

Siddur Tzur Yisrael

Weekday Prayers

**Edited and Translated by
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The Evening Service

וְהוּא רַחוּם, יִכַּפֵּר עֲוֹן, וְלֹא יִשְׁחִית, וְהִרְפָּה לְהִשְׁיב
אָפוֹ, וְלֹא יַעִיר כָּל חַמְתּוֹ, יְהוּה הוֹשִׁיעָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ
יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קִרְאֵנוּ.

בְּרַכּוֹ אֵת

יְהוּה

הַמְּבֹרָךְ.

The congregation responds and the cantor or baal tefillah repeats:

בְּרוּךְ יְהוּה הַמְּבֹרָךְ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.



In the section of the Mishneh Torah called *Hilkhot Issurei Mizbeach* (“Laws Relating to Items Prohibited to be Brought Upon the Altar,”) Maimonides devotes himself to an analysis of the Torah’s rules and regulations (some of them quite unexpected) about what would be sacrilegious to bring to the altar as a kind of offering to God. In the first five chapters, he devotes himself to the question of the kind of physical blemishes that render animals unfit as sacrificial offerings, then turns in more detail to some of the other laws of Scripture that govern this concept of acceptability for the altar. A selection of laws from the first seven chapters follows.

Chapter One

It is a positive commandment of the Torah that all animals offered as sacrifices be physically perfect and of the choicest variety, as it is written, “The perfect (animal) shall find favor (before God; Leviticus 22:21),” and this is (not a mere observation, but also) a positive commandment. However, any who offer a blemished animal to the Temple (i.e., as a potential sacrifice) to be offered up upon the altar (also) transgress a negative commandment, as it is written, “You shall not offer up any (animal) that is blemished (Leviticus 22:20).” Therefore, such individuals are to be punished with the lash for having sanctified an unacceptable animal (i.e., by offering it to the Temple). From our oral tradition, we learn that this last-cited verse, although it refers specifically to one who sanctifies a blemished animal, also forbids offering the Temple the funds acquired through the sale of blemished animals for the purchase of libations. Such an individual too is subject to the lash, for he has (not succeeded in making a pious offering to the Temple, but has primarily) displayed contempt for the sacrificial service. . . .

These strictures do not solely apply to animals sponsored by Jewish individuals, but to sacrifices

sponsored by Gentiles as well. If such blemished animals are offered up, their sponsors are punished with the lash, as it is written, "and from the hand of a stranger (as well) you may not offer up any of these as the "bread" of your God (Leviticus 22:25)."

Someone who consciously maims a sacrificial beast, for example if one were to blind an animal or cut off its foreleg, is punished with the lash, for it is written in the Torah, "no blemish shall be in it (Leviticus 22:21)," and we learn from oral tradition that this serves as the negative commandment forbidding any conscious attempt to maim an animal designated as a sacrifice. This punishment, however, is only inflicted when the Temple actually is standing, because only then can it plausibly be said that such an animal was truly intended to be a sacrifice and the individual who maimed it, therefore, made it invalid. In our day, however, even though one who declares an animal as potential sacrifice and then maims it is transgressing a negative commandment, such a one is not actually subject to the lash. . . .

Although one who designates a blemished animal as a sacrifice is subject to punishment by flogging, the animal itself is nonetheless considered sanctified. Therefore, it must be redeemed for its worth by a kohen, whereupon the blemished animal reverts to its profane status and an acceptable animal is purchased with the money received. The same applies to a sacrificial animal that acquires a blemish (i.e., on its own, without any individual actually inflicting the blemish on the animal): it is a positive commandment of the Torah to redeem any animal that becomes blemished after being consecrated as a sacrifice, after which it is considered wholly profane and may be eaten, as it is stated in Scripture, ". . . but that which your soul desires may be slaughtered, whereupon its flesh may be eaten (Deuteronomy 12:15)," and oral tradition teaches us that this verse is referring specifically to invalid sacrificial animals that have been redeemed. Furthermore . . . the verse in Leviticus that refers to "impure animals that may not be offered up as sacrifices to א (Leviticus 27:11)" is specifically referring to blemished animals that were redeemed.

The Evening Service


God is ever compassionate, ever willing to forgive sin without destroying the sinner, ever willing to respond to transgression without anger and without the fullness of divine rage; א will save us. Sovereign God will answer us when we call out in heartfelt prayer.


Blessed be
א,
source of all
blessing.

The congregation responds and the cantor or baal tefillah repeats:

Blessed forever and for all time
be א, source of all blessing.

The Blessings before the Shema

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
בְּדַבְּרוֹ מַעְרִיב עֲרָבִים, בְּחֻכְמָה פּוֹתַח שְׁעָרִים,
וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים, וּמַחְלִיף אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים,
וּמַסְדֵּר אֶת הַפּוֹכְבִים, בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ
כְּרַצוֹנוֹ. בּוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה, גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ,
וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר,  וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם וּמַבִּיא לַיְלָה,
וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ.
אֵל חַי וְקַיִם, תָּמִיד יְמַלֹּךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמַּעְרִיב עֲרָבִים.

אֲהַבֵּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹךְ אֲהַבָּת, תּוֹרָה
וּמִצְוֹת, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, אוֹתָנוּ לְמִדָּת. עַל כֵּן
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בְּשִׂכְבְּנוּ וּבְקוּמָנוּ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה בְּחֻקֶּיךָ,
וְנִשְׁמַח בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
 כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאֶרֶץ יְמִינוּ, וּבָהֶם נִהְיֶה יוֹמָם
וְלַיְלָה, וְאֲהַבָּתְךָ אֵל תָּסִיר מִמֶּנּוּ לְעוֹלָמִים.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

What practical differences are there between animals possessed of permanent blemishes and those with transitory ones? If an animal with a permanent blemish gives birth after being consecrated as Temple property, then the offspring is simply redeemed and is thereafter considered an ordinary (i.e., profane) animal. This is the case even though the offspring itself is not blemished, lest the secondary animal (in this example, the offspring) be considered more important than the primary one (in this case, its mother). If the animal itself were to become pregnant before being redeemed, but to give birth only after the redemption, then the offspring is considered profane (and need not be redeemed at all). If the animal should die before it is redeemed, then it is redeemed posthumously, and this is considered reasonable because it was not upon the beast itself that the consecration fell, in that it was permanently blemished, but upon its monetary value.

However, in the case of one who consecrates an animal possessed solely of a transitory blemish, and, similarly, in the case of an individual who consecrates a perfect animal which acquires a permanent blemish after it is consecrated, the law is the same: if the animal dies before redemption, then it must be buried, just like any acceptable (i.e., unblemished) sacrificial animal that dies, because the law requires that such animals stand up and be evaluated before being redeemed (and this animal obviously cannot do so). . . .

With the exception of firstborn and tithe animals, all invalid sacrificial animals that have been duly redeemed may be slaughtered in the butchers' market and sold there. Their flesh may be weighed out (and sold) by the pound, just as any meat may, since their sale in the marketplace increases their value. Since the monies received for them revert to the Temple, and since the funds were used to purchase other sacrificial animals, they may be sold in the marketplace like ordinary animals. However, the firstborn animal and the tithe animal, the funds acquired for the sale of which do not revert to the sanctuary, but which become the property of their owners . . . such animals may not be slaughtered in the butch-

ers' market and may not be sold there. Even if a blemished firstborn is designated (or, rather, the money received for it is designated) for the general upkeep of the Temple (and so, in a sense, does revert to the Temple), it still may not be weighed out by the pound or sold in the market. The reason for this is that nothing may be dedicated to the Temple that is not wholly and absolutely one's own property (and since these animals were theoretically to be given to the Temple, the funds acquired through their sale cannot be said wholly and absolutely to belong to their owners).

Chapter Two


There were fifty separate physical blemishes that disqualified kohanim from serving in the Temple or animals from being sacrificed as offerings there . . . but there are twenty-three extra disqualifying blemishes that apply solely to animals . . .

Any of these seventy-three identifiable blemishes in animals disqualify that animal from being offered as a sacrifice. Should any of them befall an animal that has already been sanctified for sacrifice and which otherwise has no physical disqualification, then such an animal is to be redeemed and may then be considered profane (i.e., no longer Temple property). The only exceptions to this general rule involved senile, ill or repulsive animals, which beasts, even though they may not be offered up, are also not to be redeemed. Instead, they are allowed simply to graze undisturbed until acquiring some other permanent blemish that would permit them to be redeemed. A similar rule applies to sacrificial animals suddenly afflicted with a temporary blemish: they may neither be offered up nor redeemed. . . .


(Although not, strictly speaking, blemished physically), the same law applies to sacrificial animals that have been abused, or which, according to the testimony of one sole witness or of the owner of the animal, have killed a person: it is neither offered up nor redeemed until such time as the animal acquires some sort of permanent blemish.

Similarly, an animal that becomes ill with any disease that would disqualify it for human con-

The Blessings before the Shema

Blessed are You, A , our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who causes evening to fall with a word, Who with wisdom opens up the celestial gates at the appointed times, Who with sublime astronomical acumen arranges the change of seasons and the orderly flow of the times of the year, and Who organizes the stars in their celestial orbits according to divine will. It is You Who are the Creator of day and night Who rolls light away when darkness falls only to roll the darkness itself back when it is time again for the world to be bathed in light,  Who causes the days to pass and nighttime to fall, Who makes clear the distinction between day and night, and Whose name is A of hosts. The living God, fully and permanently existent, shall ever reign over us.

Blessed are You, A ,
Who makes the evening fall.

You have loved Your people Israel with everlasting love, teaching us the Torah and the commandments, divine law and sacred statute. For this reason, A , our God, we shall talk of Your laws when we lie down and when we awaken, and we shall rejoice in the study of Torah and in the performance of *mitzvot* for all time, for those commandments are our life and from devotion to them comes the gift of a long life, and so we devote ourselves to their study day and night.  Never take Your love from us!

Blessed are You, A , Who loves Israel,
the people of God.

In the absence of a minyan, begin with these words:

אל מִלְּךָ בְּאֵמוּנָה

שִׁמְעֵה נִשְׁרָאֵל

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

יְהוָה אֶחָד:

Add these words in an undertone:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

sumption even after undergoing kosher slaughter is also forbidden to be sacrificed upon the altar, as it is written, "Would you offer such a (sickly) beast to your governor? Would he delight in such a gift? Would he show favor to you because of it? (Malachi 1:5)." Even though such an animal may not be sacrificed, it also may not be redeemed, because we do not redeem sacrificial animals if their flesh can only be fed to dogs. Instead, they should be sent out to pasture until they die (i.e., of their disease), whereupon they should be buried.

If an animal should be slaughtered as a sacrifice and only then found to be ill with a disease that would disqualify it from human consumption, such a carcass should be taken (outside the Temple) to a place where it can be incinerated. Similarly, if an animal is slaughtered and then it is discovered to be missing one of its internal organs, for example if it only has one kidney or if its spleen is absent, such an animal is forbidden to the altar and must be burnt. This is not done because it is truly considered to be blemished animal—because the formal definition of a blemished animal refers solely to external features—but simply because it is forbidden to offer up defective animals of any sort, as it is written, "they shall be perfect (Numbers 28:31)." Similarly, any animal possessed of extra organs is considered defective, just like one missing internal organs. Therefore, if it is discovered after slaughter than an animal has three kidneys or two spleens, it may not be offered up as a sacrifice.

Chapter Three

There are no blemishes that disqualify birds from being offered up as sacrifices, and this leniency applies to male and female birds alike, for Scripture (pointedly) does not use the expression "a blemish-free male" except with respect to animals. We are, however, only speaking of minor blemishes here and a bird, for example, with a withered wing or one that is blind in one eye or that is missing a leg may not be offered up on the altar, for it is forbidden to offer up defective animals (i.e., of any kind). Similarly, if a bird acquires any of the internal features that would make it

unkosher to be eaten if it was to be slaughtered for human consumption, it is equally forbidden to be used as a sacrifice.

Small (i.e., young) turtledoves and large (i.e., older) doves are unfit as sacrifices, for Scripture says, “. . . of the (full-grown) turtledoves and (young) doves (Leviticus 1:14).” Both become unfit, however, when their plumage begins to turn yellow—at that moment in their development, the dove is too old to be sacrificed and the turtledove, although mature, is still not old enough). Until what stage of growth are young doves acceptable as sacrifices? As long as their skin is so tender that blood fills the follicle after a feather is plucked out. Turtledoves become acceptable, however, when their plumage begins to turn golden.

Although it is the most profound of (congenital defects), animals of indeterminate gender, or who display the reproductive organs of both genders, are not suitable as sacrifices not because they are considered blemished, but for another reason: because it is unclear whether they are male or female, they must be considered as a third category of gender, whereas Scripture clearly states with respect to sacrificial animals that they are to be “male (as, for example, at Leviticus 1:3, 1:10 or 4:23)” or “female (as, for example, at Leviticus 4:32),” which implies that the sacrificial animal has to be unambiguously male or female. For this reason, even birds that are of indeterminate gender, or which display the reproductive organs of both genders, are considered unfit for the altar.

Similarly, crossbred species of animals, animals born by Cesarean section and animals younger than eight days of age are all considered invalid sacrifices, even though none of the above is, technically speaking, a blemish. The rationale for this derives directly from Scripture, where it is stated: “. . . an ox or a lamb or a goat (Leviticus 22:27),” which implies that every animal sacrificed has to be of a single species unto itself and not some sort of hybrid, for example, an animal that was part lamb and part goat. The next words in that same verse, “if there be born,” imply that the animal must be born in the natural way, (i.e., not taken out through the uterine wall). And the next words

In the absence of a minyan, begin with these words:
God is our faithful Sovereign.

Hear O
Israel, A ,
our God,
A is one.

Add these words in an undertone:
May the name of the glorious sovereignty of God
forever be blessed.

וְאֶהְבֶּתְךָ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-
לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-
מְאֹדְךָ: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶיךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-
לִבְבְּךָ: וְשָׁנַתָּם לְבִנְיָן וְדַבַּרְתָּ
בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתֹּתְךָ
בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוֹמְךָ:
וְקִשְׂרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ
לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכִתַּבְתָּם
עַל-מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

“it shall remain for seven days” imply that no animal any younger than eight days shall be considered an acceptable sacrifice. Finally, the last words in the verse, “with its mother” imply that no animal born after its mother was slaughtered can be considered an acceptable sacrificial animal.

An animal unambiguously of one species that nevertheless wholly resembles a different species is invalid as an offering on the altar. This refers, for example, to a ewe that gives birth to an animal that looks like a goat, or to a goat that gives birth to an animal that looks like a lamb. Even though there are some indications of its true species, the fact that it looks like a different species is sufficient to disqualify it as under the rubric of permanently blemished animals, for this kind of cross-species resemblance is surely among the greatest of blemishes.

Male and female animals that are abused or that are set aside for idolatrous worship, or that actually themselves are worshiped in some idolatrous cult, are considered invalid for sacrifice on the altar, even though they may be eaten, for it is written, “for their ignominy is in them (Leviticus 22:25),” which is to say: all that has been used for ignominious purposes is unacceptable as a sacrifice. The justification for this rule comes from analyzing the specific vocabulary terms used to describe these ideas in Scripture: the same verbal root used to generate the word here translated as “ignominy” is also used in Scripture to refer to sexual misconduct at Genesis 6:12 and to refer to idolatry at Exodus 32:7. Similarly, any animal or bird that kills a human being is considered to be in the same category as animals that have been subjected to abuse and, as such, are forbidden to be offered up on the altar. . . .

It is a positive commandment of Scripture to offer up all the sacrifices only after an animal is eight days old, as it is written, “and it shall be with its mother for seven days, and then, starting with its eighth day, it will be acceptable (i.e., as a sacrifice; Leviticus 22:27).” During its first seven days, therefore, an animal is called *mechusar zeman* (literally, an animal “lacking in time”). Even though a *mechusar zeman* is an invalid offering, if one

breaks the rule and does offer up such a young animal, one is not liable to punishment with the lash because the negative commandment is expressed in Scripture using positive language. Nevertheless, the sacrifice is still unacceptable.

Turtledoves too young to be offered up and doves too old to be sacrificed are considered in the same category as *mechusrei zeman* animals. Both these are considered to be blemished animals (although there is, obviously, no real physical blemish involved) and, although those who sacrifice them anyway are not subject to the lash, the sacrifice itself is considered invalid and unacceptable.

One who offers to the Temple a animal of indeterminate gender, or an animal that displays the reproductive organs of both genders, or which is disfigured or ill in a way that would make it *unkosher* for consumption, and a crossbred animal and one born by Cesarean section, it is as if such a person has offered wood or stones to the Temple, because there is no concept of any kind of holiness that can devolve upon such animals. Therefore, they are considered profane (i.e., and not consecrated), and they are sold and the money they bring may then be used to purchase any kind of sacrifice the owner wishes. They are not in the category of animals that are blemished, which may be redeemed and replaced with identical (but unblemished) animals to be used as sacrifices. However, one who consecrates an animal that has been abused or one set aside for sacrificial worship, or one that actually itself has been worshiped, and animals that were paid to a harlot as her wage or that were used to purchase a dog—such individuals are considered to be in the same category as those who consecrate animals with temporary blemishes and the law, therefore, is also the same as regards the fate of those animals: they are to be put to pasture until they develop a permanent blemish, at which time they may be redeemed. Similarly, one who consecrates a *mechusar zeman* animal to the Temple is as one who offers an animal with a transitory blemish and, thus, is not subject to punishment with the lash. . . .

And you shall love A , your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be a fourfold symbol between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house, and upon your gates.

וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֶנְכִי
מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
וּלְעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי
מִטֶּר־אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאִסְפַּת
דְּגָנָה וְתִירֹשָׁה וַיִּצְהַרְךָ: וְנָתַתִּי עֵשֶׂב בְּשֹׂדֶךָ
לְבַהֲמֹתֶיךָ וְאֶכְלָתָּ וְשִׁבְעַתָּ: הַשְּׁמֵרוּ לָכֶם פֶּן־
יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסִרְתֶּם וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם: וְחָרָה אֶרְיִהוּהָ בְּכֶם וְעָצַר
אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מִטֶּר וְהִאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן
אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְאֲבָדְתֶם מִהָרָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה
אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם: וְשִׁמְתֶם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהֵי
עַל־לִבְבְּכֶם וְעַל־נַפְשְׁכֶם וְקִשְׁרְתֶם אֹתָם לְאוֹת
עַל־יַדְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם: וְלִמְדַתֶּם
אֹתָם אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ
וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדַרְךָ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: וְכִתְבֹתֶם עַל־
מְזוֹזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: לְמַעַן יִרְבוּ יְמֵיכֶם
וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה
לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לָהֶם כִּי־יָמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

From all this, it turns out that there are fourteen kinds of animals that are, for one reason or another, forbidden to be offered up on the altar: a blemished animal, one not the choicest of its species, an animal missing an internal organ, an animal suffering from a condition that would make it unkosher for consumption, a crossbred animal, an animal born by Cesarean section, a male animal that has been abused by a woman, a female animal that has been abused by a man, an animal that has killed a human being, one that has been worshiped, an animal set aside for idolatrous worship, one that was a harlot's wage, an animal that was itself the price of a dog and an animal younger than eight days of age.

All animals forbidden to be offered up on the altar are capable of making forbidden even the largest number of animals with which they are mixed up. Even should one of these forbidden animals be mixed up with ten thousand other animals, each of the ten thousand animals is excluded and all are forbidden to be offered on the altar. The offspring of all these kinds of animals, however, are permitted to be sacrificial animals, except for the offspring of the abused female animal, one worshiped in an idolatrous cult, one set aside for use in such a cult, and animals that have killed human beings . . . This only applies, however, when the animal was already pregnant when the disqualifying event occurred, for example, if the animal was pregnant already when it was subjected to the abusive act or when it killed a human being. This is the case because the offspring, although as yet unborn, was with her when she became disqualified and was, therefore, as a limb of her body. In the case, however, of an animal that becomes pregnant after being subjected to abuse or after it kills, its offspring is considered acceptable as an offering on the altar, and this applies even if the animal was first consecrated as a sacrificial animal, then abused, and then became pregnant—and, of course, it certainly also goes without saying that if the animal was abused before it was consecrated and then became pregnant, that its offspring are wholly acceptable. Similarly, a chick that comes forth from the egg of a bird that is fatally ill in one of the ways

that makes it unkosher to eat is also an acceptable offering on the altar.

If one were to bow down in idolatrous worship to a stalk of grain, then the wheat would nevertheless be acceptable as a grain offering, because the meal made of that grain is wholly transformed and it can thus be considered roughly in the same category as the offspring of animals disqualified from the altar, which are themselves permitted. Similarly, an animal that was fattened up with grain that had been set aside for idolatrous worship is not disqualified as a sacrifice, because it is deemed to have undergone a complete transformation. . . .

Chapter Four

The same law applies to animals and birds that are abused, that kill human beings, that are designated as appurtenances of idolatrous worship and that themselves are worshiped: all are unfit to be offered up upon the altar. . . .

It is permitted to offer up an animal that killed only after it was teased and goaded on to do so, because we consider it to have been acting under duress. . . .

From what moment on is an animal designated as an appurtenance of idolatrous worship considered forbidden to be sacrificed on the altar (of the Temple)? From the moment that the pagan priests perform some specific deed to designate it. For instance, if they were to shear it, or make it work for the sake of the idolatrous service, it would be forbidden from that moment on. However, an animal cannot be forbidden as a sacrifice merely by being orally designated as a pagan sacrifice, for the notion of sanctification by declaration does not exist in the context of idolatrous worship. . . .

An animal that was itself worshiped in an idolatrous worship ceremony is forbidden to be sacrificed on the altar, and this is so regardless of whether it was worshiped by its owner or by another, whether the worshiper was acting of his own free will or under duress, whether it was being done by someone aware that it is prohibited to worship animals or by someone unaware of

And it shall come to pass, if you hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love \AA , your God, and to serve God with all your heart with all your soul, that I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, and your wine, and your oil. And I will put grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. Take heed, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of \AA be kindled against you, and God shut up the heavens so that there is no rain and the ground no longer yields its fruit and you vanish from the good land which \AA is giving to you. Therefore shall you take these of My words into your heart and your soul, and you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand and they shall be a fourfold symbol between your eyes. And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates, so that your days, and the days of your children, may be multiplied upon the land which \AA swore unto your ancestors to give them for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר
אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ
לָהֶם צִיצִית עַל־כַּנְּפֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם
וְנִתְּנוּ עַל־צִיצִית הַכַּנֵּף פֶּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת:
וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִית וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ
וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה וְעָשִׂיתֶם
אֹתָם וְלֹא תִתְּוּרוּ אַחֲרַי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרַי
עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם:
לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי
וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם
מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

The cantor or baal tefillah intones these words aloud:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֱמֶת 

that prohibition, and regardless of whether the worship took place before it was sanctified as a sacrifice for the Temple or afterwards. Such an animal must be sent to pasture for as long as it takes for it to acquire a permanent blemish, after which time it should be redeemed. . . .

The animal that is worshiped is forbidden to the altar, but so is everything that is upon it (i.e., everything that adorns it) when such worship takes place, for no benefit may be derived from anything that adorns such an animal when it is being worshiped. This is different from the law that pertains to animals that are merely designated (i.e. by physical act) to serve as part of a pagan worship ceremony: they themselves are forbidden, but whatever adornments are upon them are permitted.

If one bows down in worship of a mountain, it remains permitted to derive benefit from the mountain itself but it becomes forbidden to use its stones to construct (or repair) the altar. Similarly, one who bows down in worship of a stream (of water) that flows forth from his own property, the water of such a stream becomes invalid for use as a libation in the Temple. Nor may one bring logs for the fire stations atop the altar from an asherah tree that is no longer used for pagan worship. And just as an animal to which worshipers bow down becomes forbidden for use on the altar, so does its wool become forbidden to be used in fashioning the priestly vestments and so do its horns become forbidden to be used to fashion the Temple trumpets. Its thighs (i.e., its thigh bones) cannot be used to fashion Temple flutes, nor can its intestines be used to create the strings for the Temple stringed instruments. All of these parts of such an animal are unfit for use in the Temple.

In brief, anything connected with the name of an idol cannot be used for the holy Temple service even if one is, technically speaking, permitted to derive benefit from the specific item in question.

What constitutes the kind of animal forbidden as the "wages of a harlot"? If a man were to (point to a specific animal and) say to such a woman, "Behold, this is your recompense," that animal

would be forbidden for the altar on the condition that the woman involved was a Gentile or a servant, or a Jewish woman forbidden to him by the laws of consanguinity, or because a union with her would contravene one of the negative commandments. If, however, she were (theoretically) available to him (i.e., as a wife), then an animal offered as her wages is permissible for the altar, and this is so even if the man in question is a kohen. . . .

What constitutes the kind of animal forbidden as the “price of a dog”? If one were to say to someone, “I offer you this lamb in exchange for your dog,” the lamb would be forbidden for the altar. Indeed, if a dog were paid for with several animals or birds . . . they would all be forbidden to the altar. . . .

If two partners divide their commonly owned property between them so that one walks away with ten lambs and the other, with nine lambs and a dog, the nine lambs that went along with the dog are permitted to be sacrificed upon the altar. The situation that pertains for the other ten lambs, however, is different. If one of the lambs is of equal or greater value than the dog, then it can be separated out of the ten and declared to be the dog’s specific equivalent. In that case, the other nine lambs are permitted to be sacrificed upon the altar. If none of the lambs is equal in value to the dog, however, then all ten are forbidden to the altar.

If the price paid for a dog changes in terms of its basic nature—for example, if a dog is purchased with wheat and then the wheat is ground into flour—it becomes permitted. The animal bartered for a dog and the money paid to a harlot are permitted (although, obviously, not vice versa). Moreover, the harlot’s wage and the dog’s price are permitted to be used for the general upkeep of the Temple . . .

Chapter Five

It is forbidden to bring leaven or honey onto the altar and this prohibition extends even to the most minuscule amounts of either substance, as it is written, “For all leaven and all honey must not be burnt, etc. (Leviticus 2:11).” However, one


And A spoke unto Moses, saying: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put a thread of blue with the fringe of each corner. And the point of the fringe shall be so that you look upon it and remember all the commandments of A and do them, and so that you not wander off after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you used to go astray, and so that you may remember and do all My commandments and be holy unto your God. I am A , your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am A , your God.”



The cantor or baal tefillah intones these words aloud:



A , your God, is truth.

אַמֵת

וְאִמּוּנָה כָּל זֹאת וְקָיָם עָלֵינוּ, כִּי הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וְאֵין זוּלָתוֹ וְאֶנְחָנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ, הַפּוֹדֵנוּ מִיַּד מְלָכִים,
מִלְּכֵנוּ הַגּוֹאֲלֵנוּ מִכַּף כָּל הָעָרִיצִים, הָאֵל הַנּוֹפֵר עָלֵנוּ
מִצָּרֵינוּ וְהַמְשִׁילָם גָּמוּל לְכָל אֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ, הָעֹשֶׂה
גְּדוּלוֹת עַד אֵין חֶקֶר וְנִפְלְאוֹת עַד אֵין מִסְפָּר, הַשֶּׁם
נִבְשִׁינוּ בַּחַיִּים, וְלֹא נָתַן לְמוֹט רַגְלֵנוּ, הַמְדַרְיֵנוּ עַל
בָּמוֹת אוֹיְבֵינוּ וַיָּרֶם קַרְנֵנוּ עַל כָּל שׁוֹנְאָנוּ, הָעֹשֶׂה לָנוּ
נְסִים וְנִקְמָה בַּפְּרָעָה, אוֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים בְּאֲדַמַּת בְּנֵי
חַם, הַמֶּכֶה בְּעֶבְרָתוֹ כָּל בְּכוֹרֵי מִצְרַיִם וַיּוֹצֵא אֶת עַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם לְחֵירוֹת עוֹלָם, הַמַּעֲבִיר בְּנָיו בֵּין גְּזָרֵי
יָם סוּף, אֶת רוֹדְפֵיהֶם וְאֶת שׁוֹנְאֵיהֶם בְּתַהוֹמוֹת טַבַּע.
וְרָאוּ בְּנָיו גְּבוּרָתוֹ, שִׁבְחוּ וְהוֹדוּ לְשִׁמּוֹ,  וּמַלְכוּתוֹ
בְּרִצּוֹן קִבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם. מִשָּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָךְ עָנוּ שִׁירָה
בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה וְאָמְרוּ כָּלָם:

מִי כַמֶּכֶה בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה, מִי כַמֶּכֶה גְּאוּרֵי בַקֶּדֶשׁ, נוֹרָא
תְּהִילָת, עֹשֶׂה פֶלֶא.
 מַלְכוּתְךָ רָאוּ בְּנֵיךָ, בּוֹקֵעַ יָם לִפְנֵי מִשָּׁה, זֶה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָנוּ וְאָמְרוּ: יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
 וְנֹאמְרֵנוּ: כִּי פָדָה יְהוָה אֶת יַעֲקֹב, וְגִאֲלוֹ מִיַּד
חֶזֶק מִמֶּנּוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה גֹּאֲלֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

only incurs guilt by burning either substance with a sacrifice or as a sacrifice, and those who burn either substance, or who burn a mixture that contains either substance, are punished with the lash for each substance separately. If one should burn both substances together at the same time, one is only flogged once, because both prohibitions are expressed in Scripture as a single negative commandment.

Should any of either substance fall into the incense mixture, the latter is considered unacceptable for use. Therefore, one who burns such incense in the sanctuary building (i.e., intentionally) is punished with flogging. Incense is always burnt in quantities at least equal to an olive's bulk. . . .

If one steals an animal, or robs someone of an animal, that beast is unfit to be a sacrifice and, moreover, the blessed Holy One loathes such an individual, as it is written, "(God) loathes one who would steal an (animal and offer it as an) olah sacrifice (Isaiah 61:8)." That being the case, it hardly needs to be said that such a sacrifice is not acceptable. On the other hand, if the original owners of the animal have despaired ever of getting it back (and so the animal is deemed legally ownerless), then the sacrifice of such an animal is acceptable and, should it be offered as a sin offering, the kohanim may freely eat of its flesh. Nevertheless, the sages enacted a special law designed to safeguard the dignity of the altar to the effect that a stolen sin offering, as long as its status as such is publicly known, does not effect atonement for the sinner who sponsors it even if the original owners have despaired ever of getting it back. This was done simply to prevent anyone from saying that the altar consumes stolen property, and the same law was applied similarly to the use of stolen animals as olah sacrifices.

If one were to steal an animal intended by its owner to be sacrificed as an olah offering, and then offered it up as such anonymously (i.e., without claiming ownership of the animal or that one is the sponsor of its sacrifice), the sacrifice atones for the sins of the original owners. . . .

(Although new grain is permitted theoretically after the omer ceremony on the day following Passover), it is customary, at least a priori, not to bring a grain offering made of new grain before the two loaves ceremony (on Shavuot), because Scripture uses the term *bikkurim* (i.e., at Leviticus 2:14) to refer to grain offerings, a word usually used to designate the first fruits that are brought to the Temple on Shavuot. If one brings grain offerings of new grain before Shavuot, however, the offering is acceptable. Furthermore, one may bring libations from wine that had been set aside (and not intended to be used on the festival, although it is generally necessary to designate foodstuffs for use on the festival before the onset of the holiday).


It is a positive commandment to salt all sacrifices before they are brought up to the altar, as it is written, "every one of your sacrifices shall you offer with salt (Leviticus 2:13)." Indeed, nothing at all is brought to the altar without salt other than wine libations, blood (to be "thrown" at the altar) and the wood used as kindling. This, however, is known to us through the sole medium of tradition and does not have any Scriptural passages to support it. It was considered optimal for the meat to be very well salted, just as one might salt meat one was roasting, turning it over and salting each piece separately. However, if one salted it even minimally—even using one single grain of salt—it was acceptable. One who offers a sacrifice with no salt at all, however, is punished with the lash, as it is written, "You shall not omit the salt of your covenant with God (Leviticus 2:13)."


Even though one who offers a sacrifice without salt is to be flogged, the sacrifice itself is considered acceptable and capable of winning divine favor. However, this leniency does not extend to grain offerings, with respect to which the omission of salt renders the taking of the handful (of grain) unacceptable, as it is written, "You shall not omit the salt of your covenant with God from your grain offerings (ibid.)."


The salt used to season the sacrifices was purchased with public funds, just like the wood used as kindling atop the altar. Indeed, it is forbidden

The First Blessing after the Shema


We hold these unimpeachable truths to be the essence of our faith and eternally binding upon us: that A is our God and there is none else, that we are God's people Israel, that God is that force in history that has always saved us from tyrant kings, that God is the Sovereign of the universe who continually redeems us from the grip of cruel oppressors, that God is the source of our deliverance from our enemies and the source of the just recompense that comes to those who would annihilate us, that God is the Doer of endless wonders and uncountable mysteries, that God is the source of life itself and the source of our security as we live through the years of our lives, that God is the ultimate Arbiter of military success over our foes and the key to our unbroken string of victories against those who loathe us, that God was the Author of the marvels, miracles and wonders that occurred during our exodus from Egypt, land of the children of Ham, and also of the exquisite revenge wrought against Pharaoh, that it was God Who smote the firstborn sons of Egypt and Who brought forth Israel, the people of Israel, from their Egyptian sojourn to a life of permanent independence, that it was God Who made it possible for the Israelites to cross safely between the two walls of water that formed when the Sea of Reeds parted and Who then brought the sea back to its former state, thus drowning in its depths those who hated the Israelites and meant to destroy them.

Upon seeing God's mighty act of salvation at the Sea of Reeds, the Israelites, finally and fully self-aware of themselves as children of God, sang out to God's holy name with hymns of praise and thanksgiving.  They thus willingly submitted to the sovereignty of God, whereupon Moses and the Israelites sang to You in great and boundless joy: "Who is like unto You among the gods of other nations, A ? Which god is even remotely similar to You, O mighty One of the sanctuary, O awesome One ever worthy of praise, O Doer of wonders?"

 When You split the sea before Moses, Your children had their first incontrovertible proof of Your sovereignty. "This is my God," they sang out, " A will reign forever and always."

 And so is it written in the book of the prophet Jeremiah: "For A will rescue Jacob and redeem him from a foe mightier than he." Blessed are You, A , Redeemer of Israel.

The Second Blessing after the Shema

הַשְּׂפִיבְנוּ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְשָׁלוֹם,
וְהַעֲמִידְנוּ, מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׁ
עָלֵינוּ סֶפֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ, וְתִקְנֵנוּ בְּעֵצָה
טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן
שְׁמִיךָ, וְהִגֵּן בְּעַדְנוּ וְהִסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ
אוֹיֵב, דָּבָר, וְחָרֵב, וְרָעַב וַיִּגְוֶן, וְהִסֵּר
שִׁטָּן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵנוּ, וּבִצֵּל
כַּנְּפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ
וּמִצִּילֵנוּ אַתָּה, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנּוּן
וְרַחוּם אַתָּה,  וְשִׁמּוֹר יִצְאֲתָנוּ
וּבּוֹאֵנוּ, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם, מֵעַתָּה
וְעַד עוֹלָם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,
שׁוֹמֵר עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַד.

for a private individual to bring the salt or the wood for a personal sacrifice from home.

There were three places in the Temple in which the sacrifices were salted: in the Chamber of Salt, on the ramp leading up to the altar, and atop the altar itself. The breakdown was as follows: the hides of the sacrificial animals were salted in the Chamber of Salt, the limbs of the sacrifices were salted on the ramp leading up to the altar and the handful of grain offerings, the frankincense, the burnt grain offerings and birds offered up as olah sacrifices were all salted atop the altar. . . .

Chapter Six

Just as the proper fulfillment of the commandment requires that all sacrifices be physically perfect and representative of the choicest animals, so was it requisite that the (grain offerings and) libations be physically perfect and of the choicest varieties, as it is written, "You shall choose perfect (animals), and (perfect too shall be) their (accompanying) libations (Numbers 28:31)." This notion of perfect (grain offerings and) libations implies that the wine should not be smoked (artificially to sweeten bitter grapes) nor may the grain offering be made of meal that had turned wormy. Rancid oil possessed of a foul smell or taste may not be used either.

Similarly, the wood used for the fire stations atop the altar must also be choice and free of worms. This situation was considered irremediable if the worms moved in when the wood was still moist (and supple). If, however, the wood became wormy when it was already dry, then it was deemed sufficient merely to scrape off the section of the log that had become infested. Wood salvaged from a building that had been torn down, however, was unfit for use on the altar because it was necessary always to bring new (that is, previously unused) wood to the altar. . . .

Meal, wine, oil, frankincense, birds, wood and Temple vessels that become unfit for use or contaminated with tumah impurity may not be

redeemed, as it is written (regarding an animal offered to the Temple, yet unfit as a sacrifice), "he shall stand it up . . . and (the kohen) shall estimate its value (Leviticus 27:11–12)," thus implying that whatever is going to be evaluated (i.e., in anticipation of its redemption) must also be able to stand up. Since none of the above listed items can be stood up, it follows that they also cannot be redeemed. This rule applies, however, solely when the above listed items become unfit for use or contaminated with impurity after they have been formally dedicated to the Temple by being placed in a sacred Temple vessel. If, however, they become unfit for use or contaminated with impurity before being sanctified by being placed into such a vessel, then they may indeed be redeemed. . . .


(The water used in the water libation ceremony on Sukkot had its own set of rules.) If such water became contaminated with tumah impurity, it could be purified by being immersed in a mikveh inside a vessel . . . and regarding such water, the rule was this: if it was purified and then sanctified, it could be used as a libation. However, if it was sanctified and then became contaminated, it remains (permanently) unacceptable.

Olives and grapes that become contaminated with tumah impurity should be squeezed for their oil or juice in quantities smaller than an egg's bulk, thus rendering these liquids acceptable for use as libations. This is justifiable because the liquid inside an olive or a grape is not considered a real part of the fruit, but only something stored inside it.

The sages enacted an especially stringent rule with respect to sacrificial materials in that whatever grows from seeds that were contaminated with tumah impurity before being planted in the ground is considered unacceptable for use as a libation, because the mere act of being planted in the ground was not deemed a meaningful process in terms of the eradication of impurity. Similarly, wood and frankincense intended for use in the sacrificial service, although neither, strictly speaking, is a foodstuff, were deemed susceptible to the kind of contamination with tumah that is generally associated solely with foods. . . .

The Second Blessing after the Shema

Grant that we sleep in peace this night, A , our God, and grant that we wake up alive and well in the morning, O Sovereign God. Spread out over us the *sukkah* of Your peace and grant us the benefit of Your endlessly sage advice. Save us for the sake of Your own holy name and watch over us, protecting us from foe and famine, from plague and pestilence, from sword and suffering.

Keep Your accusing angel from spying on our comings and goings and shelter us all beneath the protective wings of the Shechinah, for You are our divine Protector and our ever-vigilant source of rescue, O compassionate and merciful Sovereign God.  Guard us wherever we go, granting us life and peace, now and always. Blessed are You, A , perpetual Guardian of Israel, the people of God.

The following kinds of wine were considered unacceptable for use upon the altar: (excessively) sweet wine, smoked wine, and wine boiled over a fire or as a result of being left in the sun to the extent that its flavor is affected because of being boiled. Wine that is merely warmed in the sunlight, but the flavor of which is not affected by the heat, and, similarly, wine made from raisins (as opposed to grapes), wine fresh from the winepress less than forty days old, wine made from grapes grown (not on the ground, but) on trellises, wine that is the product of a vineyard in an (artificially) irrigated field, wine that is the product of a vineyard in which manure is used (to stimulate plant growth), wine made from vines between which other kinds of seeds have been sown and wine that comes from a vineyard that is left to grow on its own—all these wines are unacceptable a priori, but are nonetheless deemed acceptable after the fact.

Wine that was left uncovered is unfit for use upon the altar.

Wine made from grapes that grew on a trellis beneath which grew a fig tree is unacceptable for use as a libation because the presence of the fig tree will affect the flavor of the wine, whereas Scripture uses the phrase, “. . . a sacrifice and (its attendant) libations (Leviticus 23:37),” which implies that the two are parallel and that, just as a sacrifice is unfit if its basic nature is changed, so are libations considered unacceptable for use once their basic nature (in this case, the flavor of the wine) changes.

Meal that has become mostly wormy, or meal made from wheat, most of which was deemed wormy, is unfit for use upon the altar. If most of a single grain of wheat was wormy, it is unresolved whether or not the meal made from such wheat was acceptable. Any fine meal that still had unground grains in it was unacceptable.

How was meal checked? The Temple treasurer would plunge his hand into the meal. If dust rose out of the meal, it was deemed unacceptable until it was sifted again. Meal that came from wheat that was grown in (artificially) irrigated fields or in fields in which manure was used as fertilizer, or in a field otherwise planted with trees,

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן. בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן, שִׁכֵּן יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הַלְלוּהָ. בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, עֲשֵׂה גִבּוֹלוֹת לְבָדוֹ. וּבְרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם, וַיִּמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ, אָמֵן וְאָמֵן. יְהִי כְבוֹד יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, יִשְׂמַח יְהוָה בְּמַעֲשָׂיו. יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבוֹרָךְ, מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. כִּי לֹא יִטָּשׂ יְהוָה אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּעֶבְוֵר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל, כִּי הוֹאִיל יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶתְכֶם לֹא לְעֵם. וַיֵּרָא כָּל הָעָם וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם, וַיֹּאמְרוּ: יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים, יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים. וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה לְמַלְכָּךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה אֶחָד וְשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד. יְהִי חֲסִדְךָ יְהוָה עֲלֵינוּ, כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחַלְנוּ לָךְ. הוֹשִׁיעֵנו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן הַגּוֹיִם, לְהוֹדוֹת לְשֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ, לְהַשְׁתַּבַּח בְּתַהֲלֻתְךָ. כָּל גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ יְבָאוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ, אֲדֹנָי, וַיִּכְבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ. כִּי גָדוֹל אַתָּה וְעֲשֵׂה גִבּוֹלוֹת, אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים לְבָדָּךְ. וַאֲנַחְנוּ עִמָּךְ וְצִאֵן מִרְעִיתְךָ, גּוֹדֵה לָךְ לְעוֹלָם, לְדוֹר וָדוֹר נִסְפָּר תַּהֲלֻתְךָ. בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם, בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בְּלֵילָה, בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בְּשִׁכְבְּנוּ, בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה בְּקוּמֵנוּ, כִּי בִיָּדְךָ גִבּוֹלוֹת הַחַיִּים וְהַמְּתִים, אֲשֶׁר בִּידוֹ גִּבַּשׁ כָּל חַי וְרוּחַ כָּל בֶּשֶׂר אִישׁ. בִּיָּדְךָ אֶפְקִיד רוּחַי, בְּיָדְךָ אוֹתֵי יְהוָה אֵל אֲמֵת. אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבִשְׁמַיִם, יַחַד שְׁמֶךָ וְקִיָּם מְלֻכּוֹתְךָ תָּמִיד, וּמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.


יִרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ, וַיִּשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ, וְתִגַּל בְּפִשְׁנוּ בִישׁוּעַתְךָ בְּאֲמֵת, בְּאֲמוֹר לְצִיּוֹן מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ. יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ, יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ, יְהוָה יִמְלוֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, כִּי הַמְּלָכוֹת שְׁלָךְ הִיא, וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עַד תִּמְלוֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד, כִּי אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אַתָּה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכָבוֹדוֹ תָּמִיד יִמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד וְעַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו.

or in land that was not plowed or worked, was not considered fit a priori, but was deemed acceptable for use after the fact. . . .

These are the kinds of oil deemed unacceptable for use upon the altar: oil made from olives soaked in water, oil made from pickled olives, oil made from boiled olives, oil made from olives that had already been once pressed for their oil, and foul-smelling oil. All these are considered unacceptable for use. However, oil made from olives that grew in a field fertilized with manure, oil made from olives that grew in an (artificially) irrigated field, oil made from olives that grew in a field in which different kinds of plants were planted amidst the olive trees, oil made from olives that were not really ripe and which were, as a result, not fully mature—all of these kinds of oil were considered inappropriate offerings a priori, but they were deemed acceptable for use (on the altar) after the fact.

All grain offerings and libations may be brought from produce grown in the Land of Israel or from other lands, and from the new crop (in any given year) or from older produce—as long as the produce in question is of the choicest variety. The only exceptions to this rule concern the omer offering and the two loaves of bread used in the Temple ceremonial on Shavuot, both of which must come from the new crop of grain in any given year and which also must solely be fashioned of grain grown in the land of Israel.

Chapter Seven

Not everything technically acceptable to be offered up upon the altar should be offered up there as one's first choice. For example, if one is obliged to bring an olah sacrifice, one should not bring an emaciated, ugly lamb and justify one's behavior by noting that the animal, not bearing any of the disqualifying blemishes, is not technically unfit. Regarding one who would do so, in fact, Scripture says, "Cursed be one who twists (the law to his own advantage; Malachi 1:14)." Instead, one should bring one's sacrifices from the choicest options. . . . 

The Half Kaddish

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי
 בְּרָא כְרַעוּיָתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךָ מַלְכוּיָתָהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן
 וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֻגְלָא
 וּבְזֶמֶן קָרִיב, וְאִמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

The congregation joins the cantor or baal tefillah in reciting this line.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלָם וְלְעָלְמֵי
 עֻלְמֵיָא.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם
 וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ
 דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֻלָּא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֻלָּא לְעֻלָּא מְכַל
 בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא,
 דְּאִמְרוּן בְּעֻלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

The Evening Amidah

(A version of the first blessing of the Amidah that includes the names of the matriarchs of Israel may be found on page 99.)

אֲדֹנָי

שׁוֹפְתִי

תַּבְּתִּיחַ

וּבִי נִגְנִיד

תַּהֲלִיתִי



The line that the faithful whisper as they prepare to address God in prayer comes from the end of the fifty-first psalm, a poem written to express the remorse King David felt after the prophet Nathan confronted him regarding his seduction of Bathsheba and the role he played in her husband's untimely and unwarranted death. To prepare worshipers to use the psalmist's verse well as they prepare to pray, the parable Nathan used to confront David with the magnitude of his wrongdoing is given here in slightly amplified translation . . . followed by the full text of the fifty-first psalm.

2 Samuel 12:1-10

A sent Nathan to David. When the former arrived, he told David the following tale: "It once came to pass that a rich man and a poor man lived in the same city. The rich man possessed huge flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, but the poor man possessed only a single small lamb that he had somehow managed to acquire. He sustained that lamb and raised it together with his own children, even to the extent of letting it share his bread and drink from his cup. He let the lamb cuddle up into his chest and could not have loved it more if it had been his own daughter. One day, the rich man had a traveler to dinner, but he was too stingy to slaughter one of his own sheep or oxen to feed the guest that had dropped by, so he seized the poor man's little lamb and served it to his guest instead."

David was enraged at the rich man and swore by God's holy name that he would condemn any man who behaved so poorly to death. And not only that, David continued, but the rich man, before being executed, would be forced to repay the poor man his loss forty time over because he was so cruel. At this, Nathan spoke these words to David, "You are that man. . . .

Psalm 51

For the conductor, a psalm of David composed when the prophet Nathan came to him after David seduced Bathsheba.

Take pity on me, O God, in accordance with Your mercy; in the fullness of Your compassion, erase my transgressions.

Cleanse me utterly of my iniquity; purify me from my sin.

For I know my own transgressions; my sin is permanently before me.

On its deepest level, my sin was really against You; I have done that which is evil in Your eyes.

I confess this freely, so that Your verdict will be just, Your judgment, correct.

Truly, I was born in iniquity and conceived by my mother in sin.

Truly, You desire that I speak only the truth and certainties, and so I must pray: when my wisdom is insufficient to know the truth, make it known to me.

If You cleanse me with hyssop, I shall be purified; if You wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear words of gladness and joy; let these bones You are crushing rejoice instead.

Hide your face from my sins; erase all my iniquities.

O God, create a pure heart for me; and renew within me a spirit of decency.

Cast me not out from before You and take not Your holy spirit from me.

Return to me the gladness of Your salvation, and visit me with a generous spirit.

I will teach transgressors Your ways, whereupon sinners will return unto You.


Save me from a bloody death, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing joyously of Your righteousness.

Adonai, part my lips so that my mouth might praise You.

For You do not desire sacrifices—although I would certainly offer them to You if You did—and neither do you care for wholly burnt offerings.

The real sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God will never despise the gift of a broken heart suffused with melancholy.

Be good to Zion in accordance with Your beneficent will; build up the walls of Jerusalem.

Then You will desire sacrifices of righteousness, especially wholly burnt offerings totally consumed; then shall they offer up bulls on Your altar. 

The Evening Amidah

(A version of the first blessing of the Amidah that includes the names of the matriarchs of Israel may be found on page 99.)

Adonai,
part my lips
so that
my mouth
might praise
You.

בְּרוּךְ

אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם,
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל, הַגִּבּוֹר, וְהַנּוֹרָא,
אֵל עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַפֶּלֶא, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי
אֲבוֹת, וַיִּמְבִּיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנָי בְּגִיחָם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה...

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מְלֶךְ חַפֵּץ בְּחַיִּים,
וְכַתְּבָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים

...מְלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מֶגֶן אַבְרָהָם.

אַתָּה

גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם, אֲדֹנָי, מַחְיֶה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ...

Between Shemini Atzeret and Passover, say:

מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם

...מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחַסֵּד, מַחְיֶה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים,
סוֹמֵךְ גּוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקַיֵּם
אֲמוּנָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲפָרָה, מִי כְמוֹךָ בַּעַל גְּבוּרֹת וּמִי דוֹמָה
לָךְ, מְלֶךְ יוֹמֵת וּמַחְיֶה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה...

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

מִי כְמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחֲמִים, זוֹכֵר יְצוּרֵינוּ לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים

וְנִצְמָנוּ אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מַחְיֶה הַמֵּתִים.



These meditations on the nineteen blessings of the Evening Amidah were composed by the editor of this volume as a way of assisting worshippers to make the experience of reciting the Amidah deeply personal, wholly idiosyncratic and intensely private, while at the same time remaining faithful to the traditional formulary of the prayerbook.

Meditations on the Evening Amidah

I

We begin with the first blessing. Invariable (except for a brief passage added in during the High Holiday season) throughout the year's thousand-odd annual recitations of the Amidah, the very first blessing suggests its importance in four ways: by being first, by being more or less invariable, by being the only one of the nineteen to begin and end with the phrase *baruch atah Adonai* and by being one of the two blessings of the Amidah during which the sages ordained a Jew at prayer bow down before God. The blessing touches on many different themes, but the most basic of them is that the God to Whom we turn in prayer is not solely the God of the present, but also of the past, not simply the God of us here and now, but also the God of our ancient ancestors. Moderns seeking to prepare themselves to recite this first blessing, therefore, may wish to begin by clarifying to themselves the precise way they think about the passage of time.

Nothing could be more obvious than the fact that the past and the future meet in the present, but when viewed from a spiritual point of view, this is anything but a simple truth. Indeed, it challenges us to see ourselves at the confluence of history and destiny, as living, breathing fulcrums providing the balancing point between what has befallen the Jewish people and what may yet befall them. To prepare to recite the first blessing of the Amidah, we need to ponder the intricacies of Jew-

ish history with enough fervor (and knowledge) to feel the full weight of the past propelling us forward into the future. Moreover, we need to focus on the words "God of our ancestors" and, in so doing, to develop the self-conception of ourselves as prisms through which the full force of the spiritual yearning for God of a thousand generations of Jewish people is projected into the future. And we need to attempt not merely to believe that we all stand at the crossroads of history, but actually to feel ourselves as the individual conduits through which the recollective consciousness of the Jewish people is to be funneled into the active consciousnesses of countless unborn generations.

II

The first blessing cedes nicely into the second. Also diffuse in nature, the blessing has at its core the notion that God will end history at a certain point in time, bring the dead back to life for judgment, and usher in a new era of human existence founded upon the principles of justice, peace and human decency. The blessing makes reference to many ways in which God rescues the needy of our world—healing the sick and lifting up the downtrodden, granting strength to the weak and freedom to those held in bondage—but always the text returns to the larger theme: that, in the end, the ultimate *chesed* will be the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. "God will never break faith with those who lie in the dust," the text reads . . . for the Almighty is a powerful enough Sovereign to dole out death and life, to control the destiny not solely of the world itself, but also of each individual human being who now lives or has ever lived in it.

To prepare to recite this blessing, a Jew needs to come to terms with some powerful aspects of his or her faith. It is, after all, one thing to think of God as the all-powerful Governor of Being and quite another to accept the notion, as basic to our faith as it is challenging, that God exists as the personal Redeemer of each of us individually. Before approaching the second blessing of the Amidah, then, we need to ponder the meaning of life and

Blessed are You, A , our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, great and mighty God Most High, source of endless mercy, Creator of all, God ever willing to remember the good deeds of ancestors, God Who will lovingly send a redeemer to their children's children for the sake of the divine name . . .

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

Remember us for life, O sovereign God Who desires that we merit life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life for Your own sake, O living God.

. . . O sovereign God, our divine Helper, Savior and Protector.

**Blessed are You, A ,
Protector of Abraham.**

You are forever mighty, Adonai, O God capable of bestowing life anew upon the dead, our never-ending source of salvation . . .

Between Shemini Atzeret and Passover, say:

God, Who makes the wind to blow and the rain to fall

. . . God, Who mercifully sustains the living and Who compassionately grants life anew to the dead, Who supports the fallen and Who heals the sick, Who frees the imprisoned and Who will never break faith with those who lie in the dust. Who is like You, Author of mighty deeds? And who can be compared to You, O Sovereign Who decrees death, then grants life anew, and Who will surely bring about our salvation?

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

Who is like You, O Author of compassion, Who remembers Your creations and mercifully judges them worthy of life?

Indeed, You are certain to grant life anew to the dead.

**Blessed are You, A ,
Who grants life anew to the dead.**

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

אַתָּה

קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ וְקַדוּשֵׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהִלְלוּךָ, סְלָת.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ וְקַדוּשֵׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהִלְלוּךָ, סְלָת.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמְלִיךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

Except on Saturday evenings, continue here:

אַתָּה

חוּגֵן לְאָדָם דְּעֵת, וּמְלַמֵּד לְאַנוּשׁ בִּינָה. חַגְגֵנוּ מִמְּאִתְךָ
דְּעָה, בִּינָה וְהַשְׁכִּיל.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, חוּגֵן הַדְּעֵת.

On Saturday evenings, say this paragraph:

אַתָּה חוּגֵן לְאָדָם דְּעֵת וּמְלַמֵּד לְאַנוּשׁ בִּינָה. אַתָּה חוּגֵנְתָנוּ
לְמִדְעַת תּוֹרָתְךָ, וְתַלְמִידֵנוּ לְעֲשׂוֹת חֻקֵי רִצּוֹנְךָ, וְתַבְדִּיל יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים,
בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה. אָבִינוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, הָחַל
עֲלֵינוּ הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאֵתָנוּ לְשֵׁלֹם, חֲשׂוּכִים מִכָּל חֲטָא,
וּמְנַקִּים מִכָּל עָוֹן, וּמְדַבְּקִים בְּיִרְאַתְךָ, וְחַגְגֵנוּ מִמְּאִתְךָ דְּעָה,
בִּינָה וְהַשְׁכִּיל. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, חוּגֵן הַדְּעֵת.

death. Is death merely the absence of life? That is how scientists explain it, but it doesn't feel that way at all to people who have known death up close. There were generations of Jews who spoke of the Angel of Death as a real presence in the world . . . and even moderns who don't quite believe that there really is such a being will readily understand the impetus behind the desire, perhaps even the need, to mythologize the notion that death is a force to be reckoned with, something powerful and merciless, something that ends life without reference to the goodness or the decency of the person whose life is being ended at that particular moment. And so our blessing requires us to come to terms, first, with the notion that God is the Source of death and life and, second, with the notion that both life and death have their origin in the will of God. And that God, therefore, is not only the one-time Giver-Out of Life and its one-time Taker-Away, but the endless Source of Being that grants vitality to dust, that takes that vitality away, and that can restore that vitality if the deeds of a specific individual during his or her sojourn in the land of the living posthumously warrant such an act of divine beneficence.

III

The third blessing of the Amidah, the last of the three which invariably open the prayer, is the shortest the pray-er will have encountered so far and is based on the notion of God's unutterable holiness. God is holy, the prayer reads, and the name of God is holy and it behooves us, therefore, to acknowledge God not only as our Sovereign, but also as the source of holiness in the world. Moderns preparing to recite this blessing will want first to ask themselves what, precisely they think holiness to be. Coming in English from a root that suggests exaltation and superiority, the word "holy" translates a Hebrew word that has its root meaning in the domain of separateness. To be holy, therefore, is to be exalted over all; but to be *kadosh* has embedded in it the idea of being totally other than the world. And, indeed, our tradition would have us consider God to be precisely that: part of the world and distinct from the world and totally other

than the created world. Moderns approaching this third blessing will want to ask themselves what, precisely, it means for them to declare God to be the ultimate source of holiness. Where do we find holiness in our world? For a word we bandy about with great frequency, especially in liturgical settings, it is a bit surprising to realize how difficult it is for us to say, precisely, what we mean by it. What does it mean to acknowledge God as being holy? What did the author of the twenty-second psalm mean to suggest by referring to God as being the Holy One enthroned on Israel's hymns of praise? Can God's otherness be overcome through praise? Is alienation from God the unavoidable corollary of God's differentness from humanity? For that matter, what exactly does it mean to consider God other than the rest of the world? Do separateness and apartness inevitably imply disconnectedness and disruption? Can we embrace something wholly other? And how, precisely, does the concept of holiness fit in with the ancient injunction to love God that we declaim morning and evening as part of the Shema just before we rise in prayer to recite the Amidah? When a worshiper has come to terms, even tentative terms, with these issues, then he or she may venture to recite the third blessing of the Amidah with a sense of spiritual integrity.

IV

With the fourth blessing, we embark on the first of the thirteen blessings that form the core of the weekday Amidah. All supplicatory in nature, they nonetheless differ profoundly from each other in terms of what precisely they request of God and whether they are essentially personal or national in nature. The fourth blessing, then, is a prayer for intelligence. Although any individual who knows God as his or her Creator will inevitably feel a deep sense of gratitude for the depth of intellect that allows human beings to understand and appreciate that fact, moderns preparing to recite this blessing will want to consider what, precisely, they consider human intelligence to be. Different from wisdom and perspicacity, not quite the same as acumen and insight, similar to (yet distinct from) creativity and ingenuity, rooted

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

You

are holy and Your name is holy and the holy ones on high sing Your praises every day, *selah*. Blessed are You, A , holy God.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

You are holy and Your name is holy and the holy ones on high sing Your praises every day, *selah*. Blessed are You, A , holy Sovereign.

Except on Saturday evenings, continue here:

You

have granted intelligence to humanity, and have provided each individual with understanding. Graciously grant each of us, therefore, intelligence, understanding and wisdom. Blessed are You, A , Who grants intelligence to humanity.

On Saturday evenings, say this paragraph:

You have granted intelligence to humanity, and have provided each individual with understanding.

You have granted us understanding of the laws of Your Torah, and sufficient insight to obey Your laws correctly, and have Yourself, A , distinguished between holy and profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, and between the seventh day, our holy Sabbath, and the other six weekdays.

Avinu Malkeinu, decree that the coming week be made up of peaceful days in which we are safe from sin, untempted by iniquity, and wholly devoted to the great goal of embodying the awe and respect due You in our daily activities.

Graciously grant each of us, therefore, intelligence, understanding and wisdom.

Blessed are You, A , Who grants intelligence to humanity.

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ

אָבִינּוּ לְתוֹרַתְךָ, וְקָרְבָנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְעִבּוֹדְתֶךָ, וְהַחֲזִירֵנוּ
בְּתִשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַרוֹצֵה בְּתִשׁוּבָה.

סִלַּח

לָנוּ, אָבִינּוּ, כִּי חָטֵאנוּ, מִחַל לָנוּ, מִלְּפָנֶיךָ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ,
כִּי מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אַתָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, חַפְזוֹן תְּמַרְפֵּה לְסִלַּח.

רָאָה

בְּעֵינֵינוּ, וְרִיבָה רִיבָנוּ, וְגָאֵלנוּ מִהֲרָה לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, כִּי
גּוֹאֵל חָזֵק אַתָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, גּוֹאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

in (but not identical to) knowledge, human intelligence is easier to acknowledge than to define. Is intelligence without God feasible? Why do so few people in the world see it that way? And what is it about the experience of holding God in awe that the liturgist imagines capable of activating human intelligence and making it operative? These are all questions a worshiper seeking to recite the fourth blessing of the weekday Amidah will need to address before being able to stand before God in a state of complete spiritual and liturgical integrity. In the end, we may never consider it reasonable to pray to God without having a clear sense of what it is, precisely, for which we are praying.

v

The fifth blessing acclaims God as One Who “desires the repentance of sinners.” The Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvah*, is so much more pungent and potent than its English cousin, however, that it deserves attention in its own right. What do people mean when they say in their prayers that God wishes them to return—for the inner meaning of *teshuvah* is just that: return, coming home, circling back, turning around, abandoning the line of history for the curve of destiny. Moderns preparing to recite this blessing will want to ask themselves what it means to declare that God “wants” *teshuvah*. Is not the idea of God “wanting” anything absurd? Does want not imply lack? And does lack not imply imperfection? And does our faith not teach us to think of God as totally without lack or want or imperfection? Yet our sages approved this blessing for daily recitation despite the fact that it speaks boldly and openly about God “wanting” our *teshuvah*. Surely this is meant metaphorically, but the intense importance of the concept comes clearly across precisely in the fact that the ancients allowed themselves this bit of hyperbole for the sake of stressing that the ultimate bond between any individual worshiper and God is not supposed to suggest the uneasy relationship of master and slave, but the dialogic love of lovers who both desire and grant the desires of the other, who are both lover and beloved in the relationship, who know the pleasure

of love, but whose greatest pleasure is the pleasure derived from allowing a lover to take pleasure in granting pleasure. The Scriptural model for this, absent from the liturgy yet unavoidably present to all who know Scripture well, will be the verse from the Song of Songs in which the poet depicts King Solomon calling out to his lover using the vocabulary of repentance as the language of love—and which the sages took to depict God calling out to Israel—*shuvi shuvi hashulamit shuvi shuvi venechezeh bach*: “Return, return, O beloved, return, return that I may gaze upon you. . . . (Song of Songs 7:1).”

VI

The sixth blessing is rooted in the concept of divine forgiveness. Moderns preparing to recite this blessing will want to ask themselves what it means, precisely, for God to forgive their sins. Can deeds be undone? Or is the concept that God can make misdeeds trivial after the fact, shrinking them down at will to the point of insignificance? And what of sins that don't involve the relationship between the sinner and God? Can God forgive sins between human beings? What if one party dies—can God grant forgiveness to the surviving sinner? It is customary for the worshiper to beat his or her breast lightly with a fist when reciting the two principal words in the blessing: *selach* (forgive!) and *mechal* (pardon!) The feel of one's hand on the skin directly over one's heart is a physical reminder of the inadequacy of human supplication, but the reality is that our faith does teach us that God is prepared to forgive human beings their foibles, weaknesses and inadequacies. And another notion to ponder: mature human beings know that it is often easier to forgive than to accept the forgiveness of others. Can the same be true of the forgiveness of God?

VII

The seventh blessing of the Amidah acknowledges God as the Redeemer of Israel and is, in effect, a prayer for redemption. Moderns reading this blessing will want to challenge themselves to ask what, exactly, they think redemption to be. Can the old categories—apocalypse, day of *A*, Gog

Bring
us back to Your Torah, O divine Parent, bring us to Your service, O holy Sovereign, and help us fully to repent all our misdeeds before You.

Blessed are You, *A* Who desires the repentance of sinners.

Forgive
us, O divine Parent, for we have sinned. Pardon us, O holy Sovereign, for we have transgressed. Do this, for You are by nature ever willing to pardon, ever ready to forgive.

Blessed are You, *A*, our gracious God ever ready to grant forgiveness.

Take
note of our suffering, defend us and redeem us speedily for the sake of Your holy name, for You are a powerful Redeemer.

Blessed are You, *A*, Redeemer of Israel.

רפאנו,

יהוה, וגרפא. הושיענו וגושעה, כי תהלתנו אִתָּה,
וְהַעֲלֵה רַפּוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכֹל מִפּוֹתֵינוּ, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ
רוֹפֵא נַאֲמֵן וְרַחֲמֵן אִתָּה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה, רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ברך

עֲלֵינוּ, יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת וְאֵת כָּל מֵינֵי
תְּבוּאָתָהּ לְטוֹבָה

Between the first intermediate day of Passover and December 4, say:

וְיֵתֵן בְּרָכָה

Between December 5 and Passover, say:

וְיֵתֵן טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרָכָה

עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה, וְשִׁבְעֵנוּ מִטּוֹבָה, וּבְרַךְ שְׁנֵתָנוּ
כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יהוה, מְבָרֵךְ הַשָּׁנִים.

and Magog—be maintained by serious people in the wake of the Shoah? But if these old categories of redemptive thought seem wanting and as little powerful as they are strangely antique, then with what will moderns yearning for redemption in God replace them? Individuals preparing to recite the seventh blessing of the Amidah will want to ask themselves, therefore, what these terms mean to them. Is salvation the same as redemption? Can there be redemption without God? Is belief in the eventual advent of the Messiah essential to maintaining a real sense of sustained, ongoing hope in redemption? Can a people redeem itself? After all, we pray to God for healing and still endorse the existence of physicians in the world. Do we feel the same way about the concept of seeking to bring about our own redemption?

VIII

And, indeed, the eighth blessing of the daily Amidah does indeed acknowledge God as the source of healing in the world. To recite this blessing honestly and with fervor, however, the worshiper will first have to encounter his or her own feelings about the nature of sickness and health. It is normal to consider good health a blessing and sickness, a curse. Few people would take exception to that, but the situation is more complex when viewed from the vantage point of Jewish spirituality. Good health, after all, often leads people away from God. Healthy people, for example, often golf on Shabbat instead of heading for shul. They head for the gym instead of the study hall. They lose their sense of beholdenness to God for their vigor and robust health because it seems to be a natural feature of their lives, something they simply have in the same way that they have eyes that see and ears that hear. And it is also so that illness often leads people back to God. As unsettling as it may be to admit, it is often troubling biopsies and abnormal MRIs that lead people back to the twin realizations that good health is a gift of God and that human beings are sinning against God when they behave as though anything else were to be the case. Now it's also true that only a fool would consider these points

carefully, then hope for catastrophic illness in his or her life . . . but there is a middle way and our blessing points us in that direction. We pray for good health for ourselves and for our families, but the point is not that we solely want to be free of disease, but that we want to be imbued with gratitude to God for the health we enjoy. Indeed, moderns can find meaning in the eighth blessing of the weekday Amidah by allowing it to give voice to their hope that the contemplation of the frailty of the human body and the ephemeral nature of human life might lead to faith in God, to being drawn back to God, to finding the strength to acknowledge God as the source of healing in the world. In the end, no one sane would wish for illness, but can the existence in the world of something that brings people to God truly be considered a curse?

IX

The ninth blessing of the Amidah turns to the question of the natural world and acknowledges God, specifically, as the Governor of nature and as the living force that fills the decades of our lives with years of plenty or with years of want, with feasts or with famine. Regular worshipers in synagogue will recognize the theme from the second paragraph of the Shema, which stresses that the phenomena of the natural world vary between beneficence and malevolence with direct reference to the degree to which Jewish people do or do not embrace the commandments of Torah. There is, therefore, some sort of subtle tension between the Shema and this ninth blessing of the Amidah: if, for example, rainfall is function of Israel's fidelity to the commandments, then what sense would it make to pray for good weather? Moderns will want to approach this blessing with an eye towards using their meditational focus as way of trying to resolve this particular paradox: does the natural world conform to specific, unbreakable natural laws or does it merely appear to function in that ordered way when God wills it to be so? Scripture tells us that the prophet Samuel prayed for rain on a specific occasion and that it rained that very day. We can contemplate that ancient model and wonder what

Heal us,

A , and we shall be healed.

Save us and we shall be saved, for You are the object of our never-ending hymns of praise.

Send a full and utter healing for all our afflictions, for You are sovereign God, our faithful and compassionate source of healing.

Blessed are You, A , Who sends healing to the ill of Israel, the holy people of God.

Bless

this year and all its crops for us, A , our God . . .

Between the first intermediate day of Passover and December 4, say:

and grant blessed prosperity

Between December 5 and Passover, say:

and grant blessed rain and dew

. . . on the face of the earth.

Make us fully satisfied with Your goodness and make this year as blessed for us as the best of years.

Blessed are You, A , Who blesses the years.

תַּקַּע

בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחַרוּתְנוֹ, וְשָׂא גִס לְקַבֵּץ גְּלוּתֵינוּ,
וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנַפּוֹת הָאָרֶץ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְקַבֵּץ גְּדֵחֵי עַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

הַשִּׁיבָה

שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ כְּבָרָאשׁוּנָה וְיִזְעַצֵּינוּ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה, וְהִסֵּר מִמֶּנּוּ
יְגוֹן וְאַנְחָה, וּמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אַתָּה, יְהוָה, לְבִדְךָ בְּחֶסֶד
וּבְרַחֲמִים, וְצִדְקָנוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה
וּמִשְׁפָּט.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say

הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ כְּבָרָאשׁוּנָה וְיִזְעַצֵּינוּ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה,
וְהִסֵּר מִמֶּנּוּ יְגוֹן וְאַנְחָה, וּמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אַתָּה, יְהוָה,
לְבִדְךָ בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים, וְצִדְקָנוּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמִּשְׁפָּט.

level of piety and devotion it would take for an individual to hold sufficient sway with the Almighty to be able to influence the weather with a prayer. It hardly seems likely that any single one of us could do so, yet this blessing only makes sense if we assume that individual men and women do possess that kind of influence on high. But do we really think that? And if we do not, then what would be our explanation for the arbitrariness with which natural phenomena wreak havoc with the world's people . . . surely if there is a just God Who governs the world, sudden tsunamis and hurricanes that take the lives of thousands or even tens of thousands cannot be considered merely the poor fortune of unlucky souls.

X

The tenth blessing turns away from the natural world and back to the Jewish people, calling upon God to gather the Jews from the lands of their dispersion back to Eretz Yisrael, their God-given patrimony. Moderns will have to come to terms with their own feelings about Zionism and the relationship between the diaspora and Israel before they will be able to manage this blessing with any level of spiritual integrity. Do we really wish for God to gather the Jews up from wherever we have settled and bring us back en masse to our ancestral homeland? There are, of course, Jews who do hope for just that, but most pray-ers in the diaspora will wish for no such thing. Does praying for something we do not truly wish to see happen make us into hypocrites? One could argue that point cogently and logically, but Jews the world over continue to recite this blessing without any sense of crippling absurdity and moderns seeking to transform their prayers from the dry recitation of other people's poetry into a vehicle for spiritual and intellectual communion with God will have to find their own way to resolve the paradox. One possibility would be to imagine that the text is referring to the messianic era and not to our own day at all. That would make it feasible for diasporan Jews to pray for the end of the dispersion without actually having to face the prospect of

sudden removal from the lands of their birth. Another possibility would make the blessing refer not to the absolute end of the diaspora, but only for the strengthening of the State of Israel through the ingathering of Jews from every land. Modern diasporan types undertaking to recite the Amidah will want to ask themselves where, precisely, the modern State of Israel fits into their internal picture of the Jewish world. They will want to ask themselves why they have not gone on aliyah, why they prefer to remain in exile. Only very few will truly feel that they would like nothing more than to be brought by some messianic leader to Israel, but feel honor-bound to remain in place at the edges of the world until the advent of the Messiah. Indeed, of the people in the world who actually feel just that way, the vast majority will not be among those who are likely ever to read these lines! So that leaves the non-Haredi modern Jew with a problem in need of resolution if the recitation of this blessing is to be a meaningful exercise. Traditionally, Jews have considered themselves to be in mourning for Zion and Jerusalem. That seems slightly absurd today, but if we are not mourning for Zion, then how can we beseech God to rebuild or restore Jerusalem? In the solution of this riddle will lie the secret to reciting the tenth blessing of the weekday Amidah honestly and candidly.

XI

The eleventh blessing of the Amidah calls upon God to endow the judges who serve in our earthly courts with decency, righteousness and wisdom in judgment. Moderns will want to prepare to recite this blessing by considering the issues inherent in this simple, unsettling proposition: if God is so terribly concerned with justice and righteousness, why are earthly judges not simply granted divine insight into things, thereby guaranteeing that no false verdicts ever be pronounced and no wrongly-accused innocent persons ever suffer? No observer of our criminal justice systems will argue that they are infallible or that it would, therefore, be pointless to pray that God guarantee justice and fairness in the world. But if Scripture is justified in

Sound

a blast for our freedom on a great *shofar*, raise a banner to gather together our far-flung exiles and gather us together from the four corners of the earth.

Blessed are You, א , Who will surely gather the dispersed remnants of Israel.

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

Establish

our judges as in olden times and grant us able counselors like those from whose sage advice we once profited. Remove sadness and misery from our midst and rule over us with mercy and compassion as our sole Sovereign, א , and grant that we live under the rule of righteous justice.

Blessed are You, א , O Sovereign Who loves righteousness and justice.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur say:

Establish our judges as in olden times and grant us able counselors like those from whose sage advice we once profited. Remove sadness and misery from our midst and rule over us with mercy and compassion as our sole Sovereign, א , and grant that we live under the rule of righteous justice.

Blessed are You, א , O just Sovereign.

וְלַמְּלֹאֲשֵׁינִים

אַל תְּהִי תִקְוָה, וְכָל הַרְשָׁעָה פְּרָגַע תִּנְאֵב, וְכָל
אוֹיְבֵיךָ מִהָרָה יִפְרְתּוּ, וְהַזֵּדִים מִהָרָה תִּעְקַר
וְתִשָּׁבַר וְתִמָּגַר וְתִכְנָיעַ בְּמִהָרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.
פְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, שִׁבֵר אוֹיְבִים וּמְכַנְיַע
זֵדִים.

עַל הַצְּדִיקִים,

וְעַל הַחֲסִידִים, וְעַל זִקְנֵי עַמּוֹךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְעַל פְּלִיטַת סוֹפְרֵיהֶם, וְעַל גְּרֵי הַצֶּדֶק וְעַלֵינוּ,
יְהִמוּ בָּא רַחֲמֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְתֵן שָׂכָר טוֹב
לְכָל הַבוֹטְחִים בְּשִׁמְךָ בְּאַמֶּת, וְשִׁים חֶלְקֵנוּ
עִמָּהֶם לְעוֹלָם, וְלֹא גִבוּשׁ כִּי בָּךְ בִּטְחָנוּ.
פְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מִשְׁעָן וּמִבְטָח
לְצְדִיקִים.

considering God to be all-powerful, then one might reasonably ask why there is any divine tolerance of judicial error at all. After all, if the purpose of the system is to bring the guilty to justice, then how, precisely, would the world be a less good place if God were to ensure the infallibility of the judicial system by inspiring those who work within it never to err? Moderns embarking on the recitation of the eleventh blessing of the weekday Amidah will want to ask themselves how, precisely, they can answer these questions without renouncing their faith in the omnipotence of God or in the much heralded divine commitment to the values of justice and fairness. To prepare to recite the eleventh blessing of the weekday Amidah, a modern will have to face the fact that God could guarantee absolute fairness in judgment in the world, but, for whatever reason, does not do so and leaves us to pray for justice instead.

XII

The twelfth blessing of the weekday Amidah is in some ways the most famous and, in others, the most notorious. Possessed of the most colorful history, this is the blessing that was added to the original eighteen to make a final tally of nineteen blessings. Interested students of liturgy will find the long story of this blessing fascinating, but modern worshipers will inevitably be more interested in delving into the form in which the blessing appears in our own prayerbooks. As we have it in our siddurim, the blessing is a plea that God defeat and destroy the wicked among us. Worshipers seeking to commune with God through the recitation of this blessing will, therefore, have to come to terms, first of all, with the precise way they explain the existence of evil in the world, and, although different moderns will frame the issue internally in different ways, for most people this will require coming to terms with the Shoah. Is God all-powerful and all-able? Scripture says as much in dozens of passages . . . but does that imply that the Almighty could well have saved some—or, for that matter, all—of the millions who died, including the million and a half children, but simply did not wish to do so? One

idea would seem to flow from the other, but moderns who wish to recite the twelfth blessing will need to work out for themselves what, precisely, they mean when they acknowledge God as the force in the world that "annihilates the wicked and defeats the arrogant," yet remained inactive in defense of the martyrs. Different schools of thought exist to explain the role of God in the Holocaust, but the intelligent worshipper will seek an answer not in books written by other people, but within the deepest recesses of his or her own heart. Is evil simply what we call the behavior of people who do not know God? (But surely there are decent, kind atheists in society!) Does God endure evil in the world because such reflects divine will, not because, God forbid, God is incapable of preventing it or simply does not find it as unbearably intolerable as do its human victims? Is there no depth to which human depravity cannot sink before it overwhelms God's decision to grant human beings the freedom to chart their own destinies and behave in accordance with whatever they personally determine to be the right path? Or are we approaching the issue from the wrong direction . . . and is the fact that two-thirds of the Jews of the world survived the onslaught during the years of the Shoah the far more potent point? And how does the founding of the State of Israel a scant three years after the last of the martyrs was put to death fit into the larger picture? The paradox is this: these questions have no answers, but no one who fails to find an internally satisfying answer will be able to turn to God in prayer and recite the twelfth blessing of the Amidah as it appears in our prayerbook without feeling at least slightly adrift in a sea of unresolved paradox.

XIII

The thirteenth blessing of the weekday Amidah talks about the different classes of Jewish people—the saints and the sages, the elders and the scribes and those who have come to Judaism later in life as righteous converts—and begs God for divine protection and support for them all. To prepare to recite this blessing, moderns will have to own up

May

there be no hope for those who slander us, may all evil immediately vanish from our midst and may all Your enemies be destroyed. Indeed, may You uproot, vanquish, annihilate and defeat all the wicked of the earth and may You do so quickly and within our own day.

Blessed are You, A , Destroyer of our enemies and Vanquisher of the wicked.

May

the fullness of Your compassionate judgment be applied, A , our God, to the righteous and the pious, to the elders of Your people Israel and to their surviving sages, to righteous converts to our faith and, not least of all, to the rest of us. May You grant a just reward to all who faithfully trust in Your name and may You set a place for us among them so that we never come to shame because of our confident trust in You.

Blessed are You, A , Who is our protective support and a secure haven for the righteous.

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם

עֵינֵינוּ בְּרַחֲמֵיךָ תְּשׁוּבָה וְתִשְׁכַּח בְּתוֹכָהּ פְּאֶשֶׁר דִּבְרַתָּהּ,
וּבִגְוֵהָ אֹתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב בְּיַמֵּינֵינוּ בְּנִי עוֹלָם, וְכִסֵּא דָוִד
מִהֲרָה לְתוֹכָהּ תִּכְוֶן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

אֶת צִמַח

דָּוִד עֲבָדְךָ מִהֲרָה תִצְמַח, וְקִרְנוֹ תִרוֹם בְּיִשׁוּעָתְךָ, כִּי
לְיִשׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּינוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מִצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן יְשׁוּעָה.

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ,

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמֵיךָ וּבְרָצוֹן
אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ, כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים אַתָּה,
וּמְלַפְנֵיהָ, מְלַפְנֵנוּ, רִיקָם אֵל תִּשְׁיַבֵּנוּ, כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ
תְּפִלַּת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמֵיךָ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.

to the level of support they personally have shown for people in the above-mentioned categories. Do our communities want rabbis at their helms who are sages and scholars . . . or ones who excel at fundraising and membership promotion? Do our schools hire teachers who are steeped in Torah learning and deeply committed to observance, or do we see no problem engaging teachers who are personally distant from faith and religious observance? Do we welcome converts into our midst with open hearts and minds, or do we make converts feel ill at ease and slightly uncomfortable in our synagogues and in our larger communities? And what of our elders? Do we honor and revere our older, infirm parents, or do we respond to our parents' and grandparents' senescence by turning away and busying ourselves elsewhere? Obviously, there are going to be all sorts of ways for moderns to answer these questions, but behind them all is a single issue: do we admire piety, learning, experience, wisdom and commitment . . . or do we merely say we do while secretly wishing nothing more fervently than never actually to be burdened by having to deal with the kind of people who actually embody these qualities the most overtly?

XIV

The fourteenth blessing is a prayer for the welfare of Jerusalem. No city has ever inspired more passion than Yerushalayim, but moderns will have to ask themselves some hard questions before daring to acclaim God as the Restorer of Jerusalem Whose spirit resides within the walls of the Holy City in a more intense, real way than in any other place. For one thing, moderns will have to address the issue of God's residence on earth before reciting these words with conviction. Do we truly believe God to dwell more potently in Jerusalem than in any other place? How does this belief fit in with our belief in an omnipresent God Who dwells in all places at once? Can the human mind grasp the concept of existence that is somewhere and everywhere at the same time? And what of the fact that God is also nowhere . . . at least in the sense that our faith teaches us that God has no physical

dimensions at all. But if even “being” is too ontologically charged a term for a God Who exists outside the boundaries of what humans can conceive of as existence, then what does it mean for God to be anywhere at all? All of these questions can be focused through the question of our feelings about Jerusalem. For Israelis, the issue will have a profoundly political feel to it. But for Jews outside Israel seeking to commune with the divine realm through the medium of the Amidah, the questions to be addressed will likely be different ones. Is Jerusalem the historical place of the ancient Temple or a place in which God can—or ought—be sought even today? Is the notion that Jerusalem is a holy city truly operative for us today? And how, precisely, does that notion accord with our conviction that God may be sought in any place and by anyone who seeks communion with the divine realm in the context of honest prayer? Is any place in which Jews gather to seek God Jerusalem? But what then of the real Jerusalem? Is it worth fighting for? Dying for? Is Jerusalem only the Jerusalem of Israel in the sense that Napoleon called Vilna the Jerusalem of Lithuania? Or is Jerusalem the Jerusalem of the world? Of humanity? Of Jewish humanity? Of monotheistic humanity? Can Jewish people come closer to God by embracing faith in the sanctity of Jerusalem without falling back on pious slogans and catchwords? The question of how Israel should negotiate Jerusalem’s political status is for Israelis to determine, but moderns seeking God in prayer will need their own answers to these questions . . . and to rise in prayer before God in the context of this blessing requires a clear sense of what Jerusalem is, what it means to say that God dwells there, what it means for us to turn towards the Holy City in prayer and what, in the end, constitutes our personal pilgrimage to the God Whom Scripture openly acclaims (at Psalm 135:21) as the Shochein Yerushalayim, the God Who dwells in Jerusalem.

XV

The fifteenth blessing of the weekday Amidah is a plea to God for the advent of the Messiah. Moderns will have to face the recitation of this bless-

May

You return with compassion to Jerusalem, Your holy city, and May You come to dwell there as You once promised You would. May You build it up quickly and permanently within our day and may You quickly establish the throne of a monarch of the House of David within its walls.

Blessed are You, A , Restorer of Jerusalem.

May

You quickly bring forth a descendant of David, Your servant, into our midst and may his horn be raised up as a sign of his salvation in You, for it is precisely that sign of Your imminent salvation that we await daily.

Blessed are You, A , Who will surely bring forth a descendant of David to lead us to salvation.

Hear

our prayers, A , our God, and take pity and have mercy upon us. Accept our prayers willingly and with compassion, for You are a God fully able and willing to listen carefully to prayer and supplication. May You not turn us away empty-handed, O sovereign God, for You are a God ever able and willing to listen compassionately to the prayers of Your people Israel. Blessed are You, A , Who will ever listen to heartfelt prayer.

On days other than Chol Hamoed or Rosh Chodesh, say:

רצה,

יהוה אלהינו, בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם, והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך, ואשי ישראל ותפלתם באהבה תקבל ברצון, ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך, ותחזינה עינינו בשוכך לציון ברחמים. ברוך אתה יהוה, המחזיר שכינתו לציון.

On Rosh Chodesh and during Chol Hamoed, say:

רצה, יהוה אלהינו, בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם, והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך ואשי ישראל ותפלתם באהבה תקבל ברצון, ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך. אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, ועלה ויבא, ויגיע, ויראה, וירצה, וישמע, ויפקד, ויזכר זכרוננו ופקדוננו, וזכרון אבותינו, וזכרון משיח בן דוד עבדך, וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשך, וזכרון כל עמך בית ישראל לפניה, לפליטה, לטובה, לחן ולחסד ולרחמים, לחיים ולשלום,

ביום ראש החדש הזה. On Rosh Chodesh, say:

ביום חג המצות הזה. During Chol Hamoed Pesach, say:

ביום חג הסוכות הזה. During Chol Hamoed Sukkot, say:

זכרנו, יהוה אלהינו, ברוך לטובה, ופקדנו ברוך לברכה, והושיענו ברוך לחיים, ובדבר ישועה ורחמים, חוס וחסנו, ורחם עלינו והושיענו, כי אליך עינינו, כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה, ותחזינה עינינו בשוכך לציון ברחמים. ברוך אתה יהוה, המחזיר שכינתו לציון.

ing, therefore, by coming to terms with the precise way they feel about the whole notion of Jewish messianism. The Bible reports that among God's promises to King David was the assurance that a king from the Davidic line would always reign over the Jewish people. And, indeed, every single king that reigned in Jerusalem from David's day until the destruction of Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. was descended from David. But when the exile in Babylon ended and the Jews returned to Eretz Yisrael, the kingship was not renewed. (The precise reasons for this are not known. Probably the simplest explanation is that Judah was no longer an independent state and its Persian overlords would not countenance the re-establishment of kingship.) The history of messianic speculation in Israel is a very complex issue, but moderns preparing to recite the fifteenth blessing of the Amidah will have to deal with the basic issues through the medium of their own faith. Do we expect a king from the House of David to return to rule over Israel? (The term "messiah" implies precisely that: the word means "anointed one" and refers to the ancient Israelite custom of investing its kings with kingship by pouring special oil over their heads.) And what, precisely, do we mean when we pray that the "horn of salvation" be raised for Israel? In the end, it comes down to this: do we truly expect a personal redeemer to arrive on earth to herald the messianic age? Jews who have abandoned Judaism for Christianity sometimes seek to rationalize their apostasy by labeling themselves "messianic Jews" as though firm, profound and unyielding messianic faith were something no Jew who remains faithful to Judaism could embrace. Nothing could be further from the truth . . . but Jews standing in prayer before God who wish to recite the fifteenth blessing of the Amidah will have to face their own beliefs squarely before they can use them to access faith in God. Indeed, moderns will have a lot of issues to resolve before daring to stand before God and recite the words of the fifteenth blessing, but foremost among them will have to be this one: can we believe that redemption will be the end of history?

XVI

The sixteenth blessing of the weekday Amidah is, slightly tautologically, a prayer for prayer. A prayer that prayer be heard. A prayer that prayer be answered. A prayer that prayer itself be a medium of communication with the divine. "For You are the God able and willing to listen compassionately to the prayers of Your people Israel," the text reads . . . but moderns wishing to commune with God through the medium of prayer will have to prepare to recite this blessing by considering what they truly think prayer to be. Does God listen to prayer? An affirmative answer to that question will rest at the core of any traditional Jewish approach to life, but do we really think that? When we pray for something that we do not end up getting, do we simply accept that our prayers have been answered in the negative? Indeed, the whole concept of standing in a crowd of people and whispering words which we presume will occupy the attention of the Sovereign of the World long enough to provoke an answer one way or the other is itself more than a bit strange. Can moderns find it reasonable to assume that God exists in a potential dialogic relationship with every single human being? Is there a distinction between the way God listens to the prayers of Jewish people and the prayers of non-Jews? Is there a difference between the way God responds to prayers that are prompted by the longings of the human heart and those recited at the precisely proper times from printed prayerbooks? Moderns preparing to recite the sixteenth blessing of the Amidah will need to come to terms with these issues before they can acknowledge the Almighty as the God Who hears—and, presumably, responds to—prayer.

XVII

The seventeenth blessing of the weekday Amidah is the first of the final three blessings which remain more or less constant throughout the year. (The versions of the Amidah for Shabbat and festivals have the same opening and closing three blessings as the weekday version of the prayer and differ from it solely in that the interior thirteen blessings

On days other than Chol Hamoed or Rosh Chodesh, say:

Take

pleasure, A , our God, in Your people Israel and in their prayers. And restore the ancient worship service to the sanctuary of Your great Temple and accept the offerings and the prayers of Israel willingly and lovingly, so that the worship of Your people Israel will ever find favor before You. May our eyes see Your compassionate return to Zion! Blessed are You, A , Who surely will return the Shechinah, the divine presence, to Zion.

On Rosh Chodesh and during Chol Hamoed, say:

Take pleasure, A , our God, in Your people Israel and in their prayers. And restore the ancient worship service to the sanctuary of Your great Temple and accept the prayers of Israel willingly and lovingly, so that the worship of Your people Israel will ever find favor before You. Our God and God of our ancestors, may Your recollection of us, and Your abiding interest in us, come to the fore forcefully and effectively and noticeably and distinctly and conspicuously and markedly . . . and not only Your recollection of us and our needs, but also Your recollection of our ancestors and Your servant, the Messiah, son of David, whom we await, and Your recollection of Jerusalem, Your holy city, and Your recollection of all Your people Israel and our need for sanctuary, for prosperity, for mercy, grace, compassion, life and peace on this

On Rosh Chodesh, say: Rosh Chodesh day.

During Chol Hamoed Pesach, say: festival of *matzot*.

During Chol Hamoed Sukkot, say: festival of Sukkot.

Remember us, A , our God, on this day for goodness and visit us with blessing. Save us and grant us prolonged life and be kind and gracious with respect to Your ancient promise of salvation. Judge us with compassion and save us, for it is to You that we ever look for salvation because You are sovereign God, gracious and just. May our eyes see Your compassionate return to Zion. Blessed are You, A , Who surely will re-establish the Shechinah, the divine presence, in Zion.

Other than on Purim, Chanukah or Yom Ha'atzma'ut, say:

מוֹדִים

אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאִתָּה הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיִּינוּ, מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֵנוּ, אֲתָה
הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר. גּוֹדֵה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהַלֵּלְךָ עַל
חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ, וְעַל גְּשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת
לָךְ, וְעַל גְּסִיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ, וְעַל גְּבֻלְאוֹתֶיךָ
וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל עֵת, עָרֵב וּבִקֵּר וְצַהֲרִים. הַטּוֹב,
כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְהַמְּרַחֵם, כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶיךָ,
מֵעוֹלָם קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ. וְעַל כָּלֵם יִתְפַּרֵּךְ וְיִתְרוֹמַם
שְׁמֶךָ, מִלְּכָנוּ, תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד...

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

וּכְתוּב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ

...וְכֹל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֶלָה, וְיִהְלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאַמֶּת,
הָאֵל יִשׁוּעַתָּנוּ וְעֲזָרְתָּנוּ סֶלָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וְלָךְ נֶאֱמָה
לְהוֹדוֹת.

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are omitted and replaced by a prayer acknowledging God as the ordaining force behind our Sabbath or holiday observance.) In the version of this blessing that appears in this prayerbook, the seventeenth blessing is a prayer that God find the prayers and rituals of current and ancient Jewish observance pleasing, satisfactory and acceptable. To prepare to recite this blessing, then, moderns will have to come to terms with the way they actually feel about the nature of observance. For fundamentalists who insist that each mitzvah is a divinely ordained precept, the concept will present no problems at all—since each specific act of ritual observance is deemed to come directly from God, it stands to reason that that same God Who commanded the commandments will find the performance of each mitzvah no less pleasant than any earthly king would find it delightful to see his subjects willingly following his instructions and orders without complaint or hesitation. The problem is far different for moderns who reject a fundamentalist reading of the text of Scripture and who, therefore, cannot proceed forward in their religious lives on the assumption that the various rituals ordained by Scripture reflect the unadulterated will of God. For people who reject fundamentalism, the mitzvot will be imagined to be human gestures representative of God's will that there be an accessible framework in which human beings can attempt to seek out communion with God. The laws and regulations that attend these commandments will be attempts by subsequent generations to perfect these rituals, to make them work better, to refine them and to make them more effective in leading the people who perform them to God. For people who hold these beliefs, the notion that God may or may not take pleasure in the rituals we use as the tools and counterments of worship becomes a real concern as the focus of the blessing shifts from the hope that our ritual will be done properly to the notion that the rituals of our faith themselves will be effective in leading us to God.

The blessing returns twice to the idea that the rituals of modern Jewish life, taken as a whole, are the latter-day equivalent of the ancient sacrificial service performed in the Temple in Jerusalem for as

long as it stood. How do we relate to that idea? Do we feel, for example, that the Amidah we recite in the morning and afternoon can reasonably serve as the modern equivalent of the daily tamid sacrifice offered up daily on the great bronze altar in the ancient Temple? If it is reasonable to think that our worship service can serve us in those terms, then do we find it to do so effectively or only theoretically? And there are other issues to confront as well. Do we believe that there can be salvation outside the performance of the commandments? Does ritual observance effect, or hasten, deliverance? And what is the precise relationship between faith in God and adherence to the commandments? Does a non-fundamentalist approach to Scripture deprive ritual of its grandeur? Of its purpose? Of its deepest meaning? Moderns seeking to preserve their spiritual integrity while preparing themselves to say the seventeenth blessing will need candidly to answer these questions before embarking on its recitation.

XVIII

The eighteenth blessing is the fifth of the six recited both on weekdays and the Sabbath. A long blessing made even more lengthy with long passages designated for insertion on Purim, Hanukkah and Yom Ha'atzma'ut and a shorter one for the High Holiday season, the general idea in all its versions is always that the primary emotion individuals are to bring to their worship of God is neither praise nor self-abnegation, but a deep sense of beholdenness. And that, more than anything, human beings need to be grateful to God for the gifts of their lives, for the wonders God has created in their world, for the miracle of life itself . . . and also for the specific ways God intervenes in the lives of all peoples, and especially the Jewish people, to deliver them from foes mightier than they and to guarantee their continued existence in peace and security. Moderns seeking to recite this blessing will want to ask themselves if they truly do feel grateful to God for all that they possess or if the gratitude they profess is merely a kind of reflex of their faith. Although it is certainly true

Other than on Purim, Chanukah, or Israel Independence Day say:

We

affirm our faith in You. You are and always shall be A , our God and the God of our ancestors, the rock of our lives and the shield behind which we nurture our hope of redemption in every generation. All this we affirm freely to You as we recount the praises due You for the security and safety of our lives, both of which we acknowledge are in Your hands, and for our souls, which are wholly dependent on You, and also for the miracles that You perform daily for us, a never-ending series of wonders and kindnesses from which we benefit morning, afternoon and evening every day of our lives. O God of goodness, Whose compassion never fails, O God of compassion, Whose mercies never end, it is ever in You that we place our trust. And so, for all these things, may Your name be blessed and exalted for always and for all time, O sovereign God. . . .

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, add these words:
and may You inscribe for a good life
all those bound to you in sacred covenant

. . . for then shall all living creatures give thanks to You, *selah*, and render sincere praise to Your name, O God of our salvation, our ever-present help, *selah*.

Blessed are You, A , Whose name is goodness itself and Who is thus wholly deserving of all gratitude.

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On Chanukah, say:

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיִּינוּ, מְגִן יִשְׁעֵנוּ, אֵתָהּ הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר.
גִּזְרָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהַלְתָּהּ עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ, וְעַל
נִשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ, וְעַל גְּסִיף שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עֲמָנוּ, וְעַל
גַּפְלֵאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יְעָת, עָרֵב וּבִקֵּר וְצַהֲרִים. הַטּוֹב,
כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְהַמְרַחֵם, כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ, מִעוֹלָם
קִוִּינוּ לָךְ. עַל הַגְּסִים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל
הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזַמַּן הַזֶּה. בַּיָּמִי מִתְּתִיָּהוּ בְּךָ יוֹחֲנָן כִּהֵן גָּדוֹל, חֲשֵׁמוּנָאִי וּבְנֵינִי,
כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁפִּיחֵם
תּוֹרְתֶךָ, וְלַהֲעֵבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רִצּוֹנְךָ, וְאֵתָהּ בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים
עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בַּעֲת צָרָתָם, רַבַּת אֶת רִיבָם, דָּגַת אֶת דִּינָם,
נִקְמַת אֶת נִקְמָתָם, מִסִּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חַלְשִׁים, וְרַבִּים בְּיַד
מְעֻטִים, וְטִמְאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים, וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים, וְזָדִים
בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ. וְלָךְ עָשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ,
וְלַעֲמֶךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפְרָקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.
וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּגִיף לְדַבֵּיר בֵּיתְךָ, וּפָגְעוּ אֶת הַיְכָלְךָ, וְטָהְרוּ אֶת
מִקְדָּשְׁךָ, וְהִדְלִיקוּ גִירוֹת בְּחֲצֵרוֹת קֹדֶשְׁךָ, וְקִבְעוּ שְׁמוֹנֶת יָמֵי
חֲנֻפָה אֵלֶיךָ, לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל. וְעַל כָּלֵם יִתְפַּרֵּךְ
וְיִתְרוֹמַם שְׁמֶךָ, מִלְּפָנֶיךָ תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד וְכָל חַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ
סֵלָה, וַיִּחַלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאֲמֹת, הָאֵל יִשׁוּעַתָּנוּ וְעִזְרָתָנוּ סֵלָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וְלָךְ גִּבּוֹרָה
לְהוֹדוֹת.

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that most people only recognize the good things in their lives once they somehow disappear, this is obviously not the only way to live. Moderns seeking to recite this blessing will have to prepare for the experience by asking themselves some difficult questions. Do they truly ascribe the good in their lives to the beneficence of God? Do they feel truly, not begrudgingly, grateful to God for the food they eat? For the water they drink? For the health they enjoy? Do they feel overcome with feelings of beholdenness and gratitude to God when it rains? When they see the natural world functioning in the way God created it to function? When Purim and Hanukkah come, do moderns use the opportunity to eat hamentaschen or latkes or to meditate on the role God plays in the history of Israel? These are not going to be simple questions to answer honestly, but the eighteenth blessing of the weekday Amidah can give moderns a chance to focus their thinking and come to terms with their innermost feelings on issues that rest, each in its own way, at the core of Jewish spirituality.

The three long additions for Chanukah, Purim and, at least in recent years, Yom Ha'atzma'ut, deserve to be considered in their own right. All three versions of the Al Hanisim prayer have mostly different texts, but they are all rooted in a single, challenging premise: that not only are Jewish men and women obliged to be grateful to God for the ongoing sustenance of their lives and the maintenance of their souls, but also for the specific instances of national deliverance that have characterized the history of the Jewish people over the long millennia of its existence. Moderns will wonder if this means to imply—or, perhaps, if it actually does imply—that God is the Author of history also at times of national catastrophe or calamity, and that God, therefore, must bear some of the blame for whatever happens in the world, but the liturgical setting here implies a more subtle concept.

Indeed, the use of language here suggests that it is precisely when God chooses to override the freedom granted to humanity to conduct its affairs in whatever way it sees fit—and according to

whatever values, however perverse, it deems appropriate to bring to bear at a specific juncture in history—that human beings are justified in labeling the turn of events as miraculous (in the event of a happy ending) or as an instance of divine punishment (in the event that things turn out poorly). To say the same thing in different words, the way the blessing is formulated suggests that the definition of a miracle is precisely when God seizes the reins of history and brings about a turn of events that reflects neither the best nor the worst of humankind's desires, but God's own personal will that some specific episode within the great pageant of human history be provided with some particular dénouement.

This notion of a miracle simply being the name human beings assign to instances of divine intervention in a world otherwise left to chart its course through time according to its own lights both enhances and devalues the concept as it is usually used by moderns—the former by making it sound reasonable and rational for moderns to believe in miracles as features of historical reality, and the latter by asserting that miracles, almost by their nature, cannot be interpreted other than as instances—albeit unexpected ones—of divine governance of the world.

Moderns approaching the work of prayer hopefully, and wishing to recite the *Al Hanisim* in this penultimate blessing of the *Amidah* possessed of intellectual integrity, will, therefore, have to decide how exactly they are going to relate to this theory of the miraculous. The three examples of miracle offered by the liturgy can, in fact, be utilized precisely to help frame those ideas and to give voice to ideas that might otherwise be left unexplored by individuals used to dismissing the whole concept of miracles as mere fairy stories only the terminally gullible would ever believe to be true.

The story of Chanukah is a good example. Modern Jewish people are familiar with the famous story of the little cruse of pure oil that was miraculously able to provide oil for eight days instead of one, thus allowing the great menorah in the Temple to be lighted and to remain lighted until new oil

On Chanukah, say:

We affirm our faith in You, for You are and always shall be *A*, our God and the God of our ancestors, the rock of our lives and the shield behind which we nurture our hope of redemption in every generation. All this we affirm freely to You as we recount the praises due You for the security and safety of our lives, both of which are in Your hands, and for our souls, which are wholly dependent on You, and also for the miracles that You perform daily for us, a never-ending series of wonders and kindnesses from which we benefit morning, afternoon and evening every day of our lives. O God of goodness, Whose compassion never fails, O God of compassion, Whose mercies never end, it is ever in You that we place our trust. We are grateful for the miracles, for the victory, for the acts of might, for the military triumphs, and the successes in battle You wrought for our ancestors at this season of the year in ancient times. In the days of the High Priest, Mattathias ben Yochanan the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the wicked Seleucid kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to attempt to force them to forget Your Torah and to disobey its laws so reflective of Your sacred will, You, prompted by Your unending mercy, stood by them in their time of trouble and helped them fight their battles. You helped them feel justified in their fight and You wrought vengeance upon those who deserved it. You helped the weak to vanquish the mighty, the few to vanquish the many, the pure to vanquish the impure, the righteous to vanquish the wicked, and those who remained faithful to the words of Your Torah to vanquish their arrogant enemies. You made glorious and holy Your own name in this world of Yours when You wrought great deliverance and salvation for Your people Israel at this very season so many centuries ago. Afterwards, Your devoted children came to the sanctuary of Your holy Temple. They cleansed the sanctuary of the symbols of idolatry and purified the Temple, then lit lamps in its holy courtyards and declared that henceforth the eight days of Chanukah would be a festival devoted to thanksgiving and the praise of Your great name.

And so, for all these things, may Your name be blessed and exalted for always and for all time, O sovereign God, for then shall all living creatures give thanks to You, *selah*, and render sincere praise to Your name, O God of our salvation, our ever-present help, *selah*.

Blessed are You, *A*, Whose name is goodness itself and Who is wholly deserving of all gratitude.

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On Purim, say:

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהֶי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר תַּיִנוּ, מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֵנוּ, אֵתָהּ הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר. נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהַלְתָּךְ עַל תַּיִנוּ תְּמִסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ, וְעַל גְּשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ, וְעַל גְּסִיף שֶׁבָּכַל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ, וְעַל גַּבְלֹאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבָּכַל יוֹם, עָרַב וּבִקֵּר וְצַהֲרִים. הַטּוֹב, כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְהַמְרַחֵם, כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ, מֵעוֹלָם קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ. עַל הַנְּסִים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹ, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה. בַּיָּמִי מְרֻדְכִי וְאַסְתֵּר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּיטָרָה, כְּשֶׁעֲמַד עָלֵיהֶם הָמוֹן הָרָשָׁע, בִּקֵּשׁ לְהַשְׁמִיד, לְהַרְגֵּם וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים, מִנְּעֵר וְעַד זָקוֹ, טָף וְנָשִׁים, בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד, בְּשִׁלְשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר, הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר, וְשִׁלְלָם לְבוֹז. וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים הַפְּרַתְּ אֶת יַעֲצוֹתוֹ, וְקִלְקַלְתָּ אֶת מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ, וְהַשְׁבִּיתָ גְּמוּלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ, וְתָלוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בְּנָיו עַל הָעֵץ. וְעַל כָּלֵם יִתְפַּרֵּךְ וְיִתְרוֹמֵם שְׁמֹךְ, מִלְּפָנֶיךָ תְּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, וְכָל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֵלָה, וְיִהְלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמֹךְ בְּאַמֶּת, הָאֵל יִשׁוּעָתֵנוּ וְעִזְרָתֵנוּ סֵלָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַטּוֹב שְׁמֹךְ וְלָךְ גְּאֵה לְהַזְדוֹת.

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prepared under the auspices of the legitimate High Priest could be prepared. That story has its own interesting anterior history, but it is not the miracle that occupied the liturgist's attention. Nor does the liturgist appear to be interested in the background of the Maccabean struggle to regain the upper hand in the Temple, or in the fact that their opponents were, at least in the beginning, other Jewish people and not the armies of Seleucid Syria at all! In the liturgist's conception, a wicked kingdom, acting for its own reasons, attempted to subjugate the Jews and, in the words of the blessing, "to force them to forget (the) Torah and to disobey its laws" so reflective of God's will. By all rights, the tiny army of Jewish rebels should have lost, but God willed it otherwise and, despite their overwhelming numbers, the Seleucid army lost, whereupon the faithful were able to take control again of the Temple, to cleanse it of idolatrous symbols, to purify its defiled vessels and appurtenances, and to light lamps in its holy courtyards. This, for the liturgist, was the miracle, then: that a small army of the faithful was able to vanquish the vastly superior forces of an impious king. The liturgist must have known the story of the "other" miracle—the one concerning the oil and the menorah—but that is not where he finds his miracle, but rather in the victory of the few over the many, the pure over the impure, and the righteous over the wicked. Normally, we can suppose he believed, the world works less fairly and the many triumph over the few. But, at least sometimes, God steps away from the absolute freedom of action granted humanity . . . and brings victory to the few, to the righteous and to the pure of spirit. That, the liturgist is as much as saying, is a miracle. And, indeed, it is surely one for which all moderns should be duly grateful.

The Purim story is given similar treatment. It once happened that a villain named Haman gained extraordinary power in the kingdom of Persia and, more amazingly, acquired enough personal authority to plan a genocidal pogrom directed against its Jewish citizenry, "men young and old, women and children." Furthermore, he planned not only to murder, but to steal their possessions. Normally, our liturgist knows, powerful govern-

ment officials can do as they please in this world . . . but occasionally God, for whatever reasons, chooses not to allow the wicked to pursue their perfidy to a successful conclusion. And so it was in ancient Persia: Haman built a gallows with the intention of hanging the virtuous Mordechai from its crossbeam, but, in the end, it was he and his own sons who died in that very place. The liturgist knows all too well how rarely this happens in our world, but instead of using the inconsistency of divine governance as a pretext for lessening his faith, he finds it possible instead to praise God for such instances of miraculous, unexpected deviation from the norm. Moderns schooled in the various schools of political science will have their own theories about why some fiends succeed and others go down to defeat, but the liturgist's is as sound as any. Fiends succeed or fail for the same reasons other people do. Only, the liturgist knows, there are factors in the flow of events that cannot be calculated in advance. . . . and that chief among them is the occasional willingness of God to see to it that a dastardly plan to harm innocents or to wreak havoc in the world fails to come to fruition. That, for the liturgist, is a true miracle . . . and so the job of moderns wishing to recite the *Al Hanisim* prayer on Purim will have to determine if they too can see the finger of God in human history when a predictably dour outcome is unexpectedly replaced with one that favors the decent and in which righteousness triumphs over villainy.

The third *Al Hanisim* prayer is of modern composition and refers specifically to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Moderns well schooled in modern history will have to consider their personal interpretation of the events leading up to the declaration of Israeli independence carefully before developing a sense of how they might best approach this blessing. And, indeed, a universal consensus has yet to be reached: although there are many congregations in which the *Al Hanisim* for *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* is recited, there are also many synagogues, including Conservative synagogues, in which it is either omitted entirely or else considered an option for individual worshipers but not the norm for all.

On Purim, say:

We affirm our faith in You, for You are and always shall be א , our God and the God of our ancestors, the rock of our lives and the shield behind which we nurture our hope of redemption in every generation. All this we affirm freely to You as we recount the praises due You for the security and safety of our lives, both of which are in Your hands, and for our souls, which are wholly dependent on You, and also for the miracles that You perform daily for us, a never-ending series of wonders and kindnesses from which we benefit morning, afternoon and evening every day of our lives. O God of goodness, Whose compassion never fails, O God of compassion, Whose mercies never end, it is ever in You that we place our trust. We are grateful for the miracles, for the victory, for the acts of might, for the military triumphs and the successes in battle You wrought for our ancestors at this season of the year in ancient times. In the days of Mordechai and Esther, it once came to pass in Shushan, the capital of Persia, that the villainous Haman rose up against the Jewish people and attempted to destroy, annihilate and murder all the Jews, men young and old, infants and women, in one single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (which is the month of Adar) and to plunder all their possessions. But You, acting in Your great mercy, ruined his plans and thwarted his plot, paying him back in kind for his wicked intentions by having Haman and his sons hanged on the very gallows from which they had planned to hang Mordechai.

And so, for all these things, may Your name be blessed and exalted for always and for all time, O sovereign God, for then shall all living creatures give thanks to You, *selah*, and render sincere praise to Your name, O God of our salvation, our ever-present help, *selah*.

Blessed are You, א , Whose name is goodness itself and Who is wholly deserving of all gratitude.

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On Yom Ha'atzma'ut, say:

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא, יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיִּינוּ, מְגִן יִשְׁעֵנוּ, אֵתָהּ הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר.
גִּזְרָה לָךְ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהַלְתָּךְ עַל חַיִּינוּ הַמְסוּרִים בַּיָּדֶךָ, וְעַל
גִּשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ, וְעַל גִּסְיָךְ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ, וְעַל
גַּבְלֹאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יְמֵי עָרְב וּבִקְרֹן וְצַהֲרָיִם. הַטּוֹב,
כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְהִמְרַחֵם, כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶיךָ, מֵעוֹלָם
קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ. עַל הַגְּסִים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל
הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה. בַּיָּמִי שִׁיבַת בָּנִים לְגְבוּלָם, בָּעֵת תְּקוּמַת עַם
בְּאֶרְצוֹ כִּימֵי קֶדֶם, גִּסְגְּרוּ שְׂעָרֵי אֶרֶץ אֲבוֹת בַּפְּנֵי אֲחֵינוּ
פְּלִיטֵי חָרֵב, וְאוֹיְבִים בְּאֶרֶץ וְשִׁבְעָה עַמְמִים בְּעֵלֵי בְרִיתָם
קָמוּ לְהַכְרִית עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ
לָהֶם בָּעֵת צָרָתָם, רַבַּת אֶת רִיבָם, וְדָגַת אֶת דֵּינָם, חֲזַקְתָּ אֶת
לִבָּם לְעִמּוּד בַּשַּׁעַר וּלְפִתְחֵי שְׂעָרִים לְפָרְדֵּים וּלְגֵרֵשׁ אֶת־
צְבָאוֹת הָאוֹיֵב מִן הָאֶרֶץ. מְסַרְתָּ רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעֻטִים, וְרָשָׁעִים
בְּיַד צְדִיקִים, וְלָךְ עָשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ, וּלְעַמְּךָ
יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְּדוֹלָה וּפְרָקוֹן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. וְעַל כָּל־
יִתְפָּרֵךְ וְיִתְרוֹמַם שְׁמֶךָ, מְלַכְנוּ, תְּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, וְכֹל
הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ סֵלָה, וְיִתְלַלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאַמֶּת, הָאֵל יִשׁוּעָתֵנוּ
וְעִזָּרְתֵנוּ סֵלָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוּה, הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וְלָךְ גְּאֻה
לְהוֹדוֹת.

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No one can contemplate the words of the Al Hanisim for Yom Ha'atzma'ut without reference to the dark days of the Shoah. To declare, after all, one's sense that the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel was an example of divine beneficence so amazing as to warrant being labeled as a miracle without wondering about the apparent lack of miraculous intervention during the Holocaust does not seem possible. Yet, the liturgist appears to see in the Shoah no more reason not to be grateful to God for the establishment of the state than the ancient author of the Al Hanisim for Purim felt to question the gratitude he felt for his people's salvation in the days of Mordechai and Esther with reference to the fact that there was only a Jewish community in that place in the first place because the Jews of Judah were exiled to Babylon by the evil Nebuchadnezzar. So many centuries later, though, it sounds like so much ungrateful carping to question the miracle of Jewish survival against a background of all the innumerable instances that did not trigger the miracle of divine intervention in the affairs of humanity below. Will that be how it will seem in a dozen centuries when Jews look back on the establishment of a Jewish state after millennia of exile and find it unnecessary to temper their gratitude to God by training their gaze instead on the fiend's failed attempt to annihilate and eradicate the Jewish people only a few years earlier? For its part, the liturgist does not look away and actually insists on linking the events. The situation was grim. The borders to the Land of Israel were sealed to Jewish immigrants, including those who had survived the most unspeakable horrors. The declaration of Israeli independence immediately triggered a war that, by all the normal criteria of military analysis, the enemy should have won. The Jews were beleaguered, outnumbered, and under attack on all fronts at once. There are many different explanations of how it came to pass that the fledgling army of the fledgling state managed to expel the armies of so many different countries at once and to make secure the State of Israel's existence, but the liturgist's is perhaps the simplest: God so wished for this to come to pass that the normal

standards of human freedom were set aside long enough for Israel to vanquish its foes. By declaring that God “wrought great deliverance and salvation” on that very day, individuals at prayer on Yom Ha’atzma’ut are accepting a challenging idea and declaring themselves concomitantly willing to accept the premise that miraculous is precisely the word to describe the triumph of decency against depravity in the world when there would otherwise have been every reason to expect a different, far less satisfying, outcome.

To imagine that the ancients were so naïve as not to notice that evil triumphs regularly in the world is to miss the point entirely. The ancients were supremely aware of the fact that God endures human history and only occasionally interrupts the flow of events we humans consider “normal” to bring about a different ending to what otherwise might be a very sorry story. But it is in their willingness to accept the concept of miracles being precisely those instances of unexpected divine intervention in the world that the ancients differ the most from moderns. These three examples are instructive: when it came to singling out miracles for which formally to thank God, the liturgists did not leap to include references to parted seas, to rivers turned to blood or to the sun standing still in the daytime sky. The examples offered are entirely different: the wholly unexpected victory of a rag-tag army of Maccabean irregulars against the well-trained, disciplined troops of the Seleucid king, the unbelievable turn of events that led to a Jewish uprising in old Shushan against the very people plotting a pogrom of genocidal proportions against the Jewish population, and the impossibly improbable victory of an army of refugees, many of whom came to the Land of Israel directly from hell, fighting with antiquated weapons against armies with almost unlimited wealth, resources and manpower. These are the miracles the liturgists are proposing to moderns eager to find the finger of God in the course of modern events. Can moderns actually accept that God’s rule over the world is accomplished almost never with grand, heart-stopping gestures, but far more often by granting

On Israel Independence Day, say:

We affirm our faith in You, for You are and always shall be א , our God and the God of our ancestors, the rock of our lives and the shield behind which we nurture our hope of redemption in every generation. All this we affirm freely to You as we recount the praises due You for the security and safety of our lives, both of which are in Your hands, and for our souls, which are wholly dependent on You, and also for the miracles that You perform daily for us, a never-ending series of wonders and kindnesses from which we benefit morning, afternoon and evening every day of our lives. O God of goodness, Whose compassion never fails, O God of compassion, Whose mercies never end, it is ever in You that we place our trust. We are grateful for the miracles and the victory, for the acts of might for the military triumphs and the successes in battle You wrought for our people at this season of the year. When Jewish people undertook a return to their ancestral homeland and began to re-establish themselves as free people living in their own land as in ancient times, entry into the Promised Land was suddenly denied to the very refugees who had escaped annihilation elsewhere. But, when our enemies in the land and their allies in adjacent countries rose up to destroy Your people Israel, You, acting in accordance with Your great mercies, came to their defense in their time of most dire trouble and rendered a just judgment on their behalf. You gave them the courage to rise up and to pry open the gates of the land to grant entry to those who needed it most and to repulse the enemy armies from the land. You gave the many into the hands of the few and the wicked into the hands of the righteous. You made glorious and holy Your own name in this world of Yours and, for Your people Israel, You wrought great deliverance and salvation on this very day.

And so, for all these things, may Your name be blessed and exalted for always and for all time, O sovereign God, for then shall all living creatures give thanks to You, *selah*, and render sincere praise to Your name, O God of our salvation, our ever-present help, *selah*.

Blessed are You, א , Whose name is goodness itself and Who is wholly deserving of all gratitude.

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Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

שְׁלוֹם

רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֹד תְּשִׁים לְעוֹלָם, פִּי אֲתָה הוּא מְלַךְ אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשְּׁלוֹם, וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יֵת וּבְכָל שְׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוֹמָךָ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמְּבַרֵּךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁלּוֹם.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

שְׁלוֹם רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֹד תְּשִׁים לְעוֹלָם, פִּי אֲתָה הוּא מְלַךְ אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשְּׁלוֹם, וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יֵת וּבְכָל שְׁעָה בְּשִׁלּוֹמָךָ. בְּסִפּוּר חַיִּים, בְּרַכָּה, וְשִׁלּוֹם, וּפְרִיגָסָה טוֹבָה, גִּזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ, אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּלְשִׁלּוֹם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, עוֹשֵׂה הַשְּׁלוֹם.

The Prayer of Mar, son of Rabina

אֱלֹהֵי, גִּצּוֹר לְשׁוּגֵי מִרְעָה, וְשִׁפְתֵי מִדְּבַר מִרְמָה, וְלִמְקַלְלֵי גִבְשֵׁי תְדוֹם, וְנִפְשֵׁי כְּעַפָּר לְכָל תְּהִיָּה. פְּתַח לְבִי בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְדּוּף גִּבְשֵׁי, וְכָל חַחוּשֵׁיבִים עָלַי רָעָה, מִהֲרָה הִפֵּר עֲצָתְךָ וְקַלְקַל מַחֲשַׁבְתְּךָ. עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמֹךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן יְמִינְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קִדְשֶׁתְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרָתְךָ. לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעֲנֵנִי. יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לְבִי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה צוּרֵי וְגוֹאֲלֵי. עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

At the conclusion of the Amidah, we append a prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of our holy Temple.


יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שִׁיבְנָה בַּיִת הַמְּקֻדָּשׁ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ, וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וְשֵׁם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה פִּימִי עוֹלָם וְכִשְׁנִים קְדָמוֹנִיּוֹת. וְעֲרָבָה לִיהוָה מִנְחַת הַיּוֹדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם פִּימִי עוֹלָם וְכִשְׁנִים קְדָמוֹנִיּוֹת.

On Saturday evenings, recite the Half Kaddish (as on page 295), then continue on page 458.

human beings the courage they would otherwise lack to defy odds that would otherwise seem unbeatable to accomplish things that any sane person would describe not merely as unlikely or improbable, but wholly and utterly impossible? Those, for our liturgists, are miracles worth embracing . . . and worth contemplating as we stand in prayer before God and consider our role in the affairs of humanity. Do we all have the capacity to be the agents of God's miraculous intervention in the affairs of humankind? The liturgists' answer is obvious, but any who would dare stand in honest prayer before God will also have to have personal answers to that same question . . . and honest ones, at that.

XIX

The final blessing of the weekday Amidah has two versions, one for the morning and another for the afternoon and evening. Both, however, are merely variations on the same theme and both are prayers for peace. Moderns preparing themselves to recite this blessing will have to decide what they consider peace to be. Is it merely the absence of war? Or is it something more, something people who seek God strive to attain in their spiritual lives as an essential prerequisite to the knowledge of God? Nations, generally speaking, are either at war or at peace . . . but for human beings, the situation is more complex. Can a person not be under attack from outside foes and still not have attained the state called shalom in Hebrew? The English word has a distinct connotation of being free from outside aggression, but the Hebrew has a different quality and suggests just as readily a state of equilibrium, of being quit of outstanding obligations, of having attained a state of inner conflictlessness, of having freed oneself of the stress of being spiritual in a secular world, of being pious in a world of profane vulgarity, of yearning for God in a world that considers such desires—to the extent that it considers them at all—quaint, even charming, but hardly the kind of thing to which serious people devote themselves. Peace is not the absence of tension or ambivalence, but the ability to rise above

both to a state of pure striving for God. It is not the absence of doubt, but the absence of crippling uncertainty about the worth of the spiritual life . . . and about participating in the Jewish mission to know God, to encounter God, to seek oneness and union with God. It is, therefore, not specifically freedom from the threatening presence of outside foes that is the great goal of Jewish spirituality presented liturgically as the culmination of the Amidah, or at least not solely that kind of freedom, but also the kind of peace for which the spiritually adept pray for on a personal level. That much sounds reasonable, but praying to God for *shalom* in the spiritual sense of the word also presents worshipers with a kind of paradox: peace is the prerequisite for successfully experiencing communion with God, yet we address God in prayer—surely the most basic of all forms of communion with the divine—to ask that it be granted us. Moderns seeking to recite the Amidah in an atmosphere of absolute spiritual integrity will want to ponder that paradox and its various implications and corollaries: seeking peace is the great goal of our lives in God and the greatest blessing we can solicit from God, yet effectively to pray for it requires the kind of inner peace that addressing God in prayer, even in a prayer for peace, would appear to require. Stilling the inner storm, therefore, is itself both journey and destination, both the goal of prayer and its most basic prerequisite, both the medium and the message. To unravel this kind of paradox, however, is not impossible, nor should it be considered beyond the capability of the ordinary faithful. In the end, it comes to this: prayer requires more courage than eloquence, more of the will to defeat paradox by mindfully ignoring it than the need to resolve it by attempting to unravel its intractable intricacies logically. And that, finally, is why it requires courage to stand in prayer before God—courage born of confidence in one’s ability to know an unknowable God, and to address in dialogue a God Whose existence is wholly outside of our own, God-given, ability to perceive God, or to know or understand anything of God’s essential nature. 

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

Grant a great and permanent peace to Your people Israel, for You are the Sovereign of all peace and we pray that it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel at every time and in every hour with Your peace. Blessed are You, A , Who will always bless the people Israel with peace.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

Grant a great and permanent peace to Your people Israel, for You are the Sovereign of all peace and we pray that it be good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel at every time and in every hour with Your peace. May we and all members of Your people, the House of Israel, be remembered and entered in the Book of Life, Blessing, Peace, and Great Prosperity, for now and for always, for a good life and for peace. Blessed are You, A , Maker of peace.

The Prayer of Mar, son of Rabina

My God, keep my tongue from speaking evil and my lips from uttering slander. May I have the inner strength to remain silent in the face of my enemies’ taunts and may I have the courage to be indifferent to all who might insult or mock me. Open my heart to Your Torah and inspire me to yearn to do Your commandments faithfully and properly. And may You quickly annul the plans and bring to naught the plots of those who wish me ill. Do this for the sake of Your name, for the sake of Your great right hand, for the sake of Your holiness, and for the sake of Your holy Torah. May Your right hand grant salvation as You answer our prayers so that those who love You might be granted relief from their burdens. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before You, A , my Rock and my Redeemer. And May God Who makes peace on high make peace for us and for the whole House of Israel. And to that, let us all say, Amen.

At the conclusion of the Amidah, we append a prayer

for the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of our holy Temple.

May it be Your will, A , our God and God of our ancestors, that the holy Temple be rebuilt quickly and within our days. And may we all have a portion in Your Torah sufficient to guarantee us the merit to serve You in awe in that place, just as in ancient days and bygone years. May the sweet savor of the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to You, A , just as in ancient days and bygone years.

*On Saturday evenings, recite the Half Kaddish (as on page 295),
then continue on page 458.*

The Full Kaddish

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא
כְּרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךָ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְחַיֵּי
דְּכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

The congregation joins the cantor or baal tefillah in reciting this line.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֵלְא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֵלְא לְעֵלְא מִכָּל

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא, דְּאִמְרוּן
בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

תְּתַקַּבֵּל צְלוּתְהוֹן וּבְעוּתְהוֹן דְּכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל קָדָם
אֲבוּהוֹן דִּי בְּשַׁמַּיָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָא, וְחַיִּים, עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

Between Passover and Shavuot, continue on page 332 with the Counting of the Omer. On Purim, continue with the reading of the Megillah. On Tisha Be'av, continue with the reading of Eichah. On Chanukah, turn to page 364.



In the opening chapters of the section of the Mishneh Torah called *Hilkhot Shegagot* (“Laws Relating to Errors,”) Rambam undertakes a massive discussion of the relationship between deeds and intentions. Framing his thinking as a treatise on the Scriptural and rabbinic laws about inadvertent sin and its expiation, Maimonides ends up creating a nuanced theory of behavior that will appeal to moderns on a wide variety of levels.

Chapter One

All who inadvertently violate one of the negative commandments of the Torah through the performance of a physical act that entails the punishment of excision are obliged, in consequence of their accidental sin, to offer up a sin offering, and it is the fulfillment of a positive commandment to do so. (Editor’s note: Elsewhere, Maimonides defines excision as the punishment of being denied a portion in the World to Come.)

It is worth noting, therefore, that all sins that entail the punishment of excision when committed intentionally oblige all who commit them unintentionally to bring a sin offering with the exception of three commandments only: the prohibition of blasphemy, and the obligations to circumcise and to offer up the annual paschal offering. The latter two, the paschal offering and circumcision, are included because they are positive commandments, whereas sin offerings are only brought for the inadvertent violation of negative commandments, as it is written in their regard, “. . . one of all the commandments of א that must not be done (Leviticus 4:27).” Blasphemy, however, is excluded because it does not involve any physical act, whereas Scripture specifies that one who must bring a sin offering for inadvertent sin must be “one who does (i.e., some specific thing) inadvertently (Numbers 15:29),” and this excludes the blasphemer who is

capable of sinning without undertaking any physical act at all. Therefore, one who accepts an idol as a divinity is exempt from the sin offering because no physical act is necessarily involved, whereas Scripture says with respect to such sinners that they must actually "do one (of these things; Leviticus 4:27)," and this is the case even though the punishment for accepting an idol as a god, if the sin was intentionally committed, is excision and death by stoning.

With the exception of the three sins specified above, if an individual intentionally commits any of the sins that are punished with excision, then that person is obliged to offer a fixed sin offering. There are, however, two exceptions, and neither one who is in a state of ritual impurity yet who nevertheless eats sacrificial meat, nor one who is in a state of ritual impurity yet who nevertheless enters the Temple, is obliged to bring a fixed sin offering (in the case of inadvertent transgression). Instead, those who commit these two sins bring a variable sin offering, as we shall explain.

A fixed sin offering is one that invariably involves animal sacrifice (as opposed to the sacrifice of a bird or the offering of a grain offering). A variable sin offering, on the other hand, is not fixed at all. A wealthy sinner, for example, may bring an animal as a sin offering. One who is poor, on the other hand, may bring a bird or even a tenth of an eifah of grain, as shall be explained. From all this we learn that there are forty-three commandments which, when violated, oblige the violator to bring a fixed sin offering. . . . Of these, twenty-six are the specific sexual sins generally called arayot (i.e., the sins listed in Leviticus 18 and 20). There are, therefore, (other than the three that do not require sin offerings at all when inadvertently transgressed), seventeen others, and these are as follow: one who worships an idol with a physical act, one who sacrifices a child to Molekh, one who contacts the dead, one who indulges in necromancy, one who violates the Sabbath, one who performs forbidden labors on Yom Kippur, one who eats or drinks on Yom Kippur, one who eats sacrificial meat after the appointed time limit, one who eats leavened products on

The Full Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified be the great name of God in this world created according to divine plan, and may God's sovereignty be established speedily and soon during the days of our lives and the lives of all members of the House of Israel, and let us say, Amen.

The congregation joins the cantor or baal tefillah in reciting this line.

May God's great name be blessed forever and throughout all eternity.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

May the name of the Holy One, source of all blessing, be blessed, adored, lauded, praised, extolled, glorified and venerated in language . . .

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

more exalted

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

entirely more exalted

. . . than any blessing, hymn, ode or prayer recited by the faithful in this world, and let us say, Amen.

May the prayers and supplications of all Israel be acceptable before their heavenly Parent, and let us say, Amen.

May we, and all Israel, be blessed with great peace that comes to us directly from heaven, and with life, and let us say, Amen.


May God Who brings peace to the heavens grant peace to us and to all Israel, and let us say, Amen.

Between Passover and Shavuot, continue on page 332 with the Counting of the Omer. On Purim, continue with the reading of the Megillah.

On Tisha Be'av, continue with the reading of Eichah. On Chanukah, turn to page 365.

עֲלֵינוּ

לְשִׁבַח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל, לְתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית, שְׁלֹא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגֵוְיֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת, וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה, שְׁלֹא שָׂם חֶלְקֵנוּ כִּהֵם, וְגִדְלָנוּ כְּכֹל הַמוֹנֵם, וְאַנְחָנוּ כְּזָרִיעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים, לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ, מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁהוּא נוֹטֵה שְׂמִימִים וַיִּסַּד אֶרֶץ, וּמוֹשֵׁב יִקְרוּ בְּשָׂמִים מִמַּעַל, וְשִׁכְנֵת עֲזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים. הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין עוֹד. אִמֶּת מִלְּפָנָיו, אִפְסֵי זוּלָתוֹ, כְּפִתוּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ: וַיִּדְעַת הַיּוֹם וְהַשַּׁבָּת אֶל לְבַבָּךְ, כִּי יְהוּה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׂמִים מִמַּעַל, וְעַל הָאֶרֶץ מִתַּחַת, אֵין עוֹד.

עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָךְ יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְרֵאוֹת מִהֲרָה בְּתַפְאֵרַת עֲזָךְ, לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאֶרֶץ וְהָאֱלִילִים כְּרוֹת יִפְרֵתוֹ, לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שִׁדְי וְכָל בְּנֵי בֶשֶׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ, לְהַפְגוֹת אֱלִיךָ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ, יִפְירוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל, כִּי לָךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרָה, תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לְשׁוֹן. לְפָנֶיךָ, יְהוּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יִכְרַעוּ וַיִּפְלְאוּ, וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקְרֵי יִתְגַּבּוּ, וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָּלֵם אֶת עוֹל מַלְכוּתֶךָ, וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מִהֲרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, כִּי הַמְּלָכוֹת שֶׁלָּךְ הֵינָּה, וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד, כְּפִתוּב בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ: יְהוּה יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.  וַיִּבְרָא: וְהָיָה יְהוּה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאֶרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוּה אֶחָד, וְשִׂמוֹ אֶחָד.

Passover, one who eats forbidden cheilev fat, one who drinks blood, one who eats sacrificial meat that was sacrificed with the intention of eating it beyond the appointed time limit, one who slaughters sacrifices outside the Temple courtyard, one who offers up a sacrifice outside the Temple courtyard, one who illicitly manufactures the anointing oil, one who illicitly makes incense of the kind that was used solely in the Temple, and one who illegitimately anoints someone with real anointing oil. All these, together with the three sins formally excluded above, come to a total of forty-three sins for the inadvertent violation of which one must bring a fixed sin offering.

What is the exact sacrifice one must bring in these cases? If one erred in a matter of idolatry, one must bring a male goat that is one year old as a sin offering, just as is specified in the Torah portion Shelach Lekhah, and this law applies to regular people, to the king, to the High Priest, or (even) to the priest anointed for battle because all are considered equal with respect to the inadvertent sin of idolatry. However, if one sinned inadvertently in any of the other forty-two cases, the situation is as follows: If one is a lay person, one brings a female goat or lamb as one's offering, and this is the commoner's sacrifice to which reference is made in the Torah portion Vayikra, (i.e. at Leviticus 4:27–29). If, however, the king errs in one of these sins, then he must bring a female goat as his sin offering. If an anointed High Priest (that is, one who is invested in office by being anointed with the anointing oil that only Moses himself created), then he must bring a bull as a sin offering and it is wholly burnt. . . .

The same law applies to single individuals who commit any of these sins and to multitudes of sinners, as it is written that "one law must apply to (all of) you (and) to the individual who sins (Numbers 15:29)." How does this apply? If the residents of an entire country were to sin inadvertently and suppose that some specific day was regular weekday when, in fact, it was Yom Kippur, and they were all to eat and to engage in the kind of work forbidden on that day, each one of them must bring two different sin offerings, either kids or lambs. Similarly, if

they all sinned as one and offered incense to idols, then each single individual would have to bring a year-old goat as a sin offering.

Chapter Two

One is not to offer a sin offering as expiation for inadvertent sin unless the individual was in error from the very beginning of the act until the end. However, if that same individual was in error at the beginning, but conscious of the sin involved by the end of the act, or if such an individual was aware that the action being undertaken was sinful when beginning it, but became erroneously convinced it was acceptable behavior when ending the deed, then such a person is exempt from the sin offering entirely. For example, if one took an object from one domain to another on the Sabbath in such a way that one was aware one was sinning when lifting it up, but unaware when setting it down (in the other domain), or if one was acting in error by picking it up in the first place but aware that one was violating a commandment when setting it down, such an individual, having failed to begin and end the act inadvertently, is exempt from the sin offering. And the same is the case in all analogous situations.

If one violates a negative commandment wittingly, but without realizing that the sin involved carries the punishment of excision, then one is considered to have sinned inadvertently and must, therefore, offer a sin offering. However, if one is aware that the sin in question bears the punishment of excision, but was unaware that such sins entail the obligation to bring a sin offering, then one is considered to have sinned intentionally. The principle is that, in the context of sins punishable with excision, ignorance regarding the sacrifice is not considered determinative with respect to the requirement that the sin be committed unwittingly.


One who is aware of having transgressed a negative commandment that carries the punishment of excision, but is unaware which commandment, precisely, it is that was violated, is exempt from bringing the sin offering, for Scripture specifically states, with respect to the sin that

Aleinu

It is our duty to praise the Author of all existence and to declare the greatness of the Creator for not making us like the other nations or granting us the spiritual bearing of other clans within the greater human family, and for neither giving us a portion similar to theirs nor a destiny like that of their great populations. Instead, we all bend the knee and kneel down to give thanks before sovereign God Who rules over even their most powerful royalty, the blessed Holy One Who spread out the heavens and established the earth, Whose holy residence is in heaven above, Whose absolute power is revealed in the highest celestial realms. The Almighty is our God; there is no other. The Sovereign of truth, God is wholly unique, as it is written in God's Torah: "And above all else you shall take to heart that *A*, alone and fully unique, is God in heaven above and on earth below."

Therefore, do we place our trust in You, *A*, our God, so that we may quickly come to see the glory of Your splendid power as it manifests itself to sweep away and utterly destroy the repulsive idols that are worshiped on this earth, to establish the sovereignty of God on earth so that all humanity will come to invoke Your sacred name, to turn the wicked of the earth toward You in full repentance, so that all who dwell on this planet will recognize and understand fully that it is to You alone that every knee must bend and every tongue pledge loyalty.

It is before You, *A*, our God, that they will kneel and fall prostrate; it is to the glory of Your name that they will all show honor as they accept upon themselves the yoke of Your sovereignty.

Then shall You rule over them, quickly and permanently, for sovereignty is Yours and so shall You ever rule over us with honor, as it is written in the Torah, "*A* shall reign forever."  And so also is it written in the book of Your prophet, "And it shall come to pass that *A* will be Sovereign over the earth. Indeed, on that day, the unique nature of *A* will be acknowledged on earth so totally that even the divine name itself will be 'One.'"

*The Mourner's Kaddish**

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא
כְּרַעוּתֵיהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵיהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוּן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוּן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמּוֹן קָרִיב,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמוֹן.

The congregation joins the mourners in reciting this line.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלָם וּלְעָלְמֵי עֵלְמֵינָא.

The mourners continue:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ
הוּא

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעֵלָא לְעֵלָא מִכָּל

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא, דְּאָמְרוּ
בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמוֹן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמֵיָא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמוֹן.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמוֹן.

*The Mourner's Kaddish appears in transliteration on page 277.

triggers the obligation, "... the sin that such a one committed (Leviticus 4:23)," which indicates that the sinner must be aware of the specific sin committed. How could one be aware of having sinned, but not of the sin committed? One could, for example, have before oneself forbidden chelev fat and notar (that is, sacrificial foodstuffs that have passed the limit before which they must be consumed). If one were to consume one of them, but without noting which one, that would be an example of knowing for certain that one has sinned without knowing with certainty what sin was committed. . . .

If one sinned, was informed that one had sinned, and then forgot what specifically one had done, one should bring the sin offering for the sake of some unspecified sin, and the sin offering may be eaten thereafter in the manner of all sin offerings that may be subsequently eaten.

If one erred in some specific way, but without being certain how exactly one had done so, one is liable to bring the sacrifice. . . . This would be akin to one who had two lamps burning on Shabbat and extinguished one of them without remembering afterwards which one he extinguished, or to one who had two pots of forbidden meat before him and ate from one, then forgot from which one he ate. In both cases, the man would be liable to offer the sin offering, and so would one in any analogous situation.

One who is obliged to bring a fixed sin offering because of a sinful deed undertaken unwittingly, who then proceeds to act unwittingly again and to sin, and then becomes aware after the fact of both sins, even though such a person may not have had any knowledge in the first place that the acts were forbidden, such a one must bring a sin offering. How could this work? An example could be a child who is taken captive by non-Jews and who grows up among them unaware of what it means to be a Jew and without any knowledge of the Jewish faith. Such a child, naturally, does all sorts of forbidden labors on Shabbat and eats non-kosher fat and blood, and all manner of similar things. Then, when the captive child in question finally learns that he is a Jew and that there

are commandments that forbid all those activities, he is obliged to bring a sin offering for each separate (category of) sin, and so would the law apply to all analogous situations.

One who sins unwittingly—not in the sense that he does something intentionally without knowing it is a sin, but in the sense that he does something without paying any attention to what he is doing at all—in matters relating to sexuality or to the laws that govern forbidden foods is liable to bring a sin offering, but not in matters relating to the observance of Shabbat. . . .

An individual observing one of the commandments, who, in the midst of performing the ritual, inadvertently commits a sin for which the punishment is excision, is exempt from the sin offering, because he was acting licitly. For example . . . if one was planning to circumcise two boys, one on Shabbat and one on the day before or after Shabbat, and, forgetting the original plan, circumcised them both on the Sabbath, such an individual would be exempt from the sin offering because he had permission to circumcise one of them and, therefore, the rules governing Sabbath rest are deferred in his regard. This individual performed one of the commandments, even though it was spread out over two different bodies because he was confused and inexact in his behavior. However, if neither boy was scheduled for circumcision on Shabbat and one were to forget that and proceed to circumcise one or both boys who were not correctly to be circumcised on the Sabbath, then the one who circumcises them is indeed obliged to bring a sin offering.

A professional mohel who intends to circumcise a boy on the Sabbath, but who is told upon arriving that there is nowhere near enough time left before the end of the Sabbath to complete the job and that, therefore, if he begins, he will not end while it is still Shabbat and will end up having merely created a wound on Shabbat (which is forbidden) and not having performed a mitzvah at all, but who personally insists that he is used to working quickly and hastily and that he can certainly circumcise the boy while there is still time, and who then actually does fail to complete

*The Mourner's Kaddish**

Magnified and sanctified be the great name of God in this world created according to divine plan, and may God's sovereignty be established speedily and soon during the days of our lives and the lives of all members of the House of Israel, and let us say, Amen.

The congregation joins the mourners in reciting this line.

May God's great name be blessed forever and throughout all eternity.

The mourners continue:

May the name of the Holy One, source of all blessing, be blessed, adored, lauded, praised, extolled, glorified and venerated in language . . .

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

more exalted

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

entirely more exalted

than any blessing, hymn, ode or prayer recited by the faithful in this world, and let us say, Amen.

May we, and all Israel, be blessed with lives great peace that comes to us directly from heaven, and with life, and let us say, Amen.

May God Who brings peace to the heavens grant peace to us and to all Israel, and let us say, Amen.

**The Mourner's Kaddish appears in transliteration on page 277.*

Psalm 27

During the weeks between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Hoshana Rabba, we read the twenty-seventh psalm at the end of the Evening Service.

(A translation appears above on page 179.)

לְדָוִד יְהוָה אֱזָרוּנִי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמֶּנִּי אִירָא, יְהוָה מְעוֹז חַיִּי
מִמֵּי אַפְחָד. בְּקִרְבַּי עָלַי מִרְעִים, לֶאֱכֹל אֶת בֶּשְׂרֵי
צָרִי וְאֵיבֵי לִי הִמָּה פָּשְׁלוּ וְנִפְּלוּ. אִם תַּחֲנֶנָּה עָלַי
מִחֲנֶנָּה לֹא יִירָא לְבָנִי, אִם תִּקְוֶם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת
אֲנִי בֹטֵחַ. אַחַת שְׂאֵלְתִּי מֵאֵת יְהוָה, אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ
שְׁבֹתִי בְּבֵית יְהוָה, כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי לַחֲזוֹת בְּנֹעַם יְהוָה
וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ. כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְּסֹפֶה בַּיּוֹם רָעָה, יִסְתַּרְנִי
בְּסִתְרֵי אֱהָלוֹ בְּצֹר יְרוּמִמֵּנִי. וְעַתָּה יְרוּם רֹאשִׁי, עַל
אֵיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאֲזַבְּחָה בְּאֱהָלוֹ זְבַחֵי תְרוּעָה, אֲשִׁירָה
וְאֲזַמְרָה לַיהוָה. שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא, וְחַנּוּנֵי וְעֲנֵנֵי.
לֵךְ אִמַּר לְבָנִי, בְּקִשׁוֹ פָּנֵי, אֶת פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ.
אֵל תִּסְתַּר פְּנֵיךָ מִמִּנִּי, אֵל תֵּט בְּאָף עֲבָדֶךָ,
עֲזַרְתִּי הֵייתָ, אֵל תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאֵל תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
כִּי אָבִי וְאֲמִי עֲזָבוּנִי, וַיהוָה יִאֲסֹפֵנִי. הוֹרְגֵנִי יְהוָה
דְּרָכֶךָ, וְנַחֲנֵי בְּאֲרוֹחַ מִישׁוֹר, לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי. אֵל תַּתְּנֵנִי
בְּגִבְשׁ צָרִי, כִּי קָמוּ בֵּי עֵדֵי שֶׁקֶר וַיִּפְּחֵ חָמָס.
לוֹלֵא הֶאֱמַנְתִּי, לְרֹאוֹת בְּטוֹב יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים.
קִוֵּה אֵל יְהוָה, חֲזֵק וַיֵּאֱמֵץ לִבְךָ וְקִוֵּה אֵל
יְהוָה.


the circumcision before the end of the Sabbath—such an individual must bring a sin offering, because they warned him that he would not be able to complete the job.

One who takes a lulav out (from a private domain) on the first day of the festival when that day is also Shabbat with the intention of using it to perform the mitzvah of waving the lulav, and who carries it four cubits in a public space inadvertently—such a person is exempt from the sin offering, because the lulav was carried licitly (in the sense that it would normally be licit to do so on the first day of the festival). Similarly, if one were to slaughter the paschal sacrifice on the fourteenth of Nisan in a year when that day (i.e., the Eve of Passover) fell on Shabbat, and only became aware afterwards that the owners of the animal had withdrawn their sponsorship from its sacrifice, or that they had died, or that they had been contaminated with impurity before the animal was slaughtered, or if the animal was discovered to be unacceptable as a sacrifice in a place that could not be seen before the animal was slaughtered, for example, if it turned out that it had a pierced bowel or lung—in all these cases, the slaughterer would be exempt from the sin offering, because he was acting licitly. However if the animal was discovered to be blemished externally, or to have any overt disqualifying features, then the slaughterer is obliged to bring a sin offering, because he ought to have checked the animal carefully before slaughtering it. And the same law would apply in all analogous situations.

If one were to slaughter the paschal sacrifice on Shabbat (in a year when the Eve of Passover fell on Saturday), intending erroneously for it to be some other sort of sacrifice (for example, a shlamim sacrifice), then one would be exempt from the sin offering because the offering itself is still considered valid. This is so because misapplying the name of a sacrifice is not considered a meaningful act of discreditation. . . .

If one erroneously offered up a different sacrifice (than a proper paschal offering) as the paschal offering, then the matter turns on whether the animal slaughtered could have been a paschal sac-


rifice. If the animal in question could well have been a paschal sacrifice, then the slaughterer is exempt from the sin offering because he performed an essentially licit act. If the animal in question could not be a paschal offering, for example if it were a female or if it were two years old, then the slaughterer is required to bring a sin offering, because the sacrifice he performed could not possibly be a paschal offering. Similarly, if he erred and slaughtered the paschal animal on the Sabbath, but it was neither eaten by the people for whom it was slaughtered nor by its sponsors, or if it subsequently was eaten by uncircumcised individuals or by people contaminated with impurity—such an individual is required to offer a sin offering. If he slaughtered the paschal offering for a mixed group—for those intended to eat it and for others, or for a group composed of its legitimate sponsors and others, or for a mixed group of circumcised and uncircumcised individuals, or of people contaminated and not contaminated with impurity—in all these instances, the individual in question would be exempt from the sacrifice, and such would be the law as well in all analogous situations.

If one were to offer up a public sacrifice on the Sabbath not for its intended purpose, one would become liable to bring a sin offering, but the *emurin* (that is, the internal organs) should only be burnt on the altar after the end of Shabbat. Similarly, if one offered up more sacrifices on Shabbat than were technically necessary, one would also become liable to bring a sin offering for those in excess of the required amount. . . . 

Psalm 49


In a house of mourning, the forty-ninth psalm is read aloud at the end of the Evening Service.

(A translation appears above on page 183.)

לְמַנְעֵחַ לְבַגְי קָרַח מְזִמּוֹר. שְׁמְעוּ זֹאת כָּל הָעַמִּים,
הָאֲזִינוּ כָּל יְשִׁבֵי חֶלֶד. גַּם בְּגִי אָדָם, גַּם בְּגִי אִישׁ,
יַחַד עָשִׂיר וְאַבְיוֹן. פִּי יִדְבֵר חֲכָמוֹת, וְהַגִּית לְבִי
תְבוּנוֹת. אַטָּה לְמַשָּׁל אֲזַנִּי, אֶפְתַּח בְּכַנּוֹר חִידָתִי.
לָמָּה אִירָא בְיָמַי רָע, עֵוֹן עַקְבֵי יִסְבְּגִי. הַבְטָחִים עַל
חַיִלָם, וּבָרַב עֲשָׂרָם יִתְהַלְלוּ. אִח לֹא פָדָה יִפְדֶּה
אִישׁ, לֹא יִתֵּן לֵאלֹהִים כְּפָרוֹ. וַיִּקַּר פְּדִיוֹן גַּבְשָׁם,
וַחֲדַל לְעוֹלָם. וַיַּחֲזִי עוֹד לְנִצָּחַת, לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשְּׁחָת.
פִּי יִרְאֶה חֲכָמִים יָמוּתוּ, יַחַד פְּסִיל וּבַעַר יֵאבְדוּ,
וְעִזְבוּ לְאַחֲרֵים חַיִלָם. קִרְבָּם בְּתֵימוֹ לְעוֹלָם,
מִשְׁפָּנֹתָם לְדוֹר וָדוֹר, קָרְאוּ בְשִׁמוֹתָם עָלַי אֲדָמוֹת.
וְאָדָם בִּיקָר בַּל יִלִּין, גַּמְשָׁל כְּפִהֲמוֹת גְּדָמוֹ. זֶה
דָּרְכָם, כָּסֶל לָמוֹ, וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ, סָלָה.
כִּצְאוֹן לְשִׂאוֹל שִׁתּוֹ, מוֹת יִרְעֵם, וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יִשְׂרָיִם
לְבַקָּר, וְצוֹרֵם לְבַלּוֹת שְׂאוֹל מִזֶּבֶל לוֹ. אֵךְ אֱלֹהִים
יִפְדֶּה גַבְשֵׁי מִיַּד שְׂאוֹל, פִּי יִקְחֵנִי סָלָה. אֵל תִּירָא
פִּי יַעֲשִׂיר אִישׁ, פִּי יִרְפֶּה כְבוֹד בֵּיתוֹ. פִּי לֹא בְמוֹתוֹ
יִקַּח הַכֹּל, לֹא יִרַד אַחֲרָיו כְּבוֹדוֹ. פִּי גַבְשׁוֹ בְּחַיָּיו
יִבְרָךְ, וַיּוֹדֶךָ פִּי תִיטִיב לָךְ. תָּבוֹא עַד דוֹר אַבוֹתָיו,
עַד גִּצָּח לֹא יִרְאוּ אוֹר.  אָדָם בִּיקָר וְלֹא יִבִּין,
גַּמְשָׁל כְּפִהֲמוֹת גְּדָמוֹ.

מזמור,

שִׁיר הַנְּפִת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד.

אֲרוּמָמָהּ יְהוָה כִּי דָלִיתָנִי, וְלֹא שִׁמְחָתָ אֵיבֵי לִי.
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי, שׁוֹעֲתִי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי.
 יְהוָה הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן שָׂאוֹל גַּפְשִׁי, חֲבִיתָנִי מִיַּרְדֵּי בֹר.
 זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה חֲסִידָיו, וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכְרֵ קֹדְשׁוֹ. כִּי רָגַע
 בְּאִפּוֹ חַיִּים בְּרִצּוֹנִי, בְּעָרֵב יָלִין בְּכִי וְלִבְקָר רָגָה.
 וַאֲנִי אֶמְרָתִי בְּשִׁלְוִי בַל־אֲמוּט לְעוֹלָם.
 יְהוָה בְּרִצּוֹנָהּ הֶעֱמַדְתָּה לְהַרְרִי עֵז,
 הִסְתַּרְתָּ בְּגִיף הָיִיתִי גִבְהָל.
 אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֶקְרָא, וְאֵל אֲדַנִּי אֶתְחַנֵּן.
 מֶה בָּצַע בְּדַמִּי בְּרִדְתִּי אֵל שַׁחַת,
 הַיּוֹדֶה עֶפְרָ? הַיִּגִּיד אֲמַתָּה?
 שְׂמַע, יְהוָה, וְחַנּוּנִי. יְהוָה, הֲיִה עֵזֶר לִי.
 הַפְּכֵת מִסִּפְדֵי לְמַחֹל לִי, 
 בַּתְּחִלָּתָ שִׁקִּי וַתִּאֲזָרְנִי שִׁמְחָה.
 לְמַעַן יִזְמְרֶה כְבוֹד וְלֹא יִדָּם,
 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי, לְעוֹלָם אֲוֹדֶךָ.

unencumbered by the strictures of language, image and symbol . . . and that there are no exceptions to this principle of any sort whatsoever nor is it conceivable that there ever could be any. Accepting this idea—and accepting its various implications and ramifications—is disorienting and upsetting for most people who hold religion in esteem. Nonetheless, any who reject this idea and insist that they actually can seize the nature of God merely by insisting repeatedly and forcefully that they somehow possess the ability intellectually and spiritually to transcend the metaphoric and symbolic language of Scripture and to fathom the unfathomable reality behind even the least obscure God talk—such people cannot be said to know God, or even really to know of God, in any but the most formal, and least meaningful, way possible. This, in a nutshell, is the whole Torah and the rest, mere midrash.



The journey to God is not for the timid. For most people, in fact, it will be an almost insurmountable challenge even to imagine what it would be like to approach God in an atmosphere of absolute honesty and with total candor and integrity, let alone actually to do so. What is easy, on the other hand, is to be crippled by the absurdity inherent in the notion of entering into any kind of relationship at all, let alone one characterized by caring and love, with a God Who cannot logically be known in the normal way human beings know each other . . . or, for that matter, perceived at all in the way people generally know each other and of each other. In a sense, this is the bedrock issue with which every individual possessed of even the vaguest interest in religion has to grapple, to struggle and, eventually, to come to terms. Yet, in this, like in so many things, the bottom line is that reality trumps paradox . . . and the fact that there are individuals who do manage to transcend the limits of their own human intellects precisely by acknowledging those limits and then by refusing to lie about them is far more significant than might seem at first.

Because there is something of the way human lovers come to know how to love by loving (which ought to be impossible, yet somehow is not) in the way the faithful are called to know of God by knowing God (which ought to be impossible, yet somehow also is not), Scripture uses the language of love to describe the kind of relationship that may exist between a human being and the unknowable God . . . and also subtly to suggest that the commandment to love God is fulfilled, either profoundly or casually, by all honest spiritual endeavor unspoiled by egotism, narcissism or arrogance.

For Jews, the paving stones that lie along the path to God will always be the commandments of the Torah. But here too, it is essential to remember that the Lover is not so much unknown as unknowable . . . and that the quest for love will therefore always be carried out within the realm of myth and metaphor. Adopting a kind of literary convention derived from the framework of mutual desire and acquiescence that characterizes the intimate love of earthly lovers, those who embrace the commandments of the Torah as their path to God often refer to them as though their fulfillment were the satisfaction of some one or another of God's needs or desires. This is not at all unreasonable, but, in the end, true love cannot flourish any more successfully in an atmosphere of unacknowledged metaphor between God and humanity than it can between human lovers. Therefore, any who perform the commandments, even the simplest and least arduous among them, out of the conviction that God "wants" them to do this or that thing, such people end up disabling their ability to move forward on the path towards redemption in God because they have attributed desire and want—and hence imperfection—to God.

The basic principle to bear in mind always is that the attribution of desire to God is at best a symbolic gesture designed gently to allude to a truth that would sound absurd if stated aloud frankly or stridently. To insist on the literal truth of those Scriptural passages that speak about God wanting this or that, therefore, is to miss the point almost entirely and this, I suspect, is the true

Psalm 30

A psalm-song of David composed upon the dedication of the House of God.


I exalt you, A , for You have drawn me up and have not given my enemies cause to rejoice over my downfall.

A , my God, I called out to You and You healed me; A , You have brought my soul up from Sheol and granted me life when I was already practically in the grave.

May the faithful chant hymns to A and give thanks to God's holy name, for divine anger lasts but a moment, yet life is extended in accordance with God's will; one can lie down for the night weeping, yet rise up singing hymns of joy.

I declare with tranquil certainty that I shall never again falter.

A , You had previously granted me the strength to stand up like a mighty mountain, so I was duly terrified when You hid Your face; I cried out to You, A , and made supplication before Adonai, saying, "What would be the profit in me being silenced, in me descending into the pit? Will dust give You thanks? Can it tell of Your truth? Hear me, A , and be gracious unto me. A , be my help!"

And, indeed, You did turn my mourning into dancing; You pulled off my sackcloth and girded me instead with happiness,  that my soul might sing out to You and not be silent. A , my God, I shall declare my gratitude to You forever.

*The Mourner's Kaddish**

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי
בְּרָא כְרַעוּתֵיהּ, וַיִּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵיהּ בְּתַיִּיכוֹן
וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַגְלָא
וּבְזַמַּן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

The congregation joins the mourners in reciting this line.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלָם וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.

The mourners continue:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ
הוּא

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say: לְעָלָא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say: לְעָלָא לְעָלָא מִכָּל

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא, הִשְׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא, דְאִמְרוּן
בְּעֻלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָא, וְחַיִּים, עָלֵינוּ וְעַל
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אַמֵּן.

*The text of the Mourner's Kaddish may be found in transliteration on page 277.

meaning of the words passionately—and neither sarcastically nor cynically—spoken by King Jehoshaphat to the prophet Michaiah, “How many times must I adjure you to speak to me only truth in the name of א (1 Kings 22:16 and 2 Chronicles 18:15)?” Like the search for love, the spiritual quest cannot be carried out successfully, even occasionally, in the context of willful self-delusion.



In earliest times, the ancestors of the Jewish people took to using the name “God” to refer to the moral core of absolute existence that rests beneath, beyond and behind the perceptible universe. This way of speaking eventually became widespread, but it still cannot be deemed to state an absolute truth. Indeed, any effort to delimit the power and majesty of the divine by encasing any of its various aspects within words and mental images, or within the realm of symbol and myth, is by definition flawed and false, and this is what the prophet meant when he asked, simply and rhetorically: “To whom would you compare God (Isaiah 40:18)?”

It follows, therefore, that anyone in this world who reads a book and then, as a result, feels competent to make pronouncements about God's will unambiguously and simply to the world is behaving at least slightly fraudulently . . . and this is true no matter how much simpler such people's lives would be if otherwise were to be the case. The bottom line is this: although no human being may know God plainly, only those courageous enough to admit as much in their hearts can claim to be counted among those who even indirectly know of God. Contemplating the reality of God from the vantage point of false, self-serving certainty about things regarding which certainty of any sort is impossible is unjustifiable. Still, in this world of mud and dust, knowing of God is a way of knowing God. And seeking God humbly by acknowledging the iron bars of myth and metaphor that imprison the would-be worshiper in the prison of human perception is the first step towards salvation. In the context of an arduous journey, accepting this principle as undeniable and incontestable is probably the most difficult of first steps.



There is another paradox to consider as well, one that lives at the heart of the matter: knowing of God is only knowing God when it is not confused, consciously or unintentionally, with actually knowing God. It is natural enough, after all, that anyone who observes the goings-on in our violent, unjust world for long enough will eventually come to yearn to believe that there is some invisible, yet wholly responsive, force of governance ruling over the physical things of the world . . . and that this yearned-for force, however it is named or described, grants order and meaning to the lives people live. Then, learning (as the potentially faithful eventually do) that this force of order and governance rooted in morality and ethics is described in the Bible as God, it is all too natural to take that hopeful identification as a simple fact rather than as an expression of the same yearning for God on the part of the ancients that stimulates spiritual endeavor on the part of moderns as well, or that should stimulate it.

Yet, for all that the longing for God may be real—and is real—in the hearts of the faithful, it is still the case that religion can never thrive in an atmosphere of pious self-delusion. To hope, to yearn, to theorize, to dream . . . these are all the tools of people who wish for goodness in the world and none of them is inherently sinful at all. To allow oneself, however, to give voice to those dreams and hopes for justice in the world by asserting things about God that, in the absence of convincing evidence, could just as easily be false as true is to flee, like Jonah in his day, from the very God one is so ardently seeking. Saying one knows God without actually knowing God is to behave like children who brag to their classmates that they know a movie star or a sports hero they've never actually met because it is impossible for them to imagine that individual not being as imagined by a fan as loyal and devoted as he or she is him or herself. Making similar claims about God, however, is no more congruent with the path of spiritual integrity than any lover's well-intentioned

*The Mourner's Kaddish**

Magnified and sanctified be the great name of God in this world created according to divine plan, and may God's sovereignty be established speedily and soon during the days of our lives and the lives of all members of the House of Israel, and let us say, Amen.

The congregation joins the mourners in reciting this line.

May God's great name be blessed forever and throughout all eternity.

The mourners continue:

May the name of the Holy One, source of all blessing, be blessed, adored, lauded, praised, extolled, glorified and venerated in language . . .

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:
more exalted

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:
entirely more exalted

. . . than any blessing, hymn, ode or prayer recited by the faithful in this world, and let us say, Amen.

May we, and all Israel, be blessed with great peace that comes to us directly from heaven, and with life, and let us say, Amen.

May God Who brings peace to the heavens grant peace to us and to all Israel, and let us say, Amen.

**The text of the Mourner's Kaddish may be found in transliteration on page 277.*