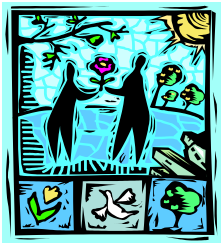
פְּתַח



Opening Up to the Days of Awe

Open for us the gates of heaven,
Open for us your storehouse of goodness. (MHY, p.789)

<u>Before</u>

Before the gate has been closed,
Before the last question is posed,
Before I am transposed.
Before the weeds fill the gardens,
Before there are no pardons,
Before the concrete hardens.
Before all the flute-holes are covered,
Before things are locked in the cupboard,
Before the rules are discovered.
Before the conclusion is planned,
Before Gd closes his hand,
Before we have nowhere to stand.

Yehuda Amichai, trans., Stephen Mitchell (MHY, p.743)

Created by Rabbi Nina J Mizrahi, Director, Pritzker Center for Jewish Education
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פְּתַח

Synonyms for *OPEN*

Not blocked up	allowing access	boundary removed
Not sealed	unenclosed	unconfined
Unobstructed	uncovered	bare
Exposed	unprotected	vulnerable
Undisguised	public	non-exclusive
Unlimited	expanded	unfolded
Frank	with gaps	generous
Accessible	unprejudiced	undecided
Unrestricted	receptive	available
Likely to be affected by	start/establish	obtainable
Be revealed	yawning	amenable
Spread out	vacant	warm
Inviting	make a preliminary statement	

How do we know we or others are "open"?

What is a "spiritual" or "mindful" practice?

What might "openness" as a spiritual practice cultivate?

How does one achieve "openness"? Is "openness" a result of a decision or a process?

Describe the meaning of "openness" as a personal quality. How might our openness impact on others?

"Although openness begins as an inner, personal discipline, it has the potential to evolve into a dynamic, interactive experience" (Spiritual Education, Jane Erricker, Cathy Ota, Clive Erricker). What do you think?

פְּתַח

This text study takes the Hebrew root for "**open"** [pay-tav-chet] and explores its use in Jewish prayer. Through gaining greater "mindfulness" about the meanings of this root, the learner can deepen the experience of prayer and strengthen the connection between prayer and actions.

Below are several quotes about "mindfulness." All are taken from Jonathan Slater's book, *Mindful Jewish Living: Compassionate Practice.*

Mindfulness is "the capacity to see clearly, with a calm and awakened mind and heart, the truth of each moment of our lives…mindfulness practice is a way of acting in the world that is enlivening. It is a way of thinking about Judaism and Jewish practices that gives renewed meaning to ritual practice."

The practice of mindfulness is the habit of attempting to experience the whole truth of the moment, from moment to moment… we open ourselves to discerning as much as possible what we are feeling – physically, emotionally, psychically, and spiritually…greater awareness of our inner states and physical status helps us to experience each moment more fully. Each moment can be complete in itself, since whatever we are doing will have integrity in itself.

Mindfulness is "the capacity to see clearly, with a calm and awakened mind and heart, the truth of each moment of our lives…mindfulness practice is a way of acting in the world that is enlivening. It is a way of thinking about Judaism and Jewish practices that gives renewed meaning to ritual practice."

פְּתַח

<u>פְּתַח</u>

in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy

Opening the Book of Remembrance

<u>Un'tanneh tokef</u>

וּנְתַנֶּה תֹקֶף

וְתִזְכֹּר כָּל־הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת. **וְתִפְתַּח** אֶת־סֵפֶר הַזִּכְרוֹנוֹת. וּמֵאֵלָיו יִקָּרֵא. וְחוֹתָם יַד כָּל־אָדָם בּוֹ׃

"**You open the book of remembrance** which proclaims itself, and the seal of each person is there."

"You remember all that is forgotten; **You open the Book of Memories**, and it speaks for itself, for each of us, by our deeds, has put our signature to it." (MHY, p.296)

"**You open the book in which all is recorded**, and it tells you all that has happened, for the book is written in each person's own hand."

<u>Mindful Connections</u>

- *Who opens the Book? Who is reading it? Who closes it?*
- *Memory can be revisionist, as opposed to a literal accounting. Which is recorded?*
- *For whom is the book written?*
- *Once something is recorded in the Book, then what?*
- *Is there something different about* פְּתַח *at Rosh Hashanah than at other times?*
- *Pakad vs zachor – Are there different types of "remembering"*
- *What about how we live our lives gets recorded in the book of our family? When is that book opened, by whom, read by whom and closed by whom?*

פְּתַח

Open my lips

The Amidah is central to daily worship. We enter the Amidah as individuals (MY lips) and come together as a community through the b'rakhot of the Tefillah.

The Amidah begins with a petition to "open my lips" in praise of The Holy One. Following this petition, we then continue silently or *b'lachash* – which means that our lips form each of the words and sometimes say them in a whisper.

The Amidah closes with a petition to simultaneously close our lips to keep us from speaking lies and deceit, while opening our hearts to Torah.

Spiritual practice
"Gd opens me in prayer to my inner……."

אֲדֹנָי שְׂפָתַי **תִּפְתָּח** וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ׃
(Psalm 51:17)

"**Open my mouth, O Lord**, and my lips will proclaim Your praise." (SS, p.107)

"**Adonai, bring words to my lips**, let my mouth declare Your praise." (ER, p.58)

"**Adonai, open my lips**, that my mouth may declare Your praise. (MT, p.242)

"**May God open my lips**, that I might utter praise." (MHY, p.160)

"Drawing on the secrets learned by our sages and the knowledge of those who understood, **I open my mouth to chant prayers and pleas** that will be pleasing to our ruler, the ultimate ruler of the world. (ER Rosh Hashanah supplement, p.408)

Mindful Connections

- *Is prayer an act in which Gd participates or perhaps initiates?*
- *Why do we begin by asking Gd to open our mouth and not our heart?*
- *What is Gd's influence on our ability to give/declare/utter praise?*
- *Can Gd speak through us?*
- *Are we asking Gd to accept our "utterances" – be they articulate or not?*
- *Why are there times we feel empowered to speak for ourselves in praise of the Holy One and at other times need Gd to open our mouths?*
- *Are we reminding ourselves that we are standing before Gd?*
- *Why does the shaliach tzibur, during the Yamim Noraim, state publicly that (s)he opens his/her own mouth?*

פְּתַח

Open my heart

אֱלֹהַי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנִי מֵרָע. וּשְׂפָתַי מִדַּבֵּר מִרְמָה ׃ וְלִמְקַלְלַי נַפְשִׁי תִדֹּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כֶּעָפָר לַכֹּל תִּהְיֶה. **פְּתַח** לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ, וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוֹף נַפְשִׁי

"My God, keep my tongue from evil, my lips from lies. Help me ignore those who slander me. Let me be humble before all. Open my heart to Your Torah, so that I may pursue Your mitzvot. "(SS, p.121)

"My God, guard my speech from evil and my lips from deception. Before those who slander me, I will hold my tongue; I will practice humility. Open my heart to Your Torah, that I pursue Your mitzvot." (MT, p.100)

My God, help me keep my tongue from speaking evil, and my lips from speaking deceitfully. May I not respond to those who curse me, and in my dealings with others, may my soul be humble. Open my heart to Your Torah, that my soul my pursue Your commandments. (ER, p.72)

Mindful Connections

- *What might we be saying that is so troubling that we turn to Gd to help us refrain from speaking at all?*
- *What is the connection between quality speech and opening one's heart to Torah?*
- *What is the connection between opening one's heart to Torah so that "my soul" can* ***pursue*** mitzvot? *[note on "pursue": this is a strong action word, used in "Justice, justice shall you pursue" as well as the legal term for one who is pursing another in order to commit murder –* rodef*]*
- *How does Gd open our hearts to Torah? What does this mean and why do we need Gd's help?*
- *What happens when there is a disconnect between our hearts and our actions?*

קריאת התורה
יְהִי רָעוֹא קֳדָמָךְ דִּתְפְּתַח לִבִּי בְּאוֹרַיְתָא וְתַשְׁלִים מִשְׁאֲלִין דְּלִבִּי וְלִבָּא דְכָל
עַמָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל

"**May it be that my heart will open up to your Torah.** Fulfill the desires of my heart, and the hearts of all your people, Israel, for good, for life and for peace." (MHY, p.187)

Mindful Connections

This prayer begins with a personal petition and then includes "Your people Israel." Does my heart need to be open in order for Gd to answer the community's prayers?

פְּתַח

Open Your hand

Ashrei(Psalm 145:1-21) is the first psalm recited as part of the worship service. It has remained important, even after the creation of P'sukei D'zimra.

אַשְׁרֵי
Psalm 145:1-21

פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת יָדֶךָ, וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל חַי רָצוֹן׃

"**You open Your hand**, and Your favor sustains all the living." (SS, p.83)

"**You give it openhandedly**, feeding every creature to its heart's content." (MT, p.217)

"**Your hand is always open**, feeding every creature to its heart's content." (ER, p.30)

"**You open your hand** and satisfy the needs of all living." (MHY, p.113)

"**You open Your hand** and sustain all life with Your will"
(http://www.scribd.com/doc/5241818/jew-seder)

<u>Mindful Connections</u>

- *The Mechaber teaches that this verse must be recited with kavannah – or else it must be repeated. (Orech Hayyim 51:7) What is kavannah? Mishnah Berurah says, "pirush hamilot" – the simple translation. (Orach Hayyim) Why does the Mechaber also teach that then reciting "poteiach et…" one should touch the tefillin shel yad, and when reciting umasbia l'chol…" touch tefillin shel rosh? (Orech Hayyim 28:1)*
- *What extra value do the rabbis find in reciting Ashrei, and this verse in particular?*
- *What does this verse teach us about being open to others?*
- *Can this be read in the tzivui- i.e. as a command to Gd: "Gd, open Your hand!"?*
- *Consider: Ashrei, which is a psalm about joy, is the first prayer recited following Yizkor. Who do we reconcile that placement?*

פְּתַח

The One who opens the gates to those who knock

Musaf Amidah – K'dushat Ha-Shem

וְכל מַאֲמִינִים
הַפּוֹתֵחַ לְדוֹפְקֵי **פִּתְחוֹ** בִּתְשׁוּבָה: וְכל מַאֲמִינִים שֶׁהוּא **פְּתוּחָה** יָדוֹ:

"We believe that He welcomes repentance. Therefore what we do this day can change our lives." (Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Rabbinical Assembly)

"He opens the gates to those who knock in repentance; we believe His hand is extended to the penitent." (MH, p. 293)

"The One who opens the gate for those who seek to return; - all believe that this One's hand is ever open. (MHY, p.302)

"You open the door to those who knock in *teshuvah;* we believe your hand is open."

Mindful Connections

- *What does it mean to be a "dofeik b'tshuvah"?*
- *When we knock, do we know who or what is behind the "door" or if anyone is even there? How might knowing or not knowing impact our commitment to doing t'shuvah?*
- *"Gd's opens Gd's hand to the penitent." Does someone need to be penitent for us to open our own hands?*
- *What comes to mind when you call Gd "Ha-Poteich" – "The One who Opens"?*
- *How does this image impact on your willingness to be a "dofeik b 'tshuvah"??*

Rabbi Yesa said, "The Holy and Blessed One said to Israel, 'My sons, open the door of Repentance as the eye of a needle, and I will open it for you so that wagons and carriages can pass through.'" (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 24)

פְּתַח

Close the Gates

"The word, *Neilah*, means the locking of a gate .
"*Neilah*" the last service of Yom Kippur.

פָּתוּחַ סָגוּר פָּתוּחַ. לִפְנֵי שֶׁאָדָם נוֹלָד
הַכֹּל פָּתוּחַ בַּיְקוּם בִּלְעָדֵינוּ. כְּשֶׁהוּא חַי הַכֹּל סָגוּר
בּוֹ בְּחַיָּיו. וּכְשֶׁהוּא מֵת הַכֹּל שׁוּב פָּתוּחַ.
פָּתוּחַ סָגוּר פָּתוּחַ זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם.

Open closed open. Before we are born, everything is open
in the universe without us. For as long as we live, everything is closed
within us. And when we die, everything is open again.
Open closed open. That's all we are.

Yehudah Amichai, *trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld*

Open for us the gates
Even as the gates are closing,
For daylight fades.
The day is waning,
The sun is setting and ebbing away;
Let us enter your gates at last. (MHY, p.763)

Sha'arei Shamayim p'takh. V'otzseir ha-tov lanu tiftakh.

How we breathe is how we live
(Spiritual Activist, p. 33)

ENTRANCES to holiness are everywhere.
The possibility of ascent is all the time.
Even at unlikely times and through unlikely places.
There is no place on earth without the Presence.
(as cited in *Mishkan Tefillah*)

פְּתַח

Siddur Key:

1. **GR =** Gates of Repentance
2. **MHY =** Mahzor Hadesh Yamenu
3. **ER** = Eit Ratzon
4. **SS** = Sim Shalom
5. **MT** = Mishkan T'fila
6. MH = Mahzor Hadash

Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe; Editor, Chaim Stern Central Conference of American Rabbis, CCAR Press, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, 212-972-3636, www.ccarpres.org © 5738/1978, revised 1996.

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Eit Ratzon: © 2003, 2006, 2008 by Joseph G. Rosenstein, Shiviti Publications, PO Box 4371, Highland Park, NJ 08904-4371; www.newsiddur.org (Rosh Hashana supplement also available separately)

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