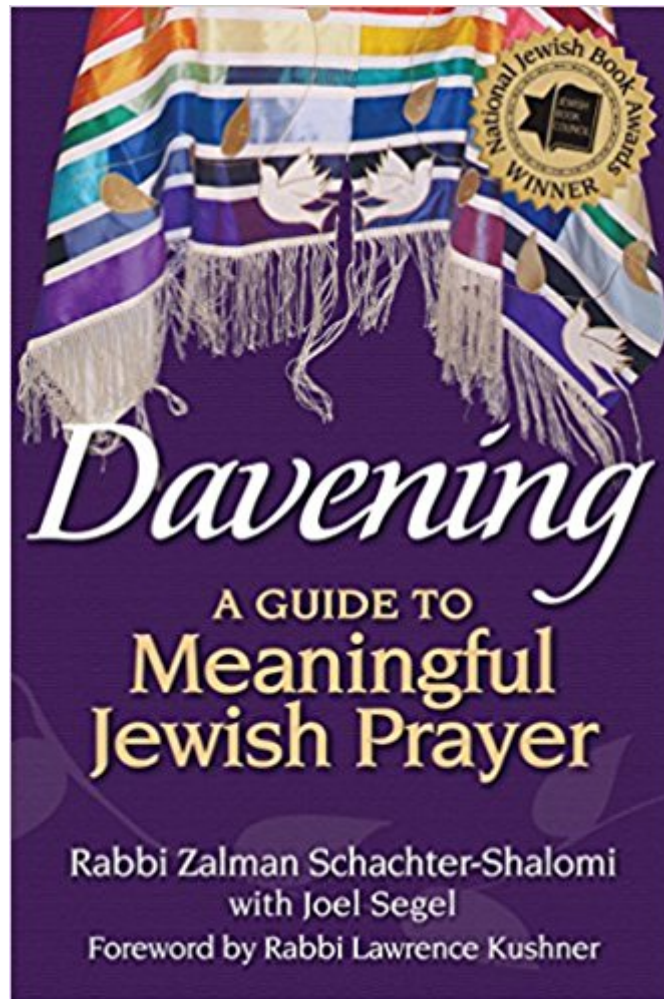


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# Davening: A Guide To Meaningful Jewish Prayer



## Synopsis

Experience the living taste of prayer in your heart, the deep and gentle glow of prayer in your soul. "Many who live their lives as Jews, even many who pray every day, live on a wrapped and refrigerated version of prayer. We go to synagogue dutifully enough. We rise when we should rise, sit when we should sit. We read and sing along with the cantor and answer 'Amen' in all the right places. We may even rattle through the prayers with ease. We sacrifice vitality for shelf-life, and the neshomeh, the Jewish soul, can taste the difference." —from the Introduction

This fresh approach to prayer is for all who wish to appreciate the power of prayer's poetry and song, jump into its ceremonies and rituals, and join the age-old conversation that Jews have had with God. Reb Zalman, one of the most important Jewish spiritual teachers in contemporary American Judaism, offers you new ways to pray, new channels for communicating with God and new opportunities to open your heart to God's response. With rare warmth and authenticity, Reb Zalman shows you: How prayer can engage not just spirit, but mind, heart and body. Meditations that open the door to kavanah, the focus or intention with which we pray. How to understand the underlying "deep structure" of our prayer services. How to find and feel at home in a synagogue. How to sing and lead niggunim, the simple, wordless tunes that Jews sing to get closer to God and more

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is about "davening," the yiddish word for prayer. Even people who insist that prayer is an intellectual process rather than an emotional, spiritual, and religious experience, as demonstrated by Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi in this book, will enjoy reading his book. Also, even non-Jews

will enjoy and benefit from the rabbi's views. Why? First, the book is a delight to read. The rabbi tells stories on virtually every page, about himself, Chabad Chasidim, and clever and thought provoking parables. Among many other things, the rabbi tells about kavanah, praying with focus, intention, and meaning. He shows how to pray from the heart, rather than from the mind. Celebrating the Sabbath or holiday with kavanah, for example, gives the day a richer meaning. He speaks also about the niggun, the melody, the wordless prayer, tunes Hasidim sing to get closer to God. Some have words and some do not. He tells how he used a niggun to get in the mood for prayer and how once he came so close to God by singing a niggun that he felt no need to continue with the formal prayers. He tells about the mystical notion of God and how prayer fits into this notion. He gives readers "a traveler's guide" through the prayers, during which he describes many prayers and shows readers their inner meaning. He also tells how people can feel "at home in Shul," what they should do to feel what they are experiencing and how to get the most out of the experience.

I have been attending shul for the past 16 years and never really understood davening. This book was a great read to help me better understand the importance of the prayers and how to pray. Striving to daven with kavanah? This book tells you how to pray from the heart. The author says kavanah is to "aim." It's a matter of really knowing where you're going. It's "calling your shot." He discusses niggun and how the kabbalah fits into prayer. You will learn why getting out of bed in the morning can be a great act of prayer. Not Jewish? You still want this book if you are looking to improve your prayer. Every Christian and Pagan should read this book as well.

In this book, Rabbi Zalman reminds us of the presence of G-d and the gift of conversation through prayer and what a blessing it is. Meaningfulness is on the verge of becoming a cliché, but not without it's expression of desire. Rabbi Zalman is all too aware of man's desire to feel closer to G-d and know his presence in happiness and sorrow. Prayer takes on many forms, all with the intent of moving closer to G-d and Rabbi Zalman leads the way. What a great read.

One would assume that a book about prayer would be inspirational, but that's not always the case. Reb Zalman has polished a gem for us all in this book. He not only teaches us how to pray, but also how to make our prayers personally transformative and meaningful. Even though the focus is in Jewish prayer, the truth is that spiritual seekers in any religious tradition will love this guide book.

The first of two books I recommend to accompany Reb Zalman's siddur ("Sh'ma: A Weekday

Siddur"), this guide to praying in a Jewish/Neo-Hasidic context may assist you with those inevitable questions that arise: here's a trustworthy travel guide to go with your path of prayer. Please note, the second book I recommend to accompany Reb Zalman's siddur is, "The Gates of Prayer: Twelve Talks on Davvenology."

I AM INSPIRED BY RABBI ZALMAN SCHACHTER-SHALOMI'S incredible book. If you want to try and make that connection with Ha'Shem while praying this is the book to read. I have not finished it yet but every time I read I have a magical moment!

Rav Zalman Schacter-Shalomi ordained the head Rabbi at my synagogue, so I may be a little biased, but the man is a genius, and a treasure. His teachings have affected every non-Orthodox congregation in America. How could you NOT want to read this? I'm planning on spending \$260 in April to hear Rav Zalman speak in Ashland. That's a lot of money, and it reflects how I feel about this man and this book.

I really love this book and the way that Zalman thinks. He's been successful at a time that most Jewish leaders are tearing their hair out. The book is full of good ideas for helping people really understand and relate to the big ideas of Judaism. If only everyone were as prescient as Zalman.

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