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Users' Guides for *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*

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Whether you are using *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* in the classroom, in your youth group, at camp, to lead services, as part of a bar/bat mitzvah program, as part of a confirmation curriculum, or on your own, it is important to take a look at the introduction in the siddur itself. What follows are users guides for different ways of working with *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*.

Note that the page numbers in *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* correspond to the page numbers in the complete edition of the original *Mishkan T'filah*. However, because the Journal Edition does not contain some of the material from the complete edition, the page numbers skip in several places.

Guide One: Using *Mishkan T'filah*, the Journal Edition for Self-Exploration

Most prayers in the original edition of *Mishkan T'filah* are presented on a two-page spread. The right-hand page has the prayer in Hebrew, transliteration, and a modern translation into English.

In the original version, the left-hand page voices the prayer through the words of others – modern poets (some Jewish, some not), liturgists, theologians, and others. In *Mishkan T'filah the Journal Edition*, the left hand side is left blank, for your voice. Read the prayer – respond to its words, its rhythms, or its themes. Focus on part of the prayer or react to all of it. Use the last line (or *chatimah*) as a starting point or, like in the original edition of *Mishkan T'filah*, an ending point. Write a poem; draw a picture. Share your own feelings or experiences... or try writing a prayer.

Some pages may have questions to help bring you in, or challenge you to see the prayer differently. These questions are one of four different types (explained below). Answer the questions or respond to them with more questions. Pick a different type of question for each prayer, or take a journey through one type of question all the way through the prayerbook. The questions were constructed in four categories:

(I) signifies an Imagery question. These are designed to help you imagine your way into the prayer. They can also be used for guided imagery exercises.

(E) indicates an Experiential question. These are designed to make a link between personal memory and the theme of the prayer.

(T) is a Trigger Text – usually a text external to the prayer, to compare and contrast with it.

(P) means Paradigm Shift. These questions are meant to turn the prayer around and give an alternate way to consider yourself and the prayer.

Ideas of what do to do with the blank pages:

- write creative versions of the prayer
- write memories that make you think of the themes of the prayer
- write a memory of when you have said the prayer
- listen to the prayer and draw how it makes you feel
- write questions that they prayer makes you think of
- take an idea from one of the questions and create a poem
- use crayons/markers and create a piece of art that captures the ideas of the page
- take photographs that capture ideas in the prayer (such as early morning for the *Yotzer Or*) and affix the photo to the page
- Using “paper-ripping techniques” create a “hand-made midrash” about the key ideas in the prayer
- look through other prayerbooks . Choose a creative version of the prayer that you like and affix them to the page.

Guide Two: Ideas and Strategies for the Classroom

Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition has been written so that it can be used in a variety of formal and informal settings. In the formal setting of a classroom you have a unique opportunity to delve into the meaning of the prayers with the students and to help them create a truly meaningful journal that will accompany them to worship both in and outside of your congregation. With the support of other educational materials, *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* can be expanded to create a full curriculum on prayer, service structure, and personal *kavanah* for your class.

Journeys through Mishkan T'filah

Below you will find four different approaches to explore *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* with your class. Just as we journey each year through the Torah, *parashah by parashah*, imagine this as one trip of many that students will take through the *siddur*.

1. Structure of the Service

Like the original *Mishkan T'filah*, *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* includes a left-hand side bar with a list of all of the prayers in that section of the worship service with the current prayer highlighted. In this curriculum model you will go through these sections of the prayer service one by one (for example *Shema* and *Her Blessings*) and explore with your students the themes and flow of the section (in the case of Shema and Her Blessings, this would be Creation, Revelation, Redemption). Using the questions and blank pages, you can explore the individual prayers in each section and their connections to one another. Supplemental materials,

like those listed at the end of this Teacher's Guide, can help you explore history, meaning and structure of these prayers with the students..

2. Morning vs. Evening/Shabbat vs. Weekday

Our cantorial tradition preserves different musical modalities for different services at different times, called *nusach*. Within the *T'filah* structure, there is also a themed *nusach*, a tone that can be found in each different service. The pace and deliberation of the morning blessings introducing the *shacharit* service bring the worshipper from sleep to wakefulness. The replacement of the petitionary prayers in the weekday *amidah* with the *k'dushat hashem* in the Shabbat or holiday service teaches a lesson about how even God can rest. Comparing services, discovering what is missing and what is added can reinforce understanding of service structure and develop a sense of the rhythm and intentionality of prayer.

3. Themed Journeys Using Question Themes

On some of the left-side page, a question was chosen out of the four created for each prayer. With a skilled teacher, students can be brought through guided imagery using the questions labeled (I) to place themselves in prayer. Using the experiential (E) questions, each prayer can generate personal input for a general discussion on that prayer's theme. Text trigger (T) questions can lead to further text study, or give students a better appreciation of the texts of Jewish tradition (modern and classic) and how they interact with our prayers, our hopes and dreams, and our *siddur*. A journey through the Paradigm Shift (P) questions will give students the ability to read prayers in a new way and to understand that a subversive reading of the text can be faithful to its intent. Such tools can be applied to other texts as well.

4. Jumping Around

Create your own journey through the *siddur*. Some examples would be:

- to follow prayers on certain themes like love, or commandments
- take a historical trip
- investigate prayers that rely on Biblical text
- contrast universal and particular prayers
- have students pick their favorite prayers,
- examine those prayers that do not occur on the Saturday morning service and may be new and unfamiliar

Additional Ideas and Activities for Planning a Curriculum Using *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition.*

- These questions are often high level synthesis and analysis questions. It may be appropriate to begin with factual questions about the prayer, translations, basic meaning, etc., before going on to these higher-level thought (or discussion) questions.
- In some cases you may want to use these questions as “set-inductions” with students filling them out in the beginning of a lesson on the prayer; In other lessons it may be appropriate to use them as “evidence of understanding activities” with students filling them out at the end of a lesson to show what they have learned. Most of the prayers that have questions written for them also have blank pages available in other services in the book. Therefore, you can use one of the questions as a “set-induction” and then use a blank page for the conclusion activity (or vice-versa).
- If you are using an “imagery question” (I) consider expanding the question in to a full guided imagery activity. After the guided imagery, ask students to respond to the question.

How to Use the Blank Pages:

- write creative versions of the prayer
- take an idea from one of the questions and create a poem
- use crayons/markers and have students create a piece of art that captures the ideas of the page
- have students pass around their book and have each student add “graffiti” about the ideas in the prayer
- have students take photographs that capture ideas in the prayer (such as early morning for the *Yotzer Or*) and affix the photo to the page.
- Using “paper-ripping techniques” have students create a “hand-made midrash” about the key ideas in the prayer
- Ask students to look through a variety of prayerbooks. Ask them choose a creative version of the prayer that they like and affix this to the page.

Guide Three: Using *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* for Writing and Leading a Service

Introduction

Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition has been written so that it can be used in conjunction with other versions of the original versions of *Mishkan T'filah* (the one and two-volume standard congregational versions) to lead communal worship. Page numbers match the numbers in the complete original version, and the blue bracketed numbers in the two volume set. The right-hand side of the page is identical to the page in other versions. Our hope is that this opens up the possibility for those who use the *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* to bring their worship insights back to their congregation/community/k'hilah.

When creating a service utilizing the *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*, you can:

- (1) have the service leaders write in their own journal prior to the service and share their writings during the service (or use materials they have written in their journal from previous worship experiences, classes...)
- (2) led by service leaders, have service participants actually write/journal in their *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* during the service itself
- (3) a combination of the above ideas

Leading a service with *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*: Service Leaders sharing their writings during the service

Service leaders can share their own writings during the service with participants, helping to create meaning and spark ideas (similar to the “old school” creative service, though using the guiding questions and not a theme as the primary tool). Below are some ideas on working with your service leaders to prepare them.

Sharing - Users/ Journalers can look through their personal writings on the left-hand pages and choose which to bring to worship – either before or after a prayer is read or chanted - as an *iyyun t'filah* or in place of the prayer.

Directive Writing - Participants can also be assigned different prayers and asked to fill in the left-hand page for a particular prayer or prayers. They can be guided with assigned questions – either those in book, on the website, or created by the prayer coordinator. The group can also chose a theme (i.e. peace) and write left-hand reflections based on the prayer and the theme. This can be done weeks before the service or in time allotted to prepare before the service begins.

Finding - a database of journal entries will be available on www.myMTJ.org and service leaders will be able to choose from the writings of other journalers who have helped to build our Reform *siddur*.

Leading a Service with *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*: Writing in the *Journal* during the service

This idea is more interactive and, perhaps, necessitates a more informal prayer experience.

Participants will have to be provided with writing utensils and be comfortable with writing during a worship service. The prayerbook can still be used by non-writers, but their writings will not be part of an on-going journal.

Assignments below can be given to all participants for all prayers, specific groups for specific prayers (as divided before or during the service – i.e. divide by name, birthday, class, counting off; or self-select), or a select group of prayer leaders.

Below are four possible approaches to writing in the journal during the service. Ideally, you will use all three of these techniques, choosing which works best for the flow of the service (sitting, standing, writing) and meets your goals for the individual prayer.

1. “Preflective”– The prayer leader asks the participants to journal before a prayer is read, chanted, or sung. Participants can be asked to respond to a particular question – either in the book or created by the leader, think along a particular theme, or be given freedom to journal what they wish. This reflection can be private or, depending on the size of the group, some or all can share what they have created, either before or after the prayer. Preparing for the prayer will give added meaning to the action of praying. The melody of the prayer could be played on guitar or piano while the participants are writing.

2. Alternative – The process is same as above, although the prayer is not read after. Instead, participants find their prayer moment in consideration of the prayer and its meaning. If this mode is chosen as primary for the service, it is recommended that consideration be given to reading some prayers as written to provide some moments of comfortable structure and familiarity to the worshippers. The melody of the prayer could be played on guitar or piano while the participants are writing to give them a feeling of praying while writing.
3. Reflective – After a prayer is chanted, read or sung (or even while a leader does so), participants are asked to reflect back on how they experienced the prayer – either through a directed question, or just based on their personal encounter with the liturgy. Responses can be shared during the service or after. One possibility is that building reflection will change the way that participants encounter the prayers and will expect to derive more as they need to journal after.
4. Synthesis – Although it may be more confusing and, perhaps, disturb the flow of the service, all or some of the three modes above can be utilized for different prayers. A caution – consider in advance which prayers are best suited for which modality and keep in mind that the idea is to have a meaningful worship experience.

No matter what the worship method/modality chosen, the following recommendations will be helpful:

- Choose a coordinator/s to hand out the assignments, create and track a plan for the whole service (including who is speaking when and leading what prayers), and to guide the service during worship. If possible, bring in a music specialist early in planning.
- Rehearse the service. This is a wonderful chance to choose which prayers will be sung or chanted, and what melodies will be used, as well as to work out the bugs.
- Spend time creating the proper environment for a successful worship service. In addition to considering the flow of the service, creating a mood, working to make sure the experience is more worship than pop quiz, make sure of logistics.
- Provide writing utensils (and hand them out early).
- Make sure that participants will be able to spread out and write (Consider sitting on chairs vs. the floor). Decide whether you want to have music (perhaps a melody for the prayer) playing while participants reflect. If so, map this out with your Cantor/songleader/music leader, with the amount of time they will be expected to play, before the service.
- Engage the participants in the concept of what you are building together. Give a good introduction and explain the expectations beforehand. If participants will be sharing aloud, explain the idea of “safe space”. The good news is that journaling and self-reflection are a part of the modern sensibility – you may be surprised at how participants are willing and able to focus on a (quiet) individual reflection in a communal experience.
- Make this experience part of a long-term engagement in the prayerbook. Find ways to return to previous journaling in the future. Let participants know that this one worship experience, preserved in their *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*, is theirs to keep and return to.

- Model engagement in the prayerbook. If possible, avoid “supervising” the service – walking around to make sure that everyone is writing. As much as you can, engage in the process yourself.

Guide Four: Utilizing Technology to Facilitate Worship

Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition can work together with a Visual T'filah service (a projected visual service to create a powerful worship experience).

- Pictures, poems, or text that participants in their journals prior to the service (in classes, individually, or during earlier prayer services) can be scanned and projected during the prayer
- Participants can Twitter instead of write in their journals (using cell phones). A Twitter feed could be set up to project during the service showing the reflections and thoughts of the participants.

Guide Five: Using *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* for Informal Education, including Israel trips, camp, Confirmation Trips, Mitzvah Corps, and youth group experiences

Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition can be used in a variety of formal and informal settings.

One of the most exciting ways that we imagine using the journal is to create an on-going dialogue between the journaler and their *siddur*. Confirmation or Israel trips, camp or residential programs, or even on-going youth group experiences or informal classes are ideal for this purpose. The biggest worry is that journalers may fill their pages and have to find other places to write and record. Here are some examples of how *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* can be used to provide self-reflection on an ongoing program and create a deeper attachment to the *siddur*. Look over the other guides to get some general ideas, and then be creative.

Israel Trip

Either each morning for *shacharit*, or even an abbreviated morning worship moment, take participants to a place with a view and, before singing *mah tovu*, invite each participant to journal as if they were Bilaam – looking out over the tents of Jacob. Have them write two sentences about where they are, what they see, and how it looks to them. Share these comments with the group, or, periodically, ask journalers to look back over their previous notes – as a reminder of where they have been and how they have changed in how they see.

Camp:

In daily worship (or as a substitute for a particular service), pick a different prayer to study. Teach about the development of the prayer, its background and meaning. After the discussion,

have journalers write their own thoughts on the left-hand page by the prayer. At the end of camp, have journalers lead a service using the thoughts that they have compiled over the course of the session. If helpful, this “camp journey” can follow a one of the question rubrics as described in the introduction.

Confirmation Trip:

Before the trip, go over the structure of the basic worship service and review the meanings of the prayers. Perhaps, prepare a chart with each prayer, its page number, and a short description of its meaning. Encourage journalers to find a moment on the trip when they are ready to “confirm” or take adult responsibility for their own understanding of each of those meanings. When they do, have them write a description of their understanding of what the prayer means to them. Consider going back to those entries to help prepare the Confirmation service.

Mitzvah Corps:

Each evening (or one or two/week), after the participants have worked on their job sites, have them pore through the prayerbook to find a prayer that connects to what they have done. Have them journal an experience that is brought to mind by that prayer. Toward the end of the program, have the participants share their writings and compile a Mitzvah Corps service. Use this service for a *siyyum* (closing ceremony) and also to bring to other venues (their synagogues, regional events, Biennial) to share what they experienced together. (Remember that page numbers in *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* correspond to the congregational MT, so they can bring their own copies of *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* to lead services in a

congregation. *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* does not correspond to *Mishkan T'filah for Gatherings*, so page numbers will have to be researched.

Guide Six: Using *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*, as part of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process

Give a copy of *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition* either at Bar/Bat Mitzvah or to classes beginning their B/BM training. Create a workshop to explain the book and how it works. Stress that this prayerbook is both something to pray out of and a place to journal their own religious/spiritual growth. Encourage students to bring it with them when they attend services and make notes – perhaps after services to be less disturbing to other congregants. Contact them periodically – to remind them to write in their *Mishkan T'filah, the Journal Edition*, with specific questions to journal on, with references to articles or events (or even popular songs or movies). Find ways to use their writings in their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, youth group, Confirmation services, during college breaks, or in general congregational services - publish shared prayers on the Temple website or bulletin.