Autumn light in maple leaves
Bluest sky, new-washed dawn
Chorus of birds, southward-bound
Deepest red chrysanthemums
Earth's first rains, smoky breeze
Fresh-picked apples, honey sweet
Golden morning and the world reborn.

Here we gather, to greet the year
Invitation to improve our lives
Joyful season and judgment day
Know this truth: we are free to change.
Let the shofar summon us home
Make this moment our return to You
Now in celebration join
Open us to the gifts of life.

I HAVE awakened again
and I give thanks.
Before me: the blessing of this day—
a feast of choices and possibilities.
And the breath within me says:
Great is Your faithfulness.
You offer me another chance.
You offer me life.
This day I am created
to create this day.

THIS DAY I AM CREATED. The Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 27a) declares that the world was created on Rosh HaShanah; a midrash (Leviticus Rabbah 29:1) teaches that Rosh HaShanah marks the creation of human beings. Tradition views this as the season of creative energy and new beginnings—a time for growth and self-transformation.
**Study: Modern Era**

I want to make a confession, to give an accounting to myself, and to God. In other words, to measure my life and actions against the lofty ideals I've set for myself. To compare that which should have been with that which was....

—Hana Senesh (1921–1944), diary entry of October 11, 1940

**BEFORE I GO** to the market, I like to make lists. I look in the cupboards, see what is missing, in short supply, or might add some delight to our family's life. Once in the market, I find my list helps me to avoid overlooking anything and being distracted by attractions on every side.

In Elul, the month preceding Rosh HaShanah, I do the same thing. I take out my pocket calendar, look through every day of the waning year, and reflect on each day's events—where did I fall short, what was missing in my actions, on what good qualities was I running low? What new actions would add some holiness to my life?

I bring the list to **S'ilchat**, and to services on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, and compare its items to the specific sins in **Al Cheit**. I remember the circumstances of each **cheit**, each mark I missed; each **avon**, each time I twisted the path God set before me; each **pesha**, each time I outwardly rebelled against what I knew was right. I think, too, about having composed my solitary list of sins by myself, when the **Al Cheit** phrase says, “the sin which we have sinned before You.” It is an important reminder that I am part of a company of list-checkers; the ruefulness and shame I feel are shared by others. We all stand **l'fanecha**, “before You.” We can face God with this list. God does not turn away, and we do not have to either.

—Rabbi Richard N. Levy (b. 1937)

**AL CHEIT.** The public confession of wrongdoing, recited at the S'ilchat (forgiveness) service on the Saturday night preceding Rosh HaShanah, and multiple times on Yom Kippur.

**CHEIT, AVON, PESHA.** Three biblical terms for wrongdoing, each connoting a different type of misdeed. The Talmud (Yoma 36b) identifies these as follows: a **cheit** is an error—a wrong act committed unintentionally or inadvertently; an **avon** is a deliberate misdeed; a **pesha** is an act whose purpose is to defy God and flout divine teaching. Rabbi Levy defines the terms somewhat differently here, drawing on the meaning of the Hebrew root of each word: **cheit** (from the verb “to miss the mark”), **avon** (from the verb “to twist”), **pesha** (“to rebel”).
"EVERYONE MUST HAVE two pockets. In the right pocket, one should place the words: 'For my sake was the world created' (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). And in the left: 'I am but dust and ashes' (Genesis 18:27)."
—attributed to Rabbi Simcha Bunim (1767–1827) of Przysucha

**COMMENTARY**

This saying depicts two contradictory visions of the Creation: According to one, the individual is the crown of Creation; according to the other, humanity is “dust and ashes.” Many people believe that Rabbi Simcha draws a continuum between the two visions, and calls on us to strike a balance between the two extremes: “Reach into the proper pocket when needed.”

But we might take Rabbi Simcha’s words as a warning: Both statements caution us against equally dangerous attitudes. Both are indicators of an incomplete self, and are laced with a narcissistic thread. An “it’s-all-about-me” stance often reflects a sense of worthlessness. Instead of reaching into either pocket, instead of pampering one’s ego or denying it, we are challenged to use the ego carefully. . . .

What other warnings should we keep in our pockets during the season of t’shuvah?

—Rabbi Dalia Marx (b. 1966)

**WHY DOES** Rosh HaShanah precede Yom Kippur? No sooner do we mark the New Year than we begin repenting for our sins. Surely the logical sequence would be the reverse: we should repent and then usher in the New Year with a clean slate.

Rosh HaShanah is a day we celebrate the world. We appreciate the beauty, the wonder, and the miraculousness of life. That appreciation is critical; for only when we understand how splendid yet fragile is God’s world can we begin to repent for having damaged or neglected it. All tikun, all repairation, begins in appreciation. We heal relationships because we understand their value. We seek to restore the imbalances in the natural world because its native pageantry dazzles our eyes. Yom Kippur is the outcome of our Rosh HaShanah vision: surrounded by possibility, we need to heal what we have hurt, or nurture the untended patches of God’s garden. Seeing the cracks in creation, we acknowledge our obligation to fill them. First comes gratitude, then regret, then restoration.

—Rabbi David Wolpe (b. 1958)
SAID RABBI LEVI YITZCHAK OF BERDITCHEV:

In every action, we must regard our own body as the Holy of Holies, a part of the Supreme Power on earth—that is, as a manifestation of the Divine. Whenever we lift our hands to do a deed, let us consider them to be God's instruments.

You have taught us:

Guard yourselves well; take good care of your lives.

Your word calls to us:

Do no harm to yourself! Do not weaken or exhaust yourself!

In gratitude for the gift of our bodies,

we pray for a year of renewed health and replenished strength.

May caring for our bodies become our daily practice.

May we be attentive to our need for proper food, sleep, and exercise.

Let no injury come to others through our acts or failure to act;

but let our mitzvah be this:

to build a just society in which care is a birthright

and the blessing of health the responsibility of all.

Baruch atah, Adonai, rofei chol basar, umafli laasot.

We praise You, Holy One,

for wondrous acts of creation and healing.

RABBI LEVI YITZCHAK. A Chasidic master (1740–1809).

GUARD YOURSELVES . . . YOUR LIVES, Deuteronomy 4:15.

YOUR WORD CALLS . . . WEAKEN OR EXHAUST YOURSELF. Adapted from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888).

THE BLESSING OF HEALTH. Wrote Moses Maimonides, Spanish-born rabbi and physician (1135–1204): “To walk in the ways of God, it is a person’s duty to avoid whatever is injurious to the body and to cultivate habits conducive to health and vigor.”
Elohai, n'shamah shenatata bi —
't'horah hi.
Atah v'ratah,
atah y'tzartah,
atah n'fachta bi,
v'atah m'sham'rah b'kirbi.
V'atah atid lit'lah mimeni,
uhachazirah bi le·atid lavo.
Kol z'man shehan'shamah v'kirbi,
modeh/modah ani l'fanecha,
Adoni Elohai v'Elohei avotai v'imotai,
Ribon kol hamaasim,
Adon kol han'shamot.

Pure, my God, is the soul You gave me.
You formed it. You shaped it. You breathed it into me.
You keep it safe within me.
Someday, when this soul returns to You,
I will find a place in eternity.
But as long as spirit breathes within me,
I place before You my thanks,
Eternal my God and God of my ancestors,
Creator of all creation, Sovereign of all souls.

Baruch atah, Adonai, asher b'yado nefesh kol chai, v'ruach kol b'sar ish.
We give You praise, Adonai: all life is in Your hand;
and in Your care, the soul of every human being.

The Hebrew word 't'horah connotes both physical cleanliness and moral virtue, suggesting that nothing can taint the human soul. As the divine spark within us, the soul's essence is radiant purity. So Proverbs 20:27 calls the human soul ner Adonai (the light of God).
Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
asher natan lasechvi vinah
l'hevchin bein yom vein lailah.

You are the Source of blessings, Adonai; Your great power
gave the mind discernment to distinguish light from darkness.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
pokei-ach ivrim.

You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power opens eyes that cannot see.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
matir asurim.

You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power brings freedom to the captive.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
zokeif k'fufim.

You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power lifts up the fallen.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
roka haaretz al hamayim.

You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power spreads the land upon the waters.

SOURCE OF BLESSINGS נחלת ברכה. Sefer HaChinuch, a 13th-century work, teaches that in
saying Baruch atah we are not blessing or praising God, which would imply that God re­
quires our praise. Rather, we are gratefully acknowledging God as the Source of all blessings.

Many other classical commentators agree, including Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th c.), Rabbi
David ben Yosef Abudirham (14th c.), and Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher (14th c.).
WE PRAISE YOU, Adonai our God, ruler of all time and space . . .

We call You poket-ach ivrim, the Opener of blind eyes.  
Help us to see Your world in a new light.

We call You malbesh arumim, the Dresser of those without clothing. 
Help us to put on the garments of health and life.

We call You matir asurim, the Freer of captives. 
Help us to break free of the bonds that keep us locked within ourselves.

We call You zokeif k'fufim, the Straightener of bent backs. 
Help us to find the power to stand upright and proud.

We call You hameichin mitzadei gaver, the Steadiness in our steps. 
Help us to understand our journey ever more clearly.

We call You hanotein laya-ef ko-ach, the Source of strength for the weary. 
Help us to be strong, and to be a source of strength for those we love.

FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT RISE

It is written in our blessings: "Your great power lifts up the fallen."  
But what of those who cannot stand up?

The Hebrew letter vav appears in the word zokeif (lifts up).  
Vav is also a connection-word, meaning "and":  
it signifies the link between heaven and earth, between human and divine.

Those who stand up straight align themselves with heaven, 
signifying their aspiration to stretch upward 
and fulfill their highest potential.

Yet the letter vav appears also in the word k'fufim (the fallen; the bent). 
Those whose bodies cannot rise possess the same divine essence, the same potential.

Despite their physical limitations, they can rise within— 
in their hearts and in their minds.

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WE PRAISE YOU. By Rabbi Larry Bach (b. 1968).  
FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT RISE. Inspired by a teaching of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1885–1935).
Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
she-asah-li kol tzorki.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power has made all I need.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
hameichin mitzadei-gaver.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power gives firmness to our steps.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
malbish arumim.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power clothes the naked.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
hanotein laya·el ko·ach.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power gives strength to the weary.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
hamaavir sheinah mei·einai,
Your great power removes sleep from my eyes,
slumber from my eyelids.

**HAS MADE ALL I NEED**

Why is this blessing written in the first-person singular? Rabbi Moshe Berger teaches that each of us should say these words in the firm conviction that God has given us all the resources we need, if only we use them properly. But this blessing applies only to ourselves; we should never assume that others do not need our help.

**GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEARY** Isaiah 40:29.
Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
she-asani b’tzlem Elohim.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power made me in the image of God.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
she-asani ben/bat chorin.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power endowed me with human freedom.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
she-asani Yisrael.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power has made me Yisrael.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
ozeir Yisrael bigvurah.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power gives strength to Yisrael.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
oteir Yisrael b’tifarah.
You are the Source of blessings, Adonai;
Your great power crowns Yisrael with glory.

The 12th-century sage Maimonides asserts the impossibility of assigning any physical characteristics to God; hence this phrase must refer to some non-corporeal quality possessed by human beings. For Maimonides, this was the intellect; for Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin (d. 1900), the phrase “image of God” refers to free will and the human capacity for decision-making. Noting that Elohim (“God”) may also be translated “judge,” Rabbi David Silverberg (b. 1972) writes: “Perhaps the relevance of this equation between man and magistrate lies in the human ability and responsibility to both discern and decide between right and wrong, and our freedom to act according to our own judgment.”
Blessed is the One who spoke the world into being. Praised is God.

Praised — the One who is ever creating.
Praised — the One who creates with a word.
Praised — the One whose vision is made real.
Praised — the One who loves the earth.
Praised — the One who loves earth’s creatures.
Praised — the One whose worshipers know goodness.
Praised — the One whose life and being last forever.
Praised — the One who rescues and sets free. Blessed is Your name.

Our sovereign, we praise You with songs of celebration.
Your Oneness is the life of the cosmos.

Blessed are You, Adonai. Your majesty is celebrated in songs of praise.
Ashrei — Happy Are Those

Ashrei yosh’vei veitecha,
oz y’hal’ucha selah.
Ashrei haam shekacha lo,
ashrei haam she-Adonai elohav.

Happy are those who dwell in Your house;
they shall sing Your praises forever.
Happy the people for whom it is so;
happy the people whose God is Adonai.

T’hilah l’David.
Aromimcha, Elohai HaMelech;
vaavar’cha shimcha l’olam va-ed.
B’chol-yom avar’cha;
vaahal’lah shimcha l’olam va-ed.
Gadol Adonai umhulal m’od;
v’ligdulato ein cheiker.
Hadar k’vod hodecha;
v’divrel nifl’otecha asichah.
Ve’ezez nor’otecha yomeiru;
ugdulat’cha asap’renah.
Zeicher rav-tuv’cha yablu;
v’tzidkat’cha y’raneinu.
Chanun v’rachum Adonai;
erech apayim ugdol-chased.

HAPPY THE PEOPLE

Baruch she-Amar
Baruch she-Amee
Ashrei
T’hilim 27
T’hilim 121
Kol Ha’n’shahah
Kol Ha’k’hilah
Psalm 145
This acrostic psalm praises a specific dimension of the Divine: God’s power is manifest in generosity, compassion, and benevolence toward all living things. The Psalmist celebrates a world abundant in resources, in which all creatures receive the sustenance they need.
Psalm 150

Halleluyah!
Praise God in our holy Temple;
give praise in the heavens, God’s fortress.
Praise God for deeds of great power;
give praise for the depths of God’s grandeur.
Praise God with the blast of the shofar;
give praise with the harp and the lyre.
Praise God with drumbeat and dancing;
give praise with the strings and the flute.
Praise God with the crash of cymbals,
and praise with the clash of resounding cymbals!
With every quiet breath, let everything that breathes
praise God — Halleluyah!

Psalm 150. This ecstatic song of praise recalls the vigor, passion, and dynamism of ancient Israelite worship. For the Psalmist, the prayer community’s joyful song mirrors the joyful praise that emanates from the heavens, creating a universal symphony in celebration of the Divine. Scholars cannot identify with certainty the various musical instruments mentioned here. Yet the overall sense is clear: when language reaches its limits, the human spirit finds expression through purely physical acts: music-making, dance, even the drawing of breath. The words teika shofar (the blast of the shofar) and tzilts lei t’ruah (resounding cymbals) link this psalm to the shofar calls of Rosh HaShanah: T’kiah! T’ruah!
By the mouths of the upright You are raised up;
in the words of the righteous You are blessed;
on the tongues of the pious You are sanctified;
in the midst of the holy You are praised.
Your people by the thousands sing to glorify Your name.
In all generations we give voice to Your sovereignty.

Yishtabach shimcha laad, Malkeinu.

Our sovereign God, source of holiness and greatness —
may Your name be praised forever in this world and beyond.
Eternal One, God of our mothers and our fathers,
Your strength, sanctity, glory, and dominion
are deserving of song, praise, poetry, hymn, sacred chant,
and blessings of thankfulness for all time and eternity.

Baruch atah, Adonai, El melech gadol batishbachot, El hahodaot,
adon haniflaot, habocheir b’shirei zimrah, melech, El chei haolamim.
Blessed are You, Adonai, Sovereign of praise, Source of the impulse
to give thanks, Crown of wonders — who desires a world
filled with song and a universe of life.

*BY THE MOUTHS OF THE UPRIGHT* בפי ישרים. This prayer lists four categories of people:
y’sharim, tzadikim, chasidim, and k’doshim — the upright, the righteous, the pious, and the holy. When these four words are aligned as above, their initial letters spell the name Isaac (Yitzchak), possibly an allusion to the prayer’s composer. Some also see this as an allusion to the biblical patriarch, whose righteousness and holiness were manifest when he let himself be bound as an offering to God. An internal acrostic reveals the name Rebecca (Rivkah), a matriarch known for her compassion and generosity.
Sh'ma Uvirchoteha • Sh'ma and Its Blessings

Bar'chu et Adonai hamvorach.
Baruch Adonai hamvorach l'olam va-ed.

Bless the Eternal, the Blessed One.
Blessed is the Eternal, the Blessed One, now and forever.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu melech haolam,
yotzeir or uvoeri choshech;
oseh shalom uvoerei et hakol.
Or olam b'otzar chayim.
Orot mei-ofel amar: “Vayehi.”

Source of Blessings, our Eternal God, Your power fills the cosmos:
shaping light, creating darkness,
making peace and fashioning all things.

Infinite light is preserved in life’s treasure-house;
“Lights from the darkness!” said God — it was so.

INFINITE LIGHT אינפיניטי לייט. These lines, from an ancient liturgical poem by Yose ben Yose (4th–5th centuries CE), are added to the Yotzeir Or blessing on the High Holy Days. They refer to a Talmudic legend (Chagiga 12a) that the brilliant primordial light of Creation, too powerful for mortal eyes, was hidden away by God, and is preserved for the righteous in the world-to-come.

LIFE’S TREASURE-HOUSE פעמון החיים. Each of us is a repository of life. We are where life is stored, and this eternal light rests inside each of us, waiting for us to manifest it with our actions. When we act justly, we bring this light into the world, answering God’s dictum, “Lights from the darkness!” When we help another, we bring the “it was so” into the present, an ongoing creation of light in darkness. (Rabbi David Kominsky, b. 1971)
IN LOVE YOU BRING LIGHT. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 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MORNING SERVICE: Sh'ma AND ITS BLESSINGS

Sh'ma, Yisrael: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad!
Listen, Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va-ed.
Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

Blessed Is God's Glorious Majesty כְּשָׁם שֵׁם. Baruch shem (unlike Sh'ma Yisrael) is not from the Torah; hence these words are said by some in a whisper, to distinguish them from the Sh'ma and to offer a private meditative moment. They are drawn from Psalm 72:19: Baruch shem k'vod malchuto (Blessed be God's glorious name forever). The word malchuto (God's majesty; literally "kingdom") was added during Roman times, in defiance of those who proclaimed the divinity of the emperor. Many people close or cover their eyes while saying the Sh'ma — not to escape from reality, but to focus on the ultimate reality: the unity of all existence.

Listen, Israel: The early Rabbis describe the act of saying Sh'ma Yisrael as kabbalet malchat shammayim (accepting the yoke of divine sovereignty). Its essence is not just the recitation of the words, but an inner assent and affirmation — the turning of the heart to God. The Sh'ma is not merely a theological statement of God's unity; it speaks of our relationship to the Divine. We declare that we are responsible and accountable to a power in the universe beyond ourselves.
You shall love Adonai your God with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your heart.

Teach them faithfully to your children.

Speak of them in your home and on your 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; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.

Some congregations continue with V'hayah Im Shamoah (Section 2 of the Sh'ma) on page 154.

V’AHAVTA (בַּהֲלֹה), Deuteronomy 6:5–9.

YOUR SOUL (נפש). In the Bible, the word nefesh refers to the life force, the vital energy possessed by all living beings. In later Hebrew, nefesh comes to refer to the unique, intangible and imperishable essence of a person. Jewish tradition (Mishnah B’rachot 9:5) interpreted the mitzvah of loving God with all one’s nefesh to mean: “love God even when God takes your life.” We might also understand this mitzvah as a call to devote one’s best energies to God’s work. The High Holy Days are especially focused on cheshbon hanefesh — a spiritual inventory or assessment. We scrutinize our deeds to ask if our nefesh has lived up to its potential.
WHERE DOES ISRAEL get the courage—the chutzpah—to go on believing in redemption in a world that knows mass hunger, political exile, and war? How can Jews testify to hope and human value when they have been continuously persecuted, hated, expelled, destroyed? Out of the memories of the Exodus!

The voice that redeems us comes from within.

Said Rabbi Eleazar HaModai:
Consider the courage of Israel.
When Moses said to the people in Egypt, "Arise and go forth,"
they did not ask, "How can we go into the wilderness with no sustenance for the way?"
They had faith and went forward.
The voice that lifts up the lowly, upholds the exhausted, and tells us to put one foot in front of the other—sometimes it comes from within.

Remember the stories of slavery and you will never stop working for freedom.
Remember their fear at the edge of the Sea, and self-doubt will never defeat you.
Remember when desperation turned to celebration, and you will never let go of hope.
Remember the words of the Baal Shem Tov: "Forgetfulness leads to exile; remembrance is the secret of redemption."

WHERE DOES ISRAEL. By Rabbi Irving Greenberg (b. 1933).
SAID RABBI ELEAZAR . . . WENT FORWARD. Based on Midrash Tanchuma Buber, B'shalach 16.
BAAL SHEM TOV. Rabbi Israel ben Elezer (1698–1760), the founder of Chasidism, is called "Master of the Good Name" because of his gift for reaching the Divine (i.e., the Good Name). Visitors read his words as they exit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.
“Of all that is worshiped, is there another like You? Maker of wonders, who is like You — in holiness sublime, evoking awe and praise?”

At the sea — with a new song on their lips — the redeemed praised Your name. Overflowing with gratitude, they proclaimed Your sovereignty and spoke as one, declaring: “The Eternal will reign till the end of time.”

Rock of Israel, arise and come to the help of Your people Israel. Keep Your word by redeeming Judah and Israel. The Eternal and Infinite One is our redeemer, our source of holiness.

Blessed are You in our lives, Eternal One, who redeemed Israel.

WHO REDEEMED ISRAEL? In the Bible, g’ulah (redemption) is connected with the concept of responsibility for one’s family or clan. A go-eil (redeemer) rescues a relative from slavery or captivity, or helps a kinsman who has fallen into poverty. In this prayer, the term is applied to God’s intervention on behalf of the Israelite slaves — a past redemption that inspires us to work for a world without poverty or suffering.

AN INCOMPARABLE TREASURE of moral strength lies in the idea of redemption, the belief in the Messianic future. It gives us faith in moral progress, and in the ultimate unity of all human-kind. (Rabbi Elie Munk, 1900–1981)
Prayer is a step on which we rise from the self we are, to the self we wish to be. Prayer affirms the hope that no reality can crush, the aspiration that can never acknowledge defeat.

—RABBI MORRIS ADLER

Make every effort to pray from the heart. Even if you do not succeed, the effort is precious in the eyes of the Eternal One.

—RABBI NACHMAN OF BRESLOV

Adonai, s'fatai tiftach,
ufi yagid t'hilatecha.
Adonai, open my lips,
that my mouth may declare Your praise.

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRESLOV, 1772-1810.

Adonai, open my lips, to the heart, that my mouth may declare Your praise.

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRESLOV, 1772-1810.

Adonai, open my lips, to the heart, that my mouth may declare Your praise.

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RABBI NACHMAN OF BRESLOV, 1772-1810.

Adonai, open my lips, to the heart, that my mouth may declare Your praise.

Baruch atah, Adonai,
Eloheinu v’Elohei avoteinu v’imoteinu:
Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak,
v’Elohei Yaakov;
Elohei Sarah, Elohei Rivkah,
Elohei Rachel, v’Elohei Leah;
haEl hagadol hagibor v’hanora,
El elyon,
gomeil chasadim tovim, v’koneih hakol —
v’zocheir chasdei avot v’imahot,
umeivi g’ulah livnei v’neihem,
l’maan sh’mo b’ahavah.

Zochreinu l’chayim,
Melech chafeitz bachayim.
V’chotveinu b’sefer hachayim,
l’mancha, Elohim chayim.

Melech ozeir umoshia umagein —
מלך חזיר עמוסיה ומעיין —
הכומר לחיים.
מפלך חפצי חיים.
מקתוב עפר חיים.
lam茈בך אלים חיים.

You are the Source of blessing, Adonai, our God and God of our fathers and mothers: God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob; God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah; exalted God, dynamic in power, inspiring awe, God sublime, Creator of all — yet You offer us kindness, recall the loving deeds of our fathers and mothers, and bring redemption to their children’s children, acting in love for the sake of Your name.

Remember us for life, sovereign God who treasures life.
Inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, God of life.

Sovereign of salvation, Pillar of protection —
ברוך אתה, יים אברכים ו},'קוזה שרה.

Blessed are You in our lives, Adonai, Shield of Abraham, Sustainer of Sarah.

REMINDER US ... GOVERN WHO TREASURES LIFE Does this mean God is liable to forget us? Perhaps, instead, our prayer expresses our wish to live the kind of life that God treasures — a life worthy of remembrance.
In Hebrew, choose either hakol or meitim.

Atah gibor l’olam, Adonai —
mezhe hakol/meitim atah,
rav l’hoshia.
Morid hatal.

Megalel him b’chesed,
mezhe hakol/meitim
b’rachamim rabim —
someich noflim,
v’rafei cholim umatir asurim;
umontey emunato lisheinei afar.
Mi chamocha, baal g’vurot;
umi domeh-lach? —
melech meimit umchayeh
umatzmiach y’shuah.

Mi chamocha, El harachamim? —
zocher y’tzurav l’chayim b’rachamim.

V’ne’eman atah l’hachayot hakol/meitim.

Your life-giving power is forever, Adonai — with us in life and in death. You liberate and save, cause dew to descend; and with mercy abundant, lovingly nurture all life. From life to death, You are the force that flows without end — You support the falling, heal the sick, free the imprisoned and confined; You are faithful, even to those who rest in the dust.

Power-beyond-Power, from whom salvation springs, Sovereign over life and death — who is like You? Merciful God, who compares with You? With tender compassion You remember all creatures for life. Faithful and true, worthy of our trust — You sustain our immortal yearnings; in You we place our undying hopes.

Baruch atah, Adonai, mezhe hakol/meitim.

Wellspring of blessing, Power eternal, You are the One who gives and renews all life.
The fantasy of the Book of Life and God's judgment is memorable, but the extraordinary aspect of the prayer is its emotional impress: *Any of us might die of anything, any time. When? Now or later? With or without warning? Who by stroke and who by cancer, who by famine and who by plague, who by collision and who by explosion? We are grass, glass, shadow, cloud, Adam.*

Certainly it is imaginary; how else but through imagination do you talk about death in the community where you spend your life—with the people you know, the people you do business with, the people who help you, love you, employ you, exasperate you? Indirection and fable are forms of delicacy; they create an atmosphere in which painful subjects can be raised without speaking of specific deaths that have wounded the people you know. The *Untaneh Tokef* was written in a time when fear and sorrow were closer to the surface of public life than they are now, but in private life we still know that security is a thin veneer. God suspends the earth over the void, says a *piyut* in the Yom Kippur *Shacharit* *Amidah*; the *Untaneh Tokef* shows us the thread on which it hangs.

—Catherine Madsen (b. 1952)

*Why do I, for one, want to hear all of Untaneh Tokef, not only the comforting parts?* An answer comes from the octogenarian violinist Olga Blum, founder of Barge Music in Brooklyn. Olga was once asked by the mayor of New York: “Olga, why don’t you put the barge on pilings so that when a large boat passes and causes a wake, the barge won’t rock any more and the piano won’t ever roll across the stage during a performance (as it once did)?” Olga replied: “I will never put the barge up on pilings because all beauty, all art, is in some way a wrestling with impermanence and death.” *Untaneh Tokef* is an artistic wrestling with impermanence and death, with deeds and their consequences, with power and powerlessness, with fear and reassurance, with mistakes and second chances.

—Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig (b. 1957)
And so, let these words of sanctity ascend to You—
for You are our God and Sovereign.

Let us proclaim the power of this day —
a day whose holiness awakens deepest awe
and inspires highest praise for Your dominion,
for Your throne is a throne of love;
Your reign is a reign of truth.

In truth,
You are judge and plaintiff, counselor and witness.
You inscribe and seal. You record and recount.
You remember all that we have forgotten.
And when You open the Book of Memories,
it speaks for itself —
for every human hand leaves its mark,
an imprint like no other.
And so a great shofar will cry — t’khiah.
A still small voice will be heard.
Angels, in a whirl of fear and trembling, will say:
“Behold the day of judgment” —
for they too are judged;
in Your eyes even they are not blameless.
All who come into the world pass before You
like sheep before their shepherd.
As a shepherd considers the flock,
when it passes beneath the staff,
You count and consider every life.
You set bounds; You decide destiny;
You inscribe judgments.

A GREAT SHOFAR WILL CRY. Here the scene expands from the human experience of Rosh HaShanah to a cosmic drama. The poet imagines the angels, too, anxiously awaiting God’s judgment, as all created beings live under divinely decreed limits. Yet God is imagined as a shepherd — an image conveying care, concern, and protectiveness.
On Rosh HaShanah this is written; on the Fast of Yom Kippur this is sealed:

How many will pass away from this world, how many will be born into it; who will live and who will die; who will reach the ripeness of age, who will be taken before their time; who by fire and who by water; who by war and who by beast; who by famine and who by drought; who by earthquake and who by plague; who by strangling and who by stoning; who will rest and who will wander; who will be tranquil and who will be troubled; who will be calm and who tormented; who will live in poverty and who in prosperity; who will be humbled and who exalted—
We sanctify Your name in the world,
as celestial song sanctifies You in realms beyond our world,
in the words of Your prophet:

“Holy Holy Holy is the God of heaven’s hosts.
The fullness of the whole earth is God’s glory.”

God of Strength who gives us strength,
God of Might who gives us might —
how magnificent the signs of Your Being throughout the earth.

“Blessed is the splendor that shines forth from the Eternal.”

Our God is one —
Avinu and Malkeinu, sovereign Source of life and liberation —
revealing with mercy to all who live: “I am Adonai your God.”

HOLY שִׁירָה, Isaiah 6:3.
GOD OF MIGHT מִלְחַיְיָהוּ, Psalm 8:2, 10.
BLESSED מִלְחַיְיָהוּ, Ezekiel 3:12.
I AM יִהְיֶה, Numbers 15:41.
WHY AM I DIFFERENT from all others?
I cried in my loneliness,
And a thousand children's voices piped,
Why are we different from all other people?
But there are no two stones alike
In all the universe of pebbles.
No two leaves on any tree are just the same,
Nor animals, nor birds, nor people.
Difference is the mark of the hand of the Creator
And evolution is God's handiwork.
Each of us is meant to be ourselves
And each person to be great in its own way.
We are different in a universe of differences
Swimming in the moving waters of history.
We Jews want to be a warm current in an icy river,
We want to create a climate for living things.
Let us have courage to be thankful for our differences,
Let us pray for strength to accept our obligations.

THE PEOPLE'S true history
is a history of encounters with God.
It has this history for its own sake
and for the sake of humanity.
It bears it and is borne by it.
Every person is a question
which God addresses to humanity;
and every person, from its own place,
with its special talents and possibilities,
must answer for its own sake
and for the sake of humanity.

WHY AM I DIFFERENT. By Ruth Brin (1921-2009).
THIS PEOPLE'S TRUE HISTORY. By Rabbi Leo Baeck (1873-1956). While imprisoned in the
Theresienstadt concentration camp, Rabbi Baeck continued to teach and offer spiritual
support; he also began a book titled This People Israel: The Meaning of Jewish Existence,
where these words appear.
Ours is the duty to praise the All-Sovereign, to honor the Artist of Creation, who made us unique in the human family, with a destiny all our own. For this we bend our knees and bow with gratitude before the Sovereign Almighty — Monarch of All — the Wellspring of holiness and blessing, who spread out the sky and fashioned the land, who dwells in beauty far beyond sight, whose powerful presence is the loftiest height. You are our God; there is none else. We take as true Your sovereignty; there is no other — as Torah teaches: “Embrace and carry in your heart this day: In heaven above, on earth below, the Eternal is God. There is no other.”

SPREAD OUT...THE LAND יבר...האר, Isaiah 51:3; Zechariah 12:1.
EMBRACE בחר, Deuteronomy 4:39.
Baruch atah, Adonai, 
Eloheinu melech haolam, 
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, 
v'tzivanu lishmoa kol shofar.

Baruch atah, Adonai, 
Eloheinu melech haolam, 
shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu 
lez'man hazeh.

Source of blessing, Eternal our God, 
You fill the universe with majestic might — 
summoning us to hear the sound of the shofar.

Source of blessing, Eternal our God, 
You fill the universe with majestic might — 
giving us life, upholding the life within us, 
and bringing us to this time.

The shofar is sounded.

T'kiah Sh'varim-T'ruah T'kiah
T'kiah Sh'varim T'kiah
T'kiah T'ruah T'kiah

The sages of the Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 33b–34a), in defining the length and order of the shofar sounds, agree that they resemble different sorts of weeping: a melancholy sigh of three wavering blasts called Sh'varim (Broken); and short piercing cries of nine staccato notes called T'ruah (Shout). Also included is a longer blast, T'kiah, a call of alarm or joy. Thus, the combination of sounds conveys the double mood of Rosh HaShanah: both solemn trepidation and festive celebration.
Today the world is born anew. This day, the whole of creation stands before You to be judged. As we are Your children, love us in the way of mothers and fathers. As we are Yours in service, guide us by the light of Your justice, grace, and holiness.

Areshet s'fateinu ye'era v'l'janecha,
El ram v'nisa —
mevin umaazin, mabit umakshiv
l'kol t'kiatenu.
Utkabeil b'rachamim uvratzon seder
malchuyotenu.

Let the wishes of our lips — our heart’s desire — be pleasing before You, God Most High. You are knowing and attentive, watchful and aware when we call out: T'kiah! Lovingly, favorably receive our prayers of Malchuyot!

TODAY THE WORLD IS BORN ANEW. Rosh HaShanah celebrates the creation of the universe, and also of human beings, blessed with the potential for continuous self-creation and self-improvement. Rabbi Hayyim Herman Kieval (1920–1991) writes: “Rosh HaShanah carries the momentous message that the human personality, the ‘crown of creation,’ possesses limitless capacities for renewal.” Thus the Sages teach that on Rosh HaShanah, God says to us: “My children, I look upon you as if today I had created a new creature” (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 29:1).
To our sages who toiled —
To the one who chopped wood; to the one who raised cattle
To the storekeeper, the cobbler, and the one who sold salt
To the one who brewed beer and the one who filled casks of wine
To the tailor; to the teacher; to the dealer in cotton
To the one who scrubbed clothing; to the keeper of vines
To the merchant of silk; to the one who plowed fields
To the builder of houses; to the doctors and scribes
To the blacksmith; to the tanner; to the digger of graves
Let us give thanks for a tradition that sanctifies work.
Let us honor those who toil and sustain the world
in noble and humble ways.
We acknowledge those whose labor goes unnoticed.
We praise the strength of their hands,
and the dedication of their hearts.

God is bringing you into a good land,
a land with streams and springs and fountains
that flow from valleys and mountains. (Deuteronomy 8:7)
The Seer of Lublin taught:
As water flows forth in streams and wellsprings,
so does God's goodness—an ever-flowing fountain of compassion.
Know this, and you will feel the kindness of God
not only on the mountain peaks of life, but also in the valleys.

To our sages, Rabban Gamliel said: "Torah study is good together with an occupation" (Pirkei Avot 2:2). Among the many Talmudic rabbis whose occupations are mentioned here are the two whose debates shaped and defined Rabbinic Judaism: Hillel and Shammai.

Seer of Lublin. The Chasidic rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz (ca. 1745–1815).
Eloheinu v’Elohei avoteinu v’imoteinu,
bar’cheinu bab’rachah hamshuleshet
hak’tuvah baTorah,
haamurah mipi kohanim —
am k’doshecha — kaamur:
“Y’varech·cha Adonai v’yishm’recha.”
Kein y’hi ratzon.
“Ya·eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka.”
Kein y’hi ratzon.
“Yisa Adonai panav eilecha
v’yaseim l’cha shalom.”
Kein y’hi ratzon.

Our God,
Divine Presence whose path our ancestors walked,
bless us now with words first bestowed on Israel
in the time of Moses and Aaron —
the threefold blessing, given us through Torah.
that joins our hopes with theirs:

May you know God’s blessings of shelter and care.
May it be so.
May you receive the light of God’s kindness and grace.
May it be so.
May you see God’s favor and goodness;
and may you partake of God’s peace.
May it be so.

MAY YOU KNOW "יָרָא יְהוָה אֶלֶף", Known in Reform Judaism as Birkat Shalom (Blessing of Peace), these words from Numbers 6:24–26 were originally offered by Aaron, his sons, and their priestly descendants; thus the verses are also known as Birkat Kohanim (the Priestly Blessing). This passage from the Torah is part of the intimacy of Jewish home life. Parents traditionally recite these words when they bless their children on Friday nights; rabbis often say them when blessing a bar/bat mitzvah.

In 1979, inscriptions on thin silver foil, bearing words almost identical to these, were unearthed in Jerusalem. Dating from about 600 BCE, they contain one of the oldest surviving texts from the Hebrew Bible.

GOD’S BLESSINGS. Kabbalistic sources speak of shefa, the abundant goodness that flows continually from God, enriching and sustaining our world. Our prayer does not seek to persuade God to offer blessings; rather, it seeks to awaken our awareness of divine blessings already in our life.
The Divine That Is Present Within and Among Us

Avinu Malkeinu —
We stand in awe; we draw close in love.

Avinu Malkeinu —
The Power that passes through us and pervades all things.

Avinu Malkeinu —
The Divine that is present within and among us.

Avinu Malkeinu, sh'ma koleinu.
We speak this sacred truth aloud.

Avinu Malkeinu, chatanu l'fanecha.
We stand as one, accountable for our sins.

Avinu Malkeinu, chamol aleinu v'ol aleinu v'tapeinu.
We yearn for true compassion—for our children most of all.

Avinu Malkeinu, kaleih dever v'cherev v'raav mei·aleinu.
May we resist the ravages of illness, fear, and despair.

THE DIVINE THAT IS PRESENT WITHIN AND AMONG US. This version of the traditional prayer reflects the kabbalistic notion that God is not an entity "out there," separate and distinct from us. Rather, all things, including human beings, exist within God and are manifestations of the Divine. As Rabbi Isaac of Homel (early 19th century) taught: "There is nothing but God alone and ... all is God." This ancient and yet radical view offers us a less hierarchical sense of the Avinu Malkeinu prayer, in which we are not "praying to" anything, but acknowledging the greater reality of which we are a part.

RESIST THE RAVAGES OF ILLNESS, FEAR, AND DESPAIR. Asked by an interviewer what I thought of an experiment that seemed to show that praying for people in hospitals made no difference, I told her, "God's job is not to make sick people healthy. That's the doctor's job. God's job is to make sick people brave." (Rabbi Harold Kushner, b. 1935)
Avinu Malkeinu

Avinu Malkeinu, kaleih kol tzar umastin mei-aleinu.
Let us summon courage to withstand our enemies.

Avinu Malkeinu, kotveinu b’sefer chayim tovim.
Let the goodness of this gift of life be engraved upon our hearts.

Avinu Malkeinu, chadeish aleinu shanah tovah.
May we taste anew the sweetness of each day.

Avinu Malkeinu, malei yadeinu mibirchotecha.
Let us wake up to the blessings already in our grasp.

Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu vaaneinu; ki ein banu maasim.
Aseih imanu tz’dakah vachesed, v’hoshi’einu.
However small our deeds, let us see their power to heal. May we save lives through compassion, generosity, and justice.

MAY WE SAVE LIVES. All traditional Jewish prayer, including Reform, speaks of “God’s power to save.” But this version of Avinu Malkeinu sees it differently: human action is a manifestation of God’s power. In other words, as the embodiment of God’s qualities (compassion, generosity, justice), it is we human beings who have the power to save lives. This is a compelling assertion to make when the inevitable question is raised in the wake of tragedy: Where was God?
K'riat HaTorah · Reading of the Torah

Bringing the Torah into Our Midst

When first we appeared on the stage of world history
a book was in our hands —
this book, this sacred scroll.
And we were told,
“This is very near to you —
in your mouth and in your heart.”
And we were told,
“You can surely do it.”
And then we learned,
“This is where heaven and earth touch.”

WE ARE the people of the book.
Through fire and mud and dust we have borne
our scrolls tenderly as a baby swaddled in a blanket,
traveling with our words sewn in our clothes
and carried on our backs.

Let us take up the scroll of Torah
and dance with it and touch it
and read it out, for the mind
touches the word and makes it light.
So does light enter us, and we shine.

THIS IS VERY NEAR . . . YOU CAN SURELY DO IT, Deuteronomy 30:14.
THIS IS WHERE, Talmud Bava Batra 74a.
WE ARE THE PEOPLE . . . WE SHINE. An excerpt from “Meditation before Reading Torah”
by Marge Piercy (b. 1936).
Ein-kamocha va-elohim, Adonai, v'ein k'maasecha.

Malchut'cha malchui kol-olamim;

umemshelt'cha b'chol-dor vador.

Adonai melech.

Adonai malach.

Adonai yimloch lo'iam va-ed.

Adonai oz l'am yitein,

Adonai y'vereicht et-amamo vashalom.

Incomparable One—
Your deeds unsurpassed, Your sovereignty everlasting.
You guide and govern through all generations.

Adonai—
sovereign of this day.
sovereign of all days, past and future.

Adonai—sovereign of time:
Bestow strength upon our people.
Bless our people with peace.

Av harachamim,
heitivah virtzoncha et-Tziyon;
tivneh chomot Y'rushalayim.
Ki v'cha l'vad batachnu —
Melech El ram v'nisa,
adon olamim.

Compassionate One—
let goodness in Zion be Your will,
the building of Jerusalem Your wish.
We place our faith in You alone,
in God, our Strength Eternal,
existing beyond time and space.

INCOMPARABLE, Psalm 86:8.
BESTOW STRENGTH, Psalm 29:11.
LET GOODNESS, Psalm 51:20.
Adonai, Adonai — El rachum v’chanun;
er ech apayim, v’rav-chesed ve-emet;
notzeir chesed laalafim;
nosei avon vafesha v’chataah; v’nakeih.

Adonai, Adonai —
God, compassionate, gracious, endlessly patient, loving, and true; showing mercy to the thousandth generation; forgiving evil, defiance, and wrongdoing; granting pardon.

Sh’mah, Yisrael:
Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad!

Listen, Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

Echad eloheinu, gadol adoneinu,
kadosh v’nora sh’mo.

One and magnificent is our God; God’s name is holy, inspiring awe.

Gad’lu l’Adonai iti;
unrom’mah sh’mo yachdav.

Exalt the Eternal with me; let us extol God’s name together.

L’cha, Adonai, hag’dulah, v’hag’vurah,
v’hatiferet, v’haneitzach, v’hahod —
ki-chol bashamayim uvaaretz.

L’cha, Adonai, hamamlachah
v’hamitnasei, l’chol l’rosh.

Yours, Adonai, are greatness, might, splendor, triumph, and majesty — yes, all that is in heaven and earth; to You, God, belong majesty and preeminence above all.
HEAR OUR PRAYER

Mi shebeirach avoteinu — Avraham, Yitzchok, v'Yaakov
Mi shebeirach imoteinu — Sarah, Rivkah, Leah, v'Rachel
May the One who blessed our Mothers
May the One who blessed our Fathers
Hear our prayer and bless us as well.

Bless us with the power of Your healing.
Bless us with the power of Your hope.
May our hearts be filled with understanding
And strengthened by the power of Your love!

Bless us with the vision for tomorrow.
Help us to reach out to those in pain.
May the warmth of friendship ease our sorrow,
Give us courage, give us faith, show us the way!

MI SHEBEIRACH

Mi shebeirach avoteinu
Mi shebeirach imoteinu

M'kor hab'rachah l'imoteinu —
may the Source of strength who blessed the ones before us
help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing
and let us say, Amen.

M'kor hab'rachah laavoteinu —
bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah,
the renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,
and let us say, Amen.

An additional prayer for healing is on page 73.

HEAR OUR PRAYER. Lyrics by Cantor Lisa L. Levine (b. 1959).
MI SHEBEIRACH. Lyrics by Debbie Friedman (1951–2011) and Rabbi Drorah Setel (b. 1956).
Zichronot: Discerning the Compassionate Presence

A messenger from another time, a stranger here in our midst — the shofar sounds remembrance.

_REmember: wherever you go, I am with you._

After the flood, in the wake of destruction, Noah discovered the rainbow.

_Alone on a mountain, a knife in his hand, Abraham heard the voice of compassion._

At the end of her strength, afraid for her child, Hagar found a well in the wilderness.

_REmember: wherever you go, I am with you._

In sounding the horn, we summon them back — _zichronot: memories of those who saw signs of Your Presence._

_A rock gives forth water, hope can blossom in the desert..._ 

and when loving hands lighten our darkness, You are there.

_When we are caught in the thicket, feel alone or forgotten — the shofar sounds remembrance._

From the deep well of the past, in the depths of our own despair — the shofar sounds remembrance.

_REmember: My Presence goes with you and will lighten your burden._

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_REMEMBER, I AM WITH YOU. Based on Genesis 28:15. MY PRESENCE GOES... LIGHTEN YOUR BURDEN, Exodus 33:14._