



CENTER FOR SMALL TOWN JEWISH LIFE

Prayer Leader Training Program

Cohort 6

November 2026 - June 2027

Program overview:

The Center for Small Town Jewish Life's Prayer Leader Training is designed to educate and empower lay congregants to lead prayer at various levels in their communities and to support their spiritual formation. The program is divided into three modules. Each module is arranged thematically to cover Kabbalat Shabbat (1), Shabbat Shacharit (2), Shiva (3). Modules include one class per week of instruction, alternating between virtual group class and tutoring sessions. Individuals can choose to apply to one, two or all three modules.

Group classes: Biweekly group classes are opportunities for cohort-based learning and discussion led by Cantor Sheila Nesis or guest faculty. These group classes provide the foundational knowledge and meaning to the practical skills needed to lead prayer. All classes are conducted virtually. These classes will cover topics such as:

- Role of the Shaliach Tzibur (emissary of the community) in Jewish tradition: its history, and its present role
- *Keva* (fixed) and *Kavanah* (intention) aspects of Jewish prayer
- Introduction to prayer structure and rubric: creation, revelation, redemption. Understanding *chatimot* and types of prayers
- Best practices and tools for leading with confidence, including voice and body stamina, how to teach new melodies, prepare a service outline, offer an introduction (*kavanah*) for a prayer, etc.
- Learning songs, melodies and nusach for prayers
- Opportunities to practice leading prayers are built into the classes, in a supportive environment

Tutoring sessions: Biweekly small group (*hevrutah* style) tutoring sessions provide opportunities to work on practical skills based on each participant's need (improve Hebrew, learn davening, practice old and new melodies and songs). Participants will be paired in groups of two or three, according to similar prayer practices or prayer books, and will be

assigned a tutor. Tutoring times are scheduled directly with the assigned tutor. All tutoring sessions are conducted virtually.

Module 1: Kabbalat Shabbat	Module 2: Shabbat Shacharit	Module 3: Shiva
Class runs 11/10/26-2/2/27 12 weeks of instruction 7 group classes (Tuesday, 7-8.15pm, EST) 5 tutoring sessions	Class runs 2/9/27-6/1/27 15 weeks of instruction 9 group classes (Tuesday, 7-8.15pm, EST) 6 tutoring sessions	Class runs 5/12/27-6/23/27 7 weeks of instruction 4 group classes (Wednesday, 7-8.15pm, EST) 3 tutoring sessions

By the conclusion of each module, learners can expect to:

- Have a deeper understanding of their role when leading prayer in their communities, and a deeper commitment to tending to their prayer and spiritual lives
- Have skills and tools to be able to lead with confidence (including how to introduce a new melody, how to offer a *kavanah*, etc.)
- Know many of the prayers that are part of the service
- Have an understanding of the structure of prayer (warm-up section, creation, revelation, redemption, closing prayers and songs, how to find the prayer's *chatimah*, etc.)
- Be able to create a service outline
- Participants who enter the program with some experience leading will be better equipped to continue to do so when solo leading or co-leading a service
- Participants who enter the program with no previous experience leading a service will be able to co-lead or lead specific prayers within the services, using the knowledge and tools as a jumping board from where to continue building and strengthening their skills

PRAYER RUBRIC

Please note that “Conservative rubric only” items will appear in **red**

Please note that “Reform rubric only” items will appear in **blue**.

KABBALAT SHABBAT	SHABBAT SHACHARIT
Opening Niggun/Song	מַה טּוֹב, Mah Tovu
Candle Blessings (<i>depending on sundown</i>)	אֱלֹהֵי נְשָׁמָה, Elohai Neshamah
יָדִיד נֶפֶשׁ, Y'did Nefesh (<i>optional</i>)	בְּרִכּוֹת הַשַּׁחַר, Nisim Bechol Yom
Psalms 95-99, 29 (davening beginning and end, or singing entirely)	בָּרוּךְ שְׂאֵמַר Baruch She'amar
לְכוּ נְרַנְנָה, L'chu N'ran'na	מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, Mizmor Shir L'yom HaShabbat
שִׁיר לַיהוָה, Shiru L'Adonai	אֲשֶׁרֵי, Ashrei
אָנָּה בְּכַח, Ana b'Koach (<i>optional</i>)	הַלְלוּיָהּ, Halleluyah!
לֶכֶה דוּדֵי, Lecha Dodi	נִשְׁמַת כּוֹל חַי, Nishmat Kol Chai
מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, Mizmor Shir L'yom HaShabbat	שׁוֹכֵן עַד, Shochen Ad + Yishtabach
שְׁלוֹם אֵלֵיכֶם, Shalom Aleichem (<i>optional</i>)	חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ, Chatzi Kaddish
חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ, Chatzi Kaddish	בְּרִכּוֹ, Bar'chu
קַדִּישׁ יְתוּם, Mourner's Kaddish	יוֹצֵר אוֹר, Yotzeir Or
בְּרִכּוֹ, Bar'chu	אֵל אֲדוֹן, El Adon (<i>optional</i>)
מַעְרִיב עֶרְבִים, Hama'ariv Aravim	Davening bottom of 153 and 154, Lev Shalem
אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם, Ahavat Olam	שְׁמַע, Shema + V'ahavta
שְׁמַע, Shema + V'ahavta	מִי כַמּוֹחָה, Mi Chamocha
מִי כַמּוֹחָה, Mi Chamochah	אֲבוֹת וְאֵמֹת, Avot-G'vurot-Kedushah (Heicha Kedushah)
הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ, Hashkiveinu	וְשָׁמְרוּ, V'shamru or Yism'chu
וְשָׁמְרוּ, V'shamru	

חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ, Chatzi Kaddish (before Amidah in the Reform service)

אַבוֹת וְאִמְהוֹת, Avot-G'vurot-Kedushah

וַיַּעֲחֹל הַשָּׁמַיִם, Silent Amidah + Vayechulu + Magen Avot (symbolic repetition of the Amidah)

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם, Oseh Shalom (optional)

קַדִּישׁ שְׁלָם, Kaddish Shalem

מִי שֶׁבֵּירַח, Mi Shebeirach

קִידּוּשׁ, Kiddush

עֲלֵינוּ, Aleinu

קַדִּישׁ יְתוֹם, Mourner's Kaddish

Closing Song

מוֹדִים, Modim

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם, Sim Shalom

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם Oseh Shalom

Torah Service:

אֵין כְּמוֹךָ, Ein Kamocho

כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן, Ki Mitziyon

שְׁמַע, Sh'ma

לְךָ יי הגדלה, L'cha Adonai

TORAH READING

מִי שֶׁבֵּירַח, Mi Shebeirach (traditional or Debbie Friedman)

וְזוֹת הַתּוֹרָה, V'zot HaTorah

HAFTARAH READING

יְהַלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם יי, Yahal'lu + Hodo Al Eretz

עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא, Eitz Chayim Hi

Musaf Service

חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ, Chatzi Kaddish

Heicha Kedusha (Avot-Gevurot-Kedusha)

קַדִּישׁ שְׁלָם Kaddish Shalem

עֲלֵינוּ, Aleinu

קַדִּישׁ יְתוֹם, Mourner's Kaddish

Closing Song

SHIVA SERVICE	SHIVA SERVICE
<p style="text-align: center;">A Simple Service</p> <p>Niggun, Opening Song, Opening Reading</p> <p>בְּרָכוּ, Bar'chu</p> <p>אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם, Ahavat Olam</p> <p>שְׁמַע, Shema + V'ahavta</p> <p>מִי כַמּוֹחַח, Mi Chamochah</p> <p>הַשְׂכִּיבֵנוּ, Hashkiveinu</p> <p>אַבּוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת, Amidah Silent Amidah or Avot+G'vurot+Kedushah</p> <p><i>Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories</i></p> <p>אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי, optional) Esa Einai יְהוָה רַעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר, Psalm 23</p> <p>אֵל מֵלֵא רַחֲמִים, El Male Rachamim</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ יְתוּם, Mourner's Kaddish</p> <p>עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם, Oseh Shalom/Closing Song</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A Traditional Service</p> <p>Niggun, Opening Song, Opening Reading</p> <p><u>Mincha (if still daylight)</u> אֲשֵׁרֵי, Ashrei</p> <p>אַבּוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת, Amidah</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ שְׁלָם, Kaddish Shalem</p> <p>עֲלֵינוּ, Aleinu</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ יְתוּם, Mourners' Kaddish</p> <p><u>Maariv</u></p> <p>בְּרָכוּ, Bar'chu</p> <p>אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם, Ahavat Olam</p> <p>שְׁמַע, Shema + V'ahavta</p> <p>מִי כַמּוֹחַח, Mi Chamochah</p> <p>הַשְׂכִּיבֵנוּ, Hashkiveinu</p> <p>אַבּוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת, Silent Amidah recitation</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ שְׁלָם, Kaddish Shalem</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">An Abbreviated Service</p> <p>Niggun, Opening Song, Opening Reading</p> <p>יְהוָה רַעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר, Psalm 23</p> <p><i>Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories</i></p> <p>אֵל מֵלֵא רַחֲמִים, El Male Rachamim</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ יְתוּם, Mourner's Kaddish</p> <p>עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם, Oseh Shalom/Closing Song</p>	<p><i>Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories</i></p> <p>אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי, Esa Einai שִׁוִּיתִי, Shiviti יְהוָה רַעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר, Psalm 23</p> <p>אֵל מֵלֵא רַחֲמִים, El Male Rachamim</p> <p>קִדְּיֵשׁ יְתוּם, Mourner's Kaddish</p> <p>עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם, Oseh Shalom/Closing Song</p>

