

WOW – Women in Judaism

Eat. Pray, Invest

AUTHOR(S):	Akiko Yonekawa
SUMMARY:	What would traditional Jewish prayer look and sound like if women were a part of development of Jewish prayer in the early years? We will explore what women's Jewish prayer is, if there is such a thing- <i>Submitted by Akiko Yonekawa</i>
TOPIC(S):	Prayer, Women, Spirituality
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will have a better understanding of the contributions that women have made to Jewish prayer and what differentiates the feminine Jewish prayer tradition from the traditional one.
AUDIENCE:	This activity is best suited to teenagers and adults.
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	Women in Prayer Source Sheet
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Flip Chart and markers
SET-UP DETAILS:	Chairs set up in a circle

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

00:00-00:10 Introductions

Have participants sit in a circle and introduce themselves and answer the question “what would traditional Jewish prayer look or sound like if women had been a part of the development of the prayer service?”

00:10-00:17 Where are the Women in Prayer?

Ask participants what they think of when they think of women praying. What do they think of when they think of men praying? Most of the prayers that we have in any style of Jewish prayer were written by and for men or codified into prayer by and for men. This doesn't mean it is not appropriate for women, but it is a fact of the development of prayer. We do find, however, some glimpses of how women prayed.

00:17-00:32 Going to the Sources

Have participants split into groups of three or four and pass out the source sheets. Explain that the sheet contains the text of a tkhine, a 17th century prayer for women by women. Women typically did not pray with men, but still had an obligation to pray, so they developed their own prayers so that they could fulfill their obligation while still being able to perform their daily tasks.

Have each group read the excerpt of a tkhine and discuss how this tkhine differs from the prayers they are familiar with. Groups should draw out themes that they see in the tkhine and make notes for what they think this prayer would look like if they were saying it daily based on the physical elements of the prayer itself.

00:32-00:40 Making a Prayer

Much of the prayer service was at one time extemporaneous prayer that became codified over the years. Although there is codified prayer, we have access to that same creativity that those who created our prayers had.

Together, collect the answers that people came up with for themes and physical elements and create a prayer with choreography that is an example of what prayer would look and sound like if women had been part of the codification.

00:40-00:45 Time to Pray

Have the group pray the prayer that they wrote.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

This activity assumes that there are difference between men and women. Keep it personal and allow people to speak for themselves as women or the women they know and not for all women everywhere over time.

Allow people to have different opinions about what it means to be a woman and have a woman's experience of the world.