

# SAMPLE

*Jewish  
Observance*

*The Sabbath*

# CRASH COURSE IN BASIC JUDAISM

*Sexuality*

*Belief in G-d*

LECTURE GUIDE

*Prayer*

# PRAYER - OUTLINE

- I. What is Prayer?
  - A. "U'l'avdo bchol livavchem" - Avodah shebalev, worship of the heart is supposed to be meaningful.
  - B. "Shifchi kamayim libeich" - prayer should be the equivalent of pouring one's heart out.
- II. How can obligatory prayer meet the criteria of meaningful prayer?
  - A. Prayer becomes rote and mechanical.
  - B. Why mandated prayer, language, time, location?
- III. Why do we pray?
  - A. To say Thank You.
  - B. Anecdote of school ski trip.
  - C. Man should say thank you all day long.
- IV. Dependence upon God.
  - A. "Asher Yatzar"
  - B. Kidney stone
  - C. Instant death
- V. How is obligatory prayer better than spontaneous prayer?
  - A. Pray at all times - not only when in need
  - B. Come even when not in the mood
  - C. Putting out for God who puts out for us
- VI. How obligatory Prayer becomes a more Perfect Prayer.
  - A. All prayers are directed together and through mutual cooperation are perfected by Clal Yisrael.
  - B. Kavanah - makes obligatory prayer as meaningful as spontaneous prayer.

So when Rav Yochanon says "*U'lvai she'yispalel odom kol hayom kulo*," he means that we should be saying, "Thank you," "Modeh ani lifonecho," every instant of our lives. We have to thank God for every breath and every heartbeat. We have to thank God every time we leave the bathroom, or eat food, or breathe air, or sing and talk, learn Torah and pray. We need to say thank you and that is what we should be doing all day long!

## BEHOLDENNESS

So a major element of our relationship with God is a sense of beholdenness. We recognize that we are the creature and You God are the Creator, that we have to thank You because You are always there for us. You have a track record.

I am here in front of You by the beneficence of God. And if God wills it, in an instant I will not be here. You will not be able to hear my voice. By the grace of God I am here, and you are here. And we have to say thank you.

How To Say Thank You

Rav Yochanan says we should be praying all day long and saying thank you all day long.

On the other hand, we are also supposed to be partners in God's creation.

The Talmud commenting upon the Biblical verse "*asher bara E-lokim la'asot*" -- "which God in creation had made," explains the word "la'asot".

The world was completed but left imperfect. We have to perfect it as partners in God's creation. There are diseases in the world for which God has given us the cures, but we have to find them. There are poor and hungry, and ill people in this world. We have to reach out and help them. The earth has to be nurtured and protected by us so that it can yield it's produce. We are partners in God's creation because we have to complete it.

This is the idea of "tikun olam," that we are here to perfect the world. By God's mandate, of course, and through God's gift to us of these things.

## HOW DOES A PARTNER FIND THE TIME?

If that's the case, how can I pray all day long? I'll have no time to accomplish anything!

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## LIVING SHABBAT

Judaism believes that one of the best ways to serve G-d is to celebrate the wonders of His creation. Shabbat is a time for private meditation, but it is also a day of delightful enjoyment. The 'rituals of Shabbat' serve to elevate the mundane and remind humanity of G-d's kindness.

The magic of Shabbat begins with candle-lighting, usually eighteen minutes before sunset. It is customary for the woman of the house to light the candles and say the blessing. If a man is alone, however, he should make the blessing over the candles.

The two candles of Shabbat represent Shamor and Zachor, Guarding and Remembering, the two Shabbat commandments. By lighting the candles, the holy light of Shabbat is brought into the home.

After synagogue, where Kabbalat Shabbat, the service welcoming the Shabbat, and Maariv, the evening service are said, everyone returns home, or to their host's home, for Shabbat dinner. Apart from itself, Shabbat dinner is a buffet of delightful food and meaningful rituals.

Kiddush, which means sanctification, is the prayer said over wine or grape juice. Reciting or hearing Kiddush is a Shabbat obligation for all adult Jews. The Friday night Kiddush contains verses from Genesis describing the Sabbath of Creation, followed by the blessing over wine, and closes with a blessing sanctifying Shabbat. The wine or grape juice may be distributed and drunk so that everyone fulfills the obligation.

After Kiddush, the celebrants wash their hands. This is not meant to be a hygienic washing of one's hands with soap and water, but rather a ritual washing, a sanctification, if you will. A cup is filled with water which is poured twice over the right hand then twice over the left hand. The entire hand, with all jewelry removed, should be rinsed, then a blessing is recited as the hands are dried. There should be no talking between the washing of hands and eating bread, the next step of the meal, because one washes in order to eat bread and there should be no interruption between the related actions.

Two complete loaves of bread, called Challah, are used for HaMotzei, the blessing over the bread. Bread holds special significance in Judaism. Bread represents the great potential that G-d put in the world. Bread begins as a seed, grows to wheat (which is still inedible), is winnowed and ground before it is transformed into flour, which is baked into bread. All from a small kernel of wheat. The blessing over bread on Shabbat, in