
FURTHER INFORMATION

Here are some explanations of items you will see in the sanctuary.

The Torah

Each scroll contains the Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. Each Torah is handwritten in Hebrew on parchment. The public reading of the Torah is a central part of Sabbath (and holiday) services.

Aron ha-Kodesh (The Holy Ark)

The Torah scrolls are kept in the Ark.

Ner Tamid (The Eternal Light)

Above the Ark is a constant light that reminds us of the light in the original Temple in Jerusalem.

Kippah

This head-covering is traditionally worn as a sign of reverence for God.

Tallit

The fringed prayer shawl is customarily worn by worshippers 13 and older for daytime services. In wearing the *tallit*, one is reminded to observe God's commandments.

Shabbat Service Explanation Booklet

Every Jewish worship service has a formal structure and a prescribed text set out in the *siddur* (prayerbook). The *siddur* has had many changes over the centuries. The Reform *siddur* evolved out of basic Reform concepts of theology and prayer. Temple Har Zion has its own *siddur* which incorporates Reform ideals. It offers opportunity for individual communion with God and communal participation. The essential goal is a spiritual dialogue with God. It is personal intent and communal support that are the foundation of the service. The *Shabbat Shacharit* service (Morning Sabbath service), consists of five major sections:

- I Opening Prayers
- II *Shema u-virkhoteha*
- III *Amidah/Tefillah*
- IV *Seder Kriat ha-Torah*
- V Concluding Prayers

A brief explanation of some of the parts of the service may help to make your worship experience more meaningful.

I OPENING PRAYERS (pp. 49 - 62)

The opening section of the service includes the *birkot ha-shachar*. These morning blessings serve as a “spiritual warm-up” and prepare one for prayer. The *pesukei dezimra* offer Psalms or poems of praise to God (pp. 56-61).

The Reform *siddur* uses two types of *kaddish*: the *hatsi kaddish* (half *kaddish*) and the *kaddish yatom* (mourner’s *kaddish*). When a *kaddish* appears in a service it is a divider between different parts of the service. The purpose of the *hatsi kaddish* on page 62 in our *siddur* is to separate the preliminary portion from that of the main service.

V CONCLUDING PRAYERS (pp. 108 – 116)

The placement of *aleinu* (pp. 108 - 109) at the end of the service is a sign of the importance of this prayer. *Aleinu* has been viewed as being second only to the *shema*. It is also among the oldest of Jewish prayers. This prayer is a statement of belief. The first paragraph speaks of our belief in and praise of one universal God. The second paragraph looks to a future we call the Messianic Age. At that time, God’s existence, sovereignty, and expectations of us will be acknowledged by all people. No longer will there be war, malice, hatred or oppression.

The word “*kaddish*” means sanctification. It praises God and expresses a yearning for the speedy establishment of God’s reign on earth. It is recited in Aramaic. The *kaddish yatom* or Mourner’s *Kaddish* (p. 113) reaffirms one’s faith in God despite the sorrow felt at a time of mourning. Our congregation stands in support of our mourners.

At the conclusion of the worship service (p. 116), it is our custom to recite the blessings over the *Shabbat* wine (*kiddush*) and the special Shabbat and Festival bread called *challah* (*ha-motsi*).

The service concludes with a congregational song. Following the song, the rabbi does a closing benediction.

It is traditional to recite the *mi sheberakh* after reading the Torah (p. 103). It is a special prayer for those whom we know to be ill in spirit or body. When the rabbi asks for names to be called, feel free to call out in Hebrew or English the names of family members or friends who are in need of healing.

The Torah is once again carried around the congregation and then returned to the ark (pp. 105 – 107). This portion of the service ends standing before the ark reciting words taken directly from the Torah. “Help us to return to You, O God; then truly shall we return. Renew our days as in the past.” Here we are reminded of the importance of learning and living Torah.

Following the Torah service the rabbi gives a *d’var Torah*/sermon and talks with the *B’nai Mitzvah* about entering Jewish adulthood.

II SHEMA U-VIRKHOTEHA (pp. 63-69)

This portion of the service begins with the *barkhu* (p. 63). When we offer the traditional response to this call to prayer, we acknowledge our willingness and readiness to begin our worship as individuals and as a community. What follows are two blessings which acknowledge God as the Creator of the Universe (*yotzer or*) and praise God for giving us the Torah (*ahava raba*), a symbol of God’s love for us. The *shema* follows (p.66) and is the central declaration of a Jewish person’s faith. The *shema* and *v’ahavta* are taken from Deuteronomy chapter 6:4-9 and are considered the essence of Jewish belief. We accept the uniqueness of God, God’s teaching and promise to live by God’s instruction. The *shema* emphasizes Judaism as a monotheistic faith and recognizes the covenant with God indicated by our acceptance of the Torah. “Hear O (people of) Israel: *Adonai* is our God, *Adonai* is One”.

The *geula* (pp. 68-69) acknowledges the people Israel’s redemption by God. *Mi khamokha* comes directly from the Torah in Exodus 15:18, the Song of the Sea. The message of *mi khamokha* completes the theological message of this section of the service. God redeemed us in the past, most dramatically at the Sea of Reeds and will bring redemption in the future.

III AMIDAH/TEFILLAH (pp. 70 – 85)

The *Amidah* (pp. 70 – 85) is a very important segment of the service in Jewish worship. “*Amidah*” means standing, which is the manner in which much of the prayer is said. The *Amidah* can be recited both individually and by the prayer leader. In our congregation we generally recite together as a congregation. There are seven parts to this prayer that combine praise, sanctification of the Sabbath, thanksgiving and a plea for peace. The *avot v'imahot* (fathers and mothers) (p. 70) establishes our relationship to God. It is a reminder of the covenantal promises made to our ancestors. In the *gevurot* (p. 71) we praise God’s greatness. In the *kedusha* (pp. 73-74) we declare God’s holiness. The *kedushat hayom* includes the *v’shamru* (p. 75) and the *kadshenu* (p. 75). Both convey the message of the importance of *Shabbat* as a sign of God’s covenant: *Shabbat* is more than a cessation of work; one is to actively delight in it.

The *avodah*/worship (p. 77) blessing asks God to accept our prayer offerings. The *modim*/thanksgiving (pp. 80-81) expresses spiritual gratefulness for God’s care. *Sim shalom* (p. 83) concludes this section of the service with a blessing for peace, highlighting the importance of the concept of peace within Judaism.

As is traditional, we take a few moments at the end of the *Amidah* for personal prayer.

IV SEDER KRIAT HA-TORAH/TORAH SERVICE (pp. 97 - 102)

The Torah scroll is read in set weekly portions continuing throughout the year according to the Jewish calendar. The structure of our Torah service at Temple Har Zion is:

Taking out the Torah

Reading the Torah

Reading the *Haftarah* (the book of Prophets)

Returning the Torah to the ark.

The importance of the Torah is made clear by the amount of ceremony that surrounds taking the Torah from, and returning it to, the ark. The congregation rises for each of these rituals. We stand when the Torah “stands”. To be near the Torah is awe-inspiring, to hold the Torah is an honour, and to read from it is both humbling and uplifting. We begin with some introductory verses declaring God’s greatness and acknowledging the gift of God’s Torah. The Torah is then paraded around the congregation and those involved in the Torah service have the honour of “marching” with it. It is traditional to face in the direction of the Torah as it is being taken around the sanctuary and to touch/kiss the Torah using a *tallit* or *siddur*. The Torah is chanted or read by the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and/or congregants over the age of 13. When the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reads from the Torah it symbolizes their becoming a member of the adult community, taking on the responsibility of reading Torah and contributing to the continuity of the Jewish people. During the Torah service, people are honoured by being called up to recite the blessings for the reading of the Torah. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or a congregant will then chant/read the weekly *Haftarah*. Usually, the *Haftarah* links thematically to the Torah portion.