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T'filat Om

A Creative Exploration into Kabbalat
Shabbat

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Introduction

Our tradition today offers us many ways to connect to God, including mindfulness, meditation, and prayer. It is through these methods that many of us have found a stillness in our hearts and a deeper connection to something or someone larger than ourselves. How can we use these practices to enhance our relationship with our liturgy and our worship experiences? Are mindfulness practices and prayers mutually exclusive, *or* can we use one to help us with the other?

Rabbinic tradition connects the three patriarchs to our daily prayer practice (y. Berakhot 4:1, 7a-b; b. Berakhot 26b). Genesis 19:27 narrates that Abraham went out early in the morning to the place where he had stood before God. This verse serves as the Rabbis' reasoning for having a Shacharit service. For Mincha, they pull from Genesis 24:63, that Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening. For our Ma'ariv service, they use Genesis 28:11, Jacob came to a certain place where, according to rabbinic interpretation, he encountered God (*vayifga bamakom*) and stayed there all night because the sun was about to set. He took a stone and placed it under his head and laid down to sleep.

In our source text for Shacharit, Abraham initiates his conversation with God. It can be scary to begin a conversation with the Holy One like Abraham does. Using God-language is difficult and oftentimes uncomfortable. In our Mincha text, Isaac initiates the prayer. He is mindful about deepening his relationship with the Eternal. In a contemporary parallel, this might be us actively going to shul for services. In the Ma'ariv source text, Jacob stumbles upon God when he was not expecting it. For us, this might look like a spontaneous prayer when we experience something wonderful or difficult.

Judaism is rich in liturgical resources, yet there is no one true definition of what prayer is.

Jay Michaelson writes:

It's very surprising for people to learn that very few rabbis, Jewish philosophers, or theologians really have a conventional view of prayer, namely, that we ask for something and God gives it to us or doesn't.¹

Not everyone who enters a sanctuary is spiritually ready to engage with prayer. That is why Judaism requires intentionality and concentration in prayer. In the Mishneh Torah, Chapter 4:15 of the section Prayer and the Priestly Blessing, Maimonides teaches us,

Any prayer uttered without mental concentration is not prayer. If a service has been recited without such concentration, it must be recited again devoutly. A person finds that his thoughts are confused, and his mind is distracted: He may not pray till he has recovered his mental composure.

In other words, Maimonides advocates for intentionality in our prayer. It is not enough to just chant the words of our Siddur; we must also maintain a certain level of *kavanah*. This is not the only example of our tradition encouraging us to pray with our hearts in addition to the words that are on the page.

1 Samuel 1:13 shows us how we can use concentration to pray from the heart. “Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard.” A barren Hannah, unable to form the words of her prayer, looked inwards, to let her heart express what her lips could not. Eli, who understood prayer to be verbal, mistook Hannah for being drunk, and yelled at her for her actions. When Hannah explained her intentions, Eli understood

¹ Jay Michaelson, cited in Mike Comins, *Making Prayer Real: Leading Jewish Spiritual Voices on the Difficulty of Prayer and What to Do About It* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2010), 39.

and prayed that her prayers would be answered. From this text, we can see how Judaism acknowledges that intense devotion can be used to aid us in our prayers.

Judaism speaks volumes on how we must recite our liturgy. It speaks to the timing of our prayers and the formulation of our praises, and it also speaks to the importance of *kavanah* in our worship experiences.

One way that we can practice mindfulness in our prayers today is through meditation. Rabbi Sam Feinsmith provides a very helpful definition of how meditation and our experience in the synagogue are connected: “Regular mindfulness meditation practice helps us to begin to see the hidden, subtle mental habits that inhibit our capacity to be present with ourselves and the people in our lives.”² To this point, the Baal Shem Tov once taught, “Truly, you are where your mind is.” If our minds are always focused on the baggage we bring with us into the sanctuary, our ability to connect to the Holy One through prayer becomes harder. However, as Rabbi Feinsmith and the Baal Shem Tov suggest, if we offer the space for meditation in prayer, we can reconfigure our hearts and our minds into a space of intentionality.

Rabbi Feinsmith further elaborates, “Mindfulness practice in a Jewish framework is an experiential venture that stands to open a gateway to the kinds of sacred experience that cannot adequately be conveyed in words.” Throughout any service, we offer praise, we sing psalms, and we chant. But if we, as clergy, allow our congregants to sit in the silence...something powerful might just happen.

² Sam Feinsmith, “What is Jewish meditation?” My Jewish Learning, June 19, 2020. Retrieved December 20, 2022, from <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-is-jewish-meditation/>

These two buzzwords, mindfulness, and meditation, seem to be interchangeable with contemporary liberal worship experiences. More and more, a focused intentionality as a prayer technique seems to be infiltrating our prayer spaces, leaving some excited and some disappointed or even worse, angry, and frustrated. Rashi on Genesis Rabbah 60:14 tells us that to meditate means to pray. Is Rashi correct that meditation and praying are synonymous?

Rabbi Jamie Korngold understands the value of meditation and its connection to prayer, saying:

One of the difficulties of prayer is getting to a place where we are still enough and connected enough to pray... There are all these beautiful psalms that are supposed to lead us up to a contemplated, quiet place. Except that for so many of us, they don't do that. They lie there dead on the page.³

When I was sitting in the sanctuary in high school, with my dean staring at me, I could not reach a place of contemplation. I could not let the words sweep me away, drawing me closer to the Holy One. As is true for many of us, that needs to be experienced organically.

Integrating the silence and meditation into our worship experience is not always easy. Whether it is because of the music that is cued too early during the Amidah, or an element being off for us in that moment, it does not always happen. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner understands this struggle. Appealing to Rav Zalman Schachter-Shlomi, he notes,

Another Zalman teaching is that when you are done praying, you need to sit down and be still, because that's as much a part of the prayer as when you are making noise. Zalman says that it may or may not be true that God answers prayers, but most of us hang up before we give God a chance to answer.⁴

Instant gratification is the antithesis of prayer. We need the Holy One to answer our petitions immediately, or we lose interest in that relationship. Mindfulness and meditation for both Rabbis

³ Jamie Korngold, cited in Comins, 71.

⁴ Lawrence Kushner, cited in Comins, 77.

Kushner and Korngold is an internal practice that opens you up to a deeper prayer experience. It takes time and an open heart, but if done correctly, it allows us space to be introspective and contemplative. It is a skill that is not easily attained, and that many of us struggle with achieving. However, Kushner believes that if we achieve this mindset of being silent and opening ourselves up to our environment, we will better understand how to pray.

We have seen that meditation can closely correlate with our prayer tradition. Whether it is the Psalms that open up Kabbalat Shabbat or the repetition of the “lai-lai-lais” at the end of a prayer, Judaism has carved out many ways in which we can utilize mindfulness and meditation in our worship experience, proving that these two practices are in fact not mutually exclusive.

Creating a prayer practice for ourselves, in whatever form that takes, is hard work. It requires us to be vulnerable. For some, prayer looks a lot like meditation, a practice of turning inward and creating space for introspection. For others, it looks like traditional prayer modalities, an external practice of praise, thanksgiving, and beseeching.

The art of praying is not an opposition between traditional Orthodox practices and liberal Reform experiences, but rather something else altogether. Prayer is a spiritual practice that is used to find comfort in times of trouble, to fulfill a religious obligation, and to connect us to the larger Jewish community.

When I started my journey of prayer, I could never have guessed that I would find it in brush strokes and creative writing. I always assumed that there was a right way and a wrong way to pray. The right way was sitting down in the pews and actively participating in services; the wrong way was anything else. Today, my relationship to prayer is completely different. It is a

chance for me to use my art and creativity to work through abstract theologies and express the praise that sits within me. This is why I created my capstone.

When I was deciding what I wanted to work on, I kept coming back to my love of prayer, but how hard it is for me to sit through services. In our modern worship experiences, there is ongoing innovation with respect to the music. While we have also seen creative *kavannot*, poetry, and liturgical texts, there has been little to no innovation for prayer-goers who relate to Jewish theology and prayer in a visual manner.

As someone who processes information visually rather than auditorily, staring at a monochromatic book becomes a challenge. Let me add to this my struggles with dyslexia, and now I have nothing in the Siddur to capture my attention during Shabbat services. That is why I wanted to turn to art. I wanted to use bold colors, intriguing lighting, and visually stimulating images that would allow congregants to “fall” into the prayer. My Siddur becomes a positive distraction for those who find themselves daydreaming during services. The art becomes a topic of conversation when services are over, and it can be used as an educational tool. The liturgy I have written encourages those using my Siddur to consider the prayers of *their* heart. My hope for this Siddur is that it is interactive. I want people to find themselves in the brushstrokes and God in the text.

Prayer is a journey, and connectedness is the destination. There have been countless new modalities when it comes to our worship experiences (e.g., meditation minyans, tot shabbats, etc.). Even though the music is compelling and has at times drawn me in, I know that as a prayer-goer, I have needed more. I hope that every synagogue that is interested in innovating their prayer space will consider new means of worship, including visual t’fillah.

Crafter, Designer, Maker of all that is good –
You who fashioned us in Your image,
We praise Your name for the gift of creation,
Which You have instilled in us.
Blessed is the One who makes each of us unique in Your world.
אלוהי אני מברכת אותך כי הנשמה שנתת בי היא ייחודית
My God, I bless you because the soul You gave to me is unique.

Shabbat Candles



A Talmudic tradition (b. Shabbat 35b, m. Sukkah 5:5) maintains that during the late Second Temple era various methods were used to announce publicly that Shabbat had arrived, one of which was through six intermittent shofar blasts. The first three blasts were to inform those working in the fields to stop their work, to tell the shopkeepers to close up shop, and to tell those that were home that it was time to light the Shabbat lamp.

From these shofar blasts, we learn that the bringing in of the Sabbath was done both in a public manner and privately at home. Today, in ultra-orthodox neighborhoods like Meah She'arim, a siren goes off to let everyone know that Shabbat has arrived. This siren acts much like the shofar used during the Second Temple era.

The act of lighting Shabbat candles is a tradition that dates back to the early rabbis. According to the Reform siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*,

The mitzvah of kindling Shabbat lights in the home is an early rabbinic practice (*M. Shabbat 2:1ff.*) The Shabbat blessing is first recorded in the ninth-century prayerbook, *Seder Rav Amram*. Lighting Shabbat candles as a part of the synagogue is an innovation of Reform Judaism.⁵

⁵ *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2007), 120.

Whether we are in synagogue or at home, many of us light two candles before saying the prayer. The tradition of using two candles can be sourced in texts such as Shulchan Aruch, which tells us.

One should take care to make a beautiful candle/lamp and there are those who place two wicks in this lamp, with the intent that one light recall [the command] “Remember” and the other, [the command] “Observe.”

Moses Isserles’ gloss: There are also those who light three or even four lights, which is their custom. You can always add to the light with more lights for additional family members, or for whatever reason, but you can never subtract.

(Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 263:1)

The Shulchan Aruch notes the custom observed by some of lighting two lights, recalling the two versions of the Shabbat commandment in Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12, the former beginning with the word *zachor* (“Remember”), while the latter begins with the word *shamor* (“Observe”):

זְכוֹר אֶת-יְוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

שָׁמֹר אֶת-יְוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

Protect the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Eternal your God has commanded you.

(Deuteronomy 5:12).

In more traditional families, the women are the ones responsible for lighting the candles. Even though lighting candles is a timebound mitzvah, a category from which women are typically exempted, this is an obligation that many take on. The halachic code, Arba'ah Turim (Tur, written by Jacob ben Asher), offers an explanation for why women are “commanded” to take on this mitzvah more than men:

[Both men and women are commanded to light,] but women are more commanded than men, as it says in the Midrash: since she [Eve, the first woman] extinguished the lamp of the world, meaning she caused the death of the first man [Adam]. And the Rambam [Moses Maimonides] explains [that women are more obligated] because they are found at home and they take care of household needs.

(Tur, Orach Chaim 1:263)

According to Jacob ben Asher and Maimonides, women are more obligated to kindle the Shabbat lights, though they disagree about the reason. For Jacob ben Asher, it is a punishment. For Maimonides, it is because women were usually at home, and it was easier for them to do it. Within the Reform Movement, both men and women will light the candles and recite the prayer.

When creating this piece of art, I wanted it to represent the transition of light to dark and back to light. I placed the candles in the frame so that the light and darkness could envelop the candles. I wanted the viewer to feel like time had stopped and that everything from the outside world had paused for just a moment. On the right, there is a large “swoosh.” I wanted that area to give you the feeling of your hands gathering in the light from the candles. This piece of art is about transitioning away from your week and your grievances by focusing for just a moment on the holiness of Shabbat.

It is a custom that after you have lit the candles and recited the blessing, you also say a prayer for your family, friends, and even yourself. This is a practice I often take on myself. I let this ritual help me calm my mind when it is constantly racing at a thousand beats per minute. When I light these candles, this is my chance to have my own space and speak my mind to the Holy Energy of the Universe. I hope that when someone looks at this piece, they can pause and think about the one thing that is truly important to them, the relationships in their lives, including their relationship with God. I hope that this piece sets the tone for the service, saying that it will be different, reflective, and a chance for meditation.

Shiru Ladonai



Psalm 96, which begins with the words *Shiru ladonai*, is one of the seven psalms (95-99, 29, 92-93) that Ashkenazic Jews recite during Kabbalat Shabbat. The psalm exhorts its audience to sing out praises to God who created and presides over all the world in holiness and justice. The Psalms are traditionally attributed to King David. The medieval biblical commentator David Kimhi (RaDaK), suggested that David composed this psalm when he brought the Ark up to Jerusalem.

Midrash Tehillim 96:1 connects the three appearances in this psalm of the imperative *shiru* to the three times a day that Jews pray, Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma'ariv.

In creating this piece of art, I wanted the music to feel like it was coming from the streets and the residents of this little area. The town is non-descript; it could be anywhere and for anyone. This way everyone could see themselves in this painting. I played off the themes of David rejoicing as the Ark was being brought to Jerusalem. I used vibrant colors to represent the excitement of this moment and the musical notes to show that the music is rising not just from the people in this town but from us as well. Our voices rise in song as we praise God with Psalm 96. What follows is my own creative response to the psalm, a *kavanah*:

Bless, laud, exult, and praise –
With all of our hearts, we cry out to You,
The Holy One who has given us music,
To proclaim our love for You –
We raise our voices to every nation,
To all peoples, to all without hope!
You are ETERNAL,
Held in awe by the Divine Council,
Whose majesty reigns supreme.
Let the mighty oaks know before whom they stand,
And let the vast oceans know their creator!
All the earth will sing out to You,
Divine Conductor of the infinite symphony,
The one who arranges our voices,
And puts life into order.
Blessed are You, who has given us song by which to praise You!

In the *kavanah* that I wrote, I wanted to use traditional liturgical language – “bless, laud, exult, and praise.” These words invoke seriousness while the accompanying art represents a touch of whimsy. Then, I wanted to use the plural--“us” and “our” rather than the singular “I” . By doing this, I want this *kavanah* to help us come together as a community. With Shabbat being a connector for those who have gone their separate ways during the week, it seemed appropriate to subtly begin to create space as one people rather than as individuals. Finally, I wanted to go back once more to the language we find in the Psalms. There, we see vivid imagery that evokes feelings of grandeur – the same feeling I associate with David bringing up the Ark of the Covenant. This piece is a nod to the traditional liturgy with my interpretation of Psalm 96 that incorporates that of Kimchi.

I hope those who use the art and the *kavanah* together feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. I hope that they embrace the sanctity of music and how it has the power to transform space and time. Ideally, the lay leader would put up this slide and read the

kavanah; then the congregation would break into music and dancing. The art and prayer should be vehicles for bringing in music, not something that should be passed over quickly.

Lecha Dodi



Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz, the author of the hymn Lecha Dodi, was a 16th-century poet who was born in Thessaloniki and later left for Safed to join the Kabbalistic circle there. His authorship of the hymn is certain because, like so many piyyutim, it is an acrostic, with the first letter of the first eight stanzas spelling his name (*Shlomo haLevi*). This poetic prayer invites imagery similar to that found in Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs) and its traditional interpretation, understanding the image of a bride as standing for the Jewish people and that of her lover being a metaphor for God.⁶

Noam Zion of the Shalom Hartman Institute tells us in his article, “*L’cha Dodi* and the Kabbalist Background to Kabbalat Shabbat”⁷, that Kabbalat Shabbat includes psalms and songs that are recited before the Friday evening service. He then suggests that these are all done for the sake of both physical and spiritual preparation for the Sabbath. Lecha Dodi is one of these

⁶ Moshe Miller, “New Translation of Lecha Dodi” (2003). https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380392/jewish/Lecha-Dodi-new-translation.htm.

⁷ Noam Zion, “*L’cha Dodi* and the Kabbalist Background to Kabbalat Shabbat.” Shalom Hartman Institute March 4, 2021. <https://www.hartman.org.il/lcha-dodi-and-the-kabbalist-background-to-kabbalat-shabbat/htm>

prayers that we sing, as we welcome in the Sabbath bride, to lead us away from our week and into the sanctity of Shabbat.

While the first two verses of *Lecha Dodi* express some of the themes of Shabbat, the remaining verses anticipate the messianic redemption. For this reason, many Reform prayer books that did not wish to espouse the idea of Israel's exile and future redemption have either omitted the hymn in its entirety or have omitted these verses, specifically verses 3,4,6,7, and 8. Since *Lecha Dodi* uses language such as "bride," excerpts of the text have been used in wedding ceremonies, specifically the phrase *boi kalah* ("Come, O bride!"; cf. b. Shabbat 119a), which concludes the final verse and leads into the refrain, *Lecha dodi likrat kalah, p'nei Shabbat n'kab'lah* ("Come, my beloved, to greet the bride; let us receive the countenance of the Sabbath!").

In my art, I wanted to create a piece that made me feel the way I feel when I sing *Lecha Dodi* in synagogue. Often, I will sit in the pews and watch as the wax has begun to drip down the candles as the words of *Lecha Dodi* dance around me. There is a moment when I am transfixed by the dancing flame, as the stained-glass windows tell me that dusk has arrived. Using this image as my jumping-off point, I then dug into the text.

I remember being so proud of myself when I was younger when I had successfully managed to get all the words of the first verse correct. For this piece of art, I decided to use that as a point of inspiration as well and create separate works of art – one representing *shamor* ("Observe!"), the other *zachor* ("Remember!"). Traditionally, we use two Shabbat candles instead of one because we associate each one with each of those words, to observe and to remember. These two words, found in the first stanza of *Lecha Dodi*, derive from the two versions of the Shabbat commandment in Exodus 20 (*Zachor et yom hashabbat*) and

Deuteronomy 4 (*Shamor et yom hashabbat*), as we have noted previously. By creating two different images, I could see them surrounding the text, engulfing the text, and creating the magic that the candles make for me every Friday night.

While I could have used the imagery of a bride (which I almost did), I instead wanted to dig deeper into how the prayer makes me feel and how I visually understand the melodies. This old and sometimes hard-to-relate-to prayer has such vivid imagery that it was important for me to understand my take on it. That is how I visually see Lecha Dodi and how I wanted to help it come to life.

I chose not to write a *kavanah* for this prayer because it is the music that has always made me feel drawn to the words. By creating this art, I hope that the one who is praying will look at the two candles burning, with the words dancing on the page, and listen to the melodies as they dance to the flickering flames.

Shabbat Has Arrived in Our City



This piece is not rooted in any particular prayer for Kabbalat Shabbat. Instead, I wanted to pause here for just a moment and take my project in a different direction. I first created the art. This piece represents the beauty and the essence of Kabbalat Shabbat. This service is full of life, music, and energy. Using those words as a reference point, I created this delicate flower that exudes all of those ideas. The petals transform into musical notes as the melody floats away into the sunset. Like many of the other pieces we have seen and will see, I wanted to play with light. The sky is a brilliant orange as the sun gets closer and closer to being fully set. The only thought that is focused on here is the music that is emerging. That is how I feel when I sing psalms such as *L'chu n'ran'nah* and *Mizmor l'David*. It is a delicate moment of praise, surrounded by beautiful harmonies of the *kehillah* (community).

Having created a Kabbalat Shabbat-inspired piece of art, I knew I wanted something musical to go with it. I was looking through the *kavannot* that I had already written and landed on the one I wrote for 'Hashkiveinu.' The *kavanah* begins with the line, "Shabbat has arrived in

our city.” As I read it and reread it, I kept thinking about that liminal moment in the shuk in Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon, when the streets are bustling, and everyone is focusing on being somewhere or doing something. Then, when Shabbat has finally settled on the city, it becomes quiet for just a moment. You can walk the streets, and minus the occasional car or two, it is so peaceful. Then, the music begins to flow down to the streets from each house. Prayers and songs erupt from this holy place.

That moment was the inspiration for this song (see below). I wanted to represent the moment when all was quiet and then the eruption of praise to Adonai and gratitude for this moment. I imagined gathering the candlelight with my aunt in her living room three times and thinking about watching her as she silently blessed her family, friends, and herself. I watched as the candles danced, getting up the courage to begin that conversation with God, myself. I then thought about the transition from the candle blessing to singing “Shalom Aleichem.” This moment is quintessential to my understanding of Kabbalat Shabbat that I wanted to include in my Siddur. That is why I wrote this song.

I would love to have people sing this song or any other song that reminds them of this sacred time while reflecting on how this delicate time is embedded with music and life. Kabbalat Shabbat is all about preparation and music. This section of my Siddur is the embodiment of those themes.

Shabbat has arrived in our city
We give thanks for this time
Shabbat has arrived in our city
Please God, bless me with your light

I'll gather it thrice,
Oh no, not once, not twice

As the lights begin to flicker
They'll dance and then I'll whisper
Holy, holy, holy, are You –
[chorus]

This week has come and gone
But now we say that we're done
As we put away our strife
And we bask in God's light, singing
Shalom, Shalom, Shalom
[chorus]

Shalom Aleichem



“Shalom Aleichem” was written during the late 16th or early 17th century by a kabbalist in Safed. Traditionally, it is recited or chanted around the Shabbat dinner table at home rather than in the synagogue. Dr. Ellen M. Umansky in her *iiyun* “The Power and Protection of Angels,”⁸ explains that this liturgical poem begins with the words, *Shalom aleichem, malachei ha-sharet, malachei elyon*, (“May peace be upon you, angels of service, angels of the Most-High.”). Umansky suggests that these angels are God’s angels, but they are separate entities from God. They are similar to the idea of “guardian angels.” Umansky notes that the source of this image is the following tradition in b. Shabbat 119b:

Rav H̄isda said that Mar Ukba said: One who prays on Shabbat evening and recites *vaykhullu*, the two ministering angels who accompany the person at all times place their hands on his head and say to him: “And your iniquity has passed, and your sin has been

⁸ Ellen M. Umansky and David N. Geffen, “The Power and Protection of Angels.” *Reform Judaism*. December 18, 2021. <https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/power-and-protection-angels>

atoned” (Isaiah 6:7). It was taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: Two ministering angels accompany a person on Shabbat eve

ning from the synagogue to his home, one good angel and one evil angel. And when he reaches his home and finds a lamp burning and a table set and his bed made, the good angel says: May it be Your will that it shall be like this for another Shabbat. And the evil angel answers against his will: Amen. And if the person’s home is not prepared for Shabbat in that manner, the evil angel says: May it be Your will that it shall be so for another Shabbat, and the good angel answers against his will: Amen.” (Translation taken from Sefaria.org)

Umansky remarks about this story, “Guardian angels, it seems, can pray to God for the good of those who fulfill God’s commandments and for the misfortune of those who do not.”

The tune that many of us sing was composed by Rabbi Israel Goldfarb who wrote it on May 10, 1918, while sitting at Columbia University.⁹ Since then, this song has served as inspiration for many artists such as Debbie Friedman, Rabbi Shmuel Brazil, and Rabbi Joy Levitt, who have also written melodies for this classic Shabbat evening hymn.

For my Siddur, I wanted to keep the original text. This is the first time (but not the last time) that I will do this in the Siddur. Many people have nostalgia around singing this song, and I am no exception. I remember, as I mentioned in the explanation for “Shabbat Has Arrived in Our City,” walking down the streets and hearing the words of “Shalom Aleichem” echo off the Jerusalem bricks. There is something magical in that moment that I wanted to capture in the art. Instead of creating a street, I instead wanted to use an icon often associated with the Middle East, camels. When creating this piece, I could imagine sitting on the pier in Tel Aviv at an outside Shabbat service, looking at the sunset reflecting off of the Mediterranean Sea. In this piece of art, I played with the vibrant colors of the sky as the last traces of the sun hit the waves. Then, hidden

⁹ Friday Evening Melodies—שיר ישראל לליל שבת, composed by Rabbi Israel Goldfarb and Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb. (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1981), 83–86.

in the clouds are the melodies floating in from all around. When I created this painting, I wanted us to feel transported to Israel. I wanted the camels to guide us into Shabbat as the ministering angels guide us in “Shalom Aleichem.” I wanted to capture the nostalgia of being in Israel on Shabbat.

Additionally, I put the Hebrew on the left side and the English on the right side to create a clean edge in between the two languages, so that your eyes do not have to dart between one side or the other. My hope is that this slide helps those singing this traditional hymn (no matter what melody they choose) to feel connected to Israel and feel guided into Shabbat.

Chatsi Kaddish



The Kaddish comes in five different forms, four of which will be regularly recited in synagogue, and the fifth one is reserved for special occasions. The four main ones are the “Half Kaddish”, “Whole Kaddish”, “Rabbis’ Kaddish” and the “Mourner’s Kaddish”.

The “Half Kaddish,” or *Chatzi Kaddish*, acts as a bookmark in the service, separating one part of a service from another (e.g., Kabbalat Shabbat from Ma’ariv or separating Pisukei D’Zimrah from the Shacharit service).

The “Whole Kaddish,” *Kaddish Shalem*, is said at the end of the Amidah and includes a petition that our prayers may be favorably received by God.

The “Rabbis’ Kaddish,” *Kaddish de-Rabbanan*, is recited after study of rabbinic texts; it requests a blessing for teachers and students of Torah. Rabbi Jack Abramowitz, the Torah Content Editor for the Orthodox Union comments on the *Kaddish de-Rabbanan* saying,

This is based on Sotah 49a, which tells us that since the Temple was destroyed, the world endures because of the recitation of Kedusha in Uva L’Tziyon and the “yehei shmei rabbah” in the Kaddish after Aggadah. Accordingly, the practice has become to recite the Aggadic passage of “Rabbi Chananya...” (Makkos 23b) between a public Torah lecture

and Kaddish. Since it is related to Torah study, the Rabbis' Kaddish includes a passage on behalf of "the Jews, the teachers, their students, their students' students, and all those who engage in the study of Torah."¹⁰

The last common Kaddish one would recite in the synagogue is the "Mourner's Kaddish" also known as the *Kaddish Yatom*. The wording is very similar to that of the "Whole Kaddish," with some of the text removed. This text is recited for one year following the death of an immediate family member: a parent, a sibling, a spouse, or a child. See further below, pp.

The fifth Kaddish is not typically recited in the synagogue because it is reserved for specific occasions, such as, when celebrating the *siyyum* (conclusion) of the study of a tractate of Talmud or Mishnah, and at a funeral (different from the Mourner's Kaddish). These two occasions have one idea in common: that Torah study earns one a place in *ha'olam haba* (the world to come). This is not an idea that Reform Judaism has adopted, so this particular Kaddish does not appear in any Reform ritual manuals.

The Kaddish is written in Aramaic which was the lingua-franca of Jews in the land of Israel and Babylonia from the Persian period into the Greco-Roman period. Specifically, the style of the prayer reflects the language of rabbinic study.

The Kaddish is a prayer that must be recited with a *minyan* (traditionally a group of ten or more men, although more liberal movements accept women as a part of the *minyan*). This potentially can cause problems for those who need to recite the Kaddish during a period of grieving. If there are not enough people at the service, then the prayer cannot be recited. Rabbi

¹⁰ Jack Abramowitz, "The Five Types of Kaddish". OU Torah. October 27, 2015.
<https://outorah.org/p/4589/>

Donin suggests why this prayer requires a minimum amount of people, unlike other prayers. He suggests,

The simplest manifestation of Kiddush HaShem [a name for God] is a public declaration of our belief that God is great and holy, which elicits from others the response *Yehei Shmei raba mevorakh l'olam ul'almei almaya* (“May God’s great name be blessed forever and ever”). That is what we do when we say Kaddish, for the whole purpose of Kaddish is not merely to praise God – many other prayers also do that – but to elicit the aforementioned response from listeners. The response is the heart of the Kaddish and should be said aloud.¹¹

Rabbi Donin continues with his argument that the response is the reason for the recitation of the Kaddish, saying that in b. Sotah 49a, Raba tells us that the religious merit of anyone who recites *Yehei shmei rabba* (the response), sustains the world. Furthermore, in b. Berakhot 57a, the same person is even worthy of the *olam haba* (the world to come). The Kaddish requires a *minyan* because it is a communal prayer that requires a response. It is not just another prayer to praise the Holy One, but rather one that encourages the community to participate.

After having learned more about the meanings behind the Kaddish generally, I focused on the meaning of the Chatsi Kaddish. The idea that it is a bookmark in our service really spoke to me. It feels fitting that we should mark the moment when we move away from Kabbalat Shabbat and into our Ma’ariv service. I used the metaphor of a bookmark very literally, taking a photo of a bookmark on the Chatsi Kaddish page in the *Mishkan T’filah* Siddur. I could have chosen other siddurim; however, I was inspired by *Mishkan* at the beginning of the project and wanted to pay tribute to that inspiration. This is also the only art that makes any reference to a typical siddur. You can clearly see the prayer is the Chatsi Kaddish but the bookmark on the page should make the viewer pause and reflect on what it means to transition or to pause. A bookmark represents a conclusion. You have put the book down and are ready to embrace a new

¹¹ Donin, 217.

activity. Hopefully, the one praying will use this time to spend one last moment to fully embrace the transition into Shabbat.

Similar to the art, I wanted the *kavanah* (see below) to reflect this pause and this transition. I refer to God as an Author, the Scribe of our destiny. My hope with this *kavanah* was that those who read it would realize that this is the moment when we begin our conversation with the Holy Energy of the Universe, that this is the moment when we move from praise to contemplation.

Holy Author, whose story is enticing,
You have given us song –
and you have given us space to ready ourselves,
to be in conversation, with You.
So often our lips utter thoughts not fully formed.
Our gratitude is often mixed with resentment.
But hear us, Mighty Scribe,
You, who give us a chance to ponder,
A chance to reflect, a chance to prepare.
Here we are on the precipice of time,
Leaving the space of internal congestion,
As we embrace our conversations with You.
Life has been hard, life has been wonderful,
I just need to be heard.
Here we are, a bookmark between the noise and the conversation,
Ready to engage.

Bar'chu



Bar'chu is the formal beginning of the Shacharit (morning) and Ma'ariv (evening) service. It is recited in a call-and-response form, with the *sheliach tzibbur* (prayer leader) reciting the first line, the *kehillah* (congregation) responding in the second line, and the *sheliach tzibbur* repeating the second line by themselves. The Bar'chu is also used in the Torah blessings with the same call and response. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* notes that Bar'chu is considered to be one of the *devarim shebikedushah* (lit. “holy things”) and may only be recited in the presence of a quorum of at least ten grown male Jews (*minyan*; Sof. 10: 7; Sh. Ar. OH 55:1).¹²

Nehemiah 9:5 suggests a verbal model for this liturgical exhortation:

וַיְבָרְכוּ יְיָם כְּבִדְדָהּ וּמְרוֹמָם עַל-כָּל-בְּרָכָה וַתְּהִלָּה:

“The Levites Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah said, ‘Rise, bless the LORD your God who is from eternity to eternity: May they bless Your

¹² Hyman Kieval, *Barekhu*. 2008. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/barekhu>.

glorious name, exalted though it is above every blessing and praise!” Here we see in Hebrew some parallel language to the Bar’chu text.

Jewish Virtual Library¹³ notes yet another scriptural model, as well as the tannaitic origins of the Bar’chu formula that we use today:

A shorter formula, Bar’chu et Adonai, occurs in Psalms 134:1–2 and 135:19. In the opinion of R. Akiva, the liturgical invocation, in accordance with scriptural precedent, should consist simply of Barchu et Adonai, whereas the formula Barchu et Adonai ha-mevorakh was advocated by his contemporary, R. Ishmael (Ber. 7:3). The latter formula was preferred by most of the amoraim (Bet. 50a; TJ, Ber. 7:4, 11c), and became standard.

In the art that I created for the Bar’chu, I wanted to emphasize us rising as a *kehillah* for the words of the Bar’chu. I then took it a step further and focused the piece on how Bar’chu leads us into the formal parts of our prayer service. This is seen by the feet walking down the path towards the beautiful blooming flowers on the tree. While most of the colors in this piece are muted, the flowers represent all that is to come in our service, starting with this prayer.

For the *kavanah*, I wanted to focus on how we address God in Judaism and try out some new language. We have in our traditions the words אל הרחמים, the compassionate or merciful God, but I wanted to play with the question of, what does a kind God look like? Additionally, I referred to God as a parent. Since Bar’chu is the exhortation that encourages us to communicate with God, I wanted our relationship to this higher being to feel intimate and challenging. I conclude it with the text of the Bar’chu, this time written in cursive Hebrew. In addition to this

¹³ Referring to Leon J. Liebreich, “The Impact of Nehemiah 9:5-37 on the Liturgy of the Synagogue,” in: *HUCA*, 32 (1961), 227–37; Max Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics* (New York: Block Publishing, 1963), 135–41; Joseph. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah bi-Tekufat ha-Tanna'im ve-ha-Amora'im*, 2nd edition (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1966), English abstract, v–vi, and index, s.v.

being artistically beautiful, I wanted it to feel like someone signing their name at the end of a letter, a letter to the Holy Energy of the Universe.

My hope for this section is that whoever is ready to respond to this exhortation to praise God will pause and think about their relationship with God. Someone using this slide should ask themselves, “Who is God to us, and am I ready to stand up and tell the world that this relationship is important to me?”

Hear us, אל הרחמים, O Compassionate One
As we stand on the precipice of uncertainty and depletion.
Weaver of the tapestry of our lives, hear our adoration for You,
Blessed One, whose name we dare not whisper,
Your heavenly reign will endure forever!

Your name is חסידות, the One who is Kindness –
Purify our hearts that we may serve You through positive interactions.
Let us embrace the neighbor, the friend, and the stranger,
All who benefit from the fountain of Your generosity,
The overflow of divinity that You have instilled within us!

Eternal Parent, accept our humble supplications,
As they ring out to the heavens –
At Sinai you showed us mercy,
You showed us Your Torah, You showed us our path.
At Sinai we became Yours, and together we were one.
Blessed are You, חסידות ורחמים, The One before whom we stand.

Ma'ariv Aravim



Ma'ariv Aravim is the first blessing that precedes the recitation of the Shema in the evening service (its counterpart in the morning service is Yotzer Or). Ma'ariv Aravim speaks about the transition from light into darkness. Just as the prayers during Kabbalat Shabbat prepare us for our Ma'ariv service, Ma'ariv Aravim prepares us for the upcoming recitation of the Shema. Rabbi Rebecca Yussman, in her Sefaria resource sheet, “Ma'ariv Aravim – The God Who Evenings the Evening”,¹⁴ notes that it also prepares us to “affirm our appreciation for God’s Creation.” This prayer speaks about how the Eternal orders the universe, brings forth darkness from light and arranges the seasons. Typically, we would recite this at dusk, as the sun begins to set.

In *Divrei Mishkan T'filah: Delving into the Siddur*,¹⁵ Rabbi Richard S. Sarason notes:

The evening Ma'ariv Aravim (literally, “who mixes the twilight”) blessing praises God for having created the cosmic order—the regular changing of the times and seasons as the celestial bodies rotate in their courses. God eternally “rolls light away from darkness and

¹⁴ Rebecca Yussman “Ma'ariv Aravim - The God Who Evenings the Evening.” Sefaria.
<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/93763?lang=bi>

¹⁵ Richard S. Sarason, *Divre Mishkan Tefilah: Delving into the Siddur*. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2018), 55.

darkness from light” (this phrase already occurs in the Babylonian Talmud, B’rachot 11b).

This short prayer tells us that the creation of darkness is part of God’s plan, and it participates in the cyclical order of the universe. From light, there is darkness, and once more, light. This demonstrates the Eternal’s wisdom in creating the universe. Rabbi Sarason further comments on the treatment of Ma’ariv Aravim in a Reform context:

Because this benediction is relatively short, it has rarely been further abbreviated in Reform liturgies (unlike its morning counterpart), although individual prayer-book editors have taken literalist offense at some of its poetic imagery and pruned the text accordingly. The *Union Prayer Book* [1940], for example, in all of its editions, omitted the phrase “rolling light away from darkness and darkness from light”—although it is unclear at this distance whether the imagery was deemed objectionable or simply redundant. *Mishkan T’filah* (like *Gates of Prayer* [1975] before it) gives the full traditional text.¹⁶

This beautiful prayer speaks of transitions in time and space. We have moved out of Kabbalat Shabbat, but we have not quite yet entered the sacred words of the Shema. We pause to acknowledge and to marvel at God’s involvement in the shift in light and the shift in seasons. My hope for this slide is that we, too, can pause and realize the majesty of the workings of the universe. For the art, I was inspired by the following teaching of Rabbi Simcha Bunim Bonhart:

Everyone must have two pockets, with a note in each pocket, so that [they] can reach into the one or the other, depending on the need. When feeling lowly and depressed, discouraged, or disconsolate, one should reach into the right pocket and, there, find the words: “For my sake was the world created.” But when feeling high and mighty, one should reach into the left pocket and find the words: “I am but dust and ashes.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim: Later Masters* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 249-250.

Often this teaching, without its flashy punchlines or dramatic occurrences, reminds me of my place in the universe. This teaching plays through my head when I read Ma'ariv Aravim and Ahavat Olam (the next prayer). Ma'ariv Aravim speaks to the second part of this dictum. When we start thinking that we are the center of the universe, we can use the themes of this prayer to ground us and realize we are just a blip in the cosmos.

This teaching and the themes woven into this prayer were the inspiration for this slide. I played with light and a subdued image of the universe so that we would feel inclined to ask ourselves, what else is there? I wanted the art to invite the viewer to search and feel a part of God's creation. Ideally, the lay leader would recite or sing the prayer while the Jew in the pew would take a moment to fall into this piece, searching for their place in God's universe.

Ahavat Olam



Ahavat Olam is the second of the two prayers recited in the evening right before the Shema. Similar to Ma'ariv Aravim, it has a parallel prayer in the morning service, Ahavah Rabbah. Maimonides, in his *Mishneh Torah*, outlines these prayer formulas within the service.

Blessings are recited before the Shema and after it. When reading the Shema by day, two blessings are recited before it, and one after it. When reading it at night, two blessings are recited before, and two after it. The former of the two blessings recited before the Shema by day, is that beginning, "Who formest light and createst darkness." The latter is that beginning, "With everlasting love hast Thou loved us." The blessing subsequent to the Shema is that beginning, "True and Firm." The former of the two blessings recited before the Shema at night is that beginning, "Who bringest on the evening twilight." The latter begins "**With everlasting love hast Thou loved Thy people, Israel.**" The former of the blessings, recited after it, is that beginning, "True and trustworthy." The latter, that beginning, "Cause us to lie down [O Lord, our God, in peace],

(Mishneh Torah, Seder Ahavah, 1:5-6).

During Maimonides' time, just like today, it was customary to recite Ahavat Olam before the Shema in the evening. In his commentary, he also acknowledged that Ahavat Olam has a parallel prayer, Ahavah Rabbah. Why are there two separate prayers, with very similar messages, but one is recited in the morning, and one is recited in the evening?

Rabbi Donin, in his book *To Pray As A Jew*, traces these two prayers back to the Talmud Bavli and the Rabbis' prayer preferences. He tells us,

The slight variation in wording of the blessings for the morning and evening services stems from the two versions that existed among the stages of the Talmud. Samuel preferred the version that begins with the words Ahavah Rabbah (“great love”), but the majority of the rabbis were in favor of the version that begins with the words Ahavat Olam (“eternal love”) (b. Berakhot 11b). This therefore became the version used in the Sefardic rite, both morning and evening. In the post-Talmudic period, the Geonim decided that both should be said: Ahavah Rabbah at the morning service and Ahavat Olam at the evening service. Such is the practice in the Ashkenazi rite,¹⁸

Rabbi Donin picks up on the different prayer traditions that existed in Talmudic times. Some of the Sages preferred to recite ‘Ahavah Rabbah’, while a majority of the Rabbis preferred the language of ‘Ahavat Olam.’ It was not until after the Talmud was canonized that the great Geonim (heads of the academies) chose to make Ahavah Rabbah the morning blessing and Ahavat Olam the evening blessing. This is how it is still done in Reform worship today.

When creating this piece of art, I wanted to keep the image of God’s love for Israel in my mind. That is why I created this piece to feel like you were walking into this beautiful world, where all you had to do is walk forward to draw closer to God. I referred to Ma’ariv Aravim with the moon, showing that these prayers are connected. I wanted this art to feel like the moment when you go into the country, and you can see the arch of the sky without any buildings disturbing the view. In that moment, you cannot help but marvel at how amazing the world is, and how you are a part of that world. For me, that is God’s love for Israel--giving us this world, filled with majesty and complications, to love forever. When I am in the country, looking at the bending sky, in that moment, it is calm, and I know that I can feel God.

¹⁸ Donin, 161.

For the prayer, I wanted to take the actual words of the liturgy and rework them according to my understanding. When the prayer mentions the house of Israel, I wanted to play with the literal biblical figure Israel and make it more egalitarian by including Rachel and Leah. This way everyone can see themselves in this prayer. Similar to the other prayers in this siddur, I speak about the power of light in Kabbalat Shabbat and our relationship to the Eternal.

My hope for this page is that people will see themselves in God's creation and see themselves worthy of God's love. The art conveys awe and serenity, and the prayer conveys appreciation for the Holy Energy of the Universe. Together, they show an appreciation for our Creator for making beauty and giving us another day to embrace the world around us.

Eternal is Your loving kindness for the House of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah.
Blessed are You who watches over us each night.
When our eyes grow heavy, as the night slowly illuminates by light lifetimes away,
We meditate on your mitzvot, on Your Torah, and on Your laws.
Light has rolled into darkness, and we whisper our appreciation for another day to love, to grow,
and to learn.
Blessed is the Divine Architect who lengthens our days and shows love to Your people, Israel.

Shema / V'ahavta



The text of the Shema is biblical: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. These three passages traditionally are recited twice a day, morning, and evening, following the rabbinic understanding of the exhortation to meditate on these words **וְיִשְׁכַּחְבְּדֶהּ וְיִקְוֶמְדֶהּ**, when we lie down and when we arise. The first verse serves as the Jewish affirmation of monotheism. One might even call it the foundational text in Judaism.

The Shema and its blessings relate to core themes within Judaism, affirming our relationship with God. Additionally, the Shema subtly suggests the link to the Ten Commandments, which M. Tamid 5:1 suggests were recited daily by the Temple priests in conjunction with the Shema. When you look at a siddur or a Torah scroll closely, you may notice that there are two letters in the Shema that are printed larger and are often bolded in the Shema, the *ayin* at the end of 'Shema' and the *dalet* at the end of 'Echad.' When you put these two letters together, they make up the word 'עד,' 'witness.' This suggests that every time we recite the Shema we are bearing witness to the affirmation of our covenant.

Traditionally, we do not recite the second line of the Shema¹⁹ out loud, since it is not part of the biblical text, but a congregational response to the articulation of the divine name (see M. Yoma 3:8, 4:2, and 6:2)—*except* on Yom Kippur, when we recall the Temple rituals. However, many congregations within the Reform and the Conservative movements will recite it out loud, in hushed tones. The line is modeled on Psalm 72:19, *Baruch shem k'vod l'olam,* "Blessed be God's glorious name forever."

Many scholars have written commentary on the words of the Shema and the V'ahavta. Moses ben Nahman (also known as Nachmanides or Ramban), a medieval Sephardic philosopher and kabbalist, understands the Shema to be so fundamental to Judaism that "whoever does not acknowledge it denies the essential principle [of the religion] as if he worships idols" (Ramban on Deut. 6:4:1).²⁰ That is how essential this prayer is to the rabbis.

In the V'ahavta, we get an extensive list of commandments to which we are expected to adhere to help us remember our relationship with the Eternal. Mishnah Berakhot 9:5 explains the first phrases as:

"With all your heart" – with your two inclinations, with the inclination of good and the inclination of evil.
"And in all your soul" – even if God takes your soul.
"And with all that you have" – with all your money.
Alternatively, "With all that you have" – with every measure that is measured for you, thank God very much.

¹⁹ בְּרֹדֶף שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלִכּוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

²⁰ Nahmanides on Deuteronomy 6:4: "But here he [Moses] came to explain this commandment [*I am the Eternal* ...] and mentioned it after the Ten Commandments because it is the root of faith, and whoever does not acknowledge it denies the essential principle [of the religion] as if he worships idols. "*The Eternal our G-d, the Eternal is One*. This means: the Eternal, Who is [now, only] our G-d and not the G-d of the [other] nations, will eventually be acknowledged as the One [and only] Eternal, as it is said, *In that day shall the Eternal be One, and His Name One*. (Zechariah 14:9)."

Sefaria.<https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.6.4?lang=bi&with=Ramban&lang2=en>.

Moreover, the first paragraph also outlines how we should embody these commandments: we should put them on the doorposts of our homes and upon our gates, and we should bind them as a sign upon our arms and between our eyes. Jewish tradition has literalized this exhortation by inscribing this text inside Mezuzot and T'fillin.

For the art for the Shema, I wanted to recreate the moment in the service when I would be sitting in Plum Street Temple, looking up at the domed ceiling. There was a light that would shine through those domes, and it felt like the words of the Shema could float to the vaulted ceilings. I wanted someone who saw the art to feel like they were praying to the heavens and that the words were drifting away from them.

In the *kavanah* I wrote for the Shema, I wanted to explore the moments when we ponder who God is to us. When Moses asks for God's name at the burning bush, he is told, "I am who I am." Later, the priests in the Temple explicitly articulate the Tetragrammaton, God's four-letter name, but we are left with euphemisms like Adonai or the Eternal. Then, I wanted to pay my respects to the traditional liturgy by bringing the second line of the Shema into the last line of the *kavanah* (see below).

For the art of the V'ahavta, I calligraphed the first and third section of the text and then made the art look like it was jagged, unfinished., I also brought this idea of the text being incomplete into the *kavanah*. In the V'ahavta, we are told to teach these words to our children, but I wanted to reach out to people (myself included) who sometimes need a reminder of God's presence, a reminder that our relationship with the Eternal is continually developing and growing, never finished. It speaks to the moments when you are trying to connect to a higher being, but you feel like you are just running up against a brick wall.

My hope for these two prayers is that they begin a conversation about when we do not feel connected to God. This is especially important as we declare our relationship to God. When we reach this part in the service, I hope to prepare ourselves to be in conversation with God during the Amidah. We can express when we feel lost and distant from God and need some help on our journey.

Shema

Hear me, Blessed One!
Infinite is Your majesty.
Your kingdom bears the fruit of devotion, for those who seek Your covenant.
Extend Your wings and embrace Your people.
You, who have no name, and all names –
Who sat in fire and put the breath of the ETERNAL into every soul,
Hear our supplications,
Blessed is the Holy Energy of the Universe, who is one, now and forever!

V'ahavta

I am told to love you,
Whoever you are,
With all my heart, my soul, and my might.
Wherever I go, whomever I am with,
I should keep You with me.
I'll be honest, God, is it so?
Sometimes all I feel is confusion.
I want to be near you, to feel you –
But some days it's just silence.
Your words hang on my doorposts,
I teach them to my children –
But who will remind me when I feel lost?
Give me a sign so that I may wear it as I go about my way.
Help me draw nearer to You.
Blessed is the Holy Struggle as I yearn to know You.

Mi Chamocha



The text of Mi Chamocha derives from the poem, The Song at the Sea, located in Exodus 15:1-18. This song is sung as the Israelites cross through the Sea of Reeds, which signals their redemption from Egyptian slavery. Many layers of meaning have been attributed to this piece of liturgy which is sung both in the morning and in the evening services.

Dr. Marc Brettler, in his contribution to *My People's Prayer Book*,²¹ examines the grammatical tenses that this text uses, which are different from those in many of our other blessings. The prayer acknowledges God's previous actions while focusing on the present tense as well. Then, it shifts to the future tense (God will reign forever and ever); thus, connecting God's previous actions to our future redemption. Instead of looking at the grammar of the prayer, Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman looks at the themes within Mi Chamocha, noting, "the Rabbis insist on

²¹ Marc Zvi Brettler, in Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., *My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries*. Vol. 1 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 130-134.

a moral God who enters history to right wrongs and bring about a better age...[and] ruled that the 'righteous' of all nations receive a share in the world to come.”²² Rabbi Rachel Barenblat writes on her blog, “The Velveteen Rabbi”, in an article titled, “How Can We Keep From Singing,” that this prayer asks us to recall the redemption from slavery. Furthermore, just like Dr. Brettler, Rabbi Barenblat looks at the grammar within the prayer, noting:

[If you] take apart the English word, remember, you get re/member – to experience memory in the body; to re-inhabit lived experience. Singing Mi Chamocha is an opportunity to re-member liberation. To experience it again. To feel it in our bodies. To cultivate our sense of awe and trust, and from those emotions, to joyously sing.²³

The layers that these three scholars have identified (the interesting use of grammar, the morality of God, and the chance to experience liberation) help make Mi Chamocha a treasure-trove for interpretation. That is why many tunes are set to these words, and *kavannot* tie in these themes with timely events.

According to *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals*,²⁴ b. Berakhot 9b connects the G'ulah/Redemption benediction (the last blessing after the Shema, in which Mi Chamocha appears) and which mentions God redeeming Israel from Egypt, to the personal prayers that are seen in the Amidah. The siddur suggests that “that the possibility of prayer flows out of our experience of God’s love as exhibited in freeing us from slavery.” Mi Chamocha, which comes before the Amidah, lets us ponder the question, “Now that we are free, what are we willing to do

²² Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My People's Prayer Book*, 158.

²³ Rachel Barenblat, “How can we keep from singing?” Velveteen Rabbi. January 19, 2019. <https://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/2019/01/how-can-i-keep-from-singing.html>.

²⁴ *Siddur Lev Shalem: Shabbat and Festivals* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2013),p. 158

with our freedom?” This is how we segue into the Amidah and into being in a relationship with the Eternal. By singing Mi Chamocha, we begin to connect our experiences to our communities and to God.

For the art, I wanted to draw on the moment when the waters were opening up right before the Israelites crossed the sea. The horizon is not clear in this piece, and it is hard to see what lies ahead. This is to draw upon the theme of “we do not know where we are going, but we know where we have been.” I wanted each person to feel as if they, too, are leaving Egypt and choosing to cross into the unknown. I decided not to do a *kavanah* for this prayer because I wanted someone using this siddur companion to have a moment where they saw a familiar text, something over which they could invoke nostalgia. When I get to Mi Chamocha, I recall specific melodies that draw me into my childhood or my time at camp. I wanted to preserve that by maintaining the original text.

That being said, I did my own translation of it, keeping the text egalitarian and using language found in my *kavannot* when referring to God. Additionally, in the last line, where I translate it to say, “...our divine miracle worker,” I wanted the reader to begin the transition away from the set liturgy and into our relationship with a higher being. My hope for this page is that the prayer-goer will listen to the music of Mi Chamocha, feel themselves standing at the edge of the sea, ready to take that first step, and think about how their experiences influence their relationship with God.

Translation

Who is comparable to You, O Holy Energy of the Universe?
Who is comparable to You, who is magnificent in holiness;
And splendid are your actions, our Divine Miracle Worker!

Hashkiveinu



Hashkiveinu can be found in the Ma'ariv service on weekdays, Shabbat, and Festivals.

There is no equivalent prayer in the morning service because nighttime can be especially frightening, so having a designated prayer for this time is important. Mishnah Berakhot 1:4 takes note of the additional blessing after Shema in the evening:

In the morning one recites two blessings before it (the *Shema*) [*“yotzer or”* and *“ahavah rabba”*], and one after it [*“emet veyatziv”*]; in the evening two before it [*“ma’ariv aravim”* and *“ahavat olam”*] and two after it [*“emet ve’emunah”* and *“hashkiveinu”*], one long and one short. ...

An early rabbinic dictum mandates that the Redemption blessing at the end of the Shema should lead directly into the Amidah, so that the Recitation of Shema and Amidah are performed at the proper time in the morning, at sunrise. But what about in the evening, when Hashkiveinu interrupts this sequence? b. Berakhot 4b addresses the problem as follows:

According to Rabbi Yoḥanan, it is a mitzva to recite Shema before the evening prayer (Amidah). Mar, son of Ravina, raises an objection from a Mishnah: How can one do that? We learn in a later Mishnah: In the evening, one recites two blessings prior to the recitation of Shema and two blessings afterward. And if you say that one must juxtapose [the] Redemption [blessing] to the Prayer (Amidah), doesn’t one fail to juxtapose

Redemption) to Prayer (Amidah), as one must recite: Help us lie down [*hashkivenu*], the blessing recited after the blessing of redemption which constitutes an interruption between and prayer (Amidah)? They say in response: Since the Sages instituted the practice of reciting: Help us lie down (Hashkiveinu), it is considered one extended blessing of redemption, and therefore does not constitute an interruption. ...

Maimonides, in *Mishneh Torah*, Prayer and the Priestly Blessing 7:17-18, further clarifies that, in the evening service, the blessing which refers to redemption is in fact connected to the Amidah. “Though the blessing concluding, ‘Who redeem[s] Israel’ is followed by the blessing beginning, ‘Cause us to lie down’, this is not regarded as an interruption between the blessing relating to redemption and the *Amidah*, both blessings being regarded as one lengthy blessing.”

What Maimonides is trying to say is similar to what Joseph Caro (Beit Yosef) is trying to say in his *Orach Chaim*, namely, that we might be tempted to see Hashkiveinu as an interruption in our service, however this is not the case; instead we should see it as an extension of G’ulah (redemption). Beit Yosef compares Hashkiveinu to the verse Adonai S’fatai which has been institutionalized as a part of T’fillah (the Amidah). Hashkiveinu is an extension of G’ulah because in it we talk about the miracles that God performed in Egypt, including the plague of darkness, which caused a great fear among the people. At that time, they prayed that the Angel of Death would pass over their houses. Hashkiveinu is a prayer that acknowledges how the darkness can be frightening, so we pray to the Eternal that we will lie down in peace and arise in the morning under the shelter of God’s wings. Maimonides and Beit Yosef agree that

Hashkiveinu, a prayer which combats the fear that we naturally have of the evening, is a continuation of G'ulah, the prayer for redemption.²⁵

For this prayer, I wanted to embrace the line, “Shelter us beneath Your wings.” I used the image of a dove, which traditionally is connected to peace (another theme throughout Hashkiveinu) and used typography to artistically display the text of the prayer. I wanted the words to be floating around the dove, fully encompassing the bird, as if our prayers were reaching God. I used muted colors to symbolize that the sun has set, and only the smallest sliver of light remains, and that is the light of God.

For the *kavanah* (see below), I wanted to take the connection between Mi Chamocha and the Amidah and reflect on the time that scares me the most – the fleeting time of the week. However, much like the traditional text of Hashkiveinu, I acknowledge the fear but remind the reader of how the Eternal will be there to protect us from our fears. Then, I end the passage with a nod to Adonai S'fatai, tying this prayer back to the Amidah. My hope for this slide is that the prayer-goer will have spent the entire service preparing to be in conversation with God, and that this prayer will give them one last moment of reflection – specifically about what they are afraid of, and how God can support them.

Shabbat has arrived in our city,
The streets are frantic with last minute preparation.
Will this task be finished, or that?

²⁵ David Schwartz, “Hashkiveinu: Questions, Context, Music.” Sefaria.
<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/269287.39?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>

There is too much to do, and time scares us.
Yet, since the beginning,
You have protected us –
You have shown us Your mighty hand,
and sustained us through endless miracles.
You gave to us a garden,
A shelter beneath your wings,
You guarded us and protected us.
You were a dove in the chaos of the storm,
and a colorful tunic which we wore with honor.
You were a shield that took our heaviest blows.
Now, more than ever, we need You,
Our Holy Symbol of hope –
So that we can pause, slow down,
and appreciate Your gift to Your people.
Shabbat is here,
And it is only under Your protection,
That we can finally let go of the chaos,
and prepare our lips so that our mouths will declare
Your ever-living sovereignty.

Amidah and Oseh Shalom (Birkat Shalom)



The Amidah is the main prayer that Jews pray each day. It is sometimes referred to as the “standing prayer” as *amidah* means “standing”. Another name it goes by is “Shemoneh Esreh,” meaning eighteen, although today there are nineteen sections that comprise this prayer.

Observant Jews will recite this prayer three times a day, in the Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma’ariv services. On Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh (the new month), and on the Jewish festivals, a fourth recitation of the Amidah called *Musaf*, is added. Once per year, a fifth recitation occurs, on Yom Kippur, during the Ne’ilah service (the last service on Yom Kippur).

The prayer is traditionally attributed to Anshei Knesset HaGedolah (the Men of the Great Assembly) between 515-332 BCE, according to the following passage in b. Megillah 17b

Rabbi Yoḥanan said, and some say that it was taught in a *baraita*: A hundred and twenty elders, i.e., the Men of the Great Assembly, and among them several prophets, established the eighteen blessings of the *Amidah* in their fixed order.

In fact, the prayer is rabbinic in origin and likely postdates the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Another Talmudic tradition, in b. Berakhot 28b attributes the formulation of the Amidah to a certain Shimon HaPekoli, who “arranged the order of eighteen benedictions before

Rabban Gamliel at Yavneh.” Regardless of the historical truth of this tradition, the association of this prayer with the sages at Yavneh is secure.

What then, was the purpose of the Amidah? Rabbeinu Bachya, in his commentary to Parashat Eikev 11:13 tells us,

The Men of the Great Assembly instituted this prayer of the Amidah in order that it should be fluent in every mouth. Therefore, they instituted it using simple language, in order not to confuse the ideas with their understanding of the language, and so that all of Israel would be equal in prayer, whether they were clever or foolish.

The Amidah, with its simple language, was supposed to be a ‘catch-all’ prayer, that would help everyone fulfil their requirement to pray. While the weekday Amidah indeed had only eighteen benedictions in the land of Israel, it had nineteen in Babylonia, where the prayers for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy and the rebuilding of Jerusalem were recited separately. Today, the nineteen sections are divided as follows:

First Three – This section is always the same, with some additions for the penitential season between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and some minor changes between denominations.

Middle Section – On weekdays, this section of the Amidah consists of 13 different blessings that focus on communal requests to God. Originally, this section only contained 12 blessings, which is how this prayer was originally named Shemoneh Esreh (the 18 blessings). However, in Babylonia, one compound blessing (*elohei David uvoneh Yerushalayim*) was split into two, which resulted in there being 19 blessings in total. However, the name Shemoneh Esreh continued to be used.

Final Section – Just like the first section, this part remains consistent throughout every service, with the exception of minor additions during the Ten Days of Repentance from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur.

Traditionally, the nineteenth blessing was thought to have been the curse on heretics, as depicted in b. Berakhot 28b: “Rabban Gamliel said to the sages “Is there no one who knows how to establish a prayer against the heretics?” Shmuel HaKatan stood up and established it.”

Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 2:1, expanded on this, explains:

In the time of Rabban Gamliel, the heretics increased amongst Israel, and they were harming Israel and leading them away from God. When he saw that this needed addressing more than the people’s other needs, he and his Beit Din arose and established a blessing that is a request from God to destroy those heretics. He fixed it in the Amidah in order that it should be well known in the mouths of everyone. Thus, the total number of blessings is nineteen.

Among the thirteen petitionary blessings, the first five are personal requests of God. The next eight focus on the communal needs of the Jewish people as a whole (bringing the Messiah, the ingathering of Jews, etc.). On Shabbat and Festivals, it is deemed inappropriate to petition God for our daily needs, so all of these petitions are replaced by a single benediction, Kedushat Hayom, that deals with the special sanctity of the holy day. In the traditional liturgy, this benediction begins differently in each of the four prayer services on Shabbat—each emphasizing a different aspect of the day (the anniversary of creation in the evening service, the giving of the Torah and the Shabbat commandment in the morning service, the Sabbath sacrifices in the Musaf service, and Israel’s special status and Shabbat rest in the afternoon service). Reform liturgies sometimes abbreviate these introductory sections, and all delete the invidious comparison between Jews and non-Jews (“the uncircumcised”) in the traditional morning version.

With its predictable recitation, this prayer is one that helps us connect with Jewish communities throughout the world. Despite its slight variations, even today, whether you are in Greece, Jerusalem, or Los Angeles, this traditional prayer follows a formula which allows all Jews to be in a similar conversation with the Holy One.

For my capstone, I chose to create a *kavanah* that would lead into a silent Amidah. The choice to do this as a silent Amidah originated from attending Zoom Kabbalat Shabbat services. As a leader, I found my attempts at flipping through the seven blessings to be a struggle, because I never knew where people were in their prayers. So, I created a *kavanah* that speaks to the themes in Avot V'imahot and would segue the prayer-goers into a silent meditation. My hope is that they would use that time to be in conversation with the Holy One.

That being said, I did want to include a slide for Birkat Shalom, the blessing for peace. When using meditation in a service, I find it helpful to have a piece of music to draw you back into the service. I chose Oseh Shalom because it is a favorite of mine; however, any prayer for peace could easily replace the text on this slide.

The art I did for the Amidah slide was inspired by meditation. My hope for this slide is that it creates the space to take a deep breath, to center the mind, and allow space to invite God in. I did this using soft colors, flora, and creating movement with the butterflies. For Oseh Shalom, I wanted to bring in the beauty of the Amidah slide with some brighter colors to help rejuvenate the soul back to being together.

You are My Neshama

You are my *neshama*, the Eternal Flame of my heart,
I sit here, my mouth open wide in preparation for speaking Your praise.
Blessed are you, the One who was in relationship with my mothers and fathers.

I am filled with awe as I draw closer to Your Majesty.
Each droplet of rain, each sparkle of the evening stars reminds me of You -
My Infinite judge.
With my breath I pray to You, O Eternal One -
See me favorably as you did with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Cherish my contributions as you did with Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,
Trust in my strength as you did with Shifrah and Puah –
As they delivered the deliverer who was slow with tongue as I am this evening.
Grant me the wisdom to lead with conviction like my mothers Miriam and Deborah,
Or as I find myself like Joseph in disputes with my brothers and sisters.
You are showing me Your path, my Eternal Flame –
Together we will walk, onwards towards holiness.

Mi Shebeirach



Mi Shebeirach is a term of invocation used to begin many prayers, such as a prayer for healing. Rabbi Amy R. Perlin in her 2016 sermon, “The Mi Shebeirach: How Our Prayer for Strength and Healing Came to Be,”²⁶ referencing her rabbinic thesis, tells us that the Mi Shebeirach originated in Babylonia as a way for the congregation to be blessed:

The earliest siddur/prayerbook [from the ninth century C.E.] has it said only on Mondays and Thursdays, probably as a way to get people to show up for the Torah services those days, as everyone came on Shabbat, but not everyone came those mornings. That original Mi Shebeirach said, “May God bless all those brothers and sisters who come to the synagogue for prayer and to give tzedakah.”

This prayer became popular because prayer-goers saw it as a reward for attending services and giving to tzedakah (charity). It became so popular that the prayer was quickly added to the Shabbat morning service. Today, the prayer is also included in weekday minyanim.

Rabbi Perlin notes that there are multiple versions of the Mi Shebeirach prayer. She identifies a variety of these versions, such as, “Mi Shebeirachs for women who made Torah adornments, for the Pope, for grooms before their wedding, and even for those who risked their lives to bury fellow Jews.” Today, however, most people associate the Mi Shebeirach with those

²⁶ March 11, 2016, Shabbat Sermon at Temple B’nai Shalom in Fairfax, Virginia

who need healing. These might include superficial injuries, mental health struggles, or even spiritual frustrations.

Many examples in the TaNaKh help us form our prayers for healing--most notably, Moses's prayer for his sister, Miriam. As she becomes smitten with leprosy, Moses cries out these words, אֵל גָּאֵרְפָא גְאֵ לָהּ, "Please God, heal her now," (Numbers 12:13). Feeling out of control, Moses begs the Eternal One to help his sister. It is not surprising that Moses would turn to the Holy One to heal Miriam. After all, in Exodus 15:26, when talking about the plagues that are being afflicted on the Egyptians, the Blessed One tells Moses, כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֲךָ, "I am the Eternal, your Healer." Finally, our Psalms provide us with another example of God as healer. Psalm 41: 4-5 proclaims, יְהוָה יְסַעְדֵנּוּ עַל־עַרְשׁוֹ, "The Holy One will sustain him on his sickbed," (Translation taken from Sefaria).

These three examples are just a few ways our tradition views the Holy One as a healer, capable of incredible miracles. That is why the Mi Shebeirach invokes the Blessed One's ability to heal. The weekday Amidah includes the following prayer for healing: "Heal us, O Eternal One, and we shall be healed, save us, and we shall be saved, for You are our praise. Bring complete healing to all our wounds." At the same time, Jewish tradition also endorses the practice of medicine, as in this passage from b. Berakhot 60a:

...It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael that from the verse, "And shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (Exodus 21:19), we derive that permission is granted to a doctor to heal.

While it is essential to turn towards God when we see someone in our community who needs healing of the mind, the body, or the soul, our tradition also teaches us that our doctors are agents of the Divine.

There are many creative versions of the *Mi Shebierach* for the ill. The most recognizable one in the Reform movement was composed by Debbie Friedman of blessed memory to a creative text that she wrote together with Dvora Setel. Her tune uses both select phrases from the Hebrew original as well as a creative interpretation in both English and Hebrew:

Mi shebeirach avoteinu
M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu
May the source of strength,
Who blessed the ones before us,
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,
And let us say, Amen.

Mi shebeirach imoteinu
M'kor habrachah l'avoteinu
Bless those in need of healing with r'fuah sh'leimah,
The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,
And let us say, Amen

(Debbie Friedman, 1989).

Typically, the prayer is recited when the Torah is read during weekday services on Mondays and Thursday mornings and on Shabbat morning. That being said, I have included it in my Kabbalat Shabbat Siddur. I did this purposefully. Many synagogues struggle to have a minyan on Saturday mornings and only have a Friday night service. These services might include a Torah reading (which traditionally is also reserved for Saturday mornings and *not* Friday nights). Due to this need to pray for their loved ones who are sick, this prayer was included in my Siddur for synagogues who recite the *Mi Shebeirach* on Friday nights.

My hope for this slide is that the art provides a peaceful moment for contemplation while someone thinks about their loved ones who are struggling. I wanted to create a serene landscape

that used water, a traditional symbol of purity and rejuvenation. There are also references to growth through the vegetation.

The *kavanah* uses a variety of metaphors to show the grandeur of the Holy One's ability to heal. It plays with images of brokenness and the ability to heal. It also uses the traditional text of the Mi Shebeirach so that the one praying this will feel as if they have recited the traditional prayer. My hope for this slide is to explore our voices regarding the Mi Shebeirach. We often rely on the same melodies; however, as Rabbi Perlin says, this prayer is no longer restricted to just the *Rabbi's Manual*, as it had been until the 1980's. Now, this prayer is a personal one and one that many people relate to. I want to encourage others to think about those who require healing and speak the words in their hearts.

We look towards the mountains and at the majesty of Your world,
Each rock and each pebble, unstable in its own right,
But when supported by others, creating a balanced whole.

Our hearts are with You, the Creator of our destinies.
We recall the thunders of Sinai that still reverberate in our souls,
The words of Your mouth drift to us from the hills of Jerusalem,
From the rivers Euphrates and Tigris to the shores of the Jordan,
The waters flow evenly, their waves engulfing all that wanders into their path, only to release it
just a few moments later.
They might still be whole; but now, cracked and fractured

מי שברך אבותינו ואמותינו
יברך אותנו יזכור אותנו

May the One who blessed our fathers and our mothers,
bless us and remember us.

Aleinu



The Aleinu, which translates as “upon us,” is a part of the concluding prayers. It is recited at the end of each of the three daily prayer services and originates as the introduction to the Malkhiyot section of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf service. While the prayer had been attributed to Joshua at the time of his conquest of Jericho, according to traditional scholars such as Rav Hai Gaon, Eleazar of Worms, Rabbi Nathan ben Rabbi Yehuda, and Kol Bo,²⁷ it is actually rabbinic in origin, derives from the land of Israel, and likely dates to the fourth or fifth centuries. The text of the prayer became controversial in Christian Europe in the high Middle Ages when it was understood by Christians as mocking Jesus and their religion. Rabbi Evan Hoffman notes:

The trouble began in 1399 when Jewish apostate Pesach Peter denounced Aleinu as an attack on Christianity. His calumny led to the deaths of 77 Jews. The line regarded by the Church to be especially offensive reads: “For they bow to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god who cannot save.” Notably, the Hebrew word for “and emptiness” וריק has the same numerical value (316) as does the name Jesus ישו. The attacks on Aleinu by Jewish apostates continued in 1530 with Anton Margarita’s publication of “The Whole Jewish Belief”; in 1610 with Samuel Friedrich Brenz’s “The Jewish Serpent’s Skin Stripped”; and in 1703 with troubles instigated by Franz Wentzel that inspired King Friedrich I of Prussia to promulgate anti-Judaic decrees interfering in the synagogue service.

²⁷ According to Macy Nulman in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer: The Ashkenazic and Sephardic Rites* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1996), 24; and Barry Freundel, *Why We Pray What We Pray: The Remarkable History of Jewish Prayer* (New York: Urim Publications, 2010), 205–206.

(sermon, “The Origins of Aleinu”)

The offensive line was censored out of Ashkenazic prayer books beginning in the fourteenth century, but still appears in the prayer books of other rites.²⁸ The preceding line, “who did not make us like the other nations of the world nor placed us like the families of the world, who did not make our portion like theirs nor our lot like all their multitudes,” was removed from virtually all Reform prayer books down to the late twentieth century, when the prayer was not omitted in its entirety.

Sixteenth-century commentator Rabbi Yoel Sirkes, in *Bayit Chadash*, Orach Hayim 133, tells us that we conclude our service with the Aleinu because we want to reinforce our faith that the Holy One’s kingdom will be fully restored. We do this right before we leave the synagogue, says Rabbi Sirkes, because when we leave, we “must then go and deal with the gentiles, seeing that they are dominant, our hearts will not be drawn to their gods, and we will not have any sinful thoughts.” Rabbi Sirkes seems to be suggesting that the Aleinu was a form of armor that the Jews would use to protect themselves against the temptations of their neighbors. While this tactic might have worked for the Jews, the optics were problematic and dangerous.

The particularistic language mentioned above has caused many people to shy away from reciting this prayer. Today, people are looking for more universalistic language in worship. This is why the prayer has gone through many iterations since its unknown composition. The commentary section of *Siddur Mishkan T’filah* has this to say about the language of the Aleinu:

²⁸ See Ruth Langer, “The Censorship of Aleinu in Ashkenaz and its Aftermath,” in Debra Reed Blank, ed., *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menahem Schmelzter* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 147-66.

Aleinu, one of our oldest prayers, was composed to introduce the sound of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah, announcing God's ultimate and universal rule. By the 14th century, this prayer joined the final *kaddish* to conclude with a note of hope for every service. Reform Jewish tradition emphasizes the universal aspect of this hope, represented by the English prayer "Let Us Adore," going back to the original *Union Prayer Book* of 1895.²⁹

The prayer now attempts to invite diversity and hope into its recitation. *Mishkan T'filah* now offers options for reciting this prayer. However, it still feels problematic, suggesting that Jews are better than the world's other nations.

Due to the problems with this prayer, I wanted to create a creative and modern translation. I wanted the art to reflect diversity, hence the variety of faces in the doodle and the colors. However, I kept to the theme of raising a group of people above others by highlighting a few of the doodle faces. I wanted to show that anyone could be lifted as "special" in God's eyes. Around the art, I included the phrase, "we bend at the knee and bow, acknowledging the supreme Sovereign, the Holy One." I wanted those words to wrap around every one of us, letting us all acknowledge and draw close to the Blessed One.

I wanted the creative prayer here to be almost the mirror theology to that of Aleinu. The words show diversity and inclusion. It invites everyone into the prayer while staying true to the intention of the original words. It is the ultimate praise of God while being open to all nations of the world.

Hear our voice
You, who have created and continue to create diversity.
Holy are the unique nations of this world who yearn to bask in Your greatness.
We bow at the knee, taking in the grandeur of your world
Which you, our Eternal Parent formed.
Holy are You, who have breathed each soul into existence, according to your likeness

²⁹ *Mishkan T'filah*, 587

From chaos to clarity, You, Holy One, continue to shape Your world for us.
Your presence fills all space, all time, and rests within all peoples.
Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu,
Adonai Echad.
Hear us as we bless your name, Architect of all Creation.

Kaddish Yatom



Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin in his book *To Pray as a Jew*, explains the possible origins of the Kaddish being used for mourners. He explains,

The first mention of the custom that mourner's say Kaddish at the end of the service, is found in *Or Zarua*, a thirteenth-century halakhic work by one of the Early Authorities. In the 16th century, Rabbi Moses Isserles still speaks of the “custom” of reciting the Kaddish for a period of eleven months after the death of a father or mother (Yoreh Deah 376:4, Rema),³⁰

Rabbi Donin further explores the Kaddish as a memorial prayer, acknowledging that the text itself does not make any references “to the dead or the hereafter.” Rabbi Donin suggests that it is an exclamation on behalf of the bereaved which expresses an acceptance of divine judgement. He offers an alternative explanation as well, suggesting that the prayer does in fact mention the dead in an indirect way. He says, “Its recitation by the living is a factor in redeeming the soul of the deceased. If the children of recently deceased parents raise the sanctified God's name in public, that redounds to the merit of the deceased.” Meaning, when a child recites the

³⁰ Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew: A Guide to The Prayer Book and the Synagogue Service* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 222

Kaddish Yatom, they are honoring their parents, even after they have died, and fulfilling the mitzvah of “Honor your father and your mother.”

Ivan Marcus, in his book, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, also explores how the Kaddish transformed from an Aramaic prayer that was said after a homily or in the study hall into a mourner’s prayer. Marcus shows us that the earliest reference to the Kaddish as a prayer for the dead is a story found with variations in both Seder Eliahu Zutta and Mahzor Vitry.³¹ The Vitry version is recounted by Marcus as follows:

Rabbi Akiva met a person walking in a cemetery, carrying a heavy load of wood, and offered to help him. The person reveals that he is dead and is being punished for the sin of having been a merciless tax collector when alive. The only way he can be saved, he tells Rabbi Akiva, would be if he had a son who could stand up in the congregation (as prayer leader) and say, “Blessed be the Lord, who is blessed” (Barekhu et Adonai ha-mevorakh), after which the congregation would respond after him, “May His great name be blessed” (yehei shemei rabbah mevorakh). Then he would be released at once from his punishment.

Rabbi Akiva inquires into the dead man's family and discovers that his wife, who had been pregnant when he died, did deliver a son. And though the son had not been circumcised and did not practice Judaism, Rabbi Akiva saw to it that the son returned to Judaism, studied Torah, and “stood before the congregation and said ‘Blessed’ (Barekhu) and was answered, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who is blessed.’” at that very moment, the father was released from his punishment.

The dead person appeared to Rabbi Akiva in a dream to thank him for “saving me from my punishment in Gehenna.” And, concludes the narrator in the 12th century northern French liturgical compilation *Mahzor Vitry*, “that is why people were accustomed to set before the Ark (as leaders of prayer) in the night after the Sabbath a man who has no father or mother to say ‘Blessed’ (Barekhu) or Kaddish.”³²

³¹ The Seder Eliahu version, in which the rabbinic protagonist is Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, is found in Eliahu Zutta 17 (=Pirkei Derekh Eretx 2); the Vitry version, in which the protagonist is Rabbi Akiva, is in section 144.

³² Ivan Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle: Rites of Passage from Biblical to Modern Times* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 237-240.

Mahzor Vitry, compiled by Simhah ben Samuel of Vitry, a pupil of Rashi, explains how even an ‘orphan’ can lessen his father’s punishment by reciting the Kaddish.

The story above shows us that the Kaddish has been used for a long time as a prayer for mourning. However, it was in the Middle Ages, during the mass casualties of the Crusades, that this prayer became the customary prayer for mourning. Marcus comments on this change of custom:

Even though there are ancient and medieval elements of saying some Kaddish text in the liturgy, the events of 1096 greatly intensified this, at least in the German empire. The cult of the martyrs of 1096 eventually generated or elaborated the widespread cult of remembering the dead of every household.³³

The Kaddish as a memorial prayer has gone through many iterations. David Shyovitz, agrees with Marcus on the spread of the Kaddish as the prayer for the dead, in his article, “You Have Saved Me from the Judgment of Gehenna: The Origins of the Mourner’s Kaddish in Medieval Ashkenaz”.

Sometime in the late 12th or early 13th century the Jewish communities of northern Europe began to recite a weekly prayer for the dead... From its initial attestation in several German liturgical guides, the recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish spread throughout the Rhineland, to northern and southern France, to Bavaria and Austria, and eventually to Spain and Italy.³⁴

The Kaddish did not start as a memorial prayer, but rather, as one to be said in study hall or after an Aramaic homily. However, after tragedy struck the Jewish community in the Rhineland, the need for a Mourner’s Prayer intensified, and those communities turned to a prayer that was

³³ Marcus, 241

³⁴ David Shyovitz, “You Have Saved Me from the Judgment of Gehenna: The Origins of the Mourner’s Kaddish in Medieval Ashkenaz,” *AJS Review* 39 (2015), 49-50

already in their liturgy and familiar to them. Thus, the birth of the Kaddish as the Mourner's Kaddish.

I created this piece of art while I was doing my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) work in 2021. This was during the height of COVID-19. In my studies, I was asked to provide pastoral care for people at Jewish Hospital, while I had to remain at home. I was not comfortable going into the hospital while this pandemic raged on. This meant that I provided pastoral care through the phone. I would talk to patients with various ailments, and I would talk to patients who were struggling, all while not being able to see their faces. This physical distance created a spiritual distance for me as well. I wanted to connect with each person on the other side of the phone, but it was very difficult.

The experience I had in CPE made me think a lot about Kaddish Yatom. I think about this desire to connect with loved ones, but them being just out of reach for us. We recite the Kaddish Yatom as a way to honor our loved ones, and as a way of remembering them. However, sometimes those memories fade, and we are left reaching. I used primarily black and white to show how distorted this time can feel, and how hard it can be to see the vibrancy of life.

I created this piyyut as a way of understanding my own feelings around death and dying. I wanted it to express the push and pull that many people feel when they lose a loved one. Whether that person died tragically or expectedly, death both as a concept and as an experience is complicated. My hope is that people use this slide as a way to prepare themselves to recite the Kaddish Yatom. It is not a replacement for the prayer like some of my other slides but is instead a moment to transition into remembering.

Time feels distorted, in this new world.
Bent, unwavering, unwilling to be compromised.
I made promises, I closed my eyes and prayed for a different scenario.
Now, I look in the mirror, and all I see is my reflection,
But all I want to see is you.
You who once stood next to me in life,
now I must stand beside you in death,
Escorting you to the great beyond.
Time feels distorted in this new world,
Without you.

V'shamru, Kiddush, and HaMotzi



V'shamru is the verses, Exodus 31:16-17. It is most often recited prior to Kiddush on Saturday morning. The text tells us to keep and observe the Sabbath throughout all ages and generations. It also reminds us that the Sabbath is a covenant between the Blessed One and Israel, because on the seventh day of creation, the Holy One rested, and so too are we commanded to rest.

Kabbalistic and Talmudic commentator Chaim ben Moshe ibn Attar, also known as Or HaChaim, writes extensively on these two verses, trying to understand what it means “for the Children of Israel to observe the Sabbath.”

...the verse addresses itself to someone who had lost track of time....Such a person is obligated to establish [their] own count so that [they] do not fail to make one day in seven [their] own personal Sabbath. Even though in this instance the Torah called that seventh day *יום השבת*, when in reality it is only that person's “seventh day,” the Torah wanted to impress on the individual the absolute need to sanctify the seventh day. The first “seventh” day in such a person's count assumes the designation *בת*,

(Or HaChaim, Exodus 31:16).

Or HaChaim is offering what feels like a liberal understanding of what the Sabbath is, in relation to the verses of V'shamru. For him, the Sabbath is not a designated day in the week; but rather, the seventh day of the week according to your count. If then, you lose track of the days in the

week, according to Or HaChaim, you should count out to seven, and let that day be your day of rest.

Furthermore, Or Chaim understands that Shabbat is very different from the rest of the days of the week, no matter when you observe it. He recognizes that there are many prohibitions in place because it allows us to enjoy the extra soul that God instills within us every Shabbat. Therefore, when the verse says, ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת, “we are to jealously guard the additional soul called “Sabbath.” It alone enables us to fulfill the Torah’s directive לעשות את השבת, “to create the true Sabbath,”” (*Or HaChaim*, Exodus 31:16). We guard the Sabbath by marking the day with prayer and with the fulfillment of mitzvot. V’shamru serves as a reminder of our need to guard our soul and “observe the Sabbath” as Children of Israel.

In his commentary on this prayer, Or HaChaim also refers to an aggadic understanding of the Sabbath found in the Bavli and its relationship to the word לעשות in Exodus 31:16.

The verse may also reflect a conversation between the Sabbath and God reported in Bereshit Rabbah 11:8 according to which the Sabbath complained to God that whereas all the other days had been given a בן זוג, a mate, only the Sabbath was left “unattached” so to speak. God reassured the Sabbath by assigning Israel as its “mate.” The meaning of the story is that at its inception the Sabbath lacked a detail to make it complete. God provided this missing detail when God commanded the Jewish people to observe it. לעשות then means “to complete it.”

In this interpretation, the verse suggests that it is our responsibility to “complete” the Sabbath, so that it is not left “unattached.” We do this by singing psalms and rejoicing in the light of the Sabbath candles. When singing V’shamru, we invoke the same joy, thus elevating the day and completing it.

Spanish commentator Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa, also known as Rabbeinu Bahya, adds to the conversation about the meaning of verses 16 and 17. He is interested in what it means to “actively observe the Sabbath,” as it says in Exodus 31:16, לעשות את השבת.

The plain meaning of this line is: “to provide [themselves] with the necessities required on the Sabbath. The expression לעשות is found in this context in Genesis 18,7 and 18,8 where the Torah reports Avraham as preparing the luncheon for the three angels who had come to visit him. The basic meaning of the verse is to encourage people to prepare for the Sabbath in time so that they can enjoy the day when it occurs.

(Rabbeinu Bahya on Exodus 31:16).

For Rabbeinu Bahya, this prayer is a way to prepare ourselves for the Sabbath; this way, we are not bothered with any of the mundane details of the week, but instead, we can focus on the joy of the Sabbath. Between both commentators V’shamru is explained as a way for us to ready ourselves and our souls for the Sabbath, so that the commandment that it be guarded is properly completed.

V’shamru is recited as an introduction to the Kiddush at the home table on Erev Shabbat.. Traditionally, it is not recited before Kiddush in the synagogue on Erev Shabbat, but is part of the Kedushat hayom blessing in the Shacharit Amidah. *Mishkan T’filah* includes it with Kiddush in the synagogue together with the candle blessing before Kabbalat Shabbat.

Why do we recite Kiddush? We turn to b. Pesachim 106a to help us understand why the rabbis instituted Kiddush on the Sabbath.

The Sages taught in a *baraita* with regard to the verse: “Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it” (Exodus 20:7): Remember it over wine, through the recitation of Kiddush.... From where do I derive that one must also recite Kiddush at night? The verse states: “Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it,” which indicates that one should also remember Shabbat as soon as it is sanctified. [that is, as soon as it begins].

The Sages are telling us that saying Kiddush is a way of fulfilling the mitzvah in Exodus 20:7 to sanctify the Sabbath.

Why does Kiddush require us to use wine or grape juice instead of any other beverage?

Rabbi Hayyim Donin explains,

Wine satisfies and is a source of nourishment; it also makes a person cheerful. The Psalmist immortalized its significance: “Wine maketh glad the heart of man... and bread sustains the heart of man” (Psalms 104:15; b. Berakhot 35b)...Wine as a symbol of joy and celebration was given halakhic status when the sages required that drinking a cup of wine accompany certain prayers or ceremonies. And so, a blessing of wine is added to Kiddush, Havdalah, the Rite of Circumcision, the Redemption of the First-Born, the Ceremony of the Betrothal, and the Marriage Blessings (OH 182:1, MB:1,4),³⁵

Rabbi Donin shows us that even though tomatoes are technically a fruit of the vine, the Rabbis saw grapes as special and worthy of distinction, to the extent that we sanctify the Sabbath over a cup of wine along with other time-marking rituals.

Immediately following Kiddush at the home table is the blessing over bread, HaMotzi. According to Rabbi Donin, the specific wording of the blessing is based on a verse found in Psalms 104:14, לְהוֹצִיא לֶקֶם מִן־הָאָרֶזׁ. This verse reads in full, “You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man’s labor that he may get food out of the earth.”³⁶ This verse explains how the Holy One provides for us resources to bring up bread from the earth. We recite this blessing because, for most of Jewish history, bread has been a substantive part of any meal, and one of the most nourishing parts as well.

³⁵ Donin, 309.

³⁶ Sefaria translation

Rabbi Donin continues his explanation for why we say a blessing over bread after Kiddush, quoting b. Berakhot 41b, “the blessing for bread, said at the beginning of a meal suffices for everything eaten as part of the meal, except wine and fresh fruit, which require separate blessings,”³⁷ Thus, we thank the Eternal One for giving us the food that we are about to eat.

In the art that I created for *V’shamru*, I wanted to explore the extra soul that we receive on Shabbat. That is represented in the celestial being near the heart. The head is thinking about breathing with a drawn-out breath which quotes *V’Shamru*, saying, וינפש. The head also explores tranquility and a sense of peace that has washed over this individual, as a result of going through this Kabbalat Shabbat service. This is Shabbat for me. After a joyous service with music and movement, this prayer tells me: it is Shabbat, it is time to rest.

For the Kiddush and HaMotzi I wanted the art to be almost literal. It is a glass of wine and a loaf of challah. There is no interpretation required here; it is Shabbat. While there is still an artistic flair, the time for reflection is over, as a delicious meal awaits us. Each piece is colorful and inviting, encouraging those who see it to want to partake in these blessings.

My hope for this section is that people notice the transition to the conclusion of the service. I hope that this ending is a way to adjust people away from the worship experience and into the joy of celebrating Shabbat.

³⁷ Donin, 308.

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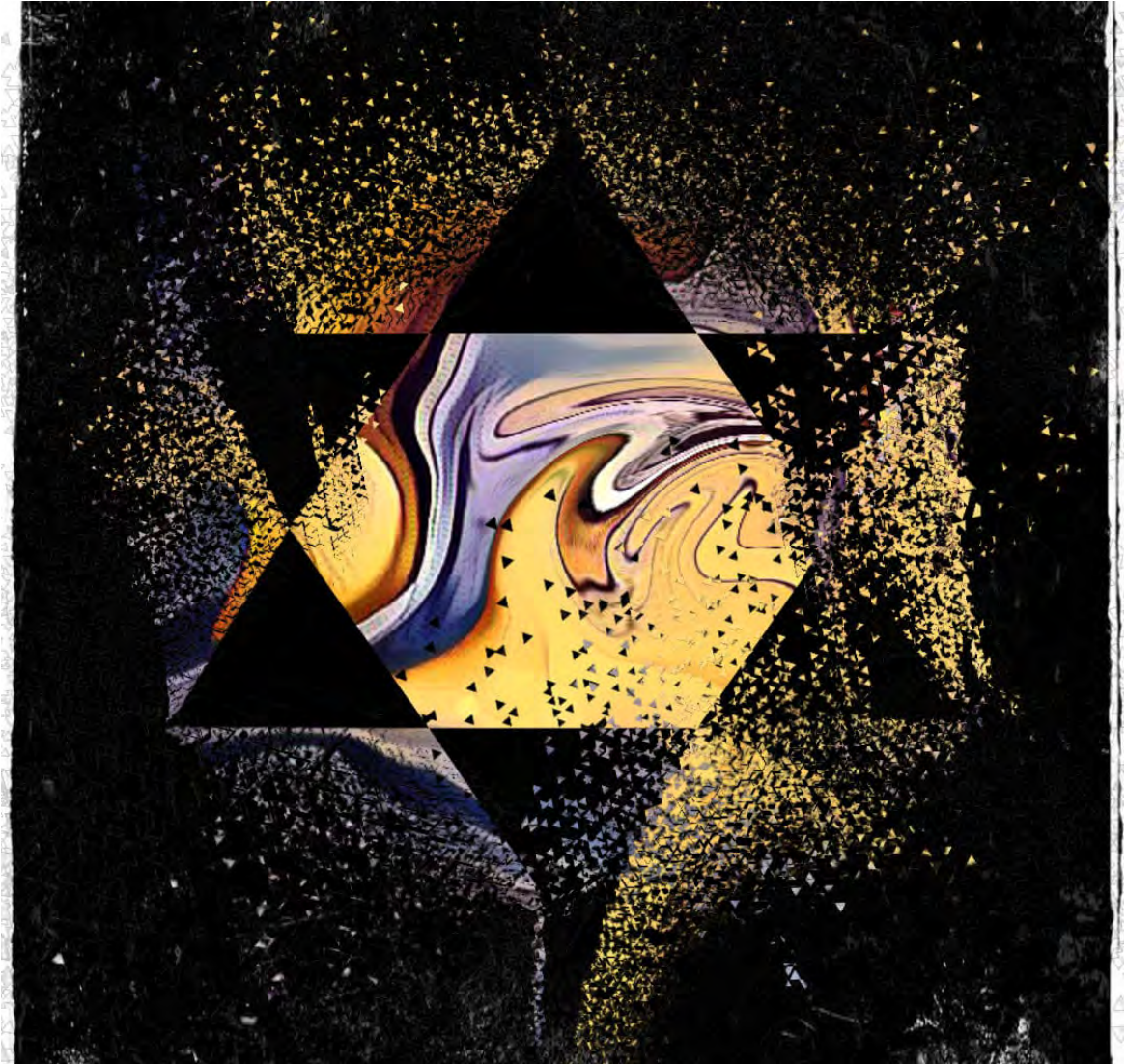
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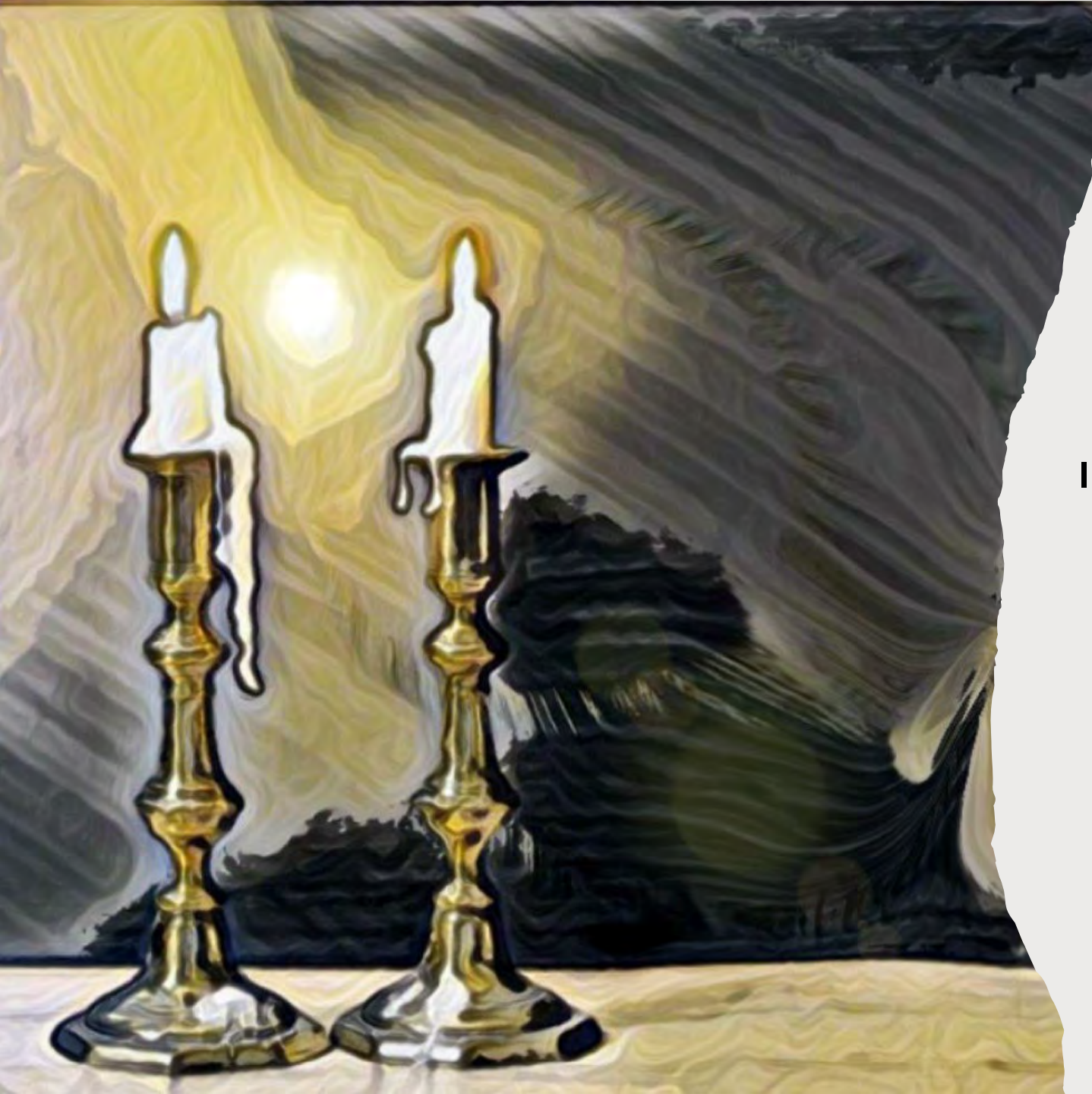
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תפילת אומנות

T'filat Omanut

An artistic siddur. All art and kavanot has been created by Tzvia Rubens





הדלקת נרות Candle Blessings

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שֶׁל שַׁבָּת

Baruch atah,
Adonai Eloheinu, Melech
haolam, asher kid'shanu
b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu
l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.

Blessed are you, Holy Energy of the Universe,
who sanctifies us with mitzvot, commanding
us to light the Sabbath candles



שִׁיר לַאֲדֹנָי Shiru L'Adonai

Bless, laud, exult, and praise –
With all our hearts we cry out to You!
The Holy One who has given us music,
To proclaim our love for You –
We raise up our voices to every nation,
To all peoples, to all without hope!
You are ETERNAL,
Held in awe by the Divine Council,
Whose majesty reigns supreme.
Let the mighty oaks know before whom they stand,
And let the vast oceans know their Creator!
All the earth will sing out to You,
Divine Conductor of the infinite symphony,
The one who arranges our voices,
And puts life into order.
Blessed are You, who has given us song by which to praise You!



Lecha Dodi
לכה דודי

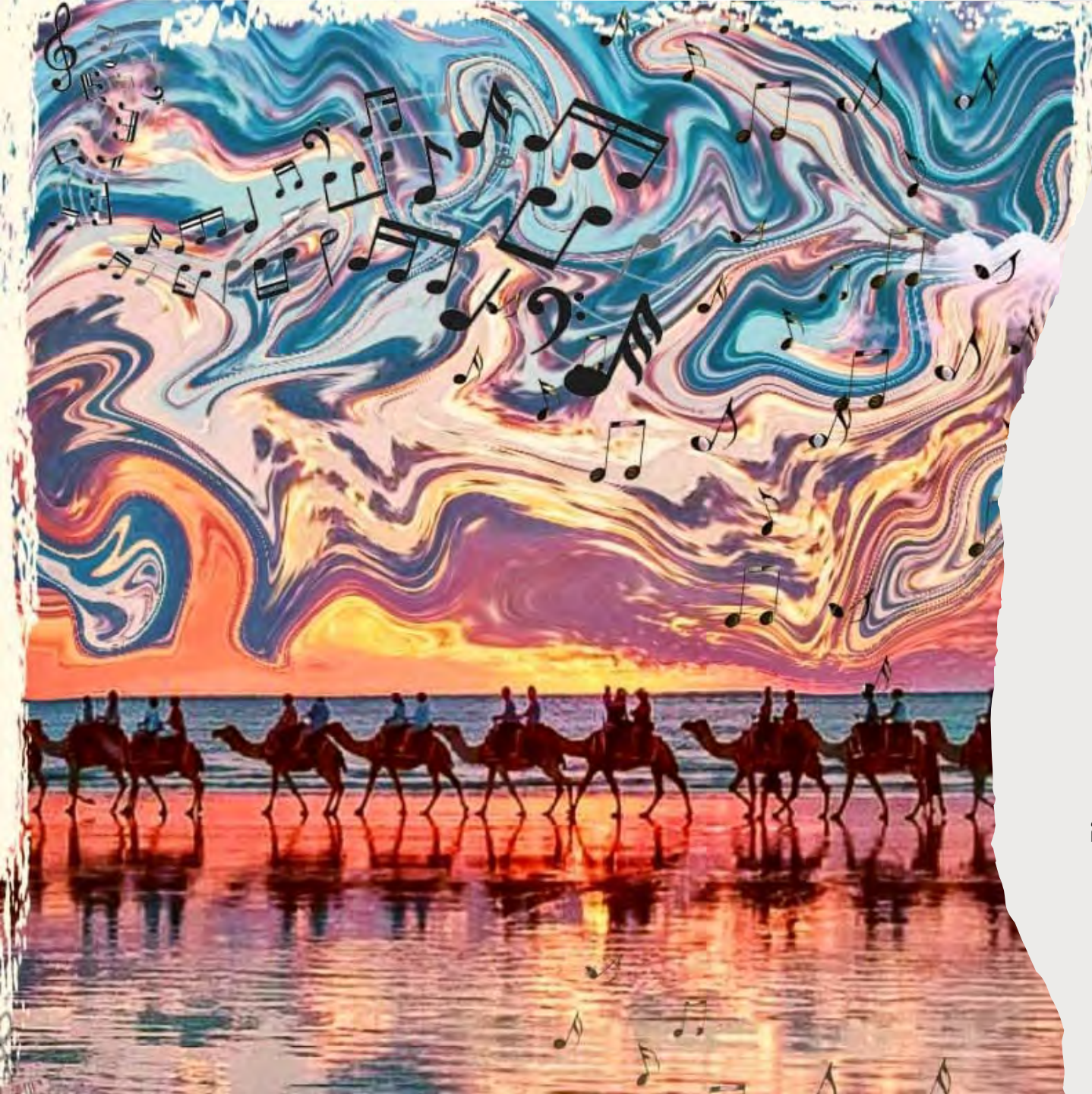
Shabbat Has Arrived in Our City

Shabbat has arrived in our city
We give thanks for this time
Shabbat has arrived in our city
Please God, bless me with your light

I'll gather it thrice,
Oh no, not once, not twice
As the lights begin to flicker
They'll dance and then ill whisper
Holy, holy, holy, are You –
[chorus]

This week has come and gone
But now we say that we're done
As we put away our strife's
And we bask in God's light, singing
Shalom, Shalom, Shalom
[chorus]





שלום עליכם Shalom Aleichem

שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם מְלֶאכֵי הַשָּׁרָת
מְלֶאכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן
מִמְלֶכֶת מְלָכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא

Sha-lom a-lei-chem,
mal-a-chei ha-sha-reit,
mal-a-chei el-yon,
mi-me-lech ma-l'chei ha-m'la-chim,
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu.

בוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם מְלֶאכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם
מְלֶאכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן
מִמְלֶכֶת מְלָכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא

Bo-a-chem l'sha-lom,
mal-a-chei ha-sha-lom,
mal-a-chei el-yon,
mi-me-lech ma-l'chei ha-m'la-chim,
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu.

בְּרַכּוֹנֵי לְשָׁלוֹם מְלֶאכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם
מְלֶאכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן
מִמְלֶכֶת מְלָכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא

Bar-chu-ni l'sha-lom,
mal-a-chei ha-sha-lom,
mal-a-chei el-yon,
mi-me-lech ma-l'chei ha-m'la-chim,
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu.

צֵאתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם מְלֶאכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם
מְלֶאכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן
מִמְלֶכֶת מְלָכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא

Tsei-t'chem l'sha-lom,
mal-a-chei ha-sha-lom,
mal-a-chei el-yon,
mi-me-lech ma-l'chei ha-m'la-chim,
ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch hu.

Chatzi Kaddish

חצי קדיש

Holy Author, whose story is enticing,
You have given us song –
and you have given us space to ready
ourselves,
to be in conversation, with You.
So often our lips utter thoughts not
fully formed.
Our gratitude is often mixed with
resentment.
But hear us, Mighty Scribe,
You, who gives us a chance to ponder,
A chance to reflect, a chance to
prepare.
Here we are on the precipice of time,
Leaving the space of internal
congestion,
As we embrace our conversations with
You.
Life has been hard, life has been
wonderful,
I just need to be heard.
Here we are, a bookmark between the
noise and the conversation,
Ready to engage.



ברכו Barchu

Hear us, אל הרחמים, O Compassionate One
As we stand on the precipice of uncertainty and depletion.
Weaver of the tapestry of our lives, hear our adoration for You,
Blessed One, whose name we dare not whisper,
Your heavenly throne will reign forever!

Your name of חסידות, the One who is Kindness –
Purify our hearts that we may serve You through positive interactions.
Let us embrace the neighbor, the friend, and the stranger.
All who benefit from the corners of Your generosity,
The overflow of divinity that You have instilled within us!

Eternal Parent, accept our humble supplications,
As they ring out to heavens -
At Sinai you showed us mercy,
You showed us Your Torah, You showed us our path.
At Sinai we became Yours, and together we were one.
Blessed are You, חסידות ורחמים, The One before whom we stand.

**בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יי הַמְּבַרֵךְ
בְּרוּךְ יי הַמְּבַרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד**







עולם אהבת Ahavat Olam

Eternal is Your loving kindness for the House of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah.

Blessed are You who watches over us each night.

When our eyes grow heavy, as the night slowly illuminates by light lifetimes away,

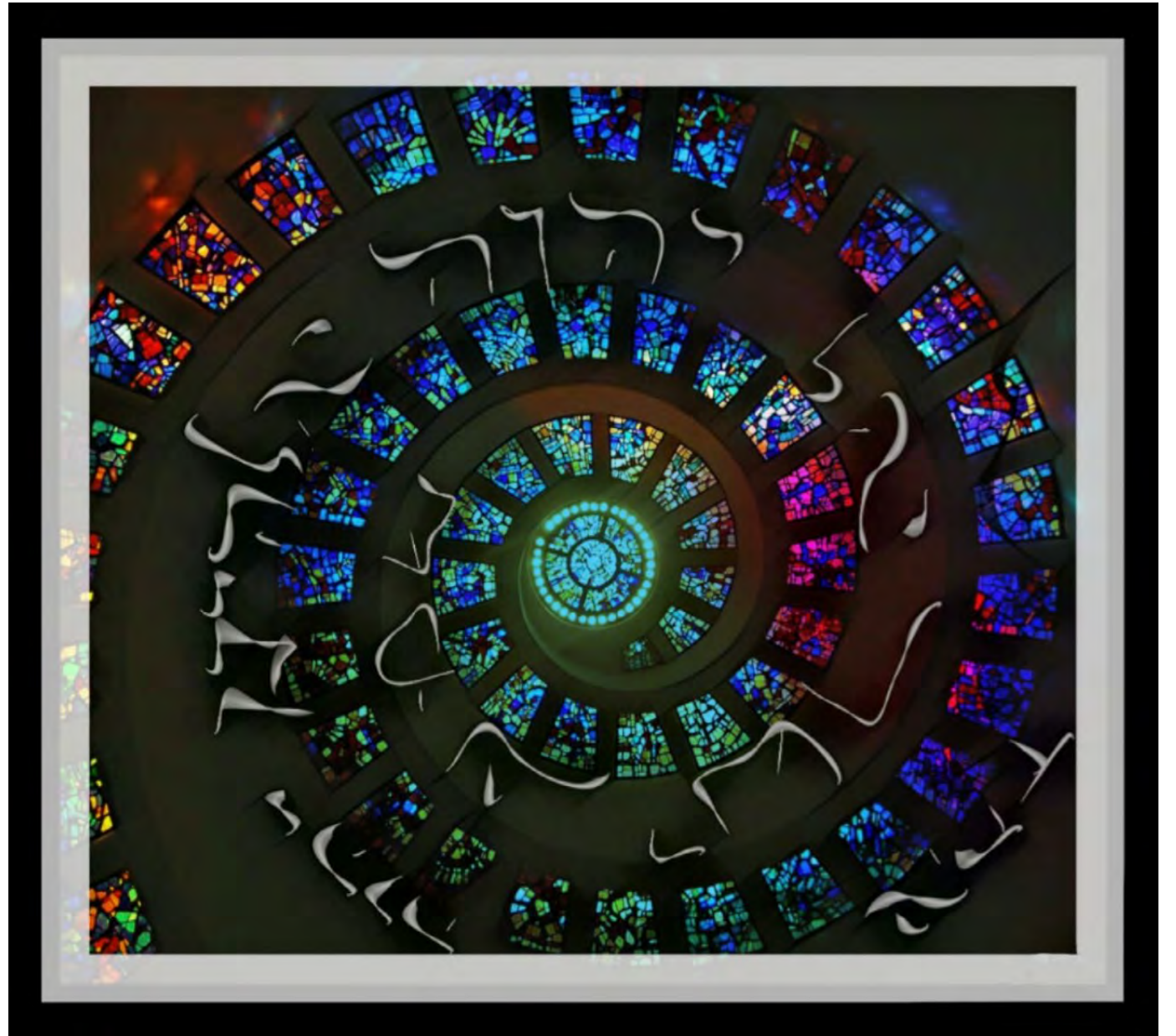
We meditate on your mitzvot, on Your Torah, and on Your laws.

Light has rolled into darkness, and we whisper our appreciation for another day to love, to grow, and to learn.

Blessed is the Divine Architect who lengthens our days and shows love to Your people, Israel.

שמע Shema

Hear me, Blessed One!
Infinite is Your majesty.
Your kingdom bears the fruit of
devotion, for those who seek
Your covenant.
Extend Your wings and
embrace Your people.
You, who has no name, and all
names –
Who sat in fire and put the
breath of the ETERNAL into
every soul,
Hear our supplications,
Blessed is the Holy Energy of
the Universe, who is one, now
and forever!





ואהבת V'ahavta

I am told to love you,

Whoever you are.

With all my heart, my soul, and my might.

Wherever I go, whomever I am with,

I should keep You with me.

I'll be honest, God, is it?

Sometimes all I feel is confusion.

I want to be near you, to feel you –

But some days it's just silence.

Your words hang on my doorposts,

I teach them to my kids –

But who will remind me when I feel lost?

Give me a sign so that I may wear it as I go about my way.

Help me draw nearer to You.

Blessed is the Holy Struggle as I yearn to know You

מי כמכה **Mi Chamocha**

מי-כְּמֹכָה בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה?
מי כְּמֹכָה נֹאדָר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ
נִוְרָא תְהִלָּתְךָ, עֲשֵׂה פְלֵא

Mi Chamocha Ba'elim Adonai?
Mi kamocha ne'dar bakodesh;
Nora tehillot, oseh feleh.

Who is comparable to You, Oh Holy Energy of the Universe?
Who is comparable to You, who is magnificent in holiness;
And splendid are your actions, our Divine Miracle Worker!



השכיבנו " אלהינו לשלום
 והעמידנו שומרנו לחיים
 ופרש עלינו סבת שלומך
 ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך
 והושיענו למען שמך והגן בעדנו
 והסר מעלינו אויב דבר וחרב ורעב ויגון
 והרחיק ממנו עון ופשע ובצל כנפיד תסתירנו
 כי אל שומרנו ומצילנו אתה
 כי אל חנוך ורחום אתה
 וישמר צאתנו ובואנו לחיים ולשלום
 מעתה ועד עולם

ברוך אתה " הצורש סבת שלום
 עלינו ועל כל עמנו
 ישראל ועל ירושלים

Hashkiveinu השכיבנו

Shabbat has arrived in our city,
 The streets are frantic with last minute preparation.
 Will this task be finished, or that?
 There is too much to do, and time scares us.
 Yet, since the beginning,
 You have protected us –
 You have shown us Your mighty hand,
 and sustained us through endless miracles.
 You gave to us a garden,
 A shelter beneath your wings,
 You guarded us and protected us.
 You were a dove in the chaos of the storm,
 and a colorful tunic which we wore with honor.
 You were a shield that took our heaviest blows.
 Now, more than ever, we need You,
 Our Holy Symbol of hope –
 That we can pause, slow down,
 and appreciate Your gift to Your people.
 Shabbat is here,
 And it is only under Your protection,
 That we can finally let go of the chaos,
 and prepare our lips so that our mouths will declare
 Your ever-living sovereignty.

עמידה Silent Amidah

You are my *neshama*, the Eternal Flame of my heart,
I sit here, my mouth open wide in preparation for speaking Your praise.
Blessed are you, the One who was in relationship with my mothers and fathers.
I am filled with awe as I draw closer to Your Majesty.
Each droplet of rain, each sparkle of the evening stars reminds me, of You -
My Infinite judge.
With my breath I pray to You, Oh Eternal One -
See me favorably as you did with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Cherish my contributions as you did with Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,
Trust in my strength as you did with Shifrah and Puah –
As they delivered the deliverer who was slow with tongue as I am this evening.
Grant me the wisdom to lead with conviction like my mothers Miriam and Deborah,
Or as I find myself like Joseph in disputes with my brothers and sisters.
You are showing me Your path, my Eternal Flame –
Together We will walk, onwards towards holiness.



עושה שלום

Oseh Shalom

עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמָיו
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן

Oseh shalom
bimromav
Hu ya'aseh shalom
aleinu
V'al kol Yisrael
V'imru: amen.

מי שברך Mi Shebeirach

We look towards the mountains and at the majesty of Your world,
Each rock and each pebble, unstable in its own right,
But when supported by others, creating a balanced whole

Our hearts are with You, the Creator of our destinies.
We recall the thunders of Sinai that still reverberate in our souls,
The words of Your mouth drift to us from the hills of Jerusalem,

From the rivers Euphrates and Tigris to the shores of the Jordan,
The waters flow evenly, their waves engulfing all that wanders
into their path, only to release it just a few moments later.
They might still be whole; but now, cracked and fractured

מי שברך אבותינו ואמותינו
תברך אותנו תזכור אותנו

May the One who blessed our fathers and our mothers,
bless us and remember us



עלינו Aleinu

Hear our voice

You, who has created and continues to create diversity.

Holy are the unique nations of this world who yearn to bask in Your greatness.

We bow at the knee, taking in the grandeur of your world

Which you, our Eternal Parent formed.

Holy are You, who has breathed each soul into existence, according to your likeness

From chaos to clarity, You, Holy One, continue to shape Your world for us.

Your presence fills all space, all time, and rests within all peoples.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu,
Adonai Echad.

Hear us as we bless your name, Architect of all Creation.



יתום Mourner's Kaddish

Time feels distorted, in this new world.

Bent, unwavering, unwilling to be compromised.

I made promises, I closed my eyes and prayed for a
different scenario.

Now, I look in the mirror, and all I see is my
reflection,

But all I want to see is you.

You who once stood next to me in life,
now I must stand beside you in death,

Escorting you to the great beyond.

Time feels distorted in this new world,

Without you.





ושמרו

V'shamru

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת
לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדֹרֹתָם בְּרִית
עוֹלָם

V'shamru v'nei Yisrael
et HaShabbat, laasot et
HaShabbat l'dorotam b'rit
olam.

בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹת הוּא
לְעוֹלָם

Beini u'vein b'nei Yisrael
ot hi l'olam,

כִּי־שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה
אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ

ki sheishet yamim asah
Adonai et hashamayim
v'et haaretz,

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפָשׁ

u'vayom hashvi-i shavat
vayinafash

קידוש Kiddush

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן
Baruch atah,
Adonai Eloheinu,
Melech haolam,
borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Holy Energy of the
Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.



Ha Motzi המוציא

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu
Melekh ha'olam, hamotzi lekhem
min ha'aretz.

Blessed are you Adonai our
God, Ruler of the universe,
who causes bread to come
forth from the earth

