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BEYOND THE WORDS A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Prayer

Lester Polonsky

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Arts in Religious Education Degree. The goal of this thesis is to provide the Jewish educator with a valuable tool in the creation of lesson plans for teaching children prayer. The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 draws upon the stages of faith development published by James Fowler in his book, *Stages of Faith*. These stages of faith incorporate the stages of a child's psychological development proposed by leading child psychologists, Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg. Borrowing from Flower's stages of faith development, I have created a Jewish framework. Hillel's statement from Pirke Avot, becomes the framework for the developmental stages of Jewish learning. Chapter 2 is a review of prayer curriculum published by URJ, Behrman House, and A.R.E. A critique of each curriculum includes an analysis of their approach to teaching prayer according to the Stages of Jewish Learning outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 presents six lesson plans for teaching prayer. Each lesson plan is developed according to one of the stages of Jewish Learning.

A variety of resource materials were used. Contemporary thought regarding the spiritual development of children from both the Jewish and non-Jewish community. Curriculums from Behrman House, Union of Reform Judaism, and Alternatives for Religious Education were particularly helpful.

The goal of the thesis was to create Stages of Jewish Learning Development so that when Jewish educators teach prayer to children, they can go beyond the words and teach their meaning. In order to accomplish this sacred task, a comprehensive approach to teaching prayer must be developed.

BEYOND THE WORDS A Comprehensive Approach for Teaching Prayer

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Master of Arts in Religious Education Degree

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I interrupted my career as a congregational rabbi to become a full time Jewish educator. During those years, I had an epiphany. Before dismissal, students would enter the sanctuary for an afternoon worship service led by the students of one class. Needless to say the 250 students entered the sanctuary with a high level of chatter.

With the service leaders seated anxiously on the bimah, I felt a need to set the tone for a meaningful worship experience. How could I quiet the restless students who have been in class for the last 90 minutes and anxiously waiting for dismissal? What words could I utter that could become a bridge between directing everyone to stop talking and to prepare for prayer? For this transitional moment, I created a simple formula. I told the students:

"Please be quiet. This is the sanctuary. The sanctuary is place where we pray. Prayer is thinking. We think about the day that has ended. We think about what we need to do to get ready for tomorrow. We think about our friends and the people we talked to today. We think about how we can make tomorrow a better day than today. In order to think, it has to be quiet. Now let us begin our service on page 104."

Each week for several years, the students would hear these words. Their efforts to stop talking without further instruction demonstrated their understanding of the message. The quiet of the sanctuary was the signal that they were ready for prayer.

After a while, this statement became routine. I repeated these words because it achieved the results of a quiet sanctuary. After a while, I began to question my own words. What am I saying to these students? Why do I feel the need to describe prayer as thinking? It was during a worship service that I had the epiphany. The meaning for my words was revealed. I was trying to teach these students how to pray. I know that they can read the words of the prayers, but they are unable to make the connection to the words. These students have learned that we pray by reading the words of the prayer. We teach our students what to pray, but we don't teach them how to pray. In my statement to

the students, I was trying to describe prayer. Certainly, thinking requires a quiet setting. My suggestions of what to think about provided the students with a focus.

As I reviewed the lesson plans of my own faculty and the textbooks, I was amazed to find further evidence to support my revelation. It is assumed that when we teach the students how to read the prayers, they will be able to pray. Unfortunately, this assumption has been the basis for prayer education for decades. What we observe today is the shortsightedness of this assumption. The decline in synagogue attendance at weekly Shabbat worship indicates the failure of our educational programs to create a meaningful connection to our prayers. The ability to read the prayers does not mean one can pray. If one can't pray, then reading the words of the prayers becomes an exercise in futility.

The challenge for Jewish education is to include the meanings of the prayers. The lesson plan for each prayer should include a discussion of its meaning. This discussion could begin with the English translation of the prayer however; it needs to go much deeper. The teacher needs to engage the students in the values or messages of each prayer. For example, the Ma'ariv prayer is the prayer for creation found in the evening service. It describes the darkness of the night and light of the day. The teacher can challenge the students by presenting the idea of night and day as a cycle of life. Teaching the Shema, as the Jewish "Pledge Allegiance" is another example of projecting meaning to the words of a prayer they can recite. When the students recite the Pledge of Allegiance each day before school begins, they promise to be loyal citizens of this country, obeying the laws and following the rules. So too with the recitation of the Shema, Jews declare the unity of God and bind themselves to the community of Israel, governed by the teachings of Torah.

The task of creating lesson plans has to recognize the developmental stage of each student. Certainly a teacher will have to consider the age of the students before preparing any lesson plan. Unfortunately, there are no educational tools for the teaching of prayer that will help the teacher identify different stages of learning development. Without this valuable tool, even the most dynamic lesson plan would fail to engage the student. For this reason, I have included in Chapter 1, "The Stages of Jewish Learning". I have incorporated James Fowler's stages of faith development into the Jewish context of Hillel's teaching in Pirke Avot. This valuable educational tool will help teachers develop lesson plans for the teaching of prayer that are appropriate to the developmental stage of their students.

The reader will find in Chapter 2 an analysis of current prayer curriculums published by the URJ Press, Torah Aura, and Behrman House Publishing Company. This review will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum.

In Chapter 3, I will demonstrate how to create lesson plans using the Stages of Jewish Learning. These lesson plans will focus on teaching the meaning of the prayer. Each Lesson Plan will reflect one stage from the Stages of Jewish Learning,

I have titled this thesis "Beyond The Words". I sincerely believe that Jewish Education must expand its goals to include the nurturing of the spirit. This can only be accomplished when the meanings of prayers are afforded the same value as the recitation. A student should be praised for his understanding of each prayer, not just for his ability to read the Hebrew. In order to accomplish this lofty goal, Jewish education has to go "Beyond The Words".

Chapter 1 Jewish Learning Strengthens Faith

It is time to acknowledge the vital role that faith fulfills in human life. Our energies are usually focused on the physical and emotional behaviors. Quality of life is often measured by the quality of our physical health or the stability of our emotional character. While these facets are critical to our human existence, we must acknowledge the critical role that faith fulfills. According to James Fowler, "Faith has to do with the making, maintenance and transformation of human meaning. It is a mode of knowing and being. In faith, we shape our lives in the relation to more or less comprehensive convictions or assumptions about reality. Faith composes a felt sense of the world as having character, pattern, and unity. In the midst of the many powers and demands pressing upon us, enlarging and diminishing us, it orients us toward centers of power and value, which promise to sustain our lives and to guarantee "more-being".¹

Unfortunately, very few manuals or guidebooks have been published which would provide the interested individual with assistance in pursuing a path to faith. One could reason, it is the physician who is monitors our physical health, it is the psychiatrist who monitors our emotional health, and therefore it should be the rabbi and synagogue that care for our spiritual well being. The religious institution may offer spiritual instruction and provide experiences for spiritual enrichment. Spiritual experiences can also occur outside of the religious institution. The euphoria one feels from a leisurely walk in the woods, an invigorating Yoga class or an intimate exchange with another human being may be described as spiritual moments. While these surroundings can provide the individual with spiritual experience, the synagogue's communal worship will also enrich one's spirituality.

¹ Craig Dyksta and Sharon Parks, *Faith Development and Fowler*, (Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1986) 15

David Ariel, President of the Laura and Alvin Siegal College of Judaic Studies in Cleveland is one of the many contemporary Jewish leaders who argue that Jewish institutions are more concerned with their own preservation than with the heart and soul of their constituents. "For the first time in three generations, a growing number of younger Jews are not content with accepting conventional Judaism. They want to know about Judaism for themselves and reject the passivity of vicarious Jewishness of letting others define Judaism for them. They seek empowerment as Jews to counter the meagerness of Judaism they were taught in Religious School. It is not enough for the Rabbi to lecture, define and lead. They want to learn, experience and understand for themselves. But they do not want to learn *about* Judaism, they want to learn Judaism. This puts increasing pressure on the Jewish community to respond to this development positively, seriously, and with additional resources."²

If Ariel is correct in his analysis, a Jewish renaissance will bypass Jewish institutions. These institutions, which were created to nurture spiritual development, have not responded to this growing need. Some synagogues participate in an endeavor to prepare for the future by recognizing the need for change today. For example "Synagogue 2000" was established as a vehicle for leaders of synagogues to share concerns about congregational life through a collaborative effort and create synagogue responses to the changing needs of the contemporary Jewish community.³ While synagogue leaders concentrate on redefining the role of the synagogue in Jewish life, it becomes the obligation of the scholars, teachers, rabbis, cantors and educators to create resources that will respond to the growing awareness of Jewish spirituality. Where to begin? To what do we respond? Do we respond to the overwhelming need to explain Jewish culture, Jewish rituals, Jewish history or Jewish prayer? Or do we respond to the probing questions of Jewish ethics and morality?

While resources for all facets of Jewish life need to be created, the teaching of prayer demands our immediate attention. Perhaps this task would not appear to be so overwhelming if we acknowledge the complexity of faith development. Current trends in

² Ariel, David S. "The Spiritual Condition of American Jews," In *Teaching About God and Spirituality* ed. Sherry Blumberg and Robert Louis Goodman (Denver: A.R.E. Publishing, Inc., 2002), 42

³ www.s2k.org/About/what.html

thinking about cognitive and emotional development, can assist in creating an understanding of Jewish learning development. Viewing Jewish learning as a developmental process may guide the Jewish professional to create appropriate educational materials to teach prayer.

The goal of Jewish education should be to nurture a positive Jewish identity. In order to accomplish this lofty goal, Jewish learning should begin with acknowledging the spiritual being. The ability to recite blessings and the mastering of the Hebrew language alone will not achieve this goal. Considering the limited time spent in the supplemental religious school class, the effectiveness of the educational experience is often measured solely by the student's ability to fluently read the prayers. Much of this teaching is far more focused on decoding the Hebrew rather than actually explaining the meaning these prayers. Jewish learning must encompass the meaning of the prayers in addition to the skill of reading them. The spiritual experience is the unique synthesis of meaning and wonder.

In order to create a curriculum that addresses the meaning of the prayers, Jewish educators should be more sensitive to the student's stage of learning. Certainly a lesson plan for a student of age 5 may not be appropriate for a student of age 10. Following Fowler's stages of Spiritual development, a developmental process can be created for Jewish education.

In <u>Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for</u> <u>Meaning.</u> Fowler, a widely regarded Harvard University professor, adopts the concept of developmental learning and applies it to spiritual development. The stages of development put forth by recognized leaders in education, such as Lawrence Kohlberg, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget, provided Fowler with a structural image of human developmental learning. With this image, Fowler proposes developmental stages for spiritual growth.

According to Fowler there are seven stages of spiritual development: Pre- stage

Stage 1 Intuitive -- Projective Faith

Stage 2 Mythical Literal Faiths

Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional Faiths

Stage 4 Individual – Reflective Faiths Stage 5- Conjunctive Faith Stage 6 – Universalizing Faith

Pre-Stage

The value of trust must be established in the Pre-Stage level and thereby becomes the foundation for the transition to future stages.

Drawing upon Erikson's outline of human development for infancy, which concentrates, on the beginnings of basic trust versus basic mistrust, Fowler presents the first stage of spiritual growth as the Pre-Stage. Within this developmental stage, ideas are formed based upon response to needs. An infant who cries will come to understand that the nurturing parent will respond. With the repetition of this interaction, the infant will develop a bond of trust with the caring parent. Without language, the infant learns the value of trust. Fowler states: "The emergent strength of faith in this stage is the fund of basic trust and the relational experience of mutuality with one(s) providing love and care."⁴ Fowler's idea of a Pre-Stage is to underscore the impact a parental bond of love will have upon a child. The quality of this early bonding may influence the individual's spiritual development.

The creation of Jewish educational resources can draw from the description of Fowler's Pre-stage. The recitation of blessings acknowledges the divine wonder of life. The parent who teaches the child to recite the blessings encourages the child to share in the moment of divine wonder. As the child begins to recite the blessings, the awareness of world is expanded to include a sense of the divine Sharing this expanded awareness enriches the bond of trust between parent and child.

Stage 1- Intuitive-Projective Faith

Once children have developed a secure sense of trust, they will begin to expand their immediate world.

⁴ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 120

Fowler follows Piaget's developmental steps of early childhood. For Piaget, the child aged 2-6 begins to use language to explore their world. The child's observations, as simple as they may be, are communicated through an unending litany of questions. Fowler views this developmental stage as a fantasy-filled, imitative phase

"in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of primarily related adults." ⁵

Teaching certain foundational Bible stories fits well at this stage of development. The Bible story can respond to a child's question. When a child expresses a wonder about creation, the response can be the Biblical narratives of Genesis. These stories present valuable lessons embedded in a religious narrative.

Stage 2 Mythic-Literal Faiths

The new capacity or strength in this stage is the rise of narrative and the emergence of story, drama and myth as ways of finding and giving coherence to experience.

For Fowler, it is the role of religion to provide this narrative. "Mythic-Literal faith is the stage in which the person begins to take on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community. Beliefs are appropriated with literal interpretations, as moral rules and attitudes. Symbols are taken as one-dimensional and literal in meaning."⁶

This stage recognizes the readiness of the individual to embark upon a journey of self-definition through the rituals and symbols of the community. At this stage of development Jewish education can focus on the calendar of Jewish holidays. The teaching of holidays should include an outline of their historical origin, and explanation of the rituals and a contemporary meaning of symbols. These lessons will become integrated into the child's development of identity.

⁵ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 132

⁶ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 149

Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional Faith

In Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional faith, a person's experience of the world now extends beyond the family. As the adolescent challenges the world, the responses should be carefully articulated to convey a contemporary interpretation of religious values.

The adolescent challenges the environment with probing questions: Who am I? How do I fit in? Fowler believes it is critical for religion to articulate a clear definition of its theology, ethics, and values in order for the individual to integrate those teachings into his evolving definition of self-identity. This stage is the most challenging stage in Jewish development. This could be the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student whose rebellious nature brings stress to the parents and heartburn to the rabbi. AND if this student (and alas, the parents and rabbi) survives then the challenge of bringing him back to synagogue is overwhelming.. The Jewish professional should acknowledge the rebellious nature of this developmental stage and creates educational experiences that are challenging and engaging. These lesson plans may include greater personalization of the prayers that the student had to learn for Bar Mitzvah. This interpretation maybe a song written/sung by a contemporary artist that conveys the same message as the one found in the prayer.

Stage 4 Individuative-Reflective

Moving from adolescent to young adult, the individual begins to acknowledge the values of this social system. At the same time, there is a struggle to discover a compatible path between social and religious systems. Fowler expands upon Kohlberg's stage of Postconventional Principled Level. For Kohlberg the individual strives to assert his own identity within a social system. Yet with this move, Fowler asserts that the role of religion in this stage is to provide the individual with ethical values that will guide him during this conflict.

"Stage 4's ascendant strength has to do with its capacity for critical reflection on identity (self) and outlook (ideology."⁷

During this stage the individual begins to clarify the definition of self. The elements of self-identity are challenged. The Fowler's reference of critical thought can embrace the moral and ethical teachings found in the biblical prophets. The study of prophetic literature seems particularly relevant for developmental stage. Each prophet can be described as a social critic who saw the social dangers of his own society. Through this study, Jewish adolescents will learn that the struggle of prophets to balance society with religion reflects their own struggle.

Stage 5 Conjunctive Faith

At this stage of development, the individual has acquired a philosophical outlook based upon many years of life experiences. One's personal philosophy is often challenged by the reality of the existing world. The individual must decide to acknowledge and accept it or do something to change it. Erikson describes this stage as Generativity vs. Stagnation. Fowler expands this struggle and suggests that the individual may question religious symbols. Are these symbols still meaningful to me today? The individual searches for meaning in order to keep these religious symbols relevant. "Stage 5 accepts as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically independent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp. Religiously, it knows that the symbols, stories, doctrines and liturgies offered by its own or other traditions are inevitably partial, limited to a particular people experience of God and incomplete."⁸

The Jewish professional must acknowledge the individual's search for meaning. The security of a Jewish identity may be plagued with questions of relevancy. The individual seeks new meaning for the symbols, rituals, and ceremonies that have been a significant part of his past. This stage of Jewish education must create new contemporary

⁷ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 182

⁸ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 186

interpretations and explanations for traditions. This effort will be effective when the individual acknowledges the value of his Jewish heritage by observing holidays, regularly attending worship and/or engaging in the study of Jewish learning.

Stage 6 Universalizing Faiths

Individuals in this stage are those unique people who have chosen to act upon the universal ethical principles and bring about radical improvement in the lives of other people. Fowler follows Kohlberg who identifies this stage as the Universal Ethical Principles: "Persons best described by Stage 6 typically exhibit qualities that shake our usual criteria of normalcy."⁹

Ideally, individuals in this last stage of development are the ultimate role models. They are of the ilk of Mother Theresa and Mahatma Gandhi who devoted their entire life and resources to helping the poor and indigent. Critics of Fowler have argued that this stage of development is unrealistic. While few have reached this "developmental stage", those who have remain a valuable role model for others. If one person achieved the same status as Mother Theresa and when asked why do you do this, and the response was "because I am Jewish and this is what Judaism means to me." Then Jewish learning has become effective in reaching Fowler's ultimate goal.

On the other hand it could be argued that this stage identifies individuals who become leaders in our congregations. They are the individuals who volunteer time and energy to the synagogue's board of directors, and committees, they are the role models for our children. Jewish educators should call upon these lay leaders to speak to religious school students about the nature of their commitment to the synagogue and to Jewish life.

Stages of Jewish Learning

Fowler's Stages of Faith provides a valuable direction for understanding spiritual development. His adaptation of the existing theories of Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg expands upon the concept that learning occurs in stages. Through these stages, Fowler offers a unique insight into the complexity of how a child begins spiritual development. However there are those who argue that Fowler's stages fail to adequately describe his own vision for faith development. Craig Dyksta and Sharon argue that faith has three components, trust, knowledge, and operation. In their opinion, Fowler's stages of faith development lack the full scope of these significant components. ¹⁰ Even Fowler will admit that the study of faith development is evolving.¹¹ The critical value of Fowler's seven stages of faith development is the integration of the psychology of learning as outlined by Kohlberg, Erikson, and Piaget.

If Ariel is correct in his observations of current trends in the Jewish community, Jewish educational material should reflect the understanding that Fowler brings to faith development. Unfortunately, we have not heeded this call. In a groundbreaking study on Jewish adolescents, prepared by Nancy Leffert and Hayim Herring, there was an incredible gap between the commitment to Jewish identity and the attendance at weekly synagogue services. According to this study, when asked if being Jewish

⁹ James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 200

¹⁰ Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, ed., *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986) 69

¹¹ Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, ed., *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986) 286

was important, over 90% responded affirmatively.¹² Yet when asked if attending weekly synagogue services were important, only 30 % of the respondents said yes.¹³ According to the results of this study, then the Jewish adolescent seems to be saying,

"I am proud to be Jewish, but I don't need to attend worship services." With this response, the student fails to recognize the value of prayer. For this reason, the words of the prayer must be taught with an emphasis on their meanings. The challenge for Jewish education is to acknowledge the stages of faith development, as outlined by Fowler. When this developmental process is integrated into a Jewish framework, it becomes a valuable tool that will assist the Jewish educator in the creation of meaningful lesson plans for the study of prayer. These lessons plans should go beyond the words and engage the student in their meanings. When the stages of Fowler's Faith Development are placed with a Jewish framework, then a valuable educational tool is created.

We will begin with the teaching from the second century sage, Hillel.

In Pirke Avot, Hillel is attributed with the following statement:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

If I am only for myself, what am I?

If not now, when?"

In a few words, Hillel describes the tension that exists in everyday life, the needs of the individual and the needs of society. Unintentionally perhaps, this second century sage composed the stages for Jewish learning. If we conceptualize Hillel's teaching in a series of three concentric circles, each circle contains one stage.

In the center circle we find the words " If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" This circle describes the self. The world begins with the self. The newborn infant

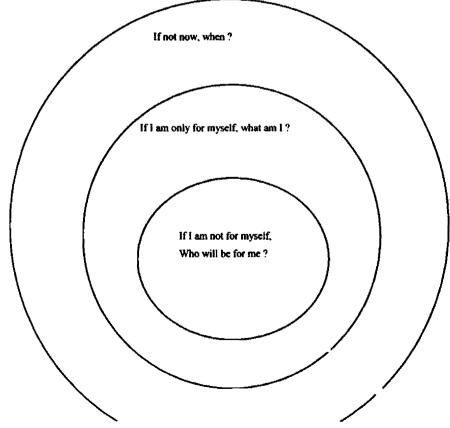
¹² Rabbi Hayim Herring and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D. "Shema: Listening to Jewish Youth: Adolescent Task Force Survey Report (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1998) 10

¹³ Rabbi Hayim Herring and Nancy Leffert, Ph.D. "Shema: Listening to Jewish Youth: Adolescent Task Force Survey Report (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1998) 17

experiences the world only through the interaction of others. So too, the stages of Jewish learning has to begin with the self. After all, the wisdom of our sages acknowledged that the experience of prayer begins with self when they refer to the action of prayer in the reflexive voice, L'hitpalel.

The second circle encompasses the first and contains the words, "If I am only for myself, what am I?" Hillel has recognized the tension that often consumes the individual as he begins to expand his definition of self to include the surrounding community. The third circle, which embraces the others, asks the eternal question, "If not now when?" How do we balance our personal needs with the needs of others? When we have arrived at this balance, Hillel demands action, If not now when? When will you initiate this action?

The diagram below presents Hillel's statement in a visual manner in order to understand how this wisdom can become the foundation for creating stages in Jewish Learning.

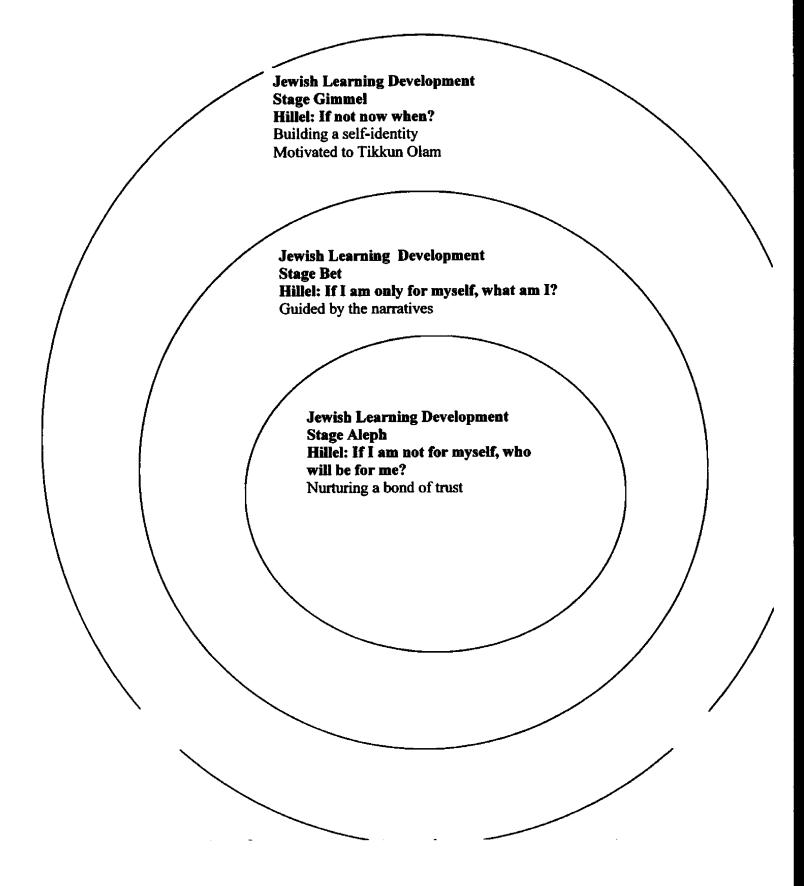


Hillel's statement begins with the questioning of self, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" and therefore is placed in the first circle

The second circle represents the individual's transition to an acknowledgement of the position within a family or community. " If I am only for myself, what am I?" poses the challenge of defining the role of the individual who exists within a larger group. The necessity of the individual to define himself first and then through interaction of others, places the first circle within the second circle.

The third circle represents the ultimate challenge, "If not now, when?" When the individual has acquired the understanding of the self and its place within the larger group, Hillel sets forth the obligation to act, "If not now, when!"

Hillel's teaching provides the structure for understanding the stages of Jewish learning. However, it does not offer the psychological details, which are necessary in order to develop educational materials. Therefore it is also necessary to integrate Fowler's stages of faith development into structure of Jewish learning development. When Fowler's stages of faith development are integrated into the concentric circles of Hillel's statement, a new insight into Jewish learning emerges can become a valuable educational tool in the creation of curriculum to meet the educational challenges of a changing Jewish community



For Hillel, the beginning of awareness begins with the self. When Hillel asks the question. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" he sets forth the individual's need for trust, acknowledging that one's personal identity cannot be limited to a definition of self but must include another. Fowler's first two stages, Pre-Stage and Stage 1- Intuitive-Projective Faith provide the psychological details to the first part of Hillel's teaching. Fowler limits these stages from infancy to early childhood, age 0-6. Within this stage of human development, the educator can begin with the understanding the student's desire to be reassured that God exists in the world. Rabbi David Wolpe suggests that teaching our children to recite blessings gives their appreciation a spiritual dimension that God is the divine artist¹⁴. For children, the beginning of their learning can start with blessings. Drawing upon the unlimited list of traditional blessings, the educator or parent will demonstrate to the child that God does exist by virtue of the beauty in the world. When we observe this beauty, a blessing is recited to express our appreciation and wonder of God's creations. Through the repeated recitation of blessings, the child begins to build a bond of trust with the parent or teacher and share in the divine wonder of God's presence in the world.

Stage Bet of Jewish Learning

In Stage Bet, Hillel recognizes the transition from the self to the other. The individual's world has expanded and the recognition of this world is expressed in the second part of

¹⁴ David J. Wolpe, *Teaching Your Children About God: A Modern Jewish Approach*, (New York: Holt, 1993) 46

Hillel's statement. " If I am only for myself, what am I ?" Fowler's Stages 2 and 3 provide an excellent psychological insight for this stage of Jewish Learning. In Fowler's Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faiths, narratives, beliefs and observances, begin to define the community. Rituals are introduced as a way of telling the narrative. Both Hillel and Fowler focus on the individual's interaction beyond his immediate world. For Hillel the dilemma in Stage Bet recognizes the individual's desire to define his identity in relationship to the community. Fowler's Stage 2 suggests the tension expressed in Hillel's statement can be resolved through the use of symbols and rituals. These symbols and rituals explain the meaning of the narrative. The narrative defines the individual's relationship to the community. Welcoming Shabbat at home with traditional songs and prayers present the narrative and rituals which define Jewish life. Participating in community worship is another important way in which individuals can enrich their Shabbat experience. Observance of other Jewish holidays can also provide the individual with an awareness of and connection to community. The rituals and ceremonies of the Passover Seder create a powerful vehicle for the individual to express his individual Jewish identity and his community affiliation. According to Fowler's Stage 3 Synthetic-Conventional Faiths. a person's experience of the world now extends beyond the family. The integration of Family Educational programs into the religious school curriculum will provide a unique opportunity for parents and children to explore their Jewish Identity through communal study and worship. Included in Fowler's Stage 3 is the requirement: "Faith must synthesize values and information, it must provide a basis for identity and outlook."

In preparation for the transition from Stage Bet to Stage Gimmel, Fowler requires faith to present a system of values and information. This system will support the individual as the journey continues in a quest for meaning. Curriculum can be designed to help the student discover the ethical, moral and theological implications of each prayer. The goal of such a curriculum should reflect the student's experience with prayer should arise from the synthesis of meaning and the ability to read the prayer in Hebrew.

Stage Gimmel of Jewish Learning

The final part of Hillel's statement <u>"If not now, when</u> confronts the learner with the mandate for immediate action. Hillel demands action. Not just any action, but rather action that arises from Jewish values. Fowler's Stage 4- Individuative-Reflective requires the individual to accept responsibility. This understanding of responsibility can embrace the individual's actions in daily life or the individual's obligation to society. As the individual begins the transition to Stage 5, he will affirm his personal identity and thereby begin to separate from the group. Hillel's challenge forces the individual to enter Fowler's Stage 5. To rephrase: "If you are Jewish, What are you going to do about it? If not now, when?. The individual has internalized Jewish values and teachings and embark upon a journey to demonstrate the highest level of moral values. These unique individuals truly understand Hillel's moral mandate,

"If not now, when ?" and they act.

Together Hillel and Fowler can provide a powerful organizational and developmental framework for Jewish learning. With the creation of this educational

tool, Jewish education can begin to create meaningful lesson plans for the study of prayer that will address the needs of a Jewish community in search of faith.

Chapter 2

Teaching Prayer

From the moment our people arrived upon the shores of this country, the goal of Jewish education has been to preserve Jewish Life. Instructions in Hebrew became a priority. Hebrew was the ancient language of prayer, which opened the doors to Jewish culture.

Every generation has confronted the question of how to teach Hebrew. In generations where children clung close to home and community, Hebrew Primers methodically presented each Hebrew letter and vowel. Through repetition and memorization the student acquired the skills of decoding. It was assumed that students would learn the meaning of the prayers through participation in Jewish holiday celebrations both in the home and synagogue.

Certainly Jewish life has changed. Regular attendance at worship services could now be measured as monthly as opposed to weekly. Jewish observance in the home, if and when observed, maybe conducted in English. While once the Hebrew language was the sole focus of Jewish Education, it now has to share the classroom with the teaching of Jewish culture.

In most Reform congregational schools the overall purpose of contemporary Hebrew language programs is to develop decoding skills and fluency in reading prayers. Considering Jewish life today, can we be limited to these goals? The challenge for Jewish Education today is to expand the Hebrew language program so that it is more than just another language course. Recently, several Jewish educational publishing houses have been responsive to the need to enhance the teaching of Hebrew to include word meanings and connections to Jewish culture. Behrman House Publishing, A.R.E. and the Union for Reform Judaism all have new materials that reflects the changes in the approach to teaching prayer.

We can see the difference in approach by examining different publications that came out within a few years of each other. In 1994, Behrman House, Inc. published *New Siddur Program*. The goal of this program is prayer literacy and fluent reading of the Hebrew prayers in the Siddur. According to the Educational Director's Guide, students will be able to "read prayers fluently, pick out key words which will help them understand the theme of the prayer, and discuss the concept of each prayer in English."¹ It is the goal of this program to teach the Hebrew enabling the students to "talk to and about God".²

In this program, Hebrew is taught as any other foreign language. Comprehension of concepts is critical. Meaning of words is taught only in the final phase. The learning sequence begins with the decoding of Hebrew. Once the student can accurately identify

¹ Educational Director's Guide p. 1-1

² Educational Director's Guide p. 1-3

the Hebrew alphabet, the teacher introduces the meaning of the words. Students learn to translate key words achieving a general understanding of the meaning of the prayer. Acquiring this understanding, the student moves on to the next phase, the learning of grammatical concepts. According to the Learning Sequence, the student learns the grammatical structure of Hebrew words in order to fully appreciate the deeper meaning of the word. Only in the final phase of this Learning Sequence does the student recognize the complexity of the concepts found among the Hebrew words. This program attempts to engage the student intellectually. It fails to provide the student in any sense of Jewish cultural literacy.

Recognizing the limitations of this Hebrew program, Behrman House published a new Hebrew curriculum in 2001. *Hineni, The New Hebrew Through Prayer*. The goal of this new program is "designed to deepen our students' understanding of Jewish ritual and the concepts inherent in our mitzvot, while teaching them to read Hebrew and to pray."³ Heneni includes opportunities for students to understand the scope of prayer. With pictures of people praying, the student can observe of what bodily actions are recommended. For example, the teaching of the Amida includes a picture of people standing. The teaching of the candle blessing for Shabbat includes a picture of women covering their eyes while reciting the blessing. This prayer curriculum encourages educators to include a prayer service during the school time. Each class would lead the worship service. In this way the students would practice reading the prayers they learned in class and also participate in the worship experience.

The Time For Prayer Program, Z'man L'Tefilah, was published by A.R.E. in 2000.

³ Hineni, The New Hebrew Through Prayer, Teacher's Edition p.4

This program is designed for students who have completed a Hebrew primer and not yet B'nai Mitzvah. The program is designed to teach prayer literacy and Hebrew language, with a strong emphasis on Jewish concepts and values.⁴ The goals of the program are:

- 1. Prayer Fluency
- 2. Prayer Concepts
- 3. Prayer Text Analysis
- 4. Why Pray
- 5. How To Pray
- 6. Hebrew Language
- 7. Hebrew Reading
- 8. Jewish Cultural Literacy

It is clear from these stated goals what the priorities are. While fluency in Hebrew reading is a primary objective, it is closely followed by Prayer Concepts. Students will acquire the skills to decode the Hebrew language in order to achieve fluency but will also learn the meaning the prayers. For example Book 1, Berachot concentrates on blessings. The lesson begins with the exercises for the student to practice his/her reading skills. As the student acquires a fluency in Hebrew reading, the words of this exercise will include the words of the blessing. The lesson continues, as the student is now ready to read the blessing. The lesson concludes with a translation of the blessing and the appropriate time to recite it. This final exercise may include a series of questions encouraging the student to explore his/her own thoughts about the blessing.

⁴ Z'man L'tefialah The Time For Prayer Program Teacher Guide p. 7

The URJ Press published the Mitkadem Program in 2003. This program was created to accommodate the varying levels of Hebrew skills in one classroom. The program includes 9 levels. Each level *Ramah* provides the student with a self-paced lesson, allowing the student to progress at his/her own speed. The role of the teacher is to introduce the information, review the previous lesson and guide the students as they work on their individual Ramah. When a student completes a Ramah, they are given a test to evaluate their comprehension for that Ramah. Mitkadem follows a "comprehensive approach to Hebrew" ⁵ The Hebrew vocabulary is carefully developed to associate with a prayer or ritual. This prayer or ritual is then explained in the student's Ramah. While the Mitkadem Program strives to satisfy the criteria:

To become fluent in Hebrew reading

Understand the meaning of the prayer

Acknowledge the connection to Jewish culture i.e. holidays, rituals, lifecycles. In order to create a program that is self-paced, each Ramah consists of several lessons. Each lesson must be completed in order for the student to advance to the next level. The challenge for the teacher is to monitor each student's progress and to create a lesson for the entire class. How does the classroom lesson reflect the individual lessons if each student is working on a different lesson? The structure of the program becomes an obstacle in achieving it effectiveness

The Stages of Jewish Learning Development as outlined in Chapter 1 provide a framework from which to further review these Hebrew programs.

⁵ Mitkadem : Hebrew for Youth Teacher's Guide p. 4

Stage Aleph requires a bond of trust be established in order for the student to develop a self-awareness as a Jew. Behrman House's *New Siddur Program* is a Hebrew program, which concentrates on fluency and vocabulary and lacks any attempt to engage the student in anything other than Hebrew. For example, in Book Two, Lesson 4 after the student has learned the Birchat Hamazon, the lesson concludes with an exercise to review the significant concepts and vocabulary.

For this exercise to comply with Stage Aleph, questions as to the reason for this blessing should be included, challenging the student to consider the importance of God, food and giving thanks, such as Why should we give thanks for food? Why should we give thanks to God for food? Why do we give thanks after we have finished eating?

What is the connection between peace and giving thanks for food?

What is the connection between Jerusalem and giving thanks for food?

In Behrman House's Hineni The New Hebrew Through Prayer, an explanation of ritual accompany each prayer lesson. In Book One, the lesson on the Ma'ariv/Yotzer prayers includes a explanation as to the reason for these prayers:

"What's your favorite part of the day-morning or evening? Maybe you love the evening. The sun turns from yellow to red, the clouds turn pink, and a beautiful, deep blue purple spreads across the sky. You can see the first stars start to twinkle as night moves in and there's a feeling of calm and peace, as if the whole world were settling down to rest. The Ma'ariv prayer is said every day as the daylight turns to evening. It praises God for creating the twilight and the darkness-every single day."(p. 14)

Behrman House strives to broaden the scope of learning prayers to include a reason for this prayer. By providing this explanation, the student will learn there is a reason for these words. When meaning accompanies the task of reading, the student will develop a bond of trust. The student is not just learning the words to recite but also a logical reason for learning these words.

The Mitkadem program published by the URJ Press describes it program as a "Comprehensive Approach to Hebrew". This approach is outlined into three fundamental components:

- Practice- as in Training; Teachers are instructed to utilize limited classroom time for learning Hebrew and fostering a feeling of community through communal worship and holiday celebrations.
- Practice as in Observance. Prayers are taught within the context of their appropriate ritual and liturgical setting.
- Practice as in Routine; Classroom setting is only the beginning of learning, students are encouraged to integrate these prayers into their family life.

Even though Mitkadem expands the learning of prayers into a comprehensive approach, it will not get them to "Carnegie Hall".

The structural complexity of this program becomes a barrier to nurturing trust that is fundamental to Stage Aleph of Jewish Learning Development. The self-paced regiment may nurture self-confidence; however it lacks the evidence that the two fundamental concepts of "Routine and Observance" are fulfilled. The effectiveness of these two fundamental principles would begin to nurture this bond of trust.

Ramah 4 introduces the student to several blessings. It begins with familiar blessings and gradually builds upon this vocabulary with words of unfamiliar blessings. Students are taught the components of blessing. As they build their vocabulary, the blessings are associated with the appropriate food or occasion. To evaluate the student's comprehension and retention of this material, the student must successfully complete a Mivchan, The Mivchan for the completion of Ramah 4 tests the students by asking them to identify whether the blessing is for Food, Holiday or Special Occasion. In order for Ramah 4 to satisfy the criteria for Stage Aleph, it would have to include an activity for students to recite the blessing at home and in the classroom. A daily log could be created for each student to record what blessings were said, when it was recited, where it was recited and why. Encouraging students to recite the blessings reinforces the value that giving thanks to God is important. Through the recitation of blessings the student becomes involved with community and family and a bond of trust evolves.

The second stage of Jewish Learning Development, Stage Bet, is built upon the narratives that define Jewish identity. When these narratives are included in a Hebrew program then the prayers resonate with personal relevance. Z'man L'tifilah, The Time For *Prayer Program* published by Behrman House, includes narratives for each lesson to enrich the learning experience. The Introduction to Book 4 in the Teacher's Guide highlights the Torah Service as the students learn the prayers and blessings for this part of the service:

"Torah is built around a central metaphor. According to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Sperling, the Jewish mystics teach that the Torah service is a reenactment of the Revelation at Mount Sinai (*Ta'amay Haminhagim*). This metaphor is introduced her as students are asked to draw comparisons between the people, places and events associated with the modern Torah service and the biblical account of what took place at Mount Sinai." (p. 16).

The lesson in Chapter 1, Book 4 introduces the core concept of honoring the Torah with a vocabulary of Hebrew words relating to the Torah service. The lesson with a narrative, which continues to draw a parallel between the events at Mount Sinai and the sanctuary today:

"Each item within the sanctuary serves as a reminder of that most ancient sanctuary. The Aron Hakodesh reminds us of the Ark of the Covenant and like the ancient Ark, the Aron Hakodesh, may have originally been a portable cabinet that was carried from place to place." (P.18).

The narrative continues to describe the Aron Hakodesh in today's sanctuary creating a direct link to the events describe in the Torah. With the inclusion of this narrative into the Hebrew lesson, the student becomes aware of the power of these symbols. The Hebrew words his is learning now take on a deeper meaning as the narrative connects the words to a dramatic moment in Jewish history.

Another example of the use of the narrative in this Hebrew program is found in Book 4, Chapter 5. The prayer for this lesson is the Aleynu . The lesson begins with a description of the historical development of this prayer and an explanation as to its importance today. The lesson proceeds to outline the three paragraphs of the prayer. According to the lesson (p. 42-43) the Aleynu consists of three paragraphs. The first paragraph focuses on the uniqueness of Israel, the second paragraph reminds us that God is the Creator of the universe and the third paragraph focuses on the hope of a future Messianic Age. After the student learns to read the Hebrew and gains an understanding of the importance of this prayer, the lesson adds another dimension to the narrative, "Prayerobics" which in picture and words describes the appropriate manner to recite this prayer. For the Aleynu the Prayerobics (p.44) depict a person bowing when reciting this prayer. This action and the historical perspective offer the student a very powerful narrative from which to develop a positive Jewish identity. The third stage of Jewish Learning Development, Stage Gimmel, recognizes the need to build a self-identity through the involvement of Tikkun Olam. Hebrew not only opens the door to Jewish culture, it also opens the door to Jewish values. We have already discussed the importance of learning the meaning to the prayers as the student acquires the skills to read them. The next step is to teach the student that Hebrew words can teach us about how we care for ourselves and the world around us.

In *Hineni: The New Hebrew Through Prayer*, Book 2. Lesson 5 introduces the Jewish value of shalom through two prayers for peace, Sim Shalom and Shalom Rav.

"When Jewish people make a wish as a community, it is a wish for peace. The idea of peace is so important to the Jews that the final blessing of the Amidah is a prayer for peace." (p. 46).

This lesson includes a section titled "Prayer Building Blocks" In this section the Hebrew word "shalom" is highlighted. Using the root letters of Shalom, Shin, Lamed, Mem, to teach the concept of harmony and completeness, the student learns that shalom means more than "hello". Shalom means peace when everyone lives together in harmony.

Another example of using Hebrew to teach Jewish values can be found in Z'man Li'tifilah: The Time For Prayer Program. In Chapter 6 of Book 3 the lesson introduces the Avodah prayer with the core concept: "Ask Not What God Can Do for You, Ask What You Can Do for God."⁶ Modifying the statement by John F. Kennedy, the concept of Avodah is translated as service to God. The lesson is not complete until the student learns the key values that have been identified in this prayer. The lesson concludes with a

⁶ Teacher's Guide p. 56

story, which highlights these values and an exercise, which asks the student to list activities that would respond to the crisis described in the story.

Summary

With the review of these Hebrew Prayer programs, certain new concepts come to light. Acquiring the skills to decode Hebrew prayers no longer fulfills the goals for Jewish education. Any Hebrew prayer program must include meanings, concepts, and the connection to Jewish culture. A comprehensive Hebrew program for prayer should integrate Jewish literacy. Jewish literacy is the connection to the prayers through holidays, worship, and celebrations. When a particular prayer is recited; the meaning of this prayer should be included in the lesson. In addition to meaning, the lesson should include the ethical and theological implications of the prayer. Jewish literacy should include synagogue etiquette. Students need to learn the choreography of worship. The explanation of body movements associated with prayer needs to be included in the lesson.

As we have seen the Hebrew curriculum, Z'man Litifilah, A Time for Prayer Program, published by A.R.E, presents such a comprehensive approach to learning Prayer. Each prayer lesson includes an ethical teaching, in addition to an English translation and an explanation of its meaning. When appropriate, "Prayerobics", an illustration and explanation of the appropriate body language is included. *Mitkadem*, published by the URJ Press describes its program as a "Comprehensive Approach" to the study of Hebrew prayer, but lacks the breath and depth presented in the Z'man Litifilah A Time for Prayer Program. Ethical teachings and "Prayerobics" are not

included. *Hineni, The New Hebrew Through Prayer* published by Behrman House, also lacks the ethical teachings and "Prayerobics".

If the goal of Jewish education is to nurture Jewish Identity, then the teaching of prayer must reach beyond the limits of simply decoding the Hebrew language. The stages of Jewish Learning Development provide a very valuable tool for creating lesson plans. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how to use this valuable tool for teaching prayer by presenting lesson plans for three prayers for each stage of Jewish Learning Development.

CHAPTER 3

The lesson plans in this chapter will demonstrate how the Stages of Jewish Learning Development will enrich the student's learning of prayers. Lessons 1,2,and 3 will focus on the Avot/Imhaot prayer and Lessons 4,5, and 6 will focus on the Shema/Vahavah prayer. Lesson Plans 1 and 4 reflect Stage Aleph. Lesson Plans 2 and 5 reflect Stage Bet. Lesson Plans 3 and 6 reflect Stage Gimmel.

The Hebrew text for each prayer is included. Students should learn to read the prayers fluently. Teachers should devote time to the meaning of the prayer. Word by word translations are time consuming and virtually impossible. Students should learn significant phrases that give insight into the prayer's meaning. For this reason, I have highlighted several significant phrases for the teacher.

Lesson plans for Stage Aleph are targeted for the students in younger elementary levels, Kindergarten through Grade 3. While these students may not have the Hebrew reading proficiency, the lesson can focus on the English meaning of the prayer. The teacher can introduce the meaning of the prayer using the significant phrases.

Lesson plans for Stage Bet are targeted for students in the middle elementary levels, Grades 4-6. Students in these levels have knowledge of the Hebrew letters and vowels and a primary level of Hebrew reading.

Lesson plans for Stage Gimmel are targeted for students in Grade 7. As they prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the learning of the prayers needs to go beyond the decoding and fluent reading. At this stage in their Jewish learning development, their Jewish world has begun a new and important phase. The meanings of prayers MUST also be included in any lesson plan.

Each lesson plan includes a detailed outline for the teacher to initiate discussion as means to introduce the theme of the prayer. The lesson plans also include suggestions for a project. The reason for this project is to provide the students with an opportunity to develop a relationship with the prayer that goes beyond the words.

The lesson plans outlined in this chapter are designed to be used for classroom instruction for the level of Jewish learning development it was created for. It is not recommended that these lesson plans be used as a series of classroom instruction for the same class in the same year.

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SUBJECT: AVOT/IMAOT PRAYER

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: ALEPH-NURTURING

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

Our ancestors established a unique relationship with God.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What was the nature of that relationship?

What should we do to continue that relationship?

Lesson outline:

 Teacher will introduce the Avot/Imaot prayer with the concept of relationships. We have different relationships with different people. Students will describe the different relationships they have
 i.e. friends, relatives, parents, siblings, teachers.

3. Teacher will ask students to draw a diagram depicting their relationships. The diagram will be concentric circles with the center circle to be "self" and the extending circles to be the people in their lives. The closer relationship should be placed closest to the center circle.

4. Teacher will ask students to share their diagrams.

5. Teacher will ask students who they chose to be in the circle closest to them.

 Teacher will tell the class that if our patriarchs and matriarchs were asked to create a similar diagram, God would be in the circle closest to them.

7. Teacher will explain that our matriarchs and patriarchs devoted their lives to God.

 Teacher will share with the class the acts of devotion of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-22:19), Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19, 24:63-67 and 25:19-28:9), Jacob (Genesis 35: 9-15), Sarah (Genesis 11:29-12:20, 16:1-18:15 and 20:1-21:13), Rachel(Genesis 29:4-30:25, 31:1-55, 35:16-20), Leah (Genesis 29:16-30 and 31:1-15) and Rebecca (Genesis 24:15-67, 25:19-26:12 and 27:1-46).

9. Teacher will ask the students to read the Avot/Imahot prayer in English from the CCAR Gates of Prayer.

10. As the students become more proficient in reading this prayer, the teacher will explain that this prayer is the beginning of an important section of the service and is known by Tefilah, Amidah, or Shmoneh Esrei.

11. Teacher will ask the students what they think the prayer is saying.

12. Teacher will focus on the English phrase: "Who remembers the deeds of our ancestors." And ask students what they think this phrase means.

13. Teacher will ask the students what they can do so that God occupies a closer circle.

14. Teacher will suggest that students choose one action that they believe will bring God closer to them and create a diary.
15. After discussion, students will read the prayer in Hebrew.
16. Students will become fluent in reading the prayer in Hebrew.

17. Teacher will explain the "Prayerobics" that accompany this prayer. Prayerobics are the bodily movements that traditionally occur when a prayer is recited. With the Avot/Imahot prayer, bowing could be done by the individual when "Baruch" is recited.

SUBJECT: AVOT/IMAOT PRAYER

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: BET-NARRATIVE

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

God should look favorably upon us because of the righteous deeds of our ancestors.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What were the righteous deeds of our ancestors?

Why should God look favorably upon us because of what our

ancestors did?

LESSON OUTLINE

1.Teacher will introduce the Patriarchs, (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and the Matriarchs, (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel) as individuals who discovered God and established a special relationship with Him

2. Teacher will ask: What did they do that we should remember them?

Abraham: a) discovered one God (Genesis 12:1-4)

b) was ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19)

Isaac: As second generation, had to preserve the traditions of his

father. (Genesis 24:63-67 and 25:19-28:9)

Jacob: Wrestled with angel, God changed his name to Israel.

(Genesis 35:9-15)Sarah: Abraham's wife and mother to Isaac.

Abraham and Sarah were not just a "married couple" but a team,

two people working in harmony.(Genesis 11:29-12:20 and 16:1-18:15)

<u>Rebecca</u>: Wife of Isaac, mother of twins, Jacob and Esau.

(Genesis 25:19-26:12)

Leah: Sister of Rachel, Married Jacob in error. The only wife of Jacob buried with him because Jacob recognized that the future generations of Israel will come from her sons.

(Genesis 29:16-30).

Rachel: Wife of Jacob, mother of Benjamin, her tomb has

become a place of pilgrimage for all those who sorrow and mourn.

"Rachel weeping for her children refused to be

comforted"(Jeremiah 31:15)

3. Teacher will ask: Why is this so important to us?

This is important because it is the beginning of the Jewish people.

4. Teacher will ask the students how the deeds of our ancestors found favor with God.

5. Students will identify the deeds of each of the ancestors and what they did found favor with God.

6. Teacher will explain that because of the righteous deeds of ancestors, God's favor is shinning on us.

7. Teacher will pose the hypothetical question: "What if your parents were crooks, and incarcerated? What would people say about you?"

What if your father was Bill Gates, How do you think people would treat you? Would they treat you different than they do today? Why?

8. Teacher will explain God's favor shines upon us on account of the righteous deeds of our ancestors and because we are their descendents, we have a unique role. Our unique role is our responsibility to carry forward their legacy and live our lives as Jews guided by the lessons of our traditions.

9. Teacher will ask students what we do today that honors the deeds of our ancestors. What do we do today to show that we are Jewish?

10. Response: We worship the One God that our matriarchs and patriarchs knew.

11. Teacher: How do we worship God?

12. Response: Prayer.

13. Teacher: Is that the only way?

14. Response, No, We worship God through study and Tzedakah.

15. Teacher: Tzadakah, is another way of worshipping God by

helping other human beings.

16. Teacher will assist students in creating a class project for Tzadakah.

SUBJECT: AVOT/IMAOT PRAYER

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: GIMMEL- TIKKUN OLAM

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

Our ancestors strived to improve the world.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What did our ancestors do?

How did their deeds improve the world?

As their descendents, what is our obligation to improve the world?

LESSON OUTLINE:

1. Teacher will introduce Abraham as the first Jew because he acknowledged one God.

2. Teacher will ask students "Why was this important?" "What impact did this new idea have upon the world?"

3. Teacher will explain that monotheism has become the foundational belief for Christianity and Islam.

4. Teacher will introduce the Shema as the Jewish declaration that there is one God.

5. Teacher will ask students what we do to demonstrate that belief. Teacher will ask students to imagine what the world would be like if we believed in more than one God.

6. Teacher will suggest that one God created one world and that it is our responsibility to make it the best it can be, Tikkun Olam.

- 7. How can this be done?
 - a) Consider ways of conserving energy and natural resources.
 - b) Meeting with students of other religious faiths and sharing concerns and ideas.

c) Helping people who are victims of genocide, prejudice and/or poverty.

8. Teacher will ask students what they think that Non-Jews say about Jews and the Jewish belief of God.

9. Teacher will ask students what they know about the Christian belief in God.

10. Teacher will observe from the students' responses, that they know very little about other religions' theological beliefs.

11. Teacher may invite a Priest or Imam to the class to explain to students

12. Teacher will invite students (same age) from a local church to share their religion's concept of God.

13. Summation: Teacher will explain that Tikkun Olam means that we need to live together in peace. Since the word "Shalom" means unity, it requires us to learn about the beliefs of our Non-Jewish neighbors.

HEBREW FOR

Lessons 1, 2 and 3

בָּרוּדָ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלהֵינוּ וֵאלהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמותַינו , אֱלהֵי

אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

, אֱלֹהֵי שָׁרָה ,אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה

, אֶלהֵי לֵאָה , וַאלהֵי רָחֵל

ָהָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגָּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקַיֵּה הַכּּל, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת וְאִמָהות וּמֵבִיא גוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנִיהֶם, לְמַעֵן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה. מֶלֶך עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמָגֵן בָּרוּדָ אַתָּה יְיָ, מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם וְעָז רַת שָׁרָה.

- אָבְרָהָם Abraham
- וsaac יִצְחָק
- Jacob יעקב
- שָׁרָה Sarah
- רבקה Rivkah
- Leah לֵאָה

רָחֵל Rachel

Significant phrases:

וזוֹבֵר חַסְדֵי אָבוֹת וְאַמָהות

Who remembers the righteousness of our patriarchs and matriarchs?

וּמֵבִיא גוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם, לְמַעֵן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה

Who brings redemption to their descendents for the sake of his name in love?

SUBJECT: SHEMA - VAHAVATAH

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: ALEPH- NURTURING

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

Our love for God is expressed through our words and actions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How does the Mezuzah express our love for God?

LESSON OUTLINE:

- 1. Teacher will ask the students, "Who do you love?"
- Teacher will ask students, "How do you express this love?"
- Teacher will ask students, "How do we express our love for God?"

- 4. Teacher will introduce the V'ahavtah prayer and ask students to read the English translation.
- Teacher will tell students that this prayer comes from the Bible, and teaches us about ways we can express our love for God.
- 6. Teacher will ask students to identify what ways the prayer teaches us how to express our love for God.
- Teacher will introduce the Mezuzah as one way we can express our love for God.
- Teacher will explain that the Mezuzah is attached to the doorpost in order to constantly remind us of God's presence.
- Teacher will explain that just as it is difficult to love someone who we never see, the Mezuzah is our expression of love for God.

- 4. Teacher will introduce the V'ahavtah prayer and ask students to read the English translation.
- Teacher will tell students that this prayer comes from the Bible, and teaches us about ways we can express our love for God.
- 6. Teacher will ask students to identify what ways the prayer teaches us how to express our love for God.
- Teacher will introduce the Mezuzah as one way we can express our love for God.
- Teacher will explain that the Mezuzah is attached to the doorpost in order to constantly remind us of God's presence.
- Teacher will explain that just as it is difficult to love someone who we never see, the Mezuzah is our expression of love for God.

- Teacher will explain that the parchment in the Mezuzah is the Shema/Vahavtah prayer which expresses our love for God and God's teachings.
- 11. Teacher will present students with the Hebrew text of the Shema/Vahavtah prayer.
- 12. Students will achieve fluency in reading this prayer.
- 13. Teacher will ask students to identify the phrase in the Shema/Vahavatah prayer about the Mezuzah.
- 14. Students will create their own Mezuzah. Teacher will supply materials.
- 15. Students will create their own "parchment" from construction paper. Copying the Hebrew text of the Shema/Vahavtah prayer.
- 16. When project is complete, teacher will explain where and how their Mezuzahs should be placed in their own homes.

17. Teacher will distribute a copy of the appropriate blessing for affixing the Mezuzah to the doorpost.Students will learn to read the blessing for affixing the Mezuzah to the doorpost.

18. Teacher will explain the meaning of the phrase:
אָנִי יְיָ אֶלהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאֶתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיֵם,
I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.
The God, who redeemed our ancestors from slavery in
Egypt, is the God who gave us the Mitzvoth to be holy.

SUBJECT: SHEMA - VAHAVATAH

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: BET-NARRATIVE

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

The Shema is the Jewish Pledge of Allegiance.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does being Jewish require us to do?

LESSON OUTLINE:

- 1. Teacher will ask students to explain the meaning and purpose of the "Pledge of Allegiance"
- 2. Teacher will explain the meaning of "Pledge" means promise.

- 3. Teacher will ask students what are they promising?
- Teacher will explain that the recitation of "Pledge of Allegiance" expresses our promise to be good Americans who obey all the laws.
- 5. Teacher will explain that this will require Americans to do things they like, and to do things they don't like.
- 6. Teacher will ask students to list things that they like to do as Americans and things they don't like to do as Americans.
- Teacher will introduce the concept that the Shema is the Jewish "Pledge of Allegiance". The Shema states, "As a Jew, I promise...."
- Teacher will ask students to complete the phrase, As a Jew
 I promise......
- 9. Teacher will present the students with the Hebrew text of the Shema/Vahavtah.

- 10. Students will learn to read fluently the Hebrew text of the Shema/Vahavatah prayer.
- Teacher will ask the students to identify in the Vahavatah prayer "Mitzvoth" actions that Jews are required to do.
- 12. Teacher will introduce the Tefilin. For Orthodox and Conservative Jews, who believe that Tefilin is a Jewish obligation?
- 13. Teacher will demonstrate the Tefilin.
- 14. Teacher will introduce the "Mitzvah" of the Talit.
- 15. Students will learn the blessing for the Talit.
- 16. Students will make their own talit with tyed dyed cloth and string for tzitzit.
- 17. Teacher will explain that the knots on the corner of the Talit, represent the 613 mitzvoth. The teacher will demonstrate how the knots are to be tied.

- 18. Teacher will suggest to the students that while they are preparing the knots, that they think of ways that they celebrate being Jewish everyday, and recite these activities silently as they prepare the knots.
- 19. Summation: The knots on the Talit remind us of our promises to God and our responsibilities as Jews.

SUBJECT: SHEMA - VAHAVATAH

JEWISH LEARNING DEVELOPMENTAL

STAGE: GIMMEL- TIKKUN OLAM

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

The declaration of One God requires us to work for Tikkun Olam?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does the Shema/Vahavtah prayer teach about the obligation

"Mitzvah" of Tikkun Olam?

LESSON OUTLINE:

1. Teacher will introduce the Shema as the Jewish Pledge of Allegiance.

- 2. Teacher will explain that the recitation of the Shema is a sacred pledge accepting the obligations of being Jewish.
- 3. Teacher will introduce the Jewish obligation of Tikkun Olam.
- Students will read the Hebrew Text of the Shema/Vahavtah prayer.
- Teacher will identify the phrase "And you shall teach them diligently unto your children"
- 6. Teacher will ask the students what this phrase means.
- Teacher will explain this phrase means that not only parents, but all Jews have a responsibility to teach the lessons of Torah to other Jews.
- 8. Teacher will prepare the students to become tutors to younger students in the religious school.
- 9. As tutors, students can work with younger students who are having difficulty decoding Hebrew.

10. Summation: Tutoring younger students who are having difficulty enables these students to learn in a positive, less stressful environment and thereby creates a positive learning experience. In a positive learning experience, these tutors will nurture a positive Jewish identity as they become role models.

ןש<u>ַ</u>נַּנְתָּם ּלְבָגֶיךָ, וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם, בְּשִׁבְתְּך בְּבֵיתָדָ, וּרְלֶכְתְּדָ בַדֶּרֶדָ, וּבְשָׁכְבְּדָ ּוּבְקּוּמֶדָ. וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדֶדָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶידָ. וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזֵזוֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ. לְמַעַן תּזְכְּרוּ וַאֲשִׂיתָם אֶת ַכָּל מִצְוֹתָי, וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם. אֲנִי יְיָ אֶלהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר

ּוְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוּך הַיּוֹם, עַל לְבָבֶךָ.

ּוְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיִךָ, בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ, וּבְכָל נַפְּשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל מְא דֶרָ

ָשָׁמע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד. בָּרוּך שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Shema/Vahavatah

Hebrew Text

הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיֵם, לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים, אַנִי יְיָ אֶלֹהֵיכֶם.

Significant phrases:

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְיָ אֱלהֶיִך	And you shall love the Lord your God
בְּכָל לְבָרְ T	With all your heart
ָ וּבְכָל נַפְּשְׁךָ ,	With all your soul
וּבְכָל מְא ֹדֶ,דָ	With all your might
וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ	You shall teach them diligently to your children
ָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם, בְּשִׁבְתָּך בְּבֵיתֶך, וּבְלָכְתִּך בַדֶּ ֶרֶדָ	

And you shall speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way

וְבְשָׁרְבָּך, וְבְקוּמֶך When you lie down and when you rise up

וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדֶךָ, וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ .

And they shall be a sign upon your hand and frontlets between your eyes.

וּכְתַבְתָּן עַל מְזֻזוֹת בֵּיתֶך וּבִשְׁעָרֶיך

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates.

לְמַעַן הּזְפְרוּ וַאֲשִׂיתָם אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתָי

You will remember and do all of my commandments

וְהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים לֵאלהֵיכֶם

And you will be holy to your God

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