

Entering *Mishkan T'filah*

SESSION 2

THE PURPOSE(S) OF PRAYER: WHAT IS NEW? WHAT IS DIFFERENT?

Please refer to pages 232-237 & 244-247 of the *Mishkan T'filah*

Introduction

A goal of this session is to help congregants understand the changes to the *Sh'ma*, *Avot V'Imahot* and *G'vurot* prayers as they are presented in the Reform Movement's new prayer book as compared to the previous prayer book, *Gates of Prayer*. In many respects, these changes represent a shift in our Movement as we prepare for life as liberal North America Jews in the twenty-first century. The inclusion of more traditional texts and concepts are balanced with the enduring commitment to the efficacy of prayer and the respect for autonomy and individual choice.

In addition to examining the changes in the three prayers between *Mishkan T'filah* and *Gates of Prayer*, the session enables participants to consider their own thoughts and feelings about prayer itself: What does it mean to pray? How does prayer affect us? What do we hope for when we pray? The goal is to help congregants bring the affective (feeling, emotion) dimension of prayer into their consideration of *Mishkan T'filah*

The texts of the prayers to be studied have been included with this packet, but you may choose to use copies of the *Mishkan T'filah* and *Gates of Prayer* prayer books if available so that your congregants can refer to them directly. The prayer texts in this session are taken from the Shabbat Morning Service (I), since this service is more likely to be familiar to them than the Weekday Service.

While this session is the second in a three-part series, it can be used as a stand-alone unit and taught independently. Much background material has been prepared to support *Mishkan T'filah*, found at www.urj.org/mishkan. The Additional Resources section below lists supplementary material on such subjects as liturgy, prayer and the history of Reform Judaism in North America. Finally, the last page of this session-pack contains an Evaluation Form. Please copy it for all of your participants, ask them to complete the form before leaving the session, collect completed forms and send them to the Union address as indicated. Your feedback is important! It will help us plan future adult Jewish learning resources best suited to your congregation's needs.

Enduring Understanding

Mishkan T'filah, in its form and content, reflects the Reform Movement's evolving relationship with prayer, Hebrew language, ritual practice, Israel,

egalitarianism and Jewish theology. *Mishkan T'filah* provides multiple, meaningful entry points for individuals to experience public prayer within a unified Jewish worship community.

Essential Questions

1. What recently emergent cultural and religious factors have caused our community to want a new siddur?
2. How do we liturgically express the dynamic tensions of the Reform Jew as an individual and as a part of a sacred community?
3. How do multiple options for individual prayer experiences with *Mishkan T'filah* reflect the ongoing tension in contemporary Reform Judaism between *keva* (the fixed words of prayer) and *kavanah* (the personal intention and focus the individual brings to prayer)?
4. How can *Mishkan T'filah* enable the individual to find his or her own place within our liturgy?
5. How do we, as twenty-first century Reform Jews, identify and articulate our understanding of our relationship with the Divine?

Questions to Be Addressed

1. How are enduring liberal Jewish values expressed in *Mishkan T'filah*?
2. How do the *Mishkan T'filah* presentations of the *Sh'ma*, *Avot V'Imahot* and *G'vurot* prayers reflect current theology and practice within contemporary Reform Judaism?

Staff/Facilitator

This class should be led by a rabbi, cantor or educator of the congregation or by a knowledgeable lay leader.

Additional Resources

1. Harvey J. Fields. *B'chol L'vavcha: With All Your Heart*. Rev. Ed. New York: UAHC Press, 2001.
2. Kim Geringer. "Have You Noticed?: Changes in Hebrew and English Wording in *Mishkan T'filah*." www.urj.org/mishkan.
3. Lawrence A. Hoffman. *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*. 2nd Ed. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 1999.
4. _____. *The Way Into Jewish Prayer*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2000.
5. Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed. *My People's Prayer Book: Vol. 1 The Sh'ma and Its Blessings*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997.
6. _____. *My People's Prayer Book: Vol. 2 The Amidah*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.
7. Richard Levy. *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism*. New York: URJ Press, 2005.

8. Michael A. Meyer. *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.
9. Adapted from the iWorship Listserv, "Ordering the Matriarchs in the *Avot V'imahot*: The Leah and Rachel (or Rachel and Leah) Debate."
www.urj.org/mishkan.
10. Richard Sarason, "The Three Paragraphs of the *Sh'ma*."
www.urj.org/mishkan.
11. _____ "To Rise from the Dead?—*Mishkan T'filah* and a Reform Liturgical Conundrum.

Materials Needed

- Pencils/Pens, colored markers and paper
- A copy of *Mishkan T'filah* and *Gates of Prayer* for each participant, if possible or copies of Prayer Text Sheets for every participant
- A copy of the sheet titled "Prayer Invites God's Presence" for each congregant
- Copies of Prayer Question Sheets for every participant
- A flip chart or board to list participant responses
- An Evaluation Form for each participant

Session Overview

Beginning the Session (5-10 minutes)

Set Induction (15–20 minutes)

Sacred Prayer Book Journeys (40-50 minutes)

Conclusion—Personal Reflection (5-10 minutes)

Session Plan

Beginning the Session (5-10 minutes)

1. Welcome participants and invite them to introduce themselves, if appropriate.
2. If you have taught Session One of *Entering Mishkan T'filah*, spend a few minutes reviewing it before beginning this session.
3. Explain that the focus of this session will be to explore personal feelings about prayer and how *Mishkan T'filah* represents a shift in Reform Movement prayer, in response to the needs of twenty-first century North American Reform Jews. These shifts will be examined through the lens of changes in three prayers: the *Sh'ma*, *Avot V'Imahot* and *G'vurot*.

Set Induction—Reflections About Prayer (10–15 minutes)

This set induction enables congregants to access their own personal emotions and feelings about prayer.

1. Distribute a copy of the reading, "Prayer Invites God's Presence..." adapted from a passage by Abraham Joshua Heschel, to all participants.
2. Either read the text out loud or ask participants to read it silently. Invite participants to share their reactions and/or their interpretations of the text.
3. After a few moments of discussion, ask the participants to close their eyes and to consider whether they have ever had a moment in their lives when they experienced prayer in the deepest possible way, to the very essence of their being. If the group has difficulty with this, you may want to give an example from your own life. For example: "*A few years ago when my [brother, sister, mother, father] was sick, I prayed with all my heart that he [or she] would quickly recover.*"
4. If appropriate, ask participants if they have ever felt deeply moved by prayer in a synagogue; if so, what contributed to that feeling? If not in a synagogue, have they had a deeply meaningful prayer experience in another setting, such as outdoors, at home, at camp, in a hospital, etc.?
5. Explain that the rest of the session will be devoted to a close study of three prayers and the changes made to them in our new siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*. One of the primary reasons for these changes is to make the prayer experience more meaningful and relevant for today's Reform Jewish community.

Sacred Prayer Book Journeys (40-50 minutes)

This learning activity will enable participants to closely study the changes made in the *Sh'ma*, *Avot V'Imahot* and *G'vurot* prayers. You can present this material in the more traditional teaching method that follows, dividing the group into smaller *chevrutot*, or keeping the group together as a whole, if that is more appropriate for your situation. Another option would be to utilize the learning stations approach described below.

1. Divide the group so that participants can work comfortably in smaller *chevrutot*.
2. Distribute the *Sh'ma* Prayer Text Sheets from both *Gates of Prayer* and *Mishkan T'filah* or have them turn to page 303 in *Gates of Prayer* and pages 232-237 *Mishkan T'filah*. Also distribute the *Sh'ma* Work Sheet.
3. Ask participants to place the two versions of the *Sh'ma* side by side, to look at them and then to read through them both including the footnotes in *Mishkan T'filah*.
4. Ask participants to read through the work sheet and to discuss their answers with one another in their *chevruta* group.
5. When the groups are ready, go through the same process with the *Avot V'Imahot* (page 306 in *Gates of Prayer* and pages 244-245 in *Mishkan T'filah*) and then the *G'vurot* prayers (page 307 in *Gates of Prayer* and pages 246-247 in *Mishkan T'filah*).
6. Bring the groups back together as a whole and ask participants to share any reactions they may have had to what they just studied.

Alternative Approach: Learning Stations

Another way of doing this exercise would be to create "prayer stations," with the *Sh'ma*, *Avot V'Imahot* and *G'vurot* each occupying its own "station." This necessitates creating a large visual for each prayer and placing text and work sheets at each location. Explain to participants that they will go to one of three prayer stations located around the room, view the text sheet and answer the questions in the accompanying work sheet. After about ten minutes, the facilitator will indicate that participants will shift to another prayer station and complete a work sheet based on that focused prayer. After another ten minutes, the facilitator will indicate that participants will shift to the last prayer station and complete a work sheet based on that focused prayer. Bring everyone together for a brief discussion after participants have visited the three stations and completed the three work sheets.

Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

1. Discuss with the participants their answers to the following question:
 "What impact, if any, might some of the changes in Reform Jewish liturgy that you learned about today make in how you feel about prayer?"
 Thank participants for coming and announce the date and time of the next session, if you are planning on having one.

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 2)

"Prayer Invites God's Presence . . ."

Prayer invites
God's presence to suffuse our spirits.
God's will to prevail in our lives.
Prayer might not bring water to parched fields,
nor mend a broken bridge,
nor rebuild a ruined city.
But prayer can water an arid soul,
mend a broken heart,
rebuild a weakened will.¹

¹ *Gates of Prayer*, 152 and *Mishkan T'filah*, 165.

Sh'ma Prayer Sheet ***Gates of Prayer*²**

SHABBAT

שמע ישראל: יי אלהינו, יי אחד!

Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד!

Blessed is His glorious kingdom for ever and ever!

All are seated

ואהבת את יי אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאריך.
והיו הדברים האלה, אשר אנכי מצוך היום, על לבבך.
ושננתם לבניך, ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך, ובלקחתך
בדרךך, ובשכבך ובקומך.

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, with
all your strength, with all your being.*

*Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your
heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them
in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when
you rise up.*

וקשרתם לאות על ידך, והיו לטטפת בין עיניך, וכתבתם
על מזוזות ביתך, ובשעריך.

*Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol
before your eyes; inscribe them on the doorposts of your
house, and on your gates.*

למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצותי, והייתם קדשים
לאלהיכם. אני יי אלהיכם, אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ
מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים. אני יי אלהיכם.

*Be mindful of all My mitzvot, and do them: so shall you
consecrate yourselves to your God. I, the Lord, am your God
who led you out of Egypt to be your God; I, the Lord, am
your God.*

² *Gates of Prayer, 1975, CCAR, p.303*

Sh'ma Prayer Sheet • Mishkan T'filah³

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 232–233**

Click on Web site's Session Two PDF link to download *Mishkan T'filah* pages.

³ *Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 232–233

Sh'ma Prayer Sheet • Mishkan T'filah⁴

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 234–235**

Click on Web site's Session Two PDF link to download *Mishkan T'filah* pages.

⁴ *Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR pp. 234–235

Sh'ma Prayer Sheet • Mishkan T'filah⁵

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 236–237**

Click on Web site's Session Two PDF link to download *Mishkan T'filah* pages.

⁵ *Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 236–237

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 2)

SH'MA WORK SHEET

Instructions:

1. Identify any changes you see between the prayer as it appears in Gates Of Prayer and as it appears in *Mishkan T'filah*.
2. Read the background information prepared by Dr Richard Sarason, and adapted from "The Three Paragraphs of the Sh'ma" below.
3. In *chevruta*, discuss your answers to the questions that follow the background information.

What do we mean by "the Sh'ma" prayer?

The traditional *K'riat Sh'ma* (Recitation of *Sh'ma*) comprises three biblical paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 [*Sh'ma* verse itself followed immediately by the *V'ahavta*], Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41.

We have the first and third paragraphs in Mishkan T'filah, what does the second paragraph say?

Deuteronomy 11:13-21

If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin you this day, loving the Eternal your God and serving [God] with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil—and I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat your fill. Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For the Eternal's anger will flare up against you, shutting up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the Eternal is assigning to you.

Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead, and teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up; and inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates— to the end that you and your children may endure, in the land that the Eternal swore to your fathers to assign to them, as long as there is a heaven over the earth.

How does our tradition understand the three paragraphs?

The Rabbis (Mishnah *B'rachot* 2:2) characterize the content of the first paragraph as "Acceptance of the Discipline [Yoke] of God's Sovereignty," and the second as "Acceptance of the Discipline [Yoke] of the Commandments." The third paragraph is called both the "Paragraph about

the Fringes" and the "Exodus from Egypt" (with reference to the beginning and the end of its content; Babylonian Talmud *B'rachot* 12b).

When did Reform prayer books stop including the 2nd and 3^d paragraphs and why?

The earliest Reform congregational prayer book (Hamburg, 1819) includes all three paragraphs of the *Sh'ma*. The first radical Reform prayer book (Berlin, 1848), however, omits all but the first paragraph, which only appears (after the *Sh'ma* verse) in German...

The deletion of the second and third paragraphs of the *Sh'ma* in the more radical Reform prayer books was justified in terms of both length and theology. In order to shorten the worship service (on the theory that less is more), repetitions were omitted. Thus, the second paragraph, which contains much of the same language as the first, was deemed redundant. But there were also theological problems with the second paragraph: It affirms that God rewards the observance of the mitzvot through rainfall in its proper season, and punishes violations through drought. To the modern scientific mind, this seemed rather primitive and gross, both as an account of the weather and as an understanding of divine providence.

In more radical Reform circles, the third paragraph, (or minimally, its first part, dealing with the mitzvah of tzitzit), was deemed expendable because the tallit, as distinctively Jewish, non-western prayer garb, was also deemed expendable. Also, the passage describes the function of the tzitzit as reminders to perform God's mitzvot---but many of these, too (particularly the ritual ones), were deemed archaic and dispensable in the modern world.

Why did the editors of Mishkan T'filah include the 3^d paragraph as an option?

...The third paragraph has been restored as an option, since many Reform Jews have embraced the tallit as distinctively Jewish prayer garb; viewing the tzitzit while praying can usefully remind us of our religious obligations.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think these three biblical texts were originally woven together?
2. What do you think of the third paragraph being an optional addition in *Mishkan T'filah*? Do you think that they should have done the same with the second paragraph?
3. Is the first paragraph of the *Sh'ma* meaningful to you? Why?

Avot V'Imahot Prayer Sheet Gates of Prayer⁶

SHABBAT

All rise

תפלה

אֲדֹנָי, שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח, וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

Eternal God, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your glory.

GOD OF ALL GENERATIONS

אבות

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל, הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן.

We praise You, Lord our God and God of all generations: God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob; great, mighty, and awesome God, God supreme.

גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמְבִיא גְאֻלָּה לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם, לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ, בְּאַהֲבָה.*

Master of all the living, Your ways are ways of love. You remember the faithfulness of our ancestors, and in love bring redemption to their children's children for the sake of Your name.*

מֶלֶךְ עֶזְרָה וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמִגֹּן. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מִגֹּן אַבְרָהָם.

You are our King and our Help, our Savior and our Shield. Blessed is the Lord, the Shield of Abraham.

** On Shabbat Shuvah Insert:*

זְכְּרֵנוּ לְחַיִּים, מֶלֶךְ הַחַיִּים בְּחַיִּים.

וְקַתְּבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַן אֱלֹהֵים חַיִּים.

Remember us unto life, for You are the King who delights in life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, that Your will may prevail, O God of life.

⁶ *Gates of Prayer*, 1975, CCAR, p. 306

Avot V'Imahot Prayer Sheet • Mishkan T'filah⁷

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 244–245**

Click on Web site's Session Two PDF link to download *Mishkan T'filah* pages.

⁷ *Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR pp. 244–245

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 2)

AVOT V'IMAHOT WORK SHEET

Instructions:

1. Identify any changes you see between the prayer as it appears in Gates Of Prayer and as it appears in *Mishkan T'filah*.
2. Read the background information prepared by Dr. Richard Sarason, and adapted from "Ordering the Matriarchs," below.
3. In *chevruta*, discuss your answers to the questions on the bottom of the next page.

When were the imahot—the mothers added to the prayer?

"In 1985, the Reform Movement agreed that all new liturgies would be gender sensitive and crafted in contemporary language, in order to both incorporate the masculine and feminine aspects of God, as well as to make the liturgy reflective of women's presence as well as that of men's." ("Gates of Repentance: A Guide to Introducing the Gender-Sensitive Version," CCAR. Compiled by Rabbis Zari Weiss, Donna Berman and Pam Wax)

The first Reform Movement prayer books to include the *imahot* were the 1993 *Gates of Prayer for Assemblies* (used mostly by the URJ) and the 1994 *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat and Weekdays*. Prior to these publications many congregations across the Movement had already been including the *imahot* in their congregational worship. As this practice became more and more common congregations even began pasting the changed Hebrew text into their siddurim. So there was no question that *Mishkan T'filah* would include this rewording of the traditional *Avot* prayer. The only question was the order in which the matriarchs, Rachel and Leah, would appear.

Should it be "Rachel v'Leah" or "Leah v'Rachel?"

1. In Talmud and Midrash the order is more commonly found as Rachel and Leah. There is never an explanation why, though the speculations many have offered are reasonable. A coincidence occurs as a result of changing the order of Rachel and Leah. After Leah, the next word in the prayer is *Ha-El* (The God) which, of course, is Leah spelled backwards. It makes for good midrash and certainly downplays any sense that Leah was less significant than Rachel.⁸

⁸ Elyse Frishman, Ordering the Matriarchs in the *Avot V'Imahot*: The Leah and Rachel (or Rachel and Leah) Debate. www.urj.org/mishkan/

2. In the classical and medieval Talmudic and Rabbinic literature, both orders are included: Rachel v'Leah, Leah v'Rachel—the former in 72 instances and the latter in 25. Nobody much worried about the order in the 1994 version of *Gates of Prayer for Shabbat and Weekdays* until the Conservative Movement published their new siddur, *Sim Shalom*, using a different order. The order Rachel v'Leah derives more from the Talmudic literature than it does from the only *Mi Shebeirach* formula in the traditional siddur that uses the matriarchs' names at all—this is when a husband or son donates money to the synagogue in honor of his wife or mother—otherwise the matriarchs' names never appear. The formula there is *Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel v'Leah*. This was clearly the precedent drawn on by the Conservative Movement and the one *Mishkan T'filah* has chosen to follow. (Dr. Richard Sarason, "Ordering the Matriarchs in the *Avot v'Imahot*." (www.urj.org/mishkan))

Discussion Questions

1. How did you respond to the inclusion of the matriarchs when you were first introduced to it?
2. Do the children in your congregation know this prayer with or without the *imahot*?
3. Why do you think there was controversy over the ordering of the names of Leah and Rachel?

G'vurot Prayer Sheet **Gates of Prayer⁹**

SHABBAT

GOD'S POWER

גבורות

אתה גבור לעולם, אדני, מחיה הכל אתה, רב להושיע.

Eternal is Your might, O Lord; all life is Your gift; great is Your power to save!

מכלכל חיים בחסד, מחיה הכל ברחמים רבים. סומך
נופלים, ורופא חולים, ומתיר אסורים, ומקים אמונתו
לישני עפר.

With love You sustain the living, with great compassion give life to all. You send help to the falling and healing to the sick; You bring freedom to the captive and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.

מי כמוך, בעל גבורות, ומי דומה לך, מלך מלכות ומחיה
ומצמיח ישועה?

ונאמן אתה להחיות הכל. ברוך אתה, יי, מחיה הכל.

Who is like You, Master of Might? Who is Your equal, O Lord of life and death, Source of salvation? Blessed is the Lord, the Source of life.

** On Shabbat Shuvah Insert:*

מי כמוך, אב הרחמים, זוכר יצוריו לחיים ברחמים?

Who is like You, Source of mercy, who in compassion sustains the life of His children?

⁹ *Gates of Prayer*, 1975, CCAR, p. 307

G'vurot Prayer Sheet • Mishkan T'filah¹⁰

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 246–247**

Click on Web site's Session Two PDF link to download *Mishkan T'filah* pages.

¹⁰ *Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pp. 246–247

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 2)

G'VUROT WORK SHEET

Instructions:

1. Identify any changes you see between the prayer as it appears in *Gates Of Prayer* and as it appears in *Mishkan T'filah*.
2. Read the background information adapted from *A Vision of Holiness* by Rabbi Richard Levy (New York: URJ Press, 2005, pp. 82-83, 86.)
3. In chevruta, discuss your answers to the questions that follow the background information.

Is resurrection of the body a Jewish idea?

I am cognizant that there that there has not been an affirmation of the return of the soul to the body, that is, the idea of resurrection. Some Jews still think that resurrection is only a Christian idea, unaware that certain statements in the Hebrew Bible formed the basis for Christian belief. The creation of humanity out of the dust of the earth reflects a view that, in the messianic time, earth-dust will once again produce a new human race. "Let Your dead revive, Your corpses arise! Awake and sing joyously, dwellers in the dust!" (Isaiah 26:19). The same image appears in the Book of Daniel, composed several hundred years later: "And many of those who sleep in the earth-dust shall awake; Some to eternal life and some to shame and eternal contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

What has been the Reform perspective?

Resurrection is a belief that Reform has rejected for most of its history. The Pittsburgh Platform (1885) traces the Reformers' opposition to its supposed non-Jewish origin: "We reject, as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (Hell and Paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment and reward. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the *Union Prayer Book* used the phrase, "He who has implanted within us immortal life" as the closing sentence of the *G'vurot*. This language altered the text from a praise of God who rejoins souls to bodies, to a praise of God who implants an eternal soul within us.

In keeping with this significant thematic change, the *Union Prayer Book* also changed the phrase *m'chayeh hameitim*, "Reviver of the dead," to *m'chayeh hakol*, Reviver of all things." *Gates of Prayer*, published in 1975, additionally used *m'chayeh hakol*, still eliminating resurrection.

How has Mishkan T'filah dealt with this issue?

Users of *Mishkan T'filah* will see that *t'chiyat hameitim* has at last been embraced as a viable option for contemporary Reform Jews. While the basic version of the *G'vurot* prayer uses *m'chayeh hakol*, it does restore the praise of God who sends down rain in winter and dew in summer. *Michayeh hameitim* appears in parentheses. The new siddur also offers a wonderfully ambiguous translation of the troubling phrase: not "You revive the dead," but "You revive what was dead," combining some of the beauty of "Reviver of all" with the possibility for the resurrection of whatever is dead in the world. This felicitous rendering is intended to appeal both to those Reform Jews who are attracted to the mystical idea of resurrection and to those who prefer the belief in the renewing presence of God in all nature¹¹

Discussion Questions

1. Are you surprised that bodily resurrection is rooted in our Bible?
2. Why do you think that Reform Judaism rejected this idea?
3. Do you feel comfortable with Levy's understanding of the current Reform explanation as it appears in *Mishkan T'filah*?
4. What are your views on the resurrection of the dead?

¹¹ Levy, 82-83, 86.

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 2)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Read the following prayer adapted from a poem by Rabbi Richard Levy:

Our Fathers and Mothered prayed
each through their own experience of God,
each through their own visions which we have come to share.
 Abraham with the fervor of justice, pleaded the cause of cities.
 Sarah, in the pain of waiting, dared to hope for new life.
Isaac, meditating alone in the field, lifted his eyes to find love.
Rebecca asked for the ability to discern God's call.
 Jacob, climbed the rungs of his night into heaven, seeking destiny.

Through their prayers came the understanding;
children answer prayers with the deeds of their lives.
And this comes to us as a command: act so that your life will be a blessing.¹²

In your opinion, who are the "children" that Rabbi Levy refers to? Do you think that our enduring Jewish values can be commanded to us as Reform Jews?

¹² *Mishkan T'filah*, 77.