



The “Our Father” Prayer & Meditation

By Jim Myers

“*The Lord’s Prayer*” is found in Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-4. It is one of the best-known prayers in Christianity. However, neither Jesus nor his followers ever called it “*The Lord’s Prayer*.” “**AVINU**” is the first word in the prayer, and it is a Hebrew word that means “**Our Father**.” They called it the “**Our Father Prayer**.” It is like a time capsule that has preserved an overview of the *Kingdom of God Movement* that Jesus founded.

Almost everything Jesus taught can be traced back to specific sections of *Jewish Scriptures*. In order to understand key points Jesus made in his teachings, it is important to identify and become familiar with those *Scriptures*. **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** reveal that **Genesis**, **Isaiah**, **Ezekiel**, **Psalms**, and **Malachi** are linked to most of the teachings of Jesus. The “**AVINU Prayer**” provides answers to many questions that were important to his followers, and other members of the Jewish community. Now, with this in mind, let’s hear the words of Jesus through the “**Our Father Prayer**.”

“Our Father in the heavens”

The words, “**Our Father**,” are linked to Malachi 2:10:

*Have we not all one Father?
Did not one God create us?*

Malachi asked a rhetorical question, and the answer is emphatic:

*“Yes! We all have the same heavenly Father
because we were all created by the same God!”*

The words, “**in the heavens**,” support *Malachi’s* claim because *the God that created the heavens, the earth, and all their hosts* was located high above the heavens in the first story in *Genesis*. The opening words of the prayer answered this question – *Who is our Father?*

Our Father is the God that created the heavens, the earth, and all their hosts.

Being familiar with the first story in *Genesis* is essential for accurately understanding the teachings of Jesus. Some key points are these:

- *All people are created in the image of our Father. This defines God's relationship to all of us and our relationship to Him. We are His children.*
- *It defines our relationships with each other. "My" father is "your" father, and "your" father is "my" father. We are all members of His family.*
- *He blessed the first two humans and empowered them to fulfill specific functions.*
- *He established His kingdom.*

Jesus linked his "**Parable of the Great Day of Judgment**" to two of the points above:

- "You **blessed** of my Father" (*Genesis 1:28*).
- "The **kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world**" (*Genesis 2:2*).

One final point must be stressed. *All of the points above apply to all people – not just to Jewish people.* Now let's continue to the next words of the "**Our Father Prayer**."

"May Your name be sanctified."

Praying "may Your name be sanctified" is a call to action -- **Perform deeds that glorify our Father's name in the eyes of mankind!** Those deeds are the functions the Creator empowered all humans to do through His blessing in *Genesis 1:26-30*.

*Function as "the image of God" on the earth
by serving the rest of the creation as God's
Co-Shepherds of all living creatures on earth –
including humans.*

Jesus taught the same lesson in *Matthew 5:16*:

*"Let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works (**acts of TZEDAQAH**)
and give glory to your Father in Heaven."*

TZEDAQAH (*tzey-doc-ah*) is one of the most important words in the Jewish Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus. No English word can convey the "bundles of associations from the Jewish culture" that are attached to it.

- Acts of **TZEDAQAH** are **TOV**, meaning they *protect lives, preserve lives, make lives more functional, and increase the quality of life.*

- Acts of **TZEDAQAH** combine to create **SHALOM** by *making lives more complete, healthy, and wholesome; relationships more harmonious, mutually beneficial, and increasing loyalty; making homes and communities safer, more secure, restful, and peaceful.*

Now let's continue with the "Our Father Prayer."

**"May your Kingdom be blessed.
May Your will be done in heaven and on earth."**

"May your kingdom be blessed" reflects an entirely different concept of kingdom than the traditional English translation -- "May Your kingdom come."

- "May your kingdom come" refers to a kingdom that doesn't exist now – it is a future end-times kingdom.
- "May your kingdom be blessed" is about a present-day kingdom; one that is in the here-and-now.
- "May Your will be done" means "now" -- here and now on earth.
- "May Your will be done" and "sanctifying **Our Father's** name" are the same thing.

The ideas above are summed up in two of the blessings he gave in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5:9-10).

*Blessed are those pursuing opportunities to do **acts of TZEDAQAH**,
for **they are the Kingdom of God.***

*Blessed are the **SHALOM makers**,
for **they shall be called "sons of God."***

Now let's continue to with the "**Our Father Prayer.**"

"Give us our daily bread continually."

The Hebrew word "**LECHEM**" is translated "bread." In ancient Israel to farmers **LECHEM** meant *grain*, to shepherds it meant "*meat*," to fishermen it meant "*fish*," and to most people it meant their "**basic food requirements in general.**"

God's role in the food supply chain was clearly understood by people in a very real and tangible way. Their survival literally depended on God sending rain at the right time,

providing good weather for crops to grow, and causing those crops to be ready when the times of harvest came.

People also understood their roles in the food supply chain. They had to till the fields, plant seeds, cultivate crops as they grew, harvest the crops, store the crops, and prepare food to be eaten. However, their roles didn't end there – **they had to make sure the poorest members of the society were fed.**

Interestingly, Jews around the world have prayed words similar to “*give us our daily bread continually,*” every day from before Jesus was born until today. Praying those words is a reminder of their roles in the food chain, too.

**“Forgive us the debt of our sins
as we forgive the debt of those who sin against us.”**

The structure of the “**Our Father Prayer**” links the **basic survival need of eating** to the **basic survival need of forgiveness of sins.**

Continuing with the “**Our Father Prayer.**”

***Food** and **forgiveness** are essential for
individuals and societies to survive and thrive.*

In the Jewish culture, when a person committed a sin against another person, the damage caused by the sin was viewed as a “**debt.**” This can be seen in a very important prophesy that Mark 1:2 linked to Jesus. It is found in Malachi 3:16-4:1. A *Book of Remembrance* was written before God:

- *In it are the names of those who stand in awe of God, value His name, and serve Him. They are the **innocent ones** that God will have compassion on like a man has on his own son who serves him.*
- *The names of the guilty ones are in it too. They are the ones who did not serve Him. The Day of Judgment will be burning like a fire-pot and all of the arrogant and everyone doing wickedness will become stubble.*

God's Book of Remembrance is like a ledger used to record financial transactions. It is updated in real time as people interact with each other, Their status of “**innocent**” or “**guilty**” is set at that moment.

*How does one change his or her status from guilty to innocent and pay the debt of sin? It is through a process called **TESHUVAH** (repentance).*

- *The sinner must stop doing the sin.*

- *The sinner must pay the person harmed restitution which is required to repair the damage that had been done.*
- *The sinner must receive forgiveness from the person harmed.*
- *The person harmed also has the option of forgiving the sinner as an **act of TZEDAQAH**.*
- *The sinner cannot receive forgiveness from God until the “debt” to the person harmed has been paid or satisfied by an **act of TZEDAQAH**.*

Jesus taught about **TESHUVAH** in Matthew 5:23-26.

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **leave your gift there before the altar**, and go your way. **First be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Amen! I say to you, you will by no means get out of there until you have paid the last penny.*

Of course, when the **day of death** or the **Day of Judgment** comes, one can no longer change their status from guilty to innocent. Jesus taught that lesson **The Story of the Lazarus and the Rich Man**. Now picture the followers of Jesus as they prepared to approach the presence of God in prayer or at the Temple. I imagine those were times when people were doing **TESHUVAH** and giving **forgiveness**.

Now let's continue with the "**Our Father Prayer**."

"Do not bring us into the hands of a test."

Most English translations have – "*lead us not into temptation.*" The Greek word used in *New Testament* manuscripts may be translated as either "**temptation**" or "**test**."

- *The idea that God tests people is found in the Jewish Scriptures, but God **DOES NOT** tempt people.*
- *The Pharisees and Sadducees tried to test Jesus when they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.*
- *"Do not bring us into the hands of a test" is found in other Jewish sources, including the Talmud – "Do not bring me into the hands of sin, or into the hands of a test, or into the hands of shame."*

- *To this day, many Jews still recite those words every morning in their daily devotions.*

One of the most famous tests in the *Jewish Scriptures* is in the **Story of Job**. The verses below set the stage for that story (Job 1:6-8):

*“Now there was a day when the **sons of the god** came to present themselves before Yahweh, and **the accuser** also came among them. Yahweh said to **the accuser**, “From where have you come?” **The accuser** answered Yahweh and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.’ Then Yahweh said to **the accuser**, ‘Have you set your heart on My servant Job? For there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.’”*

Most English translations have “**sons of God**” and “**Satan**,” instead of “**sons of the god**” and “**the accuser**.” The Hebrew prefix “**HA**” is a definite article translated as “**the**.” In Hebrew, “**the**” **cannot precede personal names**. Hebrew has no formula for speaking “**the Deborah**” or “**the David**.”¹ The Hebrew word translated “**accuser**” is “**SATAN**.” Below are its meanings:

1. *adversary, opponent*
2. *one single member of the court of Yahweh “sons of god;” plaintiff or prosecutor.*
3. *a personal name, **without the definite article**.*²

Since the Hebrew word in Job is “**HA-SATAN**,” its translation cannot be “**Satan**.” In the Jewish culture and Hebrew Scriptures, the “**Creator of the heavens, the earth, and all of their hosts**” is **NOT** engaged in wars or battles with supernatural creatures. The accuser is “**one of the sons of god**” who holds the position of “**prosecutor**.” Be sure to note, that *Yahweh knows the status of individual humans -- Job is “a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.”* Yahweh is the one that pointed out Job to the prosecutor.

The source of the *misinformation* and *mistranslations* linked to the Hebrew word “**SATAN**” was **Roman Catholic Bishop Augustine of Hippo**. Augustine **reinterpreted the Garden of Eden story** and **changed the snake** (serpent) in the story from **being a wild animal**, created by Yahweh and named by Adam, **to being a supernatural creature named “Satan,”** who was in a cosmic war with Yahweh over all human souls. Augustine’s reinterpretation took place over 400 years after Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers. It appears that Augustine’s reinterpretation influenced many English translators.

The “**Our Father Prayer**” ends with these words.

And protect us from all evil.”

English translations of the final line in the “**Our Father Prayer**” reflect the above information about “the accuser.” In *Matthew* we find “**evil**,” while *Luke* has “**evil one**.” Jesus was not talking about “a supernatural creature who is in a cosmic war with Yahweh over all human souls.” He was talking about the Hebrew word **RAH** which first appears in the *Garden of Eden Story*. The first two stories in the Bible establish the sources of and define the meanings of **TOV** (good) and **RAH** (evil):

- **The Creator** is the source of **TOV** (good) which is defined as “acts that protect lives, preserve lives, make lives more functional and increase the quality of life.”
- **Adam** is the source of **RAH** (evil) which is defined as “acts that destroy lives, harm lives, make lives less functional and decrease the quality of life.”

The same idea is found in Psalms 121:7 – “May Yahweh protect you from all evil.”

“Protect us from all evil” is a request for protection from “evil acts done by people.” Amen!

All humans are “**created in the image of the Creator**” and “**His representatives on earth**.” Therefore, **every person that prayed the “Our Father Prayer” is also responsible for making its words a reality on the earth.**

“Amen” is the signal to go to work!



Our Father Prayer

Meditations

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Our Father in the heavens.</i> | 1. Identify the highest powers and authorities of the society. |
| <i>May Your name be sanctified.</i> | 2. Identify the standards and values of #1. |
| <i>May Your Kingdom be blessed.</i> | 3. Identify #1’s expectations for members of the society. |
| <i>May Your will be done in heaven and on earth.</i> | 4. Identify #1’s institutions and laws that govern the society. |
| <i>Give us our daily bread continually.</i> | 5. Know how #1 distributes power and resources in the society. |
| <i>Forgive us the debt of our sins as we forgive the debt of those who sin against us.</i> | 6. Know the requirements for being forgiven and forgiving sin-debts. |

Do not bring us into the hands of a test.

7. Know how to be faithful when tested.

And protect us from all evil.

8. Network with others to do **TOV** locally and throughout the society.

May Memorials

In Loving Memory

**SIDNEY
PERRY
DOSH, JR.**

October 18, 1938
May 17, 2006

*May you dwell under
His wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**SHIRLEY
NELSON**

December 6, 1932
May 27, 2021

*May you dwell under
His wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**JOHN C.
WORTENDYKE**

April 28, 1935
May 6, 2021

*May you dwell under
His wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

When We Remember Them

*May their memories inspire us to seek in our lives
those qualities of mind and heart
which we recall with special gratitude.*

*May their memories help us bring closer to fulfillment
their highest ideals and noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our loyalty to each other
and to those things which cannot die –
faithfulness, love, and life-giving values.*

We are blessed by our memories of them!³

¹ *The Bible With and without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently* by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler © 2020; HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY; p. 106.

² *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament; Volume 3* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner; © 1994 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands; p. 1317b.

³ Inspired from prayers found in **Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor** - The Prayer Book Press