

## Tefillah Part 3 – Fixed Prayer Continued

(Intro Slide) Last week began to look at fixed prayer and its importance in training a believer up to pray effectively, rather than praying at randomly chosen moments of individual inspiration. This week we'll glean the nature and drive of each prayer and why they correspond to offerings in Temple times. We'll look at the content that should be covered in each prayer and finish with a look at the siddur, often translated as 'prayer book,' but in actuality it means 'order.'

### Women and Fixed Prayer

(Slide) The first thing I want to address is why, according to rabbinic halakha **הִלְכָה**, is a woman exempt from fixed prayer. The reasons are many. Torah observance treats the home and synagogue as being co-equal. Some of our most important rituals belong exclusively to the home, such as the Seder, the Sukkah, the Sabbath table, and the Chanukah menorah. The continuity of Torah observance rests on in home more than anything else.

(Slide) It's a woman's exclusive role to imbue spirituality into the home. As such, certain mitzvot are set aside especially for women because of their special connection to the home. Family purity laws, candle lighting on Shabbat and holidays, and the separation of challah are rituals that women always observed with particular pride and meticulousness.

(Slide) All societies have recognized that a woman's sensitivity and warmth are ideally suited for motherhood. Moreover, the extraordinary feeling that men can never experience – nurturing a baby inside them – puts women in the position of being the best, most loving caregivers for their children. For the preservation of the family structure, and by extension the overall health of society, the Torah encourages women to embrace this role.

In this vein, the Torah released women from the obligations of certain time-bound mitzvot. This is not because of any difference in the level of sanctity between men and women. Rather, these exemptions allow a woman the ability to be totally devoted to her family without the constraints of having to fulfil such mitzvot at the correct time. Of course, whenever a woman does not face conflicting family obligations, she may fulfil these mitzvot and receive eternal reward. Whatever the case, she is fulfilling Yahweh's will, who knows that her spiritual growth is intertwined with her primary mission as the family cultivator.

(Slide) Women are obligated to observe all the negative commandments, e.g. don't murder, don't steal. Regarding the time-bound positive commandments, a woman is exempt, with certain exceptions including:

- observance of Shabbat
- eating matzah on Passover
- lighting Chanukah candles
- all the mitzvot of Purim

Women are also required to perform all positive mitzvot that are not time-bound, e.g. mezuzah, returning lost items, etc.

Regarding certain mitzvot, although a woman is technically exempt, women have historically accepted the performance upon themselves. This is the case with hearing the shofar on Rosh Hashana, sitting in the Sukkah on Sukkot, and taking the four species. But this should not come at the expense of family life.

**(Slide)** When a woman prays, the darkness shudders. In the spiritual realm, a woman starts out as a "heavy mover." This is actually why there is a blessing that men say which thanks the Father for not having made them a woman. The reason is, that a man starts out with less initial potential to navigate the spiritual world and it is for this reason that they are thankful in that they require more constant effort than a woman to achieve perfection. A man is thankful for the requirement to have more labour set before him. On the other hand there is a blessing that a woman says thanking the Father for having made them period.

A woman understands the significance of her more private role. She realises how vital her nurturance is for the survival of mankind. She assumes the role that receives little public recognition, modestly knowing that to Elohim her sacrifices are invaluable.

Eshet Chayil (The Woman of Valour) speaks of the qualities of a woman and no, it's not about being the happy home-maker. It speaks about the woman being the actual home herself. When a husband is with his wife wherever she is that husband is home. I watched my late grandfather after my grandmother passed away resume life in his home and I tell you he was never home there. I could tell that he felt empty there without her. The Woman of Valour speaks of a woman having wisdom, courage, creativity, even business sense, and having the profound insight to recognise how to relate to individuals according to their specific needs.

For if it wasn't for women mankind would cease to exist.

## Fixed Prayer Continued

**(Slide)** "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of Elohim. (Matthew 4:4)'"

**(Click)** "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh. (Deuteronomy 8:3)"

What food is to our body, prayer is to our soul. **(Click)** Rav Yehudah HaLevi wrote that "Man cannot live without food, and similarly our soul, which is Divine in origin, yearns to be connected to the Divine."

**(Slide)** Few people will argue that man's daily physical wellbeing should be centred around three principle times a day to eat - breakfast, lunch and dinner. But man's existence should

not be by this sustenance alone, but by connecting with the Divine at these same times. Everything in the natural is given as a parable for everything in the Spiritual.

(Slide) The Yiddish word for prayer is 'daven,' derived from the Aramaic word d'avuhon, which means, "from our fathers" referring to Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov, who first instituted fixed prayer times. We see that the word 'daven' also shares the same English root as the word 'divine.' So we practice connecting with our Divine source at fixed way-points or pillars in time each day.

So there are two sources as to the origin of our daily fixed prayers. The first is our Patriarchs; each of whom instituted a prayer, which reflected his life experience.

(Slide) Tefillot Shacharit ('the dawning' or 'morning prayers'), which is recited when the sun is rising, reflects the life of Avraham. Faced with many challenges and difficulties as he embarked on the new mission to proclaim the word of Yahweh to an idolatrous world, he emerged triumphant and was treated respectfully by his peers and neighbours.

(Click) Tefillot Minchah (the offering' or 'evening prayer'), which recited in the afternoon, when the sun is descending, reflects the circumstances of Yitzhak, who composed it. In comparison with his father, Avraham, his life was one of subtle decline; he never enjoyed the fame or acceptance that his father did. Nevertheless, Yitzhak maintained Avraham's teachings and continued his legacy.

(Slide) Tefillot Maariv (Evening Prayer), was composed by Ya'akov, whose life was filled with one problem after another, reflected by the dark of night when his prayer is recited. His faith and inspiration during even the darkest times has helped sustain his descendants throughout the "night" of our history, including the past two millennia of dispersion and frequent oppression.

Each one of the patriarch's prayed all three times, in keeping with the verse "Evening, morning, and noon, I supplicate and moan, and He has heard my voice (Psalms 55:18)," but the life experiences of each was closely identified with a particular time of prayer. The each gave emphasis to their own particular time, meriting their institution and it's up to us if we want to attempt to maintain this pattern and receive an encounter with the Divine.

### Fixed Prayer Aligns with the Daily Temple Offerings

The second source, as we looked at briefly last week, was the daily offerings that were brought in the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). (Slide) So our three major forefathers received a revelation of the daily offerings that later became codified in the Torah as a קָרְבַּן עֹלָה korban olah (Burnt offering).The Torah ordains that one lamb was to be offered in the morning and a second lamb in the afternoon. "Offer one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight. (Numbers 28:4)" Though there is no specific offering tied to the maariv prayer, it

does correspond to the night time burning on the altar of all the fats and organs left-over from the preceding days offerings. And on Sabbath and Yom Tov, there was brought a mussaf **מוסף**, or additional offering. These brought Israel near to Yahweh and renewed ties with Him. These offerings were never meant to replace prayer, but heighten them. Watching and participating in the ritual slaughter of an animal was meant to fill us with the notion that a very valuable unblemished animal was having its blood shed as a substitute for us. Witnessing such an act, the slaughter of a perfect animal that could have been otherwise used in many practical ways, brought the viewer close. The Hebrew word for 'offering' is Korban **קרבן** and comes from the root Karov **קרב**, which means "to come close." Offerings in general would either be felt as a punishment or, if voluntarily brought, would cultivate feelings of love through the giving of oneself to Yahweh.

(Slide) We can learn a lot from this, because many people think of the Temple and post-Temple dispensations only and often view the post Temple period as a time which brought a change in the Torah from animal sacrifices to sacrifices of praise, but if we look at the pre-Temple period we see that this is a type of post-Temple period already in action. In the future we will have another Temple era, but this time without end. So, we have two major non-Temple eras, with sacrifice of praise being sufficient and two major Temple periods with sacrifices in full accompaniment to the offering of praise. Neither negates the other, but sacrifice of praise is constant that's why we have it mentioned in the TaNaK in Hosea 14:2b "...accept us graciously that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls." and again in the Netzarim Ketuvim in Hebrews 13:15 "... let us offer the sacrifice of praise to Elohim continually, that is, the fruit of our lips..."

Why are lambs offered up at these three fixed times? (Slide) Yahshua is our shepherd and by offering of two lambs daily, we proclaim that he leads us morning and evening, through all the different periods in our lives. We no longer have a Temple, but we saw (last week) that according to 1 Corinthians 6 that each person is considered a miniature Temple (Slide) "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Ruach HaKodesh, who is in you, whom you have received from Elohim? You are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19)" And this Temple requires timed operation in accordance with the Temple in Jerusalem, which was a reflection of the Heavenly Tabernacle. And this operation consists of the constant fruit of our lips according to Hosea 14.2b. This gives us deeper insight as to why we read (Click) "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is Elohim's will for you in Yahshua HaMoshiach. (1 Thessalonians 5:16)" And we noted that this process was not limited to non-Temple times, but was also the central feature of the Korban. If the offering of an innocent unblemished animal was not enough to elicit a change in self, then the soul and conscience of a person is considered pretty seared and the Korban is ineffectual and reduced to a legalistic act.

Shacharit

**(Slide)** Okay, the first fixed prayer is Tefillot Shacharit (dawn prayers) can be likened to climbing up and back down a ladder. We ascend to the heavenly spheres and fortify our sensitivity for Yahweh and His will. After this daily booster we descend, equipped to tackle the day and the struggles it will present.

**(Slide)** As with any discipline, there is an ordered way of approaching it. In a game of soccer, at the commencement of the game, the players are arranged specifically in various starting locations on their side of the field. The Shacharit prayer is the starting point of our commencement in our daily walk with the Father. This prayer is led into by a style of morning conduct, which is best suited at executing the day. Firstly, there is a range of things set in place before its even commenced. We arise in the morning thanking Yahweh for awakening us with a renewed soul. We then wash and relieve ourselves and prepare everything we need to pray Shacharit. **(Slide)** This involves prayer aids such as the tallit, kippah (head covering) siddur (prayer book) and tefillin (prayer straps, which act as a type of spiritual antennae). Once we have donned these articles, we lead in with various acknowledgements and thanksgivings.

**(Slide)** Shacharit can be observed anytime between sunrise and midday (the earlier the better). The prayer should last at least half an hour, especially if you are involved in leadership or mentoring roles within the body of Moshiach.

The warm-up is the morning blessings, the highpoint is the Shema (our declaration of faith), and the conclusion consists of confession based prayer, acknowledging any of our inadequacies and short comings.

(Slide)Read off Slide

In conclusion, fixed prayer binds a person to Yahweh, whether he feels inspired or not and when he does feel inspired, his fixed prayer schedule lifts spontaneous prayer to greater heights.

So today, we looked at a woman's role in prayer, the origin of the three fixed daily prayers, their relation to offerings, and their unique emphasises. We looked at the need for fixed prayer a little bit more and the key features of the first fixed prayer – Shacharit.