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הַמִּשְׁכָּנֵהּ יִשְׁרָאֵל

מה טוב אהליך יעשל מָשְׁכָּנֶהָ יִשְׁרָאֵל: אני בּוֹרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים

יִתְנָה אֲשֶׁר הֶבֶל פְּרָשָׁה בְּרֵאָם: יודע אֱלֹהִים מַצְלַל פְּרָשָׁה

הַמִּשְׁכָּנֵהּ בְּכָלָם: אני אֲשֶׁר אֵבָאֵל אָבֶרֶךְ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה

עָשָׂה נֵעָרִים הָלָה לְרֹחַ תֵּבָא אֶלְוַּיִם בּוֹרֶךְ עָשָׂה

כְּרַכְוֹת הַשָּׁרוֹן

Mah tovu ohaleh ya’akov mishkenoteh yisra’el. Va’ani berov hasheha avo veyteha eshtaaveh el heyhal kodsheha beyirateha. Adonay ahavi me’on beyteha umkom mishkan kevodeha. Va’ani eshtaaveh ve’ehra’ah evreah lifney adonay osi va’ani tefilati leha adonay et ratzon elohim berov hasheha aneni be’emet yisheha.

KAVANAH. It is only a true and close community that develops associations, traditions and memories that go to make up its soul. To mingle one’s personality with that soul becomes a natural longing. In such a community one experiences that mystic divine grace which, like radiant sunshine, illumines our lives when joyous and, like balm, heals them when wounded or stricken. Then all questions about saying this or that become trivial, for the real purpose is attained in having each one feel with the Psalmist: “One thing I ask of God that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of God all the days of my life, to behold the graciousness of God.”

M.M.R. (ADAPTED)

אני תפילתי

אשעתי / as for me, my prayer is for you. The Hebrew text has often been creatively misread to mean “I am my prayer.” All I have to offer in prayer is myself. We begin our prayers with a feeling of humility, knowing that the vaunted words we are about to speak are no greater than the person who speaks them. Most of the prayers in our liturgy are phrased in the first person plural, in which we as a community stand before the Divine presence. But here they are introduced in the halting and somewhat unsure voice of the individual, expressing some of that inadequacy that each of us feels as we enter the place and hour of prayer.

A.G.

NOTE. The Mah Tovu prayer is composed entirely of biblical verses: Numbers 24:5; Psalms 5:8, 95:6 and 69:14.

COMMENTARY. Mah Tovu begins with a historical progression—the tents of our earliest ancestors, then the sanctuary of the years of wandering in the wilderness, then the Temple in Jerusalem. Each of these is linked to the synagogue, for it too is “your house.” And I, the contemporary soul, seeking the right moment to encounter the divine there, am thus not alone. I am a link in the chain of tradition bearing the truth of your salvation.

D.A.T.
BIRHOT HASHAHAR / MORNING BLESSINGS

Blessed are you, AWAKENER, our God, life of all the worlds, who removes sleep from my eyes, and slumber from my eyelids.

COMMENTARY. Various editions of the prayerbook offer different orders of the morning blessings. Here the first blessing is that on awakening. Then comes a blessing on the first sounds of dawn, followed by thanksgiving for the return of waking consciousness (“who establishes the dry land upon the waters”), and then the blessing on opening our eyes and seeing our world, freshly created with the dawn, around us. The cycle is completed with the final blessing “who gives strength to the weary” as we prepare to begin our day.

A.G.

COMMENTARY. This sequence of blessings is the central portion of Birhot Hashahar. It was designed by the talmudic sages to celebrate such acts of awakening as focusing the eyes, sitting up, stretching, standing, etc. The transference of these blessings to the public worship service (nineteenth century) disengaged the blessing and the particular act of awakening with which it was joined. In their public setting the morning blessings took on a new level of meaning. Removed from the acts of awakening, individual activities became metaphors for godly action. The blessing “who clothes the naked” ceased to be a pointed acknowledgment of personal possessions and personal protection. Instead it became a celebration of God as the power that prompts the care and nurturance of humankind. The blessing “who raises the lowly” ceased to be a blessing over the renewal of physical mobility and became a blessing of the divine presence manifest in actions that raise the bodies and elevate the spirits of those who are low.

A.G.

S.S.
Blessed are you, The PROVIDENT, our God, life of all the worlds, who gives the bird of dawn discernment to tell day from night.

Blessed are you, The FASHIONER, our God, life of all the worlds, who stretches forth the earth upon the waters.

KAVANAH. We give thanks that we are restored whole and healthy to consciousness and to an orderly universe. That is why, in the second blessing, we give thanks that, when we stepped out of bed our feet encountered not the watery chaos which preceded creation, but the solid earth which God spread over the waters. The daily emergence from unconsciousness reminds us of our fragility as human creatures and our need for support and care.

R.A.

DERASH. For whom do we recite blessings? If God is beyond blessing, then we must be reciting them for ourselves. Each berakah urges us to avoid taking the world for granted. Each contains a vision of the creative or redemptive power in the world. Jewish tradition teaches that living up to our heritage as beings created betzelem elohim, in the image of God, requires us to “imitate God.” Thus each berakah can teach us something about living our lives in consonance with the divine. Blessings tell us not so much about a God “out there somewhere,” they teach us how to make manifest the godly in ourselves.

D.A.T.
Blessed are you, **THE LAMP**, our God, life of all the worlds, who makes the blind to see.

Blessed are you, **THE COMPASSIONATE**, our God, life of all the worlds, who clothes the naked.

Blessed are you, **REDEEMING ONE**, our God, life of all the worlds, who makes the captive free.

Blessed are you, **THE HELPING HAND**, our God, life of all the worlds, who raises up the humble.

---

**KAVANAH.** Those of us who live in plenty are grateful for the clothing on our bodies, the warmth of a garment that shields us from the elements. We pray for a time when this blessing may be spoken by all people, a time when all humans are “clothed” with warmth and safety, enwrapped in God’s love.

L.B.

**לָשׁוֹט** / who raises up the humble: literally makes upright those bent down. The phrase could suggest either those suffering a physical deformity or those humbled by adverse circumstances.

J.R.
Blessed are you, THE WAY, our God, life of all the worlds, who makes firm a person’s steps.

Blessed are you, THE GENEROUS, our God, life of all the worlds, who acts for all my needs.

Blessed are you, THE MIGHTY ONE, our God, life of all the worlds, who girds Israel with strength.

Blessed are you, THE BEAUTIFUL, our God, life of all the worlds, who crowns Israel with splendor.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu hey ha’olamim hameḥin mitzadey gaver.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu hey ha’olamim she’asah li kol tzorki.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu hey ha’olamim ozer yisra’el bigvurah.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu hey ha’olamim oter yisra’el betifarah.

德沙。/ who makes firm a person’s steps. An interpretive translation of Psalm 37:23-24: “When one’s steps follow the divine path, they bring delight along the way.” The Baal Shem Tov noted in this connection that wherever one goes and whatever one does each day should have a deeper spiritual significance that parallels the mundane reality of everyday existence. In bringing to our lives this deeper significance, we find new delight in the firmness of our steps.

L.B.
Blessed are you, THE IMAGELESS, our God, life of all the worlds, who made me in your image.

Blessed are you, THE FREE, our God, life of all the worlds, who made me free.

Blessed are you, THE ANCIENT ONE, our God, life of all the worlds, who made me of the people Israel.

Blessed are you, RENEWING ONE, our God, life of all the worlds, who gives strength to the weary.

COMMENTARY. Once we are awake, we return to full consciousness of who we are. In the rigidly stratified society in which these prayers originated, people were less conscious of identity than of status. Thus, the original forms of these prayers expressed the thankfulness of the most privileged members of the community—free Jewish males—that they did not have the less privileged status of women, slaves, or non-Jews.

The blessings we now use affirm that since we embody the divine image, we are all intrinsically valuable. To degrade or enslave others is to deface the image of God. We were created free just as our creator is free. We are capable of choice, of invention and of transformation in our lives and in our world. We also give thanks for our particular identity as Jews. God who creates our common humanity, also cherishes human diversity. Each people is unique and precious. R.A.

NOTE. “THE IMAGELESS...who made me in your image.” This paradoxical rendering enables us to understand that our being made “in the divine image” (Genesis 1:26-27) encompasses other than physical attributes: speech, will, reason, spirituality, kindness, freedom of action, moral sense. J.R.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha’olamim
she’asani betzalmo.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha’olamim
she’asani ben/bat ḥorin.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha’olamim
she’asani yisra’el.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha’olamim
hanoten laya’ef ko’ah.

/ who made me in your image. When a human being is slain, the very image of God is shattered. We revere human life because it is a spark of the life that animates the universe. Only after we have acquired the principle of reverence for each person is it possible to love each other as we should love, not merely “as thyself” but as a reflection of the divine. “Beloved are human beings,” said R. Akiba, “for they were made in the image of God.” M.M.K. (ADAPTED)
My God, the soul you gave to me is pure. You have created it, you shaped it, and you breathed it into me, and you preserve it deep inside of me. And someday you will take it from me, restoring it to everlasting life.

COMMENTARY. The word neshamah, which means both “breath” and “soul,” provides a linguistic connection between the blessings for body and soul. The blessing for the soul uses the vocabulary of the Creation story, especially Genesis 2:6, which describes how God created the human form and then animated it with the breath of life. Hence, the language of celebrating each awakening carries an echo of the primal joining of human form to life force. Every awakening is nothing less than a rehearsal of the mystery of creation.

The traditional version of the blessing for the soul acknowledges the daily renewal of life as a recollection of creation and also as a foretaste of resurrection. The current version concludes instead by acknowledging God as the power that renews life each day.

DERASH. This short and beautiful prayer starts each day and offers comfort in times of stress. Self-esteem is a precious gift. Even though we may lose it in the tragedies of the present, it will be restored to us in our future. God, the healer, returns our souls to us.

GUIDED MEDITATION. In the Hebrew of Elohay neshamah shenata bi tehorah hi, the text says, “and restore it to me in the future to come.” The text in our siddur, rather than stressing the traditional notion of individual afterlife, or of personal resurrection in the messianic End of Days, reverses the emphasis: the soul, having sojourned in the physical life, is restored to the everlasting stream of life—to the continuum of being that is the sum-total of all transitory lives, when viewed from the perspective of eternity. J.R.

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Elohay neshamah shenata bi tehorah hi.
As long as spirit breathes in me, I offer thanks before you, BREATH DIVINE, my God, God of my ancestors, the master of all deeds, and source of every life. Blessed are you, THE HOLY SPIRIT, in whose possession is the breath of every living thing, the animation of all flesh.

KAVANAH. We are each created in the image of God. When we allow the reflections of our own beings to illuminate the universe, when we understand that we carry God within us, we are closer to doing the work that will eventually perfect the world. When we each accept the purity of our own souls and the purity of the souls of others, tikun olam will have been achieved.

L.B.

KAVANAH. “Sleep is one sixtieth a part of death (Talmud Berahot 57b),” and waking is a kind of rebirth.

L.W.K.
PESUKEY DEZIMRAH / VERSES OF PRAISE

For an alternative Pesukei Dezimrah, see Perek Shirah, page 704. For additional readings, see pages 739-766.

Blessed is the one who spoke and all things came to be!  
Blessed are you!  
Blessed, who created all in the beginning!  
Blessed is your name!  
Blessed is the one who speaks and acts!  
Blessed are you!  
Blessed, who determines and fulfills!  
Blessed is your name!  
Blessed, who deals kindly with the world!  
Blessed are you!  

Baruḥ she'amar vehayah ha'olam.  
Baruḥ hu.  

Baruḥ oseh vereyshit.  
Baruḥ hu.  

Baruḥ omer ve'oseh.  
Baruḥ shemo.  

Baruḥ gozer umkayem.  
Baruḥ hu.  

Baruḥ meraḥem al ha'aretz.  
Baruḥ shemo.  

COMMENTARY. Baruḥ She'amar. Our morning psalm service begins with the words “Blessed is the one who spoke.” We begin to pray by proclaiming the divinity and great power of words themselves. The prayerbook conveys our sense of inadequacy of coming before God with human language. How can words ever be adequate vehicles for expressing our most inward thoughts?  

A.G.  

COMMENTARY. The God affirmed in the words of Baruḥ She'amar may be understood in either concrete anthropomorphic terms or in a more abstract manner. It is the latter view with which we Reconstructionists are most comfortable. Our God is not a person who promises and fulfills as a human being would. In speaking of a God who fulfills promises, we express our basic trust in life and our affirmation that goodness and godliness have their own reward.  

A.G.
Blessed, who acts kindly toward all creatures!
Blessed is your name!
Blessed, who responds with good to those in awe!
Blessed are you!
Blessed, who removes the dark and brings the light!
Blessed is your name!
Blessed is the one who lives eternally and lasts forever!
Blessed are you!
Blessed, who delivers and redeems!
Blessed are you and your name!

COMMENTARY. Baruḥ Sheʾamar is the rabbinic composition that introduces Pesukey Deziṃrah/Verses of Praise, which traditionally is compiled from biblical passages, primarily from Psalms.

The focus of Birhot Hashahar is on physical awakening. In Pesukey Deziṃrah the kaleidoscopic imagery awakens our emotions. Just as we find our own pace walking through art museums, so Pesukey Deziṃrah invites each of us to wander amidst its visions. On different days, different imagery comes to life. Pesukey Deziṃrah moves us toward prayerfulness, toward readiness to join in spiritual community.

DERASH. Pesukey Deziṃrah begins with an apology for verbal prayer. It is only because God “spoke the world into being” that we dare to assume that words can serve as the vehicles for our deepest prayers. In participating in verbal prayer, we somehow partake of that same act of Divine word-power through which the world was created. A Hasidic comment on the opening line of Baruḥ Sheʾamar translates it: “A baruḥ (blessing) that is said and creates a world—that’s a baruḥ!”

SS.

Avot de Rabbi Natan 11a (adapted by L.W.K.)

Commentary. According to the Mishnah, some Jews regularly meditated for an hour before beginning public prayer. As the public prayer service expanded, this time of personal preparation became filled with a collection of psalms and other biblical selections that became known as Pesukey Deziṃrah—“Verses of Song.” Rabbinic literature records many variations of Pesukey Deziṃrah, but common to all versions are selections from Psalms 146-150, known as the “Hallel Psalms” because they feature variations of that term as a praise of God. Another important Hallel psalm—136—is also a traditional part of this section. The central importance of these psalms indicates that the major theme of Pesukey Deziṃrah is the praise (Hallel) of God. Indeed, the Talmud sometimes refers to Pesukey Deziṃrah as the daily Hallel.
A Psalm. A song for the day of Shabbat.

A good thing to give thanks to The Eternal, to sing out to your name supreme, to tell about your kindness in the morning, and your faithfulness at night, on ten-stringed lyre and on flute, with melodies conceived on harp, for you, Almighty One, elate me with your deeds, I'll sing about the actions of your hands.

How great your deeds have been, Supernal One, your thoughts exceedingly profound.

Of this the foolish person cannot know, of this the shallow cannot understand.

For though the wicked multiply like weeds, and evildoers sprout up all around, it is for their destruction for all time, but you, Majestic One, are lifted high eternally.

COMMENTARY. Beautiful in many respects, this twice-recited (evening and morning) Sabbath psalm also contains affirmations which do not flow easily from our lips: the wicked, despite their apparent success, are destined to perish (verses 8-10), while the righteous are destined to flourish (verses 13-15). Who, observing the vast human traumas of this century, can say these words with full conviction?

Isn't this psalm facile, smug? At moments of harassment or discouragement, so it may seem; but during the composed times of quiet reflection, such as Shabbat, it appears closer to the truth than its cynical opposite. Historically, a good case can be made that evil eventually destroys itself; philosophically, it can be convincingly argued that evil contains its own self-destruction, its own internal contradiction.

Yet this vision is far from our present reality, especially when applied to individual cases. With reason Rashi construes the phrase leym hashabbat for the Sabbath Day in the first verse of the psalm as referring to olam shekulo Shabbat, a world-in-the-making when all will be serene.

It is good to give thanks. Why? Does God need our praise? No. We do. To awaken to Wonder to holiness to God. It is good to give thanks for through thanksgiving comes awakening.  

R.M.S.
Psalm 92

COMMENTARY. תzion חכם ישם / the righteous flourish like the palm trees. Unlike other trees, the palm brings forth each new branch from its very heart. So, too, the tzadik: tzadikim reach outward from their very depths. There are no superficial branches on their trees. The righteous are as open as palms, as strong and straight as cedars. Such people remain fresh and fruitful even in their old age.

A.G.
A Song for the Ascents.
I lift my eyes up to the hills.
from where does my help come?

My help is from The Unseen One,
the maker of the heavens and the earth,
who will not cause your foot to fail.
Your protector never slumbers.

Behold the one who slumbers not, who never sleeps,
the guardian of Israel.

The Abundant One preserves you,
The Watchful One, your shelter, at your right hand a support.

By day, the sun will not afflict you,
nor the moonlight by the night.

The Vigilant shall guard you from all evil,
and will keep your lifebreath safe.

The Shepherd guard your going out and coming in,
from now unto eternity.

Psalm 121

DERASH. If we lift our eyes towards the mountains, be they rounded from weathering or jaggedly youthful, their connecting of the molten innards of earth with the luminous stretches of heaven arouses wonder at the dynamism and eruptive creativity amidst which we live. Depths become heights while hills are laid low, and the hardest of surfaces yields to the softness of water and wind. Change is ceaseless, and transformation knows no pause. The dynamism both exhilarates and exhausts the spirit; no wonder that we seek stability amidst this endless process.

Many of this psalm’s readers may find such stability in the seemingly solid image of the Maker of heaven and earth. But those whose ears are attuned to mystical overtones may hear in the word יָד / me’ayin echoes of the Creative Nothingness, the Divine Void, the AYIN, the Mysterious and Ever Elusive Source from which all existence springs. The Name for that Source—four letters without consonantal substance, the stirrings of breath captured only in vowels—hints at stability amidst ceaseless process, a dizzying term of pure becoming. The paradox of this affirmation contributes to the spiritual vertigo which may, along with the heights of the highest peaks, help us sense that Source of our being that lies both above and beneath our furthest seeing.

KAVANAH. Often prayer seeks to turn our thoughts towards God; at other times it directs our attention towards ourselves, and sometimes these two poles are held in intimate relation, as in the opening outcry of the psalm: “I lift my eyes up to the hills: from where does my help come?” Had the life-sustaining force we call God not been with us, how could we possibly have survived calumny and contempt, pogroms and persecutions? Given the perils and pains of Jewish history, our continued existence as a people is not easy to account for in the usual reasoned terms of causal explanation.

Might we then succumb, if only for a moment, to the cry of the psalmist, and give voice to our astonished recognition that our existence is surely by the grace of God, a gift that surpasses explanation.
Hallelu/Yah!
Call out to Yah in Heaven’s holy place!
Boom out to Yah across the firmament!
Shout out for Yah, for all God’s mighty deeds!
Cry out for Yah, as loud as God is great!
Blast out for Yah with piercing shofar note!
Pluck out for Yah with lute and violin!
Throb out for Yah with drum and writhing dance!
Sing out for Yah with strings and husky flute!
Ring out for Yah with cymbals that resound!
Clang out for Yah with cymbals that rebound!
Let every living thing Yah’s praises sing, Hallelu/Yah!
Let every living thing Yah’s praises sing, Hallelu/Yah!

Blessed is THE ONE eternally.
Amen! Amen!
Blessed is THE OMNIPRESENT,
dwelling in Jerusalem, Halleluyah!
Blessed is THE MIGHTY ONE divine,
The God of Israel who alone works wonders,
and blessed is the glorious name forever,
and may God’s glory fill the earth.
Amen! Amen!

COMMENTARY. Psalm 150 as it appears in the biblical text does not repeat its concluding line as it does in the liturgy. The repetition here makes this concluding verse parallel to all the preceding ones, allowing it to fit a variety of musical settings. The repetition also emphasizes the psalm’s essential message.

D.A.T.
Reader: Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

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

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

COMMENTARY. Holiness is the quality or value that things or persons have when they help people to become fully human. M.M.K. (ADAPTED)
THE SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS

When a minyan is present, the Barehu is said. The congregation rises and faces the ark. It is customary to bow. The reader chants the first line, and the congregation responds with the second.

Bless THE INFINITE, the blessed One!
Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One, now and forever!

YOTZER / GOD IN NATURE

For additional readings see pages 733-739, 754-766, 798-799.

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who fashions light and creates darkness, maker of peace and creator of all.

On Festivals that fall on weekdays, continue on page 262.

KAVANAH. As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed. And the blessing gives us strength and makes our vision clear. And the blessing gives us peace, and the courage to dare.

FAITH ROGW

COMMENTARY. Barehu calls the congregation together for formal worship. The sections that precede it in the morning service, Birhot Hashahar and Pesueky Dezmimrah, have brought individuals gradually closer together until they could reach the mutual connection needed for joining together in prayer. The emotional stirring and heightened awareness brought by these earlier sections now become focused in the tighter intellectual structure of the Shema and its blessings and the Amidah.

D.A.T.

COMMENTARY. The first major theme following Barehu is that of Creation. We wonder at the order, the complexity, the vastness of our world. Struck by our own smallness, we are nonetheless also caught up in the grace of having a home amidst the splendor that is nature. Our wonder and our sense of smallness give way to thankfulness for the gift of life in this world.

D.A.T.

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

I Barehu atah adonay
Berelah at yah
Nevareh et

II eloheynu
hashechinah
eyn ha'hayim

III melech ha'olam
heye ha'olamim
ruah ha'olam

Blessed are you Adonay
Blessed are you Yah
Let us bless

Shechinah
Source of Life

Sovereign of all worlds
Life of all the worlds
Spirit of the world
To blessed God they offer melodies. To the sovereign and enduring God they utter songs, and make their praises heard, for God alone is holy and revered, enactor of all mighty deeds, the fashioner of all new things, the seeder of all righteousness, the grower of all saving acts, creator of all healing, awesome in praises, source of every wonder, who renews each day, with constant good, Creation's work—as it is said: "The maker of the skies' great lights, whose love is everlasting!"

Let a new light shine forever upon Zion. Soon, may everyone of us be worthy of its light. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, the shaper of the heavens' lights.

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Every day, Creation is renewed.
Wake up and see unfolding
In the spreading light of dawn,
The world and all it contains
Coming into being, new, fresh,
Filled with divine goodness
And love.
Every day, Creation is renewed.
Reflected in the great lights
We see a new day,
One precious day,
Eternity.

/S.P.W.
AHAVAH RABAH / LOVE AND TORAH

For additional readings see pages 780-784.

With an abounding love, you love us, NURTURER, our God; with great compassion do you care for us. Our source, our sovereign, just as our ancestors placed their trust in you, and you imparted to them laws of life, so be gracious to us, too, and teach us. Our fount, our loving parent, caring one, be merciful with us, and place into our hearts ability to understand, to see, to hear, to learn, to teach, to keep, to do, and to uphold with love all that we study of your Torah.

AHAVAH RABAH

Ahavah rabah ahavatnu adonay eloheynu hemlah gedolah viterah hamalta aleynu. Avinu malkenu ba'avor avoteynu ve'imoteynu shebatehu vecha vatelamdem hukey hayim ken tehonenu utelamdenu. Avinu ha'av harahaman hamrahem rahem aleynu veten belibenu lehavin ulhaskil lishmo'a lilmad ulelamed lishmor vela'asot ulkayem et kol divrey talmud torateha be'ahavah.

COMMENTARY. In the preceding pages (246-270) we offered an extended blessing for Creation. We accepted our creatureliness, our place in nature. Now we shift to concern with what gives our creaturely lives transcendent meaning.

We learn of our own significance through the love that is freely offered to us first by parents and later by others as well. We learn our ultimate worth in this love, which is rooted in the divine love. This is truly essential teaching! This love teaches us what to do with our lives, how to serve others, how to do the divine bidding. Thus loving and learning are inseparable parts of our tie to the divine.

Weimar D.A.T.

With an abounding love, you love us. Ahavah Rabah may be called the quintessentially Jewish prayer. In boundless love for Israel, God gives the greatest gift imaginable: teachings that will help us to live. What more could we want from the loving parent, combining attributes of both father and mother, who here becomes the compassionate teacher, sharing the gift of true knowledge with children who have become disciples? We pray that we may have the open and understanding heart to receive these teachings, to make them real by our deeds, and to pass them on to others. This is our response to God's love: a commitment to study, to live the life of Torah, and to carry it forward to future generations.

A.G.

With an abounding love, you imparted to them laws of life. This second berahah prior to the Shema moves us from the cosmic realm of God as experienced in nature to the particular Jewish experience of God, as transmitted through our culture. Our Torah records those laws of life that reflect our people's collective experience of God.

R.S.A.

Harahaman hamrahem rahem / loving...caring...be merciful. These three consecutive words are based on the same root resh, which is related to the Hebrew word rehem womb.

J.R
Enlighten us with your Torah, cause our hearts to cling to your mitzvot. Make our hearts one, to love your name and be in awe of it. Keep us from shame, and from humiliation, and from stumbling, today and always. For we have trusted in your holy, great, and awesome name. May we be glad, rejoicing in your saving power, and may you reunite our people from all corners of the earth, leading us proudly independent to our land. For you are the redeeming God and have brought us near to your great name, to offer thanks to you, and lovingly declare your unity. Blessed are you, ABUNDANT ONE, who lovingly cares for your people Israel.

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**KAVANAH.** In gathering together the four corners of the tallit, we gather our scattered thoughts and focus on unity—uniting our people, uniting the disparate elements of our lives, uniting with the oneness that links all that is. This inner unity is the place out of which our hearts speak the Shema.

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**NOTE.** Jews traditionally have gathered in the four tzitziyot at the corners of their tallitot when they reach vehavi'enu / reunite. The tzitziyot are then held throughout the Shema.
SHEMA

Listen, Israel: THE ETERNAL is our God, THE ETERNAL ONE alone!
Blessed be the name and glory of God’s realm forever!

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

GUIDED MEDITATION: Think of someone who loves you. Feel his or her presence. Take a deep breath and open up to the love that is coming to you. Focus on that feeling of love. L.W.K.

And you must love. You shall love your God intellectually, emotionally and with all your deeds. Whatever you love most in these ways is your god. For the Jewish people, the deepest love should be for freedom, justice and peace. M.M.K./M.S.

Listen... gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

SHAḤARIT: SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS / 276
The Boundless One told Moses: Speak to the Israelites—tell them to make themselves tzitzit upon the corners of their clothes, throughout their generations. Have them place upon the corner tzitzit a twine of royal blue. This is your tzitzit. Look at it and remember all the mitzvot of the Eternal One. And do them, so you won’t go off after the lusts of your heart or after what catches your eye, so that you remember to do all my mitzvot and be holy for your God. I am the Faithful One, your God, who brought you from Mitzrayim to be for you a God. I am the Infinite, your God.


/ THE BOUNDLESS ONE...God (Deuteronomy 15:37-41).

/ so that you remember. The tzitzit, like all the forms of religion, are there as reminders for us as we go about our daily lives. All of us have had moments when we most became ourselves, liberated from the bonds holding us back, or when we discovered those great inner truths that lend meaning to our lives. But such moments are forgotten, covered over by the petty angers and frustrations of daily living, by the hard shell we think we need about us to protect our most precious feelings.

Our tradition calls upon us to bring such moments back to mind and make them part of our worship. Our own innermost liberation is our “coming out of Egypt”; our own moment of deepest truth is our “standing before Sinai”. Let us remember these as we look at our tzitzit, and join them to the ancient memories of our people.

A.G.

DERASH. The four tzitziot represent the four corners of the world. The divine presence spans the entire area from one corner of the world to the other. So too are the inescapable moral obligations which extend throughout our lives no matter where we are.

D.A.T.
Give praises
to the highest God! Blessed is God, the one to bless!
So Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites came forth with
song to you,
in boundless happiness, and they all cried:

“Who among the mighty can compare
to you, Eternal One?
Who can compare to you,
adorned in holiness,
awesome in praises,
acting wondrously!”

A new song did the redeemed ones sing out to your name,
beside the Sea.
Together, all of them gave thanks, declared you sovereignty.
and said:

“The Holy One will reign forever!”

Rock of Israel, rise up to the help of Israel,
redeem, according to your word, Judah and Israel.
Blessed are you, Eternal One, the champion of Israel.

On Shabbat, continue with the Amidah on the next page.
For the Festival Amidah turn to page 326.

**DERESH.** Rabbi Judah said: [At the sea] each tribe said to the other, “You
go into the sea first!” As they stood there bickering, Naḥshon ben
Aminadav jumped into the water. God said to Moses, who had been praying,
“My friend is drowning—and you pray!” “What can I do?” Moses
asked. God responded, “Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to go!
Raise your staff...”

**TALMUD SOTAH 37A**

**DERESH.** Most congregations stand at tzur yisra’el rather than waiting for
the blessing. Thus we are already on our feet when we request that God
מש/ arise. We cannot ask God to rise up to help Israel unless we have
done so ourselves.

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SHAḤARIT: SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS / 290
AMIDAH FOR SHABBAT MORNING

The traditional Amidah follows here. Directed meditations begin on page 725. A short Amidah can be found on page 730. The Amidah is traditionally recited while standing, beginning with three short steps forward and bowing, left and right, a reminder of our entry into the divine presence. For additional readings see pages 737-738, 740-748, 752-759.

Open my lips, Beloved One, and let my mouth declare your praise.

1. AVOT VE'IMOT / ANCESTORS

Blessed are you, The ANCIENT ONE

God of Abraham
God of Isaac
God of Jacob
God of Sarah
God of Rebekah
God of Rachel
and God of Leah:

Baruḥ atah adenay eloheynu veyloheyn avoteynu ve'imoteynu
elohey avraham elohey sarah
elohey yitzhak elohey rivkah
ealohey ya'akov elohey rahel
ealohey le'ah.

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

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

KAVANAH. The opening of the Amidah calls to mind previous generations, near as well as distant. Take a few moments to think about your parents, your grandparents, other relatives about whom you may have heard stories. What is your connection with them?

L.B.

/Shabbat Amidah / 295

295 / SHABBAT AMIDAH

SHABBAT SHAḤARIT / 294
RIBONO SHEL OLAM / CONCLUDING MEDITATION

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

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

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

**Misheberach,**
by Debbie Friedman

*Mi shebeirach avoteinu*
*M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu*
May the source of strength,
Who blessed the ones before us,
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,
and let us say, Amen.

*Mi shebeirach imoteinu*
*M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu*
Bless those in need of healing with *r'fuah sh'leimah,*
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,
And let us say, Amen.
ALEYNU

We rise for Aleynu. It is customary to bow at "bend the knee." For an alternative version see page 126. For additional readings see pages 737-739, 748, 774-776, 803-804.

Choose one of the following:

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

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

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

D.A.T.
And so, we bend the knee and bow, acknowledging the sovereign who rules above all those who rule, the blessed Holy One, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth, whose realm embraces heaven's heights, whose mighty presence stalks celestial ramparts. This is our God; there is none else besides, as it is written in the Torah:

“You shall know this day, and bring it home inside your heart, that THE SUPREME ONE is God in the heavens above and on the earth below. There is no other God.”

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

M.M.K.

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

M.B. (ADAPTED)

 xd...other God (Deuteronomy 4:39).
And so, we put our hope in you, 
**The Eminence**, our God, 
that soon we may behold 
the full splendor of your might, 
and see idolatry vanish from the earth, 
and all material gods be swept away, 
and the power of your rule repair the world, 
and all creatures of flesh call on your name, 
and all the wicked of the earth turn back to you. 
Let all who dwell upon the globe perceive and know 
that to you each knee must bend, each tongue swear oath, 
and let them give the glory of your name its precious due. 
Let all of them take upon themselves your rule. 
Reign over them, soon and for always. 
For this is all your realm, throughout all worlds, across all time—
as it is written in your Torah: 
"**The Eternal One** will reign now and forever."

And it is written: 
**The Everlasting One** will reign as sovereign over all the earth. 
On that day shall **The Many-Named** be one, God's name be one!"

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

S.P.W.
Prayer for the End of Hiding

This is an important prayer in the history of our synagogue, for had it not been needed, CBH would probably not have come into existence. While most of our liturgy reflects the diversity and inclusivity of our community, this prayer connects us as nothing else can to the richness of our past and reminds us that in today’s climate, we have not yet reached Eden.

As LGBTQ Jews, we are aware of the loss of integrity we suffer due to pressures of the larger society. We often feel forced into a dishonest presentation of ourselves, to ourselves and others. The LGBTQ individuals who feel they must pretend to be something that they are not, the Jews who feel they must be alienated from their tradition and community to win larger acceptance, both are victims of a theft of identity and integrity committed by the sexual, gender-identifying or religious majority.

Creator of the Universe, we ask that our hiding draw to an end, that we no longer feel we have to pretend, to promise falsely, to renounce ourselves, and that our fullest creative expression as Jews and as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and queer people be among the blessings you bestow upon us.

Amen.
INTRODUCTION TO THE MOURNERS’ KADDISH

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

THE MOURNERS’ KADDISH

It is customary for mourners, and those observing Yahrzeit, to stand for Kaddish. In some congregations everyone rises. For additional readings see pages 787-796.

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

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

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

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

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

NOTE. Congregations usually mention the names of congregants and their relatives who have died in the previous week before reciting the Mourners’ Kaddish. In many congregations a Yahrzeit list is read as well. In more informal settings the leader sometimes invites those present to speak the names of those they wish to be remembered.

D.A.T.
ADON OLAM / CROWN OF ALL TIME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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