

Davvenen' through the Worlds: A Flow-Chart for the Shabbat Morning Service

The Jewish mystical tradition views the unfolding of creation as the emanation of four “worlds,” or levels, of spiritual energy. Kabbalah teaches that these four worlds of energy emanated from the Divine Source in a dynamic process, as the forces of creation flowed into the unfolding cosmos. These worlds are called *Assiyah*, Action; *Yetzirah*, Formation; *Briyah*, Creation; and *Atzilut* – the blazing Emanation of pure Divinity.

Kabbalah teaches that human beings, as living vessels of consciousness, are capable of experiencing these energies. We can use our capacity for heightened awareness to travel in these worlds, connecting with our source in the Divine. We can also use our capacity to tap these energies so that they flow freely in our lives.

The English word “services,” that refers to organized prayer, derives from the Hebrew “*avodah*,” meaning serving by doing sacred work. *Davvenen'*, the unique Jewish prayer practice which combines modal chanting of sacred text, meditation and movement, is one form of the spiritual work we do to restore our souls' living link with God.

The service takes us on a journey through the Four Worlds, from the most basic physical plane of *Assiyah* up through the peak of *Atzilut* and then gently back down. Hassidic teaching calls this progression “the ladder,” referring to *Yaakov's* famous night-vision of “a ladder set in the earth whose top reached into the heavens.” This ladder, said our teachers, is the ladder of the prayers. Each rung of the ladder offers its spiritual gift and challenge. The goal is not to rush overly swiftly to the top, but rather to savor the fullness of the journey. This is a pilgrimage of consciousness.

Talk to the Universe!

Or Eyn Sof: The Endless Light

