Kol Haneshamah

לפילות
לבחה היאב

Prayers for a House of Mourning
And a Guide to Mourning Practices

The Reconstructionist Press
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2001
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Lani Moss, Publisher's Representative, 2001
Commentators

At the end of each section in the commentary, the authors’ initials appear. Their full names are:

Joseph Blair          Hershel Matt
Ruth F. Brin          Marcia Prager
Martin Buber          Joel Rosenberg
Arthur Green          Steven Sager
Abraham Joshua Heschel Mel Scult
Mordecai M. Kaplan    Rami M. Shapiro
Levi Weiman-Kelman    Reena Spicehandler
Herbert Levine         David A. Teutsch
Sheila Peltz Weinberg

See also SOURCES, pages 180-187 for citations of previously published materials.
OPENING SONGS AND MEDITATIONS

To conduct a Minhah (Afternoon) service, begin with an opening song or meditation, followed by Ashrey (page 8). Continue with the Hatzri Kaddish (page 42) and the Amidah, including the Kedushah on page 50 in the presence of a minyan.

To conduct a Ma'ariv (Evening) service, begin with an opening song or meditation and continue with the Barchu on page 12.

HALIHAH LEKEYSARYAH
(ELI, ELI)

אלי שלום יברם ל ’עלם
יהול הבח
רישרשל לה ימים
ברק חשמיים
תפילת ה’אדרם.

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

My God, my God, I pray that these things never end.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

Hannah Senes

KOL HA’OLAM KULO

Colon ha’olam kulo
גשר צור מואד
וחשך לא פומך כל.

The entire world is a very narrow bridge.
The essential thing is to have no fear at all.

Attributed to Nachman of Bratzlav

3 / OPENING SONGS AND MEDITATIONS

LIGHTING THE MEMORIAL CANDLE

At the beginning of shivah, a candle that burns the whole week is lit.

We usually light candles to rejoice, to mark the beginning of a holiday or to usher in Shabbat. Now, we stand before a candle that marks both loss and connection, presence and absence. We light this candle to represent the presence of ________, with us even as we return from the cemetery to mourn her/his death. His/her spirit lives on with us in our memories and in the way our memories influence how we choose to live. For some of us, this presence may be as palpable as the heat and changing colors of this flame. Yet like this flame it cannot be held or embraced.

Source of life’s mystery, source of life’s fragility and its hard-edged boundaries, have compassion on us as we mourn our loss. May this flame remind us that loved ones’ presence in our lives does not end with death. May we find comfort as we draw together in this candle’s light. And may _________’s memory be a blessing for all of us.

Jennifer Feldman

איל היא נשמת אדם

The human soul is the lamp of God.

The candle is lit.

We have lit this candle at a time of great darkness, praying that over the period of this shivah observance the love and caring that surround us will bring us back towards the light.

ירד clas / The . . God (Proverbs 20:27).

LIGHTING THE MEMORIAL CANDLE / 2
For everything there is a time,
For every desire an opportunity,
Beneath the heavens—
A time for giving birth, a time to die,
A time to plant, a time to uproot what is planted,
A time to break, a time to heal,
A time to weep, a time to laugh,
A time to mourn, a time to dance,
A time to seek, a time to lose,
A time to keep, a time to throw away,
A time to tear, a time to mend.

An Introduction for Holiday Times

Holidays invoke memories of warm gatherings, of celebrations shared, of family stories. At holiday times we feel acutely the absence of those missing from the table. Yet their presence is palpable in memory and story, so holiday seasons are bittersweet times.

As we celebrate our freedom to serve God at Passover and the bounty of the harvest on Sukkot, the solemnity of the High Holy Days and the candle-lit rededication of Hanukah, we know that our understanding of the holidays has been enriched by those with whom we have celebrated. Our heritage has been shaped by all who have gone before us.

We savor this legacy and accept responsibility for the safekeeping of memory and the challenge of moral and spiritual renewal. Together this evening we seek the strength and guidance we need for that task.

David A. Teutsch

ESA EYNAY

מֶאַיְיִנ יַעֲו או אַזְרִי
זָאוֹרֵי מֵאִמ אָדוֹנֵי
וְשָׁלֵה שָׁמַיְמ וָאָרֵטְז
Esa eynay el heharim
me’ayin yavo ezri.
ezri me’im adonay
oseh shamayim va’aretz.

I lift up my eyes unto the hills:
from where does my help come?
My help is from THE UNSEEN ONE
the maker of the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 121:1-2

לְמַנְהַט יָמֵינוּ
Limnot yameynu
(TREASURE EACH DAY)

כָּל הַלְוָדָה
Keyn hodah
לְבָא אֶלֶבָּב הַקִּמֵּה
Venavi levav hohmah

Teach us to treasure each day,
that we may open our hearts to Your wisdom.

Psalm 90:12 (Translated by Yitzhak Hershberg-Hankin)

OPENING SONGS AND MEDITATIONS
Prayer

God, though this life is but a wraith,
   Although we know not what we use,
Although we grope with little faith,
   Give me the heart to fight—and lose.

Ever insurgent let me be,
   Make me more daring than devout;
From sleek contentment keep me free,
   And fill me with a buoyant doubt.

Open my eyes to visions girt
   With beauty, and with wonder lit—
But always let me see the dirt,
   And all that spawn and die in it.

Open my ears to music; let
   Me thrill with Spring’s first flutes and drums—
But never let me dare forget
   The bitter ballads of the slums.

From compromise and things half done,
   Keep me with stern and stubborn pride;
And when at last the fight is won,
   God, keep me still unsatisfied.

Zot Tefilati / This Is My Prayer

This is my prayer to you, my gentle God—
   let me not stray from my life’s course,
let not my spirit fall into decay,
   and may it never cease to thirst for you,
and for the energizing dew
   that you have sprinkled on it
ever since my life was new.

And let my heart be open to
   the downtrodden, and to the orphaned life,
   and to all who stumble,
   and to one entangled amid hidden sorrows,
   and to one who struggles in the dark.

And bless my eyes, and let me merit
   to behold the human beauty in this world.

Deepen my senses, widen their grasp
   so they absorb a green and flowering
   and budding world, and take from it
   the secret blossoming within a silence.

Grant me with strength to yield
   the best of fruits. Let my life grow
   a wealth of word and deed, steeped
   in the fountain of my being,
   without my measuring all things
   for only what they have to offer me.

And when my day shall come,
   let me slip into the land of night,
   without asking anything from others
   or from you, God.

Hillel Bard (Translated by Joel Rosenberg)
Happy are they who dwell within your house, 
may they continue to give praise to you.

Happy is the people for whom life is thus, 
happy is the people with THE EVERLASTING for its God!

A Psalm of David

All exaltations do I raise to you, my sovereign God, 
and I give blessing to your name, forever and eternally.

Blessings do I offer you each day, 
i hail your name, forever and eternally.

Great is THE ETERNAL, to be praised emphatically, 
because God's greatness has no measure.

Declaring praises for your deeds one era to the next, 
people describe your mighty acts.

Heaven's glorious splendor is my song, 
words of your miracles I eagerly pour forth.

Wondrous are your powers—people tell of them, 
and your magnificence do I recount.

Signs of your abundant goodness they express, 
and in your justice they rejoice.

How gracious and how merciful is THE ABUNDANT ONE, 
slow to anger, great in love.

To all God's creatures, goodness flows, 
on all creation, divine love.

Your creatures all give thanks to you, 
your fervent ones bless you emphatically.

---

COMMENTARY. Psalm 145 is an alphabetical acrostic. The translation 
roughly preserves the sound of the Hebrew initials of each line. The line 
for the letter nun is missing from this psalm, for unknown reasons. J.R.
Calling out the glory of your sovereignty,
of your magnificence they speak,

Letting all people know your mighty acts,
and of your sovereignty’s glory and splendor.

May your sovereignty last all eternities,
your dominion for era after era.

Strong support to all who fall,
GOD raises up the humble and the lame.

All hopeful gazes turn toward you,
as you give sustenance in its appointed time.

Providing with your open hand,
you satisfy desire in all life.

So just is God in every way,
so loving amid all the divine deeds.

Close by is God to all who call,
to all who call to God in truth.

Responding to the yearning of all those who fear,
God hears their cry and comes to rescue them.

Showing care to all who love God, THE ETERNAL
brings destruction to all evildoers.

The praise of THE ALL-KNOWING does my mouth declare,
and all flesh give blessing to God’s holy name,
unto eternity.

And as for us, we bless the name of Yah,
from now until the end of time. Halleluyah!

Psalm 145

And...Halleluyah (Psalm 115:18).
God is compassionate, forgiving human error and refusing to destroy, ready to refrain from anger and unwilling to awaken wrath. Extend your help, Redeeming One! Give answer, sovereign one, whenever we may call.

When a minyan is present, the Barehu is said. The congregation rises and faces east. It is customary to bow.

Bless The Infinite, the blessed One!

Blessed is The Infinite, the blessed One, now and forever.

Kavanah. Public worship aids us by liberating personality from the confining walls of the individual ego. Imprisoned in self, we easily fall prey to morbid brooding. Interference with career, personal disappointment and disillusionment, hurts to vanity, the fear of death—all these tend so to dominate our attention that our minds move in a fixed and narrow system of ideas, which we detest but from which we see no escape. With a whole wide world of boundless opportunities about us, we permit our minds, as it were, to pace up and down within the narrow cell of their ego-prisons. But participation in public worship breaks through the prison of the ego and lets in the light and air of the world. Instead of living but one small and petty life, we now share the multitudinous life of our people. Against the wider horizons that now open to our ken, personal cares do not loom so large. Life becomes infinitely more meaningful and worthwhile when we become aware, through our participation in public worship, of a common life that transcends our individual selves.

Martin Buber (Adapted)

Kavanah: When we worship in public, we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being—the first-hand experience of the larger life which is God. M.M.K.

Commentary. The morning service begins with Barehu, the call to worship. It introduces the Shema and its blessings, which are then followed by the Amidah (Silent Prayer) and the Aleynu. The Barehu calls us together for worship by asking that we return blessing to God, who is the source of all blessing. We thereby become a community. DAT.

Derash. Real faith does not mean professing what we hold true in a ready-made formula... It means holding ourselves open to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life and which cannot be comprised in any formula. It means that, from the very roots of our being, we should always be prepared to live with this mystery as one being lives with another. Real faith means the ability to endure life in the face of this mystery.

Martin Buber (Adapted)
ASHER BIDVARO / GOD IN NATURE

TRADITIONAL VERSION

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, sovereign of all worlds, by whose word the evenings fall. In wisdom you open heaven's gates. With divine discernment you make seasons change, causing the times to come and go, and ordering the stars on their appointed paths through heaven's dome, all according to your will. Creator of the day and night, who rolls back light before the dark, and dark before the light, who makes day pass away and brings on night, dividing between day and night: The Leader of the Multitudes of Heaven is your name! Living and enduring God, rule over us, now and always. Blessed are you, ALMIGHTY ONE, who makes the evenings fall.

KAVANAH. The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy amidst the simple beauty of nature. As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances may be. And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.

Anne Frank

COMMENTARY. The two berahot which precede the Shema set the stage for its evening recitation. The first berahah praises God for the wonders of creation that are visible at twilight: the shifting pattern of the stars, the rhythm of the seasons, the regular passage from day to night. All of these are a nightly reminder of the unchanging plan of creation.

The second berahah praises God, whose instruction is a special token of love for Israel. Israel responds by meditating upon God's teaching “day and night,” “when we lie down and when we rise.” This phrasing recalls the preceding berahah, adding Israel's study of Torah to the natural order: The sun sets, the stars shine, and Israel studies— as regularly as day and night. The phrase “when we lie down and when we rise” anticipates the Shema, which follows. This interplay between the berahat and the Shema suggests that the Shema is Israel's morning and evening Torah study. At the same time, it is Israel's declaration of the oneness of the power that makes for the natural order and for learning, for creation and human creativity.

S.S.

15 / SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS / GOD IN NATURE
INTERPRETIVE VERSION: AHAVAT OLAM

We are loved by an unending love.
We are embraced by arms that find us
even when we are hidden from ourselves.

We are touched by fingers that soothe us
even when we are too proud for soothing.
We are counseled by voices that guide us
even when we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love.

We are supported by hands that uplift us
even in the midst of a fall.
We are urged on by eyes that meet us
even when we are too weak for meeting.
We are loved by an unending love.

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled...
ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;
We are loved by an unending love.

Blessed are you, BELOVED ONE, who loves your people Israel.

Rami M. Shapiro (Adapted)

INTERPRETIVE VERSION: ASHER BIDVARO

Praised are you, God, ruler of the universe, who has ordained
the rhythm of life. The day with its light calls to activity and
exertion. But when the day wanes, when, with the setting of
the sun, colors fade, we cease from our labors and welcome the
tranquility of the night. The subdued light of the moon and
stars, the darkness and the stillness about us invite rest and
repose. Trustfully we yield to the quiet of sleep, for we know
that, while we are unaware of what goes on within and around
us, our powers of body and mind are renewed. Therefore, at this
evening hour, we seek composure of spirit. We give thanks for
the day and its tasks and for the night and its rest. Praised are
you, God, who brings on the evening.

1945 Reconstructionist Prayer Book (Adapted)

KAVANAH. The שמע / Shema is wrapped in האבה / ahavah / love. The blessing preceding the Shema concludes, "who loves your people Israel." This prayer begins "השע / v'e''ahavta. And you must love הושע!" First you are loved, then you respond with love. Love is central to Jewish life. Love means commitment and limitations—Torah and mitzvot. That is so both in our relationships with each other and in our relationship with God.

L.W.K.

Before worship can have any genuine spiritual influence upon us, before it can reveal God to us, we must qualify ourselves by an arduous discipline in deeds of self-control, honesty, courage and kindness. When we come to the synagogue, after having tried our utmost to deal fairly with our neighbor, to suppress our evil impulses, and have made an effort to meet our responsibilities as human beings, then worship can yield its measure of spiritual strength and give us a sense of inward peace. Communion with God is a reward of holy and righteous living.

M.N.K. (Adapted)

17 / SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS
AHAVAT OLAM / GOD'S LOVE IN TORAH

With everlasting love, you love the house of Israel. Torah and mitzvot, laws and justice you have taught us. And so, DEAR ONE, our God, when we lie down and when we rise, we reflect upon your laws; we take pleasure in your Torah's words and your mitzvot, now and always. Truly, they are our life, our length of days. On them we meditate by day and night. Your love will never depart from us as long as worlds endure. Blessed are you, BELOVED ONE, who loves your people Israel.

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

I  Baruḥ atah adonay  בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אַדְוָנָי  Blessed are you Adonay  ברוּכִּי אַתָּה יָה  Blessed are you Yah
   Beruḥah at yah  בָּרוּחַ אַתָּה יָה  Let us bless
   Nevareḥ et  נְבָרֵךְ אֶת  our God
   eloheynu  אֵלֹהֵינוּ Sheḥinah
   hašeḥninah  הַשְּׁכִינָה Source of Life
   eyn haḥayim  עֵינַי הָחיִים
II  III  meleḥ ha’olam  מֶלֶךְ הָאָלָם  Sovereign of all worlds
   hey ha’olamim  הֵי הָאָלָם Life of all the worlds
   ruḥ ha’olam  רֻחַ הָאָלָם Spirit of the world

The phrase 'Nevareḥ et eyn haḥayim' was originally formulated by poet Marcia Falk, author of The Book of Blessings (See SOURCES, p. 182).

Our text follows the Sephardic version, in the declarative mode (“Your love will never depart from us.”) rather than the imperative (“Never remove your love from us!”). Divine love is unconditional. It is available to every one of us when we fashion our lives into channels to receive and share it. The Jewish people together experience that eternal love as reflected in our love for the study of Torah—a wisdom lovingly received, shared, and passed on enriched by each generation. A.G.

DERASH. The term Sheḥinah implies that God is not aloof from human life with all its defeats and triumphs. God is in the very midst of life. The rabbis say that when people suffer for their sins, the Sheḥinah cries out. The Sheḥinah thus moves from Israel to all humanity. M.M.K./M.S.
Shema yisra’el adonay eloheynu adonay ehad.
Baruch shem kevod malhuto le’olam va’ed.

Ve’ahavta et adonay eloheha
behol levaveha uvhol nafsheha uvhol me’odeha.
Vehayu hadeverim ha’eley ashern ano’hi metzaveha hayom al levaveha.
Veshinantam levaneha vedibarta bam
besaivteha beveteheha uvlehteha vadereha uvshohbeha
uvkumeha.
Ukhartam le’ot al yadeha veyhayu letotafot beyn eyneha.
Uhavtavam al mezuot beyteha uvishareha.

SHEMA

Listen, Israel: THE ETERNAL is our God,
The ETERNAL One alone!

Blessed be the name and glory of God’s realm, forever!

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

/shema-derash/

DERASH. The Shema is called khabalat ol malhut shamyim. We “receive upon ourselves the yoke of the sovereignty of Heaven.” To proclaim God as ours and as one is to acknowledge fealty to the divine will—and the Shema is a time to listen. We listen in order to discover God’s will.

D.A.T.

הכבלת הכסף / listen...gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

KAVANAH. The moment we transcend our own egos and identify ourselves with one other person we are on the way toward God. God is thus the reality experienced as we-consciousness, in the same way as the self or soul is the reality experienced as I- or self-consciousness.

M.M.K.

телב / lev / heart. The לב / lev / heart, was seen as the source of emotions and intellect. Feelings and reason are complementary partners, not conflicting parts, of the human psyche. The double ה of lev teaches that a love of God must contain all dualities (e.g. the good and bad in you).

L.W.K.

กะבלי / totafot might have been pendants or forehead markings. The Torah text sees totafot as reminders of the divine will. The English translation captures this figurative meaning of a visible reminder of the mitzvot.

D.A.T.

MA’ARIV / 20
BIBLICAL SELECTION I

It came to pass, and will again, that if you truly listen to the voice of The Eternal One, your God, being sure to do whatever has been asked of you today. The One, your God, will make of you a model for all nations of the earth, and there will come upon you all these blessings, as you listen to the call of The Abundant One, your God:

Blessed be you in the city, blessed be you upon the field.
Blessed be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your land, the fruit of your cattle, the calving of your oxen, and the lambing of your sheep.
Blessed be your basket and your kneading-trough.
Blessed be you when you come home, and blessed be you when you go forth.

See, I have placed in front of you today both life and good, both death and ill, commanding you today to love the Boundless One, your God, to walk in ways I have ordained, keeping the commandments, laws, and judgments, so that you survive and multiply.
The Bountiful, your God, will bless you on the land you are about to enter and inherit.

When men were children, they thought of God as a father;
When men were slaves, they thought of God as a master;
When men were subjects, they thought of God as a king.
But I am a woman, not a slave, not a subject, not a child who longs for God as father or mother.

I might imagine God as teacher or friend, but those images, like king, master, father or mother, are too small for me now.

God is the force of motion and light in the universe;
God is the strength of life on our planet;
God is the power moving us to do good;
God is the source of love springing up in us.
God is far beyond what we can comprehend.
But if your heart should turn away, and you not heed, and go astray, and you submit to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall be destroyed completely; you shall not live out a great expanse of days upon the land that you now cross the Jordan to possess.

I call as witnesses concerning you both heaven and earth, both life and death, that I have placed in front of you a blessing and a curse. Choose life, that you may live, you and your seed!

---

**COMMENTARY.** The statement of God’s oneness unifies not only the context of the Shema but the text as well—three scriptural paragraphs specified in the Mishnah (a second century codification of Jewish law). The powerful declaration of God’s unity fuses the responsibility to love God and to study God’s teachings (first paragraph) with the lesson that their fulfillment confirms God’s presence (second and third paragraphs). Hence, the unity of God as idea and presence.

S.S.

In the handwritten scroll of the Torah
The word “Shema” of “Shema Yisra’el”
Ends with an oversized ayin,
And the word “Ehad”
Ends with an oversized dalet.
Taken together
These two letters
Spell “Ed,” meaning “witness.”
Whenever we recite the Shema
We bear witness
To our awareness
Of God’s presence.

H.M.

---

**COMMENTARY.** The traditional wording found in Biblical Selection II presents detailed bountiful or devastating consequences of Israel’s collective relationship to the mitzvot. That biblical section (Deuteronomy 11:13–21) offers a supernatural theology that many contemporary Jews find difficult. The first part of the biblical section on this page (Deuteronomy 28:1–6, 30:15–19) was included in the 1945 Reconstructionist Siddur. It begins by encouraging observance in the same language, but concentrates on the positive ways in which observance of mitzvot focuses our attention on God’s presence as perceived through productivity and the pursuit of abundant life. The second part was first used in the Israeli Progressive movement Siddur, Ha-`arodah Shebalev.

S.S.

**KAVANAH.** The doctrine of the unity of God calls for the integration of all life’s purposes into a consistent pattern of thought and conduct. M.M.K.

**DERASH.** God is the assumption that there is enough in the world to meet our needs but not to meet our greed for power and pleasure. M.M.K. (Adapted)
BIBLICAL SELECTION II

And if you truly listen to my bidding, as I bid you now—loving THE FOUNT OF LIFE, your God, and serving God with all your heart, with every breath—then I will give you rain upon your land in its appointed time, the early rain and later rain, so you may gather in your corn, your wine and oil. And I will give you grass upon your field to feed your animals, and you will eat and be content. Beware, then, lest your heart be led astray, and you go off and worship other gods, and you submit to them, so that the anger of THE MIGHTY ONE should burn against you, and seal up the heavens so no rain would fall, so that the ground would not give forth her produce, and you be forced to leave the good land I am giving you.

So place these words upon your heart, into your lifebreath. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and let them rest before your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home, and when you walk upon the road, when you lie down, and when you rise, inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates—so that your days and your children’s days be many on the land THE FAITHFUL ONE promised to give your ancestors, as long as heaven rests above the earth.

DERASH. This warning against idolatry has ecological significance. If we continue to pollute the environment—and thus display contempt for the integrity of God’s creation—pure rain will cease to fall, and the ground will cease to give forth its produce.

Monica Liebling

DERASH. The gods we worship write their names on our faces, be sure of that. And we will worship something—have no doubt of that either. We may think that our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of the heart—but it will out. That which dominates our imagination and our thoughts will determine our life and character. Therefore it behooves us to be careful what we are worshipping, for what we are worshipping we are becoming....

Ralph Waldo Emerson

DERASH. The traditional second paragraph of the Shema (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 satiated, 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.

A.G.
The BOUNDLESS ONE told Moses: Speak to the Israelites—tell them to make themselves tzitzit upon the corners of their clothes, throughout their generations. Have them place upon the corner tzitzit a twine of royal blue. This is your tzitzit. Look at it and remember all the mitzvot of the ETERNAL ONE. And do them, so you won’t go off after the lusts of your heart or after what catches your eye, so that you remember to do all my mitzvot and be holy for your God. I am THE FAITHFUL ONE, your God, who brought you from Mitzrayim to be for you a God. I am THE INFINITE, your God.

The BOUNDLESS ONE...God (Numbers 15:37-41).

Commentary. In the ancient Near East, free people wore fringes, or tzitzit, on the hems of their everyday clothes. Since only free people wore tzitzit, they were a form of identification. Business transactions were sealed by kissing the tzitzit.

The mitzvah of tzitzit is based on that ancient sign of freedom. The fringes remind us that we voluntarily follow the way of God, who freed us from Egyptian slavery. It is, literally, a string tied around our finger.

Today, many Jews who recite the Shema during the morning service gather the four corners of their tallitot (prayer shawls), hold the tzitzit, and kiss them at each mention of the word ציצית / tzitzit. This custom shows that we take these words seriously like a legal contract.

Mitzrayim / Mitzrayim was the escaping Hebrews', not the Egyptians', name for the land of Egypt: perhaps a slave-term, and probably not of Semitic origin, it has associations with the root מרד, to be in distress, constricted, in anguish, or in dire straits. This word powerfully evokes the choking oppression of slavery. As the psalmist wrote: יִנְחֶ֣ם יְרוּשָׁלָֽיִם / From the depths I called to Yah.
EMET VE’EMUNAH / REDEMPTION

Our faith and truth rest on all this, which is binding upon us:
That The BOUNDLESS ONE alone is our divinity
and that no divinity exists but One;
that we are Israel, community of God;
that it is God who saves us from the hand
of governments, the very palm of tyrants;
who enacts great deeds without measure,
and wondrous deeds beyond all count;
who puts our souls amid the living,
and who keeps our feet from giving way;
who breaks apart the schemes of those who hate us,
confounds the thoughts of any bearing us ill-will;
that it is God who made miracles for us in Egypt,
signs and wonders in Ham's children's land.
From one generation to the next, God is our guarantor,
and even on a day that turned to night,
God stayed with us when death’s deep shadow fell.

COMMENTARY. Two beautiful berahot complete the liturgical framework of the Shema in the evening service. The first of these is called Ge'ulah—“Redemption.” Recalling the Exodus from Egypt, it thematically echoes the third paragraph of the Shema. Moreover, it identifies the sovereign God, named in the Shema’s credo, as the power that freed Israel from slavery. Its vivid, here-and-now recollection of the escape from Egyptian bondage invites and challenges Israel to claim the redemption as a personal experience in each generation and to hear echoes of that ancient triumph over tyranny in each modern-day struggle for freedom, in every attempt to move toward the messianic future.

A.G.
And even in our age of orphans and survivors, God’s loving acts have not abandoned us, and God has brought together our scattered kin from the distant corners of the earth. As then, so now, God brings the people Israel forth from every place of menace, to a lasting freedom. God is the one who brought the Israelites through a divided Sea of Reeds. There, they beheld divine might; they praised and thanked the Name, and willingly accepted for themselves God’s rule.

Moses, Miriam, and all the Israelites broke out in song, abundant in their joy, and, all as one, they said:

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DERASH. Rabbi Judah said: [At the sea] each tribe said to the other, “You go into the sea first!” As they stood there bickering, Nahshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water. Meanwhile Moses was praying. God said to him, “My friend is drowning—and you pray!” “What can I do?” Moses asked. [God responded as it says in the text,] “Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to go! Raise your staff...”

Talmud Sotah 37a

NOTE. Biblical references include Job 9:10, Psalm 66:9.

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To open eyes when others close them to hear when others do not wish to listen to look when others turn away to seek to understand when others give up to rouse oneself when others accept to continue the struggle even when one is not the strongest to cry out when others keep silent to be a Jew it is that, it is first of all that and further to live when others are dead and to remember when others have forgotten.

Emmanuel Eyoux (Translated from the French by Jonathan Magomet)
“Who among the mighty can compare to you, Wise One?
Who can compare to you,
adorned in holiness,
awesome in praises,
acting wondrously!”

Your children saw you in your majesty,
splitting the sea in front of Moses.
“This is my God!” they cried, and said:

“THE HOLY ONE will reign forever!”
And it was said:

“Yes, The REDEEMING ONE has rescued Jacob,
saved him
from a power
stronger than his own!”

Blessed are you, THE GUARDIAN, Israel’s redeeming power!

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When our ancestors beheld these truths they proclaimed:
Among all the gods we can name, who can compare to the One Beyond Naming?
Among all the quantities we can label, number, mark and measure, which compares to the Mystery at the Heart of Reality?

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Mi ḥamōhah ba’elim adonay.
Mi kamoḥah nedar bakodesh
nora tehilot osey feleh.
Malḥuteḥa ra’u vaneḥa boke’a yam lifney mosheh.
Zeh eli anu ve’am eru.
Adonay yimloḥ le’olam va’ed.
Vene’emar ki fadah adonay et ya’akov ugalo miyad ḥazak
mimenu.
Baruḥ atah adonay ga’al yisra’el.

This siddur reinstates reference to the splitting of the sea as a sign of God’s redeeming power. The earlier Reconstructionist prayerbook omitted that reference because of its emphasis on supernatural intervention. As myth, however, the ancient tale of wonder underscores the sense of daily miracle in our lives. Even those of us who cannot affirm a God who intervenes in the natural process, and thus cannot accept the literal meaning of the tale, can appreciate its human message. According to the midrash, the sea did not split until one Israelite, Nahshon ben Aminadav, had the courage to walk upright into the water. Perhaps it was the divine spirit in Nahshon, rather than the magic of Moses’s wand, that caused the sea to split.

A.G.

NOTE. Biblical references include Exodus 15:11, 18 and Jeremiah 31:11.
Help us to lie down, DEAR ONE, our God, in peace, and let us rise again, our sovereign, to life. Spread over us the shelter of your peace. Decree for us a worthy daily lot, and redeem us for the sake of your great name. Protect us and keep from us enemies, illness, sword, famine, and sorrow. Enfold us in the wings of your protection, for you are our redeeming guardian. Truly, a sovereign, gracious and compassionate God are you. Guard our going forth each day for life and peace, now and always. Spread over us the shelter of your peace.

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who ever guards the people Israel, and all who dwell on earth.
Hashkivenu adonay eloheynu leshalom veha'amidenu malkenu lehayim ufros aleynu sukkat shelomeha. Vetakenenu ve'etzah tovah milefaneha vehoshi'enu lema'an shemeha. Vehagen ba'adeynu vehaser me'aleyhnu oyev dever vecherev vera'av veyagon. Uvezzel kenafeha tassistenu ki el shomerenu umatzilenu atah ki el melehi hanun verahum atah. Ushmor tzeytenu uvo'enu lehayim ulshalom me'atah ve'ad olam. Ufros aleynu sukkat shelomeha. Baruh atah adonay shomer am yisra'el vehol yoshvey tevel la'ad.

Commentary. Hashkivenu—"Help us to lie down [in peace]"—is the final prescribed part of the Shema. It recalls the Shema by expressing the hope that we will "lie down...in peace" and "rise again...to life." An extension of Emet Ve'emosah, Hashkivenu joins the vivid recollection of past redemption to a prayer for present protection and future peace. By calling God "guardian" and "protector" but also "redeemer," Israel recognizes new dimensions of the power that makes for freedom. This blessing is unique to the evening service. Perhaps responding to the cold, dark uncertainty of night, we invoke God's dwelling of peace.

Kavanah. Enable us, God, to behold meaning in the chaos of life about us and purpose in the chaos of life within us. Deliver us from the sense of futility in our strivings toward the light and the truth. Give us strength to ride safely through the maelstrom of petty cares and anxieties. May we behold things in their proper proportions and see life in its wholeness and its holiness.

Commentary. The traditional text of this prayer includes the phrase, hasek satan milifaneu ume-harenu. Some commentators interpret satan as "spiritual harmony," but the phrase is omitted here because of its literal reference to a prosecuting angel. The blessing at the end of Hashkivenu has been expanded to include our hope that divine protection will be extended to all peoples.

Kavanah. As we enter the dark of evening, we face the unknown. Earlier, in Asher Bidvaro (the Creation section immediately following Barehu), we affirmed the power that transforms night into day and day into night. Now we call for protection from the shadows that lengthen around us—shadows of fear and guilt, the uncharted future, the ever pursuing past. We ask that the shadows of God's wings envelop us with love and mercy. The unknown night, like the unknown tomorrow, can only be met with faith in the power of infinite compassion to care for us.

When fears multiply
And danger threatens;
When sickness comes,
When death confronts us—
It is God's blessing of shalom
That sustains us
And upholds us.
Lightening our burden,
Dispelling our worry,
Restoring our strength,
Renewing our hope—
Reviving us.

H.M.
ALL SOULS ARE IN GOD’S KEEPING

Blessed is the Ancient One by day,
and blessed is the Living One by night.
Blessed is the Guardian when we lie down,
and blessed is the Fount of Life when we arise.
For in your hands are placed the souls of all the living
and the dead,
in divine hands, the soul of every living thing,
the spirit of each being’s flesh.
In your hands I entrust my spirit,
you who have redeemed me, Faithful One,
the God of truth.
Our God on high,
make one your name,
sustain your realm continually,
and rule over us, forever and eternally.
Let our eyes behold, our hearts rejoice,
our spirits be uplifted by your redemptive power.
Let the promise told to Zion be made real:
“Your God is sovereign!
The Eternal One has reigned,
The Eternal One now reigns,
The Eternal One shall reign
forever and eternally!”
For all of the created realm is yours,
throughout all worlds, across all time,
for we have no sovereign but you.
Blessed are you, Eternal One,
you who reign in glory,
may you rule forever over us,
and over all that you have made.

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Life After Death

These things I know:

How the living go on living
and how the dead go on living with them
so that in a forest
even a dead tree casts a shadow
and the leaves fall one by one
and the branches break in the wind
and the bark peels off slowly
and the trunk cracks
and the rain seeps in through the cracks
and the trunk falls to the ground
and the moss covers it
and in the spring the rabbits find it
and build their nest inside the dead tree
so that nothing is wasted in nature
or in love.

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

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

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

I came into the world without being asked,
And when the time for dying comes
I shall not be consulted;

But between the boundaries of birth and death
Lies the dominion of Choice:

To be a doer or a dreamer,
To be a lifter or a leaner,

To speak out or remain silent,
To extend a hand in friendship
Or to look the other way;
To feel the sufferings of others
Or to be callous and insensitive.

These are the choices;
It is in the choosing
That my measure as a person
Is determined.

Gertrude Hildreth Hoosman
AMIDAH

The traditional Amidah follows here. An alternative Amidah begins on page 76. The Amidah is traditionally recited while standing, beginning with three short steps forward and bowing left and right, a reminder of our entry into the divine presence.

Open my lips, BELOVED ONE, and let my mouth declare your praise.

1. AVOT VE’IMOT / ANCESTORS

Blessed are you, ANCIENT ONE, our God, God of our ancestors,

- God of Abraham
- God of Isaac
- God of Jacob
- God of Sarah
- God of Rebekah
- God of Rachel
- God of Leah

ADERASH. 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 are we shaped by our ancestors yet give rise to a Judaism all our own.

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

D.A.T. / R.S.
great, heroic, awesome God, supreme divinity, imparting deeds of kindness, begetter of all; mindful of the loyalty of Israel’s ancestors, bringing, with love, redemption to their children’s children for the sake of the divine name.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:
(Remember us for life, sovereign, who wishes us to live, and write us in the Book of Life, for your sake, ever-living God.)

Regal One, our help, salvation, and protector: Blessed are you, Kind One, the shield of Abraham and help of Sarah.

NOTE. The Amidah is made up of three sections. The first and last remain the same for all services, but the central portion differs, containing thirteen blessings on weekdays, and only one on Shabbat and Festivals. The central section on weekdays contains petitions or requests. These workday concerns are set aside on Shabbat and Festivals, when the focus shifts to the joy and holiness of the day.

COMPUTER. This version of the first berahah in the Amidah includes the matriarchs as well as the patriarchs. The phrase “help of Sarah,” ezrat Sarah, comes from a Hebrew root (עזר) which can mean either “save” or “be strong.” This parallels the meaning of magen / shield. The biblical text says that Abraham experienced God as a shield and that Sarah experienced God as a helper. Their experience and the example of their lives can enrich our own. Just as Abraham and Sarah found the strength to face the unknown physical and spiritual dangers of their journey, so we seek to find the courage and inspiration to meet the challenges of our own time.

R.S.
2. GEVUROT / DIVINE POWER

You are forever powerful, ALMIGHTY ONE, abundant in your saving acts.

In summer: You send down the dew.

In winter: You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall.

In loyalty you sustain the living, nurturing the life of every living thing, upholding those who fall, healing the sick, freeing the captive, and remaining faithful to all life held dormant in the earth. Who can compare to you, almighty God, who can resemble you, the source of life and death, who makes salvation grow?

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: Who can compare to you, source of all mercy, remembering all creatures mercifully, decrewing life!)

Faithful are you in giving life to every living thing. Blessed are you, THE FOUNT OF LIFE, who gives and renews life.

During Minnah, in the presence of a minyan, continue with the Kedushah on page 50. Otherwise, continue silently on page 52.

We acknowledge the presence of God in the natural rhythms of passing seasons. Our awareness of wind, rain, and dew as daily miracles also serves to remind us that the purity of these gifts, so vital for our survival, must be maintained by human watchfulness. In thanking God for air and water, we assert our commitment to preserving them as sources of life and protecting them from life-destroying pollution. The mention of rain or dew follows the two-season climate of Eretz Yisra'el; summer extends from the first day of Pesaḥ until Shemini Atzeret, and winter until the following Pesaḥ.

A.G.

לחי / every living thing, gives and renews life. The traditional siddur affirms לחי, demonstrating an understanding that all of life is rooted in the world’s divine order and avoiding affirmation of life after death. We cannot know what happens to us after we die, but we can, by our thought and action, affirm the possibility of this-worldly salvation.

D.A.T.
3. KEDUSHAH / SANCTIFICATION

We sanctify your name throughout this world, as it is sanctified in the heavens above, as it is written by your prophet:

“And each celestial being calls to another, and declares: Holy, holy, holy is THE RULER of the Multitudes of Heaven! All the world is filled with divine glory!”

And they are answered with a blessing:

“Blessed is the glory of THE HOLY ONE, wherever God may dwell!”

And as is written in your sacred words of psalm:

“May THE ETERNAL reign forever, your God, O Zion, from one generation to the next. Halleluyah!”

From one generation to the next may we declare your greatness, and for all eternities may we affirm your holiness, and may your praise, our God, never be absent from our mouths, now and forever.

For you are a great and holy God.

Blessed are you, THE AWESOME ONE, the holy God.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude: the holy sovereign.)

Continue silently with BINAH / INSIGHT on page 52
3. KEDUSHAT HASHEM / HALLOWING GOD'S NAME

Holy are you. Your name is holy. And all holy beings hail you each day. Blessed are you, THE AWESOME ONE, the holy God.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude: the holy sovereign.)

4. BINAH / INSIGHT

You graciously endow the human being with the power to know; you teach a person understanding.

At the conclusion of Shabbat or a festival say:

(You have given us knowledge of your Torah and taught us to do your will. HOLY ONE, our God, you have divided between the seventh day and the first six days of Creation. Our creator, our sovereign, grant that the coming days bring us peace. Free us from all wrongdoing and purify us from all moral flaw that we may cling to you in awe.)

So may you provide us now with knowledge, understanding, and intelligence. Blessed are you, THE FOUNT OF WISDOM who graciously bestows all knowledge.

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COMMENTARY. One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word kadosh, a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and the majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

It is indeed a unique occasion at which the word kadosh is used for the first time: in the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time. "And God blessed the seventh day and made it kadosh." There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of kedushah, holiness.

A.J.H.

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DERASH. We ask God to remove the impurities that have collected in our minds so that we might: be truthful enough to serve God. What are these impurities, these false coverings? They are the myth of isolation, the denial of interrelatedness, the prideful pretense that we are alone and abandoned in the cosmos.

S.P.W.

DERASH. The creation of the world is not completed so long as we have not fulfilled our creative function in it.

M.M.K.
5. TESHUVAH / REPENTANCE

Return us, divine source, to your Torah,
bring us nearer, our sovereign, to your service.
And restore us, in complete return, into your presence.
Blessed are you, RECEPTIVE ONE,
who takes joy in our return.

6. SELIHAH / FORGIVENESS

Forgive us, our Creator, for we have done wrong.
Deal mercifully with us, our protector, though we have rebelled.
For you are truly kind and merciful.
Blessed are you, ALL-MERCIFUL,
who graciously abounds in power to forgive.

7. GE’ULAH / REDEMPTION

Behold our need, and plead our cause,
and speedily redeem us, as your name demands,
for you are called a powerful redeemer.
Blessed are you, ALMIGHTY ONE,
redeemer of the people Israel.

NOTE. The fifth blessing of the weekday Amidah focuses on the call to teshuvah – return to the path of Torah and the divine presence. Like the High Holy Day liturgy, this blessing invokes the imagery of kingship. This imagery is male and hierarchical, which is problematical for many contemporary Jews. Even more difficult for some is the image of an external God pronouncing individual judgments. This contradicts our sense of the divinity within ourselves that we strive to keep in our awareness and to bring into harmony with our lives. These difficulties have led to emendation of the traditional wording. אביו / Our father has been replaced by מושה / divine source, and מלך / our king has been replaced by מלך / our crown, here translated figuratively as “our sovereign.” Compare the alternative and interpretive versions of Avinu Malkenu, pages 82-85.

D.A.T./J.B.

The truth is that our belief in God is not based upon God’s self-revelation but on our discovery of God. According to the modern way of thinking and speaking, it is more correct to say that we discover God than to say that God reveals the divine self to us.

M.M.K. (Adapted)
8. REFU'AH / HEALING

Heal us, NURTURING ONE, so that we may be healed, help us to restore ourselves to a state of health, and bring upon us complete cure of all our ailments.

Optional prayer for one who is ill:
(May it be your will, COMPASSIONATE ONE, our God, God of our ancestors, that you quickly send forth thorough healing, a healing of the body and a healing of the spirit, to the one who ails,

for a female: ______ daughter of ______

for a male: ______ son of ______

among all others of the people Israel who are ailing.)
And remove from us all suffering and grief.
For you are a sovereign divine power and a faithful and compassionate healer.
Blessed are you, RESTORER OF ALL LIFE, who heals the sick among the people Israel.

9. BIRKAT HASHANIM / BLESSING FOR ABUNDANCE

Grant blessing over us, ABUNDANT ONE, upon this year, and all its forms of produce; let it be a year of good.

From December 4th till Pesah say: From Pesah till December 4th say:

And grant us dew and rain, And give blessing
for blessing
on earth, and satisfy us with your goodness, and give blessing to this year as in the good years of the past.
Blessed are you, ALL BOUNTIFUL, who gives blessing to the years. َ
10. KIBUTZ GALUYOT / INGATHERING OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Sound the great shofar for our freedom,
raise up the banner for the gathering-in of those in exile,
and gather us together from the earth’s four corners.
Blessed are you, REDEEMING ONE,
who gathers Israel’s dispossessed.

11. DIN / RESTORING JUSTICE

Restore our judges, as of old,
our counselors, as in the beginning,
and remove from us all suffering and grief.
Rule over us, OUR SOVEREIGN, you alone,
with love and with compassion.
Help us achieve justice through the rule of law.
Blessed are you, WISE ONE,
the sovereign who loves righteousness and justice.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, conclude:

(Blessed are you, ENTHRONED IN MAJESTY,
the sovereign, the source of all just law.)

12. BIRKAT HAMINIM / OVERCOMING DIVISIONS

Let all who speak and act unjustly
find no hope for ill intentions.
Let all wickedness be lost.
Blessed are you, JUST ONE,
who subdues the evildoers.

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The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry
13. TZADIKIM / COMPASSION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

For the righteous, and for the pious,
and for the elders of your people, the house of Israel,
and for the remnant of their scholars,
and for the righteous who have chosen to be Jews,
let your compassion be aroused, Dear One, our God,
and give proper recompense to all
who truly have found shelter in your name,
and give us a portion in their midst,
that we may never be ashamed,
for in you we place our trust.
Blessed are you, The Source of Trust,
support and stronghold for the righteous.

14. BINYAN YERUSHALAYIM / REBUILDING JERUSALEM

And to Jerusalem, your city,
may you turn with mercy,
and come home to dwell there,
as you have promised.
And rebuild the city, soon and in our days,
with everlasting peace.
Blessed are you, The God of Zion,
builder of Jerusalem.

15. YESHUAH / SALVATION

May you speedily redeem your people Israel,
and raise their stronghold with your help,
for we await with hope throughout our days
the coming of your help.
Blessed are you, The God of Israel,
who plants the stronghold of your help.

NOTE. The fourteenth blessing of the Amidah focuses on the rebuilding of Jerusalem. For centuries the rebuilding of Jerusalem has stood for an end to Jewish suffering and a return to Jewish sovereignty, as well as for the mythic end of days in which Jerusalem would become all that generations of longing Jews could imagine. For us, the rebuilding of Jerusalem signifies a world at peace and in which all human need is fulfilled. D.A.T.

DERASH. Prayer requires no consecrated edifice and no appointed hour. Indeed it needs no words or forms fixed and eternal. Prayer is a step on which we rise from the self we are to the self we wish to be. 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. Prayer takes us beyond the self. Joining our little self to the selhdom 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.

Morris Adler (Adapted)
16. KABBALAT TEFILAH / ACCEPTING PRAYER

Hear our voice, ATTENTIVE ONE, our God, have mercy and compassion for us, and accept our prayer with kindness and with favor, for you are the God who harkens to the words of prayer and supplication. Do not turn us from your presence empty-handed. For you are one who listens to the prayer of your people Israel with compassion.

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who listens to the words of prayer.

COMMENTARY. This may be the most poignant of all the benedictions of the Amidah. It occurs after we have prayed about so many important things: health, wisdom, community...Yet only here do we finally ask whether or not God hears our prayer. We ask, by way of stating, that God graciously listen to us. What is God that: such hearing is possible? If we have moved beyond a simplistic notion of a giant-figure with omniscient ears, what do we have left that hears? Whatever it is, we affirm it! Somehow the injection of our impassioned words and thoughts into the vast process of existence does something. That something is not merely self-clarification and introspection. Something hears. The cosmos bends towards us and takes cognizance. The particulars are wrapped in mystery; the direction and the flow are known.

William Strongin

Do not think that the words of prayer as you say them go up to God. It is not the words themselves that ascend. It is rather the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven. If your prayer consists only of words and letters, and does not contain your heart's desire—how can it rise up to God?

Nahman of Breslav (Translated by Arthur Green and Barry Holtz)

At this point in the Amidah it is customary to add personal petitions for healing or safety, for successfully earning a living and for other hopes and needs.
17. AVODAH / WORSHIP

Take pleasure, Gracious One, our God, in Israel your people; lovingly accept their fervent prayer. May Israel’s worship always be acceptable to you.

On a Rosh Hodesh / New Moon or Festival, add:
(Our God, our ancients’ God, may our prayer arise and come to you, and be beheld, and be acceptable. Let it be heard, acted upon, remembered—the memory of us and all our needs, the memory of our ancestors, the memory of messianic hopes, the memory of Jerusalem your holy city, and the memory of all your kin, the house of Israel, all surviving in your presence. Act for goodness and grace, for love and care, for life, well-being, and peace, on this day of

On Rosh Hodesh: the new moon.
On Pesah: the festival of matzot.
On Sukkot: the festival of sukkot.

KAVANAH. Prayer itself is the divinity.

We assert our faith in the coming of a messianic age, a time when justice will reign and all humanity will be united in recognition of the one God. Even in our people’s darkest hour, this vision of the future strengthened us as we faced both life and death. However distanced we may be from the more naive aspects of belief in the person of the Messiah, the vision of a transformed future remains our guide, just as we know that the vision will become reality only if our deeds reflect it.

A.G. / M.P.
Remember us this day, ALL-KNOWING ONE, our God, for goodness. Favor us this day with blessing. Preserve us this day for life. With your redeeming, nurturing word, be kind and generous. Act tenderly on our behalf, and grant us victory over all our trials. Truly, our eyes are turned toward you, for you are a providing God, gracious and merciful are you.

And may our eyes behold your homecoming, with merciful intent, to Zion. Blessed are you, THE FAITHFUL ONE, who brings your presence home to Zion.

18. HODA'AH / THANKS

We give thanks to you that you are The ALL-MERCIFUL, our God, God of our ancestors, today and always. A firm, enduring source of life, a shield to us in time of trial, you are ever there, from age to age. We acknowledge you, declare your praise, and thank you for our lives entrusted to your hand, our souls placed in your care, for your miracles that greet us every day, and for your wonders and the good things that are with us every hour, morning, noon, and night. Good One, whose kindness never stops, Kind One, whose loving acts have never failed—always have we placed our hope in you.

KAVANAH. So long as the Jewish people is linked in communion with the eternal, it can look forward to an eternal life for itself. M.M.K. (Adapted)

DERASH. The insights of wonder must be constantly kept alive. Since there is a need for daily wonder, there is a need for daily worship. The sense of the “miracles which are daily with us,” the sense of the “continual marvels,” is the source of prayer. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or defeats of living... The profound and perpetual awareness of the wonder of being has become a part of the religious consciousness of the Jew. A.J.H.

KAVANAH. Gratitude is the overwhelming experience of the person of faith. Faith stimulates gratitude, and the practice of gratitude expands faith. We experience thankfulness when we know that our lives are safe within God’s protection. We trust that the future is assured. We need not consume our days in fear and anxiety. We are released. We can marvel at the daily wonders. S.F.W.
On Hanukkah add: For the miracles, for the redemption, for heroic acts, for saving deeds, for consolations, all of which you have enacted for our ancestors at this time of year in days gone by—as in the days of Matthew, son of Yohanan, Hasmonean High Priest, and Matthew's sons: a wicked Hellenistic government arose against your people Israel, forcing them to shun your Torah and to leave off from the laws you will ordained. And you, in your abundant mercy, stood up for Israel in their hour of distress. You pressed their claim, exacted justice for them. You delivered armed might to the weak, the many to the power of the few, the wicked to the power of the just, the vicious to the power of those occupied with your Torah. You made known your name that day, and made it holy in your world. And for your people Israel you enacted great deliverance, as in our own time. Afterward, your children came into your Temple's inner room. They cleared your sanctuary, purified your holy place, kindled lights inside your holy courtyards, and established these eight days of Hanukkah, for giving thanks and praise to your great name.)

—ך
On Purim add:

(On Purim, add: For the miracles, and for deliverance, and for the mighty deeds, and for the saving acts, and for the consolations you enacted for our ancestors in ancient times, and in our own time.

In the days of Mordechai and Esther in Shushan, the mighty capital [of Persia], when the wicked Haman rose against them, seeking to destroy, to kill, and to eradicate all Jews, the young and old alike, in a single day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, and take as plunder all they owned.

But you, in your abundant mercies, thwarted his conspiracy, destroyed his plan. And to the Jews came light and happiness, and joy and glory.

For all these things, let your name be blessed and raised in honor always, sovereign of ours, forever.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: And write down for a good life all the people of your covenant.)

Let all of life acknowledge you! May all beings praise your name in truth, O God, our rescue and our aid. Blessed are you, THE GRACIOUS ONE, whose name is good, to whom all thanks are due. —

KAVANAH. This prayer helps us to get in touch with our gratitude for the extraordinary yet often overlooked daily workings of the world, and through them to recognize the insignificance of our own roles, to feel humble. In becoming aware of our smallness, we become able to grasp our relatedness to the All. This in turn makes it possible to overcome the loneliness of claiming we have all the answers and the anxiety of always needing to be in control. At these moments the pain of our unfulfilled needs is swept away in the wondrous goodness we feel in the world about us. We give thanks.

S.P.W.

הָלְבָּשׁ לַחַיֵּים חַלָּכִים טוֹביִים כֶּלָּכִים בְּרֵיתֵיָהוּ

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add:

KAVANAH. This prayer helps us to get in touch with our gratitude for the extraordinary yet often overlooked daily workings of the world, and through them to recognize the insignificance of our own roles, to feel humble. In becoming aware of our smallness, we become able to grasp our relatedness to the All. This in turn makes it possible to overcome the loneliness of claiming we have all the answers and the anxiety of always needing to be in control. At these moments the pain of our unfulfilled needs is swept away in the wondrous goodness we feel in the world about us. We give thanks.

S.P.W.

לַחַיֵּים חַלָּכִים טוֹביִים כֶּלָּכִים בְּרֵיתֵיָהוּ / to the Jews...glory (Esther 8:16).
19. BIRKAT HASHALOM / BLESSING FOR PEACE

Grant abundant peace eternally for Israel, your people. For you are the sovereign source of all peace. So, may it be a good thing in your eyes to bless your people Israel, and all who dwell on earth, in every time and hour, with your peace.

(Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add: In the book of life, blessing, peace, and proper sustenance, may we be remembered and inscribed, we and all your people, the house of Israel, for a good life and for peace.)

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, maker of peace.

The Amidah traditionally concludes with bowing and taking three steps back.

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Don’t stop after beating the swords into ploughshares, don’t stop! Go on beating and make musical instruments out of them.

Whoever wants to make war again will have to turn them into ploughshares first.

Yehuda Amichai (Translated by Glenda Abramson and Tudor Perfit)

73 / AMIDAH
RIBONO SHELO OLAM /
CONCLUDING MEDITATION

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

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

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

During Min'hah on fast days and during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, continue with Avinu Malkenu, page 82. Otherwise, continue on page 86.

DERASHA: Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of each other, above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of others, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

Albert Einstein (Adapted)

75 / AMIDAH / CONCLUDING MEDITATION
subside. We continue from one moment to the next, we grow and develop in body and spirit. And You, God, silently in the background, at once imperceptible and awesome. Blessed are You, eternally weaving the infinite tapestry of Your universe.

Insight / You bless us with the power to know. May we cherish this unique gift, and never trivialize it. May it be a source of wisdom and compassion leading us to sanctify our lives and Your creation. May we never profane the gift of knowledge by using it for purposes unworthy of You. Blessed are You, source of knowledge.

Repentance / The miracle of repentance can turn around our lives and the lives of those we love. Help us to shed the false values, the self-delusion and self-indulgence of a society polluted by trivialities and distractions, vanity and hollowness, and to return to the things that really count—the smile of a loved one, a pat on the back, pitching in to help someone in need, building a community, being a mensch. Blessed are You, who desire our return.

Forgiveness / Through Your power of forgiveness, we are given new life. Through the power of forgiveness we can give new lives to those we love. Help us to let go of accumulated hurts, indignities and wounds, and to find the strength to forgive those who have hurt us, for only then will their power to warp our spirit be shattered. May we have the courage to admit that we too are offenders and seek forgiveness from those we have hurt. May the awesome power of forgiveness rain down gently like sweet showers for our thirsty souls, replenishing us, fortifying us and inspiring us. Blessed are You, the power of forgiveness.

ALTERNATIVE AMIDAH

All Generations of Israel United / We remember all of our ancestors, even those we never knew. In our mind’s eye, we see them streaming to shul, the pious ones, the skeptics, the cynics, all of them. We feel their blood coursing through our veins. We feel our kinship through history. Images of our childhoods, of parents, perhaps grandparents—these mingle in our minds with our imagined ancestors across the generations, all joining us in prayer. God of history, may these links never die, may our descendants picture us in their hearts as we picture our own ancestors, and so may we become beloved ancestors some day, joined together, spanning the centuries in our worship of you. Blessed are You, who bind together the generations, giving life to our ancestors and to us.

Divine Power / Just as a baby takes the strength of her parents for granted, so God, do we take your strength for granted. For how is it that we, barbaric and vicious species that we are, endure our own natures? Surely it is because our nature includes You and Your nature. It is You, God, who give us the strength to fight for justice, the passion to dream and hope to endure our own darker side. Though we fall back, one step, two and more into darkness, Yours is the strength that pushes us forward, that suffers our heartbreak, that once more, ever more, unnoticed and unseen, picks us up from the dust, and gently urges us on. Blessed are You, who are always there, even when we don’t know it.

Hallowing God’s Name / Though our daily routines all but blind us to the splendor of Your Universe, we are not blind. Even a moment’s reflection fills us with awe — stars, planets, galaxies, rainfall, snow, sunshine and clouds — the whole earth is filled with your Glory. The laws of nature do not
of justice and righteousness that she will need to do more than merely to survive. May Israel flourish and renew herself and in renewing herself, renew us as well. May we cherish Israel in our hearts and souls. Blessed are You, who give the Jewish people a home.

Restoring Justice / May we return to those values that are most enduring, to feeding the hungry, to clothing the naked, to sheltering the homeless. May we always stand by the vulnerable and marginal and insist that there is no justice worthy of the name if that justice does not provide for their basic needs and uphold their human dignity. We were slaves in the land of Egypt, strangers in a strange land. We are commanded to love not only our neighbors but also the strangers among us. Let us aid those who seek freedom and a better life. Blessed are You, who challenge us to live justly.

Overcoming Divisions / Grace us with respect for those who differ with our views. Grant our people the humility to understand that no denomination or path is the one true path. Grant us the wisdom to understand and embrace the need for many different paths among us, to rejoice in the variety of Judaisms and look first at what unites us. May we deal with our differences with respect, never impugning the integrity of those who differ from us. Blessed are You, who sustain and nurture so many different paths to You.

Compassion for the Righteous / May wisdom accompany righteousness, so that we may understand that the rewards of righteousness are more than what meets the eye. May we learn to accept that the rewards we seek are not always those that are given. But that the smiles, laughter and love that the righteous inspire are more precious than fine gold. May we understand that the struggles of the righteous may not end.

Redemption / May we find the faith and dedication to say no to the pessimists and cynics who tell us that our dreams are only dreams. Source of hope, inspiration to generations, inspire us now in this generation to strive for a more just world, a true kingdom of God. Blessed are You, who dream our dreams with us.

Healing / In a world of beauty and wonder that is so often shattered by pain and hurt, tragedy and disease, help us to heal ourselves in body and spirit. May those whose pain, hurt and anguish cannot be prayed away still find relief in prayer. Grace us with the fortitude and staying power to be Your prayer, to be Your healing presence to the wounded among us. May we never lose sight of Your healing presence within and around us. Blessed are You, who give us healing power.

Blessing for Abundance / God, we who are smothered in comfort and abundance pray for the wisdom to use our abundance well, to freely and unstintingly give it to those who are in need. May we have the humility to realize that abundance is ultimately from You. Help us remember that if we were born in different circumstances, our skills would not prevent our starvation, disease, misery and squalor. Remind us that there are others, as much God’s children as ourselves, who live in that misery every day. May we be blessed with the ability to share our abundance generously. Blessed are You, who challenge us with abundance.

Ingathering of Jewish People / May we never take for granted the land of Israel, our people’s homeland. May we who have lived our lives during the relatively short existence of the State of Israel remember that most of our history has been a history of homelessness and vulnerability. May we dedicate ourselves to strengthening Israel with those values.
far as Jewish religion, with its teachings and rituals, is concerned, it matters very little how we conceive God, as long as we so believe in God that it makes a tremendous difference in our lives.” May we come to understand that it is the act of worship that is the answer to our prayers. Blessed are You, who created us with the astounding ability to pray.

Thanks / Grant us the grace to give thanks from deep within, the grace to live our lives as a thanksgiving offering, to see with thankful eyes, to hear with thankful ears, to speak thankful speech, to eat thankfully. Let us learn to laugh our thanks, cry out thanks, sing our thanks and in our last moments to die our thanks. Let us somehow learn that we did not have to be, that our existence is both an awesome, beautiful, fragile and utterly contingent gift, and a profound and fearful test as well. May we embrace both the gift and the test. Blessed are You, source of each life, who receive our thanks every hour, morning, noon and night.

Peace / Grant us peace, the wildpeace of Yehuda Amichai: “A peace without the big noise of beating swords into plowshares, without words, without the heavy rubberstamp; I want it gentle over us, like lazy white foam… I want it to come like wildflowers, suddenly, because the field needs it: wildpeace.” Also grant us the understanding that we must wage peace with all the fierceness that others wage war. Grant us the courage to wage a fierce, unrelenting peace that opposes all violence and hatred. Give us the courage to declare such violence and hatred a hilul Hashem, a profanation of Your name. Blessed are You, who wage peace and wait with broken heart for us to join You.

oppression, but that every soul saved from despair through righteous action is not merely a drop in the bucket, but rather, an infinitely precious divine gift. Grant us the wisdom to understand the true rewards of righteousness and to celebrate them in joy, even through tears of sadness. Blessed are You, who inspire us to revere the righteous.

Rebuilding Jerusalem / May we live to see the day when Jerusalem is truly a city of peace. May it come to symbolize all that is right and good and just about religion, rather than serve as battleground among competing religions. May the divine presence dwell in the city that we love. May we understand that Jerusalem will be finally rebuilt when all peoples and religions accept that their conceptions of God are imperfect. Blessed are You, God beyond our mere conceptions of God, who build Jerusalem.

Salvation / May the Jewish people never forget that though we are strong in Israel and comfortable in North America, many Jews throughout the world, and in Israel and North America as well, are neither strong nor comfortable. May history never record that we, in our comfort, forgot our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, in Ethiopia and Eastern Europe, in the development towns and ghettos of Israel, and in the “old Jewish neighborhoods” that time has passed by in America and other developed countries. They depend on us. Blessed are You, who give the means to save our brothers and sisters, if only we find the will.

Worship / May we learn that true worship is about thanks, not things, about awakenings to the world, not acquiring it. May we understand worship to be as much about the nature and health of our own souls as it is about You and Your nature. May we never confuse theology with worship, and may we remember the words of Mordecai Kaplan, “that as
KADDDISH TITKABAL / KADDDISH FOR THE COMPLETION OF PRAYER

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

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

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

And may the prayer and supplication of the whole house of Israel be acceptable to their creator in the heavens. And say: Amen.

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

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

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**KAVANAH:** Adding the rabbinic phrase “ve’al kol yoshvev tevel” (and for all who dwell on earth) logically completes the concentric circles of our aspirations—our care starts with our minyan, extends to the entire Jewish people and radiates outward from thee to all who share our planet.

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NOTE. Kaddish Titkabal concludes the section of the service containing an Amidah/silent prayer. It therefore contains a request for the acceptance of prayer, which is omitted in the Mourners’ Kaddish that follows Aleynu.

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87 / KADDDISH TITKABAL
From the second day of Pesah until Shavuot the counting of the Omer, pages 122-127, is inserted here. In public worship on Saturday evening Havdalah, pages 128-133, is recited here.

ALEYNU

We rise for Aleynu. It is customary to bow at "bend the knee." For an alternative version see pages 94-95. Choose one of the following:

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

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

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

COMMENTARY. The theme of Aleynu is the anticipation of God’s universal rulership. Originally, this glorious hymn introduced the “Rulership” section of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Because of its lofty language and message, Aleynu was soon added to every worship service. The Reconstructionist version of Aleynu shifts the focus from a concern with the specialness of the Jewish people to an emphasis on the unique Torah perspective that enables Israel to help spread God’s presence through the universe. This shift eliminates an opportunity for Jewish triumphalism, in favor of stressing the importance of Torah in Jewish living.
And so, we bend the knee and bow, acknowledging the sovereign who rules above all those who rule, the blessed Holy One, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth, whose realm embraces heaven’s heights, whose mighty presence stalks celestial ramparts. This is our God; there is none else besides, as it is written in the Torah: “You shall know this day, and bring it home inside your heart, that THE SUPREME ONE is God in the heavens above and on the earth below. There is no other God.”

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A Rebbi’s Proverb

If you always assume the one sitting next to you is the Messiah waiting for some simple human kindness—

You will soon come to weigh your words and watch your hands.

And if the Messiah chooses not to be revealed in your time—

It will not matter.

Danny Siegel (Adapted from a Yiddish proverb)

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

M.M.K.

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

M.B. (Adapted)

יזֶרֶד / You...other God (Deuteronomy 4:39).

Holy is your name, holy is your work, holy are the days that return to you. Holy are the years that you uncover. Holy are the hands that are raised to you, and the weeping that is wept to you. Holy is the fire between your will and ours, in which we are refined. Holy is that which is unredeemed, covered with your patience. Holy are the souls lost in your unnamming. Holy, and shining with a great light, is every living thing, established in this world and covered with time, until your name is praised forever.

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

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

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

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DERASH. When senseless hatred reigns on earth and people hide their faces
from one another, then heaven is forced to hide its face. But when love
comes to rule the earth and people reveal their faces to one another, then
the splendor of God will be revealed.

M.B. (Adapted)

DERASH. It is not the seeking after God that divides but the claim to have
found God and to have discovered the only proper way of obeying God
and communing with God.

M.M.K./M.S.

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THE ETERNAL ONE...forever (Exodus 15:18).
THE EVERLASTING ONE...one (Zechariah 14:9).
And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Judy Chicago

ALEYNU / ALTERNATIVE VERSIONS

It is up to us
to hallow Creation,
to respond to Life
with the fullness of our lives.
It is up to us
to meet the World,
to embrace the Whole
even as we wrestle
with its parts.
It is up to us
to repair the World
and to bind our lives to the Truth.

Therefore we bend the knee
and shake off the stiffness that keeps us
from the subtle
graces of Life
and the supple
gestures of Love.
With reverence
and thanksgiving
we accept our destiny
and set for ourselves
the task of redemption.

Rami M. Shapiro
Each Of Us Has a Name

Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents
Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear
Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls
Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbors
Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing
Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love
Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work
Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness
Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by our death.

Preludes to Kaddish

Choose from among the following:

Dirge Without Music

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground. 
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned 
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you. 
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains, but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, 
the love,
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

We can often see more through a tear than through a telescope.

Author Unknown
Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot always tell by looking what is happening.
More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.
Live a life you can endure; make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,
for every gardener knows that after the digging, after the planting,
after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

Birth is a Beginning

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey:
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age;
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
And then perhaps to wisdom;
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness—
And, often back again;
From health to sickness
And back, we pray, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding—
From fear to faith;

From defeat to defeat to defeat—
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage,
A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
But life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage—
To life everlasting.

Love is not changed by Death,
And nothing is lost and all in the end is harvest.

Marge Piercy

Edith Siswell

Alvin I. Fine
We turn our thoughts to yesterday...to a world that lives only in our memory. As we recall the days gone by, we know the past is irretrievable. Yet—through the gift of memory, we recapture treasured moments and images. We are thankful for the happiness we knew with those no longer here, with whom we lived and laughed and loved. We praise the Eternal wellspring of life who links yesterday to tomorrow. We affirm that despite all the tragedy bound up with living, it is still good to be alive. We understand that there can be no love without loss, no joy without sorrow. May we have the courage to accept the all of life—the love and the loss—the joy and the sorrow, as we remember them.

Evelyn Mehlman

In Praise Of The Living

Yitgadal ve’yitkadash shemey raba
This profound praise of the living
Praise for the generous gift of life.

Praise for the presence of loved ones, the bonds of friendship, the link of memory.
Praise for the toil and searching, the dedication and visions, the ennobling aspirations.
Praise for the precious moorings of faith, for courageous souls, for prophets, psalmists, and sages.
Praise for those who walked before us, the sufferers in the valley of shadows, the steadfast in the furnace of hate.
Praise for the God of our fathers, the Source of all growth and goodness, the Promise of which we build tomorrow.

Yitgadal ve’yitkadash shemey raba
This, the profound praise we offer. Praise for the generous gift of life.

Harvey J. Fields

COMMENTARY. The Mourner’s Kaddish speaks not a word about death, grief, mourning or loss. At the time of our greatest grief and sadness, our tradition asks mourners to stand and recite the Kaddish in the presence of our community so that we affirm life. Through the words of the Kaddish we affirm that life is good, that the life of the deceased was good, and that we pledge to go on living carrying their legacy with us into life. We affirm our commitment to being agents for peace and healing in the world. The community listens and offers support as mourners declare this affirmation of life and peace.

Etan WeinerKaplow
THE MOURNERS’ KADDISH

It is customary for mourners, and those observing Yahrzeit, to stand for Kaddish. In some congregations everyone rises.

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

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

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

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

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

Continue with a reading (pages 96-101, 104-107), Psalm 23 (page 116), Psalm 49 (page 112) and/or a concluding song such as Adon Olam (page 120). From Rosh Hodesh Elul through Hoshanah Rabah it is traditional to recite Psalm 27 (page 108).

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

DAR.
The son of a rabbi mourned the loss of his beloved father. Day after day he went to the cemetery and prostrated himself on his father’s grave. One day as the son gave in to waves of sorrow, his father appeared to him in a vision and said: “My son, do you think that you honor my memory with your grief? Offer me no tribute of tears, nor monuments of sorrow. Do not weep for me. Instead, live for me.

“Show your love by walking the Way, in devotion to commandment, faith, and people. This is the only memorial that truly honors the departed.” The son rose from his father’s grave on hearing these words, and went to make his father’s memory a perpetual light to guide him and a blessing to the world.

Rabbinic Tale

LOSS OF A GAY OR LESBIAN LOVER

Sister that I never held near
Comrade that I never embraced
Your memory is almost lost:

The one we don’t talk about.
The loving one who never married.
The one for whom no Kaddish is said.

READINGS

LOSS OF A PARENT

You gathered incredible strength in order to die to seem calm and fully conscious without complaint, without trembling without a cry so that I would not be afraid

Your wary hand slowly grew cold in mine and guided me carefully beyond into the house of death so I might come to know it

Thus in the past you used to take my hand and guide me through the world and show me life so I would not fear

I will follow after you confident as a child toward the silent country where you went first so I would not feel a stranger there

And I will not be afraid.

Blaži Dmitrova

COMMENTARY. We can feel grief over losing someone we hardly even knew. With the loss of a young child, a new friend or a new relation, we experience the “death of potential”—the grief over losing what might have been. Then we have no vast storehouses of memories to fall back on and few stories to comfort us, only the pain over lost opportunity to create those memories and stories. Yet we have a small spark of connection to nurture, a connection that has forever altered our lives.

Seth Goldstein
I will soothe you into forgetfulness to the drop, drop
Of the rain on the roof;
I will speak to you out of the rhymes
Of the Masters;
I will dance with you in the lilt
Of the violin,
And make your heart leap with the bursting cadence
Of the organ;
I will flood your soul with the flaming radiance
Of the sunrise,
And bring you peace in the tender rose and gold
Of the after-sunset.

All these have made me happy:
They are a part of me;
I shall become a part of them.

Your loneliness calls out to me:
I know of your struggles; we are not strangers,
And if my path is easier, I will not forget who walked it first.
We call you to mind, but did you not sometimes think of us,
Your children, lovers across the years,
Those who would follow and would think of you
And bless your memory, and call you to mind.

With David and Jonathan, we will not forget you,
With Ruth and Naomi, we will not forget you,
In the name of God you are our sisters and our brothers,
And we ask that you be remembered for peace.  Author Unknown

LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

My Hereafter

Hold on to what is good
even if it is
a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe
even if it is
a tree which stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do
even if it is
a long way from here.
Hold on to life even when
it is easier letting go.
Hold on to my hand even when
I have gone away from you.

Nancy Wood

Do not come when I am dead
To sit beside a low green mound,
Or bring the first gay daffodils
Because I love you so,
For I shall not be there.
You cannot find me there.

I will look up at you from the eyes
Of little children;
I will bend to meet you in the swaying boughs
Of bud-thrilled trees,
And caress you with the passionate sweep
Of storm-filled winds;
I will give you strength in your upward tread
Of everlasting hills;
I will cool your tired body in the flow
Of the limpid river;
I will warm your work-glorified hands through the glow
Of the winter fire;
The following psalm is traditionally recited in a mourner's house.

For the chief musician; a psalm of the clan of Korah.

Hear this, all you nations!

Hearken, all you dwellers of the earth,

you human beings of every sort,

the rich and poor alike!

My mouth shall utter words of wisdom,

words of understanding shall my heart conceive.

I'll turn my mind to parable,

my riddle I'll unfold upon the harp.

Why should I fear in times of trouble,

when the treachery of challengers surrounds me,

they who trust in force, who boast of their great wealth?

No, never can such things redeem a person;

that's not the way to clear accounts with God!

Their life cannot be saved so cheaply;

but forever they shall cease, and pass away.

For could one live forever?

Shall one never see the grave?

As one can see, even the wise shall die,

together shall the foolish and the ignorant be lost;

to others shall they leave their wealth.

Their grave is their eternal home,

their dwelling-place throughout all generations,

they whose names were famous in all lands.

———

COMMENTARY. In reflecting on the death that awaits everyone, this psalm, like Ecclesiastes, recognizes the transience of earthly existence. The psalmist seems to exclude himself, however, from this inevitable fate, by saying God will “take” him, rather than let him descend to the grave. Does he imagine that he is exempt from the laws of mortality? Ibn Ezra says, obviously not; the poet is aware of an eternal soul that outlasts our physical bodies. Rashi, however, claims that God “takes” him to walk in God’s ways during his lifetime. From this perspective, the psalmist’s main thrust is not on life after death, but on life itself. Do not focus on material wealth, he urges, because, as popular wisdom has always taught, you can’t take it with you. Focus instead on what will truly bring lasting honor.

H.L.
No person dwells in honor long; one perishes the same way as the beasts.

Such is the fate of fools, the latter end of those who revel in their talk—it shall be so!

Like sheep, they are appointed for the great unknown. Death is their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend; it is their fate to waste away; and in Sheol is their abode.

But God redeems my soul from Sheol’s power; it is God who takes me—this, too, shall be so!

Don’t be afraid of this: that though a person may grow rich, and though the glory of one’s house grow great, one doesn’t keep a bit of it at death; one’s worldly glory doesn’t follow to the grave.

However blessed you may be in life, however much people might say, “You have done well,” you’ll come to take your place beside your ancestors, with those who never more behold the light of day.

A person may know honor, yet not understand, we perish in the same way as the beasts.

要害ך לך ידם נלםاعל שבעמהות נרמות.
והגרסה פסל לומה אוחורמה במעשה יריסה פלשה.
באות לשלשלות אתה פותח ירימה בם שלגי פל僬ר וז듯ם פלמות.
שהאם מתחה לוה.
אשר א痫ים יפהו בפשיר מדשאול כי קיוו פלשה.
ואח תורא כי זשר אמש כי רבס קבור 추רה.
כי לא נמחות ישה חבל לא ייר א 저희 קבודה.
כי הפשירتأمين יברח ויור終わった כי תמיות לוה.
ההוא אערוזדר א楽しめる ער יצויא לא ירא ארה.
אודם ביטר ולא ייבי נמשל מעמהות נרמות.

/ the great unknown—The Biblical word for the place of the dead is she’ol, literally “questioning, inquiry.” The name arose from the practice, described in 1 Sam. 28, of consulting the spirits of the dead for knowledge about the future. But the name in effect became synonymous with the mystery of the afterlife itself.

/ But God redeems...be so! These are the psalm’s only words of affirmation of some reality beyond physical death, but no details are given. However vague this affirmation, it forms the premise for the psalmist’s contention, in the next verse, that death of the body is not to be feared, but rather accepted as a fact of life.

115 / PSALM FOR A HOUSE OF MOURNING
A Psalm of David

The Eternal is my shepherd; I shall never be in need. Amid the choicest grasses does God set me down. God leads me by the calmest waters, and restores my soul. God takes me along paths of righteousness, in keeping with the honor of God's name. Even should I wander in a valley of the darkest shadows, I will fear no evil. You are with me, God. Your power and support are there to comfort me. You set in front of me a table in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing. Surely, good and loving-kindness will pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall come to dwell inside the house of the Eternal for a length of days.

I Know Not Your Ways

I know not your ways—A sunset is for me a godset. Where are you going, God? Take me along. if, in the “along” it is light, God. I am afraid of the dark.

Mizmor ledavid

Malka Hesford Tzauman (Translated from the Yiddish by Marcia Falk)
READING FOR THE END OF SHIVAH

At the last service of the shivah period, the following may be read.

As this shivah draws to a close, we are grateful for the members of our family and community who have supported us through this stage of mourning. God’s redemptive power has been present in their caring. Their thoughts and memories have brought light into the darkness.

Now as we return to everyday activity, we know that the mourning process is not over. We take these steps back into life with gratitude for the power to find new strength and new resolve for the tasks ahead.

Four Things

These things are beautiful beyond belief:
The pleasant weakness that comes after pain,
The radiant greenness that comes after rain,
The deepened faith that follows after grief,
And the awakening to love again.

Author Unknown

There are stars whose light reaches the earth only after they themselves have disintegrated and are no more. And there are people whose scintillating memory lights the world after they have passed from it. These lights which shine in the darkest night are those which illumine for us the path.

Hannah Simes (Translator unknown)

Paths of Fullness—An Interpretation of Psalm 23

The Holy One is my Guide;
my life is whole.

We journey together
over fertile hillsides
and rest
beside nourishing springs.

Thus is my spirit
ever renewed,
for my Guide leads me
down paths of fullness.

Even when my steps lead
into the kingdom of death
I do not fear
for I know you are with me.

Your presence
your shelter
is a comfort to me.

With you I can set myself aright
in the face of
deepest sorrow;
and soon my joy is filled to overflowing.

As I journey on,
nothing but kindness and love
shall follow
until the day I finally return.

To my Source,
my destination.

Brant Rosen
ADON OLAM / CROWN OF ALL TIME

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

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

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

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

This is my God, my help who lives, refuge from pain in time of trial, my banner, and my place to fly, my cup's portion when, dry, I cry. To God's kind hand I pledge my soul each time I sleep, again to wake, and with my soul, this body, here. Yah's love is mine; I shall not fear.

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

At the end of Shabbat, a Havdalah candle is lit. A full cup of wine and spices are near at hand, and the lights are dimmed.

At the end of a festival, and at the start of Ḥol Hamo'ed, the candle and spices are omitted if it is not Saturday night.

Elijah the prophet, come speedily to us hailing messianic days.

Miriam the prophet will dance with us at the waters of redemption.

NOTE. Traditionally Havdalah is said after three stars appear in the sky on Saturday evening, making Shabbat about twenty-five hours long. In families that observe this tradition, younger children relish the task of finding stars.

Some sing “Eliyahu Hanavi” at the beginning of Havdalah, and some at the end. We have put it before Havdalah to set a mood of contemplation. This order builds toward the mood of jubilation expressed in the song “Hamavdil.”

Havdalah is recited not only on Shabbat but also at the conclusion of Festivals. When Festivals end at times other than Saturday nights, Havdalah includes only two blessings—over wine and over separation.

COMMENTARY. As Shabbat fades, our people’s centuries-old yearning for redemption is voiced through song. When we sing the traditional “Eliyahu Hanavi,” we recall the saving message and leadership of Elijah the Prophet, harbinger of the messianic age. The contemporary lyrics of “Miriam Hanavi’ah” parallel the traditional, offering an inspiring leadership model. Midrash tells us that Miriam helped to bolster the Israelite women’s courage in taking the risk of fleeing Egypt toward freedom. A prophet in her own right, Miriam led our people in a celebration and dance after we “took the plunge” to freedom at the Reed Sea (Exodus 15:20-21). As we strive for וְיָשָׁר הַשָּׁם, repair of the world, and as we pray for the coming of the messianic age, both Elijah and Miriam are inspiring prophetic figures who model leadership traits that may help to strengthen us on our journey toward redemption.

Leila Gal Berner
With the permission of this company:
Blessed are you, THE BOUNDLESS ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who created the fruit of the vine.

It is the custom in some families for everyone to take a sip of the wine here. Others wait until after the final berakah / blessing.

Blessed are you, REVIVER our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates various spices.

After the blessing is said, the leader smells the spices and passes them on.

Blessed are you, THE RADIANCE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates the light of fire.

After reciting the blessing over fire, participants hold their hands before the candle flame so that their fingers look radiant in its light and then cast shadows on their palms. Then the following blessing is said.

Blessed are you, THE MANY-NAMED, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who separates between holy and ordinary, light and dark, the seventh day and the six days of work. Blessed are you, THE INDIVISIBLE who separates the holy from the ordinary.

The candle is now extinguished. Some families do this by immersing it in wine from the cup. Lights are turned on, and we continue in lively song.

COMMENTARY. While lighting candles marks both the beginning and the end of Shabbat, the Havdalah candle has a meaning different from that of the Erev Shabbat candles. Lighting this new fire signals commencement of the work week because fire is so often an instrument of labor. Every berakah / blessing must correlate to an event or action so that it is not in vain. We “use” the candlelight here to cast a shadow on our palms by lifting our curled fingers toward the light.

A time of transitions, Havdalah lends itself to comment about life cycle transitions as well. It is a wonderful place to insert parents’ hopes for a bar / bat mitzvah at the transition from childhood to adolescence. Brit ceremonies for new-born girls can easily be created around Havdalah. Weddings, new jobs, beginning of school and graduation are some of the occasions when people might want to add personal words to Havdalah.

D.A.T.

Savrey ḥaveray.
Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha’olam borey peri hagafen.
It is the custom in some families for everyone to take a sip of the wine here. Others wait until after the final berakah / blessing.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha’olam borey miney vesamim.
After the blessing is said, the leader smells the spices and passes them on.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha’olam borey me’orey ha’esh.
After reciting the blessing over fire, participants hold their hands before the candle flame so that their fingers look radiant in its light and then cast shadows on their palms. Then the following blessing is said.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha’olam hamavdil beyn kodesh lehol beyn or lehosheḥ beyn yom hashevi’i lesheshet yemey hama’aseh. Baruḥ atah adonay hamavdil beyn kodesh lehol.
The candle is now extinguished. Some families do this by immersing it in wine from the cup. Lights are turned on, and we continue in lively song.

... / Shavu’a tov. / Have a good week.
... / A gute voch. / A good week.

...
HAMAVDIL / THE ONE WHO DIVIDES

This translation can be sung to the same melody as Shavu'a Tov.

May the one who divides
between holy and plain,
forbear our sins,
and ease our pain.

Posterity and plenty
add to our gain,
like seashore sands,
like stars at night.

The day moves on
like palm tree's shade,
I call to God
who charts the way.

The watchman says,
"The morn has come,
and soon the night,
yes, soon the night."

Your justice strong
as Mount Tabor,
My sins forgive,
my faults ignore.

Let me be pure,
like long before,
My blemish fade
like passing night.

COMMENTARY. Just as we greet Shabbat with blessing, we usher it out with blessing. Candlelight and wine mark these borders. Thus we attempt to bring the flavor and insight of Shabbat into the everyday. At Havdalah there is the addition of spices, as if to revive our spirits flagging at the loss of Shabbat and to bear the sweet savor of Shabbat into the week. D.A.T.

NOTE. Composed by Rabbi Isaac ibn Ghayat, who lived in eleventh-century Spain, for the conclusion of Yom Kippur, Hamavdil hails the divine power that allows us forgiveness, renewed vigor and redemption. A.G.
UNVEILING

Place a cloth over the marker. If the day is windy, the cloth can be held down with a string or stones.

We have gathered to honor the memory of our beloved _______. The link of life that joined us has been broken, but the bonds of love, friendship and family continue to connect us.

Remarks/stories about the deceased can be offered by one or several people. Sometimes all present are invited to participate if they wish.

Readings or poetry may be added here. For examples, see pages 3-7, 96-101, 103-107, 116-118.

CONCLUSION OF SHIVAH

To be read by the mourner(s) on the morning of the conclusion of shivah.

As Jewish tradition prescribes shivah, a period of intense mourning, so too does it prescribe a moment when shivah ends. Today, we walk out the door of the shivah house back into engagement with daily concerns. Mourning is far from over, but today we take important steps back into life. At this moment, we ask:

יהוה צעי לadelphia יוהו יקהוד אשתימא בשלום.

Adonay oz le’amo yiten, adonay yivarech et amo vashalom.

May You, REDEEMING ONE, give strength to your people. May You, ETERNAL ONE, bless your people with peace.

MERCIFUL ONE, grant healing, comfort, and strength to those who mourn the loss of _______. May his/her memory be a source of blessing in their lives. May they find consolation and peace with each other and return to doing deeds that strengthen the bonds of the living. Amen.

יהוה קלני בצרקתי חיש חל公園uer:

Adonay neheni vetzidkateha hayeshar lefanay darkeha.

GUIDING ONE, lead me in your righteousness, make your path straight before me.

May I take to heart the love and lessons of the life of _______ and of this shivah as I walk again into life.

It is customary to walk a short distance. Some people circle the block on which they live.

יהוה צעי לadelphia / May...peace! (Psalms 29:11).

יהוה צעי / Guiding...me. (Psalms 5:9).
God full of mercy who dwells in high places, grant full repose under Shechinah's wings in the heights of the holy and pure—like a light glowing in the firmament—to the soul of __________. Merciful one, conceal him/her under your wings forever, and bind his/her soul to life. THE COMPASSIONATE ONE is his/her portion. May he/she rest in peace in his/her place. Amen.

The covering is lifted off the marker. If a minyan is present, conclude with the recitation of Mourner's Kaddish, pages 102-103.

May we be bound up in the bonds of life. And let us say: Amen.