

The Musaf Service for Rosh Chodesh

The Half Kaddish

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרֻעֵיתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ
מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעָגְלָא
וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאִמְרוּ 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 דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְעָלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכָּתָא
וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא, דְּאִמְרִין בְּעָלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

The Musaf Amidah for Rosh Chodesh

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

כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא, הָבוּ גִדְל לְאַלְהֵינוּ.
אֲדֹנָי שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח, וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם,
אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאַלְהֵי יַעֲקֹב. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל, הַגִּבּוֹר, וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל
עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי
אֲבוֹת, וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנָי בְּנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה, מְלֶכֶךְ
עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְגִן אַבְרָהָם.



In the Mishnah, Tractate Rosh Hashanah is devoted to questions involving the calendar and the correct calculation of the new moon and the festivals. The full tractate is given here in the translation of Rabbi Simchah Roth, with some editorial additions by the editor.

Chapter One

There are four New Years. The first day of Nisan is the New Year for kings and festivals. The first day of Elul is the New Year for animal tithes. (Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Simon say that this is on first day of Tishri). The first day of Tishri is the New Year for years, for sabbatical years, for jubilee years, for plantings and for vegetables. The first day of Shevat is the New Year for trees, according to the school of Shammai; the school of Hillel says that it is on the fifteenth day of that month.

On four occasions the world is judged: on Passover regarding grain, on Shavuot regarding the fruit of trees, on Rosh Hashanah all mankind passes muster before God (as it is said at Psalm 33:15, "God, Who fashioned the human heart in all its complexity, knows the deeds of all people)," and on Sukkot we are judged regarding water.

Messengers go out to announce six different months: Nisan because of Passover, Av because of the fast, Elul because of Rosh Hashanah, Tishri because of the correct fixing of the festivals, Kislev because of Hanukah, and Adar because of Purim. (When the Temple existed, they would go also because of Iyar, because of the second Passover.)

Regarding two months, Nisan and Tishri, they were permitted to desecrate Shabbat. For these months, the messengers would leave (i.e., even on Shabbat) for Syria to fix the times of the festivals. When the Temple existed, the messengers would desecrate Shabbat for all of the months because of the fixing of the (Rosh Chodesh) sacrifice.

The Musaf Service for Rosh Chodesh

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

The Musaf Amidah for Rosh Chodesh

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

As I call out the name of A , ascribe greatness to our God.

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

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

Blessed are You, A , Protector of Abraham.

Regardless of whether the moon was observed clearly or not, it is permissible for the Sabbath to be desecrated in this regard. Rabbi Yossi says that if the moon is observed clearly (and, therefore, one can suppose many locals will come forward to give testimony regarding its appearance), Shabbat should not be desecrated in this regard.

On one occasion more than forty pairs undertook the journey (i.e., to Jerusalem) and Rabbi Akiba held them up in Lod. Rabban Gamliel sent him a message: if you hold the public up, you could be creating future confusion (i.e., because they will desist from coming in future months and, eventually, perhaps no one at all will come to testify).

If a father and his son witness the new moon, they should both go. They may not form a pair, but, if one of them is declared invalid, the other one could form a pair with someone else. Rabbi Simon says that a father and his son, indeed all relatives, are valid pairs for testimony concerning the new moon. Rabbi Yossi says that it once happened that Tobias the Physician saw the new moon in Jerusalem together with his son and his manumitted servant. The kohanim accepted him and his son, but invalidated his servant; when they came before the court, however, they accepted him and his servant, but invalidated his son.

The following are disqualified (i.e., as witnesses with respect to the new moon): those who play games of chance, those who lend on interest, those who race pigeons, those who trade in sabbatical produce and slaves. This is the general rule: any testimony that a woman is not qualified to offer, neither are they qualified to offer. (Editor's note: Women were almost always barred from testifying in court in ancient times. In modern times, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, the supreme legal decision-making body within the Conservative movement, has voted to permit testimony from women as a general principle. This has met with widespread, but not universal, approval.)

If someone saw the new moon, but is unable to go (i.e., to Jerusalem to offer the requisite testimony), he is to be conveyed there on a donkey and even on a stretcher. If (there is fear of)

אַתָּה גְבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנִי, מַחֲיֵה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ...

Between Shemini Atzeret and Passover, say:

מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם

...מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד, מַחֲיֵה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ
נוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמַקְיֵם אֲמוּנָתוֹ
לְיִשְׁרָאֵל עַכְפָּר, מִי כְמוֹךָ בָּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת וּמִי דוֹמָה לָךְ, מֶלֶךְ
יְמִית וּמַחֲיֵה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה, וְנֶאֱמָן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת
יְמֵתִים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מַחֲיֵה הַמֵּתִים.

*When reciting the Amidah silently,
continue on the next page with the words אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ.*

*When the cantor or the baal tefillah repeats the Amidah,
the Kedushah is inserted here.*

The Kedushah

The cantor or baal tefillah begins with these words:

נִקְדָּשׁ אֶת שְׁמֹךְ בְּעוֹלָם, כְּשֵׁם שְׁמִקְדִּישִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁמֵּי
מְרוֹם, כְּפָתוּב עַל יַד נְבִיאָךְ, וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה וְאָמַר:

The congregation responds:

קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת,
מֶלֶךְ כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ.

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

לְעַמֶּתָם בְּרוּךְ יֵאמְרוּ:

The congregation responds:

בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יְהוָה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ.

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

וּבְדַבְּרֵי קִדְשְׁךָ כְּתוּב לֵאמֹר:

The congregation responds:

יְמַלֶּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, אֱלֹהֶיךָ צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר, הִלְלוּיָהּ.

ambush on the way, they may carry cudgels. If the journey was a long one, they may carry provisions. Shabbat may be desecrated in order to testify about the new moon for a journey of (up to) a night and a day, for it says, "These are God's festivals which you shall proclaim at their right time (Leviticus 23:2)."

Chapter Two

If the court in Jerusalem does not know a potential witness, the authorities (i.e., in the witnesses' home town) send another with him to testify on his behalf. Originally, they would accept testimony concerning the new moon from all people, but they instituted that they would only accept (testimony) from those that they knew once sectarians subverted (the process).

Originally they would light beacons, but they instituted that messengers would be dispatched when the Samaritans interfered.

How did they light the beacons? They would bring long planks of cedar wood, reeds, pine wood and flax for a wick and would bind them together with rope. Someone would then go up to the summit of the hill, set fire to them and wave (the beacon) from side to side and up and down until he could see his counterpart doing the same thing on the next hilltop. And thus on the third hilltop.

From where would they light the beacons? From the Mount of Olives to Sartaba, from Sartaba to Aggripina, from Aggripina to Hauran and from Hauran to Bet Biltin. At Bet Biltin, he did not stop waving the beacon from side to side and up and down until he could see the whole of the diaspora before him ablaze like a bonfire.

There was a large courtyard in Jerusalem called Beit Yaazek, in which all the witnesses assembled and the court would examine them there. They would be provided with a large dinner so that they would become habituated to coming. Originally they were not permitted to move from there all day, but Rabban Gamliel the Elder instituted that they could travel two thousand cubits in any direction. And not only them, but also the midwife who comes to attend a birth

(i.e., on Shabbat) or someone who comes to save property from a conflagration, from troops, from a river or from a collapsed building (i.e., on Shabbat)—all these are considered to be locals and thus have two thousand cubits in any direction.

How did they examine the witnesses? The pair that arrived first was examined first. The elder of the two was brought in and they would say to him: "Tell us how you saw the moon. Was it before the sun or after the sun? Was it to the north of it or to the south of it? How elevated was it and which way was it facing? How wide was it?" (If he said that it was before the sun, it is as if he had said nothing.) Then they would bring in the second one and examine him. If their testimony was found to concur, it was accepted. They would then briefly examine all the other pairs—not because their evidence was necessary, but so that they would not be disappointed and so that they would continue to come forward regularly (i.e., in subsequent months).

The chief justice of the court would say, "It is sanctified" and all the people would respond, "Sanctified, sanctified." Regardless of whether it was seen at the expected time or was not, it is declared sanctified. Rabbi Eleazar ben Zadok says that if it was not seen at the expected time (and thus the new month begins without the testimony of human witnesses), it is not declared sanctified since (the month, in such a case) has been sanctified on high (i.e., and not by the earthly court).

Rabban Gamliel had pictures of the moon in a frame set into the wall of his office. He would direct the lay people to them by pointing and asking, "Is this what you saw or this?" On one occasion, two (witnesses) came forward and testified that they had seen the new moon in the east in the morning and in the west that evening. Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said that they were false witnesses, but when they reached Yavneh, Rabban Gamliel accepted them. On another occasion two came forward and testified that it had been visible at the expected time but was again invisible on the following day. Rabban Gamliel accepted them. Rabbi Dosa ben Hyrkanos said, "How can one testify that a woman has given birth when on the

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, thus making ever more certain our impending salvation, You Who are fully reliable to grant life anew to the dead?

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

When reciting the Amidah silently,

continue with "You are holy" on the next page.

*When the cantor or the baal tefillah repeats the Amidah,
the Kedushah is recited here.*

The Kedushah

The cantor or baal tefillah begins with these words

Let us ascribe holiness to Your name in this world, just as the angels do in highest heaven, just as it is written in Scripture, And they call out to each other:

The congregation responds:

Holy, holy, holy is א of the celestial hosts;
the fullness of the world attests to the glory of God.

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

Whereupon other angels respond:

The congregation responds:

Blessed be the glory of א from its celestial source.

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

And among Your sacred words preserved in Scripture it is written:

The congregation responds:

א will reign forever, your God, O Zion, in every generation.

Hallelujah!

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

לְדוֹר וָדוֹר בְּגִיד גְּדִלָּהּ, וְלִנְצַח נִצָּחִים קִדְשָׁתָךְ
בְּקִדְיִשׁ, וְשִׁבְחָךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפִּינוּ לֹא יָמוּשׁ לְעוֹלָם
וָעֵד, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְהוָה, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues below with ראשי חדשים לעמך נתת.

When praying silently, the Amidah resumes here.

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ, וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יִהְיֶה לְךָ
סֵלָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

רָאשֵׁי חֲדָשִׁים לְעַמְּךָ נָתַתָּ, זְמַן כַּפָּרָה לְכָל תּוֹלְדוֹתֵם.
בְּהִיוֹתָם מְקַרִּיבִים לְפָנֶיךָ זְבָחֵי רְצוֹן וְשְׂעִירֵי חַטָּאת
לְכַפֵּר בַּעֲדָם, זָכְרוֹן לְכֻלָּם יִהְיוּ וְתִשׁוּעַת נַפְשָׁם מִיַּד
שׂוֹנְאָא. מִזְבֵּחַ חָדָשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן תַּכְנִין, וְעוֹלַת רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ
נַעֲלָה עָלָיו, וְשְׂעִירֵי עֲזִים נַעֲשֶׂה בְּרָצוֹן, וּבַעֲבוּדַת בֵּית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ נִשְׁמַח כְּלָנוּ, וּבְשִׁירֵי דָוִד עֲבֹדְךָ הַנִּשְׁמָעִים
בְּעִירָךְ, הָאֲמוּרִים לְפָנֶיךָ מִזְבֵּחַךְ, אֲהַבֵּת עוֹלָם תָּבִיא
לָהֶם, וּבְרִית אֲבוֹת לִפְנֵי תִזְכּוֹר. וַהֲבִיאֵנוּ לְצִיּוֹן עִירָךְ
בְּרָנָה, וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם בֵּית מִקְדָּשְׁךָ בְּשִׁמְחַת עוֹלָם וְשָׁם
נַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ אֶת קָרְבָּנוֹת חוֹבוֹתֵינוּ תְּמִידִים כְּסֻדָּרָם,
וּמוֹסָפִים כַּהֲלַכְתָּם, וְאֶת מוֹסַף יוֹם רֹאשׁ הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה
נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִקְרִיב לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאַהֲבָה כְּמִצְוַת רְצוֹנָךְ, כְּמוֹ
שֶׁכָּתַבְתָּ עָלֵינוּ בַּתּוֹרָתְךָ, עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה עֲבֹדְךָ מִפִּי
כְּבוֹדְךָ כְּאָמֹר:

morrow her belly is still between her teeth?" Rabbi Joshua said to him, "I agree with you."

Rabban Gamliel sent him a message: "I order you to appear before me with your staff and money on the day that Yom Kippur falls according to your calculations!" Rabbi Akiba went and found him (i.e., R. Joshua) visibly distressed. He said to him, "I can prove that everything that Rabban Gamliel did is valid. The Torah says, 'These are God's set times, holy convocations, that you shall proclaim (Leviticus 23:2)'—regardless of whether they are at the right time or not, we have no other 'set times' but these." (Rabbi Joshua) went to Rabbi Dosa ben Hyrkanos. He told him, "If we start reviewing the decisions of the Beth Din of Rabban Gamliel, we shall have to review the actions of every Beth Din that ever was from Moses until now! (The Torah) says, 'Moses, Aaron, Nadav, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel went up (Exodus 24:9).' Now why were the names of those seventy elders not specified? To teach you that every (Beth Din of) three that is created over Israel is like the Beth Din of Moses." (Rabbi Joshua) took his staff and money in his hand and went to Rabban Gamliel in Yavneh on the day that Yom Kippur fell according to his calculations. Rabban Gamliel stood up and kissed him on his head, and said, "Welcome, my master and my student! My master in wisdom and my student in that you accepted my word."

Chapter Three

If it were seen by the Beth Din and all Israel, or if the witnesses had been examined and they did not manage to declare "Sanctified!" before the onset of darkness, the month is (to be considered) a full month. If it were seen by the Beth Din alone, two (of them) shall stand and testify before the others, then they can declare "Sanctified, Sanctified!". If three (members of the Sanhedrin) see it and they (themselves) are the Beth Din, two of them shall stand (to testify) and they shall seat two more of their colleagues with the remaining one and testify before them, then they

may say "Sanctified, Sanctified!", since one sole judge is not qualified to act alone.

All shofarot are acceptable (i.e., for use on Rosh Hashanah) with the exception of that of the cow, since it is called a horn (i.e., and not a shofar). Rabbi Yossi said, "But are not all shofarot called horns? It is said: 'And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the shofar, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat and the people shall march right into it (Joshua 6:5).'"

The shofar to be sounded on Rosh Hashanah (i.e., in the Temple) was the straight horn of the wild goat provided with a mouth-piece covered with gold and two trumpets on either side: the shofar sounded long and the trumpets cut short, since the mitzvah of the day was the shofar.

On fast days, the shofar (i.e. the one used in the Temple) was the curved horn of a male (animal) provided with a mouth-piece covered with silver, (two of them) with the two trumpets in the middle: the shofar sounded a short blast and the trumpets a longer one, since the mitzvah of the day was the trumpets.

The ritual on a jubilee year was the same as that of Rosh Hashanah as regards the sounding of the shofar and the blessings. Rabbi Judah says that, on Rosh Hashanah, we use horns of male animals, but in the jubilee year we use the horns of wild goats.

If a shofar became split and was glued together again, it is invalid. If one glues together broken sections of a shofar, it is invalid. If a hole is made (in the shofar) and it is stopped up, it is invalid if it affects the sounding; if it does not, it is valid.

If one sounds a shofar into a cistern or a hollow or a storage jar and it was the actual sound of the shofar that one has heard, one has fulfilled one's duty. If, however, it was an echo that was heard, one has not fulfilled the duty. Also, if someone were passing behind a synagogue (or if one's house backed on to a synagogue) and one hears the sound of the shofar or of the Megillah (being read aloud)—if one listened with the appropriate mental intention, the duty has been fulfilled but

The cantor or baal tefillah repeats the response and continues:

In every generation, we shall tell of Your greatness and never cease speaking of Your holiness. Indeed, the praises due You will never cease from our mouths, for You are our great and holy Sovereign. Blessed are You, A , holy God.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues below with "You have given."

When praying silently, the Amidah resumes here.

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.

You have given monthly celebrations of Rosh Chodesh to Your people as an opportunity for every generation to seek atonement for its sins. Indeed, in ancient times, the offering of animal sacrifices deemed desirable by You, and the goats that our ancestors offered on Rosh Chodesh as sin offerings, were meant to atone for their misdeeds, to serve as an eternal reminder of Your presence, and as a way of prompting You to grant them deliverance from their foes. O God, may You establish a new altar in Zion, one on which we will some day be able to offer up our Rosh Chodesh sacrifices anew. There, we will offer up those Rosh Chodesh goats and, in so doing, we will rejoice in the worship service of our holy Temple. May the songs of David, Your servant, again be heard in Your city as they are sung before Your holy altar, and may You bring to Your worshipers permanent, unending love as You favor later generations by recalling the covenant into which You entered with their ancestors. O God, bring us all to Zion, Your city. Bring us to Jerusalem, site of Your holy Temple, with everlasting joy so that we may perform the sacrifices ordained by Scriptural law, the daily sacrifices and the *musaf* sacrifices, with strict attention to detail. In particular, may we be privileged lovingly to offer up the Rosh Chodesh *musaf* sacrifice, as commanded by Scripture and as specifically stated in Your

וּבְרָאשֵׁי חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם תִּקְרִיבוּ עֹלָה לַיהוָה, פָּרִים בְּגִי בָקָר
שְׁנָיִם, וְאַיִל אֶחָד, כִּבְשִׂים בְּגִי שְׁנֵה שְׁבַעַה תְּמִימִם.
וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם כַּמִּדָּבָר, שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרוֹנִים לֶפֶר,
וּשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרוֹנִים לְאַיִל, וְעֶשְׂרוֹן לִכְבֹּשׁ, וַיִּזֶן כְּנֶסֶף, וְשָׁעִיר
לְכַפֵּר, וּשְׁנֵי תְּמִידִים כַּהֲלָכָתָם.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, חֲדָשׁ עָלֵינוּ אֶת
הַחֲדָשׁ הַזֶּה לְטוֹבָה וְלִבְרָכָה, לְשִׁשּׁוֹן
וְלִשְׁמִיחָה, לִישׁוּעָה וְלִנְחֻמָּה, לְפִרְנָסָה
וְלִכְלָפָלָה, לְחַיִּים וְלִשְׁלוֹם, לְמַחֲיִלַת חֵטָא
וְלִסְלִיחַת עֲוֹן...

In a thirteen-month year, add: וּלְכַפֵּרֶת פָּשַׁע

...כִּי בַעֲמֻד יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲרֹת מִכָּל הָאֲמוֹת,
וְחֻקֵּי רָאשֵׁי חֲדָשִׁים לָהֶם קִבְעֵת. בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְקַדֵּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְרָאשֵׁי חֲדָשִׁים.

רִצָּה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, בַּעֲמֻד יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִתְפִלָּתָם,
וְהָשִׁב אֶת הָעֲבוּדָה לְדָבִיר בֵּיתָךְ, וְאֲשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּתְפִלָּתָם בְּאַהֲבָה תִּקְבֹּל בְּרָצוֹן, וְתִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן
תְּמִיד עֲבוּדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ, וְתַחֲזִיגָה עֵינֵינוּ
בְּשׁוּבָךְ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,
הַמְּחַזֵּיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.

otherwise it has not. Thus two people may have heard (with different results), since one had mental intent and the other did not.

"When Moses held his hands aloft Israel won (the battle), etc. (Exodus 17:11)." Did Moses' hands make or break war? This is to teach that whenever Israel raised their eyes aloft and subjected their heart to their heavenly Parent they would have the advantage, otherwise they would fail. Similarly, you can say the same regarding this passage: "Make yourself a serpent and set it on a pole: every person who was bitten will see it and recuperate (Numbers 21:8)." Can (such) a serpent kill or can (such) a serpent give life? (This is to teach that) whenever Israel raised their eyes aloft and subjected their heart to their heavenly Parent, they were cured. Otherwise, they withered away. A deaf-mute, a mentally-challenged individual and a minor cannot facilitate the public's performance of its duty. The general rule is that anyone who is not himself bound by a (religious) duty cannot facilitate the public's performance of that duty.

Chapter Four

When the festival of Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbat, they would sound (the shofar) in the Temple, but not in the (rest of the) country. When the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted that they should sound (the shofar) in any place where there was a Beth Din. Rabbi Eleazar said that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted (the sounding of the shofar on Shabbat) only in Yavneh. They responded that there was no difference between Yavneh and any other place where there was a Beth Din.

Another matter in which Jerusalem was superior to Yavneh was this: any town that could see (Jerusalem), could hear (its sounds), was proximate (to it) and (from which its inhabitants) could (easily) come (to Jerusalem)—they would sound (there the shofar on Shabbat), but in Yavneh they would sound it only in the presence of the Sanhedrin.

Originally, the lulav would be used in the Temple for (all) seven days, but in the rest of the

country only on one day. After the Temple was destroyed, however, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted that the lulav would be used throughout the country for the seven days of Sukkot as a memorial to the Temple. And (he also instituted) that the use of new grain (i.e., in the post-Temple era) was prohibited each year until after the sixteenth of Nisan, the "Day of Waving" on which the new crop had formerly been formally acknowledged and dedicated in the Temple.

Originally, testimony concerning the new moon was accepted all day long. Once the witnesses came late and the Levites sang the wrong daily psalm, so they instituted that testimony would be accepted only until the afternoon (offering); if witnesses should come forward from the afternoon (offering) onwards, that day and the following day would be observed as holy days. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted that testimony would be accepted throughout the day. Rabbi Joshua ben Korchah said that Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai also instituted that even if the President of the Sanhedrin should be elsewhere, the witnesses should still go to the (regular) meeting place (of the Sanhedrin).

The order of the blessings: he recites Avot, Gevurot and Kedushat Hashem, includes Malchuyot with them and does not sound the shofar. (Then follows) Kedushat Hayom and he sounds the shofar, Zichronot and he sounds the shofar, Shofarot and he sounds the shofar. Then he recites Avodah, Hodaah and Birkat Kohanim. This is the view of Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri. Rabbi Akiba said to him, "If he does not sound the shofar for Malchuyot why does he say it (at all)? Rather, he should recite Avot, Gevurot and Kedushat Hashem, combine Malchuyot with Kedushat Hayom and sound the shofar, Zichronot and sound the shofar, Shofarot and sound the shofar, and then recite Avodah, Hodaah and Birkat Kohanim.

We do not recite less than ten (verses) for Malchuyot, ten for Zichronot and ten for Shofarot. Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri says that if he recites three for all, he has fulfilled the mitzvah. We do not recite verses for Malchuyot and Shofarot that have a negative content. He starts with the Torah

Torah, as transmitted to us through Your servant Moses, who heard it directly from the mouth of God:

"And on Rosh Chodesh you shall offer up an *olah* offering to A : two bulls, a single ram, and seven unblemished yearling lambs." And the grain offerings and libations ordained in Scripture shall be brought as well: three *isaron*-measures for each of the bulls, two *isaron*-measures for the ram and a single *isaron*-measure for each of the lambs, with wine as their attendant libations. And in addition to all that, you are to sacrifice a goat as an atonement offering and the regular two daily *tamid* sacrifices according to the relevant *halachah*.

O God and God of our ancestors, may this new month be a month of happiness and blessing for us, a month of happiness and joy, of salvation and consolation, of industry and prosperity, of life and peace, of forgiven sin and pardoned transgression . . .

In a thirteen month year, add:

and expiated iniquity

. . . for You have chosen Your people Israel from amongst the nations to grant them the laws pertaining to Rosh Chodesh. Blessed are You, A , Sovereign of the universe, God Who sanctifies Israel and the monthly observance of Rosh Chodesh.

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 of prayers of Israel willingly and lovingly, so that the worship of Your people Israel ever finds favor before You.

And 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.

When praying silently, include the following paragraph,
then omit the paragraph that follows.

מוֹדִים

אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהִי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. צוּר חַיֵּינוּ, מָגֵן יִשְׁעֵנוּ,
אַתָּה הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר. נוֹדָה לָךְ וְנִסְפֹּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ
עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בִּידְךָ, וְעַל נִשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ
הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ, וְעַל נְסִיךְ שְׂבָכָל יוֹם עֲמֻנָּה, וְעַל
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שְׂבָכָל עֵת, עָרֵב וּבֹקֶר
וְצַהֲרַיִם. הַטּוֹב, כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ, וְהַמְּרַחֵם,
כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חֲסָדֶיךָ, מֵעוֹלָם קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ.


When the cantor or baal tefillah, repeating the Amidah, intones the paragraph
just above, the congregation recites this paragraph at the same time.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ, שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהִי
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי כָל בָּשָׂר, יוֹצֵרֵנוּ, יוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית.
בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ, עַל
שְׁחִייתֵנוּ וְקִימָתֵנוּ. כֵּן תַּחֲיֵינוּ וְתַקִּימֵנוּ, וְתַאֲסוּךְ
גְּלוּתֵנוּ לְחַצְרוֹת קִדְשֶׁךָ לְשִׁמּוֹר חֻקֶּיךָ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת
רְצוֹנְךָ, וְלַעֲבֹדְךָ בְּלִבָּב שָׁלֵם, עַל שְׂאֵנֵנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַהוֹדָאוֹת.

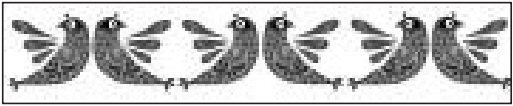
and concludes with the prophets. Rabbi Yossi says that, if he concludes with the Torah, he has fulfilled the mitzvah.

The second prayer leader on festival days (i.e., the leader of the Musaf Service) is the one who orders that the shofar be sounded; but when Hallel is said, it is the first (i.e., the leader of the Morning Service) who leads Hallel.

We do not cross the Shabbat boundary because of the shofar, nor do we remove rubble, climb a tree, ride an animal, or sail on water (to procure a shofar for use on Rosh Hashanah). Nor do we cut it (i.e. remove it from the animal's head)—neither with an implement the use of which would involve an infringement of the shevut laws that govern leisure on the Sabbath nor with one the use of which would involve the infringement of a negative commandment. But if one wants to fill a shofar with water or wine, one may do so. We do not prevent children from sounding it, but, indeed, we supervise them until they have mastered it. One practicing has not fulfilled the mitzvah nor has one listening to another practicing.

The order of the tekiot-blasts is thrice three times three. The length of a tekiah-blast is three times as long as a teruah-blast. The length of a teruah-blast is three times as long as a yebavah (wail). If he (the one sounding the shofar) sounds the first tekiah-blast twice as long as normal (i.e., with the intention that it count as the final tekiah of the first set and also as the opening tekiah of the second), it only counts as one single blast. If someone recited the blessing and only later a shofar came into hand, he should sound tekiah-teruah-tekiah three times. Just as the baal tefillah (that is, the individual leading the community in prayer) has the duty to sound the shofar, so does each individual. Rabban Gamliel says that the baal tefillah can be the congregation's facilitator. 

t



*I*t is commonplace in many synagogues to adorn the space over the Ark of the Law with the words, "Know Before Whom You Stand," the implication being that worshipers, merely by virtue of coming into the sanctuary and standing in that space, have come into God's presence. But is it really so? And what does it mean precisely to stand in God's presence? Is it even possible for human beings, anchored as we all are in three-dimensional space and the inexorable flow of moments from time past to time future, to exist in the same context—let alone in the same space—as God, Who, logic dictates, exists outside both of time and space? Can the word "exist" even rationally be applied both to human beings and God, without the term itself necessarily being deprived of any real meaning? The following lessons attempt to develop a cogent theory of human-divine co-existence in a world that cannot, yet does, contain them both.



If God exists outside of time and space, then how could it ever be possible for any of us actually to speak—except perhaps poetically or symbolically—of standing before God? Must the answer to God's own question, "Who then can stand before Me? (Job 41:2)" be then that no one can? And when the psalmist wrote of his own spiritual yearning, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God / When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:3)", is the honest answer that he never will, just as no one ever will . . . or logically, realistically, ever could? Or is it possible to speak of standing in God's presence without reference to the physics of the world?

It actually is possible to speak seriously and highly realistically about ordinary human beings reasonably hoping to stand before God without requiring some sort of supernatural bending of the time-space continuum. Indeed, it is precisely by refusing to embrace the unlikely notion that the

When praying silently, include the following paragraph, then skip the paragraph that follows.

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 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.

When the cantor or baal tefillah, repeating the Amidah, intones the paragraph just above, the congregation recites this paragraph at the same time.

We affirm our faith in You that You are **A**, our God and the God of our ancestors, the God of all flesh, our Creator, the Creator of the world at its very inception. We offer our blessings and our thanksgiving prayers to Your great and holy name in gratitude for Your gifts of life and sustenance. In so doing, we pray that we continue to enjoy those very gifts of life and sustenance and that You soon see fit to gather together our exiles to the courtyards of Your holy Temple so that all of us may there keep Your laws and do Your holy will, and so that we may worship You with full hearts as an expression of our sense of thanksgiving to You. Blessed be God, to Whom all gratitude is eternally due.

On Rosh Chodesh Tevet, we add this paragraph in honor of Chanukah:

עַל הַנְּסִים, וְעַל הַפְּרָקוֹן, וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת, וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת, וְעַל
הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.
בִּימֵי מַתְתִּיָּהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כִּהְיוֹן גָּדוֹל, חֲשֹׁמוֹנָאִי וּבָנִי, כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה
מַלְכוּת יוֹן הָרָשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁפִּיחַם תּוֹרְתָךְ,
וּלְהַעֲבִירם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנָךְ, וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם
בַּעֲת צָרָתָם, רַבַּת אֶת רִיבָם, דָּגַתְּ אֶת דִּינָם, נִקְמַתְּ אֶת
נִקְמָתָם, מִסִּרְתָּ גְבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים, וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעֻטִּים,
וּטְמֵאִים בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים, וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים, וְזָדִים בְּיַד
עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרָתְךָ. וְלֵךְ עָשִׂיתָ שָׁם גָּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָמְךָ, וְלַעֲמֹךְ
יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפְרָקוֹן כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה. וְאַחֵר כֵּן
בָּאוּ בְּנֵיךְ לְדַבֵּר בִּיתְּךָ, וּפָנּוּ אֶת הַיְכָלְךָ, וְטָהְרוּ אֶת מִקְדָּשְׁךָ,
וְהִדְלִיקוּ גִירוֹת בַּחֲצֵרוֹת קֹדֶשְׁךָ, וְקִבְּעוּ שְׁמוֹנֶת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה אֵלּוּ
לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל.

וְעַל כָּלם יִתְבַּרְךָ וְיִתְרוֹמַם שְׁמֶךָ, מִלְּכָנוּ,
תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. וְכָל הַחַיִּים יוֹדוּךָ
סֶלָה, וְיַהֲלִלוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּאַמֶּת, הָאֵל
יְשׁוּעָתָנוּ וְעֶזְרָתָנוּ סֶלָה. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה,
הַטּוֹב שְׁמֶךָ וְלֵךְ נָא לְהוֹדוֹת.

palpable, real, physically perceptible and interpretable presence of God can only be sensed (let alone felt easily and forcefully) by people capable of convincing themselves that the geometry of the world can be escaped through the sheer force of their own desire, that the possibility of standing before God, paradoxically, becomes real.

Standing before God means allowing oneself to perceive God's presence to function as the perceptible core of moral worth in the world one inhabits. It means discovering the ordering principle that grants meaning to existence itself to be a core of ethical presence capable of governing creation as the Will of the world. It means allowing oneself to be suffused with God's presence in humility and modesty, divested of all shreds of pride and arrogance, proud neither of one's dignity nor one's wealth, without reliance on education or professional status, trembling, fearful, naked, unwilling to assume that a life-time of fulfilled commandments will necessarily count for anything, fully cognizant of the fact that most of the prayers one has recited over and over in the course of a lifetime were more expressions of one's personal desires than anything like pure supplication before God. It means perceiving the God before whom one stands in prayer for the briefest of moments as the Almighty actually does exist in the world divested, for once, of the triple cloak of impenetrable symbol, inscrutable myth, and unlikely metaphor. And, finally, it also means accepting that, for all it is almost impossible to attain, the experience of standing before God totally as oneself is the first step any individual can take towards holiness and that taking this step itself is the fulfillment of a commandment, as the Bible says, "You shall be holy, for I, א, your God, am holy (Leviticus 19:2)."

Inevitably, all this must be layered over the obvious fact that, realistically speaking, no one who cannot think about God without hiding behind a protective barrier of language or symbol will ever be able truly to stand before God . . . and this is the truth the Bible imparts when it tells how, in the end, Elijah the Prophet could only perceive God's presence in a voice of thin silence, as it is

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written, "And it came to pass when Elijah heard the voice of thin silence that he covered his face with his cloak and went out of the cave and stood at its mouth . . . and it was then that he heard a voice (1 Kings 19:13)"—which is to say: a voice from silence, existence from nothingness, faith from the sudden realization that existence and non-existence constantly meet and then instantly diverge in a swirling vortex of divine presence that itself exists in a world that cannot possibly contain even the least significant aspect of divine reality at the same time that perceiving it—for the briefest of moments—means, by definition, taking a first step towards standing before God.



Although Scripture teaches that God exists outside the context of space and location and is therefore neither nowhere nor everywhere (in that neither term makes any sense when applied to God), it is—paradoxically—nonetheless perfectly possible to turn away from God . . . and this is true regardless of the specific direction one is facing with respect to the things of the physical world at the time one turns away. For example, it has been the custom of Jews from time immemorial to face Jerusalem during prayer and for Jews living west of Israel, this has meant facing east. Yet the one descriptive passage in the Bible that actually describes people facing east during prayer does so only to damn them, as the prophet Ezekiel wrote: "And God took me to the inner court of the House of Δ and, behold, at the gateway to the Temple of Δ , there were about twenty-five men between the portico and the altar, each with his back to the temple of Δ and his face towards the east . . . and they were prostrating themselves eastwards towards the sun (Ezekiel 8:16)." In other words, the prophet could not have been less impressed by the fact that they were facing east to recite their prayers not because that is not the ancient custom, but because doing so required the pray-ers to turn their backs on God.

Who these people really were, we can have no idea. But they serve collectively as the para-

On Rosh Chodesh Tevet, we add this paragraph in honor of Chanukah:

We are grateful for the miracles, for the victory, for the acts of might, for the military triumphs and the victories 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 on this very day 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, Δ , Whose name is goodness itself and Who is thus wholly deserving of all gratitude.

When repeating the Amidah, the cantor or baal tefillah
adds this version of the Priestly Benediction:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, בְּרַכְנוּ בְּבִרְכַּת הַמְּשַׁלֶּשֶׁת בַּתּוֹרָה
הַפְּתוּבָה עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה עֲבָדְךָ, הָאֲמוּרָה מִפִּי אֲהֲרֹן וּבְנָיו

כֹּהֲנִים

עִם קְדוֹשְׁךָ, כְּאֲמוּרָה:

יְבָרְכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרְךָ.

The congregation responds:

כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

יֵאָר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחַנֶּנְךָ.

The congregation responds:

כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ
וְיִשֵּׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

The congregation responds:

כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן.

digm of human beings so intricately involved in the minutiae of Scriptural law that they forget that the goal of all that scrupulousness is not to do this or that thing, but to seek out, and then to face towards, then to stand in, the perceptible presence of the ever-living God.

And why do people find this truth so difficult to seize? Partially, it is due to a certain inability to come to God in fear and trembling. But there is also the matter of the arrogance and false sense of superiority that come from the strange feeling so many people have that the worship of God is a kind of hide-and-go-seek game in which human being and God take turns hiding from each other . . . and that God delights in having to search out worshipers who will respond to the call of prayer and ritual. Regarding this situation, however, the prophet wrote in the name of God, "I spread out My arms all day to a rebellious people intent on walking in the way of evil after their own thoughts. This people angers me intensely (Isaiah 65:2-3)."



It is essential for all who embark on the spiritual journey to God to understand that the point is not to stand before God now and then or whenever the spirit moves . . . but always and permanently. But how, precisely, does one exist permanently in the presence of the Almighty? The concept itself is one of the great challenges Scripture places before the faithful and, although it feels as though the goal of standing permanently before God should be addressed after the lesser goal of standing even momentarily in the presence of God is attained, the reality is that it is actually the concept of existing permanently imbued with a palpable, empirically real sense of God's presence that is the definition of what it means, ultimately, to stand in God's presence at all.

Understanding the point of there being negative commandments in the Torah is essential in this regard—even more so, perhaps, than the positive ones—because they have the peculiar characteristic of permanence: since people who take to heart any of the negative commandments

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are in a constant state of not doing some specific thing, they can reasonably be said to be in a state of permanent observance as they perpetually refrain from doing that which the commandment forbids. It is to this concept of permanent observance through non-activity that the Bible refers when it declares, "Happy is one who is in a constant state of fear (Proverbs 28:14)"—that the individual who seeks joy in God will constantly fear stumbling from the path of righteousness and obedient goodness when succumbing to the temptation to do one or another of the things Scripture expressly forbids that the pious do.

Indeed, when Scripture speaks of hoping for God permanently, as at Hosea 12:7—or of holding the concept of divine presence within the perimeters of one's personal ambit permanently, as in the famous verse from the sixteenth psalm, "I see Δ before me always (Psalm 16:8)"—the point is specifically that people who devote themselves to the search for God must force themselves to aspire to a sense of the ongoing, palpable, verifiable presence of the Almighty in their personal lives not (merely) as a philosophic principle or (a bit dismissively) as a lofty, poetic idea, but rather as a perceptible presence no less real than any other aspect of an individual's ongoing reality. This is what it means, ultimately (if elusively), to stand in the presence of God.

When, for further example, the poet wrote "Seek always the face of Δ (Psalm 105:4)," the implication is that those who would succeed in finding God in the world cannot expend energy on their quest merely from time to time, but must also seek a way to infuse a sense of ongoing permanence to their spiritual endeavors. They must labor to create the sense inside themselves that they are not occasional tourists in a land not their own, but pilgrims moving ever forward towards their private Jerusalems possessed of the conviction that they can never hope to reach their destinations by devoting themselves occasionally to the journey. And that is why, in the real world of men and women devoted to the great goal of feeling themselves to be standing permanently in the presence of God, there is such special importance

When repeating the Amidah, the cantor or baal tefillah adds this version of the Priestly Benediction:

Our God and God of our ancestors, bless us with the blessing recorded in the Torah as having been taught by Moses, Your servant, to Aaron and his sons, the priests of Your holy people, so that they bless the people using these words:

May Δ bless you
and guard you.

The congregation responds:
So may it be Your will.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

May Δ shine the light of the
divine countenance upon you
and be gracious unto you.

The congregation responds:
So may it be Your will.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

May Δ lift up the divine
countenance toward you
and grant you peace.

The congregation responds:
So may it be Your will.

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם, טוֹבָה וּבִרְכָּה, חֵן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים, עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֻדָּה. בִּרְכָנוּ, אֲבִינוּ, כְּלָנוּ כְּאֶחָד בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּה,
כִּי בְּאוֹר פְּנִיָּה נִתְּתָה לָנוּ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת
חֶסֶד, וְצִדְקָה וּבִרְכָּה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם, וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ
לְבַרְךָ אֶת עֲמֻדָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יֵת וּבְכָל שְׁעָה בְּשְׁלוֹמָהּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמְּבַרֵּךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשְׁלוֹם.

*Here ends the public repetition of the Amidah by the cantor or baal tefillah.
The service continues with the Full Kaddish on page 162.
Silent worshippers continue below.*

The Prayer of Mar, son of Rabina

אֱלֹהֵי, נִצּוֹר לְשׁוֹנֵי מִרְעָה, וּשְׁפָתֵי מְדַבֵּר מִרְמָה, וְלִמְקַלְלֵי בִפְשִׁי
תְּדוּם, וְנִפְשִׁי כְּעֶפֶר לְכָל תְּהִיָּה. פָּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
תִּרְדּוּךָ נִפְשִׁי. וְכָל הַחוֹשְׁבִּים עָלַי רָעָה, מִהֲרָה הֶפֶר עֲצָתָם וְקַלְקַל
מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם. עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן שְׁמֶךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן יְמִינְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן
קִדְשִׁתְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לִמְעַן תּוֹרָתְךָ. לִמְעַן יִחַלְצוּן יִדְיָךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ
וְעֲנֵנִי. יִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.
עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה 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, שְׂיִבְנָה בֵּית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ, וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתְךָ. וְשֵׁם גִּבּוֹרְךָ
בִּירְאָה, כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכִשְׁנֵי קַדְמוֹנוֹת. וְעֲרָבָה לִיהוָה מִנְּחַת
יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וְכִשְׁנֵי קַדְמוֹנוֹת.

*The silent recitation of the Amidah ends here. In the presence of a minyan,
the cantor or baal tefillah now repeats the Amidah aloud.
Absent a minyan, private worshippers continue with Aleinu on page 164.*

to the careful observance of the negative commandments: insofar as they are fulfilled by refraining from doing some specific thing and not by any specific action or activity, the faithful who keep those specific commandments are doing so every single moment of their lives.

It is profoundly easier for most people to feel a surge of divine reality at the so-called high points of the religious year—when the shofar is sounded at the end of the Day of Atonement, for example—but probably more useful in the long run is to cultivate the kind of inner certainty regarding God's presence in the world that comes when worshipers come to think of themselves as existing in a state of permanent obedience to scores of divine commandments at the same time. The theory is simple to seize . . . but, as always, the question is not whether one can seize it, but whether one can do it.

The ancient rabbis expressed this truth mythologically as well when they noted that, despite what must have been enormous logistical difficulties, the fire burning atop the great altar constructed as part of the desert sanctuary was kept burning even as the Israelites traveled from place to place. Thus, even when the normal sacrifices and libations were necessarily suspended, the fire burnt continually as a sign that those who seek to stand before God cannot accept not to be journeying forward towards the divine presence even when it is not actually possible, for some entirely legitimate reason, to be performing some ritual physically . . . or to be doing anything at all.




All people, no matter how willing they might be to proclaim the reality of God's presence in the world loudly and unequivocally, stand before God as lost lambs wandering aimlessly in a world that, by its very nature, threatens to overwhelm them at any given moment with an endless series of tidal waves of existential doubt and worry. This point is made explicit in Scripture at the very end of the Bible's longest chapter when the poet writes explicitly "I wander about like a lost lamb (Psalm 119:176)," thus echoing Jeremiah's description of

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Israel itself as a lamb wandering about aimlessly and defenselessly in the world. According to this specific poetic image, God is the divine Shepherd concerned solely and totally with the welfare of those sheep content in the care of the divine and this is the simple meaning of the most famous of all verses from the Psalms, "I want for nothing, for A is my shepherd (Psalm 23:1)." But famous though the twenty-third psalm may be, the idea that the relationship of the individual before God and the Almighty is similar to the one that pertains between shepherd and lamb is not unique to that passage and the author of the eightieth psalm had the same image in mind when he wrote "O Shepherd of Israel, give ear! O God enthroned upon the cherubim Who leads forth Joseph like a shepherd might a flock of sheep, appear! (Psalm 80:2)."



If the commandments of Scripture exist to assist individuals who wish to stand before God always, even in the context of the most mundane of daily tasks and chores, then it has to be specifically from within the context of willing, uncomplaining obedience to those commandments that the benefit must derive. And so it is: within the Scriptural world view, individuals indicate their willingness to serve God precisely by behaving like disciplined sheep prepared to place their confidence in the shepherd, to follow the rules of the pasture and the corral to which their shepherd leads them and, most challengingly for a sheep with a simple ovine brain, to accept as rational and reasonable the absolute way in which the shepherd rules over the flock faithfully and responsibly. The nature of the sheep's brain is actually part of the point: sheep may not be particularly bright, but even the occasional sheep that does possess sufficient insight to realize that sheep, as a class, lack sufficient cognitive skill to understand the point of the shepherd's many rules—even that sheep can still accept (and accept fully and without ambivalence) that the shepherd that controls his flock is just and good . . . and wholly dedicated to his wellbeing. . . . 

Grant peace, goodness, blessing, grace, mercy and compassion to us and to all Your people Israel. Bless us all together, O holy Parent, with the radiance of Your countenance, for in that holy light did You, A our God, give us the Torah of life and instill in us the love of mercy, righteousness, blessing, compassion, life and peace. It is good in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel at all times, at every hour of every day, with Your peace.

Blessed are You, A , Who will always bless the people Israel with peace.

Here ends the public repetition of the Amidah by the cantor or baal tefillah.

The service continues with the Full Kaddish on page 163.

Silent worshipers continue below.

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.

The silent recitation of the Amidah ends here. In the presence of a minyan, the cantor or baal tefillah now repeats the Amidah aloud. Absent a minyan, private worshipers continue with Aleinu on page 165.

The Full Kaddish

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא
כְּרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּתַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזִמּוֹן קָרִיב,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

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

יְהִיא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.

The cantor or baal tefillah continues:

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

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעָלְמָא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעָלְמָא לְעָלְמָא מְכָל


בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא, דְּאָמִירוֹן
בְּעָלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

תְּתַקַּבֵּל צְלוֹתְהוֹן וּבְעוֹתְהוֹן דְּכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
קִדָּם אֲבוּהוֹן דִּי בְּשַׁמְיָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

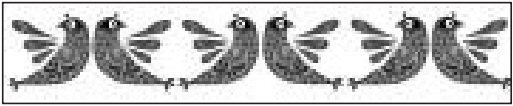
יְהִיא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמֵיָא, וְחַיִּים, עָלֵינוּ וְעַל
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

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

say to their husbands: 'Look into the mirror, I am much more beautiful than thou,' and in this way passion seized the men so that they forgot their cares and united themselves with their wives, who thereupon brought many children into the world. Take now these mirrors and fashion out of them the laver that contains the water for the sanctifying of the kohanim." Furthermore, out of this laver was fetched the water that a woman suspected of adultery had to drink to prove her innocence. As formerly the mirrors had been used to kindle conjugal affection, so out of them was made the vessel for the water that was to restore broken peace between husband and wife.

When Moses, upon God's command, made known to the people that whosoever was of a willing heart, man or woman, might bring an offering, the zeal of the women was so great, that they thrust away the men and crowded forward with their gifts, so that in two days all that was needful for the construction of the Tabernacle was in Moses' hands. The princes of the tribes came almost too late with their contributions and at the last moment, they brought the precious stones for the garments of Aaron that they might not be entirely unrepresented in the sanctuary. But God took their delay amiss, and for this reason they later sought to be the first to offer up sacrifices in the sanctuary. After everything had been provided for the construction of the Tabernacle, Bezalel set to work with the devotion of his whole soul, and as a reward for this, the Holy Scriptures speak of him only as the constructor of the sanctuary, although many others stood by him in this labor. He began his work by fashioning the boards, then attended to the overlaying of them, and when he had completed these things, he set to work to prepare the curtains, then completed the Ark with the penance-cover belonging to it, and finally the table for the showbread, and the candelabrum. 

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T*o know if a machine works, one must first know what it is supposed to do . . . and the same is true of the mechanics of spirituality: adequately to evaluate one's progress on the great journey to God one must know what precisely one expects to acquire for one's efforts . . . and to develop a reasonable sense of what it means to undertake such a journey in the first place. In the following lessons, readers are challenged to consider questions most of the faithful prefer to leave unasked, hence unanswered, at least most of the time. But as the morning service draws to a close, the time has come to begin to consider what one has accomplished by asking what, precisely, it was one expected or hoped to accomplish by approaching God through the medium of ritual, commandment and prayer.*



God can be called many things—the world beyond the world, the core and perimeter of existence, the heart and soul of being, the quintessence of love, the moral center of the universe, the great and never-ending source of law, the effulgent unity of opposites, the One, the Name . . . to say only the ones that come most readily to mind—but for those who yearn for God with purity of heart and intensity of spirit, it is as the fulcrum of insoluble paradox and un-unravelable riddle that the Almighty will be the most familiar. Acting as the possibility of impossibility in a world that both apparently can and also absolutely cannot contain even the least consequential aspect of divine being, God presents the faithful—or, rather, the would-be faithful—with the prospect of finding the deepest level of existence—God—by undertaking a journey that may not exist to a goal that does not exist along a trajectory that cannot exist to a level of faith that can only be embraced by accepting—and by accepting wholeheartedly and without reservation—the great secret of human existence, that arcane ambiguity that the

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.

עֲלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לְאֲדוֹן הַכֹּל, לְתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית,
שֶׁלֹא עֲשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת, וְלֹא שָׁמְנוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה,
שֶׁלֹא שָׁם חִלְקֵנוּ כָּהֵם, וְגִרְלָנוּ כָּכָל הַמוֹנָם,

וְאַנְחֵנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים לְפָנֵי
מֶלֶךְ, מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא,
שֶׁהוּא נוֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם וְיִסֵּד אֶרֶץ, וּמוֹשֵׁב יִקְרוּ בַּשָּׁמַיִם
מִמַּעַל, וְשֹׁכֵנֵת עֵזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים. הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֵין
עוֹד, אֱמֶת מִלְכָּנוּ, אָפֶס זִוְלָתוֹ, כְּפֶתִיב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ: וַיִּדְעַת
הַיּוֹם וַהֲשִׁבַת אֶל לִבָּהּ, כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם
מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת, אֵין עוֹד.

עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָךְ, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְרֹאוֹת מִהֲרָה בְּתַפִּילָּת
עַמֶּךָ, לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהָאֱלִילִים כְּרוֹת יִפְרִתוּן,
לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שִׁדְי וְכָל בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ,
לְהַפְּנוֹת אֱלִיךָ כָּל רִשְׁעֵי אֶרֶץ, יִפְּרוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי
תֵּבֵל, כִּי לָךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרָךְ, תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לָשׁוֹן. לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכָּרְעוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ, וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקָּר יִתְּנוּ. וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָּל־
אֶת עוֹל מַלְכוּתְךָ, וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מִהֲרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי
הַמַּלְכוּת שֶׁלָּךְ הִיא, וְלְעוֹלָמִי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד, כְּפֶתִיב
בְּתוֹרָתְךָ: יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְנֶאֱמַר: וַהֲיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ,
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה אֶחָד, וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד.



Zohar calls the *raza demehemnuta*, the mystery of faith: that although God may not be known, the love of God somehow remains possible.

This great goal is called cleaving unto God, but, like all terms conceived within the framework of purely symbolic language, it merely points at, without actually referring to (let alone delineating clearly) that which it is supposed to denote. But because all roads to God lead through this crux of meaning and the impossibility of meaning, the human soul seeking to cleave unto God may do so most effectively along the landscape of symbolism and myth. Because, for example, God is the heart of existence, faith may be sought within the chambers of the human heart . . . and through the promulgation of kindness and the pursuit of love. Because God is the moral ground of being, faith may be sought through the informed contemplation of the world . . . and through the establishment of an ethical society devoted to divine values. Because God is the mind of the universe, faith may be sought within the labyrinthine matrices of intelligence and creativity of the human brain . . . and through the informed manipulation of the intellect through textual study, meditative exercise and mindful, contemplative prayer.

All of these avenues are real paths that a human being may wander towards faith despite the fact that none of them actually exists or could actually exist. The journey out is the journey in. Searching is finding. Despair is hope. Impossibility is possibility. Is is not. Embracing paradox is the resolution of paradox. And so, the great goal of cleaving unto God—of embracing faith in God and the love of God within the context of palpable reality without becoming crippled by the seductive power of delusion and self-serving fantasy—is both possible and impossible, the latter because it must be and the former, because, somehow, it is.

The possibility of cleaving unto God in a relationship of life-long intimacy is precisely the same for men and women, and this is the meaning of the verse, "On the day God created humanity, God

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fashioned it in the divine image, creating both men and women (Genesis 5:1–2)—that is to say: the physical differences between women and men are incidental to the spiritual equality described in the language of Scripture with reference to their common origin in God and their common creation in the form and shape of the Almighty. Therefore, any who claim that the will of women to serve God is less capable than the analogous will of men to find spiritual expression through the performance of the commandments, through prayer and through the study of Torah—and, especially, any who would attempt to justify such a claim with reference to the norms of public worship that have come down to us through the generations—such people are guilty of denying the fact that the common origin of men and women is in God and that their common origin points ineluctably to a common destiny as well.



For many people, it is helpful to conceptualize the life-long search for communion with the divine as a kind of journey towards God. And indeed, other than physical reality, growth towards God has many of the trappings of a journey undertaken from one place to another and thinking of one's spiritual life in those terms can be useful . . . provided one bears several fundamental truths in mind every step of the way. Of these, the most important is that the journey has neither trajectory nor itinerary, neither beginning nor end. Therefore, the traveler does not actually move from one place to another in the course of his travels. Nor does the destination exist at all in any but the most extended sense of the word possible.

It is not possible to describe this journey in any human language. Therefore, people who sell guidebooks full of words to those seeking to undertake this journey without mentioning that their books are works of poetry, myth, fable, metaphor and symbol are, by definition, attempting to convince people that they can describe that which is by definition indescribable, even ineffable . . . and surely far beyond the reach of even the

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, and 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, and 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 is written in the book of Your prophet, "And it shall come to pass that A will be Sovereign over all 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 בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא
בְּרֵעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּתֵיכּוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכּוֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֻגְלָא וּבְזִמּוֹן קָרִיב,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

The congregation joins the mourners in reciting this line.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלָם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵיָא.

The mourners continue:

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

Except between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעָלָא מִן כָּל

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, say:

לְעָלָא לְעָלָא מְכַל

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא, דְּאָמְרוּ
בְּעֻלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

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

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

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

most eloquent human speaker. It is, of course, possible to move forward towards a life in God, but only on the condition that the would-be traveler constantly recall that the intellectual concept of God as a physically existent destination one might reach by undertaking an arduous journey from where one is to where one wishes to go is utterly misleading. In turn, this is the meaning of the rabbinic adage to the effect that God is the Place of the world, even though the world is not the place of God.



The journey to God may be undertaken successfully only by someone so utterly and deeply possessed of absolute intellectual integrity and spiritual honesty that even the slightest hint of self-deception becomes an impassable road block that makes it absolutely impossible for that individual to continue on towards the kind of psychic assimilation into the divine that is the goal of all focused religious endeavor. Therefore, all who would step outside of time to take their places among the others gathered at Sinai must first accept—and accept absolutely and totally—that even casual lies about God have the power to derail the course of long years dedicated to the performance of ritual and rite and to distance those who tell them from God.



The religious life is an old hut that has undergone so many different repairs over the millennia that the original building has actually vanished entirely. That there originally was a building—the original structure to which all the repairs were done—seems impossible to doubt. And that God was the Maker of this original structure is the basic principle of faith. The secret of living a life struggling towards communion with God is therefore embedded in the ability an individual may cultivate to live in this tottering hut without succumbing to depression or worry for as long as it takes to seek in it a God Who can only be known through the medium of symbol and allusion . . . and through the focused contem-

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plation of the mysterious way the various pieces and parts of the universe can all be interpreted in a thousand different ways as being expressive of their Creator's nature. All this creates a situation in which the performance of even the least significant commandment of Scripture has the ability to become either an expression of deep-seated and profound nobility or an exercise in self-delusion. The job of the faithful, therefore, is to tip the balance towards nobility through the sheer force of their focused will.



God is every thing and no thing, in every place without exception and in no place that exists according to the physics of the world. God belongs to the world and is other than the world . . . and is, by definition, the definition of absolute existence that does not exist at all or, more precisely, that cannot exist without that declaration of existence impacting fatally on the inner nature of divine reality. The search for God is founded on another insoluble paradox as well: the truly righteous in the world hear God speaking to them by listening to the soundless voice of the living God they know they know and they know they do not—and will not ever—know and attempt, in so doing, to gaze upon the divine face—as it is written, “Justified finally, I shall gaze on Your face (Psalm 17:16)”—at the same time they accept—and accept totally and without reservation—that it is impossible to see the face of God and survive the experience, as it is written, “You will be unable to see My face, for no one can see My face and live (Exodus 33:20).”

The author of the 119th psalm expressed the same truth when he wrote of himself, “I have sought You with all my heart (Psalm 119:10)” thus presenting the totality of his credo in three simple Hebrew words and challenging his readers to follow his exalted lead to undertake a journey to heaven by burrowing as deeply as possible in the inmost chambers of a heart that contains and cannot possibly contain a glimmer of the perceptible spark of divinity the universe both contains and

*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.*


*Psalm 24: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Sundays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן בַּשָּׁבָת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְלוֹת אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר, לַיהוָה הָאָרֶץ וּמִלּוֹאָהּ, תִּבֶּל וַיֵּשְׁבִי בָּהּ. כִּי הוּא עַל
יַמִּים יִסְדָּהּ, וְעַל נְהָרוֹת יִכּוֹנְנֶנָּה. מִי יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר יְהוָה, וּמִי יָקוּם
בַּמָּקוֹם קָדְשׁוֹ. נָקִי כַפַּיִם וְבַר לֵבָב, אֲשֶׁר לֹא נָשָׂא לִשְׂוֹא נִפְשִׁי,
וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמַרְמָה. יֵשֵׁא בִרְכָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה, וַיִּצְדָּקָה מֵאַלְהֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל. זֶה דוֹר דִּרְשָׁיו, מִבְּקִשֵׁי פִגְיָה יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה. שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים
רְאשֵׁיכֶם, וְהַנְּשֹׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם, וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד. מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ
הַכְּבוֹד, יְהוָה עֲזִז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה גִּבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה.  שְׂאוּ
שְׁעָרִים רְאשֵׁיכֶם, וּשְׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם, וַיָּבֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד. מִי
הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה.

*Psalm 48: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Mondays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם שְׁנֵי בַשָּׁבָת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְלוֹת אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְבִנְי קִנְחָה. גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמִהֲלָל מְאֹד, בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ
הַר קָדְשׁוֹ. יִפָּה נוֹף מְשׁוֹשׁ כָּל הָאָרֶץ, הַר צִיּוֹן יִרְפָּתִי צִפּוֹן,
קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ רַב. אֱלֹהִים בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ נוֹדַע לְמִשְׁגָּב. כִּי הִנֵּה
הַמַּלְכִּים נוֹעְדוּ, עָבְרוּ יַחְדָּו. הִמָּה רָאוּ כֹן תַּמְהוֹ, גִּבְהָלוֹ, נִחְפְּזוּ.
רָעְדָה אַחֲזָתָם שָׁם, חֵיל פִּיּוֹלָדָה. בְּרוּחַ קָדִים תִּשְׁבֵּר אֲנִיּוֹת
תִּרְשִׁישׁ. כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ, כֹּן רָאִינוּ בְּעִיר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, בְּעִיר
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֱלֹהִים יִכּוֹנְנֶנָּה עַד עוֹלָם, סֵלָה. דְּמִינוּ אֱלֹהִים חֲסִדָּךְ
בְּקֶרֶב הַיִּכְלָךְ. כְּשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כֹּן תִּהְלֶתְךָ עַל קַצְוֵי אֶרֶץ,
צִדֵּק מְלָאָה יְמִינֶךָ. יִשְׁמַח הַר צִיּוֹן, תִּגְלָלָהּ בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה,
לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ. סָבוּ צִיּוֹן וְתִקְיָפוּהָ, סִפְרוּ מַגְדָּלֶיהָ. שִׁיתוּ
לְבָבָם לַחִילָה פִּסְגֵי אֲרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ, לְמַעַן תִּסְפְּרוּ לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן.
כִּי זֶה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹלָם וָעֶד, הוּא יִנְהַגְנוּ עַל מוֹת. 

cannot possibly hold, and which must be and cannot be part of God.



The Jewish road towards a life in God is paved with commandments, but these commandments are neither magic rituals that have the power to force God's blessings nor superstitious rites that have any effect of any sort other than the one they have on the soul of worshipers seeking to elevate their souls to a state of ongoing communion with the divine. This lesson is at the core of the Biblical injunction to know God through divine service and, indeed, when the Bible defines the Israelites as those who manage to cleave unto God in their lifetimes at Deuteronomy 4:4, the very next verse reads, "Behold, I have taught you (My) laws and statutes" in order to make the point that much more clear than it might otherwise have been.



The performance of the commandments is intended to serve as a kind of spiritual exercise capable of making the heart wide enough to contain some immeasurably small spark of the divine spirit. Indeed, it is precisely this experience of opening up the inmost chambers of the secret heart to the palpable, dynamic presence of God that defines the experience of cleaving unto God and makes of it the great and noble goal of all human spiritual endeavor.

This point permeates Biblical thinking about God, even when it is not made explicit. For example, consider two adjacent verses in the 119th psalm. In the first, the poet writes of himself and says "I have cleaved (i.e. unto You), O A, through (the helpful agency of) Your testimonies; cause me (therefore) not to feel shame (Psalm 119:31)." And the verse that follows explains even more precisely what idea the psalmist is hoping to inspire in the hearts of his readers: "I an running (towards You) along the path of Your commandments . . . (and I will succeed if) You widen my heart (sufficiently; Psalm 119:32)." By this juxta-

position of ideas, the poet means to say that spiritual and intellectual communion with God comes to an individual as a function of the degree to which that person is dedicated to the performance of the commandments, for it is the poet's sense that they alone possess sufficient spiritual force to widen the human heart to the degree necessary for it to accept within its chambers the real, palpable presence of God. Historically speaking, this is the reason Jews have traditionally sought to cleave unto God by cleaving first unto the commandments of the Torah and why they have allowed themselves to refer to those commandments liturgically as "their lives and the length of their days"—not because it is literally so, but because they possess the capability of leading mortals to a life in God, Who is the Life of the universe and the Author of its days.



The ancients attempted to describe the great goal of all ritual activity along all sorts of mythic and poetic lines. Among the most famous of these is the attempt on the part of some authors to describe this experience of willing one's heart open to the presence of God as a kind of surgical operation designed actually to make visible and physically to widen the chambers of the human heart . . . as though the whole difficulty in cleaving unto God might literally be that the chambers of an individual's heart are simply be too narrow to accommodate the divine spirit. Indeed, the addition to the daily prayer service attributed to Mar son of Rabi-na—words the pious even today recite three times daily—to the effect that what honest supplicants truly need from God is that the chambers of their hearts be made wide open to the Torah so that their souls might more actively pursue the performance of the commandments is merely the translation of this idea into the language of prayer.

In Biblical times, the notion that all who would cleave unto God must first physically open the chambers of their hearts to the divine spirit was referred to as the circumcision of the heart and so do we read explicitly in Deuteronomy: "And you

Psalm 24: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times on Sundays in the Temple

A psalm of David.

The world and its fullness, the earth and its inhabitants—everything belongs to A , Who laid its foundation upon the seas and set it firm upon its many rivers. Who may go up onto the mountain of A ? And who may stand in that holy place? One who has clean hands and a pure heart, one who has never falsely taken a vow by his life nor sworn a duplicitous oath—that person will receive a blessing from A , a righteous blessing from the God of salvation. This is the generation of those who seek God, who seek Your face in the style of Jacob, *selah*.

Lift up your heads, O gates. Lift yourselves up, O portals of eternity, so that our glorious Sovereign may enter. And just who is our glorious Sovereign? A , valiant and triumphant, A , triumphant in battle.




Lift up your heads, O gates. Lift up your heads, O portals of eternity, so that our glorious Sovereign may enter. And just who is our glorious Sovereign?

A , God of all heavens, is our glorious Sovereign, *selah*.


Psalm 48: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times on Mondays in the Temple

A psalm-song of the sons of Korach. Great is A and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, home of God's holy mountain. Its lovely landscape the delight of all the earth, Mount Zion lies at the extreme northern point of the city of our great king; in its palaces, God is known to maintain a stronghold. For here did kings gather, meeting together in council; once gathered, they looked around and were duly amazed. They were in awe, overwhelmed. A trembling took hold of them there akin to the shuddering of a woman in labor; with an easterly breeze, You foundered the ships of Tarshish. And just as we had heard would happen, so did we see things actually unfold in the city of A , God of all heavens, in the city of our God established by God forever, *selah*.

We imagined Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your palace, for the praise due to You, like Your name, reaches to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is filled with justice. Let Mount Zion rejoice; let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your laws. Surround Zion and encompass it, then count its towers; turn your attention to its ramparts, then climb up to its palaces so that you can tell of them to the next generation.  For this is God, our God forever and always whose leadership makes it possible for us to transcend death.

*Psalm 82: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Tuesdays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי בַשָּׁבָת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּת, אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת
אֵל, בְּקָרֵב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט. עַד מָתִי
תִשְׁפֹּטוּ עוֹלָם, וּפָנִי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׁאוּ
סֵלָה. שְׁפֹטוּ דָל וְיִתּוֹם, עָנִי וְרֹשׁ
הַצְדִּיקוּ. פִּלְטוּ דָל וְאַבְיוֹן, מִיַּד
רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ. לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יִבְיִנוּ,
בַּחֲשֵׁכָה יִתְהַלְכוּ, יִמּוּטוּ כָּל מוֹסְדֵי
אָרֶץ. אֲנִי אֶמְרָתִי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם,
וּבְנֵי עֲלִיוֹן כָּלְכֶם. אֲכֹן כְּאָדָם
תִּמְוֹתוֹן, וּכְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפְּלוּ.
קוֹמָה אֱלֹהִים שִׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ, 
כִּי אַתָּה תִּנְחַל בְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם.

shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart (Deuteronomy 10:16). The ancients, of course, did not imagine that there really was some sort of membrane that covered the human heart and made it impossible for the divine spirit to enter into its chambers. Rather, this is merely a poetic way of saying that the whole effort of spirituality and religion in the world—the sole legitimate goal of worship and of spiritual enterprise divested of arrogance and the hope for personal gain—is the slow experience of making wide the human heart and, in so doing, to prepare it for the entry of the spirit of the living God, that spark of divine reality to which the human soul may cleave . . . when it is present in the physical space in which that human being lives and works, and not merely present within the confines of that individual's intellect as a lofty idea or philosophical construct.



The notion that mortal individuals can move towards attaining the great goal of integrating their spiritual selves—their souls—into God by observing even those commandments of the Torah that regulate behavior between human beings is a cornerstone of Biblical faith and one of the cardinal foundation stones of modern Judaism. This is what the poets call the integration of the inner and outer self in God and what the mystics referred to as cleaving unto God. For most of us, the first step towards that great goal is taken by turning to face an individual in the world other than ourselves and acknowledging that that person too is created in image of God, then relating to that individual in a way that reflects the implications of that specific aspect of his or her reality.

This is especially challenging when the people who cross our paths are not those the most obviously endowed with qualities reminiscent of God's grandeur or power on earth. It is not particularly taxing, after all, to find traces of the Almighty in the physical presence of the strong and powerful on earth, just as it is relatively simple to find traces of God in the guise of divine Judge present in the physical presence of human judges as they preside

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over their courtrooms and pass judgment on people indicted of heinous crimes. It is far less simple, however, to find the image of God stamped on poverty-stricken individuals struggling to keep from drowning in the circumstances of their own lives . . . and it is precisely for this reason that the Torah presents such a large number of commandments rooted in the idea that it is an act of divine worship—and not merely one of natural kindness—to lift the indigent up out of poverty and to refuse to stop up one's ears to the cries of the needy. Indeed, when the Bible declares that "one who stops up his ears to the cries of the needy will himself not be answered when he cries out in need (Proverbs 21:13)," the meaning is simply that just as one has the ability to help or to refuse to help those in one's vicinity who are needy in comparison to oneself, so are all people needy and indigent in comparison to the Almighty Who will either respond or decline to respond to their cries for help in direct relationship to the degree to which they respond to the needs of the needy in their midst who turn to them for assistance.


In the end, human beings have the freedom to choose how to live in the world . . . but there is no more pathetic fantasy than the notion that the way we live in the world need have no influence on the degree to which we know God.

The act of seeking to cleave unto God by searching for the trace of divinity stamped on even the most miserable of human beings is called the sanctification of life in the language of Scripture because those individuals who show mercy and kindness to others because of the trace of the divine image they perceive in even the least enviable of human beings are able to use the acts of succor and kindness they perform to build a kind of holy bridge to God, the source of holiness in the world whom Scripture acclaims over and over as the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore, all who do not pervert the justice due even to the less influential member of society—and who do not take the clothing of the poor as collateral when they lend them money without interest and who do not oppress the stranger in their midst and who endeavor to make sure even orphans and widows are properly represented in

*Psalm 82: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times
on Tuesdays in the Temple*

A psalm of Asaph.

God stands up in the divine council, speaking words of judgment in the midst of the celestial assembly: "How long will you render false judgment, favoring the faces of the wicked, *selah*? Judge the poor person and the orphan fairly, deal justly with the poverty-stricken and the destitute; rescue the weak and the needy, and save them from the grip of the wicked." They know nothing, understand nothing; they walk around in darkness while the very foundations of the world totter. "I say," God continues, "You may well be members of the heavenly assembly, all of you celestial beings, but you will henceforth die like human beings and fall down dead like earthly princes."  Rise up, O God, and judge the earth, for the nations of the world are Yours to possess.

*Psalm 94: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Wednesdays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם רְבִיעִי בַשַּׁבָּת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

אֵל נִקְמוֹת יְהוָה, אֵל נִקְמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ. הַנָּשָׂא שִׁפְט הָאָרֶץ, הָשֵׁב
גָּמוּל עַל גָּאִים. עַד מָתִי רְשָׁעִים יְהוָה, עַד מָתִי רְשָׁעִים
יַעֲלֹזוּ? יִפְּיֵעוּ יִדְּבְרוּ עָתֶק, יִתְאַמְרוּ כָּל פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן. עֲמֹד יְהוָה
יִדְכָּאוּ, וְנִחַלְתָּהּ יַעֲנֶה. אֶלְמִנָּה וְגֵר יִהְרֹגוּ, וַיִּתּוֹמִים יִרְצָחוּ.
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה יְהוָה, וְלֹא יִבִּין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. בֵּינוּ בַּעֲרִים בָּעֵם
וּכְסִילִים מָתִי תִשְׁכִּילוּ. הַנִּטֵּעַ אֶזְן הַלֵּא יִשְׁמַע, אִם יֵצֵר עֵין
הַלֵּא יִפְּיט? הַיֹּסֵר גּוֹיִם הַלֵּא יוֹכִיחַ, הַמַּלְמִיד אָדָם דַּעַת? יְהוָה
יִדַּע מַחֲשַׁבוֹת אָדָם, כִּי הִמָּה הַבֵּל. אֲשֶׁרִי הַגָּבֵר אֲשֶׁר תִּיַּסְרֶנּוּ
יְהוָה, וּמִתּוֹרֶתָהּ תִּלְמָדְנָהּ. לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִיָּמִי רָע, עַד יִפְרָה
לְרָשָׁע שְׁחַת. כִּי לֹא יִטֵּשׁ יְהוָה עַמּוֹ, וְנִחַלְתּוּ לֹא יַעֲזֹב. כִּי עַד
צָדֵק יָשׁוּב מִשְׁפָּט, וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב. מִי יִקּוּם לִי עִם
מִרְעִים, מִי יִתִּיצֵב לִי עִם פֹּעֲלֵי אָוֶן? לֹאִי יְהוָה עֲזָרְתָהּ לִי,
כַּמַּעֲט שְׂכָנָה דּוֹמָה בְּפִשִּׁי. אִם אֲמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי, חֲסִדְךָ
יְהוָה יִסְעֶדְנִי. בָּרֵב שִׁרְעִפִּי בְּקִרְבִּי, תִּנְחַוּמִּיךָ יִשְׁעִשְׁעוּ
בְּפִשִּׁי. הִיחַבְּרָךְ פֶּסֶא הוֹזֹת, יוֹצֵר עֵמֶל עָלִי חֹק? יִגְדֹּדוּ עַל
נֶפֶשׁ צַדִּיק, וְדָם נָקִי יִרְשִׁיעוּ. וַיְהִי יְהוָה לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב, וְאֱלֹהֵי
לְצוּר מִחֲסִי. וַיֵּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת אוֹנָם וּבִרְעָתָם יַצְמִיתָם,
יַצְמִיתָם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

*To nod to the approaching Sabbath, we add the verses
of Psalm 95 that open the Kabbalat Shabbat service:*

לְכוּ נִרְנְנָה לַיהוָה, נִרְיָעָה לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנוּ. נִקְדְּמָה פָּנֵינוּ
בְּתוֹדָה, בְּזִמְרוֹת נִרְיָע לוֹ. כִּי אֵל גָּדוֹל יְהוָה, וּמִקְלָךְ גָּדוֹל עַל
כָּל אֱלֹהִים.

court when they are forced to seek redress for grievances they have against those who would take advantage of their lack of influence in society—all such people are deemed by Scripture to come one step closer to God, the source of holiness in the world, through every single act of solicitude and caring they perform.



When the ancient poet wrote of himself that he was “imprisoned and could not escape (Psalm 88:9),” he was not an actual prisoner in a real prison of some sort, but was rather commenting on the human condition: all individuals, he was suggesting, are the prisoners of their own moral deficiencies, ethical inadequacies and spiritual shortcomings. The same is true in our day. Most human beings do not inhabit jails made of bricks and bars and high walls, but the prisons inhabited by the arrogant, the selfish and the wholly self-absorbed are real enough nevertheless.

This notion, that all people are prisoners in worlds they themselves manufacture, is a basic principle of faith. But there is another principle that needs to be paired with it . . . and that is the notion that God has the power and the ability and the will to free the imprisoned and to liberate incarcerated persons too weak and too little powerful to liberate themselves. Liberation from the world of inadequacy and ethical flaw is called redemption and, by its very name, it suggests that the great goal of all religious observance is the loosening of the bonds of shortcoming that plague all human beings as they attempt to live lives in God. Redemption, however, is a reward from God and this puzzle—that one can only be freed from the bonds that hold us back by embracing the notion that the bonds in question are of our own fashioning and that we, therefore, control their existence with our deeds and with the degree of our devotion to God—is itself one of the great paradoxes, but also one of the most basic axioms, of faith. In its own right, it is a gateway to pass through for all those who would cleave unto God and, in so doing, find redemption.

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Just as there is the Torah Scripture itself calls the “torah of truth” behind and beyond the parchment scroll we humans revere as the Torah, so is there a world behind and beyond the world we know and this world is known, in parallel fashion, as the World of Truth. In some contexts, however, this World of Truth is also called the Kingdom of God or the World to Come, the latter of which names implies that it is the realm in which the faithful may come to know God if they manage, through lives of service and worship, to free their souls from the bonds of terrestrial existence, then to ascend to God’s heaven unfettered by crippling doubt and unsullied by sin.

This ability to encounter God in the world behind the world is said by Scripture to be “the lot of the righteous,” as in the verse from the 119th psalm, “A is my lot / I pledge to keep Your commands (Psalm 119:57)” or the one from the sixteenth psalm in which the poet plainly declares, “A is my portion, my lot (Psalm 16:5).” Both these verses, and many others like them, point to a single truth: that the ability to cleave unto God is the lot—and the right—of all believers who yearn to serve and worship God wholeheartedly and without ruining their own efforts by spoiling them with selfishness or crippling self-importance. This is also the meaning of the verse from Deuteronomy, “Moses has bequeathed us Torah as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob (Deuteronomy 33:4),” which is to say: the Torah is the natural inheritance of all who cleave unto its commandments and attempt to walk in its ways and the lot and portion of the faithful. Of the wicked, on the other hand, Scripture declares that “the spirit of terror is the cup from which they drink (Psalm 11:6).” The use of this idea—that one fashions out of the specific nature of one’s faith in God a kind of cup from which one must then drink the purest water or the bitterest gall—appears elsewhere in Scripture with respect to the pious where it is noted that God alone is the cup from which they drink the living waters of faith and, indeed, the end of the verse cited above from the sixteenth psalm makes that point explicitly: “. . . You

Psalm 94: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times on Wednesdays in the Temple

A is a God of vengeance; O God of Vengeance, appear! Rouse Yourself, O Judge of the earth, and pay back the arrogant in kind. How long, A, how long shall evil people exult? How long shall the wicked express themselves by speaking words of defiance, shall doers of iniquity boast about themselves? They oppress Your people, A, and torture Your very own; they kill widows and strangers, even daring to murder orphans. They say, “B will not see; the God of Jacob will pay no heed.” Understand this, you destroyers of the people, you fools. When will you gain some insight?

Shall the One Who designed the ear not hear? Shall the Creator of the eye not see?

Shall the One Who chastises nations, Who endows humanity with intelligence—shall that One not rebuke people like You? A knows the thoughts of human beings, though they be no more substantive than breath.

Happy is the individual whom You allow to suffer, B, for thus do You instruct him from Your teaching, keeping him calm on a day of evil . . . until a pit can be dug for the wicked. For A will neither abandon the people of God nor forsake the very people who constitute the divine inheritance, but, setting an example for the honest to follow, will return a just verdict. Who will stand with me against evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the doers of iniquity? If A were not my help, my soul would almost certainly endure its existence in silence. If I were to say that my foot is slipping, Your mercy, A, would help me. Despite the multitude of dour thoughts within me, Your words of comfort delight my soul. Will You associate Yourself with those who sit on the seat of scheming, who create havoc by promulgating unjust laws? They may gang up on the righteous soul and do evil to innocent blood, but A is my citadel and my rocky haven, my God Who turns wickedness against the wicked and destroys them with their own evil. Most assuredly, A, our God, will destroy them.


To nod to the approaching Sabbath, we add the verses of Psalm 95 that open the Kabbalat Shabbat service:



Come let us sing hymns of joy to A; let us raise up a joyous noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before the divine countenance bringing a thanksgiving sacrifice; with songs, let us revel before our God. For A is a great God, a great Sovereign exalted above all other divinities.

*Psalm 81: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Thursdays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי בַשָּׁבָת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְוִיִּם אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

לְמִנְצַחַּ עַל הַגָּתִית לְאַסֶּף. הֲרַגְנוּ לֵאלֹהִים עוֹזְנִי,
הָרִיעוּ לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב. שָׂאוּ זְמֶרָה וּתְנוּ תָה, כְּנֹר
נָעִים עִם נָבֵל. תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר, בַּכֶּסֶה לְיוֹם
חֲגִגְנוּ. כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא, מִשְׁפָּט לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.
עֲדוּת בִּיהוֹסֵף שָׁמוּ בְּצֵאתוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שְׁפַת
לֹא יִדְעֵתִי אֲשַׁמֶּע. הִסִּירוּתִי מִסָּבֵל שְׁכֻמוֹ, כִּפְיוֹ
מִדּוֹד תַּעֲבֹרָנָה. בַּצָּרָה קָרָאתָ וְאַחֲלָצְךָ אֶעֱנֶךָ בְּסִתָּר
רַעַם, אֲבַחֲנֶךָ עַל מֵי מְרִיבָה סָלָה. שְׁמַע עַמִּי
וְאֶעֱיֶדָה בָּךְ, יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם תִּשְׁמַע לִי. לֹא יִהְיֶה בָּךְ
אֵל זֶה, וְלֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל גֵּכָר. אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ,
הַמַּעֲלֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, הֲרַחֵב פִּיךָ וְאַמְלֵאֲהוּ. וְלֹא
שָׁמַע עַמִּי לְקוֹלִי, וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אָבָה לִי. וְאֶשְׁלַחְהוּ
בְּשִׁירֹת לֵבָם, יֵלְכוּ בְּמוֹעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם. לֹא עַמִּי שָׁמַע
לִי, יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדַרְכֵי יִהְיֶה. כְּמַעַט אוֹיְבֵיהֶם אֲכַנֶּיֶה,
וְעַל צָרֵיהֶם אֲשִׁיב יָדִי.  מִשְׁנָאִי יְהוָה יִכְחָשׁוּ
לוֹ, וַיְהִי עֲתָם לְעוֹלָם. וַיֹּאכִילָהוּ מִחֶלֶב חֶטֶת,
וּמִצֹּר דִּבְשׁ אֲשַׁבִּיעֶךָ.

are my cup / the Framer of my destiny (Psalm 16:5)."



Many of the commandments of the Torah require of those who would worship God that they draw a line in the world with the intention that it serve as a kind of barrier between disparate spheres of existence that would otherwise be interconnected or, at least, contiguous. Obscure and seemingly unsettlingly picayune, these commandments are actually based on the notion that the most basic, fundamental test of the legitimacy of a given act of divine worship is whether it enables the individual to move forward psychically, spiritually and emotionally towards a state of ongoing communion and intimacy with God along a path paved with that individual's unquenchable desire for spiritual redemption.

This truth is hidden just behind the famous words spoken by God to Abraham at the beginning of the twelfth chapter of Genesis: "Go forth from your country, from your homeland and from your father's house to the land that I shall show you (Genesis 12:1)." These words were addressed to Abraham when he was in Haran—but was Haran his homeland? Indeed, Scripture answers that question only a few lines earlier when it notes that Abraham's brother, Haran, died "in the presence of his father, Terach, in the land of his birth, in Ur Kasdim (Genesis 11:28)" and surely Abraham and Haran, who were both born in the same year when their father was seventy, were also all born in the same city. With this apparent slip, however, Scripture wishes to teach something profound and important: by commanding Abraham to leave his homeland when he had already done so, the Torah is teaching us that it was not only from Mesopotamia to Israel that Abraham was being commanded to travel, but from the domain of the mundane to the domain of the sacred, to the holy realm, to God.

Indeed, God is acclaimed—subtly but repeatedly—throughout Scripture as the land in which the faithful dwell. God is the land in which the patriarchs wandered and towards which pilgrims

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wander, the fertile soil in which the spirit of any human being can grow to full maturity when that individual is wholly given over to the worship of God through the agency of fealty and obedience to the word of God as captured, encapsulated and presented in the pages of Scripture. It is for this reason that God is called Zion, as in the famous words of two prophets "For from Zion comes forth the Torah (Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:2)," in which "Zion" cannot possibly refer to Mount Zion in Jerusalem because, as every student of Scripture knows, the Torah was revealed to Israel at Mount Sinai, not in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, it is from Sinai that the Torah came, but from God that it continues to come forth, that is: to inspire and direct the faithful towards the great goal of communion with the living spirit of the divine. And, indeed, that is also the meaning of the reference, also in the Book of Isaiah, to "Zion, the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 60:14)."

From all this, it follows that the faithful may profitably think of God as the vast land for which the pious yearn and in which they spend their lives attempting to settle. It is for this reason that so many Jewish sages have concluded from their study of Scripture that settling in the Land of Israel is one of the commandments of Scripture—not because the other lands of the globe are somehow less meaningfully part of God's creation, but simply because the act of traveling to Zion and settling there is meant to symbolize the willingness of an individual to travel to God, called Zion, and there to dwell all the long days of a life solely and totally devoted to the quest for God. And if one were to challenge this idea by asserting that, if God exists in every place, there cannot actually be any real advantage in living in one specific land or another, then the answer would have to be that those who travel to the Holy Land—and especially those who travel there with the express intention of settling there—elevate their souls to the Holy One of Israel . . . for what could be more logical than seeking holiness in a land that is wholly holy, in a land suffused by God with the sanctity of the divine in its every path and byway?

Psalm 81: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times on Thursdays in the Temple

For the conductor, a song of Asaph to be accompanied on the *gittit*.

Sing joyously to the God of our strength; make joyous noise unto the God of Jacob. Take up song, accompany it on the drum, on the delightful lyre, on the *nevel*. Sound the *shofar* on the New Moon, on the eve of our festival day, for doing so is a law for Israel, a statute of the God of Jacob, Who vouchsafed divine testimony to Jehoseph while going forth against the land of Egypt. I hear words now, although I do not know fully what they mean. Then, as I removed some of the burden from another's back and eased his load from his hands, God spoke:

"In distress you call out and I shall grant you relief; I shall answer you with mysterious thunder. I shall test you at the waters of Meribah, *selah*. Hear, O my people, and I shall vouchsafe testimony to you—even to you, O Israel, if you will only listen. There shall be no alien god among you, nor shall you bow down to a foreign god.


"I am A, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, saying, 'Open wide your mouth and I shall fill it.' But My people did not listen to My voice; indeed, Israel had no desire for Me. And so did I send them forth in the stubbornness of their heart, letting them go forward according to their own lights. If My people would only listen to Me, if Israel would only walk in My ways, then would I soon overwhelm their enemies and turn My hand against their foes."

 Those who hate A will always deny the reality of God, but will their time last forever?

But as for the pious, God will feed them of the choicest wheat germ, saying, "I will satisfy you with honey from a rock."

*Psalm 93: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing
in Ancient Times on Fridays in the Temple*

הַיּוֹם יוֹם שְׁשִׁי בַשָּׁבַת, שָׁבוּ הָיוּ הַלְלוֹיִם אוֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ גִּאוֹת לְבַשׁ, לְבַשׁ יְהוָה
עַל הַתְּאֵזָר, אֵף תִּכּוֹן תִּבֵּל בִּל
תִּמּוּט. נִכּוֹן כִּסֵּאָךְ מִמָּז, מִעוֹלָם
אֶתָּה. נִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת יְהוָה, נִשְׂאוּ
נְהָרוֹת קוֹלָם, יִשְׂאוּ נְהָרוֹת דְּכִיָּם.
מִקְלוֹת מַיִם רַבִּים אֲדִירִים מִשְׁבְּרֵי
יָם, אֲדִיר בַּמָּרוֹם יְהוָה.  עֲדַתְּיָךְ
נֶאֱמָנוּ מֵאֹד, לְבֵיתְךָ נֶאֱוָה קֹדֶשׁ,
יְהוָה לְאַרְךָ יָמִים.



It is the natural way of people to imitate themselves and walk comfortably along paths they themselves have already traveled and this is the meaning, or one of the meanings, of the famous statement of Ben Azzai's preserved in the Ethics of the Sages, that the reward of performing one of the commandments is the energy and inclination to undertake the performance of another and that, similarly, the freedom to sin is engendered, more than by anything else, than by having already sinned and, one would like to think, gotten away with it.

The prophets of Israel, however, had their own torah, according to which the reward inherent in the performance of a commandment of Scripture is the slow integration of the soul of the worshiper into the great ocean of divine presence in the mundane world. According to this model, the reward for the performance of a commandment is that the individual in question personally becomes, so to speak, one of a series of never ending, permanently undulating waves that do and cannot exist within the exalted reality and absolute unreality of God in a world that both does and cannot contain even the smallest spark of true divinity at the time it functions—and functions effectively—as an ocean of being in which human beings can will themselves to cleave unto God and, in so doing, to become children of God, as the Torah, speaking ideally, observes almost simply, “You are—destined to be and capable of becoming and entitled to think of yourself as—the children of A , your God (Deuteronomy 14:1).”



The concept of attempting to see further by standing on one's own shoulders, the notion of attempting to deal with the problem of a lack of faith in specific dogmatic principles by embracing those very principles wholeheartedly in the context of total intellectual integrity, the idea that it is possible to conclude your own personal spiritual journey by deciding finally, actually, to undertake it . . . these

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paradoxes are all the natural results of the attempt of the individual possessed of spiritual integrity creatively, productively and intelligently to use the tension and frustration that result from undertaking a set of tasks that are possible and impossible at the same time . . . and to use that energy to unravel the riddle of trying with every ounce of one's spiritual fiber to know a God Whom one accepts as being totally unknowable. This is the inner meaning of the verse from the Torah, "Serve God and cleave unto God (Deuteronomy 10:20)," which is to say: cleave unto God through the means of worship, for you will never cleave unto God unless you find the strength to worship a God you have yet to know . . . or regarding Whose existence you have yet to feel totally secure and unconflicted.




God is neither from the world nor of the world, but neither is God to be found behind or beneath or beyond the world and this is the meaning of the divine oracle preserved in the book of the prophet Hosea, "For I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst (Hosea 11:9)." Indeed, God is found in no place and in every place and was therefore known to the sages of classical antiquity as The Place . . . because even though the world is not the place of God, God may still somehow be described aptly as the Place of the world.

Although traces of God's presence are perceptible in everything that exists, God is nonetheless so totally other than the world and from its things that it becomes reasonable to say that God is not the totality of existence and the totality of existence is not God.


God is not the whole world or even a part of it, but is rather the perceptible/imperceptible Soul of the universe and its Heart. To seek God in the context of worship, however, is not impossible. Nor is it at all irrational. Yet, to attempt to journey towards faith in the context of unwavering spiritual integrity, the would-be pilgrim on his or way to Jerusalem must embrace several ideas that themselves will require a bit of effort to accept wholeheartedly. For example, such a tentative pil-

Psalm 93: The Psalm the Levites Used to Sing in Ancient Times on Fridays in the Temple

A reigns wearing robes of majesty.
 A wears, or rather girds the divine loins with, that very might once used to create the world and make it sturdy and permanent. Your throne too stands eternally firm; You Yourself, of course, shall exist forever. The rivers, A , the rivers lift up their voice; the rivers rise and rage, but A is mighty on high, mightier even than the sound of the great waters, even than the roar of the sea's mightiest breakers.  Your testimonies regarding Your House, the most beautiful of holy places, are entirely true, A , and permanently so.

Psalm 27

During the weeks between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Hoshana Rabba, we read the twenty-seventh psalm at the end of the Morning Service. During the month of Elul, except for Erev Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is sounded before the psalm is recited.

לְדָוִד, יְהוָה אֹרֵי וְיִשְׁעִי, מִמִּי אִירָא? יְהוָה מְעוֹז
חַיִּי, מִמִּי אֶפְחָד? בְּקֶרֶב עָלִי מְרַעִים לֶאֱכֹל אֶת
בָּשָׂרִי, צָרִי וְאִיְבִי לִי, הִמָּה כְּשִׁלּוֹ וְנַפְלֹו. אִם
תַּחֲנֶה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה, לֹא יִירָא לְבִי, אִם תִּקְוִים עָלַי
מִלְחָמָה, בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בֹטֵחַ. אַחַת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת
יְהוָה, אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ, שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי
לְחַזוֹת בְּנֻעַם יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ. כִּי יִצְפְּנִנִי
בְּסֶכֶה בַּיּוֹם רָעָה, יִסְתַּרְנִי בְּסִתְרֵי אֹהֶלִי, בְּצוּר
יְרוּמָמִנִי. וְעַתָּה יְרוּם רֹאשִׁי, עַל אִיְבִי סְבִיבוֹתַי,
וְאֶזְבַּח בְּאֹהֶלִי זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה, אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמָרָה
לַיהוָה. שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא, וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנֻנִי. לֵךְ
אֲמַר לְבִי, בְּקִשׁוֹ כָּנִי, אֶת פְּגִיף יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ. אֶל
תִּסְתַּר פְּגִיף מִמֶּנִּי, אֶל תֵּט בְּאֶף עֲבָדָהּ, עֲזַרְתִּי
הֵיטֵא, אֶל תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאֶל תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל. כִּי
אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי, וַיְהוָה יִאֲסָפֵנִי. הוֹרְגִי יְהוָה
דְּרָכָהּ, וְנַחֲנִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִישׁוֹר, לִמְעַן שׁוֹרְרִי. אֶל
תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּגַפְשׁ צָרִי, כִּי קָמוּ בִי עֲדֵי שָׁקָר וַיִּפְחֹ
חֲמָס. לֹאֵל אֶהְמָנֶתִּי, לְרָאוֹת בְּטוֹב יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ
חַיִּים.  קוֹה אֶל יְהוָה, חֲזֹק וַיֵּאֱמֹץ לְבָבָהּ, וְקוֹה
אֶל יְהוָה.

grim will have to will him or herself to believe that there is reasonability in seeking communion with the divine in a world that cannot logically or reasonably contain God, that faith can never reasonably be used as a shield against honesty, science and true knowledge (and that this is so despite the fact that faith, by its very nature, seeks to live precisely where scientific knowledge refuses to dwell), and that the pilgrim seeking Jerusalem on earth must agree to seek God in places God cannot logically exist without despairing . . . or succumbing to the almost overwhelming temptation to fashion a spiritual life on lies and half-truths.



Somehow, the ancient prohibition of seeking God through the medium of idols and idolatrous worship has ended up in the modern world translated into a general ill ease about seeking real, content-rich communion with God at all. This is not entirely illogical—it was, after all, content-rich communion with God that idolaters were seeking—but it is as grave a misstep as any could be for the pilgrim seriously interested in using the rituals of religion to embrace not only theoretical faith in God, but an ongoing, sensually real sense of God's fully-present presence in his or her life. Therefore, although it is forbidden—and forbidden absolutely—for a Jew to seek communion with Baal-Zebub—as indicated by the sarcastic question the angel bid the prophet Elijah put to the king of Israel: "Go up to the messengers of the king of Samaria and say unto them, 'Is there no God in Israel that you are constrained to seek communion with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? (2 Kings 1:3)"—it is entirely permitted to seek communion with the God of Israel, and this is what the prophet Hosea meant when he declared ". . . and it is the right time now to seek out A , the God of Israel, that God may come and teach you justice (Hosea 10:12)." It is also what the Torah means to teach us is permitted when it says of Rebecca that "she went to seek communion with A (Genesis 25:22)," thus saying almost clearly that she went with neither advance per-

mission nor prior license from the religious authorities of her day.

The bottom line is that any who teach that seeking communion with God by attempting to cleave utterly and absolutely to the reality of God in the world is an impossibility or, even more absurdly, a sin of some sort are denying both the point of religion and the immediate reality of God in the world . . . as though lovers somehow debase the purity of their passion by seeking to translate it from the realm of unfulfilled pining into the sphere of ongoing dialogue and physically real pleasure by actually encountering each other in the flesh.



Religion at its best is far more of a playing field than an art gallery. As a result, the task of the faithful is not to act as the curators of a gallery of sacred things, but as athletes willing and ready to take on ancient rites and rituals and wrestle them to the ground for the sake of transforming them from dim memories of ancient worship into useful planks with which they might build a bridge to a life of ongoing communion with God.

This being the case, the approach to Judaism rooted in the idea that the sole function of the commandments of the Torah is to give a particular generation of Jews something to inherit from the generation that preceded them and to bequeath to the generation that follows them without actually enriching the spiritual life of the actual Jewish people alive in that specific generation is the ultimate in spiritual vulgarity. The cause of ensuring Jewish continuity has the ring of nobility to it, but although ensuring the orderly transfer of the commandments from one generation to the next sounds like a worthy enough goal, the great goal of Jewish life is not merely to avoid its own extinction. Rather, the whole point of preserving Jewish life at all is to give into the hands of the Jews of every generation the possibility of unifying the name of God through the performance of the commandments and, in so doing, to cleave unto God . . . and this is the meaning of the verse from the Book of Joshua that equates the twin tasks

Psalm 27


During the weeks between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Hoshana Rabba, we read the twenty-seventh psalm at the end of the Morning Service. During the month of Elul, except for Erev Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is sounded before the psalm is recited.

(A psalm) of David.


If A is my light and my salvation, whom need I fear? If A is the stronghold of my life, of whom then should I be frightened?

When evildoers draw near to me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and foes approach, they stumble and fall. Should an army array against me, my heart shall not know fear; should war be declared against me, even then shall I remain confirmed in my faith.

One favor have I asked of A and I request it now anew: that I be permitted to dwell in the House of A all the days of my life, so that I might gaze on the beauty of A and tarry forever in the divine sanctuary. For God will surely conceal me in the Temple—the divine *sukkah*—on a day of evil, hiding me in that protective tent, lifting me up onto a rock. Indeed, as I offer up the kind of sacrifice attended by trumpet blasts in God's tent, I can see my head lifted up higher than any of the enemies who surround me; I shall sing and chant hymns to A .

Hear my voice, A , when I cry out; be gracious unto me and answer me. I heard my heart say, "Seek me" to You, but surely it is I who need to seek out Your face, A . That being the case, hide not Your presence from me. Turn not from Your servant in anger, for You are my help; neither forsake nor leave me, O God of my salvation. For although my father and my mother have left me, A shall care for me. Teach me Your way, A , and guide me on the level path in order to confound my oppressors. Give me not into the hand of my enemies, for false witnesses out to inspire violence have risen up against me. Perhaps they would have already vanquished me,  had I not believed it to be my lot to look upon the goodness of A in the land of the living. Hope in A ! Be strong and may your heart be of good courage; hope in A !

On Rosh Chodesh, Psalm 104 is recited.

בְּרָכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְהוָה, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מְאֹד, הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבִשְׁתָּ.
 עֲטָה אוֹר כְּשִׁלְמָה, נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם כְּיָרִיעָה. הַמְקַרְה בַּמַּיִם עַל־וֹתֵינוּ,
 הַשֶּׁם עֲבִים רְכוּבוֹ, הַמְהַלֵּךְ עַל כְּנָפֵי רוּחַ. עֲשֵׂה מִלְאָכֶיּוּ רוּחוֹת,
 מְשִׁרְתֵּינוּ אֵשׁ לֵהֵט. יִסַּד אֶרֶץ עַל מְכוּנֶיהָ, בַּל תִּמּוּט עוֹלָם וָעֶד.
 תַּהוֹם כְּלָבוּשׁ כְּסִיתוֹ, עַל הָרִים יַעֲמִדוּ מַיִם. מִן גְּעֵרְתָּךְ יִבוֹסוּ, מִן
 קוֹל רַעְמָךְ יִחַפְּזוּ. יַעֲלוּ הָרִים יִרְדּוּ בַקְעוֹת, אֶל מְקוֹם זֶה יִסְדֹּת
 לָהֶם. גְּבוּל שָׁמַת בַּל יַעֲבֹרוּ, בַּל יִשְׁבּוּן לְכִסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ. הַמְשַׁלַּח
 מַעֲיָנִים בַּנְּחָלִים, בֵּין הָרִים יַהֲלִכוּ. יִשְׁקוּ כָּל חֵיתוֹ שָׂדֵי, יִשְׁפְּרוּ
 בְּרָאִים צִמָּאִם. עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁפּוּן, מִבֵּין עֲפָאִים יִתְּנוּ קוֹל.
 מִשְׁקָה הָרִים מִעֲלִיּוֹתֵינוּ, מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ תִּשְׁבַּע הָאָרֶץ. מִצִּמְחֵי חֲצִיר
 לְבַהֲמָה, וְעֵשֶׂב לְעִבְדֵּיךָ הָאָדָם לְהוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ. וַיִּנּוּ יִשְׁמַח
 לִבָּב אָנוּשׁ לְחֻצְהֵיל פָּגִים מִשְׁמֹן, וְלֶחֶם לִבָּב אָנוּשׁ יִסְעֵד. יִשְׁפְּעוּ
 עֵצֵי יְהוָה, אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטַע. אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צִפְּרִים יִקְנְנוּ, חֲסִידֶיךָ
 בְּרוּשִׁים בֵּיתֶךָ. הָרִים הַגְּבֹהִים לַיַּעֲלִים, סִלְעִים מִחֹסֶה לְשִׁפְּזִים.
 עֲשֵׂה יָרֵחַ לְמוֹעֲדִים, שֶׁמֶשׁ יָדַע מִבּוֹאוֹ. תִּשֶּׁת חֹשֶׁךְ וַיְהִי לַיְלָה, בּוֹ
 תִרְמַשׁ כָּל חֵיתוֹ יָעַר. הַכִּפְיָרִים שֹׁאֲגִים לְטָרְתָּ, וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מֵאֵל אֲכָלָם.
 תִּזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יֵאֲסֹפּוּן, וְאֵל מְעוֹנָתָם יִרְפָּצוּן. יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעֲלוֹ,
 וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד־יָעָרֵב. מָה רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יְהוָה, כָּל־כֹּחַ בְּחֻכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ,
 מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנָה. זֶה הַיָּם גָּדוֹל וְרַחֵב יָדָיִם, שָׁם רָמַשׁ וַאֲיִן
 מִסִּפֵּר, חֵיות קִטְצוֹת עִם גְּדֻלּוֹת. שָׁם אֲנִיּוֹת יַהֲלִכוּן, לוֹיִתָּן זֶה
 יִצְרָתָ לְשֹׁחַק בּוֹ. כָּל־כֹּחַ אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפְּרוּן, לִיתֵּת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ. תִּתֵּן לָהֶם
 יִלְקֻטָּיו, תִּפְתַּח יָדְךָ יִשְׁפְּעוּן טוֹב. תִּסְתִּיר פָּגִיךָ יַבְהֲלוּן, תִּסְרֹף רוּחָם
 יִגְעוּן, וְאֵל עֲפָרָם יִשׁוּבוּן. תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרָאוּן, וּתְחַיֵּד שָׁנֵי
 אֲדָמָה. יְהִי כְבוֹד יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם, יִשְׁמַח יְהוָה בְּמַעֲשָׁיו. הַמְבִיט לְאֶרֶץ
 וּתְרַעַד, יִגַּע בַּהָרִים וַיִּעֲשֶׂנוּ.  אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה בְּחַיִּי, אֲזַמְּרָה
 לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי. יַעֲרֹב עָלָיו שִׁיחִי, אֲנֹכִי אֲשַׁמַּח בִּיהוָה. יִתְּמוּ חֲטָאִים
 מִן הָאָרֶץ וִרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם, בְּרָכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יְהוָה, הַלְלוּיָהּ.

bestowed by Joshua upon the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh: "to keep the divine commandments and to cleave unto God (Joshua 22:5)."



God functions in the universe as the ordering force that rests just behind, beneath and behind every physically existent thing, and as the ontological energy that makes real and evident those things able to bear existence in real space. Therefore, any who seek to live in a state of ongoing communion with God must learn to transcend the boundaries of the world and, in so doing, to come to a place that exists without any trace of physicality, to a place that is and is not part of the world, to a place that exists solely as creative, poetic energy, to a place that is the Place of the world without the world actually being its place . . . but none of this will ever be possible for prisoners of the world who are incarcerated in and by its physics in the way actual prisoners in jail are kept in place by bars of steel.

Since God is totally other than the created universe, it follows that human beings can only discern the divine in the universe they inhabit indirectly through the medium of allusive hint and indirect suggestion. Indeed, to the extent that human beings can see divinity at all, God can only be seen in this world in the light of the occasional ray of luminescence that sometimes shines forth when the parts of the universe separate for the briefest moment and reveal a blurry picture of what the world itself generally keeps hidden and obscure . . . and this experience, rare thought it may be, is called salvation, as in the famous verse from the Psalms: "Shine the light of Your face upon Your servant / grant me salvation according to Your great mercy (Psalm 31:17)." Even those few who know how to look in precisely the right direction at precisely the right moment will see almost nothing—"for no one can see Me and survive"—but they still maintain a serious advantage over those who look in the wrong direction at the right time or vice versa, or (needless to say) those who look in the wrong direction at the wrong moment.

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The goal of Judaism is to point the Jew in the right direction to find God and it is for this reason that the first efforts of any individual to establish a life of communion with God are called, collectively, by the name *teshuvah*. Literally meaning "turning", the word is generally translated as "repentance," but it is not at all the same thing as regret or remorse. This is why God chose to speak through the prophet Ezekiel with the words, "Turn and live (Ezekiel 18:32)"—which is to say: turn back unto Me in perfect repentance and thus shall you merit living together with Me in the state of ongoing psychic communion which the Torah calls the love of humanity for God, as it is written, "And you shall love *A*, your God (Deuteronomy 6:4)."



When Scripture ordains that worshipers approach the divine palace in joy, as, for example, in the words of the one hundredth psalm "Serve ye *A* in joy (Psalm 100:2)," the concept is that the suppliant before God is not meant to be alienated or depressed by the obligation to worship the Almighty without wandering unawares into the realm of dream and delusion. Just to the contrary—the injunction to worship in joy is meant to remind those who seek God in the world that it is possible—and eminently so—to suffuse one's ritual activities with meaning and deep significance to the extent that those rituals never degenerate into mere mimicry and slavish, uninformed obedience.

Therefore are all who would aspire to the worship of God in joy obligated to approach the performance of the commandments imbued with a deep sense of gratitude that they are able to know joy at all. The God of Israel, they accept and believe through their own experience of the divine, is the source of joy in the world and so do they embrace the words of the fourth psalm, in which the poet acclaim God with the words "You have placed joy in my heart (Psalm 4:8). They are joyful because they have come closer to God through the medium of rite and ritual . . . and because they have the insight into the nature of things to understand that the ability to step back far enough from

On Rosh Chodesh, Psalm 104 is recited.

O my soul, bless *A*.

A, my God, You are very great; You wear splendor and magnificence as Your garments.

You are the One Who wears light as though it were a robe, Who hangs the heavens as though they were curtains, Who uses water to make the roofing for the uppermost chambers of the divine palace, Who uses clouds as a chariot, Who travels about on the wings of the wind, Who uses the winds as messengers, Whose ministers are flames of burning fire, Who set the earth on its foundations so that it will never totter.

The deep covered the earth as though it were its cloak. The waters rose over the mountains at that time, then fled away at Your scolding command; indeed, they rushed away at the sound of Your thunder.

The mountains grew and the valleys sunk to the precise foundation You laid for them; You set a boundary for land and sea that neither will ever cross. The waters will never again cover the earth.


You are the One Who sends the water of subterranean springs into rivers that run between mountains and gives water to drink to all the animals of the field; even the wild donkeys, drinking from them, slake their thirst. The birds of heaven dwell by them and sing out from the branches of nearby trees.

You are the One Who irrigates the mountains with waters stored in the upper chambers of heaven; the hunger of the earth is satisfied with the fruit You have made. You are the One Who makes the grass grow for animals to eat and the vegetation necessary for humanity to bring forth bread from the earth through working the soil. Indeed, it is bread on which the heart of humankind feasts—and also wine, which gladdens the hearts of all and makes people's faces shine more brightly than if they were rubbed with oil. The trees of *A* are well nourished, the mighty cedars of Lebanon that God planted—those trees in which birds make their nests—and the fir trees too, which are home to the storks. And You also made the high mountains for wild goats and the great rocks that serve rabbits as their safe haven.

You are the One Who made the moon in all its phases, and the sun in such a way that it knows to set in the evening. You decree darkness and it becomes night, the time when the animals of the forest creep forth in safety, when lions roar at their prey—for their roaring too is a way of asking God for food. But when the sun shines again, they rejoin their prides and lie down in their dens to rest, just as humanity is ready to go to work, to labor until evening.

How great are Your works, *A*! You have made everything with wisdom; the world is filled with Your creation. There is the sea, great and wide, filled with swimming things without number, small creatures and big. There, ships make their way; there lives the Leviathan, which you created to frolic in it.

They all look to You to give them their food in due course. You give it to them and they gather it up; You open Your hand and they are satisfied with good. But when You hide Your face, they are terrified; when You stop their breathing, they die and return unto the dust from which they came. Then, when You send them Your breath to revive them, it is as though they are created afresh, just as You renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of *A* be forever. May *A*, Who can look at the earth and make it quake and Who can touch mountains and make them smoke, forever rejoice in the work of divine creation.  I shall sing to *A* as long as I live; I shall sing hymns to God as long as I exist. May my words be pleasant unto God, as it is in *A* that I rejoice. May sinners be gone from the earth and may the wicked likewise vanish! O my soul, bless *A*.

Hallelujah!

In a house of mourning, the forty-ninth psalm is recited.

לְמִנְצַח לְבִנֵי קֶרֶחַ מִזְמוֹר. שְׁמַעוּ זֹאת כָּל הָעַמִּים,
הָאֲזִינוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי חָלָד. גַּם בְּנֵי אָדָם, גַּם בְּנֵי אִישׁ,
יַחַד עָשִׂיר וְאַבְיוֹן. פִּי יִדְבֵּר חֲכָמוֹת, וְהַגִּיתָ לְבִי
תְּבוֹנוֹת. אֲטָה לְמַשָּׁל אֲזִנִּי, אֶפְתָּח בְּכַנּוֹר חִידָתִי.
לָמָּה אֵירָא בְּיָמַי רָע, עוֹן עֲקָבִי יִסְבֶּנִי. הַבִּטְחִים עַל
חֵילִם, וּבִרְבַּע עֲשָׂרָה יִתְהַלְלוּ. אַח לֹא פָדָה יִפְדֶּה
אִישׁ, לֹא יִתֵּן יְלֹאֵהִים כְּפָרוֹ. וַיִּקָּר פְּדִיוֹן גַּפְשָׁם,
וְחָדַל לְעוֹלָם. וַיִּחִי עוֹד לְנֶצַח, לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשְׁחָתָה. פִּי
יִרְאֶה חֲכָמִים יָמוּתוּ, יַחַד כָּסִיל וּבַעַר יֵאבְדוּ, וְעֶזְבוּ
לְאַחֲרֵים חֵילִם. קִרְבָּם בְּתִימוֹ לְעוֹלָם, מִשְׁכָּנָם
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר, קָרְאוּ בְּשִׁמוֹתָם עָלֵי אֲדָמוֹת. וְאָדָם בִּיקָר
בֶּל יִלִּין, גִּמְשָׁל כְּפִהֲמוֹת גְּדָמוֹ. זֶה דִּרְכָם, כָּסִיל
לָמוֹ, וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ, סָלָה. כִּצְאוֹן לְשִׁאוֹל
שָׁתוּ, מוֹת יִרְעוּ, וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבָקָר, וַיִּצְוּם
לְבָלוֹת שִׁאוֹל מִזֶּבֶל לוֹ. אִךְ אֱלֹהִים יִפְדֶּה גַפְשֵׁי מִיַּד
שִׁאוֹל, פִּי יִקְחֵנִי סָלָה. אֵל תִּירָא פִּי יַעֲשֶׂר אִישׁ, פִּי
יִרְבֶּה כְּבוֹד בֵּיתוֹ. פִּי לֹא בָמוֹתוֹ יִקַּח הַכֹּל, לֹא יִרַד
אַחֲרָיו כְּבוֹדוֹ. פִּי גַפְשׁוֹ בְּחַיָּיו יִבְרָךְ, וַיּוֹדֶךָ פִּי תִיטִיב
לָךְ. תִּבּוֹא עַד דוֹר אֲבוֹתָיו, עַד גֵּצַח לֹא יִרְאוּ אֹר.
אָדָם בִּיקָר וְלֹא יָבִין, גִּמְשָׁל כְּפִהֲמוֹת גְּדָמוֹ.



oneself to understand the larger implications of one's ritual activity is itself a gift from God to a grateful nation anxious to know its Maker in ways that human consciousness can fathom.



The most basic aspect of the Torah is the scroll our ancient sages called "The Written Torah." It is revelation translated into the domain of parchment and ink, the divine presence encapsulated in the sounds and utterances of written and spoken language. It is available to all who would read it, which is what Scripture means when it refers to itself as "the Torah that Moses set before Israel (Deuteronomy 4:44)", that is, before all those born or accepted into the ranks of the covenanted community defined as such through the contemplative study of the Torah.

More interior than that is the aspect of commandment and law that has its origin in the notion that God may be known not merely through intellectualizing, but through physical service. These commandments are included in the written Torah, but they are distinct from it as well—the act of eating matzah at Passover is not to be confused with the text of the law ordaining the eating of matzah at Passover, nor is it to be assumed that the rewards connected with this more interior aspect of the commandment must necessarily be the same as those connected with the contemplation of the written word ordaining its observance.

Most interior of all is the level of secrets and mysteries that surround even the most apparently banal section of Scripture. These secrets and inner interpretations are the province of mystics and scholars who are no less devoted to study and observance than their less spiritually adept co-religionists, but who have the ability and the desire to pierce through the literary and physical aspects of the commandment to view its inner core and to see what rewards might await the faithful possessed of the requisite insight—and audacity—to travel even closer to God through the focused power of their own desire to encounter the divine in as intimate a way as any human ever may.

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Attaining the first level, the level of study of the written word of Scripture, is an act of respect towards the presence of God on earth. Attaining the second level, the level of practice and observance, is an act of fealty and devotion. Attaining the third aspect, the level of knowing the Torah not according to the garments it wears in the world or even according to the body of the law that rests just behind and beyond the parchment of the Torah scroll, is an act of love, and it is the ultimate, if endlessly elusive, definition of the true love of God to which all are called by Scripture. Furthermore, it is the level of the personal redemption of the individual in God. And indeed, for all it is the domain of the esoteric and foreign, it is entirely attainable by all who devote themselves to the quest for God in the world through the informed excavation of the human soul, through prayer, through contemplative, intelligent introspection infused with the unyielding desire for spiritual integrity and wholeness.



Although the notion that God is the Creator of the world and the Author of existence is the basic building block of faith, it is also a slippery concept even the most pious among us find difficult to seize totally . . . and how much the more so average people who are attempting to find faith in God the Creator at the same time they grapple with the misery and suffering of the people who actually live in God's world. Such people are called in Scripture "seekers after faith", because, although they wish to believe and they exert themselves to believe, they have not yet come to the stage of spiritual development at which they actually do believe in God in the normal way people believe in the unconditional, unquestionable existence of the things they see around them. In a way, such people are the latter-day counterparts of the ancient pilgrims who made their slow progress to Jerusalem three times a year, traveling step by step along the dusty pathways of ancient Judah until they eventually arrived at the gates of the Holy City. . . .



In a house of mourning, the forty-ninth psalm is recited.

For the conductor, a psalm of the sons of Korach.

Hear this all nations! Give ear all residents of earth, children of Adam, all humanity, wealthy and poor alike!

My mouth shall speak words of wisdom; the thoughts of my heart that I am about to express will be possessed of deep insight. I shall incline my ear to hear a parable developing in my thoughts; I shall open my riddle-song with a flourish of the lyre.

Why should I know fear in times of trouble, merely because the iniquity of my pursuers surrounds me? They, after all, are the ones who place their trust in their riches, praising themselves because of the extent of their wealth. But no one can redeem a brother from divine punishment. Indeed, it is because the redemption of the souls of sinners is so very precious that one cannot effect it merely by paying a ransom to God; the punishment for sin is that one simply ceases to exist forever.


Shall a human being live forever, then, and never see the grave?

One can see, after all, that even sages die; together with fools and boors they perish and leave their possessions to others.

Their graves become their permanent homes, their residences from generation to generation and the earthly addresses by which they are known; human beings, similar in this to the beasts whose mortality they share, cannot live forever because of their earthly wealth.

Such is the fate of all who cannot accept their own mortality: foolishness belongs to them and, afterwards, to those who find their words pleasing, *selah*.

They are marked for descent to Sheol like slaughtered sheep, Death serving as their shepherd and the righteous ruling over them in the morning. Indeed, such people so regularly make God, their rock, punish them with death that Sheol can no longer serve as the sole residence of the dead. Yet God will redeem my soul from the grasp of Sheol by bringing me forth, *selah*.

Be not in awe when an individual waxes wealthy or when the honor of that person's house grows great. When such a person dies, he will not take it all with him. His glorious possessions will not descend to Sheol after him because he blessed his own soul during his lifetime; instead, he ought to have thanked You when things went well for him. His soul shall join the ranks of his ancestors who shall never again see light,  for human beings, similar in this to the beasts whose mortality they share, are more than capable of loving earthly wealth without understanding its highly transient nature.