



# Prayer: Service of the Heart

Rabbi Dr Bradley Shavit Artson

וּנְשַׁלְמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ

We shall offer the words of our lips instead of calves. Hosea 14:3

ערב ובקר וצהרים אשיחה ואהמה וישמע קולי.

In the evening, morning, & afternoon I will speak and cry aloud & God will hear my voice. Psalms 55:18

A person should first praise the Holy Blessing One and then pray. Berakhot 32b

Cast your eyes downward as though looking at the ground and your heart upward as though standing in heaven. Yevamot 105b

A person who washes his hands, puts on Tefillin, says the Sh'ma and prays is considered to have built an altar and offered sacrifice. Such a one is also said to have truly accepted the yoke of heaven. Berakhot 14b-15a

אי-זו היא עבודה שבלב? זו תפלה.

Which is the service of the heart? This is prayer. Ta'anit 2a

רבי אלעזר יהיב פרוטה לעני והדר מצלי, אמר, דכתיב: אני בצדק אחזה פניך.

Rabbi Elazar used to give a perutah to a pauper and then pray. He said, It is written: I shall behold Your face through tzedakah. Bava Batra 10a

Said the Holy One to Israel, I have told you that when you pray, you should pray in the synagogue of your city. If you cannot pray in the synagogue, pray in your field. If you cannot pray in your field, pray in your house. If you cannot pray in your house, pray on your bed. If you cannot pray in your bed, meditate in your heart. Midrash Tehillim 4:9

An Israelite must have a clean body and spotless garments when going to pray in a place set aside for worship. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, Gen 35:2

Prayer is union with the Divine Presence. Just as two people will move their bodies back and forth as they begin the act of love, so must a person accompany the beginning of prayer with the rhythmic swaying of the body. But as one reaches the heights of union with the Presence, the movement of the body ceases. Ziva'at Rivah 7b



# Prayer: Service of the Heart

Rabbi Dr Bradley Shavit Artson

כיצד היא הכוונה שיפנה את לבו מכל המחשבות ויראה עצמו כאלו הוא עומד לפני השכינה, לפיכך צריך לישב מעט קודם התפלה כדי לכוין את לבו ואחר כך יתפלל בנחת ובתחנונים ולא יעשה תפלתו כמי שהיה נושא משאוי ומשליכו והולך לו, לפיכך צריך לישב מעט אחר התפלה ואחר כך יפטר, חסידים הראשונים היו שוהין שעה אחת קודם תפלה ושעה אחת לאחר תפלה ומאריכין בתפלה שעה.

One should clear one's mind from all thoughts and envision oneself as standing before the Divine Presence. Therefore, one must sit a short while before praying in order to focus one's attention and then pray in a pleasant and supplicatory fashion. One should not pray as one carrying a burden who throws it off and walks away. Therefore, one must sit a short while after praying and then withdraw. The pious ones of the previous generations would wait an hour before praying and an hour after praying. They would also extend their prayers for an hour. Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Hil. Tefillah 4:16

There are those who don't understand how a man can recite the same prayers all his life. The worthy people maintain that even a poet who sings his own songs must continually produce new ones. Those who don't pray themselves can't imagine that when a Jew recites a psalm with all his heart, the ancient poem becomes the worshiper's own brand-new poem, just as all of creation is made new daily for the man of faith. Every sensitive man has a day in his life when he awakes and looks at the sun a never seen it before. Of course, no one dreams that a new sun would actually materialize before his eyes. Similarly, new prayers aren't necessary for the person who prays with all his heart and soul. Chaim Grade, *The Yeshiva*

Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask, but when we are challenged to be what we can be. Rabbi Morris Adler

Prayer cannot mend a broken bridge, rebuild a ruined city, or bring water to parched fields. Prayer can mend a broken heart, lift up a discouraged soul, and strengthen a weakened will. Ferdinand M. Isserman

There is nothing that we can rightly pray for that does not make demands on us. Rabbi Harold Schulweis