

LEAD TOLDOT Service of the Heart

Not satisfied with last week's Lead, we're trying again. Differently.

Point: Rambam holds that Prayer is a Torah Mitzva, but can be fulfilled with any petition or thank you to G-d, in any language and wording... once a day. It was the Sages who formalized what, when, and how often we are to pray.

Point: Ramban says all aspects of Prayer are d'Rabbanan.

Point: Both agree that either the source or the inspiration for the requirement to pray is "And you shall serve G-d with all your heart. What is Service of the heart? T'FILA (Prayer).

Point: As mentioned last week, the Gemara presents the dual origins of Prayer as the Avot and Temple Service

Let's do an overview of Vayeira, Chayei Sara, Toldot, and Vayeitzei as far as prayer goes.

The p'sukim the Gemara points to for the establishment of Shacharit by Avraham, Mincha by Yitzchak, and Maariv by Yaakov are found in Vayeira, Chayei Sara, and Vayeitzei. Each pasuk is paired with another pasuk in Tanach to make the point.

This does not mean that Avraham Avinu davened Shacharit as we know it. But he did pray and he did pray in the morning. Similar for Yitzchak and Yaakov.

What we do see, though, is the way

the Avot spoke to G-d. We have details of Avraham's attempt to pray on behalf of the people of S'dom. And Yitzchak and Rivka praying for a child (which is why we include Toldot in the range of sedras). And we read of Yaakov's petitions and pleading with G-d for protection and needs.

There's a lot more to say, but I'd like to jump from the Avot to the banim, that is, to us.

Let's take as an example, the first prayer of our day. The 12 word sentence that we say upon awakening - MODEH (or MODAH).

MODEH can be rattled off in 5 seconds - or it can be said a bit slower and with feeling. We can take a couple of seconds before we say it to remind ourselves that we are about to talk to G-d. And that means (I hope) that we believe in Him and in Prayer to Him and only to Him. And that we believe that we each consist of a body and a soul, which are partnered for life. And that we cannot take for granted that we will wake up in the morning. Some people don't. And when we do wake up, we owe G-d a debt of gratitude for His kindnesses. Now say MODEH, and you are off on the right path for the rest of the day. Use your day well.