

# How to Use This Siddur

*Mishkan T'filah for Children* is designed to not only introduce young children to the structure and order of the prayer service, but also to help them develop their own kavanah—intentionality—when praying. Using poems, readings, and images, *Mishkan T'filah for Children* strives to create a holy space for children and their families to experience the wonder of God and the power of communal worship together.

Our rabbis knew that each of us experiences God differently, and so they embedded in our worship service different views and images of the Divine. In *Mishkan T'filah for Children* we have tried to keep this varied view of God in the creative translations, prayers and writings. By using capital letters as hints that we are calling God by name, *Mishkan T'filah* draws on the both traditional and modern images, calling God “Artist,” “Ruler,” “Love,” and “Holy Spark.” In this way, we hope to remind our students that there are many ways to view God in the Jewish tradition, and that the prayerbook gives us an opportunity to “try out” these different images and explore what is meaningful to us.

## Chatimot

One of the unique features of *Mishkan T'filah* is the use of *chatimot*, the signature lines of a prayer. In *Mishkan T'filah*, the *chatimah* is used at the bottom of the prayer on the right facing page, and again under the alternative interpretation or poem used on the facing left page. In this way, whether you use the material on the right or the left, you are able to conclude with the same signature phrase. *Mishkan T'filah for Children* follows this same paradigm, repeating the *chatimah* on both the right and left facing pages, even when the version of the prayer on the left page is visual and not textual.

In addition, both under the pictures and at the end of prayers, we have chosen to maintain the Hebrew phrase “*Baruch atah, Adonai*” in the translation, thus exposing early readers to the repeating prayer formula and bringing them in to the words of our tradition.

## Art

Art, as we know, is a powerful tool. As the adage states, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” This is indeed the case for young children. I

see the images in this prayerbook as visual prayers. When leading the service, consider asking your community how the picture makes them feel, or simply have them sit for a moment and consider the artistic interpretation of the prayer. Then, join in the chatimah together at the bottom of the picture, showing young students that pondering a piece of art can indeed be a prayer of the heart.

## Organization and Graphics

Even young children can understand that a prayerbook has an order with sections and specific prayers. Using graphic elements such as color and images to organize this siddur, young children can learn these different sections and build a strong foundation for a lifetime of worship participation. With the help of these graphics, we have included both morning and evening services for Shabbat and weekdays in *Mishkan T'filah for Children*. For an evening service, simply follow the moon icon ☾, and for a morning service, simply follow the sun icon ☀.

## Which Services Are Included In This Siddur

The first service in this siddur is a Shabbat service. It includes both evening and morning services. The moon and sun icons indicate whether that page is for evening or morning.

The second service in this siddur is a weekday service. It too includes both evening and morning services. Again, the moon and sun icons indicate whether that page is for evening or morning.

The siddur contains one Torah reading section, and one section of concluding prayers.

## When to Use This Siddur

*Mishkan T'filah for Children* is designed for family services and school worship services. The first service is meant to be used primarily for family services, and the second service is meant to be used primarily in a school setting, but there is no reason you can't use it as you see fit. In addition, it is also meant to be used as a companion for young readers in "regular" services. Consider having *Mishkan T'filah for Children* out for young children at your regular Shabbat evening or morning service. While parents are praying from *Mishkan T'filah*, children can follow along (by following the "sun" or "moon") with the pictures and words found in *Mishkan T'filah for Children*.

Each community is unique, and therefore we have left the last few pages of this siddur blank. We have done this so that your community can add their own songs and prayers, personalizing the siddur to your own needs and your own worship style. We have also chosen not to include songs within the body of the siddur itself, recognizing that musical choices vary greatly from synagogue to synagogue.

May *Mishkan T'filah for Children* help create a holy space for you and the children of your community, as you join together in worship, song and celebration together.