

Breaking Down the Gates

*A staff guide to running a creative learner's minyan
for a USY Summer Program*

"מה יקר חסדך, אלהים, ובני אדם בצל כנפיק יחסיון." (תהילים: לו)

"How precious is your constant love, O God. Mortals take shelter under your wings." (Psalms: 36)

Introduction

USY Summer Programs have the potential to change the lives of Jewish youth in many different ways. One of these ways is to enrich their lives with t'fillah, prayer. Unfortunately, when USY'ers have little background in t'fillah, they are intimidated and alienated from our minyanim during the summer. They do not feel like they are part of the service and may also feel that they are not a part of the larger community which all of the USY'ers create and which is constantly evolving throughout the summer. The opportunities that we have on Wheels or Pilgrimage as educators not only to include these kids but to turn them on to Jewish prayer is greater than any other formal or informal learning atmosphere. In order to do this, a safe environment for experimentation and learning needs to exist in the framework of a "learner's minyan." It is *your* responsibility as the minyan leader to ensure that this environment exists.

A learner's minyan is difficult to plan because it takes a lot of time to structure the framework of the minyan in a way that is creative, consistent, and balanced. On top of this, the leader must be willing to take chances with programs that may fail. Due to the tremendous amount of responsibility that each staff member and group leader has during the summer (as well as total physical and emotional exhaustion), there is rarely enough time to adequately prepare a summer long learner's minyan. The purpose of this supplement is to create the minyan for you, the counselor. This way you can choose on program from the many offered for each t'fillah, which gives you the luxury of focusing mainly on the execution of the material.

This minyan is written both for kids that have little to no t'fillah background and for the more advanced. However, if the dynamics of your group does not allow for a learner's minyan, many of the activities that we have included can be done by the regular minyan. It is important to break up your davening atmosphere with creative and interactive learning methods for any minyan.

There are two main goals of a learner's minyan: to teach the actual skills that one requires to daven (such as the ability to chant the t'fillot, to sing the tunes, and to know the choreography) and *to personally connect* to the t'fillot and to the structure of the service. These things are very difficult to achieve in such a short time. It is also easy to find oneself spending all of the time dealing with the content part and neglecting the skills part. We have some suggestions for you to accomplish both goals simultaneously.

The more the minyan can meet, the more seriously the USY'ers will take it. We suggest that the minyan meet every morning for Shacharit excluding Shabbat, Mondays, and Thursdays. The minyan should almost never do a full and complete davening of the matbeah t'fillah, halachically required minimum. The kids must understand that before they can daven the matbeah t'fillah, they must work up to it. One should begin the minyan with the explanation of its purpose and have each USY'er create personal and communal t'fillah goals. It is important to give them ownership over the direction of the minyan. Remember that you as the facilitator should never be at a point where you do not have

t'fillah goals to set as well. In order to reinforce the safe environment you are trying to create, share your personal goals with the kids. **You must use this opportunity to establish a shared sense of purpose so the kids do not feel that these are random daily activities for the "t'fillah impaired."** You are responsible for making sure that the kids achieve their goals, so help them set realistic ones. You can have the other staff members help out with this task as well as some of the more advanced kids.

Each morning you want the minyan to be consistent. If you establish rituals unique to the minyan, be consistent and do them on a regular basis. You should start with the beginning of the service and never teach a t'fillah without teaching how to chant it, to sing it, and to move with it (standing, sitting, bowing, etc.). We have provided background information for each t'fillah and it is important that you share the context of each. It is important that in the following days of the minyan you reinforce what was learned the previous days. For example, you have arrived at Mizmor Shir. Before you teach the t'fillah, sing Modeh Ani, Birkot Ha'shahar, etc. This way they will always be reinforcing what they have learned.

This source book provides many different options for teaching each t'fillah. You should choose an option based on how your minyan responds and reacts to that type of teaching technique. In the beginning, get a feel for the dynamic of the group so you can foresee which programs will work best. Each t'fillah has similar programs that may bring the kids to similar conclusions because of shared themes. It is your responsibility to make sure the activities you choose vary in order to prevent repetition. Don't be afraid to spend more than one day on one t'fillah or do more than one activity for one t'fillah.

It is also important to review the activities that you want to do before the morning of the minyan so you will be prepared with all of the necessary materials. Many of the activities serve as a starting point from which you can move into a larger discussion. They are not an end but rather a means to get there. It is OK if you spend an entire morning in a discussion about one theme in a t'fillah. If the kids are engrossed in a discussion, it means that they are relating to some aspect of the t'fillah, which is very positive. Do not feel compelled to get every point of every t'fillah across to the kids. Approach it as a lifelong process; what you don't succeed in teaching, someone else will in the future.

Some activities require a machberet, journal. Encourage everyone in your minyan to buy one (make time for them if you must) and do not limit their usage to when the activity calls for it. Tell them to continue to track their progress and frustrations throughout the summer. It is an important tool for articulation as well as very therapeutic for what can be a very frustrating process. You may want to set aside time in every other minyan for them to write in their machbarot if you see that it is helpful.

Keep in mind that the attitude, excitement, and rapport that the facilitator has with the minyan can be just as important as the program that you use to teach the material. The minyan must be a safe environment for kids to open up to one another and to discuss their frustrations and failures as well as their successes. It is your responsibility to ensure that

the environment is supportive in these instances. The more open an atmosphere you have, the more the kids will be willing to take risks.

These suggestions are just that, suggestions. You do not have to use them; you should certainly feel free to alter them. They are there to give you some fresh, creative ideas. This minyan is your vision, and this supplement should be used a resource. Always remind yourself that what you are doing is a very holy thing. When you are out there in the trenches, it is easy to forget, so approach the minyan as a rare opportunity to change Jewish souls. Have a wonderful and safe summer!

Acknowledgments:

This booklet was prepared by a small group of very committed participants on United Synagogue's Nativ Program. They felt that there was a gap in the summer programs where kids who had little to no tfillah background were falling through the cracks instead of being turned onto prayer. This was their motivation to create this learner's minyan. Their hard work and enthusiasm will inspire future Jewish children.

Nativ 17 Participants:

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Modeh Ani

p. 2

BACKGROUND:

Origin: This t'fillah is most likely based on a verse from Eicha 3:23: "They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

When Recited: Traditionally the first words recited after awakening.

Themes:

- Gratitude for daily renewal of physical and mental strength
- Praises God for restoring the soul to the body.
- Modeh Ani uses the pronoun "ani" which makes the t'fillah a very personal description of "my" relationship to God.

ACTIVITIES:

These activities may be used in conjunction with Elohai Neshama.

1) OBJECTIVE: To understand what a neshama, a soul is

PREPARATION: Tape a large piece of paper to a wall. Have a thick marker ready to write on the paper.

IMPLEMENTATION: Write the words "neshama/soul" on the page. Ask each participant to say the first word that comes to mind when he sees the word "neshama/soul." Write the words on the paper.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

We are defining one word. Why isn't there only one definition?

Why are the words so different?

What is the difference between a soul and a personality?

Is the neshama the uniqueness that we each possess and do not share with anyone else?

3) OBJECTIVE: To explore the concept of a neshama

SICHAH (discussion): *What would it be like to wake up with someone else's soul?*

4) OBJECTIVE: To emphasize the uniqueness of each individual and to learn names

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant does a hand motion with his name. The next person must do the first person's action as well as his own, etc.

5) VARIATION ON #4: Each person sings his name and the names and tunes of the people preceding him.

6) OBJECTIVE: To define the individual's relationship to Judaism

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Using the theme of the individual's relationship to God and to Judaism, ask them to answer the following questions in their journals:

Why am I a Jew today?

What about my every day life is Jewish?

How can I make this day distinctly Jewish?

Modeh Ani uses the pronoun "I (ani)." How can I make this t'fillah personal?

Ma Tovu

p. 2

BACKGROUND:

Origin: In Bamidbar 22-24, Balak, the king of Moab, fears that the Jews will defeat his nation as they so recently have defeated the Amorites. He sends for the prophet Balaam to curse the Jewish people and he goes with the messengers even though God has not given His permission. Invisible to Balaam, an angel comes down and blocks the path of his donkey with a sword. An angry Balaam hits the donkey three times. Then the angel is revealed to the prophet, and Balaam realizes that he can only curse or bless a people if God desires that of him. When Balak demands Balaam to curse the Jewish people, only blessings come out of his mouth. The first line of Ma Tovu comes directly from this blessing in Bamidbar 24:5. The remainder of the t'fillah comes from T'hillim.

When Recited: Traditionally recited when entering a synagogue.

Themes:

- Beauty and importance of communal prayer.
- A beautiful Jewish place is a place where Torah is studied.
- A personal relationship to God as seen through the usage of the first person singular in one part of the prayer.
- We relate to God through awe, love, and joy.
- It is possible to worship God in many different places such as a tent, a sanctuary, or a study house.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To examine how different places change the davening experience

IMPLEMENTATION: Using whatever is available in the room (chairs, tables, etc.), make the most beautiful and comfortable t'fillah environment.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

Why did you arrange the room the way you did?

How did your arrangement affect your t'fillah experience?

Can you make any place kadosh, holy?

*Does the place make you holy or does the t'fillah make the place holy?
How can you create a makom kavuah, a set place of worship, on
Pilgrimage or Wheels?*

- 2) OBJECTIVE: To examine how different places change the davening experience
IMPLEMENTATION: Say Ma Tovv in 3 or 4 different places, both outside and inside.
TARGET QUESTIONS:
*Did the different places have an affect on our t'fillah?
Did we have an effect on the places with our t'fillah?*
CONCLUSION: Continue the service in different places, stressing the fact that every place can be special and that we have the ability to daven everywhere.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To emphasize that each individual can personally contribute to the community
IMPLEMENTATION: Tell the story of Balaam, emphasizing the community that he blessed.
TARGET QUESTIONS:
*What is special about your community at home?
What is something you can do to make our Pilgrimage/Wheels community special?*
CONCLUSION: During these six weeks, think about what you can bring home from this experience to enhance your own community.
- 4) ***May be done in groups or alone.***
OBJECTIVE: To explore the difference between personal and communal prayer
IMPLEMENTATION: For this activity, it is important that you do not go over and discuss the t'fillah until after the exercise. You want their ideas to be original and if they come up with similar themes to the actual prayer, it will connect them in a powerful way to the t'fillah. You are planning a community gathering that will occur every day. First, each person will have alone time. Your job is to write the first t'fillah that the k'hillah, community, will say together. Make sure that the themes you use will have relevance to other Jews in the future.
CONCLUSION: Ma Tovv is also the first t'fillah that the k'hillah says together. How similar or how different was your t'fillah? Why?
- 5) OBJECTIVE: To form a sense of community among the members of the minyan
IMPLEMENTATION: Develop a tradition for our minyan to do every day (Example: give tzedakah). Make sure this happens every day once it has been decided.

Asher Yatzar
p. 6

BACKGROUND:

Choreography: One says this bracha after going to the bathroom. It can also be said every morning.

Themes:

We bless and praise God for the different openings and functions of our bodies. Because our bodies are so intricate, it is very easy for things to go wrong; therefore, we are grateful to be alive and healthy.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To appreciate the complexity of the human body
IMPLEMENTATION: Write down things that you do throughout the day that depend on your body working correctly, e.g. sneezing, yawning.

- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To appreciate the complexity of the human body
IMPLEMENTATION: Sensitivity workshop. Throughout davening, pick one of the following
 - a) Tie your arm behind your body.
 - b) Put a cotton ball in your ear.
 - c) Turn the pages with your elbows.**CONCLUSION:** Discuss how it felt to daven with a disability. Stress that you are required to say this bracha even if something is wrong. How does one reconcile saying a bracha praising God for a luxury that may not be afforded to him? Why should he recite it?

- 3) **OBJECTIVE:** To appreciate the complexity of the human body.
IMPLEMENTATION: Human knot. Stand in a circle. Each person must grab two different hands. Find a way to end up in one open circle again.
CONCLUSION: Discuss the difficulty of the activity. Stress that our bodies are even more intricate and complex.

Elohai Neshama

p. 8-9

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Talmud, Tractate Brachot

When Recited: Before Birkhot HaShahar.

Themes:

-Each person is born with a pure soul and has free will to choose how to live his/her life.

-We begin anew each morning as each day is seen as a new beginning.

ACTIVITIES:

The activities for Modeh Ani may also be used for this bracha. You could also teach these two t'fillot together.

1) OBJECTIVE: To reenact the original breathing exercise

IMPLEMENTATION: Say each word of the bracha as you breathe in and out.

Birkot Hashahar

p. 10

ACTIVITIES:

Origin: Talmud, Brachot 60b.

When Recited: Originally prescribed for private use as one performed the acts of dressing, washing, and other morning functions upon awakening. It was later added to the public service where the leader recites it at the beginning of the service. The authors of Siddur Sim Shalom changed the second, third, and fourth brachot in order to express the positive view instead of the negative and to avoid insulting different groups of people.

Choreography: Recited while standing.

Themes:

-Judaism sensitizes us to the daily miracles of life.

-We possess both good and evil inclinations, and we pray that we be far away from evil people and influences.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To recognize and articulate the daily things which we take for granted

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Make a list of physical things for which you are thankful.

2) OBJECTIVE: To relate to the order of the t'fillah

MATERIALS: Paper taped to the wall and a marker

IMPLEMENTATION: List the things you did so far this morning. Include every little detail.

CONCLUSION: Discuss which things match up from our list and the brachot.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

Why do we need to praise God?

What does He have to do with getting dressed, etc?

- 3) OBJECTIVE: To relate the brachot to contemporary problems
 IMPLEMENTATION: Everyone here is a rabbi. You have a new responsibility, leading a minyan in a nursing home. Many people are handicapped. As a rabbi, how do you explain this t'fillah?
 TARGET QUESTIONS:
How can we thank God for clothing the naked when there are people who cannot afford clothing?
How can we thank God for freeing people when there are people who are not free?
How can we thank God for all of these things if the problems still exist?
- 4) OBJECTIVE: To involve the participants in an active version of the t'fillah
 IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan up into groups of 3 or 4. Each group is responsible for acting out certain brachot of the 15 (all of them must be given out). After a few minutes of preparation, the entire group comes back together and performs the brachot for each other. Each group performs the bracha and the other groups must guess which bracha it is. When the bracha is discovered, everyone says it together. Make sure you do not give them out in order.
- 5) VARIATION ON #4:
 MATERIALS: Paper and crayons or markers
 IMPLEMENTATION: Each small group or individual is responsible for drawing one or more assigned bracha. At the end, put together the patchwork of the brachot and hang it up in the makom t'fillah.
- 6) ***Pilgrimage only***
 SICHA: Of the three brachot that were changed in the Sim Shalom, which would you say on arrival to Israel? Why?
- 7) OBJECTIVE: To examine what a bracha really is
 MATERIALS: Magnifying glass for each participant, machbarot
 IMPLEMENTATION: Go outside and write down everything you see within specific boundaries (they should be relatively small). Now look through the magnifying glass and write down everything you see.
 CONCLUSION: Just like the glass, brachot magnify our life and our actions. They enable us to see more things, to elevate the normal.
- 8) SICHA: What does it mean to be made in God's image? Do we have to treat our bodies in a certain way? How can we change our self-image to reflect more completely God's image?

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Tehillim (Psalms), Psalm 30.

When Recited: Psukei D'zimra.

Choreography: Recited while standing.

Themes:

-God restores people to health.

-Life has a supreme value.

-The term "bayit" or "house" might refer to the human body where the spirit dwells instead of a physical structure. In this context, the brachah seems to be rededicating the body after a sickness.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To identify with a specific line

IMPLEMENTATION: Pick your favorite line. Why did you pick that one?

2) OBJECTIVE: To emphasize the line "Tears may linger for a night, but joy comes with the dawn."

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Read that line and point out how things seem much worse at night than during the day. Tell the participants about something bad that recently happened to you that had a happy ending. Have each person write about something that's bothering them and how they can turn their concerns into something positive.

3) OBJECTIVE: To appreciate the joy of performing mitzvot

IMPLEMENTATION: Teach the song "Mitzvah g'dolah l'hilot b'simcha" and then switch it to "Simcha g'dolah l'hilot b'mitzvah." Explain what the two mean. "It is a big mitzvah to be happy/ Performing mitzvot is very joyous."

Baruch Sheh-amar

p. 54

BACKGROUND

Origin: Post-Talmudic. First mentioned in the ninth century.

When Recited: The opening benediction of Psukei D'zimra.

Choreography: Recited while standing.

Themes:

- God is praised for the creation of the world through the use of words and language.
- Praising God for caring for all of His creations, for rewarding those who follow His mitzvot, for being eternal, for redeeming, and for rescuing.
- God is greater than we can conceive.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To have a better understanding of what the word "baruch" really means due to its heavy presence.
SICHAH: "Baruch" is a central word in many t'fillot. What does it mean to bless or to be blessed?

- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To relate to the concept of God
MATERIALS: Paper taped to wall and marker, machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Write the word "God" on the top of the page. Have the participants list different names of God and record them on the page. (For example: king, shepherd, creator, adonai, etc.) Discuss why God has so many names. Finally, each participant writes a paragraph on his personal feelings about God.

- 3) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the importance of names in Judaism
IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the different times in our lives that we use our Jewish names including life cycle events and aliyot to the Torah.. Suggest calling each other by Hebrew names within the minyan.

- 4) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the power of words
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant should write down five positive and five negative words. Share them with each other and discuss their potential to make people feel a certain way. Read the first two lines of the t'fillah. Explore the concept of words creating a world.

Ashrei
p. 80

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Various Tehillim, primarily consisting of Psalm 145.

When Recited: Psukei D'zimra, concluding part of the Shacharit service, and the

Mincha Service.

Miscellaneous: Written as an alphabetic acrostic including all the letters except for the "nun." This made it easier to memorize in the days before publishing was wide spread.

Themes:

- Expresses joy in being able to relate to God.
- God cares for all the oppressed, fallen, hungry, and poor.
- God rewards those who are righteous and punishes those that are evil.
- God and God's judgements are beyond our understanding.

ACTIVITIES:

1)***Can be done alone or in groups***

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Make your own acrostic poem with your name or the ABC's. The poem should express your feelings about Judaism and/or God.

2) **OBJECTIVE:** To become familiar with the words of the t'fillah

IMPLEMENTATION: Say the Ashrei differently each day. Some suggestions:

- a) Spirit-reading. This means that each line is spontaneously read (or sung) by a different member of the minyan.
- b) Males and females switch off singing every verse.

3) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore the balance of responsibility between man and God

IMPLEMENTATION: Read the verse "Poteach et yadeicha . . ." together and translate it.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

What does it mean that God provides for mankind?

What is the human's role and responsibility in providing for himself?

CONCLUSION: Explain that tomorrow each person in the minyan is responsible for "providing" the whole group with a good feeling about themselves. They can accomplish this through little things such as smiles or notes. Be creative! Then discuss the results with them the next day.

Halleluyah

p. 88

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Tehilim, Psalm 150.

When Recited: Psukei D'zimra.

Themes:

- The final Psalm to climax the others.
- The Psalm calls for the use of instruments and dance to praise God reflecting the inadequacy of language to express our gratitude.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with words and music
IMPLEMENTATION: Create a symphony. Each participant thinks of a word that praises God. When the director points to him, he sings his word on a certain note. By pointing to different people in different orders and at different speeds, you will create a symphony of praise to God.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with material objects
PREPARATION: The day before you discuss the t'fillah, tell each participant to bring one object with which he can praise God.
IMPLEMENTATION: The next day, have each participant explain why he brought the object that he/she did and how he/she can use it to praise God. Discuss objects they used in the Beit Hamikdash to praise God, and how we can still do it today.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with color and art
MATERIALS: One piece of wall-sized paper, markers, crayons
IMPLEMENTATION: Make a mural praising God.
- 4) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with life
IMPLEMENTATION: Read the last line of the t'fillah and translate. Breathe in and out while saying God's name. Discuss how breathing praises God.
CONCLUSION: Because life and breathing praise God, we have a responsibility for what comes out of our mouths. Expand on how words affect people.
- 5) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with music
IMPLEMENTATION: Have a guided sing-down. Break the minyan into groups. Give them a word such as "halleluyah." Each group has a certain amount of time to think of as many songs as they can that have that word within them. Then each group takes turns singing the songs and the one with the most songs wins.
- 6) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with music
IMPLEMENTATION: Together, write a new tune for this t'fillah and sing it every day in the minyan. Or, have two people create a tune together as they go along. One person sings one line, and the second person the next and so on.

7) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with talents and hobbies

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant should write one of his favorite hobbies (e.g. dance, sports, musical instrument) and how that hobby can be interpreted as praising God. Share the results with each other.

8) OBJECTIVE: To praise God with musical instruments

PREPARATION: The day before you discuss the t'fillah, tell each participant to make a musical instrument out of the stuff they have.

IMPLEMENTATION: Have each participant play his instrument. Discuss how instruments are used in the t'fillah and how one can make an "instrument" to praise God out of anything. You can do this same activity with people who play instruments. Have them bring them to the minyan and play them to the song or make up a new tune and teach it to the minyan.

Shirat Hayam p. 92

Origin: Exodus 15:1-18.

When Recited: Psukei D'zimra.

Choreography: Recited while standing.

Themes:

-The Jewish people and God are in a covenantal relationship.

-Recalls God's miracles.

- Sung after God split the Red Sea and saved the Israelites from the Egyptians.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To recreate the emotions after the exodus from Egypt

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Each member of the minyan writes a letter to a friend as if he has just crossed Yam Suf in the exodus from Egypt.

2) OBJECTIVE: To create a song that parallels Shirat Hayam

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant picks a significant, impressive event that has happened in his life and writes a song describing what happened.

3) OBJECTIVE: To explore the differences between this summer and home

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Read the line "Zeh eili v'anvehu elohai avi v'aromimenhu."
[Translation: "He is my God and I give Him glory, my father's God and I exalt Him."] Tell the following story:

When the Kotzker Rebbe, a nineteenth century Polish Hasidic master, left his parents' house at the age of ten to study Hasidut, he explained to his father that this line charged him to define God for himself and to find his own Judaism, because "my God" is before "my father's God." (His family was not Hasidic.)

Each participant writes points on which he differs from his parents in both religious thought and practice. Then they add any new observances or opinions which they want to bring home from this summer. Discuss the answers. Be sure to teach this as an opportunity to take what they have learned from their parents and expand upon it, not replace it. They should be encouraged to recognize this foundation, even if they differ with it.

- 4) SICHAH: Does B'nei Yisrael's escape from their enemies at Yam Suf have a parallel to Israel's success against its enemies in modern wars?
- 5) SICHAH: Discuss miracles in Judaism, both ancient and modern-day.

Yishtabach p. 94

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Concludes the Psukei D'zimra. One tradition suggests that the author of this paragraph is Shlomo (found in the acrostic of the first letters of the words beginning with "shimcha.")

When Recited: Last Psalm in Psukei D'zimra, recited on weekdays and on Shabbat and holidays.

Choreography: Recited while standing.

Themes:

- We continue to praise God and with greater enthusiasm as we begin the Shacharit service.
- We will never be able to adequately express our relationship to God with words; however, we continue to try and do so.
- We are happy to be alive and be able to praise God.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To prepare oneself to “meet” God

IMPLEMENTATION: The leader of the minyan runs into the minyan excited and frantic. He tells the minyan that he’s just had news that the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Israel is going to visit with the group. What should we do to prepare for the visit? Should we dress differently? Should we clean up the bus or hostel? Hopefully the group will affirm the need to do something special. Discuss and then connect the answers with Yishtabach, that we are about to approach God. How do we need to present ourselves, our makom t’fillah? Be sure to tell them that this was just an educational tool and that the President is not really coming to visit with the group.

2) OBJECTIVE: To identify the fifteen different aspects of God

IMPLEMENTATION: Read the t’fillah, paying special attention to the fifteen words that describe different aspects of God. Give one word to each participant. Have all the participants say their words at the same time, as one breath, thereby uniting the different aspects into one entity.

3) OBJECTIVE: To relate to Yishtabach as the warm-up to Shacharit

IMPLEMENTATION: Lead the participants in warm-up activities such as jumping jacks, stretches, or toe touches, in sets of fifteen. Explain that a set of fifteen corresponds to the fifteen aspects of God mentioned in Yishtabach, which is a warm-up t’fillah to Shacharit.

Kaddish

p. 94

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Originated as an ending formula following a lecture or Torah study session.

Probably originated in Palestine in the last century B.C.E. and was written in the local language of Aramaic. It later became said by mourners because there was always a study session in memory of the person who died. The Kaddish then became associated with death rituals. In time, the Kaddish grew from a formula of dismissal from a study experience to a passage of praise affirming God’s sovereignty and our faith in Him at all times. There are five basic forms of Kaddish:

1. Half Kaddish: This form is generally used to mark a conclusion of a section of the service.
2. Full Kaddish: It is generally recited at the conclusion of major parts of the service.
3. Mourner’s Kaddish: Recited by mourners during the first eleven months after the death of a close relative, and yearly on the anniversary of death.

4. Rabbinic Kaddish: It is recited after studying portions of rabbinic literature.
5. Burial Kaddish: Recited only by mourners at a funeral after the burial.

Choreography: Can only be said in a minyan.

Some people stand for all of them- there are different minhagim.

Themes:

- Summary of praise and faith, concluding sections of the service.
- Underscores the Jewish attitude of the importance of individuals within the community.
- The mourner's recitation affirms life, even when faced with the inevitable fact of death.
- It contains hope for the ultimate blessing- peace.
- Kaddish D'Rabbanan underscores the holiness and importance of study in Jewish life.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To understand the Kaddish as a separation

IMPLEMENTATION: Have each participant make a list of things that break up the day and serve as a separation, whether it be in school, at home, or this summer. Discuss the results and relate it to the different types of Kaddish.

2) OBJECTIVE: To understand the Kaddish with its connection to learning

IMPLEMENTATION: Have one participant each day share something that he or she has learned in the last few days, preferably about Judaism. Fun facts are always a hit.

3) OBJECTIVE: To understand the Kaddish and why it is said by mourners

IMPLEMENTATION: You must only read the English translation after the activity. Split the group into two halves and set up a debate. One half debates that the prayer that we say in memory of the deceased during shivah should be about death as a way to pass on to heaven, and the other team says that the prayer should be a praise of God and should not mention death. There should be a discussion at the end about why the mourner's kaddish does not deal with death but affirms our belief in God.

Barchu

p. 96

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Nehemiah 9: 5.

When Recited: The official beginning of the Shacharit service.

Choreography: Recited while standing. One bows the knees and back.

Themes:

- All sacred acts require summoning.
- A leader leads a community by example.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To understand Barchu as a “call to prayer”

IMPLEMENTATION: Divide the participants into groups. Each group must create their own “call to prayer” with music, words, movement, art, etc.

CONCLUSION: Compare the results to the Islamic muezzins’ call to prayer and to the Barchu itself.

2) OBJECTIVE: To understand Barchu as a recognizable signal

IMPLEMENTATION: Everyone makes a lot of noise. At a prearranged signal, everyone stops and is silent. Compare the activity to Barchu. You can also daven everyone to himself and then have one person scream out the barchu and everyone comes together.

3) OBJECTIVE: To understand Barchu as a recognizable signal

IMPLEMENTATION: Sing a song (such as “Boom, Boom, Boom”) or chant a cheer (such as “Shecket B’vakasha-- Hey!”) that has a known response. Compare their response to the automatic Barchu response.

4) OBJECTIVE: To recognize Barchu as an “advertisement” for t’fillah

IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into small groups. Each group must create an advertisement for Shacharit. The advertisement may be in the form of a poster, a commercial, or a jingle.

Yotzer Or

p. 96

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Begins with Isaiah 45:7 and then continues with Psalms 104: 24, the Ayl Baruch (an acrostic of the first part of the Hebrew alphabet), a section referred to as the “k’dushah d’yotzar,” and concludes with the bracha of “yotzer ha’meorot.”

When Recited: Weekday Schacharit after the Barechu.

Themes:

- God is the only Master of creation, and God creates controls all aspects of creation.
- The creation of peace is equally as important as the creation of the universe itself.
- K'dushah d'yotzar: Expresses the idea of the angels praising God. Parallel to the k'dushah in Amidah. This k'dushah enables us to praise God without a minyan whereas a minyan is required for the k'dushah in the Amidah.
- God is compassionate and merciful and thus has created a world of warmth and light in which we live.
- Admiration for God's creations.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To explore "light" motifs in Judaism
MATERIALS: Paper taped to wall, marker
IMPLEMENTATION: The members of the minyan list all the ways that light plays a part in Jewish ritual and observance. From the list on the wall, each participant writes or draws a scene about his own most memorable Jewish experience involving light.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To understand God as the origin for both light and darkness
MATERIALS: Paper taped to wall, marker
IMPLEMENTATION: Divide the paper into two sections, "or" (light) and "choshech (darkness)." Have the participants list different things and ideas (not necessarily Jewish) that correspond to each section.
CONCLUSION: Stress that although these things are vastly different, they still all come from God.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To understand God as the origin for both light and darkness
IMPLEMENTATION: Explain the brachah to the minyan. Have someone turn the lights on and off at the corresponding words.
CONCLUSION: Stress that although light and darkness are such complete opposites, they both originate in God.
- 4) OBJECTIVE: To understand light and darkness as symbols for good and evil
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant lists his own good midot (character traits) on one half of the page and bad midot on the other half.
TARGET QUESTION:

How can we personally turn some of our bad midot into good ones?
- 5) OBJECTIVE: To relate personally to the wonders of creation
SICHAH: What have you seen this summer that expresses creation or God's wonder?
How did you feel?

CONCLUSION: After the sichah, encourage the members of the minyan to write down some of their feelings in the siddur right next to the Yotzer Or brachah.

“Ma’aseh Breishit”

(first big paragraph)

p. 96

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To explore the idea that God renews creation

PREPARATION: The day before the minyan looks at this t’fillah, each participant should make a list throughout the day of specific instances in which God renews creation.

CONCLUSION: The next day, read the t’fillah and discuss the lists.

2) OBJECTIVE: To explore the human role in renewing creation

MATERIALS: Chumash

IMPLEMENTATION: Read the first few chapters in Breishit that deal with creation.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

Does God give us specific responsibilities regarding creation?

What is our relationship to nature and the environment?

What can we do today to help God renew creation?

“Ol Malchut Shamayim”

(2nd line)

p. 98

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To explore what it means to accept the “yoke of Heaven”

MATERIALS: Paper, pencils

IMPLEMENTATION: Divide the minyan into small groups. Each group creates a 12-step plan for accepting the “yoke of Heaven.”

Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh

p. 98

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To think about what makes a person kadosh, holy
IMPLEMENTATION: The minyan plays a game such as dodge ball or basketball.
Stop them in the middle to discuss the idea of holiness and its connection to the way people treat one another. Continue the game and note if they begin to treat each other more respectfully.

*** Variation: Do this activity with the whole Pilgrimage or Wheels group, and have the members of the minyan lead the discussion. ***

Zore'ah Tz'dakot (paragraph before Ahavah Rabah) p. 98

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To explore what it means to "sow righteousness"
IMPLEMENTATION: Adopt a tzedek ritual for the minyan to do everyday such as giving tzdakah.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To explore what it means to "sow righteousness"
SICHAH: Have you ever done something for another person that has grown much greater than you originally expected? Has anyone ever done something little for you that had a really big impact?
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To explore what it means to "sow righteousness"
MATERIALS: One of Danny Siegel's books
IMPLEMENTATION: Tell or read a story about a mitzvah hero.

Or Hadash p. 98

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To set attainable goals
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each member of the minyan writes down five things he wants to accomplish that day that will "illuminate" his life. At Minchah, the participants should remind themselves of their goals, and at Ma'ariv they should look back and evaluate how they did. They will write their evaluations in their machbarot the following day.

Ahavah Rabah

p. 98

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To explore what it means to love
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Write a love letter to a person (other than a boyfriend or girlfriend) or a favorite object.
CONCLUSION: Compare their love letters to the words of Ahavah Rabah. Talk about the intricacies of a love relationship.

- 2) OBJECTIVE: To express love artistically
MATERIALS: Old magazines, paper, scissors, glue
IMPLEMENTATION: Using the magazines, make a collage that expresses your love for someone or something. Discuss the finished products.

- 3) OBJECTIVE: To understand the line "I'lmod ulilamed," to learn and to teach
IMPLEMENTATION: Each member of the minyan shares something that he has learned over the course of the summer, thereby participating in both learning and teaching at the same time.

- 4) OBJECTIVE: To explore different traditions within Judaism
IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the customs and traditions of Jews throughout the world. Sing a song in Ladino, Amaharit, or Yiddish.

- 5) OBJECTIVE: To understand that our ancestors came from "arbah kanfot ha'aretz"
MATERIALS: World map, stickers
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant puts a sticker on the map where each of his ancestors lived.
CONCLUSION: Discuss the concept of gathering the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth and its implications for modern-day Israel.

- 6) OBJECTIVE: To learn about famous people in Jewish history
PREPARATION: A week before this t'fillah is discussed in the minyan, each participant picks a famous Jewish person in history. Throughout the week, the members of the minyan research their people. On the designated day, everyone comes to the minyan dressed as their character. One by one, they tell who they are in Jewish history and why they are famous.

Sh'ma

p. 100

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Divided into three major parts: V'ahavta: Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, V'haya Im Shamo'a: Deuteronomy 10:13-21, and the Vayomer: Numbers 15: 37-41. Recited publicly after the Ten Commandments in the Temple Service. By the first century C.E., the three paragraphs of the Shema became the central part of the service along with the Amidah.

When Recited: Shacharit, Ma'ariv, and before going to sleep.

Choreography: When said with a minyan, the shalich tzibur repeats the three concluding words of the Shema. When said alone, the three words, "el melech ne'eman," are added before the Shema. This is done in order to keep the number of words in the Shema to 248. The rabbis explained this by saying that 248 is the number of parts of the body, thus symbolizing our devotion to God with our entire being. In addition, when the first line is recited, it is customary to cover one's eyes. The following line, beginning with "baruch," is said quietly to oneself. Another tradition in regards to the first line is to emphasize the word echad, one, by stressing the final "d" in order to stress our belief in one God. Because the daled and resh are similar in appearance, one might confuse the two which would change the meaning from one to two. Additionally, in the Torah, the "ayn" of shema and the "daled" of echad are written larger than the other letters spelling the word meaning witness. This stressing the concept that we serve as witnesses to God's sovereignty every time we recite this tefillah.

Themes:

- V'ahavta: God alone is our God and we are loyal only to God. We love God with our entire being. God is near to us. We vow to teach God's mitzvot to our children and integrate them as essential and integral in our daily lives. As reminders of God's mitzvot, we are to place reminders on our foreheads (tefillin) and doorposts (mezuzot).
- V'haya Im Shamo'a: This paragraph is taken from the part in Deuteronomy where Moses is telling the Children of Israel what Canaan will be like. In his description, he discusses how the land is dependent on rain unlike in Egypt where the soil was cultivated by irrigation. He continues to explain that rain is a gift from God, and if the Israelites follow God's mitzvot, then they will be rewarded with rainfall. If not however, there will not be rain. As a further punishment, they will be driven into exile. The mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah as reminders of the mitzvot are again mentioned in this paragraph.
- Vayomer: The mitzvah of placing tzitzit, fringes, at the corner of garments is mentioned here in this paragraph. Tzitzit are yet another reminder of God's commandments and our obligation to follow them.
- These three paragraphs embody various elements of Jewish life: monotheism,

emotion (love), education, and ritual.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To examine the different aspects of being Jewish

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Read the first paragraph of Sh'ma, paying special attention to the parts that refer to different aspects of being Jewish (belief in God, ritual, intellect, etc.). Each participant writes down the answers to the following questions:

*For yourself, what is the most important aspect of being Jewish?
What makes you Jewish?*

2) OBJECTIVE: To understand what the actual statement of Sh'ma means

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Write the stage directions for the first line of Sh'ma. Who's talking? Who's listening? What's going on here?

3) OBJECTIVE: To determine a personal mission statement

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Many people understand the first line of Sh'ma to be a mission statement. Write down your own personal Jewish mission statement (something short, around six words) and why.

4) OBJECTIVE: To determine a personal mission statement

MATERIALS: Paper, markers, other art supplies

IMPLEMENTATION: With the art supplies provided, each member of the minyan develops his own mission statement on the piece of paper and explains it to everyone else.

5) OBJECTIVE: To focus on the Sh'ma through the meditative process

IMPLEMENTATION: Read and discuss the six words of the Sh'ma in depth. Sitting in a circle, everyone recites the Sh'ma in their own speed, tempo, and pitch. Encourage the participants to focus on one specific word or all six. The activity should last as long as possible.

CONCLUSION: Discuss what everyone heard around them during the meditation. Stress the concept of "oneness" that the voices produced when joined together. This is the main focus of the six words.

6) OBJECTIVE: To participate in the rituals mentioned in Sh'ma

MATERIALS: Clay

IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the mitzvah of mezuzot, especially as it pertains to Sh'ma. Make mezuzot out of clay.

- 7) OBJECTIVE: To participate in the rituals mentioned in Sh'ma
 PREPARATION: Learn how to tie tzitzit. (Look in the Jewish Catalogues.)
 MATERIALS: Tzitzit string
 IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the mitzvah of tzitzit, especially as it pertains to Sh'ma: Teach the members of the minyan how to tie tzitzit.
- 8) OBJECTIVE: To understand the different times Sh'ma is recited
 MATERIALS: Paper, markers
 IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the different times a day when Sh'ma is recited. To encourage everyone to say Sh'ma al ha'metah (Sh'ma before going to bed), the members of the minyan make Sh'ma cards to keep with them and to read right before going to bed.
- 9) OBJECTIVE: To form a personal understanding of what being Jewish means
 MATERIALS: Machbarot
 IMPLEMENTATION: Write a letter to future generations of Jews about your own personal beliefs and Jewish identity. Tell them how you see yourself as a Jew.
- 10) OBJECTIVE: To incorporate mitzvot into daily life
 IMPLEMENTATION: Read and discuss the Sh'ma, paying special attention to the emphasis on ritual mitzvot. Each participant picks three mitzvot that he wants to incorporate into his own life. You should create a system of checks and balances in which the kids will motivate each other to do the mitzvot.
- 11) OBJECTIVE: To understand the mitzvah of t'fillin
 PREPARATION: Make sure you have a thorough knowledge of the subject.
 IMPLEMENTATION: Read and discuss the Sh'ma, paying special attention to the mitzvah of t'fillin. Explain the specifics of t'fillin, when they are worn, how to wrap them, etc.
- 12) OBJECTIVE: To discuss the issue of reward and punishment
 MATERIALS: Machbarot
 IMPLEMENTATION: Read and discuss the second paragraph of Sh'ma.
 TARGET QUESTIONS:

*Do you see a direct connection between observing mitzvot and being rewarded?
 How do you explain that sometimes bad things happen to good people?*

Emet V'yatzeev
p. 102

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Products of Talmudic times.

When Recited: Weekday Schacharit between the Shema and Amidah.

Choreography: The tzitzit that are held throughout the Shema are released after the words "venechemadim l'ad." Rise at the end of this section, tzur yisrael koomah (= rise), in preparation for the Amidah.

Themes:

- Redemption from Egypt in the past and total redemption in the future.
- We can depend on God to be faithful and compassionate.
- God's actions in the past inspire to have faith in his continued involvement in the world in the present and future.
- We remember slavery as we are about to begin the Amidah and petition God for various things.
- God has no equal.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To recognize the similarities of Jewish observance "l'dor vador"
IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into four groups to represent four different time periods in Jewish history. For example Biblical times, 18th century Europe, present day USA, and future Israel. Each group must act out a certain Jewish ritual such as Shabbat dinner or a brit milah.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To recognize the similarities of Jewish observance "l'dor vador"
IMPLEMENTATION: Play the freeze game. A few participants start the game by acting out a Jewish ritual (Shabbat dinner will work well for this) in a certain time period. Anyone from the audience may yell "freeze" at any time and take the place of one of the actors. Then he chooses a different period in history to act out the same scene. The other actors must go along with his decision.

Ezrat Avoteinu

p. 104

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Product of Talmudic time. It is the only bracha following the Shema as an accompanying blessing, and it is introduced by the word emet, taken from the last word in the Shema.

Choreography: The fringes help by the worshiper during the Shema are released after the words V'nechmadim L'ad since it is believed that they are the last words officially relating to the Shema.

Themes:

- The main theme is the redemption of Israel from Egypt.
- God is faithful, kind, and loving.
- God is intimate, approachable.
- We remember our humble slave origins in preparation for the petitions we are about to make in the Amidah blessings to come.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To appreciate the many gifts God has given each individual

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Write the answer to the following questions:

*What gifts has God given me personally?
For what do I have to be thankful?*

CONCLUSION: Compare the individual lists to the list found in this t'fillah.

2) **OBJECTIVE:** To appreciate the many gifts God has given to the Jewish people

MATERIALS: Paper on wall, marker

IMPLEMENTATION: Write down some of the gifts that God has given the Jewish people and some of the miracles, both ancient and modern, that He has performed.

CONCLUSION: Compare the finished product with the list found in this t'fillah.

Mi Chamochah

p. 104

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To connect personally to the t'fillah

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the t'fillah and its translation. Have each participant record his answers to the following questions:

*When would I ask the questions found in Mi Chamochah?
For what small, everyday miracles would I say this t'fillah?*

Teaching the Amidah as a Whole

pp. 106-120

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Megillah 17b states that "a hundred and twenty elders, among whom were many prophets, drew up eighteen blessings," although the specific origin of this tefillah is generally unknown. It is certain though that after the destruction of the Second Temple the order of the blessings and their wording were established. Sometime later, probably in the late first century CE, the blessing against apostates ("v'lemalshinim") was added.

When Recited: Shacharit, Mincha, and Maariv.

Miscellaneous: Referred to as "Ha Tefillah," "The Tefillah," as it is the central prayer of the service. Other names include the "Amidah" meaning "standing," and "Shmoneh Esrei" meaning "eighteen." There are three parts to Amidah: The first three brachot which include the Avot, Gevurot, and the Kedushah, the petition section including thirteen brachot, and the final three brachot which include Avodah, Hoda'ah, and the blessing for peace. Before the beginning of the actual tefillah, we say a short line which asks God to help us pray easily and with concentration and conviction.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To teach creatively the different brachot of the Amidah
IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan up into groups. Each group is responsible for creatively teaching one of the brachot in the Amidah to the rest of the minyan. Each presentation should include a reading of the brachah, a description of its general themes, and a creative program to teach it.
- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To relate to the structure of the Amidah
IMPLEMENTATION: Role play. A kid really, really wants a new bike from his parents. How does he approach them? Act it out.
- 3) **OBJECTIVE:** To become familiar with the choreography of the Amidah
IMPLEMENTATION: Go over the choreography of the Amidah, when you bow, when you walk, etc. Discuss what the movements mean. Encourage the participants to make a dance out of the movements.
- 4) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the request-based nature of the Amidah
IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into groups. Each group must draw up an agenda for a meeting with God. Make sure they include the goals and objectives of the meeting.
- 5) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the request-based nature of the Amidah
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each member of the minyan writes a business letter demanding something.

- 6) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the importance of movement in the Amidah
IMPLEMENTATION: Two people stand in front of the group and have a conversation (it could be about anything) without moving their bodies. Give two people a situation (for instance, a parent yelling at a child) that they must act out using Gibberish. For this skit, they are allowed to move as much as they want, but they may not speak any language other than Gibberish.
- 7) **OBJECTIVE:** To emphasize the importance of community t'fillah
IMPLEMENTATION: Lap sit. Stand in very close circle. Each person should face the back of the person ahead of him. At the same time, everyone sits down.
CONCLUSION: Discuss the importance of community and how everyone contributes to the whole.
- 8) **OBJECTIVE:** To recognize the different categories of brachot in the Amidah
MATERIALS: Paper and pens
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes a brachah about whatever he wants. After they are completed, the minyan must organize the brachot into different categories.
CONCLUSION: Compare these categories to the categories in the Amidah.

Teaching the Amidah as Separate Brachot

Avot
p. 106

Avot (Ancestors): God is the God of our forefathers and was their protector as he is ours. God appeared differently to each of them as God does to each of us. We hope God will care for us as God did for our ancestors.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand what it means to be a magen, a shield
PREPARATION: Cut a piece of paper into the shape of a shield for everyone in the minyan.
MATERIALS: Shields, pens, crayons
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes or draws a personal motto on the front of his shield. This is what he wants the world to see about himself. On the back, each person writes a list of things from which he wants to be shielded. The list may be global (war, poverty, hunger) or personal (jealousy, anger at siblings, low self-esteem).
CONCLUSION: Share some of the shields with each other and discuss what it means to have God as our shield.
- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To admire and emulate a righteous person
MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: In this brachah, we ask God to remember the merit of our ancestors and to redeem us for it. Who is someone in your life whom you admire and try to emulate? Why?

3) **OBJECTIVE:** To remember our ancestors

SICHAH: Who were you named after and what do you know about that person?

G'vurot

p. 106

Gevurot (Power): We praise God for God's power to perform wondrous deeds. God even has the power to revive the dead. We hope to benefit from God's power.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore ideas of what happens after death

MATERIALS: Machbarot

TARGET QUESTION:

What do you think happens after death?

CONCLUSION: Explain the Jewish concept of reward and punishment in a "World to Come." How do they reconcile their beliefs with this one?

2) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the Jewish rituals concerning death

SICHAH: Discuss the Jewish customs, laws, and rituals concerning death, burial, and mourning. Have the participants share personal experiences.

Kedushah

p. 108

Kedushah (Sanctification): God is unique, separate, and holy. For this part of the Amidah a minyan is required. If there is no minyan present, an individual states the blessing beginning with "atah kadosh." If there is a minyan and the kedushah can be recited, we are to stand with our feet together (as is throughout the Amidah) in imitation of the angels and raise up on our toes three times as we say the line "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh...."

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore different levels of kedushah, holiness

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: The word "kadosh" is said three times in a row. What are

three different levels or interpretations of holiness?

- 2) OBJECTIVE: To explore the idea of kedushah, holiness
SICHAH: In what ways does Judaism take mundane things or events and make them kadosh, holy?
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To make mundane things holy
IMPLEMENTATION: Make a list of regular things that go on in people's lives that do not have brachot (for instance, getting a drivers' license). Develop a ceremony or a custom that makes those little things special and holy.

Binah

p. 110

Our first request is for knowledge and understanding.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To teach on three different levels
IMPLEMENTATION: Teach an Israeli song on three different levels. For the "de'ah" level, teach the words and the tune. For the "binah" level, translate the song. For the "heskel" level, discuss the deeper meaning of the song.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To understand the importance of knowledge
IMPLEMENTATION: Do a little five minute skit featuring the Scarecrow from *The Wizard of Oz*. Discuss the importance of knowledge and a brain.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To understand the frustration of a missing piece of information
MATERIALS: Puzzle with a piece taken out
IMPLEMENTATION: Have the members of the minyan put together the puzzle.
Don't tell them there's a piece missing.
CONCLUSION: Discuss the frustrations that occur when a piece of information is missing.
- 4) OBJECTIVE: To trace personal knowledge
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant creates a time line of their personal knowledge. (For example: Learned to walk-1 yr old. Learned about Shabbat- 7 yrs old, etc.)
- 5) OBJECTIVE: To figure out what qualities intelligent people possess
MATERIALS: Paper taped to wall, marker
IMPLEMENTATION: Record the participants' opinions as to what qualities an intelligent person possesses.

T'shuvah

p. 110

T'shuvah: Once we have knowledge and understanding, we can be responsible for our actions. In this brachah we hope to stay close to God and righteous living. We ask that if we stray from this path that we may return and our repentance be accepted.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore the idea of punishment and forgiveness
IMPLEMENTATION: Have the participants act out a parent's reaction to a kid who has done something wrong.
CONCLUSION: Discuss God's reaction to us when we do something wrong if in fact He reacts at all. Also, discuss our reaction to a friend who does something wrong.
- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore concrete ways of doing t'shuvah, repentance
SICHAH: What baby steps can we take to start ourselves on a path to t'shuvah, repentance? Discuss Maimonides' idea that complete teshuvah is when you are in the same situation again and you resist doing the wrong thing. Do you agree with this notion?

S'lichah

p. 110

S'lichah: After we have repented, we ask that God forgive us for our wrongdoings.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) **OBJECTIVE:** To ask for personal forgiveness
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Write a personal confession to yourself.
- 2) **OBJECTIVE:** To ask for communal forgiveness
MATERIALS: Paper, pens
IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into groups. Each group writes a confession for all modern teenagers.
- 3) **OBJECTIVE:** To perform mitzvot with your five senses
IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss possible reasons for hitting the heart in this brachah. List an aveirah, a sin, that you do with each of the five senses and list a mitzvah that can be done with each of the five senses.
- 4) **OBJECTIVE:** To ask for forgiveness

MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Write an apology letter to someone to whom you have wronged.

Ge'ulah

p. 110

Ge'ulah: We hope to be redeemed, and once we are forgiven, we can begin the process of redemption.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To relate to the main words in the brachah

MATERIALS: Big pad of paper, marker

IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into two groups and play Pictionary. Use the following words: Strong, Israel, Affliction, Poverty, Redemption. After the game, discuss these words with regards to the brachah.

Re'fuah

p. 112

Refuah: We ask for good health. A personal prayer for a friend or relative may be added at this point.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To feel a sense of emotional health and satisfaction

IMPLEMENTATION: Have a "rap session" to air out any concerns, problems, uncertainties people might be experiencing. Encourage the members of the minyan to help and support each other.

CONCLUSION: Explain that the concept of mental and emotional well-being is very much a part of this brachah; it's called re'fuat nefesh, healing of the soul.

2) **OBJECTIVE:** To help people feel better

MATERIALS: Construction paper, markers

IMPLEMENTATION: Make get well cards for hospital patients and deliver them.

Birkat Ha'shanim

p. 112

Birkat Ha'shanim: We ask for a good and bountiful year.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To become part of the planting cycle
IMPLEMENTATION: Plant something as a minyan.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To relate personally to the words of the brachah
PREPARATION: Copy each line of the brachah onto a separate sheet of paper.
MATERIALS: Papers with quotes from the brachah, pens
IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into groups corresponding with each of the papers. Each group discusses the quote from the brachah. Each member of the group writes his personal feelings about that line on the paper. In the end, the papers should look like pages of Talmud.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To produce something from something else
PREPARATION: Have each member of the minyan bring any small object to the minyan that day.
IMPLEMENTATION: From the objects they have brought, the participants must make something new.
CONCLUSION: Just as wheat changes to make bread, so have we created something new. In order to transform into bread, wheat needs rain, care, sun, etc. We must pray for rain to help this process along.
- 4) OBJECTIVE: To understand the uncertainty of life
IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the possible good and bad results of rain. What are some social or cultural phenomena that have the possibility to be good or bad?

Kibbutz Galuyot

p. 112

Kibbutz Galuyot: In this blessing we ask God to gather all of Israel from exile and join us together in Israel.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To explore issues of “ingathering the exiles”
IMPLEMENTATION: Based on the t’fillah and their thoughts the participants will deal with the following scenario:

*You are the members of Kibbutz Galuyot, a religious kibbutz just outside of Jerusalem. It is now your monthly members’ meeting and an important topic is being raised, how, when, and if to recruit new members. Here are the issues:
Should new members join now or should we wait for Mashiach to let*

them in?
Should we recruit new members or should we wait for them to come to
come to us?
From where should we recruit? Who are these exiles being gathered?

- 2) OBJECTIVE: To explore different traditions among Jews
IMPLEMENTATION: Play charades. The characters should be different types of Jews or Jews from different countries.

Din

p. 112

Tzedakah U'mishpat: We ask for self-rule and good leadership.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To debate issues surrounding Israel
IMPLEMENTATION: Have a mock trial concerning Israel; should it be a theocracy or not?
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To contemplate the role of disciplinarian
IMPLEMENTATION: The participants act out the role of madrich or madricha. One of their USY'ers has eaten traif or has ditched a program. How will they deal with the situation? What is a just punishment?
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To judge yourself
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Explain to the minyan that the word l'hitpalel, to pray, is a reflexive verb that actually means "to introspect." Have the participants hold their siddurim up as a mirror; they then write down what they see and how they judge themselves.

Birkat Ha'minim

p. 112

Minim: As a result of self-rule, people opposing Israel will be punished.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To look at things objectively
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Take an favorite object or hobby and write a paragraph against it.

CONCLUSION: Has this exercise “humbled” you in any way?

2) OBJECTIVE: To relate to the brachah in modern times

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Rewrite the brachah in terms of a different point in history, for instance, the Shoah.

3) OBJECTIVE: To explore feelings about God as disciplinarian

IMPLEMENTATION: Break the minyan into two groups, one in support of God physically punishing people and one in support of God watching mercifully. After the groups debate, discuss the results.

4) OBJECTIVE: To understand the order of the brachot

SICHAH: Why does this bracha come directly before the brachah about tzaddikim, righteous people?

5) OBJECTIVE: To connect personally to the brachah

MATERIALS: Machbarot

TARGET QUESTIONS:

How can I say a brachah to which I cannot relate?

What in my life pushes me away from Judaism?

What can I do to stop it?

Tzaddikim

p. 114

Tzadikim: The righteous of all nations will be rewarded in a society of just self-rule and determination.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To understand what a tzaddik is

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Write a description of someone you consider a tzaddik and why.

CONCLUSION: Discuss how the personal descriptions compare to the descriptions in the brachah. Emphasize that even a tzaddik is not perfect.

2) OBJECTIVE: To understand the concept of righteous gentiles

SICHAH: Discuss righteous gentiles. How was God present in the Shoah?

3) OBJECTIVE: To decide what it means to be righteous

IMPLEMENTATION: The participants act out the following scenarios

- a) Everyone is cheating on a test. You are "righteous." What do you do?
- b) Everyone is picking on a kid. You are "righteous." What do you do?
- c) Everyone is speaking lashon ha'rah. You are "righteous." What do you do?
- d) You have free time, what do you do with it?

4) OBJECTIVE: To be a tzaddik for a day

IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss what it means to be a tzaddik. For today, everyone in the minyan is going to be a secret tzaddik.

CONCLUSION: The next day, discuss what it felt like to be a secret tzaddik.

Binyan Yerushalayim

p. 114

Yerushalayim: We ask to be returned to Jerusalem to a rebuilt capital.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To explore Messianic Jerusalem

IMPLEMENTATION: The participants plan out Messianic Jerusalem: what it looks like, who the inhabitants are, and what goes on there.

2) OBJECTIVE: To discuss modern day Israel and its relationship to redemption

SICHAH: Is Israel in the process of redemption? Who's doing the redeeming? Are we still waiting for redemption to come? Are we bringing it on ourselves?

Malchut Beit David

p. 114

David: We pray for the coming of a Messianic Redemption.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To plant the seeds of redemption

IMPLEMENTATION: Start a program to plant the seeds of redemption. Keep in mind the concepts of environment, human relations, Jewish learning, love, service of God, community, and respect.

2) OBJECTIVE: To participate in tzedek

IMPLEMENTATION: Tzedek brings redemption. The participants should develop a tzedek program for the entire Pilgrimage or Wheels group to do.

Kabbalat T'fillah

p. 114

Shomea Tefillah: In our final petition, we hope that God will hear and answer our prayers.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To compare Sh'ma to this brachah

SICHAH: Discuss the similarities and differences between Sh'ma and Kabbalat T'fillah.

TARGET QUESTIONS:

Who is listening in each t'fillah?

What is the significance of each?

2) OBJECTIVE: To discuss the word "koleinu," our voice

SICHAH: What is our distinctly Conservative voice? Does it differ when we speak to other Jews or to Gentiles?

3) OBJECTIVE: To let God hear "koleinu," our voice

IMPLEMENTATION: Sing niggunim to let God hear our voices.

4) OBJECTIVE: To discuss God's voice

MATERIALS: Machbarot

TARGET QUESTIONS:

How can I make God's voice inside me ring louder?

How can I relate to God's voice?

Avodah

p. 114

Avodah (Worship): Originally recited by the Kohanim. Now this brachah serves as a reminder to the Temple service and that Zion will always be the center of the Jewish spiritual world.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To explore needs and wants

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes five things he wants and five things God wants.

CONCLUSION: Discuss why God wants us to worship Him.

- 2) OBJECTIVE: To explore God's presence
SICHAH: When do you sense God's presence? What can you do to make the feeling stronger?

Hoda'ah

p. 116

Hoda'ah (Thanksgiving): We thank God for the daily miracle that occur of which we are aware and unaware. We bow at the beginning and end of this brachah.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To thank someone special
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes a thank-you letter to someone who has touched him, making sure to add why that person is special.
CONCLUSION: Compare the note to this brachah.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To thank God
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Write a thank-you note to God for something He has done for you personally.
CONCLUSION: Compare the note to this brachah.

Sim Shalom

p. 120

Shalom (Peace): Includes the priestly blessing. In this brachah we pray for a complete and lasting peace.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To learn a song about peace
IMPLEMENTATION: Teach the participants the song *Shir L'shalom* and explain that it was the last song sung at the peace rally before Yitchak Rabin was assassinated.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To portray feelings about peace
MATERIALS: Banner sized paper, crayons, markers
IMPLEMENTATION: Make a graffiti wall about peace.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: To portray feelings about peace
MATERIALS: Paper, pens
IMPLEMENTATION: Have the participants develop peace slogans. Discuss what

they mean and how they relate to the brachah.

4) OBJECTIVE: To determine what factors go into making peace

MATERIALS: A paper with a big circle on it, pen

IMPLEMENTATION: Have the minyan vote on the factors that go into making peace and how much of each. Draw a pie chart of the results.

Elohai N'tzor

p. 120

Elohai Netzor: This is a private meditation added to the end of the Amidah which asks for a number of things including that God listen and accept our tefillah and that peace be established.

ACTIVITIES:

1) OBJECTIVE: To develop a conclusion to the Amidah

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes his own ending to the Amidah.

Compare the results to Elohai N'tzor. Encourage the members of the minyan to keep their personal conclusions in their siddurim.

2) OBJECTIVE: To understand the concept of lashon ha'rah

IMPLEMENTATION: Tell a story about lashon ha'rah (feather story, nail in wall story). Discuss the ramifications of speaking lashon ha'rah. Encourage the participants to avoid lashon ha'rah by picking one hour a day that he will not do it. Hopefully, he can build from that hour.

3) OBJECTIVE: To understand the concept of lashon ha'rah

MATERIALS: Stickers

IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss lashon h'rah as it appears in Elohai N'tzor. For the next few days, the members of the minyan will put a sticker on any person who speaks lashon ha'rah to remind them not to do so. This must be done as a joke so nobody feels bad about it. At each meal everyone puts the stickers they got on a large sheet of paper and the community tries to decrease the number of stickers with each meal.

4) OBJECTIVE: To understand the ramifications of lashon ha'rah

IMPLEMENTATION: Play the telephone game, where one person whispers something to the next person, and so on. Discuss how the original words are twisted by the end and how that relates to this brachah.

Aleinu

p. 160

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Was originally part of the Musaph service for Rosh Hashanah. It has been included at the end of all synagogue services since the fourteenth century but probably has its origin in Temple days. The author is believed to be Rav, one of the greatest talmudic scholar.

Choreography: Recited standing. Bend the knees and then back at Korim U'mistachavim U'modim.

Themes:

- We praise God for his creation of the universe and for choosing us to work for the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.
- Judaism's particular view of its responsibilities to God is linked to a universal hope that all humanity will acknowledge God as the Supreme Being and seek to do His will.
- Hope is expressed for the Messianic Age.

ACTIVITIES:

1) **OBJECTIVE:** To react to the words of the Aleinu

MATERIALS: Machbarot

IMPLEMENTATION: Write a reaction to the English version of Aleinu. Discuss the results.

2) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore the concept of false gods

SICHAH: What are some modern day false gods and forms of idol worship (for instance, TV, fashion, etc.)? How can we rid ourselves of their influence?

3) **OBJECTIVE:** To explore the concept of a chosen people

MATERIALS: Paper, pens

IMPLEMENTATION: Write an article for an imaginary paper explaining how the Jews are "or la'goyim," a light unto the nations. Be sure to include personal, communal, and historical proof to support the thesis.

4) **OBJECTIVE:** To understand the idea of obligation

PREPARATION: A few days before Aleinu is discussed, tell the participants that they may not wear the color red or another such restriction. Relate the feeling of having to rationally think about getting dressed every time they put something on. Relate this to obligation or mitzvot, that they enable us to think about normal everyday actions which ultimately elevates the profane.

IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss the activity in the framework of Aleinu.
TARGET QUESTIONS:

How did the activity make you feel?
Did you think of your actions as having a greater significance?
How will you continue to obligate yourself when you go back home?

Adon Olam

p. 6

BACKGROUND:

Origin: Probably written by Solomon ibn Gabirol or Rav Hai Ga'on in the eleventh century. It is an alphabetic acrostic.

When Recited: Inserted in the beginning of the morning service since the fifteenth century and is now used as a concluding hymn.

Themes:

- The ease of meter and verse reflect in poetic form the ease of our trusting relationship in God.
- A dual conception of God is expressed: God's distance from us and God's closeness.
- A fundamental Jewish statement of monotheism.

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) OBJECTIVE: To understand the meaning of Adon Olam
IMPLEMENTATION: Act out Adon Olam.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: To relate to the words of Adon Olam
MATERIALS: Machbarot
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant writes six general statements and four personal statements about God. Discuss the parallels to the Adon Olam.

Ideas for a Siyum Party

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) MATERIALS: Paper, pens
IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant picks his favorite entry from his machberet. Compile all of the selections into a personalized siddur for the members of the

minyan to take home with them.

2) IMPLEMENTATION: Lead a fast-forwarded summary of everything accomplished this summer.

3) IMPLEMENTATION: Daven the full Shacharit as a minyan.
Discuss the experience.

4) IMPLEMENTATION: Have each member of the minyan share the most interesting thing he has learned from the minyan.

5) MATERIALS: Construction paper, glue

IMPLEMENTATION: Each participant picks a t'fillah and creates an artistic midrash about it by ripping paper and gluing it on the paper. They use different colors and shapes (but they can only rip) which will force them to use heavy symbolism. Explain each midrash.

6) IMPLEMENTATION: Discuss possible ways of continuing learning during the year, for instance, by e-mail.

YASHER KOACH!

