

# Cause us to Lie Down

## Hashkiveynu

# Learning Session

## February 2005

**KOACH**  
on campus



The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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The following materials have been created by **KOACH** for the enhancement of your on-campus programming. They are designed to be adjustable based on your interests and the available time. This packet contains: copy-ready text sheets, background materials and a facilitator guide. The background materials and facilitator guide will help you build conversations around the text and create connections between the text and contemporary life.

Questions? Send them to: [estrin@uscj.org](mailto:estrin@uscj.org).

## Cause us to Lie Down - Hashkiveynu

Shabbat Ma'ariv version:

הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְכָּנוּ לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ,  
וְתִקְנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדָּנוּ, וְהַסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ  
אוֹיֵב, דָּבָר, וְחָרֵב, וְרָעַב וְגִזּוֹן, וְהַסֵּר שָׁטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵנוּ, וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ  
תִּסְתִּירֵנוּ. כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרָנוּ וּמְצִילֵנוּ אַתָּה, כִּי אֵל מְלֹךְ חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה, וּשְׁמוֹר  
צִאתָנוּ וּבִואָנוּ, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. וּפְרֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הַפּוֹרֵשׁ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

Hash-kiveynu Adonai Eloheynu l'shalom, V'ha-amideynu Mal-keynu l'ha-yim.

U-fros aleynu sukkat sh'lomekha, v'tak-neynu b'eytzah tovah mil-fanekha, v'ho-shi-eynu l'ma-an sh'mekha. V'hageyn ba-adeynu, v'ha-seyr mey-aleyenu oyev, dever, v'herev, v'ra-av, v'yagon, v'ha-seyr satan mil-fa-neynu u-mey-ah-reynu, U-v'tzeyl k-nafekha tas-tireynu, ki Eyl shom-reynu u-matzi-leynu Atah, ki Eyl melekh hanun v'rahum Atah. U-sh'mor tzey-teynu uvo-eynu L'ha-yim u-l'shalom mey-Atah v'ad olam. U-fros aleynu sukkat sh'lomekha. Baruh Atah Adonai, ha-poreys sukkat shalom aleynu v'al kol Yisrael v'al Yeru-shala-yim.

Cause us to lie down, God, our God, in peace, and awaken us to life again, our King. Spread over us Your shelter of peace, guide us with Your good counsel. Save us because of Your mercy. Shield us from enemies and pestilence, from starvation, sword and sorrow. Remove the evil forces that surround us, shelter us in the shadow of Your wings. You, O God, guard us and deliver us. You are a gracious and merciful King. Guard our coming and our going, grant us life and peace, now and always. \*Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Praised are You, Lord who spreads a shelter of peace over us, over all the people Israel and over Jerusalem.

**\*Weekday ending:** Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Praised are You, Lord, eternal guardian of Your people Israel.

**\*Shema L'Mitah (prayer said before bed) ending:** Shema L'Mitah is recited without a *brakhah* (blessing) at end, though there is additional text afterwards.



## Cause us to Lie Down - Hashkiveynu

# Background Material

The second *brakhah* after the Shema in the daily and Shabbat Ma'ariv (evening) prayers, the Hashkiveynu is also recited at night as a part of Shema L'mita (prayers before bed).

In Mishnah Brahot 1:4, the rabbis state that in the morning, one recites two blessings before and one after the Shema, while at night, there are two before and two after. This additional blessing following the Shema is the Hashkiveynu. Midrash Tehillim explains why Hashkiveynu became the fourth *brakhah*: Rabbi Eliezer states that *t'fillin*, *tzitzit* and *mezuzah* guard against sin. Since two of these are missing during the evening prayers (*t'fillin* and *tzitzit*) the Hashkiveynu was introduced to ask for God's protection.<sup>1</sup>

In Hashkiveynu, we pray that just as we were redeemed from Egypt, and God has saved us from many challenges and afflictions, so too should God save us from all those fearful things that the night brings.

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<sup>1</sup> Midrash Tehillim is the midrash on Psalms compiled by Solomon Buber in 1891.

# Cause us to Lie Down - Hashkiveynu

## Facilitator Guide

The Facilitator Guide is designed to direct you through several discussion options. Although it is designed as a progression, you need not follow from beginning to end. Each section can stand on its own or be combined with another. Use the packet in its entirety or choose components based on the time you have available and the students in your group.

### Section one - Getting Started

You might open your conversation by asking the group to share thoughts and memories they associate with one or more of the following concepts:

- **Protection.** What is it? Who or what provides it?
- What do we need protection from? Why?
- **Peace.** What is it? Who or what provides it?
- How can we bring peace into our lives & the lives of others? (micro and macro levels)
- **Night-time.** What does it bring to mind?
- What fears do children have of the night? Adults?
- What might have been your fears if you were living 1500 years ago? What is frightening today in our society?
- What keeps you up at night? (physical, spiritual, emotional)
- How can we have peace and feel protected at night?

## Section Two – Hashkiveynu Text

Give a bit of background for Hashkiveynu and explain that it is found in our liturgy in two places, Ma'ariv (evening service) and Shema L'mita (prayers before bed). Point out that there are three different endings: Weekday Ma'ariv, Shabbat Ma'ariv, and Shema L'mita. In *hevruta* (pairs) or small groups, have the students read and discuss Hashkiveynu including the three endings, and then return to a large group discussion.

### Discussion Questions:

- What are their impressions of the prayer?
- What concepts or phrases caught their attention and why?
- What are some of the themes that appear in Hashkiveynu?
  - peace, protection, individual and communal, etc.
- How does this prayer make you feel?
- Why might there be various endings?
  - Shabbat provides protection, so we do not need to make a special request for it.
  - On Shabbat, our day of rest, we do less & therefore have less need to be protected (Rashi).
  - When we retire for the night also have less need for physical protection.
- Among the Sephardim, Hashkiveynu begins "Hashkiveynu Avinu l'shalom" (Our Father, cause us to lie down in peace). How does that compare to the version we use? What difference does it make?
  - Image of father providing protection.
  - A father is more tangible.
  - Does this raise gender questions for them?

In the Hashkiveynu, we ask God to spread over us a blanket of peace, so that we can wake up to a "life renewed," a life filled with peace. How can we contribute to this peace – peace within ourselves, peace in our relationships, peace in the world around us?

## Section three ~ Additional Conversations

Choose one or more of the following to enhance the discussion.

1. Look at the first line. "lie down in peace and awaken us to life again". Discuss what it means & why it is in that order. Remind the students to think of themselves in a more ancient/rural setting. Where does this theme replay itself in Jewish life?
  - Our "days" begin at sundown.
  - B'reshit - "And there was evening and there was morning, ..."
  - Shema - "recite these words when you lay down and when you get up"

What might we glean from the fact that we so often start with nighttime?

- day is the light at the end of the scary night, night represents death and day represents life

### **B'reshit 1:5 (for each day)**

God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

### **Shema. (D'varim 6:8 and 11:19)**

And teach them to your children, and speak of them in while you sit in your house and while you go on your way, in your lying down and in your getting up.

2. Hashkiveynu was originally recited during Ma'ariv as a response to the dark. Why? Is it relevant today? Why or why not? If the concerns are no longer relevant, what keeps they prayer important?
3. Hashkiveynu is part of Shema L'mita, the prayers said before going to sleep. Why? Have them look at Shema L'mita (Sim Shalom p. 245) for a more in-depth conversation.

There is a concept within Judaism that at night our soul joins with God returning to our bodies in the morning. Have they heard of this? What do they think? Does it shed light on reciting of Shema L'mita before bed?

Ask them if they are familiar with the classic "American Christian" bed time prayer:

- Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

The concept of the soul leaving is the same. Are the prayers analogous?

4. Discuss the concept of prayers before bed. Have them compare Shema L'mita with Modeh Ani (Sim Shalom page 2), said when you wake up. Encourage them to try it out for a month (they can start with just the one line of the Shema for the evening). Alternatively, give them some time and have them write their own bedtime prayer.
5. Lead them in the guided meditation (Appendix A) and then provide them with scratch art (or other types of) materials to create their own visual representation of Hashkiveynu.
6. If you know one or more of the various tunes for Hashkiveynu sing it or play it for the group. Discuss with them how the tune impacts the words and meanings of the prayer.

# Appendix A

Hashkiveynu guided meditation.

*Encourage them to close their eyes and relax for a few minutes while they picture the following.*

Remember scratch art? Can you see yourself sitting with a sheet of paper and a box of crayons? You proceed to cover the entire sheet of paper with blocks of color. What colors were your favorites? Now, cover the entire sheet with black crayon. [pause] Then, with some picture in mind we would scratch off the black crayon to reveal the colors below fascinated as a picture emerged. Can you remember the pictures you used to create? [pause]

Now, place that page, covered entirely in black crayon, in front of you. On the bottom third of the page, scratch out all those things in your life that you want to protect. [pause]. Now, think of all those things that go bump in the night, those things that you want to be protected from. Scratch them into the top third. [pause]. In the middle, between those things that go bump in the night and those cherished things in your life to be protected, scratch out a giant set of wings – “shelter us in the shadow of Your wings.” This is what we are requesting from God.

How does your picture look? What are those things you most cherish and how can they be protected?

*Give them a minute to think about it & as eyes open ask if anyone wants to share about the picture they created.*