

“What is old can be made new, what is new must be made sacred”  
Harav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, 1<sup>st</sup> Chief Rabbi of Israel

# *Va’ani Tefilati* *I Am My Prayer*

A Kadima/USY Guide to Enhance the Structured  
Tefillah Service

*Materials prepared by Amy Dorsch*

## **Section 3** **Shabbat Mincha**

Includes:

Matbe’ah Tefillah (Structure of the Service/ Service Outline)  
Creative and Inter-active Suggestions for each  
prayer  
Questions for Personal Meaning  
Kavanot: poems, songs and stories



## Creating An Avirah Shel Shabbat

(Shabbat Atmosphere)

Before Shabbat:

- Make sure each room is clean and in order
- Shabbat themes are always fun. Do an activity before Shabbat that welcomes the theme. E.g. Yedid Nefesh- Friendship-have each participant create a Shabbat-O-Gram for a friend. Shabbat Shalom greetings create community
- Gather the group for a quick meditation or *kavanah* (direction or intention) exercise to transition from mundane to holy, do a yoga stretch to relax the body, play soft music, tell a story, reflect on the week
- Gather the group before everything begins and tell a Midrash or traditional Jewish story. Serve tea and cookies to create a “mood”
- Set up the prayer space (*makom Tefillah*) as a *spiritual* space. Place posters of Jerusalem up, have the USYers create a mural or Shabbat Message Board where they write messages of peace and bracha to one another
- Create a mural of Jerusalem and hang it up on an entire wall
- Before candle lighting, welcome everyone in with soft, calming music, keep voices low to remind everyone that they are entering into a day of calmness and menucha
- Create a nice atmosphere for dinner by decorating the room with centerpieces, flowers and colored table cloths. Put Shabbat or Jewish quotes by each place setting as a conversation piece
- Incorporate a poem or Hebrew reading into the service for a creative Kavanah, read the lyrics to an applicable Hebrew or English song.
- Teach an Israeli dance to encourage interaction and ruach







The following pages include a guide to enhancing the structured prayer service with *Kavanot*, creative, inter-active exercises and brief explanations and suggestions for personalizing the prayer service. Please do not use every single activity or services will take hours to complete, but use a couple of ideas that will enhance the prayer experience for your group.

\*A Caveat: Please note that credit and sources are given to the best of our knowledge. The origin of any source not indicated was unclear.

Guide to Symbols:

✨ Tefillah in Action- an activity to apply to this Tefillah

*Kavanah*: Ways to connect with the prayer, make it more meaningful and personal and allow the participant to answer “what does this mean and “what does this mean to me?”

 Please rise	 Kavanah, story or Midrash, Jewish text source	 Prayer Movement
 Please be seated	 QPM- question for personal meaning, personalize the prayer	 Did you know?/Fast facts to share with the group or questions to consider

\*a note on page numbers- Page numbers that are underlined indicate pages of the full Sim Shalom. *Italics* indicate page numbers for Sim Shalom for Shabat and Festivals

## Why Pray?

### *Reflections on Reasons for Prayer*

(preparing to pray, a resource for discussion, interaction, contemplation)

Before we begin any prayer service, we must explore our intention for prayer. Why do we pray? Sometimes, all it takes for one to engage and find meaning in prayer is to find a *personal* connection, a reason why.

We often draw on Jewish sources for inspiration, motivation and reasons for prayer. Below are some secular selections (quotes marked by \* are Jewish) collected for Rakavet (a division of METNY) USY Fall Kinnus 2008, that can be used for discussion, contemplation and debate for reasons why we pray.

1. “Prayer cannot mend a broken bridge, rebuild a ruined city or bring water to parched fields. Prayer can mend a broken heart, lift up a discouraged soul and strengthened a weakened will”- Ferdinand Isserman
2. God punishes us mildly by ignoring our prayers and severely by answering them.- Richard J. Needham
3. Prayer does not change God, but it changes he who prays. – Soren Kierkegaard
4. Trouble and perplexity drive me to prayer and prayer drives away trouble and perplexity. – Philip Melanchthen

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5. Don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines. – Satchel Paige
6. The value of consistent prayer is not that God will hear us but that we will hear God. – William McGill
7. Prayer may not change things for you, but it for sure changes you for things. – Samuel M. Shoemaker
8. Two hands working can do more than 1000 clasped in prayer.
9. I prayed for 20 years and received no answer til I prayed with my legs. – Frederick Douglas
10. We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.- Oswald Chambers
11. Prayer is when you talk to God; meditation is when you listen to God
12. Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble, prayer is a life attitude.- Walter A. Mueller
13. The trouble with our prayer is we often do it as a last resort. – Will Rogers
14. When you pray, rather let your heart be without words than your words without heart. [*what is Kavanah?*]
15. Prayer must never be answered. If it is, it ceases to be prayer and becomes correspondence.- Oscar Wilde
16. Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.- Victor Hugo
17. Complaint is the largest tribute heaven receives and sincerest part of our devotion.- Jonathan Swift
18. It is of course possible to dance a prayer- Glade Byron Addams
19. Prayer requires more of the heart than of the tongue
20. What we usually pray to God is not that God's will be done, but that God approve ours.- Helga Bergold Gross
21. Prayer is exhaling the spirit of person and inhaling the spirit of God.
22. \*Always let a man test himself: if he can direct his heart, let him pray; if he cannot, let him not pray [Kavanah]- Talmud Bavli, Brachot 30b
23. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go.-King Claudius in *Hamlet*
24. Don't live too much and forget about prayer. Don't pray to much and forget about life. God won't give you straight answers so don't seek one. Seek the ways to find the answers, not the answer itself. Be loyal but not blindly loyal. Be ready to grasp God's response in any shape or form. Don't forget about prayer, don't forget about life.
25. \*Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living- Abraham Joshua Heschel
26. If the only prayer you said in your life was 'thank you,' that would suffice.- Johannes Meister Eckhart
27. \*The issue of prayer is not prayer, the issue is God- A.J. Heschel
28. Our thanks to God should always precede our requests
29. Pray for what you want, work for what you need.
30. "I'm not religious. I don't know the prayers. I'd feel hypocritical. I'm not sure what I believe so how can I pray?" Would you say, "I'm not Albert

Einstein so I'm not going to think?" or "I'm not Michael Jordan so I shouldn't play basketball?"

31. Prayer is scary because we want answers to our questions and may not get them. The very least is that you ask yourself questions to find out who you are and could be "Is there someone there greater than us?" "Does he/she care about me?" "What is expected of me?" The answers may be just in asking, making you think of thoughts you may not have considered before. -Jewish Theological Seminary program advertisement

## Section 3: Shababt Mincha

### Structure of the Shabbat Mincha

Ashrei- p. 558/226 (continue silently)



Hatzi Kaddish- p. 564/229

Torah Service: p. 566/229



*Torah is read*



Yehallelu: Torah is put away – p. 570/232

Hatzi Kaddish- p. 572/233

Amidah- p. 574/234 - be seated once you have completed your Amidah or stand until all others are finished

Kaddish Shalem- p. 596/247

Aleinu- p. 598/248

Mourners Kaddish- p.600/249

### **Make More out of Mincha**

*In the spring, Shabbat can be a long day, making Mincha madness with a stir-crazed group. In the winter, the day is basically comprised of prayer, food, prayer, food, Havdalah. Therefore, it is important to try and get creative with Mincha, if anything to break up the day with prayer through meaningful activity. Feel free to use any of the previously mentioned activities for any prayers repeated in Mincha. Additionally, you can try some of these ideas to afternoon Mincha.*

1. Apply any of the *Playin' with the Parsha* activities below for the Torah reading. This is a good opportunity to apply these ideas because it is a shorter service.  
(\*<http://www.usy.org/yourusy/reled> for "Playin' With the Parsha" ideas)
2. Host a Pray-off competition- Split the group into teams and have them compete for USY's Next Top *Davener*. This allows time to learn the Tefillot without actually teaching them. Call out a word and the first team to find the Tefillah with that word and start the group off in singing, wins the round. Try and call out the prayers in order and make sure there's a fun prize offered!
3. Min-prov Mincha Improv

*You can decide to run 1 game to spice up the traditional service or block out 25 minutes for a series of these Improv games. You can decide which ones to do or how many depending on the mood of the group. All scenes should be kept appropriate and relate to the topic.*

### **The Games:**

Jewish Alphabet Game- this is a good game to play before you sing the Ashrei, a Hebrew alphabetical acrostic. Two volunteers play two biblical characters. The first one acts out a scene using the letter A, second continues with letter B and they keep going through the alphabet until one person gets "stuck" and can be replaced with someone else. The rest of the group must guess what they're acting.

Version 2: This game is not Jewish in content but can be used to explain the Ashrei Acrostic. Ask for 5 volunteers and give them a scene to play such as "at the park." They must have a conversation beginning each sentence with the next letter in the alphabet.

Eg. Person 1: Amazing day today, huh?

Person 2: Better than yesterday when it poured all morning. Care to play catch with me?

Person 3: Don't mind if I do!

Person 4: Even I'll play this time!

Person 2: Finally, you decide to get in the game!

Person 3: Gotta get some exercise...etc. etc.

Question Game - Same premise as above- two biblical characters, leader assigns a scene. All sentences must be spoken in questions.

Freeze - Start a scene, with a Jewish theme, audience member can yell "freeze!" and tap in for one of the participants. The trick is to keep each scene Jewishly relevant and get the group members to call out what is being depicted.

Party Quirks - One person is hosting a party. Different Biblical characters "knock" on the door and come into the party. The host must decide who each character is by how they act.

4 headed Moses - Make four people sit in a line, one behind the other. The audience will ask the 4 people a question like the Israelites asking Moses a question. The 4 people must answer, each one saying one word at a time. It is funny to watch the 4 people try to create a sentence.

News Report - A host, expert, reporter and interviewee cover a news report on a biblical story.

Press Conference - One person leaves the room. The rest of the group decides which famous Jew or biblical character that person will be when they return. The person comes back in and the group starts asking the person questions until they eventually guess who they are. Ask the group not to make the questions so obvious. For example: if the person was Yosef, a group member might ask him/her his favorite color instead of asking if he was scared of his brothers. One alludes to the story, the other question is more obvious.

Props – Split the group into teams. Hand out a parsha summary or give them 5 minutes to read through the parasha in the *Chumash*. Give each team a simple prop and challenge them to explain how the prop could be used in the parsha story (similar to the game "Liar's Club").

Holy-wood Producers – split the group into teams. Assign each team a biblical story and challenge them to come up with the title of an actual Hollywood movie (or TV show) that they could adapt if the biblical story were to be told through the big screen. Examples:

Jonah and the Whale- *Finding Nemo, Finding God*

The story of the Spies- *MILK (and Honey)*

Miriam speaks Lashon Hara- *Gossip Girl*

Tent Shopping Network- Assign each group a physical object from the Tanach. Examples include: Joseph's coat, Moshe's staff, Noah's ark, Jacob's soup pot, Yocheved's basket for baby Moshe, etc. The group must make an info-mercial selling their product to the biblical community on the "Tent Shopping Network."

Communication Chain: This game is good for the **Amidah** which is the pray-er's opportunity to communicate with God. We begin the Amidah as a conversation with God, hoping God will hear our prayers.

Pick four people. Three people are sent away and the one other person stays put. The group chooses an object and place where that object is used. (eg. a blender and a kitchen). The first person will act out object and place to one of the people that was sent out using only gestures and gibberish (no words). Then that person must do the same for the next person, and then the third person must do the same for the last person. Each person will have a chance to guess the object and location and it may end up that no one gets it right. You can connect this to the Amidah by explaining that even when we communicate with God with the utmost intention or *Kavanah*, our prayers may not always be answered in the way we want.

#### 4. Chazzanut Idol: NEWSach Competition

Host a chazzanut contest and assign a short Tefillah to small groups to come up with a new tune for the traditional prayer

#### 5. Test Your Jew-Q (Jewish IQ).

Before Torah reading, play a quick round of Jewish trivia. Offer candy for those who answer correctly.

### Sources

Brown, Dr. Steven M. Higher and Higher: Making Jewish Prayer Part of Us. New York. USCJ Department of Youth Activities. 1996

Hoffman, Jeff and Andrea Cohen-Kiener. Karov L'chol Korav. New York: Melton Center for Jewish Education, 2000.

Hoffman, Rabbi Lawrence A., ed. My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries. Woodstock, VT: JPS, 1998.

Sasso, Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg and Rabbi Jeffery Schein. Siddur Kol Hanoar: The Voice of Children. Elkins Park, PA: Reconstructionist Press, 2005.

Weinberg, Alex. Siddur Sim Shalom: Remix 2.0 Teacher's Edition, 2006

\*self published. Please contact Alex through his website: [www.alexweinberg.org](http://www.alexweinberg.org)

Greenberg, Rabbi Sydney. Likrat Shabbat: Worship, Study and Song. Bridgeport, CT: Media Judaica, 1974

## Additional Resources for Creative Tefilah

## **Books**

### *General Prayer:*

- Entering Jewish Prayer: A Guide to Personal Devotion and the Worship Service- Reuven Hammer
- To Pray as a Jew - Dov Peretz Elkins
- A Guide To Jewish Prayer: Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz
- The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only – Lawrence Hoffman
- L'elah L'elah/Higher and Higher: Making Jewish Prayer Part of Us – Steven M Brown \*A USY publication
- My People's Prayer Book Set: Volumes 1-10 – Ed. Lawrence Hoffman
- Or Hadash: Commentary on the Sim Shalom – Reuven Hammer
- Rediscovering the Art of Jewish Prayer- Rabbi David Golinkin
- Siddur Sim Shalom Remix 2.0 Teacher's Edition- Alex Weinberg

\*an excellent teaching resource when using the Sim Shalom, student edition also available- [www.alexweinberg.org](http://www.alexweinberg.org)

### *Creative resources:*

- L'elah L'elah/Higher and Higher: Making Jewish Prayer Part of Us – Steven M Brown \*A USY publication
- Modim: We Give Thanks – Alisa Pomerantz Boro
- Karov L'chol Korav/For All Who Call: A Manual for Enhancing the Teaching of Prayer- Rabbi Jeff Hoffman, Andrea Cohen Kiener [with accompanying CD]
- The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival - Marcia Falk
- Toward Meaningful Prayer [I and II]: Inspiring Thoughts and Stories on Tefillah from Classic Sources- S. Feldbrand
- Talking to God- Naomi Levy
- Minding the Temple of the Soul: Balancing Mind, Body and Spirit [Yoga] – Tamar Frankiel, Judy Greenfeld [With musical accompaniment]
- Alef Bet Yoga – Steven A Rapp
- Book of Jewish Sacred Practices: CLAL's Guide to Everyday & Holiday Rituals & Blessings- Rabbi Irwin Kula and Vanessa Ochs
- Worship with Joy: A Demonstration of New Techniques and Models-
- Sedra Scenes: Skits for Every Torah Portion- Stan J. Biner
- God Whispers: Stories of the Soul, Lessons of the Heart – Karyn Kedar
- Three Times Chai: 54 Rabbis Tell Their Favorite Stories- Laney Katz Becker
- Filling Words with Light: Hasidic and Mystical Reflections on Jewish Prayer - Rabbi Lawrence Kushner and Rabbi Nehemia Polen

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- Jewish Stories from Heaven and Earth: Inspiring Tales to Nourish the Heart and Soul - [Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins](#)
- Our Dance with God: Finding Prayer, Perspective and Meaning in the Stories of Our Lives – Karyn Kedar
- The Path of Blessing: Experiencing the Energy and Abundance of the Divine - Rabbi Marcia Prager
- PRAY TELL :A [Hadassah](#) Guide to Jewish Prayer - Rabbi Jules Harlow with Tamara Cohen, Rochelle Furstenberg, Rabbi Daniel Gordis and Leora Tanenbaum
- Soul Judaism: Dancing with God into a New Era - Rabbi Wayne Dosick

## **Music**

Almost any popular song can be applied to a Jewish prayer in one way or another, you just have to think outside the box and be creative. For example, *One* by U2 is a great song to teach about faith, and monotheism in the Shema. But for specific Jewish music appropriate to use for Tefillah, read on!

**[www.Jewishmusic.com](http://www.Jewishmusic.com) or [www.oytunes.com](http://www.oytunes.com)** for downloadable hits.

Jewish musical mavens who can help bring creativity to traditional nusach:  
(name, website, sample album)

- Craig Taubman –[www.craignco.com](http://www.craignco.com) - *The World is a Very Narrow Bridge*
- Shlomo Carlebach- [www.Jewishmusic.com](http://www.Jewishmusic.com) - *Hits of Carlebach*
- Sheldon Low –[www.sheldonlow.com](http://www.sheldonlow.com) - *On One Foot*
- Debbie Freidman – [www.debbiefriedman.com](http://www.debbiefriedman.com)- *One People, Blessings*
- Rick Recht – [www.rickrecht.com](http://www.rickrecht.com)- *Shabbat Alive!*
- Avner Levi- [www.jewishmusic.com](http://www.jewishmusic.com) - *Sephradic Super Party*
- Safam- [www.safam.com](http://www.safam.com)
- Peter Halpern- [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org)- *Sweet Songs and Sacred Prayer*
- Sam Glaser- [www.samglaser.com](http://www.samglaser.com) - *A Day in the Life*
- Joshua Nelson [Jewish Gospel] –[www.joshuanelson.com](http://www.joshuanelson.com)- *Mi Chamocho*

## **Drama:**

Sedra Scenes – Stan Biner

\**Bibliodrama* – Dr. Peter Pitzele - [www.bibliodrama.com](http://www.bibliodrama.com)

Parasha Plays – Richard J. Allen

Class Acts: Plays and Skits for Jewish Settings – Stan Biner

Kings and Things: 20 Jewish Plays for Kids 8-18 – Meredith Shaw Patera

The Magic Tanach and Other Short Plays – Gabrielle Suzanne Kaplan

\*uses role playing as an excellent technique to engage with text through empathy and emotion

Enjoy these suggestions to enhance the experience of prayer for the Pray-er!

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