



ליל סליחות

LEIL SELICHOT



PRELUDE TO THE
SEASON OF RENEWAL

SELICHOT SERVICE

TIME FOR TURNING

Now is the time for turning.

The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red and orange. The birds will soon begin to turn and head once more toward the South. The animals will then turn to storing their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds, and animals, turning comes instinctively. But for us turning does not come so easily. It takes an act of will for us to make a turn. It means breaking with old habits. It means admitting that we have been wrong; and this is never easy. It means losing face; it means starting all over again; and this is always painful. It means saying: "I am sorry." It means recognizing that we have the ability to change. These things are terribly hard to do. But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever in yesterday's ways.

Adonai, help us to turn - from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith. Turn us around, Adonai, and bring us back toward You. Revive our lives, as at the beginning. And turn us toward each other, Adonai, for in isolation there is no life.

SHOFAR SERVICE

Our tradition tells us that Moses spent forty days and nights on Mount Sinai reading the Torah. After forty days and nights, he took the tablets and came down from the mountain to the camp of the Israelites. When Moses saw that the Children of Israel had built a golden calf and were worshiping it, he broke the tablets and destroyed the idols and the idolators.

On the New Moon of Elul, Adonai called Moses back to the mountain, and instructed the Israelites to blow the Shofar throughout their camp as a warning against idol worship. Therefore, the sages instituted the custom of blowing the Shofar every day during the month of Elul.

Since then, the Shofar has been interpreted as a kind of signal of alarm or warning. Too frequently we forget our duties and our responsibilities. We become selfish and cruel. We neglect important tasks, and concentrate on goals which are unworthy of us. The sounds of the Shofar are meant to wake us up, to sound an alert. May its sound inspire us to think about how we ought to live in the year that lies ahead.

As we listen to the sound of the Shofar, may its meaning enter into our hearts and shape our actions in the days ahead.

May the sound of the Shofar shatter our complacencies and make us conscious of the corruption in our lives.

May the sound of the Shofar penetrate our souls and cause us to turn back to our God.

May the sound of the Shofar break the bonds of the evil impulse within us, and enable us to serve Adonai with a whole heart.

May the sound of the Shofar renew our loyalty to the one God and strengthen our determination to defy the false gods which threaten our days.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to our many failings, and to the vastness of God's mercy for those who truly repent.

*May the sound of the Shofar enter our hearts;
For blessed is the people that hearkens to its call.*

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THE SHOFAR IS SOUNDED.

Ha-shi-vei-nu, A-do-nai, ei-le-cha
ve-na-shu-va;
cha-deish ya-mei-nu ke-ke-dem.

הַשִּׁיבֵנו יְיָ אֵלֵינוּ,
וְנָשׁוּבָה.
חַדֵּשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמוֹת.

Turn us to You, Adonai, and we will return. Renew our days as of old.

SILENT PRAYER

This book of prayers I take into my hand, and to the God of my ancestors,
Who from ages past has been their Rock and Refuge, I call.

In ancient words, seared with the pain of generations, I pour out my soul.
May these words that know the heavenly paths,
Ascend to bring God that which tongue cannot express,
That lies deep hidden in my heart.
May these words speak for me before God, entreating mercy.
Perhaps the God Who hearkened to my parents' prayers,
Who gave them courage and strength to bear all their sorrow,
Perhaps God will also hear my prayer and hearken to my cry,
And be to me a shield, for there is none to help or sustain me,
But God.

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, וְקַבֵּל
בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ. הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם.
אֲמַרְנוּ הָאֲזִינָה, יְיָ; בִּינָה הִגִּיגְנוּ.
אֵל תִּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְרוּחַ קְדֻשָּׁךָ אֵל תִּקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ.
אֵל תִּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ לְעֵת זְקֵנָה, בְּכָלוֹת כַּחֲנוּ אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ.
אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵל תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ.
כִּי לָךְ, יְיָ, הוֹחֲלָנוּ; אַתָּה תַּעֲנֵה, אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

Hear our voice, Adonai our God. Have compassion upon us, and with that
compassion, accept our prayer. Help us to return to You, Adonai, and then shall
we return. Renew our days as in the past. Consider our words, Adonai; look into
our inmost thoughts. Do not cast us away from Your presence, do not remove
Yourself from us. Do not cast us away when we are old; as our strength
diminishes, do not abandon us. Do not abandon us, Adonai our God; do not be
far from us. For You, Adonai, do we wait; and You, Adonai, will answer.

TESHUVAH

UNCOVERING OUR PAST YEAR

Our God, we call to You from the depths of our being. We know our own pain and acknowledge our own sin. We cry out our own need. Each of us is alone in thought, each one solitary in prayers during this hour of Selichot.—

And yet we are not alone. Each of us is part of a people; and so the one becomes the many. The pain of a single individual becomes Israel's pain. The solitary cry finds sanctuary in the heart of Israel, wherever Israel dwells, even to the ends of the earth.

Help us, Adonai, to be ever grateful for this shared destiny: for the strength that pours in to fortify our weakness, for the courage that the centuries of stubborn resistance to evil have stored up, for the soaring trust that You are our support and sustainer.

Let us feel Your presence, O God. May the spirit of each one who worships here become part of the larger eternal spirit of Your people Israel.

Sho-meir, sho-meir Yis-ra-eil,
she-mor she-ei-rit Yis-ra-eil;
Sho-meir, sho-meir Yis-ra-eil,
she-mor she-ei-rit Yis-ra-eil.
Ve-al yo-vad, ve-al yo-vad Yis-ra-eil,
ve-al yo-vad, ve-al yo-vad Yis-ra-eil;
ha-o-me-rim, ha-o-me-rim,
ha-o-me-rim She-ma Yis-ra-eil.
Sho-meir, sho-meir goi e-chad
she-mor she-ei-rit am e-chad,
Sho-meir, sho-meir goi e-chad,
she-mor she-ei-rit am e-chad.
Ve-al yo-vad, ve-al yo-vad goi e-chad,
ve-al yo-vad, ve-al yo-vad goi e-chad;
ha-me-ya-cha-dim,
ha-me-ya-cha-dim shi-me-cha
A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai e-chad.

שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל,
שְׁמוֹר שְׂאֲרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל,

וְאֵל-יְאֹבֵד יִשְׂרָאֵל,
הָאוֹמְרִים שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל.

שׁוֹמֵר גּוֹי אֶחָד,
שְׁמוֹר שְׂאֲרֵית עַם אֶחָד,

וְאֵל-יְאֹבֵד גּוֹי אֶחָד,
הַמְיַחֲדִים שְׁמָהּ,
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
יְיָ אֶחָד.

Guardian of Israel, guard the remnant of Israel, so those of Israel who say "Shema Yisrael" will never perish.

Guardian of our united people, guard the remnant of Your only nation, so the one people that says "Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad" will never perish.

Adonai, Whom our people addressed as Eloah Selichot - God of Forgiveness - we pray that in the calm and solemnity of prayer we may find new understanding and new direction.

On this night of Selichot may all of our misdeeds and shortcomings become known to us so that before the New Year we will be able to make amends in thought, feeling and action.

This is how the Rabbis used to speak of repentance.

Great is repentance,

For it brings healing to the world.

Great is repentance,

Because it brings about redemption.

Great is repentance,

For because of it, premeditated sins are accounted as errors.

Great is repentance,

Because it prolongs the years of humanity.

יְיָ, יְיָ אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן, אֲרַךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת,
נוֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים, נֹשֵׂא עוֹן וְפֹשֵׁעַ וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְיָה.

Adonai, Adonai our God is merciful and gracious, endlessly patient, loving and true, showing loving kindness for a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and granting pardon. (Exodus 34: 6-7)

עַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאִנּוּס וּבְרָצוֹן,

For the sin we have committed against You under duress or by choice.

עַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּזֵדוֹן וּבְשִׁגְגָה,

For the sin we have committed against You consciously or unconsciously.

וְעַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּגִלּוּי וּבְסִתְרָה.

For the sin we have committed against You openly or secretly.

וְעַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשִׂנְאֵת חִנָּם.

For the sin we have committed against You by hating without cause.

עַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּמִשְׁא וּבְמִתָּן,

For the sin we have committed against You in business.

וְעַל חֵטֵּא שְׁחָטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּהוֹנֵאת רֵעַ.

And for the sin we have committed against You by hurting others in any way.

Ve-al ku-lam, E-lo-ah
se-li-chot, se-lach la-nu,
me-chal la-nu, ka-per la-nu!

וְעַל כָּל־אֲלוֹהַּ
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר-לָנוּ!

For all these, Eloah Selichot, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement!

We have sinned against life by failing to work for peace.
We have sinned against life by keeping silent in the face of injustice.
We have sinned against life by ignoring those who suffer in distant lands.
We have sinned against life by forgetting the poor in our midst.
We have failed to respect the image of God in every human being.
We have withheld our love from those who depend on us.
We have engaged in gossip and slander.
We have distorted the truth for our own advantage.
We have conformed to fashion and not to conscience.
We have indulged in despair and trafficked with cynics.
We have given little support to our Houses of Study.
We have neglected our heritage of learning.
We have sinned against ourselves and paid scant heed to the life of the spirit.
We have sinned against ourselves and have not risen to fulfill the best that is in us.

Ve-al ku-lam, E-lo-ah
se-li-chot, se-lach la-nu,
me-chal la-nu, ka-per la-nu!

וְעַל כָּל־אֲלוֹהַּ
סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ,
מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר-לָנוּ!

For all these, Eloah Selichot, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement!

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For our failure to labor earnestly to make all people free within our community, we ask Your forgiveness.

For our failure to make our voices heard on behalf of peace among the nations and the survival of humanity, we ask Your forgiveness.

For not making real in our daily lives the insight of our tradition that every human being is created in Your image, we ask Your forgiveness.

For our neglecting to feed the hungry while we are sated, failing to house the poor while we live in security, forgetting to clothe the naked while we dress in fine clothing, we ask Your forgiveness.

For our concealing the beautiful spirit of humanity which is the reflection of Your spirit, we ask Your forgiveness.

For our lack of sensitivity to the anguish of others who reach out to us for understanding and help, we ask Your forgiveness.

For our failure to serve You in work and in deed, for our failure to sanctify life in every situation and every human encounter, we ask Your forgiveness.

In all these shortcomings, and in those failures of which we are ashamed to speak - in humility we ask Your forgiveness.

Ve-al ku-lam, E-lo-ah
se-li-chot, se-lach la-nu,
me-chal la-nu, ka-per la-nu!

וְעַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר
סָלַחְנוּ לָנוּ,
מְחַל לָנוּ, כִּפּוּר-לָנוּ!

For all these, Eloah Selichot, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement!

אֲשָׁמְנוּ, בְּגִדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דִּבְרַנּוּ דְפִי. הֶעֱוִינוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ,
זָדְנוּ, חָמְסְנוּ, טָפְלְנוּ שָׁקַר. יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, כִּזְבְּנוּ, לָצְנוּ,
מְרִדְנוּ, נֶאֱצָנוּ. סָרְרְנוּ, עֲוִינוּ, פָּשַׁעְנוּ, צָרְרְנוּ, קִשִּׁינוּ
עָרְף. רָשָׁעְנוּ, שָׁחַתְנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תָּעִינוּ, תַּעֲתָעְנוּ.

We all have committed offenses; together we confess these human sins:

*The sins of arrogance, bigotry, and cynicism; of deceit and egotism,
flattery and greed, injustice and jealousy.*

Some of us kept grudges, were lustful, malicious, or narrow-minded.

Others were obstinate or possessive, quarrelsome, rancorous, or selfish.

There was violence, weakness of will, xenophobia.

We yielded to temptation, and showed zeal for bad causes.



READINGS

FOR A PERIOD OF PRIVATE MEDITATION

PSALMS FOR SELICHOT

Hear, Adonai, when I cry aloud;
have mercy on me, answer me.
On Your behalf my heart says: "Seek My Face!"
Adonai, I seek Your face.
Do not hide Your face from me; do not thrust aside Your servant in anger;
You have ever been my help.
Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God, my deliverer.
Though my father and mother abandon me, Adonai will take me in.
Show me Your way, Adonai and lead me on a level path
because of my watchful foes.
Do not subject me to the will of my foes,
for false witnesses and unjust accusers have appeared against me.
Had I not the assurance that I would enjoy the goodness of Adonai
in the land of the living.
Look to Adonai; be strong and of good courage!
O look to Adonai!

Psalm 27: A Psalm of David

Out of the depths I call You, Adonai.
Listen to my cry; let Your ears be attentive
to my plea for mercy.
If You keep account of sins, Adonai, who will survive?
Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe.
I look to Adonai;
I look to you; I await Your word.
I am more eager for Adonai than watchmen for the morning,
watchmen for the morning.

Psalm 130: A Song of Ascents

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Adonai, You have examined me and know me.
When I sit down or stand up You know it;
You discern my thoughts from afar.
You observe my walking and reclining,
and are familiar with all my ways.
There is not a word on my tongue
but that You, Adonai, know it well.
You hedge me before and behind;
You lay Your hand upon me.
It was You who created my conscience;
You fashioned me in my mother's womb.
I praise You, for I am awesomely, wondrously made;
Your work is wonderful; I know it very well.

My frame was not concealed from You
when I was shaped in a hidden place,
knit together in the recesses of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed limbs;
they were all recorded in Your book;
in due time they were formed,
to the very last one of them.
How weighty Your thoughts seem to me, O God,
how great their number!
I count them — they exceed the grains of sand;
I end — but am still with You.

Examine me, O God, and know my mind;
probe me and know my thoughts.
See if I have grievous ways,
and guide me in ways everlasting.

Psalm 139: A Psalm of David

HUMAN NATURE

Free will is granted to every person. If we desire to lean to the good course and be righteous, we are at liberty to do so; if, on the other hand, we desire to follow the evil course and be wicked, we are likewise free to do so.

Pay no attention to the view held by the ignorant, that at our birth God decrees whether we shall be righteous or wicked. That is not so! Every person has the power of becoming as righteous as Moses or as wicked as Jeroboam — wise or stupid, tender or cruel, miserly or generous. The same applies to all other qualities. Of our own will, we consciously tend toward whatever course we please.

Rambam, 12th Century

Every human being is endowed by God with two eyes. With one we are expected to look at our neighbor, fastening our gaze on virtues, excellence, and desirable qualities. With the other eye, we turn inward to see our own weaknesses, imperfections, and shortcomings, in order to correct them.

Rabbi Israel Salanter, 19th Century

If we are guilty of sin and confess it and yet do not change our ways, we may be compared to those who hold a defiling object even while they are immersed in purifying waters! Will all the world's waters help them? So long as we cling to defilement, the uncleanness remains.

Talmud



Our tradition tells us that "The Gates of Repentance are always open". Yet, true repentance is difficult because it requires more than merely feeling sorry. The Rambam suggests that the following human actions hinder repentance and serve to obstruct the path between one individual and another, and between the individual and God:


1. Leading people to sin
2. Diverting another from good to evil
3. Seeing one's children fall into bad ways and not stopping them
4. Saying: "I will sin and then I will repent"
5. Standing aloof from the community
6. Opposing the rulings of the sages
7. Making mockery of divine precepts
8. Insulting one's teacher
9. Resisting rebukes
10. Cursing an entire people
11. Sharing with a thief
12. Finding lost property without announcing it
13. Despoiling the poor, orphans, and widows
14. Taking bribes in order to tamper with justice
15. Sharing a meal that is insufficient for its owner
16. Making use of a poor person's pledge
17. Gazing at others lustfully
18. Elevating oneself at the expense of another's degradation
19. Suspecting honest people
20. Gossiping
21. Slandering
22. Becoming wrathful
23. Thinking evil thoughts
24. Keeping bad company

Rambam, 12th Century

Rabbi Bunam said to his followers: Our great transgression is not that we commit sins, for the temptation is strong and our strength is slight! No, our transgression is that at every instant we can turn to God and we do not turn!

Chasidic, 18th-19th Century

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 We will renew our prayer, Creator, even as You have renewed our hearts. We know that a time will come when there will be no strong and no weak, no hunters and no hunted, no oppressors and no oppressed, no slayers and no slain, no masters and no servants, no rich and no poor. For we know how difficult, how dangerous, it is to be a human being. And we know how grand, how glorious it is to be a human being.

TESHUVAH: REFLECTING AND REVISING

You who are asleep, wake up!
You who are in a trance, arise!
Search your doings and repent;
Remember your Creator!
You who forget constant truth
In vanities of the hour,
And indulge all year in trifles
Which cannot profit or save!
Amend your ways and your deeds;
Let each one of you give up
Your evil course and purpose.

Rambam, 12th Century

Once on the New Moon of Elul, the tzaddik, Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berditchev was standing at his window. A Gentile cobbler passed by and asked him, "And have you nothing to mend?"

At once the tzaddik sat himself down on the ground and weeping bitterly cried, "Woe is me, and alas my soul, for the Day of Judgment is almost here, and I have still not mended myself!"

Chasidic, 18th-19th Century

It is written in the *Midrash*:

"The thirty days before Rosh Hashannah, the great Judgment Day, when we are permitted to turn in Teshuvah—to what are they comparable? To the thirty days of grace which a Court grants a debtor in which to pay all debts and be freed of all creditors."

Ephraim Zalman Margalioth, 18th-19th Century

For us there is but one atonement — the atonement wrought by human repentance and the divine forgiveness; by God's grace and help on the one hand, by human remorse and effort on the other. The process is doubtless subtle, but put into words it is simple, and in practice it is efficacious and works. That is the Jewish atonement: we know no other.

Claude G. Montefiore, 19th-20th Century

One of the noblest and most inspiring contributions which Judaism made to the spiritual development of humanity was the concept of Teshuvah, repentance. Repentance means the opportunity of a new start, the chance to correct what we had left crooked, to fill that which is wanting in our lives. Repentance is the central motif of this entire season. It is the luminous theme around which these heroic, spiritual days revolve.

Not only are we free and able to renew ourselves and to make a fresh start, but in this enterprise toward newness and regeneration lies the meaning and significance of our lives.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, 20th Century



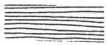
The Hebrew word for repentance is "teshuvah", and it means a turning and a returning: a turning from the wrong path and a returning to the right one. Sin is falling away from the covenant, from the law of righteousness; and repentance is both a subjective change of heart and an objective change of social relations and conditions in a community through right action. Atonement is not private and introspective only, but also public and outgoing. It is "at-one-ment" with humanity and history and with the God of history, or, with that which is highest and best in history, in the universe.

Israel Knox, 20th Century

Atonement with God means redemption from sinfulness. It does not redeem us from an earthly fate. We are not transposed into the other world as a consolation for suffering. We are redeemed from the illusion that our share in evil is unavoidable. God in mercy can grant atonement only to those who strive for the good, who recognize sin and wish to avoid it. Without our moral work in repentance, God would be unable to redeem us.

Hermann Cohen, 19th-20th Century

Now is the time for turning. The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red and orange. The birds are beginning to turn and are heading once more toward the South. The animals are beginning to turn to storing their food for the winter. For leaves, birds, and animals, turning comes instinctively. But for us turning does not come so easily. It takes an act of will for us to make a turn. It means breaking with old habits. It means admitting that we have been wrong; and this is never easy. It means losing face; it means starting all over again; and this is always painful. It means saying: "I am sorry." It means recognizing that we have the ability to change. These things are terribly hard to do. But unless we turn, we will be trapped for ever in yesterday's ways. Adonai, help us to turn — from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith. Turn us around, Adonai, and bring us back toward You. Revive our lives, as at the beginning. And turn us toward each other, Adonai, for in isolation there is no life.



SELUCHAH: FORGIVENESS

Unto You, Adonai, do I open my heart at this time of the turn of the year. As I review my conduct during the months that are passed, I am deeply conscious of my shortcomings. Often righteousness called to me in vain and I yielded to selfishness, anger and pride. I acknowledge my failings and I repent of them. I pray for Your forgiveness and for the forgiveness of those whom I have wronged and hurt. Whatever life has brought me during the year now ended, grant that it may become unto me a source of strength and wisdom. O that the year now beginning may be for me a new year indeed; new in consecration of purpose and in renewal of earnestness and sincerity; steadfast in rejecting all that is unworthy of me and of my heritage. Grant me strength of will to live as You would have me live. Incline Your ear to me; be gracious to me, Adonai. Lead me and guide me for my times are in Your hand.

The Union Prayerbook

I have often made it my practice. . . to look at the congregation one by one, and to ask myself whether indeed my acceptance of the commandment to love my fellow was genuine. With God's help I often found such to be the case. If I noticed any who have done me some wrong, I made it my rule to love them nevertheless and I forgive them at that very instant. But if my heart refused to allow me to love them, then I would force myself to say good things concerning them until I had removed all rancor from my heart.

Rabbi Joel ben Abraham Shemariah, 18th Century

The year gone by has faded with the sunset as we move always forward into life. This day which borders past and future summons us to this sanctuary. It summons us to account for the gift of life. This sacred day we join as congregation with repentance on our tongues, with resolve in our hearts that repentance be reflected in our deeds.

We seek forgiveness from ourselves, from others, and from God. In cleansing repentance we seek atonement, to be at one with ourselves, with others and with God. Wholeness and holiness we seek as we enter a new year. Help us, Adonai, to realize the truth that we are as holy as we allow ourselves to be.



THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND GOD

Lo, as the potter molds his clay,
Shaping and forming it from day to day,
Thus in Your hand, Adonai, are we,
You whose mercies never pass away.

Even as the mason hews the stone,
And one is carved and wrought, and shattered one,
Thus in Your hand, Adonai, are we,
You who of life and death are God alone.

Lo, as amidst the fiery glow
The smith his iron forges blow on blow,
Thus in Your hand, Adonai, are we,
You who saves those by care laid low.

Lo, as the silver seven times tried
Is in the smelter's furnace purified,
Thus in Your hand, Adonai, are we,
You who balm and healing scatter wide.

Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, 13th Century

When we examine ourselves and our actions carefully, we discover the divine dimension in everything we are and in everything we do. And we know that this person, this specific person is loved; that this people, this specific people is loved; that this humanity is loved. That is why we pray, knowing that our very being is the fruit and offspring of God's love, "Do not ever take Your love away from us. Blessed are you, Adonai, for giving love to the people of Israel." When we speak these words, we articulate our struggle to be worthy of a love that is eternal.

Rabbi Dudley Weinberg, 20th Century

From the Jewish heritage, I derive my world outlook, a God-centered interpretation of reality in the light of which the individual is clothed with dignity, and the career of humanity with cosmic meaning and hope; a humane morality, elevated in its aspirations yet sensibly realistic; a system of rituals that interpenetrates my daily routines and invests them with poetry and intimations of the divine.

Beyond this, my life is enriched by the accumulated treasures of over three millennia of Jewish history — a large literature in which I read extensively, not as an outsider but with a sense of belonging; music for me to sing; art for me to enjoy. I have the privilege of companionship with the great personalities of Jewish history. At my disposal is a second fund of folklore when I spin tales to my children. Mine literally is a double past — the American and the Jewish.

My horizons are distant, not in one direction but in two. I am twice anchored in traditions, and hence twice secured against the peril of being rootless and "unpossessed."

Rabbi Milton Steinberg, 20th Century



CONTEMPORARY STRUGGLE

You who are beyond time, Adonai,
You smile to see us fighting it.
And you know what you are doing,
You make no mistakes in Your distribution of time to us.
You give us one time to do what you want us to do.
But we must not deface time, waste time, kill time,
for time is a gift that You give us,
But a perishable gift,
A gift that does not keep.

And so all men and women run after time, Adonai.
they pass through life running — hurried, jostled,
over-burdened, frantic, and they never get there.
They still haven't time.
In spite of all of their efforts they're still short of time,
Of a great deal of time.
Adonai, you must have made a mistake in your calculations.
There is a big mistake somewhere.
The hours are too short,
The days are too short,
Our lives are too short.

Adonai, I have time,
I have plenty of time,
All the time that You gave me,
The years of my life,
The days of my years,
The hours of my days,
They are all mine,
Mine to fill, quietly, calmly,
but to fill completely, up to the brim.

Michael Quoist, 20th Century



RENEWAL

Do not despair. You are bigger than any of your sins and than all of them. Rise, for though you have suffered setback and hurt, you are not defeated, You possess the resources for triumph. God does not despair of you. You need not despair of yourself.

Rabbi Morris Adler, 20th Century

To return unto God is to come home, to feel that we belong in this infinite universe, to know that we are not aliens on the face of the earth, to realize that our roots are struck deep in the soil of eternity. Above all, it means to realize the deep hunger of our soul for fulfillment.

Rabbi Jacob B. Agus, 20th Century

The day has faded, the sun has set; the silence and peace of night descend upon the earth. Vouchsafe rest, O God, unto our disquieted hearts; lift up the soul that is cast down. Turn, in Your all-forgiving love, to Your children who yearn for Your mercy; turn, Adonai, to all fainting hearts, to all heavy-laden souls. Let this hour bring the assurance that You have forgiven, that we have found favor in your sight. Consecrate our hearts unto You, and make them Your living altars, whereon shall burn the holy flame of devotion to You.

From Your house, Adonai, we are about to return to our homes, to seek shelter in the communion of our family life. Open unto us the gates of Your love! Enter with us into our home so that it may become Your sanctuary, and Your spirit may abide within its walls. Then will our habitation stand firm amidst the storms of life, a refuge from evil, a bulwark against temptation.

The Union Prayerbook

There is a grace that every dawn renews,
A loveliness making every morning fresh.
We will endure. We will prevail.
We, the children of the One
Who crowds the heavens with stars,
Endows the earth with glory,
And fills the mind with wonder!

Rabbi Chaim Stern, 20th Century



TOWARD FAITH AND THE FUTURE

Glory to those who hope!
For the future is theirs;
Those who stand unflinching against the mountain
Shall gain its summit.
So hopes the river, running to the sea,
To fulfill its dreams in the crash of waters.
So longs the tree, branching skyward
At last to touch the palm of sun.
Therefore we love dawn as a promise of day.
The nightingale's love-song as a longing for birth.
The flowing of streams as the beat of dreams made real,
Streams cutting channels for rivers of the future
And never growing weary.
And all who join hands, trusting creation —
These are the companions of hope.
Forge, then, the vision of days to come:
As the waves shape the rocky shore,
As the smith shapes white-hot steel at will,
Form dreams of faithfulness.
Desolation will not leave the desert,
Until it leaves the heart.

David Rokeach, 20th Century

To have faith is to perceive the wonder that is here, and to be stirred by the desire to integrate the self into the holy order of living. Yet, faith does not spring out of nothing. It comes with the discovery of the holy dimension of our existence. We live by the certainty that we are not as dust in the wind, that our life is related to the ultimate meaning of all meanings. God's existence can never be tested by human thought. All proofs are mere demonstrations of our thirst for God. Does the thirsty man need a proof for his thirst?

To have faith is to perceive an awareness of divine mutuality and human companionship, a form of communion between God and individuals. Yet, to regard all that happens as workings of Providence is to deny human responsibility. We must not idolize history. What is it that makes us worthy of life, if not our compassion and ability to help? It is faith from which we draw the sweetness of life, the taste of the sacred, the joy of the imperishable dear. It is faith that offers us a share in eternity.

We may trust in God because God trusts in us. Our trustworthiness for God is the measure of the integrity of our faith.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel, 20th Century



אֱלֹהִי, נִצַּר לְשׁוֹנֵי מַרְעַ, וּשְׁפָתַי מִדְּבַר מְרָמָה,
וְלִמְקַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי תְדוּם, וְנַפְשִׁי כְּעֶפֶר לְכֹל תִּהְיֶה.
פָּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוּף נַפְשִׁי, וְכֹל
הַחֹשְׁבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מִהֲרָה הִפֵּר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקַל
מַחְשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן יְמִינְךָ,
עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן קִדְשֶׁתְּךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן תּוֹרָתְךָ. לִמְעַן
יִחְלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעַגְנִי.

My God, keep my tongue from evil, and my lips from deceitful speech. Let me know the way I should go, for to You do I lift up my soul. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. But how can I see all my own failings? Rid me of faults that are hidden! Lead me in Your truth, and teach me. You are God my Helper, and for You do I wait all the day. Open my heart to Your teaching, and I will make haste to do Your commandments.

יְהִיו לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי-פִי
וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ,
יְיָ, צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי.

May the words of my mouth, and the calling of my heart reflect Your will,
Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.



CANDLE LIGHTING

There are flames which burn within each of us, flames which enhance life, and flames which diminish it. To extinguish the flames of destruction is to fulfill the purpose of our High Holy Days.

Here is **Envy**. Let it be quenched. Envy enters our soul and gives us no peace. Envy makes small what is our own and magnifies what is our neighbors. We become dissatisfied with our lot, and we yearn for what lies beyond the boundary of our life. Envy's handmaiden is restlessness and together they are the evil taskmasters who destroy the family, deny morality, enslave the spirit and make life a mean and mocking thing.

Let the light of Envy, O God, be quenched.

Here is **Hatred**. Let it be extinguished. Hatred seizes on the heart and corrupts it. It obscures our vision and narrows it. It consumes the blaze, and those who gaze upon it become blind. Hatred's handmaiden is intolerance and bigotry, prejudice and racism. Together they spew forth the poison which causes the human spirit to become diseased and wither.

Let the light of Hatred, O God, be extinguished.

Here is **Arrogance**. Let it be put out. Arrogance drives us to tasks which are vanity and toward goals that are emptiness. It substitutes the unimportant for the important, the ignoble for the noble, the valueless for the valueladen. It makes the illusory seem real and distorts the wholesome goodness in life. Arrogance's handmaiden is egocentricity and together they lead people down the path of futility and delusion.

Let the light of Arrogance, O God, be extinguished.

Envy, Hatred, Arrogance. May their consuming fires be removed forever from our world.

Now, only one great light burns before us; it is the Ner Tamid. "As God spoke to Moses: Command the children of Israel that they bring to You pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. ...It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations."

(Lev. 24:2)

So it is set forth in the Book of Leviticus; so it has been across the centuries: this Eternal Light burning bright in the Sanctuary and in the heart, sending forth the golden shafts of justice and righteousness to illuminate the habitations of humankind.



*The Ner Tamid brings light to an all too darkened world. It beckons to us to keep alive our values "in spite of everything" and to hearken to the ancient call to be "a light unto the nations." The Ner Tamid is the guardian of the Torah which sustains us in all our generations. It is a tree of life to those who cleave to it. It renews us and fortifies us, and by its word we are preserved. By its word, we are instructed to **tikun olam**, to repairing our world — our personal worlds, and world around us.*

We have extinguished the lights of destruction. We kindle the lights of hope. We now kindle the light of **Teshuvah**, of Repentance. The world outside will yield only after there has been victory in the world within. There will be peace among people when there is peace in every heart. There will be respect in the world when all people respect themselves. There will be honor in the world when each of us is true to our own highest self. We shall have peace and respect and honor only when we repent of the evil of war, of the transgression of another's integrity, of the destruction of another person's dignity.

Let the light of Repentance, O God, burn bright.

We light the second candle, the light of **Tefilah**, of Prayer. Prayer is the ladder which links earth and heaven. Prayer is the shuttle which weaves the strands of life and gives them pattern. Prayer is the cup into which we pour our aspirations. Prayer is the flower born from the seed of faith. Prayer is the wings on which our spirit soars. Prayer is the littleness of each of us seeking the greatness of God.

Let the light of Prayer, O God, burn bright.

We light the third candle, the light of **Tzedakah**, of Righteousness. You have commanded us, O God, by the mouth of the prophet:

“To loose the fetters of wickedness;
To undo the bands of the yoke;
And let the oppressed go free.
To share our bread with the hungry,
And to bring into our homes the poor that are cast out,
To cover the naked and not to hide ourselves...”

These are not invitations to charity. They are commands to Tzedakah, to righteousness and justice. They give us no choice! We must feed the hungry, we must care for the sick and clothe the naked, not because charity suggests it, but because righteousness demands it! Keep our hearts sensitive to all humanity and all living things, O God, and may the wells of our compassion and our humanity never run dry.

Let the lights burn bright, O God, the lights of Repentance, of Prayer and of Righteousness. And may our hearts be illumined, O God, in this midnight hour of Selichot as we seek to prepare ourselves for the New Year and for all of life's possibilities and promises.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ: "סִלַּחְתִּי כְּדַבַּרְךָ."

And God said: "I have pardoned in response to your plea."



TESHUVAH

TURNING AND RETURNING

Adonai, Our God, how magnificent is Your name through all the earth!
Your majesty is exalted above the heavens!
Out of the mouths of babes and nurslings praise ascends to You
and baffles Your enemies, subduing the foe and the rebel.

*When I gaze at Your heavens, the work of Your hands,
at the moon and stars which You have established,
what are man and woman, that You give thought to them?
What are their children, that You care for them?*

You have made them a little lower than the angels
and have given them dominion over the works of Your hands.
You have set all things at their feet: all sheep and oxen, all wild beasts,
the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all things that traverse
the paths of the deep.
Adonai, Our God, how magnificent is Your name through all the earth!

Ki a-nu a-me-cha, ve-a-ta Mal-kei-nu.	כִּי אָנוּ עַמָּךְ, וְאַתָּה מַלְכֵנוּ.
A-nu va-ne-cha, ve-a-ta A-vi-nu.	אָנוּ בְנֵיךָ, וְאַתָּה אָבִינוּ.
A-nu na-cha-la-te-cha, ve-a-ta Go-ra-lei-nu.	אָנוּ נַחְלָתְךָ, וְאַתָּה גּוֹרְלֵנוּ.
A-nu tzo-ne-cha, ve-a-ta Ro-ei-nu.	אָנוּ צֹאנְךָ, וְאַתָּה רוֹעֵנוּ.
A-nu kar-me-cha, ve-a-ta No-te-rei-nu.	אָנוּ כְרֵמְךָ, וְאַתָּה נוֹטְרֵנוּ.
A-nu ra-ya-te-cha, ve-a-ta Do-dei-nu.	אָנוּ רְעִיתְךָ, וְאַתָּה דּוֹדֵנוּ.

*We are Your people, You are our King.
We are Your children, You are our Father.
We are Your possession, You are our Portion.
We are Your flock, You are our Shepherd.
We are Your vineyard, You are our Keeper.
We are Your beloved, You are our Friend.*

Adonai has two dwelling places in each human being, two temples. One is the temple of the emotions, a holy of holies from which issue human sentiments such as sympathy, astonishment, mercy, reverence, happiness, sadness, amazement. The other temple is that of the mind. In a human being's thoughts, as he or she studies the Torah and refines the intellect, there too resides Adonai. One house of God is in the heart of a human being, and the other is in the human brain; one is in the emotions, the other in the mind. We have been created with minds able to dwell upon good thoughts and good intentions.

We have been created with eyes, the blessing of sight, to see the world's beauty and holiness.

We have been created with ears to hear sacred words, to hear the sounds of wisdom, beauty, and love.

We have been created with mouths and tongues. The gift of speech God gave to no other creature. With words we try to pray. With words we speak of love, to God and to human beings.

We have been created with hands, the ability to sense creation through touch, the capacity to transmit tenderness.

We have been given legs to walk in God's path, and to move us to help those around us.

We have been blessed with the ability to regenerate life, and to share joy in love fulfilled.

Adonai, help us to use the wholeness of our being: Make us one with our own hearts; make us one with each other, at last to find ourselves at one with You.

A-vi-nu Mal-kei-nu, cho-nei-nu

va-a-nei-nu, ki ein ba-nu

ma-a-sim, a-sei i-ma-nu

tse-da-ka va-che-sed

ve-ho-shi-ei-nu.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ, חֲנֵנוּ
וְעַנָּנוּ, כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ
מַעֲשִׂים, עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ
צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד
וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ.

Avinu Malkeinu, answer us though we have no deeds to plead our cause; save us with mercy and lovingkindness.

Adonai, You have called us to peace, for You are Peace itself. May we have the vision to see that each of us, in some measure, can help to realize our important tasks in this world. Where we find ignorance and superstition,

Let us teach enlightenment and knowledge.

Where there are prejudice and hatred,

Let us show acceptance and love.

Where we see fear and doubt,

Let us demonstrate confidence and trust.

Where there are tyranny and oppression,

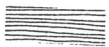
Let us work toward freedom and justice.

Where there are poverty and disease,

Let us help to create prosperity and health.

Where there are strife and discord,

Let us strive for harmony and peace.



O-seh sha-lom bi-me-ro-mav,
Hu ya-a-seh sha-lom
a-lei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,
ve-i-me-ru: a-men.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמַרוֹמָיו,
הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

May the source of peace in the heavens bring peace to us and to all Israel, and to all humankind. And we answer: Amen.

This is my prayer to You, my God:
Let me not swerve from my life's path,
Let not my spirit wither and shrivel
In its thirst for You
And lose the dew
With which You sprinkled it
When I was young.

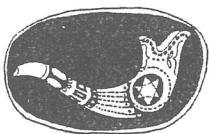
Keep my heart open
To every broken thing,
To orphaned life,
To every stumbler
Wandering unknown
And groping in the shadow.

Bless my eyes, purify me to see
Humanity's beauty rise in the world,
And my people's grandeur
In its land redeemed,
Scattering its scent
Over all the earth.

Deepen and broaden my senses
To absorb a fresh
Green, flowering world,
To take from it the secret
Of blossoming in silence.

Grant strength to yield fine fruits,
Quintessence of my life,
Steeped in my very being
Without expectation of reward.

And when my time comes —
Let me slip into the night
Demanding nothing, God, of humanity
Or of You.





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