

# Yom Kippur Morning

*Birhot Hashahar & Pesukey Dezimra*



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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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## BIRHOT HASHAḤAR / MORNING BLESSINGS

How lovely are your tents, O Ya'akov,  
how fine your encampments, Yisrael!

And as for me, drawn by your love,  
I come into your house.

I lay me down in a humble surrender,  
before your holy shrine in awe.

GREAT ONE, how I love your house's site,  
adore your Glory's dwelling place.

And as for me, I fall in prayer,  
my body I bend down,

I greet, I bless, I bend the knee,  
before THE ONE who fashions me.

And as for me, my prayer is for you, GENTLE ONE,  
may it be for you a time of desire,

O God, in the abundance of your love,  
respond to me in truth with your help.

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NOTE. The *Mah Tovu* prayer is composed entirely of biblical verses: Numbers 24:5; Psalms 5:8, 26:8, 95:6 (adapted) and 69:14.

COMMENTARY. *Mah Tovu* begins with a historical progression—the tents of our earliest ancestors, then the sanctuary of the years of wandering in the wilderness, then the Temple in Jerusalem. Each of these is linked to the synagogue, for it too is “your house.” And I, the contemporary soul, seeking the right moment to encounter the divine there, am thus not alone. I am a link in the chain of tradition bearing the truth of your salvation.

D.A.T.

## בְּרֻכּוֹת הַשָּׁחַר

מֵה טָבוּ אֱהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְאֲנִי בָּרַכְתִּיךָ חֲסִדֶּךָ אָבוֹא  
בֵּיתֶךָ אֲשַׁתְּחֶהָ אֶל הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ בֵּירְאֹתֶךָ: יְהוָה אֱהַבְתִּי מְעֹן בֵּיתֶךָ  
וּמְקוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדֶךָ: וְאֲנִי אֲשַׁתְּחֶהָ וְאֶכְרַע אֶבְרָכָה לְפָנַי יְהוָה  
עֲשֵׂי: וְאֲנִי תְפִלְתִּי לְךָ יְהוָה עֵת רַצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בָּרַכְתִּיךָ חֲסִדֶּךָ עֲנֵנִי  
בְּאֵמַת יִשְׁעֶךָ:

Mah tovu ohaleha ya'akov mishkenoteha yisra'el. Va'ani berov  
hasdeha avo veyteha eshtahaveh el heyhal kodsheha beyirateha.  
Adonay ahavti me'on beyteha umkom mishkan kevedeha. Va'ani  
eshtahaveh ve'ehra'ah evrehah lifney adonay osi. Va'ani tefilati  
leha adonay et ratzon elohim berov hasdeha aneni be'emet  
yisheha.

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KAVANAH. Torah tells us that a Moabite soothsayer, Balaam, had come to curse the Israelite people, but when he stood on a hill viewing the Israelites' peaceful encampment, "the spirit of God came upon him," and he exclaimed in wonder—"How lovely are your tents, O Yaakov, how fine your encampments, Yisrael!" (Numbers 24:5)

As we enter the New Year together, may this dwelling place we share together be "lovely." May the "tent" and shelter we build together at the dawn of this New Year be filled with harmony and peace, trust, strength and love—so our lips, too, may offer blessing. L.G.B.

וְאֲנִי תְפִלְתִּי / as for me, my prayer is for you. The Hebrew text has often been creatively misread to mean "I am my prayer." All I have to offer in prayer is myself. We begin our prayers with a feeling of humility, knowing that the vaunted words we are about to speak are no greater than the person who speaks them. Most of the prayers in our liturgy are phrased in the first person plural, in which *we* as a community stand before the Divine presence. But here they are introduced in the halting and somewhat unsure voice of the individual, expressing some of that inadequacy that each of us feels as we enter the place and hour of prayer. A.G.

## SHIREY SHAḤAR/MORNING SONGS

*One of the following introductory poems may be added here.*

### I

Morning I will seek you,  
my fortress rock, each day.  
My song of dawn and dusk  
before you I shall lay.  
I stand before your greatness,  
with trembling I'm fraught,  
because your eyes can enter  
my heart's most secret way.

What can be done, by heart  
or tongue, what can one do or say?  
And how much strength lies deep  
within my body as I pray?  
And yet you find it good  
—mere human song—and so,  
I thank you for as long as shall  
your lifebreath in me play.

Solomon ibn Gabirol

## שִׁירֵי שַׁחַר

*One of the following introductory poems may be added here.*

### I

שַׁחַר אֲבַקֶּשֶׁךָ צוּרִי וּמִשְׁגָּבִי  
אֶעֱרֹךְ לְפָנֶיךָ שַׁחְרִי וְגַם עֶרְבִי:  
לְפָנַי גִּדְלָתְךָ אֶעֱמַד וְאֶבְהִיל  
כִּי עֵינֶיךָ תִּרְאֶה כָּל-מַחְשְׁבוֹת לְבָבִי:  
מֵה-זֶה אֲשֶׁר יוּכַל הַלֵּב וְהַלְשׁוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת  
וּמֵה-כֹּחַ רוּחִי בְּתוֹךְ קִרְבִּי:  
הִנֵּה לְךָ תִּיטֵב זְמַרְת אָנוּשׁ עַל-כֵּן  
אוֹדְךָ בְּעוֹד תְּהִיָּה נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהֵי בִי:

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שַׁחַר אֲבַקֶּשֶׁךָ / Morning I will seek you. The *Shaharit* service, as its name implies, was originally meant to be recited at dawn. Our tradition views the two daily times of change of light as sacred hours to be appreciated with prayer and inner quiet. Though our morning service usually begins long after sunrise, we should try to preserve something of that special memory of dawn's quiet blessing as we begin our prayer. A.G.

For the sake of the union of the blessed Holy One with the Sheḥinah, I stand here, ready in body and mind, to take upon myself the mitzvah, “You shall love your fellow human being as yourself,” and by this merit may I open up my mouth:

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COMMENTARY. This *kavanah* before the morning service was introduced by the kabbalists of Safed. Only by accepting upon ourselves the obligation to love others as ourselves are we allowed to enter the human community of prayer. It is as members of that community and, specifically, as Jews that we come before God in worship. A.G.

KAVANAH. Before we can effect reconciliation with God, we must first become reconciled with those from whom we are estranged.

Mishnah Yoma 8.9 (Adapted)

כמוך... ואהבת / You shall...yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קוֹדֵשׁ אַ בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתֶיהָ

*Men say:*

הַנְּנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזוּמָן

*Women say:*

הַנְּנִי מוֹכְנָה וּמְזוּמָנָת

לְקַבֵּל עָלַי מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל

וְאַהֲבַת לְרַעַד כְּמוֹדָה

וּבְזִכְרוֹת זֶה אֶפְתַּח פִּי:



Some communities add Yigdal (page 1225-1226), Adon Olam (page 1223-1224), and/or Psalm 27 (page 1217-1218) here.

## BIRHOT HASHAḤAR/MORNING BLESSINGS

Blessed are you, AWAKENER, our God, life of all the worlds, who removes sleep from my eyes, and slumber from my eyelids. ↪

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DERASH. The “worlds” to which *hey ha'olamim* refers may be the many universes that each of us inhabits, the vast spaces that surround our world, or the infinite depths that fill the human heart. We proclaim that God is the single flow of life that inhabits and unifies them all. A.G.

COMMENTARY. This sequence of blessings is the central portion of *Birhot Hashaḥar*. It was designed by the talmudic sages to celebrate such acts of awakening as focusing the eyes, sitting up, stretching, standing, etc. The transference of these blessings to the public worship service (ninth century) disengaged the blessing and the particular act of awakening with which it was joined. In their public setting the morning blessings took on a new level of meaning. Removed from the acts of awakening, individual activities became metaphors for godly action. The blessing “who clothes the naked” ceased to be a pointed acknowledgment of personal possessions and personal protection. Instead it became a celebration of God as the power that prompts the care and nurturance of humankind. The blessing “who raises the lowly” ceased to be a blessing over the renewal of physical mobility and became a blessing of the divine presence manifest in actions that raise the bodies and elevate the spirits of those who are low. S.S.

COMMENTARY. The order of *Birhot Hashaḥar* varies from prayerbook to prayerbook because this was not a set part of the public service. Individuals originally recited these blessings as they went about rising, washing and dressing in the morning. Later they were recited privately as a prelude to public prayer. The order of the blessings here begins with the universal act of waking up and becoming aware of the world. It continues with greater wakefulness, addressing sight, clothing, and the act of standing upright. It then shifts to particulars reflecting Jewish uniqueness. Only then does it turn to the full awareness of the mind and spirit expressed in *Elohay Neshamah*. D.A.T.

Some communities add Yigdal (page 1225-1226), Adon Olam (page 1223-1224), and/or Psalm 27 (page 1217-1218) here.

## בְּרִחוֹת הַשַּׁחַר

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים  
הַמַּעֲבִיר שָׁנָה מֵעֵינֵי וּתְנוּמָה מֵעַפְעָפֵי: ←

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
hama'avir shenah me'eynay utnumah me'afapay. ←

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COMMENTARY. The familiar introductory formula for blessings including the phrase *meleḥ ha'olam*/sovereign of the world, was adopted by the rabbis during the talmudic era and universally accepted by later Jews. Substituting another rabbinic phrase, *ḥey ha'olamim*/life of all the worlds, expresses the idea that as Judaism continues to evolve, alternatives to the ancient metaphor of God as divine ruler should emerge. This alternative blessing formulation may be used throughout the siddur by those who prefer it, just as the traditional *meleḥ ha'olam* may be substituted here.

A.G.

COMMENTARY. Various editions of the prayerbook offer different orders of the morning blessings. Here the first blessing is that on awakening. Then comes a blessing on the sounds of dawn, followed by the return of waking consciousness (“who establishes the dry land upon the waters”), and then the blessing on opening our eyes and seeing our world, freshly created with the dawn, around us. The cycle is completed with the blessing “who gives strength to the weary” as we begin our day.

A.G.

DERASH. When we are about to say: “Blessed are you, our God, sovereign of all worlds,” and prepare to utter the first word “blessed,” we should do so with all our strength, so that we will have no strength left to say, “are you.” And this is the meaning of the verse in the Scriptures: “But they that wait for God shall exchange their strength.” What we are really saying is: “Source of life, I am giving you all the strength that is within me in that very first word; now will you, in exchange, give me an abundance of new strength, so that I can go on with my prayer.”

M.B. (Adapted)

Blessed are you, THE PROVIDENT, our God, life of all the worlds,  
who gives the bird of dawn discernment to tell day from  
night.

Blessed are you, THE FASHIONER, our God, life of all the worlds,  
who stretches forth the earth upon the waters.

Blessed are you, THE LAMP, our God, life of all the worlds, who  
makes the blind to see.

Blessed are you, THE COMPASSIONATE, our God, life of all the  
worlds, who clothes the naked.

Blessed are you, REDEEMING ONE, our God, life of all the  
worlds, who makes the captive free.

Blessed are you, THE HELPING HAND, our God, life of all the  
worlds, who raises up the humble. ↪

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KAVANAH. We give thanks that we are restored whole and healthy to consciousness and to an orderly universe. That is why, in the second blessing, we give thanks that when we stepped out of bed, our feet encountered not the watery chaos which preceded creation, but the solid earth which God spread over the waters. The daily emergence from unconsciousness reminds us of our fragility as human creatures and our need for support and care.

R.A.

DERASH. For whom do we recite blessings? If God is beyond blessing, then we must be reciting them for ourselves. Each *berahah* urges us to avoid taking the world for granted. Each contains a vision of the creative or redemptive power in the world. Jewish tradition teaches that living up to our heritage as beings created *betzelem elohim*, in the image of God, requires us to “imitate God.” Thus each *berahah* can teach us something about living our lives in consonance with the divine. Blessings tell us not so much about a God “out there somewhere,” they teach us how to make manifest the godly in ourselves.

D.A.T.

מִי שֶׁיָּרִיב / who raises up the humble: literally, makes upright those bent down. The phrase could suggest either those suffering a physical deformity or those humbled by adverse circumstances.

J.R.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים  
הַנּוֹתֵן לַשָּׁכֵרִי בִּינָה לְהִבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמָּיִם:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים פּוֹקֵחַ עוֹרִים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים מְלַבֵּשׁ עֲרָמִים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים מְתִיר אֲסוּרִים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים: ←

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
hanoten laseḥvi vinah lehavḥin beyn yom uveyn laylah.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
roka ha'aretz al hamayim.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim poke'ah ivrim.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim malbish arumim.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim matir asurim.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim zokef kefufim. ↪

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שְׁכִי / bird of dawn has been variously rendered as “rooster,” “watchman,” “celestial appearance,” or “meteor.” In an urban setting, the earliest sound of life we are likely to hear at dawn is the chirping of sparrows. *Seḥvi* is thus rendered differently from *gever*, rooster, here to capture some of the ambiguity of the word. J.R.

KAVANAH. Those of us who live in plenty are grateful for the clothing on our bodies, the warmth of a garment that shields us from the elements. We pray for a time when this blessing may be spoken by *all* people, a time when *all* humans are “clothed” with warmth and safety, enwrapped in God’s love. L.G.B.

Blessed are you, THE WAY, our God, life of all the worlds, who makes firm a person's steps.

Blessed are you, THE GENEROUS, our God, life of all the worlds, who acts for all my needs.

Blessed are you, THE MIGHTY ONE, our God, life of all the worlds, who girds Israel with strength.

Blessed are you, THE BEAUTIFUL, our God, life of all the worlds, who crowns Israel with splendor. ↩

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DERASH. **הַמְכִּין מַצְעָרַי גִּבֹּר**/who makes firm a person's steps. An interpretive translation of Psalms 37:23-24: "When one's steps follow the divine path, they bring delight along the way." The Baal Shem Tov noted in this connection that wherever one goes and whatever one does each day should have a deeper spiritual significance that parallels the mundane reality of everyday existence. In bringing to our lives this deeper significance, we find new delight in the firmness of our steps. L.G.B.

DERASH. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said that when he marched with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in Selma, Alabama, his "feet were praying."

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים  
הַמְכִּין מִצְעָדֵי גָבֶר:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים  
שֶׁעָשָׂה לִי כָל-צָרָכֵי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים  
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוֹרָה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים  
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַפְאָרָה: ←

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
hameḥin mitzadey gaver.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
she'asah li kol tzorki.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
ozer yisra'el bigvurah.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
oter yisra'el betifarah. ↪

Blessed are you, THE IMAGELESS, our God, life of all the worlds,  
who made me in your image.

Blessed are you, THE FREE, our God, life of all the worlds, who  
made me free.

Blessed are you, THE ANCIENT ONE, our God, life of all the  
worlds, who made me of the people Israel.

Blessed are you, RENEWING ONE, our God, life of all the worlds,  
who gives strength to the weary.

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COMMENTARY. Once we are awake, we return to full consciousness of who we are. In the rigidly stratified society in which these prayers originated, people were less conscious of identity than of status. Thus, the original forms of these prayers expressed the thankfulness of the most privileged members of the community—free Jewish males—that they did not have the less privileged status of women, slaves or non-Jews.

The blessings we now use affirm that since we embody the divine image, we are all intrinsically valuable. To degrade or enslave others is to deface the image of God. We were created free just as our creator is free. We are capable of choice, of invention and of transformation in our lives and in our world. We also give thanks for our particular identity as Jews. God who creates our common humanity, also cherishes human diversity. Each person is unique and precious.

R.A.

NOTE. "THE IMAGELESS...who made me in your image." This paradoxical rendering enables us to understand that our being made "in the divine image" (Genesis 1:26-27) encompasses other than physical attributes: speech, will, reason, spirituality, kindness, freedom of action, moral sense.

J.R.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים  
שְׁעָשִׂנִי בְּצַלְמוֹ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים  
שְׁעָשִׂנִי בֶן / בַּת חוֹרִין:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים  
שְׁעָשִׂנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הַעוֹלָמִים  
הַנוֹתֵן לַיְצֵף כָּח:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
she'asani betzalmo.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
she'asani ben/bat ḥorin.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
she'asani yisra'el.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu ḥey ha'olamim  
hanoten laya'ef ko'ah.

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מוֹ / שְׁעָשִׂנִי בְּצַלְמוֹ / who made me in your image. When a human being is slain, the very image of God is shattered. We revere human life because it is a spark of the life that animates the universe. Only after we have acquired the principle of reverence for each person is it possible to love each other as we should love, not merely “as thyself” but as a reflection of the divine. “Beloved are human beings,” said R. Akiba, “for they were made in the image of God.”

M.M.K. (Adapted)



Blessed are you, THE ARCHITECT, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who shaped the human being with wisdom, making for us all the openings and vessels of the body. It is revealed and known before your Throne of Glory that if one of these passageways be open when it should be closed, or blocked up when it should be free, one could not stay alive or stand before you. Blessed are you, MIRACULOUS, the wondrous healer of all flesh.

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COMMENTARY. This blessing expresses wonder at the simple but necessary functioning of the human body. We do not need to stand before any greater wonder of nature than our own bodies in order to appreciate the intricacy and beauty with which our world is endowed. A sense of awe at our own creation is a starting point of prayer. A.G.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּחֻמָּה  
וּבְרָא בּוֹ נְקֻבִים וְנֻקְבִים חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים:  
גְּלוּי וּיְרוּעַ לְפָנָי כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ שָׂאם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד  
מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהִתְקִים וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה רוֹפֵא כָּל־בְּשָׂר וּמְפַלֵּא לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam asher yatzar et  
ha'adam beḥoḥmah uvara vo nekavim nekavim ḥalulim  
ḥalulim. Galuwi veyadu'a lifney ḥisey ḥevodeḥa she'im yipate'ah  
eḥad mehem o yisatem eḥad mehem i efshar lehitkayem  
vela'amod lefaneḥa. Baruh atah adonay rofey ḥol basar umaflī  
la'asot.

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נְקֻבִים וְנֻקְבִים/all the openings. We regularly perceive by contrast: light and shadow, height and depth, loudness and softness. Often we become aware of health only after illness has replaced it. This brief paragraph of praise for the wondrous workings of the human organism encourages recognition of the blessing of health in its presence, not its absence. Every moment we are healing!

E.G.

My God, the soul you gave to me is pure. You have created it, you shaped it, and you breathed it into me, and you preserve it deep inside of me. And someday you will take it from me, restoring it to everlasting life. ↪

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COMMENTARY. The word *neshamah*, which means both “breath” and “soul,” provides a linguistic connection between the blessings for body and soul. The blessing for the soul uses the vocabulary of the Creation story, especially Genesis 2:6, which describes how God created the human form and then animated it with the breath of life. Hence, the language of celebrating each awakening carries an echo of the primal joining of human form to life force. Every awakening is nothing less than a rehearsal of the mystery of creation.

The traditional version of the blessing for the soul acknowledges the daily renewal of life as a recollection of creation and also as a foretaste of resurrection. The current version concludes instead by acknowledging God as the power that renews life each day. S.S.

DERASH. This short and beautiful prayer starts each day and offers comfort in times of stress. Self-esteem is a precious gift. Even though we may lose it in the tragedies of the present, it will be restored to us in our future. God, the healer, returns our souls to us. E.M.

היא נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא / the soul you gave to me is pure. This elegant and eloquent affirmation of the eternal purity of the soul and the possibility of personal renewal is especially appropriate at this season of *teshuvah*. R.H.

KAVANAH. Even on these days, when we are most focused on our shortcomings and faults, this prayer reminds us that our souls are pure. The task of these ten days is to turn towards that purity.

Adina Abramowitz



שְׁנַתָּה בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא :

אֶתְּךָ בְּרֵאתְךָ אֶתְּךָ יִצְרָתְךָ אֶתְּךָ נִפְחָתְךָ בִּי וְאֶתְּךָ מְשַׁמְרָה בְּקִרְבִּי  
וְאֶתְּךָ עֲתִיד לְטֹלָה מִמֶּנִּי לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם: ←

Elohay neshamah shenata bi tehorah hi.

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עולם /restoring [the soul] to everlasting life. The traditional Hebrew text says, “and restore it to me in the future to come.” The text in our siddur, rather than stressing the traditional notion of individual afterlife, or of personal resurrection in the messianic End of Days, reverses the emphasis: the soul, having sojourned in the physical life, is restored to the everlasting stream of life—to the continuum of being that is the sum-total of all transitory lives, when viewed from the perspective of eternity. J.R.

GUIDED MEDITATION. In the Hebrew of אלהי נשמה /My God, the soul, many of the words end with the sound “ah,” spelled “הָ.” When this prayer is chanted slowly, you breathe these words. Thus this prayer suggests an opportunity, through breathing, to explore the connection between *neshamah* as breath and as soul:

Sit comfortably with your eyes closed, feet uncrossed, and hands loosely on your lap. Take a series of slow, relaxed breaths. Don't try to control them. Just let them come and go freely. Focus your concentration on your breath. Let the thoughts you have flow through you. Don't try to control them. Each time you end a thought, return your focus to your breath. Do this for several minutes. As you follow your breath, reflect on the divine energy it contains.

L.W.K./D.B.

As long as spirit breathes in me, I offer thanks before you, BREATH DIVINE, my God, God of my ancestors, the master of all deeds, and source of every life. Blessed are you, THE HOLY SPIRIT, in whose possession is the breath of every living thing, the animation of all flesh.

---

KAVANAH. We are each created in the image of God. When we allow the reflections of our own beings to illuminate the universe, when we understand that we carry God *within us*, we are closer to doing the work that will eventually perfect the world. When we each accept the purity of our own souls and the purity of the souls of others, *tikun olam* will have been achieved. L.G.B.

KAVANAH. "Sleep is one sixtieth a part of death" (Talmud Beraḥot 57b), and waking is a kind of rebirth. L.W.K.

כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי מוֹדָה / מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי  
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וְאֲמוֹתַי רַבּוֹן כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲדוֹן כָּל הַנְּשָׁמוֹת: בְּרוּךְ  
אֲתָה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בִּידוֹ נִפְּשׁ כָּל חַי וְרוּחַ כָּל בָּשָׂר:

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חי אשר בידו נפש כל חי /in whose possession is the breath of every living thing. We gratefully acknowledge God as the source of life itself and of the constant renewal of our spirit. The traditional formula of this blessing, referring to the future resurrection of the dead, has been emended. As Reconstructionists, we accept both the finality of death and the infinite wondrousness of life. Our religion is about the balancing of these two realities, neither of which may be allowed to negate the other. A.G.

**A** psalm. A song for dedication of the house. Of David.

I exalt you, **GLORIOUS ONE**, because you have delivered me; you gave my enemies no joy on my account.

**DEAR ONE**, my God, I have cried out to you, and you have made me whole.

**REDEEMER**, you have raised my spirit from the land of no return, you revived me from among those fallen in a pit.

Sing out to **THE ALMIGHTY**, fervent souls, be thankful when you call God's holiness to mind.

For God is angry for a moment, but shows favor for a lifetime; though one goes to bed in weeping, one awakes in song.

And I, how I exclaimed in my security: I cannot fail!

**PROTECTOR**, when you wished, you raised my mountain's strength, and when you hid your face, I was afraid.

To you, **THE FOUNT OF LIFE**, I used to call, and from my benefactor I sought help unmerited:

"What use in my blood's waste?

What benefit, my going down into the pit?

Can dust acknowledge you? Can it declare your truth?

Hear, O **HIDDEN ONE**, deal graciously with me,  
**SUPERNAL ADVOCATE**, become a help for me!"

You changed my mourning to ecstatic dance,  
you loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with joy,

that glory might sing out to you, and not be still!

To you, **ABUNDANT ONE** my God, I always shall give thanks.

Psalm 30

# מזמור

שיר־חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד:

אֲרוּמָמָךְ יְהוָה כִּי דָלִיתָנִי וְלֹא־שִׁמְחָתָ אִיבֵי לִי:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שׁוֹעֲתֵי אֵלַיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי:

יְהוָה הָעֵלִית מִן־שָׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי חַיִּיתָנִי מִיַּרְדֵּי־בוֹר:

וַיִּמְרוּ לִיהוָה חֲסִידָיו וְהוֹדוּ לְזָכַר קִדְשׁוֹ:

כִּי רָגַע בְּאִפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ בְּעָרְבַי לֵינִן בְּכִי וּלְבָקָר רָנָה:

וְאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי בְּשִׁלּוֹי בַל־אֲמוּט לְעוֹלָם:

יְהוָה בְּרִצּוֹנְךָ הֵעֵמְדָתָה לְהַרְרֵי עֵז הַסְתַּרְתָּ פְנֵיךָ הָיִיתִי נִבְהָל:

אֵלַיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְאֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן:

מִה־בָּצַע בְּדַמִּי בְרַדְתִּי אֶל שַׁחַת הַיּוֹדֵךְ עֲפָר הַיְגִיד אֲמַתְּךָ:

שְׁמַע־יְהוָה וַחֲנֻנִי יְהוָה הִיָּה־עֲזֹר לִי:

הִפְכָּתָ מִסִּפְדֵי לְמַחֹל לִי פִתַּחְתָּ שְׂקֵי וַתֹּאזְרֵנִי שְׂמֹחָה:

לְמַעַן יִזְמְרְךָ כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדְךָ.\*

Eleha adonay ekra ve'el adonay et-hanan.

Shema adonay veḥoneni adonay heyey ozer li.

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KAVANAH. Focus on one of the psalms, one image, one verse or one word. Savor it. Let its fullness move you. Move at your own speed, easing yourself into the psalmist's vision. Let it become yours. L.W.K.

DERASH. "A song for dedication of the house." Prayer communities often find themselves in someone else's "house" for the *Yamim Nora'im*. We make these spaces holy through our presence and intentions, prayers and song. It is up to us to create holy space. R.H.



## PESUKEY DEZIMRA / VERSES OF PRAISE

Blessed is the one who spoke and all things came to be!

Blessed are you!

Blessed, who created all in the beginning!

Blessed is your name!

Blessed is the one who speaks and acts!

Blessed are you!

Blessed, who determines and fulfills!

Blessed is your name!

Blessed, who deals kindly with the world!

Blessed are you! ↩

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COMMENTARY. The God affirmed in the words of *Baruh She'amar* may be understood in either concrete anthropomorphic terms or in a more abstract manner. It is the latter view with which we Reconstructionists are most comfortable. Our God is not a person who promises and fulfills as a human being would. In speaking of a God who fulfills promises, we express our basic trust in life and our affirmation that goodness and godliness have their own reward. A.G.

KAVANAH. The opening passage of the Torah describes how God created the world by calling, or speaking, it into being. "Blessed is the one who spoke and all things came to be." This teaches that language is a powerful creative force. Later in the Torah we read that God commands destruction (for example, the flood), which takes place exactly as God wills. Anything that has the power to create also has the power to destroy. We are created in God's image; our words, like God's, have the power to both create and destroy. Words can hurt or heal, depending on our use of them. The gift of language is thus an awesome responsibility entrusted to us, and we must learn to be more mindful of its powers. Let us use our words for the sake of kindness and never to injure other human beings. Rabbi Levi said: "God says, if you bear false witness against your neighbor, I regard it as if you had declared that I had not created the world." S.D.R.

# בְּרוּךְ הוּא

בְּרוּךְ הוּא :	בְּרוּךְ שְׂאֵמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם
בְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ :	בְּרוּךְ עוֹשֶׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית
בְּרוּךְ הוּא :	בְּרוּךְ אוֹמֵר וְעוֹשֶׂה
בְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ :	בְּרוּךְ גּוֹזֵר וּמְקַיֵּם
← בְּרוּךְ הוּא :	בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל הָאָרֶץ

Baruḥ she'amar velayah ha'olam.  
 Baruḥ oseh vereyshit.  
 Baruḥ omer ve'oseh.  
 Baruḥ gozer umkayem.  
 Baruḥ meraḥem al ha'aretz.

Baruḥ hu.  
 Baruḥ shemo.  
 Baruḥ hu.  
 Baruḥ shemo.  
 Baruḥ hu. ↩

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Blessed is the one who spoke and the world became.  
 Blessed is the one.  
 Blessed is the one who in the beginning gave birth.  
 Blessed is the one who says and performs.  
 Blessed is the one who declares and fulfills.  
 Blessed is the one whose womb covers the earth.  
 Blessed is the one whose womb protects all creatures.  
 Blessed is the one who nourishes those who are in awe of Her.  
 Blessed is the one who lives forever, and exists eternally.  
 Blessed is the one who redeems and saves.  
 Blessed is God's name.

Naomi Janowitz and Margaret Moers Wenig

Blessed, who acts kindly toward all creatures!

Blessed is your name!

Blessed, who responds with good to those in awe!

Blessed are you!

Blessed, who removes the dark and brings the light!

Blessed is your name!

Blessed is the one who lives eternally and lasts forever!

Blessed are you!

Blessed, who delivers and redeems!

Blessed are you and your name! ↪

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COMMENTARY. *Baruh She'amar* is the rabbinic composition that introduces *Pesukey Dezimra*/Verses of Praise, which traditionally is compiled from biblical passages, primarily from Psalms.

The focus of *Birhot Hashahar* is on physical awakening. In *Pesukey Dezimra* the kaleidoscopic imagery awakens our emotions. Just as we find our own pace walking through art museums, so *Pesukey Dezimra* invites each of us to wander amidst its visions. On different days, different imagery comes to life. *Pesukey Dezimra* moves us toward prayerfulness, toward readiness to join in spiritual community. D.A.T.

DERASH. *Pesukey Dezimra* begins with an apology for verbal prayer. It is only because God “spoke the world into being” that we dare to assume that words can serve as the vehicles for our deepest prayers. In participating in verbal prayer, we somehow partake of that same act of Divine word-power through which the world was created. A Hasidic comment on the opening line of *Baruh She'amar* translates it: “A *baruh* (blessing) that is said and creates a world—that’s a *baruh!*” A.G.

ברוך מְרַחֵם עַל־הַבְּרִיּוֹת	ברוך שְׁמוֹ :
ברוך מְשַׁלֵּם שְׂכָר טוֹב לִירְאָיו	ברוך הוּא :
ברוך מְעַבִּיר אַפְּלָה וּמְבִיא אֹרֶה	ברוך שְׁמוֹ :
ברוך חַי לְעַד וְקַיָּים לְנֶצַח	ברוך הוּא :
ברוך פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל	ברוך הוּא וּבְרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ : ←

Baruḥ meraḥem al haberiyyot.	Baruḥ shemo.
Baruḥ meshalem saḥar tov lire'av.	Baruḥ hu.
Baruḥ ma'avir afelah umevi orah.	Baruḥ shemo.
Baruḥ ḥay la'ad vekayam lanetzah	Baruḥ hu.
Baruḥ podeh umatzil.	Baruḥ hu uvaruḥ shemo. ↪

ברוך מְרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת / Blessed, who acts kindly toward all creatures.  
 As God nurtures and cares, so should we.

Avot De Rabbi Natan 11a (Adapted by L.W.K.)

COMMENTARY. According to the Mishnah, some Jews regularly meditated for an hour before beginning public prayer. As the public prayer service expanded, this time of personal preparation became filled with a collection of psalms and other biblical selections that became known as *Pesukey Dezimra*—"Verses of Song." Rabbinic literature records many variations of *Pesukey Dezimra*, but common to all versions are selections from Psalms 146-150, known as the "Hallel Psalms" because they feature variations of that term as a praise of God. Another important Hallel psalm, 136, is also a traditional part of this section. The central importance of these psalms indicates that the major theme of *Pesukey Dezimra* is the praise (*hallel*) of God. Indeed, the Talmud sometimes refers to *Pesukey Dezimra* as the daily Hallel.

S.S.

Blessed are you, THE EVERLASTING ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds. Divine one, who gave birth to all, the merciful, subject of praise upon our people's mouths, lauded and glorified upon the tongues of all who love and serve you. And through these, the songs sung by your servant David, may we hail you, SOURCE OF BEING. With praises and with melodies we celebrate your greatness, and we praise you, glorify you, call to mind your Name, and crown you as our sovereign, God of ours, the only one, the living one, throughout all worlds. The one who reigns, lauded and glorified unto the end of time, whose name is ever great. Blessed are you, THE ONE, the sovereign hailed in songs of praise.

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COMMENTARY. Although the patchwork of psalms and praises known as *Pesukey Dezimra* is said to have evolved centuries after the prayer service itself, one can sense in this preface to the service an important echo of worship in biblical times—both the daily service of priests and Levites in the Temple, and the prayers of pilgrims ascending to the Holy City for the seasonal festivals. This bold appropriation of historical memory, undertaken in a period of exile and dispersion, affirms the continuity of biblical Israel with the later people Israel—in effect, inscribing the image of the former upon the latter. All of the themes and moods of the service are present in *Pesukey Dezimra*. J.R.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם: הָאֵל הָאָב הַרְחֵם הַמְהַלֵּל  
 בְּפִי עַמּוֹ: מְשֻׁבָּח וּמְפָאָר בְּלִשׁוֹן חֲסִידָיו וְעַבְדָּיו: וּבְשִׁירֵי דָוִד  
 עֲבֹדֶךָ נְהַלֵּלְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: בְּשִׁבְחוֹת וּבְזִמְרוֹת נִגְדֶלְךָ וּנְשַׁבְּחֶךָ  
 וּנְפָאֶרְךָ וְנִזְכִּיר שְׁמֶךָ וְנִמְלִיכֶךָ מִלְּפָנֶינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ \*יַחֲדַי חַי־הָעוֹלָמִים:  
 מֶלֶךְ מְשֻׁבָּח וּמְפָאָר עַד־עַד שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ  
 מְהַלֵּל בַּתְּשׁוּבוֹת:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam. Ha'el ha'av  
 harahaman hamhulal befi amo. Meshubah umfo'ar bilshon  
 hasidav va'avadav. Uvshirey david avdeha nehaleleha adonay  
 eloheynu. Bishva'hot uvizmirot negadeleha unshabe'aha  
 unfa'ereha venazkir shimeha venamliheha malkenu eloheynu  
 yahid hey ha'olamim. Meleh meshubah umfo'ar adey ad shemo  
 hagadol. Baruh atah adonay meleh mehulal batishbahot.

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DERASH. Rabbi Simlay said: "A person should arrange praise of the Holy One and then pray." (Talmud Berahot 32a) *Pesukey Dezimra* is a preparation. It helps our transition into prayer. L.W.K. (Adapted)

Might there be a person who wants life,  
who desires days of seeking good?  
Never let your tongue speak evil,  
nor your lips pronounce deceit!  
Swerve away from evil, perform good,  
seek peace, and follow after it.  
Eyes of THE ONE look toward the righteous,  
divine ears are trained upon their cry.

Present is GOD when evildoers act,  
to ban them from the land of memory,  
ZION'S GOD will listen when you cry  
and from all your troubles God will save.  
Quite near is THE OASIS to the broken-hearted,  
and the despairing it will help.  
Righteous one may be, with many troubles,  
but from all of them THE LIVING WATERS save.  
Showing care down to a person's bones,  
God will not let a single one of them be broken.  
The wicked ones will perish in their evil,  
haters of the righteous will be summoned to account.  
Powerful redeemer is THE ONE to those who serve,  
all who trust in THE ETERNAL triumph over guilt.

Psalm 34

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COMMENTARY. This psalm is an alphabetical acrostic. The English equivalents of the initial letters are based on the Hebrew, rather than the English, alphabet. The Tetragrammaton appears in this psalm, as in Psalm 29, eighteen times, the numerical equivalent of life. J.R.

אָהַב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב:	מִי־הָאִישׁ הַחֲפֹץ חַיִּים
וּשְׁפָתָיִךְ מַדְבֵּר מִרְמָה:	נִצֹּר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע
בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְנִדְפָּהוּ:	סוּר מִרַע וַעֲשֵׂה־טוֹב
וְאֶזְנוֹ אֶל־שׁוֹעֲתָם:	עֵינַי יְהוּה אֶל־צַדִּיקִים
לְהַכְרִית מֵאֶרֶץ זִכְרָם:	פְּנֵי יְהוּה בְּעֵשִׂי רַע
וּמִכָּל־צָרוֹתֵם הִצִּילֵם:	צַעֲקוּ וַיְהוּה שָׁמַע
וְאֶת־דַּכְּאֵי־רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ:	קָרוֹב יְהוּה לְגִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב
וּמִכָּל־מַעֲלָוֹת יְהוּה:	רַבּוֹת רַעוֹת צַדִּיק
אַחַת מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִשְׁפָּרָה:	שֹׁמֵר כָּל־עֲצֻמוֹתָיו
וּשְׂנְאֵי צַדִּיק יֶאֱשָׁמוּ:	תְּמוֹתַת רָשָׁע רַעָה
וְלֹא יֶאֱשָׁמוּ כָּל־הַחֲסִים בּוֹ:	* פְּוֹדָה יְהוּה נֶפֶשׁ עַבְדָּיו

Mi ha'ish heḥafetz ḥayim ohev yamim lirot tov.  
 Netzor leshoneḥa mera usfateḥa midaber mirmah.  
 Sur mera va'asey tov bakesh shalom verodfehu.

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COMMENTARY. "Will be summoned to account"... "triumph over guilt"—the Hebrew verb is the same in both verses: *yeshamu...lo yeshemu*. The rendering of these phrases is meant to capture the paradoxical theological and psychological implications of guilt: considered as a condition of responsibility before God, the concept of guilt is an important cornerstone of religious belief; considered as an emotion that can, sometimes inappropriately, lead a person into despair or self-hatred, a sense of guilt can sometimes be dangerous and wrong. Those who "triumph over" guilt master the crippling effects of guilt as an emotion; they will, however, retain their sense of right and wrong, and continue to hold themselves responsible before God. J.R.



A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

My protector, you are our abode,  
one generation to the next,

since before the mountains came to birth,  
before the birthpangs of the land and world.

From eternity unto eternity, you are divine.

You return a person unto dust.

You say: Return, O children of humanity!

Truly, a thousand years are in your eyes  
like yesterday—so quickly does it pass—  
or like the watchman's nighttime post.

You pour upon them sleep, they sleep.  
When morning comes, it vanishes like chaff.

At dawn, life blossoms and renews itself,  
at dusk, it withers and dries up.

Truly, we are consumed amid your anger,  
and amid your wrath are made to tremble. ↩

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COMMENTARY. Psalm 90 could be called a wisdom psalm. Its message is that the very eternity of God forces us to confront the shortness of human life and our own mortality. The psalmist calls out for the wisdom “to assess our days” and thus to gain an understanding heart. Facing mortality squarely and honestly, the psalmist, with great poignancy, calls out for as many joyous days as those we have experienced suffering and pain. The human capacity to arise from suffering and experience joy again is one of the greatest testimonies to God's presence. A.G.

# תפלה

לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים

בְּדֹר וָדֹר:	אֲדַנִּי מֵעוֹן אַתָּה הָיִיתָ לָנוּ
וּתְחֹלֵל אֶרֶץ וּתְבַל	בְּטָרִם הָרִים יִלְדוּ
וַיַּעֲזֹב עַד־עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל:	
וַתֵּאמֶר שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי־אָדָם:	תָּשׁוּב אָנוּשׁ עַד־דָּפָא
כִּיּוֹם אַתְּמוֹל כִּי יַעֲבֹר	כִּי אֶלֶף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ
	וַאֲשַׁמְרָה בְּלִילָהּ:
בִּבְקָר כְּחֹצֵר יַחֲלֶף:	זְרַמְתָּם שָׁנָה יָהִיוּ
לְעֶרֶב יִמּוֹלֵל וַיִּבֶשׁ:	בִּבְקָר יִצִּיץ וַחֲלָף
וּבַחֲמַתְךָ נִבְהָלְנוּ: ←	כִּי־כָלִינוּ בְּאַפְךָ

NOTE. Psalm 90. תפלה למשה איש האלהים / A prayer of Moses, the man of God—A number of psalms are traditionally ascribed to authors other than David. This is the only one ascribed to Moses. The identification may rest on the psalmist's extreme humility before God, the psalm's desertlike mood, its stress on the nothingness of humanity and nature, and its pleading on behalf of human beings in the face of divine wrath. J.R.

COMMENTARY. חשב אנוש עד רכא / ותאמר שובו / You return a person unto dust. You say: Return...—This couplet captures, with some irony, two values of the word “return”: physical return of the human being to dust is suggested first, and the line that follows could allude to it as well; or God's call could mean, “Repent, do *teshuvah!*” When the word appears again some verses later, its meaning is deepened further: “Return, FOUNTAIN OF LIGHT!”—Here, the prayer calls upon God to return from hiding or from anger, and be reconciled with humanity. Human and divine repentance mirror each other. The psalmist prays for this mutual return. J.R.

You have placed our sins before your presence,  
our hidden faults into the lamplight of your face.

Yes, all our days are emptied in your fire,  
our years are finished off as but a murmur.

Years of our lifetime are but seventy  
—perhaps, among the strongest, eighty years—

and most of them are toil and fatigue,  
then quickly it all ends, we fly away.

Who knows the full strength of your fury?  
Is our fear of you the equal of your wrath?

Oh, let us know how to assess our days,  
how we may bring the heart some wisdom.

Return, FOUNTAIN OF LIGHT! How long?  
Be reconciled with your servants!

Give us, at daybreak, the plenty of your love,  
enable us to dance and to rejoice throughout our days.

Regale us for as many days as you have tortured us,  
as many years as we have witnessed evil.

Let your accomplishments be visible to those who serve you,  
let your beauty rest upon their children,

let our divine protector's pleasure be upon us,  
and the labor of our hands, make it secure,

the labor of our hands ensure!

Psalm 90

עֲלֵמֵנוּ לְמֵאֹר פְּנֵיךָ :	שֵׁת עֲזַנְתֵּינוּ לְנִגְדֶךָ
כְּלֵינוּ שְׁנֵינוּ כְּמֹהֲגָה :	כִּי כָל־יָמֵינוּ פָּנוּ בְּעִבְרַתְךָ
וְאִם בְּגִבּוֹרֹת שְׂמוֹנִים שָׁנָה	יָמֵי־שָׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָהֶם שְׁבַע־עִים שָׁנָה
כִּי־גֹז חֵישׁ וְנִלְעָפָה :	וְרַהֲבָם עָמַל וְאָוֶן
וּכְיִרְאַתְךָ עִבְרַתְךָ :	מִי־יִוָּדַע עִז אֶפְרָיִם
וְנָבֵא לְבַב חֲכָמָה :	לְמָנוֹת יָמֵינוּ בֵּן הַדּוֹדַע
וְהִנָּחֵם עַל־עִבְרֵיךָ :	שׁוֹבָה יְהוָה עַד־מָתַי
וְנִרְנְנָה וְנִשְׁמַחָה בְּכָל־יָמֵינוּ :	שִׁבְעֵנוּ בְּבִקְרַח חֲסִידֶיךָ
שָׁנוֹת רָאִינוּ רַעָה :	שִׁמְחָנוּ כִּימֹת עֲנִיתָנוּ
וְהִדְרֶךָ עַל־בְּנֵיהֶם :	יִרְאֶה אֶל־עִבְרֵיךָ פְּעֻלָּתְךָ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כֹּונָה עָלֵינוּ	* וַיְהִי נָעַם אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כֹּונָהוּ :	

*For Yom Kippur:*

**A** Prayer of David.

Listen, GOD of justice, hearken to my song of joy,  
give ear, please, to my prayer, here spoken without guile.

Your judgment of my case comes forth,  
your gaze is so direct!

You prove my heart, you visit in the night,  
you test me, and find nothing wrong,  
my mouth does not transgress.

As for the deeds of human beings,  
guided by your words,  
I've kept myself away from lawless paths.

My feet held firm,  
along your winding trails, my steps did not give way.

I have called out to you, that you, divinity, might answer me;  
extend your ear to me, and listen to my utterance.

Act wondrously with loving deeds,  
redeeming those who trust in you,  
preserving from aggressors with your mighty hand.

Protect me like the pupil of an eye,  
conceal me in the shelter of your wings

from evildoers who despoil me,  
from mortal enemies who have surrounded me.

Their inner substance is closed off,  
their mouths have spoken arrogance. ↩

# תְּפִלָּה

לְדָוִד

שְׁמָעָה יְהוָה צְדָק הַקְּשִׁיבָה רַנְתִּי הַאֲזִינָה תִפְלְתִי  
בְּלֹא שְׁפָתַי מְרָמָה:

מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא עֵינֶיךָ תִּחְזִינָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:  
בְּחַנּוּת לִבִּי פָקְדוֹת לֵילָה צָרַפְתָּנִי בַל־תִּמְצָא זַמְתִּי  
בַל־יַעֲבֹר־פִּי:

לִפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בְּדַבָּר שְׁפָתֶיךָ  
אֲנִי שָׁמְרָתִי אֲרַחֲוֹת פְּרִיץ:

תִּמְדָּךְ אֲשׁוּרִי בְּמַעֲגָלוֹתֶיךָ בַל־נִמְוָטוּ פְּעָמַי:  
אֲנִי־קִרְאתֶיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֶנִּי אֵל הַט־אֲזַנְךָ לִי שְׁמַע אֲמַרְתִּי:  
הַפְּלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמַּתְקוֹמְמִים בֵּימֵינֶךָ:  
שְׁמְרֵנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בַּת־עֵינַן בְּצֶל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי:  
מִפָּנֵי רָשָׁעִים זֶה שְׁדוֹנֵי אִיבֵי בְּנֶפֶשׁ יִקְיִפוּ עָלַי:  
חֲלַכְמוּ סָגְרוּ פִּימוּ דְבָרוּ בְּגֵאוֹת: ←

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COMMENTARY. The psalmist describes himself as having clean hands and a pure heart, as a person walking a godly path. With this claim on God, the psalmist asks for protection from evil doers and enemies. Then moving beyond worldly, everyday concerns, the psalmist makes the ultimate request—to be worthy of directly encountering the divine. Jews on Yom Kippur, with their struggle for complete goodness, can see the first part of the psalm as a portrayal of the ideal toward which they are aspiring. As the order of the psalm makes clear, while there may be some temporal rewards for leading the good life, the ultimate reward is spiritual. D.A.T.

Our feet they have hemmed in,  
their eyes they have set roaming in the land.

The enemy is like a lion eager to attack,  
a youthful lion crouching in its hiding-place.

Arise, REDEEMING ONE, go forth to meet the foe and  
to subdue.

Rescue my life from evil with your power,  
from those made mortal by your hand, ALMIGHTY ONE,  
from mortal ones whose share in life is brief.

But as for those in your protection, satisfy their hunger,  
let their children enjoy plenty,  
and in turn pass on abundance to their young.

May I, with justice, come to see your face,  
may I awake with satisfaction to behold your form!

Psalm 17

אֲשֶׁר־נֹו עָתָה סִבְּבוּנוּ עֵינֵיהֶם יִשִּׁיתוּ לְנֹטוֹת בְּאָרֶץ:  
דְּמִינוּ כְּאֲרִיָּה יִכְסֹוּף לְטֹרֶף וְכִכְפִּיר יֵשֵׁב בְּמַסְתָּרִים:  
קוֹמָה יֵהוּה קִדְמָה פָּנָיו הִכְרִיעֵהוּ פְּלֹטָה נִפְשֵׁי מִרְשָׁע חֲרָבָד:  
מִמָּתִים יִדָּד יֵהוּה מִמָּתִים מִחֶלֶד חֶלְקֵם בְּחַיִּים  
וְצַפּוֹנָד תִּמְלֵא בְטָנִם יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָנִים  
וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרֵם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם:  
אֲנִי בְצַדִּק אֶחֱזָה פָּנָיִךְ אֲשַׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוֹנָתְךָ:



Dwelling in the secret of the Highest,  
in the shade of the Almighty does one lodge.

I say to THE ETERNAL ONE: My roof, my fortress tower,  
my God, in whom I trust!

For One shall shelter you from trapper's snare,  
from the disease that sweeps the villages.

Inside divine wings you are nestled,  
beneath God's pinions you are housed,  
a shield embracing is God's truth.

You shall not fear from nighttime terror,  
from the arrow that soars by day,

from pestilence that stalks the gloom,  
from feverish demon of the noon.

A thousand dangers fall away beside you,  
yes, ten thousand of them, at your right.  
To you, they can't draw near.

Just cast your eyes around,  
the payment of the wicked you shall see.

For you, PRESENCE, are canopy to me,  
Supernal One, you've offered your abode. ↪

# יָשַׁב

בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יְתְלוֹנָן : בְּסֹתֵר עֲלִיּוֹן  
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹטְחָבוּ : אָמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסֵי וּמְצוּדָתֵי  
מְדַבֵּר הַוּוֹת : כִּי הוּא יַצִּילָךְ מִפַּח יְקוֹשׁ  
וְתַחַת-כַּנְפָּיו תִּחְסֶה : בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֶּךְ לָךְ  
צִנָּה וְסַחְרָה אָמְתוֹ :  
מִחֵץ יַעוֹף יוֹמָם : לֹא-תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לַיְלָה  
מִקָּטָב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים : מְדַבֵּר בְּאֶפֶל יְהִלָּךְ  
וּרְבָבָה מִימִינֶךָ : יִפֹּל מִצַּדְךָ אֱלֹךְ  
אֲלֶיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ :  
וְשִׁלְמַת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה : רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְיֹט  
עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמַת מְעוֹנֶךָ : ← כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה מַחְסֵי

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NOTE. This psalm revels in the many words for the enclave of divine protection: secret [place], shade, fortress tower, wings, pinions, embracing, shield, canopy, abode, tent, angels, divine hands. J.R.

No evil shall befall you,  
nor shall any plague approach your tent.

For God shall bid the angels to you,  
to protect you upon all your paths.

On divine hands you shall be carried,  
lest your foot should strike the rock.

On roaring lion and on python you shall tread,  
you'll trample cub and crocodile.

Yes, in Me is her desire, I help her to survive,  
I shall exalt her, for she knows my name.

He calls to Me, I answer him,  
with him am I in time of trial.  
I release him, and I pay him honor.

Long are the days I satisfy her with,  
I look upon her with my saving help.

Long are the days I satisfy him with,  
I look upon him with my saving help.

Psalm 91

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NOTE. To achieve gender balance, the translator has exercised poetic license in choosing pronouns here.

D.A.T.

וְנָגַע לֹא-יִקְרַב בְּאֵהָלָךְ:	לֹא-תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה
לְשִׁמְרֹךְ בְּכָל-דְּרָכֶיךָ:	כִּי מִלְאָכָיו יִצְוֶה-לָךְ
פֶּן-תִּגְּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶךָ:	עַל-כַּפֵּיָם יִשְׁאַוּנֶךָ
תִּרְמַס כְּפִיר וְתַנּוּן:	עַל-שִׁחַל וּפֶתֶן תִּדְרֹךְ
אַשְׁגִּיחֵהוּ כִּי-יֵדַע שְׁמִי:	כִּי בִי חֶשֶׁק וְאִפְלֹטֵהוּ
עֲמוּ-אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה	יִקְרְאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֵהוּ
אַחֲלִיצֵהוּ וְאֶכְבְּדֵהוּ:	
וְאַרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:	* אֲרֹךְ יָמִים אֲשַׁבֵּיעֵהוּ
וְאַרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:	אֲרֹךְ יָמִים אֲשַׁבֵּיעֵהוּ

Oreḥ yamim asbi'ehu ve'arehu bishu'ati.

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COMMENTARY. The function of angels in the Bible was primarily that of messengers as reflected in the Hebrew term *malah*. Though the Bible does refer to other kinds of angels, their function is quite sketchy. In the second Temple period, the lore about angels grew quite rapidly. At several points the Hebrew liturgy utilizes biblical excerpts in ways that reflect the later understanding of angels. This is particularly the case in the three forms of *Kedushah* found in the Shabbat and Festival morning service. D.A.T.

Acknowledge THE ETERNAL, who is good,  
God's love is everlasting,  
praise the God of all the gods,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo,*  
give thanks to the most powerful of powers,  
God's love is everlasting,  
who alone performs great, wondrous deeds,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo,*  
maker of the heavens with sublime discernment,  
God's love is everlasting,  
founder of the earth upon the waters,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo,*  
maker of the great light orbs,  
God's love is everlasting,  
sunlight for dominion of the day,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo,*  
moon and stars to rule the night,  
God's love is everlasting,  
who, amid our lowliness, remembered,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo,*  
who unyoked us from our troubles,  
God's love is everlasting,  
who gives sustenance to all of flesh,  
*Ki le'olam hasdo!*  
Praises to the heavens' God,  
God's love is everlasting!

Selected from Psalm 136

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COMMENTARY. ליהוה / הודו / Acknowledge THE ETERNAL. Psalm 136 is sometimes called the Great Hallel. Its resounding chorus of praise was probably sung by the Levites on festive occasions during Second Temple times. The stanzas of the psalm combine mention of the wonders of Creation and the history of Israel as signs of God's faithfulness. A.G.

# הוֹדוּ

לִיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב

הוֹדוּ לֵאלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים

הוֹדוּ לְאֲדֹנָי הָאֲדֹנִים

לַעֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת לְבָדוּ

לַעֲשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּחִבּוּנָה

לְרַקַּע הָאָרֶץ עַל־הַמַּיִם

לַעֲשֵׂה אוֹרִים גְּדֹלִים

אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת בַּיּוֹם

אֶת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְכּוֹכָבִים לְמַמְשֶׁלוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה

שִׁבְשֵׁפְלָנוּ זָכַר לָנוּ

וַיַּפְרְקֵנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ

נָתַן לָחֶם לְכָל־בָּשָׂר

הוֹדוּ לְאֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֹדוֹ:

Hodu ladonay ki tov

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Hodu leylohey ha'elohim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Hodu la'adoney ha'adonim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Le'osey nifla'ot gedolot levado

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Le'osey hashamayim bitvunah

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Leroka ha'aretz al hamayim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Le'osey orim gedolim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Et hashemesh lememshelet bayom

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Et hayare'ah ve'ho'avim lememshelet balaylah

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Shebeshiflenu zahar lanu

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Vayifrekenu mitzareynu

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Noten lehem lehol basar

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Hodu le'el hashamayim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

# Hallelu/Yah!

Call out to Yah in Heaven's holy place!  
Boom out to Yah across the firmament!  
Shout out for Yah, for all God's mighty deeds!  
Cry out for Yah, as loud as God is great!  
Blast out for Yah with piercing shofar note!  
Pluck out for Yah with lute and violin!  
Throb out for Yah with drum and writhing dance!  
Sing out for Yah with strings and husky flute!  
Ring out for Yah with cymbals that resound!  
Clang out for Yah with cymbals that rebound!  
Let every living thing Yah's praises sing, Hallelu/Yah!  
Let every living thing Yah's praises sing, Hallelu/Yah!

Psalm 150

Blessed is THE ONE eternally.  
Amen! Amen!  
Blessed is THE OMNIPRESENT,  
dwelling in Jerusalem, Halleluyah!  
Blessed is THE MIGHTY ONE divine,  
The God of Israel who alone works wonders,  
and blessed is the glorious name forever,  
and may God's glory fill the earth.  
Amen! Amen!

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COMMENTARY. Psalm 150 as it appears in the biblical text does not repeat its concluding line as it does in the liturgy. The repetition here makes this concluding verse parallel to all the preceding ones, allowing it to fit a variety of musical settings. The repetition also emphasizes the psalm's essential message.

D.A.T.

הַלְלוּיָהּ הַלְלוּ-אֵל בְּקֹדֶשׁוֹ הַלְלוּהוּ בְּרִקְיעַ עֲזוֹ:

הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִבּוֹרֹתָיו הַלְלוּהוּ כְּרֹב גְּדֻלוֹ:  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַ שׁוֹפָר הַלְלוּהוּ בְּנִבְל וְכִנּוֹר:  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתוֹף וּמְחוֹל הַלְלוּהוּ בְּמִנִּים וְעִגָּב:  
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי שְׁמַע הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי תְרוּעָה:  
\* כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהִלֵּל יְהוָה הַלְלוּיָהּ:

כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהִלֵּל יְהוָה  
הַלְלוּיָהּ

Halleluyah halelu el bekodsho. Haleluhu birki'a uzo.

Haleluhu vigvurotav. Haleluhu kerov gudlo.

Haleluhu beteka shofar.

Haleluhu benevel vehinor.

Haleluhu betof umaḥol.

Haleluhu beminim ve'ugav.

Haleluhu betziltzeley shama.

Haleluhu betziltzeley teru'ah.

Kol haneshamah tehael yah. Halleluyah.

כָּרוֹךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן: כָּרוֹךְ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן שֶׁכֵּן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם  
הַלְלוּיָהּ: כָּרוֹךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבָדוֹ:  
\* וְכָרוֹךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אָמֵן וְאָמֵן:

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כָּרוֹךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ / and may God's glory fill the earth. The meaning of the Hebrew phrase is rich in ambiguity. All earth is filled with divine glory, but divine glory itself is filled up with earthliness. It is the reality of this world that fills God's presence, as it is the presence that gives the world its glory. A.G.

כָּרוֹךְ.../Blessed...Amen! (Psalms 89:53, 135:21, 72:18-19).



The soul of every living thing shall bless your name, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the spirit of all flesh shall glorify and hold in reverence continually the memory of you, our sovereign one. From one eternity to another, you alone are God. For without you, we have no ruler, no redeemer, none to champion our cause, none to rescue or to save, none to nourish or to nurture us, whatever be the hour, or the trouble, or the need. ↩

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COMMENTARY. *Nishmat Kol Hay* consists of three sections. The first section presents God's unity as that unity is declared with every breath of creation. The second section gives thanks for timely rains and declares God to be beyond creation's collective ability to praise. Even if we could enlist nature's greatest capacities in the service of praising God, they would still fall short. Praise "as great as all outdoors" is still inadequate.

In the third section of *Nishmat Kol Hay*, Israel's unique praises reflect its historical experiences of God as the power that brings redemption. *Nishmat Kol Hay* begins with a universal chorus of praise, moves to the particular praise of Israel, and then speaks of the many ways that individual actions serve as praise. Praises arise from the universe *within* the self just as they fill the universe *without*. Verses from the psalms illustrate aspects of body and breath/soul contributing praises that fill worlds.

*Pesukey Dezimra* ends with this rabbinic composition reassembling individual voices into a chorus of adoration and thanksgiving. The final paragraphs are a reprise of the first blessing of *Pesukey Dezimra* in *Baruh She'amar* (page 194). Thus, the entire collection beginning with *Baruh She'amar* and ending before the Kaddish (which separates *Pesukey Dezimra* from *Shaharit*) becomes a well defined literary whole. S.S.

*Nishmat* is the song of the wave  
awakening to the ocean,  
seeing that the wave is the ocean and the ocean the wave,  
recognizing the interdependence of all things and  
discovering the awesome wonder that is our reality.

R.M.S.

נִשְׁמַת כָּל־חַי תְּבָרַךְ אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְרוּחַ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר תְּפָאֵר  
 וְתַרְוִימֵם זְכָרְךָ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ תָּמִיד: מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם אֶתָּה אֵל  
 וּמִבְּלַעַדֶיךָ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשִׁיעַ פּוֹדֵה וּמַצִּיל וּמַפְרִיֵם  
 וּמְרַחֵם בְּכָל־עֵת צָרָה וְצוּקָה אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי אֶתָּה: —

Nishmat kol ḥay tevareḥ et shimeḥa adonay eloheynu.

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DERASH. *Nefesh, ruah, neshamah*: these three Hebrew terms are often translated as soul or spirit. They were originally terms for breath. This relation between soul and breathing is found in other sacred languages as well: *atman* in Sanskrit, *pneuma* in Greek, *anima* and *spiritus* in Latin are all terms for soul. All in origin refer to breath and breathing. Literally, then, this prayer asserts that the breath of all living creatures proclaims God's blessing. In what sense might this be so?

Breath is the prerequisite of life and speech, of existence and communication, and it is a gift requiring no conscious attention except in cases of illness. If each inhalation required a direct order, each exhalation a conscious command, how should we find energy or attention for anything else? How should we sleep? In truth, we do not breathe; we are breathed. At this moment of my writing, at this moment of your reading, at succeeding moments of our praying, breath enters and leaves our lungs without our conscious intervention. Truly we are breathed. E.G.

חַי נִשְׁמַת כָּל / The soul of every living thing. This ancient and grand rabbinic closing to the morning psalms follows the biblical view that refuses to make any distinction between matter and spirit. God is the breath that resides in all of life, the spirit that animates all flesh. It is this corporeal world that is the locus of divinity. We need only develop the eyes to see it. A.G.

KAVANAH. Prayer is not just words. It is actions; it is our very breathing. *Nishmat* asserts that—with *kavanah*, proper intent—the act of breathing and living can itself become a prayer to God. S.D.R.

God of the first things and the last, the deity of every creature, power over all that comes to be, the subject of all praises through the multitude of laudatory songs, who guides the universe in love, all creatures with compassion. THE WATCHFUL ONE will never slumber, never sleep! To you who wakens all who sleep and stirs all those who slumber, who gives speech to those who cannot speak, who frees the captive and upholds the falling, who makes upright those bent down—to you alone we offer thanks.

And were our mouths oceans of song, our tongues alive with exultation like the waters' waves, our lips filled full of praises like the heaven's dome, our eyes lit up like sun and moon, our hands spread out like eagle's wings, our feet as light as those of the gazelle—we would never have sufficient praise for you, ABUNDANT ONE, our God, God of our ancestors, nor could we bless your name enough for even one small measure of the thousands upon thousands of the times of goodness, when you acted for our ancestors and us. ↩

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COMMENTARY. This passage invokes Creation—the separation of sky and water, the fixing of the heavenly lights, the creation of winged creatures and fleet-footed animals. The poet imagines human beings with the best qualities of all the rest of creation. Even then our most elaborate praises would not suffice to express the immensity of the blessing we receive. We are therefore urged to honor our good fortune in God's creative power with every organ of our bodies and with every imaginable verbal variation—that is all we can do in the face of the multiplicity of God's wonders.

R.S.

אֱלֹהֵי הָרְאשׁוֹנִים וְהָאַחֲרוֹנִים אֱלֹהֵי כָּל־בְּרִיּוֹת אֲדוֹן כָּל־תּוֹלְדוֹת  
הַמְהַלֵּל בְּרַב הַתְּשׁוּבָה הַמְנַהֵג עוֹלָמוֹ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרִיּוֹתָיו בְּרַחֲמִים:  
וַיְהוּה לֹא־יָנוּם וְלֹא־יִישָׁן הַמְעוֹרָר יְשָׁנִים וְהַמְקִיץ נֹרְדָמִים  
וְהַמְשִׁיחַ אֲלֵמִים וְהַמְתִּיר אֲסוּרִים וְהַסּוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים וְהַזּוֹקֵף  
כְּפוּפִים לָךְ לְבַדָּךְ אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים:

אֱלוֹ פָּנוּ מֵלֹא שִׁירָה כִּים וְלִשׁוֹנָנוּ רְנָה כְּהַמּוֹן גְּלִיו וְשִׁפְתוֹתֵינוּ  
שָׁבַח כְּמַרְחָבֵי רִקְיעַ וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִיָּרַח וַיְדִינֵנוּ פְּרוּשׁוֹת  
כְּנִשְׂרֵי שָׁמַיִם וְרַגְלֵינוּ קְלוֹת כְּאֵילוֹת אֵינן אֲנַחְנוּ מִסְּפִיקִים לַהוֹדוֹת  
לָךְ יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵנוּ וְלִבְרַךְ אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ עַל־  
אֲחַת מֵאֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֲלֵפֵי אֲלֵפִים וְרַבֵּי רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים הַטּוֹבוֹת  
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ עִם־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְעִמָּנוּ: ←

Ilu finu maley shirah kayam.

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KAVANAH. מעורר ישנים / who wakens all who sleep. Our faith awakens us from the sleep of our unawareness and calls us to release the bound, to raise up the fallen, and to uplift those who are bent over. In this we are doing godly work, serving as the limbs of the divine presence in this world. It is only through our acting in this way that God's work is done in the human community. And it is only by recognizing such acts as God's work that we transcend ourselves and our own needs in fulfilling them.

A.G.

From Egypt you redeemed us, ANCIENT ONE, our God, and from the house of servitude you rescued us. When we were hungry, you provided us with food. With satisfaction you have nurtured us, and from the sword you have delivered us, and during pestilence you gave us refuge, and from dreadful and persistent sicknesses you've set us free. Down to the present day, your kindnesses have been a help to us, your loving acts have not forsaken us.

So never more abandon us, FOUNT OF COMPASSION.

Therefore, the limbs that you have molded for us, breath and spirit you have breathed into our nostrils, tongue that you have placed into our mouths—behold, they shall give thanks, and bless, and praise, and glorify, exalt, admire, sanctify, and crown your name our sovereign power. For every mouth will offer thanks to you, each tongue swear oath; each knee will bend, each upright body will bow down; and every heart will be in awe of you, and every inner organ sing out to your name—as it is written: “Let all my bones declare: THE INFINITE! Who is like you? You, who save the poor from those of greater strength, the destitute and the oppressed from their exploiters.” The wail of the downtrodden you will hear, and to the cry of the unfortunate you hearken and come forth with help. Who resembles you, who can be your equal, who can estimate your worth? Divinity so great, so mighty, and so awesome, supreme God, creator of the heavens and the earth!

We hail you, and we praise you, and we glorify you, and we bless your holy name, as it is said by David: “Bless, O my soul, THE ONE, and all my inner strength, God’s holy name.”

Divinity so consummate in strength, so abundant in the glory of your name, so great unto eternity, so awesome in your awe-inspiring deeds.

ממַצְרִים גִּאֲלֹתָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּמִבֵּית עֲבָדִים פְּדִיתָנוּ בְּרַעַב וְנָתַנּוּ  
 וּבְשֹׁבַע כָּל־כֹּלֵתָנוּ מִחֶרֶב הִצַּלְתָּנוּ וּמִדְּבַר מִלְטָתָנוּ וּמִחֲלָיִים רָעִים  
 וְנֶאֱמָנִים דִּלִּיתָנוּ: עַד־הֵנָּה עֲזָרוּנוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ וְלֹא־עֲזָבוּנוּ חַסְדֶּיךָ וְאֵל־  
 תִּטְשֵׁנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְנֹצַח:

עַל־כֵּן אֲבָרִים שׁוֹפְלֹגֶת בָּנוּ וְרוּחַ וּנְשָׁמָה שׁוֹנֶפֶת בְּאַפֵּינוּ וְלִשׁוֹן  
 אֲשֶׁר שִׁמַּת בְּפִינוּ הֵן הֵם יוֹדוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ וַיִּשְׁבְּחוּ וַיִּפְאָרוּ וַיְרֹמְמוּ  
 וַיַּעֲרִצוּ וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ מִלְּפָנֵינוּ: כִּי כָל־פֶּה לְךָ יוֹדֶה  
 וְכָל־לִשׁוֹן לְךָ תִּשְׁבַּע וְכָל־בֶּרֶךְ לְךָ תִּכְרַע וְכָל־קוֹמָה לְפָנֶיךָ  
 תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְכָל־לְבָבוֹת יִירָאוּךָ וְכָל־קָרֵב וְכָל־יֹדוּת יִזְמְרוּ לְשִׁמְךָ כַּדְּבַר  
 שְׁכִתוֹב: כָּל־עֲצָמוֹתַי תֹּאמְרָנָה יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ: מִצִּיל עֲנִי מִחֲזֹק  
 מַמְּנוּ וְעֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מִגְּזֹלוֹ: שׁוּעַת עֲנִיִּים אַתָּה תִּשְׁמַע צַעֲקַת הַדָּל  
 תִּקְשִׁיב וְתוֹשִׁיעַ מִי יְדָמָה־לְךָ וּמִי יִשׁוּה־לְךָ וּמִי יַעֲרֹךְ־לְךָ הָאֵל  
 הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

\* נְהַלְלֶךָ וְנִשְׁבַּחֶךָ וְנִפְאָרֶךָ וְנִבְרַךְ אֶת־שֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ כְּאִמּוֹר לְדוֹד  
 בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה וְכָל־קְרִבִי אֶת־שֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ: הָאֵל בְּתַעֲצֻמוֹת  
 עֲזֶיךָ הַגָּדוֹל בְּכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ הַגְּבוּר לְנֹצַח וְהַנּוֹרָא בְּנוֹרְאוֹתֶיךָ:

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Let all my bones declare (Psalms 35:10). It is the whole self that calls out the praises of God, not just the lips or the mind. The act of prayer is one that calls upon the entire person. This is why traditional Jewish prayer may involve the rhythmic swaying of the body. There is preserved in this ancient and largely unconscious movement an element of ritual dance in which bodily movement was joined to speech in calling out God's glory. A.G.

Bless...name (Psalms 103:1). ברכי נפשי...קדשו

*On the High Holy Days in some communities, the ḥazan or a second sheliḥ tzibur/prayer leader begins here.*

The sovereign one,  
presiding on your lofty and exalted throne!

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COMMENTARY. When we are brushed by the magic of the world's splendor, when we catch a hint of the mysteries of the universe, when we behold nature in all its wild beauty, we are embraced by a majesty that both takes our breath away and restores it to us in an inspiring rush. At that moment, the "lofty and exalted throne" shines before us. We are humble—and joyful. L.G.B.

KAVANAH. Praised be to absolutes, to the truths planted deep within us. Praised be these inner sovereigns and our ability to revere them, to hold them sacred, so that we can act in their name. D.B.

COMMENTARY. Rosh Hashanah is the descendant of ancient Near Eastern ceremonies celebrating the annual re-enthronement of the local king and deity. In the ancient mythologies, this enthronement was associated with the defeat of chaos. We too have a need to re-enthrone meaning in the face of the chaos of our lives. J.A.S.

DERASH. On a hospital bed in an intensive-care unit, a critically ill patient was heard to say, "I'm ready. If God calls me now, I'm ready to go." This acknowledgment of our basic human frailty, mortality and ultimate lack of control is an essential aspect of addressing God as *Hameleh*/the Sovereign. We live life for as long as we have it, doing godly acts as long as we are able. When our time comes, may we be ready. Carl S. Choper

*On the High Holy Days in some communities, the ḥazan or a second sheliaḥ tzibur/  
prayer leader begins here.*

הַמֶּלֶךְ  
יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּי רָם וְנִשְׂא:

Hameleh  
yoshev al kisey ram venisa.

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The traditional liturgy subtly underlines the changes in mood and meaning from weekday to Shabbat to Holiday to High Holy Day by its shifts in *nusah*, the melodic liturgical line. Such a shift occurs at this juncture. On weekdays much of this passage is omitted, and the person who will chant the main part of שחרית/the morning service begins simply—“ישתבח שמך לעד”/your name will always be praised.” On Shabbat the new service leader emphasizes the stative, restful nature of Shabbat and its grandeur by beginning “שוכן עד מרום”/forever dwelling in the highest heights.” On the Pilgrimage Festivals the new leader emphasizes the historical origins of the festivals and their connection to revelation and redemption by beginning “האל בתעצמות עוז”/divinity so consummate in strength.” On the High Holy Days the leader leads us toward the primary struggle of this season, the effort to re-enthron the divine in our lives, by beginning, “המלך/the Sovereign.”

D.A.T.



Forever dwelling in the heights, forever holy is God's name! And it is written: "Sing joyously, you fervent ones, about THE FOUNT OF LIFE, for, from the upright, praise is fitting!"

By the mouths of all the upright you are raised!  
And in the words of all the just ones you are blessed!  
And on the tongues of all the fervent you are sanctified!  
And in the midst of all the saintly, you are praised ↪

שׁוֹכֵן עַד מְרוֹם וְקְדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ:  
וְכָתוּב: רָנְנוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה לִישָׁרִים נְאוּה תְהִלָּה:

תְּתַרְוֶמֶם	יְשָׁרִים	בְּפִי
תְּתַבְרַךְ	צַדִּיקִים	וּבְדַבְרֵי
תְּתַקְדָּשׁ	חֲסִידִים	וּבְלִשׁוֹן
תְּתַהַלֵּל ←	קְדוֹשִׁים	וּבְקִרְבַּ

Shoḥen ad marom vekadosh shemo.

Veḥatuv: Ranenu tzadikim badonay laysharim navah tehilah.

Befi yesharim titromam

uvdivrey tzadikim titbarah.

uvilshon ḥasidim titkodash

uvkerev kedoshim tit-halal

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רננו...תהלה/Sing...fitting! (Psalms 33:1).

And in the congregations of the tens of thousands of your people, the House of Israel, through joyful song, your name is glorified, our sovereign, in each and every generation. Thus is the obligation of all creatures in your presence, HOLY ONE, our God, God of our ancestors, to thank, to hail, to praise, to glorify, to hold aloft, and to embellish, and to bless, and to exalt, and to revere, beyond all words of song and praise sung by your servant David son of Jesse, your anointed one.

Your name be praised eternally, our sovereign, you who are divine, and powerful, and great, and holy, throughout all the heavens and the earth. For unto you, RESPLENDENT ONE, our God, our ancients' God, it is appropriate to offer song, and to ascribe all greatness, might, and praise, all splendor, holiness, and royalty, all blessings and all thanks, from now unto eternity. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, the sovereign divine, so great in praises, God of all thanksgiving, source of wondrous deeds, who takes pleasure in our song and melody. Blessed is the one who lives eternally!

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חי העולמים / who lives eternally. The Hebrew phrase literally means life of the worlds. This prayerbook also uses the rich and ambiguous phrase for the morning blessings. The word *olam* can refer either to space or to time. A God who is “the life of the *olamim*” can be one who lives eternally, one who inhabits all of many worlds, or one who joins space and time together. Space and time are the two essential categories that are sanctified by religion. Our tradition declares both certain times and particular places to be especially holy. It is through our reverence for these that we learn to treat life as a whole with the reverence of *kedushah*. It is our understanding of God as *hey ha'olamim* that cuts through the distinction between space and time and binds them together in cosmic oneness. A.G.

וּבְמִקְהֵלוֹת רַבּוֹת עִמָּךְ בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרֹנָה יִתְפָּאֵר שְׁמֶךָ מִלְּפָנָיו  
בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר שְׁפָן חוֹבֵת כָּל־הַיְצוּרִים לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי  
אֲבוֹתֵנוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵנוּ \*לְהוֹדוֹת לְהִלֵּל לְשַׁבַּח לְפָאֵר לְרוֹמֵם לְהַדִּיר לְבָרֵךְ  
לְעֵלָה וּלְקַלֵּס עַל כָּל־דְּבָרֵי שִׁירוֹת וְתַשְׁבְּחוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן־יִשִׁי עַבְדְּךָ  
מְשִׁיחְךָ:

\* יִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׁמֶךָ לְעַד מִלְּפָנָיו הָאֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּשָׂמִים  
וּבְאַרְצָן כִּי לָךְ נָאָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ שִׁיר  
וְשִׁבְחָה הִלֵּל וְזִמְרָה עִזוּ וּמְמִשְׁלָה נִצַּח גְּדִלָה וּגְבוּרָה תְּהַלֵּה  
וְתִפְאָרֶת קְדֻשָּׁה וּמְלֻכוֹת \*בְּרֻכּוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם: בְּרִיךְ  
אֲתָה יְהוָה אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל בְּתַשְׁבְּחוֹת אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת אֲדוֹן הַנִּפְלְאוֹת  
הַבּוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי זִמְרָה מֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי הַעוֹלָמִים:

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your servant...your anointed one. David was anointed as ruler over Israel by Samuel, according to I Samuel 16. Anointment, the pouring of olive oil over the head of a chosen leader of Israel, was a symbol of elevation to kingship. Eventually, "Anointed One" (*mashiah*) came to refer to *the* Messiah, the descendant of King David who would rule Israel and the world at the End of Days. The rule of David, at least for the people of the southern kingdom, Judah, symbolized an idyllic time of unity and sovereignty in Israel. Belief in a Messiah became more intense when Israel's unity and sovereignty ended. Here, the term refers simply to the anointing event in David's lifetime. J.R.

## ḤATZI KADDISH/SHORT KADDISH

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

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

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

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COMMENTARY. Holiness is the quality or value that things or persons have when they help people to become fully human. M.M.K. (Adapted)

COMMENTARY. Kaddish is thematically similar to the *Aleynu* prayer. It is at heart a prayer for the inflow of divine presence, which it is imagined will bring true fulfillment to our lives. The prayer thus reminds us that the small sparks of holiness we manage to discover in our everyday lives are but *hints* of the holiness our efforts can help to make manifest. D.A.T.

## חֲצִי קַדִּישׁ

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךְ  
מְלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיָמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן  
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:  
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרַומֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה  
וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא  
לְעֵלָא לְעֵלָא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאַמְרִין  
בְּעֻלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן:

*Reader:* Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba  
be'alma di vera hirutey veyamliḥ malḥutey  
beḥayeyḥon uvyomeyḥon uvḥayey deḥol beyt yisra'el  
ba'agala uvizman kariv ve'imru amen.

*Congregation:* Yehey shemey raba mevarah le'alam ulalmey almayā.

*Reader:* Yitbarah veyishtabah veyitpa'ar veyitromam veyitnasey  
veyit-hadar veyitaleh veyit-halal shemey dekudsha beriḥ hu le'ela  
le'ela mikol birḥata veshirata tushbeḥata veneḥemata da'amiran  
be'alma ve'imru amen.