**Jewish Artist lab-April 20, 2021**

**When broken, how do we move towards peace/wholeness?**

**When in a dark space, how do we create?**

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**-Rani Halper**

Thanks to Aimee Orkin for inspiring this lesson with her deep dive into t’fillot and visual arts during her Sabbatical year and her stewardship of the Interfaith Women’s Prayer Exhibit at the University of St. Thomas.

**Some thoughts on *T’fillah* (Prayer)**

1. *T’fillah* is an invitation to go inward. The word *lehitpallel* (to pray) is reflexive – it’s something I do within myself. It involves inhabiting my inner experience, listening to what is happening in the present, allowing my inner reality to express itself, and embracing this experience as a dialogue with my Creator.

[Rabbi Ami Silver](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/awakening-with-rabbi-ami-silver/id1456561554)

1. Prayer is like the light from a burning glass in which all the rays that emanate from the soul are gathered to a focus.

[Abraham Joshua Heschel](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/abraham-joshua-heschel-a-prophets-prophet/)

1. Prayer is where I go to turn off the noise of life. It is there that I connect to the One who made me and reminds me what is true, right, and expected of me in this life.

[Rabbi Rachel M. Isaacs](http://www.colby.edu/jewishlife/)

Questions for your chat room

What resonates with you?

What would you say about *t’fillah*?

**Case Study 1- Rani Halpern: Translating words of *t’fillah* to visual *t’fillah***

**Case Study 2-*Nigun-t’fillah* without words**

**Case Study 3-*Hashkivenu*—Finding peace when afraid.**

Musical version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqtK2VfZWkI>

השכיבנו

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְ**שָׁלוֹם**,וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת **שְׁלוֹמֶךָ**, וְתַקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהָגֵן בַּעַדֵנוּ, וְהָסֵר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב, דֶבֶר, וְחֶרֶב, וְרָעָב וְיָגוֹן, וְהָסֵר שָׂטָן מִלְפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵנוּ, וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירֵנוּ. כִּי אֵל מַלְכֵּנוּ שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אָתָּה, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אָתָּה, וּשְׁמוֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבוֹאֵנוּ, לְחַיִּים וּ**לְשָׁלוֹם**, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.

(יום חול)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, שׁוֹמֵר עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לָעַד

(בשבת)

וּפְרֹשׂ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׂ סֻכַּת שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְִרוּשָׂלָיִם.

Hashkivenu

Cause us to lie down in **peace**, O Adonai our Lord, and awaken us to life again, our King. Spread over us Your sukkah of **peace**. Cause us do the right thing through Your good counsel. Save us for your Name’s sake. Protect us, remove from us any enemy, plague, war, famine, despair. Remove evil in front of us and behind us. Hide us in the shade of your wings. You are our God who guards us and saves us. You are a gracious and compassionate King. Guard our going out and our coming in. Grant us life and **peace** now and forever.

(Weekdays)

Praised are You who guards God’s people Israel forever.

(Shabbat)

Spread over us the sukkah of your peace. Praised are You who spreads the sukkah of peace over us and over all God’s people Israel, and over Jerusalem.

**Discussion Questions for *Hashkivenu***

* This *t’fillah* is recited twice at night—once during the evening service and again by individuals before they fall asleep at night. Why do you think this t’fillah was chosen as part of the bedtime ritual?
* What emotions run through this t’fillah? Can you imagine a person going to bed in Tiberias in 80 CE and what that person might be feeling as he lay in his bed?
* The period before sleeping and when waking up is often called a “liminal” time—a time when we’re passing through one stage to another. How aware are you of this movement and your thoughts before you fall asleep or as you awaken?
* During the past pandemic year, have you had more difficulty falling asleep? What thoughts run through your head? What helps you fall asleep?
* Can you relate to the fears the author of Hashkivenu expresses? Which ones?
* T’fillah can’t change our circumstances so how could a t’fillah help someone who’s afraid or anxious at night?
* How does this t’fillah address our theme of brokenness and wholeness? (notice the bolded Hebrew words).

**Case Study #4-*Modeh Ani*- Gratitude in the morning**

Musical version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQoPnW20pHI>

מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ רוח חַי וְקַיָּם שֶהֶחֱזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְחֶמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ

*Modeh ah-nee lifanecha, Ru-ach chai v’kayam, she-hechezarta bee nishma-tee b’chemlah rabbah emunatecha.*

I thank You, living and enduring King, who compassionately retuned my breath, my soul within me. Your faithfulness is great.

**Case Study #5- *T’fillah* before getting the coronavirus vaccine**—Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu (Chief Rabbi of Safed)Composed March 2021.

מודִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ ה' אֱלהֵינוּ וֵאלהֵי אֲבותֵינוּ אֱלהֵי כָל בָּשָׂר. בּוֹרֵא רְפוּאוֹת. שאַתָּה חונֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת וּמְלַמֵּד לֶאֱנושׁ בִּינָה לִמְצֹא וּלְהַמְצִיא חִסּוּן לַמַּגֵּפָה. יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שֶׁהַחִסּוּן הַזֶּה יִמְנַע אֶת הִתְפַּשְּׁטוּת הַמַּגֵּפָה וְיַצִּיל חַיִּים שֶׁל אַלְפֵי רְבָבוֹת בָּעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ

אָנָּא ה' שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל חולֵי עַמֶּךָ. הִצִּילָנוּ מִכָּל תּוֹפְעוֹת הַלְּוַאי, רְפָאֵנוּ ה' וְנֵרָפֵא הושִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִוָּשֵׁעָה כִּי תְהִלָּתֵנוּ אָתָּה. וְהַעֲלֶה אֲרוּכָה וּמַרְפֵּא לְכָל תַּחֲלוּאֵינוּ. וּלְכָל מַכְאובֵינוּ וּלְכָל מַכּותֵינוּ. כִּי אֵל רופֵא רַחְמָן וְנֶאֱמָן אָתָּה. יִהְיוּ לְרָצון אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיון לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ. ה' צוּרִי וְגאֲלִי.

We thank You our God and God of our ancestors, the God of all flesh, the Creator of medicines that You imbue humankind with knowledge and imbue humanity the understanding to create a vaccine against this pandemic. May it be your will that this vaccine will prevent the spread of the pandemic and will save the lives of many thousands throughout the world.

Please, God, send complete healing to the sick of your people. Save us from all side effects. Heal us, God, and we will be healed. Save us and we will be saved because you are our praise. Grant healing and cure for all our sicknesses and pains and troubles. For You are a compassionate and faithful healer, O God. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart find favor before You, Lord, my Rock and Redeemer.

**Consider with your Hevruta**

**Focus questions**

* Does t’fillah address *sh’virut* and *shleimut*?
* How can *t’fillah* help the broken feel more whole?
* Is there a specific *t’fillah* that resonates with you at this time?
* Is there a specific *t’fillah* you would create in words, music, or visual art that resonates with you at this time?

You may want to begin by exploring feelings about *t’fillah* (prayer). Even if your partner is unused to prayer, they’re familiar with the notion. The idea is to examine those feelings but not to judge or change them.

**The *Siddur* (prayerbook) as a resource**

This month’s lab is an invitation to open a *siddur* (prayerbook) to see if there are *t’fillot* (prayers) that speak to you at this moment or that prompt a creative response from you.

The *siddur* is the comprehensive book of Judaism. Jewish theology, history, poetry, ethics, values, and prayers all reside within the covers of a *siddur*. *T’fillah* includes words, music, movement to create an immersive experience.

There are many *siddurim* – some accessible online. See the list at the end of the source sheet.

**Some background to consider**

* The Hebrew verb *l’hitpalel* is closer to the idea of self-reflection than the English translation “to pray.”
* Like the Haggadah, the *siddur* is structured but within the structure is the possibility for personal prayer.
* *T'fillah* is chanted and not spoken. For most of Jewish history Jews depended on their rote memory and the *shaliah tzibur* to repeat the words of the *t’fillot* .
* The first printed *siddur* appeared in 1486 from Soncino. *Siddurim* were not widely available to the Jewish community until 1865.
* The first *siddur* was compiled in the late 9th century in Babylonia but there is evidence of Jewish prayer from the time of the Exodus. The ritual was well-established in the time of the Temples. From 586 BCE-70 CE worship revolved around sacrifices. With the destruction of the Temple, worship had to change or Judaism could have disappeared. Gradually, the rabbis developed an oral tradition of prayer that followed the times of the daily sacrifices. *Hashkivenu* is mentioned in *Brakhot* 4b and is one of the earliest *t’fillot* included in the service. It has two endings because the rabbis couldn’t agree on which ending to use so they use one for weekdays, one for Shabbat.

**Diving into the *siddur* – a few pathways**

1. Select the *hashkivenu* as your text and use the discussion guide above along with some of Saul Wach’s suggested approaches.
2. Open ended—when you get together see if there’s a prayer that already resonates with your partner and delve into that *t’fillah* using Dr. Wachs’ guidelines.
3. If your partner is not Jewish, pre-select a prayer that you think might connect with your partner’s experience—it could be a psalm like Psalm 121 that also addresses fear and plays with some of the same imagery of darkness, shade.

**Swimming through the text with your partner-**Suggested questions from Saul P. Wachs, PhD

* What does the prayer say? What does it mean?
* Can it be divided into units of thought or structure?
* Are there any striking grammatical forms?
* What do you think happened to the author?
* Has that ever happened to you?
* How do you feel about what is written here?
* What questions would you ask the author if you could?
* Who in the Bible might have wanted to say this prayer?
* Have you ever been in a situation where you might have wanted to say this prayer?
* If you took the words of this prayer seriously, at this moment in your life, what difference would it make?
* (My addition): If you could illustrate this prayer, what would you create?

**Some random thought about *t’fillah* to ponder on your own or with your hevruta**

1. *T’fillah* is not afraid of paradox, it embraces them. Here are a few.

Paradox of Structure (*Keva*) and Inspiration (*Kavannah*)

Paradox of Aloneness and Community

Paradox of Ancient Texts and Personal Resonance

1. *T’fillah –* no topic is off topic (partial list)

* Nature
* Bodily functions
* History
* Values
* Requests
* Politics
* Fundraising
* Emotions-Fear, despair
* Emotions-Gratitude
* Emotions-Love
* Personalities
* Action
* Community
* Esthetic: Music and poetic imagery
* *Emunah*, belief in God
* God

**Resources**

**Online *siddurim***

<https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/online-siddur/> (Reform)

<https://www.ccarnet.org/publications/mishkan-tfilah-weekdays-shabbat-festivals/> (Reform)

<https://www.sefaria.org/Siddur_Ashkenaz?lang=bi> (traditional Ashkenaz)

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/form-download-e-siddur-0> (Conservative)

<https://www.nehalel.com/index.html> (*Siddur* with accompanying photography)

Article about the relationship of visual art and siddurim: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/can-pictures-enhance-prayer>