



Judaism: The Essentials

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER?

If prayer worked the way many people think it does, no one would ever die, because no prayer is offered more sincerely than a prayer for life, for health and recovery from illness... People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles, any more than children who pray for bicycles, good grades, or boyfriends get them as a result of praying. But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost, very often find their prayers answered. They discover that they have more strength, more courage than they ever knew themselves to have.

Rabbi Harold Kushner
American Conservative rabbi (1935-)

Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living

Abraham Joshua Heschel
American Rabbi and theologian 1907-1972

We pray for the sake of our soul as we take food for the sake of our body.

Judah HaLevi
Spanish philosopher and poet (1075-1141)

Serve the Eternal your God with all your heart (Deuteronomy 10:10). What is a service with the heart? It is prayer.

Sifre Deuteronomy, Ekev
Late third century midrash

In my experience, prayer does not give security or the answer to the problems of the cosmos – at least, it never has for me. But though it has not changed the external world to suit my convenience, it has changed me, and I am part of that world. It has not given me security... but it has given me courage, and helped me cope with the next step ahead.

Rabbi Lionel Blue
British Reform Rabbi and writer (1930-2017)

When I was young I asked my father, "If you don't believe in God, why do you go to synagogue so regularly?"

My father answered, "Jews go to synagogue for all sorts of reasons. My friend, Garfinkle, goes to talk to God. I go to talk to Garfinkle."

Harry Golden
Jewish-American humorist (1902-1981)

Prayer is the time when we peel off the rugged armour with which we shield our souls in a hostile world.

David Wolpe
American Rabbi and author (1958-)

Why is the prayer of the righteous like a pitchfork? Just as a pitchfork turns over grains from place to place, so the prayer of the righteous turns the attributes of God from the attribute of wrath to that of mercy.

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 64a

When God finished the world, God asked the angels if anything was lacking on land or on sea, in the air or in heaven. Then the angels answered that although everything was perfect, one thing was still missing from the earth - words which praised God. God agreed with the angels' observation, and so created people. This teaches us that God's work is to benefit people, and people's work is to thank their Creator.

Philo (20 BC-50 BCE)
Hellenistic Jewish philosopher

Prayer... teaches people to overcome bitterness and self-pity, to think not of what the world owes him/her, but what s/he owes the world and God.

Solomon B. Freehof (1892-1990)
American Reform Rabbi and scholar

Prayer in Judaism... is bound up with human needs, wants, drives, and urges... Prayer is the doctrine of human needs. Prayer tells the individual as well as the community, what his/her or its genuine needs are, what s/he should, or should not, petition God about...

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik
Orthodox Rabbi and scholar (1903-1993)

Religion itself is an art, the art of finding shape in time, plotting points of meaning in bare space... [Public worship] is the artistry by which we paint the canvas of a world not shaped by happenstance.

Lawrence A Hoffman
American Rabbi and scholar (1942-)

BUILDING BLOCKS OF JEWISH LITURGY

1 - BIBLE

Biblical passages

Sh'ma

Psalms

Kabbalat Shabbat, P'sukei D'Zimra

Collections of verses

Ma Tovu, Havdalah, Tziduk HaDin

Individual verses / quotes

Elohei Avraham etc, Oseh Shalom

2 - BLESSINGS

How do we know it's a blessing?

כָּרַחְךָ אֶתָּה יְיָ

The *chatimah* (seal)

Types of blessing

Blessings of benefit/pleasure

Blessings for mitzvot

Blessings of praise

Blessing strings

Birkat Ha-Mazon

Amidah

3 - LITURGICAL POETRY

Piyyutim

Songs

[D'var Torah]

Shema and Blessings

Barchu
Maariv Aravim
Ahavat Olam
Shema
Ga'al Yisrael
Hashkiveinu
V'shamru

Amidah

Praise
Kedushat HaYom
Thanks
Closing

Conclusion

Aleinu
Kaddish
Song
KIDDUSH

Welcoming Shabbat

Songs
Psalms - Kabbalat Shabbat
L'cha Dodi
Psalm 92/93

**Alyth**

The Erev Shabbat Service

*Tachanun - not Shabbat/festival days
Hallel - on festival days, Rosh Chodesh*

Torah Service
*on Mon, Thur, Shabbat,
Festivals, Rosh Chodesh*

Musaf
*on Shabbat,
Festivals
Rosh
Chodesh*

Shema and Blessings

Barchu
Yotzer,
Ahavah Rabbah
Shema
Geulah

Amidah

Praise
Kedushah
Kedushat HaYom
Thanks
Closing

Conclusion

Aleinu
Kaddish
Song

**P'sukei D'zimra -
Verses of Song**
blessings, psalms and biblical material

Birchot HaShachar
including blessings, study

Alyth

Shabbat Morning Service