

All Mishkan T'fila reading references can be found online, where you can access the Siddur for free:

<https://www.ccarnet.org/publications/resources-repaginated/>

For welcoming/opening the service:

“An Invitation to God” (by Abraham J. Heschel, adapted)

The focus of prayer is not the self. Prayer comes to pass in a complete turning of the heart toward God, toward God's goodness and power. It is the momentary disregard of our personal concerns, the absence of self-centered thoughts, which constitute the art of prayer. Feeling becomes prayer in the moment in which we forget ourselves and become aware of God...

Prayer is an invitation to God to intervene in our lives, to let the Divine Will prevail in our affairs; it is the opening of a window to God in our will, an effort to make God the Lord of our soul.”

“How to Succeed in Shul on the High Holy Days by Really Trying” (by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, adapted)

“(The Holy Days) This Shabbat presents a grand opportunity for returning to our own sources as Jews. The time in Synagogue should not be squandered, but used to great effect. Below are some suggested guidelines.

Relax; don't worry about keeping up with the pages. If you find a prayer whose words reach out to you, dwell on it. Don't rush.

Try not to talk to anyone around you. Not just for reasons of decorum, but because prayer is essentially a question of mood. Chit-chat destroys the mood. Save chit-chat for parties.

Come early and prepare to stay. A brief visit to shul will leave you cold. A longer stay enables you to get into the spirit of the day.

Relax again. Remove any chips from your shoulders, whether against God or man, against Judaism, the Torah, the administration, whatever.

Don't take your pulse. Don't worry if you are "enjoying" the services, if you are being inspired, moved, or stimulated. Let the words, the melodies, the mood, your own mind, take hold of you. Forget yourself, lose yourself in the experience.

Bring your whole self into the experience. Put yourself into it. God loves you, haven't you heard? And God wants to hear from you. Speak to God when you pray, pour out your heart to God. And listen....

Listening is important. Don't just "read" your prayer book. Listen to it. For the prayers were written by religious symphony.

Praying/experiencing (the holidays) this Shabbat is such a privilege. Look at it as such. You will be participating, before you know it, in a mystical colloquy of God, humanity, Israel, and from the Jewish people, past, present, and future."

Shabbat (by Rabbi Tova Leibovic- Douglas)

We are tired of the

overthinking,

overworking,

overproducing,

overdoing.

We are longing to be.

To feel that being > doing

Once a week in this world we get to

Imagine

Imagine a world of being

We ache for you

to look for the light

to be the light

Shabbat ~

Shabbat Shalom

"The Time Is Now" (by Debbie Friedman and Tamara Ruth Cohen)

The time is now.
We've gathered 'round.
So bring all your gifts,
And bring all your burdens with you.
No need to hide.
Arms open wide.
We gather as one.
To make a *makom kadosh*.

We come to tell.
We come to hear.
We come to teach, to learn.
We come to grow.
And so we say.

The time is now.
Sing to the One.
God's Presence is here,
Shechinah, You will dwell among us.

We'll make this space
A holy place,
So separate, so whole.
Rejoice every soul
Who enters here.

Before Bar'chu"

"What Makes A Fire Burn", online Mishkan T'fila, pg. 107, 225

Before or instead of Ha'maariv Aravim prayer:

"Oh God, You Are As Near..." online Mishkan Tefila, House of Mourning, pg. 5b

Before or instead of the Ahavat Olam prayer

“Once or Twice in a Lifetime” online Mishkan T’fila, pg. 113, 231

Before or instead of Mi Chamocha:

“Standing On The Parted Shores of History” online Mishkan T’fila, pg. 39 (157)

Meditations on water (written by Cantor Sheila Nesis)

I

When the Children of Israel were standing in front of the Sea of Reeds, confronted with a mass of water, a simple man, Nachshon, stepped forward. The midrash says that Nachshon went first into the water. He walked, and the waters rose to his ankles; he kept walking, and the waters made it to his knees. And to his waist, and the to his chest, and it wasn’t until the waters were up to his neck, that the waters parted and the People were free. You are Nachshon. Wherever you are, whoever you are. You are courageous, you make miracles happen.

II

While the people of Israel wandered through the desert, it’s said that Miriam was their source of water. A well with fresh water followed her everywhere she would go, making life and sustenance possible for them. Who is your Miriam? Who nurtures you, and takes care of you? Have you considered you too, are Miriam to someone else? We are imperfect, and we are broken. It’s ok, “there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in” L. Cohen says. The crack is through where the water can rise and rush, your well is bringing life, support and healing to others.

Before or instead of Hashkiveinu:

To introduce the Amidah:

“Prayer: The service of the heart” (by Rabbi Simon Greenberg, adapted)

Our Sages taught: “Prayer is the service of the heart.”
For the Jew, “to pray” means more than to request.

It means to seek God’s help-

To keep our tongue from evil, to purify our heart, to fulfill in love the words of the Torah.

To pray means to teach ourselves to be grateful
For the miracles which God bestows upon us daily:

Love and fellowship, health and understanding.

It means to pledge ourselves anew to those ideals with which we can build a decent world.

To pray means to meditate upon those moments in ages past
When God became real in people's lives,
When God's spirit moved them and guided their actions-

And to permit those moments to give us, today, the courage to work for justice, peace, and freedom.

To pray means to sense the reality of God in our own lives, in our acts, and in our thoughts;

To feel the purity and the exaltation which come from being near God;

And to gain for our souls that peace
Which neither worldly wealth nor worldly failure.
Neither love of life nor fear of death can shatter.

Praying for Healing:

Being a Blessing (by Alden Solovy)

If you ask for rest, I will sit with you.

If you ask for comfort, I will stay with you.

If you ask for hope, I will yearn with you.

If you ask for love, I will sing with you.

If you ask for stillness, I will breathe with you.

If you ask for peace, I will dream with you.

If you ask for joy, I will laugh with you.

If you ask for healing, I will pray with you.

If you ask for warmth, I will become a blanket.

If you ask for refuge, I will become a shelter.

If you ask for help, I will become a blessing.

Before the Aleinu:

"An Opening Bow", from class #2, on Shlichei Tzibur webpage.

Before the Mourner's Kaddish:

"When I Die", online Mishkan T'fila, pg. 288 (592)

Other Readings

From "Making Prayer Real", by Rabbi Mike Comins

I'm davening to not want anything. Not davening to want what I don't have, but to want what I already have. And so prayer becomes an hour of gratitude practice and a sense of being able to be with the real and come out of my antagonistic posture to what has been given. A softening to what is so that I can be with what is. (by Rabbi David Ingber. Pg. 44)

I'm unimpressed by the idea that prayer is just to make you feel good or feel better. Prayer is also supposed to challenge you. I appreciate the quote, "Prayer comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable." I like that a lot. There's often too much emphasis on feeling good. It's all about changing yourself in order to change the world. When you walk out a better person, prayer works." (by Cantor Ellen Dreskin, pg. 45)

Another Zalman [Schachter-Shalomi] teaching is that when you are done praying, you need to sit down and be still, because that's as much a part of the prayer as when you are making noise. Zalman says that it may or may not be true that God answers prayers, but most of us hang up before we give God a chance to answer. (by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, pg. 77)

Culturally, we twenty-first-century American Jews suffer from an achievement complex, and consciously or unconsciously assume that there is a "right" way to pray, and assume, as well, that we don't know how to do it "right." (And God forbid we should be beginners or anything but "excellent" on our endeavors.) Prayer is a vast territory of possibility, modality, and nuance. Instead of aiming to pray "right", we need to strive to pray "authentically." Conditions for authentic prayer can be set, but each pray-er must take that discovery for herself. (by Rabbi Nancy Flam, pg. 94)

"i thank you God for most this amazing day" by E.E. Cummings

Here's a link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axH9A28CTjw>

This recording from 28 May 1953 is useful because the poem is read as the author intended it to be

heard, with all of the proper phrasing, pauses, and inflections. I think this helps the listener/reader improve comprehension and understanding of the poem.

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any--lifted from the no
of allnothing--human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)