

# The Jew and Prayer

*An overview of the roots, purpose and practice of Jewish prayer.*

by Lazer Gurkow

## Lesson 1: A History of Prayer

### SERIES OUTLINE

1. History of Prayer
2. Private vs. Congregational Prayer
3. Kavanah
4. Gender Roles in Prayer

### Genesis Chapter 4:13

וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן, אֶל-יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֹהִים  
אֵלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי, מִנְשָׂא  
And Cain said unto the L-rd:  
Is my sin too great to bear?

### Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 26b

איתמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמר  
תפלות אבות תקנום "Our prayers were established by the Patriarchs."

### Genesis Chapter 19:27

וַיִּשְׁכַּם אַבְרָהָם, בְּבֹקֶר  
אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם--אֲשֶׁר-עָמַד שָׁם  
And Abraham awoke in the morning  
and returned to the place where he had been standing

### Genesis Chapter 24:63

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה  
לְפָנוֹת עֶרֶב  
Isaac went out to talk  
toward evening (i.e. in the afternoon)

### Genesis Chapter 28:11

וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם  
He (Jacob) reached the place and spent the night there.

### LEARNING FROM THE PATRIARCHS

Abraham – Prayer in the Morning

Isaac – Prayed in the Afternoon

Jacob – Prayed in the Evening

**DAILY PRAYER SERVICES**

|           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| שַׁחֲרִית | Morning Service   |
| מִנְחָה   | Afternoon Service |
| מַעֲרִיב  | Evening Service   |
| or        |                   |
| עֶרְבִית  |                   |

**Psalms Chapter 55:18**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| עֶרֶב וּבֹקֶר וְצַהֲרַיִם                 | Evening, and morning, and noon,          |
| אֶשְׁיַחֵה וְאֶהַמָּה; וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי | I talk, and moan; and my voice is heard. |

**2 Kings Chapter 25:9**

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֶת-בַּיִת-יְהוָה,  | And he burnt the house of the LORD, |
| וְאֶת-בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ;         | and the king's house;               |
| וְאֶת כָּל-בְּתֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם | and all the houses of Jerusalem     |
| וְאֶת-כָּל-בַּיִת גָּדוֹל,      | and all the great homes,            |
| שָׂרַף בָּאֵשׁ                  | he burnt in fire.                   |

**Rashi; 2 Kings Chapter 25:9**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| ואת כל בית גדול | and all the great houses: [lit. the house of every great one.] |
| בתי כנסיות      | (These are the) Synagogues                                     |

שמגדלין בהן תורה ותפלה where Torah and Prayer are made great...

**RECAP**

1. Prayer Dates back to the very Beginning
2. Prayer continued in pre-temple and temple times
3. Offerings were accompanied by prayer
4. Prayer has always been done Daily

**Rambam; Mishneh Torah Chapter 1:4**

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| כיון שגלו ישראל               | When Israel was exiled  |
| בימי נבוכדנצר הרשע            | in the time of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar                        |
| נתערבו בפרס ויוון ושאר האומות | they became interspersed in Persia and Greece and other nations |
| ונולדו להם בנים בארצות הגוים  | Children were born to them in these foreign countries           |
| ואותן הבנים נתבלבלו שפתם      | and those children's language was confused                      |

**STRUCTURE OF THE AMIDAH**

1. 3 Blessings of Praise
2. Prayers for needs, personal and communal
3. 3 Blessings of Gratitude

**Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 26b**

תפלות כנגד תמידין תקנום The prayers were established in accordance with the daily offerings

**REASONS FOR DAILY PRAYERS**

1. Following in the ways of the Patriarchs
2. Coincides with times of Temple Sacrifices

**Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 28b**

|                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| תנו רבנן               | Our Sages taught:               |
| שמעון הפקולי           | Simon the Cotton Merchant       |
| הסדיר שמונה עשרה ברכות | arranged the Eighteen Blessings |
| לפני רבן גמליאל        | before Raban Gamliel            |
| על הסדר                | in order                        |
| ביבנה                  | in Yaneh                        |

**Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot 28b**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| אמר להם ר"ג לחכמים      | Raban Gamliel said to the Sages,                              |
| כלום יש אדם             | "Is there a person  |
| שיודע לתקן ברכת הצדוקים | that knows how to establish a blessing against the heretics?" |

**RECAP**

1. Origin of Prayer
  - Cain
  - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
  - Daniel and King David
2. Accompanying sacrifices with Prayer
3. Ezra introducing standards (Texts, time, place etc...)
4. Sages efforts to preserve personal license in prayer
5. Sages codify and publish prayer book in order to ensure continuity