

Welcome to the United Synagogue of Hoboken!

This pamphlet has been prepared to help people who may be unfamiliar with the parts of a traditional Shabbat service.

As you arrive.....

Take a *siddur* (prayerbook) and *humash* (Bible) from the bookshelf at the door. Men and boys cover their heads with a *kipah* (skullcap; also called *yarmulke*); you can find containers for them near the entrance. In our congregation, head-coverings are optional for women and girls, though many women in our congregation do cover their heads with *kipot* in the synagogue.

The Scenery:

Our synagogue building was built by the Star of Israel Congregation in 1915. Our office and educational annex was completed in the winter of 2000.

The raised platform at the front of the sanctuary is called the *Bimah*. From the *Bimah*, Rabbi Scheinberg and members of the congregation lead the community in prayer. The *Aron Kodesh* (ark) holds the Torah scrolls, which are taken out and read during the study portion of our service. Above the *aron kodesh* is the *Ner Tamid* (eternal light), which represents God's eternal presence among us.

Act I: The Preliminary Service: Birchot HaShachar and Psukei DeZimra

Birchot HaShachar (p. 61-82)

We have a tendency to take all the good things in our life for granted. In the *Birchot HaShachar*, or "Blessings of Dawn," we look at everything in the world - the rooster's crow, the beautiful sunrise, the renewal of our lives each day, the state of our health - as miracles and gifts from God. We literally "count our blessings."

P'sukei D'Zimra: Verses of Song (p. 83-106)

One of the books of the Bible, the book of Psalms, is full of 150 poems and songs that the Levites used to sing in the Temple when it stood.

During *P'sukei D'Zimra*, we sing some excerpts of these poems, which help us praise God and prepare us for the "core" of the service, which comes in the next two sections.

Act II: The Shma and its Blessings

This section of the service begins with the *Barechu*, the formal call to worship (p. 107). This is the point at which the leader of the service invites us all to pray as a unified community, rather than as separate individuals. This prayer is recited only in the presence of a *minyan*, a quorum of ten adult Jews.

In Jewish theology, there are three major ways in which God interacts with the world: *creation, revelation, and redemption*. At this point in the service, we recite three blessings, one for each of these. In between the "revelation" blessing and the "redemption" blessing, we also recite the *Shma*, which is the most important Jewish statement of faith.

The *Shma* (p. 112-113) is a series of three selections from the books of Deuteronomy and Numbers. In the first selection (*Shma Yisrael Ve-Ahavta...*), we proclaim our faith in one God and remember our responsibilities towards God, including the responsibility to educate our children. In the second selection (*Ve-hayah im shamo'a*), we affirm that God responds to our actions. In the third selection (*Vayomer*), we recall the commandment to wear the *tzitzit*, and we affirm the value of this and other Jewish ritual observances.

The first line of the *Shma* ("Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one") may be the best known line from any Hebrew prayer. Traditionally, it is the first prayer taught to Jewish children who are just beginning to speak, as well as the last prayer on the lips of Jews as they approach death. It is also recited twice every day, morning and evening. Because of the special sanctity of this prayer, it is traditional to cover one's eyes with one's hand while reciting it, to ensure maximum concentration and minimum distraction.

Act III: The Amidah

The *Amidah* (p. 115-120) is certainly the central prayer in any Jewish worship service - in fact, the earliest name for the *Amidah* was *T'filah*, which simply means "prayer." This indicates that the *Amidah* was considered to be the Jewish prayer *par excellence*. Today, we refer to this prayer as the *Amidah*, meaning "standing prayer," as it is recited silently while standing.

The *Amidah* is traditionally recited three times on weekdays: morning, afternoon, and evening. The weekday version of the *Amidah* includes 19 blessings, covering a wide range of praises, petitions, and prayers of thanksgiving. The Shabbat version of the *Amidah*, however, consists solely of seven blessings. Just as we make an effort to rest on the Sabbath day, we also make an effort to afford God that privilege - so on Shabbat, we shorten the *Amidah* by skipping most of the petitions.

It became traditional for the service leader - the *Shaliach tzibbur* - to repeat the *Amidah* out loud after the members of the congregation have recited it silently. This repetition is done only in the presence of a *minyan*.

Act IV: The Torah Service

The reading of the Torah occupies a central position in the Shabbat morning service. First, the Ark is opened (p. 139) and a Torah scroll removed. (It is traditional to rise whenever the Ark is opened or whenever the Torah is lifted or carried.) After a Torah procession, it is opened on the reading table. Seven members of the congregation are called up for the honor of reciting the blessings before and after each reading; this honor is called an *aliyah* ("ascending"), or "having an *aliyah*."

The Torah is divided into 54 sections, (approximately) one for each week, so that the entire Torah can be read each year. The entire Jewish community reads the same Torah portion each week; Jewish calendars indicate the name of the Torah portion assigned to each week. Members of the congregation can follow along with the Torah reading, in Hebrew or English, in books called *Humashim*. During Shabbat morning services at the United Synagogue of Hoboken, the rabbi, or a member of the congregation, facilitates a discussion on a theme emanating from the Torah portion of the week.

Sometimes, on holidays and special Sabbaths, two (or even three) Torah scrolls are removed from the Ark. After the main reading from the first scroll, there is a brief reading from the second scroll (and third scroll) which relates to the themes of the holiday or special day.

Following the reading of the Torah, a member of the congregation is called up to lift the Torah by its handles and to display

it, open, to the congregation. This is called *hagbah* ("lifting"). Another member of the congregation is called up to roll and dress the Torah scroll (*gelilah*, "rolling").

Immediately after the Torah reading, a member of the congregation is called up to read the *Haftarah*, a selection from the Prophets which has been selected for the day. Following the *Haftarah*, there is another procession through the congregation, and the Torah scroll is returned to the Ark (151-154).

Act V: The Musaf (additional) Service

On Shabbat and holidays, an additional *Amidah* is recited which is very similar to the *Amidah* which was recited earlier in the service. In our congregation, sometimes this silent *Amidah* is followed by the reader's repetition, and sometimes we begin the *Amidah* together and finish it silently. (p. 156-161, or other selections on holidays)

Act V½: Concluding Songs and Prayers

The service concludes with songs and prayers, often led by the children of the congregation (181-187). Also at the end of the service is the *Mourner's Kaddish* (184). This prayer is traditionally recited by those who have lost a close relative within the last eleven months, or on the anniversary of a death in the family. The prayer does not actually mention death; rather, it is a listing of praises of God. It encourages us to affirm God's existence and glory even in our times of pain. In addition, the congregational responses during the *Mourner's Kaddish* give the congregation the opportunity to show support for the members of the community who are in mourning.

The concluding prayer is *Adon Olam* ("Lord of the world", 187). This concluding song is always a congregational favorite. Despite its apparent simplicity, *Adon Olam* eloquently expresses a profound theological truth: Jews simultaneously experience God as both *transcendent* (an all-powerful, eternal force in the world) and *immanent* (a supportive force dwelling within every person).

Curtain

After the service, please join us for *Kiddush*, the prayer over the wine, followed by an opportunity to eat, drink, and meet other members of the community.

Cast of Characters

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Literally, "person to whom the commandments apply." The beginning of adolescence (age 12 for girls, age 13 for boys) has traditionally marked the time when Jews become obligated to fulfill the commandments of the Torah. Several hundred years ago, it became customary to make a special celebration to mark this passage from childhood to adulthood. The young man or woman who is becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is often called up to the Torah during the Shabbat morning service, reads the *Haftarah*, leads parts of the service, and/or shares some thoughts about the Torah portion with the congregation.

Thus, strictly speaking, the words *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* refer not to the event (as in "I went to a lovely Bat Mitzvah last week"), nor to the process (as in "The rabbi's going to Bar Mitzvah him as soon as he's ready"); rather, it refers to the 12- or 13-year-old him/herself.

At the United Synagogue of Hoboken, like many Conservative and Reform congregations, both boys and girls celebrate their attainment of the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah at age 13.

Rabbi literally means "teacher," and this continues to be the main function of a rabbi today. While rabbis often lead services, officiate at weddings and funerals, visit the sick, and give sermons, none of these functions is the exclusive purview of a rabbi; any educated Jew may fulfill these functions under Jewish law. Rabbis are employed by synagogues by virtue of their expertise in Jewish law and tradition. Most Conservative rabbis in the United States receive their training at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, on Manhattan's Upper West Side. In the Conservative Movement, women have been ordained as rabbis since 1985. (In fact, Rabbi Scheinberg's two immediate predecessors at the United Synagogue of Hoboken were both women.)

Conservative Judaism is one of the major movements of American Judaism. Conservative Jews believe that Jewish law continues to be relevant and binding today; however, like any legal system, it is appropriate for Jewish law to undergo a natural process of change and development. This position puts the Conservative movement towards the middle of the American Jewish ideological spectrum, with Orthodoxy on the right and the Reconstructionist and Reform movements on the left.

Shabbat Morning Services at the United Synagogue of Hoboken

A Drama in 5½ Acts



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SYNAGOGUE
OF HOBOKEN

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