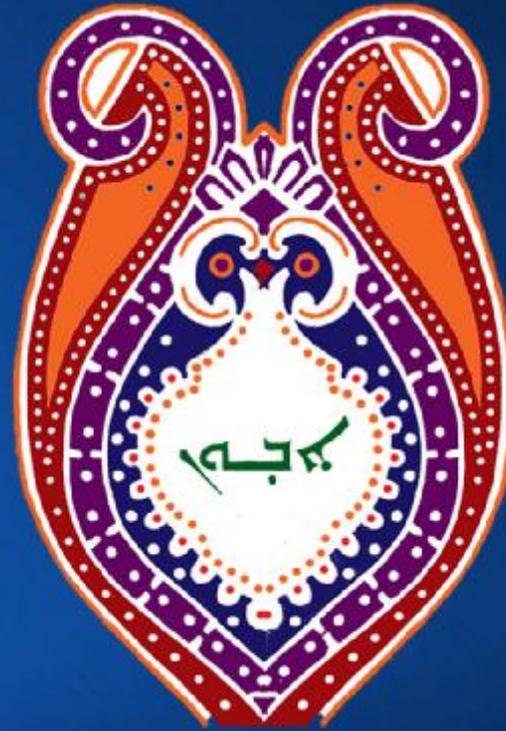


Exploring the Lord's Prayer in the Aramaic



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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

Opening Prayer (BCP page 355)

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your Holy Name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Introduction (recap)

- Aramaic
 - Jesus taught in Galilean Aramaic a poetic language where words may hold whole concepts
- Mishnah
 - A rabbi's *mishnah* was his “repetition,” the words and actions that conveyed his teachings
- Mamzer
 - Jesus might have been considered a *mamzer*, an Israelite of suspect paternity.
 - Jesus often addressed those on the fringes and the outcasts
 - Jesus worked to present a “kingdom” of inclusion rather than hierarchy
 - The question of “identity” would have been especially important

- **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.
 - Jesus frequently used the imagery of the Holy Spirit as wind or breath
- **Prayer—Imaging**
 - “Imaging” is the process of holding one thing in the mind to the exclusion of all others. In the Jewish tradition of prayer this is also known as “engraving.”
 - The engraved image is held in the heart through 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 - To the disciples
 - Matthew 6: 5-14 - To the multitude
- **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, creation into forms
 - Hearing *abwoon* is hearing the movement of Creation – God (ab) creates (bw) by stretching out the firmament (oo) and making all things appear (n)
 - Abwoon d'bwashmaya netqadash shmakh
 - Teytey malkuthakh nehwey tzevyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph barha

What have we learned so far?

- God is the Creator who continuously opens a space for the new to be present—*ABWOON*
- Heaven is not only a place, but is consciously living in loving, creative interaction with God—it is a relationship—*D'BWASHMAYA*
- God does not need to be swept out or prepared, but is in the action of preparing us—*NETQADASH*
- God is personal—has a specific, particular BEING—*SHMACKH*
- Come, Come is a call and response that acknowledges something is here, but not in fulfillment; like a lover's cry—*TEYTEY*
- The “kingdom” of God is a “fruitful arm” meant to sustain, support and protect the other—*MALKUTHAKH*
- God's “heart's desire” is the vision / realm we want to see fulfilled, and we are called to be a part of bringing that about—*TZEVYANACH*
- It is not just a “spiritual” thing, but is expected to happen in our earthly, daily experience—*AYKANNA*
- Our beings, our “forms,” and all we see around us, are the place where all of this starts—*BARHA*

The Third Line:

Hawvlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana

(Give us this day our daily bread)

- Hawvlan—to give
 - There are several other translations possible
 - Humanly generate
 - Produce with life and soul
 - Animate with fruitfulness
 - The key concept is to bring something into existence that has life and fruitfulness
 - Our interactions in life is our “work” and is part of that process
 - We are expected to be co-creators and have co-responsibility in life / we are to be as much “givers” as God
 - Not just for ourselves but for all of life
 - This is a Genesis understanding—we were placed in the garden to tend it, watch over it, know the essences of its creature and Name them—to be the “fruitful arm”
 - Jesus frequently used Genesis / Creation stories as the heart of his teaching
- Lachma—generally translated as “bread”
 - Also means
 - Understanding / sustenance for growth of any kind / support for all life

- The core word here is HMA which relates to the divine feminine
 - Generative power
 - Verdancy
 - Warmth
 - Passion and possibility
- Because of this core word, *lachma* is deeply related to *hochma*
 - Holy Wisdom—as found in the Book of Proverbs

“Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: ‘To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. . . Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.’”
(Proverbs 8: 1-4, 9:5-6)

All of chapter 8 is a description and call from Holy Wisdom through to verse 7 of chapter 9 where begins several chapters of single line statements of wise counsel for living

- Jesus was sometimes understood as the embodiment of Wisdom

“For she [Wisdom] is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty. Therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. And being but one, she can do all things and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets.” (Wisdom of Solomon 7: 25-27)

“My Son, I was waiting for you in all of the prophets, waiting for you so I could rest in you”—Wisdom speaking to Jesus in the non-canonical Gospel of the Hebrews

- Jesus spent much of his time acting in the manner of Wisdom in gathering all people to his table, and preparing to feed them
- Back to the BREAD
 - This deep relationship between *lachma* (bread, sustenance, understanding) and *hochma* (Holy Wisdom) is a clear picture of the continuum and interconnected reality between that which is “earthly” and that which is “spiritual” (or heavenly) in Semitic thought.
 - How we live within and understand daily life IS our spiritual reality
- Deeper understandings of “bread” in Semitic culture
 - Bread had very sacred meaning for the people Jesus met and talked to
 - Jesus’ use of communal meals was a sign that the radical hospitality for the stranger was present (reflecting the hospitality and abundance of God in Creation), and,

- That here was a place where honesty and openness were the norm
 - Bread on the table meant that God’s sustaining presence was here and that God’s goodness covered all that was to happen in that place
- There is a saying for Middle Eastern people that, “We have Bread and Salt between us.” It means that we have made a sacred pact, a solemn agreement.
 - To break this covenant showed a person was base and not worthy of trust and was a stigma that held with the family for many generations
- Women would bake only enough bread for the day to cover the family and any visitors or strangers who might join them
- All of this comes from God’s Creation and the giving of daily bread to the people when they were in the wilderness. It is God who provides/sustains/cares for
- Within the other translations for *lachma*—understanding, truth, and teaching—and its interconnection to *hochma*, can be found the core of the “great commandment”

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your being and with all your power and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it. Love your neighbor as yourself. In these two is the meaning of the Torah and the Prophets.”

(Matthew 22:35-40)

- D'sunqanan—is a very interesting word which refers to taking care of our needs on its first level, but also translates:
 - A nest
 - The imagery here is that we are “nested” in God. We are surrounded by God’s loving care and concern. We are supported and held and fed within God as though we are fledglings. Here we are taught the skills needed to fly on our own and care for our own.
 - Birds often give their young food by regurgitating it. A large part of the imagery here is that we are to bring what is sustaining for our family, group or community from deep inside.
 - Jesus used the imagery that it is not what goes into a person that defiles them. It is what comes from inside. As we think, so are we.
 - What we bring forth should be FOOD for others that both protects and lovingly encircles them and is sustaining for their life—parent bird giving food to its young
 - An illumined measure—having to do with weights and scales being accurate, ie: giving in “good measure.”
 - The reciprocal understanding of doing our best to care for another. When we are honest and forthright about how we treat others, we come to expect the same.
 - A circle of possession, NOT possessiveness—knowing what is yours to care for
 - Jesus telling the stories of the lost coin and the lost sheep are examples of this understanding in daily living. The owner, or caretaker knows when the sheep or coin is lost (that which they possess or care for) and does the work to find it because this is what sustains them and takes care of their needs and the needs of the animals or the family.

- Yaomana—today, or, this day
 - This word comes from the word *YOM* the word for “day.”
 - We know *yom* mostly from the story of Creation where we hear it said, “an evening and a morning, the [1st , 2nd , 3rd , 4th , 5th , 6th] day.”
 - The word refers to a time of light, or, the time when activity is going on, and is a reference to God’s active and sustaining presence
- Jesus gave several examples and stories of our need to be awake and pay attention while it is still “day” (while God is still actively engaged) because there will come a time when that is not true (night would come, God would not be easily available).
 - This kind of understanding comes from several points in their history and cultural knowledge
 - Genesis—there were times when God was actively creating and times when this was not so
 - The Time of slavery in Egypt—400 years when God was not actively engaged with the people
 - The Time of Captivity—the land had been devastated and the people taken away. It was seventy years before they were allowed to return and rebuild
 - The Time of Oppression—many countries had control over Israel up to and including the Romans. While there are some apocryphal books written, it is about another 400 years that they are oppressed by others. Again understood as a time when God was silent (night).
 - What other images of “day” and “night” does Jesus use? (times of activity and preparedness and times of waiting)

- To reiterate :
 - To Give, generate and produce fruit, animate with life—*HAWVLAN*
 - Bread, Understanding, Sustenance for living—*LACHMA*
 - To be embraced and enfolded with possession, Nested—*D'SUNQANAN*
 - Today, this day, during the time of life's activity—*YAOMANA*
- Animate the earth within us: we then feel the Wisdom underneath, supporting all.
- Generate through us the bread of life: we hold only what is asked to feed the next mouth.
- Let the measure of our need be earthiness: give all things simple, verdant, passionate.

Hawvlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana

Give us this day our daily bread

Next: line 4

Meditations on *LACHMA*:

- What does Jesus mean by, “This is my body?” when referring to the bread we eat at Communion?
- Intone the sound of *lachma* slowly (lah-ch-ma). Feel the sound become denser inside. Feel where it resonates in your body. Remember to take all things step-by-step, without force, and look to what is needed right now—this moment of our lives.
- What feeds, sustains and strengthens your “I AM?” Sitting quietly, relax your muscles and mind. Open your thoughts to explore gently how you are fed psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and bodily. Leave nothing out, but take your time. You may want to choose an area per day.
 - One way to do this is to envision a table where all aspects of your being (including your child self, and those you normally shy away from) are welcome. Everything your whole being needs is available here
 - As you explore, turn the thought around and ask how you are providing that same need for others—for your family, for your friends, for those you work with, for those you don’t like, for your community, for the earth herself and all her creatures