A GUIDE TO THE SELIHOT SERVICE

Rabbi Max Arzt

1 THE MESSAGE OF SELIHOT

The aim of the Selihot prayers is to induce in us a determination to narrow the gap between our present and our potential selves, to judge what we are in the light of what we ought to be, and to mobilize our will power behind our noblest intentions.

During the solemn days which follow the midnight Selihot, we are to resolve to be lenient in our judgment of others and to be more severe and demanding with ourselves.

If you have done your fellow man a little wrong, let it be a great wrong in your eyes and go and rectify it. If you have done him much good, let it be little in your eyes. If he has done you a great wrong, let it be little in your own eyes.

(Abot de Rabbi Nathan, 41)

In the Selihot services we point the accusing finger at ourselves; we confess our own moral frailty and acknowledge our own failings. Three times we recite the Confession (Ashamnu pp. 37, 39, 41) and each time we declare: “We are neither so arrogant nor so hardened as to say... we are righteous and have not sinned.”

The solemnity of the Selihot prayers should not lead us to conclude that Judaism teaches a morbid sin-consciousness or that it emphasizes man’s depravity. The very word “Selihot” comes from the Hebrew root səlāh, “to forgive.” Throughout the Bible, this word is used exclusively in contexts where God forgives a repentant sinner. The Selihot prayers point to the end of a self-cleansing process: repentance leading to divine forgiveness.

According to Maimonides (Hilkhot Teshuah II), true repentance entails several steps: awareness of one’s guilt; sincere confession before God, after having made amends to those who have been wronged; deep remorse; and a firm resolve never to repeat the offense. These steps lead to selihah or divine forgiveness and reconciliation.
Happy are they who dwell in Thy house; forever shall they praise Thee. Happy the people who thus fare; happy the people whose God is the Eternal.

Psalm 145
I will extol Thee, my God, O King, And praise Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, And I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, And His greatness is without end. One generation shall laud Thy works to another, And shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the splendor of Thy glorious majesty, And tell of Thy wonders. And men shall proclaim the might of Thy acts, And I will declare Thy greatness. They shall make known the fame of Thy great goodness, And shall joyously proclaim Thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; Slow to anger and great in kindness. The Lord is good to all; And His love is over all His works. All whom Thou hast made shall give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, And Thy faithful ones shall bless Thee. They shall declare the glory of Thy kingdom, And tell of Thy power, To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, And the glorious splendor of Thy kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all who fall, And raiseth up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all hopefully look to Thee, And Thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest Thy hand, And satisfiest every living thing with favor. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, And gracious in all His works. The Lord is near unto all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.
He shall fulfill the desire of them that revere Him;
He shall also hear their cry, and save them.
The Lord protects all them that love Him;
But all the wicked shall He bring low.
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord;
Let all men praise His holy name for ever and ever.
We will praise the Lord from this time forth,
And forevermore. Halleluyah.

Reader
May the great name of God be honored throughout the world which He has created according to His will. May He, soon, even in our own lifetime and in the lifetime of our people, establish His kingdom on earth so that God shall rule over us all; and let us say, Amen.

Congregation and Reader
May His great name be praised for ever and ever.

Reader
Exalted and honored be the name of the Holy One, praised be He, whose glory is far above all hymns of praise which man can offer Him; and let us say, Amen.

B'ha-yay-hon uv-yo-may-hon, uv-ḥa-yay d’ḥol baiy yis-ra-ayl,
Ba-a-ga-la u-viz’man ka-reer, v'im-ru a-mayn.
Y-hay sh'may ra-ba m'vo-raḥ, l'o-lam ul-ol-may ol-ma-ya.
Tush-b'ḥa-ta v’ne-ḥeḥ-ma-to, da-a-mee-ran b'ol-ma,
V'im-ru Amen.

O Lord, Thou art righteous, but we are prone to error. How can we plead before Thee? What can we say? How can we justify ourselves? Let us search and examine our ways and return to Thee, for Thy right hand is extended to receive all those who truly repent. We come before Thee not with deeds of lovingkindness, but like poor and needy creatures do we knock at Thy doors. O merciful and gracious God, we call upon Thee. Turn us not away from Thy presence without Thy blessing. O send us not away without blessing us, for Thou alone hearest prayer.
Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord!
Let us rejoice before the Rock who is our unfailing help.
Let us come before Thy presence with thanksgiving;
Let us joyfully sing psalms unto Thee.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne;
Mercy and truth go before Thee.
Let us assemble together,
And reverently come to Thy house, O God.
In Thy hand is the soul of every living being,
And in Thy keeping is the spirit of all mankind.

The soul of man is Thine, and his body is Thy creation;
have compassion upon Thy handiwork. Yea, both soul and body are Thine. O Lord, for the sake of Thine honor, deal kindly with us. We have come here trusting in Thy name, for Thou art a merciful and gracious God. For Thy name's sake, pardon our iniquity, for it is great.

Forgive us, O our Father, for in our folly we have gone astray. Pardon us, O our King, for our iniquities are many.

Our God and God of our fathers!
How shall we pray to Thee who dwellest on high?
How shall we express to Thee our inmost thoughts?
We have abhorred Thy true and righteous ways;
We have preferred abominations and evil deeds.
We have followed false prophecies and delusions;
We have been stubborn and insolent.

Because of our iniquities was Thine indignation aroused;
The Temple was destroyed and sacrifices have ceased.

Anointed priests, skilled in Temple ritual and sacrifice,
Have been banished and exiled afar.

Mal'akh Loam meroshe
Le'olam la'aleirah le'olam yeshuva:
Bakharah tovah v'evirot v'ofir la
Kadosh mishpesh mukashet mishpat v'sheva:
Asher ygeschet mishpat v'sheva elolim benelah b'kesh:
Asher l'olim mishpesh v'sheva elolim b'kesh:
Asher l'olim mishpesh v'sheva elolim b'kesh:

Mal'akh Loam la'aleirah le'olam yeshuva:
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Achad Benjamim ben Zareah is an alphabetical acrostic by Rabbi Benjamim ben Zareah of the eleventh century. The author's name is contained in the words of the closing stanza, page 13.
How often hast Thou rebuked us through prophets and seers!
Yet we did not hearken to Thy teachers and exhorters.
Ever since have we been wanderers, Crushed, tortured and slaughtered.
We have survived as a handful among worthless thorns. Though seeking deliverance, we find it not.
Why do the oppressors of Thy people, who bow to idols, continually prosper?
Rising up against Thee, they speak blasphemies and taunt Thy people:
"O shattered and broken ones! In whom do you trust?"
O Holy One, Thou who livest forever, behold the plight of Thy wretched people
Who cling to Thee and rely only upon Thee.
May we by Thy wondrous power be saved now and for-evermore,
For upon Thy great mercy we depend.

We trust in Thine abundant mercy; we rely upon Thy righteousness; we hope for Thy forgiveness, and yearn for Thine unfailing help. Thou, our King, hast always loved righteousness. Thou absolvest Thy people of their iniquities, and Thou removest the sins of those who revere Thee. Thou didst make a covenant with our forefathers, and dost fulfill Thy promise to their descendants. In Thy cloud of glory, Thou didst descend on Mount Sinai, and didst show Thy ways of goodness unto Thy servant Moses. Thou didst reveal unto Him Thy paths of lovingkindness, and didst make known to him that Thou art a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, continually dispensing goodness, and guiding the whole world with Thy mercy. As it is written: "And God said: 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I shall show mercy.' "

1 Exodus 33:19.
Thou art slow to anger.

Thou art known as the God of mercy; Thou hast shown man the way to repentance.

Be ever mindful of Thine abundant mercy and loving-kindness toward the descendants of Thy beloved people.

Turn unto us in compassion, for Thou art the Lord of compassion.

With supplication and prayer we come before Thee who didst reveal Thy mercy unto Moses.

Repent once more of Thy wrath, as it is written in the Torah.¹

May we find shelter in Thy protection as on the day when Thou didst descend in the cloud.

Forgive our transgressions, and blot out our guilt as on the day when Thou didst appear unto Moses on Sinai.

Heed our supplication! Hearken to our prayer

As on the day when Moses called upon God. Thus, it is recorded in the Torah.²

“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed:

“If the Lord, the Eternal, is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and acquitting all those who truly repent.’”

O pardon our iniquity and our sin, and accept us for Thine inheritance.

Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, O our King, for we have transgressed.

For Thou, O Lord, art good, and ever ready to forgive. Thou art abounding in mercy unto all who call upon Thee.

O Lord, in the morning, hearken unto our supplication. In the morning, we shall prepare our prayer unto Thee and await Thy blessing. Hear our voice as we call upon Thee and lift our hands in reverence toward Thy holy Sanctuary. Hear, O Lord, our plea; be gracious unto us and answer us. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine indignation toward us to cease. Though there is no one worthy to call upon Thy name, to rise up and cleave unto Thee, hear our prayer, O Lord! Hearken to our plea and be not unmindful of our tears.

¹ Exodus 32:12. ² Exodus 34:6, 7.
As a father pities his children, so pity us, O Lord. Salvation comes from the Lord; may Thy blessing be upon Thy people. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is as a high tower unto us. O Lord of hosts, happy is the man that trusts in Thee. Save us, O Lord; mayest Thou, O King, answer us on the day we call.

O pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people from the days of Egypt even until now.

And the Lord said: 'I have forgiven according to Thy word.'

O my God, hear our prayer and behold the desolation of Zion, the city which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteous deeds, but because of Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and deal kindly with us. Delay not for Thine own sake, O my God, for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.
Thou sittest on Thy judgment seat
Enthroned on high,
And one by one man’s trespasses
In pence pass Thee by.
Almighty King, Thy governing
With tender love replete.
Absolve we pray, our fears allay,
With mercy judgment mete.
Thou dwellest high, our Rock and Shield,
Enthroned in might,
And pardon each one his sins,
From scarlet mak’st Thou white.
O Ruler wise, before Thine eyes,
Our frailties stand revealed
Thy judgment be with charity,
Thy might with mercy wield.
Thou taughtest us Thine attributes
Thirteen to say.
Remember then Thy covenant
With us unto this day.
O living Fount, on Sinai’s mount
Didst plant Thy nation’s roots.
The truth, Thy seal, Thou didst reveal,
And none Thy word refutes.
Thou stoodest in a heavenly glow
With Moses there;
Thy name, O God, did he proclaim,
And then didst Thou declare:
“Gracious Lord, compassionate Lord,
To wrath and anger slow,
Forgiving sin, men’s hearts to win,
Doth thousands mercy show.”

Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed. For Thou, O Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and art abounding in mercy unto all who call upon Thee.

Judge us not according to Thy judgment, for in Thy sight is no man guiltless. May our prayers come before Thee; turn not away from our supplication. Hear Thou the sighs of the oppressed and, through Thy mighty power, release those condemned to die. O Lord, hear our voice and heed our supplications. And mayest Thou ever hearken to Thy people Israel.

Adonai Adonai El rahum v’hanun
ereh apayim v’ra v’hased v’emet.
Notzer hesed la-alafim nosh
avone va-fesha v’hata-ah v’nakeh.
True Worship

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God on high?
    Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
With ten thousand rivers of oil?
    Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

You have been told, O man, what is good,
And what the Lord requires of you;
    Only to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God.

The sacrifice of a wicked man is an abomination to the Lord,
But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

    Thus saith the Lord:
Will you steal, murder and commit adultery,
  Swear falsely, and walk after other gods,
And then come and stand before Me in My house,
Whereupon My name is called,
    And think that merely by uttering words you will be saved,
Saved to continue all these abominations?

When you offer such prayers, I will not hear.
I cannot endure iniquity along with solemn worship.

    Hear the word of the Lord,
All who enter these gates to worship.

If you thoroughly mend your ways and your doings;
If you see that justice is done between man and man,
    If you oppress not the stranger, the orphan and the widow,
And shed not innocent blood,
Neither walk after other gods,

Then shall your light break forth as the morning,
And your healing shall spring forth speedily;
    Your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your protection.
At the close of the Sabbath, we come before Thee.
Hear us from on high;
O Thou who art continually praised,
Hear our plea and prayer!
Lishmō-a el ha-ri-na v’el hat-fi-la.
By means of Thy power, perform in our behalf deeds of might for the sake of Isaac, who was willingly bound to the altar on Moriah, and in whose stead a ram was sacrificed. Shield his descendants who implore Thee this night.
Hear our plea and prayer!
Seek the well-being of all those who seek Thee. From Thy heavenly abode, heed their prayer, and turn not aside from their supplication.
Hear our plea and prayer!
They tremble at the approach of Thy judgment. Awaiting Thy verdict, they suffer pangs like a woman in childbirth. Cleanse Thou the stain of their guilt that they may sing of Thy wondrous deeds.
Hear our plea and prayer!
Thou art the Creator of all living things. From the beginning didst Thou provide them with relief from suffering by granting them mercy from Thy treasure-house of love.
Hear our plea and prayer!
Lord on high, though Thy people’s transgressions be many, O come to their aid with Thy mercies stored up in heaven. For undeserving of Thy grace, they plead before Thee.
Hear our plea and prayer!
Consider our trials and not our transgressions. Worker of wonders, do Thou vindicate all those who cry unto Thee. Hearken to their supplications, O Lord of the universe.
Hear our plea and prayer!
Accept their plaint as they stand before Thee this night. Receive their prayer with favor as if it were a Temple offering of old. Show them Thy wonders, O Thou who doest great deeds.
Hear our plea and prayer!
The Eternal Presence

Selected from Psalm 139

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and knowest me.
Thou knowest my every step;
Thou understandest my thought from afar.
Thou measurest my going about and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For if there be a word on my tongue,
Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there;
If I make my bed in the nether world, behold, Thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there would Thy hand lead me,
And Thy right hand would hold me.

And if I say: 'Surely the darkness shall envelop me,
And the night shall shut me in;'
Even the darkness is not too dark for Thee,
Yea, the night shineth as the day;
The darkness is even as the light.
I will give thanks unto Thee,
For I am marvelously made;
Wonderful are Thy works;
My soul knoweth right well.

Before my days were fashioned,
In Thy book were they all written down.
How mysterious are Thy purposes, O Lord,
How vast is their number!
Search me, O God, and know my heart,
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any guile in me,
And lead me in Thy way forever.
Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindness for they are everlasting. O remember not our former iniquities. Hasten Thy tender mercies for we are brought very low. Remember us, O Lord, with favor, and grant us Thy salvation. Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast gotten of old and which Thou hast redeemed, and Mount Zion wherein Thou hast dwelt. Remember, O Lord, the devotion of Jerusalem, and never forget the love of Zion. Recall, O Lord, the words of the Edomites, who in the day of Jerusalem said: "Raze it, raze it even unto its very foundation." Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time has now come to favor her.

Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou promised: "I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." Yea, remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness nor to their sin.

Remember unto us the covenant of the patriarchs, "And I will remember My covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob; and I will remember the land."

Remember unto us the covenant of our ancestors, "And I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations that I might be their God; I am the Lord."

Deal with us according to the promise in Scriptures: "And even when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord, their God."
Have mercy upon us and destroy us not, "For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not forsake you, neither will He destroy you, nor forget the covenant made with your fathers."

Purify our hearts to love and revere Thy name. "And the Lord your God will incline your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

O bring back our captivity and have compassion upon us. "Then the Lord your God will turn your captivity and have compassion upon you, and will again gather you from all the peoples whither the Lord your God hath scattered you."

O gather our dispersed and homeless. "If any of them be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord your God gather you, and from thence will He fetch you."

O be Thou with us to guide our paths. "And if you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

O blot out our transgressions for Thy sake. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions, for Mine own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

O blot out our transgressions and may they vanish as a thick cloud and as a mist. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a mist your sins; return unto Me; for I have redeemed you."

O turn Thou our sins as white as snow or wool. "Come now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

O cleanse us from all our impurities. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your defilement and from all your abominations will I cleanse you."

O bring us to Thy holy mountain and make us joyful in Thy house of prayer. "I will bring them to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their offerings shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."
Heavenly Father, heed our cry; 
In mercy grant our supplication. 
Turn us back to Thee, O Lord; 
Restore to us our ancient glory. 
Accept our words, our fervent prayer; 
Consider Thou our meditation. 
Rock divine, be with Thy folk; 
Cast not Thy people from Thy presence. 
Without Thee, God, there is no hope; 
Our life an aimless evanescence. 
Lord, forsaik us not, we pray; 
Be Thou our staff when our strength faileth; 
When youth to feeble age gives way, 
Naught then but Thee, O God, availeth. 
Thou, O Father, wast our hope 
In all our days through joy and sorrow. 
Be with us yet and to the end, 
Our Comforter in life's tomorrow.

It is characteristic of the spirit of Judaism that the confessional is recited in public and is expressed in the plural. Each human being is responsible for all the sins of the society in which he lives, either by his own acts of commission, or by his passive acquiescence in the conditions that breed crime and lawlessness.

Our God and God of our fathers, may our prayers come before Thee. Hide not Thyself from our supplication, for we are neither so arrogant nor so hardened as to say before Thee: "O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous and have not sinned." Verily, we have sinned.


We have trespassed, we have been faithless, we have robbed, and spoken slander; we have acted perversely, we have wrought wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done violence, and uttered falsehood; we have counselled evil, we have revolted, and provoked; we have rebelled, and committed iniquity, we have failed to keep our promise, we have transgressed, oppressed, and have been stiff-necked; we have done wickedly, we have corrupted, and committed abomination; we have gone astray, and have led others astray.

We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.
We have trespassed more than all other peoples; we are bowed down by shame more than any other generation. Our joy is departed from us; our heart is downcast because of our sins. Our cherished treasures have been destroyed and our glory darkened. Because of our iniquities, our holy Temple is in ruins and our palace is desolate. Our fair land is given over to strangers, and our wealth has been seized by the alien.

Yet have we not repented of our sins. Then how shall we dare be so brazen and obstinate as to declare before Thee: “O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous and have not sinned!” Verily, we and our fathers have sinned.


We have trespassed, we have been faithless, we have robbed, and spoken slander; we have acted perversely, we have wrought wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done violence, and uttered falsehood; we have counselled evil, we have revolted, and provoked; we have rebelled, we have committed iniquity, we have failed to keep our promise, we have transgressed, oppressed, and have been stiff-necked; we have done wickedly, we have corrupted, and committed abomination; we have gone astray, and have led others astray.

We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.

Before our very eyes, they plundered our wealth, seized and stripped it from us. They imposed their yoke upon us, and we have borne it upon our shoulders. Slaves have dominion over us, and there is none to deliver us from their oppression. Many are the tribulations that beset us. We call upon Thee, O Lord our God, but because of our iniquities Thou keepest afar from us. We have turned away from Thee, gone astray, and are lost.

Yet have we not repented of our sins. Then how shall we dare be so brazen and obstinate as to declare before Thee: “O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous and have not sinned!” Verily, we and our fathers have sinned.
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We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.

We have acted wickedly and transgressed; therefore we have not been saved. O inspire us to forsake the way of wickedness, and hasten to save us, as it is written in the Book of Isaiah: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his evil purposes. Let them return unto the Lord, and He shall have mercy upon them. Let them return to our God, for He will be ever ready to pardon them." 1

David, Thine anointed, said unto Thee: "Who can discern his own errors? Absolve me from those faults unknown to me." 2 Absolve us, O Lord our God, from all our transgressions, and cleanse us, as it is written in the Book of Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified from all your impurities, and from all your idolatries will I cleanse you." 3

Thine own people hunger for Thy goodness. They thirst for Thy lovingkindness, and yearn for Thy deliverance. May they come to know that only the Lord our God shall grant mercy and forgiveness.

Thou who art ever-existing, good and beneficent; Thou who knowest our frailty, who suppressest anger, who art robed in righteousness, O Supreme King of kings,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art revered and exalted, who forgivest and pardonest, who answerest in a favorable time, Thou Redeemer and Deliverer,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art just and upright, near to all who call upon Thee, merciful and gracious, the support of the faithful,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

O God of our fathers, O God of Abraham, O Revered of Isaac, O Mighty One of Jacob, Refuge of our mothers, Helper of the tribes,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art slow to anger, who art easily reconciled, who answerest in time of sorrow, Thou Father of orphans, Thou Judge of widows,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

He who answered our father Abraham on Mount Moriah, and Isaac, his son, when he was bound on the altar, and Jacob in Bethel,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Joseph in the dungeon, and our fathers at the Red Sea and Moses in Horeb,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Aaron with the censer, and Phineas when he rose from amongst the congregation, and Joshua in Gilgal,

He shall answer us.
He who answered Samuel in Mizpah, and David and Solomon, his son, in Jerusalem,
He shall answer us.

He who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel and Elisha in Jericho, and Jonah in the bowels of the fish,
He shall answer us.

He who answered Hezekiah in his sickness and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in the midst of the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion’s den,
He shall answer us.

He who answered Mordecai and Esther in Shushan the capital, and Ezra in the captivity,
He shall answer us.

He who answered all the righteous and pious, the faithful and the upright in all generations,
He shall answer us.

O merciful God, who answereth the poor, the lowly in spirit, and the broken of heart, answer us.
O merciful God, have compassion, redeem, save and have pity upon us, now and forever.
Lord in heaven, we plead before Thee as the captive before his master. All captives are ransomed with silver, but Thy people, the House of Israel, shall be saved by mercy and supplication. O grant our petition and our plea; turn us not away from Thee without Thy blessing.

Lord in heaven, we implore Thee as the slave implores his master. Oppressed, we dwell in darkness, and our souls are embittered and distressed. We have not the strength to win Thy favor, O Lord. Act mercifully for the sake of the covenant Thou didst make with our forefathers.

O Guardian of Israel, preserve the remnant of Israel; let them not perish, Thy people Israel, who say: “Hear, O Israel!”

O Guardian of a unique people, preserve the remnant of a unique people; let them not perish, this unique people, who proclaim Thy Oneness, saying: “The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!”

O Guardian of a holy people, preserve the remnant of a holy people; let them not perish, this holy people, who repeat the threefold sanctification to the Holy One.

O Thou who hearest to all prayers and supplications for mercy, hearken to this afflicted generation, for there is none else to help them, save Thee.

A-vee-nu mal-kay-nu ha-nay-nu va-anay-nu, (repeat)
Kee ayn ba-nu ma-a’sim.
A-say i-ma-nu ts’-da-ka va-heh-sed, (repeat)
V’hoo-sha-ee-ay-nu.
A-vee-nu mal-kay-nu, ha-nay-nu va-anay-nu, (repeat)
V’hoo-sha-ee-ay-nu.

Our Father and King, be gracious unto us and answer us, for we are unworthy; deal charitably and kindly with us, and save us.

We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee. Remember Thy mercy and lovingkindness, O Lord, for they are eternal. Grant us Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, for Thou art our only hope. Remember not our former iniquities; favor us speedily with Thy compassion, for we are greatly distressed. Have mercy upon us, for we have been held in contempt. Despite Thine anger, remember to be merciful. Thou knowest the frailty of our nature and rememberest that we are but dust. For the sake of Thy glorious honor, help us, God of our salvation; deliver us and pardon our sins for Thy name’s sake.
Repentance is more than saying we’re sorry, more than embarrassment, more than the discomfort of being caught, more than fear, more than an effort to avoid punishment or penalties.

It is a sincere change within, a sincere turning away. Such repentance lets us live with ourselves with quiet conscience.

People have sometimes supposed that repentance was too high-priced.

They have looked at what they would have to give up, at appetites they would have to curb, at habits they would have to break or abandon, at things they would have to set aside.

They have forgotten the fact that no matter what the price of repenting, it is never so high as the price of not repenting.

And no later hour is ever better for the purpose of repenting than this very hour is.

Failure to repent is much worse than doing wrong. A person may have sinned in a moment, but he may fail to repent of it moments without number.

There is in repentance this beautiful mystery—that we may fly fastest home on a broken wing.

Because man is the crown of creation, he can do teshuva. Because he is dust, he must do teshuva.

Repentance may be compared to the sea. Just as the sea is always open to anyone who approaches, so too repentance is always open.

The best cure for a sense of guilt is a sense of duty.

No sin is too great for God to pardon, but none too small for habit to magnify.

To anyone who asserts, “Human nature never changes,” it is fair to reply, “It is human nature to change itself.”

God made man a changer. He can change himself into a fish and dive deep and stay under water unafraid of any sea animals.

He can change himself into a bird and travel farther with heavier cargo, wider wings, fiercer claws and beaks than any bird.

God must have wanted man to be a changer. Else God wouldn’t have put that awful unrest in him.

Richard Evans, Rabbi Bunam, William Sullivan, Abraham J. Heschel, The Midrash, Mordecai M. Kaplan, Bahya Ibn Pakuda, Carl Sandburg
YIGDAL

We praise and exalt the living God who was, who is, and who will be forever.

He is One alone and there is none else, and He will be One forever.

God has no body or form; nothing can compare with His holiness.

He was God before anything was created; from the beginning of time He was the first.

He is the Lord of the universe; He reveals His greatness and His power to all living creatures.

He inspired His chosen ones to be His prophets.

Never has there been a prophet who was as close to God as Moses.

God gave us the holy Torah through His faithful prophet Moses.

God will not change this Law for any other law.

He knows and understands our secret thoughts; He foresees the outcome of events from the beginning.

He rewards the righteous according to his righteousness; He punishes the wicked according to his wickedness.

God will send a Messiah to bring freedom and peace.

In His great mercy, God will grant life to the dead; praised be His glorious name forevermore.