



Intention: Praying with *Kavanah*

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Rabbi and founder of the Jewish Renewal and Spiritual Eldering movements

Huffington Post | 05/06/2013 | Updated Jul 06, 2013

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zalman-schactershalomi/intention-praying-with-kavanah_b_3222792.html

Jewish prayer begins with *kavanah* – intention...to pray with focus, intention, meaning [with singular devotion]. It means praying from the heart, rather than prayer centered solely in the mind. Celebrating a Shabbos or a holiday with *kavanah* gives that days a deeper, richer texture. *Kavanah* gives meaning to our rituals of marriage and birth and death. It inspires us to perform a mitzvah [good deed/work of mercy] on a more conscious and ultimately more rewarding level. *Kavanah* lies at the heart of Jewish devotional life. That one word encompasses an entire body of inner work necessary to live consciously in the presence of God.

The Jewish path to inner awareness begins with *kavanah*. The meditative lives as Jews could not be complete without it, for it is the steering wheel of all inner consciousness work. The inner search for *kavanah* might at first be satisfied with a momentary boost of intention. Ultimately, though, we want *kavanah* to be transformational. We seek a complete realignment of the soul,...a handing over of the soul to God's work. We wish to become the very intention and *kavanah* of God.