



# Prayable Moments

## **Topic**

Prayer; Daily Life & Sacred Moments

## **Grade Level(s)**

All

## **Goals for the Lesson/Activity**

### **Students will:**

- Investigate how key moments in world events connect with prayer
- Explore how their lives or the lives of their family and friends connect with prayer
- Learn how emotion and empathy influence prayer and apply that understanding to their own prayer experiences

## **Materials needed**

As explained in the “Background” section, this is a situational activity/experience. Materials are discretionary and are selected as relevant to a variety of factors: the details and nature of the event, the *t’fillah* practices of the school, the age of the students, and the timing of the event (how recently it occurred).

- News article(s), print
- News video
- *Tehillim* (Psalms), possibly 20, 23, 27, 121 or other Psalms, as appropriate
- *Siddur*, possibly *Mi Shebeirach*, *Sim Shalom*, *Kaddish*, as appropriate

## **Background for Teachers**

The idea of a “prayable moment” is a variation on the concept of a “teachable moment,” defined as a moment when a unique, high-interest situation arises that lends itself to discussion of a specific topic. As such, this is presented as a teaching skill to be employed when the opportunity arises. As with teachable moments, prayable moments often come unexpectedly, in context of events outside of the learning curriculum. These events can fall into two categories and need to be handled with different approaches.

1. “Outside” events, those that have news significance or cultural impact, such as: a major scientific breakthrough, a Nobel Prize announcement, a terrorist event, a natural disaster, or a drug overdose of a pop culture icon.
2. “Inside” events, those that have immediate impact on the personal lives of one or more of your students: a birth, a marriage, a family illness, a death, a divorce.



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**Seriously consider addressing particularly sensitive events in partnership with the educational director and, when appropriate, clergy.**

Activities for ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ events can be planned. However, remember that a prayable moment is often powerful as a spontaneous response to occurrences “outside” or “inside” the school or congregation.

### **Description of Activities**

This is a situational activity/experience. We present here the core idea: to have the class write a prayer together in response to an event.

The steps are a template adaptable to the event and the age of the students. For younger grades, pay careful attention to the appropriate emphasis for each step.

Step 1: What happened?	Share the background. As relevant, bring in news articles or video clips (e.g. YouTube) to set up the background
Step 2: Impact	Discuss: How does this impact our world, our community, our synagogue, our families, our friends?
Step 3: Our feelings	Discuss: What’s the emotional impact on us? How does it feel? If it is an “inside” event, how does it feel to the people we know? Begin to capture key words on a whiteboard. This will likely flow naturally from Step 2: Impact.
Step 4: Jewish prayer responses (recommended only for older students)	What is the Jewish prayer response to this kind of event? Where do we see that in our prayers? After asking for ideas, focus on a specific prayer or Psalm. Be prepared for difficult questions like whether prayers are answered or if anger or angry language has a place in prayer.
Step 5: Write a prayer	This will flow directly from the Step 3 discussion of feelings. Ask students what they want their prayer to say and create phrases or sentences of the prayer for them. When it is done, read it to them and get buy-in.



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	As an alternative for older students, individuals take 10 minutes to write their own prayer responses and those interested read their prayers to the class.
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This skill set is designed for spontaneous use when “inside” or “outside” events are the focus of conversation and concern among students. Prayable moments can also be brought by the teacher based on news (“outside”) events. Here are some examples:

- Potential Cures for Leukemia (<http://bit.ly/1TkCSG6>)
- Battle for Aleppo: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18957096>
- Election Results in Your Country

### **Differentiation Options**

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

#### ***For learners who need more assistance***

- To show emotions, rather than speak them, suggest drawing a picture or expressing their feelings through pantomime
- Ask if there are songs that would be meaningful in this situation

#### ***For learners who need extension opportunities***

- Students look more deeply at how a specific prayer conveys meaning through its language, imagery, etc. Encourage students to incorporate their insights into their own prayers.
- For students interested in poetry, look at the prayer aspects of Israeli poetry, anything from Yehuda Amichai to Rachel to Navit Barel. Embolden students to use their observations to write their own prayerful poetry.