

**A Jewish Hospice Resource Mobile Application:
*Bringing Jewish Hospice Support into the 21st Century***

Matthew Zerwekh

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Referee, Professor Dr. Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph PH.D. RJE

Digest

This capstone has a number of different components contained within it. The first components are written, contained in four basic sections.

The Jewish View of Death and Dying includes modern and rabbinic sources on medical care of a terminal patient including when is and is not acceptable to terminate care of a terminal patient.

The History and Current Form of Hospice Care discusses the evolution of hospice care from a mere idea to an accepted and meaningful part of the medical care of a terminal patient. This section also discusses the form of modern hospice care including the makeup of a hospice medical team, as well as popular attitudes toward end-of-life care in the managed care (HMO) setting.

The bedside service and companion commentary is a service contained within the mobile application "A Jewish Hospice Resource" as well as a companion commentary that explains the thought process that went into the formation of the service.

The prayer resources found in the mobile application itself are contained within this written work in order to provide source material for interested readers.

The mobile application is broken into four sections:

In the 'Prayers' section, users will find a bedside service for loved ones to recite at the bedside of a hospice patient, with directions informing the user how to best utilize the sources within the service, as well as various meditations and prayers from various contemporary and biblical sources. Users will also find prayers for a hospice patient to recite themselves (if possible). A loved one or

spiritual leader can also read these to, or on behalf of the hospice patient. Any and all parts of the bedside service can also be recited by the patient themselves.

In the 'Psalms' section, users will find the Psalms that Jewish tradition states are appropriate to recite at the bedside of a *goses*, a dying patient.

In the 'Video' section, users will hear from two well-respected chaplains about their views of hospice care and the positive aspects of such end-of-life care, and from the creator of this app regarding his experiences with hospice care, as well as the philosophy behind this mobile app.

In the 'Music' section, users will find a variety of different musical selections written by cantors and musical talents from within the Reform tradition. These pieces can be played in the background while the user is utilizing different resources within the app, or as standalone music separate from the prayer resources in the app.

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Introduction

In the summer between third and fourth years of my studies as a rabbinical student, I had the opportunity to work as a chaplain intern at The Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati. During my short time as chaplain intern, I was involved in a number of conversations introducing the idea of hospice care to family members of terminal patients. In the majority of conversations we had, the family was unaware of, or had misconceptions about the hospice process and what it entailed. Once a family became comfortable with the idea of hospice care, I found that these families didn't know how to be with their family member, and/or those supporting the family did not necessarily possess the tools to properly be with the patient or his family. This project was born out of a desire to establish an easily accessible and easy-to-use resource of prayers and support for Jewish families going through hospice care with a loved one, as well as their spiritual leaders.

The written portions of this work encompass information relevant to a Jewish professional in the hospice setting, including the Jewish views of death and dying. In this work, readers will find that Jewish law makes fascinating delineations between allowable circumstances in which a patient is allowed to discontinue care; such as when further medical treatment would cause more pain for the patient, and when it is disallowed; such as the withdrawal of life-support, as the latter requires actively withdrawing support instead of merely choosing not to treat the malady.

Also within this written work, readers will find the history of hospice care, as well as the state of hospice care in the United States today. From its inception in the 1960's to today, hospice care has moved from a fringe idea to becoming an accepted

and mainstream choice for patients facing terminal diagnoses. Within the chapter discussing the history and form of hospice care, readers will find the makeup of a typical hospice medical team, the role of the rabbi or chaplain in hospice care, as well as a differentiation between hospice and palliative care. Oftentimes, palliative care and hospice care are mentioned in the same breath and this work takes pains to show the clear delineation between hospice care and palliative care.

Chapter three of this work is a bedside service and companion commentary describing the choices that went into forming the service itself. A brief bedside service can provide interaction for someone who may not have words to use himself. The bedside service offers prayers of comfort as well as prayers of healing that a pray-er can say to a terminal patient (*goses*), and is meant to offer words to someone who knows not what words to choose. Oftentimes, a pray-er will be unaware that there are intentional choices that place certain prayers in the places they are within a created service. The commentary helps the pray-er as well as any interested clergy to understand the rationale behind the layout of the service.

Along with the written portions of this capstone project, there is a companion mobile application for both Android and iPhone formats that can be downloaded and utilized by anyone free-of-charge. The aim of this application is to make supporting a terminal patient both more meaningful and less daunting to those involved, while simultaneously providing comfort to the loved ones left behind by the painful loss of a cherished relationship.

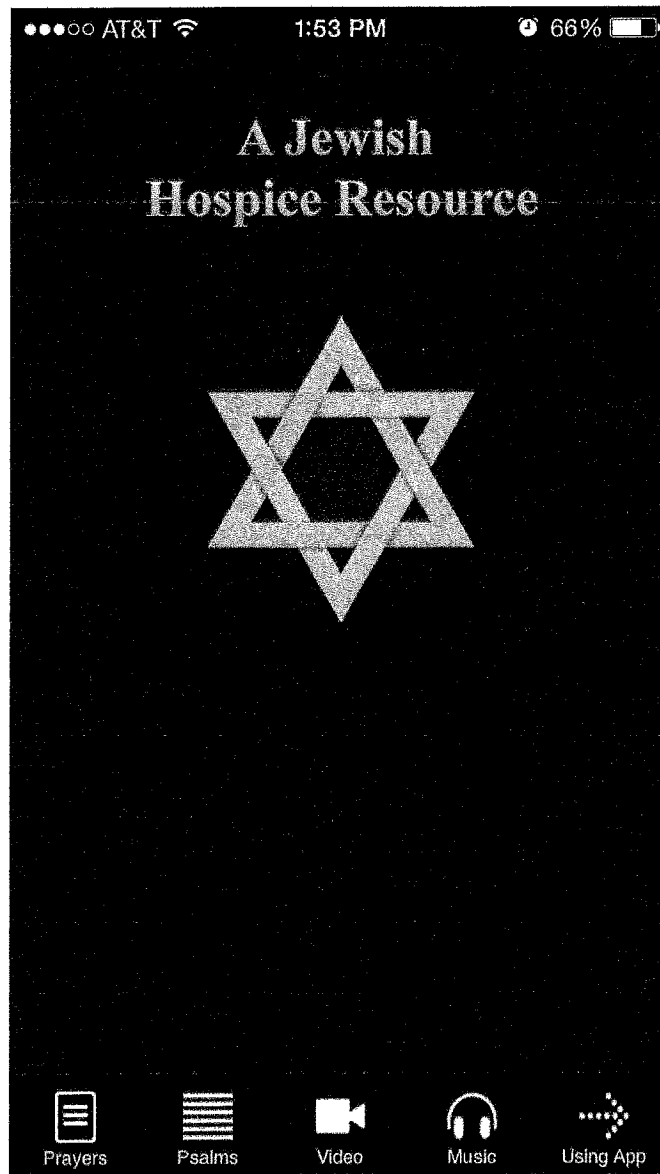
The development of the mobile application took months of work as well as the generosity of the Wendy Kanter Memorial Fund, underwriter for the generous grant covering development costs.

The app can be found as a native Android app at

<http://ibuildapp.com/projects.php?action=info&projectid=702435>.

The app is also available as a native iOS app on the iTunes app store at:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/jewish-hospice-resource/id850347860?mt=8&uo=4>



A screenshot of the opening screen of the mobile application

The Jewish View of Death and Dying

Dying is lonely; “[a] dying person, like most people, is used to being accompanied by family or friends in every major step of life. Now death will terminate all relationships with everyone. That is [the dying individual’s] fear.”¹

The prospect of dying is one that many individuals fear above all else. Death signifies a terminus to human endeavor, an end to one’s world, finality to relationships cultivated over a lifetime. Rabbi Maurice Lamm states: “The dying should experience a stillness, a serenity, a coming-together of all the events of life... Peace that until now has never been known”². But to many, death in and of itself is a troubling prospect. The struggles and physical and emotional pain that accompany the end of life often times take center stage over the beauty that can potentially come from approaching death with acceptance and pragmatism. “One can die in fulfillment and with meaning, or in misery – filled with hate and jealousy”³.

Just “as there is a Jewish way of living, there is a Jewish way of dying – and of caring for the dying”⁴. Despite this fact, “early twentieth-century Austrian writer Franz Borkenau once classified the major cultures this way: the Hellenistic is death accepting, the Western is death denying and the Jewish is death defying”.⁵ This line of thinking maintains that Judaism as a culture views death as real and natural, but death is not total as the spirit goes on beyond the life of the body. Maurice Lamm maintains that: “Not only does Judaism defy death but, as a consequence of the sin of

¹Lamm, Maurice. “The Jewish Way in Dying”. Jewish Perspectives on Death and Dying. Council of Jewish Federations, 1983. Pg 2.

² Ibid. 2

³ Ibid 2

⁴ Ibid. 7

⁵Lamm, Maurice. Consolation: The Spiritual Journey Beyond Grief. 1st ed. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004. Pg 92.

Adam, it even refuses to consider death a natural phenomenon.”⁶How does Judaism, a culture which defies death, come to accept death?

As much as we, as a culture or as individuals, choose to defy death, it remains an inevitable and undeniable part of, and natural end, to what we know as our physical life. The Rabbis were aware of this fact, despite Judaism’s outward defiance; “Dying is the juncture between time and eternity. It is twilight, *bein ha-shemashot*, as the Rabbis put it – not day, not night when the sun sinks behind the horizon”⁷. How do we as members of the “death defying” culture of Judaism come to understand such a twilight? While Judaism is death-defying, it is not death-denying: “Man must accept death after defying it to the last. But the repression of the reality of death is an un-Jewish attitude, and our elaborate attempts at its denial a religious absurdity.”⁸

Once death appears to be imminent, Jewish law guides its adherents regarding their actions in the care of the dying and sets laws regarding rituals and observances for the dying and the dying individual’s family. However, the path toward death is longer and more drawn out than it was even a generation or two ago. As a result, medicine’s approach toward the treatment of terminal illnesses has changed. The steady advancement of medical knowledge, skill, and technology has allowed people to live a much longer time than at any other point in history:

⁶Lamm, Maurice. “The Jewish Way in Dying”. Jewish Perspectives on Death and Dying. Council of Jewish Federations, 1983. Pg. 5

⁷ Ibid. Pg.

⁸ Ibid. Pg. 5

Until this generation, people usually died of catastrophic illness and the end came too quickly to ruminate about. That is why, according to the Halakah, the definition of dying, *goses* is a process that takes at most three days. Today, people are more likely to die from degenerative disease, and the process of dying is often extended for six months and more.⁹

Advancements in medical knowledge have not only allowed people to live longer, but they have complicated, and in some cases drawn out, the dying process.

Individuals facing terminal illnesses no longer question merely when death may occur, but also in what manner death will occur, as well as what a terminal patient's quality of life will be until his final breath. As a result, decisions regarding end-of-life issues are no longer as simple as they once were. To complicate the matter further, members of the medical field tend to deny death, that is, adopt an outlook that states that death is not inevitable and most medical problems have a solution. As a result we find the lines between treatment to save a life and treatment to prolong the dying process blurred.

Jewish tradition teaches that we are created *b'tzelem elohim*,¹⁰ in the image of God. "In Jewish literature and law, man's inherent dignity is compared with the dignity of the scroll of the Torah"¹¹ and "as a consequence of his being created in God's image, man has an integrity and a worth which are his by God-given right regardless of his socially utilitarian value".¹² Furthermore, "Man's life is not his property, but the property of the Holy One, blessed be He."¹³ We are told by Jewish tradition that we are to guard human life above all else. "Judaism affirms that the

⁹Ibid Pg 2.

¹⁰Genesis 1:27. Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1985

¹¹Lamm, Maurice. "The Jewish Way in Dying". Jewish Perspectives on Death and Dying. Council of Jewish Federations, 1983. Pg. 3.

¹² Ibid. Pg 3.

¹³Radvaz. *Hilkhot Sanhedrin 18:6*. In the "Survey of Recent Halakhic Periodical Literature: Treatment of the Terminally Ill." By David Bleich. In *Tradition* 30:3, Rabbinical Council of America, (1996): 54.

body we inhabit belongs to God”¹⁴, and the Shulchan Aruch affirms this by stating that any or all medicines and drugs must be used to help an individual recover and all Sabbath laws may be broken to save a life.¹⁵ However, with the advent of new medical treatments for previously terminal illnesses, Judaism and medicine have been forced to interact in ways previously unseen:

With new moral and bio-ethical issues coming to the forefront, it has become imperative for science and religion to work together to address the needs of patients, families, and those in the medical professions, for these issues and decision are not simply or solely medical or physical, but can have religious and spiritual ramifications as well.¹⁶

The line between medicine and religion is blurred further when we investigate the views regarding the onset of death by varying classical Jewish sources. Tractate Semachot from Talmud states: “a dying person (*goses*) is considered as a living person in all respects”¹⁷ but there are varying opinions to tell us when a *goses*, an individual in the process of dying, has died. Gesher HaChayim states that if “there is no movement for at least 15 minutes” death has occurred.¹⁸ Yoreh De’ah, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher’s compilation of halachah, has a differing view: “lack of respiration alone is conclusive if ‘the individual lay as quietly as a stone’¹⁹. The Shulchan Aruch views the cessation of life in more medical terms, as it states that a lack of respiratory activity and heart beat signify death.²⁰ Yismach Lev takes this idea further, saying that it is not until one hour after the cessation of

¹⁴ “For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill.” National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980). Pg 7.

¹⁵ Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg. 5

¹⁶ Frenkel, Jennifer L. “Rabbi, Do You Have a Minute?” Jewish Pastoral Care Theology for End-of-Life Issues pg. 56

¹⁷ Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 2.

¹⁸ Ibid. Pg. 5

¹⁹ Ibid. pg 5

²⁰ Ibid. pg. 5

respiration and a heart beat that death has occurred.²¹ However, current medical interventions have made differentiating between life and death all the more difficult. Rabbi Bernard Zlotowitz states: "If a person is hooked up to a machine, we don't know whether the machinery is preserving life or the person is living on his/her own power."²²

Leviticus 19:16 states "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor"²³. It is upon this verse from Torah that much of our classical Jewish text bases its opinions regarding treatment of the ill and dying, and it is upon Jewish tradition that we must base our own views regarding the treatment of terminal illness. Rabbi Maurice Lamm states: "The style of Jews in their days of sickness is not, I think, the style of Christians, as the style of Christians is not that of Moslems. His racial memories are unique to him. He has ethnic prejudices he could never eradicate, and which he now cherishes."²⁴ As much as American Reform Jewry values its American identity, our "racial memories", as Dr. Lamm calls them, resonate beyond our American identities and should not be discounted during times of illness.

Throughout the course of life, man rarely faces the decision of whether to actively live or whether to choose death. His body continues the processes that keep him alive uninterrupted and he has no choice in allowing these processes to continue. In fact, throughout much of his life, man's body actively attempts to keep him alive through immune defense mechanisms, visceral reflexes, and instinct

²¹Ibid pg. 5

²²Ibid 5.

²³Lev 19:16 Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1985

²⁴Lamm, Maurice. "Fundamental Jewishness of Jewish Hospice." Hospice for the Jewish Community (1984): 9-15.

without any further intervention on his part. However there may come a time when one or more of these mechanisms begins to fail, continuation of life can no longer be taken for granted, and he is faced with the prospect of death.

"Judaism believes in the sanctity of life and every means must be taken to preserve life."²⁵ However, the path toward death is often accompanied by fatigue, great amounts of pain, both emotional and physical, and a loss of quality of life. In these cases, Judaism can help provide us guidance as to how to treat such cases of terminal illness. In order to discuss the treatment of terminal patients, we must first define the terms used in such a discussion.

Hospice care, which is discussed more fully in another section and is the theme of this work, is "end-of-life care provided by health professionals and volunteers... The goal of the care is to help people who are dying have peace, comfort and dignity. The caregivers try to control pain and other symptoms so a person can remain as alert and comfortable as possible."²⁶ As opposed to hospice care which is provided to only those patients "with a life expectancy of six months or less if the terminal illness or disease runs its normal course"²⁷, palliative care "focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress of a serious illness—whatever the diagnosis. The goal [of palliation] is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family."²⁸ While Hospice care almost always has a palliative component to the treatment of terminal patients, palliative

²⁵ Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 1

²⁶ "Hospice Care: MedlinePlus." U.S National Library of Medicine. U.S. National Library of Medicine. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hospicecare.html>.

²⁷ "In a New Light." Hospice Eligibility Requirements. VistaCare Hospice. <http://www.vistacare.com/hospice/eligibility.asp>.

²⁸ "What Is Palliative Care?" What is Palliative Care? GetPalliativeCare.org. <http://www.getpalliativecare.org/whatis/>

care can take place outside of the hospice setting and is used in treatment of pain associated with an illness, whether or not it is terminal.

One of the biggest misconceptions about hospice care is that it is aimed at accelerating the demise of a terminal patient. This is neither true of hospice care, nor is it legal in the United States. Hospice care treats the pain associated with a terminal illness; it does not attempt to treat the cause of a patient's pain, nor does it take any steps to prolong the life of a patient with a terminal illness. Neither in hospice care, nor in palliation is any medical therapy performed, nor any medication given, to accelerate a patient's demise.

The choice to end one's own life in the face of a terminal or debilitating disease is currently the most active area of research in contemporary bioethics.²⁹ While there are some states that allow for a patient with a terminal illness to voluntarily end his own life with the help of a medical professional, this is considered assisted suicide and is only currently permitted in Oregon, Vermont, Washington and Montana.³⁰ However, as Rabbi Barry Block stated in a sermon delivered in October 1996, "Such acts might have been declared legal by the decisions of two different federal appeals courts. They may be permitted by the law of the land. They are not permitted by Judaism. They are against the law of God."³¹ Active euthanasia, on the other hand, is illegal throughout the United States as well as most countries worldwide. Any form of hastening death is prohibited by Jewish

²⁹Borry, P., P. Schotsmans, and K. Dierickx. "Empirical research in bioethical journals. A quantitative analysis." *Journal of Medical Ethics*.<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2565792/>.

³⁰ O'Reilly, Kevin B. "Physician-assisted suicide legal in Montana, court rules." - [amednews.com](http://www.amednews.com). American Medical News.<http://www.amednews.com/article/20100118/profession/301189939/6/>

³¹ "Euthanasia and Judaism: Jewish Views of Euthanasia and Suicide." - [ReligionFacts](http://www.religionfacts.com/euthanasia/judaism.htm). <<http://www.religionfacts.com/euthanasia/judaism.htm>>.

law as well, as Maurice Lamm writes: "Judaism is clearly in the sanctity-of-life category – vigorously protesting active euthanasia and affirming that man is created in God's image. Man's life is of infinite value, and even two days, which is a tiny fraction of life, is a fraction of infinity, and a fraction of infinity is infinite."³² A story involving a Rabbinic sage helps to illustrate this point further:

Rabbi Chaninah ben Teradion, during Hadrianic persecutions of the Second Century, was tortured by the Romans for teaching Torah. He was wrapped in the scroll of a Torah and was set afire on a pyre of green brushwood. In order to lengthen and intensify his agony, they placed a water-soaked sponge on his chest. His students urged him to open his mouth in order that he may die more quickly. He refused. He will die in God's time, he said. Then they urged him to ask his tormentors to remove the sponge, after all, an artificial hindrance to his dying. This he did. The Roman guard complied. He died quickly. The Talmud reports that both Rabbi Chaninah and his tormentor received the heavenly reward.³³

From this tale we are able to see, as Rabbi Lamm states, "that life may not be shortened by active euthanasia, neither by family nor by well-meaning friends."³⁴ Jewish law clearly and unequivocally prohibits an individual of sound mind to commit suicide, "however, we are dealing with a person who is in great physical agony. That makes an important difference. A person under great stress is no longer considered in Jewish law to be a free agent. He is, as the phrase has it, *Anus*, "under stress of compulsion".³⁵ Such an *anus* is under the stress of great pain

³²Lamm, Maurice. "Fundamental Jewishness of Jewish Hospice." Hospice for the Jewish Community (1984): 9-15

³³Lamm, Maurice. "Fundamental Jewishness of Jewish Hospice." Hospice for the Jewish Community (1984): 9-15

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg. 257

and as The Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards

states:

Requests for assistance in suicide are often an expression of the patient's extreme suffering, despair, psychiatric depression and loneliness. The Jewish tradition bids us to express our compassion in ways that effectively respond to the patient's suffering while adhering to our mandate to respect the divine trust of life.³⁶

While there is strong reasoning behind Judaism's prohibition against purposely shortening a life, today's medical advancements have made this issue less black and white than it was in the time of Rabbi Chaninah. Today, medical therapies available for the treatment of terminal illness may prolong life, but may also cause a great amount of pain. Despite the example of Rabbi Chaninah and in the face of therapies that prolong life but cause great pain to the patient, Rabbi Bernard Zlatowitz, in a report for the UAHC Committee on Bioethics states: "Judaism objects to the use of measures that prolong the act of dying of a hopelessly ill, terminal patient."³⁷

Tradition holds that: "The death of a man... is equivalent to the burning of a Torah"³⁸. Therefore, any hastening of death on the part of a doctor or loved one is equivalent to complicity in burning a Torah, an action clearly and strongly prohibited by Jewish law. At the same time, however, our tradition holds: "if one is endlessly tortured, it is worse than death, and even idols might perchance be

³⁶ Abelson, Rabbi Kassel. "Suicide." Rabbinical Assembly.

<http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/abelson_suicide.pdf>.

³⁷ Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 1

³⁸ Lamm, Maurice. "The Jewish Way in Dying". Jewish Perspectives on Death and Dying. Council of Jewish Federations, 1983.

served!"³⁹ Jewish law protects life but does not necessarily choose life in the face of immense pain with little promise of a positive outcome. The fact is that there is little Jewish legal literature about the relief of pain: "that can be understood because, after all, in those days they had very little knowledge of opiates or narcotics."⁴⁰

In discussing the treatment of a patient, "our sages recognized long ago that one has an obligation to protect his health, based on the biblical imperative 'Only watch yourself, surely watch your soul...(Deut. 4:9)'"⁴¹ However, certain medical interventions such as heavy-duty chemotherapy or certain drug therapies may, in fact risk the patient's life. The question, as the CCAR Reform Responsa Committee asks is: "May we take that amount of risk to the patients' life in order to relieve the great agony which he is now suffering?"⁴² The committee holds: "If the patient is dying anyhow, more risks may be taken for the chance of his possible benefit."⁴³ This viewpoint is strengthened by the Halakhic stance from:

Talmud – Avoda Zara 27b,[which] says clearly that one may risk otherwise forbidden remedies if the dying patient has a chance to be cured by the remedy. In other words, this is the case of a dying patient, and the law permits us in such a case to risk the *Chayeisha-a*, [final hours of life], for his potential benefit.⁴⁴

The story of Rabbi Chanina ben Tradion informs us that such medical intervention may not be undertaken if it is known that such a treatment may hasten death: "Let

³⁹Lamm, Maurice. "Fundamental Jewishness of Jewish Hospice." Hospice for the Jewish Community (1984): 9-15

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Tradition 34:2

⁴² Ibid Pg. 257

⁴³ Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg. 256

⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 256

Him who gave me my soul take it away, but no one should injure himself.”⁴⁵ Gemara supports this by saying: “He who closes the eyes of a dying man at the point of the departure of the soul is a shedder of blood”⁴⁶ But the CCAR Responsa Committee differentiates between hastening the death of a patient and palliation of his pain: “this medicine is neither immediately, nor intentionally, directly lethal; its prime purpose and main effect is the alleviation of pain.”⁴⁷ But, “at the same time, Jewish law sanctions the withdrawal of any factor – when extraneous to the patient himself or not – which may artificially delay his demise in the final phase”.⁴⁸

In the case of some terminal patients, it may be clear that any further treatment or medical intervention will only result in further pain, with the outcome merely prolonging the life of a patient whose death is imminent:

Sefer Chasidim (based upon Ecclesiastes): ‘There is a time to live and a time to die’ – says as follows: If a man is dying, we do not pray too hard that his soul return and that he revive from the coma; he can at best live only a few days and in those days will endure great suffering; so ‘there is a time to die’⁴⁹

Medical interventions aimed at merely prolonging the life of an individual who is actively dying are largely viewed as prohibited, though Tel Talpiyot argues that “no nourishment, however little the amount, may be withheld from a dying person whose condition seems hopeless and his pain great in order to hasten his death.”⁵⁰

This view of what is widely referred to as “termination of treatment” can and should

⁴⁵Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 1

⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg. 2

⁴⁷Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg. 255

⁴⁸Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 6

⁴⁹Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg. 258

⁵⁰Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 5.

be acknowledged, but we must understand that this is an opinion that takes a minority view in the face of the majority of Jewish opinion permitting such termination of treatment. In fact, some scholars hold that one may even pray for a quick death for a patient who is suffering: "The Spanish scholar Nissim Gerondi says that while it is our duty to pray for a sick person that he may recover, there comes a time when we should pray for God's mercy that he should die."⁵¹

While we may pray for the speedy demise of a patient who is actively dying, the question remains regarding Judaism's view of removing any artificial means by which the patient is being kept alive, such as artificial life support, IV medication or artificial nutrition and hydration. An incident as related in Ketubot 104a discusses Rabbi Judah the Prince, who was on his deathbed, in great agony:

On the day when Rabbi (Judah) died, the rabbis decreed a public fast and offered prayers for heavenly mercy. They, furthermore, announced that whoever said that Rabbi was dead would be stabbed with a sword. Rabbi's handmaid ascended the roof and prayed: "the immortals desire Rabbi to join them and the mortals desire Rabbi to remain with them; may it be the will of God that the mortals may overpower the immortals." When, however, she saw how often he resorted to the privy, painfully taking off his tefillin and putting them on again, she prayed: May it be the will of God that the immortals may overpower the mortals." As the rabbis continued their prayers for heavenly mercy, she took up a jar and threw it down from the roof to the ground. At that moment they ceased praying and the soul of Rabbi departed to its eternal rest.⁵²

In this Talmudic story, we see that the rabbis viewed prayer as an artificial means of keeping Rabbi Judah alive. Talmud says nothing about a punishment for the rabbi's servant who forced such artificial means of keeping the Rabbi alive to be stopped.

⁵¹Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg. 258

⁵²Ketubot 104a. In Death and Euthanasia in Jewish Law. Edited by Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer. New York, NY: Berhagagn Books, 1995, p. 65

From this, we see that the rabbi's servant was viewed as right in her actions, and should be lauded. Rabbi Judah ben Samuel agrees in his statement: "if a person is dying and someone near his house is chopping wood so that the soul cannot depart, then one should remove the [wood] chopper from there."⁵³ While Judaism permits the cessation of prayer in order to allow a *goses* to die, and even allows for prayer for a speedy demise, the termination of medical treatment is not always as painless, and may require inflicting further pain upon the patient. In this case, "there may be some ground for objection if the removal of the apparatus was a rather forcible procedure and shook up the patient"⁵⁴ The difference, Rabbi Jennifer Frankel states, "is between 'doing to' and 'doing for'".⁵⁵ We are told by our movement that "The positive outlook on life which governs Judaism prohibits any drastic steps toward death but it does not insist that life continue when the person is a *goses*. At that point a peaceful release is permitted."⁵⁶

Such a "peaceful release", is easily arrived at by the rabbis, but can be admittedly much harder to "permit" by a patient's family and friends. While Jewish tradition can offer us guidance regarding difficult decisions regarding end-of-life care, it is not comprehensive nor does it arrive at any absolute edicts. Jewish law is important for its adherents to understand and take note of, but ultimately the decision regarding the best course of treatment for any potentially terminal patient must be arrived at by the patient and his or her family. While Jewish law can help to

⁵³Zlotowitz, Rabbi Bernard M. Termination of Treatment Based on Rabbinic Sources Pg 4.

⁵⁴Jacob, Walter. American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1983. New York: The Conference, 1983. Pg 260

⁵⁵Frenkel, Jennifer L. "Rabbi, Do You Have a Minute?" Jewish Pastoral Care Theology for End-of-Life Issues. Pg 67

⁵⁶Central Conference of American Rabbis Responsa. "Living Will." #156. 1989.

inform a patient's decisions, the patient, his family, and his doctors must use their best judgment to agree upon the best course of treatment for the patient based upon the knowledge available at the time.

The History and Current Form of Hospice Care

Since the Middle Ages, hospitals and refuges have existed for the treatment and care of the terminally ill.⁵⁷ Initially, these facilities called hospices were small and held dual purposes, treating patients suffering from maladies such as tuberculosis or other such incurable (at the time) diseases⁵⁸ as well as serving as temporary refuge for wayward travelers. "The term 'hospice' means 'hospitality for travelers'"⁵⁹ and as such, that is how hospices began, as a place for travelers to stay along their journey. While their purpose shifted throughout the years, hospices continued to exist for the care of illness and disease and, in their own way, serving as a refuge for travelers nearing the end of their journey through life. These early hospices helped to influence the development of a new approach to care for the dying, and "today, hospice [has come to be known as] a philosophy of medical supportive care for terminally ill patients when curative medical treatment is no longer effective".⁶⁰

Since the late 1960's a different and debatably new approach to the treatment and care of terminally ill patients has continued to gain popularity in the United States and Europe, called hospice care.

The word hospice "...was first applied to specialized care for dying patients by physician Dame Cicely Saunders, who began her work with the terminally ill in 1948 and eventually went on to create the first modern hospice—St. Christopher's Hospice—in a residential suburb of London."⁶¹

⁵⁷ Robbins, Joy. Caring for the dying patient and the family. London ; Hagerstown Md.: Harper & Row, 1983.

⁵⁸ Clark, D. (2000) *Total pain: the work of Cicely Saunders and the hospice movement*. American Pain Society Bulletin, 10 (4). pp. 13-15.

⁵⁹"For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980) Pg. 2

⁶⁰ Ibid. Page 2

⁶¹ "National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization." History of Hospice Care. National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. <http://www.nhpco.org/history-hospice-care>

Dame Saunders used knowledge and experience she gained while working at St. Joseph's Hospice in London in the 1950's to help her form the founding principles of modern hospice care.⁶² Chief among these principles were to treat dying patients with dignity and respect, while allowing them to live their remaining days in as comfortable a manner possible.

During a visit to Yale University in 1963, "Saunders introduced the idea of specialized care for the dying to the United States" through a presentation of hospice care, given to the medical staff.⁶³ This presentation came at an opportune time for the medical community in understanding its attitude toward death; around the same time, in 1969, Elisabeth Kübler -Ross released her best-selling book *On Death and Dying*.⁶⁴ In her book, Kübler-Ross discusses her theory that individuals facing imminent death go through five stages of grief; denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Also in the book, Kübler -Ross makes a plea for home care as opposed to treatment in an institutional setting and argues that patients should have a choice and the ability to participate in the decisions that affect their ultimate destiny.⁶⁵ It is around the time of Dame Saunders and Dr. Kubler-Ross that the modern Hospice movement began to take shape, thanks in large part due to the efforts of those two aforementioned women as well as Florence Wald, the Dean of

⁶² Clark, D. (2000) *Total pain: the work of Cicely Saunders and the hospice movement*. American Pain Society Bulletin, 10 (4). pp. 13-15.

⁶³ "National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization." History of Hospice Care. National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. <http://www.nhpco.org/history-hospice-care>

⁶⁴ Reed, Christopher. "Elisabeth Kubler-Ross." The Guardian. 30 Aug. 2004. Guardian News and Media. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2004/aug/31/mentalhealth.guardianobituaries>.

⁶⁵ "National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization." History of Hospice Care. National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. <http://www.nhpco.org/history-hospice-care>

the Yale Nursing School who was initially responsible for bringing Dame Saunders to the United States to teach her methods.⁶⁶

Modern Hospice care, while relatively new, returns to the old ideal of allowing our loved ones to pass away peacefully, without sometimes-violent medical intervention in the cold and impersonal setting of a hospital, an unintentional but all-too-common consequence of modern medicine. "Today, hospice means a philosophy of medical supportive care for terminally ill patients when curative medical treatment is no longer effective."⁶⁷ As opposed to traditional medical care, "Hospice care takes place wherever the need exists – usually the patient's home⁶⁸. "Hospice focuses as much on the grieving family as on the dying patient"⁶⁹ with an emphasis on "maximiz[ing the] patient's quality of life; with an emphasis on living rather than dying".⁷⁰ In fact, "about 70 percent of hospice care takes place where the patient lives.⁷¹ This allows a terminally ill patient to live their life to the extent that they can at home, where they feel comfortable and can get the most out of the time they have left; "The advantage of the hospice program is not that it solves the problem of where to die but that it offers an important option for patients and family to consider."⁷² Hospice care can take place in a variety of settings, dictated by the realities of the patient's medical situation, as well as the wishes of the patient

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980)Pg 2.

⁶⁸ "American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Debunking the Myths of Hospice. American Hospice Foundation. <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/about-hospice-mainmenu-7/36-debunking-the-myths-of-hospice>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980)Pg 2.

⁷¹ "American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Debunking the Myths of Hospice. American Hospice Foundation. <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/about-hospice-mainmenu-7/36-debunking-the-myths-of-hospice>.

⁷² "For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980) Pg. 2

and his family: "Hospice care may take place in a free-standing or separate facility, a specialized unit within a hospital or nursing home, at home, or in a combination of these facilities."⁷³

"While those affected by terminal illness struggle to come to terms with death, hospices gently help them find their way at their own speed."⁷⁴ On top of supporting the patient himself, hospice care also focuses on supporting the family of the dying. "More than one-half of hospice patients nation-wide have diagnoses other than cancer"⁷⁵. As a result, "increasingly, hospices are also serving families coping with the end-stages of chronic diseases, like emphysema, Alzheimer's, cardiovascular, and neuromuscular diseases."⁷⁶ This support, while still centering on the patient, also helps the loved ones of a family member who is actively dying in order to help both the patient and family with the eventuality of death.

"Three major features characterize hospice care: 1) Emphasis on personal care for the patient. 2) Concerted effort to prevent and relieve chronic pain associated with much of terminal illness. 3) Involvement of family members and close friends of the patient in his treatment."⁷⁷ In order to provide such care, the hospice process entails a number of important aspects of care, represented by various members of the hospice team. In general, the hospice team consists of a five-

⁷³Ibid Pg. 2.

⁷⁴"American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Debunking the Myths of Hospice. American Hospice Foundation. <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/about-hospice-mainmenu-7/36-debunking-the-myths-of-hospice>.

⁷⁵"American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Debunking the Myths of Hospice. American Hospice Foundation. <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/about-hospice-mainmenu-7/36-debunking-the-myths-of-hospice>

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷"For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980)Pg 2.

pronged team approach, with all parts of the team working together in order to provide the best care to the patient.

A typical hospice team will include 1) A Doctor and Registered Nurse to take care of medical and medicinal issues that might arise throughout the patient's time in hospice care, 2) A member of the psychology staff or other mental health professional to help the patient and his family with various issues that might arise around a patient's death, 3) a rabbi, to help with any spiritual or religious issues, 4) hospice volunteers, to help keep the hospice patient comfortable, and 5) the patient's family and friends⁷⁸ supporting him in the loneliest of human events: "the company of family and friends is a therapeutic presence and considered a very great mitzvah. It reassures the patient of his continuing worth as an individual and reinforces his feelings of being an integral part of the family and community".⁷⁹ "The gift of hospice is its capacity to help families see how much can be shared at the end of life through personal and spiritual connections often left behind."⁸⁰

In order for a patient to be eligible for hospice care, "most hospices have rules and regulations whereby the patient must have an expected life expectancy of six months or less to be eligible for admission."⁸¹ In addition to a prognosis, "Most hospices provide only comfort care, and many do not administer antibiotics or blood transfusions".⁸² These realities can further help clarify a patient's desires regarding

⁷⁸"For Jewish Families of the Seriously Ill." National Institute For Jewish Hospice (1980) Pg. 3

⁷⁹ Ibid. Pg 9

⁸⁰"American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Debunking the Myths of Hospice. American Hospice Foundation. <http://www.americanhospice.org/articles-mainmenu-8/about-hospice-mainmenu-7/36-debunking-the-myths-of-hospice>

⁸¹Rosner, Fred. *Biomedical Ethics and Jewish Law*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 2001. Page 126

⁸²Ibid. Pg 126

treatment, as the patient knows that once they are in hospice, doctors will no longer attempt to heal the patient but instead help the patient manage the symptoms and pain related to illness or infection.

If a patient does desire administration of antibiotics, blood transfusions, or other healing therapies they will, most likely, be ineligible for hospice care but instead may be eligible for palliative care. Palliative care "relieve[s] or alleviates symptoms without affecting the disease process".⁸³ "The goal of modern palliative care, for persons at any stage of a serious illness, is to achieve the best quality of life for patients and their families, consistent with their values."⁸⁴

The primary difference between palliative care and hospice care essentially boils down to two questions. 1) Does the patient have a prognosis of 6 months or less? 2) Does the patient want to stop treating the cause of the symptoms? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then that patient may be eligible for hospice care rather than palliative care. While hospice care and palliative care have many similarities, palliative care can potentially treat any chronically ill patient no matter their prognosis. One of the biggest struggles with palliative care and, to a slightly lesser extent, hospice care continues to be a lack of understanding on behalf of both medical professionals, as well as patients and their families, regarding the benefits of these programs, as well as an understanding of the religious and social ethics behind treatment options.⁸⁵

⁸³"American Hospice Foundation, Washington DC, USA." Hospice Care or Palliative Care: What's the Right Care for Me? American Hospice Foundation, n.d. Web.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Lucas, Sue. "Palliative Care: Issues and Challenges." World Health Organization, n.d. Web.<http://www.who.int/3by5/en/palliativecare_en.pdf>.

Bedside Service and Companion Commentary

Bedside service:

The following service is meant to be recited aloud by those at the bedside. Portions of the service can be read silently, if the reader wishes.

"Comfort, comfort My people, nachamu nachamu ami." (Isaiah, 40:1)

The prophet Isaiah offered these simple but profound words from God to the Jewish people after the Temple was destroyed and all hope seemed lost. For Isaiah, comfort existed in the belief that a better day was coming and in the certainty that good would triumph over evil.

Today, many of us struggle to find meaning during illness, death, divorce, violence, even natural disasters. While we may long for something as unwavering as Isaiah's faith, few of us have that. So we search for tools to help us confront the truth of hardship...

Meditation before beginning the service

"If you truly wish to help a person die well, learn to live well. If you really want to understand the message of dying, learn to see deeply into living. If you really want to know where you came from and where you are to go, pay attention to where — and who — you are. There is much we can learn when we attend to the dying". And always, the point is to attend to living.⁸⁶ – Rabbi Rami Shapiro

My God, the soul you have given me is pure.
You created it, You shaped it, You breathed it into me
And You protect it within me.
For as long as my soul is within me,
I offer thanks to You,
Adonai, my God
And God of my ancestors
Source of all creation, Sovereign of all souls
Praised are You, Adonai,
In whose hand is every living soul and the breath of humankind⁸⁷.
Baruch Atah Adonai, asher b'yado nefesh kol chai v'ruach kol b'sar ish.

⁸⁶ "Jewish Hospice Network Brochure." JFCS of Philadelphia, n.d. Web.
<http://www.ajfca.org/ajfca/uploads/File/JFCS_Philadelphia-Hospice_brochure.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Frishman, Elyse D. *Mishkan T'filah : A Reform Siddur : Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals, and Other Occasions of Public Worship*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007. Print.

Blessed are you, God, who frees the captive
Baruch Atah Adonai matir asurim

Praised are you, God, sovereign of the universe, who shares holiness with us
through Your mitzvot, and commands us to occupy ourselves with the words
of Torah.
*Baruch Atah Adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu
l'asok b'divrei torah*

Hear my cry, O God, heed my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to You; when my heart is faint, You lead me to a rock
that is high above me.
For You have been my refuge, a tower of strength against the enemy.
O that I might dwell in Your tent forever, take refuge under Your protecting wings.
Selah. (Psalm 61:1-4)

I know who is here,
and I know who you are,
and I speak to your heart:
There is no such thing as death.
It is a transitioning energy.
The most enduring and profound thing
on the planet can never be destroyed.
It is love.
Yet you feel somehow that it is gone.
But it is not, for that loved one
who is gone is still here.
All they have done is
to move between the veil and you.
The dreams that you are having
about them
are real;
the messages that you've received
are real,
and these loved ones are
here in spirit this night.
They sit next to you and
they cry out to you and they say:
"Do not go into sorrow for I am here
for the rest of your life."

-Lee Carroll⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Mentzel, Ulla, MA. "Spiritual Prayers for the Dying." *Spiritual Prayers for the Dying*. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.a-good-dying.com/spiritual-prayers.html>>

The following blessing can be read to the loved one by those at the bedside.

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָּךְ
יְאֵר יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִתְנֶכָּךְ
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה | פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם :

May God bless you and keep you
May God's countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you
May God bestow favor upon you and grant you peace (Num 6:24-26)

At the Place of the Sea⁸⁹

Have you come to the Red Sea place in your life
Where, in spite of all you can do,
There is no way out, there is no way back,
There is no other way but through?
Then wait on the Lord with a trust serene,
Till the night of your fear is gone;
He will send the winds, He will heap the floods,
When He says to your soul, "Go On!"

And His hand shall lead you through, clear through,
Ere the watery walls roll down;
No wave can touch you, no foe can smite,
No mightiest sea can drown.
The tossing billows may rear their crests,
Their foam at your feet may break,
But over their bed you shall walk dry-shod
In the path that your Lord shall make
In the morning watch, 'neath the lifted cloud,
You shall see but the Lord alone,
When He leads you forth from the place of the sea,
To a land that you have not known;
And your fears shall pass as your foes have passed
You shall no more be afraid;
You shall sing His praise in a better place,

⁸⁹ Greenberg, Rabbi Sidney. *A Treasury of Comfort A Source of Consolation, Hope, Courage and Guidance for Those Who Mourn*. N. Hollywood, CA: Melvin Powers Wilshire Book, 1954. Print. Pg 108

In a place that his hand hath made.

- *Annie Johnson Flint*

When Rabbi Bunam was lying on his deathbed, he said to his wife who wept bitterly, "Why dost thou weep? All my life has been given to me merely that I might learn to die"⁹⁰

Psalm 23

God is my shepherd; I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures:
Leads me beside still waters and restores my soul:
You lead me in the paths of righteousness for Your name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff – they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies:
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of God forever.

There is No Death – There's Immortality⁹¹

There is a plan far greater than the plan you know;
There is a landscape broader than the one you see.
There is a haven where storm-tossed souls may go-
You call it death – we, immortality.

You call it death – the seeming endless sleep;
We call it birth – the soul at last set free.
'Tis hampered not by time or space – you weep.
Why weep at death? 'Tis immortality

Farewell, dear voyageur – 'twill not be long.
Your work is done – now may peace rest with thee.
Your kindly thoughts and deeds – they will live on.
This is not death 'tis immortality.

Farewell, dear voyageur – the river winds and turns;
The cadence of your song wafts near to me,
And now you know the thing that all men learn:
There is no death – there's immortality
-*Anonymous*

⁹⁰ Ibid. 73

⁹¹ Ibid. 238

Hymn to the Soul⁹²

Beauty may wither
And beauty may die
But the soul of beauty
Endureth forever.

Flowers may wither
And flowers may die
But the soul of the flowers
Endureth forever

Lovers may wither
And lovers may die
But the soul of love
Endureth forever.

Mortals may wither
And mortals may die
But the soul which is God
Endureth forever!

- *Ruth Le Prade*

I think that I shall fade with ease
Melt into earth like snow
Be food for hungry, growing trees,
Or help the lilies grow.

And if my love should lonely walk
Quite of my nearness fain,
I may come back to her and talk
In liquid words of rain⁹³.
-*Countee Cullen*

Luce intellettuale peina d'amore,
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore

Light intellectual, full of love,
Love of true good full of gladness,
Gladness which transcends every sweetness⁹⁴
-*Dante*

⁹² Strong, Sydney. *We Believe in Immortality; Affirmations by One Hundred Men and Women*,. New York: Coward-McCann, 1929. Print. Page 3

⁹³ Ibid. Pg 16

⁹⁴ Ibid. Pg 110

Book of Life⁹⁵

All mankind is of one Author, and is one volume; when one Man dies, one chapter is not torn of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation; and His hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again, for that Library where very book shall lie open to one another. – *John Donne*

A Rose To the Living⁹⁶

A rose to the living is more than
Sumptuous wreaths to the dead;
In filling love's infinite store,
A rose to the living is more –
If graciously given before the
Hungering spirit is fled,
A rose to the living is more than
Sumptuous wreaths to the dead
- *Nixon Waterman*

You are with me. This I believe.
There's evil in the world. This I know.
When the world is bright,
I see You.
I reach You.
I speak to You.
When shadow swallows the light,
Inky darkness envelops my world
And I lose sight of You.
I speak to You with words I've always used,
But I lose my breath.
I yell for you using words written before me
But darkness fills my mouth and mutes my pleas for you.
The words I've always used aren't working.
Nothing seems to be working.
I have to find another way to connect.
The old ways aren't working.
I have to find new words.
Find new ways.
I have to move from this place.
Away from the darkness and silence and
Look for a light.

⁹⁵ Greenberg, Rabbi Sidney. *A Treasury of Comfort A Source of Consolation, Hope, Courage and Guidance for Those Who Mourn*. N. Hollywood, CA: Melvin Powers Wilshire Book, 1954. Print. Pg 240

⁹⁶ Ibid. Page 189

Listen for a noise.
I have to move from this place,
Toward new words
New meaning
A new perspective.
-Matthew Zerwekh

Life's Lesson⁹⁷

I learn, as the years roll onward
And I leave the past behind
That much I had counted sorrow
But proved that God is kind;
That many a flower I'd longed for
Had hidden thorn of pain
And many a rugged bypath
Led to the fields of ripened grain.
The clouds that cover the sunshine;
They cannot banish the sun,
And the earth shines out the brighter
When the weary rain is done.
We must stand in the deepest shadow
To see the clearest light;
And often through wrong's own darkness
Comes the welcome strength of Right.
-Anonymous

The soul would have no rainbow
Had the eyes no tears⁹⁸.
-John Vance Cheney

Is It Really the End? ⁹⁹

Is it really the end? The path is still clear.
The mists of life still beckon from afar
The sky is still blue, the grass green;
Autumn is coming.

I shall accept the judgment. My hear harbors no complaint.
How red were my sunsets, how clear my dawns!
And flowers smiled along my path
As I passed.
- Rachel

⁹⁷ Ibid. 89

⁹⁸ Ibid. 81

⁹⁹ Ibid. 79

To My Father¹⁰⁰

A giant pine, magnificent and old,
Stood staunch against the sky and all around
Shed beauty, grace, and power. Within its fold
Birds safely reared their young. The velvet ground
Beneath was so gentle, and the cooling shade
Gave cheer to passers-by. Its towering arms
A landmark stood, erect and unafraid,
As if to say, "Fear naught from life's alarms."

It fell one day. Where it had dauntless stood
Was loneliness and void. But men who passed
Paid tribute – said, "To know this life was good,
It left its mark on me. Its work stands fast."
And so it lives. Such life no bonds can hold –
This giant pine, magnificent and old.

- Georgia Harkness

God, what are we, that You have regard for us?
What are we, that You are mindful of us?
We are like a breath; our days are as a passing shadow;
We come and go like grass which in the morning shoots up, renewed,
And in the evening fades and withers.
You cause us to revert to dust, saying, "Return O mortal creatures!"
Would that we were wise, that we understood where we are going!
For when we die we carry nothing away; our glory does not accompany us.
Mark the whole-hearted and behold the upright; they shall have peace.
Adonai, You redeem the soul of Your servants,
And none who trust in You shall be desolate.¹⁰¹

Psalm 121

I lift my eyes to the mountains;
From where will my help come?
My help comes from Adonai,
Maker of heaven and earth.
God will not let your foot give way;
Your guardian will not slumber;
See, the guardian of Israel
Neither slumbers nor sleeps!
Adonai is your guardian,
Adonai is your protection

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 78

¹⁰¹ Frishman, Elyse D. *Mishkan T'filah : A Reform Siddur : Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals, and Other Occasions of Public Worship*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007. Print. Page 576

At your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you,
Nor the moon by night.
Adonai will guard you from all harm;
God will guard your life.
Adonai will guard your going and coming
Now and forever.

Psalm 16:8-11

I am ever mindful of Adonai's presence;
God is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.
So my heart rejoices,
My whole being exults,
And my body rests secure.
For You will not abandon me to Sheol,
Or let Your faithful one see the Pit.
You will teach me the path of life.
In Your presence in perfect joy;
Delights are ever in your right hand.

The following prayer may be recited by the patient or on behalf of the patient by family or friends.

My God and God of all who have gone before me, Author of life and death, I turn to You in trust.
Although I pray for life and health, I know that I am mortal.
If my life must soon come to an end, let me die, I pray, at peace.
If only my hands were clean and my heart pure!
I confess that I have committed sins and left much undone, yet I know also the good that I did or tried to do.
May my acts of goodness give meaning to my life, and may my errors be forgiven.
Protector of the helpless, watch over my loved ones.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit; redeem it, O God of mercy and truth....

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad—Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is one.¹⁰²

A Vidui confession on behalf of a patient unable to speak

Chaplain, family member, or friend says: The Jewish tradition provides us with rituals to sanctify the passing of time and to mark life's transitions.

¹⁰² Mezler, Rabbi Joseph B. "Peace of Mind." *Jewish Lights: Peace of Mind*. Jewish Lights, n.d. Web. <<http://www.jewishlights.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=OP>>.

Just as each year we say a confessional prayer, a *vidui*, on Yom Kippur to mark the transition from year to year, so too we will mark this transition with a *vidui*.

We pray that this *vidui* will prove to signify a transition to new life, even as we know that it may mark life's final transition (Based on the *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah* 338).)

Chaplain, family member, or friend says:: Since (name) is unable to speak, I will recite the *vidui* prayer on their behalf:

Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, we acknowledge that all life is in Your hands. May it be Your will to send complete healing to (name). But, if the end is imminent, may it come with love, with peace, and with understanding.

In life, our heart asks for forgiveness, in death let it be your will that we are forgiven. Forgive and release (name) from any hurts or wrongdoings done consciously or unconsciously. Grant him/her shelter in the shadow of Your wings and a portion in *Gan Eden*.

Guardian of the Bereaved protect his/her family, for his/her soul and their's are intertwined. In Your hand he places his/her spirit. True God, You have redeemed him/her.

Chant together:

Shema yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai echad.

Barukh shem kivod malkhuto le'olam va'ed.

Adonai hu ha'Elohim

Repeat:

Adonai hu ha'Elohim

Sing or say quietly to the ill person directly:

At your right is Michael, at your left is Gabriel, before you is Uriel, and behind you is Raphael, and above your head God's presence dwells. Be strong and find courage; do not fear, and do not dismay - God is with you wherever you may go.

Adonai yishmot tzeytkha u'voekha mey'atah ve'ad olam.

May God guard your going out and coming in, from now until eternity.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ "Vidui for One Unable to Speak" -- Jewish Ritual. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/vidui-one-unable-speak>>

Commentary to the Bedside Service Contained in Mobile Application

The bedside service that I have composed is targeted at family members sitting at a loved one's (who is in hospice care and actively dying) bedside. The reason I chose to create a liturgy such as this one is because I have found a lacuna in resources for someone who is in this. There are plenty of prayers and prayer resources for the patient who is healing, or who is coming to grips with a terminal diagnosis, and there are plenty of resources for the time after a loved one passes away, but there seem to be a lack of resources for this "limbo". I call it limbo because the loved one is neither fully alive, nor fully dead. In traditional Jewish parlance we may refer to this person as a *goses*, but since a *goses* can only technically be a *goses* for three days before they die, I've chosen to avoid this term altogether as this puts no time restriction upon when this service may be of use.

I chose to begin the service with a meditation to be read silently, as it gives the pray-er a purposefully quiet and inward-directed time before they begin praying out loud. This is probably the first time the pray-er has prayed at a bedside of a dying loved one and it is often an emotion-laden and uncomfortable time. There are no social norms, nor directions regarding what to do at the bedside of a dying loved one and so, this meditation gives the pray-er a centering point from which they may begin to pray.

The reason I included morning prayers from *Mishkan T'fillah* in the beginning is not because I envision this service to be recited in the morning, but rather because of the message of the prayer itself. The first two prayers serve to both help the pray-er and the patient to remember from where their life force comes, and then

prays for action from God. To some, the journey to death is a long and painful one, marked by both a deep sadness as well as a feeling of relief that a loved one is no longer in the pain they had been in previously. The prayer “matir asurim” envisions a patient whose family has made their peace with death, and are praying for their loved one’s suffering to end in God’s time.

The excerpt from Psalm 61 is meant to provide some comfort to the pray-er, and to remind them of the power and strength of something greater than they are. Oftentimes in loss, the loved ones “left behind” lose site of anything beyond their own pain of loss. This prayer helps them to see beyond their pain.

Should traditional Jewish texts and prayers not speak to the pray-er, the following resource is a modern and non-traditional text that can help to provide some comfort to those who find deeper comfort in possibly more “accessible” texts for their modern sensibilities. This poem does not invoke God, nor is it necessarily a Jewish text, but one that might help the pray-er to reframe the imminent death of their loved one not in terms of an end to a life, but merely another step on the spiritual journey.

Oftentimes, a loved one at the bedside of a terminal patient may find himself at a loss for words to speak to the patient. The priestly benediction, while admittedly used in a non-traditional way, helps the pray-er comfort their loved one

in a way that is both comfortable, but also allows them to tell their loved one “may god bless you” without saying those exact words extemporaneously.*

The final two English resources were included for similar reasons the previous one was; they are accessible to the not-particularly-religious Jew who finds himself desiring to pray Jewishly, but finding traditional text to be uncomfortable for any number of reasons. These two resources are more direct in their reference to God, and in their Judaism respectively, but are still accessible and “pleasing” to read.

The last page of this service contains a *chatimah*, of sorts, in Psalm 23. Even for the “lapsed Jew”, Psalm 23 will most likely be known to be the Psalm recited in association with death. This Psalm itself evokes beautiful and peaceful imagery and comfort language in relation to God, and a service of this nature felt not-quite-complete without the inclusion of this Psalm at the end. The final reading, “There is No Death – There’s Immortality” felt as though it complimented Psalm 23’s God and comfort language, while allowing the pray-er to say goodbye to their loved one without having to utter the words unprompted (which can also be very difficult and emotionally-wrought even for someone wholly prepared for a loved-one’s death).

While this service was meant to be relatively brief (as an extended time praying in this way would surly leave both the pray-er and the patient exhausted), it

* I have found in my chaplaincy work that Jewish patients and their families tend to be uncomfortable both with the ideas of extemporaneous prayer and language that may ‘feel’ Christian, although the language is not explicitly Christian, nor explicitly Jewish.

was meant to provide a number of meaningful and useful prayers and readings to provide comfort to both the terminal patient, as well as his family. Losing a loved one (even when we know it is imminent) is an extremely difficult time for a family, and this service is aimed at providing words of support and comfort to those in search of such words.

Additional Prayer Resources found in Mobile Application

Hymn to the Soul¹⁰⁴

Beauty may wither
And beauty may die
But the soul of beauty
Endureth forever.

Flowers may wither
And flowers may die
But the soul of the flowers
Endureth forever

Lovers may wither
And lovers may die
But the soul of love
Endureth forever.

Mortals may wither
And mortals may die
But the soul which is God
Endureth forever!

- *Ruth Le Prade*

I think that I shall fade with ease
Melt into earth like snow
Be food for hungry, growing trees,
Or help the lilies grow.

And if my love should lonely walk
Quite of my nearness fain,
I may come back to her and talk
In liquid words of rain¹⁰⁵.
-*Countee Cullen*

Luce intellettuale peina d'amore,
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia
Letizia che trascende ogni dolore

Light intellectual, full of love,
Love of true good full of gladness,

¹⁰⁴ Strong, Sydney. *We Believe in Immortality; Affirmations by One Hundred Men and Women*,. New York: Coward-McCann, 1929. Print. Page 3

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Pg 16

Gladness which transcends every sweetness¹⁰⁶

-Dante

Book of Life¹⁰⁷

All mankind is of one Author, and is one volume; when one Man dies, one chapter is not torn of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation; and His hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again, for that Library where every book shall lie open to one another. – *John Donne*

A Rose To the Living¹⁰⁸

A rose to the living is more than
Sumptuous wreaths to the dead;
In filling love's infinite store,
A rose to the living is more –
If graciously given before the
Hungering spirit is fled,
A rose to the living is more than
Sumptuous wreaths to the dead
- *Nixon Waterman*

You are with me. This I believe.
There's evil in the world. This I know.
When the world is bright,
I see You.
I reach You.
I speak to You.
When shadow swallows the light,
Inky darkness envelops my world
And I lose sight of You.
I speak to You with words I've always used,
But I lose my breath.
I yell for you using words written before me
But darkness fills my mouth and mutes my pleas for you.
The words I've always used aren't working.
Nothing seems to be working.
I have to find another way to connect.
The old ways aren't working.
I have to find new words.
Find new ways.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Pg 110

¹⁰⁷ Greenberg, Rabbi Sidney. *A Treasury of Comfort A Source of Consolation, Hope, Courage and Guidance for Those Who Mourn*. N. Hollywood, CA: Melvin Powers Wilshire Book, 1954. Print. Pg 240

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Page 189

I have to move from this place.
Away from the darkness and silence and
Look for a light.
Listen for a noise.
I have to move from this place,
Toward new words
New meaning
A new perspective.

-Matthew Zerwekh

Life's Lesson¹⁰⁹

I learn, as the years roll onward
And I leave the past behind
That much I had counted sorrow
But proved that God is kind;
That many a flower I'd longed for
Had hidden thorn of pain
And many a rugged bypath
Led to the fields of ripened grain.
The clouds that cover the sunshine;
They cannot banish the sun,
And the earth shines out the brighter
When the weary rain is done.
We must stand in the deepest shadow
To see the clearest light;
And often through wrong's own darkness
Comes the welcome strength of Right.

-Anonymous

The soul would have no rainbow
Had the eyes no tears¹¹⁰.

-John Vance Cheney

Is It Really the End? ¹¹¹

Is it really the end? The path is still clear.
The mists of life still beckon from afar
The sky is still blue, the grass green;
Autumn is coming.

I shall accept the judgment. My hear harbors no complaint.
How red were my sunsets, how clear my dawns!
And flowers smiled along my path

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 89

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 81

¹¹¹ Ibid. 79

As I passed.

- Rachel

To My Father¹¹²

A giant pine, magnificent and old,
Stood staunch against the sky and all around
Shed beauty, grace, and power. Within its fold
Birds safely reared their young. The velvet ground
Beneath was so gentle, and the cooling shade
Gave cheer to passers-by. Its towering arms
A landmark stood, erect and unafraid,
As if to say, "Fear naught from life's alarms."

It fell one day. Where it had dauntless stood
Was loneliness and void. But men who passed
Paid tribute – said, "To know this life was good,
It left its mark on me. Its work stands fast."
And so it lives. Such life no bonds can hold –
This giant pine, magnificent and old.

- Georgia Harkness

God, what are we, that You have regard for us?
What are we, that You are mindful of us?
We are like a breath; our days are as a passing shadow;
We come and go like grass which in the morning shoots up, renewed,
And in the evening fades and withers.
You cause us to revert to dust, saying, "Return O mortal creatures!"
Would that we were wise, that we understood where we are going!
For when we die we carry nothing away; our glory does not accompany us.
Mark the wholehearted and behold the upright; they shall have peace.
Adonai, You redeem the soul of Your servants,
And none who trust in You shall be desolate.¹¹³

Psalm 121

I lift my eyes to the mountains;
From where will my help come?
My help comes from Adonai,
Maker of heaven and earth.
God will not let your foot give way;
Your guardian will not slumber;
See, the guardian of Israel

¹¹² Ibid. 78

¹¹³ Frishman, Elyse D. *Mishkan T'filah : A Reform Siddur : Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals, and Other Occasions of Public Worship*. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007. Print. Page 576

Neither slumbers nor sleeps!
Adonai is your guardian,
Adonai is your protection
At your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you,
Nor the moon by night.
Adonai will guard you from all harm;
God will guard your life.
Adonai will guard your going and coming
Now and forever.

Psalm 16:8-11

I am ever mindful of Adonai's presence;
God is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.
So my heart rejoices,
My whole being exults,
And my body rests secure.
For You will not abandon me to Sheol,
Or let Your faithful one see the Pit.
You will teach me the path of life.
In Your presence in perfect joy;
Delights are ever in your right hand.

The following prayer may be recited by the patient or on behalf of the patient by family or friends.

My God and God of all who have gone before me, Author of life and death, I turn to You in trust.
Although I pray for life and health, I know that I am mortal.
If my life must soon come to an end, let me die, I pray, at peace.
If only my hands were clean and my heart pure!
I confess that I have committed sins and left much undone, yet I know also the good that I did or tried to do.
May my acts of goodness give meaning to my life, and may my errors be forgiven.
Protector of the helpless, watch over my loved ones.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit; redeem it, O God of mercy and truth....

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad—Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is one.¹¹⁴

A Vidui confession on behalf of a patient unable to speak

¹¹⁴ Mezler, Rabbi Joseph B. "Peace of Mind." *Jewish Lights: Peace of Mind*. Jewish Lights, n.d. Web. <<http://www.jewishlights.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=OP>>.

Chaplain, family member, or friend says: The Jewish tradition provides us with rituals to sanctify the passing of time and to mark life's transitions.

Just as each year we say a confessional prayer, a *vidui*, on Yom Kippur to mark the transition from year to year, so too we will mark this transition with a *vidui*.

We pray that this *vidui* will prove to signify a transition to new life, even as we know that it may mark life's final transition (Based on the *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah* 338).)

Chaplain, family member, or friend says:: Since (name) is unable to speak, I will recite the *vidui* prayer on their behalf:

Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, we acknowledge that all life is in Your hands. May it be Your will to send complete healing to (name). But, if the end is imminent, may it come with love, with peace, and with understanding.

In life, our heart asks for forgiveness, in death let it be your will that we are forgiven. Forgive and release (name) from any hurts or wrongdoings done consciously or unconsciously. Grant him/her shelter in the shadow of Your wings and a portion in *Gan Eden*.

Guardian of the Bereaved protect his/her family, for his/her soul and their's are intertwined. In Your hand he places his/her spirit. True God, You have redeemed him/her.

Chant together:

Shema yisrael Adonai Eloheynu Adonai echad.

Barukh shem kivod malkhuto le'olam va'ed.

Adonai hu ha'Elohim

Repeat:

Adonai hu ha'Elohim

Sing or say quietly to the ill person directly:

At your right is Michael, at your left is Gabriel, before you is Uriel, and behind you is Raphael, and above your head God's presence dwells. Be strong and find courage; do not fear, and do not dismay - God is with you wherever you may go.

Adonai yishmot tzeytkha u'voekha mey'atah ve'ad olam.

May God guard your going out and coming in, from now until eternity.¹¹⁵

A Prayer of Trust¹¹⁶

Can be said upon the decision to remove a loved one from life support

Today is the day that I have spoken for my beloved mother/father even as she/he spoke for me when I was a child without words, without understanding. He/She anticipated my needs and protected me from harm when I was yet unable to negotiate my life independently.

Today she/he is no longer capable of speech, of comprehension, of expressing his/her love for me as she/he has always done through words and through actions.

Today I have spoken as I promised I would. I have articulated his/her wishes as she/he has articulated them to me over these past few years. We both hoped that this day would never come. We both hoped that Your will would be done quietly, peacefully. But that was not meant to be. The inevitable outcome of his/her illness was postponed by hopes and dreams and medical technology. We know today that nothing can help. The life that was acceptable to her/him is no longer accessible. The process of dying is being prolonged.

Today I have spoken as I promised. I have fulfilled the mitzvah, the commandment, of honoring my father/mother.

He/ She has lived with integrity, has acted righteously and has spoken truthfully. Take her/him then, unto Your sanctuary, let her/him repose upon Your holy mountain.

Originally published in Sh'ma, January, 1999. Used by permission of the author.

From Darkness to Light

In the darkest parts of our selves, we find the holiest sparks. When we allow them their voice, when we set them free, they begin to tell us their own story, the one we need to hear. Then those darkest voices can lead us back home, can lead us into the light.

Dear God, I feel so ugly, So very alone. Wrapped in darkness. Swirling emotions trap me. No exit. Just this blackness. This hideous self.

¹¹⁵ "Vidui for One Unable to Speak" -- Jewish Ritual. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/vidui-one-unable-speak>>

¹¹⁶ "A Prayer of Trust." A Prayer of Trust -- Jewish Ritual. Ritualwell.org, n.d. Web.
<<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/prayer-trust>>.

I walk alone right now. The circles of my despair have been so familiar. No one knows this place the way I do.
Again and again I traverse this jagged landscape.
Please God, Help me to know that I am not alone. If I can just breathe through these moments. This darkness will not last forever. You are already whispering Your love for me.
Quiet me enough to feel Your nearness. You are so close –
Just an arm's reach away.
My steps are small, But I am learning. Teach me God, the way back to myself.
Guide me. Let me feel Your hand, so gently on my back.
Soothe me through my fear Cradle me. Renew my strength.
You see the light in me even when I am blind. Stay here with me now, dear God.
Until this darkness melts away.¹¹⁷

Breathing Praise ¹¹⁸

Every breath is your praise.
Nishmat kol hay tevareh.

The infant breath, quick and shallow,
from lungs so new to the task.
The tree breath, a fluttering susurrantion
of stomata on leaves, opening and closing.
Every breath is your praise.
Nishmat kol hay tevareh.

Max's last breath, so quiet
I did not see which it was,
as I held her head
and stroked her face,
long after it was taken.
Every breath is your praise.
Nishmat kol hay tevareh.

Dolphin breath, spider breath, jellyfish breath,
laughing breaths, sobbing breaths.
The oceans, churning oxygen through their deeps,
we, filling our lungs with the molecules
of generations before us
and those long after we are gone.
This green, blue, moving, breathing earth.
Every breath is your praise.

¹¹⁷ Campbell, Talia. "From Darkness to Light." *Ritualwell*. Ritualwell.org, n.d. Web.

¹¹⁸ "Breathing Praise." -- Jewish Ritual. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/breathing-praise>>.

Nishmat kol hay tevareh.

An Excerpt from "From Mi Shebeirach to Birkat HaGomel" ¹¹⁹

We pray,
Mi Shebeirach,
to the source of blessing
for healing of mind
healing of body
of spirit
wishing,
hoping,
begging
that it happen
speedily
painlessly
and fully...
that life should return to the way it was
before the illness,
before the injury,
before the brokenness...
or we pray
that healing come in different ways...
wishing,
hoping,
begging for relief,
for release,
for ease and liberation from suffering

In and of itself,
the latitude
we give to a definition of healing...
can bring us the comfort,
can bring us the healing we so desire.

A Prayer for Wholeness¹²⁰

Oh World of Miracles, you are supremely broken.

¹¹⁹ "From MiSheberach to Birkat HaGomel" -- Jewish Ritual. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/mi-shebeirach-birkat-hagomel>>

¹²⁰ Jewish Ritual. N.P. n.d. Web.
<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/prayer-wholeness>

Your shards are painful and cutting.
 Your pieces are scattered across the globe, aching for wholeness.
 We seek justice and peace in you.
 We long and love, divine sparks igniting fires within us.
 We tend the embers and feed the flames, at times nearly consuming ourselves and our neighbors.
 We pray for--no, we demand--open heartedness and resilience.
 We seek grace and peace.
 We pursue justice.
 May the fragments of our world and the brokenness of our souls be blessed with strength, wisdom, and compassion.
 May we be whole again, quickly, in our days.

Birkat HaGomel¹²¹

I bless you God, the Holy One, who cares for the world. With goodness, you protect me for all I am and for all I hope to be. So I give thanks for your mercy.

May God who has been gracious to you protect you with all that is good. *Kol tov selah. Kol tov sela.* We bless you God the holy one and all that is good. *Kol tov sela.*

El Na Rafa Na La. El Na Rafa Na Lah. (Num 12:13)

Heal him/her, O God, and he/she shall be healed; grant our loved one a perfect healing from all his/her afflictions.¹²²

May the doctors and nurses be skillful and gentle
 May _____'s pain be stilled
 May _____'s anguish be softened¹²³

For the patient

My God and God of all who have gone before me, Author of life and death, I turn to You in trust. Although I pray for life and health, I know that I am mortal. If my life must soon come to an end, let me die, I pray, at peace.

¹²¹ "Healing Service" – Jewish Ritual. N.P. n.d. Web.

<http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/healing-service>

¹²² Polish, David, and W. Gunther Plaut. [Ma'gele Tsedek] = Rabbi's Manual. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1988. Print. Pg 191

¹²³ Ibid. 192

If only my hands were clean and my heart pure! I confess that I have committed sins and left much undone, yet I know also the good that I did or tried to do. May my acts of goodness give meaning to my life, and may my errors be forgiven.

Protector of the bereaved and the helpless, watch over my loved ones. Into your hand I commit my spirit; redeem it, O God of mercy and truth.¹²⁴

"The King of Kings, almighty God, is not like a human king. When a king of flesh and blood orders his armies into battle, he sees only the large effects, the massive logistics and the great goal. He does not know the individual men. They are not distinguishable one from the other. They are human machines that carry rifles, and perform a function. If he loses half a regiment, he sincerely regrets the mass death. But he mourns no individual human being.

Not so is the King of Kings. He is Master of the world, yet he cares for each individual life. Men are not machines or ciphers. They are human beings. When God's soldiers die He mourns, as it were, each man. When a man dies, His own Name is diminished, His own sanctity lessened. His Kingdom experiences a terrible vacancy. God suffers, as it were, just as the human mourner suffers."¹²⁵

-S.Y. Agnon

¹²⁴ Ibid 108

¹²⁵ Lamm, Maurice. "The Fundamental Jewishness of Jewish Hospice." Hospice for the Jewish Community (n.d.): 9-15. Print. Page 9

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