

# Aleinu

Recited at the end of each of the three daily Jewish services.

"It is incumbent upon us to give praise to the Lord of the Universe, to glorify Him who formed creation, for He hath not made us to be like the nations of the lands, nor hath He made us like the families of the earth; He hath not set our portion with theirs, nor our lot with their multitude; . . . for they prostrate themselves before vanity and folly, and pray to a god who can not help. . . . But we bend the knee and prostrate ourselves and bow down before the King of the Kings of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He! For it is He who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and the seat of His glory is in the heavens above, and His mighty dwelling-place (Shekinah) is in the loftiest heights. 'He is our God, and there is none other.' In truth, He is our King, there is none besides Him, as it is written in His Torah: 'And thou shalt know this day and lay it to thine heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath: and there is none other.'

*(Some traditions omit the second paragraph)*

"Therefore do we wait for Thee, O Lord our God, soon to behold Thy mighty glory, when Thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth, and idols shalt be exterminated; when the world shall be regenerated by the kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh invoke Thy name; when

all the wicked of the earth shall be turned unto Thee. Then shall all the inhabitants of the world perceive and confess that unto Thee every knee must bend, and every tongue be sworn. Before Thee, O Lord our God, shall they kneel and fall down, and unto Thy glorious name give honor. So will they accept the yoke of Thy kingdom, and Thou shall be King over them speedily forever and aye. For Thine is the kingdom, and to all eternity Thou wilt reign in glory, as it is written in Thy Torah: 'The Lord shall reign forever and aye.' And it is also said: 'And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His name be One.'"

Evidently this prayer was originally recited with the prostration of the whole assembled congregation before their departure from the house of God, or after the benediction given by the priests. In such solemn language the congregation gives expression to its faith in the One Universal Ruler of the World, and to its hope for His universal kingdom when all the idolatrous nations around Israel shall have been converted to His truth. The omission of a personal Messiah from the expression, of the Messianic hope points to a pre-Christian era; and the very title, "King of the Kings of Kings" shows that the formula used at the prostration goes back to Persian times when kings bore the title of King of Kings.

Moses Mendelssohn also, in his memorandum, declares the 'Alenu to be one of the oldest prayers of the nation, adducing as proof of its ancient and pre-Christian character the fact that no mention is made in it of the restoration of the Jewish Temple and state, which would scarcely have been omitted had it been composed after their destruction.

Adapted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleinu> and <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1112-alenu>