

The Hebrew Corner

In our worship of the Lord, we praise him and pray to him. The Hebrew verbs *halal* (הלל hah-LAHL) and *palal* (פלל pah-LAHL) are the Hebrew words commonly translated in English as to praise and to pray. *Halal* also can mean to shine, or to boast. This is the root of the Hebrew word *helel* (הליל hay-LAYL), which means “the shining one.” This word is encountered in Isaiah 14:12, which is translated as “Lucifer” in the King James Version of the Bible. This is a Latin word meaning “light-bearer,” which was used as an appellation for the King of Babylon, much as in modern times we use the word “star” to describe a famous person. Jesus made an apparent connection between “the shining one” and Satan in Luke 10:18. The root word *halal* is also encountered in the well-known exclamation *Hallelujah* (הללויהּ hah-lah-LOO-yah), which means “praise the Lord.” The book of Psalms is referred to in the Tanach (Old Testament in Hebrew) as the *sepher tehillah* (ספר תהלה SAY-fehr tuh-HIH-lah), also from the root *halal*, which means the Book of Praises, since so many of the Psalms give praise to the Lord.

Palal can mean to pray on behalf of yourself, or pray on behalf of someone else, as in intercessory prayer. The different forms of *palal* can refer to a mediator, arbitrator, or even a judge. Some of the Psalms have the Hebrew word *tephillah* (תפלה tuh-FIHL-lah) in the title, which means prayer, such as in Psalm 90,

tephillah mosheh (תפילה משה tuh-FIHL-lah moh-SHEH), which means Prayer of Moses.

Prayer is important in developing a relationship to God, and to make our petitions to God on behalf of ourselves and others, and to express our thanks for all he has done for us. Praising of God is important in that it helps us understand our proper relationship to him, to come to him with a humble spirit, and develop the right attitude when approaching God. He is always worthy of our praise. Hallelujah!