



Rosh Hodesh Adar

Sunday, March 2, 2024 @ 11:00 am

Program Facilitator: Rachel Howe

Agenda

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Introductions and Opening Blessing

Introduce yourself! We invite you to use your first name and your mother's first name. It doesn't matter if your mother isn't/wasn't Jewish.

Blessings:

Commentary by LilyFish Gomberg:

The reference to children in the blessing can apply to biological or adopted children, and it can also apply to anyone we nurture and teach within the community, the next generation of Jews we collectively hope to inspire.

The prayer is intended to be inclusive, speaking to our shared responsibility in helping to shape the future of the Jewish community.

In Sanhedrin 99b, Reish Lakish says, "Anyone who teaches someone else's child Torah is regarded by the Torah as though they have made them." R. Elazar adds that it is as though the teacher has "made" the child in terms of Torah, highlighting the importance of the role of teaching and mentorship in Jewish life.

May it be Your will, my God and God of my ancestors, to be gracious to me and to all my family and to give us, and all Israel, a good and long life. Remember us with goodness and blessing, and grant us salvation and mercy. Grant us abundant blessing, and fortify the places we call home. May Your Presence dwell among us as we gather here today. May we be blessed with wise and learned disciples and children, lovers of God who stand in awe of You, people who speak truth and spread holiness. May those we nurture light the world with Torah and good deeds.

Hear the prayers I utter now in the name of our mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. May Your light, reflected in these candles, surround us always. And let us say, Amen.

*Barukh atah Adonai
Eloheinu melekh ha'olam
shehecheyanu vekiyemanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּים וְקִיּוּמָנוּ
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה

*Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, sovereign of the universe
who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season*

About *Tehines*:

Tehines are a specific type of prayer outside of the traditional liturgy that were popular in Europe from the 17th century through the early 19th century. They were written in Yiddish, and largely for women, often by women. The word comes from the Hebrew, *Tehinot*, which means supplications. *Tehines* were very popular, printed over and over on small paper booklets, often without bylines or publication information, which makes them hard to track.

Well known texts:

- Sarah bas Tovim's *Shloyshah She'orim* (*The Three Gates*)
- *Seyder tkhines*, published in Prague, 1718, written by a man, Mattithias ben Meir Sobotki for women
- *Eyn Gor Sheyne Tkhine* ("A Very Beautiful *Tehine*"), published in Prague in about the year 1600 by "a group of pious women"

Connections to Adar:

- "Adar" comes from the same root as *Adir*, which means strength. *Tehines* are a way of showing women's strengths.
- Adar is the holiday of Purim, whose heroine, Esther, is one of the best-known figures of strength in Jewish tradition. Esther fasted and prayed to God for the strength to reveal herself and beg mercy for her people.

Tehine of the Matriarchs
for the New Moon of Elul

by Serl bat R' Yankev
Segal of Dubno



Purpose:

In the communities where *teḥines* were popular, women were often barred from learning Hebrew and Aramaic, so couldn't read sacred texts. However, many were literate (as opposed to many Christian women of the era), so the vernacular Yiddish provided women a way to pray in a language they could understand. The introduction of one popular book describes women's inability to understand Hebrew prayer as "like a blind person standing at a window and looking out at the street to see wondrous things — this is the same as women saying the *teḥinnot* in the holy tongue and not knowing what they are saying."

Their focus was largely women's domestic life, children (including for women who lost husbands or could not have children), and the three special commandments/*mitzvot* for women (lighting candles, *challah*, *mikvah*), and for the new moon (*rosh ḥodesh*). Their tone was often very personal, addressing God like a friend, and *teḥines* were seen as a pipeline to God. They were passionate and personal in a way the synagogue liturgy is not. "*Teḥines* enabled women to imbue their daily tasks with meaning and infuse their traditional roles with religious significance (Grossman and Haut, 2005)."

How they worked:

Prayers often begin with directions on how, where, when to pray and what general purpose is. Examples:

- "A pretty *teḥine* to say on the Sabbath with great devotion"
- "A *teḥine* that the woman should pray for herself and her husband and children"
- "A confession to say with devotion, not too quickly; it is good for the soul"

Some were connected to specific prayers in the daily prayerbook or to be said at a certain time during a synagogue service (when the Cantor says a particular thing). Others were to be said in the kitchen, *mikvah*, etc.

History:

The rise of *teḥines* coincides with the rise of mass printing, as well as with changes around gender roles in European culture. We also see the rise of Jewish mystical movements, including the Kabbalists in *Tz'fat* (also written *Safed* or *Tz'vat*), who wanted to make holy books more accessible to all — though many of these texts were more directed toward less educated men who had learned the basics of Hebrew. Because they were published on the open market any woman who could read Yiddish could access them, as opposed to Hasidic teachings which were passed from master to very small groups of select students, which excluded women.

The earliest *teḥine* was for women to say upon entering the *mikvah* in Crakow in 1577 (a *mikvah* is a ritual bath). They can be divided into two major groups.

The first category was those published mostly in 17th and 18th century Western and Central Europe, and *probably* written by men for women — but they were anonymous. These were often intended to convey the holiness found in the domestic and the mundane, in the activities of a wife and mother. They also depict the angels, the patriarchs and matriarchs, the male and female heroes of Jewish history, and the ancient Temple that stood in Jerusalem. Later on, these were published in German, addressing the changing gender roles for women and current affairs.

The second category was those published from the 17th to 19th centuries in Eastern Europe, written for women by both men and women — and these had bylines. Their focus was largely on inner life and repentance, the coming of the messiah, and the new moon. Some were also about gaining access to men's spaces, like synagogue and Torah study. As the standard prayerbook invokes the patriarchs, these *teḥines* often invoke the matriarchs and other Jewish heroines to intercede on the reader's behalf. They often pull from kabbalistic and rabbinic texts.

Analyze:

Take a look at these excerpts from Sarah bas Tovim's *teḥines* for reciting as you light the yartzeit candles on Yom Kippur before going to the synagogue, and for lighting the Shabbat candles. Discuss any themes or words that stand out to you with your neighbor.

For lighting Yahrzeit candles on Yom Kippur

Let it be Your will that today, the eve of Yom Kippur, we will be remembered for good, since we bring the candles to the synagogue. Because of the commandment that we keep we should merit to give candles to the Holy Temple, as it was in the beginning, and the prayers that will be said near the candles should be with great piety and great awe...



For lighting Shabbat candles

Ribono shel olam [Master of the Universe], may the mitzvah of my lighting the candles be accepted as equivalent to the mitzvah of the *kohen gadol* [high priest] when he lit the candles in the precious *beit hamikdash* [holy temple]. As his observance was accepted, so may mine be accepted.

"Your words are a candle at my feet and a light for my path" means that your words are a candle at my feet, so that all my children may walk in God's path, and may the mitzvah of my candle lighting be accepted so that my children's eyes may be illumined by the precious holy Torah. I also ask at this time that this mitzvah of lighting candles be accepted as equivalent to the olive oil which burned in the *beit hamikdash* [holy temple] and which was never extinguished



Traditional *Tehines*:

A *tehine* to be said when we go to shul after childbirth:

O great King, when we were worthy and dwelt in our land and your presence rested amongst us in your holy palace, the *beit hamikdash* [holy temple], a woman who gave birth to a child had to bring an offering of two doves. One was a sin offering and the second was a thanksgiving offering for the kindnesses that You did for her during the time of carrying and giving birth. Indeed, she was saved from grave danger.

But now because of our iniquities we lost our Holy Temple and I cannot bring an offering. The prophet says, "The songs and praises of our lips that we say before You are accepted by Your mercy immediately as if we would have brought a real sacrifice." Therefore I come to Your holy house, a "mini *beit hamikdash* [holy temple]" to praise and to thank Your Dear Name for the great kindness that you did for me. I pray, You are praised, Holy God, King of the World, Who does good to sinful man and has also done to me much good and saved me from great danger, and blesses me with fruit of my womb, with a child for long life. So with Your kindness I have lived to come to Your Holy House. I bow in Your Holy Palace with awe.

And I beg that You never remove Your kindness from me. Let us merit to raise the child without trouble, to be a good Jew and to have awe of Heaven. May it be your will that you build the *beit hamikdash* [holy temple] in our times. There we will offer to You the offerings that You command us in Your Holy Torah, Amen.

For Deliverance from Bad Neighbors

Creator of the world, You have made Your world so that man should inhabit it. I am going out now to look for a dwelling in which to settle with my husband and children. Please help me, God, send me to a nice, kosher place where I shall not have to haggle about the rent or fall in among bad neighbors. Our Sages say: "Keep far from a bad neighbor" (Pirkei Avot 1:7) so that he may not corrupt my character; all the more so, from a neighbor corrupted in his faith... Help me get to know good, God-fearing neighbors and learn good qualities from them. As our Sages say: "What is the good way to which a man should cling? Rabbi Yosi says: a good neighbor (Pirkei Avot 1:13). May we also be found worthy of dwelling in our own land in our own houses, quickly and in our own time. Amen.

Modern *Tehines*:

Tekhine for Planned Parenthood

Ariana Katz, via *Ritualwell*

Ribono shel olam, ruler of the universe
Who planted the tree of knowledge in the garden,
to know between good and evil,
Who granted human beings free choice.
Be with me in this time.
Holder, Guard, keep us safe.
Ribono shel olam, Rachel is weeping for her children,
She pours out her grief.
I am awash in her tears.
Lift up the *neshamot*, the souls, of our fallen,
Comfort their families.
Memory, Eternal, remember us.
Ribono shel olam,
who knows of birth and death and the life that exists between,
Bless our healers,
Bless our health,
Bless our hands as we work to heal this brokenness.
Bless our treatments as they bring *chayyim tovim*, good life, on us all.
Shield our caregivers from harm
For our rabbis teach us, that one on their way to perform one of your holy
commandments
is themselves shielded from harm.
Healer, Soother, treat us.
Ribono shel olam,
Our Well, our source, who brings renewal and sustenance.
You are the deep well I draw from.
The well where Rebecca stood,
The waters that Miriam caused to pour forth.
The waters of the Nile that Yocheved trusted.
Ribono shel olam,
bless these sacred spaces of decision.

Modern *Tehines*:

Tehine Prior to Immersion in the Mikveh

Renee S. Septimus, via *Ritualwell*

Ribono shel olam, God of Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Layeh, I stand before You as have countless generations of Jewish women, about to immerse in the waters of your holy presence.

Bless me, dear God, in body and in spirit. Keep me, and those I love, healthy, safe and strong. Protect and nurture me the way a mother does her child. Bind me and my beloved husband in a long, peaceful, harmonious marriage. Give my children easy lives without strain or struggle. [Give me children who will have lives without strain or struggle.] Grant me fulfillment and a generous sustenance from my livelihood.

Ribono shel olam, lead me in the path of righteousness and help me use my abilities to repair this broken world. Help me ease and gladden the lives of those I cherish. Give me the vision to recognize my unique capacity to make the world a better place, and the courage and stamina to do so.

Dear God, you created the world from a womb of water. You made me in your image, pure and holy, according to your will. I thank you for my miraculous body which keeps its own rhythms as do the sun and moon, the seasons, the Shabbos and the Holy Days. I bless your sacred name as I ask for your blessing upon me and those I love.

As I immerse in the mikveh waters, I am ever more aware of my dependence upon you. I know that my life is sustained by your mercy.

Be kind and beneficent to me. Help me purify my life from pain and sorrow, from bad influences, from my own faults and inadequacies.

As these waters embrace me, dear God, may I embrace your presence in and around me at all times and in all space, Amen.

Hineh mah tov:

הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב וַיְמָה נְעִים שֶׁבֶת אֲחִיּוֹת גַּם יַחַד.

*Hineh mah tov umah na'im, shevet **ahayot** gam yahad.*

Behold how good it is to dwell together as **sisters**.

More Resources

Articles or entries about tehines:

- Jewish Women's Archive: jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/tkhines
- My Jewish Learning:
myjewishlearning.com/article/tehines-womens-prayers
- Aish:
aish.com/tehinot-forgotten-history-of-jewish-womens-prayers

Articles about Sarah Bas Tovim:

- Jewish Women's Archives:
jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bas-tovim-sarah
- Good ol' Wikipedia: wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Bas_Tovim

Books about tehines and women's prayer:

- *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*, edited by Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Jewish Publication Society, 2005)
- *Seyder Tkhines: The Forgotten Book of Common Prayer for Jewish Women*, translated and edited with commentary by Devra Kay (2004)

SPRING 2025 CALENDAR

MARCH

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

APRIL

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

CALENDAR KEY:

- = Book Club
- = B'nei Mitzvah
- = Rosh Hodesh
- = Men's Club
- = Young Families Shabbat
- = Save the Date for a Special Event

Special Events:

- 3/1 — SONGS FROM THE VOID: Darshan Concert
- 3/8 — Bat Mitzvah of Sophia Spiegel
- 3/9 — Purim Carnival
- 3/13 — Dinner, Scotch, Bake-Off & Rock Purimspiel
- 3/14 — "Traditional" Megillah Reading
- 3/15 — Interfaith Lunch 'n' Learn
- 3/21 — TGIShabbat featuring *Kitot Hey* and *Vav*
- 3/23 — Triple Chai: Museum for Art in Wood
- 3/28-29 — Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat with Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld
- 4/5 — Bar Mitzvah of Aaron Wolson
- 4/6 — *Min HaMeitzar*: MIRYAM Concert
- 4/10 — Young Friends: Birthright Israel Happy Hour
- 4/13 — Pesah Second Night Seder
- 4/17 — Young Friends: Matzah Pizza Night
- 4/25 — TGIShabbat featuring *Kitah Zayin* and *Tikhon*
- 4/26 — Senior Shabbat
- 4/27 — Murder Mystery Dinner Theater
- 4/30 — Yom Hazikaron & Yom Ha'atzma'ut
- 5/3 — Bat Mitzvah of Hazel Saltzman
- 5/15 — Lag Ba'Omer Barbecue & Celebration
- 5/17 — Last day of Hebrew School Classes
- 5/18 — Triple Chai: Knock Knock... Jews There?

This calendar is subject to change.

For up-to-date information, check www.societyhillsynagogue.org/calendar or contact our office.

You can add our **Society Hill Synagogue Community Calendar** to your own personal Google Calendar! Visit our website calendar and click "Add this calendar to your Google Calendar."