

MARE Liturgy

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..... Overview

We will explore the basic structure and content of the traditional weekday and Shabbat liturgies, focusing on the concepts expressed by each prayer and its place in the larger structure of the service.

Armed with a solid understanding of the traditional prayerbook, we will study typical Reform liturgies, and issues relating to liturgy and supplemental Hebrew school programs.

..... Topics

Background

The course begins with an overview of how Jewish liturgy works and the principles that guided the creation of the traditional service and its contents. These include the notions of distinct sections (“rubrics”) of a service, specific material for holidays and special events, fixed prayer vs. improvised prayer, etc.

The Prayers

Roughly two-thirds of the class will consist of studying the prayers themselves. We will place each prayer in the context of the larger service, and then look at both the literal meaning of the prayer and the role it plays in reflecting Jewish philosophy and theology.

While we will take sporadic looks at the history and development of the traditional service, we will not undertake a systematic look at the long process that gave it to us. By contrast, we will focus on how that service became the Reform service.

Reform Worship

As we read through the prayers, we will compare and contrast the traditional and Reform liturgies, paying particular attention to changes the Reform movement has made and the motivations behind those changes.

Hebrew School

The topics of prayer and liturgy continue to challenge Hebrew school principals.

One of the major goals of many Hebrew schools — and often the most important goal of the parents who send their children to those schools — is that the students learn what they will need to know about the service for bar or bat mitzvah. We will take a serious look at the considerations that determine what students should know for bar or bat mitzvah, and then move on to discuss ways of helping students reach the goals set out for them.

We will specifically discuss the role weekly worship services play in a curriculum, and how to plan and implement services for children. Our discussion will include the often conflicting goals of teaching the liturgy through services and providing a prayer experience for children.

.....Requirements.....

Because much of the course will consist of class discussion, you should plan on attending every class. If you must miss a class, you will want to make sure to obtain class notes from someone else.

Your grade in the class will reflect class participation, a few small quizzes during the course of the semester, and a final exam.

.....How to Reach Me.....

You can reach me most conveniently by e-mail: Joel@Exc.Com. You can also reach me by phone: 718/834-1080. You can call as early as you like, but *please don't call after 9:00pm*.

.....Selected Bibliography.....

Most of the course consists of class lectures, handouts and discussions. However, the following are used to greater or lesser degrees during the course, either to supplement or to reinforce material presented in class.

Of these, the books most worth having on your bookshelf are marked with an asterisk (*). Those most relevant to the course are marked with a plus symbol (+).

- Birnbaum, Philip, 1977. *ha-Sidur ha-shalem*. New York: Hebrew Publishing Company. (*+)
- Elbogen, Ismar. 1993. *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*. Philadelphia: JPS (trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin) (*)
- Hammer, Reuven. 1994. *Entering Jewish Prayer*. New York: Schocken Books
- Hoffman, Lawrence A., 1979. *Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press. (*)
- Hoffman, Lawrence A., 1987. *Beyond the Text*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. (+*)
- Hoffman, Lawrence A. 1999. *The Art of Public Prayer*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing (+*)
- Hoffman, Lawrence A., ed. 1997–2004. *My People's Prayer Book*. Vols 1–7. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing. (+*)
- Langer, Ruth. 1998. *To Worship God Properly : tensions between liturgical custom and Halakhah in Judaism*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Press (*)
- Petuchowski, Jacob J., 1972. *Understanding Jewish Prayer*. New York: Ktav. (+)