

## Patriarch Prayers

Tonight, we are not studying the book of Judges. I am continuing on the topic of prayer. Last week I made an attempt to link “relationship” to the book of Judges. Not tonight.

Have you ever approached a situation and felt impelled to go in a specific direction. The Holy Spirit pushed you. There was no other way you could go. Unless you wanted to fight the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can do that. Look at Mark 1:12 when the Holy Spirit “brought” Jesus into the desert to be tested.

### **Mark 1:12 (NASB) And immediately the Spirit \*brought Him out into the wilderness.**

**Brought.** The word “brought” is a rather weak translation of “ekballo.” It should be more like “impelled” or “threw” or “drove” Him into the desert.

Tonight is one of those situations for me. I had to continue on the topic of prayer. I also found it intriguing. I never studied prayer in the Old Testament till now. In the past, I have only looked at prayer as it applied to me as a Christian with an occasional look at promises from the Old Testament.

Here is an overview of what I intend to present. In other words, I’m going to tell you what I’m going to tell you before I tell you...

The start of calling on the name (Ha Shem) of Yahweh: Gen 4... Then look at references to prayer, mostly in the book of beginnings, Genesis. Note the verbs used. Note the titles of address to God. Then perhaps we

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will have time to look at those words and see how they relate to how we pray today. I am not including the book of Job.

Another point I need to make. During the last couple of weeks, the importance of covenant has become evident. Covenants defined the relationship of God to His people as “sovereign.” For Christians, position in Christ defines our relationship to God as “Father.”

Before starting on a journey into prayer in the Old Testament, let’s review what prayer is. These points are given without Scripture references, they are merely information that Herman already taught some time ago.

### **I. Phases of Prayer**

#### **A. Prayer Preparation**

Previously on Wednesday nights Herman conducted a prayer meeting. Now Wednesday service includes prayers at the beginning of the service. Part of prayer is preparation. We talk about what and who needs prayer before we pray. We prepare. Preparation might be as simple as having a single topic or person to pray for. Or you may have a prayer list. The church has a prayer list sent out weekly. That is part of prayer preparation.

There will be time when you have no time for preparation. You have one topic in mind: Help! The situation you found yourself in prepared you.

#### **B. Prayer Petition**

Then, there is actual prayer. We approach God based upon our relationship to God. As Christians, we approach God as our

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Father, in fellowship by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus.

Remember, we can approach God as “Father” because of our position in Jesus Christ. We pray with His authority because we are “in” Jesus positionally.

### **C. Prayer Pursuit**

For some things, Paul prayed multiple times. We pray “continually.” That is, unless God answers your prayer almost immediately. And that happens.

I told you once or twice the story of me as a new believer, feeling the need to share the gospel. But, I didn’t have much experience doing that. And I didn’t know how to start. So, one day while I was a student at Florida State University, I was walking with an unbeliever from Iran who was a student there. Those were in the days when there was still a Shah in Iran. I prayed to the Father asking for a little help in getting started presenting the gospel to this fellow student. Almost immediately, this student turned to me asking if I knew anything about God!

From another perspective, as Herman has said previously, you may be the answer to your own prayer. Say you pray that someone you know gets the gospel. God may put you into a situation in which you give the gospel to that person.

## **II. How to Pray**

- A. In Fellowship, filled with the Holy Spirit, walking by faith, faith dependence upon the Holy Spirit.**

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- B. Understanding doctrine: what to pray for and what not to pray for
- C. For the Christian, pray to God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit by the Authority/Name of Jesus Christ.
- D. Determine what you are really praying for.
- E. Pray in God's will.

### III. Elements of Prayer

- A. Thanksgiving (in all things give thanks)

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.**

- B. For Self, like Paul in

**2 Corinthians 12:7 Because of the extraordinary greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!**

**2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me.**

**Corinthians 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”**

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**I pleaded.** This is from the same root as “paraclete.” From Strong’s Concordance via Biblehub: (a) I send for, summon, invite, (b) I beseech, entreat, beg, (c) I exhort, admonish, (d) I comfort, encourage, console.

OK, that was New Testament and this lesson is about prayer in the Old Testament: Genesis 15:2 (see below for the text & comment)

C. For others like Abraham in Genesis 20:17

Here is a quote from Hermans sermon last Sunday: “You should note Paul’s continual prayer for those who have believed in Jesus and who love to grow in the Word of God. (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:4. Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2:13; and Philippians 4) “

D. For leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-12)

E. For God’s Will

IV. What is Prayer? A simplistic answer is, talking to God.

Now let’s follow a trail of prayers in the Old Testament, concentrating in the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings.

### ***1. The beginning of prayer.***

It is fitting that the book of beginnings, Genesis would have the “beginning” of prayer:

**Genesis 4:25 Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, “God has appointed**

**me another child in place of Abel, because Cain killed him.”**

**Genesis 4:26 To Seth also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then people began to call upon the name (shem) of the Lord (Yahweh).**

**People.** There is no word for people or men in this verse. It was added to smooth out the context.

**Began.** This word can mean many things. But this is in the “hophel” which is a bit unusual. This stem is the passive of the causative. The calling upon the name of the Lord was caused to begin.

**Call.** This is the normal word for calling. But this is our first description in the Bible of what prayer is. It is calling on God.

**Upon the name of the Lord.** “Name” is “shem.” If you know someone’s name you know something about them. “Lord” is Yahweh which we know is God’s name for the sons of Israel.

**Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”**

Moses is asking, how should the people address you?

**Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

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**I AM.** This is a verb from the same root as Yahweh. It actually means “I am.” When Jesus said, “I am,” some wanted to kill Him for making Himself out to be deity.

**Exodus 3:15 God furthermore said to Moses, “This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: ‘The Lord (Yahweh), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is the name for all generations to use to call upon Me.**

**The Lord.** Here we have the name of God: Yahweh.

**To call upon Me.** The text does not say to call upon Me. Here is the Young’s Literal Translation:

**Exodus 3:15 And God saith again unto Moses, `Thus dost thou say unto the sons of Israel, Jehovah, God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this [is] My name -- to the age, and this My memorial, to generation – generation.**

Without getting deep into Hebrew and Theology, the point is that “Yahweh” is God’s name, forever. So I am thinking, why don’t Christians call God “Yahweh?” It was one of those questions that perhaps I should have asked a long time ago. But just now, I ask myself this question. As Christians, we do not address God by His name! We address Him by our relationship to Him, “Father.” That thought took me by surprise. We don’t call on His name. We are family. God is not just a

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friend, He is the Father of Jesus in whom we reside, positional truth. Most people don't call their human father by his first name. They invoke the family relationship. Christians have something that the Old Testament believers did not have.

**Calling on the name (shem) of the Lord (Yahweh).** Here is a perspective from the TDOT concerning this phrase: "Invoking a name is not a magical technique that uses the name to summon a person; it is the verbal appeal for the deity's presence that is foundational to all acts of prayer and worship." This term, HaShem Yahweh is used multiple times in the Old Testament as the person prayers are addressed to.

In the Old Testament, they had a name with which to address God, "Yahweh." They were bound by covenants which defined their relationship as vassals to the sovereign. They could, on occasion, talk face-to-face as a friend to God.

In Christianity, we do not address God by name but by our intimate family relationship. If you get nothing more out of this study than this, I would be very happy. We have a more intimate relationship to God than the Old Testament faith heroes had. When you appreciate that, you have a greater appreciation of what we received as part of our salvation. We have an intimate familial relationship to God our Father.

## **2. *Abraham prayed to God***

Using the word we found in Genesis 4 for prayer, "called," Abraham and others called upon the Name of Yahweh (God).

Abraham was chosen by God. Abraham responded in faith. Abraham called upon the name of the Lord (HaShem Yahweh). Here we do not have the prayer, only the narrative description that he called upon the Name of the Lord (Yahweh).



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**Genesis 12:7** And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

**Genesis 12:8** Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

**Genesis 13:2** Now Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

**Genesis 13:3** And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,

**Genesis 13:4** to the place of the altar which he had made there previously; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Again, the narrative describes his prayer as calling on **the name of the Lord**.

**Genesis 21:33** Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

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Once more Abraham is in prayer. When “call on the name of the Lord” is related to prayer, then we see Abraham praying. We do not know the content of that prayer, only that he prayed.

Up to this point, we have seen the description of Abraham calling on the name of the Lord. Abraham talked directly with God. For that he used the normal word for talking in Hebrew, *amar*.

**Genesis 15:2 But Abram said (*amar*), “Lord (Yahweh) God (Elohim), what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”**

**Genesis 15:3 Abram also said, “Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir.”**

Here Abraham is asking on his own behalf. Note, he addresses God as Yahweh Elohim, the name of God.

Abraham also prayed intercessory prayer:

**Genesis 20:17 Then Abraham prayed (Hebrew *palal*, meaning to pray, intervene, interpose) to God (Elohim), and God (Elohim) healed Abimelech and his wife and his female slaves, so that they gave birth to children.**

So we have another Hebrew word used in prayer, *palal*. This one is can mean intervene, interpose, also petition. In other words, intercessory prayer. He is praying for someone else. And God answers his prayer.

The TDOT says, “Passages in which a leader prays to Yahweh in the name of the people have attracted special attention. They are claimed to

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prove that the primary meaning of pll is “intercede on behalf of.” There are several passages given by the TDOT to support this. In the end the TDOT does not fully agree with this stance, although for some technical issues.

Another quote from the TDOT on this Hebrew word, “Neither tepilla (noun) nor pll (verb) hithpael defines a prayer with specific content or liturgical form. Quite the contrary: our expressions presuppose the widest possible range of liturgical prayer: lament and petition (Isa. 38:2-5; 2 Ch. 33:12-13, 18-19; for the most part also in the Psalms and 1 K. 8); praise and thanksgiving (2 S. 7:18-27; Ps 42:9[8]; Neh. 11:17; 2 Ch. 20:22,27); vow (1 S. 1:10-11). In one text the pl. tepillot denotes the various prayer genres collectively (Ps. 72:20).”

### 3. *Isaac prayed to God*

**Genesis 26:25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.**

This description is similar to descriptions of Abraham’s prayers.

### 4. *Jacob prayed to God*

Jacob was a “deceiver,” liar, perhaps cheat. Yet what follows is an amazing prayer. It illuminates the connection of Old Testament prayer to the covenants.

With Jacob, we get the words of one of his prayers:

**Genesis 32:9 Then Jacob said, “God (Elohim) of my father Abraham and God (Elohim) of my father Isaac, Lord (Yahweh—God’s name), who**

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**said (participle - saying) to me, ‘Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ (Genesis 26:3; 31:13)**

Jacob is addressing God, identifying Him as the God of his father and grandfather and the one who addressed him, Jacob. He calls Him Yahweh, His name.

**Genesis 32:10 I am unworthy of all the favor and of all the faithfulness, which You have shown to Your servant (‘abd – servant or slave); for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies (literally “camps”).**

Jacob expresses his humility (unworthy) and acknowledges that his wealth was blessing from Yahweh. This might be considered a way of thanking God. It is also the correct orientation to God, humility.

**Unworthy.** The Hebrew word means to be small or insignificant. But it is more than just “small.” Per TDOT, “Only rarely, however, does it refer to size in a neutral sense; inherent in the word group is the negative connotation “be negligible, be weak.” This is where its semantic core lies.” Jacob is expressing his humility toward God. In other word, his grace orientation. Perhaps this foreshadows Paul’s response to the “thorn in the flesh,”

**Servant.** The word ‘abd means servant, slave. But in the context of “covenant,” wouldn’t “vassal” be a more correct meaning?

**2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in**

**persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

**Favor.** This is “chesed,” covenant love. Jacob is referring to the love of God; this is His love relationship to Jacob based upon being a believer in the covenants.

**Faithfulness.** Again, this refers to God’s character. First there is the blessing, chesed, then there is God’s faithfulness. Jacob says he understands the character of God and his relationship to God. He depends upon God’s faithfulness to the covenant to answer him.

**Your servant.** Remember, the covenants are between a sovereign and a vassal. Jacob understands that relationship and uses the word ‘abd which can mean servant or slave.

**Genesis 32:11 Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children.**

Now we come to Jacob’s petition. Save me.

**Save me.** This is not the word for deliver used in Judges. This means to take away or separate.

**Please.** This is a particle and interjection expressing entreaty. “Please” is an acceptable translation.

**Genesis 32:12 For You said, ‘I will assuredly make you prosper and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be counted.’”**

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Jacob then uses a promise from God, a promise from the covenant, as the basis for his prayer.

**I will assuredly make you prosper.** There are two verbs here, one of which is an infinitive absolute which when combined with a regular verb of the same root serves to emphasize the action. Both are in the hiphil which is causative. God will cause this to happen.

Again, this is looking back to the promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-4), Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5) and Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15).

Hebrew verbs for prayer (Just the ones we have encountered so far)

1. **Qara.** (TDOT) “Throughout the OT, but especially in Psalms, qara finds explicit use as a term to denote the establishment of a relation between a human individual and God.”

“The formula qara bešem yhwh occurs five times in Genesis (4:26b; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; possibly J/JE); here it is the idiom of choice to express the establishment of a relationship with Yahweh. Invoking a name is not a magical technique that uses the name to summon up a person; it is the verbal appeal for the deity’s presence that is foundational to all acts of prayer and worship.”

“In the Psalter qara bešem yhwh refers in laments to a cry of lamentation addressed to Yahweh (Ps 79:6; 80:19[18]; 116:4); in thanksgiving and hymns such a cry is an expression of praise and exultation (105:1; 116:13, 17).”

“Used in parallel with amar, the expression introduces the actual words of the petition addressed to Yahweh: for deliverance from thirst (Jgs. 15:18), for physical strength (Jgs. 16:28), for healing of a deadly disease (1 K. 17:20-21). In most cases, by describing the results of

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calling upon Yahweh the petitioner bears witness to Yahweh's effectual power (1 S. 12:17-18; 2 K. 20:11).

“This, then, is the theological import of qara in conjunction with ana: prior to any specific instantiation, it expresses quite fundamentally “the profoundly dialogical nature of the relationship between God and human beings in the OT.”

2. **Palal**. Means to pray, often with the idea of interceding on behalf of someone. Quotes from the TDOT were given previously. The Hebrew words for prayer deserve an entire hour of teaching by themselves. Perhaps another day.

### ***Old Testament (Genesis) Patriarch Prayer Summary***

1. Pray (call/intercede) similar to Christians
2. To Yahweh instead of to the “Father” like Christians.
3. Based on a relationship established by the Abrahamic Covenant & subsequent related covenants. Christians pray based upon position in Christ. That is why we say in Christ's name.
4. With grace orientation (humility) same as Christians.
5. With Thanksgiving and intercession for self and others like Christians.
6. Depending upon God's character, lovingkindness/covenant love and faithfulness, like Christians.