

**Morning I Will Seek You: Awakening to the Beauty of the Day (2008)**  
**Shawn Zevit**

This recording follows the traditional *matbeah* (deep structure) of the Jewish Sabbath morning (and some of the weekday) prayer service. I have recorded prayers from centuries of Jewish liturgical expression and *nusach* (the musical soundscape of Jewish prayer), and original words and melodies that I or my colleagues composed between 1994 and 2008. As in my previous recording for evening prayer, "Generations", I have again aspired to blend traditional melodies and words with contemporary versions of my own and other artists, some of whom do not have their own music recorded or widely known in the world.

Due to the immense amount of material in both Hebrew and English, I have chosen to highlight the meaning and background of the musical prayers in this project in English. For the fuller liturgies consult any number of Sabbath or Jewish weekday prayer books.

*Prayer can be electric and alive. Prayer can touch the soul, burst forth a creative celebration of the spirit, and open deep wells of gratitude, longing, and praise. Prayer can connect us to our Living Source and to each other, enfolding us in love and praise, wonder and gratitude, awe, and thankfulness. The Jewish morning prayer service in its essence is soul dialogue and calls us into relationship within and beyond. Through the power of ancient and modern words and melodies, we venture into realms of deep emotion and find longing, sorrow, hope, wholeness, connection, and peace. When guided by skilled leaders of prayer and ritual, our complacency is challenged, we can break through outworn assumptions about God and ourselves and emerge refreshed and inspired to meet the challenges our lives offer.* Adapted From the Davenning Leadership Training Institute webpage ([www.DLTITraining.org](http://www.DLTITraining.org))

(Hebrew: תפילה, *tefillah*; plural תפילות, *tefillot*) are the prayer recitations which form part of the Jewish worship. There are three prayer services each day on weekdays. A fourth additional prayer service (called *musaf*, "additional"), is added on Shabbat and on major holidays by Orthodox and Conservative communities. A fifth prayer service (*ne'ilah*), is nowadays only recited on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

**Shacharit: morning prayers**

These prayers are recited in the morning. Jewish tradition limits parts of its recitation to the first three (*Shema*) or four (*Amidah*) hours of the day, where "hours" are 1/12 of daylight time, making these times dependant on the season. On Mondays and Thursdays a Torah reading service is inserted, and a longer version of *Takhanun* takes place. A distinction is made between individual prayer and communal prayer in a *minyan* (quorum). Communal prayer is generally preferable, as it includes components that cannot be performed without a *minyan*.

**The Four Worlds of Jewish Prayer**

The *matbeah* or deep structural foundation of the awakening process in Jewish morning prayers rests on the very ancient Jewish mystical understanding of four worlds of time, space, and soul. The Jewish world-tree, the *etz chayim* or tree of life, passes through four levels of existence on its way between heaven and earth. Each of these fours divides the world into multiple aspects. The elements are earth, water, air, and fire.

The worlds are assiyah, yetzirah, b'riyah, and atzilut (doing, feeling, thinking, and existing). By meditating and consciously holding these four worlds in our morning prayers- which are really worlds within each world, not separate- we come to understand both the multiplicity and the oneness of creation. Balancing our energies among the physical, the emotional, the mindful, and the spiritual, we come to give proper attention to the multiple aspects of our lives. This is the journey at the foundation of this CD and of the progression of the prayerful offerings that await you. May you be blessed along the path and leave more alive and awake to the loving possibilities the day may bring.

### **The World of Assiyah: Birkhat HaShakhar - Physical Awakening**

#### **1. Morning I Will Seek You / Modeh Ani (6:55)**

[https://youtu.be/srQiGv4S1mU?si=ZJ7u1s2TpC1Pgg\\_j](https://youtu.be/srQiGv4S1mU?si=ZJ7u1s2TpC1Pgg_j)

**(translated and adapted by Shawn Zevit based on a poem by Shlomo Ibn Gabriol; Modeh Ani (Hebrew- egalitarian liturgy, melody by Shawn Zevit)**

The *shakharit* service was originally recited at dawn, with a contemplative series of morning blessings aimed at suffusing sacred consciousness into every breath and bodily function. This beautiful liturgical poem by medieval Spanish Jewish poet, Shlomo ibn Gabriol, blends into the other phrase modeh ani... or "I am so grateful to You spirit of Life and Renewal", traditionally recited upon first opening one's eyes to the new day. The ancient Indian shruti box is the carrier wave for this meditative waking prayer.

I yearn for You each morning  
 My Rock and my Shore  
 I lay myself before You  
 Each and every morn  
 Present to this moment  
 I have nowhere to run  
 Because You are the Vision  
 Inside my secret heart  
 What words can express this  
 What can one do or say  
 And how much strength lies  
 Deep within my body as I pray  
 And yet You hold me dear  
 My gentle Song of Soul  
 I thank You for each day  
 Until I am no more

Body, heart, mind, soul  
 So grateful for this morning  
 So grateful to be alive

*Modeh ani l'Fanecha Ruach khai v'Kayam*

## 2. Elohai Neshama (God of my Soul) (5:09)

<https://youtu.be/0QW6VZtdN4M?si=-Kby45Rsf7tX2oD>

(Hebrew- liturgy, words, and music- Shawn Zevit, English adapted from a translation in the "P'nai Or" siddur for Shabbat Morning, developed by R. Marcia Prager.)

Flowing from our bodily awakening is the awareness of the amazing soul that we have come to embody. The word *neshama* means both breath and soul- connecting back to Genesis 2:6 and the biblical story of God breathing life into human form. Every day we re-awaken to this mystery of creation, this re-creation of the Life Force pulsing through us. The English was inspired by a translation in the "P'nai Or" siddur for Shabbat Morning, developed by R. Marcia Prager.

My God, The soul You placed within me is pure  
You breathed of Yourself  
Forming in me a deep awareness  
Of Your Presence

*Elohi neshama she'nattatah bee tehorah hee*

My God, every soul's a part of You  
You are constantly renewing life within me  
with Your breath of love

Morning blessings  
Awake to the beauty of the day  
(a time to offer your own gratitude for the physical world)

### The World of Yetzirah- Pseukei D'Zimrah- Emotional Awakening

## 3. Barukh She'amar (Blessed is the One) (3:12)

[https://youtu.be/7bB3ZbITPxl?si=OyOKu\\_1Hcp-wP46](https://youtu.be/7bB3ZbITPxl?si=OyOKu_1Hcp-wP46)

(Hebrew- liturgy, English translation from the "P'nai Or" siddur for Shabbat Morning, developed by R. Marcia Prager, music- Shawn Zevit)

Barukh She'amar is a rabbinic composition from biblical passages and Psalms that introduces the verses of praise, the heart-opening section of song and joyful declaration of life and gratitude. We begin to expand our awareness, including our own physical form, to the harmonizing notes with those we are sharing this experience of life and community with. As a Hasidic saying implies- tapping into the energy of blessing that can birth life and transformation is what blessing is all about! The English was inspired by a translation in R. Marcia Prager's "P'nai Or" siddur for Shabbat Morning.

Refrain: *Barukh Hu, Barukh Sh'moh / Brukhah Hee, Barukh Sh'ma*

Blessed be the One whose speech is the world  
Blessed be the Source  
Blessed be the One forever creating  
Blessed be the One speaking and acting  
Blessed be the One separating and sustaining

Blessed be the One whose love fills the earth  
Blessed be the One whose compassion gives life  
Blessed be the One living forever  
Blessed be the Name of the One

**4. Ps. 42: Ka'ayal (2:33) (words- Psalmist, music- Simcha Zevit)**

<https://youtu.be/FzU1UX74PrU?si=eIK7uCHooXxbfDv6>

Not traditionally part of the morning service, the longing expressed in this psalm, "as a deer longs for water, so my soul thirsts for You, God", is profound. A beautiful psalm of longing, with a melody composed by a beautiful soul, my dear Simcha.

*Ka'ayal ta'arog al afikei mayim  
Keyn nafshi ta'arog elekha Elohim*

**5. Ps 146: Halleli Nafshi (2:49)**

[https://youtu.be/uvsgnpWk2mQ?si=NpH8FFlr73\\_y0gp](https://youtu.be/uvsgnpWk2mQ?si=NpH8FFlr73_y0gp)

**(words- Psalmist, music- Jarah Greenfield)**

The heart-awakening continues with this ancient psalm, musically beautified by newly RRC-ordained rabbi Jarah, a precious and inspiring soul. The psalmist sings "Praise GOD, Soul of mine, Praise GOD with my life, I sing to GOD with my existence." Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav interpreted it this way, "I shall praise the Holy One with my life, singing by my talents and gifts to my GOD." As my Zaida Aaron used to say, "we all have hidden talents, the question is- will we use them in this life?"

*Halleli nafshi et ADONAI  
Ah'hallelah ADONAI b'khayai  
Azamrah l'ELOHI b'odi (2x)*

**6. Psalm 145: Ashrei / Psalm 150: Hallelu (7:46)**

<https://youtu.be/MdFCK16gWQs?si=odJ5ucgVKZQTikN0>

**(Hebrew- Psalmist, "Ashrei" music- Jamie Arnold; "Va'anakhnu" melody R. Marcia Prager, "Psalm 150" music- Nusferat Ali-Kahn, adapted to this medley setting by Shawn Zevit)**

The psalms continue with the acrostic declarations of Psalm 145, which opens with a quote from Psalm 84:5, "Happy are those who dwell in Your House, may they ever offer praise to You" and it's tag line from Psalm 115:18, "And we, we will bless the Name of YAH, from now until the end of the time!". The morning psalms crescendo with Psalm 150, "Praise GOD, let every living soul praise YAH!" Multiple melodies have been written for this section over the centuries. I was moved to use a recently internationally-made popular melody that Israelis visiting in India adapted from the Sufi chant-master Ali-Kahn, set to psalm 150 and in the globalized world of music and prayer- reached North America in a flash, becoming an instant staple of morning worship services across denominations.

*Ashrei yoshvei veytekha  
Od yehallelukha, selah*

*V'anakhnu nevarekh YAH  
Me'atah v'ahd olam, HalleluYAH*

*Hallelu (5x), halleluYAH*  
*Kol han'shamah t'hallel YAH*  
*Hallelu, HalleluYAH (2x)*

### **7. Nishmat Kol Chai (Soul-Breath of Every Life)**

<https://youtu.be/9NtrZlAVSE8?si=wYpEKJxGz1XMTtr8>

**(Hebrew- liturgy, English words to *Nishmat*- R. Arthur Waskow, music- adapted from traditional *nusakh (liturgical melodies)* as I learned it from and Hazzan Jack Kessler)**

*Nishmat*, "every Soul's breath praises Your Name", appears only in Shabbat and Holiday morning services, and begins with a declaration of God's Presence being expressed in every breath of every life form. Reb Arthur's powerful interpretation captivated me when I first heard him recite it in Philadelphia in 1993 and using the traditional Shabbat morning melody line, I put his words to an extended score. This section brings the heart-awakening section of morning prayers to an integrated conclusion with fifteen words of praise that are seen as Divine qualities and emanations expressed through humanity and back to GOD- macro and micro manifesting holographically the Holy Name, whose numerology is "fifteen" itself. The prayer culminates with the declared understanding that the "Life-giver of all the worlds" is ever-revealed in the unfolding process of creation.

Breath of Life (2x)  
*Nishmat kol Chai*  
*t'varech et Sheemkha*

You alone, Your breath of life alone  
Guides us, frees us,  
Transforms us, heals us  
Nurtures us, teaches us  
First, last  
Future, past  
Inward, outward  
Beyond, between  
You are the breathing  
that gives life to all the worlds  
And we do the breathing  
that gives life to all the worlds  
As we breathe out  
what the trees breathe in  
And the trees breathe out  
what we breathe in  
So we breathe each other into life  
We and You, You and we

*Shir u'shvakha, hallel v'zimra, oz u'memshalah,*  
*netzakh, gedulah u'gevurah*  
*t'hillah v'tifferet, kedushah u'malkhut,*  
*brakhot v'hoda'ot, me'atah v'ad olam*

*Barukh Atah YAH,  
Melekh chei ha'olamim*

### **8. As We Bless (Shma and Blessings) (8:33)**

<https://youtu.be/vOHCndKjHrM?si=FCOWcpcSoCfRzF7>

**(Hebrew- liturgy and traditional music, "As We Bless" poem- Faith Rogow, Emet V'Yatziv chant by R. Marcia Prager, English blessings and meditations by Shawn Zevit)**

With the ancient public call to prayer through the invocation of the sacred Name of Divinity, we bend our knee in acknowledgement of a Source or set of Values we direct our lives from, that gives direction to our lives.

The first blessing before Shema focuses on the Divine gift of creativity and holy illumination. In non-dual praise, based on the original words Isaiah channeled centuries ago, light and dark, peace and disquiet co-exist in creative tension within and around us.

The second blessing before Shema (the declaration of the Oneness of God and Unity of All Being) balances the first blessing with the Unending Love that is open to everyone and the inherent gift all beings can claim as theirs.

Listen! On the deepest level The Many and the One and the One is All- the Unity of All Life is expressed in diversity and a Divine directive for us to live in an interdependent, sustainable relationship with this web of existence is our guiding principle

"Shema" blends seamlessly into the blessing of redemption- of fulfilling our individual and collective potentials and destiny- expressed in a mantra-style text of streaming praise of GOD's Teaching through the truths/principles of a righteous and sustainable life. Liberation from any form of oppression is not only a collective memory, but a requirement for living a Godly life here and now.

As we bless the Source of Life  
So we are blessed (2x)

As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed  
And the blessing gives us strength  
And makes our visions clear  
And the blessing gives us peace,  
And the courage to dare.

*Barkhu et ADONAI hamevorakh  
Barkhu et ADONAI hamevorakh l'olam va'ed*

Shower of Light (*ohr*)  
Shadow of Darkness (*khoshech*)  
Making Peace (*shalom*)  
Shattering complacency (*HaKol*)

Your are the Force, the Energy of All

Blessed are You, (*Barukh Atah Adonai*)  
Source of all Light (*Yotzer*)  
Of all Life (*HaMi'orot*)

And You are Love  
We are loved by an Unending Love  
(*Ahavah rabbah ahavtanu*)  
We are longing for connection  
For relationship  
Cleaving to each other  
Bringing us from fragmented sense of self  
to integrated whole  
Blessed are You Source of Love  
(*Barukh Atah Adonai ohev amo Yisrael*)

The One, the Many  
***Shma Yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai Echad***

The One, the Truth  
*Emet* (repeat chant)

*Emet, v'Yatziv, v"Nakhon v'Kayam*  
*v'Yashar v'Neh'eman, v'Ahuv, v'Khaviv*  
*v'Nekhmah, v'Na'im, v'Norah v'Adir*  
*u'Mitukan u'M'kubal, v'tov v'Yafeh*  
*ha'davar hazeh, aleynu l'olam va'ed*

You are the First and You are the Last  
You are the Present and the Future and the Past  
For now and for all time  
Through time and space Your Glory shines

*Mi khamokha ba'elim Adonai*  
*Mi khamokha nedar bakhodesh*  
*Norah t'hillot oseh felleh (2x)*  
*Shirah khdashah shi'bikhu ge'ulim*  
*l'Shimkha ahl s'fat ha'yam*  
*Yakhad kulam hodu v'himlikhu v'ameru*

***YAH yimlokh l'olam va'ed (chant)***

*Barukh Atah Adonai, Ga'al Yisrael*

#### **9. Amidah (The Great Prayer) (4:04)**

[https://youtu.be/nD1GAef1WWA?si=GoM4aG8k5DdC6\\_O6](https://youtu.be/nD1GAef1WWA?si=GoM4aG8k5DdC6_O6)

(Words: Hebrew: traditional liturgy, English words- S. Zevit, 2008;

**melody from Adonai S'fatai by S. Zevit and Juliet I. Spitzer c-'98)**

The pinnacle of the Sabbath morning service is entering the Seven Gates of the Amidah- the great standing prayer. We begin by chanting at the gates to the Holy of Holies " Oh, my GOD, open my lips, that I might declare Your praises. Then follow the nineteen blessings (seven for Shabbat) of the weekday Amidah, the 13 middle petitionary weekday blessings reduced to one essential blessing for the gift of the Sabbath. This is the realm of *atizlut*, of pure spirit without form, and the seven blessings (Ancestors, Divine Power, Sacredness of Life, the Holiness of the Sabbath, Prayerful Consciousness in our Life, Gratitude) are gateways that culminate in *Shalom* (peace, wholeness for the Jewish people and all peoples). In 2008, I took the original version from my 1998 recording, "Heart and Soul", and added the English blessings in the middle as a meditation on the seven blessings of the Shabbat Amidah. You can also add 13 petitionary prayers in place of the blessing for the day if it is a weekday morning. Thus the recording spans a decade in one four minute prayer- temporality and eternity co-existing as in life.

I first did a version of this meditation prayer in the Galilee in Israel in the summer of 1997 at a retreat that Gabi Meyer organized.

*Adonai S'fatai*  
*Tiftach oo fee yagid*  
*Oo fee yagid t'hilla*  
*T'hillatekha*

Blessings from our ancestors  
Blessings when we live in our power  
Blessings when we live in holiness  
Blessings on this day, on this blessed day  
The Blessing of Your Presence  
Return to our present  
So thankful for this life  
For the blessings of this life  
For this beautiful life  
For the blessing of this life

*Oseh Shalom bimromav*  
*Hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu*  
*V'ahl kol Yisrael*  
*V'kol yoshvei tevel*

**10. Ya'aseh L'cha Shalom (May you have Peace: Priestly Blessing) (4:48)**

<https://youtu.be/WI1ihOEwJps?si=kozSvXKD8NCyqgBv>

**(Hebrew- Numbers 6:24-26, English words, and music- Shawn Zevit)**

Written in one sitting on my 37th birthday (1997), from midnight to 2 am. The chorus is the traditional priestly blessing, first recited by Aaron over 4,000 years ago, and said by many Jewish parents to their children and grandchildren down to this day.



I pray you enter and leave this realm with a Sabbath or weekday blessing meant especially for you this day and every day you reach for the Source of All Life with all your body, heart, mind and spirit. May God always be by your side.

*Y'Varekhekha Adonai V'Yishmerekha  
Yissa Adonai Panav Elekha Vikhuneka  
Yissa Adonai Panav Elekha V'Yassem L'kha Shalom*

May your GOD protect you  
May GOD shine a light upon you  
In the sparkle of your eyes  
May you grow into the blessing  
That you're born and meant to be  
In this life  
May you go, go in peace  
May God always be by your side