

Principles for Teaching Siddur Through Inquiry & Discovery

The expression of such problems guides the teacher so that s/he can make the study relevant. That such theological problems exist is obvious to all but the most "buried ostrich." Our approach is to "ventilate" them while the child is still a student in a Jewish atmosphere rather than waiting until the student leaves us. The wisdom of this approach is obvious and requires no explanation.

Rhetorical and literary analysis help the student to carefully examine all of the elements that carry the meaning or meanings in the prayer. The following questions may be taken as illustrative of an analysis of a piece of Jewish liturgy:

1. What does the prayer say?
2. Can it be divided into units of thought or style?
3. Are there any striking grammatical forms?
4. When was the prayer written?
5. What kind of experience might have stimulated such a prayer? *Has that ever happened to you?*
6. For whom was the prayer intended?
7. What questions is the prayer attempting to answer? *Has there ever been a time in your life when you could have said this prayer?*
8. When is the prayer recited?
9. What ideas do we find in the prayer?
10. Where do we find similar or contradictory ideas in the Siddur?
11. What has happened to these ideas as Judaism has developed?
12. What role has this prayer played among Jews?
13. How do you feel about this prayer? *all answers are correct*
14. If a person took the ideas in this prayer seriously, how might it affect his/her behavior? *-what difference would it make?*