

Unit One: Sharing the Vision

ב ון חמיצום עופזב פבטפ ריפנונוע יאגבע לקזרידודקי שעוצ ב
רייט הופדקעפרימי וט, מיניפבחוועחמוך וציפדב המב וועבל
מופ ועוזג מי וסבד פבטפ ריללבר ללב וכבפ ון שעבפועדוקי
מיבלנרו ון, ריודמוחעומו עון פנודרו המב, חמימעם טרבו כדולדין
וקיבדוג, ולגבליבצבמץ שליטעבענסופ ריבקי יאגבע וטפ פבטפ
וטקי "חמיכמיטפ המב חמישהקפרי עקיג רי יאגבע וטקי"
המוני יאגבע וטפ ועבה קוט. ריסעב מי נקי ריבקי מיניפבחוועחמוך
רייט הוחמבטר וט וץ? פטחאנטפ מי נווה ריעאנט ריודמיקיג רייט
מי רי יאגבע וטפ פבטפ ריעוללבר וטפ ללוק": רימיניפדקעפרימי
עג שלהמיכ הופוועח ריבקי מיניפבמבלנרו קומ וטקי "ודמועוזמוך
ללב המב ומן.

We are usually expected to be "in conference," not in thought. Nonetheless, mostly, this year, we ask you to study and to think -- and to think together, bravely. You will explore ideas that may seem far removed from the project-oriented "Let's just get it done" attitude that characterizes the way our culture usually teaches us to approach problems. Try to restrain your natural inclination to "do something now," and take time to think through the issues of what your synagogue is all about. If you do not question assumptions, the most you will manage to accomplish will be incremental change. Some "quick fixes" may happen here and there, but you will not make substantive spiritual changes in your community, and your ritual alterations will become tiresome and hardly worth the effort. The old way of doing things will reassert itself and you will probably move on to other projects that also will not really handle the underlying issues that need attention.

Eventually, of course, your study and thinking has to generate activity. And so it will. But if you rush the activity, you will miss the forest for the trees. You will tire of the energy required for the tasks, and forget the rationale behind them all. Without a larger vision to sustain the work you do, you will be unable to attract others to what they will perceive as just more synagogue programs or activities. Your best efforts may even die for lack of others to keep them going. So take this opportunity to study and learn, to observe and to question, to reflect on your own spiritual journey and that of your synagogue. Action will follow. (See Unit One: Appendix, "What We Mean by Spirituality")

"Vision looks inward and becomes duty. Vision looks outward and becomes aspiration. Vision looks upward and becomes faith."

Stephen S. Wise

For Discussion:

- 1. In what ways do you agree/disagree with the point of view presented in the reading?***
- 2. Are you personally more comfortable being a "doer" or a "thinker?" In what ways?***
- 3. What suggestions do you have for the team's work?***

READ AND DISCUSS

Reshaping Ritual and Beyond

Changing the way we pray together in public is a hard thing for synagogues to accomplish. Prayer is ritual, after all, and ritual seems to go back “forever.” Some people automatically think, “We’ve always done it that way!” It is second nature for them to go through the motion of *davening*¹ the way they always have, running by rote through the service from beginning to end.

Others, who are unhappy with a rote service, stop coming. Those who like it remain. Then it appears as if “everyone” at the service thinks it is terrific. Attempts to introduce change are met with hostility from the “regulars” who find nothing wrong.

Very few people are well versed in a new field of study called “ritual theory,” which deals with the “way that worship works.” Some people know a lot about the history of our prayers, the melodies that go with one service or another, and the *Halakhah* that defines how the prayers are said. But these elements came into being at a time when the service was part and parcel of a Jewish social setting where modern problems like Jewish identity and the nature of God were not the issues they are today. Your study, therefore, will deal with the prayers, the music and the *Halakhah*. But it will also draw on ritual theory to let you see how well your worship is working.

As your **SYNAGOGUE 2000** team focuses on worship and prayer, you will come to understand:

- Prayer does not exist in a vacuum.
- Ritual is a reflection of the community in which it takes place.
- Changing the service requires attention to the congregational setting in which it occurs.

You will have the option, in a few minutes, to think through an example of a family ritual that failed. It illustrates the principle that most problems in ritual are really problems in communication. Dysfunctional families have dysfunctional rituals. The same is true of synagogues.

2. It is hard to know what word to use when discussing synagogue services. Some people like to call it “worship” or “prayers”; others still prefer *Tefillah* or just *davening*. Sometimes, the generic “ritual” suffices. Similarly, our institutions are variously called “synagogue,” “temple” and *shul*. Terms vary among us, often according to movement, but frequently also depending on regional usage. If you see a term with which you are unfamiliar, please just translate it into the one you prefer.

To be sure, prayer in Judaism is a matter of *Halakhah*; it is a requirement. Our own satisfaction may not be the “be all and end all.” But there is no reason to believe that we should on that account actually remain dissatisfied. Satisfaction does matter. Ritual should move us, be more than *pro forma*, and certainly not be boring.

This curriculum will, therefore, explore the aspects of prayer and ritual. But each of you are asked as well -- even more importantly -- to internalize the broad vision of spirituality that motivates the Synagogue 2000 project. You will be asked to build, expand or maintain a spiritual community that suffuses the entire culture of your synagogue: how it cares for its members, how it studies, how it does good deeds, how it welcomes people and how it creates a life of prayer.

As a team, you will be asked to grapple with these two things:

- (1) *prayer and services, that is, ways to explore or maintain change on Shabbat, Holiday, and daily services, and*
- (2) *the spiritualization of the synagogue community; that is, ways to effect the ambiance of the underlying synagogue system in which prayer and ritual occur.*

For Discussion:

- 1. How do you feel about services?***
- 2. What is your understanding of prayer?***
- 3. What does “synagogue as ‘spiritual community’” mean to you?***

<p>The Birthday Party: A Ritual that Didn't Serve (found in Unit One: Appendix)</p>

- I. What is Jewish Spirituality?

- II. The Birthday Party: A Ritual That Didn't Serve

I. What is Jewish Spirituality?

Hard to Define

As with all great and lofty concepts, “spirituality” is hard to define, but easier to recognize. What is love? What is dignity? What is integrity? Spirituality is another one of those things that matters profoundly but is hard to capture without just pointing to an example or two, and saying, “See? It’s like that.”

A more serious difficulty with defining spirituality is that the languages of western civilization have been heavily influenced by Christianity, so until recently, “spirituality” was a word that was associated with Christian usage. People regularly pointed to “spiritual” monks or nuns, but not rabbis, even though it takes just a moment’s thought to realize that people would have pointed also to Nachman of Bratslav, and did point to Abraham Joshua Heschel, as equally “spiritual.” Interestingly enough, however, both Nachman and Heschel “qualified” as spiritual not so much on Jewish grounds but because in addition to their substantial Jewish qualities, they exemplified the Christian definition of people who were apparently intoxicated with God, completely selfless, and more or less beyond anything any “normal” person could aspire to.

To some extent, that Christian use is still alive and well. It is related to the Christian notion of the holy spirit that comes upon the chosen few and infuses them with the divine. In Shakespeare’s day, “spiritual” was the opposite of regal; it was the church as opposed to the British crown. Nowadays, it is commonly thought of as what proper church representatives are supposed to be like as opposed to politicians: unconcerned with affairs of this world, beyond avarice and power; uninterested in business affairs; even unworldly. Some of these values are Jewish too: Judaism also opposes avarice. But some of them are not. Judaism never withdrew from the world the way the monastic tradition in Christianity did. Judaism therefore shares some parts of the Christian definition, but it has its own take on spirituality as well.

We should ask, first, what “generic” spirituality might be, that is, how anyone, Jew, Christian, Buddhist, or atheist might be spiritual; and then, how spirituality can be specifically Jewish. Then we can illustrate what Synagogue 2000 means when it says that synagogues can transcend mere ethnicity to become spiritual places.

The Demise of Natural Communities

Once upon a time, we lived in what are called “natural communities.” We romanticize them now, even though there was a lot that was genuinely positive

about them. I mean farm communities where people lived all their lives, married each other, and settled down into predictable ways of life until they died; or a *shtetl* community where the role people played in town was relatively predictable -- girls, for instance, grew into women, married young, had children (if they could and become housewives. Men entered one of several predictable businesses, and eked out a living. *Fiddler on the Roof* portrays the romanticized version of reality when Tevya sings, "Who day and night must scamper for a living..." and answers, "The father, the father." But even Tevya sees his daughters fall in love with a Russian and a socialist. Even his world was changing by the time Sholom Aleichem parodied it so well in the Yiddish tale upon which *Fiddler on the Roof* was based.

With few exceptions, there are no more natural communities in modern life. The essence of natural communities is that everything is for sure. The old-time religion has all the answers, even to unexpected tragedies. Pogroms happened "because of our sins." Sickness occurs because it is God's will. Life always makes perfect sense because there are no options. There is no existential anxiety about what to "become," no question about where to live, no issues about "life style." In reality, life is never quite that simple — there were always some people who never followed the norm, but they were easily cast as deviants, or they stayed in the closet, or they led two lives, or somehow managed to present themselves to the tightly-knit community as proper.

The difference today is that it has become normal for everyone to face uncertainty. Old answers are challenged; institutions that once gave stability, like the family or the neighborhood, are being challenged or have altogether disappeared. Half the occupations our children will enter have not even been invented yet. We live in "future shock," have mid-life crises, think values are relative, suffer from loneliness, and discuss alienation (a word our grandparents never knew). We undergo crises like sickness or divorce without the consoling verities that religion once provided as a matter of course. All of this is not to pass judgement on old-time natural communities or on ourselves. It is just a statement about the way things have changed. Some things about modern life are better — it is good to have choices about what role we will play in life rather than to be gifted with or condemned to our status in advance, just because we are "the oldest son" or "the youngest daughter," a *Talmid chakham* or the village cobbler. But it is harder to find meaning in a world where everything is up for grabs.

The Search For Meaning

Our world therefore suffers most from a lack of meaning. Religion could never end suffering, but it could make suffering sufferable, because if you knew you were being tried by God or punished for sin, at least your suffering had meaning. If values are relative, if even old-time traditions were once just invented by people like us, if our parents and teachers turn out to be all too human, and if even God's existence is questioned all around us, what is the point of suffering? Or even of work? Or of morality, for that matter? These are

real questions. Remember Woody Allen's *Crime and Misdemeanors*, where the perfect Jewish citizen and UJA-Federation honoree kills his mistress successfully and gets away with it because no one (not even God) is watching?

If there is no higher value, no God, nothing that is forever, no human virtue to which to aspire, life becomes an accidental thing into which we are born with nothing worth doing but maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain as long as we can. An ancient brand of Greco-Roman philosophy that arrived at that conclusion were called the Epicureans. The Rabbis called them *Apikorsim* (singular -- *Apikoros*). In Yiddish and in Hebrew, *Apikoros* is still the worst thing you can call someone. It conveys the denial of all that is noble, great and real in human life.

The search for meaning is the search to transcend being an *Apikoros*, and every thinking person these days is to some extent on that search. Another way to describe it is to say that we are trying to give shape to our lives. Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? What do we stand for? We want to know we have integrity. A good metaphor is the child's pastime called "Connect the dots." There is something very consoling about taking a pencil and connecting the dots on a page until a picture emerges. The apparently random dots turn out to be a boat, and the wiggly lines at the page's margin are waves. In the natural community, our lives had natural shape, because everything was explainable and we had a minimum of big decisions to make, as things were mostly decided for us. In modern life, with everything up for grabs, life becomes a jumble of dots, without design or meaning. The task of modern life is to make sense of it all by connecting the dots of our lives into a coherent picture of a person whose biography we are proud to call our own. The psychologist Erik Erikson called it "owning our own life cycle." Judaism called it becoming a *mensch*.

The way we do that is universal. We need to identify with something greater than ourselves. Before we were ever born, we say, we had ancestors and a history. Before we started our own life's journey, we were placed at the end of a journey that others had set for us, so that to some extent, our own trek through time is a continuation of a longer journey, much much greater than our own. The decisions we make are not just self indulgent; they are part of that journey, determined by the values that the journey represents. When we die, our life's project does not die with us because others will come along and inherit what we have wrought, continuing our story just as we continued the tale of others. In the here and now, we are not alone either, because we have a genuine community of people on the same journey as we are. We and they get together to celebrate the things that matter and to mourn life's traumas. The search for personal meaning is the search for history and hope; it is the search for community and connectedness.

Ultimate Connectedness

Spirituality is the dawning recognition that we are connected in all these ways: to our ancestors, our descendants yet to come, to history, to a purpose,

and to a community of others united by values implicit in that purpose. But the spiritual dawning goes deeper still. It has an intellectual component when we think through the nature of the universe, governed by dependable laws in which we ourselves have a place. Our very bodies are connected to laws of chemistry and physics. Our minds are connected to some larger intelligence that seems to lie behind the magnitude of reality. It dawns on us also, one day or other, that we are part of a grand design in nature of which we know only a fraction. We feel called to revere all that is, to take responsibility for other creatures, for the environment, for all of life. Everything has consequences for everything else. Everything is interrelated. There is a majesty to it all, a shape to time and space, and a feeling that we belong to very large picture where we can make a difference for better or for worse.

Ultimate connectedness leads us to sense the divine. At that ultimate level of thought, what Heschel called “radical amazement,” words begin to fail. So we use the word God, knowing, as Maimonides did, that we can never do justice to God’s reality. Is God a mind that lies behind it all, and accessible, therefore, to our own minds? That’s what Maimonides thought. Is God the source of help, the friendly presence we seek behind the phenomena of nature? That’s what the psalmist thought. Is God the voice of conscience that guides us toward all that is right and good? That’s what Isaiah thought. Is God the intimate presence who follows us even into the moments of despair that Judaism calls “exile?” That’s what the Rabbis thought. The list is endless; it is infinite; as indeed, we say God is.

Spirituality, then, is a word that changes meaning from era to era. It need not be a Christian term, and it is a far cry from abandoning our reason and taking up other-worldly pursuits. It is not mindless emotionality.

It is the dawning recognition that we are not *apikorsim*; that some things are forever; that we are not alone; that our lives have shape; that we are connected first and foremost to others and to history; and that our connectedness leads ultimately to our being at home in the universe, where we sense the reality of the ultimate presence we call God.

Jewish Spirituality

I have spoken so far only of generic spirituality, the search of everyman and everywoman for connectedness. But the truth is, there is no generic spirituality, just as there is no everyman or everywoman. We are all a particular man or woman, and we think with particular models, metaphors, values, and pictures of the whole. Even God, who is a God for all peoples, can only be imagined as a particular God. Jewish spirituality is the specifically Jewish search for connectedness. It is the dawning realization that we were at Sinai, not at the founding of the Church in Rome; that our story is the story of the Exodus, not the story of the Buddha; that our enlightenment comes through Torah, not through the gift of the holy spirit that calls us to conversion; that our most sacred place to which we make pilgrimage is Jerusalem, not Mecca; that our celebrations are seders and Shabbat, not eucharists and the Lord’s Day.

The dots that we connect cannot be generic “everyones” just as great art cannot be generic paint-by-number. Generic pictures get hung on the walls of Holiday Inns and Howard Johnsons. Masterpieces are particular things: they are Rembrandts, Monets, or Michelangelos. We too are masterpieces, masterpieces in the making: not just generic men and women, but specific someones, in our case, Jews, not pagans, Christians, Muslims, or Hindus. Jewish spirituality is identification with the master template of the Jewish story, the Jewish picture, the Jewish project, and Jewish hope.

Synagogue 2000 believes that synagogues must become places where that Jewish template is so patently present and so personally connected to the real lives of the people who go there, that going to synagogue for any purpose whatever is tantamount to the dawning recognition of greater and greater connectedness.

Synagogue as Spiritual Center

Our *PISGAH* vision posits six entryways to the synagogue as spiritual center, each of which connects people to the Jewish template. The key to each of them is the conscious way that the synagogue connects the template to people’s lives.

- *Prayer* is not distant or rote; it is personally engaging, and a genuine way to celebrate Jewish community, Jewish obligation, Jewish history, and God.
- *Institutional change* is a model for personal change: the synagogue as the microcosm of the Jewish people grows through time, so that the individual Jews who come there retain the freshness of their search for meaning in the Jewish mold.
- *Study* is not just objective mastery of facts, but the growing identification of our lives with the Torah’s concepts of history, time, and peoplehood. Good deeds are not just doing our duty, but personally undertaken *mitzvot* -- active statements of connectedness to other people and to the universe to which we are connected.
- The synagogue *ambiance* connects us to others; it welcomes us to our story and our people; it assures us that we are not isolates having to find our connectedness elsewhere.
- *Healing* is not being cured of a disease; it is the feeling of wholeness that comes from knowing we are connected to all that is and from seeing the picture of our lives take on greater and greater clarity with every passing day.

A spiritual center is a place where the human search for connectedness is always present; it is a living breathing community where hope and history, care and community, goodness and responsibility, and wholeness and meaning are never in doubt. A Jewish spiritual center is where Jewish journeys toward ultimate connectedness are constantly rewarded. A synagogue alive with the radical amazement that all of this is happening is a Synagogue 2000.

II. Birthday Party: A Ritual That Didn't Serve

Norman is a man of 55. When he was still in college, he surprised his Jewish parents by enlisting in the army and then making it his career -- all of this despite an A average, and the chance to go to graduate school in medicine or science. He moved rapidly up the ranks, but then surprised them again when he took early retirement just a little after 30 years in the service, expecting to find a second career. He was only 49. Nothing quite went right after that. Though his pension gave him enough money to live on, he never did find anything to galvanize his interest and attention the way the army had.

His parents never forgave him for becoming a "soldier;" and neither did his brother and sister, who had to live through years of family feuding between Norman and their mother and father. Theoretically, they all respected Norman's right to decide on his own destiny, and they recognized also the need for a strong American army. But soldiering? That was not what they thought Norman ought to have done. When he returned and began to suffer from the uncertainties of civilian life, they were unable to be supportive of him, and Norman himself was by now so estranged from his family of birth that he saw them only infrequently, usually under moderate duress.

When he turned 50, Norman's own wife and children decided to throw him a gala birthday party, something he had never really had all those years when he was posted so far from home. Since he had been born near the end of November, they decided to make the party coincide with Thanksgiving, and invite Norman's parents, as well as his siblings and their families to the traditional turkey dinner, after which they would unveil a huge cake with fifty candles on it.

Everyone arrived as planned, but to the surprise and dismay of Norman's children and wife, Norman remained somewhat taciturn through the dinner. Instead of bubbling over with joy, he seemed distant, even distraught, and when the time came to blow out the fifty candles, he did it almost as if he was being forced to, making a joke about being too old to make wishes any more.

The extended family sang "Happy Birthday," but not happily, it seemed. People left shortly thereafter, and Norman went to bed early.

For Discussion:

Birthday parties are not Shabbat services; but both are rituals, and both require proper planning. In both cases, there is a ritual script. You sing the right songs on cue, and there are ritual actions like blowing out candles or opening the ark and carrying the Torah. But in both cases, even if you do everything correctly, the ritual will be perceived as a failure if the community that celebrates it is not whole.

- 1. What was the intent of the birthday party ritual? Why did each of the participants perceive it so differently?***
- 2. What implications does this story have for our own worship ritual?***

Unit Two: Worship

The Synagogue as a Spiritual Community

In this unit, we will...

- 1) expand our thinking about *T'fillah* beyond the text of prayer
- 2) understand the various requirements of the worship service
- 3) understand how our movement liturgies came to be the way they are
- 4) understand synagogues as systems
- 5) consider whether the four “unintentional sins” of synagogue life are present
- 6) review our vision-in-progress, imagining how our would look if being a spiritual community were our primary focus

Preparatory Reading:

1. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer**
Introduction: “Is Ecstasy Enough?”
Chapter 1 “Structuring Time”
Chapter 3 “Worship Systems”
Chapter 4 “Mistaking the Code, Mixing Messages and Managing Change”
*Art of Public Prayer was written to facilitate ritual change in synagogues and churches. It therefore uses examples from Jewish and Christian experience. The first chapter (“Structuring Time”) illustrates the universal role of ritual in human life. It provides a suitable introduction to ritual as a topic for interesting conversation. Other chapters that you are to read develop the theme of system-thinking.
2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987, pp. 60-74 “American Jewish Liturgies: A Study of Identity”

Materials Needed

1. Name tags or tents, if needed

2. Wish List begun during Unit One
3. Flip chart/Markers
4. Food/Drinks

During the Unit

This unit is full. You may want to prioritize with the rest of your team. There are many “For Discussion” topics where you can spend a lot of time. Make sure you watch your timetable and set aside some of the questions for another time if necessary.

Remind people of the next meeting date. Assign reading for the next unit, and any other homework.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you actually do return to it in another meeting.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking In

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS



Prayer services are more than liturgy. Liturgy is the set of words that constitute the prayers. If we merely sat in the quietude of our homes reading the prayers silently the way we do a library book, that would be all there is. But in worship services, liturgy is acted out as public “performance.” *As odd as it may seem at first, it is helpful to think of the words of the prayers as a dramatic script for a sacred performance that features every single worshiper in the room.*

- There is even room for God, whom we never see, but who waits in the wings, so to speak, and attends to what is being said.
- The performance takes place in a space like a modern play where even the audience is on stage; the official stage is the *bimah* area, but from time to time the action moves elsewhere as during the *hakafah* [Torah procession].
- Some people have “starring roles”: the *chazan*, the *ba'al korei* [the Torah reader], the president who gives announcements. Others have side parts: the ushers, who speak to individuals more or less off-stage or the *gabbai* who assigns parts to the actors as they arrive.
- We wear special clothes, *tallit*, for instance, a “costume” for the performance, and do special things -- kiss the Torah, walk up and back for an *aliyah*, or stand and sit on cue.

It feels strange to compare prayer to a play: plays are performances we observe. They are make-believe, just the opposite of what prayer is supposed to be. But prayer is performance nonetheless, albeit performance that is sacred, and that involves everyone in the room not as observer but as an integral player in the dramatic action. We will return to the idea of worship as drama later -- *The Art of Public Prayer* has a lot to say about this. For now, however, we want to emphasize that *T'fillah* is more than liturgy. Knowing the prayer book *alone* is only a part of knowing what you need to know in order to make *t'fillah* work for the people in the congregation.

We will also return again to another crucial realization -- that regardless of what our prayers say to God, they say something inspirational to us about ourselves. They tell us who we are, what is important to us, what we fear, and what we want.

For Discussion:

Think of the Shabbat service as a sacred drama. If you were the director of the play, you would need to consider the following things. In each case, how would you decide what to do? What criteria would you have in mind for...

- . ***The script?***
- . ***The props?***
- . ***The costumes?***
- . ***The staging?***
- . ***The music?***
- . ***The audience participation?***

1. Do you pray?

If so, what do your prayers tell you about yourself?

Your beliefs? Your hopes? Your community?

2. What is the difference between private and public prayer?

READ AND DISCUSS

Once upon a time, there was a guru in the mountains of Asia who gathered round him a band of monks dedicated to prayer. The guru owned a cat which he loved deeply. He took the cat with him everywhere, even to morning prayer. When the disciples complained that the cat's prowling distracted them, the guru bought a leash and tied the cat to a post at the entrance to the

prayer room. Years later, when the guru died, his disciples continued to care for the cat. But, as they say, cats have nine lives, so the cat outlived even the disciples. By then, the disciples had their own disciples who began caring for the cat, without, however, recalling any more why the cat was present during prayer. When the cat's leash wore out, they knitted another one in the sacred colors of the sky and the earth, and when the post wore down, they built a beautiful new one which they began calling the sacred cat stand. During this third generation of disciples, the cat finally died, and the disciples wasted no time in buying yet another sacred cat to accompany them in prayer. Their worship was eventually expanded to include the sacred actions of tying the cat to the leash and affixing the leash to the sacred cat stand.

For Discussion:

What we assume as necessary in our worship may just be cats, leashes, and cat stands: encumbrances that grew up once upon a time but could have just as easily gotten rid of.

What implications does this story have for your services?

What are the Minimal Requirements
for a Service?
(found in Unit Two: Appendix)

DISCUSS
Beyond the Text, "American Jewish
Liturgies: a Study of Identity"
found in supplemental Bibliography



For Discussion:

- 1. How do our liturgies present statements of Jewish identity?
Personal identity?***
- 2. Is our contemporary Jewish identity different than previous identities? If yes, how should our worship change to reflect who we are now?***
- 3. If strangers were to observe our worship, what might they infer about who we are and what we care about?***

READ AND DISCUSS

**The Synagogue as a System:
Piece-meal vs. transformative change**

A system is an organic interactive whole. It might be very small composed of only two people, or very large such as an entire country; or even, for some thinkers, the entire world. In between the extremes of very small scale and very large scale social systems, we have intermediate size social systems such as the groupings of organizations to which we belong -- families, schools, homeowner associations, political parties and the like. Synagogues, like these other groupings, are also systems whose parts -- governing bodies, administrative operations, interpersonal relationships -- are interdependent. These parts form a culture and hang together because they continually affect each other and operate out of a common sensibility.

Social scientists have many ways of analyzing systems and getting a handle on what they call this “dynamic complexity” – the idea that the various components of the system remain in constant interaction with one another over time. While such interactions may exhibit great variety in the details, the interactions are similar in their underlying principles or qualities – giving rise to what has become folk wisdom that “the more things change, the more they remain the same.”

This tendency towards culture stability or homeostasis is what makes intentional piece-meal change in social systems proceed slowly and with great difficulty, often frustrating those who want to make change quickly and decisively. The culture of organizations usually absorbs each new idea, new activity or new person, whether introduced as part of a plan or at random, by infusing them with pre-existing principles or qualities. The life cycle of anything new usually begins by its being different from current practices, to then being

modified by interaction with the existing social system and finally being absorbed by the institutional culture. The system accepts new ideas, activities or individuals and slowly digests them so that they become part of the old system. Eventually, a “new-old” culture does emerge. This type of change process is organic and evolutionary, sometimes taking years or lifetimes to produce change in the underlying principles or qualities -- the culture -- of the social system. This is the stuff of evolution and history. Transformational change challenges directly the underlying principles and ideas of a system. It encourages a “new way of seeing,” sometimes even a “new way of being.” Once having “seen,” once having been transformed, once having understood and shifted their underlying principles or qualities, neither individuals nor organizations can go back to the way they were before. A metamorphosis has occurred in the culture.

SYNAGOGUE 2000 suggests that just such a profound transformational change should occur in synagogue cultures. The qualities and principles of synagogues should change such that all their interactions and activities are infused with a sense of the sacred, a sense of deep caring for one another, and a spiritual sense of being a part of an ongoing Jewish religious community and tradition.

For Discussion:

- 1. If you were to analyze this synagogue as a social system, what are the various components (e.g. individuals, activities, structures) you see as interacting in “dynamic complexity?” What are the underlying principles and qualities which link all the components together?***
- 2. What experiences have you had with piece-meal change in this synagogue? Trace the life-cycle of one recent piece-meal change.
Did it influence the system of the synagogue? How did the system influence it?***
- 3. What experience do you have with change in other areas of your life? What is your reaction to the concept of transformative change?***
- 4. How do you feel about the kind of transformative change proposed by Synagogue 2000?***

READ AND DISCUSS

Systems are dysfunctional only from the viewpoint of our definition of their function.

This is very important, for it indicates the difference between mechanical black boxes and human ones. If, for example, your toaster breaks and burns every piece of bread, you would correctly observe that the toaster is in a state of dysfunction. We distinguish now between people standing outside the toaster waiting for edible toast, and the mechanical parts of the toaster. The people --those outside the system in question -- unanimously agree that the toaster is malfunctioning. That's because they can all agree that the purpose of toasters is to make toast, not charcoal. From the hypothetical perspective of the toaster parts, though, the toaster system is functioning with admirable perfection. Every time bread goes in, out it pops, perfectly burned. As a system for burning bread, the toaster is completely reliable. It never fails. If the toaster parts could talk, they would argue that the problem lies with the people observing it, who project unreal expectations on the toaster. It is not a toaster in the first place, it would say, but a burner. As a burner, it is functional and without peer. The people would then respond that if it were a burner, it should have been advertised in the store as such. No one with such a toaster would hesitate to get it fixed and convert it from a burner to a toaster. Dysfunctional systems often function very well at doing things that we do not want them to do. They are dysfunctional only from the perspective of our own arbitrary definition of what they are supposed to do.

For Discussion:

What implication does this have for changing your services?

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ AND DISCUSS
"Four Unintentional Sins of
Synagogue Life"
(found in Unit Two: Appendix)

After reading the "Four Unintentional Sins of Synagogue Life," divide into four groups. Each group discusses one set of questions:

Group 1

To what extent is your synagogue driven by considerations related to children?
Consider study, worship services, rituals, programs.

Group 2

To what extent is your synagogue driven by ethnic Judaism rather than by a serious engagement with a Judaism of the spirit?
Consider why you and your friends join the synagogue and stay involved in synagogue activities.

Group 3

To what extent is your synagogue culture driven by corporate busyness, rather than human care and personal warmth?
Consider membership, fund-raising, board activities.

Group 4

To what extent is your synagogue culture driven by its corporate structure, so that you adopt a consumer mentality that discourages cooperation and mitigates against reevaluating your goals in the light of spiritual not consumer values?
Consider the extent to which your synagogue participation is like or unlike your participation in other organizational activities.

Reconvene together as a large group and debrief the small group discussions.

READ AND DISCUSS

Visioning

Albert Einstein said that the most important quality human beings possess is that of imagination. This is an extraordinary statement which you think of what else he might have named as the most important quality – thinking, feeling, understanding and the like. What he seems to be saying is that the way to the other important qualities is through the ability to imagine what is not present in front of us, what is not yet in existence, what we might bring into being if we could only “see” it in our mind’s eye.

Imagination or “image-ing” is a different process than thinking or analyzing or taking apart or breaking something into its component parts. It requires aptitudes other than verbal fluency or dexterity. It is wholistic and engages all our senses. It is integrative and creative and brings the “new” into the world. It is composed of many things, among them ideas, pictures, feelings, wishes, hopes and dreams.

“Visioning” is the shorthand term we use to describe our attempts at imagining our synagogue just the way we want it to be. Visioning the synagogue the way we want it to be is both an individual activity and a collective activity. Each individual brings an ideal vision of the synagogue -- one which would be most satisfying to them and their unique history, experience and wishes. Individuals together – collectively -- build from these their common or shared vision. Until people reach agreement at the deepest level on what their collective vision is, their vision will be “in progress.” Synagogue 2000 has as its core wish and value that synagogues should be deeply spiritual communities. It is likely that each individual and each congregation will come to and envision that central notion in accordance with their own history, their own traditions and their own expectations.

How does “visioning” happen? It happens when individuals articulate to each other what they already find meaningful in synagogue life and what they would find meaningful if it were present.

It happens when individuals start “listening to” the visions of others in their synagogue community. As Peter Senge says in *The Fifth Discipline*: “Every organization has a destiny: a deep purpose that expresses the organization’s reason for existence. We may never fully know that purpose, just as an individual never fully discovers his or her individual purpose in life. But choosing to continually listen for that sense of emerging purpose is a critical choice that shifts an individual or a community from a reactive to a creative orientation.”

For Discussion:

Summarize the discussion from the “Four Sins” groups.

1. What desirable “core values” emerged from them?

2. Where are the agreements? Disagreements?

3. If the most important core values were to be put in operation, what would your synagogue be like?

Record the different opinions about “values” on flip charts to preserve for the future. Label these “Vision-in-progress.”

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the session. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Session Two: Appendix

- I. What are the Minimal Requirements for a Service?
- II. “Four Unintentional Sins of Synagogue Life”

I. What are the Minimal Requirements for a Service?

(Our appendices on Halakhic issues are intended only as springboards to Jewish discussions rooted in Jewish categories and sources. They hardly do justice to the complexity of the issues they address. Rather, they are outlines of some of the halakhic considerations that apply to the material covered in the sessions that they accompany. We know that conversations on these issues will be expanded by each team's rabbis. We know also that Jews of different denominations will differ on how to read the halakhic precedents and reasoning.)

Though the codes describe how to do the various parts of the service, they do not specify "the minimum service" required to fulfill one's halakhic obligations. That question would have never occurred to the authors who assumed Jews would do everything: they did not stop to define each of the components that made up the "everything" in question. In modern times, this question was first asked in Reform circles in 1986, and it elicited a brief answer that prescribed the *Sh'ma* and its Blessings, the *Amidah* and *Tachanun* (the penitential prayers for weekdays that follow the *Amidah*), Torah readings, an unspecified concluding prayer and *Kaddish*. This answer is based on what is taken to be the "basic structure of the service," although it does not inquire into halakhic precedents or a detailed understanding of the history of the service.

If we look at the development of our halakhic textual evidence, we see that the Mishnah prescribes the *Sh'ma* and its Blessings, the *Amidah* and a Torah reading on appropriate occasions. Some version of the Haftarah may have been common in the first century too (the New Testament shows Jesus reading it in the synagogue). Most people think there was a *Kaddish* after the Torah reading, though there is no real evidence for that. By the time of the Talmud, a daily confession seems to have been the rabbinic norm as well. The *P'sukei D'zimrah* (Verses of the century) was optional and varied widely in terms of content all the way up to the Crusades (11th century). Some communities recited the psalms we now have (Ps 145-150), but many chose other ones, and some even chose psalm snippets, actual "verses of song," not whole psalms that were strung together. Morning blessings (*Birkhat Hashachar*) were part of the Rabbis' daily regimen, but not part of the public service. At that time no rabbinic prayers had fixed wording. Only the progression of themes were set.

The Talmud differentiates among the various *Amidahs*. The morning and afternoon *Amidah* are mandatory because they are assumed to be stand-ins for the daily sacrifice (the *tamid*) that was offered at those times. The evening *Amidah* was considered mandatory by some, optional by others. The authority who considered it optional is the 3rd century Babylonian master, Rav, who is normally followed in matters of ritual; but Maimonides ruled that by his time, it is said as if it were mandatory, and it has been so treated ever since.

The logic of having to say an *Amidah* that is a stand-in for sacrifices might suggest that the *Amidah* for

Musaf is necessary also.

Sh'ma, *Amidah*, and Torah reading are assumed in our texts to have biblical bases. The decision to read Torah is attributed to Ezra. One might conclude, therefore, that we need at least:

Sh'ma
Amidah of Shacharit and Minchah
Torah reading
Amidah for Musaf

Within the major rubrics, the codes also require certain things. The *Sh'ma* requires all three paragraphs and the *chatimot* of the accompanying blessings. The *Amidah* would have to include all seven of its Sabbath blessings. The prose and poetry written over the centuries to accompany this skeleton, while often recited, are not mandatory. Conservative synagogues vary in their approach to these “prayer embellishments,” and they tend not to be said in their entirety in Reconstructionist and Reform synagogues. In Reform congregations, the *Sh'ma* and the *Amidah* are customarily shortened, and both Reform and Reconstructionist congregations regularly amend their text to avoid ideas and statements that are taken as offending modern consciousness.

Many Conservative synagogues use the *Hekhi K'dushah* method by which the congregation recites the *Amidah* silently only after the Chazan has led them all through the opening three blessings publicly. That allows the congregation to dispense with a lengthy repetition of the entire prayer. They do this even though on Sabbaths and Holy Days, when Musaf is recited, people presumably are not going to work and have time to stay later.

II. “Four Unintentional Sins of Synagogue Life”

Our culture rejects the notion of “sin,” largely because it evokes popular (and, to some extent, Christian) definitions of sinfulness. But the Jewish view of sin should not be so easily dismissed. To begin with, “sin” (for Jews) is not necessarily just the bad things we do -- it is equally the good things we do not do. Even the best of us commits sin just by not rising to the best of what we ought to be. And sin is communal, not just individual. The Yom Kippur confessions (*Al chet* and *Ashamnu*) do not even mention such grand things as “murder” and “adultery.” Those things (should they be relevant) are for individuals to confess privately to God, and, in fact, *Halakhah* demands that the public confession be accompanied by a private one whereby we come to terms with our own individual wrongdoing, even for matters that fall short of the worst that we might imagine.

The public prayers of Yom Kippur do include individual wrongdoing, but they are primarily vehicles to come to terms with communal guilt. Since they are part of our synagogue liturgy, they invite us to admit certain sins of the synagogue.

These sins need not imply that the synagogue is an awful place. Judaism insists that even good people, and, therefore good institutions, sin. The prayer *Al chet* illustrates the point.

Its various lines are alphabetic: that is, the sins correspond not to a psychological inventory of what people are likely to do wrong, but to an arbitrary list of errors that is generated by the need to have a separate sin for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Still, more than one sin is possible for each letter, and, in fact, different versions of the prayer abound. One of them is particularly insightful for synagogues who want to look more carefully at themselves.

It begins with “the sin which we have committed under duress or willingly” (*b’ones uv’ratson*) but includes also “the sin which we have committed unknowingly” (*bivli da’at*). Synagogue sins are unlikely to be done willingly or even under duress. But they may occur unknowingly. They are the things we should do but don’t, because we do not realize we should do them; or the things we do not even know we do but ought to stop doing.

At stake in either case is the failure to “move on.” All institutions are conservative in nature. All institutions resist change. If they are businesses, the “bottom line” forces the owners to keep up with the times, or go out of business. Non-profit institutions do not work that way. It takes a courageous act of will by congregational leaders to decide to do things differently.

Our model in this regard comes from the Torah, where a consistent theme is to the challenge of “moving on.” The Jewish People’s saga begins with Abraham, who is told to go to an unnamed land. At the burning bush, Moses, too, is asked to leave the desert and confront Pharaoh. We do not know how long it took Abraham to concede that he had to make his journey forward, but various strands of Midrash imply that he was not overly eager to leave his

comfortable surroundings for a far-off and unknown destination. Certainly, Moses tried desperately to avoid the challenge of moving on. And later, the Israelites continually repeat his hesitancy, applying it to themselves whenever God tells them that they cannot stay where they are.

Life is a process of being challenged to move on, but preferring to play it safe and stay put.

In theological terms, staying put when you should move on can be a “sin of omission,” something we do not do but should. It is a sin that synagogues commit unknowingly. Having gotten used to certain comfortable habits of behavior that once served us well, we keep on “doing what comes naturally,” rather than adapt our institutional behavior to the challenge of new times. Synagogue 2000 specifies four new directions that synagogues need to take. Once upon a time, these four old synagogue habits were innovations that served our people well. Like Abraham and Moses, we need to go beyond them now. In each case, we need to go beyond what we were doing to a new approach that fits the needs of American Jews in our own day.

1. *Beyond Pediatric to Adult.* Synagogues have gotten used to planning mostly for children. In our understandable anxiety to pass on Judaism to the next generation, we have neglected its spiritual resources for adults, leaving ourselves with no adequate notion of how we, too, might draw sustenance from our faith as we grow up and grow older. Worse: we were often the very children for whom our parents over-planned, so that we should have known better from our own experience. We are living proof that their pediatric approach failed: seeing no models of religious Jewish adulthood, we learned that “Judaism is for children.” Many of our friends do not even have the basic commitment to a Jewish future and Jewish learning and life that we possess. And worse yet: we are committing the same error with our children, devoting all our institutional efforts on their childhood education, while ignoring our own adult needs, so that now, as we are grown, we have little understanding of Judaism as an adult faith, with adult consciousness, adult intellect, and answers to the challenges of adult life.

To what extent is your synagogue driven by considerations related to children?

2. *Beyond Ethnic to Spiritual:* In an age when memories of Europe were still writ large upon our consciousness, and when anti-Semitism dominated world affairs, we grew up thinking Judaism was almost solely ethnic, a combination of old-world culture, *shtetl* memories, defensive Judaism, and the primary need to save the Jewish people. Saving the Jewish people remains a priority, and the warmth that we associate with Jewish ethnic ways of life can still sustain us. But by themselves, they have proven insufficient to the task. Put very simply, Judaism must be more than lox and bagels, or Jewish jokes that were understandable in a time when Jews were on the defensive against anti-

Semitism from without, but are often more embarrassing than funny these days. We are now, all of us, Jews by choice -- that is, by personal affirmation. Judaism today needs desperately to reassert its spiritual promise for the world and for each and every person, for only such a promise warrants adult affirmation. Our day features the threat of loneliness and despair, of spiritual malaise and ethical impoverishment, of the breakdown of old-time verities and the need to find wholeness and transcendent meaning in our lives.

To what extent is your synagogue driven by ethnic Judaism rather than by a serious engagement with a Judaism of the spirit?

3. Beyond Corporate to Care: Efficiency is a fine thing. It is necessary in a time when businesses come and go daily, and Mom and Pop family stores cannot make it in a competitive market. So beginning around 1910, churches and synagogues adopted a strategy designed to institute efficient religion: things like managerial excellence, organizational clarity, and responsible leadership by boards, trustees, committees and management. This corporate model rewarded busyness, programming, and delivery of services. But as much as efficiency remains a decided advantage over sloppiness and irresponsible leadership, synagogues that rely on corporate structures and style run the risk of spiritual irresponsibility. Synagogues are widely perceived in the community as a corporate bastions that do things efficiently, but without soul. They may be more distant and impersonal than the people who care for it and who work there admit. The telephone system may be demeaning; the front-office personnel treat you like a number. Even religious services seem corporate! Procedures may be obsessed with paperwork, and success measured by amounts of paper turned out -- paper to apply for this, paper to sign up for that, and paper reports in bulletins, committee documents, and even printed sermons. Lots of people come and go, but we know next to nothing about the lightness or harshness of their lives. They tend to take their real problems to therapists, 12-step programs, social workers and counselors, but not the synagogue. We may be unable to name the faces of the vast majority of those who drop off their children.

To what extent is your synagogue culture driven by corporate busyness, rather than human care and personal warmth?

4. Beyond Consumer to Community: With corporate structures, American institutions developed a consumer mentality. The bottom line of business was the product, so synagogues approached Judaism as if it were a marketable entity, and the market was the Jews who buy it. Success was subtly defined as an ever-growing market niche of members, for which Rabbis (mostly), as the

corporate CEOs, are responsible. Rabbis therefore supervise staffs to help them to market Judaism for delivery, and when they or their staffs fail to increase the membership, or market share, they get fired by boards who observe the declining membership. Conflict is ingrained in the scheme: rabbi against board, since boards judge rabbis, who are held responsible for the product; cantor against rabbi, as each blames the other for falling service attendance; staff against each other, since no one wants to be held responsible for the failure of the whole, when product lines do not attract the consumer loyalty for which they are designed. The members see the synagogue as a place for expenditure of discretionary income in return for service, and measurable, therefore, in market terms of cost effectiveness, not in personal commitment or religious mission.

To what extent is your synagogue culture driven by its corporate structure, so that you adopt a consumer mentality that discourages cooperation and mitigates against reevaluating your goals in the light of spiritual rather than consumer values?

Unit Three: Prayer

The Structure of a Service

In this unit, we will...

understand why the liturgy is shaped the way it is

Preparatory Reading:

1. Jules Harlow, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, (New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of America, 1985), pp. xi-xxviii.

Introduction to the structure of traditional liturgy.

2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, "The Roots of the Siddur," *Keeping Posted* 22:6 (March 1977): 7-8, 17 reprinted in Alan D. Bennet, ed., *Journey Through Judaism: The Best of Keeping Posted*. (New York: UAHC Press, 1991), pp. 123-126.

A quick history of how the *siddur* came into being, and its basic structure.

Materials Needed:

1. Siddurim (Use the prayer book that is commonly used in your synagogue)
2. Food/Drinks

Before the Unit

The Rabbi should spend some time preparing to teach the structure of the service. This unit is the introduction to the structure of a Shabbat Service. You may want to write on a flip chart the "Rubrics of a Shabbat Service" (see Unit Three: Appendix)

During the Unit

Goal: Understand why the liturgy is shaped the way it is.

This unit is the first of two parts for understanding the structure of the service and the siddur (Unit Three and Unit Five). You may want to sit down with the Rabbi and go over the structure yourself to become as familiar as possible with the rubrics of the service. During this unit remind people of the next meeting date. Assign reading for the next unit, and any other homework.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking in Suggestions” in Resources for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

Liturgy

We have said that broader than *the dramatic script.*

READ AND DISCUSS
Major Rubrics of a Shabbat Morning
Service
(found in Unit Three: Appendix)

Appreciation

worship is liturgy. *Liturgy is Worship is the*

performance. The script is very important. Especially if you pray in English, you may find yourself moved at times, appalled at others, by what the words say. Even if you use Hebrew and do not understand what each word says, you may also find your eye straying to the English translation and wondering why you are saying something that you do not fully believe. The manifest content of the liturgy matters a great deal.

Prayer is an art form with its own rationale. The liturgy is not a jumble of words. It is a set of literary units called *rubrics*, put together according to an elaborate plan.

The following two terms help explain what liturgy is all about:

1. Rubric:

The liturgy is made of a variety of different kinds of compositions -- some prose, some poetic, some biblical citations (like psalms or the *Sh'ma*), some rabbinic medieval writings. A convenient way to refer to them, without worrying about what to call one technically, is to say that it is a rubric. *Rubric is the word we use to name any discrete unit of liturgy, large or small.* The *Amidah*, the *Alenu*, and the *Kaddish* are rubrics, for instance. Within the *Amidah*, however, any one of the many blessings that make it up can also be called a rubric. The term is used loosely and contextually to identify any given piece of liturgy.

2. Blessing or b'rakhah (i.e., benediction):

These terms mean the same. They are the most common kind of prayer in our liturgy. Of all their liturgical work, it was the blessings (*b'rakhot*) that the Rabbis liked most. The blessing provided the means by which Jews were asked to greet the presence of God in the world! The most familiar blessings are for greeting God's work in the daily flow of our lives. These are the one-liners that Jews say for the experience of enjoying life -- like ...*borei p'ri hagafen* for drinking wine; ...*hamotsi lechem min ha'arets* for eating bread; ...*shehechyanu v'kiy'manu v'higyanu laz'man hazeh* for anniversary events in the course of a given year. They may also be the way Jews meet God in doing *mitzvot* -- again, one-liners that we memorize for the acts that we believe God has commanded (like lighting Shabbat candles, for which we say ...*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel shabbat.*)

Blessings always
end with a
summary line,
*Barukh atah
Adonai...*

But there is another kind of blessing. It is longer, and best imagined as a theological essay, usually running a single paragraph, but sometimes continuing for several paragraphs.¹ The prayer book is filled with such compositions, again as a means to meet God in the world, this time for meeting God in the ebb and flow of time: like the first blessing that precedes the morning *Sh'ma* and greets the morning light by acknowledging God's eternal presence as creator of light. The Rabbis liked to bracket biblical readings with blessings. When you read the Torah and are called for an *aliyah*, you say a blessing before and then another one after the reading. Similarly, the *Sh'ma* (which is Biblical) has blessings both before and after it. The *Amidah* has no biblical root at all; it is simply a succession of blessings. Blessings are the true core of our service.

Blessings are relatively easy to spot because of their distinctive prose style. They may begin in many ways, so their beginning is difficult to find sometimes; but they always end with a summary line, *Barukh atah Adonai...* ("Blessed art Thou O Lord..." [or some modern English version of this line]) followed by a synopsis of what the blessing is about.

This is the opposite of what English readers expect: we learned long ago, probably in high-school English class, that the most important sentence in a paragraph is the first one, the topic sentence that establishes the theme of the paragraph. Prayer-book blessings may indeed have a beginning topic sentence that begins with *Barukh atah Adonai...*, but they are just as likely not to. However, they all have a summary wrap-up sentence, the sentence with

1. For example: the first blessing of the *Amidah*, known as the *Avot* ("Fathers" or "Ancestors") The following is the version from *Siddur Sim Shalom*:

Praised are You Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God, who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors, and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and guards, saves and shields. Praised are You, Adonai, Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

This blessing does begin with *Barukh atah Adonai*. Others may not. This one does end with *Barukh atah Adonai*. They all do. It is called the *chatimah*. This blessing has a theme, immediately recognizable from the *chatimah*. It is God's shielding power by virtue of His relationship to our ancestors, especially Abraham and Sarah. The theme is elaborated in the body of the blessing.

which they close that begins with *Barukh atah Adonai*. With blessings, the “topic sentence” is always at the end! It is called a *chatimah*, literally a “seal,” referring to the seal on a signet ring, once used to close an envelope. It is as if each blessing is a letter to God, signed and sealed at the end with a summarizing *chatimah*.

For Discussion:

Analyze the *Sh'ma* and its blessings, then some of the blessings of the Amidah. Be able to spot the *chatimot*.

READ

What do you understand about *keva* and *kavannah*? Though the words mean different things at different times, one way to understand them is to think of *keva* as fixity, and *kavannah* as creativity or spontaneity. Nowadays, with a printed liturgy giving us every word for every prayer, *kavannah* comes through inner concentration by each worshiper, or by the music and cantorial “delivery” of the inner spirit of a prayer. But when the liturgy was in formation, there were no prayer books. In an oral milieu, *keva* was the structural fixity, the rhetorical rules for prayer, the fixed succession of themes that inevitably constituted a service no matter what words were used. Prayer leaders were not limited by printed pages; they had memorized hundreds of stock phrases that they strung together, creating new prayer versions as they went along. *Kavannah*, therefore, was the novelty of the occasion, the spontaneous wording that the prayer leader chose to express the prayers on any given occasion.

Verbal spontaneity balanced by structural fixity marked our liturgy until the Middle Ages. What finally ended the spontaneity was the invention of the printing press. The wording of the liturgy until then varied from place to place, and often, from time to time. Still no matter what words were used, they were thematically determined by a single accepted structure. Even though the words varied from occasion to occasion, they were always selected to fit the theme that the structural integrity of the service demanded. You may sometimes note that different versions of the same prayer have been assigned to evening or morning (like *ahavah rabbah* that precedes the *Sh'ma* in the morning and *ahavat olam* that precedes it in the evening). That variation is usually because, when the prayer book was finally compiled, two alternative versions of the same prayer were still in common use, and both were assigned to the written service. Many other alternatives were lost.

In sum:

The key to understanding our liturgy is to know the thematic structure that

underlies the liturgical wording. The thematic structure -- the *keva*, or flow of ideas -- remains the same from synagogue to synagogue and across the centuries. The *kavannah* -- the wording -- however, may vary. Once upon a time, before prayer books existed, and when prayer was an oral medium, the wording changed all the time, depending on the innovative facility of the prayer leader. Now that we have a prayer book, the wording changes very little, since we depend on what is written. The burden of providing *kavannah* thus falls mostly on *how* the words are delivered: that is, on the music and general choreography of the service. Your study of prayer will therefore emphasize the music and choreography -- not just the words, but the way in which the words are delivered. You will learn the importance of the space you use for prayer, for instance, and how best to involve the congregation.

READ AND DISCUSS

The next step is the mapping of the Shabbat morning service. Again we suggest that the Rabbi or Cantor teach the formal structure of the service. The Preparatory Readings also dealt with the structure. They should be reviewed as well.

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ AND DISCUSS
Learning How to Pray
(found in Unit Three: Appendix)

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the session. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Optional reading for this unit:

Lawrence A. Hoffman edited a book series called *Minhag Ami: My People’s Prayer Book* (Jewish Lights Publishing). Each volume contains a detailed account of a major rubric along with commentaries on the prayers by a gamut of modern thinkers ranging from modern Orthodox to Reform. In addition, volume 1 (The *Sh’ma*) has a detailed account of how the prayer book came into being, as well as how the service was designed in antiquity. Volume 2 (the *Amidah*) has an essay on “petition in Judaism” and another on the history of the *Amidah* and its “hidden” theological message.

Unit Three: Appendix

- I. Major Rubrics of a Shabbat Morning Service
- II. Learning How to Pray

I. Major Rubrics of a Shabbat Morning Service

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Warm-up | 1. <i>Birkhot Hashachar</i>
(Morning Blessings) and
<i>P'sukei D'zimrah</i>
("Verses of song") |
| 2. The Jewish creed:
"What we believe"
(<i>talking about God</i>) | 2. <i>Sh'ma</i> and its Blessings |
| 3. Petitions:
"What we want"
(<i>talking to God</i>) | 3. <i>T'fillah</i> or <i>Amidah</i>
The <i>Amidah</i> is altered on Shabbat to celebrate holy time. It is always followed by Silent Prayer of some sort. It may also be followed by special prayers demanded by holidays like the <i>Hallel</i> (psalms for holiday celebration) or <i>Avinu Malkenu</i> (High Holiday poetry) |
| 4. Sinai revisited:
"Encountering God's word as a community" | 4. Torah and Haftarah |
| 5. Petitions:
A repetition
(<i>talking with God</i>)
-- not in Reform service | 5. Musaf service |
| 6. Conclusion | 6. <i>Alenu</i> and <i>Kaddish</i> |

II. Learning How to Pray

Do Jews Pray?

In a country where 90% of Americans say they believe in prayer and pray daily themselves, Jews stand out as uniquely troubled by the practice of praying. They may attend services, and they may even have some familiarity with the prayers and practices associated with public worship. But they report a lot of ambivalence when it comes to private prayer.

Most Jews are uncomfortable with God language in general. College and post-graduate degrees have usually sharpened their critical acumen and made them appreciate intellectual matters at a level rarely reached by other religious and ethnic groups. But their thinking about God has usually not kept pace with their other learning. Saddled with a fourth-grader's concept of the divine, they may even have given up on believing in God altogether, and they say they feel silly or embarrassed when they try to pray with their children, pray on their own, or engage in spontaneous prayer at meetings or public gatherings. Some even say, "That's not a Jewish thing to do." We engage in study; they may start meetings with a *D'var Torah*. But pray? Do Jews really pray?

The answer is, "We do." The Psalms are filled with examples of individuals who sought God in moments of distress or celebration. One Rabbi after another is cited in the Talmud as having a favorite personal prayer that followed the *Amidah*. Every single one of our standard blessings began as a private moment of prayer in the mouth of one rabbi or other. Eventually they were canonized, but only eventually. Yes, Jews do pray: not just from a book, but from the heart.

And most Jews want to pray as well. They just feel unempowered by Jewish institutions that make them feel self-conscious if they try. I teach liturgy, and when I go around the country lecturing on prayer, almost invariably, people stay after the lecture to tell me a story of how they tried to pray, and maybe even succeeded -- but then felt guilty because maybe Jews don't do that. One woman explains, "When my son was deathly ill, I fell down on my knees and prayed to God for his life. It made me feel good. It was all I could do at the time. But then I was afraid to tell anyone, because I am a proud Jew and wouldn't do anything that wasn't thoroughly Jewish." Another mother says she wanted to pray at bedtime with her children, but just didn't know how to do it. "I tried the *Sh'ma*, but it felt phony to me, as if I was play-acting. It wasn't a service, after all, and besides, my kids wanted to make up their own prayers like their friends at school say they do. I couldn't handle that, so they stopped asking, and now I have short-changed them." A businessman active in Rotary reported that his local chapter starts meetings with a prayer. "It gives the meeting a new feel," he explained, "because you know you are there to do good, not just to haggle or

do business. I wish we did that at our *Shul* board meetings.”

Synagogue 2000 is here to say that Jews can learn to pray again. They don't have to work out all the theological problems first either. Following the axiom from Sinai, *Na'aseh v'nishma* — “We will do and then we will hear” — the Jewish way has always been to jump into the practice on matters of faith, and only then to find the faith which might never have been arrived at purely by thinking. Saying prayers at meetings *does* raise meetings to a level of the sacred. It feels good to pray, and once you learn how to do it, it becomes part of daily life. So we advise our teams to get used to prayers at every meetings.

Unit Four: Rethinking God Modern Theological Options

In this unit, we will ...

- 1) recognize the array of Jewish beliefs about God
- 2) understand four different ideas of God
- 3) link personal thinking with a classical Jewish perspective

Preparatory Reading:

Choose one of the following:

1. Mordecai Kaplan, *Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers*, pp.102-106, 244, 457, 459-461.

The classic account of religious naturalism by the founder of Reconstructionism.

2. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God*, (New York: Harper, 1952), pp. 126-7

Two short but difficult pages on religious existentialism.

and

- Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought*, pp. 143-154

An exceptionally readable account of Buber, accenting his view of God and of prayer.

3. Henry Slonimsky, "Prayer and a Growing God," pp. 71-79

A poetic essay and personal statement of a *theological iconoclast*, convinced that God grows as people do.

4. Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*

A concise statement of how Jewish feminists are expanding the way we think about God.

5. Joseph Soloveitchik, "The Three Biblical Names of God" in *Reflection*

of *The Rav*, pp. 13-21

A brief selection of this influential, traditional Rabbi and scholar's teachings on God.

Optional Reading:

Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought*, Chapter 10, "A Theology of Modern Orthodoxy: Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik"

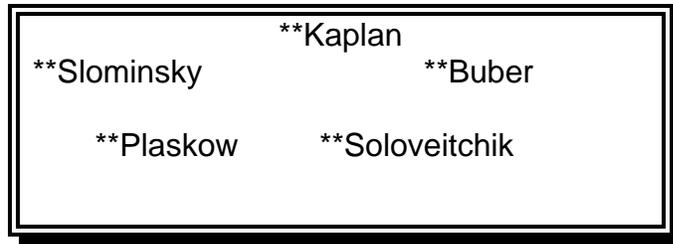
A readable, though still complex, explication of some of Soloveitchik's major ideas. Focus on pp. 229-230 for additional background on the individual's relationship to God.

Materials Needed

- Flip charts/markers
- Stickers, stars, etc.
- Extra chairs
- Food/Drinks
- A copy of a Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Siddur

Before Unit

Write on a piece of flip chart paper: "Kaplan, Buber, Soloveitchik, Slonimsky and Plaskow" (see below).



During the Unit

Goal: Recognize the array of Jewish beliefs about God. Understand four different ideas of God. Link personal thinking with a classical Jewish perspective.

Spend some time during this meeting discussing "spreading the word" (see Resources: "Spreading the Word"). During this time you should ask questions such as: How is Synagogue 2000 being received by the congregation? What have they heard? What are you doing to let lay leaders, professional staff, and congregants understand and experience S2K ideas? How has your bulletin column been embraced? Get some feedback about the bulletin and revise it if

needed.

Remind people of the next meeting date. Assign reading for the next unit, and any other homework.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking In

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in the Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

To become a more spiritual community, synagogues need to become more comfortable with God. Because synagogues have so often been child-centered, they tended to invest little energy in thinking about God from an adult perspective. The result is that many parents are not able to answer their children’s questions about God, because they do not know what they themselves believe. They may take prayer-book language literally, harboring suspicions that Judaism’s view of God must be limited to a God who looks like an old man in the sky. Unable to believe in such a God, they declare themselves “atheists” (people who categorically deny the existence of God) or

“agnostics” (people who do not now believe in God but are theoretically open-minded on the subject). They may still attend synagogues, but their reasons for belonging have little to do with praying to God.

An old Jewish joke illustrates this:

A middle-aged man (call him Schwartz) attends Shul every Shabbos. He is approached by a neighbor who questions his behavior.

Neighbor: You go to shul every Shabbos?

Schwartz: Yes

Neighbor: Why? To talk to God?

Schwartz: No, I don't believe in God. But I sit next to Cohen.

Neighbor: What's that got to do with it?

Schwartz: Cohen does believe in God. So Cohen goes to talk to God, and I go to talk to Cohen.

There still may be some “Schwartzes” who go to synagogue to talk to the “Cohens,” but, by and large, that social motivation is insufficient nowadays. And it is not just services that are affected. Without a sustaining belief in God, the very fabric of the synagogue becomes threadbare. A synagogue should be a spiritual center where people take the presence of God seriously. Synagogue 2000 teams are encouraged to consider the reality of God early on in their conversations -- partly because the existence of God is central to the experience of prayer, and partly because it is equally central to a spiritual synagogue ambiance.

For Discussion:

Divide into groups of four or five. Take a short time to discuss these questions:

- 1. What troubles you about praying?***
- 2. What prayers make you uncomfortable? Why?***
- 3. What theological issues disturb you?***

READ AND DISCUSS

It is convenient to think of the content of our prayer book (*siddur*) as having three parts:

Cosmology is what the prayers say about the nature of the universe,

including, most particularly, the condition of the Jewish people as part of history.

Anthropology is what the prayers say about human nature.

Theology is what the prayers say about God.

Any one of these elements can give thoughtful worshipers problems. Reform Jews, especially, are apt to complain, since they tend to read their prayers in English, and in so doing, have to contend with their meaning. Jews who pray in Hebrew and understand what they're saying have the same problem. Even those who do not understand the Hebrew may find their eye wandering to the English side of the page and their mind wondering why they are reciting material with which they take exception. The Reform and Reconstructionist prayer books provide optional services that omit much of the troublesome content; the Conservative siddur does not, although some exceptionally difficult passages have been altered so as to make them more palatable for moderns -- both Conservative and Reform Jews have stopped praying for a restoration of animal sacrifices, for instance.

Nonetheless, problems still abound in three areas:

Cosmology

Regarding *cosmology*, Jews have to come to terms with what we believe about being the chosen people, as found in the blessing just before the *Sh'ma* and in the *Alenu*, and what we take to be the way history works. Do we expect a messiah, or a return to *Eretz Yisrael* at the end of time -- traditional parts of the daily *Amidah*?

Anthropology

Regarding *anthropology*, most Jews today find the accent on human sin hard to take. Ever since the 19th century especially, we have emphasized the potential for good in every person. In the medieval era, by contrast, it was human evil that received the most attention, so we have many prayers that remind us of how far short we fall when compared to what God demands of us.

Theology

In the realm of *theology*, many people have trouble believing in what appears to be a male deity, "a man in the sky." This God also seems to crave as much praise as He can get, so people wonder also why God needs constant fawning from us, His people. In fact, the Rabbis worried about these things too. They did not believe that God was a "man in the sky," and they objected to the overabundance of praise. Nonetheless, our prayers are filled with material that seems, redundantly, to be praising God who seems very human and very male.

Other theological issues occur too. If God is all-powerful and all knowing and also all-good, why is there evil in the world? This is an issue of theology,

anthropology and cosmology, all tied up together.

If evil is caused by humans so that we deserve what we get, we have a negative *anthropology* -- a problem for our time, because most of us are convinced that people are mostly good, not bad.

If evil is built into the rules of nature, we have a cosmic order (cosmology) that seems unjust, especially if a good God created it -- the problem faced by Job, and so a *theological* issue too.

The issue of "How a good God can allow bad things to happen to good people" is called the problem of *theodicy*.

It seems that you can have a God who is any two of the three: all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient) and all-good (benevolent), but cannot have all three. Which one are we willing to give up? Or, can we have them all in some way after all?

Divide into small groups and discuss the following:

- 1. What interested you in the above reading?***
- 2. What terms are unclear?***
- 3. How do the authors you have read handle the issue of theodicy?***

READ AND DISCUSS

What God Do We Believe In?

Of all the theological issues, the one most pertinent to prayer is the troubling suspicion that there is no God listening. Your readings dealt with this issue. We ask you here to think through which of the various alternatives speak to you. Many people find no single one completely acceptable. Theology is not algebra: there is no single "right" answer. We will see that even though people think that their main stumbling block to prayer is about their belief in God, it turns out that theology is rarely as important as people imagine. Prayer is a ritual. When it is well done, it allows us to go beyond problems of disbelief.

However, it would be intellectually disingenuous to ignore the issue of belief altogether. If what we have is a left-over childish view of a perfect parent-like God who listens to us the way an idealized human mother or father might, we are apt to be disappointed in our worship no matter how well orchestrated it is.

We need, therefore, to understand two things: the way good worship can overcome theological scruples and the broad array of alternative theologies that modern thinkers have offered us.

The challenge is to determine the relationship between what we believe and what we pray. What is this thing called prayer anyway? We may come to services for the music, the companionship of community, the sermon, or the Torah reading. These are important but ancillary to the central core of prayer: God.

To get in touch with where you stand, we suggest the following exercise:

1. Begin with reports from people willing to talk about what they have read. One person in the room should become the champion for each of these:

- 1) Buber's God of pure presence
- 2) Kaplan's God who is a natural power that makes for salvation
- 3) Slonimsky's growing God
- 4) Plaskow's God who appears in many guises (fountain, source, lover, friend....)
- 5) Soloveitchick's eternal master and creator God

2. The Rabbi might sum up the perspectives of each author where clarification is needed.

3. When people understand the various options open to them, move to an empty room with folding chairs. Each of the five people championing the authors should stand in a separate spot in the room.

4. Ask each team member to select the thinker whose view of God they feel most comfortable with, and to move to that spot in the room. In small groups, discuss the following:

- A. What appeals to you about this view of God?
- B. What concerns, if any, do you have about this view of God? What questions does it leave unanswered?
- C. What questions/comments do you have about the other positions?

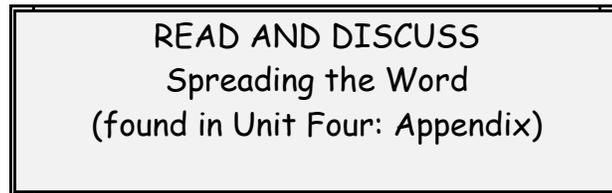
5. Have each small group share their responses to A with the other groups. Then use the questions generated in C to further discuss each of the positions.

6. Now ask each person to place a sticker on the chart that matches where they feel most comfortable. Display the chart where everyone can look at it.

7. What have you learned about your team from this exercise? For example, does your team lean more heavily towards one view of God, or are there a variety of viewpoints? What can you extrapolate about your congregation from your team's responses? What might be the implications for your synagogue's tefilah given these different views?

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?



For Discussion:

- 1. What feedback have you been getting from the congregation?**
- 2. How has your bulletin column been going?**
- 3. Is there anything else you need to be doing to spread the word?**

Concluding Ritual

Invite people to offer a few "last words" which summarize their learning from, or feeling about, the meeting. Sing a *niggun*, read a poem, or make a spontaneous prayer. For additional ideas, refer to "Concluding Ritual Suggestions" in Resources.

Optional Readings after the Meeting

You may want to read all the selections in the introductory reading list. In addition, you may enjoy *The Reconstructionist* 59:1 (Spring 1994). The entire issue is devoted to prayer, liturgy, and theology.

Unit Four: Appendix

I. Spreading the Word

This is a short menu of how some Synagogue 2000 teams have spread the word about Synagogue 2000 and the work they are doing. There is no “one right way” to spread the word. Each Synagogue 2000 team should consider its own situation and decide on the most appropriate ways in which to share what they are doing.

SPREADING THE WORD TO LAY LEADERS

Generally this group includes the Board, its officers and members, the Chairs and members of standing committees, long term active and influential members regardless of what their “official” status is at the moment, as well as the Chairs and members of other synagogue groups such as Sisterhood and the PTA.

- Informal and casual conversation between people who know one another is most important. Lay leaders should hear about Synagogue 2000 from their friends who are members of the team and from the rabbi and the cantor. The Synagogue 2000 team might develop “talking points” which answer the questions team members are most often asked so that each team member doesn't have to “make it up on the spot.”
- Members of the Synagogue 2000 team who are on the Board and on standing committees should intentionally bring up topics and ideas emanating from their S2K discussions during meetings, so naturally and in the course of doing their work, the Board and committees become aware of the thinking and experiences of the S2K team.
- Members of the Board and of standing committees should be invited to participate, when appropriate, in S2K meetings and, following their visions, should be asked their reactions and impressions.
- Regularly scheduled up-dates about what is happening at S2K meetings should be on the agenda of Board meetings.
- From time to time, as appropriate, particularly moving and interesting topics or discussion questions or exercises that have taken place at S2K meetings can be introduced at meetings of other groups, not simply as “demonstrations” but as forms of involving an ever widening circle of people in the ideas and message of Synagogue 2000. It is important that others actually experience the depth of Synagogue 2000 through these events, but these must be selected carefully so that the experiences do

not depend on previous knowledge of the Synagogue 2000 context.

SPREADING THE WORD TO PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

In addition to clergy who are likely to be personally participating in Synagogue 2000 meetings, there may be others, such as the Executive Director of the Synagogue, the school administrators and teachers, the administrative and custodial staff who should come to understand what it means to them that their congregation, as a Synagogue 2000 participating synagogue, is dedicated to being a spiritual and caring community.

- Just as it is with spreading the word to lay leadership, so it is with other groups in the synagogue: personal and informal conversations among people who know one another or who work together are the most effective and persuasive means of sharing Synagogue 2000 experiences.
- Presentations about Synagogue 2000, or the introduction of Synagogue 2000 discussion topics, might also be appropriate at staff meetings, at school board or advisory council meetings, or at meetings of other synagogue groups.
- Since an essential aspect of Synagogue 2000 is the creation of a welcoming ambiance -- both in the physical aspects of the building, and in the way people treat newcomers and one another -- people should be made more aware of how this gets translated into the small activities of daily life in the synagogue. There is available, upon request, a Synagogue 2000 workshop for administrative staff, for lay hospitality or membership committees which deals with these issues. For example, congregations that have a *Mi Sheberakh* or other healing prayer on Shabbat might invite the names of sick people in the families of their staff members, so that their names too can be included in the prayer. It means a lot to staff members, whether Jewish or not, to know that the congregation cares about their families. Staff members should be asked if they would mind being identified at the time of the prayer, e.g, "Joan, the mother of Kaye, our receptionist in the front office."

SPREADING THE WORD TO CONGREGANTS

- Congregants who come to Friday night or Shabbat services may hear about Synagogue 2000 from the pulpit -- either from the rabbi or cantor. For example, if small changes -- "low hanging fruit" -- are made in the services or the music, the congregation should be brought in on the Synagogue 2000 thinking behind the changes and be given opportunities to react and respond. People can be asked to take home "reaction forms" and mail them back. Similarly, if they are met by greeters, or find new "learning about the services" materials on their seats, or experience a different way of doing the Oneg Kiddush, they

- should understand why these changes are being made and have a chance to tell someone how they feel about the changes.
- Several Synagogue 2000 teams have set up a table in the lobby on which they put copies of selected readings of the Synagogue 2000 material. In addition to having them available as handouts, they have posted provocative questions or quotations on the walls to stimulate conversations and informal discussions. Often, they station several team members at the table to greet whoever comes to look at the material and to answer questions.
- A Synagogue 2000 booth might be set up in the lobby, where congregants after a service, or after a Sunday School “drop-off” of their children can get information on all the ways adults may find worship, social action, and study opportunities; including a comment sheet on what sort of spiritual, study or support groups at temple the person would welcome for themselves or others.
- One Synagogue 2000 team printed buttons for knowledgeable people to wear saying “We are a Synagogue 2000 congregation. Ask us what that means.”
- Synagogue bulletins contain information about Synagogue 2000 issues and ideas on a regular basis.
- The S2K team may want to think about planning one -- or a series -- of congregant-wide activities that would demonstrate the Synagogue 2000 style. They might want to conduct, for the congregation, a special service which introduces congregants to Synagogue 2000 practices.
- When thinking about upcoming synagogue activities (a Simchat Torah celebration, e.g., a fundraising dinner/dance, back to school night at the Religious School - (i.e., any place where congregants come) the S2K team might think about proposing an S2K “overlay” on the event. Greeters should be everywhere (not just collecting money), printed materials (invitations, flyers) should reflect the spiritual dimension of the event, talks and/or speeches should include reference to Torah and/or God.

For Discussion:

- 1. Who in your synagogue already knows about Synagogue 2000? What do they know? How did they find out? What is their reaction?***
- 2. Who do you think should be updated and informed about what's going on in the Synagogue 2000 team meetings?***
- 3. How and when will this happen?***

Unit Five: Prayer

The Structure of the Siddur

In this unit, we will...

- 1) complete our survey of Jewish liturgical structure
- 2) appreciate our *siddur* as an authentic representative of traditional Jewish liturgy
- 3) begin a critique of prayer-book English

Preparatory Reading:

1. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, Chapter 6 “Words Spoken”

The way words work in prayer. If we said only what we literally hold as true, we would say only a small portion of our prayers. Alternative views of God do not depend on taking God language literally. What then do words do?

2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People’s Prayer Book*, “Minhag Ami: Our Diary of prayer Across the Centuries,” pp. 1-5

3. A. Stanley Dreyfus, “The Gates Liturgies: Reform Judaism Reforms its Worship” in Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds, *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 141-156.

4. Jules Harlow, “Revising the Liturgy for Conservative Jews,” in Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds, *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*, pp. 125-140.

Descriptions of the liturgies of Reform and Conservative Movements

5. David A. Teutsch, Introduction to Kol Haneshama Prayer Book, (Wyncote, PA: The Reconstructionist Press, 1989): pp. xiv-xxiii

Follow up Reading (Optional)

Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Ritual, God, and Me," in Lawrence A. Hoffman and Arnold J. Wolf, eds., *Jewish Spiritual Journeys* (New York: Behrman House, 1997): pp. 36-48.

An autobiographical statement on the role of ritual in "manufacturing" truths about the universe and finding my way to God.

Ruth Langer, "From Study of Scripture to a Reenactment of Sinai: The Emergence of the Synagogue Torah Service," *Worship* 72:1 (1998): pp. 43-67.

A scholarly but not too technical exploration of how the Torah service grew and why it replicates standing at Sinai.

Materials Needed:

- I. Paper/Pens
- II. Siddurim for the group
- III. Food/Drink

Before the Unit

The Rabbi/Cantor should be prepared to answer any questions from the assigned readings.

During the Unit

Goal: Complete a survey of Jewish liturgical structure. Appreciate our siddur (prayer book) as an authentic representative of traditional Jewish liturgy. Begin a critique of prayer-book English.

This unit is a continuation of Unit Three. Come with your notes and spend a few minutes in the beginning going over where you left off at Unit Three.

You will take some time during this meeting to look at specific prayers. Have paper and pens if you decide as a group to sit and write your own prayer.

Remind people of the next meeting date. It is important that everyone reads the Preparatory Reading assigned for next unit.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

We assume the rabbi or cantor will answer questions that arise from your reading of the two assigned articles. Please note that even though the movement prayer books differ from one another, they follow the prescribed rubric order.

Every time you study prayers, you rehearse the structure of the service. This curriculum assumes that it will take you two or more meetings to do justice to the structure. Begin each meeting by reviewing what you already know about the structure of a service from prior study. Before going forward with this unit, be sure you understand the service structure.

The English in most prayer books is a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew. Conservative worship presupposes that you are using the Hebrew anyway, so the English is there just as a convenience: to let you know what you are saying. Reform worship differs in that the English is what is actually said. In these prayer books, therefore, often introduce creative English readings that may paraphrase rather than translate the Hebrew prayer that appears alongside it. Hebrew is central to Reconstructionist prayer also, but Reconstructionist liturgy is particularly creative, and frequently adds English readings as well. Some worship (generally Orthodox and Conservative) may have English readings, but they are usually added to the Hebrew part of the service. Other worship

(generally Reform and some Reconstructionist) differs in that the English is what is actually said.

The question is, therefore, what readings in English ought to be. The question is not academic. You may want to add readings to a service you are preparing: a healing service or a seeker service, for instance, where you have to prepare the liturgy yourself. What criteria do you use?

Most people approach the question of prayer selection by treating the prayer in question as a theological treatise. Desiring a prayer on a theme like peace or healing, for instance, they decide what they want to express and compose a paragraph that says precisely what they have in mind. They want to mean what they say and say what they mean. Alternatively, if they choose something already written, they find language that already says more or less what they think or believe.

But consider what we learn from the “Chinese Calligraphy” example in *The Art of Public Prayer*.

The first lesson of English prayer texts is that people perceive poetry differently than they do prose. They assume prose is either “fiction” or “non-fiction.” Since prayer is not “fiction,” they assume it to be “non-fiction.” But paragraphs in prose remind people of scientific writing, magazine essays, newspaper editorials and the like -- things that are argumentative, intended to be judged as true or false, and composed in such a way that readers are supposed to take the language literally. That is why we tend to accept what the prayer book says as literal, even though (as we saw in our theology study) there is little reason to believe that classical Jewish authors intended their work on God to be seen that way. They knew better than to take prayer literally. We do not.

Prayer is the search
for harmony
between
man and God,
the quest
for communication
between
the finite and the
infinite
Solomon Freehof

By contrast, when we read a passage that looks like poetry, we tend to linger over it, imagining that there is some message implicit in it, as long as we do *not* take it literally.

Poetry evokes our gift for broad interpretation. We look for the hidden meaning, poetic devices, the use of metaphor, and so forth.

And that is why English prayers should at least *appear* as poetry. Sometimes, they may actually *be* poetry. If you compose a service and can use either a poem or a prose piece, choose the poetry. If you are writing it yourself and can adapt the language to poetic style, do so -- make it scan, even at the cost of literal accuracy. If you are translating a Hebrew prayer, compose the translation in poetic form.¹

¹A side issue is whether we have the right to tamper with a translation so as to make it come out poetic, even if it does not say exactly what the Hebrew does. Which is better? Literal accuracy or poetic appeal? The answer follows from our earlier insight regarding the multiplicity of prayers that were once common in the service for any given rubric. We saw, for instance, that a prayer for peace was always part of the service, and always in the same spot. We called that *keva*, structural fixity. The thematic progression did not vary from place to place or day to day.

We have every right to make our translation “prayable” by making it into poetry. In fact, if we take as our model what the Rabbis did when they began the liturgy some 2,000 years ago, we may even want to do what they did: not worry much about literal translations. The Hebrew prayers we are translating are not sacrosanct, after all; they are just the accidental result of centuries worth of trial and error; they are what happened to get saved in contrast with other prayers on the same theme that got lost in the sands of time. Retaining them in English is not as necessary as providing new expressions of old themes that speak to the spiritual condition of the Jewish people in our time.²

Even if the reading would not pass a poet's litmus test for good poetry, the fact that it appears in poetic lines rather than in prose will make a difference. It will be treated as poetry, and will not be dismissed as saying something literally impossible about God or unscientific in its interpretations

But until the printing press, the actual words with which the prayer leader chose to express the prayer varied greatly. That means that the specific choice of words that we now have is more a matter of historical accident than anything else. Originally, more than one way of expressing our hopes for peace would have been the norm. It was not thought necessary -- in fact, it would have been frowned upon -- for a given prayer leader to use the same prayer over and over again.

2

Given our own prayer books which are printed, and the desire for familiarity, we may decide that we can no longer just freely compose whatever expression of our prayers we want. The codes, moreover, have by now mandated certain prayers over others, so that Halakhah does not give us the same leeway our ancestors once had, and we may prefer standard Hebrew prayers to be continuous with our past, since they build familiarity with the service and allow us to feel at home in a synagogue service anywhere in the world. But the English varies from prayer book to prayer book anyway; and it changes with every new edition. Why should we feel bound by English the way we do by ancient Hebrew?

about the world.

Compare the standard English version of the *Avot*, the first blessing of the *Amidah*, from the Conservative prayer book with the other versions, arrayed more poetically on the page.

Version 1: Prose

Praised are You Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God, who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors, and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of your loving nature. You are the Sovereign who helps and guards, saves and shields. Praised are You, Adonai, Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

Version 2: Still prose, but appearing as poetry

Praised are You,
Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,
God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob,
Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah,
 great, mighty, awesome,
 exalted God,
 who bestows loving kindness,
Creator of all.
 You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors,
 And will send a redeemer to their children's children
 because of your loving nature.
 You are the Sovereign
 who helps and guards, saves and shields.
Praised are You, Adonai
Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

Version 3: (Word order altered, some words omitted for the sake of cadence)

Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,

English prayers should be presented in poetic format:
- broken up into lines,
- made to scan, if possible,
- with lots of white space.

What you say matters: so, too, does how you present it.

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah,
We praise you.
God who is great, mighty and awesome,
Exalted God,
Who bestows loving kindness
Creator of all:
You remember the pious deeds of our mothers and fathers,
And will send a redeemer to their children's children
For your nature is love.
You are the Sovereign
Who helps and guards,
Saves and shields.
We praised You, Adonai, Abraham's Shield and Sarah's
Guardian.

For Discussion:

- 1. Which version has most appeal to you?***
- 2. Try reorganizing a prayer yourself.***
- 3. Find a relatively short paragraph from whatever prayer book you use and recast it as poetry.***

We can level this critique at most existing English-language prayer books: they pay little attention to how the prayers appear on the page. Since the pages look like crowded philosophy or science texts, people treat the claims in the prayers as if they are scientific or philosophical statements that are not provable as true, so must be false. They fail to consider them as poetic possibilities that can evoke inspiring God-concepts.

READ AND DISCUSS
Prayer As Drama
(found in Unit Five: Appendix)

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have

as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

DISCUSS
Prayer As Literature
(found in Unit Five: Appendix)

Concluding Ritual

Invite people to offer a few “last words” which summarize their learning from, or feeling about, the meeting. Sing a *niggun*, read a poem, or make a spontaneous prayer. For additional ideas, refer to “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources.

Unit Five: Appendix

- IV. Prayer As Drama
- II. Prayer As Literature
- III. Hebrew and English in Services

I. Prayer As Drama

We have said that because of the prose-layout of the words, people come to expect that prayers *describe* reality, the way a scientific treatise does. Prayers do more than describe. Some of what words of prayer do:

1. They make things happen in the present. They perform.
- as in wedding ceremonies, when someone says, *Harei at m'kudeshet li...* ("Behold you are sanctified by me...according to the laws of Moses and Israel")
2. They constitute a sacred story of the past.
- as in the *Mi khamokha*, which "remembers" how God saved us at the Red Sea
3. They look to the future, by hoping, committing us, inspiring us.
- as in the *Alenu* – "On that day, Adonai will be one..."

They present a *virtual* and *alternative universe*. Good drama does that also. Deeply engrossed in a great play, the audience forgets for a moment what life is *really* like. Vacationers staying in expensive hotels attend London's performance of *Les Miserables* and cry uncontrollably at the poverty of France's peasantry and the horror of war. For just a moment, in the final scenes, they believe also in life after death where virtue is rewarded, heroism is not in vain, and it all works out in the end. So, too, with prayer. If the "drama" works, we believe in it, even if we harbor doubts about some of the literal meaning.

We leave our secular roles at the door and emerge as self-conscious Jews...

Liturgy (worship as drama, that is) is even more powerful than ordinary theater, because the people in the congregation are not just observers of someone else's play. They are the players, and this is their story! That is why they have to be engaged, not distant and passive. When we say that liturgy is drama, then, we do not mean that it is in some way "playacting," or even that it has to be rehearsed, or that it becomes a spectacle or an "event." We mean that if liturgy engages us, we discover that it is "our" play, from across of the centuries. As we go through it, it makes us into the roles that the drama contains. Although we enter as housewife, lawyer, retired teacher, in any role that society has set up for us, that is not how we leave. If our worship is successful, we leave not only having fulfilled our responsibility as Jews. We have exchanged our secular roles for the Jewish roles that the liturgy prescribes. By saying the *Sh'ma* with proper *Kavvanah* (as the Rabbis put it), we "accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven" that is, we become conscious

of God as the sovereign of the universe. When we say the final line of the *Alenu* (“On that day, Adonai will be one...”) we recover the promise of *tikkun olam* (“perfecting the universe”). If we are called to the Torah, it is as if we stand at Sinai again. If we enter services having experienced a bad day at the office or a struggle to get our telephone fixed, we leave services having vicariously re-experienced the Exodus, Sinai, the prophets, Jerusalem restored, and the Jewish vision of a better tomorrow. We leave our secular roles behind, and emerge as self-conscious Jews. To say that prayer is drama, then, is to affirm that the grand story of the Jewish trek through time can capture us as willing participants in that journey.

For Discussion:

- 1. What is your reaction to these ideas?***
- 2. Has the transformation of roles ever happened to you?***

II. Prayer As Literature

Your reading in *The Art of Public Prayer* further describes prayer as drama, putting it on a continuum beyond the normal drama that also engages us, but that we know is not ours. Perhaps that lesson is worth repeating here: Remember the continuum of literature. On one side of the continuum is the novel. Novels are read privately and quietly according to your personal taste. Libraries make all sorts of books available, and it is considered bad form to ask too closely after the kind of book that someone else is reading. If a friend does ask you, and if you are reading a “junk novel,” you may even apologize by saying, “It’s just for quick light reading, after all.” It is, in other words, your choice; it is a private matter.

Prayer is about dreaming.

Hebrew, music and poetry
are the language of dreams.

Prayer does not discover reality
so much as it constructs it.

As you take one step to the right on the chart below, you come to poetry. You may read poetry privately also, but unlike novels, poems are composed to be read aloud. You go to poetry readings, for instance; if you steal silently into a room and hear a solitary reader there reading a poem aloud, you may pause to listen and even enjoy it; whereas hearing a novel read aloud is apt to make you wonder what the reader is doing.

Moving further to the right in the chart, you come to drama, which you can read privately if you wish but usually presupposes your seeing it performed. Unlike poetry, you are expected to participate publicly in drama. Public performance is its whole point.

And one step further along on the chart, you come to liturgy. Liturgy is like the script of a play, but the lines become the property of everyone in attendance. We do not just watch other people recite the drama of liturgy we participate. We are supposed to be moved by this drama; our lives are supposed to change, as we internalize the promise or hope of the liturgical service, integrating its *message into the people we strive to become*.

Fiction

Real Life

<i>Private</i>	novel	poetry	drama	liturgy	<i>Public</i>
<i>Quiet</i>					<i>Aloud</i>

We return to this theme of prayer as drama again and again. Most Jews will say that when they *daven* the Hebrew, for instance, they do not know what the words mean. Even those who do may admit that when they race through the lengthy paragraphs, they are, at best, only vaguely aware of what they are saying. They do not have time to translate every word as they come to it, and in any event, the style often make it hard to grasp the word-for-word meaning anyway. However, the Hebrew ambiance of the service establishes a mood of otherness, a Jewish otherness, where different rules of reality exist. Music does the same thing: you can sing a lot of things that you would probably choke on if you were just to speak them. And poetry, too, permits us to dream, not just to report.

Words establish an alternative present: when you walked down the aisle, you weren't married. Fifteen minutes later, you are "sanctified ... by the laws of Moses and of Israel."

You sit with friends, say words that go back centuries, dress in special clothes, and go through motions that you would never perform on the street. Your Torah reading and the sermon link your life to a tale about people you never knew (and in whose historical reality you may not even believe). Out of it all, life is reshaped: or should be. For that is what words of prayer can do. Out of it all, your life is reshaped, or should be.

Words establish sacred models from the past: when you entered the sanctuary, you were just you, an individual with an unremarkable past. Now you "remember" that you were in Egypt, saved by God from slavery so that you could save others.

Words establish a future, by hoping, committing us, inspiring us. When services began, you were alone with your problems. Now, in the comfort of the community and the surety of a God who cares, you dare to hope in the future.

In rote worship where no one is seriously involved, none of these things happen. How to make them happen is your challenge. You cannot change the prayer book after all; the prayers are what they are. Especially if you are a "traditional" congregation, you may have little leeway to imagine dramatic changes.

But remember that the drama of worship is dependent on the entire ambiance of the service, not just one or another prayer. Even in crowded services, much can be altered. Community and music are critical; so too are

warmth and welcome. Have patience; we are just getting started. These early sessions are meant to get you thinking differently, not taking actions. Taking actions and making changes will come -- in due time.

For Discussion:

- 1. How has this analysis changed your feeling about prayer and worship services?***
- 2. What might you wish to do differently at your services?***
- 3. Later on you will begin to consider small changes you might make, "low hanging fruit." But for now, simply brainstorm some ideas.***

III. Hebrew and English in Services

(Our appendices on Halakhah are intended only as springboards to Jewish discussion that is rooted in Jewish categories and sources. They hardly do justice to the complexity of the issues they address. Rather, they are outlines of some of the halakhic considerations that apply to the material covered in the sessions that they accompany. We know that conversation on these issues will be expanded by each team's rabbis.)

Technically, Jewish law permits prayer in any language, but Hebrew has been the preferred language of prayer since the time when the liturgy first came into being. Except for women's prayer books -- in Italian or Yiddish -- public worship was almost universally in Hebrew until the nineteenth century.

It was then that the issue of praying in the vernacular first arose, particularly in Germany, where reformers wanted to modernize Jewish practice for the many Jews who were leaving Judaism because they found its medievalisms uncongenial to their modern life. The question was whether prayer in Hebrew was one such a medievalism. Some said yes, and some said no.

The issue emerged most clearly at a rabbinic conference in mid-century, when that body voted that, while Hebrew was desirable, it was not always necessary. This was a compromise position that fell short in the opinion of the radical group for whom Hebrew was no longer even desirable. On the other side of the debate, one rabbi, Zacharias Frankel, is remembered as walking out of the meeting because he felt Hebrew was more than just "desirable;" he wanted the resolution to affirm its "necessity," and when he was outvoted, he refused to go along with the majority.

Currently, modern Conservative Jews trace their ideological lineage back to Frankel, while modern Reform Jews side with the majority opinion that Frankel rejected. Conservative worship has therefore increasingly become more Hebraic, not less. The first official Conservative siddur was the *Silverman Prayer Book* of 1946, for instance. It was patterned after a private prayer book by Rabbi Morris Silverman of Hartford, Connecticut. The original book featured transliterations for most of the congregational responses. These were omitted from the official prayer book that the movement published, and *Siddur Sim Shalom* was planned with Hebrew clearly in mind as the language of Jewish prayer, to the point where (in the first edition) sexist language in the translation was officially overlooked, since it was felt that people would not actually use it.

Modern Orthodoxy goes back to Samson Raphael Hirsch, also a rabbi in Germany, who strove to combine traditional ideas and practice with a modern identity, emphasizing, above all, sophisticated Jewish education. Hirsch's

students put together a traditional siddur with commentary that they had learned from their teacher. The siddur follows all the traditional rubrics, but has some surprises: for example, it omits Kol Nidre, because Hirsch opposed the idea that Jews might not be responsible for all their vows, and although Kol Nidre did not really imply such a notion, he feared that people who read the German translation might get the wrong idea. Hirsch insisted on praying in Hebrew, but he provided facing page translations, and his commentary is in the vernacular. Nowadays, many Orthodox prayer books abound, but increasingly the Artscroll series is becoming popular, because, like Hirsch's siddur, it has abundant translation and commentary in the vernacular.

Our most recent movement, Reconstructionism, arose out of the thought of Mordecai Kaplan, who taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary in the first half of the 20th century. Kaplan was convinced that Judaism had to be rethought as a civilization. Reconstructionist liturgy goes back to Kaplan himself. It provides a liturgy that is traditional more or less, but amended to make room for Kaplan's somewhat radical theology, which, among other things, saw God as an indwelling force in the natural world, the "force that makes for salvation," and which rejected the notion of the chosen people. Kaplan also provided prayers for the American calendar. Contemporary Reconstructionism has moved away somewhat from Kaplan's original thinking, and has integrated the ideas pioneered by the Chavurah movement of the 1960's and 1970's. Its current liturgies abound in concern for modern sensitivities, such as feminism.

Reform worship has varied with regard to the Hebrew-English balance. Isaac Mayer Wise wrote a moderate book about half Hebrew and half English (with some German): full Hebrew pages on the right with matching translations on facing pages. The other major forerunner for the American Reform Movement, Rabbi David Einhorn of Baltimore, published a book with almost no Hebrew at all. At the present time, Reform congregations are committed to bilingual worship but divided on such important "details" as how much of each to demand, and whether to include transliterations in the prayer book.

Conservative synagogues, by both custom and conviction, recite over 90% of the prayers in Hebrew -- even in late Friday night services and on the High Holy Days, when the least traditional crowd is likely to be in attendance. The Law Committee had assumed this practice so that the only specific ruling on it that Rabbi Elliot Dorff could find is that the blessings surrounding the *aliyah* should not be said in English. Copies of the transliteration should be made available.

A Reform responsum urges Hebrew for the blessings on the grounds that Jewish custom (*minhag*) is to use Hebrew at these times. Congregations whose custom allows English may continue to do so, since local custom takes precedence. Still, people who know they will be called for an *aliyah* are encouraged to learn the Hebrew beforehand.

Conservative usage allows English to accompany the Hebrew and English prayers may be added. As far as English style is concerned, *Siddur Sim Shalom* (1985) omitted the Shakespearean English pronouns, but retained masculine pronouns for both human beings and God. Revisions of that siddur have changed this practice.

Unit Six: Rethinking God as Intimate Presence

In this unit, we will...

- 1) recognize that God, who is beyond human imagination, can never be fully imaged, so must be conceived anew in every age
- 2) see the intrinsic relationship between our God-image and our institution building
- 3) analyze the image of God that underlies our synagogue's culture and structure
- 4) reconceptualize God for ourselves
- 5) recognize that synagogue transformation is a profound response to our faith that we are made in God's image and therefore asked to act as God does

Preparatory Readings:

Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, Chapter 5:
"The Presence of God At Worship"

Materials Needed:

(None)

During the Unit

This is a reassessment unit regarding our thoughts about God. Many small group discussions will take place. You will need to monitor how long each conversation lasts. Allow time for everyone to share their thoughts while balancing the rhythm of the meeting. You may decide to ask someone to write up some thoughts to share in a bulletin article.

Remind people of the next meeting date. Assign reading for the next unit, and any other homework.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time.

Write up and distribute notes to team members and regional change manager.

READ AND DISCUSS

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D'var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t'fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

To judge by surveys, most people do not think deeply about the nature of God or of prayer. Large numbers of people report that they hold a relatively traditional view of a deity who hears our prayer the way another person hears a request from a friend, and may or may not be moved to grant it.

Divide into small groups each of which answers one question.

For Discussion:

- 1. Do you believe in the healing power of personal prayer?**
- 2. Do you believe that praying for someone else can cure their illness?**
- 3. Do you believe that God sometimes intervenes to cure people who have a serious illness?**
- 4. Do you believe that doctors should join their patients in prayer if the patients request it?**

It would appear that most Americans see God as a kind of super-parent whose role is to make us better in times of suffering. Implicitly, they may imagine themselves

as the children they once were when they thought mom or dad could make all things better. The actual power of prayer to heal is a very large question – too big to be addressed at this point. However, we will never appreciate the power of prayer as long as we assume its efficacy to be response to personal petition.

Judaism's view of *God* is far too complex to be captured in a single simple image.

Reformulating our experience of prayer requires an acknowledgment of the fact that *God* is never fully grasped by human consciousness. We know *God* differently in every era.

- Even if you, yourself, believe that *God* acts personally, the way most Americans apparently do, you may not appreciate the broader scope of how we may meet *God* in worship.
- And if you have trouble with belief in a personal *God*, then you may make the mistake of thinking that prayer must be irrelevant for you.

Exodus [Reading 1]
 Maimonides on God [Reading 2]
 Maimonides on God [Reading 3]
 (found in Unit Six: Appendix)

READ AND DISCUSS
Views of God
(found in Unit Six: Appendix)

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people’s reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ AND DISCUSS

Synagogue 2000 is built on the conviction that synagogues should be places where God’s presence is palpable. But for many of us God is no longer identifiable as the “old man in the sky.” God does not automatically answer our prayers or reward our goodness the way a parent hands out lollipops. But we have not been given permission to say so out loud, and we walk around with no alternative way to conceptualize God, so we avoid the issue. Every one of the six Synagogue 2000 spokes is, we believe, a way toward God, a way to connect the larger yearnings of the human spirit to a different facet of the divine presence: the same divine presence that Moses knew, when God told Moses, “You cannot see my face.” God may have no anthropomorphic face. But God is real nonetheless. And God can be the center of Jewish life in synagogues that connect the *PISGAH* vision to the ultimate source of meaning in the cosmos.

Can God's presence be evident in a synagogue which constantly engages in good deeds? Or a synagogue where the ambiance is filled with a sense of wholeness and healing? Or a synagogue where study is everyone's passion - not just to know more facts, but to inform our lives with meaning?

What makes Synagogue 2000 unique is not just its call for *Prayer*, *Institutional assessment and change*, *Study*, *Good deeds*, an *Ambiance of welcome and care*, and *Healing*. What characterizes Synagogue 2000 is its insistence that when people engage in these acts, they are engaging in acts of ultimate meaning. The synagogue that sponsors them becomes the place where people find the purpose of their life. It is where they connect to something beyond their own mortality. It is where they find their access to the divine.

For Discussion:

If God is not recognizable any more as a King, worship that depends on awe alone can no longer work its magic as it once did. If God is, instead, better seen as an intimate presence among us, and if God is known nowadays primarily through the intimacy of relationship rather than as a distant monarch, if God is a God who is present when

we do good deeds; then...

- 1. What is your image of God?***
- 2. How should the synagogue function so that it is a place of God?***
- 3. How should our public prayer be understood?***
- 4. How should we comport ourselves in the synagogue, so that we emulate the God-likeness in which we say we are made?***

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the session. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Six: Appendix

- I. Readings About God
- II. Views of God

I. Readings About God

1. Exodus 33:17-23

The Lord said to Moses, "I will do what you ask, for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name."

He [Moses] said, "O, let me behold Your Presence!"

He [God] replied, "I will make all My goodness pass before you as I proclaim the name "Adonai" before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show compassion to whom I will show compassion. But you cannot see my face and live. See, there is a place near me. Station yourself there on the rock, and as my Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with my hand, until I have passed by. Then I will take my hand away and you will see my back; but my face cannot be seen.

2. Code of Maimonides: *Sefer Hamada*

"Laws Concerning the Foundational Principles of Torah" 1:8-9

It is expressly explained in both the Torah and the Prophets that God has no body or physicality, for it says (Joshua 2:11), "The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath," and no body can be in both places. It also says (Deuteronomy 4:15), "You saw no physical form when God spoke to you..." and (Isaiah 40:25), "To whom will you liken me, to whom can you compare me?" Now if God had a body, He would be comparable to other bodies.

If that is the case, what can it mean when scripture says, "under his [God's] feet," "written by the finger of God," "the hand of God," "the eyes of God," "the ears of God," and the like? The whole thing is composed with the understanding of human beings in mind; since they think in terms of bodily shape, the Torah speaks in the language of human beings [*hakol l'fi da'atan shel b'nei adam hu she'einan makirin ela hagufot v'dibrah Torah k'lashon b'nai adam*]... Everything is metaphoric [*Hakol masha*].... The truth is, the human mind cannot understand the divine; it cannot grasp or fathom it [*ein da'ato shel adam mevin v'lo y'cholah l'hasigo ul'chakro*].

3. Commentary of Maimonides to the Mishnah: Sanhedrin 10:1

You should know that Torah scholars are divided in their views regarding the good that accrues to human beings in their performance of the commandments that God gave us through Moses, and also regarding the bad that is meted out to those who transgress them. There are very many arguments on such matters according to the

differences of human reason, and a great deal of confusion as well, to the point where it is almost impossible to find someone who is entirely clear on the matter....

I suggest, dear reader, that you attend to the following analogy, after which you will understand my meaning in the matter at hand.

Imagine that a young child has been brought to a teacher for the study of Torah. The greatest good for him would be to understand the fullness of the matter, but on account of his youth and immature power of reason, he is unable to grasp it. Of necessity, the teacher, whose mind is more advanced than the student, is forced to motivate the student by means of things that the student enjoys in accord with his age. So he says to him, "Read this passage, and I will give you some candy." Thereby, the student will read and pay attention to the reading, even though he cannot grasp its true value except as something he does to attain something sweet to eat. Eating a treat is more important to him than the reading. It is doubtless so much better to him, that he considers the study to be work, and he works at it just to attain the candy as a reward that he really wants.

When he grows up and his power of reason matures, the reward that seemed so good to him as a child will be less important. Now, he grows to like something else, so that the teacher motivates him by awakening his desire for whatever that thing is. The teacher says, "Read and I will give you a pair of shoes or a new suit of clothes." He thereby performs the reading, but for the sake of a new wardrobe which he values more than Torah, and which constitutes the end of his study.

When he has become more mature yet, he will disdain even that reward, and instead, set his heart upon what is greater still. His teacher now says, "Learn this section and I will pay you in cash." He now goes about learning just to get paid, since money is now more valuable to him than learning, and he learns only to achieve the cash promised him.

But he continues to grow, until the measure of money too is diminished, and he yearns for something with more prestige. So his teacher instructs him, "Study in order to become a leader and a judge among us. Everyone will honor you; they will rise up before you. He now studies to attain the honor that people pay him, to be elevated by them and receive praise from them."

But all of this is of little value. It may be necessary for those with little wisdom that they set as the goal of wisdom something other than wisdom itself. About such things, the Rabbis said, "They study but not for its own sake," meaning that they work hard to perform the commandment of studying Torah, but for extraneous not intrinsic reasons. The Rabbis were adamant about that, saying, "Do not make your study a crown by which to attain glory, nor a spade with which to dig." They meant thereby to hint at what I am explaining to you: wisdom knows no higher end -- neither the honor that people pay the learned, nor monetary reward. We should occupy ourselves with God's Torah without regard for earning a living. The goal of wisdom is just knowledge itself, as the

goal of truth is just to know that it is the truth. Torah is truth, and the goal of knowing it is just to live it. It is forbidden for a completely mature person to ask, "What do I gain by performing commandments and avoiding sin?" It would be like the child whom I mention, who asks, "What will you give me if I study?" People tell him, "You will get such and such," because they see his limited capacity to think.

It is not that the multitude of people who act out of hope for some external reward or fear of punishment lose everything thereby. It is just that they are not fully grown in their understanding.... The sages say, "Let people occupy themselves with Torah even if it is not for its own sake, since from study for extrinsic reward, they can move to study for its own intrinsic merit."

For Discussion:

Maimonides' treatise on pedagogy here is an analysis of the maturation process on which human cognition depends. What goes for the issue of "reward and punishment" (Maimonides' topic) goes also for our own growing conception of God.

We are challenged to conceive of God in different ways, depending on the circumstances and our own personal needs. Some views of God may be "childish," albeit necessary at the time. But others are distinctly adult orientations to God, things children are not likely to comprehend.

The difference between Maimonides' account of reward and punishment and our understanding of God is that (according to Maimonides) there is a single fully mature way to view reward and punishment – Torah and goodness are their own reward, he says – whereas there may be many equally "grown-up" ways for adults to experience the reality we call God.

- 1. Do you agree with how Maimonides' deals with the issue of "reward and punishment?"***
- 2. How do we redefine our theological ideas as we grow older?***

II. Views of God

Divide into four groups, each of which discusses one image.

Image 1

In the age of Abraham and Sarah, nomadic existence gave us the idea of God who travels with the patriarchs, and is a kind of patriarch Himself. He has no single dwelling place. For instance, Jacob erects a place for Him at Beth El, and Moses finds Him at the burning bush.

In Roman times, God begins to look like a Roman noble, monied and powerful, an emperor, in fact, or at least the head of family and state, as in *avinu malkenu*, "Our Father, our King."

For Discussion

- 1. How is God conceived in American life?***
- 2. What images have we bring brought here with us from experiences in Europe?***
- 3. What did our parents teach us about God?***

Image 2

Rabbi Susan Talve (in St. Louis) has a wonderful tradition of asking kindergarten children to draw a picture of what it is like to meet God. Every year prior to the High Holy Days, she takes the pictures that the current year's class has drawn and has a printer offset them onto the front of greeting cards. Then she sells boxes of "kids' greeting cards for the holidays" in her Judaica shop. A full set of cards has one card from each of the kids in the class. Each card has the picture on the front and a blank section within, in which you write your message. On the back, it says, "A greeting card about God, by (name of child who drew it)."

For Discussion:

What kind of images did you have about God as a child?

Image 3

Institutions mirror our God-image, and then impart that image to people who go there. This is a sort of theological feedback loop. People with a particular view of God build institutions that confirm their image; as long as the social structure confirms the image also, the institution works. When the institution's message is out of sync with the times, people feel the institution is irrelevant. They look for God elsewhere.

Think of the process this way:

Social structure -----> God image----->Institutional ambiance.

If the social structure changes, and the God metaphor no longer applies, the institution that tries to sustain the outdated metaphor forfeits people's confidence.

We need to think through the necessary relationship between synagogue style -- its look, its structure, its activity -- and the image of God that is projected.

For Discussion:

- 1. Where do people think they find God in the American synagogue?***
- 2. Is God associated with the activities that the synagogue does?
Which?***
- 3. Do you think that the synagogue has become a secular programming center because people have given up on finding God altogether?***

Image 4

In many synagogues, a majority of people would be unable to answer any of these questions with any degree of certainty. They would find themselves uncomfortable with them. That is because their God concept has not kept up with society's development. The problem began in Europe, not here in America. Already by the time our forebears arrived here as immigrants, they had mostly jettisoned the traditional God-image of the Middle Ages, but they had no other concept to replace it with. The result is that many became atheists. In eastern Europe, some channeled their Jewish messianic fervor into socialism, remaining proud cultural Jews without the baggage of a God they could not believe in. They built synagogues here, but as ethnic compounds, not as bastions for God. And with the arrival of corporate efficiency, synagogues became efficient deliverer of services. Where was God in all this?

For Discussion:

If secularity is insufficient, and God as all-powerful Father and King are unsatisfactory, how can we make synagogues places where the presence of God is palpable?

Unit Seven: How Worship Moves Us Not *Sign* But *Symbol*

In this unit, we will...

- 1) discuss how symbols are to signs as poetry is to prose
- 2) think through the symbolic ambiance of our sanctuary

Preparatory Reading:

1. Samuel Barth, "Symbols in Jewish Worship: Continuity and Change in a Self-Conscious Era" *Liturgical Ministry* (Fall 1993): pp.138-148.
It is not the words or texts of prayer but the symbols that matter most.
2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer*, Chapter 2:
"Lost Symbols"
A distinction between "symbols" that move us, and "signs" that do not. Much of what goes by the name "symbol" is really just a "sign." Worship requires an ambiance that evokes symbolism.
3. "On the *Tallit* and *Yarmelka (Kippah)*" in *Gates of Understanding*, Vol. II. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis (1984) pp.56-62.
A brief historical essay on the history of both *tallit* and *kippah*. Intended originally for Reform worshipers who are deciding whether to adopt them, but the historical data is true for us all.

During the Unit

Spend time during this unit to think through how you are "Spreading the Word" about Synagogue 2000 throughout your congregation. Make sure that between now and your next meeting that all "committees" have heard about Synagogue 2000.

Remind people of the next meeting date. Assign reading for the next unit, and any other homework.

After the Unit

Make note of who is assigned to speak at various committee meetings. Make sure it gets done and have them be prepared to report out during the next unit.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

Symbols have been described in so many ways that no single definition is accepted by everyone. In general, we can lay out a spectrum of opinion from 1 to 4, where 1 represents how arbitrary symbols are and 4 imagines there is something absolutely inherent in them, some meaning that the symbol holds within itself.

Divide into four groups to discuss the following thoughts on symbols.

1. Symbols are purely arbitrary. Anything can mean anything to anyone

at any time. Individuals and traditions arbitrarily assign meaning to symbols, saying, for instance, that *tsitsit* symbolize our coming out of Egypt. But *tsitsit* could have been taken to stand for something else also. It just so happened that the Exodus was assigned to *tsitsit*; it didn't have to work out that way. In fact, the midrash regularly provides lots of alternative meanings for symbols. Symbols, therefore, can mean lots of things, all of them just random, and we are free to read anything we want into them at any time.

2. Symbols are arbitrary at the beginning, but they do not remain that way for very long. Once religious traditions assign them one meaning rather than another, they really have that meaning. What we said above in #1 regarding *tsitsit* was true initially, but now that *tsitsit* do stand for the Exodus, we are not free to find new meanings for them. *Tsitsit* symbolize the Exodus and that's that.

3. Some symbols, (and maybe all of them) are not just arbitrary. They have inherent meanings with which we are not free to tamper. Take, for instance, a special class of symbol, the things that are regularly associated with what they stand for, the way smoke is associated with fire. "Where there's smoke, there's fire," we say. Other symbols that have inherent meaning are those that look like what they symbolize; we call them "icons." The color red symbolizes danger, not arbitrarily, but because red is the color of blood and of flame, so it directly reminds us of danger. Red, therefore, symbolizes danger. Red lights mean "Stop." When we get angry enough that we could kill, we "see red."

4. Symbolism is even more fixed than that. Some symbols have meanings that connect deep inside our psyches, or are fixed by metaphysical properties inherent in them. Jung, for example, believed in archetypes, symbolic shapes or ideas that have emerged out of human history so that everyone shares them simply by being human. Shapes that stretch equally toward the four cardinal points (like a cross, in Christianity) stand for balance, and point the way to personal internal human equilibrium. Other archetypes are things like Mother Earth or Mother Nature, inherent symbols of nurture that you see in myths world-wide.

Worship that works depends on creating the kind of emotional ambiance that powerfully connects people to the words, gestures and things that constitute the worship experience.

When we become attached or repelled by things because of the experience that accompanies them, we say they are “symbolic.” When we become attached or repelled by things, we may seek a reason for being so moved. When we ask, “What do they *symbolize*?” we are really asking, “What do they *sign-ify*?”

Alternatively, tradition itself may assign a *sign*-value to a thing because at a given point in time, the people who make up the community feel so strongly about a given object. For instance, medieval Jews depended on their synagogues for their existence but yearned to be redeemed from “exile” and to return to Jerusalem. They likened their synagogue to the tabernacle in the desert and the Temple of old, and therefore, outfitted it with

things that they thought the tabernacle once had. That is how we got a *parochet* (curtain) over the ark, a *ner tamid* (eternal light), and so forth. These items are not necessarily symbolic to later Jews, however, who may never feel especially emotional about them at all, but who may or may not memorize the official

interpretation of them that gets passed down through time.

For Discussion:

Our purpose, right now, is not to decide how every symbol gets its meaning, but rather, how symbols function in worship.

Pick a symbol in the worship service.

- ***What is its function in the service?***
- ***What meanings does it have to you and others in your group?***
- ***What is their sign-value?”***

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people’s reaction to the units so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

Adjourn to the sanctuary for the following exercise:

- Have people stand under or adjacent to a symbol that means a lot to them. People who have no such symbol to stand next to can sit anywhere they like.
- When they have found their places, ask them why they chose the symbol that they did?
- Estimate how many people have Jewish symbols that matter to them?
- How many of the people present merely opted for a convenient sign, because they had no moving prayer experiences in the sanctuary to draw upon?

READ AND DISCUSS
Harry's Ashtray
(originally from "The Art of Public
Prayer" pp. 52-53)

Harry's Ashtray

Though he didn't know it was a ritual, Harry had been a member of a lunch ritual nonetheless. He used to own a furniture store in New York, and every day, for years, he and some friends who operated other stores nearby would go to their favorite haunt for lunch. They would sit at the same table and have the same waiter serve them. They always ordered the same thing, even joked around in the same way with the waiter, who got used to their jibes about the old-fashioned restaurant. Near the end, the restaurant was sold to a new owner who decided to capitalize on the fact that the old part of town was being gentrified. He changed the menu to *nouvelle cuisine*, replaced the round tables with smaller square ones, altered the decor, and warned the waiter not to waste so much time talking to the customers. By the time the final renovations had been finished however, Harry had decided to retire anyway. He sold his store, bid "the boys" (as he called his lunch-time friends) a last good-bye, and moved to Florida.

The environment of prayer should evoke a God who meets us in warm intimacy, as part of a caring community!

If you visit him in his condominium there, you will see an old and battered ashtray sitting on his desk. But Harry doesn't smoke; he never has!

Just before he moved south, his friends met him one last time at the restaurant, and on the way out the door, he took the ashtray as a visible reminder of his years of friendship with the lunch crowd. If asked about the ashtray, he will smile sheepishly and explain all about the lunch moment.

For Discussion

Divide into groups of four or five for the following discussion:

- 1. Would average members consider the experience of prayer in the synagogue symbolic in a positive way?***
- 2. How can services be changed to make them more symbolically charged? That is the goal!***
- 3. Do services bring people together or separate them? Is the ambiance warm or coldly forbidding?***
- 4. How do the colors and art function to create warm moments that people will treasure?***

SPREADING THE WORD

Take time out before you close for the evening to discuss the following questions about the *SYNAGOGUE 2000* process and its relationship to the rest of your synagogue.

- Make a list of all committees in your synagogue. See how many representatives sit with you now in your S2K group.
- Within the next month, have someone speak at each of the committees explaining a little about S2K. You will find some Talking Sheets in Resources 17.11 to help you in this process.
- With the group, discuss how you would explain what S2K is and its purpose in your synagogue at this time.
- Also, keep using your bulletin as a means of communication with your synagogue.

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from, or their feelings about, this unit. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety

of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Eight: Watchers, Seekers, Regulars and Professionals

Spiritual Search and Religious Healing

In this unit, we will...

- 1) familiarize ourselves with the “seeker” phenomenon
- 2) understand “seekers” as individuals on a spiritual search for wholeness
- 3) understand the meaning of a synagogue where “God is always present”
- 4) differentiate among types of synagogue members
- 5) introduce various types of synagogue members to one another
- 6) learn the relationship between spiritual search and religious healing

Preparatory Readings:

1. Wade Clark Roof, “Mollie’s Quest,” in *A Generation of Seekers*, pp. 63-88.
A detailed and fascinating portrait of seekers.
2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, *A Tale of Four Generations* (Synagogue 2000 Library)
A look at what is driving the current search for spirituality, against the backdrop of Jewish history in America, especially the 1950s and the baby-boom generation.

During this Unit

Find sometime during this unit to report out what happened during your visits to various committee meetings. Were there common questions that were repeated in different meetings? What can you do to communicate more effectively throughout your synagogue?

After the Unit

What actions need to take place from “reporting out”? Make sure to follow-through and make assignments as needed.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking in Suggestions” in Resources for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Traveler’s Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

In an earlier unit, we saw how our concept of God lies at the heart of the synagogue. As our image of God changes, we expect the synagogue to change too. If the synagogue resists change, so that the image of God we find there is not consonant with the image that we actually have, we abandon the synagogue, labeling it irrelevant.

Now we turn to the social changes that lie behind new images of God. Even in a democracy, cultural or social change is not a planned thing. For instance, no one votes on whether we should become more or less liberal. We become more or less liberal, and then we vote. And social movements are not initiated everywhere in society all at once. Each era features specific sectors of the population that drive change. Think of the population group most responsible for change as unconscious trend setters, especially in eras of massive social upheaval, where new groups with novel needs dominate the social agenda.

Consider the case of “Frontier Religion and Princes of the Pulpit”:

In 19th-century America, rapidly growing frontier life spawned huge population segments on the march westward, living in frontier towns, and yearning for a form of religion that was less institutionally mired in old styles, and relatively freewheeling as befit frontier life. The result was a series of camp meetings that became the modern Methodist and Baptist churches. Great preachers put up tents in frontier towns, set up a circus-like ambiance, and preached to masses, many of whom “declared themselves for Christ.” Historians call it “**The Second Great Awakening**” (the first one had already taken place in colonial America, under the influence of New England preachers and immigrants with strongly Puritan leanings).

The following snippet gives you some indication of the nature of these camp meetings.

On August 6, 1801, the greatest revival meeting ever held took place in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. For months prior, rumors of the meeting spread throughout the Midwest and even into the east, and by the time the day dawned, somewhere between 10,000 and 25,000 pilgrims anxious to be saved had gathered together in the hot and sultry summer air. This was at a time, mind you, when all of Lexington, Kentucky’s largest city and the state capital, did not exceed 20,000 souls. Critics charged that more than spirituality went on there, what with thousands of loose men and women cavorting about in the Lexington summer nights -- as one pundit put it, “More souls were begat than were saved.”

But in fact, the meeting went down in the annals of American history as a something worth remembering on religious grounds alone, because even if some souls were conceived there, lots more claimed to have been reborn, by a sudden conviction that God had been present alongside everyone else in that Kentucky mud, and this conviction, it was said, was never so clear as during the worship services that came complete with exercises. Clearly, thousands of itinerant peddlers, smiths, millers, and adventurers, most of whom were a long way from knowing anything about God in their daily rough and tumble lives, and who had never read a book about God and never would, claimed at least to have known God in that moment of hurly-burly worship under the August sun and stars.

Jews were affected also, not because we went to the meetings, but because we too responded with religious fervor of a sort. The Reform Movement congealed shortly after Protestant movements did. In the cities, both

Protestants and Jews abandoned frontier excesses, and crystallized into a more sedate form of religious life. Even there, however, Protestants remained true to the frontier gatherings in that preachers dominated Sunday assemblies with their fire and brimstone sermons. Jews ended up with a similar phenomenon: great preaching congregations where people came mostly to hear orations by pulpit stars like Cleveland's Abba Hillel Silver and New York's Stephen S. Wise.

Thus did the frontier society become an unconscious trendsetter. When Andrew Jackson moved the White House from his native Tennessee, the first representative of the frontier to do so, he symbolized just how deeply the frontier was affecting even old-guard Virginia society. Elsewhere, what he stood for was leaving its mark on religion as well.

Who are the trend setters in this case? Most immediately, it is the preachers at Cane Ridge and the Protestant churches and Reform temples. But that would miss the point of whatever it was that drove both Protestant and Jewish leaders, each in a way unique and authentic to their respective faiths. The trend setters were actually larger social groups, the westward migrants in America.

Today too we have trend setters. Because of their great number and because they are reaching the 40's and 50's – precisely the age when a person's influence is greatest in our society – the trend setters now are the baby-boomers, people born from about 1945 to 1965. It is the baby-boomers entering their middle age years who are “driving” societies interest in spirituality, healing and synagogue transformation.

For Discussion:

- 1. Reflect on your rereading of “Four Generations.” Do people see their own lives or the lives of their parents reflected in that essay?***
- 2. What type of seekers do you recognize from Mollie's Quest?***
 - ***What are seekers?***
 - ***To what extent are the people around the table seekers?***
 - ***What are seekers looking for?***
 - ***Mollie is an “aging” baby boomer. Can people be seekers at any age and any generation? Are there seekers in “Generation X” (age 20-35)? Might Mollie's parents be seekers?***
- 3. Divide your team into “generations.” How many are baby-boomers, parents of baby-boomers, generation x, or others? Compare the ways the different generations look at religion, spirituality and healing.***

READ AND DISCUSS

The search for spiritual meaning is everywhere. See, for example, the following excerpt written more than half a century ago by none other than C.J. Jung! Jung remains a controversial figure in the history of psychoanalysis. He has had a revival, a testimony to the extent to which he captured the essence of the seeker situation half a century ago. His prose is somewhat dated by now, but his description of seekers is remarkably apt.

Although the theories of Freud and of Adler come much nearer to getting at the bottom of the neuroses than does any earlier approach to the question from the side of medicine, they still fail because of their exclusive concern with the drives to satisfy the deeper spiritual needs of the patient. They are still bound by the premises of nineteenth-century science -- they give too little value to fictional and imaginative processes. In a word, they do not give meaning enough to life, and it is only the meaningful that can set us free.

The doctor is confronted with the necessity of conveying to the patient the healing fiction, the meaning that quickens -- for it is this that the patient longs for. What will he do when he sees only too clearly that his patient is ill; when he sees that it arises from his having no love, but only sexuality; no faith because he is afraid to grope in the dark; no hope because he is disillusioned by the world and by life; and no understanding because he has failed to read the meaning of his own existence.

What the patient needs in order to live: faith , hope, love, and insight.¹

It is patently not true that everyone wanders the streets of America beset by angst and troubled minds. But seekers are people who find such spiritual questions bubbling up despite themselves. Jung describes it. So does Mollie.

People at the table may be familiar with other literature on the subject of the search for meaning. The search for meaning is implicit in the “theme song”

¹ From C.J. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

of the seeker generation, “What’s it all about, Alfie?” Having grown up with jet travel, rapid progress, and economic security, seekers are super-saturated in experience; they have the uneasy sense of having “been there, done that,” and they wonder with Peggy Lee, “Is that all there is?” They understand what Ecclesiastes meant when he said of life, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What do people gain from all the work they do under the sun?”

***Spirituality merges here
with what we mean by religious healing:
both are part and parcel of our quest to find life’s meaning.***

Spirituality is not just deep mystical insight from the Kabbalah, and healing is not simply a cure for designated physical or even mental illnesses. They are both ways of conceptualizing a response to the sense that our lives are fragmented, that we are not whole, that the structures that give life meaning are falling apart, that families and neighborhoods are disappearing, and on and on. The lack of meaning is a malady that is felt most acutely at the end of the 20th century.

Spirituality is largely the attempt to feel connected again, internally and externally, so that life takes on meaning once again. Healing is the same attempt to feel connected within and without, to know that we are not alone, and that somehow, no matter what is “wrong,” we are, as it were, “alright.”

Recognizing that the search for meaning is something to occupy our attention regularly, we can now try to move on to another differentiating system: a congregational scheme that categorizes people: “professionals,” “regulars,” “movers” or “watchers.” Our prior reading (from *Art of Public Prayer*) was clear on this point, so we need only recollect what the distinction was.

For Discussion:

- 1. To what extent are people around the table self-designated regulars, professionals and/or watchers and movers?**
- 2. How representative is your group?**
Actually, by virtue of their being invited into the team, even the watchers among you are already at least potential movers, if not regulars, but nonetheless, as recent watchers, they may be able to explain what the synagogue looks like to them and their friends. They are closer to the reality "out there beyond the walls of the committed regulars."
- 3. How much does the synagogue meet the spiritual needs of the watchers?**
- 4. With the above readings as backdrop for what you read about Mollie, and what you know about your own lives and the lives of others, launch a conversation about the search for meaning?**

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the units so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

If your synagogue follows the norm, you can expect that the regulars consider the synagogue to be a warm and supportive place; it usually is for most of them.

On the other hand, consider the following letter (duly altered to protect the identity of its author). Here is a regular with a different tale to tell. It is dated just before Rosh Hashanah, 1996. It is unsigned.

Dear Rabbi Hoffman,

I read your article, "Imagine: a Synagogue for the 21st Century" in *Reform Judaism*. Frankly, I cried when I read Item #4, "Healing." I am divorced and live alone. I have joint custody of my son and daughter, but I cannot afford more than a small apartment, so they cannot live with me more than every other weekend -- then one sleeps in my bed, the other on the foldout couch, and I sleep in a sleeping bag. We've been doing this for some time now. Soon they will finish high school and move away.

I have been a member of a congregation for eleven years --

ever since moving to town. I grew up in the Reform movement, joined the youth movement, etc. I volunteer for projects, join committees, go to regular Torah study -- and as always, with the High Holy Days approaching, I face bone-crushing loneliness. People say hello to me, but never invite me to sit with them. We discuss the High Holy Days in Torah study, but no one has ever invited me to join them for a High Holy Day meal. My former wife and I allow the children to choose what they will do for the holidays, which means that I rarely know more than a week in advance if my children will join me for meals and services. So I begin about 3 weeks before Rosh Hashanah to find a place, putting out the word. Every year it becomes more and more alienating. Earlier this year, my beloved father died suddenly in an accident. My mother will join me for services this Rosh Hashanah, and I know what that means: she and I and maybe my children, alone, for holiday dinner. I do not know what to do any more. Judaism has always been the core of my life, and I have wonderful memories of meals and services, strangers invited to share. What happened? I wish you the very best in trying to create synagogues where love and care are real. I am realistic enough to know that at my age, the mid-fifties, this is my future, and I will probably grow old and die alone, in the midst of a Jewish community that doesn't see me.

There you have it: the reason you are here. Regulars need healing as much as watchers do. Healing is repairing each other and being repaired ourselves: *tikkun olam* (literally "repairing the world") is healing *the* world (out there), but there is another kind of *tikkun* or reparation: it is healing *my* world, the world each of us knows intimately as our own little private domain of experience deep inside ourselves.

Recollect, now, that at its best, even prayer (*t'fillah*) is *tikkun*. According to the Kabbalists, every single prayer should be approached from the perspective of understanding what kind of *tikkun*, or healing, it is about. Various considered, we can say that prayer is *universal*, *particular*, or *individual*:

- Prayer is *universal* when it moves us to repair the world;
- Prayer is *particular* when it has us look inward at our own people, *Am Yisrael*, and repair the bonds of harmony within;
- Prayer is even more particular -- call it *individual* -- when it creates a sense of healing in the heart and soul of a single worshiper. Then, prayer is like putting together the fragments of individual lives that are shattered. Not that a shattered life is evident to anyone but the person

living it -- as we see from the letter writer whose synagogue friends and fellow Torah-Study members probably have no idea he is hurting. The issue is spiritual. It is a response to seekers who are seeking connectedness in lives that seem shapeless.

If regulars have complaints like this one, imagine what watchers think of the synagogue! They join for many good reasons, but not to get a sense of healing and wholeness. They may not even be aware of their own need for wholeness - - not unless a crisis strikes, or they reach an age of changing equilibrium. Most of them (and us too) go through the daily tasks, mostly satisfied with things. But illness strikes, or someone dies; we lose our job or pause to wonder why we are working so hard; our kids grow up and out of the house, or we find that we cannot have kids altogether; we are single but do not want to be; we get divorced or change life's partners or life's goals. These are the times when life catches up with us, especially at holiday time -- Shabbat dinners we do not have, for instance; or Rosh Hashanah, when the honey loses its sweetness.

More on the phenomenon of seekers and meaning later. Spirituality and healing are two sides of the same coin: they both imply a center where the spiritual search is pivotal, where we go to tell our stories and to connect with our past and future; where hope and history come alive in our personal present; where people matter and we find ourselves linked through chains of time and space to some amazing wholeness whom we name "God."

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some "last words" which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the unit. From time to time, refer to the "Concluding Ritual Suggestions" in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Nine: The How of Prayer

The *Halakhah*

In this unit, we will...

- 1) appreciate *Halakhah* and *Minhag* as “the rules of the Jewish drama”
- 2) understand our personal approach to *Halakhah*
- 3) recognize *Halakhah* as constituting the “how” of prayer
- 4) apply *Halakhah* to some prayer issues

Preparatory Readings:

There are no preparatory readings for this unit.

Before the Unit

Have someone prepare a new way to “check in.” See Resources for new ideas. The Rabbi should be prepared to discuss your synagogue’s stand on Halakhic issues around prayer. You may want to bring some extra resources to distribute.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking in Suggestions” in Resources for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

Prayer is like drama in that we exchange our daily life for the roles that our ritual prescribes, saying the “lines” of the dramatic script in prescribed ways. The script is partly “closed” (we may have no choice in what to say; it is determined by the prayer book) and partly “open” (we get a chance to make up our own prayers for the sick, or to take part in a conversation over the Torah reading, for instance). Here again is the balance between *keva* and *kavvanah*.

Keva (fixity) is the closed part of the script; *kavvanah* (spontaneity) is the open part of what we say and do, the personal investment that we manage to inject into the sacred parts we play during services.

Prayer provides an alternative world of experience, where we dare to believe in an ancient past that we all shared, and a future that we can bring about.

Every art form has its rules, without which it would never come into being. People imagine that great artists simply dash the

paint on a canvas, or scribble furiously under the impact of sudden inspiration. Actually, nothing could be farther from the truth. Van Gogh painted sunflowers for days on end until he got the structure of the petal just right; violinists practice eight hours a day and more, until they manage to get just the right sound. Writers write and rewrite, until the words come together the way they want.

Every art is both closed and open: closed in that the artist is guided by the rules (if you are composing a march, for instance, you need to write it in march tempo); but open too, in that real art takes shape only because an individual artist does something personal with it (the march from *Aida* is not the same as *Stars and Stripes Forever*).

Different religions have different kinds of governing rules. In Christianity, the rules turn out to be theology. Christians measure every word that is said for theological meaning. Because of what the word implies about God, you describe God in this fashion but not that one; use one word but not another. Jews too have rules; but they are structured as *Halakhah* and *Minhag*.

***Halakhah* (Jewish law, broadly conceived)
is the historical Jewish way of shaping what we do.
It therefore provides the parameters
in which our prayers are said.
It is the rule book for the play we call *T'fillah*.**

Think of *Halakhah* as the stage directions of the play. George Bernard Shaw instructs his characters in great detail as to how they are supposed to deliver their lines. They are told what to wear, where to stand, and even how loud to talk. Despite it all, there are good performances and bad performances of Shaw. By contrast, William Shakespeare rarely wrote stage directions into his play. The actors are more or less free to do whatever they want, as long as they recite the right words. But there are Shakespearean traditions with which they must contend, an informal understanding of how the script is supposed to be played. They too must worry about tradition, the tradition of the theater. Here too, there are good and bad performances, but directors and actors are held accountable for doing the play within the broad context of the way it is supposed to be done. They cannot make Hamlet into a farce, for instance; and soliloquies are delivered with the spotlight on the character delivering the lines, rather than on someone else. The character who is speaking is not allowed to mumble inaudibly off in a darkened corner.

Jews use two words for the rules of our ritual: *Halakhah* and *Minhag*. They are not as easily distinguishable from each other as you might first suspect.

1. *Halakhah* is more or less formalized rulings, encoded in the legal literature and discussed with regard to what is mandatory, advisable,

or prohibited.

2. *Minhag* is informal custom, tradition that has become “normative,” things you are used to doing but that might change without contravening the formal rules of Jewish law.

But Judaism respects *Minhag*. In the Middle Ages, when new *halakhic* rulings sometimes contradicted local custom, some Jews even argued *Minhag m'vatel halakhah* (Custom overrides law). Certainly, the way people have always done something locally has a certain binding force in Jewish thought, so it is not enough to simply look up the *Halakhah* and parrot it back, as if the same structures are equally binding on all Jews in every circumstance. Some are, some aren't. And different Jews have different approaches to the *Halakhah*. Seeing *Halakhah* as the rules by which the drama of our prayers can be performed allows us to appreciate the variety of approach that different movements take to Jewish law. None of them wants to abolish Jewish law; none of them ignores its seriousness; but they all have different approaches to how it should be applied. And they may take strong exception to each other, the way different schools of art have strong opinions about the way other schools of art apply the rules of painting or of music.

For Discussion:

Since Jews think *halakhically*, this discussion (more than any other) is apt to evoke strong feelings. Jews and our religious movements differ from each other in the way they approach the rules of the script.

- 1. Discuss the following statement: Prayer is *like* drama; and *Halakhah* of prayer is *like* the rules by which the script becomes an acted-out performance.**
- 2. How does *halakhic* interpretation play out in your synagogue?**

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the units so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ AND DISCUSS

If you imagine yourselves as the directors and actors of the drama, you will readily concede the importance of first thinking through how you want to approach the stage directions and informal rules by which the play has been cast through our 2000-year-old liturgical history.

One approach, nowadays associated mostly with Orthodoxy, is to take the rules as if they were timeless sets of instructions for every aspect of the play. Even there, personal creativity is possible, but it is carefully confined by the “author’s stage directions,” so to speak. Conservative Jews treat the stage directions as if they are evolving; there is no single set of them extant, and every generation of Jewish directors understands their impact differently. Reform Jews give the greatest interpretive liberty to each cast of players (the congregants) and to each member of the cast (each individual worshiper). But Reform Jews too feel constrained by Jewish precedent.

It is perhaps not just accidental that our modern movements developed at precisely the time that modern art was coming into being. Modern art is to traditional art as the movements of modern Judaism are to the Rabbis of the Talmud and the Middle Ages. Modern art was born when masters like Henri Matisse, thoroughly trained in the traditional rules of painting, began experimenting with the extent to which the rules could be interpreted. Similarly, all modern movements (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionism, European Liberal, Orthodoxy) are attempts to become self-conscious about the way we approach the Jewish rules of *Halakhah*.

Writer Annie Dillard says of her art,

The writer makes real artistic meaning out of meaninglessness the usual way, the old way, by creating a self-relevant artistic whole. He produces a work whose parts cohere.... Art may imitate anything but disorder.... It is integrity that separates art from non-art.¹

Dillard could have been talking about us. Prayer, too, is the attempt to bring structure and order into potential meaninglessness. That is why we imagine a past in which we can believe, dream a future for which we dare hope, and use words to construct things that never were but only now come into being -- a priestly blessing? -- a *chuppah* for “sanctification”? – a community of strangers which holds hands across space and welcomes in a Sabbath bride? These are

¹ Annie Dillard, *Living By Fiction* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1982), p. 28.

fictions, like Dillard's fictions, but Jewish ones, that come into being when we pray. The rules of the game tell us how.

How far can you stretch the rules? The Belgian surrealist, Rene Magritte (1898-1967) imagines the conventional image of a bird in a cage, and suggests a thought experiment by which we imagine an artist changing it a little at a time. Suppose we have an eagle in the cage; or a bird's egg in a cage; or what about (even!) a shoe in a cage? Does it make any sense at all to do these things?

The eagle works; eagles are birds, and to make a point, an artist might deliberately draw an eagle in a cage that usually holds only domesticated birds. So too, even an egg in the cage. That's clever! Birds' eggs hatch into birds. Maybe even a cat in a cage -- a clever reversal of animal roles. But a shoe? Shoes have nothing to do with birds; they don't belong in cages by any stretch of the imagination. You cannot stretch the rules that far, he concludes. What Magritte does for the rules of art, we do for the rules of prayer.

Halakhah is the set of rules by which Jews have constructed a universe. Whatever we do now must have some continuity with what we have always done, or our prayers will have no integrity. Anyone can put together some songs and hand-holding, after all; but what makes it Jewish? And how is it continuous with our past and future? How does it link us to a larger whole?

For Discussion:

The denominational movements differ on what exactly constitutes integrity. Your rabbi will discuss the following points on Halakhah within the context of your own movement. Other issues are described, in short, in the appendix to this chapter (pp9.9-9.14).

You may wish to use one or more of them to round out discussions. (See: "What is some of the Halakhah for Reading Torah?" "Can Services be Interrupted for Private Matters?" "What Rules Govern Electric Media?" in Unit Nine: Appendix)

- 1. How does your movement deal with Musaf?***
- 2. How does your movement deal with the idea of praying for a return to animal sacrifice?***
- 3. How does your movement deal with women chanting Torah as official readers for a congregation where men are present?***
- 4. Make a list of other areas that your team feels they would like to discuss in fuller detail. What halakhic information do you think you need if you are to evaluate your worship?***

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some "last words" which summarize

their learnings from or their feelings about, the unit. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Nine: Appendix

- I. What is some of the *Halakhah* for Reading Torah?
- II. Can Services be Interrupted for Private Matters?
- III. What Rules Govern Electronic Media?
- IV. What Rules Govern Movement in Services?

I. What is some of the *Halakhah* for Reading Torah?

(Our appendices on *Halakhah* are intended only as springboards to discussion. They hardly do justice to the complexity of the issues they address, but they outline some of the halakhic considerations that apply to Jewish worship. We know that conversation on these issues will be expanded by each team's rabbis.)

The Halakhah for reading Torah developed slowly. The Talmud discusses it, but was not canonized until an 8th century document from Palestine and a 9th century prayer book from Babylonia. Even in medieval Europe, however, such things as allowing a minor to read Torah were matters that had not yet been fully determined.

The basic rules now include the following:

Aliyot

1. On ordinary weekdays and Saturday afternoon (*Minchah*), 3 people receive *aliyot*.
2. On Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamo'ed, add one: 4 people receive *aliyot*.
3. On holidays (except Yom Kippur), add one: 5 people receive *aliyot*.
4. On Yom Kippur, add one: 6 people receive *aliyot*.
5. On Shabbat morning, add one: 7 people receive *aliyot*.
6. The first *aliyah* normally goes to a Kohen; the next to a Levi; the next to a Yisrael. Generally speaking, Reform and Reconstructionist Jews apply the principle of egalitarianism to the class system of Kohen, Levi, Yisrael, and do away with the distinctions, and therefore, do not differentiate among who gets what *aliyah*.
7. Reconstructionist, Reform and Conservative practice all allow *aliyot* to be shared in the case of family occasions (e.g., a bride and groom for their *aufruf*, an anniversary couple, parents of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*), but in general, Conservative practice prefers that individuals be called to the Torah to preserve traditional practice, to give full honor to the one called up, and to prevent singling out people who are single or do not fit the "usual" family constellation mode. Reform Jews factor into their decision the last-named concern particularly, but tend more than Conservative Jews to call up groups of people -- and not just family groups, but affinity

groups as well (all the people about to travel to Israel, or all the people who are thankful for being cured of illness during the past week). Reconstructionist Jews may use both individual and group *aliyot* for all occasions and holidays, depending on the *minhag hamakom*, the custom in that particular synagogue.

8. We may add but not subtract from the appropriate number of *aliyot*.

But adding to the point where the congregation finds its prayers unduly extended is not permitted. Reform Jews further apply the principle of not unduly extending a congregation's worship, and do not demand the usual number of *aliyot*. Practice varies from congregation to congregation, but it is common to find from one to three *aliyot* at services when the Torah is read. Similarly, Reconstructionist synagogues focus on creating a worship service that is meaningful for its participants. Depending on the congregation's needs and customs, they may have only 3 *aliyot* (plus the *maftir*) in a Shabbat Torah service or they may have the full seven.

Reading Torah

The Torah is divided into sections. Each section is called a *parashah* or a *sedra*. (*Parashah* is the old Babylonian word; *sedra* is the old Palestinian word for the same thing.) The following rules apply to how the *parashah* is read at services:

1. The Shabbat *Minchah* reading anticipates the reading of the week after; it does not repeat the reading of the morning service just completed.
2. Many Reform congregations read Torah Friday night, and call up only one *aliyah*. The Conservative Movement holds that it is not appropriate to read from the Torah at a late Friday night service. However, in the case of a synagogue which does not hold Shabbat morning services, one may read from a printed *chumash* without *aliyot*. Reconstructionist congregations tend to read Torah on Saturday morning only.
3. Contrary to common opinion, the Conservative Movement has ruled that a minor may read from the Torah. Reform Jews do not allow minors to do so.
4. The *halakhic* minimum of verses that may be read for each *aliyah* is three. On any given occasion, at least ten verses in total are to be read. The Reconstructionist Movement tends to respect and observe this tradition. Reform Jews rarely enforce the numbers strictly. Instead, they select a reading that is "self-sustaining" – a discrete unit that stands on its own – and then break it up at meaningful places. In practice, this usually amounts to obeying the rule of three and ten, but the decision of where to make the breaks is arrived at somewhat arbitrarily -- whenever it "makes sense," rather than at the traditional breaks that were established in the 10th century and that are followed to the day in traditional congregations. It is the official sentiment of the Conservative

Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards that an annual reading cycle is preferable to a triennial one, but many, perhaps most, Conservative synagogues use a triennial reading – that so, they read a different third of each *parashah* for three consecutive years. An official division of the Torah readings, including divisions for each *aliyah* has been approved by the Law Committee and is the one most widely in use (even listed on the United Synagogue calendar). Traditional *haftarot* are used in conjunction with the triennial cycle. Reform Jews also have a triennial cycle listed in *Gates of Understanding*, vol. 1 as well as *Gates of the House* (available from the Central Conference of American Rabbis). But it is not widely followed in practice. Rather, the custom is to select a self-standing discrete reading out of the weekly *parashah*, as mentioned above. Like Conservative Jews, Reform Jews tend to use the traditional *Haftarot*, regardless of what part of the *parasha* they select.

The selection should be made such that the final verse does not end on a negative note. No *aliyah* is allowed to take place on such a negative note.

Torah Chanting

1. The direction the Torah reader faces (either toward the ark or toward the congregation) depends on local custom.
2. The Torah must be read from an unvocalized text without any musical notes. If nobody can read the Torah, the Torah is customarily removed from the ark, and the reading chanted from a *chumash*, either without calling up *aliyot*, or by calling up the requisite number, but not having them recite blessings.

Minyan

All Reform and Reconstructionist congregations count women in a *minyan*, call women to the Torah, and encourage women as well as men to learn to read Torah. Most Conservative congregations do likewise, but some do not count women in a *minyan*. Most Orthodox congregations generally do not count woman in a *minyan*; nor do they call women to read Torah in a mixed-gender service (although many have introduced women's prayer groups where women participate fully). Even those synagogues that do not count women in the *minyan* may nevertheless call them to the Torah and have them read the Torah. Most Orthodox congregations do not count women in a *minyan*; not do they call women to read Torah in a mixed-gender service (although many have introduced women's prayer groups where women participate fully).

II. Can Services be Interrupted for Private Matters?

In general and within the confines of other halakhic rules that call for saying certain prayers immediately after others, the rabbi may add anything appropriate to the service, including readings and/or a healing ceremony. The only specifically forbidden thing to say in this regard on Shabbat or Festivals is the prayer called *El Malei Rachamim*, since it is normally said at funerals and memorial services, and is therefore contrary in tone to Sabbath rest and Festival joy.

Typically, a *Mi sheberakh* is said after a person finishes the second blessing of his/her *aliyah*. *Mi sheberakh* is a genre of prayer that requests special blessing for an individual or group. There are many versions in Jewish tradition, but the one most common is a request for healing. In one way or other, people offer the name of someone who is sick, and the prayer is given for that person. Some synagogues do a separate *Mi sheberakh* for each person, while others do a collective *Mi sheberakh*.

Takkanot from the Middle Ages even allow individuals who feel that they have been unjustly wronged to interrupt the service and call the guilty party to account, but this right was restricted over time. A Reform responsum by Solomon Freehof (1971) traces the tradition of such interruptions, the case in point being a group who wants to interrupt services at a synagogue honoring the president of a university which does not allow student protests against the Vietnam War. Freehof indicates that because rabbinic authorities noticed the right of interruption being abused, they limited it. He rules against continuing the right altogether, on the grounds that our court system is sufficient to handle such matters.

III. What Rules Govern Electronic Media?

Electricity

Turning on or off electricity is an infringement of Shabbat work regulations, since making or breaking an electric circuit is deemed equivalent to starting or stopping a fire. Both Conservative and Reform Judaism practices leniency in this regard. The famous “riding on Shabbat” responsum of 1950 (Conservative) included, as a majority opinion, the view that electricity is permitted for enhancing the enjoyment of Shabbat, reducing personal discomfort, or helping in performance of a *mitzvah*. The minority opinion permitted electricity to be used also in activities not connected to the performance of a *mitzvah*, as long as the activity in question was not itself a violation of Shabbat. That ruling abides, but it is becoming more common for some (primarily younger) rabbis to refrain from using electricity on Shabbat in their own personal practice, and as they take over leadership of synagogues, their more stringent view may alter synagogue practice.

Instruments

Assuming, however, that electricity is permitted, electronic instruments would not be banned from a Conservative perspective, solely on account of their being electronic. (Other issues arise regarding instruments: see Appendix on Instruments, in a later session.) Reform Jews agree. From the standpoint of the commandment to “Keep the Sabbath day by hallowing it” (*sh’mor et yom hashabbat l’kadsho*), videotapes and slides may be shown, and recorded music may be played, but the parallel commandment to “remember the Sabbath Day by hallowing it (*z’khor et yom hashabbat l’kadsho*)” demands that the materials so used be in the spirit of Shabbat.

For Conservative Jews, however, a contrary piece of correspondence states that, showing slides, even for educational purposes, is not in keeping with the Sabbath spirit, and three other pieces of Law Committee correspondence the showing of films on Shabbat and Yom Tov prohibit, even if the machine is operated by a non-Jew. With all of the above, Conservative rabbis have an understandable variety of policies on using videotapes, slides, or recorded music on Shabbat, both in services and in *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* receptions thereafter.

Photography

Photography on Shabbat is prohibited by Orthodox and Conservative Judaism but not by Reform. This Conservative ban exists even if the photographer is a non-Jew. Both Reform and Conservative Judaism ban photography during services, however. The Reform objection (Responsum by Rabbi Walter Jacob, 1986) arises from the demand that “Nothing may distract the worshiper from praying.”

Taping

Video-taping or audio-taping is forbidden in the Orthodox movement but allowed by Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist movements. Conservative opinion is based on the fact that these activities do not fall under the category of *k'tivah* (writing). Reform permission comes from the recognition that taping need not be intrusive. Both however, permit taping on Shabbat only under certain restrictions. Reform opinion insists that services not be changed for the sake of the taping, and that services proceed normally with no intrusion from the taping machine. Conservative opinion agrees, but adds that the recorder should be connected to a timer or placed in operation by a non-Jewish staff person and that the recording equipment actually be hidden from view. For video-taping, the camera should be as inconspicuous as possible and remain stationary and left to run by itself, not operated manually.

IV. What Rules Govern Movement (like Dance) in Services?

Reform Judaism permits all aesthetic activities on Shabbat and even encourages them if they add to the sanctity of the day and the beauty of worship, on the grounds that it is a positive thing to adorn any *mitzvah* (the act is called *hiddur mitzvah*, "beautifying the commandment"). In general traditional bans on writing, making a fire, and so forth are passed over in the interest of sanctifying Shabbat and adorning its *mitzvot*.

Conservative practice is divided. A 1939 opinion holds that dance in the sanctuary is prohibited, even if the ark is curtained off, and other opinions state that dance elsewhere in the synagogue should not be scheduled on Shabbat or Yom Tov, even if it could be technically arranged that the holiday would not be violated, because such activities are not in keeping with the Shabbat spirit. Rabbi Elliot Dorff suggests, however, that these are old opinions that are no longer followed. Ramah camps and the University of Judaism regularly schedule Israeli dancing on Friday night (in the case of the University of Judaism, to tape-recorded music), and some synagogues, at least, do likewise after Friday evening services. Ramah regularly has dance performed by different ages before candles are lit on Friday night, in order to set the mood for Shabbat.

Dance within services is a relatively new phenomenon, and how one approaches it would depend on what constitutes dance. Rabbi Dorff suggests that it would take some adjustment for Conservative synagogues, at least, to include dance within services. The same may be true for Reform synagogues. But the issue of novelty is different from that of permissibility.

Dance can be defined simply as movement, an extension of all the traditional motions that are practiced in Jewish prayer. These include standing at various points during the service; gathering and kissing the fringes of the *tallit* during the morning *Sh'ma*; bowing from the waist and, in some cases, from the knees, at prescribed points during the service; turning around and bowing to the entering Shabbat bride during the last stanza of *L'kha Dodi* on Friday night; and following the Torah as it winds its way through the congregation when it is taken out of the ark and returned to it. There is also a prescribed choreography of the Torah service, wherein the one called to the Torah kisses the Torah where it is about to be read -- first, before saying the blessings that introduce the reading, and then again, after the reading has ended.

Unit Ten: Synagogue Space

Creating a Spiritual Environment

Part I

In Part I of this unit, we will...

- 1) understand space as an extension of the identity of those who inhabit it
- 2) experience our synagogue space as a stranger might
- 3) understand the identity messages conveyed by our synagogue space.

Preparatory Readings:

1. Joseph Gutmann, "Architectural Aspects of the Synagogue," *Encyclopedia of World Religion*, vol. 14, pp. 214-218.
An eminent art historian provides a history of the architecture of the synagogue.
2. Daniel H. Freeland, "Why Temples Look the Way They Do," *Reform Judaism*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Fall 1994), pp. 35-37.
Criteria for evaluating three stages of synagogue architecture that reflect trends of North American Jewish life.
3. James Howard Kunstler, "Home From Nowhere," *Atlantic Monthly* (September, 1996), pp. 43-50.
Kunstler's article deals with the spiritual deadening of city space.

After the Unit

During Part One of the unit, make sure everyone has a buddy to go visit a shopping area.

During Part Two, follow-thru with what steps need to be made regarding your "Action Plan." Make a list of what needs to be done now and what can be a future project.

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Make sure you return to it at another time. Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking in Suggestions” in Resources for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Traveler’s Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

We modern men and women of the west think of space as empty. It is something we live in, pass through, or fill up. In itself, it is neutral.

In a way, all of that is true. We buy a home with spacial packets we call rooms, and rooms are empty until we move in, deciding that one room will be a den, rather than a music or TV center, for instance. Once we outfit our rooms as something rather than another, we act a certain way in them. They take on character. What we do in them becomes a memory that we are able to recall for ourselves or for others.

Spaces that are uninhabited have no tale to tell. A story comes into being only when we make the space our home. Then it becomes a place! “*Place*” is “*space*” with character.

NASA sends missions into *space* -- an endless void. But remember *Monopoly*, the game you played as a kid. Along with Boardwalk, there was Park *Place* (not *Space*) -- a wealthy *place* with character.

Insofar as we refer to synagogue areas as “spaces,” we imply their open-endedness. We can change them. Sacred “space” should probably be referred to, more properly, as sacred “place.” By calling it sacred “space,” however, we invite those who occupy it to lend it their own distinctive sacred character.

For Discussion:

Begin with a conversation about the history of synagogue buildings from your assigned reading “Architectural Aspects of the Synagogue.”

- 1. Does your synagogue building fit into Freeland’s stages of architectural style?**
- 2. Do any of the authors do justice to the building that you inhabit?**

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people’s reaction to the units so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ

More important than a building’s external shape is the human touch with which it is outfitted -- something akin to internal design or decorating. Everyone knows how much a good designer can make over a room. From time to time, we hire designers to renovate and refurbish synagogues too.

***Buildings are about people.
They tell our stories.***

Good designers know, however, that a synagogue’s beauty should not be viewed as if it had nothing to do with the mission of the synagogue being redesigned. If we redo our synagogue just to be beautiful, it may come to resemble a living room so beautiful that no one sets foot in it -- a museum under glass, a gorgeous monument to a Judaism that no one touches.

Here is your chance to decide what story an outsider would get from a walk through your facility.

EXERCISE:

A Spiritual Inventory of Synagogue Space, see
"Observation Forms A and B"
(found in Unit Ten: Appendix)

1. Divide into pairs. Go outside and observe your building from the street, discussing what you see. Together fill in **Observation Form A "Synagogue External Inventory"** (found in Unit 10: Appendix) to express the synagogue's message as you perceive it.
2. Imagine that the two of you are coming to the synagogue for the first time, as visitors to a *bar/bat mitzvah*; or as seekers, looking for a Jewish message; or to say *Kaddish* on a *Yahrzeit*. You drive to the synagogue, park your car, make your way inside, and settle into the sanctuary. Later you will follow the crowd to the *Oneg Shabbat* or Kiddush room, get your coat from the cloakroom, and leave. Along the way, you may have to use the bathrooms, visit the Judaica shop or museum area, or do whatever people do on an average visit to the synagogue.
3. Using **Observation Form B, "Spatial Identity Inventory for Synagogues,"** (found in Unit Ten: Appendix) do a spatial inventory of what people new to the synagogue would conclude about you and your synagogue's members, were they to read the message implicit in your synagogue spaces -- because they do read that message! It is like "body language" in a person having a conversation with us. The body language of a synagogue is always noticed.
4. When you are done, reassemble to conclude the evening. If you do not have time to discuss your observations, you can save them for the next session. In any event, by next session, you have the following field-work assignment to do.

For your next meeting:

Arrange to go with a sub-team of four or five to two other environments:

1. First, go shopping at your favorite mall or shopping area. Fill out

Observation Form C (found in Unit Ten: Appendix) and compare notes afterward. By now, you should be well on the way to expert observer status.

2. Some Sunday, attend a local church to feel what it is like to be a seeker, someone showing up at a religious place but knowing nothing about the religion. (If you do not feel comfortable to go to a church, use another copy of Observation forms A and B to visit another synagogue.) Note how strange it feels just to be there, how guardedly you move around in the religious ambiance which has not been designed with strangers in mind. Churches are built for Christians who know their way around already; as synagogues are built with an unconscious assumption that Jews who come there will have a sixth sense about what you do, and where and how you do it. Remember how lost you felt in church. Huge numbers of Jews feel that way in synagogues. They may be Jews who have rarely, if even, come to synagogue but who feel “guilted” by the way everyone expects them to know what to do. There are also non-Jews, perhaps on their way to becoming Jews by choice, who are learning your space and ritual demand. Or there may be Jews from another denomination who know their way around the synagogue they grew up in reasonably well, but need help negotiating your own place successfully.

a. Fill out copy of **Observation Forms D and E (Unit Ten: Appendix)** pp.10.13-10.15 for a church. As an outsider, what can you learn about the church? What is its message?

b. Describe some things that you would advise the church, if you were hired as a consultant to help them think through the message they give to seekers and visitors.

Remember to bring your forms to the next meeting.

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the unit. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit 10

Synagogue Space: Creating a Spiritual Environment, Part II

Part II

In Part II of this unit, we will...

- 1) analyze the effectiveness of our sanctuary
- 2) generate ideas about improving our worship space

Preparatory Reading:

Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*,
Chapter 8 “Sacred Space: the Message of Design”

A short summary of what we know about how space functions to enhance or to impede good worship.

Checking In

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Traveler’s Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ

So far, the discussions on Prayer have dealt with the *Siddur*, the script of the sacred performance we call our services. We have looked also at theology, trying to broaden our views about the way we conceive of God. We looked next at symbols, discussed poetry versus prose, and dealt with the *Halakhah* of prayer -- the set of Jewish requirements that can be thought of as the stage directions. Two main topics still await consideration: the music of worship (which you have not yet begun) and the space of worship (which is related to the work on space that you did in Part I of this unit.)

In Part I, we began the task of thinking through issues such as whether the synagogue building is welcoming; what image of community it provides; and what message about ourselves we give to an outsider who enters it. If you did not have a chance at your last session to discuss your walk through your building, take time now. You can also discuss your observations from visiting the mall and the church or other synagogue.

EXERCISE

The sanctuary is the place where we act out our identity as a community. Move to the sanctuary, bringing your observation sheets with you. While in the sanctuary, and using your observation sheets as a guide, discuss the following:

- Is our service too cold or too personal? How does the space make it so?
- Do we sing together or do we have the sense that rabbi, cantor and choir mostly speak and sing in isolation?
- Do we try to get to know people next to us, or have we gotten used to sitting through services with strangers at our side?
- Is our synagogue a place in which one has to be an expert to feel at home here, or is it a place where you belong no matter how much you know?
- How well does our worship space allow us to know each other, and also to discover God?
- Sit where you usually do and figure out why you sit there. How do the other team members feel about the seat they always sit in?

These are all matters that require attention if we are to move worship beyond rote and make it meaningful once more.

Space either helps this transformation occur or it impedes it. The reading for Part II provides ways to analyze the space and see how well it does its job.

A SYNAGOGUE 2000 is a place where community is real, where people matter, where the promise of Judaism is not some distant academic idea but an immediately felt reality by the Jews who come to pray. It is a place where God can be known in the intimacy of a community that gathers together.

The time has come to return to the idea of what our prayers say about who we are, coupled now with the theological notion borrowed from Buber: God can be encountered in the meeting place where we truly know each other, and “space” can become a “place” where true meeting occurs.

**EXERCISE:
AMBIENCE OF SPACE**

Ambiance of Space

A. Current Room

Look around you at the room you are in. Go through the questions below and apply the following concepts taken from the preparatory reading to your present environment. Keep a record of your comments.

1. Sociopetal [bring people together] or Sociofugal [scatter people apart]

Are you sitting in sociopetal or sociofugal space at this moment? How do you know?

2. Fixed, Semi-fixed, Personally negotiable

Look around the room. To what extent is the space fixed, semi-fixed, negotiable? Did you negotiate it during your meeting, moving, perhaps, to sit next to a friend or hear better? Check out how well the space is working even as you speak; experiment with negotiating it or altering its semi-fixed capacity -- that is, move some chairs around to see if it helps to draw you into the conversation better.

3. Distance: intimate, personal, social, public

What kind of distance marks your conversation now? What sorts of interchange does it permit and what does it prevent?

4. Register

What register are you using now? You probably adopted it naturally, taking your cue from the room you are in, or the table around which you are sitting. Try different registers and see how strange it sounds.

5. Relationship: Actional; Reactional; Transaction

How much of the communication in your meeting this evening has been actional? reactional? transactional? What kind of communication are you engaged in now?

6. Focus (from *Art of Public Prayer*)

Is there a focus in the room at the moment? Study and meeting-room conversation tends to diffuse the focus. However, the person leading your discussion at the moment may have situated him/herself in such a way as to provide a common focus for everyone, and thereby be able to lead the conversation well. If you are sitting around a table, people tend to lean forward, treating the table top as a focus.

B. Sanctuary

Once everyone is clear on the above concepts, divide into groups of three or four and move to the sanctuary. Have each small group apply the concepts by answering the following questions. Have groups record their comments for a discussion later.

1. Sociopetal [bring people together] or Sociofugal [scatter people apart]

Is the sanctuary generally sociopetal (people feel drawn together) or sociofugal (they feel separated from each other and from the pulpit)?

2. Fixed, Semi-fixed, Personally negotiable

Sanctuaries tend to be largely fixed; but the space can also be personally negotiable to some extent. If you want to pray in space that brings people together (sociopetal), you may have to overcome old fixed space that was deliberately arranged to accomplish the opposite. If you use them, walk-around microphones do wonders to enhance negotiation success! Ask the cantor and rabbi to try out different negotiated spaces and give them feedback on how it feels to you as they talk, sing, teach and lead services.

3. Distance: intimate, personal, social, public

What distance is “felt” from the pulpit of the sanctuary? Ask the rabbi or cantor to share the sense he or she has there. Similarly, what is it like sitting in the seats or pews? How is the distance between you and others experienced? What interchanges are permitted as part of worship, and what is prevented?

Brainstorm how each kind of space (intimate, personal, social, public) can be wisely used. For instance:

- Intimate space is desirable for blessing people.
- Social space is excellent for a discussion after the Torah reading; the rabbi may be able to descend from the bimah in order to negotiate the space and develop a lively conversation that would otherwise tend toward a public monologue.
- Music may best be taught to people not on the *bimah* (public space).

4. Register

What register is used for prayer? When people address the congregation, for instance, or when the cantor directs music? By changing the register, you can alter the perception of spatial distance. Register refers to the level at which communication occurs, the tone of the conversation. Different distances tend to go along with different conversational registers.

Large public spaces encourage a formal register of distance. Speakers use more complex vocabulary and complete sentences; they talk at people, not with them; people can feel instructed, or uplifted. They become an audience that listens to high cultural discourse, relative to the bantering that they might be used to in social space.

As space becomes less public and more social, people relax. They speak in a less formal register, preferring simple vocabulary, shorter sentences or sentences fragments, and give and take among each other. Register becomes less formal still in private and intimate space.

Technique is communication: the two words are synonymous in conductors.

5. Relationship: Actional; Reactional; Transaction

How much of services are actional? reactional? transactional? What should services be? Clearly, there are appropriate moments for all three. But measure the satisfaction you feel with each one, and decide how much the service has to change to encourage the ones that you do not get enough of. How can you do that?

Actional communication is one-way -- a lecture, for instance, where a speaker reads prepared remarks to an audience that listens and takes notes. Public distance encourages formal register, anonymity of people, and actional communication. In large formal spaces, even *davening* may tend toward formal actional style -- the cantor and choir may sing at anonymous crowds of people who may not even be paying attention. They may not even get to answer "Amen," or if they do, it may be drowned out by the choir's response to its own singing.

Reactional communication is like a telephone conversation. People are in dialogue, but one person starts only when another person finishes. Social distance encourages middle-range register and conversation according to rules of social etiquette. People wait for each other. Good *davening* tends to be reactional; Jewish prayer is naturally antiphonal, and there is a feeling of satisfaction to the give and take of cantor and congregation. Reform worship tried to make English prayer reactional by introducing responsive readings. But reading from a book tends toward public register; it rarely works the way *davening* does, because *davening* imposes a musical flow upon the words. You can achieve a sense of reactional ambiance by *davening* even the English. The musical flow will overcome the formal register that arises when you

try to read English out loud from a formal text.

Transactional communication is like holding hands. The communication is simultaneously two-way. It arises naturally when social distance shrinks further to personal and intimate distance. At personal distance, people abandon full sentences; they become acutely aware of the people sharing the space; they feel free to begin tossing out the formal communicative structures that govern discussion in social space. Worship becomes distinctively personal when distance collapses to the point where people feel comfortable about sharing intimate feelings with each other -- not something you want all the time, and never something to be forced upon people who have a right to their privacy. But life-cycle moments are ripe for this sort of thing: blessings encourage it and physical contact makes it happen. Singing together is the best liturgical example, especially if it is accompanied by holding hands throughout the congregation. And focusing attention on a baby being blessed or an engaged couple at an *aufruf*, can induce a feeling of transactional communication by extension. We watch and silently smile within, maybe even shed a tear or two, saying nothing but being moved by the impact of the moment.

6. Focus (from *Art of Public Prayer*)

Where are the foci in the synagogue? If prayer is a sacred drama, where are the foci around which the dramatic action occurs, and what distance do they necessitate from others? You may be able to change the focus (as when the cantor teaches a song from among the people, not from the pulpit far away.) By cutting down on the social distance, s/he cuts down on public space. In less public space, people lose inhibitions and sing more readily; s/he will talk in a register that befits conversation, not formal presentation, again helping people feel less inhibited. The focus is now in social distance range for many, and the atmosphere will be more akin to conversation than public proclamation.

For Discussion:

Reassemble and compare notes. Make a team list of the items in the sanctuary space that should be changed. Start working on preparing your "Action Plan."

Preparing An Action Plan

The following considerations may guide you as you draw conclusions about your sanctuary space. It is possible to:

- negotiate space personally to overcome the limits of fixed space designs (Can you suggest specific ways of doing that?)
- encourage social (not public) distance, and at times, a sense of personal and intimate distance too (Can you suggest where and how?)
- alter your register to promote the feeling of the kind of space you want rather than allowing the fixed space to decide your register. (Rabbi, Cantor, did you practice doing it from the pulpit? What reactions you get from the team?)
- move toward reactional and transactional relationships: reactional for the bulk of the service; transactional for much of the singing and at moments that you want to be personal (Can you name some?)
- alter foci to negotiate the space; do not settle for the fixed foci that you already have (Can you locate other potential foci for specific parts of the service?)

READ AND DISCUSS

Places have character. Consider your own home. What you hang on the walls matters. You take care to make sure the front porch is well lit. You may put your name on the door, or display signs of Jewish occupancy within and without. A *m'zuzah* tells people that Jews live here. If you have visited Israel, you may have a porcelain tile with your name in Hebrew on the door. Inside, you may have Jewish art and ritual objects.

Suppose your family traced its lineage back to the Mayflower. I expect you would have Americana all over the house. What does it mean these days to see homes with large American flags flying outside the front door? Or with gun racks mounted inside the family room? Or bowling trophies on the mantel place?

Think of the synagogue as a place that heralds who you are. And then think of what the place should say to people, if “who you are” is essentially a place of wholeness, ultimate connectedness, spirituality.

Healing and prayer go together. They are connecting doorways to a larger

vision: a vision of a place where people know God, find community, experience growth, help others, and feel whole. Work on prayer should focus on the wholeness that people want to feel in their lives, and on their sense of connectedness to the synagogue community, to the Jewish People, and to God.

The search for spirituality is a search for that wholeness. It is the desire to see one's life against the template (or pattern) of something far grander than ourselves. Synagogues are not for programming alone. They are for displaying and celebrating the Jewish template, so that all who enter the synagogue may envision their internal wholeness and their external connection to what is beyond themselves. Creating an atmosphere where that vision of wholeness predominates is creating a "spiritual center."

"A Place of Spiritual Wholeness"

Think through what a congregation would look like if it were a place of spiritual wholeness, not just a busy environment where people come and go, or where parents just sign up their kids for one thing or another. Synagogue should be more than a place where we go only for life cycle events. Synagogues should be where we do more than business, programs, and planning.

The Mishnah has very few laws regarding synagogues, but one of them is that you may not walk through them in order to use them as short cuts to go somewhere else. The point seems to be that synagogues are not purely utilitarian. They are sacred places and the sacred, in Judaism, cannot be "used" for arbitrary or extraneous ends. Remember the Chanukah candles? After lighting them, it is customary to sing *Hanerot halalu...*, a prayer that goes back to the 8th century, if not earlier, and announces, "These lights are sacred; *we do not have the right to make use of them.*" The candles are used, says the Talmud, only "to proclaim the miracle of Chanukah." It could be argued that everything holy in Judaism is reserved so as not to be used extraneously. "You may not use the Torah as a spade to dig with," says *Pirke Avot*; the Torah is sacred knowledge; ideally, it is *Torah lishmah* (Torah for its own sake). Shabbat is holy; we do not use it to do work of any sort. The human being is holy, because we are made in God's image. We do not "use" people either.

Holy things are utilized only to proclaim the miracle of God's presence. God is present in Torah, holy words. God is present in Shabbat, holy time. And God is present in the synagogue, holy space.

The synagogue, then, is not a place where people should "buy time or services," the way they buy a seat at the theater or an hour of court time at the neighborhood racquet club. It is a place they join because it reminds them constantly of the miracle of the sacred – in themselves and in the world, insofar as they touch the world as partners with God.

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the units so far. Do they

have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

READ AND DISCUSS
"In a Synagogue Where Spirituality
Matters"

Below are samples of how other Synagogue 2000 team members described the question, "In a synagogue where spirituality matters..."

- "People feel welcome."
- "You don't get lost in huge rooms where everyone but you seems to know where they are going."
- "The pictures on the wall should include the people who attend here, not just once-upon-a-time presidents and rabbis; or the confirmation classes from years gone by."
- "There should be a contemplative or meditation area where you can go to be alone, perhaps to listen to tapes of healing services or just some music; and you should be able to access tapes of prayers, maybe the psalms being read aloud, for people who cannot or do not want to read them themselves."
- "Can't there be an information area like a spiritual AAA office? I go to the Automobile Association of America to find out all the offerings in a place I visit as a tourist. How do I find out what a synagogue has, without having to explain my needs to a stranger? There ought to be handout flyers announcing a host of study, healing, social action, or support groups (like Jewish Alcoholics Anonymous, or 'Moms with Teenagers')."
- "You feel safe -- physically safe in the parking lot, for instance; psychologically safe inside -- no one will pounce on you, even though people will make you feel welcome; and safe to talk about God, hesitantly and critically, or passionately and certainly, as the case may be."

- “The signs that you see tell you what matters. I would expect to find more than cardboard displays urging me to support UJA.”
- “You ought to be able to get to the rabbi or other ‘spiritually helpful personnel’ without curt and business-like office staff who may mean well, but give the impression they are standing guard, and who manage only to scare you away. Some ‘border guards’ are necessary, but they should greet you in an atmosphere that doesn't just make you give up or get frightened and go home.”
- “Reserved parking should go to someone other than the president and staff -- what about the old and disabled, for instance? How do first-time visitors feel when they get here? Are they stuck off in a distant part of the parking lot and left to find the right door in the dark? (Some places have a first-time visitors’ area near the main door, where they can be greeted and shown the way in, with all the consideration for comfort that you would show a visitor to your home.)”
- “You could have a sign outside, like a church signboard, that displays thoughtful messages about the human condition, rather than a list of who works at doing what in the synagogue. Signs ought to put a smile on your face, not read like a list of who’s who in Temple politics.”

For Discussion:

- 1. How would you describe a synagogue where spirituality matters?***
- 2. How does your synagogue give a message of the sacred?***
- 3. What do you still have to do if you want strangers to recognize your synagogue as a spiritual place?***

READ AND DISCUSS

In the previous discussion just completed, you have begun to dream of what a your synagogue as a spiritual center ought physically to *look like*. But remember, physical change in a building will come slowly and with time. Do not rush to make too many changes too quickly.

To begin with, changing the physical space of an institution may be very expensive. But even if cost were not a factor, space would be hard to alter because people relate to it personally. They have a sense of ownership. They often like it just the way it is. As the song goes, “Be it ever so humble, there’s

no place like home.” For the regulars who go there or the people who work there it is a symbol.

A 1996 *New York Times* article on changing church space reports a pastor who removed just the front pew from his sanctuary so that he could have room to come down from his lofty pulpit and engage people in conversation during services. Under the removed pew, he discovered new carpet that stood out boldly in contrast to the old soiled carpeting all around it where people had been walking for years. In order not to draw too much attention to the spacial change he had

initiated, he actually spent hours rubbing grime into the new carpet to make it look old! Sounds crazy! But he knew how people react to changing space. They often reject it, even if it is for the better.

On the other hand, sometimes small things can happen quickly. You may want to consider tackling some small items now just to see how they work, and to get some idea of how change works in your institution. For instance, a huge bulletin board with pictures of families and children can be added to the wall which holds paintings of former rabbis and presidents, if that is what you want. Some S2K synagogues now have bulletin board areas for notices about families sitting *shivah*, or people who are sick, or members celebrating *simchahs*. People refer to it to know who to contact and about what.

Somewhat larger projects may take more time, but may be small enough to undertake without too much stress and strain. One synagogue is discussing a meditation area where people can listen to tapes or just come to think and pray. If the front hall is dingy, extra lighting is relatively easy to add. Decorative wall banners with messages of identity are relatively inexpensive, but they are often seen as altogether novel, so are harder to implement than they should be. Anything dealing with public display and building structure usually has to go through a Building, House, or Grounds Committee and then the board. Move carefully and patiently.

For Discussion:

Think through things for now and things for later -- what might become a long-term project in the next year or so. Decide what a spiritual center might look like, and then determine if there is anything easy to put into operation now, while saving the larger project for later.

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some “last words” which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the unit. From time to time, refer to the “Concluding Ritual Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Ten: Appendix

- I. Observation Form A: Synagogue External Inventory
- II Observation Form B: Synagogue Spacial Identity Inventory
- III. Observation Form C: General Spatial Inventory
for a Mall or Shopping Area
- IV. Observation Form D: Church External Inventory
- V. Observation Form E: Church Spacial Identity Inventory

I. Observation Form A: Synagogue External Inventory

1. From the street (passing by) what would you notice?

Grounds: well kept? inviting? other?

External Building Structure: well kept? inviting? other?

Zoning: What synagogue zones are evident (school wing? sanctuary?
business office? other?)

Of the zones, which ones predominate?

Signs: Does the synagogue have any signs?

- on the building?

- on signboards?

- are any activities advertised? (like school events, Israel rallies,
capital campaigns?) What activities apparently "matter"?

So far: what is the message of this place?

2. In the parking lot...

How easy is it to find the right place to park? to find the right door to the
various zones?

Check parking lot lighting. Is it safe? comfortable? clean?

What "feel" do you get from the outside? Is there anything that invites
you in? Puts you off? How do you know it is a synagogue? Is it
cold and barren looking? Warm and inviting? Other?

How far away is the parking? How many spaces close to the building are
reserved for professionals and others? Are there spaces for parents with
children? Newcomers?

II. Observation Form B: Spatial Identity Inventory for Synagogues

Doorways:

What kind of doorway do you go through to enter the building?
A front or side door? Is it decorated? If so, with what message?
Is there a mezuzah?

Do you have the sense of entering a portal that goes somewhere special?

How easy/hard is it to open the doors and get inside or outside? If you were aged? in a wheel chair? Were the doors open or locked? Did you have to walk from door to door across the grounds? If so, did you feel foolish (people usually do)?

Entry room:

What is the message of the first room that greets you? Is it bright? dull? clean? interesting? exciting? other?

What signs are readily visible? What else is on the walls? Are the visual displays interesting? current? eye-catching? artistic? What impact, if any, do they make on you? What is the message that they give?

Are you greeted? Is this a warm and friendly place? Or a cold and distant one? If you have to get help for something, is there anyone to ask? Does the guard or receptionist seem happy to help you? Would they offer to do so? Do they have name-tags so you can call them by name? What, exactly, did they say when they saw you?

How hard/easy is it to find your way to the coat room, the bathrooms, the sanctuary or other zones?

Sanctuary:

How do you know where to sit? How does it feel to enter the sanctuary? Do other people sit with you? Does anyone talk to you, greet you, hand you a book (with a smile? or otherwise)? Can you readily locate *tallit* and *kippah*?

What is the message of the sanctuary? Big and cold? formal? friendly?

From where you sit, can you hear people at the front?

Look around you: what are other people near you doing? Are they engaged in services? Bored?

Is the temperature right? Too hot? Too cold?

Oneg Shabbat / Kiddush room

Do people greet you? Do you stand alone? Do people sit down at tables, and is there room for you? Are you welcome here?

Is there grape juice for people who do not drink wine?

Halls:

Whose pictures get put up here? Who matters, apparently?

What is the visual message of the hallways, the walls, the pictures and displays?

Bathrooms:

Are the bathrooms tidy and well stocked with what you needed?

Generally:

What visual foci does the synagogue have in its various rooms, and what rooms seem to matter most? Where do you find your eye wandering as you walk through the rooms? What matters to people here?

For Discussion, Complete the following:

This synagogue is a place that appeals to certain kinds of people, namely,

The people here can be described as

They seem especially concerned about.....

The shape that their building is in tells me a lot about how important the place is to them. In general,

I would go here in order to

Unlike other synagogues, this one stands out because.....

III. Observation Form C: General Spatial Inventory for a Mall or Shopping Area

Why do you like this place?

Does it have a “feel,” friendly or otherwise? What gives it this quality?

How do you know where to go?

Do people greet you anywhere?

Is there a focal point around which the place is organized? a fountain, perhaps?
And how do people know to congregate there? Do they congregate in other places, perhaps ones never contemplated by the planners of the place? What kind of people go there and why?

Are there information booths? How do you find out where to go?

What kind of place is this? Upbeat? Happy? Expensive? How do you know?

What kind of people would be drawn here? What does their being there tell them about themselves?

IV. Observation Form D: Church External Inventory

1. From the street (passing by) what would you notice?

Grounds: well kept? inviting? other?

External Building Structure: well kept? inviting? other?

Zoning: What church zones are evident (school wing? sanctuary?
business office? other?)

Of the zones, which ones predominate?

Signs: Does the church have any signs?

- on the building?

- on signboards?

- are any activities advertised? What activities apparently
“matter”?

So far: what is the message of this place?

2. In the parking lot...

How easy is it to find the right place to park? to find the right door to the
various zones?

Check parking lot lighting. Is it safe? comfortable? clean?

What “feel” do you get from the outside? Is there anything that invites
you in? Puts you off? How do you know it is a church? Is it cold
and barren looking? Warm and inviting? Other?

How far away is the parking? How many spaces close to the building are
reserved for professionals and others? Are there spaces for parents with
children? Newcomers?

V. Observation Form E:
Spatial Identity Inventory for Churches

Doorways:

What kind of doorway do you go through to enter the building?
A front or side door? Is it decorated? If so, with what message?

Do you have the sense of entering a portal that goes somewhere special?

How easy/hard is it to open the doors and get inside or outside? If you were aged? in a wheel chair? Were the doors open or locked? Did you have to walk from door to door across the grounds? If so, did you feel foolish (people usually do)?

Entry room:

What is the message of the first room that greets you? Is it bright? dull? clean? interesting? exciting? other?

What signs are readily visible? What else is on the walls? Are the visual displays interesting? current? eye-catching? artistic? What impact, if any, do they make on you? What is the message that they give?

Are you greeted? Is this a warm and friendly place? Or a cold and distant one? If you have to get help for something, is there anyone to ask? Does the guard or receptionist seem happy to help you? Would they offer to do so? Do they have name-tags so you can call them by name? What, exactly, did they say when they saw you?

How hard/easy is it to find your way to the coat room, the bathrooms, the sanctuary or other zones?

Sanctuary:

How do you know where to sit? How does it feel to enter the sanctuary? Do other people sit with you? Does anyone talk to you, greet you, hand you a book (with a smile? or otherwise)?

What is the message of the sanctuary? Big and cold? formal? friendly?

Spiritual?

Look around you: what are other people near you doing? Are they engaged in services? Bored?

Is the temperature right? Too hot? Too cold?

Halls:

Whose pictures get put up here? Who matters, apparently?

What is the visual message of the hallways, the walls, the pictures and displays?

Bathrooms:

Are the bathrooms tidy and well stocked with what you needed?

Generally:

What visual foci does the church have in its various rooms, and what rooms seem to matter most? Where do you find your eye wandering as you walk through the rooms? What matters to people here?

For Discussion, Complete the following:

This church is a place that appeals to certain kinds of people, namely,

The people here can be described as

They seem especially concerned about.....

The shape that their building is in tells me a lot about how important the place is to them. In general,

I would go here in order to

Unlike other churches, this one stands out because.....

The Vocabulary of Music

Unit 11

OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

The history of Jewish music goes back to the time of the Bible. The Temple in Jerusalem had its own small orchestra and a choir of Levites sang as pilgrims mounted the Temple steps. While the Psalms mention several of the instruments that would have been played—shofar, harp, lyre, lute, cymbals—we know almost nothing about how that music sounded. We do know that, since Judaism’s earliest days, music has been a central part of Jewish worship and spirit; in every generation, the Jewish people have heeded the Psalmist’s instruction: “*Shiru l’Adonai shir chadash! Shiru l’Adonai kol ha-aretz!* Sing unto God a new song; sing unto Adonai, all of the earth!”

Our practice of chanting the Torah at public readings is an ancient one, and the Masoretes (the scribes who determined the grammatical and cantillation marks during the ninth and tenth centuries) were vitally concerned about how the Torah’s words would be pronounced and chanted. While we presume that they passed on earlier traditions, we have no understanding of how ancient systems for chanting the Torah actually sounded. The earliest music about which we have any firm knowledge is the group of melodies called *Mi-sinai*, literally “from Sinai.” In truth, these so-called “melodies from Sinai” date only from the tenth century C.E. at the earliest, but they are such an integral and longstanding part of the Ashkenazi tradition that they are considered to be as ancient as Sinai.

Most of the standard synagogue repertoire is more recent still, and often reflects the influence of the varied communities and cultures where Jews have lived. The most familiar melody for the *Sh’ma*, for instance, is usually called “the Sulzer *Sh’ma*” after Salomon Sulzer, a nineteenth-century Viennese cantor. While it appears that Sulzer himself may not have arranged this particular setting, the stirring, waltz-like “Sulzer *Sh’ma*” illustrates how wider musical trends contributed to the shaping of the music of classical Reform Judaism. Sulzer and his peers—like other Jewish musicians before and after—were immersed in the music of their day, and we can discern its influence in their compositions.

Jewish music, like Jewish art, architecture, law, cooking, and every other aspect

of Jewish culture, has never been completely isolated from the wider civilizations where Jews have lived. Often, though, Jews have preserved musical or cultural elements from the past and have brought them to new places. With the beginning of Jewish emancipation in Europe, nineteenth-century Jews had many more opportunities than before to observe and interact with the culture around them. In recent decades, Jews are no longer just assimilating Jewish culture into non-Jewish civilization; they are increasingly co-creators of a common, modern Western culture.

The range of contemporary Jewish liturgical music encompasses influences and trends which have shaped Western popular and art music over the last three hundred years. Along with the new, many cantors and communities are seeking to enrich their worship by including older music from the Western and Eastern Sefardi traditions.

In this unit, we will learn about the history of Jewish liturgical music, explore a variety of musical styles, and reflect on the role that music plays in synagogue worship. Many conversations about the place of music in the synagogue quickly become a debate about style: art song vs. folk song, or about instruments: organ vs. guitar. We encourage you to avoid limiting the conversation to such either-or choices, and instead to focus on the various roles that music plays in the life of your synagogue's communal worship and how a variety of different musical settings, styles and moods might all make a contribution.

Many Jews feel strongly about preserving the music that is used in their synagogue. Over the course of time, we have come to associate certain prayers with particular tunes, and many of us are reluctant to change them. This loyalty is healthy. Familiarity is a key part of ritual. A central function of religious practice is to connect our present to our past, and, by extension, to connect us to a history which extends beyond our own life-spans. We are obviously not the first generation to sing music that evokes memories of eras we never saw and things we never witnessed. *Mi-sinai* melodies and traditional *chazanut*, for example, can be exceptionally moving links to the past. The sense of history these settings bring can link us to our deepest roots and help create a spiritual environment in which some things appear to endure.

But sometimes, singing the same song over and over again, regardless of the antiquity of the melody, may not be beneficial. What evokes positive associations or nostalgia for some people may elicit neutral or negative memories, or nothing at all in others. When we learn about the history, meaning or function of texts or musical settings, our relationship to them may of course change. Nonetheless, insisting on always keeping the same melodies may prevent us from finding other spiritual rewards, because it closes the possibility that new music might lead our prayer in a different direction. Every worshipping community needs to find a

balance between the familiar—with the comfort and associations this brings—and the regular appearance of the new, with its possibilities and challenges.

Because many of us feel so passionately about music, and because its emotional associations are so strong, it is especially important to pay attention to group process during this unit. Be sure to take time to check in, to review the process and agenda, and to create safe and respectful ways for people to express their opinions and issues. Most importantly, be sure to listen.

Please begin your study by reading Eliyahu Schleifer’s essay, “Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism.” (A glossary of the technical terms he uses is included.) Our present-day challenges are articulated in Chapter Seven of *The Art of Public Prayer*, “The Script of Prayer: Words Sung,” pp. 171–200.

Team Objectives

Team members will:

- Study the history of Jewish music;
- Learn how music functions liturgically;
- Reflect on the place of music in their synagogue’s liturgical life;
- Explore the relationship between a text and its musical setting;
- Identify the variety of moods that music creates in a service;
- Develop a deeper insight into the connections between music and text;
- Cultivate a wider vocabulary to discuss liturgical music;
- Understand how Jewish liturgical music organizes and punctuates Jewish sacred time.

Action Items

The S2K team will:

- Facilitate learning and dialogue about the place of music in the worship life of the synagogue;
- Encourage the use of a variety of musical moods and styles in the worship life of the congregation;
- Make recommendations to the clergy and synagogue members about how to deepen and strengthen the place of music in the worship life of the synagogue;
- Encourage the ongoing musical education of the congregation.

“Since Judaism’s earliest days, music has been a central part of Jewish worship and spirit.”

NOTES TO THE FACILITATOR

S2K Meeting Format

- Food
- Opening prayer or ritual
- Check-in
- Readings, activities, and discussion
- Process checks
- Closing prayer or ritual

This unit requires greater advance planning than most of the other units in the curriculum. The musical illustrations that accompany the articles in this unit are available from Synagogue 2000; if you have not already received the tape or CD, please contact the S2K office. Your synagogue's cantor or music director may wish to serve as the "expert resource" for this unit, singing the various illustrations or providing additional background information; alternatively, the cantor or music director may opt to be just a participating team member. (One activity in the unit asks the cantor or music director to present the process of how the music for a service is chosen in your synagogue.) All the information needed to present the material in this unit, along with the appropriate music, is available from S2K. The facilitator should check in with the cantor or music director about this when planning the unit, and explain at the first meeting what the role of the cantor or music director will be. The facilitator may need to remind the team periodically to honor this decision. The team may also wish to invite other "stakeholders" in the musical life of the synagogue—organist or accompanist, choir director, music committee chair, and/or school song leader—to participate in these sessions.

Be sure to arrange appropriate sound equipment for the meetings when the recordings will be played. It may be necessary or desirable, in advance of the team meeting, to make a tape recording of the music which is customarily heard in the synagogue on Shabbat, or perhaps, if feasible, to make a recording of an actual service. Arranging for this should begin well before the scheduled team meeting.

The Activities in Unit Eleven

There are three different kinds of readings and activities in this unit. The first group is primarily educational. This includes the background readings and the activities on *nusach* (p. 8-7) and "Music As Expression of Text" (p. 8-11).

All of these are intended to expand the team members' vocabulary for thinking about Jewish music. Both of the group activities involve listening to selections of Jewish liturgical music and discussing them together. The group's ability to follow the material on *nusach*, however, may depend on their prior familiarity with traditional synagogue chant. If your synagogue has a cantor, she/he may wish to lead this section, using other examples from the liturgy of your synagogue.

The second set of activities looks at the music the congregation sings. The reading and exercise on "The Many Faces of Jewish Sacred Music" (p. 8-18) will also help the group develop a more sophisticated and neutral vocabulary for talking about music and its place in the synagogue. The congregation's own history is an important source of information; what we do today is always informed by what we did in the past. There are two aspects to the "History and Place of Music" exercise: interviewing people who have influenced the musical culture of the congregation over the years, and inviting team members to reflect on their own Jewish musical experiences and values. These latter conversations are best held *after* the team has developed a shared language for talking about liturgical music. You may also wish to conduct a "Musical Inventory" (p. 8-26) of your congregation's repertoire.

The final part of this unit should be a process of goal setting. The pair of readings at the back of the unit, "Ten Steps for Increasing Congregational Singing" and "More Ideas for Increasing Congregational Singing," contain ideas from other congregations about how they achieved their musical goals. They are included as resources for your team in its thinking about the steps it can take in realizing your own musical goals.

Suggestions for Planning the Sessions

As elsewhere, it is up to the facilitator or planning group for the S2K team to decide how many sessions to devote to this unit. We suggest that you allow a minimum of three meetings. One possible arrangement of the material in this unit would be:

To Prepare

Background reading:

"Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism"

"The Script of Prayer: Words Sung"

First Session: About Liturgy and Music

"*Nusach*: The Traditional Chants and Chant Patterns of the Synagogue,"

p. 8-7

"Music As Expression of Text," p. 8-11

"The History and Place of Music in Your Synagogue," p. 8-28

(assign interviews)

Second Session: The Music We Sing

“The History and Place of Music in Your Synagogue,” p. 8-28

(reports back)

“The Many Faces of Jewish Sacred Music,” p. 8-18

“Musical Inventory,” p. 8-26, or “The History and Place of Music in Your Synagogue,” p. 8-28 *(S2K team members)*

Third Session: Goal Setting and Moving Forward

“Twelve Steps for Increasing Congregational Singing,” p. 8-30

“More Ideas for Increasing Congregational Singing,” p. 8-32

Low-Hanging Fruit & Action Items

BACKGROUND

READINGS

Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism

Eliyahu Schleifer, from Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience, Lawrence A. Hoffman and Janet R. Walton, eds., Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, Vol. 3, pp. 11–58. (Glossary by Judah Cohen.)

Schleifer is Professor of Sacred Music and Director of the School of Sacred Music at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem. In this essay, he traces the history of Jewish liturgical music from its Biblical origins until the eve of the modern period. While some passages are technical in nature, the article as a whole is an accessible survey. A glossary of the musical terms is included.

The Script of Prayer: Words Sung

Chapter Seven in The Art of Public Prayer, pp. 171–200.

Nusach: The Traditional Chants and Chant Patterns of the Synagogue

Andrew Bernard

(This section is adapted from a forthcoming curriculum developed by the American Conference of Cantors and the UAHC Department of Sacred Music.)

The Jewish liturgical calendar organizes time in three different ways: according to the time of day, the day of the week, and the season of the year. The liturgical modules (see p. 3-7) included in a particular service are determined by these variables. Every morning service throughout the year contains the “Morning Blessings,” but they are never found in an afternoon or an evening service (see the chart of service modules on p. 3-7). Within each module, individual prayers change or are added depending on the time of day or day of the week. For example, the words of the *Mi kamokha* are slightly different at the evening and morning services. Shabbat services contain insertions in honor of the Sabbath day which are not included in weekday services. High holidays, festivals, and other seasons of the calendar determine other additions or changes in the liturgy. The traditional music of the synagogue reflects each of these changes. The traditional chants and chant-patterns of the synagogue are collectively called “nusach.” There is weekday nusach, Shabbat nusach, and special nusach for holidays, festivals, and the Days of Awe.

(The numbers in the examples below correspond to the musical selections on the CD available from www.s2k.org)

Nusach Tells Time, Day, and Season

The music of the service often reminds us of “what time it is” on the Jewish calendar. Melodies associated with a holiday are woven into the nusach of the regular liturgy. For example, the *Mi kamokha* is customarily sung to a melody that is associated with the holiday:

1 – Rock of Ages/*Maoz Tzur* inserted in *Mi kamokha*

2 – God of Might/*Adir Hu* inserted in *Mi kamokha*

The High Holiday season is distinguished by its special nusach, when we hear familiar prayers in a different way, and by those prayers and melodies which are only heard during this season:

3, 4, 5 – *Barkhu*, *Mi kamokha*, *Chatzi Kaddish* in High Holiday nusach

6, 7 – *Kol Nidrei* and *U'teshuvah*, *u'tefillah* [closing line of *U'nataneh tokef*]

Each regular service is associated with a particular nusach, which creates continuity and familiarity over time. By listening to the nusach, one can “know” without thinking that “this is Shabbat.”

8 – Nusach for *Kabbalat Shabbat* – Psalm 93 [*Adonai malach mode*]*

9 – Nusach for Shabbat evening – *Magein avot* [*Magein avot mode*]*

* The Shabbat evening *nusach* is divided between that for *Kabbalat Shabbat* and the *nusach* for the latter part of the evening service. The *nusach* for *Kabbalat Shabbat* is called *Adonai malach*, after the first words of Psalm 93. Psalm 93 is part of *Kabbalat Shabbat*. The *nusach* for the regular evening service on Shabbat evening (see the chart on p. 3-7) is called *Magein Avot mode*. *Magein Avot* is the summary of the Shabbat evening *Amidah*, chanted in lieu of a complete repetition of the *Amidah* (see p. 3-7; *GOP*, p. 141). Both texts are only recited on Shabbat evening and therefore the musical modes when they are recited are named after them.

The musical motifs of the Shabbat, festival, and High Holy Day liturgy can be heard by comparing the same text as it would be sung differently on each occasion. Listen to this passage from the end of the Kedushah.

10 – *Ledor va-dor* for Shabbat morning [*Ahavah rabah mode*]

11 – *Ledor va-dor* for Festivals [*Festival mode*]

12 – *Ledor va-dor* for High Holidays [*High Holiday mode*]

Musical Hints about What's Coming

An important function of the nusach within any service is to give a hint or "prelude" of what is coming next. These musical clues direct our attention to where the liturgy is moving. They bind the different parts of our worship together and help create a seamless experience of prayer. This foreshadowing helps create a bridge to what comes next, both within individual services and also between one service and another.

Anticipation within a Service

The blessing which is sung before the haftarah, for example, is not sung using the Sabbath or holiday nusach but instead uses the haftarah cantillation:

13 – *Haftarah* blessing

14 – Sample *haftarah*: Isaiah 40:27–29 (*Parshat Lech L'cha*).

The very last phrase of the haftarah itself, though, is always sung in the nusach of the blessing which follows it:

15 – End of the sample *haftarah*: Isaiah 40:27–29

16 – Blessing after *haftarah*

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*Perhaps less familiar is how the chants of the Torah service are linked. The closing phrase of the blessing following the reading of the Torah anticipates the invitation to call up the next aliyah:**

17 – End of blessing after reading Torah

18 – Invitation to come up for an *aliyah*: *Ya'amod . . .*

The Chatzi Kaddish, which marks the transition between one section of the service and the next, uses the nusach of the next portion of the service, not the unit just completed.

19 – *Chatzi Kaddish* on Friday evening, at the end of *Kabbalat Shabbat* [*Magein Avot mode*]

Anticipation between Services

We may be less familiar with how the tradition anticipates upcoming holidays by including elements of their music in the Sabbath services immediately before them. On the Shabbat before the new month, a special blessing is included announcing when the new moon of the coming month falls. Cantors may include a “hint” of the musical themes of the holidays coming in the new month in the Rosh Chodesh (New Month) blessing or in the Kaddish on the Shabbat before a holiday.

20, 21 – *Rosh Chodesh* blessing for Nisan and Kislev

22 – *Chatzi Kaddish* for *Erev Shabbat* with *Chanukah* candle blessing

23 – *Chatzi Kaddish* for *Erev Shabbat* with *Pesach* theme

24 – *Ki heim chayeinu* with High Holiday insertion into folk melody for *Ahavat olam*

*The *Mi shebeirach* for the individual called up for an *aliyah* is rarely done in Reform synagogues. It too is sung in this *nusach*.

DISCUSSION/ REFLECTION

***Nusach*: The Traditional Chants and Chant Patterns of the Synagogue**

1. How familiar are you with the traditional *nusach*?
2. How and when is *nusach* used in your synagogue? (The cantor or key music leader may be asked to give a more detailed explanation.)
3. What was new or unfamiliar to you in this lesson?
4. By what other routes, besides *nusach*, is information about liturgical season, day and time announced?

ACTIVITY

Music As Expression of Text

Evan Kent

(This section is adapted from a forthcoming curriculum being developed by the American Conference of Cantors and the UAHC Department of Synagogue Music.)

Jews have been composing, adapting, and singing liturgical music for centuries. In this activity, we will explore a selection of Jewish musical styles and genres through listening and reflecting on a series of settings from the Book of Psalms (Sefer T'hilim). Our text is Psalm 150, the last psalm in the book, and also the closing psalm in the P'sukei d'zimrah (Passages of Song) section of the morning liturgy (see p. 3-13 and chart on p. 3-7).

Part I

As a large group, brainstorm answers to the following questions:

1. What do you know about the Book of Psalms?
2. What associations do you have with it?

After the group has completed its brainstorming, the facilitator or a group member may present additional background information about the Book of Psalms.

Part II

Divide into pairs or small groups and read Psalm 150 out loud.

Discuss:

1. Why do you suppose this psalm was placed at the very end of the Book of Psalms? Why do you think that this psalm was included in the daily and

Shabbat liturgy?

2. Why has it been retained as part of our Reform Jewish liturgy?
 3. If you were a composer writing music for this psalm, what would you want it to sound like? What instruments, if any, would you use?
- Report back to the large group on your discussion.*

Part III

We will listen to a series of settings of Psalm 150. Please listen to each setting of the psalm as openly as you can. After you and the team have had the opportunity to discuss each setting, the facilitator will report on the composer and time period for each piece.

1. With your partner or small group, listen to the first setting of Psalm 150.
2. Together, complete the questions following the translations.
3. Listen to Settings 2-5 in turn and answer the questions after each one.

A Contemporary Translation

hallelu Yah praise Yah
praise God in the holy place
in the firmament of God's power give praise
praise God for acts of might
give praise to God's infinite greatness
praise God with a shofar blast
and with the harp and lyre
with drumming and dance praise God
and on the lute and pipe
praise God with resounding bells
with loud clashing cymbals
let all the soul and breath
praise God
hallelu Yah praise Yah
—*Dan Bellm*

Literal Translation

Hallelujah!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
praise Him in the sky, His stronghold.
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
praise Him for His exceeding greatness.
Praise Him with blasts of the shofar;
praise Him with harp and lyre.
Praise Him with timbrel and dance;
praise Him with lute and pipe.
Praise Him with resounding cymbals;
praise Him with ringing bells.
Let all that breathes praise Yah.
Hallelujah!
—*JPS Tanakh*

Psalm 150

hallelu Yah
hallelu El b'kodsho
halleluhu b'rakia uzo
halleluhu big'vurato
halleluhu k'rov gudlo
halleluhu b'teka shofar
halleluhu b'nevel v'chinor
halleluhu b'tof u-machol
halleluhu b'minim v'ugav
halleluhu b'tzil'tzelei shama
halleluhu b'tzil'tzelei truah
kol ha-neshama t'hallel Yah
Hallelujah!

Rejoin the large group. Discuss together the team's responses to the different settings.

1. How many of the settings were familiar to team members?
2. What were different ways that the composers expressed the text through their music?
3. Which words get emphasized in the various settings, and how does that change the way you hear the text? Do the different settings create a different reading of the text?
4. Which settings reminded team members of familiar music or styles?
5. Which of these settings would team members choose to use in worship?
6. How do the various settings enhance or support different worship services?
7. How did each setting invite the listener into the text?
8. When might the various settings be used at services or other occasions?
9. How did familiarity affect team member's responses to the various settings?
10. Are there any overall observations or conclusions which you can draw from this exercise?

The facilitator should distribute information about the composers and their music.

The Chronicler for this session should add conclusions and significant observations to the Reminder Portfolio.

**Music As Expression of Text: “Let Everything That Has
Breath Praise God...”
(group answers for each setting of Psalm 150)**

1. Have you heard this piece of music before? Where?
2. Do you think the music matches the text? Why or why not? How does the music express the text?
3. Does this piece remind you of another musical selection with which you may be familiar? If yes, which one?
4. What feeling or mood did this setting create for you?

The Many Faces of Jewish Sacred Music

Benjie-Ellen Schiller

First prepared as an address to cantors, Schiller introduced her now well-known formulation of the various moods of Jewish music in this essay. You may already be familiar with the categories of “majesty, meditation, meeting, momentum, and memory.” As you read it now, ask: How do these apply to the music of my synagogue?

Where are we going with the music of prayer of our Reform synagogues?

Does some larger cultural process exist within the contemporary Jewish community that will predetermine our sacred music as it develops into the next century?

Although the numbers of affiliated Jews are diminishing, due largely to our successful assimilation, an inner core of synagogue regulars, those who religiously attend our services and “keep the fires burning” within our communities, is thriving. Enthusiasm is flowering among those seriously committed to synagogue life. They exhibit impressive vigor and passion for prayer, study, and social activism. They take our adult education courses, attend *kallot*, learn to read from the Torah, and sing in our volunteer choirs. Some are so hungry for involvement, learning, and spirituality that they even join synagogue committees!

Singing: An Entrance into Jewish Ritual Life

These regulars have wholeheartedly expressed their desire to sing within the service. We cantors have responded to their call for inclusion by finding ways to sing *with* them, rather than *for* them, at every possible opportunity. Let us first try to understand the underlying sociological, psychological, or spiritual reasons for their desire to participate actively in the service. They tell us that they feel welcomed and accepted within our community when we invite them to sing with us. Moreover, singing prayers has become their entrance into Jewish ritual life as well as their gateway into learning Jewish sacred texts. Through singing Hebrew or English words, made possible either by soaring melody or simple *nusach* (prayer modes), they feel empowered to pray as Jews, in a way that undeniably links them with the larger Jewish community and affirms their Jewish identity. Singing gives them the sacred key that allows their access to Jewish sacred tradition. If the regulars are giving us this message, we can only imagine how first timers feel!

Our future will include ever more communal singing within our synagogues. Today we join in singing the melodic refrains within large, complex compositions for cantor, choir, instruments, and congregation. In such settings of rich, sophisticated harmony and several layers of melodic counterpoint, modern composers often include sections with lyric melodies. From the first hearing, congregants can easily relate to these accessible moments and eventually enjoy the more challenging sections as well.

An Ever Richer and More Complex Mix

What are the musical elements of congregational song, and how will this song develop? Which styles are timeless, and which will disappear with the next stylistic wave? I believe that we will see a gradual increase in traditional chant within our services. Cantors will teach us to chant some of the liturgy in *nusach*, whether in Hebrew or English. In addition, we will continue to implement various ethnic traditions within Jewish sacred music. We have discovered the Chasidic *niggun* and Sephardi melody, and we are rediscovering Yiddish music and culture. We are experimenting with Middle Eastern and Yemenite traditional music. Secular American styles too have permeated our contemporary musical idiom. In short, we are broadening our definition of contemporary liturgical music by incorporating various musical traditions, ancient to modern, from across the Jewish spectrum. Our artistry will be proven as we attempt to integrate this rich, diverse mix into an artistically cohesive whole.

How do we create a fluid, musically sound, and spiritually meaningful service? What will be the balance of styles? Is our music to become fully participatory? Will the pendulum swing so far toward inclusivity that we exclude music that requires the performance by a cantor and a professional choir and instrumentalists? We must first consider a larger perspective. What dynamics affect our choices of particular musical styles? Jews today want to feel both welcomed and empowered to participate within the service. They have sought out the synagogue for communal gatherings. They come perhaps to find solace, or to meet friends. They come, in some way, to meet God. Many are burdened by the mundaneness of their lives and yearn for meaning and purpose to nourish their minds and calm their souls. What kind of prayer will speak to them? How will the music help them on their spiritual path?

A New Vocabulary of Sacred Music

We need to understand clearly what occurs within music itself that creates a sense of prayerfulness. If we could scientifically break down sacred music to isolate various moods of prayer, perhaps we could perceive how certain prayer experiences directly relate to particular musical expressions. We have spent too much energy defending particular musical styles as if the music were the end in itself. Let us instead develop a new vocabulary of sacred music that will focus on the unique phenomena at the intersection of prayer and music. Here are descriptions of several distinct kinds of prayer. Even though the following terms may appear simplistic, perhaps they will help us discuss synagogue music beyond purely musical categories.

Majestic: A Sense of Awe and Grandeur

Our first mood is majestic: that which evokes within us a sense of awe and grandeur. A classic example is the music of the First and Second Temple periods.

The Levites, with full choir and orchestra, assembled a magnificent offering suited only for God. What is our equivalent of majesty in musical prayer? Our liturgical texts certainly intend to inspire such passion on a regular basis. Look at the texts of the Torah service, *Kedushah*, *Adon olam*, *Sh'ma*, or *Hashkiveinu*, not to mention our High Holy Day and festival liturgy. When are we ever so moved within our service as to sense the majesty implicit in so many of our prayers? How can we create awe and grandeur when inclusivity has become the hallmark of our age?

Meditative: Inward and Reflective

Our second mood is meditative: that which leads us inward, toward reflective, contemplative prayer. It is to know the “still small voice” within ourselves, the one that often eludes us. Consider the Silent Prayer, “May the Words,” *Mi shebeirach*, or even *Kol nidrei*. Is our liturgical music conducive to moments of genuine meditation?

Meeting: Creating and Encountering Oneness

Our third mood is meeting: moments in which we become aware of the larger community and literally meet other souls through prayer. When all voices join to create a resounding chorus of prayer, when every voice contributes its sound to the whole, a new expression of prayer is born. Even among strangers, we sense both a personal and a spiritual connection with those with whom we pray. Imagine a *seder* table where everyone joins to sing a blessing or song. We have so many opportunities to create “meeting moments” within our liturgy: when the Torah is taken from the ark, or at the beginning or end of a section of the service, or on Yom Kippur. Whether majestic or meditative—whatever the musical style—the meeting of voices defines this type of prayer.

Moving Along: Creating Momentum

Of course, not every melody fits into one these categories. Some music functions as the “connective tissue” of the liturgy, carrying the worship from one section to the next—the *Chatzi Kaddish* on Shabbat evening, for example, may not readily be identified as music of meeting, meditation or majesty—although some of us no doubt experience it in each of these ways. Mostly, I think of it as the music of “moving along” or “momentum.” In this case, its music is traditional and connects us to our musical history. Its familiarity is comforting; its specific melody, chant or prayer mode, is a reminder of where we are in Jewish sacred time. As an individual piece of music it is relatively neutral; its function is simply to punctuate one section of the service. But “connectors,” such as the *Chatzi Kaddish*, fulfill an important task—they create momentum, so that one prayer flows smoothly into the next.

These four M's of prayer just begin to address the many subtleties of the dramatic and musical nuances inherent in sacred music. Invariably there are overlaps, for the boundaries between majesty, meditation, and meeting easily blur, but that does not lessen the individual function of each mood within a service. Some music's primary task is to “move things along.” Memory may

also be associated with any of these moods. These distinctions remind us to focus upon the larger process of what prayer does, rather than solely upon the repertoire we choose. We will never get beyond our disagreements about musical style! Sacred music nurtures meaningful, honest prayer, whether or not the music we ultimately choose satisfies our artistic selves. The real test is whether our sacred music satisfies our spiritual selves, as individuals and as a community. To me, a successful service offers a healthy combination of moods of prayer to express an array of paths toward knowing God.

Balance Between the Different Moods

Today our people call out to be included. They ask us to enrich their sense of meeting. Whether they know it or not, they do not wish to abandon either the majestic or the meditative moods of prayer. Ultimately these four moods succeed when they complement and balance one another. When a part of the whole is not fulfilling our communal needs, however, we must examine the effectiveness of that part and its relationship to the whole. Do we offer an array of paths to God which all can appreciate? Does our music express the affective moods of our sacred texts? If we assess our meeting moments, both at specific times and within the entire service, perhaps we can determine how our music can encourage a sense of welcome and empowerment, even amidst a fully balanced range of moods and styles. Let us make a correlation, then, between our prayers and their most vivid musical expressions. Let us do this as individuals, and then with our community. I hope that our prayers will continue to uncover the majesty within the Godly world around us and the intimacy of our sacred relationship with the Divine. I pray that we meet one another, both in honest debate and in the prayers we sing.

Memory: Connecting to the Past

Some people suggest that a fifth function should be added to the list: memory. Sometimes it is the associative connection that one's memory makes to a particular melody that moves people the most. In these situations, the melody and/or the words are symbols. The significance of these associations may be private—"The melody that my grandmother sang as she lit the Shabbat candles" or "The song we always sang at our family *seder*"—but if many people in the community have the same memory and bring similar associations, then the memory is a mood of shared prayer. If the music of meeting establishes connections with our community today, the music of memory creates continuity with our communal past. In Jewish tradition, particular musical themes serve as leitmotifs for corresponding Holy Days: imagine Yom Kippur without the Kol Nidre melody!

While style and our own musical tastes have changed over time, we must nonetheless respect the power of the music of memory to evoke and embody the sacred. Memory is not a separate mood from the four M's of meeting, majesty, meditation, and momentum; it is an over-arching category that is often experienced simultaneously with the others.

ACTIVITY

The Many Faces of Jewish Sacred Music

Schiller distinguishes among four distinct moods: majesty, meditation, meeting, and momentum. (Memory may be associated with any of these moods.) In this exercise, you will evaluate how the music at a service in your own congregation creates and supports these different moods. The leader should be prepared to sing, or arrange for someone to sing, the major liturgical musical pieces as they are sung/chanted/played in your congregation on a typical Friday night. Alternatively, the leader may prepare a tape of these selections.

Allow time for team members to reread the article. Invite each team member to share a brief reaction to it.

Distribute copies of the four M's chart (p. 8-25). On this chart, the vertical axis represents Schiller's prayer "moods." The facilitator should then lead the group in filling in the horizontal axis with the names of the musical liturgical selections used during a typical Friday night service.

(The chart can be prepared in advance by the facilitator and distributed at the meeting; however, team members will have a better grasp of the relationship between individual prayers and the liturgy as a whole if they complete the chart themselves.)

Team members should be asked to listen as each musical selection of the service is sung or played. Ask team members to "plot" each musical piece's "mood" on their chart. Participants should work independently. There are no "right" answers in this exercise and responses may differ widely.

If desired, the team may divide into small groups and report back responses to these questions:

1. In what ways did the team's responses agree? How much did they differ?
2. At our synagogue, is the mood evenly divided between the "majestic," "meditative," "meeting" and "momentum"?

3. What do you think about the balance of musical styles in a typical service in our synagogue? Is there more emphasis on one mood than on the others? If so, why?

4. How are each of the moods created or supported by the non-musical aspects of our service?

5. How does this compare to the music at other places of worship you have visited?

6. Would this exercise be significantly different at a Shabbat morning service? A bar/bat mitzvah? A festival? High Holidays?

If the team chooses, this exercise might be repeated for one or more of these services.

If the team has broken up into small groups, each small group should report back to the entire team.

The Chronicler for this session should add conclusions and significant observations to the Reminder Portfolio.

ACTIVITY

Musical Inventory

What is the musical repertoire of your congregation? What are the congregational favorites? Which places in the liturgy need renewal? How does the music support or hinder the flow of the service? Does the congregation regularly sing music which supports each of the different moods of meeting, majesty, meditation, and momentum? In this exercise, you will compare how different individuals, including the synagogue's cantor or key music professional, think about organizing a service. The team should be divided into small groups and each person given a copy of the congregation's prayer book. The entire team can look at the same service, or some groups can look at a Friday evening service while others look at a Saturday morning service. The goal of this exercise is to create an "inventory" of the musical options in your congregation.

1. Start at the first page of the service. How does a service customarily begin? (Is there a song before people are asked to open their books?) As you come to each text that is customarily sung, list the various melodies that the members of the group know. For places where there is no specific text—for example, at the beginning or end of the service—list all the songs and melodies that are used in the congregation. (Most people probably will not know the composer of a particular setting. You may need to identify different settings as "the fast tune" or "so-and-so's favorite." You may use a tape recorder, too.)
2. For each tune that is listed, invite the members of the group to freeassociate about any memories or "feeling tones" they connect with each song. People may say, "I've sung that all my life," "We sang that at my son's bar mitzvah," "I just love when the cantor sings that piece," "I hate that melody," and so forth.
3. In the large group, each group can briefly report on its work. After the groups have reported on their remembered repertoire and their responses to it, the cantor (or key music person) should be asked to comment on the list. How does the cantor think about and categorize these melodies? The cantor may also add additional information about the composer, history, or style of the different melodies in the congregational repertoire.
If you have scheduled time for this activity: How is music planned for a service in your synagogue? The cantor or key music person can present the outline of a service and explain the criteria used for planning the music of a service in your synagogue.

For Discussion:

1. Look for patterns in the inventory. Which, if any, of the “M’s” predominates? Are all the functions represented? Are individuals’ favorites concentrated in one type of music?
2. Were you challenged in any way during this session, regarding anything you may have taken for granted about the music of the synagogue?
3. What did you learn about the “musical culture” of your congregation?
4. Are there significant groups within your congregation that are not represented at this meeting? What might their responses be to this exercise?

ACTIVITY

The History and Place of Music in Your Synagogue

What is the musical history of your congregation? Where did the musical traditions come from? What melodies are most important to people and why? Before you begin to discuss possible change, give respectful attention to the past and present.

In teams of two, identify people in the congregation who have been involved in the musical life of the synagogue in the past or are active today.

These individuals may include the cantor or music director, the organist or accompanist, choir director, rabbi, choir members, and members of the congregation from different age groups and backgrounds. If appropriate, interview people who served in these roles in the past, too. If your synagogue has a long history, you may wish to also research its older musical history.

The S2K team may also do this exercise internally, interviewing one another and discussing the answers in small or larger groups. In this case, members of the S2K team do not need to be interviewed outside of the regular meeting.

Questions to ask include:

1. What was the music of the synagogue like when you first arrived?
2. What have been the Jewish musical influences on your life?
3. If you grew up in a synagogue, what kind of music was heard in your synagogue then?
4. What values did you bring to selecting or singing music in the synagogue?
5. What were your favorite melodies or types of song in the past? Today?
6. What do you cherish about the music life of our congregation?
7. What about the music life of the congregation would you like to change?

Twelve Steps to Increasing Congregational Singing

These steps are based on what has been learned from other congregations' experiences.

1. Avoid scapegoating.

If there is less congregational singing than you wish, avoid scapegoating any single group or individual. It is not simply the “fault” of the rabbi, cantor, music director, ritual or music committees, or anyone else. Begin your change efforts by a clear understanding that you are not criticizing anyone for real or imagined shortcomings in the music of prayer.

2. Watch for principles, not precedent.

Each congregation is unique; what is appropriate or successful in one setting may not be in another. Do not try to make your congregation's worship a clone of another's! Concentrate on the values and principles which make for effective congregational singing.

3. Choose the best times in the liturgy.

Singing together at the beginning of a gathering establishes community, while ending with common song reinforces the sense of community before we leave to go home alone. Consider increasing congregational singing at these two places in the service.

4. Choose different theological types of song.

Congregational melodies can be of any of the types mentioned in Cantor Schiller's article. Music that “works” engages the congregation and elevates people to a different plane. We can be engaged in a variety of ways—at times of harmony, in vigorous unison, in reflective listening.

5. Review the music you have.

Review the current musical inventory that your congregation usually uses. Consider how much of it was written for community singing. Where in the flow of the service is it appropriate to add more community singing?

6. Try it out.

The cantor or person leading the singing may want to step forward and teach or lead from a spot closer to the congregation. Other strategies may include altering the register of the music leader's spoken presentation to encourage more participation. Musically, the cantor needs to check the register and range too; congregants will sing along if the music is sung in a register that invites participation.

7. Give the congregation the words and the music.

Make sure the congregation has the correct words to the music as it will be sung. This should include transliteration and Hebrew. Are the words in the prayer book *identical* to those which will be sung? If words or lines are repeated in the song, how will the congregation know this? If possible, provide the music, too. Many more people can read music than we often imagine.

8. Teach outside of the service.

If introducing an entirely new song, or one with challenging words or music, consider teaching it outside of the service proper. The song can be taught at the very beginning of the service, before the official “opening song,” and then sung at its proper place in the service. The Ritual Committee, Board, or other groups can be taught the song at their regularly scheduled gatherings before it is introduced at services. The adult choir can introduce a new melody and then “hand it off” to the congregation.

9. Consider changing instruments.

While the organ can be quite effective as an instrument for both meditative and majestic music, American Jews do not enthusiastically sing with it. Do not be afraid of using piano, guitar or other instruments, even in a big crowd, and even on the High Holy Days. What you sing and how you sing it will determine how people respond to the guitar or any other instrument. Try guitar with other instruments for harmony: perhaps flute, violin, or oboe. Almost any other instruments such as piano, flute, harp or cello can add to the musical experience during prayer.

10. Use a *niggun*.

Begin by teaching a *niggun*, from the midst of the congregation (off the *bimah*). The *niggun* has the advantage of demanding no words. Repetition is the key; the moment when some in the congregation may become tired or bored with the melody is often just when many congregants are first becoming fully comfortable and able to pray through the music.

11. Take lots of time to teach.

Do not let people who know the song rush into singing it, thereby possibly inhibiting those who do not know it yet. Take the time you need to teach the newcomers and request the patience of the seasoned singers to wait and listen. Teach in simple singable ideas—not too much at a time—and then put them together slowly.

12. Avoid the tendency to “raise up” music.

The most common error of congregations who already enjoy a fine classical repertoire of sacred music, but want to add congregational music, is that they try to set it to organ accompaniment or rearrange it such that it no longer has the intended pathos. A congregation can enjoy classical and folk repertoires side by side; each creates paths to experiences of the sacred. Keep singable melodies singable. Once the congregation has learned a new tune, let it enjoy what it has learned. Stay away from changes and embellishments to the music, which could leave the congregation feeling left out. Congregants can quickly become self-conscious about their singing, fearful that they will make a mistake.

More Ideas for Increasing Congregational Singing

The following ideas were submitted by members of other S2K teams around the country. What

was right for a different congregation may not be right for yours—but what variations on these techniques would be appropriate and useful for your congregation to try out?

Learning and Teaching the Congregation's Music

- Make a cassette or CD so that would-be worshipers can listen to the music in their cars. New members automatically receive the music when they join the congregation.
- One congregation made a tape with twelve new melodies, one for each month of the year. People listen to it in advance, and the melody is introduced and sung regularly during the month in question.
- A congregation made a CD of its Friday evening Shabbat service and mailed it to every household in the synagogue.
- Offer a “sing-in” for people to practice a variety of melodies. Repeat regularly until those who come are familiar with the congregational melodies. Could this take place before or after services?
- Schedule a sing-along class annually for new members who want to feel at home with the congregational music tradition.
- If the current practice is to have a completely different musical program from week to week, the cantor/key music person might begin building a repertoire that is consistent (in addition to the music that will continue to be changeable).
- Teach a refrain from a larger prayer, and ask people to sing it several times at length, punctuated by solo lines. Settings that combine solo verses with congregational refrains add different textures within the service.

Introducing New Music to the Congregation

- If the repertoire of “predictable” music is stale by now, the cantor or music leader might begin teaching new music that can alternate with the music already in place.
- Prepare a handout for each Shabbat, listing the music that will be sung, its origin, and the composer.
- When new music is to be introduced, prepare a simple music sheet for those who can read music. Even those who do not read music will find the words helpful.
- Keep the pace of new music manageable. A single new piece at a service is just right.

Increasing Participation at High Holidays

- The High Holiday musical “theme,” which recurs regularly through the High Holiday liturgy, can be taught during the month of Elul, and then again before *Selichot* services.
- Try a simple and compelling tune to *Hashivenu*, and start or end all services with it on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Use it as a *niggun* and then apply the words, making sure that people have the words before them in a handout. Get the whole congregation singing as a meditation to evoke the necessary *kavvanah* before the official liturgy of each service begins, and then again at major intervals.
- One cantor who follows tradition and sings *Kol Nidrei* three times, sings it himself the first time, with the choir the second time, and with the entire congregation the third time.

- It is not true that the High Holy Days resist change, or that the liturgy is already so wonderful that nothing new should be attempted. This is the time when the entire community is really present. Give them the full experience—not just the wonderful things you already do, but the glory of thousands of voices raising their voices in prayer together.

Learning from Others

- Take time to go visit another denominational service. You will be amazed at what you can learn from each other. Many Reconstructionist communities, for example, know how to chant English well.
- It is very important to let your worship leaders go to other synagogues to learn what other people are doing differently. A Shabbat spent in an altogether different congregation is a wonderful investment in keeping our own clergy fresh and challenged.

LOW-HANGING FRUIT & ACTION ITEMS

***T**his unit discussed the place of music in the liturgy of the synagogue.*

You explored how your synagogue's musical culture has evolved and the values that team members and key leaders bring to their own appreciation of music. Having deepened your understanding of music and its importance in the articulation and celebration of the sacred, please turn now to how these conversations can be brought to the congregation as a whole.

As a team, discuss:

1. What did you learn in the course of this unit? Are there ways in which you “hear” liturgical music differently than you did before?
2. What experiences did you have that you would like others in the congregation to participate in?
 - Are there activities or readings in this unit that can be used or adapted for other groups in the congregation?
 - Are there existing opportunities for discussing these issues?
 - What additional programs or activities could be developed for introducing discussions about the place of music, and different types of music, to the congregation as a whole?
 - Do congregants know about the musical history of the congregation? How can this information become more widely known?
3. How might the music at your synagogue's worship further create or enhance your experience of the sacred? Is there a consensus within your team? If not, how can the different needs be addressed?
4. Can you agree on specific steps for how to achieve these goals? If increasing congregational singing is a goal, which of the ideas on pp. 8-30 to

8-34 can best be adapted to your congregation?

5. What forums will be used to enlist the entire congregation in identifying and implementing the goals you have created?

6. What is the time frame for any next steps, and who is responsible for implementing them? Who will report back and when?

7. What song will you now sing to conclude your study of this unit?

The Chronicler for this session should add conclusions and decisions to the Reminder Portfolio.

Unit Twelve: The Wholeness of Shabbat Game and Spectacle

In this unit, we will...

- 1) understand Shabbat as the paradigmatic time for spirituality in Jewish life
- 2) discuss the distinction between “game” and “spectacle”
- 3) apply the game/spectacle distinction to Shabbat services
- 4) begin transforming the Shabbat experience into a time of spiritual wholeness

Preparatory Readings:

1. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1951), pp. 95-101
Heschel’s famous exploration of Shabbat as a sanctuary in time.
2. Lawrence A. Hoffman, “Welcoming *Shabbat*: the Power of Sabbath Metaphor,” *Liturgy* (Winter, 1989).
A concise account of the role that Shabbat played in the mind and ritual of Safed mystics.

Optional Reading:

- Thomas F. O’Meara, *Notre Dame Magazine* (Fall, 1991) pp.12-14 “Field of Grace”
Hordes of visitors descend on the Notre Dame Campus for football weekends—not for games at all, but for the spectacle.

During the Unit

You may want to read out loud the open letter found in Unit Thirteen. This letter summarizes where you have been thus far and where you are headed in the future. There is some homework that is required before you meet again. Please

look over the material carefully.

After the Unit

Make note of any material that you set aside for another unit. Now is the time to make notes of anything that you have not covered in the Itinerary and would still like to cover in the future. Bring all your notes to your next meeting.

Write up and distribute notes to team members.

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D'var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t'fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ

Shabbat as a Time of Wholeness and Healing

A good number of readings regarding Shabbat would have convinced you that Shabbat is a time of rest and of sanctity. Of the two, the idea of sanctity predominates in the Bible, while the details of what it means to rest are emphasized by the Rabbis. Both are necessary components of Shabbat, certainly. But for our purposes, neither is entirely sufficient. We need to concentrate on yet a third aspect of Shabbat in Jewish tradition: a time of innate wholeness for people whose lives are shattered or simply not as full as they might like. The relationship between Shabbat and wholeness is not immediately

evident. It may take some time before it becomes clear. But it is worth the effort. Again, it is easiest to work with a broad view of wholeness as spiritual healing. We can begin on familiar ground: Shabbat rules of work.

READ AND DISCUSS

Everything we know about Sabbath ambiance supports the claim that, at least in the synagogue, Shabbat should be the kind of experience that Heschel

Develop a sense of Shabbat in the synagogue such that healing is its very essence.

People who come to pray then should be given such support, such love, such care, that they cannot help but feel healed. Healing presents itself in the broader sense of temporary respite from their pain, their anxiety, their loneliness and their distress.

describes as a “sanctuary in time.” Isn’t that what the notion of “an extra soul” means -- that in addition to the soul, that we have, we are gifted with another for one day in seven? Or what about the midrash that pictures the souls of Hell coming back to earth to enjoy Shabbat with us. At *Havdalah* they hesitate to return to their torment; similarly, the troubled among the living may want to delay their own return to weekday worries. Why else would we raise up mourners from their *shivah* on Shabbat, admitting them to the synagogue that day with the assumption that their mourning can be put on hold for these twenty-four hours?

Serious concern for Shabbat should transcend notions of toiling. They should bring us to the point where we ask: what can we do to make Shabbat a healing time? Only then can we rest safe in the

assumption that God and the healers can take a rest themselves that day, for Shabbat will fill in for them. The overriding concern for Shabbat in the synagogue is how to make it a time and place of such healing that Shabbat becomes what it was meant to be from the start, a time when people cannot help but know that “healing is near at hand.”

Shabbat as Game and Spectacle

Most attempts to provide meaningful Shabbat services ignore the fact that the service is only part of what draws people to services. Rightly or wrongly, people come also for such things as the *Oneg Shabbat*, or *Kiddush* to be with friends, or (if they are teenagers) just to chat in the back row while their friend is going through the rigors of becoming *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Rabbis look askance at all this, of course, wishing people would come for “the right reasons.” Anthropologists would be less dismayed. Long ago, they learned to differentiate the official reason that people attend events from the unofficial things that draw them there. The official reason to attend is called the

game; the unofficial things that happen before, during and after are called the spectacle.

Take a football game: Players are sure you ought to go for the game -- from the kickoff to the final whistle. People *really* go because they cannot wait to do the wave, or because they love tailgating beforehand, or walking through the crowds eating hotdogs while the game is on. Back in the 1950's, a hit song featured the nostalgic line, "On New Year's Eve, we did the town; the day we tore the goal posts down; these are the moments to remember." Not the winning touchdown, but tearing the goal posts down: except for real sports fans, that's what people come for – not just the game but the spectacle.

Now consider a concert, musicians hate the idea that people come late or leave early; the rules prevent your being seated if you interrupt the performance. But many people come *really* not just for the music, but to enjoy the ambiance at the intermission, or (at open air concerts) to lie on the ground with the sun beating down on their face all afternoon. If it is opening night, people pay a lot of money to meet the composer, mix with society, display their evening wear, and read about themselves in the newspaper the next day.

And here's the point: The football game and the actual music are the "game." The rest of what happens is the spectacle. People can stand a bad game as long as the spectacle attracts them!

To be sure, it pays for the football team to become a contender, and the Philharmonic does well to perform at the high standard that its followers expect of it. But even a good football team and even the best orchestra better pay attention to the spectacle in which even their best "game performance" is embedded.

So too with the Synagogue:

For Discussion:

The service is the game. Ask yourself what the spectacle events are.

- 1. Before services, what do people do? Greet each other? "Hang out in the hall?" Other?***
- 2. During services, what do people do? Sit with friends? (Ask them; you'll get some surprises.)***
- 3. During the Torah liturgy especially, what happens? Who carries the Torah? Who is involved, and who not? Do people touch it?***
- 4. After services, what do people do? At the Kiddush or Oneg?***

The question becomes: How can we alter not only the game (the services) but the spectacle? Much about the game may be unalterable, or at least, not easily changed. But the spectacle is not governed by *Halakhah*, or even (often) by

minhag (custom).

The point is, not just the game but the spectacle can provide Shabbat wholeness or make people feel welcomed. It is a sacred act to provide wholeness for people on Shabbat. This is the unit of study for you to think through how to do that.

READ AND DISCUSS

Kabbalat Shabbat in Safad (“Tsfat”)

A good example of wholeness in game and spectacle comes from the mystics in medieval Safed. Your reading described how the Safed Kabbalists developed a solemn and impressive ritual to greet the Shabbat bride. On Friday afternoon, some time before the onset of the Sabbath, the Kabbalists of Safed and Jerusalem, usually clad in white, went out of the city into an open field, and transformed into the “holy apple orchard,” bride. In the course of the procession, the people sang special hymns to the bride and psalms of joyful anticipation (such as Psalm 29 or Psalms 95-99). The most famous of these hymns was composed by Rabbi Solomon Alkabez.

Go, my beloved, to meet the bride,
Let us greet the Sabbath.

In this hymn, which is still sung in the synagogue, mystical symbolism is explicitly combined with Messianic hopes for the redemption of the *Sh'khinah* from exile. When the actual procession into the fields was dropped, the congregation met the Bride in the court of the synagogue, and when this observance fell into disuse, it became customary, as it is to this day, to turn to the doorway at the last verse of the hymn, and bow to the approaching Bride. It is recorded that Luria, standing on a hill near Safed, beheld in a vision the throngs of Sabbath-souls coming with the Sabbath-Bride. A number of our sources tell us that the Sabbath songs were sung with closed eyes, for as the Kabbalists explained, the *Sh'khinah* is designated in the *Zohar* as “the beautiful woman who has no eyes.” That is to say, she has lost her eyes from weeping in exile. On Friday afternoon, it became customary to sing the Song of Songs, traditionally identified as the indissoluble bond between “The Holy One, blessed be He,” and Israel, but here taken also as the *Sh'khinah*. Only after the meeting of the Bride were the traditional Sabbath prayers spoken.

After the prayer, the mystical ritual was resumed at home. According to Isaac Luria, it was highly commendable and “rich in mystical significance” to

kiss one's mother's hands when one entered the house. The family marched solemnly around the table, from which they took in silence the two bundles of myrtle for the Bride and Bridegroom. They then sang a greeting to the angels of the Sabbath, that is, the two angels who, according to the Talmud, accompany us to our homes at the onset of the Sabbath. The four stanzas of the hymn to the angels, "Peace be with you..." [*Shalom aleikhem...*] are followed by the 31st chapter of Proverbs ["A woman of valor, who can find...."], which seems to sing the praises of the housewife and her activities, but which the Kabbalists interpreted line by line as a hymn to the *Sh'khinah*....¹

For Discussion:

- 1. How much of the above is "game" and how much is "spectacle"?**
- 2. How does spectacle become game eventually?**
- 3. How much of what we now consider the Shabbat eve game was originally spectacle?**
- 4. What do we have in the way of spectacle nowadays?**

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people's reaction to the sessions so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

EXERCISE

Recollect the old children's game sometimes called "Statue." In it, you were

¹ Adapted from Gershom Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists," *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 141-142.

asked to go about your business of walking, running, or doing whatever you were doing until someone yelled out "Freeze." Then you had to stop in mid-motion, like a statue.

Go out into the parking lot or sidewalk where you normally approach the synagogue for Shabbat services (either Friday night or Shabbat morning).

The goal of the exercise is to go through the motions of arriving at services, choosing a seat, getting settled, and so forth, up to and including the end of services; then you are to continue going through the motions as you customarily take part in the Friday night *Oneg Shabbat* (if you have one) or the Shabbat morning *Kiddush* (again, if your synagogue includes one) as part of its normal "spectacle."

At various points on the way, someone (who is appointed in advance) stops the procession of activity as if to say, "Freeze." At that point, everyone gets in touch with what they would be doing on an average Shabbat eve or morning, and explains to the group what that would be (e.g., as you walk through the corridor Friday night prior to services, you might normally be looking for friends to say hello to; most people count on friends at that time, preferring not to walk into services alone.) The things that emerge from the discussion constitute the customary spectacle, and turn out often to be what brings people to synagogue as much as the services (the game). The spectacle, remember, comprises things before, after, and during services that are not strictly speaking part of the prayer service itself, but are customary anyway.

Most regulars find the spectacle comforting. They meet friends, enjoy the routine that they know and understand, find time to share their lives with others, and discover the magic of socializing around food. All of these activities are spectacle-events: they provide solace, sustenance, comfort and company – in a word, wholeness. In addition, the regulars find wholeness in the service that they understand: not only the game (they know the prayers) but the spectacle (they know how to get a name read on the *Yahrzeit* or *Mi sheberakh* list; they sit with friends in a favorite place; they arrive when their friends do, and check in with each other over small talk during the *davening* perhaps.)

For Discussion:

- 1. Elicit a list of the things people find comforting about the service.***
- 2. Elicit from rabbi and cantor how they feel at all times also. How do they feel when they look out at the congregation (mostly empty?) or at a bar/bat mitzvah crowd (mostly new?)***
- 3. What do you think newcomers or watchers think when they attend?***
- 4. What do mourners feel when they arrive?***
- 5. How can you involve people other than the regulars in the little things that provide wholeness to you, when you attend?***

Exercise:
Homework for Final
Session

Now that you have come this far, you can anticipate just one more final unit to cap off your work in this phase of S2K Itinerary that you are finishing.

For now, we want you to concentrate on how far you've come. The next unit is designed to do that, but in order to do so, you need to do some preparatory work at home.

1) The beginning of Unit 13 contains an "Open Letter." Please be sure to read it and follow instructions within it. Briefly, you are asked to give some prior thoughts to how much progress your team has made in areas that are described there are personally and institutional transformations.

In addition, you will spend some time reviewing what you have learned. To do that, please divide up now into several subgroups of two or three. Assign parts of the Year One Itinerary to each group. The groups should meet for an evening between now and the next session to go over the assigned curricular units. Their task will be to report the most important lessons from the units, so that, all together, you will recollect and sum up what you learned. So as to prevent an onerous session of endless reporting, teams should plan on reporting for *no more than five minutes* for each Itinerary unit. The units on space and music are exceptions. Since they have two parts, they can be allotted more time.

Assign someone now to bring two egg timers, which can be used to measure the reporting out.

Don't miss the last session. It will be rewarding and celebrative. You've come a long way.

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with each person offering some "last words" which summarize their learnings from or their feelings about, the unit. From time to time, refer to the "Concluding Ritual Suggestions" in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts. Sing a *niggun*, or read a poem.

Unit Thirteen: *Cheshbon Hanefesh* “Taking Stock”

In this unit, we will...

- 1) Take stock of what you have learned
- 2) Evaluate how much you have realized the first two stages of the S2K process (small scale individual and group transformation)
- 3) Revisit your growing agenda for synagogue initiatives
- 4) Conclude with a *siyyum* – the traditional Jewish ritual for completing a tractate of Talmud (we have applied it to completing a significant piece of study in general, in this case, to completing this itinerary.)

Preparatory Reading:

An “Open Letter” to S2K Team Members (enclosed)

Before the Unit

It is important that everyone has read and done their homework for this next unit.

During the Unit

Goal: Take stock of what you have learned. Evaluate how much you have realized the first two stages of the S2K process (small scale individual and group transformation). Revisit your growing agenda for synagogue initiatives. Conclude with a *siyyum*.

After the Unit

Write up all your notes and make copies for all team members.

An Open Letter to S2K Team Members

(To be read before coming to the final session of the Prayer Itinerary)

Dear Members of the S2K team:

Mazal Tov! -- Congratulations

You have accomplished so much! It is time to take a deep breath, to pause, and to appreciate how far you have come so far on your journey with Synagogue 2000. In the 1950s when engineering schools were graduating students in droves, a popular cartoon portrayed a young man just starting out with slide rule in hand (anyone remember using slide rules??), and saying, "Two years ago I didn't even know how to spell 'Engineer' and now I am one." Well, a year and a half ago (roughly), you may never have heard of "The study of worship and synagogue ambiance," and now you are your synagogue's experts in it.

You have discussed such big topics as Jewish spirituality, synagogue as spiritual center, and religious healing. You have "rethought" God, discovered the staying power of "symbols," taken apart the prayer service and studied some of its rules (or stage directions) that we call *halakhah*. You looked especially closely at sacred music and synagogue space, and you went through a series of exercises to sharpen your sensitivity to the way the entire complex of words, songs, room arrangement and surrounding ambiance forms a system that lets worship work or makes it fail. You have begun enriching what you have by instituting "low-hanging fruit," subtle experiments in change that do not depend on lengthy processes to be put into place. You have left-over lists of other things that you want to try some day.

Along with studying prayer, you have begun to form some understanding of the importance of greeting people, sending a spatial message of what you stand for, and becoming sensitive to the special needs of "watchers" and of "seekers." Your very last exercise combined the two foci of prayer (on one hand) and ambiance (on the other) by saying that the entire experience of coming to *shul* ought to be spiritually satisfying, creating a sense of personal wholeness and worth. What we said there about prayer goes equally for every other aspect of synagogue activity. For instance: Parents who drive their children to religious school think that "school" is the game that their children come for – they have no "adult" game, and no "spectacle" other than waving to other drop-off parents: so they go home. What would happen if we provided their own parallel "game," or at least a spiritually satisfying spectacle for them to engage in while their children attended the "game" of school?

One way to look at what you are about is think through how the year and a half so far has affected you. And one way to approach that is to recognize the importance not only of what you have done but how you have done it. If you have followed the strategy provided for in meetings (checking in, reflecting,

eating together, and so forth), you will discover that you have learned how to “do synagogue differently” on a microscopic level – in your own S2K group. Imagine if the whole synagogue operated with the principles that underlie your meeting practice! Synagogues who have already “graduated” tell us that their boards do check-in, that even seventh-graders do it; that their walls have new pictures and notices; that the message on the outside bulletin board is spiritual not just informational, that the phone gets answered differently; that staff are proud of working in an institution where what matters most is the fact that every single soul who walks through the door is viewed as having been made in the image of God – and on and on and on. Hopefully, you yourself have begun thinking in this way. Hopefully also, the next phase of S2K will get your whole institution “doing synagogue spiritually.”

We think of the S2K process as an arc – or (better) a synagogue ark (which is usually arc-shaped, with a sign over it, saying “Know before whom you stand.” Our whole program is based on knowing before whom we stand; and the process moves arc-like also.

- Stage 1. *Individual* transformation: the way you felt way back when we sang and prayed together at our first conference; and the way you began to think differently as you discovered the thrill of learning together in a serious way and in an atmosphere where what you thought mattered and where you could check in and tell your story in the safety of a group that confirmed your worth.
- Stage 2: Small-scale *group* transformation: the way your S2K team as a group began acting differently during meetings, and the way you carried your learning into the congregation by greeting people, and noticing the human needs that everyone brings with them when they attend the synagogue. You should now just be finishing stage 2.
- Stage 3: Large scale *group* -- now *institutional* -- transformation. Stage 3 and 4 are what have to be realized in the next 18 months of your S2K work. In stage 3, you will learn to infuse S2K values into committee meetings, normal synagogue functioning, and the way the people who

work in the synagogue go about their tasks. Soon you will be “marketing” yourself as the spiritual center you are becoming. Members will be welcomed for the gifts of know-how and the passions that drive them -- all of which can be tapped to add to the spiritual depth of what the synagogue has to offer.

They will discover how small groups like your own can enhance Jewish life for everyone in the synagogue, and they will find the worship service growing more and more compelling. You will look back on a synagogue that has been made over into more than a corporate giant, or “limited liability community.”

- Stage 4: Large-scale *individual* transformation: When all is said and done, it is individuals who matter most. Institutions do have needs, but their needs matter only if they satisfy the individual needs of the people for whom the institution exists. As we began with individual transformation (your own), so we end with it. You will know you have “made it” to the vision that drives you when you see large-scale individual transformation occurring: large numbers of people studying, doing acts of Jewish justice, attending services, and helping and healing others in the community (while being helped and healed themselves).

The individual details of how to accomplish all of this vary from synagogue to synagogue. What works in one may not work in another. Priorities vary; the specificity of the vision must be your own. And that is why we have insisted on your making your own lists of what to do; why also we reminded you to consult with others in the synagogue as part of your “getting the word out”; and why it remains necessary to “reflect” on the progress of your own S2K team. As you continue your study together. In your next session -- your last one before launching into the second half of the S2K Itinerary, you should take final stock of your own synagogue vision thus far: what you have learned, what matters to you, what you have accomplished, and what still remains to do.

In order to accomplish that, you were given “homework” at your last session: to read through and summarize part of the Itinerary that you are completing; and to prepare for a final bit of team reflecting by asking yourself how much you have accomplished. Limit your thoughts on progress to stages 1 and 2, which are described above. What follows are some questions to consider regarding each stage.

- 1. Small-scale personal transformation: Is it true that, in some ways, you have learned to think differently about things? Have you experienced the thrill of learning in a serious way? Have you been moved by some of the things people said as they voiced their opinion, recalled their experiences, or “checked in” with news of their lives? Come to the next session with a specific instance of thinking differently, being excited

about what you were learning, and being moved by your team-mates.

- 2. Small-scale institutional transformation: Has your team experienced a new-found life of its own? How well have you overcome the committee mentality? Is the new way of “doing business” second nature? How respectfully do team members treat each other? If prayer is the spirituality between “ourselves and God” (what tradition calls *bein adam lamakom*) our treating each other as made in the image of God is the spirituality of “acting Godlike toward each other” (what tradition calls *bein adam l’chavero*). Come to the last session prepared to reflect on the spirituality of your group – the way you have grown together, the way you treat each other, the hopes you have for continuing together into stages 3 and 4, as we go forward into the next chapters in your ongoing S2K work.

Finally, know please how grateful we, at the national offices of S2K, are for all that you do with us. We are partners in this venture. Without your work, nothing happens. Our itineraries lie unread and unacted upon on shelves. Our theorizing remains empty. Our synagogues remain doing business as usual. And our Jewish community remains unrenewed. Know too that we learn from the feedback loop from you to us, thereby allowing us to work more fruitfully with others in the future.

In return, you remain one of us long after you finish the second itinerary that you are just about to get to. We will be preparing itineraries for the other spokes of our PISGAH vision: on life-long learning, and on good deeds that are our Jewish *ts’dakah*, the way we practice *tikkun olam*, “perfecting the world.” We will contact you when those are available, in the hope that your transformed synagogue as spiritual center will have normalized the PISGAH vision and that, as a result, you will always have teams somewhere in your synagogue anxious to pursue the other areas without which the task is not complete.

This is our joint work – you and us: *v’khol l’shem shamayim*: “all for the sake of heaven.”

Warmly,

The National S2K Team

Checking in

Spend a few minutes going around the table with each person sharing with team members whatever personal news he or she wishes – celebrations, important events, illnesses, stresses or sadnesses. From time to time, refer to the “Checking-in Suggestions” in Resources, for a variety of ways to structure these thoughts.

Praying

Depending on the wishes of the group, a short prayer might be said at various times during the meeting: a *D’var Torah* or the Travelers Prayer after Checking in; *t’fillot* or prayers before or after study; the *Birkat Hamazon* after eating; a spontaneous prayer or *niggun* for the Concluding Ritual. (See Resources)

Studying

READ AND DISCUSS

Ask the groups of two or three that were set up last unit to sum up in no more than three minutes the most important things that they found in their units. To facilitate the time-keeping, have on hand two egg-timers. Use them interchangeably, so that if one is still running down when a person finishes a report, you can start the other without wasting time. The rules are that when the egg-timer finishes, the person reporting can complete a sentence or two, but is essentially finished with the report. Not everything need be reported on. But the most important things should be summed up. You may want to give each group ten minutes of preparation time to decide what needs to be said, and who will make the report.

Have someone keep notes on what is said.

For Discussion:

- 1. What specific initiatives were begun in the synagogue? Compile a joint list of what people say, and then ask people to remember what they said they would initiate but have yet to do so?**
- 2. What should still get done this year? Prioritize the things to be done, and make a point of returning to the list at your next meeting – as you begin the new itinerary.**
- 3. Account for the things that worked and the things that did not. What, apparently, has to be done to get things to work in this synagogue. What is bound to make them fail?**
- 4. How well have you “gotten the word out”? Decide if you have to make special effort to do it better in the next stage of your meetings. If need be, decide to spend time next meeting thinking through how to accomplish that task.**

Reflecting

Pause to inquire about people’s reaction to the units so far. Do they have as yet unexpressed feelings about the content being discussed? About what is left out? About the way in which meeting time has been allocated? About the interactions among team members? About the method of facilitation? About anything else?

DISCUSS

For Discussion:

Ask people how they answered the questions about completing Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the S2K vision of transformation.

- 1. Go around the group asking for personal instances during the year when the learning moved people. What were the highlights? Why? Did the learning carry over in any activity in the synagogue? Or at home?**
- 2. Were people moved during the year by what they heard people say about themselves. Let people address each other by saying, “ I remember the time we....” or “I was moved when (so and so) told us that day that”**
- 3. Based on what people have said so far and on what they**

remember about group meetings in general, Can it be said that this group has begun treating each other with the kind of respect that does not occur generally in meetings elsewhere? Do people feel they are listened to? Do they think the group ought to have checked in more? Reflected better? What ground rules ought to apply next year?

Concluding Ritual

Conclude with the *siyyum*. Take it out of the binder so you can hold it easily as you do it. Notice that the clergy have a special part to say, as do team members other than the clergy. Now take it with you and reassemble in some place that has special meaning for you as a group: the sanctuary, perhaps, or a chapel, or a room where you had your first meeting, or any other place that is conducive to the spirituality of the moment.

When you are reseated in the room that you have chosen, take a moment of silence, and ask people to speak aloud one word or phrase that describes what they want to pray for as one phase of study ends and the other begins. They should complete the sentence, "I want to pray for..." or "I want to pray that we..." When everyone has had a chance to say aloud what they pray for, the team facilitator answers "Amen." Everyone else chimes in "Amen." Then the written parts of the ritual begin...