

with the help of God

THE PRAYERS

Spiritual Awakening

Spiritual Ups and Downs

Help me, God, to be strong and determined in serving You; never let me fall. “Do not cast me away from Your Presence; do not take Your spirit of holiness away from me.” Grant me the skill to engage in spiritual ascent — to attain the higher states of mystical perception — and grant me the skill to return to the mundane and to serve You through the simple tasks of everyday life. Help me to find You everywhere, for “if I rise up to Heaven, You are there, and if I make my bed in the abyss, behold, You are there.” May I always cleave to You, and in my relationship with You, let me experience the fulfillment of the verse “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.”

(1:56)

Beginning Anew

Help us to serve You always, with all our hearts. May our Divine service seem new to us every day; may we begin afresh, as if we had never served You before. May we never succumb to thinking of ourselves as old or incapable of change; rather, may we be “bold as a leopard and light as an eagle, swift as a deer and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of our Father in Heaven.” Let us experience the truth of the prophet’s words, “Those who yearn for God will find their strength renewed; they will take flight like eagles; they will run and not become faint, walk and not become weary.”

(1:776)

Remembering the Future

“I remember my song in the night; with my heart I shall speak, and my spirit shall seek. I have remembered Your Name in the night, O God, and I shall heed Your teachings. I remember that God brings everything into existence when I recall Your wonders of old. I remember the days of old; I meditate upon Your deeds; about the work of Your Hands I shall speak. When my soul became faint, I remembered God. My soul remembers well and is humbled.”

I encourage my soul: “Remember and do not forget that there is a World to Come and that this world has no permanence. This world passes in the blink of an eye — like a passing shadow, a swirl of dust, a vaporous cloud, a gust of wind, a fleeting dream. A person’s life and true home is only the World to Come. Have mercy on yourself, and guard your memory well; remember that world every day — never forget it. Let your thoughts cleave to the World to Come, and never let your awareness of that Supernal World leave you. Gaze deeply into yourself, and attain true presence of mind — for a person’s stay in this world is but a fleeting moment.”

I come before You, my God, to cast my supplications before Your mercy and to raise my eyes expectantly toward Your great kindness. Guard my memory well, and let me remember always the World to Come, binding my thoughts only to the World that endures forever.

Every day when I awaken from sleep, as soon as I open my eyes, may I remember my ultimate destiny. For this world is empty and without substance, “a fleeting vapor — vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” There is no gain from all the labors that one exerts in worldly endeavors, for there is no purpose or true good to be found in this world except

the diligent pursuit of the World to Come. Grant me the presence of mind to remember this well through the power of holy remembrance.

In every time and place, enable me to understand the hidden messages that You constantly send me in order to draw me close to You in truth. For in Your great kindness, You have constricted Your Godliness from the first point of Creation, the beginning point of the World of Emanation (*Atzilut*) to the center point of this physical World of Action (*Asiyah*) — from the Infinite to the finite. Through this constriction, You send hidden messages to each person, in every situation, to bring him or her closer to Your service, in accordance with the place, the time and the individual. Open my mind, that I may understand clearly these hidden messages. Thus I will return to You in truth; now and forever I will fulfill Your will.

Teach me and guide me, in Your great kindness and awesome power, that I may attain the higher levels of consciousness necessary to understand these hidden messages. At the same time, grant me the wisdom to constrain this higher consciousness, that it never exceed its proper bounds.

Let me not inquire into the mysteries that are above my ability to understand or search out what must remain hidden to me. Help me to contemplate only that which lies within my limits; may I increase my wisdom in a modest, measured way, according to my spiritual level. In this way I will recognize and understand, at all times and at every moment, all the hidden messages that You weave into the fabric of my experiences. For through all the thoughts, words and actions that You constantly send my way, Your intention is only to teach me how to attach myself to You in truth.

(1:655-656)

Rekindling the Flame

Master of the universe, Knower of Secrets: You know all the mysteries of the world; You know the secrets of all living creatures. What can I say before You? Nothing is concealed from You, nothing hidden from Your sight.

Eternal One, Awesome One, Lofty One, before Your Presence the universe with all it contains is as nothing, and all of time does not amount even to the blink of an eye. You alone understand the nature of Your mercy: how You wish to confer upon us the ultimate goodness, which is to know Your truth, to experience an illumination of Eternity, an illumination of Your Godliness and Your awesome wonders, the sublime delight of cleaving to Your Oneness.

How many incarnations have You granted us, how many diverse happenings and chains of cause and effect — sometimes pleasant, sometimes painful — have You brought about, all for our ultimate benefit. For everything in life is meant to awaken us to serve You in truth, to encourage us to renounce our evil deeds and character traits, to draw near to You and to cleave to You, to become sated with Your goodness and illuminated with transcendent lights. May we “gaze upon the pleasantness of God and meditate in His palace,” and perceive Your Oneness. This is the ultimate success, the ultimate deliverance, the ultimate benefit and the ultimate goal.

Who would believe that someone such as myself — created to receive such goodness, to attain such a sublime goal, to delight in God and take refuge in the shadow of His Presence — could commit such deeds as my deeds and conceive such thoughts as my thoughts? What can I say? In truth, I have no words with which to justify myself. All I can do is cry out with a bitter voice over my spiritual devastation, until God looks down

upon me in His mercy. For nothing can deter God's salvation, which can come at any moment. His deliverance is absolute and true, a deliverance that lasts forever. Therefore, may it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors, that the merit and power of the true tzaddikim shine upon us. Through their merit may we experience true joy; through their great inspiration may the spirit of enlightenment come upon us. Awaken us from our spiritual sleep, and remove from our hearts all sadness and depression, insensitivity and lethargy. Then our souls will burn with fervor, enflamed with true longing for You.

(II:212-13)

Turning Darkness into Light

O God, Whose goodness never ceases, may I be worthy of receiving Your true goodness. Satisfy the deepest desire of my soul and enable me to merge into Your Oneness — to reach the ultimate state of self- nullification and spiritual harmony. May I progress along the spiritual path, like the angels in Ezekiel's vision, "advancing and then returning" — advancing toward the eternal and retreating toward the temporal world — until I attain the full realization that everything in life is a manifestation of pure goodness and that evil does not really exist. For when one contemplates that all suffering and affliction is in fact hidden goodness, the disguise of suffering falls away. Help me accept whatever suffering I must endure with love and joy, and enable me to nullify its painful aspect through binding myself to the Ultimate Reality, which is true goodness.

(I:805)

Finding God Wherever One Stands

God of Heaven, God of Earth, All-Powerful One, Who encompasses everything: Shine the holy light of the true tzaddikim upon us, the light that shines through all the worlds, both spiritual and physical. Enlighten both those who dwell above and those who dwell below. Reveal to those who dwell above, who have attained a higher level of holiness, that they have not begun to know God at all. Arouse and awaken all those who dwell below in the dust, on the lowest spiritual level, with the perception that "the entire earth is full of God's glory." Raise up these fallen souls from wherever they have fallen. Restore their spirits and awaken them, even those who have fallen to the farthest depths through their evil deeds and transgressions. Let Your compassion reach them all.

Encourage the weak and the spiritually injured, the sinful and the embittered, and bring them back to You. Have pity on the poor and destitute — save them, awaken them and give them strength, that they not despair, for God may be found everywhere. Even from the depths of the abyss it is possible to come closer to You, "for there is no place devoid of You" and no cause in the world for despair.

Awaken me, O God, awaken me; be gracious to me and raise me up. "Set my feet upon the rock; firmly support my steps." Grant me the strength to revere You and serve You. "Neither cast me off nor abandon me, God of my deliverance." Fortify me in my weakness, that I may return to You in truth. May I trust in You, God, and never falter, nor become disheartened for any reason. "Behold, God is my deliverance; I shall trust and not fear, for God is my strength and my song, and He has been my salvation."

May I be worthy to fully realize that "the whole world is full of God's Glory." Then I shall live with a constant sense of Your Presence and truly know and believe that Your Glory fills the world. For You both permeate all worlds and transcend all worlds, and there is no place from which You are absent. "If a person conceals himself in hidden

places, do I not see him?’ declares God. ‘Indeed, do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’” Help me to fulfill the words of the verse “I place God before me constantly” by knowing, discerning and sensing Your awe and the truth of Your existence; for You stand before us continually, and nothing is hidden from Your sight.

Enable us all to realize the unity of both perceptions of God: the exalted perception of those who dwell below — that no place is empty of His Presence; and that of those who dwell above — the Heavenly hosts who exclaim, “Where is the place of His Glory?” For no thought can grasp You at all, and that ultimate knowledge of God lies in “not knowing,” for His greatness cannot be fathomed.

(II:164, 166)

The Long Journey

Merciful One, raise me up from a beast-like existence to a human existence — from body to soul, from matter to spirit, from darkness to light, from foolishness to intelligence, from false intellect to the holy wisdom of Torah, from forgetfulness to memory. Call forth that faculty of “memory” which stems from Your Essence and instill it within me. Let me always remember all the words of Your Torah and Divine service: those I have learned from sacred texts and those I have heard or will hear from my teachers and friends. Help me remember clearly everything that relates to the fear of God, to Torah and Divine service; let me never forget anything I have learned.

May I always remember my mortal destiny and take to heart the purpose for which my soul descended to this lowly world. May I constantly bear in mind what will happen to me when my days come to an end. Help me remember this well every day; for all our days and years are without substance — like a fleeting dream, a passing shadow, a vaporous cloud, a gust of wind and a swirl of dust.

It is impossible to elude death, no matter where one turns: “There is no escape from this war.” What can one possibly say before God? What can one do when the day of destiny arrives? “My soul remembers well and is humbled” — for there is no forgetfulness before the Divine Throne, and nothing is hidden from God’s sight. Help me remember this always, so that I will tend to my soul’s deepest needs and save myself from destruction. May I prepare “sustenance” for the journey of my soul, for “the way is long, and even scant provisions are lacking.”

(I:543)

Music to Awaken the Soul

Deliver me from illusory goodness, which in the end is bitter as gall and wormwood. Grant me Your enduring goodness, O God, that I may be happy in all circumstances. “I shall rejoice in Your deliverance, and Your melodies I shall play on musical instruments in God’s Temple, all the days of my life.” Let me raise my voice in exalted song and melody for the sake of Your Name, according to Your beneficent will.

May I always awaken and reveal the Ten Kinds of Song, with which the Book of Psalms is written. Let me hear the melody and song of true joy in Divine service from a skillful and spiritually refined musician — “a singer with a beautiful voice, who plays the instrument well.” For such a musician knows how to play holy melodies which are drawn forth from the harp of King David.

Such a musician can separate the “good spirit” — a spirit of prophecy, a spirit of enlightenment, a spirit of joy and gladness — from the “evil spirit,” a spirit of sadness, a spirit of grief. Then we will all attain true happiness and will return to You with a whole

heart, for the heart is opened through holy joy and melody.
(I:669)

The True Goal

May I always seek to come close to You, O God, and not be deceived by the vain attractions of this world. What can be gained by the pursuit of wealth? Will it not all be taken from me when I die? “For nothing accompanies a person when he passes away, not silver, gold, precious gems or pearls; only Torah and good deeds.” Whether or not I succeed in acquiring riches, I will have wasted my days for naught. “What does a person gain from all his efforts that he labors under the sun? Utter emptiness; all is emptiness.” Even if I am unworthy to serve You due to my many sins, may my desire to draw near to You still remain strong and my holy determination never diminish. May You perform wonders for me and draw me near to You in truth.
(II:83)