

Serving G-d

1. It has already been explained that it is incumbent on every person to try to achieve understanding of the Creator according to his capability, and he should meditate always on the greatness of the Creator, and on His supervision over the whole creation, in order to awaken his heart to love and fear Him.¹ This comprehension and understanding needs to be in a manner that causes the proper feelings toward the Creator, meaning love of G-d and fear of Him.

What is this love and fear? When a person understands that G-d is the Creator of everything and keeps everything in existence at every moment, and that G-d created all people so they should honor and serve Him, and then he meditates on the infinite greatness of G-d according to his ability and understanding, he will come to love G-d. When one also contemplates the lowliness of any creation in comparison to the Creator of everything, he will realize G-d's infinite greatness, and awe and fear of G-d will fall upon him. A person will also be humbled by knowing that he is a small, lowly creation with severely limited understanding, who is standing in the Presence of G-d Al-mighty.

This understanding and these meditations are the ways to recognize G-d and serve Him with love and fear. There is no true recognition without thought and meditation, and true meditation brings true

When a person understands ... and then he meditates ... he will realize
- This requires a purposeful effort that may be easy for some, and difficult for others. But one who searches for these treasures should not abandon this goal.

¹ See *Iggeret Ha'Rambam* to Rav Ḥasdai (Epistle 24:1), that a pious Gentile needs to intellectually grasp the existence of G-d according to his ability, and he should mold his opinions and nature to be correct, which means that he is obligated to refine his nature.

See Rambam's *Sefer Ha'Mitzvot*, Positive Commandment 3, that Jews are commanded to love G-d, and to therefore call out to the people of the world to believe in G-d and recognize Him, quoting *Sifri* (on Deuteronomy 6:5): "Bring love of Him to all people, like Abraham your father."

The commandment to fear G-d has a logical basis and is a part of accepting and recognizing Him. It is included in the Noahide prohibition against blasphemy.

emotions into the heart, and proper intentions for proper actions.

We find that part of the obligation to believe in and recognize G-d is the obligation one has to connect his intellect to his feelings, to bring himself to love and fear G-d, and accept an obligation to fulfill G-d's explicit will (the Noahide Code). Also included is the effort a person should make to follow correct paths and deeds that will be pleasing to G-d, even if there are no specific commandments that apply. G-d expects that if an adult person with developed intellect is blessed with the opportunity to learn of these ways, he will strive to follow them. (The Prophets of the Hebrew Bible revealed that these are ways of kindness, justice, mercy, righteousness, graciousness, and humility. These are basic examples, but one should strive to follow not only these virtues, but any understood way that G-d wants a person to act.)

Therefore, a Gentile needs to serve G-d in his thought and emotions, to motivate himself often to love and fear G-d. How does one serve Him? By arousing his will to focus his mind and heart, to direct his thoughts and opinions so that his actions will be in accordance with the will of the Creator, which will bring pleasure and satisfaction to Him.

2. Included in the obligation to believe in and recognize the Creator of the universe is the trust that a person must place in G-d. With this trust, a person must have faith that G-d is surely concerned about him, and about all of His other creations, and that everything G-d does is for the ultimate good of the person, since G-d is the ultimate good. One aspect of this trust is that each of G-d's commandments will in truth be for the good of the person who is so commanded, and for the good of the entire world.

3. The main part of this service of the heart and mind is prayer. Therefore one should always pray before G-d, to make requests to Him for all of his needs, and he should thank and praise Him always according to his ability. Another goal of this prayer and contemplation is to bring the person to know that there is nothing worthy of complete trust except the One G-d, Who is King of the universe.

Prayer, blessings and praise to G-d, even though they are not strictly required for Gentiles because they were not commanded explicitly in the Noahide Code to observe these things, are nevertheless an intellectual obligation.

4. When a person prays [to G-d], he should clearly express his words to G-d with his lips in speech if possible, and not only in his thoughts² (and this is a good deed). In a situation when a person is not able to speak for some reason, or the location is not a fitting place for prayer, he may pray in the concentration of his thought.

A person can pray at any time of day, and in any fitting words that he chooses.

Guidelines for Prayer

When a person prays before G-d, and likewise when he wants to bless and thank G-d – for example, to thank Him for his food,³ for his life, for his recovered health, or for a miracle that was done for him – he should direct his mind and his speech to say verses from the Hebrew Bible, or he should praise G-d in a way of honoring His blessed Name. Through this manner of prayer, the Name of G-d will be glorified. On the other hand, a person should not mention G-d while he is distracted or without thinking about what he is saying, for that would be degrading to the honor of G-d.

Therefore it was Abraham's custom to teach all the people of the

When a person prays [to G-d], he should clearly express his words to G-d with his lips in speech - This follows the instruction of Psalms 146:2, "I will praise the L-rd with my life (my soul); I will sing to my G-d with my existence (my body)." The words of prayer should thus be spoken, at least to the level at which the person himself can hear what he is saying. This is learned from I Samuel 1:13: "Hannah spoke unto her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." Still, this does not preclude a person from reaching a depth of prayerful attachment to G-d that words cannot express.

² Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe Oraḥ Ḥayim* vol. 2, ch. 25. It is obvious to me that if he prays to G-d even in his thoughts alone, he has a reward for this as well, because he is fulfilling the obligation to believe in G-d, the Creator of the world. But from the outset, it is obviously better for a person to vocalize the words of his prayer.

³ Even though there is no commandment for a Gentile to recite blessings for food or other things, it is nevertheless an intellectual obligation to thank G-d for the kindness that He has given him. This is what Abraham taught his guests, as explained in Tractate *Sotah* 10b.

world that it is proper to thank and bless G-d's great Name, and not to assign this level of honor to any other presumed power or any created being, as it says,⁴ "and there he [Abraham] proclaimed the Name of G-d, G-d of the universe." This means that Abraham caused the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, to be called out to by all those who passed by, and he taught everyone to praise the Name of G-d.⁵

Likewise Joseph acted in this manner, as it says,⁶ "G-d was with Joseph, and he became a successful man ... his master perceived that G-d was with him, and in everything he did, G-d caused his hand to be successful." How did Joseph's master see that G-d was with him? Because the praise of G-d was always found in Joseph's mouth,⁷ and through this he would explain his success and publicize the Name of the blessed G-d to everyone. Likewise, Joseph told Pharaoh,⁸ "It is G-d Who will respond to Pharaoh's welfare."

One's prayers should be said honorably, in order to honor G-d (even if G-d's name is not mentioned). Therefore, it is meritorious to pray in honorable clothing. One should not pray in filthy clothing, or with genitals uncovered, or in the presence of others who have their genitals uncovered. One should not pray where there is a bad smell or in a lavatory or bathing room, or within about 6 feet (1.8 meters) of excrement.

If one has no choice and has no other opportunity to pray, and he must make a request to G-d, and he is standing in a place where other people are unclothed, he should turn his body (or at least his head) in order not to see them, and then pray. If this is impossible as well (for example, one who is in a restroom and cannot exit), it is better to pray in his heart, and not utter G-d's Name in such a place.

Similarly, one of the ways of serving G-d is to frequently mention His praise, and to bless and thank Him for all the good that He bestows on a person. Even though a Gentile is not commanded to bless G-d for the food that he eats, not before he eats and not after he eats, it is

⁴ Genesis 21:33.

⁵ Tractate *Sotah* 10b and Rashi there. This righteous path that Abraham showed is a foundational principle for the present work.

⁶ Genesis 39:2-3.

⁷ Rashi *ibid.*

⁸ Genesis 41:16.

obvious by intellectual reasoning⁹ that a person should thank and bless G-d for giving him his food, and likewise for giving him all his needs for existence.

How does one do this? Before he eats, it is proper to make a request to G-d that He please give him enough sustenance, and he should say words of praise and thanks for that which G-d gave him..

Grace After Meals

After a person eats a satisfying amount, it is fitting to thank and bless G-d for giving him his food, and along with this thanks and blessing, it is proper to include thanks for his other necessities – e.g., his health, livelihood and existence. When concluding the prayers of grace after eating a filling meal, the final thanks should be this blessing:

*Blessed is the G-d of the universe, from Whose bounty we have eaten.*¹⁰

The Sages did not fix a liturgy of prayers, thanks or supplications to G-d for Gentiles. Since these are optional and may be said in any fitting words that the person chooses, ... each person may continue to add requests and supplications to G-d at his own will; ... a person should praise and bless G-d for all the good he receives, and recognize that these things are from Him.

After a person eats ... it is fitting to thank and bless G-d - But it is not customary to recite the “Grace after Meals” for a small snack or drink.

a person should praise and hallow God for all the good he receives - A blessing to G-d by a Gentile is voluntary, since there is no penalty involved if the blessing is omitted. It may be expressed in any words the person chooses, when he has a desire and inspiration to do so with devotion.

However, prayers or blessings that would be made without intention and devotion to G-d are better left unsaid.

⁹ See Tractate *Beraĥot* 35a, on the requirement to bless G-d for the benefit one receives from the beneficence that He bestows to the world. It is stated there: “It is a logical obligation on a person, even though it is not a direct command from G-d.” Therefore according to logic, one should bless G-d.

¹⁰ The blessing taught by Abraham to his Gentile guests, from *Midrash Rabbah Bereishit* ch. 54.