



ACTIVITY

Collective Prayer

Materials Needed

- Copies of the Vidui (Confession) Text
- Poster board and markers

Time Needed

30-45 minutes

Goal

To explore how communal prayer can be a window into the notion of mutual responsibility.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

- Jewish tradition created a society where the members of the Jewish People have a responsibility to each other as joint participants in a collective.
- Judaism outlines ‘*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*’ as an imperative. The word “*kol*” emphasizes that it is an obligation for each and every person.
- Jewish communities have always organized themselves according to this principle, building structures for mutual support of those in need.
- In the late 20th century there are numerous examples of when Jews mobilized in support of their brethren around the world based on this principle.

Directions for Activity

1. Ask participants to brainstorm what the purpose of prayer is for Jews? Who is it for? Is it for the individual’s spiritual connection with something greater or are there other reasons behind it?
2. Present the Vidui confession/prayer in context:

אָשָׁמְנוּ, בָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דִּבְרַנּוּ דְפִי, הֶעָוִינוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ, זָדְנוּ, חִמְסְנוּ, טָפְלָנוּ שָׂקָר, יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, כָּזַבְנוּ, לָצָנוּ, מִרְדְּנוּ,
נֶאֱצָנוּ, סָרְרָנוּ, עָוִינוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ, צָרְרָנוּ, קִשְׁיָנוּ עֵרָף, רָשָׁעְנוּ, שָׁחַתְנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תָּעִינוּ, תַּעֲתָעְנוּ.

Ashamnu—we have trespassed, *bagadnu*—we have dealt treacherously, *gazalnu*—we have robbed, *dibarnu dofi*—we have spoken slander, *he’evinu*—we have acted perversely, *v’hirshanu*—we have done wrong, *zadnu*—we have acted presumptuously, *hamasnu*—we have done violence, *tafalnu sheker*—we have practiced deceit, *ya’atsnu ra*—we have counseled evil, *kizavnu*—we have spoken falsehood, *latsnu*—we have scoffed, *maradnu*—we have revolted, *ni’atsnu*—we have blasphemed, *sararnu*—we have rebelled, *avinu*—we have committed iniquity, *pashanu*—we have transgressed, *tsararnu*—we have oppressed, *kishinu oref*—we have been stiff necked, *rashanu*—we have acted wickedly, *shichatnu*—we have dealt corruptly, *ti’avnu*—we have committed abomination, *ta’inu*—we have gone astray, *titanu*—we have led others astray.

-Siddur and Yom Kippur Liturgy

3. Divide the group into smaller ones and ask them to modernize the ashamnu prayer so that it feels relevant for Jews today. Would they change the prayer? If so, how?
4. Let the groups present their finished product to the whole group and use that to lead into a discussion around the question of collective vs. individual responsibility.
5. Present the idea of the minyan, the group of 10 Jews, without which many of the important parts of the Jewish prayer (including kaddish, the mourner's prayer and barkhu the call to prayer) cannot take place. Why would others have to be present for specific moments in a prayer service to take place?
6. Create a space for personal reflection. Ask participants to share if they have ever been asked to be the 10th for a minyan or otherwise "needed" for communal prayer. How did they feel? (Inconvenienced? Like it was a privilege?)

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understandings that you set out to teach surface during this activity?