

ISRAEL

Food For Thought

Hanefesh Region USY

Spring Kinnus 1993

April 23 - 25, 1993

Educator's Guide

ISRAEL: FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Goals of overall study program:

- A. To acquaint USYers with the content of Birkat Hamazon and recognize the prayer's relationship to Eretz Yisrael.
- B. To heighten the USYers' awareness and knowledge of various facets of Israel.
- C. To increase the USYer's appreciation of Eretz Yisrael and our obligation to support it.

The study sessions are intended to be fun and informative, just like Israel. We want our USYers to go home with a renewed or a new-found excitement about Israel, while at the same time recognizing its importance in prayer, and as a result, our daily lives.

SESSION I:

"Israel: Dare to Know It"

GOALS:

1. To introduce the general theme of convention to the USYers.
2. To get participants identified with the need to bless before and after meals.
3. To get participants acquainted with basic geographical, historical and political concepts related to the Land of Israel.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Explain the general theme of the convention, emphasizing that every one of the Kitot will concentrate on an aspect of Birkat Hamazon and how that portion of Birkat Hamazon relates to Israel.
2. Explain the rationale of blessing before and after the meal. (see sourcebook p. 11)
 - Be sure to get input from the USYers about why they feel they need to bless before and after the meal.
3. Read (or ask participants to read) the second section of Birkat Hamazon, which ends with a blessing over the Jewish land - the land of Israel (see sourcebook p. 4-5)

-Emphasize that by understanding the meaning of this section, one becomes aware that this blessing is not for any land, but particularly for the land of Israel which feeds its Jewish inhabitants.

-You can discuss why there is a special prayer over the actual land of Israel. Why is this so important?

-Discuss how Israel has taken a virtual dessert and made it a land "flowing with milk and honey."

-USYers can relate personal experiences in Israel on USY Israel Pilgrimage or on other trips.

-Where else in t'fillah do we find mention of the land of Israel? (e.g. Amidah-prayers for rain)

See also sourcebook p. 12

4. Game Show: "Israel Family Dare"

Rules of the Game:

- A. The group is split into 4 "families"
- B. Every sub-group is seated separately.
 1. The first family from the right is choosing a category, and the number of the question in that category.
 2. The MC asks that family the question it picked.
 3. The family has 30 seconds to consult within itself before answering the question.
 4. After 30 seconds, the family can either answer the question, or "dare" another family to answer the question.
 5. If they answer right, they get 10 points.
 6. If they "dare" another family to answer the question, that other family has 30 seconds to come up with the correct answer. After 30 seconds, if the "dared" family answered correctly - it gets 20 points. If the "dared" family didn't answer the correct answer, the daring family gets 5 points.
 7. If no one answered the right question the MC will give it.
- C. This process is repeated for every family, one after the other.

All together, there are 28 questions, so that every family will be asked 7 questions. Note: Game Boards and point cards (to keep score) will be provided to you.
- D. Play the game until all of the questions are answered. Then calculate the score of each family and declare who is the winner.

SESSION II
"Jerusalem, The Holy City"

- GOALS:**
- A. To examine the importance of Jerusalem to the three major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
 - B. To understand the uniqueness of the Jewish ties to Jerusalem, compared to the nature of ties of other religions to Jerusalem.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read (or ask USYers to read) the 3rd section of Birkat Hamazon, which ends with the blessing to rebuild Jerusalem: (See sourcebook p. 5 and 7)
2. Feel free to open up the room to discussion to USYers on why Jerusalem is regarded as such a holy city and any personal reflections they may have.
3. Present the goal of this kitah (only article "a" of the goals above). This may be a good opportunity for you, as educator, to incorporate some history of Jerusalem. Discuss the division of Jerusalem and its reunification in 1967.
4. Tell the group that after they split into sub-groups, every sub-group would concentrate on one religion, and later present what they have learned to the whole group.
5. Split the group into 3 sub-groups. Nominate one person in charge of each sub-group.
6. Allow 20-30 minutes for sub-group work.
7. Call the whole group together. Ask each sub-group to present their skit/presentation and to explain the nature of "their" religion's attachment to Jerusalem.
Alternatively, instead of having the group do skits or make presentations, you could set this up in a debate format. Ask the question: "Who does Jerusalem belong to?" (Each group (religion) could give reasons why their religion has its own special attachment to Jerusalem.
 - A. Summarize this activity by emphasizing the difference of nature of relationships of each one of the 3 major religions to Jerusalem.
 - B. Emphasize the uniqueness of the Jewish relationship to Jerusalem:
(This is where Goal "B" comes in)
 1. Jerusalem is the only holy city for the Jews
 2. Jerusalem was always the capital and the center of Jewish life, when Jews were independent in Israel and when they were in exile. (Refer to sourcebook p. 26-34)
 3. Jerusalem will remain the center of the Jewish people as long as our people will yearn to have all the Jews centered in Jerusalem (in prayer, poetry and actions). Again, refer to those texts mentioned above.
8. After this discussion, if time permits, read (or summarize for the group) the article from the Jerusalem Post (sourcebook p. 25). After learning about the positions that Judaism, Christianity and Islam take toward Jerusalem, how do they feel? As Jews, how do they personally feel?

christianity

Indeed, for many centuries Christianity had been caught between the horns of the dilemma of the heavenly *versus* the earthly Jerusalem.¹² The New Testament itself exhibits a marked tendency towards what might be called a "de-territorialization" of the concept of holiness, and a consequent dissolution of spatially localized notions. It is not the Temple and its Holy of Holies that is the centre, but Christ; it is not the Holy City or Land that constitute the "area" of holiness, but the new community, the body of Christ.¹³ Yet for later generations of Christians, the land in general and Jerusalem in particular were the scene on which the most uniquely momentous events of history had been enacted. The mystery of the incarnation and redemption had taken place here. The divine act of salvation, in spite of its universal — and according to some early fathers, cosmic — significance, here had its local habitation and incarnate manifestation. The nativity and the events preceding it, Christ's childhood and manhood, his ministry and preaching, the consummation of this ministry in his passion, resurrection and ascension, the birth of the Church on Pentecost and the beginnings of the first Christian community — all these took place on definite spots in this particular city and land, no matter whether the sites associated with these events by later tradition were historically "authentic" or not. Small wonder, then, that Christians have always cherished Palestine as a "holy land", and Jerusalem as a "holy city", and that pilgrims have at all times come to visit the sites associated with the mystery of salvation and to permeate their souls with the blessings of this mystery at the very place of its earthly and historical manifestation. Yet at the same time the aforementioned "de-territorializing" tendency also asserted itself, and many of the great spiritual figures in the history of Christianity expressed doubts about what seemed to them an at least potentially crude, unspiritual, and hence unsound approach to the mystery. Commenting on the words of Jesus "if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37), St. Augustine wrote:¹⁴

When we thirst, then we should come — not with our feet but rather with our feelings; we should come not by wandering but by loving. In an inward way to love is to wander. It is one thing to wander with the body, and a different thing to wander with the heart. He who wanders with the body, changes his place by the motion of the body; he who wanders with the heart, changes his feelings by the motion of the heart.

There were other voices warning against pilgrimages, and casting doubt on their value. St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote in one of his letters¹⁵ "advise therefore the brethren to ascend from the body to God, rather than from Cappadocia to Palestine"; but he himself did make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. St. Jerome, although he chose to spend the better part of his life in Bethlehem, declared¹⁶ "the heavenly sanctuary is open from Britain no less than from Jerusalem, for the Kingdom of God is within you", and many later mystical writers suggested that pilgrimages were not always or necessarily conducive to sanctification. Protestantism has taken up this strand in the Christian tradition, emphasizing and elaborating it, and I need not remind you of the Puritan poet's jeer in his description of the paradise of fools,¹⁷

*Here Pilgrims roam, that stray'd so far to seek
In Golgotha him dead, who lives in Heav'n.*

Others dreamed of a terrestrial but omnipresent Jerusalem, a Jerusalem that could be built "in England's green and pleasant land". But again, as if to illustrate the aforementioned built-in Christian ambivalence in this matter, it was Protestant scholarship which gave the main impetus to the modern study of biblical archeology and antiquities.¹⁸

By and large, however, Christian piety has acted on the assumption that the movement of the body and that of the heart were not incompatible and that, on the contrary, the former could stimulate and promote the latter. But this is only part – and perhaps the lesser part – of the story. We already encountered one main Christian *Leitmotiv* in St. Bernard's letter to the Bishop of Lincoln: the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the real and essential one, and of which any possible earthly Jerusalem is but a pale terrestrial reflection. The origins of this notion of a heavenly Jerusalem go back to the Judaism of the Second Temple period, and I shall soon have to say a word on this, as well as on the development of this idea in post-Temple, Tannaitic and Amoraic (i.e., rabbinic) Judaism.¹⁹ Mount Zion and the city of the living God are explicitly identified with the heavenly Jerusalem in the Epistle to the Hebrews 12:22, and there is no need for me to quote at length from the apocalyptic vision of the glorious celestial Jerusalem, shining with gold and studded with sapphires, as described in ch. 21 of the Revelation of St. John. This chapter has had a lasting influence on Christian symbolism, but one may perhaps venture to generalize by saying that this influence exerted itself mainly in line with the aforementioned spiritualizing and de-territorializing tendency. Jerusalem is essentially the heavenly Jerusalem, and the heavenly Jerusalem is the archetype of the Church. Like every city which is a *metropolis*, i.e. in both the literal and the archetypal sense a mother to her children,²⁰ so the heavenly Jerusalem too, "the Jerusalem which is above", is, in the words of the Apostle Paul (Gal. 4:26), "the mother of us all". In fact, the city as the mother, i.e., the celestial Jerusalem which is the mother of us all, is identical with the *mater ecclesia*. The liquidation, to all practical intents and purposes, of concrete historical eschatology in the centuries between *Revelation* and St. Augustine, produced a Christian image of the heavenly Jerusalem which is purely spiritual. This heavenly, spiritual entity, of which the Church in this world is an earthly reflection, is the abode of God who dwells in the midst of his faithful and sanctified people. This spiritual view of humanity united to God, expressed largely in allegorical and homiletical imagery, was only partly counterbalanced by the traditions of popular piety, pilgrimages, and such outbursts of enthusiasm as witnessed by the Crusader period.

But perhaps the most beautiful and moving of all Christian poetry on the subject is a song Abelard wrote, not in honour of Heloise, but in honour of that perfect day which is eternal Sabbath and eternal joy. This ultimate Sabbath day, Abelard identified, in the wake of traditional symbolism, with the heavenly Jerusalem, the one serving as a cosmic-temporal, the other as a cosmic-spatial symbol of ultimate bliss and perfection:

*O quanta qualia
Sunt illa sabbata
Quae semper celebrat
Superna curia
Quae fessis requies
Quae merces fortibus
Cum erit omnia
Deus in omnibus*

*Vera Jerusalem
Est illa civitas
Cujus pax iugis est
Summa iucunditas.*

I do not know what Abelard would have said had he known that this combination of the symbolism of Jerusalem and the Sabbath, coming to him from the treasury of Christian imagery, would later produce some very odd sectarian phenomena. The great revival that swept many Bantu tribes in South Africa (and about which Bishop Bengt Sundkler has given us such a fine book,²¹) produced hundreds of churches and sects which in part have the word Zion in their name, and in part even use the sixpointed "Star of David" as a symbol, some of them carrying such curious names as "The Apostolic Jerusalem Church in Sabbath in Zion".

To the extent that Jerusalem also has a terrestrial, geographical dimension as a holy city, it is mainly in its quality of a memento of holy events that occurred at certain places – "holy places" therein.

Jerusalem entered Israelite history and historico-religious consciousness under David. The story of the conquest of the city, as well as the reasons that prompted David to turn her into a symbolic centre — ritually as well as politically — are too well known to require rehearsing here. Suffice it to say that David made Jerusalem the cornerstone of the religious and cultic, as well as the national unification of Israel. In the words of Prof. Shemaryahu Talmon,²² "Jerusalem thus became the symbol and the most significant expression of the transition from 'peoplehood' to the formation of a 'nation' and a 'state'. But it was never completely subservient to, or identified with, the new social phenomenon and hence, when the state ceased to exist, Jerusalem did not lose its importance and symbolic value for the Jewish people. The city which in antiquity had undergone one decisive transformation of her significance, could easily adapt and readjust to ensuing diverse historical situations. She has, in fact, done so for many hundred years without losing her prestige and the symbolic value that had been conferred on her by David". Indeed, the amazing and historically crucial aspect of the story is the depth and tenacity with which the "Jerusalem consciousness" (as I would call it) has struck roots in Israelite feeling, belief and theology. Jerusalem was the city which God had chosen, and the chosenness of this city was as much part of God's covenant with his people as his covenant with David and his seed, and it was as permanent as his covenant with Nature (cf. Jeremiah 31:34—39; 33:14—26).

The meaning of Jerusalem as it subsequently determined Jewish self-understanding and historic consciousness is spelled out in the Prophets and in the Book of Psalms. Jerusalem and Zion are synonymous, and they came to mean not only the city but the land as a whole and the Jewish people (viz. its remnant) as a whole. When the author of *Lamentations* bewails the destruction of the "daughter of Jerusalem" and the exile of the "children of Zion", he obviously means the people; and when the prophet known as the Second Isaiah rhapsodically exults in the rejoicing of Zion as her sons return unto her from the dispersion, he clearly means the people and the land as historic entities. City, land and people become one in a grand symbolic fusion. Zion, viz. Jerusalem, is the "Mother" also in Jewish symbolic language, and the same figures of speech which Christian idiom uses in connection with the *mater ecclesiae*, are used by the ancient rabbis of *Keneseth Yisra'el*, identified with Zion and Jerusalem as the mother. These symbolic equations are a permanent feature of Jewish experience since the days of the Psalmist. The identification of Zion and Jerusalem with the widowed, sorrowful and mourning mother, who one day will exult and rejoice again as her children are gathered back unto her, is one of the main motives of traditional Jewish imagery since that pattern was set by the Second Isaiah. The talmudic sages merely spelled out more explicitly in their many dicta on the subject that which was already implicit in the prophets and in many Psalms.

The prophet's word (Is. 49:14) "And Zion said 'the Lord has forsaken me'" is paraphrased in the Talmud²³ — as a matter of course — "the congregation of Israel said. . . .". The perfect liturgical expression of this symbolism occurs in the Jewish wedding service, where one of the liturgical benedictions reads "May she who was barren (*scil.* Zion) be exceedingly glad and exult when her children are gathered within her in joy. Blessed art thou, o Lord, who makest Zion joyful through her children". Another version of the same benediction has the closing words "who makest Zion joyful and rebuildest Jerusalem". Similarly one of the benedictions recited every Sabbath after the reading of the prophetic lesson says: "Have pity on Zion which is the home of our life. . . . Blessed art thou, o Lord, who makest Zion

Jerusalem, in the daily liturgy, in the grace after every meal, and in the poetry a homiletical writings of medieval Judaism. The point which I wish to emphasize here is the semantic role of a geographical term for naming an historical entity, but in such a way that history remains anchored in a concrete, geographical centre, in terms of catastrophe and suffering (exile, dispersion), and of eschatology (restoration, future return). Rabbinic tradition took up and developed in its own peculiar way the notion of a heavenly Jerusalem that had begun to evolve in the inter-testamentary period. But the rabbinic priorities are reversed when compared to the Christ scheme, where the symbolism of the heavenly Jerusalem tends to dominate. Liturgical devotion, popular piety, religious symbolism, and messianic hope — also in 19th and 20th century secularized forms — are directed first and foremost to earthly Jerusalem as a symbol of the ingathering, on this earth, of the people their promised land. A most striking rabbinic saying almost goes out of its way to invert the usual apocalyptic cosmology, according to which the earthly Jerusalem but a reflection of the heavenly one. According to this midrash²⁴ "you also know that there is a Jerusalem above, corresponding to the Jerusalem below. For the love of the earthly Jerusalem, God made himself one above". In other words, earthly Jerusalem does not reflect a heavenly archetype, nor does it derive significance from the fact that it mirrors a celestial reality. It is a value in itself, as such serves as the archetype of God's heavenly Jerusalem. According to tradition, spiritual fullness can never be attained by playing down the historical sphere with its material, social and political realities. The ideal, restored Jerusalem of Jeremiah's vision is a city, nay a political centre, bustling with life and with people: "For if ye do these things indeed, then shall there enter by the gates of house (i.e. city) Kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and horses, he, and his servants, and his people" (Jer. 22:4). We may note in passing plural "Kings sitting upon the throne" in Jeremiah's utopia. The eschatological notion of the *one* messianic Son of David had not yet evolved. To quote P. Shemaryahu Talmon once more: "Nevertheless, also at the height of its development, the idea of the celestial Jerusalem as it was conceived by Jewish thinkers, even by mystic fancy, never lost its touch with down-to-earth reality. A definite strand of this-worldliness. . . . seems to permeate normative Jewish religion in all ramifications"²⁵. The earliest reference to a heavenly Jerusalem in talmudic literature²⁶ puts the following, somewhat surprising, words into the mouth of himself, who is made to say: "I will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem, until I have entered the earthly Jerusalem first".

If it is true, as I have suggested, that the synonymous terms Jerusalem and Zion have symbolized the historical reality of a people and of its bond to a land, then may, perhaps, also come closer to an understanding (though not necessarily an affirmation) of the modern, secularized stages of this history. The modern Jewish national movement took its name not from that of a country or a people, but from that of a city: Zionism. The hymn of the Zionist movement, which in 1948 became the national anthem of Israel, speaks of the "eye that looks toward Zion" and the millennial hope of a return to "the land of Zion and Jerusalem". The anthem known as *Ha-Tiqvah* ("Hope"), is very poor poetry indeed, but in all its awkwardness and sentimentality it somehow catches the essential awareness of the Jewish people that at its centre there is an indissoluble bond with the land, and that at the centre of this centre is Zion, the City of David. Jerusalem and Zion are geographical terms beyond mere geography, but not without geography: they are "the habitation and the name" for an historic existence and its continuity — an existence which for the religious Jews has religious dimensions and which for the secular

The sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam is a fact. Jerusalem is *al-Kuds* ("the Holy One"), or *al-Kuds al-sharifa* ("the noble holy one") as it was referred to by medieval Arab travellers and writers. The problem that interests us here is how the city came to acquire that place in Muslim consciousness, and in a religion the founder of which exercised his ministry in south-western Arabia.

The holiness of Jerusalem was part of that legacy, and indeed the original direction of prayer (*qibla*) was not to Mecca but to Jerusalem — *'ula al-qiblatayn* ("the first of the two qiblas"). This is not the occasion to discuss the origin of this first *qibla* and the reasons for the subsequent change to the direction of Mecca and the Ka'aba (cf. Kur'an, Sur'a 2:136 ff.).

Nevertheless we must turn our attention, however briefly, to the famous passage in the Kur'an, Sur'a 17:1 "Praise be to Allah who brought his servant at night from the Holy Mosque to the Remote Mosque, the precincts of which we have blessed".

It is, however, not the debated original meaning of this Kur'anic passage which must claim our attention here, but the interpretation which it was given already in early Islam. According to this interpretation, the Prophet Muhammad was miraculously transported from Mecca to Jerusalem, and it was from there that he made his ascent to heaven, the *mi'raj* (the references to revelations granted to the Prophet and described Kur'an, Sur'a 81:19 ff. and 53:1 ff., were consequently merged with the journey referred to in Sur'a 17:1). The events of this nocturnal journey (the *isra*) were subsequently embellished by a luxuriant growth of legend, which included the Prophet's miraculous winged mount, al-Buraq, and many more picturesque details. But the gist of the story — as relevant to our purpose — is simple, and if I may put it, somewhat irreverently, into the language of modern airtravel, it is this: there are no direct flights from Mecca to Heaven; you have to make a stopover in Jerusalem. By this interpretation and by this fusion of the *isra* and the *mi'raj*, Islam linked itself to the traditional holiness of Jerusalem in Christianity and Judaism, and integrated this legacy into its own religious system.

For there had occurred an important event that decisively affected and changed the status of Jerusalem, and influenced its consolidation as a centre of Muslim devotion. That was the conquest of the city by the Khalif Omar in or about the year 638. Unlike the early days of the Medinese period, when Jerusalem was outside the orbit of Muslim society, and the original *qibla* was due to purely ideological factors, Jerusalem was now part of the *dar al-Islam*, the Muslim *oikoumene*. The many Christian churches and places of pilgrimage in the city (including the traditional site of Christ's ascension), and its role as a centre of Christian devotion and piety, could not but act as a challenge to the Muslims. Jewish influences too may have played a part, as evidenced by traditions such as that concerning the dialogue between the conqueror of Jerusalem, the Khalif Omar ibn al-Khattab, and Ka'ab al-Akhtar, a Jewish convert to Islam, as recounted by the 10th century historian al-Tabari. Indeed, attempts to extol the sanctity of Jerusalem in such manner as might seem to make the city compete with Mecca or Medina, were more than once branded by opponents as "Jewish".⁴ The Khalif Omar seems to have erected a house of prayer near the holy *sakhra* (the "rock") on the site of the former Jewish temple, and about fifty years later, in the year 691, the Umayyad Khalif Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan built the mosque (falsely called the Mosque of Omar in

popular parlance) which to this day is one of the glories not only of Islam but of religious architecture in general. The Jewish word for the Temple became one of the Arabic designations of Jerusalem: *Beyt al-Makdis* (or *Beyt al-Mukaddis*), *sharrafahu Allah* — "the House of the Sanctuary, may Allah glorify it".

The history of the mosque, its repairs and renovations, need not detain us here. What matters is the fact that when Abd al-Malik (or his son al-Walid) built the large mosque at the southern end of the *Haram* and this mosque came to be called *al-Aksa* ("the Remote Mosque"), the identification of the site with the "farthest (or remote) Mosque" in the Kur'anic account of the *isra* was definitive and complete. For a long time scholars have held the growing emphasis on the sanctity of Jerusalem to have been due mainly to pragmatic considerations of Umayyad politics, an even the eminent Goldziher⁵ lent the weight of his great authority to this view. Abd al-Malik, it was asserted, was interested in boosting the sanctity of Jerusalem in order to neutralize the influence of the rebellious counter-khalif in Mecca, 'ibn Zubayr. Modern scholarship — and I am in private duty bound to emphasize the contribution of scholars from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in this matter — has abandoned this interpretation, and tends to accept the testimony of the ancient Muslim writers to the effect that the underlying motives were essentially religious. Jerusalem had begun to play an increasingly important role in Muslim piety, and there was an element of competition, it was not so much with 'ibn Zubayr as Mecca as with the Christian churches in Jerusalem and especially the noble dome of the Anastasis (unfortunately known in western Christendom under the name of the "Holy Sepulchre"), the splendour of which the Muslims wanted to outdo with a even more glorious sanctuary. This is explicitly stated by a great lover of Jerusalem and an illustrious fellow-Jerusalemite (though he lived a thousand years ago), the 10th century Arab geographer and historian al-Mukaddasi, and I see no reason to disbelieve his testimony.

The sanctity of this holy site acted like a magnet, and an increasing number of cosmological, eschatological,⁷ and legendary-historical beliefs as well as devotional practices came to be associated with it. After the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, a new kind of — one is tempted to call it "Zionist" — literature began to flourish in the Islamic world: the *fadha'il al-Kuds*, tracts singing the praises and virtues of Jerusalem. It will not do to describe this *genre litteraire* simply as propaganda designed to rouse enthusiasm for a Muslim reconquista. No doubt this fact helps to explain the quantity and dissemination of this kind of literature, but its existence as such and the underlying ideas belong to the sphere of Muslim piety and devotion. As a matter of fact, the *fadha'il* literature, though it flourished in the Crusader period,⁸ actually had its beginnings before the Crusades. When a modern Muslim scholar asserts that "the earliest work of this class is by a contemporary of Saladin"⁹ then I am pleased to point to the work of scholars at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which has definitely established the earlier date of some *fadha'il al-Kuds* compositions.¹⁰

Islam, therefore, provides us with perhaps the most impressive example of how a holy city can acquire a specific holiness on the basis of what — to the unbeliever outside at least — is mere legend, superimposed, no doubt, on an earlier, traditional, sanctity of the place. ...

SESSION III

"What Would You Ask The Merciful?"

GOALS:

- A. To get participants acquainted with the variety of blessings and requests within the 4th section of Birkat Hamazon.
- B. Understanding the concept of praying and asking for redemption.
- C. Examining problems that were solved after prayers and relating it to personal experience.
- D. Examining different segments of Israeli Jewish society.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the 4th section of Birkat Hamazon (first in Hebrew then in English).
2. Ask participant to name this section (note: the official title of that section in the sidur is "other blessings" or "the G-d who does only goodness"). Call their attention to the variety of topics covered in that section and also to modern additions for the State of Israel for oppressed Jews, for the Israeli soldiers, etc.
3. Present the goals of this Kitah.
4. Examine problems for which people prayed for and their problems solved. Have a short discussion on the various factors that lead to the salvation in the case: "oppressor's attitude; victim's hope & action; activists' help; prayer; G-d's assistance; etc.
Tie in at this point the section of Birkat Hamazon which asks for bringing oppressed peoples from darkness into light.

This is a good opportunity to discuss the Russian Olim that have escaped the persecution they faced in the former Soviet Union as well as the Ethiopian Jews now living in Israel, having left the famine they endured in Ethiopia.
5. Encourage participants to share with the group some personal experience that they had (or know of) in which they believe prayer did help.
6. A. Suggest participants to think about a blessing they would like to add to Birkat Hamazon, in addition to the existing collection.
B. Suggest participants to really add their personal wish to Birkat Hamazon, at least during the Convention.
7. Look at the part of Birkat Hamazon which blesses the land of Israel. Explain that this blessing deals not just with the land of Israel, (as did the first part of the Birkat Hamazon), but also with the people of Israel, particularly the Jews. This will lead you in to the "Coalition for Israeli Jewry" Exercise.

Coalition For Israeli Jewry

Objectives:

1. To inform the participants on the different parts of Israeli society regarding religion.
2. To show the difference between the American and Israeli system regarding separation of religion and state.
3. To relate to the issue of how Jewish should be the Jewish state.
Note: Each group will receive enough information sheets and Issue sheets.

Outline:

Step 1 - Cultural Circles

- Divide the participants to four groups: Dati, Secular, Masorti, Haredi
- Hand them the information sheet of their group and learn
- Discuss the position group on the four ideological issues (enclosed) and divide your group to four, each sub-group will present one issue.

Step 2 - Committees Circles

- Form four groups based on the four ideological issues (public places open on Shabbat, selling hametz on Pesach, civil marriages, legitimate conversion)
- Each committee will have the representation of each culture group (dati, secular, masorti, haredi)
- Stage I - each culture representative should give a short description of their culture and ideology and give their position on the issue discussed
- Stage II - Let them try and reach an agreement; (i.e. vote)
- Stage III - Choose representative to present the results.

Step 3 - Conclusion Session

- Each committee representative will represent the outcome of his community
- A voting session on the 4 issues with each participant voting according to his own perspective.
- Voting results and concluding words for instructor

Remember, have FUN with his. Have your groups get into their characters, and be passionate about these issues.

A good "sum up" would be to discuss how the different groups need to unify in order to combat the other enemies Israel has.

Ideological Issues Concerning The Separation
Of "Church"/Religion And State:

1. Should public places be open on Shabbat? Should there be laws which prohibit their remaining open?
2. Should there be laws prohibiting the sale of hametz on Pesach?
3. Should civil marriages be legal in Israel?
4. What constitutes a legitimate conversion?

Religious/Dati

You are the modern National Religious. Your religious philosophy is based on the teachings of Rav Kook. You believe that Zionism is the beginning of the process of redemption - even though it started with secularists. Secularism/rebellion against religion was an essential first step to fight the non-productivity of shtetl life. You believe that everyone must actively bring the Messiah - you must fight for the independent State of Israel. Even a secular state has religious significance - which is why you say Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim.

You have your own religious system but you are not cut off from the rest of society. Your educational system (the mamlachti dati) is according to the Ministry of Education format.

You all serve in the army.

Philosophically, you do not believe in changing Halacha. If the State of Israel is the beginning of the redemption, we must do everything possible to turn Israel into a religious state. Therefore, religious laws should exist and be enforced - such as closing public places on Shabbat and not selling hametz on Pesach. Marriages, divorces and conversions can only be performed by Orthodox rabbis. Civil marriages should not be legal in Israel. You are strongly against Reform and Conservative Judaism because they are the greatest threat since they change Halacha to suit modernity.

Conservative/Masorti

You are a new minority in Israel comprised mainly of American olim. You believe in diverse levels of observance and halachic commitment, but you stress some commitment to Halacha. You define your religious observance in terms of your community, while your private religious observance might be on a different level.

Because you are not recognized by the Chief Rabbinate, you cannot conduct marriages, divorces, conversions, etc.

You believe that religious observance is personal and should be left to the individual. Society should not force religion. You, therefore, oppose religious laws such as those which close public places on Shabbat and prohibit the sale of chametz on Pesach. (You believe in the separation of "church"/religion and State.)

You oppose civil marriages because they would make it impossible to keep records of who is Jewish.

Any "halachic" conversion (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) is acceptable.

Secular/Hiloni

You as an elite secular delegation, have a secular philosophy which includes plurality, a belief in being strongly Jewish without being religious, and a need to define yourself in positive terms and opposed to negatives (i.e. - not being religious, not praying, etc.)

It is important to remember, however, that most secular Jews do not have a philosophical view of their secularism.

Most secular Jews are "traditional" - they go to synagogue on the High Holidays, have a Pesach Seder, etc. You do not, however, see the synagogue as central because you are in a Jewish State.

You want COMPLETE separation of "church"/religion and state. You oppose religious political parties and see religious laws (such as closing public places on Shabbat and prohibiting the sale of chametz on Pesach) as complete coercion.

You believe that any type of conversion is legitimate (if you want to be Jewish you should be able to be) and support civil marriage in Israel.

Your basic attitude is one of "live and let live."

Ultra Orthodox/Haredi

You are the extreme religious who do not accept any of the changes of the last 2-3 centuries. You continue to live in shtetls and live your lives strinclty and exclusively according to the Torah.

Attitude towards Israel:

"Eretz Yisrael," as a religious and spiritual concept, is ingrained within your philosophy. However, you question its sovereignty/statehood since Israel should exist only as a halachic state. Therefore, if it exists as a secular state you maintain the same relationship with the Israeli government that you would with any other diaspora government."

You follow your rabbis (as the interpreters and messengers of God) exactly regarding everything from marriage to business to how you vote.

Your basic ideology is that anything other than the Torah is secondary. Therefore, you live in separate neighborhoods, have a separate educational system, separate newspapers, don't watch TV (which is corrupt) and don't serve in the army. (Note: some haredim do some sort of military service before the age of 30 in order to ensure social security and other national benefits.) You will do anything you need to do to gain what you need from the government.

You believe secular or religious Zionism is bankrupt, and national religion cannot work because it is impossible to be seriously religious and seriously modern.

You believe religious laws must be enforced as much as possible - this makes your life easier (you are not interested in improving others!) You would, therefore, strongly support laws which would keep public

You only marry each other and would strongly oppose any civil marriages in Israel. You believe that Reform and Conservative Judaism (and conversions) are worse than secularism because they present "religious" alternatives - which are not religious Judaism. Anyone converted by a Reform or Conservative conversion is NOT a Jew.

You do not recognize the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and do not recognize civil courts - only your own religious courts.