

Tefilla Workshops for Channichim

Written and compiled at Yeshivat Har Etzion, Gush Etzion, Israel

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Dear Madrichim

Our Sages show an ambivalent approach to taking Davening seriously. On the one hand we say each morning in ברכת התורה that עיון תפילה is one of the things for which a person gets reward in This World, but his reward in the World to Come is not diminished; (this is based on a Gemarah in שבת קכז.) which clearly makes עיון תפילה a positive action. But on the other hand the Gemarah in ברכות נה. & ברכות לב. teaches that עיון תפילה is one action that reminds G-d of man's sins and leads to a sore heart.

How can we synthesise these 2 understandings of חז"ל?

The בעלי תוספות give one approach to explaining this apparent contradiction. They explain that if one takes davening seriously and has kavanna, then he reaps the rewards in both This World and in the Next World as one builds a relationship with Hashem. On the other hand if one takes one's davening so seriously as to believe that G-d will automatically give one everything for which one prayed, then he will leave with a sore heart, as he will not be answered. Moreover, this haughty behavior will lead G-d to look at one's actions more seriously in the 'hope' that one is a true Tzadik and one truly deserves all his prayers answered and hence one's sins will be remembered.

G-d is not a celestial vending machine who caters to everyone's orders! Rather, he creates man with needs (reason to request from Him and to show gratitude towards Him), so that man can have an opportunity to strike up a relationship with Him.

This booklet was written to help our chanichim and us not to just stand at the vending machine 3 times a day, hoping that it will not swallow our money but to create a real relationship with Hashem. The workshops are intended to develop a genuine desire to both thank G-d and request our needs - to give the tools that we can all fulfill עיון תפילה meaning having true Kavanna.

Our goal is to show that what Chachamim compiled 2000 years ago is perfectly relevant today. We don't want our channichim to feel that they *have* to daven but to *want* to daven.

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Madrachim, please note that the benefits that can be reaped from this Tefillah workshop booklet are not solely for the channichim but we ourselves can also reap benefits. In truth the only way our channichim can benefit is if we take the preparation of these workshops seriously. I would personally suggest that madrichim should learn the workshop in chavrutot before giving the workshop. The more seriously we take the workshop, the better our Tefillot get and the better we can give them over to our channichim.

This booklet is unique as it has been written in a *channich friendly* format, which means that the madrich doesn't have to spend too much time thinking of creative ways to present the workshop to interest the channichim. Another unique aspect of this booklet is that it comes with a parallel workbook including the Tefillot dealt with in this booklet with a linear translation and the summaries of each workshop so that the channichim can remember what they learnt in each workshop.

The layout of this booklet has been designed to help the madrich give over the workshop. In this booklet: -

- Bold** - for emphasis
- Small Italics* - instruction for madrichim
- Bold & Underline** - headings
- ((Double Brackets)) - optional

As a rule we have prepared the workshops to take about 15 minutes each. Some of the workshops may be broken up to enable good discussion of the topic.

I would like to thank every person who contributed workshops to this booklet. Each contributor's name is written together with his workshop. Without their enthusiasm and devotion of time and effort the creation of this booklet would not be possible.

I would also like to extend a very special thank you to my dear friend Avi Ziskind, for taking the initiative to compile the attached workbook (siddur). I can attest to many hours, both day and night Avi spent making sure that the workbook was perfect both in terms of aesthetics and content and that it includes summaries of the workshops in the booklet.

I would also like to thank the editors of content and layout who poured many hours into checking and rechecking this booklet. Thank you to Chaim Dovid Lazear, Hillel Maizels, Danny Eisenberg, Adam Victor, Leron Bernstein and Daniel Orelowitz. Another important thank you must go to my roommate Eliyahu Misgav for all the creative artwork.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Roshei Yeshiva and Ramim of Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) for the special care shown for talmidim on MTA and for developing the type of talmidim who would volunteer to help channichim in chutz le'aretz. I would specifically like to thank them and my fellow talmidim of the Yeshiva for all the support and guidance during this project.

I hope that you and your channichim will learn and grow from the use of this booklet

Bevirkat Torah VeAvodah
Warren Sher (MTA'01 & MTB'02)
Rosh Dat Machaneh Hineini 2002

This hadracha booklet on Tefillah is dedicated in memory of

Yoni Jesner

הקדוש יונתן בן יוסף הי"ד

May G-d avenge his blood

Dear friend of the all those involved in making the booklet
and enthusiastic leader of Bnei Akiva in Glasgow Scotland,

Lover of Eretz Yisrael, Am Yisrael and Torat Yisrael,

Whose life was tragically cut short Al Kiddush Hashem
On the eve of Sukkot 5763

Yoni - madrich par excellence. Yoni was a person that embodied everything for which one wished. Love for Torah, to the extent that he deferred a place in university for a second year in Yeshiva. He used to learn day and night and even in free time. After finishing high school he sat down and wrote out a year's supply of Divrei Torah for the Jewish schools program in Scotland. This was done during the holiday that every school child spends the whole year dreaming about.

Yoni, cared for every person in Am Yisrael. It didn't matter what their age or religious commitment was, if they needed help or advice then Yoni was the one. He was leader of Bnei Akiva in Glasgow and a very important and valued madrich to both the chanichim and the madrichim. He lived the concept of 'Dugma Ishit'. If he were to be left with a group of chanichim, he would be able in matter in moments to hold the group in the palm of his hand, even when there was no tochnit prepared, he was a professional when it came to off-the-cuff education and entertainment. To the Madrichim in particular, he could offer guidance with a wealth of knowledge that seemed to be too advanced for his age on how to tackle a particular problem or tochnit.

Finally Yoni's love for Eretz Yisrael humbled all those around him. His devotion to a dream that he was determined to fulfill, the plan was to become a doctor in England and then make Aliyah. The only thing that bothered him was his duties to the Jewish community in Scotland.

It was this combination of a love for Torah, Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael that brought him to Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) to learn in Yeshiva, to develop his Torah personality, to consequently be able to give even more back to the community in Glasgow and ultimately to contribute to building Medinat Yisrael. Ironically it was this love that brought him to Israel and it was there that we laid him to rest.

יהי זכרו ברוך

Yoni was fatally injured in bomb blast on a bus in Tel Aviv two days before Sukkot this year. He succumbed to his injuries the following day and was laid to rest in Jerusalem an hour before Yom Tov. His families donated his organs and thus even through his death, Yoni was able to help others. We, his friends in Yeshiva Har Etzion, hope to keep his spirit alive through this booklet.

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Why bother davening?¹

Aim: To address this important basic question which most chanichim will face at some time and will come to you, their trusty madrich for all the answers! This can be used as an active pe'ula and discussion, a frontal session (DT/davening group) or in one-on-one discussions with channies (or even for your own clarification). We will address three basic issues:

1. The basic premise behind prayer.
2. What do our prayers accomplish?
3. So why do we have a fixed routine of prayer (this we will just touch on)?

Basic Premise of Prayer

Active pe'ulah: 3 volunteers.

1. Ask a few channies to convince a wall/pole/tent/tree (any inanimate object) to marry them - one by one aloud for all to hear. Choose people who will make good laughs!
2. Explain to group that you will make a statement that only one person in the group will know that you're talking about him/her. That person then makes a statement that only one other person in the group knows that he's referring to him. (E.g. If you had a discussion with a channie on the way to the beach the day before about Aliyah, you could say something like: "This person uses beach time to think about Israel".) Obviously you must be clear enough so that person will understand and cryptic enough so that no one else will understand. Use those brain cells! Allow this to run for a few people (not too long).
3. Ask channies how they felt when convincing tree to marry them. Ask both the volunteers themselves and the rest of the group what they felt.
4. Ask the channies how they felt as people were passing secret messages around the room. Ask both the people who spoke, were spoken to and the rest of the group what they felt.
5. Here's the crunch: Ask them why they felt different! On the surface there shouldn't be a difference – in both cases they were talking and listening. Aha! In the tree case they felt stupid because they knew the tree wasn't listening and anything they said was just nonsense. On the other hand in the second case they knew someone was listening to what they said, so they had to put a lot of thought and concentration into what they were saying, etc!

In summary, when we daven Someone is listening. If we view davening as reading off a string of words, then it's no wonder we don't identify with it or like it – it's like convincing a tree that you want to marry it. It's absurd and you feel like an idiot.

But if we understand that someone is listening on the other side then automatically our prayers must become more meaningful. We have to think about what we're saying and who our "audience" is. Just like the second exercise we did.

Therefore, the Basic premises on which prayer is built:

1. There is a God (This can be a whole separate discussion and is not the topic of this workshop)
2. God takes an active role in the world and is interested in each and every one of us.

So what do our prayers accomplish?

This part can be done as a discussion, or a frontal presentation. If you can think of an innovative interactive/pe'ula way of doing it please share it with me!

¹Hillel Maizels MTA'95

Prayer can take two roles:

- **Formative or**
- **Reflective**

Here is a story to illustrate the difference:

Yankel was visiting his Rabbi. He sees the Rabbi pick up an apple, make a brocha and take a hearty bite. Yankel thinks to himself, 'There's really no difference between the Rabbi and me – we both need to eat and we both make brochot before eating. What's so special about the Rabbi?' The Rabbi in his wisdom and sensitivity sees Yankel's puzzled face and says: 'I know what you're thinking – what's the difference between the Rabbi and me?' I'll tell you: When you wake up in the morning, you say to yourself 'Boy am I hungry', and you can't wait to eat a good juicy apple. But being a good Jew, you can't eat before making a brocha, so you mumble a blessing, hopefully reminding yourself briefly that the apple came from God and you tuck in. When I wake up I see Hashem's wonderful creations, I am thankful for the soul He gave me, I can see His hand guiding my life and I want to sing praise to him. So I look for opportunities to do that. I see an apple and think 'Here's my chance to bless God!'

Reflective

Sometimes when we daven it's because we feel a strong connection to Hashem and want to relate to Him, praise Him and thank Him. We feel inspired and want to express this. This is particularly so at certain high points in life, milestones, special moments and experiences. It also happens sometimes in the regular flow of life when we take a minute of "time out". This is prayer in its reflective state. The words are there to help give expression to our feelings and to formulate our relationship with Hashem.

Formative

Often, however, we don't necessarily feel this way. We're caught up in our daily rat race and are totally absorbed in this world. Then the prayers take on a different role. They are there to help us reach that mind-frame. To give us the opportunity of re-connecting with whom is really running the world. By reading the words of the prayers, we are reminded and refocused on Hashem, His role in the world and our dependence upon Him. This is formative prayer.

One should note that this form of prayer is more focussed on us and where we stand (albeit in relation to Hashem), rather than focussing directly on Hashem and His relating to us (in the reflective mode). This fits in with the understanding of the word תפילה coming from the shoshon פלל meaning to judge. And התפלל therefore meaning self-judgement, or self-appraisal.

It's the same words, but depending on where we're holding that particular day, our prayers can fulfill very different roles!

For further illustration of the difference between these two aspects, the workshop on 'Personal Prayer and Nusach' (page 43) represents the reflective view of Tefillah, whereas in the introduction to the workshop on 'Velamalshinim' (page 48) a formative view is portrayed.

((This is certainly true of the Shevach and Hodaya prayers (praise and thanks), but it is also true of bakashot (requests). We turn to Hashem with our requests because we understand that He is the provider of all. Alternatively, through turning to Him because that's what's written in our Siddur, we are brought to this realisation.

Important to remember 2 points when prayers aren't answered:

1. "No" is also an answer!
2. Hashem has the whole picture in front of Him, as opposed to our limited view of life. What we might want might not be good for us in the long run!))

This is an important point, because it answers the claim that one should only pray when one feels like it, when feeling "in touch" with Hashem, or inspired ("What's the point of praying if I don't really feel that way?"). Based on this distinction between prayer as reflective or formative, it turns out that when you're not "feeling into it" that's an even **more important** time to pray and be reminded why you **should** be into it!

Why then do we have a fixed obligation of prayer 3 times a day?

This could be dealt with in other articles, but I want to add a brief point here, which I feel, complements this topic (in addition to the last paragraph above).

Surely its enough to pray when I need to, or when I feel inspired, or every now and then. Why do we need a fixed, rigid structure of 3 times a day at specific times? In a nutshell, an answer is (besides the one in the previous paragraph) is that we're creating a kesher (connection) with Hashem so that when we really do need it, it's there for us.

To illustrate this, a few examples:

- Who feels more at ease and comfortable in Shul on Yom Kippur – the person who comes three times a year, or the daily davener? According to the logic of the questioner here, the one who comes 3 times a year should be more inspired and should have the more heartfelt, meaningful prayers?
- At school if you need to approach a teacher about something, is it easier to approach one of your teachers whom you see in class every day, or a teacher you never have had?
- In sports, you can't just rock up at the final race and expect to win, you have to have the commitment of the regular training (even when it's difficult and you're not in the mood) in order to be "in shape" when the real test comes.

Davening (in many ways) is no different. In order to maximise our tefillot, to feel that kesher with Hashem, to be really inspired and to feel that someone's listening, we need to pray on a regular basis! We need to be well versed in the content of the prayers, we need to feel "comfortable" talking to God, and also want Hashem to view us a "ben bayit" (one of the family).

Summary

Why bother davening?

- Hashem takes an active role and interest in the world and listens to us.
- Our prayers allow us to give expression to this understanding (in a reflective role) and how it affects our lives. Alternatively, tefillah can take a formative role, helping us reach this realisation.
- By praying regularly, we entrench this into our daily lives, and form a close relationship with Hashem.

Hypocrisy in Prayer¹

Objective: to discuss the essence of prayer by using a trigger - whether there is any point in davening when one does not really feel like talking to G-d!

Part 1- Clarifying the question

Discuss whether hypocrisy is a good or bad trait - *conclude bad*

Discuss what prayer is about - *conclude talking with G-d (there are other definitions, but this one could be generally agreed on)*

Ask them to think then, why if they aren't interested in praying are they not being hypocritical? Would you like someone to come and chat to you if you know they don't really want to? - *Leave question in the air*

Bring an example of kid playing soccer and sees an old lady struggling with her shopping bags. The kid really would rather carry on playing but helps the old lady anyway. Do we call him a hypocrite because he didn't do what he really wanted to and wasn't really interested in helping the lady, or is he a good-hearted kid that stuck to his morals? –*Conclude that sometimes we do things even though we don't want to do them, are we considered hypocrites and there is no meaning to our actions for acting like this?*

What's the difference between the boy who helped the lady, and the person who didn't want to speak to you but did it anyway? – *Conclude that there is a distinction when the action done has any value even when the desire to do the action is lacking! The boy believed that helping is a good thing. Speaking to someone and giving false impressions is not an inherently good thing (there may be certain exceptions)*

Return to original question – is there any point to davening when there is no desire to talk to G-d at this moment or is this bordering hypocrisy and better to shut up?

According to the previous discussion the answer must lie in the essence of prayer – is prayer inherently good even if there is no desire to pray (analogous with the kid and old lady)

Part 2- The essence of Tefillah

1. The **Rambam²** explains the passuk of serving G-d as referring to prayer. (Accordingly prayer is a mitzvah from the Torah.)
One could argue that prayer is a commandment that has to be fulfilled regardless of whether we really want to or not. (We do not say that a person did not fulfill the mitzvah of 4 cups of wine on Pesach even though one hates wine – and we definitely wouldn't call him a hypocrite)
2. **Ramban³** argues that prayer is a gift that G-d gave to us because of the trait of mercy. This could be compared to a principal saying to students – anyone who has a complaint can speak to me in my office, would there be any point going to him if one had nothing to say (for good or bad)? The principal did not force anyone to go and

¹By Doron Podlashuk MTA'96

²Sefer HaMitzvot #5, in the name of the Sifri

³On the Rambam ibid.

one could assume would prefer that if you don't want to come –THEN DON'T! One could argue that according to the Ramban there is nothing inherently good about praying when you don't want to. (2 important points to remember - we are not talking about a person who loses concentration whilst davening; furthermore THE RAMBAN WOULD AGREE THAT ON A RABBINIC LEVEL THERE IS AN INHERENT GOODNESS ABOUT PRAYER EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NO DESIRE SINCE ONE IS FULFILLING A RABBINIC COMMANDMENT WHICH IS, IN ITSELF, A TORAH LAW)

3. There is a third way of understanding prayer – it's not because (1) we have to, or (2) because we want to but something in between. It's called building a relationship. One doesn't necessarily call one's parents and wish them good Shabbos because one has to (excluding S.A. moms) or because one really wants to (excluding home-sick channies) but because they know it will make their Shabbos.

To put it in another way - a relationship is defined by giving and taking, which brings about a connection, called love, friendship etc. The more one gives and takes the deeper the bond becomes. G-d's ultimate kindness is letting us finite mortals have a relationship with him. This leads to a problem, how can we give to G-d? How can we say that G-d takes from us?

If the rabbis didn't say it, I wouldn't be so daring but the Gemara in Chullin 60b explains that Adam found a world completely barren until he prayed and then the garden of Eden came about. Why? "BECAUSE G-D DESIRES THE PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS."

The rabbis tell us that our prayers have the same effect as "wishing our folks good Shabbos." (One way to understand this is that G-d allowed us to have a relationship with him but in a relationship one has to be able to give or else the bond formed will be one sided. G-d in his infinite wisdom created a thing called prayer where it is as if we could give to G-d. Obviously He doesn't need our prayers, but on a human level one could look at it in that way)

In this understanding, we do not pray because we have to, nor necessarily because we want to, but because we're in a relationship with G-d. HOWEVER IF ONE TRULY UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS IS A GIFT FROM G-D, A CHANCE TO CONNECT, HOW COULD ONE NOT WANT TO PRAY, AND WHEN PRAYING, HOW COULD ONE NOT CONCENTRATE?

Summary

- Sometimes we do things even when we don't want to, as we see in the example of the boy who stops his game of soccer in order to help the old lady with her bags. How can we be considered hypocrites for such an action?
- One could understand Tefillah as the building of a relationship between us and ה'. We know that even though we may not feel like davening today, keeping up the relationship is worthwhile.
- If one truly understands that this is a gift from G-d, a chance to connect, how could one not want to pray? And when praying, how could one not concentrate?

Why Daven in Hebrew?¹

We have all at one point asked ourselves “Why pray in Hebrew?” We live in South Africa, where English is our first language, and maybe Afrikaans our second. For many people, Hebrew doesn’t even have the slightest meaning or relevance. We ponder, “Why should I pray in a language which not only do I not speak, but neither do I understand?” We can even ask if it is appropriate to be standing before and praying to our Creator and not understand a word of what we’re saying?

This topic has been discussed throughout the ages, even back to the days of the Talmud, as we see in the Tractate of Brachot. After much discussion, the Talmud concludes that one can read or say the Sh’ma in any language, and this ruling is also relevant to all prayer.

We see too that in practical Halacha one can read or say the Sh’ma in any language, as stated in the Shulchan Aruch²:

”יכול לקרותה בכול לשון ויזהר מדברי שיבושת שבאותו לשון וידקדק בו כמו בלשון הקודש”
 (“One may read the Sh’ma in any language, however he must avoid mistakes in that particular language and should pronounce the wording of the language accurately, just as required when one reads the Sh’ma in the Holy Tongue”)

The Mishna Berura elaborates that in order to pray in any language other than Hebrew one must: a) understand that language that they are using, and b) that the language used must be the language of that particular country (understood in that country).

However, the Mishna Berura writes that it’s a מצווה מן המובחר, “the highest level of a Mitzvah,” is to pray in Hebrew. Thus, while we have the license to pray in any language, it is preferable to pray in Hebrew.

Now after hearing that from the standpoint of Jewish Law one may pray in English, do you think one should daven in Hebrew? Why do you think the Mishna Berura says that the highest level is to daven in Hebrew?

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of davening in Hebrew. Hopefully they will bring up some of the answers mentioned below but if they don’t, try to guide towards them

Answers

A) Practically- Hebrew is a superior language (for prayer)

As we saw stated in the Shulchan Aruch, “one should be careful of making mistakes in that particular language,” just as much as if it were in Hebrew. However, there are words in Hebrew that we not only have extreme difficulty in understanding their true meaning, but their translation is also highly problematic. For example:

Hebrew Word	Translation
מאודך	Might or fortune
ושננתם	To teach or to sharpen
לטטפת	Frontlets, head ornament or reminder

¹By Chemi Falkson

²אורח חיים סב:ב

These are just examples from one prayer. How much more so throughout the whole Tefillah! If our prayers were in our mother tongues, how could we possibly fulfill the requirement to carefully express the prayer's true meaning and avoid mistakes, when the translation gives us only a simplistic, one-sided expression of that particular word or prayer? By praying in Hebrew, one is able to encompass the true meaning of every letter, word and prayer, and thus fulfill the Mitzvah of prayer in the ultimate manner.

B) Hebrew is integral element of Jewish identity

Although the speech of the Jews in Israel at the time of the compilation of the prayers was Aramaic, the prayers of the synagogue were formulated in classical Hebrew.

The use of the Hebrew language was withdrawn from secular life, and was seen as לשון הקודש, the "Holy Tongue". Apart from the sense of mystery in the service by the use of the Holy Tongue, increasing both the solemnity and emotional appeal of the service; the men of the Great Assembly felt that the synagogue service must be essentially the **Expression of Klal Yisrael**. Therefore, prayers must be in Israel's historic language, which is the **depository of the soul-life of Israel**.

Hellenistic Jewry did not share these views, and it dispensed of the sacred language in its religious life. In the synagogue, the Torah was read in translation, and the prayers were in Greek. "The result was death, it withered away, and ended in total abandonment of Judaism". Those, who in our own day seek the virtual elimination of Hebrew from our services in favour of their mother tongues, are (consciously or unconsciously) severing one of our strongest spiritual and cultural links both with our rich past and with the present and future generations of Jews.

When G-d spoke to the Jewish people from Mount Sinai, He spoke to us in לשון הקודש (Hebrew). He commanded us not to steal, not to murder, to honour our parents etc. - all in Hebrew; not in English, not in Afrikaans, nor in any other language. What could be a better language to pray to Him than using the same words as He used when talking to us?

You can be in a country and feel extremely uncomfortable as you cannot communicate with the people since you don't speak their language but from the moment you walk into the Shul you can feel quite at home.

Summary

- Although it is Halachically O.K. to daven in English, it is preferable to daven in Hebrew for 2 reasons:
 1. The tefillot were written in Hebrew and their true meaning can only be expressed accurately in Hebrew
 2. Hebrew prayer is the expression of Klal Yisrael– which binds the Jewish people despite all language or cultural barriers
- On the odd occasion it is not a bad thing to daven in English to make your prayers more meaningful. If you do decide to daven in English remember the 2 conditions:
 1. You must understand English
 2. English must be the spoken language in that town

May all our Tefillot be rich and transcendent and be received favourably in שמייים!

Tefillah BeTzibur - Davening in a Minyan¹

This is a very important workshop to give over as this subject is too often neglected. If the madrich doesn't feel comfortable about talking about Minyan, he should speak to the menahel and perhaps skip over this workshop. Nonetheless, he should study it well for his own personal purposes.

Aims:

The workshop aims to explain

1. *Why we daven in a Minyan?*
2. *Why we daven in the plural?*
3. *What to do if you for what ever reason cannot make a minyan?*

Try and set the following scene of a court case

We are now found in the town of Gamla (in the Galilee) at the beginning of the Roman conquest of Israel (65CE). The Roman army has, not long ago, destroyed 2 or 3 other Jewish strongholds as they begin to sweep through the land. Our city has just withstood a 1½-year Roman siege and much damage has been suffered to the city's defenses. We must repair the damage to our city wall before the next Roman offensive.

We would like to present before the Beit Din (Jewish Court) the case of Yonatan HaPachdan who refuses to help the rest of the townsmen to repair the city wall and is only interested in reinforcing the walls of his own home.

Divide the group into 2 parts and get each group to either prosecute or defend Yonatan. Possible claims may be

<u>Yonatan</u>	<u>The town's men</u>
The responsibility to protect my family comes before the responsibility to protect my neighbours	We need the commitment of all the town's men to protect each other against the brutal Roman army.
I can most efficiently protect my family by devoting all my effort to protecting my own house	If we work together to protect the city and manage to fix the wall so that the Romans can no longer break through them, there is no need to strengthen the protection around your house.
<i>I understand that this group will have to be a little more inventive.</i>	Most likely if the Romans breach the city's walls they will have no problem breaking into his house, no matter how well he defends it.
	How can a Jew turn his back on his brothers in a time of need?

After many long hours of debate the court decided to force Yonatan to help reinforcing the city's walls and if not they he will be put in jail.

Do you believe this debate is parallel to the debate that one goes through when he decides not to come to Minyan but rather davens alone? *Get responses from the guys. It is not necessarily imperative to have everyone saying 'Yes', as the comparison is a bit extreme*

Our Sages, to a certain extent, think so as expressed in the statement of Reish Lakish (an early Rabbi of the Gemara period) 'Whoever has a Shul in his town and doesn't go there to pray is called a bad neighbour' (Brachot 8a).

¹By Warren Sher MTA 2001

Lets us try and understand this idea a little deeper by looking into a few sources.

The Gemara (Brachot 6a) asks 'from where do we know that a man's prayers are only heard in a **shul** (beit haknesset)? The passuk says "to hear the praise and prayer" (Kings I 8) – The Gemara interprets this to mean: Praise is heard in the place of prayer'.

Briefly discuss why the channies think a prayer is best heard in a shul. Tell on of the channies to remind you later that one of the components of a minyan is a shul.

Another Gemara (Brachot 7a) tells a story: Rav Yitchak once asked Rav Nachman: 'Why did you not come to shul (this morning)?' He answered "I wasn't feeling well". Rav Yitchak then asked him 'Why didn't you get a minyan to come to your house so that you could daven?' He responded: "It was too much of a bother". Rav Yitchak again asked him 'Why didn't you ask the Gabbai to tell you when the congregation was davening so that you could daven at the same time?' He responded; "Why should I have?" Rav Yitchak explained that his Rabbis had taught him prayer is best heard at an opportune time, which is **the time when the congregation is davening**. *Tell one of the channies to remind you later that one of the components of a minyan is a time of davening.*

Finally another Gemara (Brachot 8a) learns from a passuk, the fact that Hashem never rejects the **prayer of many** *Tell on of the channies to remind you later that one of the components of a minyan is a company.*

If we analyse the 3 Gemarot we see 3 different aspects of Minyan. What are they?

1. Place – the shul
2. Time – when the community is davening
3. Company –ten or more

What is the common denominator between these 3 things? *This is a hard question don't really expect to get an answer*

All these things force man to think about the greater good of others while praying. Let us imagine if a guy was to daven in his room at home. What will he think about while davening?

When he looks to his left he sees his wallet which was emptied last night when he bought a large steak at On The Square, he will begin to daven that his wallet will fill up. He sees schoolwork lying on the desk and he begins to daven that he will not get so much homework this week and that he'll do well in his test.

What surrounds the man is his possessions and therefore he automatically begins to think about his personal needs. This is like Yonatan, the guy who missed the point and decided to strengthen his own house but ignoring the greater need of the community and in the big picture what is really good for him.

How do these aspects help a man refocus his tefillot and get him to pray for the greater good and the things that are really important for Jewish People? *Open this up to the channies*

1. Place. *When one is in a shul he sees the people around him praying and also thinks about their problems and therefore it is more like reinforcing the town's walls.*

2. **Time:** *When one sees everyone davening the same prayers around him, he looks around and thinks about their needs and in this way is able to realize the greater good and daven for the good of others.*
3. **Amount:** *When there are many people around, one can always think about something that others need and help them pray for it.*
4. **Prayers written in plural:** *If we focus on the meaning of the words and the fact that we are praying in plural we also begin to think of the greater good of the community and Am Yisrael in general*

Only with a minyan where everybody is praying for one another can we say the holiest prayers like *ברכו & קדיש קדושה*. Each minyan davens towards Eretz Yisrael and thereby unites all the minyanim in praying for the needs of Am Yisrael.

((So what happens if for some reason you don't make the minyan can we achieve this goal of praying for the greater good of the entire community?

Yes, you use your 21st century virtual imagination. The Shulchan Aruch¹ rules that if you can't go to a minyan the next best is to:

- Daven in a minyan outside your shul
- Daven in a shul without a minyan- as you can picture everyone around you davening and daven for their needs
- Daven at the time that the minyan is davening – as you can imagine that everyone who is davening at that time in another place is davening around you.))

We rely on every Jew to pray for peace, tranquility and a stop to terror in Israel and the entire world and in times like these we need each person to devote themselves to davening in a minyan so that this goal of communal prayer can be achieved.

Summary

- Davening in a minyan helps us focus on communal needs and not just focus on our own needs. This is because of four factors of davening in a minyan:

1. Everyone is davening in the same place.
2. Everyone is davening at the same time.
3. There are a significant number of people all praying together.

All the above 3 contribute to the fact that when you are in a shul, you see the people around you praying and also think about them and their problems

4. Prayers are written in plural

- Many people praying the same prayers written in the plural, in the same place at the same time create the atmosphere of communal prayer.

¹ אורח חיים צ: ט

Asher Yatzar¹

Aim:

- For the channies who don't say A.Y. we want to inspire/teach them to say it.
- For the kids who say it already, we want to inform them (& us) exactly what it is that they are saying.

Background:

The format of the Bracha is taken from Targum (the Aramaic translation of) Yonatan Ben Uziel to Yechezkel. It was written by Abbaye in the Talmud (4th century) (Masechet Brachot 60b)

Content

Start off by introducing the kids to A.Y and giving them a very basic idea that it is a bracha that Jews say when exiting the toilet to thank Hashem for enabling us to go to the toilet.

Imagine not being able to go to the toilet... definitely not a pleasant thought! Going to the toilet, something which I'm sure most of us take for granted, is probably one of the most essential gifts that Hashem has given to man. Hence it is incumbent on us to praise Hashem for this precious gift. This is precisely what Asher Yatzar is about – praising Hashem for the wonders of the Human body.

A Jewish doctor once wrote an article in an international medical journal about a wonderful Jewish prayer that is said after going to the toilet. He spoke in depth about the meaning of the blessing and concluded the article with the following story.

Josh was a 20-year-old student who was in a terrible car accident. He nearly died from his injuries and initially became a quadriplegic. With incredible courage, hard work and excellent physiotherapy, Josh improved day by day. Eventually he stabilized and rehabilitated and was able to walk slowly with a leg brace and a cane.

Unfortunately, he still had terrible bladder problems and could not urinate without having a very complicated procedure done, every time he needed to urinate. The doctors were very pessimistic with regards to his recovery from this.

Then the impossible happened – he recovered. The doctor in the room happened to be a frum Jew and immediately thought of the Asher Yatzar prayer. He pointed out to Josh that there could not be a more meaningful time to recite Asher Yatzar. Josh recited it with tears in his eyes.

Josh is my son

There should be A.Y (Asher Yatzar) cards ready-made with the Hebrew and English translation side by side – the idea is to give to the kids and tell them to keep them in their wallet/purse. If these cards are unavailable ask them to open to page -3- of the workbook.

At this stage, give out the A.Y cards. Go through the bracha with the channies and discuss the following issues...

¹By Saul Adler MTA 2001

Chochma- חכמה

Ever built a car engine? Did it last for more than 10 years? Perhaps it lasted 15 years at the most. Well, try building a human body that can last for a potential of a good hundred years or so! The physical creation of man is absolutely brilliant! The intricacies involved in the functioning of the body are wondrous. It takes an infinite amount of wisdom to be able to produce such a complicated and yet flawless and precise system in such a small frame. If you were to take a scientist from 100 years ago and put him in an operating room today he would probably be sued for malpractice because of the 'undeveloped' techniques that he would use. Today, surgeons are a lot more advanced and yet in a century's time the surgeons of today will be completely outdated and would also be charged with malpractice if they were to operate in a 100 years time from now, using the surgical techniques of today. As much as medicine has advanced, there is still hordes of information to be discovered about the human body and the way it functions.

Nekavim – נקבים: various holes in our body – mouth, nose, anus, and pores

Chalulim – חלולים: various organs in our body – heart, stomach, intestines.

Before your throne of glory - לפני כסא כבודך

Have you ever seen President Bush or Prime Minister Sharon or President Mbeki cleaning the streets or doing the dirty work? Ever seen a king do that stuff? Well, maybe not a king of flesh and blood but the King of Kings is different. We tell Hashem that even the lowliest, more disgusting and dirty matters/things in life are revealed before His throne of glory. One may think that maybe disgusting things like toilet matters are not fitting for Hashem to involve Himself in, and yet Hashem not only created these things but supervises their functioning as well! Why? We show that Hashem has total supervision over everything that exists, even the seemingly dirty, disgusting things that come right before Hashem's throne of glory where not even angels can approach!

If one of them opens or ...closes - אם יפתח אחד מהם או יסתם

Our various bodily systems (respiratory, digestive, excretory etc.) might be brilliant in design, but they would all be useless if they kept breaking down or stopping. We therefore thank Hashem for designing our intricate systems to function flawlessly, without a hitch. If there were to be even the slightest problem, boy oh boy, we would definitely feel it and probably go to the doctor. When we are in the womb, our mouths are closed (so as not to 'breathe' in any amniotic fluid and drown) and bellybuttons open (in order to receive food and nutrients from our mother's body). If they were to open or close respectively then we would be in big trouble and exactly the opposite when we are born. If our mouths were to stay shut then come our first blocked nose and we can't breathe and if our bellybuttons were to stay open then (*I don't know – never tried, but I'm assuming*) our insides would probably fall out or at least we would lose a lot of blood. If Hashem stops supervising our bodies, then we are goners!

Who heals all flesh - רופא כל בשר

This is referring to the process of the removing of waste products from our bodies through our various openings. G-d created these holes to enable our body to rid itself of these products which would otherwise just stay in our bodies and we would eventually die from them.

ומפליא לעשות - And does wonders

Some say that this is referring to the process where our body separates the good from the bad - i.e. when the food is digested, the nutrients, fats, proteins and other essential things for our body to survive are extracted from the food. The question arises...How does our body know what stuff to extract? The answer lies with G-d and His phenomenal powers. We therefore praise G-d for 'doing wondrously' and enabling our bodies to distinguish and separate good from bad.

Halachot

- A.Y. can be said from the time one exits the bathroom until the next time that that person feels that he needs the toilet again.
- Even if a little drop comes out, that is regarded as enough to say the Bracha as if that drop were to not have come out then it would be quite painful for the person and therefore we thank Hashem, even for a drop!

Summary

- Hashem created us with the most outstanding wisdom, חכמה, as expressed through our immensely complex, yet flawless body system.
- Hashem supervises over everything that exists. Even the lowliest, more disgusting and dirty things in life are revealed before Him, לפני כסא כבודך.
- If Hashem stops supervising our bodily functions we would not be able to function.
- We praise Hashem for allowing our bodies to get rid of waste רופא כל בשר, and for digesting food, ומפליא לעשות.

The Morning Brachot - ברכות השחר¹

Aim

- To give the channies an understanding of what the morning brachot are about
- To give the channies an appreciation of the gifts Hashem gives us which we take for granted

Close your eyes and imagine that you are sitting in a room, and then suddenly you hear a soft hissing noise. You notice that the air is getting thinner. You notice a vent is sucking out the air from the room. Soon it's getting hard to breathe. What do you do?

Open your eyes. Think back to how you felt at the beginning, and how you felt at the end. How did your attitude towards the air in the room change? Was it important to you? Discuss these questions for a while

Answer: Originally you took the air for granted, even though you depend on it to survive, because there was no shortage of it. Suddenly when you discovered that it was running short, you realised that you can't survive without it.

Hashem provides us with the things we need all the time to survive, but most of the time we take these things for granted. This is one of the reasons for ברכות השחר - to make us appreciate all the things Hashem gives us all the time, which make our lives livable, and to thank Him for them. In the past, people used to say these ברכות from the moment they woke up, saying each bracha at the first opportunity of experiencing each of Hashem's gifts.²

For example, they would say the brachot of פוקח עורים when they first rubbed their eyes to see, מלביש ערומים was they got dressed, etc. This way they would appreciate what a gift each thing was.

Let's look at some of the things that we thank Hashem for and imagine what life would be like without them:

אשר יצר	For making our bodies function properly 24 hours a day, without which we couldn't survive for a moment.
אלקי נשמה	that Hashem returns us our soul to us every day
ברכות התורה	He gave us the Torah to learn
שלא עשני גוי, עבד	Hashem made us Jewish and free
פוקח עורים	the gift of sight
מלביש ערומים	the gift of having clothes to wear
מתיר אסורים	giving us control over our bodies
זוקף כפופים	the ability to stand upright, unlike the animals
רוקע הארץ על המים	dry land to live upon
שעשה לי כל צרכי	all our essential needs, even shoes to wear
אשר הכין מצעדי גבר	the ability to walk
הנותן ליעף כח	energy to get through the day
המעביר שינה	the ability to be awake and alert

¹By Danny Eizenberg MTA '92

²Brachot 60b

(There are other ברכות which can't be dealt with here which need independent attention, e.g. שלא עשני אשה / שעשני כרצוני, אוזר ישראל בגבורה, עוטר ישראל בתפארה.)

Summary

Hashem constantly provides us with things we need to survive, but most of the time we take these things for granted. (One example of this is the gift of sight.)

One of the main reasons for saying ברכות השחר is to make us appreciate all of these gifts from Hashem which make our lives livable and to thank Him for them.

In the past, people used to say these ברכות from the moment they awoke, saying each ברכה at the first opportunity of experiencing each of Hashem's gifts. Now we say them all together in shul.

Pesukei Dezimrah ¹

Aim: Pesukei Dezimrah is not seen as one of the most important or exciting parts of davening and it's usually the first thing to be left out. This Peulah aims to offer insights into the reason why we say Pesukei Dezimrah h. It is not an in-depth analysis into the meaning of each part of Pesukei Dezimrah thus for further detail one should see *The World Of Prayer* by Rabbi E. Munk.

With 100% honesty this is one boring Peulah! That's a fact, not an excuse. The madrich needs to substitute excitement for the content and make sure that he/she moves quickly so as not to lose the attention of the chanichim.

Introduction:

A number of examples have been included, the madrich can add and leave out as he/she wants.

The Madrich should start by asking everyone

How would you ask for something like a car from your parents? What would be the best method? The madrich should then compare the responses to the way we prepare ourselves to ask Hashem for our needs.

What is Pesukei Dezimrah? For those of you who don't know, all the paragraphs we say (that are in the siddur) from "Baruch Sheamar" until "Barechu" are called "Pesukei Dezimrah". They form the introduction to davening. Although these pessukim can seem long and boring there are many reasons why we say them and I'd like to go through one or two of them with you.

The Gemara (Brachot 28b) tells a story. The talmidim of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai went to him and asked him for a "Bracha" (blessing). He said to them, may your "Yirat Shamayim" (fear of heaven) be like your "yirat Basar Vedam" (fear of man). His students were amazed, they asked, "that's how much we should fear the King of Kings, only as much as we fear man?" He replied that just as a man hides from other people when he does a sin, so too he should be that scared and aware of G-d if he sins, that he knows Hashem is watching; So too in the case of Davening. If one of us were asked to appear before a great king or any other important person, we would prepare ourselves and think of what we would say. So too when we stand before the King of Kings and pray to him, we have to prepare ourselves. This preparation is Pesukei Dezimrah h.

The Gemara (Brachot 32a) also says "one should set forth praises of G-d before making requests of him". Think about it, just as when you want something from your parents you have to butter them up first so too with G-d. Before we ask Him for things we put in a little serious praise time. In fact the Gemara says (Brachot 30b) that in days of yore (long ago ☺) the righteous people used to wait a whole hour before Davening just to prepare their thoughts correctly.

The words "Pesukei Dezimrah" mean "verses of praise". The words "Dezimrah h" and "Lizmor" (to prune) have the same root letters (זמר). The recital of these passages is the cutting away of mental and spiritual hindrances to proper prayer. This is the preparation for Sh'ma and Shmoneh Esreih which are the central points of davening, where we accept Hashem as our king and pray for the needs of the Jewish people. During Pesukei Dezimrah we should concentrate on Hashem's revelation in history and how His glory can be seen in creation and the unfolding events of time.

¹By Layve Rabinowitz MTA'01

Content: *This section deals with the actual paragraphs of Pesukei Dezimrah h.*

Pesukei Dezimrah consists of a number of paragraphs mainly from Tehilim. They lie between the two Brachot of “Baruch Sheamar” and “Yishtabach”

The initiating Bracha “Baruch Sheamar,” speaks about the seven attributes found within the name of Hashem. The Midrash (Tehilim 91:14) says that the reason Bnei-Yisrael prays but is not answered, is because they don’t know the depths of the name of Hashem. We therefore find that to understand the name of Hashem is a good way to start davening if we want our prayers to be answered. The paragraphs continue with the aim of showing that everything in life can be traced back to Hashem.

One of the most important paragraphs in Pesukei Dezimrah is “Ashrei”. This paragraph represents the whole of Pesukei Dezimrah in a narrower sense. The Gemara says (Brachot 4b) that one who recited the paragraph of “Ashrei” three times a day is sure to inherit the world to come. In “Ashrei” one of the most important verses is “Poteach et yadecha umasbea lechol chai ratzon - You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing”. This verse explains how much we rely on Hashem for everything from basic food to the most extravagant riches.

After the song of “Az Yashir” which is the song that Bnei Yisrael sang at the “Yam suf” (Red Sea) on their way out of Egypt, we reach the concluding Bracha of “Yishtabach”. The final Bracha begins with the words “Keil Hahodaot - The G-d of praises”. We learn from these words that Hashem is the master of praises. Not only that, but Hashem Himself is above praise as he created the concept and therefore we can never praise Him enough.

Selected Halachot:

- Whilst reciting the first paragraph of “Baruch Sheamar” one must stand and men must hold their two front tzitzit in their right hand and then kiss them and release them after the paragraph.
- While saying “Poteach et Yadechah” in “Ashrei”, men must touch their “tefillin shel yad” followed by their “tefillin shel rosh” and then bring their hand to their lips.
- From the paragraph “Vayevarech David” until after “Barechu” (which follows “Yishtabach”) one should stand.

Summary:

- Pesukei Dezimrah h is the introduction to Davening and prepares our minds to ask Hashem for what we need.
- Pesukei Dezimrah begins with the bracha of “Baruch Sheamar” and ends with the bracha of “Yishtabach”. Its major component is the last 6 chapters of Tehilim.
- One should concentrate on Hashem’s influence and control over the world.

Bibliography: Rabbinical council of America edition of the Artscroll siddur. The world of prayer- Rabbi E. Munk

ASHREI - אֲשֵׁרֵי¹

For Ashrei in the siddur

Bold / **Outlined** – key words – showing the theme of each paragraph.

Underline – for the pasuk “poteach et yadecha...”

Shaded – the 3 different words with the root “ברוך” in Ashrei.

Don't let channies open to Ashrei yet

Introduction:

Who has been to a soccer, rugby, or cricket game – live? What is the difference between this and watching the game at home or on TV? *Get a few answers from the channichim.*

There are 2 main reasons why people go to a game [1. Want to see it live.] 2. **Support the team:** a few people cheering them on can **inspire them and increase their spirit**. The presence of thousands and thousands of people all shouting together can have a huge impact on the team they're supporting.

So too, when we want to thank or praise Hashem, it is certainly meaningful and precious to Hashem when we approach him individually. Nonetheless, when 10 people together – in a minyan – daven, and even more so when thousands of **people all join together** – the **effects of our prayers are magnified** and multiplied beyond what we could imagine.

This, in essence, is one of the **messages of Ashrei**. It is not written in those words, but as we read it carefully, we will see that this is one of the themes in Ashrei.

Get the channies to open to page -11- of the workbook

Structure

Let's go through the structure of Ashrei.

Ashrei has been divided into 5 parts, as you can see on the page.

- The 1st section begins with the **individual** praising Hashem's gedulah / greatness.
- The 3rd section describes the righteous, **tzaddikim**, praising Hashem.
- The last section ends with the final goal achieved by **everyone** praising Hashem – Jews and non-Jews - everyone together.
 - ⇒ All these describe **Man** approaching **Hashem**
 - ⇒ Then in between these 3 sections, there are 2 paragraphs (2nd & 4th) which describe **Hashem** bestowing goodness on **Man**. *These are in a different font to make it easier to distinguish them from the rest of Ashrei.*

¹By Avi Ziskind MTA'01– based on a shiur on Ashrei which can be found at www.tefillah.net

Theme 1: Everyone recognising Hashem

[The key word: Bracha]

This theme — of more and more people recognising and praising Hashem — is developed in Ashrei and can be followed by looking at the key word of 'bracha' — it is not that easy to identify, because it is in different forms.

Ask the channichim to find all the words with the root "ב.ר.כ" ("To bless" — you can also translate it "praise" / "thank" / "acknowledge" if you want):

1. It is in pasuk א — "ואברכה שמך" — "I will bless..." (and also in pasuk ב — "אברוך" — but you can join these together — and identify them as one appearance of "ברך").
2. In pasuk ג — "וחסידך יברכוכה" — "the righteous will bless you".
3. In pasuk ד — "ויברך כל בשר" — "everyone will bless".

Ask the channichim to find all 3 (4) appearances. Identify the channich(a) who finds it with the pasuk s/he finds. So, for example, if Adam finds the one in pasuk א first, then whenever you refer to pasuk א, you will refer to it as "Adam's pasuk says" rather than "pasuk א says". This will get them more involved (and hopefully more interested). Try to get 3 **different** channichim — one for each pasuk.

[In the rest of this shiur, I'll use Adam for pasuk א, Baruch for pasuk ג, and Chayim for pasuk ד]

Notice that in Adam's pasuk, he says "I will bless Hashem's **name**". Compare this with Chaim's pasuk — the last one — "**Everyone** will bless Hashem's **holy name**". What is the main difference? What is its significance? *Discuss.*

Hashem's name is made holy (kadosh) only when **everyone** praises Hashem together. What does "**Hashem's name**" **symbolise**? "Hashem's name" is the **way in which we recognise Hashem** in this world. So when everyone praises & recognises Hashem in the world, Hashem's name becomes "kadosh" — holy, which means that we are better able to recognise Hashem as unique and separate from the world...

Just like when everyone supports the soccer team, they have more spirit and often play much better, we should feel that we want to be part of all of mankind praising Hashem — the **power** of our **united universal prayer** is so much greater.

Theme 2: Hashem's increased chessed to us

What is the difference between paragraph 2 & 4? *Get suggestion with channichim.*

- 1) Firstly, and most obviously — Par. 4 is much **longer** than par. 4!
- 2) The word "כל" appears **10** times in paragraph 4, as opposed to twice in paragraph 2, emphasizing that Hashem is good to **everyone**, as everyone recognises his kingship.

When it is just individuals praying → Hashem is merciful and good to them.

When it is all of mankind praising Hashem → it is on a **different level** entirely, there are **7** psukim describing the goodness that Hashem gives us (as opposed to 3 in paragraph 2). And Hashem's kindness is on a much wider scale — it affects everyone.

But there is a more basic difference between the two:

In paragraph 2, Hashem's kindness to us could be summarised as "mercy". Even though people might not be on their best behaviour, Hashem is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger". Paragraph 2 shows Hashem's kindness, even when people might not necessarily deserve it, but Hashem is kind and merciful and just.

Paragraph 4, though, describes Hashem showering us with blessing and kindness, after everyone has recognised Hashem – after – "להודיע לבני האדם גבור תיו" – in paragraph 3.

Now, Hashem is "פֹּתַח אֶת יָדוֹ וַיִּשְׁבֵּעַ לְכָל חַי רִצּוֹן" – he gives freely and openly and makes sure every single person is satisfied.

Summary

In Ashrei, there are two parallel themes running side-by-side:

- Even though at the moment it might just be individuals who recognise Hashem in the world, eventually it will be all of mankind – Jews and non-Jews – who recognise Hashem and acknowledge his kingdom. This theme is developed in paragraphs 1 ⇨ 3 ⇨ 5.
- As everyone realises this, Hashem's relationship with us changes from one of "mercy" to one of kindness and open generosity, expressed by the pasuk "פֹּתַח אֶת יָדוֹ". This can be seen by the change from paragraphs 2 ⇨ 4.

Kaddish-קדיש¹

The aim of this workshop is to give an idea to the channichim of:

- 1) What Kaddish is
- 2) The importance of Kaddish as a part of our Tefillah
- 3) Why so many people relate Kaddish to death and mourning

There are 4 main areas we'll be dealing with:

- 1) The strength and power of Kaddish
- 2) The essence of Kaddish: Yehei Shmei Rabba
- 3) The connection between Kaddish and death and mourning
- 4) The various Halachot pertaining to listening to and answering Kaddish

Introduction

NB: you must go through the text in English (see page -15- in the workbook) with the kids before you begin anything.

Ask: What is Kaddish talking about?

- Angels praising God
- General words of praise of God, etc.
- An attempt to praise Hashem on as high a level possible, and landing up being at a loss for words and not being able to really find words adequate enough (L'Eila min kol birchata etc.)

The Chachamim (sages) in the Talmud (סוטה מט.) teach:

Rava said: "Our woes [following the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash] increase with every succeeding day; how, then, does the world exist? [It is sustained] by Kedusha Desidra (ובא לציון) and [by] Yehei Shmei Rabba of the Aggadah." ("Aggadah" refers to learning Torah)

Short discussion: After having read through the Kaddish in English, what could possibly be so powerful in the words that could save the world from destruction?

- It gives us hope to carry on. An example of this phenomenon is when Sir William Wallace (guy in Brave Heart) is standing on the battlefield, about to go to war with England, screams out 'We may give up our lives, but we will never give up our FREEDOM!' The soldiers find new hope and raise their armour with vigour and pride. So too when we say Kaddish, we rekindle a hope that is buried deep inside of us, a hope that we can face the troubles and hardships of anti-Semitism and terrorism that face the Jewish people today. This hope is rekindled, as God, the Master of the universe, Who is so exalted, is yet so close to us.

Ask: What is the focal point, climax of Kaddish, which everyone shouts out at the top of their lungs?

Obviously, it is Yehei Shmei Rabba. The Gemara (Shabbat 119b) says: "R' Yehoshua ben Levi said: He who responds YSR with all his might, his decreed sentence [if Heaven has decreed punishment for him] is torn up."

¹By Gabi Gluck MTA'01

Ask: How do you understand this Gemara? Why is this line of YSR chosen to be the focal point of Kaddish?

- When saying 'May His great Name be blessed forever and ever', one is essentially accepting 'ol Malchut Shamayim' (the responsibility of serving one All-Powerful God). When saying this, we state that there IS a God, which is essentially an act of Teshuva (repentance) for all the time we sinned as if there was no God. Therefore, when one says YSR with all one's might and with real Kavana, the decree that we got because of our sins is torn up.

A number of years ago Warren Sher and Saul Adler were once learning Gemara in the Shul at camp and Warren said "I can't wait to finish the Mesechet (tractate) so then we can say Kaddish!". Shaun Kagan overheard this and turned to Warren in complete shock and said, "You want your parents to die?"

From what we have discussed above we can see that Kaddish is one of the ultimate praises of God, what does it all have to do with death and mourning? Why does one automatically associate Kaddish with death and mourning?

See if the channies have any ideas

The simple reason as to why the average Joe relates Kaddish to death and mourning is because when one sees another saying Kaddish, they say "Well, his parent passed away and is saying Kaddish, therefore Kaddish must be something specific to death!"

A Rabbi once came across a dead man who was cutting wood and carrying it on his shoulder. He said, "My son, why are you doing this?"

The other man replied, "Rabbi, this is my judgment. I bring this wood to feed the fires of Gehinom, and then I am judged in it."

The rabbi said, "Is there no one who can save you from this suffering?"

The man answered, "Nothing can save me, unless my son says the Kaddish on the Haftarah, glorifying God's name for my sake. If he does that, I know that its merit will stand up for me and protect me."

The Rabbi went and told this to the son of the dead man, and the son did all that he said.

The dead man later appeared to the Rabbi and said, "May your spirit be at ease, for you have put me at ease."

Because of this story (and there are different versions of this story) it became the Minhag for sons to say Kaddish for a parent that has passed away.

What is the real connection between Kaddish and death and morning?

- Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead, but rather something that is said on behalf of the person that has passed away, it should be a merit for that soul that has now moved on to Olam Ha'emet.
- When a son says Kaddish for his parent that has passed away, he is fulfilling Kibud Av v'Em (honouring your parents)

Halachot

- One should be very careful not to talk during Kaddish.
- One should have intention when answering to the Kaddish and should do so in a loud and clear voice.

Summary

- When we say Kaddish we are emulating the angels praising God and thereby attempting to praise Him on as high a level as humanly possible.
- The focal point of Kaddish is when we shout out Yehei Shmei Rabba, blessing Hashem's name forever and ever and accepting 'Ol malchut shmayim' upon ourselves.
- Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead, but is rather something that is said on the deceased person's behalf, as merit for his soul. A son saying Kaddish for his father is performing the Mitzvah of kibbud Av v'Em.
- One should be very careful not to talk during Kaddish. Instead one should have intention when answering Kaddish and should do so in a loud and clear voice.

Birchot Kriyat Sh'ma¹

Aim: to come to an understanding on the connection between the brachot and Kriyat Sh'ma and to underline some basic ideas of Jewish thought.

Try to discuss the ideas as much as possible. Pose questions to the channichim that will invoke the answers.

The brachot of Kriyat Sh'ma start after Barechu and end with the Shmoneh Esreih

Introduction: What is the difference between light and darkness? What is the relationship between them? Which came first, light or darkness? If we look at the first paragraph of Birkat Kriyat Sh'ma, we see that darkness was created first – 'borei choshech'. Make sure the channies can identify Birkat Kriyat Sh'ma in their siddurim

Background: These brachot were composed by the Anshei Knesset Hagdola (Men of the Great Assembly –second temple period) and are said surrounding the recitation of the Kriyat Sh'ma. The content is based on various pessukim in Tanach.

Content: The brachot surrounding Kriyat Sh'ma are very different to that of other Mitzvot. If we compare Birkat Kriyat Sh'ma to other brachot said on Mitzvot, with the classical format of 'Baruch ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech Haolam, Asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu...' we see how so much longer and verbose they are. This is because of the simple fact that they are not brachot pertaining to a mitzvah at all, but rather are brachot recited in order to prepare oneself for the recitation of the Shmoneh Esrei, to psyche oneself up before standing before Hashem.

Madrach should pose the questions to the channichim.

This being the case, why was Kriyat Sh'ma placed, right in the middle of these brachot? What is the relevance of having these specific brachot surrounding Kriyat Sh'ma? What is the connection between these three brachot and the three paragraphs of the Sh'ma?

In order to answer these questions we have to understand the main theme in each of the three paragraph of the Sh'ma as well as each bracha.

Let's take a look at the first paragraph of the Sh'ma. *The madrich should ask the channichim.* What is the most important passuk of the first paragraph? Obviously, it is first passuk. What is the meaning of the first passuk? *See also next article on this passuk*

Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad forms the very backbone of Judaism, and of any monotheistic religion: the belief that there exists only one God, is the foundation of monotheism. This is the primary message of the first paragraph of Kriyat Sh'ma.

Let's now look at the second paragraph: *Madrach asks channichim.* From the first passuk what do you think is the main theme of the second perek? *Vehaya im shamo'a tishme'u el mitzvotai* points out to us that the main topic or theme being discussed is the keeping of Hashem's Mitzvot and the consequences of not keeping them.

The third paragraph is a little more complicated, since there are two main themes. Can you guess what they are? 1) Tzitzit and 2) redemption from Egypt. Though since the mitzvah of tzitzit does not apply during the day, the main theme is redemption from Egypt.

Madrach should ask the channies to open to explanation page on page -35- of the workbook and refer to it when explaining the ideas.

¹By Meir Perez MTA'01

If we take a look at the brachot we see that there exists a parallel between the main themes of the Kriyat Sh'ma and the brachot: take a look at the last bracha. What is the main theme (take a look at the end of the bracha)? *Ga'al yisrael* – redemption: this is parallel to the last paragraph of the Sh'ma.

Take a look at the second. What is the theme there? *Veha'er einenu betoratecha vedabek libenu bemitzvotcha* (*open our eyes to Your Torah and let our hearts cleave to Your Mitzvot*)– keeping Mitzvot, which is exactly what the second paragraph of Kriyat Sh'ma is about.

Though, the difficulty lies in the first paragraph: the main theme in the first bracha is that Hashem is the creator of light and dark, night and day – *yotzer or uvorei choshech*. *Madrich should begin the discussion*. What does this have to do with Hashem being one? What is the relationship between light and darkness? They are complete opposites.

Early pagan doctrine believed that there existed two gods, one creator of light and the other creator of darkness. They believed in the eternal strife between these two antithetical divinities, and man, being stuck between these two forces could be compelled either way, until along came Avraham. Avraham was the first to understand that there exists one ruling force over everything, one creator of both light and darkness; both good and evil. Upon looking at the sun he was the first to proclaim Hashem as *yotzer or* and during the darkest night - *borei choshech*. It was this understanding which marked the birth of Judaism and monotheism, the belief that there exists one God, not two, who rules over everything, both light and darkness. By us saying the first bracha of Kriyat Sh'ma and hence proclaiming Hashem as the creator of light and darkness, the two most opposite entities known to man, we are actually giving testimony to Hashem's absolute unity, just as Avraham did. This proclamation of Hashem's unity is also the main message of the first paragraph of the Sh'ma. Hence we see the parallel between the first paragraph and the first bracha.

To sum up, we see that the brachot, although not intended for Kriyat Sh'ma at all, are thematically connected to Kriyat Sh'ma, and that each bracha is parallel to one of the three paragraphs, by sharing the common theme.

Summary:

There exists a parallel between the themes of the three brachot and the three paragraphs of the Sh'ma.

1. The main theme in the first paragraph of the Kriyat Sh'ma is *Hashem echad*. This is parallel to the first bracha that Hashem creates light and darkness, implying that Hashem is the one and only creator – *Hashem echad*. We see that the belief in Hashem being the creator of the two greatest opposites is the very foundation of Judaism and monotheism.
2. The main theme in the second paragraph is the keeping of the Mitzvot; parallel to the second bracha – *vedabek libenu bemitzvotcha*, cleave our hearts to Your Mitzvot.
3. The main theme in the last paragraph is redemption; parallel to the third bracha – *ga'al yisrael*, the redeemer of Israel.

Sh'ma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad¹

***Aim:** The aim of this Tefillah workshop is to instill a sense of what this cliched pasuk really means and its real significance within the foundations of Judaism.*

Story

The Madrich can choose to start with either one or both of the following stories

1. By the end of World War two, many Jewish Children had been hidden in Christian orphanages by means of falsified documents. After the war the remains of the Jewish communities was left with the challenge of locating these Jewish Neshamot of which no records remained. The story is told of an American Jew who was one of those searching for these children. He had tried every means of identifying these children but when almost all hope was lost he decided to try one more thing. One evening he walked into one of the many Christian orphanages, walked straight into where all the children were in bed about to go to sleep and cried out "Sh'ma Yisrael". There was silence but after a second or two he hears a few of the children whispering in reply "Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!"
2. In the time of the Romans lived a great Rabbi - Rabbi Akiva, the Rabbi after whom our movement is named. Rabbi Akiva was the one to come up with the idea that in the Sh'ma Yisrael, the words "uvechol Nafshecha - with all ones soul", meant that one had to love Hashem so much even if it meant giving up ones life. During those times the Romans passed an evil decree that Jews weren't allowed to learn Torah. Rabbi Akiva defied this decree and continued to learn and to teach the words of Torah. One day the Romans found out about Rabbi Akiva's deception and they came and captured him. Soon after that they took him into the public square where they combed his flesh with iron combs and horrendously tortured him. His students, who were standing around helplessly, called out to him and said Rabbi why aren't you screaming in pain? He replied and said, "All my life I have been worried that I would not be able to fulfill the command to love Hashem with all your soul as I explained it, and now that I have the opportunity I am happy." Rabbi Akiva, even in this state realised it was time for the morning Sh'ma and so he began and said "Sh'ma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem.." and with the last stretch of the word "Echad" his soul left him and went straight up to Heaven.(Brachot 61b)

Discussion

The next stage of this davening group should be posed as a question and then an interactive discussion. 3-4 minutes.

Sh'ma is this only part of Davening that comes directly from the Torah. We also know (as in the story of Rabbi Akiva) that a Jew strives to make Sh'ma Yisrael his dying words.

- Why is this?
- What is the significance of the Sh'ma in the two stories I told you?
- What is so central about Sh'ma?
- What is the meaning of the passuk?

After getting answers and inviting discussion the madrich should put forward these two ideas.

¹By Layve Rabinowitz MTA'01

1. In the Torah the “Ayin” (א) of the word “Sh’ma” and the “Daled” (ד) of Echad are bigger than the other letters. These two letters spell the word “Eid (אד); a witness”. When we say this passuk of Sh’ma, we are in fact testifying to the fact that Hashem is the only G-d.
2. God’s oneness is the most fundamental principle in Judaism, without this belief everything else falls apart. This is the first of the Ten Commandments: “Hashem is G-d”. It is this fact which distinguished us from all other pagan religions that believe in idolatry and divine beings.
 - The first name of Hashem in the passuk is his four-letter **name “Yud Keh Vav Keh”**. This shows us that Hashem was, is and always will be, from the words derived from this name “Haya” (was), “hoveh” (is) and “yihyeh” (will always be).
 - The second name of Hashem in the passuk is **Elokeinu** meaning all-powerful.

Tie the names used into the ideas previously mentioned, i.e. That’s G-d is the focus point of Judaism and the foundation of our belief is based on his omnipotence and omnipresence.

Halachot:

- One must cover one’s eyes for this passuk in order to concentrate fully and not be distracted by things going on around one.
- When saying this passuk one must have in mind:
 - to fulfill the mitzvah of saying Sh’ma twice daily
 - One is living for the ideal of one G-d.
- One must remember that Echad means two things:
 1. He is one G-d and there are no others
 2. He cannot be divided into different parts (indivisible) unlike a human.

Summary

The madrich should summarise briefly all the points including the Halachot and end off. Once again...

- Jews all over the world recognise the passuk of “Sh’ma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad”. This is because it is one of the most fundamental and basic concepts in Judaism.
- Sh’ma is the only part of Davening taken directly from the Torah.
- When we recite Sh’ma we are testifying that Hashem is the one and only G-d.

Bibliography: The World of Prayer- Rabbi E. Munk
 The Artscroll Daily Siddur
 The Sh’ma Spirituality and law in Judaism- Norman Lamm

The First Paragraph of the Sh'ma: A Recipe for Love¹

Aim:

1. To give a greater understanding and appreciation of the significance the first perek of Kriyat Sh'ma
2. To examine the centrality and importance of its content in our ahavat and avodat Hashem.

Try to allow the channichim to draw the conclusions themselves. Allow for their own personal explanations but still try and direct the shiur in such a way that the ideas of the text are portrayed, by phrasing the questions in such a way that the channichim will give the answers which are intended. Feel free to use as many examples as necessary to explain a question or an idea. Make sure that the channichim have a Basic English translation if necessary. See siddur

Background: The first paragraph of Sh'ma appears in the Torah in Sefer Devarim 6:4-9. It appears as part of a long speech, which Moshe says to Bnei Yisrael, in order to remind the people of the essential tenets of our religion before entering the land of Israel.

Introduction: begin the shiur with a discussion and present the following questions to the chanichim.

- Is it possible to love someone whom you have never seen, with the knowledge that you will never see him/her?
- Is it possible to love someone who is not sociably suited to you, such as a president or a king?
- Is love reliant on ones physical senses?

Contents: The first paragraph of the Sh'ma is probably the most important paragraph in the whole Torah. Not only does it contain five fundamental Mitzvot: 1) accepting the yolk of heaven on oneself, 2) loving Hashem, 3) learning Torah, 4) Tefillin and 5) mezuzah, but it contains the very basis of our faith: "Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem echad", a description of Hashem's unity. The Halacha states that one who does not say this passuk with kavana does not fulfill his obligation of Kriyat Sh'ma. But what exactly does "Hashem echad" mean? The Rambam (Yesodei haTorah chapter 1) explains that, "Hashem echad" comes to negate the possibility of Hashem having any physical qualities: Hashem is beyond our physical senses. The Rambam goes on to explain that the kavana which we have when saying "Hashem echad" should be kabalat ol malchut shmayim, the acceptance of Hashem's sovereignty over all of existence (Hilchot Kriyat Sh'ma chapter 1).

This being the case, there is no way we can sense or feel Hashem physically because of his being totally non-physical and majestic.

- How is it possible that in the very next passuk we are told to "love Hashem with all our hearts, all our souls and all our possessions"? Not to mention that we are actually **commanded** to do so.
- Surely love is dependent on being able to relate to the other on a physical level?
The madrich should allow for the chanichim to give their own ideas.

The solution is given to us in the rest of the paragraph: The next passuk tells us to place Hashem's Mitzvot "on our hearts". The Mitzvot are an expression of Hashem's will: if we

¹By Meir Perez MTA'01

make His will, i.e. the Mitzvot, a part of our lives and “fall in love” with them we will automatically fall in love with Hashem, since His essence and His will are one and cannot be separated – “Hashem echad”. This makes the mitzvah of loving Hashem easier since now we have something tangible to which we can connect: the Mitzvot.

This is easier said than done: how does one fall in love with the Mitzvot? Furthermore, how is this love expressed through the Mitzvot? *The Madrich should allow for the chanichim to give their own ideas.*

The answer to this is also given to us in the rest of the paragraph: there are two ways a person can express his thoughts or emotions.

- 1) **Through speech and learning:** by speaking about someone and learning more about that person we express and deepen the love for that person; if we love someone we want to know more about that person and speak about him/her. “Veshinantam levanech vedibarta bam”. If we learn His commandments i.e. the Torah, we attain a deeper knowledge of his will and hence a deeper knowledge of Himself. This will in turn deepen our connection with Him and strengthen our love for Him. When we speak this knowledge and share it with “our children” we express the love, which is inherent in it.
- 2) **Through action:** by doing special deeds for someone, not only do we express the love, which we have for that person, but we also create and deepen the love. The last two psukim of the paragraph speak of deed: “ukeshartam leot al yadecham”, the physical act of putting on tefilin. By placing the tefilin opposite our hearts and binding it to our hearts we express our devotion to Hashem and as a result build up the love, just as a wedding ring expresses the love and deepens the connection between the couple. The tefilin, just like the wedding ring, also serves as a reminder of the bonds of love, which exists between the husband and the wife. “Uchetavtam al mezuzot beitecha uvishaarecha” - the mezuzah also serves as a reminder of the love, which exists between Hashem and us. When we make Hashem part of our families, bring Him into our homes through the mitzvah of mezuzah, we deepen and strengthen the love.

Conclusion: The message of the first paragraph of Kriyat Sh'ma is as such: Although, Hashem is so transcendent, it is certainly possible to love him - by loving his Mitzvot and expressing that love through the learning and performance of the Mitzvot. This is the foundation of loving and connecting to Hashem and this is what makes this paragraph probably the most important paragraph in the whole Torah.

Summary:

- Hashem is not at all physical and rules over all of existence (first passuk).
- We are nevertheless commanded to love Him (second passuk).
- Hashem's essence and His will (the mitzvah) are one.
- If we learn to love His will we will learn to love Him (third passuk).
- This is done through the learning (fourth passuk) and performance of His Mitzvot (fifth and sixth psukim).

Second Paragraph of Sh'ma: Reward and Punishment (Relationships)¹

Aim

This workshop aims to give our channichim a basic understanding of the meaning of the 2nd paragraph of the Sh'ma and of how to build a relationship with Hashem.

The aim of this workshop is to give the channichim a basic understand Often we think about this subject when relating to life issues. If I pursue this, what reward shall I reap? If I don't or do something shall I be punished for it?

The second paragraph of Sh'ma deals with the issue in a more mature depiction of what reward and punishment is and what our relationship is to Hashem.

Hashem firstly tells us that if we adhere to his commandments "Then we will reap the rewards" "ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו" ("Then I will provide rain for you land in your proper time"). We need to understand that the Mitzvot that we perform are our way of developing our relationship with Hashem.

Relationships:

One can appreciate a relationship, the more intense and intimate it becomes. For example becoming very close to a friend. That's why we sometimes feel very distanced from Hashem, as we haven't put enough effort into the relationship. The point of developing relationships is because we love intimate and deep involvement with other people.

When we feel close to someone there are still times when we aren't so happy and things aren't so wonderful, but we realise that the relationship demands our total devotion and constant dedication on our part.

We need to do this with our relationship with Hashem. We have to see deeper into the relationship by being more of a participant, and we must also try to "press all the right buttons" for example by performing Mitzvot. "תשמעו אל מצותי" -If you continually listen to my Mitzvot" the relationship will ultimately deepen.

We can now understand, when we break up with a girlfriend or boyfriend or we lose someone very close to us, the punishment is the absence of the relationship i.e. his or her non-involvement in your life.

When G-d says that he will punish us it means not having an intimate relationship with him. "ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר" ("He will restrain the heaven so there will be no rain").

Relationships are meaningful but one needs to put a lot of investment into them, to make sure that they continue to remain strong and fulfilling. Mitzvot and acts of kindness ensure the continuation of our relationship with Hashem and create a different dimension to our lives.

The paragraph ends with a promise that ensures our relationship will lead till the redemption, "למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה אשר נשבע ה' לאבותיכם לתת להם" ("In order to prolong your days and the days of your children upon the ground that Hashem

¹By Jarred Bloch MTA'02

has sworn to your ancestors to give them"). Nonetheless we have the personal and individual ability to enhance the relationship between the Almighty and us.

Summary

- If we fulfill our part → Hashem fulfills His part
- Don't fulfill our part → it causes a break in our connection with Hashem
(We don't get enough rain and we eventually are exiled from our land).
- How do we guarantee a healthy relationship? Through keeping critical Mitzvot mentioned at the end of the paragraph.

Sh'ma: Third paragraph¹

Aim: To explain the significance of the Sh'ma in our daily lives as well as explaining the positioning of the third paragraph in the Sh'ma and elaborating on its own special significance.

The maddies must put special emphasis on the reasons for tzitzit and how the Sh'ma forms one of the basic essentials of our daily prayers. They should get the channies involved by asking questions at the beginning of the shiur and letting them try and come up with the answers themselves (e.g. What is the reason for tzitzit and do you think tzitzit achieves its objective goal?)

The Sh'ma has always been known as the prayer that encapsulates our belief in G-d. It serves as one of the most important parts of our daily prayer. It is divided into three segments in which are embedded the fundamentals of our faith.

To fully understand and appreciate this prayer one has to understand its content as well as its placement in the Siddur.

Let us begin by examining the actual text and what this strange paragraph contains: This paragraph is found in Bamidbar 15. In this section we find that the main emphasis is on the mitzvah of tzitzit. G-d commands Moshe Rabbeinu to instruct Bnei Yisrael to tie tzitzit to their 4 cornered garments. The purpose of this commandment is for Bnei Yisrael to "remember the commandments of Hashem and perform them".

A few questions could be raised with regard to this strange commandment:

1. Why are we instructed to put tzitzit on a 4-cornered garment?
2. How does tzitzit remind one of the commandments?

One could answer the first question by saying that a 4-cornered garment was probably the garment that people wore on a daily basis. This garment was probably easy to make due to its simple design. It, therefore, makes sense that it was worn on a daily basis and would then obviously be best suited to remind one of all the Mitzvot.

This still doesn't answer the question on how does this remind us of all the Mitzvot. The gematria of tzitzit is equal to the number of Mitzvot $\aleph \times 2 = 180$, $\beth \times 2 = 20$, $\aleph = 400$ plus the number of knots (5) and strings (8) = 613. One could possibly look at the tzitzit as miniature whips that beat against ones leg as one walks. In this way it reminds me that I must be careful with everything that I do or else I will be punished for my mistakes. The colour tchelet makes up part of the tzitzit. This bluish colour reminds one of the skies above and hence of G-d that is found above us at all times.

Now that we can understand how this mitzvah works, lets look at why this paragraph makes up part of the Sh'ma? Why does this mitzvah make up one of the main foundations of our daily prayer?

In the first paragraph of the Sh'ma (Devarim 6), we see that the basis of our connection with Hashem is through our love for Him. We read about how one has to occupy one's day with Torah. 'When you go to sleep and when you wake up' etc. The essence of a Jewish way of life is to be filled with the knowledge of G-d as well as exercising His commandments continuously.

¹ By Alon Chasen MTA '99

The second paragraph (Devarim 11) clarifies the conditions for this pact with G-d. Hashem will provide us with all our wants and needs as long as we keep to our share of the bargain – that is, keeping the Mitzvot. Failing to do so would be going against this pact. Hashem would, therefore, punish us.

Finally, the last paragraph speaks about how one could maintain one's level of keeping Mitzvot by creating a system that would remind one of his responsibilities and duties to maintain this relationship with Hashem.

By looking at the Sh'ma in this way, we can understand the structure these paragraphs have as well as their significance. These concepts serve as the basis of our relationship with Hashem and therefore it is obvious why they are fundamental to our daily routine.

Summary

There are 4 ways that tzitzit reminds us to do Mitzvot:

1. We wear tzitzit on a garment that is worn every day.
2. The strings remind us of miniature whips.
3. The gematria of tzitzit is equal to that of the Mitzvot (613).
4. The colour tchelet reminds us of the sky above, which brings us to think about G-d above.

The Sh'ma forms one of the fundamentals of our daily prayer because it contains in it:

- Our commitment to the Mitzvot
- The conditions to a close relationship with G-d
- A way to maintain this close bond with Hashem

What is the essence of Kriyat Sh'ma¹

Ask the question – What is a Jew?

(Not who is a Jew – don't need a halachic definition)

Then try to think of a prayer that represents your idea of being a Jew.

Important Jewish question – If you don't have enough time, what is the least that you can say to fulfill the commandment of saying Sh'ma?

There are 4 opinions:

- 1) Just the 1st passuk
- 2) 1st paragraph
- 3) 1st passuk, and first 2 paragraphs
- 4) All parts including the third part

The debate over the four options is not just that we're being pedantic over words but what is the true essence or true meaning of being a Jew.

The saying of the Sh'ma is declaring that I am a Jew and my faith in G-d.

The 1st option

This opinion is according to the **Sefer Hachinuch** (an anonymous author).

It is necessary only to say the 1st פסוק as through this we acknowledge that there is a G-d – קבלת עול מלכות שמים, and that we are part of the Jewish people – This is enough to show that you are a good Jew.

2nd option

Proposed by **Rashi** (Lived in the Late 11th century, early 12th century in France). Its not enough to declare that G-d exists and that I believe in him, we need to do something to show your belief and love for G-d.

- The essence of the 1st paragraph is relationships.
- Themes: 1) אהבה - love
2) תפילין – Binding us to 'ה
3) מזוזה – Protection
4) חינוך – Education
All are expressions of the relationship between us and 'ה
- *Discussion:* What do all these things have in common?
Hashem is involved in our lives and therefore there is a sense of responsibility.

3rd Option

Proposed by **Rabbeinu Yona** (a Spanish Rabbi who lived in the 12th century).

- He proposes that we need to say the 1st 2 paragraphs.

¹Thanks to DIJE who prepared this shiur many years ago

- Yes, we need to believe in G-d and have a connection with G-d, **but** this is not enough. Being a Jew is realising that there is reward and punishment – to believe in the idea that our actions have consequences.
- We must not only love G-d but act like a Jew, believe there is reward and punishment for all that you do.
- It is not always direct punishment, but an accumulation.
(Mention that you always have a chance to do תשובה)
- Whenever we refer to reward and punishment, reward is mentioned before punishment because ה always wants us to go on the good path and do well.

4th Option

To say all paragraphs is proposed by the **Rambam** who lived in the late 12th century and early 13th century in Spain and was a physician to the king. He was one of the foremost Jewish thinkers.

What is a Jew? – Being a Jew is contained in the 3rd Paragraph

1. ציצית – Represents all 613 Mitzvot (The gematria of ציצית = 90+10+90+10+400= 600 + 5 knots + 8 strings (on each corner) = 613)
2. Remembering the exodus from Egypt.

Why is יציאת מצרים such a central concept? *Discuss briefly*

We all know and understand that part of being a Jew is not just living in our own world. It is being part of a nation, part of the Jewish people.

Being a Jew is being part of History. יציאת מצרים is a central concept of belief, because of its central role in Jewish history

Egypt proved that G-d accepted Jews as his people. It was a promise to Avraham. We can't deny that each individual is part of Jewish people and part of its future. If you live as a Jew yet not part of the community it is not being Jewish! Therefore Sh'ma ends off with "I will be your G-d if you remember your history and be part of a nation".

According to this last opinion it is not just good enough to believe in one G-d and to act on that belief. Nor to believe that if you don't act on those beliefs you will eventually be punished but you need to see yourself as part of a nation as well, with a national destiny.

Summary

There are 4 different opinions of what is the essence of Kriyat Sh'ma. Each opinion is based on a different view on what it means to be a good Jew

1. **Sefer Hachinuch:** the 1st passuk – a good Jew must know there is a G-d.
2. **Rashi:** the 1st paragraph – a good Jew must act upon his belief in G-d.
3. **Rabbeinu Yona:** the 1st two paragraphs – a good Jew must realise his actions have consequences.
4. **Rambam:** all 3 paragraphs – a good Jew must also feel part of a nation

Structure of the Shmoneh Esrei¹

General order of the Brachot in the Shmoneh Esrei

Praise → Request → Thanks

AIMS:

To know the general structure of the Shmoneh Esrei

To develop a loving relationship with Hashem

To develop an 'acknowledgement of the goodness' that Hashem does for us

Method of the Workshop:

1. *Stick pieces of cardboard on the wall (corresponding to the number of groups) so that the chanichim will be able to write on them.*
2. *Divide the chanichim into 3 (or more if need be) groups. Each group stands against a piece of cardboard, and on the cardboard the chanichim need to write a request to the president of South Africa for a new location for Bnei Akiva camps.*
3. *After everybody is finished writing, each group moves to stand against the cardboard of the group to its right. After they read the requests on the cardboard they are to answer the following questions:*
 - i) *How did they call or address the president? Why?*
 - ii) *At what point in the letter did the request itself appear? The beginning, the middle or the end?*
 - iii) *How did they end the letter?*

Discuss with the channies

- **What is the best way to structure a request to an important person?**
- **Does the structure of the Shmoneh Esrei comply with the above structure?**
- **How do we address Hashem in the introduction (praise)?**
 - **Elokeinu ve'elohei avoteinu** – Close and intimate
 - **Elokei Avraham, etc.** – Historical connection
 - **Hakel, hagadol, hagibor, etc.** – Power, awe of his supremacy
 - **Gomel chasadim tovim, etc.** – Kindness, love of Hashem
- **How does the Shmoneh Esrei structure our requests – We'll discuss this in detail in the following workshop**
- **How do we end our 'letter' to Hashem (Modim)?**
- **Give examples for the thanks we give Hashem for "nisecha shebechol yom imanu" (all the miracles You perform for us daily)**

The following could be done as continuation of the previous workshop or as a separate workshop

The structure of the Request of the Shmoneh Esrei

AIM: *To know the structure of the requests of the Shmoneh Esrei*

¹ By Ramy Avigdor

Divide the chanichim into groups of 7-13 chanichim. Each group should receive as many cards as it has channichim. The channichim need to try and stand in a certain order, the team to stand in the correct order first gets one point.

1. Cards with names of the Prime Ministers of Israel – Place in alphabetical order
2. Cards with numbers (1 – Hashem, 12 – Tribes, 40 – years in the desert, 120 elders...)
3. History of Israel (1948 - Independence, 1967 – Six-day war, 1970 – Yom Kippur) – In order of dates
4. The 13 Requests of the Shmoneh Esrei – According to the Shmoneh Esrei (They may use a siddur)

Discuss with the channies

- Is there an order for the requests?
- What do we ask for first?
Knowledge – without knowledge it is impossible to know what we need
- What is the difference between repentance, forgiveness and redemption?
- Would you also place health before sustenance (money)? Why?

Ask the channies to open to page -36- of the workbook.

- What is the difference between the requests on the one side and those on the other side?
The one side represents the needs of the individual whereas the other represents the needs of the community.
- Can you see a parallel between the bracha on the one side and the corresponding bracha on the other side of the arrow?

Knowledge // The ingathering of the exiles (אתה חונן ו תקע בשופר)

Just as it is impossible for an individual to request something if he has no knowledge of what he wants, so too it is impossible for the community to request something before there is a community.

Repentance // Justice (השיבנו אבינו ו השיבה שופטינו)

The repentance of an individual is parallel to the teshuva of the community, which is expressed in enforcement of true justice.

Forgiveness // Removal of evil and evildoers (סלח לנו ו למלשינים)

Atonement of the individual is achieved by wiping out his sins. This is parallel to the atonement of the community, which is achieved removal of evil within people and groups.

Physical Redemption // The righteous (ראה בענינו ו על הצדיקים)

A man is physically redeemed from hardship and slavery by his good deeds. This is parallel to the redemption of the community, which is achieved by the good deeds of the tzaddikim.

Healing // Rebuilding Yerushalayim (רפאנו ו ולירושלים)

When one part of a person's body is weak or broken then his entire body is weak. This is parallel to the entire nation - when one part of the nation is sick the entire nation is weak. Yerushalayim is the heart of the nation and therefore while it is destroyed the entire nation is weakened. Therefore just as we pray for the physical health of our friends and family, so too we pray for our national spiritual health.

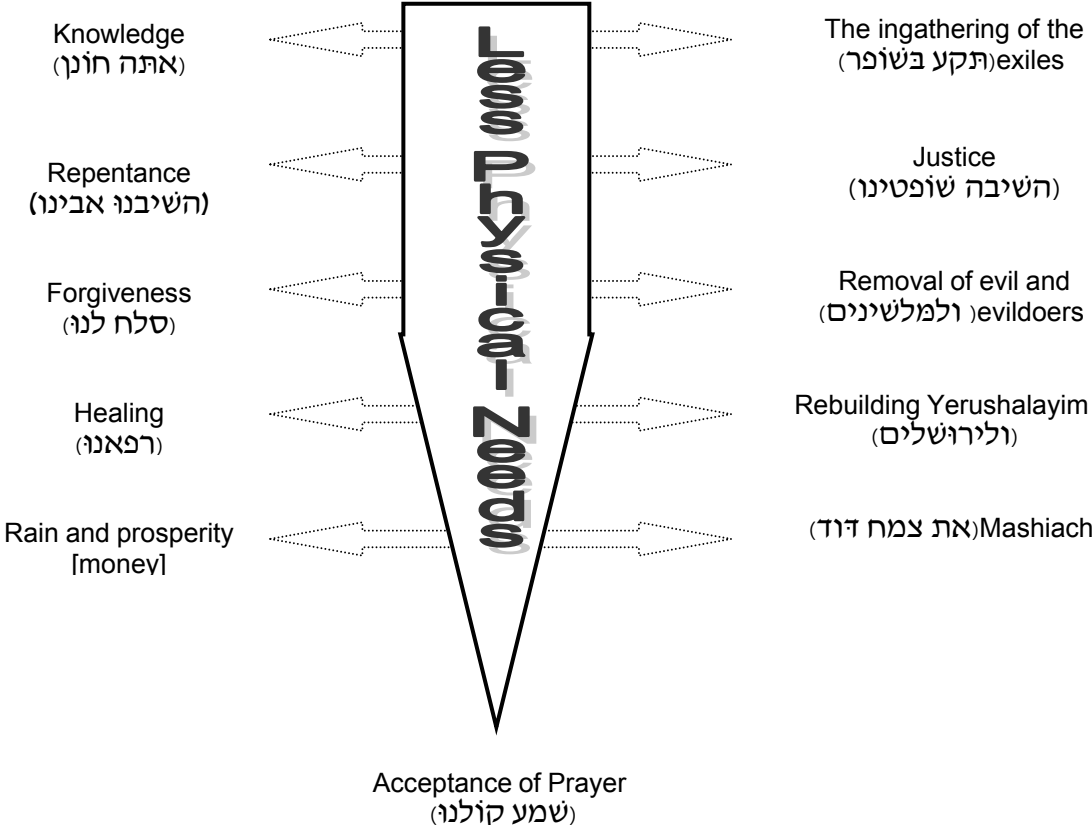
Rain and prosperity (money) // Mashiach (ברך עלינו ו את צמח דוד)

The prayer for the prosperity of an individual, which is measured in terms of money, and rain for his crops, is parallel to Mashiach. Just as enough money allows one to focus on more meaningful things than just putting bread on the table, so too will Mashiach allow the Jewish people not to worry about physical survival but spiritual development. (There is even an opinion in the Gemara (Brachot 36b) that in the days of Mashiach other people will work our fields and therefore we'll have the ability to learn Torah all day).

Acceptance of Prayer (שמע קולנו)

We end all our prayers with the addition of any personal prayers that we may have that haven't been mentioned above and put one final plea that all the aforementioned requests be granted.

Summary

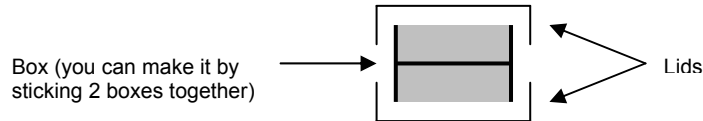


Personal Prayer and Nusach¹

Magic box

Aim: To develop a personal connection between chanichim and the nusach of the prayers in the siddur

Equipment: Paper for the chanichim, writing utensils, and a box with 2 compartment. (This is the best way but if not improvise)



Method:

1. Place a siddur in the bottom compartment of the box without letting the chanichim know.
2. Distribute paper and writing utensils to the chanichim. Then ask them each to write a request for the thing that is most important to them. (If possible, the madrich should say that he is going to the Kotel soon and he will place their requests in the cracks of the wall. This will make the chanichim treat the task more seriously).
3. Every chanich should then fold their paper with their request, without writing their names on the paper, and put it into the box. After the madrich has gathered all the requests, he/she should close the box and say to the chanichim that he will perform magic now and out of the box will come all their requests joined together.
4. The madrich shakes the box, and then turns it over (of course, without the chanichim knowing.) The madrich then opens the side of the box and takes out... A Siddur! At first, the chanichim will laugh, and that is precisely the time to show the chanichim that all their requests can be found in the Shmoneh Esrei.
5. Take out one request and show the chanichim the bracha in the Shmoneh Esrei that answers that request.

For example: Health – רפאנו, money – ברכת השנים and peace – שים שלום.

If the requests do not fit into the first 12 brachot, their place is in שומע תפילה. (The bracha compiled for special personal requests)

It is important to show them that this is not just the cop-out on the madrich behalf, but rather this is how our Sages z"l ideally compiled the Shmoneh Esrei. Chachamim left a special space in the Prayer to add our special requests, besides for the standard requests which are always relevant to us.

Our sages in their compilation of the text of the tefillah (the nusach), also left place for the requests of one's friends, relatives and acquaintances (and not just for oneself) without someone having to reveal to them their requests and secrets. This is precisely the power of davening in a minyan, each person prays for the other as a united whole, while simultaneously the minyan as a whole prays for each individual. In the repetition of the Shmoneh Esrei by the Shaliach Tzibbur, we repeat and emphasize our identifying with the needs of each and every person of Klal Yisrael.

Summary

- Our Sages have given us the ultimate guideline to prayer by compiling the nusach (text). It leaves place for each individual to add their own personal prayer by thinking about it while reading the brachot.
- Our sages composed the Bracha of שומע תפילה for us to include our own personal prayer if it does not fit into any of the brachot.

¹ By: Ramy Avigdor

- The idea of davening is not only to add in our own personal prayers and show our own personal gratitude but also to include prayers of the community and Am Yisrael in general.

Birkat Avot ברפת האבות¹

Props for this workshop: Four A4 pages (laminated if possible), and on each one of them, one of the following should be written:

KING

FRIEND (HELPER)

LIFEGUARD (SAVIOUR)

SHIELD

Introduction: The idea of Hashem being “close” to us

Ask the channichim to point to Hashem.

There is a story² of two of great Rabbanim – **Rava and Abayei** – when they were young boys of about 5 years, their Rav asked them to point to where Hashem is. Rava pointed up to the ceiling (they were inside), while Abayei went outside and pointed up to the sky.

Ask the channichim:

- Who do you think was more correct? Why?
- What does it mean when we say Hashem is “close to us”? *Discuss*

The story goes that their Rabbi smiled and said that, in fact, they were both correct. In other words, they were talking about different aspects of Hashem’s presence. On one hand, Hashem is so far **beyond our understanding**, that you can only describe him as being ‘up there’ in shamayim – ‘up in the sky’. On the other hand, Hashem’s presence is **everywhere**, equally inside a house as in a far-away galaxy.

Hashem hears everyone’s prayers. When we say that Hashem is close to us, we mean that He pays attention to everyone’s needs, and is “personally” interested and involved in all of our lives.

‘Closeness’ in the first bracha of the Shmoneh Esrei

The first bracha of the Shmoneh Esrei defines and establishes our relationship with Hashem. During this bracha we describe Hashem coming **closer and closer** to us. Let’s see this in the text:

Ask the channichim to open to page -37- of the workbook

The bracha can be divided into 4 main sections, as you can see on the page:

Paragraph 1

The first paragraph describes how the relationship we have with Hashem is mainly because we are the **descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov**. Because each of them was a huge tzaddik, and each had an incredibly close relationship with Hashem, they created a connection to Hashem that is passed on to their descendants. That’s why when we have the privilege of being allowed to speak directly to Hashem,

¹ By Avi Ziskind MTA ‘01

² Brachot 48a

and so we begin by referring to the fact that we are the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov.

In this respect, we see Hashem as mighty and powerful 'hagadol hagibor vehanorah – el elyon'. Hashem is **almighty, beyond the forces of nature, but relatively distant** – this is the level that our forefathers understood Hashem (Avraham – Gadol; Yitzchak – Gibor; Yaakov – Nora), but it is difficult for us to relate to Hashem on this high level. We can only get a rough idea of what this means.

Paragraph 2

In the second paragraph, Hashem is **closer** to us – 'Gomel chasadim tovim' Hashem does kindness and good deeds to us which we can see, and relate to. 'Vekonei hakol' ('owner of everything') – Hashem is **part of the physical world** around us (in the sense that ones physical possessions can be considered an extension of oneself): Not just an abstract idea like 'el elyon' – but all around us.

Paragraph 3

In the third section, Hashem is even closer – Hashem is the one who **guides** history, Jewish history in particular. In the merit of the Avot, he shows a special level of closeness to us Jews: 'umeivi go'el livnei v'neihem - brings a redeemer to their [the Avot's] descendants'). He guides historical events in a certain direction to bring us the Final Ge'ulah.

Hand out the four laminated A4 pages to the channichim, each with one of the following phrases written on it:

*King, // Friend (Helper) // Lifeguard (Saviour) // Shield
[Don't give them the pages in this order, though!]*

All of these are people/things that can help you. Ask the channies to arrange them in order of how quickly they would be able to respond to you. Tell them to ignore the words in brackets for the meanwhile. [Note that they might switch the order of Friend and Lifeguard – explain that a Friend might not always be at your side, or even at the beach with you, while the Lifeguard is always watching you when you are swimming]. You can let this take up to 3 minutes.

Hopefully they should arrive at the order shown above. If not, guide them to the correct order.

The **King**, even though he probably has the most power, has the slowest “response-time.” To get in contact with the king, you have to make an appointment, and you might have to **wait weeks** before he has time to see you. This corresponds to paragraph 1, where we see Hashem as powerful, but distant

A **Friend** or Helper (עוזר) is closer – you can call on them any time you want, but you are often in different places, and he **might not be around** to help you. This corresponds to paragraph 2.

A **Lifeguard** or Saviour (מושיע) is much more capable of saving you than your friend. The lifeguard is **constantly watching you** and at a moment's notice can come and save you. This corresponds to paragraph 3.

A **Shield**, however, is the **most immediate** response. When an arrow is flying at you, there is no time for a lifeguard to come and block it; the shield constantly has to be perfectly positioned to save you.

The Midrash says that after Avraham broke all his father's idol's (do all of you know the story?) Avraham was thrown into the fiery furnace, but since Hashem was protecting him, the flames didn't even singe him. When the angels saw this, they all said together: "ברוך אתה ה' מגן אברהם" – the **Shield** of Avraham – because Hashem was like a shield to Avraham – so that the flames which were enveloping him were unable to harm him.

When we say these last 4 words, we should feel Hashem's presence coming "closer" and "closer" to us, until we are in a perfect frame of mind to continue the rest of the Shmoneh Esrei.

Summary

- Hashem hears everyone's prayers. When we say that Hashem is close to us, we mean that He pays attention to everyone's needs, and is "personally" interested and involved in all of our lives.
- This first bracha sets the tone for the rest of the Shmoneh Esrei. It helps us recognise how our relationship with Hashem is on different levels of "closeness":
 - There is the level of:
 - King – high, majestic and supreme
 - Helper – willing to help, but sometimes unavailable
 - Saviour – always available to help, but not instantly
 - Shield – able to respond instantaneously – to stop an arrow flying at you
 - Avraham achieved the level of a shield – and so when he was thrown into the furnace, the flames enveloping him could not harm him
- When we say these last 4 words, we should feel Hashem's presence coming "closer" and "closer" to us, until we are in a perfect frame of mind to continue the rest of the Shmoneh Esrei.

ולמלשינים - Velamalshinim

Go through the bracha with the channies (it can be found on page -43- of the workbook)

And for the slanderers let there be no hope, and may all evil PERISH in an instant, and may all your enemies be CUT DOWN quickly. May You (Hashem) quickly uproot, SMASH, cast down and humble the eager sinners - in our days. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who BREAKS enemies and humbles the eager sinners.

We have already learnt that the structure of the Siddur was compiled as an aid to prayer, and is **not** intended as prayer itself. The word סידור comes from the root סדר, which means 'order'. The Shmoneh Esrei is no different. Just as we learn at school how to structure an essay, opening paragraph, content, sum-up etc. Our teachers have given us guidelines on how to write the best essay. A good essay needs structure and logic. It's absurd to argue that the essay we create is based on the thought and opinions of our teachers. The creativity comes from **us**, our teachers just give us the outlines.

So too with Prayer, the Sages have given us the ultimate guideline to Prayer, but don't think for one moment that this outline forms the basis of our own personal prayers. The structure is there to motivate and inspire us, we add our own creativity and personal dialogue with Hashem. The Siddur should be used as a catalyst to bring out what we truly feel. As Reb Shlomo Carlebach says, we do it all wrong: "When we pray, we turn the pages of the Siddur, it should be the other way round, the pages should turn us."

So, what feelings and response is the above paragraph trying to evoke within us? This particular prayer seems to be quite violent. We are in essence asking G-d to annihilate evil from the world. The use of strong verbs, such as cut done, smash, break etc. leads us to believe that sinners should be obliterated and this should be done quickly!

There is a Midrash on Tehilim (מזמור קד, כ"ז) and Gemorah (in ברכות י. ה) where we see the great Sage Rabbi Meir and his interaction with the atheists of his town. These atheists taunted Rabbi Meir and used certain verses to prove their evil blasphemy. Rabbi Meir was very perturbed and began to pray that these heretical sinners should die. Rabbi Meir's wife, Bruria, overheard these prayers and immediately said to her husband, that the verse in Tehilim יתמו חטאים (Evil must perish) is not referring to the 'sinners' but rather the verse is referring to their 'sins'. Rabbi Meir immediately changed his prayers and prayed that their evil actions be destroyed. The sinners all repented and the wickedness disappeared from the town.

We see from here that the intolerance in the first paragraph is referring to the intolerance we should have for **evil actions** and not intolerance for the sinners themselves. We are upset and even moved to anger by the effects that evil can have on our society and us, but we must differentiate between the actions and the individual. We are in no place to judge others, but we may disagree with certain offensive actions.

Similar to the other paragraphs in the Shmoneh Esrei, the issue being discussed should be analysed on both a personal and communal level. In the case of ולמלשינים we can divide these 2 levels even further.

Firstly on a personal level: We are able to divide this into 2 categories, 1- our own personal enemies and 2 - 'the enemy within me'.

1. Our personal enemies

Unfortunately, there are some people that willfully want to hurt us, it could be because we did something wrong, or for some other reason we'll never understand. The point is that prayer is very powerful and it's possible that our very own enemies are praying for our destruction. The only weapons we have against these prayers are our own prayers that these evil **intentions** should be destroyed. People that are in pain and are angry can be very malicious, so we use this prayer to ask Hashem to guard us spiritually and physically from these fiends.

A practical example can be when so called friends are trying to corrupt a member of their group to try drugs or engage in other negative behavior. It's at this point we should ask Hashem to nullify their plans.

2. The 'enemy within us' – The יצר הרע

There is a theory among the modern day psychologists that states that in our own interaction with others, one tries to evoke responses that complement our personal needs. Simply put - one likes being around people that are similar to one in a positive sense and one hates being around people that are similar to one in a negative sense. It is astounding that the faults that one sees in other people are really a reflection of faults that are imbedded in one's own personality.

The Vilna Gaon in quoting the Gemara, states that when we find faults in others, first check if that fault is apparent in you. Most times it is and their problem is actually your problem! Remember when we point a finger at others, you are actually pointing three fingers back at you. It is important to use this opportunity in the Shmoneh Esrei to introspect into our own faults and ask Hashem to annihilate them quickly. Yes, it's our own duty to remove our bad qualities, but as we have learnt from Rav Yisrael Salanter, it's harder to change one bad quality than to learn the whole of Shas. We are therefore very dependent on Hashem for all help we can get in ridding ourselves from these evil tendencies.

An example is when I was so upset when I heard a certain person speaking Lashon Harah, I got so angry, I couldn't believe that this person could be so despicable as to vilify others. I then heard the words of the Gaon in my head and I looked at the three fingers pointing at me. After a little introspection I realised that the person who had the problem of speaking Lashon Harah was I. With Hashem's help, I will one day be able to eradicate such terrible urges.

Secondly on a communal level. This too can be divided into 2 categories, 1 - a physical enemy and 2 –a 'spiritual' enemy.

1. The physical enemy of the community

It is very clear to us that on a communal level we have many physical threats. So many Jewish teenagers are dying from drug abuse and suicide. We must take an active role to defend ourselves against such dangers and this begins at this point in the Shmoneh Esrei when we acknowledge that such dangers exist and that we are not able to combat them alone. Other physical dangers include anti-Semitism. Who is able to stop murderous terrorists in their scheming to kill innocent Jews? We need to realize that this danger exists all over the world and one of our best weapons against such attacks is תפילה.

2. The spiritual enemy of the community

No one needs to reiterate the devastating effects of assimilation. Spiritual deaths have been compared to the Shoah and have been termed the 'silent holocaust'. What Hitler began, assimilation is finishing. Organizations like 'Jews for Jesus' must be stopped and it is up to us to ask Hashem to help us in our endeavor to thwart their intentions.

Summary

This bracha addresses the intolerance we should have for **evil actions**, but not against the sinners themselves. We ask Hashem to help rid us of this evil in the following spheres

1. Personal: Our personal enemies
The enemy within us = the יצר הרע
2. Communal: The physical threats to Jews (i.e. anti-Semitism)
The spiritual threats to Judaism (i.e. assimilation)

Sim Shalom - שִׁים שְׁלוֹם¹

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה חֵן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים
Establish **peace**, goodness, blessing, graciousness, kindness, and compassion

עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ.
upon us and upon all of Your people Israel.

בְּרַכְנוּ אֲבִינוּ כְּאֶחָד בְּאֹר שְׁנֵיךָ
Bless our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your face

כִּי בְּאֹר שְׁנֵיךָ נָתַתָּ לָנוּ אֱדֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
for **with the light of Your face** You have given us, Hashem, our God:

תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְצְדָקָה וּבְרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם
the Torah of life and a love of kindness, righteousness blessing, mercy, life, and peace.

וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
And may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel

בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ
in every season and in every hour **with Your peace**.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם.
Blessed are You, Hashem, Who blesses His people Israel with peace.

When confronting the final bracha of the Shmoneh Esrei, at first glance it seems quite simple to gauge the content and theme of the bracha. The first two words say it all: שִׁים שְׁלוֹם = "Establish Peace."

Yet when reading further we note that there are some strange expressions we use in what appears to be 'a prayer for peace.'

- Why are we asking G-d to bless us - באור פניך - with "the light of His face"? How does that relate to this bracha?
- And also, why do we conclude requesting to be blessed בשלומך - "with Your peace"? Doesn't the word "peace" mean enough without having to say that we want "Your (=G-d's) peace"?

Before answering these questions it is important to note something about the structure of the Shmoneh Esrei. Immediately before the bracha of Sim Shalom we have Birkat HaKohanim – the Priestly Blessing. Examining Birkat HaKohanim will show us a striking similarity between the Bracha that Hashem gives us via the Kohanim, and those blessings we pray for in Sim Shalom

The Priestly Blessing

יְבָרְכֶךָ אֱדֹנֵי וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ.
May Hashem bless you and guard you,

יִצְאָר אֱדֹנֵי שְׁנֵיךָ אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנֶּנֶךָ.
May Hashem **shine the light of His face** on you and be gracious to you,

יִשָּׂא אֱדֹנֵי שְׁנֵיךָ אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.
.May Hashem **turn His face** to you and **establish peace** for you

¹ By Sholem Hurwitz MTA '93

The Priestly Blessing is not a blessing that the Kohanim bestow upon Am Yisrael. Rather it is a blessing directly from G-d that uses the Kohanim as the people through whom the blessing is given. G-d is blessing Am Yisrael with many positive aspects, yet it is clear that a certain theme recurs.

Before even comparing the Priestly Blessing to Sim Shalom, there are a few issues within Birkat HaKohanim we must consider:

1. What does it mean when we talk about "G-d's face?"
2. What is the "light of G-d's face"?
3. And finally, why is שלום – "Peace" so important that the entire bracha reaches its climax and concludes with the words וישם לך שלום?

Answering these questions will help us understand these same terms that appear in Sim Shalom, and thereby we will be able to understand what exactly it is that we are praying for in this bracha.

1. How do we tell our friends apart from each other?

We are able to recognise their voices, their mannerisms, and maybe even their style of clothing. Yet the first way we recognise anyone is by his face. Even someone who is blind will often feel another person's face in order to get a clearer picture of 'who that person is.'

Once you know someone, you recognise him in a crowd, and his face becomes the way you remember him and think of him. The same is true with G-d. Of course it is impossible to see G-d in three-dimensions as you see your friend, but the thought of being able to comprehend G-d **as if** He was standing right there in front of you is what every human being desires.

2. Certainly if we could, we would not like to see G-d in the dark, but rather in the light. We would also like to feel and experience G-d from close-up – for what is the use of seeing if we are still distant and detached from Him? That is why G-d blesses us with "the shining light of His face." Once G-d's face is shining, not only do we see more clearly, but also we can feel and experience the warmth of his essence. The sun shines and gives warmth and cultivates life – how much more so does G-d!
3. Finally G-d closes his blessing to Am Yisrael with the word שלום – "Peace." Does this simply mean an end to all wars? No! After all that G-d blesses us with in the Priestly Blessing, שלום encompasses everything already mentioned in the blessing - and even more. The word "Shalom" comes from the root "Shalem" meaning "complete." We are also told that G-d's name is Shalom! (Shabbat 10b)

A name defines a person as distinct, and also is the manner by which a person can be identified. That which defines G-d is His name "Shalom" – surely G-d is the height of "completeness and perfection!"

And now we can return to understanding Sim Shalom.

"There is no servant who receives a blessing and does not listen; there is no servant who receives a blessing and does not respond favourably." (Sotah 40a)

G-d blesses us through the Kohanim, and quite obviously how do we respond?

We accept the blessing and using the very same words we pray that we will in fact be worthy of receiving G-d's blessing.

We ask that G-d use "the light of His face" towards us, stating that with this "light" we received the Torah – "a Torah of life." The light of His face endows us with the ability to see and comprehend Him, and the Torah offers us the method to understand His ways and recognise our personal and collective missions in the world. G-d's light and a life of Torah offer us a glimpse of the true life¹.

We now conclude the bracha as we ask G-d to bless us בשלום – "with Your peace." Living in G-d's light and living in full unison with G-d, climaxes in 'G-d's peace' – peace that is Divine perfection and completeness.

Summary

- Sim Shalom is our response to G-d's blessing, which we receive via the Kohanim.
- In Birkat Kohanim, we are blessed that Hashem will "shine the light of His face upon us". This imagery represents a feeling of closeness to Hashem, our ability to recognise Him with clarity and feel his warmth. This in turn will lead to completeness and perfection.
- In Sim Shalom we pray that we may be worthy of receiving this blessing (using the same imagery as Birkat Kohanim.). This can only be attained through Torah, which instructs us how to live according to His light. Finally we pray that this will result in Divine perfection and completeness – "Shalom".

¹(Rav S.R. Hirsh, Bamidbar 6:25 & Rav A. I. Kook, "Olat Re'iyah")

Aleinu Leshabeiach - עלינו לשבח¹

This workshop is designed to work in 25 – 30 minutes and is hence made in 2 parts. If for whatever reason you don't want to do it in 2 parts it is possible and I have included special instructions to facilitate this option.

Aims

To give over the message that

- 1) Davening helps us focus on our priorities for the day and life in general.
- 2) Aleinu is the tefillah with which we conclude davening. It was instituted with the express purpose of directing our lives to still be meaningful despite us finding ourselves in places that place strain on our religious identity

PART 1

Introduction

The madrich should direct each question to a specific channich and try to get his/her response as quickly as possible (2 – 3 minutes)

How do you relate to schoolwork the day after exams? *(Try forget it etc.)*

How do you relate to the happenings of the previous night on which you said something offensive to someone of the opposite sex that you really shouldn't have said? *(Try conceal what you may have done wrong / promise insincerely never to be sexist again etc.)*

How does the content of a serious movie on drug abuse affect you when one leaves the movie house? *(Try and internalise the messages / make a serious commitment to stay away from drugs and negative peer-pressure)*

How do you relate to the introspection done on Yom Kippur the day after? *(Try and implement new years resolutions)*

The Madrich should open the following question to everyone and try and get a few responses.

How do you feel when you leave shul and what messages should you take from the tefillot?

After receiving a few responses ask:

Is it more like schoolwork or a slip-up that you would like to forget, or like a drug abuse movie and Yom Kippur that you try and internalise?

(If you are doing this workshop in 1 part then you should ask one of the channies to read Aleinu aloud to everyone)

Now the madrich should hand out or open to the caricature of a guy walking out of shul. (It can be found on page –53– of the workbook. She/He should explain that this is a picture of a man (give him a name like Daniel) who is leaving shul. It depicts his thoughts reflecting back on what the prayers he has just prayed. S/He should spend the next 2 – 3 minutes analysing the world that the guy is leaving.

(If the channies are having problems analysing the picture, the maddie should prompt him with questions such as 'Where is the majesty of G-d found? / What does the closed window represent etc.)

Daniel's physical surroundings (as described in the 1st paragraph of Aleinu

Surrounding objects (Inside the shul)	Jewish symbols: A shul, Menora, Books, Aaron Hakodesh, Tefillin etc., which represents the insular world of service of G-d that he is leaving. A world where there are no negative influences
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¹This workshop was put together by Warren Sher based on a shiur that can be found on www.tefillah.net. Thanks to Eliyahu Misgav for the illustration

People	All he can see are a few dedicated people who are directly involved in service of G-d.
The closed window	Daniel is leaving a closed world, which builds small windows that remain closed. They do this in order to get away from the evil influences of the people outside. (<i>Shehem mishtachavim lehevel... – for they bow down to vanity etc.</i>)
The inscription of the shul	<i>And today, you shall know, and you shall remind your heart that Hashem is G-d –You elite few who decide to come to daven or learn, will know who Hashem is.</i>
The crown of G-d	G-d's glory represented by the crown on the ark is found concealed in a small room that only the few dedicated individuals can appreciate. (<i>Emet malkeinu – our G-d [the G-d that only a few of us perceive] is true</i>)
Surrounding object outside the shul (<i>This one is less important than those above</i>)	Natural objects: Trees, birds and clouds. To Daniel the only things in which you see the pure hand of G-d outside of shul is nature but the people around have become corrupted (<i>Heaven and Earth are each mention 3 times in the first paragraph of Aleinu</i>)

{Any ideas that follow the lines of what is stated above should be warmly accepted}

The next 2 – 3 minutes should be spent comparing it to the world created in his thought (right side of the picture – in the thought bubble)

Daniel's vision for future times (as described in the 2nd paragraph of Aleinu)

City	The people are all walking towards Jerusalem the city of G-d in all its splendour to serve Him
People	All types of people (Jewish and non-Jewish) are coming to pray to Hashem (<i>Kol Bnei Vasar Yikreu Vishmecha ...ki lecha tichra kol berech – every creature will call in Your name... for every knee will bow down to you</i>)
Broken idol / cross	In the future every person will give up their false belief and come and serve the Master of the Universe (<i>LeHa'avir Gilulim min Ha Aretz – to remove idols from the land</i>)
The inscription on the sign post	<i>Hashem will reign forever.</i> If you follow this direction, you will arrive at the city of G-d's palace (the Beit Hamikdash) from where G-d will eternally reign of the entire world.
The crown of G-d	When everyone decides to give up false beliefs and come to serve G-d, the glory of G-d will move from inside a concealed shul to being visible to all. When Hashem moves from what is termed the Mikdash me'at (the small mikdash, the shul) - to the real Beit HaMikdash – which was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world.

(If you're giving this shiur in 1 part then you must skip right to the end and discuss practical ways of achieving this)

PART 2

Sum up briefly what was we covered yesterday.

Summary

- Aleinu is the tefillah with which we leave davening. It is placed at the end of davening to give us a message for the day.
- The first paragraph describes a world of only religious Jews involved in Service of Hashem and their contempt for the evil idol worshipers around them.

- The second paragraph conjures up images of the future – a perfect world where even the non-Jews around us come to serve G-d.
- This vision enables us to leave shul and go out into the world, because we are going out in order to bring the world closer to its perfection.

Ask the channies

Is there any other place that we find the tefillah of Aleinu? (*Rosh Hashanah davening*)

The Gemara in Yerushalmi Masechet Rosh Hashanah 1:2 hints to the fact the Amorah - Rav composed Aleinu along with other parts of the Mussaf service for Rosh Hashanah. There are those who claim that Yehoshua (Joshua) composed the prayer after entering the Promised Land of Israel. The text is first found in the siddur of Rav Amram Gaon only as part of Mussaf of Rosh Hashanah and not part of daily davening.

Ask the following questions and try to get answers

- Looking back on what we have learnt yesterday, do you think it is logical that Yehoshua wrote Aleinu?

Yes, because Aleinu talks about the mission of the Jewish leaving their closed insular world living with constant miracles in the desert (manna, Miriam's well of water, etc.) and going to fix the world through the destruction of idolatry and a return of all nations to the serving of Hashem. This is what the nation at the time was going out to do, to destroy the nations that were living in G-d's land, but who refused to accept G-d's authority.

- Do you think it is logical for Aleinu to be part of only the Rosh Hashanah davening?

Yes, because on Rosh Hashanah the focus of prayer is for Hashem's name to become fluent on all the tongues of the nations and that is exactly the hope that is mentioned in Aleinu

(We can perhaps suggest that Yehoshua really composed the theme of Aleinu but its text was formalised by Rav in the Time of Talmud (+/-500 CE)

- Why do you think Aleinu later became included in our daily prayers?

Aleinu as a prayer of the martyred

During the period of the Crusaders, many Jews were made to choose between baptism and death. One French Jew by the name of Rabbi Ephrayim Ben Ya'akov (1132 – 1197) went to his death with the words of Aleinu on his mouth. It is a phenomenal idea that this great Jew, while being tortured to death, was praying that his murderers would merit to do Teshuva and return to serve Hashem. A number of years later the Rabbis instituted Aleinu into our daily prayers so that we can also pray like Rabbi Ephrayim; that we can merit to see our enemies return to serve G-d. It also was included to inspire us to leave our insular Jewish world and go out and try to make this a reality.

- Aleinu once created much friction between the Jews and the Christian's. What part of Aleinu could you think might have bothered the Christian's?

'That they are bowing down to vanity and emptiness, to a G-d that does not listen'. The word vanity [וריק] ($6+200+10+100=316$) has the same numeric value as Jesus [ישו] ($10+300+6=316$). This led the Christians to believe that Aleinu was a direct

attack on them. Eventually one of the Christian kings decreed that these words be excluded from the Siddur. Therefore in some siddurim we find these words not printed or printed in brackets.

Read through Aleinu and allow the channies to raise the ideas mentioned yesterday as you read. (It is very important that the channies see how the caricature depicts the text). The madrich should re-emphasize the important points.

Summary 2

- Aleinu may have originally been composed by Yehoshua Bin Nun or by Rav.
- It was originally only part of Rosh Hashanah davening but later became the closing prayer of daily davening (This was inspired both by its content and by martyrs dying with these words on their mouths – praying for a return of all mankind to the service of Hashem.)
- Some of the content of Aleinu angered Christians and hence a line of Aleinu was censored
- Aleinu allows us to leave Shul after davening and go face the world with a mission which is ‘to fix the world in the name of Hashem’