



# SIDDUR *OF* REENTERING



The Covenant Foundation

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## INTRODUCTION

Someone once told me that they imagine their Jewish life as a slinky. Year after year, we follow the same calendar, we celebrate the same holidays, we read the same parshiyot (weekly Torah portions), we move through the same liturgical arcs. And yet, we are different. We may chant the same words and perform the same rituals, yet the new experiences we have had, the new heights we have reached, the new challenges we have traversed mean that we come to these same moments as changed selves. The same circle, a new rung higher, or sometimes lower. A slinky.

And then, sometimes, the slinky changes color, or changes texture. A rupture occurs. And though our path has echoes of the familiar, it is suddenly the differences that feel more salient. The disorientation overwhelms. This is what the early phase of the COVID pandemic did to so many of us. It shook us out of our ordinary, and ushered in a different way of being. Some of that was temporary. Some of that has stuck. Some of that is still sticky.

This siddur is meant to give text, art, liturgy and ritual for just those moments. For the times in which everything feels unfamiliar and uncertain. For the times that feel shrouded by loss. For the times that feel like there just may be a path forward. For the times that feel so precious, and maybe even so precarious, that all we can say is thank you.

The siddur is divided into these four sections – darkness, memorial, reentering and gratitude – and charts a course from one to the next. And yet we recognize that each person's journey has been, at once, deeply intertwined and interdependent, and also completely independent and unique.



As a country and a world, we have personally and collectively gone through some, each or all of these stages and then back again. The journeys to and through pandemic and healing are not linear ones – they are not straight lines, they do not move in a single direction, and they rarely have a clear beginning and end. Some of us are stuck in darkness. Some are basking in gratitude. Some are ready for reentering. Some need space to memorialize. Some are all, some are none, and some flit from stages to another, back and forth, back and forth. Jewish life is not a straight line – it is a slinky. Forever spiraling, circling, offering paths up and down and around and around and back again.

The art and text and reflections that you encounter in this book will not be everything for everyone at all times. You may well have experienced a loss that you do not see mentioned in these pages; you may experience gratitude in a way that we did not capture. A siddur is not all-encompassing – it can't be. What we hope it can be is a companion. An opening for wherever you are at – an invitation to explore, to find grounding and togetherness, however and wherever on this journey you may be.

May these pages give comfort where it is needed. May they give connection where it is sought. May they give resilience where it is possible. And may we all move through life's journeys and cycles surrounded and anchored by our tradition, its words, and all those who hold fast to them.

**—Rabbi Sarah Krinsky**

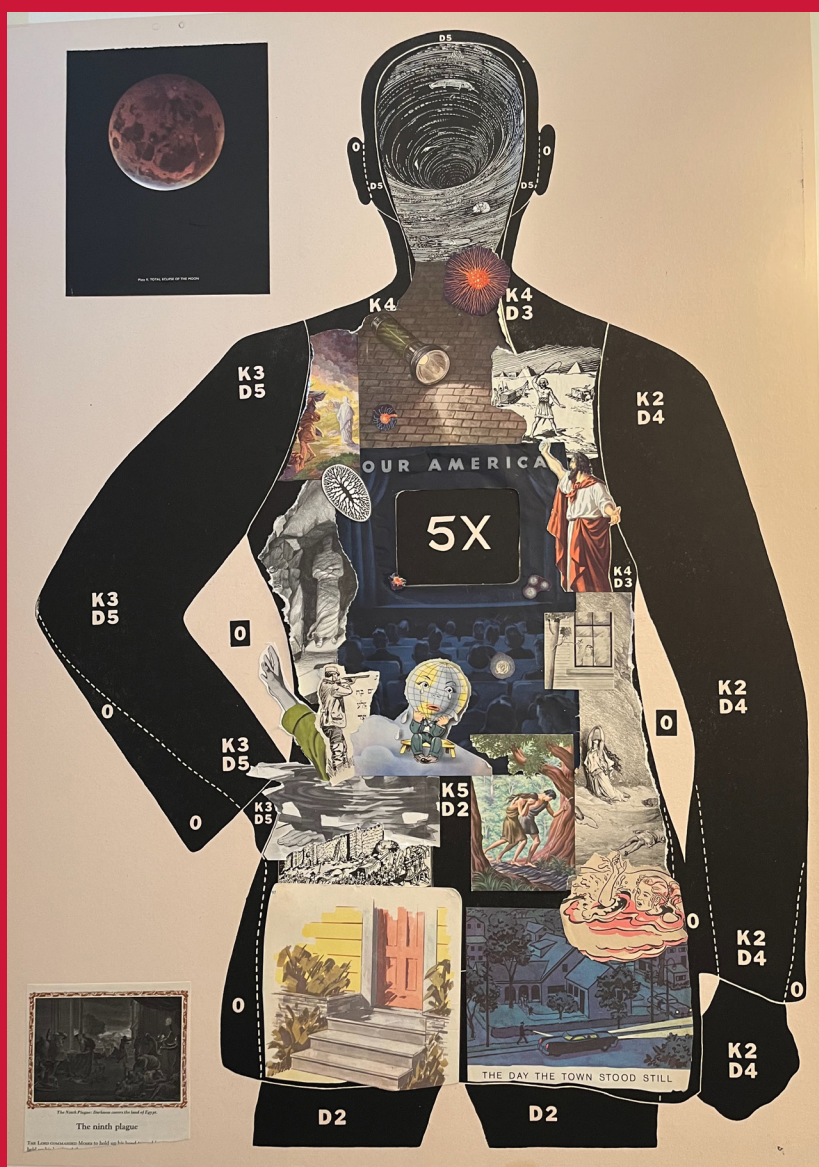
“I was lonely during covid. I am outgoing and sociable and it was hard to be home all the time. It is so nice to pray with other people, listen to live music and meet Adas members and clergy. I needed to hear myself sing along with the clergy and the congregants.”

**-Margot Mezvinsky**

“The whole concept of what it means to be “counted” in a minyan changed depending on whether we were virtual or in person, and that notion of not being “fully present,” despite needing to feel that so much during that time, really hit me in a deep way. I really missed the “full” sensory experience of Adas: the sights, the sounds, the smells, etc. There is nothing that can approximate the feeling of being in the building and taking it all in.”

**-Nathaniel Berman**

**DARK**



## The Ninth Plague

2022, Collage, mixed vintage printed paper

AMY COHEN

בֹּרָא יוֹם וָלַיְלָה גּוֹלָל אוֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אוֹר וּמַעֲבִיר יוֹם  
וּמַבְיֵא לַיְלָה וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה... בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
יְהוָה הַמַּעֲרִיב עַרְבִים:

God creates day and night, rolls the light away from before darkness, and darkness from before light; causes day to pass and brings night, and separates between day and night. Blessed are You, God, who brings on evening.





# DARKNESS

Our lives are bittersweet. There are times of great joy and happiness and times of immense pain and suffering. The Rabbis recognized that we live in a world of both light and dark. They understood that we must learn to navigate through the dark times—using gratitude, perseverance, prayer, and the belief that at some point, we will feel the light again.

**There is a crack in everything...  
That's how the light gets in.**

**—Leonard Cohen**

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I sit in the dark  
My heart is breaking  
The darkness surrounds me--  
I fear my tears will never stop  
I am exhausted, but I cannot lay my head on the pillow  
Terrifying thoughts deny me either rest or sleep  
Angry thoughts invade my being  
My grief-filled body cannot find peace

I do not know if it is day or night  
I feel only darkness in my soul  
I reach out to You God  
Are You there? At all?  
Can You hear my cries, as it says in the Psalms?  
Can You heal my wounds?  
My spirit is bleeding  
I need Your presence. I need Your blessing.  
Remind me that, in this world,  
Light follows Darkness  
As Day follows Night  
It always does

**—Nechama Liss-Levinson**

**From the depths, I call out to You, God;  
God, hear my voice, be attentive to my pleas.  
(Psalm 130)**

When we struggle in the darkness, we wonder:  
Will it always be like this?  
Will I survive?  
Will I ever see the cracks of light?

You are not alone.

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## **Here are some lifelines for you to consider:**

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Breathe</b> | Take a breath; let some calm enter your body<br>Feel the Source of Life enter your being                    |
| <b>Write</b>   | Writing your feelings down may offer a crack<br>in the darkness   |
| <b>Talk</b>    | To someone you feel might listen  |
| <b>Enter</b>   | Another place in your life for moments of<br>peace Read, create art, listen to music, cook,<br>be in nature |
| <b>Move</b>    | Walk, dance, run, exercise  |
| <b>Be Kind</b> | To yourself. You matter.<br>Extend small acts of kindness to others,<br>when you can                        |
| <b>Pray</b>    | To God, to the universe, to fate, to fill existential<br>loneliness. So that you feel you are NOT ALONE     |
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**Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do  
that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.**

**—Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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## CARRY ME

God, carry me today,  
With Your love,  
Your grace,  
Your wisdom and strength.  
God, carry me today,  
With Your power,  
Your justice,  
Your holiness and law.  
God, carry me today,  
Through stormy winds and rough seas,  
The obvious and unforeseen  
Challenges and losses,  
The uneven flow of my emotions,  
My fears and my shames.

God, carry me today.  
Give me healing hands,  
A quiet mind,  
Gentle speech,  
And a forgiving heart.  
Let me feel You in my chest.  
Let me feel You in my limbs.  
Let me feel You by my side.

With You as my Rock and Shield,  
I will face this day with an answer  
To loneliness and dread,  
Misgivings and mistakes,  
To stand with courage and freedom  
Against misfortune and deceit.  
Today, God on high,  
I need your majesty and might,  
Your dignity and righteousness,  
To carry me though the day ahead.

**—Adapted with permission from “Carry Me” by Alden Solovy, © 2011**

## A MANTRA

(You can put in your own words...)

May I feel safe

May I feel light

May I feel love

May I feel peace

**I lift my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come?**

**My help is from God, who made the heavens and the earth.**

**God will watch over your coming and your going**

**From this time forth, and forever and ever. (Psalm 121)**

**—Nechama Liss-Levinson**











## **Nest**

Assembled from fallen branches collected from the vicinity of our synagogue building and the historic Jewish cemeteries in Southeast DC.

RACHEL FARBIARZ &  
PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

ORIAL



**What was your biggest take away from having so much time away?**

“Judaism, Jewish life and practice and all, goes on... something we've learned from history from many centuries of persecutions and all the rest is that we've survived, but we've never felt that same need for survival in our less threatened lives, at least here in America in the 21st century. The shul was still there, our traditions, our holidays, our Torah, our Jewish lives...maybe on hold to some extent, but everyone was forced to be creative to carve out their own journey path to get through it...each in our own "safe room." But we also each decided on different things to take with us into that safe room...whatever we thought we'd need while in there. Now that we've opened that door, even a small amount, whatever we didn't bring in there with us, is all still there!”

**—Sheldon Novek**





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אל מלא רחמים שוכן בְּמְרוֹמִים, הַמַּצֵּא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה עַל כָּפֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה  
בְּמַעְלוֹת קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּזוֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזַהְרִים נִשְׁמַת (פְּלוּנִי בֶן פְּלוּנִי  
שְׁהֵלָה לְעוֹלָמוֹ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן תֵּהָא מְנוּחָתוֹ בְּעַל הָרַחֲמִים, יִסְתִּירָהוּ בְּסֶטֶר כְּנָפָיו  
לְעוֹלָמִים, וְיַצְרֵר בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים אֶת נִשְׁמָתוֹ הֵא הוּא נִחְלָתוֹ, וְיִנּוּחַ, בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל  
מִשְׁכְּבוֹ וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן

Exalted, compassionate God, grant infinite rest, in Your  
sheltering Presence, among the holy and pure to the  
souls of those who have gone to their eternal homes.  
Merciful One, we ask that our loved ones find perfect  
peace in Your eternal embrace. May their souls be  
bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace.  
And let us say amen

## INTRODUCTION

The Jewish people have spent millennia wandering in the Diaspora. We wandered from country to country, being sometimes invited in to settle and more often being kicked out. Going back to the early rabbinic period after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and even before, we established the concept of k'dushat z'man – the holiness of time. To be sure, Jewish tradition also contains the concept of k'dushat ha-makom, the holiness of place. And yet k'dushat z'man always took precedence over k'dushat ha-makom. When we light candles on Friday or holidays, we utter the words, “asher k'dshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu – who has made us holy and commanded us.” We use these words when we put on tallit and tefillin in the morning and for many other blessings. The last line of the Friday night kiddush reads, “Barukh atah Adonai m'kadesh ha'shabbat. Praised are you God who sanctifies the Shabbat.” What these blessings share is that they all sanctify time.

Later Jewish thinkers and scholars expanded on this idea. The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel develops this in many of his writings – most articulately, in “The Sabbath.” In his landmark work *Zakhor*, the late Professor Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi devotes the entire book to expressions of memory in Jewish tradition throughout the ages and the ways in which Jews hold on to memory. *Zakhor* – Remember is an ancient injunction in Jewish tradition. The title of Yerushalmi's work is in the imperative because Jews are commanded to remember. We are commanded to remember the act of creation of God's world and we are commanded to remember the Exodus from Egypt. We are commanded to recite kaddish for our loved ones as part of the unbroken chain of tradition.

Memory is a strong concept in Jewish tradition as it represents our sense of continuity as a people. As we present this Siddur of Reentering to the Adas Israel community, these essays which follow recall loving memories of grief during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The loss of spouses, of parents and in two cases of both parents in a short period of time. What it was like to grieve with barely a minyan and in some cases not even a minyan at a graveside along with dozens of Zoom screens; what it was like to hold shivah on Zoom or in some cases supplemented by limited in person shivah during the freezing cold or blistering Washington, DC summers; what it was like to come to Zoom t'filot morning and evening with modified prayers since we weren't in a duly constituted minyan as we were not in person.

You will read about the silver linings people found in this difficult background. Individual walks during cold shivah days holding a cup of coffee, learning about people's loved ones during daily Zoom davening and of course, being able to come to shul from the comfort of one's home, from a car, the Metro or even an airplane. We are grateful for these reflections. We are pained by these losses. We are together in this remembrance.

Yehi Zikhram Barukh – may their memories be for a blessing.

—Rabbi Jan Kaufman

## REMEMBERING STAN COHEN

My husband, Stan Cohen, died of COVID in April 2020, the very beginning of the COVID pandemic. Stan was a longtime congregant, a permanent fixture on the board of managers, and, over the years, a member of many different committees. As Toni Bickart once said, “Stan cared about Adas Israel the way one cares about a member of your family.

Rabbi Alexander has observed that during COVID, a time of so much death, even the rituals of death had been disrupted. And so it was for our family. In normal times, we would have wanted to hold Stan’s funeral in the Smith Sanctuary. Instead, six of us stood at his grave in the Old Adas Cemetery, each six feet apart, as Rabbi Holtzblatt delivered a heartfelt eulogy. The rest of his family, his friends, and his professional colleagues watched on Zoom.

Shiva is a time for a community to provide mourners with food, hugs, and remembrances. Our family sat home, alone, receiving shiva visits online and food largely through contactless deliveries. Needless to say, no hugs could be given. Our social isolation added complexity to the earliest days of our grieving process

The isolation continued once shiva ended and life returned to normal. In the spring of 2020, “normal” meant a mandated lockdown existence. It is common for the bereaved to feel lonely at this juncture: the reality of a loved one’s absence is sinking in, and fewer friends are on hand to ease the pain. During COVID, finding comfort presented special challenges.

As I recited the mourner’s kaddish during Adas’ daily virtual minyan services, I found my community. Many who joined me were also saying kaddish for loved ones, so we were united in our collective grief. Despite our lack of physical togetherness, those services were a shared, and emotionally meaningful, experience.

We held Stan’s unveiling as our year of mourning him neared its end. Again, only a few people could join us in person in the cemetery, with everyone else on Zoom.



However, between April 2020 and March 2021, much had changed. We had weathered our grief. We were now vaccinated. And, on that spring day, a cherry tree near Stan's grave was in full bloom, reminding us that life goes on and better days can lie ahead.

Recently, our family dedicated a memorial plaque to Stan in the Smith Sanctuary. It is one of the ways we continue to honor his memory. Stan would have been pleased to be included in this siddur of re-entry. And, while I've noticed that it's sometimes difficult for me to be at Adas Israel -- I'm reminded of Stan's absence -- that too will likely pass with time. After all, Stan would have wanted it that way.

### —Sue Ducat

Stan Cohen became a member of Adas Israel in the late 1970s, when he first moved to Washington. In addition to his second wife, Sue Ducat, whom he married in 1988, Stan is survived by his children: Rachel (Jon Dinman); Lissa Shorr (Andy); Norman (Karina Gaige); and Hannah; and his sister, Ann Sher (Joe). He also had six grandchildren: Robbie Shorr (Lydia Sonenklar); Brian Shorr (Shayna); Bailey Dinman; Chloe Dinman; Eli Cohen; and Will Cohen. His first wife, Barbara, died in 1986.



## LOSING MY DAD, FRANK HIMMELFARB [Z"l] DURING COVID

The experience of my Dad dying suddenly and unexpectedly was far more powerful than what had become the baseline stress of Covid. When my Dad died Covid stress was and still is my new normal. Covid fear was omnipresent for many indelible memories such as entering my parents' home for the first time in almost a year, hugging my Mom and brother for the first time in almost a year, wearing a mask indoors when my family gathered, and fetching a shovel from my garage the morning of my Dad's funeral. It was the fog of loss that seeped into the entirety of my being. The fear and protocols of Covid were only the familiar, crappy background.

I have wondered what would it have been like if my Dad's death happened without the worries of Covid? As far as ritual goes, there is little to wonder as our tradition gives us a time-tested and expected roadmap. My Dad was a lifelong Washingtonian with far reaching friendships. I can imagine we would have had a very well attended funeral, followed by days of vibrant, well attended shiva, and additionally followed by a year of in-person minyan for me. These are the rituals we know, this is what is expected, and for me and my family we would have done nothing less to honor my Dad's tremendous legacy and spirit. Had all the traditional non-Covid rituals been responsibly available, for me I wonder if my experience would have been performative at times? While the reality of my Dad's death was devastating, my deeply embedded style is to always take care of everyone else even when that means diminishing my own experience. This style has both served me very well professionally and also sometimes is at the expense of my wellbeing. I cannot help but to wonder if I would have felt pressure to connect with each person kind enough to show up, would I have stressed out and been hard on myself if I forgot the name of my cousin's new husband, would I have been uncomfortably aware of the work colleague who showed up at shiva but was sitting alone not talking to anyone because they didn't know anyone, and would I have been distracted by the people who showed up out

of some sense of obligation but seemed disengaged? Would I have felt obligated to prepare witty remarks that thread the needle of capturing my Dad's essence, soothed my grieving family, and had the perfect tone? There is very, very little I appreciate about Covid, but in my case I am grateful that I was able to mourn, unpack my layered feelings, pray deeply, frequently connect with those who also really loved my Dad the most, have conversations with my Dad and God, and reenter life without the pressure of expectations, norms and an audience that I would be acutely aware of and not entirely of my choosing. The physical space and solitude imposed by Covid allowed me to subvert my embedded instinct to rise to others' expectations and instead wrestle with losing my Dad on my own terms supported by the comfort of faith and community and family in doses and modalities of my choosing.

Prior to my Dad's death, the phrase Kehilla kedosha or holy community was both aspirational and mission statement material. I did not get it on the level I now get it. Firsthand, after being on the recipient side, I now deeply understand the meaning of kehilla kedosha.

I am still blown away by how our Adas Israel community has pivoted throughout Covid times to keep kehilla kedosha alive, even more relevant, with more and better accessibility. From clergy, professional staff, and fellow community members I felt an unbelievable level of support, albeit support that often looked different.

At my Dad's graveside funeral on a wet, cold February day, attended only by immediate family, I saw a lone car very nearby with someone standing outside. I asked Rabbi Alexander who was the guy at the car and why was he here? Rabbi Alexander said that's Billy Begal from the Bereavement Committee, he's here to complete the minyan and he has a shovel in his trunk in case you forgot. While days of shiva were replaced by one evening of Zoom, there were multiple long walks in the cold with friends who always checked in, lots of coffee outside, and daily Zoom minyan which provided both spiritual

and communal connection. I did not have the wisdom or state of mind to know what to ask for and I don't have the chutzpa to seek all the kindness and love that I received. It was overwhelming, beautiful and unforgettable, and tailored to meet the requirements of the Covid world. To be clear, this is only my experience. I am absolutely certain that my Mom and brother were impacted differently by experiencing loss during Covid and in their cases they do not share my feelings about finding some comfort in the extra physical space that Covid imposed.

Also, to be additionally clear, I always choose in person over virtual and have lots of concerns about how Covid has accelerated our societal trend of increasing disconnection and solitude. With that said, for me, Covid gave me additional power on how and what external forces and traditions shaped my own mourning. Loss is loss, Covid or not, and we each bring our unique imperfect selves to the process. For me, our tradition and community met the moment, I continue to feel overwhelmingly supported and loved, and I have a renewed devotion to our collective commitment to provide tailored Jewish onramps and support where, when, and how individually needed.

—Steve Himmelfarb

## MOURNING DURING COVID



The late Jeopardy host, Alex Trebek, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in March 2019, about a month before my mother Naomi received the same diagnosis. Alex became her hero, almost her alter ego. She followed his prognoses, his ups and downs, as though they were her own. Michael and I last spoke to my mom by phone on Saturday, November 7, 2020, together celebrating the election being officially called that day for Joe Biden. But when Alex died the next day, I believe my mother lost her own will to keep fighting. She died in hospice the following Saturday night at age 88.

Mourning a parent's death is a commandment in Jewish law. Was it wrong of me not to experience anguish, despair, or heartache? In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, I couldn't help feeling that dying relatively quickly and peacefully was a blessing for an 88-year-old woman whose three grown children, six grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren had given her great joy and naches – not to mention her



beating acute leukemia in her 50s, which gave her another 30-plus years.

Sure, I felt sad – and my sisters, who lived close to her and looked after her needs on a regular basis, felt sadness more acutely than I did. But in the moment, I felt saddest that my mother had been cheated by COVID of the respect she deserved in death, and that we'd been cheated of the human connections we needed at that time.

Due to COVID protocols, we were unable to be with her when she passed. We had a small graveside funeral on a cold day, limited to immediate family members wearing masks. We could have no shiva callers at my sisters' homes, so we were left staring at each other for a couple of days before Michael and I returned to DC. Our Adas clergy were incredibly kind and understanding during this time, arranging an online shiva for us. My sisters hadn't ever heard of, much less participated in, a Zoom shiva. We were all impressed and pleasantly surprised by the turnout and obvious love in which we were wrapped that evening by the congregation, our family, and friends. But even the largest attendance on Zoom was no substitute for hugs.

I wasn't a regular minyan-goer and hadn't recited kaddish daily since my father died three decades ago. Davening over Zoom was a challenge for me. Aside from my technological ineptitude at 7:30am and unfamiliarity with the Shacharit liturgy, I found it hard to focus amidst the cacophony of voices and background noises. Rather than providing a ritual helpful to a mourner at a vulnerable time, the Zoom thing for a while seemed downright annoying. (Ah, wait – was my absence of deep grief at the moment of my mother's death a form of denial? Had I now reached the second stage of the grieving process – anger?)

Our return to in-person davening was a source of joy to me. No matter the masking and social distancing. Praying in the same room with a minyan present, seeing the Torah lifted, and reciting a full kaddish with a congregational response were a turning point.



Even the transition from the Smith to the Gewirz seemed symbolic of the way in which Judaism has gradually guided mourners through the process of grieving for millenia, long before Elizabeth Kubler Ross came up with the remaining stages of bargaining, depression, and acceptance. It was a real-life manifestation that things were really getting back to normal. And when my 11 months were over, I realized I'd had the pleasure and privilege of making connections and forming relationships with countless other mourners who, to a greater or lesser extent, had shared the same losses and gained the same comforts this ritual provided, guiding us back toward living life to the fullest even in the midst of a pandemic.

—Alan Roth

## GRIEVING DURING THE PANDEMIC



Although I haven't always appreciated this, it has been my great fortune, my great mazel, as my dad would say, to have my parents for nearly seven decades. My grandparents too lived long lives--I lost my first grandparent at the end of my senior year in college and the last, twenty-six years later in 2001. My in-laws both lived well into their nineties. What I'm trying to say is that I have been blessed with parents, grandparents and in-laws for much of my life, an absence of grief. My parents both died during the pandemic, my father, Walter Ernest Simon at 95 in February 2021, and my mother, Marilyn Weintraub Simon at 94 in November 2021. Each had had a long and fulfilling life, with much joy and accomplishment, and each had experienced their share of disappointment and loss. After such long lives and the slow deterioration that is the inevitable side effect of long life, death still came with surprisingly sharp pain and grief, a tearing of the heart and fiber of my being, after so many years with them in the world. And although I had not experienced the grief of losing a parent before the pandemic, I did know how that was supposed to work, having long been an engaged member of the Jewish community, and having participated in mourning my parents-in-law and my brother-in-law. It was important to figure out how to navigate grief without the familiar comfort of shiva

visits, attending shul and the many mourning practices that enable us to cope, developed over thousands of years.



When we buried my dad in February 2021, in the frozen, muddy ground of Judean Gardens, my siblings, our spouses, many grandchildren and one great-grandchild, gathered in the frigid outdoors for the funeral and burial. We brought our own shovels and covered the casket with dirt--a job that up to that point in the pandemic, Rabbi Lauren told us, she had been shouldering alone. In those pre-vaccination days, we did not gather indoors to share our pain or comfort in person, but instead dispersed to our relatively safe and separate homes. We observed a daily family Zoom shiva, an inadequate but surprisingly intimate and comforting substitute, and shared stories of our dad with a lovely, extended family Zoom shiva minyan led by Rabbi Aaron.

My children and grandchildren, having withheld their company for the previous weeks to protect us, their parents--yet another loss--rejoined us, and offered their great comfort in person, but it wasn't enough. It was necessary to find a substitute for shiva gatherings of friends and family in our homes. To fill the shiva void,

I invited friends and family to take shiva outdoors with scheduled shiva walks; we walked the neighborhood, talked and cried and remembered my dad. Shiva walks were an amazing experience that I can recommend to anyone who is grieving--we shared memories, one on one, and as always happens during shiva, I gained new insights and learned previously unheard stories about my dad, while exercising--something he would have endorsed.

After the intimacy of the shiva period, there is more loss and for that I had the great fortune to turn to the Adas daily minyan. The Zoom minyan was there every day, morning and evening, to support mourners, daveners and anyone else who wished to participate. Although I knew no one, having only recently joined Adas, I quickly found my community and support system. Manny Schiffres made minyan happen and made me and everyone else feel welcome. We came together every day for prayer and schmoozing, and this group became the lifeboat that enabled me to steer and manage the turbulence of mourning, first during morning minyanim and then during mincha, maariv, where I graduated to once weekly minyan leader, trying out new tunes, experimenting with videos, sharing.

Over time the minyan ebbed and flowed, mourners joined our ranks literally from all over the world, finding a safe and reliable place to cry, to share memories, to chat and to pray together. And then, when my mother died, nine months into my mourning period for my dad, the minyan was there to support me--with food, with words of comfort, with their constant and reliable presence. My mom's death both surprised me, not that it was unexpected, but I thought I would have a year to mourn my dad, and also conferred a great blessing. At a very different point in the pandemic from my dad's death, vaccinated and tested, over thirty family members and many friends celebrated my mom's life at an incredible funeral service at Judean Gardens with a live polka band--my mom's one enduring request. She gave us the gift of gathering as a family for the first time in nearly two years for an amazing Shabbat dinner in our home where the great grandchildren were able to play together and we sat on the floor for a family sing,

led by my klezmer playing niece and partner. Shiva was in person this time, although masked and without food, and again there were shiva walks and shiva visits in the Sukkah (still standing) and with a heater to make it more bearable. And, of course, there was the ever present, comforting and consoling minyan. The minyan was there to hear about my mom at her shloshim (30 days of mourning) and to hear about my dad at his first yahrzeit and they carried me through to my last kaddish for my mom on Simhat Torah (in person) and her first yahrzeit over Zoom in late November. The Zoom minyan—necessitated by the pandemic—has been a lifeline for me and for many others. Living at a distance from Adas, I would never have been able to attend a daily minyan, never would have been able to mourn my parents in the way that I was able to do over Zoom.

This Zoom minyan community has been one of the unexpected blessings of the pandemic. As we move and reimagine in person gatherings, it is critical to retain both the relationships and the opportunities created by our Zoom minyan experience.

—Nina Simon





## GRIEF DURING COVID

My father, Irving Jacobs, would smile and say he wanted to live until 102. He may have, had he not fallen, landing him in the hospital with a broken neck. A week later he passed away gently at the age of 99. I was with him for hours that day and all the previous ones in the hospital, trying to lift his spirits, while tenderly massaging his shoulders and arms. He always loved the physical connection with loved ones – and now more than ever. That was November 17th, 2019, two months before Covid struck, four months before the shutdown, and thirteen months before we would lay my dear mother, Estelle, to rest.

Though it was a blessing to have had my father for so many years, it was devastating to lose him. I was swept up in a torrent of emotions, unable to focus on all the tasks that lay ahead. Fortunately, the world was open then, and in-person support was abundant.

The events surrounding my father's death are as clear today as they were then. But the moments that are most vivid, those that nourished me then and have sustained me to this day, are the very ones we were denied following the death of my mother, just a short time later; being with my father on the day he died; receiving visits by Hesed volunteers; sitting next to Rabbi Lauren as we recounted so many special moments with him; being in the sanctuary, surrounded by family and friends as Cantor Ari's melodious voice and the Rabbi's moving words treated our souls; and finally, the shiva evenings in my parents' apartment, with Adas rabbis uniting us in prayer and encouraging memories to be shared. The living room swelled with people whose lives were touched by my father in different ways. Some of their stories illuminated him in colors I had never seen. Their presence and their hugs protected my heart from shattering. Those moments and those rituals provided me with guardrails for my grief, steadying me when I lost my footing. Yet losing my mother in such precarious times dismantled those rails, leaving me to feel as if I were cascading over a cliff. I began grieving for my mother months before she died. Her moderate dementia progressed rapidly following my father's death.



After 74 years of a loving marriage, I was not surprised. Yet I grew sadder every day, watching her slip further into her own private world. It was a world that was confusing to her and frustrating to all of us. It was one where our mask-covered faces would cause her to cry out in desperation that she couldn't hear us. It was a world that would prevent me from holding her, kissing her, or stroking her beautiful silver hair.

Two nights before she died, I rushed to her bedside, after a call from a caregiver. Despite the risks, I held her and sat with her for hours. The next day we learned she had Covid. I was not allowed to see her again. She died the following day, January 6, 2021. I still feel the pain and loneliness of that moment and the weeks that followed. Our daughter had been hunkering down with us. But now, with the knowledge that we were exposed, we masked and retreated to separate rooms. Whereas we embraced and wept together after my father died, now we shared tears from across the room, then withdrew to our own private spaces to cry and grieve. The graveside funeral was postponed for two weeks, pending negative test results. A freak snowstorm delayed its start, and stranded my sister alongside the road. Even before the first prayer was chanted, my mother's casket was lowered into the ground, apparently due to a Covid protocol. This wracked my soul. I wasn't ready. It was a cold, expedient process- a perverse, futuristic version of our sacred burial rituals. When the service started, we stared into a camera. We could see only those delivering eulogies. I wondered who was sharing in our sorrow. I craved to see them, to feel the warmth of their presence. As my son spoke from a distant city, I watched his tears through a screen. I wouldn't be able to embrace him for four more months.

The Zoom shiva finally brought loved ones into our view, but not into our living room. It felt awkward, though we were grateful nonetheless. Still, it was another moment where we were denied spaces for intimate connection, private moments with loved ones, or warm embraces from a friend.

Grief is hard. There is no easy way out. But mourning during Covid confounded the process. For me, it meant trying to disentangle my grief; wrestling with the pain caused by losing a person I desperately loved, from the pain caused by an apocalyptic world, which denied me the opportunity to grieve fully, authentically – as a human being, and as a Jew.

One final note: The power of standing alongside others in communal prayer cannot be fully supplanted by a virtual kaddish. But I am forever grateful to Adas for bringing the daily minyan into our homes via the computer. For a year, it offered me a defined moment each day to breathe, reflect and pray. It also provided me with a warm, compassionate community of people who will always remain in my heart.

—Susan Sorrells

## COPING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF IN A PANDEMIC



The once in a century disease known as Covid slammed into Washington mid-March 2020, forever changing our lives. We continue to grapple with this phantom plague as still other deadly diseases sweep through the country. My beloved husband, Michael Stern, had been struggling with his own afflictions for several years when he succumbed to one of them, a blood cancer, on August 2, 2020. I had expected his decline to proceed as it had been, inexorably but slowly. Instead, it was as if a trap door opened and suddenly he was gone. Miraculously, the hospital waived Covid restrictions for us, allowing me to sleep there during Michael's final days. And so, I was able to hold my guy until the end and hear him whisper his final "I love you."

Suddenly, a new reality was thrust upon me. Indeed, I am still navigating uncharted waters. But I managed the initial process by faithfully following step by step the ancient rituals designed by our rabbis in their divinely inspired wisdom. But with Covid it would be different. There could be no funeral at the synagogue and no Shiva minyanim in my home. Working behind the scenes, synagogue staff arranged to flawlessly zoom a

graveside funeral and the evening Shiva services. The “rooms” overflowed with several hundred people who quietly had loved and admired my noble, kind, modest but oh so very learned partner of 60 years.

The graveside service rules permitted attendance by only a minyan—10 people, masked, of course. That would include Rabbi Alexander who officiated, me, my sister Janet Hayes, Michael’s study partner, and four friends who were a constant presence during my many hours of need. Robyn Helzner honored my request that she attend and sing a favorite of ours, Shlomo Carlebach’s rendition of lines from the 23rd psalm. The time had come to hear the words again, but now applied to the present situation: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” Her “Lo, lo, lo, lo, lo –Ira ra ki ata imadi, (No, no, no, no, no--I will fear no evil for You are with me”) tore at my heart, bringing me to tears every time I listened to it. I often thought I would want Robyn to convey this profound and comforting message at my own funeral. But now it was to be sung at Michael’s.

Our son Avidan wisely chose not to risk contracting Covid by flying in from Chicago. But the tenth person, our daughter Lisë, insisted on driving from Boston. I pleaded with her not to come as a Category 1 hurricane was rolling up the I-95 corridor. She would be driving into and through it to reach her father’s funeral. I was distraught, fearful of the risk she was taking.



The storm had an unusual name—Isaias. I was inspired to research what it meant. It turned out to be Spanish for Isaiah. That knowledge brought me comfort. For the past two years, Lisë and Michael had studied every week by telephone the writings of the prophet Isaiah. I knew she would arrive safely. And she did. Standing at her father's grave she sang her own composition which perfectly described her father's unique personality and yes, his endearing idiosyncrasies: "This Song's for You Dad." No one privileged to be in attendance will ever forget that song. Hearing it, my heart overflowed with love, sorrow, and gratitude. It was Michael in full.

—Joyce Stern

How does it feel coming back and being with the congregation after Covid?

“It was both a relief to be immersed in the community and still tentative at times – like wading into the shallow end of the waters, unsure of how it would go.”

—Chana Engel

What was the most exciting thing about coming back?

“Kiddush! LOL!”

—Shelden Novek

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Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

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REENT





## **Liminal**

Watercolor on Yupo Paper

MARGERY THOMAS

ERING



## THE JOY OF REUNION: SHECHEHEYANU

During these past few years, there were so many people I love who I didn't see and so many things I love that I didn't do. As we return to being together, participating and feeling connected, I desire a ritual, and fortunately, Judaism has one all ready for me, just waiting to be dusted off.

The Talmud (Brachot 58b) states that one should recite the blessing of Shechecheyanu upon meeting a dear friend or relative who one hasn't seen for at least a month. This friend should be someone you are especially close to, who brings you great happiness, someone who makes your heart sing. Each of us knows in our soul who these people are.

And although this custom hasn't been widely followed in recent years, the Age of Covid calls out for celebrating the Joy of Reunion. When we are finally able to see those we love, we can acknowledge the joy of this reunion. We can each say to one another, either separately or in unison:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּיב וְקִיָּמֻנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

**Baruch Ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melech HaOlam,  
Shechecheyanu, V'Keyamanu, V'Higiyanu L'Zman  
HaZeh.**

**Blessed are You, God, Source of All Being, who has  
kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this very  
moment.**

The Talmud goes on to state that the blessing, Mechayeh HaMayteem (who revives the dead) should be recited when you meet someone you love whom you haven't seen for twelve months. Some say this is only if you haven't been in contact for the year and you don't know if they are still alive. However, during this time, it would seem appropriate to say the blessing of MeChayeh HaMayteem when first seeing someone you love who has recovered from illness, someone who has been snatched back from the arms of the Angel of Death.

Perhaps we can also say this about ourselves, when we engage in an activity or an event, which we thought we might never do again—something which we thought was long gone, a part of ourselves which we felt was dead.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מַחִיֵּה הַמֵּתִים

**Baruch Ata Adonai, Elohaynu Melech HaOlam,  
Mechayeh HaMayteem  
Blessed are You, God, Source of All Being, who revives  
the dead.**

The Joy of Reunion can also include a one sentence acknowledgement of the special happiness that this other person brings to you. "Your kindness and your smile light up my life."

And then, let the joy fully enter your body and your soul.

**—Nechama Liss-Levinson**

Adapted from When We Turned Within: Reflections on  
Covid-19

## MEDITATION 1 – UPON ENTRY/REENTERING

**Where do you find God? Wherever you let God In.**

Attributed to The Kotzker Rebbe – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, 19th century Hasidic master

Is it just me or is this wonderful-sounding quote posing a challenge that leaves someone feeling either smug about how they “let God in” or hopelessly guilty about not being able or willing to “let God in?” I know one of the classic Rabbinic names for God is HaMakom, the Place.

Today, I re-enter THIS place,” THIS space. This my commitment— today, now, for now: to take the first step of entry/re-entry. I’m here and I’m trying to be present and open to myself, my experience, my surroundings. I am seeking to find MY place and space.

I need time, patience, perseverance and courage to re-discover what is inside of me, how I am similar to the me I used to be/the me who used to be in this place, and how I have changed and am changing still.

So... God—bear with me, as I bear with You when you have seemed not to be present nor visible. I hope that we can find each other and let each other in.

### **Moments for Reflection – 1**

So, I AM here. Finally. At last. It’s been a while.

1. What are some of the reasons or issues that held me back up until now?
2. What’s changed about those “circumstances?”
3. What’s changed about ME?
4. If I’ve had a fantasy about this moment of re-entry, what was it?

## **MEDITATION 2 – UPON ENCOUNTERING A "SPEED" BUMP IN THE MIDST OF MY PRAYERS/RE-ENTRY EXPERIENCE**

**If you wake up each morning and your concept of God is the same as it was the day before, it is as if you have committed idolatry.**

Attributed to The Kotzker Rebbe – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, 19th century Hasidic master

Ok— Your name appears with some frequency and in all sorts of forms – “God;” “our Lord;” “Master of the Universe;” and in so MANY variations and versions in Hebrew. And I don’t even know what I think or if I agree with Omnipresent, Omniscient. . . Seems to me the only “Omni - - -” appellation not exactly attributed to You is Omicron (You DO have a sense of humor, I hope?). NONE OF THIS really makes it easier for me to feel I “know” You. So . . . I am committed to working on this – discovering IF, WHERE, and WHEN, WHAT name or names resonate for me. None of us are simple, neatly and forever fixedly defined, and we change over time and many times. I’m guessing that if we WERE created in Your image, then I need to be open to the possibilities of seeing Your many faces and aspects too. For now, let’s just figure out what to call each other today. Who knows what tomorrow brings?

### **Moments for Reflection – 2**

#### **Questions for Reflection as I Pause and/or Hesitate**

1. Is this “speed-bump” something I often experience and perhaps a good sign of the ways in which I periodically stop and evaluate the meaningfulness of things I am doing?; OR
2. Does this somehow feel different? Is there something that is specifically making me uncomfortable that I need to focus on and address?
3. Can I “work through” this challenge – and do I want to?
4. What’s my next step – and do I need to know what it is right now?



## MEDITATION 3 – UPON LEAVING THE SYNAGOGUE, OTHER HOLY PLACES AND/OR SPACES

**Blessed are you, God... הַבּוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי זִמְרָה – the Selector of song-hymns...** (From the Yishtabach prayer, which concludes the Pesukei D'zimra section of the morning service). **While the Hebrew shirei can be translated as “songs,” we might also read that word as shairey, the remnants of hymns. God is less interested in what we say in the midst of our praying/our formal spiritual moments, but rather is focused on what we take with us from our experiences and how they transform us throughout the day.**

Attributed to Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, late 18th century Hasidic master

The TV comedienne Carol Burnett ended each of her weekly nighttime shows in the 1980's with a song entitled “I’m So Glad We Had this Time Together.” I need to create some space now for myself, from this place and from this focused experience. I need to regroup and reflect on what has transpired, what I have thought and felt, and how – if at all – I am changed and changing as a result. I hope that I can say “I’m so glad that we had this time together.” If I return to this place, there is a lot more for us to learn about each other. And if I am unable to return right now, I know that You know where I am – and perhaps we will chance to meet again. Shalom – “peace,” “goodbye” – and yes, “hello.”

### Reflection 3

1. What has this journey taught me about myself?
2. How am I different than when I started?
3. What is my fantasy about returning – or about NOT returning?
4. Shalom means “peace” and also refers to a sense of “wholeness – Have I found either or both?

–William Liss-Levinson, PhD







## Opening

Acrylic, thread, vellum, pen and LED light rope

SAMANTHA KREINDLER

# GRATI



What was your biggest take away from having so much time away?

“I found myself appreciating small moments on a deeper level, those that I may have often taken for granted in the “before times” – hugging a friend I hadn’t seen in a long time, relishing a conversation.”

—Chana Engel

“My take away was that happiness comes from within.”

—Margot Mezvinsky

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מוֹדָה אֲנִי לַפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִּים. שֶׁחָזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי, בְּחַמְלָה. רַבָּה  
אֱמוּנָתְךָ:

I give thanks before You, Sovereign living and eternal,  
for You have returned my soul to me with compassion;  
abundant is Your faithfulness



### Reflection

Mirror and LED light rope  
SAMANTHA KREINDLER

ITUDE

## EMBRACING GRATITUDE

### **A new beginning...**

As we emerged cautiously from the startling darkness of the pandemic, many of us came to experience life and its many moments from a different, shifted perspective. For some, the pain of loss was intolerable and continues to be a source of anguish. For others, there was an overwhelming sense of relief for having survived, for being here. A shared sense of gratitude that also deepened our pathways to life and each other. A perspective that intimately reminded us of life's fragility, and highlighted how each and every moment we have here, with loved ones, in shared spaces, with freedom and health, is actually a gift, a miracle to be accepted, cherished, and appreciated.

Collectively we experienced a deep sense of gratitude, a soulful exhale when we saw loved ones and colleagues again first via Zoom and then in person, we hugged family members after many months of separation, we finally ate and prayed together without masks. Walking into the Smith Sanctuary for the first time after months of being away, I remember feeling flooded with uncontrollable tears of humility, sadness, joy, and gratitude. We were still in the midst of the pandemic and a few of us were invited to attend in-person services, which were now being broadcast to the entire congregation virtually. I was speechless when I walked in. Our sanctuary had been transformed into a production studio with monitors and cables running down the aisles, spotlights, acrylic shields, and masks protecting our clergy, and a sea of mostly empty seats everywhere my eyes could see. It was like walking into an operating room in which our clergy and staff were the ER doctors and technicians keeping the critically ill patient alive. I felt a sense of reverence for our human ingenuity, evolution, and innovation. I was also overwhelmingly thankful for that moment of being back in our sacred space, cables and all.

Each one of us was individually touched and shaped by our unique emotional experiences during the pandemic. Our hearts were cracked open, our souls marred, and yet we intuitively resonated with a shared



humanity, an existential common denominator that became our path forward. In her book, *To Begin Again*, author Naomi Levy explains that even when parts of ourselves are broken, “It is from them that we learn our strength. It is from them that we learn compassion, wisdom and understanding, devotion, faith, and insight. It is from them that we learn how to pray, how to cry, how to listen, how to reach for help. It is from them that we learn how to strive for better, how to empathize and offer help.”

From these moments of spiritual awakening and deep gratitude, we were also inspired and ready “to begin again.” We understood, with newfound wisdom and clarity, that what we yearn for and need is real and shared. Each of us in our own way accessed gratitude for what we cared for, valued, and appreciated. We also sensed the many miracles present and required to make life and living possible.

## **GRATITUDE AND ITS MANY BENEFITS**

Gratitude is a foundational Jewish building block, an emotion we are often called to explore when we pause to bless an activity, a moment, an experience, a person. Examples of the value of gratitude are ample in Jewish tradition. In his essay, *The Power of Gratitude*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains that, “Jewish prayer is an ongoing seminar in gratitude.” Our morning prayers are a collection of gratitude prayers for life itself, and we begin our days with *Modeh Ani* (I thank you) or *Asher Yatzar* (gratitude blessing for our body and its functioning), both morning declarations of thankfulness. “Part of the essence of gratitude,” Sacks continues, “is that it recognizes that we are not the sole authors of what is good in our lives...Thankfulness has an inner connection with humility. It recognizes that what we are and what we have is due to others, and above all to God.” As such, gratitude can also function as an antidote to entitlement. When we operate from a place of thankfulness and feeling blessed, we intuitively sense that we’ve received from others what

we couldn't have had on our own. We are less likely to take people, things, or situations for granted, because we understand that God, other people's efforts, or even life itself make many of the things we enjoy possible.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel explains, "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement [to] get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed."

Interestingly, we are more open to radical amazement when we are fully present and thankful. On Shabbat, for example, we practice resting from the work of creation and focusing instead on the sanctity of time. Shabbat invites us to slow down, notice, celebrate, appreciate, and consecrate the many blessings we already have in our lives. On all other days of the week we run on the treadmill of time, but on Shabbat we are commanded to step down, be mindful and notice all the gifts we've been blessed with.

Whether it's God or the universe, author David Whyte expands on this idea in his book, *Consolations*, when he explains that gratitude is, "the understanding that many millions of things come together and live together and mesh together in order for us to take even one more breath of air, that the underlying gift of life and incarnation as a living, participating human being is a privilege, that we are miraculously part of something, rather than nothing."

Gratitude is defined as the feeling of thankfulness or appreciation we experience for someone, something, or somewhere. Through studies, researchers have concluded that gratitude is a hard-wired emotion, a biological trait that also functions as a "social glue" that binds us together. Studies show that monkeys, for example, are more likely to share their food with those who have groomed them before. Gratitude expert Robert A Emmons explains that "Gratitude emerges from two stages of information processing – affirmation and recognition. We affirm the good and credit others for bringing it about."

Gratitude is an expansive emotion that philosophers have coined the “mother of all virtues,” because it cultivates the development of other virtues like patience, humility, and wisdom. A state of gratitude opens us to other positive emotions like happiness, joy, generosity, and a sense of awe. Furthermore, experiencing life through a gratitude lens is scientifically proven to enhance overall physical, spiritual, and psychological well being.

Scientific studies of the benefits associated with gratitude include a stronger immune system, protection against disease, lower blood pressure, increased positive emotions like joy, optimism, and happiness. Gratitude also primes and inspires us to behave with more generosity, compassion, and kindness, which helps counter feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression. In his book, *The Little Book of Gratitude*, Emmons says that “Gratitude is fertilizer for the mind, spreading connections and improving its function in nearly every realm of experience.” In addition to physical benefits, he explains, gratitude also, “increases self-esteem, enhances willpower, strengthens relationships, deepens spirituality, boosts creativity, and improves athletic and academic performance.”

## **PRESENCE AND GRATITUDE**

We are more likely to experience gratitude when we slow down to notice what’s already working around us and within us. This is a change of pace that many of us experienced, some for the first time, during the pandemic shutdown. As we renounced life as we knew it, some of us took it as an invitation to notice more and clarify our priorities. It was a time when we were reminded to take stock of what we were losing and simultaneously hold onto what we appreciated – our blessings, regardless of how big or small – and bring that positive feeling of appreciation to the rest of our lives. Gratitude gently guided us to pause and acknowledge the gifts and blessings. In turn, gratitude humbles us and inspires us to be generous and kind. For Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, “It is gratefulness

# GRATITUDE

that makes the soul great...In prayer we shift the center of living from self-consciousness to self-surrender.”

We can feel gratitude as a result of something someone does for us that is unexpected and makes us feel appreciated and valued. Gratitude also can emerge through experiences, objects, people and animals.

For some, gratitude is a fleeting emotion after receiving something or having an unexpected moment. Gratitude is like an exhale after holding our breath, a form of relief that embraces us and helps us see how fortunate we are that some things are still good and they could have been worse.



## CULTIVATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

People experience gratitude differently. Some can access it easily, while others might find it challenging to step into the emotion. Studies show that personality and our upbringing influence our readiness and willingness to experience gratitude. Yet, no matter where we are on the gratitude spectrum, there are habits and practices we can use to strengthen our ability to experience and grow our gratitude attitude.

**Here are four things we invite you to try:**

1. Keep a gratitude journal. What are you thankful for? Buy one or make one and on a daily basis, write down 3 good things that happened to you and how they impacted your life.
2. Challenges as Blessings. How are you grateful for challenges? We all experience difficult moments that generate intense emotions. Although counterintuitive, another way to access gratitude is to imagine how your situation could have been worse. Often, this exercise can help us notice that there are still things we can be thankful for and that our challenge might be a blessing too.
3. Volunteer to help others. How did you help someone today? Find a volunteer opportunity through which you can give back to others and open yourself to receive kindness, gratitude, and connection.
4. Shabbat Thankfulness: What happened or didn't happen this week that you're thankful for? Atomic Habits author, James Clear, explains that one of the best ways to add new habits is to stack them onto current ones. Add a gratitude moment to your weekly Shabbat celebration by sharing three things you are grateful for.

**—Jessika S. Wellisch**



## BEING IN THE SYNAGOGUE WITHOUT YOU

Here I am back in this holy space—  
It looks the same, but I am not the same  
I am here without you  
We shared so much together here  
The prayers, the songs, the laughter,  
The glances that only you understood  
Since you left  
I am learning to live in the world without you  
Difficult, slow, and painful learning  
As I go on this journey, I fear being alone

Here I am back in this holy space—  
Without you sitting by my side  
Feeling grateful for the gift of the time we had together  
Perhaps God will be at my side and lift me up  
Perhaps a friend will find me,  
Share some warmth, and hold my hand  
I pray that I will also feel you with me—  
In my heart, in my soul, in my dreams

—Nechama Liss-Levinson

## RITUAL IDEAS

When our lives change, rituals help us to move forward, despite our pain. Here are some ideas of ways to re-engage in the synagogue and life after the loss of a loved one.

1. Donating a prayer book in memory of the person and using that prayer book when returning to synagogue.
2. Creating a memorial plaque for your loved one, and having a private visit to the synagogue to see the plaque and recite this prayer or your own words.
3. Gathering with a small group of friends & family, before or after services, saying this prayer, and each person offering a memory and a blessing.
4. Choosing a personal quality of the person who is gone that you wish to emulate
5. Donating to a tzedakah (charity), engaging in tikkun olam (social justice), doing small acts of hesed (kindness) or creating a Mitzvah Celebration in memory of the person you loved.

# SIDDUR *OF* REENTERING



The Covenant Foundation