

Exploring the Lord's Prayer in the Aramaic



By Rev. Paul M. Shaffer
St. John in the Wilderness - April 2013

Resources used for the presentation

- *Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus*, by Neil Douglas-Klotz
- *Original Prayer: Teachings and Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus*, by Neil Douglas-Klotz
- *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*
The Jewish Life and Teaching That Inspired Christianity,
by Bruce Chilton
- *Setting A Trap for God: The Aramaic Prayer of Jesus*
by Rocco A. Errico
- *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide*, by Aryeh Kaplan
- *Son of Man: The Mystical Path to Christ*, by Andrew Harvey

The Lord's Prayer

Modern English

Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial ,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Introduction (recap)

- Aramaic
 - Jesus taught mostly in Galilean Aramaic
 - A language where words can have several meanings and sometimes hold whole concepts or thoughts
 - each Aramaic word presents several possible translations
 - we must participate in re-creating meaning from those varied translations
 - *ABWOON* is a word that holds the understanding of—God creates and stretches out to bring into form or manifestation.
- Mishnah
 - A rabbi's *mishnah* was his “repetition,” the words and actions that conveyed his teachings
 - Jesus' regular use of community meals is a clear “active” part of his *Mishnah*—especially the statements and actions of the “last supper”
- Mamzer
 - Jesus may well have been considered a *mamzer*, an Israelite of suspect paternity.
 - We have a variety of stories to support this understanding

- Mamzer (cont.)
 - Jesus often addressed and drew into his group of followers those on the fringes and the outcasts
 - Jesus worked throughout his ministry to present a “kingdom” of inclusion rather than hierarchy, often turning the common understandings upside down
 - The question of “identity” would have been especially important
 - Answered in his Baptism experience
- Prayer—Setting a Trap for God
 - Refers to setting your mind and attention to catch the thoughts of God
 - Other meanings have to do with adjusting , focusing, or to incline
 - Think of sailing. It is the adjustment of the sail that “catches” the wind and moves the vessel. A boat also leans (inclines) when the wind is caught in her sails
- Prayer—Imaging
 - “Imaging” is the process of holding one thing in the mind (heart) to the exclusion of all others (sustained attentiveness)
 - The purpose was to let the image disclose its meaning to you
 - This was often done with letters of the alphabet and words in order to “see” the meaning

The Lord's Prayer: Core to Jesus' *Mishnah*

- Jesus gives the prayer twice
 - Luke 11:1-4 The disciples ask Jesus, "Teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples"
 - Matthew 6: 5-14 Jesus teaches the prayer to the multitude
 - Jesus wanted everyone to understand their relationship with God, each other (and their whole world), and themselves in this simple direct manner.
- **Abwoon** (transliterated phoenetic spelling)
 - It is composed of several parts, each of which has its own meaning:
 - Ab – shortened form of *abba*, but also means: source, parent, generative power, initiator, first cause, unity
 - Bw – a buzzing sound of the lips as air is pushed through
 - Oo – the opening sound
 - N – the close
- **Abwoon d'bwashmaya netqadash shmakh**
 - D'bwashmaya – (Heaven) consciously living in God's creative presence/ energy/fire – relationship
 - Netqadash – (Holy) pure, clean, swept out, readied for planting, set apart – active
 - Shmakh – (Name) the hard KH ending means this refers to a particular, personal form or being

The Second Line:

Teytey malkutakh nehwey tzevyanach d'bwashmaya aph barha

(Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven)

- Teytey—Aramaic emphatic
 - **Tey** means “come”—to be in this place or time
 - The repetition of a word is a Middle Eastern way of saying “Pay Attention here.”
 - Jesus used this form of expression in another way also
 - Matthew 18:3
 - Luke 23:43
 - John 5:24
 - The expression frequently used is “Amen Amen”
 - It is like a town crier going up to the roof top to call the people to listen to news
 - It is like the watchman in the tower calling out that fields or vineyards are in danger
 - Today, it is still used in Muslim culture in the prayer call from the minarets
 - Come/Come, holds the tension of knowing that something is already here—It has come, it is present—and that there is still effort to be given to bring it into full manifestation
 - It holds an excited expectation of fulfillment, while knowing that fulfillment is already present
 - There is almost a lover’s desire to bring to deepest and fullest flower the love that is clearly present but not necessarily fully expressed
 - It holds what we might term “faith”

- **Malkuthakh—commonly translated as Kingdom**
 - This is a word that has been translated from a patriarchal point of view
 - The same word also means “Queendom”—and is the stronger translation
 - Malkatuh—was a name for the Great Mother, one who saw and understood the verdant quality of the world around her and the earth’s ability to provide and take responsibility for all her creatures
 - It meant: the “fruitful arm”—one who is poised to create
 - A person who does this was often one who became a leader in their community—later defined as a queen or king
 - malkuthakh can also mean:
 - Realm
 - Vision
 - Ideal way of being and living
 - In many ways, this is my personal “I can” agreeing and working with the great “I CAN” about the best way to live
- **Nehwey is the word that states it is time to act, time to move**
 - We are not just to hold the divine vision and keep it as an ideal
 - It is not a pie-in-the-sky understanding, not something we will get to later
 - We are called to move into it and make it real now
 - Recall how many times Jesus told people the kingdom was here, now, within their circle
- **Tzevyanach is translated as “will”—thy “will” be done**

- This is not “willfulness” as in unrestrained force, or “will power;” trying hard to do something
- It is much closer to “heart’s desire” and includes the understanding of beings moving together in harmony
- In this case it refers to God’s heart’s desire
 - We are called to match our heart’s desire to God’s
 - We have gone beyond the ideal image
 - Put this together with “nehwey” and you have God moving toward us to include us in the processes of creation, and us toward God
 - A pathway is opened for right relationship with God and all that is moving together in rhythm and certainty
 - Envision the swirling movement of galaxies and you have the feeling of this
- Aykanna is a connective word translated “just as” or “as in”
 - It relates to a desire for consistency and stability
 - There is also the sense of two or more things happening at the same time
 - Or better, happening as a whole within the continuum of existence
- D’bwaSHMAYA—commonly translated “heaven”
 - Means—to consciously live in the Creation energy/vibration/fire, always
 - Being continuously open to what is around us
 - HEAVEN is then, NOT necessarily a place, but a state of experience
 - Note: the “bw” birthing breath is before the SHM energy
 - We are born with the knowledge and ability to know the essences of things
 - We are born into the image of ELOHIM (the many-faced ONE)
 - The “aya” ending is a soft breath that goes on forever

- bARHA—Earth
 - Arha holds the most ancient understanding of. . . any “form” created by God, but especially the “land” created by God at the beginning.
 - It invokes the feeling of we humans remembering to treat Earth as another BEING when we feel her support under us—holding us and embracing us
- A Look at ancient Semitic understandings of heaven and earth
 - Our most common way to understand these words
 - Heaven is someplace or state other than what we see and know
 - It is a spiritual dimension we cannot see and may get to some day (by God’s grace)
 - Earth is the world we live in and on
 - It is real material form which we deal with all the time
 - This separation is very Greek in understanding
 - We are spirits within bodies and getting rid of, or out of, the body was often seen as beneficial to deep spiritual development
 - Semitic understanding has these realms deeply intertwined as part of one being
 - Heaven and Earth are parts of a continuum of existence
 - What we do as a body (as a material mortal being) IS spirit—spiritual
 - What we think of as spiritual, or spirit connected, always has a bodily component
 - This seems to be core part of Jesus’ *Mishnah*
 - His emphasis on communal meals was an understanding that this bodily and relational activity expressed the relationships and banquet of heaven
 - Meals showed the people’s purity
 - God’s vision/realm/queendom already present and acting now

- There is a *sensuality* in this line in the Aramaic that is missing from our English translation—a lover’s cry, a call and response, a deep movement of Beings together.

Teytey malkuthakh neyweh tzevyanach aykanna dbwashmaya aph barha

(Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven)

Come, come your realm, moving with your heart’s desire within the wholeness of our being

- Unite our “I Can” to yours so that we walk as kings and queens with every creature. Help us love beyond our ideals and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
- Desire with and through us the rule of universal fruitfulness on the earth. As we find your love in ours, let heaven and nature form a new creation
- Come into the bedroom of our hearts, prepare us for the marriage of power and beauty. Let your heart’s fervent desire unite heaven and earth in our harmony.

A Fun Meditation on Being Embraced by Earth

- This is best done on a warm night in a place you can see the stars, but can be done effectively during the daytime as well.
 - Find a place where you can lie on your back and look up into the sky. Relax and breathe quietly. Feel the earth underneath you, supporting your body. In this relaxed state, look up into the stars or the clouds and sky above you.
 - Now, switch your perspective. Instead of looking up into the night or day sky, understand that you are looking DOWN into the infinite dimension of SPACE that is below you.
 - What may begin to happen is a sense of disorientation and the possibility that you might fall into that infinity of space—lose contact with the world you know, and be lost.
 - While feeling that disorientation, KNOW that you are being embraced and gently held by Earth, your Mother, and she will not let you go. She loves you and you are a part of her. Enjoy her embrace and care.
 - Switch your perspective back and know that all creatures and forms are held in her embrace (even the birds and others who fly) and thank her.