
THE JEWISH VIEW OF PRAYER

Prayer provides each Jew with the profound ability to communicate with God. Moreover, prayer is a powerful means for personal introspection as well as contemplation of the world. Nevertheless, praying to God raises basic questions regarding our relationship with Him. Why should God answer my prayers if they are not in my best interests or may even be unjustified? Doesn't God provide for my needs irrespective of whether I actually pray for them? This class analyzes the nature, efficacy, and historical development of Jewish Prayer.

This class will answer the following questions:

- ~ What is prayer?
- ~ Does God answer our prayers?
- ~ Do our prayers really make a difference?
- ~ Why was Jewish prayer formalized into the Siddur?
- ~ Isn't formal prayer repetitive?

Class outline:

Section I. What is Prayer?

- Part A. One of the Three Pillars of the World
- Part B. Connecting to the Spiritual Dimension
- Part C. Self-judgment and Contemplation
- Part D. The Driving Force of the World

Section II. Do Our Prayers Get Answered?

- Part A. Do Our Prayers Make a Difference?
- Part B. The Power of Prayer

Section III. Establishment of Individual and Communal Jewish Prayer

- Part A. The Avot Introduced Tefillah
- Part B. Individual Prayer, Communal Prayer, and Compilation of the Siddur
- Part C. Institution of the Times of the Prayers
- Part D. The Role of the Synagogue and Beit Medrash
- Part E. Isn't Formalized Prayer Repetitive?

SECTION I. WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is one the primary purposes of Creation, enabling us to transcend the physical world and build a relationship with God, and providing us with clarity and guidance in our personal growth.

PART A. ONE OF THE THREE PILLARS OF THE WORLD

1. Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 1:2 – Prayer is one of the three principal goals of Creation.

Shimon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say, “The world rests on three things: On Torah, on *Avodah* (Divine service, i.e. prayer) and on acts of kindness.”

שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה, הוא היה אומר, על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים.

The importance of prayer is derived from its direct relationship to *Avodah*, (Divine service in the Temple). After the destruction of the Temple, prayer replaced *Avodah* as a primary means of building a relationship with God on both a personal and national level.

2. Rambam (Maimonides), Hilchot Tefillah (Laws of Prayer), 1:1 – The connection of prayer to *Avodah* is derived in the Talmud as the service (*Avodah*) of the heart.

It is a positive commandment to pray each day as it is stated, “And you shall serve the Lord your God (Shemot/Exodus 23:25) ... They taught that “*Avodah*,” means prayer, as it is stated “And you shall serve Him (*le'avdo*) with all your hearts” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 10:12). The Sages asked, “What is the service of the heart? This is prayer” (Ta’anit 2a).

מצות עשה להתפלל בכל יום שנאמר [שמות כג:כח] ועבדתם את ה' אלהיכם מפי השמועה למדו שעבודה זו היא תפלה שנאמר [דברים יא:יג] ולעבדו בכל לבבכם אמרו חכמים אי זו היא עבודה שבלב זו תפלה [תענית ב].

PART B. CONNECTING TO THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

1. Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto), Derech HaShem, (The Way of God) Translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1978, pp.65, 287 – How can we connect to spirituality when immersed in the physical world?

The deeper plan of God's wisdom ... was to arrange things so that even though man must be immersed in the physical, he should be able to attain perfection through his worldly activities and the physical world itself. It is precisely through these that he attains a pure and lofty state, and it is therefore his very lowliness that elevates him. For when he transforms darkness into ... sparkling brilliance, he is then able to attain unparalleled excellence and glory ...

[However] the more he would become entangled in worldly affairs, the more he would darken himself spiritually and divorce himself from the highest light. God therefore prepared a remedy for

עומק יותר יש בענין, כי הנה האדון ברוך הוא... להיות לו עסק בעולם וליקשר בעניניו, וזה מה שמקיימו במצבו האנושי... והנה באמת מצד אחד ירידה לו ולעניניו, אבל היא ירידה המצטרפת לו, וגורמת לו עליה אחרי כן... כי הנה כפי מה שירבה להסתבך בעניני העולם, כך מתרחק מן האור העליון ומתחשך יותר. והנה הכין הבורא יתברך שמו תיקון לזה, והוא מה שיקדים האדם ויתקרב לפניו יתברך וממנו ישאל כל צרכיו... ותהיה זו ראשית כללית ועיקרית לכל השתדלותו, עד שכאשר יימשך אחר כך בשאר דרכי ההשתדלות, שהם דרכי ההשתדלות האנושית, לא יקרה שיסתבך וישתקע בגופניות וחומריות.

this, namely that man should initiate all worldly endeavors by first bringing himself close to God and petitioning Him for all his worldly needs ... This initiation is most important for all human effort. When a person subsequently engages in various forms of human activity, he will not become entangled and immersed in the physical and material world.

2. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Committee for the Publication of the Writings of Rabbi E.L. Dessler, Jerusalem, 1978. III: 68 – Essence of the soul is prayer; all of one's aspirations are expressed in prayer.**

What is meant by the term “*nefesh*”? This is prayer, as it is stated, “And I will pour out my soul (*nafshi*) before God.” (Shmuel/Samuel I 1:15). Therefore the essence of the human soul is prayer. And the explanation of this subject is as follows: Every aspiration of a person is intrinsically prayer because it is characteristic of a person that any strong aspiration he has is expressed within his heart and also by his lips in prayer.

ומה היא הנפש, זו תפלה, שנאמר ואשפוך את נפשי לפני ה'. הרי שמהות הנפש היא תפלה. וביאור הענין זה: כל שאיפה הרי היא ממילא תפלה, כי כך היא תכונת האדם, ששאיפתו החזקה מתבטאת בפנים לבבו וגם בשפתותיו בתפלה.

For example, when driving your car to make an important meeting on time and you're delayed at a red traffic light – you launch into “prayer” hoping it will turn green quickly!

3. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Ibid. – A person is constantly praying.**

A person constantly yearns and prays – either to God or to seemingly “natural” forces.

כל אדם שואף ומתפלל תמיד – או אל השי"ת או אל כחות הטבע המדומים.

4. **Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, Sefer HaKuzari, III: 5 – Prayer nourishes the soul.**

And his expression should be conducive with his thoughts, not adding to them. And in his prayer he does not express himself instinctively like a starling or a parrot, rather each word is contemplated and intended ... A person's prayer provides nourishment for his soul just as food provides nourishment for his body. The influence of each prayer remains with a person until the subsequent prayer, just like the daytime meal sustains him until he eats the evening meal.

ויהיה הלשון מסכים עם המחשבה לא יוסיף עליו, ולא יבטא בתפלתו על דרך המנהג והטבע כמו הזורז והבבא אלא עם כל מלה מחשבה וכונה בה... והסדר הזה מהנפש כסדר המזון מהגוף, מתפלל לנפשו וזון לגופו, ומתמדת עליו ברכת התפלה עד עת תפלה אחרת, כהתמדת כוח סעודת היום עד שיסעד בלילה...

PART C. SELF-JUDGMENT AND CONTEMPLATION

1. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, Translated by Dayan Dr. I Grunfeld, The Soncino Press, Jerusalem, 1891, p.472 – Evaluating our character, actions, and goals through prayer.**

Hithpallel, from which “*tefillah*” is derived, originally meant to deliver an opinion about oneself, to judge oneself or an inner attempt at so doing such as the *hithpa'el* (reflexive) form of the Hebrew

verb frequently denotes ... Thus it denotes to step out of active life in order to attempt to gain a true judgment about oneself ... about one's relationship to God and the world, and the world to oneself ... In English we call tefillah "prayer," but this word only incompletely expresses the concept "to pray," i.e. to ask for something is only a minor section of tefillah.

2. Ibid, p. 473 – What is the difference between Tehillah and Tefillah?

Such prayers, in which you refashion your outlook on life, are called chiefly Tehillah [תהילה] and tefillah [תפילה]: Tehillah when referring to the general contemplation of God in the world, humanity and Israel; tefillah when referring more to yourself. Tehillah gives the contemplation itself; tefillah, the judgment arising from it.

PART D. THE DRIVING FORCE OF THE WORLD

Judaism is revolutionary in its understanding of what is the primary driving force behind events. Logic dictates that it is "nature" which brings rain, and one's hard work which provides a successful harvest. In fact, God brings events to fruition as a response to our prayers. This principle is taught in the following three sources

1. Bereishit (Genesis) 2:5 –Vegetation was created on the third day, but did not grow until the sixth day.

No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground.

וכל שיח השדה טרם יהיה בארץ וכל עשב השדה טרם יצמח כי לא המטיר ה' אלהים על הארץ ואדם אין לעבד את האדמה:

2. Rashi, Ibid. – Why didn't the grass grow on the third day?

Why did it not rain? Because there was no man to work the land, and no one to recognize the goodness of rain.

When man came and recognized that rain was necessary for the world, he prayed for it, and it rained, and the trees and grasses sprouted.

...ומה טעם לא המטיר לפי שאדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואין מכיר בטובתן של גשמים

וכשבא אדם וידע שהם צורך לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו וצמחו האילנות והדשאים:

3. Rav Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. II – From the lesson above, the world is seen as analogous to a gigantic watch driven by a spring (a battery today).

The world is comparable to a gigantic watch. Within the watch are many wheels moving one another until they move its hands. The watch has a spring which moves all of the wheels. In this world the spring is tefillah.

העולם דומה לשעון אדיר. בפנים השעון ישנם הרבה גלגלים המניעים זה את זה עד שמניעים את המחווגים. ויש לשעון קפיץ המניע את כל הגלגלים. קפיץ זה בעולם היא תפלה.

SECTION II. DO OUR PRAYERS GET ANSWERED?

Since Judaism teaches that God runs the world, what difference does it make if we pray?

PART A. DO OUR PRAYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

1. J. David Bleich, Ed., *With Perfect Faith*, quoting Albo, *Sefer Ikarim* 4:18, translated by Issac Husik, Ktav Publishing House, Inc., New York, 1983, p. 267 – 269 – If God has already decreed that one will receive a certain benefit, why should he pray? Alternatively, if God has not decreed that this should happen, can prayer change His plan?

Either God has determined that a person shall receive a given benefit or He has not so determined. If He has determined, there is no need for prayer; and if He has not so determined, how can prayer avail to change God's Will that He should now determine to benefit the person when He had not so determined before? For God does not change from a state of willing to a state of not willing, or vice versa. For this reason they say that the worthiness of an action does not help a person receive any benefit from God. And similarly, they say that prayer does not help one to receive a benefit or to be saved from something bad which has been decreed against him.

But this opinion is not true, for the influences from above come down upon the recipient when he is on a certain spiritual level and state of preparation to receive them. And if a person does not prepare himself, he withholds this good from himself. For example, if it has been determined from on High that a person's crops shall prosper in a given year, and he neglects to plow or sow his land that year, then God may bring the most abundant rain upon the land but his crops will not prosper, seeing that he has not plowed or sowed. He withheld the good from himself because he did not prepare himself to receive it ... In the same way, when a certain evil is determined upon someone, it is also conditional upon either his being wicked in a certain degree, or to his being predisposed to it.

As for the objection that the Divine Will can not be changed by prayer, the answer is that it is the Divine Will in the first place that the decree should be realized if the person in question continues in the same state, and that the decree should be changed if the person's state changes.

אם נגזר מהשם טוב מה על איש או לא נגזר. ואם נגזר אין צריך תפלה, ואם לא נגזר איך תועיל התפלה לשנות רצון השם לגזור עליו טוב אחר שלא נגזר, שלא ישתנה השם מן הרצון אל לא רצון, ולא מלא רצון אל רצון, ובעבור זה יאמרו שלא יועיל כשרון המעשה אל שיגיע לאדם מהשם בעבור טוב מה, וכן שאמרו שלא תועיל התפלה להשיג טוב מה או להנצל מרע שנגזר עליו.

וזה הדעת איננו נכון, שהשפעות העליונית יושפעו על המקבל בהיותו במדרגה ידועה והכנה ידועה לקבלם, ואם לא יכין האדם עצמו לקבל השפע ההוא הנה הוא המונע הטוב מעצמו, שאם נגזר על איש מה על דרך משל שיצליחו תבואותיו בשנה פלוני והוא לא יחרוש ולא יזרע בשנה ההיא אף אם ימטיר השם מטרות עזות על פני תבל ארצו לא תצליחנה תבואותיו אחר שלא חרש וזרע והוא המונע מעצמו הטוב ההוא שלא הכין עצמו לקבלו...

וכן כשנגזר עליו רע מה הנה הוא נגזר בהיותו במדרגה ידועה מהרוע או בהכנה ידועה.

PART B. THE POWER OF PRAYER

1. **Rabbeinu Bachya, Kad HaKemach, Translation by Rabbi Dr. Charles Chavel, Shilo Publishing House, Inc. New York 1980, pp. 662 – 663 – Prayer can change Heavenly decrees and save us from danger.**

The power of prayer is so great that it can even change the course of nature, save one from danger, and nullify a Heavenly decree. That prayer can change the course of nature may be gathered from the case of Rivkah (Rebecca) whose barrenness was removed by prayer. Prayer can also save one from danger as it is written ... “For He commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves. They mounted up to the heaven, they went down to the deeps; their souls melted away because of trouble. They cried unto the Eternal in their trouble ... He made the storm calm, so that the waves were still.” (Tehillim/Psalms 107:25-28). Thus, prayer protects at a time of danger. Similarly, it is within the power of prayer to nullify a Heavenly decree against a person, as was with the case of Chizkiyahu (Hezekiah), King of Judah.

גדול כח התפלה אפילו לשנות הטבע ולהנצל מן הסכנה ולבטל הנגזר. לשנות את הטבע ממה שכתוב (בראשית כה) ויעבר יצחק לה' וגו'... וכן להנצל מן הסכנה ממה שכתוב... ויאמר ויעמד רוח סערה יעלו שמים ירדו תהומות נפשם ברעה תתמוגג ויצעקו את ה' בצר להם... יקם סערה לדממה ויחשו גליהם (תהלים קז:כה-כח) הרי שהתפלה מגינה על הסכנה. וכן כח התפלה לבטל הנגזר... מחזקיהו...

2. **Melachim (Kings) II, 20:1-6 – Prayers can save lives and add years to life.**

In those days Chizkiyahu was terminally ill and Yeshayahu ben Amotz (Isaiah) the Prophet came to him and said, “Thus says God: Set your house in order for you will die and not live.” And [Chizkiyahu] turned his head to the wall and prayed to God ... and Chizkiyahu cried loudly ... And God came to Yeshayahu again saying “Return and say to Chizkiyahu, ... I heard your prayers and saw your tears, behold I will cure you on the third day ... and I will add fifteen years to your life...”

בימים ההם חלה חזקיהו למות ויבא אליו ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא ויאמר אליו כה אמר ה' צו לביתך כי מת אתה ולא תחיה. ויסב את פניו אל הקיר ויתפלל אל ה'... ויבך חזקיהו בכי גדול... ודבר ה' היה אליו לאמר. שוב ואמרת אל חזקיהו... שמעתי את תפלתך ראיתי את דמעתך הנני רפא לך ביום השלישי... והספתי על ימיו חמש עשרה שנה.

3. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Kiddushin 82a – What is the ultimate source of one's income?**

Rabbi Meir says, “A man should always teach his son a clean and easy profession and pray to the One who is the Owner of all wealth and property, for there is no trade that does not have poor and wealthy professionals. [A person] does not gain or lose wealth through his profession, rather in accordance with what he merits.

Rashi: He should not say in his heart, “This trade is not lucrative,” rather he should pray to the One who is the Owner of all wealth.

רבי מאיר אומר לעולם ילמד אדם את בנו אומנות נקיה וקלה ויתפלל למי שהעושר והנכסים שלו, שאין אומנות שאין בה עניות ועשירות שלא עניות מן האומנות ולא עשירות מן האומנות, אלא הכל לפי זכותו.

רש"י: ואל יאמר בלבו אומנות זו אינה מעשרת, אלא יבקש רחמים למי שהעושר שלו.

SECTION III. ESTABLISHMENT OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL JEWISH PRAYER

Jewish prayer began with the recitation of informal prayers in the times of the Avot. In the Second Temple period, prayer was formalized with the compilation of the Siddur and arranged prayer times.

PART A. THE AVOT INTRODUCED TEFILLAH

Informal, individual prayer was established by the Avot prior to the Temple period.

1. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 55a – Morning prayer.

Avraham (Abraham) established the morning prayer as it is stated ... “And Avraham went in the morning to the place that he had stood (*ammad*) [before] God.” (Bereishit 19:26). “*Amidah*” is a term specifically used for prayer as it is stated, “And Pinchas stood (*veyamod*) and prayed.” (Tehillim 106:30)

אברהם תקן תפילת שחרית שנא' וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם ואין עמידה אלא תפילה שנאמר ויעמד פינחס.

2. Ibid., 26b – Afternoon prayer.

Yitzchak (Isaac) established the afternoon prayer as it says, “And Yitzchak went to meditate (*lasuach*) in the field just before evening” (Bereishit 24:63), and “*sichah*” is an expression specifically used for prayer ...

יצחק תקן תפלת מנחה שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוּח בשדה לפנות ערב ואין שיחה אלא תפלה.

3. Ibid., – Evening prayer.

Yaakov (Jacob) established the evening prayer as it says, “[And Yaakov left Beersheva and went towards Charan]. He encountered (*vayifgah*) the place and he slept there because the sun had set...” (Bereishit 28:10-11), and “*pegiyah*” is a term specifically used for prayer ...

יעקב תקן תפלת ערבית שנאמר ויפגע במקום וילן שם ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה.

PART B. INDIVIDUAL PRAYER, COMMUNAL PRAYER, AND COMPILATION OF THE SIDDUR

How was prayer formalized throughout history?

1. Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:1 – Torah law and individual prayer.

The number of prayers is not decreed by Torah law; the wording of the prayers is not decreed by Torah law; and prayer does not have prescribed times decreed by Torah law.

ואין מגין התפלות מן התורה ואין משנה התפלה הזאת מן התורה ואין לתפלה זמן קבוע מן התורה:

2. **Ibid., 1:3 – Nature of individual prayer from Moshe Rabbeinu until Ezra (Second Temple).**

If a person was fluent in prayer he would make many supplications and requests. But if it was difficult for a person to pray, he would pray what he could and at a time he wished. Similarly, the number of prayers that a person would pray depended upon his ability to pray: some people would pray once a day and some twice daily, and others even several times; and everyone prayed in the direction of the Temple (in Jerusalem) from wherever they stood. This was the practice from Moshe Rabbeinu until Ezra.

אם היה רגיל מרבה בתחנון ובקשה ואם היה ערל שפתים מדבר כפי יכלתו ובכל עת שירצה, וכן מנין התפלות כל אחד כפי יכלתו, יש מתפלל פעם אחת ביום, ויש מתפלל פנאים הרבה, והכל יהיו מתפללין נכח המקדש בכל מקום שיהיה, וכן היה הדבר תמיד ממושה רבינו ועד עזרא.

3. **Rabbeinu Bachya, Kad HaKemach, Translation by Rabbi Dr. Charles Chavel, Shilo Publishing House, Inc. New York 1980, pp.663-664 – Arrangement of prayer before and up until the Great Assembly.**

You should know that from the days of Moshe Rabbeinu until the period of the Men of the Great Assembly, prayer in Israel was not arranged in a definite order for everyone alike. Each individual prayed for himself according to his knowledge, wisdom, and clarity of expression. This was the general practice until the Men of the Great Assembly ordained the Shemoneh Esrei, so that there would be a set prayer for all the people of Israel alike.

וצריך אתה לדעת כי מימות משה רבינו עד אנשי כנסת הגדולה היתה התפלה בישראל בלתי מסודרת בתיקון שווה לכלנו, שהיה כל א' וא' עושה מליצה ומתפלל לעצמו כפי ידיעתו וחכמתו וצחות לשונו, עד שבאו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ותקנו תפלה זו של שמונה עשרה כדי שתהיה תפלה מסודרת שווה לכל ישראל.

4. **Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:4 – Why the prayer service became standardized.**

After the First Temple was destroyed by the evil Nebuchadnezzar and the Jewish people were exiled, they became mixed amongst the Persians, Greeks, and other nations. They gave birth to a new generation of Jews in these countries, and these children lost the ability to express themselves clearly in Hebrew and they mixed many languages into [their prayers]. They became unable to express themselves properly in one language.

They were not able to speak Hebrew as well as their national languages. Because of this, they abbreviated their prayers, whether requests or praises of God, which they made in Hebrew, to the extent that they started to mix foreign languages into their prayers. When Ezra saw this, he and his Court established the order of the Eighteen Blessings. The first three blessings consist of praise to God, the last three express thanks to God, and those in between contain requests for the basic

כיון שגלו ישראל בימי נבוכדנצר הרשע נתערבו בפרס ויוון ושאר האומות ונולדו להם בנים בארצות הגוים ואותן הבנים נתבלבלו שפתם והיתה שפת כל אחד ואחד מעורבת מלשונות הרבה וכיון שהיה מדבר אינו יכול לדבר כל צורכו בלשון אחת אלא בשיבוש...

ואינם מכירים לדבר יהודית וכלשון עם ועם ומפני זה כשהיה אחד מהן מתפלל תקצר לשונו לשאול חפציו או להגיד שבח הקדוש ברוך הוא בלשון הקדש עד שיערבו עמה לשונות אחרות, וכיון שראה עזרא ובית דינו כך עמדו ותקנו להם שמנה עשרה ברכות על הסדר, שלש ראשונות שבח לה' ושלש אחרונות הודיה, ואמצעיות יש בהן שאלת כל הדברים שהן כמו אבות לכל חפצי איש ואיש ולצרכי הציבור כולן, כדי שיהיו ערוכות בפי הכל וילמדו אותן ותהיה תפלת אלו העלגים תפלה שלימה כתפלת בעלי הלשון הצחה,

needs of each individual and the community as a whole. The fixed prayer was therefore established to enable those who had difficulty expressing themselves to pray with clarity.

ומפני ענין זה תקנו כל הברכות והתפלות מסודרות בפי כל ישראל כדי שיהא ענין כל ברכה ערוך בפי העלג.

5. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, Translated by Dayan Dr. I Grunfeld, The Soncino Press, Jerusalem, 1891, p. 506. – Communal prayer.**

So far we have considered the tefillot as instituted for the individual in respect of his inner Divine service. But the *korbanot* to which they correspond were all *korbanot tzibbur*, communal offerings. Coming as they did from public funds and offered up by the Kohanim, the representatives of the community, they represented the dedication of the communal relationship of the nation of God. [Therefore] even the form of our tefillot, as a rule, expresses communal recognition, communal wishes, communal thanks and communal confession. They teach you to regard yourself as a member of the community...[and] to strive for others.

6. **Ibid., p. 625- 626 – Compilation of the Siddur.**

When Israel dwelt upon its land, life everywhere clearly appeared as being borne by God... But Israel stood before the long period of wandering, scattered and despised among the nations, robbed of all national character, hardly admitted to possess human character, having but Torah, and the spirit of Torah as its only possession. A crushing of the spirit under the torture of worldly troubles was to be foreseen. A substitute had to be found for the Temple and all the spiritual levers that spring from it... Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly set the Divine service of the world into a firmer form by compiling Israel's Book of Prayer (Siddur).

PART C. INSTITUTION OF THE TIMES OF THE PRAYERS

Although the Avot introduced the concept of praying at different times during the day, the morning, afternoon, and evening prayers were not formalized until the Second Temple. The timing of the prayers was instituted to correspond to the Avodah in the Temple.

1. **Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 1:5 – Morning and Afternoon Service.**

The Great Assembly also established that the number of prayers would correspond to the number of times the daily sacrifices were offered in the Temple. Therefore, two daily prayers were instituted corresponding to the two daily offerings, as well as an additional service corresponding to the third offering, which was brought on special occasions.

The morning prayer is called *Shacharit*, the afternoon service is called *Minchah*, and the additional prayer service for special occasions is called *Mussaf*.

וכן תקנו שיהא מנין התפלות כמנין הקרבנות, שתי תפלות בכל יום כנגד שני תמידין וכל יום שיש קרבן מוסף תקנו בו תפלה שלישית כנגד קרבן מוסף,

ותפלה שהיא כנגד תמיד של בקר היא הנקראת תפלת השחר, ותפלה שכנגד תמיד של בין הערבים היא הנקראת תפלת מנחה ותפלה שכנגד המוספין היא נקראת תפלת המוספין.

2. **Ibid., 1:6 – Evening Service.**

The Great Assembly also established that there would be one prayer service in the evening, since parts of the afternoon sacrifice would be consumed on the altar throughout the night...

וכן התקינו שיהא אדם מתפלל תפלה אחת בלילה
שהרי איברי תמיד של בין הערבים מתעכלין והולכין
כל הלילה...

PART D. THE ROLE OF THE SYNAGOGUE AND BEIT MEDRASH

1. **Mishnah Brurah, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 155:1 – Where are the prayer services held?**

In Talmudic times, the synagogue was used exclusively for communal prayer and the Beit Medrash (Study Hall) was exclusively used for Torah study. It was the practice for people to pray in the synagogue. Nowadays, it is commonplace to hold communal prayers both in Batei Medrashot [and synagogues].

והנה בזמננו היה הביהמ"נ מיוחד לתפלה וביהמ"ד
מיוחד לתורה לחוד והיה דרכם להתפלל בביהמ"נ ואף
בזמנינו שמתפללים בבתי מדרשות.

PART E. ISN'T FORMALIZED PRAYER REPETITIVE?

Although Judaism approves free expression in prayer, the Siddur, prayer services, and prayers themselves comprise a system that one might think is confining and repetitive

1. **Rabbi Chaim Volozhin, Nefesh HaChaim, pp. 327-328.**

Our Divine service today consists of prayer instead of sacrifices. Prayer stands at the most exalted place of the universe, and each letter rises to an exceedingly high place ... For this important purpose one hundred and twenty elders, among them several prophets, composed it. But people of our stature are also capable of forming requests for our needs and asking for healing of our ailments in an educated manner. So why did we need prophets to do this for us? However, they put particular intentions into the prayers and established them in such a manner that everything should be included in them, so that each Jewish person can pray according to his understanding.

The underlying reason [why the prophets needed to do this for us] is as follows: that from the day the prayers were established, there have not been two similar prayers in the world that have made the identical effect Above and risen to the same level. For today's prayer is different from that of yesterday, and everything is dependent on these words [which were fixed for us for every prayer]. Therefore, prophecy was necessary for this.

עבודתנו היא רק התפלה, במקום זבח ומנחה, והדברים
עומדים ברומו של עולם, וכל תבה ותבה עולה למקום
גבוה מעל גבו.... וכי לא לחנם ק"ך זקנים, ומהם כמה
נביאים יסדוה. והלא גם מאנוש כערכנו לא יפלא, ליסד
בקשת כל צרכנו, ורפואות תחלואנו, בלשון למודים,
ולמה צריך לנביאים, אך המה כונו בה, ותקנוה, על
אפן, שתהיה הכל כלול בה, וכל איש ישראל, כל אחד
מתפלל כפי הבנתו.

וכללו של דבר, שמיום שנתקנה, לא היה בעולם ב'
תפלות שיעשו רשם שוה למעלה, ושיעלו למדרגה א',
כי משנה בזה תפלת היום, מתפלת אתמול כי יעבר,
והכל תלוי בתבות אלו. ולכך הצרך נבואה לזה.

And all of the intentions and secrets that have been revealed about the prayers until this day are not even like a drop from the vast sea in comparison to the intention that the smallest of the one hundred and twenty elders understood. And even the greatest of them only reached an understanding according to his level and the root of his soul. In truth, prayer is much above any person's understanding, and it unites the lower world with the higher one in the same way as a sacrifice.

וכל הכונות והסודות, שנתגלו על התפלה עד היום אינם כטפה מים הגדול, נגד הכונה שהשיג הקטן מק"כ זקנים, וגם הגדול לא השיג, רק כפי ערכו ושרש נשמתו. אבל באמת, היא גבוהה יותר מבינת כל אדם, והיא קושרת עולם התחתון בעליון, כמו הקרבן.

2. **Ohr Yechezkel, Darchei Avodah p. 97 – The prayers themselves provide a framework to enable a person to develop himself and reach new levels.**

The essence of prayer is to transform a person, elevating him to previously unrealized heights. Prayer is not merely the recitation of certain words, rather its goal is to change a person, and enable him to grow from one level to the next...

כי יסוד התפילה לשנות את האדם ולהביאו לידי מחזות ומקומות נוספים אשר לא היה בהם, ואין התפילה אמירת פרקים וכדומה, אלא מטרתה להפוך אותו ולשנותו ממדרגה למדרגה...

