SELIHOT

PRAYERS FOR FORGIVENESS

COMPILED BY RABBI MORRIS SILVERMAN
and RABBI HILLEL SILVERMAN
COMMENTARY BY RABBI MAX ARZT

THE PRAYER BOOK PRESS OF MEDIA JUDAICA
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A GUIDE TO THE SELIHOT SERVICE

Rabbi Max Arzt

I THE MESSAGE OF SELIHOT

The aim of the Selihot prayers is to induce in us a determination to narrow the gap between our present and our potential selves, to judge what we are in the light of what we ought to be, and to mobilize our will power behind our noblest intentions.

During the solemn days which follow the midnight Selihot, we are to resolve to be lenient in our judgment of others and to be more severe and demanding with ourselves.

If you have done your fellow man a little wrong, let it be a great wrong in your eyes and go and rectify it. If you have done him much good, let it be little in your eyes. If he has done you a great wrong, let it be little in your own eyes.

(Abot de Rabbi Nathan, 41)

In the Selihot services we point the accusing finger at ourselves; we confess our own moral frailty and acknowledge our own failings. Three times we recite the Confession (Ashamnu pp. 37, 39, 41) and each time we declare: "We are neither so arrogant nor so hardened as to say... 'we are righteous and have not sinned.'"

The solemnity of the Selihot prayers should not lead us to conclude that Judaism teaches a morbid sin-consciousness or that it emphasizes man's depravity. The very word "Selihot" comes from the Hebrew root salah, "to forgive." Throughout the Bible, this word is used exclusively in contexts where God forgives a repentant sinner. The Selihot prayers point to the end of a self-cleansing process: repentance leading to divine forgiveness.

According to Maimonides (Hilkhot Teshuvah 11), true repentance entails several steps: awareness of one's guilt; sincere confession before God, after having made amends to those who have been wronged; deep remorse; and a firm resolve never to repeat the offense. These steps lead to selihah or divine forgiveness and reconciliation.

PREFACE

This edition of the SELIHOT SERVICE is unique in content and form. All of the traditional Hebrew prayers have been retained while several new prayers have been added. Important Hebrew passages and hymns appear in transliteration. This text is, therefore, a collection of Selihot liturgy from which selection may be made.

Some of the traditional prayers, notably the Piyyutim, are couched in cryptic terms, with many Biblical and Rabbinic allusions skilfully woven into the Hebrew text in unique forms, often in alphabetical acrostic. In order to convey the spirit of these prayers in translation, it is occasionally necessary to paraphrase and interpret.

The prayer, "El Melech Yiskhav," which occurs three times in the Hebrew text, is only once translated (on page 22), while new responsive readings from the Bible and Talmud have been substituted for the English translation on pages 27 and 31. Likewise, the prayer "K'raham Av" is translated on page 18, while a new responsive reading has been substituted for the translation on page 23.

"Repentance" (page 54) was compiled by Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, editor of A Contemporary High Holiday Service. All other readings were prepared by the editors.

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Taking its cue from the moral tenor of the biblical prophets, the Talmud attributed the destruction of the first and second Temples, not to the superior military might of the Babylonians and the Romans, but to the accumulated sins of the Jewish people. The Rabbis declared that the first Temple was destroyed because idolatry, adultery and bloodshed were rampant, while the second Temple was destroyed because baseless hatreds and groundless prejudices had corrupted the nation (Yoma 9b). This sense of corporate and even cumulative guilt is poignantly expressed in the second *ashamnu* confessional which closes with the declaration, "Verily we and our fathers have sinned" (p. 39).

In this traditional view, each generation can bring an end to the exile by its moral regeneration. Thus, the collective sense of culpability is balanced by the hope of redemption, rooted in the indissoluble covenant made with the patriarchs. A truly repentant people, according to tradition, would win divine forgiveness and be restored to its pristine glory with the rebuilding of the Temple as a House of Prayer for all nations (p. 35).

The imagery here employed is couched in archaic language; but it reflects a profound sense of "collective conscience" and thus addresses us with singular contemporary relevance.

The Individual and Society

Each of us must cultivate a sense of shared responsibility for the sins of our society and our government. The biblical concept of a "righteous nation" must be granted a place of primacy in a civilization which has too often considered the individual’s conduct as affecting solely his personal salvation.

It is imperative that we be concerned about the inequities of a social order which fails to protect the weak against the strong and which permits people to "grind the faces of the poor." It is essential that we be agitated about corruption and oppression—wherever they exist.

Yet, it is precisely because of the wide dimensions of our concern that we court the danger of feeling self-righteous as we decry and condemn the evils perpetrated around us. We may then have eagle’s eyes for the faults of others but be blind as bats about our own shortcomings.

The *Selihot* prayers affirm the possibility of moral renewal and rehabilitation. Latent resources of will and of high purpose are revealed to the person who takes the initiative toward repentance. "He who comes to cleanse himself is helped in his resolve" (Yoma 38b). "Though the gates of prayer may sometimes be closed, the gates of repentance are always open. As the sea is accessible, so the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is always open to receive those who repent" (Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:12).

The *Selihot* prayers (and their premise that an individual’s life-style can undergo fundamental change) contradict the widespread notion that external factors and uncontrollable internal drives determine human behavior. We are often told that we are the products solely of our biological inheritance, our physical and social environment, our economic status, and a variety of drives and impulses.

Judaism emphasizes the vast interior resources of volition, morale, and moral purpose by which seeming "iron necessity" can be transcended. A person can respond rather than merely react to circumstance. A human being need not be merely a predetermined product of his biological and environmental antecedents.

Judaism educates us to turn to God for the courage to transcend the influences which inhibit and stultify moral growth. We can learn how to sublimate and redirect our aggressive drives and lusts in the spirit of the Rabbinc principle that a person must love God with his "evil inclination" as well as with his "good inclination," by dedicating all human capacities to His service (Mishnah Berakhot 9:5).

The *Selihot* prayers thus direct us to scrutinize our inner being and our conduct in the searching light of God’s presence and promise.

II THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF SIN AND RENEWAL

One of the principal characteristics of the *Selihot* liturgy (and of all Jewish liturgy) is its corporate dimension. The individual Jew is taught by his tradition that his personal moral faults and defaults add to the burden of sin borne by the Household of Israel, thereby prolonging the Exile and its attendant sufferings in an unredeemed world.
The piyyutim

In this edition, the piyyutim are to be found on pp. 13, 19, 25 and 29. Each piyyut is an alphabetical acrostic into which the author has skillfully worked his name. Thus, the piyyut on page 19 concludes with the acrostic Shelomo, its author being Solomon ben Judah ha-Bavli (Rome, 10th century). Note the reference to the practice of fasting during the day on the first day of the Selihot period (four lines from the bottom in the Hebrew text).

The anonymous piyyut “At the close of the Sabbath” (page 29) was composed for the first night of Selihot, which in the Ashkenazic rite begins on a Saturday night. The refrain, “Hear our plea and prayer,” is taken from the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8:28).

In the Middle Ages the recital of Selihot was extended to all public fasts, and the number of poets and Selihot piyyutim proliferated. Sometimes a synagogue reader would interpolate a Selihah of his own composition or, more likely, he would select piyyutim by other authors. As the number of piyyutim and the occasions for Selihot increased, specific piyyutim were designated for optional use for each occasion.*

The Confession (viddui)

The litany which follows the verse groupings and their piyyutim leads up to the “Confession” (viddui)—the alphabetical ashamnu, which is recited three times. This litany, too, is in anaphora form, with verses linked by key words.

One group of verses containing the root zekhor (“remember”) on p. 33 invokes God’s mindfulness of His people, of Zion, of Jerusalem, and of the promises He made to the patriarchs. This is followed by verses containing respectively the roots rahem (“have mercy”), hashev (“restore”), mehe (“wipe out our sins”) and zerok (“pour on us cleansing waters”).

The litany is climax ed by the prophetic vision of the return of the people to “Thy holy mountain” and the restoration of the Temple as a “house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7). The word refillah (“prayer”) is the link with Shema Kolenu (“Hear our voice”), p. 37. This stirring supplication for the acceptance of our prayers is spoken with heightened emotion at this point, in conformance with the talmudic rule that petitional prayer must be preceded by praise of God’s goodness (Berakhot 32a); and such words of praise are found in the earlier litanies.

* Ismar Elbogen, a widely recognized liturgical authority, suggested that in the absence of individual texts, the anaphora arrangement of the Selihot was intended as an aid to the memory and enabled the congregation to recite the verses responsively with the reader.

Each recital of the Thirteen Attributes is followed by the plea:

“Forgive us, O our Father, for indeed we have sinned; pardon us our King, for we have transgressed” (taken from the weekday Amidah)
and
“For Thou, O Lord, art good and ready to forgive and art abounding in mercy unto all who call on Thee” (Psalm 86:5).

(pp. 15, 21, 27, 31)

The Selihot litanies

The earliest versions of the Selihot consisted of groups of biblical verses strung together in an anaphora arrangement where the same root-words occur in several successive passages. For example, on page 8, “And Thou who hearest prayer unto Thee all flesh shall come” (Psalm 65:3) is linked with “They shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord and honor Thy name” (Psalm 86:9).

The biblical verses, culled from the Psalms and other parts of the Bible, extol God as Creator, and as the Source and Sustainer of life, “In whose hands is the soul of every living being and in whose keeping is the breath of all mankind” (p. 12).

Each cluster of verses is climax ed by the recitation of the Thirteen Attributes. Each such recitation is introduced by a prelude of which there are two versions.* The older one (pp. 21, 27) depicts God as sitting on the Throne of Mercy, an allusion to the Rabbinic statement that on Rosh Hashanah when Israel sounds the Shofar, God moves from the Throne of Judgment to that of Mercy. Then it cites the tradition that God taught us (El horeta lana) through Moses, to appeal for His favor by reciting the qualities of Divine Mercy expressed in Exodus 34:6-7. The later version of the prelude refers to God as “The Lord of Compassion who taught us the road to repentance by revealing it to ‘the meek man’ .” (This allusion to Moses occurs in both versions).

Originally the name Selihot applied to the litanies of Biblical verses. In the period between the tenth and sixteenth centuries, these verses were considerably shortened to make room for the interpolation of liturgical poems (piyyutim) which likewise came to be known as Selihot.

* Both are found in all versions of the Selihot liturgy. The preludes are cited in the Seder of R. Amram as well as in the Siddur of Saadia.
The petitions in conclusion of the Selihot liturgy

The concluding prayers, “Act for the sake of Thy truth” (aseh); “Answer us O Lord” (anenu); and “May He who answered Abraham” (mi-sheanah), pp. 43-45, were inspired by prayers which the Mishnah prescribed for fast days proclaimed in years of drought (Mishnah Taanith 2:4); In the Mishnah, “May He who answered Abraham” has a refrain, “May He answer us” hu ya’anenu (p. 45) which was the brief response of the congregation to each of the leader’s citations of biblical personalities whose prayers had been answered. It testifies to an awareness of peak occasions in the collective, historic experience.

The very last petition (p. 47) is taken from the Aramaic version of mi-sheanah, the complete text of which is to be found in the Sephardic rite. Only the first two and the last two lines are retained in our Ashkenazic version:

O merciful God
Who answereth the poor,
The lowly of spirit,
And the broken of heart, (p. 48)

Answer us

O Merciful God,
Have compassion;
Re Redeem, save and have pity upon us
Now, speedily and soon. (p. 48)

Tahanun (pp. 49-53)

The weekday Shaharit and Minah services include a section called tahanun (“Petition”) which is recited after the Amidah. These prayers were originally petitions recited on fast days, later becoming part of the daily service. The Aramaic prayer mahe umase (“He wounds and He heals”) is cited in R. Amram’s Seder and the familiar Shomer Yisrael (“O Guardian of Israel” p. 51) first appears in a manuscript dated 1245 of Selihot for the Tenth Day of Tebet.

The Kaddish Shalem

The Kaddish doxology is occasioned by any public reading of biblical verses. The Selihot Service begins with Psalm 145 (Ashre p. 3) and this Psalm occasions the recitation of the havzi kaddish (“Half Kaddish” p. 5). The service closes with a medley of biblical verses followed by the complete “Reader’s Kaddish” (kaddish shalem), which marks the close of every formal service.

“May the prayers and petitions of all Israel find acceptance before their Father in heaven”

(Kaddish, p. 53)
REPTONANCE

At nightfall and at dawn, search well into the nature of your dealings. Let your dealings bring no blush upon the cheek; commit no sin in the expectation of repentance. At first sin is an indifferent stranger; later a welcome guest; finally the master.

O God, Thou knowest my folly; And my trespasses are not hid from Thee; For I do declare my iniquity; I am full of concern because of my sin. If Thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who would be without sin in Thy sight? Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Turn me unto Thee, O Lord, that I may forsake my sins; Make me mindful of Thy presence that I may mend my ways. Teach me to forgive my neighbor the injury he did unto me, So that when I pray, my sins will be forgiven.

If man cherishes anger against another, How can he seek healing from Thee? If he has no mercy on his fellowman, How can he expect mercy from God?

I shall not say, 'If I sin, no eye beholds it, Or if I deal untruly in all secrecy, who will know it?'

If a man fast for his sins, and again does the same, Who will listen to his prayer? And what has he gained by his self-affliction?

Evil and abomination dost Thou hate, O Lord, And Thou dost not let it come nigh to them that truly worship Thee.

Let the wicked forsake his way, And the man of iniquity his thoughts; And let us return unto Thee, O Lord,

That Thou mayest have compassion upon us, And in Thy lovingkindness Thou wilt graciously pardon.

OPENING PRAYER

Our God and God of our fathers, on this Selihot night of self-scrutiny, free of guile and pretense, in humility and contrition we turn to Thee to implore Thy forgiveness.

Thou dost teach us through Thy Torah to distinguish between right and wrong and to choose between good and evil. But how often do we forget our destiny and stray from the path of righteousness! How often are we indifferent to our neighbor's plight; how often does our thoughtlessness bring needless pain and grief! Alas, we frequently succumb to greed, arrogance and selfishness. We allow temptation to blind our eyes, and baseness to prevail over our nobler impulses.

Since no one is so righteous that he sins not, Thou hast given us Yomim Noraim for soul-searching and repentance. O Lord, Thou desirerst not the death of the sinner, but that he depart from his evil ways and live righteously. Cause us therefore to realize the measure of our wrongdoing that we may make full amends and resolve before Thee to turn from the errors of our ways. May we at this season of repentance and forgiveness, forgive those who have sinned against us even as we ask that Thou forgive us for our misdeeds.

As we approach the High Holidays, help us to purge from our lives all that is debasing and corrupt, petty, deceitful and malicious. Inspire us to acquire a new heart and a new spirit that we may do justly, love mercy, and thus be at peace with ourselves and with Thee. Amen.
Happy are they who dwell in Thy house; forever shall they praise Thee. Happy the people who thus fare; happy the people whose God is the Eternal.

Psalm 145

I will extol Thee, my God, O King,
And praise Thy name for ever and ever.

Every day will I bless Thee,
And I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,
And His greatness is without end.

One generation shall laud Thy works to another,
And shall declare Thy mighty acts.

I will speak of the splendor of Thy glorious majesty,
And tell of Thy wonders.

And men shall proclaim the might of Thy acts,
And I will declare Thy greatness.

They shall make known the fame of Thy great goodness,
And shall joyously proclaim Thy righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion;
Slow to anger and abundant in kindness.

The Lord is good to all;
And His love is over all His works.

All whom Thou hast made shall give thanks unto Thee, O Lord,
And Thy faithful ones shall bless Thee.

They shall declare the glory of Thy kingdom,
And tell of Thy power,
To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts,
And the glorious splendor of Thy kingdom.

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

The Lord upholdeth all who fall,
And raiseth up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all hopefully look to Thee,
And Thou givest them their food in due season.

Thou openest Thy hand,
And satisfiest every living thing with favor.

The Lord is righteous in all His ways,
And gracious in all His works.

The Lord is near unto all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He shall fulfill the desire of them that revere Him;
He shall also hear their cry, and save them.
The Lord protects all them that love Him;
But all the wicked shall He bring low.
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord;
Let all men praise His holy name for ever and ever.
We will praise the Lord from this time forth,
And forevermore. Halleluyah.

Reader
May the great name of God be honored throughout the
world which He has created according to His will. May He,
soon, even in our own lifetime and in the lifetime of our people,
establish His kingdom on earth so that God shall rule over us
all; and let us say, Amen.

Congregation and Reader
May His great name be praised for ever and ever.

Reader
Exalted and honored be the name of the Holy One, praised
be He, whose glory is far above all hymns of praise which man
can offer Him; and let us say, Amen.

B'ha-yay-hōn uv-yō-may-hōn, uv-ha-yay d'hol b'ayt yis-ra-ayl,
Ba-aga-la u-viz'man ka-reev, v'im-ru a-mayn.
Y-hay sh'may ra-ba m'vo-rah, l'o-lam ul-o-lay ol-ma-ya.
Tush-b'ha-ta v'ne-heh-ma-to, da-a-mee-ran b'ol-ma,
V'im-ru Amen.

O Lord, Thou art righteous, but we are prone to error. How
can we plead before Thee? What can we say? How can we
justify ourselves? Let us search and examine our ways and
return to Thee, for Thy right hand is extended to receive all
those who truly repent. We come before Thee not with deeds
of lovingkindness, but like poor and needy creatures do we
knock at Thy doors. O merciful and gracious God, we call
upon Thee. Turn us not away from Thy presence without
Thy blessing. O send us not away without blessing us, for
Thou alone hearest prayer.
Responsive Reading

Selected from the Hebrew

And Thou who hearest prayers,
Unto Thee all flesh shall come.
They shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord,
And do honor to Thy name.

O come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us bend the knee before the Lord, our Maker.
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Behold, bless the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord,
Who stand through the night in the house of the Lord.
Lift up your hands in the Sanctuary and bless the Lord.
We will enter His tabernacle and worship at His footstool.

Exalt the Lord our God,
And worship at His holy mountain.
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
Revere Him all that inhabit the earth.

We will come into Thy house in the abundance of Thy mercy;
In reverence for Thee will we worship toward Thy holy Temple.

We will praise Thy name for Thy loving-kindness and for Thy truth;
Thou hast made Thy word supreme above all.

God of hosts, who is like unto Thee?
Thy faithfulness is round about Thee.
Who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord?
Who among the mighty can stand beside the Lord?

For Thou art great and dost wondrous things;
Thou art God alone.

For Thy mercy is great above the heavens,
And Thy truth reaches unto the clouds.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.
Responsive Reading

Who would not be in awe of Thee, O King of nations? In all the kingdoms there is none like unto Thee.

Mighty art Thou, and great is Thy name; With Thee are strength and majesty.

The day is Thine and the night also, Thou hast prepared the light and the sun. For in Thy hand are the depths of the earth; The strength of the hills is also Thine.

Thine, O Lord, are greatness and power, Glory, victory and majesty.

For all that is in heaven and on the earth is Thine; Thine is sovereignty, O Lord; Thou rulest supreme.

The heavens are Thine and the earth also; The world and the fullness thereof, Thou hast founded them.

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth; Thou hast made summer and winter.

The sea is Thine and Thou hast made it; And Thy hands formed the dry land.

Thou rulest the raging of the sea; When the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them.

Great art Thou and greatly to be praised In Thy city on the holy mountain.

The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord; And Thy faithfulness among the holy ones.
Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord!
Let us rejoice before the Rock who is our unfailing help.
Let us come before Thy presence with thanksgiving;
Let us joyfully sing psalms unto Thee.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne;
Mercy and truth go before Thee.
Let us assemble together,
And reverently come to Thy house, O God.
In Thy hand is the soul of every living being,
And in Thy keeping is the Spirit of all mankind.

The soul of man is Thine, and his body is Thy creation;
have compassion upon Thy handiwork. Yea, both soul and body are Thine. O Lord, for the sake of Thine honor, deal kindly with us. We have come here trusting in Thy name, for Thou art a merciful and gracious God. For Thy name’s sake, pardon our iniquity, for it is great.

Forgive us, O our Father, for in our folly we have gone astray. Pardon us, O our King, for our iniquities are many.

Our God and God of our fathers!
How shall we pray to Thee who dwellest on high?
How shall we express to Thee our inmost thoughts?
We have abhorred Thy true and righteous ways;
We have preferred abominations and evil deeds.
We have followed false prophecies and delusions;
We have been stubborn and insolent.
Because of our iniquities was Thine indignation aroused;
The Temple was destroyed and sacrifices have ceased.
Anointed priests, skilled in Temple ritual and sacrifice,
Have been banished and exiled afar.

This is an alphabetical acrostic by Rabbi Benjamin ben Zeraḥ of the eleventh century. The author’s name is contained in the words of the closing stanza, page 13.
Selihot Service—Prayers for Forgiveness

How often hast Thou rebuked us through prophets and seers!
Yet we did not hearken to Thy teachers and exhorters.
Ever since have we been wanderers,
Crushed, tortured and slaughtered.

We have survived as a handful among worthless thorns.
Though seeking deliverance, we find it not.
Why do the oppressors of Thy people, who bow to idols, continually prosper?

Rising up against Thee, they speak blasphemies and taunt Thy people:
“O shattered and broken ones! In whom do you trust?”

O Holy One, Thou who livest forever, behold the plight of Thy wretched people
Who cling to Thee and rely only upon Thee.

May we by Thy wondrous power be saved now and for evermore,
For upon Thy great mercy we depend.

We trust in Thine abundant mercy; we rely upon Thy righteousness; we hope for Thy forgiveness, and yearn for Thine unfailing help. Thou, our King, hast always loved righteousness. Thou absolvest Thy people of their iniquities, and Thou removest the sins of those who revere Thee. Thou didst make a covenant with our forefathers, and dost fulfill Thy promise to their descendants. In Thy cloud of glory, Thou didst descend on Mount Sinai, and didst show Thy ways of goodness unto Thy servant Moses. Thou didst reveal unto him Thy paths of lovingkindness, and didst make known to him that Thou art a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, continually dispensing goodness, and guiding the whole world with Thy mercy. As it is written:

“And God said: ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I shall show mercy.’”

1 Exodus 33:19.
Thou art slow to anger.

Thou art known as the God of mercy; Thou hast shown man the way to repentance.

Be ever mindful of Thine abundant mercy and loving-kindness toward the descendants of Thy beloved people.

Turn unto us in compassion, for Thou art the Lord of compassion.

With supplication and prayer we come before Thee who didst reveal Thy mercy unto Moses.

Repent once more of Thy wrath, as it is written in the Torah.¹

May we find shelter in Thy protection as on the day when Thou didst descend in the cloud.

Forgive our transgressions, and blot out our guilt as on the day when Thou didst appear unto Moses on Sinai.

Heed our supplication! Hearken to our prayer

As on the day when Moses called upon God. Thus, it is recorded in the Torah:²

“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed:

‘The Lord, the Eternal, is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and acquitting all those who truly repent.’”

O pardon our iniquity and our sin, and accept us for Thine inheritance.

Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, O our King, for we have transgressed.

For Thou, O Lord, art good, and ever ready to forgive.

Thou art abounding in mercy unto all who call upon Thee.

O Lord, in the morning, hearken unto our supplication. In the morning, we shall prepare our prayer unto Thee and await Thy blessing. Hear our voice as we call upon Thee and lift our hands in reverence toward Thy holy Sanctuary. Hear, O Lord, our plea; be gracious unto us and answer us. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine indignation toward us to cease.

Though there is no one worthy to call upon Thy name, to rise up and cleave unto Thee, hear our prayer, O Lord! Hearken to our plea and be not unmindful of our tears.

¹ Exodus 32:12. ² Exodus 34:6, 7.
As a father pities his children, so pity us, O Lord. Salvation comes from the Lord; may Thy blessing be upon Thy people. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is as a high tower unto us. O Lord of hosts, happy is the man that trusts in Thee. Save us, O Lord; mayest Thou, O King, answer us on the day we call.

O pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people from the days of Egypt even until now.

And the Lord said: 'I have forgiven according to thy word.'

O my God, hear our prayer and behold the desolation of Zion, the city which is called by Thy name; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteous deeds, but because of Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and deal kindly with us. Delay not for Thine own sake, O my God, for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.
SELHOT SERVICE—PRAYERS FOR FORGIVENESS

Our God and God of our fathers!

There is no man righteous enough to plead for us, even the best among us is worthless as a reed. There is none to implore mercy for us, nor to arise to comfort us. 

There are none who are upright and pure-minded among us, not even one who is worthy, devout and sincere in prayer. Remember Thy mercies and refuse me not. 

How can we pray and look up to God? How can we entreat or exclaim unto Thee? Thou who art good to those who sincerely call upon Thee, help them hear their burden and sustain them. May Thy loving-kindness encompass me. 

Consider me not as one who is of no consequence, but as one who is worthy to hear. I am nothing, but yet I have heard of Thee. 

In fear and trembling, I plead before God who scrupulously examines all deeds. Lack good deeds and laden with sin, how can we hope for favor with God? 

Our needs are many and cannot be expressed because of our ignorance and suffering. All is revealed unto Thee, O Creator, Guide, Shepherd, Refuge and Guardian. 

We are left forlorn like a lonely pole on the mountain. Our honor is departed from us, and we are of no account. Oh, seek our lost ones and count them among Thee. 

Our fathers dwelt in dispersion and were scattered among the nations. They labored and toiled, and toiled for bread. They fasted and fought, they fell and rose again. 

They are scattered and dispersed among the nations. They are hurt and wounded, and have no one to help. They have no one to comfort them, nor to comfort them, nor to comfort them. 

They are scattered and dispersed among the nations. They are hurt and wounded, and have no one to help. They have no one to comfort them, nor to comfort them, nor to comfort them. 

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They are scattered and dispersed among the nations. They are hurt and wounded, and have no one to help. They have no one to comfort them, nor to comfort them, nor to comfort them.
Thou sittest on Thy judgment seat
Enthroned on high,
And one by one man’s trespasses
In penance pass Thee by.
Almighty King, Thy governing
With tender love replete.
Absolve we pray, our fears allay,
With mercy judgment mete.
Thou dwellest high, our Rock and Shield,
Enthroned in might,
And pardonest each one his sins,
From scarlet mak’st Thou white.
O Ruler wise, before Thine eyes,
Our frailties stand revealed
Thy judgment be with charity,
Thy might with mercy wield.
Thou taughtest us Thine attributes
Thirteen to say.
Remember then Thy covenant
With us unto this day.
O living Fount, on Sinai’s mount
Didst plant Thy nation’s roots.
The truth, Thy seal, Thou didst reveal,
And none Thy word refutes.
Thou stoodest in a heavenly glow
With Moses there;
Thy name, O God, did he proclaim,
And then didst Thou declare:
“A gracious Lord, compassionate Lord,
To wrath and anger slow,
Forgiving sin, men’s hearts to win,
Doth thousands mercy show.”

Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed. For Thou, O Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and art abounding in mercy unto all who call upon Thee.

Judge us not according to Thy judgment, for in Thy sight is no man guiltless. May our prayers come before Thee; turn not away from our supplication. Hear Thou the sighs of the oppressed and, through Thy mighty power, release those condemned to die. O Lord, hear our voice and heed our supplications. And mayest Thou ever hearken to Thy people Israel.
True Worship

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
With ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

You have been told, O man, what is good,
And what the Lord requires of you;

Only to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God.

The sacrifice of a wicked man is an abomination to the Lord,
But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Thus saith the Lord:
Will you steal, murder and commit adultery,
Swear falsely, and walk after other gods,

And then come and stand before Me in My house,
Whereupon My name is called,

And think that merely by uttering words you will be saved,
Saved to continue all these abominations?

When you offer such prayers, I will not hear.
I cannot endure iniquity along with solemn worship.

Hear the word of the Lord,
All who enter these gates to worship.

If you thoroughly mend your ways and your doings;
If you see that justice is done between man and man,

If you oppress not the stranger, the orphan and the widow,
And shed not innocent blood,
Neither walk after other gods,

Then shall your light break forth as the morning,
And your healing shall spring forth speedily;
Your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your protection.
Our God and God of our fathers!

May our cry for mercy come before Thee. O Righteous One, who desirest uprightness and shunnest slander, hearken unto our supplication and hear our prayers.

Because we have defamed our good name, we are ashamed to raise our heads to Thee. We have strayed from Thy just ways and perverted Thy teaching. We hang our heads and are overcome with disgrace.

Trouble and anguish surround us on all sides. We are like wandering sheep without shelter. To the right, the sword cuts us down; to the left, there is terror, for the hunter pursues us.

O Thou who seest all, behold our distress and affliction. Turn Thou our lamentation into exultation, our rebuke into atonement, and return us to Thy righteous paths.

Because of our transgressions, we have been subjected to plunder and exile. Our people, kings and priests have been humiliated. Thy Temple, which in loving concern Thou didst esteem and exalt, Thou hast reduced to a heap of ruins.

We did not beseech Thee with supplication nor did we attempt to understand Thy truth in order to be cleansed of pollution. Verily, were it not for Thy mercy, like Sodom we should have been destroyed in a moment.

Thou didst mercifully spare the remnant of Thy people and didst grant them security and protection. We were dispersed, and Thy glorious Temple was destroyed, because of the three sins Thou dost abhor: idolatry, adultery and murder.

We have acted perversely and dealt corruptly; therefore have we many times borne the yoke of captivity. Remember that Thou hast promised not to reject us, but to gather Thy scattered ones and unite them in Thee.

Despite all the woes that have befallen us, we proclaim that Thou art righteous and that we have sinned. This day as of yore we stand before Thee in contrition.

Mercifully grant Thy forgiveness and healing to Thy people, oppressed, scorned and reviled; a people persecuted, downtrodden and plundered; a people tested and now purified by captivity and exile.

In Thy mercy, fulfill now, even before the appointed time, Thy prophecy of redemption, that we may be saved through Thee: "They shall return from far and from near."

They are Thy people and Thy faithful servants. Show them Thy love as in days of old. Draw us closer to Thee and stamp us with Thy seal for we all yearn to revere Thy name.

O increase the smallest number into a thousand, and make the few as strong as a mighty multitude. According to Thy righteousness, have mercy upon us. Turn away Thy righteous indignation, and console us.

This is a double alphabetical acrostic in reverse, by Rabbi Solomon ha-Bavli of the tenth century, whose signature is contained in the last two stanzas.
Search Your Ways
Selected from Job 31

Help me, O Lord, to search my heart,
And see the folly of my way.
   Do I live falsely?
   Do I hasten to deceive?
Am I indifferent to the rightful cause
Of any servant, man or woman?
   Didst not Thou that made me, also make my fellowman?
   Did not One fashion us both?
Do I withhold aught that the poor require,
Or make a widow suffer want?
   Do I eat my bread alone,
   Sharing it not with the fatherless?
Do I see any in need of clothing,
And not provide for him?
   Do I open my door to the stranger,
   So that he does not lodge in the street?
Do I make gold my hope and say:
   "You are my confidence?"
   Do I boast because my wealth is great,
   And my hand has gotten much?
Do I rejoice at the destruction of my foe,
Or exult when evil befalls him?
   Do I fear what the multitude will say,
   Being silent when I should speak forth?
O God, dost Thou not see?
Dost Thou not know my every step?
   What can I say unto Thee when Thou rememberest?
   What can I answer when Thou takest me to task?
Do Thou judge me, O Lord,
And may I not be found lacking in integrity.
At the close of the Sabbath, we come before Thee.
Hear us from on high;
O Thou who art continually praised,
Hear our plea and prayer!
Lish-mō-a el ha-ri-na v’el hat-fi-lā.

By means of Thy power, perform in our behalf deeds of might for the sake of Isaac, who was willingly bound to the altar on Moriah, and in whose stead a ram was sacrificed. Shield his descendants who implore Thee this night.
Hear our plea and prayer!

Seek the well-being of all those who seek Thee. From Thy heavenly abode, heed their prayer, and turn not aside from their supplication.
Hear our plea and prayer!

They tremble at the approach of Thy judgment. Awaiting Thy verdict, they suffer pangs like a woman in childbirth. Cleanse Thou the stain of their guilt that they may sing of Thy wondrous deeds.
Hear our plea and prayer!

Thou art the Creator of all living things. From the beginning didst Thou provide them with relief from suffering by granting them mercy from Thy treasure-house of love.
Hear our plea and prayer!

Lord on high, though Thy people’s transgressions be many, O come to their aid with Thy mercies stored up in heaven. For undeserving of Thy grace, they plead before Thee.
Hear our plea and prayer!

Consider our trials and not our transgressions. Worker of wonders, do Thou vindicate all those who cry unto Thee. Hearken to their supplications, O Lord of the universe.
Hear our plea and prayer!

Accept their plaint as they stand before Thee this night. Receive their prayer with favor as if it were a Temple offering of old. Show them Thy wonders, O Thou who doest great deeds.
Hear our plea and prayer!
O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and knowest me.
Thou knowest my every step; Thou understandest my thought from afar.
Thou measurest my going about and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways.
For if there be a word on my tongue, Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.
Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in the nether world, behold, Thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there would Thy hand lead me, And Thy right hand would hold me.
And if I say: ‘Surely the darkness shall envelop me, And the night shall shut me in’;
Even the darkness is not too dark for Thee, Yea, the night shineth as the day; The darkness is even as the light.
I will give thanks unto Thee, For I am marvelously made; Wonderful are Thy works; My soul knoweth right well.
Before my days were fashioned, In Thy book were they all written down.
How mysterious are Thy purposes, O Lord, How vast is their number!
Search me, O God, and know my heart, Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any guile in me, And lead me in Thy way forever.

Adonai Adonai El ra'hum v'hanun
ereh apay'im v'ra'v hesed v'emet. Notzer hesed la-alafim noseh avone va-fesha v'hatah-ah v'nakeh.
Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindness for they are everlasting. O remember not our former iniquities. Hasten Thy tender mercies for we are brought very low. Remember us, O Lord, with favor, and grant us Thy salvation. Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast gotten of old and which Thou hast redeemed, and Mount Zion wherein Thou hast dwelt. Remember, O Lord, the devotion of Jerusalem, and never forget the love of Zion. Recall, O Lord, the words of the Edomites, who in the day of Jerusalem said: "Raze it, raze it even unto its very foundation." Thou wilt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time has now come to favor her.

Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou promised: "I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." Yea, remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness nor to their sin.

Remember unto us the covenant of the patriarchs, "And I will remember My covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob; and I will remember the land."

Remember unto us the covenant of our ancestors, "And I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations that I might be their God; I am the Lord."

Deal with us according to the promise in Scriptures: "And even when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord, their God."
Have mercy upon us and destroy us not, “For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not forsake you, neither will He destroy you, nor forget the covenant made with your fathers.”

Purify our hearts to love and revere Thy name. “And the Lord your God will incline your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

O bring back our captivity and have compassion upon us. “Then the Lord your God will turn your captivity and have compassion upon you, and will again gather you from all the peoples whither the Lord your God hath scattered you.”

O gather our dispersed and homeless. “If any of them be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord your God gather you, and from thence will He fetch you.”

O be Thou with us to guide our paths. “And if you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

O blot out our transgressions for Thy sake. “I, even I, am He that blotteth out your transgressions, for Mine own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

O blot out our transgressions and may they vanish as a thick cloud and as a mist. “I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a mist your sins; return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.”

O turn Thou our sins as white as snow or wool. “Come now, and let us reason together,” saith the Lord. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

O cleanse us from all our impurities. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your defilement and from all your abominations will I cleanse you.”

O bring us to Thy holy mountain and make us joyful in Thy house of prayer. “I will bring them to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their offerings shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.”
Heavenly Father, heed our cry;
In mercy grant our supplication.
Turn us back to Thee, O Lord;
Restore to us our ancient glory.
Accept our words, our fervent prayer;
Consider Thou our meditation.
Rock divine, be with Thy folk;
Cast not Thy people from Thy presence.
Without Thee, God, there is no hope;
Our life an aimless evanescence.
Lord, forsake us not, we pray;
Be Thou our staff when our strength faileth;
When youth to feeble age gives way,
Naught then but Thee, O God, availeth.
Thou, O Father, wast our hope
In all our days through joy and sorrow.
Be with us yet and to the end,
Our Comforter in life’s tomorrow.

It is characteristic of the spirit of Judaism that the confessional
is recited in public and is expressed in the plural. Each human
being is responsible for all the sins of the society in which he lives,
either by his own acts of commission, or by his passive acquiescence
in the conditions that breed crime and lawlessness.

Our God and God of our fathers, may our prayers come
before Thee. Hide not Thyself from our supplication, for we
are neither so arrogant nor so hardened as to say before Thee:
“O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous
and have not sinned.” Verily, we have sinned.

A-sham-nu, ba-gad-nu, ga-zol-nu, di-bar-nu dō-fec; heh-ch-vee-nu,
v'hir-sha-nu, zad-nu, ha-mas-nu, ta-fai-nu shē-kēr; ya-atz-nu ra,
ki-zav-nu, la-tz-nu, ma-rahd-nu, ni-atz-nu, sa-rahd-nu, a-vee-nu,
pa-sha-nu, iz-rahd-nu, ki-shēe-nu ō-ref; ra-sha-nu, shi-hat-nu,
ti-ahy-nu, tae-ee-nu, ti-ta-nu.

We have trespassed, we have been faithless, we have robbed,
and spoken slander; we have acted perversely, we have wrought
wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done vio-
ience, and uttered falsehood; we have counselled evil, we have
revolted, and provoked; we have rebelled, we have committed
iniquity, we have failed to keep our promise, we have trans-
gressed, oppressed, and have been stiff-necked; we have done
wickedly, we have corrupted, and committed abomination; we
have gone astray, and have led others astray.

We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy
sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou
art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted
truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.
We have trespassed more than all other peoples; we are bowed down by shame more than any other generation. Our joy is departed from us; our heart is downcast because of our sins. Our cherished treasures have been destroyed and our glory darkened. Because of our iniquities, our holy Temple is in ruins and our palace is desolate. Our fair land is given over to strangers, and our wealth has been seized by the alien.

Yet have we not repented of our sins. Then how shall we dare be so brazen and obstinate as to declare before Thee: “O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous and have not sinned!” Verily, we and our fathers have sinned.


We have trespassed, we have been faithless, we have robbed, and spoken slander; we have acted perversely, we have wrought wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done violence, and uttered falsehood; we have counselled evil, we have revoluted, and provoked; we have rebelled; we have committed iniquity; we have failed to keep our promise, we have transgressed, oppressed, and have been stiff-necked; we have done wickedly, we have corrupted, and committed abomination; we have gone astray, and have led others astray.

We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.

Before our very eyes, they plundered our wealth, seized and stripped it from us. They imposed their yoke upon us, and we have borne it upon our shoulders. Slaves have dominion over us, and there is none to deliver us from their oppression. Many are the tribulations that beset us. We call upon Thee, O Lord our God, but because of our iniquities Thou keepest afar from us. We have turned away from Thee, gone astray, and are lost.

Yet have we not repented of our sins. Then how shall we dare be so brazen and obstinate as to declare before Thee: “O Lord our God and God of our fathers, we are righteous and have not sinned!” Verily, we and our fathers have sinned.
We have trespassed, we have been faithless, we have robbed, and spoken slander; we have acted perversely, we have wrought wickedness, we have been presumptuous, we have done violence, and uttered falsehood; we have counselled evil, we have revoluted, and provoked; we have rebelled, we have committed iniquity, we have failed to keep our promise, we have transgressed, oppressed, and have been stiff-necked; we have done wickedly, we have corrupted, and committed abomination; we have gone astray, and have led others astray.

We have turned away from Thy commandments and Thy sound judgments, and it has profited us nothing. But Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for Thou hast acted truthfully, while we have wrought unrighteousness.

We have acted wickedly and transgressed; therefore we have not been saved. O inspire us to forsake the way of wickedness, and hasten to save us, as it is written in the Book of Isaiah: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his evil purposes. Let them return unto the Lord, and He shall have mercy upon them. Let them return to our God, for He will be ever ready to pardon them.”

David, Thine anointed, said unto Thee: “Who can discern his own errors? Absolve me from those faults unknown to me.” Absolve us, O Lord our God, from all our transgressions, and cleanse us, as it is written in the Book of Ezekiel: “I will sprinkle purifying water upon you, and you shall be purified from all your impurities, and from all your idolatries will I cleanse you.”

Thine own people hunger for Thy goodness. They thirst for Thy lovingkindness, and yearn for Thy deliverance. May they come to know that only the Lord our God shall grant mercy and forgiveness.

Thy name is Merciful God! Thy name is Gracious God! We are called by Thy name. O Lord, forgive us and be Thou with us for the sake of Thy name, Thy truth, Thy covenant, Thy greatness and Thy majesty.

Do so for the sake of Thy Law, Thine honor, Thy troth, Thy memorial, Thy loving-kindness, Thy goodness, Thy unity, Thy glory, Thy teachings, Thy kingdom.

Forgive us for the sake of Thy splendor, Thy mystery, Thy strength, Thine excellence, Thy righteousness, Thy holiness, Thine abundant mercy, Thy divine presence and Thy praise.

Deal kindly with us for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon; for Jerusalem's sake, Thy holy city; for Zion's sake, the tabernacle of Thy glory; for the sake of the desolation of Thy Temple and of the ruins of Thine altars.

Forgive us for the sake of the blood of Thy servants which has been poured forth; for the sake of those who have been slain for Thy holy name, who have been slaughtered for Thy unity; who went through fire and through water for the sanctification of Thy name.

Deal kindly with us for the sake of the young children who study Torah in the school; for the infants who have not sinned nor transgressed and for the sake of orphans and widows. Do so for Thine own sake, if not for ours; yea, do it for Thy sake and save us.

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

O our Father, Creator, Redeemer, O Thou who seestest us, O Thou faithful God, Thou who art perfect and kind, Thou who art pure and upright,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.
Thou who art ever-existing, good and beneficent; Thou who knowest our frailty, who suppressest anger, who art robed in righteousness, O Supreme King of kings,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art revered and exalted, who forgivest and pardonest, who answerest in a favorable time, Thou Redeemer and Deliverer,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art just and upright, near to all who call upon Thee, merciful and gracious, the support of the faithful,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

O God of our fathers, O God of Abraham, O Revered of Isaac, O Mighty One of Jacob, Refuge of our mothers, Helper of the tribes,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

Thou who art slow to anger, who art easily reconciled, who answerest in time of sorrow, Thou Father of orphans, Thou Judge of widows,

Answer us, O Lord, answer us.

He who answered our father Abraham on Mount Moriah, and Isaac, his son, when he was bound on the altar, and Jacob in Bethel,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Joseph in the dungeon, and our fathers at the Red Sea and Moses in Horeb,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Aaron with the censer, and Phineas when he rose from amongst the congregation, and Joshua in Gilgal,

He shall answer us.
He who answered Samuel in Mizpah, and David and Solomon, his son, in Jerusalem,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel and Elisha in Jericho, and Jonah in the bowels of the fish,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Hezekiah in his sickness and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in the midst of the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den,

He shall answer us.

He who answered Mordecai and Esther in Shushan the capital, and Ezra in the captivity,

He shall answer us.

He who answered all the righteous and pious, the faithful and the upright in all generations,

He shall answer us.

O merciful God, who answereth the poor, the lowly in spirit, and the broken of heart, answer us.

O merciful God, have compassion, redeem, save and have pity upon us, now and forever.
Merciful and gracious God, I have sinned before Thee. O Lord who art full of compassion, have mercy upon me and accept my supplications.

Psalm 6

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath;
Neither chastise me in Thine anger.
Be gracious unto me, O Lord, for I am weary;
Heal me, O Lord, for my limbs are atremble.
My whole body aches. Thee, O Lord, do I entreat:
“How long must I suffer?”
Return unto me, O Lord, and deliver me from death;
Because Thou art merciful, save Thou me.
For the dead cannot invoke Thy name,
And the departed cannot acknowledge Thee.
I grow weary of weeping;
Every night my couch is wet with tears.
Because mine adversaries sorely vex me,
Mine eyes grow dim from weeping.
Depart from me, O workers of iniquity,
For the Lord has given heed to my weeping.
The Lord has hearkened to my supplication,
And He will accept my prayer.

Then shall all mine adversaries be frustrated and confounded;
Suddenly in utter confusion they shall depart.

God who wounds and heals, who causes death and gives life,
He also raises up from the grave to everlasting life. When a
son commits a wrong, his father chastises him; but the com-
passionate father soon heals the pain. A rebellious slave is
put in chains; but if the master desire, he breaks the chains.
We, Thy first-born, have sinned against Thee; therefore our
souls are heavy-laden with bitterness. We, Thy servants,
have rebelled against Thee; therefore have we been subjected
to punishment, plunder and captivity. We implore Thee, in
Thine abundant mercy heal our pain which is too heavy to
bear, so that we perish not in captivity.
Lord in heaven, we plead before Thee as the captive before his master. All captives are ransomed with silver, but Thy people, the House of Israel, shall be saved by mercy and supplication. O grant our petition and our plea; turn us not away from Thee without Thy blessing.

Lord in heaven, we implore Thee as the slave implores his master. Oppressed, we dwell in darkness, and our souls are embittered and distressed. We have not the strength to win Thy favor, O Lord. Act mercifully for the sake of the covenant Thou didst make with our forefathers.

O Guardian of Israel, preserve the remnant of Israel; let them not perish, Thy people Israel, who say: "Hear, O Israel!"

O Guardian of a unique people, preserve the remnant of a unique people; let them not perish, this unique people, who proclaim Thy Oneness, saying: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!"

O Guardian of a holy people, preserve the remnant of a holy people; let them not perish, this holy people, who repeat the threefold sanctification to the Holy One.

O Thou who hearkenest to all prayers and supplications for mercy, hearken to this afflicted generation, for there is none else to help them, save Thee.

A-vee-nu mal-kay-nu ha-nay-nu va-anay-nu, (repeat)
Ke eyn ba-nu ma-ay-sim.
A-say i-ma-nu ts'da-ka va-heh-sed, (repeat)
V'ho-shay-ay-ny-u.
A-vee-nu mal-kay-nu, ha-nay-nu va-anay-nu, (repeat)
V'ho-shay-ay-ny-u.

Our Father and King, be gracious unto us and answer us, for we are unworthy; deal charitably and kindly with us, and save us.

We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee. Remember Thy mercy and lovingkindness, O Lord, for they are eternal. Grant us Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, for Thou art our only hope. Remember not our former iniquities; favor us speedily with Thy compassion, for we are greatly distressed. Have mercy upon us, for we have been held in contempt. Despite Thine anger, remember to be merciful. Thou knowest the frailty of our nature and rememberest that we are but dust. For the sake of Thy glorious honor, help us, God of our salvation; deliver us and pardon our sins for Thy name's sake.
Repentance is more than saying we’re sorry, more than embarrassment, more than the discomfort of being caught, more than fear, more than an effort to avoid punishment or penalties.

It is a sincere change within, a sincere turning away. Such repentance lets us live with ourselves with quiet conscience.

People have sometimes supposed that repentance was too high-priced.

They have looked at what they would have to give up, at appetites they would have to curb, at habits they would have to break or abandon, at things they would have to set aside.

They have forgotten the fact that no matter what the price of repenting, it is never so high as the price of not repenting. And no later hour is ever better for the purpose of repenting than this very hour.

Failure to repent is much worse than doing wrong. A person may have sinned in a moment, but he may fail to repent of it moments without number.

There is in repentance this beautiful mystery—that we may fly fastest home on a broken wing.

Because man is the crown of creation, he can do teshuva. Because he is dust, he must do teshuva.

Repentance may be compared to the sea. Just as the sea is always open to anyone who approaches, so too repentance is always open.

The best cure for a sense of guilt is a sense of duty.

No sin is too great for God to pardon, but none too small for habit to magnify.

To anyone who asserts, “Human nature never changes,” it is fair to reply, “It is human nature to change itself.”

God made man a changer. He can change himself into a fish and dive deep and stay under water unafraid of any sea animals.

He can change himself into a bird and travel farther with heavier cargo, wider wings, fiercer claws and beaks than any bird.

God must have wanted man to be a changer. Else God wouldn’t have put that awful unrest in him.
מליחות ליום הארץן

YIGDAL

Yig-dal e’lo-heem hye, v’yiah-ta-bah, nim-tsa, v’ayn ayt, el m’see-u-to.
E-had v’ayn ya-heed k’yi-hu-do, ne-el’am v’gam ayn sof l’ah-du-to.
Ayn lo d’mut ha-guf, v’ay-no guf, lo naa’-roh ay-lav k’du-sha-to.
Kad-mon l’hol da-var a’sher niv-ra, ri-shon v’ayn ray-sheet, For-yee-sha-to.
Hi-no a-don o-lam, l’hol no-tsar, yo-reh g’du-la-to, u-ma-lhu-to.
Sheh-fa n’vu-a-to, n’ta-no, el a-n’shay y’gu-la-to, v’li-far-to.
Lo kam b’yis-ra-ayl, k’mo-shet od, na-vee u-ma-beet, et t’mu-na-to.
To-rat e’-met na-tan l’a-mo ayl, al yad n’vee-o, ne-e’men ban-yo-to.
Lo ya-ha’leef ha-ayl, v’lo ya-meer da-to, l’o-la-meem l’zu-da-to.
Tso-fe v-yo-day-a s’ta-ray-nu, ma-beet l’sof da-var b’kad-ma-to.
Go-mayl l’ech she-sed k’mi-fa-lo, no-tayn l’ra-sha ra, k’ri-sha-to.
Yish-lah l’kayts ya-meen, m’shee-hay-nu, li’dot m’ha-kay kaytz y’shu-a-to.
May-tem y’ha-yet ayl b’roh has-do, ba-ruh a-day ad shaym t’hi-la-to.

Based on Maimonides’ 13 Principles of Faith

We praise and exalt the living God who was, who is, and who will be forever.
He is One alone and there is none else, and He will be One forever.
God has no body or form; nothing can compare with His holiness.
He was God before anything was created; from the beginning of time He was the first.
He is the Lord of the universe; He reveals His greatness and His power to every living creature.
He inspired His chosen ones to be His prophets.
Never has there been a prophet who was as close to God as Moses.
God gave us the holy Torah through His faithful prophet Moses.
God will not change this Law for any other law.
He knows and understands our secret thoughts; He foresees the outcome of events from the beginning.
He rewards the righteous according to his righteousness;
He punishes the wicked according to his wickedness.
God will send a Messiah to bring freedom and peace.
In His great mercy, God will grant life to the dead; praised be His glorious name forevermore.
SELIHOT SERVICE—PRAYERS FOR FORGIVENESS

CLOSING PRAYER

Our God and God of our fathers, as we conclude this Selihot Service, may we take to heart the admonition of Thy prophet Isaiah:

"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. May the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his evil purposes. Let them return to the Lord, and He shall have mercy upon them. Let them return to our God, for He is ever ready to pardon them."

O merciful God, this night from the depths of our hearts have we called unto Thee. In deep humility have we confessed our sins and shortcomings. Cause us to discover the faults of our ways and the errors into which we have fallen. Strengthen us that we do not repeat the wrongs for which this day we repent. Help us to understand that, unless we daily search our hearts, turn from evil ways and fill our lives with acts of lovingkindness, we shall have offered Thee naught but lip service.

Only when our prayers are sincere, our repentance genuine, our thoughts pure, and our deeds righteous, shall we find peace in our hearts and be at peace with Thee and with our fellowmen.

Bless us in the coming year with vision and courage, faith and serenity. Endow us with singleness of purpose that we may do Thy will with a perfect heart.

"For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light."

Amen.