

# INTERPRETIVE LITURGY FOR SHABBAT

**NOTE:** The prayers, poems, meditations and commentary in this collection were composed by members of West End Synagogue, A Reconstructionist Congregation in New York City, for use in synagogue services. The pieces may be used during religious services by other congregations, provided that West End Synagogue and the individual authors, who own the copyright to their work, are cited. Any other usage requires permission from the individual authors, who can be contacted through West End Synagogue

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**Sponsored by the Ritual Committee of**

**West End Synagogue**

**A Reconstructionist Congregation**

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# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

Over the years, members of West End Synagogue have written a number of prayers, poems and interpretive readings for use in Shabbat services, something that is perhaps unique among congregations of all denominations. This collection of more than 100 innovative liturgical compositions is intended to make them available for regular use during West End's services, by individual members of the congregation and by the larger community. It is also hoped that it will inspire other WES members to express in their own words their personal interpretations of, or responses to, traditional prayers.

As an aid to the creative process, we have included in this introduction section three pieces presenting different perspectives on how to approach the writing of innovative liturgy. They are not intended as limitations, but as stimuli to creative thinking.

Mel Scult illustrates the method of converting an essay into a prayer that was used by Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement;

Andrea Bardfeld, who compiled this collection at the request of the WES Ritual Committee, describes the essence of what make a liturgical composition a prayer, rather than simply a religious poem.

Mark Nazimova presents a systematic way to reconstruct a traditional prayer or ceremony and develop new meanings for our liturgical heritage;

Note that the numbers immediately under the prayer names on many pages in this document reference the Kol HaNeshamah Shabbat prayer book (The Reconstructionist Press). The original of each reconstructed prayer can be found on the indicated page.

This is not a static document. As new prayers, poems and commentaries are created by WES members, they will be added to it.

Non-WES members may reproduce selections only with the permission of their authors, who can be contacted through the synagogue office at: [liturgy@westendsynagogue.org](mailto:liturgy@westendsynagogue.org).

Comments, questions or other inquiries about the WES Innovative Liturgy Project should be sent to the same address, and will be appropriately forwarded.

*West End Synagogue Ritual Committee, 2007*

## WRITING NEW PRAYERS

Very early on, Kaplan suggested that the way to write new prayers was to take an esodealing with religious or theological matters and turn it into a poem. He mentioned this suggestion to Louis Finkelstein in the early twenties but did not take his own advice until the early forties. In 1942, Kaplan was working on his prayer book and turned to a number of writers, some famous some unknown, to use in writing supplementary prayers. In that summer he created a prayer out of an essay by Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was not yet known at all and only recently arrived in this country. The prayer is entitled “The Pious Man” and can be found in Kaplan’s prayer book published in 1945. For those of you who want to read further on Heschel and Kaplan and on this prayer, I published an essay in the journal *Conservative Judaism* Summer 2002 entitled “Kaplan’s Heschel”. That article contains the text of the Kaplan Heschel prayer.

In 1942, Kaplan also created a prayer based on an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The essay Kaplan used as a basis for this prayer is Emerson’s “Divinity School Address of 1838”. In the case of both Emerson and Heschel, Kaplan relied heavily on the language of the original but changed it when it suited him, rearranged the lines and even inserted a few lines of his own.

So for those of you who want to follow Kaplan’s example, I recommend this route. It is not easy but may be productive. If you make it clear that your poem is adapted from the essay and not just taken from it, you will be safe in terms of creating your own prayer.

The Kaplan Emerson prayer may be found in the Additional Prayers section of this Prayer Book.

*Mel Scult*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A PRAYER

A prayer – rather than (just) a reading or a poem – should convey a sense of spirituality or a connection to or recognition of something that is greater than oneself. It might also indicate an awareness of the holiness of Shabbat or the holiday being celebrated.

Among the ways to achieve this are:

Some recognition of or interaction with the “Force For Good” or your conception of the divine aspect of reality

This can range from summoning the best in oneself to addressing God (or your name for the divine)

An expression of awe, gratitude, thanks, hope, challenge, longing, or even anger or despair

A recognition of the miracles of life, the wonders of nature, the beauty of the world

A wish for betterment – of oneself, the community, the world, using words such as: Let there be or May we have – (strength, courage, patience, peace etc.)

A statement of our connection to all other peoples and to the universe as an interactive, inter-related whole, with shared responsibility for creating a better place to dwell and to leave for our children and their children.

Mention of our (Jewish) past – our ancestors, our God – and an integration of this past into our religious world of today.

*Andrea Bardfeld*



# SUGGESTIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTING LITURGY

How do we continue the millennia-old practice of developing new meanings from our liturgical inheritance? One way is to reconstruct a prayer or ceremony. A basic approach is to first ask yourself:

**What about the prayer or ceremony works for me?** Which aspects of it engage me? Its literal meaning? Its underlying message? Its use of language? Its imagery? Its form? The personal associations it brings to mind? Its history?

**What about the prayer or ceremony doesn't work for me?** Which aspects, if any, seem problematic? Its literal meaning? Its underlying message? Its use of language? Its imagery? Its form? The personal associations it brings to mind? Its history?

## How To Begin

Some people begin their project of reconstructing liturgy by diving right in, writing from inspiration; others begin by first studying their subject. When you're ready to study, there are resources at the end of this piece that you can use to learn more about the liturgy with which you're working.

When you're ready to write, consider starting with those aspects of the prayer or ceremony that work for you, and build on them. Your initial reactions, and your reflections on your reactions, can be a good place to start. Take what engages you and run with it.

Consider changing or transforming those aspects that *don't* work for you. Think about their deeper meaning; you might transform them using what you think are more appropriate metaphors, language, or form. If you can, consider changing things in a way that retains an echo of the original work.

For example, if a prayer's meaning seems appropriate (e.g., Shabbat is a holy time in which we can renew ourselves), but the language and structure the prayer uses are archaic and no longer resonate for you (e.g., references to angels, and a responsive format), you could recast the meaning using new imagery and in a new structure.

Alternatively, if the underlying message seems valuable (e.g., behave ethically), but the literal meaning undermines that value for you (e.g., follow the laws of the Torah or God will destroy your crops), then re-express the underlying message (behave ethically) in a new way. Because you want to maintain continuity with the original prayer, try using some of its images, forms, terms, and/or structure; for example, you might use the same structure as the original, or you might use terms and images that are found in, or inspired by, the original.

In all cases, consider making use of images, metaphors, historical references, themes, terms, and quotations from our tradition. You might take them from the Bible, Talmud, other prayers, holiday ceremonies, midrash, history, this week's parsha, or your favorite Jewish novel. They can bring extra resonance to your work, connecting it to the ongoing conversation across time and space that is Judaism.

## **Guidelines: Striking a Balance**

While you're working on your project, there are some general guidelines that can help you strike a balance between creativity and respect for the tradition. Each time you reconstruct something, you may find that you balance the two in a different way.

When you work with prayers and ceremonies, you can:

Change language.

Change names.

Change format.

Change structure.

Change meaning.

You should:

Understand the prayer/ceremony's traditional meanings, language, and form.

(You can learn more about these using the resources listed at the end of this piece.)

Retain some aspect of the original, to avoid changing everything at the same time.

Remember that what you hold in your hands has been handed down *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation. What you hold in your hands is a valuable inheritance. If you chose to work with it, you should do so carefully and with respect, before passing it on to the next generation.

## **The Paradox**

West End Executive Director Lila Pahl has said that, when she performs a certain ritual, she has a sense that "this is what those who came before me did." Here's the paradox: if we change too much too quickly, we break the golden thread of continuity that connects us, and the ritual is no longer recognizable as "what those who came before me did." But too little change can make ritual irrelevant or even irresponsible, so that many of us stop practicing it.

Change can be good. But if we change too much too quickly, we break the link to Jews who came before us, and break the link to other Jews around us. Something that was recognizable as a version of a particular ritual becomes unrecognizable. And something that felt like a Jewish ritual might stop feeling Jewish.

It's instructive to hear what Mordecai Kaplan wrote about reconstructing ritual: "To reconstruct means to reaffirm, reachieve, reestablish. ... Where deviation [from tradition] is necessary, two considerations should be kept in mind: One, an effort should be made to find a way of retaining at least some part or element of the traditional practice; the other, some new practice should be instituted that might serve as a substitute for the one that cannot be observed." [*Questions Jews Ask*, pp. 236 – 7, 239.]

## The Bottom Line

However you change things, the bottom line is that:

What you write should work for you.

What you write needs to be something that is appropriate for the place in the service in which it's going to be used.

What you write needs to work for the congregation.

This *does not* mean that you are limited to writing in accordance with some set of beliefs that you do not share. Rather, it means that certain standards play a role in shaping what you write. For example, using obscenity is almost always inappropriate. Likewise, using extremely obscure language that fails to reach most of the congregation is counterproductive.

If you have questions, or would like help, we encourage you to speak to the person who commissioned you to reconstruct the prayer or ceremony, or to the rabbi.

## Resources

Many resources are available to learn about a prayer or ceremony's meaning, language, and form; its origin; how its context and meaning may have changed over time; etc.

The resources below, a fraction of what's available, are a place to start. Most are available in the public library and in Jewish and secular bookstores. Some are also in the synagogue's library and/or the rabbi's library.

*My People's Prayer Book*, edited by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman. An excellent resource for learning about the meaning and development of most prayers. Each volume covers a different part of the service.

In addition, the first 26 pages of the first volume provide an excellent brief introduction to the spirit, history, and structure of Jewish prayer and the Jewish service in general. It's a great place to start learning.

*Encyclopedia Judaica*. Comprehensive and concise, if a bit dry. The first edition is available in the synagogue library; the updated second edition (published in 2007) is available at some libraries (e.g., the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Library on 42<sup>nd</sup> St.).

Siddurim. Different prayer books provide different translations, shedding additional light on a prayer's manifold meanings. Some also offer commentary. Here are a few to consider:

*Kol Haneshemah*, the Reconstructionist series of siddurim.

*Or Hadash*, the Conservative siddur Sim Shalom with commentary added.

*Mishkan T'filah*, the new Reform siddur.

*Artscroll*, an Orthodox series of siddurim.

*Entering Jewish Prayer*, by Reuven Hammer. Covers Shabbat, daily, and festival services (from a Conservative perspective perspective).

*Entering the High Holy Days*, by Reuven Hammer. Covers Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services (from a Conservative perspective).

If you want to learn about the development of a prayer in more depth, consider the following:

*Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, by Ismar Elbogen. A classic reference work.

*The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, by Lawrence A. Hoffman. Focuses on how the service took on its current appearance in the resolution of ideological/theological disputes between the eighth and eleventh centuries. A fascinating and detailed account.

*From Ideology to Liturgy: Reconstructionist Worship and American Liberal Judaism*, by Eric Caplan. Examines the interplay of issues and people that produced several generations of Reconstructionist prayer books, and compares the result to Reform, Conservative, and Renewal liturgies. (Some of the personalities were/are West End members.)

*Mark Nazimova*

**KAVANOT**  
**ON**  
**WEST END SYNAGOGUE**

## **MISSION STATEMENT WEST END SYNAGOGUE**

Our mission is to develop, nurture and transmit a Reconstructionist approach to Judaism by building an intellectually challenging, spiritually vibrant and mutually supportive community.

## BARHU

### BLESSINGS FOR OUR RECONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

Blessed the love that joins us;  
The spirit, the shared intention  
that creates community.

Blessed our traditions;  
The God of our ancestors,  
steeped in holiness and ceremony.  
The ark, sheltering Torahs  
which teach, challenge, demand interpretation.

Blessed our Reconstructionist theology;  
Nourishing the holy flame within -  
Urging each toward creative understanding,  
Opening paths to participation.

Grounded in our ancient tradition,  
Let these paths lead us to  
Learning,  
New traditions,  
and the  
Increasing appreciation of, and thankfulness for  
The beauty, the holiness that surround us.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## ON INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING

In our charge to build an intellectually challenging community, we must face one of the great difficulties of talmud torah: the setting aside of sechel in favor of our middot -- a willingness to forego the great gift of our human intellect in favor of our emotional instincts. Torah makes us think many things; but how does it make us feel? Do we respond to the stories and the teaching with love, or anger? Humility, or pride? Compassion, or a heightened demand on ourselves or others? When struggling with Torah as literature, are we aware of its teachings about the human condition? When wrestling with Torah as teaching, are we conscious of how those moral lessons guide the arc of our own life-narratives? We should remember that as we are all Yisrael, wrestling with the Divine, we are also always Ya'acov, at our own heels in a constant struggle to realize ourselves.

*Joshua Greenberg*



## ON SPIRITUAL VIBRANCY

The musician draws the bow across the string. The vibration of the string passes through the bridge of the instrument and into its sound post. The sound post, pressed against the inside chamber of the body, causes the body to resonate. The other strings, the ones which the bow did not touch, begin to vibrate as well. They call this phenomenon "sympathetic vibration". Spiritual vibrancy can be found in the resonance of all that lives, for the bow is always moving across the strings. Even in stillness there is movement, and where there is movement, there is vibration and resonance, from one body to the next. When we listen for it, we can sense the vibrations in ourselves, and we can sympathetically vibrate to the resonance of others, and on, and on. Listening for this resonance, we begin to experience a heightened sense of awareness; listening for this resonance, we become spiritually vibrant.

*David Friedman*

## ON MUTUAL SUPPORT

As they were growing up, how many times did I note how my kids did so much better with one another when one was lying on the floor bleeding (so to speak). Although there were some fine points in interpersonal relationships that needed work, early on they did get the

essence of “mutually supportive”. West End gets it also. It isn’t just a phrase in our Mission Statement. We’ve succeeded in establishing a mutually supportive ethos here. Not to say that, like my kids, we don’t occasionally have our small contretemps with each other. But essentially West End “gets” mutually supportive.

All synagogues have some form of Bikkur Cholim, a group committed to lending emotional or even physical support to those members who are in particular need. Which is good. But how many have had a Psalms Project! Some years ago, when our little rabbi – small but mighty – she who would be the one to comfort us – fell victim to cancer, and at an age when one should not expect to think about health issues – well, what to do? We said psalms. We reconstructed some of them. We argued with others. Some we loved “as is.” So, for many months, until that phase of our rabbi’s treatment was complete, every single day each of the one hundred and fifty Psalms was recited by at least one West End member. And our rabbi healed. And who knows how many others of us were shielded beneath the resonance of those same recitations. And we went onward – mutually supportive. Perhaps West End’s finest hour.

So we’ll continue to go on together in some form of mutually supportive “psalming” while negotiating life’s rough seas, on those days when the high waves don’t just part for us.

*Jane Weprin-Menzi*

# SHABBAT EVENING

## **DUSK DEEPENS**

2

### **RECEIVING SHABBAT**

Dusk

deepens.

The frenetic pace of creation

is stilled...

May you

open your eyes to wonder

open your body to rest

open your mind to peace.

And may you, in your renewed innocence

sail on this halcyon Shabbat sea,

'till dusk returns.

*Mark Nazimova*

## PSALM 96

24

Sing to the Lord  
and all the earth sings  
a new song,  
day after day  
chimes His name,  
blesses Her.

Drum and tambourine and voice  
breathe their mysteries, and the new song within us  
flattens the cruel stones of ancient gods,  
flashes like lightning among the heavens  
that the Lord makes,  
His glory sparkling love among the nations,  
Her wondrous deeds healing the people.

Bow to the Lord  
and the trees of the forest  
shout for joy, the sea and all within it thunder.  
Sing to the Lord a new song.  
Her waves, His leaves  
will seed a new justice  
will celebrate a new harvest.

*Helen Papell*

## PSALM 98

32

O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things.  
His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

he LORD has made known his victory;  
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and  
sing praises.

Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.  
With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the  
LORD.

the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy  
at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

*Esther Heyman*

## PSALM 92

48

### A SONG FOR SHABBAT

How good it is to sing praises in God's name  
To declare loving kindness in the morning  
And faithfulness by night!

These were the words sung  
By Adam and Eve after the first night  
When darkness descended  
Without warning or explanation  
When they felt certainties  
Slipping away and fearfulness  
Encroaching on their dreams

But in the morning dawn broke  
And in gratitude they sang  
This song in amazement  
As they awoke to find  
They were in the garden  
On the first Sabbath day

Soon they would learn  
The full glories of God's garden

And the work to be done—  
The trimming back of wild  
Thoughts that mistake  
Another's silence for abandonment;  
The pruning of the myth  
That we do not have a choice;  
The weeding of overgrown  
Traditions that need to be plucked—  
All this they would learn;  
But for now a day of rest

Let this be my song for Shabbat:  
May the righteous flourish like a palm tree  
Grow like a cedar of Lebanon  
In the house of God  
We shall flourish  
We shall bear fruit  
Even in old age  
Always vigorous and sturdy  
As we sing:  
*To seek godliness is just*  
*Let it be my rock*  
*Let me do no wrong.*

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

## ASHER BIDVARO

58

### GOD IN NATURE

Oh my God! *Baruch attah adonay...*

(Walked in, dropped bags, it was automatic).

Glanced out the window. Oh my God!

The perfect glowing sun has just slipped away,  
painting the sky in pink, orange and purple lights.

Feeling blessed, blessing in return.

Day mixes into evening, light into darkness. *Ma'ariv aravim...*

A moment that is timeless, a beauty beyond words.

The majesty of the moment contains the words of the Creator,  
*Asher bidvaro ma'ariv haravim.*

Projected across the snowy roofs on the other side of the street,

Dramatic accent to the budding greens of spring.

Washed in the steamy heat of summer,

Reflected in the mirror of the changing leaves of fall,

Blessed by this daily gift of renewal, we bless the Creator in return.

*Baruch attah adonay hama'ariv aravim.*

*Margie Schulman*



## GOD IN NATURE

What of the cardinal's song, piercing winter's crystal air, red coat flashing by,  
Or colors of sycamore bark on city trees,  
Or stands of white birch glistening in an Adirondack forest?

What of a few brave redbuds, fuchsia starbursts in a leafless Kansas woods,  
Or pinky white-apple blossoms, lilacs heady with scent, or majestic irises drinking late spring  
rain?

What of the taste of the first asparagus stalk or strawberry, then later, the heft, warmth and  
flavor of a tomato on its way from vine to mouth?

What of water in summer heat, speckling pavement hissing from a garden hose or blasting  
from a hydrant.

Or the scent of sunshine lingering on sheets swinging in the breeze?

What of the colors of fall, leaves swirling, horse chestnuts and acorns tumbling to ground,  
Squirrels collecting, woodpeckers drilling, swallows diving into cloudless blue?

God, whatever you are, thank you for the gifts of the earth: everyday, in every season, with  
every sense.

*Helen Stein*

# TZITZIT

72

THE BOUNDLESS ONE *told Moses: Speak to the Israelites – tell them to make themselves tzitzit upon the corners of their clothes, throughout their generations.*

*Numbers 15:37-41*

May the fringed *tallisim* that we wear today, which once signified free men, and on women now declares both equal stature and multi-hued individuality,

Continue to tie us to the generations of Jews who wore *tzitzit* before us,  
to our traditions and to the Jewish community;

Envelop each of us in a protective mantle, head-shrouded and inner-focused,  
floating in tradition or connected, with shawl to neighbor's shoulder;

Celebrate passage from childhood to *minyan* member, non-Jew to tribe.

May the strings and knots of the *tzitzit*, that once represented commandedness,  
today represent our choice  
to participate,  
to perform mitzvot,  
to search out ways of expressing Judaism that tie past to present and tradition to  
knowledge.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# EMET VE'EMUNAH

74

## GE'ULAH REDEMPTION

The Israelites walked into the Reed Sea  
one foot at a time.

(What were they thinking about  
as the water rose  
up their legs  
chilling their hearts  
advancing toward their open mouths?)

We continue to walk  
here, now.  
One foot at a time.  
(On our better days, forward.)

Alone  
I  
cannot reach the far shore  
without drowning.

Somehow I don't go under.  
The person to my right  
holds me up.  
Something I cannot see  
holds him up.

Blessed is the SOURCE of HELP  
so often unexpected.  
I step forward.  
The sea is vast.

Blessed are You, GRACIOUS ONE, for your miracles that greet us every day.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, al nisecha shebechol yom imanu.*

*Mark Nazamova*

## REDEMPTION

An aluminum can may be redeemed for a nickel or a dime. A grocery coupon may be redeemed for a discount of a quarter or even a dollar. But on Shabbat, we can redeem something even more valuable, ourselves. Each Shabbat, we have the opportunity to reflect and then redeem something that made us imperfect. And in the six days that follow, we can work towards taking “home” something better and improving our lives and those around us. The lines that follow begin with a focus on the world and narrow down to a focus on ourselves. Select one attribute that strikes a chord with you or create your own line. By taking one step forward, we make the world a better place and ourselves as well. This is the path of redemption.

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my faithlessness for belief,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my darkness for light,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my doubt with confidence,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my prejudice for tolerance,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my ignorance with knowledge,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my banality for creativity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my competitiveness for cooperation,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my distrust for trust,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hatefulness with love,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my anger for understanding,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my cruelty with kindness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hostility for peacefulness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my violence for acts of kindness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my discord for harmony,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my animosity for goodwill,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my greed for generosity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my miserliness with charity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my haughtiness for modesty,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my arrogance for humility,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my impatience for serenity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my indifference for caring,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my disrespect with obedience,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my pity for respect,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my contempt for esteem,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my slothfulness for productivity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my selfishness for selflessness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my pettiness for generosity,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my conflict for peace,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my weakness for strength,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my wickedness with righteousness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hatred for love,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my despair for hope.  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my selfishness for worldliness,  
On this Shabbat, may I help make the world a better place, and  
On this Shabbat, may I study Torah and become a better person.

*Harvey Kaufman*

# HASHKIVENU

80

## EVENING PRAYER

**At the end of each day, may we remember  
To look back and appreciate**

Instances we stayed with a difficult task and made progress

Occasions we were patient with ourselves, and those when we found patience for others

Times someone treated us with generosity or love.

**To examine interactions that didn't go as we had hoped –**

Seeking avenues to personal closeness or problem resolution,  
Determining to make amends where we caused hurt or offense.

**To Put To Bed The Cares Of The Day,**

So as to sleep peacefully,  
Knowing the day was well spent,  
Hoping for additional opportunities to inch closer to the person each would like to be.

**May we awaken refreshed, and with a sense of possibility and courage.**

May we see that every challenge offers a chance to reach out or accomplish –  
Each another opportunity to spend the day well.

**May we never give up hope; never abandon the search for the strength to overcome.**

May we never become immune to the miracles – small and large – that make life wonderful.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## PLACES OF HOLINESS, PLACES OF PEACE

After the night of exile in *Mitzrayim*,  
the awakening to divine presence in the *Mishkan*.  
After the darkness of Yerushalayim's siege,  
the dawn of Yavneh's flowering.

Guide us from darkness to dawn,  
from insecurity to serenity in an uncertain world.

God—*HaMakom*—is the place of holiness;  
God is everywhere,  
so everywhere can be made holy.  
*Shalom* is the peace of wholeness;  
to recognize God everywhere is  
to sense the holiness hidden in the world's fragments,  
to feel commanded to join the fragments back together into a whole,  
into peace.

Teach us to frame the world in Your *Mishkan*, that we might encounter divine presence everywhere.  
Cover our sleep within Your *sukkah* of peace, that we might awake to wholeness every morning.

Spread over all of us the shelter of Your peace and an awareness of Your presence.

---

<i>HaMakom</i>	One of the names of God, meaning The Place
<i>Mitzrayim</i>	Egypt
<i>sukkah</i>	Shelter, booth
<i>Yerushalayim</i>	Jerusalem
<i>Yavneh</i>	The town established by the early Rabbis as a safe haven when Jerusalem was under siege, so that Rabbinic Judaism could continue developing as the Second Temple (and Temple-centered Judaism) was about to be destroyed by the Romans.

*Mark Nazimova*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE AMIDAH

88

As work-week cares fade to Shabbat peace,  
task-focus to Seventh-Day sanctity and grandeur;  
let us participate actively in this candle-lit transition -

Using the silence of the Amidah  
to bridge to a prayerful state

Finding renewal in the ancient themes;  
reverence, thanks, hope for peace

Or, meditating,  
let each open the door between mind and soul;  
searching for the path to heightened self-awareness, greater understanding,  
increased compassion.

*Andrea Bardfeld*



# GEVUROT

94

## DIVINE POWER

*Atah gibor l'olam Adonay, ray Lehoshiyah*

Overwhelmed by the awesome power and mystery of the universe, we seek help to overcome our innate weaknesses. Science has chipped away at the vast unknown that pervades our world but much remains that is still beyond our understanding. We feel the wind in our faces and move through the rain and snow that swirls about us. But we are barely able to predict them and cannot control them. The living are sustained by marvels of medicine, perhaps divinely inspired but accomplished through much time and effort. Captives are freed after human intervention and life persists despite incredible odds. Our existence is rooted in life and death but they are still beyond our comprehension. We seek salvation but know not its source or dimension. We are mere humans, seeking support beyond ourselves.

*Stan Samuels*

## DIVINE POWER

Each week the world is reborn  
even when I'm too preoccupied to notice.

Each day I'm one step from turning,  
inches from *t'shuvah*,  
but I'm looking the other way.

Each hour the oppressive chain of cause and effect which binds me  
weakens as it quietly fissures and cracks  
unheard as I bend my ear to the clamor of the street.

Each minute, though hidden from me, is an opportunity  
to be birthed  
out of the womb of my past  
into a better future.

Praised be God  
Who makes renewal possible.

*Mark Nazimova*

# KEDUSHAT HASHEM

94

## HALLOWING GOD'S NAME

Holy, a spirit of generosity and kindness.  
May we always be grateful for its presence.

Holy, the moment of gratitude  
The recognition of beauty  
The search for the best in each.  
Let us sanctify that search,  
and each small step achieved toward Godliness

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# KEDUSHAT HAYOM

96

## THE DAYS HOLINESS

*Sabe'enu mituveha*

*Samechenu bishu'atecha*

*Vetaher libenu le'ovdeha de'emet*

Whether we step forth to greet it  
Or wait inside for it to arrive  
It's bound to come every week.

If we are daydreamers—  
Living in worlds we imagine—  
It comes like the breaking of a spell  
Awakening us to the smells and sounds that surround.

Or maybe we are engagers—  
Rapt with attention to details—  
Then it is a letting go  
A receiving of the mysteries that lie beyond.

Whatever it is  
Let it come to us  
Not with the shuddering force of revelation—  
Not the thundering bolt that shakes the very foundation of the house  
Let it come quietly  
Like taking down from the attic and unwrapping  
Something within ourselves that's been hidden there all along.

May we be blessed with the courage to turn our prayers into actions

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

# HODA'AH

100

## THANKS

Why is there something  
rather than nothing?

Why do I exist, able to pose the question?

I did not earn this.

Bounty beyond measure.

Why is there something  
rather than nothing?

Awe.

Why do I exist, able to pose the question?

Amazement.

I did not earn this.

Gratitude.

The feast of life

is before us

inviting

me to partake of it.

To whom/what/ever set the table:

Thank you.

*Mark Nazimova*

# BIRKAT HASHALOM

104

## BLESSING FOR PEACE

We cannot undo what has been done to us  
nor what we have done to others  
for time's arrow flies in one direction only.  
So let peace come  
to the rubble of history in which we stand.  
Let peace come  
to the hill on which the Temple used to sit.  
Let peace come  
to the pit from which the Twin Towers used to rise.  
Let peace come  
to our souls  
surrounded by the ghosts of friends  
of family  
of lovers  
and of ancestors.  
Let peace come  
to the ghosts of Afghans  
of Koreans, North and South  
of Irish, Protestant and Catholic  
of Cherokee  
of Romans  
of Palestinians and of Israelis.  
Let the rubble grow no higher.  
Let peace come.

*Barukh atah Adonai she'mazkir otanu lirdof shalom.*

Blessed are You, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who reminds us to seek peace.

*Mark Nazimova*

# YARZEIT READINGS

130

## CANDLES

And there you are in my arms  
in a dress with ruffles,  
grinning with just two teeth  
as everyone sings to you,  
and that's you with handfuls of wrapping paper,  
your face smeared with frosting,  
and look at you there, showing your doll  
how to cut the cake,  
and it seems impossible that it's been four years  
of me lighting candles you'll never see,  
flickering dimly in their fireproof glass,  
on the day you were born too soon,  
on the day you should have been born,  
on the day of remembering  
all the birthdays I wanted you to have.

## AT SEVENTY

### A MEDITATION ON PSALM 90

*“The days of our years are threescore years and ten.  
And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength  
but labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away...”*

*“May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us  
and establish for us the work of our hands.  
Yes, the work of our hands – may it endure.”*

*Psalm 90:10, 17*

Our life begins in the warm darkness of our mother’s womb.  
We enter the light, first finding family, then friends, later lovers.  
Sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain;  
Often lost, sometimes found.  
Music, art, books, babies;  
Work to do, a life to live.

Together, we walk along the shore of the endless Sea,  
leaving footprints behind us in the sand,  
hoping they will be deep enough to last a while  
before disappearing into the ever-rising tide of forgotten memories.

Or alone on its smooth surface, we pull ourselves forward, stroke by stroke,  
searching hopefully for meaning in the eternal fog of time.  
Looking back, we sometimes glimpse some of the swirls and eddies created by our passage,  
But mostly we do not know the full impact that our actions have on the lives of others.

Time passes. Daylight and darkness, daylight and darkness.  
Slowly at first, then fast, and faster.

It ends too soon.  
Parents go. Siblings, lovers, friends depart.  
We’re lucky if our deepest love is with us to the end.

At last we too leave the light, returning to the colder darkness  
of our other mother, Earth.

Some imagine we will once again find those long-lost loves.  
Others think that we return to live another life; and then another.  
But the truth is, we do not know what awaits us there.

No matter. Our life – not long enough, it’s true – is a blessing  
for which we can only be grateful.  
Perhaps eternally. Perhaps not.



*“...Establish for us the work of our hands.  
Yes, the work of our hands – may it endure.”*

*Donald Menzi*

# SHABBAT MORNING

**SHIREI SHAHAR**

146

**MORNING SONGS  
THE BIRDS OF DAWN**

When we first wake up, we don't know much,  
but the birds do: sparrow, rooster, peacock,  
each can tell the difference between night and morning,  
between when we dream our lives and live them.  
Their chirps and trills can move us toward noticing  
how breathing and not breathing are both part of our days,  
and how the light of this world, filtered through our waking,  
becomes the song we all know how to sing.

*Nancie S. Martin*

# BIRCHOT HASHAHAR

152

## MORNING BLESSINGS

### On Waking Up:

How blessed it is to be restored by a good night's sleep and to awaken, refreshed, to face a new day.

### The Birds of Dawn:

How simple yet wondrous are the rooster's crow and the sparrow's flight, greeting the light of dawn.

### The Earth Upon the Waters:

We marvel at the continents, floating on moving plates, and dividing the seas and oceans.

### The Lamp:

Blessed is light and the miracle of vision.

### Clothing the naked:

We are thankful for clothes, giving us warmth and protection.

### Freeing the Captives:

Grateful are those who were captives and are now free and those who have always enjoyed freedom.

### Raising the Humble:

Blessed are those who help to raise the humble and meet the needs of the less fortunate.

### Making Firm a Person's Steps:

Blessed is the firmness of our steps on the path of righteousness.

### Meeting One's Needs:

How grateful are we whose own needs are met and are able to help the less fortunate.

### Girding Israel With Strength:

We are thankful for the survival of the Jewish people and the creation of the state of Israel.

### The Splendor of Israel:

We appreciate the great things that Israel has achieved.

### In the Image of God:

How blessed are we with the strength and weakness of being human.

### Being Free:

How thankful are we for the freedom to act for our own good and that of others.

Being of Israel:

We accept, with courage, the mixed blessing of being part of the people Israel.

Strength to the Weary:

We are grateful for the renewal that permits us to continue our work despite our weariness.

The Marvel of Life:

How incredible and wondrous is the gift of life for us and for all living things.

The Soul:

Consciousness is still beyond our understanding and the soul exceeds our comprehension. But whatever they are — different or the same — we are grateful for them.

The Breath of Life:

We breathe and we live. It is the miracle within us. We are thankful for the breath of life that sustains us.

Torah:

We are grateful for the wisdom and the heritage of the Torah, for all it meant to our forbears and all that it still means today.

*Stan Samuels*

## ELOHAY NESHAMAH

165

I can feel you. The separation is palpable as you carefully place me on the edge.  
You have set me down in the shadow of your watchfulness, my essence pristine.  
Your presence wraps itself around me, encircles me with its protectiveness as I alight for  
only a moment.

I take my place.

I breathe and it is a solitary experience, each inhalation an isolated event as my body  
takes and then gives back.

I can hear the whispers, the disquieting rumbles to which I abandon myself as I am  
caught up in the wave of humanity.

The soul you have given me floats as it brushes lightly against the others.

I am not disquieted nor do I falter as I am drawn by the pull of generations.

And, when you have willed it, my soul will soar, gracefully folding itself back into the  
eternal stream of life.

And I will be a memory.

*Joanne Feltman*

## ANOTHER DAY

I awake from sleep and breathe the air, in and out.

I open my eyes and give thanks:

To be alive,

To be awake,

To be aware, of myself and the world.

These are miracles of living,

Miracles of being human;

Of being in the image of our ancestors

And the God they worshiped.

My soul is refreshed.

My soul?

My innermost self,

My mind,

My personality:

That which distinguishes me from all other creatures,

From all other humans.

I am awake: to face the rising sun,

To face a new day,

To face myself and the world,

Ready for Tikkun olam.

*Stan Samuels*

## ELOHAY NESHAMAH

*“Elohay neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi”*

Many of us feel deep ambivalence about this prayer – the kind of positive-negative, love-hate relationship that we have with many other parts of the liturgy.

Let’s start with the negatives.

The English translation of the prayer (p. 164) is “My God, the soul you gave to me is pure...” The problem is, many of us don’t believe a single word of it.

We could start with *Elohay* - “My God” – but any discussion of “*Elohay*” and its meaning in a Reconstructionist context would be a whole topic just by itself, and deserves to be addressed on its own, so I’ll just skip over it this time.

Then comes *neshamah shenatata bi* – “the soul that you gave me...”

The traditional view, both Jewish and non-Jewish, is that the soul is “enclothed” within the body, just as our bodies are enclothed within our outer garments. In other words, the soul is our “inner self” – everything about us that is not our physical body.

We describe our inner self as having many different aspects. We speak, for example, of the “conscious” and the “unconscious” mind. We also speak of our instincts, our emotions and our intellect as three distinctly different aspects of our inner selves. Hebrew uses the terms *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshamah* in the same way to represent different aspects of the soul. Traditionally the *nefesh*, *ruach* and *neshamah* were believed to be centered in different parts of the body: the *nefesh* in the liver, the *ruach* in the heart and the *neshamah* in the brain.

Today we know that the different aspects of the mind – instinct, feelings and intellect – are, in fact, related to three different parts of the brain, but we still don’t know how the physical and the mental – the body and the soul – work together. It is still one of the great mysteries of science. As a result, when we want to talk about the dynamics of our inner selves – our soul – we are forced to fall back on the traditional pre-scientific language of analogy, metaphor, and poetic imagery.

And, unlike the belief expressed in *Elohay neshamah*, one of the few things that all the different religious traditions agree on is that our souls are not “pure.”

Jewish tradition, for example, speaks of two conflicting forces within everyone - the *yetzer ha tov* and the *yetzer ha ra* – the inclination to do good and the inclination to do evil. Our challenge as ethical beings is to resist the temptations of our *yetzer ha ra* and follow the urgings of our *yetzer ha tov*.



In another tradition – I don't remember which – the master tells his disciple, "I have within me two beasts – a tiger and a wild boar – who fight each other every day." "Which one will win, master?" asks the disciple, to which the master replies, "The one that I feed." In this view, our conflicting impulses to do good or to do evil are either strengthened or weakened by the choices we make and the deeds that we do every day of our life.

The same thought is expressed by Thich Nat Hahn, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk who teaches about what he calls "mindfulness." The mind, he says – we could also say the soul – is like a garden in which many different kinds of seeds are planted. The seeds correspond to all the different potentials of human character and personality. There are seeds of anger and seeds of calmness. Seeds of arrogance and seeds of modesty. Seeds of hatred and seeds of love. "Which seeds will grow and flourish and which will remain dormant?" he asks. The seeds that are nourished and will grow are those that we "water" every day by our choices and our actions. When we express our love and concern for others, we water the seeds of love and kindness, nourishing those aspects both in ourselves and in others. When we "lose it" and let ourselves become angry and shout at our children or at someone who has "made us mad," we water the seeds of anger, reinforcing and strengthening the unhealthy aspect – what we Jews call the *yetzer ha ra* – not only in ourselves, but also in the people we are shouting at.

This teaching is not about the "purity" of our souls, it's about their potential for good or evil – and about our responsibility for nourishing the potential for good. It is about taking time to think about – to be mindful of – the consequences of our choices, our actions, and our interactions not just on the outer world but on our inner selves. And not just on our own inner selves, but on the souls of the people with whom we come in contact every day.

If I were going to re-write the *Elohay neshamah* prayer to "say what we really mean" – a phrase you hear a lot in West End – it would go something like this:

"To Whom it May Concern:

I think that my inner self – my instincts, emotions, and intelligence – may still have some room for improvement. I hope that by my conscious choices and mindful actions I am able to nourish and strengthen the best aspects, and minimize those that are less desirable, both in my own self and in the people around me.

Tentatively yours."

Unfortunately, you could never sing that. And that is reason enough for us not to try to re-write "*Elohay neshamah...*" but to leave it just as it is. Whenever I hear our rabbi and cantor singing "*Elohai neshamah she natata bi tehorah hi...*" toward the beginning of the Shabbat morning service – their voices perfectly matched, with the two melodic lines weaving in and out of each other – it "touches my soul," if one can still use that

expression. The melody for this prayer is now deeply embedded somewhere in the back corners of my mind, and I often hear it in my head or find myself humming it.

And that is the wonderful thing about the music in our services. It adds an emotional dimension to the words that we say, making it possible for us to sing ancient words that we would never just say, and helping us to maintain our personal links to our people's past.

So now, whatever you may think about God or the purity of our souls – whether you believe in them or not – let us turn to page 165, join together and sing it like we really mean it – loudly, with energy, with enthusiasm, and with love.

*“Elohay neshamah shenatata bi tehorah hi.”*

*Donald Menzi*

# PESUKEY DEZIMRAH

182

## OUR GOD

Our God and God of our ancestors —

We think of you,  
Search for you,  
Transform you, informed by a modern lens.

Our God of creation, of renewal -

We experience you in our grown children's support and understanding,  
Our little ones' searching questions,  
The tiny perfection of a baby,  
The birth of an idea.

Our God of "Thou Shalt" —

We access our conscience,  
Review values,  
Our actions influenced by Torah and our history.

Our God of miracles —

We see you in glorious sunsets,  
The magnificent detail of a butterfly, a snowflake,  
Unexpectedly wondrous conclusions, illuminating new paths.

Our God of tradition —

We study you, interpret you, and accept but do not accept,  
Finally transforming our Eternal One to fit updated understanding, current need -  
Creating ways to pray to God as metaphor.

Our Biblical God who responds, sets limits, punishes —

We find your attributes in friends and community who offer caring, insight, occasional anger.  
Deny your retributive hand in catastrophes, seeking worldly explanations.  
In relinquishing expectations of Fair, embracing the notion that life simply Is,  
We turn inward, looking for - nourishing spirituality.

In our finite world, ever aware of circumscribed choices,

May we appreciate the small steps, cherish the daily, enjoy all positive change.  
May we have the courage to navigate the crises and the disasters -  
The strength to survive the heartbreaks.  
May we continue to search for ways to relate, to experience and to cherish the godly.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## PSALM 92

208

### A SONG FOR SHABBAT

How good it is to sing praises in God's name  
To declare loving kindness in the morning  
And faithfulness by night!

These were the words sung  
By Adam and Eve after the first night  
When darkness descended  
Without warning or explanation  
When they felt certainties  
Slipping away and fearfulness  
Encroaching on their dreams

But in the morning dawn broke  
And in gratitude they sang  
This song in amazement  
As they awoke to find  
They were in the garden  
On the first Sabbath day

Soon they would learn  
The full glories of God's garden

And the work to be done—  
The trimming back of wild  
Thoughts that mistake  
Another's silence for abandonment;  
The pruning of the myth  
That we do not have a choice;  
The weeding of overgrown  
Traditions that need to be plucked—  
All this they would learn;  
But for now a day of rest

Let this be my song for Shabbat:  
May the righteous flourish like a palm tree  
Grow like a cedar of Lebanon  
In the house of God  
We shall flourish  
We shall bear fruit  
Even in old age  
Always vigorous and sturdy  
As we sing:  
*To seek godliness is just*  
*Let it be my rock*  
*Let me do no wrong.*

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

## PSALM 148

228

Hallelu-Yah! Praise God!

Praise the Source from the heavens;  
from infinity surpassing imagination.  
Praise, all you souls,  
Praise, all bringers of Godliness!  
Praise, sun and moon,  
Praise, all bright stars!  
Praise, from infinity beyond the infinite!

Your very existence praises the Source  
whose energy sparked all life.  
Your endurance praises the Order  
whose intricate simplicity sustains the universe.

Praise the Source from the earth and the sea;  
from the infinity of commonplace miracles –  
All strange underwater creatures,  
The ocean depths,  
Fire and hail, snow and smoke,  
The driving force of storm winds,  
All mountains and hills,  
All fruit trees and cedars,  
All wild and tamed beasts,  
Creeping things and winged birds,  
All peoples of the earth,  
Exalted or oppressed,  
Men and women alike,  
Old and young together --  
Your very existence praises the Source of Creation,  
The Force beyond naming,  
The Source of the splendor of Heaven and Earth.

The glorious Life-Force exalts all you seekers,  
All who strive to draw close to the Source,  
Among the people of Israel  
And all who dwell on Earth.

Hallelu-Yah! Praise God!

*Kate M. Sherman*

**CALL TO PRAYER**

*They built a mighty idol: of silver jewels and gold, And when it was all ready to it their prayers they told.*

\* \* \*

In the time of our ancestors there were many gods,  
And many names for the One God.  
But the God to whom our ancestors prayed  
Was beyond naming.  
God could not be depicted in an idol, or a statue, or an icon.  
But the grandeur of God could be seen in a starry sky.  
The majesty of God was evident in a sunset.  
The power of God could be felt in an earthquake.  
And the wonder of God could be perceived in a newborn baby.  
But the mystery of God was all pervasive.

And now we see galaxies, trillions of light-years apart;  
Life, written in molecules; Intelligence created from inert wafers of sand;  
Man unraveling the secrets of the universe;  
And the mystery of God is all-pervasive.

*Stan Samuels*

# BARHU

Blessed the love that joins us;  
The spirit, the shared intention  
that creates community.

Blessed our traditions;  
The God of our ancestors,  
steeped in holiness and ceremony.  
The ark, sheltering torahs  
which teach, challenge, demand interpretation.

Blessed our Reconstructionist theology;  
Nourishing the holy flame within -  
Urging each toward creative understanding,  
Opening paths to participation.

Grounded in our ancient tradition,  
Let these paths lead us to  
Learning,  
New traditions,  
and the  
Increasing appreciation of, and thankfulness for  
The beauty, the holiness that surround us.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# BARHU

## A POEM ON SPIRITUALITY

in the name of  
Andre Comte-Sponville

We are inside  
at the very heart of being  
The very heart of the mystery  
a spirituality of immanence: it is all there, and it is what we call the universe

Is it finite or infinite?  
We cannot know...not even the physicists  
No way of knowing if our universe is the All

But we do have an experience of immanence and immensity

We are in the ALL  
...and whether finite or not  
It surpasses us in every direction

It envelops, contains and exceeds us

We are inside of it  
...it is an exhaustible, indefinite immanence  
whose limits are undefined and inaccessible

We are inside it...we live within the unfathomable.

Anyone can experience this by looking up at the night sky.  
All you need is a bit of concentration and silence.

You can see billions of miles away with the naked eye.

I can barely see the ground beneath my feet and yet,  
far better than in broad daylight  
I can see the unfathomable that contains me.

But what worries me

Is not the universe – the apparent or actual limitlessness of space, eternity, silence  
...no  
What worries me is everything --- everything --- that is, except the All  
which I find soothing



Virtually all my worries are egotistical  
or at least egocentric ones

I fear only for myself and for those I love

This is why the faraway reassures me  
It puts my anxieties in perspective

When I contemplate immensity  
the ego seems laughable by comparison  
It makes my egocentricity, thus my worries,  
a little less intense, a little less powerful

Occasionally it even manages to obliterate them for a few seconds.

What a relief, when the ego gets out of the way  
and nothing remains but the All

.

Nothing remains but the enormous *thereness* of being, nature and the universe

With no one left at this particular instant, in this particular body  
to worry.....about....anything

[Adapted. The language is the author's but the poem is by Barbara Gish  
Sculd]

*Barbara Gish Sculd*

## GOD OF NATURE

What of the cardinal's song, piercing winter's crystal air, red coat flashing by,  
Or colors of sycamore bark on city trees,  
Or stands of white birch glistening in an Adirondack forest?

What of a few brave redbuds, fuchsia starbursts in a leafless Kansas woods,  
Or pinky white-apple blossoms, lilacs heady with scent, or majestic irises drinking late spring  
rain?

What of the taste of the first asparagus stalk or strawberry, then later, the heft, warmth and  
flavor of a tomato on its way from vine to mouth?

What of water in summer heat, speckling pavement hissing from a garden hose or blasting  
from a hydrant.  
Or the scent of sunshine lingering on sheets swinging in the breeze?

What of the colors of fall, leaves swirling, horse chestnuts and acorns tumbling to ground,  
Squirrels collecting, woodpeckers drilling, swallows diving into cloudless blue?

God, whatever you are, thank you for the gifts of the earth: everyday, in every season, with  
every sense.

*Helen Stein*

## **EL ADON A MEDITATION**

El Adon is a hymn that praises creator, creation, and the world of created things. It was written by an early post-Talmudic mystic who begins with an awe-filled description of the attributes of a mysterious creator. The hymn continues by praising the world of light visible to the mystic's unaided eyes: the luminous stars, the sun, the moon and the planets; the universe known at his time, subject to the will of the creator.

Creation and creator were mysteries to the hymnist. He could describe what he saw, the world of created things, but he could only give exalted human attributes to the creator. Modern humans have augmented eyes that enable them to look at the world of created things from electrons to galaxies of galaxies. But, as with the mystic, for modern humans the creation of the universe and the nature of a creator remain the central mysteries of existence that human reasoning and science seem incapable of penetrating.

In this hymn the mystic blessed and praised God as creator of the lights: the stars that fill all space, the sun and moon that govern day and night, the planets, all of which circle his world in joyous dance. His creator is described, in part, as being of the substance of light, of radiance, of that which he imbued his creation.

We, today, see the same universe but in greater detail. We see that we belong to a galaxy of several hundred billion stars, that there are galaxies of stars beyond our own, that there are galaxies of galaxies. We see that the visible universe is bathed in a radiation that seems to be the remnant of an immense explosive beginning that caused the universe to expand and sent the galaxies rushing away from each other. We see that stars are born, live and die, and we believe that in their death throes are created the atoms from which we are made. We believe that when stars like ours die they become white dwarfs about the size of the earth that eventually cool and become dim, but that when more massive stars die they explode and become black holes.

We draw inferences from what we see, as did the mystics. The mystics were bolder and inferred God. We acknowledge the mystery of the existence of God, but limit our inferences. Even they are shocking and surprising and give us a sense of the strangeness and wonder of creation. We infer that less than ten percent of the stuff of the universe is made of the atoms and radiation that we can measure and that we believe that we understand. The rest is dark matter that we can neither measure nor understand. We infer the existence of subatomic particles that are invisible to our instruments, such as quarks and gluons. We now infer that the universe will expand forever, but, decade by decade, our inferences have changed.

For us, today, understanding keeps evolving but the sense of the mystery and surprise of creation keeps evolving as well. We are true descendants of the hymnist of El Adon.

*Alan Oppenheim*

## AHAVAH RABAH

272

Let us strive to understand, to see, to hear, to learn. to teach, to keep, to do and to uphold with love and gratitude all the wisdom and compassion that our Torah reveals to us. Let us make the Torah's teachings real by our deeds and pass its teachings on to future generations.

May our people, in spite of all the traumas we have experienced, always be a people teaching and doing justice. May we always be a generous people, filled with love and compassion.

*Marty Silberberg*

**THE SOUND OF ONE**

We tell each other to listen to the Name we cannot say,  
but the Name is ours, and together, with all our might,  
we make it what we hear, bigger than all of us.  
Starting with a syllable from the librarians of our minds,  
ending with a consonant resonant of the past,  
we are loud now, our voices – deep, bright, breathy, flat –  
rising in six words, each of them an act of creation,  
bringing into being the sound of one.

*Nancie S. Martin*

## HEAR, OH ISRAEL

Hear, oh Israel  
Hear, oh humans, our family:  
Revel in every second, minute, hour  
with every extension of your body  
give thanks (were our mouths  
filled with song as  
water fills the sea)  
to the Incomprehensible  
(and our tongues abounding  
with praise like mighty waves)  
Live your lifetimes as thanks for their miracles  
let every mitochondrion,  
every eyelash and fingernail,  
every cell sing with praise and adoration  
of the One  
(we could not possibly thank You  
sufficiently, Blesser and Blessed,  
for all the wonders  
—this life—  
which You have given, unconditionally,  
as Your gift of love to us.)  
With all of your wholeness  
with revelations and exultation,  
with awe and wonder every second,  
give gratitude, glory and love  
to the Eternal  
for this  
the greatest gift of the seconds, minutes, hours,  
days, weeks, months and years  
and do not let a single one go by unheeded and  
uncelebrated.

*Arielle Derby*

## BETWEEN THE LINES

And you must love The One, your God,

*Love what is Godly: love justice, and kindness, and bonds of fellowship.*  
with your whole heart,

*With our emotions, our intellect, and our spirit.*  
with every breath,

*Because we never know how many more breaths we have; and as we say these words, we remember those who died before we reached this moment, but who are still with us, because they helped each one of us become who we are, and helped all of us together reach this place.*

with all you have.

*With everything we bring here—our confusion and our understanding; our ignorance and our knowledge. Our cynicism and our curiosity; our doubts and our faith.*

Take these words that I command you now to heart.

*Take this teaching that we have received seriously; and take our hearts seriously. Let each of us interpret the words through our heart and mind, and let our heart and mind be informed by the words.*

Teach them intently to your children.

*Teach our children. Show them the path. But don't just talk; listen, too, as our children teach us.*

Speak them when you sit inside your house

*The houses we live in, pray in, play in, and labor in.*

or walk upon the road,

*The road here: from our homes a few blocks away, and on the East Side, and in the Village, and in the Bronx, and Queens, and Brooklyn; the roads from Germany, from Poland, from Latvia, and from Shanghai; and the other roads that we've traveled to get here—from Orthodoxy and Reform, from non-observance and from observance of other faiths.*

when you lie down and when you rise.

*When we lie down and rest from our labors on Shabbat; and when we rise to the occasion the rest of the week to build a welcoming, loving, spiritual, and stimulating West End community.*

And bind them as a sign upon your hand,

*That when we reach out our hands in greeting to our neighbors, we show them our values.*  
and keep them visible before your eyes.

*So that, through all the difficulties of our lives, we stay focused on what's most important.*

Inscribe them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

*That our gates should always be open to all who want to come, learn, pray, play, and work together to create a Godly life.*

Mark Nazimova

# TZITZIT

284

THE BOUNDLESS ONE *told Moses: Speak to the Israelites – tell them to make themselves tzitzit upon the corners of their clothes, throughout their generations.*

*Numbers 15:37-41*

May the fringed *tallisim* that we wear today, which once signified free men, and on women now declares both equal stature and multi-hued individuality,

Continue to tie us to the generations of Jews who wore *tzitzit* before us,  
to our traditions and to the Jewish community;

Envelop each of us in a protective mantle, head-shrouded and inner-focused,  
floating in tradition or connected, with shawl to neighbor's shoulder;

Celebrate passage from childhood to *minyan* member, non-Jew to tribe.  
May the strings and knots of the *tzitzit*, that once represented commandedness,  
today represent our choice  
to participate,  
to perform mitzvot,  
to search out ways of expressing Judaism that tie past to present and tradition to  
knowledge.

*Andrea Bardfeld*



## EMET VE'EMUNAH

286

### REDEMPTION (GE'ULAH)

The Israelites walked into the Reed Sea  
one foot at a time.  
(What were they thinking about  
as the water rose  
up their legs  
chilling their hearts  
advancing toward their open mouths?)

We continue to walk  
here, now.  
One foot at a time.  
(On our better days, forward.)

Alone  
I  
cannot reach the far shore  
without drowning.

Somehow I don't go under.  
The person to my right  
holds me up.  
Something I cannot see  
holds him up.

Blessed is the SOURCE of HELP  
so often unexpected.  
I step forward.  
The sea is vast.

Blessed are You, GRACIOUS ONE, for your miracles that greet us every day.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, al nisecha shebechol yom imanu.*

*Mark Nazimova*

## REDEMPTION (GE'ULAH)

An aluminum can may be redeemed for a nickel or a dime. A grocery coupon may be redeemed for a discount of a quarter or even a dollar. But on Shabbat, we can redeem something even more valuable, ourselves. Each Shabbat, we have the opportunity to reflect and then redeem something that made us imperfect. And in the six days that follow, we can work towards taking “home” something better and improving our lives and those around us. The lines that follow begin with a focus on the world and narrow down to a focus on ourselves. Select one attribute that strikes a chord with you or create your own line. By taking one step forward, we make the world a better place and ourselves as well. This is the path of redemption.

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my faithlessness for belief,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my darkness for light,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my doubt with confidence,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my prejudice for tolerance,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my ignorance with knowledge,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my banality for creativity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my competitiveness for cooperation,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my distrust for trust,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hatefulness with love,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my anger for understanding,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my cruelty with kindness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hostility for peacefulness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my violence for acts of kindness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my discord for harmony,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my animosity for goodwill,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my greed for generosity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my miserliness with charity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my haughtiness for modesty,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my arrogance for humility,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my impatience for serenity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my indifference for caring,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my disrespect with obedience.

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my pity for respect,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my contempt for esteem,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my slothfulness for productivity,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my selfishness for selflessness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my pettiness for generosity,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my conflict for peace,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my weakness for strength,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my wickedness with righteousness,  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my hatred for love,

On this Shabbat, may I redeem my despair for hope.  
On this Shabbat, may I redeem my selfishness for worldliness,  
On this Shabbat, may I help make the world a better place, and  
On this Shabbat, may I study Torah and become a better person.

*Harvey Kaufman*

## ○ SHMA AND BLESSINGS

246 - 291

### THE TRANSNATURAL GOD IN PRAYER

Note: All page numbers reference the Kol Haneshamah: Shabbat Vehagim prayer book.

Kaplan believed that the divine works through nature and human beings. He neither identified God with things in the world (natural) nor did he consider God to be beyond or detached from the world (supernatural).

Therefore, Kaplan's theology came to be called "transnatural."

In this view, there is more to the universe than the sum of its parts. In organic interrelationship of all its processes, there are divine powers that truly exist apart from the empirically verifiable phenomena of nature. They are manifest, for example, in human self-consciousness. It takes faith in God to believe that the world is structured in a way that gives significance to the human quest for salvation. A transnaturalist, however, believes that God works *through* us rather than *upon* us. Thus, our sense of responsibility to bring divinity into the world is sustained by the faith that there is a power at the source of human endeavors.

Rebecca T. Alpert & Jack J. Staub, *Exploring Judaism, A Reconstructionist Approach* (1985, 2000, p. 28-29)

To the *Barkhu*, p. 246

#### **Yotzer—Nature, Creation, Light**

Recall a morning that reminds of you of the awesomeness of creation.  
Climbing Masada at dawn: Sitting down to breakfast feeling the light stream in;  
Lying in bed in the morning enjoying the special silence in the country.  
Today we celebrate the creation of creation.  
Take a minute or two then turn to p.272

#### **Ahava Rabba—Love, Torah, Teaching**

Think of those whose love and wisdom have taught you.  
Bring them to mind, a parent, a teacher, a colleague, a friend.  
Think of a book that has influenced your life.  
Today we acknowledge what has brought us closer to the Power that makes for  
learning, loving, and teaching.  
Take a minute or two.  
Turn to page 273 & chant:  
Ahava rabba ahavtanu  
Then to the *hatima* (conclusion) p. 274  
Then the Shema p. 276

#### *V'ahavta et Adonai elohekha*

Loving life and its mysterious source with all our heart and all our spirit, all our senses and strength, we take upon ourselves these promises: to care for the earth and those who live upon it, to pursue justice and peace, to love kindness and compassion. We will teach this to our children throughout the passage of the day—as we dwell in our homes and as we go on our journeys, from the time we rise until the time we fall asleep. And may our actions be faithful to our words that our children’s children may live to know: Truth and kindness have embraced, peace and justice have kissed and are one.

Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings*

*Tzitzit—So that you remember*

Pick out a Jewish memory, perhaps from your childhood, perhaps one involving WES, perhaps one involving a family member.

Bring to mind a particularly powerful Jewish moment: a Seder, a recitation of *Kol Nidre*, a baby naming.

If you have not already done so, pick up your *tzitzit*.

Hold those memories as we chant on p. 285

*Mi Chamoha—Redemption*

Bring to mind a particularly difficult situation that you have come through.

Remember a time where the journey into the unknown was less perilous than the place from which you came.

Don’t take it for granted.

Express your thanks you made to the other side  
as we sing *tehilot l’el elyon* on p. 291.

*Rabbi Avi Winokur*  
(adapted)

# INTRODUCTION TO THE AMIDAH

292

As work-week cares fade to Shabbat peace,  
task-focus to Seventh-Day sanctity and grandeur;  
let us participate actively in the transition -

Using the silence of the Amidah  
to bridge to a prayerful state

Finding renewal in the ancient themes;  
    reverence, thanks, hope for peace

Or, meditating,  
let each open the door between mind and soul;  
searching for the path to heightened self-awareness, greater understanding,  
increased compassion.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# AVOT V'IMOT

294

I stand on the shoulders of family  
of friends, of teachers, of strangers  
who themselves stand on the shoulders  
of people who stood on shoulders...

each generation of shoulders  
a rung on Jacob's ladder  
reaching me up toward  
Heaven  
just beyond my grasp

*Mark Nazimova*

**DIVINE POWER**

*Atah Gibor L'olam Adonay, rav Lehoshiyah*

Overwhelmed by the awesome power and mystery of the universe, we seek help to overcome our innate weaknesses. Science has chipped away at the vast unknown that pervades our world but much remains that is still beyond our understanding. We feel the wind in our faces and move through the rain and snow that swirls about us. But we are barely able to predict them and cannot control them. The living are sustained by marvels of medicine, perhaps divinely inspired but accomplished through much time and effort. Captives are freed after human intervention and life persists despite incredible odds. Our existence is rooted in life and death but they are still beyond our comprehension. We seek salvation but know not its source or dimension. We are mere humans, seeking support beyond ourselves.

*Stan Samuels*



# **KEDUSHAT HASHEM**

300

## **HALLOWING GOD'S NAME**

*Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh, Adonay tzevaot m'loh kol ha'aretz kevodo*

Holy, Holy, Holy

A spirit of generosity and kindness.

May we always be grateful for its presence.

Holy the moment of gratitude

The recognition of beauty

The search for the best in each.

Let us sanctify that search,

and each small step achieved toward Godliness

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# KEDUSHAT HAYOM

306

## THE DAY'S HOLINESS

*Sabe'enu mituveha*

*Samechenu bishu'atecha*

*Vetaher liu le'ovdeha de'emet*

Whether we step forth to greet it  
Or wait inside for it to arrive  
It's bound to come every week.

If we are daydreamers—  
Living in worlds we imagine—  
It comes like the breaking of a spell  
Awakening us to the smells and sounds that surround.

Or maybe we are engagers—  
Rapt with attention to details—  
Then it is a letting go  
A receiving of the mysteries that lie beyond.

Whatever it is  
Let it come to us  
Not with the shuddering force of revelation—  
Not the thundering bolt that shakes the very foundation of the house  
Let it come quietly  
Like taking down from the attic and unwrapping  
Something within ourselves that's been hidden there all along.

May we be blessed with the courage to turn our prayers into actions

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

## **HODA'AH**

314

## **GRATITUDE**

Why is there something  
rather than nothing?

Why do I exist, able to pose the question?

I did not earn this.

Bounty beyond measure.

Why is there something  
rather than nothing?

Awe.

Why do I exist, able to pose the question?

Amazement.

I did not earn this.

Gratitude.

The feast of life

is before us

inviting

me to partake of it.

To whom/what/ever set the table:

Thank you.

*Mark Nazimova*

# BIRKAT HASHALOM

318

## BLESSINGS FOR PEACE

**We look to the God of our ancestors, adapting the threefold priestly blessing of old:  
May we be blessed and protected. May we be favored with good fortune. May we all  
be blessed with peace.**

*Ken yehi ratzon*

May we be blessed through stem cell research with cures for some of the most serious ills  
that plague us.

*Ken yehi ratzon*

May we be blessed with lives of wholeness and happiness that are filled with helping hands,  
shared smiles, heartfelt hugs, and the joys of dreams made real.

*Ken yehi ratzon*

May we be blessed by peace in the world, and the eradication of poverty.

*Ken yehi ratzon*

May we be blessed with the courage to turn our prayers into actions

*Ken yehi ratzon*

May we be blessed to find our way.

Ken yehi ratzon

*Innovative Service Task Force  
February 2005*

# BIRKAT HASHALOM

## BLESSING FOR PEACE

We cannot undo what has been done to us  
nor what we have done to others  
for time's arrow flies in one direction only.  
So let peace come  
to the rubble of history in which we stand.  
Let peace come  
to the hill on which the Temple used to sit.  
Let peace come  
to the pit from which the Twin Towers used to rise.  
Let peace come  
to our souls  
surrounded by the ghosts of friends  
of family  
of lovers  
and of ancestors.  
Let peace come  
to the ghosts of Afghans  
of Koreans, North and South  
of Irish, Protestant and Catholic  
of Cherokee  
of Romans  
of Palestinians and of Israelis.  
Let the rubble grow no higher.  
Let peace come.

*Barukh atah Adonai she'mazkir otanu lirdof shalom.*

Blessed are You, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who reminds us to seek peace.

*Mark Nazimova*

## PSALM 116

366

I pray to God, however God is manifested, He or She or It.  
If God hears my pleas and listens to me when I call,  
Or if there is only a symbolic deaf ear turned to me, it matters little  
For my prayer is also symbolic.

I am mortal and have lived my life, knowing that death is inevitable.  
When my life has been threatened I too have called upon God.

God has been described as gracious, beneficent and compassionate;  
The protector of the simple and savior of those who suffer.  
I cannot vouch for those qualities, though I have been witness for  
more than threescore and ten years.  
Be at rest O my soul, for God has been good to me.

I have been delivered from death, my eyes from tears and  
my feet from stumbling.  
I still walk in the land of the living.  
Though at times I have spoken rashly, seeing only the evil  
in the world,

I have been granted many bounties and must properly give thanks  
for them.  
I raise my cup of wine and acknowledge a higher power that we call God.  
I give thanks for all that I have received.

The untimely death of God's faithful ones shakes the world of the  
casual observer.  
I am a servant of God, and the son of servants of God though the  
cords that have bound me are looser than they were.

I give thanks to the God of my ancestors for my life and my world,  
despite their imperfections.  
I give honor to God for all that we know and all that we can never know.

Halleluyah

*Stan Samuels*

# HATZI KADDISH

404

## Reader:

I find within me a glowing ember – hold a magnifying glass to it, encouraging it to flicker.

I feed the divine sparks with caring thoughts and concerned deeds, desiring a kinder world - knowing I can help make it so.

## Congregation:

Let us stoke our flames, fanning them with good will and humane acts, joining together in the light they give to work for a more just world.

Clear-seeing in the intense illumination, emboldened by the warmth of community, let us plan our days — prioritizing to focus on what is envisioned, helping to bring intention to actuality.

May our holy efforts be blessed, praised and glorified, held in honor and revered; an inspiration to others.

May the world that we leave be more peaceful, more caring, more attuned to the suffering of the poor and the needy, the ill and the desperate.

May our children and grandchildren follow in our footsteps, striving to bring the world closer to the godly Eden our ancestors imagined.

And let us say, Amen

*Andrea Bardfeld*

# TEFILAH LAKEHILAH

416

## PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNITY

Blessed is our congregation.

It offers welcome, warmth and support to all who enter its sanctuary,

Inspiration and encouragement to its members and its member committees.

May it continue to thrive;

Rich in its tradition,

Thoughtful in its search for an empowering and inspired Judaism,

Creative in its solutions.

May our city be enhanced by our presence.

And may the Force For Good in each inspire us to lead -

Joining with others to care for our world,

Protecting and enriching it for ourselves and for future generations.

May we be blessed by peace in the world, and the eradication of poverty.

*Andrea Bardfeld*



## SEDER BIRKAT HAHODESH

424

### BLESSING OF THE NEW MONTH

May we be renewed this month for goodness and for blessing. May we enjoy long life, a life of peace, a life of goodness, a life of blessing, a life of nourishment and sustenance. May it be a life of bodily health, a life in which is found awe for the divine, a life in which we have a love of Torah and godliness, a life free of disgrace and shame, a life of happiness and honor, a life of integrity and discernment, intelligence and knowledge, a life in which our heart's petitions are fulfilled for goodness. Amen.

May the spirit that redeemed our ancestors from servitude to freedom, continue to redeem us, and speedily unite our dispersed kin from the four corners of the earth. Let all Israel be committed to one another. Amen.

The beginning of the month of \_\_\_\_\_ will fall upon  
\_\_\_\_\_ [the day of the week]. May it come to us and to all Israel for  
goodness.

Let this month be renewed for us and for all who dwell on earth, for life and for peace, for joy and for happiness, for salvation and for rest. And let us say: Amen.

*Marty Silberberg*

## PSALM 145

428

Let us celebrate and bless God and God's creation today and for ever and ever.

Let each generation praise God to the next and speak of the glorious honor of God's power and wondrous works.

And while some people will speak of God's terrible acts, we will speak of God's goodness.

We will remember and speak of God's great goodness, and sing of God's righteousness.

God is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger but of great memory.

God shows goodness to all; and God's mercies prevail.

Our universe is an everlasting one, and God's presence will endure throughout all generations.

God upholds all that may fall, and raises up all that are humble.

All eyes look towards God and God responds with kindness.

With an open hand, God satisfies the desires of all living things.

God is righteous in all ways, and holy in all works.

God is close to all who call, and especially to all that call in truth.

God will listen to those that are in fear; God will hear their cry and save them.

God will sustain all who show love, and God's love will change wickedness to kindness.

Let us speak with praise of God. Let all bless God and God's creation for ever and ever.

*Andrea Brecker*

## READINGS FOR YARZEIT

450

### CANDLES

And there you are in my arms  
in a dress with ruffles,  
grinning with just two teeth  
as everyone sings to you,  
and that's you with handfuls of wrapping paper,  
your face smeared with frosting,  
and look at you there, showing your doll  
how to cut the cake,  
and it seems impossible that it's been four years  
of me lighting candles you'll never see,  
flickering dimly in their fireproof glass,  
on the day you were born too soon,  
on the day you should have been born,  
on the day of remembering  
all the birthdays I wanted you to have.

*Nancie S. Martin*

## AT SEVENTY

### A MEDITATION ON PSALM 90

*“The days of our years are threescore years and ten.  
And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength  
but labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away...”*

*“May the favor of the Lord our God be upon us  
and establish for us the work of our hands.  
Yes, the work of our hands – may it endure.”*

*Psalm 90:10, 17*

Our life begins in the warm darkness of our mother’s womb.  
We enter the light, first finding family, then friends, later lovers.  
Sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain;  
Often lost, sometimes found.  
Music, art, books, babies;  
Work to do, a life to live.

Together, we walk along the shore of the endless Sea,  
leaving footprints behind us in the sand,  
hoping they will be deep enough to last a while  
before disappearing into the ever-rising tide of forgotten memories.

Or alone on its smooth surface, we pull ourselves forward, stroke by stroke,  
searching hopefully for meaning in the eternal fog of time.  
Looking back, we sometimes glimpse some of the swirls and eddies created by our passage,  
But mostly we do not know the full impact that our actions have on the lives of others.

Time passes. Daylight and darkness, daylight and darkness.  
Slowly at first, then fast, and faster.

It ends too soon.  
Parents go. Siblings, lovers, friends depart.  
We’re lucky if our deepest love is with us to the end.

At last we too leave the light, returning to the colder darkness  
of our other mother, Earth

Some imagine we will once again find those long-lost loves.  
Others think that we return to live another life; and then another.  
But the truth is, we do not know what awaits us there.

No matter. Our life – not long enough, it’s true – is a blessing  
for which we can only be grateful.  
Perhaps eternally. Perhaps not.

*“...Establish for us the work of our hands.  
Yes, the work of our hands – may it endure.”*

*Donald Menz*

# ADDITIONAL KAVANOT

## NEEDED - PROPHETS FOR OUR DAY

He who makes me aware that I am an infinite soul heartens me.  
He who gives me to myself lifts me.  
He who shows God in me fortifies me.  
He who hides God from me destroys the reason for my being.  
The divine prophets, bards and lawgivers are friends of my virtue, of my intellect,  
of my strength.  
Noble provocations go out from them, inviting me to resist evil.  
But let us not speak of revelations as something long ago given and done.  
Only by coming to the God in ourselves can we grow forevermore.  
Let us not say that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed.  
Let us learn to believe in the soul of man, and not merely in men departed.  
The need was never greater of new revelations than now.  
The faith of man has suffered universal decay.  
The heart moans, because it is bereaved of consolation and hope and grandeur.  
We feel defrauded and disconsolate.  
Our religion has become spectral.  
It has lost its grasp on the affection of the good and on the fear of the bad.  
What greater calamity can befall a nation than the loss of worship?  
Then all things go to decay.  
Genius leaves the Temple.  
Literature becomes frivolous.  
Science is cold.  
The eye of youth is not lighted by hope of a better world.  
Society lives for trifles  
In the soul let redemption be sought.  
Let the keepers of religion show us that God is, not was.  
That He speaketh, not spoke.  
And thus cheer our fainting hearts with new hope and new revelation.

*Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan  
in the name of  
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Note: Rabbi Kaplan [1881-1983 ] used to say that if you would compose a prayer, begin with an essay. So one day in the summer of '42 he composed this prayer based on Ralph W. Emerson's Divinity School Address. The language is Emerson's but the prayer is Kaplan's. He intended to put it into his Sabbath prayerbook as an additional reading. The prayer is found in his journal.

*Mel Scult.*

## THE LAWS OF THE SOUL

The laws of the soul execute themselves.  
They are not subject to circumstance.  
In the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire.  
He who does a good deed is instantly ennobled.  
He who does a mean deed is by that action itself contracted.  
He who puts off impurity thereby puts on purity.  
If a man is at heart just, the safety and the majesty of God do enter into him.  
If a man dissemble or deceive he deceives himself and goes out of acquaintance with his own being.  
The man who reverences himself comes to himself.  
Character is always known.  
Thefts never enrich.  
Alms never impoverish.  
Murder will speak out of stone walls.  
The least admixture of a lie, the least taint of vanity will instantly vitiate the effect.  
But speak the truth, and all nature and all spirits help you with unexpected furtherance  
Speak the truth and all things alive or brute are vouchers.  
As we are, so we associate.  
The good by affinity seek the good.  
The vile by affinity, the vile.  
Thus of their own volition souls proceed to heaven or to hell.  
These truths point to the sublime creed that the world is the product of but one will, one mind,  
That one mind is everywhere active, in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool.  
So much benevolence as a man hath, so much of life hath he.  
He who seeks good ends is strong by the whole strength of God.  
For all good proceeds out of the same spirit variously named love, justice, temperance, just  
as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes.

*Mordecai M. Kaplan  
in the name of  
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Note: Rabbi Kaplan used to say that if you would compose a prayer, begin with an essay. So one day in the summer of '42 he composed this prayer based on Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Compensation". The language is Emerson's but the prayer is Kaplan's.

*Mel Scult*



## THESE QUIET MOMENTS

These quiet moments of Shabbat open my soul.  
Blessed with this week of life,  
I give thanks to God  
Who has created and sustained us.

For all the good I have known during the  
days that have passed, I am very grateful.  
For the opportunities to study and to  
rejoice and to share with friends, I am thankful.

I know I have not always responded with my best effort,  
but often, I did earnestly try. I have tried  
to give my family love and devotion, and I pray  
that I may grow more loving as the years pass.

Even as I regret my weakness, I rejoice in  
my accomplishments.

Let those minor achievements, O God, lead to  
many others. May I be blessed on each Shabbat  
with the sense of having grown in goodness and compassion.

There have been times when I endeavored  
to help those in need; Now I ask only that  
I may be able to do yet more, for the need is so great.

Let my actions testify to my worth as Your  
partner in creation; More and more let me find my  
life's meaning in working with others to bless our  
lives by making this a better world.

*Rabbi Lawrence M. Pinsker*

## THE ROLE OF THE HAZZAN

The Bible describes the human being as having two aspects – physical and spiritual – an outward, visible body and an inner, invisible soul. Kabbalah describes the written Torah in similar terms. To the kabbalist, the “body” of the written Torah is made up of the 22 Hebrew letters that are physically penned in ink on the parchment of the Torah scroll. The “soul” of Torah consists of those aspects of the text that are not actually written down – the vowels telling us how the text is actually pronounced and the cantillation marks that give us the melodies to which the Torah is to be chanted or sung. Just as the human being is only fully alive when its body is united with its soul as one, so the written Torah only comes to life when the letters – inert, lifeless ink on parchment – are sung or read aloud. It is the task of the Hazzan to unite the visible with invisible aspects of Torah – the outward and physical with the inward and spiritual – bringing it to life for us to learn from and to enjoy.

*Donald Menzi*

## **GRACE BEFORE MEALS**

We are thankful for the meal we are about to eat.

We are aware that our sustenance depends on the sacrifice of animals and plants.

May we fulfill our human potential, so that we may be worthy of this sacrifice.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

Note: I wrote this prayer when my children were small. We said it every night before dinner, all the years they were growing up. It has been used by others in the WES community before dinner on Friday nights.

## BREATHING AND BELIEVING

The barrier breaks and the mother urges her child from the womb.  
The infant unknowingly hungers to be filled by a newfound life.  
The air courses through the universe finding its way into empty spaces.  
The breathing begins.  
There is nothing to think about.  
Air in. Air out.  
Breath is everywhere and nowhere it's ever been before.  
Even in sleep the breath slinks past lips, cooling tongues as molecules of air slide down passages.  
Empty spaces swell and the air is expelled in waves so that the cycle can begin again.  
Breathe in. Breathe out.  
An internal, portable mantra.  
Breathe in a moment. Breathe out yesterday.  
Breathe in a smile. Breathe out tomorrow.  
Breathe in the smell of your grandparents' house. Breathe out last night's fight with your brother.  
Breathe in the memory of the last time you saw the moon rise. Breathe out worrying about the work on your desk.  
Breathe in joy. Breathe out sadness.  
Breathe in gratitude. Breathe out resentment.  
Breathe in acceptance. Breathe out denial.  
Breathe in love. Breathe out hate.  
Breathe in forgiveness. Breathe out blame.  
Breathe in generosity. Breathe out judgment.  
Breathe in faith. Breathe out fear.  
Keep breathing.  
Keep listening.  
The answers are in the breath.  
God speaks back if we listen.  
Until the end of our days when the air no longer seeks us out, when the universe is ready to move on to new empty spaces,  
God will be waiting for us, with each breath, always ready to hear when we are ready to listen.

*Joanne Feltman*

## THE SECRET

I'm only half ready for you, Lord;  
divided from myself, but seeking wholeness.

I know the secret lies in plain sight within me, but  
I'm half afraid to look for it with open eyes,  
for fear that I might find it.

“Seek simplicity,” you say, “The Whole can be found  
in the smallest of its parts.”  
So when I find the single seed from which the  
Universe springs anew each day,  
I'll call it by your Name, and know that it was in my hand  
all along.

*Donald Menzi*

## BEING PART OF THE UNIVERSE

Let us begin by remembering that the spiritual always points toward the unity of things not their division. Judaism tries to help us to work from a higher perspective. To recite our prayers is to see ourselves as an integral part of all that is and not to see ourselves as the measure of all things. The egotistical, self-centered part of our mind, "the evil urge" if you will, always leads us to experience our separateness from the natural world. When we see ourselves as part of creation, born primarily to tend the Garden and nurture it than we will be acting out of our higher selves.

The declaration of belief in one God is in part a call to reintegrate ourselves into the fabric of the natural world and to do our part to preserve the universe out of which we come.

*Mel Scult*

A word from Nahman of Bratslav. " The world was created only for the sake of the choice and the choosing one. We as masters of choice should say; The whole world has been created for my sake. Therefore, I shall take care at every time and in every place to redeem the world and fill its want."

## MIXED BLESSINGS OF BELONGING

A hard day. An overflowing mailbox.  
Messages on the machine.  
One needs to talk. One needs to vent.  
Is everything ok? Long, deep breath.  
One has a triumph to report. Excited. Shallow breath.  
One's news is not so good. Sigh.  
Breathe in unison. Breathe in love.

Sharing our present. Sharing our future.  
One remembers. One forgets. One recalls it differently.

Sharing our past.  
The stories from before we even knew each other.

Sharing a history.  
Belonging to family. Belonging to friends.  
Don't forget the meeting tomorrow.  
We need volunteers. Can you fill in on Saturday?  
Want to study, want to learn a new skill. But it's scary.  
We're here with support. Breathe together.

Congratulations. We're here to celebrate.

Condolences. We're here to help.

Sharing mixed blessings but always feeling blessed.  
Stories filtered through the telling and re-telling.

Sharing a heritage from before there was history.

Belonging to our community. Belonging to all Jewish community.

*Margie Schulman*

## **BELIEVING**

Can one believe in miracles  
And not believe in God?  
How do you define a miracle?  
What do you mean by God?

Behold the cycle of the moon  
Gives rise to romance, awe and fear.  
Trees and earthquakes,  
Tides and snow,  
We understand yet do not know.

Pi and M C square,  
Chlorophyll and DNA  
All were there to be revealed.  
The human brain, the human mind:  
Extensions of concepts divine

Extremes of time and space  
Exceed our understanding.  
Gamma rays and galaxies,  
Viruses and black holes  
Toy with our intellect.

Our ancestors  
Called an eclipse a miracle.  
And fire.  
And spring.  
And survival.  
And they are aren't they?

*Stan Samuels*



## THE SWEAT OF THEIR BACKS

They toil by the sweat of their backs.  
Not driven by the pain of bloody welts  
But by the pain of poverty,  
The pain of hunger,  
And the pain of illness.  
Long hours at multiple jobs,  
At the bottom of the ladder,  
Their climb blocked by missing rungs:  
Language, learning and — sometimes — legality.  
Hidden in the shadows,  
Trying to provide for themselves and their families.  
Trying to follow up the ladder  
That *our* parents and grandparents climbed,  
Trying to create a better life for their children  
As our forebears did for us.  
May our eyes never be blind to their misfortune  
Nor our ears deaf to their cries.  
As we remember when we were slaves in Egypt,  
So let us also remember when we were poor immigrants.  
And let us help those struggling  
To climb the ladder as  
others helped us.

*Stan Samuels*

## CREATION

We are here, children of our ancestors,  
Fashioned from the DNA chains  
Our parents bequeathed us.  
The offspring of Adam and Eve,  
Molded from inanimate earth  
In an instant of divine creation  
Or assembled from atoms and molecules  
By trial and error  
Over thousands of millions of years.  
Is our creation any less miraculous  
If it took a million weeks  
Instead of only one?  
It was always easier to conceive of our Creator  
In our own image  
As a timeless being dwelling among the stars.  
One can pray to Michelangelo's grandfatherly God,  
Even to a burning bush.  
But how do we speak to an incorporeal entity,  
Dimensionless yet spread across all space-time?  
How do we view good and evil, history and myth?  
How do we address our prayers,  
Give thanks,  
Or ask favors?  
Our tradition and our reality  
Seem contradictory and incompatible.  
The world of our ancestors was simple.  
Ours appears incomprehensible.  
We need to pray for guidance  
And understanding,  
To Whom?  
To What?

*Stan Samuels*

## IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning.  
In the *very* beginning,  
Before there was WHEN or WHERE,  
Before there was WHO or WHAT  
To even contemplate HOW or WHY.  
Before there were thoughts or thinking,  
Knowledge or knowing;  
Before place or time,  
Matter or energy,  
There was the infinite void  
Incubating the future,  
Creating reality.

*Stan Samuels*

## MIRACLES

There is much I do not know -  
No doubt it always will be so.  
Things occur I can't explain -  
That are beyond my human brain.  
Events unnat'ral, rare and odd,  
Intrusions of the hand of God?  
Is some Captain at the helm  
That steers nature's godly realm?  
That I clearly do not know  
But admit it could be so.

*Stan Samuels*

## TO A NEBULOUS FORCE

I cannot pray to a nebulous force  
Nor worship a carving of stone.  
Knowing no God in human form,  
I stand here quite alone.

To what then do I pray and why?  
Lost in doubt and fears,  
Clutching on a well-worn book  
Stained with countless tears?

In truth, I pray but to myself,  
Or maybe not at all,  
Setting my anxiety  
To an ancient call.

*Stan Samuels*

# **LIGHT**

## **(WHAT IT MEANS TO ME)**

Not a mean meaning

Light – incandescent, florescent

Light – warm, glow

Light – brilliant, beam

Light – unburdened, unencumbered

Light – dawn, end of darkness

Idiomatically lovely

See the light – aha!

Alight – set for a spell

Make light – not so serious

Bring to light – reveal, teach

Light on one's feet – wondrous

Light at the end of tunnel – hope

Light, so meaningful and yet so horrible to spell.

*Jerry Saltzman*

## THE LIGHT

I am fragile.  
My body is a padded, brittle scaffold  
With soft tissues hanging from it.  
Covered by my flag of age, that must be protected  
Even from sunlight.  
I live, alert to pain: my ever-present warning.  
But where am I  
In this oddly designed assemblage of molecules?  
Oh it's all me, of course and I am in here somewhere.  
But when anabolism stops  
And respiration becomes expiration,  
Where will I be then?  
A switch is thrown. A light goes out.  
Out where?

*Stan Samuels*

## **THE BRIDE, UNVEILED (LIGHT)**

When we lift the bride's veil, her countenance glows

As if lit by all the candles in the world, kindled by our joy.

Our light has come, and we become one with her:

We arise. We shine.

*Nancie S. Martin*



# TORAH/HAFTARAH

## **INTRODUCTION TO TORAH**

In our collective memories, our ancestors stood at the foot of Sinai and experienced a historic encounter with the Divine. They were united in spirit, mind and heart. Today we come together as one people, Klal Yisrael, and seek to re-establish an experience with the Divine as we study and embrace the values of the Torah. Today we seek to be infused, infused with the spirit of G\_dliness, hope and optimism. Our world is increasingly filled with hatred, cynicism and violence. The forces of destruction are once again at Israel's door, while the rest of the world either stands idly by or silently wishes for the victory of our foes. But let us not be overcome with despair and blind hatred. Let us not be overcome by the seeming ubiquity of evil doers. By our continuing revelation we have a plan for overcoming despair and building the messianic age with G\_d. Today we read and study the Torah, to keep it in touch, to remind us of what we should be doing. What do we need to do to renew the Revelation in our lives to edge us closer to the Messianic age? But perhaps instead of revelation, search is better description, for a search entails a relentless and toiling process. After the revelation at Sinai, the Mishkan was built. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explained that the Mishkan served as a prototype of how each Jew should turn himself/herself into a personal Mishkan, a place where Hashem's presence can dwell, where we can all continue to experience the revelation at Sinai. Let us today, continue the processing of building our Mishkans.

*Tom Sullivan*

## MI SHEBEIRACH

(To be sung to Debbie Friedman's melody)

*Mi she-beirach avoteinu*

We pray as our fathers did for those whose health is broken

May they receive the blessing

Of *refuah shleimah*

The renewal of body

The renewal of spirit

And let us say — A-men

*Mi she-beirach imoteinu*

We pray as our mothers did with those in pain or suffering

May we find ways to touch them

With *refuah shleimah*

To comfort the lonely

To send them a blessing

And let them hear us say A-men

*Jeanne Anderson*

## ***HAFTARAH BLESSINGS***

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### **BLESSING BEFORE HAFTARAH**

Blessed are you, Holy Spark that dwells within, who stirs us to speak truth and repair the world, who shows us 70 faces of truth, who gives us the strength and wisdom to fulfill the hopes of our ancestors. Blessed are you Giver of Language, who takes pleasure in the Torah, and in Moses, servant of God, defender of Israel, and in prophets of truth and justice.

*Lee Klinger*

## **BLESSING BEFORE HAFTARAH**

In gratitude for the wisdom of our ancient prophets and to our generations of ancestors who transmitted that wisdom to us, we are now going to listen together to one of our prophets. Blessed be the continuity and the innovations of our tradition in the past and in the future.

*Isaac Zieman*



## KAVANOT ON TORAH PORTIONS

### SARAI AND THE FIRST TALLIT

Abimelech said to Sarai “I have given a thousand pieces of silver. . .it shall serve you as a covering for the eyes” — Genesis 20:16

Moon, you wander daylight hours  
a beggar  
sandal laces untied

subject as I am to a king: Abraham sells me  
as sister, God delays my baby,  
Abimelech throws silver coins in the sand

and commands that before sunrise,  
barefoot  
I carry them away.

Moon, on this night you hold a cloak  
of blue light around you.  
I must swallow pain but you

breathe in and like a dolphin  
spray a blue-white Sabbath cloth  
upon the dunes. Moon, give me one thread

to conquer the cruel silver pieces  
and weave a tallit  
and defy my journey this desolate night.

*Helen Papell*  
*Genesis 20:16 - Vayyera*

## WHEN SARAH LAUGHED

Imagine how ridiculous it must have seemed:  
ninety years old and happy in your tent  
when some angel announces it's finally time.  
Of course you'd laugh: all those years of adventure,  
of consorting with kings and dancing with danger  
and now this, after the bondswoman's already spread her legs –  
you can hear your own heart beating as you offer the stranger more olives  
but you have to laugh to think your breasts might swell again, to think  
that after all the fear and magnificence, a son could chortle in your arms.

*Nancie S. Martin*  
*Genesis 21.1-22.24 - Vayyera*



# TURNING

Turning points.  
Unexpected events  
Challenging our perception of ourselves.  
Do we hide, run, confront?

Confrontation,  
Often leading to results difficult to live with.  
Are there options on how to respond?  
Is there time to consider?

If I were in that palace garden,  
Would I have set forth to better understand the world,  
    or stayed behind the protective walls of home?  
Would I have tried to stop the Egyptian aggressor,  
    or retreated to safety?

I have met many of the challenges of my life with courage  
    and determination,  
And have explored many of the world's far flung communities with joy.  
But the hardest – the most complex issues - have taken me  
    the better part of a lifetime to deal with.  
I glory in my increased understanding and growth, but remain frustrated  
    that it has taken me so long and that I still have so far to go.  
The successes have indeed been turning points,  
Resulting in markedly improved relationships – often with those most dear.

May increased understanding and personal growth always be a goal.  
May challenges be seen as opportunities rather than barriers.  
May we be tolerant of ourselves as we strive to subdue our inner demons.

Living in New York, a city known for its callous non-intervention  
    (even when 911 enables a request for aid without personal risk),  
May we find ways to be an active, caring part of the community –  
    bringing succor to those in need, support where it is required.

*Andrea Bardfeld*  
*Exodus - Shemot*

## THE HANDS OF WOMEN

First we heard they'd want the gold we'd been given, and we were ready.  
Then they took our rings off our fingers to melt in the fire  
and asked us to dance. We swayed, hot in the desert night,  
wondering what was being worshipped.  
It was only when they asked for our tinkling belts that we knew.  
We give from our wombs, from our hearts;  
we leave our homes and wake each morning to our children's cries  
and all we ask, our ringless hands stretched toward the sky,  
is for something, anything to believe in.

*Nancie S. Martin*  
*Exodus - Ki Tissa*

## THE TABERNACLE

There are so many specifics about how it must be built,  
about the calyx of the lampstand  
and the shape of the almond blossoms  
and the faces of the cherubim,  
but the most important thing is what's in it  
and what it takes for us to make it  
and how it must be carried:  
like something created from everything we have to give.

*Nancie S. Martin  
Terumah, Leviticus*

## CUCUMBERS AND MELONS

All that water within their skins  
and the cool texture against the tongue  
and seeds, hundreds of them, like teardrops –  
we had them daily then in their season,  
a reward from the vines for our punishment.  
I remember gorging myself on casaba one night,  
my hands and face dripping with fragrant juice  
rolling down my neck and arms in the heat,  
a gift from the earth instead of the sky.

*Nancie S. Martin*  
Numbers 8.1-12.16 Be-ha'alotekha

## JACOB'S DREAM

Night was drawing near. For miles he had walked,  
Formed new patterns of trodden earth with gentle footfall  
Till he stopped, exhausted, searching for breath.  
Though he could not know, the earth did know  
That he was exactly halfway  
Between Beer-Sheba and Haran.  
Though he did not know, the angels knew  
That he had paused to rest between forgetting  
(The smell of his brother's fields, the gaze  
Of his father's blind eyes, the joints  
Of his mother's hands) and learning  
(The smell of his uncle's house, the gaze  
Of the weak-eyed woman, the long fingers  
Of his beloved's hands).

That night he dreamt of a ladder, firmly planted in cool earth,  
Extending up only to disappear.  
On one side the angels climbed towards heaven  
To pluck from the stars a glint of their sparkle.  
On the other side the angels descended  
To deliver the sparkle  
As dew to the earth.

Just before dawn he awoke to find  
The ladder gone.  
But the stars still twittered in the sky  
And the dew still glistened in the grass  
And he knew then  
And he was renewed then  
By the thought. (*How small is the divide between  
Heaven and earth*).  
He pressed his knees down into the ground,  
Sunk his fingers between the blades of  
Grass, and arched his back and neck and face to the skies.  
Thus poised--between the stars and the dew--  
He blessed this place  
Before setting on his path anew.

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

*Note:* Written for West End Synagogue on its twentieth anniversary.

# • **ADDITIONAL PSALMS**

## PSALM 12

Help, O Lord!

*Help yourself.  
I will help you  
and you will share the glory.*

For the faithful are no more;  
the loyal have vanished from among men.

*The faithful and the loyal are still here.  
Seek them out.*

Men speak lies to one another;  
their speech is smooth;  
they talk with duplicity.  
May the Lord cut off all flattering lips,  
every tongue that speaks arrogance.

*Pay attention to what they say and we  
won't need such extreme measures.*

They say, "By our tongues we shall prevail;  
with lips such as ours, who can be our master?"

*See, they even tell you what they are doing.  
Listen and be warned.*

"Because of the groans of the plundered poor and needy,  
I will now act," says the Lord.  
"I will give help," he affirms to him.

*You must help the plundered poor and the needy,  
that is your task and why you are here.  
Imperfect humans prey upon the helpless.  
Imperfect humans must protect them.*

The words of the Lord are pure words,  
silver purged in an earthen crucible,  
refined sevenfold.

*The crucible of time allows humans to seek godliness within.*

You, O Lord will keep them,  
guarding each from this age evermore.  
On every side the wicked roam  
when baseness is exalted among men.

*This age is like any other.  
The godly must always guard against the wicked.*

*Alan Oppenheim*

## PSALM 13

Source of All Life, how long will I feel isolated and alone --  
removed from all that is godly?

How long will I be troubled and full of sadness?

How long will everything seem to go against me?

I want to believe in you, to know you are out there.

Give me the courage to see clearly.

Keep me from giving in to despair.

Help me banish self-destructive thoughts  
that threaten to defeat me.

I know my strength comes from you.

My spirits will rise as I acknowledge the Source of All Life.

I will express my gratitude for all that is good in my life

*Eva Miodownik Oppenheim*



## PSALM 56

Sustain her, O West End,  
For worries pursue her.  
Many days they may oppress her,  
Tho' many friends support her all day long.  
None are her adversaries, we speak as one.

When she is fearful she can marshal her strength  
From our community, whose spirit will lift her.  
In prayer she trusts, is less afraid,  
Encouraged by mortals' efforts.

All day long we offer hope in her affairs;  
We wish only good for her.  
We convene and devise for her welfare;  
We are in touch with her wishes, hoping for her health and

Dispelling thoughts of fear.  
We are people in community prayer.

We are well aware of her tribulations;  
Keep her fears in our consciousness and in our hearts.  
The enemy – despair – will retreat when we pray.

This I know – we join forces for her  
In earnest care and affection.  
On godliness we rely;  
In godliness we trust  
And it lessens our fear.  
When together we strive  
It is to collective goodness that we pledge our efforts.

We render thanks to modern medical science,  
Which is saving her from danger, and we will  
prevent her feet from stumbling  
So that she can continue to be with us in the light of life.

*Harriet Schnur*

## PSALM 61

Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer;  
from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,  
for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!

*(Selah)*

For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear  
your name.

Prolong the life of Yael and Tamara; may their years endure to all generations!  
May they be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch  
over them.

So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I perform my vows day after day.

*Karen Kolodney*

## PSALM 101

### Original

I will sing of steadfast love and justice;  
To you, O LORD, I will make music.  
I will ponder the way that is blameless.

Oh, when will you come to me?  
I will walk with integrity of heart within  
my house; I will not set before my eyes  
anything that is worthless.

I hate the work of those who fall away; it  
shall not cling to me.

A perverse heart shall be far from me;  
I will know nothing of evil.

Whoever slanders his neighbor I will  
destroy.  
Whoever has a haughty look and an  
arrogant heart I will not endure.

I will look with favor on the faithful in the  
land, that they may dwell with me;  
he who walks in the way that is blameless  
shall minister to me.

No one who practices deceit shall dwell in  
my house; no one who utters lies shall  
continue before my eyes.

Morning by morning I will destroy all the  
wicked in the land, cutting off all the  
evildoers from the city of the LORD.

### Reconstructed

I will sing of steadfast love and justice.  
For all I will make music.  
I will search for the path that is blameless.

Oh, I will search within my heart for the  
divine,  
I will keep integrity within my house.

I will surround myself with the worthwhile;  
I will sing to those who seem to fall away.

I will sing to their perverse heart;  
I will fiercely whisper down their evil.

I will love the slanderer.  
I will love the haughty; I will love the  
arrogant.  
They will turn; their evil will not endure.

I will embrace the deceitful;  
I will stifle their lies against my breast.

Day by day I will expunge wickedness,  
Leaving purged souls to take up my song.

Day by day all humankind will dwell in  
sacredness

*Jane Weprin-Menzi*

## PSALM 102

The prayer of one voicing her pain and asking for healing.

LORD, I am hurting, voicing my pain that you might hear.  
I rely on you to be mindful and attentive – to answer my calling in this time when I really need to believe, to be strong.

Days vanish in a fog of worry and pain – I am young and each day means a lifetime for me, and for my young family. A day not walking in our neighborhood, not dancing with my husband, not buying flowers at the market, not pointing out a turtle in the pond to my daughter.

I am nauseated, I am hot, I am cold. I have no appetite.  
The poisons that I know are defeating troublesome cells my body still fights. My hair is gone, my energy ebbs.

I am like a bird in Central Park in December, left behind by his brothers, shivering on the lake, restless on a branch.  
I lie awake, tossing, like a lone sparrow on the roof.

Every day, a villain trapped within me fights me, curses me, blackens my day.  
I eat ashes like bread, mingle my drink with tears.

One might think you lifted me up just to cast me down.  
My days are like a lengthening shadow; my leaves fall on the hills and sidewalks by the river.

But I know that the best within me, the best within us, can beat any darkness, any sickness, any malice.

It is time to heal myself, my friends and loved ones gather around me, as does Adonai, to begin a time of regeneration.

My life is worth fighting for, my people are worth living for.

As I am fighting darkness, the world is fighting darkness, that we might all rise to the light toward our day of glory.  
When my body has recovered and our people have recovered, from past hurts, from past wrongs, and come together for a day of rejoicing. My leaves again grow green and strong.

For you have heard our pleas, and helped us to heal ourselves.

Let this be written for my daughter's daughters and sons. Be proud of your heritage and strong and mighty in your own being:

"The LORD healed our grandmother, our rebbe, and our people,  
Attending to her pain, attending to our divisiveness, healing the scars on our homeland."

Adonai will bring peace to New York, to Crown Heights, to Cincinnati, to Americans, to the Middle East, to Jerusalem, to Haiti, to South Africa, to Iraq, to all places where the Lord's people suffer from terror, violence, hunger, disease, and pain.

When all peoples and kingdoms gather, thankful, for peace, for health, for understanding, respect, and love.

God did not shatter my strength, but gave me the fortitude to regain my life.

My prayers to overcome my afflictions were answered. The love of my people, my family, and my God are steadfast.

Of old you laid the earth's foundations; the heavens are the work of your hands.

People change, the world changes, but your strength and the courage of our people remain.

As time goes on, we change,

but you are the same, your years have no end.

May our children and our people live on, in health, in happiness, and in peace..

*Beth Davidson*

## PSALM 128

Hurricanes, blizzards, earthquakes, tornados. The forces of the universe come from the Creator. And the ability to lead a moral life from our own godly nature.

Happiness comes to those who commit themselves to care for the natural world and live a moral life.

They will enjoy a nurturing family and a comforting community.

May you find your way to personal fulfillment and may you share in the success of the Jewish people and all the peoples of the world.

*Margie Schulman*

# PRAYERS FOR PEACE

## **BIRKAT HASHALOM BLESSING FOR PEACE**

We cannot undo what has been done to us  
nor what we have done to others  
for time's arrow flies in one direction only.  
So let peace come  
to the rubble of history in which we stand.  
Let peace come  
to the hill on which the Temple used to sit.  
Let peace come  
to the pit from which the Twin Towers used to rise.  
Let peace come  
to our souls  
surrounded by the ghosts of friends  
of family  
of lovers  
and of ancestors.  
Let peace come  
to the ghosts of Afghans  
of Koreans, North and South  
of Irish, Protestant and Catholic  
of Cherokee  
of Romans  
of Palestinians and of Israelis.  
Let the rubble grow no higher.  
Let peace come.

*Barukh atah Adonai she'mazkir otanu lirdof shalom.*

Blessed are You, COMPASSIONATE ONE, who reminds us to seek peace.

*Mark Nazimova*



## MAY WE REMEMBER PEACE

May we remember that there is no *Mashiach*.  
And that each of us is one.  
That our next smile may tip the balance of the world.  
That *Eliyahu* is sleeping on the corner.

*May our next kind word be the pebble in the pond that ripples across the sea.*

May we remember that the *Mashiach* is a warrior fighting for *Tikkun Olam*.  
That injustice thrives where passivity prevails.  
That the Power that Makes for Peace is powerless without peace-makers.

*May we be disciples of Aaron Hakohen, loving shalom and pursuing shalom.*

May we remember *HaMitzvah: Veyahavta lereacha kamocha* / Love your neighbor as yourself.  
And the three things: *Din, Emet, V'Shalom* / Justice, Truth, and Peace.  
May we remember never to forget.

*May we not treat others as we would not want to be treated.*  
*And may we remember to study the commentary, and that study leads to action.*

May we remember the beauty of a candle in the dark.  
And the defiance of a candle in the wind.  
That the world was created for each of us alone.  
And that each of us is dust and ashes.

*May we hear the cries of strangers in strange lands echoing in the still small voice within.*

May we remember that it is not our responsibility to complete the work.  
And that neither are we free to neglect it.

*May we remember that there is no Mashiach.*  
*And that each of us is one.*

*Joshua Greenberg*

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

**All:**

In times of strife  
We pray for peace,  
In times of war  
We pray for peace.  
We pray for an end to the fears that divide us.

**Rabbi / Leader:**

In prayer, we implore, we express a wish. We pray to the Source, and we wish for peace. We look to the heavens, and we pray for peace.

May we remember that we are part of the Source, and the Source is a part of each of us. As we pray to the Source, let us find within us the spark of peace, and the courage to transcend our fears. Let us not only pray and wait, let us also work for peace, let us make manifest the power of the Source.

**All:**

In times of strife  
May we work for peace,  
In times of war  
May we work for peace.

*Irna Gadd*

## MY FIG TREE

Under my fig tree the sunlight filters through the five-lobed leaves  
and the grapes from the vine are sweet.

But I cannot sit there now.

In the desert that surrounds us the winds are howling,  
the swords clang together over and over,  
and lions and lambs alike are slaughtered.

I long for my fig tree. I think of its leaves like a shield of tender hands  
as I stand here, shivering with fear,  
trying to explain what a ploughshare is.

*Sing: Lo yisa goy el goy cherev, lo yilmedu od milchama...*

*Nancie S. Martin*

## LET US PRAY

(To be read responsively)

Let us pray for peace with our hands, hearts,  
minds and deeds

Let us pursue compromise and reconciliation  
as true indicators of victory

Let us stop counting dead bodies and  
count healthy minds and sound bodies instead

Let us use our voting power to reach out  
to the other with respect and friendship

Let us enjoy the diversity of our human garden  
as we do the diversity of our botanical gardens

Let us refuse to follow the corrupted powerful  
into the hell of war

Let us learn to give peace a try  
even though that takes courage

Let us pursue justice in every context  
and be a model to all

Let us propose, protest, argue and debate;  
Let us accept our obligation

Let us put our knowledge of history aside  
and be enduringly hopeful

*Marty Silberberg*

## BITTER WATER

"Meet the thirsty with water...  
greet the fugitives with bread" -Isaiah 21:14

Outside my shul in winter, a garden  
of bare maple twigs that shimmer frost  
like the fingers of a child without gloves  
in New York

and bare earth where food had blossomed  
in a Garden of Eden  
the summer in Sudan before  
the raiders came.

Meet the thirsty with water,  
greet the fugitives with bread.

Inside my shul, near the steps  
of the Sanctuary, where long ago  
Levite singers chanted prayers for peace,

a box with a sign "Bring cans of food,"  
a book with photos of children  
smiling.

Meet the thirsty with water,  
greet the fugitives with bread.

Refugees from war and hunger fight  
like famished gulls on Rosh Hashana  
when we wrap our sins in bread

and throw them into a river. Moses,  
in our wilderness  
find for us again  
the tree that sweetens bitter water.

Meet the thirsty with water,  
greet the fugitive with bread.

*Helen Papell*

## WHY NOT?

Will there ever be a time  
Without Cain smiting Abel  
Or Dinah weeping in shame?  
Will the children of Ishmael and Yitzkhak  
Ever lay down their swords  
And acknowledge their kinship?  
Or the descendants of Jacob  
Fighting for endless generations  
Over ceremonial trivia  
And mental inflexibility ever stop?  
Will they ever pause  
And look up  
And realize  
That they are all praying  
To the same God?  
Their words may be different —  
But if God could and can  
Accept and understand  
Aramaic and Hebrew and Arabic,  
Then why not Latin and English  
And Sanskrit and Chinese  
And German and Spanish  
And all the others?  
Why not?

*Stan Samuels*

## **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Let night drop its velvet cloth over every city, town, village and hamlet of the world.

Let it rest softly on every house, hut, shack, villa, hovel, palace and tent.

Let sleep come to the weary, the watcher, the hunter, the hunted, the driven and the forsaken.

Let all the little angers of our lives in every corner of the earth dissolve.

Let dreams of peace and love fill the night's imaginings of every sleeper.

Let the soft fresh breath of morning wake the world with promise and renewed hope.

Let the sun's warmth fill the hearts of all awakened sleepers with joy, gratitude, forgiveness and love.

*Eva Miodownik Oppenheim*

## A JEWISH PRAYER FOR DARFUR

Merciful Creator, please give us the strength to move our hearts to action.

Every day we give thanks to You for our redemption from Egypt, for our freedom as individuals and as a nation. I feel blessed that I have the freedom to work, to study, and to enjoy time with family and friends.

But across the ocean, in a refugee camp in Darfur, I have a sister who is not so fortunate. She is short and fiery like me, she loves dancing like me, and telling stories to children. Her skin is darker than mine, her language different, but we are sisters.

God, my sister is afraid for her life; afraid for her body; afraid for her children. She cries out to You on behalf of her people. She utters her own version of the Amidah – “*Sh'ma Koleinu*, Hear our voice, Lord our God, pity us, save us, accept our prayers with compassion and kindness.” She prays with every fiber of her being.

But she and I both know that You will not, cannot, act alone.

Source of compassion, let my sister's cry pierce our hearts like the wailing sound of the shofar. And once our hearts have been opened, help us move from prayer to action; let our action stir others to act as well.

God of Memory, help us to remember our sisters and brothers in Darfur even when it is easier to turn away. Let us hear the echo of their prayers deep within us.

Blessed Redeemer, who liberated our ancestors from Egyptian bondage, help us to take up the mantle of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, and do all that we can to help liberate the people of Darfur, so that they may enter the promised land of freedom, dignity, and hope.

*Margie Klein*



# PRAYER FOR PEACE

## Reader

My heart aches -  
Dreadful pictures,  
Horrific stories.  
Each pile of rubble, each maimed body  
a life waylaid.  
Each death no statistic,  
but an unfillable – an unjustifiable loss.

God of my forbearers, where are you?  
So many awful deeds in the name of religion!  
The miracles, the glorious sunrises, the perfect births,  
will not suffice. I cannot say Dayenu.

I survey my small world,  
My safe surroundings,  
My wonderful family.  
My gratitude is endless,  
Yet I can not rest.

STOP! I want to say, standing at the crossroads of the World,  
Extending my arms – palms forward  
As I do with my small granddaughter,  
in response to the traffic light hand.  
But most drivers and pedestrians obey laws,  
And the engines of destruction would not take head.

## Congregation

We must raise our voices in pain and indignation,  
Find ways to reach appropriate leaders with our urgency.

## Reader

There must be a change in priorities –  
Humanity kindness, sanity  
Not power, land, oil.

Safety for sure,  
But safety for all.

## **Congregation**

Let us pray that the days of violent conflict are numbered,  
That peace,  
for the United States, for Israel, for the World,  
Will soon arrive.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## PEACE

Oh precious source of wisdom  
Enable us to see the futility of our past ways,  
We who are forever mouthing the words of peace  
Even as we demonize the enemy,  
plant the landmines,  
set the engines of war humming.  
Oh source of truth and insight  
Inspire us to unmask our primordial and toxic delusions:  
That *we* are the children of God; that *they* are the whores of Babylon,

.  
Oh divine source of compassion  
Enable us to see beyond our superficial differences  
To the one heart and soul that exists in all men  
To the longings and fears that animate us all.  
May we have the courage to face a great and simple truth:  
Where there is no justice.....there will be no peace  
May we find the will to go beyond our prayers for peace  
To strive ceaselessly until all men have their share of the earth's bounty  
Until all men have the dignity that is their birthright.  
And then we will be known as peacemakers and the days of our life will be blessed.

Amen

*Barbara Gish-Scult*

## BROTHERHOOD

Since the beginning  
Since the first human parent  
Smiled more broadly  
At one son  
And the other tasted bile.  
Since the first mother —  
Or father —  
Chose one son  
Over the other  
And a hand curled  
Around a rock  
And the potential of rage  
Became the kinetics of violence —  
It has been in our tribal memory,  
Memorialized in our sacred texts  
And marked on us  
For all posterity —  
Brother against brother,  
Hatred above love.

But must this troglodyte mindset endure?  
Maiming for a slur  
And killing for a slight?  
Are we to remain  
One step above the beasts?  
Or can we be  
One step below the angels?  
Surely mankind can.  
Indeed it must!  
And hopefully it will  
Move from brotherhood  
To peace among nations  
In our lifetimes

*Stan Samuels*

# SERMON

Goodness

Extension of the root word Good

Good

What we are exhorted to be.

Eliminate an o and what's left is God.

God

Who ever or whatever suits you.

Omit the g and transpose the od to Do

Do

Unto others

As

You would have them

Do unto you.

It's all of a piece.

Peace.

Amen

*Ellie Chernick*

## A SIMPLE PRAYER

Sometimes I awake from a nightmare relieved that it's just a dream, but as I read the paper, watch the nightly news.....it's not a dream. It's a day in - day out nightmare. It's real. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE.....I need a world where hatred diminishes, then disappears. I need a world where gentleness and tenderness increase and prevail  
I need a world where no one must fear the other and nations don't threaten to make other nations vanish. I feel alone and afraid. Help me be a mensch. Help me to help others to make that more gentle world.

*Harold Mindess*

(congregation could sing: Lo Yisa Goy etc. - upbeat)

**MEMORIALIZING  
CATASTROPHIC EVENTS  
IN  
UNITED STATES**

## SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

A cool day in November, a Friday, 1989.  
After soccer, my friends and I,  
Clumps of earth and grass in our cleats,  
Climb into my father's station wagon. He drives the usual route  
Down backroads, and we play GHOST—our favorite car game—  
Building a word together by adding letters, and trying, by adding letters,  
Not to let the word end. I start with the letter "C." The word I've imagined  
Becomes something else as my friends add letters—a product  
Of all our private thoughts, predicted by no one, belonging to all.  
Around and around we keep playing, as my friends one by one  
Disappear down their driveways, until it is just my father and me,  
Adding letters, building words. He is about to turn down our street  
But instead slows off the road onto the shoulder—Beneath the tires  
Leaves and twigs respond in autumn crackle. My father takes the newspaper that lies  
Between us on the seat, holds it in front of me, and says,  
*Look at this.* And I do. In the photograph I see the long stretch of a wall.  
On top of it people dancing. *Remember this,* he says.  
A solid strip of white. The twisting, moving bodies.  
The words: East Germany Opens Frontier to the West.  
*Someday your children will ask you,* he says. *You must tell them about this day.*

Inside the car all images are crisp: the sharp angle of the dashboard,  
The black printed words, the pinkened rims beneath my father's eyes.  
I am eleven years old in a moment larger than myself.  
And these events, which I do not understand, are products of  
Thousands and thousands of people, doing and moving,  
Like players on a soccer field, or dancers on a wall,  
Featureless, in a world beyond me, active and alive,  
Which I, unprepared, must struggle to describe.

It's a clear Tuesday in September. The morning, 2001.  
In the kitchen, still barefoot, I sip coffee and listen  
To the whistling of the men building new apartments—  
A little taller each week—across the yard. A sudden sound:  
A clashing shatter. I run to the window to look out:  
Perhaps one of the men has fallen! But all I see are faces staring  
At something behind me, above. I life the window, step outside,  
Hoist myself up the rusted fire escape to the rooftop where I stand.  
One tower burns. Another joins. From black gashes flames flick and sputter.  
I try to imagine the lives of people I do not know.  
Try to conjure details of moments where I have not been:  
Scribbled thoughts on Post-It notes; words whispered in earnest  
In a darkened room; The calling of a name as one enters, after work, coming home.  
I want to find faces for these fragments. Want to know the features  
Of all I have not met. What can I do but imagine intimacies?  
Isn't this something? An act of grace?



The air quivers. The smoke persists in solemn march.  
One by one people gather on the rooftop beside me. One by one they add  
To the silence. One tower sighs and falls. The other follows.  
The smoke keeps moving on.  
All I see is blackness but I know what lies beyond:  
A simple stretch of that same blue sky. A little wider now.

These are the words I speak. Because I am here. Because I can.  
They are all I have to offer. The only forms I find.  
As I say them into the receiver, on a Tuesday night in September,  
I think I can see my father, miles away, in his chair.  
I think I can hear the uncomposed clang of the windchimes  
Swaying softly above the porch where he sits, and listens to my voice.

*Shira Niamh Brisman*

# MANHATTAN DUST

(for Stephen)

On my windowsill a screen  
covered with gray and black dust  
September 11 travelers  
in fire-wind flight

from the World Trade terror  
ninety blocks downtown.  
I didn't want to wash away  
the dust, all that remained  
of humans

trying to go home.  
I left the screen on my windowsill  
hoped the dust would fall away  
drift to their families  
north, south, somewhere

but since September 11  
all over Manhattan people cough winds  
of jet fuel, asbestos, unknown dust  
that screamed into the lungs of men  
*who breathed without masks*  
in their hurry to rescue strangers.

When I began to cough  
I dropped the screen into a sink.  
My fingers would not press a water faucet  
wash the dust into a sewer.  
Shall I dig a grave in Riverside Park

next to a wild place where dandelions grow?  
chant Kaddish, prayer for the dead,  
ask the seeds tiny as dust  
to carry the travelers home  
east, west, everywhere?

*Helen Papell*

## AFTER THE HURRICANE

Our Creator,  
how awesome are Your works,  
how humbling the power of winds and waves,  
testifying to the truth:  
we depend upon You,  
we rely upon each other.

How overwhelming the strength of storms  
reminding us of our place in Creation:  
to partner with You,  
to protect our fragile planet,  
to care for our brothers and sisters.

Source of Healing, Source of Hope,  
we pray for family and friends,  
we pray for neighbors we do not know,  
we pray for the stranger --  
for all who have lost homes and loved ones.

We pray for those who dwell in darkness and despair,  
who yet are buffeted by wind and wave.  
We pray for those who reach out  
through waters, darkness, and cold,  
who labor to save, to restore, to rebuild.  
We pray for all those who manifest your love,  
who practice what we pray.

May they feel safe,  
sheltered in Your love and in ours,  
strengthened by our prayers and support.  
May they know they are never alone.  
May they find renewed sources of strength  
to rebuild hopes and dreams.

May we witness the warnings in the winds,  
hear the cry of rising waters:  
Wake up! Open your eyes!  
In the silence after the storm,  
may we hear the whisper in your still, small voice:  
open your hands in generosity,  
soften your hardened hearts with love.

With Your help,  
may we lift those who are fallen,  
heal the broken-hearted,  
dispel darkness and despair  
with light and hope.

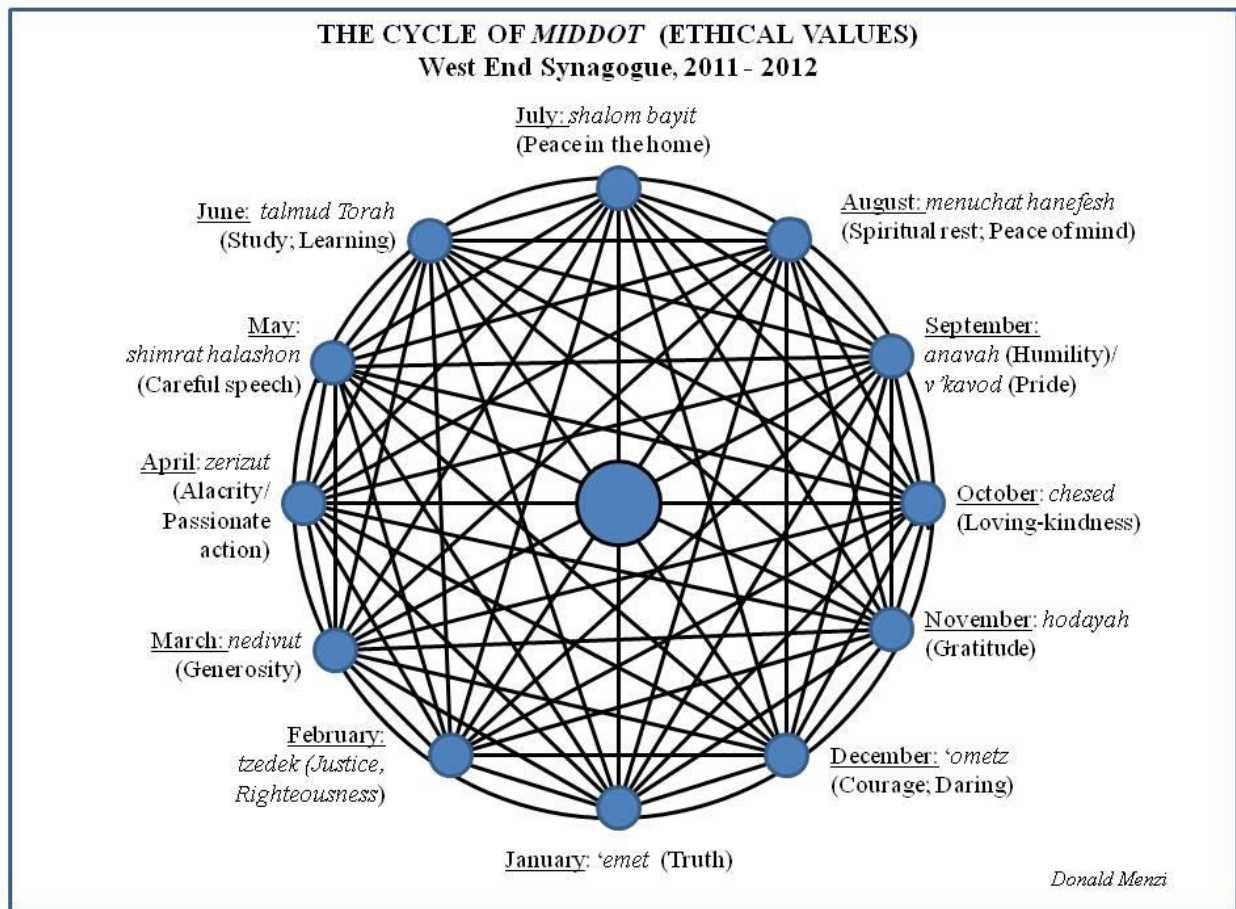
With Your help,  
may we save this storm-tossed ark  
which holds us all.

*Rabbi Marc Margolius*

# WRITINGS ON MIDDOT

# MIDDOT 2011-2012

## CYCLE OF MIDDOT



## COURAGE

The goal is clear – at least its outline,  
But the path difficult, marked by potholes.

Determination and patience are required;  
Two steps forward one step back, or perhaps three.

I remind myself that the journey itself is progress,  
All experiences along the way available for examination,  
reflection, learning.

The courage is not for the extreme  
enter the burning building, smother the grenade effort,  
But the everyday take-a-deep-breath activity -  
repair the relationship, confront the problem,  
deal with the illness.

Sometimes a fellow traveler indicates understanding -  
A shared intimacy, a smile.

But most often, the trip must be made alone.

Occasionally, status is reviewed.  
The road ahead remains long  
The path travelled also long.

I have grown  
and would not go back.  
There have been many mistakes  
And the product is far from perfect,  
but progress is clear.

So;  
I summon the energy, the determination, the courage  
and turn toward the future,  
better equipped now for the journey.  
I pray that new adventures will be enriching,  
And that my strength will not fail.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## TRUTH WHAT IS TRUTH?

The ginkgo trees in the little park below my window do not argue about truth.  
For them it is moonlight, wind through bare branches,  
a whoosh of buses passing in the dark.

Zen poets sought truth beside still waters, calmly contemplating  
their own deaths through cloudless dawns  
under blue mountains—breathing in, breathing out.

Is truth a lamp shining in one direction  
or a lighthouse beam sweeping over the horizon,  
illuminating the vast landscape that spreads before us?

The search for truth is a human endeavor.  
Gandhi proclaimed the fundamental truth of all religions.  
Truth, he said, is self-sustained.

Heschel and King embraced unconditional love, a passion for compassion.  
Some find it in constancy of character, sincerity in action,  
loyalty in love—just being kind.

In a fractured world, truth may free us—or put us in chains.  
Perhaps it's in the need to know each other's pain,  
to reach across a chasm and talk together from our hearts.

*Eva Miodownik Oppenheim*



## JUSTACE

As it is written in Isaiah Chapter 33 verses 5 and 6

*He who dwells on high,  
He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.  
He will be the permanence of your times,  
Abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge,  
The fear of the Lord is His treasure. (The Revised Standard Version)*

But Justice, representing God, does not always rule in Zion  
or elsewhere.

Law-creators and dispensers of justice have  
insufficient devotion to righteousness, wisdom, knowledge.

Much progress has been made across the centuries, but  
Police are still affected by race and ethnicity  
Judges and juries still influenced by upbringing and culture  
The rights of women still ignored  
Children still sold as sex-slaves.  
Still, uncontrollable dictators rule.  
And in this country, a desire for power, money, re-election  
too often overrides good governance.

May we continue to progress toward an even-handed justice:  
Laws created for the benefit of all  
Officials elected by and reflecting the wishes of the people  
Secure communities allowing and protecting development.

May kindness, generosity and thoughtfulness  
Influence our actions in our neighborhoods  
As we strive for more widespread opportunity.

And in our homes, may we teach our children  
by example,  
Treating them fairly, but with love and understanding -  
Responding to the world as we would have them respond  
as they grow toward adulthood.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## GENEROSITY

Generosity is giving to others with pleasure  
The amount matters not  
The thank you matters less  
It's the warm feeling within that counts

To be generous to others  
One must be generous to oneself  
Extending to self-acceptance  
and allowing life's pleasures to be savored

Each of us has something to give  
Even those without money  
Acts of kindness, empathy, time for service  
All count, without credit being the goal

The gratitude of the receiver for getting  
Provides him with the possibility of giving in turn  
Expanding the gifts and gratification into eternity  
It's his warm feeling within that counts

Aunt Golda was such a person in my life.  
She gave me the gift of loving opera that endures  
She showed me the sights of New York City  
I had the prettiest clothes from the finest stores

All of this my Aunt Golda gave to me with genuine affection  
By her example, I learned what caring meant  
Without anything expected in return  
Except my pleasure for her generosity

She knew my parents were unable to provide these gifts  
She made me feel good and confident  
In turn, I give to others unable to get what they need  
Extending generosity to perpetuity

*Shirley C. Samuels*

## GENEROSITY

Generosity  
The best compliment you can receive  
Is when someone tells you,  
You are generous

Unfortunately,  
Taking credit for your own generosity  
Feels wrong  
Like you are undoing the actions  
Taken in service of another  
It's like boasting  
Of your pretty smile  
Or your kind nature;  
Your natural openness,  
Or your capacity to be a good listener

Generosity is delicate  
If it is toyed with too much,  
The giver taking an undue sense of achievement from it  
And the receiver expecting more than she should,  
We have nothing left to do  
But to wait  
Wait for something so pure  
Something that is the foundation of human connection  
To turn rancid

But Generosity is strong:  
The network of human interaction  
Is made up of generous twists and turns;  
Doing the dishes for your mother  
Giving someone a gift,  
Handing change to a homeless man  
Or picking up a fallen wallet.

Generosity can be the way we express gratitude  
It can be the way the divine works through us.  
Generosity demands we look beyond the concerns of our own ego  
And listen closely to the needs of another.

Every night when I lay down to sleep  
I pray the words of the *siddur*  
“Please forgive any who may have done harm to me  
Whether willingly or inadvertently  
Or by design  
Let no one suffer punishment on my account”

What do those words mean?  
It means I must be ready  
And willing  
To put down the burden of a grudge;  
To be generous in my capacity  
To let go

When I wake up in the morning  
I try to think of the things I am thankful for  
(Most of the time)  
That means recognizing what someone else has done for me  
To understand how generous  
Those I am surrounded by are

Generosity  
Generosity  
The best compliment you can receive  
Is when someone tells you  
You are generous

*Jennifer Ferentz*

## **PASSIONATE ACTION (THE CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMER)**

We often hear news of global climate change—of impending disaster, and words that pass along a clear message of how the world is soon to end unless changes are made right now. Maybe the first time we hear this news, we feel compelled to alter fate, but with increased repetition, the effect is, unfortunately, extremely immobilizing. In planning to write this piece about passionate action, I found myself running into a lot of trouble. “I have no more passion,” I moaned, “I always have so much schoolwork to do and the passion is burned out of me.” Forcing myself to write became focusing myself to write—the passion came back. I was mobilized once again. My feelings about fixing the environment came back; I realized that these issues are still very important to me. For years, I’ve planned on a career in environmental studies. When I finish all of this dumb high school work, I know exactly what kind of action I’ll do: one very important type of passionate action is becoming conscientious in our way of living in the world, not just to make a positive impact, but to live happily.

We live in America, the consumer capital of the world. As much as this fact can simply make us disillusioned with the whole system and want to stay as disconnected as possible and denounce the evils of capitalism, living in a consumer society is not only a bad thing. We, the consumers, have some real power, because ultimately, we control the complex interactions that govern the production of everything that we use. Everything in our society is interconnected, and it is for this reason that each thing we do can ultimately have an effect on something larger. If we work towards being conscientious consumers, we can overcome this feeling of being overwhelmed with the problems of the world and instead help to fix them.

As Rabbi Arthur Waskow writes of the ten plagues of Passover, “When a society acts idolatrous, when corporations act like Pharaoh by ignoring the common good in order to maximize their own power, nature itself rebels: the rivers turn to blood, frogs and vermin infest the earth, thick clouds of smoke blot out the sun and the moon, ultimately human beings die. Indeed, the whole plague cycle in Exodus could be understood as a growing series of eco-disasters.” By changing our patterns of consumption, we can begin to control corporations and prevent further disasters from occurring.

Little things matter: we can start small, to mobilize ourselves. For example, we may buy eggs from the super market; the ones with the colorful label that we’re used to. Usually we don’t think beyond the one action we consider to directly involve us—the purchase of the eggs at the register. But what goes into making these eggs? Sickly chickens living out their short lives in cages, the labor of underpaid and overworked employees with no insurance operating in disgusting conditions, smog from combusted gasoline used to transport the eggs from miles and miles away. It’s up to us to make the choice and buy the local organic eggs instead, supporting small farmers from our own state, free-range hens milling about, no big factories involved. We can buy bottled drinks and decide that it isn’t worth the wait to find a recycle bin, or we can wait and make sure to perform proper disposal. Recycling really isn’t that complicated, if only we would dedicate a few minutes to learn how to do it correctly.

We can even bring around our own bottles, eliminating the need for disposal in the first place. The small efforts we need to make to stay in the loop and really work toward the greater good are completely worth it. If we buy products made with the least pain expended by the humans, plants, and animals involved, then those are the products that will be offered, more and more often. It is up to us to fix the problems at hand, through conscientious consumption. With our pledge to carry out this passionate action, we can start to repair the world.

*Marya Friedman*

## PASSIONATE ACTION

PASSIONATE ACTION starts with BEREISHEIT. In the beginning God created the world, as we read in Genesis.

In beginning PASSIONATE ACTION we can create a mitzvah starting with three small verbs.

First we SEE. But who is we? **We** — is anyone here who — SEES a need, a problem, a situation demanding positive change. Then we **FEEL** — we become PASSIONATE showing strong feeling. This feeling is marked by caring, fervor, belief we can make a difference.

But how do we turn feeling into ACTION? We **DO**. We DO, we plan, we organize to transform feeling into tangible ACTION, doing something to achieve an aim.

Look at PASSIONATE ACTIONS our own members have taken.

The Social Action Committee launched the Thousand Turkey Drive for Thanksgiving

Harriet Bograd helps African Jews develop cottage industries like Fair Trade coffee and embroidered challah covers.

Richard and Roberta Katz solicit surplus food from West Side restaurants to feed homeless members of Concrete Justice, a group is learning acting skills to perform their life stories.

Stan and Shirley Samuels connect us with Project Ezra for Kosher food collections to feed elderly Jews on the Lower East Side.

Henry Saltzman coordinates the Keshet project to help unemployed WES members.

Irene Kopley volunteers to provide job leads and counseling. I offer free career counseling to Keshet members. Helene Bass-Wichelhaus provides free consultations for referral to a low-cost clinic.

Moshe Sayer joined the Occupy Wall Street movement and helped manage its kitchen.

Ken Klein introduced us to the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing where I presented three job search/resume workshops for homeless people ready to work. Many more WES members are also taking PASSIONATE ACTION. WES is a caring and aware community.

So I urge you: make a difference with PASSIONATE ACTIONS of your own. Remember Bereisheit.

It starts with SEE, FEEL, and DO.

*Ruth Shapiro*

## GUARDING THE TONGUE

Until I tried to guard my speech  
I never knew how hard it would be.

I never knew how self-centered I am,  
how insensitive I can be, and  
how much I miss out on.

I never knew what another person might have said,  
what might happen to my understanding,  
what might become possible from words unsaid.

Until I tried to guard my speech  
I never knew the joy of having just the right word fall from my tongue,  
the discovery that listening would allow me to see and appreciate  
that there is actually a whole world outside of me and my ideas.

I never knew that I usually wait for others to stop talking so I can talk,  
that even while others talk I am talking nonstop inside, and that  
that inner talking is not my friend.

If all I do is talk, talk, talk, how can I hear anything else?

But all this I did not know until I tried to guard my speech.

*Satu Ferentz*



## STUDY

We begin to learn  
Before we are born:  
First the pulse of the mother's womb  
Then soft filtered sounds,  
Some pleasant, some not.  
In time, other senses join in:  
Soft and warm,  
Sweet or sour,  
Hot or cold,  
Wet or dry  
Large or small.

And then that wondrous day  
When we first perceive letters and words:  
The magical key to growing up.  
We learn and we read and we write,  
We study and soak up knowledge.  
And we grow and we think and we question  
And we start to doubt.

If God made the world in six days,  
Six thousand years ago,  
How did the dinosaurs die off sixty-five million years ago?  
If we are not the chosen people,  
Can earth be the chosen planet among a hundred billion galaxies?

We are People of the Book,  
So were Einstein and Freud  
And thousands of others  
Whose belief in The Book  
Was diluted by their study of other books.  
Does too much study cause too much doubt?  
Must we wall off our minds like our Haredi cousins?  
Or shed our traditions and lose our identity?  
No! We must each tread our own, very personal and thoughtful path;  
With our backs heavily laden with tradition  
And our minds wide open.  
And go wherever the journey leads

*Stan Samuels*

## SOME THOUGHTS ON PEACE AT HOME

Shalom b'bayit

It falters

when we correct their grammar

Gasps for breath

when we say "It's for your own good"

Goes on life support

when we say "I told you so"

Shalom b'bayit

It gets off the ground when we

turn off Masterpiece Theater

to help them find their glasses (keys,....cell phone....whatever.)

without the merest hint of a whimper.

It gains steam when we let them "get away with murder"

overlooking their provocative and passive aggressive behaviors

which would be cause for a blistering counter-attack

from souls less generous than ours.

It positively flourishes when we bring home their favorite pizza

thin crust, extra cheese

Even though we see this as dire proof

of an unconscious death wish

Handing it over without visibly cringing

as if it were a bowl of whole grains oats topped with flax seeds.

And finally,

like a self replicating gene, a meme, or some such new-fangled thing,

the shalom in your bayit, so dense and pervasive

seeps out under the front door

like a benign virus

softening and tenderizing all that is on its path

Providing once and for An unequivocal answer to an ancient question,

Yes, yes.....there is balm in Gilead!

There is a physician there!.

*Barbara Gish-Scult*

## GENTLE SPIRIT SPIRITUAL REST

**Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.**

(Viktor E. Frankl)

When my mind is jumpy, reflexive,  
reacting immediately to the worlds around me and within me,  
I never experience a space between stimulus / response.  
Which is to say – I'm not aware *of* my feelings;  
rather, I *am* my feelings.  
And sometimes those feelings  
drive me helter-skelter.

After practicing stilling my mind  
within a few weeks  
I begin to have that space in my life  
that Frankl wrote about:

the space, the moment,  
in which I am aware that I *have* a feeling,  
but I am not necessarily *the* feeling;  
the space between stimulus and response;  
the space to choose what to do  
with the feeling I have.

Out of such spaces  
can composure grow.

*Menuchat hanefesh*  
may mean equanimity,  
but literally it's  
"restful soul."

Perhaps to experience it, it helps to invert it.  
The space between stimulus and response,  
once found,  
is like a pause  
between musical notes:  
a soulful rest.

*Mark Nazimova*

# MIDDOT 2013

## CLEANLINESS

Images abound  
of sparkling floors,  
    fresh laundry,  
        sweet smelling linen

But enough of aesthetics and sensual pleasures  
Let's proceed to life and death issues

Even more than we lean towards clean.....  
    we shun its opposite  
        Dirt.....filth.....schmutz

We flinch at these words  
    our noses crinkle  
        our stomachs turn  
We recoil, crying out: "yuck!" "feh," "ugh."

As Amos Elon's grandmother knew so well\*  
Where there is dirt ....there are germs  
    Where there are germs there is vermin,  
        disease, food poisoning  
        ... ..and yes, very possibly.....death!

Hyperbole you think? Think again  
Better yet.....google the CDC\*\*

But enough of the lowly realm of the literal  
We are concerned here with higher things than the body

So let's fasten our intellectual seatbelts  
Let us leap forth into the metaphorical

Just as we are physically felled by microbes  
    invisible to the naked eye,  
So we are spiritually weakened. --  
    by the continuous accretions of small stains  
        ...layers of dust.....barely detectable .....

        insidiously causing:  
            dinginess of the soul

Can any earthly cleaning agent

bleach out the stains on our character  
remove the layers of dust  
blurring our spiritual vision

Who knows how much schmutz lurks in our innermost being?

Who knows if there is a cleaning agent for the soul  
rivaling the magic of oxybleach for the laundry?

The rabbi knows

But first.....this bears repeating.....BUT FIRST:

WE.....HAVE.....TO.....SEE.....THE.....STAINS

Ah, there's the rub!

*Barbara Gish-Scult*

\*Amos Oz wrote an essay about his grandmother's  
paranoid fear of germs

\*\*Center for Disease Control

## SEDER

Orderliness.

What a boring word. Not an exciting quality to be known for:

” Oh yes, she is really orderly”.

How do you approach understanding this value without feeling pushed to obey? Or falling asleep?

But... there IS an order to this world, to the way it works:

Day follows night; the moon waxes and wanes; seasons change and come again.

Why, then, is my life so messy?

There are levels of messy, granted.

The clothes may not make it back to the closet all the time,

But at least they are not on the floor anymore, these days.

Now the sweaters and gently-worn shirts get draped, layer by layer, on the back of a chair. I call it my silent valet.

To understand about order, I look at the disorder in my life. Order is a close relative to cleanliness. I see that it does not pay to delay the inevitable. As a matter of course, the bed gets made and dishes washed, but while writing this piece, I ended up cleaning a bit more of my apartment- it just gets worse if you don't.

Or , you pay someone else to do it.

But why do it? Because when things are in order, I feel good- not as in: I feel like a good girl. No (well maybe a little)- but actually, my life feels less cluttered and I feel freer. I find I can think more clearly. Decisions come more easily. I don't waffle back and forth so much.

Inner and outer are connected and influence each other. Take any level you wish. That is where the more subtle truth lies about order for me.

I make no claim in unraveling the order of the cosmos- it is best left to the poets.

This much is clear to me:

Order is simple.

When I was in massage school, trying very hard to comprehend the ways of zen, my Shiatsu teacher said: " If you want your Shiatsu to improve, wash your floors".

It sounded indirect, but compelling. It took years to digest. However, I offer it now

Because it could be perfect advice for anyone, Just fill in the blanks for yourself.

Orderliness. Not exciting, but important.

*Satu Ferentz*

## EQUANIMITY

Like water off a mallard's back  
Or dew upon a leaf,  
Let nature's hazards flow away  
And leave you with relief.

Such verbal fluff on greeting cards  
May fill some peoples needs  
But most of us lack Teflon skin  
And require stronger deeds.

Prayer may help a little.  
A response would aid much more.  
We must rely upon ourselves  
To have a winning score.

For us to have tranquility  
And float above the storm  
We really have to cultivate  
A psyche cool yet warm.

We try to ride the ups and downs,  
Keeping our composure,  
With a calm demeanor outward,  
Limiting exposure.

That is so easy to be said;  
We all have lived through it.  
From time to time we do succeed,  
Otherwise we rue it.

So trial and error is the way.  
(I have none that is stronger.)  
Just work and try because we know  
Vict'ry may take longer.

*Stan Samuels*



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once found,  
is like a pause  
between musical notes:  
a soulful rest.

*Mark Nazimova*

## TRUST

A baby, fist firmly encircling a much larger finger,  
looks into eyes with perfect trust –  
knowing needs will be met,  
hugs plentiful.

Yet with the passage of time trust is much less certain,  
harder to achieve.

Hurt by life  
walls go up, high or higher.  
Barriers created stand in the way  
of meaningful relationships.

trust –  
fragile as a spiders web  
as easily pierced,  
but possible to nurture over time –  
each strand woven and attached carefully, deliberately.

Even well established walls-so-high can be breeched.  
Push a ladder close,  
peek over, remove a brick.

Relationships to be cherished,  
one or a few in a lifetime – most fortunate,  
worth the risk.

Hard won bonds with  
children, grandchildren, friends.  
Memories lived and left.

May the forces that whisper improvement  
continue to urge us on.  
May our courage not fail  
as we reach toward better selves, more meaningful lives.

May our efforts, as our arms encompass ever-wider circles,  
improve our own lives, and the (many) others we touch.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## SECOND BECOMING FRUGAL

I am not cheap  
I'm frugal  
Mama was cheap  
I'm not !

I am not materialistic  
I'm frugal  
Papa was materialistic  
I'm not !

Mama bought shoddy clothes  
And cheap out-of-date food  
Papa spent without care  
With little money to spare.

Papa bought new things  
Mama spent little  
Shouting matches loomed constantly  
Each parent claiming veracity.

Escaping from the fray  
Wanting all needs fulfilled  
Dreaming of marrying wealth  
With positive mental health.

The dream vanished  
As many do  
Reality held sway  
Frugality the way.

Two married students  
Two part-time jobs  
A child and little to spend  
The car a VW bug to tend.

Two married students  
Two part-time jobs  
A child and little to spend  
The car a VW bug to tend.

Contentment found  
Shopping with care  
Culture entertainment deals  
Companionship potluck meals.

Picnics on the lawn  
Camping vacations  
Walking for leisure  
Skating for pleasure.  
Savoring the joys of life

With family and friendships  
The calm of falling snow  
Watching the ocean flow.

Feelings of accomplishment  
Love of work above money  
Volunteering with joy  
By tutoring a boy.

Lessons learned  
Practiced still  
Poverty long gone  
Frugality goes on.

*Shirley C. Samuels*

## MIDDOT 2014

### PATIENCE SALVANUT

It's easy to forget how quickly everything  
turns: the world and the ballerina, the  
silence of morning, the cruelty of despair

It's easy to forget how very quickly  
the chick hatches and the heart breaks,  
and the baby's wail becomes a belly laugh.

The call from the lover away at war  
is not a stove-pot filled with water;  
neither is the end of mourning set  
by clockwork or another sunrise.

The caterpillar knows of waiting,  
and the son of the man in surgery,  
and the anxious actress who waits

on you with coffee and dessert and  
a hope that the glass she shattered  
at your feet isn't her only big break.

The bear in winter knows of waiting,  
and the Master of Suspense, and  
the percussionist during an adagio.

But it's easy to forget how quickly everything  
turns: the world and the ballerina, and the  
hateful storm into the promise of the rainbow.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## ON SALVANUT MEDITATION 2

i remember a time when  
moments fit eternities with  
vast emptiness for doing,

before yesterday was last year  
and tomorrow had already past.  
so many vessels, silently smashed,

the work of the world is six days  
for One only when partners must,  
unequal, sweep construction dust.

now eternity seems too long with  
out t i m e e n o u g h to mend  
broken hearts or fractured futures.

when i was young, i would close  
a book to think on what might  
come next, and then wait to turn

off the light so i could savor the  
words on the cover, struggling  
to find the meaning hidden there...

now grief hovers, an uninvited guest  
smelling of motor oil and wanting  
to muse about the stock market,

as late at night, i lose the light  
and turn on television, struggling  
to find distraction from the day.

there is hope in regret -- that  
pain is a refuge for the quiet  
possibility of what Tomorrow is.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## PATIENCE

Waiting.....

For the weather to warm  
    baby to take a first step  
    fever to break.

So many hours, days, months spent waiting,  
    hurrying time  
The quality of time spent  
    working toward a goal.

Expressing love and support  
    for yourself, a child, a neighbor

or, a colleague –  
    waiting calmly, with understanding.

Or persevering toward a hoped-for conclusion;  
    short-term, requiring focus and attention  
    or long-term,  
    where a final result – often years away –  
    asks for ingenuity,  
    political savvy, staying power, talent.

We revere Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela for  
    their vision and determination  
    as they fought to move their nations  
    toward equality and peace - a lengthy, difficult process.

Our personal battles loom large,  
    demand foresight, patience, perseverance –  
    the work of a life-time.  
    Breaking a destructive family cycle  
    improving relations with dear ones  
    conquering or surviving illness  
    as we strive to accept imposed limitations  
    dealing with personal demons.

May we find the strength  
    to nurture the patience  
    to overcome the obstacles,  
    to chart a productive path,  
    to creatively support our cherished ones  
    as we reach for and work toward our goals.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## HESED

### ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS

No hymnals sung by angelic choristers  
in my Heaven  
Where, out there, somewhere... is a never ending sphere of  
Eternal Bliss  
no stress, want, duress

2

Imagine a place devoid of conflict  
No discussions about Being and/or Becoming.  
Dare not contradict the nature of good and evil  
all to no avail.  
Out there, all is good as it justly should....  
In that other place can the so called "Elect" denizens fathom  
what is the good?  
In a sphere of no ambiguities,  
only civilities and the Everlasting Boredom of placid Eternity.

3

One time I did see "Heaven" in a revelatory dream  
I was standing in the midst of a maelstrom of people,  
although the multitude was strangely calm.  
Were they true Believers, or Doubters too?  
Their faces were devoid of any expression.  
Were we all there to determine what Grace is?  
Were we here -up there- for some momentous lesson?  
  
A susurrus enveloped me, an ambient wimple of a cloud caressed.  
A stentorian voice pierced the silence  
Was it the voice of the  
Bat Kol?

This voice blessed the multitude in many languages  
and I recognized the words  
Chesed acts of loving kindness  
Chesed acts of loving kindness  
Chesed acts of loving kindness

I awoke and contemplated the meaning of this strange dream.  
Was some stalking revenant telling me to tear into the narrative  
to enlighten me to what it might mean.  
This experience reminded me of an exegetical class in Biblical history.  
Perhaps my inherent skepticism forced me to parse the words  
not the numinous gleamings.  
Was it all a mystery?

4

An epiphany - I realized the simplest words and thoughts mask the most arcane meanings.  
What can be more basic than to pursue Chesed - acts of loving kindness?  
To remove the veil of blindness which separates us - one from the "Others,"  
whomever they might be.  
Given to all to discourse, to refute, to experience, to act upon the meaning of Chesed in this  
World's vast mirror.  
And so the oneiric glimpse of Heaven is here, not up there,  
somewhere - not there - given to all of us.

<u>Chesed</u>	acts of loving kindness
<u>Chesed</u>	acts of loving kindness
<u>Chesed</u>	acts of loving kindness

*Leila B. Alexander*



## ON HESED MEDITATION

I don't long for  
your love, your  
adoration  
of all that makes me sing  
my own praises.

I don't seek  
your celebration, your  
approval  
of all that makes me dance  
in public just for fun.

I don't pine after  
your prizes, your  
accolades  
for all that makes me smile  
with the pride of self-respect.

I ache for your acceptance  
of my weakness  
and my wandering,  
crave the comfort  
in your knowledge  
of my flawed humanity,  
heave for the healing  
words you whisper  
while you embrace my disgrace.

You may like me for my goodness,  
but  
(Gd knows)  
you must love me  
for my shame.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## ON HESED MEDITATION 2

If Love were the same as Compassion,  
it would have more Saving Simplicity;  
it would command Comfort and Might,  
Power and Nerve, if love didn't stop at  
the Edge of Victory and Loneliness --  
there would be Another Oh! in love, and  
I would be in it, but only toward the end.

If Love were the same as Compassion  
there would be no abuse of substances  
or children; people would trade smiles  
for smirks and barter peace with pride --  
and the world would know that Gd=Love  
is not enough, that the arms of mighty  
nations are most powerful when opened.

If Love were the same as Compassion  
the Children of Man and Life would keep  
their brothers company and think better  
of animals that sense our secret pain --  
and on flags around the world the heart  
would conquer moons & stars & crosses;  
if Love were the same as Compassion.

*Joshua Greenberg*

**SILENCE**  
**SHMIRAT HALASHON**  
**Guarding the tongue**

Is it better to say the wrong thing  
Or just say nothing at all?  
And how do you know the right thing  
When there is no cue card or script?  
So you muffle the words that fill your mind  
And void the facial clues.  
You sit and emulate the sphinx  
Though wisdom is a ruse.

*Stan Samuels*

## GUARDING THE TONGUE MEDITATION ON SHMIRAT LASHON

I studied freshman English with Peter Murphy who taught us Hemingway's terse prose and decreed to us his law over the art of language: choose your words, finite as heartbeats, with care.

And I've studied the ancient teaching of the rabbis, who detailed the ritual slaughter for 70 bulls, on the lethality of language: words, irretrievably cast, are feather-weapons of triple murder.

Forgetting, I hold my tongue gleaming, the sword of a golden *torero*, to strike swiftly, shallowly, pridefully, repeatedly at a provoked, majestic creature, in a cruel pursuit of so vainglorious victory.

Weakened, the earth drunk now with a wine of wounds, I finally relent over my victim and, like the roar all around or the bloody roses, fall far too late to a merciless, piercing, eternal silence.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## TRUST

Abraham went forth to a land he did not know,  
trusting the extravagant promise of a God  
with whom he had no prior history,  
a paradigmatic act of trust.

And we too,  
though not on a par with Abraham,  
Ulysses, or even Huckleberry Finn,  
must go forth.

Like it or not we too must go forth  
at first to kindergarten,  
followed by an endless series of going forths.

It is an inviolable law of nature.....to evolve,  
to grow...and keep on growing.  
Mother Nature abhors couch potatoes.

To flaunt this law  
is to place your genetic endowments  
in serious jeopardy.  
( that is, to risk becoming extinct)

I have no doubt it is trust  
that allows amoebas to divide,  
bees to leave the hive\  
and salmon to make the daunting trip upstream

Trust is the engine driving us forward.  
Trust is hardwired.....unquenchable...  
and will not be denied,

Except....of course when it is betrayed,  
violated and utterly abused by egotists,  
narcissists, sociopaths and other unsavory types  
that populate our otherwise benign universe.

Was it Oliver Cromwell who said  
“trust in God”  
but keep your gunpowder dry”?

It was certainly Jesus who said  
“Lay not up your treasures  
where moths and rust do corrupt.”  
The message is clear.

Trust must be managed,  
doled out in small doses,  
dispensed with vigilance.

It has a checkered history.

To trust is to risk betrayal  
which is as common as dirt,  
and like clothing...comes in all sizes  
small, medium, large and extra extra large.

Judas did it with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane

Bernie Madoff did it with a ponzi scheme  
at his faux Louis XIV desk  
in the Lipstick building.

“Et tu Brute” could be the motto of us all.

Of course it's the small daily betrayals  
that do us in ..... in the end.

The “thank you” withheld,  
the guilt trip not deserved,  
the cold shoulder instead of a smile.

But ....as the Buddhists say....to hell with all that.  
Let's transcend the petty wounds to pride and self love.  
and fling ourselves, incautiously,  
into the love intoxicated cosmos of Walt Whitman,  
the full catastrophe of Zorba the Greek.

Let's go forth....and risk betrayal,  
opt for trust over cynicism,  
vulnerability over self protection

And when we are betrayed at times as we will surely be,  
let us have the grace  
to utter a benign sigh  
and paraphrase Emily Dicinson.

less ..... than we chide ourselves,  
for entertaining plastic goods  
upon our silver shelves

*Barbara Gish Scult*

## **TRUST ON BITACHON**

## MEDITATION

Trust is the home of our mothers,  
first built far away in distant lands  
where kings were gods, and gods  
the work of so many men's hands.

One framed hers with the sticks  
of a husband who smashed staid  
stone faces, leaving its walls open  
to wanderers that the wind made  
She died, perhaps childless, never  
meeting the daughter-in-law who  
shaped hers from the gentle fabric  
compassion but chose one of two.

Her nieces warred of worn, need-  
ful jealousies, conceived rivalries,  
and conjured theirs between each  
other in the husband they pleased.

Until Hannah, in a desperate piety,  
asked the Name in a bold petition  
to be granted a son, and anointed  
the kings who birthed holy nations.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## ON BITACHON MEDITATION 2

We met at the crossroads to new understanding:  
I would wear the face of the underprivileged and  
She would shelter the cause of the exile. Many  
joined, many moaned, and many made jokes of  
us from the windows of passing caravans where  
children laughed about my clothes and women  
snickered at Her tallis wrapped like a schmata.  
rust

There was a great heaving of disbelief when the  
water rushed over our pursuers like a stampede  
of angels. Songs and symphonies were not yet  
distraction enough to counter the trauma in our  
relief from that massacre. Such beautiful horses.

I looked past the people and saw a light shining  
from a distant mountain, where the blue of the  
sky turned to fire and fear turned to a new kind  
of promise -- that laws were not made by men,  
but among them; and gold is no standard at all.

I turned to Her, realizing, my tears forming like so  
many raindrops after drought & famine & rivers of  
blood; I turned to Her, holding my head up in my  
weariness, with the ache of labor and the visions  
of my lost little boy tossed into the abyss; I turned  
to Her, weeping joy, and took her hand--to my lips.

*Joshua Greenberg*



## FAITH

Reading Scult on Kaplan,  
pondering the several definitions of God –

immanent,  
transnatural,  
transcendental

philosophically useful I find, conceptually interesting,  
but leading to a remote, intellectualized Deity.

My God  
lives within me, walks beside me.  
Her name is Courage,  
Strength,  
or again Patience.  
She helps me chide myself  
for anger, for resentment.  
Beside me, she is called Wonder, Compassion, Empathy -  
noticing,  
urging me to appreciate the miracles  
experience the pain.

I seek “only” aid in bettering myself,  
encouragement when at risk of failing.

Perhaps She is my better self,  
a friend worth having.

We pray “Adonai Elohainu, Adonai Ehad”.  
Could our One God be the  
the need for, the ideal of,  
the work toward betterment?

Perhaps not so different from Kaplan, as I understand him.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## FAITH

On the green pillow  
in the darkened room  
I sit on the ground.  
IT comes to me once  
my eyes close, when I breathe in  
deeply, then out, in again.  
IT tingles under my skin,  
surrounds me, a silk tent.  
My friend, I call silently.  
Where have you been?  
In fact, I know you're here  
in the hush and the din,  
but I've been too busy  
too noisy to pay attention.  
Invisible Soft Handed One,  
You appear in my grandson's tush,  
In the face of my son,  
In my daughter, a kissing mother now,  
In my husband, as he chauffeurs me  
around town.  
In my friends' smiles that warm  
my synagogue seat before I sit down.  
IT fills my well,  
the void I used to feel.  
In the snap of the wind,  
in the sweat staining  
my workout shirt.  
In the infinitesimal orchid bud,  
third time in bloom.  
IT compels me to do, to give,  
To hope, to say YES.  
IT is with me at all times.  
Even in pain, even in death.  
IT is central as stone.  
My hold on this  
is blind and loud.  
but gets lazy,  
so quickly forgets.  
But when I confront IT  
on that green cushion  
or anywhere I go  
What a welcome I get!  
Heaven is my home

*Judith Edelstein*

# FAITH EMUNAH MEDITATION

The sun is late this morning.

I've waited by the waves with  
their cold thunder rhythm  
and soft silence  
guarding the dawn

for hours in anticipation  
of the horizon's labor pains.

She screams fire into the cobalt  
nothingness  
that has trapped longing  
and levity and  
loneliness

for centuries before and  
does not relent now for my sake.

I imagine a sail offshore  
sending sentries paddling  
to the beach where I sit  
with bottles of  
messages I will never  
answer, and rags soaked  
in kerosene and fear.

I need a light, but  
the sun is late this morning.

The clouds are heavy with rain  
or snow. The seagulls have gone.  
There are no dogs chasing after

their humans -- just a rib-boned  
mangey hound, skulking  
like a jackal at the edge of the sea.

There is eternity in those depths.  
The green surf, murky and raging,  
mirrors my mind like tarnished glass.  
I am dependent on the dawn, but  
the sun is late this morning.

Soon I know (I hope) I will  
have sight of my hands again  
where I clench the memories

of my accomplishments and  
my raison d'être alone with  
smashed clam shells and silt.

I remember smiling, what  
it was like to taste joy  
in each breath and to  
trust in tomorrow.

I grip the sand like a ladder  
dangling from Heaven, a  
trapeze artist or a yellow-  
tailed fish waiting for a net  
as I breathe in the space  
between high and low tide.

The shadow of the water's edge  
circles like a harlot's seduction  
-- the price I will pay is  
holiness and sanctity and love.

If only I could see more clearly, but  
the sun  
is late  
this morning.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## FAITH

Faith is Trust and Belief merged into one,  
While securely surrounding the mind.  
Guiding one's life it blocks critical thought,  
And ideas of an unwelcome kind.

Guarded well by a wall of tradition,  
And resistant to a nascent view,  
It hinders studying our history  
Or our learning of anything new.

We must lower that wall of tradition  
And expose ourselves to new learning.  
Let our minds be expanded through knowledge  
And follow a flame ever burning.

Our beliefs have matured through the ages,  
We must see and continue today.  
Let our faith become something we build on,  
Not a hindrance that limits our way.

*Stan Samuels*

## **ORDERLINESS IT DEPENDS**

Like most things, the worth of orderliness depends.

In the wilderness, God called upon the Israelites to establish order.

Count the able bodied men, name them by clan and tribe, assign them place, duties, standards. Give them purpose and connection. Count the firstborn, levy taxes, pay the priests. Create a community to defend, protect, endure.

Through the ages, orderliness has been the consort of dictators, hierarchies and bureaucracies, the steel ramrod of armies poised to strike, reducing nations and tribes to a wilderness of bones and ashes.

In my own small world, I skip between order and wilderness, needing both. I pay the taxes, delete the emails and lock the doors. I fill the larder and feed the cat. Then, in my thoughts and dreams, I find my own wilderness.

And there I play.

*Helen Stein*

## ORDERLINESS A HAIKU

Orderliness  
Is it a blessing  
Or a curse?

If we attempt  
To clear disorder  
Complaints come

Priorities  
Removing the mess  
Can Relax

Should we tune out  
Are we the problem  
Dilemma?

All in its place  
Everything is found  
Done quickly

Work on changing  
Our expectations  
Without pain

Through out old stuff  
Make room for the new  
A blessing

Some find comfort  
Surrounded by mess  
Let them be

When chaos comes  
Comfort no more there  
Order gone

If we obsess  
With our disorder  
Clear it up

Others disorder  
Perfect world upset  
No control

Enjoy our choice  
Of orderliness  
Savor it!

People mock us  
Call us obsessive  
Disturbing

*Shirley C. Samuels*

## MIDDOT 2015

### JUSTICE

Justice should not be meted in anger  
For justice should not be revenge  
A world of an eye for an eye  
Would be a world of the blind.  
We certainly cannot forget  
And often cannot forgive.  
The facts must be collected,  
Then properly weighed in court.  
Along with mitigations,  
According to the law.  
Quickly but not in haste,  
The innocent duly acquitted.  
And punishment given when due  
That's how it all should work  
And might in a heavenly court  
But humans aren't angels  
And injustice sometimes rules.

*Stan Samuels*

## ATTENTIVENESS LISTEN OH LISTEN

My eyes squint as the misty raindrops explode on clear walls of plastic  
Which I forget are not my eyes  
The aromatic smell of nothingness wafts up my nostrils  
Carried by the very same raindrops  
A sweet, succulent narcotic pulses and courses through my veins  
The grey sky, like a protective womb, wraps around me, keeping me safe  
And the world is full of molecules that exist because I am here  
And I am one  
I am one  
Where are you?... I am here  
***I am here...*** Where are you?  
The tree blows brown wet leaves- I know them from some time before  
On wet cobblestones like these, whose blackened sheen holds history prisoner  
The smell of rain dampened suede  
The pounding of a father's heart against the palms of little girl hands, held securely on his  
back  
But I know I heard those smells  
And I know I heard the sky as it opened up to bare its soul to all who would dare to look  
And the universe is full of suffocating expansiveness that exists because I exist now  
And you are here because I exist  
You exist because I am here  
Who are you?... I am you  
***I am you...*** Who are you?  
The sky is vast- the heavens are dark and inviting  
It sings out to me like the sea- It calls to me- pulling at my arms  
It lifts my hands  
Unweights my spirit to reach at the sound of soundlessness  
A woman pleas for help, a child cries, a dog squeals, a man begs, the dumpster crashes,  
The tree blows, a father's heart pounds against a child's hand, blood pulse

And molecules attract, repel, and resonate- Raindrops give themselves over to puddle  
Can you hear it with your eyes? Can you hear it with your heart?  
Can you hear it with your soul?  
Can you?

Listen...  
We are here  
We are here  
Open your eyes  
And listen  
OH LISTEN

*Marion Mackles*



## ATTENTIVENESS

Look up  
at the sky.  
Electric yellow by day,  
Small night light  
Set on tinges of bright white  
Smile at the light.

Feel  
its color  
creep up your sleeve  
wrap your shoulders,  
cashmere warm or  
edge of knife chill.  
Caress it.

Touch  
The air swirling around you,  
Cotton candy on a stick.  
Oozing in summer,  
Biting in winter.  
Embrace it.

Smell  
The garbage, dog-doo,  
The urine soaked one,  
The flowers, the trees,  
Garlic frying in olive oil.  
Rub your nose in it.

Taste  
The center of your heart,  
Relish the water, the blood,  
The bone, the fat.  
Savor sugar, sour, salt.  
Tongue all of it.

Stop.  
Breathe in.  
Touch.  
Look.  
Listen.

*Rabbi Judith Edelstein*

## BOUNDARIES

In the geography of my mind, fear has whelped walls  
My own Great Wall of separation at 12 months,  
A Watt's Dyke of homesickness at 6,  
The Wailing Wall of depression at 16,  
A Separation barrier of heartbreak at 25,  
A brief Jericho of terror: cancer at 57.  
Walls of stone, barbed wire, shards of glass that read KEEP OUT.

In the geography of my mind, boundaries have grown coequal with wisdom.  
Delicate structures, they are tethered by rope and strands of silk, velvet and embroidery  
floss.  
Structures that breathe and sway like tents, changing and enduring.  
Blue and mauve and airy for spontaneity and intimacy.  
Deep green and purple, secured to the earth for discipline, work and solitude.  
Tents that invite and convey dignity, respect and love.

*Helen Stein*

## **BOUNDARIES A PONDERANCE**

Boundaries of the soul, boundaries of the heart, boundaries of intellect, of character, of passion...

The force of a chemical, electrical, or magnetic bond  
The permeability of a cellular membrane  
The spaciousness and limitations of the womb  
Atmospheric pressure  
The force and the pull of gravity  
An explosion that we do not remember- but it remembers us  
A synaptic cleft over which a neurotransmitter must take a leap of faith  
The arid, dry suffocating heat of a sandy desert  
The rough terrain and insistence of a whipping wind on a mountain top  
The thick bramble and maddening shouts of the impenetrable woods  
The depths of an ocean where we are bumped once as a warning  
    before being swallowed up alive  
The desire to look past one's eyes and meet another's soul  
Fear that it might be your own  
You may love your enemy  
You may give up self-loathing  
You may forgive yourself whether you are forgiven or not  
Forgive someone whether they accept it or not  
Fear- the strongest of boundaries, the mortar for the bricks of hate  
Why be fearful? We all will share the same boundaries in eternity  
There is an explosion that remembers us  
Replaying as light bounces between two mirrors and the clock ticks ad infinitum  
Be strong in your passion, be thirsty for light, be loving in your touch  
And never forget the power of an open mind and a compassionate heart  
There is no light in a black hole- and no way out

*Marion Mackles*

## COMMON DECENCY

Before there were middot and commandments,  
Before there was righteousness and piety,  
Before sin and punishment,  
    There was common decency.

Even among baboons.

Baboons grooming baboons!  
Chimps sharing a banana!

What imperatives of decency have been encoded  
    in the depths of our genome.  
What ethical necessities written  
    into the very heart of being.

Refusing to be outdone by baboons  
    We humans aspired to ever higher levels of civility,  
Excelled at "thank you"....."you're welcome"....."I'm sorry,"  
Developed an uncanny ability  
    to feel each other's pain.

There are times though when being decent is more serious  
Than blowing the whistle on a friend  
    cheating at Mah Jongg.

There are times when it means taking your life in your hands.  
When speaking inconvenient truths  
    offends really scary people.  
Do the decent thing and you could end up in the witness protection program.  
    living in a small Balkan country  
    with inferior plumbing.

But an encouraging word to the risk averse.

No need to put your head on the chopping block.  
    You can always just share a banana.  
It's not likely to get you killed  
    And will surely make the world a better place.

And since reciprocity is a basic law of nature,  
    You will end up with a lot more bananas.

*Barbara Gish Scult*

## COMMON DECENCY THE WAY OF THE LAND

I don't know when it came to be - sometime before the time of remembrance  
Now rich cool soil tickles my digits and caresses my every move  
Pushing, nudging, rolling and uncurling me toward a new beginning  
Something unknown- a light that warms and dares me to open  
A new soil of nothingness whose gentle breath sways and lures me to unfurl  
Thank you for keeping me safe, for food, shelter and the space to grow

Since the time before remembrance your ancestors moaned and laid  
Their weary heads down and returned what we had given and they had taken  
And one day you shall do the same for our ancestors  
It is the way of the land

Out, I elongate- expanding and extending  
Exposing myself to the force of mystery  
Above me- shimmering against the still blue - a green leaf tiled canopy  
Like sirens, whisper sweet songs leading me forever upwards to the heavens  
Dangling the sun on a string - taunting me with a taste that I so desperately crave  
Excuse me, if you please, would you allow me to share in your light - I am thirsty

I will teach you what was taught to me, and in time, you shall share it with another  
You must bend, bow, never lose sight of your desire- search, seek out and find your own  
light  
One day I will fall to feed the soil like our ancestors before us - and you shall know the sky  
It is the way of the land

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN- PLEASE STAND CLEAR OF THE CLOSING DOORS  
THE NEXT STOP IS...  
Excuse me, would you like a seat?  
Oh thank you! I don't think I could have stood much longer  
My pleasure...  
It's the way of the land

*Marion Mackles*

## **COURAGE**

### **THE NAMELESS KNIGHT**

The night is cold and dark  
In the stillness there is a loud silence  
Filling my body with the chill of fear  
The unknown rests behind closed eyelids

A hollowness beckons a warm breath to enter  
Then roll out like the tide  
Fueled by an energy that is foreign to me  
But comforting- lulling me into existence

Open your eyes and let me in  
The silver moon beam pries open heavy lids  
No I am afraid- You are not warm and do not fill me  
With golden pinks, joyous oranges, and caressing skies

My child clear your vision- I light the evening sky with silver beams  
Reflect the deceiving colors of the day so you can truly see  
My ancestry is yours, we share the same beginning  
And will one day swirl together in an old forgotten cosmic dance

An eye lid flutters, silver lashes glowing  
Moon light impregnates the emptiness  
Returning the warmth siphoned off by fear  
The hollowness gives way to strength with each new breath

How courageous is the moon to light the dark alone  
To closed eyes without a word of thanks  
How brave of you to trust the moon  
To be there in the unknown

*Marion Mackles*

## DECISIVENESS

### NACHSON BEN AMINADAV

Roiling seas, angry waves  
Mountains of white foam  
On the shore B'nai Israel wept  
before the fearsome task  
fording the water  
on their way home.  
Home to a land that was only a dream  
A fable long forgotten.  
Perhaps a tale told by an elderly  
grandparent  
some one  
who sat by the fire and lulled a  
little one to sleep  
when the arduous days' work was done.

Perhaps they crooned the august names  
of half forgotten ancestors long ago  
The wanderers--Abraham, Isaac and Jacob--  
-  
Whose sturdy feet had trod  
endless journeys through  
fabled land  
Through never-ending hillocks of sand  
to forge their claim to the  
One with the Ineffable name--  
their God

Having shuffled off the bonds of Egyptian  
servitude  
through miracles and signs  
their once Jubilant and thankful mood  
Was overcome by horror and awe  
As they stood at the shore  
of the Sea of Reeds  
Waiting to be relieved--  
Perhaps other Miracle might occur  
They stood still--too fearful to go forward  
too reluctant to turn back

Within their ranks there was a rustle a  
stir of silent motions--

While Moses their leader beseeched God--  
suddenly - a Shout-  
a cry rang out-  
"Follow me" someone cried  
as he leapt into the foaming tide-  
the roaring and crackling, and hissing  
ceased  
and all was still  
When Israel crossed the river wide  
and fell to rejoicing and singing on the  
other side.

On that day--a new Hero was made  
his name is remembered in legend and song  
Nachshon ben Aminadav  
with rhythmic beat strong  
Nachshon, Elder of the Tribe of Judah  
Will remain  
In song and fable a source of  
Fame.

*Leila Alexander*

## **DECISIVENESS**

### **GHOSTS OF A MIRRORED PALACE**

To reach, to grab, to pull, to want, to push away  
To hold, to speak, to wish, to grasp  
To forgive, to love, to hate, to succeed  
To prosper, to learn, to blame, to do  
To live, to bury, to lose, to gain, to regret,  
To let go...

On the stairs, I knew  
I hesitated in mid-sentence  
You said, "Well goodnight then"  
I decided not to say, "I love you"  
Now today is yesterday is a million decades ago  
You will never know I loved you- doesn't matter now

On the phone, remember?  
I hung up without hesitation  
I decided it should be you who should apologize  
Or maybe you hung up before I could decide  
Now a million decades ago is yesterday  
You will never know how sorry I was- doesn't matter now

When did I make the choice?  
To forget to take the time to hesitate  
As I watched the bag zip over a stiffened shell  
Of now forgotten memories  
Why was that the moment to choose to be decisive?  
Now it is all today and I am haunted by millions of decades of yesterdays

When was it  
That deliberation became hesitation  
And hesitation became deliberate  
And indecision masqueraded as decisiveness  
And decades of todays turned to millions of yesterdays  
And what didn't matter...matters

To reach, to hold, to forgive, to prosper, to live, to move on...  
It is time, without hesitation  
No stairs, no phone, no reflections, through reflections, in reflections  
Time for deliberation is over  
Prometheus' chains have vaporized into the fog  
It is time to decide to let go and live for today

*Marion Mackles*

## **EQUANITMITY**



A quiet surface - unruffled as a glassy lake,  
only an occasional bubble indicating activity beneath.

Yet there is turmoil in the depths –  
anguish at difficult choices  
anger as a plan goes wrong  
pain from feeling inadequate  
A tsunami brewing.

Focus on the flow of days,  
The wonder of the journey –  
beauty of the scenery  
(colors)  
grandeur of the whole

grow, change while  
drifting with the bubbling stream or moving purposefully  
toward outlet or end point.

Perspective is all.  
Pain diminishes  
new experiences enrich old  
solutions are found  
clarity replaces befuddlement  
patience eases one through the worst times.

Equinity will come if one can keep the boat upright,  
aimed in the right direction

values, priorities intact,  
a focus on the flow, the experience –  
an acute ear trained toward signals and  
an appreciation of,  
an openness toward the help of others.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## EQUANIMITY

### MY FRIENDS, IF YOU PLEASE, I NOW INTRODUCE TO YOU...THE DRAGON

The lights burn bright as the curtain floats up with great velocity and importance  
The deep bang of the drum sounding the impending doom- the dutiful town crier  
Clanking of tin and wood vying for the space where our heart generates its own  
vernacular

The painted face of the fierce dragon gracefully jumps, spins, and turns, banging fists  
What has hurt and angered you so- to chase after the flowing silk and clashing cymbals  
I am told that the Earth is square and Heaven round- Earth flat square... Heaven round  
Heaven round sits on top of Earth below

The sun rises over soot covered landscapes of mystical mountain formations  
Man-made citadels of brick, glass, and neon lights blend and compete with what was  
The harsh screech of aluminum garage doors on cinderblock and concrete changes to a  
moan

Shirtless men smoking in piles of old tire rubble and discarded plastic, laugh in the heat  
A thin female figure with silken toddler wrapped around her leg cajoles sizzles from a  
wok

Heat pressing against ribs making it hard to suck the air- tears fall from burning eyes  
Is that your wrath? What if you knew they were tears of despair?  
Earth is round and Heaven square- Heaven square teeters on top of round desperate  
Earth

Soothing water of moonlit skies across the world washes off the thick white face paint  
The mask fades and melts away, exposing all that is and all that was- a faceless face  
The dragon that chases silk- the rounded square Earth and its squarely circular Heaven  
The skin peels- there is no good or evil  
Beneath the façade, the sinew, and veins where the dragon lives and flows through the  
blood  
Beats a heart that knows truth

*Marion Mackles*

## SLOWNESS TO ANGER

Slowness to anger,  
remote to a child,  
Can prevent actions  
quite violent and wild.

When violence abounds  
in home and on street.  
Slowness to anger's  
a difficult feat.

For a child, hit  
by parent or brother  
The injured soul  
will beat up another.

Angry behavior  
without reflection  
Grows much worse,  
like a rampant infection.

Think Cain and Abel;  
there's a moral there.  
Untempered anger  
a trait to repair.

Well managed,  
anger can be constructive.  
Otherwise  
it can be quite destructive.

Start with the young,  
in their homes and in schools,  
Providing guidance  
and giving them tools.

For problemed adults  
it isn't too late  
To slow down their anger,  
temper their hate.

For growth to proceed  
when anger is just  
Slowness to anger  
decreases mistrust.

You have to relax  
and think it all through  
Look at your choices  
and what you can do.

Learn to assert  
with positive action,  
Uncontrolled anger  
will have no traction.

Let's choose the option  
of talking it out,  
Better than hitting,  
without any doubt.

Sit back, calm down  
take long, slow deep breaths  
Relaxing thoughts  
can reframe all your threats.

To child or adult  
once more do I say  
Slow down your anger;  
find ways to delay.

*Shirley C. Samuels*

## **SLOW TO ANGER THE WHOLE THING'S ABOUT SOUP!**

Chicken Soup- It Cures What Ails You

It's all in the same pot  
Parts that you cannot bear to smell  
Or eat  
Things that repulse you  
and some that comfort

The water boils  
It has to- it is what you have been waiting for  
At last you will have your way- get what you want  
But if you let it boil for too long  
The soup will evaporate, the flavorful bouquet will burn  
The meat will overcook- harden, like an unforgiving heart

The angry bubbles thrash the contents around  
Turn it down to a simmer- but not for too long  
Or the results will be just as devastating as if you let it burn  
Constantly skimming the relentless assault of grey scum  
The soup's revenge  
You know the final outcome can go either way

Finally it's done...Maybe...Your choice- you turn off the flame  
It beckons to you to take a sip- but you know it is a game you will not play  
You have been there before and been burned  
Frustrated, you gently remove the fat  
Soothe it with a gentle slow breath from pursed lips  
Then down it flows, you breathe a sigh of calm relief

You can let it boil and burn  
You can let it simmer until the contents turn to mush  
Rendering it inedible  
You control the flame, you control the dial  
It is yours to destroy  
Or yours to enjoy, love and use to heal

It is your choice  
How and what you swallow  
And how it came to be

*Marion Mackles*

# MIDDOT 2016

## TRUST IN BETWEEN TRUST AND TRUST

Visions, Illusions, Memories  
Dream, Reality  
Mine, Yours  
Yours, Mine

Breathe in deep  
Let your ribs expand  
Fly  
Like the eagle gliding – flowing lighter than air  
Above  
Held up by nothing  
Wait for me  
It didn't make it  
I'm sorry - Don't cry  
You'll have to try again

Breathe in deep  
Let your ribs expand  
Let the warmth of the sky comfort you  
Float-Let the current carry you away  
Fly - Let your heart take flight  
Wait for me  
You made it  
There, there - Don't cry  
I knew you would

The sun rises and sets, sets and rises  
The moon waxes and wanes, wanes and waxes  
Flowers bloom and wither, wither and bloom  
A blue heron stretches its mighty wings -  
    rippling the air as it rises off its perch on the water  
A baby cries....

There is always a tomorrow

*Marion Mackles*

**SILENCE**  
**“IF A TREE FALLS IN A FOREST AND...”**

Broken seashells, shreds of straw from a basket lie lifeless on a floor  
She- sits on the couch, arms crossed, nurturing her grief  
Him- head down, elbows on table, chin cradled by hand  
The air is still, there is not sound, the silence is deafening  
Piercing the eardrums, devouring the heart  
The green grass is grey from the moonlit sky, stars nestle the heavens above them  
Hundreds of bullfrogs croak their syncopated rhythm- resonating waves bounce unabashedly  
Every ounce of ones being reverberates, the sound is deafening In the vortex of the crescendo  
is silence When did their insanity lull you to sleep, make still the atmosphere, stop time  
He always told me that speech is silver  
She always told me silence is golden  
I always replied, "but sometimes yellow"  
I will only know silence when life ceases and stillness is an undefined entity  
So until then, I will lay still, staring into the heavens

*Marion Mackles*

# MIDDOT 2017

## LOVING KINDNESS

Don't turn away

A smile

opens the door –  
an invitation.

Follow with an out-stretched hand

An offer of comfort  
connectedness  
perhaps a sandwich prepared to share.

A gesture goes a long way –

Feeling noticed, appreciated  
can be the beginning of self esteem

And within the family

love is palpable.

Give yours away,

the supply is unlimited  
quickly replenished –  
also returned in kind, leaving no holes.

Careful listening

careful response  
make it clear that you heard  
will consider  
are aware of needs, sensitivities.

Small kindnesses that feel like hugs.

Memories of a day bathed in love

last a lifetime.

*Andrea Bardfeld*

## HONOR & RESPECT

A title or rank is honored:  
A princess, a knight, a rabbi.  
But the person is respected —  
If that person has earned the respect.  
The president is honored;  
Some are respected  
Others not.  
We honor our parents  
But judge them as well —  
Sometimes too critically  
And so shape our respect.  
We honor longevity and knowledge  
But respect accomplishments  
And wisdom.

*Stan Samuels*



**SILENCE**  
**MY SILLY TONGUE**

My Silly Tongue

So much like a pup,  
you slop  
and slip  
romp and dump,  
my sulky, silky tongue.

You're having fun:  
You jump and crash,  
While I'm numb  
From the damage  
You've done.

Don't mean to be rash,  
But I wish  
I were strong enough  
To pin you down,  
Tie you up.

*Judith Edelstein*

## TRUST

To be we might, to be we will  
We are unknown; won't know until  
What deeds we might, what deeds we do  
When what we choose comes into view

To trust ideals, we must ask why  
If we're just cells that live then die

A life of trust that does what must  
With faith in truth that knows what's just  
Trusting those to do what's right  
A leap of faith into the night

To trust ideals, we must ask why  
If we're just cells that live then die

Trust ourselves to be the one  
To seek for truth where there is none  
Choosing not the easy path  
When lust and greed fill us with wrath

To trust ideals, we must ask why  
If we're just cells that live then die

Alas we cross the great unknown  
Our lease on life is just a loan  
Trust that purpose will transcend  
When time on earth has reached its end

Why trust ideals? The truth is nigh.  
We're more than cells that live then die.

*Art Spar*

## TRUST

In God we trust”  
Our country’s motto  
Does that comfort me  
When I believe in a just God  
and I am deceived?

At Auschwitz some died  
feeling abandoned  
The God they trusted  
was not there to help  
Others died with the Shema  
affirming their trust of God.

With trust still strong  
some survivors thanked God  
that they survived  
and trusted Him more  
Those bitter about abandonment  
gave up their belief in the Divine.

Where do I stand  
Do I blame God  
when my government  
defies the Constitution

Do I believe God  
has abandoned our country?  
No, I have to believe  
that democracy will prevail

It has survived since our forefathers  
framed the Constitution  
We have been threatened before  
and overcame the threats

I believe God does not control  
what happens to me  
My religious belief  
is that fairness and good  
ultimately prevail.

The God I trust  
gives me the strength  
And the morality of Judaism  
that mandates action  
to make the world a better place.  
Belief in positive future change  
must be expected and pursued!

The horrors of Auschwitz  
might have been prevented  
if the righteous world  
had acted together sooner

*Shirley C. Samuels*

## TRUST A MEDITATION

His neck stretched and twisted, serpentine like the staffs in the palace throne room that crept to life in a war of wonders, watching the walls of waves crash up into themselves so far above his head and as high as the pyramids, unmoving and

disbelieving, children pushing past on either side, singing and staring at the startled man who couldn't accept or conceive of the marvelous! But one girl, chewing on some fresh kelp from the forested seabed, took his hand gently across the threshold.

*But, how, wait, this...* -- the words were like well-timed jokes at a shiva house, only inadvertent and at his own expense, and the child smiled as she jumped over seashells and pulled him by his heavy heart, so petrified that it soon shattered with awakening:

*There is power here*, he thought as he walked deeper into the cavern of water, *like nothing ever witnessed!* But where was it so many months before, when he stood on a different shore and had to watch as they tossed his only son into the river to drown?

The broken slave sank deeper into the thick muck of grief at the bottom of that desolate sea -- until at last, the girl tugged on the fringes of his torn tunic, and he crawled toward the light beyond as the sea surged again behind him with new tears, of freedom.

*Joshua Greenberg*

## TRUSTWORTHINESS CATCHING THE WIND

And, what if there were a bird and I was a feather  
Soft down plucked off your  
soaring wings  
Coiling here, there, up and down, down  
in a spiraling of wind  
that has lost its way

And, what if there were a tree and I was a leaf  
Green and brown dappled, dull and polished luster twisted off your  
stoic branches  
Flip-flopping here, there, up and down, down  
in a cascading of blustering wind  
that has lost its way

And, what if there were a fire and I was a burning ember  
Ash of glowing heat severed off your  
swirling roaring flames of kinetic wood  
Gyrating here, there, up and down, down  
in a chaotic dance of tyrannical wind  
that has lost its way

And, what if there were a mentor and I was a voice calling  
Sometimes hollow, sometimes sanguine, but mostly lost  
calling, calling, calling  
Undulating amplifications in the white noise here, there, up and down, down  
of a wind that stops for no one  
that has lost its way within me

And, what if you were the net  
that catches the echoes of my voice...  
and siphons the untamed wind

*Marion Mackles*