



# *Open My Heart:*

## *Living Jewish Prayer with Rabbi Jonathan Slater*

**Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg**

### JONATHAN:

Shalom. This is Rabbi Jonathan Slater, and welcome to “Open My Heart: Living Jewish prayer”, a Prayer Project Podcast of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. Together, we will investigate how personal prayer, in its many forms, is an important part of Jewish spirituality. Each Monday and Friday, we will offer a different practice, led by a different person, all praying from the heart.

Today, we're blessed to have with us Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg, a teacher, a friend, a colleague, a loving, loving, and lovely person. And I'm so happy to have you here today. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

### SHEILA:

Thank you, Jonathan. I'm so happy to be here as well. Well, I am a rabbi. I have been one for 37 years. I've had some pulpits in various places and have been involved with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality since its beginning, and still in a small way. And I do a lot at this point in my life: being a grandma, and trying to be retired, but not really. And I do a fair amount of spiritual direction or spiritual companionship that feels like a big part of my life. And over the years, teaching meditation and pondering the relationship between prayer and meditation.

### JONATHAN:

That's great. That's great. I'm looking forward to hearing your practice and it being part of your practice. So I'm going to turn things over to you and thank you for sharing your prayer with us now.

## SHEILA:

Thank you. So when I pray or think about praying, I think about, and I try to, connect to something that is greater than myself. Something greater than my small mind sort of running around after itself; or my fears; or my worries; my despair. Notice all of these are “my”: my, my, my! So beyond my naming, even and beyond my owning, and beyond MY wanting, beyond me, my myself. And I recognize that that greater something, that larger something is already here, right here, right now, in this present moment. So, I pray that this smallness expand into the bigness. And the prayer that I've been thinking about in these days, which is all about expansion, is a prayer we say in the mornings, in the prayer book, in the Jewish liturgy: it's called Sim Shalom.

And I like to think of that as: “Expand into Shalom. Expand into peace, into wholeness, into pure goodness and blessing”. *Sim Shalom tova uv'rakhah*/ שִׁים שְׁלוֹם טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה – expand, expand into a world, right here, filled with graciousness and loving kindness – *ba'olam chen vachessed*/ בְּעוֹלָם חֵן וְחֶסֶד compassion, love, tenderness. The ability to just be in a loving, expanded way with the pain: my pain, your pain, our pain. Not just for me, but for us, all of us; all the people, all the identities, all the ME's, all the US's, all the WE's. So you might want to just think of a word, one of the words that I said: *Shalom*, wholeness, loving kindness, graciousness; *Tova*, goodness; *B'rakhah*, blessing. These are big, big words that you might want to rest in. Just rest in, dissolve into, allow the wants, the fear, the me, the grasping for this to soften, to smooth, to dissolve, to be held in that expansion, that blessing; that *chen vachessed*. Just resting. Allowing the thoughts to expand, the sensations to expand; breath to expand.

*Barkheinu avinu kulanu k'echad*/ בְּרַכְנוּ אֲבֵינוּ כְּלָנוּ כְּאֶחָד . Imagine a blessing flowing to all of us from all our ancestors. They are all behind us. Their life force flowing into us, shining upon us, shining an awareness that we are all one. We are all one with all the colors, with all the ages, the names and the claims. *Ki b'or panekha*/ כִּי בְאוֹר פְּנֵיךָ shining that light upon us. Your light, the light shining upon us the awareness that we are one. It's the colors, the ages, names and claims one with the stars and the grasses; the oceans, the hills and the cliffs; one with the sand, the sun, the sparrow. And we bask in the light of love.

*Ki v'or panekha natata lanu*/ כִּי בְאוֹר פְּנֵיךָ נִתְּתָ לָנוּ the love that shines inside, and illumines what is here. *Torat chayyim v'ahavat chesed utzedakah v'rachamim v'chayyim v'shalom*/ תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד. וְצְדָקָה וּבְרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם the love that shines inside and illumines what is here: wisdom, kindness, justice, blessing, compassion, life, and peace. All mysteries, mysteries, beyond this smallness; mysteries of expansion,



resting in this, in this moment. And we Israel, all other people on earth, just rest in the light of this great love that shines. That shines, strength and wholeness, love and peace.

*v'tov b'einekha l'varekh et amkha yisrael v'et kol ha'amim b'rov oz v'shalom, barukh atah Adonai oseh hashalom/ וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת כָּל הָעַמִּים בְּרֹב עוֹז וְשָׁלוֹם*

We rest in this Shalom.

### JONATHAN:

That was Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg leading us in their personal prayer practice, which was so inspiring, and for which we are grateful

We hope that you found this practice meaningful. You can use the recording as support if you choose to engage in the practice yourself and we encourage you to do so. First use the practices offered in this episode, following the instructions given you may wish to practice with the presenter several times to get a feel for the practice yourself over time, you will likely find your own inspiration and take the practice in new directions, which will be great for you and for the Jewish people. Together, we can shift the paradigm around prayer from going to services, to prayer as a spiritual practice.

We are grateful to Judith silver for giving us permission to use her song "Open" at the start of our show. You can find it and more of her music at [judithsilver.com](http://judithsilver.com). We are also grateful to Elana Arian for giving us permission to use her song, "Ken Yehi Ratzon", as our closing. You can learn more about Elana's music at [elanaarian.com](http://elanaarian.com). For more information about "Open My Heart" and the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, please visit us at [jewishspirituality.org](http://jewishspirituality.org). Shalom. Until next time we pray that, you remain healthy and to safe.

