



The RA Presents

Conservative/Masorti Tikkun Leil Shavuot

May 16th 12pm – May 17th 12pm (EDT)

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Engaging, Enriching and Empowering Jewish Women
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

The Akdamut – an Aramaic preface to our Torah Reading

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אַקדמוֹת מַלְיוֹן וְשָׂרִיּוֹת שׁוֹתָא

Before reciting the Ten Commandments,

אַוּלָא שְׁקַלְנָא הֶרְמֵן וּרְשׁוּתָא

I first ask permission and approval

בְּבִי תֵרִי וּתְלַת דְּאַפְתַּח בְּנִקְשׁוּתָא

To start with two or three stanzas in fear

בְּבִרֵי דְבָרֵי וְטָרִי עָדִי לְקִשְׁשׁוּתָא

Of God who creates and ever sustains.

גְּבוּרָן עֲלָמִין לֵהּ וְלֹא סִפֵּק פְּרִישׁוּתָא

He has endless might, **not to be described**

גְּוִיל אֱלוֹ רְקִיעֵי קִנִּי כָּל חוּרְשׁוּתָא

Were the skies parchment, were all the reeds quills,

דִּיּוֹ אֱלוֹ יַמֵּי וְכָל מֵי כְּנִישׁוּתָא

Were the seas and all waters made of ink,

דִּירֵי אֶרְעָא סְפָרֵי וְרִשְׁמֵי רְשׁוּתָא

Were all the world's inhabitants made scribes.

From Shabbat Shacharit:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֵא שִׁירָה בְּיָם. וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רָנָה כְּהַמּוֹן גְּלוֹ. וְשִׁפְתוֹתֵינוּ שְׂבַח
כְּמַרְחֲבֵי רְקִיעַ. וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִיָּרַח. וְיָדֵינוּ פְּרוֹשׁוֹת כְּנִשְׂרֵי שָׁמַיִם.
וְרַגְלֵינוּ קָלוֹת כְּאַיִלוֹת. אֵין אֲנַחְנוּ מִסְּפִיקִים לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. וּלְבָרֶךְ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ עַל אַחַת מֵאֲלֹף אֲלָפִים וְרַבֵּי רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים

Were our mouths filled with song as the sea,
our tongues to sing endlessly like countless waves,
our lips to offer limitless praise like the sky....
We would still be unable to fully express our gratitude to You,
ADONAI our God and God of our ancestors...

Creation of the World

הַדָּר מְרִי שְׁמַיָא וְשַׁלִּיט בְּנִבְשָׁתָא

The glorious Lord of heaven and earth,

הַקִּים עֲלָמָא יְחִידָאֵי וְכַבְּשָׁה בְּכַבְּשׁוּתָא

Alone, formed the world, veiled in mystery.

וּבְלָא לָאוּ שְׁכָלְלָהּ וּבְלָא תַשְׁשׁוּתָא

Without exertion did he perfect it,

וּבְאַתָּא קַלִּילָא דְלִית בֵּיהּ מְשַׁשׁוּתָא

With only the whoosh of a breath-like hei.

Midrash Bereshit Rabba 12: 10

(י) בְּהִבְרָאָם, רַבִּי אֶבְהוּ בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר בְּהִבְרָאָם, בְּהִיא בְּרָאָם, וַיִּמָּה
הִיא זֶה כָּל הָאוֹתִיּוֹת תּוֹפְסִין אֶת הַלְשׁוֹן וְזֶה אֵינוֹ תּוֹפֵס אֶת הַלְשׁוֹן, כִּדּוּ לֹא
בְּעֵמֶל וְלֹא בִּיגִיעָה בְּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ

The Midrash understands the word be-hibar'am (Gn 2.4) to mean be-heh bera, "God created the heavens and the earth by using the letter heh." 'Be-hibar'am - R. Abbahu in the name of R. Yohanan: With a heh he created them. Just as all the letters (of the alphabet) make a sound and the heh does not, so, too, did the Holy One, blessed be he, create his world without labor and effort."

The Angels:

חִיל אֶלֶף אֲלָפִין וְרַבּוּא לְשִׁמְשׁוּתָא

Millions of legions are at his service;

חֲדָתִין נְבוּט לְצַפְרִין סְגִיָּאָה טְרִשׁוּתָא

Newly born each and every day – so great are God’s ways.

(Talmud Chagigah 14a)

כָּקַל מִן קָדָם שְׁדֵי כָּקַל מִי נְפִישׁוּתָא

As if the sound came from God, like ocean’s roar,

כְּרוֹבִין קָבֵל גְּלָגְלִין מְרוֹמְמִין בְּאוֹשְׁתָא

The cherubim and the spheres rise loudly

לְמַחְזָא בְּאַנְפָּא עֵין כּוֹת גִּירֵי קִשְׁתָּא

To gaze at the rainbowlike appearance.

Ezekiel 1: 28-29

Like the appearance of the bow which shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the Presence of the LORD. When I beheld it, I flung myself down on my face. And I heard the voice of someone speaking.

The children of Israel:

עֲדֹב יְקָר אַחֲסִנְתָּהּ חֲבִיבִין דְּבִקְבֵעֲתָא

Dear to him are the people of Israel,

עֲבִידָא לֵיה חֲטִיבָא בְּדִנְח וּשְׁקֵעֲתָא

Acclaiming him each morning and evening...

צְלוֹתֵהוּן בְּכֹן מְקַבֵּל וְהִנָּא בְּעוֹתָא

So that their prayer be well accepted,

קְטִירָא לְחֵי עֲלָמָא בְּתַגָּא בְּשִׁבּוּעֲתָא

Bound up in the crown of the Eternal,

קָבֵל יְקָר טוֹטְפֵתָא יְתִיבָא בְּקִבְיֵעֲתָא

Securely set near the precious frontlet.

רְשִׁימָא הִיא גוּפָא בְּחִכְמָתָא וּבְדַעֲתָא

His frontlet is most skillfully inscribed:

רְבוּתָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל קְרָאִי בְּשִׁמְעֲתָא

“Great is Israel who proclaims God’s Oneness.”

God's Tefilin: (Talmud Bavli Berachot 6a)

אָמַר לִיה רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק לְרַב חִיָּיא בַּר אָבִין : הֲנֵי תַפְּיִלִּין דְּמַרְי עֲלָמָא מָה
כְּתִיב בְּהוּ? אָמַר לִיה "וּמִי כְּעַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ" .

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said to Rav Hiyya bar Avin: What is written in the tefilin of the Master of the world? Rav Hiyya bar Avin replied: It is written: "Who is like Your people, Israel, one nation in the land?" (I Chronicles 17: 21).

The Crowns of the Torah (Talmud Bavli, Menachot 29b):

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב בְּשַׁעָה שַׁעֲלָה מֹשֶׁה לְמַרוֹם מִצָּאוּ לְהַקְבִּי"ה שִׁיּוֹשֵׁב
וְקוֹשֵׁר כְּתָרִים לְאוֹתוֹת

Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: When Moses ascended on High, he found the Holy One, Blessed be He, sitting and tying crowns on the letters of the Torah.

Conclusion:

Of the precious old wine preserved in vats.
You upright, having heard this hymn of praise,
May you be in that blissful company!
You will merit to sit in the first row
If you will obey God's majestic words.
God, exalted from beginning to end,
Was pleased with us and gave us the Torah.

חֲמַר מֵרַת דְּמִבְּרַא שִׁית נְטִיר בֵּי נַעֲוֹתָא
זָכְאִין כִּי שְׁמַעְתּוֹן שְׁבַח דָּא שִׁירְתָּא
קִבִּיעִין כּוֹן תְּהוּוֹן בְּהִנְהוּ חֲבוּרְתָּא
וְתִזְכּוּן דִּי תִיתְּבוּן בְּעֵלְא דְרְתָּא
אַרִי תְּצִיתּוֹן לְמַלּוּי דְנַפְקִין בְּהַדְרְתָּא
מְרוּמָם הוּא אֱלֹהִין בְּקַדְמֹתָא וּבִתְרִיתָּא
צָבִי וְאַתְרַעִי בְּן וּמְסַר לָן אוּרְיָתָא

אקדמות 

On the first day of Shavuot, Akdamut is chanted as part of the Torah service, before the first aliyah, as an introduction to the Torah reading.

Shavuot celebrates God's gift of Torah to the Jewish people. On Shavuot, the Ten Commandments, or Ten Words, are the focus of the Torah reading and thus represent the entire Revelation of Torah. The first words of this special poem, AKDAMUT MILLIN (introductory words), describe the poem's purpose — to introduce the Words of the Ten Commandments.

Akdamut was written in Aramaic by Rabbi Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai in twelfth-century Germany.

אִקְדָּמוֹת מְלִין וְשָׁרְיוֹת שׁוֹתָא
 אִוְלָא שְׁקֻלְנָא הֶרְמֵן וְרִשׁוֹתָא.
 בְּבִי תִרִי וְתִלַּת דְּאֶפְתָּח בְּנִקְשׁוֹתָא,
 בְּבִי דְבְרִי וְטִרִי עֵדִי לְקִשְׁוֹתָא.
 גְּבוּרִין עֲלָמִין לִיָּה וְלֹא סַפֵּק פְּרִישׁוֹתָא,
 גְּוִיל אֱלוֹ רְקִיעֵי, קִנִּי כָּל-חוֹרְשׁוֹתָא.
 דִּיּו אֱלוֹ יָמֵי וְכָל מִי כְּנִישׁוֹתָא,
 דִּירִי אֶרְעָא סְפָרִי וְרִשְׁמֵי רִשׁוֹתָא.
 הֶדְר מְרִי שְׁמִיָּא וְשְׁלִיט בִּיבְשׁוֹתָא,
 הֶקֶם עֲלָמָא יְחִידָאֵי וְכִבְשִׁיהַּ בְּכִבְשׁוֹתָא.
 וּבְלָא לֹאֻ שְׁכַלְלִיָּהּ, וּבְלָא תִשְׁוֹתָא,
 וּבְאֶתָּא קְלִילָא, דְּלִית בֵּיהַּ מִשְׁוֹתָא.
 זְמִין כָּל עֲבִידְתִּיָּהּ בְּהָךְ יוֹמֵי שְׁתָּא,
 זְהוֹר יְקָרִיָּהּ עֲלֵי, עֲלֵי כְּרִסְיָהּ דְּאֶשְׁתָּא.
 חֵיל אֶלְף אֶלְפִין וְרְבוּא לְשִׁמְשׁוֹתָא,
 חֲדָתִין נְבוֹט לְצַפְרִין, סְגִיָּאָה טְרִישׁוֹתָא.

In Talmudic times the Torah was read in Hebrew but was accompanied by a translation into the vernacular, Aramaic, in order to enable the listeners to understand it. This is still done in Yemenite synagogues. In most European countries this practice was abandoned since the Aramaic Targum, as it is called, was not understood either. In some places, however, the Targum was read on two special occasions: when reading the portions about the splitting of the Sea (at the conclusion of Pesah) and the Ten Commandments (on Shavuot). Rabbi Meir ben Isaac, a contemporary of Rashi who lived in Worms, was a great liturgical poet who wrote the Aramaic acrostic Akdamut as an introduction to the Aramaic reading of the ceremony at Mount Sinai. In addition to its poetic description of Revelation and its praise of the divine law, it contains a magnificent picture of the eventual triumph of Judaism and the end of exile.

The Ten Commandments are not “merely” the core of a moral code, designed for all mankind. They are not “merely” an enunciation of principles conveyed to the human intelligence. They are also the critical initial episode in the making of a people out of a rabble of slaves; that is to say, they are to the phenomenon of civilized peoplehood what Genesis is to the phenomenon of the world order. . . . That is, it thrust aside the fantastic and often revolting cosmogonies of the ancient world and, in incomparable language, left upon the human mind the impression that the world order crystallized at God’s command. So with the Ten Commandments. They assert that the force in the making of a civilized people is God’s will and that without His will there is *tohu va-vohu*, formlessness and the void.

The Ten Commandments — taken in their setting — asserted for the ancients that the source of civilization and morality is not to be sought in the conflicting intentions of a multiplicity of divinities; and they assert for the moderns that it is not to be sought in the relativisms of the anthropologists — not in the *elan vital* but in the *elan divin*. . . .

If one denaturalizes the theophany at Sinai into naturalistic terms, the Bible as a whole disintegrates. For the Bible is not simply a collection of dogmas and episodes; it is essentially the record of a dynamic unfolding of the spirit through the medium of history, that is through the substance of human events.

Nor are we to understand that, at Sinai, God suddenly interposed Himself to create a people. His interposition is continuous. At Sinai He revealed Himself. At Sinai, wherever it is located, at a certain point in time, whenever we date it, a people saw God; or, rather, as the record itself says, a people became overwhelmingly aware of Him — He is not to be seen. And this flash of awareness became an everlasting fixation. In this fixation the people has endured when all its early contemporaries, as well as other people who came upon the world scene subsequently, have disappeared.

Maurice Samuel

FOR SHAVUOT

AKDAMUT

Akdamut praises God as Creator of the world. It highlights the inadequacy of any mortal attempt at such praise. The angels join in groups to praise the Creator. Yet wondrous and respectful as angels are, the praise of the people Israel is far more precious to God because of Israel’s unique devotion to God on earth. The people Israel have been enticed to join others in idolatry, but they have withstood temptation, maintaining their loyalty to God and Jewish tradition, anticipating the time when they will enjoy the Shekhinah, the splendor of God’s presence. All of us, the poet concludes, will be able to merit and enjoy that splendor by fulfilling the “Ten Words” presented at Mount Sinai by the living God: The words that embody God’s gift of Torah, which we are about to hear in the Torah reading.

Before reading the ten divine commands,
O let me speak in awe two words, or three,
Of the One who wrought the world
And sustained it since time’s beginning.

At God’s command is infinite power,
Which words cannot define.
Were all the skies parchment,
And all the reeds pens, and all the oceans ink,
And all who dwell on earth scribes,
God’s grandeur could not be told.

Sovereign over the heavens above,
God reigns supreme on earth below.
God launched creation unaided
And contains it in the bounds of His law.

Without weariness God created,
Only by divine will, uttered in a gentle sound.
God wrought His works in six days,
Then established His glorious sovereignty
Over the life of the universe.

Myriads of angelic hosts serve God,
Divine messengers that propel life’s destiny.
They arise each morning to their calling.

טְפִי יְקִידִין שְׂרָפִין, כְּלוּל גַּפִּי שְׂתָא,
 טַעַם עַר יְתִיֵּהב לְהוֹן שְׂתִיקִין בְּאֲדָשְׂתָא.
 יְקַבְּלוּן דִּין מִן דִּין שְׁוֵי דְלֵא בְּשִׂשְׂתָא,
 יְקַר מִלֵּי כַל-אַרְעָא, לְתַלְוֹתֵי קְדָשְׂתָא.
 בְּקַל מִן קָדָם שְׂדֵי בְּקַל מִי נְפִישׁוּתָא,
 כְּרוּבִין קְבַל גְּלָגְלִין מְרוּמְמִין בְּאוּשְׂתָא.
 לְמַחְזֵי בְּאַנְפָא עֵין פּוֹת גִּירֵי קְשָׂתָא,
 לְכַל אַתְר דְּמִשְׁתַּלְחִין, זְרִיזִין בְּאַשְׂתָא.
 מְבָרְכִין בְּרִיָּה יְקַרְיָה בְּכַל-לְשׁוֹן לְחִישׁוּתָא,
 מְאַתְר בֵּית שְׂכִינְתָּהּ, דְּלֵא צְרִיָּה בְּחִישׁוּתָא.
 נְהִים בְּלִ-חֵיל מְרוּמָא, מְקַלְסִין בְּחִישׁוּתָא,
 נְהִירָא מְלִכּוּתֵיהּ, לְדַר דְּרָא לְאַפְרָשְׂתָא.
 סְדִירָא בְּהוֹן קְדָשְׂתָא, וְכַד חֲלָפָא שְׂעֵתָא,
 סִיּוּמָא דְלַעֲלָם, וְאוּף לֵא לְשַׁבְּעֵתָא.
 עַדב יְקַר אַחְסַנְתִּיהּ חֲבִיבִין דְּבִקְבַעְתָּא,
 עֲבָדִין לִיהּ חֲטִיבָה בְּדִנְח וּשְׁקַעְתָּא.
 פְּרִישָׁן לְמִנְתִּיהּ, לְמַעַבַּד לִיהּ רַעוּתָא,
 פְּרִישׁוּתֵיהּ שְׂבָחִיהּ יַחוּזִין בְּשַׁעוּתָא.
 צְבִי וְחַמֵּד וְרַגְג דִּילְאִין בְּלַעוּתָא,
 צְלוּתְהוֹן בְּכִן מְקַבֵּל וְהַנִּיא בְּעוּתָא.
 קְטִירָא לְחֵי עֲלָמָא בְּתַנָּא בְּשַׁבְּעֵתָא,
 קְבַל יְקַר טוּטְפָתָא יְתִיבָא בְּקַבְּעוּתָא.
 רְשִׁימָא הִיא גּוּפָא בְּחַכְמַתָּא וּבְדַעְתָּא,
 רְבוּתְהוֹן דִּישְׂרָאֵל, קְרָאֵי בְּשַׁמְעָתָא.
 שְׂבַח רְבוּן עֲלָמָא, אַמִּירָא דְכּוּתָא,
 שְׁפַר עָלֵי לְחַוּוּיָהּ, בְּאַפִּי מְלַכּוּתָא.
 תַּאֲיִן וּמִתְפַּנְשִׁין בְּחַזוּ אֲדוּתָא,
 תְּמַהִין וְשִׁילִין לֵהּ בְּעַסְק אֲתוּתָא.

In every generation each of us should feel as if he or she had personally stood at Sinai and received the divine revelation.

We stand at Sinai to hear the divine command, each of us according to our ability to understand it. We take upon ourselves the obligation to observe the will of God.

All the people answered as one, saying, "All that Adonai has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 19:8).

We stand at Sinai to make a covenant with God. We take upon ourselves the obligations of being God's people.

"Now, then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples" (Exodus 19:5).

We stand at Sinai newly liberated from bondage, bondage to human masters and bondage to false ideals. We become instead the servants of the Holy One.

"I am Adonai, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2).

We stand at Sinai to accept the yoke of God's sovereignty upon ourselves. We abjure the worship of all false gods.

"You shall have no other gods beside Me" (Exodus 20:3).

We stand at Sinai to become a people, mutually responsible for one another, pledged to continue and renew the traditions of our ancestors.

"It is not with our ancestors that Adonai made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today" (Deuteronomy 5:3).

Mount Sinai was uprooted from its place and the people came and stood underneath it [as under a *huppah*], as it says, "You came forward and stood under the mountain" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This is stated in the Sacred Writings: "O my dove, in the cranny of the rocks, hidden by the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice" (Song of Songs 2:14) — this refers to the Ten Commandments.

Mekhilta Bahodesh 3

Accepting the Sovereignty of God

"I am Adonai, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2).

A parable. To what may this be compared? To a king who entered a city and said to the populace, "I shall rule over you." They replied, "What have you done for us that you should rule over us?" What did he do? He fortified the city, ensured their water supply, and waged war on their behalf. Then he said to them, "I shall rule over you," and they responded, "Yes, O yes!" Thus the Holy One brought Israel out of Egypt, split the Sea for them, supplied them with manna, created a well for them, and supplied them with quail. God waged war for them against Amalek. Only then did God say to them, "I shall rule over you," and they replied, "Yes, O yes!" *Mekhilta Bahodesh 5*

All the celestial beings join in a chorus of praise;
In unison they call to one another:
All the earth is full of the glory of the thrice Holy One.

In a mighty roar,
As the thundering noise of vast waters,
Moving amidst the heavenly spheres
Where the divine light glows brilliant,
The angelic hosts proclaim their words of adoration:

Praised be God's glory by every whispering lip
From the place of His abode which is everywhere.
All the celestial hosts roar their response in awe:
The splendor of God's dominion
is acclaimed from age to age.

Yet dearer to God than this
Is the song of the children of Israel,
Rising to Him morning and evening,
In free outpourings of adoration.

Chosen to be the faithful servants of God's will,
They continually rehearse God's praises,
Who summoned them in love
to pursue the labors of Torah,
And accepts their supplications and entreaties,
Which weave a crown of glory for the Almighty.

The Eternal cherishes their prayers
And keeps them ever before Him,
Thus declaring the greatness of Israel
Who reiterate that God is One.

Israel acclaim the glory of the Ruler of the universe,
And offers God homage before kings and princes.
They all gather and ask in wonder,
Who is this your beloved, O fair one,
For whom you brave the perils of the lion's den?

Why was the Torah not given in the Land of Israel? So that the nations of the world would not be able to say, "Since it was given in Israel's land we did not accept it. . . ." Therefore it was given in the wilderness — openly, publicly, in a place belonging to no one. *Mekhilta Bahodesh 5*

מִזֶּן וּמִזֶּן הוּא רְחִימָךְ, שְׁפִירָא בְּרוּתָא,
 אַרוּם בְּגִינְיָה סְפִית מְדוּר אַרְיִוּתָא.
 יִקְרָא וַיֵּאָה אֵת, אֵין תַּעֲרְבִי לְמִרוּתָא,
 רְעוּתְךָ נַעֲבִיד לִיךָ, בְּכָל-אֲתָרוּתָא.
 בְּחֻמְתָּא מְתִיבְתָּא לְהוּן קֶצֶת לְהוּדְעוּתָא,
 יִדְעָתוּן חֻמְיָן לִיָּה בְּאֲשֶׁתְּמוּדְעוּתָא.
 רְבוּתְכוֹן מַה חֻשִׁיבָא קָבֵל הָהִיא שְׁבַחְתָּא,
 רְבוּתָא דִּיעֵבֵד לִי, בְּד מְטִיא יִשׁוּעָתָא.
 בְּמִיתִי לִי נְהוּרָא, וְתַחֲפִי לְכוּן בְּהָתָא,
 יִקְרָה בְּד אֲתַגְלִי בְּתַקְפָּא וּבְגִיּוּתָא.
 יִשְׁלַם גְּמִלְיָא לְסַנְיָי וְנִגְוָתָא,
 צְדֻקְתָּא לְעַם חֲבִיב וְסִגְיָא זְכוּתָא.
 חֲדוּ שְׁלָמָא בְּמִיתִיָּה וּמְנִי דְכִיתָא,
 קְרִיתָא דִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּד יְכַנְּשׁ גְּלוּתָא.
 יִקְרִיָּה מְטִיל עֲלֵהּ בְּיוֹמֵי וְלִילוּתָא,
 גְּנוּנְיָה לְמַעֲבַד בֵּה בְּתַשְׁבְּחוֹן כְּלִילְתָא.
 דִּזְהוּר עֲנִיָּא לְמִשְׁפַּר כִּילְתָא,
 לְפּוּמִיָּה דְעֵבְדְתָא עֲבִידִין מְטַלְלְתָא.
 בְּתַחֲתֵיקֵי דְהַב פִּיזָא וְשִׁבְעַ מַעֲלָתָא
 תְּהִימִין צְדִיקֵי קָדָם רַב פְּעֻלְתָּא.
 וְרִיּוּהוּן דְּמִי לְשִׁבְעָא חֲדוּתָא,
 רְקִיעָא בְּזוּהֲרָה וְכוּכְבֵי זִיוּתָא.
 הֲדָרָא דְלֹא אֲפֻשֶׁר לְמַפְרַט בְּשִׁפּוּתָא,
 וְלֹא אֲשִׁתְּמַע וְחָמֵי נְבִיאָן, חֲזוּתָא.
 בְּלֹא שְׁלִטָא בִּיהֵ עֵין, בְּגוּ עֵין גְּנִיתָא,
 מְטִילֵי בֵי חֲנֻגָּא לְבַהֲדֵי דְשְׁכִינְתָא.
 עֲלִיָּה רְמִזֵי דִין הוּא, בְּרַם בְּאֲמַתְּנִיתָא,
 שְׁבַרְנָא לִיָּה בְּשִׁבְזָן, תְּקוּף הַמְנוּתָא.

The events of Sinai are of supreme importance to us because they signify the making of the covenant between God and Israel, by which we became a people wedded to the Divine.

If one believes that communication is possible between God and humanity, if one believes that a covenant was made at Mount Sinai in which the people of Israel pledged to become a holy nation, a nation belonging exclusively to God and desiring to live according to God's will — the highest possible moral and ethical standards — then the events at Sinai and Shavuot, the holiday that commemorates those events, have tremendous significance.

The biblical account itself depicts these events as a covenant ceremony. One cannot prove that the event actually occurred as described, or even that it happened at all, but it would indeed be strange if this entire tradition had no basis whatsoever. The covenant is a reality of Israel's being, as is the way in which Israel understood that covenant.

We did indeed receive our Torah at Sinai, for Torah means God's instruction. We became aware of God at Sinai, overwhelmingly so. We accepted God's commanding presence and the terms of the covenant. That was the seed from which the Written Torah and the extensions of it we call the Oral Torah both sprang. To celebrate what happened at Sinai reaffirms the basis of our existence: the covenantal relationship with God and the striving to translate that covenant into study (Torah) and ways of living (mitzvot).

“The heavens belong to Adonai, but the earth He gave to human beings” (Psalm 115:16). Said Rabbi Yose: Neither Moses nor Elijah ever ascended to heaven, nor did God descend to earth. Rather it says: “And Adonai called Moses to the top of the mountain” (Exodus 19:20) — God said to Moses, “I shall call to you through the top of the mountain, and you shall ascend.” Mekhilta Bahodesh 4

**Accepting the Yoke
of the Commandments**

“You shall have no other gods beside Me” (Exodus 20:3).

A parable. A human king entered a city. His ministers said to him, “Proclaim your edicts to them.” He said to them, “No. When they accept my sovereignty, then I shall proclaim my edicts. For if they do not accept my sovereignty, will they obey my edicts?” Thus God said to Israel, “I, Adonai, am your God [and only then] You shall have no other gods beside Me — I am the One whose sovereignty you accepted in Egypt.” They said to God, “Yes, O yes.” [God then continued,] “As you have accepted My sovereignty upon yourselves, accept now My edicts — ‘You shall have no other gods beside Me.’”

Mekhilta Bahodesh 5

If you but join our fold,
We would cover you with splendor and glory;
In every land would we ratify your every wish.

A wise reply is Israel’s:
How can you know God with your foolish minds?
How compare the glories you bestow
With the glory that is God’s,
With the splendor of God’s deeds
In the hour of our deliverance,
When the light divine will shine on us,
While darkness covers your mocking multitudes,
When God will manifest His glorious might
And render His foes their due,
And triumph to the people
Abounding in virtue
Whom God has loved.

Joy unmarred will reign in hearts ennobled, pure.
Jerusalem will rise again;
Her exiled children will come back to her.
Day and night God will shed His glory on her,
And build in her anew His sacred shrine of praise.

The righteous will possess the reward for their service.
They will dwell before their Creator,
Arrayed on golden thrones,
With seven steps ascending,
Resplendent as the azure of the sky
And the brightness of the stars.

They will acclaim God:
It is God we trusted with faith unyielding
In the days of our captivity.
God will lead us forever,
Renewing us with the glee of youthful dancers.

.....

יְדַבֵּר לָן עֲלֵמִין עֲלֵמִין מִדְּמוּתָא,
 מִנֵּת דִּילָן דִּמְלֻקָּמִין פִּרְשׁ בְּאַרְמוּתָא.
 טְלוּלָה דְלוּיָתָן וְתוֹר טוֹר רְמוּתָא,
 וְחַד בְּחַד כִּי סְבִיף וְעֵבֵד קְרִבוּתָא.
 בְּקִרְוֵהי מִנְגַח בְּהִמּוֹת בְּרַבְרִבוּתָא,
 יִקְרִטֵעַ נוּן לְקַבְלִיָּה בְּצִיצוּי בְּגִבוּרָתָא.
 מְקַרֵב לֵיהּ בְּרִיָּה בְּחִרְבִּיָּה רְבִרְבָּתָא,
 אֲרִסְטוֹן לְצִדִּיקֵי יִתְקַן וְשְׂרוּתָא.
 מְסַחְרִין עֲלֵי תְכִי דְכִכְבֵּד וְגוּמְרָתָא,
 נְגִידִין קְמִיהוּן אֲפִרְסוּמוֹן נְהָרָתָא.
 וּמְתַפְנִקִין וְרוּוּ בְכִסֵּי רוּיָתָא,
 חִמְר מֵרַת דְּמִבְרָא שִׁית נְטִיר בֵּי נְעוּתָא.
 זְבָאִין, כֵּד שְׂמַעְתוּן שְׁבַח דָּא שִׁירָתָא,
 קְבִיעִין בְּן תְּהוּוֹן בְּהִנְהוּ חִבוּרָתָא.
 וְתִזְכּוּן דִּי תִיתְבוּן בְּעֵלָא דְרָתָא,
 אֲרִי תִצִּיתוּן לְמֵלוּי, דְנִפְקִין בְּהִדְרָתָא.
 מְרוּמָם הוּא אֱלֹהִין בְּקִנְמָא וּבְתִרְיָתָא,
 צְבִי וְאַתְרַעִי בְּן וּמְסַר לָן אֲוִרִיָּתָא.

How were the Ten Commandments presented?
 There were five on each of the two tablets.

“I am Adonai your God” (Exodus 20:2) was written on one tablet and opposite it on the other was written “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13), indicating that one who sheds blood is considered to have diminished the Divine Image. A parable. A human king entered a city, and images of him were hung, likenesses were erected, and coins were struck [with his image]. After a while, they upset the images, broke the likenesses, and defaced the coins — diminishing the image of the king. Thus if one sheds blood, he is considered to have diminished the Divine Image, as it is said, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God was man created” (Genesis 9:6).

“You shall have no other gods beside Me” (Exodus 20:3) was written on one tablet and opposite it was written “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:13), indicating that one who worships idols is considered to have committed adultery in reference to God, as it is said: “You were like the adulterous wife who welcomes strangers instead of her husband” (Ezekiel 16:32).

“You shall not swear falsely” (Exodus 20:7) was written on one tablet and opposite it was written “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:13), indicating that if one steals he will eventually come to swear falsely, as it is said: “Will you steal and murder and commit adultery and swear falsely?” (Jeremiah 7:9).

(continued on opposite page)

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8) was written on one tablet, and opposite it was written “You shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:13), indicating that if one desecrates the Sabbath it is as if he testifies before the One Who Spoke and the world came into being that God did not create the world in six days nor rest on the seventh. If one observes the Sabbath it is as if he gives testimony before the One Who Spoke and the world came into being that God did create the world in six days and rested on the seventh, as it is said: “My witnesses are you, declares Adonai” (Isaiah 43:10).

“Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12) was written on one tablet and opposite it was written “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:14), indicating that if one covets, he will sire a son who will curse his own father and give honor to one who is not his father.

For this reason the Ten Commandments were presented five on one tablet and five on the other. This is the teaching of Rabbi Hananya ben Gamliel.

However the Sages say, “There were ten on each of the two tablets, as it is said: “Adonai spoke these words . . . He inscribed them on two tablets of stone” (Deuteronomy 5:19).

Mekhilta Bahodesh 7

We will possess the portion
 God set apart for us in ancient days.
 Leviathan and the wild ox of the mountains
 Will charge and contend with each other,
 The beast goring fiercely with its horns,
 The sea monster striking with its mighty fins.

But Adonai will make an end of them
 With His great sword,
 And prepare a banquet for the righteous.

They will sit at tables of precious stones,
 Rivers of balsam flowing before them;
 And they will drink the precious wine
 Stored for them from the first of days.

O you upright who have heard the song of God’s praise,
 May you ever be in the blessed circle of God’s faithful.

Through all eternity, exalted be Adonai
 Who conferred true love upon us
 By entrusting to us the Torah.

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Shavuot 5781

Hasidic Insights into the First Commandment

Rebbe Yehudah Aryeh-Leib of Ger: Sefat Emet Shavuot 5631

בגמ' ויתיצבו כו' שכפה עליהם ההר מודעא רבה כו'. י"ל כי בשעת מתן תורה הי' חירות כמ"ש חז"ל. והפירוש שהי' מתגלה פנימיות החיות של הטבע ג"כ. והי' משועבד כל הטבע להשי"ת בלבד וכמו שיהי' לעתיד שמו אחד. [וי"ל ששתי לחם רומז על זה] כמ"ש וירד ה' על הר סיני ומתרגמינן ואתגלי כו'. שהי' גילוי החיות בכל הנבראים. וכ"כ אתה נגלית. וכ"כ פנים בפנים דיבר כו' שהי' כל הבריאה מכוון למעלה לשורש החיות ואיתא כשאמר השי"ת אנכי ה' אלקיך היו כל פרטי הנבראים סבורין שלהם הדיבור עד שאמר שר הוצאתיך כו' ע"ש. והפי' כי ודאי השי"ת הוא החיות והכח של כל הנבראים. ובאמת ה' אלקיך קאי על כל הבריאה. רק שהתגלות מלכותו ואלקותו לכל הבריאה הוא ע"י ישראל. וז"ש אשר הוצאתיך כו'. ונחזור לדברינו שכיון שהי' מתגלה החיות והי' תיקון הראוי. ממילא צריך להיות שלא יוכל האדם לחטוא. כי הטבע עצמו מעכב שלא יעבור שום אדם על דעת קונו. וזה ענין כפה עליהם ההר כו'. שהטבע עצמו נתבטל וראו והבינו כי אין להם חיות בלי חיות התורה. כי לא הי' אז חיות מסט"א רק מסטרא דקדושה. וזה עצמו המודעא שלא היו יודעין שאח"כ יחזור הטבע להיות נסתר. ואז נראה להם הכל בחוש הראות שא"א לסור מהש"י חי החיים. ולכך מצוה לזכור יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלקיך והוא ההתגלות שהי' אז עומד כל אדם לפני ה' ממש כנ"ל. והדר קבלוה כשראו הנס תוך הטבע האמינו שהוא רק הסתר אבל הפנימיות רק חיות התורה כנ"ל:

It is written in the Talmud, 'They stood beneath the mountain...He held the mountain over them...A great declaration...etc'. This is to say that at the time of the giving of the Torah there was freedom, as our sages have said. The explanation is that there was revealed the innermost vitality of all nature also and the whole of nature was subservient to God alone, as it will be in the future [when] 'His name is one'. [It should be said the two showbreads hint at this] This is as is it said 'And God descended on Mount Sinai' which we translate as 'And [God] was revealed' etc. This means that there was a revelation of the vitality [that is to be found] in all created things. Thus is it written 'You were revealed'. So is it written also 'Face to face did God speak etc...' that is to say, that all creation was focussed upwards towards the root of its vitality, and it is said that when God said, 'I am the Lord your God' every part of creation thought that these

words were addressed to them, until God said 'Who brought you out etc...' (See there). The explanation is that for sure God is the vitality and strength of all created things. And in truth 'the Lord your God' refers to the whole of creation. Only the revelation of God's sovereignty and divinity to all creation is through Israel. This is the meaning of 'Who brought you out etc...'. But, to return to our subject, since the divine vitality was revealed and there was reparation as should be, it should surely follow that it is impossible for anyone to sin. For it is nature itself which prevents it from being the case that none transgresses the will of their Maker. (Alternatively: Nature itself prevented anyone from transgressing against the will of their Maker.) This is the meaning of 'He held the mountain above them etc...': nature itself was suspended and they saw and understood that they had no vitality apart from the vitality of the Torah. For there was no vitality from the other side; only from the side of holiness. This was in itself the 'declaration'; for they didn't know that afterwards nature would once again return to [the reality of] concealment. But at that moment it was manifest to them and they saw by the sight of their own eyes that it was impossible to turn aside from God, the vital source of life. Therefore it is commanded to remember 'The day when you stood before the Lord your God'; that is, the revelation, in which every person stood literally before God, as explained above. Afterwards they accepted [the Torah], for when they saw the miracle within nature, they believed that it was only a [form of] concealment, but the inward reality is solely the vitality of the Torah, as has been said.

Rebbe Mordechai Yosef of Izbitz: Mei Hashiloach Vol. 1, Parashat Yitro

אנכי ה' אלקיך. ולא נאמר אני, כי אילו היה כתיב אני, היה משמע שגילה אז הקב"ה לישראל את כל אורו בשלימות ולא יוכלו אח"כ להעמיק בדבריו, כי כבר גילה הכל, אך הכ"ף מורה שאינו בשלימות ורק דמות ודמיון הוא להאור שיגלה הקב"ה לעתיד, וכל מה ששיג האדם יותר עמקות בד"ת יראה שעד עכשיו היה בחושך. וע"ז מרמז היום והלילה, היום היינו שהש"י פותח שערי החכמה לאדם והלילה היינו שלא ידמה האדם שהשיג הכל בשלימות, כי כל מה שהשיג הוא כלילה נגד היום הבא אחריו וכן לעולם, וממילא הכל הוא לילה נגד האור שיפתח הקב"ה לעתיד. וזה שנסמך מאמר לא תעשה לך פסל ואיתא בזוה"ק (**שמות פ"ז**): (משום דכתיב פסל לך ע"כ נאמר לא תעשה לך פסל ולא תעביד לך אורייתא אחרת. והענין בזה כי מלת פסל הוא דבר מחותך במדה וקצב ובהשלמה בלי חסרון שום דבר בעולם וזאת אינו נמצא רק בתורת מרע"ה, אבל בשכל אנושי אין באפשר לתקן דבר כזה בשלימות הגמור

'*Anochi* - I am the *Lord* your God': the *Torah* doesn't say *Ani*, for had it said *Ani*, then this would have implied that the Holy Blessed One revealed all the divine light to Israel in its entire perfection and they wouldn't be able to explore God's words in greater depth because God had already revealed everything. But the letter *caph* indicates that what was revealed was not perfect, only a similitude and likeness to the light which the Holy Blessed One will reveal in the future, and the more depth a person attains in the study of the words of *Torah*, the more he /she realises that until now he/she has been in darkness. Day and night hint at this; day, because God opens the gates of wisdom to humankind and night so that no-one should think they've understood everything perfectly, because everything so far comprehended is like night compared to the day which will follow, and so on forever. Moreover, everything is like night compared to the light which God will open in the future. This is why we have next the commandment, 'Don't make yourself any graven image'. Because the *Torah* says 'Carve out for yourself', it says 'Don't make yourself any graven image'. Don't make yourself an alternative *Torah*... The issue is that the meaning of the word *Pesel* is something cut to measure and carved to perfection with nothing whatsoever lacking, and this is something to be found only in the *Torah* of Moses our master, peace be upon him, but it is not possible for the human intelligence to attain to such a state...



Standing at the Foot of Sinai



*Who is with you
and
what do you hear?*

Art and teaching by
Rabbi Debra S. Cantor



*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

**Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who has made our lives holy with Your mitzvot, and
commanded us to engage with the words of Torah.**



Opening to Torah

Holy One,
bring us to that mountain
where we all once stood,
our souls opened
like the buds of newborn flowers,
open to receive Your holy Torah,
written on the canopy of stars
that You created.

- Ariel Neshama Lee



Exodus 20:15

וְכָל-הָעָם רָאוּ אֶת-הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת-הַלְפִידִם
וְאֶת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת-הַהָר עֹשֶׂה וַיֵּרָא הָעָם
וַיִּנָּעוּ וַיַּעֲמָדוּ מֵרָחֵק:

All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance.



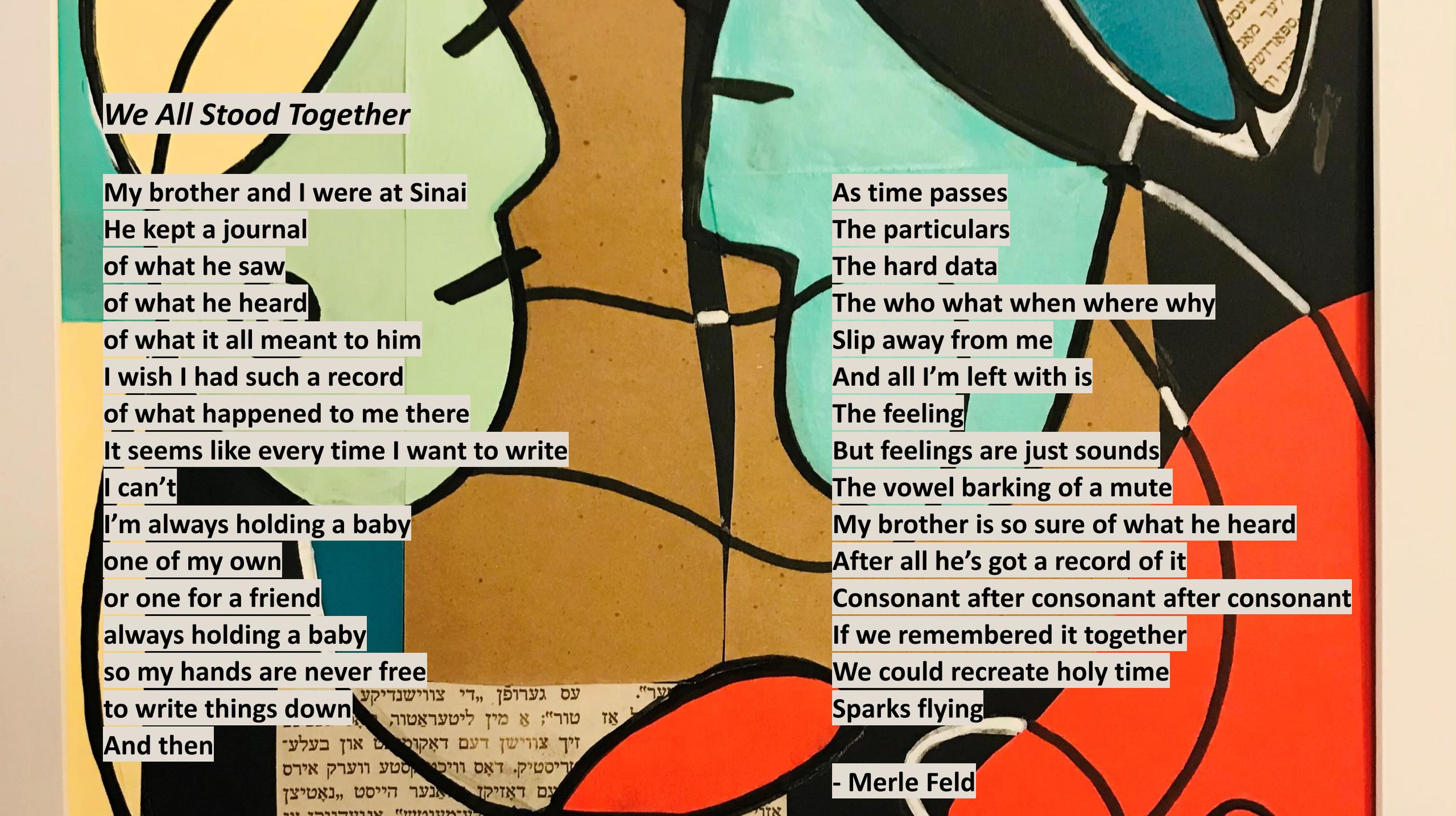
Shemot Rabbah 5:9

And it is stated (Exodus 20:15), "And all the people saw the sounds (literally, voices)" - It is not written, "sound," here, but rather, "sounds."

Rabbi Yohanan said, "The voice would go out and divide into seventy voices for the seventy languages, so that all the nations would hear . . . And each and every nation would hear in the language of the nation and their souls would depart. But Israel would hear and they were not injured."

Come and see how the voice would go out among all of Israel - each and every one according to their strength: the elders according to their strength; the young men according to their strength; the infants according to their strength; the sucklings according to their strength; the women according to their strength; and even Moshe according to his strength...in the strength of each and every one, and even the pregnant women, according to their strength.





We All Stood Together

My brother and I were at Sinai
He kept a journal
of what he saw
of what he heard
of what it all meant to him
I wish I had such a record
of what happened to me there
It seems like every time I want to write
I can't
I'm always holding a baby
one of my own
or one for a friend
always holding a baby
so my hands are never free
to write things down
And then

As time passes
The particulars
The hard data
The who what when where why
Slip away from me
And all I'm left with is
The feeling
But feelings are just sounds
The vowel barking of a mute
My brother is so sure of what he heard
After all he's got a record of it
Consonant after consonant after consonant
If we remembered it together
We could recreate holy time
Sparks flying

- Merle Feld

TEXTS FOR GORDON TUCKER'S TIKKUN SESSION

"Reflections on the Omer, Sinai, and the Fate of Our Planet"

Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* III:43

The Festival of Weeks is the day of the giving of the Torah. In order to glorify and exalt that day, the days are counted from the first of the festivals up to it, as is done by one who waits for the coming of the human being he loves best and counts the days and the hours. This is the reason for the counting of the Omer from the day when they first left Egypt till the day of the giving of the Torah, which was the purpose and end of their leaving: וָאָבִיָּא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי — “And I brought you to Me” (Exodus 19:4)

Rabbi Avraham Mordecai of Ger [20th Century Poland], brought in *Likkutei Yehudah*, Parashat Emor

In Rabbi Isaac Luria's writings it is stated that just as the growth of the grain happens in these two months, so is it with the growth of the soul.

It is concerning these days that it is written (Jeremiah 2:2): “I remember the faithfulness of your youth”. For these days of the Omer preceded the Israelites' receiving the Torah. And it was only *after* that that they sinned. Thus, the days that we count are the days that *precede* sin, which came only after the receiving of the Torah. Now even though Israel eventually sinned, there already was, despite that, a residue in each person of that which existed prior to the sin. It is that residue that provides strength for everyone's future, since we are always able to draw on those innocent days. In fact, the holy Rabbi Isaac Luria said that whatever power a person has in his or her allotted years on earth comes *only* from these precious days, i.e. from the days of youthful innocence, before there was any taste of sin. So even though every person is destined to fall from that pedestal of innocence, there is yet in every person something from before the sinning, on which he or she can draw.....Therefore, a person should never, God forbid, lose hope in himself/herself, for there is always the possibility of reawakening that residue, which always remains from his/her prior days.

Bill McKibben, *Falter*, 2018, pp. 226-227

In our current culture, we find the idea of maturing less exciting than the idea of growth because, I think, in our own lives, maturation is bittersweet. When we were young and growing, we could do and choose anything; no options had been foreclosed. Maturity.....means making choices: to commit to one person, one career, one community.....If we admire individuals for those traits, it's possible we can learn to admire societies for the same things.

Pirkei Avot 4:1

בן זומא אומר.....איזהו גבור? הכובש את יצרו. שפאמר: "טוב.....משל ברוחו מלכד עיר".
Ben Zoma liked to say.....Who is mighty? One who can overcome one's inclinations, as it is said: ".....one who rules over one's own spirit is better off than one who conquers a city" (Proverbs 16:32)

Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart*, Gate 5 (Devotion), chapter 5

אמרו על חסיד שפגע אנשים שבים ממלחמת אויבים, ושלו שלל אחר מלחמה חזקה.
אמר להם: "שבתם מן המלחמה הקטנה שוללים שלל; התעתדו למלחמה הגדולה."
אמרו לו: "ומה היא המלחמה הגדולה?" אמר להם: "מלחמת היצר וחייליו."
It is said of a pious man who met some men returning from a war against enemies, and they brought spoils after a raging battle. He said to them: "you returned from the small war with spoils; now prepare for the big war!" They asked: "which big war?" He answered: "the war of the *yetzer* and his legions."

Bill McKibben, *Falter*, 2018, pp. 228, 255

Societies are measured not just by the things they build, but also by the things they can bring themselves to leave alone: whales, bright-plumed birds, mountains, children kept safe from Dickensian labor.

None of these fights is easy....but in a world where algorithms are starting to take over, where Facebook and Amazon know us much too well, these self-imposed limits help keep us human.

The most curious of all...lives are the human ones, because *we can destroy, but also because we can decide not to destroy*. The turtle does what she does, and magnificently. She can't not do it, though, any more than the beaver can decide to take a break from building dams or the bee from making honey. But if the bird's special gift is flight, ours is the possibility of restraint. We're the only creature who can decide *not* to do something we're capable of doing. That's our superpower, even if we exercise it too rarely.

POSTSCRIPT ON LIFE EXTENSION (SEE NYT MAGAZINE 5/2/21)

Bill McKibben, *Falter*, 2018, pp. 187-188

Michael West, who organized the first effort to isolate human cells for cloning purposes, was once asked whether immortality wouldn't lead to overpopulation. Sure, he said, but "why put the burden on people now living, people enjoying the process of breathing, people living and being loved. The answer is clearly to limit new entrants to the human race, not to promote the death of those enjoying the gift of life today".....

It's that incredible self-absorption that should be the clue to what a bad idea this all really is.....Though the technologists at some level value individual humans too much — no one can be allowed to die — they value humanness far too little. They don't understand that some sadness and loss is not just bearable; it's essential. There is an everyday heroism, if you think about it, in bringing up your children fully aware that they will supplant you. That's what human civilization is. If it weren't — if your children were just going to be other beings who perpetually trailed you through infinity by twenty or thirty years — then the most powerful of human connections would in effect be severed.

A world without death is a world without time, and that in turn is a world without meaning, at least human meaning. Go far enough down this path and the game is up.

Reuven Kimelman/Brandeis University

A. The blessing on the soul follows the blessing on the body:

1. א-להי. נְשַׁמָּה לְשִׁנְתָּת בִּי טְהוּרָה הִיא.
 2. אַתָּה בְּרֵאתָהּ, אַתָּה יִצַּרְתָּהּ, אַתָּה נִפְחַתָּהּ בִּי, וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי.
 3. וְאַתָּה עֲתִיד לְטַלְּהָ מִמֶּנִּי, וְלְהַחְזִירָהּ בִּי לְעֵתִיד לְבוֹא.
 4. כָּל זְמַן נְשַׁמְשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ.
 5. יי א-להי וא-להי אבותי רבון כל המעשים אדון כל הנשמות.
 6. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי הַמְחַזֵּיר נְשָׁמוֹת לְפָגְרִים מֵתִים.
1. My God, the soul You gave me is pure.
 2. You created **it**, You shaped **it**, You breathed **it** into me; You keep **it** intact.
 3. And someday You will reclaim **it** from me and restore **it** in me in the coming future.
 4. As long as the soul is within me I render thanks to You,
 5. A-donai, my God, God of my ancestors, Master of all creation, Lord of all souls.
 6. Blessed are You Who restores souls to lifeless, dead-tired bodies.

B. Blessing 2 of the Amidah – Resurrection

1. אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי.
 2. מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים אַתָּה רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.
 3. מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם.
 4. מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים.
 5. סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.
 6. וּמְקַיֵּם אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עֶפְרָיִם,
 7. מִי כָמוֹךָ בְּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת וּמִי דוֹמָה לָךְ.
 8. מְלֹךְ מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה.
 9. וּמְצַמֵּחַ יְשׁוּעָה.
 10. וְנֹאמֵן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים.
 11. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים.
1. You, are ever mighty, A-donai,
 2. You *revive the dead*, great is your saving power.
 3. (causing the wind to blow and the rain to fall).
 4. You sustain the living with kindness, *reviving the dead* with manifold mercies,
 5. [You] are the one who supports the falling, heals the sick, frees the fettered.
 6. And keeps His promise with those slumbering in the dust.
 7. Who is like You, Almighty, and who can be compared to You?
 8. The Sovereign who brings death and *revives*
 9. and causes salvation to sprout,
 10. Faithful are You *to revive the dead*,
 11. Blessed are You, A-donai, *reviver of the dead*.

Midrash Sheymot -- Shavuot 5781 Rabbis Steve Wernick and Robyn Fryer Bodzin Beth Tzedec Congregation, Toronto

Source Sheet by Rabbi Steven Wernick



Ruth 1

(1) In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a **famine** in the land; and a man of **Bethlehem** in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of **Moab**. (2) The man's name was **Elimelech**, his wife's name was **Naomi**, and his two sons were named **Mahlon and Chilion**—Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there. (3) Elimelech, Naomi's husband, **died**; and she was left with her two sons. (4) They married Moabite women, one named **Orpah and the other Ruth**, and they lived there about ten years. (5) Then those two—Mahlon and Chilion—also **died**; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband. (6) She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of **Moab she had heard that the LORD had taken note of His people and given them food**. (7) Accompanied by

רות א'

(א) ויהי בימי שפוט השפטים ויהי רעב בארץ וילך איש מבית לחם יהודה לגור בשדני מואב הוא ואשתו ושני בָּנָיו: (ב) ושם האיש אלימֶלֶךְ ושם אשתו נְעֹמִי ושם שני בָּנָיו מחלון וכליון אפרתים מבית לחם יהודה ויבאו שדני מואב ויהיו שם: (ג) וימת אלימֶלֶךְ איש נְעֹמִי ותשארה היא ושני בָּנָיה: (ד) וישאו להם נשים מאביות שם האחת ערפָּה ושם השנית רות וישבו שם כעשר שנים: (ה) וימותו גם שניהם מחלון וכליון ותשארה האשה משני ילדיה ומאשה: (ו) ותקם היא וכלתיה ותשב משדני מואב כי שמעה בשדה מואב כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹ לַתַּת־לָהֶם לָחֶם: (ז) ותצא מן־המקום אשר היתה־שָׁמָּה ושתי כלתיה עמה ותלכנה בדרך לשוב אל־ארץ יהודה: (ח) ותאמר נְעֹמִי לשתי כלתיה לִכְנֹה שִׁבְנָה אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה יַעֲשֶׂה [נְעֻשׂ] יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד כְּאֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם־הַמֵּתִים וְעַמְדִי: (ט) יתן יְהוָה לָכֶם וּמְצֹאֵן מְנוּחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁה וּתְשֻׁק לָהֶן וּתְשֹׂאנָה קוֹלָן וּתְבַכְינָה: (י) ותאמרנה־לָּהּ כִּי־אַתְּ נָשׁוּב לְעַמֶּךָ: (יא) ותאמר נְעֹמִי שִׁבְנָה בְּנִתִי לָמָּה תִּלְכְּנָה עִמִּי הָעוֹד־לִי בָּנִים בְּמַעַי וְהִיוּ לָכֶם לְאִנְשִׁים: (יב) שִׁבְנָה בְּנִתִי לָכֵן כִּי וְקִנְיַתִּי מֵהַיּוֹת לְאִישׁ כִּי

her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah. (8) But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Turn back, each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me! (9) May the LORD grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!” And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping (10) and said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” (11) But Naomi replied, “Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you? (12) Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons, (13) should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more **bitter** than yours, for the hand of the LORD has struck out against me.”

(20) “Do not call me Naomi,” she replied. “Call me **Mara**, for Shaddai has made my lot very **bitter**.”

אָמַרְתִּי יֵשׁ-לִי תַקְוָה גַם הִיְתִי הַלְיָהּ לְאִישׁ
 וְגַם יָלַדְתִּי בְנִים: (יג) הֲלֵהֶן וַתִּשְׁבְּרָנָה עַד
 אֲשֶׁר יִגְדְּלוּ הֲלֵהֶן תַּעֲגֹנָה לְבַלְתִּי הָיִתְּ לְאִישׁ
 אֵל בְּנֹתַי כִּי-מָרָה לִי מְאֹד מִכֶּם כִּי-יֵצְאָה בְּיָדֵיהֶן:

(כ) וַתֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶן אֵל-תִּקְרָאנָה לִי נַעֲמֵי קְרָאן
 לִי מָרָא כִּי-הָמַר שָׁדַי לִי מְאֹד:

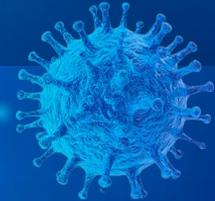
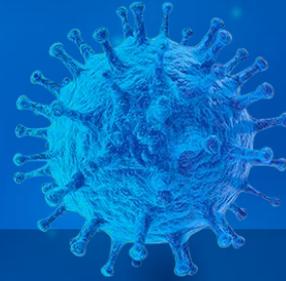
What Does Pirkei Avot Teach Us in the Time of COVID?

Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields, Executive Director
Rabbi Margie Cella, Educational Programming Coordinator
Women's League for Conservative Judaism



Humility and Mortality

Pirkei Avot- 4:19, 3:1, 4:4

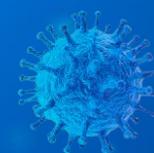
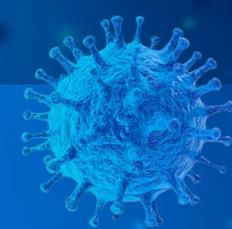




Pirkei Avot 4:19

אֵין בְּיַדֵּינוּ לֹא מַשְׁלוֹת, רַבִּי יַנַּאי אוֹמֵר
הַרְשָׁעִים וְאֶף לֹא מִיִּסוּרֵי הַצַּדִּיקִים

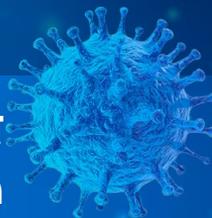
Rabbi Yannai said: it is not in our hands [to explain the reason] either of the security of the wicked, or even of the afflictions of the righteous.





Pirkei Avot 3:1

דע. הסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עברה, עקביא בן מהללאל אומר
מטפה, מאין באת. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון, ולאן אתה הולך, מאין באת
ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין. למקום עפר רמה ותולעה, ולאן אתה הולך, סרוחה
לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא, וחשבון



Akabyah ben Mahalalel liked to say: Consider these three things and you will not fall into transgression: Know from where you come, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning. From where do you come? From a putrid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, of worm and of maggot. Before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning? Before the Sovereign of the sovereigns of sovereigns, the blessed Holy One.





Pirkei Avot 4:4

מְאֹד מְאֹד, רַבִּי לְוִיטָס אִישׁ יִבְנֶה אֹמֵר
שֶׁתִּקְוֹת אֲנוֹשׁ רַמָּה, הֵוִי נִשְׁפָּל רוּחַ

Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh liked to say: Be
very, very humble of spirit, for the
(ultimate) hope of humankind is the worm.



One's Behavior Affects Those Around Them

Pirkei Avot- 1:14, 4:2, 3:19



Pirkei Avot 1:14

הוא הִיה אומר, אם אין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאֲנִי
לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי. וְאִם לֹא עֲכָשְׁיוּ, אֵימָתִי:

He (Hillel) [also] used to say:

If I am not for myself, then who will be?

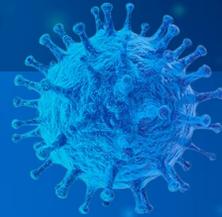
If I am only for myself, what am I ?

And if not now, when?



Pirkei Avot 4:2

שְׁמִצּוֹה גּוֹרֶרֶת. וּבּוֹרֵחַ מִן הָעֲבֵרָה, הֵוֵי רֹץ לְמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבַחְמוּרָה, בֶּן עֲזַאי אוֹמֵר
עֲבֵרָה, וְשִׁכַר עֲבֵרָה. מִצְוָה, שִׁשְׁכַר מִצְוָה. וְעֲבֵרָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֲבֵרָה, מִצְוָה:



Ben Azzai liked to say: Run to (perform) a (seemingly) trivial commandment as (vigorously as you would) to a (seemingly) consequential one, and flee from transgression, for one (fulfilled) commandment brings another (in *its* wake) just as one transgression brings in its wake. The reward for (fulfilling) a commandment is (the desire to fulfill) another commandment, whereas the “reward” for transgression is (the brazenness to commit yet) another transgression.

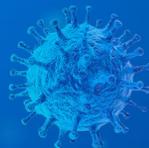
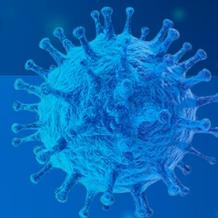




Pirkei Avot 3:19

וְהַכֹּל יֵדוּעַ. וְבִטּוּב הָעוֹלָם נִדּוֹן, וְהַרְשׁוּת נְתוּנָה, הַכֹּל צְפוּי:
לְפִי רֵב הַמַּעֲשֶׂה

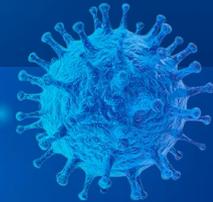
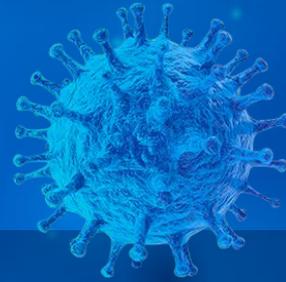
Everything is foreseen yet freedom of choice
is granted, And the world is judged with
goodness; And everything is in accordance
with the preponderance of works.





Community

Pirkei Avot- 2:5, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6





Pirkei Avot 2:5

וְאַל תִּתְּרֵם בְּעַצְמְךָ עַד, אֶל תִּפְרָשׁ מִן הַצְּבוּר, הֵלֵל אֹמֵר
וְאַל תִּדְּיִן אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמְקוֹמוֹ, יוֹם מוֹתְךָ

Hillel said: Do not separate yourself from the community; Do not believe in yourself until the day you die; Do not judge your fellow until you have reached their place...



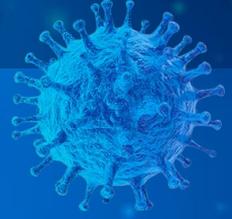
Pirkei Avot 1:4

..יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה אומר, יהי ביתך בית
ועד. לחכמים, והוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, והוי
שותה בצמא את דבריהם:

...Yose ben Yoezer used to say: let your house
be a meeting place for Sages; sit in the dust of
their feet; and drink in their words thirstily.



Pirkei Avot 1:5



יוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹחָנָן אִישׁ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם אָמַר, יְהִי
בֵיתְךָ פֶּתוּחַ לְרוּחָהּ, וְיִהְיוּ עֲנֵיִים בְּנֵי
בֵיתְךָ...
בֵיתְךָ...

Jose ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem
used to say: Let your house be wide open;
treat the poor as members of your home; ...





Pirkei Avot 1:6

...יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרִיָּה אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה לָּךְ רֵב, וּקְנֵה
לָּךְ חֵבֵר, וְהוּי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת:

... Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: Make
a teacher for yourself; acquire a friend for
yourself; and judge everyone favorably.

Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 12:25 - The Many Faces and Voices of God

Rabbi Sydni Adler Rubinstein - rabbi@agudathshreveport.com - Shavuot 5781

ד"א אנכי י"י אלהיך א"ר חננא בר פפא נראה להם הקב"ה פנים זעופות פנים בינוניות פנים מסבירות פנים שוחקות פנים זועמות למקרא כשאדם מלמד את בנו תורה צריך ללמדו באימה פנים בינונית למשנה פנים מסבירות לתלמוד פנים שוחקות לאגדה אמ' להם הקב"ה אע"פ שאתם רואין כל הדמויות הללו אלא אנכי י"י אלהיך

Another explanation for the words: **I am Adonai your God** (Exodus 20:2).

Rabbi Hanina bar Papa said: The Holy Blessed One appeared to them as angry faces, complacent faces, rational faces, laughing faces. Furious faces are for Torah, since when a person teaches her child Torah, she needs to teach it with fear. Complacent faces are for Mishnah. Rational faces are for Talmud.

Laughing faces are for *aggadah*, [the stories in Rabbinic text]. The Holy Blessed One said to them, even though you all see all of these images, only "I am Adonai your God."

א"ר לוי נראה להם הקב"ה כאיקונין הזו שיש לה פנים מכל מקום אלף בני אדם מביטין בה והיא מבטת בכולם כך הקב"ה כשהיה מדבר כל אחד ואחד מישר' היה אומ' עמי הדבר מדבר אנכי י"י אלהיכם אין כת' כאן אלא אנכי י"י אלהיך

Rabbi Levi said: The Holy Blessed One seemed to them like a statue that has faces in every place. A thousand people gaze upon it, and it gazes back at each of them. So too, when the Holy Blessed One would speak, every single Israelite would say, "With me the speech is speaking." It is not written here: *Anokhi Adonai Eloheikhem* - I am y'all's God. Rather, it is written: ***Anokhi Adonai Eloheikha* - I am your [singular] God.**

א"ר יוסי בר' חנינא ולפי כוחן של כל אחד ואחד היה הדיבר מדבר עמו ואל תתמה על הדבר הזה שהיה המן יורד לישראל כל אחד ואחד היה טועמו לפי כוחו התינוקות לפי כוחן והבחורים לפי כוחן הזקנים לפי כוחן התינוקות לפי כוחן כשם שהתינוק הזה היונק בשדי אמו כך היה טועמו שנא' והיה טעמו כטעם לשד השמן (במדבר יא ח) והבחורים לפי כוחן שנ' ולחמי אשר נתתי לך לחם ושמן ודבש האכלתיך (יחזקאל טז יט) והזקנים לפי כוחן שנ' וטעמו כצפיחית בדבש (שמות טז לא) ומה אם המן כל אחד ואחד לפי כוחן היה טועם לפיו בדיבר כל אחד ואחד שומע לפי כוחן אמ' דוד קול י"י בכח (תהלים כט ז) קול י"י בכוחו אין כתי' אלא קול י"י בכח של כל אחד ואחד א' להם הקב"ה לא מפני שאתם שומעי' קולות הרבה אלא היו יודעים שאני הוא אנכי י"י אלהיך (שמות כ ב)

Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Hanina said: And according to the *koah* of each and every one, the speech would speak. And don't be surprised at this, for when manna fell for Israel, every person tasted according to her *koah* - the babies according to their *koah*, and the youngsters according to their *koah*, and the elderly according to their *koah*. The babies according to their *koah* - just as this babies nurses at the breasts [*sheid*] of her mother, so too, what she tastes [in the manna]. As it is said: **And its taste was like that taste of rich [*shad*] cream (Numbers 11:8)**. And the youngsters according to their *koah*, as it is said: **And the food that I have given you, bread and oil and honey I have fed you (Ezekiel 16:19)**. And the elders according to their *koah*, as it is said: **And its taste was like wafers in honey (Exodus 16:31)**. And just as with the manna, whereas every single person tasted according to her *koah*, so too, when God spoke, every single person heard according to her *koah*. David said: **The voice of Adonai is in the *koah* (Psalms 29:4)**. He did not say, "The voice of Adonai is in God's *koah*." Rather, he said, "The voice of Adonai is in the *koah*" of every single person. The Holy Blessed One said to them: This was not for the sake of you hearing many voices; rather, it was so that they would know that it was me: **I am Adonai your God.**

תהלים 132 Psalm

“Arise *Adonai*...You and the Ark”

- א** שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת : זְכוֹר יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל עֲנֹתָיו.
- ב** אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַיהוָה ; נְדָר לְאַבִּיר יַעֲקֹב.
- ג** אִם אָבֹא בְּאֵהָל בֵּיתִי ; אִם אֶעֱלֶה עַל עֶרְשׂ יְצוּעֵי.
- ד** אִם אֶתֵּן שְׁנַת לְעֵינַי ; לְעַפְעַפֵּי תְנוּמָה.
- ה** עַד אֶמְצָא מְקוֹם לַיהוָה ; מִשְׁכָּנוֹת לְאַבִּיר יַעֲקֹב.
- ו** הִנֵּה שָׁמַעְנוּהָ בְּאֶפְרַתָּה ; מִצְּאֲנוּהָ בְּשֵׂדֵי יַעֲר.
- ז** נְבוֹאָה לְמִשְׁכְּנוֹתָיו ; נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְהֵדֶם רַגְלָיו.
- ח** קוּמָה יְהוָה לְמְנוּחֹתֶיךָ ; אֶתָּה וְאַרְוֹן עֲזָרְךָ.
- ט** כְּהַנִּיף יִלְבְּשׁוּ צִדִּיק ; וְחִסְדֵיךָ יִרְנְנוּ.
- י** בְּעִבּוֹר דָּוִד עֲבָדְךָ ; אַל תִּשָּׁב פָּנָי מִשִּׁיחֶךָ.
- יא** נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֱמֶת ;
- 1** A Song of Ascents. Remember *Adonai* for David all his affliction;
- 2** When he swore to *Adonai* and vowed to the Powerful One of Jacob:
- 3** “If I come into the tent of my home; if I ascend upon the couch spread for me;
- 4** If I give sleep to my eyes, to my eyelids slumber;
- 5** Until I find a place for *Adonai*, dwellings for the Powerful One of Jacob.”
- 6** Behold, we heard of it in Ephrath; found it in the field of Ya’ar.
- 7** “Let us come to [God’s] dwellings; let us bow down at [God’s] footstool.”
- 8** “Arise, *Adonai*, to Your resting-place- You and the Ark of Your strength.
- 9** Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness; and Your devotees sing joyfully.
- 10** For the sake of David Your servant do not turn away the face of Your anointed one.”
- 11** *Adonai* has sworn to David a truth-[God] will not turn back from it:

לא ישוב מִמְּנָה :
מִפְּרֵי בִטְנֶךָ אֲשִׁית לְכֶסֶא לְךָ.

“From the fruit of your belly I will set up a throne for you.

יב אם ישְמְרוּ בְּנֵיךָ בְרִיתִי
וְעֵדוּתִי זוֹ אֶלְמַדְם, גַּם בְּנֵיהֶם
עַדִּי עַד יֵשְׁבוּ לְכֶסֶא לְךָ.

12 If your children keep My covenant and My testimony, this I will teach them, also their children forever shall sit on a throne of yours.”

יג כִּי בָחַר יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן ;
אֹהֶה לְמוֹשֵׁב לוֹ.

13 For *Adonai* has chosen Zion; has desired it for a seat for [God]:

יד זֹאת מְנוּחָתִי עַדִּי עַד :
פֹּה אֲשֵׁב כִּי אֹהֶתִיהָ.

14 “This is My resting-place forever: here I will dwell for I have desired it.

טו צִידָהּ בְּרֵךְ : אֶבְרֵךְ
אֲבִיוֹנֶיהָ אֲשַׁבֵּיעַ לֶחֶם.

15 Her sustenance blessed: I will bless her needy, I will sate with bread.

טז וְכַהֲנֵיהָ אֶלְבִּישׁ יִשַׁע ;
וְחַסִּידֶיהָ רִנּוּ יְרַנְּנוּ.

16 And her priests I will clothe with deliverance and her devotees will sing joyfully- they will sing joyfully.

יז שָׁם אֶצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד ;
עֲרַכְתִּי נֵר לְמִשְׁיַחִי.

17 There I will gleam a radiance for David, I have set-out a lamp for My anointed one.

יח אוֹיְבָיו אֶלְבִּישׁ בִּשְׁת ;
וְעָלָיו יִצִּיץ נִזְרוֹ.

18 His enemies I will clothe in shame and upon him will gleam his crown.”

Heschel on Freedom and Responsibility

Rabbi William Plevan PhD

Freedom and Torah: Avot 6:2

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: every day a bat kol (a heavenly voice) goes forth from Mount Horeb proclaiming and saying: “Woe unto humanity for their contempt towards the Torah”...And it says, “And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tablets” (Exodus 32:16). Read not haruth [‘graven’] but heruth [‘freedom’]. **For no one is free unless they occupy themselves with the study of the Torah...**

Two Conceptions of Freedom of the Will

1. Freedom means the capacity to choose among possible courses of action
2. Freedom means the capacity to choose what we **ought** to do, right from wrong, good as opposed to evil etc.

Two Conceptions of Political Freedom

1. Freedom as the social and political absence of constraints (liberal or libertarian freedom)
2. Freedom as living under a system of **non-arbitrary** constraints, i.e. norms and laws (republican)
 - The norms and laws have some good reason; they serve a common good
 - We have an equal voice in shaping and revising those constraints (democratic)

Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Religion in a Free Society,” (1958) in *The Insecurity of Freedom*

Freedom as Inner Allegiance

“We all share a supreme devotion to the hard-won freedom of the American people. Yet to be worthy of retaining our freedoms we must not lose our understanding of the essential nature of freedom. Freedom means more than mere emancipation. It is primarily freedom of conscience, bound up with an **inner allegiance**. The danger begins when freedom is thought to consist in the

fact that “I can act as I desire.” This definition not only overlooks the compulsions which often lie behind our desires; it reveals the tragic truth that freedom may develop within itself the seed of its own destruction. The will is not an ultimate and isolated entity, but determined by motives beyond its own control. *To be* what one wants to be is also not freedom, since the wishes of the ego are largely determined by external factors. (14)

Freedom as Doing the Good

“Although political and social freedom must include all this, even the freedom to err – its true essence is in man’s ability to surpass himself, even to act against his inclinations and in defiance of his own needs and desires, to sacrifice prejudice even if it hurts, to give up superstition even when it claims to be a doctrine.” (14)

“Freedom is the liberation from the tyranny of the self-centered ego. It comes about in moments of transcending the self as an act of spiritual ecstasy, of stepping out of the confining framework of routine reflexive concern. Freedom presupposes *the capacity for sacrifice*.” (15)

“As the object of divine transitive concern *man is*; knowing himself to be the object of divine concern and responding through acts of his own transitive concern *he is free*.” (15)

“The meaning of freedom is not exhausted by deliberation, decision, and responsibility, although it must include all this. The meaning of freedom presupposes an openness to transcendence, and man has to be *responsive* before he can become *responsible*.

For freedom is not an empty concept, Man is free to be free, he is not free in choosing to be a slave; he is free in doing good; he is not free in doing evil. To choose evil is to fail to be free.” (15)

Freedom, Revelation, and Human Dignity

“The glory of a free society lies not only in consciousness of *my* right to be free, and *my* capacity to be free, but also in the realization of *my fellow man*’s right to be free, and *his* capacity to be free.” (17)

“The threat to freedom lies in the process of reducing human relations to a matter of fact. Human life is no longer a drama; it is a routine. Uniqueness is suppressed, repetitiveness prevails.” (18)

“There is no substitute for faith, no alternative for revelation, no surrogate for commitment. This we must remember in order to save our thought from confusion.” (3)

“The Bible is an answer to the question, What does God require of man? But to modern man, this question is suppressed by another one, namely, What does man demand of God?” (4)

“This, indeed, is the purpose of our religious traditions: to keep alive the higher Yes as well as the power of man to say, “Here I am”; to teach our minds to understand the true demand to teach our conscience to be present.” (7)

“When the Voice of God spoke at Sinai, it did not begin by saying, “I am the Lord your God Who created heaven and earth.” It began by saying, “I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Judaism is not only deliverance from external slavery, but also freedom from false fears and false glories, from fashion, from intellectual will-o’-the-wisps. In our souls we are subject to causes; in our spirits we are free, beholding the uncompromising.” (13)

“Man is not the measure of all things, but the means by which to accomplish all tasks.” (13)

“As a free being the Jew must accept an enormous responsibility...He is told to abhor self-complacency, to enjoy freedom of choice. He has been given life and death, good and evil, and is urged to choose, to discriminate. Yet freedom is not only the ability to choose and to act, but also the ability to will, to love. The predominant feature of Jewish teaching throughout the ages is a sense of constant obligation.” (13)

The New Jewish Body – Jewish Power Resurrected

Compiled by Rabbi Mike Uram



<p>Bava Metzia 84a - One day R. Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan, when Resh Lakish saw him and leapt into the Jordan after him. Said he [R. Yochanan] to him, 'Your strength should be for the Torah.' — 'Your beauty,' he replied, 'should be for women.' 'If you will repent,' said he, 'I will give you my sister [in marriage], who is more beautiful than I.' He undertook [to repent]; then he wished to return and collect his weapons, but could not. Subsequently, [R. Yochanan] taught him Bible and Mishnah, and made him into a great man.</p>	<p>יומא חד הוה קא סחי ר' יוחנן בירדנא חזייה ריש לקיש ושוור לירדנא אבתריה אמר ליה חילך לאורייתא אמר ליה שופרך לנשי א"ל אי הדרת בך יהיבנא לך אחותי דשפירא מינאי קביל עליה בעי למיהדר לאתויי מאניה ולא מצי הדר אקרייה ואתנייה ושוייה גברא רבא</p>
<p>Rashi on that text: His mere decision to turn to the study of the Torah had so weakened him that he lacked the strength to don his heavy equipment.</p>	<p>ולא מצי - לקפוץ כבראשונה דמשקבל עליו עול תורה תשש כוחו:</p>

Aaron David Gordon – New Jewish Body

Text #1 - And when, O Man, you will return to Nature—on that day your eyes will open, you will gaze straight into the eyes of Nature, and in its mirror you will see your own image. You will know that you have returned to yourself, that when you hid from Nature, you hid from yourself. When you return you will see that from you, from your hands and from your feet, from your body and from your soul, heavy, hard, oppressive fragments will fall and you will begin to stand erect. You will understand that these were fragments of the shell into which you had shrunk in the bewilderment of your heart and out of which you had finally emerged. On that day you will know that your former life did not befit you, that you must renew all things: your food and your drink, your dress and your home, your manner of work and your mode of study—everything!

A different life, a life not ready-made, a life to be experienced in preparation and creation—that life you did not know (The Zionist Idea, 371).

Text #2 - Only by making Labor, for its own sake, our national ideal shall we be able to cure ourselves of the plague that has affected us for many generations and mend the rent between ourselves and Nature. Labor is a great human ideal (The Zionist Idea, 374).

Text #3 - Our people can be brought to life only if each one of us recreates himself through labor and a life close to nature. Should he fall short of achieving this self-rehabilitation, the next generation, or the one thereafter, will complete the process.

On the other hand, if in Palestine we continue the life of the Galut, with its petty trading and all that goes with it, the coming generations will pursue the same road even more vigorously (The Zionist Idea, 377).

Text #4 - This demand embraces every detail of our individual lives. Every one of us is required to refashion himself so that the Galut Jew within him becomes a truly emancipated Jew; so that the unnatural, defective, splintered person within him may be changed into a natural wholesome human being who is true to himself; so that his Galut life, which has been fashioned by alien and extraneous influences, hampering his natural growth and self-realization, may give way to one that allows him to develop freely, to his fullest stature in all dimensions (The Zionist Idea, 377).

Optional Text: - We are a parasitic people. We have no roots in the soil, there is no ground beneath our feet. And we are parasites not only in an economic sense, but in spirit, in thought, in poetry, in literature, and in our virtues, our ideals, our higher human aspirations. Every alien movement sweeps us along, every wind in the world carries us. We in ourselves are almost non-existent, so of course we are nothing in the eyes of other people either (Sternhell, p. 48)

ANGELS IN THE OUTHOUSE: THE MYSTERY AND MAJESTY OF THE BLESSING, ASHER YATZAR.

Rabbi Dan Ornstein
Congregation Ohav Shalom
Albany, NY
RA Tikkun Leil Shavuot 5781

Known commonly as "the bathroom blessing," Asher Yatzar is, in its original Talmudic context, an insightful spiritual meditation on the body, in which we acknowledge with God the mystery of our bodies' power and fragility. We will look at this classic Jewish prayer in its original setting of the Talmud and talk about its relevance for us today..

THE BLESSING:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה, וּבָרָא בּוֹ נְקִבִים נְקִבִים חֲלוּלִים
חֲלוּלִים. גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כֹסֵא כְבוֹדְךָ, שָׂאֵם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם, אִי אֶפְשָׁר
לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, רוֹפֵא כָּל בֶּשָׂר וּמְפַלֵּיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

*Praised are you YHVH our God,
Ruler of the universe;*

*(You are the One)
Who formed the human being with wisdom,
And Who created within him/By creating within him
Openings upon openings,
Hollow organs upon hollow organs.*

*It is revealed and known
Before the throne of Your glory
That should one of these be opened
(When it should be closed),*

*Or should one of these be closed
(When it should be opened),
It would be impossible to survive
And to stand before You.*

*Praised are You, YHVH,
Healer of all flesh
And wondrous Creator (of the human being).*

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brakhot, 60b.)

THE BLESSING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TALMUD: B. Brakhot 60a-b.

Upon entering a (walled, fortified) city one recites two prayers, one when he enters and one when he leaves. Ben Azzai says that he recites four prayers, two when he enters and two when he leaves. (In these prayers) one thanks God for (deliverance in) the past and cries out to God for (deliverance in) the future. (Mishnah, *Brakhot* 9:4)...

[Elucidating the *Mishnah*], our rabbis taught: When one is about to enter a (walled, fortified) city what prayer does he recite? “May it be Your will, My God, to bring me into this city in peace.” When he enters the city he says, “I thank You God for bringing me into this city in peace.” When he wishes to leave he says, “May it be Your will, My God and God of my ancestors, to bring me out of this city in peace.” After he leaves he says, “I thank You, Lord my God, for bringing me out of this city in peace...”

[The *Talmud* then qualifies the circumstances under which these prayers for entering the city are to be recited with two traditions ascribed to R. Matana.]

Our rabbis taught: When one enters a bath house he recites: “May it be Your will, Lord my God, that you save me from this place and places like it. (In this place), may I not experience any kind of disgrace or sin.

If I do experience any kind of disgrace or sin may my death be atonement for all my sins.”ⁱ

[The *Talmud* then discusses the impropriety of the prayer about disgrace and sin. It adds to the *baraita* an Amoraic prayer of thanks upon leaving the bath house]:

==When one leaves the bath house, what prayer does one say?

---Rav Aha says: “I thank You, God, for saving me from the fire.”

[As part of the longer conversation about conduct and prayer in the bath house, the *Talmud* then quotes another Amoraic teaching of Rav Aha that is disputed.]

---Rav Aha says: When one enters (a physician’s office) to have a bloodletting, he recites: “May it be Your will, Lord my God, that this shall be a healing endeavor for me, and that You will heal me, for You are a faithful healer and Your healing is truthful. For [the truth is that] it is not natural for human beings to engage in healing, even though this has become human custom...”

[Abaye then rejects Rav Aha’s contention by quoting Rabbi Yishmael’s teaching that God grants the physician permission to heal.]

==When one gets up (from the physician’s table) what does one say?

---Rav Aha says: “Praised is the One Who heals for free.”

When one enters the bathroom, [literally, “the throne room”], he recites, “Be honored, honored ones, celestial servants. Show honor to the God of Israel. Leave me alone while I enter here, do what I desire, then return to you.”

---Abaye says: A person should not recite this prayer this way, for perhaps they (the ministering angels accompanying him) will leave him there and abandon him. Rather he should say, “Guard me, guard me. Help me, help me. Support me, support me. Wait for me, wait for me until I enter here and return, for this is the nature of human beings.”

==When a person leaves the bathroom he recites, “Praised (are You YHVH our God, Ruler of the universe) who formed the human being with wisdom, and Who created within/by creating within him openings upon openings, hollow organs upon hollow organs. It is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory that should one of these be opened (when it should be closed), or should one of these be closed (when it should be opened), it would be impossible to stand before You.”

[A discussion of versions of the ending of the brakhah follows.]

When one enters his bed to sleep he recites the first and second paragraphs of the Shma, then he recites the following:

[A long *brakhah* follows, asking God to cause the worshipper to lie down in peace, protected from the evil inclination, bad dreams, illness, and death.

The *Talmud* then records the *brakhah*, *Elohai Neshama*, which the worshipper recites upon awakening.] (BT *Brakhot* 60a-60b)

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“Angels in the Outhouse”:
New Perspectives
On *Birkat Asher Yatzar**

DAN ORNSTEIN

Praised are you, YHVH our God,
Ruler of the universe;

(You are the One)
Who formed the human being with wisdom,
And Who created within him/By creating within him
Openings upon openings,
Hollow organs upon hollow organs.

It is revealed and known
Before the throne of Your glory
That should one of these be opened
(When it should be closed),
Or should one of these be closed
(When it should be opened),
It would be impossible to survive
And to stand before You.

Praised are You, YHVH,
Healer of all flesh
And wondrous Creator (of the human being).

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, 60b)

~ New Perspectives on *Birkat Asher Yatzar* ~

Asher Yatzar is one of the most profound and popular liturgical expressions of praise for the wisdom of God's creation, specifically our bodies and the functions of digestion and excretion. It receives much theological commentary and attention, particularly in halakhic literature. Recorded in B. Berakhot 60b as the *berakhah* to be recited after relieving oneself, it entered the morning liturgy along with *Birkot Hashahar* during the geonic period to insure that they would be recited by the *baal tefillah* on behalf of all worshippers, especially those whose prayer skills are deficient.¹ A number of the *rishonim*, traditional *Siddur* commentators and codes lavish attention upon the theological message of the *berakhah* as well as its philology.² They focus on the meaning of *Asher Yatzar* based upon its wording and internal structure. They highlight it as a praise of God for the body, its functions and its capacity for self-healing and correction, all of which are part of the miracle of creation. Their interpretations also recognize the ancient rabbinic idea that God's creative wisdom is made manifest in the ways that the body—a physical container—manages to hold the human soul (referred to as air in these sources) without letting it out.

However, the traditional commentators do not acknowledge that *Asher Yatzar* is also an “address” to God about the mystery of the physical and spiritual dimensions of being human that we experience through our bodies' functions and malfunctions, as well as through mortality. A close reading of *Asher Yatzar* in its literary context reveals that this *berakhah* is the Talmud's meditation on the temporary loss and restoration of our full human dignity each time we perform these bodily functions and, by extension, each time our bodies malfunction and heal. The Talmud expresses this tension between our physical and spiritual selves in terms of leaving one's accompanying angels “at the door of the throne room” (i.e., the bathroom) only to return with them to stand before God's throne as a fully restored, “angelic” human being.

My interest in analyzing *Asher Yatzar* is partly academic: I wish to examine new ways in which it can be read and understood by rabbis, scholars, and laypeople using some of the tools at our disposal for close reading of biblical and rabbinic texts. Equally important is my interest in its deeper spiritual meaning and pastoral value: I present new ways in which *Asher Yatzar* can be taught and prayed as a daily-recited *berakhah* that connects us to God through our bodies, and as a tool for the spiritual care of people who are sick or in crisis.

*This paper is an abbreviated version of a much longer treatment of *Asher Yatzar* that I am happy to share with the reader. My deepest thanks to Professors Eitan Fishbane, David Gordis, Judith Hauptman, Hayim Lapin, Timothy Lytton and Saul Wachs for their guidance and insights during its writing. All translations in this paper are mine, except where otherwise noted.

The Biblical and Talmudic Context of the *Berakhah*

My interpretation of the *berakhah* is influenced by the methodology employed by Professor Judith Hauptman for close, contextual readings of Talmudic literature. Her textual analyses of how the rabbis of the Talmud approached and developed the halakhic status of women in the setting of ancient rabbinic patriarchy can also be used to understand this *berakhah* in its Talmudic setting.³ Following Professor Hauptman's methodology, I will show how I believe *Asher Yatzar* can be understood using three different readings of the *berakhah*. I will look at its references to the creation of humanity that echo earlier biblical sources and commentators on those sources. I will also examine how the meaning of a critical phrase in *Asher Yatzar* is clarified through its parallel use in one other passage of rabbinic literature. Most importantly, I will examine the *berakhah* as part of the *sugya* found in B. Berakhot, 60a–b.

1. The Biblical Evidence: Ezekiel 28:12b–13 and *Targum Yonatan*

The interpretive translation of Ezekiel 28:12b–13 found in *Targum Yonatan* is often cited by *Siddur* commentators as the literary source of *Asher Yatzar*.⁴ Ezekiel 28:11–19 contains a lamentation over the Prince of Tyre. The prophet harshly criticizes him for falling from his divinely-favored status because of his arrogance in regarding himself as a god. In Ezekiel 28:12b–13, God recalls the prince's primordial status of grandeur bestowed upon him by God in Eden:⁵

You were the seal of perfection,
full of wisdom (*hokhmah*) and flawless in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your adornment:
carnelian, chrysolite, and amethyst;
beryl, lapis lazuli and jasper;
sapphire, turquoise and emerald;
and gold beautifully wrought for you,
mined for you,
prepared the day you were created.

This is the Jewish Publication Society's 1999 translation based upon the

translation team's admitted uncertainty concerning the meaning of the Hebrew, specifically the phrase *m'lekhbet tupekha u-n'kavekha bakh b'yom hi-ba-raakha konanu*.⁶ RaDaK, Rashi, and *Metzudat David* render *tupekha u-n'kavekha* as "your (hollow) drums and (hollow-tubed) musical instruments." Following them, the entire phrase could be translated as "your crafted (hollow) drums and (hollow-tubed) instruments were upon you; they were prepared the day you were created." Since this translation does not follow the main theme of the rest of the verse—the precious stones of the High Priest's breastplate with which the Prince of Tyre was adorned in "priestly" or "Eden-like" fashion—it is not surprising that it was not adopted by JPS as the accepted translation. The *New Interpreter's Bible* understands the phrase as "settings and mountings" or "settings and engravings," recognizing that the words of the phrase are obscure, and are possibly "from the world of jewelry making."⁷ Nonetheless, this interpretation of *tupekha u-n'kavekha* as hollow-tubed objects or instruments is actually quite ancient. *Targum Yonatan*, the Aramaic translation of Prophets which is found in standard rabbinic Bibles, is traditionally ascribed to Yonatan ben Uzziel, Hillel the Elder's student who flourished in the Land of Israel in the first centuries BCE and CE.⁸ The translation is not a straight rendering of the text from Hebrew into Aramaic, but often a midrashic interpretation. Note how Yonatan translates the above verses, particularly the words for hollow-tubed objects and instruments:

You were like a well-formed object, prepared with wisdom and decorous in its beauty. You were pampered with an abundance of good things and delicacies as if you dwelled in Eden, the garden of God. All kinds of opulent and honorable wealth were given to you, all sorts of precious stones arranged on your clothing. . . . Then your heart became haughty. But surely, you did not look at your lifeless body that is made of *hollow organs and openings*. They are your bowels (lit. "your necessities") without which it would be impossible for you to survive.⁹ They were prepared as a part of you from the day that you were created.

Yonatan transforms these technical terms for jewelry engravings and settings into descriptions of the body's hollow tubes and organs. Specific phrases in his translation are also found in *Asher Yatzar*, especially words and phrases

such as *hokhmah*/wisdom, *hallalin u-n'kavin*/hollow organs and openings, and *d'lo efshar lakh d'titkayem* it would be impossible for you to survive. Certainly, he is addressing the arrogant subject of Ezekiel's prophecy, Tyre's royalty. Yet by extension he is addressing all human beings whose unbridled, "god-like" power and arrogance cause them to forget the mortal, physical frame which God fashioned for us in Eden, and without which we cannot function. Yonatan purposely chooses that part of the body involving digestion and excretion as a highly graphic reminder of the lowliness and mortality that we, God's (often overly proud) creations, share with other species. At the same time, he follows the plain sense of the verses by also emphasizing the beauty and wisdom with which human beings were created. A limited reading of *Targum Yonatan* would insist that this early rabbinic translator was referring only to Tyrian royalty and not to human beings in general. However, that is certainly not how his translation is used in *Asher Yatzar*.

What seems clear is that the *Targum* uses Ezekiel 28:13 to address the dual nature of being human that has been our legacy since God created us in Eden at the beginning of time. We are "animal and angel": on the one hand mortal and earthy, on the other hand beautifully designed with divine wisdom as the highest of God's creations. I am not asserting a strict, literal similarity between humans and angels in these biblical and rabbinic passages. Nonetheless, this "angelic" dimension is well attested by their emphases on the wisdom and sense of beauty used by God in forming human beings, which surpass those of all other species. Of additional importance is their use of the verb *bara*, "form out of nothing," that echoes the emphatic description in Genesis 1:27 of the unique creation of human beings in God's image. *Asher Yatzar* shares with the *Targum* this dual vision of the human condition. It praises God explicitly for the magnificent wisdom with which God created human beings, our bodies in particular. It also implicitly recognizes that this wonderfully wise creation is like all other animal bodies: it has to do lowly things like rid itself of waste, it is subject to dysfunction and it can die.¹⁰

2. The Biblical Evidence: Genesis

In *Asher Yatzar*, the words *yatzar* and *bara*, "formed" and "created," echo both Genesis narratives concerning the creation of human beings. God

declares that God will personally make human beings, "earth persons," from the land, just as with the other land animals (*na'aseh adam*, 1:24-26). However, because human beings are created in God's image and after God's likeness, they are more than a derivative of the earth (*adam/ah*) like the other land creatures. They are an entirely new creation "out of nothing." The Bible emphasizes this idea by using the verb *bara*, "create from nothing," three times in 1:27, the verse about the creation of human beings (*va-yivra, bara, bara*). Genesis 2 introduces the word *yatzar*, "formed from something," to describe how God created human beings, instead of continuing to use *asah* or *va-yaas*, "personally made something." As has been demonstrated, this second Creation narrative emphasizes humankind's earthly, rather than spiritual, origins.¹¹ The first man is formed (*va-yitser*, 2:7), from the dust of the earth, and God personally blows the breath of life into him. God then forms all of the other animals from the earth as well (*va-yitser*, 2:19) and brings them to the man to name them. Even though naming the other animals gives the man power over them, his origin—the earth—is no different from theirs.

Asher Yatzar appears to erase the early biblical distinctions between *bara*, creation of human beings in the divine image as a new entity, and *yatzar*, creation of the human body from the earth. *Bara*, "created from nothing," modifies *n'kavim* and *hallulim*, the openings and hollow organs of the body, rather than emphasizing humanity as the divine reflection.¹² I suggest that, while the author of the *berakhah* may have used the two terms for creation indiscriminately, it is also possible that the author used them here in two meaningfully distinctive ways. At the very least, we could assert that the use of the word *bara*, echoing the narrative in Genesis 1, would not be unfamiliar to a person who knows the Hebrew text about humanity being created uniquely in God's image. So too, the Hebrew-speaking worshipper would be familiar with the use of *yatzar* in Genesis 2 that emphasizes the earthly origins we share with other species. By using *yatzar* and *bara*, the *berakhah* asks the worshipper to consciously affirm that the body and all of its functions, including excretion, reflect our dual physical and spiritual selves. We are physical, embodied creatures formed by the Creator, and we do things that make us no different from other animal species. Yet our intricate system of openings and hollow organs is actually another aspect of what makes us reflections of divine wisdom, along with the breath of life breathed into us by God at the beginning of creation.¹³

3. Openings Upon Openings, Hollow Organs Upon Hollow Organs

N'kavim, n'kavim, hallulim, hallulim is used in two different contexts in the Babylonian Talmud, one of which bemoans the decrepit, mortal state of the body and the other of which celebrates the body as God's creation. The first is found earlier in B. Berakhot 24b:¹⁴

If one is reciting the *Amidah* and he passes wind, he waits until its odor ceases, then he goes back to praying.

There are those who say [this teaching in the following version]:

If one is reciting the *Amidah* and he wishes to pass wind, he steps backwards a distance of four cubits, he passes wind, he waits until its odor ceases, then he goes back to praying. [Before praying again] he says: "Master of the universe, *You formed us with openings upon openings, hollow organs upon hollow organs. Revealed and known before You* are our shame and our disgrace when we are alive, and that our end is [nothing but] maggots and worms." He then continues the *Amidah* from the place where he had stopped.

The phrase italicized above closely parallels that of *Asher Yatzar*: "... *And Who created within him openings upon openings, hollow organs upon hollow organs.*"¹⁵ *It is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory...* However, the prayer in B. Berakhot 24b is the individual's "reminder" to God of the weakness of the human body that causes us to interrupt prayer to perform disgraceful physical acts. We are full of God-given openings and organs that make these things happen. Even the dignity of prayer is not enough to overcome the corruptions of our bodies that God has created. Though it shares with Berakhot 24b an acknowledgement of human physical frailty and mortality, Berakhot 60b (the locus of *Asher Yatzar*) views people and their bodies in a very different way: we, our openings and organs, are reflections of divine wisdom, not sources of shame and disgrace.

I suggest that, at the very least, the above phrase may have been understood in both ways as a common figure of speech in Amoraic Palestine and

Babylonia. Both uses of the phrase can be heard in *Asher Yatzar* in a highly nuanced fashion. Having performed bodily functions, the worshipper stands before God in thanks for the body given to him or her. Its capacity to function and to regulate itself distinguishes it as an unparalleled example of divine wisdom and human magnificence. At the same time, its similarity to the mortal bodies of other animal species is a sober reminder that "Man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing..."¹⁶ This second idea is reinforced by the *berakhah* when it reminds us that, its divine source notwithstanding, the wondrous system of human organs and openings is subject to potential breakdown like that of any other animal. The worshipper is asked to recite the words *n'kavim n'kavim hallulim hallulim* with a full consciousness of the dual nature of human existence that is located in the marvelous and mortal systems of our bodies.

4. *Baraitot* about Entering and Exiting

Asher Yatzar is embedded in a series of *baraitot* that follow the pattern of M. Berakhot 9:4 and elucidate it.¹⁷

Upon entering a [walled, fortified] city one recites two prayers, one when he enters and one when he leaves. Ben Azzai says that he recites four prayers, two when he enters and two when he leaves. [In these prayers] one thanks God for [deliverance in] the past and cries out to God for [deliverance in] the future. (M. Berakhot 9:4) ...

[Elucidating the Mishnah], our Rabbis taught: When one is about to enter a [walled, fortified] city what prayer does he recite? "May it be Your will, My God, to bring me into this city in peace." When he enters the city he says, "I thank You God for bringing me into this city in peace." When he wishes to leave he says, "May it be Your will, My God and God of my ancestors, to bring me out of this city in peace." After he leaves he says, "I thank You, Lord my God, for bringing me out of this city in peace..."

The Talmud then qualifies the circumstances under which these prayers for entering the city are to be recited with two traditions ascribed to R. Matana:

Our rabbis taught: When one enters a bath house he recites: "May it be Your will, Lord my God, that you save me from this place and places like it. [In this place], may I not experience any kind of disgrace or sin. If I do experience any kind of disgrace or sin, may my death be atonement for all my sins."¹⁸

The Talmud then discusses the impropriety of the prayer about disgrace and sin. It adds to the *baraita* an Amoraic prayer of thanks upon leaving the bath house:

When one leaves the bath house, what prayer does one say?
Rav Aha says: "I thank You, God, for saving me from the fire."

As part of the longer conversation about conduct and prayer in the bath house, the Talmud then quotes another Amoraic teaching of Rav Aha that is disputed:

Rav Aha says: When one enters [a physician's office] to have a bloodletting, he recites: "May it be Your will, Lord my God, that this shall be a healing endeavor for me, and that You will heal me, for You are a faithful healer and Your healing is truthful. For [the truth is that] it is not natural for human beings to engage in healing, even though this has become human custom . . ."

Abaye then rejects Rav Aha's contention by quoting Rabbi Yishmael's teaching that God grants the physician permission to heal:

When one gets up [from the physician's table] what does one say?

Rav Aha says: "Praised is the One Who heals for free."

When one enters the bathroom [literally, "the throne room"], he recites, "Be honored, honored ones, celestial servants. Show honor to the God of Israel. Leave me alone while I enter here, do what I desire, then return to you."

Abaye says: A person should not recite this prayer this way, for perhaps they [the ministering angels accompanying him] will leave him there and abandon him. Rather he should say, "Guard me, guard me. Help me, help me. Support me, support

me. Wait for me, wait for me until I enter here and return, for this is the nature of human beings."

When a person leaves the bathroom he recites, "Praised [are You YHVH our God, Ruler of the universe] who formed the human being with wisdom, and Who created within/by creating within him openings upon openings, hollow organs upon hollow organs. It is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory that should one of these be opened [when it should be closed], or should one of these be closed [when it should be opened], it would be impossible to stand before You."

A discussion of versions of the ending of the *berakhah* follows:

When one enters his bed to sleep, he recites the first and second paragraphs of the Shema, then he recites the following:

[A long *berakhah* follows, asking God to cause the worshipper to lie down in peace, protected from the evil inclination, bad dreams, illness, and death. The Talmud then records the *berakhah*, *Elohai Neshama*, which the worshipper recites upon awakening.] (B. Berakhot 60a-60b)

These passages are a collection of *baraitot* and Amoraic teachings about prayers for entering and exiting different places safely. They address human anxiety about what Professor Neil Gillman calls threshold experiences: instances in which one's transition from one place or state of being (he uses the word structure) to another is fraught with a sense of chaos.¹⁹ Each of the prayers mentioned in these passages can be seen as a ritualized way in which the individual in transition from one physical state or place to another re-creates a sense of personal order and structure that is rooted in the larger cosmic order created by God. They are arranged purposefully to move the reader and the worshipper inward from threshold experiences involving external, physical danger to those of internal (or internalized) danger which is physical and moral in nature.²⁰ This arrangement is perhaps employed to emphasize the necessity of praying to God for protection regardless of the nature or location of one's journeys in life.

The statements to the angels prior to entering the bathroom and the recitation of *Asher Yatzar* after exiting it do not fit exactly the pattern of

the *sugya*. A close inspection of them and their relationship to *Asher Yatzar* reveals that the Talmud's anxiety about this specific threshold experience is unique among these passages. Rather than be concerned with the physical and moral dangers (i.e., the dangers of sinning) that await the one who enters, the Talmud focuses on the physical and "spiritual" or existential dangers. Note again both passages found in the *sugya*:

Be honored, honored ones, celestial servants. Show honor to the God of Israel. Leave me alone while I enter here, do what I desire, then return to you.

Guard me, guard me. Help me, help me. Support me, support me. Wait for me, wait for me until I enter here and return, for this is the nature of human beings.

In both versions the worshipper calls upon the two angels that, according to tradition, accompany a person during his or her lifetime.²¹ The individual admonishes them to remain outside until he or she does what is desired, *for this is the nature of human beings*. The bathroom is not a proper place for our accompanying angels because it exposes our nakedness and our performance of the bodily functions that make us most like other animals. This can "shock" the angels, dishonor God, and embarrass the human being involved, who is now revealed to be less "angelic" than he or she appeared. These "entrance prayers" are entreaties to one's attendant angels not to abandon him or her as they await him or her outside that coarse place where he or she performs these functions. We would expect these statements of the individual outside the bathroom to focus explicitly on the physical dangers—especially from demons, scorpions, and snakes—awaiting one who enters that place.²² Instead, what the individual recites is a request for privacy and a disclaimer about the diminished "angelic" profile of human beings in this physical circumstance. The human being entering the bathroom is in danger of losing the distinctively spiritual dimension of his humanity, because he or she is about to do something that marks him or her as yet another mortal creation. Further, as a *berakhah* to be recited upon exiting a place of danger, *Asher Yatzar* is altogether different from the other exit-prayers in the *sugya*, which focus on thanking God for saving us from a specific danger, physical or moral. *Asher Yatzar*, by contrast, focuses first on praising God for creating us wisely by making our bodies' func-

tions wise. I am not arguing that these passages are not concerned with our entering and exiting a place in which potentially dangerous bodily activity occurs; they are. However, they are also concerned with the close identification of humans with angels that is in danger of being erased should the angels view us behaving, of necessity, like animals.

5. Leaving the "Throne Room" to Stand Before God's Throne

Asher Yatzar is intended as a *berakhah* which is recited *after* performing one's bodily functions in response to what the worshipper had said *before* entering the bathroom. The Talmud uses the standard phrase *beit hakisei*, literally "the chair/throne room," to refer to the bathroom. The phrase seems to establish a connection with the phrase *galui v'yadua lifnei khisei kh'vodekha* that comes later in the *sugya* as part of the text of *Asher Yatzar*. This relatively rare phrase, "it is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory," occurs six times in early halakhic and aggadic literature (excluding all later mentions of the phrase in detailed commentaries on the *berakhah* itself).²³ The earliest references to the throne of divine glory are found in the Bible, particularly among prophets who experience theophanies of God sitting in judgment with celestial attendants at God's side.²⁴ The rich literature of *Merkavah* and *Heikhalot* mysticism, one of whose major contemplative foci was beholding the divine throne, emerged in part from esoteric interpretive lore concerning Ezekiel 1, and reached its most detailed expression in the first few centuries of the Common Era.²⁵ There is ample evidence of Rabbis in the Tannaitic period engaging in *Merkavah* and *Heikhalot* mystical practice, as well as warning practitioners of its dangers.²⁶ References to the throne of glory abound in Talmudic and aggadic literature.²⁷

Recognizing the risk of too much generalization, I suggest that—among other things—the throne of divine glory in rabbinic literature is the central celestial site of divine sovereignty, knowledge and forgiveness to which anyone can turn in petition to be saved from death as Moses and the High Priests once did. It is there that a person can move God the supreme ruler to shun punishing anger and to act mercifully by sustaining the life of the petitioner, the people of Israel, and the world. At the throne of glory,

human beings argue like angels, with angels and God alike, for the sake of humanity, which is physically fragile and conscious of its mortality. This function of the divine throne is clarified by an examination of two of the five other uses of *galui v'yadua lifnei khisei kh'vodekha*, the opening phrase used by each petitioner to appeal to God's mercy and kindness. According to one midrash, when God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, he should have reminded God that earlier God had promised him posterity through his son. For his obedience to God's command (thus risking Isaac's life) he asks that when his descendants sin, God should recall the binding of Isaac and forgive them. Mordehai argues that he refused to bow down to Haman solely out of fear of God. For his faithfulness to God (thus risking the lives of himself and his fellow Jews), he asks that God deliver them from Haman's murderous plot. In light of these two passages, I suggest that *Asher Yatzar* uses the above phrase for similar purposes: to "speak" with God about confronting the mystery of death and surviving it. Upon fulfilling bodily needs which he or she shares with all animals, the worshipper returns to his or her accompanying angels and restores his or her status as a full human being by doing what the other animal species cannot do: recognizing that the body's normal, healthy functions cannot be taken for granted and that any change in their function might cause disease and death. Having once again left that place of potential physical danger and spiritual diminishment, the worshipper engages in the uniquely human act of standing before God's throne and the angelic assembly in order to assert the following: "I cannot take for granted that my body will always work and that disease and disorder will not kill me. I acknowledge that You have created within me systems whose functioning and capacity for self-healing reflect Your wisdom, yet which simultaneously run the risk of malfunction and death. I ask You, God, for mercy in maintaining the health and balance of my body." Similar to the phrase *n'kavim . . . halulim* analyzed above, the phrase *galui v'yadua . . .* once again asks the worshipper to see himself or herself standing on the boundary between his or her physical and spiritual "selves." In most respects he or she is no different from other mortal creatures. However, in at least one important respect he or she is distinguished from all other species: he or she can "talk" with God and the angels about the majesty and frailty of his or her body and life.²⁸

Restoring the Angels to Asher Yatzar: Pastoral and Spiritual Care Implications

Why do we no longer recite the warnings to the angels that the Talmud prescribes? In his commentary on the *Siddur*, David Abudarham (Spain, 14th century) cites the ruling of the renowned halakhist, Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet (Spain and Algeria, 1326–1408): "And [Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet] wrote in *Hiddushei HaRIVaSH* that only a person who is pious and God-fearing, with whom the *Shekhinah* dwells, should recite this blessing, [i.e., the words before entering the bathroom]. However, other people should not recite it because [its implication that a person is worthy to be accompanied by angels] gives the appearance of arrogance."²⁹ Following Abudarham, Joseph Karo concludes: "It appears that because of this [ruling], the recitation of this passage has been discontinued in our generation."³⁰ I am not familiar with the historical and cultural factors that influenced this ruling of the RIVaSH, but I believe that its observance has obscured some of the spiritual riches that *Asher Yatzar* has to offer as a *berakhah*. *Asher Yatzar* is, in my opinion, unparalleled in Jewish liturgy as praise of and thanks to God for the miracle of the body. It is an excellent example of how rabbinic Judaism cultivates our sense of what Professor Max Kadushin called normal mysticism.³¹ It helps the worshipper to experience God's wondrous, creative power even and especially during an act as mundane as excretion.³² However, as I have demonstrated above, its other meanings only emerge fully when it is recited as a response to the warning given by the worshipper to his or her angels prior to entering the bathroom. One does not need to believe literally in the existence of accompanying angels to recognize that there are aspects of daily life, especially the decline of one's bodily functions and one's mortality, which at any moment can banish our sense of being fully human, our "angelic dimension." Each morning we, our loved ones, and the people to whom we minister awaken, hopefully healthy and refreshed, with our bodies working well. Then, often quite suddenly, we find ourselves or our loved ones trapped in painful, life-threatening illnesses, injuries and disabilities that rob us of our dignity and beat us into resignation to the "inexorable march towards death." Or, we might remain healthy for many years only to watch helplessly as the blessing of longevity is transformed gradually into a curse of old age in which

our minds and souls suffer inside of dying bodies. Our angels—and God—are nowhere to be found, and we are overwhelmed by the physical decay and looming sense of mortality that make us feel more animal than angel. If we are blessed with the ability to self-heal and with access to good medical intervention, we can recover and remain alive and independent for as long as possible. We are able to “stand again with the angels before God’s throne” in full health and dignity, thankful for God’s marvelous handiwork, and cognizant of how precious, complex, and fragile it is.

We do not need to be sick or in crisis to appreciate this, nor does *Asher Yatzar* have to be read exclusively as a *berakhah* that addresses only one aspect of human mal/function. The warning to the angels and the words of *Asher Yatzar* are liturgical bookends of a common, even coarse, yet extraordinary human experience. They ritualize that physical experience, lending it deeper significance. These passages help us to imagine all of our physical functions, however base, as daily “mini-dramas” in which each of us enters the potential “place of danger” that is the physical world outside and inside our bodies. For the Talmud, the drama proceeds as our “angels wait outside the door,” and we put our lives and our human dignity on hold for a long moment, unsure if our God-given capacities for healthy functioning and self-healing will work. Then, once again, our openings and hollow tubes open and close as programmed. We leave the “throne room,” the place of potential danger, and, uttering *Asher Yatzar*, we find ourselves ushered before the divine throne, if only for one moment. There, we praise God for the awesome blessings of body and life, and for the renewed opportunity to stand before God among (and as one of!) the celestial beings. At that moment, we again share with God the divine secret that we learn each time we are fully aware of *any* of our physical functions and their potential discontents: We are both “animal and angel,” and we are neither one fully. To be human is to comprehend that we will break down and die, something that the other animal species cannot grasp and that the other angels cannot experience. When we say to God that these things are “revealed and known before Your throne of glory,” we are actually telling ourselves that we too understand them, and that we can respond to them with wisdom.

Can clergy and other spiritually-oriented caregivers use these insights as healing imagery and conversation at the hospital bedside and in other spiri-

tual care situations? I recommend that we can and we should. We pray *Asher Yatzar* with friends, family and congregants to ask God’s continued blessings of the body’s capacity for self-healing and to express deep wonder and gratitude to God for the body and for that healing. We teach (and hopefully model in our personal lives and worship practices) profound daily gratitude that we awaken each morning and that we function well most of the time. I suggest that we can expand that sense of gratitude. Every day, in health and in sickness, we can thank God for the “angelic” dimension of human dignity: our consciousness of the fact that, though we share some important things with other animals, we are truly, meaningfully different from them. When our bodies break down, our independence wanes, and we feel our sense of personal dignity weakening, we can find refuge in intimate dialogue with God, who holds onto all mysteries and secrets. We can ask God to restore our angels to us, recalling Abaye’s words. “Guard me, help me, support me, wait for me.” In those moments of sickness, we can also find strength and hope in the fact that we are much more than our bodies.

Admittedly, these are abstract concepts and images. Many people think in far more concrete terms than I have presented, and even a person who can grasp these ideas might be unable to do so when he or she is suffering and in pain from illness, disability or other crisis. Further, it is easy to open any *Siddur* and share the text and ideas of *Asher Yatzar* with others in a teaching or spiritual care situation. It is harder to share the preceding passages about the angels in an accessible, written form, and harder still to relate these ideas, even as metaphors, to contemporary Jews who have not thought in “angelic terms” for hundreds of years. Nonetheless, the spiritual and pastoral value of viewing *Asher Yatzar* in these ways makes it worthwhile for rabbis and other caregivers to incorporate these insights into their work of spiritual care, teaching, and modeling. Further, in a time of “new age” popular interest in matters such as angels and unseen protective forces, our Talmudic passages are a rich, traditional resource for very comforting imagery when ministering to those who suffer illness or are in crisis. Though we are not likely to resurrect this “rumor of angels” in the formal liturgy of *Asher Yatzar*, it is still available to us in the spiritual care that we provide.³³ For instance, the person who is about to go for major surgery or who is facing dangerous challenges to physical health can be encouraged to imagine those divine messengers of

ancient times standing by one's side as companions on his or her journey. A guided meditation in which the person comes before *kisei hakavod* and pours out his or her heart to God could be helpful as well.

After hundreds of years in its present form, *Asher Yatzar* will most likely continue to stand alone, without the warnings to the accompanying angels that should precede it.³⁴ Liturgically and spiritually, this is unfortunate but not tragic. The *berakhah* as it is found in the *Siddur* alludes to everything that I have stated above; it will continue to occupy an honored place in *birkot hashahar*, in daily Jewish ritual life, and at the bedsides of people who are ill and suffering. The latter is where our most intense dramas take place on a stage that shifts relentlessly between life and death, "the angelic and the animal." Whatever side of the bed we are on, as patients or as pastors, *Asher Yatzar* binds us together with God, the angels and each other in a chorus of gratitude for being formed with wisdom, opening upon opening, hollow organ upon hollow organ.

NOTES

1. See Ismar Elbogen (Raymond Scheindlin, trans.), *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society/The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993), p. 78. See also Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefillah*, 7:5–9, and *Seder Amram Gaon: Birkot Hashahar*, and *Sefer Kol Bo*, #1.
2. For *Siddur* commentaries see in particular David Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham Hashalem* (Jerusalem: Makhon Mishnat Dan/Even Yisrael Publishing, 5755), pp. 39–46; Seligman Baer, *Seder Avodat Yisrael* (New York: Schocken Books, 5697), pp. 36–37; S. Goldman, ed., *Otzar HaTefillot* (New York: Otzar Sefarim, 1915/New York: Hebraica Press, 1966), pp. 57–58 (112–113); *Siddur Tefillah L'Moshe: Otzar HaRishonim Al HaTefillah*, Vol. I (Jerusalem: Makhon Maadanei Asher, 2001) pp. 2–10; Lawrence Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayerbook*, Vol. 5, *Birkhot Hashahar* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing), pp. 108–116; Yissachar Jacobson, *Netiv Binah*, Vol. 1: *Tefillot Hol* (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 2001) pp. 156–157. Rishonic comments on *Asher Yatzar* include Rashi on B. Berakhot, 60b, s.v. *U-Mafli Laasot*; Tosafot on B. Berakhot, 60b, s.v. *Mafli La-Asot* and s.v. *Asher Yatzar*; Shmuel Eidels, *Hiddushei Halakhot V'Aggadot HaMaHaRSHA* to B. Berakhot, 60b, s.v. *Asher Yatzar Et Ha-Adam B'hokhmah*; Yacov bar Asher, *Arbaah Turim, Orah Hayyim*, # 6:1; *Bet Yosef to Arbaah Turim, Orah Hayyim* #6, s.v. *Vi-Varekh Birkat Asher Yatzar*; Joseph Karo, *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim*, #6:1.

3. Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), ch. 1.
4. See, for example, Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham Hashalem*, Baer, *Seder Avodat Yisrael* and Goldman, *Otzar Hatefillot*.
5. Jewish Publication Society eds. and trans., *Hebrew-English Tanakh* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1999), p. 1217.
6. See the footnotes at the bottom of p. 1217.
7. *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 1392. For a full exposition of the historical context and meaning of Ezekiel's lament over Tyre, see pp. 1390–1395.
8. See B. Megillah 3a. See also B. Bava Batra 134a and B. Sukkah 28a.
9. The Aramaic is *d'inun tzorkbakh*, similar to the euphemistic use in Hebrew of *tzorekh*, "need, necessity": "*Adam oseh tzorchav*," "a person performs his needs," is a euphemism for relieving oneself.
10. See also *Leviticus Rabbah*, 20:2, s.v. *Amar Rabbi Levi b'shem Rabbi Hama bar Hanina*.
11. See Nahum Sarna, *Jewish Publication Society Commentary on Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 17, comment to Genesis 2:7.
12. The blurring of these distinctions is already found in later biblical passages such as Isaiah 45:7 that use the two words in a parallelism, i.e., *yotzeir* or *u-vorei hoshekh*. This same blurring of distinctions appears to occur in the *berakhah, Elohai Neshama*, found near *Asher Yatzar* in the Talmud: *Atah v'ratah Atah y'tzartah*, "You, God, created and fashioned my soul."
13. The Vatican manuscript of the Jerusalem Talmud (#133) uses the word *v'asita*, "You made," instead of the word *bara*, in its version of *Asher Yatzar*. This is derived from the verb *asah* which is used in Genesis 1 but is not included in the Babylonian Talmud's version of the *berakhah*.
14. See also *Genesis Rabbah* 1:3, s.v. *Rabbi Tanhuma Patah*. In all of my translations of the *Talmud* passages that follow, single, broken lines indicate an *amora* as the speaker. Double, solid lines indicate *stama d'gmara* as the speaker. Passages with no preceding lines indicate *mishnayot* and *baraitot*.
15. B. Berakhot 60b records a variant reading of *hallulim, ballulim*, the words *hallalim, hallalim*, that was rejected by the Tur in favor of *hallulim*, which is used in our *Siddurim*.
16. Ecclesiastes 3:19b.
17. The standard edition of the Babylonian Talmud presents all of M. Berakhot 9 as one long text with no distinctions between individual *mishnayot*. This is not the case in contemporary editions of the Mishnah. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz numbers this mishnah as 9:2.
18. The underlying assumptions of the *baraita* and its ensuing Talmudic comments are that if the floor of the bath house caved in the patrons would be burned to death by the hot coals and fire underneath; the prayer about sin perhaps implies

the concern that bath houses in Roman Palestine were rife with promiscuous activity, homosexual or otherwise.

19. Neil Gillman, *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology For the Modern Jew* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990) ch. 9, especially pp. 230–242.

20. For a more detailed exposition of such purposeful structuring of *sugyot*, see Hauptman, *Rereading The Rabbis*. Also see Jacob Neusner, ed. and trans., *The Talmud of Babylonia, An Academic Commentary: #1 Bavli Tractate Berakhot* (Atlanta: Scholars Press for The South Florida Academic Commentary Series, 1994–6, 1999), especially pp. v–xii, 409–411, 439–443, 525, and 532–539.

21. Many of the statements in rabbinic literature about the accompanying angels are based upon *Psalm* 91:11: “He will charge His angels to you, to protect you on all your paths.” See *Sifre B’Midbar*, *Piska* 40, s.v., *Y’varekhekha*. See also BT Hagigah 16a, s.v., *Darash Rabbi Yehudah*, *Exodus Rabbah* 32:6, s.v., *Davar Aher*, and *Midrash Tanhuma*, (Warsaw), *Parshat Pekudei*, #3.

22. See B. Berakhot 62a, s.v. *Amar Rabbi Tanhum bar Hanilai*, ff. His statement that modesty in the bathroom saves a person from being attacked there by snakes, scorpions, and evil spirits is followed by a number of stories of *amoraim* protecting themselves from evil spirits in bathrooms.

23. B. Berakhot 60b; *Leviticus Rabbah* (Vilna and Margoliot), 29:9, s.v. *Davar Aher Bahodesh Hashvii*; *Esther Rabbah* (Vilna), 8:7, s.v. *Vatomer Esther*. Eisenstein’s *Otzar Hamidrashim* records three other uses of the phrase in minor midrashic works that I did not focus upon above.

24. See I Kings 22:19, Isaiah 6:1–3, Ezekiel 1:26–28, and Daniel 7:9–10.

25. See Gershom Scholem, (George Lichtheim trans.) *Major Trends In Jewish Mysticism*, (New York, Schocken Books, 1941), ch. 2.

26. See M. Hagigah 2:1, T. Hagigah 2:3, (Lieberman Edition), J. Hagigah 2:1, (77b).

27. *Genesis Rabbah* (Vilna, Teodor-Albeck), 1:5, s.v. *Breishit Bara*; *Leviticus Rabbah*, (Vilna), 29:9, s.v. *Davar Aher Bahodesh Hashvii*; BT *Avodah Zarah* 3b, s.v. *V’Ha Amar Rav Yehudah*; BT *Yoma* 86a, s.v. *Amar Rabbi Levi*; B. Shabbat 88b, s.v. *V’Amar Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi*; B. Shabbat 152b, s.v. *Tanya Rabbi Eliezer Omer*; *Lamentations Rabbah*, (Vilna), 2:2, s.v. *Eifah Yaiv B’Apo*; *Batei Midrashot I. Pirkei Heikhalot* 11:2, s.v. *V’hei-idu Lahem*; B. Berakhot 7a, s.v. *Tanya Amar Rabbi Yishmael Ben Elisha*.

28. Though I did not examine them closely in this paper, other rabbinic sources that view the human being as a complex combination of “animal and angel” and that identify humans with the angelic realm have influenced my thinking about *Asher Yatzar*. Most notable is *Genesis Rabbah* 8:11, s.v. *Zakhar U-n’keivah B’raam*. For a fuller exploration of the rabbinic perspective on humans and angels see, Ephraim Urbach (Israel Abrahams, trans.) *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1979), ch. 8.

29. David Abudarham, *Sefer Abudarham Hashalem* (Jerusalem: Makhon Mishnat Dan, 5755), p. 40.

30. Joseph Karo, *Bet Yosef to Arbaah Turim, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 3:1. I am not certain why the commentators cited above who preceded Perfet and Abudarham failed to comment on *Asher Yatzar* in its larger Talmudic context as I have done. Perhaps the idea of accompanying angels had already waned by the early middle ages, and the RiVaSH merely formalized the discarding of this practice in his responsum.

31. Max Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics: A Study in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1963), ch. 7. See especially p. 168.

32. My deepest thanks to my teacher, Professor Saul Wachs, for pointing this out to me many years ago in a course that I took with him at Hebrew University. My thanks also to Professor Wachs for inspiring my academic and pastoral interest in *Asher Yatzar* over the years. His influence is reflected throughout this paper.

33. Obviously, not all references to accompanying angels have been expunged from Jewish liturgy. Prayers such as *Shalom Aleikhem* and the Shema for bedtime are two outstanding examples of the persistence of images of accompanying angels in Jewish liturgy. Why they entered Jewish liturgy and the prayers preceding *Asher Yatzar* did not is worthy of further exploration.

34. In fact, even without the introductory prayers prescribed by the *Talmud*, *Asher Yatzar* at times immediately precedes *Elobai Neshama* in the *Siddur*. The new *Siddur Sim Shalom* follows this arrangement, in keeping with the ruling of Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan in his *Sefer Mishnah Brurah, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 6:3, n. 12. The juxtaposition of both *brakhot* allows—I believe—for a daily liturgical emphasis by the worshipper on the dual notion of human beings as body and soul, “animal and angel.”

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**Community and Covenant: Where do we Fit?
Reflections from Rabbi Rachel Ain
Sutton Place Synagogue**

What is the relationship between covenant, community, and peoplehood?

Genesis 12:1-3

1 Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee. **2** And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing. **3** And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

Genesis 17:1-11

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him: 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be thou wholehearted. **2** And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.' ...**7** And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. **8** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.' ... **10** This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Rabbi Louis Jacobs, A Jewish Theology

The Genesis narratives were woven and told originally in the form of saga. These traditional stories were eventually put together to form the more or less continuous narrative we have in Genesis as part of the *Heilsgeschichte*, the sacred history in which God makes God's covenant with the patriarchs and their descendents... The Genesis narrative as a whole is about the covenant, about God and Israel, about God finding Israel and Israel finding God and bringing God to humankind.

Exodus 19:3-5

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying: 'Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: **4** Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. **5** Now therefore, if ye will hearken unto My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine;

Deuteronomy 10:12-14

12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul; **13** to keep for thy good the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command thee this day?

Heschel, I Asked for Wonder

Judaism is not *only* the adherence to particular doctrines and observances, but primarily living in the spiritual order of the Jewish people, the living *in* the Jews of the past and *with* the Jews of the present---It is not a doctrine, an idea, a faith, but the covenant between God and the people. Our share in holiness we acquire by living in the Jewish community.

Dr. Arnold Eisen, Dvar Torah on Parashat Yitro

The "revelation" at Sinai does not pertain to God's essence—but to the gift of Jewish (and, by extension, human) obligation. The Torah aims at far more than collective belief or individual enlightenment. Its point is nothing less than a different kind of world, composed of just and compassionate societies. Everything that each of us can bring to the work is needed: learning and experience, parenting and profession, art and science, knowledge and wisdom. The Covenant demands that we fulfill it *together*—Torah requires, in a word, *community*.

We All Stood Together, Merle Feld

My brother and I were at Sinai

He kept a journal

of what he saw

of what he heard

of what it all meant to him

I wish I had such a record

of what happened to me there

It seems like every time I want to write

I can't

I'm always holding a baby

one of my own

or one for a friend

always holding a baby

so my hands are never free

to write things down

And then

As time passes

The particulars

The hard data

The who what when where why

Slip away from me

And all I'm left with is

The feeling

But feelings are just sounds

The vowel barking of a mute

My brother is so sure of what he heard

After all he's got a record of it

Consonant after consonant after consonant

If we remembered it together

We could recreate holy time

Sparks flying

Deuteronomy 6:4

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One.

Ruth 1:16

Your people shall be **my people**, and your God, my God. ... But **Ruth** said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, ...



Counting Time, Making Time Count Rabbi Cheryl Peretz

בס"ד

Leviticus 23:15-16

(15) And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete:
(16) you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the LORD.

ויקרא כ"ג:ט"ו-ט"ז

(טו) וסַפַּרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת
מִיּוֹם הַבְּיָאֲלֶכֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפֶה
שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָעוֹת תְּמִימֹת תִּהְיֶינָה: (טז)
עַד מַחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּסְפְּרוּ
חֲמֵנָשִׁים יוֹם וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה
לֵה'

Deuteronomy 16:9

(9) You shall count off seven weeks; start to count the seven weeks when the sickle is first put to the standing grain.

דברים ט"ז:ט

(ט) שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפְּרֶנָּה
מִהַחֵל חֲרִמְשָׁא בַקֶּמֶה תַחֲלֵל לִסְפֹּר
שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעוֹת:

Rabbi Aryeh Carmel, Masterplan, Feldheim - p. 205 [England (1917-2006)]

1917-2006, Rabbi Carmel was a successful *mortgage broker* and *real estate developer*, living and working in London, England who wrote several books.

The Omer on Pesach was from the barley harvest. The offering on Shavuot was of wheat. Barley is mainly food for animals. Wheat is food for human beings. The Torah hints to us that physical independence by itself still leaves man – from the Torah perspective – on the animal level. The counting of the forty-nine days signifies a sevenfold refining process and marks our progress to full human status with our acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, seven weeks after the Exodus.

Sefer HaChinuch*, Mitzvah #306

Since the acceptance of the Torah was the goal of our redemption and serves as the foundation of the Jewish people, and through it we achieved our greatness, we were commanded to count from the day after [the first day of] Pesach until the day that the Torah was given. This manifests our great desire for that awesome day

Composed in Middle-Age Spain (c.1255 - c.1285 CE). The Sefer ha-Chinuch (Book of Education), is a work which systematically discusses the 613 commandments of the Torah. It was published anonymously in 13th century Spain.

ומפני כן, כי היא כל עיקרן של ישראל
ובעבורה נגאלו ועלו לכל הגדולה שעלו
אליה, נצטוינו למנות ממחרת יום טוב של
פסח עד יום נתינת התורה, להראות בנפשנו

which our hearts yearn for just as a servant yearns for shade. We count constantly – when will the day come that we yearn for, the day that we left slavery? Because counting [towards a certain date] shows a person that all his desire and longing is to reach that time.

החפץ הגדול אל היום הנכבד הנכסף ללבנו, כעבד ישאף צל, וימנה תמיד מתי יבוא העת הנכסף אליו שיצא לחירות, כי המנין מראה לאדם כי כל ישעו וכל חפצו להגיע אל הזמן ההוא.

Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed) 3:43

Shavuot is the time of the Giving of the Torah. In order to honor and elevate this day we count the days from the previous festival until it [arrives], like someone who is waiting for a loved one to arrive, who counts the days by the hours.

- *According to these two texts, what are the purpose in counting?*
- *When are times in our lives that we count up? When do we count down?*
- *Does counting time help? in what way?*
- *When else Jewishly is there a debate about counting down versus counting up?*
- *How has counting time changed for you in this past year?*

And Fly: A Poem for Counting the Omer by Stacey Zisook Robinson

Count your things.	and succulent
Add them up.	ripeness:
Amass a pile of More.	A bursting of Ready,
Grab and gather	sweet and sour and sharp
in forty-nine steps,	all at once
the firsts	on your tongue.
of your herd,	Count them all.
your horde	Gather them up;
your heart.	Breathe in
Count them	seven breaths of seven
in countless succession:	and lay them at
All your best -	the waiting altar
Your hopes.	that stands in the shadow of God.
Your sins.	Lay your counted glory there -
Fill your tent;	an offering:
load the baskets and bags	a psalm of blessing
with counting	and hopeful benediction.
and counted riches that	Lay it all down
smell of excess	and fly

Psalms 90:12

Teach us to count our days rightly, that we may obtain a wise heart. :לְמַנּוֹת גְּמִינוּ כִּי הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֵבָב חֲכָמָה:

Harmful Gratitude

Rabbi Dahlia Bernstein
Congregation Beth Ohr,
Bellmore, NY

May 16th,
9:30 PM
Est.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Pirkei Avot 1:14

1

Making Our Souls Great

To pray is to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments.

Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. It is all we can offer in return.

Who is worthy to be present at the constant unfolding of time?

Here we are amidst the meditation of the land, the songs of the

water, the humility of the flowers,

flowers wiser than all alphabets -

Suddenly we feel embarrassed,

ashamed of our complaints and clashes in the face of tacit glory.

How strange we are in the world!

Only one response can maintain us:

gratefulness for the gift of our unearned chance to serve, to

wonder, to love life and each other.

It is gratefulness which makes our small souls great.

3

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?

Overdosing on Gratitude

2

Michal is highly critical of whatever Sam does or says. In spite of the effort she put into her work, attitude, and behavior, she always criticized and nitpicked on her. The truth is that Sam let that happen to her. She never tried to stop her or stood up for herself. Sam feels put down Michael feels like Same doesn't listen to her. They fight, then try to make nice and not bring it up and inevitably something sets them off again.

How might gratitude play a role in perpetuating these explosive episodes?

How can gratitude be a distraction from underlying issues?

How can anger be used constructively?

How can someone overdose on gratitude?

we deny that there are moments in which a voice speaks for God? that the source of goodness communicates its way to the human mind?

True, it seems incredible that we should hold in our gaze words containing a breath of God. What we forget is that at this moment we breathe what God is creating, that right in front of us we behold works that reflect His infinite wisdom, His infinite goodness.

The surest way of misunderstanding revelation is to take it literally, to imagine that God spoke to the prophet on a long-distance telephone. Yet most of us succumb to such fancy, forgetting that the cardinal sin in thinking about ultimate issues is literal-mindedness.

The error of literal-mindedness is in assuming that things and words have only one meaning. The truth is that things and words stand for different meanings in different situations. Gold means wealth to the merchant, a means of adornment to the jeweler, "a non-rusting malleable ductile metal of high specific gravity" to the engineer, and kindness to the rhetorician ("a golden heart"). Light is a form of energy to the physicist, a medium of loveliness to the artist, an expression of grandeur in the first chapter of the Bible. *Ruah*, the Hebrew word for spirit, signifies also breath, wind, direction. And he who thinks only of breath, forfeits the deeper meaning of the term. God is called father, but he who takes this name physiologically distorts the meaning of God.

The language of faith employs only a few words coined in its own spirit; most of its terms are borrowed from the general sphere of human experience and endowed with new meaning. Consequently, in taking these terms literally we miss the unique connotations which they assumed in the religious usage.

The meaning of words in scientific language must be clear, distinct, unambiguous, conveying the same concept to all people. In poetry, however, words that have only one meaning are considered flat. The right word is often one that evokes a plurality of meanings and one that must be understood on more than one level. What is a virtue in scientific language is a failure in poetic expression.

Is it correct to insist that Biblical words must be understood exclusively according to one literal meaning? It often seems as if the intention of the prophets was to be understood not in one way, on one level, but in many ways, on many levels, according to the situation in which we find ourselves. And if such was their intention, we must not restrict our understanding to one meaning.

It is usually assumed that the Biblical writers had a bent for lofty, swelling language, a preference for extravagant exaggeration of statement. However, pondering about the substance of what they were trying

to express, it dawns upon us that what sounds to us as *grand eloquence* is *understatement* and *modesty of expression*. Indeed, their words must not be taken literally, because a literal understanding would be a partial, shallow understanding; because the literal meaning is but a *minimum of meaning*.¹

"God spoke." Is it to be taken symbolically: He did not speak, yet it was as if He did? The truth is that *what is literally true to us is a metaphor compared with what is metaphysically real to God*. And when applied to Him our mightiest words are feeble understatements. The speech of God is not less but more than literally real. The nature of revelation, being an event in the realm of the ineffable, is something which words cannot spell, which human language will never be able to portray. Our categories are not applicable to that which is both within and beyond the realm of matter and mind. In speaking about revelation, the more descriptive the terms, the less adequate is the description. The words in which the prophets attempted to relate their experiences were not photographs but illustrations, not descriptions but songs. A psychological reconstruction of the prophetic act is, therefore, no more possible than the attempt to paint a photographic likeness of a face on the basis of a song. The word "revelation" is like an exclamation; it is an *indicative* rather than a descriptive term. Like all terms that express the ultimate, it points to its meaning rather than fully rendering it.

We must not try to read chapters in the Bible dealing with the event at Sinai as if they were texts in systematic theology. Its intention is to celebrate the mystery, to introduce us to it rather than to penetrate or to explain it. As a report about revelation the Bible itself is a *midrash*.

To convey what the prophets experienced, the Bible could use either terms of description or terms of indication. Any description of the act of revelation in empirical categories would have produced a caricature. This is why all the Bible does is to state *that* revelation happened; *how* it happened is something they could only convey in words that are evocative and suggestive.

The same word may be used in either way. The sound is the same, but the spirit is different. "And God said: Let there be light" is different in spirit from a statement such as "And Smith said: Let us turn on the light." The second statement conveys a definite meaning; the first statement evokes an inner response to an ineffable meaning. The statement, man speaks, describes a physiological and psychological act; the statement, God speaks, conveys a mystery. It calls upon our sense of wonder and amazement to respond to a mystery that surpasses our power of comprehension.

There are spiritual facts which are wholly irreducible to verbal expression and completely beyond the range of either imagination or definition.

It was not essential that His will be transmitted as sound; it was essential that it be made known to us. The sound or sight is to the transcendent event what a metaphor is to an abstract principle.

For us, therefore, to imagine revelation, namely, to conceive it as if it were a psychic or physical process, is to pervert its essence and to wreck its mystery. It is just as improper to conceive revelation as a psychophysical act as it is to conceive God as a corporeal being. Few of us are able to think in a way which is never crossed by the path of imagination, and it is usually at the crossroads of thought and imagination that the great sweep of the spirit swerves into the blind alley of a parabolic image.

A hasid, it is told, after listening to the discourse of one who lectured to him about the lofty concept of God according to the philosophers, said: "If God were the way you imagine Him, I would not believe in Him." However subtle and noble our concepts may be, as soon as they become descriptive, namely, definite, they confine Him and force Him into the triteness of our minds. Never is our mind so inadequate as in trying to describe God. The same applies to the idea of revelation. When defined, described, it completely eludes us.

Unlike the mystic act, revelation is not the result of a quest for esoteric experience. What characterizes the prophet is, on the contrary, an effort to escape such experience. Never does he relish his vision as one relishes the attainment of a goal longed for. Revelation is not an act of his seeking, but of his being sought after, an act in God's search of man. The prophet did not grope for God. God's search of man, not man's quest for God, was conceived to have been the main event in Israel's history. This is at the core of all Biblical thoughts: God is not a being detached from man to be sought after, but a power that seeks, pursues and calls upon man. The way to God is a way of God. Israel's religion originated in the initiative of God rather than in the efforts of man. It was not an invention of man but a creation of God; not a product of civilization, but a realm of its own. Man would not have known Him if He had not approached man. God's relation to man precedes man's relation to Him.

The mystic experience is man's turning toward God; the prophetic act is God's turning toward man. The former is first of all an event in the life of man, contingent on the aspiration and initiative of man; the latter is first of all an event in the life of God, contingent on the pathos and initiative of God. From the mystic experience we may gain an insight of man into the life of God; from the prophetic act we learn of an insight of God into the life of man.

Therefore, to characterize revelation as a prophetic insight or experience is to reduce a reality to a perception. Seen from man's aspect, to receive a revelation is *to witness how God is turning toward man*. It is not an act of gazing at the divine reality, a static and eternal mystery. The prophet is in the midst of a divine event, of an event in the life of God, for in addressing the prophet, God comes out of His imperceptibility to become audible to man. The full intensity of the event is not in the fact that "man hears" but in the "fact" that "God speaks" to man. The mystic experience is an ecstasy of man; revelation is *an ecstasy of God*.

As described by the prophets in terms of time and space, the act of revelation represents the image of a transcendent event as reflected in the restricted terms of human experience. Its indigenous quality is to be found in the creative fact of how the divine was carried into the concrete experience of man. Imbued with a sense of the crushing marvel of God's reality, compared with which mankind appeared to be less than nothingness,² the prophets must have been more astounded about their experience than any one of us to whom the transcendence of God is only a vague concept, of which we occasionally become aware in calm speculation.

To sum up, revelation is a moment in which God succeeded in reaching man; an event to God and an event to man. To receive a revelation is to witness how God is turning toward man.

12. RESPONSE THROUGH DEEDS

Where is the presence, where is the glory of God to be found? It is found in the world ("the whole earth is full of His glory"), in the Bible, and in a sacred deed.

Do only the heavens declare the glory of God? It is deeply significant that Psalm 19 begins, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and concludes with a paean to the Torah and to the mitzvot. The world, the word, as well as the sacred deed are full of His glory. God is more immediately found in the Bible as well as in acts of kindness and worship than in the mountains and forests. It is more meaningful for us to believe in the *immanence of God in deeds* than in the immanence of God in nature. Indeed, the concern of Judaism is primarily not how to find the presence of God in the world of things but how to let Him enter the ways

When Needs Conflict with Jewish Practice

Rabbi Amy Bardack
Tikkun Leil Shavuot 5781

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 328:2

(2) For someone who has a dangerous illness, it is a commandment to break Shabbat for him. One who hurries to do this is praised. One who asks about this is a murderer.

אורח חיים שכ"ח:ב'

(ב) מי שיש לו חולי של סכנה מצווה לחלל עליו את השבת והזריז הרי זה משובח והשואל הרי זה שופך דמים:

Shabbat 11a:6

And Rava bar Meḥasseya said that **Rav Ḥama bar Gurya said** that **Rav said: A fast is effective to neutralize a bad dream like fire burns chaff. Rav Ḥisda said: And a fast is effective specifically on that day that he dreamed. And Rav Yosef said: One suffering from a bad dream that he dreamed is permitted to fast even on Shabbat.**

שבת י"א א:ו'

וְאָמַר רַבָּא בַר מְחַסְיָא אָמַר רַב חָמָא בַר גּוּרְיָא אָמַר רַב: יָפָה תַעֲנִית לְחֵלּוּם כְּאֵשׁ לְנִעוּרָתָא. אָמַר רַב חֲסִידָא: וּבּוּ בֵיּוֹם. וְאָמַר רַב יוֹסֵף: אֲפִילוּ בְּשַׁבָּת.

Mishnah Moed Katan 1:1

(1) **One may irrigate a field that requires irrigation on the**

משנה מועד קטן א:א'

(א) מְשַׁקֵּין בֵּית הַשְּׁלַחִין בַּמוֹעֵד

intermediate days of a **Festival as well as during the Sabbatical Year, both from a newly emerged spring** that began to flow only during the Festival, **and from a spring that did not just emerge** and that has been flowing for some time. **However, one may not irrigate a field with rainwater** collected in a cistern, a procedure that requires excessive exertion, **or with water drawn with a shadoof [kilon]**, a lever used to raise water with a bucket from deep down in a well.

ובשביעית, בין ממעין שיצא בתחלה, בין ממעין שלא יצא בתחלה. אבל אין משקין לא ממי הגשמים ולא ממי הקילון. ואין עושין עוגיות לגפנים:

Mishnah Moed Katan 1:2

(2) **And one may not construct circular ditches** around the bases of **grapevines** on the intermediate days of a Festival. **Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya says: One may not construct a new water channel during the intermediate days of a Festival or during the Sabbatical Year. And the Rabbis say: One may construct a new water channel during the Sabbatical Year and one may repair damaged water channels during the intermediate days of a Festival.** In addition to performing labor on one's own

משנה מועד קטן א'ב'

(ב) רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר, אין עושין את האמה בתחלה במועד ובשביעית, וחכמים אומרים, עושין את האמה בתחלה בשביעית, ומתקנין את המקלקלות במועד. ומתקנין את קלקולי המים שברשות הרבים וחוטטין אותן. ומתקנין את הדרךים ואת הרחובות ואת מקוות המים, ועושין כל צרכי הרבים, ומצינין את הקברות, ויוצאין אף על הכלאים:

property in order to avoid financial loss, it is also permitted to perform labor on the intermediate days of a Festival for the public welfare: **One may repair damaged water cisterns that are in the public domain, and clean them out** by removing the dirt and sediment that accumulated there; **one may repair roads, streets, and ritual baths; and one may tend to all other public needs.** So too, **one may mark graves** to inform the public of their ritual impurity, **and** inspectors **may even go out to** uproot **the** shoots of prohibited **diverse kinds** [*kilayim*] that grew in the fields during the rainy season.

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 1:1:1

[2a] **Halakha 1 · MISHNA** On the **first of Adar** the court **proclaims concerning** the collection of **shekels**, i.e., the yearly half-shekel contribution to the Temple treasury made by each adult male for the purpose of buying communal offerings. **And** they also proclaim **with regard to** the obligation to uproot forbidden mixtures of **diverse**

תלמוד ירושלמי שקלים א:א:א'

[דף ב.] משנה באחד באדר משמעין על השקלים ועל הכלאים. ובחמשה עשר בו קורין את המגלה בכרכים

kinds of food crops in gardens and fields. **And on the fifteenth day of the month of Adar, the Scroll [Megilla] of Esther is read in the cities [kerakim]** surrounded by walls from the time of Joshua.

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 1:1:2

And they also repair the roads that were damaged in the winter, **and the streets, and the cisterns.** **And** at that time **they perform all that is necessary for public welfare.** **And they also mark the Jewish gravesites** anew, so that people would know their location and avoid ritual impurity, as the previous markers may have eroded during the rainy season.

תלמוד ירושלמי שקלים א':א':ב'

וּמְתַקְנִין אֶת הַדְּרָכִים וְאֶת
הַרְחֻבּוֹת וְאֶת מְקוֹת הַמַּיִם,
וְעוֹשִׂין כָּל-צֹרְכֵי הָרַבִּים וּמְצַיִנִין
עַל הַקְּבָרוֹת

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 1:1:36

§ The mishna taught that on the fifteenth of Adar **they repaired the roads** that were damaged in the winter, **and the streets, and the cisterns.** **And they did all that was necessary for public welfare.** The Gemara explains:

תלמוד ירושלמי שקלים א':א':ל"ו

מְתַקְנִין אֶת הַדְּרָכִים וְאֶת
הַרְחֻבּוֹת וְאֶת מְקוֹת הַמַּיִם
וְעוֹשִׂין כָּל-צֹרְכֵי הָרַבִּים. אֵילוּ הֵן
צֹרְכֵי הָרַבִּים. דְּנִין דִּינֵי מְמוֹנּוֹת
וְדִינֵי נְפָשׁוֹת דִּינֵי מְכוֹת וּפּוֹדִין

These are the matters necessary for public welfare: They judge monetary cases, capital cases, and cases that involve the punishment of lashes. And the court also redeems valuations, consecrations of articles for Temple or priestly use, and consecrations for Temple maintenance or as offerings.

עֲרֻכֵין וְתַרְמִין וְהַקְדִישוֹת

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 1:1:37

And they give the *sota* to drink, and they burn the red heifer, to use its ashes for the ritual purification of those rendered impure by contact with the dead, and they break the neck of the heifer whose neck is broken, and they pierce the ear of a Hebrew slave, and they render the leper ritually pure. And they remove the locks that were placed over the water cisterns during the winter, as this water was for public use in the summer, and they do not replace them until the winter.

תלמוד ירושלמי שקלים א:א:ל"ז

וּמְשַׁקִין אֶת הַסּוֹטָה וְשׂוֹרְפִין אֶת
הַפָּרָה וְעוֹרְפִין עֵגְלָה עָרוּפָה
וְרוֹצְעִין עֶבֶד עִבְרִי וּמְטַהְרִין אֶת
הַמְצוֹרֵעַ וּמְפָרְקִין אֶת הַמְנַעֵל
מֵעַל גְּבֵי הָאֵימוֹם וְאֵין מְחַזְרִין
אוֹתוֹ.

אורה חיים תקמ"ד:א'

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 544:1

(1) 1. The Laws of Public Needs During Chol HaMoed, 2 Seifim: It is permitted on Chol HaMoed to take care of the needs of the community, such as fixing roads and removing stumbling blocks (or obstacles) from them, and to mark (or point out) graves so the priests can be warned about them, and to fix the Mikvahs. *RAMA: Specifically public needs like needs for the person's body (or well being) but other public needs, like building a synagogue (Beis Yosef in the name of the Teshuvos HaRashbah) are forbidden to do during Chol HaMoed. And this is the law for other mitzvah related needs - it is forbidden to perform artistic work during Chold HaMoed (Rivash, Siman 226).*

(א) דין צרכי רבים בחול המועד. ובו ב סעיפים:
צרכי רבים מותר לעשותן בחול המועד כגון לתקן הדרכים ולהסיר מהם המכשולות ולציין הקברות כדי שיזהרו מהם הכהנים ולתקן המקוואות: הגה ודוקא צרכי רבים כאלו שהם צריכים לגוף האדם אבל שאר צרכי רבים כגון בנין בה"כ (ב"י בשם תשובת הרשב"א) אסור לעשות במועד וה"ה דלשאר צרכי מצוה אסור לעשות מלאכת אומן במועד. (ריב"ש סימן רכ"ו):

Mishneh Torah, Mamrim, 2:5-6

A court that sees fit to enact a *gezeirah* or a *takkanah* or to institute a practice must consider the matter and know beforehand whether or not the majority of the public can confirm to it; no *gezeirah* is ever imposed on the public unless the majority can conform to it.

If the court has enacted a *gezeirah* or *takkahah*, believing that the majority of the public can conform to it, and thereafter the people resist it, and a

majority of the public do not abide by it, it is void and it is not permissible to compel the people to observe it.

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Amy Bardack

מי השלוח:

ולא שמעו אל משה ויותר אנשים ממנו עד בקר וירם תולעים וכו'. הענין שהורם תולעים ויבאש מורה שהיתה בהם ענוה פסולה. בטוחים היו, אחרי כל הנסים שאירעו לישראל, כי לא יעזוב ה' עמות אלא שחששו פן ירד המן לכל ישראל ולהם לא ירד. וזהו ענוה פסולה, כי אין האדם צריך להחזיק עצמו שהוא גרוע מכל ישראל.

Mei HaShiloach, R Mordechai Leiner

What is the Torah teaching us by “it became infested and stank”? It teaches that the Israelites had *anavah psulah*, an ‘invalid’ humility. They were certain, after all of the miracles that had happened to Israel, that God would not leave God’s whole people. However, they feared that while the manna would fall for all of Israel, there would not be any for themselves, the individual.

This is *anavah psulah*, because **no person should think he, she, or they are inferior to anyone else.**

היום בו נולדת
הוא היום בו החליט הקב"ה
שהעולם אינו יכול להתקיים בלעדיך.
-רבי נחמן מברסלב

The day that you were born
is the day that the Holy One decided
the world could no longer exist without you.

-Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

Gender in Genesis

Source Sheet by Sarah Hasson + Steph Sussman

Genesis 1:26

(26) And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.”

בראשית א':כ"ו

(כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם
בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם
וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ
וּבְכָל־הַרֹמֵשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

Genesis 1:27

(27) And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

בראשית א':כ"ז

(כז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם
בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר
וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

BT Sanhedrin 38b

In the Talmudic depiction, Adam and Eve's first day on earth is divided into twelve hours. In the first hour, Adam's clay is heaped up. In the second, he becomes an inert mass. In the third, his limbs extend. In the fourth, he is infused with a soul. In the fifth, he stands on his feet. In the sixth, he gives names to all of creation. In the seventh, Eve becomes his mate, and in the eighth, “they ascended to the bed as two, and descended as four” (Cain and Abel were born). In the ninth, he was commanded not to eat of the tree, in the tenth, he went astray, in the eleventh, he was judged. And in the twelfth, he was expelled and departed.

Rabbi Michael Lerner

The great Hasidic teacher the Kedushat Levi, riffing on the line in the morning prayer “*yotzer or u’voreh choshedi*” (Who creates light and shapes darkness—in the present tense), points to creation as an ongoing process. This interpretation provided one of the foundations for my teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel to say that human beings are potentially partners with God in the healing and transformation of the world (*tikkun olam*), because the creation is not yet finished. We are here in part to do what we can, enabled by being created *b’tzelem* (in the image)

Genesis 2:15-25

(15) The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. (16) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; (17) but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.” (18) The LORD God said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him.” (19) And the LORD God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name. (20) And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found. (21) So the LORD God cast a deep

בראשית ב':ט"ו-כ"ה

(טו) וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחָהוּ בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ׃
(טז) וַיִּצַּו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל׃ (יז) וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְיוֹם אָכַלְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת׃ (יח) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא-טוֹב הֵיוֹת הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לּוֹ עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ׃ (יט) וַיִּצַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאָדָמָה כָּל-חַיֵּית הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל-הָאָדָם לְרֹאוֹת מַה-יִּקְרָא-לּוֹ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא-לּוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ׃ (כ) וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חַיֵּית הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא-מָצָא עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ׃ (כא) וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַתִּרְדְּמָה עַל-הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצְלָעֹתָיו וַיִּסְגֵּר בָּשָׂר תַּחֲתָנָה׃ (כב)

sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot. (22) And the LORD God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man. (23) Then the man said, "This one at last Is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, For from man was she taken." (24) Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh. (25) The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.

וַיִּכַּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֶּלֶע
אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּבְאַהֲ
אֶל־הָאָדָם׃ (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' הָאָדָם זֹאת
הִפְעֵם עָצָם מֵעֲצָמַי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי
לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ
לָקַחְהָ זֹאת׃ (כד) עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ
אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ
וְהִיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד׃ (כה) וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם
עָרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא
יָתִיב־שׁוּ׃

Dr. Gwynn Kessler

First, we can note that according to Genesis Rabbah 8:1, even though adam is split into two separate genders, God remains one: both male and female. Furthermore, we might stress that Genesis Rabbah 8:1 records another interpretation of adam in which the first human is a “golem”—an undifferentiated, perhaps ungendered, being. That this undifferentiated adam is created in God’s image provides us a model for a God who trans (cends) gender altogether—a God who is both male and female, meaning neither. Although Genesis Rabbah 8:1 does not imagine a world where a person who identifies as both female and male can refuse to be split in two, we can work to shape a world where ze proclaims hir creation in the image of God. Even though Genesis Rabbah does not envision a world where a person might choose to identify as neither female nor male, thus existing outside of a rigid bi-gender system—we must affirm all gender expressions and identities. I began by stating that Genesis 1:27 is difficult. What I mean to say is that Genesis 1:27 is complex. In fact, what is most queer about this verse is its ability to challenge—or dare—us to understand it easily. It prophecies, as it were, gender trouble. This verse, which at least mythically purports to usher gender into the world, simultaneously canonizes gender ambiguities

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Sarah Hasson

Not for Converts Only: What does *Kabbalat Ol Mitzvot* (Accepting the Yoke of the Commandments) Really Mean?

Source Sheet by Jonathan Lubliner

1. Yevamot 47

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: With regard to a potential **convert who comes to a court in order to convert, at the present time**, when the Jews are in exile, the judges of the court **say to him: What did you see that motivated you to come to convert? Don't you know that the Jewish people at the present time are anguished, suppressed, despised, and harassed, and hardships are frequently visited upon them? If he says: I know, and although I am unworthy of joining the Jewish people and sharing in their sorrow, I nevertheless desire to do so, then the court accepts him immediately to begin the conversion process. And the judges of the court inform him of some of the lenient mitzvot and some of the stringent mitzvot, and they inform him**

יבמות מ"ז .א

תנו רבנן גר שבא להתגייר בזמן הזה אומרים לו מה ראית שבאת להתגייר אי אתה יודע שישראל בזמן הזה דוויים דחופים סחופים ומטורפין ויסורין באין עליהם אם אומר יודע אני ואיני כדאי מקבלין אותו מיד ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות ומודיעין אותו עון לקט שכחה ופאה ומעשר עני ומודיעין אותו עונשן של מצות אומרים לו הוי יודע שעד שלא באת למדה זו אכלת חלב אי אתה ענוש כרת חללת שבת אי אתה ענוש סקילה ועכשיו אכלת חלב ענוש כרת חללת שבת ענוש סקילה וכשם שמודיעין אותו עונשן של מצות כך

of **the sin** of neglecting the mitzva to allow the poor to take **gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and** produce in the **corner** of one's field, **and** about the **poor man's tithe**. **And they inform him of the punishment for transgressing the mitzvot**, as follows: **They say to him: Be aware that before you came to this status and converted, had you eaten forbidden fat, you would not be punished by karet, and had you profaned Shabbat, you would not be punished by stoning**, since these prohibitions do not apply to gentiles. **But now**, once converted, **if you have eaten forbidden fat you are punished by karet**, and **if you have profaned Shabbat, you are punished by stoning**. **And just as they inform him about the punishment for transgressing the mitzvot, so too, they inform him about the reward granted for fulfilling them. They say to him: Be aware that the World-to-Come is made only for the righteous**, and if you observe the mitzvot you will merit it, **and** be aware that **the Jewish people, at the present time, are unable to receive their full reward in this world; they are not able to receive either an abundance of good nor an abundance of calamities**, since the primary place for reward and punishment is in the World-to-Come. **And they do not overwhelm him with threats, and they are not exacting with him** about the details of the mitzvot. If **he accepts** upon himself all of these ramifications, then **they circumcise him immediately**. If **there still remain on him shreds** of flesh from the foreskin **that invalidate the circumcision, they circumcise him again a second time** to remove them. When **he is healed** from the circumcision, **they immerse him immediately, and two Torah scholars stand over him** at the time of his immersion **and inform him of some of the lenient mitzvot and some of the stringent mitzvot**. Once **he has immersed and emerged, he is like a born Jew in every sense**. For the immersion of a

מודיעין אותו מתן שכרן אומרים לו הוי יודע שהעולם הבא אינו עשוי אלא לצדיקים וישראל בזמן הזה אינם יכולים לקבל לא רוב טובה ולא רוב פורענות ואין מרבין עליו ואין מדקדקין עליו קיבל מלין אותו מיד נשתיירו בו ציצין המעכבין את המילה חוזרים ומלין אותו שניה נתרפא מטבלין אותו מיד ושני ת"ח עומדים על גביו ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות טבל ועלה הרי הוא כישראל לכל דבריו אשה נשים מושיבות אותה במים עד צוארה ושני ת"ח עומדים לה מבחוץ ומודיעין אותה מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות.

woman: Women appointed by the court **seat her in the water** of the ritual bath **up to her neck, and two Torah scholars stand outside** the bath house so as not to compromise her modesty, **and** from there **they inform her of some of the lenient mitzvot and some of the stringent mitzvot.** .

2. **Tractate Gerim 1**

Anyone who becomes a proselyte for the sake of [marrying a Jewish] woman, or out of fear, or love is not a proselyte. Similarly R. Judah and R. Nehemiah said: All [the Gentiles] who were converted in the days of Mordecai and Esther were not genuine proselytes, as it is stated, *And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them.* Anyone who is not converted from purely religious motives is not a proselyte.

3. **Yevamot 24b**

MISHNA: One suspected by others of engaging in sexual relations **with a Canaanite maidservant and she was later set free, or one suspected of relations with a gentile woman and she subsequently converted, may not marry that woman, since this will strengthen the suspicions against him. But if he did marry her, they, the judges of the court, do not remove her from him, i.e., they do not require him to divorce her.** . . .

GEMARA: The mishnah teaches that one who is suspected of relations with a gentile woman who later converted may never marry her. **This** implies that **she is, however, a convert**, although it appears that she converted only in order that he might marry her. The Gemara **raises a contradiction** from a *baraita*: **Both a man who converted for the sake of a woman and a woman who converted for the sake**

ב. **מסכת גרים א'**

כל המתגייר משום אשה משום אהבה משום יראה אין זה גר וכן היו ר' יהודה ור' נחמיה אומרים כל אותם שנתגיירו בימי מרדכי ואסתר אינם גרים שנא' ורבים מעמי הארץ מתיהדים כי נפל פחד היהודים עליהם וכל שאינו מתגייר לשם שמים אינו גר:

ג. **יבמות כ"ד ב**

מתני' הנטען על השפחה ונשתחררה או על העובדת כוכבים ונתגיירה הרי זה לא יכנס ואם כנס אין מוציאין מידו . . .

גמ' הא גירת מיהא הויא ורמינהי אחד איש שנתגייר לשום אשה ואחד אשה שנתגיירה לשום איש וכן מי שנתגייר לשום שולחן מלכים לשום עבדי שלמה אינן גרים דברי ר' נחמיה שהיה רבי נחמיה אומר אחד גירי אריות ואחד גירי חלומות ואחד גירי מרדכי ואסתר אינן גרים עד שיתגיירו בזמן הזה בזמן הזה ס"ד אלא אימא כבזמן הזה הא איתמר עלה א"ר יצחק בר שמואל בר מרתא משמיה דרב הלכה כדברי האומר כולם גרים הם.

of a man, and similarly, one who converted for the sake of the king's table, so that he could serve in a prestigious capacity, or for the sake of Solomon's servants, who were also considered prestigious, in all of these cases they are not converts; this is the statement of Rabbi Neḥemya. As Rabbi Neḥemya would say: With regard to converts by lions, i.e., forced converts such as the Samaritans [*Kutim*] described in II Kings (17:24–25); and converts who convert based on their dreams; and converts of the time of Mordecai and Esther described in the verse, “And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them” (Esther 8:17); all of these are not converts until they are converted at this present time. The Gemara clarifies the meaning of the words: Could it enter your mind to say only at this present time? Since he mentioned the converts of Mordecai and Esther, who were deceased before Rabbi Neḥemya made this statement, he therefore cannot possibly mean this phrase literally. Rather, say: Like at this present time, when the Jewish people are in exile and there is no material benefit to conversion. Returning to the question above: How could a woman who converted for the sake of a man be considered a true convert? The Gemara answers: But wasn't it stated with regard to that *baraita* that Rav Yitzḥak bar Shmuel bar Marta said in the name of Rav: The *halakha* is in accordance with the statement of the one who says that they are all converts.

4. Bekhorot 30b

With regard to a convert who accepted upon himself upon his conversion matters of Torah, i.e., all of the mitzvot, even if he is suspect with regard to one matter alone, he is suspect with regard to the entire Torah, and he is considered like a

ד. בכורות ל' ב

הגר שקיבל עליו דברי תורה אפי' נחשד לדבר אחד הוי חשוד לכל התורה כולה והרי הוא כישראל משומד . . . עובד כוכבים שבא לקבל דברי

Jewish transgressor [*meshummad*] . . . In the case of a **gentile who comes to convert** and takes upon himself to **accept the words of Torah except for one matter, he is not accepted** as a convert. **Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says:** Even if he refuses to accept **one detail of rabbinic law**, he is not accepted.

תורה חוץ מדבר אחד אין מקבלין אותו ר' יוסי בר' יהודה אומר אפי' דקדוק אחד מדברי סופרים.

5. **Mishneh Torah, Forbidden Intercourse 13**

14) The appropriate way to perform the commandment [of conversion] is that when the convert comes to convert, we investigate him lest he be motivated for money that he will receive, or for some position of authority that will come his way, or because of fear that he wishes to enter the religion. If he is a man we investigate whether he has cast his eye upon a Jewish woman; and if she is a woman whether she has cast her eye on a Jewish man. If no inappropriate motivation is discovered, we inform him of the magnitude of the weight of the yoke of the Torah and of the tremendous efforts required to perform the commandments. If they accepted and did not change their minds, and we see that they have come out of love, we accept them.

17) A convert whom they did not investigate or to whom they did not make known the commandments and the punishments [for not observing them], but who was circumcised and immersed in front of three judges is a convert. Even if it subsequently becomes known he converted for an ulterior motive, once he has been circumcised and immersed, he is no longer a Gentile, and he remains suspect until his righteousness can be verified. Even if he returns to Gentile worship, he remains in the category of a Jewish apostate whose marriage is a valid marriage.

ה. **משנה תורה, הלכות איסורי ביאה י"ג**

שְׁהַמְצֹוה הַנְּכוּנָה כְּשִׁיבָא הַגֵּר אוֹ הַגֵּיְרָת לְהַתְּגַיֵּר בּוֹדְקִין אַחֲרָיו שְׂמָא בְּגִלְלָהּ מְמוֹן שְׂיִטְלָהּ אוֹ בְּשִׁבְלֵי שְׂרָרָה שְׂיִזְכָּה לָּהּ אוֹ מִפְּנֵי הַפְּתַח בָּא לְהַכְּנס לְדַת. וְאִם אִישׁ הוּא בּוֹדְקִין אַחֲרָיו שְׂמָא עֵינָיו נָתַן בְּאִשָּׁה יְהוּדִית. וְאִם אִשָּׁה הִיא בּוֹדְקִין שְׂמָא עֵינֶיהָ נִתְּנָה בְּבַחֲוֹר מִבְּחֹרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אִם לֹא נִמְצָא לָהֶם עֵלָה מוֹדִיעִין אוֹתָן כְּבֹד עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְטִרְחָ שִׁישׁ בַּעֲשִׂיטָתָהּ עַל עַמֵּי הָאָרְצוֹת כְּדִי שְׂיִפְרְשׁוּ. אִם קָבְלוּ וְלֹא פִּרְשׁוּ וְרָאוּ אוֹתָן שְׂחִזְרוּ מֵאֲהָבָה מְקַבְּלִים אוֹתָן

(יז) גֵּר שְׂלֹא בְּדָקוּ אַחֲרָיו אוֹ שְׂלֹא הוֹדִיעוּהוּ הַמְצֹוֹת וְעִנְשָׁן וּמַל וְטָבַל בְּפָנָיו שְׂלֵשָׁה הִדְיוּטוֹת הָרִי זֶה גֵּר. אֶפְלוּ נוֹדַע שְׂבִשְׂבִיל דְּבַר הוּא מִתְּגַיֵּר הוֹאִיל וּמַל וְטָבַל יֵצֵא מִכְּלַל הָעַפּוּ"ם וְחוֹשְׁשִׁין לוֹ עַד שְׂיִתְּבַאֵר צְדָקוֹתוֹ. וְאֶפְלוּ חִזַּר וְעָבַד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה הָרִי הוּא כִּיִּשְׂרָאֵל מוֹמֵר שְׂקִדוּשָׁיו קְדוּשָׁיו. וּמְצֹוה לְהַחֲזִיר אֲבֻדָּתוֹ מֵאַחַר שְׂטָבַל נַעֲשֶׂה כִּיִּשְׂרָאֵל.

6. **Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann (1843-**

Regarding the question of the accepting a female convert who wishes to marry a Jewish man – I have already ruled previously [on this matter], citing the principle articulated by the Shakh, **“Everything depends upon the judgment of the rabbinic court.”** See the Beit Yitzhak Y.D. 2:100. And in our day, it is possible for a Jewish man to marry a gentile woman even if she remains in her gentile state since, if we do not accept her [as a convert], the Jew will marry her in a civil ceremony. In addition, if an Orthodox rabbi does not accept her [as a convert], she will go to one of the new rabbis (Hehadashim, i.e., Reform or Liberal) who accept female converts without immersion by a beit din and without kabbalat mitzvoth (acceptance of the yoke of the commandments), and she will then be thought a Jew even though she remains a gentile. Consequently, it is better to keep the evil to a minimum and accept her as a convert if she promises that she is converting for the sake of heaven and that she will fulfill all the commandments, in particular, Shabbat, family purity (niddah), and kashrut (ma'a'chalot asurot – forbidden foods. She should take a pledge of honor on this and the court should warn her husband that he should not marry her unless he knows that she will fulfill all these [commandments] . . . And if the husband testifies after this warning that his wife is converting for the sake of heaven, then it is permissible to accept her as described above. And if it is possible to examine other persons who are not affected by the matter, and [they testify] that she wishes to convert in truth and with a whole heart, how wonderful!

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) of Thorn, in Responsa of Rabbi

Y. D. 2:100, Y. D. 2:100

Esriel Hildesheimer, Yoreh De'ah #229

In response to a halakhic decision issued by Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans in 1864. Rabbi Illowy had ruled that sons born to a gentile mother and Jewish father should not be circumcised by a mohel lest they mistakenly be identified as Jews. Seeking support for his stance, Illowy wrote to Der Israelit and asked the European Orthodox rabbinate to express its opinion on this issue. Several rabbis commented upon it and all, including Hildesheimer, supported Illowy's position. Kalischer, however, dissented from their opinions and stated that it was a "mitzvah to circumcise such children." Here are selections from his responsum:

And now that we have demonstrated that it is both permissible and a mitzvah to circumcise a gentile [prior to this, Kalischer has argued that it is a mitzvah to circumcise a gentile even if not for the sake of conversion], I will present a logical argument {relevant to this case} which common sense would also dictate. It is as follows. All the inhabitants of the world are the work of the Creator, may He be blessed. One God created us all. Though He favored Israel by the giving of the Torah, He, in His mercy, actually desired to give it to all the world. As the Sages said (*Avodah Zarah* 2b) about Scripture, "The Lord came forth from Sinai and rose from Seir unto them, He shined forth from Mt. Paran" (*Deut.* 33:2). It was only when the Blessed One saw that there was a base spirit within the nations that prevented them from receiving the Torah that He gave it to Israel alone. However, it is written, "For all the world is mine and you will be to Me a kingdom of priests" (*Exodus* 19:5-6). Truly the whole earth is mine, and I want to grant merit to all who dwell therein, even though the light of Torah has not penetrated them. Therefore, you [Jews] will be like priests to all the inhabitants of the world; for, by your coming near to Me, the nations, too, will see the light. In truth,

this has already taken place. For the Holy Torah serves as the foundation for the faithful of all nations, and the events that have befallen Israel serve as the foundation for their faith. ... Yet, the Blessed One still wished to grant the fullest merit to all His creatures. As they did not accept the Torah, He undoubtedly was expressing an open-ended hope that anyone who wished to convert and take refuge in the inheritance of the Lord would do so and thereby merit the infinite light, like Onkelos, Shemaya, Abtalyon, and others. Therefore, when a non-Jew comes to incline his heart to enter into the Community of Israel. ... And if we do not circumcise him [in a case where he is a baby] we abrogate his choice because he will not easily subject himself to the pain of circumcision when he is an adult. By circumcising him [as a child] we will be removing an iron barrier from before him ... And if with regard to a child born of two gentile parents the law is such that this action does not constitute a sin, but rather a mitzvah-then it is all the more so in reference to a boy whose father is a Jew. You should not refrain from circumcising him as we are commanded to grant him the opportunity to be circumcised immediately at the directive of his father. Thus, when he grows up, he will quickly be able to perform the will of his father by ritually immersing himself according to the Jewish law of conversion ... However, if we do not circumcise him, we are pushing him away with both hands from the Community of Israel ... Moreover, in regard to this matter, we not only grant merit to the son who now has the free option to make himself holy. But we also grant much merit to the father. For when this sinner inclines his heart to repent, how will his repentance be received if he raises his children as non- Jews? ... If, however, we respect his good will in this instance--to circumcise his male children--then he, along with his children, will easily repent and we will have

extended them a hand in their repentance, And even if, God forbid, he [the father] does not truly repent, he is, in any event, acting properly in this matter, as he wants firmly to establish his children in the Jewish faith by circumcising them, Without a doubt, when they grow up they can receive immersion through the agency of a Beit Din ... And with children such as these, there is sometimes the possibility that great leaders of Israel will arise from among them ... **And as for the fear that he [the child] will not learn the Jewish faith in the house of a gentile woman, ... at a time like this there are many who do not conduct themselves according to Jewish law in their eating of non-kosher meat and pig, Nevertheless [and even though this may be the case here, we should circumcise the son with joy, For we should not make one matter contingent upon the other in areas where we are unable to prevent [transgressions].** But we do relate one matter to another in a case where we are able to grant merit. For, God forbid, we should not push him away. In regard to this, it is fitting to say that even sinners in Israel sometimes perform mitzvot that are as numerous as the seeds in a pomegranate. And thus it is demonstrated from the proofs I have brought above that even if the mother should remain a gentile, the son should be immersed [and thus converted] under the supervision of a Beit Din.

7. ***PETAH HA-OHEL: A RABBINIC
GUIDE TO CONVERSION:***

KABBALAT OL MITZVOT
WITHIN A
CONSERVATIVE/MASORTI
CONTEXT

The acceptance of the yoke of the commandments is integral to the

conversion process. In a real sense such acceptance not only serves as the means by which conversion is accomplished, but should be the ultimate *raison d'être* of *giyyur*, whatever the other ancillary motivations and considerations. Given its centrality to the process, it is not surprising that Jewish Law requires a higher standard of attestation for *kabbalat ol mitzvot* than for immersion or ritual circumcision for the purpose of conversion. Of the aforementioned only the acceptance of the yoke of the commandments must take place in the form of a declaration made in the presence of a *bet din*.^[1]

The act of *kabbalat ol mitzvot* includes a formal acceptance of *halakhah* as an authoritative system of normative religious practice, i.e., an acknowledgment that the laws of the Torah and the rabbinic means by which those are interpreted have a valid claim on the behavior of the individual. Thus, an individual who maintains, for example, that the laws of *kashrut* have no authority where s/he is concerned most certainly has not accepted the yoke of the commandments, and should be refused conversion.^[2]

That an individual has yet to achieve full observance of Jewish law, however, is not tantamount to an *a priori* rejection of the authoritative character of *halakhah*. As our colleague, Jeremy Kalmanofsky, observes:

When candidates close themselves to any particular mitzvah – say they are uninterested in its wisdom, unwilling to try its discipline – we should reject them. The commandments have been disclosing their holiness to millions of Jews over hundreds of years. New Jews must open themselves to each practice – even the strange ones. No one fulfills every mitzvah. None of us fulfills even a single mitzvah perfectly. Sometimes we try and fail. Sometimes on ethical, communal or personal grounds, we stop trying. But as long as we live, we stand subject to these sacred obligations. Accepting Jewish religious discipline for Conservative converts means

accepting that each *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*. Under this view, selective observance would not vitiate verbal acceptance. Even harboring reservations about observance at the moment of conversion is not necessarily defective. For we demand that converts sincerely declare before the *bet din* their religious attachment to Judaism – its deeds and teachings – and their aspirations to grow in holiness.[3]

The process of rabbinic sponsorship must incorporate significant discussion about the concept of *kabbalat ol mitzvot* and its impact on the day-to-day life of the conversion candidate. Should the rabbi encounter a categorical rejection of specific *mitzvot* (“I will never observe” as opposed “I’m not yet ready to observe”), or a general denial of *halakhic* authority, it would be wise to defer convening the *bet din* pending further discussion with the candidate.[4] In the final analysis we must applaud the integrity of those who cannot in good conscience accept the yoke of the commandments. Without such acceptance, however, *halakhic* conversion remains impossibility.[5]

To be truly meaningful, however, *kabbalat ol mitzvot* requires more than a declarative statement in the presence of a *bet din*. The person who acknowledges the authority of Torah in the abstract, while deferring the observance of the most basic *mitzvot* to some indeterminate future, has said little of significance. The emptiness of such tokenism is self-evident; the real question, then, is what constitutes credible evidence of *kabbalat ol mitzvot*. Does rabbinic literature offer any guidance regarding the observance of specific *mitzvot* as prerequisites to conversion?

The classic description of conversionary protocol as it applies to the teaching and acceptance of *mitzvot* is found in the Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 47a-b and echoed in subsequent *halakhic* literature. Several important points emerge from a

consideration of this source. They include:

1) The *gemara* does not insist on full observance of *mitzvot* prior to conversion. Indeed the choice of the term *kabbalat ol mitzvot* instead of *shemirat mitzvot* supports this contention. The sages understood the growth of religious commitment to be an ongoing endeavor. This awareness finds beautiful expression in the Talmudic story of the dramatically different attitudes taken by Hillel and Shammai to those who came to convert with ulterior motives.[7] Indeed, the very wording of the passage from *Yevamot*, “some of the major and some of the minor commandments” highlights precisely this point. An important difference exists between Franz Rosenzweig’s sincere “*noch nicht*” and the individual whose own words and deeds reveal that the conversion process marks the end of Jewish growth.

Consequently, perhaps the single most important criterion for a rabbinic sponsor to employ in evaluating a candidate’s readiness is whether or not the individual is likely to continue to grow in observance and commitment *after* conversion – a determination that obviously will depend in large measure on the quantitative and qualitative changes in behavior that have already taken place during the pre-conversionary period itself. An honest and open conversation between sponsoring rabbi and candidate about specific plans for continued post-conversionary religious growth should also play an integral role in the evaluation process.

2) A perusal of the *halakhic* literature yields no “top ten” list of specific *mitzvot* reflective of genuine *kabbalat ol mitzvot*. Other than the acceptance of Jewish law as a normative and binding system of authority over the individual, *halakhah* is silent on the matter of specific observances. That a strong correlation exists between degree of commitment and the declaration

degree of commitment and the declaration of such is self-evident; nevertheless it is impossible to define how much observance constitutes a minimal threshold of *kabbalat ol mitzvot*.

3) While not determinative from a *halakhic* standpoint, the specific mention in the *gemara* of various forms of *tzedakah*, *helev* and Shabbat point, at least symbolically, to the integral character of acts of *hesed*, *kashrut* and Sabbath observance to any meaningful definition of *kabbalat ol mitzvot*.^[8] The specific relevance of precepts affecting daily life lies in their power to form and shape Jewish identity. In particular, given Conservative/Masorti Judaism's insistence that *kashrut*, Shabbat and ethical behavior constitute normative aspects of Jewish practice, a conversion that did not require some substantive (even if less than complete) commitment to these practices would be largely devoid of meaning.

CONCLUSION:

To be considered a valid conversion, *kabbalat ol mitzvot* requires a formal declarative statement in the presence of a *bet din*. The statement of *kabbalat ol mitzvot* published in *Moreh Derekh* (pp. J14-16) furnishes an appropriate declaration of such, as it stipulates "commitment to the God of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and the people of Israel," and further requires the individual to pledge "to live the Jewish way of holiness by accepting the *mitzvot* of Judaism now and always, here and wherever I may be."

In addition, the *Moreh Derekh* document calls upon the individual to declare specifically that, "I have determined to the best of my ability, to make the following Jewish observances an integral part of both my life and that of my family." The ensuing list includes Jewish education for all children, observance of Shabbat and holidays, incorporation of *kashrut* into

one's life, affiliation with a synagogue and attendance at services, regular prayer, *gemilut hasadim*, the study of Torah, and identifying with the Jewish community and the State of Israel. As a list of basic practices necessary for meaningful religious expression without being exhaustive, this document clearly reflects both the legal and spiritual intention of *kabbalat ol mitzvot*. Accordingly, members of the Rabbinical Assembly are encouraged to use the declaration found in *Moreh Derekh* as a basis for the profession of *kabbalat ol mitzvot* by *gerim* at the time of their conversion.

[1] It is always preferable for a *bet din* to supervise ritual immersion and *hattafat dam brit* or *brit milah*. If these were performed in the presence of two valid witnesses, however, it is acceptable – at least after the fact. In addition the declaration of *kabbalat ol mitzvot* must take place during the day, i.e., at a time when a rabbinical court would normally convene. *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Deah, 268:3* also *Ta”Z ad loc.*

[2] A deliberate and explicit rejection of a particular commandment in the presence of a *bet din* is sufficient grounds for the invalidation of conversion: “*iht 'sjt rcsn .uj 'vru, hrks kcek tca ohcfuf scug "/u,ut ihkcn BT, Bekhorot 30b.* The plain meaning of the text indicates that a categorical refusal to observe any commandment is sufficient to terminate the conversion process. Nevertheless, this source does not prove that a potential *ger* must explicitly pledge to accept and demonstrate observance of all precepts prior to conversion. Not only does the foundational text on conversion in *Bavli Yevamot 47a-b* (see below) demonstrate the unlikelihood of this premise, but all the major codes of Jewish law require no more than a general acceptance of the yoke of the commandments as a prerequisite to

conversion.

In the last 150 years, however, a number of prominent ultra-Orthodox authorities have made the novel claim that *kabbalat ol mitzvot* is synonymous with complete observance – indeed, some have gone so far as to opine that the failure to maintain such observance is sufficient to render an individual's conversion null and void, even after the fact. See Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah*, vol. I, responsum 124. For a fuller treatment of the ultra-Orthodox view, its origins, and the ramifications for conversion in the modern State of Israel, see Rabbi David Golinkin, "A Responsum Regarding the Annulment of Conversions," *Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2, no. 9 (June 2008).

[3] Jeremy Kalmanofsky, "Spiritual Citizenship: Reflections on *Hilkhot Giyyur*," *Conservative Judaism* Vol. LX, nos. 1-2 (Fall/Winter 2007-08), p. 36. One finds a similar approach among Sephardic *poskim* and moderate Orthodox rabbis as well. Writing a half century ago, Rabbi Moshe Ha-Kohen of Djerba opined: "*Kabbalat ol ha-mitzvot* does not mean that he is required to accept *all the mitzvot to observe them* [italics added], but to accept all the *mitzvot* of the Torah and, if he transgresses, to accept upon himself the punishments he deserves. Therefore, we do not care if at the hour that he accepts the *mitzvot* he has decided to transgress a specific commandment and [as a consequence] receive the punishment." *V'heshiv Moshe on Yoreh Deah* 268, no. 50. Rabbi Ben Zion Meir Ouziel, the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel, reached the same conclusion in his *Piskei Uziel*: "It is clear [from *Bavli, Yevamot* 47a – see below] that we do not demand of him to observe [all of] the *mitzvot*, and it is also unnecessary that the *Bet Din* know that he will observe them, for if not, no converts will be accepted in Israel, for who will guarantee that this gentile will be loyal to all the *mitzvot* in the Torah." *Piskei Ouziel*. no. 65. p. 385.

Speaking from a centrist Orthodox perspective in North America, Rabbi Maurice Lamm further notes, "One may choose to observe or not to observe, but one may not decide what Jewish law demands to be observed. Therefore, if a convert candidate – before becoming a Jew – rejects the practice of a specific mitzvah as fundamentally not valid and therefore not to be observed, rather than because he simply does not have the capacity to keep it now, he disqualifies himself as a credible candidate for conversion." See Lamm, *Becoming a Jew* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1991), p. 211.

[4] An individual ambivalent about *kabbalat ol mitzvot* can and should delay the conversion . . . even with one foot poised to enter the *mikveh*. See *Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Deah*, 268:1.

[5] The *Committee on Jewish Law and Standards* has examined the issue whether or not a conversion obtained through deception may be annulled. Rabbi Steven Saltzman's *teshuva* concludes, "Where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proselyte acted dishonestly, withholding information vital to our ability to make a coherent decision, then the conversion may be considered null and void." The responsum was adopted by a vote of 11-8 with no abstentions. See also the concurring opinion of Rabbi Avram Reisner and the dissenting addenda of Rabbi Morris Shapiro. *Proceedings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards*, 1986-1990, pp. 185-200, 547-554.

[6] BT, *Yevamot* 47a.

[7] BT, *Shabbat* 31a.

[8] *Helev*, of course, is a precept related to sacrifice, rather than *kashrut*. On the other hand, the prohibition of its consumption is a dietary observance. There are, moreover, myriad associations between altar and dining table in both *halakhah* and *aggadah*.

רפאנו REFAEINU

Healing Service | Shavuot 5781

Rabbinical Assembly Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Rabbi Bryan Wexler

Temple Beth Sholom, Cherry Hill, New Jersey

May 17, 2021

Temple Beth Sholom Healing Service
open to everyone seeking community and comfort.

רְפֹאֵנוּ ה' וְנִרְפָּא

Heal me O Lord, and I shall be healed.

JEREMIAH 17:14

מִן הַמַּצַּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה,

עֲנֵנִי בַמְּרוֹחַב יְהוָה.

Min hameitzar, karati yah, annani vamerhav yah.

From the depths I cried out to God, and God answered me from a place of expanse (with open arms)

Let all who seek comfort under the wings of the Shekhinah, God's presence in our midst, gather at this time to help and support one another: those who need support in their lives, those who are ill, those who are praying and caring for loved ones who are ill, those who are grieving for loved ones who have died, and those who are struggling amidst the pandemic. We turn to our tradition to strengthen and renew ourselves.

We Join Together This Evening

We join together this evening to voice the longings of our hearts in prayer.

In sacred company, we offer our love to the Holy One.

We devote ourselves this evening to psalm and song, study and prayer.

May our hearts be lifted, may our thoughts be deepened, and may our souls like the eagle soar.

Psalm One: A Psalm for Comfort

Listen!

Because I know You will hear me
As I fear this unknown I must enter,
Surrendering my self, my authority,
If only for a brief while.

Listen!

Because I know You will hear
As I praise You at this season
Spreading warmth of renewal over cold earth,
Even as my soul's chill is warmed.

Listen!

Because I know You are there:
Hearing me,
Warming me,
Renewing me,
Leading me through this time
To a place of health and vigor.

FROM "FLAMES TO HEAVEN: NEW PSALMS FOR HEALING & PRAISE"
BY DEBBIE PERLMAN.

אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים
מֵאֵין יְבֹא עֲזָרִי.
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם ה'
עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

Esa einai el heharim, me'ayin me'ayin yavo ezri

Ezri me'im Hashem, Oseh shamayim va'aretz

I lift up my eyes to the mountains.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 121

Eyes Remade For Wonder

BY RABBI LAWRENCE KUSHNER

Each lifetime is the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.
For some there are more pieces,
For others the puzzle is more difficult to assemble.

Some seem to be born with a nearly completed puzzle.
And so it goes.
Souls trying this way and that
Trying to assemble the myriad parts.

But know this. No one has within themselves
all the pieces to his or her puzzle.
Like before the days they used to seal jigsaw puzzles in
cellophane. Insuring that
All the pieces were there.
Everyone carries with them at least one and probably
Many pieces to someone else's puzzle.

Sometimes they know it.
Sometimes they don't.

And when you present your piece
which is worthless to you,
to another,
whether you know it or not,
whether they know it or not,
You are a messenger from the Most High.

Or Hadash

אור חדש
על ציון תאיר
ונזכה כלנו
מהרה לאורו.

*Or hadash al tziyon ta'ir v'nizkeh kulanu
me'herah le'oro.*

Caure a new light to shine on Zion,
and may we all soon be worthy of its
illumination.

Healing Prayer for a Time of Pandemic

REV. ROGER GENCH

Merciful God, hear our prayers for a world that continues to grapple with a relentless virus, and our gratitude for the light beginning to emerge at the end of a long and deadly tunnel. As vaccines are at last becoming available for COVID-19 and as people begin to be inoculated around the globe, we give thanks for all whose tireless labors have brought us to this day: technicians, scientists, medical personnel, biotech companies and government agencies that have worked together to find a cure that will restore our communities to wholeness and health.

עֲזֵי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה
לְיִשְׁוּעָה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ

Ozi v'zimrat Yah, Vay'hi li lishuah

God is my strength and my might;

God is my deliverance.

PSALM 118:14, EXODUS 15:2

We pray that the reach of these vaccines will encompass the world, especially those places where medical resources have far too often been inadequate to the need...

We continue to pray for healthcare workers around the globe who are running ragged after months of high-risk essential work on the frontlines of this pandemic. Grant them strength, endurance, wisdom and courage for the living of these days. We pray for all who are desperately ill, for those who grieve the loss of loved ones and for those whose physical, mental and economic wellbeing have been most severely impacted by the havoc wrought by the pandemic. Grant wisdom to all entrusted with civic leadership as they discern and negotiate just ways in which to aid those most afflicted. Move our hearts to put partisanship aside for the common good, so that safeguards against the coronavirus will not be ignored and that our communities may be restored and revitalized.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayers. Amen.

A Prayer of Hope During this Pandemic

RABBI NAOMI LEVY

We are frightened, God,
Worried for our loved ones,
Worried for our world.
Helpless and confused,
We turn to You

Seeking comfort, faith and hope.

Teach us God, to turn our panic into patience,
And our fear into acts of kindness and support.

Our strong must watch out for our weak,
Our young must take care of our old.

Help each one of us to do our part to halt the spread of this virus

Send strength and courage to the doctors and nurses
In the frontlines of this battle,

Fortify them with the full force of their healing powers.

Send wisdom and insight to the scientists

Working day and night across the world to discover healing
treatments.

Bless their efforts, God.

Fill our leaders with the wisdom and the courage

To choose wisely and act quickly.

Help us, God, to see that we are one world,
One people

Who will rise above this pandemic together.

Send us health God,

Watch over us,

Grace us with Your love,

Bless us with Your healing light.

Hear us God,

Heal us God,

Amen.

A Prayer for Healers

RABBI AYELET COHEN

May the One who blessed our ancestors
Bless all those who put themselves at risk to care for the sick
Physicians and nurses and orderlies
Technicians and home health aides
EMTs and pharmacists

Hospital social workers, respiratory therapists, and more
Who navigate the unfolding dangers of the world each day,
To tend to those they have sworn to help.

Bless them in their coming home
and bless them in their going out.

Ease their fear. Sustain them.

Source of all breath, healer of all beings,
Protect them and restore their hope.

Strengthen them, that they may bring strength;
Keep them in health, that they may bring healing.

Help them know again a time when they can breathe
without fear.

Bless the sacred work of their hands.

May this plague pass from among us,
speedily and in our days.

Forty-Nine Gates
based on a Teaching by the Netivot Shalom

The Torah mentions the exodus from Egypt fifty times, hinting that there are fifty steps or aspects to coming out of the mindset of slavery. Indeed, the Torah teaches that the Israelites went up out of Egypt hamushim (Exodus 13:18) which literally means “armed” but may also suggest “one-fiftieth.” Thus on the first day of Pesah, we may be said to have walked through the First of fifty gates toward genuine freedom. To complete the exodus, we must journey through another forty-nine gates.

Counting Up

Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz

The ancient rabbis say that when we count the omer, we are counting toward the time that we will receive the Torah. Day by day, week by week, we count, in a highly regulated fashion: when, how, in what language, with or without a blessing, all issues addressed by Jewish law. But what is most noteworthy is that when we count the omer, we count up. Our natural tendency is to count down. We count down the seconds in anticipation of the secular New Year. We count down the days to an upcoming vacation. We count down toward a professional deadline or the end of a specific project.

I can think of only one time in my life when it was natural for me to count up: when I was pregnant. Week by week, month by month, I counted. I was excited about my due date, but also wanted to be pregnant for nine complete months. Like other pregnant women, I knew that the period of gestation was not a simply a time I needed to get past in order for the “real” event to take place; each week, each month, was vital for my baby’s development. Each day had its own significance, nurturing the growth that would be necessary for my baby to enter the world. So quite naturally, I knew to count up.

So too with receiving Torah. Torah defines us as a people; it shapes our individual identities and our character. But its transformative potential is dependent on our preparation. To truly receive Torah, we need to grow into it, to make ourselves ready for it. We count up to remind ourselves of the significance of this gestational time. We count up because each day, each week is an opportunity to identify and refine the ways we want to grow: as moral people, as people who live a life of care, as people willing to be instructed.

סִכָּה... שְׂאִינָה גְבוּהָה עֶשְׂרֵה טַפָּחִים... פְּסוּלָה

A sukkah... less than ten handbreadths high... is invalid.

- MISHNAH SUKKAH 1:1

מנלן?... ותניא, רבי יוסי אומר: מעולם לא ירדה שכינה למטה, ולא עלו משה ואליהו למרום, שנאמר "השמים שמים לה' והארץ נתן לבני אדם" (תהלים קט"ו). ולא ירדה שכינה למטה? והכתיב "וירד ה' על הר סיני" (שמות י"ט). – למעלה מעשרה טפחים... ולא עלו משה ואליהו למרום? והכתיב "ומשה עלה אל האלהים" (שמות יט) למטה מעשרה.

From where do we derive this law? ...It was taught that Rabbi Yosi taught: The Shekhinah never descended to earth, nor did Moses or Elijah ever ascend to Heaven, as it is written, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth God gave to the sons of men" (Psalms 115:16). But did not the Shekhinah descend to earth? Is it not in fact written, "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai?" (Exodus 19:20) — That was above ten handbreadths [from the summit]. ... But did not Moses and Elijah ascend to Heaven? Is it not in fact written, "And Moses went up unto God?" (Exodus 19:3) — [That was] to a level lower than ten [handbreadths from heaven].

- BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TRACTATE SUKKAH 4B-5A

We are Loved by an Unending Love

We are loved by an unending love,
We are embraced by arms that find us
Even when we are hidden from ourselves.
We are touched by fingers that soothe us even when
We are too proud for soothing.
We are counseled by voices that guide us
Even when we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love.
We are supported by hands that uplift us
Even in the midst of a fall.
We are urged on by eyes that meet us
Even when we are too weak for meeting.
We are loved by an unending love.
Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled...
Ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
Ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;
We are loved by an unending love.

-RABBI RAMI M. SHAPIRO

A Prayer for Strength

Be with me, God. I feel so lost. I can't seem to escape the dark cloud that is hanging over me today. Help me, God. Give me strength to combat despair and fear. Show me how to put my pain into perspective. Teach me to have faith in the new day that is coming. Thank you, God, for today's blessings, for tomorrow's hope, and for Your abiding love. Amen.

Teach me always to believe in my power to return to life, to hope, and to You, God, no matter what pains I have endured, no matter how far I have strayed from You. Give me the strength to resurrect my weary spirit. Revive me, God, so I can embrace life once more in joy, in passion, in peace. Amen.

When I feel tainted, God, remind me that I am holy.
When I feel weak, teach me that I am strong.
When I am shattered, assure me that I can heal.
When I am weary, renew my spirit.
When I am lost, show me that you are near. Amen.

May God heal you, body and soul.
May your pain cease,
May your strength increase,
May your fears be released,
May blessings, love and joy surround you. Amen.

-RABBI NAOMI LEVY, FROM TALKING TO GOD: PERSONAL PRAYERS FOR TIMES OF JOY,
SADNESS, STRUGGLE AND CELEBRATION

You'll Never Walk Alone

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone
You'll never walk alone
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone
You'll never walk alone

SONGWRITERS: OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II / RICHARD RODGERS

The Angel Song

בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיְּמִינִי מִיְּכֵיֵל
וּמִשְׁמֹאלִי גַבְרִיֵּאל וּמִלְפָּנָי אֲוִרִיֵּאל
וּמֵאַחֲרָי רַפָּאֵל וְעַל רֹאשִׁי וְעַל
רֹאשִׁי שְׁכִינַת אֵל.

*B'sheim Hashem elohei Yisrael, mimini Mikhael umismoli Gavriel,
Umilfanai Uriel umeahorai Rafael, v'al roshi shekhinat El*

**In the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, may Michael be at my right hand;
Gabriel at my left; before me, Uriel; behind me, Raphael;
and above my head the divine presence of God.**

Somewhere Over the Rainbow

Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby
Oh, somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue
Clouds high over the rainbow, makes all your dreams come true, ooh
Someday I'll wish upon a star
Wake up where the clouds are far behind me
Where trouble melts like lemon drops
High above the chimney top
That's where you'll find me, oh
Somewhere over the rainbow, blue birds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow
Why, oh why can't I?

A Prayer for those who have lost a loved one

At the rising of the sun and at its going down

We remember Them.

At the blowing of the wind and the chill of winter

We remember Them.

At the opening of the buds and the rebirth of spring

We remember Them.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer

We remember Them.

At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn

We remember Them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends

We remember Them.

As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,

We remember Them.

When we are weary and in need of strength

We remember Them.

When we are lost and sick at heart

We remember Them.

When we have joy we crave to share

We remember Them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make

We remember Them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs

We remember Them.

As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,

We remember Them.

-JACK RIEMER AND SYLVAN D. KAMENS

Mi Sheberakh

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל לֵאָה.

הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וַיְרַפֵּא אֶת _____
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, יְמַלֵּא רַחֲמִים
עֲלֵיהֶם לְהַחֲזִיקָם
וּלְרַפְאוֹתָם וַיְשַׁלַּח לָהֶם
מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן
הַשָּׁמַיִם רְפוּאָת הַנְּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת
הַגּוּף בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר הַחֻלִּים וְחִזַּק אֶת יְדֵי
הַעוֹסְקִים בְּצָרְכֵיהֶם שֶׁבֵת הִיא
מִלְזַעוּק וְרְפוּאָה קְרוֹבָה לְבוֹא הַשְּׂתָה
בְּעִגְלָה וּבְזֶמַן קָרִיב וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן.

May the one who blessed our ancestors Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, bring blessing and
healing to all of us. May the Holy One mercifully restore us to
health and vigor, granting us spiritual and physical well-being,
together with all others who are ill, and may God grant strength
to those who tend to them. Though Shabbat is a time to refrain
from crying out, we yet hope and pray that healing is at hand.

And let us say: Amen

Mi Sheberakh

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ

Mi sheberakh avoteinu mekor haberakha le'imoteinu

May the source of strength
who blessed the ones before us,
Help us find the courage to
make our lives a blessing
And let us say: Amen.

מִי שֶׁבֵרַךְ אִמּוֹתֵינוּ
מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ

Mi sheberakh imoteinu mekor haberakha le'avoteinu

Bless those in need of healing with

רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה

refua sheleimah

The renewal of body,
the renewal of spirit
And let us say: Amen.

WORDS AND MUSIC BY DEBBIE FRIEDMAN, Z"l

Mourner's Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא
בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ
בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעֻגְלָא וּבְזַמַּן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעַלְמֵי
וְלְעַלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא,
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ
דְּקַדְשָׁא, בְּרִידָא הוּא
לְעַלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא,
תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא דְאִמְרוּן בְּעֻלְמָא,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמֵיָא
וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאָמְרוּ, אָמֵן.

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba.

*B'alma di v'ra khir'utei, v'yamlikh malkhutei
b'hayeikhon u-v'yomeikhon u-v'hayei d'khol beit Yisrael
ba'agala u-vi-z'man kariv, v'imru Amen.*

Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh, l'alam u-l'almei 'almaya

*Yitbarakh v'yishtabah, v'yitpa'ar v'yitromam v'yitnasei
v'yit-hadar v'yit'aleh v'yit-halal sh'mei
d'kudsha b'rikh hu l'ela min kol birkhata v'shirata,
tushb'hata v'nehemata, da-amiran b'alma, v'imru, Amen.*

*Y'hey sh'la-ma ra-ba min sh'ma-ya
v'hayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael v'imru, Amen.*

*Oseh shalom bim-ro-mav hu ya-a'seh shalom
alei-nu v'al kol Yisrael v'imru, Amen.*

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which God has created according to God's will.

May God establish God's kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May God's great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be God, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

God who creates peace in God's celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה
שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

*Oseh shalom bimromav Hu ya'aseh shalom
aleinu V'al kol Yisrael*

**May the One who creates peace on
high bring peace to us and to all Israel.**

עֲזִי וְזִמְרַת יְהוָה יְהִי לִי לְשׁוּעָה

Ozi v'zimrat Yah, Vay'hi li lishuah

God is my strength and my might;

God is my deliverance.

PSALM 118:14, EXODUS 15:2



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Conservative Movement Tikkun Leil Shavuot
 Rabbi Gideon Estes
 The Power of Lament

Lamentations	איכה
1	א' אִיכָה
Alas! Lonely sits the city Once great with people! She that was great among nations Is become like a widow; The princess among states Is become a thrall.	אִיכָה יְשֻׁבָה בְּדוֹד הָעִיר רַבַּתִּי עִם הַיְתָה כְּאַלְמָנָה רַבַּתִּי בְּגוֹיִם שְׂרָתִי בְּמַדִּינֹת הַיְתָה לְמָס: (ס)
Bitterly she weeps in the night, Her cheek wet with tears. There is none to comfort her Of all her friends. All her allies have betrayed her; They have become her foes.	כְּבוֹ תִבְכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה וְדַמְעָתָהּ עַל לְחִיָּהּ אֵין-לָהּ מִנְחָם מִכָּל-אֶהְבִּיָּהּ כְּלִי-רַעִיָּה בְּגָדוּ בָּהּ תִּיּוּ לָהּ לְאֹיְבִים: (ס)
Judah has gone into exile Because of misery and harsh oppression; When she settled among the nations, She found no rest; All her pursuers overtook her In the narrow places.	גְּלָתָהּ יְהוּדָה מֵעַנְי וּמִרַב עֲבֹדָה הִיא יְשֻׁבָה בְּגוֹיִם לֹא מִצְאָה מְנוּחַ כְּלִי-רִדְדָנִיָּה הַשִּׁיגִינָהּ בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים: (ס)
Zion's roads are in mourning, Empty of festival pilgrims; All her gates are deserted. Her priests sigh, Her maidens are unhappy— She is utterly disconsolate!	דְּרָכֶי צִיּוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת מִבְּלִי כְּאֵי מוֹעֵד כְּלִי-שִׁעְרֵיהָ שׁוֹמְמִין כְּהִנָּה נְאֻנָּחִים בְּתוֹלְתֶיהָ נוֹגָוֹת וְהִיא מֵרָלָה: (ס)
Her enemies are now the masters, Her foes are at ease, Because Adonai has afflicted her For her many transgressions; Her infants have gone into captivity Before the enemy.	הִיוּ צָרִיָּה לְרֹאשׁ אֹיְבֵיהָ שְׁלֹו כִּי-הִ' הוֹגָה עַל רַב-פְּשָׁעֶיהָ עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שָׁבִי לְפָנֵי-צָר: (ס)
Gone from Fair Zion are all That were her glory; Her leaders were like stags That found no pasture; They could only walk feebly Before the pursuer.	וַיֵּצֵא מִן-בֵּית- [מִבֵּית-] צִיּוֹן כְּלִי-הַדְּגָרָה הִיוּ שְׂרָיָה כְּאֵלִים לֹא-מִצְאָו מִרְעֵה וַיִּלְכוּ בְּלֹא-כֹחַ לְפָנֵי רוֹדְף: (ס)
All the precious things she had In the days of old Jerusalem recalled In her days of woe and sorrow, When her people fell by enemy hands With none to help her; When enemies looked on and gloated Over her downfall.	זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְמֵי עֲנָיָהּ וּמְרוֹדֶיהָ כָּל מַחְמֵלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר הִיוּ מִיְמֵי גְדָם בְּנִפְלַע עֲמָה בְּיַד-צָר וְאֵין עוֹזֵר לָהּ רֹאיוֹהָ צָרִים שִׁחְקוּ עַל מִשְׁבַּתָּהּ: (ס)
Jerusalem has greatly sinned, Therefore she is	חֲטָא חֲטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל-כֵּן לִנְיָדָה הַיְתָה כְּלִי-מִכְבָּדֶיהָ הִזְלִיחָה כִּי-רָאוּ עֲרֹמָתָהּ גַּם-הִיא נְאֻנָּחָה וְתִשָּׁב אַחֲזֹר: (ס)
	טְמֵאָתָה בְּשׁוֹלֵיָהּ לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרֵימָהּ וַתִּרְדּוּ פְּלָאִים אֵין מִנְחָם לָהּ רֹאֶה ה' אֶת-עַנְיָי כִּי הִגְדִּיל אוֹיֵב: (ס)
	יְדוּ פָּרַשׁ צָר עַל כְּלִי-מַחְמֵדֶיהָ כִּי-רֹאֲתָהּ גּוֹיִם כְּבָאוּ מִקְדָּשֶׁהָ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ לֹא-יָבֹאוּ בְּקִהְלָהּ: (ס)
	כְּלִי-עֲמָה נְאֻנָּחִים מִבְּקָשִׁים לָחֵם נִתְּנוּ מִחֲמוּדֵיהֶם [מִחֲמֵדֵיהֶם] בְּאֶכָּל לְהַשִּׁיב גִּפְשׁ רֹאֶה ה' וְהִבִּיטָהּ כִּי הִנִּיתִי זוֹלָלָה: (ס)
	לֹא אֵלֵיכֶם כְּלִי-עֲבָרֵי דְרָף הִבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ אִם-יִשׁ מִכְּאוֹב כְּמִכְּאוֹבֵי אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:

become a mockery. All who admired her despise her, For they have seen her disgraced; And she can only sigh And shrink back.

Her uncleanness clings to her skirts. She gave no thought to her future; She has sunk appallingly, With none to comfort her.— See, O LORD, my misery; How the enemy jeers!

The foe has laid hands On everything dear to her. She has seen her Sanctuary Invaded by nations Which You have denied admission Into Your community.

All her inhabitants sigh As they search for bread; They have bartered their treasures for food, To keep themselves alive.— See, O LORD, and behold, How abject I have become!

May it never befall you, All who pass along the road— Look about and see: Is there any agony like mine, Which was dealt out to me When Adonai afflicted me On His day of wrath?

From above He sent a fire Down into my bones. He spread a net for my feet, He hurled me backward; He has left me forlorn, In constant misery.

The yoke of my offenses is bound fast, Lashed tight by His hand; Imposed upon my neck, It saps my strength; Adonai has delivered me into the hands Of those I cannot withstand.

Adonai in my midst has rejected All my heroes; He has proclaimed a set time against me To crush my young men. As in a press Adonai has trodden Fair Maiden Judah.

For these things do I weep, My eyes flow with tears: Far from me is any comforter Who might revive my spirit; My children are forlorn, For the foe has prevailed.

) ס)

ממרום ושלח־אש בעצמתי וירדנה פרש רשת לרגלי
השיבני אחור נתננלי שממה כל־היום הנה:) ס)

נשקד על פשעי בידו ישתרנו עלו על־צוארי הכשיל כחי
נתנני אדני בידי לא־אובל קום:) ס)

סלה כל־אבירי | אדני בקרבי קרא עלי מועד לשפר בחורי
גת דרה אדני לבתולת בת־הנדה:) ס)

על־אלה | אני בוכה עיני | עיני ירדה מים כי־רחק ממני
מנחם משיב נפשי הני בני־שוממים כי גבר אויב:) ס)

פרשה ציון בידיה אין מנחם לה צנה יתנה ליעקב סביבי
צרו היתה ירושלם לנדה ביניהם:) ס)

צדיק הוא יתנה כי פיהו מריתי שמעו־נא כל־עמים
[העמים] וראו מכאבי בתולתי ובחורי הלקו בשבי:) ס)

קראתי למאקהל המה רמוני כהני וזקני בעיר געו כי־בקשו
אכל למו וישבו את־נפשם:) ס)

ראה יתנה כי־צר־לי מעי חמרמרו נהפך לבי בקרבי כי מרו
מריתי מתוץ שכלה־חרב בבית כמות:) ס)

שמעו כי נאנחה אני אין מנחם לי כל־איבי שמעו רעתי
ישו כי אתה עשית הגאת יום־קראת ויהנו כמוני:) ס)

תבא כל־רעתם לפניך ועולל למו באשר עוללת לי על כל־
פשעי כי־רבות אנחתי ולגי דגוי:) פ)

ב'

איכה יעיב באפו | אדני את־בת־ציון השליף משמים ארץ
תפארת ישראל ולא־יגבר הדם־רגלי ביום אפו:) ס)

בלע אדני לא [ולא] חמל את כל־נאות יעקב הרס בעברתו
מבצרי בת־הנדה הגיע לארץ חלל ממלכה ושריה:) ס)

גדע בקרי אף כל קרו ישראל השיב אחר ימינו מפני אויב
ויבער בייעקב פאש להבה אכלה סביב:) ס)

דרה קשאו פאזיב נצב ימינו פאר ויהיג כל מחמד־יעון
באהל בת־ציון שפך פאש חמתו:) ס)

<p>Zion spreads out her hands, She has no one to comfort her; Adonai has summoned against Jacob His enemies all about him; Jerusalem has become among them A thing unclean.</p>	<p>הִלָּה אֲדַגִּי כְּאוֹיֵב בִּלְעַי יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּלְעַל כְּלֵי־אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ שַׁחַת מִבְּצֻרָיו וַיִּרְבַּב בְּבֵת־יְהוָה תִּצְנֶנֶה וְאֲנִיָּהּ: (ס)</p>
<p>Adonai is in the right, For I have disobeyed Him. Hear, all you peoples, And behold my agony: My maidens and my youths Have gone into captivity!</p>	<p>וַיִּחַמְסוּ בְּגוֹשׁוֹ שַׁחַת מוֹעֵדוֹ שִׁפְחָה יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וְשִׁפְחָת וַיִּנְאַצְוּ בְּזַעַם־אִפּוֹ מִלֶּדֶד וַכְּהוּ: (ס)</p>
<p>I cried out to my friends, But they played me false. My priests and my elders Have perished in the city As they searched for food To keep themselves alive.</p>	<p>זָנְחָה אֲדַגִּי מִזְבַּח־וֶאֱרָר מִקִּדְשׁוֹ הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב חוֹמַת אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ קוֹל נְתַנּוּ בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּנוּם מוֹעֵד: (ס)</p>
<p>See, O LORD, the distress I am in! My heart is in anguish, I know how wrong I was To disobey. Outside the sword deals death; Indoors, the plague.</p>	<p>הָשִׁיב יְהוָה לְהִשְׁחִית חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן גִּטָּה קוֹ לֹא־הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ מִבְּלַעַע וַיִּצְבֹּל־וַחֲוָמָה וַחֲוָמָה יַחֲזֶנּוּ אֲמַלְלוּ: (ס)</p>
<p>When they heard how I was sighing, There was none to comfort me; All my foes heard of my plight and exulted. For it is Your doing: You have brought on the day that You threatened. Oh, let them become like me!</p>	<p>טָבְעוּ בְּאֶרֶץ שַׁעֲרֶיהָ אֶבֶד וְשִׁבַר בְּרִיתֶיהָ מִלִּפְנֵי וְשַׁרְיָהּ בַּגּוֹיִם אֵין תּוֹרָה גַּם־נִבְיָאֶיהָ לֹא־מִצְאוּ קִזְזוֹן מֵה': (ס)</p>
<p>Let all their wrongdoing come before You, And deal with them As You have dealt with me For all my transgressions. For my sighs are many, And my heart is sick.</p>	<p>יָשִׁבוּ לְאֶרֶץ יְדִמוֹ וְזָקְנֵי בַת־צִיּוֹן הִעֲלוּ עֶפְרָיִם עַל־רֵאשֵׁי חֲגָרוֹ שֹׂקִים הוֹרִידוּ לְאֶרֶץ רֵאשֵׁי בְּתוּלוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם: (ס)</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>כְּלוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי חֲמַרְמָרוּ מֵעֵי נִשְׁפָּה לְאֶרֶץ כְּבֹדֵי עַל־שִׁבָר בַּת־עַמִּי בְּעֵטָף עוֹלָל יוֹנֵק בְּרַחֲבוֹת קִרְיָהּ: (ס)</p>
<p>Alas! Adonai in His wrath Has shamed Fair Zion, Has cast down from heaven to earth The majesty of Israel. He did not remember His Footstool On His day of wrath.</p>	<p>לְאִמְתָם יֹאמְרוּ אֵיךְ דָּגְנוּ וַיִּגְנוּ בְּהַתְּעַטְפָם כְּחָלָל בְּרַחֲבוֹת עִיר בְּהַשְׁתַּפֵּחַ נִפְשָׁם אֶל־חֵיק אִמְתָּם: (ס)</p>
<p>Adonai has laid waste without pity All the habitations of Jacob; He has razed in His anger Fair Judah's strongholds. He has brought low in dishonor The kingdom and its leaders.</p>	<p>מֵה־אֲעִידֶךָ מֵה־אֲדַמֶּה־לְךָ הַבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם מֵה־אֲשׁוּהֶה־לְךָ וַאֲנַחְמֶךָ בְּתוּלוֹת בַּת־צִיּוֹן כִּי־גָדוֹל כִּיִּם שִׁבַרְךָ מִי יִרְפָּא־לְךָ: (ס)</p>
<p>In blazing anger He has cut down All the might of Israel; He has withdrawn His right hand In the presence of the foe; He has ravaged Jacob</p>	<p>נִבְיָאֵיךְ קִזְזוּ לְךָ שָׁוָא וַתִּפָּל וְלֹא־גִלּוּ עַל־עֲוֹנֶיךָ לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבִיתְךָ [שְׁבִיתְךָ] וַיִּחֲזוּ לְךָ מִשְׁאוֹת שָׁוָא וּמַדּוּחִים: (ס)</p>
	<p>סָפְקוּ עֲלֶיךָ פְּלִיִם כְּלֵי־עֲבָרֵי יָדְךָ שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֵאשֵׁי עַל־בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם הַנְּזֹאת הָעִיר שִׁיאֲמָרוּ כְּלִילַת יָפִי מִשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ: (ס)</p>
	<p>פָּצוּ עֲלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם כְּלֵי־אוֹיְבֶיךָ שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחַרְקוּ־שָׁוֶן אֲמָרוּ בִלְעֵנוּ אִךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שִׁקּוּיָהּ מִצְּאוּנוּ רְאִינוּ: (ס)</p>
	<p>עֲשֵׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם בַּצַּע אֲמַרְתוּ אֲשֶׁר צָנְהָ מִימֵי־לְקָדָם הָרַס וְלֹא חָמַל וַיִּשְׁמַח עֲלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב הָרִים קָרוֹ צָרִיךְ: (ס)</p>
	<p>צָעַק לָבָם אֶל־אֲדַגִּי חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן הוֹרִידֵי כַּנְּחַל דְּמַעַה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה אֶל־תַּתְּנֵי פוּגַת לְךָ אֶל־תִּדְמֶם בַּת־עֵינֶיךָ: (ס)</p>
	<p>קוּמִי רִנֵּי בַלִּיל [בְּלִילֶיךָ] לְרֹאשׁ אֲשִׁמְרוֹת שִׁפְכֵי כַמִּים לִפְנֵי נֶכַח פְּנֵי אֲדַגִּי שְׂאֵי אֲלֵיו פָּפִיךָ עַל־נִפְשׁ עוֹלְלֶיךָ הַעֲטוּפִים</p>

<p>like flaming fire, Consuming on all sides.</p> <p>He bent His bow like an enemy, Poised His right hand like a foe; He slew all who delighted the eye. He poured out His wrath like fire In the Tent of Fair Zion.</p> <p>Adonai has acted like a foe, He has laid waste Israel, Laid waste all her citadels, Destroyed her strongholds. He has increased within Fair Judah Mourning and moaning.</p> <p>He has stripped His Booth like a garden, He has destroyed His Tabernacle; Adonai has ended in Zion Festival and sabbath; In His raging anger He has spurned King and priest.</p> <p>Adonai has rejected His altar, Disdained His Sanctuary. He has handed over to the foe The walls of its citadels; They raised a shout in the House of Adonai As on a festival day.</p> <p>Adonai resolved to destroy The wall of Fair Zion; He measured with a line, refrained not From bringing destruction. He has made wall and rampart to mourn, Together they languish.</p> <p>Her gates have sunk into the ground, He has smashed her bars to bits; Her king and her leaders are in exile, Instruction is no more; Her prophets, too, receive No vision from Adonai.</p> <p>Silent sit on the ground The elders of Fair Zion; They have strewn dust on their heads And girded themselves with sackcloth; The maidens of Jerusalem have bowed Their heads to the ground.</p> <p>My eyes are spent with tears, My heart is in tumult, My being melts away Over the ruin of my poor people, As babes and sucklings languish In the squares of the city.</p> <p>They keep asking their mothers, “Where is bread and wine?” As they languish like battle-wounded In the squares of the town, As their</p>	<p>בָּרָעַב בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצוֹת: (ס)</p> <p>רָאָה ה' וְהִבִּיטָה לְמִי עוֹלָלָתָּ כִּי אִם־תִּאֲכַלְנָה נַשִּׁים פְּרִיָם עַל־לִי טַפְלִים אִם־יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כִּי־נָבִיא: (ס)</p> <p>שָׁכְבוּ לְאַרְצָן חוּצוֹת נֶעַר וְזָמֹן בְּתוֹלְתֵי וּבַחֲוָרֵי נָפְלוּ בְּהָרֵב הִרְגִּתָּ בַּיּוֹם אֶפְדָּה טַבְחָתָּ לֹא חָמְלָתָּ: (ס)</p> <p>תִּקְרָא כִּי־יּוֹם מוֹעֵד מִגּוּרֵי מִסְכִּיבִים וְלֹא הָיָה בַּיּוֹם אַרְיֵיהוּנָה פְּלִיט וְשָׁרִיד אֲשֶׁר־טַפְחָתִי וְרַב־יְתִי אֲבִי כָלָם: (פ)</p> <p>ג'</p> <p>אֲנִי הַגִּבֹּר רָאָה עֵינֵי בְּשָׁבֵט עֲבָרְתוֹ: אוֹתִי נִהְגָּה וַיִּלְךָ תִּשְׁפֹּךְ וְלֹא־אָוֹר: אֶדָּה בִּי יִשָּׁעַב יִהְפֹּךְ יָדוֹ כָּל־הַיּוֹם: (ס) בָּלָה בְּשָׂרֵי וַעֲוֵרֵי שֹׁבֵר עֲצָמוֹתֵי: בָּגַה עָלַי וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וַתִּלְאַחַה: בְּמַחְשָׁפִים הוֹשִׁיבֵנִי כְּמַתִּי עוֹלָם: (ס) גָּדַר בַּעֲדַי וְלֹא אֶצְאָה הַכְּבִיד נִחְשָׁתִי: גַּם כִּי אֲזַעַק וְאֲשׁוּעַ שְׁתֵּם תִּפְלֹתֵי: גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בְּגִזִּית נְתִיבַתִּי עֵנָה: (ס) דָּב אֲרָב הוּא לִי אַרְיָה [אַרְיָה] בְּמִקְדָּשָׁיִם: דָּרְגֵי סוֹנֵר וַיִּפְשַׁחֲנִי שָׁמְנֵי שִׁמְם: דָּרַף קִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּצְיָבֵנִי כַּמַּטְרָא לַחֲזָן: (ס) הִבִּיא בְּכִלְיוֹתַי בְּנֵי אֲשֻׁפְתּוֹ: הִיִּיתִי שְׁחֹק לְכָל־עַמִּי נִגְיַנְתֶּם כָּל־הַיּוֹם: הַשְׁבִּיעֵנִי בְּמִרוֹרִים הִרְוֵנִי לַעֲנָה: (ס) וַיִּגְרַם בְּחֻצָּץ שִׁנֵּי הַכְּפִישָׁנִי בְּאַפְּרָ:</p>
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<p>life runs out In their mothers' bosoms.</p> <p>What can I take as witness or liken To you, O Fair Jerusalem? What can I match with you to console you, O Fair Maiden Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea: Who can heal you?</p> <p>Your seers prophesied to you Delusion and folly. They did not expose your iniquity So as to restore your fortunes, But prophesied to you oracles Of delusion and deception.</p> <p>All who pass your way Clap their hands at you; They hiss and wag their head At Fair Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called Perfect in Beauty, Joy of All the Earth?"</p> <p>All your enemies Jeer at you; They hiss and gnash their teeth, And cry: "We've ruined her! Ah, this is the day we hoped for; We have lived to see it!"</p> <p>Adonai has done what He purposed, Has carried out the decree That He ordained long ago; He has torn down without pity. He has let the foe rejoice over you, Has exalted the might of your enemies.</p> <p>Their heart cried out to Adonai. O wall of Fair Zion, Shed tears like a torrent Day and night! Give yourself no respite, Your eyes no rest.</p> <p>Arise, cry out in the night At the beginning of the watches, Pour out your heart like water In the presence of Adonai! Lift up your hands to Him For the life of your infants, Who faint for hunger At every street corner.</p> <p>See, O LORD, and behold, To whom You have done this! Alas, women eat their own fruit, Their new-born babes! Alas, priest and prophet are slain In the Sanctuary of Adonai!</p> <p>Prostrate in the streets lie Both young and old. My maidens and youths Are fallen by the sword; You slew them on Your day of wrath,</p>	<p>ותננח משלום נפשי נשיתי טובה: ואמר אבד נצחתי ותחלתני מה': (ס) זכר-עניי ומרוגי לעגה וראש: זכור תזכור ותשיח [ותשוח] עלי נפשי: זאת אשיב אל-לבי על-כן אוהיל: (ס) חסדי ה' כִּי לֹא-תִמְנֶנּוּ כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו: חֲדָשִׁים לְבַקְרִים רַבָּה אֲמוֹנָתָה: חֲלָקֵי ה' אֲמַרְהָ נִפְשֵׁי עַל-כֵּן אוֹתִיל לוֹ: (ס) טוב ה' לקונו לגנפוש תדרשנו: טוב ויחיל ודומם לתשועת ה': טוב לגבר כִּי-יִשָּׂא עַל בְּנֵעוּרָיו: (ס) ישב בְּדֹד ויִדָּם כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו: יתן בעפר פִּיהוּ אוֹלֵי יַשׁ תִּקְוָה: יתן למכהו לחי ישבע בְּחִרְפָּה: (ס) כִּי לֹא יִנָּח לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי: כִּי אִם-הוֹגָה וְרַחֵם כָּרֵב חֲסִדוֹ [חֲסִדָּיו]: כִּי לֹא עָנָה מִלְּבֹו וַיִּגָּה בְּנִי-אִישׁ: (ס) לדבא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ: להטות משפט-גִּבֹר נגד פני עליון: לענת אדם בריבו אֲדָנִי לֹא רָאָה: (ס) מי זה אמר וְתָהּ אֲדָנִי לֹא צָוָה: מפי עליון לֹא תֵצֵא הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב: מה-יתאונן אדם חִי גִבֹר עַל-חֲטָאוֹ [חֲטָאָיו]: (ס)</p>
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<p>You slaughtered without pity.</p> <p>You summoned, as on a festival, My neighbors from roundabout. On the day of the wrath of Adonai, None survived or escaped; Those whom I bore and reared My foe has consumed.</p> <p>3</p> <p>I am the man who has known affliction Under the rod of His wrath;</p> <p>Me He drove on and on In unrelieved darkness;</p> <p>On none but me He brings down His hand Again and again, without cease.</p> <p>He has worn away my flesh and skin; He has shattered my bones.</p> <p>All around me He has built Misery and hardship;</p> <p>He has made me dwell in darkness, Like those long dead.</p> <p>He has walled me in and I cannot break out; He has weighed me down with chains.</p> <p>And when I cry and plead, He shuts out my prayer;</p> <p>He has walled in my ways with hewn blocks, He has made my paths a maze.</p> <p>He is a lurking bear to me, A lion in hiding;</p> <p>He has forced me off my way and mangled me, He has left me numb.</p> <p>He has bent His bow and made me The target of His arrows:</p> <p>He has shot into my vitals The shafts of His quiver.</p>	<p>נחפשה דררינו ונחלקה ונשובה עדה':</p> <p>נשא לכבנו אל־כפים אל־אל בשמים:</p> <p>נחנו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלקת: (ס)</p> <p>סבתה באר ותרדפנו הרגת לא סמלת:</p> <p>סבותה בענו לך מעבור תפלה:</p> <p>סזי ומאוס תשימנו בקרב העמים: (ס)</p> <p>פצו עלינו פיהם כל־איבנו:</p> <p>פחד ופחת הנה לנו השאת והשקר:</p> <p>פלגי־מים תרד עיני על־שקר בת־עמי: (ס)</p> <p>עיני נגרה ולא תדמה מאין הפגות:</p> <p>עד־ינשקיר וירא יהוה משמים:</p> <p>עיני עוללה לנפשי מכל בנות עירי: (ס)</p> <p>צוד צדוני כצפור איבי חנם:</p> <p>צמתו בבור חלי וידוי־אבן בי:</p> <p>צפוי־מים על־ראשי אמרתי נגזרתי: (ס)</p> <p>קראתי שמך יהוה מבור תחתיות:</p> <p>קולי שמעת אל־תעלם אזנך לרוחתי לשועתי:</p> <p>קרבת ביום אקראך אמרת אל־תירא: (ס)</p> <p>קבת אדגי ריבי נפשי גאלת חיי:</p> <p>ראיתה ה' ענותי שפטה משפטי:</p> <p>ראיתה כל־נקמתם כל־מחשבתם לי: (ס)</p> <p>שמעת חרפתם יהוה כל־מחשבתם עלי:</p> <p>שפתי קמל והגיונם עלי כל־היום:</p>
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<p>I have become a laughingstock to all people, The butt of their gibes all day long.</p>	<p>שבתם וקיימתם הביטתם אגני מנגינתם: (ס)</p>
<p>He has filled me with bitterness, Sated me with wormwood.</p>	<p>תשיב לך גמול יהיה כמעשה ידיהם: תתן להם מגנת לב תאלתה להם:</p>
<p>He has broken my teeth on gravel, Has ground me into the dust.</p>	<p>תרדף באר ותשמידם מתחת שמי ה': (פ)</p>
<p>My life was bereft of peace, I forgot what happiness was.</p>	<p>ד' איכה יועם זקב ישנא הכתם הטוב תשתפכנה אבני-קדש בראש כל-חוצות: (ס)</p>
<p>I thought my strength and hope Had perished before Adonai.</p>	<p>בני ציון הנקרים המסלאים בפו איכה נחשבו לנבלי-תרוש מעשה ידי יוצר: (ס)</p>
<p>To recall my distress and my misery Was wormwood and poison;</p>	<p>גם-תנין [תנים] תלצו שד היניקו גוריגו בת-עמי לאכזר כי ענים [פיענים] במדבר: (ס)</p>
<p>Whenever I thought of them, I was bowed low.</p>	<p>דבק לשון יונק אל-חכו בצמא עוללים שאלו להם פרוש אין להם: (ס)</p>
<p>But this do I call to mind, Therefore I have hope:</p>	<p>האכלים למעדנים נשמו בחוצות האמנים עלי תולע חבקו אשפתות: (ס)</p>
<p>The kindness of Adonai has not ended, His mercies are not spent.</p>	<p>ויגדל עון בת-עמי מחטאת סדם ההפוכה כמו-רגע ולא-תתלו בה ימים: (ס)</p>
<p>They are renewed every morning— Ample is Your grace!</p>	<p>זכו וזיריה משלג צחו מחלב אדמו עצם מפנינים ספיר גורתם: (ס)</p>
<p>“Adonai is my portion,” I say with full heart; Therefore will I hope in Him.</p>	<p>חשה משחור תארם לא נפרו בחוצות צפד עורם על-עצמם יבש היה כעז: (ס)</p>
<p>Adonai is good to those who trust in Him, To the one who seeks Him;</p>	<p>טובים היו חללי-תורב מחללי רעב שהם יזכו מדקרים מתגובת שדי: (ס)</p>
<p>It is good to wait patiently Till rescue comes from Adonai.</p>	<p>ידי נשים רחמניות בשלו ילדיהן היו לברות למו בשבר בת-עמי: (ס)</p>
<p>It is good for a man, when young, To bear a yoke;</p>	<p>כלה ה' את-חמתו שפד תרון אפו ויצת-אש בציון ותאכל סודתיה: (ס)</p>
<p>Let him sit alone and be patient, When He has laid it upon him.</p>	<p>לא האמינו מלכי-ארץ וכל [כל] ישבי תבל כי יבא צר ואויב בשערי ירושלים: (ס)</p>
<p>Let him put his mouth to the dust— There may</p>	<p></p>

<p>yet be hope.</p> <p>Let him offer his cheek to the smiter; Let him be surfeited with mockery.</p> <p>For Adonai does not Reject forever,</p> <p>But first afflicts, then pardons In His abundant kindness.</p> <p>For He does not willfully bring grief Or affliction to man,</p> <p>Crushing under His feet All the prisoners of the earth.</p> <p>To deny a man his rights In the presence of the Most High,</p> <p>To wrong a man in his cause— This Adonai does not choose.</p> <p>Whose decree was ever fulfilled, Unless Adonai willed it?</p> <p>Is it not at the word of the Most High, That weal and woe befall?</p> <p>Of what shall a living man complain? Each one of his own sins!</p> <p>Let us search and examine our ways, And turn back to Adonai;</p> <p>Let us lift up our hearts with our hands To God in heaven:</p> <p>We have transgressed and rebelled, And You have not forgiven.</p> <p>You have clothed Yourself in anger and pursued us, You have slain without pity.</p> <p>You have screened Yourself off with a cloud, That no prayer may pass through.</p>	<p>מחטאת נביאיה עונות כהגיה השפכים בקרבה גם צדיקים: (ס)</p> <p>נעו עורים בחיצות נגאלו בדם בלא יוכלו יגעו בלבשיהם: (ס)</p> <p>סורו טמא קראו למו סורו סורו אל-תגעו כי נצו גם-געו אָמרו בגוים לא יוסיפו לגור: (ס)</p> <p>פגי ה' חלקם לא יוסיף להביטם פגי כהנים לא נשאו זקנים [וזקנים] לא תגנו: (ס)</p> <p>עודינה [עודיניו] תכלינה עינינו אל-עזרתנו הכל בצפנתנו צפינו אל-גוי לא יושע: (ס)</p> <p>צדו צעיניו מלכת ברחבתינו קרב קצינו מלאו זמינו כיי-בא קצינו: (ס)</p> <p>קלים היו רדפינו מנשרי שמים על-ההרים דלקנו במדבר ארבו לנו: (ס)</p> <p>רוח אפינו משיח יהיה נלכד בשחיתותם אשר אמרנו בצלו גתיה בגוים: (ס)</p> <p>שישי ושחקי בת-אדום יושבתי [יושבת] בארץ עוז גם- על-יד מעבר-פוס משפרי ותערי: (ס)</p> <p>תם-עונד בת-ציון לא יוסיף להגלותה פקד עונד בת-אדום גלה על-חטאתיה: (פ)</p> <p>ה'</p> <p>זכר ה' מה-הנה לנו הביט [הביטה] וראה את-הקרפתנו:</p> <p>נחלתנו נהפכה לזרים בתינו לנכרים:</p> <p>יתומים הלינו אין [ואין] אב אמתינו פאלמנות:</p> <p>מימינו בכסף שתינו עצינו במתיר נבאו:</p> <p>על צוארנו נרדפנו גענו לא [ולא] הונח לנו:</p> <p>מצרים נתנו יד אשור לשפוע לקם:</p> <p>אבתינו חטאו אינם [ואינם] אנחנו [ואנחנו] עונתיהם</p>
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<p>You have made us filth and refuse In the midst of the peoples.</p> <p>All our enemies loudly Rail against us.</p> <p>Panic and pitfall are our lot, Death and destruction.</p> <p>My eyes shed streams of water Over the ruin of my poor people.</p> <p>My eyes shall flow without cease, Without respite,</p> <p>Until Adonai looks down And beholds from heaven.</p> <p>My eyes have brought me grief Over all the maidens of my city.</p> <p>My foes have snared me like a bird, Without any cause.</p> <p>They have ended my life in a pit And cast stones at me.</p> <p>Waters flowed over my head; I said: I am lost!</p> <p>I have called on Your name, O LORD, From the depths of the Pit.</p> <p>Hear my plea; Do not shut Your ear To my groan, to my cry!</p> <p>You have ever drawn nigh when I called You; You have said, "Do not fear!"</p> <p>You championed my cause, O Lord, You have redeemed my life.</p> <p>You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done me; Oh, vindicate my right!</p> <p>You have seen all their malice, All their designs against me;</p>	<p>סְבִלְנוּ:</p> <p>עֲבָדִים מְשֻׁלוּ כְּנוֹ פֶרֶק אֵין מִיָּדָם:</p> <p>בְּנִפְשָׁנוּ נִבְיֵא לְחִמּוֹנוּ מִפְּנֵי תֵרֵב הַמְדַבֵּר:</p> <p>עוֹרְגוּ בְּתַנּוּר נִכְמְרוּ מִפְּנֵי זִלְעָפוֹת רָעֵב:</p> <p>נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עָזוּ בְּתֵלֶת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה:</p> <p>שָׂרִים בִּיָּגָם נִתְלוּ פָּנֵי זַמְנָיִם לֹא נִתְקְרוּ:</p> <p>בַּחוּרִים טְחוּן נִשְׂאוּ וּנְעָרִים בְּעֵץ בְּשָׁלוֹ:</p> <p>זַמְנָיִם מִשְׁעַר שְׂכָתוֹ בַּחוּרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם:</p> <p>שָׁבַת מְשׁוֹשׁ לָבְנוּ נִהְפָּךְ לְאַבֵּל מִחֻלְנוּ:</p> <p>נִפְלָה עֲטָרַת רֹאשֵׁנוּ אִוִּי-גָא לְנוּ כִּי חֲטָאנוּ:</p> <p>עַל-זֶה הָיָה דָוָה לָבְנוּ עַל-אַלֶּה חֲשָׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ:</p> <p>עַל הַר-צִיּוֹן שִׁשְׁמָם שׁוֹעֲלִים הַלְכוּ-בוֹ: (פ)</p> <p>אַתָּה ה' לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב בְּסֶאֱךָ לְדָר וְדוֹר:</p> <p>לְמָה לְנִצָּחַת תִּשְׁפָּחֵנוּ תַעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְץ יָמִים:</p> <p>הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה וְ אֵלֶיךָ וּנְשׁוּב [וּנְשׁוּבָה] חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם:</p> <p>כִּי אִם-מָאֵס מְאֹסָתָנוּ קִצְפָתָ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מָאֵד:</p> <p>[הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וּנְשׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקִדְמָם]</p>
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You have heard, O LORD, their taunts, All
their designs against me,

The mouthings and pratings of my adversaries
Against me all day long.

See how, at their ease or at work, I am the butt
of their gibes.

Give them, O LORD, their deserts According
to their deeds.

Give them anguish of heart; Your curse be
upon them!

Oh, pursue them in wrath and destroy them
From under the heavens of Adonai!

4

Alas! The gold is dulled, Debased the finest
gold! The sacred gems are spilled At every
street corner.

The precious children of Zion; Once valued as
gold— Alas, they are accounted as earthen
pots, Work of a potter's hands!

Even jackals offer the breast And suckle their
young; But my poor people has turned cruel,
Like ostriches of the desert.

The tongue of the suckling cleaves To its
palate for thirst. Little children beg for bread;
None gives them a morsel.

Those who feasted on dainties Lie famished in
the streets; Those who were reared in purple
Have embraced refuse heaps.

The guilt of my poor people Exceeded the
iniquity of Sodom, Which was overthrown in a
moment, Without a hand striking it.

Her elect were purer than snow, Whiter than
milk; Their limbs were ruddier than coral,

Their bodies were like sapphire.

Now their faces are blacker than soot, They are not recognized in the streets; Their skin has shriveled on their bones, It has become dry as wood.

Better off were the slain of the sword Than those slain by famine, Who pined away, [as though] wounded, For lack of the fruits of the field.

With their own hands, tenderhearted women Have cooked their children; Such became their fare, In the disaster of my poor people.

Adonai vented all His fury, Poured out His blazing wrath; He kindled a fire in Zion Which consumed its foundations.

The kings of the earth did not believe, Nor any of the inhabitants of the world, That foe or adversary could enter The gates of Jerusalem.

It was for the sins of her prophets, The iniquities of her priests, Who had shed in her midst The blood of the just.

They wandered blindly through the streets, Defiled with blood, So that no one was able To touch their garments.

“Away! Unclean!” people shouted at them, “Away! Away! Touch not!” So they wandered and wandered again; For the nations had resolved: “They shall stay here no longer.”

Adonai’s countenance has turned away from them, He will look on them no more. They showed no regard for priests, No favor to elders.

Even now our eyes pine away In vain for deliverance. As we waited, still we wait For a nation that cannot help.

Our steps were checked, We could not walk in
our squares. Our doom is near, our days are
done— Alas, our doom has come!

Our pursuers were swifter Than the eagles in
the sky; They chased us in the mountains, Lay
in wait for us in the wilderness.

The breath of our life, Adonai's anointed, Was
captured in their traps— He in whose shade we
had thought To live among the nations.

Rejoice and exult, Fair Edom, Who dwell in
the land of Uz! To you, too, the cup shall pass,
You shall get drunk and expose your
nakedness.

Your iniquity, Fair Zion, is expiated; He will
exile you no longer. Your iniquity, Fair Edom,
He will note; He will uncover your sins.

5

Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
Behold, and see our disgrace!

Our heritage has passed to aliens, Our homes
to strangers.

We have become orphans, fatherless; Our
mothers are like widows.

We must pay to drink our own water, Obtain
our own kindling at a price.

We are hotly pursued; Exhausted, we are given
no rest.

We hold out a hand to Egypt; To Assyria, for
our fill of bread.

Our fathers sinned and are no more; And we
must bear their guilt.

Slaves are ruling over us, With none to rescue

<p>us from them.</p> <p>We get our bread at the peril of our lives, Because of the sword of the wilderness.</p> <p>Our skin glows like an oven, With the fever of famine.</p> <p>They have ravished women in Zion, Maidens in the towns of Judah.</p> <p>Princes have been hanged by them; No respect has been shown to elders.</p> <p>Young men must carry millstones, And youths stagger under loads of wood.</p> <p>The old men are gone from the gate, The young men from their music.</p> <p>Gone is the joy of our hearts; Our dancing is turned into mourning.</p> <p>The crown has fallen from our head; Woe to us that we have sinned!</p> <p>Because of this our hearts are sick, Because of these our eyes are dimmed:</p> <p>Because of Mount Zion, which lies desolate; Jackals prowl over it.</p> <p>But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever, Your throne endures through the ages.</p> <p>Why have You forgotten us utterly, Forsaken us for all time?</p> <p>Take us back, O LORD, to Yourself, And let us come back; Renew our days as of old!</p> <p>For truly, You have rejected us, Bitterly raged against us. Take us back, O LORD, to Yourself, And let us come back; Renew our days as of old!</p>	
6	7

<p>-For the leader; with instrumental music on the sheminith. A psalm of David.</p> <p>O LORD, do not punish me in anger, do not chastise me in fury.</p> <p>Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I languish; heal me, O LORD, for my bones shake with terror.</p> <p>My whole being is stricken with terror, while You, LORD—O, how long!</p> <p>O LORD, turn! Rescue me! Deliver me as befits Your faithfulness.</p> <p>For there is no praise of You among the dead; in Sheol, who can acclaim You?</p> <p>I am weary with groaning; every night I drench my bed, I melt my couch in tears.</p> <p>My eyes are wasted by vexation, worn out because of all my foes.</p> <p>Away from me, all you evildoers, for Adonai heeds the sound of my weeping.</p> <p>Adonai heeds my plea, Adonai accepts my prayer.</p> <p>All my enemies will be frustrated and stricken with terror; they will turn back in an instant, frustrated.</p>	<p>לְמִנְצַחַת בְּנִגְיֹנוֹת עַל־הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:</p> <p>יְהוָה אֵל־בְּאַפְּךָ תוֹכִיחֵנִי וְאֵל־בְּחַמְדְּךָ תִּסְרָנִי:</p> <p>חַנּוּנֵי ה' כִּי אֶמְלֵל אֲנִי רַפְּאֵנִי ה' כִּי נִבְהַלְוּ עֲצָמָי:</p> <p>וּנְפֹשִׁי נִבְהַלָּה מְאֹד וְאֵת [וְאֵתָה] יְהוָה עַד־מָתָי:</p> <p>שׁוּבָה ה' חֲלֻצָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי לְמַעַן חֲסִדְּךָ:</p> <p>כִּי אִין בְּמֹות זְכָרְךָ בְּשֵׁאוֹל מִי יוֹדֶה־לָּךְ:</p> <p>גַּעַתִּי בְּאַנְחֹתֵי אִשְׁחָה בְּכָל־לַיְלָה מִטְתִּי בְּדַמְעֹתַי עַרְשִׁי אֶמְסָה:</p> <p>עֲשִׂשָׁה מִכַּעַס עֵינַי עֲתָקָה בְּכָל־צוֹרָרַי:</p> <p>סוּרוּ מִמֶּנִּי כָל־פְּעֻלֵי אָוֹן כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל בְּכִנִּי:</p> <p>שָׁמַע ה' תְּחִנָּתִי יְהוָה תִּפְלֹתַי יִקַּח:</p> <p>יָבֹשׁוּ וְיִבְהַלְוּ מְאֹד כָּל־אֹיְבֵי יָשׁוּבוּ יָבֹשׁוּ רַגְעַ:</p>
<p>13</p> <p>For the leader. A psalm of David.</p> <p>How long, O LORD; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?</p> <p>How long will I have cares on my mind, grief</p>	<p>י"ג</p> <p>לְמִנְצַחַת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:</p> <p>עַד־אֲנָה ה' תִּשְׁכַּחֵנִי גִצַּח עַד־אֲנָה תִּסְתִּיר אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי:</p> <p>עַד־אֲנָה אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי יָגוֹן בְּלִבִּי יוֹמָם עַד־אֲנָה רָוִם אֹיְבֵי עָלַי:</p>

<p>in my heart all day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?</p> <p>Look at me, answer me, O LORD, my God! Restore the luster to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;</p> <p>lest my enemy say, “I have overcome him,” my foes exult when I totter.</p> <p>But I trust in Your faithfulness, my heart will exult in Your deliverance. I will sing to Adonai, for He has been good to me.</p>	<p>הַבִּיטָה עָנְנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָאֵירָה עֵינַי פְּרֹאֲשָׁן הַמָּוֹת: פְּרֹאֲמַר אִיבֵי יִכְלֹתֵיו צָרִי לְגִילּוֹ כִּי אָמוּט: וְאֲנִי בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחַתִּי יִגָּל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ אֲשִׁירָה לֵה' כִּי גָּמַל עָלַי:</p>
<p>130</p> <p>A song of ascents. Out of the depths I call You, O LORD.</p> <p>O Lord, listen to my cry; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.</p> <p>If You keep account of sins, O LORD, Lord, who will survive?</p> <p>Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe.</p> <p>I look to the LORD; I look to Him; I await His word.</p> <p>I am more eager for the Lord than watchmen for the morning, watchmen for the morning.</p> <p>O Israel, wait for the LORD; for with the LORD is steadfast love and great power to redeem.</p> <p>It is He who will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.</p>	<p>ק"ל</p> <p>אֲשִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת מִמַּעַמְמָקִים קְרֹאתֶיךָ ה': אֲדַנְּי שְׁמַעָה בְּקוֹלִי תִהְיֶינָה אַזְנוֹיֶךָ קִשְׁבוֹת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי: אִם-עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמַר-יְיָ אֲדַנְּי מִי יַעֲמֵד: כִּי-עָמַךְ הַסְּלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּגְרָא: קִנִּיתִי יְהוָה קִוְיָה נַפְשִׁי וְלֹד-כִּרְוֹ הוֹחֵלְתִי: נַפְשִׁי לְאֲדֹנָי מִשְׁמָרִים לְבַקֵּר שֹׁמְרִים לְבַקֵּר: יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי-יְהוָה כִּי-עַם-הוּא הַחֶסֶד וְהַרְבֵּה עֲמֹו פְּדוֹת: וְהוּא יַפְדֶּה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנֹתָיו:</p>

<p>38</p> <p>A psalm of David. Lehazkir.</p> <p>O LORD, do not punish me in wrath; do not chastise me in fury.</p> <p>For Your arrows have struck me; Your blows have fallen upon me.</p> <p>There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your rage, no wholeness in my bones because of my sin.</p> <p>For my iniquities have overwhelmed me; they are like a heavy burden, more than I can bear.</p> <p>My wounds stink and fester because of my folly.</p> <p>I am all bent and bowed; I walk about in gloom all day long.</p> <p>For my sinews are full of fever; there is no soundness in my flesh.</p> <p>I am all benumbed and crushed; I roar because of the turmoil in my mind.</p> <p>O Lord, You are aware of all my entreaties; my groaning is not hidden from You.</p> <p>My mind reels; my strength fails me; my eyes too have lost their luster.</p> <p>My friends and companions stand back from my affliction; my kinsmen stand far off.</p> <p>Those who seek my life lay traps; those who wish me harm speak malice; they utter deceit all the time.</p> <p>But I am like a deaf man, unhearing, like a dumb man who cannot speak up;</p>	<p>ל"ח</p> <p>מזמור לדוד להזכיר:</p> <p>יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי בְּקָצְפֶךָ תּוֹכִיחֵנִי וּבְחַמְתֶּךָ תִּסְרֹנֵנִי:</p> <p>כִּי־חָצִיף גִּחְתּוּ בִּי וּתְנַחַת עָלַי יָדָךְ:</p> <p>אִי־מָתָם בְּבִשְׂרֵי מִפְנֵי זַעֲמֶךָ אִי־שְׁלוֹם בְּעַצְמֵי מִפְנֵי חֲטָאתֵי:</p> <p>כִּי עֲוֹנֹתַי עָבְרוּ רֹאשֵׁי כַּמְשָׂא כָבֹד יִכְבְּדוּ מִמֶּנִּי:</p> <p>הִבְאִישׁוּ גִמְקוֹ חִבּוּרֹתַי מִפְנֵי אֹלֹתַי:</p> <p>נִעֲנִיתִי שַׁחְתִּי עַד־מָאֵד כָּל־הַיּוֹם קִנְרַת הַלִּבִּיתִי:</p> <p>כִּי־כִסְלִי מְלֹאָו נִקְלָה וְאִין מָתָם בְּבִשְׂרֵי:</p> <p>נִפְוִגְוֹתַי וְנִדְבִיתִי עַד־מָאֵד שְׁאֵגְתִי מִנְהַמַּת לִבִּי:</p> <p>אֲדַנִּי נִגְדַתְּ כָל־תַּאֲוֹתַי אֲנַחְתִּי מִמֶּךָ לֹא־נִסְתַּרְתָּה:</p> <p>לִבִּי סִחַרְחַר עָזַבְנִי כַחַי וְאוֹר־עֵינַי גַּם־הֵם אִין אֶתִּי:</p> <p>אֶהְבִּי וְרַעִי מִנְגִיד נִגְעֵי יַעֲמָדוּ וְקִרְוֵבֵי מִרְחַק עָמְדוּ:</p> <p>וַיִּנְקָשׁוּ מִבְּקָשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי וְדַרְשֵׁי רַעְתִּי דָּבְרוּ הַגּוֹת וּמִרְמוֹת כָּל־הַיּוֹם יְהִיגוּ:</p> <p>וְאִנִּי בַחֲרֹשׁ לֹא אֲשַׁמַּע וּכְבֹּאֵלִים לֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי:</p> <p>וְאֵהִי בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמַע וְאִין כְּפִיו תּוֹכְחוֹת:</p> <p>כִּי־לֹךְ ה' הוֹחֵלְתִי אֶתְּהַ תַּעֲנֶה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהֵי:</p> <p>כִּי־אָמַרְתִּי פֹן־יִשְׁמַח־לִי בְּמוֹט רַגְלִי עָלַי הִגְדִּילוּ:</p> <p>כִּי־אֲנִי לְצַלַּע נָכוֹן וּמִכְאוּבֵי נִגְדֵי תְמִיד:</p> <p>כִּי־עֹנֵי אֲגִיד אֲדַאֵג מִחֲטָאתַי:</p> <p>וְאִזְבִּי חַיִּים עֲצָמוּ וּרְבּוּ שִׁנְאֵי שְׁקָר:</p> <p>וּמִשְׁלֵמֵי רַעַת תַּחַת טוֹבָה יִשְׁטַנּוּנִי תַחַת רְדוּפֵי־[רַדְפֵי־]</p>
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<p>I am like one who does not hear, who has no retort on his lips.</p> <p>But I wait for You, O LORD; You will answer, O Lord, my God.</p> <p>For I fear they will rejoice over me; when my foot gives way they will vaunt themselves against me.</p> <p>For I am on the verge of collapse; my pain is always with me.</p> <p>I acknowledge my iniquity; I am fearful over my sin;</p> <p>for my mortal enemies are numerous; my treacherous foes are many.</p> <p>Those who repay evil for good harass me for pursuing good.</p> <p>Do not abandon me, O LORD; my God, be not far from me;</p> <p>hasten to my aid, O Lord, my deliverance.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">טוב:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">אל־תִּעֲזֹבֵנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֶל־תִּרְתַּק מִמֶּנִּי:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">תוֹשָׁה לְעִזְרוֹתַי אֲדֹנָי תִּשׁוּעָתִי:</p>
<p>123</p> <p>A song of ascents. To You, enthroned in heaven, I turn my eyes.</p> <p>As the eyes of slaves follow their master's hand, as the eyes of a slave-girl follow the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are toward the LORD our God, awaiting His favor.</p> <p>Show us favor, O LORD, show us favor! We have had more than enough of contempt.</p> <p>Long enough have we endured the scorn of the complacent, the contempt of the haughty.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">קכ"ג</p> <p style="text-align: right;">שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲלֵיךָ נִשְׁאַאתִי אֶת־עֵינַי הַיֹּשְׁבֵי בַשָּׁמַיִם:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">הֲבֵנָה כְּעֵינַי עֲבָדִים אֶל־יְד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינַי שִׁפְחָה אֶל־יְד גְּבֻרָתָהּ כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד לְשִׁיחָנוּ:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">תִּנְנוּ ה' תִּנְנוּ כִּי־רַב שָׂבַעְנוּ בּוֹז:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">רַבַּת שְׂבַעָה־לָּהּ נִפְשָׁנוּ הִלְעַג הַשְּׂאֲנָנִים הַבּוֹז לְגֵאוּנִים:</p>

The Reward for Observing Mitzvot: In This World or in the Next?

Guiding Questions

1. Is there a reward in observing commandments? How about avoiding sin?
2. Is quality of observance more important (e.g., *Hiddur Mitzvah*) or quantity of commandments observed?
3. Do some commandments receive more of a reward than others? Are some sins more cursed than others?
4. Is the reward received in this world or in the World to Come? Is there even a World to Come?

Sanhedrin Chapter 10 Mishnah 1

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר
ועמך כלם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ נצר מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר. ואלו שאין להם חלק (ישעיהו ס)
לעולם הבא, האומר אין תחיית המתים מן התורה, ואין תורה מן השמים, ואפיקורס

רבי עקיבא

אומר, אף הקורא בספרים החיצונים, והלוחש על המכה
ואומר

כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך (שמות טו)

אבא שאול

אומר, אף ההוה את השם באותיותיו

All of the Jewish people, even sinners and those who are liable to be executed with a court-imposed death penalty, **have a share in the World-to-Come**, as it is stated: **“And your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, for My name to be glorified”** (Isaiah 60:21). **And these** are the exceptions, the people **who have no share in the World-to-Come**, even when they fulfilled many mitzvot: **One who says: There is no resurrection of the dead derived from the Torah**, and one who says: The **Torah did not originate from Heaven**, and an *epikoros*, who treats Torah scholars and the Torah that they teach with contempt. **Rabbi Akiva says: Also** included in the exceptions are **one who reads external literature**, and **one who whispers invocations over a wound and says** as an invocation for healing: **“Every illness that I placed upon Egypt I will not place upon you, for I am the Lord, your Healer”** (Exodus 15:26). By doing so, he shows contempt for the sanctity of the name of God and therefore has no share in the World-to-Come. **Abba Shaul says: Also** included in the exceptions is **one who pronounces the ineffable name** of God as it is written, **with its letters**.

5. Sanhedrin continues with a further list of those denied a place in the World to Come. How can the text say everyone has a place in the World to Come and then give numerous exceptions?

Kiddushin Chapter 1 Mishnah 10

מתני' כל העושה מצוה אחת מטיבין לו ומאריכין לו ימיו ונוחל את הארץ וכל שאינו עושה מצוה אחת אין מטיבין לו ואין מאריכין לו ימיו ואינו נוהל את הארץ

Anyone who performs one mitzva has goodness bestowed upon him, his life is lengthened, and he inherits the land, i.e., life in the World-to-Come. And anyone who does not perform one mitzva does not have goodness bestowed upon him, his life is not lengthened, and he does not inherit the land of the World-to-Come.

6. Do you agree with Sanhedrin (one major sin leads to removal from World to Come) or Kiddushin (one mitzvah leads to entering the World to Come)?

Gemara on Kiddushin 1:10 (Kiddushin 39b)

גמ' ורמינהי אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא אלו הן כבוד אב ואם וגמילות חסדים והכנסת אורחים והבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

GEMARA: And the Gemara raises a contradiction from a mishna (Pe'a 1:1): These are the matters that a person engages in and enjoys their profits in this world, and the principal reward remains for him for the World-to-Come, and they are: Honoring one's father and mother, acts of loving kindness, hospitality toward guests, and bringing peace between one person and another; and Torah study is equal to all of them. This indicates that one is rewarded in this world only for fulfilling these mitzvot, but not for fulfilling all mitzvot.

אמר רב יהודה הכי קאמר כל העושה מצוה אחת יתירה על זכויותיו מטיבין לו ודומה כמי שמקיים כל התורה כולה מכלל דהנך אפילו בחדא נמי אמר רב שמעיה לומר שאם היתה שקולה מכרעת

Rav Yehuda said that this is what the mishna is saying: Anyone who performs one mitzva in addition to his other merits, and thereby tips the scale of all his deeds to the side of righteousness, has goodness bestowed upon him and is compared to one who fulfills the entire Torah. The Gemara asks: One can learn **by inference** from here **that** regarding **those** mitzvot listed in the mishna in *Pe'a* one is rewarded **even for one** of them, notwithstanding the fact that overall, his sins are more numerous. **Rav Shemaya said:** The other mishna serves **to say that if one's sins and merits were of equal balance, i.e., he has accrued an equal amount of merit and sin, one of these mitzvot tilts the scale in his favor.**

7. Do we buy Rav Shemaya's teaching that our mitzvot are weighed out against our sins?

Why an Emphasis on the World to Come?

Maimonides Mishneh Torah Laws of Repentance Chapter 9

אם עבדתם את ה' בשמחה ושמרתם דרכו משפיע לכם הברכות האלו ומרחיק הקללות מכם עד שתהיו פנויים להתחכם בתורה ולעסוק בה כדי שתזכו לחיי העולם הבא ויטב לך לעולם שכלו טוב ותאריך ימים לעולם שכלו ארך ונמצאתם זוכין לשני העולמות, לחיים טובים בעולם הזה המביאים לחיי העולם הבא.

If you have served God with joyfulness and observed God's way, God will bestow in abundance these blessings upon you and set at a distance the curses from you, so that you be at leisure to grow wise in the wisdom of the Torah, and to busy yourselves therein, and so that you will merit life in the World to Come, and to do you good in the world which is all good, and prolong your days in the world which is unending, and you will find yourselves acquiring two worlds: good living in this world and a life in the World to Come.

8. Can we “have our cake and eat it too” (live a good life in this world as well as merit the World to Come)?

והבטיחנו בתורה שאם נעשה אותה בשמחה ובטובת נפש ונהגה בחכמה תמיד שיסיר ממנו כל הדברים המונעים אותנו מלעשותה כגון חלי ומלקמה ורעב וכיזא בהן. וישפיע לנו כל הטובות המחזיקות את ידינו לעשות התורה כגון שבע ושלום ורבי קסף וזהב. כדי שלא נעסק כל ימינו בדברים שהגוף צריך להן אלא נשב פנויים ללמד בחכמה ולעשות המצוה כדי שנזכה לחיי העולם הבא.

We were, moreover, assured in the Torah that if we will observe it in joy and out of goodness of soul, and constantly meditate in its wisdom, God will detach from us all such things which prevent us from observing it, such as sickness, war, famine, and the like. God will, in addition, be bountiful unto us by giving us all good which sustain our hands to observe the Torah, as plenty, peace, and an increase in silver and gold, so that we be not occupied all our days in the things that are of bodily need, but, instead, be at leisure to study wisdom and observe the precept to acquire life in the World to Come.

9. Maimonides is emphasizing that performing the commandments *lishmah* (“in joy and out of goodness of soul” as opposed to for a reward) will end up being rewarded by physical impediments being taken away from us. Is this accurate in your life experience?

Ibn Ezra Haazinu

Not even one of a thousand people can intellectually grasp the notion of the World to Come...since a physical being cannot understand the non-physical nature of the world to come, the Torah simply hid mention of this from the masses, due to their feeble intellects. But the ultimate reward is the World to Come.

10. Do you agree with Ibn Ezra or is this elitism?

Bahya ibn Pekuda Duties of the Heart

The rewards of the Torah are all supernatural. For how else can the meteorological phenomenon of rainfall be dependent upon a certain people observing specific commandments? But the soul is by nature a metaphysical being, and it is not unnatural that it will (eventually) leave the body and this physical realm...From the fact that only the wicked who receive *karet* (excommunication) do not merit a share in the world to come, one can deduce that as a matter of course, one who is not wicked will indeed receive a share. Hence, there was no need for the Torah to state the obvious!

11. Is the World to Come obvious to you?

Leviticus 26:12

וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי לְעָם:

I will be ever present in your midst: I will be your God, and you shall be My people.

Yehuda HaLevi *The Kuzari*

The Torah does hint at the world to come. For when it writes "I will be ever present in your midst" (Lev. 26:12) it is referring to the *Shechinah* (feminine presence of God) and the virtuous Jewish soul in this world. From it one can deduce the following: if the soul can cling to the *Shechinah* in this world, surely it will be able to cling to the Shechinah in the non-physical World to Come.

12. Do you agree with HaLevi's *kal vahomer* (argument a fortiori) that God being ever present in this world surely means God will be ever present in the World to Come?

Babylonian Talmud Berachot 57b

חמשה וששה ועשרה סימן: חמשה אחד מששים, אלו הן: אש, דבש, ושבט, ושינה, וקלום. אש — אחד מששים לגיהנם. דבש — אחד מששים למן. שבת — אחד מששים לעולם הבא. שינה — אחד מששים למיתה. קלום — אחד מששים לנבואה

The numbers **five, six, and ten are mnemonics** for the categories to follow. The Gemara says: There are **five** matters in our world which are **one-sixtieth** of their most extreme manifestations. **They are: Fire, honey, Shabbat, sleep, and a dream.** The Gemara elaborates: Our **fire** is **one-sixtieth** of the fire of Gehenna; **honey** is **one-sixtieth** of manna; **Shabbat** is **one-sixtieth** of the World-to-Come; **sleep** is **one-sixtieth** of death; and **a dream** is **one-sixtieth** of prophecy.

13. How might observance of Shabbat help us find that taste of the World to Come?

Yedid nefesh by Rabbi Elazar Azrik

*Yedid nefesh, Av harachaman,
meshoch Avdecha el Retzonecha.*

*Yarutz avdecha kemo ayal,
yishtachave mul hadarach.*

Ki ye'erav lo yedidutach, minofet tsuf vechol ta'am.

*Hadur naeh ziv haolam, nafshi cholat ahavatach.
Anah El nah refah nah lah, b'harot lah noam zivach,
Az titchazek v'titrapeh, v'hay'tah lah shifchat olam.*

*Vatik yehemu rachamecha v'chus na al ben ohavach.
Ki zeh kamah nichsof nichsaf, lir'ot b'tiferet uzach.
Anah Eyli, machmad libi, chushah nah v'al titalam.*

Higaleh nah uf'ros chaviv alai, et sukkat shelomach
*Tair eretz mikevodach, nagilah v'nismechah bach.
Maher ahuv, ki va moed, v'choneni kimei olam.*

Lover of my soul, merciful God,
bring your servant close to Your will.

Your servant will run like a gazelle, to prostrate before Your glory.
For Your companionship is purer than any fine taste or flavor.

Perfect, pleasing, radiance of the world, my soul desires Your love.
Please, God, heal her now, as You show her the pleasantness of Your
light.

Now, strengthen and heal her, and she will be for You an eternal
servant.

Ancient one, many your mercies be made manifest,
And have compassion on the child of Your lover.

For it is so long that I have faithfully waited, to see the glory of Your
strength.

Please, my God, the desire of my Heart, hurry and do not hide!

Please, my beloved, reveal yourself and spread over me the shelter of
Your peace.

Fill the world with the light of your glory, so that we may rejoice and
be happy in You.

Be quick, my lover, for the time has come, and have mercy on me for
all time.

(From Lekha Dodi, written by Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz)

Boi beshalom *ateret ba'alah gam besimcha uv' tzohala,*
toch emuney am segulah, boi Kallah, boi Kallah.

Come in peace, crown of your husband,
with rejoicing and with cheerfulness,
in the midst of the faithful of the chosen people:
come, O bride; come, O bride

Erev Ba

Lyrics: Oded Avishar Music: Arielev Levanon

*Shuv haeder noher
Bimvo'ot hakfar
Veolech haavak
Mishvilei-afar
Veharchek od tzemed inbalim
Melave et meshech batz'lalim
Erev ba, erev ba.....*

*Shuv haruach lochesh
Bein gidrot ganim
Uvtzameret habrosh
Kvar namot yonim
Veharchek al ketef hagvaot
Od noshkot, karnaim achronot
Erev ba, erev ba...*

*Shuv havered cholem
Chalomot balat
Uforchim kochavim
Bamaron at at
Veharchek, baemek ha'afel
Melave hatan et bo baleil
Layil rad, layil rad...*

Again the flocks wander
along the village street
and the dust rises
from sandy paths.
And far away the bells
merge with the gathering shadows.
Evening falls, evening falls.

Again the wind whispers
amongst the garden fences
and from the tops of the cypress
the doves coo

And in the distance
the last rays of the sun caress the hilltops
Evening falls, evening falls.

Again the rose dreams
languorous dreams
and gradually on high
the stars begin to twinkle

And afar in the dark valley
the jackal accompanies the approach of night.
Night falls, night falls.

Dodi Li

Music: Nira Chen Lyrics: Shir Hashirim

*Dodi li va'ani lo
Haro'eh bashoshanim*

*Mi zot ola min hamidbar
Mi zot ola
M'kuteret mor, mor ulevona
Mor ulevona*

*Libavtini achoti kala
Libavtini kala*

Uri tzafon uvo'i teiman

My beloved is mine and I am his,
The shepherd [grazing his flock] among the lilies.

Who is this, rising up from the desert
Who is she, rising up?
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense
Myrrh and frankincense.

You have captured my heart, my sister, my bride.
You have captured my heart, my bride.

Awaken, north wind, and come, south wind. (2x)

Erev shel shoshanim

Lyrics: Moshe Dor

Music: Yosef Hadar

*Erev shel shoshanim
Nitzeḥ na el ḥabustan
Mor besamim ulevona
Leraglech miftan.*

*Layla yored le'at
Veru'ach shoshan noshvah
Havah elchash lach shir balat
Zemer shel ahava*

*Shachar homa yonah
Roshech maleh t'lalim
Pich el ḥaboker shoshana
Ektefenu li.*

Meheira- Sheva B'rakhot

*Meheira hashem, hashem 'elohenu yishshama' be'are yehuda
uveḥutsot yerushalayim ḳol śaśon veḳol śimḥa ḳol ḥatan
veḳol kalla ḳol mitshalot ḥatanim meḥuppatam une'arim
mimmishteh neginatam*

Evening of roses
Let's go out to the grove
Myrrh, perfumes, and incense
Are a threshold at your feet.

The night falls slowly
A breeze of roses blows
Let me whisper a song to you quietly
A song of love.

At dawn, a dove is cooing
Your hair is filled with dew
Your lips to the morning are like a rose
I'll pick it for myself

Soon, Lord our God may it be heard in the cities of Judah and the spaces of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of groom and the voice of bride, the voices of grooms from their wedding canopies and youths from their musical banquets.

Sheyn vi di levone

Music: Joseph Rumshinsky

Lyrics : Chaim Tauber/tauzberg

*Sheyn vi di levone,
Likhtik vi di shtern,
Fun himl a matone,
Bistu mir tzugeshikt!
vayl/mayn glik hob ikh gevunen,
Ven ikh hob dikh gefunen,
Sheyn vi toyznt zunen
hostu/hot mayn hartz baglikt.*

*Dayne tzeyndelekh,
vays vi perelekh,
Mit dayne sheyne oygn,
Dayne heyndelekh, dayne herelekh,
Hot mikh tzugetzoygn.*

*Der moykh is mir tzumisht,
Ikh gey arum tzukhisht,
Khveys aley nix vos ikh vil,
Ikh shem zikh, ikh bin royt.
Di tzung is bay mir toyt,
Ikh ken nit zogn, vos ikh vil,
Du bist arayn tzu mir,
In hartzn oyf kvartir.*

*Khtrakh vi tzu zogn dir,
Az du bist...*

*Sheyn vi di levone,
Likhtik vi di shtern,
Fun himl a matone,
Bistu mir tzugeshikt!
vayl/mayn glik hob ikh gevunen,
Ven ikh hob dikh gefunen,
Sheyn vi toyznt zunen
hostu/hot mayn hartz baglikt.*

*As beautiful as the moon,
As radiant as the stars,
You are sent from heaven
As a gift to me.
I won good fortune
When I found you
As beautiful as a thousand suns
You have rejoiced my heart.*

*Your little teeth
Like little pearls*

*With your beautiful eyes,
Your flirting, your hair
Attracted me.*

*My brain is mixed up,
I go around confused.
I myself don't know what I want.
I'm embarrassed, and red-faced.
I've lost my tongue
I cannot explain what I want.
You came to me,
to remain in my heart forever.
I'm thinking how to say to you
that you are...*

*As beautiful as the moon,
As radiant as the stars,
You are sent from heaven
As a gift to me.
I won good fortune
When I found you
As beautiful as a thousand suns
You have rejoiced my heart.*

Zemer Nugeh

Lyrics: Rachel

Music: Shmulik Kraus

*Hatishmah koli
rechoki sheli
Hatishmah koli
ba'asher hinchu*

*Kol koreh be'oz
kol koreh bidmi
Ume'al hazman
metzaveh bracha*

*Eretz zo rabah
udrachim ba rav
Nifgashim ledak
nifradot la'ad
Mevakesh adam
ach koshlot raglav
Lo yuchal limtzo
et asher avad*

*Acharon yamai
ma karov ulai
Ma karov hayom
shel dim'ot preda
Achakeh lecha
ad yichbu chayai
Kechakot rachel ledoda*

Will you hear my voice
so far away from me
Will you hear my voice
where ever you are

A strong voice
praying silently
over time
Sending a blessing

This country is big
and has many roads
We meet for a moment
and separate for ever
A man tries,
but his legs fail
He will never find
what he has lost

My final days
are very close
Near is the day
of good bye tears
I will wait for you
until my life will end
Like Rachel waited for her lover

Haperach Begani

Music/Lyrics: Avihu Medina

*B'yom aviv bahir vatzach
Otach ani zocher
Ukvar me'az heiteiv yada'ti
shelo avateir.
Ki li hayit be'vat einai
bechol yom bechol leil,
hayit li kemal'ach ha-el
mitoch ha'arafel.*

*Ratziti levakesh yadech,
ratziti lach lomar,
sod ahava shebilvavi
shamoor mikol mishmar
ratziti lach lomar ahavati,
ahavti ve nigmar
ach lo he'azti
gam keshehaya k'var me'uchar.*

*Pizmon:
At olami im shachar
at li kol hayom
at olami balayla
at hachalom.*

*At bedami beruchi u'levavi
at ha'nicho'ach hamatok
haperach begani.*

*Meaz halach't yomi koder
aroch u'meshamem
lashav rotzeh ani lishko'ach
u'lehitaleem.
Chazri maher, ki bil'adayich
olami shomem
nadamu meitarei koli
vekinori domem.*

*Pizmon:
At*

*On a clear and crisp spring day
I remember you.
Already since then I knew well
that I won't give up,
for you were in my eye
every night and every day.
You were for me, as a heavenly angel
in the mist.
I wanted to ask for your hand.
I wanted to say to you
the secret of love that is in my heart*

*guarded from all.
I wanted to say to you, my love,
I loved and it's over
for I did not dare
also when it was too late.*

*Chorus:
You are my world at dawn.
You are mine all day.
You are my world at night.
You are the dream.
You are in my blood, my spirit and in
my heart.
You are the sweet fragrance,
the flower in my garden.*

*Since you went my day is dimmed,
long and boring.
In vain I wish to forget
and not to notice.
Return fast, for without you
my world is desolate,
my vocal chords are silenced
and my violin is quiet.*

*Chorus:
You...*

Abanibi

Lyrics: Ehud Manor

Music: Nurit Hirsch

*Abanibi obohebev
Abanibi obohebev obotabach*

*K'shehayinu yeladim,
Ahavnu besodei sodot
El mi hayinu nechmadim
Rak ledodim uledodot.*

*Vehabanot hamiskenot savlu
Hametukot hen rak makot kiblu.
Ve'et mah shehigashnu be'emet
Lachashnu rak bis'fat habeit*

*Ahavah, hi milah yafah
Hi t'filah yafah, hi safah.
Ahavah, hi elai tovah
Hi tamid tit'gaber
Uvis'fat ahavah nedaber*

*Ani cholem vekam shalosh milim
Umahu ha'olam? Shalosh milim.
Vezeah mah she'ani margish ka'et.
Mamash k'mo az. S'fat habet*

I love*
I love you*

When we were children,
we never spoke of love (except secretly)
To whom were we "nice"?
Only to uncles and aunts.

And the poor girls suffered,
the sweet ones only were hit.
And what we truly felt,
we whispered only in "B-language"***

Love, it is a beautiful word
A beautiful prayer, a language
Love, it is good to me
It will overcome all
And we will speak the language of love.

I dream, and three words appear
And what is the world? Three words
And this is what I feel now
Truly just as then - "B-language"*

Ani ve'ata

Lyrics: Arik Einstein

Music: Miki Gavrielov

You and I we'll change the world
you and I by then all will follow
Others have said it before me but
doesn't matter you and I we'll change the world.

You and I we'll try from the beginning
it will be tough for us, no matter, it's not too bad!
Others have said it before me but it
doesn't matter you and I we'll change the world.

*Ani ve'ata neshaneh et ha'olam
ani ve'ata az yavo'u kvar kulam
Amru et zeh kodem lefanai
lo meshaneh, ani ve'ata neshaneh et ha'olam.*

*Ani ve'ata nenaseh mehahatchalah
yihyeh lanu ra ein davar zeh lo nora.
Amru et zeh kodem lefanai
zeh lo meshaneh, ani ve'ata neshaneh et ha'ola*

Hebrew words

Hayalda Hachi Yaffa Bagan

The Prettiest Girl in Kindergarten *from HaKeves HaShisha Asar(1978)*

Music: Yoni Rechter

Lyrics : Yehonatan Geffen

Performed by: Yehudit Ravitz

The prettiest girl in the kindergarten Has the prettiest
eyes in the
kindergarten
and the prettiest braids in the kindergarten
the prettiest in the kindergarten

The more you look
You realize there's nothing more to say She's the prettiest
girl in the
kindergarten

When she smiles, I smile
When she's sad, I don't understand how it's possible
to be sad
when you are the prettiest girl in the kindergarten

*Hayalda hachi yafah bagan
Yesh lah einayim hachi yafot bagan
vetzme'ah hachi yafah bagan
hachi yafah, yafah bagan*

*Vekamah shemabitim bah yoter
Ro'im she'ein mah ledaber
v'hi hayaldah hachi yafah bagan*

*K'shehi mechayechet, gam ani mechayechet
'k'shehi atzuva, ani lo mevinah
Eich efshar lihyot atzuvah
She'at hayaldah hachi yafah
Bagan*

Hebrew words

Panim el mul panim

Lyrics: Ya'kov Gil'ad

Music: Yehudah Poliker

Face to face
Meeting in the middle of life
We arrived to ourselves
From places so different.
The city seems different
As if we were not here,
Tonight you remain
Wait with me for the morning that will come.

We loved once truly and innocently.
We loved in the way that children know.
On me, and also on you, see the years
And you are pretty, face to face.

Face to face
Maybe only once on life
The time closes in on us
A circle of changes.
So what's the past to you
And what brings you here,
Tonight you remain
Wait with me for the morning that will come

*Panim el mul panim
p'gishah ba'emtza hachaim
hig'anu el atzmenu
mim'komot kol kach shonim.
Ha'ir nir'et acheret
ke'ilu lo hayinu poh,
halailah at nish'eret
chaki iti laboker sheyavo.*

*Ahavnu pa'am ba'emet uvatamim
ahavnu k'mo sheyeladim yod'im
Alai vegam alaich ro'im et hashanim
ve'at yafah, panim el mul panim.*

*Panim el mul panim
ulai rak pa'am bachaim
hazman soger aleinu
ma'agal shel shinu'im.
Az mah avar alaich umah mavi otach lefo,
halailah at nish'eret
chaki iti laboker sheyavo.*

Ahavnu pa'am ba'emet uvatamim [Hebrew words](#)

Lechol Echad Yesh

Lyrics: Shlomi Shabat

Music: Uzi Hitman

Every man has a woman
who will close the circle with him.
Every woman has a man
who is destined for her.
Like cloth for the body, like air for breathing,
And among the madness they find comfort.

And you are my sweet soul,
the only one to set me on fire.
With you I am the whole world,
with you I am the universe.
Without you I am half a human being,
without you I am really nothing.

Every man has his dream,
that looks like it's coming true,
Every woman has her dream,
that he will come and storm her heart.
Like water to the thirsty,
like hope for despair.
And among the coldness of the sea,
they have love.

*Lechol echad yesh t'achat shelo,
shetisgor ito ma'agal,
Lechol achat yesh t'echad shela,
sheyavo veyipol bagoral,
Kemo beged laguf, kmo avir linshima,
Uvetoch hatefuf hem motz'im nechama.*

*Ve'at haneshama hametuka sheli,
hayechida shemadlika oti.
Ve'itach ani kol haolam,
ve'itach ani kol hayikum.
Biladayich ani chatzi ben adam,
biladayich ani be'etzem klum.*

*Lechol echad yesh t'chalom shelo,
shenidmeh vehu karev.
Lechol achat yesh t'chalom shela,
sheyavo veyas'ir et halev.
Kemo mayim latzameh,
velayeush - hatikva.
Uveyam shel krirut
yesh lahem ahava.*

Contemporary American Selections

Let There Be Love — Hashkiveinu Duet

English Text by Chaim Stern

Let There Be Love Music by Noah Aronson and Cantor Jodi Sufrin

Hashkiveinu Music by Cantor Dan Singer

Let there be love
And understanding among us.
Let peace and friendship
Be our shelter from life's storms.
Let there be love
And understanding among us.
Let peace and friendship
Be our shelter from life's storms.
Hashkiveinu
Adonai Eloheinu.
Hashkiveinu
L'shalom.
V'haamideinu
Shomreinu l'chaim,
Ufros alienu
Sukkat shlomecha

Unending Love

Lyrics (by Rabbi Rami Shapiro)

Music: Shir Yaakov Feit

We are loved by an unending love.

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

We are supported by hands that uplift us
even in the midst of a fall.

We are urged on by eyes that meet us
even when we are too weak for meeting.
We are loved by an unending love.

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

Sifra Kedoshim 4:12

"And you shall love your neighbor as yourself"
(Leviticus 19:18).

Rabbi Akiva says: This is an all-embracing principle in the Torah.

Ben Azzai says: "This is the numeration of the generations of Adam' (Genesis 5:1). This is an even greater principle."

Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5

Adam, the first man, was created alone: And this was done due to the importance of maintaining peace among people, so that one person will not say to another: My ancestors are greater than yours.

Makkot 23b-24a

(1 of 2 slides)

- Rabbi Simlai taught: There were **613** mitzvot stated to Moses in the Torah, consisting of 365 prohibitions corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, and 248 positive mitzvot corresponding to the number of a person's limbs...
- Rabbi Simlai continued: King David came and established the 613 mitzvot upon **eleven** mitzvot, as it is written: "A Psalm of David. Lord, who shall sojourn in Your Tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Your sacred mountain? He who walks wholeheartedly, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. Who has no slander upon his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up reproach against his relative. In whose eyes a vile person is despised, and he honors those who fear the Lord; he takes an oath to his own detriment, and changes not. He neither gives his money with interest, nor takes a bribe against the innocent. He who performs these shall never be moved" (Psalms, chapter 15)...

Makkot 23b-24a

(2 of 2 slides)

- Rabbi Simlai's exposition continues: Isaiah came and established the 613 mitzvot upon **six**, as it is written: "He who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands from holding of bribes, who stops his ears from hearing blood, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil" (Isaiah 33:15)...
- Micah came and established the 613 mitzvot upon **three**, as it is written: "It has been told to you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord does require of you; only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).
- Isaiah then established the 613 mitzvot upon **two**, as it is stated: "So says the Lord: Observe justice and perform righteous-ness" (Isaiah 56:1).
- Amos came and established the 613 mitzvot upon **one**, as it is stated: "So says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live" (Amos 5:4).
Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak objects to this: Rather, say: Habakkuk came and established the 613 mitzvot upon **one**, as it is stated: "But the righteous person shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

- And you shall love your neighbor as yourself
- Adam, the first man, was created alone
 - A person will not say to another: My ancestors are greater than yours.'
- Seek Me and live
- But the righteous person shall live by his faith

Finding Comfort in Uncertain Times

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When Struggling to Meet Your Own Expectations

Kedushat Levi (Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev), Parashat Shemot

Leading figure in spread of Hasidism and struggle against mitnagdim, those who opposed Hasidism; well trained in rabbinic writing and also served as halakhic authority in region; 1740-1809, Ukraine

The *Tzadik* ["righteous one"] who serves HaShem needs to always know that when he/she achieves some spiritual level, there is another level above that one which has not yet been achieved. This level is not the goal of wholeness, since he/she constantly knows that since there is still something lacking, he/she has not achieved [wholeness]. And when one comes also to this next level, he/she should know that there is still another level in front of that and in front of the next one. There is no end to this, since all who achieve a spiritual level know that he/she still has not achieved wholeness and the level above this one requires still more wholeness. But he/she still cannot attain it and always knows that he/she is not whole and what he/she is lacking...

הצדיק העובד את השם צריך שידע בכל יום וכל פעם שמשיג איזה השגה שיש עוד השגה מדריגה למעלה וזה שאינו משיגה אותה עדיין. ושאינן השגה זו שמשיג בתכלית השלימות שידע בכל פעם שעדיין חסר שאינו משיג. וכשיבא גם להשגה זו ידע שיש עוד השגה לפני ולפנים. ודבר זה אין לו סוף שכל מה שמשיג ידע שעדיין אינו בשלימות והמדרגה שלמעלה מזו צריך להשיגה ואינו השיגה אותה עדיין וידע תמיד שאינו בשלימות ומש שחסר לו...

When Struggling with Change

Avot d'Rabbi Natan 4:5

Collection of "midrash" on Pirkei Avot, compiled probably between 8th – 10th Centuries CE

One time, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was walking from Jerusalem and his disciple, Rabbi Yehoshua, was walking behind him when he saw the Temple in ruins. Rabbi Yehoshua said, "Oy for us that this place that we used to atone for Israel's transgressions [through sacrifices] has been destroyed!" Rabban Yohanan said to him, "My child, do not grieve. There is another way we can gain atonement that is just as good. What is it? Acts of lovingkindness, as it is said, 'Lovingkindness I desire, not sacrifice' (Hosea 6:6)."

פעם אחת, היה רבן יוחנן בן זכאי יוצא מירושלים והיה רבי יהושע הולך אחריו וראה את בית המקדש חרב. אמר רבי יהושע, "אוי לנו על זה שהוא חרב, מקום שמכפרים בו עונותיהם של ישראל!" אמר לו רבן יוחנן, "בני, אל ירע לך. יש לנו כפרה אחרת שהיא כמותה. ואיזו? כמילות חסדים, שנאמר, 'כי חסד חפצתי ולא זבח' (הושע ו, ו)."

When Everything Seems Awful

Likkutei MoHaRaN I, 51:2 (Rabbi Nahman of Breslov)

Great grandson of Ba'al Shem Tov; founder of Breslov (and Uman) Hasidic community which still exists today; 1772-1810, Poland/Lithuania/Ukraine

Falsehood, which is evil, which is impurity, is caused by distance from Oneness. For evil is contrariety, for example, something that opposes a person's will is [considered] evil. But in Oneness, contrariety doesn't exist; all is good.

והתהוות השקר, שהוא הרע, שהוא הטומאה, הוא מחמת הריחוק מאחד. כי הרע הוא נגדיות, למשל, כל מה שהוא נגד רצונו של אדם הוא רע. ובאחד, אין שייך נגדיות, אלא כולו טוב.

When Feeling Lonely

Aish Kodesh (Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piassetzka), Shabbat HaHodesh, 5702

Leader of Hasidic community outside of Warsaw; secretly wrote and continued teaching after being sent to the Warsaw Ghetto before he was sent to Trawinki work camp, where he died; 1889-1943, Poland; this is a portion from a teaching composed on March 14, 1942

In the Talmud, Hagigah (5b), it mentions, "In the outer chambers—'Strength and gladness in God's place'" and "In the inner chambers—God is sorry and weeps, as it were, for the pain of Israel." Therefore, at the time of God's concealment—that is to say, when the Holy One is hidden in the inner chambers—a Jew is alone with God there, each according to his/her own level, and there it is revealed to him/her Torah and prayer...

ובגמרא חגיגה (ה, ב), איתא ד"בבתי בראי—'עוז וחדוה במקומו," ו"בבתי גואי—מצטער ובוכה כביכול בצרות ישראל." לכן יש שבשעת ההסתר, כלומר, שהוא יתברך מסתתר בבתי גואי, איש הישראלי מתיחד עמו שם, כל אחד לפי מצבו, ושם נתגלה לו התורה ועבודה...

But as we mentioned above, the Blessing One is found in the inner chambers and cries, and when one who [is suffering] presses and approaches God with Torah, that person cries with the Holy Blessing One and learns Torah with God. This is the difference: One who cries, is in pain, is sorry about his/her pain and suffers alone, can be broken and fall because of it until he/she is unable to do anything. But the crying one does with God together strengthens the person. That person cries and is strengthened; broken, but strong enough to study and pray.

אבל כנזכר לעיל, הוא יתברך נמצא בבתי גואי ובוכה, ומי שדוחק ומתקרב אליו בתורה, אז בוכה הוא שם עם הקב"ה וגם לומד תורה עמו. וזהו החילוק: הבכיות והצער שהאדם מצטער בעצמו לבדו על צרותיו, יש שנשבר ונופל מהם עד שאינו יכול לעשות מאומה. והבכיות שבוכה עם הקב"ה יחד מחזיאים אותו. בוכה ומתחזק; נשבר ומתאמץ ללמוד ולעבוד.

Shavuot 5781-2021 — 'As If I Stood at Sinai': Two 'Revelation' Poems

כָּלֵם כָּבֵר הֵלְכוּ אֶל הָהָר וּמַחֲכִים
מַחֲכִים לְרֵאוֹת, בְּשִׁקֵט רַב מַחֲכִים,
שֶׁלֹא כַמְנַהֲגִים גַּם הַחֲמוּרִים, גַּם הַגְּמֵלִים
בְּשִׁקֵט הַזֶּה צְפוּר לֹא צִיָּצָה
גַּם יְלָדִים עַל כִּתְפֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם,
וְהַשִּׁקֵט רַב מִנְשֵׂא כְמוֹ לִפְנֵי דָבָר
נוֹרָא וְגָדוֹל וְאֲנִי עוֹד רְצִיתִי
לְהַסְפִיק וּלְתַלּוֹת אֶת הַכְּבָסִים
לְעִשׂוֹת זְמַן לְעֲצָמִי לְתַקֵּן רֵיחוֹתֵי
וּחֲמַמְתִּי אֶת הַחֶלֶב לְתִינּוֹק, שֶׁלֹא יִרְעַב
שֶׁלֹא יִבְכֶּה חֲלִילָה, בְּרִגְעֵה הַלֵּא
מִתְאִים, כְּמָה זְמַן עַד כְּלוֹת. הַצִּפִּיה
שֶׁתִּיבֵשׁ הַכְּבִיסָה וְהַתִּינּוֹק מָה.
אִישׁ לֹא יָדַע

וְאֲנִי רְאִיתִי שְׂרוּחַ קִלְהָ, כְּמוֹ נְשִׁימְתוֹ שֶׁל אִישׁ יֶשׁוּ, עֲבָרָה
בְּכְבָּסִים וְנִפְחָה כְּרוֹסָה
שֶׁל כִּתְנָתִי וּמִפֶּת הַשֶּׁבֶת
הִיְתָה מִפְּרֵשׁ לָבֵן בְּאֲמֻצֵּי הַמַּדְבָּר
וַיִּצְאָנוּ מִשָּׁם עַל הַתְּכֵלֶת
הַרְחֵק לְמָקוֹם בּוֹ

נִפְרַט רְמוֹנִים וְנֹאכַל עֲסִיסִים
לְמָקוֹם בּוֹ
לְאֵהָבָה
שֵׁם מִפְּרֵשׁ.

— חוה פנחס-כהן "שם מפרש"

אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, כְּשֶׁנָּתַן הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, צְפוּר לֹא צוּחַ, עוֹף
לֹא פָּרַח, שׁוֹר לֹא גָעָה, אוֹפְנִים לֹא עָפוּ, שְׂרָפִים לֹא אָמְרוּ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ, הַיִּם לֹא נִזְדַּעְזְעוּ,
הַבְּרִיּוֹת לֹא דָבְרוּ, אֲלֵא הָעוֹלָם שׁוֹתֵק וּמַחְרִישׁ, וַיִּצָּא הַקּוֹל: אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... כְּשֶׁדָּבַר
הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַר סִינַי, הִשְׁתִּיק כָּל הָעוֹלָם, כְּדִי שִׁדְעוּ הַבְּרִיּוֹת שְׂאִין חוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ,
וְאָמַר: אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ — [שְׁמוֹת רַבֵּה, כ"ט: ט]

They've all gone to the mountain to wait
to wait and see, most quietly they wait,
against their nature even donkeys, even camels
in this quiet a bird did not chirp
even children on their father's shoulders,
the quiet too much to bear as if before a matter
so awesome and great but I still wished
to finish hanging the laundry
to make time for myself, to refresh my aroma
and I warmed the baby's milk, lest he be hungry,
lest he cry, perish the thought, at an improper
moment, how much longer till it ends. The expectation
that the laundry will dry and the baby, what.

No one knew
but I saw a light wind, like the breath of a person asleep, pass
through the laundry and inflate the middle
of my shirt and the Sabbath tablecloth
was a white sail in the middle of the wilderness
and we went from there on azure
far to the place where

we'll open pomegranates and devour their juice
to the place where
love has
a manifest name.

— Hava Pinhas-Cohen 'A Manifest Name'
[translation, David C Jacobson]

When the Holy One of Blessing gave the Torah no bird chirped (*tzavah*), no fowl flew, no ox lowed, Ophanim did not fly, Seraphim did not say "Holy, Holy," the sea did not move, people did not speak. The world was completely quiet and still and the voice of God, "I am the Lord your God" went out...(God) quieted the whole world so that all creatures would know that no one but God said, "I am the Lord your God." [Midrash Shemot Rabbah 29:9]

יְעִירוּנִי בְּשִׁמְךָ רַעֲיוֹנָי / וְיִשִּׁימוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ לִפְנָי
הֶבְיִנוּנִי דְּבַר נֶפֶשׁ יִצְרָתָהּ / קְשׁוּרָה בִּי וְהִיא נִפְלְאֵת בְּעֵינָי
וְלִבִּי רָאָךְ וַיֵּאֱמֹן בְּךָ / כִּאֲלוּ מֵעֶמֶד הָיָה בְּסִינָי
דְּרִשְׁתִּיךָ בְּחִזְיוֹנִי וְעֵבֵר / כְּבוֹדְךָ בִּי וַיֵּרֶד בְּעֵנָנִי
הֶקִּימוּנִי שְׁעָפִי מִיִּצְוֵעֵי / לְבָרַךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדְךָ אֲדָנָי.

— יהודה הלוי

My meditations on Your name aroused me,
They set before my face Your acts of love,
Revealed to me the soul that You created —
Bound to me, yet past my understanding.

My heart beheld You and was sure of You,
As if I stood myself at Sinai mountain.
I sought You in my dreams; Your glory passed
Before my face, on clouds descending, landing.

My thoughts awakened me to rise from bed,
To bless Your glorious name, O Lord, commanding.

— Yehudah haLevi
[translation, Raymond Scheindlin]

One thing you should keep in mind, O my brother, when reading the things described by me in this chapter. All these are but a few of the many secrets of wisdom you may discover if you search for them with a pure heart and an innocent soul. Having arrived at the highest point of your ability in this respect, you should remember that all you have seen and understood of God's wisdom and ability as manifested in this world is nothing in comparison to the whole of God's wisdom and ability. Remember that the part made manifest is revealed only according to necessity, for the sake of humanity, and not in proportion to God's true ability, which is limitless. But you should appreciate God's magnitude and omnipotence according to their true value, and fear God proportionately, and not only according to what you can understand of it. [Bahya ibn Paquda 'Duties of the Heart', chapter 2]

אֲדַדְךָ עַל כִּי נִוְרָאוֹת נִפְלְיֹתֶיךָ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְנִפְשִׁי יָדַעַת מְאֹד:

וְלִי מִה־יִקְרָנוּ רַעֲיֶיךָ אֶל מֶה עָצְמוּ רְאִשֵׁיהֶם:
אֶסְפְּרֶם מִחֹל יִרְבּוּן הַקִּיצֹתֶי וְעוֹדֵי עִמְךָ:

I praise You, for I am awesomely, wondrously made;
Your work is wonderful; I know it very well...

How weighty Your thoughts seem to me, O God,
How great their number!
I count them — they exceed the grains of sand;
I awake — but am still with You...

[Psalm 139:14,17-18]

Abraham ibn Ezra — Commentary on Psalm 139

v. 1 — זה המזמור נכבד מאוד בדרכי השם ואין באלה החמשה ספרים מזמור כמוהו, וכפי בינת אדם — בדרכי השם ודרכי הנשמה יתבונן בטעמיו.

This Psalm is very weighty in the ways of the Lord; in these five books (= the five books of the Psalms) there is none like it. Its meaning can be penetrated only to the extent of one's understanding of the ways of God and the ways of the soul.

v. 14 — וטעם ונפשי יודעת מאד – על דעת רבי יהודה הלוי: משכבו מנוחתו כבוד, נפלאים ממני — מעשיך אף על פי שנפשי יודעת מאד.

'I know it very well' in the opinion of Rabbi Judah Halevi (who rests in glory!) means, 'Your works are too wonderful for me (i.e. beyond me), even though my soul is very aware.'

v. 17 — ויהיה רעיק כאשר אני חושב בלבי לדעת רעיק, והנה הוא כמראה אלהים והגוף שוכב בהדבק — נשמת האדם בנשמה העליונה, אז תראה תמונות נפלאות, על כן הקיצותי ועודי עמך, כי אין זה כדרך כל החלומות.

'Your thoughts' means that when I think with my heart to know Your thoughts it is like a vision of God: the body is recumbent and the soul of man clings to the highest soul. There it sees marvelous forms. Therefore, 'I awaken and am still with You,' for this is not like all (ordinary) dreams.

Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin

Samson Raphael Hirsch once said that “the Jewish calendar is the Jewish catechism,”

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1

(1) The four new years are: On the first of Nisan, the new year for the kings and for the festivals; On the first of Elul, the new year for the tithing of animals; in the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year for the trees, these are the words of the House of Shammai; The House of Hillel says, on the fifteenth thereof.

Sukkot

Shavuot ↘

Pesach ↗

Rosh HaShana/Yom Kippur ↗

Tisha B'Av ↗

Finding New Meaning in the Ten Commandments
Tikkun Leyl Shavuot 5781- 2021
Rabbi Stewart Vogel

TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's. (Exodus 20:14)

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not crave your neighbor's house, or his field, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's. (Deuteronomy 5:

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:14:2

[250-300] "**You shall not covet**": Rebbi says: One verse states "You shall not covet," and, another, (Devarim 5:18) "You shall not desire." How are these two verses to be reconciled? As positing **liability for desiring in itself and for coveting in itself**, and as teaching that **if one desires, in the end he will covet**, i.e., "Do not desire and you will not covet." And if he does covet, in the end, he will use force and steal, as it is written (Micah 2:2) "and they will covet fields and steal (them)."

Shadal on Exodus 20:14:1

Do not covet etc: "Coveting" is desire for something which now belongs to others, and is consequently forbidden to us, that is, it is not for sale; and see, every desire and coveting come spontaneously into human hearts after seeing something desirable, but it is within one's capacity and will to stop that coveting as it emerges, and to distance it from one's heart when one knows that attaining the desirable thing is impossible for one, or one may keep it in his heart, and let its bonfire grow until one acts on it, when one knows that acting on it is possible. And God having said, do not commit adultery, do not steal, etc, forbidding the taking of what belongs to another, now God says, what belongs to our fellow must be in our eyes as if it were utterly unattainable by us, and having commanded us not to *take* what belongs to another we are now commanded not to *covet* it. And everyone who covets is under this forbidding; violence comes lightly to him and seems possible, but anyone who reveres God's word, sees violence as prevented, and what doesn't belong to him is as if it were in the heavens, so that he cannot seize it and does not covet it. He rejoices in what he has and rejoices in his fellows' good fortune, loving them and beloved by them; but the other one spends all his days in the whirlwind of cravings and anxieties, coveting what he cannot have and aggressive toward his fellow, envious of his fellow, hating them and hated by them, and he will die in his lack of ethics; and see Ibn Ezra's words, which are apt.

Shney Luchot HaBrit, Vaetchanan, Ner Mitzvah 3

[1555-1630] We must not ask how the Torah can expect us to exercise control over our mind's desires. This is a spurious argument. Only wicked people or fools would argue in such a way. **Man is a free agent and can control his desires. He can discipline himself not to desire what is forbidden.** God is well aware of our innermost thoughts and will punish people for sinful

thoughts, whereas God will reward people who have pure thoughts for up to two thousand generations. **It is best if a person can train himself to have only pure thoughts, for they lead to laudable deeds.**

SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods besides Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:3-6)

אלהים אחרים OTHER GODS — which are not gods, but others have made them gods over themselves. It would not be correct to explain this to mean “gods other than Me”, for it would be blasphemy of the Most High God to term them gods together with Him (cf. Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:3:1). Another explanation of אלהים אחרים : they are so called because they are other (i.e. strange) to those who worship them; these cry to them but they do not answer them, and it is just as though it (the god) is another (a stranger) to him (to the worshipper), one who has never known him at all (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:3:1). (Rashi)

A picture of anything in the heavens. . . Rashi explains this so we will not think תמונה is the name of a certain idol [whose image may not be made]. Furthermore, [Rashi says this] because a picture of heaven cannot be made. A picture is a property of an entity; one cannot make a picture that stands [independent of a material entity]. Therefore, Rashi explains: “Of any *thing* in the heavens,” such as stars in the shape of Aries or of Taurus. (Siftei Chachamim)

CONCLUSION

Nothing is as hard to suppress as the will to be a slave to one's own pettiness. Gallantly, ceaselessly, quietly, man must fight for inner liberty. Inner liberty depends upon being exempt from domination of things as well as from domination of people. There are many who have acquired a high degree of political and social liberty, but only very few are not enslaved to things. This is our constant problem—how to live with people and remain free, how to live with things and remain independent. In a moment of eternity, while the taste of redemption was still fresh to the former slaves, the people of Israel were given the Ten Words, the Ten Commandments. In its beginning and end, the Decalogue deals with the liberty of man. The first Word—I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage—reminds him that his outer liberty was given to him by God, and the tenth Word—Thou shalt not covet!—reminds him that he himself must achieve his inner liberty.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath, pp. 89-90.