

Zmanim: Times of Prayer

Shacharit (Morning Prayer)	Time
Earliest Time	Sunrise
Latest Time	Midday
Mtncha (Afternoon Prayer)	Time
Earliest Time	1/2 Hour After Midday
Latest Time	Sundown
Ma'ariv (Evening Prayer)	Time
Earliest Time	Nightfall
Latest Time	Midnight

A Biblical Hour

The above times for the prayers are based on traditional Scripture interpretations. Note that an hour in the Bible is not a clock hour like we think of it. Rather, a biblical hour is calculated by taking the total time of daylight (from sunrise to sunset) and then dividing it into twelve equal parts. For example, if the sun rises at 5:00 AM and sets at 7:00 PM, then an hour would be 70 minutes. Yeshua alludes to this *halacha* in the Gospel of John by stating, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Therefore all the hours discussed in this paper should be read as scriptural hours and not clock hours.

This means that "midday" [*chatzot*] is six biblical hours after sunrise and six biblical hours before sunset. Astronomically it is the exact moment when the sun is at its highest or zenith point in the sky for a particular location on that day. "Midnight" [also *chatzot*] in turn is six biblical hours after sunset and six biblical hours before sunrise.

The oldest source to codify the times of prayer is found in the *Mishnah* (approximately 200 CE):

- The morning prayer [can be said] until midday...
- The afternoon prayer [can be said] till evening [sundown]...
- The evening prayer has no fixed limit.³

This is the source for all *halacha* surrounding prayer times. However, when approaching a passage of oral Torah such as this, it is important to measure it against the written Torah, as well as the Apostolic scriptures. When we do this, we find is that this *halacha* is indeed rooted in Scripture.

Shacharit (Morning Prayer)

In Numbers we read that the first offering of the day was to take place "in the morning." The Hebrew word for "morning" is *boker*. *Boker* can be defined as "morning, from split, penetrate, as the dawn the darkness."⁵ Therefore, the earliest time that the sacrifice could take place was at sunrise. It is the same for the morning prayers.

There also needed to be a cut off point (or latest time) that morning prayers could be recited. While morning was defined as ending at midday, traditionally it was considered a good practice to start one's prayers as early as possible, before eating or other daily activities. It was eventually decided

that it was best to finish one's prayers within four hours after sunrise. It is likely that Yeshua and the disciples were in line with this *halacha*, since we see this practice in the book of Acts, where the disciples are in the Temple praying at the third hour of the day. Also Messiah gives the example of arising early to pray in Mark 1:35.

Mincha (Afternoon Prayer)

The *mincha* service is linked to the time of afternoon sacrifice, which is commanded to take place at "twilight." The Hebrew phrase for "twilight" is *bein ha-'arbayim*, which literally means "between the settings." The *JPS Torah Commentary* on Numbers comments that *bein ha-'arbayim* "clearly means the time between sunset and dark." Rabbinic interpretation saw this as the time between when the sun begins its decent at midday and when it sets behind the horizon. The *Mishnah* interprets that the afternoon sacrifice in the Temple should take place around the ninth hour. (Remember that this is nine biblical hours after sunrise, which could be more or less than 540 minutes after sunrise depending upon the time of year.) Therefore it is tempting to reject the rabbinic interpretation of the sacrifice taking place at the ninth hour and go with the seemingly more literal "between sunset and dark."

Literal Definition	Rabbinic Definition
Between sunset and dark	Between midday and sunset

Which is right? Surprisingly enough the Gospels and the book of Acts clearly approve of the rabbinic interpretation by indicating that sacrifices and petitions were offered at the ninth hour. Our Master dying at this time in Mark 15:34-37 also seems to support this interpretation. In Acts 3:1 we get a clear indication that the Scriptures and the disciples accepted this as the time of prayer and sacrifice, "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer." The earliest the afternoon prayer could be prayed was just after midday, and it appears that Peter prays an early *mincha* when he went up on the roof top to pray at "about sixth hour". The latest time was sunset.

Ma'ariv (Evening Prayer)

The evening prayer is related to the sacrifices left over from the daily services. These were burned all night on the Temple altar. Since these offerings were burned all night, this prayer could be said from when it got dark all the way until sunrise, i.e. as the *Mishnah* says, "no fixed time." Later the sages added the fence of midnight for practical reasons: if most people waited later than that, they would fall asleep and not perform the service.

Keriat Shema (Recital of the Shema)

A final note: the times listed for *Shacharit* are traditionally not the same parameters set for reciting the *Shema*. The earliest time for the *Shema* is earlier than that of morning prayers, since Scripture equates the morning recital of the *Shema* with "when you rise up" which could be earlier than sunrise. The earliest most people would wake up in Biblical times was dawn, so therefore the earliest time of the *Shema* recital was originally when "one can distinguish between blue and white." Due to the subjective nature of this ruling, it was determined that the time for reciting the *Shema* would begin approximately 45 minutes before sunrise. The latest time for reciting the *Shema* is 3 hours past sunrise. This arose from an ancient custom: this was the time when kings would customarily awaken, so it therefore would be the latest time anyone else would "rise up." It may be that when Messiah prayed before sunrise (i.e. when the time of morning prayers begins), He started with the *Shema*.

The purpose in providing this brief overview (compliments of First Fruits of Zion I believe) is not to present the reader with an orthodox mandate to observe the traditional Jewish prayer cycle ... which as can be seen is fashioned after the "Holy Service".

This being stated one should however consider the traditional perspective which does indeed call a purported believer to a sincere and dedicated prayer life. A prayer life which is centered upon a presentation to ADONAI ... a conversation with ADONAI ... each and every day!

Some more insights!

Eternal Principles of the Sacrificial System

[The sacrificial system is one of the most important aspects of the Torah. It symbolizes both commitment and forgiveness. Without those two aspects, there really cannot be a covenantal relationship between Adonai and man. The sacrificial system is, therefore, at the core of Adonai's covenantal relationship with His people.

At the center of the sacrificial system was the eternal burnt offering ... the "Olah"! There were two types of Olah sacrifices one offered on behalf of individuals and one offered on behalf of the community. A community Olah was offered every morning and every evening at about sunrise and sunset.

Three classes of animals were used for the personal Olah: Herding animals, flocking animals, and birds. Leviticus chapter 1 seems to say that the person bringing the sacrifice experienced different levels of interaction with the sacrificial rite depending on the type of animal that was offered. Regulations concerning the personal Olah are found in Leviticus 1. Olah in Hebrew means that which goes up" and refers to the smoke of the offering as it rises toward Heaven. The Olah as indicated is usually translated into English as the Burnt Offering.

The animal used for the daily community Olah was the lamb. The kohanim (priests) conducted the morning and evening Olah service on behalf of the whole congregation. Structured liturgical recitation of psalms and prayers were part of the whole sacrificial rite. After the destruction of the Temple and with the onset of the rabbinical period of Judaism, the morning and evening prayers were modeled after the morning and evening Olah prayers and psalms. They are to be recited at about the same time as the sacrifice even in our day by faithful believers.

While Leviticus 1:4 says that the Olah offered expiation, it was not to be used as an offering to cover specific sins. There are two other offerings that are designated for that purpose. The term expiation here probably refers to the recommitment that the individual is making to Adonai through the Olah. Generally, therefore, the concept of recommitment to Adonai as seen in the Olah is an expiation in itself and covers all the inadequacies of the individual. Consequently the Olah was not directly an offering for sin. It was completely consumed on the altar and neither the kohanim nor the giver was allowed to eat any part of it. The Olah was a symbol of absolute commitment and consecration to Adonai. When an individual brought an Olah, they would lay their hands on the sacrifice prior to the death of the animal. This symbolically transferred the person to the sacrifice signifying their desire to completely consecrate themselves to Adonai and to give themselves up to Him.

This should remind us of the words of Rabbi Shaul, who said in Romans: Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yeshua the Messiah were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as the Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with the Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with him.

After the Olah was slain, the head was burned immediately by the kohein. The legs and the entrails were washed before burning. This practice is rich in symbolism. Rabbi Shaul, again, illustrated truths behind this sacrificial practice: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Messiah: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. This I say therefore, and testify in Adonai, that ye henceforth walk not as other the gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of Adonai through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Messiah; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Yeshua: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after Adonai is created in righteousness and true holiness.

When something needs to be washed, it is because it needs to be cleansed. In the passage above we see that Messiah is the Head. The head of the Olah was not washed prior to being burned. Messiah was pure and sinless and did not need cleansing. Thus, in the head of the Olah we see a symbol of Messiah. His corporate body of believers, however, does need to be cleansed. Note in the passage above that Rabbi Shaul encourages these believers to put off their former lifestyles and live holy and righteous lives. A little later in the same Epistle (Ephesians), Rabbi Shaul tells us how we can be washed: Husbands, love your wives, even as the Messiah also loved the assembly, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious assembly, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

It is through the consistent study of His Word that we are cleansed of our old ways. It is through the Word that we learn to do what is right. In summary, we see that the head of the

Olah is a symbol of the Messiah, while the body and the entrails are his body of believers on the earth. He is pure and does not need to be cleansed; but we, who are sinners, need to be washed in His Word.

The Olah is a symbol of an individual's commitment to follow Adonai completely. The Olah was totally consumed by the fire. It is interesting that the Messiah is pictured in this commitment. For without Him as our Head, we could not commit ourselves at all ... not even if we wanted to. If He was not our perfect Head, the body could not be committed to Adonai. Rabbi Shaul was referring to the Olah when in Romans it was revealed: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Adonai, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Adonai, which is your reasonable [i.e. expected] service.

The Olah was offered on behalf of the whole community of believers every morning and evening. It is at that same time today that faithful believers pray and recite the Shema. The wise person will use these times each day to make a personal recommitment to Adonai.]
Compliments of Rabbi Robert Tippie!

So what is the point of exposing this Jewish daily prayer cycle and the brief overview of the eternal burnt offering?

It is hoped ... for a moment that you the reader can gain a sense of this grand relationship between G_D and His children ... between the Everlasting Covenant and the Sacrificial System ... between the daily offering and us personally being the temple being built by Yeshua ... between our daily prayers and our relationship with ADONAI in and through Yeshua!

Just ponder for a moment how the Olah is essentially the sacrifice of the covenant ... it serves as the very basis for our relationship with ADONAI ... a relationship wherein He has offered

us the opportunity to approach Him in an acceptable manner. Unlike all other sacrifices the Olah offerings were wholly dedicated to and consumed by ADONAI ... making these sacrificial offerings unique! Consequently if we can grasp it ... then we too can leverage the principles of the eternal sacrificial system to facilitate development of our personal and communal relationship with ADONAI!

Personally I believe we should view our morning and evening prayers as Olah sacrifices wherein we offer up the most valuable but intangible thing that we have ... "time"! By willingly and joyfully getting ourselves into the timing and rhythm of the Sacrificial System we most assuredly manifest our commitment to ADONAI and therein profess the power of Yeshua in our lives.

When we then take on the role of priest over our very own temple we surely do then abide within the Covenantal relationship ... in, by with and through Yeshua HaMashiach.

Perhaps the Rabbi(s) were on the mark when it comes to prayer life!

Shalom ... P.R. Otokletos