



## Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.**

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Why Pray?, 1966.



Let me pursue this a step further. When I pray, I pray to God. I believe, and that is the way it comes out. Yet I hold it as a matter of routine observation that there is much prayer which is not properly addressed and zoned. Men pray to God, to Gods, to mother, to the devil, to the winds. Prayer is instinctive. No Rabbi need justify it. It is a lightning discharge of emotional electricity. What is there that is explosive and crackling about the carefully written formulas and artfully devised chants of our services? Yet because the book given out at the Synagogue is called a Prayer Book, we encourage false expectation, create disappointment, sow confusion - and we impale ourselves unnecessarily in the logical thickets which surround these questions: Why a formal liturgy? Does God want us to be parrots? Why didn't God answer my prayer?

There is petition in the Siddur, and there are fastidious folk who find this petition offensive. We are told that God is not a cosmic complaint clerk. Agreed. We are told that it is naive to believe that the Temple is the only proper post office for our letters to the Creator. Agreed. Yet prayer is elemental. To live is to be bruised. There are times when we need to pour out our fears and our tensions. Prayer is man's instinctive response to the extreme passions and bitter anxieties of life. Why drive a natural emotion out of the Synagogue? Indeed, who are we to say that prayer displeases God? Our fathers had the temerity to suggest that God himself prays, as if there are moments when the burden of creation is too much even for Him. The efficacy of prayer is a divine secret, but the Rabbis saw a virtue in bringing prayer into the house of God. In the Holy Place petty peevishness is revealed as shoddy and shocking. We are less likely to utter them. Then too, the language of traditional prayer ties our private needs to

Some sense  
be all the same  
of the same



the common need. "Grant us peace, Thy most precious gift, Oh Thou eternal source of peace." We are made to sense our interdependent destiny.

Having defended the presence of prayer--petition-in our liturgy, I hasten to repeat that our service is not a prayer meeting. One look at the Union Prayer Book's or the Siddur's content makes this clear. Open it and you find praise, dogma, doctrine, paragraphs from the literature, a whole volume of The Sayings of the Fathers, memorial. At our services Scripture is read and a sermon preached. Candles are lit and the Kiddush is recited. All in all, the prayer element is small. For the Rabbis did not set out to create a prayer hour.

The Rabbis created worship. A sanctuary, a Siddur, music, the congregation, the reading of Scripture, ritual - all are requirements of worship and not of prayer. Prayer and worship are not antithetical, but for our purpose we must keep them separate. Prayer is agnostic. Worship is monotheistic. Prayer is elemental. Worship is organized. Prayer is spontaneous. Worship has a set calendar. Prayer is a release. Worship is a commitment.

Much of the current disparagement of our services exists because you come expecting intensity - prayer - and find a low-keyed and meditative service - worship. You want to ask and you find yourself encouraged not to ask. You expect silence and find reading. Sometimes sermons and Sunday School texts encourage this confusion. From its beginning Reform has been tempted by the antinomean freedom of Christian thought. Paul mistrusted public worship. Paul emphasized seizure and ecstasy.



We do not emphasize ecstasy, of course, but many among us routinely disparage the printed word; we are enthusiasts of what we call

Creative Prayer. There is even a little cult of the silent meditation

among us. Reform youth, especially, <sup>Those who have take part in Camp INSTITUTE</sup> have been caught up by, and to a certain degree, encouraged in a suspicion of forms, of readings and of rituals.

The Jewish world view begins in community, not in aloneness. Man is free to accept responsibility. Family, school, community permit civilization and man finds his freedom in furthering the common cause. Judaism will not admit that man compromises freedom or individuality when he accepts the ties of family, love and the city, declaring "If I am for myself alone what am I?" Our fathers understood worship as submission. In worship we take upon ourselves the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. The pious have always claimed this yoke to be the highest freedom, but no one can deny its deep and persuasive obligations.

Worship is artificial in the sense that all civilization is artificial--it is a creation of human design. We must outgrow the naivete that no one can properly use another man's words. Creative worship is any worship in which we are engaged heart and soul. No one would say that Stern or Heifetz are not genuine musicians because they play notes written by Chopin or Beethoven. The pianist creates his music even as he recreates another's music. If this were not so, Rubinstein would be replaced by a roller piano. The genuine worshipper participates fully and genuinely in the words of the psalmist or the poet. The words are read, the thoughts reviewed. We work our own lives into and around the lines and the readings. We relate our faith to their faith. The

PAGE  
4-5  
member  
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words are the same, yet unique, new. The Twenty-third Psalm, about which I have written recently, belongs to me as much as to King David.

Now, of course, worship can be a perfunctory and hapless routine. If we come to Temple only to honor a friend or a friend's son rather than to honor God, our worship is meaningless, if not blasphemous. Our literature is heavy with reminders that one who recites without intent plays a fool's role.

Simple literary analysis or theological judgment distorts and misrepresents, albeit unwittingly, the act of worship. It describes the dead word, the formal act, the surface meaning. A Buddhist priest once lectured on his forms of service. The phrases had meaning for him, but I confess that I understood without understanding, because I lacked context and reference for his words. I went to a Buddhist service, and though I did not understand a word, I sensed the mood, the piety. The cadence and the chant, the disciplined setting, the physical self-control - the trust of his faith spoke to me.

Fortunately, you and I share a single form of worship and a single spiritual heritage, and we can speak critically together about it. Much more of this is needed. The Kol Nidre is no more than a Perry Como hit tune, unless each generation associates to it a history of sturdy loyalty and persistent faith. In far too many congregations liturgy is never studied. The Prayer Book is allowed to remain one-dimensional and shallow.

Yet, historical study and theological analysis alone will not revive worship. We need to find in worship the living presence of God. Judaism is the achievement of a people who have approached God and sought to understand His will. God is beyond understanding, yet over the centuries we have sensed and expressed His creative wisdom, and we have sensed and expressed His Will. This wisdom, this poetry, this teaching is available to



us in the substance of our worship.

In prayer man speaks to God. In worship God speaks to man. / The Shema is not a philosophic definition, but a revelation--the substance and the beginning of faith. / The Torah is not an ancient teaching but the presence of God's wisdom among us. / The Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead, but the revelation that death is part of God's wisdom and the resurrection of earlier generations who struggled and suffered and served. / The Kaddish has no meaning unless we understand this struggle, this sacrifice, and this service. / The Torah is a musty scroll unless we read it, reflect on it and renew ourselves in God's wisdom. / The Shema is a simple motto unless we understand it as a statement of faith, the substance of faith, and the search for faith's meaning. /

When our fathers first left Egypt they fashioned for themselves an ark in which they put their holy objects. They carried the ark with them and set it up wherever they camped. The ark was the visible symbol of the presence of God in the midst of the people. Today the sanctuary serves that purpose. We have substituted worship for clay tablets and golden vessels. In the act of worship the Jew becomes Jewish. In the act of worship faith comes alive. In the act of worship, the teaching becomes relevant. ~~In the act of worship, the teaching becomes relevant.~~ In the act of worship, God finds man.

Let us put the obvious on the cover of our Siddur. This is not <sup>AND MORE IMPORTANTLY INTO OUR MINDS</sup> our Prayer Book but our <sup>book of public worship</sup> liturgy. The Sabbath is not our prayer day, but the sanctified time for worship. Worship is far more inclusive and far more civilized than prayer, and..... unlike prayer unequivocally monotheistic. The worship that I love is something finer and wiser than prayer. Prayer begins in need. Worship begins in reverence. / Prayer is a measure of man's anxiety. Worship is a measure of man's commitment. / Prayer springs from the convulsed heart. Worship begins in the reflective



soul. Prayer is half-formed - a thing of the moment. Worship is sculptured -  
a thing of beauty. Prayer is an urgency. Worship is a consecration. We pray  
when life is too much for us. We worship, the better to live.

W. B. R. -

~~And if we could pray and make it true - To live - (T-)~~

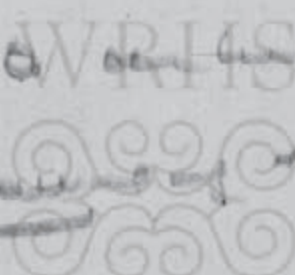
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& a founder of the movement.

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part of the - 2 hours after called myself daily - The reason  
I believe this is the consequence of the fact that the insurance ~~is~~ not  
for much on which one normally will pay -

Let me try to explain:

The Terminal publication is a significant 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> out columns which  
discuss the question of the meaning of public membership, in MYSTIC  
SIMON BAR YOHAI is quoted to have effect

|| it is more important to read the Torah at a service  
than to study the Torah in a class room.  
This matter is put in contrast to a background which leads of  
Judah the Priest (the scholar - rabbi Yehuda the priest was the found creator  
of the Mishnah) to the apostate level which he reached and  
interrupted his Torah - his scholarship studies in order to murder.

[From the early way, a rabbi has used Judah's  
precedent to exploit scholarship, to move from  
to transfer the subject from the house of  
membership with a concurrent from a scholar which -  
Such actions is denounced

Judah's action & his argument with him must  
be understood within the context of concepts, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> out  
which Judah should not interrupt his studies - but also











[illegible]





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