



Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

HASHKIVEINU - PRAYER AND CONNECTION  
A Lesson for Use with Siddur Kol Hano'ar  
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This lesson works well with children or as a family education program.

**Time:** 1.5 hours

**Goals:**

- To acquaint children with using a siddur and more particularly Siddur Kol Hanoar.
- In Siddur Kol Hanoar, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Jeffrey Schein begin their introduction by explaining that “children have deeply spiritual lives ... and our role is to help them find a language to give that form and expression” (IX). This lesson allows children to begin to think about and to share how and why they pray, using Reconstructionist values age-appropriately.
- In Exploring Judaism, Rebecca Alpert and Jacob Staub list reasons Reconstructionists pray. Among them are “consciously experiencing God’s presence,” “group connection” and “acknowledgment of need” (see p 81-83). In this lesson, connection - connection to God, to other people and to ourselves - is stressed as a goal of prayer.

**Materials:** Adam and Eve’s First Sunset written by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and illustrated by Joani Keller Rothenberg (also the illustrator of Siddur Kol Hanoar), Siddur Kol Hanoar, copies of the survey handout, pencils and regular markers, fabric markers, precut squares of fabric and precut squares of paper of the same size

**Introduction:**

- Have children complete the surveys (below). If this is a family education program, have families fill out the surveys together.
- If there is time, come together and discuss students’ answers.

**Discussion:**

Read *Adam and Eve’s First Sunset* aloud and discuss the following questions:

- Why are Adam and Eve upset when the sun sets for the first time?
- What are their prayers to God that night?
- Look back at page 16. Did their prayer help? If so, how?

Obviously, there can be a range of answers to this question. Some students may answer that the prayers didn’t help at all. Challenge them to identify some ways that it did help, as well as other ways that it did not help. Some children may notice or you can point out that Eve and Adam stop fighting and start working together after praying (prayer as connecting to other people). Other children might suggest that God taught them how to build a fire or that God made the sun

come back (prayer as connection to God). While this second reason borders on supernaturalism, which can make many Reconstructionist adults uncomfortable, this perspective is completely appropriate for children, and you should not feel a need to disabuse them of their particular relationship with God. If no one mentions it, you also might want to point out that after praying, Adam and Eve admitted that they couldn't fix the problem, and after their second prayer (p22), they fell asleep. Prayer can help us calm down. It can force us to be honest with ourselves that we can't fix everything or that we are scared.

- How do you make yourself feel better when you are upset? Do you pray or have you ever prayed in the past? If so, when do you pray and what do you pray about? How does it make you feel? Does it help?

### **Text study:**

Read the English of *hashkivenu* on page 23 of Siddur Kol Hanoar together. Also read the second prayer on page 24 together. Explain that this is how the third graders at Congregation Beth Israel understand *hashkivenu*:

- Why do you think *hashkivenu* is said at night (not in the morning or afternoon)?
- What is the connection between the prayers on page 23 and 24?
- What would the world look like under God's *sukkah* of peace?
- How can we help to build God's *sukkah* of peace? Making peace inside ourselves, working towards peace in our families, *tikkun olam*, prayer?

### **Craft:**

Explain that as part of helping to build God's *sukkah* of peace, the children are going to make a peace quilt, which will be sent to a children's hospital, a family shelter, or a school, depending on what you have pre-arranged. The blanket can be used by children there to help them feel safe when they are scared. In another part of *hashkivenu*, which is not included in Siddur Kol Hanoar, we ask God to fold us in the wings of God's protection. Children should be given time to think about how they want to depict a peaceful world, kept safe under God's *sukkah* or nestled in God's wings. The students should practice with a paper square and regular markers. Once they are ready, pass out the cloth squares and the fabric markers. A volunteer will need to sew the squares together in a quilt after class.

I have sent a blanket to a Jewish school in an area plagued by acts of violent anti-Semitism through Action for Post-Soviet Jewry. We received back a very nice thank you and pictures of the children with the blanket. Their contact information is

*Action For Post-Soviet Jewry, Inc.*

*24 Crescent Street, Suite 306*

*Waltham, MA 02453*

*(781) 893-2331*

[ActionPSJ@aol.com](mailto:ActionPSJ@aol.com)

### Hebrew Lesson: Roots

- The English language, like Hebrew, uses roots as building blocks to makes words. For example, “happy” is the root of the words happiness, happily and happier.
- In Hebrew, most roots are made of three letters.
- Write the letters shin, lamed, mem on the board. This root means to be complete, be safe, secure, perfect, finished, make whole.
- Ask students to think of a word they all know that uses these three letters: “shalom.”  
Have the students think of expressions they know that include the word “shalom”: Shabbat Shalom, Shalom Aleichem, (maybe your synagogue or another local synagogue has a name with the word “shalom” in it).
- In hevrotah (study partners) pairs, have the students find all the words with this root in the Hebrew of hashkivenu on page 23 (above and below the English). They should write the words and read them aloud together. (Younger students may need to do this exercise as a class and skip the writing piece.)
- Reconvene as a class and make sure everyone found all four words. The words are leshalom (“for peace”), shelomeha (“your peace”), shalom (“peace”), and Yerushalayim. The trickiest is the last word, Yerushalayim, the Hebrew word for Jerusalem. It literally means “foundation of peace” (BDB 436, 1024).
- Based on how many times the root shin, lamed mem is used in the hashkivenu prayer, what is the theme of this prayer?
- Instruct students that the next time they are at services, they should look for as many Hebrew words as they can that use this root.

### Survey Handout

1. How do you usually feel at bedtime?

Circle those that are true for you. You can add new descriptions as well.

Tired Scared/Nervous Peaceful Calm Lonely Happy  
Very awake (hard to get to sleep) Silly Cuddly

2. What do you do to get ready for sleep at night? Are there things you do every night?  
Things you do for a special treat?

3. (For family ed programs only)

Parents, tell your children any memories you might have from bedtime when you were a child. How did your parents put you to bed?