

הכנה לתפילה

Preparing for Prayer

Leshoni Konanta
Author Unknown

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Leshoni konanta Elohai vativhar
Beshirim shesamta befi tov mimishar
Venegdakh konanta tze'adai mimishhar
Veli garon tata bekori lo nihar
Veyitzri hilibanta kemo tzemer tzahar
Velakhen lo shata levavi bi seharhar
Heyeh sitri ata ke-etmol ukhemahar
Umagini ata Elohai al te-ahar

לְשׁוֹנִי כּוֹנֵנֶת אֱלֹהֵי וְתִבְחַר
בְּשִׁירִים שֶׁשָׁמַתָּ בְּפִי טוֹב מִמִּשְׁחָר
וְנִגְדָּךְ כּוֹנֵנֶת צְעָדִי מִמִּשְׁחָר
וְלִי גֵרוֹן תִּתֶּה בְּקֶרְאִי לֹא נֶחַר
וְיִצְרֵי הַלְּבָבֶתָּ כִּמוֹ צֶמֶר צַחַר
וְלִכֹּן לֹא שִׁתֶּה לְבָבִי בִּי סַחְרָחַר
הֲיִה סִתְרֵי עֲתֶה כְּאֶתְמוֹל וּכְמֶחַר
וּמַגִּנִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי אֵל תִּאֲחַר

My tongue You have fashioned
Songs that you have placed
discourse

And my footsteps you have directed
And you have given me a throat

And you have purified my Yetzer
Therefore my heart did not stray

Be now my protector
You are my shield

My Lord, and have chosen
in my mouth, they are better than any other

towards you from the first
that has not gone dry from calling out to you

to be as white as wool
nor grow dizzy within me

as yesterday and tomorrow
My Lord, do not delay

Shachar Avakeshka
R. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol
Spain, 11th Century
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Shahar avakeshka tzuri umisgabi
e'erokh lefanekha shahri vegam arbi

שחר אַבְקֶשְׁקָה צוּרִי וּמִשְׁגָּבִי
אֶעֱרֹךְ לְפָנֶיךָ שַׁחְרִי וְגַם עֶרְבִי

Lifnei gedulatekha e'emod ve-ebahel
ki eincha tir-eh khol mahshevot libi

לִפְנֵי גְדֻלַּתְךָ אֶעֱמֹד וְאֶבְהֵל
כִּי עֵינֶיךָ תִּרְאֶה כָּל מַחְשְׁבוֹת לִבִּי

Ma zeh asher yukhal halev vehalashon
la'asot uma koah ruhi betokh kirbi

מָה זֶה אֲשֶׁר יוּכַל הַלֵּב וְהַלְשׁוֹן
לַעֲשׂוֹת וּמָה כֹּחַ רוּחִי בְּתוֹךְ קִרְבִּי

Hineh lekha titav zimrat enosh al ken
odekha be'od nishmat elo-ah bi

הִנֵּה לְךָ תִּיטֵב זִמְרַת אָנוּשׁ עַל כֵּן
אוֹדֶךָ בְּעוֹד נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהִים בִּי

At dawn I seek You, my rock and my fortress
my morning and evening prayers I lay before You

Before Your greatness I stand in fright
for Your eyes can see into the thoughts of my heart

What is this that the heart and tongue can
bring about, and what is the strength of my spirit within me?

Behold the singing of man will be pleasant to You, therefore
I thank You while the soul of God is within me

Adon Olam

Author Unknown

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Adon olam asher malakh	beterem kol yetzir nivra	בְּטָרִם כָּל יִצִיר נִבְרָא	אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מְלַךְ
Le'et na'asah beheftzo kol	azai melekh shemo nikra	אֲזִי מְלַךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא	לְעֵת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחִפְצוֹ כָּל
Ve'aharei kikhlot hakol	levado yimlokh nora	לְבַדּוֹ יִמְלֹךְ נוֹרָא	וְאַחֲרֵי כְּכֹלֹת הַכֹּל
Vehu haya vehu hoveh	vehu yihyeh betifara	וְהוּא יְהִיָּה בְּתִפְאַרָה	וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא הוֹנֶה
Vehu ehad ve-ein sheni	lehamshilo ul'habhira	לְהַמְשִׁילוֹ וּלְהַחְבִּירָה	וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שֵׁנִי
Beli reshit beli takhlit	velo ha'oz vehamisra	וְלוֹ הָעוֹז וְהַמְשֶׁרָה	בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תַכְלִית
[Beli erekh beli dimyon	beli shinuy utmura	בְּלִי שְׁנוּי וּתְמוּרָה	[בְּלִי עֶרֶךְ בְּלִי דְמִיּוֹן
Beli hibur beli perud	gedol koah ugevura]	גָּדֹל כֹּחַ וּגְבוּרָה]	בְּלִי חֲבוּר בְּלִי פְרוּד
Vehu Eli vehai go-ali	vetzur hevli beyom [be'et] tzara	וְצוּר חֲבְלֵי בְיּוֹם [בַּעַת] צָרָה	וְהוּא אֱלֹהֵי וְחֵי גּוֹאֲלֵי
Vehu nisi umanusu	menat kosi beyom ekra	מְנַת כּוֹסֵי בְיּוֹם אֶקְרָא	וְהוּא נְסִי וּמְנוֹסִי
[Vehu rofe vehu marpe	vehu tzofeh vehu ezra]	[וְהוּא צוֹפֶה וְהוּא עֲזָרָה]	[וְהוּא רוֹפֵא וְהוּא מְרַפֵּא
Beyado afkid ruhi	be'et ishan ve-a'ira	בְּעַת אִישׁוֹ וְאַעִירָה	בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי
Ve'im ruhi geviyati	Adonai li velo ira	אֲדֹנָי לִי וְלֹא אִירָא	וְעַם רוּחִי גְוִיָּתִי
[Bemikdasho tagel nafshi	meshihenu yishlah meherah	מְשִׁיחֵנוּ יִשְׁלַח מְהֵרָה	[בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי
Ve-az nashir beveit kodshi	amen amen shem hanora]	אָמֵן אָמֵן שֵׁם הַנּוֹרָא]	וְאֵז נִשִּׁיר בְּבַיִת קֹדֶשִׁי

Lord of the world, who reigned
By His will all things were made,
And when all has ceased to exist,
He has been, and still He is,
He is One—there is no other
Without beginning, without end,
Beyond imagining, beyond measure,
Set apart, yet utterly whole,
He is my God, my Redeemer lives,
He is my banner, He is my refuge,
He is the healer and He is the balm,
And in His hand I place my soul
As my spirit dwells in my body,
In His abode my soul will rejoice,
And in my Temple we will sing

before any creature came to be
and then He was called our King
He alone, revered, will reign
and in His majesty He will be
who might ever approach His grandeur
strength and dominion belong to Him
unchanging and beyond compare
and wondrous in His might and power
He is a Rock in my hour of despair
He is my sustenance when I call
He keeps watch and comes to my aid
when I sleep and when I wake
God is with me—I will not fear
for our redeemer is on his way
Amen Amen, the awesome Name.

Yedid Nefesh

R. Elazar Azikri

Tzfat, 16th century

🔊 Listen to Yedid Nefesh - Morocco-Algeria

🔊 Listen to Yedid Nefesh - Iraq

<p>Yedid nefesh av harahaman Yarutz avdakh kemo ayal Ki ye'erav lo yedidutakh</p>	<p>meshokh avdakh el retzonakh yishta_haveh mul hadarakh minofet tzuf vekhol ta'am</p>	<p>מִשׁוּךְ עַבְדְּךָ אֵל רְצוֹנְךָ יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה מוּל הַדָּרְךָ מִנּוֹפֵת צוּף וְכָל טַעַם</p>	<p>יְדִיד נֶפֶשׁ אָב הַרְחֵמֵן יָרוּץ עַבְדְּךָ כְּמוֹ אֵיל כִּי יַעֲרַב לוֹ יְדִידוּתְךָ</p>
<p>Hadur na-eh ziv ha'olam Ana el na refa na lah Az tith_hazek vetitrape</p>	<p>nafshi h_olat ahavatak beharot lah no'am zivakh vehayta lakh shif_hat olam</p>	<p>נֶפְשִׁי חוֹלֵת אֲהַבְתְּךָ בְּהַרְאוֹת לָהּ לַעַם זֵינְךָ וְהִיְתָה לְךָ שְׂפַחַת עוֹלָם</p>	<p>הַדּוֹר נֶאֱחָז זֵיו הָעוֹלָם אֲנִי אֶל-נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ אֲז תִּתְחַזֵּק וְתִתְרַפָּא</p>
<p>Vatik yehemu rah_hamekha Ki zeh khameh nikhsaf nikhsaf lirot betiferet uzakh Ana Eli mah_hmad libi</p>	<p>veh_husa na al ben ohavakh Ki zeh khameh nikhsaf lirot betiferet uzakh Ana Eli mah_hmad libi</p>	<p>וְחוֹסֶה נָא עַל בֶּן אוֹהֲבְךָ לְרֵאוֹת בְּתַפְאֵרַת עֲזֶךָ חוֹשֶׁה נָא וְאַל תִּתְעַלֵּם</p>	<p>וְתִיק יְהֵמוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ כִּי זֶה כְּמָה נִכְסֶיךָ נִכְסֶיךָ אֲנִי אֶל-י מַחְמַד לְבִי</p>
<p>Higaleh na ufros h_haviv Ta-ir eretz mikevodakh Maher ahuv ki va mo'ed</p>	<p>alai et sukkat shelomakh nagila venismeh_ha bakh veh_honeni kimei olam</p>	<p>עָלִי אֶת סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ נְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמְחָה בְּךָ וְחִנְנֵי כִימֵי עוֹלָם</p>	<p>הִגְלֵה נָא וּפְרֵשׁ חֲבִיב תְּאִיר אֶרֶץ מְכַבֹּדְךָ מַהֵר אֲהוּב כִּי בָּא מוֹעֵד</p>

Soul's beloved, merciful father,
draw your servant to your Will;
he'll run to you like a gazelle
and bow before your splendor—
for your love to him is sweeter
than a taste of the honeycomb's nectar.

Ancient of Days, may your mercies stir:
take pity on him who loves you;
for long now has he yearned
to see the glory of your power—
Hasten, Lord, my heart's delight,
do not ignore my desire.

Majestic, magnificent world's luster,
my soul is faint with love for you;
Heal her, O Lord, I beseech you,
show her your brilliance's pleasure—
Then she will be strengthened and healed
and serve your will forever.

Make yourself known, my spirit's treasure,
spread the shelter of your peace about me;
let the world shine with your glory.
in you then we'll rejoice—
Hurry, my beloved, the hour has come,
be gracious as once you were.

Odeh LaEl (Simu Lev El Haneshama)

R. Shma'yah Kosson
North Africa, 16th Century

 [Listen to Odeh LaEl](#)

Simu lev el haneshama leshem shvo ve-ahlama
Ve-ora ke-or ha_hama shiv'atayim ke-or haboker.

שִׁמוּ לֵב אֶל הַנְּשָׁמָה לְשֵׁם שְׁבוּ וְאַחֲלָמָה
וְאוֹרָה כְּאוֹר הַחֲמָה שְׁבַעֲתִים כְּאוֹר הַבֹּקֶר

Odeh la-el levav hoker beran yahad kokhvei oker.

אוֹדָה לְאֵל לִבְבִּי חוֹקֵר בְּרֵן יַחַד כּוֹכְבֵי בֹקֶר

Mikhse khavod hutzava lagur be-eretz arava
Lehatzila milehava uleha-ira lifnot boker.

מִכְסֵּא כְבוֹד חֲצָבָה לְגוֹר בְּאַרְץ עַרְבָּה
לְהַצִּילָה מִלְּהָבָה וּלְהַאֲרִיחָה לְפָנוֹת בֹּקֶר

Uru na ki vekhol laila nishmatkhem ola lemala
Latet din veheshbon mif'ala leyotzer erev vavoker..

עוֹרוּ נָא כִּי בְּכָל לַיְלָה נִשְׁמַתְכֶם עוֹלָה לְמַעַלָּה
לְתֵת דִּין וְחֲשׁבוּן מִפְּעֵלָה לְיוֹצֵר עֶרֶב וּבֹקֶר

Yimtza-eha mekushetet betalit vetotefet
Kemo kala mekushetet tamid baboker baboker.

יִמְצָאָהּ מִקִּשְׁטֵט בְּטֹלִית וְטוֹטֶפֶת
כְּמוֹ כָּלָה מִקִּשְׁטֵט תָּמִיד בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר

Hane-eman befikdono yahazirena lo kirtzono
Ish lo gava ba'avono vayehi erev vayehi voker.

הַנְּאֻמָּן בְּפִקְדוֹנוֹ יַחְזִירְנָה לוֹ כִּרְצוֹנוֹ
אִישׁ לֹא גָוַע בְּעוֹנוֹ וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר

Vehahayu ha'aniyah yehida tama unkiyah
Va-asher nafsho lo hiyah eikh yizkeh le-or haboker.

וְהָחִיו הָעֲנִיָּה יַחֲדָה תָּמָה וּנְקִיָּה
וְאַשֶׁר נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא חָיָה אִיךָ יִזְכֶּה לְאוֹר הַבֹּקֶר

No'am Adonai la hazot nizke uvashanah hazot
Bismahot tahat regazot boker tishma koli boker.

נְעִים יִי לְחַזוֹת נִזְכָּה וּבִשְׁנָה הַזֹּאת
בְּשִׁמְחוֹת תַּחַת רִגְזוֹת בֹּקֶר תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי בֹקֶר

Pay heed, pay heed, to your own soul:
As bright as is the sun's warm glow,

Opal, amethyst, and gold,
Far brighter than the morning!

I thank the God who probes all hearts

When stars sing in the morning.

In this wilderness she roams,
To redeem us from wrath's flame

A gemstone hewn from God's throne,
And light our way before morning.

Awake! Awake! For every night
And there accounts for her deeds that day

Your soul ascends to a place on high
To the Maker of night and of morning.

If He finds her fair and fetching,
Like a bride dressed for her wedding,

Clothed in prayer and thanksgiving,
It will be in the morning.

Thus restoring her to Him,
No one need die in his sin,

You'll be her faithful guardian.
For after night comes morning.

Don't let her be a homeless waif,
He who cannot keep her safe,

Once so innocent and chaste.
What light will he have in the morning?

May we see this very year God
And say, our griefs replaced by cheer,

In His graciousness appear
"You shall hear My voice in the morning."

בני ישורון B'nai Jeshurun

Agadelkha

R. Avraham Ibn Ezra

Spain, 12th Century

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אֲגַדְלֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי כָּל נִשְׁמָה וְאוֹדֶךָ בְּרֹב פֶּחַד וְאִימָה
בְּעַמְדֵי תוֹךְ קִהְלֶךָ צוּר לְרוֹמֵם לֵךְ אֶכְרַע וְאֶכְפֹּף רֹאשׁ וְקוֹמָה
רְקִיעֵי רוֹם הֲלֹא נָטָה בְּמִבְטָא וְהָאָרֶץ יִסְדָּה עַל בְּלִימָה
הַיּוֹכֵל אִישׁ חֲקוֹר אֶת סוֹד יִצְרוּ וּמִי הוּא זֶה בְּכֹל קִדְמָה וְיָמָה
מְרוֹמֵם הוּא עָלֵי כָּל פֶּה וְלָשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר הִפְלִיא וְעָשָׂה כָּל בְּחֻכָּמָה
וְיִתְגַּדַּל בְּגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ וְעֶלְיוֹן וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמִיהָ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא

Agadelkha Elohei khol neshama ve-odekha berov pahaḏ ve-eima
Be'omdi tokh kehalkha tzur leromem lekha ekhra ve-akhof rosh vekomah
Reki'ei rom halo nata bemivta vaha-aretz yesadah al belimah
Hayukhal ish haker et sod yetzaro umi hu zeh bekhoh kedma veyama
Meromam hu alei khol peh velashon asher hifli ve'asa khol behokhma
Veyitgadal begoy kadosh ve'elyon veyitkadash shemeh raba be'alma

I will praise You, God of all souls
and I will thank you with great fear and awe.

As I stand among your worshipers, Lord, and exalt you
before you I will kneel and bow head and body

The high heavens – Has He not stretched them forth with His speech?
and the earth He founded upon nothingness

Can a man explore the secret of his Creator?
and who is He at the far ends of the East and West?

He is exalted by every mouth and tongue
he who did wonders, and has done all with wisdom

His name will be magnified among the holy nation
may His great name be sanctified in His world!

Ana Elekh
R. Israel Najara
Tzfat, 16th Century
🔊 Listen to Ana Elekh

Ana Elekh meru <u>h</u> ekha Evra <u>h</u> mimekha elekha	Ana mipanekha evra <u>h</u> uvetzel yadekha agil efra <u>h</u>	אָנָה אֵלֶךְ מְרוּחֶךָ אֵבְרָח מִמֶּךָ אֵלֶיךָ וּבְצֵל יָדְךָ אֲגִיל אֶפְרָח
Ya kevodekha olam male Im lashamayim e'ele	Ata ha-el ose fele Sham emtza orkha Yizra <u>h</u>	יְיָ כְבוֹדְךָ עוֹלָם מְלֵא אֵת הָאֵל עוֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא אִם לְשָׁמַיִם אֵעֲלֶה שֶׁם אֲמַצָּא אוֹרְךָ יִזְרַח
Sha <u>h</u> ak lo yekhakelekha Mi yemalel rav gadlekha	Ve-eretz lo tekhilekha lu fiv kayam bekol yitzra <u>h</u> .	שָׁחַק לֹא יִכְלָלְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ לֹא תִכְיֶלְךָ מִי יִמְלֵל רַב גְּדֹלְךָ לֹא פִּי כִּי בְּקוֹל יִצְרָח
Reki'ei rum hem kisakha Gadol shimkha ve-ein lekha	Ve-eretz hadom raglekha Tzafon veyam ma'arav mizra <u>h</u>	רְקִיעֵי רוּם הֵם כִּסְאֶךָ וְאוֹרְךָ הַדּוֹם רִגְלֶךָ גְּדוֹל שִׁמְךָ וְאֵין לְךָ צָפוֹן וְיָם מֵעַרְב מִזְרָח
Esak shamayim sham orekha A <u>h</u> arit yam gam sham yadekha	Atzi'a she-ol hinekha Tika <u>h</u> eni beli tora <u>h</u>	אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שֶׁם אוֹרְךָ אֲצִיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּחַד אֲחֲרִית יָם גַּם שֶׁם יָדְךָ תִּקְחֵנִי בְּלִי טוֹרַח
Lakhen ein li manos biltakh ve-eka <u>h</u> magen toratakha	uve <u>h</u> emlatakha avo beitakh toreni derekh va-orah <u>h</u> .	לָכֵן אֵין לִי מָנוֹס בְּלִתְךָ וּבְחִמְלַתְךָ אֲבוֹא בְּיַתְדְךָ וְאֶקַּח מִגֵּן תּוֹרַתְךָ תּוֹרַנִי דְרָךְ וְאוֹרְךָ

Where from your spirit could I go?
I'd only flee from You to You

Where flee from your face?
And thrive in the shade You cast.

Yah, your presence fills the world.
If I could scale the heavens' heights

You are a God of wonders.
I'd find your brightest splendor.

And yet the sky's too small for You.
No tongue can tell your greatness, though

The earth's too cramped a space.
Its voice boomed like the waves.

The highest heavens are your seat.
Your name is great. You have no east

Your footstool is the earth.
No west, no south, no north.

When I soar, it's to your light
Across the sea, your long arm's reach

And in the depths, you're there.
Can pluck me from afar.

There is then no escape from You.
I'll take your Torah to be my shield

Your mercy leads me home.
And You'll show me the road.

Sha'ar Asher Nisgar
R. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol
Spain, 11th Century

שַׁעַר אֲשֶׁר נִסְגַּר קוּמָה פְּתַחְהוּ
וּצְבִי אֲשֶׁר בָּרַח אֵלַי שְׁלַחְהוּ

לְיוֹם בּוֹאֲךָ עָדִי לְלִין בְּבֵין שְׂדֵי
שָׁם רִיחְךָ הַטּוֹב עָלַי תִּגְיַחְהוּ

מֵה זֶה דְּמוּת דּוֹדְךָ כְּלָה יִפֶּה-פְּיָה
כִּי תֹאמְרִי אֵלַי שְׁלַחְהוּ וְקַחְהוּ

הֲהוּא יִפֶּה עֵינִי אָדָם וְטוֹב רֵאִי
רְעִי וְדוֹדִי זֶה קוּמָה מְשַׁחְהוּ

Sha'ar asher nisgar Utzevi asher barah	Kuma petahehu Elai Shelahehu
Leyom bo-akha adai Sham reihakha hatov	lalin bevein shadai Alai tenihehu
Ma ze demut dodekh Ki tomri elai	kala yefe-fiya Shilha vekahehu
Hahu yefe ayin Re'l vedodi ze	Adom vetov ro-i Kuma meshahehu

The gate long shut ---
Get up and throw it wide;
The stag long fled---
Send him to my side.

When one day you come
To lie between my breasts,
That day your scent
Will cling to me like wine.

How shall I know his face, O lovely bride,
The lover you are asking me to send?
A ruddy face, and lovely eyes?
A handsome man to see?

Aye, that's my love! Aye that's my friend!
Anoint that one for me.

On Prayer and the Person Who Prays Sources from The Mishnah and The Talmud

This saying is also recorded in the names of R. Johanan and R. Eleazar: Even if a sharp sword rests on a person's neck, that person should not desist from prayer, as it says, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust in God." (Job 13:15)—BT Berakhot 10a

Our Rabbis taught: One should not stand up to say the Tefillah while immersed in sorrow, or idleness, or laughter, or chatter, or frivolity, or idle talk, but only while still rejoicing in the performance of some religious act.—BT Berakhot 31a

One should not stand up to say the Tefillah save in a reverent frame of mind. The sages of old used to wait an hour before praying in order that they might concentrate their thoughts upon their father in heaven.—Mishnah Berakhot 5:1

R. Ashi said: I saw R. Kahana, when there was trouble in the world, removing his cloak (so that he would not appear important), clasp his hands (as one troubled by fear of his master), and pray, saying, '[I pray] like a slave before his master.' When there was peace, he would put it on, cover and enfold himself and pray, quoting, 'Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.'—BT Shabbat 10a

Rabbi Shimon said: When you pray, do not do so as a fixed routine, but as a plea for compassion and grace before God.—Pirkei Avot 2:18

What is meant by fixed? —R. Jacob b. Idi said in the name of R. Oshaiah: Anyone whose prayer is like a heavy burden. The Rabbis say: Whoever does not say it in the manner of supplication. Rabbah and R. Joseph both say: Whoever is not able to insert something fresh in it. R. Zera said: I can insert something fresh, but I am afraid to do so for fear I should become confused. Abaye b. Abin and R. Hanina b. Abin both said: Whoever does not pray at the first and last appearance of the sun.—BT Berakhot 29b

Our Rabbis taught: When one prays, one should direct one's heart to heaven.—BT Berakhot 31a

R. Hanah b. Bizna, said in the name of R. Simeon the Pious: One who prays should regard himself [i.e., behave] as if the *Shechinah* were before him, as it is written, "I have set God always before me (Psalms 16:8)." —BT Sanhedrin 22a

R. Hama son of R. Hanina said: If one sees that one prays and is not answered, one should pray again, as it says, "Wait for the Lord, be strong and let thy heart take courage; yea, wait thou for the Lord (Psalms 27:14)." —BT Berakhot 32b

The Blessed Holy One longs to hear the prayer of the righteous.--BT Yevamot 64a

R. Eleazar said, Why are the prayers of the righteous likened to a pitchfork? (Based on Genesis 25:21, "And Isaac entreated [entreat and pitchfork use the same root]") To

teach you that just as the pitchfork turns the corn from place to place in the barn, so the prayers of the righteous turn the mind of the Blessed Holy One, from the attribute of harshness to that of compassion.—BT Sukkah 14a

“When Moses held up his hand, then the Israelites prevailed,” (Exodus 17:11). Could the hand of Moses animate the contest, or cause it to cease? Rather it was thus: while Israel looked to heaven for aid, and subjected their will to their heavenly Mother, they prevailed, but when they ceased to do so, they failed. A similar instance we find, “Make for yourself a fiery serpent, and it on a pole, and every one that is bitten when he looks upon it shall live (Numbers 21:8).” Could this serpent kill or bring to life? Rather it was thus: when the Israelites looked to heaven for aid, and subjected their inclination to the will of their heavenly Father, they were cured, but when they did not, they perished. —Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:8

Our Rabbis taught: The pious people of old used to wait for an hour and pray for an hour and then wait again for an hour. But seeing that they spend nine hours a day over prayer, how is their knowledge of Torah preserved and how is their work done? [The answer is] that because they are pious, their Torah is preserved and their work is blessed. —Berakhot 32:2

R. Helbo, in the name of R. Huna, says [further]: When one leaves the Synagogue, one should not take large steps. Abaye says: This is only when one goes from the Synagogue, but when one goes to the Synagogue, it is a pious deed to run. For it is said: Let us run to know the Lord (Hosea 6:3).—BT Berakhot 32:2

Our Rabbis taught: ‘Synagogues must not be treated disrespectfully. It is not right to eat or to drink in them, or to dress up in them, or to stroll about in them, or to go into them in summer to escape the heat and in the rainy season to escape the rain, or to deliver a private funeral address in them. But it is right to read [the Scriptures] in them and to repeat the Mishnah and to deliver public funeral addresses...They should be swept and watered so that grass should not grow in them. R. Judah said: When is this? When they are in use; but when they are abandoned, grass is allowed to grow in them; if grass does grow, it is not plucked, so that it may excite compassion. —Megilah 28a-b

Rabbi Yehudah also teaches that eulogies may not be delivered in a synagogue which had become ruinous, nor may it be used as a rope-walk, not to spread net therein [to dry items], not to spread fruit on its roof, not to use it as a short cut, as it is said I will bring your sanctuaries into desolation (Leviticus 26:31),” this is, they remain sanctuaries even in their desolation. —Mishnah Megilah 3:3

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: One who spits in the synagogue is like one who spits in the pupil of his own eye.—JT Berakhot 3:6

Rabbeinu Bahya ibn Paquda, Obligations of the Heart, Gate of Introspection, Part III

Kavannah is the essence of prayer

Know that words are in the tongue and kavannah is in the heart. Words are the body of prayer and kavannah is its spirit. If one prays with her tongue and her heart is otherwise engaged, her prayer is like a body without a spirit, like a shell without a kernel, because her body is present but her heart is not with her while she is praying. Of such a person Scripture says “because that people has approached me with its mouth and honored me with its lips, but has kept its heart far from me” (Isaiah 29:13)...

Our sages say “One should estimate oneself: if he feels that he can pray with kavannah in his heart, then he should pray, but if not he should not” (Berakhot 30b). As Rabbi Eleazar lay dying, he said to his students: “when you are praying, know before Whom you are praying” (ibid. 28b). Scripture also says...” *Prepare* to meet your God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12). Our sages say “when you pray do not make your prayer fixed, rather [pray with kavannah] for compassion before God” (Pirkei Avot 2:13)...

It is fitting for you to know that our kavannah is nothing but subsuming your soul to God, surrendering to God’s presence, by exalting, praising and thanking God’s name, casting all your burdens on God.

Since it is hard for a person to remember all this without well-kept notes, our sages set down [in the siddur] those things that most of us need and depend on from God. These needs constitute the fixed prayers...

Our sages prepared a text for you to recite also because your thoughts are so changeable and ephemeral. They pass so quickly through your mind making it difficult to organize your prayers. And because your thoughts are best organized through speech, prayer is best expressed [audibly] in words...

Therefore, organize your prayers in your heart, match them to what you want to say, so both [your thoughts and prayers] will say the same thing to God. Still your body and stop feeling or thinking about anything mundane while you pray. Act as if you are in the presence of a great monarch whom you are thanking and praising...

Prayer is a remarkable sign of God’s faith in and reliance on you. For God placed it in your care and presented it to you to be hidden from anyone else...

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, The Kuzari , Part 3:2-5

Al Khazari: Give me a description of the doings of one of your pious Jews at the present time.

The Rabbi: A pious Jew is, so to speak, the guardian of his country, who gives to its inhabitants provisions and all they need. He is so just that he wrongs no one, nor does he grant anyone more than his due. Then, when he requires them, he finds them obedient to his call. He orders, they execute; he forbids, they abstain.

Al Khazari: I asked you about a pious Jew, not a prince.

The Rabbi: The pious Jew is nothing but a prince who is obeyed by his senses, and by his mental as well as his physical faculties, which he governs corporeally, as it is written: 'He that rules his spirit [is better] than he that takes a city' (Proverbs 16:32). He is fit to rule, because if he were the prince of a country he would be as just as he is to his body and soul. He subdues his passions, keeping them in bonds, but giving them their share in order to satisfy them as regards food, drink, cleanliness, etc. He further subdues the desire for power, but allows them as much expansion as avails them for the discussion of scientific or mundane views, as well as to warn the evil-minded. He allows the senses their share according as he requires them for the use of hands, feet, and tongue, as necessity or desire arise...

If she, then, has satisfied each of them (giving to the vital organs the necessary amount of rest and sleep, and to the physical ones waking, movements, and worldly occupation), she calls upon her community as a respected leader calls her disciplined army, to assist her in reaching the higher or divine degree which is to be found above the degree of the intellect. She arranges her community in the same manner as Moses arranged his people round Mount Sinai. She orders her will power to receive every command issued by her obediently, and to carry it out immediately. She makes faculties and limbs do her bidding without contradiction, forbids them evil inclinations of mind and desire, forbids them to listen to, or believe in them, until she has taken counsel with the intellect...

He directs the organs of thought and imagination, relieving them of all worldly ideas mentioned above, charges his imagination to produce, with the assistance of memory, the most splendid pictures possible, in order to resemble the divine things sought after. Such pictures are the scenes of Sinai, Abraham and Isaac on

Moriah, the Tabernacle of Moses, the Temple service, the presence of God in the Temple, and the like. He, then, orders his memory to retain all these, and not to forget them; he warns his desire and its sinful prompters not to confuse the truth or to trouble it by doubts; he warns his irascibility and greed not to influence or lead astray, nor to take hold of his will, nor subdue it to wrath and lust...

The tongue agrees with the thought, and does not overstep its bounds, does not speak in prayer in a mere mechanical way as the starling and the parrot, but every word is uttered thoughtfully and attentively. This moment forms the heart and fruit of her time, while the other hours represent the way which leads to it. She looks forward to its approach, because while it lasts she resembles the spiritual beings, and is removed from merely animal existence. Those three times of daily prayer are the fruit of her day and night, and the Sabbath is the fruit of the week, because it has been appointed to establish the connection with the Divine Spirit and to serve God in joy, not in sadness, as has been explained before. All this stands in the same relation to the soul as food to the human body. Prayer is for her soul what nourishment is for her body. The blessing of one prayer lasts till the time of the next, just as the strength derived from the morning meal lasts till supper. The further her soul is removed from the time of prayer, the more it is darkened by coming in contact with worldly matters...

During prayer he purges his soul from all that passed over it, and prepares it for the future. According to this arrangement, there elapses not a single week in which both his soul and body do not receive preparation. Darkening elements having increased during the week, they cannot be cleansed except by consecrating one day to service and to physical rest. The body repairs on the Sabbath the waste suffered during the six days of the week, and prepares itself for the work to come, while the soul remembers its own loss through the body's companionship. He cures himself, so to speak, from a past illness, and provides himself with a remedy to ward off any future sickness. This is almost the same as Job did with his children every week, as it is written: 'It may be that my sons have sinned' (Job 1:5).

Maimonides,
Guide for the Perplexed, Book 3, Chapter 51

We must bear in mind that all such religious acts as reading the Torah, praying, and the performance of other precepts, serve exclusively as the means of causing us to occupy and fill our mind with the precepts of God, and free it from worldly business; for we are, as it were, in communication with God, and undisturbed by any other thing. If we, however, pray with the motion of our lips, and our face toward the wall, but at the same time think of our business; if we read the Torah with our tongue, while our heart is occupied with the building of our house, and we do not think of what we are reading; if we perform the commandments only with our limbs, we are like those who are engaged in digging in the ground, or hewing wood in the forest, without reflecting on the nature of those acts, or by whom they are commanded, or what is their object. We must not imagine that [in this way] we attain the highest perfection; on the contrary, we are then like those in reference to whom Scripture says, “You are near in their mouth, and far from their reins” (Jeremiah 12:2).

I will now commence to show you the way how to educate and train yourselves in order to attain that great perfection. The first thing you must do is this: Turn your thoughts away from everything while you read the *Shema* or during the *Amidah*, and do not content yourself with being devout when you read the first verse of *Shema*, or the first paragraph of the *Amidah*. When you have successfully practiced this for many years, try, in reading the Torah or listening to it, to have all your heart and all your thought occupied with understanding what you read or hear. After some time when you have mastered this, accustom yourself to have your mind free from all other thoughts when you read any portion of the other books of the prophets, or when you say any blessing; and to have your attention directed exclusively to the perception and the understanding of what you utter. When you have succeeded in properly performing these acts of divine service, and you have your thought, during their performance, entirely abstracted from worldly affairs, take then care that your thought be not disturbed by thinking of your wants or of superfluous things....

When you are alone by yourself, when you are awake on your couch, be careful to meditate in such precious moments on nothing but the intellectual worship of God, viz., to approach God and to minister before God in the true manner which I have described to you—not in hollow emotions. This I consider as the highest perfection one can attain by the above training.

When we have acquired a true knowledge of God, and rejoice in that knowledge in such a manner, that while speaking with others, or attending to our bodily wants, our mind is all that time with God; when we are with our heart constantly near God, even while our body is in the society of people; when we are in that state which the Song on the relation between God and man poetically describes in the following words: "I sleep, but my heart wakes; it is the voice of my beloved that knocks." (Song of Songs 5:2)—then we have attained not only the height of ordinary prophets, but of Moses, our Teacher, of whom Scripture relates: "And Moses alone shall come near before the Lord" (Exodus 24:2); "But as for you, stand here by me" (Deuteronomy 5:31). The meaning of these verses has been explained by us. The Patriarchs likewise attained this degree of perfection; they approached God in such a manner that with them the name of God became known in the world. Thus we read in Scripture: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. . . . This is My name forever" (Exodus 3:15).

Zohar 2:63A-B

Rabbi Hizkiyah opened: "A song of ascents. Out of the depths [*mi-ma'amakim*] I call You, O YHVH" (Psalm 130:1).

"A song of ascents"—anonymous, not specifying who said it.

However, "A song of ascents," to be chanted by all inhabitants of the world, for this song is intended for generation after generation.

What is the meaning of "Out of the depths [*mi-ma'amakim*] I call You, O YHVH"?

So it has been taught: Whoever offers his prayer before the blessed Holy One should convey his request and pray from the depth of his heart, so that his heart may be completely with the blessed Holy One and he may concentrate heart and aspiration.

Now, did David really say this? Look at what is written: "With my whole heart I seek You" (Psalm 119:10). This verse suffices; what need is there for "out of the depths"?

Well, so it has been taught: Every person who presents his request before the King should focus mind and will on the root of all roots, to draw blessings from the depth of the well, so that it will gush blessings from the spring of all.

And what is that?

The place from which the river issues and derives, as is written: "A river flows from Eden [to water the garden (Genesis 2:10)], and similarly: "A river whose streams gladden the city of God" (Psalm 46:5).

This is called "out of the depths—*mi-ma'amakim*"—depth of all, depth of the well, springs issuing and flowing, blessing all.

This is the beginning of drawing blessings from above to below.

Rabbi Hizkiyah said: When the Ancient One, concealed of all concealed, desires to provide for the worlds, He pours all and includes all in this supernal depth, and from here the well draws and flows, gushing and feeding streams and springs.

Whoever offers his prayer should concentrate heart and will to draw blessings from that depth of all, so that his prayer may be accepted and his desire fulfilled.'

Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav

Conversations of the Ran, 75

The Rebbe constantly told us to force ourselves to pray with devotion, strongly binding our thoughts to each word. He said that true devotion is listening very carefully to the words you are saying. He said that perfect prayer is the plain meaning of such words as *Baruch Atah Hashem*—“Blessed are You, God,” Devotion is concentrating on the meaning of the words and listening to them carefully.

The Rebbe would ridicule those who said that one should not force himself to pray. He advised us very strongly to pray with all our might, putting all our strength into each letter of the service. He also instructed us to ignore all disturbing thoughts during worship. His advice was that we merely pray correctly, disregarding all distractions. He said that we should turn our minds away from all such thoughts completely.

The Rebbe also said that it may be impossible to go through the entire service with proper devotion. Still, each person can say a small portion with true feeling. We see this all the time. One person might have deep feelings while saying the *Ketoret*, the prayers in place of the spice offering. Another may pray best during the *Pesukei DeZimra*, the opening psalms. I once saw a lesson regarding this in the Rebbe’s writing. It was never copied, and I can only report what I remember. The *Tikuney Zohar* states that there are masters of the hands and masters of the feet. There is a transcendental counterpart of the human body, and each of its limbs corresponds to a portion of the service. Each person is also associated with a particular limb. When he comes to the part of the service pertaining to his limb, he is aroused to great devotion. You may sometimes pray with great devotion. But then the feeling departs, and the words begin to seem empty. Do not be discouraged, for you have merely left your area in the transcendental form. Continue the service, saying each word in absolute simplicity.

Sometimes you will try very hard and still not be able to pray. But never become discouraged. This is the most important rule of all. Force yourself to say each word of the service. Make believe that you are a child just learning to read and simply say the words. In most cases, God will then touch your heart with a flame and it will be aroused to pray with feeling. Do not make a test of this. For deep inside, you are very far from prayer.

Prayer is very high. It is even above the study of Torah. How can you be worthy of serving God in such a lofty manner? Do your part. Simply begin the words of the service—*Adon Olam Asher Malakh*—“Master of the world, who Ruled...” Listen to every word you say. Concentrate and do not let your thoughts stray. Simply keep your mind on the words of the service. Follow the order of the service even without feeling. Continue word by word, page by page, until God helps you achieve a feeling of devotion. And even if you complete the entire service without feeling, it is not the end. You can still say a Psalm. There are other prayers to be said. In general, you must force yourself to do every holy task with all your might. This is especially true of prayer. If you are not worthy, it is still forbidden to become discouraged. Be strong and cheer yourself as much as possible. This is discussed widely in the Rebbe’s published works.

Pray in happiness with a joyful tune. Put yourself into a cheerful mood before you beginning your worship. Seek out your good points, using them to bring joy to your prayers...The Rebbe says that the main thing is truth. You may be distracted during your devotions, but grasp onto truth. No matter what your level, you can speak the simple truth in your prayers. Consider the Rebbe’s words, and you will certainly be worthy of true prayer. It is an important rule in all devotion.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
Authorized Daily Prayer Book, Introduction

KavaNnah: Directing the mind

Prayer is more than saying certain words in the right order. It needs concentration, attention, engagement of mind and heart, the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Without devotion, said Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pakuda, prayer is like a body without a soul. The key Hebrew word here is *kavannah*, meaning mindfulness, intention, focus, direction of the mind. In the context of prayer, it means several different things.

The most basic level is *kavannah le-shem mitzvah*, which means, having the intention to fulfil a mitzvah. This means that we do what we do, not for social or aesthetic reasons. We pray because we are commanded to pray. In general in Judaism there is a long-standing debate about whether the commandments require *kavannah*, but certainly prayer does, because it is supremely an act of the mind.

At a second level, *kavannah* means understanding the words (*perush hamilim*). At least the most important sections of prayer require *kavannah* in this sense. Without it, the words we say would be mere sounds. Understanding the words is, of course, made much easier by the existence of translations and commentaries.

A third level relates to context. How do I understand my situation when I pray? Maimonides states this principle as follows: “*The mind should be freed from all extraneous thoughts and the one who prays should realize that he is standing before the Divine presence.*” These are essential elements of at least the *Amidah*, the prayer par excellence in which we are conscious of standing before God. That is why we take three steps forward at the beginning, and three back at the end—as if we were entering, then leaving, sacred space.

The fourth level of *kavannah* is not merely saying the words but meaning them, affirming them. Thus, for example, while saying the first paragraph of the *Shema*, we “accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven”—declaring our allegiance to God as the supreme authority in our lives. In the second paragraph, we “accept the yoke of the commandments.” The word *Amen* means roughly, “I affirm what has been said.” In prayer we put ourselves into the words. We make a commitment. We declare our faith, our trust, our dependency. We mean what we say.

There are, of course, higher reaches of *kavannah*. Mystics and philosophers throughout the ages developed elaborate meditative practices before and during prayer. But at its simplest, *kavannah* is the practiced harmony of word and thought, body and mind. This is how Judah Halevi described it:

The tongue agrees with the thought, and does not overstep its bounds, does not speak in prayer in a mere mechanical way as the starling and the parrot, but every word is uttered thoughtfully and attentively. This moment forms the heart and thought of his time, while the other hours represent the way which leads to it. He looks forward to its approach, because while it lasts he resembles the spiritual beings, and is removed from mere animal existence. Those three times of daily prayer are the fruits of his day and night, and the Sabbath is the fruit of the week, because it has been appointed to establish the connection with the Divine spirit and to serve God in joy, not sadness.