

## Creating New Prayers: Fixed Prayer versus Spontaneous Prayer

I enter this sacred space to voice  
The longings of my heart in prayer.  
In sacred company,  
I offer my love to the Holy One.

I devote myself this morning  
To psalm and song, study and prayer.  
May my heart be lifted,  
May my thoughts be deepened,  
And may my soul like the eagle soar.

—*Rabbi Elyse Frishman*

SHOULD WE USE PRAYERS written by others or only those we have composed ourselves? Should we use a prayer book that gives us a fixed order for prayer or create our own order of worship each time we wish to pray?

Can a congregation exist without some order of service that it uses each time it comes together for prayer? Does a congregation need its own special fixed prayers in order to express common concerns?

Which is better: fixed or spontaneous prayer? This is not a new question. The issue of whether prayers should be fixed or spontaneous was hotly debated by the Rabbis of the Talmud over two thousand years ago. And the debate was never really resolved. In almost every age the controversy has continued between those who wanted a fixed prayer book and those who preferred newly created prayers.

The words *keva* and *kavanah* often arise in this debate. *Keva* means “fixed” and is used to describe the written-down, set, established order and wording of the prayers that we have in our siddur. *Kavanah* comes from the Hebrew root for “direction” or “intent” and is commonly understood as “intention” or “the direction of the heart.” It is used to refer to spontaneous prayer, the outpouring of the heart and soul, and the manner in which we bring our individual voice, mood, and emotions to our prayer.

The Daily  
*Amidah*  
שְׁמוֹנֵה עֶשְׂרֵה

The Shabbat and Holiday  
*Amidah*  
תְּפִלַּת שֶׁבַע

<i>Avot v'Imahot</i>	אָבוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת	<i>Avot v'Imahot</i>	אָבוֹת וְאִמָּהוֹת
<i>G'vurot</i>	גְּבוּרוֹת	<i>G'vurot</i>	גְּבוּרוֹת
<i>K'dushah</i>	קְדוּשָׁה	<i>K'dushah</i>	קְדוּשָׁה
<i>Binah</i>	בִּינָה		
<i>T'shuvah</i>	תְּשׁוּבָה		
<i>S'lichah</i>	סְלִיחָה		
<i>G'ulah</i>	גְּאוּלָּה		
<i>R'fuah</i>	רְפוּאָה		
<i>Birkat HaShanim</i>	בְּרַכַּת הַשָּׁנִים		
<i>Kibbutz Galuyot</i>	קְבוּץ גְּלוּיֹת	<i>K'dushat HaYom</i>	קְדוּשַׁת הַיּוֹם
<i>Tzedakah Umishpat</i>	צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט		
<i>Machnia Zeidim</i>	מַכְנִיעַ זַיִּים		
<i>Al HaTzaddikim</i>	עַל הַצַּדִּיקִים		
<i>Boneih Y'rushalayim</i>	בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם		
<i>Keren Y'shuah</i>	קֶרֶן יְשׁוּעָה		
<i>Shomei-a T'filah</i>	שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה		
<i>Avodah</i>	עֲבוּדָה	<i>Avodah</i>	עֲבוּדָה
<i>Hodaah</i>	הוֹדָאָה	<i>Hodaah</i>	הוֹדָאָה
<i>Birkat Shalom</i>	בְּרַכַּת שְׁלוֹם	<i>Birkat Shalom</i>	בְּרַכַּת שְׁלוֹם
<i>*Elohai N'tzor</i>	אֱלֹהֵי נְצוֹר	<i>*Elohai N'tzor</i>	אֱלֹהֵי נְצוֹר

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