The 2018 National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths theme is “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair.” Fifty years after Dr. King announced the Poor People’s Campaign, even though we have made strides in many ways, more than 13 million children live in poverty in our rich nation. Fifty years after Dr. King’s message of nonviolence and love, every two days the equivalent of a classroom full of children and teens are killed by guns. Fifty years after Dr. King’s reminder that we are all bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality, families seeking refuge in our nation are torn apart, children suffering the trauma of separation. We have work to do to fulfill the promise and realize Dr. King’s vision. The parashah and haftarah for the Shabbat that falls on October 19-20, 2018 resonate richly with the 2018 Children’s Shabbat theme. In Lech Lecha we hear the Eternal’s promise to Avram of blessing—blessing that is embodied in the birth of children and the generations that follow.
The parashah reminds us that we are blessed not for our own gratification but so that we might be a blessing. The haftarah (Isaiah 40:27-41:16) is a word to the weary in exile, offering a word of hope and encouragement to trust. The commentary in *Etz Hayim* observes, “Isaiah emphasizes God’s power and providential guidance to alleviate the nation’s mood of despair and fear. Through their faithful response, the people would thus renew a redemptive journey begun by their great ancestors more than a millennium earlier.” (p. 94)

In Isaiah we read, “[The Eternal] gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent. Youths may grow faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall; But they who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength as eagles grow new plumes: they shall run and not grow weary, they shall march and not grow faint.” (Isaiah 40:31-31) For fifty years and more, we have been marching and advocating and working and speaking out for justice and an end to poverty, racism, and violence. The persistence of injustice can be discouraging, the deeply rooted racism a source of despair, the entrenched poverty can make us want to give up. Nevertheless, these times call for us to renew our strength so that we continue marching and calling for justice until we realize Dr. King’s vision. As Rabbi Heschel so famously observed after marching with Dr. King in Selma, “I felt my legs were praying.” On the 2018 Children’s Shabbat, as we celebrate together with congregations spanning the country and across all lines of religion, race, income and geography, we will be praying with our voices and legs, our words and our work. Like the journey of Abraham and Sarah, may our work, too, be for a blessing.

The 2018 National Observance of Children’s Sabbath is focused on ending child poverty and fulfilling Dr. King’s vision in which every child is cherished, respected, and enabled to live into the fullness of life. Following you will find a range of Jewish resources for your Children’s Shabbat:

- Suggestions for incorporating themes of this year’s observance into your services.
- Passages from modern and traditional Jewish sources related to poverty, children, and justice.
- Suggested readings and prayers for a Kabbalat Shabbat/Erev Shabbat Service.
- Suggested readings and prayers for the Shacharit/Shabbat Morning Service.

Be sure to draw on other sections of the Children’s Sabbath resource manual (at www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths) for suggestions and materials to broaden your Children’s Shabbat beyond the services to include education, outreach, and actions for justice on the weekend of the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths and throughout the year to come. Children’s Shabbat is about far more than one weekend. After the services and education programs and activities of the weekend, our hope is that the gemilut hasidim—compassionate action—and the justice-seeking advocacy of your congregation in the year ahead will continue to help improve the lives of children in our communities and throughout our nation in deep and lasting ways. Working together, we can make a difference.
Suggestions for the Services

Services on the Children’s Shabbat are an excellent opportunity to help focus the congregation on the links between Torah readings, Jewish tradition, and the charge to pursue justice and protect children. The focus of the 2018 Children’s Shabbat is ending child poverty. Children’s Shabbat services also are a time to affirm the work of your congregation on behalf of children and to challenge members to continue and expand their responses to the needs of children locally and nationally.

The following suggestions may assist you in planning your own unique Children’s Shabbat service or supplementing your congregation’s weekly prayer and discussion.

• **There are several options for the services:**
  1) Use or adapt the service readings provided in this section for a Kabbalat Shabbat/Erev Shabbat service or a Shabbat morning service;
  2) Develop your own Children’s Shabbat that reflects the theme of children, justice, and the need for action; or
  3) Use readings from the prayer books that include a social action theme.

• **Determine ways in which the children of your congregation can participate in the various services on this Shabbat.** Involve children attending religious school, members of youth groups, and children who attend day schools. For example, religious school classes and youth groups could read prayers or Torah and Haftarah readings, lead songs or responsive readings, greet people as they arrive, or design and print the bulletin. Keep in mind, however, that this is an intergenerational family event and should not be “given over” to children as “performers” or only be intended for families with young children as in a Tot Shabbat.

• **Introduce the special Children’s Shabbat focus at the beginning of the service.** The Union for Reform Judaism’s online resources for Social Action Worship note, “The beginning of the service is the time to set the tone. By opening with a special reading, the congregation knows that the service has a special theme and we can consider how we might focus our prayers differently during this service. What is the connection between our prayers and our pursuit of tikkun olam? An introductory reading might help us begin to answer that question. In addition, candle lighting during Friday night services would also be an appropriate time to include a special reading. With the lighting of the candles, we reflect on what it means for us to be an Or Lagoyim, a ‘light unto the nations,’ and how that shapes our actions.”

• **Focus the sermon, D’var Torah, or Torah discussion on children, justice, and ending child poverty.** In addition to the sermon notes at the end of this section, draw on resources provided in other sections of the Children’s Sabbath materials (available for download at [www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths](http://www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths)) and from the Children’s Defense Fund’s website ([www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)), social action websites, and resources of your movement such as the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism ([www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org)).
• Invite a professional from the congregation or the community who works with or on behalf of children to give the sermon. For example, this might be a community organizer or child advocacy staff working for systemic change to end child poverty or a staff person from an agency or organization serving low-income families.

• Bless the children. On Friday night, incorporate the parental blessing for children into the service. Alternatively, incorporate the need to bless all children into the Shabbat morning blessing of students becoming B’nai Mitzvah.

• Honor congregation members who are working to nurture and protect children. This year, invite those who are engaged in efforts to end child poverty and work for justice. Ask them to lead certain prayers or give them aliyot during the Torah reading.

• Collect tzedakah in religious school to benefit a program serving children, such as a struggling public school, a Head Start program, mentoring or tutoring program, an organization working to end or alleviate the effects of poverty, or an after-school program.

• Distribute or insert the bulletin inserts which can be found in “Promoting Your Children’s Sabbath” at www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths.

• With the help of your Cantor or Cantorial Soloist, prepare some new music to be sung by the children at the service.

• Encourage families to invite grandparents and other relatives to join them for the service. If you wish, plan a special recognition of grandparents during the service.

• Arrange for a special Kiddush/Oneg Shabbat/luncheon/Se’udah Shlishit in honor of the occasion. As a resource, see “Planning a Shabbat or Holiday Family Meal” and “A Family Shabbaton,” both from the Youth/School Liaison Department of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

• Continue the celebration of Children’s Shabbat with Havdalah and/or a M’laveh Malkah during the Saturday evening or the Sunday morning minyan/religious school sessions.

• Plan a “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair” educational session for adults or youth group members, drawing on the session outline provided in the Education Resources for Children’s Sabbath and the Actions Section of the Children’s Sabbath resources.

• Organize a book group to read Recharging Judaism: How Civic Engagement is Good for Synagogues, Jews, and America by Rabbi Judith Schindler and Judy Seldin-Cohen, and discuss ways that its insights could guide your congregation’s justice work for children and families in poverty.

• Be sure to read the Actions Section of the Children’s Sabbath manual, available for download from www.childrensdefense.org/childrenssabbaths, to select actions for the congregation collectively or individual members to take on the Children’s Sabbath weekend and in the year to follow to seek justice for our nation’s children. Children’s Shabbat is about much more than one Shabbat a year, but is intended to support long-term efforts to improve the lives of our nation’s children throughout the years to come. Additional resources for action planning include Lirdof Tzekdek: A Guide to Synagogue Social Action (by Evely Laser Shlensky and Rabbi Marc D. Israel, ed.) and Mitzvah Magic: What Kids Can Do to Change the World (by Danny Siegel with Naomi Eisenberger).
Passages from Modern and Traditional Jewish Sources on Poverty, the Importance of Children, and Justice

On Poverty
A small bit of bread may be life to the poor; one who deprives them of it sheds blood.

(Ben Sira 34:21)

Do not neglect the children of the poor, for from them will go forth the law.

(Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 81a)

Defend the poor and the orphan; do justice to the afflicted and needy.

(Midrash Tehillim 82:3)

You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I enjoin you to observe this commandment... when you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

(Deuteronomy 24:17-18, 21)

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: What is the meaning of the verse, “You shall walk behind the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 13:5)? ... [It means that] a person should imitate the righteous ways of the Holy One, blessed be God. Just as the Lord clothed the naked, ... so too you must supply clothes for the naked [poor]. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, visited the sick, ... so too you should visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, buried the dead, ... so too you must bury the dead. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, comforted mourners, ... so too you should comfort mourners.

(Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 14a)

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish: “He who lends money [to a poor person] is greater than he who gives charity; and he who throws money into a common purpose [to form a partnership with the poor person] is greater than either.”

(Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 63b)

God says to Israel, “My children, whenever you give sustenance to the poor, I impute it to you as though you gave sustenance to Me.” Does God then eat and drink? No, but whenever you give food to the poor, God accounts it to you as if you gave food to God.

(Midrash Tannaim on Deuteronomy 15:10, citing Numbers 28:2)

Anyone who withholds what is due to the poor blasphemes against the Maker of all, but one who is gracious unto the needy honors God.

(Proverbs 14:31)

Take care of the children of the poor, for they will be the ones who advance knowledge.

(Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim, 81a)
In Rab’s day, there was a teacher whose prayer for the rain was answered promptly. When asked to tell of his special merit, he said, “I teach children of the poor as well as of the rich, I accept no fee from any who cannot afford it, and I have a fishpond to delight the children and to encourage them to do their lessons.”

(Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 24a)

The prophets never thought that God’s anger is something that cannot be accounted for, unpredictable, irrational. It is never a spontaneous outburst, but a reaction occasioned by the conduct of man….Man’s sense of injustice is a poor analogy to God’s sense of injustice. The exploitation of the poor is to us a misdemeanor; to God, it is a disaster. Our reaction is disapproval; God’s reaction is something no language can convey. Is it a sign of cruelty that God’s anger is aroused when the rights of the poor are violated, when widows and orphans are oppressed? …There is an evil which most of us condone and are even guilty of: indifference to evil. We remain neutral, impartial, and not easily moved by the wrongs done unto other people. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself.

(Abraham Joshua Heschel, as quoted in Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 42)

On the Importance of Children and Justice

Thus said the Eternal: A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Eternal: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears; for there is reward in your labor—declares the Eternal. They shall return from the enemy’s land, and there is hope for your future—declares the Eternal, and your children shall return to their country.

(Jeremiah 31:15-17)

And Israel beheld Joseph’s sons and said, “Whose are these?” And Joseph said to his father, “These are my children, whom the Lord has given me in this place.” And he said, “Bring them to me, and I will bless them.”

(Genesis 48:8-9)

Speak up for [those unable to speak], for the rights of all the unfortunate. Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and needy.

(Proverbs 31: 8-9)

One violates Shabbat for the sake of a one-day-old baby, but not for the corpse of David, King of Israel.

(Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 151b)

As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs. We know that every moment is a moment of grace, every hour an offering; not to share them would mean to betray them. Our lives no longer belong to us alone; they belong to all those who need us desperately.

(Elie Wiesel, Night)

When the children are blessed, the parents by this very token are blessed.

(Zohar I: 227b)
Rabbi Meir said: When the Israelites came to receive the Torah, God said to them, “Bring me good sureties that you will observe it.” They answered, “Our ancestors shall be our sureties.” God replied, “Your sureties need sureties themselves. I have found fault with them.” They answered, “Our prophets shall be our sureties.” God replied, “I have found fault with them also.” Then the Israelites said, “Our children will be our sureties.” They proved acceptable, and God gave Israel the Torah.

(Shir HaShirim Rabbah, 1:4)

“Righteousness and only righteousness you shall pursue” (Deut. 16:20). The term “pursue” carries strong connotations of effort, eagerness, persistence, inflexibility of purpose. This implies more than merely respecting or following justice, walking in the way of righteousness; righteousness may be hard to attain; it may escape us if we do not pursue it.

(Abraham J. Heschel, in The Prophets, p. 264)

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

(Elie Wiesel)

Help me perfect my ways of loving and care. Inspire me to make myself whole so that I may honor your name and create a world of justice and peace.

(Martin Buber, as quoted in Mishkan T’filah, p 121)
The following readings, reflections, and prayers may be incorporated into your services to focus attention on the Eternal’s call to justice and care for children, especially those in poverty. Choose as many or as few as is appropriate for your congregation. Each reading suggests a particular point in the service for which it may be especially appropriate (in some instances, several options are offered), but there are, of course, many ways to incorporate these resources and you should do what works best for your service.

**Suggested Readings and Prayers for a Kabbalat Shabbat/Erev Shabbat Service on Children’s Shabbat**

**Friday, October 19, 2018**

**Kabbalat Panim**

Reflection before the Candle Lighting

*Hadlakat Neirot Shabbat*

As the great doors of night are opening we come into the clean, quiet room of Shabbat. Let us be thankful as we light these candles like eyes of holiness on this moment of peace. Let us savor the fruit of the vine, the blood of the earth that quickens us. Let us be thankful for grain, fruit of grasses that feed the cow, the gazelle, and us. Let us be grateful for the children and the work of the week that are our own fruitfulness. Let us as we eat never forget that food comes from the earth. We must cherish and heal through labor, we must respect and reward.

(By Marge Piercy from *Kol Haneshamah, Shabbat Vehagim.* Reprinted with permission of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation.)

O Source of light and truth,  
Creator of the eternal law of goodness,  
Well-spring of justice and mercy,  
Help us to find knowledge by which to live.  
Lead us to take the words we shall speak  
Into our hearts and our lives.

Bless all who enter this sanctuary in need,  
all who bring the offerings of their hearts.  
May our worship lead us to acts of kindness, peace, and love.

(From *Mishkan T’filah: A Reform Siddur*)

May the door of this synagogue be wide enough to receive all who hunger for love, all who are lonely for fellowship. May it welcome all who have cares to unburden, thanks to express, hopes to nurture.
May the door of this synagogue be narrow enough to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.

May its threshold be no stumbling block to young or straying feet.

May it be too high to admit complacency, selfishness and harshness.

May this synagogue be, for all who enter, the doorway to a richer and more meaningful life.

(from Mishkan T’filah: A Reform Siddur)

Welcome

I begin with a prayer of gratitude for all that is holy in my life. God needs no words, no English or Hebrew, no semantics or services. But I need them. Through prayer, I can sense my inner strength, my inner purpose, my inner joy, my capacity to love. As I reach upward in prayer, I sense these qualities in my Creator. To love God is to love each other, to work to make our lives better. To love God is to love the world God created and to work to perfect it.

(from Mishkan T’filah: A Reform Siddur)

This weekend marks the 27th anniversary of the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths celebrated by congregations of many faiths all across our nation. This year’s observance is titled “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair,” taking place 50 years after Dr. King announced the Poor People’s Campaign. Even though we have made strides against child poverty, in our rich nation, one in every five children still lives in poverty, struggling against the undertow of hunger, lack of health care, inadequate housing, and other necessities to survive and thrive. Fifty years after Dr. King’s message of love and nonviolence, the equivalent of a classroom full of children and teens is killed by guns every two days. And fifty years since Dr. King reminded us that we are caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, families seeking refuge in our country are turned away and torn apart, children suffering the trauma of heartless separation.

We have work to do to fulfill the promise and realize Dr. King’s vision. In Isaiah we read, “[The Eternal] gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent. Youths may grow faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall; But they who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength as eagles grow new plumes: they shall run and not grow weary, they shall march and not grow faint.” For fifty years and more, we have been marching and advocating and working
and speaking out for justice and an end to poverty, racism, and violence. The persistence of injustice can be discouraging, the deeply rooted racism a source of despair, the entrenched poverty can make us want to give up. Nevertheless, these times call for us to renew our strength so that we continue marching and calling for justice until we realize Dr. King’s vision. As Rabbi Heschel so famously observed after marching with Dr. King in Selma, “It felt my legs were praying.” On the 2018 Children’s Shabbat, as we celebrate together with congregations spanning the country and across all lines of religion, race, income and geography, we will be praying with our voices and legs, our words and our work. Like the journey of Abraham and Sarah, may our work, too, be for a blessing. Shabbat shalom.

**Kabbalat Shabbat – Welcoming Shabbat**

**Introduction to L’chah Dodi**

As we prepare to sing *L’chah Dodi*, pause to reflect on the words of comfort and promise in the third verse of the translation in *Siddur Sim Shalom*: “Holy city, majestic, banish your fears. Arise, emerge from your desolate years. Too long have you dwelled in the valley of tears. God will restore you with mercy and grace.” This evening, as we sing, may the words be our prayer for the children and families throughout our nation who live in fear, with the desolation of poverty, and in a valley of tears.

**Ar’vit l’Shabbat**

**Sh’mah Uvirchoteha – Sh’mah and Its Blessings**

**Reflection after the Bar’chu**

One must repeat from time to time: The world was created for my sake. Never say: What do I care about this or that? Do your part to add something new, to bring forth something that is needed, and to leave the world a little better because you were here briefly.

(Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav)

**Maariv Aravim**

This is an hour of change.
Within it we stand uncertain on the border of light.
Shall we draw back or cross over?
Where shall our hearts turn?
Shall we draw back, my brother, my sister,
or cross over?

This is the hour of change, and within it,
we stand quietly
on the border of light.
What lies before us?
Shall we draw back, my brother, my sister,
or cross over?

*Baruch atah, Adonai, Hamaariv aravim.***

(Mishkan T’filah, p. 149)
**Reading after Ahavat Olam**

In each age we receive and transmit Torah.
At each moment we are addressed by the World.
   In each age we are challenged by our ancient teaching.
   At each moment we stand face to face with Truth.

In each age we add our wisdom to that which has gone before.
At each moment the knowing heart is filled with wonder.
   In each age the children of Torah become its builders
   and seek to set the world firm on a foundation of Truth.

*(Mishkan T’filah, p. 266)*

God of the generations, God of new beginnings, children are Your promise of tomorrow
made in Your image, a reflection of Your divine love. Teach us to raise our children worthy
of this sacred trust of life. Sustain us and our children in health and love. We are thankful for
the beauty of our lives and the ability to bring new life. We are thankful to all those who help
us to raise our children in love.

*(Adapted from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association Rabbi’s Manual.
Used with permission.)*

“One who teaches a child Torah is considered to have taught that child and that child’s children
and grandchildren, to the end of the generations.” *(Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 30a)*

**Reflection after the Sh’ma and V’ahavta**

**Sh’ma: A Re-Creation**
Loving life
   and it mysterious source
with all our heart
   and all our spirit,
all our sense and strength,
we take upon ourselves
and into ourselves
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
We will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day—
as we dwell in our homes
and as we go on our journeys,
from the time we rise until we fall asleep.
And my our actions
be faithful to our words
that our children’s children
may live to know:
Truth and kindness have embraced,
peace and justice have kissed
and are one.

(Marcia Falk, in Siddur Lev Shalem The Rabbinical Assembly, p. 41)

**Emet Ve-Emunah**
In a world torn by violence and pain,
a world far from wholeness and peace,
give us the courage to say, Adonai:
there is one God in heaven and earth.
The high heavens declare Your glory;
May earth reveal Your justice and love.

From bondage in Egypt, we were delivered;
At Sinai, we bound ourselves to Your way.
Inspired by prophets and instructed by sages,
Time and again, we overcame oppressive forces.

Though our failings are many and our faults are great,
It has been our glory to bear witness to our God,
Keeping alive in dark ages
Your vision of a world redeemed.
Let us continue to work for the day
When the nations will be one and at peace.
Then shall we rejoice as Israel did,
Singing on the shores of the Sea:

(Adapted from Chaim Stern in Mishkan T’filah, p. 157)

**Readings after Mi Chamocha**
“You cannot find redemption until you see the flaws in your own soul, and try to efface them.
Nor can a people be redeemed until it sees the flaws in its soul and tries to efface them. But
whether it be an individual or a people, whoever shuts out the realization of their flaws is
shutting out redemption. We can be redeemed only to the extent to which we see ourselves.

The world is in need of redemption, but the redemption must not be expected to happen as
an act of sheer grace. Our task is to make the world worthy of redemption. Our faith and our
works are preparations for ultimate redemption.”

(Adapted from Martin Buber, in Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 32)

Sing the song of men and women
joined in understanding and respect.
The song of God’s miracles,
an earth protected and cherished;
a gift for our children
and the generations to come.
The song of a land once ravaged by war, 
now quiet and content; 
her soldiers home, to leave no more. 
The song of a world redeemed: 
the song of peace. 

( Mishkan T’filah, p. 159) 

Responsive Reading after Hashkiveinu 
As a mother comforts her children, 
so I Myself will comfort you, says Adonai. 
And you will find peace in Jerusalem. 

Past troubles will be forgotten, hidden from sight. 
Jerusalem will be a delight, her people a joy. 
And you will find peace in Jerusalem. 

None shall hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, 
says the Creator whose throne is heaven, 
says Adonai who also seeks peace in Jerusalem. 

Each month at the new moon, each week on Shabbat 
all people, all My children, shall worship Me, 
says Adonai who will also find peace 
and consolation in Jerusalem. 

(Jules Harlow, in Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 33).

Prayer after the V’shamru 
O God of Israel, 
May our worship on this day help us to grow 
in loyalty to our covenant with you 
and to the way of life it demands: 
the way of gentleness and justice, 
the path of truth and of peace. 

( Mishkan T’filah) 

Amidah 

Readings for the Amidah 
Prayer invites 
God’s Presence to suffuse our spirits, 
God’s will to prevail in our lives. 
Prayer might not bring water to parched fields, 
nor mend a broken bridge, 
nor rebuild a ruined city. 
But prayer can water an arid soul, 
mend a broken heart, 
rebuild a weakened will. 

(Abraham Joshua Heschel, adapted, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 165)
Pray as if everything depended on God.
Act as if everything depended on you.

O God, by faith, like Abraham, let us obey Your call to leave our comfortable homes and set out for strange places although we do not know for certain where we are going.
By faith, like Noah, let us heed Your signs and warnings and build sturdy arks to rescue our children from the coming floods.
By faith, like Isaac and Jacob, let us seek Your blessings on our children’s futures.
By faith, like Moses, let us leave Pharaoh’s house and head across the wilderness to lead our oppressed children to freedom.
By faith, like Joseph, let us turn evil into good and welcome our erring brothers and kin with a spirit of reconciliation and love.
By faith, like the child David, let us go out without fear to face the Goliaths of our day with slingshots of righteousness and justice confident of Your divine guidance and protection.

(Marian Wright Edelman in Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children, p. 56)

Prayer after the Avot v’Imahot
Source of All Being, we turn to You as did our people in ancient days.
They beheld you in the heavens, they felt You in their hearts,
They sought You in their lives. Their quest is ours.
Help us to see the wonder of being.
Give us the courage to search for truth;
teach us the path to a better life.
So shall we, by our lives and our labors,
bring nearer the world we envision,
one of justice, freedom and peace.

(Chaim Stern, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 274)

Responsive Reading after the G’vurot
Your might, O God, is everlasting;
Help us to use our strength for good and not evil.

You are the Source of life and blessing;
Help us to choose life for ourselves and our children.

You are the support of the falling;
Help us to lift up the fallen.

You are the author of freedom;
Help us to free the captive.

You are our hope in death as in life;
Help us to keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.
JEWISH RESOURCES FOR THE CHILDREN'S SHABBAT

Your might, O God, is everlasting;  
_Help us to use our strength for good._  
For blessing and not for curse,  
_For life and not death,_  
For abundance, not want.  

(Chaim Stern, in _Mishkan T'filah_, p. 349)

**Reflection after the K’dushah HaShem and K’dushat HaYom**

Disturb us, Adonai, ruffle us from our complacency;  
Make us dissatisfied. Dissatisfied with the peace of ignorance,  
the quietude which arises from a shunning of the horror, the defeat,  
the bitterness and the poverty, physical and spiritual, of humans.

Shock us, Adonai, deny to us the false Shabbat which gives us  
the delusions of satisfaction amid a world of war and hatred;

Wake us, O God, and shake us  
from the sweet and sad poignancies rendered by  
half forgotten melodies and rubric prayers of yesteryears;

Make us know that the border of the sanctuary  
is not the border of living  
and the walls of your temples are not shelters  
from the winds of truth, justice and reality.

Disturb us, O God, and vex us;  
let not Your Shabbat be a day of torpor and slumber;  
let it be a time to be stirred and spurred to action.  

_Baruch atah, Adonai, m’kadeish HaShabbat._  

(Mitchell Salem Fisher, adapted, in _Mishkan T'filah_, p. 173)

**Reading after the Avodah and Hodaah**

For the good in us, which calls us to a better life, we give thanks.  
For the strength to improve the world with our hearts and our hands,  
we offer praise.  
For the desire in us which leads us to work for peace, we are grateful.  
For life and nature, harmony and beauty, for the hope of tomorrow,  
All praise to the Source of Being.  

(Chaim Stern and Abraham Rothberg, in _Mishkan T'filah_, p. 281)

**Reading after Shalom**

Spread Your peace over us  
like a vast quilt crafted by  
strong and patient hands.  
Plant it deep within us like  
a million seeds claiming  
life in the heart’s most soil  
Grant it now.
To those born Your people,
to those who have
walked winding paths to become so;
to those still burdened by
history, to those with no
memory of want or fear;
grant a generous peace.
To those who reach for it through
the steady breath of the body;
to those who grasp for it in a child
home from the reserves;
to those on the streets for the
rights of others; to those on
guard for the safety of their own;
with abundant gentle blessing,
Master of Peace,
kiss all of us goodnight.

(Tamara Cohen in Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 51)

Reflection after T’filat HaLev
Holy One,
give me a quiet heart,
and help me to hear the still,
small voice that speaks within me.
It calls me to come close to You
and to grow in Your likeness.
It teaches me to do my work faithfully,
even when no one’s eye is upon me.
It counsels me to judge others kindly
and to love them freely,
for it persuades me to see divinity
in everyone I meet.
Help me, O God,
to come to the end of each day
feeling that I used its gifts wisely
and faced its trials bravely.

(Chaim Stern in Mishkan T’filah, p. 261)

Introduction to the Misheberach
One is five children in our nation is poor. Poverty exacts a terrible toll from children—including hunger, health problems, and even early death Children who were separated from their parents at the border suffered unimaginable trauma. And all across our nation, children live in fear of gun violence that injures and kills more than 40 children and teens every day. Tonight, as we say/sing the Misheberach, may we pray for their blessing and healing.

Mi Shebeirach avoteinu
M’kor hab’rachah l’imoteinu.
May the Source of strength who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing and let us say, Amen.
JEWISH RESOURCES FOR THE CHILDREN’S SHABBAT

Mi shebeirach imoteinu
M’kor hab’rachah laavoteinu.
Bless those in need of healing with r’fuah sh’leimah,
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, and let us say, Amen.

(Debbie Friedman)

Prayer for Our Country
We pray for all who hold positions of leadership and responsibility in our national life.
Let Your blessings rest upon them, and make them responsive to Your will, so that our nation may be to the world a beacon of justice and compassion.

Deepen our love for your country and our desire to serve it. Strengthen our power of self-sacrifice for our nation’s welfare. Teach us to uphold its good name by our own right conduct.

Cause us to see clearly that the well-being of our nation is in the hands of all its citizens; imbue us with zeal for the cause of liberty in our land and all lands; and help us always to keep our homes safe from affliction, strife, and war. Amen.

Aleinu v’Kaddish Yatom

Reflections after the Aleinu
Rejoice in the everlasting creation,
Give praise to the greatness of the world!
Divine glory is revealed in the heavens above, and in the earth below.
Yet creation is never ended, and the universe never full.
Potential is unrealized, promises unfulfilled.
Our place is to affirm the present, even as
We commit to the future, through the ideals of sacred living, as revealed in our sacred Teaching.

(Chaim Stern, adapted, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 589)

Meditation Before Kaddish
When I die give what’s left of me away to children and old men that wait to die.
And if you need to cry, cry for your brother walking the street beside you.
And when you need me, put your arms around anyone and give them what you need to give me.
I want to leave you something, something better than words or sounds.
Look for me in the people I’ve known or loved, and if you cannot give me away, at least let me live in your eyes and not in your mind.
You can love me best by letting hands touch hands,
by letting bodies touch bodies,
and by letting go of children that need to be free.
Love doesn’t die, people do.
So, when all that’s left of me is love,
give me away.

(Merrit Malloy in Mishkan T’filah, p. 592)

**Blessing of the Children**
We call upon the child advocates and others in the congregation who are working to end
poverty and assure love and justice for every child, to come to the bima with their children,
and lead us as together we bless our children.

Blessed is the parent, and blessed the child, when their hearts are turned to one another.
Blessed is the home filled with gladness and light, the spirit of Shabbat. May God bless you and
guide you. Seek truth always, be charitable in your words, just and loving in your deeds.
A noble heritage has been entrusted to you; guard it well.

**For a Boy**
Y’sim’cha Elohim k’Ephrayim v’chiMenasheh
May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Ephraim and Menasheh, who carried forward the
life of our people.

**For a Girl**
Yismeich Elohim k’Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, v’Rachel
May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, who carried
forward the life of our people.

**For Both Boys and Girls**
Y’varech’cha Adonai veyishm’rehcha
Yair Adonai panav eleycha vichuneka
Yisa Adonai panav eleycha veyasem lecha shalom
May God bless you and keep you. May God look kindly upon you and be gracious to you. May
God reach out to you in tenderness and give you peace.

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Welcome

Today marks the 27th annual National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths weekend celebrated by congregations of many faiths all across our nation. This year’s National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths is titled “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair.” Fifty years after Dr. King announced the Poor People’s Campaign, even though we have made strides in many ways, more than 13 million children live in poverty in our rich nation. Fifty years after Dr. King’s message of love and nonviolence, the equivalent of a classroom full of children and teens is killed by guns every two days. And fifty years since Dr. King reminded us that we are caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, families seeking refuge in our country are turned away and torn apart, children suffering the trauma of heartless separation. We have work to do to fulfill the promise and realize Dr. King’s vision. In the parashah Lech Lecha we hear the Eternal’s promise to Avram of blessing—blessing that is embodied in the birth of children and the generations that follow. It reminds us that we are blessed not for our own gratification but so that we might be a blessing. In the haftarah we will hear “[The Eternal] gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent. Youths may grow faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall; But they who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength as eagles grow new plumes: they shall run and not grow weary, they shall march and not grow faint.” For fifty years and more, we have been marching and advocating and working and speaking out for justice and an end to poverty, racism, and violence. The persistence of injustice can be discouraging, the deeply rooted racism a source of despair, the entrenched poverty can make us want to give up. Nevertheless, these times call for us to renew our strength so that we continue marching and calling for justice until we realize Dr. King’s vision. As Rabbi Heschel so famously observed after marching with Dr. King in Selma, “I felt my legs were praying.” On the 2018 Children’s Shabbat, as we celebrate together with congregations spanning the country and across all lines of religion, race, income and geography, we will be praying with our voices and legs, our words and our work. May it be for a blessing, even as we have been blessed with children. Like the journey of Abraham and Sarah, may our work, too, be for a blessing.

Modeh/Modah Ai

There is grace that every dawn renews,
a loveliness making every morning fresh.
We will endure, we will prevail—
We, the children of Hope,
Children of the One
Who crowds the heavens with stars,

Endows the earth with glory,
And fills the mind with wonder!
Mah Tovu

May the One whose spirit is with us in every righteous deed,
be with all who work for the good of humanity
and bear the burdens of others,
and who give bread to the hungry,
who clothe the naked
and take the friendless into their homes.
May the work of their hands endure,
and may the seed they sow bring abundant harvest.

(Elyse Frishman in Mishkan T'filah, p. 197)

Elohai N’shamah

My soul came to me pure,
drawn from the reservoir of the Holy.
All the time it remains within me,
I am thankful for its thirst
for compassion and justice.
Let my eyes behold the beauty of all creatures;
let my hands know the privilege of righteous deeds.

Baruch atah, Adonai, asher b’yado nefesh kol chai v’ruach kol f’sar ish.

(Nezer B’nai Mohr, Gates of Prayer, in B’nai Mohr, Mishkan T’filah, p. 199)

Nisim B’chol Yom

I can stay the tears of others, if I can see myself
as diminished of their sorrows.
I can hasten time when everyone will be able
to rejoice in freedom,
And if I can see myself as the companion
of those fighting against oppression,
I can honor the struggle of people everywhere
to gain dignity and deliverance from bondage.
when I look at myself in the mirror
who will I see?

Religion embraces both faith and action.
The primary quality is action,
for it lays the foundation for faith;
the more we do good,
the more readily do we grasp the meaning of duty and life
and the more readily do we believe in the Divine
from which stems the good.

 leo baeck in mishkan t’filah p. 199}
Study Texts

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: What is the meaning of the verse, “You shall walk behind the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 13:5)? ... [It means that] a person should imitate the righteous ways of the Holy One, blessed be God. Just as the Lord clothed the naked, ... so too you must supply clothes for the naked [poor]. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, visited the sick, ... so too you should visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, buried the dead, ... so too you must bury the dead. Just as the Holy One, blessed be God, comforted mourners, ... so too you should comfort mourners. (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 14a.)

There are eight degrees in the giving of tzedakah, each one higher than the one before:

- to give grudgingly, reluctantly, or with regret;
- to give less than one should, but with grace;
- to give what one should, but only after being asked;
- to give before one is asked;
- to give without knowing who will receive it, although the recipient knows the identity of the giver;
- to give without making known one's identity;
- to give so that neither the giver nor receiver knows the identity of the other;
- to help another to become self-supporting, by means of a gift, a loan, or by finding employment for the one in need.

(Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Charity 10:7-14)

The Call to Justice

Justice, justice shall you pursue,
That you may live in the land which God gives you.

You shall not pervert judgment, nor favor persons,
Neither shall you take a bribe,
For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise,
And perverts the words of the righteous.

Hear the causes between your brothers [and sisters],
Judge righteously your [kin] and the stranger.
You shall hear the small and great alike,
You shall not be afraid of the face of any [person];
For the judgment is God's.

Woe unto them that call evil “good” and good “evil”,
That turn darkness into light, and light into darkness.
Woe unto them that defend the wicked for a bribe
And deprive the innocent of [their] rights.

Rob not the weak because [they are] weak,
Neither crush the poor in thy midst.

See justice, relieve the oppressed,
Protect the [orphan], defend the cause of the widow.

Seek good and not evil, that you may live;
Then I the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you.

Hate evil and love what is good,
Yea, establish justice in the land.
Let justice well up as the water
And righteousness as a mighty stream.
For righteousness and justice
Are the foundations of God's throne.
For the Lord of Hosts is exalted through righteousness,
And God, the Holy One, is sanctified through justice.

(Rabbinical Assembly of America and the United Synagogue of America Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, 1957, adapted for inclusive language.)

Sh’ma Uvirchoteha — Sh’ma and Its Blessings

Reflection after the Bar’chu and Yotzeir Or
In the beginning, even then,
a new light was sown for the righteous;
a promise that Your light would become
the catalyst, first for Order
and then for Hope.
Author of language and light,
help us to use words as You have,
to cast light into dark waters
and draw out justice and truth.
Baruch atah, Adonai, yotzeir ham’ orot.

(Elyse Frishman, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 229)

Responsive Reading after Ahavah Rabbah
Once or twice in a lifetime,
a man or woman may choose
a radical leaving, having heard
Lech l’cha—Go forth.
    God disturbs us toward our destiny
    by hard events
    and by freedom’s now urgent voice
    which explode and confirm who we are.
We don’t like leaving
but God loves becoming.
Baruch atah, Adonoai, habocheir b’amo Yisrael b’ahavah.

(Mishkan T’filah, p. 231)

Responsive Reading after the Sh’ma and V’ahavta
True, we are often too weak to stop injustices;
but the least we can do is protest against them.
True, we are too poor to eliminate hunger;
but in feeding one child, we protest against hunger.
True, we are too timid and powerless to take on all the guards of all the political
prisons in the world;
but in offering our solidarity to one prisoner, we denounce all the tormentors.
True, we are powerless against death;
but as long as we help one man, one woman, one child live one hour longer in safety and dignity, we affirm a human’s right to live.

(Elie Wiesel, Sages and Dreamers)

When justice burns within us
like a flaming fire,
when love evokes willing sacrifice form us,
when, to the last full measure of selfless devotion,
we demonstrate our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness—
then Your goodness enters our lives
and we can begin to change the world.
And then You live in our hearts,
and we, through righteousness, behold Your Presence.

(Mishkan T’filah, p. 235)

Responsive Reading after Emet v’Yatziv
The eternal truth
is that You alone are God and there is none else.
May the righteous of all nations
rejoice in Your love and exult in Your justice.
Let them beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Let nation not lift up sword against nation
nor learn war any more.
You shall not hate your brother or your sister in your heart.
The stranger that sojourns with you
shall be accepted as your equal,
for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
“Why do you crush My people and oppress the poor?” asks God.
We know that the Eternal One defends the poor
and upholds the rights of the needy.
Praise to God Most High;
Blessed is God and deserving of blessing!

(Solomon ben Isaac in Mishkan T’filah, p. 239)

Reading after Mi Chamocha
The good in us will win,
over all the wickedness, over all the wrongs we have done.
We will look back at the pages of written history, and be amazed,
and then we will laugh and sing,
and the good that is in us, children in their cradles, will have won.
Our hearts beat with certainty
that there is a day and an hour, and a mountain called Zion,
And that all of the sufferings will gather there and become song,
ringing out into every corner of the earth, from end to end,
and the nations will hear it,
and like the caravans in the desert will all to that morning throng.

(Hugh Nissenson, adapted, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 241)
JEWISH RESOURCES FOR THE CHILDREN’S SHABBAT

Blessing of Redemption
Let us bless the source of life, source of faith and daring, wellspring of new song and the courage to mend.

(Marcia Falk in Siddur Lev Shalem, p. 158)

Amidah

Reflection for the Amidah
“Never again” becomes more than a slogan: It’s a prayer, a promise, a vow. There will never again be hatred, people say. Never again jail and torture. Never again the suffering of innocent people, or the shooting of starving, frightened, terrified children. And never again the glorification of base, ugly, dark violence. It’s a prayer.

(Elie Wiesel, Hostage)

Prayer invites
God’s presence to suffuse our spirits, God’s will to prevail in our lives. Prayer might not bring water to parched fields, nor mend a broken bridge, nor rebuild a ruined city. But prayer can water an arid soul, mend a broken heart, rebuild a weakened will.

(Abraham Joshua Heschel, adapted, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 165)

Reading after Avot v’Imahot
Our fathers and mothers prayed, each through their own experience of God, each through their own visions which we have come to share. Abraham with the fervor of justice, pleaded the cause of cities. Sarah, in the pain of waiting, dared to hope for new life. Isaac, meditating alone in the field, lifted his eyes to find love. Rebecca asked for the ability to discern God’s call. Jacob climbed the rungs of his night into heaven, seeking destiny. Leah dreamed of love; and Rachel sought harmony. We as they seek God’s Presence.

(Richard Levy, adapted, in Mishkan T’filah, p. 245)

Responsive Reading after G’vurot
Your might, O God, is everlasting; Help us to use our strength for good and not evil. You are the Source of life and blessing; Help us to choose life for ourselves and our children. You are the support of the falling;
Help us to lift up the fallen.
You are the author of freedom;
Help us to free the captive.
You are our hope in death as in life;
Help us to keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.
Your might, O God, is everlasting;
Help us to use our strength for good.
For blessing and not for curse,
For life and not death,
For abundance, not want.

(Chaim Stern in Mishkan T'filah, p. 349)

God, please stop injustice,
the killing of innocent children
by violence at home and in faraway lands.
God, please stop injustice,
The killing of innocent children
By poverty at home and abroad.
God, please stop injustice,
The killing of innocent child spirits
By vanity and greed in our land and others.
God, please stop injustice,
The assault on precious child dreams
By neglect and apathy near and far.
God, please stop injustice,
So our children may live
And love and laugh and play again.

(Marian Wright Edelman, in Guide My Feet)

**Reading after K'dushah**

How shall we sanctify God's name?
By being holy ourselves.
How do we accomplish this?
Let our prayers bring us to sacred deed,
to actions that promote justice, harmony and peace.

(Mishkan T'filah, p. 351)

**Reading after K'dushat HaYom**

For the good in us
which calls us to a better life,
we give thanks.

For the strength to improve the world
with our hearts and hands,
we give praise.
For the peace in us
which leads us to work for peace,
we are grateful.

For the gift of Shabbat
which renews us for life,
we offer blessing.

(Chaim Stern and Abraham Rothberg in Mishkan T'filah, p. 353)

Responsive Reading after Avodah
We Cannot Merely Pray

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;
For the world was made in such a way
That we must find our own path of peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbor.
We cannot merely pray to God to root out prejudice;
For we already have eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.
We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;
For we already have the resources
With which to feed the entire world
If we would only use them wisely.
We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;
For we already have the power
To clear away slums and give hope
If we would only use our power justly.
We cannot merely pray to God to end disease;
For we already have great minds
With which to search out cures and healings
If we would only use them constructively.
Therefore we pray instead
For strength, determination, and will power.
To do instead of merely pray
To become instead of merely to wish;
That our world may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

(Jack Riemer, adapted)

Responsive Reading after Hodaah

For the expanding grandeur of Creation,
Worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies,
Filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations,

Modim anachnu lach.
For this fragile planet earth, its time and tides,
Its sunsets and seasons,
Modim anachnu lach.
For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises,
Its hopes and achievements,
Modim anachnu lach.
For human community, our common past and future hope,
Our oneness transcending all separation,
Our capacity to work for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression
Modim anachnu lach.
For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism,
For understanding of views not shared.
Modim anachnu lach.
For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world,
Who have lived so that others might live in dignity and freedom,
Modim anachnu lach.
For human liberties and sacred rites:
for opportunities to change and grow, to affirm and choose,
Modim anachnu lach.
We pray that we may live not by our fears but by our hopes,
Not by our words but by our deeds.
Modim anachnu lach.
Blessed are you, Adonai, Your Name is Goodness and You are worthy of thanksgiving.

(Eugene Picket, adapted, in Mishkan T'filah, p. 257)

Reading after Sim Shalom

We oughtn't pray for what we've never known,
and humanity has never known:
unbroken peace,
unmixed blessing.
No.
Better to pray for pity,
for indignation, discontent,
the will to see and touch,
the power to do good and make new.

(Mishkan T'filah, p. 259)

Readings for the T'filat HaLev

A Talmudic sage once taught, “If a man prays only according to the precise text of the prayer book and adds nothing from his own heart, his prayer is not complete.”

Pray as if everything depended on God;
Act as if everything depended on you.
Who rise from prayer better persons,
their prayer is answered.

(From the Religious Action Center's Shabbat Tzedek Morning Service)
My God, help me to persist although I want to give up.
Help me to keep trying although I can’t see what good it does.
Help me to keep praying although I’m not sure You hear me.
Help me to keep living in ways that seek to please You.
My God, help me to know when to lead and when to follow.
Help me to know when to speak and when to remain silent.
Help me to know when to act and when to wait.

(Marian Wright Edelman, adapted from Guide My Feet)

Help me perfect my ways of loving and care.
Inspire me to make myself whole
so that I may honor your name and
create a world of justice and peace.

(Martin Buber, in Mishkan T’filah, p 121)

**Seder K’riat Hatorah L’Shabbat — Reading the Torah on Shabbat**

**Before the Ki Mitziyon**
Assemble the people, men, women and children,
and the strangers in your cities, to hear, to learn, to revere Adonai your God,
to observe faithfully the words of this Torah.
And let their children, who do not yet know it, hear,
that they, too, may learn to revere Adonai your God.

**Mi Shebeirach**
One in five children in our nation is poor. Poverty exacts a terrible toll from children—including
hunger, health problems, and even early death Children who were separated from their
parents at the border suffered unimaginable trauma. And all across our nation, our young live
in fear of the gun violence that kills or injures more than 40 children and teens every day. As
we say/sing the Misheberach, may we pray for their blessing and healing.

Mi Shebeirach avoteinu
M’kor hab’rachah l’imoteinu.

May the Source of strength who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing and let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu
M’kor hab’rachah laavoteinu.

Bless those in need of healing with r’fuah sh’leimah,
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, and let us say, Amen.

(Debbie Friedman)

**Responsive Readings after the Haftarah**
I, the Eternal, have called you to righteousness
and taken you by the hand, and kept you;
I have made you a covenant people, a light of nations.

*We are Israel: witness to the covenant
between God and God’s children.*
This is the covenant I make with Israel:
I will place my Torah in your midst, and write it upon your hearts.

I will be your God, and you shall be My people.

We are Israel: our Torah forbids the worship
of race or nation, possessions or power.

You who worship gods that cannot save you,
hear the words of the Eternal One:
I am God, there is none else!

We are Israel: our prophets proclaimed
an exalted vision for the world.

Hate evil, and love what is good;
let justice well up as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

We are Israel, schooled in the suffering of the oppressed.

You shall not oppress your neighbors nor rob them.
You shall not stand idle while your neighbor bleeds.

We are Israel, taught to beat swords into plowshares,
commanded to pursue peace.

Violence shall no longer be heard in your land,
desolation and destruction within your borders.
All your children will be taught of your God,
and great shall be the peace of your children.

We are Israel, O God,
when we are witnesses to Your love
and messengers of Your truth.

(Harvey J. Fields and Chaim Stern in Mishkan T'filah, p. 373)

Hachzarat HaTorah

When Torah entered the world, freedom entered it.
The whole Torah exists only to establish peace.
Its highest teaching is love and kindness.
What is hateful to you, do not do to any person.

That is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.
Those who study Torah are the true guardians of civilization.

Honoring one another, doing acts of kindness,
and making peace: these are our highest duties.
But the study of Torah is equal to them all,
because it leads to them all.

Let us learn in order to teach.
Let us learn in order to do!

(John Raynor and Chaim Stern in Mishkan T'filah, p. 375)

For Our Congregation

Source of all being,
may the children of this community learn these passions from us:
love of Torah, devotion in prayer, and support of the needy.
May we learn from the children of this community:
outrage at injustice, a vision of what can be untarnished by cynicism, and energetic pursuit of what is right without anxiously counting the cost. May we guide with integrity, and may our leadership be in Your service. May those who teach and nourish us be blessed with satisfaction, and may we appreciate their time and their devotion. Bless us with the fruits of wisdom and understand, and may our efforts bring fulfillment and joy. Baruch atah, Adonai, she-ot’cha b’yirah naavod.

(Adapted from Mishkan T’filah, p. 376)

Readings after the Aleinu L’shabeach

May we gain wisdom in our lives, Overflowing like a river with understanding. Loved, each of us, for the peace we bring to others. May our deeds exceed our speech, And may we never lift up our hand But to conquer fear and doubt and despair. Rise up like the sun, O God, over all humanity. Cause light to go forth over all the lands between the seas. And light up the universe with the joy of wholeness, of freedom, and of peace.

(Mishkan T’filah, p. 591)

While the sage Choni was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: “How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?” “Seventy years,” replied the man. Choni then asked: “Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?” The man answered: “I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planted for my children.” It is not your duty to complete the work. Neither are you free to desist from it.

(Pirkei Avot 2:16)

Reflection Before the Mourner’s Kaddish

Yizkor...We remember
Remember our people who suffered and died so that we could be free and secure; May their memory be more than a distant shadow.

For their dreams left unfulfilled and lives taken too soon: we remember.

Remember our brothers and sisters whose sacrifice kept the dream of democracy and justice alive; may their courage be our inspiration and strength.

For life cut short and vision unrealized: we remember.

Remember the fallen of our armed services, the victims of terror and tragedy; may the darkness of their loss not obscure the light of peace. They were in love with our land and in love with life.

For the agony, the tears, the mothers and the fathers, for the children who were and for the children yet to be: we remember.

(Peter Knobel in Mishkan T’filah, p. 597)
Sermon Notes for Parashat Lech Lecha

Sermon Notes

The following are sermon notes for the Torah portion Lech Lecha, which are useful resources from which to draw as you prepare your sermon for the 2018 Children’s Shabbat on October 19-20, 2018.

These sermon notes were prepared by Rabbi Judy Schindler, Sklut Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Stan Greenspon Center for Peace and Social Justice at Queens University of Charlotte and Rabbi Emerita of Temple Beth El in Charlotte, North Carolina. She recently co-authored with Judy Seldin-Cohen, Recharging Judaism: How Civic Engagement is Good for Synagogues, Jews, and America (CCAR Press: 2018).

The following are some suggested methods for approaching this year’s theme, “Realizing Dr. King’s Vision for Every Child: Lives of Hope, Not Despair.” Each congregation has its own customs, so your Children’s Shabbat sermon or drash should be tailored for your congregational needs.

You are welcome to adapt Rabbi Schindler’s words without attribution.

1. Tears Speak Louder than Words

Tears speak louder than words. Tears tell us of pain and let us know that a healing hand, a healing voice, a healing act is needed. The Talmud teaches that since the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, the gates of prayer are locked—an angel must serve as intermediary carrying our petitions up to God. But the gates of tears, Rabbi Elazar tells us, are not locked. God hears the cries of the oppressed.

Our Biblical mothers wept abundant tears. Each desperately wanted a child.

Sara wept. She desperately wanted a child and was blessed with the promise of a child in this week’s parashah. According to the Midrash, she dies bereft in next week’s parashah, having an inkling that her husband Abraham, in a moment of fanaticism, planned to sacrifice their son.

Rebecca wept. Her children, her twins Esau and Jacob, were fighting in her womb. She said, “If this is so, why do I exist?” No parent wants to see their child caught up in battle.

Hannah wept. In the book of Samuel, Hannah wanted a child so deeply and prayed so sincerely that her lips moved and no words came forth. The Priest observing her thought she was drunk. Hannah became a model for genuine prayer.

Today countless mothers across our country are weeping—as are fathers.

We have heard the ceaseless wailing of parents whose children have been stolen from this world by gun violence. According to a school tracker created by the Department of Education for the State of Hawaii, since January 1, 2018 there have been 17 school shootings with 33 people killed (among them 26 students). Hundreds, if not thousands, of lives and worlds have been shattered. Even our preschoolers are trained in lockdowns in the face of violent threats. Our kids have tragically grown up with mass shootings becoming commonplace.

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1 Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 59a
Today mothers and fathers are weeping as are their children who have been taken from them from our country’s borders. At this moment, 497 children remain separated from their parents. 103 of these children are categorized as being under 5 years of age. I cannot imagine my child being taken from me at any age.

U.S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw remarked “The reality is that for every parent who is not located there will be a permanently orphaned child and that is 100 percent the responsibility of the administration.”

Just as Avram and Sarai were called in this week’s parashah to take a journey leaving behind all that they have known for a dream and promise of a better future, so have the families arriving at our Southern borders done the same. They are leaving behind all they know in order to flee danger, seek refuge and asylum in our country and provide the promise of a better future for their children. Yet they are finding not blessings but devastation as they enter our country only to have their children, for whom they have risked everything, taken from them.

Today, mothers and fathers and children are weeping. For poverty pains the bodies and souls of 13 million American children each and every day.

Like Abraham and Sarah in Parashat Lech Lecha, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his final speech before his assassination 50 years ago, had a vision. “The arc of the moral universe is long,” he promised, “but it bends toward justice.”

Abraham and Sarah lived and died with hope in the brighter future that they could bring about. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived and died with hope in the more just future that he could co-create. As Jews, living with hope and working toward a more just future is fundamental to our faith.

To be a Jew is to plant for the future: saplings, seeds for vegetables and fruits, seeds of education, seeds of hope, and seed of peace.

Sara’s tears led to peace. In next week’s parashah, an angel stops Isaac from being sacrificed.

Rebecca’s tears led to understanding. The twins fighting within her womb were two nations, two peoples.

Hannah’s tears led to transformation. In her bitter grief she wept, prayed, and vowed to act. If God blessed her with a son, she would raise him to serve God. Hannah’s son, Samuel, would be the prophet who would anoint David as King – our most successful monarch from whose seed our tradition teaches that a messianic time of peace will indeed come.

May our tears and our response to the tears of the millions of parents and children suffering in the face of gun violence, poverty and family separation lead us to understanding, peace and change. May their tears touch our souls and move us to respond with our actions in order to ensure the promise of a better future.

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2. Blessings Are in Our Hands

Parashat Lech Lecha opens with God's call to Avram, “Lech Lecha, go forth from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.” God continues with a promise, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Commenting on the words “v’hayay b’rachah, and you shall be a blessing,” Rashi, clarifying his understanding of God’s intention, writes: “and you will be a blessing – The [rights to give] blessings are given into your hand. Until now, [the rights to give blessings] were in my hands. I blessed Adam, Noah, and You. From now on, you will bless whoever you want.”

The ability to bless the children of our country is in our hands. We can bless our children by being engaged in any number of activities and on many levels. We can be a blessing of support through mentoring and building relationships with those who are impacted by issues of gun violence, poverty and issues surrounding immigration. We can be a blessing of support by giving tzedakah to agencies supporting those in need with critical lifesaving items. We can be a blessing through the work of advocacy as we work to change policies that cause suffering. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught, social service is about alleviating hardship while social justice aims to eradicate root causes of that hardship.

3. Great is Peace

In this week’s Torah portion, Sarah laughs when she learns that she and Abraham will have a child noting to the Divine messenger that “her husband is so old.” But when Abraham enquires about the source of Sarah’s laughter, God adapts her words, saying that Sarah commented, “Shall I have a child, seeing that I am old?” Based on this week’s Torah portion the School of Ishmael taught: “Gadol shalom – Great is peace,” that God revised Sarah’s words in order to attain it. (Babylonian Talmud Bava Metiza 87a)

There is a chapter called Perek HaShalom – the Chapter of Peace, that concludes the minor tractate of the Babylonian Derech Eretz Zuta (one of fourteen tractates not included in the canon of the Mishnah) that has a litany of statements on the importance of peace:

Rabbi Yosi the Galilean said: Gadol hu hashalom – Great is peace, because even in a time of war, one should begin with peace, as it’s written: “When you near a city to war against it, [first] call out to it for peace” (Deuteronomy 20:10).

Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: Gadol hu hashalom - Great is peace, for all the blessings and prayers conclude with “shalom/peace.” The Shema concludes with “peace”—“...spread the sukkah of Your peace” [end of Hashkivenu prayer, following the Shema]; the Priestly Blessing concludes with peace—“and give you peace;” and the Amidah concludes, “Bless You, Who makes peace/oseh hashalom.”

The one who loves peace, runs after peace, greets with “peace” and answers with “peace,” the Blessed Holy One makes to inherit the life of this world and the life of the world to come, as it’s written: “…the lowly shall inherit the land, and delight in abundant peace” (Psalm 37:11).

What is our role and what are our responsibilities in creating gadol shalom – great peace or greater peace for our children?