

Curtain Up! Lessons on Prayer from the Broadway Stage

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SUMMARY: In this session, we will learn from and identify how Broadway shows create new meaning in each performance and production while staying true to the source material and keeping it relevant.

GOALS: Participants will be inspired to enhance their tefillah experiences at camp with new and fun ideas. They will also be able to connect with source material that is familiar but look at it with a new lens.

AUDIENCE: Anyone!

TIMING: 45 Minutes

MATERIALS: Bluetooth speaker, Broadway music playlist, scratch paper, pens

SET-UP: A space with chairs in a circle.

SESSION TIMELINE

- *Before hand: Broadway Music Playing*
- *00:00-00:05 – Welcome and Ice Breaker*
- *00:10-00:12 – Instructions for Revival Discussion*
- *00:12-00:22 – Small Group Exploration of “Porgy and Bess” and “The Glass Menagerie.”*
- *00:22-00:30 – Whole Group Discussion*

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:05 – Welcome and Ice Breaker: Set up the space with Broadway music playing. As participants trickle into the room, encourage them to sing along. Once you have a consensus, invite everyone to sit in a circle. Go around and have each person share their name, camp, and favorite Broadway musical.

00:05- 00:10 – First Listen to “Who I’d Be” from Shrek the Musical: Pass out some scratch paper and pens or have participants take out a notebook and pen. “I am going to play a very popular Broadway song. As it plays, jot down a few thoughts of how this song makes you feel and how/if you can relate to the character and lyrics you are hearing.” Play the song and give people a few minutes to write down their notes.

00:10-00:12 – Instructions for Revival Discussion: Keeping the beautiful words of “Who I’d Be” in mind, put your notes to the side. “For the next 30 minutes or so, we are going to look at 2 Broadway shows where the idea of repetition and meaning change with each performance through the production techniques of Broadway revivals I am going to split you into two groups. In these groups, you will look at either the most revived Broadway Musical of all time or the most revived Broadway Play of all time. Revivals of shows tend to follow trends in society, box office numbers, and relevance to modern times. I am going to give you a synopsis of the show and the different productions. Feel free to read the text out loud as a group and as you do, keep in mind 3 questions:

- *Why do you think this show has been revived the most?*
- *What themes do you see in the work?*
- *How could you see its subject matter/themes being relevant to today?*

Take about 10 minutes in your groups. When we come back, I will ask your groups to answer those two questions.

00:12-00:22 – Small Group Exploration of “Porgy and Bess” and “The Glass Menagerie.” The facilitator should play music from Porgy and Bess and groups are discussing.

00:22-00:30 – Whole Group Discussion – Bring the group back and have a representative or 2 from each group share their answers to the questions. Once the groups have shared explain that the exercise we just did is not too far away from the Rabbi’s have done for centuries to try and make tefillah and torah applicable to modern Jewish communities. They look for themes, stories, and ideas from our ancient text and make it digestible for the modern day.

At camp this summer, you will be curating tefillah experiences for your campers in the same way that rabbis do for congregants and Broadway producers do for audiences.

In our last few minutes together, you are going to go back into your groups and revive a classic shachrit tefillah for modern day and for camp this summer. Use our 2 questions from before and create your own Broadway revival of the tefillah:

- *What themes do you see in the prayer?*
- *How could you see its subject matter/themes being relevant to today?*

Porgy and Bess – Modeh Ani and Mah Tovu

The Glass Menagerie – Birkot Ha'shachar

Feel free to get creative! Be your own rabbi/producer and revive these tefillot for the modern theatre/camp prayer space.

00:30-00:38 Work on Revivals

00:38-00:42 Come back and perform your revival for the other group!

00:42-00:45 Bravo! Bravo! I can't wait to see all the new revivals you will create this summer. Additionally, look around camp and see who you can "stunt cast" in your tefillot. Bring in those in your camp community who can produce the coolest version of prayer. Lastly, let Shrek sing us out. Listen to this song. Does it mean anything different now?

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

You can bring all the lessons above into your prayer experiences at camp. Use this activity to think about tefillah during staff training or staff week to plan tefillot for the rest of the summer. You can also use this as a bit of text study for activities with older campers.