

Rosh Hashanah Supplement



Why Pray?

What then is the role of prayer in an era of greater and growing human competence? And in an age when we seek to shake off magical thinking in order to relate to God more out of love, out of partnership, rather than out of servile need to win God's favor and out of self-interest desire for favors?

I would propose three functions for prayer. All humans live inside their own skins. One's perspective is skewed by being focused on one's self. By turning to God in prayer, one is motivated to move beyond a self-centered or narcissistic perspective for a moment to see the world from a Divine perspective. In praying, I see myself as a finite creature within the great whole. The world *is not* centered on me. This makes me (the individual) no less important. After all, every human being is an image of God – godlike, endowed with the intrinsic dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness. But the universe does not rotate around me. When the individual prays and sees the world from Divine perspective, they see the incredible beauty and grandeur of existence. We recognize how much goodness has been granted in our lives; how much health, life experience, intelligence, growth has brought one's life (and the lives of our loved ones) this far. This is expressed in *prayers of praise and thanksgiving* (not request), which have always been part of traditional prayers.

The second category of prayer is particularly significant in our time when humans are more competent. Sometimes, I call this category the 'prayers of the powerful' instead of the past 'prayers of the powerless.' It is about knowing one's limits and respecting the capacity and dignity of the other. Instead of the incurable patient pleading for a miracle, there is the prayer of the doctor: God, guide my hand; God help me focus my judgement and wisdom to make the right diagnosis and prescriptions. Teach me to respect the patient and enlist their choices, to engage them in the therapeutic process. Help me see that I am not God. Remind me to respect the patient's God-given body, to work with its natural rhythms in devising a cure. Teach me to accept my finitude and express it in not overtreating, in not turning the patient into a guinea pig for experimentation. Inspire me with love so that I will get up in the middle of the night and make a home visit to better understand and treat the sick person. There is an equivalent prayer for every business person, therapist, teacher, trainer, supervisor, and so on.

Finally, there is a third form of prayer: to join with a congregation, to become part of the Jewish people or the larger community, to identify with the concerns and needs of the whole nation. In such a case, I may even say the old prayers – the unchanged words even of

prayers whose magical thinking or retributionist overtone I may not accept any more. In saying these prayers, I identify with my people and its tradition. I acknowledge that the covenant to perfect the world (or to sustain individual lives) has been going on for thousands of years. I embrace past generations and express my gratitude to them even when I disagree with their words or some specific values. Still I acknowledge with gratitude their contribution, that they brought us and the covenant this far and that I am the beneficiary. At such a moment, I open up to the needs of *klal Yisrael* [the Jewish people] and of the whole world and am inspired to join in the effort of *tikkun olam* [world repair].

At such moments, sometimes, I open to God – not as the divine vending machine but as partner, sustainer, lover, redeemer of my people and myself. Thus these prayers become prayers of solidarity, thanksgiving, and of eternal love.

- Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg

Hinei Ma Tov

Hinei ma tov u'ma na'eem shevet acheem gam yachad (x 2)

Hinei ma tov shevet ach'yot gam yachad (x 2)

Translation: How good and how sweet it is to be together in community

Unison Benediction

Return to the most human
nothing less will nourish the torn spirit,
the bewildered heart,
the angry mind:
and from the ultimate duress,
pierced with the breath of anguish,
speak of love.

Return, return to the deep sources,
nothing less will teach the stiff hands a
new way to serve,
to care into our lives the forms of
tenderness

and still that ancient necessary pain
preserve.

Return to the most human,
nothing less will teach the angry spirit,
the bewildered heart,
the torn mind,
to accept the whole of its duress,
and pierced with anguish...
at last, act for love.

- May Sarton

Roll Into Dark

Roll into dark, Roll into light
Light becomes day, day turns to night.

Borei yom va lailah, goleil or meep'nei choshech
Goleil or meep'nei choshech, v'chosech meep'nei or.

- Noam Katz

Redemption Song

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships

Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit

But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty

We forward in this generation
Triumphantly

[Chorus]
Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

[Verse 2]
Emancipate yourselves from mental
slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds

Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time

How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?

Ooh, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book

[Chorus]

[Verse 3]
Emancipate yourselves from mental
slavery
None but ourselves can free our mind

Woah, have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them-ah can-ah stop-ah
the time

How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?

Yes, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book

[Chorus]

- Bob Marley

Hashkiveynu

Leader: *Hashkiveynu Adonai eloheynu l'shalom, v'ha'amideynu malkeynu l'chaim.*

Congregation:

Give us a place to rest, God, and help us stand up to life.
Spread over us Your peace-filled sukkah that through Your good counsel we might be
repaired.

Shield us from enmity, slaughter, hunger of the body and soul,
From unexpected sorrow
From those who would fault us for being merely human.

Bring us into the soft shelter of Your truth,

For with You is protection and safekeeping;
In Your royal, loving Presence we find acceptance and compassion.

Watch over us as we go forth and prepare for us a peaceful welcome as we return.
Spread your peace-filled sukkah
over us and all we love,
over Jerusalem and all who dwell there,
over all of the House of Israel and all the peoples of the world.
Amen. May it be so.

- adapted from *On the Wings of Awe*, the Hillel High Holiday prayerbook

Yah Ribon

Yah ribon, yah ribon olam, v'almaya

Ahnt hu malka, ahnt hu malka, melech malchaya

Yah ribon olam v'almaya ahnt hu malka melech malchaya

Ovad g'vur'teich v'timhaya sh'far kodamach l'hachavaya

Yah ribon, yah ribon olam, v'almaya

Ahnt hu malka, ahnt hu malka, melech malchaya

Yah! Sovereign of all Worlds, Wow is it good to sing your praise.
Return to your holiest place, the place where all spirits and souls will rejoice.
And when we come together, we will sing to you beautiful songs and praises.

Leader: And it is said: On that day, Oneness will reign supreme

- Words in Aramaic by Rabbi Yisrael Najara
- music by Josh Warshawsky

We Rise

We rise, humbly hearted
Rise, we won't be divided
Rise, with spirit to guide us... Rise!

In hope, in prayer, we find ourselves here
In hope, in prayer, we're right here. (x2)

We rise, all of the children
Rise, elders with wisdom

Rise, ancestors surround us... Rise!

In hope, in prayer, we find ourselves here
In hope, in prayer, we're right here. (x2)

We rise, up from the wreckage
Rise, with tears and with courage
Rise, fighting for life... We rise!

- Batya Levine

A Blessing for Entering the New Year (And for Journeying Onward Anytime Anywhere)

On the next part of your journey, into a
new year or a new career
As you make a new friend or to your heart
you do tend
We wish you... B'hatzlacha (good luck)!

May your eyes open to glorious sights that
will make your heart beat faster
and may your breathing slow enough to
embrace the meaningfulness of it all.
May your mind expand to explore new
ideas and consider new possibilities
and may your thinking constrict enough
to impede the inevitable kvetches and
self-deprecating self-critique.

May your sense of self morph and
strengthen as you experience what no
longer is
But what now just might be.

May your awareness of what is and can be
Expand beyond what was and what you
expected.

And may the journey ahead be jam packed
with joy joined with serious
self-reflection,
fullness of family and friends amidst an
abundance of fun,
insight, inspiration, and more than a
touch of idealism, with
love sweetened with laughter, and
healthy living, working and being.

And may you interact with and as part of
an increasingly haimische humanity.

Thus may you fill your heart and soul,
so that the journey ahead, into the
unknown may be exciting, energizing, and
absolutely... enough.

- Rabbi Paul Kipnes

I Thank You G-d

i thank you G-d for most this amazing day;
for the leaping greenly spirit of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;
and for everything which is natural,
which is infinite
which is yes

i who have died am alive again today
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the
birth day of life and of love and wings;

and of the gay great happening earth

how should tasting, touching, hearing,
seeing, breathing any- lifted from the no
of all nothing- human merely being
doubt the unimaginable You?

now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened

- e.e. cummings

Blessing for the New Year

May you experience unexpected wonder this year. May you teach something new to
someone this year. May you engage in productive teamwork this year. May you find
inspiration from our tradition this year. May you build new friendships this year. May you
have satisfying agreements and disagreements this year. May this year bring you many
moments of sweetness. And may we each be blessed with what is truly most precious and
therefore most holy – time. Shana tovah!

TORAH READINGS

From the Book of *Breishit* (Creation)

Genesis 18:17-22

וַיְהִיָּה אָמַר הַמַּכְסָּה אֲנִי מְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה:

Now יהוה had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

וְאַבְרָהָם הִינוּ יְהִיָּה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְעַצְמוֹם וְלִבְרָכוֹ-בּוֹ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ:

since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him?

כִּי יִדְעַתִּיו לַמַּעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת-בָּנָיו וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָדָּךְ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת
צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לַמַּעַן הִבִּיֵּא יְהוָה עַל-אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּר עָלָיו:

For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of יהוה by doing what is just and right, in order that יהוה may bring about for Abraham what has been promised him."

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וְעֹמֶרָה כִּי-רָבָה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כְבֹדָה מְאֹד:

Then יהוה said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave!

אֲרֹדֶה-נָּא וְאֶרְאֶה הַכָּצָעַקְתָּהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עֲשׂוּ | כָּלָה וְאִם-לֹא אֵדָעָה:

I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note."

וַיִּפְּנוּ מִשָּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ סְדֹמָה וְאַבְרָהָם עֹדֵנּוּ עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

The agents went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before יהוה.

Genesis 18:23-27

וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵף תִּסְפֶּה צַדִּיק עִם-רָשָׁע:

Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?

אוּלֵּי יֵשׁ חֲמִשִּׁים צַדִּיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר הֲאֵף תִּסְפֶּה וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא לְמַקְוֹם לְמַעַן חֲמִשִּׁים
הַצַּדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּהּ:

What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it?

חָלָלָה לָךְ מַעֲשֵׂת | בְּדִבַּר הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צַדִּיק עִם-רָשָׁע וְהָיָה כְּצַדִּיק כָּרָשָׁע חָלָלָה לָךְ
הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:

Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אִם־אֶמְצָא בְּסֹדֶם חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְנִשְׁאַתִּי לְכָל־הַמָּקוֹם
בְּעִבּוֹרָם:

And יהוה answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."

וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאֵלֶתִי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי וְאַנֹכִי עֹפָר וָאֵפֶר:

Abraham spoke up, saying, "Here I venture to speak to יהוה, I who am but dust and ashes:

Genesis 18: 28-33

אֲוִלִּי יַחֲסֹרֹון חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִּיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה הַתְּשֻׁתִית בְּחִמְשָׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא
אֲשַׁחִית אִם־אֶמְצָא שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים וְחִמְשָׁה:

What if the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there."

וַיִּסָּף עוֹד לְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אוֹלִי יִמָּצְאוּ שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּעִבּוֹר
הָאַרְבָּעִים:

But he spoke up again, and said, "What if forty should be found there?" "I will not do it, for the sake of the forty."

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא יַחַר לֹא־דִבְרָה אוֹלִי יִמָּצְאוּ שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה
אִם־אֶמְצָא שָׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים:

And he said, "Let not יהוה be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?" "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא הוֹאֵלֶתִי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי אוֹלִי יִמָּצְאוּ שָׁם עֶשְׂרִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא
אֲשַׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרִים:

And he said, "I venture again to speak to my lord: What if twenty should be found there?" "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty."

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא יַחַר לֹא־דִבְרָה אֲדֹ־הַפַּעַם אוֹלִי יִמָּצְאוּ שָׁם עֶשְׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא
אֲשַׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרָה:

And he said, "Let not יהוה be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?" "I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten."

וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמָקוֹמוֹ:

Having finished speaking to Abraham, יהוה departed; and Abraham returned to his place.