



## Objectives of Machaneh Shai Tefillot

### Scope and Sequence

The main tefillah goal of a congregational school is creating synagogue literacy and fostering meaningful participation in the ritual life of the congregation (and by extension, in other congregations where students might find themselves). This program which is using Siddur Shema Yisrael as its primary text will give students the foundation and skills they need to achieve these goals.

**General introduction** What is prayer? What makes something a prayer? Why do we pray? These are essential questions we must be prepared to answer for our students in every grade. Explaining the what and why will make the how we pray easier, and may serve as a motivation for helping our students learn to pray.

**Why do we pray?** Prayer is the expression of human emotions in words and song: wonder, gratitude, pain, loss, joy, amazement, anger and love. Sometimes we feel things and we don't have the vocabulary to express what we feel. Jewish tradition has developed a system and vocabulary to help us express and understand a wide spectrum of feelings.

**What is Prayer?** Jewish prayer is designed to do three main things: To thank God (and show gratitude), to praise God and to petition God (ask God for certain things, like peace or wise judges and advisors or to heal the sick).

Examples:

Giving Thanks - Brachot, like birkat hamazon, thanking God for creating the world (*Yotzer Or* Praising God - *Hallel*, *Barchu*, *Yishtabach*, *Baruch She'amar*, the psalms that we say in *P'sukei D'Zimra*, the various forms of *Kaddish*. Petitioning God - the 13 middle *brachot* in the weekday *Amidah*, *MiShebairach* for *Cholim* (the sick).

These categories will be helpful in helping students to identify why we say certain *tefillot*. [There are things in the siddur, like *Kri'at Shema* that are not strictly prayers, but are included within the structure of a prayer service for other reasons.

Important Resources:

Nulman, Macy, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer*, Aronson Press, 1993.

Kadden, Bruce and Kadden Barbara Binder, *Teaching Tefilah*, ARE (now Behrman house)

## K-2 Tefillah Curriculum

### Giving Thanks and Making Time Holy

Our early grades begin Tefillah in two ways; there is a progression through time, daily, weekly and annual, and the focus is on moments we make sacred (special, holy Hebrew word is **kadosh**) by pausing to say thanks at certain times.

We start our day by pausing to say thanks (sometimes even before getting out of bed) by saying **Modeh Ani**. Pausing to say thank you is an element of mindfulness, realizing that we are dependent on others, parents, caregivers, siblings, teachers and in this case, God for that which makes us complete. We stop before eating to say, brachot over various foods before we eat a meal or a snack (**HaMotzi** on page 18 - others in Siddur Sim Shalom (Complete,1985) pp.714-715). Learning the formula of the bracha is an important foundational piece of Tefillah learning. The bracha recognizes God's role as sovereign of the world, the source of the resources that we are giving thanks for, and that it is appropriate for us to direct our thanks to God (and probably whoever prepared the meal or snack for us).

**Barchu** p.89- An announcement to those that have come together that it is fitting (correct, appropriate) to praise God (for all time) *l'olam v'ed*

**Shema Yisrael** p.101- The *Shema* is not strictly a tefillah - it is a statement, a declaration of one of the most important aspects of our belief - God's oneness or uniqueness. It doesn't thank, praise or request anything.

**Shema V'Ahavta** p.101- We are commanded to love God (in return for the love God has shown us) in the same way we love our parents in return for all they do for us (this is an analogy students readily identify with). *V'Ahavta* goes on to list other mitzvot, like the study of Torah, t'fillin and mezuzah. It is often chanted using the same notes (trope) that are used for the reading of Torah.

**Ein Keloheinu** - p. 175. Is an acrostic poem - a hidden message is spelled out (taking the first letter of every other line, it spells Amen – a-m-n. When we sing *Ein K'eloheinu* we are describing God in in four ways: *Eloheinu*- our God, *Adoneinu*- our Ruler, *Malkeinu* - our Sovereign and *Moshieinu* - the one who saves us.

## Third Grade Tefillah Curriculum

### Shabbat at Home and Synagogue Foundations and Themes

Third Grade Tefillah begins with Shabbat home practices and continues some of the important relational parts of the synagogue services, parts common morning and evening.

**Candle lighting on p.6.** We start Shabbat (and as we'll see later) end it in a multi-sensory way - light, good smells and tastes. In Judaism light is a symbol for knowledge - when we have light we can see things and learn about the world around us (current brain research confirms that 90% of our learning is visual). We light candles as a symbol of bringing knowledge and warmth into the world.

**Children's Blessing on pg. 7.** (Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6:22-27) Parents hope their children acquire the attributes of ancestors who were great and did great things.

**Kiddush pp.13-14** is not a prayer over wine. We hold wine when we say it and include a *bracha* over wine, but it is a prayer about time. It is about making Shabbat a special time to recharge and stop creative work. It is about connecting to both creation and our shared experience of the Exodus from Egypt. You could substitute *HaMotzi* for *boreh pri hagafen* and still say *kiddush*. We are grateful that God gave us Shabbat, and we express that thanks with Kiddush.

**Mah Tov - p.70.** These words were first spoken by Balaam, a non-Jewish prophet who had been hired by the Moabite king, Balak to curse the Jewish people, but able only to say what God's spirit directly him to say said Mah Tov instead (Numbers 24:5). This is a great example that Jews are not the only ones who believe and follow our God, and that we've taken the words of a non-Jew to say whenever we enter a sanctuary. Very empowering to a student with a non-Jewish parent, grandparent or caregiver.

**Shema and V'Ahavta** - p. 101 We are commanded to love God (in return for the love God has shown us) in the same way we love our parents in return for all they do for us (this is an analogy students readily identify with). *V'Ahavta* goes on to list other mitzvot, like the study of Torah, t'fillin and mezuzah. It is often chanted using the same notes (trope) that are used for the reading of Torah.

**Mi Kamocha - p.106** A nice way of teaching this tefillah about *geula* (redemption) is to introduce the tefillah by showing the scene from the film Prince of Egypt as the Children of Israel cross the sea. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNGgsHbzWPs> It is a powerful piece about both saving the worthy and punishing the wicked (though I do feel bad for the horses).

**Aleinu - p. 176.** The prayer transitions from one being about God being our God and choosing us to be God's treasured people, and concludes with universality, that one day all will recognize God's dominion over all the world. It is a very old prayer, dating back to the High Holiday service in the period of the Second Temple.

## Fourth Grade Tefillah Curriculum

### Building Blocks of the Morning Service

**Birkot HaShachar - p. 74.** The introductory brachot that introduce the morning service were likely once said as part of a morning ritual as one got out of bed in the morning and got ready for their day (hearing the rooster crow to wake up, get untangled from your bedsheets (*matir asurim*), opening your eyes, getting dressed. Eventually, they made their way into the siddur about 600 years ago. As a more modern midrash on these blessings, they can be seen as a checklist of things we can do in partnership with God, reminding us that during the day we can clothe the naked, give sight to the blind (become a reader or sponsor a guide dog for the blind, donate used eyeglasses), work to free those wrongly imprisoned, bring dignity to those that are bent over.

**Review Mah Tov** (see 3rd grade page).

**Barchu p. 89.** An announcement that it's now time to get serious about praising God. It used to be at the beginning of the service, but it got moved, probably because people arrive late to services; in the Sephardic tradition they add another *Barchu* near *Aleinu*. Showing the opening of Lion King is a helpful tool for teaching *Barchu* - they're at a high place like a bimah, pride rock, in the morning as then sun is coming up, and when the baby future king is lifted up, all the animals bow down. You can find it at this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLx\\_JtcQVI&list=PLGCXm1qp9zudhs3rB0NH073ZN07gqQETt&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zLx_JtcQVI&list=PLGCXm1qp9zudhs3rB0NH073ZN07gqQETt&index=1)

**Review Shema and V'Ahavta** - pp. 101

**Amidah (Avot V'Imahot) p. 110 or 113** One of the justifications we have for approaching God in prayer is the concept of *z'chut avot* - the merit of our ancestors. Because of the special relationships our ancestors made with God (each of them different and individual), we too have the right, because of their righteous deeds, to approach God in praise, thanks and petition. This is why we invoke the *Avot* and *Imahot* in the beginning of the *Amidah* before we ask God for things like peace, success, intelligence, and ability to repent, etc.

**Amidah - G'vurot - p. 110 or 113** Theologically, this can be a difficult text to teach. While describing God as a God with strength is not problematic, the concept of *t'chiyat hamaytim*, reviving the dead, is problematic for some students (though not for Rambam in the 11th Century). One way this "power" has been explained is that humans are the only creations with specific abilities of memory, so that when we remember the mitzvot and *ma'asim tovim* (good acts) of those before us who have died, we revive their memories, as if they are still alive, teaching us. Maimonides stated his Principles of Faith that believing in the eventual resurrection of the dead at the "End of Days" is an important, central Jewish belief.

**Birkat HaMazon (First Bracha)** - Birkat HaMazon is a great opportunity for teaching the importance of showing gratitude. We pause after a meal, to fulfill the verse:

*V'Achalta v'savata uberachta et Adonai elohecha al Ha Aretz asher natan lach* . You will eat and be satisfied and bless God for the good land God has given you (Devarim 8:10). This is not in Siddur Shema Yisrael.

**Yotzer Or** - p.90 Bonus (Optional) We praise God as creator of the world. In our tradition, light is a symbol for knowledge; light reveals things that darkness hides from us. In the dark we don't know what's in front of us, the light gives us knowledge of the obstacles and opportunities in our path.

**Ahavah Rabah** - p.97 Bonus (Optional) This Tefilah, which immediately precedes the Sh'ma in the morning service is important in terms of understanding the "commandment to Love" in V'Ahavta. Ahavah Rabah (or its Ma'ariv counterpart, Ahavat Olam) describe the love God has shown for us by creating the world and putting us in it, and giving us the mitzvot to bring order and meaning into our lives.

## Fifth Grade Tefillah Curriculum

### Torah Service and End of the Shabbat/Yom Tov Service

You might introduce the unit by talking about the importance/centrality of Torah, that in ancient times the Torah was read infrequently, (one reference in D'varim says every seventh year) and it wasn't until the beginning of the Second Temple period that regular weekly readings of the Torah were instituted; the *te'amim* (trope signs, the notes we use for chanting the Torah) were likely invented in the post-Mishnaic period of the 4th-6th centuries CE, likely in *T'veriya* (Tiberias), in the Lower Galil. There are some nice introductory pieces on pp. 150-151 of the siddur.

**Ain Kamocha - Av HaRachamim** - p. 152 Ain Kamocha and Av HaRachamim are more of a collection of Biblical verses that a prayer, primarily from various Psalms ( Tehillim,) praising God (for a list of sources, the Art Scroll Siddur provides footnotes listing all of the sources for the various verses). The second verse, Malchutcha may seem familiar - it is in Psalm 145 (Ashrei). On Shabbat, when it is expected that there is more leisure time, the ceremony for removing the Torah is enhanced (compared to the weekday version).

**V'yehi Binsoa – Ki Mit'zion** - p. 153 The Torah service is bracketed by two verses from the Book of B'Midbar that talk about moving the Aron Kodesh – *va'yehi binsoa* and *uv'nucho yomar* in Chapter 10 verses 35 & 36, the first talking about the moving of the ark, and the second about when it was put back down - now we read the first of those two verses at the beginning of the service for reading the Torah, and we read the second as an introduction to Etz Chayim Hee at the end of the Torah service. The second verse of *Vayehi Binsoa* comes from Isaiah 2:3 and was frequently used as a proof text in the Talmud for the primacy of Eretz Yisrael to any other place Jews lived in the world ( ki Mltzion Tetzej Torah).

**Blessing before reading the Torah** - (pg 158) - Thanking God for choosing the Jewish people to be the recipients of the Torah.

**Blessing after reading the Torah** - (pg 159) - Thanking God for the Gift of the Torah. This is also a good opportunity to teach about the number of aliyot to the Torah on various occasions (3 weekday, 4 Rosh Chodesh, 5 yom tov, 6 Yom Kippur, 7 Shabbat) and the concept of increasing our holiness - *Ma'alim BaKodesh* .

**Haftarah Blessings** - (pp. 163-164) It is possible the students won't know or remember the concept of Tanakh תנ"ך, being an acronym, and that the Hebrew Bible is made up of 3 sections, **כתובים ' נביאים ' תורה** It's a good opportunity to talk about the concept, the explain that Haftarot come from the books of Prophets, not the Torah, that the custom comes from a time in the Second Century CE when the Romans forbade the Jewish community in Judea from reading and studying Torah, so they read sections from the Prophets (with similar themes to what would have been the week's Torah reading) to get

around the prohibition. Once reading Torah was reinstated, the reading from Prophets was so entrenched that the custom has continued.

**Returning the Sefer Torah to the Ark** (pp. 170-173). We end with ***Etz Hayim Hee***; the Torah is a tree of life, a guidebook we keep learning from. Even as we put it back we announce that we will return to it again soon.

**Kedusha** - p. 118 We have already introduced the notion of holiness, of separating something and making it special. Kedusha describes a vision of Isaiah watching God's angels proclaiming his holiness.

## Sixth Grade Tefillah Curriculum

### Filling in with Important Prayers

This year before B'nai Mitzvah is an important one for review and checking in that the teaching of Tefillah has stuck with the students. There will also be new material, but making sure tefillot "haven't fallen between the cracks" is an important part of sixth grade.

Review: *Mah Tov*, *Modeh Ani*, *Birchot HaShachar*, *Barchu*, *Shema* and *V'Ahavta* and Torah Service.

The new material:

**Shema Yisrael, Echad Eloheinu, Gadlu**, (once the Torah has been taken out of the aron) **p.155** Statements, more than prayers about God's uniqueness and our loyalty to God.

#### Intermediate brachot of the Shabbat Amidah - pp. 120-124

- The holiness of time - Shabbat is a commandment, a positive mitzvah
- (V'Shamru), we don't ask for things on Shabbat so we thank God of the gift of time and rest (M'kadesh HaShabbat).
- Gratitude - V'Techezenah, Modim, V'chol haChayim pp. 122-124. Miracles, that plants grow and give oxygen, that our hearts pump blood to all parts of our bodies happen all around us, that we have capacity to love and be loved. We pause to show gratitude.

**Ashrei - p. 168** - This psalm is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot, p. 4b (if you want to show your students. You can use [www.Sefaria.org](http://www.Sefaria.org) to show them online. The rabbis of the Talmud said there that whoever says this psalm 3 times a day will have a share in the world to come. It appears in Psukei D'Zimra, the end of Shacharit and the beginning of Mincha - that's how we get our 3 times in.

**Hatzi Kaddish - p.162** - This brief (literally half) kaddish, is an Aramaic prayer praising God's greatness. Hatzi Kaddish is used as a transition between parts of the service.

**Kaddish Shalem - p. 174** - Kaddish, written and recited in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud, is a way of praising God. We try looking at the bigger picture and recognizing God's holiness and greatness.

**Aleinu - p. 176.** The prayer transitions from one being about God being our God and choosing us to be God's treasured people, and concludes with universality, that one day all will recognize God's dominion over all the world. It is a very old prayer, dating back to the High Holiday service in the period of the Second Temple.



## Seventh Grade Tefillah Curriculum

### Celebrating Endings

We are focusing on the End of the Amidah and the end of Shabbat and Holidays with our study of these brachot.

**Sim Shalom – Birkat Shalom** in Shacharit (p.127) and **Shalom Rav** in Ma'ariv (p.55) - Our prayers for peace. It is important to emphasize that the word *shalom* is more than just a greeting or a word that means the absence of violence or hostility. *Shalom* comes from the root word *שָׁלוֹם* - *שָׁלוֹם* meaning wholeness or completeness. When are we at peace? When we have everything we need, when the things we need to live are provided, when we are whole, complete. The greeting came from the *question Shalom Lecha?* Do you have everything you need? Are you complete? That's why peace is so important - in Hebrew, it means all of our needs have been met.

**Havdallah Blessings** - Once we define what holy time is, we have to find a way of marking its end, just like we use candle-lighting and kiddush to begin it. Havdallah is a mirror image to the ritual of the beginning of Shabbat on Friday evening. We use a candle and wine, the spices replace the smells of the food cooking for our Shabbat feast; all of our senses are engaged: We taste the wine, see the light and feel the warmth from the candle, hear the blessings and smell the spices. The brachot help us to mark the separation between the holy and the ordinary (Hebrew word *-chol - חול*). This is not in Siddur Shema Yisrael.