

REL 402 - Judaism - Blessings

The Jewish spiritual aid I chose to practice for three days were the Jewish blessings. It amazed me to find out how many blessings the followers of the Jewish faith go through in one day. The Jewish followers say blessings for each food item ingested, and have different blessing for the type of drink they consume. The Jewish followers also have blessings for things such as washing hands, seeing a rainbow, hearing good news or hearing tragic news. The Jewish faith is surrounded by blessings and their belief in God in their daily lives is thought to bring them closer to Him and following his law.

While practicing the Jewish blessings I was surprised at how relaxing it can be and how much closer to God it can bring one in showing him thanks for everything we have here on earth. I would also think to myself that even though the Jewish faith had many more blessings than my own that they were similar. I believe that whatever path one chooses in following the law of the Lord is acceptable. I find it very interesting to look into the beliefs of other religions and how I can incorporate some of their practices with my own. I don't think that one religion necessarily has all the right answers and as long as you follow a path towards God you are in good hands and are following a path of righteousness.

On the first day that I practiced the blessings it was a challenge to remember that for almost everything I came into contact with I had to say a blessing. It seemed silly at first to be saying a blessing for every little thing I came into contact with and that I would be talking to my food, but then I realized that in my own religion I say blessings at meal times such as breakfast, lunch, and dinner, to thank the Lord for gracing me with the bountiful food before me, realizing that there are those that are less fortunate. To say blessings at meal times is quite different to having a blessing for each individual food item and drink but it is basically the same concept and I have no doubt that the Lord appreciates all paths that lead to him.

After reading the reason behind why the Jewish faith gives blessing to each food item I was surprised to find that they believe having clean blessed food is the best thing, it incorporates the old saying that cleanliness is next to Godliness. Although in my own faith we may not bless every piece of food daily, but during Passover we incorporate a lot of the Jewish faith. The way we incorporate the Jewish faith during Passover is by making a meal out of beef ribs to symbolize the lamb that was killed during Passover and the blood was put over the doors of the Israelites so that the angel of death would pass them by. We also make boiled eggs to symbolize the rebirth of Jesus Christ, herbs dipped in salt water that symbolize the tears that were shed in Egypt and of new life, matza for the bread that Christ broke during his last supper, and grape juice to symbolize the blood of Christ that he shared with his followers during the last supper. During this time my faith takes each of these items and blesses them with holy water as a way of cleansing for the coming year.

On the second day that I practiced the Jewish blessings they came to me a little bit easier and I felt that I was actually telling God how much I appreciate all of his creations, even though I have felt that I have done this through my own faith. However, through using the Jewish blessings I felt that I was just taking some extra steps and saying some extra blessings to tell God how much I appreciate the things he has provided for me. I also began to incorporate the Jewish blessing for washing hands. At first I thought this was silly because I often wash my hands throughout the day and at first I couldn't quite grasp the idea behind saying a blessing while washing my hands. However, the more I used this type of Jewish blessing the more I came to understand that it is just one more way to show God appreciation for what we have and be thankful for clean water and soap to wash away germs and bacteria, when then again there are those less fortunate who don't have clean water and who probably don't even know what soap is, so in this I thank the Lord for what he has provided me. I never would have imagined saying a blessing while washing my hands, but it gave me a good feeling. On this second day of practicing the Jewish blessing I felt that my own faith was growing and becoming stronger because I was always talking to God and I know that he is always listening no matter what the circumstance.

During this day I also reflected upon my own faith and that Jesus would wash the feet of his followers as they would do for him. Reflecting on this aspect of my faith it was also clear to me that in the Jewish faith they are portraying in their own way the cleaning of feet that Jesus and his followers did in Israel by saying a blessing while washing their hands and because again they believe that cleanliness is next to Godliness and by making sure that their hands are clean they are giving praise.

On the third day that I practiced the Jewish blessings most of them began to come to me much easier than on the first and second days that I incorporated the Jewish blessings into my life. It was still difficult at times to remember when, and what blessing was to be said but I felt that it was a strong way to bond with God. On this third day I also saw a rainbow and was thinking to myself I understand why the Jewish followers say a blessing for the rainbow. With my own faith I believe a rainbow is not just caused by rain but is the work of angels and is a sign of happiness. And in the same way the Jewish followers are blessing God for his work on earth.

At the end of the day I also reflected on what role the rainbow plays in my own faith and how I can correlate this with the Jewish faith. In my faith I believe that the rainbow also symbolizes the promise that God gave to Noah. The promise that God would never again create such a flood. In such a manner I believe the Jews bless the rainbow for thanks and praise of God's promise.

I came to find that the Jewish religion is not that much different from my own. To thank God in all his wondrous work on earth brings one's spirits closer to God and closer to following in his footsteps and abiding by his law.