



Student Prayer Guide For Alef Tefillot



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FOR STUDENTS

Prayer can be viewed as a way to get connected to God. We pray to be drawn closer to God so we can improve our daily behavior.

Jews offer prayers together. We pray as a congregation. We come together as a minyan, or group of ten people, when we want to say certain prayers. Building our Jewish community is one important result of prayer.

Prayers should be said with care. We do not mumble or rush our words. We want to show love and respect to God, our Creator and "King of the Universe."

Now that you know why we pray, you can focus on how.



ADON OLAM

This prayer of praise is actually a poem used for worship. It was written by a man named Solomon ibn Gabirol, a Jewish philosopher who lived 1000 years ago. Adon Olam has been in the Siddur for at least 600 years.

The title, Adon Olam, means “Master of the Universe.” It is one of the best-known songs in Judaism, and could be the most popular, because it is the last song in Shabbat services.

Adon Olam is sung often. It is part of the morning blessings said at the beginning of each day, and it is said at the end of the musaf service on Shabbat and holiday mornings. Adon Olam is also one of the prayers we say before going to bed at night. One theory about Adon Olam is that it was first written as a poem to be read before going to sleep because the last line is, “I place my spirit in God’s care, when I wake as when I sleep.” The prayer is also said at the close of Kol Nidre services on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Adon Olam expresses our complicated relationship with God. God is both very far away from us and very close to us at the same time. Even though the entire congregation says Adon Olam together, the message is that God is there with each of us in our day to day lives.

Adon Olam ends with the idea that God is protecting us. "We will have nothing to fear." This allows us to leave the synagogue with a feeling of comfort and strength; our relationship with God has been reinforced.

There are a lot of different melodies for Adon Olam, and in some communities it is common to sing the prayer to a timely secular melody (Yankee Doodle on Fourth of July weekend, or Taxman on the week before Tax Day). In many communities, children are invited up to the bimah to help lead Adon Olam.

אדון
עולם

ADON OLAM

אָדוֹן עוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר מְלֶךְ, בְּטָרִם כָּל יְצוֹר נִבְרָא,
לַעֲת נַעֲשֶׂה, בְּחֶפְצוֹ פֶּלֶא, אֲזִי מְלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא.
וְאַחֲרֵי כָּלֹת הַפֶּלֶא, לְבַדּוֹ יְמֶלֶךְ נוֹרָא.
וְהוּא הָיָה, וְהוּא הֵנָּה, וְהוּא יְהִיָּה בְּתַפְאָרָה.
וְהוּא אֶחָד, וְאֵין שֵׁנִי, לְהַמְשִׁיל לּוֹ, לְהַחְבִּירָה.
בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית, בְּלִי תַכְלִית, וְלוֹ הָעוֹז וְהַמְשָׁרָה.
וְהוּא אֱלֹהֵי, וְחַי גּוֹאֲלֵי, וְצוֹר חֻבְלֵי בְּעֵת צָרָה.
וְהוּא נְסִי, וּמְנוּס לִי, מִנֶּת כּוֹסֵי בְיוֹם אֶקְרָא.
בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי, בְּעֵת אִישָׁן וְאַעִירָה.
וְעַם רוּחִי גְּוִיָּתִי, יְיָ לִי וְלֹא אֵיָרָא.



THE SHEMA

One of the most ancient prayers recited by Jews is called the K'riyat Shema, or the recitation of the Shema, meaning "Hear!" In the Torah, Moses declares, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." The belief in just one God is central to Judaism.

The Shema is considered by some the most important prayer in all of Judaism. It is so important that we are commanded to say it twice each day, in the morning and at night. The Shema is usually the first prayer children learn. It is a statement of the Oneness of God and the unity of all people.

The words of the Shema are:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

"Hear" is used to make sure that the people of Israel (all Jews) are able to LISTEN to God. We are challenged to hear God, as we believe God is able to hear our prayers.

The V'ahavtah that follows the Shema lists the ways we should show our faith in God: Love God with all of your being, teach it to your children, recite it when you wake and lie down, bind it as a symbol on your body and inscribe it on your house.

The first part tells us to "Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might." We are commanded to "teach" these words to our children to make sure Judaism continues in the future. The whole Jewish community is responsible for teaching children the Shema, not just parents for their own children.

When the prayer says to "bind them as a sign upon your hand" and "as a reminder above your eyes." This is why we wrap Tefillin around our hands and arms and place the small box on our foreheads. The box contains a kosher piece of parchment on which the Shema is written.

We put a mezzuzah on the doors of our homes to fulfill the commandment, "Inscribe them upon the door posts of your homes and upon your gates."

With very few words, the Shema conveys a powerful message. It expresses our beliefs and daily observances as Jews. So much expressed by so little.

THE SHEMA

The Shema (and V'ahavtah) is the central prayer of the worship service and is recited during the morning and evening services on Shabbat, during festivals and during the week. Many people close or cover their eyes when saying the opening line of the Shema to focus their attention on the prayer.

It is also customary to say the Shema every night before going to sleep.



שִׁמְעֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד.

If you look carefully, you'll see that the ayin (the last letter of the Hebrew word shema) and the daled (the last letter of the Hebrew word echad) are larger than the other letters. Together, they form the word "ayd," which means "witness." This is done to remind us of our duty to be witnesses to God's power by leading honorable lives.

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ.

וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ. וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם, עַל לְבָבְךָ.

עַל לְבָבְךָ. וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבִנְיָהּ, וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ.

וּבְלִכְתּוֹתְךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ. וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ.

וְהָיוּ לְטָטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ. וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ.

EIN KEILOHEINU

This is one of the most popular songs/prayers sung at worship services. It was composed about 1200 years ago and has been included in Jewish prayer ever since. It is usually sung toward the close of the Shabbat morning service.

Ein Keiloheinu repeats and confirms again and again our belief in one God.

It combines different kinds of prayers:

- 1) Prayers of Belief - "You are our God."
- 2) Prayers of Adoration - "Who is like our God?"
- 3) Prayers of Gratitude - "We will give thanks to our God."

אֵין כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין כֵּאֲדוֹנֵינוּ,
אֵין כְּמִלְכֵנוּ, אֵין כְּמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

מִי כֵּאלֹהֵינוּ, מִי כֵּאֲדוֹנֵינוּ,
מִי כְּמִלְכֵנוּ, מִי כְּמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ?

נוֹדֶה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ, נוֹדֶה לֵאֲדוֹנֵינוּ,
נוֹדֶה לְמִלְכֵנוּ, נוֹדֶה לְמוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

בְּרוּךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּרוּךְ אֲדוֹנֵינוּ,
בְּרוּךְ מִלְכֵנוּ, בְּרוּךְ מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

אֲתָה הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
אֲתָה הוּא אֲדוֹנֵי
אֲתָה הוּא מִלְכֵנוּ,
אֲתָה הוּא מוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.



ALEINU

Aleinu is a relatively short prayer that is said at the end of every Shabbat and festival service. The highpoint of Aleinu is the line, "We bend the knee and bow, acknowledging the King of Kings, the Holy One, praised be God," at which the whole congregation bows in the direction of the ark.

Aleinu is made up of two paragraphs. The first paragraph is about the Jewish obligation to praise God ("It is our duty to praise the Master of all..."). The second paragraph calls for the recognition of God by all people ("and all humanity will call upon your name"). Aleinu ends with the hope that all people will become one, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord with one name."

Aleinu is about the important difference between Israel's notion of God, and that of the other nations. It is believed Aleinu was written at the time of the Maccabees as they fought against the idol-worshipping Syrians

The worship of statues made from wood or stone ended a long time ago, but we still need to watch out for idol worship in the modern world. Idols of our time include the worship of power, money, and fame.

As in most prayers, Aleinu comes from a part of the Torah:

"Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God
In heaven above and on earth below-. There is no other." (Deuteronomy 4:39)

The text of Aleinu is based on the story of creation, with God as creator.

When we say Aleinu, we thank God for allowing Jews to recognize God's Supreme Power. It also implies that Jews have added responsibilities because of our special relationship with God.

Aleinu has been the closing prayer of worship services for over 700 years. It is a prayer of hope and vision of the future of mankind.

ALEINU

Aleinu is a relatively short prayer that marks the end of all three daily prayer services.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשִׁבְחָ לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל, לְתֵת גְּדֻלָּה
לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית, שְׁלֵא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי
הָאֲרָצוֹת, וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת
הָאֲדָמָה, שְׁלֵא שָׁם חִלְקָנוּ כָּהֵם, וְגָרְלָנוּ
כְּכֹל הַמוֹנִים,

וְאֲנַחְנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמְשִׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים,
לְפָנֶי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא.

וְנֹאמֵר, וְהָיָה יי לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ,
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יי אֶחָד, וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד.



BLESSING OVER THE TALLIT

There is a biblical source for wearing a tallit. It is found in Numbers 15:37-41:

"The Lord said to Moses: Instruct the people Israel that in every generation that they shall put fringes on the corners of their garments and bind a thread of blue to the fringe of each corner. Looking upon it you will be reminded of all the mitzvot of the Lord and fulfill them and not be seduced by your heart or led astray by your eyes. Then you will remember and observe all my mitzvot and be holy before your God. I, the Lord, am your God."

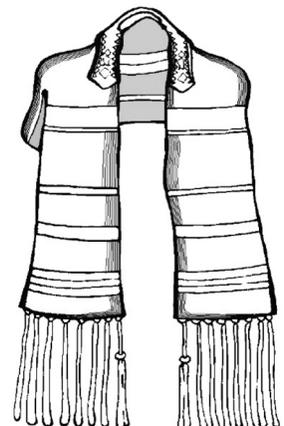
The tallit is the holiest garment worn by Jews. 'Tallit' means prayer shawl. It is made of silk, wool, cotton or synthetic fibers and is usually all white, white and blue, or white and black. The flag of Israel took its white and blue colors from the tallit. In each of the four corners are strings tied in a particular pattern, called tzitzit.

The tzitzit on the four corners serve as a reminder of the duties and obligations of a Jew. The numerical value of the letters of the Hebrew word "tzitzit" (fringes) equals 600. If we add that number to the five knots and eight threads of each fringe, it is equal to 613, which is the total number of commandments in the Torah. Therefore, as we wrap ourselves in the Tallit, we dedicate ourselves to serving God and obeying God's commandments.

Traditionally, men wear a tallit during morning services. In Conservative synagogues like Woodbury Jewish Center, many women also choose to wear a tallit. The tallit has four long fringes, one on each corner. It is customary to kiss the long fringes when we recite the Shema V'ahavtah. When congregants are called to the Torah, they place a corner of the tallit on the word where the Torah portion begins, and then kiss the corner of the tallit.

When putting on the Tallit, say the following prayer:

פְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִצְוֹת צִיצִית.



V'ZOT - Prayer When the Torah is Raised

The Torah is raised into the air after reading has been completed. Because not everyone can see the Torah while it is read, it is unrolled to reveal a few sections and held up for the entire congregation to see. This shows respect for the Torah, and shows how important its teachings are for us. The blessing states, "This is the Torah that Moses set before the people Israel: The Torah, given by God, through Moses."

This phrase emphasizes both the divine origin of the Torah and the role of Moses in transmitting it to Israel.

וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לְפָנַי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. עַל פִּי יְיָ בְיַד מֹשֶׁה.



YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS.....

In the Talmud, there is a prayer for when you are starting a journey. We hope that the beginning of your journey of prayer continues and brings you fulfillment and understanding.

May it be Your will, oh Lord my God,
to lead me in peace,
to guide my steps in peace,
to uphold me in peace,
to save me from any enemy or entrapment along the way,
to bless the works of my hands,
and permit me to find grace, favor, and mercy in Your eyes
and in the eyes of all who behold me,
Blessed are You, oh Lord, who hears prayer. Amen.