Beside Still Waters
A Journey of Comfort and Renewal

על מי מנוחות
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Introduction

Stages on the Journey

Death is part of life. While we live, the deaths of others bring us loss and grief, sometimes relief and sometimes ambivalence. When our own lives end, we transition into something that we cannot know. This book is intended to help navigate the continuum of living, in health and illness, healing or dying, and the transitions that come after a death for those who remain.

If a death is not sudden, if illness offers “advance warning” or opportunity to prepare, both the person who is dying and the person who is preparing to mark that death as a mourner are likely to experience deep emotions and ask big questions.

The sections of this volume entitled “Healing of Body,” “Healing of Spirit,” and “Before Death” contain readings and prayers for this time. These readings and prayers may be helpful for the person who is sick and for the person who anticipates marking a loss yet to come.

The next stage comes after a person has died, but before burial. One Jewish tradition holds that the soul of the person who has died lingers near their body until burial, which is the reason that some maintain the custom of sh’mira, keeping watch over the body and keeping company with the soul of the deceased. For the mourner, this stage is called aninut. The period between death and interment can be a tender space and one of emotionally unstable days. The section of this volume entitled “Before Burial” contains readings and prayers for this time.

After the burial, the mourner enters the first week after burial, known as shiva (“seven”). At this time, the Hebrew term for such a mourner is avel or avela, and this period is also known as avelut. During this first week, it’s customary for the community to gather in the mourner’s home to keep them company, to care for them, and to constitute a minyan (a quorum of ten adult Jews) so that the mourner can recite prayers of mourning in the loving presence of community. More on that at the beginning of the “Shiva” chapter.

When a Holiday Cancels Shiva

When a Jewish holiday arrives during shiva, the shiva is cut short. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first day of Sukkot or Passover or Shavuot: all of these curtail shiva. This is true even if the festival begins on the evening of the day of the funeral. In these cases, the regular rhythms of grieving are disrupted, which can be emotionally and spiritually challenging. There are prayers for that circumstance in the After Shiva chapter of this book.

Following shiva, the mourner is in the period called sh’loshim (“thirty”), the first month after burial. That first month is followed by the following months
that round out the year until the first yahrzeit (death-anniversary). In the classical Jewish tradition, one mourns a parent for a year (or, some say: for eleven months — presuming that saying Kaddish helps to purify and elevate the soul of the deceased, and only a rasha, a wicked person, would require twelve months of that uplifting) and one mourns other intimate family members for one month. In today’s world, many of us mourn many relationships (not only parents) for a full eleven or twelve months.

In addition to the yahrzeit or death-anniversary, Jewish tradition offers four opportunities each year for communal remembering, at the four Yizkor (Remembrance / Memorial) services of the festival year. In this volume, the sections entitled “After Shiva,” “Yahrzeit,” and “Yizkor” contain readings for those seasons, while the chapter entitled “Remembrance” offers prayers and poems of remembrance that can be used at any time.

The paradigm in which mourning unfolds through these distinct stages offers one truth: the first days after a death are likely to feel different from the first week, which, in turn, is different from the first month, the first year and so on. Another truth is that grief is rarely linear: It unfolds in its own time. Grief has an ebb and flow (in the language of tradition, a ratzo vashov, “running and returning”). Many who experience grief find that they can’t control those tides, but rather just ride them. Your experience will be uniquely yours.

Our hope is that this volume will help those who are on the mourner’s path...with awareness that all of us eventually experience this path, in many different ways over the course of our lives.

How to Use This Book

This book offers readings, prayers, reflections, and practices: beginning before death, with prayers for healing and prayers to recite before dying, and continuing through the first yahrzeit and subsequent Yizkor memorials.

If you are part of a community that will accompany you in sitting shiva, the shiva liturgies in this book will give you prayers (whether you choose an afternoon observance or an evening one) for shiva minyanim / services.

If you are not part of a community, or are mourning on your own, you can still use this book and the liturgies it contains. Although certain prayers (including the Bar’chu call to prayer and the Kaddish in all of its forms) are traditionally only recited in the presence of a minyan, even a solitary mourner may find comfort in the traditional words and forms — or in the creative, interpretive, renewed / renewing variations that appear alongside the classical tradition.
On Language

Hebrew and English

For millennia, Hebrew has been Judaism’s holy language of prayer. For those who are comfortable with Hebrew, its poetry and its resonance can be profound. And for those who are not fluent in Hebrew, the rhythms and sounds of the traditional prayers (especially the Mourner’s Kaddish) can be evocative and meaningful in ways that go beyond literal linguistic comprehension. For this reason, we provide the liturgy of shiva and the memorial prayers of Yizkor here in Hebrew.

All of the Hebrew in this book is also transliterated and translated into English. Vernacular prayer can be powerful, and can provide comfort, especially at times of mourning. Reb Zalman z”l (Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, of blessed memory — one of the zaides/grandfathers of Jewish renewal) taught that prayer needs to come from the heart, and sometimes that means that the pray-er (the person who is praying) needs to be speaking their own familiar language.

Translation

Every translation is a choice, and Hebrew is a rich and multi-layered language. Even a simple and familiar phrase, such as

כָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
Baruch atah, יהוה Eloheinu, Melech haolam...

can be rendered in English in a variety of ways. Here are three equally faithful translations:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe…
A Fountain of Blessings are You, יהוה our God, Sovereign of all worlds…
You are blessed, Infinite Is/Was/Will-Be, our God, Core of all that is…

We’ve chosen one way of rendering these words throughout this book, but if a different one resonates more for you, feel free to substitute it, either aloud or in your head and heart.

Reb Zalman z”l also compared printed liturgy to freeze-dried soup: the ingredients are there, but in order for the soup to be nourishing, one must add hot water. In any printed liturgy, the ingredients are there, but, in order for the prayer to be nourishing, the pray-er must add intention and heart. May this volume give you the resources you need in order to offer the prayers of your heart as you walk the mourner’s path.
Ways of Speaking to the One

God has many names in Jewish tradition, among them Elohim (God), יהוה (or YHVH: an untranslatable permutation of the verb “to be”), Havayah (like יהוה, a permutation of the verb “to be”), Ahavah (Love), Adonai (Lord), Shechinah (immanent, indwelling, feminine Presence), Ein haChayyim (Source of Life) Melech (King), Malkah (Queen), Ruach (Breath of Life), Avinu (Our Father), Immeinu (Our Mother), Beloved, Friend, Creator, Wellspring, Source, Hidden One, Merciful One, Judge, Parent, and many more.

Most of our traditional prayers use masculine God-language (Lord, Father, King), like so:

כְּרוּכָה אַתָּה, יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
Blessed are You, יהוה our God, Sovereign of the Universe…

Today, some find that feminine language (Queen, Mother, Shechinah) enables them to better speak to the One. That might mean using feminine names for God(dess), and it might mean feminizing the Hebrew, like so:

כְּרוּכָה אַת, יָה שְׁכִינָה, רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם
Blessed are You, Shechinah, Breath of the World…

Although most of the liturgy in this book follows the traditional masculine paradigm, in some places a feminine alternative is also offered (for instance, El Malei Rachamim is accompanied by Elah M’lei’at Rachamim: that same prayer invoking Divine compassion, but spoken to a divinity that is gendered female, rather than a divinity that is gendered male.)

Still others prefer gender-neutral terms (Friend, Source, Wellspring), such as:

כְּרוּכָה אַת עֵין הַחַיִּים
Let us bless the Source of Life…

Use whatever words best enable you to relate to the Divine.

Jewish tradition teaches that our Creator is beyond language: our words can only approach the Infinite. May our linguistic choices remind us that our names are only substitutes, and that our Source is beyond any words we can speak.
Shiva

What is Shiva?

Shiva is a Hebrew word meaning “seven.” The first seven days after a funeral are known as “shiva,” and those who are mourning are said to be “sitting shiva.” After a funeral, mourners stay at home — traditionally, for seven full days — and are fed, nurtured and cared-for by friends, neighbors and members of the community.

Shiva begins as the mourner departs from the cemetery, if there is a burial. It is customary to wash hands either upon exiting the cemetery or before arriving at the house of mourning, or both times. Friends or family often set out a pitcher of water and towels. After entering the home, the mourner may be encouraged to eat a meal of consolation. Perhaps food is not of interest to the bereaved. However, our tradition compels us to sustain life, returning to the world of living with breath, food and prayer. Long established custom across Jewish cultures and traditions is to eat foods that are round, recalling the roundness of the earth and the cycles of life. Some eat bagels, hard boiled eggs, chickpeas or lentils. Again, family or friends should prepare the table for the mourner and clean up as well so as to relieve the mourner of any burdens.

The custom of visiting mourners during shiva arose at a moment in time when it was presumed that everyone (or at least, all men) felt obligated in the mitzvah of daily communal prayer. To ensure that the mourners didn’t need to leave their homes in order to find a minyan (a quorum of ten adult Jews) with which to pray, the community brings the minyan to them.

The first week of mourning gives the mourners time to come to grips with the reality of their loss, and time to grieve. It can be an emotionally and spiritually intense time. It is the job of the community to respond with love and compassion, to be helpful and generous. The most important thing anyone can do is to show up.

In many communities today, many people choose to observe formal shiva only for a few days, or for a single night. And for some of us who don’t feel connected with a community, the first week after the funeral may be a time when that lack of connection is keenly felt precisely because the customs of shiva presume that community members will visit those who mourn.

The job of a mourner is to be present to their experience and their emotions. The job of those who come to shiva is to accompany the mourners, to bring them food, to listen when they need to talk, and to share memories of the person who has died. Those who do not have the comfort of community (or who do not find the presence of community to be a comfort) can still sit shiva.

The first week after a burial can be a time unlike any other in your life. Whatever emotions you feel, know that they are legitimate and they are real. May the customs of shiva be a comfort to you as you walk this road.
There are many customs of *shiva*, and many different ways to experience the first week after burial. One of the most common customs is not to go to work — in fact, not even to leave the house — but instead to stay home and focus inward on the work of remembrance and mourning.

Some people follow the custom of covering their mirrors during this week. One explanation for this is to serve as a reminder not to focus on vanity, and instead to turn our focus inward to heart, soul, and memory. Others see it as remembrance of a folk custom that holds that the spirit of the deceased lingers among us; because spirits do not have a reflection in the mirror, we cover the mirror so that the soul of the deceased will not be “shamed” by its lack of body.

Another common custom of *shiva* is sitting on the ground, or on low stools or benches close to the ground: a reminder that we are embodied beings who can take comfort in the nearness of our mother, the Earth. Another is eschewing leather shoes or belts, or any garment that required the death of an animal in order to be fashioned. (Some observe this prohibition on Yom Kippur as well, which can be regarded as a day of rehearsal for our own deaths.) In another interpretation of this custom, we wear soft shoes during *shiva* as a reminder to maintain soft hearts, to be permeable and present to the range of emotions at this time.

May whatever customs of *shiva* you follow provide structure and comfort for you as you navigate these tender days.
Maariv / Evening Prayer

Lighting the Shiva Candle for the First Time

May the light of this candle gleam like the soul of ________________.

May the light of this candle bring me comfort and keep me company.

And, when this candle is gone, may the memory of ________________ continue to illuminate my days.

יהוה אוֹֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי, מִמִּּי אִירָא
יהוה מָעוֹֹז חַיַּי, מִמִּי אֶפְחָד?

If יהוה is my light and my redemption, what shall I fear?
If יהוה is the strength of my life, what shall make me afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יהוה אֶחָד.

Hear, O Israel; יהוה is our God; יהוה is One.
The Sh'ma and Her Blessings

Bar'chu — Call to Prayer

As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed.
And the blessing gives us strength, and makes our visions clear;
And the blessing gives us peace, and the courage to dare.
As we bless the Source of Life, so we are blessed.

(Faith Rogow)

V'Hu Rachum / The Merciful One

The Merciful One will cover iniquity and not forever destroy.
Soon may God withdraw anger;
may divine rage not be aroused.
יהוה, save us, You who answer
on the day when we call.

Bar'chu, Dear One

Bar'chu, Dear One—Shechinah, holy Name
As I call on the light of my soul I come home.

(Brabi Lev Friedman)

Blessed is יהוה, the blessed One.
Blessed is יהוה, the blessed One, now and forever!
Ma·ariv Aravim / Who Evens the Evenings

Baruch atah, יהוה,
Eloheinu, melech ha·olam,
asher bidvaro ma·ariv aravim,
b'chochmah potei·ach sh'arim,
uvitvunah m'shaneh itim,
 Ramosh'ah mi·nei shtim,
Sassallich n'ata hokemim,
Umsadeir n'ata hakochavim.
B'mishm'roteihem baraki·a kirtzono.

Borei yom valailah,
Goleil or mip'nei choshech
V'choshech mip'nei or.

Uma·avir yom umeivi lailah,
Umavdil bein yom uvein lailah,
Yehovah tz'vaot sh'mo.
Al mi t'kayam,
Tamid yimloch aleinu l'olam va·ed.

Baruch atah, יהוה,
Ha·ariv aravim.

Blessed are You, יהוה, our God, Source of all being,
by Whose word the evening falls.
In wisdom You open heaven’s gates.
With understanding 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 day and night, who rolls back light before dark,
and dark before light, who makes day pass away
and brings on the night, dividing between day and night;
the Leader of Heaven’s Multitudes is Your name!
Living and enduring God, be our guide now and always.
Blessed are You, Source of All being.
Who makes evening fall.
Evening

You mix the watercolors of the evening
like my son, swishing his brush
until the waters are black with paint.
The sky is streaked and dimming.

The sun wheels over the horizon
like a glowing penny falling into its slot.
Day is spent, and in its place: the changing moon,
the spatterdash of stars across the sky’s expanse.

Every evening we tell ourselves the old story:
You cover over our sins, forgiveness
like a fleece blanket tucked around our ears.
When we cry out, You will hear.

Soothe my fear of life without enough light.
Rock me to sleep in the deepening dark.

(Rabbi Rachel Barenblat)
Ahavat Olam / Unending Love

Ahavat olam
be'it Yisra-el am'cha ahavta
Torah umitzvot chukim umishpatim
otanu limadta.
Al kein, Eloheinu,
b'shochveinu uvkumeinu
nasi-ach b'chukecha, v'nismach b'divrei
toratecha umitzvotecha
l'olam va-ed.
Ki heim chayeinu v'orech yameinu,
uvahem nehgeh yomam valailah.

V'ahavat'cha
al tasir mimenu l'olamim.
Baruch atah, Eloheinu,
oheiv amo Yisra-el.

With eternal love,
You love the house of Israel.
Torah and mitzvot, laws and justice
You have taught us.
And so, Eloheinu, 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, Eloheinu,
who loves Your people Israel.
Unending Love

We are loved by 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 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 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 unending love.

(Rabbi Rami Shapiro)
Sh’ma / Oneness

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָא·ל, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָא·ל שְׁמַע Yisra·el: שְׁמַע Yisra·el: יְהוָה יְהוָה אלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד! אֶחָד! Baruch shem k’vod malchuto l’olam va-ed.

Hear, O Israel: is our God, יְהוָה is One!
(Through time and space Your glory shines, Majestic One!)

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יהוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, b’chol levv’cha, uvchol nafsh’cha, Love the One, your God, with every heartbeat, with every breath, with every conscious act.

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי m’tzav’cha hayom, al l’vavecha. Keep in mind the words I command you today.

וַחֲיַם הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי V’hayu had’varim ha-eileh, asher anochi m’tzav’cha hayom, al l’vavecha. Teach them to your children, talk about them at work; whether you are tired or you are rested.

וְהָיוּ לְטֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ. v’hayu l’totafot bein einecha. Let them guide the work of your hands; keep them in the forefront of your vision.

וּכְתַבְתָּם על מְזֻזוֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ. Uchtavtam al m’zuzot beitecha uvishearcha. Do not leave them at the doorway, or outside your gate.
וּוְהָיָה אִם שָׁמֹעַ תִּשְׁמְع אֶל מִצְוֹתַי, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם, לְאַהֲבָה אֶת יהוה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעָבְדוֹ, בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם.

וְנָתַתִּי מְטַר אַרְצְכֶם בְּעִתּוֹ, יֹֹרֶה וּמַלְקוֹ, וְאָסַפְתָּ דְגָנֶךָ וְתִירֹשְׁךָ וְיִצְהָרֶךָ. וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשָׂדְךָ לִבְהֶמְתֶּךָ, וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבָעְתָּ.

הִשָּׁמְרוּ לָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתֶּה לְבַבְכֶם, וְסַרְתֶּם וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם. וְחָרָה אַף יהוה בָּכֶם, וְעָצַר אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָטָר, וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת יְבוּלָהּ, וַאֲבַדְתֶּם מְהֵרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר יהוה נֹתֵן לָכֶם.

וְשַׂמְתֶּם אֶת דְּבָרַי אֵלֶּה על לְבַבְכֶם וְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם, וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יֶדְכֶם, וּהָיוּ לְטוֹֹטָפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם. וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם לְבֵנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ, וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ, וּבְקוּמֶךָ. וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹֹת בֵּיתֶךָ וּבִשְׁעָרֶיךָ. לְמַעַן יִרְבּוּ יְמֵיכֶם וִימֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר יהוה נֹתֵן לָכֶם, כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ.
How good it will be when you really listen and hear My directions which I give you today, to love יהוה, who is your God, and to act godly with feeling and inspiration. Your earthly needs will be met at the right time, appropriate to the season. You will reap what you have planted for your delight and health. Also your animals will have ample feed. All of you will eat and be content.

Be careful—watch out! Don’t let your cravings delude you; don’t become alienated; don’t let your cravings become your gods; don’t debase yourself to them because the God-sense within you will become distorted. Heaven will be shut to you, grace will not descend, Earth will not yield her produce. Your rushing will destroy you! And Earth will not be able to recover her good balance in which God’s gifts manifest.

(translation: Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi z”l)
Listen Up Y’all / An interpretive version of וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמֹעַ

“Listen up, y’all,” says Shekhinah who looks today like a teacher in corduroy dress and sedate boots.

“Let the smartphone rest a bit, or learn how to hear My voice coming through its speaker.

Let your love for Me well up like unexpected tears. Everyone serves something: give your life to Me.

Let the channel of your heart open and My abundance will pour through. But if you prefer profit, if you pretend —

if you’re not real with Me — your life will feel hollow and your heart be embittered.

I won’t punish you; I won’t need to. Your hollowness will be punishment enough, and the world will suffer for it.

So let My words twine around your arm, and shine like a headlamp between your eyes to light your way.

Teach them to everyone you meet. Write them at the end of your emails and on your business cards.

Then you’ll remember how to live with the flow of all that is holy — you’ll have heaven right here on earth.

(Rabbi Rachel Barenblat)
Who Is said to Moshe:

Speak, telling the Yisra-el folks to make tzitzit

on the corners of their garments,

so they will have generations to follow them.

On each tzitzit-tassel let them set a blue thread.

Glance at it, and, in your seeing,

remember all of the other directives of יהוה who Is, and act on them!

This way you will not be led astray, craving to see and want,

and then prostitute yourself for your cravings.

This way you will be mindful to actualize my directions

for becoming dedicated to your God,

to be aware that I AM יהוה who is your God —

the One who freed you from the oppression in order to God you.

I am יהוה your God.

This way you will be mindful to actualize my directions

for becoming dedicated to your God;

to be aware that I am your God,

the one who freed you from the oppression

in order to be your God. I am Adonai your God.

That is the truth!
True and enduring, right and real, are these truths:
that You, יהוה, are our God and there is none like You,
and we, Israel / the God-wrestlers, are Your people.

You rescue us from the hands of kings and sovereigns.
You are the God Who brought us forth from the Narrow Place
and rescued us from the enemies of our souls.
You are the One Who does great wonders and miracles beyond counting.
You redeem us into life and do not give us over into death.
You lead us away from places and people of enmity toward us.
You did signs and wonders for us before Pharaoh.
Your might led to the death of the first-borns of Egypt as you led Your people Israel into freedom.
You led us through the Sea of Reeds, and, as everyone saw Your might, we sang grateful praises to Your name.

Perceiving and accepting Your sovereignty, Moshe, Miryam, and all Israel sang this song to you in great joy, and together they said:

Who is like You, among the gods, יהוה?
Who is like You, awesome and doing wonders?
Your children saw your majesty, splitting the sea before Moses and Miryam.
“This is our God,” they cried, “He will reign through all space and time!”
And it is said:
He has saved the people of Jacob and redeems the weak from the mighty.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who redeems Israel.
Journey

between
a pillar of cloud
and a pillar of fire
the sea yawns
birth canal
labyrinth
blood-painted door

we enter joyful
that the future is just ahead

we enter afraid
of what pursues us

we enter
present with not knowing

we have escaped slavery
just barely
someone bought our freedom
we’re not sure who
ancestors
children
prophets
the all-weaver
the angel of death

to either side
the water is mirrors
is windows
is a view of the deep

just ahead
is darkness
is a light shining
is the sound of singing
and the pounding of feet

(Rabbi Jill Hammer)
Help us to lie down in peace, יהוה our God, and to arise again to life.
Spread over the world Your sheltering peace.
Direct us with Your guidance, and save us.
Protect and keep us from enmity, illness, violence, want, and sorrow.
Remove envy and recrimination from us; help us to sidestep our internal adversary.
Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings, for You are a protecting, redeeming God.
You are God, our source of grace and mercy.
Guard our going out and our coming in, for life and for peace, now and forever.
Spread Your sheltering peace over us.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who spreads a shelter of peace over all of Your people.
Places of Holiness, Places of Peace

After the night of exile in Mitzrayim,  
the awakening to divine presence in the Mishkan.  
After the darkness of Yerushalayim’s siege,  
the dawn of Yavneh’s flowering.

Guide us from darkness to dawn,  
from insecurity to serenity in an uncertain world.

God — HaMakom — is the place of holiness;  
God is everywhere,  
so everywhere can be made holy.  
Shalom is the peace of wholeness;  
to recognize God everywhere is  
to sense the holiness hidden in the world’s fragments,  
to feel commanded to join the fragments back together into a whole,  
into peace.

Teach us to frame the world in Your Mishkan,  
that we might encounter divine presence everywhere.  
Cover our sleep within Your sukkah of peace,  
that we might awake to wholeness every morning.

Spread over all of us the shelter of Your peace  
and an awareness of Your presence.

(Mark Nazimova)

HaMakom - One of the names of God, meaning The Place  
Mitzrayim - Egypt  
Sukkah - Shelter, booth  
Yerushalayim - Jerusalem  
Yavneh - The town established by the early Rabbis as a safe haven when Jerusalem was under siege,  
so that Rabbinic Judaism could continue developing as the Second Temple (along with Temple-centered Judaism) was about to be destroyed by the Romans.
Baruch יְהֹוָה לְעוֹלָם, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן.
Baruch יְהֹוָה מִצִּיּוֹן,
שֹׁכֵן יְרוּשָׁלָיִם הַלְלוּיָהּ.
Baruch יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
עֹשֵׂה נִפְלָאוֹת לְבַדּוֹ,
וּבָרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדָה לְעוֹלָם, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן.

לְגַדָּל יְיָ אֶת עַמּוֹ, בַּעֲבוּר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל,
כִּי הוֹּאִיל יְהֹוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶתְכֶם לְעָם.

וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, יהוה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים,
יהוה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

Blessed is the One forever, Amen and Amen.
Blessed is the One dwelling in Zion and Jerusalem, halleluyah.
Blessed is the One, the God of Israel, who alone does miracles.
Blessed is the Name of the One forever;
may God’s glory fill the earth, amen v’amem.
May God’s glory extend forever; may God rejoice in God’s creation.
May the name of the One be blessed, from now until forever.
God will not abandon God’s people; we were made to be in relationship with God.
When we see God’s greatness, we fall on our faces, declaring: God is God!
V’hayah יהוה lemelech al kol ha-aretz,
may God be sovereign over all the earth.

bayom hahu

yihye יהוה echad ushmo echad.

Y’hi chas’d’cha יהוה aleinu,
May God’s mercy be upon us as we make God’s presence real for ourselves.

ka-asher yichalnu lach.

Hoshi-einu יהוה, Eloheinu,
Save us, יהוה our God; gather us in, that we might praise Your name.

v’kab’tzeinu min hagoyim,

I’hodot Isheim kodshecha,
May all the peoples whom You have created

l’hodot וישה התהילתה, bend the knee before You and praise Your name.

l’hoda תהלתך שמות קדשך,
For You are great; You do wonders, You alone.

כד גודל אתא עלשה נפקאות,
And we are Your people, the flock that You tend; we thank You always,

ואתא אלוהים קדשך va-anachnu am’cha v’tzon maritecha,
and sing Your praises from generation to generation.

יקדב לאשה שמחה קדשך.
nodeh l’cha l’olam,

לדור ודור תשרף תהלתך.
ledor vador nsapeir t’hilatecha.
Baruch יְהֹוָּה בַּיּוֹם,
baruch יְהֹוָּה בַּלָּיְלָה,
baruch יְהֹוָּה בְּשָׁכְבֵנוּ,
baruch יְהֹוָּה בְּקוּמֵנוּ.

Ki v’yad’cha nafshot hachayim v’hameitim,
asher b’yado nefesh kol chai
v’ruach kol b’sar ish.

B’yad’cha afkid ruchi, paditah oti,
יהוה, אֵל אֶמֶת.

Eloheinu shebashamayim, yacheid shimcha,
v’kayeim malchut’cha tamid,
umlouch aleinu l’olam va-ed.

May the One be blessed by day and by night,
when we lie down and when we rise up.
For in Your hands are our lives and our deaths,
the breath of all life and the spirit of all flesh.
Into Your hands I place my spirit, O God of truth.
God Who is in the heavens: may Your name be unified,
may Your sovereignty endure always, may You rule over us always.
May our eyes see you, and may our hearts rejoice,
and may our souls know your redemption in truth,
flowing from Zion, O our sovereign and our God.

God reigned then, God reigns now,
God will reign forever and ever.

For sovereignty is Yours,
and You will reign always in glory;
we have no God but You.

Blessed are You, יהוה, who reigns in glory;
You will reign over us always,
and over all of Your creations.

The Kaddish: A Door

In all of its forms, the Kaddish is a doorway
between one part of the service and the next.

As we move through this door, notice:
what is happening in your heart and mind?

Whatever is arising in you,
bring that into your prayer.
Chatzi Kaddish / Half Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא
בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהוּ, וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהוּ,
בְּחַיֵּיכוֹֹן וּבְיוֹֹמֵיכוֹֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב,
וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

וְאִמְרוּ:
יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא,
בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְעֵלָּא
מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא
תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא,
דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

During the Ten Days of Repentance:

Magnified and sanctified! Magnified and sanctified!
May God’s Great Name fill the world God created.
May God’s splendor be seen in the world in your life,
in your days, in the life of all Israel.
Quickly and soon!
And let us say: Amen.

Forever may the Great Name be blessed!
Blessed and praised! Splendid and supreme!
May the holy Name, Bless God, be praised,
(During the Ten Days of Repentance: far,)
far beyond all the blessings and songs,
comforts and consolations,
that can be offered in this world.
And let us say: Amen.
Amidah

In this service there are two versions of the weekday Amidah, the standing prayer that is at the heart of every Jewish service. First there is a contemplative version, in which we offer a kavanah or meditative focus for each of the Amidah’s themes. Then there is the full-text version, which features the complete Hebrew text of the traditional prayer. Use whichever one best allows you to speak from your heart the words you most need to say to the One at this time.

The Contemplative Amidah follows here.
The Full-text Amidah appears on p. 95.

Meditation Before the Amidah

What do you most need to say to God tonight?

What do you need to pour forth from your heart?

What healing do you yearn for?
Contemplative Amidah

These are the themes of the Weekday Amidah. Meditate on each of them in your own time. If you wish to close each reflection with the closing words in Hebrew that “seal” each blessing, they are here for your use.

Avot V’imahot / Ancestors
I reflect on my ancestors. Who did I come from? How did they shape me?
Baruch atah, יהוה, magein Avraham v’ezrat Sarah.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, מביאין אברהם ועזרת שרה.

Gevurot / Power
What is the source of power in my life? Where do I find strength? What enlivens me?
Baruch atah, יהוה, m’chayeih hameitim.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, מחיה השמים.

Kedushah / Holiness
I open myself to holiness. I seek to live wholly and in a way that is holy.
Baruch atah, יהוה, ha·El hakadosh.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, האל הקדוש.

Binah / Understanding
I seek wisdom and understanding in my life.
Baruch atah, יהוה, chonein hada·at.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, חונן הדעת.

T’shuvah / Return
I want to orient myself in the right direction, to re/turn to my deepest self and my highest aspirations.
Baruch atah, יהוה, harotzeh bit·shuvah.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, חורץ בתשובה.

S’licha / Forgiveness
I aspire to cultivate forgiveness, and I ask all those whom I have hurt to forgive me.
Baruch atah, יהוה, chanun hamarbeh lislo·ach.
ברוך אתה, יהוה, חנן מרבח לסלוח.
Ge-ulah / Redemption
I ask the source of transformation to lift me out of my narrow places.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, go-eil Yisra-el.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, גו-יאל ישראל.

Refu-ah / Healing
Heal my wounded places. Help me be a source of healing for others.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, rofei cholei amo Yisra-el.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, רופא חולים עם ישראל.

Birkat Hashanim / Cycles
May abundant blessing pour into creation in this turning of the wheel and in all of the cycles of our lives.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, m’varech hashanim.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, מברך השנה.

Kibutz Galuyot / Ingathering
May we be gathered in from our spiritual exile.
May this be true for us as individuals and for us as a people.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, m’kabeitz nidchei amo Yisra-el.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, מקבץ נדחי עם ישראל.

Din / Justice
May justice flow like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.
May we all be blessed with good judgment, discernment, and good boundaries.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, melech oheiv tz’adakah umishpat.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט.

Birkat Haminim / Divisions
May unhelpful divisions be bridged and healed.
May wickedness come to its end. May hope and righteousness reign.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, shoveir oyvim umachni-а zeidim.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, שובר איבים ומكتب злоים.

Tzadikim / Righteous Ones
May all of my righteous and holy teachers be blessed.
May I recognize that the whole world can be my teacher.
Baruch atah, יְהֹוָה, mishan umivtach latzadikim.
ברוך אתה, יְהֹוָה, משתumo וביתך לצדיקים.
Boneih Yerushalayim / Jerusalem
May Jerusalem, our holy city of old, be blessed with wholeness and peace. May her inhabitants relate to one another with righteousness and love. May all places where humanity dwells be blessed.
Baruch atah, Adonai, boneih Yerushalayim.

Y’shu·a / A World Transformed
May redemption flower forth and transform our world into a world where suffering, hatred, and loss are no more.
Baruch atah, Adonai, matzmi·ah keren y’shu·ah.

Sh’mah Koleinu / Hear Our Voices
May our prayers be heard on high and deep within. May the deepest murmurings of our hearts be heard and honored.
Baruch atah, Adonai, shomei·a t’filah.

Avoda / Service
May my life be an expression of my desire to serve something greater than myself. May my service help to uplift Shechinah, Divine presence, everywhere.
Baruch atah, Adonai, hama·chazir shechinato leTziyon.

Hoda·ah / Gratitude
Help me to cultivate gratitude for the blessings of every day.
Baruch atah, Adonai, hatov shimcha ulcha na·eh l’hodot.

Shalom / Peace
Help me to feel and to embody peace and wholeness.
Baruch atah, Adonai, hama·vreich et amo Yisra·el bashalom.
Oseh shalom bimromav,
uhu ya-aseh shalom aleinu
v'al kol Yisra-el,
v'al kol yoshvei teiveil,
va'imru: Amen.

May the One who makes peace in the heavens
make peace for us, for all Israel,
and for all who dwell on earth.
And let us say: Amen.
Full-Text Amidah

אֲדֹנָי, שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח, Adonai, s’fatai tiftach,
וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ. ufi yagid t’hilatecha.

Eternal God, open my lips
that my mouth may declare Your praise.

Avot V’imahot / Ancestors

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יהוה Baruch atah, י’וה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ, v’moteinu,
אֱלֹהֵי אברָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִツְחָק, Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak,
אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, veilohei Yaakov;
ואֱלֹהֵי הָאֶל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, Elohei Sarah, Elohei Rivkah,
אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל, אֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה, Elohei Rachel, veilohei Lei·ah,
הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, Ha-el hagadol hagibor v’hanora,
אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרַה, אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה, El elyon, gomeil chasadim tovim,
אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל, אֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה, v’konei hakol v’zocheir chasdei avot
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִツְחָק, v’imahot,
וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, umei v’go-eil livnei v’neihem,
וֵאלֹהֵי הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, lema-an sh’mo b’ahavah.

Blessed are You, יהוה, our God and God of our ancestors,
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob;
God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah;
the great, mighty, and awesome God,
God on high, who does deeds of lovingkindness,
who is the Source of all,
and who remembers the steadfast love of our ancestors,
who lovingly brings redemption to their children’s children for Your name’s sake.
During the Ten Days of Repentance  
(between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)

זָכְרֵנוּ לְחַיִּים, melech chafeitz bachayim,
v’chotveinu b’sefer hachayim,
lema·ancha Elohim chayim.

Remember us for life, Sovereign who chooses life,  
and inscribe us in the book of life for Your sake, God of life.

Melech ozeir umoshi·a umagen.  
Baruch atah, יהוה, magein Avraham v’ezrat Sarah.

Ruler, Helper, Redeemer, and Protector,  
blessed are You, Abraham’s shield and Sarah’s strength.

Atah gibor l’olam  
m’chayei meitim atah rav l’hoshi·a.  
Summer: Morid hatal.  
Winter: Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem.

You are our eternal strength, יהוה.  
Your saving power gives life that transcends death.  
Summer: You bring the dew of the field.  
Winter: You cause the winds to blow and the rains to fall.
Mechalkeil chayim b’chesed,
m’chayei meitim b’rachamim rabim,
someich nof’lim, v’rofei cholim,
umatir asurim,
umkayeim emunato lisheinei afar.

Mi chamocha baal g’vurot,
Umi domeh lach?
Melech meimit umchayei,
umatzmi-ach y’shu-ah.

You sustain the living with kindness;
in Your great mercy You bestow eternal life.
You support the fallen, heal the sick, and free the captive.
You keep Your faith with us beyond life and death.
There is none like You, our source of strength,
the ruler of life and death, the source of our redemption.

Who is like You, Source of Mercy,
Who mercifully remembers Your creatures for life?
Our faith is with You, the God Who brings eternal life.
Blessed are You, יהוה, Who gives life which transcends death.

During the Ten Days of Repentance
(between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)

Mi chamocha, av harachamim,
zocheir y’tzurav l’chayim b’rachamim.

Who is like You, Merciful Parent?
You remember us for life and for compassion!
Kidushat HaShem / Sanctification of God’s Name

Atah kadosh v’shimcha kadosh
ukdoshim b’chol yom y’hal’lucha selah.
Ki El melech gadol v’kadosh atah.
Baruch atah, yehou, haEl haKadosh.

*During the Ten Days of Repentance:
Baruch atah, yehou, ha·Melech hakadosh.

You are holy, and Your name is holy,
and holy ones praise You always.
*Blessed are You, yehou, the holy God.

*During the Ten Days of Repentance: Blessed are You, yehou, the holy King.

Bakashot / Weekday requests

Atah chonein l’adam da·at,
umlameid le·enosh binah.
Choneinu mei·it’cha
dei·ah binah v’haskeil.
Baruch atah, yehou, chonein hada·at.

You give humanity wisdom and teach us understanding.
Grace us with wisdom, insight, and knowledge.
Blessed are You, yehou, who graces us with wisdom.

Hashiveinu, avinu, l’toratecha,
v’kar’veinu, malkeinu, la·avodatecha,
v’hachazireinu
bit·shuvah sh’leimah l’fan·echa.
Baruch atah, yehou, harotzeh bit·shuvah.

Return us, our Parent, to Your Torah;
draw us near, our Sovereign, to Your service;
help us to return in complete t’shuvah before You.
Blessed are You, yehou, who wishes for our t’shuvah.
S'lach lanu, avinu, ki chatanu;
m'chal lanu, malkeinu, ki fashanu;
ki mocheil v'solei-ach atah.
Baruch atah, יהוה,
chanun hamarbeh lislo-ach.

Forgive us, our Parent, for we have sinned;
pardon us, our Sovereign, for we have erred;
for You are the one who forgives and pardons.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who graciously forgives.

R'eih na v'onyeinu, v'rivah riveinu,
ugaleinu m'heirah l'ma-an sh'mecha,
ki goeil chazak atah.
Baruch atah, יהוה, go·eil Yisra·el.

Take note of our affliction and our struggles.
Redeem us swiftly for Your name's sake.
Blessed are You, יהוה, Redeemer of Israel.

R'fa·einu, יהוה, v'neirafei;
hoshi·einu v'nivashei·ah,
ki t'hilateinu atah,
v'haaleih r'fuah sh'leimah
l'chol makoteinu.
Ki El Melech rofei ne·eman
v'rachaman atah.
Baruch atah, יהוה,
rofei cholei amo Yisra·el.

Heal us, יהוה, and we will be healed;
save us, and let us be saved;
for You are the healer,
and from You complete healing rises for every wound.
Blessed are You, יהוה, healer of the sick among Your people.
Bareich aleinu, Eloheinu,
est hashanah hazot
v’et kol minei t’vuatah l’tovah

in winter

v’tein tal umatar livrachah

in summer

v’tein b’rachah

Bless, our God, the cycle of this year
and all the various good things which grow.

And

Satisfy us with Your goodness, and bless this year as all good years.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who blesses the cycle of the years.

Sound the great shofar for our freedom,
raise a banner for the oppressed,
gather us in from the four corners of the earth.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who ingathers the exiles of Your people.
Hashivah shof’teinu k’varishonah
v’yo-atzeinu k’vat’chilah,
vhaseir mimenu yagon va’anachah,
vmalch aleinu m’heirah atah, יהוה,
levad’cha b’chesed uvrahachim,
v’tzadkeinu bamishpat.
Baruch atah, יהוה,
melech oheiv tz’dakah umishpat.

Let our judges be righteous, as they were of old;
bring mercy and lovingkindness through them;
for You are our ultimate ruler,
You alone in Your mercy and compassion,
your justice and your statutes.
Blessed are You, יהוה, Ruler who loves justice.

V’lamalshinut al t’hi tikvah,
v’chol harisha k’rega toveid,
v’chol oy’vecha m’heirah yikareitu,
v’hazeidim m’heirah t’akeir ut-shabeir
utmageir v’tachni-a bimheirah v’yameinu.
יהוה, Baruch atah,
shoveir oy’vim umachni-a zeidim.

And may wickedness not be given hope,
and may the errant return to You, speedily and in our days.
Blessed are You, יהוה, who shatters wickedness.
Al haatzadikim v’al hachasidim
v’al ziknei am’cha beit Yisra-el,
v’al p’leitat sof’reihem,
v’al gerei hatzedek v’aleinu,
yehemu na rachamecha Eloheinu,
v’tein sachar tov
l’ichol habot’chim b’shimcha be-emet,
v’sim chelkeinu imahem,
ulolam lo neivosh
ki v’cha batachnu.
Baruch atah, יהוה,
mishan umivtach latzadikim.

And on the righteous ones and the pious ones and our elders,
and on our leaders, and on the strangers who dwell among us,
and on us, may you grant compassion, יהוה our God,
and give blessing and good reward to all who trust in Your name,
and number us among them forever,
and let us never waver from our faith in You.
Blessed are You, יהוה, the staff and stay of the righteous.

V’lirushalayim ir’cha b’rachamim tashuv,
v’tishkon b’tochah ka-asher dibarta,
vneih otah b’karov b’yameinu
binyan olam,
v’chisei David m’heirah l’tochah tachin.
Baruch atah, יהוה,
boneih Y’rushalayim.

And to Jerusalem Your city speedily return in compassion.
Help us to rebuild her speedily and in our days,
in a manner befitting the throne of David.
Give rest to Zion and help us to rebuild Jerusalem.
Blessed are You, יהוה, builder of Jerusalem.
May the sprout of David flower forth,  
Bringing with it Your redemption,  
For we hope for Your redemption every day.  
Blessed are You, Our God,  
Who brings forth redemption.

Hear our words, Our God,  
Be compassionate and merciful upon us,  
And let our prayers be received with mercy according to Your will,  
For You are the one who hears our prayers and supplications  
That arise before You.  
You are the one  
Who hears the prayers of Your people Israel with compassion.  
Blessed are You, Our God,  
Hearer of prayer.
Accept, our God, the prayers of Your people Israel; find favor in us and accept our prayers in love. May our prayers always ascend to You in love.

On Rosh Chodesh, and on the intermediate days of festivals:

On Rosh Chodesh, and on the intermediate days of festivals:

Our God and God of our ancestors:
allow memory to ascend,
to come, to reach us.
May our memory
and our ancestors’ memory
and the memory of the dream
of a messianic time,
and the memory of the vision
of Jerusalem as a city of peace,
and the memories of all of Your people
of the House of Israel,
be before You

on this day of (Rosh Chodesh) (Pesach) (Sukkot).

On this day
may these memories,
these dreams of redemption,
inspire graciousness, lovingkindness,
and compassion in us,
for life and for peace.
Remember us, יהוה our God, for goodness.
Count us in for blessing.
Save us with life.
Shower us with salvation
and with compassion;
be merciful to us; enfold us
in the compassion we knew
before we were born.
For You are our merciful Parent and Sovereign.
May our eyes see Your presence return to Zion with compassion.

Blessed are You, יהוה, whose Presence returns to Zion.

We are grateful before You, for You, יהוה our God and God of our ancestors, are forever the rock of our lives, the shield of our salvation;

You are this for us in every generation.

For our lives, which are in Your hands, and our souls, which are in Your keeping, and for the wonders You do for us each day and the miracles You perform for us at every moment, evening and morning and afternoon:

Your mercies never end, Your compassion never fails, we put our hope in You.
On Chanukah and Purim

Al hanisim, v’al hapurkan,
v’al hag’vurot, v’al hat’shu-ot,
v’al hanifia-ot,

she-asita la-avoteinu ulimoteinu
bayamim haheim baz’m’an hazeh.

For the miracles, for the redemption,
for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts,
and for the wonders, which You wrought for our ancestors
in those days, at this time.

On Chanukah

Bimei Mattityahu kohein gadol
chashmonai uvanav k’she-am’d’a aleihem

malchut Antiyochos harasha
uvikeish la-akor et emunateinu

v’dateinu v’heitzeiru lanu v’chav’shu et
heichaleinu tim’u et mikdasheinu.

Az kamu negdam chasidecha v’chohanecha,
v’atah, b’rachamecha harabim,
amadta lahem be’it tzaratam,
ravta et rivam, nakamta et
nikmatam, v’hayita b’ezratam l’hitgabeir
aleihem ultaheir et hamikdash.

Mitoch ga-agu-im l’hashra-at’cha
ratzu l’hadlik et hamenorah
hat’horah v’lo matz’u shemen
ad shehereita lahem shemen tahor
l’yom echad. B’vitachon hidliku
et hamenorah v’atah asita lahem
neis vafelehm v’hashemen lo hifsik
ad she-asu meichadash.

V’kav’u sh’monat y’mei chanukah eilu
l’hadlik neirot l’firsum haneis

l’hadlik nirot hamenorot neis
l’hadlik lishma Hagadol

v’hakadosh al nisecha
v’al nifl’otecha v’al y’shu-atecha.
On Chanukah

In the days of Mattityahu, High priest, and his sons, when there arose against them the reign of wicked Antiochus, who sought to uproot our faith and law, oppressing us, they conquered our Temple and desecrated our sanctuary. Then there arose, against them, Your devout priests, and You, in Your great compassion, stood by them, in their troubles, waging their wars, avenging their pain, helping them to overcome Antiochus’ forces and to purify the sanctuary. Amidst their longing for Your Presence among them, they sought to kindle the pure lamp and, not finding enough pure oil, You led them to find some, just enough for one day. In trust, they kindled the lamp, and You miraculously made the oil last until they could make some afresh. Then did they set these days of Chanukah to lighting candles, to chanting the Hallel, in gratitude to Your great reputation for Your miracles, Your wonders, and Your salvation.

(Adaptation and translation by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi z”l)

On Purim

In the days of Mordechai and Esther in Shushan, the capital, when the wicked Haman arose before them and sought to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all the Jews — young and old, infants and women — on the same day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions:

You, in Your abundant mercy, nullified his counsel and frustrated his intention and caused his design to return upon his own head.
V’al kulam yitbarach v’yit·romam
shimcha Malkeinu
tamid l’olam va·ed,

For all these things, O God, let Your name forever be praised,

During the Ten Days of Repentance:
u’chtov l’chayim tovim kol b’nei v’ritecha
May all the children of Your covenant be inscribed for a life of goodness

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,
v’chol hachayim yoducha selah,

for You are the God of our redemption and our hope.
Blessed are You, יהוה, whose Name is good
and who does great things worthy of our thanksgiving.

Shalom rav al Yisra·el am’cha
tasim l’olam,

Shalom rav al Yisra·el am’cha
tasim l’olam,

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tasim l’olam,

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Shalom rav al Yisra·el am’cha
tasim l’olam,

Shalom rav al Yisra·el am’cha
tasim l’olam,
During the Ten Days of Repentance:

בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים, בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹֹם
וּפַרְנָסָה טוֹֹבָה, נִזָּכֵר וְנִכָּתֵב לְפָנֶיךָ,
אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְֹרָאֵל,
לְחַיִּים טוֹֹבִים וּלְשָׁלוֹֹם.

In the book of life, blessing, peace, and prosperity,
may we be remembered and inscribed by You,
— we and all Your people Israel —
for a good life and for peace.

ברוך אַתָּה, יְהוָה, הַמְבָרֵ
אֶת עַמּוֹֹ יִשֹרָאֵל בַּשָּׁלוֹֹם.

Baruch atah, Adonai, ha-vorey
et amo Yisra-el bashalom.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹֹם בִּמְרוֹֹמָיו
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Oseh shalom bimromav,
hu ya-aseh shalom aleinu
v’al shalom Yisra-el,
v’al kol Yisra-el;
v’al kol yoshvei teiveil;
v'imru: Amen.

May the One who makes peace in the heavens
make peace for us,
for all Israel,
and for all who dwell on earth.
And let us say: Amen.
Broken Open

When life is full of ease, spirituality is like cotton candy—fluffy, airy, and unserious….
And then something happens. Someone gets sick, or a relationship ends. Or a pet dies, or I lose my job. Or a friend dies unexpectedly.
And then we go searching for meaning. Not answers necessarily… but significance, meaning. Now the self-satisfied smirk of the critic melts into something less sure of itself. What can be understood in the midst of this tragedy, about the fragility of the human condition or the impossibility of holding onto it? And what are the forms which, over the years, people like me have created to contain this grief?

Thus pain becomes a gate to the recovery of the spiritual tones of living. I fail; I lose; and so I grow closer to the parts of myself which feel more authentic, more connected. Spiritual paths may not be as sophisticated or arch as other ways of being. They may be mocked in the pages of the *Times*. But at some point, most of us find ourselves broken—and hopefully broken open.

It’s easy to be cynical about this sudden return to religious, spiritual, philosophical, or artistic homes long abandoned. We seem to be spiritual equivalents of fair-weather fans, clinging to a tradition or practice in our moment of need, then discarding it once again, when the moment of crisis has passed. Really, though, we are just flawed humans. To admit our inconsistency is only another necessary surrender. Fine, we are inconsistent. What do we sense to be true when we are at our weakest, our most open?

(Rabbi Jay Michaelson)
The Kaddish: A Door

The Kaddish which follows—known as Kaddish Shaleim (whole Kaddish)—is the doorway between the Amidah and our concluding prayers.

Where have tonight’s prayers taken you? Whatever you’re feeling in this moment, bring that into your prayer.
Kaddish Shaleim

Magnified and sanctified! Magnified and sanctified! May God’s Great Name fill the world God created.

May God’s splendor be seen in the world in your life, in your days, in the life of all Israel.

Quickly and soon! And let us say, Amen.

Forever may the Great Name be blessed!

Blessed and praised! Splendid and supreme!

May the holy name, Bless God, be praised, beyond all the blessings and songs, comforts and consolations, that can be offered in this world.

And let us say: Amen.
תִּתְקַבֵּל צְלוֹתְהוֹן וּבָעוּתְהוֹן
dְכָל (בֵּית) יִשְׂרָאֵל קֳדָם אֲבוּהוֹן
dי בִּשְׁמַיָּא, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא
וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹֹם בִּמְרוֹֹמָיו
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְעַל כָּל יוֹֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל,
וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
Psalm 23

A psalm of David:

יהוה
is my shepherd; I shall not want.

God makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters to restore my soul;

God leads me in paths of righteousness
for the sake of God’s name.

Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil,
for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff,
they comfort me.

You set a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Truly goodness and mercy will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell
in the house of יהוה forever.
Filled to Overflowing

The Holy one is my Guide;
my life is whole.
We journey together
over fertile hillsides
and rest
beside nourishing springs.
This 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.

(Rabbi Brant Rosen)
El Malei Rachamim: God of Compassion

El malei rachamim, shochein bam'romim,
hamtzei m'nuchah n'chonah
im k'doshim ut·horim
k'zohar haraki·a maz·hirim,
et nishmat ___________

for a man say: shehalach l'olamo,
b'gan Eden t'hei m'nucha-to.
b'seiter k'nafecha l'olamim,
v'yitzror bitzror hachayim
et nishmato. הולו hu nachala-to.
v'yanu-ach b'shalom al mishkavo,
v'nomar amen.

for a woman say: shehal'chah l'olamah,
b'gan Eden t'hei m'nucha-tah.
b'seiter k'nafecha l'olamim,
v'yitzror bitzror hachayim
et nishmatah. הולו hu nachalatah.
v'tanu-ach b'shalom al mishkavah,
v'nomar amen.

Compassionate God, Spirit of the universe, Grant peace beneath the shelter of Your presence among the holy and the pure who shine with the splendor of the heavens, to the soul of our dear one __________ who has gone to their reward. May the Garden of Eden be their rest. O God of mercy, guard them forever in the shadow of Your wings. May their soul be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.
Elah M’lei-at Rachamim

This version of El Malei Rachamim uses feminine Hebrew, speaking to divinity in feminine form.

God filled with mercy, dwelling in the heavens’ heights, bring proper rest beneath the wings of your Shechinah, amid the ranks of the holy and the pure shining like the brilliance of the skies, to the soul of our beloved ________ who has gone to her eternal place of rest. May her rest be in the garden of Eden. May you who are the source of mercy shelter her beneath your wings eternally, and weave her soul into the web of life that she may rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

(Rabbi Jill Hammer)
Aleinu

Short Aleinu (Ein Od Mil’vado)

וֹֹאֵין עוֹֹד מִלְּבַדּ
יהוה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

There is nothing but God; God is God.

Aleinu (Full-Text)

עָלֵינוּ לְשַׁבֵּחַ לַאֲדוֹֹן הַכֹּל
לָתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית,
שֶׁלֹּא/שֶׁלּוֹֹ*
עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹֹיֵי הָאֲרָצוֹֹת
וְלֹא/וְלוֹֹ*
שָּׂם כְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹֹת הָאֲדָמָה,
שֶׁלֹּא/שֶׁלּוֹֹ*
שָם חֶלְקֵנוּ כָּהֶם,
וְגֹרָלֵנוּ כְּכָל הֲמוֹֹנָם.

It is up to us to praise the Source of all, to exalt the Molder of creation.

We are:

made for God
like all nations. (or) not made like
other nations.

We are:

placed here for God
like all humanity. (or) unlike
other peoples.

Our portion and our fate are:

for God’s
own sake. (or) not like those
of other peoples.

*Pray either לֹא, pronounced lo (“not”), or לְלֹא, also pronounced lo (“for God”). The first articulates Jewish chosenness; the second, post-triumphalism.
We bow low and prostrate in thanks before the Source of all sources, the Holy One, blessed is God.

Shehu noteh shamayim v’yoseid aretz, umoshav y’karo bashamayim mima-al, ush’chinat uzo b’govhei m’romim. Hu Eloheinu, ein od.

God sets out the heavens and establishes the earth. God’s honored place is in the heights of our aspirations; God’s powerful presence is in the heavens of our hopes.

This is our God; there is none else.

Emet malkeinu efes zulato. Kakatuv b’torato: V’yadata hayom vahasheivota el l’vavecha, ki יהוה hu ha·elohim bashamayim mima-al, v’al ha·aretz mitachat, ein od.

There is nothing that God is not. As it is written in God’s sacred teaching:

“You shall know this day and place upon your heart that יהוה is God in heaven above and earth below; there is none else.”

Al kein n’kaveh l’cha יהוה Eloheinu, lirot m’heirah b’tiferet uzecha, l’ha·avir gilulim min ha·aretz, v’ha·elilim karot yikareitun, l’takein olam b’malchut Shaddai.
Therefore we hope in You, יהוה our God. May we soon see the power of Your beauty wipe away false gods from the earth and sweep away idolatry, so that the truth of Your sovereign presence will repair the world.

Then will all humanity call Your name, and then all that had been dark will turn to Your light.
All who dwell on earth will feel in their hearts and know in their minds that You are our source—the true object of devotion and loyalty.
Mourners’ Kaddish

Yitgadal v’yitkadosh, sh’mehi raba,
bal’ma di v’ra chiruteih,
v’ya’mledh malchuteih
b’chayeichon uvyomeichon
u’chayei d’chol b’it Yisra-el,
ba-agala uvyizman kariv,
v’imru: Amen.

Y’hei sh’mehi raba m’varach
l’alam ulal’mei al’maya.

Yitbarach v’yishtabach v’yitpa-ar
v’yit’romam v’yitnasei v’yit’hadar v’yitaleh
v’yit’halal sh’mehi d’kudsha
b’rich hu
l’eila

During the Ten Days of Repentance:

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

Oseh shalom bimromav,
hu ya-aseh shalom, aleinu
v’al kol Yisra-el,
v’al kol yosh’vei teiveil,
v’imru: Amen.
I pray to You God, 
that the power residing in Your Great Name 
be increased and made sacred 
in this world which God created freely 
in order to preside in it, and grow its freeing power 
and bring about the messianic era. 
May this happen during our lifetime 
and during the lifetime of all of us 
living now, the house of Israel. 
May this happen soon, without delay 
and by saying AMEN we express agreement and hope, AMEN.

May that immense power residing in God’s great name 
flow freely into our world and worlds beyond.

May that Great Name, that sacred energy, 
be shaped 
and made effective 
and be acknowledged 
and be given the right honor 
and be seen as beautiful 
and uplifting 
and bring jubilation. 
Way beyond our input 
of worshipful song and praise 
which we express in this world 
as our agreement and hope, AMEN.

May that endless peace 
that heaven can release for us 
bring about the good life 
for us and for all Israel 
as we express our agreement and hope, AMEN.

You, who harmonize it all 
on the highest planes: 
bring harmony and peace to us, 
to all Israel and all sentient beings 
as we express our agreement and hope, AMEN.

(translation: Rabbi Zalman Shachter-Shalomi z”l)
(Each time Mourners’ Kaddish appears in this volume, it is translated by someone different. Each translation is unique, and each evokes a particular quality of the original Aramaic.)

Mourners’ Kaddish Poem

So often am I lost, yet through the pall, yet through the tarnish, show me the way back, through my betrayals, my dismay, my heart’s leak, my mind’s sway, eyes’ broken glow, groan of the soul—which convey all that isn’t real, for every soul to These Hands careen. And let us say, Amen.

Say you will show me the way back, my Rock, my Alarm. Lead the way, Oh my Yah.

And yet in shock and yet in shame and yet in awe and yet to roam and yet to stay and yet right here and yet away and yet — “Halleluyah!” my heartbeat speaks, for You live in all this murk and too in the clear and too in our wreckage. You are the mirror of our souls, let us say: Amen

Life may harm me, rob me, ream me raw, try me, even slay me. Over all You will prevail. And let us say: Amen

Say You shall loan me a tomorrow, say You shall loan another day to all who are called Yisra-el and all called Yish’mael and all called We and They, and let us say, Amen.

(Elliot bat Tzedek)
The Angel Song (from the Bedtime Sh’ma)

This song, which describes and evokes four angelic presences surrounding us as we approach sleep, comes from the traditional liturgy of the bedtime Sh’ma.

בְּשֵׁם יהוה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִימִינִי מיכָאֵל,
וּמִשְׂמֹאלִי גַּבְרִיאֵל,
וּמִלְּפָנַי אוּרִיאֵל,
וּמֵאֲחוָֹֹֹֽוִרְאֵל,
וְעַל רֹאשִׁי וּמֵעַל תַּחְתִּי
שְׁכִינַת אֵל.

In the name of God, the God of Israel:
On my right is Michael, on my left is Gavriel.
In front of me is Uriel, behind me Raphael.
And all above, surrounding me, Shechinat-El.

The four angels who watch over us as we sleep:

Micha-el: Who is Like You, God? (Wonder)
Gavri-el: God’s Strength (Strength)
Uri-el: God’s Light (Light)
Rapha-el: God’s Healing (Comfort)
When There Is No Grave To Visit

We scatter your ashes at sea,
riding far into the waters in a speeding boat,
strewing your remains onto the choppy waves.
I pray: May God bless you and protect you.
The boat turns and we race to land and home.
I look back and cannot see you.

I turn this way and that, not knowing where to face,
not knowing where you are,
knowing you are not here.
I pray: May God’s light shine on you and be gracious to you.
I turn again, pray in another direction,
turn again and again.

I stand at the edge of the sea,
cold curls of water dance up to my feet
and coyly slip away. You are not here.
I pray: May God’s face be lifted toward you,
and toward me,
and bestow upon us peace.

(Rabbi Jennifer Singer)
When The Grave Is Too Far Away

God, my loved one is buried
Too far away to visit.
I want to run my fingers along
Their name, engraved in granite.
To take a stone from my pocket
And leave it to mark my presence.

Times like this, I wish
I didn't live so far away.
If I close my eyes and imagine
Their headstone here before me
Will You help me feel as though
I'd actually gone to see them?

Be the switchboard operator:
Please connect my call.
When I say “I remember you”
I want to believe they hear me
Even though I’m not standing
In that far-off cemetery.

May the miles between here
And there become unimportant
In the face of what connects us
Across every kind of distance.

(Rabbi Rachel Barenblat)
In Remembrance of an Abusive Relationship

1.

I mourn the self
Who was Hurt deeply
Profoundly
Painfully
Who was lost for a time in the noise
of someone else's story
Their need to
Control
Destroy
Patch their own wounds
by making them mine

I was told in word and deed
That I was too much
Too smart
Too pretty
Too headstrong
Too damaged

I had yearnings and hopes
And they were dashed

I offered myself
And was rejected

My losses are found
In the marrow of my bones

When I weep
There is little comfort

2.

And yet –

May I dare to imagine
The life I may still live
May I remember that
I am not what they said
I am not what they did

May I know that while
I am weighted by memory
I am not my past

I am
Intrinsically
Beautifully
More than they believed

I am a vessel for thoughts
And words
And song
And patience
And love
And compassion
And stillness
That without me would not be born
Into a world that needs these things
Like breath

3.

I claim resilience for myself
For the others who’ve walked
This path before me

I remember that for those who follow
I am hope

I exist in this moment
And for myself
I am love

(Cate Denial)
Prayer for Those Left Behind After the Suicide of a Loved One

May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah and all those who came after them, bless those of us living in the shadow of the valley of death, left behind because of the suffering of a dear soul who took their own life.

May our connection with the One who is the Source of All Blessing, continually remind us that our memories of our loved ones are for a blessing: zichronam livracha. May we be able to look at their life and not only their suffering and death. May we learn to understand in time that memories of their life bless our days. May we know through our memories of their life, they too, are blessed wherever they rest. May they be protected by the God of Compassion.

When the memories of their life’s suffering come to us, give us the strength and courage to feel compassion and love for them. Help us feel the companionship of families, friends, ancestors, and the Divine Presence to protect and nourish us in times of distress. May we find the healing possible through sharing our whole experience with others, including feelings of regret and shame, relief and anger, grief and sorrow, unanswered questions, and deep love.

Source of All Life, surround us with grace and spread over us a sukkat shalom, a shelter of peace and wholeness. And let us say Amen.

(Rabbi Chaya Gusfield)
A Yizkor Kavanah for the Ambivalent

Bless Yah, Ruach Ha Olam,
Breathing us in and breathing us out.
Each loss breaks a pattern.
We pray and remember.

Daddy God of our childhood.
Useless God of our arrogant youth,
Intervening God of our adult actions,
Mother God of our spiritual seeking,
Soothing God of our old age,
Listening God of our last words,
We pray and remember.

Bless Yah, Ruach Ha Olam,
Breathing us in and breathing us out.
Imagining us,
Comforting us,
Singing us,
We pray and remember.

We remember them:
Our Teachers and Leaders,
Our Artists and Entertainers,
Our Enemies and Rivals,
Our Friends and Companions,
Our Aunts and Uncles and Cousins,
Our Husbands and Wives and Partners,
Our Children and Siblings,
Our Parents and Grandparents.

We remember them
Because we loved each other,
Except when we didn’t.

We pray and we hope for delight in the memories
And music when there cannot be joy
And repair when the patterns break.

Bless Yah, breathing in,
Praying with us because we are alone.
Bless Yah, breathing out,
Remembering us when we cannot.

(Trisha Arlin)