

חדש ימינו



ס ד ו ר

חדש ימינו



Hadesh Yameinu

• R E N E W •
O U R • D A Y S

A Book of Jewish Prayer and Meditation



Edited and translated by

Rabbi Ronald Aigen

בית
הכנסת
דורשי
אמת



CONGREGATION DORSHEI EMET
the reconstructionist synagogue of montreal

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אסתר הודא בת יצחק יהודה וזלדה אייגן ז"ל

תנחום בן ירמיהו ומינה ליבה מלניק ז"ל

רייזל בת משה הכהן וחיה מלניק ז"ל

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INTRODUCTION

Why “a book of Jewish prayer and meditation,” and not simply “a Jewish prayer book”? In part, to indicate that this volume reflects a wider than usual spectrum of a 3,500-year-old spiritual tradition: from one of the oldest Hebrew prayers of the Bible, Moses’ prayer for healing, to the sublime biblical poetry of the psalms; from the rich storehouse of classical prayer of the ancient rabbis to the mystical meditations of the medieval kabbalists and psychological insights of the ḥasidic masters; from the wisdom of great modern teachers to the inspiration of contemporary poets. While it is true that the classical Jewish prayer book, the *siddur*, is in its own way also an anthology, this book expands upon that model. Moreover, the effort here has been to give a new hearing to the prayers, meditations, stories, poems, songs, chants and art-forms of Jewish men and women throughout the ages.

Those who are still far from the discipline of traditional prayer and formal communal worship are encouraged to read through this book as one would any volume of inspirational literature. If one continues in sequence from beginning to end, there is the greater rhythm of the whole. But any one poem, or any single verse, might alone be the one which makes the whole worthwhile, the one which becomes “my prayer,” “my meditation.”

From the structure of the book’s Contents, this would indeed appear to be simply another Shabbat and Festival prayer book. The intent, however, is to unlock the spiritual treasures of Judaism in such a way that the seekers of our own age might (re)discover their spiritual heritage. This book is for those who are searching for deeper purpose and meaning in their lives; for those who have perhaps begun to appreciate the wisdom of meditation or of following some other spiritual path, but have not yet discovered those same possibilities within the Jewish tradition. By following the basic structure of a Shabbat and Festival prayer book, this book invites those for whom communal prayer is a foreign experience, or merely an exercise in rote ritual, to explore one of the richest spiritual experiences of the Jewish people.



The weekly Shabbat, from sundown on Friday evening until the appearance of three stars on Saturday night, is the jewel in the crown of Jewish spiritual life. An entire day of rest and renewal for the soul; a day of release from the

worldly concerns of the six-day work week; a day for contemplating with gratitude the beauty and wonder of Creation; a day for clarifying our vision of a better world and renewing our resolve to bring it about — this is what the experience of Shabbat is meant to be. Over the millennia the traditional prayers and rituals that would take us there have been embellished with mystical meditations and the folkloric wisdom of poetry and song. The bulk of this volume has been given over to this legacy of seeking to soar beyond the realm of ordinary time and, at day's end, to return to it with the transformative spirit of Shabbat.

Over the course of the year there are other sacred days, although none is as sacred as Shabbat (with the exception of Yom Kippur, “The Sabbath of Sabbaths”). On these days we reconnect with the rhythm of the seasons and the sacred history of our people.

Over the course of a lifetime, we experience and need to give voice to the sacred moments of birth, coming of age, marriage and death. And, daily we come into contact in a myriad of ways with the realm of the sacred and experience the wonders and miracles of living, once we begin to train our eyes to see and our hearts to understand. While the book's structure is clearly designed primarily for use on Shabbat and Festivals, internal instructions indicate how to proceed for daily use.

As always, the spiritual path is best learned not from a book but from a teacher, one from whom we can actually hear how the words are to be sung, so to speak. We find our way by observing personalities whose very being conveys what cannot be expressed in words. As the famous ḥasidic saying has it, “I didn't come to the rebbe to learn words of Torah, I came to learn how the rebbe ties his shoes.”

One of the great spiritual teachers of our own age, Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, once said it this way: “The words of the prayer book are like freeze-dried coffee. Our problem today is that we've forgotten that in order to enjoy it, we need to first add boiling water.” This book provides the raw material for those who are willing to learn how to “boil water.”



The name *Ḥadesh Yameinu* comes from the familiar verse with which we conclude the Torah service, “Restore us, Eternal One, to you, and we shall return; *renew our days* as of old.” To “renew our days” has been the fervent wish of Jews throughout the generations. This is our path to spiritual

growth — a renewal of days in order to bring on a better world. The paradox of this messianic hope, however, presents a dilemma. Will our ideal future world come from making our days “as of old,” that is, literally a return to past forms of Jewish life? Or will our renewal come from a new Jewish vision for our own time, just as previous generations boldly innovated in the past? In our own time, this debate about the meaning of Jewish messianism has once again come to the fore.

The premise of the Reconstructionist approach to Jewish life has always been a commitment to living within the tension of this dialectic. We seek to maintain strong connections with our past even as we take bold steps to create new forms of Jewish life. That was the guiding commitment of the original 1945 Reconstructionist *Sabbath Prayer Book*, and it remains the aim of the present volume. The aim of *Ḥadesh Yameinu* is to maintain, as far as possible, a strong link with the traditional liturgy of our past, even as we seek to help a new generation give expression to their own spiritual reality. Thus, while the traditional order of the Hebrew liturgy, *matbei'a shel tefillah*, has been largely maintained, this siddur includes several innovations.

The first and most obvious difference is to be found in the format itself. By placing the English translation on the same page as the Hebrew in matching phrases, we hope to enable Hebrew readers to add meaning to their prayer experience through a better, perhaps new understanding of the prayers they are reciting. Those who follow in English may come to learn the Hebrew phrases through aural repetition. The intention is to promote Hebrew literacy, an indispensable key to unlocking the storehouses of our spiritual tradition. A greater familiarity with the meaning of the Hebrew will increase the potential for *kavanah*, a meaningful prayer experience.

The translation itself attempts to be faithful to the original, while at the same time conveying a religious humanist's understanding of the text. As always, translation interprets, and this one does so frankly and deliberately. Several aspects of the translation are discussed in this introduction.

One aspect of this translation that may be viewed as innovative is its response to the feminist call for inclusivist gender-neutral language. While this has been a main effort of the English translation, it is an impossible task to do the same in Hebrew without doing violence to the poetic cadence of the original or losing all connection to the traditional liturgical form. As a symbolic statement of inclusiveness in the Hebrew, references to the matriarchs

have been added in the first paragraph of the *Amidah*, a tradition we have developed orally over the past several years. The matriarchs have also been referred to in the personal blessings, the *mi-sheberakh* prayers of the Torah service, *tefillat geshem* (the prayer for rain), and in *birkat ha-mazon* (the grace after meals).

Another innovation in form is found in the Preliminary Meditation and Musaf sections. It is not only the idea of “contemporary readings” that is being introduced here; that was already a feature of the 1945 *Sabbath Prayer Book*. What is being suggested here is the idea of private, silent meditation as part of congregational worship. These sections may also be read aloud, thus adding to the innovative potential of the weekly group experience.

The Hebrew text deviates in some aspects from the “traditional” siddur as well as from the 1945 *Sabbath Prayer Book*. Because we want the act of prayer to be an act of affirmation and not merely quotation, many of our changes, but not all, follow those changes made by the 1945 siddur edited by Mordecai Kaplan.



The formulation of the “choseness” passages will continue to avoid negative comparisons with other peoples; the *Aleinu* of the '45 version will remain as it was. The *aliyah* blessing continues to emphasize the idea of being singled out for divine service, what Mordecai Kaplan called “vocation.” Kaplan had changed the traditional phrase, *asher baḥar banu mi-kol ha-‘ammim*, “who distinguished us from all other peoples,” to *asher keirevanu la-‘avodato*, “who has drawn us close to divine service.” Here, however, we have expressed this idea of vocation using the more traditional language, *asher baḥar banu la-‘avodato*, “who has distinguished us for divine service.” A nonsupernatural God neither “draws close” nor “distinguishes” in any literal sense. It is rather the feeling that we have in relation to our God which is being articulated. Our version seeks to affirm that it is our sense of purpose or vocation that makes us unique, rather than any supernatural, inherent characteristic that distinguishes us from other peoples.

The prayer for peace will continue to offer the more universal formulation of the '45 version, “Grant peace...to us *and all God-fearing people...* bless the people Israel and *all peoples* with abundant strength and peace.”

The concept of messianic days and redemption continues to replace calling upon a personal Messiah or redeemer. The phrase *mashiah ben David*,

however, does appear in this volume, but has been translated idiomatically as a reference to the Jewish vision for the ideal future. In this respect, we have permitted ourselves greater latitude to allow the poetic language of liturgy, as we understand it, to stimulate and enrich us through its use of symbolic metaphor.

Where previous generations clearly intended a literal understanding of a phrase, precluding our assignment of symbolic meaning, the metaphor collapses for us. Accordingly, the traditional prayers for the restoration of the animal sacrifices and the Temple cult continue to be eliminated here, as they were in the 1945 *Sabbath Prayer Book*.

The traditional reference to resurrection of the dead, *meḥayyei ha-meitim*, “who resurrects the dead,” has also been eliminated. Here, however, we have used *meḥayyei kol ḥai*, “who gives life to everything,” in place of the phrase used by the 1945 *Sabbath Prayer Book*, *ha-zokher le-yetzorav be-rahāmim tovim*, “who remembers His creatures with compassion.” In this way, we have tried to capture the more powerful God-imagery of the original.

With regard to selections of biblical psalms, within the main body of the prayer service we have determined to retain the integrity of the original poem, even when certain phrases seemed theologically or politically problematic, as in Psalm 136, “who slew great kings...and gave their land as a heritage to Israel.” In this way, we distinguish between the sanctity of the Bible and that of the rabbinic liturgy.



A brief note on the varying translations of two significant terms is in order. The first is the tetragrammaton, the four-letter name of God, YHWH. In biblical times the ineffable name was uttered only once a year, by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies. Once the Temple was destroyed and knowledge of the correct pronunciation of God’s name was lost, the rabbis expressed this name in prayer with the term, *Adonai*, “my Lord.” As a sign of respect for the sanctity of the name of God, they transcribed only two letters, the two *yuds*, of the four-letter name, with the vocalization of the word they actually pronounced, *Adonai*.

The actual meaning of the original four-letter name was first given to Moses at the burning bush: “I am that I am,’...YHWH, that is my name for all generations” (*Exodus 3:14, 15*). This name of the Jewish God is, in fact, a

conflation of the verb form “to be” arrested in all its tenses, “am, was, will be.” What this name connotes is not a “thing,” but rather the “force” or “process” connected with Being or Becoming. YHVH was also understood by the rabbis as an expression of the intimate God of relationship who “shall be with you in accordance with your need.” In this translation, the four-letter name has been rendered by the primary expressions: “Eternal” or “Eternal One,” reflecting the dynamic process of becoming that is the God of Being; the “Everpresent,” reflecting the intimate One who is ever with us; and “Source” and “Life-giver,” to express the Power that is the very source of existence.

The second major term is *barukh*, traditionally rendered as “blessed” or “praised.” Our understanding of *barukh* stems from a cognate term found in ancient Sumerian hymnologies. The Sumerians adulated their gods and goddesses with the term “*bulug*,” a word which also denoted barley that had been soaking in vats and was about to burst its shell. Thus, the highest acclaim ascribed to the deity had the connotation of “that which broke boundaries, exceeded all limits, and in its own over-abundant fruitfulness was able to enrich others.” A similar connotation of the Hebrew term is found in the Jerusalem Talmud in which we find the phrase, *ha-mayim nitbarkhu*, “the waters overflowed their banks.” This connotation of the term *barukh attah* has been rendered variously as “You abound in blessings”; “Boundless are you”; “Limitless are you”; and the more traditional “Blessed” and “Praised are you.” I am indebted to my teacher, Rabbi Sol Cohen, for this insight.



Once again, our main effort in producing this siddur has been to help contemporary Jews re-enter the world of prayer; experience God in terms that are emotionally and spiritually compelling as well as intellectually satisfying; experience a oneness with Kelal Yisrael, the Community of Israel; and gain a sense of inspiration from Jewish tradition. Our hope is that this siddur will nurture prayer and spiritual life; help people to understand themselves as individuals, as Jews and as human beings; help to create community; and teach, comfort and open pathways to joy. If this book of prayers will in any small way bring even some of this about, *harei zeh meshubah*, it will have served a worthy purpose.

Ronald Aigen
Yom Yerushalayim 5756
Montréal

KEY FOR TRANSLITERATION

<u>Consonants</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Symbol / Pronunciation</u>
א	alef	(silent)
ב	bet	b
בּ	vet	v
ג	gimmel	g
ד	daled	d
ה	heh	h
ו	vav	v
ז	zayin	z
ח	het	ḥ (as in “ḥallah,” and “Ḥanukkah”)
ט	tet	t
י	yud	y
כּ, כ	kaf/ final kaf	k
כּ, כ	khaf/ final khaf	kh (as in “Bach” and “barukh”)
ל	lamed	l
מ, מ	mem/ final mem	m
נ, נ	nun/ final nun	n
ס	samekh	s
ע	ayin	ʿ (glottal stop)
פ	peh	p
פּ, פ	feh/ final feh	f
צ, צ	tzadik/ final tzadik	tz (as in “mitzvah”)
ק	kuf	k
ר	resh	r
שׁ	shin	sh
שׂ	sin	s
ת	tav	t

<u>Vowels</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Symbol / Pronunciation</u>
אָ , אַ	pataḥ	a (as in “far”)
אֲ	kamatz	a (as in “ah!”)
אִ	kamatz katan	o (as in “ought”)
אֹ , אֻ	ḥolam	o (as in “coat”)
אִי , אִי	kubutz, shuruk	u (as in “flute”)
אֵ	sheva na‘	e (as in “carpet”)
אֶ , אֶ	segol	e (as in “let”)
אֵי	tzerei	ei or e (as in “weigh” or “bread”)
אִי	ḥirik	i (as in “ink”)

Diphthongs

אֵי	ai (as in “aisle”)
אֵי	ei (as in “weigh”)
אִי	oi (as in “boil”)

NOTE

Transliterations of Hebrew passages have been included to promote active participation in congregational or home singing by those unable to read Hebrew. To that end, we’ve aimed more for ease of use than scholarly precision, and have adopted the following conventions, recognizing that they may be departed from for the sake of clarity:

1. Hyphens are used to set off articles, prepositions, and conjunctions that are part of the word in Hebrew. (E.g., ha-raḥaman; be-tif’eret.)

2. *Dagesh ḥazak* is shown by a doubled consonant, except (1) when the consonant is shin, shown as “sh” or tzadi, shown as “tz” and (2) following an element set off by a hyphen.

3. *Sheva na‘* is indicated by an “e”, to show that it is sounded.

4. Apostrophes are used to show that two adjacent vowels are pronounced separately and do not form a diphthong. (E.g., ta’ir, ve-yit’haddar.) Alef is shown by the vowel alone, except when an apostrophe is needed to show that the alef starts a new syllable. (E.g., ot; ana; lir’ot.)

5. Ayin is shown by a reverse apostrophe before the associated vowel or at the end of the word, except where the word is effectively used as an English term. (E.g., ‘olam; yada‘; Shema, Amidah.)

כוונות הלב THE PRAYERFUL HEART

The great sages used to give a coin to the poor before prayer and then they would pray, as it is said, “With righteousness (*bi-tzedakah* [taken as charity]) will I grasp your presence.”

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah



Prayer is never repeated:

the quality of each day's prayer
is unlike that of any other.

This is the meaning of the Mishnah's words:

“The one whose prayer is rigid
prays without feeling.” (*Mishnah Berakhot 4:4*)

This can be seen even in the thoughts
that distract us from true prayer;
they too are different every day.

Each day and its prayer,
each day and its distractions —
until Messiah-time comes.

Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoye



Every single word is a whole world. When a person stands up to pray and recites the words of the prayers, he is gathering beautiful flowers and blossoms, one by one, until they make a bunch. Then he picks more, one by one, until they make another bunch, and he puts them together. So he goes on, picking and gathering more and more lovely bouquets.

So it is in prayer: one goes from letter to letter, until several letters are joined together to make a syllable. One does the same to make whole words. Then one joins together two words, and goes on, picking and gathering, until one completes a whole blessing.

Nahman of Bratzlav



The Tzanzer Rebbe was asked by one of his disciples:

“What does the Rebbe do before praying?”

The Rebbe replied: “I pray that I may have the ability to pray!”



In prayer we gather the strength and dedication which enables us to become the fulfillment of the Divine will, thus advancing the purpose which God has set for humanity and for Israel. The flowering of true prayer is a resolve which fills our entire being, and unites all our powers in the service of God.

Joseph Albo



It is possible to pray in such a way
that no other person
can know of your devotion.

Though you make no movement of your body,
your soul is all aflame within you.

And when you cry out in the ecstasy of that
moment —
your cry will be a whisper.

Meshulem Heller of Zbarash



לְמַדְנִי, אֱלֹהֵי, בְּרַךְ וְהַתְּפִילָּה
עַל סוּד עֵלָה קָמַל,
עַל נִגְהַ פְּרִי בְּשֵׁל,
עַל הַחֲרוּת הַזֹּאת: לְרֵאוֹת,
לְחֹשׁ, לְנָשֵׁם,
לְדַעַת, לְיַחַל, לְהַבְּשֵׁל.

Teach me, my God, blessing and prayer —
for the secret of the withered leaf,
the brightness of the ripened fruit,
for this freedom to see,
to sense, to breathe,
to know, to wish, to fail.

לְמַד אֶת שְׁפֹתַי בְּרִכָּה וְשִׁיר הַיָּל
בְּהַתְּחַדֵּשׁ יוֹמְךָ
עַם בְּקָר וְעַם לַיִל,
לְבַל יִהְיֶה יוֹמֵי הַיּוֹם
בְּתַמּוּל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם,
לְבַל יִהְיֶה עָלַי יוֹמֵי הַרְגָּל.

Teach my lips a blessing, a song of praise
in renewal of your day,
each morning and eve.
That my today not be
like all my yesterdays;
that my day not be — merely routine.

Leah Goldberg

To pray is so necessary and so hard. Hard not because it requires intellect or knowledge or a big vocabulary, but because it requires of us humility. And that comes, I think, from a profound sense of one's brokenness, and one's need. Not the need that causes us to cry, "Get me out of this trouble, quick!" but the need that one feels every day of one's life — even though one does not acknowledge it — to be related to something bigger than one's self, something more alive than one's self, something older and something not yet born, that will endure through time.

Lillian Smith



The human body is always finite;
it is the spirit that is boundless.
Before beginning to pray,
 a person should cast aside that which limits him
 and enter into the world of Nothing.
In prayer one should turn to God alone
 and have no thoughts of oneself at all.
Nothing but God exists for him;
 he himself has ceased to be.
The true redemption of one's soul can only happen
 as one steps outside the body's limits.

Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev



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?

Wolf of Zhitomir