

High Holidays 2022

Birhot Hashahar & Pesukey Dezimra



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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HAPPY NEW YEAR • SHANAH TOVAH • שנה טובה

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.

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

מַה טֹבֹו אֹהֶלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְאֲנִי בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוֹא
בֵּיתְךָ אֲשַׁתְּחֶנָּה אֶל הַיְכָל קֹדֶשְׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ: יְהוָה אֱהַבְתִּי מְעֹון בֵּיתְךָ
וּמִקוֹם מִשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ: וְאֲנִי אֲשַׁתְּחֶנָּה וְאֶכְרָעָה אֲבִרְכָּה לְפָנֶי יְהוָה
עָשִׂי: וְאֲנִי תַפְלְתִּי לְךָ יְהוָה עֵת רְצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ עֲנֵנִי
בְּאַמַּת 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 kevodeha. Va'ani
eshtahaveh ve'ehra'ah evrehah lifney adonay osi. Va'ani tefilati
leha adonay et ratzon elohim berov hasdeha aneni be'emet
yisheha.

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 תַפְלְתִּי/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.

ATIFAT TALLIT / DONNING THE TALLIT

It is customary to wrap oneself in the tallit before reciting the blessing that follows. After the blessing is recited, the tallit is placed across the shoulders. In some congregations the blessing is said in unison.

Bless, O my soul, THE ONE!

ABUNDANT ONE, my God, how great you grow!

In majesty and beauty you are dressed,
wrapping yourself in light as in a garment,
stretching out the heavens like a shawl!

Psalms 104:1-2

Blessed are You, VEILED ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has made us holy with your mitzvot, and commanded us to wrap ourselves amid the fringed tallit. ↩

COMMENTARY. According to rabbinic tradition, Psalms 104:1-2 describes how God, robed in splendor, wrapped in light, began to create the world. The radiance of God's light-robe (one source says that God donned a white tallit) illumined the world before the creation of sun, moon, and stars. This meditation invites the worshipper to consider the act of donning the tallit to be the first step in the daily renewal of the world. God's wrapping in light becomes Israel's enlightened wrapping at the outset of a new day. It encourages Israel to celebrate world-renewing creativity as an unfailing sign of the divine presence within humankind.

S.S.

DERASH. The tallit is a very personal ritual object. Usually I wrap it around myself when joining in a prayer community. For the tallit both creates a private space for me and links me with Jewish tradition. It emphasizes my connection to my people while also offering me spiritual privacy. I am alone and in community at the same time.

L.G.B.

עטיפת טלית

It is customary to wrap oneself in the tallit before reciting the blessing that follows. After the blessing is recited, the tallit is placed across the shoulders. In some congregations the blessing is said in unison.

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מַאֲד הוֹד וְהִדָּר לְבִשְׁתָּ:
עֲטֶה־אוֹר כְּשֶׁלֶמָה נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם בִּירִיעָה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית: ←

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam
asher kideshanu bemitzvotav
vetzivanu lehitatef batzitzit.

Many contemporary Jews are reciting *beraḥot*/blessings in ways that reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. At any place where a blessing occurs in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas for *beraḥot*. This can be done by selecting one phrase from each group to form the introductory clause.

I	Baruḥ atah adonay	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are you Adonay
	Beruḥah at yah	בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְה	Blessed are you Yah
	Nevareḥ et	נְבָרֵךְ אֶת	Let us bless
II	eloheynu	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
	hasheḥinah	הַשְׁכִּינָה	Sheḥinah
	eyn haḥayim	עֵין הַחַיִּים	Source of Life
III	<u>meleḥ</u> ha'olam	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of all worlds
	ḥey ha'olamim	חַי הָעוֹלָמִים	Life of all the worlds
	ru'ah ha'olam	רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Spirit of the world

The phrase *nevareḥ et eyn haḥayim* was originally formulated by poet Marcia Falk (see SOURCES, p. 1248).

מה יקר חסדך יי אלהים, וְנִי אֲדָם בְּצֶלַל כְּנָפֶיךָ יְהִי יוֹנוֹן

How precious is your love, O God,
when earthborn find the shelter of your wing!
They're nourished from the riches of your house.
Give drink to them from your Edenic stream.
For with you is the fountain of all life,
in your Light do we behold all light.
Extend your love to those who know you,
and your justice to those honest in their hearts.

Psalms 36:8-11

COMMENTARY. The wearing of the tallit has its origins in the biblical commandment (Numbers 15:37-41) that a tassel should be attached to each corner of a garment to remind the Israelites of the mitzvot. This garment, resembling a poncho, was the basic garment worn every day. When clothing without such defined corners came to be customary, the tallit became a special ritual garment. In our time, a large tallit is worn only during the morning prayer, while traditional Jews wear a small tallit, also known as *arba kanfot*/four corners, underneath their outer clothes. In the biblical commandment the fringe included a color called תְּכֵלֶת/*tehelet*, a particular shade of purple-blue. When this was no longer available, the rabbis ruled that the tassels should be an undyed white. Some contemporary Jews have reinstituted the inclusion of blue in the fringe. Today in Reconstructionist congregations, women are encouraged to wear tallitot as well.

D.A.T.

מה יקר הסדך אלהים ובני אדם בצל כנפיה יחסיון

מה־יקר חסדך אלהים ובני אדם בצל כנפיה יחסיון:
 ירוגן מדשן ביתך ונחל עדנך תשקם:
 פי־עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה־אור:
 משך חסדך לידעך וצדקתך לישרי־לב:

כי עמך מקור חיים / For with you is the fountain of all life, in your light do we behold all light. The flow of light represented by the tallit is joined to the blessing of life itself. God is described here in the psalmist's most delicate and abstract phrasing. We reach forth to the source of life and are bathed in its light as it flows forth to meet us. A.G.

DERASH. The tallit is a "garment of brightness." It links us with the whole universe, with the whole of Nature. The blue thread within it (Numbers 15:37-41) reminds us that heaven and earth can touch, that the elements of our universe are all wondrously connected. L.G.B.

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:
לִפְנֵי גְדֻלָּתְךָ אֶעֱמֹד וְאֶפְהִיל
כִּי עֵינֶךָ תִּרְאֶה כָּל-מַחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבִי:
מֵה-זֶה אֲשֶׁר יוֹכֵל הַלֵּב וְהַלְשׁוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת
וּמֵה-כֹּחַ רוּחִי בְּתוֹךְ קִרְבִּי:
הִנֵּה לְךָ תִּיטֵב זְמַרְתִּי אֲנוּשׁ עַל-כֵּן
אוֹדְךָ בַּעֲדֵי תְהִיָּה נִשְׁמַת אֱלֹהִים בִּי:

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.

II

My heart's a place for you, as you are mine.

Remembering you, I hail, nighttime, daytime,
I praise you, Holy One, my crown divine,
cure of my soul, to my thirst quench sublime.

I walk amid your light, unto your room,
and from your precious glow my clothes I find,
and, happy serving you, my place assume,
in dread filled joy of you, perfect and kind.

My God, glory and love around me bloom,
my wish is seeing you, outside dream's time,
for you my passion burns, my whole life through,
my want is to ascend, these heavens climb.

Anonymous

לבבי מקומך / My heart's a place for you, as you are mine. The journey to God is a journey inward rather than upward. We think more easily of a God who dwells within the human soul than we do of one in the sky or on a mountain. Here the poet reminds us that while God is indeed in us, we are also "inside" God. The Hebrew word *makom* or "place" is one of our ancient names for the divine. "God is the place of the world," said the rabbis, "but the world is not God's place," meaning that the divine cannot be contained within the finite. In the spirit of this poem, we might choose to say that the inwardness with which we seek God and the inwardness with which the divine seeks us is the same inwardness. A.G.

II

לְבָבִי מְקוֹמָךְ וְאַתָּה מְקוֹמִי
 בְּזִכְרֶךָ אֶהְיֶה לְבִלְיִי וַיּוֹמִי:
 שְׂבַחְךָ קְדוּשִׁי עֲטֹרַת לְרֹאשִׁי
 וְרִפְאוּת לְנַפְשִׁי וְשִׁקּוּי לְעַצְמִי:

מְהֵלֶךְ בְּאוֹרְךָ לְנֹכַח דְּבִירְךָ
 וַיַּהֲדוּ יְקָרְךָ לְבוּשִׁי וְעַצְמִי:
 וְאַשְׁמַח בְּעַבְדְּךָ בְּעַמְדִי לְנִגְדְּךָ
 וְאַשְׁמַח בְּפִחְדְּךָ בְּחִסְדְּךָ שְׁלוֹמִי:

אֱלֹהֵי כְבוֹדְךָ סְבִיבִי וְחִסְדְּךָ
 וְחִפְצִי רְאוּתְךָ וְלֹא בְחִלּוֹמִי:
 לְךָ תִּאֲוָתִי בְּחַיִּי וּמוֹתִי
 וְחִפְצִי עֲלוּתִי לְגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִי:

III

You knew me long before you fashioned me,
and as long as your breath lives in me, you shall
preserve me.

Would I have any place to stand were you to push me on?
Would I have power to walk were you to hold me back?
What can I say other than thoughts your hand has shaped
in me?

What can I do unless you shall enable me?
I seek you in this hour of desire: Please answer me!
May your desire, like a shield, surround me.
So raise me up to hasten early to your dwelling place,
to bless your Name alone, please waken me!

Yehudah Halevi

III

יְדַעְתָּנִי בְּטָרָם תִּצְרֵנִי	וְכָל עוֹד רִוּחָךְ בִּי תִצְרֵנִי
הֵי־שׁ לִי מַעֲמָד אִם תִּהְדַּפְּנִי	וְאִם לִי מַהֲלָךְ אִם תַּעֲצֵרֵנִי
וּמָה אֶמֶר וּמַחֲשָׁבִי בְיָדְךָ	וּמָה אוֹכַל עֲשֵׂה עַד תַּעֲזֹרֵנִי
דִּרְשָׁתִּיךָ בְּעֵת רָצוֹן עֲנֵנִי	וּכְצִנָּה רָצוֹנְךָ תַּעֲטִירֵנִי
הַקִּימֵנִי לְשִׁחַר אֶת־דְּבִירְךָ	וְאֶת שְׁמֶךָ לְכָרֶךְ עוֹרֵרֵנִי:

DERASH. Each of us is bombarded daily with messages that if we accomplish this or buy that, we will become who we want to be. Such messages belie another reality about our lives. Sickness, accident, war, randomness, and hundreds of other circumstances are at least partly beyond our control. When we are honest with ourselves, we recognize not only our own power, but our finitude, the extraordinary contemporary achievements from which we benefit, and our fragility. Often, I am not in control of my own destiny. Passing through the valley of fear, I come to seek hope and trust. In my smallness, I seek the Source of all life. Now I am ready to begin!

D.A.T.

IV

I call to you, please answer me, divine one!
Incline your ear to me, and listen to my prayer.
May I, with justice, come to see your face,
May I awake with satisfaction to behold your form!

For I have trusted in you, GUIDING ONE,
and I have said: You are my God!
Please hear my supplication when I call to you,
when I raise up my hands in homage to your holy place.
ETERNAL ONE, my God, I have cried out to you,
and you have healed me.
To you, RESTORING ONE, I call,
to my protector I lay out my supplication.

Let your face's light shine on your servant,
help me with your love!
For in you, ABUNDANT ONE, I place my hope,
may you give answer, sovereign one, my God.
Please hear my prayer, ETERNAL ONE, please hearken to my
cry,
and to my tearful plea do not be deaf!
Hear, O HIDDEN ONE, deal graciously with me,
SUPERNAL ADVOCATE, become a help for me.

I rejoiced when people said to me:
Let's go forth to the house of GOD!
I take joy in all that you have said,
like one who comes into great wealth.
Please hear, my sovereign, my God,
the sound of my prayer's cry,
for truly, I now pray to you.
ILLUMINATOR of the dawn, please hear my voice;
my morning prayer I offer you, and wait with expectation. ↪

IV

אֲנִי קְרָאתִיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט־אָזְנוֹךָ לִי שְׁמַע אֲמַרְתִּי:
 אֲנִי בְצָדֶךָ אֲחֻזָּה פָּנֶיךָ אֲשַׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תְּמוֹנָתְךָ:
 וְאֲנִי עָלֶיךָ בְּטַחְתִּי יְהוָה אֲמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהֵי אֶתָּה:
 שְׁמַע קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנֵי בְּשׁוּעֵי אֱלֹיךָ בְּנִשְׁאֵי יָדֵי אֶל־דְּבִיר קִדְשֶׁךָ:
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שְׁוַעְתִּי אֱלֹיךָ וְתִרְפָּאֵנִי:
 אֱלֹיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְאֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן:
 הָאִירָה פָּנֶיךָ עַל־עַבְדְּךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי בַּחֲסֶדְךָ:
 כִּי־לָךְ יְהוָה הוֹחֲלָתִי אֶתָּה תַעֲנֶה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי:
 שְׁמַעַה תִּפְלָתִי יְהוָה וְשׁוּעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל־דְּמַעְתִּי אֶל־תַּחֲרֹשׁ:
 שְׁמַע־יְהוָה וְחַנּוּנִי יְהוָה הִיָּה עֶזְרִי לִי:
 שְׁמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרִים לִי בֵּית יְהוָה גִּלְךָ:
 שֵׁשׁ אֲנֹכִי עַל־אֲמַרְתְּךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלֹל רָב:
 הִקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוּעֵי מַלְכִּי וְאֱלֹהֵי כִי־אֱלֹיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל:
 יְהוָה בִּקְרָתְּךָ תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי בִּקְרָתְּךָ־לָךְ וְאַצְפָּה: ←

Eleha adonay ekra ve'el adonay ethanan.

Shema adonay vehoneni adonay heyey ozer li. →

I cry out to you that you might answer, God.
Incline your ear to me, and listen to my utterance.
My feet are standing on the straight path,
and in company of others I now bless THE OMNIPRESENT.

Psalms 17:6, 15; 31:15; 28:2; 30:3, 9; 31:7; 38:16; 39:13; 30:11; 122:1; 119:162; 5:3-4; 26:12

KAVANAH. Public worship aids us by liberating personality from the confining walls of the individual ego. Imprisoned in self, we easily fall prey to morbid broodings. Interference with career, personal disappointment and disillusionment, hurts to vanity, the fear of death—all these tend so to dominate our attention that our minds move in a fixed and narrow system of ideas, which we detest but from which we see no escape. With a whole wide world of boundless opportunities about us, we permit our minds, as it were, to pace up and down within the narrow cell of their ego-prisons. But participation in public worship breaks through the prison of the ego and lets in the light and air of the world. Instead of living but one small and petty life, we now share the multitudinous life of our people. Against the wider horizons that now open to our ken, personal cares do not loom so large. Life becomes infinitely more meaningful and worthwhile when we become aware, through our participation in public worship, of a common life that transcends our individual selves.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

אֲנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט־אֲזָנְךָ לִי שְׁמַע אֲמַרְתִּי:
 רַגְלִי עֲמֹדָה בְּמִשׁוֹר בְּמִקְהָלִים אֲבָרְךָ יְהוָה:

נלך / שמחתי באמרים לי בית יהוה נלך / I rejoiced when people said to me: Let's go forth to the house of GOD! This is indeed how we want to feel when given the opportunity to attend synagogue and be part of a community of prayer. Yet there are so many reasons why we stay away: a lack of knowledge or skill that makes us feel incompetent, the press of other responsibilities or opportunities, the difficulty in becoming spiritually engaged through public worship, and simply falling out of the habit. Then, when it comes time "to go forth to the house of GOD," instead of rejoicing we experience anxiety. This is a season for seeking a path that will led toward rejoicing at the opportunity to worship. R.H.

KAVANAH. When we worship in public we know our life is part of a larger life, a wave of an ocean of being—the first-hand experience of that larger life which is God. M.M.K.

V

My God, you have prepared my tongue,
and in your wisdom you have placed
into my mouth these prayerful songs,
surpassing every worldly craft in grace.
And you have given me a singer's throat,
with which I call out sweetly, never hoarse;
since dawn of life, you have prepared my foot
toward you alone to set its course.
My every instinct you have purified
like wool as white as snow,
and never have you cast aside
my heart to wander as sleepwalkers go.
Be now my refuge, and my secret place,
as yesterday, and every future day.
Protect me now, in your abundant grace,
my God, do not delay!

Solomon ibn Gabirol

אֱלֹהֵי וַתְּבַחַר
 בְּפִי טוֹב מִמֶּסְחָר
 בְּקָרְאִי לֹא נָחַר
 צַעֲדֵי מִמֶּשְׁחָר
 כִּמּוֹ צֶמֶר צָחַר
 לְבָבִי בִּי סָחַרְחַר
 כְּאֶתְמוֹל וּכְמָחָר
 אֱלֹהֵי אֵל תֵּאֱחָר:

לְשׁוֹנֵי כּוֹנֵנֶת
 בְּשִׁירִים שִׁשְׁמֶת
 וְלִי גֵרוֹן תִּתֶּה
 וְנִגְדֶּךָ כּוֹנֵנֶת
 וַיִּצְרֵי הַלְבֵּנֶת
 וְלִכֵּן לֹא שִׁתֶּה
 הִיָּה סִתְרֵי עֵתֶה
 מִגְנֵי אֶתֶה

NOTE. Solomon ibn Gabirol was an eleventh-century Sephardic poet and philosopher.

VI

As the heart yearns for the waters of a brook,
so yearns my heart for you, O God.
My soul now thirsts for God, the living God.
When might I come to see the face of God?
My tears have been my food both day and night,
whenever people said to me: "Where is your God?"
These things I call to mind, and I pour out my soul,
as I now pass amid the crowd,
making my way with them up to the house of God,
amid the sound of jubilation and thanksgiving,
amid the roar of celebration.
Why are you downcast, my soul,
why do you sigh within me?
Place hope in God!
For soon I shall again give thanks
to God, whose presence is my saving force!

Psalms 42:2-6

VI

כָּאֵל תַּעֲרֹג עַל־אֶפְיֻקֵי־מַיִם
 בֵּן נַפְשֵׁי תַעֲרֹג אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים:
 צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לֵאלֹהִים לְאֵל חַי
 מִתִּי אָבוֹא וְאֶרְאֶה פָנַי אֱלֹהִים:
 הִתְהַלֵּלִי דְמַעְתִּי לָחֵם יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
 בְּאֹמֶר אֵלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם אֵיךְ אֵלֶיךָ:
 אֱלֹהִים אֲזַכֵּרָה וְאֶשְׁפָּכָה עָלַי נַפְשִׁי
 כִּי אֶעֱבֹר בְּסֶדֶךְ אֲדָדִים עַד־בֵּית אֱלֹהִים
 בְּקוֹל־רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה הַמּוֹן חוֹגֵג:
 מִה־תִּשְׁתַּחֲוִי נַפְשִׁי
 וְתִהְיֶה עָלַי
 הוֹחֲלִי לֵאלֹהִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנֹו
 יִשְׁוּעוֹת פָּנָיו:

KAVANAH. As the pilgrim in the psalm ascends toward the Temple, surrounded by a celebrating throng, loneliness and sadness well up from within. While the pilgrim longs for a sense of serenity, meaning and security as the time for making an offering draws near, an inner struggle takes place—a struggle to feel hope, become ready to offer real thanks, and experience the possibility of redemption. “Let my thirst be quenched,” the psalmist cries, “by the waters of salvation.”

H.L./D.A.T.

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:

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)

כְּמוֹךָ / You shall...yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

לְשֵׁם יְחִוּד קוֹדֶשׁ אַ בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׂכִינְתָּהּ

Men say:

הַנָּנִי מוֹכֵן וּמְזוּמֵן

Women say:

הַנָּנִי מוֹכֵנָה וּמְזוּמָנָה


לְקַבֵּל עָלֵי מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שָׁל

וְאַהֲבָתָ לְרַעַד כְּמוֹד

וּבִזְכוּת 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. 

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 הָעוֹלָמִים
הַמַּעֲבִיר שְׁנָה מֵעֵינֵי וְתַנוּמָה מַעֲפָפֵי: ←

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu hey ha'olamim
hama'avir shenah me'eynay utnumah me'afapay. ←

COMMENTARY. The familiar introductory formula for blessings including the phrase *meleh 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, *hey 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 *meleh 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. ↩

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.

זוקף כפופים / 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.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים
הנותן לשכוי בינה להבחין בין יום ובין לילה:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים רוקע הארץ על המים:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים פוקח עורים:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים מלביש ערמים:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים מתיר אסורים:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים זוקף כפופים: ←

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. ↪

שכוי / 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. ↩

DERASH. המכין מצערי גבר /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-צָרָכִי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוּרָה:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים
עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתִפְאַרֶה: ←

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.

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 people 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.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים
שעשני בצלמו:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים
שעשני בן / בת חורין:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים
שעשני ישראל:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו חי העולמים
הנותן ליצף פח:

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.

שעשני בצלמו / 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.

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.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה
 וּבְרָא בּוֹ נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים:
 גָּלוּי וִידוּעַ לִפְנֵי כֹסֵא כְבוֹדְךָ שָׁאֵם יִפְתָּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד
 מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקִים וְלַעֲמֹד לִפְנֶיךָ:
 בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה רוֹפֵא כָּל־בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Baruh 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.

נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים/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 recogni-
 tion 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. ↩

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 / 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 :

אַתָּה בְּרֵאתָ אֶתָּה יִצְרָתָה אֶתָּה נִפְחָתָה בִּי וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְרָה בְּקִרְבִּי
וְאַתָּה עֲתִיד לְטֹלָה מִמֶּנִּי לַחַיִּי עוֹלָם : ←

Elohay neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi.

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 “ָה”. 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 זֶמֶן שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקֶרְבִּי מוֹדָה / מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וְאִמּוֹתַי רַבּוֹן כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲדוֹן כָּל הַנְּשָׁמוֹת: בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בִּידוֹ נֶפֶשׁ כָּל חַי וְרוּחַ כָּל בָּשָׂר:

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.

BIRKAT LIMUD TORAH/ BLESSING PRECEDING TORAH STUDY

Blessed are you, THE ONE OF SINAI, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who made us holy with your mitzvot, and commanded us to occupy ourselves with words of Torah. 

COMMENTARY. The three blessings on pages 170, 174, and 176 constitute a meditation on body, soul and intellect. The first blessing reflects the intricate workings of our physiology. We recognize the wondrous system of arteries, organs and glands that comprise the “human machine.” We then celebrate the purity of the soul that is implanted within us, we feel the “wind-spirit” of our own breath, our *anima* filled with air. As we breathe, all the systems of our bodies are also filled with life-sustaining oxygen. Finally, we rejoice in our intellects—in our ability to study and grapple with words of Torah, to reflect on them and our capacity to teach them to future generations.

L.G.B.

בִּרְכַּת לְמוֹד תּוֹרָה

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְעִסֵּק בְּדִבְרֵי תּוֹרָה: ←

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam asher kideshanu
bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok bedivrey torah. ↪

לעסֵק בדברי תורה /to occupy ourselves with words of Torah. The Hebrew words here do not say “to study Torah,” but rather to “be engaged” or “to be busy with” the study of Torah. We study Torah not as an intellectual exercise alone. Rather, we understand our “engagement” with Torah more holistically—as an every day, every moment activity. We also understand that to be fully “engaged” with Torah is to wrestle with Torah—to challenge our tradition while loving it, to question while celebrating it.

L.G.B.

Transmit to us, WISE ONE, our God, your Torah's words, into our mouths, and to the mouths of all the House of Israel, who called you kin. May we, and our children, and all the children of your people, the House of Israel, all of us, be knowers of your Name and learners of your Torah, for its sake alone. Blessed are you, THE SAGE, who teaches Torah to your people Israel.

Study selections on the themes of the High Holy Days from biblical and rabbinic literature follow. Other selections could, of course, be used.

COMMENTARY. Blessings and texts for Torah study are a traditional part of *Birhot Hashahar*. Like body and soul, Torah study is a daily part of Jewish living. Rabbinic literature records more than a half dozen versions of Torah blessings. The ornate Torah blessing in our text (pages 175-178) both begins and ends with the formula "*Baruh atah*." In the first instance, the formula of the blessing acknowledges that Torah study is essential to Jewish life. The concluding phrase of blessing praises God as the teacher of Torah. From a Reconstructionist perspective, the metaphor of God as teacher is an invitation and challenge to discern the divine presence in learning. A talmudic passage appears between the two blessings. It offers the hope that we, the people Israel, will always see Torah as an intrinsic part of ourselves.

S.S.

וְהֶעֱרַב־נָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ בְּפִינוּ וּבְכָפֵי עֲמֻךְ בֵּית
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ וְצִאֲצָאֵינוּ וְצִאֲצָאֵי עֲמֻךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלָנוּ
 יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ וְלומְדֵי תוֹרָתְךָ לְשִׁמְחָה:
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַמְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Veha'arev na adonay eloheynu et divrey torateha befinu uvefi
 ameha beyt yisra'el venihyeh anahnu vetze'etza'eynu
 vetze'etza'ey ameha beyt yisra'el kulanu yodey shemeha
 velomdey torateha lishmah. Baruch atah adonay hamlamed
 torah le'amo yisra'el.

Study selections on the themes of the High Holy Days from biblical and rabbinic literature follow. Other selections could, of course, be used.

DERASH. We must study the Torah with a view toward discerning the great traits of Jewish consciousness that struggled to become articulate in its traditions, laws, prophecies, psalms and wisdom. We should study all of its traditions with the purpose of finding out their bearing on Israel's destiny and duty in the world and then seek to make that destiny and duty our own.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

BIBLICAL VERSES ON EVIL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Woe to those who say of evil, "It is good,"
and of good, "It is evil,"
who put darkness in the place of light,
and light in the place of darkness,
who put bitterness in the place of sweetness
and sweetness in the place of bitterness.
Woe to those who see themselves as wise,
and who account themselves as clever.
Woe to those who become mighty when they're full of wine,
and think themselves heroic when they've mixed
their drink,
who give preference to the wicked for a bribe,
and withhold justice from the good.
They have a mouth, but cannot speak,
they have eyes, but cannot see.
They have ears, but cannot hear,
they have a nose, but cannot smell.
They have rebelled against the light,
and have not recognized its path,
and have not dwelt along its roads.
To all of them, the morning is a darkness,
truly, they are intimate with terror's shade.
But evil's light shall be extinguished,
its fire's flame shall never shine,
the light shall darken in its tent,
its lamp shall go dead where it shines.
The wicked grope in darkness where no light exists,
they cast about like drunkards in a haze. ↩

וְלֵטוֹב רַע	הוּא הָאֱמָרִים לָרַע טוֹב
וְאוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ שָׁמַיִם מֵר לְמַתּוֹק	שָׁמַיִם חֹשֶׁךְ לְאוֹר
וּמַתּוֹק לְמֵר:	
וְנֶגֶד פְּנֵיהֶם נִבְנִים:	הוּא חֲכָמִים בְּעֵינֵיהֶם
וְאַנְשֵׁי-חַיִּל לְמִסֵּךְ שָׁכָר:	הוּא גִבּוֹרִים לְשִׁתּוֹת יַיִן
וְצִדְקַת צַדִּיקִים יִסְּרוּ מַמָּנוּ:	מִצַּדִּיקֵי רָשָׁע עֵלֶקֶב שֶׁחַד
עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יֵרְאוּ:	פֶּה-לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבָּרוּ
אֵף לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְיחוּן:	אָזְנִים לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ
לֹא הִפְּרִיזוּ דְרָכָיו	הֶמָּה הָיוּ בְּמִרְדֵּי-אוֹר
	וְלֹא יֵשְׁבוּ בְּנִתְיִבְתָּיו:
כִּי-יִכְּיֹר בְּלִהוֹת צִלְמָנוּת:	כִּי יַחֲדוּ בִּקְרָר לְמוֹ צִלְמָנוּת
וְלֹא-יִגָּה שֹׁכֵיב אִשׁוּ:	גַּם אוֹר רָשָׁעִים יִדְעָךְ
וַיֵּרֶוּ עָלָיו יִדְעָךְ:	אוֹר חֹשֶׁךְ בְּאַהֲלוֹ
וַיִּתְּעַם בְּשֹׁכֹר: ←	יִמְשְׁשׁוּ-חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא-אוֹר

COMMENTARY. The rabbis often created new prayers by anthologizing biblical verses. Michael Strassfeld employed this technique in creating this *piyut*-like meditation on human evil and its consequences. D.A.T.

And I shall banish from their midst
the voice of joy, the voice of happiness,
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,
the sound of the handmill and the light of the lamp.
Yes, all the lights amid the heavens
I shall blacken over you,
and I shall place a darkness on your land,
says THE ALMIGHTY God.
So listen, you who cannot hear,
and you who cannot see, lift up your gaze.

Isaiah 5:20-23; Psalms 115:5-6; Job 24:13, 17; 18:5-6; 12:25; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 32:8; Isaiah 42:18.

קוֹל שְׁשׁוֹן וְקוֹל שְׁמָחָה
קוֹל רַחִים וְאוֹר גֵּר:
אֶקְדִּירֵם עָלַיָּךְ
נָאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:
וְהַעֲוִרִים הַבֵּיטוּ לְרֹאוֹת:

וְהֶאֱבֹדְתִי מֵהֶם
קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה
כָּל-מְאוּרֵי אוֹר בְּשָׂמִים
וְנָתַתִּי חֶשֶׁךְ עַל אֶרֶץ
הַחֲרָשִׁים שְׁמָעוּ

TESHUVAH IN MIDRASH

One who says, time after time,
“I’ll sin, but later I’ll do *teshuvah*,”
will not have the opportunity to do *teshuvah*.
Or: “I’ll sin, but Yom Kippur will bring atonement,”
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement.
For wrongful acts that one has done toward God,
Yom Kippur will bring atonement,
but for a wrongful act between one person and another,
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement
till one gains forgiveness from the person wronged.
Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah explained this verse of Torah:

“From all your wrongful acts
before the FOUNT OF MERCY
you shall be cleansed”—

Leviticus 16:30

for wrongful acts that one has done toward God,
Yom Kippur will bring atonement,
but for a wrongful act between one person and another,
Yom Kippur will not effect atonement
till one gains forgiveness from the person wronged.

Rabbi Akiba said: Happy are you, O people Israel!
Who is the one before whom you are cleansed?
Who is the one who cleanses you?
It is your heavenly Creator!

As is written: “I shall sprinkle over you
pure waters, and you shall be clean.
From all of your impurities, from all of your idolatries,
I’ll make you clean.”

Ezekiel 36:25

And it is written:

“The hope of Israel / Israel’s purifying water
is THE FOUNT OF LIFE!”

Jeremiah 17:13

Just as waters of a mikvah purify your sins,
so does the blessed Holy One wash clean
the people Israel.

Mishnah Yoma 8:9

תשובה

האומר: "אֶחָטָא וְאֶשׁוּב, אֶחָטָא וְאֶשׁוּב" — אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה; אֶחָטָא וְיוֹם־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר — אין יום־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר. עֲבֵרוֹת שְׂבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם — יום־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר, עֲבֵרוֹת שְׂבִין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ — אין יום־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר, עַד שְׂרִיצָה אֶת־חֵבְרוֹ. אֵת זֶה דָּרַשׁ רַבִּי אֱלֶעָזָר בֶּן־עֲזַרְיָה: "מָלַל חַטָּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה תִּטְהָרוּ" — עֲבֵרוֹת שְׂבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם יום־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר, עֲבֵרוֹת שְׂבִין אָדָם לְחֵבְרוֹ — אין יום־הַכּוֹפָרִים מְכַפֵּר, עַד שְׂרִיצָה אֶת־חֵבְרוֹ.

אמר רבי עקיבא: אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם, יִשְׂרָאֵל, לִפְנֵי מִי אַתֶּם מְטַהְרִים וּמִי מְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם? — אֲבִיכֶם שְׂבַשְׁמִים! שָׁנְאָמַר: "וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵי־טְהוֹרִים וְטַהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם"; וְאָמַר: "מִקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה" — מִה מִקְנֵה מְטַהֵר אֶת־הַטְּמֵאִים, אֵף הַקֹּדֶשׁ־בְּרוּךְ־הוא מְטַהֵר אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Rabbi Abbahu bar Ze'ira said:

Great is *teshuvah*,

for it existed in the world before Creation,

as it says: "Before the mountains came to birth,

you, God, gave the human being ability to change

and to be humble."

Soḥar Tov 90; Genesis Rabbah 1.4 (quoting Psalms 90:23)

Two things are both near to you and far,

both far from you and near:

Teshuvah is near to you, yet far,

and far from you, yet near.

And death is near to you, yet far,

and far from you, yet near.

Ecclesiastes Rabbah 8.18

"Open up to me my sister!"—

Rabbi Yasa said: "The blessed Holy One

declared to Israel: Open up to me, my children,

a gate of *teshuvah* narrow as a needle's eye,

and I shall open up for you a gateway

wide enough for wagons and for coaches to come through.

Song of Songs Rabbah 25.2; Yalkut Shimoni on Song of Songs 5:2

"Outside, the stranger need not lodge."—

or the blessed Holy One views no being as unworthy;

rather, all are received by God.

In every hour, the gates are open,

and whoever seeks to enter may come in.

Exodus Rabbah 19.4 (quoting Job 31:32)

תשובה

אמר רבי אבהו בר זעירא: גדולה תשובה שקדמה לבריאת העולם
שנאמר בט"רם הרים ילדו... תשב אנוש עד-דכא:

שני דברים קרובים לך ורחוקים ממך. רחוקים ממך וקרובים לך:
תשובה קרובה לך ורחוקה ממך. רחוקה ממך וקרובה לך מיתה
קרובה לך ורחוקה ממך. רחוקה ממך וקרובה לך:

רבי יסא אמר: אמר הקדוש-ברוך-הוא לישראל: בני פתחו לי
פתח של תשובה כחדה של מחט ואני פותח לכם פתח שיהיו
עגלות וקרונות נכנסות בו:

"בחוץ לא-ילין גר" – שאין הקדוש-ברוך-הוא פוסל לבריה
אלא לכל הוא מקבל: השערים נפתחין בכל-שעה וכל-מי שהוא
מבקש לכנס יכנס:

Rabbi Ḥama son of Rabbi Ḥaninah said:
Great is *teshuvah*, for it brings healing to the world,
as it is said: “I shall heal their affliction [*meshuvatam*],
yes, willingly I’ll show them love!”

Talmud Yoma 86a (quoting Hosea 14:5)

Rabbi Abbahu said:
In a place where people doing *teshuvah* stand,
even the wholly righteous cannot stand,
as it is said: “Shalom! Shalom!”
Peace be to all, both far and near!”
—first to those who are far,
and only afterward, to those who are near.

Talmud Berahot 34b (quoting Isaiah 57:19)

תשובה

אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא: גדולה תשובה שמביאה רפאות לעולם שנאמר ארפא משובתם אלהם נדבה:

רב אבהו אמר: במקום שבעלי-תשובה עומדים צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדים שנאמר שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב — לרחוק תחלה ואחר-כך לקרוב:

COMMENTARY. A controversy existed among the rabbis about who is closer to God—Jews who have not sinned or those who have sinned and done *teshuvah*. Perhaps for some of the rabbis Hama's *midrash* was just a bit of hyperbole to motivate the discouraged to action. But how close to God can one stand who has never been tempted and therefore never developed the broken-heartedness, honesty and strength of will that true turning requires? The act of *teshuvah* brings a self-awareness that can create intimate new links to the divine.

D.A.T.

KADDISH DERABANAN / THE SAGES' 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.

For Israel and her sages, for their pupils and all pupils of their pupils, and for all who occupy themselves with Torah, whether in this place or any other place, may God grant them and you abundant peace, and grace, and love, and mercy, and long life, and ample sustenance, and saving acts, all flowing from divine abundance in the worlds beyond. And say: Amen.

May heaven grant a universal peace and life for us and for all Israel. And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above make peace for us, and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth. And say: Amen.

DERASH. When we recite the Kaddish Derabanan, we are thankful for the teachings of Torah (in its widest sense). We have received from those who have come before us—and we accept our own place as links in the chain of tradition. Every student becomes a teacher—what we have learned we will teach. We celebrate our sense of accomplishment, our feeling that we have gained richness from our study. With this Kaddish we re-affirm the honorable endeavor in which we have been engaged. We are a people of study and learning, teaching and receiving—*this* is critical to our collective Jewish life.

L.G.B.

קדיש דרבנן

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וַיִּמְלִיךְ
מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזִמְן
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה
וַיִּתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא
לְעֵלְא לְעֵלְא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא דְאִמְרִין
בְּעָלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל רַבְּנָן וְעַל תַּלְמִידֵיהוֹן וְעַל כָּל תַּלְמִידֵי תַלְמִידֵיהוֹן
וְעַל כָּל מָאן דְּעָסְקִין בְּאוּרֵיתָא דִּי בְּאַתְרָא הָדִין וְדִי בְּכָל אַתְר וְאַתְר
יְהֵא לְהוֹן וּלְכוֹן שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא חֲנָא וְחֻסְדָּא וְרַחֲמִין וְחַיִּין אֲרִיכִין
וּמְזוּגֵי רוּיְחֵי וּפְרָקְנָא מִן קֳדָם אַבּוּהוֹן דְּבִשְׁמַיָּא וְאַרְעָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל
כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּבֵל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth,
From the laziness that is content with half-truths,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
O God of truth, deliver us.

M.M.K.

COMMENTARY. Most scholars agree that Kaddish Derabanan is the most ancient form of the kaddish prayer. It was used at the conclusion of study long before the kaddish became a prayer for mourners. Its prayer is that the efforts of both students and teachers bring holiness and a sense of the divine presence into the world. This in turn should help them formulate a vision of peace that they can spread to all Israel, and ultimately to all the world. Kaddish Derabanan, like all forms of the kaddish, thus brings us in touch with the central purpose of prayer.

D.A.T.

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.

Psalms 30

מזמור

שִׁיר־חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד:

אֲרוּמָמָךְ יְהוָה כִּי דָלִיתָנִי וְלֹא־שִׁמְחָתָ אִיבִי לִי:
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שְׁוַעְתִּי אֵלַיִךְ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי:
 יְהוָה הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן־שָׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי חַיִּיתָנִי מִיָּרְדֵי־כּוֹר:
 וַמְּרוֹ לִיהוָה חֲסִידָיו וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכַּר קִדְשׁוֹ:
 כִּי רָגַע בְּאִפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרָצוֹנוֹ בְּעָרֵב יָלִין בְּכִי וּלְפָקֵר רָנָה:
 וַאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי בְּשִׁלּוֹי בַל־אֲמוּט לְעוֹלָם:
 יְהוָה בְּרָצוֹנְךָ הֶעֱמַדְתָּה לְהַרְרִי עַז הַסִּתְרָתָּ פָנֶיךָ הֵייתִי גְבוּהָל:
 אֵלַיִךְ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא וְאֶל־אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן:
 מִה־כָּצַע בְּדָמִי בְּרִדְתִּי אֶל שְׁחַת הַיּוֹדֵךְ עֶפֶר הַיְגִיד אֲמַתְּךָ:
 שְׁמַע־יְהוָה וַחֲנֻנִי יְהוָה הִיָּה־עֲזֹר לִי:
 הִפְכָּתָּ מִסִּפְרִי לְמַחּוֹל לִי פִתַּחְתָּ שְׁקִי וַתֹּאזְנֵנִי שְׂמִיחָה:
 *לְמַעַן יִזְמְרְךָ כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדְךָ:

Eleha adonay ekra ve'el adonay et-hanan.

Shema adonay vehoneni adonay heyey ozer li.

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! ↩

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.

פְּסוּקֵי דְזִמְרָה

פְּרוּךְ הוּא :	פְּרוּךְ שֶׁאָמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם
פְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ :	פְּרוּךְ עוֹשֶׂה בְּרָאשִׁית
פְּרוּךְ הוּא :	פְּרוּךְ אוֹמֵר וְעוֹשֶׂה
פְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ :	פְּרוּךְ גּוֹזֵר וּמְקַיֵּם
פְּרוּךְ הוּא : ←	פְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל הָאָרֶץ

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

Baruh hu.
 Baruh shemo.
 Baruh hu.
 Baruh shemo.
 Baruh hu. →

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! ↪

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.

בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל־הַבְּרִיּוֹת	בְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ:
בְּרוּךְ מְשַׁלֵּם שָׂכָר טוֹב לִירֵאָיו	בְּרוּךְ הוּא:
בְּרוּךְ מַעֲבִיר אֶפְלָה וּמְבִיא אוֹרָה	בְּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ:
בְּרוּךְ חַי לְעַד וְקַיָּים לְנֶצַח	בְּרוּךְ הוּא:
בְּרוּךְ פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל	בְּרוּךְ 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 מרחם על הבריות / 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.

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 הָאֵב הַרְחֵם הַמְהִל
 בְּפִי עַמּוֹ: מְשֻׁבָּח וּמְפָאָר בְּלִשׁוֹן חֲסִידָיו וְעַבְדָּיו: וּבְשִׁירֵי דָוִד
 עֲבֹדְךָ נְהַלֵּלְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: בְּשִׁבְחוֹת וּבְזִמְרוֹת נִגְדְּלְךָ וְנִשְׁבַּחְךָ
 וְנִפְאָרְךָ וְנִזְכִּיר שְׁמְךָ וְנִמְלִיכְךָ מִלְּפָנֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ *יַחֲדֵי חַי־הָעוֹלָמִים:
 מֶלֶךְ מְשֻׁבָּח וּמְפָאָר עַד־עַד שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ
 מְהִל בַּתְּשֻׁבּוֹת:

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam. Ha'el ha'av
 haraḥaman hamhulal befi amo. Meshubah umfo'ar bilshon
 ḥasidav va'avadav. Uvshirey david avdeḥa nehaleleḥa adonay
 eloheynu. Bishvaḥot uvizmirot negadeleḥa unshabeḥaḥa
 unfā'ereḥa venazkir shimeḥa venamliheḥa malkenu eloheynu
 yaḥid hey ha'olamim. Meleḥ meshubah umfo'ar adey ad shemo
 hagadol. Baruh atah adonay meleḥ mehulal batishbaḥot.

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

Give thanks to THE MAGNIFICENT, call on the name,
make known among all peoples God's great deeds.

Sing songs of God, make melody for God,
converse about God's wondrous acts.

Celebrate the holy name,
God will delight the heart of those who seek THE ONE.

Inquire of THE HOLY ONE and gather strength,
search out the divine presence always.

Call to mind the wondrous things God did,
the acts of wonderment, the judgments of God's mouth.

Sing to THE INCOMPARABLE throughout the earth,
bring news, from one day to the next, of divine help.

Tell among the nations of God's glory,
amid all peoples, of God's wondrous acts.

For great is THE ETERNAL, celebrated mightily,
and awesome, above all false gods,

for all the gods of popular imaginings are mere idols,
but THE CREATOR alone made the heavens.

I Chronicles 16:8-12, 23-26

הִזְדוּ

לַיהוָה קְרָאוּ בְּשֵׁמוֹ הִזְדְּעוּ בְּעַמִּים עַל־לוֹתָיו:
 שִׁירוּ לוֹ זִמְרוּ-לוֹ בְּכָל-נַפְלְאוֹתָיו:
 הִתְהַלְלוּ בַּשֵּׁם קִדְּשׁוּ יִשְׁמַח לֵב מִבְּקָשֵׁי יְהוָה:
 דִּרְשׁוּ יְהוָה וְעִזּוּ בִּקְשׁוּ פָנָיו תָּמִיד:
 זְכְרוּ נַפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מִפְתִּי וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי-פִיָּהוּ:
 שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ בְּשִׁירוֹ מִיּוֹם-אֶל-יוֹם יִשׁוּעָתוֹ:
 סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם אֶת-כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים נַפְלְאוֹתָיו:
 כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד וְנוֹרָא הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:
 * כִּי כָל-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים וַיהוָה שְׁמַיִם עָשָׂה:

DERASH. The service of gratitude is eternal. As the Rabbis put it (Leviticus Rabbah 9), though in the time to come all sacrifices will cease, the thank-offering will never cease. It will last on in eternity; thanksgiving will never become obsolete in the realms of spiritual bliss. A world full of praise—how near to heaven it would be! We must bring ourselves into line with such ideals. Our worship must not be impatient supplication, but patient praise. We must think less of what we lack, more of what we have.

A.G.

M.M.K./M.S.

A song of triumph. A psalm of David.

The skies recount the glory of divinity,
God's handiwork the heavens' dome declares.

Day after day pours forth its evidence,
night after night expresses knowledge of it,

yet without speech and without words,
without their voice being heard.

Through all the earth their chord goes forth,
and to the farthest reaches of the globe, their phrase.

For the sun a tent is placed in their domain,
and it is like a bridegroom stepping from his canopy,
rejoicing like a mighty runner on his course,
the borders of the heavens are his starting point,
his orbit runs beyond their other edge,
with nothing hidden from his warmth. ↩

אל / השמים מספרים כבוד אל / The skies recount the glory of divinity. The Hebrew verb *mesaperim* ("recount") is associated by the rabbis with the word "sapphire." The verse would then mean, "The heavens shine like sapphire with the glory of God." A.G.

קום / their chord, literally, their line/chord, here understood as a musical chord. Belief in "the music of the spheres," a notion shared by many cultures in the ancient and medieval world, is perhaps reflected here, and it bears interesting resonance with conceptions of the cosmos advanced in modern physics and astronomy. The music of the spheres and that of the psalmist stand in a certain parallel. J.R.

לְמִנְצָח

מזמור לדוד:

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הֶרְקִיעַ:
 יוֹם לַיּוֹם יִבְיַע אֶמֶר וְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יַחְוֶה־דָּעַת:
 אֵין אֶמֶר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם:
 בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ יֵצֵא קוֹם וּבִקְצֵה תִכַּל מְלִיָּהֶם לְשֹׁמֵשׁ שָׁם אֶהָל בָּהֶם:
 וְהוּא בְּחֶתֶן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ יָשִׁישׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּץ אֶרֶח:
 מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָם וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחֻמָּתוֹ: ←

Nature is God's *niggun*,
 a wordless melody of unfolding Life.
 To awaken to God we must hear the *niggun*.
 To awaken to God we must listen in deep silence.
 Silence arises when thinking ceases.
 If we would know God
 we must quiet the mind,
 cease the chatter that passes for knowledge
 when in fact it only flatters the foolish.
 We cannot live without words
 but let us not imagine that words are sufficient.
 As a symphony needs rest to lift music out of noise,
 so we need Silence to lift Truth out of words.

R.M.S.

KAVANAH. There are two things that fill my soul with holy reverence and ever-growing wonder—the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings, and the Moral Law that raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent agents.

Immanuel Kant

The Torah of THE ONE is flawless, it restores the soul,
the testimony of THE ONE is true, it makes wise the simple,
precepts of THE ONE are sure, they make the heart rejoice,
the mitzvah of THE ONE is clear, it gives light to the eyes,
fear of THE ONE is pure, it stands eternally,
the judgments of THE ONE are true, together they are just,
desired more than gold, and greater than the purest gold,
sweeter than honey, than the nectar of a honeycomb!

Your servant, too, is being enlightened by them,
in their preservation is great consequence.

Our petty failures, who can understand?
From hidden faults declare me clean!

And from premeditated ones, as well, protect your servant.
Do not let them govern me!

Then might I be perfect, cleared of grave wrongdoing.

May the utterances of my mouth be pleasing,
the conceptions of my heart, before you,
PRECIOUS ONE, my rock, my champion.

Psalms 19

COMMENTARY. Rabbi Kaplan used to say that if you want to discover the truth of a statement about God, you must invert it. He would then state, "The Torah of God is flawless, restoring the soul" should be read, "Whatever restores the soul is the Torah of God." M.S.

מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ	תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה
מְחַיֶּמֶת פֶּתִי:	עֲדוֹת יְהוָה נֶאֱמָנָה
מְשַׁחֲי־לֵב	פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרָיִם
מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:	מִצְוֹת יְהוָה בָּרָה
עוֹמְדַת לְעַד	יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה
צָדְקוֹ יִחָדּוּ:	מִשְׁפָּטֵי־יְהוָה אֱמֶת

הַנֶּחְמָדִים מִזֶּהָב וּמִפָּז רַב וּמִתּוֹקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים:
 גַּם־עֲבֹדְךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם יַעֲקֹב רַב:
 שְׂגִיאוֹת מִי־יִבִּין מִנִּסְתָּרוֹת נִקְנִי:
 גַּם מִזֵּדִים חֲשׂךְ עֲבֹדְךָ אֶל־יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִי אֲזִי אֵיתָם וְנִקְיִתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רַב:
 * יִהְיוּ לְרִצּוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לִפְנֵיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

Torat adonay temimah meshivat nafesh
 edut adonay ne'emanah mahkimat peti.
 Pikudey adonay yesharim mesameheyy lev
 mitzvat adonay barah me'irat eynayim.
 Yirat adonay tehorah omedet la'ad
 mishpetey adonay emet tzadeku yahdav.

אִתָּם / Then might I be perfect—the phrase is rendered in a subjunctive mood (“might” instead of “shall”) to express the uncertainty and wishfulness—perhaps even wistfulness—of the speaker, who knows that even with God’s help, total human perfection is unattainable.

רַב מִפֶּשַׁע / *mipasha rav*/ of grave wrongdoing is a wordplay on the boldly contrasting *umipaz rav*, “and greater than the purest gold,” eight lines earlier, expressing the sharp difference between the perfection of divine utterance and the human imperfection of the psalm’s speaker. J.R.

A psalm of David, when he changed his appearance feigning madness before the Philistine king Avimeleḥ, who sent him on his way.

A blessing shall I speak for THE ALMIGHTY, at all times,
always is God's praise upon my mouth.

By THE INCOMPARABLE shall my soul celebrate,
and may the humble hear it and rejoice.

Give greatness to THE ONE along with me,
and let us elevate the divine name in unison.

Deeply have I searched for THE INEFFABLE,
and in all my trials, God has rescued me.

Have eyes turned toward God and be enlightened!
Oh, let not your faces darken in confusion!

Zero this person had, but when he called, GOD listened,
and in all his troubles, he was helped!

He had an angel of THE ONE stationed around him,
as around all those who fear GOD and are freed.

Taste then, and see how good THE FOUNT can be,
how happy is the person who finds refuge there.

You holy beings, have awe of THE DIVINE
there is no lack for those who tremble at it.

Cubs of the lion are at times in need and hungry,
but those who ask of GOD shall never lack the good.

Listen children, hear me out,
an awe for THE MYSTERIOUS I'll teach to you. ↩

COMMENTARY. Rabbi Kaplan used to say that we can only know God through the direct experience of the world. He would then cite the verse, טעמו וראו כי טוב יהוה / Taste, then and see how good THE FOUNT can be (Psalms 34:9). Buber made the same point when he said, "One who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to God" (I and Thou). M.S.

לְדָוִד

בְּשִׁנּוֹתָיו אֶת־טַעְמוֹ לִפְנֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וַיִּגְרְשֵׁהוּ וַיֵּלֶךְ:

אֲבָרְכָה אֶת־יְהוָה בְּכָל־עֵת	תִּמְיֵד תְּהַלֵּלֵהוּ בְּפִי:
בִּיהוָה תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי	יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנָוִים וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ:
גִּדְּלוּ לַיהוָה אֹתִי	וַנְּרוֹמָמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחֲדוּ:
דַּרְשֵׁתִי אֶת־יְהוָה וְעֲנֵנִי	וּמִכָּל־מְגֻרֹתַי הִצֵּילָנִי:
הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו וְנִהָרוּ	וּפְנִיָּהֶם אֶל־יַחֲפָרוּ:
זֶה עֲנִי קָרָא וַיהוָה שָׁמַע	וּמִכָּל־צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעוּ:
חֲנֹה מִלְּאֹךְ־יְהוָה	סָבִיב לִירְאָיו וַיַּחֲלִצֵם:
טַעְמוּ וִירְאוּ כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה	אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה הַגֹּבֵר יַחֲסֶה־בּוֹ:
יִרְאוּ אֶת יְהוָה קִדְּשׁוּ	כִּי־אֵין מַחֲסוֹר לִירְאָיו:
כִּפְּרִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבוּ	וְדִרְשֵׁי יְהוָה לֹא־יַחֲסְרוּ
	כָּל־טוֹב:
לְכוּ־בָנִים שִׁמְעוּ־לִי	יִרְאֵת יְהוָה אֲלֹמֶדְכֶם: ←

NOTE. "He" has been used in the translation of several verses in this psalm because they refer specifically to King David. R.S.

COMMENTARY. In the opening sentence of this psalm, the Hebrew idiom for "feigning madness" means literally to "change one's taste." And this is what David did. He began to physically taste that God is good, as the psalm says: טַעְמוּ וִירְאוּ כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה / Taste then, and see how good THE FOUNT can be. And he proclaimed that the tongue that has tasted sweetness—confirming God's goodness—may no longer speak evil or deceit. To Avimeleḥ, the powerful Philistine ruler, this surely appeared to be madness. To us, it resounds as a challenge. J.A.S.

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

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.

אֶהָב יָמִים לְרֹאוֹת טוֹב:	מִי־הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים
וּשְׁפָתַיִךְ מִדְּבַר מְרֻמָּה:	נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֶךָ מֶרֶע
בִּקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְנִדְפָּהוּ:	סוֹר מֶרֶע וַעֲשֵׂה־טוֹב
וְאֶזְנִי אֶל־שׁוֹעֲתָם:	עֵינֵי יְהוָה אֶל־צַדִּיקִים
לְהַכְרִית מֵאֶרֶץ זָכָרָם:	פָּנֵי יְהוָה בְּעֹשֵׂי רָע
וּמִכָּל־צָרוֹתֵם הֲצִילָם:	צַעֲקוּ וַיהוָה שָׁמַע
וְאֶת־דַּכְּאֵי־רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ:	קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְגִשְׁפְּרֵי־לֵב
וּמִכָּל־שִׁלְלוֹ יְהוָה:	רְבוֹת רָעוֹת צַדִּיק
אַחַת מִהֲנֶה לֹא נִשְׁפָּרָה:	שֹׁמֵר כָּל־עֲצֻמוֹתָיו
וּשְׁנָאֵי צַדִּיק יֹאשְׁמוּ:	תְּמוֹתֶת רָשָׁע רָעָה
וְלֹא יֹאשְׁמוּ כָל־הַחֲסִים בּוֹ:	* פֹּדֶה יְהוָה נַפְשׁ עַבְדּוֹ

Mi ha'ish hehafetz hayim ohev yamim lirot tov.
 Netzor leshoneha mera usfateha midaber mirmah.
 Sur mera va'asey tov bakesh shalom verodfehu.

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. ↩

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.

תַּפִּלָּה

לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים

אֲדַנִּי מַעֲוֹן אֶתָּה הָיִיתָ לָּנוּ בְּדָר וְדָר:

בְּטָרֶם הָרִים יָלְדוּ וּתְחִלָּה אֶרֶץ וּתְבִל

וּמַעֲוֹלָם עַד־עוֹלָם אֶתָּה אֵל:

תָּשָׁב אָנוּשׁ עַד־דָּפָא וְתֹאמַר שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי־אָדָם:

כִּי אֵלֶּף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ כְּיוֹם אֶתְמוֹל כִּי יַעֲבֹר

וְאַשְׁמוּרָה בְּלִילָה:

וְרַמְתָּם שָׁנָה יְהִיוּ בִּפְקָר כְּחֹצִיר יִחְלֶף:

לַעֲרֹב יְמוּלֵל וְיִבֶּשׁ: בִּפְקָר יִצִּיץ וְחָלָף

כִּי־כָלִינוּ בְּאַפָּךְ וּבַחֲמָתְךָ נִבְהָלְנוּ: ←

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 דכא / 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

שֶׁת עֲזַנְתִּינוּ לְגִגְדֶּךָ	עֲלֵמָנוּ לְמֵאֹר פְּנֶיךָ :
כִּי כָל־יָמֵינוּ פָּנוּ בְּעִבְרָתְךָ	כְּלִינוּ שְׁנֵינוּ כְּמוֹ־הֶגְהָ :
יָמֵי־שָׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָּהֶם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה	וְאִם בַּגְּבוּרַת שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה
וְרַחֲבָם עָמַל וְאָנֹן	כִּי־גֹז חֵישׁ וְנִצְעָפָה :
מִי־יֹדַע עַז אַפֶּךָ	וּכְיָרְאָתְךָ עִבְרָתְךָ :
לְמָנוֹת יָמֵינוּ בֵּן הַדּוֹעַ	וְנִבָּא לְבָב חֲכָמָה :
שׁוֹבָה יְהוָה עַד־מָתִי	וְהִנָּחֵם עַל־עֲבֹדֶיךָ :
שִׁבְעֵנוּ בְּכֶקֶר חֲסִדֶּךָ	וְנִרְנָנָה וְנִשְׁמָחָה בְּכָל־יָמֵינוּ :
שִׁמְחָנוּ כִּימוֹת עֲנִיתָנוּ	שָׁנוֹת רָאִינוּ רָעָה :
יִרְאָה אֶל־עֲבֹדֶיךָ פָּעֲלֶךָ	וְהִדְרֶךָ עַל־בְּנֵיהֶם :
* וַיְהִי נָעַם אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ	וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עָלֵינוּ
	וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָהוּ :

For Rosh Hashanah:

For the chief musician, to a Gathite melody; by Asaph.

Sing joyful song to God, our strength,
make joyous sounds for Jacob's God!


Raise up a song, and strike the tambourine,
pluck sweetly on the strings, accompanied by harp.

Blast piercing notes upon the shofar for the New Moon,
for the full moon, for our festive holiday.

For it is Israel's law,
a statute of the God of Jacob.

God established it in Joseph's clans,
when going forth against the land of Egypt;
I heard a language that I didn't know.

"I have relieved their shoulders of their burdens,
their hands are freed from carrying the basket.

In sorrow you called out, and I released you,
I answered from my hidden place where thunder rolls,
I tried you at Meribah's waters. So it was! 

לְמַנְצַח

עַל הַגָּתִית לְאַסָּף:

הִרְנִינוּ לֵאלֹהִים עֲוִיָּנוּ הִרְיעוּ לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

שְׁאוּזְמָרָה וּתְנוּ-תָּהּ כְּנֹר נָעִים עִם-נָבֶל:

תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר בַּכֶּסֶה לְיוֹם חֲגִינוּ:

כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׁמוּ בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם שְׁפַת לֹא-יִדְעָתִי אָשְׁמָע:

הִסִּירוּתִי מִסֹּבֵל שְׁכֵמוֹ כִּפְיוֹ מְדוּד תַּעֲבֹרָנָה:

בְּצָרָה קָרָאתָ וַאֲחִלְצֶנָּה אֶעֱנֶנּה בְּסִתָּר רָעַם אֲבַחֲנֶנּה עַל-מִי מְרִיבָה סֵלָה: —

NOTE. This appellation "For the chief musician, to a Gathite melody," occurs dozens of times at the beginning of psalms, as at the end of the book of Habakuk. Often it occurs alongside references to Asaph, the clan of Levite singers. This suggests that the choir leader either composed or directed the performance of these compositions. D.A.T.

Listen, my people, I admonish you!
Israel, if you only would pay heed to me!

Let you not have among you alien gods,
let you not bow down to exotic gods.

I am THE REDEEMING ONE, your God,
who brings you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open up your mouth, and I shall fill it!

But my people did not listen to my voice.
no, Israel did not care for me.

So I sent away the people in their stubbornness of heart,
I let them go according to their own devices.

Would that my people might listen to me,
yes, would that Israel walked according to my ways!

How quickly would I crush their enemies,
on their oppressors would I cast my hand.

Those who hate GOD would cringe before my people;
I would stand beside them always.

God would feed them from the choicest wheat.
Yes, from the rock I'd feed you honey in abundance."

Psalm 81

שָׁמַע עַמִּי וְאַעֲדָה בָּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־תִּשְׁמַע־לִי:
 לֹא־יִהְיֶה בָּךְ אֵל זֶר וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל נָכַר:
 אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמַּעֲלֶךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הַרְחֹב־פִּיךָ וְאִמְלֵאֲהוּ:
 וְלֹא־שָׁמַע עַמִּי לְקוֹלִי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אָבָה לִי:
 וְאַשְׁלַחֲהוּ בַּשְּׂרִירוֹת לִבָּם יִלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתָיָהֶם:
 לוֹ עַמִּי שָׁמַע לִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדַרְכֵי יְהִלְכוּ:
 כְּמַעַט אוֹיְבֵיהֶם אֲכַנֶּיֶע וְעַל־צָרֵיהֶם אֲשִׁיב יָדַי:
 מִשְׁנָאִי יְהוָה יִכְחָשׁוּ־לוֹ וְיִהְיֶה עֲתָם לְעוֹלָם:
 *וַיֹּאכִלֵּהוּ מִחֶלֶב חֹטָה וּמִצֹּר דָּבַשׁ אֲשַׁבֵּיעָךְ:

COMMENTARY. Psalm 81 is divided into two sections reflecting the contrasting moods we experience on Rosh Hashanah. The first eight verses emphasize our joy in praising God and our gratitude at no longer finding ourselves in the narrow places in our lives represented by *Mitzrayim*/Egypt. The many references to joyous song and instrumental music-making communicate our sense of celebration, as we anticipate the opportunity for a new beginning presented by the new year. Verses 9-16 reflect the more somber and contemplative aspect of the Days of Awe. These verses are punctuated by forms of the verb *shema*/listen. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we strain to listen for God's message in the world, as well as to our innermost selves. The tension between the psalm's two moods is resolved in the final words, "from the rock I feed you honey in abundance." The rock simultaneously refers back to the agonizing trial at Meribah when Moses strikes a rock to extract water for the complaining Israelites; and to God, the Rock of Israel. These words also give substance to the vague promise, "open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." In opening ourselves to God's presence, we free ourselves from the oppressors and alien gods of our own Egypt. Only then can our mouths be truly filled with both joyous prayer and the sweetness of (Rosh Hashanah) honey.

R.S.

For Rosh Hashanah:

A song of triumph, to a Gathite melody. Of David.

ALMIGHTY ONE, our sovereign, how glorious is your name
throughout the earth,
you whose splendor is stretched forth across the heavens!

Even from the mouths of infants and of nurselings
you have drawn foundation for your power,
in order to confound your enemies,
in order to frustrate your foe and to enact your justice.

When I behold your heavens, which your hands have wrought,
the moon and stars you have created,
what are human beings that you should think of them,
the children of humanity that you take note of them?

For you have made them only slightly less than divine beings,
and have crowned them with your glory and your splendor.

You have given us authority over your handiwork,
all things you make dependent on our power—
the sheep and cattle, all of them,
even the wild mountain beasts,
birds of the skies, fish of the sea,
all that travel through the ocean currents.

Our FOUNT OF LIFE, our God, how glorious is your name
throughout the earth!

Psalms 8

לְמִנְצָח

עַל־הַגָּתִית מְזֻמּוֹר לְדוֹד:

יְהוָה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מֶה־אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר־תִּגְדֹּה הוֹדֶךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם:
מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וַיִּנָּקִים יִסְדֹּתָ עוֹ לְמַעַן צוּרֶיךָ
לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם:
כִּי־אֶרְאֶה שְׁמֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂה אֲצָבָעֶיךָ
יֵרָח וְכוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָה:
מֶה־אֶנּוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ:
וְתַחֲסֹרֵהוּ מַעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכְבוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֹרֵהוּ:
תִּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כֹּל שֵׁתָה תַּחַת־רַגְלָיו:
צִנָּה וְאֶלְפִים כָּלָם וְגַם בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי:
צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וּדְגֵי הַיָּם עֹבֵר אַרְחוֹת יָמִים:
יְהוָה אֲדֹנֵינוּ מֶה־אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

For Yom Kippur:

[A psalm] of David.
A poem of contemplation.

Happy is the one whose wrong has been forgiven,
whose transgression has been cleared!

Happy is the one whose error is no longer reckoned
by THE GOD OF MERCY,
and no treachery remains within that person's soul.

While I was silent, I wore out my bones
with anguished roaring through the day,
yes, day and night your hand was heavy over me.
My strength was ravaged as in summer drought.
How difficult it was!

But then I made my errors known to you,
and I did not conceal my wrongful acts.
I said: "I shall confess to you, exalted God,
all my injustices, FORGIVING ONE."
And you forgave my wrongs, and cleared my sins.
How glad I was!

Because of this, all those who love you
pray to you, whenever sin is found,
so that a flood of great torrential waters
will not overwhelm them.

You are my shelter, you protect me from distress;
you surround me with the joys of your deliverance.
How fortunate I am! ➞

לְדָוִד

מִשְׁכִּיל

אֲשֶׁר־יְנַשּׁוּי־פָּשַׁע כְּסוּי חַטָּאָה:

אֲשֶׁר־יֵאָדָם לֹא יִחְשָׁב יֵהוּה לֹו עֹון
וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רְמִיָּה:

כִּי־הִחַרְשֵׁתִי בְּלוֹ עֲצָמִי בְּשֹׁאֲגָתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
כִּי יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה תִּכְבֹּד עָלַי יְיָ
נִהַפֹּךְ לְשֹׁדִי בְּחֶרְבִּי קִיץ סֵלָה:

חַטָּאתִי אֹדִיעַךְ וְעוֹנִי לֹא־כִסִּיתִי
אֶמְרָתִי אֹדָה עָלַי פִּשְׁעֵי לִיהוּה
וְאַתָּה נִשְׂאתָ עֹון חַטָּאתִי סֵלָה:

עַל־זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל־חֹסֶיד אֵלֶיךָ לְעֵת מָצָא
רַק לְשֹׁטֶף מַיִם רַבִּים אֵלִיו לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:

אַתָּה סֹתֵר לִי מִצָּר תַּצִּירֵנִי רַגְלִי פִּלֵּט תְּסוּבִּבֵּנִי סֵלָה: ←

“I shall instruct you,” [you have said,]

“I shall light up for you the road on which you tread,
I shall advise you, and my eye is watchful over you.

So, act not like the senseless horse or mule,
whose petulance is curbed by bridle and by reins
before one can approach.”

Great are the torments of the wicked,
but the one who trusts in GOD is ringed by loving-kindness.
Have joy in THE ETERNAL ONE; rejoice, you who are just!
Cry out for joy, all who are upright!

Psalm 32

אֲשַׁכִּילָךְ וְאוֹרֶךְ בְּדַרְךְ־זוֹ תִלָּךְ
אֵיעָצָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי:

אֶל־תִּהְיֶה כְּסוֹס כְּפָרֶד אֵין הָבִין
בְּמַתְגַּוְרָסֵן עָדִיו לְבָלוֹם בַּל קָרַב אֵלֶיךָ:

רַבִּים מְכַאוּבִּים לְרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטָח בִּיהוָה חָסֵד יְסוֹבְבָנוּ:
שִׂמְחוּ בִיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהִרְנִינוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

COMMENTARY. The Hebrew exclamation *selah!* has no exact translation, but it completes the thought of a verse by making it more emphatic. In this psalm, it exercises an important function, marking three key moments in the worshipper's evolving awareness: the past state of sin; the turning-point, when repentance occurred; and the present state of trust in God. The translation therefore substitutes three appropriate exclamatory phrases ("How difficult it was!" "How glad I was!" "How fortunate I am!") where the word occurs in order to capture the trajectory of the worshipper's spiritual progress.

J.R.

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. ↪

תַּפְּלָה לְדָוִד

שְׁמָעָה יְהוָה צְדָק הַקְּשִׁיבָה רְנָתִי הַאֲזִינָה תַּפְּלָתִי
בְּלֹא שִׁפְתֵי מִרְמָה:

מִלִּפְנֵיךְ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא עֵינֶיךָ תַּחֲזִינָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:
בְּחִנּוּת לִבִּי פָקְדוֹת לַיְלָה צָרַפְתָּנִי בַל־תִּמְצָא זִמָּתִי
בַּל־יַעֲבֹר־פִּי:

לִפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בְּדִבְרֵי שִׁפְתֶיךָ
אֲנִי שִׁמְרָתִי אֲרַחֲוֹת פְּרִיץ:

תִּמְדֹךָ אֲשׁוּרִי בְּמַעֲגָלוֹתֶיךָ בַּל־נִמְאֹוֹטוּ פְּעָמַי:
אֲנִי־קִרְאתֶיךָ כִּי־תַעֲנֵנִי אֵל הַט־אָזְנוֹךָ לִי שְׁמַע אֲמָרָתִי:
הַפְּלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמֶּתֶקֶוֹמָמִים בִּימִינֶךָ:
שְׁמְרָנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בַּת־עֵינַן בְּצֹל כְּנָפֶיךָ תַּסְתִּירָנִי:
מִפְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים זֶה שְׁדוֹנִי אִיבִי בְּנֶפֶשׁ יִקְיֹפוּ עָלַי:
חֲלַכְמוּ סָגְרוּ פִּימוּ דְּבָרוּ בְּגִאוֹת: —

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!

Psalms 17

אֲשֶׁר־נָנוּ עָתָה סִבְבוּנוּ עֵינֵיהֶם יִשְׁתּוּ לְנֹטוֹת בְּאָרֶץ:
דָּמִינוּ בְּאַרְיֵה יִכְסוּף לְטֹרֶף וְכִכְפִּיר יֵשֵׁב בְּמִסְתָּאִים:
קוֹמָה יִהְיֶה קִדְמָה פָּנָיו תִּכְרִיעֵהוּ פִּלְטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרָשָׁע חֲרָבָד:
מִמָּתִים יָדָד יִהְיֶה מִמָּתִים מִחֶלֶד חֶלֶקֶם בַּחַיִּים
וְצַפּוֹנָד תִּמְלֵא בָטָנָם יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָנִים
וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם:
אֲנִי בְצֹדֵק אֶחְזֶה פָנָיִךְ אֶשְׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוֹנֶתְךָ:

A song of the Ascents:

From amid the depths, I have cried out, REDEEMING ONE,
so hearken, my protector, to my voice,
and let your ears be attentive to my call of prayer.
Were you, O God, to keep exact accounting of our sins,
who, my sovereign, could survive?
For you possess the power to forgive;
for this, the awe of you is stirred.
I hope for you, ABUNDANT ONE, my soul has hoped,
and for God's word I wait with expectation.
My spirit longs for its protector
more than those who wait for dawn,
those who wait for day to break.
So Israel hopes for THE ABUNDANT ONE,
for with THE FOUNT OF MERCY is the power of love,
with God, the power to redeem.
God is the one who shall release
the people Israel from their sins.

Psalms 130

שִׁיר

הַמַּעֲלוֹת

מִמַּעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה: אֲדֹנָי שְׁמָעָה בְּקוֹלִי
תְּהַיִּינָה אָזְנוֹיךָ קְשָׁבוֹת לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי:
אִם-עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמְרֶינִי אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֵד:
כִּי-עָמָךְ הִסְלִיחָה לְמַעַן תִּנָּרָא:
קִנֵּיתִי יְהוָה קִנְיָתָה נַפְשִׁי וְלִדְבָרוֹ הוֹחֵלְתִּי:
נַפְשִׁי לֹאדֹנָי מִשְׁמָרִים לִבְקָר שֹׁמְרִים לִבְקָר:
יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה
כִּי-עַם-יְהוָה הַחֲסֵד וְהַרְבֵּה עֲמוֹ פְדוּת:
וְהוּא יַפְדֶּה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנָתוֹ:

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. ↩

יִשָּׁב

בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנָן:	בְּסֹתֶר עֲלִיּוֹן
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹט־חֹב:	אֲמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסֵי וּמְצוּדָתִי
מְדַבֵּר הַוּוֹת:	כִּי הוּא יַצִּילָךְ מִפֶּחַ יְקוֹשׁ
וּתְחַת־כַּנְפָּיו תִּחְסֶה	בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יָסֹף לָךְ
צִנָּה וְסִחְרָה אָמְתוֹ:	
מִחֵץ יַעֲוֶף יוֹמָם:	לֹא-תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לַיְלָה
מִקָּטָב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים:	מְדַבֵּר בְּאָפֶל יִהְלֹךְ
וּרְבֵבָה מִימִינֶךָ	יִפֹּל מִצִּדְּךָ אֶלֶף
אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יָגֵשׁ:	
וְשִׁלְמַת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה:	רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְטֹחַ
עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמַת מְעוֹנֶךָ: ←	כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה מַחְסֵי

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.

Psalms 91

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

D.A.T.

וְנָגַע לֹא-יִקְרַב בְּאַהֲלָךְ:	לֹא-תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה
לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ בְּכָל-דֶּרֶךְךָ:	כִּי מִלְאָכָיו יִצְוֶה-לָךְ
פֶּן-תִּגְּף בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶךָ:	עַל-כַּפָּיִם יִשְׁאַנְנֶךָ
תִּרְמַס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין:	עַל-שֹׁחַל וְפֶתֶן תִּדְרֹךְ
אֲשַׁגְּבֶהוּ כִּי-יֵדַע שָׁמַי:	כִּי בִי חֶשֶׁק וְאַפְלִטָהוּ
עַמּוֹ-אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה	יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאַעֲנֶהוּ

אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֶכְבְּדֶהוּ:

וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:	* אֶרְךָ יָמִים אֲשַׁבִּיעֶהוּ
וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:	אֶרְךָ יָמִים אֲשַׁבִּיעֶהוּ

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

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

COMMENTARY. ליהודה / 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.

הודו

ליהוה פייטוב

הודו לאלהי האלהים

הודו לאדני האדנים

לעשה נפלאות גדלות לבדו

לעשה השמים בתבונה

לרקע הארץ על-המים

לעשה אורים גדלים

את-השמש לממשלת ביום

את-הירח וכוכבים לממשלות בלילה

שבשפילנו זכר לנו

ויפרקנו מצרינו

נתן לחם לכל-בשר

הודו לאל השמים

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

כי לעולם חסדו:

Hodu ladonay ki tov

Hodu leylohey ha'elohim

Hodu la'adoney ha'adonim

Le'osey nifla'ot gedolot levado

Le'osey hashamayim bitvunah

Leroka ha'aretz al hamayim

Le'osey orim gedolim

Et hashemesh lememshelet bayom

Et hayare'ah vehohavim lememshelot balaylah

Shebeshiflenu zahar lanu

Vayifrekenu mitzareynu

Noten lehem lehol basar

Hodu le'el hashamayim

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Ki le'olam hasdo.

Rejoice, you just ones, in THE SOURCE,
you who are upright, it is fitting to sing praise.

Give thanks to THE INCOMPARABLE upon the harp,
by ten-stringed lute, make melody for God,

yes, sing a new song to the One,
play heartily a melody with hornblast,

for the word of THE SUPERNAL ONE is true,
whose every deed is done in faith,

who loves the righteous and the just.
THE PROVIDER'S kindness fills the earth!

By THE CREATOR'S word the skies were made,
by breath of divine speaking all their host,

who gathered in a heap the ocean's waters,
placing into chambers all the deep.

Have awe of THE UNSEEN ONE, all the earth,
have dread of God, all dwellers of the globe,

for here was one who spoke and all things were,
who gave command and everything arose,

REDEEMER, who makes void the plans of nations,
who subverts the scheming among peoples.

The counsel of THE ETERNAL ONE shall stand forever,
God's meditations, from one generation to the next. ↪

רַנְנוּ

צְדִיקִים בַּיהוָה

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר

שִׁירוּ-לוֹ שִׁיר חֹדֶשׁ

כִּי־יִשָּׁר דְּבַר־יהוָה

אֲהַב צִדְקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שְׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ

כֹּה־נֶגַד מִי הַיָּם

יִירָאוּ מִיהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי

יְהוָה הַפִּיר עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם

עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד

לִישָׁרִים נָאוֹה תְהִלָּה:

בְּנִבְלָ עֲשׂוֹר זְמַר-לוֹ:

הֵיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתִרְעוּעָה:

וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂהוּ בְּאִמוּנָה:

חֹסֶד יְהוָה מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ:

וּבְרֹיחַ פִּי כָל־צַבָּאִם:

נָתַן בְּאוֹצְרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:

מִמָּנוּ יִגְוִרוּ כָל־יֹשְׁבֵי תִבְל:

הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֹד:

הֵנִיא מִחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים:

מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר: ←

What is a new song?

When we break our habits of heart and mind

We step out of the past and into the Present.

What is new is what is no longer habitual.

What is new is what arises out of the Moment.

R.M.S.

Happy is the nation who has THIS ONE for its God,
the people who has chosen this inheritance.

Far from the heavens does THE KEEPER watch,
beholds all children of humanity,

surveying, from the seat of rule,
all dwellers of the earth,

who fashions all their hearts as one,
who understands their every deed.

A king cannot be saved, however great his force,
no mighty one whose great strength can redeem.

His horse proves false for rescuing,
in the abundance of his force he can't be saved.

But see! GOD'S eye looks toward the awestruck,
those who yearn for divine love,

for saving of their souls from death,
and giving them, amid their hunger, life.

Our spirit has awaited THE ETERNAL,
who is for us a help and shield.

Through One alone our heart rejoices,
in whose holy name we place our trust.

May your kindness be upon us,
just as we have placed our hope in you.

Psalm 33

אֲשֶׁרִי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵיו
 מִשְׁמָיִם הַפִּיט יִהְיֶה
 מִמְּכוֹן־שִׁבְתּוֹ הַשְּׁגִיחַ
 הַיֵּצֵר יַחַד לָכֶם
 אֵין הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשֵׁעַ בְּרֶב־חַיִל
 שֶׁקֶר הַסּוֹס לַחֲשׂוּעָה
 הִנֵּה עֵין יִהְיֶה אֶל־יִרְאָיו
 לְהַצִּיל מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם
 נַפְשֵׁנוּ חֲפָתָה לִיהוָה
 * כִּי־בֹ יִשְׁמַח לִבֵּנוּ
 יִהְיֶה־חֲסִדְךָ יִהְיֶה עָלֵינוּ

הָעַם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לוֹ:
 רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:
 אֶל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:
 הַמִּבִּין אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
 גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִנָּצֵל בְּרֶב־כֹּחַ:
 וּבְרֹב חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמָּלֵט:
 לְמִי־חַלִּים לְחֲסֹדוֹ:
 וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרָעַב:
 עֲזָרְנוּ וּמִגִּנָּנוּ הוּא:
 כִּי בָשָׂם קִדְשׁוֹ בְּטָחָנוּ:
 כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחֲלֵנוּ לָךְ:

A psalm. A song for the day of Shabbat.

A good thing to give thanks to THE ETERNAL,
to sing out to your name supreme,

to tell about your kindness in the morning,
and your faithfulness at night,

on ten-stringed lyre and on flute,
with melodies conceived on harp,

for you, ALMIGHTY ONE, elate me with your deeds,
I'll sing about the actions of your hands.

How great your deeds have been, SUPERNAL ONE,
your thoughts exceedingly profound.

Of this the foolish person cannot know,
of this the shallow cannot understand.

For though the wicked multiply like weeds,
and evildoers sprout up all around,

it is for their destruction for all time,
but you, MAJESTIC ONE, are lifted high eternally, ↪

It is good to give thanks.

Why? Does God need our praise?

No.

We do.

To awaken to Wonder

to holiness

to God.

It is good to give thanks

for through thanksgiving comes awakening.

R.M.S.

מִזְמוֹר

שִׁיר לְיוֹם-הַשַּׁבָּת:

טוֹב לְהִדּוֹת לַיהוָה	וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ:
לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חֲסִדֶּךָ	וְאֶמְוִנְתְּךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת:
עַל-עֲשׂוֹר וְעַל-נָכֹל	עַל הַגִּיוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר:
כִּי שִׁמְחָתָנִי יְהוָה בְּפַעֲלֶךָ	בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן:
מִה-גָּדְלוֹ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יְהוָה	מֵאֵד עֲמָקוֹ מִחִשְׁבֹתֶיךָ:
אִישׁ-בָּעֵר לֹא יָדַע	וּכְסִיל לֹא-יָבִין אֶת-זֹאת:
בְּפֶרֶחַ רִשְׁעִים כְּמוֹ-עֵשֶׂב	וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָל-פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן
לְהִשָּׁמְדָם עַד-יָעַד:	
וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעֵלָם יְהוָה: ←	

Mizmor shir leyom hashabbat.

Tov lehodot ladonay

Lehagid baboker ḥasdeḥa

Aley asor va'aley navel

ulzamer leshimeḥa elyon.

ve'emunateḥa baleylot.

aley higayon beḥinor.

COMMENTARY. Beautiful in many respects, this twice-recited (evening and morning) Sabbath psalm also contains affirmations which do not flow easily from our lips: the wicked, despite their apparent success, are destined to perish (verses 8-10), while the righteous are destined to flourish (verses 13-15). Who, observing the vast human traumas of this century, can say these words with full conviction?

Isn't this psalm facile, smug? At moments of harassment or discouragement, so it may seem; but during the composed times of quiet reflection, such as Shabbat, it appears closer to the truth than its cynical opposite. Historically, a good case can be made that evil eventually destroys itself; philosophically, it can be convincingly argued that evil contains its own self-destruction, its own internal contradiction.

Yet this vision is far from our present reality, especially when applied to individual cases. With reason Rashi construes the phrase *leyom hashabbat* for the Sabbath Day in the first verse of the psalm as referring to *olam shekulo Shabbat*, a world-in-the-making when all will be serene. E.G.

behold your enemies, RESPLENDENT ONE,
behold, your enemies are lost,

all evildoers shall be scattered.

You raise my horn like that of the triumphant ox;
I am anointed with fresh oil.

My eye shall gaze in victory on my enemies,
on all who rise against me to do harm;

my ears shall hear of their demise.

The righteous flourish like the palm trees,
like cedars of Lebanon they grow,

implanted in the house of THE ALL KNOWING ONE
amid the courtyards of our God they bear fruit.

In their old age, they'll put forth seed,
fleshy and fresh they'll ever be,

to tell the uprightness of ONE ALONE,
my Rock, in whom no fault resides.

Psalms 92

כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיכָיִךְ יֵהוּה	כִּי־הִנֵּה אֵיכָיִךְ יֵאֲבֹדוּ
וְתִפְרְדוּ כָל־פְּעָלֵי אָוֶן:	
וְתָרֵם כְּרָאִים קִרְנִי	בְּלִתִּי בְשֶׁמֶן רֵעֵנוֹ:
וְתִבֶּט עֵינֵי בְשׁוּרִי	בְּקָמִים עָלֵי מְרַעִים
	תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אָזְנִי:
צַדִּיק כְּתָמָר יִפְרַח	כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִכְנֹן יִשְׁגָּה:
שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יְהוּה	בְּחֲצֹרֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:
* עוֹד יִנּוּכּוֹן בְּשִׁיכָה	דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:
לְהַגִּיד כִּי־יָשָׁר יְהוּה	צוּרֵי וְלֹא־עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ:

Tzadik katamar yifrah ke'erez balvanon yisgeh.
 Shetulim beveyt adonay behatzrot eloheynu yafrihu.
 Od yenuvun beseyvah deshenim vera'ananim yihyu.
 Lehagid ki yashar adonay tzuri velo avlatah bo.

COMMENTARY. צַדִּיק כְּתָמָר יִפְרַח / The righteous flourish like the palm trees. Unlike other trees, the palm brings forth each new branch from its very heart. So, too, the *tzadik*: *tzadikim* reach outward from their very depths. There are no superficial branches on their trees. The righteous are as open as palms, as strong and straight as cedars. Such people remain fresh and fruitful even in their old age. A.G.

THE ETERNAL reigns, is clothed in majesty,
THE INVISIBLE is clothed, is girded up with might.

The world is now established,
it cannot give way.

Your throne was long ago secured,
beyond eternity are you.

The rivers raise, O MIGHTY ONE,
the rivers raise a roaring sound,

the floods raise up torrential waves,
but louder than the sound of mighty waters,
more exalted than the breakers of the sea,

raised up on high are you, THE SOURCE.

Your precepts have retained their truth,
and holiness befits your house,

ETERNAL ONE, forever and a day.

Psalm 93

Some communities recite Ashrey (Psalm 145, page 593) here.

יְהוָה

מֶלֶךְ גְּאוֹת לְבָשׁ לְבַשׁ יְהוָה עֹז הַתְּאֵזָר

אֶף-תִּכּוֹן תִּבְלַל בְּלִתְמוּט:

יַעֲוִלֵם אָתָּה:

נִכּוֹן כְּסֶאֱךָ מְאֹז

נִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת קוֹלָם

נִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת יְהוָה

יִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת דְּכִים:

אֲדִירִים מְשַׁבְּרֵי-יָם

מְקִלוֹת מַיִם רַבִּים

אֲדִיר בְּמָרוֹם יְהוָה:

לְבֵיתְךָ נְאֻה-קֹדֶשׁ

* יַעֲדֶיךָ נְאֻמָּנוּ מְאֹד

יְהוָה לְאַרְךָ יָמִים:

Some communities recite Ashrey (Psalm 145, page 594) here.

COMMENTARY. How often it feels that the chaos in our world—and the chaotic feelings in our hearts—could overwhelm us! The central Jewish article of faith that God is one and that the world is therefore one, that the world makes sense, stands as an assertion that the forces of chaos will not ultimately prevail. The floods raise up torrential waves, but we listen for the one reality that can overwhelm the mighty waters. D.A.T.

A Song for the Ascents.

I lift my eyes up to the hills.
From where does my help come?

My help is from THE UNSEEN ONE,
the maker of the heavens and the earth,

who will not cause your foot to fail.
Your protector never slumbers.

Behold the one who slumbers not, who never sleeps,
the guardian of Israel.

THE ABUNDANT ONE preserves you,
THE WATCHFUL ONE, your shelter, at your right hand a support.

By day, the sun will not afflict you,
nor the moonlight by the night.

THE VIGILANT shall guard you from all evil,
and will keep your lifebreath safe.

THE SHEPHERD guard your going out and coming in,
from now unto eternity.

Psalms 121

ישן לא ינום ולא יישן/slumbers not, who never sleeps. Many are the metaphors for God: Ruler, Spouse, Parent. Here the psalmist imagines God as a parent who remains ever alert to a child's call in the night. How comforting to remember a time when no matter the hour, our cries would be heard.

R.H.

אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל-הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:
 עֲזָרִי מִעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:
 אֶל-יִתְּן לְמוֹט רִגְלֶךָ אֶל-יָנוּם שְׁמֶךָ:
 הִנֵּה לֹא-יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 יְהוָה שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה צִלְךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ:
 יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יִכָּפֶה וַיֵּרָח בְּלִילָהּ:
 יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל-רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ:
 יְהוָה יִשְׁמֹר-צִאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

Esa eynay el heharim me'ayin yavo ezri.
 Ezri me'im adonay oseh shamayim va'aretz.

עֲזָרִי / *me'ayin yavo ezri* / From where does my help come. *Ayin* can be read as meaning Nothing, a reference to the Eyn Sof, the infinite, unknowable One. My help is from that Emptiness which is prior to all creation, and which makes room for me to creatively change the universe.

J.A.S.

KAVANAH. Often prayer seeks to turn our thoughts towards God; at other times it directs our attention towards ourselves, and sometimes these two poles are held in intimate relation, as in the opening outcry of the psalm: "I lift my eyes up to the hills. From where does my help come?" Had the life-sustaining force we call God not been with us, how could we possibly have survived calumny and contempt, pogroms and persecutions? Given the perils and pains of Jewish history, our continued existence as a people is not easy to account for in the usual reasoned terms of causal explanation.

Might we then succumb, if only for a moment, to the cry of the psalmist, and give voice to our astonished recognition that our existence is surely by the grace of God, a gift that surpasses explanation.

E.G.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

I rejoiced whenever people said to me,
let's journey to the house of THE UNSEEN!

Our feet would stand
inside your gates, Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, built up, a city
where all things converge,

the place to which the tribes would climb,
the tribes of Yah,

the place of Israel's witness,
for acknowledging the name of THE ETERNAL.

For there the seats of justice dwell,
the thrones of David's house.

So, let us say: Shalom, Yerushalayim,
and let all who love you be consoled,

great solace be upon your force,
salvation's rest amid your halls,

for all my kin, for all my friends,
may I now speak: Shalom to you!

And for the house of THE INDWELLING ONE, our God,
I only seek your good.

Psalms 122

COMMENTARY. Psalms 121 and 122 are included from the Sephardic rite. They are part of a group of pilgrims' songs, sung by our ancestors as they went up to the Temple. These two psalms, simple in their language and strong in their faith, are classics of our ancient religious literature. A.G.

שִׁיר

הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד

שִׁמְחֵתִי בְּאִמְרִים לִי בֵּית יְהוָה גִּלְיָה:
עֲמֻדֹתָיו הֵיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיָהּ יְרוּשָׁלַם:
יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שְׁחָבְרָה-לָהּ יִחְדּוּ:
שֵׁשׁ עָלוּ שְׂבָטִים שְׂבִיטֵי-יָהּ עֲדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָדוֹת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה:
כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסָאוֹת לְמִשְׁפָּט כְּסָאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד:
שְׁאַלּוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם יִשְׁלָיו אֶהְבִּיָהּ:
יְהִי-שְׁלוֹם בְּחִילָהּ שְׁלוֹהָ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ:
לְמַעַן אַחֵי וְרַעֲי אֲדַבְּרָה-נָא שְׁלוֹם בָּךְ:
* לְמַעַן בֵּית-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשֶׁה טוֹב לָךְ:

Sha'alu shelom yerushalayim yishlayu ohavayih.

Yehi shalom beheyleh shalvah be'armenotayih.

Lema'an ahay vere'ay adaberah-na shalom bah.

Lema'an beyt adonay eloheynu avakshah tov lah.

COMMENTARY. Psalms 121 and 122 are selections from the Psalms of Ascent or the Psalms of Degrees, originally sung in the Temple. The beginning of the upward path exists in the recognition of God's loving, helpful presence in our lives (Psalm 121). God is with us when we behold nature in its perfection and we become ready to acknowledge the possibility of communion with the power of Creation. Awareness of our access to God offers us protection no matter how often we enter and leave the ascending journey.

S.P.W.

Halleluyah!

Hail, my soul, THE OMNIPRESENT!

I hail THE INNERMOST my whole life through,
I sing out to my God as long as I endure.

Trust not in human benefactors,
in mortal beings, who have no power to help.

Their spirit leaves, they go back to the ground,
on that day, all their thoughts are lost.

Happy is the one who has the God of Jacob for a help,
whose hopeful thought is for THE LIVING ONE, our God,

the maker of the heavens and the earth,
the seas and all that they contain,

the world's true guardian, ↩

DERASH. The God of religion is the God we can know and experience every time we choose to act in the spirit of moral responsibility by being loyal, honest, just, sympathetic and creative.

M.M.K. (Adapted)

אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָמֵינוּ / "Trust not in human benefactors..." Judaism bequeathed a gift to humanity: the hope for the future embodied in the mythic figure of the messiah. Yet how often has this hope been distorted and disappointed as each pretender to the title has proven false. As Reconstructionists, we affirm a messianic era, not a messiah. We are also cautioned by the psalmist not to be overconfident, or to overestimate the possibilities of our bringing the messianic era to fruition. Improvement, rather than perfection, is a more realistic though more humble aspiration in light of the horrors of the 20th century.

R.H.

הַלְלוּיָהּ

אֶהְלֵלָהּ יְהוָה בְּחַיִּי

אֶל־תִּבְטָחוּ בְּנִדְבִיבִים

תֵּצֵא רִיחוֹ יָשֵׁב לְאֲדָמָתוֹ

אֲשֶׁר־י שָׁאֵל יַעֲקֹב בְּעֶזְרוֹ

עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

הִלְלִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה:

אֲזַמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוּדִי:

בְּכֵן־אָדָם שָׁאִין לוֹ תְשׁוּעָה:

כִּיּוֹם הֵהוּא אָבְדוּ עֲשִׁתְנָתָיו:

שִׁבְרוּ עַל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיוֹ:

אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם

הַשֹּׁמֵר אֶמֶת לְעוֹלָם: —

DERASH. אהללה יהוה בחיי / I shall praise the Eternal One with my life, I shall sing to my God with my virtue/talent/gift. (Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav's rendering)

Why do we find it so difficult to pray? What prevents us from praising God? Our lists would most likely emphasize intellectual and theological obstacles; few would include Rabbi Nahman's audacious suggestion that a key to the silence of our souls is that we think too little of ourselves. Our low self-regard makes us feel inwardly unworthy to praise the beneficent bestower of blessings upon humankind.

So, recommends Rabbi Nahman, begin your preparation for prayer by focusing on your עוֹד / *od*, on something worthy about yourself, a virtue, a talent, a personal quality perhaps overlooked or unappreciated. Concentrate even a little on this עוֹד / *od*, and your sense of unworthiness will be diminished. In touch with this element of value in yourself—and even the worst of sinners possesses goodness as well, Nahman assures—you'll find that this merit, this עוֹד / *od*, recognized, will help you sing God's praises, and that your life itself will utter a hymn of praise to God. E.G.

who musters justice on behalf of the oppressed,
who gives bread to the hungry,

ADVOCATE, who sets the captive free,

THE UNSEEN ONE, who makes the blind to see,
SUPPORTING ONE, who helps the lame to stand,

THE WATCHFUL ONE, who loves the just,

THE BOUNTIFUL, protector of the stranger,
and in whom the orphan and the widow find their strength,

By whom the evildoers' route is set awry.

The ALL-EMBRACING reigns eternally,
your God, O Zion, from one generation to the next.
Halleluyah!

Psalms 146

עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט לַעֲשׂוּקִים נָתַן לָחֶם לָרַעֲבִים
 יִהְיֶה מִתִּיר אֲסוּרִים: יִהְיֶה פֶלֶא עוֹרִים
 יִהְיֶה אֱהָב צַדִּיקִים: יִהְיֶה שֹׁמֵר אֶת-גִּרָּם
 וְדָרְךָ רָשָׁעִים יֵעָוֶת: יִתּוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה יַעֲזֹדֵד
 *יִמְלֹךְ יִהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהֶיךָ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר

הַלְלוּיָהּ

COMMENTARY. The latter part of this psalm lists divine actions worthy of human emulation. The approach of predicate theology treats divine attributes as models for human conduct. In praising God this way we are not attempting to make factual statements about God's conduct. We are stating values that we hope to make manifest through the way we lead our lives.

D.A.T.

Halleluyah! How good it is to sing out to our God!
How much a pleasure and how fitting is our praise!

The builder of Jerusalem is ZION'S GOD,
may those of Israel gone astray be gathered there.

The healer of the broken-hearted,
the one who bandages their bones,

who alone reckons the number of the stars,
while giving names to every one of them—

how great is our protector, and how powerful,
whose understanding has no limit!

THE COMPASSIONATE encourages the humble,
and brings down the wicked to the earth,

sing choruses of thanks to THE MAGNIFICENT,
sing out to our God with instrument of strings,

the one who covers up the sky with clouds,
who prepares the rainfall for the earth,

who causes grass to sprout upon the mountains,

who gives the beast its sustenance,
young ravens, what they clamor for,

who is indifferent to the horse's power,
who takes no pleasure in the muscle's might, ↩

הללויה

כִּי־טוֹב זְמַרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	בֹּנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יְהוָה
נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְכַנֵּס:	הַרֹפֵא לְשִׁבְרֵי לֵב
וּמַחְבֵּשׁ לַעֲצוֹתָם:	מוֹנֶה מִסֶּפֶר לַכּוֹכְבִּים
לְכֻלָּם שְׁמוֹת יִקְרָא:	גָּדוֹל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב־כֹּחַ
לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסֶּפֶר:	מְעוֹדֵד עַנְוִים יְהוָה
מִשְׁפִּיל רָשָׁעִים עַד־אָרֶץ:	עָנִי לַיהוָה בְּתוֹדָה
זְמַרְוּ לֵאלֹהֵינוּ בְּכִנּוֹר:	הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים
הַמְכִּין לְאָרֶץ מָטָר	
הַמַּצְמִיחַ הָרִים חֲצִיר:	
לִבְנֵי עֵרֶב אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאוּ:	נוֹתֵן לִבְהֶמָה לַחֲמָה
לֹא־בְשׁוּקֵי הָאִישׁ יִרְצָה: ←	לֹא בַגְבוּרַת הַסּוֹס יִחְפֹּץ

COMMENTARY. Psalm 147 has three majestic interlacing themes. The divine is present in the ordered universe of galaxies and creatures. The divine is present, too, in the broken human heart, in those humbled by loss and disappointment. Finally, the divine is present in the capacity of our senses and in our ability to appreciate the world around us. S.P.W.

THE JUST ONE values only those in awe of God,
only the ones who yearn for God's kind love.

Give praise, Jerusalem, to THE ETERNAL,
hail your God, O Zion.

For God has fortified the bars upon your gates,
has blessed your brood amid your breast,

and sets your borderlands at peace,
and satisfies you with the choicest wheat,

the one who sends an utterance to earth,
whose word runs swiftest in the world,

the giver of a snow like fleece,
who strews a frost like frigid ash,

who casts down hail like crumbs of bread
—before such chill, who can endure?—

but who, with but a word, can melt them all,
and by whose breath the waters flow.

God tells the words to Jacob,
laws and judgments to the people Israel.

Has God not done so for all nations?
Are there any who do not know such laws?

Halleluyah!

Psalms 147

רוֹצֶה יְהוָה אֶת־יִרְאָיו
 שִׁבְחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם אֶת־יְהוָה
 כִּי־חֹזֶק בְּרִיחֵי שְׁעָרָיו
 הַשָּׁם־גְּבוּלָיו שְׁלוֹם
 הַשָּׁלָח אִמְרָתוֹ אֶרֶץ
 הַנָּתַן שָׁלֵג בַּצֶּמֶר
 מִשְׁלֵיךְ קִרְחוֹ כַּפְתִּים
 יִשְׁלַח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּמָּסֶם
 * מִגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לִיעֶקֶב
 לֹא עָשָׂה כֵן לְכָל־גּוֹי

אֶת־הַמִּיחָלִים לְחֹסְדוֹ:
 הַלְלִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ צִיּוֹן:
 בָּרוּךְ בְּנֵיךָ בְּקִרְבֶּךָ:
 חֲלֹב חֹטִים יִשְׁבִּיעֶךָ:
 עַד־מְהֵרָה יְרוּץ דְּבָרוֹ:
 כַּפּוֹר כְּאֹפֶר יַפְזֹר:
 לִפְנֵי קִנְיָתוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד:
 יֹשֵׁב רוּחוֹ יִזְלוּ־מָיִם:
 חֲקִיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:
 וּמִשְׁפָּטִים בְּלִי־דַעוּם

הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה:

Halleluyah!

Hail! THE OMNIPRESENT from the heavens,
praise God in the heights,

sing out your praises, all you angels,
praise God, all you multitudes,

give praise to God, you sun and moon,
praise God, all you stars of light,

praise God, heavens upon heavens,
and you, the waters up above the heavens!

Let all praise the name of THE ETERNAL,
who commanded, and all things became,
who raised them up forever and an aeon,
who affixed a limit none could pass. ↩

הַלְלוּיָהּ

הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים :	הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם
הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צָבָאיוֹ :	הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו
הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־כּוֹכְבֵי אֹר :	הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וְיָרֵחַ
וְהַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל הַשָּׁמַיִם :	הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם
כִּי הוּא צוּר וְנִבְרָאוֹ :	יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה
חֲקֹנָתָן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר : ←	וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם

COMMENTARY. This psalm and the tradition it represents stand as an important counterweight to the first chapter in Genesis. That chapter gives us the impression that humans are separate from the world around us, we alone having been created in God's image as "the crown of creation." Here we see a different vision. The human community is an integral part of the natural realm. "You young men, and you maidens, elders sitting with the young," sing and dance before God as do mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars.

A.G.

Give praise to THE ALL-POWERFUL throughout the earth,
you dragons and torrential depths,

you fire and hail and snow and smoke,
you raging wind, all acting by God's word,

you mountains, all you hills,
you fruit trees, bearing every seed,

you wild animals, and every beast,
you creeping thing, and bird of wing,

you rulers of the earth, and all the nations,
nobles, and you judges of the land,

you young men, and you maidens,
elders sitting with the young!

Let all bless the name of THE ETERNAL,
for God's name alone is to be exalted.

God's majesty is in the earth and heavens,

God has raised the fortunes of our people,
praises for the fervent ones,

for Israel's children, people near to God,
Halleluyah!

Psalm 148

תַּנִּינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת:	הִלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ
רֹיחַ סַעֲרָה עֲשֵׂה דְבָרוֹ:	אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֵּג וְקִיטּוֹר
עֵץ פָּרִי וְכָל־אֲרָזִים:	הַהָרִים וְכָל־גִּבְעוֹת
רֶמֶשׂ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף:	הַחֲיָה וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה
שָׂרִים וְכָל־שׁוֹפְטֵי אָרֶץ:	מַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ וְכָל־לְאֻמִּים
זְקֵנִים עִם־נְעָרִים:	בַּחֲוָרִים וְגַם־בְּתוֹלוֹת
כִּי־נִשְׁגַּב שָׁמוּ לְבָדּוֹ	יְהִלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה
	הוֹדוּ עַל־אָרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:
תְּהַלֵּה לְכָל־חֲסִידָיו	* וַיָּרֶם קֶרֶן לְעַמּוֹ
לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם קָרְבוֹ:	

הִלְלוּהָ

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!

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 בִּרְקִיעַ עֶזְרוֹ:

הַלְלוּהוּ בְּגִבוּרָתוֹ הַלְלוּהוּ כְּרֹב גְּדָלוֹ:
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתִקְעַ שׁוֹפָר הַלְלוּהוּ בְּנִבְל וְכִנּוֹר:
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּתֹף וּמַחּוֹל הַלְלוּהוּ בְּמִנִּים וְעֶגְב:
הַלְלוּהוּ בְּצִלְצְלֵי שֶׁמֶע 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 te halel yah. Halleluyah.

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה מְצִיּוֹן שְׁכֵן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
הַלְלוּיָהּ: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשֵׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבָדּוֹ:
* וּבְרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם וְיִמְלָא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אָמֵן וְאָמֵן:

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.

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. ↩

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 תִּבְרָךְ אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְרוּחַ כָּל־בָּשָׂר תִּפְאֹר
וּתְרוּמִים זָכָרְךָ מִלִּפְנֵי תָמִיד: מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם אֶתָּה אֵל
וּמִבְלָעָדֶיךָ אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשִׁיעַ פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל וּמַפְרִיֵּם
וּמַרְחֵם בְּכָל־עֵת צָרָה וְצוּקָה אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי אֶתָּה: —

Nishmat kol ḥay tevarēḥ et shimeḥa adonay eloheynu.

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. ↩

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 הָרָאשׁוֹנִים וְהָאַחֲרוֹנִים אֱלֹהֵי כָּל-בְּרִיּוֹת אֲדוֹן כָּל-תּוֹלְדוֹת
הַמְהֻלָּל בְּרַב הַתְּשַׁבְּחוֹת הַמְּנַהֵג עוֹלָמוֹ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרִיּוֹתָיו בְּרַחֲמִים:
וַיְהוּה לֹא-יָנוּם וְלֹא-יִישָׁן הַמַּעֲזֹרֵר יְשָׁנִים וְהַמְּקִיץ נֹרְדָּמִים
וְהַמְּשִׁיחַ אֲלֵמִים וְהַמְּתִיר אֲסוּרִים וְהַסּוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים וְהַזּוֹקֵף
כְּפוּפִים לֵךְ לְבִדְדָה אֲנַחֲנוּ מוֹדִים:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ מָלֵא שִׁירָה כִּים וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה כְּהַמּוֹן גִּלְיוֹ וְשִׁפְתוֹתֵינוּ
שֹׁבַח כְּמִרְחַבֵּי רִקְיעַ וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִיָּרָח וַיְדִינוּ פְּרוּשׁוֹת
כְּנִשְׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם וְרַגְלֵינוּ קִלּוֹת כְּאֵילוֹת אֵין אֲנַחֲנוּ מִסְּפִיקִים לַהֲדוֹת
לֵךְ יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵנוּ וּלְבָרֵךְ אֶת-שְׁמֶךָ עַל-
אֶחָת מֵאֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֲלֵפִי אֲלֵפִים וְרַבֵּי רַבּוֹת פְּעָמִים הַטּוֹבוֹת
שְׁעָשִׂיתָ עִם-אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְעִמָּנוּ: ←

Ilu finu maley shirah kayam.

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.

מִמִּצְרִים גִּאֲלָתָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּמִבֵּית עַבְדִּים פְּדִיתָנוּ בְּרָעַב וְנָתַתָּנוּ
וּבשָׁבַע כָּל־כֹּלֵתָנוּ מִחֶרֶב הִצֵּלָתָנוּ וּמִדָּבָר מִלִּטְתָּנוּ וּמִחֲלָיִים רָעִים
וְנֶאֱמַנִים דִּלִּיתָנוּ: עַד־הֵנָּה עֲזָרוּנוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ וְלֹא־עֲזָבוּנוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ וְאֵל־
תִּשְׁלֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְנֶצַח:

עַל־כֵּן אַבְרָם שִׁפְלָגָת בָּנוּ וְרוּחַ וּנְשָׁמָה שִׁנְפָּחָת בְּאַפֵּינוּ וְלִשׁוֹן
אֲשֶׁר שִׁמָּת בְּפִינוּ הֵן הֵם יוֹדוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ וַיִּשְׁבְּחוּ וַיִּפְאֲרוּ וַיְרֹמְמוּ
וַיַּעֲרִצוּ וַיִּקְדְּשׁוּ וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ מִלִּפְנֵינוּ: כִּי כָל־פֶּה לְךָ יוֹדֶה
וְכָל־לִשׁוֹן לְךָ תִּשְׁבַּע וְכָל־בֶּרֶךְ לְךָ תִּכְרַע וְכָל־קוֹמָה לִפְנֶיךָ
תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְכָל־לִבָּבוֹת יִירָאוּךָ וְכָל־קֶרֶב וְכָל־זֵמֶר לְשִׁמְךָ כַּדָּבָר
שֶׁכָּתוּב: כָּל־עֲצָמוֹתַי תֹּאמְרֶנָּה יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ: מִצִּיל עֲנִי מִחֲזֹק
מִלִּמּוֹנוֹ וְעֲנִי וְאֶבִּיּוֹן מִגְּזֹלוֹ: שׁוּעַת עֲנִיִּים אַתָּה תִּשְׁמַע צַעֲקַת הַדָּל
תִּקְשִׁיב וְתוֹשִׁיעַ מִי יְדֻמָּה־לְךָ וּמִי יִשְׁוֶה־לְךָ וּמִי יַעֲרֹךְ־לְךָ הָאֵל
הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

* נִהְלָלְךָ וְנִשְׁבַּחְךָ וְנִפְאָרְךָ וְנִבְרַךְ אֶת־שֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ כָּאֲמֹר לְדָוִד
בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה וְכָל־קֶרְבִּי אֶת־שֵׁם קְדוֹשׁ: הָאֵל בְּתַעֲצֻמוֹת
עֲזָךְ הַגָּדוֹל בְּכִבוֹד שִׁמְךָ הַגִּבּוֹר לְנֶצַח וְהַנּוֹרָא בְּנוֹרְאוֹתָיִךְ:

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). / בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי...קְדוֹשׁ

*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!

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 *Hameleḥ*/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 כִּסֵּא רָם וְנִשְׂא:

Hameleh
yoshev al kisey ram venisa.

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 בתעצומות 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-enthroned 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 מָרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ:
וְכָתוּב: רָנְנוּ צַדִּיקִים בַּיהוָה לִישָׁרִים נְאֻה תְהִלָּה:

בְּפִי	יִשְׁרִים	תִּתְרוֹמֵם
וּבִדְבָרִי	צַדִּיקִים	תִּתְבָּרֶךְ
וּבִלְשׁוֹן	חֲסִידִים	תִּתְקַדֵּשׁ
וּבִקְרֹב	קְדוֹשִׁים	תִּתְהַלֵּל ←

Shoḥen ad marom vekadosh shemo.

Veḥatuv: Ranenu tzadikim badonay laysharim navah tehilah.

Befi yesharim titromam

uvdivrey tzadikim titbarah.

uvilshon ḥasidim titkadesh

uvkerev kedoshim tit-halal

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!

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.

וּבִמְקַהֲלוֹת רַבּוֹת עִמָּךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרָנָה יִתְפָּאֵר שְׁמְךָ מִלִּפְנֵי
 בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר שְׁכֵן חֹבֶת כָּל־הַיְצוּרִים לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי
 אֲבוֹתֵנוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵנוּ *לְהוֹדוֹת לְהִלֵּל לְשַׁבַּח לְפָאֵר לְרֹמֵם לְהַדִּיר לְבָרוּךְ
 לַעֲלֹה וּלְקַלֵּס עַל כָּל־דְּבָרֵי שִׁירֹת וְתַשְׁבְּחוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן־יִשִּׁי עַבְדְּךָ
 מְשִׁיחְךָ:

* יִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׁמְךָ לְעַד מִלִּפְנֵי הָאֵל הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּשָׁמַיִם
 וּבָאָרֶץ כִּי לָךְ נָאָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ שִׁיר
 וְשִׁבְחָה הֵלֵל וְזִמְרָה עֹז וּמִמְשָׁלָה נֶצַח גְּדֻלָּה וּגְבוּרָה תְּהִלָּה
 וְתִפְאָרֶת קִדְשָׁה וּמַלְכוּת *בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת מַעֲמָה וְעַד עוֹלָם: בְּרוּךְ
 אַתָּה יְהוָה אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל בְּתַשְׁבְּחוֹת אֵל הַהוֹדָאוֹת אֲדוֹן הַנִּפְלְאוֹת
 הַבּוֹחֵר בְּשִׁירֵי זִמְרָה מֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי הָעוֹלָמִים:

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.

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 קָדִישׁ

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךְ
מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיָמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזִמָּן
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:
יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא
לְעֵלָא לְעֵלָא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחַמְתָּא דְאַמִּירָן
בְּעֻלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן:

Reader: Yitgadal veyitkadesh shemey raba
be'alma di vera hirutey veyamlīḥ 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 berīḥ hu le'ēla
le'ēla mikol birḥata veshirata tushbeḥata veneḥemata da'amiran
be'alma ve'imru amen.