Selichot

Prayers of Preparation and Penitence

Adas Israel Congregation
Washington, DC
A great poet has written: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." Many of us can recognize the truth of these words from our most intimate experiences.

From time to time we have heard melodies which play not upon the ear but within the heart, melodies which originate not outside of ourselves but in the innermost part of our selves.

Just as there are melodies which remain unheard, so there are prayers which remain unspoken. These are prayers which never fall upon the ear because they never cross our lips.

These prayers are found in no prayer book; they well up out of our inner depths - fashioned by our fears and our hopes, by our guilt and our gratitude, by our needs and our aspirations.

"Silence," said the Kotzker Rebbe, "can be the loudest of voices."

Siddur Hadash

Silent Meditation

A Suggested Meditation

In this dark and quiet hour I gather with others to prepare for the season of repentance. Another year has passed. In this year I have seen birth and death, joy and sorrow. I have seen the resolves made a year ago come to naught, but on occasion I have stood firm in my conviction and caused things to come to pass in a responsible manner.
אשريك ישבביikt, כד יהלל סלה.
אשريك הכנם שבבי, כד ישה סלה.

"Selichot" edited by Rabbi Hillel Cohn, 1995, rev. 2008
Adapted by Rabbi Gil Steinlauf & Cantor Jeffrey Weber, 2010
Psalm 84:5; 144:15
Blessed are they who dwell in Your house;
They shall praise You forever.
   Blessed the people who are so favored;
   Blessed the people whose God is Adonai.

Psalm 145; 115:18
A Psalm of David.
I glorify You, my God, my Sovereign;
I praise You throughout all time.
   Every day do I praise You, exalting Your glory forever.
Great is Adonai, and praiseworthy;
God's greatness exceeds definition.
   One generation lauds Your works to another,
   acclaiming Your mighty deeds.
They tell of Your wonders and Your glorious splendor.
They speak of Your greatness and Your awesome power.
   They recall Your goodness; they sing of Your faithfulness.
Adonai is gracious and compassionate;
Patient, and abounding in love.
   Adonai is good to all; God's compassion embraces all.
All of Your creatures shall praise You;
the faithful shall continually bless You,
   recounting Your glorious sovereignty,
   telling tales of Your might.
And everyone will know of Your power,
the awesome radiance of Your dominion.
   Your sovereignty is everlasting;
   Your dominion endures for all generations.
Adonai supports all who stumble,
and uplifts all who are bowed down.
   The eyes of all look hopefully to You,
   and You provide their food in due time.
You open Your hand; Your favor sustains all the living.
   Adonai is just in all His ways,
   loving in all His deeds.
Adonai is near to all who call,
to all who call to God with integrity.
   God fulfills the desire of those who are faithful;
   God hears their cry and delivers them.
Adonai preserves all who love Him,
while marking the wicked for destruction.
   My mouth shall praise Adonai.
   Let all flesh praise God's name throughout all time.
   We shall praise Adonai now and always. Halleluyah!
YIGDAL

Revere the living God, sing praises to God’s name,
Both inmanent and timeless, through eternity.

God’s oneness is unique, no other can compare;
Unlimited and boundless is God’s majesty.

No image can be seen, no form or body known;
No mortal mind can fathom God’s totality.

Before creation’s start, the world as yet unformed,
The living God endured in endless mystery.

The Ruler of the world! whose creatures all declare
The glory and the greatness of God’s sovereignty.

God chose devoted servants, wise and faithful seers,
And showered on each one the gift of prophecy.

In Israel none arose like Moses – touched by God –
Whose visions probed the limits of humanity.

The Torah, in its truth, God granted to us all.
Which loyal servant Moses taught us faithfully.

Our God will neither change nor modify His law;
Its place remains established for eternity.

God penetrates our minds, the promptings of our hearts,
Anticipating actions that are yet to be.

God grants reward to those who lead a noble life,
While punishing transgressors sinning wantonly.

Messiah, God will send, to greet the end of days,
Redeeming all who long for God to make them free.

In love our God restores the life of all our souls –
May God be ever praised until eternity.
HATZI KADDISH

Reader:
May God’s name be exalted and hallowed throughout the world he created, as is God’s wish. May God’s sovereignty soon be accepted, during our life and the life of all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

Congregation and Reader:
Y’hei sh’mé raba m’varachh l’alam u-l’almei almaya.
May God’s great name be praised throughout all time.

Reader:
Glorified and celebrated, lauded and worshipped, exalted and honored, extolled and acclaimed may the Holy One be, praised beyond all song and psalm, beyond all tributes that mortals can utter. And let us say: Amen.

As we stand at the threshold of a New Year, we pray:
May our dear ones be near to us,
And may our near ones be dear to us.

May our road of life be straight and smooth;
But may it also be marked by hills that challenge,
And by turns which add variety and interest to our journey.

May our ideas have wings, but may they always find anchor in reality. May our lives be peaceful, but may our minds grapple with ideas And our hearts wage war with cruelty and deceit.

May each of us be moved to proclaim:
I am not satisfied if anyone, anywhere, suffers hunger and want.
I am not free if anyone’s life is controlled or their mind fettered.
I am not secure if anywhere on the face of God’s earth there is a person who fears to lift his or her eyes in hope or his or her voice in prayer.
**KADDISH**

**Reader:**
May God’s name be exalted and hallowed throughout the world that He created, as is God’s wish. May God’s sovereignty soon be accepted, during our life and the life of all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

**Congregation and Reader:**
*Y’hei sh’mei raba m’varakh l’alam u-l’almei almaya.*
May God’s great name be praised throughout all time.

**Reader:**
Glorified and celebrated, lauded and worshipped, exalted and honored, extolled and acclaimed may the Holy One be, praised beyond all song and psalm, beyond all tributes that mortals can utter. And let us say: Amen.

May the prayers and pleas of all the people Israel be accepted by our Guardian in heaven. And let us say: Amen.

Let there be abundant peace from heaven, with life’s goodness for us and for all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May the One who brings peace to His universe bring peace to us and to all Israel. And let us say: Amen.
May our storehouses be full, and our hearts fuller still. May we learn to find joy in that which we have, rather than regret for that which we have lost.

May we understand that we have been granted the gift of being able to begin anew through return and repentance.

May the blessings of Shalom be the inheritance of all God’s children.

Shalom - born of love, rooted in justice, and therefore everlasting.

COME LET US WORSHIP

O God, Who hears prayer, all creatures shall come to worship before You and to revere Your name.

Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us prostrate ourselves before Adonai, our Creator.

Come into God’s gates with thanksgiving, into God’s courts with songs of praise. Acclaim The Holy One. Yea, praise God’s name.

Come, praise God all you servants who stand in the House of God in the night. Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary and praise The Eternal One. Exalt God, and bow down at the foot of The Divine One’s throne, for God is holy.

Worship God in the beauty of holiness. Let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble before Adonai.

In the abundance of God’s loving-kindness will we come into the House of The Holy One. Reverently will we worship in God’s holy Temple.

We will worship in God’s holy Temple and thank God for the love and truth of The Eternal One, for God’s name and God’s word are supreme above all things.
THE CONFESSIONAL

Our God and God of our ancestors, may our prayers come before You and may You not ignore our pleas. We are neither so brazen nor so stubborn as to declare that we are righteous and have not sinned; for indeed, we have sinned.

We all have committed offenses; together we confess these human sins: the sins of arrogance, bigotry, and cynicism; of deceit and egotism, flattery and greed, hatred, injustice and jealousy. Some of us kept grudges, were lustful, malicious, or narrow-minded. Others were obstinate or possessive, quarrelsome, rancorous or selfish, temperamental or unbending. There was violence, weakness of will, xenophobia; We yielded to temptation and showed zeal for bad causes.

The great transgression is not that we commit sins – for temptation is strong and our power is slight. Rather the great transgression is that at every instant we could turn to God in repentance – and yet we do not do so. We have abandoned good commandments and judgments. You have acted truly, while we have been at fault.

We have acted wrongly and cruelly and we were not saved. Inspire us to desert the way of evil and confer upon us a speedy deliverance. As it is written: “Let the evil one forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his designs; and let him return and God will be compassionate toward him; God will abundantly pardon.”

GUARDIAN OF ISRAEL

O Guardian of Israel,
Guard the remnant of Israel;
And let not destruction befall Israel
Who proclaim daily: “Hear O Israel.”

O Guardian of a unique people,
Guard the remnant of a unique people;
And let not destruction befall a unique people
Who proclaim Your unity: “Adonai our God, Adonai is one.”

O Guardian of a holy people,
Guard the remnant of a holy people;
And let not destruction befall a holy people
Who proclaim the threefold affirmation of Your holiness.

Ha-n’sha-mah lach ve-ha-guf po-o-lach chusa al am-a-lach.
Ha-n’sha-mah lach ve-ha-guf she-lach Adonye a-say le-ma-an sh’mecha.
GOD’S MAJESTY

Yours, Adonai, is the greatness, and the power, and glory, and the victory, and the majesty. All that is in the heaven and the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, Adonai, and You rule over all.

You established the world and its fullness. You set the boundaries of the earth. Summer and winter are of Your ordaining.

Your sway is over the raging sea. When the waves rise, You still them.

The foundation of Your throne is justice and uprightness. Mercy and truth are Your faithful emissaries.

In God’s hand is the life of every creature, and the destiny of all humankind.

THE SOUL IS YOURS

The souls of humans are Yours, and their bodies are Your creation. Have compassion on that which You have created. Both soul and body are Yours. Adonai, for the sake of Your honor, deal kindly with us.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because they are spoken with sincerity and with truth.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because they are uttered in humility, as we acknowledge our frailty and our need for Your sustaining strength.
Be near us when we call You, as it is written: “And you shall seek Adonai your God, wherever you may be, and you will find God, if you seek The Divine One with all your heart and all your soul.”

Cause our transgressions to vanish as a cloud and as the mist, as it is written, “I will erase your transgressions as a cloud and your sins as the mist. Return to Me, for I have made you free.”

Pour clean water on us and cleanse us, as it is written,” And I will pour clean water on you and you will be cleansed from all your sins. I will cleanse you of every defilement.”

Bring us to Your holy mountain and cause us to rejoice in Your House of Prayer, as it is written: “And I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and I shall cause them to rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their offerings shall be accepted upon My altar. For My house shall be a House of Prayer for all peoples.”

HEAR OUR VOICE – SHEMA KOLENU

Hear our voice, Lord our God; spare us, pity us.
Accept our prayer in Your gracious love.
Help us to return to You, and we shall return;
Give our days the freshness of youth.
Do not banish us from Your presence;
Do not deprive us of Your holy spirit.
Do not cast us off in old age;
When our strength declines, do not forsake us.
Do not forsake us, O Lord our God;
Do not make Yourself distant from us.
May our prayers be pleasing to You because they are offered in gratitude for Your manifold blessings, too numerous to be counted, too constant to be deserved.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because we firmly resolve to take these noble words with us and to permit them to guide our actions in the year ahead.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because the lips which speak them also speak words of hope to the discouraged, cheer to the distressed, solace to the bereaved, and kindness to all.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because they reflect not only our own needs but also the needs of others, and the needs of our People.

May our prayers be pleasing to You because they remind us of what You expect of us and because they challenge us to become all that we are capable of being.

Pardon Us, Our Ruler

You, O God, are slow to anger and abundant in kindness. You have shown us the way of penitence. On this day, and every day, bestow Your abundant mercies and Your loving kindness upon us. Remember the merits of our ancestors who were faithful to You. Turn to us in mercy, for You are the source of all mercy.

With earnest prayer we have come to seek You. Under the wings of Your protecting presence we will find shelter and rest. Forgive our transgressions and erase our trespasses.

Give heed to our cry and attend to our plea, in accordance with Your promise, which You revealed to Your humble servant, Moses. As it is written: “Adonai, Adonai God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, keeping mercy for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and giving pardon to the penitent.”

O pardon our iniquity and our sin, and make us again Your own possession. Our Father, forgive us, for we have sinned. Pardon us, our Ruler, for we have transgressed. In You, Adonai, is goodness and forgiveness and abundant mercy for those that seek You.
Remember the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “I will multiply your children and make them like the stars in the heavens. And this land of which I have spoken, I will give to your descendants and they will possess it forever.

Remember the virtuous lives of our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Do not consider the stubbornness of this people, nor their transgression, nor their sin.

Remember the covenant made with our ancestors, as You promised: “I will remember My covenant with Jacob. I will be mindful also of My covenant with Isaac and with Abraham. And I will remember the land.”

Remember the covenant made with our ancestors, as You promised: “And I will remember in their favor the covenant with their ancestors whom I liberated from Egypt in the sight of all the nations that I might be acknowledged as their God. I am Adonai.”

Fulfill Your promise to us: “Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, nor cast them away to make an end of them. Nor will I annul My covenant with them, for I am Adonai their God.”

**BRING US TO YOUR HOLY MOUNTAIN**

Extend Your mercy to us and do not destroy us, as it is written: “For Adonai your God is merciful. The Holy One will not forsake you, nor destroy you. Nor will God forget the covenant made with your ancestors, which God pledged to them.”

Purify our hearts that we may revere Your name, as it is written: “And Adonai your God will purify your hearts and the hearts of your children that you may love Adonai your God with heart and soul that you may live.”

Gather up our homeless ones, as it is written: “And if your captives should be in the remotest parts of the world, from there Adonai your God will assemble them and restore them to freedom.”
Shabbat has ended, night has come;
We come before You with an earnest plea.
O You who dwell in the heavens above,
Bend low and hear us.

*Lish-mo-a el ha-reena*

Trembling before You like a woman in labor
Like a woman bringing forth her first born,
They stand in awe before Your wonders,
Before the wonder of Your forgiveness.

*Lish-mo-a el ha-reena*

Strengthen Your People, O God,
Though their transgressions are so many.
Bless them from Your heavenly treasure
Though undeserving, they plead before You.

*Lish-mo-a el ha-reena*
Most patient God, Master of Mercy,
You have shown us the way of penitence.
Grant lovingkindness every day
To the children of Your beloved people.

Heed now our cry; listen to our speech,
As on the day of Your revelation:

“Adonai, Adonai is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness,
Assuring love for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity,
Transgression and sin, and pardoning the penitent.”

Forgive us our sins; claim us for Your own.
Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned.
Pardon us, our Ruler, for we have transgressed.
You, Adonai, are generous and forgiving.
Great is Your love for all who call upon You.

ADONAI REMEMBER US

Adonai, remember us in accordance with Your mercy and Your kindness, for they are everlasting.

Remember Your people’s welfare, and appoint deliverance to us.

Remember the people You redeemed from bondage, and Mount Zion, the site of Your glory.

Remember, Adonai, Your devotion to Jerusalem, and do not forget Your love for Zion.

Remember, Adonai, our humiliation when Jerusalem fell and the Edomites shouted: “Destroy it, destroy it, to its very foundations.”

Arise and be compassionate to Zion, for it is time to be gracious to her. The hour of her deliverance has come.