

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-13

DIG: What motivates the talmidim to ask about pray at this time? In Yeshua's model prayer, what two concerns related to ADONAI come first? Why? What personal concerns then follow? How do **prayer** and forgiveness relate? In Jesus' parable of the **friend** in need of **bread**, whom do the two friends represent? Why is persistence in **prayer** important? How do verses 9-10 relate to the parable? How might these verses be misunderstood? How do verses 11-13 clarify the intent of verses 9-10? What does this teach you about **God's Kingdom**? His goodness?

REFLECT: In what way does this **prayer** serve as a model for us to follow? What are the dangers of reciting the same **prayers** over and over again? What steps can we take to keep our **prayers** honest and meaningful? In what circumstances is it tempting to give up **praying**? What can persistent **prayer** accomplish? In what ways does this passage change your attitude toward a long-term **prayer** request or need in your life?

The example that **Daniel** set by praying **three times a day** (Daniel 6:10) was religiously followed by the Pharisees. They used **prayer** as a means of demonstrating their piety before men (see **Ii - The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector**). The **disciples** of **John** the Immerser had evidently realized that such **prayer** was unacceptable and had asked **him** to teach **them** how to **pray**. Therefore, **Yochanan** had sought to correct the perverted Pharisaic practices in **prayer**.¹⁰⁰⁷ **One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His talmidim said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John the Baptizer taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).**

In the days of **the Messiah**, each rabbi had his own unique style of **praying**. And if that rabbi had any followers or **disciples**, he would teach them to **pray** in the same manner. So that when praying in public, someone overhearing a **disciple** of a certain rabbi **praying** out loud, he or she would be able to identify their rabbi. Consequently, **Yeshua's apostles** wanted **Him** to **teach them His** unique style of **praying**.

Then we are given a beautiful example of **prayer** known as "The Lord's Prayer," because **the Lord Jesus** taught it, but could more accurately be described as "The Disciples Prayer." How ironic it is that some groups have used this model **prayer** in the very way that **Messiah** warns against - vain repetition! It is not meant to be a magical mantra, but rather, a model for **how** to **pray**.¹⁰⁰⁸ This version of **the Lord's prayer** is briefer than **Matthew's**, but it contains the same topics for prayer. I have included both for fuller understanding.

This, then, is how you should pray (Mattityahu 6:9a). All of its components may be found in the Judaism of **Messiah's** day, and is revered for its beauty and economy of words. This, then, is a model when we **pray**. It shows us the vital themes and principles desired for effective worship:

1. **Our Father in heaven** or **Avinu shebaShamayim** (Matthew 6:9b; Luke 11:2a), opens many Hebrew **prayers**. The concept of **ADONAI** being a loving **Father** is not a new concept in Judaism. Isra'el was called **His** firstborn son in **Exodus 4:22**, and **Isaiah** proclaimed to his generation: **You are our Father** (**Isaiah 63:16**). In addition, numerous **prayers** in the Siddur also address **God** as **Avinu**. Consequently, **our prayer** should be addressed to **the Father**, through the ministry of **the Son**, by the power of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh (Holy Spirit)** (see **Ephesians 2:18**). **Our Father**, the **God** of Isra'el, is still to be the focus of our **prayers**. The next two lines in **Matthew** recall the first portion of the synagogue **prayer** known as the Kaddish.
2. **Hallowed be Your name** (Mattityahu 6:9c; Luke 11:2b). When reciting the well-known Kaddish in the synagogue, the leader begins with these words, "May **His** great **name be magnified and sanctified**" or **yitgadal v'yitkadash**. **An entire tractate of the Talmud deals with the details of how to offer up prayers and blessings (Tractate Berakhot)**. The common formula continues today: Barukh Atah **ADONAI** (Blessed are You, **LORD**), reminding us to bless **HaShem** before other prayers are offered. To honor **God's** name is to honor **Him**. The Egyptians had many gods by many different names. Moses wanted to know **His** name so the Jewish people would know exactly who sent him to them (see my commentary on **Exodus At - I AM Has Sent Me To You**). **ADONAI** called **Himself I AM**, a name describing **His** eternal power and unchangeable character. **His name** is like **His** signature guarantee of **His** promises. In a world where values, morals, and laws change constantly, we can find stability and security in our unchanging **God**. **The LORD** who appeared to Moshe is the same **God** who can live in us today. **Hebrews 13:8** says: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever**. Because **HaShem's** nature is stable and trustworthy, we are free to follow and enjoy **Him** rather than spending our time trying to figure **Him** out.
3. **Your Kingdom come** (Luke 11:2c), **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven** (Matthew 6:10). **Jesus** instructs **His** disciples to focus on **the** coming messianic **Kingdom**. We are **to pray** that this same **Kingdom** will be established **on earth** during our lifetime. Continuing the Great Kaddish, the leader continues and says, ". . . in the world that **He** will create anew, when **He** will raise the dead, and give them eternal life, will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and establish **His** Temple in the middle of it; and will uproot all pagan worship from **the earth**, and restore the worship of the true **God**."¹⁰⁰⁹ The liturgy of the Torah service also elaborates on this and quotes **First Chronicles 29:11-12** when it says, "**The Kingdom is Yours, ADONAI**." All true believers desire for **God's** messianic Kingdom to come to this **earth** because that means that **Yeshua ha-Mashiach** will have returned.

When **He** rules and reigns from Jerusalem (see my commentary on **Isaiah Jg - In Righteousness You Will Be Established, Terror Will Be Far Removed**), His desire **will be done on earth as it currently is in heaven**.

4. **Give us today our daily bread (Mattityahu 6:11; Luke 11:3)**. While it is essential for us to **pray** for the bigger picture of the messianic Kingdom, **Christ** also reminds us that **the Father** is also concerned about our **daily** needs. This reminds us that for forty years **the Father** took care of the practical needs of **His** children. The manna, for example, was edible only on the very day it was given. The Israelites learned to thank **the LORD** for their **daily bread** without worrying too much about the future. When we **pray** before a meal, we need to be reminded that we are not blessing the food, but are blessing **ADONAI** for providing **our** food!
5. **Forgive us what we have done wrong, as we too have forgiven those who have wronged us (Matthew 6:12 CJB; Luke 11:4a)**. Christ's **prayer** gives us a strong reason to seek forgiveness. Since **we too have forgiven those who have wronged us**, we can ask for the same kind of forgiveness. Sometimes it is necessary to **forgive** in order to be **forgiven**; sometimes it is necessary to **forgive** because we are already **forgiven**, and sometimes it is necessary to **forgive** as we are in the process of being **forgiven** by others.¹⁰¹⁰ These principles of giving and receiving forgiveness are common in Judaism.

Each Shabbat, those who **love** the **God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob recite the sixth blessing of the Amidah, the Standing **Prayer**, which is the central **prayer** of the Jewish liturgy. It asks for forgiveness for all **sins** and praises **God** as being a **God** of forgiveness. This **prayer**, among others, is found in the Siddur for Messianic Jews (2009).¹⁰¹¹ **As traditional Judaism's central prayer, the Amidah is often designated simply as tefila, "prayer" in rabbinic literature.**

The concept of forgiveness is the central theme of the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The **Avinu Malkeinu prayer** calls on us to **forgive** others as well as receiving forgiveness. We must remember that forgiveness is more than merely forgetting the things **we have done wrong**, or the fact that **we have** been **wronged**. The perfect example is **Yeshua's** actions towards **us**. **He** does not forget our **sins**, but chooses not to dwell on them once we are adopted into **His** family (see **Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith**). In the same way, as **His** child, our forgiveness of others cannot be conditional. This is demonstrated in a special ceremony that takes place on Rosh Hashanah (the first day of the Jewish New Year). Traditional Jews go down to a lake or the ocean and **throw** bread crumbs or stones into it. This ceremony is called Tashlikh, or *you will throw*, based on **Micah 7:19 CJB**, where the prophet says: **You will throw all their sins into the depths of the sea**. If **God** has buried our **sins** in the **depths of the sea**, we would do well to let them stay there and not go fishing!¹⁰¹²

The LORD forgives us instantly (Isaiah 55:7; First John 1:9). So how long should I feel guilty? Not very long! **He** forgives me repeatedly (Nehemiah 9:17; Hebrews 7:25). **ADONAI** forgives me freely (Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:8-9). It is a gift. I can't pay for it. **God forgives** me completely (Colossians 1:14, 2:13-14; Romans 3:25; Matthew 26:28). Psalm 51:1-19 was King David's written confession to **HaShem** after an especially sinful episode in his life. David was truly sorry for his adultery with Bathsheba and for murdering her husband Uriah to cover it up (Second Samuel 11:1-27). He knew that his actions had hurt many people. But because David repented of those sins, **ADONAI** mercifully forgave him. No **sin**, except the rejection of **God the Holy Spirit Himself** for salvation, is too great to be forgiven! Do you feel that you could never come close to **the LORD** because you have done something terrible? **He** can and will forgive you of any **sin**.

6. **And lead us not into temptation** (Matthew 6:13a; Luke 11:4b). There is no definite article before the word **temptation**. Even though the article is not necessary in a prepositional phrase to make the noun definite, its omission here is significant. This indicates that this term is used in a more general sense to refer to inward seductions.¹⁰¹³ **Jesus** said: **In this world you will have trouble** (Yochanan 16:33b), and there are many twists and turns. There is no doubt that we will be tested, yet it is appropriate for **us to pray** that **the Father** would **not lead us into hard testing** (the Greek for **temptation** can also mean **testing**). **ADONAI** does not tempt anyone into **sin** (James 1:13). That would be entirely contrary to **His** nature. And our willpower is overrated. Our **sin** nature will take us further than we want to go and cost us more than we want to pay. Yet, we are told **to pray** that we might not endure **hard testing** no matter what the source.

The prayer spoken of by **Jesus** transcended any that Jewish rabbi ever conceived. **Forgive us what we have done wrong, and lead us not into temptation** find no real counterparts in the prayers of the rabbis. **In the Temple, the people never responded to the prayers with an "Amen," but always with this blessing, "Blessed be the Name of the glory of His Kingdom forever!"** The rabbis teach that it was traced all the way back to the patriarch Jacob on his deathbed. In regard to the Kingdom, whatever the rabbis understood by it, the feeling was so strong that it was said by them: **Any prayer that makes no mention of the Kingdom, is not a prayer at all.**¹⁰¹⁴

7. **But keep us safe from the Evil One** (Mattityahu 6:13b CJB). Besides our own flesh, **Yeshua** mentions another source of tempting, which is **the Evil One** or **the devil**, who is alive and well, seeking to devour any unsuspecting soul (Job 1:6-7; Zechariah 3:1; First Peter 5:8). In the midst of this great spiritual battle for our souls, this part of **the prayer** reminds us **to pray** that **the LORD** would **keep us safe**. **The Father** has not left us as orphans to fend for ourselves, but has provided powerful spiritual armor for our protection. As we walk through this life, the battle rages all around us. As a result, we must keep on **the helmet of salvation**, wear **the breastplate of righteousness**, and wield **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). There is no

doubt that this battle is intense; however, we are promised victory **because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (First John 4:4 CJB).**

The oldest and most reliable manuscripts do not include the words, "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever," so I have not included them here. The plural phrasing . . . **give us . . . forgive us . . . lead us . . . keep us . . .** is characteristically Jewish, focusing on the group rather than the isolated individual.¹⁰¹⁵ What kind of protection does **He** offer **us**? King David said: **ADONAI is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2).** The LORD's protection of His people is limitless and can take many forms. **He** characterized **God's** care with five military words. **HaShem** is like (1) a **rock** that can't be moved by any who would harm us; (2) a **fortress** or place of safety where the enemy can't follow us; (3) a **shield** that comes between us so that no one can destroy us; (4) a **horn of salvation**, or a symbol of might and power; and (5) a **stronghold** high above our enemies. If you need protection, look to **Jesus Christ**.

Then Jesus said to them: **Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight (Luke 11:5a).** The need to travel by night because of the excessive heat in the Near East is common knowledge. But in Palestine it is not necessary because there is a breeze from the sea along the coast. Therefore, the arrival of **the guest** at midnight would be unexpected. **And say: Friend, lend me three loaves of bread (Luke 11:5b).** During the meal, everyone has their own **loaf of bread**. They break off bite-sized pieces and dip it into the common dish, which is never defiled because they begin each bite with a fresh piece **of bread**.

It is important to understand that **the guest** is **a guest** of the whole community, not just of the individual. **The guest** must leave with a good feeling about the hospitality of the entire village. **A friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him (Luke 11:6).** Which really means, "I have nothing adequate to serve **my guest** so that the honor of the village will be upheld." With this in mind, the next verse becomes quite clear. **Verses 5** through **7** are together the extended question that expects an emphatic negative answer in the original Greek text. This understanding is crucial to the interpretation of this parable.

And suppose the one inside answers, "Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything" (Luke 11:7). It is as if **Yeshua** was asking, "Can you imagine going to a neighbor with the sacred request to help you entertain **a friend** and then **he** offers ridiculous excuses about sleeping **children** and a **locked door**?" The Oriental listener (or reader) would understand the communal responsibility for **the guest** and would respond, "No, I can't imagine it."

I tell you, even though the friend will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your *chutzpah*, meaning *shameless audacity, boldness, gall, brazen nerve, persistence* and just plain *guts*, and to keep from being shamed, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need (Luke 11:8). So [the borrower] keeps knocking on the door with *chutzpah* until the friend opens it. The friend knows that [the borrower] must gather up all the essentials for the meal from his various neighbors. If the friend refused the request of anything so humble as a loaf of bread [the borrower] would continue on his rounds looking for bread and cursing the stinginess of the friend who would not get up even to fulfill his duty to the village. The story would be all over the village by morning. The friend would be met with cries of "shame" everywhere he went. Because of his desire for "avoidance of shame" he will get up and give [the borrower] anything he wants.¹⁰¹⁶

The one main point of the parable of the Friend at Midnight is that to protect his honor, the friend will grant [the borrowers] request and much more. Thus, believers before ADONAI have much more reason to trust that their requests will be granted.

Christ then turned from parable to precept and applied the narrative. Jesus concluded His lesson on prayer with a threefold exhortation, a threefold promise, and a threefold illustration based upon experience. So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. And He coupled this exhortation with a threefold promise. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened (Luke 11:9-10).

Then a threefold illustration based upon experience. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? Messiah said that since a human father readily responds to the needs of his children, God the Father would respond to the needs of believers who present their prayers to Him. If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:11-13)!

Ephesians 5:18 commands Yeshua's followers to keep on being filled with the Spirit. The Ruach HaKodesh first came upon believers after they had been praying persistently (Acts 1:4-5 and 2:4), in response to Christ's own promise (here, Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8). Those filled with (the Greek word *ev* has a wide semantic range and can be translated *with, in, or by*) the Holy Spirit may expect to receive gifts (Romans 12:6-8; First Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-12), display fruits of righteousness (Galatians 5:22-23), and have the desire, love and power to communicate effectively the Good News of Yeshua by word and deed to those who have not yet believed (the entire book of Acts centers on this theme). Moreover, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Messiah doesn't belong to Him (Romans 8:9 CJB).¹⁰¹⁷

Father, forgive us for giving up on **prayer** so easily. Forgive our insincerity and lack of interest. We thank you for remaining faithful to us, even when we are unfaithful. Teach us how to pray honestly, persistently, and faithfully. Most importantly, **Father**, help us to follow in the footsteps of your perfect **Son, Jesus Christ**.¹⁰¹⁸