

A NEW SPIRITUALITY

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Prayer

Most of us long to connect with someone who can understand us and share in our day to day life. That is what prayer is - a personal connection with God who created us and loves us. Prayer is like talking to your best friend. It's easy to talk to someone who loves you unconditionally and knows everything about you. But if God already knows everything about us and everything we need, why do we need to pray? Because we are not puppets. We have been given freedom and it is up to us to choose to connect with the Divine and establish a relationship with him.

Jesus taught his disciples what is known as The Lord's Prayer. It is said to be the most powerful prayer because of the depths of meaning contained within it. We do not have to understand all that it means for it to have power. Among the articles on prayer in this issue, we have one on the Lord's Prayer which seeks to broaden our appreciation of that prayer by suggesting some of the meanings available to us through the Aramaic language in which it was originally spoken.



Whenever I have been reading the Lord's prayer, I have plainly perceived an elevation toward the Lord which was like an attraction, and at the same time my ideas were open, and from this there was effected a communication with some societies in heaven; and I noticed that there was an influx from the Lord into every detail of the prayer, thus into every idea of my thought that was from the meaning of the things in the prayer. The influx was effected with inexpressible variety, that is, not the same at one time as another; hence also it was made evident how infinite are the things contained in the prayer, and that the Lord is present in every one of them.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Prayerfully Eric Hoffman

Prayer doesn't just happen automatically when we bow our heads and think about God. The kind of prayer that really nourishes us spiritually is a learned skill that incorporates the deliberate pursuit of inner silence, with a conscious awareness of the presence of the Divine. True prayer is not an *activity* as much as it is a *state of being*.

This state of being is wonderfully and appropriately illustrated in the Bible in the image of the Temple. After years and years of transporting the Ark of the Covenant from sanctuary to sanctuary, a permanent building was finally built in Jerusalem under the leadership of Solomon. The Temple was to serve as a fixed sanctuary built specifically for the purpose of acknowledging God and the essential role that God played in the life of the kingdom.

When we as individuals commit ourselves to making worship a regular part of our lives, we are likewise building a Temple. It is an internal Temple: a place where we may return in order to reconnect with the Divine. It is Solomon who builds the Temple in the biblical narrative. And it is our inner Solomon who builds our Temple as well, since Solomon corresponds to that part of us that genuinely loves doing what is good and true. It is this love in us that gives rise to our commitment to worship and to pray.

When we enter into our Temple, we are called upon to listen for the influence of the Lord. However, when we think about prayer, we often think in terms of what we say to God. In other words, when called upon to pray, we are prone to do all the talking!

You see, prayer is a state that calls for silence, too. I'm not talking about external silence, because we can pray in a room full of noisy people if we choose to. What we need is *inner* silence, as free from physical brain activity as possible. I was amazed several years ago, leading a group that was exploring meditation, at how many people when asked to clear their mind of all thought said that they couldn't do it. They had to have an idea in their head at all times - kind of like people who need to keep their hands occupied continuously. When the busyness of our daily lives intrudes upon the time we spend in our Temple, the

listening side of prayer can easily be overlooked. Of course, there are different ways to pray. "Busy prayer" is that in which we do all the talking. Responsive prayer is that in which we spend at least as much time listening for God as we do in addressing God. Swedenborg felt that prayer needs to change us somehow. In his *Spiritual Diary*, #3677, he relates that ritualistic or formulaic (external) prayer is not effective in the remission of our sins. And responsive prayer changes us in a way that "busy prayer" does not.

To the degree that we seek inner silence, and to the degree that we are focused on heavenly matters and not material matters, God fills our Temple with the Divine Presence. God helps us to see and feel the potential for real beauty in our lives. God instills within us a sense of clarity, so that we may perceive the deeper reasons for all our circumstances. God inspires us with the knowledge that everything is going to be okay. Such is the power of the Divine Spirit that it can reestablish in us a sense of the sacred whenever we need to feel it.

When next you enter into prayer, make a deliberate effort to locate within your consciousness a quiet place, a sacred place, a place that no outside chaos can disturb. This is your inner Temple. You may find that thoughts of your life outside of worship are entering your mind. Acknowledge them, and set them aside for a more appropriate time. This time will be for you and you alone.

There are many things that we could pray for. There are many people for whom we could ask God's love and support. There are many things that we could say to God; but for the moment let us simply listen in silence for what God has to offer us.

And as we pray, let us promise to return to this Temple from time to time. Let us make a commitment to center ourselves in prayer on a regular basis. And each time we pray, each time we seek this silent peace, may we re-enter our worldly lives better equipped to practice God's love in all that we do, making our whole life an expression of the Divine that shines in each and every one of us.

Editorial

Prayer

Prayer is talking with God. In our busy worlds, finding time to pray takes conscious effort. But prayer can take place anytime, anywhere - while traveling to work, walking the dog, in the middle of a room full of people, you name it. People don't need to know you are praying. We are told to pray in secret. But there are times when we pray out loud with other people, such as when we say The Lord's Prayer together in church. There are other times when we may pray out loud on behalf of a group of people. I have heard of a surgeon who prays with those assisting him before performing an operation.

When praying about a problem, however, we have to be prepared to be a part of the answer. The Writings of Swedenborg teach us that we should not just hang down our hands and expect a solution to materialize. While miracles do happen, it is far more likely that the Lord will work through you or others to resolve the issue. We may need to be ready to make changes in our lives, or step out of our comfort zones. God works through our efforts. His answer to our prayer may be to show us what we need to do and to give us the resolve to do it.

Answers to prayer may come in various ways. God speaks to us through his Word, through random thoughts and ideas, conversations with others, and through circumstances. These should always be confirmed by our conscience. Sometimes the answer will not be the one we want to hear. We should always say, "Your will be done."

Whatever you pray, pray from the heart. If nothing is laid on your heart, pray The Lord's Prayer. It will bring his angels around you.

Jenny



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A NEW CHRISTIANITY

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The Lord's Prayer: Awareness and Meditation

Roslyn Taylor

In the last few years, my experience of praying the Lord's Prayer has been revolutionized and incredibly deepened. This change came about after I read Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus by Neil Douglas-Klotz (Harper Collins, New York, 1990). Douglas-Klotz explains that Jesus spoke in Aramaic, including of course when he taught his disciples the way they should pray. The Aramaic language may be derived from Hebrew but is more likely derived from more ancient Middle Eastern roots. Like Hebrew, it expresses many layers of meaning due to its root and pattern system. Sometimes a word may have several seemingly unrelated meanings, but on reflection an inner connection becomes apparent. Douglas-Klotz also points out that Aramaic has sound meaning that can resonate in the body, as other ancient languages do.

Aramaic New Testament texts known as Peshitta, meaning simple or true, were preserved and used in the Syrian Christian church since at least the second century AD. Some controversy exists regarding the age and authority of the Peshitta texts but, regardless, the language is closer to Jesus' spoken words than the Greek texts used in the Western Christian church which have also been preserved in the Lord's providence. The Eastern Orthodox church believes all the gospels were in fact first written in Aramaic, and then translated into Greek for the use of the Western European converts to Christianity. It is the Peshitta texts of the New Testament that Douglas-Klotz uses to find the actual words spoken by Jesus as he taught his followers, including us, how to pray.

The book offers possible new translations and layers of meaning within the Lord's Prayer, all from the original Aramaic words. It also offers body prayers for each line of the prayer, as a way to access the body resonance of the language, and as an embodied meditation on the deeper meanings of the prayer. As I read and experienced these built-in deeper meanings, I was sometimes stunned at how closely they echoed explanations in the

Writings of Swedenborg about the Lord's Prayer. Further reading in the Writings showed, not surprisingly, some obvious instances of congruity between the explanation given in the Writings, and the meanings packed into the words - meanings that were obvious to the original audience and have been obvious to readers of the Peshitta over time. Not only that, but both Douglas-Klotz and the Writings address the layers of meaning within the original language of the Word, and how the meaning layers work.

Consider this from Arcana Coelestia 6619 concerning the Lord's Prayer in general:
The contents of that prayer hold more within them than the whole of heaven is capable of understanding; also that people find more in it, the more their thought is opened towards heaven.

The contents of that prayer hold more within them than the whole of heaven is capable of understanding

Arcana 9349 addresses the nature of the ancient languages used to record God's Word: ... *in the Lord's Divine Providence it has happened that every jot and tittle of the Word, especially in the Old testament, has been preserved since it was written. It has been shown from heaven that in the Word not only each word but also each letter, indeed - incredibly so - each small part of a letter in the original language has an inner holiness, as angels of the inmost heaven are able to perceive.*

So I offer you several new ways to appreciate the Lord's Prayer, hoping that your experience of praying this sacred prayer may be enhanced and deepened. First, there is a transcription of the Aramaic words Jesus used when he taught this prayer, followed by one possible translation from the many possible, due to the richness of meaning in the Aramaic words. This is followed by another possible version of the prayer, constructed from statements and phrases in the Writings that unpack the inner meaning of the words. Finally, there is a series of body prayers, one for each line of the prayer, which can be used as a meditative way to experience the depth of meaning in this most important prayer.

The Lord's Prayer, transcribed from the Aramaic (from Prayers of the Cosmos)

Abwoon d'bwashmaya *Our Father who art in the heavens*

Nethqadash shmakh *hallowed be Thy name*

Teytey malkuthakh *Thy kingdom come*

Nehwey tzevyanach aykanna d'bwashmaya aph b'arha *Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth*

Hawvlan lachma d'sunqanan yaomana *Give us this day our daily bread*

Washboqlan khaubayn (wakhtahayn) aykanna daph khnan shbwoqan l'khayabayn *And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors*

Wela tahlan l'nesyuna *And lead us not into temptation*

Ela patzan min bisha *but deliver us from evil*

Metoldilakhie malkutha wahayla wateshbukhta l'ahlam almin. Ameyn. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

<i>The Lord's Prayer: One Possible Translation from the Aramaic (from <u>Prayers of the Cosmos</u>)</i>	<i>The Lord's Prayer: One Possible Version from the Writings of Swedenborg</i>
<p>O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos,</p> <p>Focus your light within us - make it useful:</p> <p>Create your reign of unity now -</p> <p>Your one desire then acts with ours, as in all light, so in all forms.</p> <p>Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.</p> <p>Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' guilt.</p> <p>Don't let surface things delude us,</p> <p>But free us from what holds us back.</p> <p>From you is born all ruling will, the power and the life to do, the song that beautifies all, from age to age it renews.</p> <p>Truly - power to these statements - may they be the ground from which all my actions grow:</p> <p>Amen.</p>	<p>Lord Jesus Christ, one with God, we have eternal life from you.</p> <p>May everything that is divine within you, and everything that proceeds from you, be kept holy.</p> <p>Help us to be joined with you through love.</p> <p>We ask that our lives can become an image of heaven as we receive you in our hearts and souls.</p> <p>We trust you to move us continually towards an everlasting state of happiness.</p> <p>In your total mercy, prepare us to admit and detest our evil ways and start a new life, while we look with mercy as you do on the lives of others.</p> <p>You seem so far away as we struggle, yet we know you are present, freeing us from the evil we have chosen.</p> <p>Glorious truth emanates eternally from you and moves into creation, with power for never-ending goodness.</p> <p>Amen.</p>

The Lord's Prayer: Body Prayers
(adapted from Prayers of the Cosmos)

Abwoon/Father/Birther/Lord God Jesus Christ

Breathe in feeling the sound *Ah*; breathe out feeling the sound *bwoon*. Inhale, feeling newness and nourishment coming into your heart-lung area. Exhale, feeling everything old and unwanted leaving with your breath.

Nethqadash/Holy/Useful/Divine

Relax and feel the shrine created by your heartbeat and breathing. Take one long deep breath, remembering the holy of holies within. The holy Name can become hallowed again, with every breath, in an instant.

Malkuthakh/Kingdom/Reign/Joining

When in need of healing or rest, or in emotional turmoil, return to your heart-shrine. Let whatever feelings emerge be okay and accepted by the Breath of Life within your own breathing. Gradually allow the breathing, yours and God's together, to become more rhythmic. Inhale from the One Source of healing; exhale to that part of yourself in need or in turmoil.

Tzeyyanach/Will/Desire/Image

Remember a negative habitual response in your life to work/relationships/life situation. Go to your heart-shrine and clear a space for a new response. A new response or action may suggest itself to you that doesn't make sense, but it won't ever go against your conscience. Breathe *Abwoon*, and ask for confirmation. If confirmed, envision it so clearly you can feel yourself doing it in your body. Then when the situation arises again, act from your heart, from this new response, before your mind drags you back to a habitual response.

Lachma/Bread/Insight/Happiness

Intone the sound *lachma* slowly, feeling how the phrase becomes denser inside. We are reminded to take things step by step as we work through the issues of each day, not forcing beyond the needs of the time, but accepting today's manna only. Remember an issue or situation for which you need understanding or growth today. Keep it in mind as you continue to repeat *lachma* slowly. Notice what insight comes to your attention. Notice what you need for this moment of your life.

Washboqlan/Forgive/Release/New Life

Sit comfortably. Feel your heartbeat and pulse, focusing this time on its releasing power. Feel and visualize your blood bringing to your lungs what needs to be released this moment. Breathe out what needs to be released, breathe in new life and pulse it out to every cell. During "body forgiveness," feel your muscles relax, your blood vessels relax and improved blood flow, maybe even your psychological armour dissolving a little. Remember Jesus' words "This is my blood given for the untying of mistakes and failures."

Patzan/Deliver/Free/Present

Walk freely in a circle. With each step become more present just to your own footfalls, *now*. Walk simply being *present*. Be present with and accept any part of you that resists. Feel yourself fully and completely accepted in the presence of God.

L'ahlam/Forever/Age/Eternal

Breathe in and out, feeling the steps along the journey that the prayer has presented. Try to not focus on the concepts, but enter the inner temple of your heart with the feelings and body sensations the prayer has evoked, both pleasant and unpleasant. Gather them in and feel them as a whole, then let them slowly disperse again to their source in God's universe.

Lord, Teach Me to Pray


Eddie Askew

Lord, teach me to pray.
It sounds exciting, put like that,
It sounds **real**. An exploration.
A chance to do more than catalogue
And list the things I want,
To an eternal Father Christmas.

The chance of meeting you,
Of drawing closer to the love that made me,
And keeps me, and knows me.
And, Lord, it's only just begun.
There is so much more of you,
Of love, the limitless expanse of knowing you.
I could be frightened, Lord, in this wide country.
It could be lonely, but you are here, with me.

The chance of learning about myself,
Of facing up to what I am.
Admitting my resentments,
Bringing my anger to you, my disappointments, my frustration.
And finding that when I do,
When I stop struggling and shouting and let go
You are still there. Still loving.

Sometimes, Lord, often -
I don't know what to say to you.
But I still come, in quiet
For the comfort of two friends
Sitting in silence.
And it's then, Lord, that I learn most from you.
When my mind slows down,
And my heart stops racing.
When I let go and wait in the quiet,
Realising that all the things I was going to ask for
You know already.
Then, Lord, without words,
In the stillness you are there ...
And I love you.
Lord, teach me to pray.

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A New Spirituality

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