

Entering *Mishkan T'filah*

SESSION 1

THE ROLE OF THE PRAYER BOOK: WHY A NEW SIDDUR? WHY NOW?

Please refer to pages 148 & 150 of the *Mishkan T'filah*

Introduction

In this session, participants will consider how our liturgy changes in response to the evolving needs of the (Reform) Jewish community, and how *Mishkan T'filah* reflects the contemporary North American Reform Jewish experience. This session is the first in a series of three, though each session has been designed to be taught independently. An outline of the contents of each session appears in the introduction to the three-session unit.

Extensive background material supporting the introduction of the new prayer book to congregations can be found at www.urj.org/mishkan. Please review these and determine which you would like to download and use as background information or handouts for this session. Supplementary resources about liturgy, prayer, and Reform theology are also indicated in the Additional Resources section below.

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 to the Union address as indicated. Your feedback is important! It will help us plan adult Jewish learning suited to your needs. Thank You

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 have Judaism's enduring sacred values and practices been expressed historically in our Reform *siddurim*?
2. How have Reform *siddurim* responded to our changing culture?
3. How have Reform Jews spoken to God through our evolving liturgy?

Staff/Facilitator

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

Additional Resources

1. Lawrence A. Hoffman. *My People's Prayer Book: Vol. I, The Sh'ma and Its Blessings*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1997.
2. Richard N. Levy. *A Vision of Holiness: The Future of Reform Judaism*. New York: URJ Press, 2005.
3. Michael A. Meyer. *Response to Modernity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, 1995.

Materials Needed

- Pencils/Pens, colored markers
- Paper
- A copy of *Mishkan T'filah* for each congregant, if possible
- Copies of Text Sheets—enough for all participants
- Writing board or flip chart
- Poster size enlargement of Essential Questions

Session Overview

Beginning the Session (5 minutes)

Set Induction (15-20 minutes)

Prayer Book Journeys: Back to the Future (30-40 minutes)

Conclusion - Personal Reflection: As I "Enter" *Mishkan T'filah*.... (5-10 minutes)

SESSION PLAN

Beginning the Session (5 minutes)

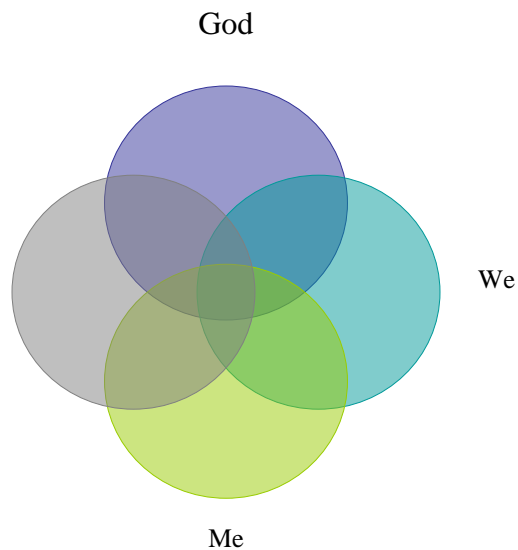
Prior to the session, hang the Essential Questions poster in the room in which you will be teaching.

1. Welcome participants and invite them to introduce themselves.
2. Explain that the focus of this session will be upon understanding *Mishkan T'filah*, the new Reform Movement siddur, in its historical and communal context.
3. Review the Essential Questions with the participants and explain that these will guide the study they will do as they “enter Mishkan T'filah” in this session and those that follow.
4. If you plan to teach the other two sessions, you may wish to give an overview of the focus and the schedule for each of them. (You can find an overview of each session in the Introduction to the three-lesson unit.)

Set Induction—We or Me? (15-20 minutes)

The purpose of this set induction is to enable participants to consider their own prayer experiences as an entry point into understanding Reform liturgy and *Mishkan T'filah*, particularly with regard to the balance between the individual and the community. To do this, you will be guiding participants through four selections in the prayer book, with accompanying questions for reflection and discussion.

1. Create the following diagram on the board or flip chart. Explain that the word “me” represents the individual and the word “we” represents the synagogue community.



2. Explain to the group that a dynamic exists within Judaism with regard to the importance/value of personal prayer and communal prayer. (You may want to provide some of your own examples of this, such as praying in the plural during the Yom Kippur confessional, the Aleinu prayer in which each individual accepts God's sovereignty upon the community, etc.)
3. Tell the participants that *Mishkan T'filah* is the third completely new prayer book of the North American Reform Movement, with each prayer book seeking to balance the needs of the individual and the community in its

own way. Explain that the group will now examine examples of this dynamic in *Mishkan T'filah*.

4. Invite volunteers to read each of the following texts/reflections and after each is read, ask this question for discussion: Does this reading seem to reflect a greater emphasis on the individual or on the community (in relationship to God), or does it seem equally balanced in its approach? You can find these readings on the Text Sheets at the end of this lesson.

Prayer Book Journeys: Back to the Future (30-40 minutes)

In this activity, congregants will consider how North American Reform Movement prayer books reflect the needs of their times.

1. Distribute to the group the chart titled "North American Reform Prayer Book History at a Glance." Ask your congregants to take a minute to review the chart and to note anything that surprises them about it.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups (*chevrutot*) of between two and four people each. Give each member of each *chevruta* copies of Prayer Book Journeys Text Sheets and a set of Guiding Questions. Explain that all three text sheets contain the same prayers, *Ma'ariv Aravim* (who brings on evening), and *Ahavat Olam* (everlasting love)¹ from the Shabbat Evening Service as they appear in our Movement's different prayer books: *The Union Prayerbook* (1940), *Gates of Prayer* (1975) and *Mishkan T'filah* (2005).
3. Ask the groups to do the following:
 - Invite a volunteer to read the first prayer, *Ma'ariv Aravim*, out loud to the group.
 - Discuss their answers to the questions provided on the "Guiding Questions for Prayer Book Journeys Activity." (You may want to suggest that each group appoint someone to record the key points of the conversation.)
 - Repeat the process with the second prayer, *Ahavat Olam*.
4. Ask the groups to reassemble into the whole group and invite the groups to report on their conversations about the similarities and the differences between the prayers.

Conclusion - Personal Reflection: As I "Enter" Mishkan T'filah... (5-10 minutes)

1. Distribute the "Personal Reflection: "As I "Enter" Mishkan T'filah..." sheet and read the text or invite a volunteer to do so.
2. Ask the participants to complete the activity.
3. Wrap up by thanking your congregants for their participation. If you will be teaching additional sessions, remind the group about future dates and times.

¹ These prayers were chosen from the Shabbat Evening Service because this is the service with which most Reform Jews are familiar.

Essential Questions

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4. How can *Mishkan T'filah* enable the individual to find his or her own place within our liturgy?
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Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 1)

TEXT SHEET

1. Standing on the parted shores of history
we still believe what we were taught
before we stood at Sinai's foot;

that wherever we go, it is Eternally Egypt
that there is a better place, a promised land;
that the winding way to that promise passes through the wilderness

that there is no way to get from here to there
except by joining hands, marching
together.

(Michael Walzer, adapted)

2. I begin with a prayer of gratitude
for all that is holy in my life.
God needs no words, no English or Hebrew,
no semantics and no services.
But I need them.
Through prayer, I can sense my inner strength,
my inner purpose,
my inner joy, my capacity to love.
As I reach upward in prayer,
I sense these qualities in my Creator.
To love God is to love each other,
to work to make our lives better.
To love God is to love dreams of peace and joy
that illumine all of us,
and to bring that vision to life.

(Ruth Brin)

3. May the One whose spirit is with us
in every righteous deed,
be with all
who spend themselves for the good of humanity
and bear the burdens of others,
who give bread to the hungry,
clothe the naked,
and take the friendless into their homes.
May the work of their hands endure,
and may the good seed they sow
bring forth an abundant harvest.

4. You are the Open Door
that beckons me in;
peeking around the door frame,
I begin to enter into Your glory.

You move me forward, O Eternal,
to step beyond self-made boundaries:
lift my foot over the threshold
that I might abide with You.

In the house of the Eternal,
I found my questions:
waiting to be posed,
they filled me with wonder.

Sit with me, Eternal Teacher,
encourage my seeking:
as I fill my hours with Your mitzvot,
so shall I be filled.

Send me through Your door
stretching up to honor Your Name,
sharing out this wonder,
enriching myself in the giving.

(Debbie Perlman)

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 1)

AMERICAN REFORM PRAYER BOOK HISTORY AT A GLANCE²

Year	Prayer Book	Significant Focus
1895	Union Prayer Book	Universalist orientation, rejected concept of Jewish peoplehood, personal Messiah, resurrection, return to the land of Israel; eliminated the Musaf (additional) service
1940	“ ” (newly revised)	The term “rabbi” replaced “minister”, aspects of peoplehood reintroduced
1940	“ ” “	Support for the rebuilding of Palestine as a haven, refuge for Jews in need; more Hebrew in services
1975	Gates of Prayer ³	Choice of themed services for Friday night, selection of new readings and prayers, more popular vernacular English, Holocaust commemoration and Israeli Independence Day component, extensive selection of songs, optional Hebrew opening format.
2006	Mishkan T'filah	Balance between <i>keva</i> (fixed) and <i>kavanah</i> (fluid and creative) aspects of prayer), more faithful English translation of Hebrew, each prayer represented in the traditional with corresponding interpretive readings in English; thorough neutering of gender language pertaining to God in both Hebrew and English; virtually every Hebrew text presented with a transliteration facing it.

² Based upon “The Prayer Books, They Are A ‘Changin’” by Elliot L. Stevens in the Summer 2006 issue of *Reform Judaism*.

³ The gender-sensitive version of Gates of Prayer, published in 1994, has not been listed separately.

Entering Mishkan T'filah (Session 1)

PRAYER BOOK JOURNEYS ACTIVITY TEXT SHEET

Union Prayer Book, CCAR, 1940 and 1967, pages 12–13

12 EVENING SERVICES FOR THE SABBATH

(Congregation rises)

Reader

Praise ye the Lord, to whom all praise is due.

Choir and Congregation

Praised be the Lord to whom all praise is due forever and ever.

(Congregation is seated)

Reader

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, ruler of the world, by whose law the shadows of evening fall and the gates of morn are opened. In wisdom Thou hast established the changes of times and seasons and ordered the ways of the stars in their heavenly courses. Creator of heaven and earth, O living God, rule Thou over us forever. Praised be Thou, O Lord, for the day and its work and for the night and its rest.

Congregation and Reader

Infinite as is Thy power, even so is Thy love. Thou didst manifest it through Israel, Thy people. By laws and commandments, by statutes and ordinances hast Thou led us in the way of righteousness and brought us to the light of truth. Therefore at our lying down and our rising up, we will meditate on Thy teachings and find in Thy laws true life and length of days. O that Thy love may never depart from our hearts. Praised be Thou, O Lord, who hast revealed Thy love through Israel.

EVENING SERVICES FOR THE SABBATH 13

(Congregation rises)

Reader

בְּרַחוּ אֱתֵי הַמְּבָרֵךְ:

Choir and Congregation

בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

(Congregation is seated)

Reader

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר
בִּדְבָרוֹ מַעְרִיב עֲרֵבִים. בְּחֻקָּהּ פּוֹתֵחַ שַׁעֲרִים.
וּבְחִבּוּנָהּ מַשְׁנֶה עַתִּים וּמַחְלִיף אֲחִיזוֹת־מָנוֹחַ.
וּמַסְדֵּר אֲחִיזוֹת־כּוֹכָבִים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ
בְּרָצוֹנוֹ. בּוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה. יְיָ צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. אֵל
חַי וְנֶמֶס תָּמִיד יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יְיָ הַמַּעְרִיב עֲרֵבִים:

אֶהְבֶּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹךְ אֶהְבֶּת. תּוֹרָה
וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים אוֹתָנוּ לְמַדָּת. עַל־כֵּן יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשִׁבְבְּנוּ וּבִקְוִמָנוּ נָשִׁים בְּחֻקֵּיךְ. וְנִשְׁמַח
בְּדַבְרֵי תּוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי הֵם
חַיֵּינוּ וְאֶרֶץ יְמֵינוּ. וּבָהֶם נִהְיָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה.
וְאֶהְבֶּתְךָ אֵל־תְּסִיךְ מִמֶּנּוּ לְעוֹלָמִים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְיָ אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

SHABBAT

REVELATION

אהבת עולם

אהבת עולם בית ישראל עמך אהבת: תורה ומצוות, חקים
ומשפטים אותנו למדת.

Unending is Your love for Your people, the House of Israel:
Torah and Mitzvot, laws and precepts have You taught us.

על-כן, יי אלהינו, בשכבנו ובקומנו נשים בחקיה, ונשמח
בדברי תורתך ובמצותיך לעולם ועד.

Therefore, O Lord our God, when we lie down and when we
rise up, we will meditate on Your laws and rejoice in Your
Torah and Mitzvot for ever.

כי הם חיינו וארץ ימינו, ובהם נהנה יוםם ולילה. ואהבתך
אל-תסיר ממנו לעולמים! ברוך אתה, יי, אוהב עמו ישראל.

Day and night we will reflect on them, for they are our life
and the length of our days. Then Your love shall never depart
from our hearts! Blessed is the Lord, who loves His people Israel.

* *

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-ל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך ובכל-מאריך.
וקיו הדברים האלה, אשר אנכי מצוה היום, על-ל-לבבך.
ושננתם לבניך, ודברת בם בשבתך בביתך, ובכל-תך
בדרך, ובשכבך ובקומך.

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

SHABBAT

All rise

שמע וברכותיה

ברכו את-יי המברך!

Praise the Lord, to whom our praise is due!

ברוך יי המברך לעולם ועד!

Praised be the Lord, to whom our praise is due,
now and for ever!

* *

CREATION

מעריב ערבים

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר בדרו מעריב
ערבים. בחכמה פותח שערים, ובתבונה משנה עתים,
ומחליף את-הנמים, ומסדר את-הכוכבים במשמרותיהם
ברקיע כרצונו.

Praised be the Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, whose
word brings on the evening. His wisdom opens heaven's gates;
his understanding makes the ages pass and the seasons alter-
nate; and His will controls the stars as they travel through
the skies.

בורא יום ולילה, גולל אור מפני חשך וחשך מפני אור,
ומעביר יום ומביא לילה, ומבדיל בין יום ובין לילה, יי
צבאות שמו.

He is Creator of day and night, rolling light away from dark-
ness, and darkness from light; He causes day to pass and
brings on the night; He sets day and night apart: He is the
Lord of Hosts.

אל חי וקיים, תמיד ומלוד עלינו, לעולם ועד. ברוך אתה,
יי, המעריב ערבים.

May the living and eternal God rule us always, to the end
of time! Blessed is the Lord, whose word makes evening fall.

* *

***Mishkan T'filah*, 2006, CCAR, pages 148 and 150**

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

Guiding Questions for Prayer Book Journeys Activity

1. What is similar between the three versions of the prayer? What is different about them?
2. What names of God (proper nouns and pronouns) are used in these three translations?
3. What clues does the language of the prayers give us about the enduring Jewish values within the Reform community?
4. How do the changes in the language used in our prayers reflect the changes in our social and religious environment over time?

Entering *Mishkan T'filah* (Session 1)

PERSONAL REFLECTION - AS I "ENTER" *MISHKAN T'FILAH*...

The title Mishkan T'filah is drawn from Exodus 25:8 where God commands us to build a portable sanctuary that can accompany us on our wanderings. "And let them build Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." Mishkan T'filah is a dwelling place for prayer, one that moves with us wherever we might be physically or spiritually. It offers the opportunity for God, the individual and the community to meet.⁴

1. Create a visual representation of this text. Where do you appear in it?

2. Complete the following sentences with your own words:

My personal *Mishkan T'filah* would be constructed out of

_____.

My personal *Mishkan T'filah* contains

_____.

I sense that my community is present in my *Mishkan T'filah* when

_____.

I sense that *Adonai* is present in my *Mishkan T'filah* when

_____.

⁴ Elyse D. Frishman and Peter S. Knobel, *Introduction to Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*, New York: CCAR Press, 2006.