

CORNERSTONE 2022 RESOURCE

WHAT is t'fillah and WHY does it matter anyway? *Specialty Track*

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SUMMARY:	In this session we will: explore t'fillah as both a balance of liturgy and prayer (incl. what that means) and an opportunity for spiritual development through programs you can run at camp, plus how finding your "why" can elevate the t'fillah experience for you as a leader or participant, your campers, and your staff, making it more meaningful for everyone
ABC GOALS:	<p>Affective: Participants will feel....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited and engaged in the material • Connected to each other <p>Behavior: Participants will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring these programs back to their camps • Be reflective on their why and the camp's why of t'fillah <p>Cognitive: Participants will know...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That why leads the way! • More about t'fillah and spiritual development than before
AUDIENCE:	Cornerstone fellows
TIMING:	1.5 hours
APPENDICES:	Modah ani handout Specialty Track Slides
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Index cards, writing utensils, large post-its, small post-its, projector and screen or TV, modah ani handout
SET-UP DETAILS:	Large room with plenty of wall space and ability to move around

- 00:00- 00:15 Opening
- 00:15- 00:30 Debrief
- 00:30-00:45 Why Map of Camp
- 00:45-1:05 T'fillah Is...
- 1:05-1:20 So, what is t'fillah?
- 1:20-1:30 Closing

- 00:00-00:20 Oh my g?d!
- 00:20-00:35 Debrief
- 00:35-1:00 Spiritual development
- 1:00-1:20 Back to the liturgy
- 1:20-1:30 Closing

- 00:00-00:15 Opening/mini-mincha
- 00:15-00:25 Debrief
- 00:25-00:40 Finding your “why”
- 00:40-00:55 T'fillah can connect us to:
- 00:55- 1:05 Debrief
- 1:05-1:20 Taking all this back to camp
- 1:20-1:30 Closing

SESSION OUTLINE:

00:00- 00:15 Opening

- Have index cards and writing utensils set up already in a circle
- Have a sign up in the space that says “why leads the way”
- Open with a niggun and a deep breath
- Ask “Why are you here?” Invite everyone to think about their answer
- Remind participants that “why leads the way” and point out the sign!
- Invite participants to write down their why on the index cards and sign their names.
- Depending on number of participants, have them share their why’s with each other in small groups or as a whole, with their names, pronouns, and camps as well
- Invite people to use their why as their compass, but also to let it shift and change.
- Invite participants to put their index cards in the middle of the circle; collect them at the end.
- Share a prayer- may the why be our guide to a meaningful experience.
- Take another deep breath.

00:15- 00:30 Debrief

- Ask- what did we do? Why did we do it?
- What about what we did was prayer?
- Why does why matter?
- Discuss why having a “why” is important:
 - Important for the program-planner to create a tight, meaningful experience.
 - Let your purpose be your bouncer- Priya Parker
 - The Golden Circle- Simon Sinek

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- Important for participants and other stakeholders to have a why, or know yours
 - People can tell (and often resent) if there doesn't seem to be a reason to what they're doing

00:30-00:45 Why Map of Camp (maybe do this, maybe do it on a worksheet and then have them discuss. Unsure.)

- Have set up large Post-it's around the room (or a white board) with the following prompts:
 - As it stands now, why t'fillah?
 - For the camp leadership
 - For the staff
 - For the campers
 - For the parents/ caregivers of the campers
- Explain that participants will go around and write their thoughts. As it stands now, what is each party's understanding of why they do t'fillah at camp?
- Give 5 minutes to write, and 5 minutes for participants to discuss and debrief
- What similarities do we see? What differences? What is challenging?

00:45-1:05 T'fillah Is...

- Say to participants- I said we should start with "why," but a challenge of t'fillah is that it means so many different things. We really need to start with "what"
- Explain that you're going to say two statements. Head to one side if you agree with the first, and the other if you agree with the second. Use your hands to designate which option is which wall.
- Go through the following prompts. T'fillah is...
 - "Personal" over here, "communal" over here (about me or about we)
 - "From the siddur" over here, "with my own words" over here
 - "About g?d" over here, "about me" over here
 - "In Hebrew" over here, "my language" over here
 - "At set times" over here, "whenever I need it" over here
- After each prompt, ask a few participants to share their answers. Eventually, some participants will probably choose the middle. That's great! Point out that these are not binaries. T'fillah is all of these things.

1:05-1:20 So, what is t'fillah?

- Through a slide presentation, explore/discuss the following:
 - Let's look at the word "t'fillah" itself. What does it mean?
 - Root is פלל "pey lamed lamed"
 - פלל pillel means "to judge, examine, or inspect." To clock! To notice!
 - The verb form is לְהִתְפַּלֵּל l'hitpallel which is reflexive, turning that curiosity inward.
 - What can we learn from the word itself about what it is we are doing?
 - And in English- "to-feel-ahhh." What can we learn from that about what it is we are doing?
 - T'fillah is used to mean both "liturgy" and "prayer." What's the difference?
 - Liturgy comes from the greek meaning "public works." It's the language of the community that we've inherited.
 - Prayer is so many things! What is prayer to you?

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- Prayer is a response to life, it's loving attention, it's heart-opening, it's deeply personal
- Prayer is what our ancestors did to create the liturgy. Prayers are written by people!
 - Many prayers are remixes of Tanach verses, or whole paragraphs. But people still decided what to put where, with wisdom.
 - We can hear our ancestors talking to us through the siddur. What do they have to say to us today?
 - The words of the liturgy themselves are not our prayer, but they sensitize us to life, and can inspire our own prayers.
 - Prayer is an attempt to put into words that which cannot be put into words. It is poetry, which for this age is difficult. It's not literal. G?d is experienced, and it's different for every person. But that doesn't mean we stop talking about it. L'eilah- we keep talking about it, even though it's beyond us. It's a response to life
 - Everytime we approach the liturgy, it can be different, because we are different (like the parsha cycle)
- T'fillah is meant to change us. T'fillah practice is not just practice for more t'fillah, but practice for life.
 - Now that we have a little more what, tomorrow we're going to do some short programs you can do with campers to explore the "why" of t'fillah and talk about spiritual development. Then in the third session, we'll explore finding a personal "why"

1:20-1:30 Closing

- Already have two wall spaces or large poster boards with the following prompts: sparks; questions
- Invite participants to fill out two post-its:
 - What was sparked in you today? What is something new you've learned, a new perspective, something you're thinking about in a different way
 - What is a question you have inspired by our exploration today?
- Invite participants to fill out their post-its, sign them, and put them up on the wall
- Thank everyone for being present, and sing the niggun you opened with to close.

00:00-00:20 Oh my g?d!

- Open with a niggun or song
- Ask the group: when do you say "oh my g?d"
- Have participants share a few scenarios where they have (or might) respond with "oh my g?d." Invite them to act it out- HOW do they say it?
- Hand out sticky notes and have people write a scenario on each sticky note- 3-5 for each person.
- Have them put all the sticky notes up on a wall
- Share that the group has 6 minutes to group similar sticky notes together
- Assign a few participants to each grouping- give them two minutes to see what they have in common, and name their category
- Have them share out the categories with the rest of the group

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- Ask- now what do all of these categories have in common? Discuss the categories and the process. What do we notice? Does “oh my god” have to do with “god” at all? Why do we say this? What does it do for us?
 - It’s an attempt to put big feelings into words. Sometimes there aren’t any words. Sometimes it’s just repeating “oh my god” over and over like a mantra.
 - It’s an expression of feeling out of control, both for good (I didn’t make this mountain) and for bad (I can’t make the illness disappear)
 - We can only respond if we are aware of what is going on around us. If we let ourselves feel, and be moved, and be open.
- The writer Anne Lamott gives us three categories: thanks, wow, and help
- Put up three signs on the wall- thanks, wow, help.
- Speed Sort! Re-sort the stickies into Thanks, Wow and Help categories as a large group.
- Debrief. What changes? How does this new categorization feel?
- Discuss- why might it be important to feel these feelings and express them aloud?
 - Thanks- helps us feel gratitude, take fewer things for granted, count our blessings
 - Wow- helps us feel awe, feel amazed to be alive. Makes life more enjoyable and meaningful
 - Help- helps us feel like we aren’t alone. Reminds us that things aren’t perfect, that there are some things we can change, and some things we can’t.
- Anne Lamott calls these the **three universal prayers**. Because yes, **oh my god is a prayer! It’s a response to living**, it’s feeling our feelings, it’s calling out to something greater, whether that is god or not. It’s an understanding that we aren’t alone, even if it’s just a phrase we say automatically. And it tries to put these big feelings into words, and doesn’t quite get it, yet we try. Over the next few weeks, we’re going to dive deeper into prayer, but keep these categories in mind.

00:20-00:35 Debrief

- Discuss- what did we do?
- How might you use this framing with your campers? Both in a program, and in the moment?
- Why might this be a helpful framing?
 - It uses language our campers already use to explore this big concept.
 - It takes prayer out of the t’fillah setting and into life
- Ways to adapt:
 - Just do it as a call out discussion, not with stickys (or, if it feels like too much to do in this session, do it as a discussion and share the sticky note activity as an option.)
 - Introduce thanks, wow, and help in t’fillah- dramatically! Theme a t’fillah experience around one category. Invite them into that feeling.

00:35-1:00 Spiritual development

- Using slides, share the spirituality research of Dr. Lisa Miller.
 - founder of the Spirituality Mind Body Center at teachers college at Columbia University, author of the spiritual child, 25+ years of scientific research in the role of spirituality in every child’s development.
 - Here is her main conclusion, taken from the website and heard in more depth in sessions etc.
 - “Every human being is born an innately spiritual being, just as we are cognitive, emotional, and physical beings. Basic science has shown that spirituality is one-third innate and two-third socialized, a birthright of every child which must be cultivated, supported, and nurtured in community to fully develop. In tandem with other lines of

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development, there is a surge of awakening of the spiritual life during adolescence (head and heart questions), during which spiritual formation can be supported.

- We see through hundreds of peer review articles that a child is far less likely to fall prey to the most prevalent forms of suffering -- anxiety, depression, suicide, addiction -- once the spiritual core is built throughout the lifespan. The deepening of the spiritual core throughout childhood and adolescence allows us to transform suffering into post traumatic spiritual growth.”
- What is spirituality according to Dr. Miller?
- ...a direct sense of listening to the heartbeat of the living universe, of being one with that seen and unseen world, open and at ease in that connection.”
 - the capacity for a transcendent relationship, and that it might be shared”
- “Spirituality is an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding.”
- Quote- connection to all life?
 - How does a spiritual core shape development?
 - Isn't this what we want for our campers? Staff? Self?
- And it's embedded in Judaism, in t'fillah, already.
- Discuss- in small groups, then as a whole- How can t'fillah develop the spiritual core? What would we need to make that happen?
- In the discussion, mention that:
 - Many t'fillot connect to these core themes- love, gratitude, awe. Make it explicit
 - Point out wow, thanks, and help in the “wild.” What is an Ahavah rabbah moment, an ashrei moment, a modeh ani moment?
 - Take the time to invite students in to these feelings. Don't just say it, feel it.
 - G?d language matters- Yud-hey-vav-hey as present tense being. Will share some resources on that.

1:00-1:20 Back to the liturgy

- If prayer is a response to life, why the liturgy? Let's explore some for ourselves.
- In Chevruta, invite participants to explore the modeh ani deep dive sheet.
- After 20 minutes, debrief- what was that like? What did you discover?
 - Take a session and dive deep into a particular t'fillah. Reinforce that someone wrote this, and is inspiring us from the past.
 - BUT it is up to each of us to feel that gratitude.

1:20-1:30 Closing

- Invite participants to fill out two post-its:
 - What was sparked in you today? What is something new you've learned, a new perspective, something you're thinking about in a different way
 - What is a question you have inspired by our exploration today?
- Invite participants to fill out their post-its, sign them, and put them up on the wall
- Lead participants in a gratitude meditation:
 - Invite them to roll shoulder back, open up chest, put feet on the floor, close their eyes
 - Liturgy can sensitize us to life- open us up to live more deeply, feel more, do more. But we have to do it. Can you invite a feeling of gratitude into your body?
 - Take a deep breath to close.

00:00-00:15 Opening/mini-mincha

- Begin with Ashrei- ahhhh. I am choosing to be here and present.
- Into a silent moment of mindfulness
- Oseh Shalom

- V'hashevota- and you shall know by heart. You shall feel it!

00:15-00:25 Debrief:

- What did we just do? What tools do you notice?
- How did it connect to what we have been exploring?

00:25-00:40 Finding your “why”

- Do a recap of everything done so far.
- Think back to your “why” at every level- camp, staff, camper. Go back to your post-it notes. Has that changed?
- Discuss how change can happen:
 - A “why” conversation at a leadership level
 - Make sure to include the counselors- why? Share stories of how sitting next to a staff member who has their own why is important. If they aren't involved, why should the campers?
 - Discuss the Kavannah list activity (see here, but we won't do it in the session for time)
 - Explore the concept of kavanah. Kavanah means “intention.” It shares a root with the word kivun, meaning “direction” or “aim,” like in archery. Why is it important to have an aim when you shoot a bow and arrow? Why is it important to have an intention for prayer? (or anything else, for that matter?)
 - Discuss with the campers and staff: what are some kavannot we could have for our prayer time every day/week/month? What intention can you have while you're here?
 - Make a list, commenting on the additions, and add more. Examples include:
 - To take a pause to reflect on my day
 - To sing and enjoy the music
 - To feel connected to my community
 - To feel connected to something bigger than myself
 - To feel connected to my family and my past
 - To learn Jewish tools that I'll have forever
 - To say thank you for the blessings in my life
 - To share my feelings with the Universe
 - To be there for someone else who is here
 - Turn the list into a poster or slide and keep it in your prayer space. Give campers and staff a chance at the beginning of each prayer time to set a kavanah, and to look at the kavanah list if they need some inspiration. If they come up with more over time, add them to the list!
 - What might this accomplish?

00:40-00:55 T'fillah can connect us to: (if needed, can just describe and skip for time)

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- Put up some large sticky notes around the room, “T’fillah can connect me to...” and the following words in large letters in the middle, one word per note/poster/slide:
 - My ancestors
 - My camp community
 - Jews around the world
 - My highest self
 - Something greater than myself
- Invite participants to walk and wander around, and comment: Do you agree? If so, how? What would need to be true to make it possible? After many minutes of commenting, and commenting on each other’s comments, invite the participants to stand by the poster with the connection that they don’t care about as much. Have them explain why. Then, have them go to the poster with the connection that speaks the most/makes the most sense to them. Instruct them to read the poster in small groups so they can present to the rest of the group.

00:55- 1:05 Debrief

- What did you discover? How could you use this with your campers? Or maybe more importantly, your staff?
- The connection direction
 - Liturgy connects us backwards, around, and forwards- on the dimension of immediate community and global community
 - Prayer connects us inwards towards our highest self, that spark of the divine inside us, and something greater than ourselves.
 - You can use these connections as a why starting point. Let why lead the way!
 - When these connections are made explicit, spiritual core development is more likely to happen, and meaning is more likely to happen.

1:05-1:20 Taking all this back to camp

- Invite participants to think to themselves- what is one thing they want to take back with them to camp? What are the steps needed to make it possible? (maybe use a worksheet for this)
- Have them share in chevruta and exchange information to be accountability-buddies.
- Share a personal story- the campers and staff are listening and taking everything in. So it matters- even if they aren’t all singing, even if it’s hot, even if they’re tired. What you are doing matters!

1:20-1:30 Closing

- Hand out index cards from the beginning, with your why. What has changed?
- Invite participants to think of their why for doing this work this summer, and to phrase it as a blessing. May we...
 - For example: If my “why” is to help campers have an attitude of gratitude, say “may we help our campers have an attitude of gratitude”
- Invite participants to share their blessings and have the group respond “amen”
- Thank everyone!
- Sing niggun to end



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BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP:

The “oh my g?d” activity can be done fully, or as a discussion, with campers above 5th grade. The Thanks, Wow, Help language can be introduced at any age and reinforced through t’fillah! The T’fillah is sides of the room, kavanah list, and t’fillah connects me to activities can be done with campers 6th grade and up.