

Taking Three Steps Back

Welcome to Worship Shorts!

Today I want to answer the question, “Why do Jews take three steps back and then three steps forward at the beginning of the *Amidah*?”

Worship is defined as a conscious act of respect accompanied by a determination to obey. Normally in Scripture, worship is accompanied by a sacrifice, as if to say that we acknowledge our own mortality and that our own soul exists only by the grace of the one to whom the sacrifice is offered. This is why it's considered a grave sin to offer a sacrifice to an idol. It would be like saying that our soul belongs to an idol.

The *Amidah* is also referred to in Jewish literature as “*Hat'fillah*,” which means “the prayer,” in the singular. Although there are multiple blessings contained in the *Amidah*, it is referred to as though it were only one long prayer. One of the requirements for those who are praying the *Amidah* is that they not allow anything to distract them, unless it's a life threatening emergency. It's a solemn time in the service, because those praying are to pray as though standing before the God of Israel.

We recognize God's authority as a king, and just as it was customary to approach a king very carefully and to bow in recognition of his majesty and authority, we take three small steps forward and bow. It is part of how we acknowledge his authority in our lives. To emphasize this, we first take three steps back and then step forward.

At the end of the *Amidah* we bow again and take three steps back. One would not turn one's back on a king, and we don't turn our backs until we have gently withdrawn from His presence.

As Messianic Jews we recognize that Yeshua is part of the identity of God, and that all authority is in Him. Everything was made through Him and for Him. When we stand in the *Amidah*, we are also standing before the One who gave up His life so that we might live. He is our sacrifice. And we belong to Him. He has authority because he made us, and when we went our own way, he redeemed us. Not only is he our creator, he is our owner. This is the basis for our worship.

Thank you for listening to Worship Shorts.