

Discussion Shacharit

Prayer through Deep Meaningful Conversations

Adapted by Jared Rogers (USY International Rel/Ed VP 2017)

Goals:

- To have a meaningful *sicha* within a service to help USYers feel more connected with the service
- To relate prayers to USYers' lives in a way they will remember next time they are in a regular service

Time: 1 hour

Space Needed: A medium sized room

Shabbat Friendly: Yes

Participants: 0-30

Audience: Grades 9-12

Keywords: Discussion, Meaning, Conversation, *Sicha*, *Tefillah*

Materials: Siddurim and these Discussion Questions

Introduction for Leader:

The idea of this "*sicha* within a service" is to help the USYers feel more connected with the service. We are aiming to relate these prayers to their lives in a way that they will remember and have more respect the next time they attend a regular service. Dissent and different opinions are encouraged because they will show everyone a new side to things. Above all, this should be an open discussion where no one is afraid to express his or her views. There is no right or wrong and no one should be put down. These questions are only to guide the discussion. You do not need to follow them exactly or get to all of them. If the USYers are deep in discussion then this is GREAT. Do not interrupt them to move on to something new.

***Birkot HaShachar* (p.10)**

- A. Have a USYer read the 14 blessings of *Birkot HaShachar* out loud to the group in English
- B. In His image...(line 3)
 1. What does it mean to be created in God's image?
 - a. What is his image? Ex: Physical, mental, emotional, etc.?
 - b. Potential response: we are all the same on the inside
 2. Does this idea also extend to non-Jews? Atheists?
 3. Why is everyone so different if we were all created in the same image?
 4. Why should we be thankful that we were created equally?
- C. Who made me free...(line 5)
 1. What does it mean to be free?
 2. Do you have the freedom at school to wear and say what you want?
 3. What was it that God made free? Did he make us physically free to do what we

want or spiritually free to feel what we want?

- D. Sight to the blind...(line 6)
 - 1. Why are there still blind people if God has the ability to give them sight?
 - 2. Are there other ways to gain sight besides the literal physical sense?
 - 3. Do you think that your insight (conscience) is another form of the 'sight' that God gives to us?
- E. Provides for all my needs... (line 11)
 - 1. Why are there still people living in poverty?
 - 2. Should someone blame God if he/she is living in poverty?
 - 3. What does God define as our needs?
- F. Guides us on our paths... (line 12)
 - 1. Does anyone believe in fate? To what extent?
 - 2. Is God's path for you to set when you are born or does it change as you grow and make decisions for yourself?
- G. ***Daven Birkot Hashachar together as a group***

Ashrei (p.80)

- A. Read the *Ashrei* out loud responsively in English
- B. The Lord is good to all; His compassion embraces all (p.83 top)
 - 1. Do you think this is true? Who is all? How does God decide who is rich and who is poor if he is compassionate to everyone?
 - 2. Do good things happen to us only because of God's compassion?
- C. All who love the Lord he preserves, but all the wicked he destroys. (p.83 last line)
 - 1. How does this contradict the line we just discussed?
 - a. Potential response: The first line says God is compassionate to all; This one says He is only kind to those who love Him
 - 2. Is God compassionate toward the wicked also, or instead merciless toward them?
 - 3. Should we only be kind to those we like? Is it important to be kind to those we dislike?
- D. ***Daven Ashrei together as a group***

Az Yashir (p.92)

- A. Have a USYer read the prayer out loud in English to the group
- B. Questions
 - 1. Why do we say a prayer that is all about God's destruction of other people? (I.E. the Egyptians)
 - 2. Should we be praising God for murder and therefore breaking one of the commandments? Does he deserve our praise for this behavior?
 - 3. Should this be a prayer? Do you feel comfortable using such violent words in prayers, which should bring peace and happiness?

C. Daven Az Yashir together as a group

Shema (p.100)

A. Have a USYer read the first paragraph of the *Shema* out loud in English to the group

B. Questions:

1. What is the first paragraph of the *Shema* asking us to do as Jews?
 - a. Potential Responses: To love God, to teach *Torah* to our children, to talk about *Torah* whenever possible, to wear *tefillin*, to put a *mezuzah* on our doorposts
2. Do you think Judaism asks too much of you or imposes on your life too much be demanding so many things?
3. Is a person who obeys more of these *mitzvot* a better Jew than someone who does not?
4. As teenagers, is it one of our major priorities to study *Torah* and attend Hebrew school, etc.? If not, should it be?
 - a. Potential Responses: for most teens it is not a major priority, maybe for some it is; it probably should be a major priority but at least our parents are there to make sure we follow through
5. What would happen if we did not follow one or all of these commandments? For example, what would happen if we stopped teaching about *Kashrut* (keeping kosher)?
 - a. Answers: Eventually our children would not learn about *Kashrut* and it would cease to be a Jewish practice
6. Do we care if *kashrut* ceases to be a Jewish custom? Should we care about continuing the Jewish traditions that we ourselves do not follow?
7. Why are you here today (at convention)? How did you get started in USY? Did it have anything to do with your parents?
8. Why does USY place such a big emphasis on prayer and teaching? Does USY serve as a parent in this sense?

C. Daven the Shema and V'ahavta as a group

Amidah (p.354-364)

The *Shacharit Amidah* on *Shabbat* is based around resting on *Shabbat* and observing all of the laws and *mitzvot* of *Shabbat*. Based on this ask the USYers the following question:

- How important do you think it is to be observing the laws on *Shabbat*? Do you go to services every week? How important is it to keep the Jewish traditions going?

Do pages 354-356 out loud and then the rest silently.