

Rabbi David Wolpe's

## *Off The Pulpit*

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### **Is This A Prayer?**

Prayer is supposed to inspire us with the beauty of its language and the grandeur of its conception. In each morning service there is a passage called 'The Thirteen Exegetical (or, hermeneutical) rules of Rabbi Ishmael.' If prayer is supposed to be uplifting one can only wonder why such dry material would be included. Here is a sample of one of the rules: "The particular implied in the general and excepted from it for pedagogic purposes elucidates the general as well as the particular." It hardly sets the spirit aflutter.

Rabbi Ishmael's rules are included because these are the logical principles through which the Rabbis interpreted the texts of the Torah and derived rulings from it. In other words, they are guidelines for the

study hall.

That rules for study would be put into prayer says much about the Jewish tradition. Most people distinguish the two — the famous saying is that in prayer we speak to God and in study God speaks to us. Yet the distinction is not always so clear. Study itself is surrounded by blessings: we have a prayer offered before study and the *kaddish D'rabbanan*, the *kaddish* for scholars, after study. To use our minds for sacred learning is a prayer to the One who fashioned them.

The U.S. / Israel Relationship.

Get Rabbi Wolpe's new book *David: The Divided Heart*.