

Kavanah, Ruah, Emunah

(Intention, Breath, Faith)



***Prayers, Poems, Recitations, and Readings
adapted for
Contemplative Jewish Practice***

an initiative of

VAHAVTAH

Judaism Beyond Zionism

*Jewish prayer is defined broadly as any practice or process
that we undertake by first turning inward in the service of widening outward,
to meet a holiness larger than our individual lives.*

—Wendy Elisheva Somerson

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*collection edited and all pieces adapted
by Josh Bartok*

Beyond I and Thou

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from Gate to the Heart)

Yah, my G-d, where are You?

I call You as if from afar,

But You, my Redeemer,

Dwell in my heart,

So close, and I know it not.

Here You are,

Present in my innermost,

And so too at the outermost edge,

Both my Source and Goal!

Where my feelings rise in me,

There You are, stirring me,

Nesting in the womb

Of my urge.

Here in my eyes,

You are the pupil,

And I yearn so much

To make of You

The object of my sight.

Show me how to host You,

Your sanctuary in me,

Sacred by Your Presence.

Life of my life,

You are with/in me

So how can I meet You

On the outside?

My song I would

Address to You,

Were You beside me,

And not hidden in this voice.

Zoned in the point of knowing,

You hide in unseen splendor,

Glorious as I seek Your Glory;

Lingering on Your threshold,

My ego squats, claiming to be

The legal tenant of Your home.

More I cannot confuse

The two who shimmer

As one I-Am-ness.

Never can I leave this labyrinth

My self by myself.

Help me sortie and free me;

Then my prayer

Will be pure

For You.

Echo—

Are You the call

Or the answer?

Even these words,

Are they mine

Or Yours?

Help and tell me,

Love of my Heart,

Are You not also

The Love and the Heart?

Yah! G-d, adored One,

I want to offer You

A gift You will not spurn—

Your will be mine.

Is it not already so?

Holy solitude,

All One Alone,

My sole One,

My soul's One,

My part(ner)

My wholly-Holy Other-One.

Amen.

On Dialogical Presence

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from All Breathing Life Adores Your Name)

The mind enjoys reaching towards unity. It can conceptually reach infinity in solitude. And yet, the heart needs to flow to a dialogical Presence. It needs to have the Other to face and to love and to embrace. The contemplative, who still wants to experience love and longing without relinquishing the unitive awareness will find this poem a heart-full expression.

Thank-You Prayer

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi from All Breathing Life Adores Your Name)

Thank You, G-d of Eternity,
for this great wonder,
for the earth, the stars, the sun, and the moon,
and the beauty of Your universe,
with which in Your great kindness You have blessed me.
Thank You for granting me life, in all its richness,
for its brilliant moments of joy,
which allow me to soar as the birds,
and even for its anguish and pain,
which somehow seem to precipitate inner growth and change.
For all these things, G-d, I am grateful.
But thank You, especially, G-d,
in Your abundant love,
for having chosen to make me a human being,
with a mind to reason and seek truth and justice;
with a soul to feel pain, ecstasy, and compassion,
and has the freedom to choose life and goodness
over cruelty and destruction;
and with a heart which can love and care,
and reach out to touch the hearts of my siblings,
as together we walk through the years of our lives.

Aleinu—It Is Our Duty

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi,
from Sh'ma: A Concise Weekday Siddur for Praying in English)

We rise to praise You,
Source of All,
Your generous work
as Creator of All;
You made us One
With all of Life
And help us to share
With all of Humanity;
You linked our fate
With all that lives,
And made our portion
With all in the world.

Some of us like
to worship You
As Emptiness and Void;

Some of us
Want to worship You
As Sovereign of Sovereigns;

We all consider
You Sacred and blessed.
We stand amazed
At the vault of the sky,
At the firmness of earth,
And deem You enthroned
In the Highest realms,
But also dwelling Within us.

You are our G-d;
There is nothing else;
Your Truth Is supreme;
Existence is Nothing but You[...].

The Four Worlds

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from The Gates of Prayer)

G-d, I want to do for you;
I want to feel for you;
I want to know for you;
I want to be for you.

You are action;
You are feeling;
You are knowledge;
You are being.

You are action;
You are feeling;
You are knowledge;
You just Are.

If I Am I

(by Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)

If I am I because I am I,
and you are you
because you are you,
then I am I and you are you.

But if I am I *because* you are you
and you are you
because I am I
then I am not I and you are not you!

Source of Space and Time

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from The Emerging Cosmology)

Source of Time and Space,
Avinu Malkeinu,
 Our Sovereign Parent,
 Draw down to us the great Renewal,
 A stream from The Infinite,
 Attuning us to Your timely intent.

Let Wisdom flow into our awareness,
 Awakening us to foresight,
 Guiding us to help
 Instead of harm.

May every tool and device
 Of human use
 Be sparing and protecting
 Of Your Creation.

Help us to set right
 All that we have debased,
 To heal what we have made ill,
 To care for and restore
 What we have injured.

Bless the Earth, our home;
 Guide us in how
 To care for her
 So we might live
 According to Your promise,
 Days of Heaven Here on Earth.

May all the beings
 Become aware of You
 And the gift of being
 You grant them In every moment.

May we realize
 The shaping of our lives,
 And may everything that breathes
 Share breath
 And knowing,
 Delighting in the One Great Breath.

Guide us in
 The understanding
 Of the art of partnering
 With family, with friends,
 And with neighbors,
 New and old.

Aid us in dissolving
 Old enmities;
 May we come to honor,
 Even in those
 With whom we struggle,
 Your image and form,
 Your Light
 Dwelling In their hearts.

May our star soon
 Rise on the day
 When Your House
 Will indeed be A House of Prayer
 For All Peoples,
 Named and celebrated
 In every tongue;
 On that day
 You will be known
 As One with all
 Cosmic Life.

A Rehearsal Prayer

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from Living Fully, Dying Well)

G-d...

From before I was born,
You took me through my life,
You supported me,
You were there with me
Even when I wasn't there with You.

There were times I was sick
And you healed me;
There were times I was in despair
And you gave me hope;
There were times when I felt betrayed
And I could still turn to You;
It was a wonderful life.

I loved
And I was loved;
I sang,
I heard music,
I saw flowers,
I saw sunrises
And sunsets.

Even in places when I was alone,
You, in my heart,

Helped me turn loneliness
Into precious solitude.
I look back over the panorama
of my life...
What a wonderful privilege this was.

I still have some concerns
For people,
For the world,
For the planet;
I put them in Your blessed hands.

I trust that
Whatever in the Web of Life
That needed me to be there
Is now completed.
I thank You
For taking the burden from me
I thank You for keeping me in the light...

As I let go,
And let go,
And let go,
And let go.

Gratitude Prayer

(tr. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi)

If ocean-full our mouth were with music,
Our tongues singing
Like the ceaseless surf,
Our lips praising You to the skies,

Our eyes blazing like the sun and moon,
Our arms spread like soaring eagles,
Our legs sprinting like those of deers—
We could not thank You enough.

Prayer for Peace

(by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, from All Breathing Life Adores Your Name)

May the Holy One bless
all those whose lives have been changed
by violence.

May those who witnessed such events
find reconciliation and an inner peace
which allows them to live without fear.

May those who suffered injury
find healing and recovery.
And may those who have lost loved ones
find comfort and consolation
in the presence of family, friends, and community.

Our Parent, Source of our very being,
please gather under your Wings
And close to your heart
the souls of those who passed on.

Keep them close to us who live on,
that they inspire us to seek peace,
to be peace,
and to end the curse of killing, hatred, and fear
which blocks us from becoming
the compassionate beings
we were meant to be.

May the souls of those who suffer today
or were lost
be bound up with those who live on
that we not forget the love they shared
and the love we all must share.
May they rest in peace.

Amen.

There Are Numerous Paths

(by Yisrael Baal Shem, from Testament of the Rabbi Yisra'el Ba'al Shem)

There are numerous paths, and G-d wishes to be served via all of them; sometimes in this way, sometimes in another. When a person finds their path blocked, this may mean that G-d now offers an opportunity to be served in *another* manner. Do not look down upon anyone for any kind of service, for all ways lead to G-d.

The Totality of Souls

(by Pinhas of Koretz)

What is G-d? The totality of souls. Whatever exists in the whole may also be found in the part. Therefore, in any one soul, all souls are contained. If I turn in *teshuvah*, in repentance, I already contain in me the friends whom I wish to help; and, likewise, they contain me in them. My *teshuvah* makes both the *them-in-me* better, and the *me-in-them* better. In this way, it is easier for the *them-in-them* and the *me-in-me* to become better as well.

Do Not Be Daunted

(by Rami Shapiro, paraphrasing Micah 6:8 and Ethics of Our Fathers (*Pirkei Avot*))

Do not be daunted
by the enormity
of the world's grief.

Do justly, now.
Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now.

We are not obligated
to complete the work,
but neither are we free
to abandon it.

Hineh Ma Tov

Hineh ma tov uma na'im
Shevet achim gam yachad.

Hineh ma tov uma na'im
Shevet achim gam yachad.

(Chorus)
Hineh ma tov
Shevet achim gam yachad.

(How good and pleasant it is
For siblings to sit together.)

Holy, Holy, Holy

(Anonymous, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

Who is like you
 Who could reach you
 Who has seen
 Who has been
 Who would hold their head high
 or raise an eye,
 Who would insist
 Who would persist
 Who would dare
 Who would consider
 Who would be so coarse and proud,
 Who would plot and build

When You ride a cherub
 And glide on the wind
 And wander through thunder
 And move within storms

Making Your way through the waters
 And sending Yourself through flames
 A thousand thousands
 and tens of thousands
 becoming people,
 and becoming spirits,
 and becoming demons,
 becoming every likeness
 and carrying out every mission

With reverence and awe,
 shivering and shaking,
 they open their mouths
 extolling your holy name,
 and as it is written, calling:
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts—
 The world is filled with Your glory.

Kadoish Kadoish Kadoish

Kadoish, Kadoish, Kadoish Adonai Tzevaot

Windows of Worship

(Anonymous, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

And Moses asked Metatron: “What are these windows?”
 And Metatron said, “These windows are:

Windows of worship,
 Windows of beckoning,
 Windows of weeping,
 Windows of joy,
 Windows of satiety,
 Windows of hunger,

Windows of penury,
 Windows of wealth,
 Windows of peace,
 Windows of war,
 Windows of bearing,
 Windows of birth.”

And he saw—windows without number or end.

Prayers for Heart Opening

(by Moshe ben Nahman, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

(1.) May the Name
send its hidden radiance
to open the gates [...]—
and shine in the hearts,
which now are shut in silent darkness.

(2.) May the One be moved to act
in perfection and uprightness—
to open the gates of wisdom
for us and awaken love.

(3.) I trust in You,
and not my power,
and know Your mercy endures.
Before I call, somehow, You answer...

(4.) I-am is the power
of your Name
in concealment,
and one who knows its mystery
dwells in eternity's instant.

Over the world,
it pours forth abundance and favor,
and on it all worlds hang,
like grapes in a cluster.

Send us the dew of blessing,
the dew of grace.

Where Will I Find You

(by Shalomoh Ibn Gabirol, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

Where, G-d, will I find you:
your place is high and obscured.
And where won't I find you:
your glory fills the world.
You dwell deep within—
You've fixed the ends of creation.
You stand,
a tower for the near,
refuge to those far off.
Exalted among your hosts,
although beyond their hymns—

no heavenly sphere
could ever contain you,
let alone a chamber within.
I sought your nearness.
With all my heart I called you.
And in my going out to meet you,
I found you coming toward me,
as in the wonders of your holy works
I saw you....

On Awakening and Drawing Near

(from *The Zohar*, tr. Peter Cole, in *The Poetry of Kabbalah*)

Aspiration to action
and the bonds of faith.
A voice, the voice of voices,
awakened on high and below.
Our eyes were open:
a wheel turned on high all around,
and a fine voice was aroused.
Awaken those who drowse—
with sleep in their hollows—
and neither look nor see nor know,

their ears sealed, their hearts thick,
they drowse and do not know.
The teaching stands before us.
Scripture sends forth voices.
Look closely,
open your eyes and understand.
How long will you dwell
in the dark of your desire?
Look and discover—
the light that shines.

The Ghazal of Goodness

(by Anonymous, tr. Peter Cole, in *The Poetry of Kabbalah*)

Fathom and hold to your faith,
for there is nothing else but G-d.
Circle and serve and you will find
not a thing but G-d.
G-d and G-d's name,
which are the same
—enter, observe, and understand:

there is none but G-d.
Be filled with G-d, see G-d and say:
there is no other but G-d.
G-d is hidden, G-d is found —
but not, to be sure, created;
Do not inquire, do not aspire,
speak of nothing but G-d.

Think of Others

(by Mahmoud Darwish, tr. Mohammed Shaheen)

As you prepare your breakfast,
think of others
(do not forget the pigeon's food).
As you conduct your wars,
think of others
(do not forget those who seek peace).
As you pay your water bill,
think of others
(those who are nursed by clouds).
As you return home, to your home,
think of others

(do not forget the people of the camps).
As you sleep and count the stars,
think of others
(those who have nowhere to sleep).
As you liberate yourself in metaphor,
think of others
(those who have lost the right to speak).
As you think of others far away,
think of yourself
(say: "If only I were a candle
in the dark").

Song of You

(by Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

G-d of the World.	and — there I go — You	The heavens — You.
G-d of the World.	always You,	Earth — You.
G-d of the World,	however You,	On high — You,
I'll sing You	only You, and ever You.	and below...
a little Song of You.		
<i>You — You — You</i>	East — You	In every direction,
	West — You	and every inflection.
Where will I find You?	North — You	
Where won't I find You?	South — You	Still You. However You.
	<i>You — You — You</i>	Only You. Ever You.
So — here I go — You		<i>You — You — You</i>

A Silent Language of God

(by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

A silent language of G-ds exists, a soundless speech of secrets, but rich with color, the magic of shifting forms, a fabulous spectacle. And within that language G-d is known.	in the corn's trembling gold, and the great cedar soaring; the white wing of the fluttering dove, and the broad strokes of the eagle's wings; in the simple beauty of a person's back and the splendor of the look in their eye; in the sea's anger, and its breakers' crash and play; in the night's bounty and the silence of falling stars; in the noise of fire and the ocean —roar of daybreak's blaze and dusk.
This is the language of vision, revealed along an azure strip of heaven's expanse, and within its silvery clouds and nimbus massed;	

Bring Me Under Your Wing

(by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, tr. Peter Cole, in The Poetry of Kabbalah)

Bring me in under your wing,
be sister for me, and mother,
the place of you,
rest for my head,
a nest for my unwanted prayers.

At the hour of mercy,
at dusk,
we'll talk of my secret pain:
They say, there's youth in the world—
What happened to mine?

And another thing, a clue:
my being was seared by a flame.

They say there's love all around—
What do they mean?

The stars betrayed me—
there was a dream,
which also has passed.
Now in the world
I have nothing, not-a-thing.

Bring me in under your wing,
be sister for me, and mother,
the place of you,
rest for my head,
a nest for my unwanted prayers.

Contemplative Sh'ma

(by Marcia Falk, from The Book of Blessings)

Hear, O G-dwrestlers,
The Divine abounds everywhere
and dwells in everything:
the many are One.
Loving life and its mysterious Source
with all my heart and all my spirit,
All my senses and strength,
I take upon myself and into myself
these promises:

to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
I will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day—
as I dwell in my home
and as I go on my journey,
from the time I rise until I fall asleep.

Blessings

(by Marcia Falk, from The Book of Blessings)

After the Meal

Let us acknowledge the Source of life,
Source of all nourishment.
May we protect the bountiful earth
that it may continue to sustain us,
and let us seek sustenance
for all who dwell in the world.

Candlelighting

May our hearts be lifted,
our spirits refreshed,
as we light the candles.
Let us seek the unseen sparks that
kindle the greater lights.

In the Morning

The breath of my life will bless,
the cells of my being sing
in gratitude, reawakening.

In Closing

May the blessings of peace
and kindness, graciousness, goodness,
and compassion flow among us
and all the communities of G-dwrestlers,
And all the peoples of the world.
As we bless the Source of life
so we are blessed.

Distinctions

Let us distinguish parts within the whole
and bless their differences.
Like the Sabbath
and the six days of creation,
may our lives be made whole
through relation.
As rest makes the Sabbath precious,
may our work give meaning to the week.
Let us separate the Sabbath
from other days of the week,
seeking holiness in each.

For the New Week

May blessing abound in the city
and in the field,
in the home and on the journey.
Blessed be the vessel
and the work of the hands,
the fruit of the body
and the fruit of the land.
May it be a fruitful week.

Of the Children

Be who you are—
and may you be
blessed
in all that you are.

Prayer for the New Month

(by Marcia Falk, from The Book of Blessings)

May this month
be a month of blessings:
blessings of goodness,
blessings of joy,
peace and kindness,
friendship and love,
creativity, strength, serenity,
fulfilling work and dignity,

satisfaction, success,
and sustenance,
physical health and radiance.
May truth and justice guide our acts,
and compassion temper our lives
that we may blossom as we age
and become our sweetest selves.
May it be so.

I Will Be Still

(by Anna Margolin, tr. Marcia Falk,
in The Book of Blessings)

Slender ships drowse
on swollen green water,
black shadows sleep
on the cold heart of water.
All the winds are still.
Clouds shift like ghosts in the
speechless night.
The earth, pale and calm, awaits
lightning and thunder.
I will be still.

All the Winds

(By Rachel Korn, tr. Marcia Falk,
in The Book of Blessings)

All the winds have grown still
as though someone rocked them
softly to sleep
between naked branches of the trees
on a rainy autumn night.
All the sorrows have made their home
at my doorstep,
as though—in all the world—
they had no other harbor
but my eyes, my hands,
my smile, my word.

Grant Me the Ability to be Alone*(by Nachman of Breslov, tr. Peter Cole in The Poetry of Kabbalah)*

Grant me the ability to be alone;
 may it be my custom
 to go outdoors each day
 among the trees and grass—
 among all growing things—
 and there may I be alone,
 and enter into prayer,
 to talk with the One to whom I belong.
 May I express there everything
 in my heart,
 and may all the foliage of the field—
 all grasses, trees, and plants—

awake at my coming,
 to send the powers of their life
 into the words of my prayer
 so that my prayer and speech
 are made whole
 through the life and spirit
 of all growing things,
 which are made as One by their
 transcendent Source.
 May I then pour out
 the words of my heart
 before Your presence like water,
 and lift up my hands to You.

May I Be Empty*(by Batya Levine)*

May I be empty
 And open to receive the light
 May I be empty
 And open to receive

May I be full
 And open to receive the light
 May I be full
 And open to receive

We Are Good, We Are Flawed*(by Batya Levine)*

We are good
 We are flawed
 We are the Breath
 Of an imperfect G-d.

You-and-I-and-the-Whole-World

(by Kalonymus Kalman Shapira)

I may imagine myself unable to see it right now, but Being is made of G-d.
 You-and-I-and-the-whole-world is utterly comprised of G-d. All depends on G-d.
 When I stubbornly insist on my own autonomy and independence,
 I only succeed in banishing myself from any sense of G-d's Presence.

The Ways of All Things

(by Rami Shapiro)

I acknowledge before
 the Source of All
 that life-and-death
 is not in my hands.
 Just as I did not choose
 to be born,
 so I do not choose to die.
 As death is my fate,
 I accept it with dignity
 and the loving calm
 of one who knows the ways
 of all things.
 May my life
 be a healing memory,
 and its recollection bring joy.

From all I have hurt,
 I ask forgiveness;
 to all who have hurt me,
 I give forgiveness.
 As a wave returns to the ocean,
 so I return to the Source.
Hear, O G-dwrestlers,
 that which we call G-d
 is Oneness itself.
 Blessed is the way of G-d,
 the way of life-and-death,
 of coming-and-going,
 of meeting-and-loving,
 now-and-forever.
Shalom, Shalom, Shalom.

As You Are, So May I Be

(by Rami Shapiro)

Blessed are You, Beloved,
 who shows me the Way
 and accompanies me.
 May I live each day's unfolding
 with compassion and foster faith
 In the One who is All.
 Enveloped in Your Light,

may I be a beacon
 to those in search of Light.
 Sheltered in Your Peace,
 may I offer shelter to
 those in need of peace.
 Embraced by Your Presence,
 so may I be present to others.

The Ocean and the Drop

(by Jason Shulman, from The Instruction Manual for Receiving G-d)

Let us say that the individual person is a drop of water. Standing beyond this drop is the ocean: the entirety of All That Is. There are no drops of water in the ocean, of course, just water and more water. So there seem to be two worlds: the world of the drop and the world of the ocean. It is tempting to think that a single drop is “my self” and the ocean is G-d. But this is not true. G-d in you and you in G-d is the truth. It is as if you awoke to find yourself capable of knowing simultaneously that you are a separate bit of water—glistening, wet, fluid, and alive—and that this “drop” is just a moment of separateness in an ocean of water. This ocean is the Source of all drops. It makes them and takes them back again forever. It is life unending. Knowing both the drop and the ocean is living the life of the Divine Self. It is one world. One life. One G-d.

Honey in the Rock

(by Jason Shulman, from The Instruction Manual for Receiving G-d)

This life may be a mystery,
but it is a mystery of love.
We simply need to know
how to surrender
to whatever G-d gives us,
like manna, each day.
We may never completely understand
the fullest extent of G-d's love
and how it manifests
in unexpected ways,
sometimes within difficult circumstances
or impossible situations.
But we can make a start

by acting as *if* we understand:
Each day
we can pick one small difficulty
and hold it gently,
with the understanding
that something inside this difficulty
is precious.
Don't demand
that G-d show you
the ultimate meaning
of this difficulty,
but take it on faith:
There is honey in the rock.

Search Out Every Sparrow

(by Jason Shulman, from The Instruction Manual for Receiving G-d)

We need only embrace ourselves
in conscious awareness,
with deep knowledge
and without judgment,
to feel G-d.

It is said that G-d knows
when every sparrow falls—
but here's greater truth still:
G-d searches for each sparrow,

because each sparrow is holy.
Although we are all born holy
and die holy,
when we embrace ourselves
in this way,
we light up heaven.
G-d sees the sign,
finds us,
and brings us home.

Rest from Illusions

(by Jason Shulman, from The Instruction Manual for Receiving G-d)

What is Shabbat?
It is a day when we rest
from creating illusions.
When we have Shabbat
in our souls,
we are plain.

When we are plain,
we are with G-d.
We light the tapers,
knowing only later
that it was our own soul
burning.

Red Brocade

(by Naomi Shihab Nye)

The Arabs used to say,
When a stranger
appears at your door,
feed him for three days
before asking who he is,
where he's come from,
where he's headed.
That way,
he'll have strength
enough to answer.

Or, by then you'll be
such good friends
you don't care.
Let's go back to that.
Rice? Pine nuts?
Here, take
the red brocade pillow.
My child will serve water
to your horse.
No, I was not busy
when you came!

I was not preparing
to be busy.
That's the armor
everyone put on
to pretend they had
a purpose in the world.
I refuse to be claimed.
Your plate is waiting.
We will snip fresh mint
into your tea.

Kindness

(by Naomi Shihab Nye)

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride,
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize
and chicken
will stare out the window forever.
Before you learn
the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the person
in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night

with plans
and the simple breath
that kept him alive.
Before you know kindness
as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow
as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness
that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day
to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say,
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

Teach Me to Forgive

(by Diane Elliot)

Master of Pardonings,
teach me to forgive—
to forgive myself,
to forgive You,
to forgive those who have hurt me
in the name of ignorance, mindlessness,
certainty, rigidity,
even righteousness and justice,
even love;
to forgive the slings and arrows of
outrageous fortune,
to forgive nature, human and otherwise,
personal and impersonal,
majestic and petty;

to forgive death,
to forgive You,
to forgive myself—
to forgive it all,
so that I may open to life,
living-and-dying as it is,
flowing through me
carrying it all along,
a great river of living-and-dying,
a mighty stream of birthing-and-dying,
a towering wave of living-and-dying.
Holy Merciful one,
teach me to forgive.

An Unending Love

(by Rami Shapiro)

We are loved by an unending love.
We are embraced by arms
that find us
even when we are hidden
from ourselves.
We are touched by fingers
that soothe us
even when we are too proud
for soothing.
We are counseled by voices
that guide us even when
we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved by an unending love.

We are supported by hands
that uplift us, even amid a fall.
We are urged on by eyes that meet us
even when we are too weak
for meeting.
We are loved by an unending love.
Embraced, touched, soothed,
and counseled,
Ours are the arms, the fingers,
the voices;
Ours are the hands,
the eyes, the smiles;
We are loved by an unending love.

Tashlich Prayer*(by Marcia Falk)*

We cast into the depths of the sea
 our sins, and failures, and regrets.
 Reflections of our imperfect selves
 flow away.

What can we bear,
 with what can we bear to part?
 We upturn the darkness,
 bring what is buried to light.

What hurts still lodge?
 What wounds have yet to heal?
 We empty our hands,
 release the remnants of shame,
 let go fear and despair
 that have dug their home in us.
 Open hands, opening heart —
 All flows, and all flows in.

Great Is Our Regret*(by Elizabeth Tragash)*

Great is our regret
 for the harsh words we have spoken,
 the tender words we left unsaid,
 for the anger we let smolder,
 the compassion we withheld,
 for our greed and jealousy,
 our lack of generosity.
 for all that we could have done,
 all that we have left undone.
 Many are the regrets and sorrows
 that weigh upon our souls,
 let us cast them into the moving waters
 so we can strive to become
 all that we were meant to be.
 Great is our remorse
 for the energy we spent fighting

instead of trying to make amends,
 for the times we could have lent a hand
 instead of keeping our hands
 by our sides,
 for the times we looked away
 from those near and far
 who need our help and caring,
 when we turned away
 from the places in the world
 in need of repairing.
 Many are the regrets and sorrows
 that weigh upon our hearts and souls,
 let us cast them into the moving waters
 so we can begin to build bridges
 connecting us one to another.

Blessed Is the True Judge*(by Josh Bartok)*

Blessed is the True Judge
 who includes the pain of grieving
 in the joy of loving.
 Blessed is the Truth
 that grieving is loving;
 and loss is inevitable.
 Blessed is the Truth
 that all is holy,
 even pain, even impermanence,
 even loss.
 Blessed is the Universe that Judges
 by holding all this for us—
 so we need not.

We need not judge
 by clinging to what we like
 and pushing away what hurts.
 The Blessed True Judge
 is the endless rippling-outward
 energy of the whole Universe,
 not my opinion
 or my desires
 of how the Universe
 should be.

Blessed is the True Judge.

Listen, Beloved, And Yield*(by Rami Shapiro)*

Listen, Beloved, and yield
 to the journey of living-and-dying:
 Yield to the truth of what is happening.
 Yield to the One and know
 you are the One-beyond-many
 Who holds the many and the one.
 The Whole is the part,
 The Self is the self,
 The I AM is the I.
 Like a wave yielding to the ocean
 that waves it
 you are only becoming
 what you have always been.
 There is nothing to do.
 There is nothing to achieve.
 There is nothing to earn.
 There is only the gift
 of yielding to what Is.
 Listen, Beloved: You are the Aliveness

that is birthing-and-dying.
 You are the Divine Happening
 happening as all happening.
 You are the I Am of all happening
 and aliveness.
 Listen, Beloved, and yield.
 There are many experiences in life;
 Some fit your desires, others do not;
 Some fulfill your goals, others do not;
 Some uphold your values, others do not.
 Experiences may arise in your mind
 as memories, reflections,
 yearnings, and regrets.
 Simply acknowledge their arriving
 and allow them to pass.
 Do not cling to what arises,
 only acknowledge it.
 Say Yes to what has been
 without excuse or explanation.

Listen, Beloved, As You Die*(by Rami Shapiro)*

Listen, Beloved, as you die,
the faces of loved ones
may come to appear.
Welcome each face with “I love you.”
Do not cling, excuse, or explain.
Without clinging, excuse, or
explanation—there is only love.
Beloved, as you die,
the faces of those you have hurt
may come to you:
Welcome each face with “I am sorry.”
Do not cling, excuse, or explain.
Without clinging, excuse, or
explanation—you are forgiven.
Beloved, as you die,
the faces of those who have hurt you
may come to you:
Welcome each face with “I forgive you.”
Do not cling, excuse, or explain.
Without clinging, excuse, and
explanation—you forgive.

Listen, Beloved, as you die,
you may begin to forget,
but you will not be forgotten.
You may begin to let go,
but you will not be abandoned.
You may feel without moorings,
but you will never be set adrift.
You are loved. You are not alone.
As your senses fade,
sense the One’s embrace.
As your feelings fade,
feel yourself loved.
As your thoughts fade,
Know you are surrounded with love.
May you be free from fear.
May you be free from compulsion.
May you be blessed with love.
May you be blessed with peace.
You are loved.
You are loved.
You are love.

It Would Not Be Enough

(by Arthur Waskow from “The Original 1969 Freedom Seder”)

If we were to end a single genocide
but not to stop the other wars
that kill people, even now,
it would not be enough;

If we were to end those bloody wars
but not disarm the nations
of the weapons
that could destroy us all,
it would not be enough;

If we were to disarm the nations
but not end the brutality of police
and state-sanctioned violence,
it would not be enough;

If we were to end outright brutality
but not prevent some people from
wallowing in luxury while others starve,
it would not be enough;

If we were to ensure that no one starved
but were not to free the daring poets
from their jails, it would not be enough;

If we were to free the poets
from their jails
but not train the minds of people
so that they could understand the poets,
it would not be enough;

If we educated everyone to understand
the free poets,
but forbade them
to explore their own inner depths,
it would not be enough;

If we allowed everyone to explore
their own inner depths,
but did not allow them
to love one another
and share in human familyhood,
it would not be enough.

How much then are we duty-bound
to struggle, work, share, give, think,
plan, feel, organize, sit-in, speak out,
hope, and be on behalf of
all humankind.

Dayenu of Thusness (“This alone would have been enough”)

Meeting the Universe as it is—Dayenu.
Meeting the Self as it is—Dayenu.
Meeting Community as it is—Dayenu,

Meeting this moment as it is—Dayenu.
Meeting life-and-death as it is—Dayenu.
Meeting self-and-Other as it is—Dayenu.

For all and each of these alone-and-together, we say *Dayenu*.
And yet, and yet...

Instructions for Centering

(by Wendy Elisheva Somerson from An Anti-Zionist Path to Embodied Jewish Healing)

Centering helps us become more awake, alive, and feeling. We center inside ourselves to become less numb and to feel more, not necessarily to feel good or calm. The goal of centering is to become more connected to ourselves and our intention, inside of any emotions we are experiencing. When we center, we increase our awareness of the sensations of aliveness that flow through us as organic beings who are part of the world. Centering helps us create a home-base inside of outer pressure or stressful situations. Instead of only thinking our way into our intention, we start to embody our *kavanah*, our intention, through our full three-dimensionality.

By feeling our sensations and corresponding emotions, we bring ourselves into the present moment before we try to change anything. We can center in any position—seated, lying down, standing. We don't practice self-domination, forcing our bodies into certain positions based on ableist norms. If it works for our bodies, we center with our eyes open in a soft gaze because we want to be able to stay attuned to the world while we feel ourselves deeply. If our vision is impaired, we practice staying attuned through our other senses. We become more present by consciously deepening our breath and tracking temperature, pressure, and movement throughout our body. We might notice the temperature of the air where it meets the surface of the skin on our hands, and then feel the temperature somewhere deep inside us, perhaps in our belly. To notice pressure, we find the contracted places in our bodies. Many of us hold tightness behind our eyes, in the hinge of our jaw, in our shoulders, our hips. We can use our breath to meet these tense places and simply acknowledge all that they are holding. After we feel for constriction, we also find places in our body that are open or spacious—where our breath has room to move, perhaps one small part—one finger or toe—is already relaxed, and we send breath there.

We feel movement by first noticing the rhythms of life as they move through our bodies: the pulsing of blood and the flow of breath through our nose, mouth, diaphragm, and lungs. We can also bring our attention to more subtle cadences of vibrating, humming, or tingling. Once we identify these rhythms, we also notice the places that are quiet, still, or numb. After feeling for temperature, pressure, and movement, we identify how these sensations help create a mood and story about how we are in this moment.

We fill into our three-dimensionality (length, width, and depth) and our *kavanah*, our intention. We start by locating our center of gravity, which is one to two inches below the belly button. We direct our breath and attention to this place, which holds what we care about. Because our energy follows our attention, when we bring our attention to a specific place in the body, we also direct our energy there.

To extend into our length, we move our focus and our energy down from our center into the earth by tracing our breath down through the belly, pelvis, thigh bones, lower legs, and feet. We then allow our muscles to relax into gravity as we send gratitude to the land and respect for the first peoples of the land where we are centering. Perhaps we imagine roots reaching for nutrients from the mycelial network and the soil.

From our center, we breathe up our spine, to the sky imagining more space and light between our vertebrae as we lengthen out through the crown of our heads. We might imagine our branches reaching up to the light of the sun and the moon to offer gratitude. When we expand into our length, we embody our inherent worth and dignity. As we send respect to all that is alive, we acknowledge that we also deserve respect because we include ourselves in the circle of life that surrounds us.

Next, we broaden into our width from side to side. We start by softening our gaze to take in more on either side of us with a wide peripheral vision. This wide focus helps us widen and soften across the width of our faces. We breathe from the midline of our bodies out to our edges across the span of our jaw, between our shoulders, across our ribs, and across our hips. We expand across the width of each leg and foot from the inner to the outer edge. The metaphor for width is connection. When we bring our presence out to the edges of our being, we feel our interdependence with others. The goal is to widen enough to feel the people, animals, and land to whom we belong. We can imagine our beloved humans, flora, and fauna surrounding us, and then widen enough to feel their presence.

Maintaining our length and width, we invite depth by waking up the back of our bodies. We might notice where our clothes touch the back of our body to awaken this back plane. Then we might feel the back of our head, the space between our shoulder blades, and the backs of our knees and heels. We often spend more time in the front body—on screens and socially—so we have to practice feeling for the wisdom that lies farther back. With depth, we are working with the metaphor of time. We can imagine that our history—everything that has come before this breath—is at our backs. To feel resourced by this history, we can imagine opening up the pores on the back of our bodies.

As we reach for our past, we access the wisdom we have gained in our own lifetime, and we offer gratitude to the generations that came before us. Imagining a wide "V" extending out and back from our bodies to include our ancestors, we feel for all the beings—human and more-than-human—who made our lives possible. This includes our ancestors of blood and our ancestors of craft or calling who devoted their lives to working for justice. This wide "V" represents a river of life behind us, which we can allow to flow through our bodies—from back to front—to help us experience our depth.

We can feel the flow of energy from the back to the front of our hearts, from the back to the front of our rib cages, and from the back to the front of our bellies. In our thickness, we access our interior landscape, where many longings reside. Finally, we wake up the front plane of our body from our eyebrows to our collarbones to our toes.

As we gaze out toward the horizon, we orient ourselves toward the future: our next breath, our *kavanah*, and the generations yet to come. We try to find this balance from back to front and front to back. We don't want to be stuck in the past, nor do we want to lean so far forward into the future that we lose connection to our history. We are invited to stay connected to time beyond linear time through being present and balanced in this moment.

We may place one hand at our center of gravity and one hand at our heart and feel for our *kavanah*.

What might it feel like to be embodied in this *kavanah*? If it were one year from now and we were living into this *kavanah* more fully, what would that feel like in our bodies? What adjustments will help us create more space for our *kavanah*? We might notice that we need to soften our shoulders or lengthen our spine or widen across our hips. Then we speak our *kavanah* inwardly while we feel our sensations.