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# *Open My Heart:*

## *Living Jewish Prayer with Rabbi Jonathan Slater*

**Rabbi Amy Grossblatt Pessah**

### 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 Amy Grossblatt Pessah, who is an educator, a teacher and author of “Parenting on a Prayer: Ancient Jewish Secrets for Raising Modern Children”. I'm really happy to have you back with us, Amy. Tell us again a little bit about yourself.

### AMY:

Thank you Jonathan for having me on the podcast. I'm grateful to be here. A bit about myself: I'm Amy Grossblatt Pessah. I'm a rabbi living in Boca Raton Florida, where I work at various synagogues and Jewish institutions around town. I've also been trained as a Spiritual Director, and before I became a rabbi I was a Jewish educator for over twenty-five years, with a specialty in Jewish Family Education. I'm the proud *imma* of three young adults. And I am a recently published author of a book entitled “Parenting on a Prayer: Ancient Jewish Secrets for Raising Modern Children”, where I weave together my experience in the Jewish educational world and combine it with my parenting experience of raising my three children.

The practice I'd like to share this morning emerges from years of dreaming, and finally the ability to put it into practice. I recently became an empty-nester, and have the opportunity to take twenty minutes before I get out of bed and tend to somebody else's needs. So, this is really a practice which has grown with me over the years, and I've been able to implement it over the past few months while my children have been off at

college. And it's that practice that I'd like to share with you this morning: "Gratitude and Spiritual Protection before Getting out of Bed".

#### JONATHAN:

Well, I'm really excited now to be able to share in your practice. So, I'm gonna turn things over to you and thank you for sharing your prayer with us now.

#### AMY:

Thank you for the opportunity. It's good to be with you all. I'm going to share my morning practice with you. The practice that I do every morning before I even get out of bed. I imagine some of you might be thinking, "Oh, I can, like, barely reach to turn the alarm clock off", or "I need my morning coffee before I do anything". So I'm going to offer this to you as my practice sharing exactly the way that I walk through my morning routine. And I invite you to use it in whatever way it works best for you.

So I'm going to sort of pretend like I'm waking up from my sleep. My eyes are closed. And then the way that I wake up, probably strangely to some, is my eyes immediately pop open. And I have this deep breath and the thought is, "Oh, I'm back".

I believe that when we sleep our souls travel and do various -- I don't even know what we do -- learnings, workings, growing, stretching. So, in the morning when we wake up and I have my eyes open, I have a gasp of gratitude that comes with this sense of reconnecting to my soul and thanking God that, that soul, my soul is back in its proper body. And with this first thought of, "Oh, hello again. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be of service for another day."

*Modah ani lephanekha, melekh chai v'kayyam* מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם

*Sheh-hechezarta bi nishmati b'chemlah* שְׁהִחְזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֵמְלָה

*Rabbah emunatekha* רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ

Thank you God so much for returning my soul to me. I am grateful. I am humble.

I breathe in and out [spacious breaths], reciting these words to myself over and over again, as I feel my body, supported and held by my mattress, tucked warm underneath my covers. And I take about two minutes and repeat these words.



*Modah ani lephanekha, melekh chai v'kayyam* מודה אני לפניך מלך חי וקים  
*Sheh-hechezarta bi nishmati b'chemlah* שהחזרת בי נשמתִי בחמלה  
*Rabbah emunatekha* רבה אמונתך

I'm grateful for the gift of another day. I ask you: How can I be of service today? What would you have me do? How can I be your eyes? How can I serve as your heart, your hands, in this world?

And then I go into some more silence. Oftentimes I'll hear a response: "Here's what I want you to do today. Oh, this person, please call them". Sometimes I hear silence. And that too is okay. Then I guess it's up to me to set the agenda.

And after about three minutes of this space, I imagine myself being wrapped in the following words from Hosea, the words that are recited when we put *tefillin* on in the morning. So, while I don't have those *tefillin*, since I'm still in bed, I imagine these words themselves being wrapped around my body. And before I start saying these words to myself, I invite my full self to show up. And so if there are any parts of me that are still out floating in the ethers, I invite them to come back in and just visualize them all coming back into my field, into my body.

And then I start at my feet and I say these words:

*V'eirastikh li l'olam* וארשתיה לי לעולם  
*V'eirastikh li b'tzedek uv'mishpat* וארשתיה לי בצדק ובמשפט  
*Uv'chesed uv'rachamim* ובחסד וברחמים  
*V'eirastikh li beh'emunah* וארשתיה לי באמונה  
*V'yada't et Adonai* וידעת את ה'

And I continue to move these words in a swirling wrapping motion upward on my body.  
And I will betroth you to me forever,  
and in righteousness, justice,  
and loving kindness and mercy,  
and in trust and in faith.  
And through that process, I will come to know you, *Yah*.



That is what those words mean. And so I continue wrapping my body.

*V'eirastikh li l'olam* וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם

*V'eirastikh li b'tzedek uv'mishpat* וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצֶדֶק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט

*Uv'chesed uv'rachamim* וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים

*V'eirastikh li beh'emunah* וְאֶרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְאֱמוּנָה

*V'yada't et Adonai* וַיְדַעַתְךָ אֶת

And then when I get to the top of my head, I continue to wrap my body again, but now moving in a downward motion. Again, continuing to say these words. And I do this process three times from my feet to the top of my head; from the top of my head to my feet. And then finally, from my feet to the top of my head. Pausing, I spend about another 30 seconds integrating that experience.

And then the last part of my practice is to do a body scan with healing light. I envision gold or white energy, this light coming in through the top of my head, through my crown chakra. And I slowly move that light throughout my body, pausing on those places that feel extra tight. So, starting at the top of my head slowly, moving this light through my skull eyes, nose, exterior, and interior, mouth, cheeks.

Noticing any tight spots. I usually stop at my jaw, since I tend to clench my jaw when I sleep, and send it extra healing, light. Relaxing, releasing any tension. Then I continue to move it downward to my throat, noticing any tightness. Downward into my shoulders. Usually stopping there as well, releasing any tightness. my clavicle.

Continuing to move this divine light, healing energy throughout my chest, my abdomen, moving it down my arms, into my fingers. At some point I might notice a tingling, sensations, or heat. And sometimes there's nothing. And reminding myself not to judge the nothing. That too is part of the process,

Moving this beautiful, soft, flowing light through my internal organs, down into my pelvic region, checking for tightness or aches or pains. Downward still into my thighs, knees, shins, hamstrings. Moving it into my feet, over my ankles, into each one of my toes.

Spending an additional two to three minutes, feeling this energy coursing through my body. And if my mind starts to wonder what's next, or wander to, "Oh right. I have that



meeting in an hour”, I gently say, “Thank you for visiting. Please float on down the river”.  
Coming back to this light, feeling my body completely relaxed,

Setting my intention in this stage of how I want my day to unfold: with this ease and relaxation, with this deep connection to Source. With the connection to my soul, to my higher self, all in alignment.

After three minutes, I envision myself being placed into a cocoon or a pod; starting at the top of my head, and moving down my right and left side simultaneously, ‘til it reaches to my feet. And then I do the same starting at the top of my head, putting the front and back of my cocoon on, my divine pod, sealing it at the bottom, so that I feel divinely protected, connected, and guided during my day.

I slowly start to wiggle my fingers and toes, opening my eyes, sitting up slowly. One final recitation:

*Modah ani lephanekha, melekh chai v’kayyam* מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם

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*Rabbah emunatekha* רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ

Waiting for my body to equilibrate, so I feel grounded enough to stand up and to begin my day. Boker Tov. May you make it a wonderful day.

#### JONATHAN:

That was Rabbi Amy Grossblatt Pessah sharing her personal prayer with us, 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 safe.

