

Alexander Massey

# Adonai Adonai #1

13 Attributes of Mercy

(voice & piano or guitar  
+ optional vocal harmony)

including an essay-commentary  
on the text and music

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# Adonai Adonai

In May 2020, during the lockdown, I was attending a morning meditation session run by Rabbi Anne Brener in the USA (4.30pm for me in the UK!). She asked us how we were feeling, and I realised that I felt overwhelmed at the time, by trying to meet so many competing demands on my attention and energy. Anne suggested that I could do what Moses did, and allow myself some 'time out'. He secluded himself, and God spoke to him the '13 attributes of mercy' (Ex. 34:6-7). Jewish tradition teaches that when we speak to God and meditate on these attributes, we will never come away empty-handed (*Talmud, Rosh Hashanah* 17b).

I took Anne's advice, and went walking late one night, turning these words over in my mind. And it was then that I realised I wanted an alternative tune to the austere one that we sing in community at *Yom Kippur*. This musical setting is the result of my spending time with the 13 attributes, and finding comfort in them. Rabbi Anne gave a beautiful teaching that we can recite or chant these 13 attributes after the bedtime *Sh'ma*, as we surrender our souls to sleep. She says that when hand ourselves to God at night, our souls can 'marinate' in the 13 attributes while we sleep. In the morning, our souls are returned to us, and we give thanks.

Sephardic and Chassidic Jews recite the 13 attributes after the daily morning *Amidah* (standing prayer), before the confession *Vidui* (confession) and *Tachanun* ('supplication'). We also sing them before taking the Torah from the ark during the three pilgrimage festivals of *Passover*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*, at *Selichot* (prayers for forgiveness) before the High Holy Days, on the eve of *Rosh Hashanah* (the new year), and on the penitential day of *Yom Kippur*.

## Suggestions for use

1. On *Yom Kippur*, this prayer comes several times throughout the day. On each occasion, the congregation sings the words twice.
2. I have been using this setting as a personal meditation that I can sing at any time that I need comfort and clarity.
3. I find myself singing this over and over again (or listening to it repeatedly). You don't have to stop at twice!
4. The extra voice parts and guitar chords are not strictly necessary. This can be sung just as an unaccompanied melody, either solo, or by a group of people in unison.
5. I have created a recording for this using two guitars, singing through twice, the first time with a voice harmonising below the main tune, and the second time with a voice harmonising above and around the main tune. These are notated in the sheet music. However, feel free to find your own harmonies – but don't let the musical texture become too busy or fussy.

# Adonai Adonai

# יהוה יהוה

## 13 Attributes of Mercy

Music: Alexander Massey

Text: Ex: 34:6-7

Spacious, 1 in a bar ♩=111

Capo 2: Am Bm G A Am Bm G A Am Bm

Capo 2: A - do - nai, A - do - nai, -

A - do - nai, A - do - nai,

9 Dm Em Am Bm

Eil ra - chum, v' - cha - nun,

Eil ra - chum, v' - cha - nun,

17 Dm Em G A Am Bm

e - rech a - pa - yim v' - rav che - sed,

e - rech a - pa - yim v' - rav che - sed,

25 Dm7 Em7 G A C E7 F#7

v' - e - met, no - tzer che - sed l'a - a - la - fim,

v' - e - met, no - tzer che - sed la' - a - la - fim,

## Adonai Adonai - Massey

33

*Am* *G* *Am* *C* *Dm* *C/E*  
*Bm* *A* *Bm* *D* *Em* *D/F#*

no - seh a - von, va - fe - shah, v' -

no - seh a - von, va - fe - shah, v' -

41

*Am* *Dm* *Am*  
*Bm* *Em* *Bm*

cha - ta' - ah, v' - na - keh.

cha - ta' - ah, v' - na - keh.

יְהוָה יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת  
 נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאֲלָפִים נִשְׂא עוֹן וְפֹשֵׁעַ וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקָּה

There are many different interpretations of the 13 attributes. Here are some of the more familiar ideas:

1. *YHVH Adonai* - compassion before a person sins (even though aware s/he will sin)
2. *YHVH Adonai* - compassion after a person has sinned
3. *Eil* - mighty in compassion, to give all creatures according to their need
4. *rachum* - merciful, that humankind may not be distressed
5. *v'chanun* - and gracious if humankind is already in distress;  
 mercy to the underserving, consoling the afflicted, raising up the oppressed
6. *erech apayim* - slow to anger; gives the sinner time to reflect, improve and repent
7. *v'rav chesed* - and plenteous in kindness;  
 to those who lack merit, tipping the scales towards good
8. *ve'emet* - and truth
9. *notzeir chesed la'alafim* - keeping kindness unto thousands;  
 passing benefits of one generation to the next
10. *noseih avon* - forgiving iniquity (if repentant at intentional wrongdoing)
11. *vafesha* - and transgression (if repentant at intention to rebel against God)
12. *v'chata'ah* - and sin (carelessness, apathy, lack of thought, ignorance)
13. *v'nakeih* - and pardoning (lit. cleansing)

# Adonai Adonai No.1

Music: Alexander Massey

## 13 Attributes

Words: Ex: 34:6-7

Restless ♩=111

Capo 2: Am Bm G A Am Bm Am Bm G A Am Bm

A - do - nai, \_\_\_\_\_ A - do - nai, -

9 Am Bm Dm Em Dm Em Am Bm

Eil ra - chum, \_\_\_\_\_ v' - cha - nun, \_\_\_\_\_

17 Am Bm Dm Em G A Am Bm

e - rech a - pa - yim v' - rav \_\_\_\_\_ che - sed,

# Adonai Adonai No.1 - Massey

25

*Am* *Bm* *Dm7* *Em7* *G* *A* *C* *D* *E7* *F#7*

v' - e - met, \_\_\_\_\_ no - tzer che - sed l'a' - a - la - fim,

33

*Am* *Bm* *G* *A* *Am* *Bm* *C* *D* *Dm* *Em* *C/E* *D/F#*

no - seh \_\_\_\_\_ a - von, va - fe - shah, \_\_\_\_\_ v'-

41

*Am* *Bm* *Dm* *Em* *Dm* *Em* *Am* *Bm*

cha - ta' - ah, \_\_\_\_\_ v' - na - keh. \_\_\_\_\_