

Classic Prayers for the Days of Awe

For Yom Kippur



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We are grateful for the efforts of Rabbi Amy Loewenthal for producing this excerpt in tandem with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association under the leadership of Rabbi Elyse Wechterman.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR • SHANAH TOVAH • שנה טובה

LIGHTING OF A MEMORIAL CANDLE

We light this candle in the memory of all our loved ones. May their memory be a blessing!

We light this candle in the memory of the soldiers of the Israel Defense Force, all those who sacrificed their lives for the sanctification of God, and all those who died in the Holocaust. May their memory be a blessing!

The memorial candle is now lit.

LIGHTING OF YOM KIPPUR CANDLES

The festival candles are lit.

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God,
the sovereign of all worlds,
who has made us holy with your mitzvot,
and commanded us to kindle
the light of (Shabbat and of)
the Day of Atonement.

May it be your will, ETERNAL ONE, our God,
and God of our ancestors, that these candles
light up the pathway of return
on this your holy *Shabbat Shabbaton*
a Sabbath of complete cessation.
By their light may your light be seen.
And let us say: Amen.

DERASH. Why Day of Atonements—*Yom Hakippurim*—and not Day of Atonement—*Yom Kippur*? Here we speak in the plural, despite this being a day of solitude and singularity. I come knowing that I will be asked to confess sins, an intimidating, even frightening prospect. We are strengthened in the task as we realize that those with whom we have come to pray are engaged in the same process. Not for each of us alone is this a “Day of Atonement,” but for all of us together: a “Day of Atonements.”

R.H.

הדלקת נר זכרון

נר זה אנו מדליקים לזכרם של כל האהובים שלנו: יהי זכרם
ברוך:

נר זה אנו מדליקים לזכרם של חילי צבא ההגנה לישראל וכל-
אלה שמסרו את-נפשם על-קדוש השם ושנהרגו בשואה: יהי
זכרם ברוך:

The memorial candle is now lit.

הדלקת נרות ליזם כפור

The festival candles are lit.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו
להדליק נר של (שבת ו) יום הכפורים:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam asher kideshanu
bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel (shabbat ve)yom
hakippurim.

יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו שיאירו
נרות אלה את דרכי התשובה ביום שבת שבתון קדשך: לאורם
נראה אור ונאמר אמן:

COMMENTARY. Those who recite *Yizkor* in memory of loved ones traditionally light a *Yizkor* candle at home before joining the community for *Kol Nidrey*. This is also done on the anniversary of the death of a loved one. For this home ritual, see *Kol Haneshamah: Shirim Uvrahot* [pages 136–137]. The communal lighting of a *Yizkor* candle here commemorates the losses suffered by our community as a whole—not only those who once lived among us, but also our people's martyrs, those who died for the upbuilding of the land of Israel, and those we lost in the Holocaust. We define ourselves in part by whom we choose to remember. May their memory be a blessing for us.

D.A.T.

KOL NIDREY/ALL VOWS

By the authority of all who congregate above
and all who congregate on earth,
and with permission of the omnipresent One,
and by consent of this assembly,
we accept into our midst whoever seeks to pray.
Whether righteous or unrighteous,
all shall pray as one community. ↪

KAVANAH. Worlds are joined in this opening recitation. Upper and lower worlds are joined. The divine and the human are joined. We and they—those who have crossed the boundary to leave the we—are joined. This reveals our intention in seeking atonement: at-one-ment. We seek unification, the dissolution of barriers, the merging and unity that will culminate at the end of Yom Kippur. S.P.W.

DERASH. It is we who are the righteous, granting permission to participate in prayer. It is also we who are the unrighteous, seeking readmission to the community of holy beings. Realizing that each of us is both righteous and transgressor is the first step in *teshuvah*. J.A.S.

DERASH. The Kabbalist Isaac Luria taught that we can build our personal sanctuary (*mishkan*) with God one year at a time. The task of Yom Kippur is to build our *mishkan* in time, to build a relationship with God that will last for the year. Yom Kippur is a return to the source to reconstruct our interior. Z.S.S.

COMMENTARY. This prayer has long been associated with the Hidden Jews—the Jews in Spain who converted to Christianity during the Inquisition and kept their Jewish life secret in order to survive. This prayer allowed them to pray as Jews by forgiving the vows they had made to another religion, another system of beliefs. What a deep resonance this interpretation has for gay and lesbian Jews who are living hidden, secret lives! For those in the closet about their gay identity in their Jewish communities and those in the closet about their Jewish lives in the gay community, this prayer recognizes the pain of hidden and split identities and offers the hope for integration and healing. Adina Abramowitz



בִּישִׁיבָה שֶׁל מַעֲלָה וּבִישִׁיבָה שֶׁל מַטָּה
עַל דַּעַת הַמָּקוֹם וְעַל דַּעַת הַקָּהָל
אָנוּ מַתִּירִין לְהַתְפַּיֵּל עִם הָעֹבְרִינִים: ←

בישיבה / By the authority of all who congregate. Originally a legal formula, *Kol Nidrey* is introduced by this meditation in which an imaginary court is invoked to validate the liturgical proceeding. The parallelism is striking: “who congregate above/the Omnipresent One” and “who congregates on earth/this assembly.” We stand *before* God and *among* our community—we require the permission and participation of both. R.H.

Anu matirin lehitpalel im ha'avaryanim / Whether righteous or unrighteous, all shall pray as one community. There is a Jewish folk legend that suggests that in the *Kol Nidrey* chant, the word עֹבְרִינִים / *avaryanim* (transgressors) was actually a code for the word, *Iberyanim* (Iberians or Spaniards), referring to death-fearing Spanish Jews who had converted to Christianity during the Inquisition, but who secretly continued to practice Judaism. According to the legend, in embracing these crypto-Jews within the community of believers and sinners, the *Kol Nidrey* chant reminds us that we all wear masks, we all hide our true essence—and we all enjoy the possibility of God's forgiveness. L.G.B.

DERASH. The setting for *Kol Nidrey* is that of two courts joined. The earthly court, composed of the *hazan* and two people holding Torah scrolls, reflects the heavenly court where God sits in judgment. The imagery of the court is further emphasized by the legalistic style of the *Kol Nidrey* prayer itself. In this introductory prayer to *Kol Nidrey*, “we” are granted permission to pray with sinners. But since no human being is without sin, this permission must be understood as a mutual act. We can only become a community when we begin to forgive ourselves and each other. D.A.T.


All vows,
and formulas of prohibition, and declarations of taboo,
and promises of abstinence, and names of God,
and pledges one assumes on penalty, and oaths,
whatever we have vowed and then forgot,
whatever we have sworn but not upheld,
whatever we declared taboo that went amiss,
whatever prohibitions we assumed upon ourselves to no avail,
from the last Day of Atonement to this Day of Atonement
– may the day come upon us for the good! –

from all of them we now request release.
Let their burden be dissolved, and lifted off, and canceled,
and made null and void, bearing no force and no reality.
Those vows shall not be binding vows,
those prohibitions not be binding prohibitions,
those oaths shall not be binding oaths.

COMMENTARY. Part of the awesome power of *Kol Nidrey* comes from the gathering of so many Jews in community. Although we may have theological hesitations regarding *Kol Nidrey's* annulment of vows, these pale in comparison to the fulfillment of our one shared commitment: to be here together. J.A.S.

COMMENTARY. Despite generations of commentary, the peculiar paradox of *Kol Nidrey* remains—that even as we prepare to swear loyalty to our resolutions, we declare that unkept pledges are absolved. In the early years of the original Reconstructionist synagogue (the Society for the Advancement of Judaism), Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan attempted to avoid this problem by substituting Psalm 130 for the words of *Kol Nidrey* while chanting the traditional melody. The reaction of the congregants was strongly negative: while they may not have been able to make sense of *Kol Nidrey's* words, the emotional appeal determined the outcome. Today we remain moved by the solemnity of the moment, the plaintive chant, and the orchestrated overture to the Day of Atonement—even when the purpose of the words escapes us. In the realm of the spirit, the heart often speaks louder than the head. R.H.

כָּל נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרֵי וְשְׁבוּעֵי וְחֻרְמֵי וְקוֹנָמֵי וְקוֹנוֹסֵי וְכִנּוּיֵי דְנִדְרָנָא
וְדִאֲשְׁתַּבְּעָנָא וְדִאֲחִימָנָא וְדִאֲסָרָנָא עַל נַפְשָׁתָנָא מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים
שְׁעָבַר עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה הָבָא עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה כְּלֵהוֹן אֲחֻרָּטָנָא כְּהוֹן
כְּלֵהוֹן יְהוֹן שָׁרֹן שְׂבִיקִין שְׂבִיתִין בְּטִלִין וּמַבְטְלִין לָא שְׂרִירִין וְלָא
קִמְיִין: נִדְרָנָא לָא נִדְרֵי וְאֶסְרָנָא לָא אֶסְרֵי וְשְׁבוּעָתָנָא לָא שְׁבוּעוֹת: —

Kol nidrey ve'esarey ushevu'ey vaharamey vekonamey vekinusey
veh inuyey dindarna ude'ishtabana ude'aharimna ude'asarena
al nafshatana miyom kippurim she'avar ad yom kippurim zeh
haba aleynu letovah kulehon iharatna vehon kulehon yehon
sheran shevikin sheviten beteylin umevutalin la sheririn vela
kayamin. Nidrana la nidrey ve'esarana la esarey ushevu'atana
la shevu'ot. 

COMMENTARY. The *Kol Nidrey* is at once a legal declaration and a prayer. In the careful language of a contract it marks out the territory of prayer, introspection, and personal resolve as a domain beyond law. This is a realm where the promptings of the heart and utterances in the passion of the moment are allowed a certain freedom, privacy, and momentum, irrespective of their realization or completion in practice. By declaring such utterances null and void, one both affirms their importance and limits their force. Let the heart be free, says this prayer, to promise what it will, to aspire where it will, even to call itself to task in the harsh language of law—but let us be at peace with our past failures or resolve and get on with our lives as best we can. *Kol Nidrey* inevitably calls to mind all that we have done, or not done, since the previous *Kol Nidrey*. Indeed, it is that *previous* declaration that now reaches into the present, and releases us to pray and to change—and to assume our role in our community of prayer.

J.R.

KAVANAH. At this Yom Kippur, we seek to deal kindly but honestly with ourselves, to take care that our commitment to ideals does not entail the destruction of our own souls, our own worlds. We freely admit our failings and create our atonements. No excuse, no escape, just an honest seeing into the truth, that we might correct our path and set off once more toward the good each of us seeks.

R.M.S.

“And there shall be atonement
for the whole community of Israel,
and the stranger dwelling in their midst
—indeed, for an entire people that has gone astray.” Numbers 15:26

“Grant forgiveness, then,
for the transgression of this people,
as the abundance of your love demands,
and as you have always lifted from disfavor
these, your people, from the time of Egypt until now,”
as it is told: Numbers 14:19

“THE FOUNT OF MERCY said:
I grant forgiveness, as you ask.” Numbers 14:20

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, the sovereign of all worlds,
who has given us life,
and has sustained us,
and has brought us to this time.

סלחתי כדבריך / I grant forgiveness as you ask. The words, from Numbers 14:20, are portrayed as God's speech following the rebellious report of the spies sent by Moses to scout out the Promised Land. Moses implores God not to eradicate the Israelite people. “Thus, I [God] grant forgiveness as you [Moses] ask.” On Yom Kippur, each of us brings our own rebellious report: We have scouted out our own Promised Land and declared ourselves unable to secure it. Despite the promise of God's presence, we have squandered the opportunity to advance. But tonight, each of us becomes like Moses; each of us asks for ourselves: “Grant forgiveness as I ask.” We do not expect to reach the Promised Land—only to be allowed to continue on the journey. R.H.

DERASH. According to the *midrash*, Yom Kippur plays a part in the Exodus year. On Shavuot, Moshe goes up to receive the tablets. He comes down and breaks them on the seventeenth of Tammuz. For forty days he argues with God to forgive. He goes up again on Rosh Hodesh Elul, and comes down on Yom Kippur reciting *salaḥti kidvareḥa*. So the Torah that was actually received was not the Torah of Shavuot but the Torah of Yom Kippur. Our law is one that was given with *salaḥti kidvareḥa*. It contains the built-in possibility of *teshuvah*. Z.S.S.

וְנִסְלַח לְכָל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלַגֵּר הָגֵר בְּתוֹכָם כִּי לְכָל־הָעָם
בְּשָׁגָגָה:

סִלַּח־נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגֹדֶל חֶסֶדְךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה
מִמִּצְרִים וְעַד־הַנֶּה: וְשָׁם נֹאמַר:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה: סִלַּחְתִּי כְּדָבָרְךָ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲנּוּ וְקִיּוּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ
לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה:

Venislāh leḥol-adat beney yisra'el velager hagar betoḥam ki
leḥol-ha'am bishgagah.

Selaḥ-na la'avon ha'am hazeh kegodel ḥasdeḥa veḥa'asher
nasatah la'am hazeh mimitzrayim ve'ad heynah. Vesham ne'emar:

Vayomer adonay: Salaḥti kidevareḥa.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam sheheḥeyanu
vekiyemanu vehigi'anu lazeman hazeh.

DERASH. These verses from the book of Numbers appear in the story of the Israelite spies in Canaan. Later we will recite the Thirteen Attributes of God's compassion, also part of the wilderness story of human failure. The disasters during the wandering in the wilderness are part of the Torah's paradigm for forgetting purpose, losing awareness, faith and truth. The people seek a product of their own making, a god of gold to worship in place of the living God that is beyond their full comprehension and mastery. Our stumbling and falling often occurs when we substitute an immediate and known gratification for a transcendent value. Through the inclusion of the Thirteen Attributes in the stories of the wilderness wanderings, divine forgiveness and mercy are inextricably linked with this story of failure. It teaches us about the universality of error and forgetfulness and the eternal possibility of realizing God's loving presence in our lives.

S.P.W.

All the vows on our lips,
The burdens in our hearts,
The pent-up regrets
About which we brooded and spoke
Through prayers without end
On last Atonement Day
Did not change our way of life,
Did not bring deliverance
In the year that has gone.
From mountain peaks of fervor
We fell to common ways
At the close of the fast.

Will You hear our regret?
Will You open our prison,
Release us from shackles of habit?
Will You answer our prayers,
Forgive our wrongs,
Though we sin again and again?
In moments of weakness
We do not remember
Promises of Atonement Day.
Look past forgetfulness,
Take only from our hearts.
Forgive us, pardon us.

Ze'ev Falk (Translated by Stanley Schachter)

On Shabbat continue on the following page. On all other days turn to page 705.

כָּל־נִדְרֵי שְׁפָתֵינוּ, קִבְלוֹת שְׁכַלְפָנוּ
 וְהִרְהוּרֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה שְׁהֲגִינוּ וּכְטָאנוּ
 בְּאַלְפֵי תַּפְלוּתֵינוּ בְּיוֹם כְּפוּר שְׁהִיָּה
 לֹא שָׁנוּ אֶרֶח חַיֵּינוּ,
 לֹא הִבִּיאוּ גְּאֻלָּתָנוּ
 בְּשָׁנָה שְׁנִסְתִּימָה:
 מִמְּרוּמֵי הַתְּלַהּבוּתָנוּ
 אֶל חֲלִין הֶרְגֵּלָנוּ
 שְׁכָנוּ מִיָּד עִם נְעִלָה:

הַתְּשַׁמֵּעַ חֲרָטָתָנוּ, אִם תִּתִּיר אֶת־מַאֲסֵינוּ
 בְּיַד יָצָר שֶׁל שְׁגָרָה?

הַתְּרַצָּה תַּפְלוּתָנוּ לְכַפֹּר עַל פְּשָׁעֵינוּ
 אִף אִם נָשׁוּב וְנִחָטָא?
 דַּע כִּי בְשַׁעַת חֲלָשָׁתָנוּ לֹא נִזְכֹּר מוֹדַעְתָנוּ
 מִיוֹם כְּפוּר שְׁהִיָּה:
 תִּתְחַשֵּׁב בְּשַׁכְחָתָנוּ וּתְקַבֵּל כְּוִנוּתֵינוּ
 לְסְלִיחָה וּלְמַחִילָה:

On Shabbat continue on the following page. On all other days turn to page 706.

COMMENTARY. Often we are confronted with moral or religious decisions where the right choice does not seem immediately clear. We make our choices as best we can despite not being entirely certain. At *Kol Nidrey* we look back at the year and hope our decisions have been correct. However, if they were not correct and we are now aware of it, we pray that we will be forgiven by whomever we may have offended, and that our consciences can be clear.

Carl S. Choper

Hear our voices, ETERNAL ONE, our God,
and accept our prayer with mercy and good will.
Turn us, ANCIENT ONE, toward you, let us return.
Renew our days like days of old.
Do not cast us away
from dwelling in your presence,
and do not remove your holy spirit from our midst.
And do not cast us off as we grow old;
do not forsake us when our strength departs.
Do not forsake us, GENTLE ONE, our God,
do not withdraw from us.
Give us a sign of blessing,
so that anyone who bears us ill
shall hesitate to harm us.
For truly, you, ETERNAL ONE,
have always helped us and consoled us.
Hear now our words, GOD OF COMPASSION,
and behold our contemplation.
May our words of prayer,
and meditations of our hearts,
be seen favorably, PRECIOUS ONE, our rock, our champion.
For we place our hope in you, ETERNAL ONE,
so may you answer us, Almighty One, our God.

COMMENTARY. This is one of the most well known and dramatic prayers of the High Holy Day liturgy, yet it is fraught with problematic images—a God who might reject the infirm, who might cast out the aged, who might ignore our vulnerability were it not for our pleading. This *piyut* is popular not for what it implies about God but for what it says about us: I am weaker than I usually admit. I fear the inevitable loss of power that comes with getting older. I fear my vulnerability. I need the support of others to compensate for my frailty. I need the protection of others to compensate for my foolishness. I need the community of others for my legacy to live when my life is gone. You who are here praying with me can make possible this, my redemption. We pray for the strength to make God present for each other, that the weakest, oldest, frailest might find consolation and a sign of blessing.

D.A.T.

שמע קולנו

יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים

וּבְרָצוֹן אֶת־תַּפְלָתָנוּ:

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁוּבָה חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ בְּקָדָם:

אֶל תַּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ מִלִּפְנֵיךָ וְרוּחַ קְדֻשְׁךָ אֶל תִּקַּח מִמֶּנּוּ:

אֶל תַּשְׁלִיכֵנוּ לְעֵת זְקָנָה בְּכָלוֹת כֹּחֵנוּ אֶל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ:

אֶל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶל תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ:

עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ אוֹת לְטוֹבָה וְיִרְאוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ וַיִּבְּשׁוּ:

כִּי אַתָּה יְהוה עֲזָרְתָנוּ וְנִחַמְתָּנוּ:

אֲמַרְיֵנוּ הָאֲזִינָה יְהוה בִּינָה הִגִּידָנוּ:

יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אֲמַרְיֵנוּ וְהִגִּיזֵנוּ לִבֵּנוּ לִפְנֵיךָ יְהוה צוּרֵנוּ וְגוֹאֲלֵנוּ:

כִּי לָךְ יְהוה הוֹחֵלָנוּ אַתָּה תַעֲנֶה אֶדְנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

Shema kolenu adonay eloheynu ḥus verahem aleynu
vekabel beraḥamim uveratzen et tefilatenu.

Hashivenu adonay eleḥa venashuvah ḥadesh yameynu kekedem.

Al tashliḥenu milefaneḥa veru'ah kodsheḥa al tikaḥ mimenu.

Al tashliḥenu le'et ziknah kihlot koḥenu al ta'azvenu.

Al ta'azvenu adonay eloheynu al tirḥak mimenu.

Asey imanu ot letovah veyiru soneynu veyevoshu

ki atah adonay azartanu veniḥamtanu.

Amareynu ha'azinah adonay binah hagigenu.

Yihyu leratzen imrey finu vehegyon libenu lefaneḥa adonay
tzurenu vego'alenu.

Ki leḥa adonay hohalnu atah ta'aneḥ adonay eloheynu.

NOTE. After the first verse *Shema Kolenu* is composed of biblical verses adapted by the poet.

M.B.K.

Our God, our ancients' God,
do not forsake us, and do not turn us away,
and do not cause us shame,
and do not nullify your covenant with us,
but bring us nearer to your Torah,
teach us your mitzvot,
instruct us in your ways.
Incline our hearts to treat your name with awe,
and open up our inner nature to your love,
and bring us back to you in truth,
with whole and peaceful heart.
And for the sake of your great name,
be merciful, and grant forgiveness for our wrongs,
as it is written in your prophet's words:
"For the sake of your great name, ETERNAL ONE,
forgive my wrongdoing, for I have done much wrong."

Our God, our ancients' God,
forgive us, pardon us, help us atone—
for we are your people, and you are our God,
we are your children, and you are our creator,
we are your servants, and you are our sovereign,
we are your community, and you are our portion,
we are your possession, and you are our fate,
we are your sheep, and you are our shepherd,
we are your vineyard, and you are our keeper,
we are your creation, and you are our fashioner,
we are your loved ones, and you are our beloved,
we are your treasure, and you are our kin,
we are your people, and you are our ruler,
we are your faithful, and you our source of faith! ↩

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ אֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ וְאֵל תִּשָּׁשְׁנוּ וְאֵל
 תִּכְלִימֵנוּ וְאֵל תִּפְרֵ בְרִיתְךָ אִתָּנוּ קִרְבָּנוּ לְתוֹרַתְךָ לְמִדָּנוּ מִצּוֹתֶיךָ
 הַזֵּהנוּ דְרָכֶיךָ הַט לִפְנֵינוּ לִירְאָה אֶת־שִׁמְךָ וּמֹל אֶת־לִבְכֵּנוּ לֹאֲהַבְתָּךְ
 וְנָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֵמֶת וּבְלֵב שָׁלֵם וּלְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל תִּמְחַל וְתִסְלַח
 לַעֲוֹנוֹנוּ כִּפְתּוּב בְּדִבְרֵי קִדְשְׁךָ: לְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה וְסִלַּחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנֵי כִי
 רַב הוּא:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ סִלַּח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כִּפּוּר־לָנוּ:	כִּי אָנוּ עֲמָךְ וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
אָנוּ בְנֶיךָ וְאַתָּה אֲבֵינוּ:	אָנוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵינוּ:
אָנוּ קָהָלְךָ וְאַתָּה חֻלְקָנוּ:	אָנוּ נִחְלָתְךָ וְאַתָּה גּוֹרְלָנוּ:
אָנוּ צֹאנְךָ וְאַתָּה רוֹעֵנוּ:	אָנוּ כְרֵמְךָ וְאַתָּה נוֹטְרָנוּ:
אָנוּ פְּעֻלָּתְךָ וְאַתָּה יוֹצְרָנוּ:	אָנוּ רַעֲיָתְךָ וְאַתָּה דּוֹרְנוּ:
אָנוּ סִגְלָתְךָ וְאַתָּה קְרוֹבָנוּ:	אָנוּ עֲמָךְ וְאַתָּה מִלִּפְנֵינוּ:
אָנוּ מֵאֲמִירָךְ וְאַתָּה מֵאֲמִירָנוּ: ←	

Eloheynu velohey avoteynu ve'imoteynu selah lanu. Mehal lanu.
 Kaper lanu.

Ki anu ameha ve'atah eloheynu. Anu vaneha ve'atah avinu.
 Anu avadeha ve'atah adoneynu. Anu kehaleha ve'atah helkenu.
 Anu nahalateha ve'atah goralenu. Anu tzoneha ve'atah ro'enu.
 Anu harmeha ve'atah notrenu. Anu fe'ulateha ve'atah yotzrenu.
 Anu rayateha ve'atah dodenu. Anu segulateha ve'atah kerovenu.
 Anu ameha ve'atah malkenu. Anu ma'amireha ve'atah ma'amirenu.

למען...רב הוא / For the sake of...wrong (Psalms 25:11).

This prayer sings of the exquisite mutuality between the Jewish people and the Divine. One without the other has no meaningful existence. A lover does not have reality without a beloved, and so it is with all the pairs of mutuality. The Jewish people without a relationship to our God (however we understand that term) may be no more than a scattered collection of individuals. The Divine, cut off from a community of the faithful, may be nothing more than a meaningless abstraction. S.P.W.

We are strong-willed and stubborn,
but you are merciful and gracious.
We are stiff-necked, but you are slow to anger.
We are full of error, but you are full of mercy.
We—our days are like a passing shadow,
but you are one whose years shall never end.
Our God, our ancients' God,
may our prayer come before you.
Hide not from our supplication,
for we are not so insolent and stubborn
as to say, here in your presence,
“HOLY ONE, God of our fathers and our mothers,
we are righteous, and we have not sinned,”
for we indeed have sinned. ↪

אָנוּ עֵזִי פָּנִים וְאַתָּה רַחוּם וְחַנוּן: אָנוּ קָשִׁי עֶרֶף וְאַתָּה אָרֶךְ אַפִּים:
אָנוּ מְלֹאֵי עוֹן וְאַתָּה מָלֵא רַחֲמִים: אָנוּ יִמֵּינוּ כָּצֵל עוֹבֵר וְאַתָּה הוּא
וּשְׁנוֹתֶיךָ לֹא יִתָּמוּ:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ תְּבוֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תִּפְלָתָנוּ וְאַל
תִּתְּעַלֵּם מִתַּחֲנֻנָּתָנוּ שְׂאִין אֲנַחְנוּ עֵזִי פָּנִים וְקָשִׁי עֶרֶף לֹמֵר לְפָנֶיךָ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ צְדִיקִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְלֹא חָטָאנוּ
אֲבָל אֲנַחְנוּ חָטָאנוּ: ←

The community rises.

We have acted wrongly,
we have been untrue,
and we have gained unlawfully
and have defamed.

We have harmed others,
we have wrought injustice,
we have zealously transgressed,
and we have hurt
and have told lies.

We have improperly advised,
and we have covered up the truth,
and we have laughed in scorn.

We have misused responsibility
and have neglected others.

We have stubbornly rebelled.

We have offended,
we have perverted justice,
we have stirred up enmity,
and we have kept ourselves from change.

We have reached out to evil,
we have shamelessly corrupted
and have treated others with disdain.

Yes, we have thrown ourselves off course,
and we have tempted and misled. ↩

The community rises.

אֲשַׁמְנוּ: בִּגְדָנוּ: גָּזַלְנוּ: דִּבְרָנוּ דָּפִי:
הֶעֱוִינוּ: וְהִרְשָׁעֵנוּ: זָדָנוּ: חָמְסָנוּ:
טָפְלָנוּ שָׁקַר: יַעֲצָנוּ רָע: כָּזַבְנוּ: לָצָנוּ:
מָרְדָנוּ: נִאֲצָנוּ: סָרְרָנוּ: עָוִינוּ:
פִּשְׁעֵנוּ: צָרָנוּ: קִשְׁיָנוּ עָרָף: רִשְׁעֵנוּ:
שִׁחַתְנוּ: תַּעֲבָנוּ: תַּעֲיִינוּ: תַּעֲתָעֵנוּ: ←

Ashamnu. Bagadnu. Gazalnu. Dibarnu dofi.
He'evinu. Vehirshanu. Zadnu. Hamasnu.
Tafalnu shaker. Ya'atznu ra. Kizavnu. Latznu.
Maradnu. Ni'atznu. Sararnu. Avinu.
Pashanu. Tzararnu. Kishinu oref. Rashanu.
Shihatnu. Ti'avnu. Ta'inu. Titanu. ↩

COMMENTARY. The *Ashamnu*, the short alphabetic acrostic confession, precedes the *Al Het*, the longer catalogue of sins for which we seek forgiveness. It is no easy task to confront our failings, still more daunting to name them, perhaps most difficult to speak them. We are first given the opportunity, as it were, to practice; we chant together a short series of statements of a general nature. As we draw our voices together, we move on to the lengthier and more specific listing of sins, strengthened by the presence of others who, like us, have also failed. R.H.

We have turned away from your mitzvot,
and from your righteous laws,
as if it did not matter to us.
And you are just, whatever comes upon us,
for what you do is truth,
and we have done much wrong.

We have done wrong, and have rebelled.
And so, we were not ready for your help.
Place into our hearts the will
to leave behind the path of evil,
and so hasten our redemption and renewal—
as is written by your prophet's hand:
“Let the wicked leave behind their unjust way,
let the unworthy cast away their plans,
let them return to THE COMPASSIONATE, who will be merciful,
returning to our God, who shall abundantly forgive.”

סָרְנוּ מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ הַטּוֹבִים וְלֹא שָׁוָה לָנוּ: וְאַתָּה צְדִיק עַל
כָּל-הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ כִּי-אַמֶּת עֲשִׂיתָ וְאַנַּחְנוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ:

הִרְשָׁעְנוּ וּפָשַׁעְנוּ לְכֵן לֹא נוֹשָׁעְנוּ וְתָן בְּלִבֵּנוּ לַעֲזֹב דְּרָךְ רָשָׁע וְחֵישׁ
לָנוּ יֵשַׁע בְּכַתּוּב עַל יַד נְבִיאָךְ: יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֲוֶן
מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וַיָּשָׁב אֶל יְהוָה וִירַחֲמֵהוּ וְאֶל-אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי-יִרְפָּה לְסִלּוֹחַ:

And...wrong (Nehemiah 9:33). ואתה...הרשענו
Let...forgive (Isaiah 55:7). יעזוב...לסלוח

What can we say before you,
you who dwell on high?
What can we tell you,
you who inhabit heaven's heights?
Are you not one who knows all things,
both hidden and revealed?

From eternity you have been called
"the One who passes over transgression."
So hear our cry as we stand here
in prayer before you.
Pass over the transgression
of a people who return from their transgressing.
Erase our guilt from before your eyes.

You know the secrets of the universe,
the most hidden recesses of all that lives.
You search the chambers of our inner being,
you examine the conscience and the heart.
There is nothing hidden from you,
nothing is concealed before your eyes.
So, let it be your will,
ETERNAL ONE, our God, God of our ancestors,
that you may grant forgiveness to us for all of our sins,
and be merciful to us for all of our injustices,
and let us atone for all we have done wrong: ↪

מַה נֹאמַר לְפָנֶיךָ יוֹשֵׁב מְרוֹם וּמַה נִסְפֵּר לְפָנֶיךָ שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים: הֲלֹא
 כָּל הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת וְהַנְּגֻלוֹת אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ: שִׁמְךָ מְעוֹלָם עוֹבֵר עַל פֶּשַׁע:
 שׁוֹעֲתֵינוּ תֹאזִין בְּעִמְדָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בַּחֲפֻלָּה: תַּעֲבֹר עַל פֶּשַׁע לַעַם שְׂבִי
 פֶּשַׁע: תִּמְחָה פִשְׁעֵינוּ מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ:
 אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ רְזִי עוֹלָם וְתַעֲלוּמוֹת סִתְרֵי כָל חַי: אַתָּה חוֹפֵשׁ כָּל חַדְרֵי
 בֵּטֶן וּבוֹחֵן כְּלִיֹּת וְלֵב: אֵין דְּבַר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּךָ וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִנֶּגֶד
 עֵינֶיךָ: וּבִכֵּן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
 וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּסַלַּח לָנוּ עַל כָּל חַטֹּאתֵינוּ וְתִמְחַל לָנוּ עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ
 וְתִכַּפֵּר לָנוּ עַל כָּל פִּשְׁעֵינוּ: ←

For the wrong that we have done before you
in the closing of the heart,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
without knowing what we do.

For the wrong that we have done before you
whether open or concealed,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
knowingly and by deceit.

For the wrong that we have done before you
through the prompting of the heart,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
through the influence of others.

For the wrong that we have done before you
whether by intention or mistake,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
by the hand of violence.

For the wrong that we have done before you
through our foolishness of speech,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
through an evil inclination.

And for them all, God of forgiveness,
please forgive us, pardon us, help us atone!

For the wrong that we have done before you
in the palming of a bribe,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
by expressions of contempt.

For the wrong that we have done before you
through misuse of food and drink,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
by our avarice and greed. ↵

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאִמּוּץ הַלֵּב:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּכָלִי דָעַת:

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּגִלּוּי וּבִסְתָר:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּדַעַת וּבְמִרְמָה:

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּהִרְהוּר הַלֵּב:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּוַעֲדַת זְנוּת:

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּזִדּוֹן וּבְשִׁגְגָה:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּחֹזֶק יָד:

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטַפְשׁוֹת פֶּה:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּלִצְר הָרַע:

וְעַל כָּלֵם אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת סִלַּח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כִּפּוּרֵינוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloha seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּכַפַּת שֹׁחַד:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּלִצּוֹן:

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּמֵאֵכֶל וּבְמִשְׁתֶּה:

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּנִשְׁךְ וּבְמִרְבִּית: —

COMMENTARY. Often Jews mistakenly dismiss the reality of sin, substituting the gentler but weaker image of “missing the mark.” This suggests that sin lies only in failing to do what we should rather than in failing to be who we should be.

Reducing sin to the status of an almost inadvertent error hardly seems tenable in the light of our awareness of the horrors of which humans, individually as well as collectively, have proved capable. The very nature of human nature lies before us as an open question.

There is a dark side to human nature, an impulse to evil which distorts and corrupts our best intentions. Rabbinic tradition teaches that each of us has a good as well as an evil inclination, the *yetzer hatov* and the *yetzer hara*. Sin is not only what we do, or do not do; it is also a question of who we are. In order to confess sin, we must first confront sin.

R.H.

For the wrong that we have done before you
through offensive gaze,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
through a condescending glance.

And for them all, God of forgiveness,
please forgive us, pardon us, help us atone!

For the wrong that we have done before you
by our quickness to oppose,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
by deception of a friend.

For the wrong that we have done before you
by unwillingness to change,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
by running to embrace an evil act.

For the wrong that we have done before you
by our groundless hatred,
and for the wrong that we have done before you
in the giving of false pledges.

And for them all, God of forgiveness,
please forgive us, pardon us, help us atone! ↪

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשִׁקּוֹר עֵינַי:
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּעֵינָיִם רָמוֹת:

וְעַל כָּלֵם אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כְּפַר־לָנוּ:

Ve'al kulam eloha seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu.

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּפִלּוּת:
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּצַדִּית רָע:
עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּקִשְׁיוֹת עֶרֶךְ:
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּרִיצַת רַגְלִים לְהִרְע:
עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשִׁנְאָת חֲנֻם:
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּתִשּׁוּמַת יָד:

וְעַל כָּלֵם אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת סְלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כְּפַר־לָנוּ: ←

Ve'al kulam eloha seliḥot selah lanu. Meḥal lanu. Kaper lanu. →

COMMENTARY. Why tap our hearts as we recite the *Vidui*? To remind ourselves that the collective responsibility for the wrongdoing in our community rests on each one of us. As we tap our chests, we might ask how we will make things different in our community this coming year.

D.A.T.

And for mitzvot that call on us to act,
and for mitzvot that bid us not to act,
for mitzvot that say: "Arise, and do...!"
and for mitzvot that do not say: "Arise, and do...!"
for those that are made known to us,
and those that are not known to us.

Those that are known to us
are things we have acknowledged
and confessed before you,
but those that are not known to us
are things revealed and known only to you,
as it is said: "The hidden things
belong to THE ETERNAL ONE, our God.
What is revealed belongs to us and to our children,
always and forever—all the matters
of this Torah that are ours to carry out."
For you are the source of all forgiveness,
the fount of mercy for each and every generation,
and apart from you we have no sovereign
so full of mercy and forgiveness, none but you.

*The community is seated.
Continue on page 437.*

וְעַל מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה וְעַל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין שֵׁשׁ-כָּה קוֹם עֲשֵׂה וּבֵין
שָׁאִין כָּה קוֹם עֲשֵׂה אֶת-הַגְּלוּיִים לָנוּ וְאֶת-שְׂאִינָם גְּלוּיִים לָנוּ: אֶת-
הַגְּלוּיִים לָנוּ כָּכָר אֲמָרְנוּם לְפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹדִינוּ לְךָ עָלֵיהֶם וְאֶת-שְׂאִינָם
גְּלוּיִים לָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ הֵם גְּלוּיִים וַיְדוּעִים כַּדָּבָר שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הַנִּסְתָּרִית
לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַנִּגְלִית לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת כִּי אַתָּה סֹלֶחַ לְכָל-דּוֹר וְדּוֹר וּמַבְלֵעַ דֵּיךְ אֵין לָנוּ
מֶלֶךְ מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אֱלֹא אַתָּה:

*The community is seated.
Continue on page 438.*

הנסתרות...הזאת / The hidden...out (Deuteronomy 29:28).

AVINU MALKENU / OUR CREATOR, OUR SOVEREIGN

The ark is opened.

Most communities follow tradition in not reciting Avinu Malkenu when Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat because of the prayer's petitionary nature.

For an alternative version see pages 457-460. For an interpretive version see page 456.

Our creator, our sovereign, we have done wrong in your presence.

Our creator, our sovereign, we have no one to rule over us but you.

Our creator, our sovereign, help us for the honor of your name.

Our creator, our sovereign, renew for us a good year.

Our creator, our sovereign, nullify the plans of any who may seek to do us harm.

Our creator, our sovereign, grant forgiveness and atonement for all of our transgressions.

Our creator, our sovereign, help us to return wholeheartedly into your presence.

Our creator, our sovereign, send thorough healing to all those who ail.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us for good fortune in the Book of Life.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Redemption and Salvation.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Sustenance and Livelihood.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Merit.

Our creator, our sovereign, inscribe us in the Book of Forgiveness and Atonement.

Our creator, our sovereign, let grow for us the tree of imminent redemption. ↩

DERASH. The *Avinu Malkenu* prayer gives us permission to open up our deepest yearnings to the Universal One. By allowing our yearnings, often hidden even from ourselves, to emerge, we are taking a first step toward achieving an inner balance which will enable us to move forward toward wholeness.

D.B.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ

The ark is opened.

Most communities follow tradition in not reciting Avinu Malkenu when Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat because of the prayer's petitionary nature.

For an alternative version see pages 457-460. For an interpretive version see page 456.

אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹא אַתָּה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִפֵּר עֲצַת אוֹיְבֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ סִלַּח וּמַחֵל לְכָל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הַחַיִּירָנוּ בְּחִשּׁוּבָה שְׁלָמָה לְפָנֶיךָ:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלָמָה לַחֲוָלִים:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר גְּאֻלָּה וִישׁוּעָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר פְּרִנְסָה וְכִלְכָּלָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר זְכוּת:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר סְלִיחָה וּמַחֲלָה:
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִצְמַח לָנוּ יְשׁוּעָה בְּקֶרֶב: ←

COMMENTARY. Jews have traditionally not recited *Avinu Malkenu* on Shabbat because Shabbat is a day of rest, a day focused on appreciation of what we are and what we have. Work and need, and all discussions of them, including petitionary prayer, are out of place on Shabbat. Since *Avinu Malkenu* is entirely petitionary and specifically refers to *parnasah*, earning a living, its use on Shabbat was excluded as early as the time of the Mishnah (around the third century C.E.).

D.A.T.

Our creator, our sovereign, remember us, though we are made of dust.

Our creator, our sovereign, be merciful to us and to all our offspring.

Our creator, our sovereign, act in memory of all those who have been killed while honoring your name.

Our creator, our sovereign, act in honor of your great and mighty, awe-inspiring name, which has been called out over us for our protection.

Our creator, our sovereign, be gracious with us and respond to us, for we have no deeds to justify us; deal with us in righteousness and love, and save us now.

Continue on page 461.

COMMENTARY. Perhaps more than any other prayer, *Avinu Malkenu* invokes the image of a long-bearded king sitting in judgment upon his throne. How many are the ways that this image can trouble us! Some Jews are struggling to recover from the harsh judgments of parents or peers, or from harsh self-judgments. Some are struggling to escape the transcendent imagery of God and replace it with the divine within. Some have trouble with the maleness of the image.

Despite these very real difficulties, there is a powerful core of truth in the *Avinu Malkenu* that transcends the trouble many of us have with its imagery: we must grapple with standards of justice that are external to us. Social responsibility is not merely a matter of personal conscience. Chanting the *Avinu Malkenu* reminds us of standards by which we ought to judge ourselves.

Furthermore, it reminds us of forces infinitely greater than ourselves upon which our very lives depend. While our lives depend upon our inner resources, we cannot exist without the aid of natural and social forces. Knowing who we are means accepting the limits of our power and knowledge and the inevitability of our dependency. D.A.T.

אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ זְכוֹר כִּי עָפָר אֲנֵחֶנוּ:
אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ חֲמוּל עָלֵינוּ וְעַל-עוֹלָלֵינוּ וְטַפֵּינוּ:
אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לָמַעַן הַרוּגִים עַל-שֵׁם קְדֻשָּׁךְ:
אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לָמַעַן שְׂמֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל הַגָּבוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא שְׁנִקְרָא
עָלֵינוּ:
אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ חַנּוּן וְעֲנִינוּ כִּי אֵין פָּנֵינוּ מַעֲשִׂים עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה
וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ:

Avinu malkenu ḥonenu va'anenu ki eyn banu ma'asim
asey imanu tzedakah vaḥesed vehoshi'enu.

Continue on page 462.

COMMENTARY. In *Avinu Malkenu* we seek the strength to do justice, the inner harmony needed to find forgiveness, and the acceptance of the small place we have amidst the tumult of the world. It is in that context that we express the hopes embodied in this prayer. Whether or not the worshipper chooses to change the words of *Avinu Malkenu*, the fervently expressed pleas it contains transcend the constraints of time and place. D.A.T.

DERASH. Divine love, חסד/*hesed*, makes it possible to take the next personal step of continuing our efforts after finding that our deeds have once again failed to measure up to our own expectations. It is in taking that step, made possible by חסד/*love*, that we find salvation. J.A.S.

Here I am, meager of deeds!
In turmoil, and afflicted with such fear
to stand before the One enthroned
on Israel's songs of praise,
I come here now to stand in pleading
in your presence, for your people Israel,
who have sent me here,
even though I am unworthy of it.
For this, I ask you—God of Abraham and Sarah,
God of Isaac and Rebekah,
God of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah,
THE GRACIOUS ONE, THE GRACIOUS ONE,
God full of mercy and compassion,
you, Almighty One, awesome and feared—
that you may make my way successful,
as I stand and beg forgiveness
for myself and those who send me.
Do not find them to blame for sins of mine,
do not declare them guilty for my own mistakes,
for I myself am fallible, and have done wrong.
And do not let them suffer shame
because of any wrongdoing of mine,
and let them not incur disgrace on my account,
and let me, likewise, not incur disgrace through them.
Receive my prayer as if it were
the prayer of one experienced and wise,
whose utterance is well-accepted,
whose bearing is mature,
whose voice is sweet and pleasing
to the ear of all who hear it.
May you nullify the voice of cynicism,
and dispel whatever would prevent our prayer
from being heard. ↵

הִנְנִי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׂ נִרְעָשׁ וְנִפְחָד מִפֶּחַד יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: בָּאֲתִי
לַעֲמֹד וּלְחַנֵּן לְפָנֶיךָ עַל עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְוָנִי אִף עַל פִּי
שְׂאִינִי כְּדִי וְהִגּוֹן לְכָךְ: עַל כֵּן אֲבַקֶּשׁ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי שְׂרָה אֱלֹהֵי רַבֵּקָה אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה יְהוָה
יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂדֵי אִים וְנוֹרָא: הֲיִה נָא
מַצְלִיחַ דְּרַכֵּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לַעֲמֹד לְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים עָלַי וְעַל
שׁוֹלְחִי: וְנָא אֵל תַּפְשִׁיעַם בְּחִטָּאתַי וְאֵל תַּחֲיִיבֵם בְּעֻנּוֹתַי כִּי חוֹטֵא
וּפּוֹשֵׁעַ אָנִי: וְאֵל יִכְלָמוּ בִּפְשָׁעִי וְאֵל יִבּוֹשׁוּ כִּי וְאֵל אֲבֹשָׁה בָהֶם:
וְקַבֵּל תַּפִּלָּתִי כַּתְּפִלַת זָקֵן וְרָגִיל וּפְרָקוֹ נָאָה וְזָקְנוֹ מַגְדֵּל וְקוֹלוֹ
נָעִים וּמַעֲרֹב בְּדַעַת עִם הַבְּרִיּוֹת: וְתַגְעֵר בְּשָׁטָן לְבַל יִשְׁטִינֵנִי ←

COMMENTARY. *Hineni* was traditionally sung by the *hazan* just before the repetition of the *Musaf* Amidah while the *hazan* slowly walked from the back of the synagogue to the *bimah*. The theme of *Hineni* is a humble cantor's plea, which is in direct tension with the high drama of the music and ritual of this moment. Most Reconstructionist communities do not expect the cantor to enter in this highly dramatic way, and most do not repeat the Amidah. Thus, Reconstructionist communities include *Hineni* in different places of the service if at all. It can serve as the introduction to any Amidah that is chanted aloud, or to the silent Amidah. As with all *piyutim*, there is unlimited flexibility as to whether and where to include *Hineni*.
D.A.T.

COMMENTARY. This personal prayer recited by the prayer leader is a public declaration of unworthiness. The leader represents all the people seeking divine compassion and forgiveness. Who could possibly be worthy of such a task if its success depends on the moral purity of the leader? Indeed, true prayer always acknowledges our spiritual poverty. The leader asserts a readiness for true prayer—free of self-centered thoughts, free of manipulative strategies, no longer tallying merits. One is ready to seek God's love, compassion and forgiveness when one is ready to admit how small our efforts are in relation to divine grace.
S.P.W.

Let the banner of our passion
proclaim love for you,
and may you overwhelm all wrongdoing with love.
Reverse all trouble and affliction in our favor,
for the sake of all the people Israel,
for the sake of joy and gladness,
for the sake of life and peace.

May it be your will, ETERNAL ONE,
O God of Abraham and Sarah,
God of Isaac and Rebekah,
God of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah,
you, the supreme God,
you who have been ever changing and becoming,
that all your ministering angels,
all appointed as the guardians of prayer,
shall bring my prayer before your Throne of Glory,
and present it there before you,
for the sake of all the righteous and the loving,
all who are unblemished and deserving of respect,
and for the honor of your great and awesome Name.
For you are one who listens with compassion
to the prayer of your people Israel.
Blessed are you,
who listens to our prayer.

וַיְהִי נָא דְגִלָּנוּ עָלֶיךָ אֱהָבָה לְכָל־פְּשָׁעִים תִּכְסֶּה בְּאַהֲבָה: וְכָל־צָרוֹת
וְרַעוֹת הַפֶּךָ־לָנוּ וּלְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשִׁשּׁוֹן וּלְשִׁמְחָה לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם:
הָאֵמֶת וְהַשָּׁלוֹם אֶהָבּוּ וְאֵל יְהִי שׁוֹם מְכַשׁוֹל בְּתַפְלָתִי:

וַיְהִי רָצוֹן לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי
שָׂרָה אֱלֹהֵי רַבֵּקָה אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגָּבוֹר
וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלִיוֹן אֱהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֱהִיָּה שְׁכַל־הַמְּלָאכִים שֶׁהֵם בְּעֲלֵי
תַפְלוֹת יָבִיאוּ תַפְלָתִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּבוֹדָךְ וַיִּצְיִגּוּ אוֹתָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּעִבּוֹר
כָּל־הַצְּדִיקִים וְהַחֲסִידִים הַתְּמִימִים וְהַיִּשְׁרִים וּבְעִבּוֹר כְּבוֹד שְׁמֶךָ
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלָת עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלָה:

KAVANAH. When people who are concerned about ethics and spirituality gather together, they collectively proclaim the glory of God before they even say a single word because their presence bespeaks the power of God.

E.M.

KAVANAH. The moisture diffused in mist and clouds reduces our vision and chills our bones. We can only wait for wind or sun to remove them. By contrast, on Yom Kippur when we confront the mist of our faults and foibles, sins and errors in our lives, we are able to act, precipitating and thereby concentrating. Through gaining awareness and making confession, our vision is cleared, fresh vistas are opened, and a pool of pure spiritual water before us provides the opportunity to cleanse our souls.

E.G.

COMMENTARY. *Hineni* has long been loved not only for its beautiful music but also because each of us must struggle in our own way with the problem it raises: "How can I be worthy of forgiveness? How can I purify myself enough to be worthy of the lofty hopes of this day?" D.A.T. / M.B.K.

This Amidah can be recited aloud following the silent Amidah, or on its own, or it may be recited with a heyha kedushah. It is traditional for the ark to remain open throughout the Ne'ilah Amidah that is chanted aloud. While it is customary for all to stand during the Kedushah, those who feel weak are encouraged to sit for some other parts of the Amidah.

God great of deeds, the awesome one,
God great of deeds, the awesome one,
grant pardon for the wrongs that we have done,
in the hour of closing the gates.

So few, this people, summoned to you,
they raise their eyes, and look toward you,
aquiver with awe, they pray to you,
in the hour of closing the gates.

They pour their souls in prayer to you,
so blot out their wrongs, their lives renew,
grant pardon to all who pray to you,
in the hour of closing the gates. ↪

Eyl nora alilah
Hametzey lanu mehilah

Metey mispar keru'im
Umesaledim behilah

Shofehim leha nafsham
Hametzi'em mehilah

Eyl nora alilah
Bishe'at hane'ilah

Leha ayin nose'im
Bishe'at hane'ilah

Mehey fisham vehahasham
Bishe'at hane'ilah ↪

This Amidah can be recited aloud following the silent Amidah, or on its own, or it may be recited with a heyha kedushah. It is traditional for the ark to remain open throughout the Ne'ilah Amidah that is chanted aloud. While it is customary for all to stand during the Kedushah, those who feel weak are encouraged to sit for some other parts of the Amidah.

אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה	אֵל נֹרָא עֲלִילָה
בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	הַמָּצֵא לָנוּ מַחִילָה
לָךְ עֵין נוֹשָׂאִים	מִתִּי מִסְפָּר קְרוּאִים
בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	וּמִסְלָדִים בַּחִילָה
מַחָה פֶּשַׁעַם וְכַחֲשֵׁם	שׁוֹפְכִים לָךְ נַפְשָׁם
בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה: ←	הַמָּצִיאָם מַחִילָה

COMMENTARY. "Closing the gates" (*Ne'ilah*) is a resonant theme throughout this eloquently plain song. In its simplest sense, it refers to the closing of the ark curtain at the end of the final Yom Kippur supplications, and the imminent closing of the synagogue after the evening prayers. In a larger sense, however, it calls to mind the gates of Heaven, which have been opened throughout the Days of Awe, for Israel and for the world at large, to a degree unheard of the rest of the year. And in the song's final two stanzas, where Israel's messianic hopes are expressed, "closing the gates" suggests the End of Days, when God will bring everlasting peace to Israel and the world.

The third line of the final stanza literally reads: "to Oholivah and Oholah." It is a reference to Ezekiel's parable (Ezekiel 23) of the two wayward sisters, who represented Samaria and Jerusalem, respectively, the capital cities of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In their eager love for Egypt and Assyria, they incurred God's displeasure and were sent into captivity to the very nations whose improper love they had courted. The names Oholah and Oholibah both play on the Hebrew word for "tent" (*ohel*), Oholibah's name meaning literally "My tent is in her"—a reference to God's sacred Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's parable had been a prophecy of God's anger, but in the present song, Oholah and Oholibah are symbols of hope, expressing the belief that the divided kingdom of ancient times will be reunited in the End of Days, and the remnant of all the lost tribes of Israel returned to the Holy Land. In the present translation, "land of contentment" serves as a play on the word "tent."

J.R.

Please be for them a shelter in need,
protect them from harm, of word or of deed,
and seal them for splendor and for joy,
in the hour of closing the gates.

Be gracious to them, your mercy show,
and to every oppressor and every foe
bring judgment, bring justice above and below,
in the hour of closing the gates.

Remember our ancestors' righteous ways,
remember your promise, and renew their days,
as it was long ago, in former days,
in the hour of closing the gates.

Proclaim now, we pray, a year of fulfillment,
and return your flock's surviving remnant,
to be reunited in a land of contentment,
in the hour of closing the gates.

Moses ibn Ezra

COMMENTARY. As we move toward the end of Yom Kippur, we alter in our mood and our liturgical imagery. On Rosh Hashanah, we prayed that we would be written in The Book of Life; at *Ne'ilah*, we pray that our fate be sealed there. On Yom Kippur, we envision the gates to the divine as standing open; at the hour of *Ne'ilah*, we see them gradually swinging shut. All through Yom Kippur we recited the *Al Het*, the lengthy confessional prayer, along with the *Vidui*; at *Ne'ilah*, the detailed confessing is behind us, and yet the gates are still not shut. The gates move slowly in this last hour. We have one more chance to squeeze from ourselves the last bit of impurity still in our hearts, to voice the last unspoken hope and give it power in the new year. The gates are closing, but they are not yet shut.

D.A.T. / M.B.K.

וְחַלְצִים מִמָּאָרָה	הִיָּה לָהֶם לְסִתְרָה
בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה:	וְחֻתְמֵם לְהוֹד וּלְגִילָה
וְכָל-לוֹחֵץ וְלוֹחֵם	חֵן אוֹתָם וְרַחֵם
בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה:	עֲשֵׂה בָּהֶם פְּלִילָה
וְחִדֵּשׁ אֶת-יְמֵיהֶם	זְכוֹר צְדָקָת אַבְיָהֶם
בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה:	כְּלָדָם וּתְחִלָּה
וְהִשָּׁב שְׂאֵרִית הַצֹּאן	קָרָא נָא שְׁנַת רָצוֹן
בְּשַׁעַת הַנִּעִילָה:	לְאַהֲלִיבָה וְאַהֲלָה

Heyey lahem lesitra
Vehotmem lehod ulegilah

Vehaletzem mime'era
Bishe'at hane'ilah

Hon otam verahem
Asey vahem pelilah

Vehol-lohetz velo hem
Bishe'at hane'ilah

Zehor tzidkat avihem
Kekedem utehilah

Vehadesh et-yemeyhem
bishe'at hane'ilah

Kera na shenat ratzon
le'oholiva ve'ohola

vehashev she'erit hatzon
bishe'at hane'ilah

KAVANAH. When you are asleep, you can wake up, and when you are awake, you can awaken even more. *Ne'ilah* is filled with imagery of gates closing, *ne'ilat hash'a'ar*. The bilateral root of the word *sha'ar*, ער, means to be awake, to watch. The challenge of *Ne'ilah* is to awaken even more.

Z.S.S.

HAVDALAH

The candle is lit.

With the permission of this company:

Blessed are you, THE BOUNDLESS ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates the fruit of the vine.

The blessing over the spices is said only on Saturday night.

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

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

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

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

The candle is now extinguished. Some communities do this by immersing it in wine from the cup.

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

D.A.T.

The candle is lit.

סְבִירי חֲבֵרִי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן:

Savrey haveray.

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey peri hagafen.

The blessing over the spices is said only on Saturday night.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׂמִים:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey miney vesamin.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey me'orey ha'esh.

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

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמְּבָדִיל בֵּין קֶדֶשׁ לְחָל בֵּין
אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
הַמְּבָדִיל בֵּין קֶדֶשׁ לְחָל:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam hamavdil beyn
kodesh leḥol beyn or leḥosheḥ beyn yom hashevi'i lesheshet
yemey hama'aseh. Baruh atah adonay hamavdil beyn kodesh
leḥol.

The candle is now extinguished. Some communities do this by immersing it in wine from the cup.

COMMENTARY. Just as we end Shabbat by candlelight and wine, so do we conclude Yom Kippur, which is called *Shabbat Shabbaton*/the Sabbath of Sabbaths. As this day of fullest removal from ordinary cares and concerns fades away, we re-enter the workaday world. However, we hope to bring the spiritual vision and moral resolve of Yom Kippur back into our everyday lives so that they can shape our everyday concerns. D.A.T.