



# Institute for Jewish Spirituality

Yom Iyyun: Prayer as Practice

June 1, 2015

Congregation Beth El - Berkeley, CA

## Afternoon Workshops Session A

### **Binding Body and Soul: Embodied *Tefillin* Practice** – *Rabbi Jonathan Slater and Rabbi Diane Elliot*

Wearing *tefillin* is a defining element of traditional Jewish weekday morning prayer practice. While we can rotely wrap the leather boxes and straps around arm and head to fulfill the obligatory *mitzvah*, we can also place them on our bodies intentionally to align and focus the energies toward greater devotion, a deeper connection with the divine, both within ourselves and in the world. Join Rabbis Jonathan and Diane to learn – through text study and movement - more about the multi-dimensional resonance of *tefillin* within Jewish tradition, as well as to experience firsthand the potency of this ancient, embodied practice. This workshop can be enjoyed with or without a set of *tefillin*; those who have a set may wish to bring them.

### ***Davenen*: Ancient Words and Expressions of the Heart** – *Rabbi Sheldon Lewis*

The order of prayer in the siddur has been fixed for virtually two millennia. How is it possible to honor this text without shutting down the human heart? Where is there room for urgent personal prayer? This session will explore how sages of old tried very hard to build a bridge from ancient words to the deepest yearnings of the davenner.

### ***Hitbodedut*: Talking to God** – *Rabbi Nancy Flam*

For many people, “Jewish prayer” refers only to formal liturgy recited communally at specific times. But not only are there over 140 examples in the Bible of people voicing their own, spontaneous, individual prayers, but there also developed the deliberate Jewish *practice* of regular, daily conversation with God known as *Hitbodedut*. We will study *hitbodedut* instructions of both Rabbi Nachman of Breslov and the Piasetzner Rebbe and discuss some of the great challenges to this practice, as well as some of its potential rewards.

### **Let Not Your Prayer Be “Static”:** Innovation and Change in Prayer – *Rabbi Yoel Kahn*

We find comfort and continuity in the texts of the liturgy but we are also challenged to renew them daily with fresh meaning and engagement. In this workshop, we will consider both how and why our historical texts have changed across time and explore how contemporary principles and practices for liturgical innovation inform the liturgy at a “mainstream” Reform synagogue and other worshipping communities.

**Cultivating mindful leaders. Revitalizing Jewish life.**



## **Music Direction for Spiritual Communities** – *Reb Shir Yaakov Feit*

Inviting instrumentalists (back) into prayer has radical implications. Clergy become responsible for helping musicians *davven* through their instruments; musical ensembles don't simply play songs, rather they act in service of elevating prayer, prayer leaders and prayer communities. This workshop is for anyone who leads through music, whether from the *bima*, from behind a music stand, or from within the congregation. Learn about the space and spark between sound and silence.

## **The “Nature” of Prayer** – *Rabbi Michael Comins*

Most people would agree that praying outdoors has an effect on both the pray-er and his or her prayer. But why? And how would answering that question change the way we pray and the way we teach prayer? Rabbi Mike Comins has been living these questions for the last two decades. He will share theory, techniques and pedagogy for communing with the natural world in order to connect with God and one's heart through contemplative practice and prayer.

## **Pop Music from the Pulpit** – *Maggid Jhos Singer and Shlichat Tzibur Julie Batz, along with guitarist Lisa Zeiler*

How does a service leader weave modern liturgical poetry (aka pop music) into Jewish ritual and practice in a way that amplifies tradition and speaks directly to congregants? Join Chochmat HaLev leaders Maggid Jhos Singer and *Shlichat Tzibur* Julie Batz, along with guitarist Lisa Zeiler as they share inspiration, examples, and best practices for including this powerful tool in your Shabbat and Holy Day worship.

## **Sabbath Prayers, Poems & *Piyyutim*: Awakening the Beloved** – *Rabbi Dr. Aubrey Glazer*

What techniques of awakening to the Beloved are embedded in the prayers, poems and *piyyutim* that surround the Sabbath? We will explore the process of Awakening [*hit'oreru*] that leads to Realignment [*hishtavu*], so that every word being sung is harnessed to the merging experience [*deveku*] that is the rose of the Sabbath journey.



## Afternoon Workshops Session B

### **Creative Prayer through Dance and Movement** – *Rabbi Chai Levy and Julie Emden*

This experiential prayer session follows the flow of a morning service using music, dance, movement, and creative expression to internalize and embody the themes of the prayers. Experience with Rabbi Chai Levy and Julie Emden (director of Embodied Jewish Learning at Jewish LearningWorks) how dance and movement can be an interpretive tool to make the morning prayer service and the Torah portion come alive. This session will also include time for reflection on how to use dance and movement in your prayer life and in prayer settings.

### **Davenology: A Four Worlds Model** – *Reb Shir Yaakov Feit*

"Davenology", a term coined by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi z"l, concerns itself with "the Jewish liturgical life beyond prayer or worship." An understanding of the underlying psycho-spiritual processes of our siddur (prayerbook) immeasurably enriches prayer as practice. Recasting gendered language, emphasis on nature and ecology, and integration of the body are all precious tools which can make the synagogue experience transformational.

### **Meditation & Mystical Experience in Kabbalah** – *Daniel Matt, Ph.D.*

During this class we will explore teachings from Kabbalah on the process of meditation and encountering the Divine. We will read the texts in the original Hebrew (and Aramaic) alongside translations composed by the teacher.

### **Piyyut in your Pocket: Traditional Jewish Devotional Poetry** – *Maharat Victoria Sutton and Hazzan Sharon Bernstein*

In this workshop we will explore the world of *Piyyut* (liturgical poetry) in ways that can be incorporated, musically and textually, into your prayer practice. We'll sing, we'll learn, and you'll be introduced to the *Hazmanah L'Piyyut* resource bank with guidance about how to introduce – joyfully and effectively- both familiar and many unfamiliar poems and tunes into the prayers you offer personally and the services you lead.

### **Primal Prayer: Spiritual Responses to a Real World** – *Rabbi Menachem Creditor*

From the depths of pain to the heights of joy, tefilah is there, providing a framework for connecting with others in the aftermath of moments that might otherwise isolate. Join this conversation/workshop which will use as study/diving boards selected contemporary prayers (by the presenter), written in response to the political, the emotional, the natural, and the Eternal.



## ***Shlichut Tzibur as a Spiritual Practice – Rabbi Zac Kamenetz***

Rabbi Mishael Zion wrote, "Being a *Shaliach Tzibur* never means going at it alone, but rather galvanizing the voices of the community to join you in prayer, to join you in action." How can leading *tefilah* lead us to deepen commitments, whether spiritual, communal, or moral? In this class, we will encounter several Classical and Hasidic texts to understand how *shlichut tzibur* can impact our interior lives and communal roles.

## **Teaching Prayer as a Practice: A Report from the Field - Rabbi Michael Comins**

How can "prayer as a practice" be presented to students and implemented in a school or synagogue class? Rabbi Mike Comins has developed a curriculum that teaches prayer as a practice. To date, it has been taught over the internet and by 12 clergy in their congregations (MakingPrayerReal.com). He will share his approach and the extensive feedback he has received from teachers and students. Core issues include: how to set the goals of a prayer practice; placing God-moments before God-ideas; involving the body in prayer; and how to develop one's personal prayer voice.

## **Thinking like Adults, Praying Like Children: Theology of Prayer and/vs Practice of Prayer –**

*Rabbi Yoel Kahn and Rabbi Yonatan Cohen*

Prayer begins with yearning, with need, with gratitude. Later, we also want to make sense of prayer so that it fits into our philosophies and world-views. How then do we discover and cultivate "second naivete," integrating what we "know about" prayer into our lived experience of prayer. We will share teachings about the theology of prayer from classic Jewish teachers and bring them into a reflective conversation about our own ideas and practice of prayer.