

Worship

Explore prayer in The Window and on the Temple website

Many congregants have asked for help feeling more comfortable, confident and competent to participate in Shabbat service.

Each month we will explore a different prayer from the Shabbat liturgy with a short explanation or reflection provided by a member of the congregation in *The Window*. The website will feature the printed text of the prayer (in Hebrew, transliteration and English translation all from *Mishkan T'fila*) and a MP3 recording for you to read or sing along with Cantor Cohn.

Resources to learn more about prayers and the art of worship will also be available. Log on to www.tedallas.org and click the prayer study link on the home page.

Please share your feedback about these resources with us at thechairoad@tedallas.org.

This month Worship Committee member Peggy Kaufman helps us focus on the V'ahavta.

The *V'ahavta* is one of the blessings that immediately follows the recitation of the *Sh'ma*. The text is drawn from two different sections of Torah: Deuteronomy (Devarim) 6:5-9, from *parashah V'e'tchanan*, and Numbers (B'midbar) 15:40-41, from *parashah Sh'lah Ekha*. As Reform Jews, we recite a shorter version of the blessing than our Conservative or Orthodox counterparts, but variations of the *V'ahavta* have been included in the Reform liturgy going back to the first Reform congregational prayer book, published in Hamburg in 1819.

One of the most common reactions to the *V'ahavta* is a question: How can we be commanded to love? The prayer tells us “You shall love Adonai your God...” but it seems counterintuitive that the Torah demands a feeling that we assume should flow naturally. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, taught that if we behave in a way that shows our love for others, this will automatically result in love for our God. The verb form of “v'ahavta” (“And you shall love”) appears only three times in the whole Torah. We are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves in Leviticus (Vayikra) 19:18, then to love the stranger as ourselves in Leviticus 19:34, and finally to love our God in the verse from Deuteronomy we recite in this prayer. Many rabbis have noted that the order of these commandments can teach us a fundamental truth: that by acting with love towards others, we can grow in our love towards God.

The
V'ahavta
ואהבת