

Hashkiveinu¹

הַשְּׂכִיבֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם, וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְּכָנוּ לְחַיִּים וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ וְתַקְנֵנוּ
בְּעֶצֶה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנו לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ, וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדָּנוּ, וְהַסֵּר מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב, דָּבָר,
וְתָרַב, וְרָעַב וְיָגוֹן, וְהַסֵּר שְׁטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵנוּ, וּבְצִל כְּנַפֶּיךָ תִּסְתֵּירֵנוּ. כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרָנוּ
וּמְצִילָנוּ אַתָּה, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה, וְשׁוֹמֵר צִאתָנוּ וּבּוֹאֵנוּ, לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם,
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. (וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ.) בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, שׁוֹמֵר עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַד:

*Hashkiveinu adonai eloheinu l'shalom,*²

Lay us down to sleep, Lord our God, in peace,
v'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'chayim,
raise us erect, our King, to life;

ufros aleinu sukat sh'lomecha,

spread over us the shelter of Your peace.

v'tak'neinu b'eitzah tovah mil'fanecha,

Set us aright with good counsel from before Your Presence,

v'hoshieinu l'ma'an sh'mecha.

and save us for Your Name's sake.

V'hagein ba'adeinu, v'haseir mei'aleinu

Shield us, remove from us

oyeiv, dever v'cherev v'ra'av v'yagon,

foe, plague, sword, famine, and woe;

v'haseir satan mil'faneinu umei'achareinu,

and remove spiritual impediment from before us and behind us

uv'tzeil k'nafecha tastireinu,

and shelter us in the shadow of Your wings³ –

ki eil shom'reinu umatzileinu atah,

for God who protects and rescues us are You;

ki eil melech chanun v'rachum atah

for God, the Gracious and Compassionate King⁴, are You.

*Us'hmor tzeiteinu uvoeinu, l'chayim ul'shalom mei'atah v'ad olam*⁵.

Safeguard our going and coming - for life and for peace from now to eternity⁶.

Baruch atah Adonai, shomeir amo yisraeil l'ad.

Blessed are You, Lord, ⁷Guardian of Israel for always.

¹ "Following a reading from Seder Rav Amram, our first known comprehensive prayerbook, c. 860 BCE" (*Mishkan T'fillah: a Progressive siddur*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2010, p.160)

² Planer, John (2013) 'The poetry, variants, and evolution of *Hashkiveinu*', Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy, 1 Jan., <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201301/3460064971.html>. Read this for an elegant analysis of the beautiful structure of themes, rhymes etc in this prayer.

³ Ps. 17:8 - *B'tzeil k'nafecha tastireinu* - shelter us in the shadow of Your wings

⁴ Nech. 9:31 - *ki eil chanunu v'rachum atah* – for You are gracious and compassionate

⁵ Added on Shabbat: *ufros aleinu sukat sh'lomecha* - spread over us the shelter of Your peace.

⁶ Ps 121:8 – *mei'atah v'ad olam* - from now to eternity. (This ending to the prayer is found in the Babylonian text.)

1. Entering the darkness

- Grishaver relates two Jewish folktales about the provenance of the *Hashkiveinu* prayer. One tells of when the Israelites prayed for safety and deliverance as they waited terrified behind their doors while the Angel of Death passed by on the night before their flight from Egypt. The other story is of their first night in the wilderness, under the stars, with no shelter, amongst the ominous shadows and cries of wild beasts in the darkness. They prayed: “Cause us, Eternal One, to lie down in peace, and rise again to life!” - Grishaver, Joel (2012) ‘Hashkiveinu’ in Stories we pray: insights into the inner-work of Jewish worship, Torah Aura Publications, pp. 65-6
- “the Guardian of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps” (Psalms 121:4)

2. Why a ‘sukkah’ of peace?

“Jewish law validates a *sukkah* even when it has gaping holes, when it is built from little more than two walls, or has large spaces between the walls and the roof. Even such a fragile structure still qualifies as a kosher *sukkah*. The same is true regarding peace. Peace is so precious, so vital, that even if we are unable to attain complete peace, we should still pursue a partial measure of peace. Even an imperfect peace between neighbors, or between an individual and the community, is worthwhile. ‘How great is peace!’ proclaimed the Sages (VaYikra Rabbah 9:9). The value of peace is so great that we pray for it even if it will be like a *sukkah*—flimsy and temporary, rendered fit only by special laws.” Adapted by Mrs. Chaya Batya Neugroschl in ‘*Sukkat Shalom: Paradigms for Peace*’, The Benjamin and Rose Berger Torah To-Go, Oct 2014, pp. 9-13 - from Kook, Rav Abraham (1865–1935) *Ma’amarei HaR’Iyah*, vol. I, pp. 149-150

3. ‘Satan’ – *v’haseir satan mil’faneinu umei’achareinu*

- Berachot 60b, the inspiration for the *Hashkiveinu* prayer, has these words: “... and may the good inclination have sway over me and let not the evil inclination have sway over me. ... and let not evil dreams and evil thoughts disturb me ...” This provides a good Talmudic precedent for the modern responses to the word *satan* given below.
- “One verse in the blessing, ‘remove spiritual impediment from before us and behind us,’ may ... have a meaning that goes beyond the sense of imminent physical danger. The word we translate as ‘spiritual impediment’ or ‘adversary’ is rendered in the Hebrew text by the word *satan*. In [Judaism] this word does not mean a ‘Satan’ who fights against God. Judaism recognizes no independent spiritual power other than God. *Satan* refers to the evil impulses within man that prevent him from following his good inclinations and thus lead him astray.” <http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/Hashkiveynu.html>
- “The text recognizes the darkness that lies within each of us, and is a prayer to dispel that darkness. Some modern versions of the *siddur* have removed the phrase entirely. However, I find the following phrase asking God to shelter us, *b’tzeil k’nafecha* (‘in the shadow of Your wings’), to be a plea for refuge from a spiritual challenge or foe and a recognition of the reality of the spiritual adversary [including ‘our own inner demons’].” Barth, Samuel ‘Turn aside (*haseir*) evil forces’, 25 June 2014, <http://learn.jtsa.edu/content/commentary/pinehas/5773/turn-aside-haseir-evil-forces>

⁷ On Shabbat, replace with: *haporeis sukat shalom aleinu, v'al kol amo Yisrael, v'al Y'rushalayim* - who spreads the shelter of peace upon us, upon all of his people Israel and upon Jerusalem. (This ending to the prayer is found in the Palestinian text.)

4. The holiness of sleep

- “There is something very holy about sleep.” Rabbi Jonathan Magonet
- “Even when he is sleeping, a person should have the intention that he is allowing his mind and body to rest in order that he should not become sick, which would prevent him from serving God. Thus, his sleep becomes part of his Service of God [*avodah l'makom*].” Maimonides, *Hilchot De'ot* (Laws of Conduct), 3:3

5. Reflections on *Hashkiveinu*

- *Hashkiveinu* – This word is requesting, actually commanding, God to make us lie down. We lie and down sleep as an act of surrender to God's will that we sleep. And if we can do nothing without God, and it is God who makes us lie down, then perhaps God is personally and specially responsible for us while we sleep ... ‘Lying down’ is also a metaphor for death – we pray to be able to meet death peacefully, and at peace with ourselves, with the world, and with God.
- *YHVH / Adonai* – 1) My God is personal and intimate 2) *YHVH* is the compassionate aspect of God.
- *Eloheinu* – 1) Our God is collective; this word connects me to my fellow Jews, and universally to everyone 2) *Eloheinu* is the Ultimate Source of all power in the universe.
- *L'shalom* – outer peace, inner peace, and wholeness (*shleimut*). At night, we return to our wholeness, our untroubled self, to the place of holiness (soul returns to God). *SHaloM* has same outer letters (*SHin-Mem*) as *SHamayim* (heaven), which can metaphorically reconcile and harmonise opposites, such as fire (*aiSH*) and water (*Mayim*).
- *V'ha'amideinu* – come to standing (as in the morning *Amidah*, the ‘standing prayer’), where we recommit ourselves in service to God, and acknowledge our total dependence – whether when unconscious at night, or conscious in the daytime when we are supposedly running our own lives. If ‘lying down’ can be a metaphor for dying, then ‘standing up’ is a metaphor for ... what?
- *Malkeinu* – When this prayer first came into being, a king was a real and immediate presence, a tribal chieftain to whom one pledged loyalty, but also who offered protection in return. Back then, how personally meaningful, therefore, was this metaphor of God as king? Perhaps more than it is for us now. But we may aspire to trust in God far more than in any earthly power: “Don't put your trust in princes, nor in human beings, for they cannot save.” (Ps 146:3)
- *L'chayim* – ‘To life’; each day is a new opportunity. *Chayim* is a plural noun (‘lives’). We pray: to enrich the lives of those we meet; to live well the many ‘lives’ (roles) we play in one day; to live two lives well - our outer and inner life; and to align our *yetzer ra* (impulse to look after ourselves) with our *yeter tov* (impulse to do what is right). “Yesterday and tomorrow are man's downfall. Today you may be aroused towards God. Don't let yourself become discouraged because of what may have happened yesterday or what may happen tomorrow.” Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, *Sichot Haran* #288
- *Ufros aleinu* – We ask for peace to be shared around. We ask for others, and not just ourselves, because peace/*shalom* has no substance if it is only for some and not everyone else.
- *Sukkat* – A *sukkah* has open sides. In our *sukkah*, we welcome the visitor, the stranger, whoever needs to share our shelter. *Shalom* comes from this.
- *Sh'lomecha* - Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: "When we pray, we bring God into the world." Focusing our conscious intention on the possibility of God's *shalom* brings it closer; we are key to making God's *shalom* become a reality in the world.

6. *Shalom*

- It's worth knowing something about the Hebrew word *shalom*. It is usually translated 'peace'. However, it is different from the conventional meaning of the word, which means 'cessation or absence of war' (from the Latin *pax*). The Hebrew word *shalom* is connected to *shleimut*, meaning completeness or wholeness. Do we ever reach such a place? Perhaps not. But it makes a difference to aspire to such a state, and to take what action may take us closer to it. I like to think that the time we are given in this life can be dedicated to a continuous process '*shalom-ing*' as much as we can.
- In Psalm 34:15, there is the phrase "seek *shalom* [peace] and pursue it". The traditional Jewish commentary on this (in the ancient Rabbinical text, Leviticus Rabah 9:9), says: 'seek it in your own place, and pursue it even to another place as well.' And that means that it is not enough just to solve the conflicts, wounds and problems that arise in our own lives and immediate environment – important though that is. How can we be at peace if others are not? How can we be whole, when the world is still broken? There can be no *shalom* for anyone until there is *shalom* for everyone. The Rabbis taught that this psalm verse highlights a moral imperative to look beyond what we immediately see and know, to discover where else we could contribute to the '*shalom-ing*' of the world. In Judaism, we call this the human obligation toward *tikkun olam*, the healing of the world.
- *Shalom*, the Jewish concept of 'peace', is not easily realised in human terms, but is the essence of God. From God's eye view, all can be seen as part of a whole, all is reconciled and makes sense. The word *ShaLoM* (*shin-lamed-mem*) is related by *shoresh* (root) to *ShLeiMut*, meaning 'wholeness'. In the mystical tradition of *kabbalah*, the letter *Shin* (representing *aiSh* 'fire') is reconciled by the letter *Lamed* (representing *meLamed*, God the ultimate 'Teacher') with the letter *Mem* (representing *Mayim* 'water'). This idea of all things becoming One with each other is also found in the allegorical idea that *ShaMayim* 'heaven' is the reconciliation of the opposites of *Shin* (*aiSh* 'fire') and *Mem* (*Mayim* 'water'). From the *Zohar* (the 13th century seminal text of *kabbalah*) we learn that to listen – *SheMA* (*shin-mem-ayin*)- – with the ears of God, we can reconcile *Shin* (*aiSh* 'fire') and *Mem* (*Mayim* 'water'), and then see with God's eyes (*Ayin*).

7. **Bedtime Forgiveness Prayer** (Rabbi Zalman Shachter-Shalomi *zt"l*, 1924-2014)

We can choose to end our day with a *cheshbon hanefesh*, an 'accounting of the soul', making peace with the people around us, with ourselves, and with God. This is Reb Zalman's modern re-working of a much older prayer.

"You, my Eternal Friend, witness now that I forgive anyone who hurt or upset me or who offended me - damaging my body, my property, my reputation or people that I love; whether by accident or purposely; with words, deeds, thoughts or attitudes. I forgive every person who has hurt or upset me. May no one be punished because of me. May no one suffer from consequences for hurting or upsetting me. Help me, Eternal Friend, to keep from offending You and others. Help me to be thoughtful and not commit outrage by doing what is evil in Your eyes. Whatever sins I have committed, blot out, please, in Your abundant kindness, and spare me suffering or harmful illnesses. Help me become aware of the ways I may have unintentionally or intentionally hurt others, and please give me guidance and strength to rectify those hurts and to develop the sensitivity to not continue acting in a hurtful way. Let me forgive others, let me forgive myself, but also let me change in ways that make it easy for me to avoid paths of hurtfulness to others.

"I seek peace, let me BE peace. I seek justice, let me be just. I seek a world of kindness, let me be kind. I seek a world of generosity, let me be generous with all that I have. I seek a world of sharing, let me share all that I have. I seek a world of giving, let me be giving to all around me. I seek a world of love, let me be loving beyond all reason, beyond all normal expectation, beyond all societal frameworks that tell me how much love is "normal," beyond all fear that giving too much love will leave me with too little. And let me be open and sensitive to all the love that is already coming to me, the love of people I know, the love that is part of the human condition, the accumulated love of past generations that flows through and is embodied in the language, music, recipes, technology, literature, religions, agriculture, and family heritages that have been passed on to me and to us. Let me pass that love on to the next generations in an even fuller and more explicit way.

"Source of goodness and love in the universe, let me be alive to all the goodness that surrounds me. And let that awareness of the goodness and love of the universe be my shield and protector. Hear the words of my mouth and may the meditations of my heart find acceptance before You, Eternal Friend, who protects and frees me. Amen."

8. Hashkiveinu – music and additional words by Alexander Massey (listen online)

1. Hashkiveinu, hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu
Hashkiveinu, adonai eloheinu l'shalom

Hashkiveinu, hashkiveinu, hashkiveinu l'shalom.
Hashkiveinu, hashkiveinu, hashkiveinu l'shalom.

2. V'ha'amideinu, v'ha'amideinu, v'ha'amideinu malkeinu
V'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'chayim. [Refrain] *Hashkiveinu, ...*

You held me safe through the day;
Keep me safe through the night.
Maker of darkness, hear me pray ...
Please, let me meet the morning light.

3. Ufros, ufros, ufros aleinu;
Ufros aleinu sukat sh'lomecha. [Refrain] *Hashkiveinu, ...*