

Dance Movement Shacharit

Exploring Shacharit at a Music Festival

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Goals: To express a connection with God, prayer, community, and self through movement

Time: 50 Minutes

Space Needed: A large open space

Shabbat Friendly: Yes

Participants: 0-30

Audience: Grades 9-12

Keywords: Dance, Movement, Creative, Physical, Music, Tefillah

Set Up: Set up chairs in a circle with a few extra feet between them to allow for more movement

Facilitator Introduction (3 mins):

Hey everyone! Welcome to Dance Movement Shacharit! Being at a music festival certainly involves a lot of movements. There are people getting jiggy all over the festival grounds, showing off their dance movements and raving to the music. This morning you will be participating in a movement based Shacharit service which will have us use the motion of our bodies to find meaning and connection to God, prayer, community, and self. The services we do regularly already include a fair amount of movement (sitting, standing, bowing, turning, covering eyes, raising heels), but just as the words are often difficult to relate to because of how accustomed we are to them or how little we know about them, so too can these purposeful movements be alienating and confusing. Today we will add our own movements and dances to the words of the prayers to renew the purpose and form new meaning.

***Birkot Hashachar* (page 10) - Dance Warm Up (5 mins):**

1. Have all USYers stand in a circle with chairs behind them (for sitting later)
2. Go through traditional marathon/sports stretches. For each stretch that you do, instead of counting to ten like you normally would, say one of the prayers of the *Birkot Hashachar*. It will be sort of hard for them to hold a Siddur while doing this, but you can lead them and surely some people will know it and follow along
3. There are 7 stretches here and 14 blessings of the Birkot Hashachar. For each stretch, do the stretch on each hand (so do right arm, left arm for the first two blessings, etc.)



Ashrei (page 80) - Popcorn Dance Moves (5 mins):

1. Remain standing in a circle
2. Instruct USYers that we will be doing *Ashrei* popcorn style - which means that everyone will be able to participate in a random order
3. You can decide to go around in a circle if it is easier to make people more inspired to participate, but if they are not comfortable or do not know the Hebrew, don't make them
4. Any USYer who steps forwards should go into the middle of the circle, show everyone a simple movement or dance movement, and then read the prayer while having everyone do that movement
 - a. The movement does not have to be related to the prayer but it must be mature, since it is still a prayer and you will be moving as you say the prayer
5. Sample simple dance moves for lines of the *Ashrei* - if you do any of these moves to the right, just do the movements over and over again (for example, for "swing," just keep swinging and swaying your arms over your head back and forth for the duration of the line
6. If USYers do not step up to make their own dance moves, you can lead them in a bunch of these



Halleluyah (Psalm 150 - page 88) - The Epic Instrumental (7 mins):

1. Preface the next activity by mentioning that *Halleluyah* is about praising God with excitement, liveliness, song and music
2. Have all USYers sit down and ask for a volunteer to read the prayer in English
3. After doing so, have USYers pair up to choose a musical instrument they would play for the *Halleluyah*. It does not necessarily need to be connected to the prayer, but they will not actually be playing it. For example, they could play the "air guitar," "air tamborine," can simply clap, or bang on the chair
4. Then, after two minutes have passed, come back together and sing the *Halleluyah* in Hebrew as every group pretends to play their instrument
5. Use the lively melody for *Halleluyah*

Shema - The Beat Drops; the Height of Prayer (7 mins):

This section will be similar to, but more focused than, *Baruch Sheamar*.

1. Have someone volunteer to read the first line of the *Shema* in Hebrew and English
2. Ask every USYer to choose one word of the *Shema*. Ask them to think about that word and what it means to them. Why did they pick it? How does it relate to God? How does it relate to them?
3. Have everyone find someone who picked the same word as them and pair off. Only have a group of 3 if the numbers are uneven
4. As a pair, they should come up with a hand motion that represents their word according to either or both of their interpretations.
5. Come back together and lead the group in a set of five controlled breathing cycles of five-second inhales followed by five-second exhales
 - a. Breath in 1 2 3 4 5...Breath out 1 2 3 4 5 (x5)
6. Sing the *Shema* slowly together with everyone doing their movements. Say the *Shema* in such a way that everyone holds the last syllable until they have no more breath. Each group should do their hand movements as they recite the words, and this way will allow every group to show off their movement

Amidah - The Silent and Sedentary Rave (13 mins)

1. Before beginning you will teach/review the “choreography” of the *Amidah*
 - a. Stand at the word “*kumah*” on page 352, which asks God to stand up for us as we stand up for ourselves
 - b. Before the first blessing, take three steps back and then three steps forward as if stepping back from something overwhelming, but then approaching in awe
 - c. We bow at “*Baruch*” both at the beginning and end of the first paragraph, as if addressing a human king
 - d. For the *Kedushah* we are saying the words that are the same words the Angels say when they approach God. In this moment we are angelic. We bow to left and right at the words, “*zeh el zeh*”, inviting everyone to join together. We lift our heels three times, on the words “*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*” as we ascend in holiness. We lift our heels at each of our responses, acting the part of the angels
 - e. We then are silent as we continue the *Amidah* in stillness until the end
 - f. At the end of the *Amidah*, at the words, “*Oseh Shalom*” we again take three steps back and then three steps forward, as we did at the start of the prayer
2. **Read:** *Amidah* itself means “standing”. Once we go silent our movement will shift to stillness. Stillness is the absence of movement, but can it can be just as important as movement. When we reach that point, you will have the opportunity to feel the difference between active movement and potential movement
3. Daven the *Amidah* normally - first part out loud with all movements enunciated, then silently until the end

Conclusion: Thank you all for participating! (Time permitting: ask for feedback).