

PRAYER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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by

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SUMMARY OF THESIS.

As "Prayer in the Old Testament" is a very wide subject, I have restricted myself to outlines on certain themes. In a sense the whole Bible can be described as "prayer" since it is a dialogue of man with God, and God with man.

Obviously the word with which to attempt any definition of prayer is the Hithpa'el verb שָׁבַח, and its noun שְׁבָחָה. It describes speech with God. As the Hebrew poetic device of parallelism offers us synonyms to שָׁבַח, we examine those words with much the same general definition. There are other words which the Hebrew concordance reveals as being translated as "prayer", or as describing prayer. Most of these words are the ordinary words for speech. The words for prayer, in general, describe speech before God.

With this wide definition Chapter Two groups the various kinds of speech before God, and attempts to describe each. Prayer is seen as dialogue, as asking, and as praise and thanksgiving.

Prayer, however, does not exist in a vacuum. It cannot be separated from the people who pray and the God who makes prayer possible. Personalities of prayer give prayer meaning, purpose and dynamic. Looking at their prayers in context enables us to grasp a little more fully the rôle of prayer in life itself.

As God provides the framework of prayer, we must also look at that framework. He determines what kind of prayers are

acceptable/.....

acceptable. He gives direction and power to the words of prayer. Without God, prayer is either magic or meaningless words.

In the final chapter I try to tie up some of the loose ends. Prayer is not just an isolated and individual thing - it exists within the cult and the community. Certain disciplines accompany it.

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I wish to acknowledge my great debt to the late Dr. W. Cosser who not only taught me to love the Old Testament Scriptures, but who has also enabled me to discover some of the gems that it contains. Through his encouragement and patience I have been able to continue in these studies towards a B.D. degree.

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CHAPTER ONE.

THE WORDS OF PRAYER.

As there are a variety of words which describe prayer in the Old Testament, this chapter will attempt to define prayer in terms of those words.

The obvious word with which to begin any examination of the definition of prayer in the Old Testament, is the Hithpa'el verb of שָׁבַח and its noun שְׁבָחָה (1). ~~The main error is to take the word in this Hebrew language and take its meaning precisely as it is used in the Bible. The definition of the word is not the same as it is in the Bible.~~

333 describes speeches, sentences or words
spoken to Yahweh. (2)

For example: in II Samuel 7:18-29, we read David's words spoken to Yahweh "Then king David went in and sat before the Lord and said, 'Who am I, O Lord God'" In verse 27 these words are described by תִּפְלֵחַ. "...therefore thy servant has found courage to pray this prayer to thee".

: ၆၁၄၇ ၇၃၀၈၇ - ၆၄ ၇၂၅၄ ၁၅၉၈၇၃

Jeremiah 36:16 reads : "I prayed to the Lord,
saying..." : יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ... הָיָה נִשְׁמָע וְנַחֲמֶנּוּ
This is followed by a speech to verse 25 directed to Yahweh.

"A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to Shigionoth", (Habakkuk 3:1) describes a psalm of praise of Yahweh. It begins by telling Yahweh that this speech is for Him. "O Lord, I have heard the report of thee." (3)

The Psalms reveal **His** speech very clearly e.g.

"Hear my /

"Hear my prayer, O God;

Give ear to the words of my mouth" (Ps.54:2(4)).

The common phrase: "give ear to my cry" (Ps.39:12(13)) indicates speech to Yahweh.

The next question to be asked is: can this speech towards Yahweh be classified into special types e.g. praise, petition, intercession?

Intercession, or supplication and petition appear frequently in ⁵⁵⁹ usage. Abraham (Gen.20:7,17); Moses (Numbers 11:2; 21:7); Samuel (I.Samuel 12:19); Elisha (II Kings 4:33; 6:17,18) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 37:3) are notable personalities who are described as praying for others. David (II Samuel 7:28F) prays for himself and the future of his dynasty. The Psalms have numerous references to petition.

e.g. "Give ear to my prayer, O God;

And hide not thyself from my supplication!

Attend to me, and answer me.

I am overcome by my trouble". (Ps.55:1(2)f).

In the Psalms prayer ($\pi \text{ } \frac{1}{2} \text{ } \eta$) and supplication ($\pi \text{ } \frac{1}{2} \text{ } \eta$) are used as parallels. (4)

e.g. "The Lord has heard my supplication;

the Lord accepts my prayer." (Ps 6:9(10)).

A special kind of petition is confession where the petitioner asks of God forgiveness of past sin and removal of guilt. Ezra 10:1 and Nehemiah 1:7 describe prayers that have a large measure of confession of the past sins of the nation. Solomon, in his well-known temple prayer leaves ample room for confession in his, "if then" formula.

eg."if they /.....

e.g. "if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart... then hear thou and forgive they people who have sinned against thee..." (I Kings 8:48-50).

332 also describes words of praise to Yahweh. Hannah's prayer in I Samuel 2:1-10 is pure praise. David's prayer in II Samuel 7:18-29 has the element of praise in verse 22. Solomon's temple prayer has praise. (I Kings 8:23F).

332 however describes prayer in much wider categories than ours of praise, intercession, petition and confession. The prayer of Hannah in I Samuel 1:10-12 is a vow. Oesterly translates Psalm 42:8(9) as:

"In the day-time I watch for Yahweh,
and for his mercy at night.
Within me (my) meditation is a prayer to
the living God."

Here prayer is described as meditation i.e. his thoughts about God and His ways become prayer. (5)

Psalm 141:2 describes ^{prayer} as incense and sacrifice

"Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee,

And the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!"

~~In the Bible cycle of stories prayer is a medium of magic. In one place Elisha simply blinds the enemy through using prayer. (II Kings 6:18-20) Prayer is a powerful weapon of war.~~

SYNONYMS TO 332.

The whole scope of prayer becomes even wider when we examine the synonyms contained in parrallel with 332, and when we look/.....

and when we look at the other words which describe words or speech directed to God.

The following are the main parallel synonyms:

נִשְׁבַּח ; נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה ; שָׁחַד ; שָׁחַד and שָׁחַד

1. Out of its 33 appearances in the Old Testament, the word נִשְׁבַּח is used seven times as an obvious parallel to שָׁחַד (6) e.g.

"Let my prayer come before thee,

incline thy ear to my cry." (Psalm 88:2(3)).

The basic meaning of the verb is (I) to shout for joy and hence it is frequently translated "to sing"; (II) to call out in invitation (Proverbs 1:20; 8:3); (III) to cry out ^{in distress} for help (Lamentations 2:19). It has the sense of "to shout, sing, rejoice" with שָׁחַד, or over, שָׁחַד ; and (IV) to sing, celebrate, or praise with the accusative שָׁחַד or שָׁחַד of the

person or thing. (v) The Piel has the sense of a ringing cry, in joy, exultation, especially in praise to Yahweh (7B). (vi) The noun describes also the ringing cry, in joy, exultation, especially in praise to Yahweh. (7B)

Forty-five percent of נִשְׁבַּח and שָׁחַד appearances in the Old Testament

both verb and noun, are found in the Psalms.

נִשְׁבַּח and נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה extends the definition of prayer in showing the praise and joyous aspects of communication with Yahweh. They have with definite cultic connotations. They are used to describe the praising of God for His past victories and achievements in the history of Israel (8); for the present mercies of "the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd." (Jeremiah 31:12); and for the future acts of deliverance of God, when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing." (Isaiah 35:10).

Not only/.....

Not only are people involved in these prayers of praise, but the whole of nature as well. (9) "The sea and all that fills it", "the desert and its cities", all join in this paean of praise to Yahweh. (Isa. 42: 10).

So much does thankfulness and praise mean to the people that again and again we hear the exhortation to rejoice. (10) The cultic setting of these exhortations is strongly evident in the holy processions mentioned (11) and in the acts of fasting and sacrificing with prayers.

. $\pi\pi\pi$ expands the definition of prayer by its special setting of praise in the cultic situation. Prayer is seen not only as individual and personal, but corporate and national as well.

2. A second parallel to $\pi\pi\pi$ is $\pi\pi\pi\pi$. Out of a total of 25 appearances in the Old Testament, there are only two obvious parallels. Psalms 6:9(10), and 55:1(2).

"The Lord has heard my supplication;
the Lord accepts my prayer" (6:9(10)).

"Give ear to my prayer, O God;
and hide not thyself from my supplication" (55:1(2)).

In ten places $\pi\pi\pi\pi$ is placed in the same context as $\pi\pi\pi$ (12). In eight other places it either describes speech before God or is linked indirectly with $\pi\pi\pi$ (13).

Only in five places has $\pi\pi\pi\pi$ a secular meaning. In Ezra 9:8 it is translated as a "favour" from Yahweh, while in Joshua 11:20 it means "mercy" which was not shown to the enemies of Israel. In the remaining three places, it describes a plea to a king (Jeremiah 37:20; 38:26) and a prophet (Jeremiah 42:2).

$\pi\pi\pi\pi$ has the/.....

. 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕 has the sense of a "humble plea". It comes from the verb 𐤓𐤕𐤕, which has the meaning of "to be gracious, merciful, compassionate". (?)

The noun has the sense of a "favour" that one asks of another. נִשְׁאָל adds to the meaning of שָׂא the emphasis of asking Yahweh for favours for others or for oneself. It is the humble asking of a favour from a superior, by an inferior. It is not a demand, but a request, a favour.

3. A third parallel is $\gamma \dot{\underline{1}} \dot{\psi}$. This masculine noun appears only once in the Old Testament, and there it is used in parallel with $\dot{\underline{3}} \dot{\underline{3}} \dot{\underline{2}}$.

"Hearken to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to thee do I pray." (Psalm 5:2(3)).

× 1 ψ comes from the verb × 1 ψ which appears in the Pi'el only. It has the meaning "to cry for help", and in almost every case, the call for help is directed to God. Psalm 88:13(14) has the verb in parallel with 550.

"But I, O Lord, cry to thee;
in the morning my prayer comes before thee."

.y / w describes the prayer of a person in trouble or need.

"O Lord my God, I cried to thee for help,
and thou hast healed me". (Psalm 30:2(3)).

4. The fourth parallel is $\gamma \bar{\gamma} \bar{\gamma}$. The parrallel is found in Jeremiah 7:16 where Yahweh commands the prophet: "do not pray for this people, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede ($\gamma \bar{\gamma} \bar{\gamma}$) with me, for I do not hear you". Out of the 45 appearances, the word has the meaning of "intercession" only /.....

only 4 times. (14)

The basic meaning of the verb is "to meet", often violently. In the Kal it can also mean "to assail with petitions, to urge, entreat, supplicate, with \int , or \int . In the Hiph'il it means simply "to cause to entreat, supplicate".(7)

\int describes a much stronger appeal than the humble request of \int . It has the sense of "intervening", of coming between the suppliant and God, of being the meeting-place or the mediator.

"He saw that there was no man,

and wondered that there was no one to intervene"

(Isaiah 59:16).

5. The fifth parallel is simply the word \int . This very common word appears some 731 times in the Old Testament. In 96 places it describes prayer. (15). In five places it is in parallel with \int . (16)

\int is translated variously as: to shout, to utter, to name (Genesis 1:5; 17:5); to summon, to proclaim, and even to read (II Chronicles 34:24; Jeremiah 29:29). \int describes prayer as talking to Yahweh, as "calling upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

"Calling upon the name of the Lord" is the ~~earliest~~ description of prayer in the Old Testament. To call upon the name of Yahweh is to utilize the very power of Yahweh. Psalm 54:1 shows this clearly.

"Save me, O God, by thy name

and vindicate me by thy might".

This first description of prayer has the instrumental suggestion of calling/.....

of calling to the intercessor's aid, the very power of God by calling on His "name". (17) Later this primitive concept is replaced by the expectation that God will answer prayer because He is faithful, righteous and just.

. $\times \overline{7} \overline{P}$ emphasises that prayer is generally voiced aloud. "They cried with a loud voice to the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:4)

"I cried aloud to God, aloud to God,
that he may hear me". (Psalm 77:1(2)).

The spoken word carries the urgency and the feelings of the prayer in a way that silent prayer is not able. The intonation of the voice is part and parcel of the prayer. The whole person is involved in praying.

"With my whole heart, I cry;

Answer me, O Lord". (Psalm 119:145)

. $\times \overline{7} \overline{P}$ also has the meaning of "to summon". The R.S.V. does in fact translate $\times \overline{7} \overline{P}$ as "summon" in places.

"If I summoned him and he answered me,

I would not believe that he was listening to my voice."

(Job 9:16).

The five parallels have given a new dimension to the definition of בְּשִׁיר . $\overline{7} \overline{3} \overline{7}$ tells of the joy in praise and thanksgiving, especially in the cultic activities; $\overline{7} \overline{3} \overline{7} \overline{3}$ describes prayer as a gentle and humble plea for God to act, while $\times \overline{7} \overline{3}$ is a much stronger request before God on behalf of another. $\times \overline{7} \overline{P}$ opens up a very wide field of definition, when it describes prayer in the everyday terms of speech.

OTHER WORDS/.....

OTHER WORDS FOR PRAYER.

The concordance suggests the following words to be translated as "prayer" or "to pray".

- . $\times \underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ and $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ (Ch Pe³al); $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ (Hithpa²el) ;
 . $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{y}$; $\underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ (which we have examined as a synonym);
 . $\times \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ (Ch Pe³al); $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$, $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$; and $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$.(18)

1. All twelve references to the ~~Arabic~~ word $\times \underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ or $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ are found in Daniel. In four places it has the meaning of prayer. (19) Its basic meaning is "to seek, to search after, to ask, to request". The main force of the word is "to petition".
2. The second word is the Hithpa²el of $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$. Only nine times does it describe supplication to Yahweh (20) It also describes an appeal for a favour by an inferior from his superior. (21) The Kal has the meaning of "to be gracious", "to have mercy", thus giving the Hithpa²el the causative force of appealing to God to show mercy. The R.S.V. translates Job 8:5 in this way: "I must appeal for mercy to my accuser".
3. The third word, $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{y}$ is a much more solid word for prayer. It is translated as "to entreat" and "to supplicate". All twenty occurrences of the word refer to Yahweh or God. (22) Unlike the synonym $\underset{\tau}{y} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ which frequently describes God not answering prayers (23), $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{y}$ describes prayers that are answered (24).
4. $\underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}} \underset{\tau}{\bar{\imath}}$ and its noun have as their basic meaning, "to meditate", "to complain". In no place does the R.S.V. translate the words as "pray" though the A.V. does in Psalm 55:17(18).

Nevertheless/.....

Nevertheless they do describe speech to Yahweh.

"Sing to him, sing praises to him,
tell of all his wonderful works!"

(I Chronicles 16:9;

Psalms 105:2).

Certain speeches to Yahweh are described as "complaints".

"Hear my voice, O God in my complaint" (Psalm 64:1(2))

I pour out my complaint before him,

I tell my trouble before him." (Psalm 142: 2(3)).

Prayer in the Old Testament has this dimension of complaint

before God. Prayer ^{consists} not only ~~consists~~ of praiseworthy and pleasant things, but is ^{ALSO} wide and honest enough to include the whole realm of human experience, including that of complaints.

Meditating on the precepts of God (Psalm 119:15,27) can also be described as verbal communication with God. It forms part of man's verbal response to God's revelation of Himself, though often the speech is not obviously directed towards God. Meditation hit upon the hymn as its most natural form of expression. (e.g. Psalms 90, 139) Psalm 91, for instance, is a meditation on the security of a man who trusts in God. By putting these thoughts into words the psalmist is not only meditating on his subject, but through his subject is praising God for enabling the believer to live securely!

5. The noun $\overline{\text{m}} \overline{\text{m}}^{\text{p}} \overline{\text{w}}$ appears only three times in the Old Testament: Job 15:4; Psalms 119:97,99, and in each case the R.S.V. translates ^{it} as "meditation".

6. $\text{b} \text{x} \overline{\text{w}}$ is the secular word whose basic meaning is "to ask". In only one place does the R.S.V. translate it as "to pray". That place is in Psalm 122:6 where the Psalmist exhorts/.....

exhorts the worshipper to "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem".

Outside the secular uses of the word, שָׁאַל refers to asking or petitioning Yahweh for various gifts. Eli, in response to Hannah's prayer, reassures her "to go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him". (I Samuel 1:17). Not only do men ask of God, but He asks of men also. (Deuteronomy 10:12).

An interesting use of שָׁאַל is in the field of 'magic', of 'enquiring' of Yahweh as to which of two actions to take. For instance David enquired of Yahweh whether he should go into any of the cities of Judah or not. (26) The means of asking in this sense are: dreams, urim, prophets, oracle, and spirit mediums. (27)

7. The Pi'el of שָׁאַל has the meaning of "entreating the favour" of Yahweh. In I Samuel 13:12, we note that the burnt offering is a means of entreating the favour of Yahweh. In the remaining references the method of entreaty is not mentioned. (28)

8. The ~~ARAMAIC~~ word שָׁאַל occurs twice, once in Ezra 6:10 and the other in Daniel 6:10(11). In both places the R.S.V. translates it as 'prayer'.

9. The final word for consideration is the noun שְׁאֵלָה . In Only one out of a total of five appearances can it be translated as 'prayer', and even there the Hebrew is uncertain. (Isaiah 26:16)

These other words for prayer emphasize much of what we have already learned about prayer from an examination of שָׁאַל and its synonyms. They do however widen the scope a little by opening the door for complaints before God, meditation and guidance by 'enquiry'.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE. ---

1. The verb is found in the following texts:

Genesis 20:7,17.

Numbers 11:2; 21:7.

Deuteronomy 9:20,26.

I Samuel 1:10, 12, 26, 27; 2:1,25; 7:5; 8:6; 12:19,23.

II Samuel 7:27.

I Kings 8:28,29,30,33,35,42,44,48,54; 13:6.

II Kings 4:33; 6:17,18; 19:15,20; 20:2.

I Chronicles 17:25.

II Chronicles 6:19, 20, 21, 24, 26, 32, 34, 38; 7:1,14; 30:18;

32:20, 24; 33:13.

Ezra 10: 1.

Nehemiah 1:4,6; 2:4; 4:9(3);

Job 42:8,10 .

Psalms 5:2(3); 32:6; 72:15.

Isaiah 16:12; 37:15,21; 38:2; 44:17; 45:14,20.

Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 29:7,12; 32:16; 37:3; 42:2,4,20.

Daniel 9:4,20.

Jonah 2:1(2); 4:2.

The noun is found in the following texts.

II Samuel 7:27.

I Kings 8:28(2x), 29, 38, 45, 49, 54; 9:3.

II Kings 19:4; 20:5.

II Chronicles 6:19(2x), 20, 29, 35, 39, 40; 7:12,15; 30:27;

33:18,19.

Nehemiah 1:6,11(2x); 11:17

Job 16:17.

Psalms/.....

Psalms 4:1(2); 6:9(10); 17 : title (1), -1(2); 35:13;
 39:12(13); 42:8(9); 54:2(4); 55:1(2); 61:1(2);
 65:2(3); 66:19,20; 69:13(14); 72:20; 80:4(5);
 84:8(9); 86:title (1), 6(7); 88:2(3), 13(14);
 90:title(1); 102:title(1), 1(2), 17(18), (2x); 109:4,7;
 141:2,5; 142:title(1); 143:1.

Proverbs 15:8,29; 28:9.

Isaiah 1:15; 37:4; 38:5; 56:7(2x).

Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14.

Lamentations 3:8,44.

Daniel 9:3,17,21.

Jonah 2:7(8).

Habbakuk 3:title (1).

It can be seen that שָׁפַח appears only 7 times in the law books, whereas it is abundant in the prophets and the Writings.

The Lexicon (Davidson's : Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon) notes that שָׁפַח appears only in the *El* and *Hithpa'el* forms. The *El* has the meaning of "intercede", and appears four times only. in The *Hithpa'el* has the basic meaning, "to intercede", supplicate, pray for anyone with $\text{לְ$; שָׁפַח ; לְ for whom : with שָׁפַח , with whom one intercedes; also with שָׁפַח ; שָׁפַח to whom.

2. As a rule שָׁפַח does not describe prayer to other gods.

The exceptions to the rule are in Isaiah 16:12; 44:17, and 45:20, where it is used of the pagan deities to show that Yahweh alone has power to answer prayer, while the pagan deities are powerless in this respect.

3. Other/.....

3. Other examples where ⁵⁵⁹ describes speech to Yahweh are: I Samuel 2:1; I Kings 8:54; II Kings 6:17; II Kings 19:15,20;|| Isaiah 37:15,21; II Kings 20:2;|| Isaiah 38:2; II Chronicles 30:18; Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:21; Jonah 2:1(2); 4:2.

Some of the Psalms are described as prayers in their titles (Psalms 17, 86, 90, 102, 142), but we can disregard these in this thesis since scholars are generally agreed that the titles are not part of the original text, though they obviously reflect very late traditional usage.

Psalm 72:20 bears special mention as it describes a whole section of the Psalms to be prayers: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended". This text is omitted by a number of M.S.S., whereas G reads שִׁבְּחָהּ , "praises", for שִׁבְּחָהּ , "prayers". (Oesterly: The Psalms). Here also the question arises as to whether we are to regard either Psalm 72 as a prayer by itself, or the whole of the second book of Psalms, viz 42-72. The plural form excludes the former suggestion, whereas not many of the Psalms in the book are in the nature of prayers.

4. Other references in the Psalms are 4:1(2); 39:12(13); 54:2(4); 55:1(2); 61:1(2); 66:19,20; 143:1.

5. Making the textual amendment וְיִתְּנָהּ for וְיִתְּנָהּ cp. G. (Oesterly: The Psalms).

6. I Kings 8:28 ;|| II Chronicles 6:19; Psalms 17:1; 61:1(2); 88:2(3); Isaiah 35:10; 48:20; 51:11; 54:1. Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:12; Lamentations 2:19. The following are examples of the normal usage of וְיִתְּנָהּ : ISAIAH 35:10; 48:20; 51:11; 54:1.

7. Davidson: Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon.
7A. BROWN, F. et al: A Hebrew + English Lexicon of the O.T. Psalms 5:12; JEREMIAH 7:16; 11:14; 14:12; Lamentations 2:19. The following are examples of the normal usage of וְיִתְּנָהּ : ISAIAH 35:10; 48:20; 51:11; 54:1.
8. Psalms 105:43; 107:22; 118:15. 31:12; 51:48; ISAIAH 26:19; 35:2; 9. Psalms/.....
7B. BROWN, F. et al: A HEBREW + ENGLISH LEXICON. 52:8

9. Psalms 96:12; 98:8; Isaiah 14:7; 35:10; 44:23;
49:13; 55:12.
10. Psalms 33:1; 98:4; Isaiah 12:6; Zephaniah 3:14;
Zechariah 2:10(14).
11. Psalms 42:4(5); 105:43; 118:15; Jeremiah 14:12;
12. I Kings 8:28, 30, 38, 45, 49, 54; 9:3;
II Chronicles 6:19, 29, 35, 39.
13. I Kings 8:30,52; II Chronicles 33:13; Psalm 119:170;
Jeremiah 36:7; 42:9; Daniel 9:20.
14. Job 21:15; Isaiah 53:12; Jeremiah 7:16; 27:18.
15. Genesis 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 16:13; 21:33; Judges 16:28.
I Kings 8:52; 18:24; II Kings 5:11; I Chronicles 4:10; 21:26;
Job ~~27~~:10; Psalms 17:6; 66:17; 88:9(10); 118:5; 130:1; 141:1;
Jeremiah 10:25; 29:12; 33:3; Ezekiel 8:18; Joel 2:32;
Jonah 1:6; Zephaniah 3:9; et al.
16. Psalms 4:1(2); 61:2(3); 141:1,2; Jeremiah 11:14;
29:12.
17. Jacob: Theology of the Old Testament p.84.
18. The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance, 5th
Edition, Bagster and Sons. Ltd. London.
19. Daniel 2:18; 6:7(8); 11(12), 12(13).
20. Deuteronomy 3:23; I Kings 8:33,47,59; II Chronicles 6:24, 37;
Job 8:5; Psalms 30:8(9); 142:1(2) and perhaps Hosea 12:4(5).
21. Genesis 42:21; II Kings 1:13; Esterⁿ 4:8; 8:3.
22. Genesis 25:21; Exodus 8: 8(4) ; 9 (5); 28(24); 29(25);
30(26); 9:28; 10:17,18; Judges 13:8; II Samuel 21:14; 24:25;
I Chronicles 5:20; II Chronicles 33:13; Ezra 8:23; Job 22:27;
33:26; Isaiah 19:22.
23. Job 19:7; 24:12; 30:20; ~~36:13~~; Psalms 18:41(42);
Habakkuk 1:2.

24. Genesis 25:21; Ezra 8:23; Job 33:26.
25. Other places where $\int \times \psi$ is used in this sense are:
 I Samuel 1:20,27; I Kings 3:10; Psalms 21:4(5); 105:40.
26. II Samuel 2:1; Other examples are I Samuel 10:22;
 14:37; 22:13,15; 23:4.
27. Deuteronomy 18:11; I Samuel 28:6f; II Samuel 16:23.
28. Exodus 32:11; I Kings 13:6; II Kings 13:4;
 II Chronicles 32:13; Psalms 119:58; Jeremiah 26:19; Daniel 9:13;
 Zechariah 7:2; 8:21f; Malachi 1:9.
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SURVEY OF TYPES OF PRAYER.I. Prayer As Dialogue.

The words describing prayer show prayer to be chiefly speech with God. Following this line, it is interesting to note the dialogue or conversational nature of prayers, especially in the patriarchal period.

In Genesis 18 Yahweh, disguised as a man, comes to Abraham and converses with him on a man to man basis. During the conversation Yahweh reveals to Abraham His plans to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. Abraham takes Yahweh to task about this: "Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?" (18:23f) This bargaining continues until Yahweh promises not to destroy the towns if ten righteous people are found within the city walls.

Despite this familiarity in dialogue with Yahweh, Abraham is not disrespectful or familiar, but is deeply conscious of his own standing before God. "Behold I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes." (18:27)

Abraham has a number of dialogue prayers with Yahweh (e.g. Genesis 17:1ff; 22:1f), but in each case it is Yahweh who takes the initiative. Abraham's words are the response of a faithful and responsible worshipper of God.

The book of Genesis has other dialogue prayers as well, the most interesting of which is the conversation with Abimelech (20:3f) who is not a believer.

Moses follows in the tradition of Abraham. His call

to lead/.....

to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt to the promised land is a dialogue with Yahweh in which he tries to evade his God-given responsibility (Exodus 3 and 4). Exodus 17:4f is interesting for here it is Moses who takes the initiative in approaching God on behalf of the people and himself. He is able to do this since God has built up a trust-relationship with him already and by taking the initiative, Moses is actually responding to God's whole approach to him.

Exodus 33:11 and Numbers 12:8 give down to earth descriptions of this dialogue prayer.

"Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend".

"With him (i.e. Moses), I (Yahweh) speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord".

Although Gideon has dialogue with Yahweh in the fashion of Abraham and Moses, the other conversational prayers in the book of the Judges are with the Angel of the Lord. In Judges 6:12 the terms "Angel of the Lord" and "the Lord" are used as synonyms in the prayer. When Manoah reflects on his conversation with the "Angel of the Lord", he tells his wife: "We shall surely die, for we have seen God" (Judges 13:22).

As Yahweh becomes more remote, so the dialogue prayers of the patriarchal period give way to a different kind of dialogue. The "face to face" encounter becomes a rare experience, until it disappears altogether. In the inbetween stage dreams form the media of the dialogue. (I Kings 3:5f). Eventually the pattern emerges of the prophet being the chief speaker with God. He acts as a go-between God and man in that he conveys/.....

conveys God's answers, messages and demands to man and at the same time tells God of the requests of the nation and individuals. (Individuals however are still able to pray to Yahweh directly if they wish.) An incident that shows this transition from direct dialogue to the mediation of the prophet, is when David prays to Yahweh, but receives the answer via the seer (II Samuel 24:10-12).

Although the prophets converse with God, they do not record their prayers in the style of the dialogue prayers of Abraham and Moses. The prophets merely write: "The Lord said to me" (II Kings 18:25; Isaiah 8:11; Jeremiah 32:25), or "The word of the Lord came unto me" (Jeremiah 32:26; Ezekiel 27:1; Hosea 1:1); or "Thus says the Lord" (Obadiah 1:1; Amos 5:4). Although these expressions are also found in the Pentateuch, they more commonly form the style of prophetic speech of the written prophets.

There is a sense in which the whole of the Old Testament is a dialogue between God and man. James Smart (1) suggests that the way for us to approach the Scriptures should thus be a dialogue approach, i.e. we come to the Bible expecting to hear God and on hearing to respond in obedience, praise, thanksgiving and confession. We also come with the questions of life and expect God to give us answers through the Bible.

The dialogue prayer of the Patriarchs gives way in stages to the dialogue of the prophets, but the essence of the God-man relationship **REMAINS** the same. Yahweh speaks and man responds. Man speaks and Yahweh answers in one way or another. Man's response however is not always in the speech of prayer, but also in obedience and in the cultic activities of sacrifice/.....

of sacrifice and fasting.

II Prayer As Asking.

The various words describing prayer bring out very strongly and frequently the "asking" or "requesting" feature of prayer. There are the ordinary prayers of "intercession" and "petition", but "vows", "oaths", "blessing", "cursing" and "confession", also fall under this heading.

(a) Intercession.

The main emphasis of the pre-exilic period is that of intercession. The dialogue prayers of both Abraham and Moses are largely intercessory. (2) Whenever the people of Israel were in difficulties, they would complain to Moses; he in turn talked to Yahweh on their behalf. Yahweh then answered their requests through Moses for food, meat, water and healing. "The people cried to Moses; and Moses prayed to the Lord". (Numbers 11:2)

Other examples of intercessory prayers are those of Aaron (Numbers 11:2-3); Samuel (I Samuel 7:5f; 12:19,23); Solomon (I Kings 8:22ff) and Hezekiah (II Kings 19:14-19).

We cannot look at intercessory prayer without also noting the intercessor. The patriarchs are the first of the intercessors. As they enjoyed a close and personal covenant relationship with Yahweh, their prayers had special power. Even Abimelech, the unbeliever, realized this and thus asked Abraham to pray for him (Genesis 20:7,17).

The prophets are the chief intercessors of the Old

Testament/.....

Testament, since they possessed the spirit of Yahweh. As Yahweh spoke to man through His spirit, the prophets were thus well equipped both to proclaim God's requirements of His people and ^{also} to make known to Him the needs and petitions of individuals and of the nation. (3)

The prophets, though the main intercessors, are not the only ones who may pray for others. Kings were able to pray for their subjects and righteous men for their unrighteous friends (4). Strangely enough the priest is not prominent in this ministry. Only in two places is the priest seen as having the duty of intercession viz, in Joel 2:17 the priest is encouraged by the prophet to recite an intercessory prayer for his people; and in Malachi 1:9 where the priest is told that his prayers for the people cannot be granted since he does not give God the best for the sacrifices of the temple.

Intercession benefits the person who offers it. For instance "the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends." (Job 42:10) On the other hand to refuse to intercede is to sin against God. (I Samuel 12:23). Intercession is a sacred duty.

We have in the Old Testament a number of intercessory prayers written down (5). The question that arises, is: are these prayers the actual prayers prayed by the intercessor, or are they specially composed in the form in which we have them today?

As we examine the format of these prayers, we find a definite pattern, thus indicating that these prayers are special compositions. One of the short prayers of intercession is in Judges 16:28; "Then Samson called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged upon the

Philistines/.....

Philistines for one of my two eyes'." This short prayer has the elements of: address, affirmation of Yahweh as God, and petition with a statement of the motive. The much longer prayer of Solomon in the Temple (I Kings 8) has the same elements while adding the recollections of earlier demonstrations of God's grace. When we look at the more elaborate prayer of Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20: 6-12, we find the same kind of motives as in the shorter prayers.

There is a continuity in the pattern of these prayers. It is just that the whole form has become much fuller. The affirmations about God are multiplied and the largest place is given to historical retrospects. Solomon's prayer of dedication in the temple (I Kings 8:23-53) is a special type of the prayer of intercession - it reckons up in a casuistic style all the cases of need in which Israel will cry to God for help from either within the temple or facing the sanctuary, and asks for God's gracious hearing in anticipation of these requests.

(b) Petition.

The devout men of the Old Testament were deeply conscious of their need to be sustained by God in their work, hence they also felt the necessity to pray for themselves. For example, when Moses was in complete despair about his task of leading his people to the promised land, and about whether Yahweh was still supporting him, he turned in prayer to seek the assurance of Yahweh's presence.

"I pray thee, show me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18)

Jeremiah's first efforts in prayer were for the

nation/.....

It was

nation whose doom he was compelled to announce. ^A Partly through the rejection of these prayers and partly through the frustration of his prophetic calling that he learned to pray for himself.

When we come to chapter four: "Praying Personalities", we shall note this aspect of asking prayer a little more fully.

(c) Vows.

To the modern ear it sounds peculiar to include the 'vow' under the heading of prayer, but on closer examination of the evidence, the inclusion is quite logical. The ordinary term for making a vow to the deity ($\overline{\text{V}}$), received the sense of praying to Him. Psalm 61:5(6) shows this quite clearly: "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows". A vow is a promise to do some special thing for God, if God acts in accordance to the prayer request. When Jacob was confronted by Yahweh at Bethel, and was uncertain whether Yahweh was the powerful deity he needed, he made a vow to test Yahweh. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou givest me I will give the tenth to thee". (Genesis 28:20-22). How modern this kind of response to God's call is.

Sometimes the vow-prayer suggests that God provides His people with the opportunity for praising Him, by granting their requests. In Psalm 79:12,13, for instance, the Psalmist promises to give thanks for ever, if God will but

"return/.....

"return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbours the taunts with which they have taunted thee, O Lord".

Hannah in I Samuel 1:11 asks God to give her a son to take away her disgrace of being childless. In return for His removal of her shame, she promises to give her son "to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head".

In Judges 11:30-40, Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh that if Yahweh gave him victory over the Ammonites, then he would offer up as a burnt offering the first ^{PERSON} who comes to greet him from his house on his return from victory. As vows are sacred, Jephthah sacrificed his only child. "I have opened my mouth to the Lord and I cannot take back my vow".

NOTE TO "VOWS"

In post-exilic times human sacrifice, even as a votive offering, was regarded as barbarous. With the established priesthood, it was no longer possible for a non-Levite to enter the priesthood even as ^{the} fulfilment of a vow. A money payment, therefore, in lieu of the person involved, offered a satisfactory settlement and was determined according to the value of the labour of the person ^{who had/was} so vowed. This system also helped to pay some of the heavy costs involved in maintaining the temple. (7)

(d) Oaths.

Oaths are a peculiar kind of asking prayer. It is a solemn action whereby the individual (or group) calls upon God to witness to the truth of what he affirms. By asking God to acknowledge the accuracy of his stat^ement, the oath-taker hopes to avoid or end strife and controversy.

The oath-formula/.....

The oath-formula is an abbreviated form of self-cursing. It has the pattern: "If I do this and this (may I be accursed) = certainly I will do this", or alternatively, "If I do not do this and this (may I be accursed) = certainly I will do this." (8)

The oath has a firm place in the cult. In I Kings 8:31-32, Solomon not only says that the oath is to be made in the temple, but he also calls upon Yahweh to honour that oath. "If a man sins against his neighbour and is made to take an oath, and comes and swears his oath before thine altar in this house, then hear thou in heaven and act, and judge thy servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his own conduct upon his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness."

The devout man who takes an oath before Yahweh must be very certain that he is in the right or else he will taste the punishment of the oath at the hands of Yahweh. Psalm 7:3(4)f gives a good example of an oath.

"O Lord my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,

.....

let the enemy pursue me and overtake me,
and let him trample my life to the ground,
and lay my soul in the dust."

Some oaths form part of the pre-determined cultic pattern. For instance, Deuteronomy 26:5-10, 13-15, has the liturgical words of the oath to be recited by the layman as he offers the first fruits and the tithes. This oath not only reminds Yahweh of His promises to His people, but claims that

the worshipper/.....

the worshipper has honoured his own oaths. In Job 31:5-34, 38-40a there is preserved for us the great oath of cleansing. ^{From} ~~moral failure.~~

As the oath calls upon God to attest the truth of the words spoken, such oaths are to be sworn with reverence and fear, (Ecclesiastes 9:2); sincerely, faithfully and justly (Jeremiah 4:2); cautiously (Genesis 24:5,8); but not idolatrously (Joshua 23:7), deceitfully (Jeremiah 42:5,20), falsely (Leviticus 6:3; 19:12) or rashly (Leviticus 5:4). The oath calls upon Yahweh to act where truth is being violated.

The oath is also one of the forms that Yahweh uses when He makes promises to His people. It underlies His sure promises to His people, the promises which He "swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24; Psalm 105:9ff) For many years the outward symbol of this oath was the possession of the Holy land, "the land which he swore to give to our fathers". (Deuteronomy 6:18, 23; 7:12). He also swore ^{by} His "covenant" and His "mercy". (Deuteronomy 4:31; 7:12).

Yahweh also swore to preserve the house of David. "Once for all I have sworn by my holiness, I will not lie to David". (Psalm 89:35,49). The priest-king of Psalm 110 is appointed to his office by an oath. "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizadek". (verse 4) God's sure promises survived the judgement of the exile and are affirmed by Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. These prophets see the oaths as including promises to admit the Gentiles to the worship of Yahweh (Isaiah 54:18-22) and to renew the covenant of peace with Israel. (Isaiah 45:9-10)(9).

The big difference between the oaths taken by men and
by Yahweh/.....

by Yahweh, is that men have Yahweh as their guarantor, while Yahweh swears by Himself (Genesis 22:16; Jeremiah 22:5), His holiness (Psalm 89:35; Amos 4:2), His right hand (Isaiah 62:8) (9A) and His name (Jeremiah 44:26).

These oaths of Yahweh are used in the intercessory prayers of His people to remind Him of His sacred duties. Thus in Exodus 32:13,14, we hear Moses reminding Yahweh of His oaths: "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self." When Yahweh heard this reminder, He "repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people".

(e) Blessing.

Blessing is a primary experience of religion and thus also an important part of the cult. It is the special form of "asking" God for His gifts. Through blessing external and internal happiness and welfare of both the land and her people are ensured. Health, long life, fertility, victory, power, happiness, peace, and joy are the products of blessing. It helps to create the fellowship of the clan through justice, law and tradition.

Something happens in the words of blessing. A relationship with God is established and developed which is of vital importance to the congregation. Through the acts and words of the blessing the people not only express what happens in life, but also seek to achieve their needs as a nation and as individuals.

In blessing energy is conveyed from him who blesses to him who is blessed. As a rule it moves from strong to weak, wise to unlearned, old to young, and God to man. ~~But the energy does~~
~~it was thought that God needed the blessing of man. (Jeremiah 44:26)~~

All normal/.....

All normal and healthy people have this blessing in themselves and thus are able to bless. Not all, however, are equally filled with the power to bless, for this power depends on the power of the spirit possessed and the status of the person concerned. Blessings given from the deathbed have a special power about them.

In both the giving and the receiving of a blessing there is communication of power. He who receives, blesses him who gives i.e. his soul goes out to him who has the power of blessing, and so maintains and manifests his glory.

(III Samuel 14:22; Job 22:29). Thus throughout the Old Testament men bless God who is above blessing, for in blessing they are blessed. "Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be thy glorious name which is exalted above all blessing and praise." (Nehemiah 9:5). The worshipper gathers all the energies of his life and directs them towards Him from whom all blessings flow. (10)

When one person blesses another (11) these blessings are both a prayerful vision of the Divine purpose for that person and a declaration of it, i.e. ^{they are} ~~it is~~ also prophetic, (Genesis 49:1) and also an intercessory prayer, (Deuteronomy 33). Pedersen (as quoted by Jacob) sees blessings operative in three fields: (i) to be fruitful and to multiply (12); (ii) in having many possessions and riches, and, (iii) in victory over enemies.

Blessings appertain to every climax of life and in all important decisions e.g. before a journey, at a wedding, assignment of inheritance. (13) Even a greeting can be a blessing. (Ruth 2:4)

In the opinion of the Israelite there is no great

difference/.....

difference between the word of blessing and intercessory prayer. Blessing is asking God for His bounty. Psalm 72 can be taken either as a blessing or as an intercessory prayer. The Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:23-24 is also an intercessory prayer for the people:

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace."

(f) Curses.

Cursing is blessing with a negative sign, and like blessing it is a mixture of magic and 'asking' prayer. The apocryphal book of the Old Testament, Sirach, equates the curse with prayer. "If in bitterness of soul he calls down a curse upon you, his Creator will hear his prayer." (Sirach 4:6) Grotesque as this sounds to the modern worshipper (in his thinking, if not in his emotions) cursing is a form of praying in the Old Testament.

Like blessing cursing is also regarded as a word of power, capable of attaining its end. ~~It is the weapon of the warrior against his enemy (Deuteronomy 28:26).~~ Israelite tradition revels in telling the story of how Yahweh saved His people by compelling Balaam to bless Israel, instead of cursing as he was commanded to do by the enemy. (Numbers 23:11; 24:10).

Although the primary word for cursing is קלל , sometimes the word for blessing, ברך , is used in its place, no doubt as an euphemism to avoid that dreadful word. (14)

There are a number of formulae for the curse.

Deuteronomy/.....

Deuteronomy 27:15-26 has a long list of various curse-formulae, to be used by the congregation, e.g. "Cursed be he who dishonours his father or his mother" and all the people shall say 'Amen' ". The curse attached to the test for a wife suspected of adultery, specifies the result if the wife, being guilty, drinks of the bitter water. If guilty the bitter water will "make your body swell and your thigh fall away". (Numbers 5:16-27). Jeremiah 17:18 is an example of a more usual form of the curse: 'let those be put to shame who persecute me, but let not me be put to shame..... bring upon them the day of evil; destroy them with double destruction".

There are also examples of prayers for revenge and for the destruction of the enemy. They are both frequent and *The R.S.V. translation of* urgent. An extreme form is found in Psalm 109 where the Psalmist even prays that the prayer of his enemy be counted as sin.(15)

Grim as those prayers may seem to be to us, they do reveal a strong sense of justice and an awareness that God will not allow injustice to be tolerated or ~~in~~justice to be violated. "May their camps be a desolationfor they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and him whom thou hast wounded, they afflict still more. Add to them punishment upon punishment." (Psalm 69:25-27).

Mowinckel notes that the operative words of the rituals of cursing ~~are~~ ^{OR} blessing, often are older than prayer, and in the course of time develop into prayer.

Although the curse is a word of power against those to whom it is directed, it will not affect the man who is full of blessing and remains close to God. Thus it was that Balaam found it impossible to curse the Israelites before the battle.

(Numbers 22- 24)/.....

(Numbers 22-24). Yahweh assures Abraham of His protection against the curse: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you, I will curse." (Genesis 12:3)

(g) Confession.

Confession can be described as a special type of intercessory prayer in which a definite request is made, viz. the forgiveness of sin, the removal of guilt, and the turning away of the punishment which threatens the individual or the people because of their sin. (16)

One obstacle to petitions of which the people of the Old Testament were very conscious, was sin expressed in its various forms of infidelity, disobedience, ingratitude, and rejection of the covenant. Sin hindered Yahweh's salvation and had to be removed, before Yahweh's salvation worked again. The sinner has set into motion a fatal force that will destroy him. The tragedy of sin is that the sinner is powerless in its grip, unless Yahweh intervenes.

In the prayers of penitence we have the most profound and impressive of Israel's prayers. There we learn of a God who freely forgives, receives back, and takes active steps to cleanse. (17) Forgiveness is sought so that worship may be worthily offered, and that the precious relationship between Yahweh and His people may be restored.

The prayer of confession follows the recognition of who God is, for none can stand in the presence of the Holy One without being conscious of the gulf between him and God. Isaiah's response to the vision of Yahweh in the temple was: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the/.....

seen the king, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5) Unholy man cannot see God and live, unless God imparts His cleansing grace. Either he must perish with his sin, or his sin must perish that he might live. (18)

"If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
that thou mayest be feared." (Psalm 130:3,4).

Confession prayer is very prominent during the period of the exile and the return. It was a period of much soul-searching for the reasons why Yahweh had allowed them to go into exile and yet had not abandoned them. Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:5-15) is mainly confession, acknowledging both the sins of Israel and the righteousness of God. In this community confession the leader does not stand apart from the congregation in admitting sin, for he too is involved. (Nehemiah 1:6)

As in other prayers confession also has a definite format. In Judges 10:10 we have a simple confession of guilt. "We have sinned against thee, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals." In chapter 10:15, there is added a prayer for deliverance. "We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to thee; only deliver us, we pray thee, this day". To confession and petition I Samuel 12:10, adds the promise of showing gratitude in ever more faithful honouring of Yahweh. Ezra 9:6-15 and Daniel 9:4-19, retain the motives and expressions, but multiply the affirmations of God and add historical retrospect.

III Prayer of Lamentation And Complaint.

In the various distresses that come upon nations and individuals, people always try to find a way to touch the heart
of God /.....

of God so that He may be susceptible to their prayers. They attempt to arouse His compassion by appealing to His promises in the covenant, His loving-kindness, honour and power. They, in turn, try to remove all that which displeases Him, confessing their sins, asking for forgiveness and help, appeasing His wrath and looking for His mercy and love.

The prayers of national lamentations are as a rule couched in general phrases which constantly recur; "hear", "look here", "plead our cause". When defeated and oppressed the nation have their special prayers asking to be rescued from death and distress. (Psalm 74:19); for revenge on their enemies (Psalm 79:10-12) and that they may be raised up again (Psalm 80:7).

Mowinckel suggests that the prayers of national lamentation belong to the special days of humiliation and prayer. When defeated in war or when some natural disaster takes place, a public fast day is proclaimed. (19) Humiliation and mourning imply a state of impurity since the 'disaster' or 'curse' has befallen the people. The accompanying cultic actions of tearing the clothes, beating the breasts and hips, cutting themselves with knives, shaving or plucking the hair and beard, wearing sackcloth, throwing dust and ashes on to their heads and either kneeling or lying prostrate in prayer, are meant to emphasize the depths of their feelings and to add power to their words of lamentation. (20)

In a world where illness was thought to be caused by demons, and even inflicted by Yahweh as punishment for sin, private prayers of complaint and lamentation are inevitable. As ^{Hebrews} a rule they believed that the curse of illness or trouble could be dealt with by means of offerings, cleansings and prayers. The individual prayed to Yahweh for healing, confessing his sinfulness and recalling/.....

and recalling his pious works. Calling on Yahweh to have compassion on him, he also asks Him to withdraw His sentence through His blessing.(21) He also prays for punishment and revenge on the evil enemies who have caused his discomfort.

These laments do not allow us to reconstruct the life history of the individual worshipper since his laments express his experience in a typical and universal way. The purpose is not to describe a particular happening, but to interpret the event in terms of the familiar categories of religion, hence these laments give words to express the feelings of others who are undergoing trials and tribulations.

IV Prayers Of Praise.

Most hymns and prayers begin either with an exhortation to praise Yahweh, to thank Him for His mercies or simply an ascription of praise. The Hebrew did not come into the presence of God with an easy familiarity, but with a deep awareness of His greatness and majesty. Adoration leaves no room for self-glory- only humility is expressed: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,..... the mighty man ... might,rich man ... riches, but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practice kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth." (Jeremiah 9:23-24) The Psalms clearly recognized that humble reverence is the beginning of prayer and worship.

In praising Yahweh the worshipper reminds himself just to whom he is praying and when he knows this, this knowledge governs his whole approach to Yahweh. This is the route of the man who knows God, and who is grateful for all that He has done.

Mowinckel also/.....

Mowinckel also suggests that praise to lead in the main body of the prayer, is an expression of a primitive utilitarian attitude to flatter Yahweh as well as to appeal to His sense of honour. Yahweh is far more likely to answer prayer if tackled in the right way. Although Mowinckel's assertion might be true of very early praise forms, it does not ring true in the later prayers and praises which reflect the genuine desires and feelings of the worshipper. The acclamation of Yahweh is basically a simple obligation of the covenant. It is man's response to the dialogue Yahweh has initiated with his community. At the core of the prayers of praise is the consciousness of both the poet and the congregation that they are standing face to face with Yahweh Himself. He is in their midst, and they are His chosen people who owe Him everything, including their birth as a nation. Those hymns of praise attempt to express what the congregation is seeing and feeling and to increase His glory in the world. Joy, enthusiasm and adoration are its dominant moods.

These hymns begin with an invitation to join the poet in praising God.

"O come, let us worship and bow down,

let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker". (Psalm 95:6)

Frequently the method of praising is also suggested -- singing, dancing, or ^{playing} a musical instrument.

"Let them praise his name with dancing,

making melody to him with timbrel and lyre!" (Psalm 149:3)

After the exhortation to praise Yahweh, the reasons why He should be worshipped are developed. Sometimes the poet is specific, at other times his motivating reasons are general. The primary reason for praise is Yahweh's acts in fulfilling

His rôle/.....

His rôle in the covenant relationship. Creation and His cosmic functions follow as stimuli for praise. (22)

"For he is our God,

And we are the people of his pasture,

and the sheep of his hand". (Psalm 95:6-7)

Occasionally the hymn of praise closes with a brief wish or asking prayer for the future prosperity of the congregation or of the poet himself. (23)

"May the Lord give strength to his people!

May the Lord bless his people with peace." (Psalm 29:11)

This kind of conclusion expresses a deep and original religious need: to surrender one's life and one's cause to such a glorious and mighty God and thereby to know oneself to be safe in His care.

These prayers of praise fall into two main categories:

(i) there are those prayers to be said or sung by the cultic community as a whole; and (ii) there are the personal hymns of praise. Psalm 84 is a good example of an individual's thoughts of praise. His "soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord", since he regards that a day spent in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand elsewhere. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." (24)

Yahweh is sometimes praised indirectly. When the poet refers to the temple or to Zion, it is God to whom he gives the glory, for He dwells in the temple and in Jerusalem. (25) (26)

Many hymns of praise can be found in the Psalms.
no 20).

V Prayers of Thanksgiving.

Praise moves very easily into thanksgiving - so much so that Ringgren describes the prayers of thanksgiving as "narrative praise" (27). There are however two formal differences between praise and thanksgiving hymns, viz. (i) in thanksgiving Yahweh is addressed in the second person, and (ii) the motivation for giving thanks includes some particular answer to prayer, or some special benefit obtained. (28) Common to these prayers is the deep sense of unworthiness of the worshipper, which has been made very plain by the great proofs of the Divine grace, always felt to be entirely undeserved.

Mowinckel sees the original pattern of the hymn of thanksgiving in the old songs of victory. (29) The worshipper does not only turn to Yahweh to thank and to praise Him for His action, but in doing so he is also witnessing before men Yahweh's acts of salvation. "All nations surrounded me; in the name of the Lord I cut them off..... I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me". (Psalm 118:10 & 13).

Thanksgiving, like praise, abounds in the Psalms. Gelin (30) lists the thanksgiving Psalms under three headings viz. (i) thanksgiving of the nation as a whole; (ii) thanksgiving of particular groups, guilds, or clans; and (iii) the thanksgiving of individuals. (31) The worshipper remembers with gratitude the many mercies of the past and the present. "In thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them".

They are so

(Psalm 22:4(5)). [^] filled with the joy of thanksgiving, that they not only witness to Yahweh's mighty acts, but ~~also~~ ^{invite us} to "taste and see that the Lord is good", and ^{to discover for ourselves} that "the man who takes refuge in him" is happy. (Psalm 34:8(9)). Thanksgiving covers the /.....

both

covers the whole sphere of national, clan and individual life, for in all these areas Yahweh is obviously active.

Special events give rise to special songs of thanksgiving e.g. the times of national deliverance as in the time of Deborah (32) "The Lord has done great things for us". The fulfilment of vows (33), *spiritual, material and physical* blessings *both encourage and give content to Thanksgiving.* (34)

Sacrifice and thanksgiving are closely linked. The phrase "a sacrifice of thanksgiving" is fairly common. "Burnt offerings" are a way of giving thanks for vows fulfilled. (Psalm 66:13) Leviticus 7:12-15 and 22:29-30 lay down the regulations for these thanksgiving offerings. The sacrifice is the attempt to go beyond inadequate words in thanksgiving and to give tangible evidence of a grateful heart. The characteristic feature of these sacrifices is that the victim is shared among God, the priest and the worshipper who eats the offering as a holy thing. The sacrifice must be eaten on the day it is offered. (35)

Conclusion.

As can be seen prayer as speech with Yahweh covers a very wide field. Although some of these types are not usually regarded as prayers today, in the Old Testament times they were very real and vital elements in their religious life. Prayer, of course, is not just man's speech to God, it is also God's speech to man. Man also needs to listen to God's speech, before he can pray properly. However, to cover God's speech to man as part of prayer, would need a thesis on its own.

Footnotes to Chapter Two.

1. Smart, J.D.: The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man.
2. Genesis 18:16-33; 20:17; Exodus 32: 11-13, 31f; 33:12-16;
34:9; Numbers 11:11-15; 14:13-19; 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:
18-21, ~~26-29~~.
3. I Kings 13:6; I Samuel 12:19; Jeremiah 1:5.
4. II Chronicles 32:20, Job 42:8.
5. Examples of these prayers are: Deuteronomy 9: 26-29,
~~Judges 15: 20~~; II Samuel 7:18-29; I Kings 8:23-53;
II Kings 6:17,18; 19:15-19; ~~Isaiah 37:15-21~~;
~~Isaiah 37:15-21~~; II Chronicles 20: 6-12.
6. Eissfeldt, O: The Old Testament, pages 17-18.
7. Leviticus 27:1-8.
8. Eissfeldt, O: The Old Testament, page 76.
9. Richardson, A. editor: A Theological Word Book of the Bible. ^{p.160}
~~9A: N.E.B. "With his right hand"~~, ~~ARTICLE: OATH, SWEAR.~~
10. Psalms 103:1, 22; 104:1 cf Deuteronomy 8:10; Judges 5:2;
I Chronicles 29:20.
11. Genesis 27:27-29, 39-40; 47:10; 48:15f, 20f; 49:16
12. Jacob, E: Theology of the Old Testament, p 179;
(i) Genesis 1:28; 9:1; 12:2; 13:16.
(ii) Genesis 24:35.
(iii) Genesis 27:29; 49:8-12, 22-26.
13. Ruth 3:10; I Samuel 23:21; 25:33; ~~II Kings 4:29~~ Psalm 129:8.
14. I Kings 21:10,13; Job 1:5,11; 2:5,9.
15. Other examples in the Psalms are: 35:26; 40:15; 59; 69:22-28;
Oesterley: Psalms p 458, suggests that if 25 25 25 be
149:7. read instead of 19 25 25 in Psalm 109:7
16. Eissfeldt, O: The Old Testament, page 18.
17. Psalm 51; Isaiah 63; 64.
18. Psalms 38:18; 51:1-4,7,10; 130:3; Habakkuk 1:13.
19. I Kings /.....

19. I Kings 21:9,12; Jeremiah 36:9; Joel 1:14.
20. (i) National laments are found in - Psalms 12, 14, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 144, Lamentations 5.
(ii) Prayers for revenge: Nehemiah 1:2, Psalms 58:11; 79:10; 91:1; 106:4; 149:7.
(iii) The ancient formulae of cursing are used in prayers for the destruction of the enemy - Psalms 12:4; 35:4; 58:5-10; 79:6; 83:10-17.
21. Examples of private lamentations are Psalms 6, 30, 32, 38, 39, 41, 88; Job 33:19ff.
22. Psalms 47:2-4; 95:3-5.
23. (i) Psalms 29:11; 104:34-35.
(ii) Psalms 19:13f(14f); 138:8.
24. Other Examples Psalms 9-10, 104, 121.
25. Psalms 48, 84, 87, 122.
26. *OTHER HYMNS OF PRAISE.*
Job 9:3-13; 12:13-25; 25:2-6; 26:5-14.
Psalms 8,19, 29, 33, 46, 47, 48, 76, 104, 135, 136, 145-150.
Amos 4:12f; 5:8f; 9:5f.
27. Ringgren, H: Israelite Religion, page 180.
28. MacKenzie, R.A.F.; Faith and History in the Old Testament, page 95-96.
29. Genesis 4:23f; Judges 5; I Samuel 18:7.
Mowinkel, S: The Psalms in Israel's Worship, Volume II, Chap.9
30. Gelin, A: The Religion of Israel, page 50-53.
31. (i) Psalms 66, 123, 128, 135.
(ii) Psalms 106, 117.
(iii) Psalms 17, 29, 31, 33, 40, 65, 91, 115, 137.
Job 33:26-28; Isaiah 38: 9-20; Jonah 2:3-10.
32. Judges 5:1f; Psalm 126:3; Isaiah 35:10.
33. Psalms 50:14; 76:11; 66:13.
34. Psalm 23:3
35. de Vaux, R: Ancient Israel, page 417.

CHAPTER THREE:Praying Personalities.

Prayer is a combination of three factors: speech, man and God. We have looked at the speech, now we turn to the personalities of prayer.

1. Abraham.

When we read through the book of Genesis, we are struck by the intimate relationship between God and the patriarchs. He was not only in close contact with the head of the clan, but belonged to the family, moving with them in their nomadic life. Their relationship with God is one of reverence and respect, but not of terror. This very personal God comes in friendliness and promise, speaking to the clan through the head of the tribe. Not unnaturally the kind of God they worshipped determined the kind of prayers they prayed.

Abraham is the supreme example of patriarchal piety. In Genesis 12:1ff we read of Yahweh taking the initiative in calling Abram to leave his country and in promising to make a great nation out of his descendants. Abram's response is one of obedience, and it is this continuing obedience, tested severely in the command to sacrifice Isaac, which maintains that intimate contact with Yahweh. The first time Abram is *described as praying* to Yahweh is in chapter 12 verse 8 where he first built an altar, and then "called on the name of the Lord". Prayer at the altar of sacrifice is a feature of the early patriarchs.(1)

The chief pattern of Abraham's prayers is that of dialogue and intercession. He prayed for an heir to succeed him; for ^hIsmael; for Sodom and Gomorrah when Abraham dared to argue

with/.....

with Yahweh and to plead with Him to be merciful; and for Abimelech and his family to be healed from the curse that Yahweh had placed upon them. (2)

Abraham, however, does not take the initiative in the prayers. It is Yahweh who first of all approaches Abraham. (3) ^{"the Word of the Lord"} Sometimes He comes in a vision, but usually He just appears, on occasion, in the guise of a human being. (4) Yahweh approaches Abraham in promises; to be a great nation; to be his shield; to make a covenant; and to give Sarah a son. (5)

Prayer for Abraham is also the method that God uses to reveal Himself, His plans and purposes. "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1). He reveals Himself as a covenant-making God; a promise-keeping God, and a God who is deeply interested in the welfare of His people. When Abraham's servant goes to Nahor to find a wife for Isaac, it is to the "God of my master Abraham" (Genesis 24:12) i.e. to the God who has revealed Himself to Abraham, to whom he prays for wisdom in this delicate task. In later years Yahweh is known as the "God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Exodus 3:6). Prayer to Abraham and to the other patriarchs was a means of revelation, of getting to know God more intimately.

The outstanding characteristic of Abraham's prayer is its compassion and his intimate relationship with God. The other praying personalities of the Old Testament are not portrayed with this easy style of prayer.

2. Jacob.

Abraham's obedience and loving loyalty to Yahweh make his relationship so unique. When we come to Jacob, obedience is not an /.....

is not an easy thing. Jacob is a different kind of person. Although his early life was a deceitful kind of life, Yahweh, ~~as~~ with Abraham, took the first steps in the building of a deeper relationship. We can also see in this action of Yahweh, an answer to Isaac's blessing prayer for Jacob. (Genesis 27:27-29)

At Bethel Yahweh approaches Jacob in a dream. Unlike Abraham's, Jacob's response is not that of obedience, ~~but is that of the~~ making of a bargain with God. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God" (Genesis 28:20-21) This vow has none of the trust of Abraham's prayers, but it is the beginning of a new life with Yahweh.

After his years with Laban, and as he prepares to meet his brother Esau who has sworn to kill him, Jacob attempts to smooth the way through prayer. Quite unlike the conversational prayers of Abraham, this prayer of Jacob is very formal. It has the elements of invocation; a remembrance of Yahweh's promises and command; confession and petition. Jacob is so conscious of the many blessings that God has bestowed on him, that he discovers his unworthiness: "I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness which thou hast shown to thy servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies". (Genesis 32: 10) God has been working in his life in a different way from that of Abraham, and Jacob responded to that steadfast love and faithfulness in prayer.

The crisis point in his relationship with Yahweh is at Penual where he received a special blessing from God. "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved". (Gen. 32:30).

From here/.....

From here onwards God is able to speak to Jacob as He spoke to Abraham. (35:1, 9, 10). Jacob's response is non-verbal - he set up a pillar of stone and sacrificed on it (35:14). God used prayer to reveal to Jacob His nature and promises. (35:11f). Jacob is now as obedient as Abraham was. (35:1-4, 15). His life closes with his prayer and prophetic blessings. (48:15-16, 20; 49:2-27).

3. Moses.

The prophet Jeremiah describes both Moses and Samuel as pre-eminent in intercession (6). As we read through the life and prayers of Moses, we find this assertion to be no exaggeration. The secret of his dynamic and resilient leadership is found in his intimate relationship with God. Like Jacob, Moses had run away from the consequences of his sin, but unlike Jacob, Moses was more receptive to Yahweh's call. Again it is Yahweh who takes the initiative in calling Moses to his task of delivering the Hebrew people out of their slavery in Egypt. Moses is God's answer to the many prayers of the oppressed people. "And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." (Exodus 2:23F). This method of God's in answering prayer by calling a man to His service, is a common feature, especially in the period of the Judges. (7)

The dynamic of Moses' work and prayers finds its source in the fact that it is Yahweh who has called and equipped him for leadership. In his call Yahweh convinces Moses that he can save the Hebrew slaves if He helps. This aid Yahweh promises. Convinced himself, Moses is able to persuade others. In the call/.....

call, which is in dialogue form, Yahweh reveals Himself and His nature. (8) Moses' response to Yahweh's call, however, is not the ready obedience of Abraham, but the deep inner struggle of surrender to the will of God to attempt this most onerous of challenges. Only after Yahweh has resolved his doubts, 'is Moses able and willing to trust and obey.

The call of Moses gives power to his prayers. Because Yahweh has called him to this task of leadership, Moses is free to turn to Him again and again in the predicaments of the wilderness wanderings. Whenever Yahweh voices His intention either to abandon His people, or to destroy them, Moses reminds Him of the promises made in the call. (9) This is the lever that he uses in his God-given task to bring the people to the promised land.

A good example of this kind of prayer is found in Yahweh's reaction to the people's disobedience in making the golden calf. Yahweh tells Moses to leave Him alone so that His "wrath may burn hot against them and may consume them" (10) Yahweh also promises to fulfil His age-old promise to Abraham by creating a nation out of the descendants of the loyal Moses. Moses' reaction is to appeal to Yahweh's pride and nature. Why should He give the Egyptians the opportunity to scorn Him **because he fails** to fulfil His pre-determined task? Then Moses reminds Yahweh of His promises to the patriarchs. In this prayer Moses dares to tell Yahweh what to do: "Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people". (Exodus 32:12) The basis of Moses' confidence in daring to pray such a strongly worded prayer, is found in his call and in the nature of Yahweh to keep promises.

In the expanded edition of the prayer in Numbers 14:13-19 the
 editors/.....

editors make Moses take a much more gentle and reverent line with Yahweh: "And now, I pray thee, let the power of the Lord be great as thou has promised".

This prayer also closes with an appeal to be forgiven, while the Exodus account puts the call for forgiveness on the following day.

The confession and plea for forgiveness in Exodus 32:31f shows us that Moses did not pray in words alone, but with his life. Here he is prepared to be blotted out of God's book, if God will not forgive His people. This is intercession of the highest order. In verse 34 when Moses is assured of the continued existence of his people, he is charged by Yahweh to take action as the shepherd leader to bring the people back to the path of rectitude. Moses is himself part of the answer to his own prayer.

The dialogue prayer recorded in Exodus 33:1- 34:10 shows again the intercessory power of the whole man. Cassuto writes that if we are "to comprehend the dialogue in this paragraph properly", then we must pay heed "to the fact that this conversation is not conducted in accord with Greek or modern processes of logical thinking, but follows the pattern of eastern dialogues, which convey the intention of the speakers more by way of allusion than through explicit statements." (11)

Yahweh opens the dialogue by commanding Moses to continue to escort the Hebrew tribes to the promised land. "Depart, go up hence, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 33:1) God promises to send an angel to guide and protect, while He Himself will remain behind "lest I consume you in the way, for you are a stiff necked people". (Exodus 33:3)

Moses parries with Yahweh (v 12-16). He alludes to his
call /.....

call (v.12- "I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight.") If he has indeed found favour, then Yahweh must grant his request as it is in harmony with his call ("show me now thy ways", and, "this nation is thy people" - which Yahweh seems to deny in verse 1).

In reply Yahweh promises to be with them (verse 14), but Moses is not totally satisfied. Having obtained this much, Moses goes on to receive an even greater blessing for his people. Moses is prepared to give everything so that his divine calling might be brought to completion, even if this means taking Yahweh to task for His unreasonable stand over Israel's sin. Moses is deeply aware that the survival of the tribes is valueless, unless Yahweh accompanies them to fulfil His purposes. The distinction between the Hebrews and the Egyptians have no value unless Yahweh goes into the future with them. Yahweh gives to Israel her distinctive nature and rôle in the world.

In verse 17 Yahweh praises Moses for his rightful persistence. As a reward Moses is shown more of God, than any of his predecessors. He sees the glory of God (v.18-22) i.e. he perceives the works of God and in them is able to discern some of Yahweh's attributes, but is unable to comprehend His essential nature. (12) As complete forgiveness is obtained, the sin barrier to the covenant is lifted, and the covenant renewed. (Exodus 34:10ff)

The prayers of Moses are in the context of his call and the promises of Yahweh. His prayers are more than words, they are the expression of a man who enjoys an intimate relationship with God. These prayers involve his whole life. His faithfulness and persistence make him into the priest whose prayers save Israel from the wrath of Yahweh. His persistence is a necessary part of prayer, not to persuade God by much asking, but to prepare/.....

pare his mind and imagination for the answers.

When we leave these great and demanding prayers of Moses, and look at some of his other prayers, we come down to earth again. The pattern of many of these prayers is: a complaint of hardships; Moses intercedes; God acts. For instance, when the wanderers camped at Rephidim, they not only found that there was no water, but they blamed Moses and demanded that he remedy the situation. In this explosive atmosphere Moses asks Yahweh: "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." (Exodus 17:4) Yahweh answers by showing the method to find the water.(13) Closely allied to this pattern are the prayers for the lifting of the nine plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh requests the plagues to be removed, and Moses through prayer obliges.(14)

Moses did not find the path of obedience a bed of roses. He has personal prayers of complaint and regret that he had ever heeded the call. "Why didst thou ever send me?" he grumbles feelingly. (Exodus 5:22). In Numbers 11:11-15, Moses despairs of ever fulfilling his God-given responsibility, and wants to be released from his task, or alternatively to have more help. Yahweh's answer in verses 16-23 is a promise to share the burden. Only as Moses came to Yahweh with his complaints, was he able to continue faithfully in his often thankless task. Through these encounters with Yahweh, Moses learned to trust more.

This man of prayer was at the same time a man of action. Most of the Old Testament heroes of prayers are also heroes in action. Prayer was so important and vital in Moses' life, that one tradition indicates a special place of prayer, viz. the tabernacle which stood outside the defiling precincts of the camp. Whenever Moses went to pray in the tent it was a state occasion. All the people rose up and stood in front of their own tents until

Moses/.....

Moses had gone into the tabernacle to pray. (Exodus 33:7-11)

Here God came in the pillar of cloud: here Yahweh spoke "face to face" with Moses. The mountain, and Mount Sinai in particular, was also a special place of prayer. (Exodus 31:18)

4. Joshua.

Although Joshua succeeded Moses as leader, his prayer life is not as fully recorded as are his military exploits. As before Yahweh takes the first step in establishing a relationship. Yahweh promises to be with Joshua as He had been with Moses. In Joshua 7:7-15, Joshua pleads for Yahweh's support, since the people have suffered a heavy defeat at Ai. It seems as if Yahweh has deserted them. Yahweh's answer is to point out the sin in the camp that had caused the trouble. Prayer here has the function of enabling Yahweh to uncover the sin of the people, and hence to give the opportunity of cleaning the community and restoring the broken relationship.

5. Judges.

A feature of the prayers in the time of the Judges is, as mentioned earlier, that the tribes ask Yahweh to save them out of their predicament, and He answers the prayer by sending a deliverer. The usual pattern of the prayer is that of acknowledgement of sin as the root of their captivity, and a plea for forgiveness and deliverance. "We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to thee; only deliver us, we pray thee this day (Judges 10:15)

In the context of Yahweh's deliverance of his people,

the prayers/.....

the prayers of the judges are to be found. Gideon, Jephthah, Manoah, and Samson are the praying personalities here. (15) Perhaps even the final verse of Deborah's victory song (Judges 5:31) can be added as a prayer of attrition.

Gideon's dialogue prayer is with the angel of Yahweh, and with Yahweh Himself (16) who calls him to his task. Like Moses, Gideon is very wary about the call of God to be a deliverer. Like Jacob, Gideon responds to Yahweh in a vow prayer. "If now I have found favour with thee, then show me a sign that it is thou who speakest with me." (Judges 6:17) On a second occasion Gideon asked for yet another sign that Yahweh to make certain that He really wanted him to deliver the people from the Midianites (Judges 6:36-39). The sign is given. From this point onwards Yahweh speaks to Gideon, but Gideon no longer responds in words, only in obedient action.

Jephthah's vow prayer is a little different from Gideon's. Where Gideon prays for a sign, Jephthah promises to offer in sacrifice the first person or creature that comes from his house to greet him when he returns from the victory Yahweh has promised to give him. His vow prayer is thus supposed to give Yahweh an added incentive to secure victory. (Judges 11:29-40) Yahweh gave the victory, and Jephthah sacrificed his only child who was the first to greet him. Vows were made to be honoured, no matter what the cost was.

Manoah and his wife experienced a dialogue prayer with the angel of Yahweh. When the angel tells them that they are to have a son born to them, Manoah prays for guidance; "teach us what we are to do with the boy that will be born" (Judges 13:8). The son, Samson, has only one prayer attributed to him. This is the prayer in which he asks Yahweh for power to avenge himself on the Philistines by destroying their temple. This prayer is prayed in the/.....

in the pagan temple of Dagon. It is also answered, despite the locality. (Judges 16:28)

6. Hannah.

Hannah's vow prayer started a new era in the history of Israel for Yahweh granted her prayer, and gave her a son, Samuel whom Jeremiah called a great intercessor in the tradition of Moses. (Jeremiah 15:1) Her prayer answered, Hannah prays the beautiful psalm prayer of thanksgiving. (I Samuel 2:1-10) This prayer with its reference to the monarchy (verse 10), was hardly composed by her on this occasion. Micklen suggests that the psalm was inserted here because in later years it was used in the liturgy for the service corresponding to the modern "churching" of women. The psalm was also used as a song of victory and of thanksgiving on a variety of occasions. Micklen sees Hannah's "exultavit" as the first draft of the Christian "Magnificat". (17)

7. Samuel.

Samuel's call came in the night hours. Only as he obeyed Eli's suggestion to pray: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears", was he able to wait and hear the word of Yahweh to him. (I Samuel 3:9,10,21). The word was a prophetic one concerning Eli and his sons.

As a prophet at Shiloh, Samuel's special duty was to pray for the people. The nation accepted this responsibility and power to such a degree that they pleaded with him never to cease to pray for them. (18) Samuel thought it to be sin, if he failed/.....

failed to pray for his people.(18)

Praying for his people went hand in hand with telling them of God's requirements, since prayer is not effective, unless Yahweh's conditions and commands are met. Thus in I Samuel 7:3f Samuel instructed the house of Israel to turn aside from the foreign gods and ashtaroth and to turn to Yahweh with all their heart. Only after a formal commitment to Yahweh, did Samuel call them together at Mizpah. Through fasting and the act of pouring out water, they confessed: "We have sinned against Yahweh". The offering accompanied Samuel's unrecorded intercession. Here we have an example of a cultic prophet at his work of prayer and sacrifice.

When the elders of Israel asked for a king (I Samuel 8:6) Samuel took the matter in prayer to Yahweh who told him to grant their request. Using the means of prayer, Samuel discovered God's will ~~about~~ the request and God's own appointment for the post. These prayers along with their answers played an important part in Israel's history, for here was to be discovered Yahweh's purpose and pattern for the future of the people. At Yahweh's instigation Saul was anointed as the first king. (19) In chapter 16:1f there is a short dialogue prayer concerning the appointment of Saul's successor. In verse 12 Yahweh reveals that David is to be anointed king.

Since Samuel was angry with Yahweh for removing the kingship from Saul, he "cried to the Lord all night"(I Samuel 15:11) Despite this all night vigil, Yahweh is not persuaded to change His mind; instead He asks Samuel: "How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel?" (I Samuel 16:1) Intercession cannot and does not compel Yahweh to take steps that are opposed to His nature and His will. Yahweh

answers/.....

answers only those prayers that are in line with His ultimate purposes.

8. David.

Unlike Samuel, David is a man of war. His communications with Yahweh are a mixture of 'enquiry' by magic and prayer.(20) The prayers that are recorded are deeply personal though they do affect the nation's future.

Yahweh did not approach David directly. Nathan, the prophet, was His mediator. "Go and tell my servant David," (II Samuel 7:5) was God's way of speaking to him. David's response to this mediated word was a personal and direct prayer to Yahweh (verses 18-29). This prayer is a religious composition dating in the main from David's time. In its context the central theme is played on the word 'house'. Yahweh will not allow him to build His house, but will build David a house i.e. sons to follow him on the throne. David begins his prayer by remembering his unworthiness before God. There is thanksgiving for past mercies (23-24); a remembrance of the greatness of God (21-22,26); a request to confirm the word spoken by Nathan (verse 25), and to bless his house for ever (verse 29).

What is interesting in this prayer is that David "has found courage to pray this prayer" to Yahweh, since God Himself has taken the initiative. This is in contrast with the other personalities of prayer who dared to pray and even to argue with God. There are perhaps two interpretations here: either David had desired to pray this prayer, but dared not because of the nature of the request as overriding Yahweh's personal appointment of kings, but as the suggestion comes from Yahweh Himself, he can go ahead; Or David feels that it is dangerous to pray because of his/.....

of his chequered career, but now that Yahweh has taken the first step, it is a sign of Yahweh's favour.

Like Samuel, David had an all night vigil of prayer. Fasting was added as part of his vigil for the life of his illegitimate child. Though his prayer was not answered, David accepted the situation with grace, trusting to the Lord's perfect will. He had done all that he could to save the life of the child, but Yahweh had taken the baby in death. (II Samuel 12:22f)

In chapter 22 there is a psalm of thanksgiving. It purports to be an hymn of triumph, sung no doubt to the accompaniment of sacrifice and festivity to celebrate David's victories. Here it is possibly adapted for liturgical purposes.

In II Samuel 24:10f David prayed for the forgiveness of his own sin. God's answer to his request came through Gad, David's seer.

9. Solomon.

Unlike David to whom Yahweh revealed His plans through a prophet, Solomon is privileged to have a direct revelation. In a dream by night, Yahweh appeared to Solomon and commanded the king: "Ask what I shall give you". This is unusual, for Yahweh has always told the previous praying personalities His requirements, though leaving the door open for requests. Solomon's prayer in response to this unusual command shows a sensitivity to the greatness of Yahweh; a deep knowledge of what Yahweh requires ("walk in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart.") and an appreciation of his inadequacy to be king in his own power. Hence Solomon prays for "an understanding mind to govern thy people." Through meditation in prayer and by sharing his thoughts with God in prayer, Solomon was able/.....

was able to make the right choice. (I Kings 3:5-9)

The well-known prayer of Solomon at the opening and dedication of the temple is a well constructed legalistic composition attempting to provide for every kind of situation when people should want to pray to Yahweh. (21) The phraseology, the full rhetorical style, the admonitory tone and the simple, stern theology of sin and retribution stamp this prayer as an elaboration of the Deuteronomic compiler with later expansion by a revisor of the same school after the exile. (verses 44 -53) (22)

The prayer is divided into three main sections:

- (a) Solomon's address to the assembly (15-21) which recapitulates in thanksgiving the fulfilment of the promises of Yahweh and especially Nathan's oracle to David. (II Samuel 7);
- (b) the prayer of dedication (22-53) which is strongly Deuteronomic. In the enumeration of the various calamities and the catalogue of curses consequent upon the breaking of the law suggests Deuteronomy 28:15-68; and (c) the blessing (54-61) which is omitted from the Chronicles account. This omission probably reflects the development of the priestly monopoly of such sacred functions as the blessing of the people. In the earlier record Solomon ~~has~~ the authority to assume the rôle of priest, for then, by virtue of his kingship, he was head of his own sanctuary: the professional priests exercising their offices only as the king's deputies. (23)

Running through the prayer there are four main themes which also contain the substance of the Church's intercessions for every age, viz. right relationships between individuals; a worthy rôle for the nation; material and physical wellbeing; and an outgoing concern for the heathen world.

Yahweh assures Solomon that He has heard the prayer. He repeats the conditions of faithfulness, integrity and upright-

ness/.....

ness, if the promise to David's house is to be kept in all its fullness. (24)

10. Elijah and Elisha.

Most of Elijah's and Elisha's prayers are of a legendary and magical nature with instant miraculous answers. The Carmel contest; Elisha's knowing the mind of the king of Syria; the flow of oil to pay off the widow's debt; the curse on the two boys; and Elisha's singlehanded capture of the Syrian army, all bear evidence of this magical and legendary prayer. No doubt these men were giants in prayer to give rise to such stories. (25)

Elijah's dialogue with Yahweh after the Carmel contest (I Kings 19:9-18), shows the usual pattern of Yahweh taking the first step in the conversation. Here He shows deep concern for Elijah's depressed state. Elijah discovers a further revelation of God, that God comes not always in the spectacular events of life like at Carmel, but also in the "still small voice". After this new revelation Elijah is able to discern God's commands once more.

11. Jeremiah.

Wellhausen names Jeremiah as "the father of true prayer," (26), and as we read through Jeremiah's writings, we find in his prayers the peak of Old Testament prayer. He has broken through the lower reaches of prayer and has come to the highest point of prayer of an individual in the Old Testament.

Skinner suggests that there is a ladder of prayer in the historical evolution of religion. (27) At the lowest level prayer is/.....

prayer is simply petition for the fulfilment of some particular desire, or the removal of an external evil, solely in the interest of the individual. ~~This kind of prayer is sometimes tinged with~~
~~egoism.~~

Through the development of intercession, prayer ascends to the stage of Jeremiah. This stage is the effort of the soul to bring every thought and feeling into harmony with God and to discover its true good in being right with Him. Though neither selfish nor self-centered, this stage does contain a certain and necessary amount of self-will. There is an unresolved difference between the two wills, arising from man's inability to conceive that which he deems to be necessary for his good can possibly be other than what God wills he should have. In Jeremiah's case he wants the punishment of his enemies and the withdrawal of the call to be a prophet - and yet this is not God's way.

The third stage of prayer we see in Jesus where the thought of self is lost in the divine will, where the mind surrenders itself wholly to the Divine will as that which is the highest good. "Not my will but Thine be done", expresses in a nutshell the height of prayer.

As prayer and life are so closely integrated, we need to look at Jeremiah as a person, before looking at his prayers. The prophet was a sensitive soul, shy and not given to public life. He was formed for quietness and companionship, yet he was called by Yahweh to follow a lonely, hard and sorrowful path of obedience.

Jeremiah had two deep and conflicting loyalties: a deep love for his country, and a deep love for Yahweh. His supreme aim was to bring the will of his people into harmony with the will of God, but as the nation refused to listen and to obey, he failed. He had to condemn the nation he loved, to serve the God he loved. "Each prophecy cost him tears of blood; for he had

to/.....

to announce the destruction of that which he loved". (28) He is branded as a traitor, he is hated, and no one ever listens.

There were times when Jeremiah wondered whether he was being cursed by God through this gift of prophecy, since the genuineness of a prophet was tested by the fulfilment or otherwise of his words. For years he had predicted the downfall of Jerusalem and the ruin of his people, but it seemed as if it would never happen.

Yahweh added to Jeremiah's frustrations by forbidding him to pray for the nation and even if Jeremiah does pray for them, He promises not to hear. (Jeremiah 7:16) The people of Israel must first of all learn to listen and to obey, for only then will the intercessions be meaningful and effective. It is interesting to note that even though Jeremiah is in extreme disfavour with the people, they still ask him to pray on their behalf. This is part of his responsibility as a prophet - but he learns that God requires more than words. Yahweh calls for inner obedience, justice, mercy, and righteousness.

Jeremiah's first efforts at prayer were for his nation, but he learned to pray for himself when his intercessions were rejected by Yahweh. It was also partly through the rejection of his message and of his person by others, while at the same time having this burning desire to proclaim the dreadful message, that compelled him to wrestle with God in prayer to make sense out of his calling, his message and response. He felt himself damned by God, thus giving an inadequate message, while other prophets were comfortable in their proclamations of peace, hope and joy. Evil prospered, while he, the good and obedient servant of God, was going through hell on earth. This forms the background and burden of his prayers, complaints, and his petitions to have his enemies heavily punished.

The relevant passages that deal with Jeremiah's wrestlings with God are: 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 15:10-21; 17:9f, 14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-12, 14-18. The first two come from the early part of Jeremiah's ministry, while the rest are generally accepted as coming from the middle years of his ministry. There is the suggestion that Jeremiah was able to come to the point of accepting his frustrating life in his later years when he learned to surrender more fully to Yahweh. His problems were very much like those of a young minister growing wise to the ways of God and himself in handling all kinds of people.

In the first two passages Jeremiah is painfully conscious of the hatred that his unpopular message has heaped upon him. He hears his enemies plot: "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more". (11:19) He asks Yahweh the age old question: "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (12:1) Yahweh ought to know the answer since He "plantest them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit." (12:2) Jeremiah calls upon Yahweh as the righteous judge to allow him to see His vengeance upon his enemies (11:20) In verse 22 Yahweh promises punishment for the enemies.

Although Jeremiah is having a difficult time in his unpopular work, his prayers reveal, even at this early stage, the underlying certainty that his message is in harmony with God's revelation.

Chapter 15:10-18 is also a complaint about the tough life he is leading despite his uprightness. The first part of verse 10 is very much like Job 3: "Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land."

Once again, he calls for God's vengeance on his enemies. Verse 16 is a positive step forward for here he admits that "thy words

became/.....

become to me a joy and the delight of my heart." Yahweh replies by affirming his ultimate deliverance (verses 16-21) and by promising to make him "a fortified wall of bronze".

Jeremiah's prayer in chapter 20:7-12, begins in the depths of despair, but ends on a note of triumph receiving the assurance of Yahweh. The Lord is to him as a "dread warrior".

Jeremiah is able to pray for vengeance without taking vengeance himself. He is free in his prayers to express his strongest feelings before God - and Yahweh understands. By praying in this way, Jeremiah is affirming his confidence in the rightness of his living and his message. Even his most dangerous enemies cannot shake him here nor can they force him in any way to yield to their ways. In his prayers Jeremiah works out his thoughts with Yahweh, and through his prayers finds the strength to endure.

Reading between the lines of his prayers we see a process of self-examination, a scrutiny of his motives to discover whether he has been disloyal to his calling. He repels the idea that he has a secret delight in anticipating the day of reckoning (17:16). On the contrary he has striven to act as mediator and intercessor even for his foes. (18:20). He works his unpleasant duties with a clear conscience, but even here he is conscious that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt". (29)

In his prayers Jeremiah learns that the condition of victory over the world is victory over himself (16:19). He discovers that he must learn to distinguish the noble from the base in his own thinking and feeling. God's presence enables him to discover the unworthiness of some of the feelings to which he had given such free and fearless expression. Only as these rebellious thoughts are surrendered, is he able to stand before Yahweh and to speak on His behalf to the nation. Only the pure in heart are able to see God.

12. Daniel.

In the days of the bitter persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, Daniel became the hero of prayer and loyalty to Yahweh. Despite the laws passed making his prayers unlawful, Daniel continued to pray three times a day facing Jerusalem. His prayers were not secret affairs, for with his windows flung wide open, they were clearly audible in the street below.

(Daniel 6:10f)

Conclusion.

In these individual prayer studies, we have covered a long period of time, beginning with ~~the~~ Abraham and concluding with Daniel. From the intimate and chatty prayers of the Patriarchs we moved to the more formal and liturgical prayers of Solomon. From the straightforward petitions of Jacob, we came to Jeremiah whose prayers struggle to express his deepest needs. The prayers of the praying personalities cover a wide field of human activity from Moses' prayers to guide a nation to Jeremiah's prayers of self-discovery. But in every case prayer was the very life breath that sustained them and encouraged them in the work they had to do. These men of prayer, were also men of action, ^{it is} ~~and~~ as we study their tasks and their backgrounds, ^{that} ~~does~~ prayer take on a richer meaning for us.

Footnotes to Chapter 3.

1. Genesis 13:4; 26:25.
2. Genesis 15:2f; 17:18,20; 18:20-33; 20:17.
3. Genesis 12:1,7; 13:14; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1 etc.
4. Genesis ~~17~~:1; 18:1f. 15:1
5. Genesis 12: 2; 13:14f; 15:1; 17:2,16.
6. Jeremiah 15:1.
7. Judges 10:10-16; 2:16; 3:9,15; 4:3,4; 6:6-8 et al.
8. Exodus 3:6,14; 6:3f.
9. Exodus 33:3; 32:10; 32:11ff.
10. Exodus 32:10.
11. Cassuto, V: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, page 432.
12. Ibid page 435.
13. Other examples. Exodus 15:23-25; 17:1-6; Numbers 11:1-3;21:4-9.
14. Exodus 8:9,12,28,30. et al.
15. Judges 6:11f, 36; 11:30; 13:8f; 16:28.
16. The terms Angel of Yahweh, and Yahweh used interchangeably.
17. Abingdon Commentary, page 384.
18. I Samuel 7:8 of 12:19; 12:23.
19. I Samuel 9:15f; 10:1; but 10:20f refers to enquiry by means of the "lot".
20. II Samuel 2:1; 5:22f.
21. I Kings 8:15-53, 56-61 // II Chronicles 6:1-39.
22. Gray, J.: I and II Kings, page 197f.
23. Abingdon Commentary, page 420.
24. I Kings 9:1-9; II Chronicles 7:11-22.
25. I Kings 18:17-40; II Kings 6:11f; 4:1-7; 2:23f; 6:15-23.
26. Skinner, J.: Prophecy and Religion, page 228. I have relied heavily on Skinner in this section.
27. ibid page 228.
28. de Dietrich, S: Free Men, page 47.
29. Jeremiah 17:9; 17:10 cf 11:20; 12:3; 20:12. Chapter Four/...

Chapter Four:God and Prayer.

A study of the many prayers in the Old Testament reveals to the reader the kind of God in whom the worshipper believed. Prayer is one of the best keys to an understanding of what men think of God, the salvation He offers, and the ground of hope for that salvation. Conversely God Himself provides the framework of prayer - a framework of the creation, covenant, election and in His nature.

1. Prayer - Answering God.

Yahweh is the prayer-answering God. The Psalmist describes Him as "thou who hearest prayer". (65:2(3)). He alone has this power. The idols and pagan deities are powerless, since they are not living gods as Yahweh is. "They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god who cannot save." (1) Oaths have their power, because behind the words is the power of Yahweh.

Although Yahweh is the prayer answering God, He is not compelled to answer every request. Again and again we read the pleas of the Psalmists to hear the words of their prayers, and to answer their petitions - pleas which would be quite unnecessary if Yahweh answered all the prayers that came His way, in the method desired by the worshipper. God's answer to Jonah's prayer is simply to point out the foolishness of the petition. (Jonah 4:1-11)

Many prayers are not answered either because they are not according to His will of mercy, justice, faithfulness and love; or because of the poor rebellious state of the petitioner's spiritual and moral life. Yahweh, for instance, refused even

to listen/.....

to listen to Jeremiah's prayers for the people, since they were sinful and disobedient. Even if the great intercessors of the past, Moses and Samuel, were to pray, it would make no difference to God. (2) The wise man notes that "if one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination". (3) God shuts out such abominations, by wrapping Himself in a cloud "so that no prayer can pass through". (4) The Psalmist knows that if he had cherished iniquity in his heart, Yahweh would not have listened. (5) The petitioner and/or the people on whose behalf he is praying, must first of all be cleansed, if the prayers are to be heard. (6) Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple lays great stress on repentance and forgiveness as conditions for successful petitions. (7)

In contrast to the prayers of the rebellious, Yahweh finds His delight in the prayers of the upright. (8) The prayers of the righteous He always hears, (9), as He does the prayers of the poor, needy and godly. (10) Since Yahweh answers only those prayers that come from a just and righteous heart, the Psalmist gives praise. Even when Yahweh obviously answers the prayers of the upright, these answers are seen as the result of God being merciful and loving, and not because righteousness forces Him to answer prayer. (11)

"Blessed be God,

because he has not rejected my prayer

or removed his steadfast love from me!" (12)

2. The Covenant God.

It is the nature of God to make effective prayer possible. This He does not only because He is the prayer - answering God, but because His relationship with His elected people/.....

people is personal and intimate. This close relationship is highlighted in the dialogue prayers, especially those of Abraham. According to the Pentateuchal source, "J", this intimate relationship was sealed in a covenant with Abraham. (13) This special covenant relationship is based on Yahweh's election of Abraham and his offspring and on his faithfulness. On Abraham's side obedience and loyalty seal the relationship. Yahweh is very specially Abraham's God who will look after him and answer those prayers that are right for Abraham and his successors.

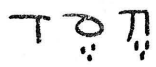
The covenant made with Abraham is renewed with each of the patriarchs. On Mount Sinai the covenant is made with the nation. The prophet Jeremiah expresses the heart of the covenant when he writes: "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people." (7:23) "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (31:33) Yahweh will do everything to fulfill His purposes through Israel.

Israel's obligation under the covenant is to obey the laws of God. Where there is disloyalty and disobedience, Yahweh is under no obligation to keep His side of the contract. Rebellion and sin hamper the covenant relationship, hence there is the need for the nation to confess her sins so that the precious relationship can be restored. Confession and restoration are given meaning and significance within the framework of the covenant. Outside the covenant there is no disobedience or disloyalty against Yahweh, for He has made no pledge with the outsider. When Israel acknowledges and confesses her failures and sin, He restores the strained relationship to its fullness. (14) This is possible since Yahweh is a forgiving God. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (15)

Yahweh does/.....

Yahweh does not only forgive sin, but He enables His people to discover sin as the cause of the broken covenant relationship. Through punishing Israel for their sin by means of drought, pestilence, defeat in battle and supremely in the fact of the exile, Yahweh prepares the way for confession. Nehemiah acknowledges all this in his prayer: "We have acted very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances which thou didst command thy servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them I will gather them ... and bring them to the place which I have chosen'." (16)

As Yahweh's responsibility in the covenant is to look after the welfare of His people, He hears and answers the right kind of prayers of the people. He alone knows what will preserve and what will destroy that well-being of the nation. In the early days of the Sinai covenant Yahweh was strongly tempted to abandon His rôle in the covenant, since Israel had not kept her promises; but He continued in His duty, when Moses reminded Him of His promises. (17) Through the rest of the Old Testament we see Yahweh keeping to the covenant and even attempting to help Israel keep her promises, despite the utter failure of the nation to be loyal and obedient. He can thus be trusted to hear the prayers of the nation and of individuals where the answering of those prayers will fulfil His covenant purposes.

Yahweh is a God who is consistent and merciful. When  came to be used mainly of the covenant, the prophets had discovered that such a covenant could only be maintained by that persistent, determined steadfast love of God, which transcends

every /.....

every other love by its nature and depth. (18) Yahweh is a God waiting to be gracious. Furthermore He is a God who does not change as the mood captures Him. This makes real and vital prayer possible, for such prayer is based on the unchangeable nature of God, and where that nature is $\tau\theta\pi$, the prayers are answered in love and not as an automatic response taking no account of the effect that certain answered prayers will have on the petitioners. Where answers to prayers are automatic, it is not prayer, but magic. Real prayer has warmth because God is personally involved with His people in that loving and intimate covenant relationship. Real prayer becomes a personal encounter every time. Since God is consistent, there can never be the fear that God will suddenly change His mind or temper like the pagan deities.

3. The Creator God.

God creates the conditions for prayer. He created man in His own image and made man for communion with Himself. He has made man in such a way that He is able to reveal Himself and His purposes through prayer and history. He has placed within man that spirit and instinct for worship and prayer, and placed him in a creation that becomes a vehicle of revelation as well. God made man for Himself so that our hearts are restless until we find rest in Him - as Saint Augustine reminded us.

When Yahweh created man, He created him to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air ... and over everything that creeps upon the earth". (19) Man is a "co-operator" with God on earth in a minor sense. Prayer is the communication with God to enable man to be an active and efficient governor over the earth and her creatures. *These spiritual*

~~prayer attempts to separate the individual from the world and~~
~~from himself by submerging himself in the absolute,~~ Israelite
 prayer aims at uniting the will of man with the will of God, so
 that the individual, abandoning himself to God, also finds him-
 self fully in God. (20) Any separation from the will of God is
 sin - it is the failure to have that perfect relationship as por-
 trayed before the Fall. In the story of Adam and Eve, it is
 only as they attempt to assert their own will apart from God's
 will, that the harmonious and beautiful relationship is shattered.
 The prayer of the Israelite is part of the attempt to recover that
 paradise relationship again.

There is more to it as well, for man, as God's
 governor on earth, needs to co-operate with Him that the Creator's
 will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. Fernand Ménégoz
 writes: "Israelite prayer tends to make the believer an energetic
 co-operator and not a beatified enjoyer of God. The expression
 and driving force of a will active in holiness shows itself to be
 in the last analysis a result of God's redemptive work such as
 takes place age after age in men's hearts." (21)

God is not only the Creator of the universe, but also
 the controller. Job, Chapters 38-41 show this very clearly. For
 instance, although Yahweh created the heavens, He still ensures
 that the Mazzaroth are lead out in their season, as is the Bear
 with its children. (22) ^{Because He is the} Creator and Controller, of the universe
^{the authority}
 He alone has ~~the~~ ^{the authority} power to answer prayer. His is the power and the
 glory. Life is not governed by the caprice with which the
 elements make sport with the earth, nor by the sexual potency of
 both humans and animals, but by the Divine Will operating in
 various ways, through mind, spirit, word, history, blessings,
 the natural channels of rain, sunshine, storms, etc. In this
 universe/.....

universe of order and law, true prayer is possible.

Prayer does not only take its form, content and purpose from the beginnings of creation and providence, but also finds its meaning from the consummation^m of creation. Unlike most of the pagan deities, Yahweh has a definite purpose for His people, a purpose that He will complete at the consummation^m of the world. This purpose can be described by the word $\text{וְשָׁלוֹם} \dots \text{וְשָׁלוֹם}$ does not only mean peace, but wholeness and harmony. It is a comprehensive word covering the many and varied relationships of daily life, and expressing the ideal state of life in Israel. Originally it had a strong stress on material prosperity untouched by violence or misfortune. The kernel of וְשָׁלוֹם is the harmonious living together with Yahweh and others. It is the normal and proper condition of men in relationship with one another, enjoyed most intimately in the family (23) and extended to others by a covenant (24) which determines relationship.

וְשָׁלוֹם is central to the teaching of the prophets. They do not however proclaim וְשָׁלוֹם at the price of neglecting sin. It is only after the judgement that Jeremiah is able to write to the exiles that Yahweh has thoughts of וְשָׁלוֹם for them. "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare (וְשָׁלוֹם) and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. " (25) Deutero - Isaiah announces the deliverance from Babylon as a gospel of וְשָׁלוֹם .(26) Ezekiel notes that Yahweh will make a covenant of וְשָׁלוֹם with the restored community. (27) The prophets think of וְשָׁלוֹם in terms of salvation, though not forgetting the underlying meaning of prosperity. וְשָׁלוֹם is clearly bound up with righteousness and truth in prophetic circles. (28)

A final וְשָׁלוֹם as the gift of Yahweh in the coming age, is /.....

part of the Old Testament eschatology, and is envisaged either as the abolition of war and the reign of Israel's messianic king over all the nations, (29) or as a paradisaal existence in which all forms of strife will have been removed. (30)

Obviously God's plan for His people must influence the content of their prayers. Their prayers seek to bring about that wholeness in their own lives (e.g. prayers for healing) and that of their community. בִּישׁוֹ also governs the kind of prayer that Yahweh will answer. Where there are barriers to בִּישׁוֹ the worshippers confess their sins thus opening up the channels for petition and intercession to fulfil the purpose for which God has called and created them.

4. The Holy God.

Yahweh is described as the "Holy One of Israel" who is "with" or "in the midst of" His people. This is a paradox, for to describe God as holy is to emphasize His otherness, mystery, transcendence and unapproachability, yet He is "with" and "in the midst of" His people. In this paradox Israel finds her ultimate assurance of salvation and a strong desire for worthy living. (31) The ultimate horror is that He will depart and abandon them. (32)

Yahweh's holiness provides the framework of their whole approach to Him in worship and prayer. His holiness means that they must be holy and righteous. This approach is interpreted in both a material and a moral sense. Israel's obedience to a holy God consists in reflecting Yahweh's holiness, purity and love within the human situation. Psalm 24 expresses this approach:

"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart."

His/.....

His holiness shows up their need for forgiveness. The prophet Isaiah discovered the depths of this truth, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up". To this God whom the seraphim described as "Holy, holy, holy", Isaiah could only say: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Only then did cleansing follow, and a fuller communication with God established.

God's holiness gives boundaries to petition and intercession, and also the opportunities for confession, praise, meditation and thanksgiving.

5. The Life-giving God.

The greatest gift that Yahweh gives to man is the gift of Himself. The supreme end of worship is to be lifted up into the very spirit of Yahweh Himself, to share His will, His thought and His purpose. Man's soul longs for God.

Jocz notes that "speech is understood to be the fundamental activity of God" (33). It is with a word that Yahweh creates the heavens and the earth and all that they contain. He speaks creatively, ~~By~~ His words He delivers Israel out of the clutches of Egypt and establishes His covenant. Through the prophets He speaks to His people sharing and accomplishing those purposes. "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (34)

Man's response to God's word is also in words. Yahweh's words make this response of man possible. These words of man's prayer can be a mere formality and tradition, but Yahweh gives

spirit/.....

spirit and life to these phrases. He enables man to pray.

6. Conclusion.

The Old Testament is silent on just how Yahweh, the Holy One is able to speak to sinful man and on how man can speak to God. This is simply stated as a fact of experience.

God Himself makes prayer possible and provides the framework within which prayer can act. Outside that framework prayer is magic, formality, or an empty set of words with no power. The area of prayer is the area of man's relationship with God, and with one another. God's nature governs the scope and power of the words of prayer. That nature is love, mercy, justice, righteousness; the power comes from the fact that He is Creator. Prayer is possible since He reveals Himself to His people. When men call upon the name of the Lord, they are calling on the power and nature of God to act in this world.

Footnotes to Chapter Four.

1. Isaiah 45:20 cf 16:12; 44:17.
2. Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 15:1.
3. Proverbs 28:9.
4. Lamentations 3:8, 44.
5. Psalm 66:18.
6. Isaiah 1:15 f.
7. I Kings 8.
8. Proverbs 15:8.
9. Proverbs 15:29.
10. Psalms 86:1f.
11. God is also shown as answering prayers in the way in which they were asked. In Numbers 11:2, Moses prayed that the fire would die out, and it did. Hannah's prayer for a son was answered. (I Samuel 1: 10f) Other examples of answered prayer are: Abraham interceding for Abimelech (Genesis 20:7,17); Moses concerning the serpent and then praying for Aaron (Numbers 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:20); Samuel praying for guidance about the appointment of a king for Israel (I Samuel 8:6); Hezekiah praying for his life and the healing of his people (II Kings 20:1-11 // Isa. 38:1-7; II Kings 19:1-7 // Isaiah 37:1-10).
12. Psalm 66:20.
13. Genesis 12:1-3, 7-8; 17:7.
14. cf Zechariah 8:8.
15. Jeremiah 31:34.
16. Nehemiah 1:7-9.
17. Exodus 32:12-14.
18. Snaith, N : The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, P.99.
19. Genesis' 1:26.

20. Jacob.E: /.....

20. Jacob, E: Theology of the Old Testament, P.176.
 21. ibid, quoted on page 176.
 22. Job 38:32.
 23. Genesis 13:8.
 24. I Samuel 20:42. *THEOLOGICAL WORD BOOK OF THE BIBLE*, PAGE 165
 25. Jeremiah 29:11
 26. Isaiah 52:7; 55:12.
 27. Ezekiel 34:25-30; 37:26.
 28. Isaiah 49:22-26; 54:11-17; Jeremiah 33:8-14; Zechariah 8:16-19.
 29. Isaiah 9:2-7; Zechariah 9:9f; Micah 5:5; Haggai 2:7-9.
 30. Isaiah 11:1f; 2:2-4; 65:25; Ezekiel 34:25-28.
 31. Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 46:5.
 32. Psalm 89:38f; Ezekiel 8-11.
 33. Jocz, J: The Spiritual History of Israel, page 28.
 34. Isaiah 55:11.
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CHAPTER FIVE.Some Related Aspects of Prayer.A. Places, Postures and Time of Prayer.

In ancient Israel certain localities, stones, springs, streams, or trees were thought to be filled more with the (or a) divine presence than others. It was at such places that the special shrines or altars were erected for worship. When Jacob left his home, he unknowingly slept on such a sacred site. There he received a personal revelation from Yahweh. "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it". (Genesis 28:16) Here he prayed his vow-prayer (verses 20-22).

Although the Hebrew was able to pray wherever he was, he came to the sacred shrines in times of special prayer. Hannah, for instance, came to Shiloh to ask Yahweh for a son, and returned there to give thanks when she fulfilled her part of the vow.

During the temple period the Israelites normally prayed in the temple courts facing the inner sanctuary.

"Hear the voice of my supplication,
as I cry to thee for help,
as I lift up my hands toward thy innermost sanctuary".

(Psalm 28:2 ~~waspsind~~).

~~During~~ and ~~after~~ the exile the Jews outside Jerusalem prayed facing the Holy City and her temple. (I Kings 8:44,48; Daniel 6:10). In later Judaism the synagogues were built to face Jerusalem.

The Israelites adopted various postures when they prayed. These postures are more than positions of the body but are a reflection of an inward humility and reverence for God. The posture indicates in non-verbal terms how the worshipper feels about/.....

about Yahweh and about the matter he voices in prayer.

Certain texts seem to indicate that a usual posture for prayer was to stand upright. (1) de Vaux, however claims that the word תָּבִיחַ can also mean "to be in front of" Yahweh, as well as the ordinary meaning of "to stand erect". (2)

The penitential liturgy of Nehemiah 9:3-5 has changes of postures during the worship. During the reading of the Law the people stood, then they knelt to confess their sins. On the command of the Levites the worshippers stood to sing the Psalm.

Men prayed on their knees ~~and~~ their hands with open upturned palms raised to heaven (3). The upturned palms were symbolic of the act of receiving from God. Sometimes the worshippers prostrated themselves, kneeling and bowing their foreheads to the ground. (4) The pagans adopted the same attitudes when praying to their gods, (5) and the gestures were part of the normal courtesies extended towards the king or dignitary whom they wished to honour. (6)

Prayers are generally prayed aloud. So unusual was Hannah's silent prayer that Eli thought her drunk (I Samuel 1:12-14).

Prayers could be shouted out aloud or spoken sedately. The vocalized prayer can express the depth of emotion and the urgency of the situation far more effectively than the silent prayer to which we are accustomed. The שִׁבְחָה draws attention to this fact that the worship of Yahweh was distinctly vocal in character. The congregation are encouraged to shout exultantly. Musical instruments were used. The purpose of the praise-cry (הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהִים) or the singing cry (הַלְלוּ אֱלֹהִים) is to convey the life soul of the worshipper to God. (7)

Concerning the time of prayer, Psalm 55:17(18) tells us that the Israelites prayed "evening and morning and at noon". Daniel certainly prayed three times a day. These texts however are late

and/.....

and refer to private prayer. In the temple only morning and evening prayers were said. Psalm 4 is a morning prayer and Psalm 5 an evening prayer.

B. Public and Private Prayer.

The patriarchal period had a religion that ~~as~~ ^{was} more personal than corporate. Its known forms were sacrifice and prayer which rose to great heights of fellowship with God. This period, however, lacked the obvious corporate element of prayer since the conditions under which the patriarchs lived made formal corporate worship impossible, unless they mingled with the Canaanites of their day, but this is so alien to the whole tone of the patriarchal religion, that it is not generally accepted.

In the period from the Exodus event onwards corporate acts of worship play a greater rôle as noted in the cultic activities.

Liturgical prayer is the prayer of corporate worship. According to de Vaux there are only two references to this type of prayer viz Nehemiah 9 and Joel 1 and 2.(8) Both references refer to penitential prayers. Public prayers were usually sung or recited both by the leader and the congregation. These liturgical prayers give apt expression to the sentiments, beliefs, hopes and fears of all the worshippers; hence these prayers tell us much by statement or implication about Yahweh what is expected from Him, the kind of salvation they hope for, and, their grounds of hope for that salvation.

Liturgical singing made its appearance once the cult and priesthood were organized in a public sanctuary. Public prayer tends to become rhythmic hymn singing. Right from the early days of Solomon's temple there was a choir to lead the prayers.

The hymnbook of the second temple is the Psalter. It is also Israel's lyrical prayer. The Psalms bring together in an unique

way/.....

way both public and private prayer. Mowinckel finds both public and private prayers within his many classifications of praise, thanksgiving, confession, lamentation and even the royal psalms. For instance he sees in Psalms 66 and 118 as public thanksgiving psalms, whereas Psalms 30, 32, 34, 92, 116, he notes as "personal thanksgivings."

Private liturgy is also reflected in the Psalter. It seems to have consisted of a confession of sin (Psalm 51:1f), offering of sacrifice and other rites, like ablutions (Psalms 51:2'; 50:8) and probably a prophecy of recovery or a blessing recited by the officiating priest.

The great characteristics of the Psalms is that they are completely theocentric in outlook; they reflect every stage in Israel's history; and they express every basic human emotion from the heights of joy to the depths of sorrow. Célin notes that the "Psalter is the very model of the prayer that opens our hearts".

(9) St. Augustine wrote of the Psalter: "If the Psalm prays, pray; if it groans, groan; if it is joyful, rejoice; if it is full of hope, then hope; and if it expresses fear, then feel fear yourself." (9)

Here in the Psalms we have blended together both private and public prayers, each complementing the other, enriching the life of the worshipper. This is in the main the pattern of Old Testament prayer.

C Prayer and the Cult.

The cultic acts were formal actions which were thought of as effectively conveying something from man to God and as mediating the divine blessing to man. Their purpose is not to coerce God, but to bring the worshipper to God by the means that He is believed to have commanded. In the cult something happens. A relationship is established/.....

is established and developed which is of vital importance to the congregation. The actions and the words express what happens. What the congregation wants to achieve through the cult is life i.e. their fundamental needs of rain, sunshine, fertility, spiritual and ethical values which are the lifeblood of the people. God has the power to create this life hence the cult.

Prayer, as such, did not arise out of the cult, but in all higher cults, it gradually took precedence over everything else. Prayer is the primary expression of religion. It is older than the cult and independent of it.

Sacrifice was the central act of the cult. Patriarchal prayer is closely linked with sacrifice. We have descriptions of Abram building an altar, and then calling "upon the name of the Lord". (Genesis 12:8; 13:4) Throughout the Old Testament prayer and sacrifice were very close. This we have already noted in the prayers of thanksgiving and confession. Incense, a type of sacrifice, is in fact regarded as typical of prayer.

"Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee,
and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice".

(Psalm 141:2)

Vocal prayer accompanied sacrifice. Amos 5:23 notes that hymns were sung while the sacrifice was being offered.

When sacrifices could no longer be offered, the texts which were designed to evoke the spirit that gave meaning to the acts, continued to be used to evoke the same spirit.

"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

(Psalm 51:17(18)). (10)

~~Finally perhaps the new testament translation of "my sacrifice, accept", which maintains the same relationship of the Psalm. (10).~~

Part of/.....

Part of the task of the cultic prophets was to reply in God's name to the prayers and laments of the community (11). The reply is usually followed by a statement of confident assurance.

"Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed;
he will answer him from his holy heaven
with mighty victories by his right hand." (Psalm 20:6(7)).

Although prayer plays a large part in the cult, it is not confined to the cult, but is part of the religious life of all the worshippers both in corporate and in private worship.

D. Short Historical Survey.

The patriarchal period records the first time when men began "to call on the name of the Lord". (Genesis 4:26). With Abraham we enter into the fullest and freest exercise of prayer. In his dialogue with God, he shows an easy, though humble familiarity with the deity who reveals his divine purposes through these conversations. Intercession is prominent as are personal petitions. (12) Vows, blessings, curses and oaths feature in this period. (13) There is also the offering of prayer in the context of sacrifice, suggesting an union of man's will with God's, of abandonment and submission of self to Yahweh.

Although the Law teaches little about prayer, the law-giver, Moses, teaches much by example. The exception to the rule is in Deuteronomy 26:1-5 where the liturgy for the handing in of the first fruits is outlined. Prayer is not put into the strait-jacket of legalized religion, but is left as a spontaneous expression of the human soul. The lasting effect of this strange silence about prayer, is seen in the negative teaching of the Berakhoth IV -4

"If prayers are said only to fulfil a duty.....

they will not be heard by God." (14)

In the period/.....

In the period of the Kingdom the raising up of the various judges is associated with the people "crying unto the Lord" for a deliverer. (15) This period is the "golden era" of noted intercessors: Samuel, Solomon, Hezekiel and Elijah.

During the exile and the return prayer assumes greater importance since sacrifice fell away, leaving the burden of worship on prayer. As there was a sense of abandonment by God, an earnest seeking of explanations for this apparent desertion and a call for His favour to deliver them, confession is prominent. Fasting and prayer go together here (Ezra 8:21-23).

Footnotes to Chapter Five.

1. I Samuel 1:26; I Kings 8:22; Jeremiah 18:20.
 2. de Vaux, R: Ancient Israel, page 458.
 3. (i) I Kings 8:54; Isaiah 49:23; Daniel 6:10
(ii) Exodus 9:29; I Kings 8:22,54; Psalm 28:2; Isaiah 1:15;
Lamentations 2:19.
 4. Psalms 5:7(8); 95:6; 99:5.
 5. Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:19; I Kings 19:18.
 6. I Samuel 24:9; II Samuel 9:8; Ester^h 3:2.
 7. Herbert, A.S. : Worship in Ancient Israel, page 11.
Jeremiah 45:3; 41:42; Malachi 2:13.
 8. de Vaux, R.: Ancient Israel, page 457.
 9. Gélín, A: The Religion of Israel, page 47.
 10. Rowley, H.H.: Worship in Ancient Israel, page 246.
Rowley prefers the reading "my sacrifice, O God." which maintains
 11. The textual amendment involves the change of one vowel only, ^{the} I-Thou relationship of the Psalm.
thus avoiding the awkward change from plural to singular.
 11. II Chronicles 20:14F; Psalms 12:5(6).
 12. (i) Genesis 17:18; 18:33; 20:7
(ii) Genesis 15:5; 24:12; 39:9-12; 32:24.
 13. Genesis 28:20; 49:1; 14:22.
 14. Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible - article on "Prayer".
 15. Judges 3:9; 4:3; 6:7 et al.
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15. Jocz, J./.....

15. Jocz, J : The Spiritual History of Israel.
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