

N'ILAH

Again the day rolls
into darkness; the sky
spills its pinks and purples,
draining to blackness. Deep
inside there is a closing,
a small gate
swinging shut in the mind.
Those few last thoughts
rush through, and a life
is sealed. Outside the temple
a lone bird sounds its call,
waits for response.

El Nora Alilah

אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה, אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה,
הַמַּצֵּא לָנוּ מַחִילָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה.

*El nora alilah, El nora alilah,
hamtzei lanu m'chilah, bishat han'ilah.*

מִתִּי מִסְפָּר קְרוּאִים, לָךְ עֵין נוֹשָׂאִים,
וּמִסְלָדִים בַּחִילָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*M'tei mispar k'ruim, l'cha ayin nosim,
umsal'dim b'chilah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

שׁוֹפְכִים לָךְ בַּפֶּשֶׁם, מַחֶה פֶּשַׁעַם וְכַחֲשָׁם,
הַמַּצִּיאַם מַחִילָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*Shofchim l'cha nafsham, m'cheih fisham v'chachasham,
hamtzi-eim m'chilah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

יְיָ לָהֶם לְסִתְרָה, וְהִלְצָם מִמָּאֲרָה,
וְחִתְּמָם לְהוֹד וּלְגִילָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*Heyeih lahem l'sitrah, v'hal'tzeim mim'eirah,
v'chotmeim l'hod ulgilah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

חֹן אוֹתָם וְרַחֵם, וְכֹל לוֹחֵץ וְלוֹחֵם,
עֲשֵׂה בָּהֶם פְּלִילָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*Chon otam v'racheim, v'chol locheitz v'locheim,
aseih vahem f'lilah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

זְכוֹר צְדָקָת אֲבִיהֶם, וְחַדֵּשׁ אֶת יְמֵיהֶם,
בְּקֶדֶם וּתְחִלָּה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*Z'chor tzidkat avihem, v'chadeish et y'meihem,
k'kedem ut-chilah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

קְרָא נָא שְׁנַת רָצוֹן, וְהֵשֶׁב שְׂאֵר הַצֹּאן,
לְאַהֲלִיבָה וְאַהֲלָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*K'ra na sh'nat ratzon, v'hasheiv sh'ar hatzon,
l'Oholivah v'Oholah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת, הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנוֹת,
בְּדִיצָה וּבִצְהָלָה, בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה. אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה ...
*Tizku l'shanim rabot, habanim v'habanot,
b'ditzah uvtzoholah, bishat han'ilah. El nora alilah ...*

EL NORA ALILAH אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה. Composed by Rabbi Moses Ibn Ezra (ca. 1055–1138), this *piyut* (religious poem) from the Sephardic tradition resounds with urgency, hope, and faith in the special power of prayers uttered in this closing hour of Yom Kippur.

הַתְּפִלָּה

HaT'filah · Standing before God

Ki-kadosh hayom laAdoneinu;

v'al-tei-atzeivu —

ki chedvat Adonai hi ma-uz'chem.

כִּי־קָדוֹשׁ הַיּוֹם לַאֲדֹנֵינוּ,

וְאַל־תִּצְעֲבוּ,

כִּי־חֲדָוַת ייִ הִיא מַעֲזָכֶם.

This day is holy to our God. Do not be sad,
for your rejoicing in the Holy One is the
source of your strength.

Adonai, s'fatai tiftach —

ufi yagid t'hilatecha.

אֲדֹנָי, שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח,

וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

Adonai, open my lips,
that my mouth may declare Your praise.

THIS DAY IS HOLY כִּי־קָדוֹשׁ הַיּוֹם, Nehemiah 8:10. Nehemiah's words were meant to comfort and reassure the community of Jews recently returned from exile in Babylonia (5th century BCE). When he saw the people grieving over their failure to fulfill the mitzvot, he urged them to move from repentance to celebration, teaching that the proper way to honor God is through joyful, life-affirming acts.

For those who have reached the closing hour of Yom Kippur, this verse is a reminder that we do not achieve spiritual fortitude through excessive self-recrimination and despair. Rejoicing in the Holy One is the source of our strength. We enter the last *T'filah* of this sacred day encouraged to cultivate our own sense of joy.

ADONAI, OPEN MY LIPS אֲדֹנָי, שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח, Psalm 51:17.

<i>Baruch atah, Adonai,</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ,
<i>Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu,</i>	אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ:
<i>Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak,</i>	אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק,
<i>v'Elohei Yaakov;</i>	וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב,
<i>Elohei Sarah, Elohei Rivkah,</i>	אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה,
<i>Elohei Rachel, v'Elohei Leah.</i>	אֱלֹהֵי רָחֵל, וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה,
<i>HaEl hagadol hagibor v'hanora —</i>	הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא,
<i>El elyon,</i>	אֵל עֲלִיוֹן,
<i>gomeil chasadim tovim, v'koneih hakol; —</i>	גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל —
<i>v'zocheir chasdei avot v'imahot,</i>	וְזוֹכֵר חֲסֵדֵי אֲבוֹת וְאִמּוֹת,
<i>umeivi g'ulah livnei v'neihem</i>	וּמְבִיא גְאֻלָּה לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם,
<i>l'maan sh'mo b'ahavah.</i>	לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.
<i>Zochreinu l'chayim,</i>	זָכְרֵנוּ לְחַיִּים,
<i>Melech chafeitz bachayim;</i>	מֶלֶךְ חָפֵץ בַּחַיִּים.
<i>v'chotmeinu b'sefer hachayim,</i>	וְחֹתֵמֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים,
<i>l'maancha, Elohim chayim.</i>	לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים.
<i>Melech ozeir umoshia umagein.</i>	מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמִגֵּן —

You are the Source of blessing, Adonai, our God
and God of our fathers and mothers:
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob;
God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah;
exalted God, dynamic in power, inspiring awe,
God sublime, Creator of all —
yet You offer us kindness,
recall the loving deeds of our fathers and mothers,
and bring redemption to their children's children,
acting in love for the sake of Your name.

Remember us for life, sovereign God who treasures life.

Seal us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, God of life.

Sovereign of salvation, Pillar of protection —

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם וְעֵזְרַת שָׂרָה.

Baruch atah, Adonai, magein Avraham v'ezrat Sarah.

Blessed are You in our lives, Adonai, Shield of Abraham, Sustainer of Sarah.

In Hebrew, choose either hakol or meitim.

*Atah gibor l'olam, Adonai,
m'chayeih hakol/meitim atah,
rav l'hoshia.*

Morid hatal.

*M'chalkeil chayim b'chesed,
m'chayeih hakol/meitim
b'rachamim rabim.*

*Someich noflim,
v'rofei cholim umatir asurim,
umkayeim emunato lisheinei afar.
Mi chamocha, baal g'vurot;
umi domeh-lach? —
melech meimit umchayeh
umatzmiach y'shuah.*

*Mi chamocha, El harachamim? —
zocheir y'tzurav l'chayim b'rachamim.*

V'ne-eman atah l'hachayot hakol/meitim.

אַתָּה גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם, אֲדֹנָי,
מַחְיֵה הַכּוֹלִים אַתָּה,
רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

מוֹרִיד הַטֵּל.

מַכְלִיל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד,
מַחְיֵה הַכּוֹלִים
בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים.

סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים,
וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים,
וּמְקַיֵּם אֱמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר.
מִי כְמוֹךָ, בַּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת,
וּמִי דוֹמֶה לָךְ,
מֶלֶךְ מֵמִית וּמַחְיֶה
וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה.

מִי כְמוֹךָ, אֵל הָרַחֲמִים,
זוֹכֵר יְצוּרָיו לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים.

וְנֶאֱמָן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת הַכּוֹלִים.

Your life-giving power is forever, Adonai — with us in life and in death.
You liberate and save, cause dew to descend;
and with mercy abundant, lovingly nurture all life.
From life to death, You are the force that flows without end —
You support the falling, heal the sick, free the imprisoned and confined;
You are faithful, even to those who rest in the dust.

Power-beyond-Power, from whom salvation springs,
Sovereign over life and death — who is like You?

Merciful God, who compares with You?

With tender compassion You remember all creatures for life.

Faithful and true, worthy of our trust —

You sustain our immortal yearnings; in You we place our undying hopes.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, מַחְיֵה הַכּוֹלִים.

Baruch atah, Adonai, m'chayeih hakol/hameitim.

Wellspring of blessing, Power eternal, You are the One who gives and renews all life.

Sh'ma na!

S'lach na hayom,

avur ki fanah yom.

Unhalelcha nora v'ayom, kadosh.

שְׁמַע נָא.

סְלַח נָא הַיּוֹם,

עֲבוּר כִּי פָנָה יוֹם.

וְנִהְלַלְךָ בּוֹרָא וְאִים, קָדוֹשׁ.

Hear us this day!

Forgive us, we pray — for the day begins to fade.

Your holiness awakens deepest awe.

Your praise shall be our song.

Uvchein ulcha taaleh k'dushah,

ki atah Eloheinu melech

mocheil v'solei-ach.

וּבְכֵן וּלְךָ תַעֲלֶה קְדוּשָׁה,

כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ

מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ.

Our Sovereign,

God of pardon and forgiveness,

let these words of sanctity ascend to You.

Pit-chu-lanu shaarei-tzedek;

navo vam, nodeh Yah.

פְּתַחוּ-לָנוּ שַׁעֲרֵי-צֶדֶק,

נִבְאֵיָם, בּוֹדֶה יְהוָה.

Open the gates of righteousness for us;

open the gates that we may enter and praise the Eternal.

Open the gates for us, for all Israel, and for people everywhere:

the gates of acceptance and atonement, beauty and creativity;

the gates of dignity, empathy, and faith;

the gates of generosity and hope, insight and joy;

the gates of knowledge and love, meaning and nobility;

the gates of openness, patience, and the quest for peace;

the gates of renewal, song, and tranquility;

the gates of understanding and virtue;

the gates of wisdom and wonder; exultation, youth and old age;

the gates of Zion — reborn and rebuilt in our time.

Open the gates; open them wide — show us the way to enter.

אתה נוֹתֵן יָד

V'chotmeinu

b'sefer hachayim

livrachah v'likdushah —

ki atah kadosh, v'shimcha kadosh;

usharecha bikdushah nikaneis.

וְחַתְּמֵנוּ

בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים

לְבִרְכָּה וּלְקִדְשָׁהּ,

כִּי אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ, וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ,

וְשָׁרְעֶיךָ בְּקִדְשָׁהּ נִכְנָס.

Seal us

for holiness and blessing in the Book of Life —

for You are holy and Your name is holy;

and we yearn to enter Your gates in holiness.

Ki atah notein yad l'foshim;

vimincha f'shutah l'kabeil shavim.

כִּי אַתָּה נוֹתֵן יָד לְפוֹשְׁעִים,

וְיְמִינְךָ פְּשׁוּטָה לְקַבֵּל שָׁבִים.

For You hold out Your hand to those who do wrong;

Your right hand opens wide to receive those who return.

YOU HOLD OUT YOUR HAND יָד אַתָּה נוֹתֵן יָד. Three times in *N'ilah* the Hebrew words *atah notein yad* are spread wide across the page to proclaim this message: we have prayed, fasted, confessed, and asked forgiveness — all to the best of our ability. Now, instead of the long confession, *Al Cheit*, we say: “You hold out Your hand.” That is, instead of a final litany of sin, we say: “You reach out to us.”

The word *yad* can also mean “power.” In that sense, *atah notein yad* (“You give us power”) suggests that, in these last moments of Yom Kippur, God offers us the freedom and strength to turn our hands into instruments of blessing, to transform our myriad words of atonement into deeds of goodness.

<i>Shaarei armon —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי אֲרָמוֹן
<i>m'heirah tiftach l'vo-arei amon!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְבוֹאֲרֵי אֲמוֹן.
<i>Shaarei g'nuzim —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי גְבוּזִים
<i>m'heirah tiftach l'dat'cha achuzim!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְדַתְּךָ אַחֲוִיִּים.
<i>Shaarei heichal hanechmadim —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי הַיֵּכָל הַנְּחָמָדִים
<i>m'heirah tiftach livudim!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְוַעֲוִדִים.
<i>Shaarei z'vul machanayim —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי זְבוּל מַחֲנֵי
<i>m'heirah tiftach l'chachlili einayim!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְחַכְלִילֵי עֵינָיִם.
<i>Shaarei tohorah —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי טְהוֹרָה
<i>m'heirah tiftach l'yafah uvarah!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְיָפָה וּבָרָה.
<i>Shaarei cheter hamyuman —</i>	שַׁעְרֵי כֶּתֶר הַמִּיָּמֶן
<i>m'heirah tiftach l'lo alman!</i>	מִהֲרָה תִּפְתָּח לְלֹא אֱלָמָן.

Gates of Heaven! Gates of Wisdom's Palace!

Open them now to the people who seek life's meaning in Torah.

Gates of Mystery! Gates of Hidden Truth!

Open them now to those who hold fast and refuse to give up.

Gates of Splendor! Gates of Beauty!

Open them now to Your faithful congregation.

Gates of Your Presence! A Vision of Glory!

Open them now to the red-eyed and weary from fasting and prayer.

Gates of Purity! Gates of Radiance!

Open them now to the people who glow with inner light.

Gates of Sovereignty! Gates of Strength!

Open them now to the people You have never abandoned.

GATES OF HEAVEN שַׁעְרֵי אֲרָמוֹן. This liturgical poem (*piyut*) by Rabbi Simeon ben Isaac Abun (ca. 925–1020) was written to introduce the *K'dushah* — a vision of the heavenly hosts joining the congregation of Israel in proclaiming God's glory. Focusing on the mutual love and loyalty that unite God and the Jewish people, the poem evokes an exhausted community yearning for a glimpse of heaven: transcendent beauty and meaning.

WISDOM'S PALACE. This translation of the words *shaarei armon* draws on the imagery in Maimonides' famous 12th-century Parable of the Palace (*Guide for the Perplexed* 3:51), which describes those who seek to draw closer to the divine Sovereign through the intellectual and spiritual quest for truth.

Atah kadosh, v'shimcha kadosh —

ukdoshim b'chol yom y'hal'lucha selah.

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ, וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ,
וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יִהְיוּ לְךָ סֵלָה.

You are holy.

Your name is holy.

Seekers of holiness praise You day by day. *Selah.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

Baruch atah, Adonai, haMelech hakadosh.

You are the Source of blessing, Eternal One —

Sovereign of the sacred.

SEEKERS OF HOLINESS PRAISE YOU DAY BY DAY וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יִהְיוּ לְךָ. The Talmud gives us a way of understanding what it means to be a “seeker of holiness.” In *B’rachot* 17a we read: “A favorite saying of the rabbis of Yavneh was: I am God’s creature and my friend is God’s creature. My work is in the city and my friend’s work is in the field. I rise early for my work and my friend rises early, as well. Just as my friend does not presume to do my work, so I do not presume to do my friend’s work. In case you were to say, ‘I study much Torah and my friend studies little’ — have we not learned that, whether we do much or little, it is all one — provided we direct our hearts to heaven?” Seekers of holiness are those who devote their energies, great or small, to living in the presence of the Divine. Our tradition teaches us that the spiritual life should not be marred by competition, which leads to a “holier than thou” attitude. Rather, sincerity and intentionality define the search for holiness.

SOVEREIGN OF THE SACRED הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ. Throughout the High Holy Days we use the term “Sovereign” (*haMelech*) in this blessing instead of the word “God” (*haEl*). Experiencing ourselves in the presence of the Sovereign cultivates humility — a quality that is essential to asking forgiveness and confessing wrongdoing.

Atah v'chartanu mikol haamim;

ahavta otanu, v'ratzita banu.

V'romamtanu mikol hal'shonot,

v'kidashtanu b'mitzvotcha.

V'keiravtanu, Malkeinu, laavodatecha;

v'shimcha hagadol v'hakadosh aleinu karata.

אַתָּה בְּחַרְתָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים,

אָהַבְתָּ אוֹתָנוּ וְרָצִיתָ בָּנוּ.

וְרוֹמַמְתָּנוּ מִכָּל הַלְשׁוֹנוֹת,

וְקִדַּשְׁתָּנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ.

וְקִרְבַּתָּנוּ, מַלְכֵנוּ, לְעִבּוֹדְתְּךָ,

וְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקָּדוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ קָרָאתָ.

You chose us, with love, to be messengers of mitzvot;
and through us You made known Your aspirations.

Among all the many peoples,
You gave us a pathway to holiness.
Among all the great nations,
You uplifted us and made Yourself our Sovereign —
and so we seek You and serve You
and celebrate our nearness to Your presence.

Your great and sacred name has become our calling.

PSALM

redeemable, forgiven, blessed,
by what right—only by
wanting—

to have done
enough, to have done what is right,
or not—

emptied out
to make room for the unasked for,
that the soul might live—

red poppies still bowed down
on narrowest curving stems
after the rain has passed,

still staring
at the darkened ground,
heedless of the light they wear—

<i>Zochreinu, Adonai Eloheinu, bo l'tovah. Amen.</i>	אָמֵן.	זָכְרֵנוּ, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בּו לְטוֹבָה.
<i>Ufokdeinu vo livrachah. Amen.</i>	אָמֵן.	וּפְקֹדְנוּ בּו לְבִרְכָּה.
<i>V'hoshi-einu vo l'chayim. Amen.</i>	אָמֵן.	וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ בּו לְחַיִּים.

Eternal our God,
remember us, *Amen*
be mindful of us, *Amen*
and redeem us
for a life of goodness and blessing. *Amen*

<i>Uvidvar y'shuah v'rachamim chus v'choneinu;</i>	וּבְדָבַר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים חוּס וְחֻנָּנוּ,
<i>v'racheim aleinu v'hoshi-einu —</i>	וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ,
<i>ki eilecha eineinu;</i>	כִּי אֵלֶיךָ עֵינֵינוּ,
<i>ki El melech chanun v'rachum atah.</i>	כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה.

Favor us with words of deliverance and mercy.
Show us the depth of Your care.
God, we await Your redemption,
for You reign with grace and compassion.

CLOSING WORDS OF HAT'FILAH (*facing page*). This prayer brings together several essential themes of the four final blessings of *HaT'filah*. A rabbi of the 2nd–3rd centuries, Mar Shmuel of Babylonia, composed a condensed version of *HaT'filah*, known by its initial word — *Havineinu* (Give us insight) — intended for occasions when time is short. In similar manner, a sense of urgency prevails during *N'ilah*; and there is an eagerness to devote our fullest energies to the last *S'lichot* (Songs of Forgiveness) and *Vidui* (Confession) of Yom Kippur. Thus this *machzor* concludes *HaT'filah* with an abridged version of the final blessings, inspired by Mar Shmuel's *Havineinu*.

Closing Words of HaT'filah — Forgiveness, Zion, Covenant, and Peace

Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,

Our God and God of all generations,
on this Great Sabbath of Forgiveness,
forgive our moral failings;
on this Great Sabbath of Goodness,
teach us to be satisfied with Your goodness;
on this Great Sabbath of Atonement,
purify our hearts to serve You in truth.
Blessed are You, Adonai:
Year after year You set us on the path from guilt to holiness.

Our God and God of all generations,
let us feel Your nearness;
let us know Your love.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, הַמַּחְזִיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.

Baruch atah, Adonai, hamachazir Sh'chinato l'Tziyon.

Let our eyes and hearts experience Your Presence in Zion.

God of goodness, mercy, and hope,
we are grateful for Your gifts of love and compassion.
Seal us today for a life of integrity, lived in covenant with You.

God of peace, grant us peace — Your most precious gift.
You have given us freedom to choose between good and evil,
life and death.

May we choose life and good,
that our children may inherit from us the blessing of peace.
May we and the whole family of Israel
be remembered and sealed in the Book of Life.

Blessed is forgiveness and blessed are goodness, mercy, and love.
Blessed is the nearness of Divine Presence and blessed is the hope for peace.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, עוֹשֵׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם.

Baruch atah, Adonai, oseh hashalom.

You are the Blessed One, the Eternal One, Source of peace.

סליחות

S'lichot · Songs of Forgiveness

Open the Gates

P'tach lanu shaar, b'eit n'ilat shaar,

ki fanah yom.

Hayom yifneh; hashemesh yavo v'yifneh.

Navo-ah sh'arecha!

Ana El na:

Sa na. S'lach na.

M'chal na. Chamol-na.

Rachem-na. Kaper-na.

K'vosh cheit v'avon.

פֶּתַח לָנוּ שַׁעַר, בְּעֵת גְּעִילַת שַׁעַר,

כִּי פָנָה יוֹם.

הַיּוֹם יִפְנֶה, הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יָבֹא וַיִּפְנֶה.

נִבְּוֵאָה שְׁעָרֶיךָ.

אָנָּה אֵל נָא:

שֵׂא נָא. סֶלַח נָא.

מַחֵל נָא. חָמַל-נָא.

רַחֵם-נָא. כַּפֵּר-נָא.

כִּבֹּשׁ חַטָּא וְעוֹן.

Open a gate for us when the gates are being closed,
for the day is about to fade.

The day shall end, the sun shall set.
Let us enter Your gates!

Holy One, we pray:

Please — be patient.
Please — pardon and forgive.
Please — show compassion.
Please — lead us to atonement.
And help us, please help us
to conquer injustice
and triumph over sin.

OPEN A GATE פֶּתַח לָנוּ. These traditional words — likely a fragment from a lost poem — voice a yearning for a way forward, a way to connect with the Holy One, even as the gates of this holy day are closing.

THE PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE of Yom Kippur ultimately turns on the individual's ability to believe that his or her life can be different. The main obstacle to *t'shuvah* is not whether God will forgive us but whether we can forgive ourselves — whether we can believe in our own ability to change the direction of our lives, even minimally. *T'shuvah* is grounded in the idea of an open future, in the belief that the possibilities for human change have not been exhausted, that the final chapters of our personal narratives have not been written. (Rabbi David Hartman, 1931–2013)

Your Promise Is Forever

God Most High, Your promise is forever.

Even when prayer is a struggle
and You seem far away
the doors open wide for the repentant.

Like the stoutness of oak trees —
so is our stubbornness.

Like thorns and thistles —
so is our malice.

And yet You say:
Return, rebellious children.
Seek My face with tears and supplication.

God Most High, Your promise is forever.

Impoverished,
we knock on Your door, seeking kindness,
lamenting our lot —

Remember us!
Recall us for a full life!
May Your ancient love come to us quickly.

And You say:
Come to Me with thanksgiving and songs.

God Most High, Your promise is forever.

GOD MOST HIGH. Based on a *S'lichah* (liturgical poem) for Yom Kippur evening by Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 11th century). The prayer is still found in the *Kol Nidrei* liturgy of the northern Italian cities of Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo. The phrase "Your promise is forever" resonates with the poignant words of the *N'ilah* service: *Atah notein yad l'foshim* (You hold out Your hand to those who do wrong).

YOUR PROMISE IS FOREVER, Psalm 119:89.

THORNS AND THISTLES, Ezekiel 2:6.

RETURN, REBELLIOUS CHILDREN, Jeremiah 3:14.

SEEK MY FACE WITH TEARS AND SUPPLICATION, based on Psalm 27:8 and Jeremiah 3:21.

COME TO ME WITH THANKSGIVING AND SONGS, based on Psalm 100:2–4.

אל רחום

*"S'lach-na laavon haam hazeh
k'godel chasdecha,
v'chaasher nasata laam hazeh
mimitzrayim v'ad heinah."*

Moses prayed to God:

"As You have been faithful to this people ever since Egypt,
please forgive their failings now,
in keeping with Your boundless love."

סִלַּח־נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה
כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדֶּךָ,
וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה
מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הֵנָּה.

*"Adonai, Adonai: El rachum v'chanun;
erech apayim, v'rav-chesed ve-emet;
notzeir chesed laalafim;
nosei avon vafesha v'chataah; v'nakeih."*

"Adonai, Adonai —

God, compassionate, gracious, endlessly patient, loving, and true;
showing mercy to the thousandth generation;
forgiving evil, defiance, and wrongdoing; granting pardon."

יְיָ, אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן,
אֶרֶץ אַפִּימִים, וְרַב־חֶסֶד וָאֱמֶת.
נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לָאֲלָפִים,
נֹשֵׂא עוֹן וּפֹשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה, וְנִקְיָה.

*Vayomer Adonai:
"Salachti kidvarecha."*

And God responded:

"I forgive, as you have asked."

וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ:
סִלַּחְתִּי כִּדְבָרְךָ.

AS YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL סִלַּח־נָא, Numbers 14:19.

ADONAI, ADONAI יְיָ, יְיָ, Exodus 34:6-7. Our Sages (Talmud *Rosh HaShanah* 17b) envisioned God promising that all those who recite this prayer, known as the Thirteen Divine Attributes, will receive divine compassion and forgiveness. But these words are not a magic formula intended to manipulate God for our own benefit. Rather, if we recite them with sincerity and focus, we can transform ourselves into "a chariot for God's Presence." That is, through our own actions we can make God's compassion manifest in the world. Strengthening our own sense of God's Presence within us, we become the carriers of divine love, responsible for revealing the Divine Presence to others.

AND GOD RESPONDED וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ, Numbers 14:20.

THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH PRAYER

Enkat m'sal'decha —

taal lifnei chisei ch'vodecha.

Malei mishalot am m'yachadecha,

Shomei-a t'filat ba-ei adecha.

אֶנְקַת מְסַלְדֵּיךָ,
תָּעַל לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ.
מֵלֵא מִשְׁאָלוֹת עַם מִיַּחַדֶּךָ,
שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלַּת בָּאֵי עֲדֶיךָ.

May the prayers of those who struggle with prayer
reach Your presence.

May the people who say “Hear, O Israel”
come to know You as the One who hears.

Great Giver, Israel's eternal hope—

You are rich in forgiveness.

Though You dwell on high,

Your compassion is present—here and now.

Shelter us in the shade of Your presence.

When You look into our hearts, be kind; set us on the right path.

Come to us, our God. Please, be my Strength.

Hear the ache in our voices, the pain of our plea.

Most High and Hidden—we yearn to hear: “I have forgiven.”

A broken people hungers for Your care and protection.

Answer us with righteousness. Inspire us with awe.

Adonai, be our Help—give us strength.

MAY THE PRAYERS. Each of these four stanzas is by a different poet: Rabbi Silano of Venosa, Italy (9th century); Rabbi Shefatya ben Amitai of Oria, Italy (9th century); Rabbi Yitzchak ben Shmuel of Dampierre, France (12th century); and Rabbi Shlomo ben Shmuel of Akko, Israel (13th century). The poem resonates with the language of Isaiah 49:2, Jeremiah 17:9, and Psalm 68:29.

BE MY STRENGTH. The individual soul, unable to hold back, bursts forth with a personal plea in the midst of this otherwise communal prayer (“Shelter us . . . Come to us . . .”).

A BROKEN PEOPLE. The Hebrew Bible tells us that God cares especially for the poor and vulnerable. The poets of this prayer present the Jewish people as spiritually impoverished and broken in spirit—an image that may also ring true for Jews living after the Shoah.

Ki anu amecha, v'atah Eloheinu;
anu vanecha, v'atah avinu.
Anu avadecha, v'atah adoneinu;
anu k'halecha, v'atah chelkeinu.
Anu nachalatecha, v'atah goraleinu;
anu tzonecha, v'atah ro-einu.
Anu charmecha, v'atah notreinu;
anu f'ulatecha, v'atah yotzreinu.
Anu rayatecha, v'atah dodeinu;
anu s'gulatecha, v'atah k'roveinu.
Anu amecha, v'atah malkeinu;
anu maamirecha, v'atah maamireinu.

כִּי אֲנִי עַמְּךָ, וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
 אֲנִי בְנֶיךָ, וְאַתָּה אָבִינוּ.
 אֲנִי עַבְדֶּיךָ, וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָנוּ,
 אֲנִי קַהֲלֶךָ, וְאַתָּה חֶלְקֵנוּ.
 אֲנִי נַחֲלֶיךָ, וְאַתָּה גֹרְלֵנוּ,
 אֲנִי צֹאנְךָ, וְאַתָּה רוֹעֵנוּ.
 אֲנִי כֶרֶמְךָ, וְאַתָּה בּוֹטְרֵנוּ,
 אֲנִי פִעֲלֶיךָ, וְאַתָּה יוֹצְרֵנוּ.
 אֲנִי רֵעִיךָ, וְאַתָּה דוֹדֵנוּ,
 אֲנִי סִגְלֶיךָ, וְאַתָּה קְרוֹבֵנוּ.
 אֲנִי עַמְּךָ, וְאַתָּה מַלְכֵנוּ,
 אֲנִי מַאֲמִירְךָ, וְאַתָּה מַאֲמִירֵנוּ.

Our God and God of our ancestors —

We are Your people; and You are our God.
 We are Your children; and You are our father, our mother.
 We are the people who serve You; and You call us to serve.
 We are Your community; and You are our portion.
 We are Your legacy; and You are our purpose.
 We are Your flock; and You are our shepherd.
 We are Your vineyard; and You watch over us.
 We are Your work; and You are our maker.
 We are Your beloved; and You are our lover.
 We are Your treasure; and You are the one we cherish.
 We are Your people; and You reign over us.
 We offer You our words; and You offer us Yours.
So forgive us, pardon us, lead us to atonement.

WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE כִּי אֲנִי עַמְּךָ. With its plethora of images for God, this *piyut* (religious poem) encourages us to think beyond the narrow definition of Divinity as “Ruler of the universe.” Above all, it suggests a theology that is relational, built on our capacity to respond to the Other.

In *N'ilah* we turn from the soul-searching of Yom Kippur to the world of relationships in our daily lives — encompassing love, responsibility, and commitment. This prayer may serve as a tool for exploring the multifaceted nature of those relationships.

וְדוּי

Vidui · Confession

How Do We Offer the N'ilah Confession?

With Honesty and Humility

<i>Anu azei fanim, v'atah rachum v'chanun.</i>	אָנוּ עֲזִי פָנִים, וְאַתָּה רַחוּם וְחַנוּן.
<i>Anu k'shei oref, v'atah erech apayim.</i>	אָנוּ קְשֵׁי עֶרֶף, וְאַתָּה אֶרֶץ אַפִּיִם.
<i>Anu m'lei-ei avon, v'atah malei rachamim.</i>	אָנוּ מִלֵּאֵי עוֹן, וְאַתָּה מָלֵא רַחֲמִים.
<i>Anu yameinu k'tzeil oveir, v'atah hu — ushnotecha lo yitamu.</i>	אָנוּ יָמֵינוּ כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר, וְאַתָּה הוּא וְשִׁבּוֹתֶיךָ לֹא יִתְמוּ.

We are insolent — but You are compassionate and gracious.
We are stubborn and stiff-necked — but You are slow to anger.
We persist in doing wrong — but You are the essence of mercy.
Our days are a shadow passing by, but You — You are existence itself,
Your years never ending.

With a Moment of Self-Reflection

<i>Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, tavo l'fanecha t'filateinu; v'al titalam mit'chinateinu.</i>	אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ, תָּבֹא לִפְנֵיךָ תְּפִלַּתֵנוּ, וְאַל תִּתְעַלֵּם מִתְּחִנָּתֵנוּ.
<i>Anachnu azei fanim ukshei oref lomar l'fanecha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu:</i>	אֲנַחְנוּ עֲזִי פָנִים וְקְשֵׁי עֶרֶף לֹמַר לִפְנֵיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ:
<i>Tzadikim anachnu, v'lo chatanu. Aval anachnu chatanu.</i>	צַדִּיקִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְלֹא חָטָאנוּ. אָבֵל אֲנַחְנוּ חָטָאנוּ.

Our God and God of all generations, may our prayers reach Your presence.
And when we turn to You, do not be indifferent.
Adonai, we are arrogant and stubborn, claiming to be blameless and free of sin.
In truth, we have stumbled and strayed.
We have done wrong.

How Do We Offer the N'ilah Confession?

With All Our Heart, with All Our Mind, with All Our Being

<i>Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, dibarnu dofi.</i>	אֲשָׁמְנוּ, בָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דִּבַּרְנוּ דָּפִי.
<i>He-evinu, v'hirshanu, zadnu, chamasnu,</i>	הֶעֱוִינוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ, זָדְנוּ, חֲמָסְנוּ,
<i>tafalnu sheker.</i>	טָפַלְנוּ שֶׁקֶר.
<i>Yaatznu ra, kizavnu, latznu, maradnu,</i>	יַעֲצֻנוּ רָע, כִּזְבָּנוּ, לָצַנוּ, מָרַדְנוּ,
<i>niatznu, sararnu, avinu, pashanu,</i>	נִאֲצֻנוּ, סָרַרְנוּ, עָוִינוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ,
<i>tzararnu, kishinu oref.</i>	צָרַרְנוּ, קִשִּׁינוּ עֶרֶף.
<i>Rashanu, shichatnu, tiavnu,</i>	רָשָׁעְנוּ, שָׁחַתְנוּ, תִּיַּעַבְנוּ,
<i>ta-inu, titanu.</i>	תַּעֲיִינוּ, תִּעֲתַעְנוּ.

Of these wrongs we are guilty:

We betray. We steal. We scorn. We act perversely.

We are cruel. We scheme. We are violent. We slander.

We devise evil. We lie. We ridicule. We disobey.

We abuse. We defy. We corrupt. We commit crimes.

We are hostile. We are stubborn. We are immoral. We kill.

We spoil. We go astray. We lead others astray.

<i>Mah nomar l'fanecha, yosheiv marom?</i>	מַה נֹאמַר לְפָנֶיךָ, יוֹשֵׁב מְרוֹם,
<i>Umah n'sapeir l'fanecha, shochein sh'chakim?</i>	וּמַה נִסְפֵּר לְפָנֶיךָ, שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים.
<i>Halo kol hanistarot v'haniglot</i>	הֲלֹא כָּל הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת וְהַנִּגְלוֹת
<i>atah yodei-a.</i>	אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ.

What can we say to You whose existence is beyond time and space?

What words of ours can reach Your realm

beyond the clouds, beyond heaven itself?

Every hidden mystery, every revelation — surely, You know them all.

CONFESSION וְיָדַי (*facing page*). In all other Yom Kippur services, there are two confessions: one long (*Al Cheit*) and one short (*Ashamnu*). *N'ilah* has only the shorter confession, *Ashamnu*; and *Al Cheit* is replaced by the prayer that begins “You hold out Your hand (*Atah notein yad*).” Thus, in the closing moments of Yom Kippur, the focus shifts from our wrongs and sins to an image of God reaching out to us — encouraging our repentance with open arms, as it were. A commentary from the time of Rashi (11th century) notes that *yad* means not only “hand” but also “ability” and “freedom of action,” suggesting that *Atah notein yad* can be read as a statement that God offers human beings free will, choice, and moral autonomy.

אתה בותן יד

You Hold Out Your Hand

Atah notein yad l'foshim,

vimincha f'shutah l'kabeil shavim.

Vat'lam'deinu, Adonai Eloheinu,

l'hitvadot l'fanecha al kol avonoteinu,

l'maan nechdal mei-oshek yadeinu,

utkab'leinu bit-shuvah sh'leimah l'fanecha,

l'maan d'varecha asher amarta.

אתה בותן יד לפושעים,
וימינך פשוטה לקבל שבים.
ותלמדנו, יי אלהינו,
להתודות לפניך על כל עונותינו,
למען נחדל מעשק ידינו,
ותקבלנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך,
למען דבריך אשר אמרת.

You hold out Your hand to those who do wrong;

Your right hand opens wide to receive those who return.

You teach us the true purpose of confession:

to turn our hands into instruments of good,

to cause no harm or oppression.

Receive us, as You promised, in the fullness of our heartfelt *t'shuvah*.

*V'atah Elo-ah s'lichot,
chanum v'rachum,
erech apayim, v'rav-chesed ve-emet.
Umarbeh l'heitiv —
v'rotzeh atah bit-shuvat r'sha-im;
v'ein atah chafeitz b'mitatam.
Shene-emar: Emor aleihem,
"Chai ani, n'um Adonai Elohim,
im echpotz b'mot harasha —
ki im b'shuv rasha midarko v'chayah.
Shuvu, shuvu midarcheichem hara-im —
v'lamah tamutu, beit Yisrael?"*

And You, Holy One of forgiveness —
compassionate, gracious, endlessly patient, loving, and true:
You are the wellspring of generosity —
wanting the repentance of those who do evil, not their demise.
As it is said in the Prophets:
"As I live — declares the Eternal God —
it is not My desire that the wicked shall die,
but that the wicked turn from their evil ways and live.
Turn back, turn back from all that leads you astray.
House of Israel, why choose death?"

*Ki atah solchan l'Yisrael,
umocholan l'shivtei Y'shurun
b'chol dor vador;
umibaladecha ein lanu melech mocheil
v'solei-ach ela atah.*

For You are the Forgiver of Israel,
in every generation granting pardon to the tribes of Yeshurun.
We have no God of forgiveness and pardon but You, You alone.

וְאַתָּה, אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת,
חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם,
אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת.
וּמַרְבֵּה לְהִיטִיב,
וְרוֹצֶה אֶתָּה בְּתִשּׁוּבַת רְשָׁעִים,
וְאֵין אֶתָּה חָפֵץ בְּמִיתָתָם.
שְׁנַאֲמַר: אֲמַר אֲלֵיהֶם,
חַי אֲנִי, נָא אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים,
אִם אֶחָפֵץ בְּמוֹת הָרָשָׁע,
כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ וְחָיָה.
שׁוּבוּ שׁוּבוּ מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים,
וּלְמָה תָּמוּתוּ, בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

כִּי אַתָּה סֹלְחַן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל,
וּמַחֲלִן לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל
בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר,
וּמִבְּלַעַדֶּיךָ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ מוֹחֵל
וְסוֹלֵחַ אֶלָּא אַתָּה.

AS I LIVE אֲנִי חַי, Ezekiel 33:11.

YESHURUN. This name for the people Israel first appears in Deuteronomy 32:15. It has been understood, in folk etymology, as a reference to the Jewish people's ideal calling: to be *yashar* (straight, honorable, morally upright).

HAKARAT HATOV: RECOGNIZING THE GOOD

אָהָבֵנוּ, בָּכִינוּ, גַּמְלָנוּ, דִּבַּרְנוּ יָפִי.
הֶאֱמַנּוּ, וְהִשְׁתַּדְּלָנוּ, זָכַרְנוּ, חִבְּקָנוּ, טָעַמְנוּ סֵפֶר.
יִצְרָנוּ, כָּמְהָנוּ, לְחַמְנוּ עֲבוֹר הַצֶּדֶק, מִצִּינוּ אֶת הַטּוֹב, גָּסִינוּ,
סִרְנוּ לְרָאוֹת, עָשִׂינוּ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנוּ, פִּרְשָׁנוּ, צִדְקָנוּ לְפַעֲמִים, קָרָאנוּ בְּשִׂמְךָ.
רָצִינוּ, שִׁמְחָנוּ, תִּמְכְּנוּ.

1

We loved. And we wept. We were kind—and spoke thoughtfully.

We were faithful and trusting. We put forth effort.

We were mindful. We embraced. We took delight in the holy books.

We were creative. And we yearned.

We fought for justice—and searched out the good.

We tried our best. And we were attentive.

We did what You commanded us to do.

We found meaning in Torah. And, most of the time, we did what is right.

We proclaimed Your name. And we were accepting.

We were joyful. And we cared.

מול השער

Mul HaShaar · Conclusion of the Day

Avinu Malkeinu

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, קַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן אֶת הַפְּלִתָּנוּ.

Avinu Malkeinu, kabeil b'rachamim uvratzon et t'filateinu.

Avinu Malkeinu — Almighty and Merciful —
welcome our prayer with love; accept and embrace it.

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן רַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים.

Avinu Malkeinu, aseih l'maan rachamecha harabim.

Avinu Malkeinu, act for the sake of Your boundless compassion.

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ.

Avinu Malkeinu, aseih imanu l'maan sh'mecha.

Avinu Malkeinu, act toward us as befits Your name.

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חַתֵּמְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר פָּרְנָסָה וְכִלְכָּלָה.

Avinu Malkeinu, chotmeinu b'sefer parnasah v'chalkalah.

Avinu Malkeinu, seal us in the Book of Sustenance and Livelihood.

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חַתֵּמְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר זְכוּיֹת.

Avinu Malkeinu, chotmeinu b'sefer z'chuyot.

Avinu Malkeinu, seal us in the Book of Worthiness and Merit.

אָבינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חַתֵּמְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר סְלִיחָה וּמַחִילָה.

Avinu Malkeinu, chotmeinu b'sefer s'lichah umchilah.

Avinu Malkeinu, seal us in the Book of Forgiveness and Pardon.

SEAL US IN THE BOOK. One repeated refrain of this service — “The gates are closing” — expresses our sense of urgency and unease, perhaps fear that our time is running out. Another liturgical theme of *N'ilah* — “Open the gates” — expresses a sense of courage and hope, aspiration and faith. And when we say “seal us” — as we do five times in this last *Avinu Malkeinu* — we express our deep longing for certainty as the New Year begins. Each of us aches for some assurance that our names will be inscribed and sealed in this sacred scripture of Yom Kippur — this Torah of *T'shuvah*: the Book of Sustenance and Livelihood; the Book of Worthiness and Merit; the Book of Forgiveness and Pardon; the Book of Lives Well Lived; the Book of Redemption and Renewal. In a world of uncertainty, we want to know that our lives matter, that goodness and blessings await us in the year ahead. *Chotmeinu*, we say: “Seal us in these books. Let us know that our lives have lasting worth and meaning.”

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חַתְמָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים.

Avinu Malkeinu, chotmeinu b'sefer chayim tovim.

Avinu Malkeinu, seal us in the Book of Lives Well Lived.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חַתְמָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר גְּאֻלָּה וְיִשׁוּעָה.

Avinu Malkeinu, chotmeinu b'sefer g'ulah vishuah.

Avinu Malkeinu, seal us in the Book of Redemption and Renewal.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, מַלֵּא יָדֵינוּ מִבְּרָכוֹתֶיךָ.

Avinu Malkeinu, malei yadeinu mibirchotecha.

Avinu Malkeinu, let our hands overflow with Your blessings.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, פָּתַח שַׁעֲרֵי שָׁמַיִם לְתַפִּלָּתֵנוּ.

Avinu Malkeinu, p'tach shaarei shamayim litfilateinu.

Avinu Malkeinu, let the gates of heaven be open to our prayer.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה.

Avinu Malkeinu, chadeish aleinu shanah tovah.

Avinu Malkeinu, renew us for a year of goodness.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אַתָּה.

Avinu Malkeinu, ein lanu melech ela atah.

Avinu Malkeinu, we have no Sovereign but You.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חֲנֹנוּ וְעֲנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים,

עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu vaaneinu ki ein banu maasim.

Aseih imanu tz'dakah vachessed, v'hoshi-einu.

Avinu Malkeinu — Almighty and Merciful —

answer us with grace when our deeds are wanting.

Save us through acts of justice and love.

WHEN OUR DEEDS ARE WANTING כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים. From the evening of Rosh HaShanah until the afternoon of Yom Kippur, we sing: "Answer us with grace, *for* our deeds our wanting." Now, in *N'ilah*, having engaged in the process of *t'shuvah* (return) and *cheshbon hanefesh* (accounting of the soul), we experience this final moment of *Avinu Malkeinu* in a unique way. The tiny word *ki* makes all the difference: it can mean either "for" or "when." The latter suggests that, though we are bound to miss the mark in the year ahead, we now leave behind a year's worth of guilt — serene in the knowledge that we can start fresh. Our deeds are not wanting. Truly this is a moment of joy and renewal.

As the Day Ends

We stand as one before the gates of a new year —
renewed by this Day of Atonement,
made stronger by all who are with us
and by those whose presence we feel within.

As the long day fades into dusk,
we join our voices in words of hope and dedication:

פִּתְחוּ־לָנוּ שַׁעֲרֵי־צֶדֶק, גְּבֹא־בָּם, נוֹדֶה יָהּ.

Pit-chu-lanu shaarei-tzedek; navo vam, nodeh Yah.

Open for us the gates of righteousness,
that we may enter and praise the Eternal Source of Life.

Open for us the gates of sacred community,
that we may enter and feel its healing power.

Open for us the gates of truth and integrity,
that we may enter and grow in faithfulness.

Open for us the gates of devotion and principle,
that we may enter and find enduring values and meaning.

Open for us the gates of repentance and return,
that we may enter and offer our best.

Open for us the gates of forgiveness,
that we may enter and offer our humanity.

Open for us the gates of kindness and compassion,
that we may enter and offer our love.

OPEN FOR US THE GATES פִּתְחוּ־לָנוּ. In the Book of Psalms (118:19) the verse reads: “Open for me the gates of righteousness” — a beautiful prayer for private devotion. But *N’ilah* is not a moment of solitude. In the last minutes of this powerful day, we express our solidarity as a congregation and our solidarity with the Jewish people. We do this by saying, “Open for us . . .”

For the Sounding of the Shofar

As the Sabbath of Sabbaths ends, we say from the heart:

Living Source — You are ours, we are Yours.

From beyond time and space,
You hold out Your hand to receive us.

Living Source — You are ours, we are Yours.

You are the Sovereign of remembrance, the Voice of holiness —
Your presence lights the way.

Living Source — You are ours, we are Yours.

Sh'ma, Yisrael — Hear the shofar —
witness to history, thunder to our souls.

Living Source — You are ours, we are Yours.

Happy are those who love the sound of the shofar —
its mystic chords of memory.

Living Source — You are ours, we are Yours.
Hear the shofar! Hear its cry of freedom, its call of courage —
cherish its promise of hope.

YOUR PRESENCE LIGHTS THE WAY, Psalm 89:16.

HAPPY ARE THOSE, Psalm 89:16, adapted.

MYSTIC CHORDS OF MEMORY. From Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address
(March 4, 1861).

SH'MA YISRAEL . . . JERUSALEM (*next two pages*). These words and sounds comprise a ritual unto itself. First, we witness the divine Unity by singing *Sh'ma Yisrael*, words recited every day when we lie down and when we rise up. Then three times (to symbolize past, present, and future) we affirm God's sovereignty, as did ancient worshipers after hearing the High Priest's three confessions on Yom Kippur. Next, the seven rungs of a "word ladder" appear on the page (for seven is the symbol of wholeness and holiness) — each rung bearing the two qualities of the righteous Judge: *Adonai*, mercy; *Elohim*, justice.

A day filled with words nears its end with a cry that echoes from deep within and far away — the ram's horn: "God ascends with the sound of *t'ruah*, Adonai with the voice of the shofar" (Psalm 47:6). Finally, "Next year in Jerusalem" — a wish, a hope, a yearning for the place where our earliest ancestors encountered the Holy, and where the Divine Presence is felt in our time.

שמע ישראל יהוה | אלהינו יהוה אחד

Sh'ma, Yisrael: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad.

Listen, Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.

Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.
יְיָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

Adonai, hu haElohim.

Adonai is God.

שׁוּפֹר

תְּקִיעָה

שְׁבָרִים

תְּרוּעָה

תְּקִיעָה גְּדוֹלָה

T'kiah Sh'varim T'ruah T'kiah G'dolah

לִשְׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם!

Lashanah habaah birushalayim!
Next year in Jerusalem!

הַבְּדֵלָה Havdalah

Wine

*Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Adonai, our God and Sovereign, Source of blessings,
You create the fruit of the vine.

Spices

*Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
borei minei v'samim.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא מִיְּבֵי בְשָׂמִים.

Adonai, our God and Sovereign, Source of blessings,
You create spices of every kind.

Lights

*Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
borei m'orei ha-eish.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ.

Adonai, our God and Sovereign, Source of blessings,
You create the lights of fire.

YOU CREATE SPICES OF EVERY KIND. At the end of Shabbat, Havdalah, the service of separation, is recited over wine, spices, and fire (the light of a braided candle). Some derive the use of spices in Havdalah from a teaching in the Talmud (*Beitzah* 16a): “Resh Lakish said: The Holy One gives a person an additional soul (*n’shamah y’tairah*) on the eve of Shabbat; but at the end of Shabbat the additional soul is taken away.” Inhaling the sweet fragrance of the spices strengthens us after the additional soul has departed.

While spices are not traditionally included in the Havdalah ceremony that concludes Yom Kippur, many Reform Jews affirm Yom Kippur as *Shabbat Shabbaton* (the Sabbath of Sabbaths; *Leviticus* 16:31) — and therefore include spices, even when Yom Kippur falls on a weekday.

Separation

*Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol,
bein or l'choshech,
bein Yisrael laamim,
bein yom hash'vi-i
l'sheishet y'mei hamaaseh.*

ברוך אתה, יי,
אלהינו מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמַּבְדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל,
בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ,
בֵּין יִשְ�רָאֵל לְעַמִּים,
בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
לְשֵׁשֶׁת יְמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה.

Adonai, our God and Sovereign, Source of blessings—
You distinguish the holy from the everyday
and separate light from darkness.
You give each people a place in the family of nations,
and thus distinguish Israel from other peoples.
You set apart the seventh day from the six days of creation.

ברוך אתה, יי, הַמַּבְדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל.

Baruch atah, Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol.

Adonai, Source of blessings,
You distinguish the holy from the everyday.

*Hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol
chatoteinu hu yimchol
zareinu ushlomeinu yarbeh kachol
v'chakochavim balilah.*

הַמַּבְדִּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל
חַטֹּאתֵינוּ הוּא יִמְחֹל
זֶרְעֵנוּ וְשְׁלוֹמֵנוּ יִרְבֶּה כָּחֹל
וְכִכּוֹכָבִים בַּלֵּילָה.

As You separate sacred from profane,
separate us from our wrongful ways.
Give us a future —
our children countless as grains of sand.
Give us peace —
majestic and beautiful as the starry night.

GIVE US PEACE וְשְׁלוֹמֵנוּ יִרְבֶּה. This 11th-century blessing exists in two versions. One asks God to increase our offspring and our prosperity (*zareinu v'chaspeinu*); the other (above) presents a vision of the future that places *sh'lomeinu* (our peace, our well-being) among our two highest values.

Songs

*Shanah tovah, shanah tovah,
shanah tovah, shanah tovah (2x)*

שָׁנָה טוֹבָה, שָׁנָה טוֹבָה,
שָׁנָה טוֹבָה, שָׁנָה טוֹבָה

A good year, a year of peace —
May gladness reign and joy increase. (2x)

*Eliyahu hanavi, Eliyahu haTishbi,
Eliyahu, Eliyahu, Eliyahu HaGiladi.
Bimheirah v'yameinu yavo eileinu
im mashiach ben-David,
im mashiach ben-David.*

אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא, אֵלִיָּהוּ הַתְּשֻׁבִּי,
אֵלִיָּהוּ, אֵלִיָּהוּ, אֵלִיָּהוּ הַגִּלְעָדִי.
בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ יָבֹא אֵלֵינוּ
עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־דָּוִד,
עִם מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־דָּוִד.

Elijah the Prophet,
Elijah of Tishbi,
Elijah of Gilead:
may he come in our own time,
and reach us without delay.
May he yet fulfill — with love — our hope:
a world perfected and redeemed.

ELIJAH אֵלִיָּהוּ. II Kings 2:1–11 records Elijah's ascent to heaven, alive, in a chariot of fire. Some four centuries later, the prophet Malachi proclaimed in God's name: "I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of Adonai. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with destruction" (Malachi 3:23–24). Long considered a harbinger of the messianic age, Elijah is recalled particularly at the departure of Shabbat, since Shabbat is called a "sampling" (or "taste") of the world-to-come (Talmud *B'rachot* 57b).

Similarly, the prophet Miriam (*facing page*) is associated with song and healing. Her role in the story of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 2:7–8) makes her a redemptive figure in biblical history. Our last words on this Sabbath of Sabbaths point toward an era of *tikkun* — a world healed and at peace.

Miryam han'viah —

oz v'zimrah b'yadah.

Miryam tirkod itanu

l'hagdil zimrat olam;

Miryam tirkod itanu

l'takein et haolam.

Bimheirah v'yameinu hi t'vi-einu

el mei ha-y'shuah.

מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה,

עַז וְזִמְרָה בְּיָדָהּ,

מִרְיָם תִּרְקֹד אִתָּנוּ

לְהַגְדִּיל זִמְרַת עוֹלָם.

מִרְיָם תִּרְקֹד אִתָּנוּ

לְתַקֵּן אֶת הָעוֹלָם.

בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ הִיא תְּבִיאֵנוּ

אֶל מֵי הַיְּשׁוּעָה.

Miriam the prophet —

the power of song is in her hand.

Miriam will dance among us

and the music will be heard far and wide.

Miriam will dance among us

to mend our world of suffering.

May she lead us, in our time, without delay,

to the waters of help and healing.

Tizku l'shanim rabot!

תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת!

Be worthy of your years — and may they be many!

MIRIAM THE PROPHET מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה. Hebrew lyrics by Rabbi Leila Gal Berner (b. 1950).

BE WORTHY OF YOUR YEARS — AND MAY THEY BE MANY תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת.

This Sephardic blessing, which appeared already near the start of the *N'ilah* service, in the poem *El Nora Alilah* (page 614), echoes a verse in *Avinu Malkeinu*: “Seal us in the Book of Worthiness and Merit.” The blessing captures the purpose of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur from the perspective of those who observe these holy days: to make us worthy of our lives, to instill in us the hope for an abundance of life, and, finally, to renew us as human beings who go forth in gladness.

Eli, Eli

Eli, Eli,

shelo yigameir l'olam:

hachol v'hayam,

rishrush shel hamayim,

b'rak hashamayim,

t'filat haadam.

אֱלִי, אֱלִי,

שֶׁלֹא יִגְמֹר לְעוֹלָם

הַחֹל וְהַיָּם,

רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,

בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,

תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.

Eli, Eli, 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.

THIS IS the hour of memory —

and this is our house of comfort.

Wounded by loss, we retreat from life;

our synagogue gathers us in.

Into this place we bring stories and prayers,

unanswered questions,

tears that need to be shed.

Lives recollected and carried within us —

moments of courage and laughter and pain —

this day embraces them all;

this place embraces us all.

Now the heart opens in sorrow,

for we are time's subjects,

and all that we love we must lose.

So let us hold fast to the love that remains,

and cherish the light of the sun.

Today all of us walk the mourner's path;

together may we find strength.

שבע נרות יזכור

The Seven Lights of Yizkor

THE TRADITIONAL *Yizkor* prayer asks God to remember the souls of our loved ones and to shelter them for eternity. But the *Yizkor* Service on Yom Kippur has significance beyond the prayer itself. This is a moment set apart for solitary reflection; an opportunity to fulfill a sacred obligation; and it is a time to feel the physical and emotional closeness of community — the presence of other people who know what we have been through because they have been through it, too. At *Yizkor* we see the sorrow in one another's eyes.

As the number seven is a Jewish symbol of wholeness and holiness, our *Yizkor* Service offers seven ways to reflect on loss and memory, grief and healing. We choose, alone and together, from among these diverse lights.

*Enosh kechatzir yamav,
k'tzitz hasadeh kein yatzitz.
Ki ruach av'rah-bo v'einenu,
v'lo-yakirenu od m'komo.
V'chesed Adonai mei-olam
v'ad olam al-y'rei-av;
v'tzidkato livnei vanim —
l'shom'rei v'rito.*

אנוש כפחציר ימיו,
כצִיץ השדה כֵּן יִצִיץ.
כִּי רוּחַ עֲבֶרָה־בו וְאֵינָנוּ,
וְלֹא־יִכְיֶרְנוּ עוֹד מְקוֹמוֹ.
וְחֶסֶד יי מְעוֹלָם
וְעַד־עוֹלָם עַל־יִרְאָיו,
וְצִדְקָתוֹ לְבָנֵי בָנִים,
לְשׁוֹמְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ.

Our days —
Like the grass of the field, like flowers in the meadow
vanish in a momentary gust of wind,
gone, never to be seen again.
But God's love is infinite and with us forever.
God's goodness reaches far into the future —
This is the gift of the covenant.

My Dead

הם בלבד בותרו לי, רק בהם בלבד
לא ינעץ המות סבינו החד.

במפנה הדרך, בערב היום
יקיפוני חרש, ילונני דם.

ברית אמת היא לנו, קשר לא נפרד
רק אשר אבד לי – קניני לעד.

They alone are left me; they alone still faithful,
for now death can do no more to them.

At the bend of the road, at the close of day,
they gather around me silently, and walk by my side.

This is a bond nothing can ever loosen.
What I have lost: what I possess forever.

Rachel

Psalm 121

Shir lamaalot:

Esa einai el-heharim:

mei-ayin yavo ezri?

Ezri mei-im Adonai —

oseih shamayim vaaretz.

Al-yitein lamot raglecha;

al-yanum shom'recha.

Hineih: lo-yanum v'lo yishan

shomeir Yisrael.

Adonai shom'recha;

Adonai tzil'cha al-yad y'minecha.

Yomam hashemesh lo-yakeka,

v'yarei-ach balailah.

Adonai yishmorcha mikol-ra —

yishmor et-nafshecha.

Adonai yishmor-tzeit'cha uvo-echa,

mei-atah v'ad-olam.

A song for reaching up

I turn my eyes to the mountains;

from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Eternal,
maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot give way;
your guardian will not slumber.

See, the guardian of Israel
neither slumbers nor sleeps!

The Eternal is your guardian,
The Eternal is your protection
at your right hand.

By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

The Eternal will guard you from all harm;
God will guard your soul.

The Eternal will guard your going and coming now and forever.

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת:

אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הָהָרִים,

מֵאֵינן יָבֹא עֲזָרִי.

עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יי,

עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

אֶל־יְתֵן לַמּוֹט רַגְלְךָ

אֶל־יָנוּם שְׁמֹרְךָ.

הִנֵּה לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן

שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל.

יי שְׁמֹרְךָ

יי צִלְךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינְךָ.

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יִכָּכֶה

וַיָּרַח בַּלַּיְלָה.

יי יִשְׁמְרְךָ מִכָּל־רָע

יִשְׁמֹר אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ.

יי יִשְׁמֹר־צִאֲתְךָ וּבֹאֲךָ

מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם.

The Echo of Your Promise

Based on Psalm 77

When I cry my voice trembles with fear

When I call out it cracks with anger

How can I greet the dawn with song
when darkness eclipses the rising sun

To whom shall I turn
when the clouds of the present eclipse the rays of tomorrow

Turn me around to yesterday
that I may be consoled by its memories

Were not the seas split asunder
Did we not once walk together through the waters to the dry side

Did we not bless the bread
that came forth from the heavens

Did your voice not reach my ears
and direct my wanderings

The waters, the lightning, the thunder
remind me of yesterday's triumphs

Let the past offer proof of tomorrow
Let it be my comforter and guarantor

I have been here before
known the fright and found your companionship

I enter the sanctuary again
to await the echo of your promise

Rabbi Harold Schulweis



FOURTH CANDLE Our Most Precious Relationships

Words of Faith and Tradition

*Yeish kochavim she-oram magia artzah
rak kaasher hem atzmam*

av'du v'ainam.

*Yeish anashim sheziv zichram mei-ir
kaasher hem atzmam einam od*

b'tocheinu.

Orot eileh hamavhikim

b'cheskat halayil.

*Heim heim shemarim laadam et
haderech.*

יֵשׁ כּוֹכָבִים שְׁאוֹרֵם מִגִּיעַ אֶרְצָה
רַק כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם עֲצָמָם
אֲבָדוּ וְאֵינָם.

יֵשׁ אָנָשִׁים שֶׁזִּיו זְכָרָם מֵאִיר
כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם עֲצָמָם אֵינָם עוֹד
בְּתוֹכָנוּ.

אוֹרוֹת אֵלֶּה הַמַּבְהִיקִים
בְּחֶשֶׁכַת הַלַּיִל.

הֵם הֵם שְׁמֵרָאִים לְאָדָם אֶת
הַדֶּרֶךְ.

There are stars up above,
so far away we only see their light
long, long after the star itself is gone.
And so it is with people that we loved —
their memories keep shining ever brightly
though their time with us is done.
But the stars that light up the darkest night,
these are the lights that guide us.
As we live our days, these are the ways we remember.

Hana Senesh

The Yizkor Prayer

“Love is strong as death.” Song of Songs 8:6

For a Man or Boy

Yizkor Elohim et nishmat

shehalach l'olamo.

Hin'ni nodev/nodevet tz'dakah

b'ad hazkarat nishmato.

Ana t'hi nafsho

tz'rurah bitzror hachayim

ut'hi m'nuchato kavod —

sova s'machot et panecha,

n'imot bimincha netzach.

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נִשְׁמַת

שֶׁהֵלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ.

הִנְנִי נוֹדֵב/נוֹדֵבֶת צְדָקָה

בְּעַד הַזְכָּרַת נִשְׁמָתוֹ.

אֲנִי תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ

צְרוּרָה בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים

וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד,

שׁוֹבֵעַ שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת פָּנֶיךָ,

נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֶצַח.

May God remember the soul of

who has gone to his eternal home.

For the sake of *tikkun olam*, I freely give *tzedakah* in his memory.

For the sake of his precious soul, let my memories, my prayers,
and my acts of goodness bind him to the bond of life.

May I bring honor to his memory by word and deed.

May he be at one with the One who is life eternal;

and may the beauty of his life shine forevermore.

For a Woman or Girl

Yizkor Elohim et nishmat

shehal'chah l'olamah.

Hin'ni nodev/nodevet tz'dakah

b'ad hazkarat nishmatah.

Ana t'hi nafshah

tz'rurah bitzror hachayim

ut-hi m'nuchatah kavod —

sova s'machot et panecha,

n'imot bimincha netzach.

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נִשְׁמַת
שֶׁהָלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ.

הִנְנִי נוֹדֵב וְנוֹדֵבֶת צְדָקָה
בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת נִשְׁמָתָהּ.

אֲנִי תְּהִי נַפְשָׁהּ
צְרוּרָה בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים

וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתָה כְּבוֹד,

שֶׁבַע שְׂמָחוֹת אֶת פָּנֶיךָ,

נְעִימוֹת בְּיָמֶיךָ נֶצַח.

May God remember the soul of

who has gone to her eternal home.

For the sake of *tikkun olam*, I freely give *tzedakah* in her memory.

For the sake of her precious soul, let my memories, my prayers,
and my acts of goodness bind her to the bond of life.

May I bring honor to her memory by word and deed.

May she be at one with the One who is life eternal;

and may the beauty of her life shine forevermore.

Yizkor Meditations

WHEN WE ASK GOD to remember the souls of our departed at *Yizkor*, we request more than a mere mental act. We pray implicitly that by focusing on our loved ones' souls, God will take action on their behalf and save them from whatever pain they may be suffering, wherever they may be. At the same time, the implication is that this act of remembrance also constitutes a guarantee of Jewish continuity — well beyond just those we remember, and far beyond us as well. In remembering and in asking for God's remembrance, we request divine help in continuing our people's trajectory beyond ourselves, to achieve the ultimate aims of our people's history.

Yizkor is, in the end, not a prayer for the dead, but a promise by the living.

Rabbi Aaron Panken

MAY THESE MOMENTS of meditation link me more strongly with my closest companion in life — my soulmate, my friend, my confidant, my helping hand, my listening heart, my compass, my shining light.

In spite of death, our deep bonds of love are strong.

May I always be worthy of that love.

May the memory of our companionship lead me out of loneliness; may it awaken in me gratitude for that which still endures.

And may you rest forever in dignity and peace.

BLESSED IS THE ONE who is far beyond all the blessings and hymns, all the praises and words of comfort that we speak in the world. And blessed are those who are now far beyond my words, my praise, my voice — even my silence.

For an Infant or Child

God of hope, God of strength —
As my heart aches in silence
I turn to You on this holy day for healing and comfort.
I pray to You, God of life, for renewal of spirit.
I long for the shelter of Your love.

May the soul of my beloved
be embraced by You forever with love and tenderness.
May the promise of this innocent young life
teach me to cherish sweetness and beauty,
and not give in to the bitterness I have tasted.
May the gift of memory bless each of my days.

Weep with me, God, Creator of life,
for the precious life whose songs were left unsung.
Weep with me, God, for the loss of my child —
a loss that is like no other.
Shelter me,
that I may be a source of care and shelter for those who need me.
Strengthen me,
that I may be a source of strength.
Be with me
in sorrow and joy, in moments of emptiness, and in the fullness of life.

REFLECTING ON THE DEATH of his 20-year-old son Uri, an Israeli soldier who died in the final hours of the 2006 Lebanon War, novelist David Grossman (b. 1954) said: "You have to understand that when something like this happens to you, you feel exiled from every part of your life. Nothing is home again, not even your body."

For One Who Died by Violence

קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֶעֱקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה.

“Your brother’s blood cries to Me from the ground.”

Genesis 4:10

Creator of life, Source of healing,
grant peace in Your great shelter of peace
to my loved one
whose life ended abruptly through an act of senseless violence.

With sadness I recall the joy that brought into the world;
that voice and face I will never forget.
May these precious memories console me.
Let there be light —
to guide my way through the shadow of loss.

I long with all my being
for an end to baseless hatred, war, and violence.
May a time come soon
when no one will suffer or die at the hands of another.

May my loved one’s soul be embraced by You —
free of pain now, held in tenderness and love.
I will cherish forever this life now lost:
a blessing in the bond of life everlasting,
a blessing here and now.

In Memory of a Parent Who Was Hurtful

Dear God,

You know my heart. Indeed, You know me better than I know myself, so I turn to You in these quiet moments of Yizkor.

My emotions swirl as I recite this prayer. The parent I remember was not kind to me. His/her death left me with a legacy of unhealed wounds, of anger and of dismay that a parent could hurt a child as I was hurt.

I do not want to pretend to love, or to grief that I do not feel, but I do want to do what is right as a Jew and as a son/daughter.

Help me, God, to subdue my bitter emotions that do me no good, and to find that place in myself where happier memories may lie hidden, and where grief for all that could have been, all that should have been, may be calmed by forgiveness, or at least soothed by the passage of time.

I pray that You, who raise up slaves to freedom, will liberate me from the oppression of my hurt and anger, and that You will lead me from this desert to Your holy place.

Rabbi Robert Saks

אַל־תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי, אַל־תִּטְּבֹאֲךָ עֲבֹדָה, עֲזָרְתִּי הָיִיתָ.
אַל־תִּטְּשֵׁנִי, וְאַל־תִּעֲזָבֵנִי, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי, וַיֵּי יֶאֱסָפֵנִי.

Don't hide your face from me —

Don't push me away;

I depend on you.

I've looked to you for help —

please don't abandon me.

Adonai, may I find safety in You.

Though my mother and father forsake me,

the Eternal will take me in.

The Five Stages of Grief

The night I lost you
someone pointed me towards
the Five Stages of Grief.
Go that way, they said,
it's easy, like learning to climb
stairs after the amputation.
And so I climbed.
Denial was first.
I sat down at breakfast
carefully setting the table
for two. I passed you the toast —
you sat there. I passed
you the paper — you hid
behind it.
Anger seemed more familiar.
I burned the toast, snatched
the paper and read the headlines myself.
But they mentioned your departure,
and so I moved on to
Bargaining. What could I exchange
for you? The silence
after storms? My typing fingers?
Before I could decide, *Depression*
came puffing up, a poor relation
its suitcase tied together
with string. In the suitcase
were bandages for the eyes
and bottles of sleep. I slid
all the way down the stairs
feeling nothing.
And all the time Hope
flashed on and off
in defective neon.
Hope was a signpost pointing
straight in the air.
Hope was my uncle's middle name,
he died of it.

After a year I am still climbing,
though my feet slip
on your stone face.
The treeline
has long since disappeared;
green is a color
I have forgotten.
But now I see what I am climbing
towards: *Acceptance*
written in capital letters,
a special headline:
Acceptance,
its name is in lights.
I struggle on,
waving and shouting.
Below, my whole life spreads its surf,
all the landscapes I've ever known
or dreamed of. Below
a fish jumps: the pulse
in your neck.
Acceptance. I finally
reach it.
But something is wrong.
Grief is a circular staircase.
I have lost you.

Linda Pastan

GOD OF PITY AND LOVE, return to this earth.
Go not so far away, leaving us to grief.
Return, Eternal One, return. Come back with the day.
Come with the light, that we may see once more
across this earth's unsettled floor
the kindly path, the old and living way.
Let us not give way to evil in the night.
Let there be God again.
Let there be light.

The Union Prayerbook (adapted)

The 23rd Psalm

No other psalm—perhaps no other prayer but the *Kaddish* itself—is as inseparable from our experience of grief and mourning as the twenty-third. One phrase, so simple and direct yet emotionally profound, has made it so: *ki atah imadi* (“For You are with me”). Or in the language of an earlier age: “for Thou art with me.” To arrive at those words after passing through “the valley of the shadow of death” is to know, in the words of Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, that God “contains and supports us as a mighty ocean contains and supports the infinitesimal drops of every wave.” To arrive at those words is to feel at home in the cosmos—held and comforted, cared for and serene.

The twenty-third Psalm does not make promises that cannot be kept: the end of all evil; the eradication of suffering and pain; sunshine instead of shadows. It makes but one promise—only this: you are not alone.

Mizmor l'David.

Adonai ro-i; lo echsar.

Binot deshe yarbitzeini;

al-mei m'nuchot y'nahaleini.

Nafshi y'shoveiv;

yancheini v'mag'lei-tzedek l'maan sh'mo.

Gam ki-eileich b'gei tzalmavet,

lo-ira ra, ki-atah imadi.

Shivt'cha umishantecha — heimah y'nachamuni.

Taaroch l'fanai shulchan neged tzor'rai.

Dishanta vashemen roshi;

kosi r'vayah.

Ach tov vachessed yird'funi kol-y'mei chayai;

v'shavti b'veit-Adonai l'orech yamim.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד.

יְיָ רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחְסָר.

בְּנֹאֹת דֶּשֶׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי,

עַל מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי.

נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב,

יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.

גַּם כִּי אֵלֶיךָ בָּגִיא צַלְמוֹת

לֹא אִירָא רָע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי.

שִׁבְטְךָ וּמַשְׁעֲנֶתְךָ הֵמָּה יִנְחָמֵנִי.

תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שֻׁלְחָן נֶגֶד צָרָי,

דִּשְׁנָתְךָ בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי,

כּוֹסֵי רוּחָה.

אֵךְ טוֹב וַחֲסֵד יִרְדּוּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי,

וְשָׁבֹתִי בְּבֵית יְיָ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים.

Recitation of Names

Our loved ones live in our broken hearts — and, at times, that brings some measure of healing. Their acts of kindness and generosity are the inheritance they leave behind. We feel their absence; but the beauty of their lives abides among us. As it is said, *The name of one who has died shall not disappear*. Our loved ones' names — and their memories — will endure among us. And these are the names — on our lips and in our hearts. . . .

Memorial Prayer

*El malei rachamim,
shochein bam'romim,
hamtzei m'nuchah n'chonah
tachat kanfei hash'chinah —
im k'doshim ut-horim
k'zohar harakia mazhirim —
l'nishmot yakireinu
shehal'chu l'olamam.
Baal harachamim yastireim
b'seiter k'nafav l'olamim;
v'yitzror bitzror hachayim
et nishmatam.
Adonai — hu nachalatam.
V'yanuchu b'shalom al mishkavam.
V'nomar: Amen.*

Merciful God,
God Most High:
Let there be perfect rest
for the souls of our loved ones who have gone into eternity.
May they find shelter in Your presence among the holy and pure
whose light shines like the radiance of heaven.
Compassionate God, hold them close to You forever.
May their souls be bound up in the bond of life eternal.
May they find a home in You.
And may they rest in peace.
Together we say: *Amen*.

אל מלא רחמים,
שוכן במרומים.
המצא מנוחה נְכוֹנָה
תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה
עם קדושים וטהורים
כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזֻהָרִים
לְנִשְׁמוֹת יְקִירֵינוּ
שֶׁהֲלָכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם.
בְּעַל הַרְחָמִים יִסְתִּירֵם
בְּסֵתֶר כַּנְפָיו לְעוֹלָמִים,
וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים
אֶת נִשְׁמָתָם.
יְיָ הוּא נַחֲלָתָם.
וַיָּנוּחוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכָּבָם.
וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.

Mourner's Kaddish

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meih raba,
b'alma di v'ra chiruteih.
V'yamlich malchuteih b'chayeichon
uvyomeichon,
uvchayei d'chol beit Yisrael —
baagala uvizman kariv;
v'imru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'meih raba m'varach
l'alam ul-almei almaya.
Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpaar
v'yitromam v'yitnasei v'yit-hadar
v'yitaleh v'yit-halal sh'meih
d'kudsha — b'rich hu —
l'eila ul-eila mikol birchata v'shirata,
tushb'chata v'nechemata
daamiran b'alma;
v'imru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya,
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael;
v'imru: Amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav,
Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu,
v'al kol Yisrael
v'al kol yoshvei teiveil;
v'imru: Amen.*

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא,
בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ.
וַיַּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ
וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ,
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעֻגְלָא וּבְזִמָּן קָרִיב.
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ
לְעָלָם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר
וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא וַיִּתְהַדָּר
וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ
דְּקֻדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא,
לְעֵלָא וּלְעֵלָא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא,
תְּשׁוּבָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא
דְּאִמְרֵינוּ בְּעֻלְמָא.
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא,
וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמֵי
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל.
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Words of Hope

שִׁימֵנִי כַּחֲזָתָם עַל־לִבֶּךָ . . . כִּי־עֲזָה כַּמָּוֶת אֶהְבֶּה.

Simeini chachotam al-libecha . . . ki-azah chamavet ahavah.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, for love is strong as death. Song of Songs 8:6

הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמָּעָה, בִּרְנָה יִקְצְרוּ.

Hazorim b'dimah — b'rinah yiktzoru.

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Psalm 126:5

נֵר יְיָ נִשְׁמַת אָדָם.

Ner Adonai nishmat adam.

The spirit within is the lamp of God Eternal. Proverbs 20:27