 Date: August 2014 Course Name and Number:

Prayer and Man to G-d Issues

**Type of course:** Lecture

**Year of Studies:** 2014-2015 **Semester:** Spring **Hours/credits:** 2

**Course Description:**

The aim of the course is to introduce the different modes of thought in Rabbinic literature towards the centrality of prayer in Jewish tradition. The rulings of Rabbinic authorities will be reviewed in order to crystallize an understanding of the methodology & philosophy of prayer as incorporated in the daily life of the Jewish community. We will analyze the liturgical order of prayer in the traditional Jewish prayer book with special focus & emphasis on the quintessential prayer of the Amidah.

**Detailed Lesson plan:**

**Unit 1 :**

1. The History of Jewish "Tefilah" Prayer.
2. Prayer in Biblical Literature.
3. Mishnaic & Talmudic ideas, Law & approaches to prayer
4. Codification of the Prayer Book.

**Unit 2:**

1. Formal & informal prayer – analysis of the advantages & disadvantages of each category.
2. Hebrew prayer vs. prayer in the vernacular.
3. Rabbinic suggestions for individualistic petitional prayer within the framework of the Siddur.

**Unit 3 :**

Prayer Motions

1. Sitting vs. Standing – When & Why.
2. Kneeling & Bowing – What's the significance?
3. Swaying & Shaking – Understanding the positions of the protagonists & antagonists.

**Unit 4 :**

Philosophy of Prayer

1. Why pray – Doesn't G-d know what we want?
2. Prayer as a lesson in value clarification.
3. Seeing prayer as faith strengthening – exercises.
4. Silent prayer vs. audible prayer – when to whisper, when to scream.
5. Songs of prayer & recitals of prayer. What about musical instruments?
6. The humbling effects of prayer.

**Unit 5:**

Praying for others

1. The plural form of prayer.   
   caring & prayer for other peoples' needs.
2. The significance of "Minyan" – Congregational & communal prayer.
3. Praying in a room with windows to the world.

**Unit 6:**

The Amidah Service.

1. Seeing the Amidah as the quintessential prayer.
2. Origins of the Amidah – Variant readings & customs.
3. The significance of the systematic order of the Amidah.
4. Reflections of Rabbinic ideas of prayer as reflected in the Amidah.

**Unit 7:**

Prayer as an intimate relationship with G-d.

1. Will prayer bring us all that we want?
2. Prayer as a step towards getting closer to G-d.
3. Communication skills in approaching the Divine.
4. Summary.

**Course requirements**

1. Class attendance & participation.

2. Submission of homework assignments.

3. Term paper.

4. Final examination.

**Grade Components: Number grade.**

Final – 50%

Paper – 50%

#### Bibliography: (Required/ Elective)

1.Birenbaum, Mayer, *Pathway to Prayer*, 1997

2. Cohen, Gabriel H. & Fish, Harold, ed.: *Prayer in Judaism*, 1996.

3. Cohen, Jack: *Major Philosophies of Jewish Prayer in the Twentieth Century*, 2000.

4. Derovan, David: *Prayer: A study guide to the philosophy & meaning of prayer*, 1970.

5. Donin, Hayim Halevy: *To pray as a Jew*, 1980.

6. Feuer, Avraham Chaim: *Shemoneh Esrei*, 1995.

7. Golonkin, David: *Rediscovering the art of Jewish prayer*, 1996.

8. Heinemann, Joseph: *Prayers in the Talmud*, 1977.

9. Heschel, Abraham Joshua: *Man's quest for G-d: Studies in prayer & Symbolism*, 1954.

10. Idelsohn, A.Z.: *Jewish Liturgy & it's development*, 1932.

11. Jacobs, Louis: *Hasidic Prayer*, 1993.

12. Jabobson, B.S.: *Meditations of the Siddur*, 1978.

13. Kadish, Seth Avi: *Directing the heart in Jewish Prayer*. 1997

14. Mindel, Nissan: *My Prayer*, 1990.

15. Munk, Elie: *The world of prayer*, 2007.

16. Nissel, Menachem: *Regshei Lev*, 2001.

17. Shalom Hartman Institute: *Prayer, structure & spontaneity*, 1984.

18. Skikveichick, Joseph Dov: Worship of the heart: Essays on Jewish prayer, Carmy Sholom, Ed., 2003.