

- experienced. Gently return your attention to the breath and to your body, and continue on.
- The numbers 25-25-50 are to give you a general idea of where your attention should be focused. They are not meant to be followed literally. Another way to frame this practice is: place part of your attention on your breath, part of your attention on the feel of the earth against you, and most of your attention on the object(s) of your main focus. One woman mentioned that it was helpful to think of this as heart-earth meditation.
 - It might be too much to keep awareness on three loci. For some, it is better to simply keep some awareness on the bottoms of the feet, and not bother with breath. Some people prefer to keep awareness on the heart rather than the breath. The rule is, experiment and do what works for you. I find that when walking in nature, it helps to keep awareness on feet and heart. When praying, I keep some awareness on one or the other.

I often run into past participants from hikes with my organization, TorahTrek. Many volunteer that the 25-25-50 practice has affected them the most. Take it seriously, and you will notice a change in any activity to which you apply it.

PRACTICE 6

Heart Awareness

This practice is as powerful as it is simple. It is particularly effective while praying, as focus on the heart area not only keeps you aware of the body but also invites your emotional participation in the praying.

- Whatever else you are doing, *keep part of your awareness on your heart*. Because of its simplicity, this is a good practice for staying grounded throughout the day, whatever the activity.
- Before praying, place full awareness on your heart and listen in silence.

- While praying, keep part of your awareness focused on the heart. Notice any sensations in the chest area. If you are davenning from the Siddur, feel your heart open up to the words of the prayer book. If you are praying your own prayer, feel your words coming from the heart and extending into the world.
- Place your hand over your heart, as if you were saying the American pledge of allegiance. This helps maintain focus and facilitates the flow of *chiut*, divine energy, through the body. I especially love to do this during the Amidah and personal prayer.

Blessings

As discussed in chapter 11, blessings are a fruitful way to begin praying, as blessings always include awareness and gratitude. To begin a blessings practice, you might turn the Thank-You Walk (practice 3) into a Blessings Walk (practice 10). Simply add some variation of the *baruch ata* formula (see practice 8) into your thank-you prayer. I try to avoid generalities and get specific, as awareness of detail creates a stronger connection to what I am blessing and a stronger movement in my heart. So instead of thanking God for the blue sky, I might bless God, "who brings us fog in the morning and thunderclouds in the afternoon."

Second, you can learn the traditional blessings and use them (practice 9). I would begin with just a few. The blessings around food are a good place to start, as they are simple but varied, and we eat often. It is quite easy for blessings over food to become rote, the dark side of memorizing and habituating prayer. So blessings over food can be a testing ground and a knife-sharpener for honing your *kavvanah*. To combine traditional and personal blessings, try practice 10.

Whether spontaneous or traditional, blessings require our focus and concentration. A final reason for starting Jewish prayer with a blessings practice is that the techniques in the