

# Classic Prayers for the Days of Awe

For Yom Kippur



# RECONSTRUCTING JUDAISM

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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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## 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.

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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.

## הַדְּלָקַת נֵר זְכוֹרֹן

נֵר זֶה אָנוּ מְדַלִּיקִים לְזִכְרוֹם שֶׁל כָּל הָאֲהוּבִים שְׁלָנוּ: יְהִי זְכוֹרָם  
בְּרוּךְ:

נֵר זֶה אָנוּ מְדַלִּיקִים לְזִכְרוֹם שֶׁל חַיֵּי צָבָא הַהִגְנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַל-  
אֵלֶּה שֶׁמָּסְרוּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁם עַל-קִדּוּשׁ הַשֵּׁם וְשִׁנְהֵרְגוּ בְּשׂוֹאָה: יְהִי  
זְכוֹרָם בְּרוּךְ:

*The memorial candle is now lit.*

## הַדְּלָקַת נְרוֹת לִיּוֹם כְּפוּר

*The festival candles are lit.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לְהַדְּלִיק נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת ו) יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים:

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

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שִׂיֵּאִירוּ  
נְרוֹת אֵלֶּה אֶת דְּרָכֶי הַתְּשׁוּבָה בְּיוֹם שַׁבָּת שְׁבַתוֹן קִדְּשָׁךְ: לְאוֹרָם  
נִרְאָה אוֹר וְנֵאמַר אָמֵן:

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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. ↩

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**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



בְּיִשְׁבָּה שֶׁל מַעְלָה וּבְיִשְׁבָּה שֶׁל מַטָּה  
עַל דַּעַת הַמָּקוֹם וְעַל דַּעַת הַקָּהָל  
אָנוּ מִתְּרִיזִין לְהִתְפַּיֵּל עִם הָעֹבְרִינִים: ←

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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.

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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 וְחַרְמֵי וְקוֹנָמֵי וְקוֹנֵסֵי וְכַנּוּיֵי דְנִדְרָנָא  
וְדִאֲשַׁתְּבַעְנָא וְדִאֲחַרְיִמָּנָא וְדִאֲסָרְנָא עַל נַפְשָׁתָנָא מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים  
שְׁעָבַר עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה הִבָּא עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה כְּלֵהוֹן אֲחַרְטָנָא כְּהוֹן  
כְּלֵהוֹן יְהוֹן שָׂרָן שְׁבִיקוֹן שְׁבִיתִין בְּטֵלִין וּמִבְטָלִין לָא שְׁרִירִין וְלָא  
קְמִין: 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 shevitin 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.

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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 הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכָם כִּי לְכָל-הָעָם  
בְּשִׁגְגָה:

סִלַּח-נָא לַעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כַּגְּדֹל חַסְדְּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה  
מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהָה: וְשָׁם נֹאמַר:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה: סִלַּחְתִּי כַדְבָרְךָ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲטָיו וְקִימָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ  
לְדֹמֵן הַזֶּה:

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

Selah-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.

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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)

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כַּל-נִדְרֵי שְׁפָתֵינוּ, קִבְלוֹת שְׁפָלָינוּ  
 וְהִרְהוּרֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה שְׁהֲגִינוּ וּבִטְאֵנוּ  
 בְּאֶלְפֵי תַפְלוּתֵינוּ בְּיוֹם כְּפוּר שְׁהִיָּה  
 לֹא שָׁנוּ אַרְח חַיֵּינוּ,  
 לֹא הִבִּיאוּ גְאֻלָּתָנוּ  
 בְּשָׁנָה שְׁנִסְתִּימָה:  
 מִמְרוּמֵי הַתְּלֻהָבוֹתָנוּ  
 אֶל חֲלִין הַרְגֵלָנוּ  
 שְׁכָנוּ מִיָּד עִם נְעִלָה:

הַתְּשַׁמַּע חֲרָטָתָנוּ, אִם תִּתִּיר אֶת-מַאֲסֵינוּ  
 בְּיַד יֵצֵר שֶׁל שְׁגָרָה?

הַתְּרַצָּה תַפְלֻתָנוּ לְכַפֵּר עַל פְּשָׁעֵינוּ  
 אִף אִם נָשׁוּב וְנִחָטָא?  
 דַּע כִּי בְשַׁעַת חֲלֻשָׁתָנוּ לֹא נִזְכֵּר מוֹדְעָתָנוּ  
 מִיוֹם כְּפוּר שְׁהִיָּה:  
 תִּתְחַשֵּׁב בְּשִׁכְחָתָנוּ וּתְקַבֵּל כְּוִנוֹתֵינוּ  
 לְסְלִיחָה וְלִמְחִילָה:

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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.

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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 אלהינו חוס ורחם עלינו וקבל ברחמים

וברצון את־תפלתנו:

השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם:

אל תשליכנו מלפניך ורוח קדשך אל תקח ממנו:

אל תשליכנו לעת זקנה ככלות כחנו אל תעזבנו:

אל תעזבנו יהוה אלהינו אל תרחק ממנו:

עשה עמנו אות לטובה ויראו שונאינו ויבשו:

פי אתה יהוה עזרתנו ונחמתנו:

אמרינו האזינה יהוה בינה הגיגנו:

יהיו לרצון אמרי־פינו והגיון לבנו לפניך יהוה צורנו וגואלנו:

פי לך יהוה הוחרלנו אתה תענה אדני אלהינו:

Shema kolenu adonay eloheynu ḥus verahem aleynu  
vekabel beraḥamim uveratzon 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 leratzon imrey finu vehegyon libenu lefaneḥa adonay  
tzurenu vego'alenu.

Ki leḥa adonay hohalnu atah ta'aneh 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 תִּשְׁשָׁנוּ וְאֵל  
 תִּכְלִימֵנוּ וְאֵל תִּפְרֵ בְרִיתְךָ אִתָּנוּ קִרְבָּנוּ לְתוֹרַתְךָ לְמִדָּנוּ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ  
 הוֹרָנוּ דְרָכֶיךָ הֵט לִפְנֵינוּ לִירְאָה אֶת־שִׁמְךָ וּמוֹל אֶת־לִבְבָנוּ לְאַהֲבַתְךָ  
 וְנָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ בְּאֵמֶת וּבְלִב שָׁלֵם וּלְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל תִּמְחַל וְתִסְלַח  
 לְעוֹנֵינוּ כִּפְתּוּב בְּדַבְרֵי קִדְשְׁךָ: לְמַעַן שִׁמְךָ יִהְיֶה וְסָלַחְתָּ לְעוֹנֵי כִי  
 רַב הוּא:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ סָלַח לָנוּ: מְחַל לָנוּ: כִּפּוּר־לָנוּ:  
 כִּי אָנוּ עֲמָךְ וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: אָנוּ בְנֶיךָ וְאַתָּה אֲבֵינוּ:  
 אָנוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאַתָּה אֲדוֹנֵינוּ: אָנוּ קְהֵלְךָ וְאַתָּה חֻלְקָנוּ:  
 אָנוּ נִחְלָתְךָ וְאַתָּה גּוֹרְלָנוּ: אָנוּ צִאֲנֶךָ וְאַתָּה רוֹעֵנוּ:  
 אָנוּ כְרֵמְךָ וְאַתָּה נוֹטְרָנוּ: אָנוּ פְעֻלָּתְךָ וְאַתָּה יוֹצְרָנוּ:  
 אָנוּ רַעֲיָתְךָ וְאַתָּה דוֹרְנוּ: אָנוּ סִגְלָתְךָ וְאַתָּה קְרוֹבָנוּ:  
 אָנוּ עֲמָךְ וְאַתָּה מְלִכָנוּ: אָנוּ מְאֻמֵּיךָ וְאַתָּה מְאֻמֵּירָנוּ: ←

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 עֵרֶף וְאַתָּה אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם:  
אָנוּ מְלֵאֵי עוֹן וְאַתָּה מָלֵא רַחֲמִים: אָנוּ יַמִּינוּ כְּצֶל עוֹבֵר וְאַתָּה הוּא  
וּשְׁנוֹתֶיךָ לֹא יִתְמוּ:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ תְּבוֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ וְאֵל  
תַּתְּעַלֵּם מִתְּחַנְּתָנוּ שְׂאִין אֲנַחְנוּ עֵזִי פָּנִים וְקָשִׁי עֵרֶף 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. ↩

אֲשַׁמְנוּ : בְּגָדְנוּ : גָּזַלְנוּ : דִּבְרָנוּ דְּפִי :  
הֶעֵרְנוּ : וְהִרְשַׁעְנוּ : זָדְנוּ : חָמְסְנוּ :  
טָפְלְנוּ שָׁקַר : יַעֲצְנוּ רַע : כְּזָבְנוּ : לֵצְנוּ :  
מָרְדְנוּ : נִאֲצְנוּ : סָרְרְנוּ : עֲוִינוּ :  
פִּשְׁעֵנוּ : צָרְרְנוּ : קִשְׁיֵנוּ עֲרָף : רִשְׁעֵנוּ :  
שִׁחַתְנוּ : תַּעֲבָנוּ : תַּעֲיִנוּ : תַּעֲתָעְנוּ : ←

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. ←

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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 מִמְצוֹתַיִךְ וּמִמְשַׁפְּטֶיךָ הַטּוֹבִים וְלֹא שָׁוָה לָנוּ: וְאַתָּה צְדִיק עַל  
כָּל-הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ כִּי-אַמֶּת עֲשִׂיתָ וְאַנְחֵנוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ:

הִרְשָׁעְנוּ וּפְשָׁעְנוּ לְכֵן לֹא נוֹשָׁעְנוּ וְתַן בְּלִבֵּנוּ לְעֹזב דְּרָךְ רָשָׁע וְחַיֵּשׁ  
לָנוּ יֵשַׁע כַּכְּתוּב עַל יַד נְבִיאֶךָ: יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֲוֶן  
מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וַיָּשֻׁב אֶל יְהוָה וַיִּרְחַמֵּהוּ וְאֶל-אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי-יִרְפֶּה לְסִלּוֹחַ:

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סָרְנוּ מִמְצוֹתַיִךְ וּמִמְשַׁפְּטֶיךָ הַטּוֹבִים וְלֹא שָׁוָה לָנוּ: וְאַתָּה צְדִיק עַל  
כָּל-הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ כִּי-אַמֶּת עֲשִׂיתָ וְאַנְחֵנוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ: / And...wrong (Nehemiah 9:33).  
יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֲוֶן מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וַיָּשֻׁב אֶל יְהוָה וַיִּרְחַמֵּהוּ וְאֶל-אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי-יִרְפֶּה לְסִלּוֹחַ: / Let...forgive (Isaiah 55:7).

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: ↪

מֵה נֹאמֵר לְפָנֶיךָ יוֹשֵׁב מְרוֹם וּמֵה נִסְפָּר לְפָנֶיךָ שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים: הֲלֹא  
 כָּל הַנְּסֻתָרוֹת וְהַנְּגָלוֹת אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ: שְׁמַךְ מַעֲוֹלָם עֹבֵר עַל פְּשָׁע:  
 שׁוֹעֲתֵינוּ תֹאזִין בְּעַמְדָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בַּחֲפִלָּה: תַּעֲבֹר עַל פְּשָׁע לַעַם שְׂבִי  
 פְּשָׁע: תִּמְחָה פְּשָׁעֵינוּ מִנְּגִד עֵינֶיךָ:  
 אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ רְזִי עוֹלָם וְתַעֲלוּמוֹת סִתְרֵי כָּל חַי: אַתָּה חוֹפֵשׁ כָּל חַדְרֵי  
 בָּטָן וּבֹחֵן כְּלִיֹּת וְלֵב: אֵין דְּבַר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּךָ וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִנְּגִד  
 עֵינֶיךָ: וּבְכֵן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
 וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּסַלַּח לָנוּ עַל כָּל חַטָּאוֹתֵינוּ וְתִמְחַל לָנוּ עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ  
 וְתִכְפֹּר לָנוּ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעֵינוּ: ←



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 הַטָּא

שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאִמוּץ הַלֵּב:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּכֹלֵי יָדָעַת:

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּגִלּוּי וּבִסְתֵר:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּדַעַת וּבְמִרְמָה:

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּהִרְהוּר הַלֵּב:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּוַעֲדַת זְנוּת:

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּזִדּוֹן וּבְשִׁגְגָה:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּחֹזֶק יָד:

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטַפְשׁוֹת פֶּה:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּלִצְר הָרַע:

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

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

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּכַפַּת שֶׁחַד:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּלִצּוֹן:

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּמֵאֵכֶל וּבְמִשְׁתֵּה:

וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּנִשְׁפָּה 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 בְּשִׁקּוּר עֵינַיִן:  
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּעֵינַיִם רַמּוֹת:

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

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

עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּפִלְלוֹת:  
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּצַדִּית רָע:  
עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּקִשְׁיוֹת עֲרָף:  
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּרִיצַת רַגְלַיִם לְהָרַע:  
עַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשִׁנְאָת חֲנָם:  
וְעַל חֵטָא שְׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּתִשּׁוּמַת יָד:

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

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

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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-בָּה קוּם עֲשֵׂה וּבֵין  
שְׁאִין בָּה קוּם עֲשֵׂה אֶת-הַגְּלוּיִים לָנוּ וְאֶת-שְׂאִינָם גְּלוּיִים לָנוּ: אֶת-  
הַגְּלוּיִים לָנוּ כְּכֹר אֲמָרְנוּם לְפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹדִינוּ לְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם וְאֶת-שְׂאִינָם  
גְּלוּיִים לָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ הֵם גְּלוּיִים וַיְדוּעִים כְּדָבָר שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הַנְּסֹתָרֵת  
לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַנְּגַלֵּת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי  
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת כִּי אַתָּה סֹלֶחַן לְכָל-דּוֹר וְדוֹר וּמַבְלֵעֵדֶיךָ אֵין לָנוּ  
מִלֶּךָ מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אֱלֹא אַתָּה:

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

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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. ↩

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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.

# אֲבִינוּ 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.

אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹא אַתָּה :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ חֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הִפֵּר עֲצַת אוֹיְבֵינוּ :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ סֶלַח וּמַחֵל לְכָל-עוֹנוֹתֵינוּ :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ הַחַזִּירֵנוּ בְּחַשׁוּבָה שְׁלָמָה לְפָנֶיךָ :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ שְׁלַח רְפוּאָה שְׁלָמָה לְחוֹלִים :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר גְּאֻלָּה וְיִשׁוּעָה :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר פְּרִנְסָה וְכִלְפָּלָה :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר זְכוּת :  
 אֲבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כְּתִבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר סְלִיחָה וּמַחִילָה :  
 אֲבִינוּ 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.*

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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 אֲנִחֵנוּ:  
 אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ חֲמוּל עָלֵינוּ וְעַל־עוֹלָלֵינוּ וְטַפֵּינוּ:  
 אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לָמַעַן הַרוּגִים עַל־שֵׁם קָדְשְׁךָ:  
 אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ עֲשֵׂה לָמַעַן שְׂמֵךְ הַגְּדוֹל הַגָּבוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא שְׁנִקְרָא  
 עָלֵינוּ:  
 אֲבִינוּ מֶלְכֵנוּ חַנּוּן וְעֲנֵנוּ כִּי אֵין בָּנוּ מַעֲשִׂים עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ צְדָקָה  
 וְחֶסֶד וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ:

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

Continue on page 462.

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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. ↵

הַנִּנִּי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׁ נִרְעַשׁ וְנִפְחָד וְנִפְחָד מִפְּחָד יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל: כְּבָאתִי  
לְעַמּוּד וּלְחִנּוּן לְפָנֶיךָ עַל עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְוֹנִי אַף עַל פִּי  
שְׂאִינִי כְדִי וְהִגּוֹן לְכֹף: עַל כֵּן אֲבַקֶּשׁ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹרָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק  
אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה אֱלֹהֵי רַבֵּקָה אֱלֹהֵי רַחֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי לְאָה יְהוּה  
יְהוּה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂדֵי אִים וְנוֹרָא: הֲיִהָ נָא  
מִצְלִיחַ דְּרַפִּי אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לְעַמּוּד לְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים עָלַי וְעַל  
שׁוֹלְחִי: וְנָא אֵל תְּפַשְׁיֵעַם בְּחִטָּאתִי וְאֵל תַּחֲיִּבֵם בְּעֹנוּתִי כִּי חוּטֵא  
וּפּוֹשְׁעֵ אָנִי: וְאֵל יִכְלְמוּ בְּפִשְׁעֵי וְאֵל יִבּוֹשׁוּ בִי וְאֵל אִבּוֹשָׁה בָהֶם:  
וְקַבֵּל תְּפִלָּתִי כְּתַפִּלַּת זְקֵן וְרָגִיל וּפְרָקוּ נְאֻה וְזִקְנֹו מְגַדֵּל וְקוֹלוֹ  
נְעִים וּמְעָרֵב 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.

וְיִהְיֶה נָא דְגִלְנוּ עֲלֵיךָ אֱהָבָה לְכָל־פְּשָׁעִים תִּכְסֶּה בְּאַהֲבָה: וְכָל־צָרוֹת  
וְרַעוֹת הַפֶּה־לָנוּ וְלְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשִׁשּׁוֹן וְלְשִׁמְחָה לְחַיִּים וְלְשָׁלוֹם:  
הָאֵמֶת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אֲהָבוּ וְאֵל יְהִי שׁוֹם מְכַשׁוֹל בְּתַפְלָתִי:

וְיִהְיֶה רָצוֹן לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי  
שָׂרָה אֱלֹהֵי רַבְקָה אֱלֹהֵי רָחֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר  
וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלִיוֹן אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה שְׁפֵל־הַמְּלָאכִים שֶׁהֵם בְּעֲלֵי  
תַפְלוֹת יָבִיאוּ תַפְלָתִי לְפָנֶי פָּסָא כְבוֹדְךָ וַיִּצְיִגוּ אוֹתָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּעִבּוֹר  
כָּל־הַצְּדִיקִים וְהַחֲסִידִים הַתְּמִימִים וְהַיִּשְׁרִים וּבְעִבּוֹר כְּבוֹד שְׁמֶךָ  
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלָת עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים: בְּרוּךְ  
אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תַּפְלָה:

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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 ve'hasham  
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 :	הַמְצִיא לָנוּ מַחִילָה
לְךָ עֵינַי נוֹשָׂאִים	מִתֵּי מִסְפָּר קְרוּאִים
בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה :	וּמִסְלָדִים בַּחִילָה
מַחָה פְּשָׁעַם וְכַחֲשָׁם	שׁוֹפְכִים לְךָ נַפְשָׁם
בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה : ←	הַמְצִיאָם 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

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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.

וְחִלְצִים מִמְּאָרָה בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	הִיָּה לָהֶם לְסִתְרָה וְחִתְּמֵם לְהוֹד וּלְגִילָה
וְכַל-לוֹחֵץ וְלוֹחֵם בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	חֵן אוֹתָם וְרַחֵם עֲשֵׂה בָּהֶם פְּלִילָה
וְחִדֵּשׁ אֶת-יְמֵיהֶם בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	זְכוֹר צְדָקַת אַבְיָהֶם כְּלָרֵם וּתְחִלָּה
וְהִשָּׁב שְׂאֵרֵית הַצֹּאן בְּשַׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה:	קְרָא נָא שְׁנַת רָצוֹן 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

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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.*

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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.

# הבדלה

*The candle is lit.*

סְבָרֵי חֲבֵרֵי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Savrey haveray.

Baruḥ 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 מִיְנֵי בְשָׂמִים:

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

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ:

Baruḥ 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 הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֶדֶשׁ לְחַל בֵּין  
אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי לְשֶׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשָׂה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה  
הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֶדֶשׁ לְחַל:

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

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

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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.