

# *A Guide to Sabbath Services at VBS*

**SHABBAT SHALOM!**

**Welcome to our Shabbat Worship Services!**

**God.  
Where then?  
God not in me  
nor in you.  
But between us.**

**God not me or mine  
nor you or yours  
But ours.**

**God known  
not alone  
but in relationship.**

**Not revealed through  
lonely power  
but through our kinship,  
friendship  
healing, binding  
raising up of each other.**

**To know God is to know others  
to love God is to love others  
to hear God is to hear others**

**More than meditations within  
insight within  
feeling within  
Between us are  
Claims, obligations, commandments,  
the behavior of beliefs.**

**God  
not as super-person alone,  
He or She  
Not as is, a process, power, being, thing,  
a Subject acting on me  
or I on it.  
God in connection  
God in the nexus of community.  
God the betweenness  
that binds and holds together.**

**Even alone, in meditation,  
in private thought  
I turn to the  
memory of betweenness  
to the promise of betweenness.**

**God not in me or in you  
or in Himself  
but in betweenness  
the evidence of  
God's reality and our own.**

—Rabbi Harold Schulweis

## **SHABBAT SHALOM**

## **WELCOME TO VALLEY BETH SHALOM**

*We welcome you to our synagogue. We hope you will enjoy the atmosphere of our worship service and the warmth of our congregation's fellowship. This guide has been prepared to help you feel more comfortable in our synagogue. Should you have additional questions about the synagogue and its programs, or about the traditions of our worship service, please approach one of the ushers, or come and introduce yourself to our Cantor and Rabbis following the service. In the meantime, enjoy the music, the spirit, and the learning, of our services. We're glad you're here.*

### **The Synagogue**

The institution of the synagogue is thought by most scholars, to have begun during the 7th Century BCE when the Jewish nation was exiled to Babylonia. Far from their homeland, from Jerusalem their holy city, and from the Temple and its sacrificial rites, Jews gathered for prayer, for study, and for celebrations. These community gatherings (the literal meaning of the Greek "synagogue") became a focal experience for the exiles, and their efforts to preserve their distinct culture and identity so far from home. So important were these gatherings, that even after their return to Jerusalem and the re-building of the Temple, the institution of the synagogue continued to flourish.

A synagogue is any place ten or more Jews gather for prayer, learning, and fellowship. In the ancient world, this concept was revolutionary. The ancients typically worshipped at special places, designated by tradition as sacred -- sacred rocks, trees, and mountains, for example. The holiness of the synagogue (and its descendant, the church) derives not from its location, but from the solidarity and fellowship of those who have gathered.

Our synagogue, Valley Beth Shalom, was founded here in the San Fernando Valley of Southern California in 1952. We are affiliated with the Conservative Movement of American Judaism -- which means you will see in our services and activities a mixture of ancient traditions and modern innovations. We continue, for example, to conduct our services in Hebrew -- the traditional language of our people. At the same time, our congregation recognizes the rights of women to participate as equals in all rituals and services. This is an innovation established during the past three decades.

### **What You Are Seeing**

The focal point of our synagogue's sanctuary is the **Ark of Holiness**. The Ark contains the scrolls of the **Torah** -- the first five books of the Bible -- hand-written with meticulous artistry on parchment, according to the dictates of tradition. The Torah is the Constitution of our people -- setting forth the foundations of our faith and values. We maintain the practice of reading from a scroll as a symbol of the antiquity and authenticity of the Torah: We want our children to know that these are the same words studied and revered by our ancestors for 3000 years. We show our respect and reverence for Torah by dressing the scrolls in beautiful vestments, crowning them with silver ornaments, and keeping them in the majestic Ark of Holiness which is before you in the sanctuary.

Directly over the Ark is the **Eternal Lamp** -- a symbol of God's perpetual protection and affection for our People. The Lamp is a reminder of the seven-branched candelabrum, fashioned by Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, that illuminated

the Temple of Jerusalem.

The raised area that functions as a stage is called the "**Beemah**". At the front of the Beemah are two lecterns for those who lead our worship. At your right is the rabbi who teaches the congregation through his or her words. At the left is the cantor who leads the congregation in singing the prayers. In our tradition, any Jew who knows the service and its melodies is entitled and empowered to lead the worship. The rabbi and cantor are specially qualified by their years of learning.

You will notice that the rabbi and cantor, along with many of the worshipers, are wearing two special ritual garments: The **Kippah** or skullcap symbolizes the heightened holiness of the acts of worship and study carried out during our service. The Kippah is a symbol of our reverence for God's presence at these special moments. There are many Jews who don a Kippah at meals in recognition of the sanctity of the fellowship of the table. Some Jews wear the Kippah constantly as a symbol of God's constant presence and protection. The **Tallit** or prayer shawl is worn in observance of the commandment in the Biblical book of Numbers that we tie fringes on the corners of our garments as a reminder of the religious and moral obligations incumbent upon Jews.

Jewish tradition teaches us to enjoy and embellish the observance of commandments. For this reason, you might see congregants wearing a Tallit that has been beautifully decorated, or a Kippah with a favorite logo or decoration. For the same reason, we endeavor to fill the service with music and celebration.

In the pew before you, there are two books which are used during the services. The smaller blue prayerbook, the **Siddur** (literally "order", or order of prayer), contains the text of our prayer service together with an English translation. The larger maroon volume is a **Humash** (literally "five" for the five books) -- containing the text of the Torah in both Hebrew and English, together with a commentary prepared by many prominent rabbis and scholars of the Conservative movement. We alternate between these volumes during the course of the service. Because Hebrew is read right-to-left, the volumes open from the side opposite that of English books.

## **What You Are Hearing**

The major traditions of Jewish prayer were established in the first century CE, following the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem by the Roman Empire. The Rabbis who survived this catastrophe created a regimen of prayer as a substitute for the sacrificial rites of the Temple. They established a system of prayers to be recited morning, noon, and night each day as well as special prayer for Sabbath, holidays, and special occasions. The Rabbis also established the practice of public reading of a selection from the Torah scroll on Monday and Thursday mornings (which were market days in the ancient Near East) as well as on Sabbath mornings and afternoons. There is, therefore, a detailed tradition establishing *which prayers* are said *on which days*, in *what order* the prayers are to be recited, and even *which melodies* are to be used. All this is ordered by tradition.

You may ask: If so much is ordered by tradition, what freedom is left for individual expression? First, we are encouraged to break away from the service and offer personal prayers, or to meditate on the events of life and the conclusions we draw from them. Second, the rabbis who established the service recognized that, even in synagogue, we are often pre-occupied with the aggravations and annoyances of daily life. The service has been structured to guide one's thoughts away from these mundane matters and into the realm of ultimate values. In this way, the ordered prayer service serves a pedagogic role -- teaching us and reminding us what's really important in life. Finally, this dilemma of finding creativity within the bounds of a traditional form is not restricted to prayer. Three great musicians can play the same piece of music. And despite the fact that the notes are precisely the same for them all -- each plays the piece differently. In fact,

*each time* they play the piece, it comes out differently! Similarly, each person prays differently. And each time we pray, it comes out differently.

Jewish worship services are typically built around two central prayers: *Shema Yisrael* and the *Amidah*.

*Shema Yisrael* -- "Hear O' Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone" -- is taken from the Bible, Deuteronomy 6:4, and constitutes a pledge of faith and loyalty to God. Three paragraphs from the Bible follow this declaration and amplify its message. These Biblical selections are further interpreted and amplified by the addition of poetry and meditation, written over the centuries, which precede and follow the declaration. Thus, the *Shema Yisrael* has grown from just one line to an entire "block" of prayer expressing the meaning of faith and allegiance to God.

*Amidah* means "standing". This prayer was designed by the rabbis of the first century to substitute for the sacrificial rites of the Temple. Each morning in the Temple of Jerusalem, a Daily Offering was prepared. This Offering was meant to convey the on-going loyalty of our People to God, and to specifically request God's blessings for a day of prosperity and peace. Each Sabbath and Festival, an additional offering was prepared in celebration of the special day. We therefore have a morning *Amidah* reflecting our daily needs, and a special *Musaf Amidah*, or Additional *Amidah*, on Sabbath and Festivals.

The *Amidah* is actually a composite prayer -- made up of a series of individual blessings. The composition of this series is specific to each service -- on Sabbath we recite a series of seven blessings, on weekdays, nineteen. Whatever the occasion, the first and last three blessings always remain the same -- it is the middle blessings that adjust for each day: On weekdays, we request God's blessings of prosperity and peace. On Shabbat, we reflect on the uniqueness of the Sabbath day.

## **THE FRIDAY NIGHT SHABBAT SERVICE**

The Friday night Shabbat service has five major sections:

- .. *Kabbalat Shabbat*, Welcoming the Sabbath, (pp. 13-24);
- .. The *Shema Yisrael*, our declaration of faith, and its surrounding blessings, (pp. 28-33);
- .. Transitional prayers, (p. 34);
- .. The *Amidah*, our Sabbath offering, (pp. 35b-38);
- .. Closing prayers, (pp. 47-54).

### **I. pp. 13-24: *Kabbalat Shabbat*, "Welcoming the Sabbath"**

Psalms and poems intended to wrest us out of our weekday concerns and into the spirit of Sabbath.

**p. 13: Shalom Aleichem** -- It is a tradition that angels of peace accompany us during the Sabbath day. With this song we welcome all who have come to share our Sabbath peace and celebration.

The central prayer of the section is *L'cha Dodi*, on pp. 21-22. This poem was written by the 16th Century Mystics in the Israeli village of Safed who imagined the coming of Sabbath as a wedding. On Sabbath, as at a wedding, we dress up and feast on fine foods and wine, we decorate our homes with flowers and celebrate with song and dance. The mystics imagined the Sabbath as a beautiful bride, and her arrival at sunset as that magic moment at a wedding when the bride enters the room.

## **II. pp. 28-33: Shema Yisrael -- Our Declaration of Faith**

**p. 28: Barchu** -- The call to prayer initiates the formal evening service.

The *Shema Yisrael* is surrounded by four blessings: two opening blessings and two closing blessings. These blessings interpret the *Shema Yisrael* by describing the ways in which we find God in our experience: Where can one find God? In our experience of nature, of Scripture, of history, and of our own vulnerability.

**p. 28: U'Maavir Yom [Praised are You...]** -- The first blessing preceding the *Shema Yisrael* is a meditation on the evening sunset. The blessing describes our experience of God in the order and grandeur of nature. Miracles are found, no in extraordinary events that shatter nature's order, but in the very order itself.

**p. 29: Ahavat Olam [With constancy...]** -- This second blessing preceding the *Shema Yisrael* meditates on our experience of God in Scripture. Just as the world has a natural order which manifests the will of the Creator, so too human life manifests a moral order -- detailed in the Bible -- which also reveals the presence of God.

**p. 30: Shema Yisrael** The central declaration of Jewish faith, taken from the Bible, Deuteronomy 6:4.

The Shema is followed by three paragraphs, taken from the Bible. These paragraphs detail how faith fits into life.

(1.) **p. 30: V'ahavtah [You shall love Adonai your God...]** taken from Deuteronomy 6:5-9, commands us to make the love of God and the words of His instruction the preoccupation of our lives.

(2.) **pp. 30: V'haya [If you will earnestly heed...]** taken from Deuteronomy 11:13-21, describes the Biblical belief that obedience and disobedience to the word of God has direct consequences.

(3.) **p. 31: Va'yomer [Adonai said to Moses...]** taken from Numbers 15:37-41, commands us to wear reminders of God's commandments "Then you will remember and observe all My mitzvot, and be holy before your God."

**p. 32: Emet V'emuna [We affirm the truth...]** This, the first of two closing blessings, describes our experience of God in the course of Jewish history. The blessing describes the experience of the Crossing of the Red Sea as the moment our people realized the presence of God in history. At the end of the prayer, we re-enact that pivotal moment of redemption and exultation as we sing the words of the Bible's Song of the Sea: "Who is like You, Adonai, among all that is

worshipped!"

**p. 33:** *Hashkiveinu [Help us, Adonai, to lie down in peace...]* This, the last of the four blessing surrounding the *Shema Yisrael* describes our experience of God in our own vulnerability. This is the only petitionary prayer that is recited on Sabbath. On weekdays, we present God with our requests for prosperity and for the needs of daily life. On Sabbath, all we ask for is peace, security and protection.

### **III. Transitional Prayers**

**p. 34:** *V'shamru [The people Israel...]* This prayer and the next function as transitions between the two "blocks" of prayer that make up the core of our service -- *Shema Yisrael* and the *Amidah*. Taken from the Bible, Exodus 31:16-17, it describes the Sabbath as the symbol of the eternal covenant between God and the people Israel. The prayer ends with a remarkable observation: " in six days Adonai made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day, ceased from work and rested." The last word, translated as "rested", (in Hebrew, *va'yinafash*) comes from the Hebrew root, *nefesh*, meaning "soul". On Sabbath, we refrain from work and returned to our souls - to the essence of our human-ness, to the source of our vitality and creativity.

**p.34:** *Kaddish [May God's name be exalted...]* The *Kaddish* functions as the transition from one section of prayer to another. Whenever it is recited -- three or four times in the Friday night service -- it indicates our passing from one "block" to another.

### **IV. pp. 35b-38: Amidah Our Sabbath Offering**

The seven blessings that make up the Friday evening *Amidah* are recited in silent devotion. As noted, the first and last three blessings are standard for all recitations of the *Amidah*. On Friday night, the middle blessing (p. 36) meditates on the sanctity of Sabbath. It is traditional to take these moments of silent prayer to reflect on the events of the week past, and to add personal prayers to God.

....**pp. 47-48:** These prayers reiterate the major themes of the silent *Amidah*. They are recited aloud, so that those who cannot read the prayers for themselves will hear them recited.

### **V. Closing Prayers**

**p. 49:** *Kiddush* This prayer is normally said at home, at the Sabbath table. It was brought to the synagogue service so that those who might not have had the opportunity to recite it at home will do so here. The Kiddush, recited over a cup of wine, affirms the sanctity of Sabbath. Wine symbolizes the sweetness of the Sabbath, and its ability to take us out of our normal routines. The Kiddush affirms Sabbath, first, as a commemoration of the work of Creation: As God created a world in six days, we are commanded to invest ourselves in the work of creation for six days. And as God rested on the seventh day -- enjoying His creation -- so we too take this day to evaluate and enjoy our lives. The Kiddush also views Sabbath as a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. On Sabbath, we cease being slaves to the burdens of making a living, and return to our status as free human beings.

**p. 51:** *Aleinu [We rise to our duty...]* This prayer praises God for the Covenantal relationship He has established between Himself and the Jewish people. This Covenant demands a commitment to "perfect the world by Your sovereignty".

**p.52: Mourner's Kaddish** This prayer, remembering loved ones who have passed away, marks the end of the service. In our congregation, we recite the list of those whose "Yahrtzeit" -- the yearly anniversary of a loved one's death -- is remembered this week.

**p. 54: Adon Olam [Lord of the World...]** The traditional closing prayer, affirms our faith in God's protection as we depart for our homes. Note the last words of the prayer:

I place my spirit in God's care

My body too can feel God near

When I sleep, as when I wake

God is with me, I have no fear.

## **Oneg Shabbat**

Following services, we invite you to join us for coffee, tea and sweets, for conversation, and, occasionally, for spirited Israeli folkdancing. This "Oneg Shabbat" -- the enjoyment of Shabbat -- is an important part of our celebration. Join us, and enjoy!

## **SATURDAY MORNING SHABBAT SERVICES**

The Saturday Morning Shabbat Service has five major sections:

- .. Introductory Blessings and Hymns (pp. 65-105);
- .. The *Shema Yisrael*, our declaration of faith, and its surrounding Blessings (pp. 107-114);
- .. The *Amidah*, our daily offering (pp. 115b-120);
- .. The Reading and Study of the Torah (pp. 139-154);
- .. The *Musaf*(Additional) Service for Sabbath & Closing Prayers (pp. 156b-187).

### **I. Introductory Blessings and Hymns**

These prayer are intended to move us out of the concern of the everyday world, and into the special atmosphere of the worship service. These prayers are recited silently -- the prayer-leader generally chants the first and last lines of each prayer. Three of these prayers merit special attention:

**p. 65: Birchot Ha-Shachar, Morning Blessings** This series of blessing, originally meant to be recited at home each morning, make us aware of the remarkable miracles contained in the simple act of waking up -- the mind distinguishes dreams from reality, the body functions efficiently and gracefully, we are refreshed and renewed and ready for a new day

**p. 83: Baruch She'amar [Praised is God...]** We share with God the ability to use language to create a world. God creates

a physical world by means of words. We create a world of relationships, ideals, dreams and values by means of words.

**p. 96-97: Ashrei** [*Blessed are they...*] This section of the service climaxes with the recitation of the 145th Psalm, a song of God's universal benevolence. Notable is the line: "Adonai is near to all who call, To all who call to God with integrity."

## **II. Shema Yisrael and its Surrounding Blessings**

The *Shema Yisrael* declares our faith and allegiance to God. The surrounding blessings -- two preceding blessings and one concluding blessing -- interpret the *Shema Yisrael* by affirming God's presence in nature (as symbolized by the sunrise), in Scripture, and in history.

**p. 107: Barchu** [*Praise Adonai...*] The call to prayer initiates the morning service.

**pp. 107-110: Yotzer Or** This section of prayers is an extended meditation on God's creation of light. Notice the various ways in which this theme of "light" is used: the light of sunrise, the shining angels in the prophetic visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, "enlightenment", etc. This section is constitutes the first blessing before the *Shema Yisrael*.

**p. 111: Ahavah Rabbah** [*Deep is Your love...*] This prayer, the second blessing introducing the *Shema Yisrael*, celebrates the spirituality of learning: "Our Maker, merciful Provider, show us mercy; grant us discernment and understanding. Then will we study Your Torah, heed its words, teach its precepts, and follow its instruction, lovingly fulfilling all its teachings."

**p. 112: Shema Yisrael** The central declaration of Jewish faith, taken from the Bible, Deuteronomy 6:4.

The Shema is followed by three paragraphs, taken from the Bible. These paragraphs detail how faith fits into life.

(1.) **p. 112: V'ahavtah** [*You shall love Adonai your God...*] taken from Deuteronomy 6:5-9, commands us to make the love of God and the words of His instruction the preoccupation of our lives.

(2.) **pp. 112: V'haya** [*If you will earnestly heed...*] taken from Deuteronomy 11:13-21, describes the Biblical belief that obedience and disobedience to the word of God has direct consequences.

(3.) **p. 113: Va'yomer** [*Adonai said to Moses...*] taken from Numbers 15:37-41, commands us to wear reminders of God's commandments "Then you will remember and observe all My mitzvot, and be holy before your God."

**pp. 113-114: Emet V'yatziv** [*Your teaching is true and enduring...*] The concluding blessing, following the *Shema Yisrael*, affirms God's presence in the miraculous history of the Jewish people. We re-enact the moment of redemption at the Red Sea by singing the Bible's Song of the Sea, and we petition God to continue His protective care over our people.

### **III.pp. 115b-120 Amidah The Morning Offering**

In the ancient Temple of Jerusalem a morning offering was prepared on behalf of the entire community. This offering carried our gratitude to God for the creation of a new day, and our petitions for a day of prosperity and peace. When the Temple was destroyed, in the year 70 CE, the rabbis who led the Jewish community offered this prayer -- the *Amidah* -- as a substitute. The morning offering was communal, and therefore, after a time of silent prayer, this prayer is repeated aloud on behalf of the entire community.

### **IV. Reading and Study of the Torah**

#### ***pp. 116-123: Service for Taking Out the Torah***

The study of Torah -- the Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible -- forms the center of our Sabbath morning service. The Torah is divided by tradition into 54 weekly portions. We complete the entire Torah in one year. The Torah is read from a scroll as a symbol of its antiquity and authenticity. The scroll is removed from the Ark of Holiness with great pomp and majesty, and paraded around the congregation. It is then opened and read in seven sections or *Aliyot*. Literally, *aliyot* means "going up" -- as honored members of the community are invited to come up to the Beemah, recite a blessing and witness the reading first-hand. The blessing for Aliyot are found on page 142 in the prayer book.

It is our custom at Valley Beth Shalom to engage in Torah discussion and study between the readings. Please feel free to join the discussion. You will need to set aside your blue prayer book and take up the large maroon volume -- the *Etz Hayim Humash* -- which contains the text of our weekly reading, both in Hebrew and English, together with a running commentary.

On many Sabbath mornings, we celebrate a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. This ceremony celebrates entrance into adulthood of a child who has reached the age of 13. As a sign of this coming-of-age, the Bar (a boy) or Bat (a girl) Mitzvah leads the congregation in prayer, reads the weekly portion from the Torah scroll, and teaches the congregation through a short discourse. These acts -- praying, learning, teaching -- are symbols of the child's assumption of adult responsibilities, and constitute the essence of adulthood in Jewish tradition.

Following the Torah reading, we read a section of from the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. Each week has its special section, chosen for its relationship to the weekly Torah portion. This reading of the prophets is called the *Haftara* (lit, "concluding Torah") and is chanted by the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The blessings can be found on page 146-147 in the prayer book.

***pp. 151-154 Service for Returning the Torah*** At the conclusion of the reading, the Torah is once again paraded around the congregation, and returned to the Ark of Holiness.

### **V. Sabbath Musaf (Additional) Service & Closing Prayers**

In the Temple of Jerusalem, a special additional offering was prepared on Sabbath and holidays. The *Musaf*, or Additional service, is recited in remembrance of that offering.

**pp. 156b-161 Musaf Amidah** This *Amidah* reflects the special joy of Sabbath.

**pp. 181-183 Closing Kaddish,**

*Ein Keloheinu [Who is like our God?...],*

*Aleinu [It is for us to praise...]*

As on Friday evening, these prayers conclude the service with an affirmation of the hopes of our people that God will “perfect the world by Your Sovereignty.”

**p. 184 Mourner's Kaddish** We remember loved ones who have passed away with this prayer, affirming that the ties of love and family are not severed by death.

*Sabbath Morning Kiddush* We acknowledge the sanctity of the Sabbath day in the warm fellowship of a community of family and friends, over sweet wine and *challah*, the traditional braided bread. Following the service, please join us for Kiddush in the social hall.

*We hope you have enjoyed worshipping with us at Valley Beth Shalom. Should you have any questions about the service, about the synagogue, or about Judaism, please call our synagogue office, 818-788-6000. We welcome your interest. Please feel free to take this booklet home with you.*