

כל הנשמה

Kol Haneshamah

תפילות לבית האבל

Prayers for a House of Mourning
And a Guide to Mourning Practices

The Reconstructionist Press
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania
2001

LIGHTING THE MEMORIAL CANDLE

At the beginning of shivah, a candle that burns the whole week is lit.

We usually light candles to rejoice, to mark the beginning of a holiday or to usher in Shabbat. Now, we stand before a candle that marks both loss and connection, presence and absence. We light this candle to represent the presence of _____, with us even as we return from the cemetery to mourn her/his death. His/her spirit lives on with us in our memories and in the way our memories influence how we choose to live. For some of us, this presence may be as palpable as the heat and changing colors of this flame. Yet like this flame it cannot be held or embraced.

Source of life's mystery, source of life's fragility and its hard-edged boundaries, have compassion on us as we mourn our loss. May this flame remind us that loved ones' presence in our lives does not end with death. May we find comfort as we draw together in this candle's light. And may _____'s memory be a blessing for all of us.

Jennifer Feldman

נֵר יְהוָה נִשְׁמַת אָדָם Ner adonay nishmat adam

The human soul is the lamp of God.

The candle is lit.

We have lit this candle at a time of great darkness, praying that over the period of this *shivah* observance the love and caring that surround us will bring us back towards the light.

נֵר...אָדָם / The... God (Proverbs 20:27).

LIGHTING THE MEMORIAL CANDLE / 2

OPENING SONGS AND MEDITATIONS

To conduct a Minhah (Afternoon) service, begin with an opening song or meditation, followed by Ashrey (page 8). Continue with the Hatzki Kaddish (page 42) and the Amidah, including the Kedushah on page 50 in the presence of a minyan.

To conduct a Ma'ariv (Evening) service, begin with an opening song or meditation and continue with the Barehu on page 12.

הַלִּיכָה לְקִיסְרִיָּה (אֵלִי אֵלִי) / HALIḤAH LEKEYSARYAH
(ELI, ELI)

אֵלִי שְׁלֹא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם	Eli shelo yigamer le'olam
הַחֹל וְהַיָּם	haḥol vehayam
רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַיָּמִים	rishrush shel hamayim
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם	berak hashamayim
תְּפִילַת הָאָדָם.	tefilat ha'adam.

This translation can be sung to the same melody as the Hebrew.

My God, my God, I pray that these things never end.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

Hannah Szenes

כָּל הָעוֹלָם כָּלוּ / KOL HA'OLAM KULO

כָּל הָעוֹלָם כָּלוּ	Kol ha'olam kulo
גֶּשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד	gesher tzar me'od
וְהַעֲקָר לֹא לִפְחַד כֶּלֶל:	veha'ikar lo lefaḥed kelal.

The entire world is a very narrow bridge.
The essential thing is to have no fear at all.

Attributed to Nahman of Bratzlav

ESA EYNAY

אֶשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים Esa eynay el heharim
מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי: me'ayin yavo ezri.
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה ezri me'im adonay
עוֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ: oseh shamayim va'aretz.

I lift up my eyes unto the hills:
from where does my help come?
My help is from THE UNSEEN ONE
the maker of the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 121:1-2



לְמִנּוֹת יְמִינוּ LIMNOT YAMEYNU
(TREASURE EACH DAY)

לְמִנּוֹת יְמִינוּ Limnot yameynu
כִּן הוֹדַע Keyn hodah
וְנָבִיא לִבְּב חֻכְמָה: Venavi levav ḥoḥmah

Teach us to treasure each day,
that we may open our hearts to Your wisdom.

Psalm 90:12 (Translated by Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin)

For everything there is a time,
For every desire an opportunity,
Beneath the heavens—
A time for giving birth, a time to die,
A time to plant, a time to uproot what is planted,
A time to break, a time to heal,
A time to weep, a time to laugh,
A time to mourn, a time to dance,
A time to seek, a time to lose,
A time to keep, a time to throw away,
A time to tear, a time to mend.

From Ecclesiastes 3

An Introduction for Holiday Times

Holidays invoke memories of warm gatherings, of celebrations shared, of family stories. At holiday times we feel acutely the absence of those missing from the table. Yet their presence is palpable in memory and story, so holiday seasons are bittersweet times.

As we celebrate our freedom to serve God at Passover and the bounty of the harvest on Sukkot, the solemnity of the High Holy Days and the candle-lit rededication of Hanukkah, we know that our understanding of the holidays has been enriched by those with whom we have celebrated. Our heritage has been shaped by all who have gone before us.

We savor this legacy and accept responsibility for the safekeeping of memory and the challenge of moral and spiritual renewal. Together this evening we seek the strength and guidance we need for that task.

David A. Teutsch

Zot Tefilati / This Is My Prayer

This is my prayer to you, my gentle God—
let me not stray from my life's course,
let not my spirit fall into decay,
and may it never cease to thirst for you,
and for the energizing dew
that you have sprinkled on it
ever since my life was new.

And let my heart be open to
the downtrodden, and to the orphaned life,
and to all who stumble,
and to one entangled amid hidden sorrows,
and to one who struggles in the dark.

And bless my eyes, and let me merit
to behold the human beauty in this world.

Deepen my senses, widen their grasp
so they absorb a green and flowering
and budding world, and take from it
the secret blossoming within a silence.

Grant me with strength to yield
the best of fruits. Let my life grow
a wealth of word and deed, steeped
in the fountain of my being,
without my measuring all things
for only what they have to offer me.

And when my day shall come,
let me slip into the land of night,
without asking anything from others
or from you, God.

Hillel Bavli (Translated by Joel Rosenberg)

Prayer

God, though this life is but a wraith,
 Although we know not what we use,
Although we grope with little faith,
 Give me the heart to fight—and lose.

Ever insurgent let me be,
 Make me more daring than devout;
From sleek contentment keep me free,
 And fill me with a buoyant doubt.

Open my eyes to visions girt
 With beauty, and with wonder lit—
But always let me see the dirt,
 And all that spawn and die in it.

Open my ears to music; let
 Me thrill with Spring's first flutes and drums—
But never let me dare forget
 The bitter ballads of the slums.

From compromise and things half done,
 Keep me with stern and stubborn pride;
And when at last the fight is won,
 God, keep me still unsatisfied.

Louis Untermayer

Happy are they who dwell within your house,
may they continue to give praise to you.
Happy is the people for whom life is thus,
happy is the people with THE EVERLASTING for its God!

A Psalm of David

- נ All exaltations do I raise to you, my sovereign God,
and I give blessing to your name, forever and eternally.
- ב Blessings do I offer you each day,
I hail your name, forever and eternally.
- ג Great is THE ETERNAL, to be praised emphatically,
because God's greatness has no measure.
- ד Declaring praises for your deeds one era to the next,
people describe your mighty acts.
- ה Heaven's glorious splendor is my song,
words of your miracles I eagerly pour forth.
- ו Wondrous are your powers—people tell of them,
and your magnificence do I recount.
- ז Signs of your abundant goodness they express,
and in your justice they rejoice.
- ח How gracious and how merciful is THE ABUNDANT ONE,
slow to anger, great in love.
- ט To all God's creatures, goodness flows,
on all creation, divine love.
 - י Your creatures all give thanks to you,
your fervent ones bless you emphatically. ←

אשרי...סלה / Happy...you (Psalm 84:5).
אשרי...אלהיו / Happy...God (Psalm 144:15).

אֲשֵׁרֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתֶךָ עוֹד יִהְיֶה לְךָ פֶלֶא:
אֲשֵׁרֵי הָעַם שִׁפְכָה לּוֹ אֲשֵׁרֵי הָעַם שְׂיִהוּוּ אֱלֹהָיו:
תְּהִלָּה לְדָוִד

אֲרוֹמֵמָה אֱלֹהֵי הַמָּלְכָה	וְאֶבְרַכָּה שְׁמָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
בְּכָל־יוֹם אֶבְרַכְךָ	וְאֶהְלֵלָה שְׁמָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד	וְלִגְדֻלָּתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר:
דוֹר לְדוֹר יִשְׁבַח מִעֲשֵׂיךָ	וּגְבוּרָתֶיךָ יִגְדֹּדוּ:
הַדָּר כְּבוֹד הוֹדָה	וְדַבְרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה:
וְעֹזוֹ נוֹרְאוֹתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ	וּגְדֻלָּתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרָנָה:
זָכַר רַב־טוֹבֶךָ יִפְעוּ	וְצִדְקָתֶךָ יִרְנְנוּ:
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה	אֲרָךְ אַפַּיִם וּגְדֻלַּת־חֶסֶד:
טוֹב־יְהוָה לְכָל	וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו:
יְדוֹתָהּ יְהוָה כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיךָ	וְחִסְדֶּיךָ יִבְרַכּוּכָה: ←

Ashrey yoshvey veyteḥa od yehaleluḥa selah.
Ashrey ha'am shekaḥah lo ashrey ha'am she'adonay elohav.
Tehilah ledavid.
Aromimeḥa elohay hameleḥ va'avareḥah shimeḥa le'olam va'ed.
Behol yom avareḥeka va'ahalela shimeḥa le'olam va'ed.
Gadol adonay umhulal me'od veligdulato eyn heker.
Dor ledor yeshabaḥ ma'aseḥa ugvuroteḥa yagidu.
Hadar kevod hodeḥa vedivrey nifle'oteḥa asihah.
Ve'ezuz noroteḥa yomeru ugduloteḥa asaperenah.
Zehēr rav tuveḥa yabi'u vetzidkateḥa yeranenu.
Hanun veraḥum adonay ereḥ apayim ugdol ḥased.
Tov adonay lakol veraḥamav al kol ma'asav.
Yoduḥa adonay kol ma'aseḥa veḥasideḥa yevareḥuḥah. ↵

COMMENTARY. Psalm 145 is an alphabetical acrostic. The translation roughly preserves the sound of the Hebrew initials of each line. The line for the letter *nun* is missing from this psalm, for unknown reasons. J.R.

- כ Calling out the glory of your sovereignty,
 of your magnificence they speak,
 ל Letting all people know your mighty acts,
 and of your sovereignty's glory and splendor.
 מ May your sovereignty last all eternities,
 your dominion for era after era.
 ס Strong support to all who fall,
 GOD raises up the humble and the lame.
 ע All hopeful gazes turn toward you,
 as you give sustenance in its appointed time.
 פ Providing with your open hand,
 you satisfy desire in all life.
 צ So just is God in every way,
 so loving amid all the divine deeds.
 ק Close by is God to all who call,
 to all who call to God in truth.
 ר Responding to the yearning of all those who fear,
 God hears their cry and comes to rescue them.
 ש Showing care to all who love God, THE ETERNAL
 brings destruction to all evildoers.
 ת The praise of THE ALL-KNOWING does my mouth declare,
 and all flesh give blessing to God's holy name,
 unto eternity.

Psalm 145

And as for us, we bless the name of Yah,
 from now until the end of time. Halleluyah!

ואנחנו...הללויה / And...Halleluyah (Psalm 115:18).

וּגְבוּרַתְּךָ יִדְבָּרוּ:	כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתְךָ יֵאמְרוּ
וּכְבוֹד הַדָּר מַלְכוּתוֹ:	לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם גְּבוּרַתִּי
וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכַל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר:	מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל־עַלְמִים
וְזוֹקֵף לְכָל־הַנְּפֹלִים:	סוּמָה יִהְיֶה לְכָל־הַנְּפֹלִים
וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן־לָהֶם אֶת־אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ:	עֵינַי כָּל אֲלֵיהֶם יִשְׁפְּרוּ
וּמִשְׁפִּיעַ לְכָל־חַי רִצּוֹן:	פּוֹתַח אֶת־יְרֵךְ
וְחֹסֵד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו:	צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו
לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאֵהוּ בְּאָמַת:	קָרוֹב יִהְיֶה לְכָל־קְרָאָיו
וְאֶת־שׁוֹעֲתָם יִשְׁמַע וַיִּשְׁיַעֵם:	רִצּוֹן יִרְאִיו יַעֲשֶׂה
וְאֵת כָּל־הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמִיד:	שׁוֹמֵר יִהְיֶה אֶת־כָּל־אֲהַבָּיו
וַיְבָרֶךְ כָּל־בְּשָׂר שֶׁם קָדְשׁ	* תְּהִלַּת יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ פִּי

לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:



מִעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם

וְאַנְחֵנוּ נְבָרֶךְ יְיָ

Kevod malhuteha yomeru ugvuroteha yedaberu.
 Lehodi'a livney ha'adam gevurotav uhvod hadar malhuto.
 Malhuteha malhut kol olamim umemshalteha behol dor vador.
 Someh adonay lehol hanofelim vezokef lehol hakefufim.
 Eyney hol eleha yesaberu
 ve'atah noten lahem et ohlam be'ito.
 Pote'ah et yadeha umasbi'a lehol hay ratzon.
 Tzadik adonay behol derahav vehasid behol ma'asav.
 Karov adonay lehol korav lehol asher yikra'uhu ve'emet.
 Retzon yere'av ya'aseh ve'et shavatam yishma veyoshi'em.
 Shomer adonay et kol ohavav ve'et kol harsha'im yashmid.
 Tehilat adonay yedaber pi
 vivareh kol basar shem kodsho le'olam va'ed.
 Va'anahnu nevareh yah me'atah ve'ad olam halleluyah.

God is compassionate,
forgiving human error
and refusing to destroy,
ready to refrain from anger
and unwilling to awaken wrath.
Extend your help, REDEEMING ONE!
Give answer, sovereign one,
whenever we may call.

When a minyan is present, the Barehu is said. The congregation rises and faces east. It is customary to bow.

Bless THE INFINITE, the blessed One!

Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One, now and forever.

KAVANAH. Public worship aids us by liberating personality from the confining walls of the individual ego. Imprisoned in self, we easily fall prey to morbid brooding. Interference with career, personal disappointment and disillusionment, hurts to vanity, the fear of death—all these tend so to dominate our attention that our minds move in a fixed and narrow system of ideas, which we detest but from which we see no escape. With a whole wide world of boundless opportunities about us, we permit our minds, as it were, to pace up and down within the narrow cell of their ego-prisons. But participation in public worship breaks through the prison of the ego and lets in the light and air of the world. Instead of living but one small and petty life, we now share the multitudinous life of our people. Against the wider horizons that now open to our ken, personal cares do not loom so large. Life becomes infinitely more meaningful and worthwhile when we become aware, through our participation in public worship, of a common life that transcends our individual selves.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

וְהוּא רַחוּם יְכַפֵּר עוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁחִית וְהַרְבֵּה
לְהָשִׁיב אָפּוֹ וְלֹא יַעִיר כָּל חַמְתּוֹ: יְהוּה הוֹשִׁיעָה
הַמַּלְאָךְ יַעֲזָרנוּ בְּיוֹם קִרְאָנוּ:

When a minyan is present, the Barehu is said. The congregation rises and faces east. It is customary to bow.

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְהוּה הַמְּבָרָךְ:
בְּרוּךְ יְהוּה הַמְּבָרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Barehu et adonay hamvoraḥ.

Baruḥ adonay hamvoraḥ le'olam va'ed.

KAVANAH When we worship in public, we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being—the first-hand experience of the larger life which is God. M.M.K.

COMMENTARY. The evening service begins with ברכו / *Barehu*, the call to worship. It introduces the *Shema* and its blessings, which are then followed by the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) and the *Aleynu*. The ברכו / *Barehu* call us together for worship by asking that we return blessing to God, who is the source of all blessing. We thereby become a community. D.A.T.

DERASH. Real faith does not mean professing what we hold true in a ready-made formula. . . . It means holding ourselves open to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life and which cannot be comprised in any formula. It means that, from the very roots of our being, we should always be prepared to live with this mystery as one being lives with another. Real faith means the ability to endure life in the face of this mystery. Martin Buber (Adapted)

ASHER BIDVARO / GOD IN NATURE

TRADITIONAL VERSION

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, sovereign of all worlds, by whose word the evenings fall. In wisdom you open heaven's gates. With divine discernment you make seasons change, causing the times to come and go, and ordering the stars on their appointed paths through heaven's dome, all according to your will. Creator of the day and night, who rolls back light before the dark, and dark before the light, who makes day pass away and brings on night, dividing between day and night: The Leader of the Multitudes of Heaven is your name! Living and enduring God, rule over us, now and always. Blessed are you, ALMIGHTY ONE, who makes the evenings fall.

DERASH. When we are about to say: "Blessed are you, our God, sovereign of all worlds," and prepare to utter the first word "blessed," we should do so with all our strength, so that we will have no strength left to say, "are you." And this is the meaning of the verse in the Scriptures: "But they that wait for God shall exchange their strength." What we are really saying is: "Source of life, I am giving you all the strength that is within me in that very first word; now will you, in exchange, give me an abundance of new strength, so that I can go on with my prayer." M.B. (Adapted)

אשר ברברו מעריב ערבים / by whose word the evenings fall. The word plays a central role in the Jewish imagination. Our liturgy fantasizes that God brings on evening each night by saying "Evening!" Thus we repeat each day the original act of Creation that took place by means of the divine word. It is only because we affirm a God who so values language that we feel ourselves able to use words in prayer. Our word, perhaps like God's, gives expression to a depth that goes beyond language, but that can be shared only through the symbolic power of speech. A.G.

אֲשֶׁר בְּדָבָרוֹ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר בְּדָבָרוֹ מַעְרִיב עַרְבִים
בְּחִכְמָה פּוֹתַח שְׁעָרִים וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֵּה עֵתִים וּמַחְלִיף אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים
וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרָקִיעַ כְּרִצּוֹנוֹ: פּוֹרָא יוֹם
וְלַיְלָה גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי הָאֶשֶׁף וְחָשֶׁף מִפְּנֵי אוֹר: *וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם וּמְבִיא
לַיְלָה וּמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ: אֵל חַי וְקַיִם
תָּמִיד יְמַלֵּךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַמַּעְרִיב עַרְבִים:

El hay vekayam tamid yimloḥ aleynu le'olam va'ed.
Baruḥ atah adonay hama'ariv aravim.

KAVANAH. The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy amidst the simple beauty of nature. As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be. And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.

Anne Frank

COMMENTARY. The two *beraḥot* which precede the Shema set the stage for its evening recitation. The first *beraḥah* praises God for the wonders of creation that are visible at twilight: the shifting pattern of the stars, the rhythm of the seasons, the regular passage from day to night. All of these are a nightly reminder of the unchanging plan of creation.

The second *beraḥah* praises God, whose instruction is a special token of love for Israel. Israel responds by meditating upon God's teaching "day and night," "when we lie down and when we rise." This phrasing recalls the preceding *beraḥah*, adding Israel's study of Torah to the natural order: The sun sets, the stars shine, and Israel studies—as regularly as day and night. The phrase "when we lie down and when we rise" anticipates the Shema, which follows. This interplay between the *beraḥot* and the Shema suggests that the Shema is Israel's morning and evening Torah study. At the same time, it is Israel's declaration of the oneness of the power that makes for the natural order and for learning, for creation and human creativity.

S.S.

INTERPRETIVE VERSION: ASHER BIDVARO

Praised are you, God, ruler of the universe, who has ordained the rhythm of life. The day with its light calls to activity and exertion. But when the day wanes, when, with the setting of the sun, colors fade, we cease from our labors and welcome the tranquility of the night. The subdued light of the moon and stars, the darkness and the stillness about us invite rest and repose. Trustfully we yield to the quiet of sleep, for we know that, while we are unaware of what goes on within and around us, our powers of body and mind are renewed. Therefore, at this evening hour, we seek composure of spirit. We give thanks for the day and its tasks and for the night and its rest. Praised are you, God, who brings on the evening.

1945 Reconstructionist Prayer Book (Adapted)

KAVANAH. The שמע / Shema is wrapped in אהבה / *ahavah* / love. The blessing preceding the Shema concludes, “who loves your people Israel.” This prayer begins “ואהבת / *ve’ahavta*, And you must love יהוה / *YHWH*.” First you are loved, then you respond with love. Love is central to Jewish life. Love means commitment and limitations—Torah and mitzvot. That is so both in our relationships with each other and in our relationship with God.

L.W.K.

Before worship can have any genuine spiritual influence upon us, before it can reveal God to us, we must qualify ourselves by an arduous discipline in deeds of self-control, honesty, courage and kindness. When we come to the synagogue, after having tried our utmost to deal fairly with our neighbor, to suppress our evil impulses, and have made an effort to meet our responsibilities as human beings, then worship can yield its measure of spiritual strength and give us a sense of inward peace. Communion with God is a reward of holy and righteous living.

MMK. (Adapted)

INTERPRETIVE VERSION: AHAVAT OLAM

We are loved by an unending love.
We are embraced by arms that find us
even when we are hidden from ourselves.

We are touched by fingers that soothe us
even when we are too proud for soothing.
We are counseled by voices that guide us
even when we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love.

We are supported by hands that uplift us
even in the midst of a fall.
We are urged on by eyes that meet us
even when we are too weak for meeting.
We are loved by an unending love.

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled...
ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;
We are loved by an unending love.

Blessed are you, BELOVED ONE, who loves your people Israel.

Rami M. Shapiro (Adapted)

Hail the hand that scattered space with stars,
Wrapped whirling world in bright blue blanket, air,
Made worlds within worlds, elements in earth,
Souls within skins, every one a teeming universe,
Every tree a system of semantics, and pushed
Beyond probability to place consciousness
On this cooling crust of burning rock.

Oh praise that hand, mind, heart, soul, power or force
That so inclosed, separated, limited planets, trees, humans,
Yet breaks all bounds and borders
To lavish on us light, love, life
This trembling glory.

R.F.B.

AHAVAT OLAM / GOD'S LOVE IN TORAH

With everlasting love, you love the house of Israel. Torah and mitzvot, laws and justice you have taught us. And so, DEAR ONE, our God, when we lie down and when we rise, we reflect upon your laws; we take pleasure in your Torah's words and your mitzvot, now and always. Truly, they are our life, our length of days. On them we meditate by day and night. Your love will never depart from us as long as worlds endure. Blessed are you, BELOVED ONE, who loves your people Israel.

Many contemporary Jews are reciting *berahot*/blessings in ways that reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. At any place where a blessing occurs in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas for *berahot*. This can be done by selecting one phrase from each group to form the introductory clause.

I	Baruḥ atah adonay	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are you Adonay
	Beruḥah at yah	בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ	Blessed are you Yah
	Nevareḥ et	נְבַרְךָ אֵת	Let us bless
II	eloheynu	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
	hasheḥinah	הַשְּׁכִינָה	Sheḥinah
	eyn haḥayim	עֵינַי הַחַיִּים	Source of Life
III	meleḥ ha'olam	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of all worlds
	ḥey ha'olamim	חַי הָעוֹלָמִים	Life of all the worlds
	ruaḥ ha'olam	רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Spirit of the world

The phrase '*Nevareḥ et eyn haḥayim*' was originally formulated by poet Marcia Falk, author of *The Book of Blessings* (See SOURCES, p. 182).

אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם

אַהֲבַת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אֶהְבֶּתָּ: תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים
אוֹתָנוּ לְמַדְתָּ: עַל כֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשִׂכְכָנוּ וּבְקוֹיָנוּ נִשְׁיַח בְּחַקֶּיךָ
וְנִשְׁמַח בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאַרְךָ
לְמֵינוּ וּבָהֶם נִהְגָה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה: וְאַהֲבַתְךָ לֹא תִסּוּר מִמָּנוּ לְעוֹלָמִים:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Ahavat olam beyt yisra'el ameha ahavta.

Torah umitzvot hukim umishpatim otanu limadeta.

Al ken adonay eloheynu beshohvenu uvkumenu nasi'ah
behukeha

venismaḥ bedivrey torateha uvmitzvoteha le'olam va'ed

ki hem hayeynu ve'oreh yameynu

uvahem nehgeh yomam valaylah.

Ve'ahavateha lo tasur mimenu le'olamim.

Baruḥ atah adonay ohev amo yisra'el.

ואהבתך לא תסור. Our text follows the Sephardic version, in the declarative mode (“Your love will never depart from us.”) rather than the imperative (“Never remove your love from us!”). Divine love is unconditional. It is available to every one of us when we fashion our lives into channels to receive and share it. The Jewish people together experience that eternal love as reflected in our love for the study of Torah—a wisdom lovingly received, shared, and passed on enriched by each generation. A.G.

DERASH. The term Sheḥinah implies that God is not aloof from human life with all its defeats and triumphs. God is in the very midst of life. The rabbis say that when people suffer for their sins, the Sheḥinah cries out. The Sheḥinah thus moves from Israel to all humanity. M.M.K./M.S.

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

SHEMA

Listen, Israel: THE ETERNAL is our God,
THE ETERNAL ONE alone!

Blessed be the name and glory of God's realm, forever!

And you must love THE ONE, your God, with your whole heart, with every breath, with all you have. Take these words that I command you now to heart. Teach them intently to your children. Speak them when you sit inside your house or walk upon the road, when you lie down and when you rise. And bind them as a sign upon your hand, and keep them visible before your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. ←

שמע...ובשעריך / Listen...gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

DERASH. The Shema is called *kabbalat ol malhut shamayim*. We “receive upon ourselves the yoke of the sovereignty of Heaven.” To proclaim God as ours and as one is to acknowledge fealty to the divine will—and the Shema is a time to listen. We listen in order to discover God's will.

D.A.T.

יהוה / love יהוה your God. Abbaye said, “Let the love of God be spread through your activities. If a person studies and helps others to do so, if one's business dealings are decent and trustworthy—what do people say? ‘Happy is the one who studied Torah, and the one who teaches Torah! Have you seen the one who studied Torah? How beautiful! What a fine person!’ Thus, the Torah says, ‘You are my servant Israel; I will be glorified by you’” (Isaiah 49:3).

Talmud Yoma 86a

KAVANAH. The moment we transcend our own egos and identify ourselves with one other person we are on the way toward God. God is thus the reality experienced as we-consciousness, in the same way as the self or soul is the reality experienced as I- or self-consciousness.

M.M.K.

שְׁמַע

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלַכּוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כְּכֹל-לְבָבְךָ וְכְכֹל-נַפְשְׁךָ וְכְכֹל-מְאֹדְךָ:
וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לְבָבְךָ:
וּשְׁנַתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּדְבַרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁחֲתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ
וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטַטְפֹּת בֵּין
עֵינֶיךָ: וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: —

Shema yisra'el adonay eloheynu adonay ehad.

Baruh shem kevod malhuto le'olam va'ed.

Ve'ahavta et adonay eloheha

behol levaveha uvhol nafsheha uvhol me'odeha.

Vehayu hadevarim ha'eleh asher anohi metzaveha hayom al
levaveha.

Veshinantam levaneha vedibarta bam

beshivteha beveyteha uvlechteha vadereh uvshohbeha
uvkumeha.

Ukshartam le'ot al yadeha vehayu letotafot beyn eyneha.

Uhtavtam al mezuzot beyteha uvishareha.

לבך / levaveha / your heart. The לב / lev / heart, was seen as the source of emotions and intellect. Feelings and reason are complementary partners, not conflicting parts, of the human psyche. The double כ of לבב teaches that a love of God must contain all dualities (e.g. the good and bad in you).

L.W.K.

עֵינֶיךָ טַטְפֹּת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ. Totafot might have been pendants or forehead markings. The Torah text sees totafot as reminders of the divine will. The English translation captures this figurative meaning of a visible reminder of the mitzvot.

D.A.T.

For the second paragraph of the Shema, read either the version below or the biblical selection beginning on page 26 then continue with the third paragraph, page 28.

BIBLICAL SELECTION I

It came to pass, and will again,
that if you truly listen
to the voice of **THE ETERNAL ONE**, your God,
being sure to do whatever has been asked of you today,
THE ONE, your God, will make of you a model
for all nations of the earth,
and there will come upon you all these blessings,
as you listen to the call of **THE ABUNDANT ONE**, your God:
Blessed be you in the city,
blessed be you upon the field.
Blessed be the fruit of your womb,
the fruit of your land, the fruit of your cattle,
the calving of your oxen, and the lambing of your sheep.
Blessed be your basket and your kneading-trough.
Blessed be you when you come home,
and blessed be you when you go forth.
See, I have placed in front of you today
both life and good, both death and ill,
commanding you today to love **THE BOUNDLESS ONE**, your God,
to walk in ways I have ordained,
keeping the commandments, laws, and judgments,
so that you survive and multiply.
THE BOUNTIFUL, your God, will bless you
on the land you are about to enter and inherit. ↩

For the second paragraph of the Shema, read either the version below or the biblical selection beginning on page 27 then continue with the third paragraph, page 29.

BIBLICAL SELECTION I

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-
כָּל-מִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם וּנְתַנֶּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עָלֶיךָ
עַל כָּל-גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ: וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל-הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהַשִּׁיגְךָ
כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּעִיר וּבְרוּךְ אַתָּה
בְּשָׂדֶה: בְּרוּךְ פְּרִי-בִטְנְךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ וּפְרִי בְהֵמָתְךָ שֶׁגֵּר
אֶלְפֶיךָ וְעַשְׁתָּרוֹת צֹאנֶךָ: בְּרוּךְ טִנְאֶךָ וּמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶיךָ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
בְּבֹאֶךָ וּבְרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתְךָ: ←

רָאָה נִתְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת-הַחַיִּים וְאֶת-הַטּוֹב וְאֶת-הַמּוֹת וְאֶת-
הָרָע: אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַחֵץ
בְּדַרְכָּיו וּלְשׁוֹמֵר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקְתָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחַיִּית וּרְבִית וּבְרַכְךָ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: וְאִם-יִפְגָּה ←

When men were children, they thought of God as a father;
When men were slaves, they thought of God as a master;
When men were subjects, they thought of God as a king.
But I am a woman, not a slave, not a subject,
not a child who longs for God as father or mother.

I might imagine God as teacher or friend, but those images,
like king, master, father or mother, are too small for me now.

God is the force of motion and light in the universe;
God is the strength of life on our planet;
God is the power moving us to do good;
God is the source of love springing up in us.
God is far beyond what we can comprehend.

R.F.B.

But if your heart should turn away,
and you not heed, and go astray,
and you submit to other gods and serve them,
I declare to you today that you shall be
destroyed completely; you shall not live out
a great expanse of days upon the land
that you now cross the Jordan to possess.

I call as witnesses concerning you
both heaven and earth, both life and death,
that I have placed in front of you
a blessing and a curse.
Choose life, that you may live,
you and your seed!

Continue on page 28.

COMMENTARY. The traditional wording found in Biblical Selection II presents detailed bountiful or devastating consequences of Israel's collective relationship to the mitzvot. That biblical section (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) offers a supernatural theology that many contemporary Jews find difficult. The first part of the biblical section on this page (Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 30:15-19) was included in the 1945 Reconstructionist Siddur. It begins by encouraging observance in the same language, but concentrates on the positive ways in which observance of mitzvot focuses our attention on God's presence as perceived through productivity and the pursuit of abundant life. The second part was first used in the Israeli Progressive movement Siddur, *Ha-avodah Shebalev*. S.S.

KAVANAH. The doctrine of the unity of God calls for the integration of all life's purposes into a consistent pattern of thought and conduct. M.M.K.

DERASH. God is the assumption that there is enough in the world to meet our needs but not to meet our greed for power and pleasure.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

לְכַבֵּךְ וְלֹא תִשְׁמַע וְנִדְחָהּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
וְעַבַדְתָּם: הַגִּדְתִּי לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֶבְדֶּה תְּאֵבֶדוֹן לֹא-תֵאָרִיכֶן יָמִים
עַל-הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עִבֵּר אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן לְכוּא שְׁמָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:
הַעֲדֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים וְהַמּוֹת נִתְּתִי
לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה וּבַחֲרַתְּ בַחַיִּים לְמַעַן תַּחֲיֶה אֶתָּה וְזָרַעְךָ:

Continue on page 29.

COMMENTARY. The statement of God's oneness unifies not only the context of the Shema but the text as well—three scriptural paragraphs specified in the Mishnah (a second century codification of Jewish law). The powerful declaration of God's unity fuses the responsibility to love God and to study God's teachings (first paragraph) with the lesson that their fulfillment confirms God's presence (second and third paragraphs). Hence, the unity of God as idea and presence. s.s.

In the handwritten scroll of the Torah
The word "Shema" of "*Shema Yisra'el*"
Ends with an oversized *ayin*,
And the word "*Ehad*"
Ends with an oversized *dalet*.
Taken together
These two letters
Spell "*Ed*," meaning "witness."
Whenever we recite the Shema
We bear witness
To our awareness
Of God's presence.

H.M.

BIBLICAL SELECTION II

And if you truly listen to my bidding, as I bid you now—loving THE FOUNT OF LIFE, your God, and serving God with all your heart, with every breath—then I will give you rain upon your land in its appointed time, the early rain and later rain, so you may gather in your corn, your wine and oil. And I will give you grass upon your field to feed your animals, and you will eat and be content. Beware, then, lest your heart be led astray, and you go off and worship other gods, and you submit to them, so that the anger of THE MIGHTY ONE should burn against you, and seal up the heavens so no rain would fall, so that the ground would not give forth her produce, and you be forced to leave the good land I am giving you.

So place these words upon your heart, into your lifebreath. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and let them rest before your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home, and when you walk upon the road, when you lie down, and when you rise, inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates—so that your days and your children’s days be many on the land THE FAITHFUL ONE promised to give your ancestors, as long as heaven rests above the earth. ↩

DERASH. The traditional second paragraph of the Shema (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) offers an account of the natural process by which the blessings of God themselves lead to pride, self-satisfaction, and ingratitude on the part of those who receive them. Ironically, the more we are blessed, so it seems, the less grateful and aware of blessing we become. It is when we are most sated, Scripture warns us, that we should be most careful. Fullness can lead to ingratitude, and ingratitude to idolatry—primarily in the form of worship of our own accomplishments. Then, indeed, “the heavens might close up and no rain fall.” For, once we begin to worship our achievements, we will never find satisfaction.

A.G.

BIBLICAL SELECTION II

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לֹא־הָבָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעַבְדּוֹ כְּכֹל-לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי מְטָר-אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאִסְפַּת דְּגַנְךָ וְתִירְשָׁךָ וּיְצַהֲרֶךָ: וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשֹׂדֶךָ לְבַהֲמֹתֶךָ וְאִכְלֹתָ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ: הַשְּׁמְרוּ לָכֶם פֶּן-יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם: וְחָרָה אֶף-יְהוָה בְּכֶם וְעָזַר אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא-יְהִי מְטָר וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת-יְבוּלָהּ וְאִבְדַתֶּם מִהֲרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם:

וּשְׁמַתֶּם אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהַי עַל-לְבַבְכֶם וְעַל-נַפְשְׁכֶם וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יְדֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם: וְלִמְדַתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדֹרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל-מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: לְמַעַן יִרְבּוּ יְמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לֵאמֹתֶיכֶם לִתֵּת לָהֶם כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ: ←

DERASH. This warning against idolatry has ecological significance. If we continue to pollute the environment—and thus display contempt for the integrity of God's creation—pure rain will cease to fall, and the ground will cease to give forth its produce.

Mordecai Liebling

DERASH. The gods we worship write their names on our faces, be sure of that. And we will worship something—have no doubt of that either. We may think that our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of the heart—but it will out. That which dominates our imagination and our thoughts will determine our life and character. Therefore it behooves us to be careful what we are worshipping, for what we are worshipping we are becoming....

Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE BOUNDLESS ONE told Moses: Speak to the Israelites—tell them to make themselves *tzitzit* upon the corners of their clothes, throughout their generations. Have them place upon the corner *tzitzit* a twine of royal blue. This is your *tzitzit*. Look at it and remember all the mitzvot of the ETERNAL ONE. And do them, so you won't go off after the lusts of your heart or after what catches your eye, so that you remember to do all my mitzvot and be holy for your God. I am THE FAITHFUL ONE, your God, who brought you from Mitzrayim to be for you a God. I am THE INFINITE, your God.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה...אֱלֹהֵיכֶם / THE BOUNDLESS ONE...God (Numbers 15:37-41).

COMMENTARY. In the ancient Near East, free people wore fringes, or *tzitzit*, on the hems of their everyday clothes. Since only free people wore *tzitzit*, they were a form of identification. Business transactions were sealed by kissing the *tzitzit*.

The mitzvah of *tzitzit* is based on that ancient sign of freedom. The fringes remind us that we voluntarily follow the way of God, who freed us from Egyptian slavery. It is, literally, a string tied around our finger.

Today, many Jews who recite the Shema during the morning service gather the four corners of their *tallitot* (prayer shawls), hold the *tzitzit*, and kiss them at each mention of the word *צִיצִית* / *tzitzit*. This custom shows that we take these words seriously like a legal contract. L.W.K.

מצרים / *Mitzrayim* was the escaping Hebrews', not the Egyptians', name for the land of Egypt: perhaps a slave-term, and probably not of Semitic origin, it has associations with the root *צָרַר*, to be in distress, constricted, in anguish, or in dire straits. This word powerfully evokes the choking oppression of slavery. As the psalmist wrote: *מִן הַמַּצַּר קִרְאתִי יְהוָה* / From the depths I called to Yah. M.P.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ
אֲלֵהֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִת עַל-כַּנְּפֵי בְגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וּנְתַנּוּ עַל-
צִיצִת הַכֶּנֶף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת: וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִת וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ
וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְלֹא תִחַרְרוּ אַחֲרָי
לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ
וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם
לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם **אמת**

יהוה כל מצות יהוה / all the mitzvot of THE ETERNAL ONE. כל, all, as many as possible. According to rabbinic tradition, there are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. A combination of gematria (Jewish numerology) and ritual macramé “proves” that ציצית / tzitzit equals all 613 mitzvot combined: צ = 90, י = 10, ז = 90, י = 10, ת = 400; all together = 600. Each tzitzit has 8 strands (per corner) and 5 knots; 8 + 5 = 13; 13 + 600 = 613. L.W.K.

אחרי עיניכם / after what catches your eye, that is, the physical and material temptations you see. The Baal Shem Tov had a method for dealing with distractions, especially sexual ones. If you can’t get that person out of your thoughts, remember that beauty is a reflection of God’s image. Redirect that energy towards God. L.W.K.

תכלת is Sidon blue, which is obtained from a shellfish. Sidon or royal blue is associated with majesty—even today the British queen wears a blue sash. The Jews were so oppressed at the time of Bar Kōḥbah that indigo, a vegetable dye, replaced Sidon blue on their tzitzit. The Romans banned the blue fringe because of its symbolism. During the nineteenth century the Radnizer ḥasidim reintroduced its use. Now other Jews have also begun to use it. The long tehelet thread intertwined with short white ones is a complex and powerful image that hints at the interplay between majesty and subject within our own hearts. Eric Mendelsohn

EMET VE'EMUNAH / REDEMPTION

Our faith and truth rest on all this, which is binding upon us:
That THE BOUNDLESS ONE alone is our divinity
and that no divinity exists but One;
that we are Israel, community of God;
that it is God who saves us from the hand
of governments, the very palm of tyrants;
who enacts great deeds without measure,
and wondrous deeds beyond all count;
who puts our souls amid the living,
and who keeps our feet from giving way;
who breaks apart the schemes of those who hate us,
confounds the thoughts of any bearing us ill-will;
that it is God who made miracles for us in Egypt,
signs and wonders in Ham's children's land.
From one generation to the next, God is our guarantor,
and even on a day that turned to night,
God stayed with us when death's deep shadow fell. ↪

COMMENTARY. Two beautiful *berahot* complete the liturgical framework of the Shema in the evening service. The first of these is called *Ge'ulah*—"Redemption." Recalling the Exodus from Egypt, it thematically echoes the third paragraph of the Shema. Moreover, it identifies the sovereign God, named in the Shema's credo, as the power that freed Israel from slavery. Its vivid, here-and-now recollection of the escape from Egyptian bondage invites and challenges Israel to claim the redemption as a personal experience in each generation and to hear echoes of that ancient triumph over tyranny in each modern-day struggle for freedom, in every attempt to move toward the messianic future. S.S.

אֱמֶת וְאִמוּנָה

אֱמֶת וְאִמוּנָה כָּל זֹאת וְקִיָּם עָלֵינוּ

כִּי הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵין זֹולָתוֹ

וְאֶנְחֵנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמוֹ:

הַפּוֹרְנוּ מִיַּד מְלָכִים

הַגּוֹאֲלֵנוּ מִכַּף עָרִיצִים

הָעוֹשֶׂה גְדוּלוֹת אֵין חֶקֶר

וְנִפְלְאוֹת אֵין מִסֵּפֶר:

הַשֵּׁם נִפְשָׁנוּ בַּחַיִּים

וְלֹא נָתַן לְמוֹט רַגְלָנוּ:

הַמִּפְרַע עֲצַת אוֹיְבֵינוּ

וְהַמְקַלֵּק לִמְחֻשְׁבוֹת שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ:

הָעוֹשֶׂה לָנוּ נְסִים בְּמִצְרַיִם

אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים בְּאֶדְמַת בְּנֵי חָם:

מִדּוֹר לְדוֹר הוּא גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ:

וּבִיּוֹם שְׁהַפִּיף לְלִילָה

עֲמָנוּ הִיָּה בְּגִיא צַלְמָוֹת: ←

COMMENTARY. The blessing immediately following the Shema deals with the theme of divine redemption. The present text, a rewritten version, includes reference to the Holocaust, from which there was no redemption, and the return to Zion, a fulfillment of Israel's ancient dream. The same divine spirit that gave Israel the courage to seek freedom from Egypt in ancient times inspired those who fought for Israel's freedom in our own day. At the same time, this version omits those portions of the text that glory in the enemy's fall or see in God a force for vengeance. All humans are God's beloved children, as were the Egyptians who drowned at the sea.

A.G.

And even in our age of orphans and survivors,
God's loving acts have not abandoned us,
and God has brought together our scattered kin
from the distant corners of the earth.

As then, so now,
God brings the people Israel forth
from every place of menace, to a lasting freedom.
God is the one who brought the Israelites
through a divided Sea of Reeds.
There, they beheld divine might;
they praised and thanked the Name,
and willingly accepted for themselves
God's rule.

Moses, Miriam, and all the Israelites
broke out in song, abundant in their joy,
and, all as one, they said: ↩

DERASH. Rabbi Judah said: [At the sea] each tribe said to the other, "You go into the sea first!" As they stood there bickering, Naḥshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water. Meanwhile Moses was praying. God said to him, "My friend is drowning—and you pray!" "What can I do?" Moses asked. [God responded as it says in the text,] "Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to go! Raise your staff..." Talmud Sotah 37a

NOTE. Biblical references include Job 9:10, Psalm 66:9.

גַּם בְּדוֹר יְתוּמִים
לֹא עִזְבוּנוּ חֲסָדָיו
וַיִּקְבֹּץ נִדְחֵינוּ מִקְצוֹת תְּבֵל:
כָּאִז גַּם עֵתָה
מוֹצִיא אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכַּף כָּל אוֹיְבָיו
לְחֵרוֹת עוֹלָם:
הַמְעַבִּיר בְּנָיו בֵּין גְּזָרֵי יַם סוּף
שֶׁם רָאוּ אֶת גְּבוּרָתוֹ
שִׁבְחוּ וְהוֹדוּ לְשָׁמַי
וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּרָצוֹן קִבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם:

מֹשֶׁה וּמִרְיָם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵה עָנוּ שִׁירָה בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה וְאָמְרוּ כֻלָּם: ←

Mosheh umiriam uvney yisra'el leha anu shirah besimḥah rabah
ve'ameru ḥulam.

To open eyes when others close them
to hear when others do not wish to listen
to look when others turn away
to seek to understand when others give up
to rouse oneself when others accept
to continue the struggle even when one is not the strongest
to cry out when others keep silent—
to be a Jew
it is that,
it is first of all that
and further
to live when others are dead
and to remember when others have forgotten.

Emmanuel Eydoux (Translated from the French by Jonathan Magonet)

“Who among the mighty can compare
to you, WISE ONE?

Who can compare to you,
adorned in holiness,
awesome in praises,
acting wondrously!”

Your children saw you in your majesty,
splitting the sea in front of Moses.

“This is my God!” they cried, and said:

“THE HOLY ONE will reign forever!”

And it was said:

“Yes, THE REDEEMING ONE has rescued Jacob,
saved him
from a power
stronger than his own!”

Blessed are you, THE GUARDIAN, Israel’s redeeming power!

When our ancestors
beheld these truths
they proclaimed:
Among all the gods
we can name,
who can compare to the
One Beyond Naming?
Among all the quantities
we can label, number,
mark and measure,
which compares to the
Mystery
at the Heart of Reality?

R.M.S.

מִי־כַמְכָּה בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה מִי כַמְכָּה נֶאֱדָר בְּקֶדֶשׁ
 נוֹרָא תְהִלַּת עֲשֵׂה פֶלְאָ:
 מִלְכוּתָהּ רָאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בּוֹקֵעַ יָם לְפָנָי מֹשֶׁה זֶה אֵלֵי עָנּוּ וְאָמְרוּ:
 יְהוָה יְמַלֵּךְ לְעַלְמֵם וְעַד:
 וְנֶאֱמַר: כִּי פָדָה יְהוָה אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וּגְאָלוּ מִיַּד חֲזַק מִמָּנּוּ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
 יְהוָה גְּאֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Mi ḥamohah ba'elim adonay.
 Mi kamohah nedar bakodesh
 nora tehilot osey feleh.
 Malhuteha ra'u vaneha boke'a yam lifney mosheh.
 Zeh eli anu ve'ameru.
 Adonay yimloḥ le'olam va'ed.
 Vene'amar ki fadah adonay et ya'akov ugalo miyad hazak
 mimenu.
 Baruh atah adonay ga'al yisra'el.

בוקע ים לפני משה. This siddur reinstates reference to the splitting of the sea as a sign of God's redeeming power. The earlier Reconstructionist prayerbook omitted that reference because of its emphasis on supernatural intervention. As myth, however, the ancient tale of wonder underscores the sense of daily miracle in our lives. Even those of us who cannot affirm a God who intervenes in the natural process, and thus cannot accept the literal meaning of the tale, can appreciate its human message. According to the midrash, the sea did not split until one Israelite, Nahshon ben Aminadav, had the courage to walk upright into the water. Perhaps it was the divine spirit in Nahshon, rather than the magic of Moses's wand, that caused the sea to split.

A.G.

NOTE. Biblical references include Exodus 15:11, 18 and Jeremiah 31:11.



who ever guards the people Israel
and all who dwell on earth.

HASHKIVENU / DIVINE HELP

For commentary, see pages 38-39.

Help us to lie down, DEAR ONE, our God, in peace, and let us rise again, our sovereign, to life. Spread over us the shelter of your peace. Decree for us a worthy daily lot, and redeem us for the sake of your great name. Protect us and keep from us enemies, illness, sword, famine, and sorrow. Enfold us in the wings of your protection, for you are our redeeming guardian. Truly, a sovereign, gracious and compassionate God are you. Guard our going forth each day for life and peace, now and always. Spread over us the shelter of your peace.

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who ever guards the people Israel, and all who dwell on earth.

עם ישראל וכל יושבי תבל



Blessed are you,
Compassionate One,

הַשְּׁפִיכֵנוּ

Transliteration and commentary follow on pages 38-39.

הַשְּׁפִיכֵנוּ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְהַעֲמִירְנוּ מִלְּפָנֶינוּ לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׁ
עָלֵינוּ סֶפֶת שְׁלוֹמָהּ: וְתַקְּנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן
שְׁמֶךָ: וְהִגֵּן בְּעַדְנוּ וְהִסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב רָבָר וְחָרָב וְרָעַב וְיָגוֹן: וּבְצֹל
כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירְנוּ כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרָנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אַתָּה כִּי אֵל מְלֹךְ חַנוּן
וְרַחוּם אַתָּה: וְשֹׁמֵר צִאתָנוּ וּבוֹאֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם מַעֲתָה וְעַד עוֹלָם:
וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶפֶת שְׁלוֹמָהּ:

ברוך אתה יהוה שומר עם ישראל וכל יושבי תבל לעד:



COMMENTARY. *Hashkivenu*—"Help us to lie down [in peace]"—is the final prescribed part of the Shema. It recalls the Shema by expressing the hope that we will "lie down...in peace" and "rise again...to life." An extension of *Emet Ve'emunah*, *Hashkivenu* joins the vivid recollection of past redemption to a prayer for present protection and future peace. By calling God "guardian" and "protector" but also "redeemer," Israel recognizes new dimensions of the power that makes for freedom. This blessing is unique to the evening service. Perhaps responding to the cold, dark uncertainty of night, we invoke God's dwelling of peace. S.S.

KAVANAH. Enable us, God, to behold meaning in the chaos of life about us and purpose in the chaos of life within us. Deliver us from the sense of futility in our strivings toward the light and the truth. Give us strength to ride safely through the maelstrom of petty cares and anxieties. May we behold things in their proper proportions and see life in its wholeness and its holiness. M.M.K./M.S.

COMMENTARY. The traditional text of this prayer includes the phrase, *haser satan milfanenu ume-aharenu*. Some commentators interpret *satan* as "spiritual harmony," but the phrase is omitted here because of its literal reference to a prosecuting angel. The blessing at the end of *Hashkivenu* has been expanded to include our hope that divine protection will be extended to all peoples. D.A.T.

KAVANAH. As we enter the dark of evening, we face the unknown. Earlier, in *Asher Bidvaro* (the Creation section immediately following *Barehu*), we affirmed the power that transforms night into day and day into night. Now we call for protection from the shadows that lengthen around us—shadows of fear and guilt, the uncharted future, the ever pursuing past. We ask that the shadows of God's wings envelop us with love and mercy. The unknown night, like the unknown tomorrow, can only be met with faith in the power of infinite compassion to care for us. S.P.W.



Hashkivenu adonay eloheynu leshalom veba'amidenu malkenu
lehayim ufros aleynu sukkat shelomeha. Vetakenenu ve'etzah
tovah milefaneha vehoshi'enu lema'an shemeha. Vehagen
ba'adeynu vehaser me'aleynu oyev dever veherev vera'av
veyagon. Uvetzal kenafeha tastirenu ki el shomrenu umatzilenu
atah ki el melech hanun verahum atah. Ushmor tzeytenu uvo'enu
lehayim ulshalom me'atah ve'ad olam. Ufros aleynu sukkat
shelomeha. Baruch atah adonay shomer am yisra'el vehol yoshvey
tevel la'ad.

When fears multiply
And danger threatens;
When sickness comes,
When death confronts us—
It is God's blessing of shalom
That sustains us
And upholds us.

Lightening our burden,
Dispelling our worry,
Restoring our strength,
Renewing our hope—
Reviving us.

H.M.

ALL SOULS ARE IN GOD'S KEEPING

Blessed is THE ANCIENT ONE by day,
and blessed is THE LIVING ONE by night.
Blessed is THE GUARDIAN when we lie down,
and blessed is THE FOUNT OF LIFE when we arise.
For in your hands are placed the souls of all the living
and the dead,
in divine hands, the soul of every living thing,
the spirit of each being's flesh.
In your hands I entrust my spirit,
you who have redeemed me, FAITHFUL ONE,
the God of truth.
Our God on high,
make one your name,
sustain your realm continually,
and rule over us, forever and eternally.
Let our eyes behold, our hearts rejoice,
our spirits be uplifted by your redemptive power.
Let the promise told to Zion be made real:
"Your God is sovereign!
THE ETERNAL ONE has reigned,
THE ETERNAL ONE now reigns,
THE ETERNAL ONE shall reign
forever and eternally!"
For all of the created realm is yours,
throughout all worlds, across all time,
for we have no sovereign but you.
Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE,
you who reign in glory,
may you rule forever over us,
and over all that you have made.

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בְּלֵילָהּ: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בְּשַׁכְנָנוּ: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה
בְּקוֹמָנוּ: כִּי בִיָּדָה נִפְשוֹת הַחַיִּים וְהַמֵּתִים: אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ נִפְשׁ כָּל־חַי
וְרוּחַ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה: בִּיָּדָה אֶפְקִיד רוּחֵי פְּדִיתָהּ אוֹתִי יְהוָה
אֵל אֱמֶת: אֵלֵהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׂמַיִם יַחַד שְׂמָה וְקַיִם מְלַכּוֹתָהּ תְּמִיד וּמְלוֹךְ
עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

יִרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ וַיִּשְׂמַח לְבָנוּ וְתִגַּל נִפְשָׁנוּ בִּישׁוּעָתָהּ בְּאֵמֶת בְּאִמּוֹר
לְצִיּוֹן מְלֹךְ אֱלֹהֵיהָ: יְהוָה מְלֹךְ יְהוָה מְלֹךְ יְהוָה יְמֻלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
כִּי הַמְּלָכוֹת שֶׁלָּהּ הִיא וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכַבוֹד כִּי אֵין לָנוּ מְלֹךְ
אֶלָּא אַתָּה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַמְּלֹךְ בְּכַבוֹדוֹ תְּמִיד יְמֻלֶךְ עָלֵינוּ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד וְעַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו:

Life After Death

These things I know:

How the living go on living
and how the dead go on living with them
so that in a forest
even a dead tree casts a shadow
and the leaves fall one by one
and the branches break in the wind
and the bark peels off slowly
and the trunk cracks
and the rain seeps in through the cracks
and the trunk falls to the ground
and the moss covers it
and in the spring the rabbits find it
and build their nest inside the dead tree
so that nothing is wasted in nature
or in love.

Laura Gilpin

ḤATZI KADDISH / SHORT KADDISH

Reader: Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

Congregation: May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure.

Reader: May it be blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished, and revered; and may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher (*Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: by far*) than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in this world. And say: Amen.

I came into the world without being asked,
And when the time for dying comes
I shall not be consulted;

But between the boundaries of birth and death
Lies the dominion of Choice:

To be a doer or a dreamer,
To be a lifter or a leaner,

To speak out or remain silent,
To extend a hand in friendship
Or to look the other way;
To feel the sufferings of others
Or to be callous and insensitive.

These are the choices;
It is in the choosing
That my measure as a person
Is determined.

Gertrude Hildreth Housman

חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךְ
מְלַכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוּן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוּן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֻגְלָא וּבְזִמְן
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא:
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא
לְעֵלָא (לְעֵלָא) (Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא
וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא דְאִמְרֵן בְּעֻלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Reader: Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba
be'alma di vera hirutey veyamliḥ malḥutey
beḥayeyḥon uvvomeyḥon uvḥayey deḥol beyt yisra'el
ba'agala uvizman kariv ve'imru amen.

Congregation: Yehey shemey raba mevarah le'alam ulalmey almaya.

Reader: Yitbarah veyishtabaḥ veyitpa'ar veyitromam
veyitnasey veyit-hadar veyitaleh veyit-halal
shemey dekudsha beriḥ hu
le'ela (Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: le'ela) min kol birḥata
veshirata tushbeḥata veneḥemata da'amiran be'alma
ve'imru amen.

AMIDAH

The traditional Amidah follows here. An alternative Amidah begins on page 76. The Amidah is traditionally recited while standing, beginning with three short steps forward and bowing left and right, a reminder of our entry into the divine presence.

Open my lips, BELOVED ONE,
and let my mouth declare your praise.

1. AVOT VE'IMOT / ANCESTORS

Blessed are you, ANCIENT ONE, our God, God of our ancestors,
God of Abraham God of Sarah
God of Isaac God of Rebekah
God of Jacob God of Rachel
and God of Leah; ↩

DERASH. Acknowledging our ancestors reminds us that what we are is shaped by who they were. Just as an acorn is shaped by the oak that preceded it and yet gives birth to a tree uniquely its own, so we are shaped by our ancestors yet give rise to a Judaism all our own. R.M.S.

COMMENTARY. The *Amidah* or “standing prayer” is also called “*Hatefilah* / The Prayer,” because of its centrality in every one of the daily services. The *Amidah* in its weekday form is also known as the “*Shemoneh Esrey* / The Eighteen (benedictions).” This name dates from a very early period; nineteen blessings have been included for the last 2000 years. Most liturgy scholars agree that the weekday *Amidah* is structured as a prayer for the arrival of messianic times. The thirteen middle blessings of the weekday *Amidah* are petitions for success and wellbeing that reflect the concerns that occupy our daily circumstances. The *Amidah* always concludes with a prayer for completeness and peace, uniting workday concerns with messianic hope. D.A.T. / R.S.

אֲדוּנֵי...תְהִלָּתְךָ / Open...praise (Psalm 51:17).

עֲמִידָה

The traditional Amidah follows here. An alternative Amidah begins on page 76. The Amidah is traditionally recited while standing, beginning with three short steps forward and bowing left and right, a reminder of our entry into the divine presence.

אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:

אָבוֹת וְאִמּוֹת



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ

אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה

אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם

אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה

אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק

אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל

אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

וְאֱלֹהֵי לְאֵה: ←

Adonay sefatay tiftah ufi yagid tehilateha.

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu veylohey avoteynu ve'imoteynu

elohey avraham

elohey sarah

elohey yitzhak

elohey rivkah

elohey ya'akov

elohey rahel

veylohey le'ah ↪

COMMENTARY. Throughout the centuries the pursuit of meaningful communal prayer has led to variations in the *Amidah*. These variations reflect the attitudes and beliefs of different prayer communities. In the ongoing pursuit of meaningful prayer for a Reconstructionist prayer community, changes have been introduced into this *Amidah*, most notably in the first two *berahot*. The first *berahah* has been expanded to include the matriarchs along with the patriarchs as exemplars of God's presence in human lives. By concentrating on examples of healing forces and life-sustaining rains, the second *berahah* acknowledges God as the power that sustains life. The traditional emphasis on God's ability to resurrect the dead has been replaced here by a celebration of God as the power that sustains all life.

S.S.

great, heroic, awesome God, supreme divinity,
imparting deeds of kindness, begetter of all;
mindful of the loyalty of Israel's ancestors,
bringing, with love, redemption to their children's children
for the sake of the divine name.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(Remember us for life,
sovereign, who wishes us to live,
and write us in the Book of Life,
for your sake, ever-living God.)

Regal One, our help, salvation, and protector:
Blessed are you, KIND ONE,
the shield of Abraham and help of Sarah. ←↻

NOTE. The Amidah is made up of three sections. The first and last remain the same for all services, but the central portion differs, containing thirteen blessings on weekdays, and only one on Shabbat and Festivals. The central section on weekdays contains petitions or requests. These workday concerns are set aside on Shabbat and Festivals, when the focus shifts to the joy and holiness of the day. J.B.

COMMENTARY. This version of the first *berahah* in the Amidah includes the matriarchs as well as the patriarchs. The phrase “help of Sarah,” *ezrat Sarah*, comes from a Hebrew root (עזר) which can mean either “save” or “be strong.” This parallels the meaning of *magen* / shield. The biblical text says that Abraham experienced God as a shield and that Sarah experienced God as a helper. Their experience and the example of their lives can enrich our own. Just as Abraham and Sarah found the strength to face the unknown physical and spiritual dangers of their journey, so we seek to find the courage and inspiration to meet the challenges of our own time.

R.S.

הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים וְקוֹנֵה
הַפֶּל וְזוֹכֵר חֲסָדֵי אָבוֹת וְאֲמוֹת וּמִבִּיא גְּאֻלָּה לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן
שְׁמוּ בְּאַהֲבָה:

Ha'el hagadol hagibor vehanora el elyon gomel ḥasadim tovim
vekoney hakol vezoh̄er ḥasdey avot ve'imot umevi ge'ulah livney
veneyhem lema'an shemo be'ahavah.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(וְזָכְרָנוּ לְחַיִּים מְלֶךְ חַפֵּץ בְּחַיִּים וְכֹתֵבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים
חַיִּים:)

(Zoh̄renu leḥayim meleḥ ḥafetz baḥayim veḥotvenu besefer
haḥayim lema'aneḥa elohim ḥayim.)

מְלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשֵׁיעַ וּמִגֵּן: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם וְעֹזֵר
שָׂרָה: ←

Meleḥ ozer umoshi'a umagen. Baruh̄ atah adonay magen
avraham ve'ezrat sarah. ↪

KAVANAH. God is experienced as עוֹזֵר / helper, every time our thought of
God furnishes us an escape from the sense of frustration and supplies us
with a feeling of permanence in the midst of universal flux.

M.M.K./M.S.

COMMENTARY. A.J. Heschel has said, "The term, 'God of Abraham, Isaac
and Jacob' is semantically different from a term such as 'the God of truth,
goodness, and beauty.' Abraham, Isaac and Jacob do not signify ideas, prin-
ciples or abstract values. Nor do they stand for teachers or thinkers, and
the term is not to be understood like that of 'the God of Kant, Hegel, and
Schelling.' Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not principles to be compre-
hended but lives to be continued. The life of one who joins the covenant
of Abraham continues the life of Abraham. For the present is not apart
from the past. 'Abraham is still standing before God' (Genesis 18:22).
Abraham endures forever. We are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." In this same
spirit, we are also Sarah and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.

L.W.K.

2. GEVUROT / DIVINE POWER

You are forever powerful, ALMIGHTY ONE,
abundant in your saving acts.

In summer: You send down the dew.

In winter: You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall.

In loyalty you sustain the living, nurturing the life of every living thing, upholding those who fall, healing the sick, freeing the captive, and remaining faithful to all life held dormant in the earth. Who can compare to you, almighty God, who can resemble you, the source of life and death, who makes salvation grow?

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: Who can compare to you, source of all mercy, remembering all creatures mercifully, decreeing life!)

Faithful are you in giving life to every living thing. Blessed are you, THE FOUNT OF LIFE, who gives and renews life. ↵

During Minḥah, in the presence of a minyan, continue with the Kedushah on page 50. Otherwise, continue silently on page 52.

מוריד הטל/משיב הרוח. We acknowledge the presence of God in the natural rhythms of passing seasons. Our awareness of wind, rain, and dew as daily miracles also serves to remind us that the purity of these gifts, so vital for our survival, must be maintained by human watchfulness. In thanking God for air and water, we assert our commitment to preserving them as sources of life and protecting them from life-destroying pollution. The mention of rain or dew follows the two-season climate of *Eretz Yisra'el*; summer extends from the first day of Pesah until Shemeni Atzeret, and winter until the following Pesah.

A.G.

כל חי / every living thing, gives and renews life. The traditional siddur affirms מחיה המתים / revival of the dead. We substitute כל חי, demonstrating an understanding that all of life is rooted in the world's divine order and avoiding affirmation of life after death. We cannot know what happens to us after we die, but we can, by our thought and action, affirm the possibility of this-worldly salvation.

D.A.T.

גְבוּרוֹת

אַתָּה גְבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדוֹנֵי רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ:

In summer: מוֹרִיד הַטָּל:

In winter: מְשִׁיב הַרְיָח וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם:

Atah gibor le'olam adonay rav lehoshi'a.

In summer: Morid hatal.

In winter: Mashiv haru'ah umorid hagashem.

מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד מְחַיֶּה כָּל חַי בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים
וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים וּמְתִיר אֲסוּרִים וּמְקַיֵּם אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר: מִי כְמוֹךָ
בְּעַל גְבוּרוֹת וּמִי דְלוֹמָה לָךְ מְלֶכֶךְ מִמִּית וּמְחַיֶּה וּמְצַמִּיחַ יְשׁוּעָה:

Meḥalkel ḥayim beḥesed meḥayey kol ḥay beraḥamim rabim
someḥ noflim verofey ḥolim umatir asurim umkayem emunato
lisheney afar. Mi ḥamoḥa ba'al gevurot umi domeh laḥ meleḥ
memit umḥayeh umatzmi'ah yeshu'ah.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(מִי כְמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחָמִים זוֹכֵר יְצוּרֵי לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים:)

(Mi ḥamoḥa av haraḥamim zoher yetzurav leḥayim
beraḥamim.)

וּנְאֻמֵּן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת כָּל חַי: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְחַיֶּה כָּל חַי: —
Vene'eman atah lehaḥayot kol ḥay. Baruch atah adonay meḥayey
kol ḥay. →

During Minhah, in the presence of a minyan, continue with the Kedushah on page 51. Otherwise, continue silently on page 53.

3. KEDUSHAH / SANCTIFICATION

We sanctify your name throughout this world,
as it is sanctified in the heavens above,
as it is written by your prophet:

“And each celestial being calls to another, and declares:
Holy, holy, holy is THE RULER of the Multitudes of Heaven!
All the world is filled with divine glory!”

And they are answered with a blessing:
“Blessed is the glory of THE HOLY ONE,
wherever God may dwell!”

And as is written in your sacred words of psalm:
“May THE ETERNAL reign forever,
your God, O Zion, from one generation to the next.
Hallelulyah!”

From one generation to the next may we declare your greatness,
and for all eternities may we affirm your holiness,
and may your praise, our God, never be absent from our mouths,
now and forever.

For you are a great and holy God.

Blessed are you, THE AWESOME ONE, the holy God.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude: the holy sovereign.)

Continue silently with BINAH / INSIGHT on page 52.

וקרא...כבוד / And...glory (Isaiah: 6:3).

ברוך...ממקומו / Blessed...dwell (Ezekiel 3:12).

ימלך...הללויה / May...Halleluyah (Psalm 146:10).

קְדֻשָּׁה

* נִקְדֵּשׁ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּעוֹלָם כְּשֵׁם שְׁמַקְדִּישִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁמִּי מְרוֹם כְּכַתוּב
 עַל יַד נְבִיאֶיךָ: וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה וְאָמַר:
 קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:
 * לְעַמְתֶּם בְּרוּךְ יְאֻמְרוּ: בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה מִמְקוֹמוֹ:
 * וּבְדַבְרֵי קְדֻשָּׁה כְּתוּב לְאֹמַר:
 יִמְלֹךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר הַלְלוּיָהּ:
 לְדֹר וָדֹר נִגִּיד גְּדֻלָּתְךָ וְלִנְצַח נִצְחִים קְדֻשַׁתְךָ נִקְדִּישׁ וְשִׁבְחֶךָ
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּיֵנו לֹא יִמוּשׁ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד כִּי אֵל מְלֹךְ גָּדוֹל וְקְדוֹשׁ אַתָּה:
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֵל הַקְדוֹשׁ:

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude:

(בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַמְּלֹךְ הַקְדוֹשׁ)

Nekadesh et shimeha ba'olam keshem shemakdishim oto
 bishmey marom kakatuv al yad nevi'eha: vekara zeh el zeh
 ve'amar:

Kadosh kadosh kadosh adonay tzeva'ot melo hol ha'aretz
 kevodo. Le'umatam baruḥ yomeru:

Baruḥ kevod adonay mimekomo. Uvdivrey kodsheha katuv
 leymor: Yimloḥ adonay le'olam elohayih tziyon ledor vador
 halleluyah.

Ledor vador nagid godleha ulnetzah netzahim
 kedushateha nakdish veshivhaḥa eloheynu mipinu lo yamush
 le'olam va'ed ki el meleḥ gadol vekadosh atah.

Baruḥ atah adonay ha'el hakadosh.

(Baruḥ atah adonay hameleḥ hakadosh.)

Continue silently with בִּינָה on page 52

KAVANAH. You are eternal, the life of all that lives, the love in all that loves. You animate lifeless matter. You are the courage of those who conquer adversity. You are in the health of those who overcome sickness. You are the hope of those who now sleep in the dust. Yet you are more than all these, O master of life and death and salvation. You are holy and those who strive after holiness worship you.

M.M.K./M.S.

3. KEDUSHAT HASHEM / HALLOWING GOD'S NAME

Holy are you. Your name is holy. And all holy beings hail you each day. Blessed are you, THE AWESOME ONE, the holy God.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude: the holy sovereign.)

4. BINAH / INSIGHT

You graciously endow the human being
with the power to know;
you teach a person understanding.

At the conclusion of Shabbat or a festival say:

(You have given us knowledge of your Torah and taught us to do your will. HOLY ONE, our God, you have divided between the seventh day and the first six days of Creation. Our creator, our sovereign, grant that the coming days bring us peace. Free us from all wrongdoing, and purify us from all moral flaw that we may cling to you in awe.)

So may you provide us now
with knowledge, understanding, and intelligence.
Blessed are you, THE FOUNT OF WISDOM
who graciously bestows all knowledge. ↵

DERASH. We ask God to remove the impurities that have collected in our minds so that we might be truthful enough to serve God. What are these impurities, these false coverings? They are the myth of isolation, the denial of interrelatedness, the prideful pretense that we are alone and abandoned in the cosmos.

S.P.W.

DERASH. The creation of the world is not completed so long as we have not fulfilled our creative function in it.

M.M.K.

קִדְשַׁת הַשָּׁמַיִם



אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ וְקִדְוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהִלְלוּךָ סְלָה: בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ:

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude: הַמְלִיךָ הַקָּדוֹשׁ)

בִּינָה



אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דָּעַת וּמְלַמֵּד לְאָנוּשׁ בִּינָה:

At the conclusion of Shabbat or a festival say:

(אַתָּה חוֹנֵנֵתָנוּ לְמַדְעַת תּוֹרָתְךָ וְתַלְמִידֵינוּ לְעֲשׂוֹת חֻקֵי רְצוֹנְךָ וְתַבְדִּיל
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בֵּין קִדְשׁ לְחֹל בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת
יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה: אָכִינוּ מִלֶּכְנוּ הָחַל עָלֵינוּ הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתָנוּ
לְשִׁלּוֹם חֲשׂוּכִים מִכָּל-חַטָּא וּמִגְּנֻזִים מִכָּל-עֶזְרָת וּמִדְּבָקִים בִּירְאָתְךָ.)

חֲנֵנוּ מֵאַתָּה דְעָה בִּינָה וְהִשְׁכַּל: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה חוֹנֵן הַדָּעַת: ←

COMMENTARY. One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *kadosh*, a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and the majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

It is indeed a unique occasion at which the word *kadosh* is used for the first time: in the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time. "And God blessed the seventh day and made it *kadosh*." There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of *kedushah*, holiness.

A.J.H.

5. TESHUVAH / REPENTANCE

Return us, divine source, to your Torah,
bring us nearer, our sovereign, to your service.
And restore us, in complete return, into your presence.
Blessed are you, RECEPTIVE ONE,
who takes joy in our return.

6. SELIḤAH / FORGIVENESS

Forgive us, our Creator, for we have done wrong.
Deal mercifully with us, our protector, though we have rebelled.
For you are truly kind and merciful.
Blessed are you, ALL-MERCIFUL,
who graciously abounds in power to forgive.

7. GE'ULAH / REDEMPTION

Behold our need, and plead our cause,
and speedily redeem us, as your name demands,
for you are called a powerful redeemer.
Blessed are you, ALMIGHTY ONE,
redeemer of the people Israel. ↵

The truth is that our belief in God is not based upon God's self-revelation but on our discovery of God. According to the modern way of thinking and speaking, it is more correct to say that we discover God than to say that God reveals the divine self to us.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

תְּשׁוּבָה

הַשִּׁיבָנוּ מְקוֹרֵנוּ לְתוֹרָתְךָ; וְקִרְבָּנוּ עֲטֹרֹתֵנוּ לְעִבּוֹדְתְךָ. וְהַחְזִירֵנוּ
בְּתִשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ; בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַרוֹצֵה בְּתִשׁוּבָה;

סְלִיחָה

סְלַח־לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ; מַחֲל־לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ מִלְּפָנֶינוּ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ; כִּי מוֹחֵל
וְסוֹלֵחַ אַתָּה; בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה: חַנוּן הַמְּרַבֵּה לְסְלוּחַ;

גְּאֻלָּה

רֵאֵה בְּעֵינֵינוּ וְרִיבֵה רִיבָנוּ וּגְאֹלֵנוּ מִהֶרָה לְמַעַן שְׂמֵךְ: כִּי גּוֹאֵל חָזַק
אַתָּה; בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל: ←

NOTE. The fifth blessing of the weekday *Amidah* focuses on the call to *teshuvah* – return to the path of Torah and the divine presence. Like the High Holy Day liturgy, this blessing invokes the imagery of kingship. This imagery is male and hierarchical, which is problematical for many contemporary Jews. Even more difficult for some is the image of an external God pronouncing individual judgments. This contradicts our sense of the divinity within ourselves that we strive to keep in our awareness and to bring into harmony with our lives. These difficulties have led to emendation of the traditional wording. Our father has been replaced by *מקורנו* / divine source, and *מלכנו* / our king has been replaced by *עטרתנו* / our crown, here translated figuratively as “our sovereign.” Compare the alternative and interpretive versions of *Avinu Malkenu*, pages 82-85.

D.A.T./J.B.

8. REFU'AH / HEALING

Heal us, NURTURING ONE, so that we may be healed,
help us to restore ourselves to a state of health,
and bring upon us complete cure of all our ailments.

Optional prayer for one who is ill:

(May it be your will, COMPASSIONATE ONE, our God,
God of our ancestors,
that you quickly send forth thorough healing,
a healing of the body and a healing of the spirit,
to the one who ails,

for a female:

to _____ daughter of _____

for a male:

to _____ son of _____

among all others of the people Israel who are ailing.)

And remove from us all suffering and grief.

For you are a sovereign divine power
and a faithful and compassionate healer.

Blessed are you, RESTORER OF ALL LIFE,
who heals the sick among the people Israel.

9. BIRKAT HASHANIM / BLESSING FOR ABUNDANCE

Grant blessing over us, ABUNDANT ONE,
upon this year, and all its forms of produce;
let it be a year of good.

From December 4th till Pesah say:


And grant us dew and rain,
for blessing

on earth, and satisfy us with your goodness,
and give blessing to this year
as in the good years of the past.

Blessed are you, ALL BOUNTIFUL,
who gives blessing to the years. ←

From Pesah till December 4th say:

And give blessing

רְפוּאָה 

רְפָאֵנוּ יְהוָה וְנִרְפָּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ וְנִשְׁעָה וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל מַכּוֹתֵינוּ:

Optional prayer for one who is ill:

(יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וְאֵמוּנָתִי שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מִהֲרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף

לְחוּלָה _____ בַּת _____

לְחוּלָה _____ בֶּן _____

בְּתוֹךְ שָׂאָר חוּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:)

וְהִסֵּר מִמֶּנּוּ יְגוֹן וְאִנְחָה כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ רּוֹפֵא נֶאֱמָן וְרַחֲמָן אֲתָה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה רּוֹפֵא חוּלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

בְּרַכַּת הַשָּׁנִים 

בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת כָּל מִינֵי תְבוּאָתָה לְטוֹבָה

From December 4th till Pesah say:

וְתַז טַל וּמָטָר לְבִרְכָּה

From Pesah till December 4th say:

וְתַז בְּרַכָּה

עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה וְשִׁבְעֵנוּ מִטוֹבָךָ וּבְרַךְ שְׁנָתֵנוּ בְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְבָרַךְ הַשָּׁנִים: ←

COMMENTARY. As a God of lovingkindness, God not only teaches us how to conduct ourselves so as to elicit the best in each other, but also calls upon the transgressor to repent. When human beings repent, God forgives, and by forgiveness enables individuals to use their own powers as God would have them do. M.M.K./M.S.

NOTE. Our hope for rain in its season, which sustains crops throughout the year, is expressed in a subtle change of words. "Provide blessing" which is used most of the year, becomes "provide dew and rain for a blessing." Pesah marks the beginning of the spring grain planting season in Israel. The rabbis used the sun calendar date of December 4 for this prayer for rain to adjust to agricultural conditions in Babylonia. In following their lead, we recognize the need to adjust Jewish practice in response to local climatic, cultural, and political conditions. D.A.T.

10. KIBUTZ GALUYOT / INGATHERING OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Sound the great shofar for our freedom,
raise up the banner for the gathering-in of those in exile,
and gather us together from the earth's four corners.
Blessed are you, REDEEMING ONE,
who gathers Israel's dispossessed.

11. DIN / RESTORING JUSTICE

Restore our judges, as of old,
our counselors, as in the beginning,
and remove from us all suffering and grief.
Rule over us, OUR SOVEREIGN, you alone,
with love and with compassion.
Help us achieve justice through the rule of law.

Blessed are you, WISE ONE,
the sovereign who loves righteousness and justice.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude:

(Blessed are you, ENTHRONED IN MAJESTY,
the sovereign, the source of all just law.)

12. BIRKAT HAMINIM / OVERCOMING DIVISIONS

Let all who speak and act unjustly
find no hope for ill intentions.
Let all wickedness be lost.
Blessed are you, JUST ONE,
who subdues the evildoers. ↵

קבוץ גלויות 

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו ושא נס לקבץ גלויותינו וקבצנו יחד
מארבע כנפות הארץ: ברוך אתה יהוה מקבץ נדחי עמו ישראל:

דין 

השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה ויועצינו כבתחלה והסר ממנו יגון
ואנחה ומלוך עלינו אתה יהוה לבדך בחסד וברחמים וצדקנו
במשפט: ברוך אתה יהוה מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט:

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude:

(ברוך אתה יהוה המלך המשפט:)

ברכת המינים 

ולמלשינים אל תהי תקוה וכל הרשעה כרגע תאבד ברוך אתה
יהוה מכניע זדים: ←

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry

13. TZADIKIM /
COMPASSION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

For the righteous, and for the pious,
and for the elders of your people, the house of Israel,
and for the remnant of their scholars,
and for the righteous who have chosen to be Jews,
let your compassion be aroused, DEAR ONE, our God,
and give proper recompense to all
who truly have found shelter in your name,
and give us a portion in their midst,
that we may never be ashamed,
for in you we place our trust.
Blessed are you, THE SOURCE OF TRUST,
support and stronghold for the righteous.

14. BINYAN YERUSHALAYIM /
REBUILDING JERUSALEM

And to Jerusalem, your city,
may you turn with mercy,
and come home to dwell there,
as you have promised.
And rebuild the city, soon and in our days,
with everlasting peace.
Blessed are you, THE GOD OF ZION,
builder of Jerusalem.

15. YESHU'AH / SALVATION

May you speedily redeem your people Israel,
and raise their stronghold with your help,
for we await with hope throughout our days
the coming of your help.
Blessed are you, THE GOD OF ISRAEL,
who plants the stronghold of your help. ↩

צְדִיקִים

עַל הַצְּדִיקִים וְעַל הַחֲסִידִים וְעַל זְקֵנֵי עַמָּהּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל פְּלִיטַת
סוֹפְרֵיהֶם וְעַל גְּרֵי הַצָּדֵק וְעַלֵּינוּ יְהוָה נָא רַחֲמֵיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְתַן
שָׂכָר טוֹב לְכָל הַבוֹטְחִים בְּשִׁמְךָ בְּאַמֶּת וְשִׁים חֲלָקְנוּ עִמָּהֶם וְלַעֲוֹלָם
לֹא נִבּוֹשׁ כִּי כָּה בְּטָחָנוּ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מִשְׁעַן וּמִבְטָח לַצְּדִיקִים:

בְּנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָה בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב וְתִשְׁכּוֹן בְּתוֹכָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ וּבָנָה
אוֹתָהּ בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ בְּנֵי שְׁלוֹם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם:

יְשׁוּעָה

אֵת עַמָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִהֲרָה תִּגְאָל וְקִרְנֵנוּ תִּרְוִם בְּיִשׁוּעָתְךָ כִּי לְיִשׁוּעָתְךָ
קִוִּינוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מִצְמִיחַ קָרְן יְשׁוּעָה:

NOTE. The fourteenth blessing of the *Amidah* focuses on the rebuilding of Jerusalem. For centuries the rebuilding of Jerusalem has stood for an end to Jewish suffering and a return to Jewish sovereignty, as well as for the mythic end of days in which Jerusalem would become all that generations of longing Jews could imagine. For us, the rebuilding of Jerusalem signifies a world at peace and in which all human need is fulfilled. D.A.T.

DERASH. Prayer requires no consecrated edifice and no appointed hour. Indeed it needs no words or forms fixed and eternal. Prayer is a step on which we rise from the self we are to the self we wish to be. Prayer is not an escape from duty. It is no substitute for the deed. Prayer seeks the power to do wisely, to act generously, to live helpfully. Prayer takes us beyond the self. Joining our little self to the selfhood of humanity, it gives our wishes the freedom to grow large and broad and inclusive. Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask, but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

Morris Adler (Adapted)

16. KABBALAT TEFILAH / ACCEPTING PRAYER

Hear our voice, ATTENTIVE ONE, our God,
have mercy and compassion for us,
and accept our prayer
with kindness and with favor,
for you are the God who harkens
to the words of prayer and supplication.
Do not turn us from your presence empty-handed.
For you are one who listens
to the prayer of your people Israel
with compassion.

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who listens to the words
of prayer. ↵

At this point in the Amidah it is customary to add personal petitions for healing or safety, for successfully earning a living and for other hopes and needs.

שמע קולנו / Hear our voice. After all these specific requests and petitions why do we still ask God to hear our prayers? Don't we assume God has been listening to our voice all along? All prayer is about opening. The *Shema Kolenu* / Hear our voice indicates how wide and expansive we have become. No longer is content expressed. It is pure compassion—pure opening alone that we seek. Our innermost hopes have been expressed through the specific litany of needs—now our voice rises from the tender core of our beings. We are one with all Israel whose cries have been heard in love. We cannot return empty. The opening itself is the filling. S.P.W.

פסוק קבֵּלֶת תְּפִלָּה

שָׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְכַרְצוֹן
אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים אַתָּה; וּמִלְפָּנֶיךָ מִלְפָּנֵינוּ
רִיחַם אֵל תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלַּת עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה: ←

At this point in the Amidah it is customary to add personal petitions for healing or safety, for successfully earning a living and for other hopes and needs.

COMMENTARY. This may be the most poignant of all the benedictions of the Amidah. It occurs after we have prayed about so many important things: health, wisdom, community...Yet only here do we finally ask whether or not God hears our prayer. We ask, by way of stating, that God graciously listen to us. What is God that such hearing is possible? If we have moved beyond a simplistic notion of a giant-figure with omniscient ears, what do we have left that hears? Whatever it is, we affirm it! Somehow the injection of our impassioned words and thoughts into the vast process of existence does something. That something is not merely self-clarification and introspection. Something hears. The cosmos bends towards us and takes cognizance. The particulars are wrapped in mystery; the direction and the flow are known.

William Strongin

Do not think that the words of prayer
as you say them
go up to God.
It is not the words themselves that ascend;
it is rather the burning desire of your heart
that rises like smoke toward heaven.
If your prayer consists only of words and letters,
and does not contain your heart's desire—
how can it rise up to God?

Nahman of Bratzlav (Translated by Arthur Green and Barry Holtz)

17. AVODAH / WORSHIP

Take pleasure, GRACIOUS ONE, our God, in Israel your people; lovingly accept their fervent prayer. May Israel's worship always be acceptable to you.

On a Rosh Hodesh/New Moon or Festival, add:

(Our God, our ancients' God, may our prayer arise and come to you, and be beheld, and be acceptable. Let it be heard, acted upon, remembered—the memory of us and all our needs, the memory of our ancestors, the memory of messianic hopes, the memory of Jerusalem your holy city, and the memory of all your kin, the house of Israel, all surviving in your presence. Act for goodness and grace, for love and care, for life, well-being, and peace, on this day of

On Rosh Hodesh: the new moon.

On Pesah: the festival of matzot.

On Sukkot: the festival of sukkot. ←

KAVANAH. Prayer itself is the divinity.

Pinhas of Koretz

וזכרון ימות המשיח. We assert our faith in the coming of a messianic age, a time when justice will reign and all humanity will be united in recognition of the one God. Even in our people's darkest hour, this vision of the future strengthened us as we faced both life and death. However distanced we may be from the more naive aspects of belief in the person of the messiah, the vision of a transformed future remains our guide, just as we know that the vision will become reality only if our deeds reflect it. A.G.

עבודה

רצה יהוה אלהינו בעמך ישראל ולהב תפלתם באהבה תקבל
ברצון ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך:

On a Rosh Hodesh / New Moon or Festival, add:

(אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו יעלה ויבוא ויגיע ויראה וירצה
וישמע ויפקד ויזכר וזכרוננו ופקדוננו וזכרון אבותינו ואמותינו
וזכרון ימות המשׁיח וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשׁה וזכרון כל עמך
בית ישראל לפניך לפליטה ולטובה לחן ולחסד ולרחמים לחיים
ולשלום ביום

On Rosh Hodesh:

ראש החודש הזה

On Pesah

חג המצות הזה

← *On Sukkot:*

חג הסוכות הזה

ולהב תפלתם. The external mouthing of words alone cannot move us. It is the inward flame of devotion that brings our prayer close to God. Indeed, as the Hebrew phrasing vividly conveys, a passionate longing for godliness can exist among those unable to express that feeling in words. The phrase *lahav tefilatam*, “the flame of Israel’s prayer,” recalls that feeling of *hitlahavut*: the “in-burning” flame of passionate devotion. To attain *hitlahavut* in prayer is to soar with the rapturous ecstasy of divine communion, to access the infinite and be aflame with the nearness of God.

A.G. / M.P.

Remember us this day, ALL-KNOWING ONE, our God, for goodness. Favor us this day with blessing. Preserve us this day for life. With your redeeming, nurturing word, be kind and generous. Act tenderly on our behalf, and grant us victory over all our trials. Truly, our eyes are turned toward you, for you are a providing God, gracious and merciful are you.)

And may our eyes behold your homecoming, with merciful intent, to Zion. Blessed are you, THE FAITHFUL ONE, who brings your presence home to Zion.

18. HODA'AH / THANKS

We give thanks to you that you are THE ALL-MERCIFUL, our God, God of our ancestors, today and always. A firm, enduring source of life, a shield to us in time of trial, you are ever there, from age to age. We acknowledge you, declare your praise, and thank you for our lives entrusted to your hand, our souls placed in your care, for your miracles that greet us every day, and for your wonders and the good things that are with us every hour, morning, noon, and night. Good One, whose kindness never stops, Kind One, whose loving acts have never failed—always have we placed our hope in you. ←

KAVANAH. Gratitude is the overwhelming experience of the person of faith. Faith stimulates gratitude, and the practice of gratitude expands faith. We experience thankfulness when we know that our lives are safe within God's protection. We trust that the future is assured. We need not consume our days in fear and anxiety. We are released. We can marvel at the daily wonders.

S.P.W.

זָכַרְנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בּוֹ לְטוֹבָה: וּפְקַדְנוּ לְבָרָכָה וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו בּוֹ לְחַיִּים:
וּבְדַבַּר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים חוּס וְחַנּוּנוֹ וְרַחֲמֵינוּ וְרַחֲמֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו כִּי אֵלֶיךָ
עֵינֵינוּ כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה:

וְתַחֲזִינָה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׂוֹבֵךְ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַמַּחְזִיר
שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן:

ליל הודאה

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ שְׂאֵתָה הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד צוּר חַיֵּינוּ מִגֵּן יְשׁוּעָנוּ אַתָּה הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:
נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ וְעַל נְשׂוּמֵינוּ
הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ וְעַל נְסִיָּה שְׂבַכְל יוֹם עֲמָנוּ וְעַל נְפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ
שְׂבַכְל־עַת עָרַב וּבִקֵּר וְצַהֲרִים: הַטוֹב כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ וְהִמְרַחֵם
כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶיךָ מֵעוֹלָם קִוִּינוּ לָךְ: ←

KAVANAH. So long as the Jewish people is linked in communion with the eternal, it can look forward to an eternal life for itself. M.M.K. (Adapted)

DERASH. The insights of wonder must be constantly kept alive. Since there is a need for daily wonder, there is a need for daily worship. The sense of the "miracles which are daily with us," the sense of the "continual marvels," is the source of prayer. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or defeats of living....The profound and perpetual awareness of the wonder of being has become a part of the religious consciousness of the Jew. A.J.H.

(On *Ḥanukah* add: For the miracles, for the redemption, for heroic acts, for saving deeds, for consolations, all of which you have enacted for our ancestors at this time of year in days gone by—as in the days of Matthew, son of Yoḥanan, Hasmonean High Priest, and Matthew’s sons: a wicked Hellenistic government arose against your people Israel, forcing them to shun your Torah and to leave off from the laws your will ordained. And you, in your abundant mercy, stood up for Israel in their hour of distress. You pressed their claim, exacted justice for them. You delivered armed might to the weak, the many to the power of the few, the wicked to the power of the just, the vicious to the power of those occupied with your Torah. You made known your name that day, and made it holy in your world. And for your people Israel you enacted great deliverance, as in our own time. Afterward, your children came into your Temple’s inner room. They cleared your sanctuary, purified your holy place, kindled lights inside your holy courtyards, and established these eight days of *Ḥanukah*, for giving thanks and praise to your great name.) ↵

On Hanukah add:

עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַפְּרָקָן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַנְּחֻמוֹת
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה: בְּיָמֵי מַתְתָּיָהוּ
בֶן יוֹחָנָן כִּהְיוּ גְדוֹל חֲשׂוֹנָאֵי וּבְנֵי כֹשְׁעַמְדָּה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הִרְשָׁעָה
עַל עַמָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁכִּיחַם תּוֹרַתָּה וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנָךְ וְאַתָּה
בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם רַבַּת אֶת רִיבָם דָּגַתְתָּ אֶת
דִּינָם מִסָּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים וּרְשָׁעִים בְּיַד
צַדִּיקִים וְזוּדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרַתָּה: וְלֵךְ עֲשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גְּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ
בְּעוֹלָמְךָ וּלְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפְרָקָן כִּהְיוּ הַזֶּה:
וְאַחַר כֵּן בָּאוּ בְנֵיךָ לְדַבֵּיר בֵּיתָךְ וּפָנּוּ אֶת הַיְכָלְךָ וְטָהְרוּ אֶת מִקְדָּשְׁךָ
וְהִדְלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחֻצְרוֹת קִדְשֶׁךָ וְקִבְּעוּ שְׂמוֹנֶת יְמֵי חֲנֻכָּה אֵלּוּ
לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלְלֵךְ לְשִׁמְךָ הַגְּדוֹל: ←

(*On Purim, add:* For the miracles, and for deliverance,
and for the mighty deeds, and for the saving acts,
and for the consolations
you enacted for our ancestors
in ancient times, and in our own time.

In the days of Mordechai and Esther
in Shushan, the mighty capital [of Persia],
when the wicked Haman rose against them,
seeking to destroy, to kill, and to eradicate
all Jews, the young and old alike,
in a single day,
the thirteenth of the twelfth month,
that is, the month of Adar,
and take as plunder all they owned.

But you, in your abundant mercies,
thwarted his conspiracy, destroyed his plan.
And to the Jews came light and happiness,
and joy and glory.)

For all these things, let your name be blessed and raised in honor
always, sovereign of ours, forever.

(*Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:* And write down for a good
life all the people of your covenant.)

Let all of life acknowledge you! May all beings praise your name
in truth, O God, our rescue and our aid. Blessed are you, THE
GRACIOUS ONE, whose name is good, to whom all thanks are
due. ←

ליהודים...ויקר / to the Jews...glory (Esther 8:16).

On Purim add:

עַל הַנְּסִים וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַנְּחֻמּוֹת
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה:

בְּיָמֵי מְרֹדְכֵי וְאַסְתֵּר בְּשׁוֹשׁוֹן הַבִּירָה כְּשֶׁעָמַד עָלֶיהֶם הַמֶּזֶן הַרְשָׁעִי:
בְּקִשׁ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים מִנְּעֵר וְעַד זָקֵן בְּיוֹם
אֶחָד בְּשִׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר הוּא הָחֵדֵשׁ אֲדָר וְשָׁלָלָם לְבוֹז:
וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים הַפָּרַתְּ אֶת עֲצָתוֹ וְקִלְקַלְתָּ אֶת מַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ
לְיְהוּדִים הֵיטָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן וְיִקְרָ:

וְעַל כָּלֵם יִתְבַּרַךְ וְיִתְרוֹמַם שְׁמֶךָ מִלְכָּנוּ תְּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(וּכְתַב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל־בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ:)

וְכַל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֵלָה וַיְהִלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאַמֶּת הָאֵל יִשְׁעֵתָנוּ
וְעִזְרֵתָנוּ סֵלָה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וּלְךָ נִאֶה לְהוֹדוֹת: ←

KAVANAH. This prayer helps us to get in touch with our gratitude for the extraordinary yet often overlooked daily workings of the world, and through them to recognize the insignificance of our own roles, to feel humble. In becoming aware of our smallness, we become able to grasp our relatedness to the All. This in turn makes it possible to overcome the loneliness of claiming we have all the answers and the anxiety of always needing to be in control. At these moments the pain of our unfulfilled needs is swept away in the wondrous goodness we feel in the world about us. We give thanks. S.P.W.

19. BIRKAT HASHALOM / BLESSING FOR PEACE

Grant abundant peace eternally for Israel, your people. For you are the sovereign source of all peace. So, may it be a good thing in your eyes to bless your people Israel, and all who dwell on earth, in every time and hour, with your peace.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: In the book of life, blessing, peace, and proper sustenance, may we be remembered and inscribed, we and all your people, the house of Israel, for a good life and for peace.)

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, maker of peace.

The Amidah traditionally concludes with bowing and taking three steps back.

ואת כל יושבי תבל. According to the sages, every *Amidah* must conclude with a prayer for peace and an acknowledgment of God as the power that makes for peace. Inclusion of the words “and all who dwell on earth” proclaims that Israel desires the blessing of peace, not for itself alone, but for all humanity. S.S.

עושה השלום / Maker of peace. This ancient version of the prayer for peace in its most universal form was assigned in the traditional liturgy to the ten days of *teshuvah*. During the year the text read, “who blesses your people Israel with peace.” In our time, when life has been transformed by the constant threat of global destruction, the need of the hour calls for the more universal form of the prayer throughout the year. A.G.

KAVANAH. God is shalom. God’s name is shalom, everything is held together by shalom. Zohar

My God, you are *salam* peace.
Peace comes from you, goes back to you.
Let us live in peace and with peace.
You are great and generous.

Sidi Sheikh Muhammad Al Jemal

ברכת השלום

שְׁלוֹם רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ תְּשִׂים לְעוֹלָם: כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹן
לְכָל הַשְּׁלוֹם: וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֹךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי
תֵּבֵל בְּכֹל עֵת וּבְכֹל שָׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוּמֶךָ:

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם וּפְרִנְסָה טוֹבָה גְּזָר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנַחְנוּ
וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּלְשָׁלוֹם):

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה עוֹשֵׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם:

Shalom rav al yisra'el ameha tasim le'olam.
Ki atah hu meleḥ adon leḥol hashalom.
Vetov be'eyneḥa levareḥ et ameha yisra'el
ve'et kol yoshvey tevel
beḥol et uvḥol sha'ah bishlomeḥa.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

(Besefer ḥayim beraḥah veshalom ufarnasah tovah nizaḥer
venikatev lefaneḥa
anahnu veḥol ameha beyt yisra'el
leḥayim tovim ulshalom.)

Baruḥ atah adonay osey hashalom.

The Amidah traditionally concludes with bowing and taking three steps back.

Don't stop after beating the swords
into ploughshares, don't stop! Go on beating
and make musical instruments out of them.

Whoever wants to make war again
will have to turn them into ploughshares first.

Yehuda Amichai (Translated by Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt)

RIBONO SHEL OLAM / CONCLUDING MEDITATION

Sovereign of the universe,
fulfill my heart's petitions for the good.
Let me be worthy to perform your will with a whole heart.
Deliver me from the inclination to do evil,
and give me my portion in your Torah.
May I merit, with all Israel, your people,
that your Presence dwell upon us.
Make evident among us
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and strength,
the spirit of knowledge and the awe of THE CREATOR.
May divine love surround the one
who trusts in THE ETERNAL.

May my words of prayer, and my heart's meditation
be seen favorably, PRECIOUS ONE,
my rock, my champion.

May the one who creates harmony above
make peace for us and for all Israel,
and for all who dwell on earth.
And say: Amen.

During Minhah on fast days and during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, continue with Avinu Malkenu, page 82. Otherwise, continue on page 86.

DERASH. Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of each other, above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of others, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

Albert Einstein (Adapted)

רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם

רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם מִלֵּא מְשָׁלוֹת לְבִי לְטוֹבָה וְזַפְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ
בְּלִבְבִי שָׁלֵם: מִלְּטִנִּי מִיָּצָר הָרָע וְתוֹן חֲלָקִי בְּתוֹרָתְךָ: זַפְּיִנִי עִם כָּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ שְׁתַּשְׁרֵה שְׂכִינְתְּךָ עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹפֵעַ עָלֵינוּ רוּחַ חַכְמָה
וּבִינָה רוּחַ עֲצָה וּגְבוּרָה רוּחַ דָּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה:
וְהַבּוֹטָח בִּיהוָה חֶסֶד יְסוּבְכֶנּוּ.

יְהִיו לְרְצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לְבִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרֵי וְגוֹאֲלֵי:
עוֹשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל
כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵיבֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:

During Minhah on fast days and during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, continue with Avinu Malkenu, page 83. Otherwise, continue on page 87.

רְכוּנְךָ / *shehinateha* / your Presence. This term is one of the most frequent ways of speaking of God in rabbinic and mystical tradition. The term derives from Exodus 25:8: “And I shall dwell in their midst” (*veshahanti betoḥam*). God’s Presence coming to dwell in the Tabernacle was believed to be the normal outcome of the priestly sacrificial labors. When Israel’s Second Temple was destroyed, the belief arose that God continues to dwell among Israelites during study and prayer. “If two sit and there are words of Torah between them, the Sheḥinah dwells with them (*Pirkey Avot* 3:3).
J.R.

יְהִיו...וְגוֹאֲלֵי / May...champion (Psalm 19:15).

ALTERNATIVE AMIDAH

All Generations of Israel United / We remember all of our ancestors, even those we never knew. In our mind's eye, we see them streaming to *shul*, the pious ones, the skeptics, the cynics, all of them. We feel their blood coursing through our veins. We feel our kinship through history. Images of our childhoods, of parents, perhaps grandparents—these mingle in our minds with our imagined ancestors across the generations, all joining us in prayer. God of history, may these links never die, may our descendants picture us in their hearts as we picture our own ancestors, and so may we become beloved ancestors some day, joined together, spanning the centuries in our worship of you. Blessed are You, who bind together the generations, giving life to our ancestors and to us.

Divine Power / Just as a baby takes the strength of her parents for granted, so God, do we take your strength for granted. For how is it that we, barbaric and vicious species that we are, endure our own natures? Surely it is because our nature includes You and Your nature. It is You, God, who give us the strength to fight for justice, the passion to dream and hope to endure our own darker side. Though we fall back, one step, two and more into darkness, Yours is the strength that pushes us forward, that suffers our heartbreak, that once more, ever more, unnoticed and unseen, picks us up from the dust, and gently urges us on. Blessed are You, who are always there, even when we don't know it.

Hallowing God's Name / Though our daily routines all but blind us to the splendor of Your Universe, we are not blind. Even a moment's reflection fills us with awe — stars, planets, galaxies, rainfall, snow, sunshine and clouds — the whole earth is filled with your Glory. The laws of nature do not ↵

subside. We continue from one moment to the next, we grow and develop in body and spirit. And You, God, silently in the background, at once imperceptible and awesome. Blessed are You, eternally weaving the infinite tapestry of Your universe.

Insight / You bless us with the power to know. May we cherish this unique gift, and never trivialize it. May it be a source of wisdom and compassion leading us to sanctify our lives and Your creation. May we never profane the gift of knowledge by using it for purposes unworthy of You. Blessed are You, source of knowledge.

Repentance / The miracle of repentance can turn around our lives and the lives of those we love. Help us to shed the false values, the self-delusion and self-indulgence of a society polluted by trivialities and distractions, vanity and hollowness, and to return to the things that really count—the smile of a loved one, a pat on the back, pitching in to help someone in need, building a community, being a *mensch*. Blessed are You, who desire our return.

Forgiveness / Through Your power of forgiveness, we are given new life. Through the power of forgiveness we can give new lives to those we love. Help us to let go of accumulated hurts, indignities and wounds, and to find the strength to forgive those who have hurt us, for only then will their power to warp our spirit be shattered. May we have the courage to admit that we too are offenders and seek forgiveness from those we have hurt. May the awesome power of forgiveness rain down gently like sweet showers for our thirsty souls, replenishing us, fortifying us and inspiring us. Blessed are You, the power of forgiveness. ↵

Redemption / May we find the faith and dedication to say no to the pessimists and cynics who tell us that our dreams are only dreams. Source of hope, inspiration to generations, inspire us now in this generation to strive for a more just world, a true kingdom of God. Blessed are You, who dream our dreams with us.

Healing / In a world of beauty and wonder that is so often shattered by pain and hurt, tragedy and disease, help us to heal ourselves in body and spirit. May those whose pain, hurt and anguish cannot be prayed away still find relief in prayer. Grace us with the fortitude and staying power to be Your prayer, to be Your healing presence to the wounded among us. May we never lose sight of Your healing presence within and around us. Blessed are You, who give us healing power.

Blessing for Abundance / God, we who are smothered in comfort and abundance pray for the wisdom to use our abundance well, to freely and unstintingly give it to those who are in need. May we have the humility to realize that abundance is ultimately from You. Help us remember that if we were born in different circumstances, our skills would not prevent our starvation, disease, misery and squalor. Remind us that there are others, as much God's children as ourselves, who live in that misery every day. May we be blessed with the ability to share our abundance generously. Blessed are You, who challenge us with abundance.

Ingathering of Jewish People / May we never take for granted the land of Israel, our people's homeland. May we who have lived our lives during the relatively short existence of the State of Israel remember that most of our history has been a history of homelessness and vulnerability. May we dedicate ourselves to strengthening Israel with those values ↵

of justice and righteousness that she will need to do more than merely to survive. May Israel flourish and renew herself and in renewing herself, renew us as well. May we cherish Israel in our hearts and souls. Blessed are You, who give the Jewish people a home.

Restoring Justice / May we return to those values that are most enduring, to feeding the hungry, to clothing the naked, to sheltering the homeless. May we always stand by the vulnerable and marginal and insist that there is no justice worthy of the name if that justice does not provide for their basic needs and uphold their human dignity. We were slaves in the land of Egypt, strangers in a strange land. We are commanded to love not only our neighbors but also the strangers among us. Let us aid those who seek freedom and a better life. Blessed are You, who challenge us to live justly.

Overcoming Divisions / Grace us with respect for those who differ with our views. Grant our people the humility to understand that no denomination or path is the one true path. Grant us the wisdom to understand and embrace the need for many different paths among us, to rejoice in the variety of Judaisms and look first at what unites us. May we deal with our differences with respect, never impugning the integrity of those who differ from us. Blessed are You, who sustain and nurture so many different paths to You.

Compassion for the Righteous / May wisdom accompany righteousness, so that we may understand that the rewards of righteousness are more than what meets the eye. May we learn to accept that the rewards we seek are not always those that are given. But that the smiles, laughter and love that the righteous inspire are more precious than fine gold. May we understand that the struggles of the righteous may not end ↵

oppression, but that every soul saved from despair through righteous action is not merely a drop in the bucket, but rather, an infinitely precious divine gift. Grant us the wisdom to understand the true rewards of righteousness and to celebrate them in joy, even through tears of sadness. Blessed are You, who inspire us to revere the righteous.

Rebuilding Jerusalem / May we live to see the day when Jerusalem is truly a city of peace. May it come to symbolize all that is right and good and just about religion, rather than serve as battleground among competing religions. May the divine presence dwell in the city that we love. May we understand that Jerusalem will be finally rebuilt when all peoples and religions accept that their conceptions of God are imperfect. Blessed are You, God beyond our mere conceptions of God, who build Jerusalem.

Salvation / May the Jewish people never forget that though we are strong in Israel and comfortable in North America, many Jews throughout the world, and in Israel and North America as well, are neither strong nor comfortable. May history never record that we, in our comfort, forgot our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, in Ethiopia and Eastern Europe, in the development towns and ghettos of Israel, and in the “old Jewish neighborhoods” that time has passed by in America and other developed countries. They depend on us. Blessed are You, who give the means to save our brothers and sisters, if only we find the will.

Worship / May we learn that true worship is about thanks, not things, about awakenings to the world, not acquiring it. May we understand worship to be as much about the nature and health of our own souls as it is about You and Your nature. May we never confuse theology with worship, and may we remember the words of Mordecai Kaplan, “that as ↩

far as Jewish religion, with its teachings and rituals, is concerned, it matters very little how we conceive God, as long as we so believe in God that it makes a tremendous difference in our lives.” May we come to understand that it is the act of worship that is the answer to our prayers. Blessed are You, who created us with the astounding ability to pray.

Thanks / Grant us the grace to give thanks from deep within, the grace to live our lives as a thanksgiving offering, to see with thankful eyes, to hear with thankful ears, to speak thankful speech, to eat thankfully. Let us learn to laugh our thanks, cry out thanks, sing our thanks and in our last moments to die our thanks. Let us somehow learn that we did not have to be, that our existence is both an awesome, beautiful, fragile and utterly contingent gift, and a profound and fearful test as well. May we embrace both the gift and the test. Blessed are You, source of each life, who receive our thanks every hour, morning, noon and night.

Peace / Grant us peace, the wildpeace of Yehuda Amichai: “A peace without the big noise of beating swords into plowshares, without words, without the heavy rubberstamp; I want it gentle over us, like lazy white foam...I want it to come like wildflowers, suddenly, because the field needs it: wildpeace.” Also grant us the understanding that we must wage peace with all the fierceness that others wage war. Grant us the courage to wage a fierce, unrelenting peace that opposes all violence and hatred. Give us the courage to declare such violence and hatred a *hilul Hashem*, a profanation of Your name. Blessed are You, who wage peace and wait with broken heart for us to join You.

AVINU MALKENU / OUR CREATOR, OUR SOVEREIGN

Avinu Malkenu is traditionally recited during Minḥah between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and on fast days. On fast days, substitute "bless" for "renew" and "remember" for "inscribe."

Our creator, our sovereign, we have done wrong in your presence.

Our creator, our sovereign, we have no one to rule over us but you.

Our creator, our sovereign, help us for the honor of your name.

Our creator, our sovereign, renew for us a good year.

Our creator, our sovereign, nullify the plans of any who may seek to do us harm.

Our creator, our sovereign, grant forgiveness and atonement for all of our transgressions.

Our creator, our sovereign, help us to return wholeheartedly into your presence.

Our creator, our sovereign, send thorough healing to all those who ail.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us for good fortune in the Book of Life.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Redemption and Salvation.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Sustenance and Livelihood.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Merit.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Forgiveness and Atonement.

Our creator, our sovereign, let grow for us the tree of imminent redemption. ↵

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ

Avinu Malkenu is traditionally recited during Minhah between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and on fast days. On fast days, substitute "בָּרַךְ" for "חַדַּשׁ" and "זָכְרָנוּ" for "בְּרַבְנוּ."

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ אֵין לָנוּ מְלֶךְ אֱלֹא אַתָּה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ עָשָׂה עֲמָנוּ לְמַעַן שְׂמֵךְ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חַדַּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִפָּר עֲצַת אוֹיְבֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ סָלַח וּמָחַל לְכָל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִחְזִירָנוּ בְּתַשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְחוֹלִים:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר גְּאֻלָּה וַיְשׁוּעָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר פְּרִנְסָה וְכִלְכָּלָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר זְכוּת:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר סְלִיחָה וּמְחִילָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִצְמַח לָנוּ יְשׁוּעָה בְּקָרוֹב: —

NOTE. Other versions of *Avinu Malkenu* can be constructed to reflect different theological outlooks and ethical concerns. This can be done by selecting one word from each group to form the introductory phrase.

I	Imeynu	אִמֵּנוּ	Our mother
	Eloheynu	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	Our God
	Mekorenu	מְקוֹרֵנוּ	Our source
	Avinu	אָבִינוּ	Our creator (literally, father)
	Shehinatenu	שְׁכִינָתֵנוּ	Our presence
II	Malkatenu	מַלְכָּתֵנוּ	Our queen
	Shebashamayim	שְׁבַשְׁמַיִם	In heaven
	Atartenu	עֲטֻרָתֵנוּ	Our crown
	Shehinatenu	שְׁכִינָתֵנוּ	Our presence
	Malkenu	מַלְכֵנוּ	Our sovereign

Our creator, our sovereign, remember us, though we are made of dust.

Our creator, our sovereign, be merciful to us and to all our offspring.

Our creator, our sovereign, act in memory of all those who have been killed while honoring your name.

Our creator, our sovereign, act in honor of your great and mighty, awe-inspiring name, which has been called out over us for our protection.

Our creator, our sovereign, be gracious with us and respond to us, for we have no deeds to justify us; deal with us in righteousness and love, and save us now.

COMMENTARY. Perhaps more than any other prayer, *Avinu Malkenu* invokes the image of a long-bearded king sitting in judgment upon his throne. How many are the ways that this image can trouble us! Some Jews are struggling to recover from the harsh judgments of parents or peers, or from harsh self-judgments. Some are struggling to escape the transcendent imagery of God and replace it with the divine within. Some have trouble with the maleness of the image.

Despite these very real difficulties, there is a powerful core of truth in the *Avinu Malkenu* that transcends the trouble many of us have with its imagery: we must grapple with standards of justice that are external to us. Social responsibility is not merely a matter of personal conscience. Chanting the *Avinu Malkenu* reminds us of standards by which we ought to judge ourselves.

Furthermore, it reminds us of forces infinitely greater than ourselves upon which our very lives depend. While our lives depend upon our inner resources, we cannot exist without the aid of natural and social forces. Knowing who we are means accepting the limits of our power and knowledge and the inevitability of our dependency.

D.A.T.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ זְכוֹר כִּי עָפָר אֲנַחְנוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲמוּל עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־עוֹלָלֵינוּ וְטִפְלֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן הַרוּגִים עַל־שֵׁם קִדְשֶׁךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׂמֵחַ הַגְּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא שְׂנֵקְרָא עָלֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חַנּוּן וְעֲנָנוּ כִּי אֵין לָנוּ מַעֲשִׂים עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה
 וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ:

Avinu malkenu honenu va'anenu ki eyn banu ma'asim, aseh
 imanu tzedakah va'hesed vehoshi'enu.

In *Avinu Malkenu* we seek the strength to do justice, the inner harmony needed to find forgiveness, and the acceptance of the small place we have amidst the tumult of the world. It is in that context that we express the hopes embodied in this prayer. Whether or not the worshipper chooses to change the words of *Avinu Malkenu*, the fervently expressed pleas it contains transcend the constraints of time and place.

D.A.T.

KADDISH TITKABAL / KADDISH FOR THE COMPLETION OF PRAYER

Reader: Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

Congregation: May God's great name be blessed forever and as long as worlds endure.

Reader: May it be blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished, and revered; and may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher (*Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: by far*) than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in this world. And say: Amen.

And may the prayer and supplication of the whole house of Israel be acceptable to their creator in the heavens. And say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace, and life for us, and for all Israel. And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above make peace for us and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth. And say: Amen.

NOTE. Kaddish Titkabal concludes the section of the service containing an *Amidah*/silent prayer. It therefore contains a request for the acceptance of prayer, which is omitted in the Mourners' Kaddish that follows *Aleynu*.

D.A.T.

קִדִּישׁ תִּתְקַבֵּל

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךָ
מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיָוִמִיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְנָא
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעֵלְמֵי עֵלְמֵיָא:
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא
לְעֵלְא (לְעֵלְא: *Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:*) מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא
וְשִׁירְתָּא תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחְמַתָּא דְאִמְרִין בְּעֵלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

תִּתְקַבֵּל צְלוֹתָהּ וּבְעוּתָהּ דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל קֳדָם אָבוּהוֹן דִּי
בְּשַׁמַּיָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָא וְחַיִּים עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל
כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Yehey shemey raba mevarah le'alam ulalmey almaya.

Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu ve'al kol
yisra'el ve'al kol yoshvey tevel ve'imru amen.

KAVANAH. Adding the rabbinic phrase “*ve'al kol yoshvey tevel*” (and for all who dwell on earth) logically completes the concentric circles of our aspirations—our care starts with our *minyan*, extends to the entire Jewish people and radiates outward from thee to all who share our planet.

D.A.T.

From the second day of Pesah until Shavuot the counting of the Omer, pages 122-127, is inserted here. In public worship on Saturday evening Havdalah, pages 128-133, is recited here.

ALEYNU

We rise for Aleynu. It is customary to bow at "bend the knee." For an alternative version see pages 94-95. Choose one of the following:

It is up to us to offer praises to the Source of all,
to declare the greatness of the author of Creation,
who gave to us teachings of truth
and planted eternal life within us.



It is up to us to offer praises to the Source of all,
to declare the greatness of the author of Creation,
who created heaven's heights and spread out its expanse,
who laid the earth's foundation and brought forth its offspring,
giving life to all its peoples,
the breath of life to all who walk about.

COMMENTARY. This siddur offers several versions of the *Aleynu*. The first, which appeared in the 1945 Reconstructionist siddur, emphasizes that the gift of God's Torah or teaching demands our committed response. The second version, based on Isaiah 42:5 and fit into the *Aleynu* by Rabbi Max D. Kline, emphasizes that our obligation to God flows from our role as part of Creation. The traditional *Aleynu* that appears below the line has troubled Reconstructionist Jews because it implies the inferiority of other faiths and peoples.

D.A.T.

COMMENTARY. The theme of *Aleynu* is the anticipation of God's universal rulership. Originally, this glorious hymn introduced the "Rulership" section of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Because of its lofty language and message, *Aleynu* was soon added to every worship service. The Reconstructionist version of *Aleynu* shifts the focus from a concern with the specialness of the Jewish people to an emphasis on the unique Torah perspective that enables Israel to help spread God's presence through the universe. This shift eliminates an opportunity for Jewish triumphalism, in favor of stressing the importance of Torah in Jewish living.

From the second day of Pesah until Shavuot the counting of the Omer, pages 122-127, is inserted here. In public worship on Saturday evening Havdalah, pages 128-133, is recited here.

עֲלֵינוּ

We rise for Aleynu. It is customary to bow at korim. Choose one of the following:

Aleynu leshabe'ah la'adon hakol
latet gedulah leyotzer bereyshit
shenatan lanu torat emet
vehayey olam nata betohenu.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל
לְתֵת גְּדוּלָה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית
שְׁנָתוֹ לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נִטַּע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ: ←

Continue on page 91.



Aleynu leshabe'ah la'adon hakol
latet gedulah leyotzer bereyshit.
bore hashamayim venoteyhem
roka ha'aretz vetze'etza'eha
noten neshamah la'am aleha
veru'ah laholehim ba.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל
לְתֵת גְּדוּלָה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית
בוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטֵייהֶם
רִקַּע הָאָרֶץ וְצִאצְאֵיהֶּ
נָתַן נְשָׁמָה לְעַם עֲלֵיהֶ
וְרוּחַ לְהִלְכֵימ בָּהֶם: ←

Continue on page 91.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל לְתֵת גְּדוּלָה
לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית שְׁלֵא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי
הָאֲרָצוֹת וְלֵא שְׁמָנוּ כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה
שְׁלֵא שָׁם חִלְקָנוּ כְּהֵם וְגוֹרְלָנוּ כְּכָל
הַמוֹנִים:

It is up to us to offer praises to the Source of all, to declare the greatness of the author of Creation, who has made us different from the other nations of the earth, and situated us in quite a different spot, and made our daily lot another kind from theirs, and given us a destiny uncommon in his world.

And so, we bend the knee and bow,
acknowledging the sovereign who rules
above all those who rule, the blessed Holy One,
who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth,
whose realm embraces heaven's heights,
whose mighty presence stalks celestial ramparts.
This is our God; there is none else besides,
as it is written in the Torah:
"You shall know this day, and bring it home
inside your heart, that THE SUPREME ONE is God
in the heavens above and on the earth below.
There is no other God." ←

DERASH. Every person and people that feel they have something to live for, and that are bent on living that life in righteousness, are true witnesses of God. M.M.K.

KAVANAH. As the hand held before the eye hides the tallest mountain, so this small earthly life hides from our gaze the vast radiance and secrets of which the world is full, and if we can take life from before our eyes, as one takes away one's hand, we will see the great radiance within the world. M.B. (Adapted)

וידעת...עוד / You...other God (Deuteronomy 4:39).

Holy is your name, holy is your work, holy are the days that return to you. Holy are the years that you uncover. Holy are the hands that are raised to you, and the weeping that is wept to you. Holy is the fire between your will and ours, in which we are refined. Holy is that which is unredeemed, covered with your patience. Holy are the souls lost in your unnamings. Holy, and shining with a great light, is every living thing, established in this world and covered with time, until your name is praised forever.

Leonard Cohen

וְאַנְחֵנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים לְפָנַי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים
הַקְּרוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא:

שְׂהוּא נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם וַיּוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ וּמוֹשֵׁב יִקְרוּ בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וּשְׂכִינַת
עֵזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים: הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵין עוֹד: אָמֵת מְלַפְּנוּ אָפֶס זּוֹלַתוֹ
כְּפָתוּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ: וַיִּדְעַת הַיּוֹם וְהִשְׁבַּת אֶל לְבַבָּהּ כִּי יְהוּה הוּא
הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד: ←

Va'anahnu korim umishta'avim umodim
lifney meleḥ malhey hamelaḥim hakadosh baruḥ hu.
Shehu noteh shamayim veyosed aretz umoshav yekaro
bashamayim mima'al
ush-ḥinat uzo begovhey meromim.
Hu eloheynu eyn od.
Emet malkenu efes zulato kakatuv betorato.
Veyadata hayom vahashevota el levaveḥa
ki adonay hu ha'elohim bashamayim mima'al ve'al ha'aretz
mitaḥat eyn od.

A Rabbi's Proverb

If you always assume
the one sitting next to you
is the Messiah
waiting for some simple human kindness-

You will soon come to weigh your words
and watch your hands.

And if the Messiah chooses
not to be revealed
in your time-

It will not matter.

Danny Siegel (Adapted from a Yiddish proverb)

And so, we put our hope in you,
THE EMINENCE, our God,
that soon we may behold
the full splendor of your might,
and see idolatry vanish from the earth,
and all material gods be swept away,
and the power of your rule repair the world,
and all creatures of flesh call on your name,
and all the wicked of the earth turn back to you.
Let all who dwell upon the globe perceive and know
that to you each knee must bend, each tongue swear oath,
and let them give the glory of your name its precious due.
Let all of them take upon themselves your rule.
Reign over them, soon and for always.
For this is all your realm, throughout all worlds, across all
time—
as it is written in your Torah:
“THE ETERNAL ONE will reign now and forever.”
And it is written:
“THE EVERLASTING ONE will reign
as sovereign over all the earth.
On that day shall THE MANY-NAMED be one,
God’s name be one!”

KAVANAH. A world of God callers is a world of truth and peace, a world where lust for power, greed, and envy—the idols of pride—is uprooted from the individual and group psyche. S.P.W.

עַל פֶּן נִקְוָה לָּהּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְרֹאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֶרֶת צִדָּקָה לְהַעֲבִיר
גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהַאֲלִילִים כָּרוֹת יַפְרֹתוּן לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת
שִׁדְיִ: וְכָל בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשֵׁמָהּ: לְהַפְנוֹת אֵלֶיהָ כָּל רִשְׁעֵי אָרֶץ:
יִכְרְוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תִבֵּל כִּי לָּהּ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרָךְ תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל־לִשׁוֹן:
לְפָנֶיהָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמָּה יִקָּר יִתְּנוּ וַיִּקְבְּלוּ
כָּל־אֶת עַל מַלְכוּתָהּ וְתִמְלָךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: כִּי
הַמַּלְכוּת שֶׁלָּהּ הִיא וְלְעוֹלָמִי עַד תִּמְלָךְ בְּכָבוֹד כְּפִתּוּב בְּתוֹרָתָהּ:
יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: וְנֹאמַר: וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְהוָה אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

Kakatuv betorateḥa: Adonay yimloḥ le'olam va'ed.
Vene'emar: Vehayah adonay lemeleḥ al kol ha'arets.
Bayom hahu yihyeh adonay eḥad ushmo eḥad.

DERASH. When senseless hatred reigns on earth and people hide their faces from one another, then heaven is forced to hide its face. But when love comes to rule the earth and people reveal their faces to one another, then the splendor of God will be revealed. M.B. (Adapted)

DERASH. It is not the seeking after God that divides but the claim to have found God and to have discovered the only proper way of obeying God and communing with God. M.M.K./M.S.

יְהוָה...וְעַד / THE ETERNAL ONE...forever (Exodus 15:18).

וְהָיָה...אֶחָד / THE EVERLASTING ONE...one (Zechariah 14:9).

ALEYNU / ALTERNATIVE VERSIONS

It is up to us
to hallow Creation,
to respond to Life
with the fullness of our lives.

It is up to us
to meet the World,
to embrace the Whole
even as we wrestle
with its parts.

It is up to us
to repair the World
and to bind our lives to the Truth.

Therefore we bend the knee
and shake off the stiffness that keeps us
from the subtle
graces of Life
and the supple
gestures of Love.

With reverence
and thanksgiving
we accept our destiny
and set for ourselves
the task of redemption.

Rami M. Shapiro

And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Judy Chicago

PRELUDES TO KADDISH

Choose from among the following:

Dirge Without Music

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.

So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains, but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter,
the love,
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and
curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not
approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in
the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

We can often see more through a tear than through a telescope.

Author Unknown

לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	<i>Each Of Us Has a Name</i>
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּן לֹו אֱלֹהִים	given by God
וְנִתְּנוּ לֹו אָבוֹ וְאִמּוֹ	and given by our parents
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו קוֹמָתוֹ וְאַפָּן חִיּוּכּוֹ	given by our stature and our smile
וְנִתְּן לֹו הָאָרִיג	and given by what we wear
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו הַהָרִים	given by the mountains
וְנִתְּנוּ לֹו כְּתָלָיו	and given by our walls
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו הַמְּזֹלוֹת	given by the stars
וְנִתְּנוּ לֹו שְׁכֵנָיו	and given by our neighbors
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו חַטָּאיו	given by our sins
וְנִתְּנָה לֹו כְּמִיָּהְתּוֹ	and given by our longing
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו שׁוֹנְאָיו	given by our enemies
וְנִתְּנָה לֹו אֶהְבָּתוֹ	and given by our love
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו חֲגִיו	given by our celebrations
וְנִתְּנָה לֹו מְלָאכְתּוֹ	and given by our work
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּנוּ לֹו תְּקוּפּוֹת הַשָּׁנָה	given by the seasons
וְנִתְּן לֹו עִוְרוֹנוֹ	and given by our blindness
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם	Each of us has a name
שְׁנַתָּן לֹו הַיָּם	given by the sea
וְנִתְּן לֹו	and given by
מוֹתוֹ:	our death.

Zelda (translated by Marcia Falk)

Birth is a Beginning

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey:
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age;
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
 And then perhaps to wisdom;
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness—
 And, often back again;
From health to sickness
 And back, we pray, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding—
 From fear to faith;

From defeat to defeat to defeat—
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage,

 A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
But life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage—
 To life everlasting.

Alvin I. Fine

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow
underground.

You cannot always tell by looking what is happening.
More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.
Live a life you can endure; make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,
for every gardener knows that after the digging, after the
planting,
after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

Marge Piercy

Love is not changed by Death,
And nothing is lost and all in the end is harvest.

Edith Sitwell

In Praise Of The Living

Yitgadal ve'yitkadash shemey raba

This profound praise of the living
Praise for the generous gift of life.

Praise for the presence of loved ones,
the bonds of friendship, the link of memory.

Praise for the toil and searching,
the dedication and visions, the ennobling aspirations.

Praise for the precious moorings of faith,
for courageous souls, for prophets, psalmists, and sages.

Praise for those who walked before us,
the sufferers in the valley of shadows,
the steadfast in the furnace of hate.

Praise for the God of our fathers,
the Source of all growth and goodness,
the Promise of which we build tomorrow.

Yitgadal ve'yitkadash shemey raba

This, the profound praise we offer.
Praise for the generous gift of life.

Harvey J. Fields

We turn our thoughts to yesterday...to a world that lives only in our memory.

As we recall the days gone by, we know the past is irretrievable. Yet—through the gift of memory, we recapture treasured moments and images.

We are thankful for the happiness we knew with those no longer here, with whom we lived and laughed and loved.

We praise the Eternal wellspring of life who links yesterday to tomorrow. We affirm that despite all the tragedy bound up with living, it is still good to be alive.

We understand that there can be no love without loss, no joy without sorrow. May we have the courage to accept the all of life—the love and the loss—the joy and the sorrow, as we remember them.

Evelyn Mehlman



COMMENTARY. The Mourner's Kaddish speaks not a word about death, grief, mourning or loss. At the time of our greatest grief and sadness, our tradition asks mourners to stand and recite the Kaddish in the presence of our community so that we affirm life. Through the words of the Kaddish we affirm that life is good, that the life of the deceased was good, and that we pledge to go on living carrying their legacy with us into life. We affirm our commitment to being agents for peace and healing in the world. The community listens and offers support as mourners declare this affirmation of life and peace.

Eitan Weiner-Kaplow

THE MOURNERS' KADDISH

It is customary for mourners, and those observing Yahrzeit, to stand for Kaddish. In some congregations everyone rises.

Reader: Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

Congregation: May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure.

Reader: May it be blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished, and revered; and may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher (*Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: by far*) than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in this world. And say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace, and life for us, and for all Israel. And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above, make peace for us and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth. And say: Amen.

Continue with a reading (pages 96-101, 104-107), Psalm 23 (page 116), Psalm 49 (page 112) and/or a concluding song such as Adon Olam (page 120). From Rosh Hodesh Elul through Hoshanah Rabah it is traditional to recite Psalm 27 (page 108).

KAVANAH. In reciting the Kaddish we affirm our awareness of holiness in our world. Much of our experience of divine goodness, grace and love has come to us through those whose lives have touched our own. We invoke the transcendent power of love and caring as we sanctify God's name.

DAT.

קדיש יתום

It is customary for mourners, and those observing Yahrzeit, to stand for Kaddish. In some congregations everyone rises.

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיד
מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמָא:
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיד הוּא

לְעֵלְא (לְעֵלְא) (Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא
וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאִמְרִין בְּעֻלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוּמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל
כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵיבֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

*Reader: Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba
be'alma di vera hirutey veyamliḥ malḥutey
beḥayeyḥon uvyomeyḥon uvḥayey deḥol beyt yisra'el
ba'agala uvizman kariv ve'imru amen.*

Congregation: Yehey shemey raba mevarah le'alam ulalmey almaya.

*Reader: Yitbarah veyishtabah veyitpa'ar veyitromam
veyitnasey veyit-hadar veyitaleh veyit-halal
shemey dekudsha berih hu
le'ela (Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: le'ela) min kol birḥata
veshirata tushbeḥata veneḥemata da'amiran be'alma
ve'imru amen.*

*Yehey shelama raba min shemaya veḥayim aleynu ve'al kol
yisra'el ve'imru amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu ve'al kol
yisra'el ve'al kol yoshvey tevel ve'imru amen.*

*Continue with a reading (pages 96-101, 104-107), Psalm 23 (page 116), Psalm 49 (page
112) and/or a concluding song such as Adon Olam (page 120). From Rosh Ḥodesh
Elul through Hoshanah Rabah it is traditional to recite Psalm 27 (page 108).*

READINGS

LOSS OF A PARENT

You gathered incredible strength
in order to die
to seem calm and fully conscious
without complaint, without trembling
without a cry
so that I would not be afraid

Your wary hand
slowly grew cold in mine
and guided me carefully
beyond into the house of death
so I might come to know it

Thus in the past you used to take my hand
and guide me through the world
and show me life
so I would not fear

I will follow after you
confident as a child
toward the silent country
where you went first
so I would not feel a stranger there

And I will not be afraid.

Blaga Dmitrova

COMMENTARY. We can feel grief over losing someone we hardly even knew. With the loss of a young child, a new friend or a new relation, we experience the “death of potential”—the grief over losing what might have been. Then we have no vast storehouses of memories to fall back on and few stories to comfort us, only the pain over lost opportunity to create those memories and stories. Yet we have a small spark of connection to nurture, a connection that has forever altered our lives. Seth Goldstein

The son of a rabbi mourned the loss of his beloved father.
Day after day he went to the cemetery and prostrated
himself on his father's grave.

One day as the son gave in to waves of sorrow,
his father appeared to him in a vision and said:

"My son, do you think that you honor my memory with
your grief?

Offer me no tribute of tears, nor monuments of sorrow.
Do not weep for me. Instead, live for me.

"Show your love by walking the Way,
in devotion to commandment, faith, and people.

This is the only
memorial that truly honors the departed."

The son rose from his father's grave
on hearing these words,
and went to make his father's memory a perpetual light
to guide him
and a blessing to the world.

Rabbinic Tale

LOSS OF A GAY OR LESBIAN LOVER

Sister that I never held near
Comrade that I never embraced
Your memory is almost lost:

The one we don't talk about.
The loving one who never married.
The one for whom no Kaddish is said. ↩

Your loneliness calls out to me:
I know of your struggles; we are not strangers,
And if my path is easier, I will not forget who walked it first.
We call you to mind, but did you not sometimes think of us,
Your children, lovers across the years,
Those who would follow and would think of you
And bless your memory, and call you to mind.

With David and Jonathan, we will not forget you,
With Ruth and Naomi, we will not forget you,
In the name of God you are our sisters and our brothers,
And we ask that you be remembered for peace.

Author Unknown



LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

My Hereafter

Do not come when I am dead
To sit beside a low green mound,
Or bring the first gay daffodils
Because I love you so,
For I shall not be there.
You cannot find me there.

I will look up at you from the eyes
Of little children;
I will bend to meet you in the swaying boughs
Of bud-thrilled trees,
And caress you with the passionate sweep
Of storm-filled winds;
I will give you strength in your upward tread
Of everlasting hills;
I will cool your tired body in the flow
Of the limpid river;
I will warm your work-glorified hands through the glow
Of the winter fire; ↵

I will soothe you into forgetfulness to the drop, drop
Of the rain on the roof;
I will speak to you out of the rhymes
Of the Masters;
I will dance with you in the lilt
Of the violin,
And make your heart leap with the bursting cadence
Of the organ;
I will flood your soul with the flaming radiance
Of the sunrise,
And bring you peace in the tender rose and gold
Of the after-sunset.

All these have made me happy:
They are a part of me;
I shall become a part of them.

Juanita de Long



Hold on to what is good
even if it is
a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe
even if it is
a tree which stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do
even if it is
a long way from here.
Hold on to life even when
it is easier letting go.
Hold on to my hand even when
I have gone away from you.

Nancy Wood

The following psalm is traditionally recited at this point each morning and evening from Rosh Hodesh Elul through Hoshanah Rabah.

[A psalm] of David.

THE ETERNAL is my light and my salvation; whom, then, should I fear?

THE ALMIGHTY is my living source of strength; before whom should I tremble?

When evildoers approach to eat my flesh, when tormenters and enemies come after me,
see how they stumble; see how they tumble down!

Should a force encamp against me, my heart shall have no fear;
should a war arise against me, in one thing I shall trust,

one thing have I asked of GOD, one goal do I pursue: to dwell
in THE ETERNAL's house throughout my days,
to know the bliss of THE SUBLIME, to visit in God's temple.

Truly, in a day of trouble, I am nestled in God's shelter, hidden
in the recess of God's tent.

God sets me high upon a rock. ↩

KAVANAH. Throughout history it has been true that sometimes good people suffer through no fault of their own. The psalmist is not so naive as to be unaware of this reality. How can there be shelter in the midst of swarming enemies? With physical protection unlikely, the shelter invoked here provides not physical but spiritual succor. The psalmist seeks the calm and bliss that come from an awareness of the divine made manifest in the workings of the human heart. With this sense of a greatness that transcends physical peril, enemies' violence causes no fear, and slanderers can do little damage. Living directed to the divine gives us the power not to avoid mortal danger, but to transcend our fear of it. D.A.T.

The following psalm is traditionally recited at this point each morning and evening from Rosh Hodesh Elul through Hoshanah Rabah.

לְדָוִד

יהוה אורי וישעי ממי אירא:
יהוה מעוז חיי ממי אפחד:
בקרב עלי מרעים לאכל את בשרי
צרי ואיבי לי המה כשלו ונפלו:
אם תחנה עלי מחנה לא ירא לבי
אם תקום עלי מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח:
אחת שאלתי מאת יהוה אותה אבקש שבתאי בבית יהוה כל ימי
חיי לחזות בנעם יהוה ולבקר בהיכלו:
כי יצפנני בסכו ביום רעה יסתירני בטתר אהלו בצור ירוממני: ←

Ahat sha'alti me'et adonay otah avakesh shivti beveyt adonay kol yemey hayay la hazot beno'am adonay ulevaker beheyhalo.

COMMENTARY. We say this psalm every day from the first of *Elul* through *Hoshanah Rabah*. The rabbis doubtless chose it to accompany us through every phase of the fall holiday season because it encompasses such a range of powerful emotions. Identifying with the experience of the speaker can help us to be in touch with our fears of abandonment, our need for security, our yearning for joyful religious experience, our need for guidance from God, or our steady commitment to never lose hope. Above all, we experience the psalmist's vulnerability. Feeling that it is possible to be hidden and secure within God's presence, the speaker also knows, by contrast, the terrible fear that God can hide the divine countenance and seem utterly unavailable. The psalm delicately balances these two kinds of hiddenness, as it tries to find a metaphoric "level path," the right way of walking in a difficult, dangerous world. The psalm ends by urging that we seek our God, clinging to hope in the return of God's presence. H.L.

And now, my head is raised in triumph on my foes around me,
and I offer sacrifice in celebration in God's tent.

I offer song and melody to MY REDEEMER.

Hear me, PRECIOUS ONE, I call aloud;
be gracious to me, answer me!

To you my heart cries out, to you my face is turned,
your presence, GRACIOUS ONE, I seek.

Hide not your face from me: do not, in anger, turn away your
servant.

You have been my help, don't shun me now; do not abandon
me, my God who saves!

For my father and my mother have abandoned me,
but THE LIVING ONE shall take me in.

Teach me your way, WISE ONE, and guide me in a just path as
I meet my foes.

Don't place me at the mercy of my enemies, for slanderers arise
against me, and they fume in violence.

Were it not for my belief that I'll behold GOD's goodness in the
Land of Life...

Hope, then, for THE ETERNAL ONE; strengthen your heart with
courage, and have hope in THE ETERNAL.

Psalms 27

וְעַתָּה יְרוּם רֹאשִׁי עַל אֵיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאֶזְבְּחָה בְּאַהֲלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה
 אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה לַיהוָה:
 שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנֵנִי:
 לֵךְ אָמַר לְבִי בְקֶשׁוֹ פָנָי אֶת פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ:
 אֵל תִּסְתַּר פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אֵל תֵּט בְּאֶף עֲבָדֶךָ עֲזָרְתִי הָיִיתָ אֵל תִּטְשֵׁנִי
 וְאֵל תִּעְזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 כִּי אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וַיהוָה יֹאסֶפְנִי:
 הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְּרָכֶךָ וּגְחֹנֵנִי בְּאַרְחַ מִישׁוֹר לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרָי:
 אֵל תִּתְנֵנִי בְנֶפֶשׁ צָרִי כִּי קָמוּ בִי עֲדֵי שֹׁקֵר וַיִּפְחַ חֲמָס:
 * לֹלְאָ הָאֲמָנְתִּי לְרֵאוֹת בְּטוֹב יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:
 קִנְיָ אֵל יְהוָה חֲזַק וַיֶּאֱמַץ לְבָבָהּ וְקִנְיָ אֵל יְהוָה:

KAVANAH. This psalm speaks of evildoers, but also refers to our illness, pain, the trails and tribulations we all suffer, and our concerns and worries with living. The plane on which we focus our everyday consciousness keeps us in touch with all the things that go wrong in our lives—both small and large. This psalm urges an awareness of a different plane, one where we focus on the eternal instead of the everyday. Here we are nurtured by spiritual connection. Here we gain perspective on the whirl of activity that dominates our everyday lives. Here we find the strength and goodness that can sustain us in our daily tasks.

D.A.T.

The following psalm is traditionally recited in a mourner's house.

For the chief musician; a psalm of the clan of Korah.

Hear this, all you nations!

Hearken, all you dwellers of the earth,

you human beings of every sort,

the rich and poor alike!

My mouth shall utter words of wisdom,
words of understanding shall my heart conceive.

I'll turn my mind to parable,
my riddle I'll unfold upon the harp.

Why should I fear in times of trouble,
when the treachery of challengers surrounds me,

they who trust in force, who boast of their great wealth?

No, never can such things redeem a person;
that's not the way to clear accounts with God!

Their life cannot be saved so cheaply;
but forever they shall cease, and pass away.

For could one live forever?
Shall one never see the grave?

As one can see, even the wise shall die,
together shall the foolish and the ignorant be lost;
to others shall they leave their wealth.

Their grave is their eternal home,
their dwelling-place throughout all generations,
they whose names were famous in all lands. ↵

The following psalm is traditionally recited in a mourner's house.

לְמַנְצָח

לְבְנֵי־תֵרַח מְזֻמָּר:

שָׁמְעוּ זֹאת כָּל הָעַמִּים הָאֲזִינוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הַקָּלָד:

גַּם בְּנֵי אָדָם גַּם בְּנֵי אִישׁ יְחַד עָשִׁיר וְאֶבְיוֹן:

פִּי יִדְבֵר הַקְּמוֹת וְהַגּוֹת לְפִי תְבוּנוֹת:

אִשָּׁה לְמָשָׁל אֲזַנִּי אֶפְתַּח בְּכַנּוֹר חֵידָתִי:

לְמָה אֵירָא בְיָמַי רַע עֲזוֹן עַקְבֵי יִסְבְּנִי:

הַבְּטָחִים עַל חֵילָם וּבְרַב עֲשָׂרָם יִתְהַלְּלוּ:

אָח לֹא פָדָה יִפְדֶּה אִישׁ לֹא יִתֵּן לְאֱלֹהִים כְּפָרוֹ:

וַיִּקַּר פְּדִיוֹן נַפְשָׁם וַחֲדָל לְעוֹלָם:

אֵיחִי עוֹד לְנִצָּח לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשְּׁחַת:

כִּי יִרְאֶה חֲכָמִים מְוֹתוֹ יְחַד כְּסִיל וְבָעַר יֶאֱבְדוּ וְעֲזָבוּ לְאַחֲרִים חֵילָם:

קָרַבָם בְּתִימוֹ לְעוֹלָם מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּם לְדוֹר וְדוֹר קָרְאוּ בְשִׁמוֹתֶם עָלַי

אֲדַמּוֹת: ←

COMMENTARY. In reflecting on the death that awaits everyone, this psalm, like Ecclesiastes, recognizes the transience of earthly existence. The psalmist seems to exclude himself, however, from this inevitable fate, by saying God will “take” him, rather than let him descend to the grave. Does he imagine that he is exempt from the laws of mortality? Ibn Ezra says, obviously not; the poet is aware of an eternal soul that outlasts our physical bodies. Rashi, however, claims that God “takes” him to walk in God’s ways during his lifetime. From this perspective, the psalmist’s main thrust is not on life after death, but on life itself. Do not focus on material wealth, he urges, because, as popular wisdom has always taught, you can’t take it with you. Focus instead on what will truly bring lasting honor. H.L.

No person dwells in honor long;
one perishes the same way as the beasts.

Such is the fate of fools,
the latter end of those who revel in their talk—it shall be so!

Like sheep, they are appointed for the great unknown.
Death is their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend;
it is their fate to waste away; and in Sheol is their abode.

But God redeems my soul from Sheol's power;
it is God who takes me—this, too, shall be so!

Don't be afraid of this: that though a person may grow rich,
and though the glory of one's house grow great,

one doesn't keep a bit of it at death;
one's worldly glory doesn't follow to the grave.

However blessed you may be in life,
however much people might say, "You have done well,"

you'll come to take your place beside your ancestors,
with those who never more behold the light of day.

A person may know honor, yet not understand,
we perish in the same way as the beasts.

Psalm 49

ואָדם בִּיקָר בַּל יִלֵּין נִמְשָׁל כְּבִהְמוֹת נְדָמוּ:
 זֶה דְרָכָם כְּסֵל לָמוּ וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ טָלָה:
 כִּצְאוֹן לְשֵׂאוֹל שְׁתוּ מִוֹת יִרְעִים וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יִשְׁרִים לְבַקֵּר וְצוּרִים לְבִלְוֹת
 שֵׂאוֹל מִזֶּבֶל לוֹ:
 אֵךְ אֱלֹהִים יִפְדֶּה נַפְשֵׁי מִיַּד שֵׂאוֹל כִּי יִקְחֵנִי טָלָה:
 אֵל תִּירָא כִּי יַעֲשֶׂר אִישׁ כִּי יִרְבֶּה כְבוֹד בֵּיתוֹ:
 כִּי לֹא בָמוֹתוֹ יִקַּח הַכֹּל לֹא יִרַד אַחֲרָיו כְבוֹדוֹ:
 כִּי נַפְשׁוֹ בְּחַיָּו יִבְרַךְ וַיִּוְדָה כִּי תִיטִיב לָהּ:
 תָּבוֹא עַד־דֹּר אָבוֹתָיו עַד נִצַּח לֹא יִראוּ אוֹר:
 אָדָם בִּיקָר וְלֹא יִבִּין נִמְשָׁל כְּבִהְמוֹת נְדָמוּ:

לשאול / the great unknown—The Biblical word for the place of the dead is *she'ol*, literally “questioning, inquiry.” The name arose from the practice, described in 1 Sam. 28, of consulting the spirits of the dead for knowledge about the future. But the name in effect became synonymous with the mystery of the afterlife itself. J.R.

אך אלהים יפדה...סלה / But God redeems...be so! These are the psalm's only words of affirmation of some reality beyond physical death, but no details are given. However vague this affirmation, it forms the premise for the psalmist's contention, in the next verse, that death of the body is not to be feared, but rather accepted as a fact of life. J.R.

This psalm is often read by mourners. An interpretive version is on page 118.

A Psalm of David

THE ETERNAL is my shepherd; I shall never be in need.

Amid the choicest grasses does God set me down.

God leads me by the calmest waters,
and restores my soul.

God takes me along paths of righteousness,
in keeping with the honor of God's name.

Even should I wander in a valley of the darkest shadows,
I will fear no evil.

You are with me, God. Your power and support
are there to comfort me.

You set in front of me a table
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely, good and loving-kindness will pursue me
all the days of my life,

and I shall come to dwell inside the house
of THE ETERNAL for a length of days.

Psalm 23

I Know Not Your Ways

I know not your ways—

A sunset is for me a
godset.

Where are you going,
God?

Take me along,
if, in the “along”

it is light,
God.

I am afraid of the dark.

Malka Helfetz Tussman (Translated from the Yiddish by Marcia Falk)

This psalm is often read by mourners. An interpretive version is on page 118.

מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד

יהוה רֵעִי לֹא אָחָסָר: בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצְנִי
עַל־מֵי מְנַחֹת יִנְהַלְנִי: נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב
יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שָׁמוּ:
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶּה בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא־אִירָא רַע
כִּי־אַתָּה עֲמָדִי שְׁבֻטָּה וּמִשְׁעַנְתָּהּ הִמָּה יִנְחַמְנִי:
תַּצְרוּךְ לְפָנַי שְׁלַחוּ נֶגֶד צָרָרִי
דִּשְׁנַת בְּשִׁמּוֹן רֹאשֵׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה:
אֵךְ טוֹב וַחֲסֹד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי
וּשְׁבַתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאֶרֶךְ יָמִים:

Mizmor ledavid

adonay ro'i lo ehsar. Binot deshe yarbitzeni
al mey menuhot yenhale^uni. Nafshi yeshovev
yanheni vemageley tzedek lema'an shemo.
Gam ki eleh begev tzalmavet lo ira ra
ki atah imadi shivteha umishanteha hemah
yena^hamuni.
Ta'aroh lefanay shulhan neged tzoreray
dishanta vashemen roshi kosi revayah.
Ah tov vahesed yirdefuni kol yemey hayay
veshavti beveyt adonay le'oreh yamim.

Paths of Fullness—An Interpretation of Psalm 23

The Holy One is my Guide;
my life is whole.

We journey together
over fertile hillsides
and rest
beside nourishing springs.

Thus is my spirit
ever renewed,
for my Guide leads me
down paths of fullness.

Even when my steps lead
into the kingdom of death
I do not fear
for I know you are with me.

Your presence
your shelter
is a comfort to me.

With you I can set myself aright
in the face of
deepest sorrow;
and soon my joy is filled to overflowing.

As I journey on,
nothing but kindness and love
shall follow
until the day I finally return.

To my Source,
my destination.

Brant Rosen

READING FOR THE END OF SHIVAH

At the last service of the shivah period, the following may be read.

As this *shivah* draws to a close, we are grateful for the members of our family and community who have supported us through this stage of mourning. God's redemptive power has been present in their caring. Their thoughts and memories have brought light into the darkness.

Now as we return to everyday activity, we know that the mourning process is not over. We take these steps back into life with gratitude for the power to find new strength and new resolve for the tasks ahead.

Four Things

These things are beautiful beyond belief:
The pleasant weakness that comes after pain,
The radiant greenness that comes after rain,
The deepened faith that follows after grief,
And the awakening to love again.

Author Unknown

There are stars whose light reaches the earth only after they themselves have disintegrated and are no more. And there are people whose scintillating memory lights the world after they have passed from it. These lights which shine in the darkest night are those which illumine for us the path

Hannah Szenes (Translator unknown)

ADON OLAM / CROWN OF ALL TIME

This translation can be sung to the same melody as the Hebrew.

Crown of all time, the one who reigned
before all mortal shape was made,
and when God's will brought forth all things
then was the name supreme proclaimed.

And after everything is gone,
yet One alone, awesome, will reign.
God was, and is, and will remain,
in splendid balance, over all.

And God is One, no second is,
none can compare, or share God's place.
Without beginning, without end,
God's is all might and royal grace.

This is my God, my help who lives,
refuge from pain in time of trial,
my banner, and my place to fly,
my cup's portion when, dry, I cry.

To God's kind hand I pledge my soul
each time I sleep, again to wake,
and with my soul, this body, here.
Yah's love is mine; I shall not fear.

KAVANAH. God is that aspect of reality which elicits from us the best that is in us and enables us to bear the worst that can befall us. M.M.K.

אָדוֹן עוֹלָם

בְּטָרֵם כֹּל יַצִּיר נִבְרָא:
אֲזַי מְלֶךְ שְׁמוּ נִקְרָא:

לְבַדּוֹ יְמַלֵּךְ נוֹרָא:
וְהוּא יְהִיָּה בְּתַפְאָרָה:

לְהַמְשִׁיל לּוֹ לְהַחֲפִירָה:
וְלוֹ הָעֵז וְהַמְשָׁרָה:

וְצוּר חֲבִלִי בְּעַת צָרָה:
מִנַּת כּוֹסֵי בְיוֹם אֶקְרָא:

בְּעַת אִישָׁן וְאַעֲיָרָה:
יְהוּה לִי וְלֹא אִירָא:

אָדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מְלֶךְ
לְעַת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחַפְצּוֹ כֹּל

וְאַחֲרַי כְּכֹלֹת הַכֹּל
וְהוּא הִיָּה וְהוּא הוֹה

וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאִין שְׁנַי
בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תַכְלִית

וְהוּא אֵלִי וְחִי גּוֹאֲלִי
וְהוּא נְסִי וּמְנוֹס לִי

בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי
וְעַם רוּחִי גְּוִיָּתִי

Adon olam asher malah, beterem kol yetzir nivra.
Le'et na'asah veheftzo kol, azay meleḥ shemo nikra.
Ve'aḥarey kihlot hakol, levado yimloḥ nora.
Vehu hayah vehu hoveh, vehu yihyeh betifarah.
Vehu eḥad ve'eyn sheni, lehamshil lo lehaḥbirah.
Beli reshit beli taḥlit, velo ha'oz vehamisrah.
Vehu eli veḥay go'ali, vetzur ḥevli be'et tzarah.
Vehu nisi umanos li, menat kosi beyom ekra.
Beyado afkid ruḥi, be'et ishan ve'a'irah.
Ve'im ruḥi geviyati, adonay li velo ira.

NOTE. *Adon Olam* states principles of Jewish faith. It is frequently attributed to Solomon ibn Gabirol, a medieval Sephardic poet.

J.B.

ORDER OF COUNTING THE OMER

From the eve of the Second Day of Pesah through the evening before Shavuot, the days are counted as follows after the evening Amidah:

Before counting the Omer say:

Blessed are you, ETERNAL, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has made us holy with your mitzvot, and commanded us concerning the counting of the Omer.

1. This is the first day of the Omer.
2. This is the second day of the Omer.
3. This is the third day of the Omer.
4. This is the fourth day of the Omer.
5. This is the fifth day of the Omer.
6. This is the sixth day of the Omer.
7. This is the seventh day, making one week of the Omer.
8. This is the eighth day, making one week and one day of the Omer.
9. This is the ninth day, making one week and two days of the Omer.
10. This is the tenth day, making one week and three days of the Omer.
11. This is the eleventh day, making one week and four days of the Omer.
12. This is the twelfth day, making one week and five days of the Omer.
13. This is the thirteenth day, making one week and six days of the Omer.
14. This is the fourteenth day, making two weeks of the Omer.
15. This is the fifteenth day, making two weeks and one day of the Omer.



סֵדֵר סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר

From the eve of the Second Day of Pesah through the evening before Shavuot, the days are counted as follows after the evening Amidah:

Before counting the Omer say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam asher kiddeshanu
bemitzvotav vetzivanu al sefirat ha'omer.



1. הַיּוֹם יוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
2. הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
3. הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
4. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
5. הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
6. הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
7. הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
8. הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וַיּוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
9. הַיּוֹם תְּשַׁעָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וּשְׁנַיִם יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
10. הַיּוֹם עֲשָׂרָה יָמִים שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
11. הַיּוֹם אֶחָד־עָשָׂר יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
12. הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וְחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
13. הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה־עָשָׂר יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שְׁבוּעַת אֶחָד וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
14. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה־עָשָׂר יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שְׁנַיִם שְׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:
15. הַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה־עָשָׂר יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שְׁנַיִם שְׁבוּעוֹת וַיּוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:

16. This is the sixteenth day, making two weeks and two days of the Omer.
17. This is the seventeenth day, making two weeks and three days of the Omer.
18. This is the eighteenth day, making two weeks and four days of the Omer.
19. This is the nineteenth day, making two weeks and five days of the Omer.
20. This is the twentieth day, making two weeks and six days of the Omer.
21. This is the twenty-first day, making three weeks of the Omer.
22. This is the twenty-second day, making three weeks and one day of the Omer.
23. This is the twenty-third day, making three weeks and two days of the Omer.
24. This is the twenty-fourth day, making three weeks and three days of the Omer.
25. This is the twenty-fifth day, making three weeks and four days of the Omer.
26. This is the twenty-sixth day, making three weeks and five days of the Omer.
27. This is the twenty-seventh day, making three weeks and six days of the Omer.
28. This is the twenty-eighth day, making four weeks of the Omer.
29. This is the twenty-ninth day, making four weeks and one day of the Omer.
30. This is the thirtieth day, making four weeks and two days of the Omer.
31. This is the thirty-first day, making four weeks and three days of the Omer.

16. היום ששה־עָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁנֵי שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
17. היום שְׁבַע־עָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁנֵי שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
18. היום שְׁמוֹנֶה־עָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁנֵי שְׁבִיעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
19. היום תְּשַׁע־עָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁנֵי שְׁבִיעוֹת וַחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
20. היום עָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁנֵי שְׁבִיעוֹת וְשֵׁשׁ יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
21. היום אֶחָד וְעָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:
22. היום שְׁנַיִם וְעָשָׂר יום שהם כְּלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
23. היום שְׁלֹשָׁה וְעָשָׂר יום שהם כְּלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
24. היום אַרְבָּעָה וְעָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
25. היום חֲמִשָּׁה וְעָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
26. היום שֵׁשׁ וְעָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וַחֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
27. היום שִׁבְעָה וְעָשָׂר יום שהם שְׁלֹשָׁה שְׁבִיעוֹת וְשֵׁשׁ יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
28. היום שְׁמוֹנֶה וְעָשָׂר יום שהם אַרְבָּעָה שְׁבִיעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:
29. היום תְּשַׁע וְעָשָׂר יום שהם אַרְבָּעָה שְׁבִיעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
30. היום שְׁלֹשִׁים יום שהם אַרְבָּעָה שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁנֵי יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
31. היום אֶחָד וּשְׁלֹשִׁים יום שהם אַרְבָּעָה שְׁבִיעוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:

32. This is the thirty-second day, making four weeks and four days of the Omer.
33. This is the thirty-third day, making four weeks and five days of the Omer.
34. This is the thirty-fourth day, making four weeks and six days of the Omer.
35. This is the thirty-fifth day, making five weeks of the Omer.
36. This is the thirty-sixth day, making five weeks and one day of the Omer.
37. This is the thirty-seventh day, making five weeks and two days of the Omer.
38. This is the thirty-eighth day, making five weeks and three days of the Omer.
39. This is the thirty-ninth day, making five weeks and four days of the Omer.
40. This is the fortieth day, making five weeks and five days of the Omer.
41. This is the forty-first day, making five weeks and six days of the Omer.
42. This is the forty-second day, making six weeks of the Omer.
43. This is the forty-third day, making six weeks and one day of the Omer.
44. This is the forty-fourth day, making six weeks and two days of the Omer.
45. This is the forty-fifth day, making six weeks and three days of the Omer.
46. This is the forty-sixth day, making six weeks and four days of the Omer.
47. This is the forty-seventh day, making six weeks and five days of the Omer.
48. This is the forty-eighth day, making six weeks and six days of the Omer.
49. This is the forty-ninth day, making seven weeks of the Omer.

Continue on Page 88.

32. הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
33. הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמֵשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
34. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם אַרְבָּעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
35. הַיּוֹם חֲמֵשָׁה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:
36. הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
37. הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁנַיִ יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
38. הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
39. הַיּוֹם תְּשָׁעָה וְשָׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
40. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמֵשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
41. הַיּוֹם אֶחָד וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם חֲמֵשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
42. הַיּוֹם שְׁנַיִם וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:
43. הַיּוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְיוֹם אֶחָד לְעֹמֶר:
44. הַיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁנַיִ יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
45. הַיּוֹם חֲמֵשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
46. הַיּוֹם שֵׁשָׁה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְאַרְבָּעָה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
47. הַיּוֹם שִׁבְעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְחֲמֵשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
48. הַיּוֹם שְׁמוֹנֶה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשָׁה שָׁבוּעוֹת וְשֵׁשָׁה יָמִים לְעֹמֶר:
49. הַיּוֹם תְּשָׁעָה וְאַרְבָּעִים יוֹם שֶׁהֵם שִׁבְעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת לְעֹמֶר:

Continue on Page 89.

HAVDALAH

At the end of Shabbat, a Havdalah candle is lit. A full cup of wine and spices are near at hand, and the lights are dimmed.

At the end of a festival, and at the start of Ḥol Hamo'ed, the candle and spices are omitted if it is not Saturday night.

Elijah the prophet, come speedily to us hailing messianic days.

Miriam the prophet will dance with us at the waters of redemption.

NOTE. Traditionally *Havdalah* is said after three stars appear in the sky on Saturday evening, making Shabbat about twenty-five hours long. In families that observe this tradition, younger children relish the task of finding stars.

Some sing “*Eliyahu Hanavi*” at the beginning of *Havdalah*, and some at the end. We have put it before *Havdalah* to set a mood of contemplation. This order builds toward the mood of jubilation expressed in the song “*Hamavdil*.”

Havdalah is recited not only on Shabbat but also at the conclusion of Festivals. When Festivals end at times other than Saturday nights, *Havdalah* includes only two blessings—over wine and over separation.

D.A.T.

COMMENTARY. As Shabbat fades, our people’s centuries-old yearning for redemption is voiced through song. When we sing the traditional “*Eliyahu Hanavi*,” we recall the saving message and leadership of Elijah the Prophet, harbinger of the messianic age. The contemporary lyrics of “*Miriam Hanevi’ah*” parallel the traditional, offering an inspiring leadership model. Midrash tells us that Miriam helped to bolster the Israelite women’s courage in taking the risk of fleeing Egypt toward freedom. A prophet in her own right, Miriam led our people in a celebration and dance after we “took the plunge” to freedom at the Reed Sea (Exodus 15:20-21). As we strive for תיקון עולם, repair of the world, and as we pray for the coming of the messianic age, both Elijah and Miriam are inspiring prophetic figures who model leadership traits that may help to strengthen us on our journey toward redemption.

Leila Gal Berner

הבדלה

At the end of Shabbat, a Havdalah candle is lit. A full cup of wine and spices are near at hand, and the lights are dimmed.

At the end of a festival, and at the start of Ḥol Hamo'ed, the candle and spices are omitted if it is not Saturday night.

אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֱלִיָּהוּ הַתְּשִׁבִי אֱלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי:
בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבֵא אֵלֵינוּ עִם מַשְׁיַח בֶּן דָּוִד:

Eliyahu hanavi, Eliyahu hatishbi, Eliyahu hagiladi.

Bimherah veyameynu yavo eylenu, im mashi'ah ben David.

מְרִים הַנְּבִיאָה עֵז וְזִמְרָה בְּיָדָהּ
מְרִים תְּרַקֵּד אֲתָנוּ לְהַגְדִּיל זְמַרְת עוֹלָם
מְרִים תְּרַקֵּד אֲתָנוּ לְתַקֵּן אֶת־הָעוֹלָם:
בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ הִיא תְּבִיאָנוּ
אֶל מֵי הַיְשׁוּעָה:

Leila Gal Berner

Miriam hanevi'ah oz vezimrah beyadah.

Miriam tirkod itanu lehagdil zimrat olam.

Miriam tirkod itanu letaken et ha'olam.

Bimherah veyameynu hi tevi'enu

el mey hayeshu'ah.

With the permission of this company:

Blessed are you, THE BOUNDLESS ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who created the fruit of the vine.

It is the custom in some families for everyone to take a sip of the wine here. Others wait until after the final beraḥah / blessing.

Blessed are you, REVIVER our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates various spices.

After the blessing is said, the leader smells the spices and passes them on.

Blessed are you, THE RADIANCE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates the light of fire.

After reciting the blessing over fire, participants hold their hands before the candle flame so that their fingers look radiant in its light and then cast shadows on their palms. Then the following blessing is said.

Blessed are you, THE MANY-NAMED, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who separates between holy and ordinary, light and dark, the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are you, THE INDIVISIBLE who separates the holy from the ordinary.

The candle is now extinguished. Some families do this by immersing it in wine from the cup. Lights are turned on, and we continue in lively song.

COMMENTARY. While lighting candles marks both the beginning and the end of Shabbat, the *Havdalah* candle has a meaning different from that of the *Erev Shabbat* candles. Lighting this new fire signals commencement of the work week because fire is so often an instrument of labor. Every *beraḥah* / blessing must correlate to an event or action so that it is not in vain. We “use” the candlelight here to cast a shadow on our palms by lifting our curled fingers toward the light.

A time of transitions, *Havdalah* lends itself to comment about life cycle transitions as well. It is a wonderful place to insert parents’ hopes for a bar / bat mitzvah at the transition from childhood to adolescence. *Brit* ceremonies for new-born girls can easily be created around *Havdalah*. Weddings, new jobs, beginning of school and graduation are some of the occasions when people might want to add personal words to *Havdalah*.

D.A.T.

סְבִרֵי חֲבֵרֵי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Savrey ḥaveray.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey peri hagafen.

It is the custom in some families for everyone to take a sip of the wine here. Others wait until after the final berachah / blessing.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי בְשָׂמִים:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey miney vesamim.

After the blessing is said, the leader smells the spices and passes them on.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוֹרֵי הָאֵשׁ:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey me'orey ha'esh.

After reciting the blessing over fire, participants hold their hands before the candle flame so that their fingers look radiant in its light and then cast shadows on their palms. Then the following blessing is said.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלְּךָ הָעוֹלָם הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קָדֵשׁ לְחַל בֵּין
אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְיַשְׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשָׂה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קָדֵשׁ לְחַל:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam hamavdil beyn
kodesh leḥol beyn or leḥosheḥ beyn yom hashevi'i lesheshet
yemey hama'aseh. Baruḥ atah adonay hamavdil beyn kodesh
leḥol.

The candle is now extinguished. Some families do this by immersing it in wine from the cup. Lights are turned on, and we continue in song.

שָׂבוּעַ טוֹב. / Shavu'a tov. / Have a good week.

אַ גוטע וואָך. / A gute voch. / A good week.



HAMAVDIL / THE ONE WHO DIVIDES

This translation can be sung to the same melody as Shavu'a Tov.

May the one who divides
between holy and plain,
forgive our sins,
and ease our pain.
Posterity and plenty
add to our gain,
like seashore sands,
like stars at night.

The day moves on
like palm tree's shade,
I call to God
who charts the way.
The watchman says,
"The morn has come,
and soon the night,
yes, soon the night."

Your justice strong
as Mount Tabor,
My sins forgive,
my faults ignore.
Let me be pure,
like long before,
My blemish fade
like passing night.

NOTE. Composed by Rabbi Isaac ibn Ghayat, who lived in eleventh-century Spain, for the conclusion of Yom Kippur, *Hamavdil* hails the divine power that allows us forgiveness, renewed vigor and redemption. A.G.

אמר...לילה / The watchman...night (Isaiah 21:12).

כיום...בלילה / Let...night (Psalm 90:4).

הַמְבַדִּיל

חֲטָאֵינוּ הוּא יְמַחֵל
וְכַוּכְבֵּים בְּלִילָהּ:
אֶקְרָא לְאֵל עָלַי גֹּמֵר
אֶתָּא בְּקָר וְגַם לִילָהּ:
עַל חֲטָאֵי עֵבֶר תַּעֲבֹר
וְאַשְׁמוּרָה בְּלִילָהּ:

הַמְבַדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל
זֶרְעֵנוּ וְכִסְפֵּנוּ יִרְבֶּה כְּחֹל
יוֹם פְּנֵה כְּצֵל תִּמָּר
אָמַר שׁוֹמֵר
צְדָקְתְּךָ כְּהַר תִּבּוֹר
כִּיֹּם אֶתְמוֹל כִּי יַעֲבֹר

Hamavdil beyn kodesh lehol
Hatoteynu hu yimhol
Zarenu vehaspenu yarbeh ka^hol
Vehako^havim balaylah.

Yom panah ketzel tomer
Ekra la'el alay gomer
Amar shomer ata voker vegam laylah.

Tzidkateha kehar tavor
Al hata'ay avor ta'avor
Keyom etmol ki ya'avor
Ve'ashmura^h valaylah.

COMMENTARY. Just as we greet Shabbat with blessing, we usher it out with blessing. Candlelight and wine mark these borders. Thus we attempt to bring the flavor and insight of Shabbat into the everyday. At *Havdalah* there is the addition of spices, as if to revive our spirits flagging at the loss of Shabbat and to bear the sweet savor of Shabbat into the week. D.A.T.

CONCLUSION OF SHIVAH

To be read by the mourner(s) on the morning of the conclusion of shivah.

As Jewish tradition prescribes *shivah*, a period of intense mourning, so too does it prescribe a moment when *shivah* ends. Today, we walk out the door of the *shivah* house back into engagement with daily concerns. Mourning is far from over, but today we take important steps back into life. At this moment, we ask:

יהוה עז לעמו יתן יהוה יברך את־עמו בשלום:

Adonay oz le'amo yiten, adonay yivareh et amo vashalom.

May You, REDEEMING ONE, give strength to your people. May You, ETERNAL ONE, bless your people with peace.

MERCIFUL ONE, grant healing, comfort, and strength to those who mourn the loss of _____. May his/her memory be a source of blessing in their lives. May they find consolation and peace with each other and return to doing deeds that strengthen the bonds of the living. Amen.

יהוה נְחֵנִי בְצִדְקֹתֶיךָ הַיֵּשֶׁר לְפָנַי דְרָכֶיךָ:

Adonay neheni vetzidkateha hayeshar lefanay darkeha.

GUIDING ONE, lead me in your righteousness, make your path straight before me.

May I take to heart the love and lessons of the life of _____ and of this *shivah* as I walk again into life.

It is customary to walk a short distance. Some people circle the block on which they live.

יהוה עז...בשלום / May...peace! (Psalms 29:11).

יהוה...דרכך / Guiding...me. (Psalms 5:9).

UNVEILING

Place a cloth over the marker. If the day is windy, the cloth can be held down with a string or stones.

We have gathered to honor the memory of our beloved _____ . The link of life that joined us has been broken, but the bonds of love, friendship and family continue to connect us.

Remarks/stories about the deceased can be offered by one or several people. Sometimes all present are invited to participate if they wish.

Readings or poetry may be added here. For examples, see pages 3-7, 96-101, 103-107, 116-118.

For a man or boy:

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים שׁוֹכֵן בְּמְרוֹמֵי הַמָּצָא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה תַּחַת כְּנָפֵי
הַשְּׂכִינָה בְּמַעְלֹת קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזַהְרִים אֶת
נְשָׁמַת _____ : בְּעַל הַרַחֲמִים יִסְתִּירָהּ בְּסֶטֶר כְּנָפָיו
לְעוֹלָמִים וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצְרוּר הַחַיִּים אֶת נְשָׁמָתוֹ: יְהוּה הוּא נִחְלָתוֹ
וַיְנַוַח עַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

For a woman or girl:

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים שׁוֹכֵן בְּמְרוֹמֵי הַמָּצָא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה תַּחַת כְּנָפֵי
הַשְּׂכִינָה בְּמַעְלֹת קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזַהְרִים אֶת
נְשָׁמַת _____ : בְּעַל הַרַחֲמִים יִסְתִּירָהּ בְּסֶטֶר כְּנָפָיו
לְעוֹלָמִים וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצְרוּר הַחַיִּים אֶת נְשָׁמָתָהּ: יְהוּה הוּא נִחְלָתָהּ
וַתְנַוַּח עַל מִשְׁכָּבָהּ בְּשָׁלוֹם וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן:

God full of mercy who dwells in high places, grant full repose under *Shehina*'s wings in the heights of the holy and pure—like a light glowing in the firmament—to the soul of _____ . Merciful one, conceal him/her under your wings forever, and bind his/her soul to life. THE COMPASSIONATE ONE is his/her portion. May he/she rest in peace in his/her place. Amen.

The covering is lifted off the marker. If a minyan is present, conclude with the recitation of Mourner's Kaddish, pages 102-103.

May we be bound up in the bonds of life. And let us say:
Amen.

THE JOURNEY OF MOURNING:
A RECONSTRUCTIONIST GUIDE

by Rabbi Richard Hirsh



Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi Richard Hirsh

INTRODUCTION

Few moments in human life carry as much meaning as those that touch on the boundaries of life. Jewish rituals and observances can help guide us through such boundary moments. At times of transition, traditions, values and customs can help create meaning and structure as well as provide comfort.

Life-boundary moments can be disruptive and disturbing, and death in particular is destabilizing. Death makes us aware of the inevitable and universal transience of life, and alongside our sorrow we hear the echo of our own mortality that accompanies moments of grieving and memorializing.

The purpose of this guide is to suggest basic Reconstructionist practices that can serve as spiritual resources for mourners and for those who comfort mourners. A guide is not a code; it does not prescribe what each individual should do. A guide is, instead, a pathway through Jewish tradition that provides explanations, illuminates values and suggests approaches that are responsive to the needs of contemporary Jews.

This Reconstructionist guide reflects two fundamental commitments:

- *Fidelity* to the customs and traditions of the Jewish people, for each generation of Jews is the custodian of Judaism and bears the responsibility of ensuring its preservation and transmission;
- *Responsiveness* to the needs of contemporary Jews, reflected in a willingness to adapt and innovate.

From a traditional as well as a contemporary perspective, many Jewish practices associated with mourning are subject to local adaptation and the customs of differing communities. What may be standard in one locale would not necessarily be done elsewhere. While the decision regarding which rituals and customs to observe is the responsibility of each mourner, a rabbi can help provide information and insight as to what is essential and what is marginal, what is recommended and what is discouraged. A rabbi can also help identify the general patterns of observance within a community as a way of providing communal guidance to individual mourners.

Explanations for rituals vary widely. Traditions surrounding death and mourning are in many cases centuries old, and the origins of customs are usually obscure, although some explanations are accepted as normative. Reconstructionism affirms the possibility of reading new meanings into old rituals while preserving those rituals out of a sense of continuity and commitment.

Because death is so profoundly disorienting, we are often eager to make use of as much of our tradition as possible to help us cope with loss. Previous patterns of personal and/or family ritual observance may be minimal, but mourners often seek to comply with maximal mourning practice. Certainly, more Jewish observance rather than less can help mourners find comfort and consolation, and from a Reconstructionist perspective, few particular practices are discouraged. But mourners should be cautious about trying to fulfill every custom conveyed to them by well-meaning friends and relatives as well as by traditional codes of Jewish law. It is easy to be overwhelmed by a sense of obligation and a need to “do the right thing.” In a quest for precision, it is possible to miss the opportunity for Jewish tradition to serve the spiritual and emotional needs of mourners.

Throughout this guide, the words *mitzvah* and *mitzvot* are used to refer to the observances of tradition that contemporary Jews should consider seriously as practices for themselves. Jewish tradition focuses on three primary *mitzvot* at the time of death:

- *Avelut* (mourning): This refers to the obligations/opportunities *for mourners* in terms of traditions and customs they observe as part of their mourning. From the rich patterns of observance marking the journey through mourning and back into life, mourners should select those rituals and rites that help support them and lend stability during a time that often appears without structure.

- *Kevod hamet* (the honor and respect due the deceased): This refers to *obligations to the deceased person*, including the care extended to the body between death and burial and the norm of a dignified and respectful interment shortly after death.

· *Nihum avelim* (comforting the mourners): This refers to the obligation of friends and family to support and comfort the mourners. There are rituals and customs pertaining to comforters as well as to those in need of comfort.

For each stage of the journey of mourning, this guide describes *mitzvot* associated with these categories. Discussions of such broader topics as who is a mourner; the Kaddish; cremation; funerals, *shivah* and Jewish holidays; infant death; and suggestions for interfaith and conversionary family circumstances are found in Section IX (p.160ff).

I. THE STAGES OF MOURNING:

ANINUT - FROM DEATH TO BURIAL*

The period from death to burial is one of intense emotion and personal and family disruption. Mourners are involved with making arrangements for the funeral and burial and notifying family and friends.

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: One becomes a mourner upon hearing of a death. The period from when one receives the news of a death up to the burial is called *aninut*, derived from a Hebrew word meaning “impoverished” or “afflicted” - which accurately captures the intensity of the first stage in the journey of mourning.

Aninut is a particularly difficult period. The often shattering news of a loss can be numbing, and yet the inevitable task of beginning to accept the death also claims attention. The necessity of making funeral and burial arrangements often supersedes the need to express the intense and complex emotions that are present.

Upon hearing of the death, mourners recite the *berahah* (benediction), “*Baruh Atah Adonay Eloheyenu Meleḥ Ha-olam, Dayan Ha-emet*, Blessed are you, WISE ONE, our God, sovereign of all worlds, the true judge.” (Who is a “mourner?” See page 160.)

* In view of traditional Jewish strictures against cremation and prevailing contemporary sentiment in favor of burial, throughout this guide “burial” is used as the normal referent for the final disposition of the body. An extended discussion of issues and options with regard to the choice of cremation is on page 164.

This ancient benediction reflects our ancestors' belief that all that happens in our world is in some way the will of God, and therefore even sad news should be acknowledged by affirming God and God's decrees. Reconstructionist Judaism retains the traditional words of the Hebrew blessing as one way of wrapping mourners in the comforting rituals of Judaism. However, as we understand God more as a Power operating in and through us than as a Person acting upon us, what we mean by this benediction is something like "We affirm the blessings of life even as we accept the boundaries of life."

After saying this *berahah*, one rends a garment as a sign of grieving. This is called *keriah* (tearing). A black ribbon often substitutes for an actual garment, and is similarly torn or cut. In many communities this is deferred until the funeral service, but need not be. The garment or ribbon is worn through the end of the *shivah* observance. The tear or the ribbon is on the right side of the chest for all deceased relatives except one's parents, when the tear is on the left, closer to the heart.

During *aninut*, mourners alter their patterns of living in response to the change in their lives brought about by a death, and in anticipation of the observances of *shivah* that commence following the burial. It is customary during *aninut* for mourners to abstain from meat and wine, symbols of enrichment; it is appropriate to withdraw from one's work, both domestic and professional; one avoids entertainment such as movies, shows and concerts.

Jewish tradition urges that burial occur as soon as possible after death. With due time allowed for family notification and necessary travel, funerals normally occur within one to three days following a death; hence the duration of *aninut* is relatively short.

Mitzvot of Kevod Hamet / Honoring the Deceased: Between death and burial, there is great care and concern for the body of the deceased. Arrangements should be made with the funeral director for a *shomer/shomeret* (guardian) to sit with the body so that it is not left alone. A *shomer/shomeret* normally recites from the biblical book of Psalms while in the presence of the body. The origins of this practice may reside in a belief that the body/soul was thought to be

vulnerable to supernatural forces following death but before interment. It may also be a survival of ancient pragmatic practices designed to protect the body from animals and insects prior to burial. Today, having a *shomer/shomeret* is recognized as a sign of respect for the deceased.

Families should ascertain that requests by the deceased for organ donation are fulfilled. While Judaism has traditionally restricted organ donation (as well as routine autopsies) as a violation of *kevod hamet*, Reconstructionist Judaism along with other non-orthodox Jewish movements affirms that medical benefits to the living outweigh traditional restrictions against organ donation. A small number of contemporary orthodox authorities have also ruled in favor of organ donation under certain circumstances. Where autopsies advance medical knowledge, families may choose to allow autopsies. (In many communities, local laws often mandate autopsy.)

Taharah (ritual purification and washing of the body) should be arranged. This is normally done by a group of volunteers known as a *hevrah kadishah*, “sacred society.” Today, in addition to a traditional *hevrah kadishah*, a significant number of Jewish communities have a progressive/liberal *hevrah kadishah*. Rabbis and/or funeral directors can usually provide the names and contacts for local *hevrah kadishah* organizations.

Humility and simplicity should guide the burial preparations. Commercial and consumer pressures often conspire at the moment of death, when mourners are most vulnerable and least able to think clearly. A close friend or family member can often help by accompanying mourners to the meeting with the funeral director and gently but firmly communicating the family’s preference for traditional rites and rituals. Simple clothes or, according to tradition, humble burial shrouds called *tahrihim*, are used for interment – in death all are equal.

For this same reason, there is a strong preference for a plain wooden casket.

The tendency to overextend on funeral arrangements is often a reflex of a genuine desire to show affection and respect for the deceased. However, ostentation should be avoided. The expenses associated with elaborate arrangements – including fancy caskets and flowers – can be allocated instead to various *tzedakah* (charity) opportunities in memory of the deceased. Prior to the funeral, families should select charities to which donations may be made in memory of the deceased.

Several Reconstructionist congregations have created funeral plans that establish the community's preferred and customary rituals to be observed at a time of loss. The arrangements included in such funeral plans are then communicated to any funeral director with whom the family and rabbi may be working.

Mitzvot of Niḥum Avelim / Comforting the Mourners: The normal routines of life are disrupted immediately following a death. Offers to help with shopping, car-pooling, picking up relatives arriving from out of town and similar errands are all appropriate. During *aninut*, family and friends may offer assistance, but visitation is not appropriate prior to the funeral. The family of the deceased is busy with preparations and not prepared to receive condolences. Jewish tradition teaches that one does not attempt to console mourners prior to burial.

II. THE STAGES OF MOURNING:

HALVAYAT HAMET – THE FUNERAL

Death is a time of isolation for mourners, softened by the presence of family and community. Judaism affirms that in death both the deceased and the mourners are not alone. The next stage in the journey of mourning is *halvayat hamet*, “accompanying the deceased” on his/her journey to the final resting place.

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: If a garment or ribbon has not previously been torn, the *keriah*/tearing should take place at the funeral service.

In many communities funeral directors seat the mourners in the front row of the chapel, where they receive condolences prior to the funeral service. In other communities the family is ushered into the chapel only when the service is about to begin. Since these are only local customs, mourners should not feel compelled to comply with either model but should choose what feels appropriate and comforting.

Mitzvot of Kevod Hamet / Honoring the Deceased: Funerals can take place anytime except on Shabbat and the first and last days of Jewish holidays. They normally take place during daylight hours. (For a discussion of *shivah* and Jewish holidays, see page 165.)

Jewish tradition mandates that the casket be closed for the funeral service as a sign of respect for the deceased, and to encourage family and friends to remember her/him as s/he was in life rather than in death. Viewings and pre-funeral chapel visitations are not in keeping with Jewish tradition.

The funeral service liturgy is usually brief. Psalms, readings from the Bible, contemporary poems and reflections and a few specific prayers are included. It is customary (but not obligatory) for a *hesped* (eulogy) to be offered in which the deceased is memorialized. Most often, this will be done by the rabbi, who either will have known the deceased or met with the family to learn about him/her. Sometimes, one or more members of the family may wish to speak briefly at the funeral service. In the interests of not overburdening family and friends with a lengthy service, the rabbi should always be consulted regarding additional speakers at a funeral.

The primary role of mourners at the funeral is to be mourners. Taking on the emotional task of speaking about a loved one during the highly charged time immediately before burial should be carefully considered. As an alternative, a relative or friend might be designated to offer remarks on behalf of the family, or to read remarks prepared by one or more of the mourners. Mourners might consider, as an alternative, speaking briefly about the deceased during *shivah* at home, prior to prayer services or prior to recitation of Kaddish.

Funerals most often take place in funeral parlor chapels, although some communities hold funerals in the synagogue. Graveside funerals, which combine the funeral and burial service, are also common.

When the casket is removed from the chapel, those present stand out of respect. Although local customs vary, in most communities the casket goes first in the procession from the chapel to the hearse and from the hearse to the grave upon reaching the cemetery.

In some communities, pallbearers have the actual responsibility for carrying the casket; elsewhere the role is primarily honorary. Serving as a pallbearer is a custom rather than a law; anyone the family selects as appropriate may serve.

Mitzvot of Nihum Avelim / Comforting the Mourners: Because funerals often take place close to midday and may involve considerable travel time, mourners may neglect to take care of their nutritional needs and can end up going a long stretch of time without food or drink. Add to this the stress of the death and funeral and any seasonal factors such as extreme heat, and mourners run the risk of weakening themselves or even becoming ill during the day of the funeral.

Those involved in supporting the mourners might prepare packages (sandwiches, snacks, drinks) for the mourners to take along during the ride to/from the funeral home and/or cemetery. Mourners themselves often understandably overlook this and will appreciate the consideration.

At the funeral, friends and family provide comfort and consolation primarily by being present. There are few formal opportunities for people to convey condolences. When the funeral and burial are held separately, people will often choose not to continue on to the cemetery after the service. Often, they will seek out the mourners at the conclusion of the service. With the best of intentions of expressing regrets, such interactions when the mourners are in transition from the funeral to the cemetery can be a stressful intrusion. It is preferable to wait until a shivah visit to offer condolences.

III. THE STAGES OF MOURNING: *HALVAYAT HAMET* – THE BURIAL

The funeral is primarily a service of words; the burial is primarily a service of acts. Jewish tradition wisely recognizes the limits of language in confronting this life-boundary moment, and instead directs us to a series of acts with which to bring our loved ones to their final rest.

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: The first time that mourners recite the Kaddish prayer is at the cemetery. Again local customs vary: Kaddish may be recited before or after the casket is lowered into the grave. (See page 161 for a full discussion of the Kaddish.)

Where contemporary culture often encourages us to divert our eyes when confronting death, Judaism encourages us to face the reality of mortality. A meaningful tradition is to place two or three spadefuls of earth in the grave. Family members are invited first, followed by any others who wish to do so. While this is often an intense emotional experience, it is also a confirmation and acceptance of the death. Burial is an act of *hesed shel emet* (selfless lovingkindness) on the part of the family and friends. It is an act which cannot be reciprocated by the deceased, and as such highlights the selflessness with which all *mitzvot* may be carried out.

It is the custom to replace the spade or shovel in the mound of earth rather than hand it on to the next person. This may originate in a common belief found in almost all cultures, ancient as well as modern, that death is a contagion. Alternative explanations for retaining this custom might include: each person had a different relationship with the deceased, and so each participates in the burial independently; or, by allowing each person to retrieve and then replace the spade or shovel, we offer individuals the opportunity to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *halvayat hamet*.

It is customary to scatter some earth from the Land of Israel into the grave, symbolically linking the life of the deceased to the life of the Jewish people past, present and future. Funeral directors can usually provide small bags of soil from Israel.

Families are often encouraged to depart from the cemetery as soon as the service is concluded, but it is appropriate to remain at the grave at least until the casket is covered with earth, and preferably until the grave is filled in. However, the circumstances of the death, the emotional and physical condition of the mourners, and weather conditions should be taken into account.

The transition from the cemetery back to the home is poignant and profound. Before leaving the cemetery grounds, some follow the custom of plucking up a few strands of grass and tossing them over the shoulder. Many associate this practice with the biblical verse “At daybreak [we] are like grass that renews itself...by dusk it withers and dries up” (Psalm 90:5-6) or “God remembers that we are but dust” (Psalm 103:14).

Similarly, it is customary to wash one’s hands upon leaving the cemetery (or prior to reentering the home – depending on local and family customs). This practice is related to ancient traditions of washing as an act of ritual purification. Both the act of plucking grass and washing hands suggests a common need to demarcate the boundary between death and life – the cemetery and the world outside the cemetery.

At the cemetery, the procession normally follows the casket. Tradition suggests that the procession pause several times (seven is the common number) before reaching the grave. Explanations for this custom include a reticence to take final leave of our loved ones, a desire to impress those present with the solemnity of the moment, and an opportunity to reflect on our own mortality.

At the graveside, local customs vary: in some places, the casket is lowered into the grave before the final prayers are offered; in other locales, the casket remains at ground level until the liturgy is completed.

Jewish law mandates burial in the earth. The process of natural decomposition is considered most gentle and appropriate. Burial in a mausoleum, while not customary in our day, is not prohibited by

Jewish tradition and was apparently not uncommon in the early Talmudic period. In contemporary Jewish life, cremation is sometimes chosen in place of burial. (For a discussion of cremation, see page 164.)

Mitzvot of *Niḥum Avelim* / Comforting the Mourners: At the cemetery, when the service and the burial are complete and the mourners are preparing to leave, those present customarily form two parallel lines, creating a corridor of comfort for the mourners. It is often difficult to arrange people into this linear configuration without intruding on the emotional intensity of the moment. One way to assist is for the rabbi or other officiant to suggest that after individuals have an opportunity to place earth in the grave, they move into one of two lines leading from the graveside, to be ready to support the mourners on their journey from the cemetery. Those choosing not to place earth can be invited to step into a line as well.

As the mourners pass through, it is customary for those offering comfort to say “*Hamakom yinaḥem etḥem betoḥ sha’ar aveley tziyon virushalayim*, May God comfort you along with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.” This ancient benediction links the life of each individual Jew to the life of the Jewish people and to the hope for a messianic future. The “mourners of Zion and Jerusalem” will be comforted when, according to traditional Jewish religious myth, the Messiah arrives and Jerusalem is rebuilt and the dead are resurrected. While Reconstructionist Judaism does not affirm a personal messiah or resurrection of the dead, the symbolism of a messianic age of peace and plenitude for all renders this traditional benediction equally appropriate.

Tradition not only recommends but actually requires that the mourners share a meal, as a sign of their recommitment to life. It is a *mitzvah* of *niḥum avelim* /comforting the mourners for several people to stay behind at the *shivah* home and prepare the traditional *se’udat havra’ah* /meal of consolation so that upon returning from the cemetery mourners can have some nourishment. Customary foods representing the circle and cycle of life include eggs and lentils. Meat and wine are avoided.

Those preparing the *shivah* home for the return of the mourners should place a basin, pitcher of water and towels outside the door for those who wish to do the customary hand-washing when they return from the cemetery.

IV. THE STAGES OF MOURNING:

SHIVAH – THE FIRST WEEK

Shivah (“seven”) refers to the traditional period of time following burial that is set aside for mourners to receive condolences and be together. In the biblical tradition, seven is a number of wholeness and completion. The origins of seven days of mourning go back to the earliest generations of the Jewish people, when Joseph mourned his father Jacob (Genesis 50:10).

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: *Shivah* begins when the burial is completed, and regardless of how close to sunset the burial may be, that counts as one day. Since Jewish days begin at sunset, the night of the day of the burial begins the second day of counting for *shivah*, and so forth. If there is a cremation, it is recommended that *shivah* begin from the conclusion of the funeral service prior to, or memorial service subsequent to, the cremation. On Shabbat, public observances of *shivah* are suspended; Kaddish is recited in the synagogue. On Saturday night at sunset, *shivah* observances resume. Shabbat is counted as one of the days of *shivah*.

While *shivah* literally means “seven,” in many contemporary Jewish families circumstance and/or choice may result in a decision to reduce the number of days that *shivah* is observed. In order to demonstrate respect for the deceased, and to allow mourners a reasonable period in which to be together and share their sadness, it is recommended that the minimum observance consist of not fewer than three days. Jewish law allows those who would be economically harmed to return to work after three days of *shivah*.

In past generations, the family usually observed *shivah* at the home of the deceased. However, any residence that works may be chosen.

Mourners are free to sleep at home and come and go from the *shivah* home as necessary, but outside trips (shopping, errands) should be avoided.

With the geographic dispersal of families, people often attend a funeral in a community far from their home. Some people observe part or all of *shivah* in their home communities. Others choose to hold a one day and/or night additional *shivah* observance when they return home so that local friends and family who may not have been able to travel to the funeral can offer condolences.

At the beginning of *shivah*, upon returning home from the cemetery, a candle which burns for seven days is lit in the *shivah* home (see ritual, page 2). There are differing explanations for this practice; a common one associates light with the soul – “the human soul is the light of God” (Proverbs 20:27). For many mourners, the candle is a symbol of the abiding presence of the memory of the deceased.

During *shivah* mourners refrain from domestic and professional work and generally restrict themselves to the *shivah* home and/or their own home. Mourners abstain from activities identified with recreation and pleasure. They avoid leather shoes, and when seated customarily sit on low stools or benches, or on chairs and/or sofas from which the cushions have been removed. Those with physical and/or medical conditions which make such seating difficult, including pregnancy, are exempt.

Cutting hair, shaving, using cosmetics and so forth are avoided during *shivah*. Bathing for hygienic purposes is permissible. Sexual intercourse is avoided insofar as this embodies pleasure and represents (potential) life, both of which are in emotional contrast to death and mourning.

In many *shivah* homes, the custom of covering mirrors is observed. The origins of this practice are likely found in ancient anxieties surrounding death and demons – the concern being that one’s image or the soul of the deceased might be imprisoned in a mirror, or that a mirror might be an inadvertent gateway between the realms of life

and death. Later Jewish tradition offers two other explanations. One suggests that looking at one's reflection induces vanity, considered inappropriate to the humility that mourning is expected to confer. The other suggests that a mourner who sees her/his bedraggled appearance may be moved to shave or put on make-up in contradiction of Jewish tradition. While no one explanation can substantiate this or any other ritual practice, the emotional power of a tangible disruption of the normal appearance of the home (in ways similar to, for example, removing sofa and chair cushions) is an appropriate expression of the disruption in the family system created by the death.

Prayer services are usually held in the *shivah* home. Since Jews are traditionally enjoined to pray three times daily and mourners do not attend the synagogue during *shivah* (with the exception of Shabbat), it was imperative that they be enabled to pray by bringing the synagogue, as it were, to their home. In many Reconstructionist communities, the custom is to hold services only in the evening, but services may also be held in the morning. If a family chooses not to hold a formal religious service at the home during *shivah*, it is recommended that some structured period of brief Torah study – the reading of part of the weekly Torah portion or other biblical passages, perhaps some of the Psalms – be offered instead. Both prayer and study are appropriate as a prelude to the mourners reciting Kaddish.

On the last day, formal mourning practices of *shivah* conclude (“getting up from *shivah*”) either following morning prayer services (if they are held) or sometime between early morning and midday. Mourners take a walk around the block or neighborhood as they re-enter life. (See ritual, page 134.)

Traditional Jewish laws regarding *shivah* and Jewish holidays are complex. For a discussion of *shivah* and Jewish holidays, see page 165.

Mitzvot of Kevod Hamet / Honoring the Deceased: During shivah, it is customary to honor the memory of the deceased by telling stories of her/his life, and sharing memorabilia, including photographs and

video/audio. Many of those coming to offer comfort during shivah may not have known the deceased. This is an opportunity to honor her/his memory by recounting something of her/his life.

Mitzvot of Niḥum Avelim / Comforting the Mourners: It is appropriate to visit the *shivah* home to offer condolences and express sympathy for the loss. Sharing memories of the deceased person is also appropriate. Mourners often remember the presence of comforters rather than the words they say. Just sitting with people and providing a sense of solidarity is often enough.

The atmosphere at a *shivah* home should reflect the emotional reality of the family's loss. While serious, it need not always be somber, although solemnity is appropriate when confronting a tragic loss. While all deaths are sad, there are those that come with peace and calm at the end of a long life, and at *shivah* the family may warmly share memories in celebration of the life. Other losses, including sudden and early deaths, accidental deaths, and other shocking tragedies, should be reflected in the tone of the *shivah* home. Friends coming to visit should support the family and recognize their needs and avoid engaging in conversations of a social or business nature that can easily be deferred until outside the *shivah* home.

Helping prepare meals, doing light housekeeping, and volunteering for errands such as shopping and transportation for children are all helpful ways of supporting mourners.

V. THE STATES OF MOURNING:

SHELOSHIM – THE FIRST MONTH

The thirty days after the funeral/burial are called *sheloshim* (“thirty”). For the mourning of all immediate relatives except parents, this period comprises and concludes formal mourning observances. For parents, mourners continue a series of observances for a period of eleven months. (See page 154.)

Many contemporary Jews experience losses of other relatives such as a spouse, sibling or child as equal to (or even greater than) the loss of a parent, and thus choose to continue observing certain mourning

practices, especially the recitation of Kaddish, beyond *sheloshim* and even up to the full eleven months normally accorded only for parents.

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: The first month following death is a period of adjustment during which the intensity of the loss starts to recede as mourners begin to return to the rhythms of their lives. Following the conclusion of *shivah*, mourners can return to their regular professional and domestic work patterns. Mourners no longer sit on low stools, cover mirrors, wear a torn garment/black ribbon, avoid sexual relations or refrain from shaving.

However, it is customary for mourners to retain some outward observances. During *sheloshim*, mourners usually avoid parties, celebrations and public entertainment. One can attend bar/bat mitzvah services, weddings and other lifecycle events but may choose not to attend the celebrations often attached to those rituals. It is customary to avoid wearing new clothing during *sheloshim*. Mourners continue to recite Kaddish during this period.

Mitzvot of Kevod Hamet / Honoring the Deceased: The settling of the estate of the deceased, closing of her/his residence and disposition of her/his property often occur during *sheloshim*. While often emotionally difficult for mourners, these necessary activities are part of the process of accepting and working through the loss.

When we invoke the name of a person who is deceased, it is customary to add “*alav hashalom*” (for a male) or “*aleha hashalom*” (for a female) (“peace be upon him/her”) after the name. Another phrase often used is “*zihrone livraḥah*” (for a male) or “*zihroneh livraḥah*” (for a female) (“his/her memory is a blessing”).

It is customary to conclude *sheloshim* with a gathering of friends and family in which words of Torah are exchanged and studied in honor of the deceased.

Mitzvot of Niḥum Avelim / Comforting the Mourners: After the funeral and *shivah*, as visitations end, mourners are often unintentionally abandoned. While free to resume their normal home and

work lives, mourners in differing degrees may still want or need support and assistance. Phone calls, letters and brief visits may all be appropriate and appreciated. Invitations for Shabbat and/or holiday meals may help. Offering to attend synagogue with mourners, especially those who are alone, can help avoid the isolation that often settles on surviving spouses. In general, friends should check in with mourners during *sheloshim* to see if they are all right and if they need anything.

VI. THE STATES OF MOURNING:

YAHRTZEIT – THE FIRST YEAR

The journey of mourning is not always level. As the days and weeks from the death increase, there is often a discernible diminishment in the intensity of grieving. But at significant moments in the year such as birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, mourners may find themselves revisiting their loss as if it were only yesterday.

Mitzvot of Avelut / Mourning: When mourning for a parent, certain practices extend beyond the thirty days of *sheloshim* for a total of eleven months. Most common is the recitation of Kaddish, followed by avoidance of public celebrations and entertainment. When mourners choose to extend mourning beyond *sheloshim* for other relatives, these practices may similarly be extended.

Traditional explanations for the tradition of eleven months of mourning derive from certain rabbinic legends that associate the year following death as a period of purging of the soul of the deceased in anticipation of the soul's return to God. These legends associate the recitation of Kaddish during that time as aiding the cleansing of the soul. To avoid implying that the soul of the deceased was so severely tainted as to require a full year of mourning, the tradition became to conclude formal mourning practices after eleven months. A historical perspective would suggest that the eleven month period preceded any attempts to explain its origins. Once the practice became standard, attempts were made to explain a custom that had already attained communal consensus.

An alternative explanation may be found in the analogy to *shivah* ending on the morning of the seventh day rather than at sunset. As the first year following the death comes near to its conclusion, we abridge the fullness of twelve months, and conclude instead just as the last month of the first year is beginning. In so doing, we glimpse the Jewish affirmation of life over death. Before the first anniversary of the loss, we give ourselves a full month to resume our entire routine of activities with none of the restrictions of mourning. When we do in fact reach that anniversary, we come to it with life renewed rather than as mourners.

The first anniversary of the loss is the first observance of the *yahrtzeit*. A Yiddish word meaning “year’s time,” *yahrtzeit* corresponds to the anniversary date of the death, reckoned according to the Jewish calendar date of death (not burial). Since Jewish days start at sunset, calculating the *yahrtzeit* date requires knowing if the death occurred before or after nightfall. If after, the date for the *yahrtzeit* will be the next day on the Jewish calendar. Rabbis can assist in determining the Jewish date of the *yahrtzeit* if the family knows the English date and time of death.

The first *yahrtzeit* has a unique significance. Mourners inevitably invoke memories of the day of their loss; the presence of their loved one may feel more tangible; memories may be intensely present, and there can be a recurrence of feelings of grief and sadness that have dissipated during the year.

The practices associated with *yahrtzeit* are customarily observed by those who were the mourners. Other family members, such as grandchildren, may also choose to observe a *yahrtzeit*. When those obligated to mourning have themselves deceased, others in the family may choose to assure that the *yahrtzeit* will continue to be observed. A memorial candle is kindled in the home the evening preceding the date of the *yahrtzeit*. While Jewish tradition does not provide a specific liturgy, contemporary Jews have created a number of meditations, prayers and blessings. Personal reflections, a poem, reading or song are all appropriate. A Reconstructionist version can

be found in the home prayerbook *Kol Haneshamah: Shirim Uveraḥot, Songs, Blessings and Rituals For the Home*, page 136.

Yahrtzeits are also marked by the recitation of Kaddish. Traditionally this is done on the actual *yahrtzeit* day if mourners can attend a daily worship service for any or all of the three customary daily prayer services. In many communities, *yahrtzeits* are announced at Shabbat services, and those observing *yahrtzeit* any time within seven days recite Kaddish. Local customs vary regarding Shabbat observances coming either before or after the *yahrtzeit* date. Check with the rabbi/congregation as to the practices in a given community. Many communities follow the custom of offering those observing *yahrtzeit* an *aliyah* (recitation of blessings over the reading of the Torah) and/or designating one of the *aliyot* / Torah reading sections for anyone observing a *yahrtzeit* that week.

It is customary to make contributions to *tzedakah* and/or to engage in learning/teaching of Torah on a *yahrtzeit* in honor of the memory of the deceased. The *yahrtzeit* continues to be observed each year on the anniversary date.

Mitzvot of Kevod Hamet / Honoring the Deceased: Families normally arrange for a headstone, monument or marker to be inscribed, erected and dedicated at the burial site. Monuments usually carry the English and Hebrew names of the deceased as well as the English and Hebrew dates of birth and death. Families may choose a brief additional inscription.

Since headstone dedications (also called “unveilings”) are in the realm of custom and not law, considerable latitude can be taken in deciding when to erect a monument. Mourners do need time to adjust to their loss. A dedication which occurs in close proximity to the funeral (anytime from *sheloshim* to approximately six months following the loss) will often carry so much of the emotional echo of the funeral as to make it feel like a second round of grieving. It is recommended that dedications take place sometime in the second half of the year following a death. Seasonal and climate factors can and should be taken into account.

Family events, whether informal or formal, often bring family members together and provide an opportunity for a dedication. For example, in today's Jewish community, the Friday preceding or Sunday following a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is increasingly used for dedications. Individuals and families should assess the emotional impact on families (and especially on Bar and Bat Mitzvah students) of holding a dedication in proximity to a family celebration.

There is little formal liturgy associated with dedications. It is customary to recite the memorial prayer *El Maley Raḥamim* ("God full of compassion") in Hebrew and/or English, as well as Kaddish. Additional Psalms, readings, poems and/or family reflections can be shared as well. (For ritual, see page 135.)

Mitzvot of Nihum Avelim / Comforting the Mourners: Friends should stay in touch with mourners during the year after a loss. While there may be a decreasing need for specific support, the constancy of friendship is important. Widows and widowers often report that in the year following the loss of their partner/spouse, they experienced loss of friendships with couples who may not have known how to adjust. Friends can also intervene if they notice an absence of adjustment to the loss, and may be able to suggest some form of counseling.

VII. THE STAGES OF MOURNING:

HAZKARAT NESHAMOT - THE MEMORIALIZING OF SOULS

Beginning after the conclusion of the first *yahrtzeit*, the Yizkor (memorial) service is recited in memory of deceased relatives on the holidays of Pesah, Sukkot-Shemini Atzeret, Shavuot and Yom Kippur. During the Yizkor service recited in the synagogue, the privacy of loss is shared with the community; we join with all who have taken the journey of mourning, those who have experienced recent losses and those who memorialize relatives who are long gone. Invisible presences join us as memories are invoked, names remembered and prayers offered.

On the holidays when Yizkor is recited, it is customary to light a memorial (*yahrtzeit*) candle in the home in the evening as the holiday begins, prior to kindling the festival candles. (See *Kol Haneshamah: Shirim Uvrahot, Songs, Blessings and Rituals for the Home*, page 136.)

VIII. THE STAGES OF MOURNING:

BETZROR HAḤAYIM – THE BOND OF LIFE

Jewish tradition is remarkably diverse in its perspectives on what happens after death. As an evolving religious tradition, Judaism has passed through several stages in its thinking about the afterlife. In the biblical period, life was understood as primarily this-worldly, and whatever afterlife may have been envisioned was vaguely understood as a shadowy and ethereal semi-existence in a place called Sheol. Some biblical texts identify Gehinom as a place where punishment is meted out after death. While certain of the Psalms and one evocative passage in the book of the prophet Ezekiel seem to suggest a belief in resurrection, the testimony of the biblical writers suggests that the death of the individual was seen as final, and that eternity was understood to be in the ongoing life of the Jewish people.

With the rise of the rabbinic period beginning two centuries before the common era, a more focused concern on the fate of the individual emerged. Evidence from this period in late scripture (the Book of Daniel) and in early forms of Jewish liturgy points to an emerging belief in *teḥiyat hametim* /resurrection of the dead and *olam habah* /the [heavenly] world to come. Other teachers and authorities affirmed the eternity of the soul while denying the resurrection of the body. Some medieval forms of Jewish mysticism, as well as some forms of contemporary Hasidism, support belief in *gilgul nefashot* /reincarnation.

From the rabbinic period until the advent of modernity, whatever individual Jews may have believed about life after death – bodily resurrection, a heavenly world to come, eternal souls, reincarnation as well as any number of variants on these themes – classical Jewish liturgy affirmed that God was “*Meḥayey Hametim*” the “One who revives the dead.”

With the rise of modernity, the belief in bodily resurrection and a heavenly realm receded before science, reason and rationality. The early Reform and the later Reconstructionist prayerbooks eliminated references to resurrection and the world to come. The language of the current Reconstructionist liturgy affirms that God is “*Mehayey Kol Hay*” the “Fount of Life, who gives and renews life.”

Reconstructionist Judaism, following the insights of its founder Mordecai M. Kaplan, sees the current period in Jewish life as a this-worldly period, in contrast to the rabbinic and medieval periods of Judaism, which were other-worldly in their emphasis. While no longer affirming many of the traditional ideas about life beyond death, Reconstructionist Judaism recognizes that eternity and immortality remain important spiritual concepts that can be understood from naturalistic and humanistic perspectives.

Like our biblical ancestors, we affirm faith in the eternity of the Jewish people. Our journey through life as Jews contributes to the totality of what the Jewish people have been and will become. Through our commitments and contributions we can leave a legacy that strengthens and supports the Torah tradition as it is handed on to successive generations. And like our rabbinic ancestors, we affirm that beyond the limits of human life and the human body are our individual *neshamot* /souls with which we are graced and for which we are responsible. At death, the body comes to rest, but the soul returns to God.

Some Reconstructionists believe that the soul literally survives, cared for by a God capable of calling life itself into being, and capable of preserving it beyond its earthly journey. For other Reconstructionists, immortality is conferred through memory, as the values we lived by and the contributions we made to family, friends and the world are honored by those who live on after us. Some understand each soul to be as a wave, drawn back into the ocean from which it was essentially never separate. A smaller number of Reconstructionists no doubt find comfort and meaning in the more traditional ideas of a world to come where the injustices of this world are made right, and the peace for which we long is finally bestowed.

Jewish life today is as diverse as it has been in any of the preceding three millennia. While religious movements in Judaism may affirm or alter traditional ideas, individual Jews will choose what they believe about life beyond death – regardless of their denominational affiliation. In such a highly personal area of spiritual conviction, that is entirely appropriate. There is a wonderful diversity of Jewish views on life beyond death, and a remarkable humility in Judaism which affirms that in ways we can never quite know – and perhaps do not need to know – the sacredness of human life transcends and survives beyond death.

IX. ISSUES RELATING TO MOURNING

A. Who Is A Mourner?

Jewish tradition defines mourners as anyone having a first-degree relationship to the deceased: parents, spouses, children, and siblings. While sadness and grieving extend throughout a family system, only those in primary relationships to the deceased are, from the perspective of Jewish tradition, *obligated* to ritual observances of mourning.

So while grandchildren grieve the loss of grandparents, the grandchildren are not *obligated*, for example, to observe *shivah* or recite Kaddish – although as participants in the family system at a time of loss, they obviously partake of the atmosphere of sadness. Similarly, in-laws may experience a sense of loss, but are not obligated as mourners.

Family members who are not *obligated* as mourners often *voluntarily* assume some of the obligations of mourning. In cases where, for example, no one is left to mourn or say Kaddish for a certain relative – or, if no one else in the family shares the Jewish commitments that would support such observance – another relative might take on the *mitzvot* of mourning and Kaddish for that deceased relative. Another example might be a grandchild who is exceptionally close to a deceased grandparent, and who out of affection chooses to offer Kaddish for her/him during the period after death. There is nothing wrong with voluntarily taking on certain observances that are not required.

B. Kaddish

The Kaddish prayer originated in the days of the Talmud (c. 100-500 CE). The earliest form, the *Kaddish Derabanan* (“The Kaddish over study”), was originally offered to conclude a period of Torah learning; it had no connection with death and mourning. Over the generations, several versions of the Kaddish developed. Some versions such as the *Hatzi Kaddish* (abridged Kaddish) and the *Kaddish Shalem* (complete Kaddish) appear in synagogue liturgy as punctuation points between sections of the services.

The *Kaddish Yatom*, or Mourner’s Kaddish that we associate with mourning observances, gradually emerged in the Middle Ages. In addition to recitation at the burial and during the subsequent mourning period, today Kaddish is also recited on a *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of a death) and at *Yizkor* (synagogue memorial service held on Pesah, Shavuot, Sukkot-Shemini Atzeret and Yom Kippur).

There is one version known as the burial Kaddish which in fact makes reference to death, but it is rarely recited. The Kaddish with which most Jews are familiar does not mention death at all, but is rather an affirmation of the Godliness that inheres in life itself despite the boundaries of life. It is an affirmation that while a life has come to an end, life itself continues on with all its possibilities for the future. Perhaps that is why the prevailing theme of Kaddish is the hope for the coming of a world governed by Godliness.

· Who recites Kaddish? Keeping in mind how Jewish tradition differentiates between those *obligated* as mourners and those who may voluntarily *choose* to adopt some or all of the requirements of mourning, Kaddish is traditionally understood as an obligation only of immediate first-degree family members – the same people who are obligated to observe *shivah*. While some Jews have retained the folk practice of engaging someone to recite the Kaddish on behalf of their deceased, Reconstructionist Judaism expects mourners themselves to take responsibility for this *mitzvah*.

In many communities, it has become the custom in synagogue services for everyone to recite Kaddish. While many Jews find this

solidarity to be a source of comfort, there is a case to be made for allowing the mourners to recite the Kaddish alone, especially at the burial and perhaps during *shivah* as well. It is their first formal act of mourning, inaugurating the *shivah*; it is a time when they do truly stand apart from everyone else because of their relationship to the deceased; it is an affirmation among them of what binds them as a family. Kaddish is not a prayer intended for all people in general but for individual people in particular.

- How long does one recite Kaddish? Jewish tradition wisely demarcates an outside boundary for formal mourning, suggesting that while grieving is both necessary and appropriate, re-entering life after loss is also important. Tradition says that for a parent, one recites Kaddish for eleven months, counting from the day of the burial. For all other relatives for whom one is obligated to mourn, Kaddish is to be recited for thirty days, again counting from the burial. Many Jews find it appropriate to recite Kaddish beyond thirty days for non-parent relatives. While there is no obligation to do so, one certainly may if it provides comfort and helps on the journey through mourning. The outside boundary for regular recitation of Kaddish as a mourner is eleven months. Long-term memorialization of loved ones should be found in acts undertaken in their name and memory.

- Kaddish without a *Minyan*: Kaddish is among the prayers that traditionally require a *minyan* (prayer quorum of ten adult Jews) for recitation. One reason that comforters assemble at a *shivah* home is to allow mourners to recite Kaddish as part of prayer services.

In light of contemporary needs and people's work and family schedules, it is often difficult for mourners to attend a scheduled service at a synagogue in order to recite Kaddish following *shivah*. The question arises as to whether an individual might recite Kaddish at home, in the absence of a *minyan*, on a private basis if s/he cannot attend synagogue to do so.

Mourners during their period of formal mourning share a solidarity that is most tangible when they join with other mourners in reciting Kaddish in congregational services. Many mourners testify to the

comfort provided by regular (if not always daily) attendance at services, even if prior to the death in their family they did not regularly attend synagogue. In many ways, the often extra effort necessary to fit synagogue attendance into one's schedule is rewarded by a sense of calm, by new friendships made, and by an awareness that even in a period of need one also contributes to a community that relies on people showing up for each other.

However, in light of personal, professional, partnering and parenting schedules, it is difficult for many people to maintain even the best-intentioned commitments towards daily synagogue attendance. Additionally, it is a reality of the contemporary Jewish community that many congregations do not schedule daily services, forcing people to attend services in a congregation other than their own. Individual recitation of Kaddish, even in the absence of a *minyan*, does help maintain a pattern of ritual and regularity that is part of the journey of mourning. While joining with a community for prayer is optimal, if mourners cannot manage daily synagogue attendance and/or their congregation does not provide for daily prayer services, then Kaddish can be recited at home. Since congregations do hold services on Shabbat, mourners should make every effort to join their communities on Shabbat evening and/or Shabbat morning to recite Kaddish within the community.

Since Kaddish originated as a prayer marking the conclusion of a period of Torah study, it is also appropriate, either in addition to or perhaps in place of recitation of Kaddish (depending on individual comfort levels) for mourners to set aside a few minutes each day for some form of Torah study. In addition to the weekly Torah portion or biblical texts such as the Psalms, mourners might consult any number of publications which comprise Jewish "thoughts for a day," some of which are specifically written for the observance of a period of mourning.

C. Cremation

Cremation is a complex issue. Jewish law is unequivocal in prohibiting cremation: burial in the earth is the norm. The earliest chapters of the Torah are invoked in support of this practice. The

name *Adam* (“Earthling/Human”) derives from the noun *adamah* (earth, humus), and the Torah teaches that “dust you are and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:10). The Jewish belief in bodily resurrection, which was common until the advent of modernity, also likely influenced the prohibition on cremation.

While Reconstructionist Judaism does not affirm resurrection of the body, other contemporary concerns inform discussions regarding cremation. Prominent among them is the evocative agony of the Holocaust. Jews living in the post-Holocaust era cannot escape the association of cremation with the annihilation of European Jewry during the Second World War. For many Jews, this in itself is enough to negate cremation as a choice.

From the perspective of the needs of the mourners, cremation negates the possibilities of many Jewish rituals of mourning and memorializing – such as the burial service itself, the placing of a headstone and having a place to visit for surviving family. Cremation may not provide the sense of closure that a burial often does.

In a pluralistic Jewish community, however, some Jews will choose cremation over burial. Some raise concerns about cemeteries in terms of environmental issues and use of scarce natural resources. Others may cite concerns about the costs associated with burial in contrast to cremation (although it is important to contrast the actual costs for a traditional Jewish burial that would minimize extravagance and unnecessary additions such as flowers). Yet others choose cremation for spiritual or religious reasons as they understand them.

It is important for the family members to discuss such choices early on. Confronting cremation directives after death can cause conflict and heartache for the family if there is disagreement. A conflict of values may arise. An adult child opposed to cremation may wonder how to respect a parent’s decision for cremation. Siblings or spouses may disagree about whether to support a decision for cremation.

Families in which an individual is considering cremation should discuss and attempt to resolve any differences well in advance of

being confronted with the actual death. Adult children often feel obligated to honor the wishes of their parent/s even if the directives they leave indicate practices contrary to Jewish tradition and/or the comfort of the children. In navigating this sensitive area, some people will feel that the *mitzvah* of *kibud av v'em* /honoring one's parents is determinative. Others will want to note that Judaism does not require children to carry out directives that are contrary to Jewish law, even if that was the desire of their parent/s. Different families will arrive at different decisions. Whatever decision is reached, families should strive to maintain *Kevod hamet* /respect for the deceased.

It is important to consult with one's rabbi to ascertain her/his position on cremation and officiation, and to identify policies and customs of the local community. Rabbis can also clarify issues and discuss the issues they need to resolve.

When there is to be a cremation, it is recommended that a funeral service be conducted prior to the disposition of the body rather than holding a memorial service following the cremation. Local customs vary, but in many Jewish cemeteries ashes may be buried.

D. Jewish Holidays and *Shivah*

According to Jewish law, *shivah* is ended, regardless of how many days have been observed, when a minimum of one hour has been observed before one of the major holidays begins. These include Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Pesah, Sukkot, and Shavuot.

When a death and burial occur after a holiday has commenced but while it is still being observed (for example, the third day of Pesah), the *shivah* is supposed to be delayed until after the holiday concludes.

These practices suggest that the observances shared by all Jews (holidays) supersede those that are restricted to some Jews (in this case, mourners). They also speak to a practical reality, namely that those who might be expected to come as comforters would, in a traditional community, be involved in the observance of the holidays and unlikely to be available to provide the very support which mourners might need.

For many contemporary Jews, however, the inability to observe *shivah* fully because of the intervention of a holiday is experienced as a lost opportunity. Unable to shift between the sadness of mourning and the celebration of the holiday, many Jews are left with an incomplete experience on both counts.

It is difficult to disregard traditional teachings. The Jewish holidays are powerful; we feel the pull of community even in our moments of individual sorrow. Few Jews could imagine foregoing the Pesah Seder or Kol Nidre night in order to observe *shivah*. But it is also difficult to disregard the emotional realities of a family following a death.

It is advisable to consult with a rabbi about the appropriate accommodation of *shivah* to holidays in light of personal, family and community circumstances, customs and values. From a Reconstructionist perspective, balancing the imperatives and precedents of tradition with contemporary needs, the following adaptations may be

- If *shivah* is already being observed when Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Shavuot begins, rather than cutting off the remainder of *shivah*, the formal/public aspects of *shivah* should cease (as on Shabbat) until the holiday is concluded. A full or modified continuation of *shivah* observance might resume at that time, with the intervening holiday days being counted (as is Shabbat) as part of the seven days.
- If *shivah* is already being observed when Pesah and Sukkot commence, public observances of *shivah* should be suspended on the first and last days (which are “full” holiday observances), but intermediate days (*Hol Hamo’ed*) should count towards the days of *shivah* and may be observed as full or modified continuation of *shivah*.
- Funerals traditionally do not occur on full holiday days. A funeral may occur during intermediate days (*Hol Hamo’ed*) of Pesah or Sukkot as well as on Purim or Hanukah. When that happens, rather than waiting until after the holiday, *shivah* might begin from the

burial and continue until the onset of the closing day of the holiday, where it would either conclude or be suspended until the holiday ends, depending on the counting of *shivah* days.

· Festivals normally affect the counting of the thirty days for *sheloshim* as well, with the general tendency being for the onset of holidays to abridge or conclude the *sheloshim* even if thirty days have not elapsed. Since the function of *sheloshim* is to carry mourners through the first month of the loss, it is suggested that *sheloshim* be counted as thirty days from the funeral regardless of the intervention of holidays.

E. Infant Death

In Jewish law, the full requirements of mourning only apply when the deceased has lived beyond thirty days. While from a contemporary perspective this may appear harsh, in pre-modern times, when small communities had a high incidence of infant mortality, this was intended to be a compassionate gesture which would relieve individuals and the community from what would have been an almost continuous cycle of *shivah* and mourning.

Today, however, it is important to affirm that (with the agreement of the family) in the tragic cases of infant death, the rituals of Jewish mourning should be available to the family so that, in consultation with a rabbi, they can select the observances that would be comforting. While mourning a life of but a few hours, days or weeks is different than mourning a life lived over a period of many years, the sense of loss and grief experienced by the family deserves both respect and response from the Jewish community and Jewish tradition.

F. Interfaith Issues

In view of the changing demography of the Jewish community, with increasing numbers of intermarried and conversionary families welcomed into our congregations, a series of questions arises regarding mourning practices. In view of the complex and highly personal nature of these issues as they occur in individual families, it is helpful to consult with a rabbi when making decisions about

observances of mourning. While the evolution of community customs and norms in this area are still very much in process, the following guidelines reflect an emerging sense of how to respond sensitively to interfaith issues of Jewish rituals for mourning.

- **Mourning for Non-Jews:** The question of whether Jews are obligated to observe mourning practices for non-Jews has received consideration in traditional Jewish sources, primarily regarding the obligations that converts to Judaism have to mourn the death of their (non-Jewish) parents (and by extension, other first-degree relatives). The majority of opinions indicate that while a convert to Judaism has no obligation to observe traditional Jewish mourning practices, including Kaddish, for her/his parents, the convert may certainly do so if s/he wishes. A minority perspective suggests that such observance might be mandatory rather than optional.

It can be deduced from this reasoning that a Jewish spouse might not be obligated to observe traditional mourning practices for a non-Jewish partner but would certainly not be prohibited from doing so.

The assumptions behind this reasoning are not necessarily shared by contemporary Jews. Whereas traditional Jewish law focused on the *religious identity of the deceased*, Reconstructionist Jews would more likely focus on the *emotional and spiritual needs of the surviving family members*. The resources of Jewish tradition should help Jews throughout the period of loss and mourning. When the non-Jewish spouse/partner in an interfaith marriage dies, it is entirely appropriate for the surviving Jewish spouse/partner to observe the rituals of mourning. For these reasons, Reconstructionist Judaism encourages converts to observe Jewish mourning practices for their non-Jewish relatives.

- **Non-Jews as Mourners:** When a non-Jewish spouse/partner experiences the death of a Jewish spouse, the circumstances can be more complex. The non-Jewish spouse/partner may want a high degree of involvement with Jewish ritual, or, conversely, may not want to be under the presumption of participating in specifically Jewish observances.

The degree to which a non-Jew chooses to participate in Jewish rituals of mourning will vary. If the non-Jewish spouse/partner is an active and/or affirming member of another religious community, s/he presumably participates in the rituals and traditions of that faith community as they pertain to and help support mourners, and will look primarily to that community at a time of loss.

When the non-Jewish spouse/partner is not active in or affirming of another religious tradition, the synagogue may in fact be his/her sole religious community, notwithstanding that s/he has never converted to Judaism. A community should show support for this member as it would for any other member. There may be adaptations and/or modifications of Jewish mourning practices. For example, at a *shivah* observance there may or may not be a recitation of the Jewish evening prayers; if there is, the surviving spouse may or may not recite Kaddish but the Jewish members of the congregation present should do so as a way of the community mourning the loss.

Non-Jews are not obligated to observe *mitzvot*. They need not take on specifically Jewish observances, such as *keriah* and Kaddish. However, consider the example of a family with a Jewish father, non-Jewish mother and Jewish children. If the husband dies and the children (and other Jewish family members) are observing rituals of mourning while the wife is not, she would perhaps rightly feel excluded at a significant emotional moment in the life of the family. From that perspective, wearing a torn garment or a *keriah* ribbon and joining the recitation of the Kaddish might be appropriate.

In general, non-Jews in Reconstructionist communities would be encouraged to share in the rituals of mourning that are in the realm of custom (as examples: placing earth in a grave, washing hands on returning from the cemetery, sitting on low stools during *shivah*) while considering the appropriateness of sharing rituals that specifically presume Jewish identity (as examples: reciting Kaddish, or the benediction for the *keriah*).

X. CONCLUSION

The Bible teaches:

For everything there is a season,

A time for every experience under heaven.

A time to be born and a time to die;

A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to grieve and a time to dance;

A time to seek and a time to lose;

A time to keep and a time to let go;

A time to tear and a time to mend. (Ecclesiastes, chapter 3)

Each generation, given the gift of life by those who came before, must eventually confront the loss of life. Mortality is the common condition of humanity, transcending religions, cultures and nations. Our human relationships give us warmth, meaning, companionship and love. And when those relationships are severed by death, we are, appropriately, plunged into despair and grief.

Before we can let go of those we have loved, we pause. We pause in order to take note of a life that has come to its end. We pause to acknowledge grief, and we pause long enough to allow those who grieve to be surrounded by those who love them. And we pause because whenever parting comes, it comes too soon, and we do not want to have to say goodbye.

We look for the strength to withstand the sadness of loss and for the courage to endure in the presence of death. We pray for the ability to give as well as to receive comfort in our moments of mourning. We search for light amidst the darkness, striving to accept the blessing of life itself which death so often seeks to deny. Judaism celebrates life as a blessing and a gift, and occasions of loss can make us aware – as perhaps no other occasions can – of the need to cherish each moment of life that we are given.

As Jews, we face the common human moment of grieving as other Jews have faced it before us, strengthened by a Power that bestows life and redeems us from death, comforted by the symbols and

traditions of our people and by the friends and family who sit with us and reassure us with their presence. In our inevitable moments of loss, may we be granted the peace that comes with the passing of time and the sustaining power of love which never dies. And may we so lead our lives that when the time comes for others to memorialize us, they will do so with affection, respect and love.

RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

...is a progressive, contemporary approach to Jewish life that integrates a deep respect for traditional Judaism with the insights and ideas of contemporary social, intellectual and spiritual life.

Judaism as the Culture of the Jewish People

For Reconstructionists, Judaism is more than Jewish religion; Judaism is the entire cultural legacy of the Jewish people. Religion is central; Jewish spiritual insights and religious teachings give meaning and purpose to our lives. Yet our creativity as expressed through art, music and drama, languages and literature, and our relationship with the land of Israel itself are also integral parts of Jewish culture. Each of these aspects provides a gateway into the Jewish experience that can enrich and inspire us.

Community as Cornerstone

While deeply connected to the historical experience of the Jewish people, we find a profound sense of belonging in our contemporary communities as well. This connection often leads to increased ritual observance and experimentation with the ritual rhythms of Jewish life. We find meaning in rediscovering the richness of traditional ritual and creating new observances which respond to our contemporary communal and personal cycles.

As we come to know ourselves as part of a community and create our own patterns of religious living, we create the context in which to join the spiritual quest that is so important in our time. In moments of prayer, song, social action and story we experience the reality of God, and we join in study and discussion where searching is as central as finding.

Reconstructionist communities are characterized by their respect for such core values as democratic process, pluralism and accessibility. In this way, they create participatory, inclusive, egalitarian communities committed to exploring Jewish life with dedication, warmth and enthusiasm.

Finding Holiness

Every religion tells its own story as a sacred story; Jewish tradition is no different. In its classical texts, Judaism presents itself as originating in the revelation of God to the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai. The contemporary historical study of religions and cultures teaches us that they are better understood as a natural part of the experiences of communities that seek to live by sacred values and practices.

Reconstructionist Jews thus understand Judaism to be the outcome of the religious experience of the Jewish people in their search for meaning and sacred living throughout history rather than revelation from a supernatural God. Put differently, Reconstructionists see Jewish tradition, culture and religion as having grown “from the ground up” instead of from the “[mountain-]top down.”

Understanding Judaism as having been created by the Jewish people does not make it less sacred to us. Knowing that Jewish tradition has undergone a long period of development, change and adaptation does not weaken its claim on our lives, but rather can strengthen our connection to our tradition. We hear in that tradition the voices of generations of Jews who sought to record their deepest values, most profound religious insights and highest hopes. While Reconstructionists do not take the Torah literally, we do take it seriously as a record of our ancestors’ search for moral principles and spiritual practices that can help us become fully human.

Patterns of Practice

“Torah” means “teaching.” In Jewish tradition, *talmud Torah*, the study of Torah, is a life-long obligation and opportunity. Reconstructionists are committed to a serious engagement with the texts and teachings, as well as the art, literature and music of tradition. But we are not passive recipients; we are instead challenged to enter the conversation of the generations and to hear voices other than our own, but to add our own voices as well.

Reconstructionist Judaism is respectful of traditional Jewish observances but also open to new interpretations and forms of religious expression. As Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881-1983), the founder of Reconstructionism, taught, tradition has “a vote, but not a veto.” Reconstructionists share a commitment to making Judaism their own by finding in it joy, meaning, and ideas they can believe. Unlike Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, Reconstructionism does not view inherited Jewish law (*halahah*) as binding. We continue to turn to Jewish law for guidance, if not always for governance. We recognize that in the contemporary world, individuals and communities make their own choices with regard to religious practice and ritual observance.

But where Reform Judaism emphasizes individual autonomy, Reconstructionism emphasizes the importance of religious community in shaping individual patterns of observance. Belonging to a community leads us to take the patterns of observance within that community seriously; our choices do not exist independently, but are made in response to our community as part of our participating in it. Reconstructionism thus retains a warmly traditional (and fully egalitarian) approach to Jewish religious practice.

We encourage individual Jews, through study and exploration of Jewish tradition, to find their own place along

the spectrum of observance. This approach is woven through the Guide to Mourning earlier in this volume. Explanations, options and recommendations are presented so that the resources of Jewish tradition can provide support and meaning to mourners, even as it is acknowledged that differing individual and family circumstances will shape different patterns of observance.

Spiritual Seeking

We live in an age of spiritual seeking, a time in which the search for transcendent values and deeper meanings invites many of us back to our own religious traditions, to rediscover the rich insights of those who came before us on the spiritual journey. Reconstructionist Judaism has always been open to new approaches to thinking about God, to alternative ways of experiencing the Divine in our lives, and to honest wrestling with the inherited insights of our ancestors.

Reconstructionists hold diverse ideas about God, but we share an emphasis on Godliness – those hopes, beliefs and values within us that impel us to work for a better world, that give us strength and solace in times of need, that challenge us to grow and that deepen our joy in moments of celebration.

Reconstructionist prayerbooks such as this one speak of God beyond the gender concepts of male/female, and beyond the traditional metaphor of “king of the universe.” For example, in our prayerbooks God is addressed as, among other things, “The Healer,” “The Teacher,” “The Comforter” and “The Presence.” We are engaged in the spiritual adventure of discovering the many attributes of the one God.

Ethics and Values

In a time of wide debate about values, morals and ethics, religion is often assumed to have answers for any and every situation. But as we come to know the variety of cultures and religions that exist on our small planet, we come to know that the discovery of eternal teachings arises from the respectful exchange of perspectives and ideas among people — not from authoritarian assertions of the truth or the primacy of one religion or one religious community over another. It is in this context that we see ourselves as having an obligation to social justice and doing the work of *tikun olam*, improving our world. Reconstructionist communities emphasize such acts of social justice alongside prayer and study as an essential part of their spiritual practice.

Reconstructionist Judaism affirms that religion can and must be a powerful force for promoting communal discussion about ethics and values. The Torah tradition itself is a deep and wide resource for this project. Yet we know that generations of Jews have sharpened and distilled the ethical insights of Judaism as a result of their encounter with other cultures and traditions, and so it is in our time.

The Place of Community

The centrality of contemporary religious community cannot be overestimated. In an age of rapid communication, personal and professional mobility, intellectual excitement and cross-cultural exchange, there is a need for connection, conviction and commitment. For Jews, the congregation or havurah provides a primary community through which we can connect to other Jews, to the inherited richness of Jewish culture, and to the religious resources of Jewish religion. To engage us as fully as possible, Reconstructionist communities emphasize participation and inclusivity.

Especially in moments of the lifecycle, such as times of death and mourning, we want to be able to count on our communities to provide connection and comfort. Reconstructionists take seriously the imperative of the Talmud, “Do not separate yourself from the community.” We strive to create covenantal communities, in which individuals faithfully support one another and respond to individual needs.

Building the Future

Reconstructionist Jews have strong commitments both to tradition and to the search for contemporary meaning. We are engaged in the ongoing task of building a relationship to our Judaism that is faithful to the past and relevant to the present. We want to create a Judaism for our day that is richly traditional, spiritually alive and intellectually honest. We encourage contemporary Jews to enhance their own Jewish lives by reclaiming our shared heritage and becoming active participants in the building of the Jewish future.

For More Information

We recommend *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach* (revised, 2000) by Rabbis Rebecca T. Alpert and Jacob J. Staub. This book, along with other relevant materials, is available by calling the Reconstructionist Press at 877.JRF.PUBS, or online at www.jrf.org.

The Reconstructionist Movement

The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF), founded in 1955, is the rapidly growing synagogue arm of the Reconstructionist movement, serving its 100 congregations and havurot spread across North America. A voice of Reconstructionist Judaism in the greater Jewish world, JRF provides a wide array of services to its affiliates. National and

regional offices offer consultation on all key areas of congregational life, including youth and adult education, leadership development, outreach and community-building initiatives, fundraising and budgeting as well as musical, liturgical and other resources. A broad selection of books of contemporary Jewish interest are published by the Reconstructionist Press, including the lively periodical *Reconstructionism Today*, the six-volume prayerbook series *Kol Haneshamah* (this volume represents the most recent addition to the series), a Passover Haggadah and CD, educational materials, musical recordings keyed to the liturgy and related materials.

The number of affiliated congregations and havurot of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation is increasing at a pace that makes it the fastest growing liberal Jewish movement in North America. People experience Reconstructionist congregations as open, inclusive and egalitarian, both in principle and in practice. JRF-affiliated communities are autonomous, progressive and democratic. For more information on Reconstructionist publications and about congregations near you, contact:

The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
7804 Montgomery Avenue, Suite 9
Elkins Park, PA 19027
215.782.8500
www.jrf.org e-mail: *info@jrf.org*

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), founded in 1968 to serve the Jewish people, is dedicated to studying and teaching Judaism as an evolving religious civilization, and to advancing the universal freedom, justice and peace that are Judaism's core values. Its mission is to train rabbis, cantors and other Jewish leaders to teach Torah in its broadest terms and to strengthen leadership in congregations and other settings throughout the Jewish community in North Amer-

ica. For over thirty years, the College has provided scholarship and training to strengthen that community, advance the growth of the Reconstructionist movement, and spread its ideas and ideals throughout the Jewish world. The RRC publishes *The Reconstructionist*, a journal of contemporary Jewish thought and practice. For information about College programs, contact:

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
1299 Church Road
Wyncote, PA 19095
215.576.0800
www.rrc.edu e-mail: rrcinfo@rrc.edu

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA), founded in 1974, is the professional association of Reconstructionist rabbis. Comprising over 200 members, the RRA has three primary missions. First, the RRA serves as a collegial community, in which professional and personal support and resources are provided to rabbis. Second, the RRA represents the rabbinic voice within the Reconstructionist movement, bringing the teachings, stories and traditions of Judaism to bear on contemporary issues and challenges, and helping to define Reconstructionist positions on Jewish issues for our time. Third, the RRA represents Reconstructionist rabbis in the larger Jewish and general communities, through participation in programs, commissions, and other activities. Contact:

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
1299 Church Road
Wyncote, PA 19095
215.576.5210
www.ReconstructionistRabbis.org
e-mail: info@theRRA.org

SOURCES

Except as indicated below, all English translation through page 136 is the work of Joel Rosenberg (contemporary poet, essayist, professor of Hebrew Literature and Judaic Studies at Tufts University). All calligraphy and other art work is by Betsy Platkin Teutsch. Citations for previously published commentary, and full attributions for unpublished material by Mordecai M. Kaplan (American rabbi, 1881-1983; founder of Reconstructionist Judaism), are included below. To avoid confusion, sometimes a title or initial phrase is given. Refer to the key on page vii for full names of commentators. Biographies of authors of original works appear below. Full credits for outside sources and commentary are located in ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, pages x-xii.

Page 2

“We usually light...blessing for us all,” by Jennifer Feldman (Reconstructionist rabbi).

“We have lit...towards the light,” by David A. Teutsch (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 3

“*Halīḥah Lekeysaryah (Eli, Eli)*” by Hannah Szenes (Zionist poet, martyred during World War II). Translation adapted from *Songs and Hymns, A Musical Supplement to Gates of Prayer*.

“*Kol Ha’olam Kulo.*” Attributed to Nahman of Bratzlav (Hasidic rabbi, 1772-1810).

Page 4

“*Limnot Yameynu (Treasure Each Day).*” Translation by Yitzhak Husbands-Hankin (contemporary American rabbi).

Page 5

“An Introduction for Holiday Times” by David A. Teutsch (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 6

“This is my prayer...” by Hillel Bavli (Hebrew poet, 1893-1961). Originally appeared in *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, edited by Jules Harlow, page 412. Translated here by Joel Rosenberg.

Page 7

Louis Untermeyer (American poet, 1885-1977), “Prayer” in *Modern American Poetry*.

Page 12

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, page 248.

Page 13

Ibid, page 249.

Page 14

Adapted from *Ten Rungs: Hasidic Sayings*, collected and edited by Martin Buber (European-Israeli religious philosopher, 1878-1965), page 29.

Page 16

Interpretive Version adapted by Joy D. Levitt from the 1945 Reconstructionist *Sabbath Prayer Book*, pages 28-29.

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, page 262.

Page 17

Interpretive Version adapted from “Unending Love” by Rami M. Shapiro (Reconstructionist rabbi), published in *Tangents*.

Ruth Firestone Brin (contemporary American poet), “In Praise/GENESIS 1, 2” in *Harvest: Collected Poems and Prayers*.

Page 18

Marcia Falk (contemporary American poet) formulated the *berahah* version “*Nevareh et eyn haḥayim...*” in *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival*.

Page 19

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*, 1920s.

Page 20

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*.

Page 23

Ruth Firestone Brin (contemporary American poet), “A Woman’s Meditation” in *Harvest: Collected Poems and Prayers*.

Page 24

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, page 172.

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, 1970s.

Page 33

Emmanuel Eydoux, pen name of Roger Eisinger (modern French Jewish author). This translation by Jonathan Magonet

originally appeared in *Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship*, page 402.

Page 34

Rami M. Shapiro (Reconstructionist rabbi), “Who is Like You” in *Tangents*.

Page 38

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*, 1940s.

Page 39

“When fears multiply...” by Hershel Matt (contemporary American rabbi), published as “*Hashkivenu*” in *Raayonot*, Volume 3, Number 2.

Page 41

Laura Gilpin (contemporary American anthropologist), “Life After Death” in *The Hocus-Pocus of the Universe*.

Page 47

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*.

Page 51

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Future of the American Jew*, page 381.

Page 52

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Future of the American Jew*, page 79.

Page 53

Abraham Joshua Heschel (European-American rabbi and theologian, 1907-1972), *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, page 9.

Page 54

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*.

Page 57

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Notes*.

Page 59

Wendell Berry (contemporary American poet), “The Peace of Wild Things” in *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*.

Page 61

Adapted from an article by Morris Adler (American rabbi, 1906-1966) in *The American Jewish Monthly*.

Page 63

Selection from *Your Word Is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer*, edited and translated by Arthur Green and Barry W. Holtz. Reprinted by Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993.

Page 64

Pinḥas of Koretz was an eighteenth-century Hasidic rabbi.

Page 67

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, page 360.

Abraham Joshua Heschel (European-American rabbi and theologian, 1907-1972), *God in Search of Man*, pages 49 and 48.

Page 73

Yehuda Amichai (contemporary Israeli poet), “*Tosefet Lahazon Hashalom*/An Appendix To The Vision of Peace,” translated by Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt in *Great Tranquility: Questions and Answers*.

Page 76

Alternative Amidah by Avi Winokur (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 90

Mordecai M. Kaplan, "Sermon at S.A.J.," 1922.

"As the hand..." adapted from *Ten Rungs: Hasidic Sayings*, collected and edited by Martin Buber (European-Israeli religious philosopher, 1878-1965), page 39.

Leonard Cohen (contemporary American poet and songwriter), "Holy is Your name..." from *Book of Mercy*.

Page 91

Danny Siegel (contemporary American poet), "A Rebbi's Proverb" in *And God Braided Eve's Hair*.

Page 93

"When senseless hatred..." adapted from *Ten Rungs: Hasidic Sayings*, collected and edited by Martin Buber (European-Israeli religious philosopher, 1878-1965), page 79.

Adapted from Mordecai M. Kaplan, *S.A.J. Review*, 1928.

Page 94

Alternative Version by Rami M. Shapiro (Reconstructionist rabbi), published as "It Is Up To Us" in *Tangents*.

Page 95

Alternative Version by Judy Chicago (contemporary American artist and poet), entitled "Merger." Capitalization is identical to that in the original.

Page 96

Edna St. Vincent Millay (modern American poet), “Dirge Without Music” in *Collected Poems*.

Page 97

Zelda Mishkowsky (Israeli poet, 1914-1984), “*Leḥol Ish Yesh Shem*/Each of Us Has a Name,” translated by Marcia Falk.

Page 98

“Birth is a Beginning” by Alvin I. Fine (contemporary American rabbi). This poem originally appeared in *Gates of Repentance*, pages 283-284.

Page 99

Excerpted from “The Seven of Pentacles” in *To Be of Use* by Marge Piercy (contemporary American poet and novelist).

“Love is not changed...” from *Eurydice* by Edith Sitwell (British poet, 1887-1964).

Page 100

Harvey J. Fields (contemporary American rabbi), “In Praise of the Living.”

Page 101

Evelyn Mehlman (Jewish musicologist and composer, 1915-1989; first woman graduate of the Cantor’s Institute at The Jewish Theological Seminary). “We Turn Our Thoughts...” first appeared in the Yizkor memory book of the West End Synagogue.

Page 104

“To My Father.” Believed to be the work of Blaga Dmitrova.

Page 106

Juanita de Long (contemporary poet), “Do not come when I am dead...” in *The World’s Greatest Religious Poetry*.

Page 107

Nancy Wood (contemporary American poet), “Hold on to What is Good” in *Many Winters*.

Page 116

Malka Heifetz Tussman (Yiddish-American poet, 1896-1987), “I Know Not Your Ways,” translated by Marcia Falk.

Page 118

“Paths of Fullness” by Brant Rosen (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 119

“As this *shivah*...” by David A. Teutsch (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 120

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Journal*, 1933.

Page 122

Order of Counting the Omer from the 1963 Reconstructionist *Daily Prayer Book*, pages 108ff.

Page 128

“Miriam Hanevi’ah” by Leila Gal Berner (Reconstructionist rabbi).

Page 132

“*Hamavdil*” by Isaac ibn Ghayat (eleventh-century Sephardic rabbi).

INDEX

- Acknowledgments, x
- Adon Olam, 120
- Afternoon Service, 8
- Aleynu, 88
- Aleynu, Alternative Versions, 94
- Amidah, 44
- Amidah, Alternative, 76
- Aninut, 140
- Ashrey, 8
- Avinu Malkenu, 82
- Barechu, 12
- Berahot
 - Alternative Formulations, 18
 - Upon hearing of death, 141
- Burial, 146
- Commentators, vii
- Conclusion of Shivah, 134
- Cremation, 163
- Eli, Eli, 3
- Eliyahu Hanavi, 128
- Esa Eynay, 4
- Evening Service, 12
- Eulogy, 144
- Funeral, 143
- Haliḥah Lekeysaryah (Eli, Eli), 3
- Hamavdil, 132
- Havdalah, 128
- Hesped, 144
- Ḥevrah kadishah, 142
- Holidays, Shivah and, 165
- Infant death, 167

Interfaith issues, 167
 Introduction, xiii
 Kaddish
 About, 161
 Ḥatzi, 42
 Mourners', 102
 Titkabal, 86
 Kedushah, 50
 Keri'ah, 141
 Kol Ha'olam Kulo, 3
 Life after Death, 158
 Lighting the Memorial Candle, 2
 Limnot Yameynu (Treasure Each Day), 4
 Ma'ariv, 12
 Minḥah, 8
 Miriam Hanevi'ah, 128
 Mourner, Who is, 160
 Mourners' Kaddish, 102
 Mourning, Length of, 152
 Mourning Practices, Guide to, 137
 Aninut, 140
 Beraḥot, Upon hearing of death, 140
 Burial, 146
 Cremation, 163
 Eulogy, 144
 Funeral, 143
 Hesped, 144
 Ḥevrah kadishah, 142
 Holidays, Shivah and, 165
 Infant Death, 167
 Interfaith Issues, 167
 Kaddish, About, 161
 Keri'ah, 141

- Life after Death, 158
- Mourner, Who is, 160
- Mourning, Length of, 152
- Non-Jews
 - Mourning for, 168
 - As mourners, 168
 - Organ donation, 142
 - Se'udat havra'ah, 148
 - Shivah, 149
 - Sheloshim, 152
 - Shomer/shomeret, 141
 - Taharah, 142
 - Unveiling, 156
 - Yahrtzeit, 155
- Non-Jews
 - Mourning for, 168
 - As mourners, 168
- Notes on Usage, xv
- Omer, Counting the, 122
- Organ donation, 142
- Preface, Tefilot leveyt ha'evel, viii
- Preface, Limot Hōl, ix
- Preludes to Kaddish, 96
- Psalms
 - Psalm 23, 116
 - Psalm 23, Interpretive Version, 118
 - Psalm 27, 108
 - Psalm 49, 112
 - Psalm 145 (Ashrey), 8
- Readings
 - End of Shivah, 119
 - Introduction for Holiday Times, 5
 - Loss of a Gay or Lesbian Lover, 105

Loss of a Loved One, 106
 Loss of a Parent, 104
 Opening Meditations, 5
 Preludes to Kaddish, 96
 Reconstructionist Judaism, About, 172
 Sefirat Ha'omer, 122
 Se'udat havra'ah, 148
 Shavu'a Tov, 131
 Shema and its Blessings, 12
 Shivah
 About, 149
 Conclusion of, 134
 Holidays and, 165
 Sheloshim, 152
 Shomer/Shomeret, 141
 Songs:
 Eliyahu Hanavi, 128
 Esa Eynay, 4
 Haliḥah Lekeysaryah (Eli, Eli), 3
 Hamavdil, 132
 Kol Ha'olam Kulo, 3
 Limnot Yameynu (Treasure Each Day), 4
 Miriam Hanevi'ah, 128
 Sources, 180
 Taharah, 142
 Treasure Each Day, 4
 Unveiling, 135
 About, 156
 Yahrtzeit, 154

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is published by the Reconstructionist Press, which is sponsored by the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation. The JRF also publishes *Reconstructionism Today*. Founded in 1955, the JRF is the congregational arm of the Reconstructionist movement. The JRF does outreach, provides a variety of services to its congregations and havurot, and does regional and movement-wide programming.

To order copies of this book, or to obtain book lists or other information, please contact:

JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FEDERATION

Beit Devora

7504 Montgomery Avenue, Suite #9

Elkins Park PA 19027-2649

Phone: 1-215-782-8500

Fax: 1-215-782-8805

Email: info@jrf.org

Website: www.jrf.org
