



PRAYER
תפלה

Learning Prayer

Why do we pray? What does our tradition have to say about how we thank and praise, request and repent? How do we balance fixed words and free thought, praying as an individual and a community? Does God need our prayers, answer our prayers, understand our prayers, or even prefer some of our prayers to others? Does prayer lose meaning without Hebrew? Is it meaningless without God? Does meaning stem from ritual or from the heart? Why do we call prayer 'service'? And what happened to sacrifices anyway?

These questions, and many more, led us to choose a topic for this year's Limmud Chavruta book which has been at the heart of Judaism for thousands of years – **Prayer**. Over the four sections of this book, you will have the chance to develop, challenge and deepen your understanding of the function and purpose of prayer, both in the history of Jewish thought and in your own daily life.

There is a vast body of Jewish source material about prayer, and the Chavruta Project team has been working hard for the past year to cut it down to a manageable size. The bulk of this book is made up of traditional Jewish sources (on the right hand pages) and other, non-traditional and sometimes non-Jewish sources (on the left hand pages). We have also included **Points to consider**, as starting points for discussion, and multiple suggested paths through the book, via the **Connections**. We do hope that you will find these useful, but also not limiting. There are myriad ways to study with this book, and if you find our questions or connections limiting, feel free to ignore them! No repentance required.

We have been lucky again this year to have collaborated with four incredible teams, all of whom are affiliated to their local Limmud. All of them, but particularly the Team Chairs, are worthy of praise for producing this book. You will notice that each section has its own particular style and its own distinctive message, as designed by each team. We are proud that this project is truly international, and hope that everyone studying it will benefit from this cosmopolitan authorship.

Section One, 'Thanks and Praise', led from Limmoed in the Netherlands by Albert Ringer, with Mirjam van Emden, Ira Goldberg and Emma Sevitt, explores the value and purpose of prayer.

Section Two, 'Request and Repentance', led from Limmud in the UK by Adam Frankenberg with Daniel Mackintosh, Yisrael Malkiel and Arthur Weiss, investigates the function and power of prayer.

Section Three, 'Words and Rituals', led from Limmud Galil by David Biton with Merav Arbel, Havoushah Hertzal, Tirtsa Posklinski-Shehory, Karen Radkowsky and Tamar Shamir, reflects upon the role of structure and creativity in prayer.

Section Four, 'Individual and Community', led from Limmud in the US by EJ Cohen with Benjamin Barer, Ellen Flax, Marcus Freed, Jeri Nagler Robins and Basyah (Bat-Ami) Weinreb, considers the nature of personal and collective prayer.

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has had a part in bringing the international Limmud Chavruta Project 2013 together.

In addition to the team members listed above, we would like to thank Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz for proofreading the English text; Yuval Keren for setting and proofreading the Hebrew text; Robin Moss for detailed feedback; and Uri Berkowitz of Maven Design for the graphic design of this book. Last but not least, we would like to thank all of the wonderful people who agreed to facilitate Chavruta sessions at Limmud Conference 2013, as well as all of you who came along to learn. Limmud exists because of all you amazing participants and volunteers!

The aim of the Limmud Chavruta project is to present Jewish perspectives on a topic that will capture the imagination of all Jews. We hope that the theme of Prayer will both inspire and enthuse people to learn, and provide the space and energy for discussions that are truly *l'shem shamayim* (for the sake of heaven), but also give people the tools to consider and reflect upon their own relationship with prayer.

Robin Cooke and Jeremy Tabick Chairs, Chavruta Project 2013

What is Limmud?

Based in the UK and founded over 30 years ago, Limmud (the Hebrew word for 'learning') is a global leader in innovative, inclusive Jewish education.

The widely acclaimed winter Limmud Conference is one of the largest international gatherings of Jewish people. Over two and a half thousand people take part in over a thousand sessions over five intense, fun-filled, intellectually-challenging and unforgettable days. As at every Limmud event, presenters give their time and share their knowledge freely.

Limmud events and programmes also include Regional day Limmuds across the UK, a summer festival Limmud Fest, emails, podcasts, a Shabbat book and the Chavruta Project.

Limmud International

Limmud is now very much an international movement with volunteer teams planning and running events in over 70 communities around the world.

Limmud set up Limmud International as the body to develop and provide training, mentoring and support for groups around the world. Its vision is that every Jew, wherever they are, will be taken one step further on their Jewish journey.

With shared principles and values, Limmud International encourages and creates common spaces between the different Limmud groups around the world. We are proud that this year's Chavruta Project is again an international collaboration by volunteers from so many Limmud communities. It shows what we can all achieve by working together.

www.limmudinternational.org

The Chavruta Project and Limmud's core values

Chavruta is something that all Limmud events are encouraged to include because it is such a clear example of Limmud's values:

- Chavruta is a model of **learning** which changes people, inspires action and opens new worlds. It is the only model where every participant can be a teacher and a student *at the same time*. This creates a learning environment in which people are able to reflect and grow.
- Chavruta is part of the Limmud community of learning, and embraces its **commitment to community and mutual responsibility**. Chavruta is also a collective experience, through which participants strengthen and develop their Jewish identity, and is therefore a prime example of how Limmud is **expanding Jewish horizons**.
- Chavruta relies on **empowerment**, giving every participant a forum to teach as well as to learn, and **participation**, encouraging participants to play an exceptionally active role in the session. Chavruta is the ultimate form of participatory learning.
- Chavruta is a cross-communal and cross-generational experience, which aims to be accessible to all who want to learn. Chavruta embraces **diversity** and harnesses its power to create profound experiences. In this way, Chavruta is enabling **connections** to be made between individuals from all streams of our community. Chavruta provides a space where participants connect spiritually, emotionally and intellectually.

The real power of Chavruta is that participants can not only take their experiences home but also use the resources and learning model in their own lives and introduce it to the lives of others.



For the full text of Limmud's mission, values and principles, visit: limmud.org/home/mission

Chavruta at Limmud Conference in the UK

The starting point for many learners is the morning Chavruta sessions on Limmud Conference. In 2012, two additional study modes were added to cater for participants who wanted more or less structured learning. There are therefore three study modes available:

- **Guided:** a hands-on facilitator guides participants through a selection of sources by means of group discussion punctuated by opportunities to explore a new text with your chavruta partner;
- **Independent:** an open space for unstructured learning with facilitators available to help out as needed;
- **Traditional:** the original Limmud Chavruta experience – beginning and concluding with a facilitated group discussion and plenty of time in between to learn with your partner, creating your own journey through the texts.