

# *A Prayer Before I Pray*

*B*efore I open the prayer book, or embrace myself in a tallit prayer shawl, and give praise or thanksgiving or petition, it all begins with me.

I cannot petition God without petitioning myself

I cannot pray for health or peace or love without involving myself, my heart, my thought, my spine

I cannot pray God for peace while my arms are folded, my mouth sealed, my feet dragging

I cannot pray for health with a cigarette dangling from my lips

I cannot pray “God heal us,” and turn my head from my and our obligation to insure the health of the blind, the lame, the lacerated

I cannot pray to the God of creation and treat nature with callousness, accept the toxification of its waters, forests, and air

I cannot pray God’s love and ignore the vilification and exploitation of His children — the stranger, the pariah, the immigrant, the outcast, in our midst

I cannot pray God’s love of my people and remain mute before the ganging up on the Jewish people and the attempts to vitiate the life of the Jewish state.



Prayer is not one-sided. Not vertical, God “up there” and we “down here.” I am covenanted with God, side by side, not as a passive beggar, but as a co-creator: co-responsible collaborator with Godliness. Therefore, before every petition, I close my eyes and add two words before the yearning petitions of my heart. “Through me.”

God help — through me — those caught in the whirlwinds, earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, pestilence of the world

God protect — through me — those thrashing about in a blood-soaked universe

God bring peace — through me — to a world torn by mounting genocides, mass murders, and rapes.

The Godliness in me and through me reaches out to the Godliness in others.

In prayer I am reminded that God is lived through me in loving, healing, helping, comforting, consoling, protecting, protesting, wiping away the tears of the afflicted, soothing their pains, binding their wounds, straightening their bent spine.

Through me, through my people, through humanity, I am prepared in prayer to praise, appreciate and petition God who opens the path to life’s meaning.