This prayer, which traditionally begins communal worship, was first uttered by the non-Jewish prophet Balaam. (Numbers 24:5) This was the blessing he perceived in the Israelites by virtue of how they organized themselves. According to rabbinic lore, their tents were arranged in close proximity, displaying communal solidarity. But what prompted the blessing, "Mah tovu (‘How lovely’ or ‘How good’),” was the fact that the doorways of their dwelling places did not directly face one another, thus retaining the integrity of the individual within the framework of the community.

Mah Tovu


HOW LOVELY

How lovely are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel.

Numbers 24:5

I shall enter Your house through the greatness of Your love; I shall bow in awe before Your holy sanctuary.

Psalm 5:8

Adonai, I love being in Your house, the place where Your glory dwells.

Psalm 26:8

I will bow and bend my knees; I will kneel in praise before the God Who made me.

Adapted from Psalm 95:6

And I will pray to You, Adonai, at this time of favor; God, in the greatness of Your love, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.
May the door of this synagogue be wide enough
to receive all who hunger for love,
all who are lonely for fellowship.

May it welcome all who have cares to unburden,
thanks to express, hopes to nurture.

May the door of this synagogue be narrow enough
to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.

May its threshold be no stumbling block
to young or straying feet.

May it be too high
to admit complacency, selfishness, and harshness.

May this synagogue be, for all who enter,
the doorway to a richer and more meaningful life.

Divine Creator,
We have come together to pray as a congregation,
Yet each of us is strangely solitary in Your presence.
Each of us comes before You with special hopes and dreams;
Each of us has personal worries and concerns.
Each of us has a prayer no one else can utter;
Each of us brings praise no one else can offer.
Each of us feels a joy no one else can share;
Each of us has regrets which others cannot know.
And so we pray:
If we are weary, give us strength;
If we are discouraged, give us hope.
If we have forgotten how to pray, remind us;
If we have been careless of time, forgive us.
If our hearts have been chilled by indifference,
Warm them with Your mercy, and inspire us
With the glowing spirit of Your holiness.
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.

Judaism teaches that God gave each person a n’shamah t’horah (pure soul) at the time of birth. Jews do not believe that human beings are born in sin or evil. The soul of every person can be good or evil depending upon the way we choose to live. Our task is to develop our talents and our sense of right and wrong so that our souls may become beautiful expressions of God’s creation.
The astonishing thing about human beings is not so much
their intellect and bodily structure,
profoundly mysterious as they are.
The astonishing and least comprehensible thing about them is
their range of vision:
their gaze into the infinite distance;
their lonely passion for ideas and ideals...
for which... they will stand till they die;
the profound conviction they entertain that
if nothing is worth dying for, nothing is worth living for.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Wisdom is to the soul as food is to the body.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

My soul came to me pure
drawn from the reservoir of the Holy.
All the time it remains within me,
I am thankful for its thirst
for compassion and justice.
Let my eyes behold the beauty of all creatures;
let my hands know the privilege of righteous deeds.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Teach us, O God, to praise and to pray
for the mystery of the withering leaf,
for the glow of the ripened fruit;
for the freedom to see, to feel,
to breathe, to know, to hope, to stumble.
Teach our lips a blessing, a hymn of praise,
as You renew each morning and each night;
lest this day appear as yesterday
and the day before—
lest our days become routine.
Y’sarech’cha Adonai v’yishm’recha.
Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.
Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v’yaseim l’cha shalom.

Eilu d’varim sheh-ein lahem shi-ur
ha-peh-ah v’ha-bikurim v’ha-rei-ayon
u-g’milut chasadim v’talmud Torah.

Eilu d’varim
sheh-adam ocheil peiroteihem ba-olam ha-zeh
v’ha-keren kayemet lo la-olam ha-ba, v’eilu hein
kibud av va-eim
u-g’milut chasadim
v’hashkamat beit ha-midrash shacharit v’arvit
v’hachnasat or’chim
u-vikur cholim
v’hachnasat kalah
u-l’vayat ha-meit
v’iyun t’filah
va-hava-at shalom bein adam la-chaveiro
v’talmud Torah k’neged kulam.

May Adonai bless you and keep you.
May Adonai shine the divine face on you and be gracious to you.
May Adonai lift up the divine face to you and grant you peace.

NUMBERS 6:24-26

These are the deeds without measure:
leaving the corners of fields for the poor,
and bringing first fruits to the Temple,
and bringing special offerings on the Festivals,
and performing acts of lovingkindness,
and the study of Torah.

MISHNAH PEI-AH 1:1
These are the deeds which yield fruit in the here and now and continue to yield fruit in the time to come: honoring father and mother, performing acts of lovingkindness, going early to the house of study morning and evening, providing hospitality, attending the sick, rejoicing with bride and groom, burying the dead, meditating in prayer, making peace between one person and another.

And the study of Torah equals them all. ADAPTED FROM SHABBAT 127A

When Torah entered the world, freedom entered it. The whole Torah exists only to establish peace. GITTIN 59B

Its first and last aim is to teach love and kindness. SOTAH 14A

What is hateful to you, do not do to others. That is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary; go and learn it. SHABBAT 31A

Those who study Torah are the true guardians of civilization. EICHAH RABBAH, INTRO 2

Honoring parents, performing acts of kindness, and making peace among people—these are among our highest duties; But the study of Torah is equal to them all, because it leads to them all. MISHNAH PEI-AH 1:1

The source of these three study selections gives us an important insight. One comes from the הָרְכָּה Torah, one from the מִשְׁנָה Mishnah, and one from the תַּלמִידָה Talmud. Thus we see that Jewish tradition is not fundamentalist, contained in the written Torah alone. Rather, Torah consists of ongoing revelation; God's instruction (the literal meaning of "Torah") begins with the written Torah but continues through the Oral Tradition: first the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), then the Talmud (c. 500 CE), and then expanded sources throughout the generations.

The Rabbis usually assert the amount needed to fulfill what God requires. The commandments listed here, however, have no prescribed measure, so fulfilling them depends on a person's character. Some engage in many acts of kindness and study much Torah; others do less. We must try to shape people's characters so that they want to do more, not less.
Our rabbis taught:

Six hundred and thirteen mitzvot were given to Moses.

Micah reduced them to three:

“Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

Isaiah based all the mitzvot upon two of them:

“Keep justice and do righteousness.”

Amos saw one guiding principle upon which all six hundred and thirteen are founded:

“Seek me and live.”

Habakuk expounded the Torah on the basis of a single thought:

“The righteous shall live by their faith.”

Akiba taught:

“The great principle of the Torah is expressed in the mitzvah:

‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

But Ben Azzai found a principle even more fundamental:

“This is the story of humanity:

when God created us, God made us in the divine image.”

And Hillel summed up the Torah in this maxim:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to others.

The rest is commentary; you must go and study it.”

The world is sustained by three things:

by Torah,

by worship,

and by acts of lovingkindness.

There are eight degrees in the giving of tz'dakah, each one higher than the one before:

to give grudgingly, reluctantly, or with regret;
to give less than one should, but with grace;
to give what one should, but only after being asked;
to give before one is asked;
to give without knowing who will receive it, although the recipient knows the identity of the giver;
to give without making known one’s identity;
to give so that neither giver nor receiver knows the identity of the other;
to help another to become self-supporting,

by means of a gift, a loan, or by finding employment for the one in need.
Once a rabbi and a soapmaker went for a stroll.  
As they walked along, the soapmaker challenged the rabbi.  
“What good is the Torah?  
After thousands of years of teaching about  
honesty, truth, lovingkindness, justice, and peace,  
the world is still full of misery and trouble.”

The rabbi was quiet.  
They came upon a young child playing.  
The child was covered with dirt and grime.  
The rabbi turned to the soapmaker and said,  
“What use is soap?  
With all the soap that exists, this child is still filthy.”  
“But rabbi, soap can’t do any good unless we use it!”  
“So it is with Torah,” the rabbi replied.  
“We must apply its words to our lives.”

Hillel would say:  
If I am not for myself, who will be for me?  
But if I am only for myself, what am I?  
And if not now, when?  

Pirkei Avot 1:14
Hal’luyah!
Sing praise to God in the sanctuary;  
sing praise to God Whose power the heavens proclaim.  
Sing praise to God for mighty acts;  
sing praise to God to match God’s greatness.  
Sing praise to God with the shofar blast;  
sing praise to God with harp and lute.  
Sing praise to God with drum and dance;  
sing praise to God with strings and flute.  
Sing praise to God with resounding cymbals;  
sing praise to God with crashing cymbals.  
Let everything that breathes sing praises to God.  
HAL’LUYAH!
There was once an ignorant, impoverished peasant who entered the synagogue for worship. He listened to the scholars and sages intone their beautiful prayers to God. Since he too wished to express his love of God, he ascended the pulpit and stood before the Holy Ark. The scholars and sages were astonished to hear the rustic repetition of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet over and over again. They nudged each other, commenting on the poor man’s ignorance. They laughed and ridiculed him because he didn’t even know the simplest prayers of the Jewish service. Then, as the peasant began to speak, their mockery turned to shame as they heard him say: “Ruler of the universe—I am a simple man, an ignorant man. Oh, how I wish that I had the words to fashion beautiful prayers to praise You! But alas, I cannot find the words. So listen to me, O God, as I recite the letters of the alphabet. You know what I think and how I feel. Take these letters of the alphabet, and You form the words that express the yearning, the love for You, that is in my heart.” And thus saying, he continued to repeat the letters of the alphabet over and over again.

♦ ♦ ♦

Again has come the day which bids us lay aside the burden of care and the anxiety of the daily task. You have commanded us to work, that we may free ourselves from that bondage of nature in which all other creatures on earth are held. But in the struggle for the mastery over things material, we often forget the divine purpose of our life. Driven by the desire for gain or the longing for pleasure, we become enslaved, fettered by new wants, oppressed by new burdens. Quickened by Your spirit, may we learn how to ennoble the things of earth by sanctifying them to Your service.

We who have worked faithfully during the week, and according to our strength have contributed to the larger work of humanity, will enjoy the delight of Shabbat. In this spirit, O God, we would keep the day of rest You have sanctified for our good. May its blessings gladden our hearts and inspire us to holier resolves and purer motives. Strengthen us, O God, and grant that new courage, new faith, new power may descend upon us and upon all who strive to do Your will and to fulfill Your benign purposes. Amein.
Prayer is like playing jazz. 
You can pray alone—but exciting things happen in sessions 
with other musicians, especially if you’ve played with them before. 
Some play the “old standards;” others try new pieces. 
Sometimes we all pray in harmony; 
other times we pray at our own rhythm, our own volume. 
Mystical tradition teaches that the words are only the shell, 
the outer wrapping of the prayers. 
Jewish tradition explores the inner meaning of the words 
through interpretation, 
and ancient, sacred texts stay alive 
when each generation reinterprets them.

⚠️

Prayer is not an escape from duty. It is no substitute for the deed. Prayer seeks the power to do wisely, to act generously, to live helpfully. It helps to reinforce the act rather than to replace it. Prayer is the search for silence amidst the noise of life... 
Prayer takes us beyond the self. 
Joining our little self to the selfhood of humanity, 
it gives our wishes the freedom to grow large and broad and inclusive. 
Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask, 
but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

⚠️

Prayer is the way we speak to God. 
Sometimes we pray alone; 
sometimes we pray with others. 
Sometimes we pray out loud; 
sometimes we pray silently. 
Sometimes we pray with our words; 
sometimes we pray with our deeds. 
Sometimes we say our prayers; 
sometimes we sing them. 
Sometimes we pray in English; 
sometimes we pray in Hebrew. 
However we pray, God, 
we pray You will always hear us.
Bar’chu et Adonai ha-m’vorach.
Baruch Adonai ha-m’vorach l’olam va-ed.

PRAISE
Praise Adonai, the One Who is blessed.
Praised be Adonai, the One Who is blessed forever and ever.

◆ ◆ ◆

When the divine word ended chaos and nothingness,
when God rolled away the darkness from the light,
that was the first moment of creation.

When Adam opened his eyes and beheld earth and heaven,
that was a moment of creation as real as the first.

For the sun is not bright without an eye to see;
the waves of the sea cannot crash and roar
without an ear to listen,
And unless life marks off the segments,
time is a dimension without measure.

Though we are finite,
God created us both free and conscious,
able to share in the power of creation.

Every moment that we behold anew the work of God,
the jewels of dew on morning grass,
the smile lighting the face of a beloved child,

Every moment that we work for good
is a moment of creation.

God, renew in us, in every one,
the bright morning of Adam and Eve.

Let each dawn rise fresh with hope
as it was in the beginning.

Inspire us to create what is good;
quicken our delight in all that You create.
Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam yotzeir or u-vorei choshech oseh shalom u-vorei et ha-kol. Hamei-ir la-aretz v’ladarim aleha b’rachamim u-v’tuvo m’chadeish b’chol yom tamid ma-aseih v’reishit.
Mah rabu ma-asecha Adonai kulam b’chochmah asita mal’ah ha-aretz kinyanecha. Titbarach Adonai Eloheinu al shevach ma-aseih yadecha v’al m’orei or sheh-asita y’fa-arucha selah. Or chadash al Tziyon ta-ir v’nizkeh chulanu m’heirah l’oro. Baruch Atah Adonai yotzeir ha-m’orot.

What does it mean to be called to worship? All serious action requires preparation. The prayers and blessings that precede Bar’chu are warm-ups for the individual. Now, with , communal prayer begins. The leader asks, “Are you ready to pray?” And we respond, “Yes! Let us pray!”

The term “light” connotes goodness, while “darkness” is associated with suffering, failure, and death. Philosophers of idolatry claimed that the “good” god who creates light cannot be the “bad” one who creates darkness. In modern times, the same argument appears in different terms: how can there be a God Who allows bad things to happen? In opposition to this thought, Yotzeir praises the one God Who creates both light and darkness, an affirmation of faith that begins to build to Sh’mi, the great declaration of monotheism.

SALM 104:24

Be praised, Adonai, for the excellence of Your handiwork and for the glowing stars that You have made. They shall glorify You forever. Let a new light shine upon Zion, and may we soon merit to share its radiance. Praised are You, Adonai, Shaper of the heavenly lights.

SHAPER
Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, Shaper of light, Creator of darkness, Maker of peace, Creator of all. ADAPTED FROM ISAIAH 45:7

With compassion You light the earth and all who dwell there; with goodness You renew the work of Creation, continually, day by day. How manifold are Your works, Adonai; in wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creations. PSALM 104:24
Ahavah rabah ahavtanu Adonai Eloheinu
chemlah g’dolah v’teirah chamalta aleinu.
Avinu Malkeinu
ba-avur avoteinu v’imoteinu sheh-bat’chu v’cha
va-i’lam’deim chukei chayim
kein t’choneinu u-t’lam’deinu.
Avinu ha-av ha-rachaman
ha-m’racheim racheim aleinu
v’tein b’libeinu l’havin u-l’haskil
lishmo-a lilmud u-l’lameid lishmor v’la-asot
u-l’kayeim et kol divrei talmud Toratecha
b’ahavah.
V’ha-eir eineinu b’Toratecha
v’dabeik libeinu b’mitzvotecha
v’yacheid l’vaveinu l’ahavah ul’yirah et
shmecha
v’lo neivosh v’lo nikaleim
v’lo nikesheil l’olam va-ed
v’lo nikesheil l’olam va-ed v’ha-nora batachnu
nagilah v’nism’cha bishu-atecha.
Va-havi-einu l’shalom mei-arba kanfot ha-aretz
v’tolichelinu kom’miyut l’artzeinu
ki Eil po-eil y’shu-ot Atah
u-vanu vacharta mi-kol am v’lashon
v’keiravtanu l’shimcha ha-gadol selah behemet
l’hodot l’cha u-l’yachedcha b’ahavah.
Baruch Atah Adonai
ha-bocheir b’amo Yisra-eil b’ahavah.
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.

**GREAT LOVE**

With great love You have loved us, Adonai, our God.
With deep compassion You have cared for us.
Our Source, our Ruler,
as with our ancestors who trusted in You
and You taught them the laws of life,
so be gracious to us and teach us.
Our Source, the Source of mercy,
the Merciful One, be merciful to us
and give our hearts understanding to discern,
to hear, to study and to teach, to guard and to do
and to perpetuate all the teachings of Your Torah with love.

Enlighten our eyes with Your Torah
that our hearts may cleave to Your commandments.
Unite our hearts to love and revere Your name

ADAPTED FROM PSALM 86:11

and we shall never be shamed,
or be disgraced, or stumble.
Because we trust in Your holy, great, and awesome name,
we shall exult and rejoice in Your salvation.
Gather us in peace from the four corners of the earth
and lead us in dignity to our land,
for Yours is the power that works to save us.
You chose us from all the peoples and tongues
and brought us close to Your great name in truth
that we might thank You and proclaim Your oneness in love.
Praised are You, Adonai;
You choose Your people Israel in love.
A loving parent does not show genuine love by telling a child, “Do whatever you want.” That would not indicate love, but lack of concern and abdication of responsibility. The truly loving parent says to the child, “I care very much about you, and although I cannot live your life for you, I want you to have the benefit of my experience.” The Jews understood from the beginning that Judaism was a religion of love because it did not leave them to find the way through life alone and unaided. It offered advice, insight, and experience. It was out of God’s love and concern for Israel that God gave them the Torah, so that instead of stumbling blindly, they might be aided by its principles, take heed of its warnings, and draw closer to God.

We praise You, God, Ruler of the world, Who creates light and darkness, Who plans and forms all things. We are grateful, God, for this beautiful world in which we live.

We wonder: What is the right way to live? Are there certain mitzvot we should do? Can our daily lives be as special as the world we have been given?

We learn what to do from You, God. You teach us in Torah what is right and what is good. You show Your love for us by giving us mitzvot. We thank You for helping us lead good lives.
You were God
And we were Israel,
God alone
And lonely people,
Long ago.

You loved us with a great love
And You taught us
How to respond to You—
Through mitzvot
Recollections
Celebrations
Torah.

They are the light of our eyes
The uniqueness of our being.
In the joy of them
You have drawn us close to You.
In the truth of them
We have discovered You, the only One.
We are together still.

You respond to every people
In Your chosen way.
With Your love
You have chosen to respond to us.
With our love
We offer You our praise.

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Flood us with light;
let Torah seize our hearts,
and unite us to revere Your name.
Infuse our deeds with holiness,
radiant with passion for life.
May Your mercy ever sustain us
with the wisdom of Torah.
O Holy One, we praise You,
for Your blessed gift of love.
Sh’ma Yisra-eil, Adonai Eloheinu,  
Adonai echad.  
Baruch sheim k’vod malchuto l’olam va-ed.

Hear, Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.  
Blessed is the One Who reigns in glory, forever and ever.

V’ahavta  
You shall love Adonai your God  
With all your heart, with all your soul,  
And with all your might.  
And these words  
Which I command you this day  
Shall be upon your heart.  
Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them  
When you sit in your home, when you walk on the way,  
When you lie down, and when you rise up.  
Bind them as a sign upon your hand;  
Let them be a symbol before your eyes.  
Write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.
Open up our eyes; Teach us how to live; Fill our hearts with joy and all the love You have to give. Gather us in peace As You lead us to Your name, And we will know that You are one.

What color is the Sh’ma? Is it purple, the color of God’s majesty? Is it red as Akiva’s martyred blood? What color is the Sh’ma? Is it orange, for faith that burns eternal? Is it yellow, the light to which we rise in the morning? Is it blue, the night sky under which we lie down, the color of tzitzit? Or is it all of these together, the spectrum shot through a prism, all colors fused into a single beam? “Look, O Israel!”—one bright white ray points back to the Source.

So you shall love what is holy with all your courage, with all your passion, with all your strength. Let the words that have come down shine in our words and our actions. We must teach our children to know and understand them. We must speak about what is good and holy within our homes when we are working, when we are at play, when we lie down, and when we get up. Let the work of our hands speak of goodness. Let it run in our blood and glow from our doors and windows. We should love ourselves, for we are of God. We should love our neighbors as ourselves. We should love the stranger, for we were once strangers in the land of Egypt and have been strangers in all the lands of the world since. Let love fill our hearts with its clear precious water. Heaven and earth observe how we cherish or spoil our world.

It is a custom to recite שמע Sh’ma with eyes closed, so as to shut out external distractions and to focus on the meaning of the words. In this central affirmation of Jewish faith we address not God but one another. Sh’ma bears witness that God exists, and that God is both singular and unique; we bear witness that we have a duty to love, study, and teach God’s word. Thus the Hebrew letters י אין and ד далת, which form the word “על eid (witness),” are enlarged in the תора Torah scroll.

The phrase ברוך שם קצוד "Baruch sheim k’vod" is not part of the Biblical text and is therefore recited quietly. The Sages teach that Moses overheard the angels saying this phrase and realized its worth for us. Therefore we say it loudly only on יומ קפוץ Yom Kippur, when we are as close to angelic as we can be.
V’HAYAH IM SHAMO-A

V’hayah im shamo-a tishm’u el mitzvotai ashер Anochi m’tzaveh etchem ha-yom,
lahavah et Adonai Eloheichem u-l’ovdo b’chol l’vavchem u-v’chol nafsh’chem.
V’natati m’tar artz’chem b’ito, yoreh u-malkosh,
v’asafa d’ganecha v’tirosh’cha v’yitzharecha.
V’natati eisev b’sad’cha li-v’hemtecha,
v’achalta v’savata.
Hisham’ru lachem pen yifteh l’vavchem,
v’sartem va-avadtem elohim acheirim v’hishtachavitem lahem.
V’charah af Adonai bachelem
v’atzar et ha-shamayim v’lo yihyeh matar v’ha-adamah lo titein et y’vulah,
va-avadtem m’heirah mei-al ha-aretz ha-tovah
asher Adonai notein lachem.

IF YOU WILL HEED

If you will earnestly heed My mitzvot I command you this day,
to love Adonai your God and to serve God
with all your heart and with all your soul,
then I will favor your land with rain at the proper season—
rain in autumn and rain in spring—
and you will have an ample harvest of grain and wine and oil.
I will assure abundance in the fields for all your cattle.
You will eat to contentment.
Take care lest you be tempted to forsake God and turn to false gods in worship.
For then the wrath of Adonai will be directed against you.
God will close the heavens and hold back the rain;
the earth will not yield its produce.
You will soon disappear from the good land
which Adonai is giving you.
Therefore, place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and let them be a symbol between your eyes. Teach them to your children. Speak of them when you sit in your home, when you walk on the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Inscribe them upon the doorposts of your homes and upon your gates. Then your days and the days of your children on the land that Adonai swore to give to your ancestors will endure as the days of the heavens over the earth.

DEUTERONOMY 11:13-21
Judaim begins with the commandment:
Hear, O Israel!
But what does it really mean to hear?
  The person who attends a concert 
  And thinks only of the busy day ahead 
  Hears—but does not really hear. 
The person who walks amid the songs of birds 
And thinks only of what to have for dinner 
Hears—but does not really hear. 
  The person who listens to the words of a friend, spouse, or child 
  And does not catch the message in the tone of voice, 
  “Notice me, help me, care about me,” 
  Hears—but does not really hear. 
The person who listens to the news 
And thinks only of how it will affect business 
Hears—but does not really hear. 
  The person who stifles the sound of conscience 
  And thinks: “I have done enough already,” 
  Hears—but does not really hear. 
The person who hears the Chazan pray 
And does not feel the call to join 
Hears—but does not really hear. 
  The person who listens to the Rabbi’s sermon 
  And thinks that someone else is being addressed 
  Hears—but does not really hear. 
On this Shabbat, O God, may we 
Sharpen our ability to hear. 
  May we hear the music of the world, 
  And the infant’s cry, and the sighs of love. 
May we hear the call for help of the lonely soul,
And the sound of a breaking heart. 
  May we hear the words of our friends, 
  And also their unspoken pleas and dreams. 
May we hear within ourselves the yearnings 
That are struggling for expression. 
  May we hear You, O God. 
For only if we hear You 
Do we have the right to hope 
That You will hear us. 
  Hear the prayers we offer to You this day, O God, 
  And may we hear them too.
The traditional second paragraph of **Sh'ma** (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) offers an account of the natural process by which the blessings of God themselves lead to pride, self-satisfaction, and ingratitude on the part of those who receive them. Ironically, the more we are blessed, so it seems, the less grateful and aware of blessing we become. It is when we are most sated, Scripture warns us, that we should be most careful. Fullness can lead to ingratitude, and ingratitude to idolatry—primarily in the form of worship of our own accomplishments. Then, indeed, “the heavens might close up and no rain fall.” For once we begin to worship our achievements, we will never find satisfaction.

If we can hear the words from Sinai
Then love will flow from us
And we shall serve all that is holy
With all our intellect and our passion
And all our life.

If we can serve all that is holy
We shall be doing all that humans can
To help the rains to flow
The grasses to be green
The grains to grow up golden like the sun
The rivers to be filled with life once more.
All the children of God shall eat
And there will be enough.

But if we turn from Sinai’s words
And serve only what is common and profane
Making gods of our own comfort or our power
Then the holiness of life will contract for us
Our world will grow inhospitable
To rains from heaven
And the produce of the earth will not be ours
Or worse
It will be ours unjustly
And our acts shall isolate us
From the flowing waves of green and gold.

Let us therefore
Lace these words
Into our passion and our intellect
And bind them, all of us,
As a sign upon our hands and our eyes
Writing them in m’zuzot for our doors and gates
Teaching them to our children
Listening to our children teaching us
That our generations may be as numerous
As the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth
As faithful as the living waters
That unite them all.

L’m’a-an tizk’ru va-asitem et kol mitzvotai, vi-h’yitem k’doshim leiloheichem. Ani Adonai Eloheichem asher hotzeiti etchem mei-eretz Mitzrayim lihyot lachem leilohim, Ani Adonai Eloheichem.

ADONAI SAID
Adonai said to Moses:
Instruct the people Israel that in every generation they shall put fringes on the corners of their garments and bind a thread of blue to the fringe of each corner. Looking upon it, you will remember all the mitzvot of Adonai and fulfill them and not be seduced by your heart or led astray by your eyes.

Then you will remember and observe all My mitzvot and be holy before your God
Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God.
I, Adonai, am your God.

NUMBERS 15:37-41
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.

Our ancestors wrote in the Torah:

\[ V'ahavta eit Adonai Elohecha \]

You shall love God.

We show our love for God when parents and teachers share Torah with their children.

We show our love for God when we study the words of Torah.

We show our love for God when we say the Sh’ma each night and day.

We show our love for God when we put a m’zuzah on our doorpost.

We show our love for God when we do what the Torah says, even when no one is there to remind us.
Emet v’yatziv v’ahuv v’chaviv
v’nora v’adir v’tov v’yafeh
ha-davar ha-zeh aleinu l’olam va-ed.
Emet Elohei olam Malkeinu
Tzur Yaakov magein yish-einu.
L’dor va-dor Hu kayam
u-sh’mo kayam
v’chis-o nachon
u-malchuto ve-emunato la-ad kaymet
u-d’varav chayim v’kayamim
ne-emanim v’nechemadim
la-ad u-l’ol’mei olamim.

TRUE AND ENDURING
True and enduring, beloved and precious,
awesome and majestic, good and beautiful
is this affirmation for us forever and ever.
It is true: The eternal God is our Ruler,
the Rock of Jacob is the Shield of our salvation.
You abide through all generations;
Your name is Eternal.
Your throne stands firm;
Your sovereignty and faithfulness are everlasting.
Your words live and endure,
true and precious
to all eternity.
Emet Atah Hu rishon v’Atah Hu acharon  
u-mi-bal-adecha ein lanu melech go-eil  
u-moshi-a.  
Mi-Mitzrayim g’altanu Adonai Eloheinu  
u-mi-beit avadim p’ditanu.  
Al zot shib’chu ahuvim v’rom’mu Eil  
v’nat’nu y’idim z’mirot shirot v’tishbachot  
b’rachot v’hoda-ot l’Melech Eil chai  
v’kayam  
ram v’nisa gadol v’nora  
mashpil gei-im u-magbi-ah sh’falim  
motzi asirim u-fodeh anavim v’ozeir dalim  
v’oneh l’amo b’eit shav-am eilav.  
T’hilot l’Eil elyon baruch Hu u-m’vorach  
Mosheh u-v’nei Yisra-eil  
l’cha anu shirah b’simchah rabah  
v’am’ru chulam:

True it is that You are first and last,  
and without You we have no ruler, champion, or savior.  
From Egypt You redeemed us, Adonai, our God,  
and from a house of slavery You set us free.  
For this Your loved ones celebrated and revered You,  
and Your beloved ones gave forth their melodies, their songs and exaltations,  
blessings and thanks, to the Ruler, living and enduring God,  
lofty and exalted, great and awesome,  
Who casts the prideful down and lifts the lowly,  
Who sets the captive free and saves the humble and helps the poor,  
responding to our people when they cry aloud to God.  
Give praises to the highest God! Praised is God, the One Who is praised.  
So Moses and the Israelites  
came forth with song to You, in great joy,  
and they all proclaimed:
Who is like You, Adonai, among the mighty?
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in splendor, Worker of wonders?

With a new song the redeemed praised
Your name at the shore of the sea.
As one they all gave thanks and proclaimed Your sovereignty declaring:
“Adonai will reign forever and ever!”

Rock of Israel,
rise up to help Israel,
keeping Your promise to redeem Judah and Israel.
Redeem us: Adonai Tz’va-ot is Your name, Holy One of Israel.
Praised are You, Adonai, Redeemer of Israel.
In the morning service, the "Sh'ma and its Blessings" section contains three blessings. Their order follows the view Judaism takes of the progression of God's relationship with the world. First came creation in יוצר אadamente, then revelation in אהבה רבה, and here, finally, redemption in גאולה. This third blessing speaks directly to God's redemption of Israel. Though the blessing refers specifically to the redemption from Egypt, it also hints at the ultimate redemption of the world.

The most identifiable piece of the Ga'ula is Mi Chamocha, the song of thanksgiving upon crossing the Sea of Reeds to freedom during the Exodus from Egypt. It is the most fundamental song of freedom and redemption in all of Judaism.
I, Miriam, stand at the sea
And turn
To face the desert
Stretching endless and still.
My eyes are dazzled
The sky brilliant blue
Sunburnt sands unyielding white.
My hands turn to dove wings
My arms reach
For the sky
And I want to sing
The song rising inside me.
My mouth open
I stop.
Where are the words?
Where the melody?
In a moment of panic
My eyes go blind.
Can I take a step without knowing a
Destination?
Will I falter
Will I fall
Will the ground sink away from under me?
The song still unformed—
How can I sing?
To take the first step—
To sing a new song—
Is to close one’s eyes and dive into unknown waters.
For a moment knowing nothing risking all—
But then to discover
The waters are friendly
The ground is firm.
And the song—
The song rises again
Out of my mouth
Come words lifting the wind.
And I hear
For the first
The song
That has been in my heart
Silent
Unknown even to me.
Happy are those who cherish Your *mitzvot*
Who place Your words upon their heart.
Happy are those who rehearse the tale of Your deliverance in Egypt,
Who remember our liberation from the hovels of slaves.
Therefore Miriam the prophet led our mothers
in praise of You at the sea
Commanding timbrel and harp
to exalt the Sovereign of the universe...
Of course we should sing praise to God on high!
You are bringing near the day when no one will be drowned
No mothers will weep, no fathers struggle to be brave
But all shall proclaim in the whole vast universe
The miracle of every people’s life:
*Adonai* will reign forever and ever!

.Logging on the parted shores of history,
we still believe what we were taught
before ever we stood at Sinai:
that wherever we are, it is eternally Egypt
that there is a better place, a Promised Land;
that the winding way to that promise passes
through the wilderness
that there is no way to get from here to there
except by joining hands, marching together.

Long ago, the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt.
You sent Moses to help our ancestors,
so they could go free to worship You.
They sang a song to thank You:

> Mi chamocha ba-eilim, Adonai?
> Who is like You, God of the universe?

Still today there are people who are not free.
We pray that they will be set free.
Then all who worship You will sing for joy:

> We join in singing
> what the Israelites proclaimed after
> they had successfully
crossed the Sea and
> find in their
> redemption
> the strength to
> seek our own.
> This struggle
carries us into the
> *Amidah*,
> a prayer of becoming,
of transformation,
of divine-human
partnership that
brings grace
into our lives and
into our world.

Many congregations
rise for
*Tzur Yisra-eil*
(on the word
Kumah
(Rise up).”)
Thus we are
already on our feet
as we pray that
God may arise.
We cannot ask God
to rise up
to help Israel
unless we are willing
to stand up and
ourselves
work for
redemption.
The myriad of letters in the Torah stands for the myriad of souls in Israel. If one single letter is left out of the Torah, it becomes unfit for use; if one soul is left out of the union of Israel, the Divine Presence will not rest on it. Like the letters, so the souls must unite and form a union. But why is it forbidden for one letter in the Torah to touch its neighbor? Because every soul of Israel must have hours when it is alone with its Maker.
This section of the service goes by different names. It is called the Amidah (Standing) because we rise in recognition of the centrality of these prayers. Because the Rabbis considered it the focal point of the service, it is called the T'filah (Prayer), as if to say it is THE prayer. It is called Sh'moneh Esreih (Eighteen) because the weekday version of this section once contained that many prayers. Whatever we call it, its intent is to enable intimate, profound, public, and personal communication and contact with God.

Please listen to my call help me find the words help me find the strength within help me shape my mouth, my voice, my heart so that I can direct my spirit and find You in prayer in words only my heart can speak in songs only my soul can sing lifting my eyes and heart to You.

Adonai s’fatai tiftach open my lips, precious God, so that I can speak with You again.

Pray as if everything depended on God. Live as if everything depended on you.

Doubting is but the forefront of faith, a faith in the infinite growth of an unbounded creation.

A doubting age is one of restlessness and discontent with what is current; a doubt is an idea that is still alive.

To doubt that the past has uncovered all things is to express faith that many things are still to be uncovered.

To doubt that we have grown to our full stature and knowledge is to express faith that we may yet develop into beings of such power and dignity that we cannot as yet imagine what shall be.
ANCESTORS
Praised are You, Adonai,
our God and God of our fathers and our mothers:
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, God of Leah.
Great, mighty, and awesome God, God supreme,
bestowing acts of kindness, Owner of all,
You remember the faithfulness of fathers and mothers,
lovingly bringing redemption to their children’s children
for the sake of Your name.
Ruler and Helper, Savior and Shield:
Praised are You, Adonai, Abraham’s shield and Sarah’s trust.
Let us praise Adonai,
Source of knowledge and light,
from Whom we draw wisdom and insight.
Let us savor the fullness of each and every day
and fill our souls with the treasures of Shabbat.
And let us appreciate these distinctions:
sacred from profane, charity from greed,
purpose from drift.
Let us affirm our covenant as God’s people.
Let us honor those who study Torah.
Let us uphold the truth of ongoing revelation.
Let us celebrate the glory of our tradition
and draw refreshment from the wellsprings of prayer.
Let us respect tradition and encourage creative faith.
And let us dress ourselves in the garments of God—
compassion for the needy, embrace of the stranger—and then spread the canopy of peace over all the world.

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compassion for the needy, embrace of the stranger—and then spread the canopy of peace over all the world.

God, each of us hears You differently.
Yet You are the one God for us all.
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:
Each heard You in a different way.
To Abraham You gave courage.
To Isaac You brought comfort.
Jacob learned that You are everywhere,
even in places he didn’t expect to find You.
Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah:
Each heard You in a different way.
To Sarah You brought laughter.
To Rebekah You gave strength.
To Rachel You taught kindness.
And to Leah You brought love.
May each of us hear You
in our own special way.
And may we always feel Your protection.
We praise You, Eternal God.
You are the shield of Abraham,
the help of Sarah—
the one God of all Jews and all the world.

We begin with three
blessings of praise:
for our ancestors
(Avot v’Imahot),
God’s power
(G’vurot),
and God’s holiness
(K’dushat Ha-Sheim),
called simply
K’dushah when recited aloud
in morning and afternoon services).
At the start and end of the first blessing,
it is customary to
bend the knees at
"Baruch;"
bow at
"Atah;”
and stand straight at
"Adonai" as a sign of humility and reverence.

Acknowledging
our ancestors
reminds us that
what we are
is 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.
Atah gibor l’olam Adonai
m’chayeih meitim Atah rav l’hoshi-a

WINTER (AFTER SUKKOT TO PESACH):
mashiv ha-ru-ach u-morid ha-gashem

SUMMER (FROM PESACH THROUGH SUKKOT): morid ha-tal

m’chalkeil chayim b’chesed
m’chayeih meitim b’rachamim rabim
someich nof’lim v’rofei cholim u-matir asurim
u-m’kayeim emunato lisheinei afar.

Mi chamocha ba-al g’vurot u-mi domeh lach
Melech meimit u-m’chayeh u-matzmi-ach y’shu-ah.
V’ne-eman Atah l’hachayot meitim.
Baruch Atah Adonai m’chayeih ha-meitim.

GOD’S POWER
You are mighty forever, Adonai.
You give eternal life to the dead, so great is Your power to save.

WINTER (AFTER SUKKOT TO PESACH): You make the wind blow and the rain fall.
SUMMER (FROM PESACH THROUGH SUKKOT): You make the dew fall.

You sustain the living with lovingkindness;
in Your great mercy, You give eternal life to the dead.
You support the falling and heal the sick;
You release the bound and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.
Who is like You, Mighty One?
Who resembles You, Ruler Who causes death and gives life and brings forth salvation?

You are faithful in giving eternal life to the dead.
Praised are You, Adonai, Who gives eternal life to the dead.
We pray that we might know before Whom we stand:
the Power Whose gift is life,
Who quickens those who have forgotten how to live.

We pray for love to encompass us
for no other reason save that we are human,
for love through which we may all blossom into persons
who have gained power over our own lives.

We pray to stand upright, we fallen;
to be healed, we sufferers;
we pray to break the bonds keeping us from the world of beauty;
we pray for opened eyes,
we who are blind to our own authentic selves.

We pray that we may walk in the garden of a purposeful life,
our own powers in touch with the power of the world.

Praised be the God Whose gift is life,
Whose cleansing rains let parched men and women
flower toward the sun.

Ο God, as we remember all You do, we make this promise:
to be like You. We will raise up those who fall,
heal those who are sick, free those who are in need.
As Your partners, we will support the poor, feed the hungry,
house the homeless, befriend the lonely, and give hope to all people.
We will be faithful Jews.
As You have helped us to live better lives, we shall help others.
We praise You, O God, Who gives meaning to our lives.

Your might, O God, is everlasting;
Help us to use our strength for good and not for evil.
You are the Source of life and blessing;
Help us to choose life for ourselves and our children.
You are the Support of the falling;
Help us to lift up the fallen.
You are the Author of freedom;
Help us to set free the captive.
You are our Hope in death as in life;
Help us to keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.
Your might, O God, is everlasting;
Help us to use our strength for good.
K’DUSHAH

N’kadeish et shimcha ba-olam, k’sheim sheh-makdishim oto bi-sh’mei marom ka-katuv al yad n’vi-echa:
V’kara zeh el zeh v’amar:
Kadosh kadosh kadosh Adonai tz’va-ot m’lo chol ha-aretz k’vodo.
Adir adirenu Adonai adoneinu mah adir shimcha b’chol ha-aretz.
Baruch k’vod Adonai mi-m’komo.
Echad Hu Eloheinu Hu Avinu
Hu Malkeinu Hu moshi-einu
v’Hu yashmi-einu b’rachamav l’einei kol chai:
Ani Adonai Eloheichem.
Yimloch Adonai l’olam
Elohayich Tziyon l’dor va-dor hal’luyah!
L’dor va-dor nagid godlecha
u-l’neitzach n’tzachim k’dushat’cha nakdish.
V’shivchacha Eloheinu
mi-pinu lo yamush l’olam va-ed.
Baruch Atah Adonai ha-Eil ha-kadosh.
During the K'dushah (Holiness), it is traditional to rise to the toes on each of Isaiah’s three recitations of "שָׁם kadosh (holy),” reaching with our bodies and souls for God’s sanctity. We learn that the first “kadosh” refers to God’s holiness in the heavens above, the residence of the divine. The second “kadosh” is God’s holiness on earth, the handiwork of divine creativity. And the third “kadosh” evokes God’s holiness in time, forever. This then is the meaning of the next phrase in the Isaiah verse, “The fullness of the whole earth is God’s glory.”

To all generations we will make known Your greatness, and to all eternity proclaim Your holiness. Your praise, O God, shall never depart from our lips. Praised are You, Adonai, the holy God.

There is holiness when we strive to be true to the best we know. There is holiness when we are kind to someone who cannot possibly be of service to us. There is holiness when we promote family harmony. There is holiness when we forget what divides us and remember what unites us. There is holiness when we are willing to be laughed at for what we believe in. There is holiness when we love—truly, honestly, unselfishly. There is holiness when we remember the lonely and bring cheer into a dark corner. There is holiness when we share: our bread, our ideas, our enthusiasms. There is holiness when we gather to pray to God Who gave us the power to pray. Holy, holy, holy is the God of hosts; All of life can be filled with God’s glory.
Those who keep Shabbat and call it a delight shall rejoice in Your sovereignty.
The people who hallow the seventh day shall all be satisfied and delighted by Your goodness.
You favored the seventh day and hallowed it—
You called it the most cherished of days,
a reminder of the work of creation.
May the sense of God’s presence be with us along our way, helping us to discover the peace and rest some have lost or never known, renewing our covenant of peace with all created things.

And may we become more than we have been, more than we are: reaching for a perfection beyond our grasp, growing and learning one day to make this day’s peace a peace for all days, learning one day to do justly, and love mercy, and walk alongside the One Who walks with us.

A great pianist was once asked by an ardent admirer, “How do you handle the notes as well as you do?” The artist answered, “The notes I handle no better than many pianists, but the pauses between the notes—ah! That is where the art resides.”

In great living, as in great music, the art may be in the pauses. Surely one of the enduring contributions which Judaism made to the art of living was Shabbat, “the pause between the notes.” And it is to Shabbat that we must look if we are to restore to our lives the sense of serenity and sanctity which Shabbat offers in such joyous abundance.

Once Shabbat came to God to complain: “Every day of the week has a partner. Sunday goes with Monday, Tuesday goes with Wednesday, and Thursday goes with Friday. Only I don’t have a partner.” God replied, “The people of Israel will be your partner.”

Our tradition tells us that the seventh day was ordained as שבת Shabbat from the day of creation. Yet here it is we who make the seventh day “a delight.” The world has always been, but we transform it by the value we place on it.

To rest on Shabbat is to step back from the act of creation and thereby to gain perspective on it. For one day we stop building and polluting, using and wasting. This aspect of Shabbat, which emphasizes appreciation for the beauty of the world as it is, should encourage us to strengthen our commitment to preserve natural resources all the other days of the week.
Elohei avoteinu v’imoteinu
r’tzeih vi-m’nuchateinu
kad’sheinu b’mitzvotecha
v’tein chelkeinu b’Toratecha.
Sab’einu mi-tuvecha
v’sam’cheinu bishu-atecha
v’taheir libeinu l’ovd’cha beh-emet
v’hanchileinu Adonai Eloheinu
b’ahavah u-v’ratzon
Shabbat kodshecha
v’yanuchu vah Yisra-eil m’kad’sheh sh’mecha
Baruch Atah Adonai
m’kadeish ha-Shabbat.

Our God and God of our fathers and mothers, be pleased with our rest. Sanctify us with Your mitzvot and let Your Torah be our way of life. Satisfy us with Your goodness, and gladden us with Your salvation. Purify our hearts to serve You in truth. Adonai, our God, may we inherit, in love and favor, Your holy Shabbat, that all Israel, who hallow Your name, may rest on it. Praised are You, Adonai, Who sanctifies Shabbat.
It is not easy to keep Shabbat. The society in which we live does not create it for us; we have to create it for ourselves. And that requires remembrance, effort, and discipline. We are not the first generation of Jews to face that difficulty; let us not be the first to be defeated by it.

There are days when we seek things for ourselves and measure failure by what we do not gain.

On Shabbat we seek not to acquire but to share.

There are days when we exploit nature as if it were a horn of plenty that can never be exhausted.

On Shabbat we stand in wonder before the mystery of creation.

There are days when we act as if we cared nothing for the rights of others.

On Shabbat we are reminded that justice is our duty and a better world our goal.

Therefore we welcome Shabbat—

Day of rest,
day of wonder,
day of peace.
AVODAH

R’teih Adonai Eloheinu b’am’cha Yisra-eil
u-t’filatam b’ahavah t’kabeil
u-t’hi l’ratzon tamid avodat Yisra-eil amecha.
Eil karov l’chol kor’av
p’nei el avadecha v’choneinu.
Sh’foch ruchacha aleinu.
V’techuzenah eineinu
b’shuv’cha l’Tziyon b’rachamim.
Baruch Atah Adonai
ha-machazir sh’chinato l’Tziyon.

WORSHIP

Take pleasure, Adonai, our God, in Your people Israel:
receive their prayers with love,
and let their worship always please You.
You are near to all who seek You in truth.
Be gracious to Your servants:
pour out Your spirit on us.
Let our eyes behold
the wonder of Your return to Zion.
Praised are You, Adonai,
Whose presence is restored to the land of Zion.
In this moment of silence
a still, small voice speaks in the depths of my spirit.
It speaks to me of all that I must do
to come closer to God and grow in God’s likeness.
I must work with untiring faithfulness,
even when no one’s eye is upon me.
I must come to the end of each day with a feeling
that I used its gifts wisely and faced its trials courageously.
I must try to judge others less harshly and love them more freely.
I must be loyal to my people and heritage,
seeking greater knowledge of our tradition
and putting its teachings to work in my life.
May I become ever more conscious of my dignity as a child of God,
and may I learn to see the divinity in every person I meet.
Then indeed shall I become closer to God and grow in God’s likeness.

We sit in community:
Elbow to elbow, eye to eye.
So close, perhaps, that we brush against each other
as we move in prayer.
Ears filled with the voices of friends, teachers, fellow travelers
Who pray with us from the next seat, from across the room.
We come to silence.
Rhythm of words, shared melody, hushed.
Connected first one to all,
We now let go.

To be alone
with the Holy One.
To speak in mind, and heart, and soul,
but not with lips.

The prayers we weave together cannot replace
that private conversation:
God, our partner, awaits us,
One by one,
A miracle.
Modim anachnu lach, sha-Atah Hu Adonai
Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu v’imotein
l’olam va-ed.

Tzur chayeinu magein yish-einu
Atah Hu l’edor va-dor.

Nodeh l’cha u-n’sapeir t’hilatecha
al chayeinu ha-m’surim b’yadecha
v’al nishmoteinu ha-p’kudot lach
v’al nisecha sheh-b’chol yom imanu
v’al nifl’otecha v’tovotecha sheh-b’chol eit
erev va-voker v’tzohorayim.

Ha-tov ki lo chalu rachamecha
v’ha-m’racheim ki lo tamu chasadécha
mei-olam kivinu lach.

V’al kulum yitbarach v’yitromam shimcha
Malkeinu tamid l’olam va-ed
v’chol ha-chayim yoducha selah
vihal’lu et shimcha beh-emet
ha-Eil y’shu-ateinu v’ezrateinu selah.

Baruch Atah Adonai
ha-tov shimcha
u-l’cha na-eh l’hodot.
THANKSGIVING

We give thanks that You are Adonai
our God and God of our fathers and mothers
forever and ever.
Rock of our life, a shield to us in time of trial,
You are ever there, from age to age.
We thank You and sing Your praises:                    ADAPTED FROM PSALM 79:13
for our lives, which are in Your hand;
for our souls, which are in Your keeping;
for Your miracles that are with us every day;

and for Your wondrous goodness that is with us at all times,
 morning, noon, and night.
You are Goodness: Your mercy never ceases.
You are Compassion: Your lovingkindness never fails.    ADAPTED FROM LAMENTATIONS 3:22

For all these things, our Ruler,
let Your name be forever blessed and exalted.

Let everything that lives acknowledge You
and praise Your name in truth,
God of our deliverance and help.
Praised are You, Adonai,
Whose name is goodness;
we give You thanks and praise.

♦ ♦ ♦

Eternal Source of good, we thank You
for the numberless gifts and blessings that fill our days:
for life itself and its endless variety;
for all that sustains body and mind;
for love and friendship;
for the delights of the senses;
and for the excellence of Your Torah,
which deepens our life and enriches our days.

Help us, O God, to work for a just and compassionate society,
where all may share Your gifts in the joy of freedom.
For the blessings which You lavish upon us in forest and sea, 
in mountain and meadow, in rain and sun, 
we thank You.

For the blessings You implant within us, 
joy and peace, meditation and laughter, 
we are grateful to You.

For the blessings of friendship and love, 
of family and community,
For the blessings we ask of You 
and those we cannot ask,
For the blessings You bestow upon us openly 
and those You give us in secret,
For all these blessings, Ruler of the Universe, 
we thank You and are grateful to You.

For the blessings we recognize 
and those we fail to recognize,
For the blessings of our tradition 
and of our holy days,
For the blessings of return and forgiveness, 
of memory, of vision, and of hope,
For all these blessings which surround us on every side—
Dear God, hear our thanks and accept our gratitude.

Let us rejoice in the light of day, in the glory and warmth of the sun, 
in the reawakening of life to duty and labor.

We rejoice in the light of day. 
In the earth with its hills and valleys, its widespread fields of grain, 
its fruit and hidden treasures. 
We rejoice in the beauty of the earth. 
In the love of fathers and mothers who have nurtured our lives, with whose blessing we have gone forth to our own work in the world. 
We rejoice in the love of parents. 
In the children who bless our homes, 
whose eager minds and hearts are the promise of tomorrow. 
We rejoice in our children. 
In friends who share our sorrows and joys, 
in the fullness of the abundant life, in the serenity of old age, 
and in the peace that comes at last.

We rejoice, and shall rejoice for evermore.

The confidence of Modim lifts the heart, like a change in music from minor to major. This blessing, the second-to-last of the Amidah, is a proud and public affirmation of faith. We owe God thanks for many things in our lives. We recognize and appreciate the daily miracles in our lives, which we should not take for granted, noticing them only when we feel their absence. We are duty-bound to recognize the many gifts we enjoy each day, even when we might wish for more.

The insights of wonder must be constantly kept alive. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or challenges of living. Since there is a need for daily wonder, there is a need for daily worship. The sense of the “miracles that are with us every day” is the source of prayer. Perpetual profound awareness of wonder is a primary part of the Jewish religious consciousness.
You give meaning to our days, to our struggles and strivings. In the stillness of the night and in the press of the crowd, Yours is the voice within that brings joy and peace.

We do not ask for a life of ease, for happiness without alloy. We ask only to be uncomplaining and unafraid. In our darkness be our light, and in our loneliness help us discover the many souls akin to our own. Give us strength to face life with courage, to draw blessing even from its discords and conflicts. Make us understand that life calls us not merely to enjoy the richness of the earth, but to exult in heights gained after the toil of climbing.

Let our darkness be dispelled by Your love, that we may rise above fear and failure, our steps sustained by faith. You give meaning to our days; You are our support and our trust.

For those who find petitionary prayer to a personal God difficult, it may be worth citing the Rabbinic adage, “In the time to come, all prayers (of petition) will be annulled (as superfluous), but the prayer of gratitude will not be annulled.” (Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 9:7) The Rabbis believed that even in a future perfect world, there would still always be reason to be thankful for the sustained gift of life. How much more so now, in our unredeemed world, do these expressions of human need remain achingly relevant. Much that is heartfelt can be learned from the prayers of our ancestors; in the end our needs are not so different from theirs.
**THE BLESSING OF PEACE**

Grant peace, goodness, and blessing, grace, love, and mercy, to us and to all Your people Israel. Bless us, our Source, all of us as one, with the light of Your presence, for by the light of Your presence, Adonai, our God, You give to us Torah of life, and love of kindness, justice, blessing, mercy, life, and peace. So may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel in every season and at all times with peace. Praised are You, Adonai, Who blesses the people Israel with peace.
Grant us peace, Your most precious gift, Eternal Source of peace, and enable the Children of Israel to be its messenger unto the peoples of the earth. Bless our country, that it may ever be a stronghold of peace, and its advocate among the nations. May contentment reign within its borders, health and happiness within its homes. Strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship among the inhabitants of all lands. Plant virtue in every soul, and may the love of Your name hallow every home and every heart. Praised are You, Adonai, Source of peace.

A rabbi was asked by a farmer when the world would truly know peace. The rabbi replied, “Follow me.” He then brought the farmer to the side of a brook, put his hand on the farmer’s head, and pressed it into the water until the farmer came up gasping for breath. The rabbi then said: “This is your answer. When people want peace, when they want it as much as you just wanted air, when they come up gasping for peace, when they are ready to give up everything in themselves to have peace, as you have given to have air, then the world will have peace.”
ELOHAI N' TZOR

Elohai n' tzor l'shoni mei-ra
u-s'fatai mi-dabeir mirmah
v'li-m'kal'la nafshi tidom
v'nafshi ke-afar la-kol tihye.
P’tach libi b’Toratecha
u-v’mitzvatecha tirdof nafshi
v’chol ha-chosh’vim alai ra-ah
m’heirah hafeir atzam v’kalkeil
machashvatam.

Aseih l’ma-an sh’mecha
aseih l’ma-an y’minecha
aseih l’ma-an k’dushatecha
aseih l’ma-an Toratecha.

L’ma-an yeichal’tzun y’didecha
hoshi-ah y’min’cha va-aneini.

Yihyu l’ratzon imrei fi v’hegyon libi l’fanecha
Adonai tzuri v’go-ali.

Oseh shalom bi-m’romav Hu ya-aseh shalom
aleinu v’al kol Yisra-eil v’imru: Amein.

MY GOD, GUARD

My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit,
and to those who curse me, may my soul be silent as the dust.  ADAPTED FROM PSALM 34:14
Open my heart to Your Torah, that my soul may follow Your commandments.
And all who think badly of me, swiftly frustrate their designs, spoil their plans.
Do so for Your own sake. Do so for the sake of Your right hand.
Do so for the sake of Your holiness. Do so for the sake of Your Torah,
that Your loved ones be delivered. Save with Your right hand and answer me.  PSALM 60:7
May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before You,
Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.  PSALM 19:15
May the One Who makes peace on high bring peace to us and to all Israel, and say, Amein.
Looking inward, I see that all too often I fail to use time and talent to improve myself and to serve others. And yet there is in me much goodness, and a yearning to use my gifts for the well-being of those around me. This Shabbat calls me to renew my vision, to fulfill the best that is within me. For this I look to God for help. Give meaning to my life and substance to my hopes; help me understand those about me and fill me with the desire to serve them. Let me not forget that I depend on others as they depend on me; quicken my heart and hand to lift them up; make fruitful my words of prayer, that they may fulfill themselves in deeds.

I do not pray for riches. But should riches come to me,
I pray for generosity so that I would share with others.
I do not pray for beauty. But should I be fair of face and form,
I pray for modesty lest I flaunt my loveliness.
I do not pray for power. But should it be my lot to lead and influence others,
I pray for wisdom, lest arrogance take over my nature.
I do not pray for honor. But should honor come to me,
I pray for understanding, lest esteem cause me to forget those who need a helping hand.
I do not pray for talent. But should I be gifted,
I pray for humility, knowing full well that all talent comes from You.
I do not pray for trouble. But should trouble come to me,
I pray for courage to begin anew and neither whine nor blame.
I do not pray for sorrow. But when grief enters my life,
I pray for fortitude to bear my trials with patience and to be a comfort to those around me.
For what then do I pray, O God?
For generosity; for modesty; for wisdom; for understanding; for humility; for courage; for fortitude.

Most of our other prayers address God as Eloheinu (our God),” but this one calls God Elohai (my God).” The Rabbis believed that there should be a balance between the expression of congregational needs and individual needs. So they created a place within the service for personal prayers. At this time, the individual could express whatever might be in his or her own heart.

Most of אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶלֹהַי Elohei n’tzar was composed by Mar bar Ravina, a sage who lived in the fourth century CE. Because of its popularity, it was later chosen to be placed at the end of the Amidah. The sentence “May the words of my mouth...” from Psalm 19, was added later to Mar’s prayer. The words Oseh shalom (May God Who makes peace...) recall the final prayer of the Amidah, the prayer for Shalom.
HOTZA-AT SEIFER TORAH

Ein kamocha va-elahim Adonai
v’ein k’m’a-asecha
Malchut’cha malchut kol olamim,
u-memshalt’cha b’chol dor va-dor.
Adonai Melech
Adonai malach
Adonai yimloch l’olam va-ed.
Adonai oz l’amoo yitein,
Adonai y’vareich et amo va-shalom.

Av ha-rachamim
heitivah vi-r’tzon’cha et Tziyon,
tivneh chomot Y’rshalayim.
Ki v’cha l’vad batachnu
Melech Eil ram v’nisa Adon olamim.

TAKING OUT THE TORAH SCROLL
There is none like You among the gods, Adonai,
and there is nothing like Your works.
Your realm embraces all the worlds,
Your reign encompasses all generations.
Adonai reigns!
Adonai has always reigned!
Adonai shall reign forever and ever!
Adonai will give strength to our people;
Adonai will bless our people with peace.

Source of mercy,
do good to Zion, according to Your will,
rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
For in You alone we place our trust,
God, Ruler, high and revered, Sovereign of all the worlds.
I am a Jew because
the faith of Israel demands of me no abdication of the mind.
I am a Jew because
the faith of Israel requires of me all the devotion of my heart.
I am a Jew because
in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps.
I am a Jew because
at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.
I am a Jew because
the word of Israel is the oldest and the newest.
I am a Jew because
the promise of Israel is the universal promise.
I am a Jew because
for Israel, the world is not completed; we are completing it.
I am a Jew because
for Israel, humanity is not created; we are creating it.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

May my life be one link in a chain of goodness.
As I say the prayers of my ancestors,
Help me to recall their devotion and faithfulness,
Their joy and suffering, which are in every word.
Holiness is their heritage; may I be worthy of it.

May this tradition live in me
And pass from me to generations I shall never know,
Enriched by truths that I have found
And the good deeds I have done.
So may I fulfill my task on earth and receive my blessing.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

This is our Torah.
Its words are the same ones
that our parents and our grandparents read.
In all times and all places,
its words never change.
May our children and grandchildren,
and their children and grandchildren,
read its words as well.
Va-y’hi bi-n’so-a ha-aron va-yomer Mosheh:
Kumah Adonai v’yafutz oy’vecha v’yanusu m’san-echa mi-panecha.

Ki mi-Tziyon teitzei Torah u-d’var Adonai mirushalayim.
Baruch sheh-natan Torah l’amo Yisra-eil bi-k’dushato.

Havu godel leiloheinu u-t’nu chavod la-Torah.
Sh’ma Yisra-eil, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad.
Echad Eloheinu, gadol Adoneinu, kadosh sh’mo.
Gad’lu la-Adonai iti, u-n’rom’mah sh’mo yachdav.

L’cha Adonai ha-g’dulah v’ha-g’vurah v’ha-tif-eret v’ha-neitzach v’ha-hod ki chol ba-shamayim u-và-aretz,
la-cha Adonai ha-mamlachah v’ha-mitnasei l’chol l’rosh.
Rom’mu Adonai Eloheinu v’hishtachavu la-hadom raglav kadosh Hu.
Rom’mu Adonai Eloheinu v’hishtachavu l’har kodsho, ki kadosh Adonai Eloheinu.
When the Ark was carried forward, Moses would say, “Rise up, Adonai; let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.”

NUMBERS 10:35

For from Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem.

ISAIAH 2:3

Praised is the One Who gave the Torah to the people Israel in holiness.

Ascribe greatness to our God and give honor to the Torah.

DEUTERONOMY 32:3

Hear, Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

One is our God; great is our Sovereign; holy is God’s name.

Declare with me the greatness of Adonai; together let us exalt God’s name.

PSALM 34:4

To You, Adonai, is all greatness and might and splendor and victory and power, for everything in the heavens and the earth is Yours, Adonai, as is all sovereignty and the highest supremacy above all beings.

I CHRONICLES 29:11

Exalt Adonai our God and bow down before God’s footstool. God is holy!

PSALM 99:5

Exalt Adonai our God and bow down before God’s holy mountain for Adonai our God is holy.

PSALM 99:9
It is written in sacred scriptures:
You, God, revealed Yourself on Mount Sinai
To teach Your children Torah and mitzvot.
You revealed Yourself to Your holy people with thunder and lightning
And appeared to them with the sound of the shofar.

Our Sages, of blessed memory, said:
Whatever a faithful student will perceive and transmit,
The Torah he will create, the commandments she will teach—
They were all said to Moses at Sinai.

Sinai is ever present—not only a past event.
Wherever people gather to seek God’s presence,
To renew the covenant, to discover God’s will;
Whenever they listen and hear, receive and transmit—
They stand at Sinai.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

When our learning exceeds our deeds
we are like trees whose branches are many
but whose roots are few:
the wind comes and uproots them....

But when our deeds exceed our learning
we are like trees whose branches are few
but whose roots are many,
so that even if all the winds of the world
were to come and blow against them,
they would be unable to move them.
The book of Genesis tells us that the Tree of Life is in the garden of Eden. At the end of Chapter 3 of Genesis, Adam and Eve are forbidden access to the mysterious Tree of Life, whose fruit confers immortality. But over the millenia of Jewish history, the Torah has become our Tree of Life. As it is passed from one generation to the next, sustaining our people and preserving our Jewish values, the Torah has become our instrument of immortality.

Like pure water, Torah washes us clean and refreshes us. Like honey, Torah sweetens our lives and preserves us from the bitterness of hatred. Like a shield, Torah protects us from the violence that surrounds us. Like a crown, Torah imbues us with nobility and honor. Like a path in the wilderness, Torah guides us in time of trouble and shows us the way to peace. Our rabbis say: “Whoever honors the Torah will, in turn, be honored by all.” From generation to generation, may words of Torah forever be on our lips.
B’RACHAH LIFNEI K’RI-AT HA-TORAH

Those called to the Torah:
Bar’chu et Adonai ha-m’vorach.

Congregation:
Baruch Adonai ha-m’vorach l’olam va-ed.

Those called to the Torah:
Baruch Adonai ha-m’vorach l’olam va-ed.
Baruch Atah Adonai
Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
asher bachar banu mi-kol ha-amim
v’natan lanu et Torato.
Baruch Atah Adonai notein ha-Torah.

BLESSING BEFORE THE READING OF THE TORAH

Those called to the Torah:
Praise Adonai, the One Who is blessed.

Congregation:
Praised be Adonai, the One Who is blessed, forever and ever.

Those called to the Torah:
Praised be Adonai, the One Who is blessed, forever and ever.
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe.
You chose us from all the peoples
and gave us Your Torah.
Praised are You, Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

AT THE CONCLUSION OF A BOOK OF THE TORAH:

Chazak chazak v’nitchazeik.

Be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen each other.
Aliyah is ascent.

We ascend to the Torah
to acknowledge that we choose
to live under its laws and principles.

We ascend to the Torah
to affirm that we are part of a people and a story
that is much greater than ourselves.

We ascend to the Torah
to represent those who remain below.

We ascend to the Torah
to risk receiving an honor,
to risk being known and seen,
to risk being at Sinai again.

We ascend to the Torah
with slow steps or in haste,
with enthusiasm or reluctance,
in awe or in fear,
in hope and in love.

Rabbi Zev Wolf of Zhitomir (in Or Ha-mei-ir, vol. 1, 8, col. 1) notices the change in the opening Torah blessing
from the past tense, “and gave,”
to the present tense, “Giver.”

He draws from this an insight into the nature of holy learning.
The Torah was given at Mount Sinai.
But in each generation, God also is giving it anew
through the new interpretations of its teachers.
The sages of each era thus draw from the sacred text
newly-appropriate readings for the needs of every age.
In this way, each “new” reading has actually been
secret and latent within the Torah
ever since it was first given at Sinai.

The whole
הַתוֹרָה Torah service
is full of ceremony.
Those given the
honor of saying
the blessings for
the Torah reading
are called forward
to an עלייה aliyah
(a “going-up”).
Before saying the
blessings for the
reading, the person
honored with the
aliyah shows
respect for the Torah
by touching a prayer
book or the fringes
from a טלית talit to
the first words to be
read, and then
kissing the book or
fringes. The Torah
scroll is never
touched directly with
the hand as the oils
could smear the ink.

The Torah portion
read is consistent the
world over,
connecting the
entire Jewish people
around the globe.
The weekly portion
is often subdivided
into multiple
sections, each one of
which is also called
an aliyah.
A special melodic
system is used for
chanting Torah.
In addition, there are
entirely different
systems for the
Festivals and for the
High Holy Days.
B'RACHAH ACHAREI K'R-AT HA-TORAH

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam asher natan lanu Torat emet v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.
Baruch Atah Adonai notein ha-Torah.

BLESSING AFTER THE READING OF THE TORAH
Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe.
You have given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life.
Praised are You, Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

SHEH-HECHEYANU

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam sheh-hecheyanu v’kiy’manu v’higi-anu la-z’man ha-zeh.

THE ONE WHO GAVE US LIFE
Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

BIRKAT HA-GOMEIL

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam ha-gomeil l’chayavim tovot sheh-g’malani kol tov.
Congregation:
Mi sheh-g’mal’cha kol tov
Hu yigmol’cha kol tov selah.

BLESSING OF THE ONE WHO BESTOWS GOODNESS
Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, Who bestows goodness upon those in need and has bestowed every goodness upon me.

Congregation:
May the One Who has bestowed upon you every goodness, bestow every goodness upon you forever.
May the One Who blessed our fathers and our mothers,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,
bless and heal all those who are ill.
May the Holy One of Blessing be full of compassion for them,
to restore their health and to heal them,
to strengthen them and to help them live,
and send them quickly a complete healing,
healing of the soul and healing of the body,
speedily and soon,
and let us say: Amein.
Healing is not about cure. It is about soothing the heart and soul. Most of us will suffer sharp physical and emotional pain at some point in our lives. Feelings of sadness, anger, frustration over events we cannot control may tear at our hearts. We may feel wounded or hurt and unable to imagine those feelings ever leaving us. As we take our first tentative steps toward survival the healing begins. This healing is the body and mind’s repair process. On the other side of healing we emerge with newly-found strength, perhaps uniquely different from the person who began the journey.

Each of us confronts our ordeal as the individuals we are and with the tools we have brought with us. Yet, to truly close our wounds, we often need the help of others. During the dark moments, we can reach out to our family and friends for the loving touch and understanding that will re-energize us in our struggle. At these times, we learn that the smallest gestures can have the most profound meaning. The gentlest touch can have the strongest effect. Our strength can multiply when we are able to draw on the strength of those around us and God above us. We are truly strongest when we not only reach within, but also reach outward to our community, and upward to seek spiritual meaning and peace.

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May the One Who blesses all life, bless and heal those who struggle against illness. May their pain be eased; may they be strengthened with faith, love, and caring. May they know sustenance from their friends and families. May those who seek ways of healing through medical knowledge and those who care for the sick be blessed with courage, stamina, and communal support. And let us say: Amein.

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We don’t need to beg or bribe God to give us strength or hope or patience. We need only turn to the One, admit that we can’t do this on our own, and understand that bravely bearing up under long-term illness is one of the most human, and the most godly, things we can do. One of the things that constantly reassures me that God is real, and not just an idea that religious leaders made up, is the fact that people who pray for strength, hope, and courage so often find the resources of strength, hope, and courage that they did not have before they prayed.
Mi sheh-beirach avoteinu
Avraham Yitzchak v’Ya-akov
v’imoteinu Sarah Rivkah Racheil v’Lei-ah
Hu y’vareich et kol eileh
sheh-alu li-ch’vod ha-Makom
li-ch’vod ha-Torah
(V’LI-CH’VOD HA-SHABBAT)
Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu y’vareich otam
v’et mishp’chotam
v’yishlach b’rachah v’hatzlachah
b’chol ma-aseih y’deihem
im kol Yisra-eil achiheem v’achyoteihem
v’nomar: Amein.

"MAY THE ONE WHO BLESSED FOR THOSE WHO COME UP"
May the One Who blessed our ancestors,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,
bless all those who came up in honor of God,
in honor of the Torah (AND IN HONOR OF SHABBAT).
May the Holy One bless them and their families,
and send them blessing and success in all their labors,
along with all of Israel, their brothers and sisters, and let us say: Amein.

HAGBAHAT HA-TORAH
V’zot ha-Torah asher sam Mosheh
lifnei b’nei Yisra-eil
al pi Adonai b’yad Mosheh.

RAISING OF THE TORAH
This is the Torah which Moses placed
before the children of Israel,
by the word of Adonai, by the hand of Moses.

DEUTERONOMY 4:44
NUMBERS 9:23
Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
asher bachar bi-n’vi-im tovim
v’ratzah v’divreihem ha-ne-emarim beh-emet.
Baruch Atah Adonai
ha-bocheir ba-Torah u-v’Mosheh avdo
u-v’Yisra-eil amo u-vi-n’vi-ei ha-emet va-tzedek.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam
Tzur kol ha-olamim tzadik b’chol ha-dorot
ha-Eil ha-ne-eman ha-omeir v’oseh
ha-m’dabeir u-m’kayeim
sheh-kol d’varav emet va-tzedek.
Al ha-Torah v’al ha-avodah
v’al ha-n’vi-im v’al yom ha-Shabbat ha-zeh
sheh-natata lanu Adonai Eloheinu
li-k’dushah v’li-m’nuchah,
l’chavod u-l’tif-aret.
Al ha-kol Adonai Eloheinu
anachnu modim lach
u-m’var’chim otach.
Yitbarach shimcha b’fi kol chai
tamid l’olam va-ed.
Baruch Atah Adonai m’kadeish ha-Shabbat.
Blessing before Reading of Haftarah

Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has chosen good prophets, finding favor in their words, which were spoken in truth. Praised are You, Adonai, Who has chosen the Torah, Moses Your servant, Israel Your people, and prophets of truth and righteousness.

Blessing after Reading of Haftarah

Praised are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, Rock of all creation, righteous in all generations, the faithful God Who says and does, Who speaks and fulfills, Whose every word is truth and righteousness.

For the Torah, for worship, for the prophets, and for this Shabbat that You gave us, Adonai, our God, for holiness and rest, for honor and for glory— for everything, Adonai, our God, we thank and praise You. May Your name be praised forever and ever by every living being. Praised are You, Adonai, Who sanctifies Shabbat.

The origins of the reading of the Haftarah (conclusion) are obscure. Some say that under either Greek rule (Maccabean times) or Roman oppression (first century CE), Jews were forbidden to read the Torah. At first they ignored the orders, but the punishments were so unbearably cruel that they finally did cease reading the Torah. The Jews reasoned, however, that though they were forbidden to read from the Torah, they were not forbidden to read from the Prophets. They then chose a prophetic reading for each Shabbat and Festival that either reminded them of the Torah portion which would have been read that day or marked where they were in the Jewish calendar. When the ban on reading the Torah was finally lifted, our people had become so accustomed to the prophetic reading that it remained part of the Torah service as the Haftarah.
חנשת התורה

Y’hal’lu et sheim Adonai ki nissag sh’mo l’vado, hodo al etetz v’shamayim.
Va-yarem keren l’amo t’hilah l’chol chasidav li-v’nei Yisraeil am k’rovo hal’luyah.

Torat Adonai t’nimah m’shivat na’eish, eidut Adonai ne-emanah machkimat peti.
Pikudei Adonai y’sharim m’sam’chei leiv, mitzvat Adonai barah m’irat einayim.
Yir-at Adonai t’horah omedet la-ad, mishp’tei Adonai emet tzadku yachdav.

Ki lekach tov natati lachem, Torati al ta-azovu.

Eitz chayim hi la-machazikim bah, v’tom’cheha m’ushar.
D’racheha darchei no-am, v’chol n’tivoteha shalom.
Hashiveinu Adonai eilecha v’nashuvah chadeish yameinu k’kedem.
The prayers selected for returning the Torah to the ark act as bookends to the prayers that we uttered when we removed the Torah from the ark to read it. Both then and now, the themes are the sovereignty of God and the blessing that God's Torah constitutes for us.

The three verses quoted here from Proverbs are cited in reverse sequence from their original context. In their new order, the verses build from divine prescription to messianic promise:

Do not forsake my Torah, declares God, for it is good; it will make you happy; it will bring you peace. The cumulative effect is redemptive for both God and the Jewish People.

We both yearn for this ultimate shalom.

We both pledge, as we return the Torah to its resting-place, that we will return to its life-giving ways as of old.
**IT IS UP TO US**

It is up to us to praise the Sovereign of all, to recognize the greatness of God, our Creator, Who has not made us like the other nations of the earth, but gave us a sense of destiny and an inheritance all our own. Therefore, we bend our knees and bow and give thanks before the Ruler Who reigns over rulers, the Holy One of Blessing. You stretch out the heavens and establish the earth. Isaiah 51:13

Your splendor dwells in the skies above, Your powerful presence in the highest heavens. You are our God; there is no other.

Our Ruler is truth; there is nothing else. As it is written in Your Torah:

“May you know this day and may you fix it to your heart that Adonai is God in the heavens above and on the earth below. There is no other.” Deuteronomy 4:39
That’s the difficulty in these times:
ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, 
only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered.
It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, 
because in spite of everything I still believe 
that people are really good at heart.
I simply can’t build up my hopes 
on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death.
I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness.
I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too.
I can feel the sufferings of millions, 
and yet, if I look up into the heavens,
I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, 
and that peace and tranquility will return again.
In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, 
for perhaps the time will come 
when I shall be able to carry them out.

Eternal God, we face the morrow with hope made stronger 
by the vision of Your kingdom, a world where poverty and war 
are banished, where injustice and hate are gone.
Teach us more and more to share the pain of others, 
to heed Your call for justice, to pursue the blessing of peace.
Help us, O God, to gain victory over evil, 
to bring nearer the day when all the world shall be one.

Some day, every person will hear God’s words 
and do what God commands.
We pray with all our hearts: 
let there be no more fighting and violence and war. 
Let the time come soon 
when people will be kind to each other, 
when no one will be hungry or homeless, 
when everyone will be free.
Let us begin.
May our love and care bring nearer the time 
when all people will be one peaceful human family.
On that day, all people will say: 
Adonai is the one and only God of the whole world.

The second part of 
Aleinu begins 
with the phrase 
al kein (therefore).
We have affirmed 
God’s sovereignty; 
we have bowed 
before God’s role as 
shaper of Jewish 
destiny. So what? 
There must be a 
“therefore.” In this 
case, al kein leads 
immediately to a 
most basic premise 
of Jewish life: hope. 
We may not give 
up; we must always 
hope in the 
realization of our 
dreams of a 
perfected world.

After the first part 
of Aleinu says God 
is the creator of the 
universe Who also 
singed us out from 
all the nations of the 
earth, it follows 
here that we can 
expect the world to 
be perfected under 
God’s reign. This is 
the first instance of 
the idea of 
tikun olam (fixing 
the world).
Although recently 
the phrase has come 
to mean a Jewish 
mission to fix the 
world through 
social action, here 
we pray that God, 
not we, will perfect 
the world, by 
getting all nations to 
recognize God’s 
sovereignty.
Al kein n’kaveh l’cha Adonai Eloheinu,
lirot m’heirah b’tif’eret uzecha,
l’ha-avir gullim min ha-aretz
v’ha-elilim karot yikareitun
l’takein olam b’malchut shadai
v’chol b’nei var yikr’u vi-sh’mecha,
l’hafnot eilecha kol rish-ei aretz
Yakiru v’yei d’u kol yosh’vei teiveil
ki l’cha tichra kol berech, tisha’u kol lashon.
L’faneda Adonai Eloheinu, yich’ru v’yipolu,
v’li-ch’vod sh imcha y’kar yiteinu,
vikab’lu chulam et ol malchutecha,
v’timloch aleihem m’heirah l’olam va-ed.
Ki ha-malchut shel’cha hi,
u-l’ol’mei ad timloch b’chavod,
ka-katuv b’Toratecha: Adonai yimloch l’olam va-ed.
V’ne-emar: V’hayah Adonai l’Melech al kol
ha-aretz.
Ba-yom ha-hu yihye Adonai echad u-sh’mo echad.

We therefore hope in You, Adonai our God, that we may soon behold the glory of Your might, removing all false gods from the earth so that all idolatry will be abolished. To perfect the world under the rule of the Almighty, all humanity will call upon Your name, turning to You all the wicked of the earth. May all the inhabitants of the world perceive and know that to You every knee must bend, every tongue vow loyalty. Isaiah 45:23
Before You, Adonai our God, may they bow down and prostrate themselves, giving honor unto Your glorious name. May they all accept the yoke of Your rule, and may You rule over them soon and for all time.
For sovereignty is Yours and to all eternity You will reign in glory.
As it is written in Your Torah: “Adonai shall reign for ever and ever.” Exodus 15:18
And it is said: “Adonai shall rule over all the earth; on that day Adonai shall be One and God’s name One.” Zechariah 14:9
That’s the difficulty in these times: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered.
It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquillity will return again. In the meantime, I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come when I shall be able to carry them out.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Eternal God, we face the morrow with hope made stronger by the vision of Your kingdom, a world where poverty and war are banished, where injustice and hate are gone. Teach us more and more to share the pain of others, to heed Your call for justice, to pursue the blessing of peace. Help us, O God, to gain victory over evil, to bring nearer the day when all the world shall be one.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Some day, every person will hear God’s words and do what God commands. We pray with all our hearts: let there be no more fighting and violence and war. Let the time come soon when people will be kind to each other, when no one will be hungry or homeless, when everyone will be free. Let us begin. May our love and care bring nearer the time when all people will be one peaceful human family. On that day, all people will say: Adonai is the one and only God of the whole world.
Our tradition tells us that the bereaved should recite the Mourner’s Kaddish.

Traditionally, the only people to say the Mourner’s Kaddish were the official mourners: the child, sibling, spouse, and parent of the deceased. The rest of the congregation listened and affirmed the mourner’s statement by saying “Amen” at the appropriate times, and by joining in to recite “Y’hei shmei raba m’varach l’alam u-l’almei almayah” (May God’s great name be praised for ever and ever)” and “b’rich Hu” (May God be praised).

(continued)

The ancient words
I don’t understand them.
They are in a language
I do not know.
Why are they so familiar?
There is a rhythm to them
a beat a pulse I understand.
From somewhere very deep inside me
My heart, my soul
I am connected to a past I never lived
and
to a future I shall not know.
A member of the human race
Running through my time.
And still, connected to many lives which came before me
so many cultures, faces
tears and joys.
A Jew, connected
To the past, to a future.
Hoping always
That peace and love will finally come to all the world
That we may really live with no barriers
And each of us, in the comfort and beauty of our varied traditions.
Long before I understood what it meant to be Jewish
I knew that I was part of something
larger than myself
beyond my comprehension.
The Kaddish reminds me every week
of my family, and my friends
my people, and all the people of the world
the living, and those who live on in our hearts and minds
of the earth, and all its creatures
of God’s universe
And it is a reminder of my responsibility
to fulfill the promise of peace
while I am on earth
Shalom.
The light of life is a finite flame.  
Like Shabbat candles, life is kindled,  
it burns, it glows, it is radiant with warmth and beauty.  
But soon it fades; its substance is consumed, and it is no more.

In light we see; in light we are seen.  The flames dance and our lives are full.  
But as night follows day, the candle of our life burns down and gutters.  
There is an end to the flames.  We see no more and are no more seen.  
Yet we do not despair, for we are more than a memory slowly fading into the darkness.  
With our lives we give life.  Something of us can never die:  
we move in the eternal cycle of darkness and death, of light and life.

♦ ♦ ♦

Eternal God, the generations come and go before You.  Brief is their time.  
Passing, they leave many of their tasks unfinished, their plans unfulfilled,  
their dreams unrealized.  It would be more than we could bear,  
but for the faith that our little day finds its permanence in Your eternity,  
and our work its completion in the unfolding of Your purpose for humanity.

At this sacred moment we turn our thoughts to those we love who have gone from life.  
We recall the joy of their companionship.  We feel a pang, the echo of that intenser grief when first  
their death lay before our stricken eyes.  
Now we know that they will never vanish,  
so long as heart and thought remain within us.  
By love are they remembered, and in memory they live.

O God, grant that their memory may bring strength and blessing.  
May the nobility in their lives and the high ideals they cherished  
endure in our thoughts and live on in our deeds.  
May we, carrying on their work, help to redeem Your promise that life shall prevail.

♦ ♦ ♦

As our service ends, we think about people whose lives have ended.  
Some of them we knew, and they were very special to us;  
we loved them, and we miss them very much.  
Others we did not know, but we honor them as well.

With our Kaddish, we thank You, God, for life and love.  
We remember wonderful people and we thank You for their lives.  
We too shall try to live as You want us to live.
In many modern synagogues, however, the entire congregation says Kaddish together. Some people feel that asking only the mourners to say Kaddish might make them uncomfortable by isolating and identifying them; some people believe, since so many people were killed in the Shoah with no one left to say Kaddish for them, that surviving Jews must take on that obligation; some people say Kaddish for their friends or other non-relatives whom they are remembering.

(continued)

Downstairs in the living room there’s a yahrzeit candle burning in my chest an ache, a sadness which has weighted me down all day. I don’t want to remember a year of mourning of being dead myself that was enough. To whose advantage this yearly pilgrimage back to my kingdom of darkness. Don’t I do her honor enough to remember day by day and speak of her when I’m sitting in my house and walking on my way? Have I forgotten the embrace of the womb? the way the light fell on her hair when she sat reading? her insatiable attentiveness to all of my life’s minutiae? Who does it serve that I light that candle and rekindle such depths of pain? All last night all today and now tonight again I have made myself busy visiting friends running errands cleaning the stove falling asleep early in my bed. By tomorrow morning the light in the living room will have burnt itself out and I can go back in there to put on a record or at least not lower my eyes as I scurry past on the way to the kitchen.
As we recall precious lives no longer here, Judaism bids we reflect not upon what we have lost but
upon what we have gained. For we are the beneficiaries of lives which have beautified our days, of
heart-lifting comfort which has eased our pain, of sacrificial devotion which has enriched our
being, and of unfailing guidance which has directed our steps. At this fleeting moment of
remembrance, it behooves us to think well of this unforgettable inheritance. At this solemn
moment of reciting the ancient Kaddish, we are inspired by our faith to express full gratitude to
God for what we were uniquely privileged to receive. May we always prove worthy of the love we
remember. May the memory of departed ones inspire us to hand down a measure of their love to
those who look now to us for guidance. May everything that was kind, decent, noble, good, and
strengthening in the lives of dear ones no longer here serve to be the ultimate source of consolation
and purpose in our lives. Inspire our hearts to reach out to hearts all around us at this hour who also
share poignantly in this tender communion of remembrance. May we strengthen each other
through our common loss and our uncommon challenge.

◊ ◊ ◊

O God, as we recall the loss of those so loved, be with us;
help us to remember that all things change—
the earth and stars, time and seasons,
and we who must to dust return.
You alone are everlasting, our eternal Rock,
Whose presence redeems us from death and despair.
God of comfort, shield us with Your love and kindness.
Help us to know that time does heal and grief will yield its final grip.
May the memory of those we loved and lost
strengthen our lives and guide us always in the ways of goodness.
God of compassion, be with us now and grant us peace.

◊ ◊ ◊

It is hard to sing of oneness when our world is not complete, when those
who once brought wholeness to our lives have gone, and naught but memory can fill
the emptiness their passing leaves behind. But memory can tell us only what we were,
in company with those we loved; it cannot help us find what each of us, alone,
must now become. Yet no one is really alone; those who live no more echo still
within our thoughts and words, and what they did is part of what we have become.

We do best homage to our dead when we live our lives most fully, even in the shadow of
our loss. For each of our lives is worth the life of the whole world;
in each one is the breath of the Ultimate One. In affirming the One,
we affirm the worth of each one whose life, now ended, brought us closer to
the Source of life, in Whose unity no one is alone and every life finds purpose.
New beginnings bring to mind old and recent endings. I owe much to the past and to those who embodied it. Parents and grandparents, children and siblings, teachers and shapers, friends and loved ones—all these, living and dead, add their touch to the person I have become. To the living, I turn in gratitude and love, extending my arms in friendship, offering them renewed love. To the dead, I turn in memory, affirming their lives with the fullness of my own. In the midst of doubt and hope, at once alone and in community, I seek the courage to bear the fearsome burden of the Unknown with dignity and grace. In honor of those who went before me, I rise to affirm the eternal cycle of birth and death with this Kaddish.

Each of these impulses is honorable and valuable. But asking everyone to recite Kaddish in unison risks robbing Kaddish of its power when it is needed. If saying Kaddish becomes the rote closing to the service, then the mourners who need to say Kaddish—need it not just because Judaism says they should say it, but because it is helpful for the grieving process—may only experience it as the usual ending reading.

(continued)
Judaism teaches us to understand death as a part of the divine pattern of the universe. Mortality is the price we must pay for the privileges of love and wisdom. It is because we are human that we are prisoners of a span of years; our creative time on earth is limited. There is a proper time for our infancy, childhood, and our adult lives. The cycle of life continues to the time when goodbyes must be said as those we love forge the expanse that links our world with God’s eternity. Death cannot be an end; it is only another step in the life cycle. We live on in immortality on earth in the eyes of our children, our children’s children, and all those whose worlds we touched. For the gift of this immortality, we join together in praise of the Source of all life.

What can we know of death, we who can not understand life? We study the seed and the cell, but the power deep within them will always elude us. Though we cannot understand, we accept life as the gift of God. Yet death, life’s twin, we face with fear. But why be afraid? Death is a haven to the weary, a relief for the sorely afflicted. We are safe in death as in life. There is no pain in death. There is only the pain of the living as they recall shared loves, and as they themselves fear to die. Calm us, O God, when we cry out in our fear and our grief. Turn us anew toward life and the world. Awaken us to the warmth of human love that speaks to us of You. We shall fear no evil as we affirm Your kingdom of life.

When cherished ties are broken, and the chain of love is shattered, only trust and the strength of faith can lighten the heaviness of the heart. At times, the pain of separation seems more than we can bear, but if we dwell too long on our loss we embitter our hearts and harm ourselves and those about us. The Psalmist said that in his affliction he learned the law of God. And in truth, grief is a great teacher, when it sends us back to serve and bless the living. We learn how to counsel and comfort those who, like ourselves, are bowed with sorrow. We learn when to keep silence in their presence, and when a word will assure them of our love and concern. Thus, even when they are gone, the departed are with us, moving us to live as, in their higher moments, they themselves wished to live. We remember them now; they live in our hearts; they are an abiding blessing.
KADDISH YATOM

Yitgadal v’yitkadash sh’meih raba,
b’al’ma di v’ra chir’uteih
v’yamlich malchuteih
b’chayeichon u-v’yomeichon
u-v’chayei d’chol beit Yisra-eil,
ba-agala u-vi-z’man kariv
v’imru: Amein.

Y’hei sh’meih raba m’varach
l’alam u-l’al’mei al’maya.

Yitbarach v’yishtabach
v’yitpa-ar v’yitromam v’yitnasei
v’yithadar v’yit-aleh v’yithalal
sh’meih d’Kudshah b’rich Hu,
l’eilah min kol
birchata v’shirata,
tushb’chata v’nechemata da-amiran b’al’ma
v’imru: Amein.

Y’hei sh’lama raba min sh’maya v’chayim
aleinu v’al kol Yisra-eil,
v’imru: Amein.

Oseh shalom bi-m’romav, Hu ya-aseh shalom
aleinu v’al kol Yisra-eil,
v’imru: Amein.
Therefore, we ask people to make a choice for themselves whether or not they wish to say Kaddish. When it is time for Kaddish, we will all stand in support of the mourners. The service leader will invite anyone who is in mourning or remembering someone to say Kaddish. If you feel yourself to be in mourning for someone, whether or not they are actually related to you, then feel free to join in reciting Kaddish. And if not, then please join in the supportive responses of the congregation, marked in Hebrew by a different font and boldface, and in transliteration by boldface.

MOURNER’S KADDISH

Exalted and hallowed be God’s great name
In this world which You created according to Your will.
May Your sovereignty be revealed
In the days of our lifetime
And the life of the whole House of Israel,
Speedily and soon,
And say: Amein.
May Your great name be
Blessed forever,
Even to all eternity.
Blessed and adored, glorified and acclaimed,
Lauded and honored, extolled and praised
Be the name of the Most Holy One
Beyond all blessings and hymns,
Praises and consolations,
That may be uttered in this world,
And say: Amein.
May peace abundant descend from heaven
With life for us and for all Israel,
And say: Amein.
May the One Who makes peace on high
Bring peace to us and to all Israel,
And say: Amein.