

Text Study **א** - Aleph  
T'filat HaDerech (Traveler's Prayer)  
**תְּפִלַּת הַדֶּרֶךְ**

After saying the blessing before study, read the texts below and answer the questions in small groups of 3-5 people each. After 15 minutes, be prepared to share your responses to question #6 with the entire Task Force.

**תְּפִלַּת הַדֶּרֶךְ**

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,  
שְׁתוּלִיכֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְתַצְעִידֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְתִדְרִיכֵנוּ  
לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתַגִּיעֵנוּ לְמַחֲזוֹ הַחֲפִצּוֹנוֹ לְחַיִּים וְלִשְׂמֹחָה  
וְלִשְׁלוֹם, וְתַחֲזִירֵנוּ לְבֵיתֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְתַצִּילֵנוּ מִכָּף כָּל  
אוֹיֵב וְאוֹרֵב, וּמִכָּל מִיַּי פְּרַעֲנוֹת הַמְּתַרְגְּשׁוֹת לְבוֹא  
לְעוֹלָם וְתִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ וְתַתִּיבֵנוּ לְחוֹן  
וְלַחֲסֵד וְלִרְחָמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָּל רְאִינוֹ, וְתִשְׁמַע  
קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה וְתַחֲנוּן אַתָּה;  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.

*T'filat HaDerech (Traveler's Prayer)*

May it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our ancestors, to guide us in peace, to sustain us in peace, to lead us to our desired destination in health and joy and peace, and to bring us home in peace. Save us from every enemy and disaster on the way, and from all calamities that threaten the world. Bless the work of our hands. May we find grace, love and compassion in Your sight and in the sight of all who see us. Hear our supplication, for You listen to prayer and supplication.

Praised are You, Lord who hears prayer.

Please note that God's Hebrew name appears on this page. As a sign of respect, instead of discarding it after use you may prefer to store it in a geniza—a place where printed materials containing God's name and old ritual objects are collected in preparation for ritual burial.

1. Although this is a fairly short prayer, it contains many requests. What are some of the requests made in the prayer? Upon whose behalf are these requests made?
2. The first sentence of this prayer repeatedly mentions “peace.” The Hebrew word for peace, שלום *shalom*, derives from the Hebrew word for wholeness or completeness. In what ways do you think a journey might threaten one’s sense of wholeness?
3. What does the request “Bless the work of our hands” suggest to you about what is expected to happen during a journey?

Please read the follow text and then answer the question below:

Abaye said: A man should always associate himself with the congregation [and it is advisable that he should not pray on his behalf alone]. How should he say [the prayer]? ‘May it be Your will, Lord our God, to guide us in peace, etc.’ When should he say this prayer? R. Jacob said in the name of R. Hisda: At the moment he starts on his journey

**Brachot 30a**

4. Why do you think Abaye notes that people should pray and travel as part of a group?
5. How might being part of a group be an asset when taking a journey?
7. In what ways does this prayer help you think about your RE-IMAGINE journey?

**Background**

**Abaye** – Considered one of the primary authors of the *Talmud*, Abaye (280-339 CE) was head of the Academy at Pumbedita and a successful farmer.

**R. Jacob** – Living at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Rabbi Jacob was Babylonian-born though he migrated to *Eretz Yisrael*. He is frequently referred to in the *Talmud* as “a certain one of the rabbis.”

**R. Hisda** – With the wealth he acquired from being a brewer, Rabbi Hisda (c. 217-309) rebuilt the famous rabbinical academy in Sura, Babylonia.

**Brachot** – A tractate of the *Talmud* that deals primarily with benedictions and daily prayers.

Activity 6  
Why Study Text?

**Why is Study Important for Jews in Contemporary Society?**

- Study is a *mitzvah*, an integral part of the Jewish tradition.
- Study is a vehicle for spiritual growth.
- Study can help us to better understand who we are.
- Competence and comfort can only be achieved through study and knowledge.
- For Jews in some movements, study provides a critical basis for informed choice.

Both *torah lishma* (study for its own sake) and *torat chayim* (study as an aid to daily living) are important, and both of these are very different from education, as commonly thought of in American society.

**Why is Study Integral to The ECE RE-IMAGINE Project?**

The medium is the message. The project examines Jewish education in the synagogue, so it is imperative to model learning as a core value.

**Why Study Jewish Texts?**

Not all Jewish study involves texts, and not all the learning you do with your fellow congregants in this project will involve Jewish text. Still, text study is important in this project for a number of reasons:

- We are not interested in developing a group of like-minded thinkers (as though this were even possible!). Rather, the goal is for every individual to be able to access and study the tradition without over-reliance on experts or authorities. While some of our knowledge will always be filtered through the lens of our teachers and leaders, true autonomy requires that each of us engage in our own interpretation.
- Text study is a particularly powerful vehicle for building community, trust and reflection. Learning to appreciate how others think prepares you to make the difficult and complex decisions you ultimately will face
- The textual tradition keeps Jews connected to Judaism. As a starting point for becoming informed, it establishes the parameters within which we interpret and apply tradition to our lives. The choices or interpretations of tradition made by one generation should not close off the options or interpretations available to the

generations that follow. If Jews did not continually study texts, the choices and interpretations made today would alter Judaism irrevocably.

### **Which Texts are Appropriate for Study?**

and everything. *Torah*, for the purposes of our work, is interpreted broadly to mean all of Jewish literature. Participants should be exposed to a balanced selection of texts, including but not necessarily limited to:

- The *Tanach* (the Hebrew Bible), with texts chosen both thematically and according to *Parashat HaShavuah* (the portion of the week);
- Rabbinic literature, both *halachic* (legal) and *aggadic* (anecdotal);
- The *Siddur* (prayer book);
- Jewish thought, and
- Contemporary Jewish literature.

Although *torah lishma* should be part of the process, *torat chayim* – the ways in which Jewish texts can inform our thinking and decision-making today – is especially important. Over the course of the project, we hope to familiarize you with the major bodies of literature, the major scholars, and to some of the primary values that might inform organizational life today.

### **What Learning Methods Should We Use?**

Since The RE-IMAGINE Project engages a variety of people in conversations about Jewish learning for your congregation’s children, our text study focuses especially on interpretation and commentary, rather than the acquisition of information. While lectures and *divrei torah* (scriptural interpretation) have their place, we encourage interactive text study in *chevruta*, or in small groups. Over time you will find yourselves becoming more adept at approaching a text “from scratch,” and accessing tools of interpretation. You will also experience first-hand how study creates community.