
JEWISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Grade Level / Age 8-9 /14-15y



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Jewish Religious Education: Prayer and Meditation

Competences/Learning Outcomes

- The students know central prayers and meditations and are familiar with their practice.
- They can interpret different physical forms of expression and put into words the attitudes associated with them in the praying/meditating person.
- They can assign appropriate spaces to different forms of prayer/meditation and can deal appropriately with the respective (liturgical) situation.
- They can distinguish between different occasions and times of prayer.
- They can interpret ritualized elements of prayer/meditation and understand them as aids to engaging in the life-enhancing character of prayer/meditation.

Grade level / Age

8-9 /14-15y

Duration

120 min

Preparation

- Prepare three tables in different corners of the classroom ("stations"). Name them as follows:
 - Station 1 – When to pray
 - Station 2 – How to pray



- Station 3 – Where to pray
- Provide the tables with the corresponding material.
- Bring a bell.
- Bring as many objects shown in **M8** as you can.

Step-by-step description

- Arrange students to sit in a circle.
- Read the text of the selected prayer/meditation (from **M1**) and ask students to share their personal experiences on this prayer/meditation.
- Explain that with this lesson they will explore different aspects of prayer/meditation and write down the categories form (*how to pray*), *location (where to pray)* and *time (when to pray)* on the blackboard.
- Explain that results will be collected and presented at the Encounter Day. Aim is to introduce a prayer/meditation to others.
- Divide the participants into 3 groups to work together for the whole unit.
- Ask each group to start with a different station.
- Let them work on the station for about 15-20 min. Then ring a bell to make them change to the next station.
- Repeat the last step until every group has visited every station (3 times).
- Let all students take their seats.
- Hang an empty poster on the blackboard. It has only the text of the selected prayer in the middle (take from **M1**).
- Ask students to complete the poster with information they collected in the stations. Provide materials from the stations and stick it to the poster when mentioned by a student.
- Use the poster to present your prayer at the Encounter Day.
- As a final action at the end of the lesson read out loud the prayer text together.



Station 1

[M1] Information Text

Prayer in Judaism

In orthodox-traditional Judaism, prayer is understood as a duty of the believer. This is rooted in the conviction that prayer originated in Judaism as a substitute for sacrificial service in the temple. In ancient Israel, God was worshipped there through regular sacrificial rituals and at special feast times. However, in 70 AD, the Roman emperor Titus destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and thus ended the sacrificial service. Cultic acts were no longer possible. Instead, prayer became an obligatory ritual and replaced the sacrificial service. Based on the temple cult, prayers are recited three times a day in Judaism. These prayers have a fixed form and consist of different parts: They are called morning prayers (Shacharit), afternoon prayers (Mincha) and evening prayers (Maariv). Special prayers are also said on public holidays.

In reform-orientated Judaism, prayer is not understood as a compulsory prayer. Usually, prayers are only said on public holidays and on Shabbat.

The Shma Yisrael

The Shma Yisrael is a particularly important prayer for everyone. Some people also refer to it as the Jewish profession of faith. It is found in the Bible in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 6, 4-9. The Shema Yisrael professes faith in the one God. It exhorts people to love and to observe the commandments. This has implications for everyday life and the use of tefillin, mezuzah and the passing on of the commandments to the next generation. The text translates as follows:

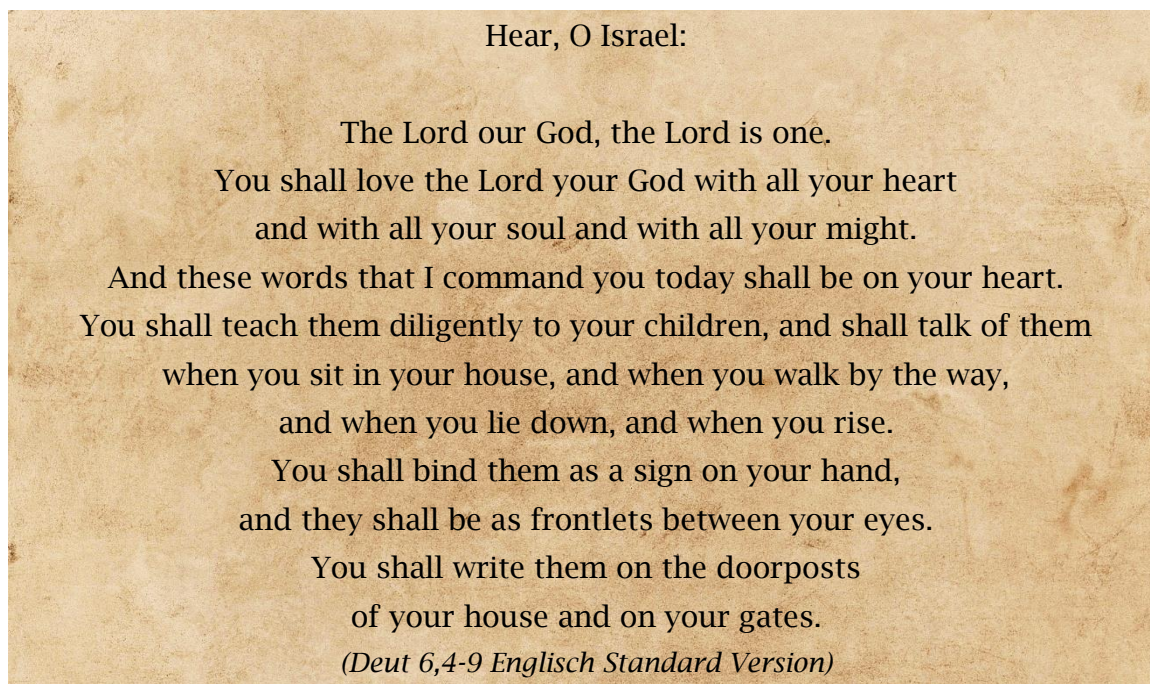


Fig.1



Der erste Absatz des Schema Jisraels auf
Hebräisch

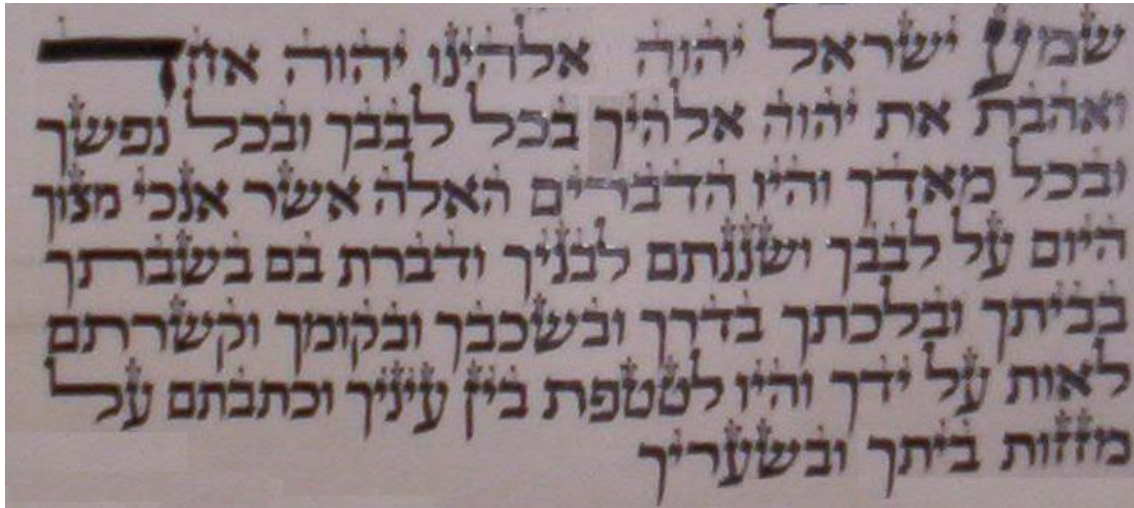


Fig.2

How do we pray?

The Shma Yisrael should be prayed with special concentration. In order to do this better, some people place their hands over their eyes. The eyes are closed and the words are spoken quietly. The prayer straps (tefillin), which are tied around the arms and head, are also said to help. In Judaism, the head is covered when praying.

When do we pray?

The Shma Yisrael is part of the morning and evening prayers. It is therefore prayed twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. In the traditional Orthodox tradition, this rule is observed every day; in the Reform tradition, it is usually only prayed on Shabbat.

Where do people pray?

If possible, however, it should be prayed in community. To do this, ten adult men or people must come together and form a minyan (minimum quorum). However, this is not always possible. You can come together in the synagogue, but it is actually possible to pray anywhere. The Shma Israel is often prayed at home in a private setting.



[M2] When to pray – Tasks

There are fixed times for some prayers. They are prayed in a recurring rhythm or on certain (festival) days.

1. Read the information text [M1] and underline all the information about the prayer times of the Shema Yisrael. Write them on the lines. When do you pray yourself? Fill in the times together on worksheets [M2] and [M3].

2. Some people pray more often than others. Think about the possible reasons for this. Discuss them in your small group.

3. Can you remember a situation in which you experienced prayer as something special? When was that? Describe the situation and write it in the lines below. If you like, tell your small group about it.



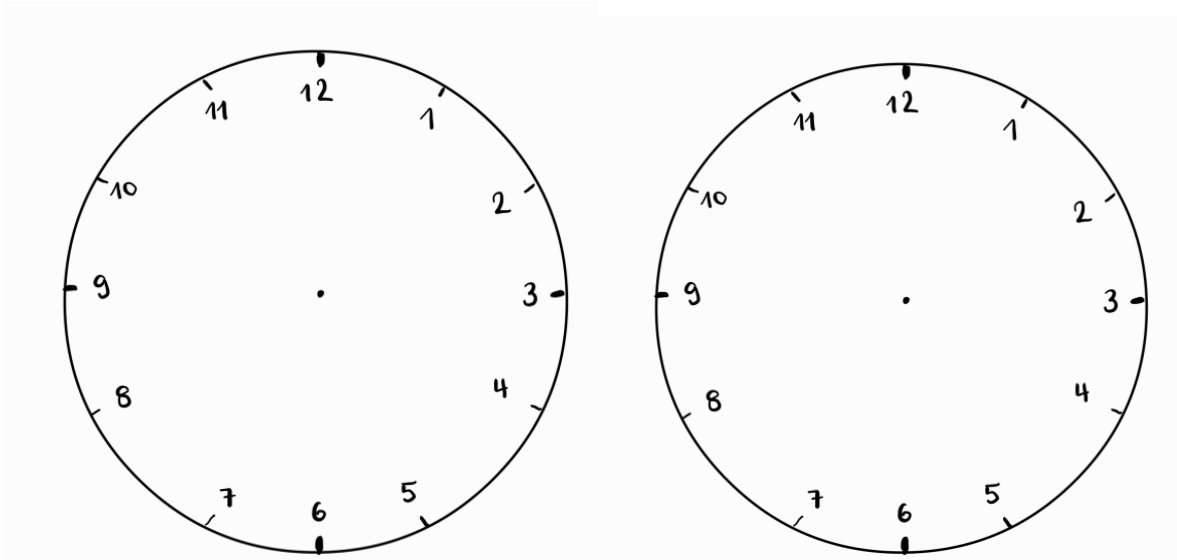
[M3] When to pray – Prayer Times

Draw in to which times you pray.

Time of day

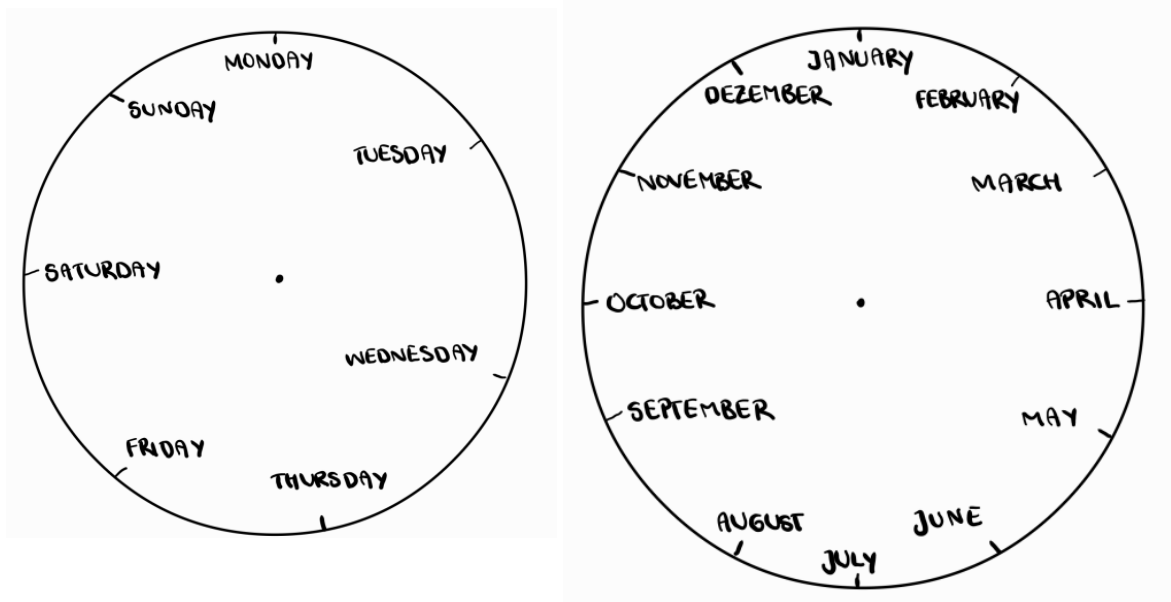
Day

Night



Days of the week

Months of the year



Station 2

[M4] How to pray – Tasks

1. Match the different postures [M7] with the word cards [M5] and the sentence cards [M6].
2. Try the different postures [M7]. Which one did you prefer? In which posture could you concentrate best? Why?

3. In some religions the people use different objects while praying. Look at the objects [M8]. You will find things from your own religion among them. Some you may know, some you may not know. Read the explanations. Can you understand why other people use these objects?

4. What can you write/stick to the poster at the end? What is important while praying? What can help?



Standing

Kneeling

Sitting

Prostration



[M6] How to pray – Sentence cards and drawings

These text cards describe the possible postures during prayer. Place them with the matching word cards (M5).

I calm down.
I am alert and can concentrate well.
I hear and absorb the words.
In this posture I can pray for a long time very well.

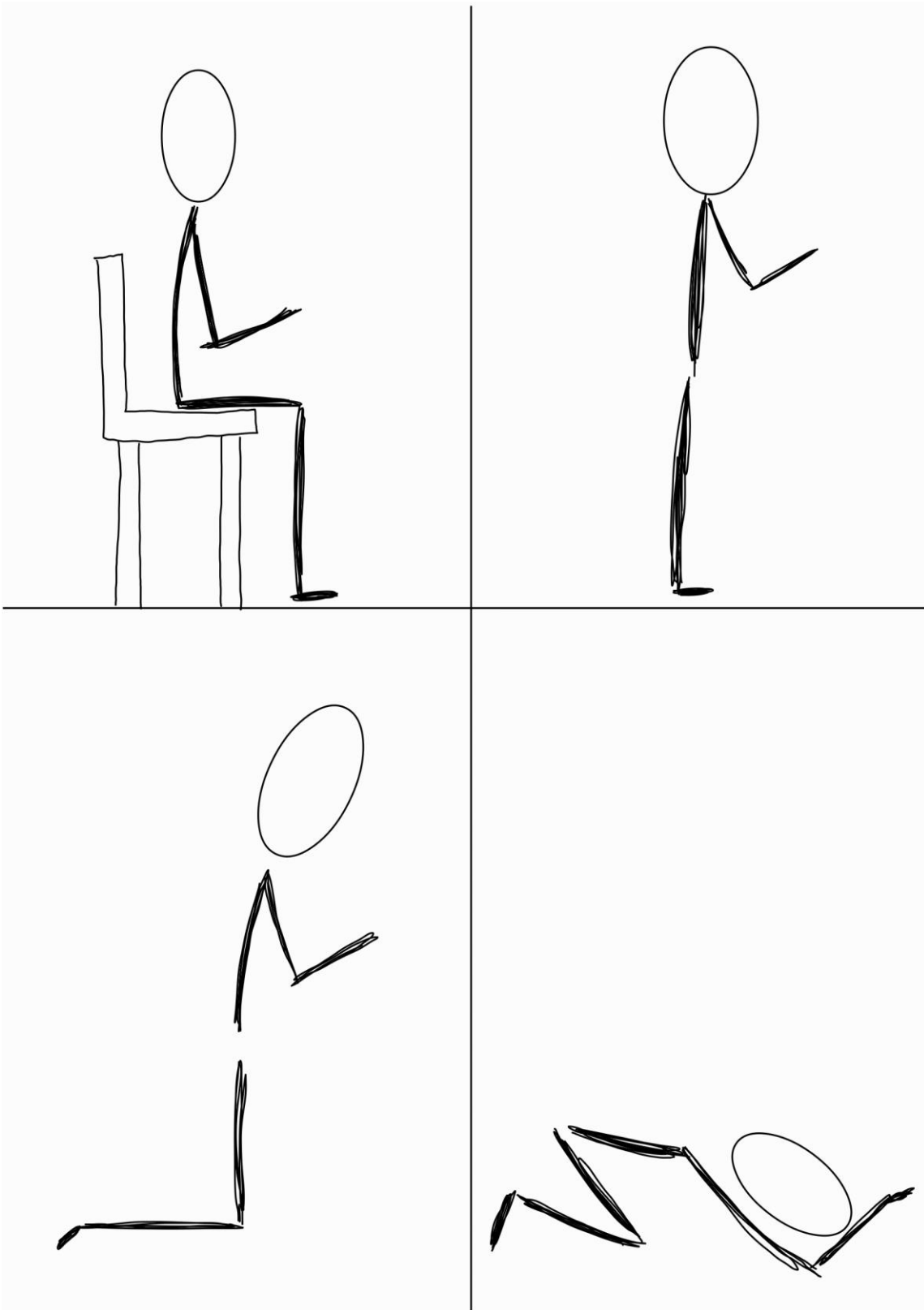
I show my respect to God.
I'm here with my full size.
I'm ready.

I acknowledge God's greatness and make myself small.
I show my reverence to God.
I worship him.

I express my willingness to serve God.
I acknowledge His dominion over me.
I surrender myself to him.



[M7] How to pray – Praying postures





[M8] How to pray – Ritual objects



Fig. 3: Some people light candles while praying.



Prayer chains are used by members of different religions to count the repetitions of the same or similar prayers, chants or devotions.

Fig. 4: catholic christian prayer chain

Fig. 5: orthodox christian prayer rope

Fig. 6: muslim prayer chain





Some believers consider images of Saints while praying.

Fig.7: Iconostasis in an orthodox church



These leather straps are tied around the arm of a jewish praying person.

Fig. 8: Tefillin worn by a man at the Western Wall in Jerusalem





Some people cover their heads and wear certain clothes during prayer.

Fig. 9: Jewish prayer shawl (tallit)

Fig. 10: Jewish head covering (kippah)



The prayer mat protects the praying person from impurity and indicates the direction of prayer.

Fig.11: Muslim prayer mat



[M10] Where do you pray? – Sketch your favorite place

The place where I like to pray the most is:



[M11] Where do you pray? – Pictures of places to pray



Fig.12



Fig.13





Fig.14



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