Prayer Hebrew/English Source Sheet

This material was prepared by Rabbi Yonatan Neril and Evonne Marzouk of Canfei Nesharim, as part of the Jewcology project.

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The Power of Prayer

Numbers 20:15-16
Our fathers went down to Egypt, and we sojourned in Egypt for a long time. And the Egyptians mistreated us and our forefathers. We cried out to G-d and He heard our voice; He sent an emissary and took us out of Egypt.

Rashi to Numbers 20:15-16

and He heard our voice: through the blessing that our father [Isaac] gave: “The voice is the voice of Jacob” (Gen. 27:22). When we cry out we are answered. — [Midrash Aggadah . See also Midrash Tanchuma Beshallach 9]
Exodus 17: 8-13
8. Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9. So Moses said to Joshua, Pick men for us, and go out and fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand
10. Joshua did as Moses had told him, to fight against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur ascended to the top of the hill. 11. It came to pass that when Moses would raise his hand, Israel would prevail, and when he would lay down his hand, Amalek would prevail. 12. Now Moses hands were heavy; so they took a stone and placed it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one from this [side], and one from that [side]; so he was with his hands in faith until sunset. 13. Joshua weakened Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Discussion Questions
1. What is the purpose of prayer, according to these verses?
2. How does prayer relate to action?

Created to Pray

Genesis 2:4-5
These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created on the day that Hashem G-d made earth and heaven. Now all the plants (siah) of the field were not yet on the earth and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted, for Hashem G-d had not yet sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to work the soil.”

Rashi to Genesis 2:5, s.v. ki lo himtir, based on Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Chullin p. 60b.
For what is the reason that G-d had not yet sent rain, because there was no man to work the land and there was no one to acknowledge the goodness of the rain, and when man came and knew that they (the rain) are a need for the world, he prayed for them and they came down, and the trees and grasses sprouted

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 26b
Isaac instituted the afternoon prayer service, as it is said, “And Isaac went out to su‘ah in the field before evening” (Genesis 24:63); and [the Talmud goes on to explain] there is no sihah except prayer; as it is said, “A prayer of the afflicted man when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications (siho) before Hashem” (Psalms, 102:1).

Discussion Questions
1. Do humans have a reason to pray?
2. What is the relationship between human prayer and nature?
Nature in our Prayers

Psalms chapter 148, verses 1-10

1. A praise of David. I shall exalt You, my God the King, and I shall bless Your name forever and ever.
2. Every day I shall bless You, and I shall praise Your name forever and ever.
3. The Lord is great and very much praised, and His greatness cannot be searched.
4. Generation to generation will praise Your works, and they will recite Your mighty deeds.
5. Of the majesty of the glory of Your splendor and the words of Your wonders I shall speak.
6. And the strength of Your awesome deeds they will tell, and Your greatness I shall sing.
7. Of the remembrance of Your abundant goodness they will speak, and of Your righteousness they will sing.
8. The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and of great kindness.
9. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are on all His works.
10. All Your works will thank You, O Lord, and Your pious ones will bless You.

Psalms 92:13-15, Artscroll translation

“A righteous person will flourish like a date palm, like a cedar in the Lebanon he will grow tall. Planted in the house of Hashem, in the courtyards of our G-d they will flourish. They will still be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be.”

Discussion Questions

1. How is nature presented in our daily prayers?
2. What can we learn from this?

Healing the World: Through Prayer

Siddur, morning blessings before Shema, Artscroll translation

“He Who illuminates the earth and those who dwell upon it, with compassion; and in His goodness renews daily, perpetually, the work of creation. “How great are Your works, Hashem, You make them all with wisdom, the world is full of Your possessions.” (Psalms 104:24)
Exodus 32:13-32
And Moses returned to the Lord and said: "Please! This people has committed a grave sin. They have made themselves a god of gold. And now, if You forgive their sin But if not, erase me now from Your book, which You have written."

I Samuel 1:10-11
And she was bitter in spirit, and she prayed to the Lord, and wept. And she vowed a vow, and said: to Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the affliction of Your bondswoman, and You will remember me, and You will not forget Your bondswoman and You will give Your bondswoman a man-child, and I shall give him to the Lor

There is a person who sings the song of his soul. He finds everything, his complete spiritual satisfaction, within his soul.

There is a person who sings the song of the nation. He steps forward from his private soul, which he finds narrow and uncivilized. He yearns for the heights. He clings with a sensitive love to the entirety of the Jewish nation and sings its song. He shares in its pains, is joyful in its hopes, speaks with exalted and pure thoughts regarding its past and its future, investigates its inner spiritual nature with love and a wise heart.

There is a person whose soul is so broad that it expands beyond the border of Israel. It sings the song of humanity. This soul constantly grows broader with the exalted totality of humanity and its glorious image. He
yearns for humanity’s general enlightenment. He looks forward to its supernal perfection. From this source of life, he draws all of his thoughts and insights, his ideals and visions.

And there is a person who rises even higher until he unites with all existence, with all creatures, and with all worlds. And with all of them, he sings. This is the person who, engaged in the Chapter of Song every day, is assured that he is a child of the World-to-Come.

And there is a person who rises with all these songs together in one ensemble so that they all give forth their voices, they all sing their songs sweetly, each supplies its fellow with fullness and life: the voice of happiness and joy, the voice of rejoicing and tunefulness, the voice of merriment and the voice of holiness.

The song of the soul, the song of the nation, the song of humanity, the song of the world—they all mix together with this person at every moment and at all times.

And this simplicity in its fullness rises to become a song of holiness, the song of God, the song that is simple, doubled, tripled, quadrupled, the song of songs of Solomon—of the king who is characterized by completeness and peace.

**Discussion Questions**

1. If we are committed to building a better world, how can prayer help us?
2. According to these sources, what should we pray for? Is there anything we shouldn’t pray for?

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