

the first section in the regular order from the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your God . . ." to the end of the section. Why is the above-mentioned sentence interpolated? We have a tradition that when the patriarch Jacob, residing in Egypt, gathered his sons about him in his dying hour, he earnestly charged them concerning the Unity of God and the way of the Lord in which Abraham and his father Isaac had walked. He questioned them, saying to them, "Possibly, my sons, there is some one among you who is unworthy, and is not at one with me on the doctrine of the Unity of the Creator of the world, in the same way as our teacher Moses charged the people in the words, 'Lest there be among you a man or a woman . . . whose heart turns away this day'" (Deut. 29:17). They all answered, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This means, "Our father, Israel, hear this, our [confession of faith]: 'the Lord our God is one Lord.'" The aged patriarch then ejaculated, "Blessed be the name of His glorious Sovereignty for ever and ever." Hence, all Israelites keep the custom of reciting, after the first verse of the *Shema*, the thanksgiving uttered by the patriarch Israel.



LAWS OF PRAYER*

Chapter 1

¶ 1 To pray daily is an affirmative duty, as it is said, "And you shall serve the Lord your God" (Ex. 23:25). The service here referred to, according to the teaching of tradition, is prayer, as it is said, "And to serve Him with all your heart" (Deut. 10:12), on which the sages commented, "What may be described as service of the heart? Prayer." The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah. No form of prayer is prescribed in the Torah. Nor does the Torah prescribe a fixed time for prayer. Hence, women and slaves are under an obligation to pray, this being a duty, the fulfillment of which is independent of set periods.

¶ 2 The obligation in this precept is that every person should daily, according to his ability, offer up supplication and prayer; first uttering praises of God, then with humble supplication and petition asking

*See *Guide*, I, ch. 59; III, ch. 32 and 52.

for all that he needs, and finally offering praise and thanksgiving to the Eternal for the benefits already bestowed upon him in rich measure.

¶ 3 One who was fluent would offer up many prayers and supplications. If one was slow of speech, he would pray as he could and whenever he pleased. Thus also, the number of separate services depended on an individual's ability. One would pray once daily; others, several times in the day. All, however, turned during prayer to the Sanctuary, in whichever direction that might be. This was the uniform practice from the times of Moses to those of Ezra.

¶ 4 When the people of Israel went into exile in the days of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, they mingled with the Persians, Greeks, and other nations. In those foreign countries, children were born to them, whose language was confused. Everyone's speech was a mixture of many tongues. No one was able, when he spoke, to express his thoughts adequately in any one language, otherwise than incoherently, as it is said, "And their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod and they could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people" (Neh. 13:24).

¶ 5 Consequently, when anyone of them prayed in Hebrew, he was unable adequately to express his needs or recount the praises of God, without mixing Hebrew with other languages. When Ezra and his council realized this condition, they ordained the Eighteen Benedictions in their present order.

¶ 6 The first three blessings consist of praises of God and the last three of thanksgiving to Him. The intermediate benedictions are petitions for the things which may stand as prototypes of all the desires of the individual and the needs of the community. The object aimed at was that these prayers should be in an orderly form in everyone's mouth, that all should learn them, and thus the prayer of those who were not expert in speech would be as perfect as that of those who had command of a chaste style. For the same reason, they arranged (in a fixed form) all the blessings and prayers for all Jews so that the substance of every blessing should be familiar and current in the mouth of one who is not expert in speech.

Chapter 2

¶ 1 In Rabban Gamliel's days, the number of heretics in Israel increased. They were wont to vex the Israelites and induce them to turn away from God. When Rabban Gamliel realized that the most

רבים וגבורי כח הָמָה, וּמַעֲמַיִם וַחֲלָשִׁים הָעוֹמְדִים בְּעֶזְרַת יְצֵר הַמָּוֵב, גַּם לַפְעָמַיִם יָקָר מְקַרָּה בְּלִתי שְׁהוֹר הַנּוֹתֵן יָד לַפּוֹשְׁעִים הַרְבִּים הָאֵלֶּה, לְהִתְקוֹמֵם בְּיַד רָמָה נֶגְדַּ חֲלוּשֵׁי הַכַּח מְתֵי הַמַּסְפָּר, וּבִתְחִבּוּלוֹת מְרָמָה יִתְמַרְמְרוּ לַפְרוֹק עוֹל מִתַּחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַרוּדָה עֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד הַנְּטִיָּה, כִּי אֵין כָּל הָעֵתִים שְׁוֹת, וּבְאֲשֶׁר תָּבֹא בֵּין אַנְשֵׁי קְלוּן בּוֹיֵי חֲכָמָה, מַלְעִינֵי עֲבוּדָה, וְנוֹסְפּוֹ שׁוֹנְאֵי חֲכָמָה אֵלֶּה הַחִיצוֹנִים עַל שׁוֹנְאֵי הַפְּנִימִים, הֵם חוֹזְרִים וְנִעְזְרִים לְחַרְחֹר רִיב וּמְדוּן בְּנֶפֶשׁ פְּנִימָה, וְאִזּוּ הַמְּלַחֲמָה כְּבָדָה, וְקָשָׁה מְאֹד עָלֶיךָ לַעֲמֹד נֶגְדַּ הַמְּוֹרְדִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר הִתְאַזְרוּ חֵיל לְהִתְקוֹמֵם נֶגְדֶךָ בְּעֶזְרַת עוֹזְרֵי הַרְבִּים אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ עָלֶיךָ תְּחוּצָה. לָכֵן אַתָּה אִישׁ תִּפְלָה בְּשִׁפְכֶךָ שׁוֹיחַ לַפְּנֵי אֲב הַרְחָמִים הַתְּפִלָּל אֱלֹו, כִּי הוּא יִרִיב אֶת מְרִיבֶךָ, הוּא יִלְחֵם אֶת לוחְמֶיךָ, הוּא יִהְיֶה לָךְ לְמַגֵּן וְצַנָּה וַיְקוּם בְּעֶזְרַתְךָ נֶגְדַּ אַנְשֵׁי מִצּוֹתֶךָ. בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֵּךְ לָךְ לְשִׁמְרֶךָ מִשִּׁטְף מֵיִם הַרְעִים, וּבְצֵל כְּנָפָיו יִסְתִּירֶךָ מִמְּהַפֶּת כְּתִקּוֹמֶיךָ. כִּי רַבִּים הֵם, הוּא יוֹסִיף לָךְ עוֹז וְתַעֲצָמָה וַיִּהְיֶה לְאֵל יָדֶךָ לְגַדַּע קַרְנֵי אֵיבֶיךָ הַחִיצוֹנִים, וְלִשְׁבֹּר זְרוּעוֹת שׁוֹנְאֵי הַפְּנִימִים, וְלֹא יִתְאַמְצוּ עוֹד בְּיַד חֲזִקְתָּם לְהִתְנַבֵּר עָלֶיךָ וּלְפָרוֹץ נֶגְדַּ הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה, אִזּוּ שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה לָךְ בְּבִתי נְפִשֶׁךָ, שְׁלוֹה בְּחַדְרֵי לְבָבֶךָ, וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לָךְ שְׁלוֹם, סְלָה:

דומה לכל לשונות ההתפענ שהפעולה הוורת עלמו, שהפעול הוא בעלמו מקבל הפעולה, כמו מתחמן מתחזק, כך מתפלל שעושה פלילה ומשפט בנפש עלמו (ויד ועלכסע בעארעהיילען). אמנם בכחית הבורא אשר אליו יעריך האדם בקשתו ומתפלל אליו, לשון מתפלל יוצא ומלאנו לו חברים, כמו והתנחלתם אותם לבניכם אחריכם דתרגומו ותחטונו, וכן כל כלי סך תחטאו, וכבחינה זו טעם מתפלל, בקשה לעשיית פלילה, כלומר שישלה ה' אליו עזרתו מקודש להוסיף לו עוז וכח להוציא לאור האמת משפטו ופלילתו עם תאוה יצרו הרע המתנבז עליו בכל יום, כאמרס לולי ה' עזרו לא היה יכול לו. וכחנת ותדע כי גם ענין טהרת הלב ממחשבות הבל נכלל בלשון תפלה עלמו, כי עיקר שרש פלל שתי אותיות פל, שכתוספת ה"א יורה על הבדלת דבר מדבר והפרשתם זה מזה (והפלה בין מקנה מלרים) ומשרש זה ישמשו רבותינו לשון פלה על הסרת הזוהמה וביעור הפסולת מהבגדים, לא יפלה כליו לאור הנר, ובערת הרע מקרבך תרגומו ותפלי עבד דביש. ופללו אלהים (ש"א ב' כ"ה) תרגומו דינא יפלי ביניהון, הנה כטהרת הבגד מן הפסולת וכטהרת העדה מן הרשעים הנכללים בשרש זה, ככה נכלל בו גם טהרת הלב ממחשבות המטמאות את הנפש. והמשתדל לפלה ולבער מלבו כל מחשבה המטגלת את עבודת הקדש שפיר יפול עליו לשון מתפלל כלומר מתטהר ע"מו להגיע אל טהרת הלב. (ודע כי מה שימוש מלת תפלה גם על השבח והתהלה, הוא מסתפק ג"כ מעיקר שרש פלה, כי כל שבח ותהלה הוא הכרת החשיבות המיוחד בדבר והגפלא בו משאר כל הדברים (עטוואס בעואנדערעם) והוראה זאת בעצמה ישנה ג"כ בשרש פלה, כמו כי הפלה ה' הסיד לו, הפלה הסדיך, טעניס יליאת דבר משאר דברים ע"ד זרות ופליאה (זאנדער-באר). — ועל הדברים האלה מיוסדים הדברים הנאמרים למעלה בפניס "בה תפלה ותבער וגו', אתה תעשה פלילים וגו'":

of instruments, of tools, and the supreme ideas are symbols only. *God is a name but no reality.* The standard of action is expediency, and God, too, is for the sake of our satisfaction.

Now, this seems to be a fact: God is of no concern to us. But there is another startling fact. His being of no concern to us has become a profound concern. We are concerned with our lack of concern.

God may be of no concern to man, but man is of much concern to God. The only way to discover this is the ultimate way, the way of worship. For worship is a way of living, a way of seeing the world in the light of God. To worship is to rise to a higher level of existence, to see the world from the point of view of God. In worship we discover that the ultimate way is not to have a symbol but *to be a symbol*, to stand for the divine. The ultimate way is to sanctify thoughts, to sanctify time, to consecrate words, to hallow deeds. The study of the word of God is an example of the sanctification of thought; the Seventh Day is an example of the sanctification of time; prayer is an example of the consecration of words; observance is an example of the hallowing of deeds.

We have lost the power to pray because we have lost the sense of His reality. All we do is done through symbols. We live for tools, we think in signs. What we do is for the sake of something else. It is therefore important that we pay attention to the role and meaning of symbols.

God is of no importance unless He is of supreme importance. It is hard to define religion; it is hard to place its wealth of meaning into the frame of a single sentence. But surely one thing may be said negatively: *religion is not expediency.* If all our actions were guided by one consideration, how best to serve our personal interests, it is not God whom we serve but the self. True, the self has its legitimate claims and interests; the persistent denial of the self, the defiance of one's own desire for happiness is not what God demands. But to remember that the love of God is for all men, for all creatures; to remember His love and His claim to love in making a decision - this is the way He wants us to live. To worship God is to forget the self. It is in such instants of worship that man acts as a symbol of Him.

Of all things we do prayer is the least expedient, the least worldly, the least practical. This is why prayer is an act of self-purification. This is why prayer is an ontological necessity.

We live through one of the great hours of history. The false gods are crumbling, and the hearts are hungry for the voice of God. But the voice has been stifled. To recapture the echo, we must be honest in our willingness to listen, we must be unprejudiced in our readiness to understand.

What goes on in the depth of our lives has a profound effect upon the international situation. Others may suffer from degradation by poverty; we are threatened by degradation through power. Power corrupts, and it is only the acceptance of the spirit of God that saves, that prevents disaster, that ennobles both body and spirit.

The acceptance of the spirit is prayer - prayer as a way of insight, not as a way of speaking. Prayer may not save us, but prayer makes us worth saving.

Of all the sacred acts, first comes prayer. Religion is not "what man does with his solitariness." Religion is what man does with the presence of God. And the spirit of God is present whenever we are willing to accept it. True, God is hiding His face in our time, but He is hiding because we are evading Him.

commitment. The intellect does not chart the course of the man of faith; its role is an *a posteriori* one. It attempts, *ex post facto*, to retrace the footsteps of the man of faith, and even in this modest attempt the intellect is not completely successful. Of course, as long as the path of the man of faith cuts across the territory of the reasonable, the intellect may follow him and identify his footsteps. The very instant, however, the man of faith transcends the frontiers of the reasonable and enters into the realm of the unreasonable, the intellect is left behind and must terminate its search for understanding. The man of faith animated by his great experience is able to reach the point at which not only his logic of the mind but even his logic of the heart and of the will, everything—even his own “I” awareness—has to give in to an “absurd” commitment. The man of faith is “insanely” committed to and “madly” in love with God.¹

“Stay ye me with dainties, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick.”*

**Vide* Maimonides, *Hilkbot Teshuvah*, X, 3. “What is the love of God that is befitting? It is to love the Eternal with a great and exceeding love, so strong that one’s soul shall be knit up with the love of God, and one should be continually enraptured by it, like a lovesick individual whose mind is at no time free from its passion. . . .”

THE UNTRANSLATABILITY of the complete faith experience is due not to the weakness, but to the greatness of the latter.

If an all-embracing translation of the great mystery of revelation and its *kerygma* were possible, then the uniqueness of the faith experience and its commitments would be lost. Only peripheral elements of the act of faith can be projected on a cognitive, pragmatic background. Prayer, for instance, might appeal to majestic man as the most uplifting, integrating, and purifying act, arousing the finest and noblest emotions, yet these characteristics, however essential to Adam the first, are of marginal interest to Adam the second, who experiences prayer as the awesome confrontation of God and man, as the great paradox of man conversing with God as an equal fellow member of the covenantal society, and at the same time being aware that he fully belongs to God and that God demands complete surrender and self-sacrifice.

There is, of course, an amazing parallelism between the cultural experience and the apocalyptic one. Yet, I repeat, no matter how impressive the similarities are, the act of faith is unique and cannot be fully translated into cultural categories.

In a word, the message of translated religion is not the only one which the man of faith must

address to majestic man of culture. Besides this message, man of faith must bring to the attention of man of culture the *kerygma* of original faith in all its singularity and pristine purity, in spite of the incompatibility of this message with the fundamental credo of a utilitarian society. How staggering this incompatibility is! This unique message speaks of defeat instead of success, of accepting a higher will instead of commanding, of giving instead of conquering, of retreating instead of advancing, of acting "irrationally" instead of being always reasonable. Here the tragic event occurs. Contemporary majestic man rejects his dialectical assignment and, with it, the man of faith.

The situation has deteriorated considerably in this century, which has witnessed the greatest triumphs of majestic man in his drive for conquest. Majestic Adam has developed a demonic quality: laying claim to unlimited power—alas, to infinity itself. His pride is almost boundless, his imagination arrogant, and he aspires to complete and absolute control of everything. Indeed, like the men of old, he is engaged in constructing a tower whose apex should pierce Heaven. He is intoxicated with his own adventures and victories and is bidding for unrestricted dominion. In order to avoid misinterpretation, let me say that I am not referring here to man's daring experiments in

space. From a religious point of view, as I said before, they are quite legitimate and in compliance with the divine testament given to Adam the first that he should rule nature. When I say that modern man is projecting a demonic image, I am thinking of man's attempt to dominate himself, or, to be more precise, of Adam the first's desire to identify himself with the total human personality, declaring his creative talents as ultimate, ignoring completely Adam the second and his preoccupation with the unique and strange transcendental experience which resists subservience to the cultural interests of majestic man. Notwithstanding the fact that Western man is in a nostalgic mood, he is determined not to accept the dialectical burden of humanity. He certainly feels spiritually uprooted, emotionally disillusioned, and, like the old king of Ecclesiastes, is aware of his own tragedy. Yet this pensive mood does not arouse him to heroic action. He, of course, comes to a place of worship. He attends lectures on religion and appreciates the ceremonial, yet he is searching not for a faith in all its singularity and otherness, but for religious culture. He seeks not the greatness found in sacrificial action but the convenience one discovers in a comfortable, serene state of mind. He is desirous of an aesthetic experience rather than a covenantal one, of a social ethos rather than a divine imperative. In

Of Prayer

(1960)

“**A** prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before God” (Ps. 102:1) is diametrically opposed to “Let him gird up strength like a lion to rise in the morning for the service of his Creator”; the first is the heading of one of the psalms and the second, the very beginning of the *Shulhan Arukh*, which serves as an introduction to the laws of prayer.¹ These two symbolize and highlight two critically different meanings of prayer.

The first is a human-psychological phenomenon, the expression of an impulse from within, an action which springs from man himself, from an experience he has undergone, or from the circumstances in which he finds himself. It is an action performed for a man's own need, whether material, intellectual, or emotional. This is prayer for one's own benefit, a service to oneself. There is nothing worshipful about it. It does not represent acceptance of “the yoke of Heaven.” In other words, it is not essentially a religious act although, like many other psychologically determined events, it may occur in a religious context as a natural outcome of human manipulation of religious categories.

Prayer, as shaped in the prayerbook, is an entirely different matter. It is obligatory and fixed. Consider what these two properties imply. As obligatory, it is not what a person desires but what is demanded of him; not prayer initiated by him, but one imposed upon him. As fixed, it does not vary with the changing circumstances or states, objective or subjective, in which the praying individual finds himself. Hence it does not reflect the state of mind or situation of the praying person. Such a prayer is not intended to satisfy a need. No two people have

identical emotional needs or perceive their position before God in the same way. Their needs and perceptions could not be expressed in the same words at the same moment. Moreover, in the life of a single person no two moments are identical in respect of what he feels or needs. Yet the prayerbook does not take these differences between individuals or between the varying circumstances of the same person into account. The same morning, afternoon, and evening prayers are imposed upon the Jew every day of his life, the only variation being the additional prayers of Sabbath and holidays and the Ne'ilah service of Yom Kippur. The Jewish prayer—inasmuch as it is a distinctive religious institution, determined by religious considerations and a constitutive element of halakhic Judaism—is not intended to serve as an outlet for the feelings and thoughts of man. It is not the spontaneous outpouring of one's soul which necessarily varies with individuals, their moods and states of mind. It is more than an expression of a psychological need which has been granted due place in the religious life. The radical difference between these two kinds of prayer is well brought out in the words of a Tannaite, who apparently was dissatisfied with the kind of prayer embodied in the prayerbook: “Do not make a routine of your prayer, but let it consist in supplication of mercy before God.” But the opposite opinion eventually prevailed and was prescribed by the Halakhah.

The sole meaning of prayer as a religious institution is the service of God by the man who accepts the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. His acceptance becomes real through his assumption of the burden of Torah and Mitzvoth. Only the prayer which one prays as the observance of a Mitzvah is religiously significant. The spontaneous prayer (“when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before God”) a man prays of his own accord is, of course, halakhically permissible, but, like the performance of any act which has not been prescribed, its religious value is limited. As a religious act it is even faulty, since he who prays to satisfy his needs sets himself up as an end, as though God were a means for promotion of his welfare. As in the case of any Mitzvah, prayer—especially prayer—is religiously significant only if it is performed because it is a Mitzvah. Its religious value is minimal when it is performed out of free inclination.

The grandeur and power of prayer, prayer that is mandatory and fixed by Halakhah, lie precisely in setting aside all of man's interests and motives out of awareness of man's position before God, a position

which is always the same regardless of any personal circumstances. Man relinquishes his own will in the recognition of the duty of worship. The same set of eighteen benedictions is required of the bridegroom as of the widower returning from his wife's funeral.² The same series of psalms is recited by one enjoying the world and one whose world has collapsed. The identical supplications are required of those who feel the need for them and those who do not.

This characterization of halakhic prayer is not contradicted by its formulations of praise of God and request for the fulfillment of needs. The wording is the ritualistic form prescribed for man's worshipful stance. It is not necessary to request satisfaction of one's needs or to praise God. But because there is a deep religious reason for praying at fixed intervals using unchanging formulas, the carrying out of this prescription has been given the form of praise and supplication. This can be understood by way of analogy with Maimonides' discussion of the sacrifices, which the fixed prayer has come to supplant. There is no reason for sacrificing exactly two sheep or thirteen oxen on a given day. But because there were significant religious grounds for instituting the sacrifices, one form had to be chosen from among the many which, in themselves, were of equal value (or of no value). Moreover, prayer cannot be comprehended otherwise than as having a ritualistically determined content and form. Whoever worships the Creator who has no body and cannot be corporeally conceived cannot imagine that he can truly praise God or that he need inform Him of his needs. He will certainly not seek to influence God, an idea which comes short of being blasphemous only because of its naïveté.

The great religious duty of "intentional prayer" is meaningless unless construed in terms of the general intention to worship God in praying and in employing the fixed formulas of the prayerbook.³ It is impossible to demand of every man, in each specific life situation, to recite the prescribed words with wholehearted intention when in many of these situations the prescribed praise or the requests are entirely inappropriate. Conversely, to pray because one is obligated to do so, and not because one is prompted by personal feelings and needs, is an entirely fitting expression of one's assumption of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Mitzvoth. The discussions and controversies in both halakhic and aggadic sources concerning "intention" and *lyyun Tefilah* while praying are highly ambiguous.⁴ Is *lyyun Tefilah* praise-

worthy or to be avoided? From a thicket of what seem to be contradictions and confusion, one may glean two meanings of "intention" and two of *lyyun Tefilah*. The great principle governing intention in prayer is: "He who prays must direct his heart to Heaven." The required intention is to serve God by observing the Mitzvah of prayer, not attention to the supplications or praises recited.⁵

Several of the greatest Amoraites testify that they were at times unable to concentrate on the content of their prayer. They regarded themselves as properly praying by virtue of their intention to observe the Mitzvah of prayer. The Tossafists make a careful distinction: "There are two kinds of *lyyun Tefilah*—awaiting that one's request be granted [which is discreditable] and directing one's heart to Heaven [which is praiseworthy]." As summed up by Rabbi Solomon ben Adreth: "Not all intentions are identical."⁶

A controversy reported in the Midrash brings into clear focus the great difference between these two distinct conceptions of prayer. "Our rabbis declared: it is forbidden to pray more than the three prayers instituted by the patriarchs [or instituted in lieu of the daily sacrifices] . . . One may not pray more than three time daily." By way of contrast, R. Yohanan said: "Would that one might spend the entire day in prayer."⁷ The first view is illustrated by a conversation reported between Rabbi Judah the Prince and the Emperor Antoninus, in which Rabbi Judah explains that "One is forbidden to pray at any time [he may be so inclined] . . . so as not to assume a disrespectful attitude to the Almighty . . . that one may not disturb Him whenever he may wish."

For these reasons there is no point to demand that liturgical formulas be modified to fit the needs of men or the mental climate of the times. Prayer cut to fit the needs and current attitudes of men loses its religious importance and becomes one of the activities men carry on at their pleasure to satisfy their spiritual needs, much like poetry, music, or the art of cinema. We, of course, recognize that the formulation of our prayers did not descend from heaven and has no special sanctity in itself. It was phrased, arranged, and redacted by men like ourselves in accordance with what appeared to them the most appropriate way of observing the Mitzvah of prayer. Only by virtue of this halakhic decision did the set forms and locutions of prayer acquire their sanctity. In this respect, prayer does not differ from any other religious institution

or practice determined by halakhic deliberation within the framework of the Oral Teaching and by virtue of its authority. No doubt, by virtue of this same authority, the formulary of the prayer may be modified, if this appears necessary to the community of those who maintain the Torah and observe its Mitzvoth and who, like the Sages who maintained and shaped the Oral Teaching throughout the ages, sincerely believe that their innovation is called for by the Torah itself. The legitimation of the Oral Teaching depends upon this belief, which is also the condition that permits human decisions on Halakhah to be regarded as the words of the Living God. It is quite different to modify the prayerbook so as to make prayer more palatable to those who participate in it, to adapt it to the spirit of the times or to the prevalent moral and aesthetic values. Such a revision does not perfect the act of prayer; it negates its religious substance. The demand for such reform is not expressive of a religious impulse but of the desire to free oneself from the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The various "occasional prayers" composed to lend a religious halo to personal or collective interests—"prayer for the welfare of the state," "a prayer for the parachutists," "a prayer for submarine crews"—are ludicrous and insipid. All these are either national-religious play-acting or expression of fears which have nothing to do with religious consciousness. By the nature of things as implanted in them by their Creator, if the girls assigned to folding the parachutes perform their work conscientiously and the parachutist follows his instructions carefully and skillfully, he will land safely. If not, the special prayer will be of no avail. "The foolishness of a man perverts his way, and his heart frets against God" (Prov. 19:3). To pray as one who has faith in God, not as one who worships an idol, one must recognize that "the regularity [implanted by God] of the world-order is constant," and that prayer is not the silly and impudent demand that God change the world's regularity for the benefit of the person praying, but is rather a token of man's cleaving to God by serving Him, no matter what occurs in his natural environment. In the words of the Psalmist, "I am continually with you, you hold my right hand . . . Whom have I in heaven but you and there is none that I desire on earth besides you . . . My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Ps. 73).

By understanding prayer as a worshipful stance and not as an attempt to bring about God's intervention in His natural order, we are able to solve a problem which arises in religious education regarding prayer: why does not prayer—at times, even the prayer of the saintly and just—evoke a response? The answer is, simply: no prayer is without response! Since true prayer is the expression of one's intention to serve God, in praying one carries out this very intention. In other words, "prayer which evokes a response" is a tautology and "prayer without response" an absurdity. This is true whenever one prays with proper intention, the intention of worship. "God is near to all those who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth" (Ps. 145:18). He who prays without proper intention, with the intention of deriving some ulterior benefit from his prayer, is likely to be disappointed: "they shall fret themselves and curse their king and God" (Isa. 8:21).

The great contrast between prayer expressing consciousness of man's position before God and prayer as request of man's wants is highlighted in the prayers of the Days of Awe.⁸ The mandatory portion voices man's apprehension of the glory of God's majesty, which leads to longing and hope that his great Name shall be magnified and sanctified in the world; all this without reference to a man's own concerns and troubles (see the prayers beginning "Now, therefore, impose Your awe," "Reign over all the universe in Your glory," and especially "It is incumbent upon us to praise," which is the praise of thanks for Israel's privilege of worshipping God). The essence of the Yom Kippur experience is the consciousness of becoming purified before God and the awareness of the uniqueness of man's position before Him, even though man in himself is as nought. However, popular religiosity was unable to bear this sublimity of faith, and embellished this essential liturgy with prayers expressing man's anxiety about his fate, the fate of the people of Israel, and his relation to God, conceived as master over this fate. Most popular of all is the prayer U'netanch Tokef.⁹ The concern with "who shall live and who shall die," "who will be impoverished and who enriched," and so on, is a general human concern that has no religious bearing. In this respect the man of faith does not differ from the infidel. Nevertheless, this prayer has been accepted as legitimate.