

Hadracha Choveret



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA
UNITED KINGDOM

BNEI AKIVA'S WEEKLY EDUCATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR MADRICHIM

Tefilla



Aims:

- 1) To learn about the source of Tefilla and to understand that Tefilla is an essential part of being Jewish.
- 2) To appreciate the different reasons why we pray and to learn about the structure of some of the Tefillot.
- 3) To make Tefilla more accessible for our Chanichim and encourage them to take an active role in their Shul services wherever possible.



Dear Madrichim

Welcome to a new week and a new Choveret!

This week the Choveret is about Tefilla, building on the fact that the Avot were the first people to pray to Hashem in the Parshiot that we are reading at the moment. Tefilla is one of the most difficult Mitzvot for most of us to relate to and the idea is to approach it in a fresh and exciting way which will make Tefilla an easier and more inspiring experience for you and your Chanichim.

I hope you are enjoying the 5771 Choveret. Thanks to the positive feedback from last week I am continuing with the new format on pages 6 and 7, designed to help you ensure that your Chanichim are learning as well as having fun. If you have any further comments, complaints or constructive criticisms of the Choveret then please do not hesitate to contact me at chinuch@bauk.org ☺

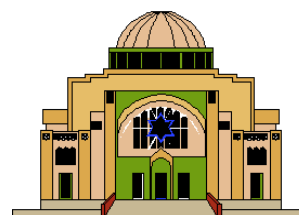
Have a wonderful Shabbat, enjoy Sviva, and make sure your Chanichim enjoy it too!

All the best

Alan ☺

Where does prayer come from?

When our Rabbis discuss the origins of Tefilla in the Gemara (Brachot 26b), two possibilities are given:



1 – We pray because of the spontaneous prayers of our forefathers:

- Avraham prayed Shacharit when he pleaded with Hashem about Sodom.
- Yitzchak prayed Mincha before he met his wife-to-be Rivka.
- Yaakov prayed Maariv before he had his dream about the ladder.

2 – We pray because we no longer have sacrifices in the Bet Hamikdash:

- Shacharit replaces the daily sacrifice which took place every morning.
- Mincha replaces the daily sacrifice which took place every afternoon.
- Maariv replaces the burning of fats and limbs on the altar every evening.

However, it is often very difficult for us to relate to our ancestors or to our Temple of 2,000 years ago when we step inside a Shul in England today. So what can we do to make sure that Tefilla is meaningful and worthwhile?



Reasons for Prayer

The first step to better appreciating Tefilla is to understand the reasons behind it. Let's take a look at four reasons why we pray...

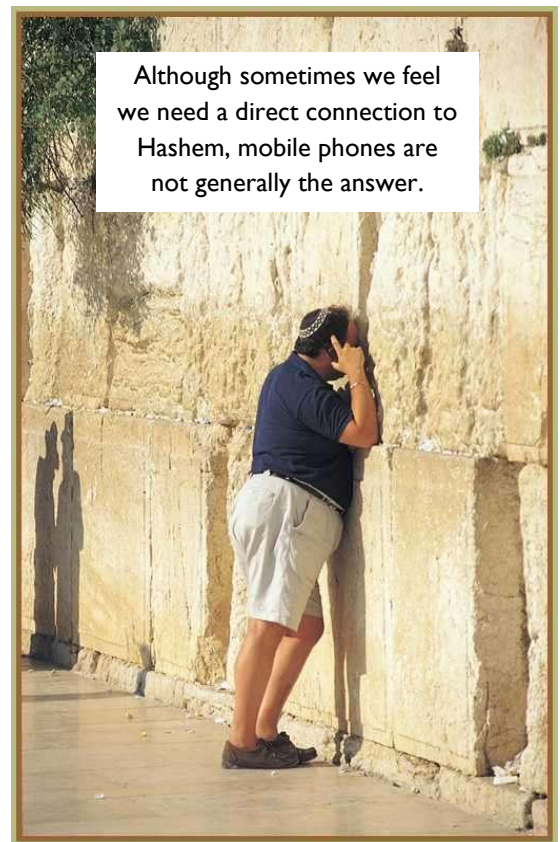
1) Self-judgement

Apart from praising Hashem, when we pray we are also judging ourselves.

The Hebrew verb, **lehitpallel** (to pray), actually comes from the root “pallel”, meaning “to assess”. By telling Hashem that we are doing wrong, that our lives are only short, and that we are very small and insignificant in the grand picture of His world, we encourage ourselves to do more, sin less, and generally be far better people.

Praying also reminds us not to take things for granted. We remember that it is not us but Hashem who is in control and that we owe our every breath to Him.

Prayer also reminds us that we are not perfect and can always change and improve.



2) Request-making

We all ask for things, apologise, and show love to our parents. Tefilla is an opportunity to do all three to our ultimate Father – Hashem.

However, there is a special process through which we make requests to Hashem. The Amidah is split up into three parts: Praise, Request & Thanks.



Praising Hashem – It is only natural to praise someone before you ask them for something. How many times have you wanted something from your parents, and you act all lovey-dovey before you pop the question? The same is true with Hashem – we praise Him before we ask Him for anything.

Requesting – Once we have praised Hashem, we ask Him for several things, be it health, sustenance, forgiveness, livelihood, etc.

Thanks – Once we have finished with our requests, we thank Hashem for all he has done for us and we hope that our prayers have been successful.

3) Coming closer to Hashem

How do we see our prayers in relation to Hashem? Do we think of prayers as a direct ‘phone-line’, or as a type of correspondence course? Is Hashem simply reading our letters, and will only reply if they make the grade?

Hashem has His ears open to our Tefillot 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and however great or small our request is He will always be there to receive it. By regularly conversing with Hashem, we can come closer to Him and strengthen our relationship with Him.

4) Becoming part of the community

Judaism is a communal religion and whenever possible we should try to pray together with the community. Praying with others helps us to understand that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves.



Virtually all of our prayers end in ‘NU’ (i.e. the plural) as we pray for others as well as ourselves. The only exception is Tachanun and we say this with our heads bowed as we are ashamed to be praying only for ourselves.

Relating to Prayer

Two of the main challenges in relating to prayer are the language barrier and the seemingly rigid structure of the prayer service.

It is true that it is preferable to pray in Hebrew as it is ‘Lashon Hakodesh’ – the holy language. Praying in Hebrew is more poetic and more respectful, and many words cannot be accurately translated into other languages. Furthermore, praying in Hebrew unites Jews all over the world. One can go to a shul in Mexico or Mozambique and still be able to follow the service. This enforces the idea of Achdut – the unity of the Jewish people.

However, it is certainly acceptable to pray in English if one cannot read the words properly in Hebrew. Hashem understands all languages and will answer prayers in any language, so although every Jew should be encouraged to learn to read Hebrew and to understand what the words mean, the notion that it is forbidden to pray in another language is simply a myth.

Similarly, although the fixed nature of the prayer service is important, it is not true that there is no room for spontaneity in Tefilla. In the sense that Tefilla reflects the daily sacrifices, the fixed structure is crucial, emphasising the need for consistency in our lives and our devotion to Hashem. In addition, saying the same words as everybody else helps us to appreciate the communal aspect of prayer and feel part of the community wherever we go.

However, the fact that Tefilla also reflects the spontaneous prayers of the Avot demonstrates that there must be a spontaneous dimension to our prayers. When we feel moved to talk to Hashem we must do so wherever we are and regardless of whether it is time for Shul. There are even specific parts of the Amidah (during Shema Koleinu and at the end) where we can insert our own personal Tefillot into the fixed prayer service.

Peulah Planning

While it is essential to make sure that Sviva is full of fun and games, it is also very important to make sure that your Chanichim learn something.

This does not just mean that you should give a quick half-a-minute explanation of why certain games were played and then tenuously link them to the theme of the Choveret. Rather it means that you should set aside a significant amount of time each week for engaging your Chanichim in a discussion about the key issues that come out of the weekly theme.

This is not as scary as it may sound, and it can also be done in fun and exciting ways. Therefore I have included in this section of the Choveret both **GAMES** and **DISCUSSION POINTS**, to help you ensure that your Chanichim are getting the most out of Sviva, both in terms of enjoyment and in terms of knowledge.

GAMES

- Musical Prayers – A fun variation of musical chairs where you sing songs which come from somewhere in Tefilla.
- Song Game – Only using songs that they know from Shul.
- Memory Game – Match up prayers to their uses (e.g. Modim = thanking Hashem, Selach Lanu = asking for forgiveness, etc.)
- I went to Shul and I prayed for...
- Made-up games – Get each team to make up their own variation of a basic game and then play their own versions as well as the originals – demonstrates how it helps to have a recognised system of prayer.
- Made-up prayers – Get everyone to think of one thing that they really want to pray for and to compose their own prayer / poem for it.
- Unity games – Loads of options here to emphasise the importance of unity in prayer in terms of praying with others and for others.

(Remember that your Sviva has two excellent games booklets with tons more suggestions and also that not every game has to be linked to the weekly theme.)



DISCUSSION POINTS

- Ask the Chanichim whether they find Tefilla exciting or boring and if they say boring then ask why and discuss with them how they can improve their experience of Tefilla and Shul.
- Ask them if they think that Hashem always answers their prayers and use this to trigger a discussion of whether Tefilla is just about us being able to ask for things which we want or need or whether there is more to it than that. (See section on reasons for prayer.)
- Tell them the famous story of the man drowning in the sea because he refused to accept the help of the helicopter as he was 'waiting to be saved by Hashem'. Use this to point out how we can't only pray and do nothing else but we have to be active and proactive in our lives. Inspire them by pointing out that when they help other people they may in some way be 'agents of Hashem' in answering other people's prayers.

Parasha in Pictures!

Chayei Sarah

'And this was the lifetime of of Sarah: 100 years and



years and

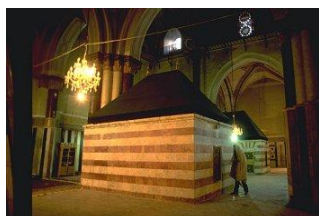


years – the years of the life of Sarah.'

Ch. 23: Avraham buys Maarat Hamachpelah to bury Sarah who has just died.

Ch. 24: Avraham sends his servant to find a wife (Rivka) for his son Yitzchak.

Ch. 25: Avraham remarries and has 6 more sons and then dies at the age of 175.



Coming soon at Bnei Akiva!

Limmud – your weekly dose of learning

London: continuing every Monday at 19:30 at the Bayit.

Birmingham: continuing every Monday at 18:00 at the standard location.

Manchester: continuing every Tuesday at 19:30 at the Bayit.

Leeds: next one on Tuesday 9th November at 20:00 (location to be confirmed).

For more information or to arrange a Chavruta email Alan at chinuch@bauk.org

29th - 30th October: Shabbat Bogrim, Students

Join us for a fantastic Shabbat with the best of Bnei Akiva's Bogrim with great food, great atmosphere, and a wonderful opportunity to discuss where our movement is at!

Full details at <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=163379457021021> - Book your place now!

31st October: Israel Machane Reunion, Year 12

Meet up with your group again while having a great day out at Alton Towers!

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity – book your place now by emailing Rafi at Israel@bauk.org

22nd - 29th December: Winter Machane, Yr 6-12

Application forms online now at www.bauk.org – please mention it every week at Mifkad between now and Machane and encourage all of your Chanichim to apply! For more information email Benjy@bauk.org

16th - 22nd December: Pre-camp for Madrichim

Tafkid applications are online now at www.bauk.org – for more information email Benjy@bauk.org

11th July – 4th August: Provisional dates for Israel Machane, Year 11