music function for us as a praying community?" Cantor Schiller explains that "each of us responds to music in our own way. Music offers a variety of paths to God and to meaning. It is difficult to talk about music since we tend to describe it with words. But music is a prayer itself, beyond words."[57] Cantor William Sharlin explains that Jewish sacred music "communicates petition, gratitude, praise, and exultation to God, and invite the Divine Presence – *Shekhinah* – to dwell among the worshiping congregation."[58] He

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[53] Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer,* 39.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer,* 179.
[56] Benjie-Ellen Schiller, "Some Notes on the Future of Jewish Sacred Music," *Koleinu B'yachad. Our Voices As One: Envisioning Jewish Music for the 21st Century,* American Conference of Cantors and the Guild of Temple Musicians (1999), accessed August 14, 2012, http://urj.org/worship/worshipwithjoy/letuslearn/s9sacredmusic/
[57] Benjie-Ellen Schiller, "How Does Music Function for Us as a Praying Community?" Union for Reform Judaism, accessed August 14, 2012, http://urj.org//worship/mishkan/music//?syspage=article&item_id=3606
[58] Jonathan L. Friedman, Brad Stetson, and William Sharlin, "A Philosophy of Jewish Sacred Music," in *Jewish Sacred Music and Jewish Identity: Continuity and Fragmentation*, ed. Jonathan L. Friedman and Brad Stetson (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2008), 4.

quotes the founder of Chassidism, the Baal Shem Tov, who believed that "a soul cannot soar without melody."[59] Cantor Sharlin insists that "sacred music of the highest order – that which is sincere, inspired, and true to the liturgy – is essentially sacred *language:* a means of communicating with God."[60]

Rabbi Hoffman offers five roles for music in the context of *t'filah*, but it seems that one important purpose is missing from the list: connection to Jewish heritage. Certainly, some of our Jewish sacred music is contemporary and even particular to our own synagogues or locales, but the vast majority of the body of Jewish sacred music comes to us from different periods in Jewish history and from a great variety of Jewish communities all over the world. What's more, much of our Jewish sacred music, particularly *nusach*, is utilized routinely, in congregations and communities near and far. It is possible for Jews in Toronto to be singing *Mi Chamocha* to the same tune as Jews in Miami, at the same moment on Shabbat evening. Cantor Schiller insists that "through singing Hebrew or English words, made possible either by soaring melody or simple *nusach*, [people] feel empowered to pray as Jews, in a way that undeniably links them with the larger Jewish community and affirms their Jewish identity. Singing gives them the sacred key which allows their access to Jewish sacred tradition."[61]

Given the significant role Jewish sacred music plays in *t'filah*, it must follow that Jewish sacred music is an important part of *t'filah* education. Jewish sacred music must be taught to our students in order that they may become engaged, skilled, and invested participants in *t'filah*. Without exposure to and involvement with Jewish sacred music, they will not be able to succeed as pray-ers in a Jewish context. Jewish sacred music is

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Schiller, "Some Notes on the Future of Jewish Sacred Music."

such an integral part of Jewish worship that *t'filah* may not be taught without music. Furthermore, not only must Jewish sacred music be taught as part of any *t'filah* curriculum, but it also should be one of the tools used in order to teach *t'filah*! As we will see in the second section of the chapter, music is an extremely effective teaching tool: it has the ability to engage students, enhance teaching moments, aid concentration, create emotional connections to information, reach various types of learners, and help with memory.

Music seems to have begun before language. [62] Millbower, the author of *Training with a Beat,* writes that "the need for higher levels of communication may have, over time, necessitated that our ancestors speak, with language evolving from the music."[63] He points to the fact that "many cultures have no separate words or music and language," asserting that "early languages, almost without exception were chanted.... It is highly likely that music was the original language."[64]This is easily understood when we consider the varied tones teachers use for emphasis and to convey interest while lecturing or when we think of the great orators whose speaking voices seem to have a musical lilt. Four schools of thought attempt to answer the question of how music began, offering the following options for music's beginning: communicating with God, joining together in community, attracting a mate, expressing love, and communicating between adults and infants.[65] Millbower explains that however music began, "it is apparent that our ancestors used songs to survive, procreate, communicate, nurture, and learn."[66] Music eventually faded into the background, leaving speech as people's usual mode of communication.

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[62] Millbower, *Training with a Beat*, 13.
[63] Ibid, 14.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid, 15.
[66] Ibid, 18.

However, explains Millbower, music "still communicates feelings and establishes community among individuals. It is an ancient universal language that transcends words."[67] That transcendence, he asserts, "gives music its power as a teaching tool."[68]

The human brain is responsible for our reception and understanding of music. In his book entitled *This is Your Brain on Music*, Daniel Levitin writes, "Musical activity involves nearly every region of the brain that we know about, and nearly every neural subsystem. Different aspects of the music are handled by different neural regions..."[69] Listening to, performing, tapping to the beat of, and recalling the lyrics for music are all activities that involve various aspects of the brain. It is important to note that there is "no single language center, nor is there a single music center" in the brain; listening to or playing music exercises large swaths of the brain and requires both sides of the brain to engage.[70]

According to our brains (and composer Edgard Varèse who verbalized this definition) music is "organized noise."[71] It is "a type of perceptual illusion in which our brain imposes a structure and order on a sequence of sounds."[72] Interestingly, it is this very organization or structure that leads us to experience emotional reactions to music. Our brains work to understand the information coming from the music we hear, combining this information into a "coherent whole, based in part on what it thinks it ought to be hearing, and in part based on expectations."[73] As we listen to the sequential tones of music, they lead our brains to predict what will come next. "These predictions

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music*, 86.
[70] Ibid, 87.
[71] Ibid, 14.
[72] Ibid, 109.
[73] Ibid, 109-110.

are the essential part of musical expectations."[74] Attending to the structure of music activates regions of the left hemisphere of the brain that also attend to structure in language. Interestingly, though, the structure of music also requires the work of the right hemisphere of the brain, while language stays in the left hemisphere.[75]

It seems that our brains are, in a way, attuned to the very structure of music. However, music "is quite robust in the face of transformations and distortion of its basic features." In other words, even if we transpose a song into a different key, change the tempo, and use different instrumentation, our brains are still able to recognize the song as the same song.[76] Levitin explains that "our memory system extracts out some formula or computational description that allows us to recognize songs in spite of these transformations."[77] What is additionally interesting about our brains' understanding of music is that our brain activity does not distinguish between listening to and imagining music. This suggests to Levitin that "people use the same brain regions for remembering as they do for perceiving."[78]

Memory is related strongly to music. The multiple-trace memory model asserts that "every experience is potentially encoded in memory."[79] The model also assumes that "context is encoded along with memory traces," so that, in the case of music, that which you have "listened to at various times in your life is cross-coded with the events of those times."[80] Music can act as a very specific cue for memory. Levitin explains that music tends to stick in our heads, because of the "multiple reinforcing cues of a good song –

[74] Ibid, 125.
[75] Ibid, 130.
[76] Ibid, 149.
[77] Ibid, 149.
[78] Ibid, 154.
[79] Ibid, 165.
[80] Ibid, 166.

rhythm, melody, contour..."[81] This is the reason that "many ancient myths, epics, and even the Old Testament were set to music in preparation for being passed down by oral tradition across the generations."[82] Memory also is needed to help us enjoy music. "Music works," explains Levitin, "because we remember the tones we have just heard and are relating them to the ones that are just now being played. Those groups of tones – phrases – might come up later in the piece in a variation or transposition that tickles our memory system at the same time as it activates our emotional centers."[83]

Research has shown that the memory system is "intimately related" to the emotional system.[84] Listening to music causes "a cascade of brain regions to become activated in a particular order..."[85] Levitin explains that music can improve people's moods because it "taps into primitive brain structures involved with motivation, reward, and emotion."[86] The brain "enjoys" dealing with the changes in structure and violations in expectations; the cerebellum in particular "finds pleasure" in adjusting itself to stay synchronized.[87] "When we love a piece of music, it reminds us of other music we have heard, and it activates memory traces of emotional times in our lives."[88] According to Francis Crick of the Salk Institute, "your brain on music is all about... connections."[89]

What is also interesting is the science behind why individuals like particular styles of music. By the age of two, children show a preference for "the music of their culture,"

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[81] Ibid, 267.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, 191.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid, 192.
[89] Ibid.

"around the same time they begin to develop specialized speech processing."[90] An important educational note is that children under the age of eight cannot filter out unwanted or distracting stimuli, so they end up with a "sensory barrage" and have trouble with certain musical exercises like singing rounds.[91] In general, children prefer more and more complex music as they grow. However, eventually, "music... has to strike the right balance between simplicity and complexity in order for us to like it."[92] Around age ten or eleven, children begin to take a serious interest in music.[93] The music we tend to like as adults is generally the music we listened to as teenagers; this is because "those years were times of self-discovery, and as a consequence, they were emotionally charged."[94] Our overall preferences for music are generally formed by eighteen or twenty, though people can always form new tastes in music.[95] Of course, "music and musical preferences become a mark of personal and group identity and of distinction."[96] Our musical preferences are also linked to past experiences and whether those experiences were positive or negative. We generally prefer music that is similar to that which we already like.[97]

With an understanding of how our brains and minds perceive, understand, and compute music, the teaching properties of music can be demonstrated. Millbower explains that because the left hemisphere of the brain works to process rhythm and lyrics and the right hemisphere listens for melodies and harmonic relationships across time,

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[90] Ibid, 230.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid, 235.
[93] Ibid, 231.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid, 232.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid, 242.

"music is an effective tool for engaging your learners' left and right hemispheres."[98] As individuals, especially young people, study music, communication between the two hemispheres increases. This means that "children who study music establish brain connections that help them become more effective adult learners."[99]

Within the field of education, there is the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Daniel Goleman suggests that emotional skills are important life skills. The main tenet of his theory says that "people need the emotive limbic system skills; that being in touch with your own emotions, and those of others, leads to success..."[100] John Blacking, author of *Commonsense View of All Music* explains that "the development of the senses and the education of the emotions through the arts are not merely desirable options. They are essential both for balanced action and the effective use of the intellect."[101] Scientific research has shown that "music can help people touch their emotions, allowing them to communicate more deeply."[102] Therefore, teaching with music may create more effective learning opportunities, as it "can reach to the core emotion of a subject, allowing for a deeper connection."[103]

For decades, those in the education field have understood that people "have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles."[104] Howard Gardner successfully showed that people have a number of different intelligences, including: bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical/mathematical,

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[98] Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 36.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, 48.
[101] John Blacking, *A Commonsense View of All Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 48.
[102] Ibid, 48.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Howard Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 46.

naturalist, visual/spatial, and musical/rhythmic.[105] Gardner believes that people's core intelligences need to be engaged in learning, because "learning that matches a person's intelligence helps that person feel more engaged and competent."[106] All intelligences seem to be present in every individual, but each person shows innate ability in specific intelligences; therefore, an individual who can learn by way of his core intelligences will learn more successfully.[107] Gardner also states that people need to learn in multiple ways; they cannot only engage in one type of learning. Both children and adults who are only exposed to the learning method preferred by the teacher may be left behind, as their core learning intelligences will be ignored. These students have the capacity to learn, and yet, because their core intelligences are not being utilized, they do not have adequate opportunity to understand and retain the material. Millbower explains that if the method of teaching speaks to the learner's core intelligences, then "that learner will be more inclined to feel valued and, as a result, will participate more fully."[108] Music is one of the eight intelligences, and is an important tool for competent teaching and successful learning, and furthermore, provides an additional opportunity to "break through a learner's wall of resistance."[109]

How do we know that music is an effective teaching tool? Because we have observed young children learning the alphabet through song and recalling spelling rules with rhymes ("i" before "e" except after "c"). Successful children's television programs, such as *Sesame Street,* "effectively use music to teach necessary life skills to children."[110]

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[105] Ibid, 45.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, 46.
[108] Ibid, 47.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, 54.

Unfortunately, as children grow older, music and rhymes begin to seem somewhat silly, and these modes of learning are passed over in favor of more "adult" methods. Interestingly, adults will still use these modes with their own children, and young children always seem to favor learning through music and rhyme.[111] Millbower explains that in preindustrial societies, adults did not ignore the power of music in teaching, but rather, relied on it for communication and retention. He points to religious groups (including Judaism), which today still "rely on hymns and poems to pass their traditions and beliefs from generation to generation."[112] Millbower cites an article entitled, "Learning Improved by Arts Training," to assert that "learning music is a means of entering the highest reaches of [one's] culture's intellectual and spiritual development."[113]

Instrumental music is an effective teaching tool in a classroom or training setting. In a chapter of *Training with a Beat* called "Teaching with Music," Millbower offers a number of positive uses for instrumental music in a teaching setting. These include: establishing a positive learning environment, minimizing negative conditions surrounding a subject, assisting with repeated tasks, aiding memorization, framing games and activities, fostering creativity, changing energy levels, and providing closure.[114] Basing his claims on extensive scientific research and real-world observations, Millbower explains that instrumental music has a place in most learning environments.[115] Though instrumental music is rarely the topic of a lesson (except, perhaps, in a music class), it

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[111] Ibid.
[112] M. Rowland, "Adult Learning through Religious Music in an African American Church," DAI, 59/08A (1998), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 53.
[113] C.J. Ellis, *Aboriginal Music: Education for Living* (St. Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1985), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 53.
[114] Ibid, 100.
[115] Ibid.

can be used to foster successful learning for a group approaching a variety of tasks and objectives.

Millbower suggests that instrumental music be used when a teacher wants to establish a generalized mood, while more specific purposes require songs with lyrics.[116] Songs with lyrics can accomplish a number of objectives in a classroom setting, including: providing comfortable familiarity, adding meaning and depth, and aiding in memorization. As Daniel Levitin explained in *This is Your Brain on Music*, much of what people like in terms of music depends on familiarity; we like what we know. In a teaching situation, familiar songs have the ability to create a comfortable learning environment. "Comfortable music emotionally warms the training room, placing learners in a receptive frame of mind for learning."[117] Just as a performer will place new songs between well-known hits during a concert in order to keep attendees comfortable and happy, so too can teachers frame new material with comfortable songs, melodies, and lyrics. Music is understood to bring forth deep emotions in people; song lyrics can add meaning and depth to an already-emotional song. Songs combining moving music and meaningful lyrics grab the attention of learners, and arouse and sustain interest.[118] Song lyrics can also serve as metaphors, placing "the subject to be taught in the context of the learners' prior experiences."[119] This metaphorical language, explains storytelling expert Margaret Parkin, "can be much more powerful and can have a more dramatic effect on the listener than literal language."[120] Finally, singing musical lyrics can aid in

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[116] Ibid, 121.
[117] Ibid, 124.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Margaret Parkin, *Tales for Trainers* (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 1984), quoted in Millbower, *Training with a Beat,* 124.

memorization, as "words synchronized with music are easy to learn."[121] Because song lyrics engage both the left and right hemispheres of the brain, as opposed to language which engages only the left, they utilize more of the brain and are better retained in the mind. When a teacher asks students to sing important words or concepts to the tune of a well-known or easily-learned song, the students will have a greatly increased chance of remembering the material.[122]

Jewish sacred music plays a significant role in *t'filah*, but it plays an equally important role in the teaching of *t'filah*. In the context of *t'filah*, music serves to enhance the message of the words, evoke association of the flow of time in the sacred calendar, bond together the worshiping community, stir our emotions, and help us know the presence of God, as well as connect us to our Jewish heritage. [123] In the context of *t'filah* education, music serves to enhance the meaning and understanding of the words we pray, create a community of learners comfortable in their environment, aid in the learning and retention of the words of the particular prayers, forge emotional connections to and provide context for the worship experience, reach students with a variety of educational needs and learning preferences, pass on traditions and beliefs to young Jews, and establish a deeper connection with God. Music is not only a beloved and necessary component of *t'filah*, but it is an enjoyable and successful tool for the teaching of *t'filah*.

Any and all curricula and programs designed to teach *t'filah* to children in the religious school setting must include a significant musical component. The teaching of Jewish sacred music is itself an important part of teaching *t'filah* as a whole. Jewish sacred music provides for a greater level of connection with God and community,

[121] Ibid, 125.
[122] Ibid, 126.
[123] Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer,* 199.

emotion and spirituality, and understanding of Jewish tradition, sacred time, and heritage in *t'filah* that would otherwise be unattainable. When liturgy and the rituals surrounding *t'filah* are taught hand in hand with Jewish sacred music, the entire experience of *t'filah* is elevated for the pray-ers. And when Jewish sacred music is used as a tool for learning about and how to participate in *t'filah,* teachers can be sure that these important skills and material are truly being absorbed.

Rabbi Judah the Hasid taught, "Say your prayers in a melody that is most pleasant and sweet to you. Then you shall pray with proper *kavanah*, because the melody will draw your heart after the words that come from your mouth."[124] When we pray with a song in our mouths and teach with music on our lips, we can achieve not only proficiency in *t'filah* but a love for prayer, a connection with God and each other, and an understanding of our Judaism.

[124] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew,* 21.

CHAPTER FOUR
TEACHING *T'FILAH* – BEST PRACTICES
INTERVIEWS FROM THE FIELD

I interviewed nine Jewish professionals, including rabbis, cantors, and educators, in order to gain a clear understanding of current best practices for the teaching of *t'filah* in a religious school setting. I aimed to uncover the manner in which *t'filah* is taught in a congregational religious school, especially in the setting of religious school *t'filot.* My primary goal was to discover successful programs for the teaching of *t'filah* and to collect these "best practices."

Most of the interviewees serve Reform congregations in the United States. However, one interviewee serves a Canadian Reform congregation, while another is a Reform rabbi serving a Reconstructionist congregation. Each of the professionals interviewed directs *t'filot* for their respective religious schools based in congregations.

Each of the interviewees was asked the same questions; however, many responses went beyond the scope of the provided questions. Additionally, some interviewees did not answer certain questions. Each interviewee attempted to describe the established program for the teaching of *t'filah* in his/her congregational religious school, as well as inform me of the general religious practice of the congregation as it relates to the religious school.

I utilized the knowledge gained from these interviews in order to design the pilot program for the teaching of *t'filah* that can be found within this thesis. It is my hope that rabbis, cantors, and educators use these collected best practices to design their own programs for teaching *t'filah* and/or improve upon existing programs.

The following pages contain the collected responses from the interviews:

Rabbi Benjy Bar-Lev, Associate Rabbi and Director of Education at Temple Beth Shalom in Columbus, OH

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

Yes, we do have *t'filah. T'filah* is part of the religious school experience every Sunday; it is also included during Wednesday Hebrew school, but this school day is optional. The service for kindergarten through 2nd grade starts right at the beginning of the day, at 9:00am. *T'filah* is held for the "Hebrew school grades" (3rd through 6th grades) in the middle of the school day on Sundays, between 10:30 and 11:00am. On Wednesdays, those students who attend the optional Hebrew enrichment program participate in *t'filah* for twenty minutes.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

The kindergarten through 2nd grade services serve to teach the kids a little bit of liturgy, but really aim for students to enjoy services, to feel connected to prayer, and to allow them to have a stake in what's happening during *t'filah*. This service includes a lot of singing, dancing, and liturgy. We do the same liturgy each week, and "there are five points during the service where the kids are allowed to get up and dance and go crazy." Every month we have a *Mi Chamocha* Dance-Off; "This is absurdly cute!" I tell a story each week- either related to the weekly *parashah* or an upcoming holiday, or just encompassing a Jewish value or lesson. We try to make this service very camp-like "so that the students stay engaged for this half-hour." In the spirit of silliness, we have three school mascots who show up during the service to answer questions, dance with the kids, etc.

The "Hebrew school grades" service (for 3rd through 6th graders) aims to strengthen the kids' Hebrew reading abilities. We try to make it fun and tell stories. In this service, we try to do a full liturgy, including *Yotzer Or, V'ahavta*, and *Amidah*. The *Mi Chamocha* Dance-Off is also a part of this service. I (Benjy Bar-Lev) always tell a story during this service, but the focus is mainly on the liturgy and affirming what they're learning in their Hebrew classes.

The Wednesday service, held during the optional Hebrew enrichment program, is a *ma'ariv* service. It is extremely informal, "goofy and silly," and fun. Everyone sits in a circle; there are approximately 20-30 students in this service.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

The kindergarten through 2nd grade students participate in *t'filah* together on Sunday mornings along with their teachers, *madrichim*, and some parents (approximately 10-12 parents usually stay). The 3rd through 6th grade *t'filah* program includes mostly students, *madrichim*, and teachers; parental attendance is low because the service is held in the middle of the school day.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The kindergarten through 2nd grade service makes use of a projector to show the liturgy, as opposed to a *siddur*. A projector is also used for congregational Shabbat evening

services. "That's a known quantity, so this isn't a big jump for the religious school kids." We found that the little kids' *siddurim* ended up on the floor, they generally weren't on the right page, etc. We decided to take the *siddur* out of their hands and put it up on the screen. The slides are "pretty-looking," we try to make it "look nice for the kids." If we're teaching new songs or liturgy, we'll do special slides. Otherwise, we use the same slides each week.

The 3rd through 6th grade *t'filah* is led from a special religious school *siddur* made specifically for this purpose. There is no transliteration in this *siddur*. The text looks much like it does in Gates of Prayer (gray gender-sensitive version), which is our congregational prayerbook. The biggest reason for using a special *siddur* as opposed to Gates of Prayer is that we hold religious school at the New Albany JCC for space reasons, and we can't move all of our congregational prayerbooks back and forth each week.

The Wednesday afternoon service is led from Gates of Prayer as we hold these sessions in our synagogue building, in the chapel.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The musical choices for religious school *t'filah* are "all pretty deliberate." Gail Rose, the congregation's music director, is also a longtime music teacher. She teaches music classes for the students, which often focus on melodies for liturgies that are used in the

First Friday (family friendly) services. "When they [students] come for Shabbat, they'll know the melodies because they use them on Sunday mornings!" The idea is to be as camp-like as possible in this program. This means that we will also sometimes teach new songs/melodies, as well as use *nusach*. We only do Shabbat *nusach*, as this is what students encounter during congregational services. We also include some of Marc Rossio's (congregant and Jewish children's musician) original music, since he is a regular service leader.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

We try to focus on both *keva* and *kavanah,* as well as community concerns. "For the younger students, the goal is really for them to feel like a community of pray-ers, a community of Jews who come together and who know the liturgy." *T'filah* is used as a skill-strengthening activity for the older students. "We want them to have prayerful moments and feel part of the community, but the major goal is for them to be able to lead a service, know how a service works, and be part of our community of leaders."

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

I (Benjy Bar-Lev) am the primary leader for both services. The early service (for kindergarten through 2nd graders) is also led by Jewish children's musician Marc Rossio,

congregational music director Gail Rose, and two college-aged songleaders. The later service (for 3rd through 6th graders) is also led by Marc Rossio and a high school or college-aged songleader. On Wednesdays, I lead the service myself with guitar. We also try to involve 5th and 6th grade students in the leadership of services on Wednesdays.

Rabbi Andrea Cosnowsky, Rabbi/Educator at Congregation Eitz Chaim in Lombard, IL

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

The 3rd through 7th grades participate in *t'filah* for thirty minutes at the end of Sunday school; our *t'filah* program is called "Prayer Experience." When I arrived at this congregation, the religious school had *t'filah*, but the kids were "as unengaged as possible." Parents used the time to pick up their kids early, the kids didn't pay attention; "it was a terrible experience for everyone involved." It was decided that *t'filah* was an integral part of the religious school day, but that it needed to change.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

Prayer Experience means that we experience prayer differently. There is a theme once per month, which goes hand in hand with a giveaway that can only be acquired if students stay for the entire service. For example, one service theme was a Hawaiian Luau: everyone wore leis, the giveaway was a maraca, and some songs were done to the tune of a Hawaiian melody. Our program is "looking to shake it up a little." Themes, gimmicks, songs, and PowerPoints all give kids an additional place to focus. "The prayers are a by-product of focusing on something else." Liturgy is the main focus of Prayer Experience. The service also includes opening and closing songs, an introduction to the theme (if any), and a teaching moment or two. These teaching moments can include: highlighting a *mitzvah*, telling a story, offering a *midrash* about prayer, talking about *keva* v. *kavanah*, etc.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

The entire 3rd through 7th grade population attends Prayer Experience together, along with their teachers. Students sit with their classes in rows, and their teachers sit with them, interspersed. As students grow older, they get to move back in the rows. Often, to keep older and younger students engaged, the older students pair with younger students, sitting with them and helping them through the service.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

A prayer packet was used originally, but it "kept getting in the way, it was a pain!" Prayer Experience now utilizes a projector and screen, with prayers inserted into a PowerPoint presentation. Everything on the PowerPoint is "straight from Mishkan T'filah," but written in a clearer, bigger font, "without distractions" that normally appear on the page in the prayerbook. The PowerPoint can be controlled by the service leader remotely, and often students are asked to help control the presentation. Additionally, some 7th graders are given the task of using a laser pen to guide everyone through the liturgy. Mishkan T'filah is the prayerbook used in services at this congregation.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

"Music is connected to what we do in the congregation. We utilize the standard greatest hits of the Reform movement." Opening and closing songs are often more "current,"

connected to what the students hear at camp. These songs are chosen by the songleader, while I (Andrea Cosnowsky) choose the rest of the music. Silly tunes are also utilized occasionally to keep interest and to help teach words. There is at least one song in each service that helps to facilitate *kavanah.*

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

Prayer Experience aims to create a sacred space, where students can focus on prayer. "If the kids enjoy the experience of engaging in prayer on some level, that's a 'win.'" The program's goals are to teach the liturgy itself, expose students to standard Reform movement music as well as some newer musical settings, allow them to experience a feeling of prayerfulness, encourage worship participation and attendance, and enjoy the experience of prayer.

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

Prayer Experience is led each week by a volunteer songleader and me (Rabbi Cosnowsky, who is also a longtime musician and songleader). "I choose the liturgy, the teaching points, and most of the musical settings for the liturgy, while the songleader is in charge of choosing and leading opening and closing songs." Each class is also required to

lead Prayer Experience. "They learn how to listen to each other; this opportunity gives them ownership over their prayer, and connects them to the liturgy."

Barbara Dragul, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning at Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati, OH

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

Kindergarteners through 3rd graders attend a weekly service, while 4th through 6th grade classes have a different program called "Prayer Lab." "I have never seen it [religious school *t'filah*] work well in all my years of teaching. We could do more with that time."

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

Kindergarteners through 3rd graders have a weekly Sunday morning service. 4th through 6th grade classes have thirty minutes of a *t'filah* program two times per month during Wednesday Hebrew school. The 4th – 6th grade *t'filah* program is not comprised of worship services, but rather a program called "Prayer Lab." The Prayer Lab curriculum is a three-year cycle: 4th grade-- how does prayer connect to God, Torah, and Israel; 5th grade--storytelling in prayer; 6th grade-- leadership of prayer.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

All kindergarten through 3rd grade classes attend an age-appropriate service together as a group during Sunday religious school. 4th through 6th grade students participate in Prayer Lab with their individual Hebrew classes, which are divided by grade. Each grade focuses on its own prescribed subject (as described above) during the twice-monthly Prayer Lab.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The kindergarten through 3rd grade Sunday service uses a children's prayerbook developed by the congregation. This prayerbook is used to introduce students to worship, and is geared towards younger children. The Prayer Lab program utilizes the Wise Temple prayerbook, called Avodat HaLev: Worship of the Heart, which is used for all Shabbat services for the larger congregation. This helps students get familiar with the congregational prayerbook.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

If there was no response here, indicate that.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

The Prayer Lab program aims to help student "go deeper into prayer understanding and reflection." Students should feel "ownership," gain understanding, and "find relevance" in prayer. The Prayer Lab program places value on authentic engagement and the concept of "belonging": students should feel that "they belong to the Jewish people" and that "Judaism belongs to them."

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

The kindergarten through 3rd grade Sunday service is led by those students' classroom teachers, our cantor, and me (Director of Education Barbara Dragul). The Prayer Lab program is led by those students' classroom teachers, specifically those who are rabbinical students, and our Assistant Rabbi.

Sarah Gluck, Director of Education at Temple Beth-El in Summerville, NJ

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

Kindergarteners through 2nd graders, as well as special needs classes, have brief *t'filot* with the cantor on Sunday mornings. The "significant" *t'filah* experience happens during mid-week Hebrew school for 3rd through 7th graders. Hebrew school is offered three days during the week, with families choosing one day for their children based on their own schedules. Therefore, classes and *t'filah* groups tend to be small.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

The *t'filah* program occurs during weekday Hebrew school for thirty minutes, held at the end of the school day. There are five minutes built into the daily schedule for students and teachers to "travel" to *t'filah.* The goal is to have a "full *t'filah.*" Sometimes this means there is "no conversation." Navigation is very important in this program; the leader always announces "where we are in the booklet," the name of the prayer in Hebrew and English, and sometimes, a brief tagline or a restatement of the *chatimah.* The *Mourner's Kaddish* is always recited during these *t'filot.* "It is a gift and an obligation to the community to provide this opportunity. It is another time during the week when a congregant or community can say *Kaddish* with a *minyan.*"

Announcements are given after Mourner's Kaddish, and the *t'filot* always close with "Hatikvah." "'Hatikvah' is important to this congregation and community, and so it is always done in religious school." Students are invited to come near the Israeli flag, on the *bima*, when singing "Hatikvah." "This ensures that people don't run out the door when

the service ends, and ensure greater cohesion when there might be less." Every fifth week, there is a break from worship services in favor of a Question and Answer session. This is a "give and take of information." Students are welcome to ask any questions pertaining to prayer, worship, Judaism, and God. The leaders often "throw questions right back to the students to answer."

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

Kindergarten through 2nd grades, as well as special needs classes, have short *t'filot* on Sunday mornings. 3rd through 7th grade students have *t'filot* during weekday Hebrew. Students sit by grade with their teachers, which allows for support and guidance during *t'filah*. Teachers all attend and participate, helping to keep track of students. The religious school *t'filah* program sees itself as a mini-congregation, as part of the larger congregation as a whole. Some parents attend, though not many. There are about fifty students in *t'filah* each weekday afternoon.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The weekday Hebrew *t'filah* program uses a booklet created in part by the students, which was developed over the course of a year. The booklet does not contain any transliteration, which is in line with the goals of the Hebrew program to never use transliteration during religious school. Hebrew text is numbered by line, which helps with navigation references and in discussion of *chatimot*. In each *chatimah*, the "*Baruch Atah*

Adonai" is "bigger and bolder to enable easy recognition and location." "The formatting is indicative of the values of the program." This booklet is "favored because it is easily handled by the students and they feel a sense of ownership over the booklet that they have created."

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

There is significant overlap in music, between the religious school *t'filot* and those of the larger congregation. "No music is done in religious school *t'filah* that just belongs to religious school *t'filah.*" A longtime songleader chooses most of the music for weekday religious school *t'filot.* The cantor chooses music for the *t'filot* attended by the kindergarten through 2nd grade group, as well as the special needs students.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

The congregation finds great value in gathering as a Jewish community, so "worship must be an aspect of that." *T'filah* is led from the *bimah*, in the main sanctuary, and aims to create a warm and welcoming space. Goals of religious school *t'filah* include: teaching about *keva* and *kavanah,* and a balance between the two; acquiring skills to bring Hebrew to life; preparing students for Jewish living/life; frequent discussion about Torah, *avodah*,

and *g'milut chasadim.* The program aims to help "students feel that the *bimah* is theirs – it is not just for clergy – and that they belong there." The program tries to make *t'filah* accessible, creating multiple entry points with discussion, question and answer, music, art, etc.

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

Sunday morning services, held for kindergarten through 2nd grades, as well as for special needs students, are planned and led by the cantor. 3rd through 7th grade weekday *t'filot* are planned and led by our longtime songleader and me (Director of Education Sarah Gluck).

Rabbi Karyn Kedar and Cantor Ross Wolman, Senior Rabbi and Assistant Cantor at Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim in Deerfield, IL

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?
Ross Wolman: *T'filah* is a part of both Sunday religious school and Tuesday/Thursday Hebrew school. On Sundays, *t'filah* and music are combined. Students are broken into groups according to grade level for *t'filah*/music.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

Ross Wolman: On Sundays, each group participates in *t'filah*, hears a story, and learns music. A full service is offered on Sunday mornings, though some liturgy might be skipped in order to focus on a particular prayer or subject. The *t'filah*/music time aims to be community-focused. Sunday *t'filah* provides an opportunity to participate in a communal prayer experience led by the congregational clergy. On Tuesdays and Thursday, the *t'filah* program functions as a learner's minyan. Students are able to help lead *t'filah* on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These weekday services are meant to be a "lab," an opportunity for students to try new things and learn about the liturgy.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

Ross Wolman: Students participate in Sunday morning *t'filah* in shifts. Junior Kindergarten through 1st graders are grouped together, 2nd and 3rd grades comprise another group, and 4th and 5th grades make up the final group. The youngest group spends about fifteen minutes in *t'filah* and ten minutes in music, the 2nd and 3rd graders spend about twenty minutes doing each, and the 4th and 5th graders participate in twenty-five

minutes of *t'filah* and twenty minutes of music. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, each class (3rd through 6th grades) does *t'filah* separately. There is a separate prayer class for 7th graders.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

Ross Wolman: Mishkan T'filah is utilized during Tuesday and Thursday afternoons' services. This is the same prayerbook used by the congregation. On Sundays, the liturgy is all projected digitally. The congregation makes use of the CCAR's "Visual T'filah" program. Visual T'filah can be customized to fit the specific needs of the service or group. Transliteration is not available to anyone above third grade.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

Ross Wolman: Musical settings for religious school *t'filah* are well integrated with those for congregational prayer services. "We try to have as much synergy as possible during services." We keep a spreadsheet in order to track the melodies we use with each class. When students attend services on Shabbat, they will know many of the tunes for the liturgy. Weekday *nusach* is used during religious school *t'filah*, and High Holy Day and Festival *nusach* are also used when appropriate.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

Ross Wolman: The primary goal is familiarity and comfort in the service. The *t'filah* program aims to give students access and connection to prayer. We also want to build community and Jewish culture. "We are assimilated American Jews, so how do we make that still feel Jewish, but at the same time familiar, comfortable, and American?" We aim to build Jewish identity and expose students to prayers, services, etc. "Osmosis is important!"

Karyn Kedar: At the age when children are starting to learn prayers, they are still very literal. We want to teach prayerfulness, but this is a difficult skill to teach a young person. "We are very heavy on the learning of worship skills, Hebrew, and liturgy." We are not as good at teaching the meanings of prayers; we focus on this more as students get older.

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

Ross Wolman: On Sundays, I (Ross Wolman) lead *t'filah* and music with my guitar. Once per month, another clergy member will lead and teach [or "with a teacher"?]. On Tuesdays and Thursdays during Hebrew school, our youth director (who is a songleader) leads *t'filah*. Students also help lead services on weekdays, while Sundays are the kids' opportunity to have access to the clergy. The congregation's cantors, Hebrew school

principal, and youth engagement workers meet to go over overarching goals, find weeks to focus on specific prayers, and plan for holidays and sacred times. I (Ross Wolman) keeps very good notes for all of these services. Currently, this program very much hinges on my (Ross Wolman) presence and leadership of these sessions.

Rabbi Karen Thomashow, Rabbi at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, Ontario

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

We hold a service for our older elementary grades at the end of the school day on Wednesday, for thirty minutes. We also hold a Sunday morning service each week for our younger students, who do not attend on Wednesdays. We also do a *Rosh Chodesh* service once per month on Sunday mornings for the older students. With weekly prayer we aim to "reinforce what's going on in the classroom." We feel that the service really adds value to our program. We have families who say that this is one of the best parts of our school and our program. "We learn in order to do"-- and "we want to 'do' every single week!"

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

School meets on Sunday for all elementary grades; older elementary students also attend on Wednesdays. On Sundays, students attend for three hours; one hour of this is focused on "Hebrew and Prayer." On Wednesdays, students attend for two and half hours; two of these hours are focused on "Hebrew and Prayer," while the last half hour consists of a prayer service. We use Behrman House line, Mitkadem, and a number of homegrown curricula to teach Hebrew in the classroom. *T'filah* is the capstone of our Wednesday afternoon and is never cancelled.

The older students (3rd through 6th grades) participate in *t'filah* on Wednesday afternoons for thirty minutes. We aim for the students to be "prayer proficient." By the end of 3rd grade, they are fairly proficient in a lot of the prayers; by the end of 6th grade they are considerably proficient in all of the liturgy we do on Wednesday afternoons. The older students participate each week in a "*parashat hashavua* play." "We really try to have this be experiential."

The younger students (kindergarten through 2nd grade) who do not attend on Wednesdays have a regular Sunday morning service for twenty minutes. They use Gates of Prayer for Young Children as their *siddur*, and use the bulk of the liturgy included in the book. I (Karen Thomashow) tell a story as opposed to a play. This year, we are focusing on *parashathashavua*; I have been utilizing God's Mailbox and other great children's books and stories that follow the *parashah*. In addition, "I certainly take the opportunity from time to time to have the story time to be a great prayer discussion."

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

Kindergarteners through 2nd graders participate in *t'filah* together as a group on Sunday mornings, along with their teachers. Parents do not generally attend, though they are invited, because this is done during the school morning. 3rd through 6th graders participate in *t'filah* together as a group on Wednesday afternoons, along with their teachers. There is a core group of about 5% of the parents who attend the service. An additional group of

parents attends a least part of *t'filah* on Wednesday afternoons, when they arrive to pick up their children. The parents who do attend are full and active participants.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The Sunday morning *t'filah* for younger grades (kindergarten through 2nd) uses Gates of Prayer for Young People, which is not used at any other time in congregational life. However, this book seems to fit the needs of the young group. It has big print and contains a significant amount of the liturgy in an accessible format. The Wednesday afternoon *t'filah* for older grades (3rd through 6th) uses the daily congregational *siddur.* Either the *mincha* or *ma'ariv* service is utilized, depending on the time of year. We aim to familiarize our young congregants with our community's *siddur.*

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

We use a combination of weekday *nusach* and "Shabbat camp music" (Taubman, Friedman, etc.) We try to overlap with what happens in the congregation, but not all the music is "shared." "We try to stick to the traditional chanting of *V'ahavta*, read *Ma'ariv Aravim* in Hebrew, etc." When our music leader can't be there, I (Karen Thomashow) lead the service a capella, and I ask the kids to lead the music from their seats. They really do sing, and I believe their prayer and leadership skills are reinforced in this situation.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

On Sundays, the goals are "a little more elementary." "I certainly take the opportunity from time to time to have the story time be a great prayer discussion." This is done every month or every couple of months. Most of these discussions stem from the way we pray and our focus on learning choreography/ritual prayer movements. We don't usually stop to articulate these, we simply teach our students to do them.

On Wednesdays, I (Karen) always ask one question of the group that either focuses on *keva* or on *kavanah.* This rotates back and forth. This is not a learner's service, but rather an approach to reflection. "This is really prayer in its basic sense: interactive *iyyunei t'filah!*" Our approach is to always be within the mode of a prayer service: we don't clap, we don't slip out of this mode, at the end of our play we all say "*yasher koach*!" If we do revert into a "classroom mode," this is because kids have a certain idea of what school should be.

"We want our kids to really enjoy prayer and to really pray. They aren't just listening or watching someone else pray." In addition, Hebrew is very significant to our *t'filah* program; we pray almost entirely in Hebrew. This is part of the Canadian Reform landscape.

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

T'filah is led by me (Karen Thomashow) and David Gershon, a musicians and regular *ba'al korei and shaliach tzibur* in our community. David is also a professional children's entertainer. In addition, we have a special class for our gifted and talented/accelerated students held on Wednesdays called "Shatz" (*shaliach tzibur).* In this class, the students learn to lead most of the liturgy. The students in the "Shatz" class also help to lead *t'filah.*

Rabbi Carrie Vogel, Assistant Director of Youth and Family Education at Kehillat Israel Reconstructionist Congregation, Pacific Palisades, CA

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

Yes, it is a part of each of our religious school days. We hold five school sessions per week; each child attends one session per week. *T'filah* is done in our school because "it is so important to make the kids feel comfortable in the sanctuary, with the prayers, the songs, the Torah." The repetition of prayer services each week really helps our students in the long run with the Hebrew and their comfort with liturgy.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

The overarching philosophy of the *t'filah* program is that each week, "all kids on all days hear the same story and are taught the same songs," according to their level. Approximately three prayers are scheduled per week. The younger students focus on *Barechu, Shema, Mi Chamocha, Mi Shebeirach l'Cholim*, and spend a little bit of time on *V'ahavta*. The older students focus on *Avot V'imahot, G'vurot*, and *Kedusha* in the second half of the year. The *Mourner's Kaddish* is never done during religious school *t'filah*, nor is *Aleinu*. *Aleinu* is left out due to the complications associated with Reconstructionist ideology. Most of the time, there is an opportunity for silent, personal prayer.

Time is spent teaching about prayers during *t'filah*. We teach "when they're supposed to bow, when to participate in prayers that require a call and response," as well as how prayers "work." There is also discussion about the purpose of prayer, if students believe in what the prayers ask us to do, what it means to pray, and how it feels to pray.

In addition to the liturgy, a story is told each week from the Torah. Instead of teaching *parashat hashavuah*, we tell the entirety of Genesis and Exodus through the whole year. "If a *parashah* has three stories, they are told one at a time, one per week." This helps the kids place the stories in context. The story can be told in a variety of ways: reading a book, asking kids to retell, skits, narration with kids acting, older students reading Torah text, etc.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

T'filah is held for thirty minutes during each religious session, generally in the middle of the session. Kindergarten through 3rd graders all attend on Sunday mornings, 7th graders attend on Tuesday evenings. 4th through 6th graders may attend on Sunday afternoons, 6th graders may attend on Tuesday afternoons, 4th and 5th graders may attend on Wednesday afternoons. Parents do not generally attend *t'filah*, as it is held in the middle of the school session. There are three or four family days during each year, and on those days, parents do attend services with their children.

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The prayerbook utilized during religious school *t'filah* is actually a prayer card, which is modeled on the Reconstructionist prayerbook. The card contains Hebrew, English, and transliteration for each prayer, just like the prayerbook. The font used is the exact same,

as well. This was a deliberate choice, in order to integrate with the prayerbook used by the congregation for Shabbat. The prayer card "feels real" to the students.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The songleader and I (Carrie Vogel) choose music together. Many times, songs are based on the Torah story being told or an upcoming holiday. Prior to the monthly Family Shabbat service, the students learn specific songs that will be sung at that service. The music used for the liturgy varies, though the aim is to teach a few different musical settings for each prayer. Sometimes, a more creative musical version of a prayer is utilized. For instance, "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman might be used to reinforce *Mi Chamocha*. Cultural literacy is also very important; we ask ourselves, "What songs do they need to know to be comfortable in the larger Jewish community?"

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

Our main goal is for students to feel very comfortable in the sanctuary and with the prayers; "their comfort is most important." This is truly time for prayer and reflection. It is important for students to understand the how and why of prayers, and to consider the liturgy's connection to our history. An important "trope" in our school is "even if you don't believe what the prayer is stating, saying the prayer still ties us to people all over

the world: there is a chain of tradition." During services, we talk about what it means to pray and our comfort (or lack thereof) with praising God. It is also important to build community during *t'filah*; "we have a lot of kids here each session, and it's nice that for twenty minutes we're all together."

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

T'filah is led each session by our rabbinic intern or me (Carrie Vogel), in addition to our songleader. I lead *t'filah* for about two thirds of the sessions, while our rabbinic intern leads the other third. We have a planning chart that helps the leaders present a cohesive, intentional experience for our students. The chart describes: who is leading, prayers to be focused on that week, musical settings for each prayer, additional songs to be sung, and the story to be told that week. The chart allows for ease of future planning, as well as making sure that there is "no rut, nothing is done over and over again."

Cantor Lorel Zar-Kessler, Cantor of Congregation Beth-El in Sudbury, Massachusetts

1. Is *t'filah* part of your religious school day? Why or why not?

T'filah is held during Thursday afternoon Hebrew school. Every other week, *t'filah* is held for grades 3, 4, and 5; on alternate weeks, *t'filah* is held for grades 6 and 7. *T'filah* is held for thirty minutes at the end of the Hebrew school day.

2. Describe your religious school *t'filah* program/curriculum.

The service is very dependent on me (Lorel Zar-Kessler). The very short service that we do includes the following liturgy: *Barechu, Ahavat Olam, Shema, V'ahavta, Mi Chamocha*, Silent Prayer, and *Oseh Shalom.* A mini Torah service is also included for the 6th and 7th grades. We spend a great deal of time on the *T'filah/Amidah.*

"It is very important to me from the beginning to have discussion and learning that is outside of that [prayer] format." When teaching *Shema*, I ask the students, "Is it a real prayer?" "Who are you talking to?" "Does this affect how you say the prayer?" Love is a major theme in prayer discussions. I ask the students, "Do you realize that God is crazy about you?" We also talk about miracles in the context of *Mi Chamocha.* I ask the students, "What are the miracles in your own life?" We often also talk about the weekly Torah portion.

3. How is your religious school *t'filah* program divided in terms of grades and ages? Are parents, caregivers, and/or other adults attending as participants?

The primary participants in *t'filah* are the students and their teachers. Parents are always invited; there a few who attend but not a large number. The years in which we've been more specific about parental attendance, we had a greater number attend. In the future, we would love for there to be a greater connection between parents and children. We don't have congregational "children's services," nor do we have children leading regular congregational services outside of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Therefore, religious school *t'filah* is a way for children to make prayer more their own. "I would love to find more ways for them and their parents to be connected through prayer, and to make prayer more real for them."

4. What prayerbook is utilized? Is this the same prayerbook as normally used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

We use the Beth-El prayerbook, V'taheir Libeinu, which was created in the early 1980s. For most of our children, this is the only prayerbook they know. "Our services are different and participation is different." We do a Shabbat evening service during Thursday Hebrew school *t'filah*, since this is not a community that does a weekday service. "At this point in their lives, if I can get them to have a basic idea of Shabbat services, that is a great accomplishment!" Time spent on a weekday service is not helpful to them. Even so, I have a desire for them to know the basics so they can pray anywhere.

5. Describe the musical settings utilized. Are these the same as used in the larger congregation? Why or why not?

The Hebrew school *t'filah* utilizes the basic melodies of a Beth-El service. Generally, the music is very participatory. The students all know how to chant *V'ahavta*; "without being able to read Hebrew, I feel this says a lot for oral tradition." We also use a touch of Shabbat *nusach*, and a lot of melodies that they can remember and hold onto. We focus more on chants, Chassidic melodies, things that I feel work! We try not to have one way of doing things, but since we see the kids so infrequently, we try to teach a tune for every prayer according to the congregational practice. We always do some singing at the beginning of *t'filah*, and we include appropriate holiday songs. In general, I try to find melodies that will help them learn the Hebrew, as well as feel part of a prayer service.

6. State the focus and/or goals of your religious school *t'filah* program. (Believing: focus on kavanah, spirituality, prayerfulness, relationship with God; Behaving: focus on keva, music, liturgy, choreography, understanding; Belonging: focus on communal worship, being part of a larger community)

"Yes, yes, and yes!" The *kavanah* is really important. We want them to understand the purpose of prayer and to be able to address the feeling they get when praying.

There is also a desire to bring an adult experience to the kids so that when they attend congregational services, this doesn't feel foreign to them. We want them to feel the joy and scriousness of our regular services.

The main goal of our Hebrew program is to teach our children a lot of prayer Hebrew. Their learning of Hebrew, their decoding and analyzing, is all in the context of prayer Hebrew. However, since we only see our students for a total of four hours per week, and since a lot of them don't make it all the time, we want to focus on prayer. "Their lives as Jews in America are tied to prayer." We want them to be able to be comfortable in a prayer service. We are very focused on language acquisition and decoding.

7. Who plans and directs the religious school *t'filah* program? Who leads *t'filah*? Are these the same people? Why or why not?

Our Director of Education, Rabbi Judy Spicehandler, divides the *t'filah* groups and schedules their *t'filah* time. She tries to grow the program each year. My (Lorel Zar-Kessler) job is to take Judy's plans, add in the teachers' classroom programs, and build on all of this. I am the primary *t'filah* leader. Years ago, there was a desire to feel that the clergy was involved in the school. The idea was that all of the clergy should participate and make things happen. As time goes on, I could probably step back, but I really love my role as *t'filah* leader, and I feel it's important for the students to see me in this role. It's also a major way for me to connect with the students and allow them to feel comfortable with me.

Additionally, if we have a student whose Bar/Bat Mitzvah is approaching, we ask them to read Torah for us. We also ask students in particular classes who are learning certain prayers to volunteer to lead the group.

PART II

CHAPTER FIVE: PILOT CURRICULUM RATIONALE AND EXPLANATION

A significant number of congregational religious schools affiliated with the Reform Movement incorporate a prayer service as part of the school day. Presumably, these prayer services aim to immerse students in a regular prayer experience, familiarizing them with liturgy, music, and ritual. Many schools have their own special *siddurim*,[1] and numerous programs include the congregation's clergy members in leading the services. Some schools have organized plans or curricula for their religious school *t'filah* experiences, while others simply set aside time for communal prayer.

I have spent the last ten years teaching in Reform Movement-affiliated religious schools. In every school of which I have been a part, the entire school (or some large sub-set of students) participated in an organized worship experience together- *t'filah.* These *t'filah* experiences have varied from school to school, but all have had a few things in common.

First, they lacked organization. Having served as the songleader or even primary *shlichat tzibur,*[2] I observed firsthand the lack of lesson planning, goal-setting, and guiding organization in these *t'filah* experiences. The leader sometimes, but not always, had an idea of the liturgy he/she wanted to complete during the given time, and sometimes, but not always, had planned additional teaching, a *d'var Torah,*[3] or time to interact with the participants. Never in my time as a teacher directly involved with religious school *t'filah* was I given a plan, lesson overview, or even guiding principles with which to conduct services. This lack of organization leads to unnecessary repetition

[1] Singular is *siddur*. "Prayer book"
[2] Prayer leader
[3] Literally "a word of teaching." This refers to a sermon or teaching the service leader gives on the subject of week's Torah portion, an upcoming holiday, or important theme.

of material, exclusion of pertinent or otherwise desired information, and an overall lack of growth or forward movement for the *t'filah* experiences throughout the school year and from year to year.

Second, these experiences were frought with inconsistencies. The *t'filah* programs with which I have been involved do not use the typical *siddur*[4] utilized by the congregation in which the school is based, nor do they use the liturgical music generally performed by the congregation and its musical leader. The liturgy was often truncated, not due to deliberate choices based on age-appropriateness or specific teaching goals, but was rather done on a whim or based in poor time management. These inconsistencies, though some may have been intentional, seem to distract from what is surely the purpose of these *t'filah* experiences- to teach students how to be knowledgeable prayer participants in their home congregations.

Finally, these experiences did not necessarily serve the educational needs or address the spiritual requirements of the children participating in *t'filah*. Most of these services were enjoyable, musical worship experiences but were not planned keeping in mind the needs of the children involved. An issue contributing to this larger problem is the possibility of inclusion of all students in a school, ranging from preschool through grade eight, in one service. Children, based on their level of knowledge and developmental stage, also approach God and spirituality differently than adults; many of these *t'filah* experiences were not designed with this in mind. Finally, students are always curious about the what, why, and how of prayer, and most of the school worship services in which I have been involved did not address these questions.

[4] Daily and Sabbath prayerbook

Based on my experiences, observations, and conversations with peers and colleagues, I have noticed a need for set curricula for religious school *t'filah.* These curricula should provide for deliberate, intentional religious school *t'filah* experiences which appropriately teach the *keva* of prayer (liturgy, *nusach* and music, ritual, and the "information"), as well as the *kavanah* (connection with God, relationship to the community, self-reflection, and spirituality). Religious school *t'filah* must be developmentally appropriate for the students involved, taking into account educational and spiritual theories regarding how best to teach and reach children of various ages. The curricula for religious school *t'filah* should fully integrate liturgical music due to the large role music plays in Jewish prayer, as well as music's ability to aid in learning.

For this thesis project, I created a pilot curriculum based on my academic research and interviews with professionals, as well as my own past observations. The curriculum consists of three sets of six lessons lasting fifteen minutes each. The lessons were designed for and taught to the *Bet, Gimel,* and *Dalet* levels (4th, 5th, and 6th grades) of Hebrew classes. The curriculum was piloted at KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple's Hebrew School over a period of six sessions. I served as the instructor for all of the lessons, though the classroom teachers for each class participated in and assisted with the *t'filah* sessions. The pilot program was identified as "*T'filah* Enrichment" for the students involved, and all of the students, teachers, and parents understood that the school was participating in a pilot program for this thesis project.

The curriculum, though based heavily in my research, was also designed to be appropriate for the Hebrew, Judaic, and prayer levels of the students in Rockdale Temple's Hebrew classes. It is important to note that the lessons might be focused on

slightly different prayers, skills, and/or liturgical music if they were being piloted in a different Hebrew School. Throughout the curriculum, the reader will observe certain choices regarding prayer "choreography," music, and *siddurim* that are specific to Rockdale Temple and its religious school program. A teacher making use of this sample curriculum might substitute his/her congregation's *minhagim*, *siddur*, and regular liturgical music in order to offer a learning experience consistent with the needs of that congregation's and religious school's practice.

The pilot curriculum aims to offer sample lesson plans that are organized, deliberate, and consistent. Each lesson plan clearly articulates framing questions, goals, and objectives. Included are a session timeline to guide the instructor, as well as a complete materials list. The curriculum offers lesson plans for individual grade levels with the understanding that children of different ages have varying educational and developmental needs. However, sequential grades could surely participate together in any of these lessons. This pilot curriculum offers new information and skills in each lesson, along with review of past material and previously-learned prayers and skills. The curriculum includes both "classroom teaching" and communal prayer opportunities, combining learning with "doing."

The curriculum assumes that the instructor is knowledgeable in the areas of Hebrew and *t'filah*, though "information boxes" with details about the liturgy appear throughout the lessons, in order to inform the teacher. The curriculum also assumes that the instructor is able to lead liturgical music, though the lessons allow for a cantor, soloist, or other music professional to assist. This pilot curriculum is based on the prayerbook Mishkan T'filah, the current *siddur* of the CCAR and the Reform Movement.

A religious school might substitute its congregation's prayerbook if different, or even a complementary prayerbook specific to the school. However, the curriculum attempts to teach prayer skills students can carry with them to their congregation's and community's *t'filah*, so the congregational prayerbook is recommended over a special "student" prayerbook.

The eighteen lessons of the pilot curriculum follow. The lessons are divided by grade level (4th/Bet, 5th/Gimel, 6th/Dalet), and then are further divided by session. Each lesson follows an identical format. An evaluation of the pilot program follows in the next chapter.

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 1

This and subsequent lessons aim to give students the skills and tools to participate as pray-ers in Jewish communal worship settings. Students will concentrate on Barechu and Shema in this lesson, learning related Hebrew vocabulary, investigating the order and structure of these prayers in the context of a Jewish prayer service, and explore the meaning of the prayers. Students will practice singing these prayers, standing when appropriate, and bowing in the proper places, in order to gain comfort with communal prayer.

Lesson 1 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema

Framing Questions
- How does understanding the Hebrew words in our prayers help us worship as Jews?
- Why is it important to have a call to prayer?
- What is the importance of the idea that Jews have only One God?

Goals
Students will…
- Understand the intent and implications of a call to worship
- Forge a deeper connect with the meanings of Barechu and Shema

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Sing *Barechu* and *Shema*
- Define the Hebrew word "echad" – one (אחד)
- Explain that the Barechu is a call to prayer
- Explain that the Shema is about our belief in One God
- Learn why various prayer "choreography" is used for these prayers (covering eyes, standing, bowing)

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Barechu* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-08	Barechu – Our Call to Prayer
08-15	Shema – God is One

Session Plan

Barechu – Our Call to Prayer (8 min)

1. Introduction: We are working on blessings in class. Blessings are types of prayers. We know many prayers, which we say during *t'filah.*
    a. (Ask question): What is *t'filah*?
        i. (suggested answers) prayer
        ii. worship services during which we pray to God
        iii. we participate in *t'filah* on Sunday mornings during religious school and on Shabbat with the congregation
2. Today we are going to review, practice, and learn more about two prayers you know well- Barechu and Shema.
    a. (Ask question) Does Barechu go by another name?
        i. (possible answer) Call to prayer/worship
    b. (Ask question) What does it mean to be called to prayer/worship?
        i. (possible answer) The prayer leader asks the congregation if we are ready to pray and we respond "yes" in order to show that we are ready to worship God.
    c. (Ask question) Why might it be important to have a call to prayer?
        i. (possible answers) The prayer leader needs to know that the congregation is ready to pray
        ii. A call to prayer/worship helps alert us to the fact that our most important prayers are about to begin
3. Turn to Barechu in siddur (p. 28)
    a. How do we know that Barechu addresses a group?
        i. Explain grammar of ברכו
        ii. Memory aid: Barechu = Hey you!
4. Practice call and response of Barechu in English
5. Pray Barechu together.
    a. Lead, emphasize bowing
    b. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    c. Sing a few times if needed
6. Follow up question: (Ask question) How does it feel to stand together as a community, be called to prayer, and answer that we are ready?

Shema – God is One (7 min)

7. We move from our call to prayer/worship, Barechu, to another prayer you know well- Shema.
    a. (Ask question) What is the meaning of Shema?
        i. (possible answer) Jews believe in One God
    b. (Ask question) For Barechu, we stood and bowed. What do we do physically for Shema?
        i. Stand (in some communities)
        ii. Close/cover eyes
    c. (Ask question) Why might someone stand to say Shema?
        i. (possible answers) Demonstrate importance of Shema

ii. Show respect to God

d. (Ask question) Why might someone cover his/her eyes while praying Shema?
    i. (possible answers) Concentrate on the prayer
    ii. Be alone with God
    iii. Listen better to those around us

8. Pray Shema together.
    a. Reminders:
        i. Stand.
        ii. Close/cover eyes if desired
        iii. Say/sing aloud!
            1. Explain that Shema is a declaration: "Our spirits are loud."
    b. Musical Setting: Sulzer

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 2

The Reform Movement has long placed emphasis on Shema, calling it "the watchword of our faith."This is often the first prayer our Jewish children learn. As they continue their Judaic, Hebrew, and prayer studies, it follows that emphasis should also be placed on the rest of Shema, the section we call "V'ahavta." This lesson focuses on the connection between the first line-s, known on its own as Shema, and the subsequent verses from Deuteronomy that make up "V'ahavta." Students will understand the meaning of the words in both parts of Shema, and will begin to work on their chanting of these later verses.

Lesson 2 Prayers:
- Shema
- V'ahavta

Framing Questions
- Do you feel a strong connection the Shema? Why or why not?
- How do we know that God loves us?
- How do we show that we love God?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider the ways in which God loves people
- Consider the ways in which people show love to God

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Sing Shema and V'ahavta
- Explain that Shema and V'ahavta are two parts of one liturgical element
- Define the "ahavah" אהבה – love

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-05	Review of Shema
05-15	Shema Part II – V'ahavta

Session Plan

Review of Shema (5 min)

1. Review previous lesson on Shema – question and answer session
    a. (Ask Question)What is the Shema about?
        i. (possible answer) Our belief in One God
    b. (Ask question) What does the Hebrew word "echad" אחד mean?
        i. (answer) One
    c. (Ask question) Do we do anything special with our bodies when we say Shema?
        i. (answers) Cover our eyes
        ii. Stand up
    d. (Ask question) Why do we do these things?
        i. (possible answers)
        ii. Concentration
        iii. Be alone with God
        iv. Listen better
        v. Show that these words are special, important, serious
2. Reflection on Shema
    a. (Ask question) Did you think about Shema this week?
    b. (Ask question) Did you recite or use it at home?
    c. (Ask question) How might you use Shema at home or outside of congregational *t'filah?*
        i. (possible answers) Recite at bedtime or upon waking
        ii. As part of personal spontaneous prayer
3. Recite Shema together
    b. Reminders:
        i. Stand.
        ii. Close/cover eyes if desired
        iii. Say/sing aloud!
    c. Musical Setting: Sulzer

***Shema* - שמע**
- "watchword" of Judaism
- Focuses on God's unity
- שמע – listen/hear
- אחד – one
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6

Shema Part II – V'ahavta (10 min)

4. Shema has a prayer partner.
    c. (Ask question) Do you know the name of that prayer partner?
        i. (answer) V'ahavta
    d. (Ask question) What is inside of a *mezuzah*?
        i. (answer) Shema/V'ahavta
    e. Shema and V'ahavta are really two pieces of one liturgical element. The words come from Torah. When we think about these two pieces together, we can call them the Shema. While we're learning, we'll separate them so we know which part we're working on.
5. Explain meaning of V'ahavta ואהבת through root אהב

***V'ahavta* – ואהבת**
- Continuation of Shema
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6
- Focuses on love of God, doing God's *mitzvot*
- ואהבת – and you shall love
- Root: אהב – love

a. Write prayer name and root on white board / point out in siddur

6. Consider the concept of love
    a. (Ask question) How do we show love to our families, friends, and others in our lives?
        i. (possible answers) Hugs and kisses
        ii. Treat kindly
        iii. Help with jobs, tasks
        iv. Compliment
        v. Protect
        vi. Caring
7. Study first line of V'ahavta
    a. Students read first line in Hebrew and English
    b. (Ask question) Based on what we read, what is the V'ahavta about?
        i. (possible answer) Loving God with your whole being
8. (Ask questions) Why are we asked to love God with our hearts, souls, and beings?
        i. (possible answers) There are many ways to love God and we need to use all of our possible manners of loving
        ii. We should not only love God with one part of us and not consider God with another part – God deserves our whole beings
    b. (Ask questions) How do we show love to God?
        i. (possible answers) Pray
        ii. Engage in acts of *tikkun olam*
        iii. Study Torah and other Jewish texts
        iv. Care for other people
        v. Give *tzedakah*
        vi. Provide for our Jewish communities
9. Chant V'ahavta together.
    a. Reminders:
        i. Read/chant slowly
        vii. Stay seated
        viii. Mark stopping point to pick up next session
    b. Musical Setting: Torah trope

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 3

In this session, emphasis is placed on "V'ahavta," the later verses of Shema. Students will understand Shema's origin in the Torah (Deuteronomy chapter 6). Students will also be introduced to Torah trope, and will discuss why V'ahavta is chanted according to the Torah trope during worship. Finally, students will define mitzvot, *commandments, and consider the meaning of being commanded by God.*

Lesson 3 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema
- V'ahavta

Framing Questions
- What does it mean to be commanded by God?
- Why might our liturgy be derived from the words of Torah?
- Why do we sing V'ahavta according to Torah trope?

Goals
Students will…
- Understand the origins of Shema/V'ahavta
- Understand why Torah trope is used in the chanting of V'ahavta in worship
- Consider the concept of being commanded

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Recite Barechu, Shema, and V'ahavta as a group
- Chant V'ahavta according to Torah trope
- Explain that Shema and V'ahavta come from Deuteronomy 6
- Define *mitzvah/mitzvot*

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary by W. Gunther Plaut – teacher
- *Barechu* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-05	Time for *T'filah*
05-15	V'ahavta and Mitzvot

Session Plan

Time for *T'filah* (5 min)

1. This session begins with *t'filah*.
    a. Pray Barechu
        i. Reminders:
            1. Teacher should lead
            2. Stand
            3. Demonstrate proper bowing
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    b. Recite Shema
        i. Reminders
            1. Students should remain standing (according to congregational custom)
            2. Cover eyes if desired
            3. Pray aloud
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer

V'ahavta Continued (10 min)

2. Now that we have taken some time to pray together today, we are going to continue to learn to recite the words of the second part of the Shema, the words we call V'ahavta.
3. Reminder: Shema and V'ahavta are two pieces of one liturgical element.
    a. Origin: Deuteronomy, chapter 6.
    f. Show students Biblical text in Plaut Chumash
    g. Note that end of first line of Shema (...Adonai Echad) runs straight into beginning of first line of V'ahavta (V'ahavta et Adonai...)
2. Mitzvot in V'ahavta
    a. Ask students to read through first paragraph of V'ahavta
    b. (Ask question) What is a *mitzvah*?
        i. (answer) Commandment
    c. (Ask question) What are we commanded to do in V'ahavta?
        i. (possible answers) Love God
        ii. Teach Torah to our children
        iii. Engage in Jewish learning, study Torah
        iv. *Mezuzah* on doors/gates
        v. Do God's commandments
    d. (Ask question) What is the purpose of doing God's commandments?
        i. (possible answers) Leads us to live as good people and good Jews
        ii. Shows God our love for God
        iii. Gives us Jewish identities
4. Chanting V'ahavta
    a. Explain use of Torah trope to chant V'ahavta
        i. Define trope
    b. Ask students to find trope marks on the words of V'ahavta in siddur

***V'ahavta* – ואהבת**
- Focuses on love of God, doing God's *mitzvot*
- *Mitzvah:* commandment
    - Root צוה – command
    - Plural: *mitzvot*
- *Mezuzah*: lit. doorpost
    - Scroll in case
    - Contains Shema/ V'ahavta

5. Recite V'ahavta together.
    a. Reminders:
        i. Read/chant slowly
        iv. Stay seated
        v. Mark stopping point to pick up next session
    b. Musical Setting: Torah trope

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 4

The Mi Chamocha recitation offers the worshipping community an opportunity to recall the Exodus from Egypt and praise God who saves and redeems. Mi Chamocha is often strongly connected to Jewish sacred music, as its origin is as a biblical "song." Students will learn about the meaning and origin of the words, as well as learn to sing various musical settings of the words that lend additional meaning to this Song of Freedom.

Lesson 3 Prayers:
- Mi Chamocha

Framing Questions
- How does sacred music help convey the meaning of our prayers?
- What is the spirit and purpose of Mi Chamocha?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider the role of sacred music in conveying the spirit or meaning of a prayer
- Understand the place of Mi Chamocha in the Jewish liturgy

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Sing Mi Chamocha according to many musical settings
- Articulate the spirit of the words of Mi Chamocha
- Explain the Torah origins of the words of Mi Chamocha (Exodus 15)

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary by W. Gunther Plaut – teacher
- *Mi Chamocha* by Debbie Friedman, Shireinu: Our Songs #192d – teacher
- *Mi Chamocha* by A.W. Binder, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Mi Chamocha* by Isadore Freed, Shireinu: Our Songs #192a – teacher
- Guitar for instructor
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-05	Our Song of Freedom – Mi Chamocha
05-15	Singing in Joy – the Music of Mi Chamocha

Session Plan

Our Song of Freedom – Mi Chamocha (5 min)

1. Introduction: It's great to see everyone again! I've brought my guitar because we are going to sing today. We will learn about another liturgical element that comes from our Torah [this, too, is not a prayer, but a verse from Scripture that we recite to identify with that first miraculous redemption].
2. Introduce Mi Chamocha.
    a. Find Mi Chamocha in siddur (p. 40)
        i. Students should open siddurim and find for themselves
    b. Find Mi Chamocha in chumash
        i. Instructor will turn to the words and point them out to the students
    c. Explain Biblical context of Mi Chamocha
        i. (Teacher might say): Mi Chamocha comes right from our Torah! When the Israelites were leaving Egypt after being slaves for so long, they got stuck along the way at the shore of the Sea of Reeds. When God parted the Sea so that the Israelites could cross on dry land, they sang praises of God, shouting about the wonderful and awesome nature of God! This song of praise was Mi Chamocha.

Mi Chamocha – מי כמכה
- Song of the Sea (Exodus 15)
- מי – who
- כמכה – like you
- אלים – gods
- י – Adonai/God

3. Define first line of Mi Chamocha
    a. Point out important vocabulary words
    b. Examine question: "Who is like You, God?"
        i. (Ask question) Why do we ask this question for which we already know the answer?
            1. (possible answer) We use this question to exclaim the greatness and awesomeness of God.

Singing in Joy – The Music of Mi Chamocha (10 min)

4. (Ask questions) What is the feeling or spirit of Mi Chamocha? How should we feel when we recite Mi Chamocha?
        i. (possible answers) Happy, grateful, thankful, excited, joyful
        ii. We are happy that God freed the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt.
5. (Ask question) How do you think the music for this prayer should sound, based on the meaning and origin of the words?
    a. (possible answers) Joyful, upbeat, happy, etc.
6. Learn Mi Chamocha musical settings
    a. Musical Setting 1: A.W. Binder
    b. Musical Setting 2: Debbie Friedman (Shireinu #192d)
    c. Musical Setting 3: Isadore Freed
7. Poll students regarding musical settings
    a. What feelings do each of the musical settings invoke?
    b. Which tune helped you feel joyful like the Israelites? Why?
    c. Why might there be different sounding musical settings for Mi Chamocha?

8. Sing Shema, V'ahavta, and Mi Chamocha together.
    a. Shema
        i. Reminders
            1. Students should remain standing (according to congregational custom)
            2. Cover eyes if desired
            3. Pray aloud
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    b. V'ahavta
        i. Reminders
            1. Be seated
        ii. Musical Setting: Torah trope
    c. Mi Chamocha
        i. Reminders
            1. Remain seated
        ii. Musical setting: Friedman (Shireinu #192d)

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 5

Mi Chamocha offers a liturgical opportunity to praise God for redeeming the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt, and God's role in it, is a crucial Jewish idea which demonstrates God's love for the people of Israel. Students will learn more about this act of freedom through midrash *and music. In this lesson, students will also tie together the liturgy learned over the last few lessons under the heading of "Shema u'Virchotecha" and pray as a community.*

Lesson 5 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema
- V'ahavta
- Mi Chamocha

Framing Questions
- How does Jewish music teach us about our tradition and heritage?
- Why do we recite the phrase "Mi Chamocha" also as "Mi Kamocha"?
- What is the role of *midrash* in understanding our Biblical texts?

Goals
Students will…
- Gain an understanding of the story of the Exodus from Egypt
- Be exposed to Jewish music that teaches Judaic concepts
- Consider the use of *midrash* to further understand Biblical texts

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Recite Barechu, Shema, V'ahavta, and Mi Chamocha together
- Sing "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman
- Differentiate between the beginning sounds/letters in the words Chamocha and Kamocha
- Define the term *midrash*

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Mi Chamocha* by Isadore Freed, Shireinu: Our Songs #192a – teacher
- *Midrash* on Nachshon ben Aminadav (B. Talmud, Sotah 36b-37a; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Beshallach 5) – teacher
- Guitar for instructor
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-05	The Words of Mi Chamocha – Nachshon's Story
05-10	Our Music Tells our Story
10-15	Praying Shema u'Virchotecha Together

Session Plan

The Words of Mi Chamocha – Nachshon's Story (5 min)

1. Thanks for having me back in your class this week! We will continue to learn about Mi Chamocha.
    a. Pray Mi Chamocha
        i. Musical Setting: Friedman (Shireinu #192d)
2. (Ask question) Look at the first two lines of Mi Chamocha- what is the difference between the similar words at the beginnings of the two lines?
    a. (answer) The first line says "Mi Chamocha" and the second line says "Mi Kamocha."
3. Explanation through grammar
    a. We know from looking at our *Sefer* Torah, our Torah scroll, that the Torah contains no vowels or trope marks. These were established by people called the Masoretes. The Masoretes did this so that people would read the Torah in a consistent way.
    b. The Masoretes decided that the repetition of the phrase Mi Chamocha should be emphasized, and therefore, they removed the hyphen the second time, so that both syllables (Mi and ka) would be accented. Since the chaf now begins a new word, it is vocalized with a dot called a *dagesh* in order to make the letter a *kaf.* When we read the phrase "Mi Kamocha," we know that this is for extra emphasis—it sounds different.
4. Explanation through *midrash*
    a. Even though we have a grammatical reason for why our two phrases, "Mi Chamocha" and "Mi Kamocha," sound a bit different, our tradition has a *midrash* that offers us a wonderful story about why this might be!
    b. Define *midrash*
    c. Tell *midrash* about Nachshon
        i. (Teacher may use the below narrative, derived from B. Talmud, Sotah 36b-37a / Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Beshallach 5. Teacher may also read from one of the two above sources)
        ii. When the Israelite people were standing on the shores on the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army quickly approaching, the Jewish people began praying. A man named Nachshon, however, did not think that praying alone would be sufficient. Moses, as commanded by God, put his staff into the sand…and the waters did not part. With the army literally at the heels of the Jews, Nachshon did what no other Israelite would do. He jumped into the water and declared, "Mi Chamocha ba'elim Adonai! Mi Chamocha nedar bakodesh!" But on the second line, his

***Midrash* - מדרש**
- Halachic or Aggadic
- Aggadic: explores ethical ideas, biblical characters, or narrative moments
- Contained in the corpus of classical Jewish texts compiled 200 - 1000 C.E.

mouth was filled with water and he choked on water while saying the word Chamocha, instead saying Kamocha. God, seeing Nachshon's brave act, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and the Israelites crossed safely.

Our Music Tells our Story (5 min)

5. Explain purpose of non-liturgical Jewish music
    a. Music plays a very crucial role in Judaism. Some Jewish music serves to remind us of our Jewish legends and Bible narratives.
6. Learn "Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman
    a. Introduce song: this song talks about the Israelite's miraculous crossing of the parted sea! This piece of music is all about the women among the Israelites who, led by Miriam, celebrated God's might and power as God saved the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.
    b. Lyrics: Mishkan T'filah p. 342

Praying Shema u'Virchotecha Together (5 min)

7. Define "Shema u'Virchotecha"
8. Pray Barechu, Shema, V'ahavta, Mi Chamochah.
    a. Pray Barechu
        i. Reminders:
            1. Teacher should lead
            2. Stand
            3. Demonstrate proper bowing
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    b. Shema
        i. Reminders
            1. Students should remain standing (according to congregational custom)
            2. Cover eyes if desired
            3. Pray aloud
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    c. V'ahavta
        i. Reminders
            1. Be seated
        ii. Musical Setting: Torah trope
    d. Mi Chamocha
        i. Reminders
            1. Remain seated
        ii. Musical setting: Freed

Shema u'Virchoteha
שמע וברכותיה

- Shema and its Blessings
- One of three large prayer rubrics at the core of Jewish liturgy (also Amidah and Torah service)
- Contains Barechu, Ma'ariv Aravim/ Yotzer Or, Ahavah Rabbah/ Ahavat Olam, Shema, V'ahavta, Geulah (incl. Mi Chamocha)

4th Grade / Level ב
Lesson 6

Music is a powerful learning tool; it is also a powerful aspect of worship. Sacred music allows us to connect with the words of our tradition and to lift our souls and hearts towards God as we pray. This lesson helps students articulate the role of music in prayer. Students also have a chance to review the major prayers of Shema u'Virchotecha, as well as engage in a meaningful prayer experience as a kehillah kedoshah, a holy community of pray-ers.

Lesson 6 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema
- V'ahavta
- Mi Chamocha

Framing Questions
- Why is music important to our worship as Jews?
- How might music help you learn or remember the words of the *siddur*?

Goals
Students will…
- Feel equipped to participate more fully in congregational and religious school worship services
- Gain exposure to liturgical music
- Understand the importance and role of liturgical music in prayer

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Barechu, Shema, V'ahavta, and Mi Chamocha together
- Articulate the purposes and meanings of the above prayers
- Demonstrate correct "choreography" for the above prayers
- Discuss the use of music in learning and praying

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Barechu* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Mi Chamocha* by Debbie Friedman, Shireinu: Our Songs #192d – teacher
- Guitar for instructor
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-07	Review of Shema u'Virchotecha
07-11	Why do we Sing?
11-15	Praying as a Kehillah Kedoshah

Session Plan

Review of Shema u'Virchotecha (7 min)

1. Review of Shema u'Virchoteha (teacher may use question and answer, lecture, or any combination of teaching methods to review the below information)
2. Barechu
    a. "Call to prayer"
    b. We bow (only when we are the ones speaking aloud) at Baruch and rise up at Adonai
        i. ברכ → knees NO
3. Shema
    c. Origin: Deuteronomy 6
    d. States clearly what Jews believe about God
        i. We only have one God, we call our God Adonai, God is "whole"
        ii. First prayer learned as a Jew
    e. Stand for Shema
        i. Varies by congregation
        ii. Purpose: give honor to God and this religious statement
    f. Cover or close their eyes to say Shema
        i. Purpose: Concentrate on the idea/words, be alone with God, feel prayerful, "hear" others better
    g. Pray aloud
        i. "Our spirits are loud!"
4. V'ahavta
    h. Origin: Deuteronomy 6
        i. Shema and V'ahavta are one prayer unit together called Shema
    i. Sing V'ahavta according to the trope
        i. include the trope/cantillation marks in siddur
    j. Commanded to love God
        i. We do this by following God's commandments, doing Jewish things and living Jewishly
    k. Sit down to say V'ahavta
        i. Some stand for whole unit or sit for whole unit
5. Mi Chamocha
    l. Prayer began as "Song of the Sea"
        i. Origin: Exodus 15 (Israelites' Exodus from Egypt)
        ii. Our story says that the Israelites sang this song as they crossed the sea into freedom
    m. Meaning: Our God is great, awesome, and unique for having freed our ancestors

Why do we Sing? (4 min)

6. (Ask question) In our Jewish tradition, why do we sing prayers as opposed to just saying them? Why do we choose certain tunes or musical settings for our prayers?
    a. (possible answers) to evoke a specific feeling
    b. help remember words

c. link to history/tradition
d. (If they need an example: (ask question)Why do we usually sing happy or joyful tunes for Mi Chamocha?
    i. (possible answers) Mi Chamocha is a happy song about freedom; we sing happy tunes to match the feeling of freedom and the joy of leaving Egypt)

7. Importance of Jewish Liturgical Music (teacher may express the following)
    e. Music is one of the ways that we connect with our ancestors and other people who came before us. By singing the same songs as they did, we become part of the same family of Jewish people who pray and sing a certain way.
    f. Music also helps us learn and remember. Think about one of the prayers we have learned together: is it easier to just read the words or to sing the words? For me and many other people, music helps us learn things better and quicker. This is actually why we have trope, the system of singing the words in our Torah. The trope marks, which tell us how to chant the words in the Torah, help the Torah readers to learn and remember the words and the ideas they are reading about.
    g. Finally, music helps us feel a certain way. So when we sing Mi Chamocha with a happy tune, this helps us to remember the happy feelings of freedom. When we sing Shema slowly with a very serious and beautiful tune, it helps us to think about the importance of our words and concentrate on them.

Praying as a Kehillah Kedoshah (4 min)

8. Pray together as a kehillah kedoshah, a holy community.
    a. Pray Barechu
        i. Reminders:
            1. Teacher should lead
            2. Stand
            3. Demonstrate proper bowing
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    b. Shema
        i. Reminders
            1. Students should remain standing (according to congregational custom)
            2. Cover eyes if desired
            3. Pray aloud
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    c. V'ahavta
        i. Reminders
            1. Be seated
        ii. Musical Setting: Torah trope
    d. Mi Chamocha
        i. Reminders
            1. Remain seated

ii. Musical setting: Friedman (Shireinu #192d)

9. Pilot Conclusion: Thank you for your wonderful participation in our *t'filah* enrichment these past few weeks. If you have questions about Jewish prayer, you can your teachers, religious school director, and rabbis. I hope you'll bring your *t'filah* skills to services with the community here in our Temple.

5th Grade / Level ג
Lesson 1

This and subsequent lessons aim to give students the skills and tools to participate as pray-ers in Jewish communal worship settings. The main focus will be on learning related Hebrew vocabulary, investigating the order and structure of prayers in the context of a Jewish prayer service, and explore the meaning of the prayers. Students will review Barechu and Shema in this lesson. Then, they will establish the connection between Shema and the subsequent verses from Deuteronomy that make up "V'ahavta" (known together simply as Shema). Finally, students will have a chance to examine the meaning of the words of V'ahavta and consider the idea of being commanded.

Lesson 1 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema
- V'ahavta

Framing Questions
- How does understanding the Hebrew words in our prayers help us worship as Jews?
- Why might our prayers be derived from the words of Torah?
- What does it mean to be commanded by God?

Goals
Students will…
- Understand the intent and implications of a call to worship
- Understand the origins of Shema/V'ahavta
- Consider the concept of being commanded

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Barechu, Shema, and V'ahavta as a group
- Explain that the Barechu is a call to prayer
- Explain that the Shema is about our belief in One God
- Explain that Shema and V'ahavta come from Deuteronomy 6
- Define *mitzvah/mitzvot*

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary by W. Gunther Plaut – teacher
- *Barechu* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-07	Introduction to *T'filah*
07-15	Shema Part II – V'ahavta

Session Plan

Introduction to *T'filah* (7 min)

1. Introduction: Today we're going to spend some time praying and singing together. I'm going to join your class for fifteen minutes each week to work on *t'filah*, prayer, with all of you.
    a. (Ask question): What is *t'filah*?
        i. (suggested answers) prayer
        ii. worship services during which we pray to God
        iii. we participate in *t'filah* on Sunday mornings during religious school and on Shabbat with the congregation
2. Today we are going to review two prayers you know well- Barechu and Shema.
3. The Barechu is our call to prayer
    a. (Ask question) What does it mean to be called to prayer/worship?
        i. (possible answer) The prayer leader asks the congregation if we are ready to pray and we respond "yes" in order to show that we are ready to worship God
    b. Turn to Barechu in siddur (p. 28)
        i. How do we know that Barechu is a "bowing" prayer?
            1. Explain root of ברכו
        ii. How do we know that Barechu addresses a group?
            1. Explain grammar of ברכו
            2. Memory aid: Barchu = Hey you!
    c. Pray Barechu together.
        iii. Lead, emphasize bowing
        iv. Musical Setting: Sulzer
    d. Follow up question: (Ask question) How does it feel to stand together as a community, be called to prayer, and answer that we are ready?
4. We turn now to Shema
    a. (Ask question) What is the meaning of Shema?
        i. (possible answer) Jews believe in One God
    b. (Ask question) For Barechu, we stood and bowed. What do we do physically for Shema?
        i. Stand (in some communities)
        ii. Close/cover eyes
    c. Pray Shema together
        i. Reminders:
            1. Stand
            2. Close/cover eyes if desired
            3. Say/sing aloud!
                a. Explain that Shema is a declaration: "Our spirits are loud."
        ii. Musical Setting: Sulzer

***Barechu* - ברכו**
- Call to prayer/worship
- Root: ברכ - bless
- Knee: בֶּרֶךְ
    - Same root
- Ending: ו
    - Plural command

***Shema* - שמע**
- "watchword" of Judaism
- Focuses on God's unity
- שמע – listen/hear
- אחד – one
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6

Shema Part II – V'ahavta (8 min)

5. Shema has a prayer partner.
    a. (Ask question) Do you know the name of that prayer partner?
        ii. (answer) V'ahavta
    b. (Ask question) What is inside of a *mezuzah*?
        iii. (answer) Shema/V'ahavta
    c. Reminder: Shema and V'ahavta are two pieces of one big prayer.
        i. Origin: Deuteronomy, chapter 6.
        ii. Show students Biblical text in Plaut Chumash
        iii. Note that end of first line of Shema (...Adonai Echad) runs straight into beginning of first line of V'ahavta (V'ahavta et Adonai...)

***V'ahavta* – ואהבת**
- Continuation of Shema
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6
- Focuses on love of God, doing God's *mitzvot*
- *Mitzvah:* commandment
    - Root צוה – command
    - Plural: *mitzvot*
- *Mezuzah*: lit. doorpost
    - Scroll in case
    - Contains Shema/ V'ahavta

6. Mitzvot in V'ahavta
    a. Ask students to read through first paragraph of V'ahavta
    b. (Ask question) What is a *mitzvah*?
        iv. (answer) Commandment
    c. (Ask question) What are we commanded to do in V'ahavta?
        v. (possible answers) Love God
        vi. Teach Torah to our children
        vii. Engage in Jewish learning, study Torah
        viii. *Mezuzah* on doors/gates
        ix. Do God's commandments
    d. (Ask question) What is the purpose of doing God's commandments?
        x. (possible answers) Leads us to live as good people and good Jews
        xi. Shows God our love for God
        xii. Gives us Jewish identities
7. Pray V'ahavta together.
    a. Reminders:
        i. Read/chant slowly
        i. Stay seated
        ii. Mark stopping point to pick up next session
    b. Musical Setting: Torah trope

5th Grade / Level ג
Lesson 2

In this session, emphasis is placed on Shema as a whole – what we might refer to as Shema and V'ahavta. Students will discuss the concept of love – our love for God and God's love for us. Students will also translate, with the help of teachers, the first line of V'ahavta in order to understand the importance of Hebrew vocabulary and learning meaning of what we pray. As in each session, students will pray together as a community.

Lesson 2 Prayers:
- Shema
- V'ahavta

Framing Questions
- How does translating the Hebrew of our liturgy help us better understand our prayers?
- What does it mean to love God and show God this love?
- Why do we sing V'ahavta according to Torah trope?

Goals
Students will…
- Understand why Torah trope is used in the chanting of V'ahavta in worship
- Consider the ways in which God loves people
- Consider the ways in which people show love to God

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Shema and V'ahavta as a group
- Chant V'ahavta according to Torah trope
- Define "ahavah" אהבה – love

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Shema* by Salomon Sulzer, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-03	Review of Shema
03-06	Review of V'ahavta
06-15	Love Adonai Your God

Session Plan

Review of Shema (3 min)

1. Introduction: Today, we're going to review Shema and continue to learn about V'ahavta.
2. Review Shema – question and answer session
    a. (Ask Question)What is the Shema about?
        i. (possible answer) Our belief in One God
    b. (Ask question) What does the Hebrew word "echad" אחד mean?
        i. (answer) One
    c. (Ask question) Do we do anything special with our bodies when we say Shema?
        i. (answers) Cover our eyes
        ii. Stand up
    d. (Ask question) Why do we do these things?
        i. (possible answers)
        ii. Concentration
        iii. Be alone with God
        iv. Listen better
        v. Show that this prayer is special, important, serious
3. Pray Shema together
    d. Reminders:
        i. Stand.
        ii. Close/cover eyes if desired
        iii. Say/sing aloud!
    e. Musical Setting: Sulzer

***Shema* - שמע**
- "watchword" of Judaism
- Focuses on God's unity
- שמע – listen/hear
- אחד – one
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6

Review of V'ahavta (3 min)

4. (Ask question) Now the Shema has a partner in prayer- can someone name the partner?
    a. (desired answer) V'ahavta
5. (Ask question) Where in the Hebrew Bible do we find the words for Shem and V'ahavta?
    a. (desired answer) Deuteronomy, chapter 6.
6. (Ask question) Together we call Shema and V'ahavta… (?)
    a. (desired answer) Shema

***V'ahavta* – ואהבת**
- Continuation of Shema
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6
- Focuses on love of God, doing God's *mitzvot*

Love Adonai Your God (9 min)

7. Explain meaning of V'ahavta ואהבת through root אהב
    a. Write prayer name and root on white board / point out in siddur
8. Consider the concept of love
    a. (Ask question) How do we show love to our families, friends, and others in our lives?
        xiii. (possible answers) Hugs and kisses
        xiv. Treat kindly

xv. Help with jobs, tasks
xvi. Compliment
xvii. Protect
xviii. Caring

9. Translate and study first line of V'ahavta
    a. Students read first line in Hebrew and English
    b. Translate word-by-word together
        a. Translate familiar words first
            i. Define words, show roots to students
        b. Define unknown words for students
    c. (Ask question) Based on what we read, what is the V'ahavta about?
        i. (possible answer) Loving God with your whole being

***V'ahavta* – ואהבת**
- Root: אהב – love
- ואהבת – and you shall love
- יי – God
- אלהיך – your God
- בכל – with all
- לבבך – your heart
- נפשך – your soul
- מאדך – your "veryness"
    - (all of you)
- ך ending – your
    - 2nd person possesive

10. (Ask questions) Why are we asked to love God with our hearts, souls, and beings?
    i. (possible answers) There are many ways to love God and we need to use all of our possible manners of loving
    ii. We should not only love God with one part of us and not consider God with another part – God deserves our whole beings
    b. (Ask questions) How do we show love to God?
    iii. (possible answers) Pray
    iv. Engage in acts of *tikkun olam*
    v. Study Torah and other Jewish texts
    vi. Care for other people
    vii. Give *tzedakah*
    viii. Provide for our Jewish communities
11. Chanting V'ahavta
    a. Explain use of Torah trope to chant V'ahavta
        i. Define trope
        ix. Ask students to find trope marks on the words of V'ahavta in siddur
12. Pray V'ahavta together.
    a. Reminders:
        i. Read/chant slowly
        x. Stay seated
    b. Musical Setting: Torah trope

5th Grade / Level ג
Lesson 3

The words from Psalms 51:17 help us articulate our readiness to pray the T'filah. This lesson will introduce students to the Biblical verse which serves as an introduction to the T'filah. Students will also learn basic prayer "choreography," understanding when to appropriately bow during the beginning of the T'filah. Students will discuss the chain of Jewish tradition and consider the importance of remembering those who came before them. This experience will allow students to connect the activity of prayer with their understanding of Jewish history and tradition.

Lesson 3 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai
- Avot v'Imahot

Framing Questions
- How do your body movements help you pray?
- Why is it important to remember our history as a Jewish people?
- How does our history connect with our prayer tradition?

Goals
Students will…
- Prepare themselves for prayerful moments
- Consider the importance of remembering our ancestors and history as a Jewish people

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Identify and define the Hebrew root שפה
- Articulate the need for an introductory prayer to begin the T'filah
- Bow in the appropriate places during the *Avot V'Imahot*
- Discuss the significance of naming Jewish ancestry in Avot v'Imahot

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary by W. Gunther Plaut – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-05	Adonai S'fatai as an Introduction
05-10	Connecting to our History through Avot v'Imahot
10-15	Knowing When to Bow

Session Plan

Adonai S'fatai as an Introduction (5 min)

1. Introduction: Today we are going to learn about the T'filah, also called the Amidah.
2. Focus on introductory line
   a. Begins: "Adonai s'fatai tiftach..."
   b. Origin: Psalms 51:17
      i. Point out in Plaut Chumash
3. Students find this line of the T'filah in siddur (p. 46)
4. Teach about the root שפה
5. Adonai S'fatai is another "call" to prayer like Barechu!
   a. Prepares pray-ers for T'filah/Amidah
   b. (Ask question) Why is it important to prepare to pray T'filah/Amidah?
      i. (possible answers) Preparation is needed for all prayer
      ii. T'filah is a particularly important prayer section – it needs preparation
6. Pray Adonai S'fatai
   a. Reminders:
      i. Pray in both Hebrew and English
      ii. Students stand in preparation for T'filah
      iii. Musical Setting: Shireinu #197

T'filah – תפילה
- "Prayer"
- Also "Amidah" – אמידה
  - Root: אמד - stand
  - "Standing (Prayer)"
- Weekday: 19 benedictions
- Shabbat: 7 benedictions
- Central worship moment in Jewish liturgy

Adonai S'fatai – אדני שפתי
- Psalms 51:17
- Introduces T'filah/Amidah
- Root: שפה – lips, language

Connecting to our History through Avot v'Imahot (5 min)

7. Continue with first benediction of T'filah – Avot v'Imahot.
   a. Find in siddur (p. 48)
   b. Introduce Avot v'Imahot
8. Preliminary questions:
   a. (Ask question) How does the prayer start and end?
      i. (possible answers) Our ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah Rebecca, Leah, Rachel)
      ii. our forefathers and mothers
      iii. the original Jews
   b. Who is mentioned?
      iv. (possible answer) Mentions of ancestor
   c. What is the prayer about? And why do our ancestors need to be mentioned here in our liturgy?
      v. (possible answers) The prayer talks about our God:
         1. The way we know that this is our God is that Adonai is the God of all of the first Jews, the people we read about in the Torah, who came before us
      vi. It's important for them to be mentioned here so that we remember our past/history.
      vii. It's good to know that we are connected to Jews from all times in the past, and that by praying to the same God, we continue the tradition of Judaism.

Avot v'Imahot – אבות ואמהות
- First T'filah benediction
- Mentions Jewish ancestry
  - Foremothers included in egalitarian *siddurim*
- God described as helper and protector of ancestors

Knowing When to Bow (5 min)

9. Introduction: You may have noticed that some people bow during this prayer
    a. (Ask questions) Why might we bow during this prayer? Who are we bowing to?
        i. (possible answers) We bow to God.
        ii. We want to show God respect.
        iii. This is a central/important prayer in our liturgy
10. How do we know when to bow?
    a. Instructions from Talmud, which contains many laws and rules for Jewish life, describe bowing during this prayer.
    b. We bow twice- at the beginning of the prayer and at the end.
        viii. We bow during the word Baruch and rise up at the name of God, Adonai
    b. Practice saying the first few words and bowing
    c. Practice saying the last few words and bowing
11. Pray Avot v'Imahot
    a. Reminders:
        ix. Stand
        x. Bow at beginning and end
            1. Bow at Baruch, rise up at Adonai
    b. Musical Setting: Shabbat *nusach*

5th Grade / Level ג
Lesson 4

The T'filah is the major prayer section of the liturgical rubric. The words from Psalms 51:17 help to prepare pray-ers to worship using the words of the T'filah. This lesson continues the study of the words "Adonai s'fatai..." and examines them as a "call to worship" for the T'filah. Students will learn about the meaning and purpose of the words, as well as learn to sing and identify musical settings of these words that serve to prepare them to pray.

Lesson 4 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai

Framing Questions
- Why does the T'filah require preparation to pray?
- How do you prepare yourself for prayer?
- How might music help you achieve a prayerful feeling?

Goals
Students will...
- Consider music's role in enabling prayerfulness
- Be exposed to a range of liturgical melodies for Adonai S'fatai
- Connect to the introductory verse for T'filah

Objectives
Students will be able to...
- Discuss the role of Adonai S'fatai in the liturgy
- Sing several musical settings for Adonai S'fatai
- Articulate which (if any) musical settings prepare them to pray the T'filah

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, by Craig Taubman – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai/Eternity Utters a Day*, by Dan Nichols, www.jewishrock.com – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-10	Music of Adonai S'fatai
12-15	Impact of Musical Setting on Prayer

Session Plan

Music of Adonai S'fatai (10 min)

1. Introduction: Last session, we learned about the introductory verse for T'filah, which begins with the words "Adonai s'fatai…" Today, we will concentrate on the musical settings for this verse.
2. Sing Adonai S'fatai together
    a. Musical Setting 1: unknown, Shireinu #197
        i. Note: this is the tune commonly used in our congregation when paired with Shabbat *nusach*
3. (Ask question) Did that tune help you prepare to pray the T'filah? Why or why not?
4. Teach and sing additional musical settings for Adonai S'fatai
    a. Musical Setting 2: Taubman
    b. Musical Setting 3: Nichols

Impact of Musical Setting on Prayer (5 min)

5. Poll students
    a. Which tune was your favorite? Why?
    b. Which tune best demonstrated the meaning of the prayer? Why?
    c. Which tune helped you get ready to pray? Why?
    d. Were all three of your answers the same? Why or why not?

5th Grade / Level א
Lesson 5

Avot v'Imahot and G'vurot, the first two benedictions of the T'filah or Amidah, contain descriptions of God. Students will find the attributes of God listed in these prayers and determine which they find appealing, helpful, comforting, or dissatisfying. Students will also continue to learn and review basic prayer "choreography," understanding when to appropriately bow during the beginning of the T'filah. Finally, students will be introduced to the concept of nusach, *the musical modes used to distinguish between various sacred times in the Jewish liturgical calendar.*

Lesson 5 Prayers:
- Avot V'Imahot
- G'vurot

Framing Questions
- What language and ideas would you use to describe God?
- Does God's complex identity affect how you approach God in prayer?
- How does music help us identify our place in the Jewish calendar?

Goals
Students will…
- Forge a connection with different attributes or visions of God
- Consider the God to whom they pray
- Be aware of changes in music/tune based on time/day/season

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Avot v'Imahot and G'vurot as a group
- Be reminded when to bow during the Avot V'Imahot
- Be able to articulate their ideal attributes of God
- Learn and define the word *nusach*
- Hear the difference between Shabbat and weekday *nusach*

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-06	Attributes of God
06-11	What is *Nusach?*
11-15	Praying the Beginning of the Amidah/T'filah (5min)

Session Plan

Attributes of God (6 min)

1. Introduction: Today we will review Avot v'Imahot and then discuss the G'vurot together, as well as work on prayer "choreography" together.
2. Find Avot v'Imahot in *siddur* (p. 48)
    a. How is God described in Avot v'Imahot?
        i. (Ask question) What are God's attributes?
            1. (possible answers) Great, mighty, awesome, transcendent, lover, creator, who remembers, redeemer, helper, shield
3. Focus on is called G'vurot.
    a. Find in *siddur* (p. 50)
    b. (Ask question)Who can define the word "gibor"?
        i. (possible answers) brave, courageous; strong, mighty; hero
    c. (Ask question) Can you find the connection with the name of our prayer, G'vurot?
        i. (possible answers) Same root
        ii. G'vurot is a prayer about our mighty, awesome God.
    d. Find all of the different descriptions and attributes of God in G'vurot
        i. (possible answers) Mighty, gives life, causes weather, sustains life, supporter, healer, caregiver, savior, deliverer
4. (Ask question) Consider both prayers: Which descriptions of God do you prefer? Why?
5. (Ask question) Is it difficult for you to think of a God that is so many things/does different jobs? Why/why not?

***G'vurot* – גבורות**
- Second T'filah benediction
- Lists attributes of God
- Praises God who:
    - Revives dead (traditional)
    - Gives life to all (Reform)
- God described as savior, givers and sustainer of life, helper,

What is *Nusach*? (5 min)

1. Sing G'vurot in both Shabbat and weekday *nusach*
    a. (Ask question) Did you hear a difference?
        i. (answer) the tunes were different
2. Explain: The first tune is the one we use during Shabbat and the second is the one we use during the week
    a. (Ask question) Why do you think we have different tunes for different times?
        i. (possible answers) Differentiates between times
        ii. Makes Shabbat is different/special
3. Define *nusach*
4. These tunes or musical settins are called *nusach*
    a. There is *nusach* for many different times- Shabbat, weekdays, Festivals (Passover, Sukkot, Shavuot), High Holy Days, etc.
5. Elaborate on importance of *nusach*

***Nusach* – נוסח**
- pattern of chanting specific prayers
- different nusach exists for various times in the Jewish calendar
    - Shabbat, weekday
    - Holy Days, Festivals, minor holidays
- these musical modes differentiate between one service and another

Praying the Beginning of the Amidah/T'filah (4 min)

6. Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot
    a. Reminders:

i. Stand
ii. Bow only at beginning and end of Avot v'Imahot

b. Musical settings:
i. Adonai S'fatai: Shireinu # 197
ii. Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot: Shabbat *nusach*

5th Grade / Level ג
Lesson 6

The T'filah or Amidah is the central prayer portion of the worship service. In teaching young Jews to participate as pray-ers, it is important that they learn to pray the first three benedictions of the T'filah. It is also important for pray-ers to understand the words of their worship, and to be able to add kavanah, *soul or spirit, to their prayer. This lesson also relates the concept of holy times and seasons to the current holiday of Chanukah, and offers a connection with holiday nusach.*

Lesson 6 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai
- Avot v'Imahot
- G'vurot
- Kedusha

Framing Questions
- What does God's holiness have to do with our prayers?
- How do we identify holy times and seasons in our prayer tradition?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider the concept of holiness
- Be exposed to Chanukah *nusach*/mode
- Feel better equipped to participate more fully in congregational and religious school worship services

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Adonai S'fatai and the first three prayers of the evening *T'filah* as a group
- Learn the Hebrew root for "holy" קדש
- Sing Maoz Tzur
- Sing Mi Chamocha in the Chanukah mode

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- *Maoz Tzur*, arranged H. Fromm, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-05	Praying Together as a Kehillah Kedoshah
05-07	The Holiness of God
07-15	Holy Times, Holy Seasons, Holy Music

Session Plan

Praying Together as a Kehillah Kedoshah (5 min)

1. Introduction: Today is our last session working on *t'filah* together. We will review what we've already learned, pray together, and do something special for Chanukah.
2. Pray together as a kehillah kedoshah, a holy community of pray-ers.
    a. Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha (evening)
        iii. Reminders:
            1. Stand
            2. Bow only at beginning and end of Avot V'Imahot
        iv. Musical Settings:
            1. Adonai S'fatai: Shireinu # 197
            2. Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha: Shabbat nusach
                a. State this explicitly
                b. Explain the use of Shabbat nusach during weekday services in a religious school setting

The Holiness of God (2 min)

3. (Ask question) Who recognizes the last prayer we sang together?
    c. (answer) Kedusha
4. Introduce Kedusha
    d. Define prayer name, show Hebrew root
    e. Explain differences between morning and evening versions
        i. Note: morning version on p. 30 in siddur
5. (ask question) Look at the Hebrew and English words- what is it about?
    f. (possible answers) God is holy
    g. We should work to be holy like God

***Kedusha* – קדשה**
- Third T'filah benediction
- Describes God's holiness
- Different versions for morning versus evening
    - Evening Kedusha is shorter
    - Morning Kedusha contains congregation responses

Holy Times, Holy Seasons, Holy Music (8 min)

6. We've just prayed the words of the Kedusha, a prayer that talks about God's holiness.
    a. What do we define as holy in Judaism?
        i. (possible answers) God
        ii. Torah / Jewish texts
        iii. Human beings
        iv. Anything God has created
7. Time is also holy
    b. Another word for holy- "sacred"
    c. "Holy" and "sacred" describe special times, seasons, or days
8. (Ask question) Name a holy time that we celebrate every week?
    d. (answer) Shabbat
9. Review *nusach*
    e. Shabbat has its own sound, its own *nusach*, used to signal that it is Shabbat

10. (Ask) Name a special prayer that is just for Shabbat:
    f. (possible answers) V'shamru, Yismechu
        i. These songs talk about Shabbat as sacred and special
        ii. We sing them only on Shabbat to note the holiness of the day
11. This week, we are celebrating Chanukah
    g. Chanukah, just like Shabbat and other holidays, has its own sound, its own *nusach*
    h. Sing *Maoz Tzur*
        i. Lyrics in siddur on p. 364
        ii. Sing one time in Hebrew, plus first verse/chorus in English
    i. The tune we use for Maoz Tzur is the musical mode for Chanukah. We sing other prayers to the tune of Maoz Tzur, in order to show that it is Chanukah.
        i. Example: Mi Chamocha.
            1. Sing Mi Chamocha to the tune of Maoz Tzur

***Maoz Tzur* – מעוז צור**
- "Rock of Ages"
- *Piyyut* - liturgical poem
- Written 13th century
- Celebrates God as the "rock" of the Jewish people
- Traditional Chanukah song

12. Pilot Conclusion: Pilot Conclusion: Thank you for your wonderful participation in our *t'filah* enrichment these past few weeks. If you have questions about Jewish prayer, you can your teachers, religious school director, and rabbi. I hope you'll bring your *t'filah* skills to services with the community here in our Temple.

6th Grade / Level ז
Lesson 1

This and subsequent lessons aim to give students the skills and tools to participate as pray-ers in Jewish communal worship settings. The main focus will be on learning related Hebrew vocabulary, investigating the order and structure of prayers in the context of a Jewish prayer service, and explore the meaning of the prayers. In this lesson, Students will discuss the chain of Jewish tradition and consider the importance of remembering those who came before them. This experience will allow students to connect the activity of prayer with their understanding of Jewish history

Lesson 1 Prayers:
- Barechu
- Shema
- V'ahavta
- Mi Chamocha
- Avot V'Imahot

Framing Questions
- Why is it important to remember our history as a Jewish people?
- How does our history connect with our prayer tradition?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider the importance of remembering our ancestors and history as a Jewish people

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Barechu, Shema, V'ahavta, Mi Chamocha, and Avot V'Imahot as a group
- Discuss the significance of naming Jewish ancestry in Avot v'Imahot

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timline

00-07	Communal Prayer
07-13	Connecting to our History through Avot v'Imahot
13-15	Praying Avot v'Imahot Together

Session Plan

Communal Prayer (7 min)

1. Introduction: Today we're going to spend some time praying and singing together. I'm going to join your class for fifteen minutes each week to work on *t'filah*, prayer, with all of you. We'll use Mishkan T'filah, which is the *siddur* or prayerbook we use in our congregation.
    a. (Ask question): What is *t'filah*?
        i. (suggested answers) prayer
        ii. worship services during which we pray to God
        iii. we participate in *t'filah* on Sunday mornings during religious school and on Shabbat with the congregation
2. Lead group in praying Barechu, Shema, V'ahavta, and Mi Chamocha
    a. Musical Settings:
        i. Barechu: Sulzer
        ii. Shema: Sulzer
        iii. V'ahavta: Torah trope
        iv. Mi Chamocha: Debbie Friedman (Shireinu #192d)

Barechu - ברכו
- Call to prayer/worship
- Root: ברכ - bless
- Knee: בָּרֶךְ
    - Same root
- Ending: ו
    - Plural command

Shema - שמע
- "watchword" of Judaism
- Focuses on God's unity
- שמע – listen/hear
- אחד – one
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6

V'ahavta – ואהבת
- Continuation of Shema
- Origin: Deuteronomy 6
- Focuses on love of God, doing God's *mitzvot*

Mi Chamocha – מי כמכה
- Song of the Sea (Exodus 15)
- Themes: Redemption, Freedom

Connecting to our History through Avot v'Imahot (6 min)

1. Continue with first benediction of T'filah – Avot v'Imahot.
    a. Find in siddur (p. 48)
    b. Introduce Avot v'Imahot
2. Preliminary questions:
    a. (Ask question) How does the prayer start and end?
        i. (possible answers) Our ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel)
        ii. our forefathers and mothers
        iii. the original Jews
    b. Who is mentioned?
        iv. (possible answer) Mentions of ancestor
    c. What is the prayer about? And why do our ancestors need to be mentioned here in our liturgy?
        v. (possible answers) The prayer talks about our God:
            1. The way we know that this is our God is that Adonai is the God of all of the first Jews, the people we read about in the Torah, who came before us
        vi. It's important for them to be mentioned here so that we remember our past/history.
        vii. It's good to know that we are connected to Jews from all times in the past, and that by praying to the same God, we continue the tradition of Judaism.

Avot v'Imahot – אבות ואמהות
- First T'filah benediction
- Mentions Jewish ancestry
    - Foremothers included in egalitarian *siddurim*
- God described as helper and protector of ancestors

Praying Avot v'Imahot Together (2 min)

3. Pray Avot V'Imahot together
    a. Reminders:
        i. Stand
        ii. Bow at beginning and end
            1. Bow at Baruch, rise up at Adonai
    b. Musical Setting: Shabbat *nusach*

6th Grade / Level ז
Lesson 2

Avot v'Imahot and G'vurot, the first two major prayers of the T'filah or Amidah, contain descriptions of God. Students will find the attributes of God listed in these prayers and determine which they find appealing, helpful, comforting, or dissatisfying. Students will also learn basic prayer "choreography," understanding when to appropriately bow during the beginning of the T'filah.

Lesson 2 Prayers:
- Avot V'Imahot
- G'vurot

Framing Questions
- What language and ideas would you use to describe God?
- Does God's complex identity affect how you approach God in prayer?
- How do your body movements help you pray?

Goals
Students will…
- Forge a connection with different attributes or visions of God
- Consider the God to whom they pray

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Avot v'Imahot and G'vurot as a group
- Be reminded when to bow during the Avot V'Imahot
- Be able to articulate their ideal attributes of God

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-06	Knowing When to Bow
06-14	Attributes of God
14-15	Praying G'vurot Together

Session Plan

Knowing When to Bow (5 min)

3. Introduction: You may have noticed that some people bow during this prayer
    a. (Ask questions) Why might we bow during this prayer? Who are we bowing to?
        i. (possible answers) We bow to God.
        ii. We want to show God respect.
        iii. This is a central/important prayer in our liturgy
4. How do we know when to bow?
    a. Instructions from Talmud, which contains many laws and rules for Jewish life, describe bowing during this prayer.
    b. We bow twice- at the beginning of the prayer and at the end.
        viii. We bow during the word Baruch and rise up at the name of God, Adonai
    b. Practice saying the first few words and bowing
    c. Practice saying the last few words and bowing
5. Pray Avot v'Imahot
    a. Reminders:
        ix. Stand
        x. Bow at beginning and end
            1. Bow at Baruch, rise up at Adonai
    b. Musical Setting: Shabbat *nusach*

Attributes of God (6 min)

6. Introduction: Today we will review Avot v'Imahot and then discuss the G'vurot together, as well as work on prayer "choreography" together.
7. Find Avot v'Imahot in *siddur* (p. 48)
    a. How is God described in Avot v'Imahot?
        i. (Ask question) What are God's attributes?
            1. (possible answers) Great, mighty, awesome, transcendent, lover, creator, who remembers, redeemer, helper, shield
8. Focus on is called G'vurot.
    b. Find in *siddur* (p. 50)
    c. (Ask question)Who can define the word "gibor"?
        i. (possible answers) brave, courageous; strong, mighty; hero
    d. (Ask question) Can you find the connection with the name of our prayer, G'vurot?
        i. (possible answers) Same root
        ii. G'vurot is a prayer about our mighty, awesome God.
    e. Find all of the different descriptions and attributes of God in G'vurot
        i. (possible answers) Mighty, gives life, causes weather, sustains life, supporter, healer, caregiver, savior, deliverer
9. (Ask question) Consider both prayers: Which descriptions of God do you prefer? Why?

***G'vurot* – גבורות**
- Second T'filah benediction
- Lists attributes of God
- Praises God who:
    - Revives dead (traditional)
    - Gives life to all (Reform)
- God described as savior, givers and sustainer of life, helper,

10. (Ask question) Is it difficult for you to think of a God that is so many things/does different jobs? Why/why not?

Praying G'vurot Together (1 min)

11. Pray G'vurot
    a. Reminders:
        i. Stand
        ii. No bowing
    b. Musical setting:Shabbat *nusach*

6th Grade / Level ד
Lesson 3

The T'filah, also known as the Amidah, is often referred to as the "prayer of prayers." It is the most essential part of any Jewish worship service, and is the section that must be done with serious intent, kavanah. *This session teaches the entire T'filah rubric to the students, allowing them to understand the full picture of the T'filah. They have the chance to then pray a "fuller" version of T'filah, taking time for their own silent prayers and meditations. This lesson stresses the importance of balancing* keva *and* kavanah.

Lesson 3 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai
- Avot V'Imahot
- G'vurot
- Kedusha
- Yihyu L'ratzon

Framing Questions
- Why would we call a collection of prayers "T'filah" (Prayer)?
- What is the importance of praying the words of your own mind/heart?

Goals
Students will…
- Understand the rubric of the Amidah/T'filah
- Consider the importance of personal prayer

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot V'Imahot and G'vurot as a group
- Engage in their own silent prayer/meditation
- Appropriately cap their own silent prayer/meditation with Yihyu L'ratzon
- Bow in the appropriate places during Avot V'Imahot

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- *Yihyu L'ratzon*, by Dan Nichols, www.jewishrock.com – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle
- Whiteboard
- Markers

Timeline

00-01	The Opening Line – Psalm 51:17
01-08	T'filah, Amidah, the Prayer of Prayers
08-09	The Closing Line – Psalm 19:15
09-15	Communal Prayer, Private Devotion

Session Plan

The Opening Line – Psalm 51:17 (1 min)

1. Introduction: Today, we're going to discuss a collection of prayers known together as the T'filah, the Prayer, or the Amidah, the Standing Prayer.
    a. We already are familiar with the first two major pieces of this collection of prayers: Avot v'Imahot and G'vurot.
2. T'filah (or Amidah) begins with an opening line
    a. Origin: Book of Psalms.
3. Opening words: "Adonai s'fatai tiftach u'fi yagid t'hilatecha"
    a. Ask God to:
        i. open up our lips
        ii. make our mouths ready to pray
4. Draw a long "timeline" on the whiteboard. Place "Adonai S'fatai" at the far left end.

T'filah – תפילה
- "Prayer"
- Also "Amidah" – אמידה
    - Root: אמד - stand
    - "Standing (Prayer)"
- Weekday: 19 benedictions
- Shabbat: 7 benedictions
- Central worship moment in Jewish liturgy

Adonai S'fatai – אדני שפתי
- Psalms 51:17
- Introduces T'filah/Amidah
- Root: שפה – lips, language

T'filah, Amidah, the Prayer of Prayers (7 min)

5. T'filah is different depending on if it's a weekday or if it's Shabbat or a holiday. Let's concentrate on the T'filah for Shabbat. There are three beginning prayers, three ending prayers, and a special prayer for Shabbat in the middle!
6. After we introduce and get ready for our T'filah with Adonai S'fatai, we begin with three major prayers or benedictions. They are:
    a. Avot v'Imahot
    b. G'vurot
    c. Kedusha
7. Can someone explain the general meaning or purpose of each of these prayers?
    a. Feel free to look through your siddur! You can find the Shabbat Evening T'filah starting on page 46 in your Mishkan T'filah siddur.
    b. Avot v'Imahot
        i. (suggested answer) This prayer invokes the names of our forefathers and foremothers. It explains that we worship the same One God worshipped by our ancestors, the first Jewish people. We talk about God's love for us today, God's love for us in the future, and the fact that God loved our ancestors, as well.
    c. G'vurot
        i. (suggested answer) In this prayer, we describe God's attributes! We call God strong, mighty, savior, healer, protector, and supporter. We praise God who takes care of us and protects us.
    d. Kedusha
        i. (suggested answer) Kedusha is all about holiness- God's holiness. We talk about God being holy in every way; even God's name is holy.
    e. (Add these three blessings to the timeline)

Kedusha – קדשה
- Third T'filah benediction
- Describes God's holiness
- Different versions for morning versus evening
    - Evening Kedusha is shorter
    - Morning Kedusha contains congregation responses

8. Our last three prayers begin on page 56. They are:
    a. Avodah
    b. Hodaah
    c. Shalom
9. Can someone explain the general meaning or purpose of each of these prayers? Feel free to look through your siddur! (Instructor may have to help students, as these prayers might be brand new to students)
    a. Avodah
        i. (suggested answer) Avodah talks about our worship of God. We hope that God will always be pleased with our prayers to God, and that God will always be with us and everyone who needs God. We also use the word Zion, saying that God will dwell in the land of Israel.
    b. Hodaah
        i. (suggested answer) This is a prayer of thanks! We give thanks to God who helps us, cares for us, hears our prayers, and does so many wonderful things for us.
    c. Shalom
        i. (suggested answer) We pray for peace with the Shalom blessings. We say Shalom Rav in the afternoon and the evening, while we say Sim Shalom in the morning. They both ask God to grant peace to us, to all those we love, to the places in which we live, and to Jerusalem and the land of Israel.
    d. (Add these three blessings to the timeline)
10. On Shabbat, there is one special "middle" prayer, which we call "Kedushat HaYom." Find it on page 54. This prayer talks about exactly what the title suggests. We use these words to describe the holiness of Shabbat. When we are celebrating a holiday, such as Passover or Sukkot, we use slightly different words to talk about how holy our holiday celebrations are.
    a. (Add this prayer to the timeline in the middle of the "firsts" and "lasts")

The Closing Line – Psalm 19:15 (1 min)

11. The T'filah or Amidah closes with another line from our Psalms, just as it opens with one! This line can be found towards the end of page 62.
12. Before we say this line from Psalms, but after we finish the third blessing at the "end" of T'filah, the Shalom prayer, we take a minute for "T'filat HaLev." This means "prayer of the heart." This is our opportunity to take a few moments to think our own thoughts and offer our own prayers to God. We can start with the words at the top of the page, which begin "Elohai n'tzor..." or we can just use the words in our hearts and minds.
13. We are always supposed to have *kavanah*, spirit or devotion, when we pray. We're not supposed to just work our way through the prayerbook, the siddur. We have to really pray with our hearts.
14. The closing line is a personal line, just like the opening. It asks God to accept the private words and prayers each of us has just offered to God.
    a. (Place this verse on the timeline at the far right)

Communal Prayer, Private Devotion (6 min)

15. Introduction: Now that we have learned all about the T'filah rubric, let's take some time to pray the T'filah together! We will chant the first three blessings aloud, beginning with "Adonai s'fatai…" We'll skip Kedushat HaYom, since today is a weekday and not Shabbat. Then, we'll do the "last" three blessings silently, according to the words on the page. Finally, we'll take some time for our own silent prayers and meditations, and then finish with the verse from our Psalms that asks God to accept our prayers.
16. Pray T'filah
    a. Musical Settings:
        i. Adonai S'fatai: Shireinu #197
        ii. Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha: Shabbat *nusach*
            1. State this explicitly!
        iii. Yihyu L'ratzon: Nichols

6th Grade / Level ד
Lesson 4

The words from Psalms 51:17 help us articulate our readiness to pray the T'filah. This lesson will introduce students to the Biblical verse which serves as an introduction to the T'filah. Students will learn about the meaning and purpose of the words, as well as learn to sing and identify musical settings of these words that serve to prepare them to pray.

Lesson 4 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai

Framing Questions
- Why does the T'filah require preparation to pray?
- How do you prepare yourself for prayer?
- How might music help you achieve a prayerful feeling?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider music's role in enabling prayerfulness
- Be exposed to a range of liturgical melodies for Adonai S'fatai
- Connect to the introductory verse for T'filah

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Identify and define the Hebrew root ספה
- Sing several musical settings for *Adonai S'fatai*
- Articulate which (if any) musical settings prepare them to pray the T'filah

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- The Torah: A Modern Commentary by W. Gunther Plaut – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, by Craig Taubman – teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai/Eternity Utters a Day,* by Dan Nichols, www.jewishrock.com – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-05	Adonai S'fatai as T'filah Introduction
05-10	Music of Adonai S'fatai
10-15	Impact of Musical Setting on Prayer

Session Plan

Adonai S'fatai as an Introduction (5 min)

1. Introduction: Today we will focus on the introductory line of T'filah/Amidah.
    a. Begins: "Adonai s'fatai tiftach…"
    b. Origin: Psalms 51:17
        i. Point out in Plaut Chumash
2. Students find this line of the T'filah in siddur (p. 46)
3. Teach about the root שפה
4. Adonai S'fatai is another "call" to prayer like Barechu!
    a. Prepares pray-ers for T'filah/Amidah
    b. (Ask question) Why is it important to prepare to pray T'filah/Amidah?
        i. (possible answers) Preparation is needed for all prayer
        ii. T'filah is a particularly important prayer section – it needs preparation
5. Pray Adonai S'fatai
    a. Reminders:
        i. Pray in both Hebrew and English
        ii. Students stand in preparation for T'filah
    b. Musical Setting: Shireinu #197
        i. Note: this is the tune commonly used in our congregation when paired with Shabbat *nusach*

Adonai S'fatai –
אדני שפתי
- Psalms 51:17
- Introduces T'filah/Amidah
- Root: שפה – lips, language

Music of Adonai S'fatai (5 min)

6. Does the tune that we sang help you get ready for T'filah? Why or why not?
7. Teach and sing additional musical settings for Adonai S'fatai
    a. Musical Setting 2: Taubman
    b. Musical Setting 3: Nichols

Impact of Musical Setting on Prayer (5 min)

8. Poll students
    a. Which tune was your favorite? Why?
    b. Which tune best demonstrated the meaning of the prayer? Why?
    c. Which tune helped you get ready to pray? Why?
    d. Were all three of your answers the same? Why or why not?

6th Grade / Level ד
Lesson 5

Our siddur, *Mishkan T'filah, includes the seasonal prayers for rain/dew in the land of Israel. This lesson focuses on their inclusion and their place in Jewish worship. Students will also learn about* nusach, *the musical modes used to distinguish between various sacred times in the Jewish liturgical calendar. Students will hear the difference between Shabbat* nusach *and weekday* nusach.

Lesson 5 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai
- Avot V'Imahot
- G'vurot

Framing Questions
- Why does our tradition provide prayers for the "weather" in the land of Israel?
- How does music help us identify our place in the Jewish calendar?

Goals
Students will…
- Be aware of changes in liturgy due to time/season
- Be aware of changes in musical settings of liturgy based on time/day/season

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot V'Imahot, G'vurot as a group
- Recognize the seasonal "weather" prayers within the *G'vurot*
- Learn and define the word *nusach*
- Hear the difference between Shabbat and weekday *nusach*

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline
00-06	G'vurot and the Seasons
06-12	What is Nusach?
12-15	Praying the Beginning of the Amidah/T'filah

Session Plan

G'vurot and the Seasons (6 min)

2. Introduction: Today, we'll focus on the second major prayer at the beginning of T'filah, G'vurot.
3. Turn to G'vurot
    a. Find in *siddur* (p. 50)
    b. (Ask question)Who can define the word "gibor"?
        i. (possible answers) brave, courageous; strong, mighty; hero
    c. (Ask question) Can you find the connection with the name of our prayer, G'vurot?
        i. (possible answers) Same root
        ii. G'vurot is a prayer about our mighty, awesome God.

***G'vurot* – גבורות**
- Second T'filah benediction
- Lists attributes of God
- Praises God who:
    - Revives dead (traditional)
    - Gives life to all (Reform)
- God described as savior, givers and sustainer of life, helper,

4. Identify "seasonal inserts"
    a. These are special prayers for the land of Israel
    b. The inserts "acknowledge God as the Source of the power of nature" (Mishkan T'filah)
    c. (ask question) Why is rain so important in Israel?
        i. (suggested answers) Israel has a desert climate
        ii. Seasonal rains are needed for the health of Israel's environment
5. Learn which inserts apply to which seasons:
    d. *Morid hatal*: for summer (Pesach through Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah)
    e. *Mashiv haruach u'morid hagashem*: for winter (Simchat Torah through Pesach)
        i. Note: In Israel, winter is the rainy season

What is Nusach? (6 min)

6. Sing G'vurot twice
    a. Musical Setting 1: Shabbat *nusach*
    b. Musical Setting 2: weekday *nusach*
    a. Ask students for the difference between the two
        i. (desired answer) The tunes were different!
7. The first tune is used during Shabbat and the second is used during the week.
    b. (ask question) Why do you think we have different tunes for different times?
        i. (suggested answer) To note or know the difference between the times
        ii. To show that Shabbat is different/special

***Nusach* – נוסח**
- pattern of chanting specific prayers
- different nusach exists for various times in the Jewish calendar
    - Shabbat, weekday
    - Holy Days, Festivals, minor holidays
- these musical modes differentiate between one service and another

8. The different modes for singing the prayers are called *nusach*
    c. There is *nusach* for many sacred times- Shabbat, weekdays, Festivals (Passover, Sukkot, Shavuot), High Holy Days
9. Elaborate on importance of *nusach*

Praying the Beginning of the Amidah/T'filah (3 min)

10. Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot
    c. Reminders:
        i. Stand
        ii. Bow only at beginning and end of Avot v'Imahot
    d. Musical settings:
        i. Adonai S'fatai: Shireinu # 197
        ii. Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot: Shabbat *nusach*
            1. Be sure to state this explicitly!
            2. Explain that we often use Shabbat nusach during weekdays because we want to teach everyone how to pray on Shabbat (when we most often attend worship services)

6th Grade / Level ד
Lesson 6

The T'filah or Amidah is the central prayer portion of the worship service. Jewish adults ought to be able to successfully pray the words of the first three major prayers, to sing them according to the correct nusach, *and to use appropriate prayer "choreography." It is also important for pray-ers to understand the words of their worship, and to be able to add* kavanah, *devotion or spirit, to their prayer. This lesson also relates the concept of holy times and seasons to the current holiday of Chanukah, and offers a connection with holiday* nusach.

Lesson 6 Prayers:
- Adonai S'fatai
- Avot V'Imahot
- G'vurot
- Kedusha

Framing Questions
- What does God's holiness have to do with our prayers?
- How do we identify holy times and seasons in our prayer tradition?

Goals
Students will…
- Consider the concept of holiness
- Be exposed to Chanukah nusach/mode
- Feel better equipped to participate more fully in congregational and religious school worship services

Objectives
Students will be able to…
- Pray Adonai S'fatai and the first three prayers of the evening *T'filah* as a group
- Learn the Hebrew root for "holy" קדש
- Demonstrate proper "choreography" throughout the T'filah
- Sing Maoz Tzur
- Sing Mi Chamocha in the Chanukah mode

Materials Needed
- Mishkan T'filah siddur – 1 per student and teacher
- *Adonai S'fatai*, unknown composer, Shireinu # 197 – teacher
- *Maoz Tzur*, arranged H. Fromm, Gates of Song – teacher
- Chairs for teachers and students, arranged in a circle

Timeline

00-05	Praying Together as a Kehillah Kedoshah
05-07	The Holiness of God
07-15	Holy Times, Holy Seasons, Holy Music

Session Plan

Praying Together as a Kehillah Kedoshah (5 min)

1. Introduction: Today is our last session working on *t'filah* together. We will review what we've already learned, pray together, and do something special for Chanukah.
2. Pray together as a kehillah kedoshah, a holy community of pray-ers.
    a. Pray Adonai S'fatai, Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha (evening)
        iii. Reminders:
            1. Stand
            2. Bow only at beginning and end of Avot V'Imahot
        iv. Musical Settings:
            1. Adonai S'fatai: Shireinu # 197
            2. Avot v'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha: Shabbat *nusach*
                a. State this explicitly
                b. Explain the use of Shabbat nusach during weekday services in a religious school setting

The Holiness of God (2 min)

3. (Ask question) Who recognizes the last prayer we sang together?
    e. (answer) Kedusha
4. Review Kedusha
    f. Define prayer name, show Hebrew root
    g. Explain differences between morning and evening versions
        i. Note: morning version on p. 30 in siddur
5. (ask question) Look at the Hebrew and English words- what is it about?
    h. (possible answers) God is holy
    i. We should work to be holy like God

Kedusha – קדשה
- Third T'filah benediction
- Describes God's holiness
- Different versions for morning versus evening
    - Evening Kedusha is shorter
    - Morning Kedusha contains congregation responses

Holy Times, Holy Seasons, Holy Music (8 min)

6. We've just prayed the words of the Kedusha, a prayer that talks about God's holiness.
    a. What do we define as holy in Judaism?
        i. (possible answers) God
        ii. Torah / Jewish texts
        iii. Human beings
        iv. Anything God has created
7. Time is also holy
    b. Another word for holy- "sacred"
    c. "Holy" and "sacred" describe special times, seasons, or days
8. (Ask question) Name a holy time that we celebrate every week?
    d. (answer) Shabbat
9. Review *nusach*
    e. Shabbat has its own sound, its own *nusach*, used to signal that it is Shabbat

10. (Ask) Name a special prayer that is just for Shabbat:
    f. (possible answers) V'shamru, Yismechu
        i. These songs talk about Shabbat as sacred and special
        ii. We sing them only on Shabbat to note the holiness of the day
11. This week, we are celebrating Chanukah
    g. Chanukah, just like Shabbat and other holidays, has its own sound, its own *nusach*
    h. Sing *Maoz Tzur*
        i. Lyrics in siddur on p. 364
        ii. Sing one time in Hebrew, plus first verse/chorus in English
    i. The tune we use for Maoz Tzur is the musical mode for Chanukah. We sing other prayers to the tune of Maoz Tzur, in order to show that it is Chanukah.
        i. Example: Mi Chamocha.
            1. Sing Mi Chamocha to the tune of Maoz Tzur
12. Pilot Conclusion: Pilot Conclusion: Thank you for your wonderful participation in our *t'filah* enrichment these past few weeks. If you have questions about Jewish prayer, you can your teachers, religious school director, and rabbi. I hope you'll bring your *t'filah* skills to services with the community here in our Temple.

***Maoz Tzur* – מעוז צור**
- "Rock of Ages"
- *Piyyut* - liturgical poem
- Written 13th century
- Celebrates God as the "rock" of the Jewish people
- Traditional Chanukah song

CHAPTER SIX: PILOT PROGRAM – REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

After the six-week-long pilot curriculum was taught in the KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple Hebrew School, a process of reflection and evaluation was undergone. Reflection and evaluation were undertaken both by the classroom teachers of the involved groups (grades 4, 5, and 6) and me. I asked each classroom teacher the same series of questions, in order to investigate the effectiveness and success of the pilot program. I reflected on the same set of questions, as well as additional issues that were apparent to me as the teacher of the sessions. The written evaluation of the pilot program is included in this thesis.

Teacher Evaluation

I met with each of the three classroom teachers for a reflective interview. Each teacher was asked the same set of questions. I recorded their responses to the questions, as well as discussed their answers with them. The evaluation questions were as follows:

1. Which lessons/segments were most successful? Why?
2. Which lessons/segments were least successful? Why?
3. How was this experience for you as the classroom teacher?
    a. What could have made this experience better for you as the classroom teacher?
4. How was the pace of the six week unit?
5. Did you think that the material was appropriate for your students? Why/why not?
6. Did the sessions relate to your class work/curriculum? Why/why not?
    a. If not, what could have been done to improve the relationship to class work?
7. Describe the success of the integration of:
    a. Music
    b. Vocabulary
    c. Torah/Jewish tradition
    d. History/Prayer Origins
8. Which foci were most helpful for your students?
    a. Communal prayer
    b. Discussion of the prayers

c. Understanding meaning
d. Understanding origin
e. Music
f. Movement/choreography

9. Did you find any theological issues in the program?
10. What do you think the students have retained/carried over with them from this program?
11. What could be done to improve this program?

The three classroom teachers for the Hebrew classes involved in the pilot program were introduced to the project before it began. They were asked to observe and reflect on each lesson, and each took the opportunity to share some of those observations and reflections with me soon after the teaching sessions. Teachers scheduled individual evaluation sessions with me immediately following the conclusion of the pilot program. I met with each teacher for about two hours in order to get their feedback on the project, curriculum, and effectiveness for their students.

Teachers are referred to here by their initials. AF is the teacher for the *Bet* Level/4th grade class. She is a third year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati. This was her first year teaching in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew School. JG is the teacher for the *Gimel* Level/5th grade class. She holds a Master's in Public Health from the University of Cincinnati, as well as a Master's Degree in Ethics from HUC-JIR. This was her third year teaching in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew School. LC is the teacher for the *Dalet* Level/6th grade class. She is also a third year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati. This was her first year teaching in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew School.

The following is a reflection and evaluation of the pilot program based on the combined responses of the three classroom teachers.

1. Which lessons/segments were most successful? Why?

AF, 4th grade teacher, felt that the lesson on V'ahavta was successful because the students were asked to consider the translation of the Hebrew prayer and think critically. She appreciated that the students were guided when they struggled, but were allowed to use their own thoughts and ideas to guide the discussion. AF also mentioned that the direction for students to find the liturgy in the prayerbook themselves during each lesson was helpful. JG, 5th grade teacher, appreciated the instruction on defining "what is prayer" and "what is blessing." She believes her students gained an understanding of different types of prayers and the role of each prayer in the larger liturgical framework. LC agreed that asking students to find the liturgy in the prayerbook themselves was a successful activity. She remarked that this engaged the students in something "active," and helped them for a skill that is helpful and important for them as pray-ers. She noted weeks later that her students seemed to have maintained this ability and are able to quickly find major prayers in the prayerbook. LC noted that when her students were asked to compare the English translation of a prayer to the Hebrew and deduce the meaning of Hebrew terms through this activity, they were able to do this successfully. LC also thought that it was successful to learn about and discuss a prayer immediately before praying that particular liturgy. Finally, LC believed that the actual learning space created for this project contributed to her students' successful experience. *T'filah* Enrichment took place in the classroom, but utilized a different part of the room. Chairs were placed in a circle, and students sat facing one another and their teachers. Of this setup, LC explained that success came from being in familiar space that was clearly separate from

their regular learning space. There was a sense of routine and expectations, but these were in line with the regular routine and expectations of the class.

2. Which lessons/segments were least successful? Why?

AF felt that the very first session was least successful for her group; the students were asked to both review and learn new information on Barechu and Shema. AF stated that this was simply too much to do in the short time allotted. She believed that the lessons on each liturgical element were good, but that they needed to have been taught separately. JG stated that the least successful lesson for her class was one in which Avot v'Imahot was introduced. She felt that too much time was spent on the introduction to this prayer, since she had covered this herself in an earlier session. This brought up another issue: the need for better communication between the regular classroom teacher and the *t'filah* enrichment instructor. LC would have liked her class to focus on "what is *t'filah*" for one of its sessions; she felt that the idea of "the purpose of prayer" was missing from several lessons.

3. How was this experience for you as the classroom teacher?

a. What could have made this experience better for you as the classroom teacher?

As JG noted in her answer to the previous question, a major concern for all of the classroom teachers was the lack of communication between the regular teacher and the *t'filah* enrichment instructor. Since the Hebrew curriculum at Rockdale Temple is prayer-based, the program would have been more successful if the enrichment lessons focused on the same liturgical elements being decoded in Hebrew class. LC mentioned that she

would have like to have been more involved in the execution of the pilot lessons. In addition, she would have appreciated having the lessons in advance in order to plan related activities during class time. AF concurred, stating that a collaborative program would be more successful for all involved.

4. How was the pace of the six week unit?

Each of the teachers noted that they wished we could have spent more time on each prayer or liturgical rubric. Both JG and LC mentioned that their students liked knowing that *t'filah* enrichment was going to happen every week; the routine nature of the program was appreciated by the students. AF was concerned with having *t'filah* enrichment each week, as she felt that in a school day of only ninety minutes, a fifteen minute enrichment session took away from precious Hebrew teaching time

5. Did you think that the material was appropriate for your students? Why/why not?

AF remarked that the prayer "choreography" was a helpful skill for her students. They recognized all of the prayers studied due to their participation in weekly religious school *t'filah*, but most did not know the correct prayer movements or why certain movements are performed. JG believed that the discussions of God's attributes were particularly appropriate for her students, as they often had questions about various God concepts. LC noted that her students were truly being "enriched" because they had not covered any of this type of material in the past.

6. **Did the sessions relate to your class work/curriculum? Why/why not?**
    a. **If not, what could have been done to improve the relationship to class work?**

While AF felt that the material was appropriate for and interesting to her students, she did not believe it related enough to her group's in-class work. Even though her curriculum called for the students to be working on *Shema u'Virchoteha*, she explained that her students did not have a grasp on the material from the second semester of their past school year. Therefore, her students were working on and reviewing blessings, and had not yet started on the basic prayer rubrics. JG noted that the information taught was very much in line with her class's work, but that the *t'filah* enrichment program moved much faster than the classroom curriculum. Each prayer was given one or two enrichment sessions, while the class might spend a full month on a particular prayer. LC was happy with her students increased knowledge and understanding of the Amidah rubric, but noted that they were now studying the Torah service. This rubric would have been a more appropriate focus based on the classroom curriculum.

7. **Describe the success of the integration of:**
    a. **Music**
    b. **Vocabulary**
    c. **Torah/Jewish tradition**
    d. **History/Prayer Origins**

AF stated that she thought music was well integrated into each of her group's sessions. She did remark, however, that the music was very "standard" – music that her

students seemed to already find familiar. She thought that her students connected to the various tunes of Mi Chamocha learned during a session, and believed that this activity helped the students understand the mood and feeling behind the prayer. She stated that it was a wonderful change of pace for the students to learn prayer through music, and that she found it very beneficial for the students to simply hear the musical settings, especially those who do not attend services often. AF also noted that the weaving of Torah narratives and *midrashim* into lessons was helpful and positive the students' Jewish learning. However, she expressed concern about the lack of distinction between Torah and *midrash* in terms of which is deemed "history." LC similarly appreciated the integration of music into the lessons; she noted that her group of students loves music and respond well to the use of music in their learning. She would have liked to have had more music in the sessions, however stated that she knew this opportunity was limited because of her class's work on the Amidah. In terms of vocabulary, LC said that she appreciated that one or two key words were highlighted in each lesson; she would have, however, liked even more reinforcement, especially for non-traditional learners. LC felt that the integration of Torah, Jewish tradition, history, and prayer origins were all lacking in the sessions with her class. She noted that some of this was present in the lesson on seasonal inserts in the G'vurot, but that more specific contextualization would have been helpful to the students.

8. Which foci were most helpful for your students?

a. Communal prayer

b. Discussion of the prayers

c. Understanding meaning

d. Understanding origin

e. Music

f. Movement/choreography

AF felt that the weekly opportunity for communal prayer was the most helpful focus for her students. She explained that this allowed for the chance to pray without all of the trappings of synagogue services; her students enjoyed praying in the classroom setting. Because prayer was still a part of classroom instruction, AF thought her students were more focused on worship. AF also felt that the communal prayer helped to connect Sunday religious school services and Hebrew class work. These moments of prayer fully integrated the learning the students had just engaged in previously. For AF, this is experiential learning as its best. It did not feel contrived; rather, this was a separate, special moment for the students. JG stated that each of the above components were a necessary part of the *t'filah* enrichment experience. As she explained, it was fun and exciting for the students to learn via these various activities. These varying foci kept the students on their toes and engaged. LC noted that she would have liked to see more of both music and movement/choreography in her students' lessons, though she believed that both were used successfully and to the advantage of her students. LC felt that discussion of the prayers and understanding the meaning of the liturgy were both very important to her students' learning experience. As she explained, discussion leads to greater understanding, as well as greater buy-in. Knowing the meanings of the prayers, as well as having the opportunity to discuss them, leads to students' engagement and investment in prayer. LC also stated that praying together abstractly stated the importance

of prayer; the idea that regular prayer is important was clearly established through routine communal prayer.

9. Did you find any theological issues in the program?

Two of the three classroom teachers noted theological issues in the program. AF was concerned, as stated previously, with the way in which Judaism defines "history." She asked, "Should Torah be the only basis for early Jewish history?" "Can a *midrash* be used to further explain that history, or does *midrash* branch out into the realm of stories or tales?" This was of particular concern during a lesson on Mi Chamocha; a *midrash* about Nachson ben Amminadav was used to illustrate the crossing of the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt. AF explained that if she were the instructor, she would be more distinctive in her language, differentiating between history and stories. AF also mentioned that as Reform Jews, we must be careful when talking about being commanded. She felt that there should be a clear explanation about Reform Jewish ideology on being bound by commandments. LC brought up another theological issue, this one dealing with the seasonal inserts in the G'vurot. I explained to the students that the inserts thank God who causes weather patterns during the necessary times of year in the land of Israel. LC was concerned that students would believe, based on my explanation, that God directly causes weather. Her broader fear is that students will believe in the theologies expressed by the liturgy if we do not offer additional explanations of what Reform Jews believe.

10. What do you think the students have retained/carried over with them from this program?

Several weeks after the conclusion of the pilot program, I asked each teacher about retention. I was curious to know what they thought their students had carried over with them from the program to their Hebrew studies. AF stated that retention looked different for each of her students, but that it was evident that they all remembered pieces of each lesson. They referenced phrases from prayers and were able to explain the proper "choreography" for Barechu and Shema. She stated that all of her students remembered the difference in pronunciation between the letters *chaf* and *kaf*. JG and LC both believed that their students had gained a clear understanding of where each prayer fit in the larger worship service and in relation to each other. They also both noted that the students remember the correct "choreography" for the Amidah, and were quick to correct any mistakes in their movements. LC also explained that her students could clearly define the term *t'filah* and its various uses, and could also explain the names T'filah and Amidah and define the scope of this prayer rubric. All three teachers felt that the routine communal prayer that was part of *t'filah* enrichment served to reinforce the importance of prayer in Jewish life.

11. What could be done to improve this program?

All three teachers offered the same two critiques of the program. They all believe that better integration with classroom work and curricula, as well as increased participation by the classroom teacher, would improve this program. By completely integrating *t'filah* enrichment into the Hebrew school session each week, students would

feel that worship is an essential part of learning and Jewish life. Students would get the most from a program such as this if it tied neatly into the subjects being taught in their classroom from week to week. Each of the teachers also wanted to have been more involved in the execution and teaching of the pilot program, and stated that they believed the program would be more successful if the classroom teacher had a role besides "super-participant." LC explained that students look to their regular classroom teacher for a model and for cues as to what they should be doing, so utilizing the classroom teacher as a *t'filah* enrichment instructor would only enhance the program. Both AF and LC spoke about the role of the primary *t'filah* enrichment instructor. They agreed that this person should be a member of the congregation's clergy. As AF explained, there is significant value in having a clergy person teach in a school classroom. There is an element of "quality control," as well as accessibility for students to their rabbi or cantor. LC took this question a step further and explained how she thought *t'filah* enrichment could relate to a religious school worship setting. She asserted that students could be invited to lead the sections of the service they had been working on during enrichment. LC also noted that religious school *t'filah* could be used as a time to teach sacred music, ask framing questions about the liturgy, and demonstrate congregational *minhagim.*

My Evaluation

The pilot program was not an original part of this thesis project. The original plan was to construct a series of lessons for the teaching of *t'filah* in the context of a religious school worship service. Through a discussion with one of my thesis advisors, Cantor Yvon Shore, the idea arose to create lesson plans for the teaching of *t'filah* in a classroom

setting, just as art or music enrichment might be utilized. As the rabbinic intern at KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple, I was able to pilot my written lesson plans in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew School. I settled on six sessions worth of lessons, which equals slightly less than one quarter of the Hebrew school calendar. The lessons were taught during the months of November and December, with the last lesson falling during the celebration of Chanukah. Each lesson lasted for approximately fifteen minutes of the ninety minute school session.

I taught the lessons to three separate classes: *Bet* Level/4th Grade, *Gimel* Level/5th Grade, and *Dalet* Level/6th grade. Originally, the plan was to teach in all of the Hebrew school classes, which also encompass *Alef* Level/3rd Grade and *Hey* Level/7th grade. I taught in all five classes during the first pilot session, however, I found this impossible to continue for a number of reasons. First, the *Alef* Level/3rd Grade students had not yet begun to learn prayers as part of their Hebrew curriculum, so the intended material for these sessions was outside of their knowledge scope. Second, the *Hey* Level/7th grade class was made up of only two students, both of whom usually utilized their Hebrew school time to prepare for *B'nai Mitzvah*. Finally, from a purely logistical perspective, it was too difficult to teach in all five classrooms each week.

The six session time frame for the pilot program worked well. I was able to try a range of teaching methods during this time, as well as have the opportunity to reflect on past sessions and edit upcoming lessons based on my observations. The students participated long enough that they felt that the pilot program was part of their Hebrew School routine. It was also very important to me that the program happen every week,

with no weeks "off." I wanted the students to retain knowledge from week to week, in addition to feeling that this concentration on prayer and worship was a priority.

The first three sessions for each of the three classes focused heavily on teaching through discussion, modeling and demonstration, and vocabulary. By the end of the third session, I knew that I was not meeting my aim of teaching *t'filah* through the use of sacred/liturgical music. Even though music was utilized in every lesson, during the first three sessions, it was simply used to "perform" the focus prayers. The reader will notice that the second three session plans for each group focus heavily on teaching through the use of music. These lessons not only expose students to a range of liturgical music, but they actually utilize music as a method for learning. The final three sessions are a much better representation of the goals of this project than the first three.

Because I built the lesson plans based on my academic research on child development, spirituality, and educational theory, I believe that the material was developmentally appropriate for the students in each group. The scope of material included in the lessons for each of the three grades was also based largely on the goals the congregation has for its students in terms of *B'nai Mitzvah* preparation and successful completion of the Hebrew School curriculum. Therefore, even though the *Dalet* Level/6th Grade class had already moved on to the Torah service by the time they participated in the pilot program, I felt it necessary for them to learn the material I had planned for the Amidah rubric. The same goes for the *Bet* Level/4th Grade class. This group was behind, as it became apparent to their teacher early on that they had not met the goals for *Alef* Level/3rd Grade. Still, I focused their lessons on the prayers the congregation and school aim for them to learn during this year of school.

The most successful lessons were those which best engaged the students in discussion, singing, and/or prayerful activity. There were a few lessons when I prioritized information rather than experience, which became a detriment to the students' learning. I found that they retained the same amount of information or skill from week to week, regardless of whether I had offered a meatier lecture or engaged the students in experiential learning. I also found the best lessons to be those in which the students felt some kind of connection to the material, or were offered the chance to "buy in." When students were given ownership over a new skill, musical setting, or leadership of a prayer, they were more likely to find meaning in the learning and retain the information.

The least successful lessons tended to be the first few. By the time the middle of the pilot program came about, the lessons were better suited to the students, their knowledge bases, and learning needs. It is important to note that the fourth session marked the switch to musically-based lessons. These were, by and large, very successful. The first few lessons were less successful for a number of reasons. First, students, classroom teachers, and I all had to adjust to a new learning segment for the Hebrew School day. Additionally, students had to adjust to a new teacher for a short amount of time. Even though most of the students in the Hebrew School know me well as their rabbinic intern, service leader, and teacher, this was a still a departure from their normal class routine. The earlier lessons were made up of question and answer sessions and short lectures. The students were less engaged during this style of lesson, whereas the musically-focused lessons inspired deeper connection. The least successful lessons were also those that tried to accomplish too much. Lessons were more successful if there was more time to spend on a prayer or topic.

I believe that all of the foci (communal prayer, discussion, understanding meaning and origin, music, and movement/choreography) were necessary to provide the students with an effective learning experience. This is especially true because we know that students have various learning styles, and students respond differently to different types of activities and teaching approaches. The different foci allowed students to see the prayers through various lenses, and to approach the prayers in ways which were meaningful for them.

Movement/choreography, along with music and communal prayer, was a particularly effective focus. Teaching the "choreography" for many of the prayers enabled students to pray with their bodies, engaging another part of themselves. It also allowed students to simply get up, change position, and move during a lesson, all of which help children refocus. Finally, by assigning body movement to a prayer, students are given another way in which to remember a piece of liturgy or recall the meaning of a prayer. Communal prayer provided students a regular opportunity to engage in Jewish worship with their peers. It showed students that routine prayer is important, both for their own lives and in the life of a community. Of course, the regular repetition of prayers also aids in students' memory of liturgy and ease of recitation. Music was perhaps the best learning focus in terms of students' ability to retain information and gain prayer skills. The importance of integrating music into the teaching program has been discussed throughout this project.

I did not find there to be any theological issues with the program, however these were noticed by several of the classroom teachers. I believe that my teaching was in line with the established theology of KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple, and followed

expressions of spirituality and descriptions of God present in congregational services and learning opportunities. Certainly, even within one Reform congregation, community members will have varying theologies. This is especially true of teachers, who presumably have extensive Jewish educations. It is necessary for the congregation or religious school to establish theological guidelines for teachers in general, but especially those who teach *t'filah*.

It is obvious that students who participated in the *t'filah* enrichment pilot program have retained a significant amount of the information and skill presented through the lessons. The *Dalet* Level/6th Grade class has continued to set aside fifteen minutes of class time for *t'filah* each week, due to the students' desire to continue learning on this subject and the teacher's dedication. I have led these groups of students in prayer on Sunday mornings during religious school services, as well as on various Tuesday afternoons during Hebrew School at the request of classroom teachers. The students demonstrate clear understanding of appropriate worship "choreography," are able to successfully navigate the congregation's *siddur*, and have increased Hebrew prayer reading abilities.

This pilot program could be improved upon and expanded in order to create a successful *t'filah* enrichment program for a congregational religious school. Each of the lessons in an expanded program should include at least three of the teaching foci in order to engage students and touch upon major components of *t'filah*. Music must be an integral part of an expanded program, as it has shown to be an extremely successful teaching tool, in addition to a major vehicle for expressing spirituality and prayerfulness in a Jewish context. Any *t'filah* enrichment program should be carefully integrated into

the larger curriculum for a given class, so that it truly serves as enrichment, as opposed to an unrelated extra lesson. *T'filah* enrichment programs would better utilize classroom teachers, beyond simply using them to model appropriate behavior and action. Teachers can and should be used as instructors, playing to their strengths and enabling them to leverage their relationships with their classroom students to create a better learning opportunity for the children involved. An expanded program should allow for several sessions spent on each liturgical element or pray, enabling students to commit to memory new knowledge and practice using new skills in a safe setting. An improved program would also serve to bridge the gap between classroom Hebrew learning and religious school and congregational worship. The aim of these programs should be: offer students the knowledge and skills, through the use of liturgical music and experiences with communal prayer, to become informed, practiced, and comfortable pray-ers in a Jewish context.

CONCLUSION

Using a process called "action research," I tackled the problem of religious school *t'filah.* I identified a need for set curricula for religious school *t'filah.* I asserted that these curricula should provide for deliberate, intentional religious school *t'filah* experiences which appropriately teach the *keva* of prayer (liturgy, *nusach* and music, ritual, and the "information"), as well as the *kavanah* (connection with God, relationship to the community, self-reflection, and spirituality).

My process of fact finding involved both academic and theoretical research, as well as an examination of current practices. I delved into the wealth of literature on the subjects of prayer, educational theory, child development, and sacred music in order to define *t'filah* for my purposes, understand relevant theories of child development and educational practice, and discover the importance of music in the areas of both learning and prayer. In addition, I compiled a collection of best practices through interviews with rabbis, cantors, and Jewish educators working with religious school *t'filah* across North America.

Developing an action plan proved to be the most difficult part of my process. I originally intended to create a sample curriculum for religious school *t'filah,* as it currently exists in the congregational religious school in which I serve. At KK Bene Israel – Rockdale Temple, the school community participates in *t'filah* on Sunday mornings for thirty minutes at the start of the school session. *T'filah* is led by the rabbi or rabbinic intern, as well as a songleader who provides musical leadership and accompaniment. I wanted to experiment with re-imagined *t'filah* on Sunday mornings, offering a communal prayer service that was deliberate in its educational goals, offered

students a well-designed "diet" of sacred music, and provided intentional teaching moments in the areas of prayer "choreography," liturgical origins and history, and Hebrew vocabulary. In addition to utilizing recognized best practices for teaching, this curriculum would also take advantage of Jewish liturgical music as a major mode for students' learning.

A number of practical factors required a change to the action plan. Any action plan would required the testing or piloting of a *t'filah* curriculum. I was able to do this, thanks to the generosity and flexibility of Rockdale Temple. However, the piloting of a curriculum for Sunday morning *t'filah* could not be accomplished due to existing plans for *t'filah* during my piloting time frame and the attendance in *t'filah* of a very wide age range of students. Therefore, the action plan was instead developed as a "*t'filah* enrichment" program to be piloted in a Hebrew school setting, which offered the freedom to establish the pilot program as well as teach to smaller groups of students according to age and Hebrew level.

The plan was carried out as *t'filah* enrichment in the Rockdale Temple Hebrew school on Tuesday afternoons during November and December 2013. I created a six week curriculum consisting of lessons for Hebrew students in grades four, five, and six (Hebrew levels *Bet, Gimel,* and *Dalet*). The fifteen minute sessions were designed as combination learning/praying opportunities. Students both learned about the liturgy in a classroom setting, as well as participated with their peers in organized, communal worship. Students in the 4th Grade/*Bet* Level, 5th Grade/*Gimel* Level, and 6th Grade/*Dalet* Level classes participated in the piloting of the curriculum. The students were informed that they were participating in this project. Each of the three classroom teachers for the

involved classes not only participated in the program, but also served as observers and evaluators, adding to the reflection process.

Reflection and evaluation was undertaken by both the classroom teachers and me. I asked each of the teachers a set series of questions about the effectiveness of the pilot program. The teachers offered their observations and reflections, and helped me to evaluate both my written curriculum and teaching success. I responded to the same set of questions and wrote down my responses, in order to reflect on my perceived effectiveness as a teacher and lesson developer. The reflection and evaluation of the pilot curriculum and teaching pilot contained within this thesis consists of the compiled responses from this process, starting first with the classroom teachers and followed by me.

Overall, we observed the relative success of teaching sessions and noticed the same challenges and issues for the program. Students generally responded positively to the *t'filah* enrichment sessions themselves. They were appropriately engaged in communal worship in this setting, and participated fully. The less successful lessons were those at the front of the pilot; these lessons tried to do too much in a short amount of time and did not meet the goal of teaching through the mode of music. The later sessions were much more successful, teaching smaller amounts of information in each lesson and utilizing music as a primary mode for learning. Students particularly enjoyed learning proper prayer "choreography," and seemed to retain these skills. In general, students seemed to understand the importance of prayer skills and regular worship, and were actively engaged in this learning opportunity.

The final part of the "action research" process is to amend the plan. Eric Golombek, the creator of this method, explains that "the process of implementing change

is an on-going one."[1] Though this thesis project has concluded, the task of creating deliberate, intentional religious school *t'filah* experiences has not. My aim is to continue this process, utilizing the findings from this project to further develop meaningful and purposeful religious school *t'filah.*

My work on this thesis project has led me to understand that Jewish students must be given the skills, tools, understanding, and comfort in order to successfully participate and find meaning in *t'filah* throughout their childhoods and adult lives. Communal Jewish worship requires practice, experience, knowledge, and proficiency. *T'filah* enrichment, as part of a balanced Jewish education, can offer the learning opportunities to help students reach this necessary level of proficiency. When combined with deliberate, intentional, meaningful religious school *t'filah*, these two methods for teaching *t'filah* to Jewish students will lead them to become Jewish children, teens, and eventually adults who are comfortable in a Jewish prayer context and who are able to find meaning therein. It is my belief that religious schools and congregations must offer these types of learning opportunities to students in order to make them into lifelong Jewish pray-ers. This thesis project provides a first step for those communities that wish to work towards the goal of *t'filah* proficiency.

[1] Eric Golombek, "Action Research Report on an Approach for Creating Meaningful Tefilla Experiences in Middle School," *Jewish Educational Leadership* 1 (2), 2004: 3.

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