

סידור קורן מהדורת קול יעקב

The Koren Kol Yaakob Siddur • Nosah Aram Soba



קורן ירושלים

THE LOBEL EDITION

סידור קורן נוסח ארם סובה
THE KOREN SIDDUR NOSAḤ ARAM SOBA



WITH INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION
AND COMMENTARY BY

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks זצ"ל

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Joseph Harari



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Nosah Aram Soba
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The Lobel Edition
of
The Koren Siddur
is dedicated to the multitudes
who use this Siddur for their daily prayers.

*May your prayers be speedily answered
and be a source of blessing
for each of you, your families,
and Kelal Yisrael.*

The Lobel Family
New York, USA



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PREFACE TO THE FIRST HEBREW EDITION

“My help comes from the LORD...”

“And their fear toward Me is as a commandment of men learned by rote” (Is. 29:13) laments the prophet, referring to those who turn prayer into routine habit. Even when they pray before the LORD, “With their mouth and with their lips do [they] honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me.” This is precisely as our sages cautioned, saying: “When you pray, do not do so as a fixed routine, but as a plea for mercy and grace before God” (*Abot* 2:18). Bartenura elaborates, “[Do not say] as a person who has a duty to fulfill says: I shall relieve myself from this burden.” Thus is the nature of ritual duties: when they become routine habit, their original meaning is diminished.

The prayers in this Siddur – the same words, those same sentences we repeat daily and even several times each day – become routine verbiage, “a chirping of a starling” which lacks the deep concentration and the vital sense of “knowing before whom one stands.”

This unfortunate situation – which is natural – became our inspiration to present worshipers with the means to connect to prayer, both to the words of the prayers and to the content and meaning our sages infused into the phrases. We resolved to bring the prayers before the worshiper not in a secular form, as a regular book, but in a more sacred manner, so as to enable the worldly structure to become a source of inspiration, reverence, sanctity and awe.

To achieve this, we created an original design of the printed font and the layout of the words in accordance with the meaning of the prayers, line-by-line, page-by-page. From a visual standpoint, the contents of the prayers are presented in a style that does not spur habit and hurry, but rather encourages the worshiper to engross his mind and heart in prayer.

One possible hazard that undermines the beauty and the purity of the prayers is carelessness of diction when pronouncing the words. Disregard for grammar and punctuation, disrespect, or lack of knowledge of the laws of the *dagesh*, the quiescent *sh’va* and the mobile *sh’va*, and so forth, that our sages – the authors of the *Mesora*, the scholars of the linguistic form

◀ of the language

of the language, the adjudicators of the laws and students of the Torah and Kabbala – were so meticulous about perfecting. In parts of prayers (such as the Shema and the Blessing of the Cohanim), they viewed this meticulous pronunciation as obligatory.

In order to relieve the worshiper of these details – for the sake of his praying – we have presented him (excluding Biblical quotations) with a different notation between the two *sh'vas* (the mobile *sh'va* is more predominant, which is a sign for the worshiper to express the vowel as a brief *segol*, while the quiescent *sh'va* is smaller, as it is not pronounced), and a special form of the *kamatz* (the “small *kamatz*” has a longer foot).

“A window thou shalt make to the *Aron*,” says God to Noah, and our sages took this also to mean that the correct pronunciation of the words is an embellishment to the prayers. It is fitting that our conversations with God be clear, pure and unblemished, open and lit as this window.

I am very grateful to the excellent proofreaders Shmuel Vexler and Abraham Frankel, for their diligent work, and to Esther Be'er, who skillfully prepared the difficult typesetting of this Siddur.

All this would not have been possible without the help and guidance of my friend Meir Medan, who helped us reach this goal. Using his vast knowledge and careful comparison between different versions, we strived together to make this Siddur as perfect as humanly possible.

And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands upon us; O prosper it, the work of our hands.

Eliyahu Koren

PREFACE TO THE KOREN SHALEM SIDDUR

”דָּוָר לְדָוָר יִשְׁבַּח מֵעַשְׂיָךְ” (תהלים קמה)

“One generation will praise Your works to the next...”

Since its initial publication in Hebrew in 1981, the original Koren Siddur has been recognized for its textual accuracy and innovative graphic design, which led to nothing less than a transformation in the very way people pray and connect to God. It was the hope of master typographer Eliyahu Koren to present to worshipers a means to draw and connect them not only to the words of the prayers, but also to the contents and meaning that were before our sages when engraving the phrases of the prayers, and our rabbis throughout the ages when compiling versions of the prayers. Koren typographic design aims to slow the reader down and help bring alive the meaning of the text to the user. We have remained committed to these qualities in all of our Siddurim with English, and have enriched the Siddur with the eloquent English translation and insightful introduction and commentary of one of the most articulate and original Jewish thinkers of our time, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

Koren is thrilled to partner with the **Sephardic Heritage Foundation** and its leader, David Catton, to present **THE KOREN KOL YAAKOB SIDDUR**, *Nosah Aram Soba*. Working together to bring the strong and precise Minhagim and traditions of the Syrian community blended with the translations and commentaries of Rabbi Sacks, has been both a challenge and a pleasure. We cannot thank our Editor in Chief and friend, Joseph Harari enough, for his hard and precise work review and corrections of the texts, and his relevant commentaries to illuminate for the reader difficult prayers.

THE KOREN KOL YAAKOB SIDDUR incorporates these special features:

- A *Nosah* based on the customs of the famed Aram Soba Community, a renowned city of scholars dating back centuries.
- Aram Soba prayers and traditions are used in Syrian-Sephardic Communities worldwide
- Complete Tefilla for Hol, Shabbat, Haggim, Fast Days and Torah Readings for Shabbat Minḥa, Mondays and Thursdays

◀ In common

In common with all Koren Siddurim and Maḥzorim, there are several unique features:

- There are two distinct fonts, designed by Eliyahu Koren, used throughout the Siddur. the Koren Tanakh Font is used for Tanakh texts (except when embedded in prayers), and the Koren Siddur Font is used for prayers, in keeping with Mr. Koren’s belief that the presentation of Tanakh text should be distinctive.
- The graphic layout distinguishes poetry from prose, and provides space to allow pages to “breathe.” We have developed a parallel style for the English text that balances the weight of the Hebrew letters to further Mr. Koren’s intention of presenting the texts in a style that does not spur habit and hurry, but rather encourages the worshiper to engross his mind and heart in prayer.
- There are concise instructions throughout the text and practical Halakha guides at the back of the Siddur.

It is always a privilege to collaborate on a project with those who share our commitment and enthusiasm for bringing out the beauty of Tefilla. We are grateful to Judith and David Lobel for their support and are proud to have their name grace this edition. On behalf of the scholars, editors and designers of this volume, we thank you; on behalf of the users of this Siddur within the Syrian Community, we are forever in your debt.

We wish to thank Rabbi Sacks, שליט"א, for his exceptional introduction, translation and commentary, and his dedicated involvement throughout the preparation of this Siddur.

We can only hope that we have extended the vision of Eliyahu Koren to a new generation following *Nosah Aram Soba* and an even larger audience, furthering *Abodat HaShem* for Jews everywhere.

Matthew Miller, Publisher
Jerusalem, 5781 (2021)

דבר העורך

אודה ה' מאד בפי ובתוך רבים אהללנו על שזיכני לעסוק בעבודת קדש זו, עריכת סדור תפלת "קול יעקב" לעדת החלבים יוצאי ארם צובה, ושילובו עם הוצאת קורן הידועה לשם טוב, יחד עם תרגומו לאנגלית ע"י הרב, נודע בשערים שמו, הרב יונתן זקס וזכר צדיק לברכה.

מין בשלחנו הטהור (או"ח סי' צח סע' א) כותב "המתפלל צריך שיכוון בלבו פירוש המלות שמוציא בשפתיו ויחשוב כאלו שכינה כנגדו".

על כן ראו לנכון ידידי היקר מר מתניו מילר הי"ו, יו"ר הוצאת קורן, וידיין מר דוד קטאן הי"ו, יו"ר ספרדיק הריטג' פונדיישון בניו יורק, לאחד כחות, והתעוררו לזכות את הרבים לעבודת ה' טהורה, את הקהל הקדוש דוברי אנגלית המשתוקקים להתפלל תפלה זכה בהבנת כל מלה ומלה שבתפלה על בוריה.

יגענו להוציא דבר מתוקן על פי מסורת תפלת יוצאי ארם צובה המודפס זה כמשלשים וחמש שנה בסידור 'קול יעקב', עם הפורמט המוצלח של 'סדור קורן', יחד עם התרגום לאנגלית, הערות והארות, לתועלת המתפלל. בתעתיק לאנגלית ניסינו להיות עקביים במידת האפשר, ולהשתמש באות ה' לחי"ת, אות k לכ"ף דגושה, אותיות kh לכ"ף רפויה, אות s לצד"י, ואות k לקר"ף. כמו כן הכפלנו את האותיות המודגשות.

כאן המקום להודות לידיין ר' יוסף מוצרי הי"ו ולד"ר אברהם שמאע הי"ו שהואילו בטובם לעבור על המהדורה הראשונה, ולהעמידנו על טעויות בדפוס ובהגהות ישרות, לקראת הדפסה זו. ישלם ה' פועלו.

אבקש בתחינה מאל שוכן מעונה, לבל תפול טעות במעשנו ותקלה ח"ו מתחת ידינו, ושתקובל תפלתנו ותפלת כל עמו ישראל ברצון, ושנוכה שבימינו תושע יהודה וישראל ישכון לבטח, בביאת משיח צדקנו בב"א.

יוסף ס. הררי

עורך ראשי

PREFACE

Sephardic Heritage Foundation is grateful to Boreh Olam to be able to present this new Hebrew-English version of our world renowned Kol Yaakob Siddur to Syrian-Sephardic Communities worldwide. It is my honor and pleasure to have collaborated with Koren Publishers Jerusalem on this monumental project. Koren and its Publisher Matthew Miller are well known as one of the leading Judaica publishers in the world. The quality of their products, professionalism, and attention to detail is second to none. I am thrilled to have worked with them on this project and I look forward to working closely with them on other projects in the future.

In this publication, Koren has beautifully taken our Kol Yaakob Siddur and added an insightful translation and commentary from one of the great leaders of the Jewish world, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. As an avid follower and student of Rabbi Sacks, when I was approached to have one of our publications bear his name, I was ecstatic, honored and humbled. The end product is a Siddur that is clear and easy to understand, thereby enhancing the prayers and glorification of the Almighty.

I am forever grateful to my good friend and trusted advisor Mr. Joey Harari for making this project a reality. Besides introducing me to Matthew Miller and Koren with the idea for this project, Joey has given his heart and soul as its Editor in Chief. May Hashem bless him with strength to continue to do His work and bless His name.

We are forever grateful to the Safra family for their support and dedication to Sephardic Heritage Foundation. The Kol Yaakob Siddur was originally dedicated in memory of Jacob Safra A”H and is further dedicated in memory of his wife Esther Safra A”H, their children Elie, Edmond, Moise and Joseph, *alehem hashalom* A”H and their daughters Paulette, Evelyne & Arlette A”H. May their memories be blessed and may the prayers facilitated by these Siddurim be in their merit.

We are further grateful to Joe and Trina Cayre for their support of Sephardic Heritage Foundation and for their guidance in helping us continue our blessed work.

Sephardic Heritage Foundation continues the work of its founder, my late grandfather, Sam Catton A”H. It is his legacy and although he is

◀ no longer

no longer with us physically, his presence is felt constantly by our family and the Community at large. Thanks to his vision and tireless efforts, we are blessed with publications that beautify our prayers, elevating them to heaven as a unified and harmonious voice. I am certain that he is watching us from above and loving this new project, which is consistent with his vision for the Foundation, connecting our Community to its heritage and maintaining its traditions.

May Hashem continue to guide and strengthen us to continue our vital mission in praise of His name.

With sincerity and humility,

David Catton
Sephardic Heritage Foundation
President

Sephardic Heritage Foundation is a Non-Profit Organization focused on facilitating the religious and cultural observance of the Jewish Syrian-Sephardic Communities. We have been producing prayer books for over 50 years, catering to the Syrian Sephardic Communities around the world including the U.S, Mexico, Central and South America, Europe and Asia. By distributing publications, Sephardic Heritage Foundation strives to perpetuate the venerated prayer, sacred traditions, and valued customs of one of the oldest uninterrupted Jewish Communities of the world, the Community of Aram Soba (Aleppo, Syria). Our work is influenced and inspired by our late founder, Mr. Sam Catton, may he rest in peace.

UNDERSTANDING JEWISH PRAYER

1. *Introduction*

Prayer is the language of the soul in conversation with God. It is the most intimate gesture of the religious life, and the most transformative. The very fact that we can pray testifies to the deepest elements of Jewish faith: that the universe did not come into existence accidentally, nor are our lives destined to be bereft of meaning. The universe exists, and we exist, because someone – the One God, Author of all – brought us into existence with love. It is this belief more than any other that redeems life from solitude and fate from tragedy.

In prayer we speak to a presence vaster than the unfathomable universe, yet closer to us than we are to ourselves: the God beyond, who is also the Voice within. Though language must fail when we try to describe a Being beyond all parameters of speech, language is all we have, and it is enough. For God who made the world with creative words, and who revealed His will through holy words, listens to our prayerful words. Language is the bridge joining us to Infinity.

Yehuda HaLevi, the great eleventh-century poet, said that prayer is to the soul what food is to the body. Without prayer, something within us atrophies and dies. It is possible to have a life without prayer, just as it is possible to have a life without music, or love, or laughter, but it is a diminished thing, missing whole dimensions of experience. We need space within the soul to express our joy in being, our wonder at the universe, our hopes, our fears, our failures, our aspirations – bringing our deepest thoughts as offerings to the One who listens, and listening, in turn, to the One who calls. Those who pray breathe a more expansive air: “In the prison of his days / Teach the free man how to praise” (W. H. Auden).

The siddur is the choral symphony the covenantal people has sung to God across forty centuries, from the days of the patriarchs until the present day. In it we hear the voices of Israel’s prophets, priests and kings, its sages and scholars, poets and philosophers, rationalists and mystics, singing in calibrated harmony. Its libretto weaves together texts from almost every part of the vast library of Jewish spirituality: Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, the classic compendia of the Oral Law – Mishna, Midrash

◀ and Talmud

and Talmud – together with philosophical passages like Maimonides’ “Thirteen Principles of Faith” and extracts from the *Zohar*, the key text of Jewish mysticism.

There is space in Judaism for private meditation – the personal plea. But when we pray publicly, we do so as members of a people who have served, spoken to, and wrestled with God for longer and in more varied circumstances than any other in history. We use the words of the greatest of those who came before us to make our prayers articulate and to join them to the prayers of others throughout the world and throughout the centuries.

Almost every age and major Jewish community has added something of its own: new words, prayers, customs and melodies. There are many different liturgies: Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Oriental, Yemenite, Italian, those of Rabbi Isaac Luria and the Vilna Gaon and others, each with its own subdivisions. Each tradition has a character of its own, to which Jewish law applies the principle *nahara nahara ufashteh*: “Every river has its own course.” Each of the historic traditions has its own integrity, its own channel through which words stream from earth to heaven.

This introduction tells of how prayer came to take its present form, the distinct spiritual strands of which it is woven, the structures it has, and the path it takes in the journey of the spirit.

2. *Two Sources of Prayer*

The best-known phrase about Jewish religious worship is: “If you serve the LORD your God with all your heart (Deut. 10:13) – what is [the sacrificial] service of the heart (*aboda shebaleb*)? This is prayer” (*Sifrei* to Deuteronomy, 41). Behind these simple words lies a remarkable story.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, we find two quite different forms of religious worship. One is prayer. Outside the book of Psalms there are some 140 references to people praying; in ninety-seven cases we are told the words they said. Abraham prays for the cities of the plain. Yaakov prays for deliverance before confronting Esau. Hannah prays for a child. These prayers are direct, simple and spontaneous. They have no fixed formula, no set text. Some are very brief, like Moshe’s five-word prayer for his sister Miriam: “Please, God, heal her now.” Others are long, like Moshe’s forty-day prayer for forgiveness of the people after the sin of the

◀ Golden.

Golden Calf. There are no general rules: these prayers have no fixed time, place or liturgy. They are improvised as circumstance demands.

The other form – generally known as *aboda*, “service” – is sacrifice. Sacrifice could not be less like prayer. As set out from Exodus to Deuteronomy, the sacrificial service is minutely specified. It has its prescribed order: which offerings should be made, when, and by whom. It has a designated place: the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later, the Temple in Jerusalem. There is no room for spontaneity. When two of Aharon’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, make a spontaneous offering of incense, they die (Lev. 10:1–2). The Mosaic books contain two set texts associated with the Temple: the Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:24–26) and the declaration made when bringing the first fruits (Deut. 26:5–10). Certain sacrifices, such as sin-offerings, involved verbal confession. Psalms were sung in the Temple, and the Mishna details the prayers said there. But the sacrificial act itself was wordless. It took place in silence.

So we have two quite different traditions, prayer and sacrifice: one spontaneous, the other rigorously legislated; one that could be undertaken anywhere, at any time, by anyone; the other which could only happen in a set place and time in accordance with detailed and inflexible procedures. How did these two forms of worship become one?

The answer lies in the national crisis and renewal that occurred after the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE. Psalm 137 has preserved a vivid record of the mood of near-despair among the exiles: “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion... How can we sing the LORD’s songs in a strange land?” In exile in Babylon, Jews began to gather to expound the Torah, articulate a collective hope of return, and recall the Temple and its service. These assemblies (*kinishtu* in Babylonian, *kneset* in Hebrew) were not substitutes for the Temple; rather, they were reminders of it. The book of Daniel, set in Babylon, speaks of threefold daily prayer facing Jerusalem (Dan. 6:11). The loss of the Temple and the experience of exile led to the emergence of regular gatherings for study and prayer.

The next chapter in this story was written by Ezra (fifth century BCE) who, together with the statesman Nehemiah, reorganized Jewish life in Israel after the return from Babylon. Ezra (“the scribe”) was a new type in

◀ history:

history: the educator as hero. The book of Neḥemiah (8:1–9) contains a detailed description of the national assembly Ezra convened in Jerusalem, where he read the Torah aloud, with the help of the Levites who explained it to the people.

Ezra and Neḥemiah were disturbed by the high degree of assimilation among the Jews who had remained in Israel. They knew that without a strong religious identity, the people would eventually disappear through intermingling with other nations and cultures. To guard against this, they set in motion far-reaching initiatives, including a national reaffirmation of the nation's covenant with God (Neḥemiah, chapter 10). One of the most important developments was the first formulation of prayers, attributed by the sages to Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly. Maimonides suggests that one of their motives for so doing was to reestablish Hebrew as the national language: at that time, “Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, or the language of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Yehuda” (Neh. 13:24; Maimonides’ “Laws of Prayer” 1:4).

One of the results of this religious renewal was the birth, or growth, of the synagogue. During the Second Temple period, priests were divided into twenty-four groups, *mishmarot*, each of which served in the Temple for a week in a rota. They were accompanied by groups of local laypeople, *ma’amadot*, some of whom accompanied them to the Temple, others of whom stayed in their towns but said prayers to coincide with the sacrifices. Whether the synagogue developed from these *ma’amadot*, or whether its origins were earlier, by the time the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, it was a well-established institution.

The synagogue was “one of the greatest revolutions in the history of religion and society” (M. Stern). It was the first place of worship made holy, not because of any historic association, nor because sacrifices were offered, but simply because people gathered there to study and pray. It embodied one of the great truths of monotheism: that the God of everywhere could be worshiped anywhere. After the loss of the Second Temple it became the home-in-exile of a scattered people. Every synagogue was a fragment of Jerusalem. And though the destruction of the Temple meant that sacrifices could no longer be offered, in their place came an offering of words, namely prayer.

◀ The transition

The transition from sacrifice to prayer was not a sudden development. A thousand years earlier, in his speech at the dedication of the Temple, King Shlomo had emphasized prayer rather than sacrifice (1 Kings 8:12–53). Through Yeshaya, God had said “My House shall be called a *house of prayer* for all peoples” (Is. 56:7). The prophet Hoshea had said: “Take words with you and return to the LORD... Instead of bulls we will pay [the offering of] our lips” (Hos. 14:3). Sacrifice was the external accompaniment of an inner act of heart and mind: thanksgiving, atonement, and so on. Therefore, though the outer act was no longer possible, the inner act remained. That is how sacrifice turned into prayer.

What had once been two quite different forms of worship now became one. Prayer took on the highly structured character of the sacrificial service, with fixed texts and times. The silence that had accompanied the sacrifice was transmuted into speech. Two traditions – prophetic prayer on the one hand, priestly sacrificial service on the other – merged and became one. That is the remarkable story behind the words, “What is the [sacrificial] service of the heart? This is prayer.”

There is a series of arguments, spanning the centuries, about the nature of prayer. According to Maimonides, daily prayer is a biblical commandment; according to Nahmanides it is merely rabbinic. Two third-century teachers, Rabbi Yose son of Rabbi Ḥanina, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, disagreed as to the origin of the prayers, the former holding that they were instituted by the patriarchs – Abraham initiating the morning prayer, Yiṣḥak the afternoon, and Yaakob the evening service – while the latter held that they corresponded to the sacrifices. Centuries earlier, Rabban Gamliel and the sages differed as to which was primary, the silent Amida or the Ḥazzan’s Repetition. Each of these debates ultimately hinges on the question as to which of the two sources of prayer – the improvised prayers of the figures of the Bible or the sacrificial service of the Tabernacle and Temple – is the more fundamental.

In truth, there is no answer: prayer as we have known it for two millennia draws on both traditions. More remarkably, we honor both, because *each Amida is said twice*, once silently by individuals, a second time aloud and publicly by the Ḥazzan. The silent Amida recalls the prayers of individuals in the Bible, while the Ḥazzan’s Repetition recalls the sacrifice: hence there is no Repetition of the evening Amida, since there was no

◀ sacrifice:

sacrifice in the evening. In prayer, two great streams of Jewish spirituality met and became one.

3. *Structures of Prayer*

The Hebrew word for a prayer book, *siddur*, means “order.” At its height, prayer is an intensely emotional experience. The wonder of praise, the joy of thanksgiving, the passion of love, the trembling of awe, the broken-heartedness of confession, the yearning of hope – all these are part of the tonality of prayer. Yet Judaism is also, and supremely, a religion of the mind – for untutored emotion, like a river that bursts its banks, can be anarchic and destructive. The opening chapter of Genesis, with its account of creation, evokes a sense of order. Each day has its task; each life-form has its place; and the result (until the birth of sin) was harmony. Jewish prayer, therefore, has an order. Like a choral symphony, it has movements, each with its moods, its unfolding themes, its developmental logic. In this section, I analyze some of these structures.

The siddur as it exists today is the result of some forty centuries of Jewish history. Yet the result is not mere bricolage, a patchwork of random additions. It is as if the composition of the prayer book has been shaped by an “invisible hand,” a divine inspiration that transcends the intentions of any particular author. Specifically, form mirrors substance. The shape of the prayers reveals the basic shape of the Jewish spirit as it has been molded by its encounter with God. These are some of the structural features of the prayers:

A. FROM UNIVERSAL TO PARTICULAR

In general, sequences of Jewish prayer move from the universal to the particular. Grace after Meals, for example, begins with a blessing thanking God “who in His goodness feeds *the whole world*.” The second blessing moves to particularities: Israel, liberation from slavery, “the covenant which You sealed in our flesh,” Torah and the commandments. We thank God “for the land [of Israel] and for the food.” The third is more narrowly focused still. It is about the holy city, Jerusalem.

The same pattern exists in the two blessings before the Shema in the morning and evening service. The first is about the universe (God gives light to the earth, creates day and night), and the second is about Torah,

◀ the specific.

the specific bond of love between God and the Jewish people. Look and you will find many more examples in the siddur. (The one exception is *Aleynu*, whose first paragraph is about Jewish particularity and whose second is a universal hope. Regarding this, see section B. MIRROR-IMAGE SYMMETRY.)

This movement from universal to particular is distinctively Jewish. Western culture, under the influence of Plato, has tended to move in the opposite direction, from the concrete instance to the general rule, valuing universals above particularities. Judaism is the great counter-Platonic narrative in Western civilization.

Moving from the universal to the particular, the prayer book mirrors the structure of the Torah itself. Genesis begins, in its first eleven chapters, with a description of the universal condition of humankind. Only in its twelfth chapter is there a call to an individual, Abraham, to leave his land, family and father's house and lead a life of righteousness through which "all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

There are universals of human behavior: we call them the Noahide Laws. But we worship God in and through the particularity of our history, language and heritage. The highest love is not abstract but concrete. Those who truly love, cherish what makes the beloved different, unique, irreplaceable: that is the theme of the greatest of all books of religious love, *the Song of Songs*. That, we believe, is how God loves us.

B. MIRROR-IMAGE SYMMETRY

Many Torah passages are constructed in the form of a mirror-image symmetry, technically known as *chiasmus*: a sequence with the form ABCCBA, where the second half reverses the order of the first. A precise example is the six-word commandment that forms the central element of the Noahide covenant (Gen. 9:6):

[A] Who sheds [B] the blood [C] of man [C] by man [B] shall his blood [A] be shed.

This is more than a stylistic device. It is the expression of one of the Torah's most profound beliefs; namely, the reciprocal nature of justice. Those who do good are blessed with good. Those who do evil, suffer evil. What happens to us is a mirror image of what we do. Thus, form

◀ mirrors:

mirrors substance: mirror-image symmetry is the literary equivalent of a just world.

Some prayers have a mirror-image structure. Most of the paragraphs of the Amida, for example, finish the same way as they begin (“at the end of a blessing one should say something similar to its beginning,” *Pesahim* 104a). So, for example, the sixteenth blessing begins, “Listen to our voice” and ends “who listens to prayer.” The eighteenth begins, “We give thanks to You” and ends “to whom thanks are due.” The Amida as a whole begins with a request to God to help us open our mouths in prayer. It ends with a request to God to help us close our mouths from deceitful speech.

According to Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the first and last three blessings of the Amida stand in a mirror-image relationship. The last uses the same key words as the first: kindness (*hessed*) and love (*ahava*). The penultimate has the same subject as the second: the gift of life and the hidden miracles that surround us constantly. The seventeenth and third are both about holiness. Thus the end of the Amida is a mirror image of its beginning.

This explains why *Alenu* – the prayer with which most services end – is constructed in a sequence opposite to all other prayers. Others move from the universal to the particular, but *Alenu* reverses the order, beginning with a hymn to particularity (“Who has not made us like the nations of the lands”) and ending with one of the great prayers for universality, when “all humanity will call on Your name.” *Alenu* gives each service a chiasmic structure. Previous prayers have been A–B (universal–particular); *Alenu* is B–A (particular–universal).

As we will see, many of the other structuring principles are three-part series of the form A–B–A.

C. PRAISE, REQUEST, THANKS

The sages ruled that the Amida – prayer par excellence – should follow a basic pattern of praise (*shebah*), request (*bakasha*), and acknowledgment or thanks (*hodaya*). This is how Maimonides puts it: “The obligation of prayer is that every person should daily, according to his ability, offer up supplication and prayer, first uttering *praises* of God, then with humble *supplication and petition* asking for all that he needs, and finally offering praise and *thanksgiving* to the Eternal for the benefits already bestowed on him in rich measure” (Laws of Prayer 1:2).

◀ The Amida.

The Amida is constructed on this template. Of its nineteen blessings, the first three express praise. The middle thirteen on weekdays are requests (we do not make requests in the Amida on Shabbat or Yom Tob, which are times dedicated to thanking God for what we have, as opposed to asking Him for what we lack). The final three are acknowledgments. The same pattern can be seen in the blessings over the Torah at the beginning of the morning service (see section G. FRACTALS).

D. PREPARATION, PRAYER, MEDITATION

Prayer requires intense concentration, and this takes time. It is impossible to move directly from the stresses and preoccupations of everyday life into the presence of eternity. Nor should prayer end abruptly. It must be internalized if it is to leave its trace within us as we move back into our worldly pursuits. Maimonides writes that because prayer needs mental focus,

One should therefore sit awhile *before* beginning his prayers, so as to concentrate his mind. He should then pray in gentle tones, beseechingly, and not regard the service as a burden that he is carrying and which he will cast off before proceeding on his way. He should thus sit awhile *after* concluding the prayers, and only then leave. The ancient saints used to pause and meditate one hour before prayer and one hour after prayer, and spend an hour in prayer itself. (Laws of Prayer 4:16)

In the morning service, the Verses of Praise (*Pesukei deZimra*) are the preparation. In them, our thoughts gradually turn from the visible world to its invisible Creator. The Shema, Amida and their surrounding blessings are prayer as such. The remainder of the service is our meditation as we leave the orbit of heaven and reenter the gravitational field of earth.

E. DESCRIPTION, EXPERIENCE, RECOLLECTION

It is one thing to describe an experience, another to live it. One of the striking features of the weekday morning service is its threefold repetition of the *Kedusha* (“Holy, holy, holy”), once before the Shema (known as *Kedushat Yoşer*); a second time during the Ḥazzan’s Repetition of the Amida; and a third time during the prayer “A redeemer will come to Zion” (known as *Kedusha deSidra*). The first and third are different from

◀ the second:

the second in that, (1) they do not require a *minyan*, and (2) they do not need to be said standing.

The *Kedusha* – one of the supreme moments of holiness in Jewish prayer – is constructed around the mystical visions of Yeshaya and Yehezkel, of God enthroned in majesty, surrounded by angels singing His praises. In the first and third *Kedushot*, we *describe* the angelic order; in the second, we *enact* it, using the same words, but this time in direct, not reported, speech (Geonim, Maimonides). The intensity of *Kedusha* is heightened by this three-movement form: first the anticipation and preparation, then the experience itself, and finally the recollection.

F. PRIVATE, PUBLIC, PRIVATE

The Amida itself – especially on weekday mornings and afternoons – is constructed on a triadic pattern. First it is said silently by the members of the congregation as individuals. Next it is repeated publicly out loud by the Hazzan. This is then usually followed by private supplications (*Tahanun*), also said quietly. As I have suggested above, this is a way of reenacting the two modes of spirituality from which prayer derives. The silent Amida recalls the intensely personal prayers of the patriarchs and prophets. The public Repetition represents the daily sacrifices offered by the priests in the Temple on behalf of all Israel (there is no Repetition of the evening Amida because there were no sacrifices at night). Thus the prayers weave priestly and prophetic, individual and collective voices, into a single three-movement sonata of great depth and resonance.

G. FRACTALS

We owe to the scientist Benoit Mandelbrot the concept of fractals: the discovery that phenomena in nature often display the same pattern at different levels of magnitude. A single rock looks like a mountain. Crystals, snowflakes and ferns are made up of elements that have the same shape as the whole. Fractal geometry is the scientific equivalent of the mystical ability to sense the great in the small: “To see a world in a grain of sand / And a Heaven in a wild flower, / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour” (William Blake).

◀ The first.

The first of the “request” prayers in the daily Amida is a fractal. It replicates in miniature the structure of the Amida as a whole (Praise–Request–Thanks). It begins with praise: “You grace humanity with knowledge and teach mortals understanding,” moves to request: “Grace us with the knowledge, understanding and discernment,” and ends with thanksgiving: “Blessed are You, O LORD, who graciously grants knowledge.” You will find many other fractals in the siddur.

The existence of fractals in the siddur shows us how profoundly the structures of Jewish spirituality feed back repeatedly into the architectonics of prayer.

H. MIDRASHIC EXPANSION

Midrash is the rabbinic investigation into the meaning of holy texts: the root *d-r-sh* means “to explore, enquire, explain, expound.” It seeks out the inflections and innuendos of words, making explicit their implicit dimensions of meaning.

One example occurs in the *Nishmat* prayer on Shabbat morning (page 491). A key phrase in prayer, spoken by Moshe and incorporated into the first paragraph of the Amida, is “God, great, mighty and awesome” (Deut. 10:17). *Nishmat* meditates on these four words, one by one:

God – in Your absolute power,
Great – in the glory of Your name,
Mighty – for ever,
Awesome – in Your awe-inspiring deeds.

Another is the passage on Shabbat morning following the phrase “who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates all” (pages 498–501). A brief prayer takes the last word, “all,” and builds around it a fivefold set of variations: “*All* will thank You. *All* will praise You. *All* will declare: Nothing is holy as is the LORD. *All* will exalt You, Selah, You who form *all*.”

Always look for apparent repetition in prayer – like the tenfold “Blessed” in *Barukh SheAmar* (“Blessed is He who spoke”), the eightfold “True” after the Shema, or the fivefold “All” immediately after *Barekhu* (“Bless the LORD”) on Shabbat morning. Reiteration is never mere repetition. The prayer is inviting us to meditate on the multiple layers of

◀ meaning:

meaning that may exist in a single word or phrase, as if words were diamonds and we were turning them this way and that to catch their multiple refractions of light.

I. NUMERICAL STRUCTURES

As we have seen, many of the prayers have an obvious three-part structure, but in some cases this is repeated in great detail on a smaller scale, as in fractals.

The most striking example is the weekday Amida, which is composed of three parts: praise–request–acknowledgment. The first and last of these are each constructed in threes: three blessings of praise at the beginning, and three of acknowledgment at the end. Less obvious is the fact that the middle thirteen blessings – “requests” – *also* share this structure. There are six individual requests, followed by six collective ones, each divided into two groups of three. The individual requests begin with three spiritual needs (understanding, repentance, forgiveness) followed by three material ones (deliverance from oppression, healing, prosperity). The collective requests begin with three political-historical elements (ingathering of exiles, restoration of judges, and an end to internal strife – the “slanderers”), followed by the three spiritual bases of nationhood (the righteous, Jerusalem, and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy). The thirteenth, “Listen to our voice,” stands outside this structure because it is not directed to any specific request but is, instead, a prayer that our prayers be heeded.

The number seven is also significant and always indicates holiness, as in the seventh day, Shabbat; the seventh month, Tishrei with its Days of Awe; the seventh year, the “year of release”; and the fiftieth year, the Jubilee, which follows seven cycles of seven years. Seven in Judaism is not a simple prime number. It is the *one-after-six*. Six represents the material, physical, secular. Ancient Mesopotamia, the birthplace of Abraham, originally used a numerical system based on the number six. Western civilization still bears traces of this in the twenty-four hour day (2×6 hours of light, plus 2×6 of darkness); the sixty (10×6) minutes in an hour, and seconds in a minute; and the 360 degrees in a circle ($6 \times 6 \times 10$). All of these originated in astronomy, at which the ancient Mesopotamians excelled. Judaism acknowledges the six-part structure of time and space,

◀ but adds.

but adds that God exists *beyond* time and space. Hence seven – the one beyond six – became the symbol of the holy.

Six, too, is not a simple number in Judaism. This becomes evident when we read the story of creation in Genesis 1 carefully. The first six days fall into two groups. On the first three, God created and separated *domains* (1: light and darkness, 2: upper and lower waters, 3: sea and dry land). On the second three God *populated* these domains, each with its appropriate objects or life-forms (4: sun, moon and stars, 5: birds and fish, 6: land animals and man). The seventh day, Shabbat, is *holy* because it stands *outside* nature and its causal-scientific laws.

Mirroring this pattern, the morning service is structured around the number seven: the three paragraphs of the Shema, surrounded by three blessings, leading to the seventh, the Amida, which is the domain of the holy, where we stand directly in the presence of God. On holy days – Shabbat and Yom Tob – the Amida has a sevenfold structure: the three opening and closing paragraphs, plus a middle paragraph dedicated to “the holiness of the day.”

It follows that sixfold structures in the siddur signal the universe and creation. Thus, on weekday mornings we say six psalms (145–150) in the Verses of Praise. *Kabbalat Shabbat* also contains six psalms, corresponding to the days of the week, before *Lekha Dodi*, which represents Shabbat itself. The blessing after the Shema repeats the keyword *Emet* (“true”) six times to show how God’s love is translated into redemptive activity in a this-worldly time and space.

Many prayers such as *El Adon* (page 503) and *Alenu* are constructed in a pattern of fours: four-line verses, each of four words. Often these reflect Jewish mysticism with its four “worlds”: *Asiyya* (Action), *Yetzira* (Formation), *Beri’a* (Creation) and *Atzilut* (Emanation). *Merkaba* mysticism, based on Yeḥezkel’s vision of the divine chariot, is an important strand of early rabbinic prayer.

The number ten represents the “ten utterances with which the world was created” (the ten places in Genesis 1 where an act of creation is preceded by the words “God said”). That is why *Barukh SheAmar*, the blessing before the creation section of the prayers, begins with a tenfold litany of phrases each beginning with the word “Blessed.”

◀ Fifteen:

Fifteen represents the fifteen steps between the courtyards of the Temple, the fifteen psalms beginning “A song of ascents,” and the numerical value of the first two letters of God’s holiest name. Hence, there are fifteen expressions of praise in the paragraph *Yishtabah* (page 89), fifteen adjectives following “the LORD Your God is true” at the end of the Shema in the morning service, fifteen psalms in the Verses of Praise on Shabbat and Yom Tob mornings, and so on. There are also more intricate numerical patterns.

These are not mere aesthetic conventions like, for example, the fourteen-line sonnet form or the four-movement structure of a symphony. As always in Judaism there is a matching of form to content, structure to substance. The sages understood – as did the ancient Greeks, amply confirmed by modern science – that *reality has a numerical structure*. Mirroring this structure in prayer, we evoke the sense of a world of order in which we are called upon to respect differences and honor boundaries, accepting graciously the integrity of natural and moral law.

J. FROM LOVE TO AWE

The supreme religious emotions are love and awe – in that order. We are commanded to “Love the LORD your God.” We are also commanded to experience the feelings associated with the Hebrew word *yira*, which means “awe, fear, reverence.” This is how Maimonides puts it: “When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom, which is incomparable and infinite, he will immediately love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great name... And when he ponders these matters, he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of He who is perfect in knowledge” (*Yesodei HaTorah* 2:2).

The supreme expression of love in Judaism is the Shema with its injunction: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” The supreme expression of awe is the Amida prayer, when we stand consciously in the presence of God. The basic movement of the morning and evening prayers is first, to climb to the peak of love, the Shema, and from there to the summit of awe, the Amida.

◀ 4. Creation,

4. *Creation, Revelation, Redemption*

One structural principle of the prayers deserves special attention, since it touches on the fundamentals of Jewish faith. In the twelfth century, Moshe Maimonides enumerated the Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith. They appear in the siddur in the form of a poem known as Yigdal (page 413).

Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemaḥ Duran (1361–1444) pointed out that Maimonides' principles could be analyzed and categorized into three themes: (1) the existence of God, the Creator (principles 1–5: God's existence, unity, incorporeality and eternity, and that He alone is to be worshiped); (2) Divine revelation (principles 6–9: prophecy, Moshe's uniqueness, the God-given character of the Torah and its immutability), and (3) God's justice (principles 10–13: God knows all, repays us according to our deeds, and will bring the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead). The philosopher Franz Rosenzweig summarized these in three words: creation, revelation, redemption. Creation is the relationship between God and the universe. Revelation is the relationship between God and humanity. Redemption occurs when we apply revelation to creation.

The movement from creation to revelation to redemption is one of the great structural motifs of prayer. One example is the three blessings in the morning service, surrounding the Shema and leading up to the Amida (pages 93–111). The first is about the *creation* of the universe in space and time; the second is about the *revelation* of the Torah; and the third is about the miracles of history, ending with the words, “who *redeemed* Israel.”

The three paragraphs of the Shema display the same pattern. The first is about creation (God's unity and sovereignty), the second about revelation (acceptance of the commandments), and the third about redemption (“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt”).

The weekday morning service as a whole is constructed on this principle. First come the Verses of Praise, taken from the book of Psalms, with their majestic vision of creation. Then follows the central section – the Shema and its blessings, leading to the Amida – in which we sit, then stand, in the immediate presence of God (revelation). Finally we come to the concluding prayers with their central line, “A *redeemer* will come to Zion.” The second paragraph of *Alenu* is likewise a vision of redemption.

The pattern is repeated yet again in the Shabbat evening, morning

◀ and afternoon:

and afternoon prayers. On Friday evening, in the central blessing of the Amida, we speak of the Shabbat of creation (“the culmination of the creation of heaven and earth”). In the morning we refer to the Shabbat of revelation (when Moshe “brought down in his hands two tablets of stone”). In the afternoon we anticipate future redemption (when “You are One, Your name is One” and the people Israel are again one “nation unique on earth”).

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik suggested that the same sequence is the basis for the threefold structure of the weekday Amida: praise, request, thanks. Praise “emerges from an enraptured soul gazing at the *mysterium magnum* of creation,” request “flows from an aching heart which finds itself in existential depths,” and thanksgiving “is sung by the person who has attained, by the grace of God, redemption.” Creation leads to praise, revelation to request, and redemption to thanksgiving.

In these multiple ways, prayer continually reiterates the basic principles of Jewish faith.

5. *Prayer and Study*

There is one spiritual activity that the sages regarded as even higher than prayer: namely, study of Torah, God’s word to humanity and His covenant with our ancestors and us (*Shabbat* 10a). The entire *Pirkei Abot* (Ethics of the Fathers) is a set of variations on the theme of a life devoted to Torah study. In prayer, we speak to God. Through Torah, God speaks to us. Praying, we speak. Studying, we listen.

From earliest times, the synagogue was a house of study as well as a house of prayer. Gatherings for study (perhaps around the figure of the prophet; see II Kings 4:23 and the commentaries of Radak and Ralbag; *Sukka* 27b) may well have preceded formal prayer services by many centuries. Accordingly, interwoven with prayer are acts of study.

The most obvious is the public reading from the Torah, a central part of the Shabbat and Yom Tob services, and in an abridged form on Monday and Thursday mornings and Shabbat afternoons. There are other examples. In the morning blessings before the Verses of Praise, there are two cycles of study, each in three parts: (1) Torah, that is a passage from the Mosaic books; (2) Mishna, the key document of the Oral Law; and (3) Talmud in the broadest sense (pages 32 and 43–55).

◀ In the main

In the main section of prayer, the paragraph preceding the Shema is a form of blessing over the Torah (see *Berakhot* 11b), and the Shema itself represents Torah study (*Menahot* 99b). The last section of the weekday morning prayers (pages 185–187) was originally associated with the custom of studying ten verses from the prophetic books. Kaddish, which plays such a large part in the prayers, had its origin in the house of study as the conclusion of a *derasha*, a public exposition of biblical texts. The entire weekday morning service is thus an extended fugue between study and prayer.

This is dramatized in two key phrases: the first is *Shema Yisrael*, “Listen, Israel,” God’s word through Moshe and the Torah, and the second is *Shema Kolenu*, “Listen to our voice,” the paragraph within the Amida that summarizes all our requests (see above). These two phrases frame the great dialogue of study and prayer. Faith lives in these two acts of listening: ours to the call of God, God’s to the cry of humankind.

6. Prayer and Mysticism

Jewish mysticism has played a major role in the prayer book. The most obvious examples are the passage from the *Zohar*, “Blessed is the name” (page 549), *Petiḥat Eliyahu* (pages 16–17), and one of the songs written by the sixteenth-century Safed mystics associated with Rabbi Isaac Luria, “Come, my Beloved” (pages 361–363).

Less obviously, many of the early post-biblical prayers were deeply influenced by *Hekhalot* (“Palace”) and *Merkaba* (“Chariot”) mysticism, two esoteric systems that charted the mysteries of creation, the angelic orders, and the innermost chambers of the divine glory.

Undoubtedly, though, the most significant mystical contribution to the prayers is the *Kedusha*, said in three different forms, most notably during the Ḥazzan’s Repetition of the Amida. We have noted the two major tributaries of prayer: the spontaneous prayers said by figures in the Hebrew Bible, and the sacrificial service in the Temple. Mysticism is the third, and its most sublime expression is the *Kedusha*, based on the mystical visions of Yeshaya (chapter 6) and Yeḥezkel (chapters 1–3). There are times in the prayers when we are like prophets, others when we are like priests, but there is no more daring leap of faith than during the *Kedusha*, when we act out the role of angels singing praises to God in His innermost chambers.

◀ Familiarity:

Familiarity breeds inattention, and we can all too easily pass over the *Kedusha* without noticing its astonishing drama. “The ministering angels do not begin to sing praises in heaven until Israel sings praises down here on earth” (*Hullin* 91b). “You,” said God through Yeshaya, “are My witnesses” (Is. 43:10). Israel is “the people I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise” (ibid, 43:20). We are God’s angels on earth, His emissaries and ambassadors. The Jewish people, always small and vulnerable, have nonetheless been singled out for the most exalted mission ever entrusted to humankind: to be witnesses, in ourselves, to something beyond ourselves: to be God’s “signal of transcendence” in a world in which His presence is often hidden.

This is a mystical idea, and like all mysticism it hovers at the edge of intelligibility. Mysticism is the attempt to say the unsayable, know the unknowable, to reach out in language to a reality that lies beyond the scope of language. Often in the course of history, mysticism has tended to devalue the world of the senses in favor of a more exalted realm of disembodied spirituality. Jewish mysticism did not take this course. Instead it chose to bathe our life on earth in the dazzling light of the divine radiance (*Zohar*, the title of Judaism’s most famous mystical text).

7. *Reliving History*

History, too, has left its mark on the siddur. There are passages, indicated in the Commentary, that were born in the aftermath of tragedy or miraculous redemption. This edition of the siddur also includes suggested orders of service for Yom Ha’ashma’ut and Yom Yerushalayim, marking the birth of the State of Israel in 1948, and the Six Day War of 1967.

No less significantly, the synagogue service invites us at many points to reenact history. The Verses of Praise begin with the song of celebration sung by King David when he brought the *Aron* to Jerusalem. The verses we sing when we take the Torah scroll from the *Aron* and when we return it recall the Israelites’ journeys through the wilderness, when they carried the *Aron* with them. In one of the most fascinating transitions in the service, as we move from private meditation to public prayer (pages 79–83), we recall three epic moments of nation-formation: when David gathered the people to charge them with the task of building the Temple; when Ezra convened a national assembly to renew the covenant

◀ Babylonian

after the return from Babylonian exile; and when Moshe led the Israelites through the Reed Sea. Even the three steps forward we take as we begin the Amida recall the three biblical episodes in which people stepped forward (*vayigash*) as a prelude to prayer: Abraham pleading for the cities of the plain, Yehuda pleading with Yosef for Binyamin to be set free, and Eliyahu invoking God against the prophets of Ba'al on Mount Carmel.

We are a people defined by history. We carry our past with us. We relive it in ritual and prayer. We are not lonely individuals, disconnected with past and present. We are characters in the world's oldest continuous story, charged with writing its next chapter and handing it on to those who come after us. The siddur is, among other things, a book of Jewish memory.

8. *Prayer and Faith*

The siddur is also the book of Jewish faith. Scholars of Judaism, noting that it contains little systematic theology, have sometimes concluded that it is a religion of deeds not creeds, acts not beliefs. They were wrong because they were searching in the wrong place. They were looking for a library of works like Moshe Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*. They should have looked instead at the prayer book. The home of Jewish belief is the siddur.

At several points, the prayers have been shaped in response to theological controversy. The opening statement in the morning service after *Barekhu*, "who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates all," is a protest against dualism, which had a considerable following in the first four centuries CE in the form of Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Its presence can be traced in the ancient documents discovered in the 1940s, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi codices. Against dualism, with its vision of perpetual cosmic struggle, Judaism insists that all reality derives from a single source.

The second paragraph of the Amida, with its fivefold reference to the resurrection of the dead, reflects the ancient controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The morning prayer, "My God, the soul You placed within me is pure" (page 5), may be directed against the Pauline doctrine of original sin. The Mishna chapter, "With what wicks may we light?" (pages 367–369), was probably inserted as part of the polemic against the Karaite sect. The Ten Commandments, said daily as part of

◀ the Temple?"

the Temple service immediately after the Shema, was removed from the prayers when it was used by sectarians to argue that only these ten commandments were commanded by God.

The fact that Jewish faith was written into the prayers, rather than analyzed in works of theology, is of immense significance. We do not analyze our faith: we pray it. We do not philosophize about truth: we sing it. Even Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith – the most famous creed in the history of Judaism – only entered the mainstream of Jewish consciousness when they were turned into a song and included in the siddur as the hymn known as Yigdal. For Judaism, theology becomes real when it becomes prayer. We do not talk *about* God. We talk *to* God.

I have known many atheists. My doctoral supervisor, the late Sir Bernard Williams, described as the most brilliant mind in Britain, was one. He was a good, caring, deeply moral human being, but he could not understand my faith at all. For him, life was ultimately tragic. The universe was blind to our presence, deaf to our prayers, indifferent to our hopes. There is no meaning beyond that which human beings construct for themselves. We are dust on the surface of infinity.

I understood that vision, yet in the end I could not share his belief that it is somehow more honest to despair than to trust, to see existence as an accident rather than as invested with a meaning we strive to discover. Sir Bernard loved ancient Greece; I loved biblical Israel. Greece gave the world tragedy; Israel taught it hope. A people, a person, who can pray is one who, even in the darkest night of the soul, can never ultimately lose hope.

9. *Prayer and Sacrifice*

The connection between prayer and sacrifice is deep. As we have seen, sacrifice is not the only forerunner of our prayers; many prayers were spoken by figures in the Bible. These were said without any accompanying offering. Yet the sacrificial system is a major tributary of the Jewish river of prayer. After the destruction of the Second Temple, prayer became a substitute for sacrifice. It is *aboda shebaleb*, “the sacrificial service of the heart.” Yet it is just this feature of the prayers that many find difficult to understand or find uplifting. What, then, was sacrifice?

The Hebrew word for sacrifice is *korban*, which comes from a root that means “to come, or bring, close.” The essential problem to which sacrifice is

◀ an answer

an answer is: how can we come close to God? This is a profound question – perhaps *the* question of the religious life – not simply because of the utter disparity between God’s infinity and our finitude, but also because the very circumstances of life tend to focus our gaze downward to our needs rather than upward to our source. The Hebrew word for universe, *olam*, is connected to the verb meaning “to hide” (see Lev. 4:13; Deut. 22:1). The physical world is a place in which the presence of God is real, yet hidden. Our horizon of consciousness is foreshortened. We focus on our own devices and desires. We walk in God’s light, but often our mind is on other things.

How then do we come close to God? By *an act of renunciation*; by giving something away; specifically, by giving something *back*. The sacrifices of the biblical age were ways in which the individual, or the nation as a whole, in effect said: what we have, God, is really Yours. The world exists because of You. *We* exist because of You. Nothing we have is ultimately ours. The fundamental gesture of sacrifice is, on the face of it, absurd. What we give to God is something that already belongs to Him. As King David said: “Who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand” (1 Chr. 29:14). Yet to *give back* to God is one of the most profound instincts of the soul. Doing so, we acknowledge our dependency. We cast off the carapace of self-absorption. That is why, in one of its most striking phrases, the Torah speaks of sacrifice as being *re’ah niho’ah*, “sweet savor” to God.

One of the sweetest savors of parenthood is when a child, by now grown to maturity, brings a parent a gift to express his or her thanks. This too seems absurd. What can a child give a parent that remotely approximates what a parent gives a child, namely life itself? Yet it is so, and the reverse is also true. The cruelest thing a child can do is *not* to acknowledge his or her parents. The Talmud attributes to Rabbi Akiva the phrase *Abinu Malkenu*, “Our Father, our King.” Those two words encapsulate the essence of Jewish worship. God is King – Maker and Sovereign of the vast universe. Yet even before God is our King, He is our Father, our Parent, the One who brought us into being in love, who nurtured and sustained us, who taught us His ways, and who tenderly watches over our destiny. Sacrifice – the gift we bring to God – is the gift of the made to its Maker,

◀ the owned

the owned to its Owner, the child to its Parent. If creation is an act of love, sacrifice is an acknowledgment of that love.

The late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik emphasized the difference between *ma'aseh mitzva*, the external act specified by a commandment, and *kiyum mitzva*, the actual fulfillment of a commandment. When the Temple stood, for example, a penitent would bring a guilt- or sin-offering to atone for his sin: that was the external act. The fulfillment of the commandment, though, lay in confession and contrition, acts of the mind and will. In biblical times, the sacrificial order was the external act, but the internal act – acknowledgment, dependency, recognition, thanks, praise – was essential to its fulfillment. That is why Judaism was able to survive the destruction of the Temple and the cessation of the sacrificial order. The external act could no longer be performed, but the internal act remained. That is the link between sacrifice and prayer.

The difference between prayer-as-request and prayer-as-sacrifice is that request *seeks*, sacrifice *gives*. The prophets asked, usually on behalf of the people as a whole, for forgiveness, deliverance, and blessing. The priests who offered sacrifices in the Temple asked for nothing. Sacrificial prayer is the giving back to God what God already owns: our lives, our days, our world. Prayer is creation's gift to its Creator.

The prophets were critical of the sacrificial system. They reserved for it some of their most lacerating prose. Yet none proposed its abolition, because what they opposed was not the sacrificial act, but the *ma'aseh* without the *kiyum*, the outer act without the inner acknowledgment that gives the act its meaning and significance. The idea that God can be worshiped through externalities alone is pagan, and there is nothing worse than the intrusion of paganism into the domain of holiness itself. Then as now, the sign of paganism is the coexistence of religious worship with injustice and a lack of compassion in the dealings between the worshiper and the world.

Sacrifice, like prayer, is a transformative act. We should leave the synagogue, as our ancestors once left the Temple, seeing ourselves and the universe differently, freshly conscious that the world is God's work, the Torah God's word, our fellow believers God's children, and our fellow human beings God's image. We emerge refocused and reenergized, for we have made the journey back to our source, to the One who gives

◀ life to all

life to all. Distant, we have come close. That is prayer as sacrifice, *korban*, giving back to God a token of what He has given us, thereby coming to see existence itself as a gift, to be celebrated and sanctified.

10. *Kavanna: Directing the Mind*

Prayer is more than saying certain words in the right order. It needs concentration, attention, engagement of mind and heart, and the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Without devotion, said Rabbi Bahye ibn Pakuda, prayer is like a body without a soul. The key Hebrew word here is *kavvana*, meaning mindfulness, intention, focus, direction of the mind. In the context of prayer, it means several different things.

The most basic level is *kavvana le-shem mitzva*, which means, having the intention to fulfill a *mitzva*. This means that we do not act for social or aesthetic reasons. We pray because we are commanded to pray. Generally in Judaism there is a long-standing debate about whether the commandments require *kavvana*, but certainly prayer does, because it is supremely an act of the mind.

At a second level, *kavvana* means understanding the words (*perush hamilim*). At least the most important sections of prayer require *kavvana* in this sense. Without it, the words we say would be mere sounds. Understanding the words is, of course, made much easier by the existence of translations and commentaries.

A third level relates to context. How do I understand my situation when I pray? Maimonides states this principle as follows: “The mind should be freed from all extraneous thoughts and the one who prays should realize that he is standing before the Divine Presence.” These are essential elements of at least the Amida, the prayer par excellence in which we are conscious of standing before God. That is why we take three steps forward at the beginning, and three back at the end – as if we were entering, then leaving, sacred space.

The fourth level of *kavvana* is not merely saying the words but meaning them, affirming them. Thus, for example, while saying the first paragraph of the Shema, we “accept of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven” – declaring our allegiance to God as the supreme authority in our lives. In the second paragraph, we “accept of the yoke of the commandments.” The word *Amen* means roughly, “I affirm what has been said.” In prayer

◀ we put

we put ourselves into the words. We make a commitment. We declare our faith, our trust, and our dependency. We mean what we say.

There are, of course, higher reaches of *kavvana*. Mystics and philosophers throughout the ages developed elaborate meditative practices before and during prayer. But at its simplest, *kavvana* is the practiced harmony of word and thought, body and mind. This is how Yehuda HaLevi described it:

The tongue agrees with the thought, and does not overstep its bounds, does not speak in prayer in a mere mechanical way as the starling and the parrot, but every word is uttered thoughtfully and attentively. This moment forms the heart and fruit of his time, while the other hours represent the way that leads to it. He looks forward to its approach, because while it lasts he resembles the spiritual beings, and is removed from merely animal existence. Those three times of daily prayer are the fruit of his day and night, and the Sabbath is the fruit of the week, because it has been appointed to establish the connection with the Divine Spirit and to serve God in joy, not in sadness... (*Cuzari*, III:5, as translated by Hartwig Hirschfeld)

Of course it does not always happen. It is told that on one occasion Rabbi Levi Yiṣḥak of Berditchev went up to one of his followers after the prayers, held out his hand and said “Welcome home.” “But I haven’t been anywhere,” said the disciple. “Your body hasn’t been anywhere,” said the Rebbe, “but your mind has been far away. That is why I wished it, ‘Welcome home.’”

Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotzk once asked: “Why does it say in the Shema, ‘These words shall be *on* your heart’? Should it not say, ‘These words shall be *in* your heart’? The answer is that the heart is not always open. Therefore we should lay these words on our heart, so that when it opens, they will be there, ready to enter.”

Prayer requires practice. That is implicit in defining prayer as *aboda shebaleb*, “service of the heart.” The word *aboda*, service, also means hard work, labor, strenuous activity. We have to work at prayer. But there are also times when the most inarticulate prayer, said from the heart, pierces the heavens. What matters is seriousness and honesty. “The LORD is close to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”

◀ 11. *Jacob's*

11. *Jacob's Ladder*

Prayer is a journey that has been described in many ways. According to the mystics, it is a journey through the four levels of being – Action, Formation, Creation and Emanation. Rabbi Jacob Emden worked out an elaborate scheme in which the prayers represent a movement from the outer courtyards to the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem. According to everyone, the stages of prayer constitute an ascent and descent, reaching their highest level in the middle, in the Shema and Amida.

The metaphor that, to me, captures the spirit of prayer more than any other is Yaakob's dream in which, alone at night, fleeing danger and far from home, he saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending. He woke and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God; this is the gate to heaven" (Gen. 28:10–17).

Our sages said that "this place" was Jerusalem. That is midrashic truth. But there is another meaning, the plain one, no less transfiguring. The verb the Torah uses, *vayifga*, means "to happen upon, as if by chance." "This place" was any place. Any place, any time, even the dark of a lonely night, can be a place and time for prayer. If we have the strength to dream and then, awakening, refuse to let go of the dream, then here, now, where I stand, can be the gate to heaven.

Prayer is a ladder and we are the angels. If there is one theme sounded throughout the prayers, it is creation–revelation–redemption, or ascent–summit–descent. In the Verses of Praise, we climb from earth to heaven by meditating on creation. Like a Turner or Monet landscape, the psalms let us see the universe bathed in light, but *this* light is not the light of beauty but of holiness – the light the sages say God made on the first day and "hid for the righteous in the life to come." Through some of the most magnificent poetry ever written, we see the world as God's masterpiece, suffused with His radiance, until we reach a crescendo in Psalm 150 with its thirteen-fold repetition of "Praise" in a mere thirty-five words.

By the time we reach *Barekhu* and the blessings of the Shema we have neared the summit. Now we are in heaven with the angels. We have reached revelation. The Divine Presence is close, almost tangible. We speak of love in one of the most hauntingly beautiful of blessings, "Great love" with its striking phrase: "Our Father, merciful Father, the Merciful,

◀ have mercy

have mercy on us.” Now comes the great declaration of faith at the heart of prayer, the Shema with its passionate profession of the unity of God and the highest of all expressions of love, “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” Ending with a reference to the exodus, the Shema gives way to the *Emet* blessing with its emphasis on redemption, the exodus and the division of the sea. Then comes the Amida, the supreme height of prayer. Three traditions fuse at this point: the silent Amida said by individuals, reminding us of prophetic prayer; the *Hazzan’s* Repetition representing priestly worship and prayer as sacrifice; and then the *Kedusha*, prayer as a mystical experience.

From here, prayer begins its descent. First comes *Tahanun* in which we speak privately and intimately to the King. At this point, with a mixture of anguish and plea, we speak not of God’s love for Israel but of Israel’s defiant love of God: “Yet despite all this we have not forgotten Your name. Please do not forget us.” There is a direct reference back to the Shema: “Guardian of Israel, guard the remnant of Israel, and let not Israel perish who declare, *Shema Yisrael.*”

Then comes *Ashre* and the subsequent passages, similar to the Verses of Praise but this time with redemption, not creation, as their theme. The key verse is “A redeemer will come to Zion.” The section closes with a prayer that we may become agents of redemption as we reengage with the world (“May it be Your will ... that we keep Your laws in this world”). We are now back on earth, the service complete except for *Alenu*, Kaddish and the Daily Psalm. We are ready to reenter life and its challenges.

What has prayer achieved? If we have truly prayed, we now know that the world did not materialize by chance. A single, guiding Will, directed its apparent randomness. We know too that this Will did not end there, but remains intimately involved with the universe, which He renews daily, and with humanity, over whose destinies He presides. We have climbed the high ladder and have seen, if only dimly, how small some of our worries are. Our emotional landscape has been expanded. We have given voice to a whole range of emotions: thanks, praise, love, awe, guilt, repentance, remembrance, hope. As we leave the synagogue for the world outside, we now know that we are not alone; that God is with us; that we need not fear failure, for God forgives; that our hopes are not vain; that we are here for a purpose and there is work to do.

◀ We are

We are not the same after we have stood in the Divine Presence as we were before. We have been transformed. We see the world in a different light. Perhaps we radiate a different light. We have spoken to and listened to God. We have aligned ourselves with the moral energies of the universe. We have become, in Lurianic terminology, vessels for God's blessing. We are changed by prayer.

12. *Is Prayer Answered?*

Is prayer answered? If God is changeless, how can we change Him by what we say? Even discounting this, why do we need to articulate our requests? Surely God, who sees the heart, knows our wishes even before we do, without our having to put them into words. What we wish to happen is either right or wrong in the eyes of God. If it is right, God will bring it about even if we do not pray. If it is wrong, God will not bring it about even if we do. So why pray?

The classic Jewish answer is simple but profound. Without a vessel to contain a blessing, there can be no blessing. If we have no receptacle to catch the rain, the rain may fall, but we will have none to drink. If we have no radio receiver, the sound waves will flow, but we will be unable to convert them into sound. God's blessings flow continuously, but unless we make ourselves into a vessel for them, they will flow elsewhere. *Prayer is the act of turning ourselves into a vehicle for the Divine.*

Speaking from personal experience, and from many encounters with people for whom prayer was a lifeline, I know that our prayers are answered: not always in the way we expected, not always as quickly as we hoped, but *prayer is never in vain*. Sometimes the answer is, "No." If granting a request would do us or others harm, God will not grant it. But "No" is also an answer, and when God decides that something I have prayed for should not come to pass, then I pray for the wisdom to understand why. That too is part of spiritual growth: to accept graciously what we cannot or should not change. Nor is prayer a substitute for human effort: on the contrary, prayer is one of the most powerful sources of energy for human effort. God gives us the strength to achieve what we need to achieve, and to do what we were placed on earth to do.

Prayer changes the world because it changes us. At its height, it is a profoundly transformative experience. If we have truly prayed, we come in

◀ the course

the course of time to know that the world was made, and we were made, for a purpose; that God, though immeasurably vast, is also intensely close; that “were my father and my mother to forsake me, the LORD would take me in”; that God is with us in our efforts, and that we do not labor in vain. We know, too, that we are part of the community of faith, and with us are four thousand years of history and the prayers and hopes of those who came before us. However far we feel from God, He is there behind us, and all we have to do is turn to face Him. Faith is born and lives in prayer, and faith is the antidote to fear: “The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?”

It makes a difference to be brushed by the wings of eternity. Regular thrice-daily prayer works on us in ways not immediately apparent. As the sea smooths the stone, as the repeated hammer-blows of the sculptor shape the marble, so prayer – cyclical, tracking the rhythms of time itself – gradually wears away the jagged edges of our character, turning it into a work of devotional art. We begin to see the beauty of the created world. We locate ourselves as part of the story of our people. Slowly, we come to think less of the “I,” more of the “We”; less of what we lack than of what we have; less of what we need from the world, more of what the world needs from us. Prayer is less about getting what we want than about learning what to want. Our priorities change; we become less angular; we learn the deep happiness that comes from learning to give praise and thanks. The world we build tomorrow is born in the prayers we say today.

When, at the end of his vision, Yaakob opened his eyes, he said with a sense of awe: “Surely God is in this place and I did not know it.” That is what prayer does. It opens our eyes to the wonder of the world. It opens our ears to the still, small voice of God. It opens our hearts to those who need our help. God exists where we pray. As Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk said: “God lives where we let Him in.” And in that dialogue between the human soul and the Soul of the universe a momentous yet gentle strength is born.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
London 5769 (2009)

ימי חול

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Shaḥrit

ON WAKING

Immediately upon waking, say:

מוֹדֶה I thank You, living and eternal King,
for giving me back my soul in mercy.
Great is Your faithfulness.

After washing hands, before drying them, say:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who has made us holy through His commandments,
and has commanded us about washing hands.

After attending to bathroom needs, and throughout the day, say:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who formed man in wisdom
and created in him many orifices and cavities.
It is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory
that were one of them to be blocked or ruptured,
it would be impossible to survive even for a moment.
Blessed are You, LORD,
Healer of all flesh who does wondrous deeds.

יֵצֵר אֱשֶׁר יֵצֵר *Who formed man in wisdom:* A blessing of thanks for the intricate wonders of the human body. *Were one of them to be blocked or ruptured* – even the smallest variation in the human genome can cause potentially fatal illness. The more we understand of the complexity of life, the more we appreciate “How numerous are Your works, LORD; You made them all in wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations” (Psalm 104:24). This blessing is a rejection of the idea that the spirit alone is holy, and physical life bereft of God.

תפילות השחר

השכמת הבוקר

Immediately upon waking, say:

מוֹדָה/ *women* מוֹדָה / אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם
 שֶׁהַחַיּוּת בֵּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה
 רַבָּה אֲמוֹנְתְךָ.

After washing hands, before drying them, say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

After attending to bathroom needs, and throughout the day, say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחַכְמָה
 וּבְרָא בּוֹ נְקֻבִים נְקֻבִים, חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים.
 גְּלוּי וּיְדוּעַ לְפָנֶי כֶּסֶף כְּבוֹדְךָ
 שָׂאֵם יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ אִם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם
 אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקִים אֶפְלוֹ שְׁעָה אַחַת.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, רוֹפֵא כָּל בֶּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

מוֹדָה אֲנִי *I thank You:* These words are to be said immediately on waking from sleep. In them we thank God for life itself, renewed each day. Sleep, said the sages, is “one-sixtieth of death” (*Berakhot* 57b). Waking, therefore, is a miniature rebirth. Despite its brevity, this sentence articulates a transformative act of faith: the recognition that life is a gift from God. Expressing gratitude at the fact of being alive, we prepare ourselves to celebrate and sanctify the new day.

MORNING BLESSINGS

אֱלֹהֵי My God,
 the soul You placed within me is pure.
 You created it, You formed it,
 You breathed it into me,
 and You guard it while it is within me.
 One day You will take it from me,
 and restore it to me in the time to come.
 As long as the soul is within me,
 I will thank You,
 LORD my God and God of my ancestors,
 As You are Master of all works, LORD of all souls,
 Ruler of all creations,
 Living and Enduring forever.
 Blessed are You, LORD,
 who restores souls to lifeless bodies.

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,
 King of the Universe,
 who gives the heart understanding
 to distinguish day from night.

Their purpose is to make us conscious of what we might otherwise take for granted. Praise is an act of focused attention, foregrounding what is usually in the background of awareness. “The world is full of the light of God, but to see it we must learn to open our eyes” (Rabbi Naḥman of Bratslav).

הַנּוֹתֵן לְשִׁבְוֵי בִינָה *Who gives the heart:* This is the translation according to Rabbeinu Asher (Rosh); Rashi and Abudarham read it, “who gives the cockerel.” According to Rosh’s reading, the first blessing mirrors the first request of the Amida, for human understanding, as well as the first act of creation in which God created light, separating it from darkness.

ברכות השחר

אֱלֹהֵי
 נִשְׁמָה שְׁנַתַּת בִּי טְהוֹרָה.
 אַתָּה בְּרַאתָהּ, אַתָּה יִצְרַתָּהּ, אַתָּה נִפְחַתָּהּ בִּי
 וְאַתָּה מְשַׁמְרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי
 וְאַתָּה עֲתִיד לְטַלְהָ מִמֶּנִּי וּלְהַחְזִירָהּ בִּי לְעֲתִיד לָבוֹא.
 כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי
 מוֹדָה/ *women* מוֹדָה/ אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי
 שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא רְבוֹן כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים, אֲדוֹן כָּל־הַנְּשָׁמוֹת
 מוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל־הַבְּרִיּוֹת, חַי וְקַיִם לְעַד
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמַּחְזִיר נְשָׁמוֹת לְפָגְרִים מֵתִים.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 הַנּוֹתֵן לְשִׁכּוֹי בִּינָה
 לְהַבְחִין בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה.

אֱלֹהֵי *My God, the soul You placed within me is pure:* An affirmation of Jewish belief in the freedom and responsibility of each human being. The soul as such is pure. We have good instincts and bad, and we must choose between them. The blessing ends with a reference to the resurrection of the dead, returning to the theme of the first words said in the morning.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה *Blessed are You:* These blessings, itemized in the Talmud (*Berakhot* 60b), were originally said at home to accompany the various stages of waking and rising. "Who gives sight to the blind" was said on opening one's eyes, "Who clothes the naked" on putting on clothes, and so on. Several medieval authorities, however, held that they should be said in the synagogue.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who gives sight to the blind.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who sets captives free.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who raises those bowed down.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who clothes the naked.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who gives strength to the weary.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who spreads the earth above the waters.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who makes firm the steps of man.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who has provided me with all I need.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who girds Israel with strength.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
פּוֹקֵחַ עֲוֹרִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַנוֹתֵן לַיַּעַף כֹּחַ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
רוֹקֵעַ הָאָרֶץ עַל הַמַּיִם.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמְכִיז מִצַּעְדֵי גִבּוֹר.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה לִי כָל-צָרָתִי.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אוֹזֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִבּוֹרָה.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who crowns Israel with glory.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who has not made me a heathen.

Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who has not made me a slave.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
King of the Universe,
men say: who has not made me a woman.

women say: who has made me according to His will.

even counts this as a positive commandment: “We were commanded to praise His Blessed name whenever we learn Torah for the great goodness He has done for us by giving us His Torah and teaching us what deeds He considers worthy, that through them we may inherit the World to Come.” This blessing is thus a Torah-ordained commandment, one of only two such blessings: Bircat HaMazon *after* eating, and Bircat HaTorah *before* studying Torah. In contrast, blessings recited *after* Torah study and blessings recited *before* eating are considered ברכות, as are all other blessings on mišvot or pleasures, sights, and sounds. The Sefer Haḥinukh (mitzvah 430) explains why the blessing for food is recited *after* eating, while the blessing for Torah is recited *before* study: “The Blessed One does not expect His servants to recognize His goodness until after their physical needs have been satisfied, for their bestial aspect will only recognize His goodness after it has been satisfied. But Torah study is part of the intellect, and the intellect is able to recognize and appreciate what it is about to receive, and God therefore requires thanksgiving and praise before Torah study.”

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַפְאָרָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 שְׁלֵא עֲשֵׂנִי גוֹי. *women* / גוֹיָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 שְׁלֵא עֲשֵׂנִי עֶבֶד. *women* / שְׂפָחָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם *:men*
 שְׁלֵא עֲשֵׂנִי אִשָּׁה.

בְּרוּךְ שְׁעֲשֵׂנִי בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ. *women*

שְׁלֵא עֲשֵׂנִי *Who has not made me a heathen, a slave, a woman:* These three blessings are mentioned in the Talmud (*Menahot* 43b). Before we bless God for the universalities of human life, we bless Him for the particularities of our identity. We belong to the people of the covenant; we are free; and we have differentiated responsibilities as women and men. These blessings have nothing to do with hierarchies of dignity, for we believe that every human being is equally formed in the image of God. Rather, they are expressions of acknowledgment of the special duties of Jewish life. Heathens, slaves and women are exempt from certain commands which apply to Jewish men. By these blessings, we express our faith that the commandments are not a burden but a cherished vocation.

THE END OF THE MORNING BLESSINGS

“When I proclaim the Lord’s name, give glory to our God” (Deut. 32:3) – from this verse Ḥazal derived the obligation to make a blessing before Torah study. Before starting *Shirat Ha’Azinu*, Moshe told Israel: When I bless the Lord before singing, you must give glory to God by answering “Amen.” Ramban

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who removes sleep from our eyes
and slumber from our eyelids.

And may it be Your will, LORD our God
and God of our ancestors, to accustom us to Your Torah,
and make us attached to Your commandments.

Lead us not into error, transgression,
temptation or disgrace.

Keep us far from the evil instinct and help us attach ourselves
from the good instinct.

Grant us love, grace, loving-kindness and compassion
in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us,
and bestow loving-kindness upon us.

Blessed are You, LORD,
who bestows loving-kindness on His people Israel.

יְהִי רָצוֹן May it be Your will, LORD my God and God of my ances- *Berakhot*
tors, to save me today and every day, from the arrogant and from *16b*
arrogance itself, from a bad man, a bad woman, a bad instinct, a
bad friend, a bad neighbor, a bad mishap, from an evil eye, an evil
tongue, from slander, lies, hatred of others, libelous plots, unnatural
death, severe illness, pernicious events, a harsh trial and a harsh
opponent, whether or not he is a son of the covenant, and from
the judgement of Gehinnom.

יְהִי רָצוֹן *May it be Your will:* A meditation composed by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi
(late second–early third century), redactor of the Mishnah and leader of the
Jewish community in Israel. We are social beings, influenced by our environ-
ment (Maimonides); therefore, we pray to be protected from harmful people,
events and temptations. The prayer reflects the “social fabric of faith” (Rabbi
Lord Jakobovits).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 הַמַּעֲבִיר חֲבֵלֵי שָׁנָה מֵעֵינֵינוּ וְתַנּוּמָה מֵעַפְעַפֵּינוּ.
 וַיְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
 שְׁתַּרְגִּילֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וְתַדְבִּיקֵנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
 וְאַל תִּבְיַאֲנוּ לַיְדֵי חַטָּא וְלֹא לַיְדֵי עֲבָרָה
 וְלֹא לַיְדֵי נַסְיוֹן וְלֹא לַיְדֵי בְּזִיוֹן
 וְתַרְחִיקֵנוּ מֵיֵצֵר הָרָע וְתַדְבִּיקֵנוּ בְּיֵצֵר הַטּוֹב
 וְתַנְנֵנוּ לְאַהֲבָה לְחֵן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים
 בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל־רוֹאֵינוּ
 וּגְמִלְנוּ חֶסֶדִים טוֹבִים.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, גּוֹמֵל חֶסֶדִים טוֹבִים לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ברכות טז: וַיְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתַּצִּילֵנוּ הַיּוֹם
 וּבְכָל־יוֹם וַיּוֹם מֵעַיֵי פָּנִים וּמַעֲזוֹת פָּנִים, מֵאֲדָם רַע, מֵאִשָּׁה רָעָה,
 מֵיֵצֵר רַע, מִחֲבֵר רַע, מִשָּׂכֵן רַע, מִפֹּגַע רַע, מֵעֵין הָרָע, וּמִלְּשׁוֹן
 הָרָע, מִמַּלְשִׁינוֹת, מֵעֲדוֹת שִׁקָּר, מִשְׁנֵאת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מֵעֲלִילָה,
 מִמִּיתָה מִשָּׁנָה, מִחֲלִים רָעִים, מִמְקָרִים רָעִים, מִדִּין קָשָׁה,
 וּמִבְּעַל דִּין קָשָׁה, בֵּין שֶׁהוּא בֶן־בְּרִית וּבֵין שְׂאִינוּ בֶן־בְּרִית,
 וּמִדִּינָה שֶׁל גִּיהֶנָם.

המעביר *Who removes sleep from my eyes:* Having thanked God for the blessings with which we are surrounded, we conclude by asking for His help in dedicating our lives to His service, undeterred by obstacles that may stand in our way. The prayer ends with thanksgiving for God's kindness, reminding us of the verse from Psalms (92:3): "To proclaim Your loving-kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness at night."

BLESSINGS OVER THE TORAH

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who has made us holy through His commandments,
and has commanded us about the words of Torah.

Berakhot
11b

וְהֵעֲרִיב נָא Please, LORD our God, make the words of Your Torah
sweet in our mouths and in the mouths of Your people,
the house of Israel,
so that we, our descendants, and their descendants
and the descendants of Your people, the house of Israel,
may all know Your name
and study Your Torah for its own sake.
Blessed are You, LORD, who teaches Torah to His people Israel.

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who has chosen us from all the peoples and given us His Torah.
Blessed are You, LORD, Giver of the Torah.

וַיִּדְבֹר The Lord spoke to Moshe, saying,
“Speak to Aharon and his sons, saying:
Thus you shall bless the children of Israel. You shall say to them:
“May the LORD bless you and protect you.
May the LORD make His face shine on you
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD turn His face toward you
and grant you peace’
They shall place my name on the children of Israel, and I will
bless them.”

Num. 6

the fulfillment of a divine commandment. This is followed by a prayer that God make Torah study sweet, and help us to hand it on to our children. The final blessing, “who has chosen us,” is a blessing of acknowledgment that chosenness means responsibility, and is inseparably linked to the study and practice of Torah.

ברכות התורה

ברכות יא:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוּנוּ עַל דְּבַרֵי תוֹרָה.

וְהֵעֵרַב נָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת דְּבַרֵי תוֹרַתְךָ
בְּפִינוּ וּבְפִיפְיוֹת עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ, וְצִאֲצֵאֵינוּ, וְצִאֲצֵאֵי צִאֲצֵאֵינוּ
כְּלָנוּ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ וְלוֹמְדֵי תוֹרַתְךָ לְשִׁמְחָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמְּלַמֵּד תוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

במדבר

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:
דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר
כֹּה תְבַרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲמֹר לָהֶם:
יְבָרַכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ:
יְאֵר יְהוָה וּפָנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶךָ:
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה וּפָנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:
וַשְׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲנִי אֲבָרַכְכֶם:

BLESSINGS OVER THE TORAH

The history of Judaism is a story of the love of a people for the Book of Books, the Torah. As a preliminary to study, we pronounce two blessings and a prayer. The first, “who has made us holy through His commandments,” is a blessing over the commandment to engage in study of the Torah, a declaration that we do not simply study as an intellectual or cultural exercise but as

אֲדֹן עוֹלָם LORD of the Universe,
who reigned before the birth of any thing –
When by His will all things were made
then was His name proclaimed King.
And when all things shall cease to be
He alone will reign in awe.
He was, He is, and He shall be
glorious for evermore.
He is One, there is none else,
alone, unique, beyond compare;
Without beginning, without end,
His might, His rule are everywhere.
Without measure, without likeness,
or transformation, even slight;
Who could add or take away
from His great power and His might?
He is my God; my Redeemer lives.
He is the Rock on whom I rely –
My banner and my safe retreat,
my cup, my portion when I cry.
He is the Physician, He the Cure,
helping Hand, all-seeing Eye.
Into His hand my soul I place,
when I awake and when I sleep.
The LORD is with me, I shall not fear;
body and soul from harm will He keep.
(When He sends our savior soon,
in His House will I find joy again,
And in our Temple we shall sing
to His great name: Amen, amen).

בְּטָרִם כָּל־יִצִּיר נִבְרָא	אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ
אֲזִי מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא	לְעֵת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחַפְצוֹ כֹּל
לְבַדּוֹ יִמְלֹךְ נוֹרָא	וְאַחֲרַי בְּכָלוֹת הַכֹּל
וְהוּא יִהְיֶה בְּתַפְאֵרָה	וְהוּא הִיא וְהוּא הָיָה
לְהַמְשִׁילוֹ לְהַחֲבִירָה	וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שְׁנַי
וְלוֹ הָעֵז וְהַמְשָׁרָה	בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית, בְּלִי תַכְלִית
בְּלִי שְׁנוּי וְתַמּוּדָה	בְּלִי עֶרְךָ, בְּלִי דְמִיּוֹן
גְּדֹל כַּחַ וְגִבּוּרָה	בְּלִי חֲבוּר, בְּלִי פְרוּד
וְצוּר חֲבֵלִי בְּיוֹם צָרָה	וְהוּא אֵלַי וְחַי גּוֹאֲלִי
מְנַת כּוֹסֵי בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא	וְהוּא נְסִי וּמְנוּסִי
וְהוּא צוֹפֵה וְהוּא עֶזְרָה	וְהוּא רוֹפֵא וְהוּא מְרַפֵּא
בְּעֵת אִישׁוֹן וְאַעִירָה	בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי
יִהְיֶה לִי וְלֹא אֵירָא	וְעַם רוּחִי גּוֹיֹתַי
מְשִׁיחֵנוּ יִשְׁלַח מֵהֲרָה	בְּמַקְדָּשׁוֹ תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי
אָמֵן אָמֵן שֵׁם הַנוֹרָא.	וְאֲזִ נִשְׁיֵר בְּבֵית קִדְשִׁי

פתיחת אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב

פֶתַח אֱלִיהוּ הַנְּבִיא זְכוֹר לְטוֹב וְאָמַר: רַבּוֹן עֲלֵמִין, דְּאַנְתָּ הוּא חַד וְלֹא
 בַּחֲשָׁבֹן. אַנְתָּ הוּא עֲלֵאָה עַל כָּל עֲלֵאִין, סְתִימָא עַל כָּל סְתִימִין. לִית
 מַחֲשָׁבָה תְּפִיסָא בְּךָ כְּלָל. אַנְתָּ הוּא דְאַפְקַת עֶשֶׂר תְּקוּנִין וְקָרִינִין לֹון עֶשֶׂר
 סְפִירִין לְאַנְהָגָא בְּהוֹן עֲלֵמִין סְתִימִין דְּלֹא אֲתַגְלִין וְעֲלֵמִין דְּאֲתַגְלִין. וּבְהוֹן
 אֲתַפְסִיאת מִבְּנֵי נְשָׂא. וְאַנְתָּ הוּא דְקָשִׁיר לֹון וּמִיחַד לֹון. וּבְגִין דְּאַנְתָּ מְלַגְּאוּ,
 כָּל מֵאן דְּאַפְרִישׁ חַד מִן חֲבֵרִיה מֵאֵלִין עֶשֶׂר, אֲתַחֲשִׁיב לִיה כְּאֵלוּ אֲפְרִישׁ
 בְּךָ. וְאֵלִין עֶשֶׂר סְפִירִין אֲנוּן אֲזֵלִין בְּסַדְרָן, חַד אַרְיֵךְ וְחַד קָצֵר וְחַד בֵּינוּנִי,
 וְאַנְתָּ הוּא דְאַנְהֵיג לֹון, וְלִית מֵאן דְּאַנְהֵיג לְךָ, לֹא לְעֵלָא וְלֹא לְתַתָּא וְלֹא
 מִכָּל סְטְרָא. לְבוּשִׁין תְּקַנְתָּ לֹון דְּמַנְהִיזוּ פְּרַחִין נְשַׁמְתִּין לְבֵנֵי נְשָׂא. וְכַמְּה
 גּוֹפִין תְּקַנְתָּ לֹון דְּאֲתַקְרִיאוּ גּוֹפָא לְגַבֵּי לְבוּשִׁין דְּמַכְסִין עֲלֵיהוֹן. וְאַתְקְרִיאוּ
 בְּתַקּוּנָא דָא. חֶסֶד דְּרוּעָא יְמִינָא. גְּבוּרָה דְּרוּעָא שְׁמָאלָא. תְּפִאֲרַת גּוֹפָא.
 נְעֻץ וְהוּד תְּרִין שׁוֹקִין. יְסוּד סְיוּמָא דְּגּוֹפָא אוֹת בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ. מְלָכוּת פֶּה
 תּוֹרָה שְׁבַעֲל פֶּה קָרִינִין לֵה. חֲכֻמָּה מוֹחָא אִיהִי מַחֲשָׁבָה מְלַגְּאוּ. בֵּינָה לְבָא
 וּבֵה הֵלֵב מִבִּין. וְעַל אֵלִין תְּרִין כְּתִיב: הַנְּסַתְרַת לִיהוּזָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: כְּתוּר עֲלִיּוֹן
 אִיהוּ כְּתוּר מְלָכוּת. וְעֲלִיה אֲתַמַּר: מְגִיד מְרָאשִׁית אַחְרִית: וְאִיהוּ קַרְקַפְתָּא
 דְּתַפְלִי. מְלַגְּאוּ אִיהוּ יוֹד ה"א וְא"ו ה"א דְּאִיהוּ אֲרַח אֲצִילוּת. אִיהוּ שְׁקִי
 דְּאִילְנָא בְּדְרוּעוּי וְעַנְפוּי, כְּמִיָּא דְּאֲשְׁקִי לְאִילְנָא וְאַתְרַבֵּי בְּהוּא שְׁקִי.

הקדמת
 תיקוני זוהר
 דף יז

בדרים כט
 ישעיהו מו

רַבּוֹן עֲלֵמִין, אַנְתָּ הוּא עֵלַת הָעֲלוּת וְסַבְתַּת הַסְּבוּת, דְּאֲשְׁקִי לְאִילְנָא בְּהוּא
 נְבִיעוּ, וְהוּא נְבִיעוּ, אִיהוּ כְּנִשְׁמַתָּא לְגּוֹפָא, דְּאִיהִי חַיִּים לְגּוֹפָא, וּבְכָךְ לִית
 דְּמִיּוֹן וְלִית דְּיוֹקְנָא מִכָּל מַה דְּלַגְּאוּ וּלְבַר. וּבְרָאת שְׁמִיָּא וְאַרְעָא. וְאַפְקַת
 מְנַהֵן שְׁמֵשׂא וְסִיחָא וְכוּכְבֵּיא וּמְזִלִי. וּבְאַרְעָא אִילְנִין וּדְשָׁאִין וּגְנַתָּא דְּעֵדִין
 וְעֶשְׂבִּין וְחִיּוֹן וְעוֹפִין וְנוּנִין וּבְעִירִין וּבְנֵי נְשָׂא. לֹא שְׁתַּמּוּדְעָא בְּהוֹן עֲלֵאִין, וְאִיךְ
 יִתְנַהֲגוּן בְּהוֹן עֲלֵאִין וְתַתָּאִין, וְאִיךְ אֲשְׁתַּמּוּדְעִין מֵעֲלֵאִין וְתַתָּאִין. וְלִית דִּידַע
 בְּךָ כְּלָל, וּבַר מְנַךְ לִית יְחוּדָא בְּעֲלֵאִין וְתַתָּאִין. וְאַנְתָּ אֲשְׁתַּמּוּדְעָא אֲדוֹן עַל
 כָּלָא. וְכָל סְפִירִין כָּל חַד אִית לִיה שֵׁם יְדִיעַ, וּבְהוֹן אֲתַקְרִיאוּ מְלָאכֵיא. וְאַנְתָּ
 לִית לְךָ שֵׁם יְדִיעַ, דְּאַנְתָּ הוּא מְמַלָּא כָּל שְׁמַהּ, וְאַנְתָּ הוּא שְׁלִימוּ דְּכְלָהוּ.
 וְכַד אַנְתָּ תְּסַתְּלַק מְנַהֵן, אֲשְׁתַּאֲרוּ כְּלָהוּ שְׁמַהּ, כְּגּוֹפָא בְּלֹא נְשַׁמְתָּא.

אֲנֵת חֲפִים וְלֹאוּ בְּחֻכְמָה יִדְעָא, אֲנֵת הוּא מִבִּין וְלֹאוּ מִבִּינָה יִדְעָא, לִית
 לְךָ אַתְרָא יִדְעָא, אֶלְא לְאִשְׁתְּמוּדְעָא תִּקְפֵּךְ וְחִילְךָ לִבְנֵי נֶשָׂא, וְלֹאֲחֻזָּאָה לֹון
 אִיךְ אַתְנַהִיג עֲלֵמָא בְּדִינָא וּבְרַחֲמֵי דְאַנּוּן צִדְקָא וּמִשְׁפָּט כְּפּוּם עוֹבְדֵיהוּן דְּבִנֵי
 נֶשָׂא, דִּין אִיהוּ גְבוּרָה, מִשְׁפָּט עֲמוּדָא דְאַמְצָעִיתָא, צִדְקָא מְלֻכּוּתָא קְדִישָׁא,
 מֵאוּנֵי צִדְקָא תְרִין סַמְכֵי קְשׁוּט, הִין צִדְקָא אוֹת בְּרִית. כֹּלָא לְאִחֻזָּאָה אִיךְ
 אַתְנַהִיג עֲלֵמָא. אֲבָל לֹאוּ דְאִית לְךָ צִדְקָא יִדְעָא דְאִיהוּ דִּין, וְלֹאוּ מִשְׁפָּט
 יִדְעָא דְאִיהוּ רַחֲמֵי, וְלֹאוּ מִכָּל אֲלִין מְדוּת כֹּלָל. קוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוּן וַיִּתְחַדְּשׁוּן
 מְלִין עַל יַדְךָ, דְּהָא רְשׁוּתָא אִית לְךָ לְגַלְאָה רוּזִין טְמִירִין עַל יַדְךָ, מָה דְלֹא
 אַתְיָהִיב רְשׁוּ לְגַלְאָה לְשׁוּם בְּרַ נֶשׁ עַד כְּעַן.

קם רבי שמעון, פתח ואמר: לך יהוה הגדלה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח
 וההוד: עלאין שמעון, אנון דמיכין דחברון ורעיא מהימנא אתערו משנתכון.

ישעיה כו

שיר השירים ה

הִקִּיצוּ וּרְנְנוּ שְׂכְנֵי עִפְרָיִם: אֲלִין אֲנּוּן צְדִיקָא דְאַנּוּן מִסְטָרָא דְהָהוּא דְאַתְמַר
 בַּה: אֲנִי יִשְׁנָה וְלִבִּי עָר: וְלֹאוּ אֲנּוּן מִתִּים, וּבְגִין דָּא אַתְמַר בַּהוּן: הִקִּיצוּ וּרְנְנוּ
 שְׂכְנֵי עִפְרָיִם: רַעֲיָא מְהִימְנָא אֲנֵת וְאַבְהֵן הִקִּיצוּ וּרְנְנוּ לְאַתְעֲרוּתָא דְשְׂכִינְתָא
 דְאִיהִי יִשְׁנָה בְּגִלוּתָא, דַּעַד כְּעַן צְדִיקָא כְּלָהוּ דְמִיכִין וְשִׁנְתָא בְּחוּרֵיהוּן,
 מִיַּד יְהִיבַת שְׂכִינְתָא תִּלְתָּ קִלִּין לְגַבֵּי רַעֲיָא מְהִימְנָא וַיִּימָא לִיה: קוּם רַעֲיָא
 מְהִימְנָא, דְהָא עֲלֵךְ אַתְמַר: קוּל דוּדֵי דוֹפֵק: לְגַבֵּי בְּאַרְבַּע אַתּוּן דִּילִיָּה,
 וַיִּימָא בַּהוּן: פִּתְחִילִי אַחֲתֵי רַעֲיָתִי יוֹנְתֵי תַמְתִּי: דְהָא תַסְעוֹנְךָ בַת־צִיּוֹן
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִגְלוֹתְךָ: שְׂרָאִשִׁי נְמֻלָּא־טַל. מֵאִי נְמֻלָּא טַל, אֶלְא אֲמַר קְדָשָׁא
 בְּרִיךְ הוּא: אֲנֵת חֲשַׁבַת דְמִיּוּמָא דְאַתְחַרְבֵּי בִי מִקְדָּשָׁא דְעֵאלָנָא בְּבִיתָא
 דִּילִי וְעֵאלָנָא בִישׁוּבָא, לֹאוּ הֲכִי, דְלֹא עֵאלָנָא כֹּל זְמַנָּא דְאַנְתָּ בְּגִלוּתָא,
 הֲרִי לְךָ סִימְנָא שְׂרָאִשִׁי נְמֻלָּא־טַל, ה"א שְׂכִינְתָא בְּגִלוּתָא, שְׁלִימוּ דִילָהּ
 וְחִיִּים דִּילָהּ אִיהוּ טַל וְדָא אִיהוּ יוּד ה"א וְא"ו, וְה"א אִיהִי שְׂכִינְתָא דְלֹא
 מִחֲשַׁבֵּן טַל, אֶלְא יוּד ה"א וְא"ו דְסִלִּיקוּ אַתּוּן לְחֲשַׁבֵּן טַל, דְאִיהִי מְלִיא
 לְשְׂכִינְתָא, מִנְבִיעוּ דְכָל מְקוּרִין עֲלֵאִין. מִיַּד קָם רַעֲיָא מְהִימְנָא וְאַבְהֵן
 קְדִישִׁין עֲמִיה. עַד פֶּאן רוּזָא דִיחֻדָּא.

ברוך יהוה לעולם אמן ואמן:

תהלים פט

הכנה לתפילה

BLESSINGS FOR TALLET

Before wearing the Tallet, say:

בְּרִכֵי נַפְשִׁי Bless the LORD, my soul. LORD, my God, You are very great, clothed in majesty and splendor, wrapped in a robe of light, spreading out the heavens like a tent. *Ps. 104*

How precious is Your loving-kindness, God; people find refuge in the shade of Your wings. They feast on the rich plenty of Your House, You quench their thirst with Your river of delights; for the fountain of life is with You, by Your light we see light. Extend Your loving-kindness to those who know You, Your justice to the upright of heart. *Ps. 36*

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who has made us holy through His commandments,
and has commanded us to wrap ourselves in the tasseled garment.

BLESSINGS FOR TEFILLIN

Before tightening the strap on the arm, say:

May the pleasantness of the Lord our God be upon us. Establish for us the work of our hands, O establish the work of our hands. *Ps. 90*

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God,
King of the Universe,
who has made us holy through His commandments,
and has commanded us to put on tefillin.

tallet, worn as a robe during prayer, *over* our clothes, and the tallet katan, worn as an undergarment *beneath* our outer clothes. Though they fulfill a single commandment, they were deemed so different as to warrant two different blessings.

הכנה לתפילה

עטיפת טלית

Before wearing the Tallet, say:

תהלים קד: בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת־יְהוָה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מְאֹד, הוֹד וְהַדָּר לְבָשָׁתְךָ:
עֲטֵה-אֹזֶר בְּשַׁלְמָה, נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם כִּירִיעָה:

תהלים לו: מִה־יָקָר חֲסִדְךָ אֱלֹהִים, וּבִנֵי אָדָם בְּצִל כְּנָפֶיךָ יַחְסִיּוּ: יְרוּיַן מִדָּשָׁן
בֵּיתְךָ, וּנְחַל עֲדָנֶיךָ תִּשְׁקֶם: כִּי־עֲמֹךָ מְקוֹד חַיִּים, בְּאֹרֶךְ נְרָאֵה-אֹזֶר:
מִשֹּׁךְ חֲסִדְךָ לִידְעֶיךָ, וְצַדִּיקְךָ לִישְׂרֵי־לֵב:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִתְעַטֵּף בְּצִיצִית.

הנחת תפילין

Before tightening the strap on the arm, say:

תהלים צ: וַיְהִי וַיִּנָּעַם אֲדָנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו כֹּונָנָה עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו
כֹּונָנָהוּ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַנִּיחַ תְּפִלִּין.

TALLET AND TEFILLIN

The mitzvah of *šīšit*, placing tassels on the corner of our garments, is to recall us constantly to our vocation: “Thus you will be reminded to keep all My commandments, and be holy to your God” (Num. 15:40). Over the course of time, the fulfillment of this commandment took two different forms: the

If one spoke before he put on the head piece, he should say this blessing:

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who has made us holy through His commandments,
and has commanded us about the commandment of tefillin.

Wind the strap three times around the middle finger and say:

וְאִרְשָׁתִּיךָ I will betroth you to Me for ever; Hos. 2
I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice,
loving-kindness and compassion;
I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness;
and you shall know the LORD.

After putting on the Tefillin say:

All the peoples of earth shall see that you are called by the Lord's name, and Deut. 28
they shall hold you in awe. I shall rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, my soul exults in
my God; He has wrapped me in garb of rescue, on my shoulders the mantle of Is. 61
justice – as a bridegroom attends in splendor, and a bride puts on her jewels.

וַיְדַבֵּר The LORD spoke to Moshe, saying, “Consecrate to Me Ex. 13
every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the
Israelites, whether man or beast, belongs to Me.” Then Moshe said
to the people, “Remember this day on which you left Egypt, the
slave-house, when the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty
hand. No leaven shall be eaten. You are leaving on this day, in the
month of Aviv. When the LORD brings you into the land of the

Tefillin thus symbolize the love for God in emotion (heart), thought (head)
and deed (hand).

וְאִרְשָׁתִּיךָ I will betroth you to Me: These exquisite lines from the book of
Hoshea speak of God's covenant with Israel as a marriage – a mutual pledge of
faith, born of love. Wrapping the strap of the hand-tefillin around the middle
finger like a wedding ring, we remind ourselves of God's love for Israel, and
Israel's love for God.

If one spoke before he put on the head piece, he should say this blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצוּנָנוּ עַל מִצְוַת תְּפִלִּין.

Wind the strap three times around the middle finger and say:

הושע ב

וְאֵרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי לְעוֹלָם
וְאֵרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְצִדְקָה וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים:
וְאֵרְשָׁתִּיךָ לִי בְּאַמוּנָה, וַיִּדְעַת אֶת־יְהוָה:

After putting on the תפילין say:

דברים כח

ישעיה סא

שמות יג

וְרָאוּ כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שָׂם יְהוָה נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וַיִּדְאוּ מִמֶּנִּי:
שׁוֹשׁ אִשִּׁישׁ בִּיהוָה תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי בְּאֵלֵי כִּי הִלְבִּישָׁנִי בְּגָדֵי־יִשְׁעַ מַעֲיֵל צִדְקָה
יַעֲטֵנִי כַחֲתָן יִכְהֵן פֶּאֶר וְכַכְּלָה תַעֲדָה כְּלִיָּה:
וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: קִדְּשֵׁ לִי כָּל־בְּכוֹר פֶּטֶר כָּל־דָּחַם
בְּבִנְיַי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֶדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה לִי הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם
זְכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאֲתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבַּיִת עֲבָדִים כִּי
בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל חֶמֶץ: הַיּוֹם אֲתֶם
יֵצְאִים בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב: וְהָיָה כִּי־יִבְיֹאֵךְ יְהוָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי

Tefillin: The word tefillin (called *totafot* in the Torah) means “emblem, sign, insignia,” the visible symbol of an abstract idea. Tefillin are our reminder of the commandment of the Shema: “Love the LORD your God your with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5). *All your heart:* this is the tefillin on the upper arm opposite the heart. *All your soul:* this is the head-tefillin opposite the seat of consciousness, the soul. *All your might:* this is the strap of the hand-tefillin, symbolizing action, power, might.

Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites, the land He swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you are to observe this service in this same month. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and make the seventh day a festival to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days. No leavened bread may be seen in your possession, and no leaven shall be seen anywhere within your borders. On that day you shall tell your son, ‘This is because of what the LORD did for me when I left Egypt.’ [These words] shall also be a sign on your hand, and a reminder above your forehead, so that the LORD’s Torah may always be in your mouth, because with a mighty hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.”

וְהִיָּה After the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your ancestors, and He has given it to you, you shall set apart for the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your cattle belong to the LORD. Every firstling donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. If you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every firstborn among your sons you must redeem. If, in time to come, your son asks you, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, “With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the slave-house. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us leave, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. That is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb, and redeem all the firstborn of my sons.” [These words] shall be a sign on your hand and as an emblem above your forehead, that with a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.

וְהַחֲתִי וְהָאֲמֹרִי וְהַחֲוִי וְהַיְבוֹסִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךְ לְתֵת לְךָ
 אֶרֶץ זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ וְעַבְדַת אֶת־הָעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה:
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֶּת וּבֵיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי חֵג לַיהוָה: מִצֹּת יֵאָכַל
 אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא־יֵרְאֶה לְךָ חֲמוֹץ וְלֹא־יֵרְאֶה לְךָ שֶׂאֹר
 בְּכָל־גְּבֻלְךָ: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה
 יְהוָה לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם: וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן
 בֵּין עַיִנֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ כִּי בַיַּד חִזְקָה הוֹצֵאתְךָ
 יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם: וְשִׁמַּרְתָּ אֶת־הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת לְמוֹעֵד מִיָּמִים
 יְמִימָה:

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִבְאֶךָ יְהוָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְךָ וְלַאֲבֹתֶיךָ
 וּנְתַנָּה לְךָ: וְהָעֲבֹדָת כָּל־פֶּטֶר־רֶחֶם לַיהוָה וְכָל־פֶּטֶר ׀ שֶׁגֶר
 בְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה לְךָ הַזְּכָרִים לַיהוָה: וְכָל־פֶּטֶר חֲמוֹר תִּפְדֶּה
 בְּשֵׁה וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעִרְפְתּוּ וְכָל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּבִנְךָ תִפְדֶּה:
 וְהָיָה כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה־זֹּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק
 יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: וְהָיָה כִּי־הִקְשָׁה פְרַעֲוֹ
 לְשַׁלְחָנוּ וַיְהִרְגֵךָ יְהוָה כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר אָדָם וְעַד־
 בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה עַל־כֵּן אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לַיהוָה כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם הַזְּכָרִים וְכָל־
 בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אִפְדָּה: וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְכָה וּלְטוֹטְפַת בֵּין עַיִנֶיךָ כִּי
 בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם:

וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל Then Ḥana prayed. She said: My heart exults in the Lord, ^{1 Sam. 2} my horn is raised up by the Lord, my mouth opens wide against my enemies, for I rejoice in Your salvation! None are holy as the Lord, for there are none besides You, and no Rock like our God. Do not drone on in pride; let no insolence cross your lips, for the Lord is an all-knowing God; by Him deeds are weighed. Heroes' bows are shattered while the feeble are girded with power. Those once sated hire out for bread, while those once hungry grow fat. By the time the barren has borne seven, the mother of many has withered. The Lord deals out death and grants life, casts down into Sheol and lifts up. The Lord impoverishes and enriches, humbles and exalts. He lifts the poor from the dust, raises the needy from the refuse heap – to seat them beside nobility, and bequeath them the seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He set the world upon them. He guards the steps of His faithful while the wicked perish in darkness, for man does not prevail by power. The Lord's foes shall be shattered; He thunders the heavens above them; The Lord shall judge to the ends of the earth. May He grant might to His king and raise up the horn of His anointed!

יְהוָה How many are His signs and how powerful His wonders; His ^{Dan. 3} kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His reign is for all generations. And we are Your people, the flock You tend. We shall thank you ^{Ps. 79} forever, and speak Your praises in all generations. Evening, morning ^{Ps. 55} and noon I shall pray and I shall cry, and He will hear my voice. When ^{Job 38} the morning stars rejoice, and the children of God cry out in celebration. I have no fear of the myriads of men encamped all around me. ^{Ps. 3} As for me – I look to the Lord; I hope for the God of my salvation; ^{Mic. 7} my God will hear me.

Omit on Shabbat:

Do not gloat at me, O my enemy, for when I fall I shall arise;
when I sit in darkness, the Lord is light for me.

For You, Lord, have I longed; You will answer, Lord my God. My feet ^{Ps. 38}
stand on even ground; among the crowd, I bless the Lord. ^{Ps. 26}

וּתְתַפְּלַל חֲנָה וּתְאָמַר עֲלַי לְבִי בִיהוּה רַמָּה קִרְנֵי בִיהוּה רַחֵב
 פִּי עַל-אוֹיְבֵי כִי שָׁמַחְתִּי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ: אֵינִי-קָדוֹשׁ בִּיהוּה כִּי-אֵין
 בְּלַתְּךָ וְאֵין צוּר כְּאֱלֹהֵינוּ: אֶל-תִּרְבּוּ תִדְבְּרוּ גְבוּהָ גְבוּהָ יֵצֵא
 עֲתָק מִפִּיכֶם כִּי אֵל דַּעוֹת יְהוָה וְלוֹ נִתְּנָנוּ עֲלֵלוֹת: קִשְׁתֵּי גְבוּרִים
 חֲתִים וְנִבְשָׁלִים אָזְרוּ חֵיִל: שְׁבַעִים בְּלַחֵם נִשְׁפְּרוּ וְדַעֲבִים חִדְּלוּ
 עַד-עֲקָרָה יִלְדָה שְׁבַעָה וְרַבַּת בָּנִים אֲמַלְלָה: יְהוּה מִמִּית וּמַחִיָּה
 מוֹרִיד שָׁאוֹל וַיַּעַל: יְהוּה מוֹרִישׁ וּמַעֲשִׂיר מִשְׁפִּיל אֶף-מְרוֹמִם:
 מִקְּיָם מַעֲפָר דָּל מֵאֲשַׁפֵּת יָרִים אֲבוֹזָן לְהוֹשִׁיב עִם-נְדִיבִים וְכַסָּא
 כְּבוֹד יִנְחַלֵּם כִּי לִיהוּה מִצְקֵי אֶרֶץ וַיִּשֶׁת עֲלֵיהֶם תִּבְל: רַגְלֵי
 חֲסִידוֹ יִשְׁמֹד וְדַשְׁעִים בַּחֲשָׁךְ יִדְמוּ כִּי-לֹא בְּכַח יִגְבְּרֵי-אִישׁ:
 יְהוּה יַחַתּוּ מְרִיבּוֹ עָלוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם יִרְעִם יְהוּה יִדִּין אֶפְסֵי-אֶרֶץ
 וַיִּתְּנֵ-עֵז לְמַלְכּוֹ וַיִּרֶם קֶרֶן מְשִׁיחוֹ:

אָתוּהִי כְּמָה רַבְרַבִּין וּתְמַהוּהִי כְּמָה תְקִיפִין מַלְכוּתָהּ מַלְכוּת
 עֲלָם וְשִׁלְטָנָה עִם-דָּר וְדָר: וְאַנְחֵנוּ עִמָּךְ וְיִצְאָן מִדַּעִיתְךָ נֹדָה לְךָ
 לְעוֹלָם לְדוֹר וְדָר נִסְפָּר תְּהַלְתְּךָ: עָרַב וּבִקֵּר וּצְהַרִים אֲשִׁיחָה
 וְאַהֲמָה וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי: בְּרֶן-יַחַד כּוֹכְבֵי בְקָר וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל-בְּנֵי
 אֱלֹהִים: לֹא-אִירָא מִרְבָּבוֹת עִם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוּ עָלַי: וְאַנִּי
 בִּיהוּה אֲצַפֵּה אוֹחִילָה לְאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמַעֲנֵי אֱלֹהֵי:

שבת: Omit on

אֶל-תִּשְׁמַחֵי אֵיבְתֵי לִי, כִּי נִפְלַתִי קָמוֹתִי
 כִּי-אֵשֵׁב בַּחֲשָׁךְ, יְהוּה אוֹר לִי:

כִּי-לְךָ יְהוּה הוֹחֵלְתִי, אֶתָּה תַעֲנֶנּוּ אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי: רַגְלֵי עֲמָדָה
 בְּמִישׁוֹר, בְּמִקְהָלִים אֲבַרְךָ יְהוּה:

תהלים לח
תהלים כו

THE BINDING OF YIṢḤAK

אלהינו Our God and God of our ancestors, remember us with a favorable memory, and recall us with a remembrance of salvation and compassion from the highest of high heavens. Remember, LORD our God, on our behalf, the love of the ancients, Abraham, Yiṣḥak and Yisrael Your servants; the covenant, the loving-kindness, and the oath You swore to Abraham our father on Mount Moriah, and the Binding, when he bound Yiṣḥak his son on the altar, as is written in Your Torah:

It happened after these things that God tested Abraham. *Gen. 22* He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. He said, “Take your son, your only son, Yiṣḥak, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall say to you.” Early the next morning Abraham rose and saddled his donkey and took his two lads with him, and Yiṣḥak his son, and he cut wood for the burnt-offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. Abraham said to his lads, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go on ahead. We will worship and we will return to you.” Abraham took the wood for the burnt-offering and placed it on Yiṣḥak his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife, and the two of them went together. Yiṣḥak said to Abraham his father, “Father?” and he said “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt-offering?” Abraham said, “God will see to the sheep for the burnt-offering, my son.” And the two of them went together. They came to the place God had told him about, and Abraham built there an altar and arranged the wood and bound Yiṣḥak his son and

פרשת העקדה

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְזָכְרָנוּ בְּזִכְרוֹן טוֹב מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וּפָקַדְנוּ בְּפָקֶדֶת
 יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים מִשְׁמֵי שָׁמַי קֶדֶם, וְזָכַר לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶהְבֵּת הַקְּדוּמוֹת,
 אֲבָרְהָם יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדֶיךָ, אֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד וְאֶת הַשְּׁבוּעָה,
 שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה, וְאֶת הָעֵקֶדָה שֶׁעָקַדְתָּ אֶת יִצְחָק
 בְּנוֹ עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, כְּכַתּוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ:

בראשית כב

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת-אַבְרָהָם
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ
 אֶת-יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר-אֶהְבֵּת אֶת-יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ-לְךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ
 הַמּוֹרִיָּה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר
 אֵלֶיךָ: וַיִּשְׁלַם אַבְרָהָם בְּפִקּוּר וַיַּחְבֵּשׂ אֶת-חַמְדּוֹ וַיִּקַּח
 אֶת-שְׁנֵי נַעֲרָיו אֹתוֹ וְאֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ וַיִּבְקַע עֵצִי עֹלָה
 וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים: בַּיּוֹם
 הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיֵּדָא אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם
 מֵרְחֹק: וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-נַעֲרָיו שְׁבוּ-לָכֶם פֹּה עִם-
 הַחֲמֹר וְאֲנִי וְהַנֶּזֶר נִלְכָה עַד-כֹּה וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְנִשְׁוֹבָה
 אֵלֵיכֶם: וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-עֵצֵי הָעֹלָה וַיִּשֶׂם עַל-יִצְחָק
 בְּנוֹ וַיִּקַּח בִּידּוֹ אֶת-הָאֵשׁ וְאֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלֹת וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם
 יַחְדָּו: וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר
 הֲנִנִּי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאִיֶּה הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהִים יְרַאֲהֶלּוּ הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה בְנִי וַיֵּלְכוּ
 שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו: וַיִּבְאוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
 וַיִּבֶן שָׁם אַבְרָהָם אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת-הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד

laid him on the altar on top of the wood. He reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. Then an angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not reach out your hand against the boy; do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, because you have not held back your son, your only son, from Me." Abraham looked up and there he saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, and Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt-offering instead of his son. Abraham called that place "The LORD will see," as is said to this day, "On the mountain of the LORD He will be seen." The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I swear, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not held back your son, your only son, I will greatly bless you and greatly multiply your descendants, as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore, and your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies. Through your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have heeded My voice." Then Abraham returned to his lads, and they rose and went together to Beersheba, and Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Master of the Universe, just as Abraham our father suppressed his compassion to do Your will wholeheartedly, so may Your compassion suppress Your anger from us and may Your compassion prevail over Your other attributes. Deal with us, LORD our God, with the attributes of loving-kindness and compassion, and may You go beyond the letter of the law for us. And in Your great goodness may Your anger be turned away from Your people, Your city, Your land and Your inheritance. Fulfill in us, LORD our God, the promise You made in Your Torah through the hand of Moshe Your servant, as

Berakhot
7a

אֶת־יִצְחָק בָּנוּ וַיֵּשֶׁם אֹתוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לְעֵצִים:
 וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִדְוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמֶּאֱכָלֹת לְשַׁחֵט
 אֶת־בָּנוֹ: וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלֵּאךְ יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר
 אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ
 אֶל־הַנֶּעֱדָר וְאֶל־תַּעֲשֵׂה לוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי וְעַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יִרְאֶה
 אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּךָ וְלֹא חֲשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי: וַיֵּשֶׂא
 אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְאֶה וְהִנֵּה־אֵיל אֶחָד נֹאחַז בְּסִבְךָ
 בְּקִרְנָיו וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֵלְהָ
 תַּחַת בָּנוֹ: וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה ו
 יִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר הַיּוֹם בְּהָר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה: וַיִּקְרָא מִלֵּאךְ
 יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם שְׁנֵית מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי
 נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חֲשַׁכְתָּ
 אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ: כִּי־בֵרֶךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְהִרְבֵּה אֲרַבֶּה
 אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וּכְחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֹׁפֵת הַיָּם
 וַיִּרְשׂ זֶרְעֶךָ אֶת שַׁעַר אֲיִכּוּ: וְהַתְּבָרְכוּ בְּזֶרְעֶךָ כָּל גּוֹי
 הָאָרֶץ יִקְבֹּץ אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעַתָּ בְּקִלִּי: וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נַעֲרָיו
 וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יַחְדָּו אֶל־בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבְאֵר
 שֶׁבַע:

רבוננו של עולם, כמו שפבש אברהם אבינו את רחמיו לעשות
 רצונך בלבב שלם, כן יבבשו רחמין את בעסך, ויגלו רחמין
 על מדותיך. ותתנהג עמנו יהוה אלהינו במדת החסד ובמדת
 הרחמים, ותפנס לנו לפנים משורת הדין. ובטובך הגדול ישוב
 חרון אפך מעמך ומעירך ומארצך ומנחלתך. וקיים לנו יהוה

ברכות 1

it is said: "I will remember My covenant with Yaakob, and also My covenant with Yiṣḥak, and also My covenant with Abraham I will remember, and the land I will remember." And it is said: "Even so, when they are in the land of their enemies, I shall not reject them and shall not detest them to the point of destruction, to the point of breaking My covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." And it is said: "I shall remember for them the covenant of the early ones, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, in order to be their God: I am the Lord." And it is said: "And the Lord your God shall restore your fortunes and have compassion for you, and shall return and gather you in from all the nations among whom the Lord your God has scattered you. If your distanced ones are at the very ends of the heavens, from there shall the Lord your God gather you; from there shall He bring you." And it is said: "The Lord your God will bring you to the land your ancestors possessed and you will possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors." And it is said through Your prophets: "Lord, be gracious to us; we yearn for You. Be their strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress." And it is said: "This is a time of trouble for Yaakob, but he will be saved from it." And it is said, "In their troubles He was troubled, and the angel of His presence saved them, and He will take them and bear them through all eternity." And it is said: "Who, God, is like You, who forgives iniquity and overlooks the transgression of the remnant of Your heritage. He does not remain angry forever, for He desires loving-kindness. He shall relent and show us compassion, He shall suppress our iniquities, casting all of our sins into the depths of the sea. Grant truth to Yaakob, loving-kindness to Abraham, as You promised our ancestors in ancient times." And it is said: "I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and I shall make them rejoice in My House of prayer; their offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted, desired on My altar, for My House will be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

Lev. 26

Deut. 30

Is. 33

Jer. 30

Mic. 7

Is. 56