

GUIDE TO VIEWING JUDY

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SECTION ONE: SETTING THE STAGE

PURPOSE We recommend beginning with a summary of your purposes for using videos for professional development:

- To observe and investigate the practice of teaching
- To begin a reflective discussion with colleagues about the dilemmas and uncertainties of teaching
- To enhance one's own skills of asking questions and diagnosing problems
- To apply these skills to the improvement of teaching and learning in one's own classroom

helpful **HINTS**

People approach videos with different expectations. Some expect to see a "model" teacher; others think the point is to evaluate whether the teacher is "good" or "bad." It is important to note, however, that these tapes are not intended to represent the best or only way to teach *Humash* or *Tefillah*.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

(NOTE: The following information about context has been provided as a separate document. You might choose to read this section aloud, or you might opt to distribute it as a hand-out for participants to read on their own.)

THE CONTEXT This kindergarten/first grade class is situated in a small Midwestern Reconstructionist synagogue near a university community. The congregation was founded by a group of families who wanted a highly participatory setting and a strong Jewish education for their children. Over the course of its history, congregants have taken an active role in the school, often participating as voluntary teachers on Sunday mornings.

THE TEACHER Judy is a member of the congregation, and for three years prior to the taping of this class has been a volunteer or avocational teacher. She became a teacher "to learn more about Judaism, to find a meaningful place for myself as a new member of the congregation, and as a way to get to know people, particularly the parents of my students." She feels her goals for participating in

this project have been met. Judy does not have any formal training in Jewish studies or education.

THE CLASS AND LESSON There are nine children in this class, which meets every Sunday and Wednesday afternoon. On Sunday mornings, Judy is joined by Sally, another congregational volunteer, and Stacy, a university student. (Stacy teaches the Wednesday class.) On Sundays, class meets from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and includes a prayer service with the rabbi in addition to a class session. The following was written by Judy for the synagogue newsletter:

Our combined kindergarten and first grade, known as *Kitah Mechinah Aleph*, has an engaging curriculum that includes Hebrew, holidays, *berakhot*, *menschlichkeit*, introduction to Torah, and its own weekly period of davening with the rabbi. We've established a two-year sequence of study, one year emphasizing concepts of God and prayer, the next focusing on the synagogue, particularly the sanctuary.

A formal curriculum was not used for this class; however, Judy and the education director, an ordained rabbi, found support in lesson plan design by reading and discussing various books on Jewish beliefs about God¹, as well as the Torah Aura curriculum for young children.

During the hour that Judy teaches this class, their subject is prayer. They learn prayers that are part of the service in school on Sunday mornings and also discuss some of the "big ideas" of praying. In this lesson, they focus in part on the idea of personal prayer.

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON AND CLIPS (17 MINUTES) In the opening few minutes of the lesson, Judy reviews previous conversations they have had about God and links those themes to today's lesson on prayer. She asks them how they would define prayer if a younger child asked them the question, "What is prayer?" They don't have a lot to say in answer to this question but do share some ideas about talking to God and about how Jews and Christians might pray differently. They list some of the prayers they already know, reviewing the *Sh'ma*, *Etz Haim*, and *HaMotzi*.

¹ These books included Harold Kushner's *When Children Ask About God* (New York: Schocken, 1989) and David Wolpe's *Teaching Your Children About God* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.)

The video clip begins when Judy asks children to talk about prayers in which we ask for things. The children suggest possible topics for “asking prayers.” Judy clarifies and reframes some of their comments.

After further discussion, Judy asks about when we pray. Children discuss praying at meals and in the synagogue. One child asks if we pray before we go to the bathroom, and other children echo this question. Stacy, the university student who teaches the class on Wednesdays, says that she knows a prayer for going to the bathroom. A brief conversation on this topic ensues.

The discussion continues about places where people pray. Judy begins by mentioning the synagogue. Joshua suggests the *Kotel*. Sally, the other avocational teacher in the room, mentions praying outside in the woods. Judy expands on this by asking Sally if she feels close to God when she is outside.

Joshua says that he prays to God before going to sleep. Judy probes as to why this is a good time. The clip ends after this discussion.

The lesson concludes with Judy telling a story about a little girl and her mother saying a bedtime prayer.

STUDENT INTERVIEW, 1 YEAR AFTER CLASS SESSION (8 MINUTES)

In this segment, Joshua, one of the children in Judy’s class, is interviewed about his ideas on prayer and praying. He was interviewed approximately one year after this class session took place.

BEFORE YOU PLAY THE VIDEO Before you play the video, set the stage by reading aloud the preceding pages or summarizing their information about the context, teacher and class.

We suggest that you hand out the ancillary materials at this point, explain what they are, and give participants a moment to look them over. For Judy’s lesson, the ancillary materials include:

- background information on the context, teacher, and class
- a transcript of the lesson
- a photo seating chart of Judy’s class
- Judy’s lesson plan and notes
- a transcript of interview with Judy
- a transcript of the interview with Joshua (student)
- student work from a different but related lesson

You might want to describe what happens in the lesson prior to the first clip by reading the first paragraph of the transcript aloud.

When you select the video, the first image will remain paused for a few seconds to allow for time for everyone to focus on the screen.

SECTION TWO: FIRST VIEWING –OBSERVATION

PURPOSE The first viewing is aimed at becoming oriented to the classroom and learning how to describe and discuss observations in a non-judgmental way.

Remind participants that the video contains excerpts of a real lesson in a real classroom and is *not* intended to represent the best or only way to teach the subject.

ACTIVITIES

1. OBSERVATION

The video consists of a section from the lesson (17 minutes), followed by an interview with one of Judy's students (8 minutes). At this point, you need only watch the lesson. The interview is intended for use in a later investigation.

Encourage participants to take notes while viewing.

You might want to ask participants to consider the following after viewing:

- What stood out for you?
- What surprised you? Why?
- What questions do you have?

helpful HINTS

Participants might notice:

- the “fidgetiness” and silly behavior of some of the children;
- the associative nature of the discussion (It seems to jump from idea to idea.);
- the number of ideas about prayer that gets raised in the lesson;
- that there are three teachers in the class;
- how interesting it is to see young children talking about God.

2. MOVING FROM OBSERVATION TO INVESTIGATION

POSTING RESPONSES

It is always helpful to write participants' responses on flipcharts as they share them with the group. This not only minimizes repetition but also creates an opportunity to discuss different interpretations of various aspects of the lesson. Focusing on the variety in what is noticed and the way in which it is noticed helps participants understand that watching a class is a subjective experience.

For example, different participants might notice that children are fidgeting. One might comment on the teacher's lack of response toward fidgeting; another might mention fidgeting as a common feature of classes with young children; and a third might question whether fidgeting indicates lack of interest or if it is typical behavior for young children.

REFINING OUR OBSERVATIONS

There will inevitably be some judgmental or evaluative responses to the video. For example, some people watch Judy and say, "The lesson seems unfocused," or "Judy discusses ideas that are abstract for children of this age." If comments like these come up, ask, "Why do you think so?" or "How can you tell?" or "What did you see in the video that led you to make that statement?" or "Can you reframe your statement or question in a descriptive way?"

Either at the end of this portion of the discussion or as participants inspect the list they made, ask participants how they would investigate this idea further. This would be a way of sharpening participants' capacity to understand what can be learned from further observation and examination of the records of practice in front of them. This step is particularly important if you opt to design your own investigative activities based on participants' observations and comments rather than to use the lesson plans that we have provided.

PLACING OBSERVATIONS INTO THE TEACHER, LEARNER, AND CONTENT TRIANGLE

One of the strategies in this guide for investigating the dynamics of teaching and learning is to focus on the teacher, the learner, or the content as a starting point and study the lesson from that perspective. This is helpful not only for examining the different elements of a class but also for understanding the very complex way in which these elements interact.

helpful HINTS

You might want to draw a large triangle on the board and mark one corner "T," another "L," and the other "C." Then write each comment in its corresponding place within the triangle. Participants might feel that some comments relate to teacher, learner, or content alone, and, therefore, belong close to the corners, while others seem to indicate a relationship *between* corners and therefore belong along the sides. This diagram might help participants organize the pieces of information that they are gathering about the lesson, as well as to begin to visualize the relationships. The triangle can serve as a map for the investigation as participants further study the lesson in the second viewing.

This discussion will set the stage for the second viewing and investigation, in which participants will view the lesson in terms of the points on the triangle (teacher, learner, content) and the relationships and interactions among them.

SECTION THREE: SECOND VIEWING –TAKING AN INVESTIGATIVE STANCE TOWARD TEACHING AND LEARNING

PURPOSE Taking an investigative stance toward teaching and learning involves a number of steps: investigation, analysis and reflection, and application to practice. The second viewing of the video allows for a more careful study of the components of the lesson and their dynamic relationship. By examining interactions among teacher, learner, and content within a particular context, we can begin to further develop our ideas about teaching and learning in general, and consider how these new insights might shed light on our own teaching. In this section we also draw upon additional records of practice to lead us to new discoveries about teaching and learning.

ACTIVITIES

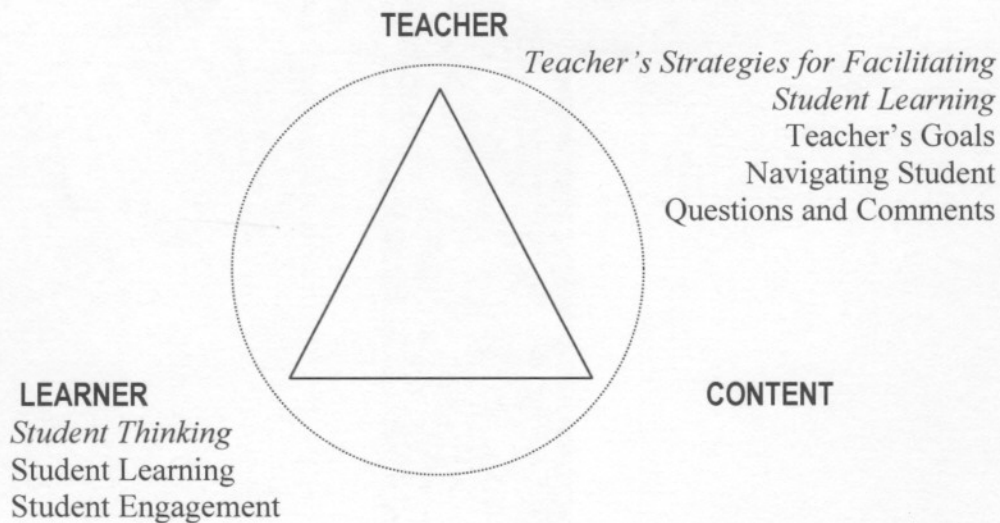
1. INVESTIGATION

View the video with an eye toward studying specific questions about the teacher, learners, or content.

Here are a number of possible ways to approach this viewing:

- **Follow the investigations that we have provided in this section.** Beginning on page 11, you will find three examples of how investigations of some key issues in Judy's lesson might be conducted from the perspective of teacher, learner, and content. This video is particularly instructive for studying and discussing the questions that appear. You might choose to ask participants to work in small groups, each conducting one of the investigations and reporting back to the larger group during the debriefings.
- **Investigate further what participants noticed in the first viewing.** Build on participants' responses to the first viewing by investigating moments or issues of their choosing. For example, participants might want to investigate the climate of the classroom and the relationship between Judy and her students; or participants might be interested in investigating the distinctions Judy makes between different kinds of prayers.

- **Design your own investigation around the corners of the triangle.** Design your own investigative viewing from the perspective of teacher, learner, or content. A list of topics that you might investigate appears around the triangle below; the italics indicate the topic that we discuss in the coming pages.



DEBRIEF

Following are guidelines for debriefing at each step. If different members of the group conduct different investigations, you might think about using the following strategy for allowing the group to debrief together:

- Share and post observations and questions. One way to do this is to ask each group to write their comments on posterboard or flipcharts and then have a representative of the group explain the written material.
- Study the items noted by each group. Several different questions could frame this analysis, including:
 1. Are there any issues that overlap?
 2. Are there significant moments that are common to all three investigations?
 3. Are there questions that can be addressed as they listen to each other?

The next steps in this second viewing ask participants to follow up on their investigation, examining additional materials and reflecting on their own practice. After each of these next two phases, you might again want to create a collective debrief.

2. ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Examine other records of practice, as well as our own experiences, and reflect on the larger implications for our practice.

3. APPLICATION TO THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Translate what we have learned into what we do in our own classrooms.

Examples of how these activities might play out begin on the next page.

INVESTIGATION OF
TEACHER



TEACHER'S GOALS What evidence can you see of the teacher's goals in the video? What are the teacher's stated goals? (If this information is available, it can generally be found in the lesson plan, teacher's notes, or the transcript of the interview with the teacher.) Does the lesson reflect these goals? Is there evidence of a particular strategy employed by the teacher to achieve these goals? Do you think the teacher succeeds in achieving these goals?

1. STRATEGY FOR INVESTIGATION

Ask participants (either individually or in small groups) to notice each time they see Judy raise a topic or develop an idea. They can track their investigation by checking off these moments on the transcript itself. They can then compare the ideas they generate to the ideas that Judy identifies as her lesson plan goals.

DEBRIEF

Give participants a few moments to share their findings and to compare and contrast their impressions of Judy's goals. Then ask participants to compare their renditions of Judy's goals with the goals that Judy herself identifies in her class notes for this session.

2. ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Examine other records of practice, as well as our own experiences, and reflect on the larger implications for our practice.

A. Examine the transcript of the interview with Judy and the background information about her. What are Judy's own experiences with and questions about prayer? What do you learn about Judy that sheds light on her choice of goals?

B. What are your own experiences of prayer? How have these experiences informed your goals for teaching prayer? How have these experiences informed your teaching of or about prayer?

3. APPLICATION TO THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Translate what we have learned into what we do in our own classrooms.

Thinking about goals for a lesson is a complicated process. Where do goals come from? One imagines in the abstract that teachers select goals from the school's mission or school's curriculum. In the case of Judy, the relationship between a teacher's personal biography and her goals is striking.

Ask participants to keep track of their goals in the coming weeks. For example, over the next two weeks, take the time to write down your goals and figure out where they come from. Do they derive from the school's curriculum, from the textbooks you are using, or from your personal biography?

It is not enough, however, to think about goals only in terms of their origins. One needs to figure out what students understand about these goals. In order to focus on the "match" between teacher's goals and learner's understanding, ask participants to pay careful attention to the ways in which they frame their goals and how these goals play out in the classroom. For example, in the next two weeks, write down some of your goals for students' learning and analyze them in terms of the following questions:

- Before the lesson: Do your goals address both content and student learning?
- After the lesson: Were you successful in achieving your goals? How do you know? What do you consider to be evidence of your students' learning?

INVESTIGATION OF
LEARNER



STUDENT THINKING What does this lesson reveal about students' thinking? What do their comments, questions, and body language reveal about what and how they think about the lesson's subject? What are the issues the students raise? To what issues or topics do they seem to respond?

1. STRATEGY FOR INVESTIGATION

One way of investigating student thinking and better understanding students' ideas about a subject is to listen carefully to their questions and comments. In this video, we have a window into some of the ways that young children think about prayer and praying.

Begin this investigation by asking participants to carefully note the ideas that children generate about times and topics of prayer. For example, Joshua asks God for help not to be kidnapped; William asks God to help him not be nervous when he goes swimming.

Based on their lists of comments, questions, and responses (including body language), participants can try to figure out what the children seem to understand about both fixed and personal prayers. In order to facilitate this discussion, participants might choose to watch different children and pay attention to both their body language and their comments. Participants can then compare their observations.

DEBRIEF

Ask participants to share the new insights that careful observing and listening gave them in regard to young learners' ideas about prayer and praying.

2. ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Examine other records of practice, as well as our own experiences, and reflect on the larger implications for our practice.

A. Watch the student interview and read the transcript. What do you learn from Joshua about his understanding of prayer? How would you answer the following question: “How does Joshua define ‘prayer’?”

B. In the lesson we have seen, students discussed what one can pray for. The next time they came to class, they composed their own prayers. Read the prayers that students wrote. What new insights do you gain into how the children think about God and prayer?

C. As we listen to young children talk about “big ideas” related to God and prayer, we often note the freedom and profundity of their discussions. Ask participants to recall their own childhood ideas about prayer and how or if those ideas have changed over time. Compare their ideas to those raised by the children in Judy’s class. Discuss the challenges of appropriately translating adult ideas into the lives and worlds of your learners, particularly those who are young children.

3. APPLICATION TO THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Translate what we have learned into what we do in our own classrooms.

Suggest ways that participants can investigate these same questions drawing on evidence from their own classrooms.

Here are two possible application exercises that would help participants learn more about children’s ideas. Both focus on carefully listening to what children have to say.

- Explore the ways in which students in your class think about the issues raised in Judy’s class. Engage the students in your class in a discussion about prayer and praying. Try to find out what they think they are doing when they pray. Is it okay to invent your own prayers? What is the difference between fixed prayers from the *Siddur* and personal prayer?

Record what they say.

- If you do not teach prayer, you might consider comments that children make about the topic that you are teaching. What can

you learn from their comments about how they understand the topic you are teaching?

- Suggest that participants actually tape record and transcribe these conversations. These tapes and transcriptions would constitute records of practice created by the participants in your group.
- Regardless of which subject matter participants have considered, ask them to follow up by designing at least one other exercise or activity (besides discussion) that would give them insights into their students' understandings.

INVESTIGATION OF
CONTENT



T L

CONTENT INVESTIGATION What appears to be the focus of this lesson? What are the significant Jewish ideas encountered in the lesson? How are they developed by the teacher and students? What would be useful for a teacher to know in order to teach the content of this lesson? What is important for students to learn about this content?

1. STRATEGY FOR INVESTIGATION

As you watch the video, check off ideas about prayer (as they are introduced in the transcript) that you consider Jewishly significant.

helpful **HINTS**

Some ideas participants might mention:

- There are petitionary prayers that are considered invalid.
- There is a prayer that is traditionally recited when one leaves the bathroom.
- People are allowed to make up their own prayers.
- There are fixed prayers; both the words and occasions on which they are recited are set.

Review your ideas with a partner and come up with a combined list. Based on the questions and topics Judy covers, answer the following:

- What seems to be the focus of this lesson?
- What points does she try to emphasize?
- What does she seem to think her students should know about prayer and praying?

DEBRIEF

Generate a collective list of ideas that participants have noted. Compare and contrast the ideas on the list they generate with the ideas that Judy mentions in her notes on this lesson. (See ancillary materials.)

2. ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Examine other records of practice, as well as our own experiences, and reflect on the larger implications for our practice.

A. Building on the ideas encountered in this investigation, ask participants to read the below selection on *tefillah* from *These Are the Words: A Vocabulary of Jewish Spiritual Life* by Arthur Green (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999).

When they complete the reading, ask them to compare the ideas that he introduces with the ideas set forth in Judy's goals. Ask them what new ideas they have gained about spontaneous and fixed prayer from their reading.

Tefillah or prayer is the living heart of Jewish faith, the daily outpouring of the soul before God....

Verbal prayer may be divided into two types: the spontaneous prayer of the moment and the set, prescribed prayer to be recited at a fixed time, or liturgy. The Bible is filled with spontaneous prayers. We need think only of Moses' one-line outcry for the healing of his sister Miriam: "Please Lord, heal her!" (Numbers 12:13), or the many spontaneous prayers of the Psalter (*tehillim*). Miriam too joins the chorus of momentary prayer when she and the women of Israel exult at the sea and cry "Sing to the Lord truly exalted: horse and rider has He cast into the sea" (Exodus 15:21).

Fixed or liturgical prayer also has its roots in the Bible, but it developed much further in post-Biblical Judaism, partly to replace the sacrificial system. Worship was now depicted as the person's gift to God, the human heart being placed on the altar where a token animal had once been offered. "A sacrifice to the Lord is a broken spirit" (Psalm 51:19). The familiar rhythms of fixed prayer serve ideally as a language familiar to the heart, one that can stir it to wakefulness like a friend who comes to remind one of the affections of a silent lover. The words recall God's abiding love and goodness, and we are aroused to respond from our depths. "The Merciful One seeks the heart," the Talmud says of prayer. The words are the vehicle to allow this flow from the heart to take place.

Nevertheless, Judaism is quite concerned about the proper forms of prayer. The opening tractate of

the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* is *Berakhot*, which deals in great detail with the order, nature, and wording of prayers. The evolution of the *Siddur*, in both its traditional and various modern forms, bears witness to the great attention Jews have given to the language of prayer. The tension between this concern for proper form and the full knowledge that true prayer soars far beyond the limits of any language lies close to the heart of true Jewish concern for prayer. (pages 110-111)

B. The section from Green's book on *tefillah* is a resource that teachers can draw upon to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of key Jewish concepts she or he wishes to teach. Ask participants to think about a "big Jewish idea" that they have taught or are interested in teaching and generate strategies for finding appropriate resources.

3. APPLICATION TO THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Translate what we have learned into what we do in our own classrooms.

Suggest that participants think about the ways in which finding and studying outside content resources could enrich their own teaching. As they plan their next few lessons, ask them to consider the following about the content they are teaching: What more would you like to know? What would help you feel better prepared? What ideas might be hard for students to grasp? What ideas might be particularly interesting for the students? Where might I find resources to help me address these issues?

Judy's Class Background Information

THE CONTEXT

This kindergarten/first grade class is situated in a small Midwestern Reconstructionist synagogue near a university community. The congregation was founded by a group of families who wanted a highly participatory setting and a strong Jewish education for their children. Over the course of its history, congregants have taken an active role in the school, often participating as voluntary teachers on Sunday mornings.

THE TEACHER

Judy is a member of the congregation, and for three years prior to the taping of this class has been a volunteer or avocational teacher. She became a teacher "to learn more about Judaism, to find a meaningful place for myself as a new member of the congregation, and as a way to get to know people, particularly the parents of my students." She feels her goals for participating in this project have been met. Judy does not have any formal training in Jewish studies or education.

THE CLASS AND LESSON

There are nine children in this class, which meets every Sunday and Wednesday afternoon. On Sunday mornings, Judy is joined by Sally, another congregational volunteer, and Stacy, a university student. (Stacy teaches the Wednesday class.) On Sundays, class meets from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and includes a prayer service with the rabbi in addition to a class session. The following was written by Judy for the synagogue newsletter:

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¹ These books included Harold Kushner's *When Children Ask About God* (New York: Schocken, 1989) and David Wolpe's *Teaching Your Children About God* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.)

During the hour that Judy teaches this class, their subject is prayer. They learn prayers that are part of the service in school on Sunday mornings and also discuss some of the "big ideas" of praying. In this lesson, they focus in part on the idea of personal prayer.

Judy Class Transcript

In the opening few minutes of the lesson, Judy reviews previous conversations they have had about God and links those themes to today's lesson on prayer. She asks them how they would define prayer if a younger child asked them the question, "What is prayer?" They don't have a lot to say in answer to this question but do share some ideas about talking to God and about how Jews and Christians might pray differently. They list some of the prayers they already know, reviewing the Sh'ma, Etz haim and HaMotzi. The video clip begins when Judy asks children to talk about prayers in which we ask for things.

1 Judy: We've talked about prayers that ask God for things, right? Is it asking... Is it like asking for a list of birthday presents?

2 *[Several say "No!"]*

3 Judy: What kinds of prayers of asking would we think about? Miriam?

4 Miriam: God?

5 Judy: Sit up so we can hear you better, okay?

6 Micah: Bones for your body? *[giggling]*

7 Judy: Micah, Miriam has some idea about what we-- what an asking prayer might be about.

8 Miriam: ...

9 Judy: You could ask a prayer, and people who ask prayers for their family to be healthy. Asking for God's help to keep our families healthy. Joshua?

10 Joshua: Um, like if you got kidnapped or something and then, um, the kidnappers, like, put a bomb in your room, you would pray to God, "Please help me."

11 Judy: So asking God for help when you have trouble. When you're in trouble or feel like you have a big, big problem in your life.

12 Joshua: Like puking.

13 William: You can pray to God to help you not be nervous.

14 Judy: To help you not be nervous.

15 Joshua: If we're going into a haunted house.

[William laughs.]

16 Judy: So to help-- to ask for God's help to be the kind of person you really want to be. William's example was asking God's help to help you be brave or strong when you've got a problem.

17 William: I remember that when I go to swimming lessons.

18 Judy: Okay.

19 Betty: Yeah, he's scared of swimming.

20 Judy: Well, the water--

21 William: I'm nervous!

22 Judy: Sure.

23 William: It comes right to here, where my legs are.

24 Judy: That makes sense, William. That makes sense. And so when we are feeling nervous about something we can talk to...

25 Joshua: You bite your fingernails.

26 Judy: ...we can talk to other people for help. Robby, we could talk to other people. We might talk to the adults, we might ask for help from adults.

[Kids pretend to bite their fingernails.]

William, we might ask for help from adults to help us be brave. And a lot of people think that another place they can go to ask for help when they have a problem is to God. To talk to God.

27 Robby: I need to go to the bathroom.

28 Joshua: 'Cause he's always there for you.

29 Judy: 'Cause God is always there.

30 Robby: I need to go to the bathroom.

31 Judy: Okay, Robby. Go ahead.

32 Davy: I need to go get a drink.

33 Another child: I need to go get a drink.

34 Judy: Okay, now we only need two people up.

35 Stacy: Well, why don't—Davy, Davy, how about one at a time, okay? We'll wait 'til Robby comes back?

36 Judy: So let's think about the things we've talked about that prayer could be. Talking to God was the big idea that we had—to thank God, to remember God, to ask for God's help for other people like the people in our family, or to ask for God's help for ourselves when we need something, when we--

37 William: This wouldn't be a prayer, like "God, I want to fly."

[Joshua laughs.]

38 Judy: When—when do we pray? Wha—when can we pray?

39 William: Times that we need help.

40 Judy: Times that we need help.

41 Collin: And at dinner.

42 Miriam: And in the morning.

43 Judy: At dinner. You could pray at dinner. You might say a blessing about the food that you're eating.

44 Noam: I want better food.
I want better food.

45 Judy: And Miriam said you could pray in the morning... and we pray here at synagogue, right?

46 Joshua: That's when people look like this *[closes his eyes, clasps his hands together and sways back and forth on his knees]*

47 William: Like Chinese people!

[Joshua tugs at his eyelids, trying to caricature Asian eyes.]

48 Judy: Some people—I've seen pictures of people, too, with their hands like that. That must be something that helps some people pray, right?

49 William: Chinese people pray like this!

[William stands up, holds his hands flat against each other, bends forward at the waist, and falls to the floor.]

50 Micah: Chinese people pray like this!

[Micah stands up, and Judy puts her hands on his shoulders and leads him to sit down again.]

51 Judy: That's just what I wanted to talk about: about what are some of the things that help us pray? Or help us get... about praying? Some people feel that the time that's best for them to pray is at a dinner or I know people who pray right away when they wake up in the morning. Rabbi Bluthe has talked about that, about the morning prayers.

52 Collin: And you pray before you go to bed.

53 Judy: Or some people feel like that's a really good time for them to pray. When... It's important for you to find the time, or for a person to find a time, to pray when they feel like it's a time or place where they can think about the things that are important to them or feel close to God. Sometimes we pray-- we always pray--we have to pray at a certain time, like before we eat. That's just the way things are organized. Or when we *daven* with Rabbi Bluthe. We know when we go into when we go in to *daven* with Rabbi Bluthe, that's a time to pray. That's set up. But sometimes we'll just pray on our own, anytime we want. Can we do that? Is that okay?

54 Children: Mm-hm. Yeah

55 Judy: Just pray when you're walking to school? Pray before? When you're in your bed?

56 Joshua: When you're going to the bathroom?

57 Noam: When you're going to the bathroom?

58 Judy: When we go, when we go in to, to the *Beit Knesset*?

59 Another child: When we're going to the bathroom?

60 Judy: When we go into the *Beit Knesset* that's an important time to pray together as a group. To, to say certain prayers together—together as a group.

61 Stacy: Can I interrupt for a second? This is silly but you asked the question. There is a prayer for going to the bathroom.

[Some laughter.]

62 Stacy: You know, maybe, maybe you could ask Rabbi Bluthe to read it to you sometime. It's interesting.

63 Joshua: What is it about?

- 64 Stacy: It's—
- 65 Sally: It's about your body and how it's working the way it should.
- 66 Stacy: It's about your body and the functions of your body and how it works.
- 67 William: Could you say it?
- 68 Stacy: I don't know it, actually, by heart, but I've heard it before.
- 69 Joshua: But if you can't say it...
- 70 Noam: How do you know there is one if you, um, don't know it?
- 71 Stacy: Because I've heard it before.
- 72 Judy: Okay, let's have everybody sit up again because I have another question I want to hear your ideas about... Raise your hand if you have an idea about this: One of the places people pray a lot is in the *Beit Knesset* because that's a special, special place for praying for Jewish people. And that's where some people feel that they can feel close to God. That God feels like He's there because the Torah's in there and other beautiful things are in there. So some people like to be in the Beit Knesset when they sing certain prayers. But could there be other places where a person feels close to God? It's different for every person. Every person-- sometimes at some par-- times in their life they feel a place or more than one place that feels like a good place to pray. Joshua?
- 73 Joshua: Um, that big wall postcard she [pointing to Stacy] was talking about it...
- 74 Judy: The *Kotel* in Jerusalem? People feel very close to God when they go there and they want to pray. They go there to pray 'cause that's where they feel like they can really talk to God.
- 75 Joshua: And they go like this.
- [Closes his eyes, clasps his hands together and sways as though praying.]*
- 76 Judy: Where else might a person feel really comfortable, really able to think about something important to them, and a place where they can talk to God very well?
- 77 Sally: I like to do it in the woods. When I'm outside and I can just be some place where it's just beautiful and quiet.
- 78 Judy: You feel that God is there? Or you're—or you're ready...

- 79 Sally: Definitely, feel closer to God there.
- 80 William: ...on top of a mountain. He can hear you 'cause He's way up high.
- 81 Judy: You would feel close to God up on a mountain. Joshua?
- 82 Joshua: Um, I pray to God when I am sleeping or I'm just about to go to sleep.
- 83 Judy: Is there something about that time that makes you feel like you can really feel close to God or say what you really are thinking about?
- 84 Joshua: Um, it's easier to talk to God then 'cause usually at night everyone's starting to go to bed and not talking to God. So it is easier.
- 85 Judy: And it's quiet; and you can think over things that are important to you? Robby. . .?
- 86 Joshua: I always say the same thing.

Judy wraps up the conversation and tells a story about a little girl and her mother and bedtime prayer.

Interview with Judy's Student

- 1 Interviewer: One of the things I was wondering was one day when I was visiting, I noticed kids were really, really silly. I think there was a discussion going on about different kinds of prayers and why you would pray to God and what kinds of things you could pray for and stuff like that. Do you remember some of that?
- 2 Joshua: Yeah.
- 3 I: I was just wondering if you have any ideas about why everyone was so silly. Do you remember people being kind of giggly and talking about what you couldn't pray for, like you couldn't pray for a Sega game and things like that. People were very giggly.
- 4 J: Some of them, like, they don't, -aren't-very religious if they do that.
- 5 I: How do you know?
- 6 J: Well, 'cause that means you're not respecting God.
- 7 I: If what?
- 8 J: If you're saying, like, bad things about prayers and stuff.
- 9 I: Hmm. Why don't you tell me a little bit about what you think about, how you think about prayers.
- 10 J: I think prayers are good so you can talk to God sometimes.
- 11 I: Do you pray sometimes?
- [J nods]*
- 12 I: Can you tell me a little bit about it?
- 13 J: Um, when I pray?
- 14 I: Sure. When do you pray?
- 15 J: Sometimes I pray, usually I pray at night, and sometimes I pray in the morning.
- 16 I: What do you pray when you pray at night?

- 17 J: Well, I say the *sh'ma*, and I say the *hamotzi*.
- 18 I: Uh huh. And why do you say those prayers at night?
- 19 J: Well, the *sh'ma* is sort of like a sleeping tune so you can get ready for bed and the, um... What was the other one?
- 20 I: You said the *motzi*.
- 21 J: The *hamotzi* is when you're saying, uh, prayer to eat.
- 22 I: So do you say the *hamotzi* at the same time that you say the *sh'ma* or at a different time?
- 23 J: The *sh'ma* is right when I go to bed, and the *hamotzi* is when I'm eating dinner.
- 24 I: I see. Could you say the *sh'ma* for me?
- 25 J: Mm-hm. [*sings* "Sh'ma yisrael adonai eloheinu adonai ehad."]
- 26 I: What's that prayer about? Why do you like to say that prayer?
- 27 J: Well, it tells me that I've had a good day and it's time to get some rest now and there's another day coming up tomorrow.
- 28 I: Another what coming up?
- 29 J: Another day coming up tomorrow.
- 30 I: Uh huh, I see. And what about the *motzi*? Can you say that?
- [*J recites hamotzi*: Baruch ata adonai eloheinu meleh haolam hamotzi lehem min ha'arets amen.]
- 31 I: And what is that prayer about?
- 32 J: That's the prayer like on the bread and stuff for dinner.
- 33 I: I see. Are there other prayers that you know?
- 34 J: Yeah, but I don't usually say them at home.
- 35 I: What are some examples of other prayers that you know?
- 36 J: Like the *adon olam*.

- 37 I: Uh huh. Anything else?
- 38 J: Um, there's a lot more prayers that I know but I don't remember the names of 'em.
- 39 I: Uh huh, where do you say them?
- 40 J: At synagogue, at Sunday school, and when I'm just in synagogue...
- 41 I: What do you mean when you're just in synagogue?
- 42 J: That's when I come on Saturdays for Shabbat.
- 43 I: Oh. What about in Sunday school? Tell me a little about the prayers you say in Sunday school.
- 44 J: Well, you go to *Tefillot*, which is the place where you pray and, um...
- 45 I: Who are you with when you go to *Tefillot*?
- 46 J: My teachers and Rabbi Bluthe.
- 47 I: And what happens? What do you guys do?
- 48 J: First the rabbi will start you off with I think the *sh'ma*, and then we'll go on to these morning prayers and stuff like that.
- 49 I: Who's in the... Where are you when you do this actually?
- 50 J: I said that.
- 51 I: But I didn't remember what you said.
- 52 J: It's part of the synagogue, and it's called *Tefillot*.
- 53 I: Oh, so who's with you in *Tefillot*?
- 54 J: Um, I just said that, too.
- 55 I: Besides the teachers and Rabbi Bluthe, I mean, is it just your class or...?
- 56 J: Um, the other kindergarten class and their teachers.
- 57 I: Uh huh. And what's the point, I mean, why do you go there?

- 58 J: It's the part where I talk to God.
- 59 I: Oh. So do you talk to God in addition to saying these prayers that you read? Do you also talk to God just in your own voice?
- 60 J: You can just talk to God, like talking to Him in your head.
- 61 I: And do you do that sometimes?
- 62 J: Yeah.
- 63 I: When do you do that?
- 64 J: Like when I feel real sick and I want some help, I talk to Him to let me not get sick anymore.
- 65 I: So you ask God for something? Or what do you do?
- 66 J: Well, sometimes I just thank Him for stuff that happened.
- 67 I: Can you think of a time when you did that?
- 68 J: Um, .a made-up time or a real time?
- 69 I: A real time that you can remember thanking God for something.
- 70 J: *[pause]* Not right now.
- 71 I: So what's an example of something that it could be (a made up thing that you might thank God for)?
- 72 J: Like if Jacob *[his younger brother]* was playing in the street and a car was coming really, really fast next to him and then suddenly somebody jumped out and saved him, that would be a part when I thanked Him.
- 73 I: You would thank God then?
- 74 J: Yeah.
- 75 I: Uh huh. And what would you say?
- 76 J: I would say, like, thank you that Jakie didn't get killed 'cause I love him so much.
- 77 I: And do you say other kinds of prayers besides thanking God?

- 78 J: Um, yeah.
- 79 I: Like what else? What was the thing about being sick? What do you say about being sick?
- 80 J: I would say, like, sometimes being sick scared me. It scares me, like when I'm—I think I'm going to throw up and it hurts my stomach and real bad...
- 81 I: So what would you say?
- 82 J: So I'd say, "God, I'm feeling real sick right now, and I don't want to be sick."
- 83 I: So that's upsetting?
- 84 J: Yeah.
- 85 I: Why is that upsetting?
- 86 J: I just don't like talking about it.
- 87 I: I understand. So does—I noticed that one of the times in your first grade class you talked about whether God, like, hears these prayers and whether God answers them.
- 88 J: Yeah.
- 89 I: And I was curious about how you think about that.
- 90 J: If He answers them, that means if you said, "Please don't let me get sick," then you wouldn't get sick, And that would be an answer if He listened to you and He let you go.
- 91 I: What if you got sick anyway?
- 92 J: That means He—He didn't answer you.
- 93 I: Why would that be?
- 94 J: He didn't hear you.
- 95 I: Why?
- 96 J: 'Cause that's why people pray to Him.
- 97 I: So was He too busy? I don't understand.

- 98 J: Well, maybe you were being bad and you deserved to do it or... you were asking Him in a mean voice like, "Please don't let me throw up or I'll kill you" or something like that. And then He would, but you would be sick. And maybe you would be sick even the next time you pray to Him.
- 99 I: So, so far you've told me a little bit about thanking God. You say prayers, like, just in your own words when you want to thank God, and sometimes you ask God, like, not to be sick. Are there any other prayers that you kind of just say in your own voice? Times that you talk to God?
- 100 J: Not that I know.
- 101 I: Is that praying also, or is praying only when you say prayers that you've learned, like the *sh'ma* or the *motzi*?
- 102 J: That's praying also.
- 103 I: So both things are praying?
- 104 J: Yeah.
- 105 I: Is the... What's the difference? Is there no difference?
- 106 J: There is no difference. Only one's in Hebrew.
- 107 I: I see. So what is a prayer really?
- 108 J: I just said that, though, like thanking and giving and stuff like that.
- 109 I: I see.

Judy's Class
Lesson Plan and Notes

(Note: This is a typed version of Judy's hand-written class notes.)

FORMAT: DISCUSSION OF PRAYER

GOALS

At the end of the discussion, I hoped to begin to move the kids toward an understanding of the following:

- (1) There is a personal spiritual activity called prayer.
- (2) Prayer is, among other things, a form of communication with God.
- (3) Prayer is a means by which individual children and adults can engage in a relationship with God.
- (4) There are different kinds of prayer (e.g.: traditional-formal and spontaneous-personal; thanks, praise, petition; also prayer as a form of thinking, meditation, a feeling of closeness with God, a time when God might speak to us.)
- (5) By engaging in prayer, students are doing what Jews have done for thousands of years.

I also wanted the students to have an opportunity to consider when, where, and why people pray.

OUTCOMES

Students were fairly squirrely, and it was hard to redirect them to create a coherent discussion and a feeling of the meaning of prayer.

I am thankful that I
practiced swimming lessons and
this summer I know how to
swim!

Thank you for giving
me cousins who I love
to visit!

Thank you for making
baby animals.

Thank you for
Learning about in first grade.



Noam

TY God for life, for ~~me~~ M&C
for lunch, for having a cozy ^{making} bed to
lie on, for soccer, for ~~the~~ trees
to climb.

O God I wish I could be
48 years old so I could
be as old as Israel, and I
wish I would have my own desk.

THACE YOU
707 friends
AOb A sistr
Ant A GRATE Ant Annu

I HOPE Alex
WOMEN GET ENFE
Moor DSEESIS

Thank you God for
having a brother who
plays with me. I really
like playing with him.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING
ME A VERY GOOD
FAMILY AND ^{FOR} MY LITTLE
BROTHER WHO MAKES
ME HAPPY.

DEAR GOD, PLEASE
DON'T LET ME GET
SICK.

JB

Interview with Judy

Clip #1

I: I was thinking about how these lessons on prayer are building on the things that you've already been talking about—about God—and wondering what ideas about God you think the kids are bringing to these discussions of prayer since God is so central in the discussion. I was wondering what they're coming with. How do you think they're thinking?

Judy: Some of them have clearly discussed it before. They had some pretty well formed ideas. The others, I'd say, uniformly were very interested in thinking about and responded to the idea that God is not a person, a he or she. They seemed very able, even though it's obviously very abstract, they were able to think about that. And some of the kids used the word 'spirit': God as a spirit; God is everywhere; God is a feeling. And some kids used that phrase, 'God is love.' I think, all together, as they heard it from a teacher or from each other, from what they discussed with their parents or anybody else, together as a group they have developed this idea of God as a spiritual being. I think they've incorporated (at least at times) and have been able to grasp the traditional Jewish concept of God and of one God ... and have then been able to think about what God has done and what God does, and are open to a sort of free-floating notion about God having done very concrete things and God being more emotional—having a more emotional nature.

So I think from one week to the next, I would never know for sure what one individual child would think or say about what God is. But I think these things are being deposited in their minds and over the years that they're at Hebrew School they will have enough to draw on to develop a notion—an abstract notion—of what God is. We've talked about traditional notions of what God does and has done. So they've talked about creating a world that's very—that makes a lot of sense to start with—that for kids, and that's worked well. And then when you were there the other time we discussed—and even before that we discussed—the other things God has done: has given us ideas about how to behave, and how to be a good person, and how to live a good Jewish life, and that many of these ideas have been written down by the rabbis and are also available in the Torah. They know what the Torah is very well. Because there are places when you go to find out what these ideas from God are. And then that moved onto what you saw, which was the *Mitzvot*...

I: Right, right.

J: So that God is kind of a guide of our behavior.

I: That's clearly been part of the conversation for a long time now.

J: Yeah, right.

I: I think a lot of people watching the tapes or coming to your class might say, these are really hard things to talk about—I mean, they're hard enough for us to talk about, let alone discussing with little kids. What do you think is hard about teaching ideas of prayer and God to young children? And why have you decided to spend—to make this such a focal point of the curriculum this year?

J: Well, from the beginning of my teaching when I was prepared to discuss “This is how Jews do things for the holidays” or “This is how Jews do things in the *Beit Knesset*” or “This is the Torah,” it was clear immediately that you can't discuss any of that without saying it's because of God. So all of these things have their source in God and to wait six months or a year or three years to say, “By the way, the reason we're doing this is because God has asked the Jews to do this” or “Because God is behind the Torah” or “Because prayers are directed at God,” I mean, it has no logic. It doesn't make any sense. And then I think even if they weren't going to grasp it, I would have to try very hard to discuss things in a way that was appropriate for them to grasp as much as possible about why we're even doing all this. Because it's a religious school and a religion is a way of thinking about God, and I think they, those words, need to be said immediately. Or that idea needs to be conveyed in some way in the beginning.

I: But it doesn't make it easy to do.

J: I don't know if I would think of it as hard. I mean, I'm always trying to monitor my language, so I'm using vocabulary that's appropriate for them, or encouraging them to talk about the topic so that I can see what their ideas are so that I know I'm in tune with what their ideas are.

Clip #2

J: Maybe what prayer is, too, is a way of thinking things through for yourself and even if you're not aware of it, God is helping you get good ideas for how to get what you want or solve a problem or cope with something that's difficult or mysterious. And so, I have to think about how to say that, about maybe one thing prayer does and maybe a way our prayers get answered is we start thinking for ourselves in a different way because we have engaged in prayer. And we can make certain things happen, or we can become a different kind of person, or more the person we want to be because we've tried to communicate these things from God, with God, rather than having the thing delivered to us.

I: Right. Yeah.

J: You know, and then knowing that that's the answer. How do I convey to kids that there's another way that our prayers can be answered that's a little bit more long term and amorphous and has more to do with meditation?

- I: And the effect on you in clarifying what you want. What you could do to make happen—make the things that you want happen. I mean, it seems like you were, this, you know, their image of asking for a present, and getting it is an analogy you're trying not to—you're trying to say this works differently. But exactly how it works and how to make that, what to pin that to that they could understand is a really interesting challenge.
- J: ...because I think, just by saying, "Let's try a prayer where we're asking God for something," you...
- I: ...you put yourself in a position of wanting to get it...
- J: ...and it does create this image of God as Merlin who can just send it back down if He's ready to or we've prayed in the right way and that's something we've got to work on, too. Uh, I think it's sort of inevitable. We don't want to have too many prescriptions about, "Well, don't ask for a Nintendo, and don't ask for..."
- I: ...2000 dollars or whatever...
- J: ...getting Mrs. Anderson for your teacher next year or something like that. I mean, we've done some of that so... you know, it's hard to say, "Well, don't ask for this to happen next week and..." I guess I just want to encourage them to do a prayer of petition and do a prayer of thanks and get an idea of the process and the form, and then maybe some of these other ideas will make more sense after they get used to the process.
- I: I wanted to ask some specific questions about the two lessons that I saw. One thing that struck me was the way that you opened the first lesson. You know, here are these kindergartners and first graders, sitting on the floor and sitting on their teachers' laps and you said, "I know some of you have younger siblings..."
- J: Oh, yeah.
- I: "...and some of you don't. But suppose a younger child asked you 'What is prayer? What is praying?' What would you say?" I really like that way of putting the question. I wanted to know why you framed it like that, asking them to imagine what they'd say to somebody younger than them.
- J: In the past, it—when I've used that, I haven't used it that much, but in the past—I think it has helped them take the question more seriously, more so than if I had just asked the question. I think that they're put in a position of authority. They're being asked to think carefully about something. They seem to take younger kids quite seriously. The thought that they could be a guide for younger kids, I think, has worked.

Clip #3

- I: Are there other things that you want say about this particular lesson?

J: Um, it was a little bit disappointing because I've seen the kids engage in just this kind of discussion on other topics in a very attentive, serious way that was sustained over at least 20 minutes, and this was not the feeling in the room on that day. We'd been apart from each other for three weeks and I felt that. I felt the difference in the way I felt with the group because we were just getting back together. I arrived late because my daughter had a fever, so I wasn't there for the first half of class and I didn't have a sense of where the class was as the half hour sections went by. So, and then I discovered subsequently that they had been sitting for an hour and a half. Some with the Rabbi, some with something else the other teachers had done, and we never, or virtually never, do that. We'll change the pace or the format so that when we are going to have a discussion, we'd give them another format before that to, uh... I think that's certainly more conducive to them sitting and thinking. So there was that, and sometimes when someone turns on the switch of silliness we can't—it's hard—to turn off.

I: It's hard to undo it. Yeah.

J: Mob reaction. So, um., so there was that. It was a little bit difficult for me to keep the ball moving and certainly to keep their attention in the way that I wanted and draw on the kids', um... And almost every child in that class has a way of responding very seriously that I wasn't able to elicit that day.

Clip #4

J: I always like to start with, "If you could thank God for something what would it be?" Because that's sufficient for many kids. And then, if not much comes to mind, or they look like they want to keep thinking about it, I can say "What is—What's one of the things that really is one of your favorite things about life?" "What's one of the best things about your life?" Or "What makes you feel really happy? What about your life makes you feel like you're really lucky? And could that be something that you could thank God for?"

I: So it just creates occasions for them to think about things they're thankful for?

J: Mm-hm.

I: I really like, "What is there in the world that you think is really great?" and "What does God do that you think is really terrific?"

J: And so, we'll get everything from a long list of the wonders of nature, which occur to many kids, to uh, a child saying, "I'm, I'm, I wanna thank God for macaroni and cheese 'cause I just love to have that for lunch." So, so... everything occurs to them. You know, they're lucky 'cause they have a little brother and I think parents would be thrilled to hear the number of kids who say, "Thank you for my little sister, thank you for my big sister, my cousins." I mean, it's just really lovely... How often do these kids that you hear the ratty things about are really valued siblings when it gets right down to it. Um, as much as they complain about them they feel very lucky to have them in, in many cases.

Clip #5

I: What's the message that you want to give them about the differences and the relationship between like, formal or traditional prayer, as you've said in your notes, and personal, spontaneous prayer? Now it seems like you're working on the personal, spontaneous...

J: Yeah

I: ...kinds of prayer.

J: And that this is a collection of those.

I: Right, right. But there are places in the structured service, *Siddur* that, in the order, there are times and places for those, too.

So I was also just wondering as I was looking at these lessons and thinking about these big, hard—I think they're hard—issues to explore for ourselves, as well as with kids... what effect the teaching and thinking about prayer has on you in thinking about prayer and praying.

J: I don't think about it being hard too much. I think I must have my first year of teaching but I don't think about it too much any more. Because a lot of what I think about is how easy the kids make it to discuss these. I think it's probably been one of the easier grades to approach, at least. It depends on what level of discussion a teacher is looking for. I'm very interested in the level of—their cognitive grasp at this age. That's fine with me. It's very satisfying to me to discuss it with 5- and 6-year-olds. But their, the ease with which they—I mean, I could say...

I: Respond.

J: ...“Let's talk about anything,” I mean the latest popular culture toy or TV. And I can just say, “Now let's talk about God.” And “Yeah, okay.” And they make it so easy, and so natural that, I mean, it's an ideal kind of environment for at least approaching the topic. So their openness and responsiveness have made it easy and that very quality, I think, has made me take it so seriously because they're just sponges. I mean, I know that's a metaphor that's used a lot but they're so ready to hear about it and talk about it and say, “What about this?” or “Why does God let bad things happen?” or anything. They're just eager and earnest, and in most cases, pretty attentive. And so I ha—I have found that has made me take my role very, very seriously.

I: Why do you think that is?

J: Why do I think...?

I: That they're— that these issues or topics about God and prayer are things that they're so open to?

J: Well, I think most people are, but you know, these different veils come down if I don't want to say anything dumb or that isn't cool. These other things that get in the way of older children and adults, you know. It's "I'm afraid to talk because I really don't know about this so I won't say that much." With them they don't have any of that, and they're not—they're not jaded; they're just ready. You know, they're interested in everything. They're interested in hearing about just about anything, it seems to me. So, that's why we need to be really careful about what we talk to them about because they're interested in everything, and there's just not too much you have to lift out of the way to talk to them. 'Cause they're right there. They're ready to talk about Nintendo and God or um, the right way to eat an Oreo and *[laughter]* it's just like, okay, what are we going to talk about now? And I feel the responsibility that that kind of openness evokes in me, and—and I feel how important this topic is.

I: Are there issues or questions that you're thinking about? Or that this has raised for you that either are on your mind personally or that relate to your teaching that have come up because of these incredible discussions and openness?

J: Um, a lot of it I think is just germinating in me and I can't really articulate it because I don't quite know what's happening. I'm interested in why this is so important to me because I, for much of my adult life, I have not been an affiliated Jew. And I'm 44 now, and this is an important topic to me. I feel like I'm discussing something that's critical and that's working in my mind even though I haven't tapped it or paid much attention to it. So that's one motivation for me, too. Because I know that the more I read so that I can get to some of the central ideas because those are the ones I want to convey to the kids so that I can do a lot of reading from adult literature to try and pull out what, what can be crystallized about some of these topics and then try and convey that in a simple and honest way. You know, I really feel like as I do that, something's happening to me and I don't know what it is and uh, I do want to continue to pursue it because of my awareness of how it seems to be to me emotionally. And it's in me somehow and I'd like it to come out of me. And I want to watch how that happens and this has helped me move that along, I think.

But, um, I'm not quite sure how to explain how I think about some of these topics myself because I'm very much learning along with them.

I: Yeah, me, too. I've found it really interesting to watch the tapes of the classes and, and to talk with you about these ideas and to think about my own journey in prayer and...

J: Yeah.

I: ...and so it seems like it's a really special opportunity to launch them on a path and to use it as a chance for us to also think about it for ourselves.

J: Um-hm. Um-hm. And I think, um, I almost with the parents could really know what happens in the class and what their kids say because they are quite remarkable—the kids. And I think the parents would be very proud if they heard. I try and convey some of it, but it's hard if you... There's not enough tape you could watch to really get the context, but the kids are really something to be proud of. I think the parents would enjoy it.