



# The Gates of Prayer: Twelve Talks on Davvenology

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*

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"When I was studying in the Lubavitcher yeshiva, one evening, we had a farbrengen, a celebration with the older Hasidim who were teaching us. And at one point, one of them started to give us a hard time about not going deeply enough into our davvenen, into our prayer. So I took a tumbler full of schnapps, said, 'L'Hayyim!' and drank it all down. Then I turned to them and said, 'How could you blame us for not going deep into contemplative prayer when you have never shared with us what goes on inside of you when you pray?' 'Immediately, some of them took umbrage at this, saying, 'How dare you ask such a question?' and then chewed me out. But Rabbi Avraham Pariz spoke up and said: 'You know, he's right. He needs to hear about what goes on inside.' Then Reb Avraham took a big tumbler-full of schnapps and drank it down and said, 'L'Hayyim!' Then he went inside himself and delivered an inner commentary on the traditional morning prayer and took us into his own inner world of sacred enchantment. But when he came to the threshold of the silent Amidah, he said, 'From here on is a private matter between God and me.' "When people ask me to repeat what Reb Avraham said, I have to confess that I cannot repeat his words. I so internalized them at that time that they have now become integral to my own prayer. The best I can do is share with you some of what I have learned in my own life about deep prayer, for which, what I learned that evening is the foundation. What you are about to read is my own telling of some of the things that are happening to me when I am involved in prayer before the living God." --- Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.

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