

Introduction to Tefillah

Introduction

(Intro Slide)

(Slide) What is the difference between rabbinics and Torah? Be very careful how you form and phrase your answer, because if you're supposedly against anything rabbinical and you're not careful, your answer when it comes to the concept of prayer, may incriminate you!

The answer is that Torah is the written command from Yahweh and Rabbinics are observances not plainly commanded in the text, but arrived at through deductive reasoning from concepts in the Written Torah or through what's known as the Oral Torah. But before we talk about prayer, we need to get some things straight. Ever heard of the expression "straighten yourself out!" This comes from the Hebrew idiom *derech hayashar* which means "finding the straight path." The expression is used in 2 Timothy. (Slide) **"Do your best to apply yourself, so you may be presented to Yahweh as one approved, a po'el (workman) without bushah (shame), keeping on a *derech haYashar Dvar HaEmet* (the straight path of the Word of truth)." (2 Timothy 2:15)**

King Messiah Yahshua was a Jew. (Click) **"For it is clear that our Adonai manifest His right arm from Judah." (Hebrews 7:14)** He observed Judaism and taught its true ways and meanings. He never renounced his religion or came to change it. (Click) **"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17)** The very expression "to fulfill" (*meley haTorah*) is taken from a Hebrew idiom that is still used in Orthodox Jewish Yeshivot to this day! The expression is "to fulfil the Torah" and it means "to teach the meaning of the Torah and observe it correctly."

In 1 Kings 2 the same expression "to fulfil" employed. (Click) **"So Shlomo thrust out Aviathar from being priest to Yahweh; that he might fulfil the word of Yahweh, which he spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." (1 Kings 2:27)**

Judah Halevi, an 11th century rabbinic professor of physical science, philosophy and metaphysics wrote that "Israel was created to fulfill the Torah....and there would be no Torah were there is no Israel."

There is also a Hebrew idiom that is expressed to "destroy the Torah," which means "to incorrectly teach the meaning of the Torah and/or to violate the it," We use this expression when we think someone is destroying the true meaning of the Torah. Even today in the Yeshivot and Beit Midrashim Rabbis will get into heated debates with one another, and pound a fist on a table declaring "you have destroyed the Torah!", or they'll give another Rabbi a compliment saying "you have fulfilled the Torah."

The more you know about Judaism, the more you'll know what our Messiah is talking about and what is actually happening. You'll begin to see the meaning

behind things and why they were set up that way. Years of mystery will come to an end!

(Slide) I'll give you a few examples: **"But when (those who had come to anoint Yahshua's body) looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away."** (Mark 16:4) **(Click)** In Judaism, rather than lay flowers, there is a tradition to lay stones atop the grave of the deceased. There are many reasons for this act, but interestingly, there is an expectation that on a return visit that the stones have been rolled away and that the deceased has been fully resurrected. **(Slide)** There is also another tradition that when one is grieved by someone who is destroying the Torah, the garment over the heart should be rent. We see this with the High Priest who rent his garment upon hearing Yahshua speak. But in another very well-known incident, we see the same action done in opposition to these imposters. **(Click)** **"And when Yahshua had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split. (Matthew 27:50-51)** It is well known in Judaism that within the anatomy of the Mishkan, the heart corresponds to the Inner Sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies is an earthly manifestation of Yahweh's heart and the curtain is a manifestation of His garment over it.

Furthermore, what amazes me in many of Yahshua's criticism of the Pharisees is the absence of an enormous number of other things that were observed in the Judaism in his day.

In Yahshua's discourse on his mission, which was to fulfil the Torah and the prophets he is saying very plainly, that he had not come to change his religion, but to rightly interpret it and fulfil all its Messianic appointments. So, if this is true, he observed a true form of Judaism, Judaism being the name given to his religion sometime after the abandonment and destruction of the Ten Tribes of Israel, leaving the tribe of Judah, the tribe of Benjamin and the Levites in the Land. Alas these tribes, all falling under the covering of the collective name of Jews also went into captivity. But unlike the Northern Tribes, the Jews maintained Torah observance as best they could under strict Babylonian rule. This sole action preserved their identity unlike the Northern Tribes who abandoned Torah even before their captivity by the Assyrians. However, seventy years in exile brought with it some practices that needed ironing out by Messiah when he eventually arrived on the scene. Therefore, we should thoroughly weigh all teachings within Judaism, rather than automatically reject them.

Where is Prayer Commanded in the Torah?

This being said, it is important to consider how Judaism regards the concept of prayer. It is taught that prayer is "Among those things that stand at the pinnacle of creation." With such a lofty view of this act before us you would think that we would easily find many commandments in the Torah to engage in prayer. But from one end of the Torah to the other, from Genesis all the way to the end of Deuteronomy there is not one commandment to pray.

Why?

Because prayer is arrived at through rabbinic insight into the text. How so? When something is rabbinic, it means that it is an insight into Yahweh's will that has been gleaned by masters of the Torah. They've lifted the rimez (allegorical meaning), the drush (metaphorical meaning) and the sod (the hidden meaning) from within the Torah. The commandment to pray is based on the interpretation of a particular type of service to Yahweh, the service of the heart called *avodah shebalev* (a service of the heart), based on **Deuteronomy 11:13**. (Slide) **"And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love Yahweh, your Elohim, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 11:13)"**

(Slide) A key element of your relationship with your Creator is to "serve Him with all your heart." The Hebrew word *avodah*, carries the sense of laborious work. But what kind of labour can the heart do to serve Elohim? Prayer is the labour of awakening the hidden love within the heart until a state of intimate union with the Divine is achieved. Prayer takes a working out of the heart, because a man's heart is an unruly thing.

(Slide) **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)"** (Click) **"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander." (Matthew 15:19)** Most people are driven by the desires of the heart, with the eyes often functioning as salesmen for the heart's gratification. The eyes and the heart are connected. Elohim designed a visual aid to disconnect the eyes from the heart with the creation of four wings or tassels (*tzitzit*) (Click) **"You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of Yahweh, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes." (Numbers 15:39)** The five senses or gateways in a man intake taste, physical touch, audio, visual and aromatic stimulus, which usually results in an action that is against the will Elohim. The mind processes and stores this stimulus. To look at a woman is not a sin, but to look at her with lust in the heart is. The eye sees and the heart reacts by engaging the brain to its bidding. When we pray and refuse to engage the heart to direct the brain, we perform what's called "the silent service," a service that no-one sees initially.

For our heart to be rendered as a suitable vessel for Yahweh our job is to direct it by use of our minds via the intellect. We must start at Golgotha, the place of the skull to achieve the victory. What did King David and Messiah Yahshua have in common? (Click through two Slides) They both vanquished their enemy at the Place of the Skull. By constantly rerouting any thought that is contrary to the Divine will, we create new neural pathways in the mind. Our minds come to divert the desires of the heart to loftier eternal goals. **"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)** Ground zero of all sin takes place in the mind and these sins can churn over in the brain for days, weeks and even years, continuing, on and on. When we sin in our minds it can continue for a great deal of time because it cannot be observed, but acting on sin usually only takes a moment. Therefore meditating on sin is more detrimental, because it is far more prolonged

and the magnitude of the sins are usually more extreme. The eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, and hands touch and our heart responds to the stimulus that these senses draw in. Then the brain reacts. Prayer is the act of bringing the brain to the fore of this process. By using it to work the heart.

Everything in our walk affects all other areas of our walk. Righteous living enhances prayer as prayer enhance righteous living. **“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b)**

Tefillah should result in a communion with Yahweh, which happens through an awareness of our true standing before Yahweh and an adjoining of heart and mind into one to draw ourselves with effort closer to Yahweh. Oneness below is the best way to get the attention of the Oneness Above. People desire *echad* within the body of Messiah, when they're not even in *echad* with themselves. So what is prayer?

(Slide) The English word prayer is a Middle English word from the Old French *preiere*, based on Latin *precari* meaning ‘obtained by entreaty’ or ‘begging,’ from *prex*, *prec-* ‘prayer.’ But the Hebrew word for prayer means something completely different. The word is *tefilah* (תפילה) and comes from the verb *pallel* (פלל), “to judge.” We use the reflexive verb *lehitpallel* (“to pray”), which also means “to judge oneself.” Thus, the time of prayer is the time of self-judgment and self-evaluation.

Tefillah outwardly carries the features of cries for comfort, solemn requests or thanksgiving to the Almighty, but this is the outward feature of prayer and perhaps why it goes by a Latin name that describes only one outward feature - Begging. It also consists of speaking to and communicating with Yahweh - the Creator, for one's-self or for others. So true prayer is self analysis

(Slide) Man's quest to serve his Creator is perpetual and all consuming, and is pursued by all people, at all times, and in all places. Yahshua and his disciples prayed three times a day, plus additional times on Shabbat and High Holidays, as well as spontaneous times. **“Now Kepha and Yochannan were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon.” (Acts 3:1)** The reality is, that a lot of what Messiah and his disciples did was not directly commanded in the Torah. There is no direct command to pray three times a day.

The three prayers were actually instituted by our forefathers. Avraham instituted the morning (Shacharit) prayer; Yitzchak first prayed the afternoon (Minchah) service; and Ya'akov was the first to say the evening (Maariv) prayers. The rabbis timed the daily prayers to correspond with the two daily Temple sacrifices. Why because the Temple and its operation unified the people. So prayer is now concentrated within our own Temples, our bodies.

It's estimated that a person who follows this model will prayer between 530 to 600 hours per year. That's a lot of time.

We have to remember that many of the writings in Scripture are not there to teach us the beats of our faith. Many of these books a written with the assumption that a person knows basic second century Judaism. The thrust of many works is the

fulfilment of Yahweh's plan, not a playbook on how to observe the faith. This is why they're so many points of conjecture, because people don't understand things from a Hebraic perspective!

So, if prayer is such a feature of our walk. Wouldn't it stand to reason that we actually learn to do it in a way that would benefit us?

Prayer is not something that should be looked at as a burden or a responsibility, but rather something that should be enjoyed and looked forward to. One should feel a sense of satisfaction and peace after one has prayed.

(Slide) Tefillah is our spiritual connection to Yahweh. After an offering occurred in the Temple it brought about a spiritual fortification. A sense of awe of Elohim came upon us. We were affected. But when the Temple fell, we lost our unified service and so we had to take responsibility for ourselves and generate our own ability to feel the same sense of fortification.

(Slide) Good prayer is seen in the eyes of the Father as a sweet-smelling aroma. **"May my prayer be set before you like incense..."(Psalm 141:2a)** Our thoughts have no body or physical substance. Our thoughts elevate like *ketoret* (incense), curling up like smoke from the hot coals of our words.

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. (Revelation 5:8)"

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before Yahweh out of the angel's hand. (Revelation 8:3-4)"

Our body language also affects our prayer. The lifting of our hands is like an offering. **"...may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2)**

Ketoret and tefillah are synonymous. In the holiest day of the year, the holiest human being on earth, entered the holiest place on the earth and did the holiest deed. On Yom Kippur the *Kohen Gadol* ("High Priest") would enter into the "Holy of Holies" (the innermost chamber of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem) to offer *ketoret* to Yahweh.

It's important to have good *ketoret*, in other words good thoughts, good concentration.

(Slide) At the Mount of Olives, Yahshua prayed with such focus and concentration that it mustered the help of an angel that came to strengthen him. **"He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if you are**

willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. (Luke 22:43)”

(Slide) The intensity that Yahshua mustered was by way *kevanah* (concentration and a sure direction), he must engage his entire body, his mind, his mouth and his actions. *Kevanah* is not just ‘focus’ or ‘concentration,’ which are the most popular translations of the word. It also means ‘preparedness,’ or ‘direction,’ as in the sense of the word, *kiven*, which means ‘to aim.’

How to Achieve Good Prayer

Prayer is spiritual incense. Let it rise before the Throne of Yahweh each day. To get results follow these few basic rules:

- **Live a righteous life.** Seek to understand Yahweh's will and purposes for the world, the church and for yourself. In other words, **obey the Almighty's commandments.**
- **Ask in Messiah's Name.** For things that will **glorify Yahweh** and be of **spiritual benefit to the cause of King Messiah YahShua, to the Commonwealth of Israel and to the rest of humanity.**
- **Ask with the right motives.** Believers often ask for the right things but with the intention of showing off to others. This is not just a form of self-deception: it is juvenile. It is a waste of time and produces no results whatsoever. So check your **motives.** Be ruthless when you examine yourself. **Constantly examine your motives; for here is where most of us fail miserably.** We want to impress others with our power, our wisdom and our fame. Yahweh knows this and answers accordingly.
- **Wait for the results.** They will come. If you are successful, praise Yahweh; if not re-examine yourself, your motives and your life. The fault is somewhere there.

Intercede for others. Meaningful miracles will happen! Souls will be converted to the Kingdom. Believers will begin to obey the commandments. Yahweh's Signature (His sacred Sabbaths) will appear in the minds of the hitherto rebellious. The good fruit of faith, obedience, holiness, praise, thanksgiving and sacrifice will soon become apparent. These are the real miracles of grace the Saviour came to perform in the soil of the human mind. These are far greater miracles than the healing of the physical body or the feeding of a multitude with bread and fish. The greatest miracles are seen when sinners give up sin and become holy like their heavenly Father is holy. You could be part of this almost incredible, miraculous process.

(Slide) “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14)” In other words, if you ask something that is in line with my character, which is embodied in my name, which is a memorial of me, I will do it. Merely

deciding to engage in the act of prayer is already a great mitzvah, because why would anybody engage in prayer if they didn't think it would help?

Everybody prays! From the most wicked person to the most righteous person on earth. Everybody at one time or another prays. If you think you have never prayed, you're lying or you've just forgotten and you almost certainly will pray again.