

Liturgical Additions

Many Jews turn to prayer and meditation for strength and healing, either when struggling with a mental illness or when acting as a caregiver. Adding existing liturgy, creating new prayers and offering new interpretations during a worship service can help those who are struggling with these issues to find comfort in a connection to God and Judaism. What follows are some suggested additions to a prayer service including psalms and prayers.

Textual Additions

Genesis 1:27

27) So God created the human beings in the divine image, creating them in the image of God, creating them male and female.	כו וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.
--	--

Suggested insert location: *Ma'ariv Aravim, Nisim B'chol Yom (For Daily Miracles), Yotzer Or*

Each of us is made in the image of God with all of our myriad differences including mental health conditions. We are each irreplaceable, precious and have contributions to make to the Jewish people and to our world. Let us as a congregation reach out to remind one another of this when despair, disappointment and suffering may cause us to feel uncertain about our worth and importance.

Isaiah 61:1

1) The Spirit of the Eternal God is upon me, because the Eternal has anointed me to bring good things to the afflicted; God has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.	א רוח אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה, עָלַי יָצַן מְשִׁחַ יְהוָה אֹתִי לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנָוִים, שְׁלַחְנִי לְחַבֵּשׁ לְנַשְׁבְּרֵי לֵב, לְקַרְא לְשִׁבּוּיִם דְּרוּר, וְלִפְתּוֹחַ פְּקֻחַ קוֹחַ.
--	--

Suggested insert location: *Mi Chamocha, Elohai N'shamah, Nisim B'chol Yom (For Daily Miracles)*

God cares about those who are afflicted, feeling despair, isolation and pain. These words also remind each of us that just as Isaiah was so charged each of us has the responsibility to help those who are suffering, to offer comfort and to help them to find the means to be freed from the prison of mental illness. Each of us is reminded to create places and attitudes of welcome to reduce others' feeling of isolation.

Psalms 146:7-9

7) The Eternal sets prisoners free; the Eternal	ז יְהוָה, מַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים.
---	------------------------------

restores sight to the blind; 8) The Eternal makes those who are bent stand straight; the Eternal loves the righteous; 9) The Eternal watches over the stranger; God gives courage to the orphan and the widow.	ח הַהֵוֵה, פִּקַּח עֲוֵרִים הַהֵוֵה, זָקַף כְּפֹפִיִּים; הַהֵוֵה, אֶהֱבֶה צְדִיקִים. ט הַהֵוֵה, שָׁמַר אֶת גְּרָמִים יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה יְעוֹדֵד.
--	--

Suggested insert location: *Mi Chamocha, Hashkiveinu, Nisim B'chol Yom* (For Daily Miracles)

We serve as the hands and eyes of God, using our gifts and strengths to help one another, including those who are weakened by carrying the weight of their own mental illness or that of family members.

Modern Psalms

The following three modern psalms come from the writings of Debbie Perlman, reflecting today's modern issues and situations.

One Hundred Seventy-Four: For Seth¹

Bound like Isaac upon the rock,
Held fast by thought terrors:
Mind grasping, pulse booming, grasping
Bands of breathlessness.

Give us strength, Almighty One,
To work free the mind-made knots,
Worrying them with our worries
Until a rush of wings clears the air.

Where is the angel with the ram
Come to rescue this beloved son?
When will he arrive, loosening the bonds
That hold my child to the precipice?

Give us courage, Almighty One,
To cope with snarls and tangles;
Binds loosen and return,
Abide with us.

I did not offer up my son,
Though my love for You is steadfast;
I cannot untie him,
Though my faith in You is firm.

Two Hundred Forty-Six: The Plague of Darkness²

Deliver me from darkness of my soul,
Created by internal enemies, my defeaters;

Strengthen the stars, remove the obscuring clouds,
Unwrap the blindfold from my eyes;

¹ By Debbie Perlman in Address, Richard F., *Caring for the Soul R'fuat HaNefesh: A Mental Health Resource and Study Guide*, New York: UAHC Press, 2003, page 23.

² By Debbie Perlman in Address, Richard F., *Caring for the Soul R'fuat HaNefesh: A Mental Health Resource and Study Guide*, New York: UAHC Press, 2003, page 21.

They shake the foundation of my being,
They battle my innermost self.

Renew in my spirit fortitude and strength,
Your precious shard of brilliance, my sunrise.

Not as day fades to evening, but as thieves they
come,
So abruptly they steal the light
That I stand immobile, mute.
Be again my Light, Holy One, as I seek the light.

Two Hundred Fifty-One: Beginning Therapy³

Today I will begin to uncover my heart,
I will let accumulation of sorrow surface;
Today the cycle of hurt and longing is suspended,
Arresting my spiral into the maelstrom.

All my yesterdays describe my future,
Yet I am more than their sum;
I begin the deciphering with trepidation,
Help me to calculate my strengths.

If I falter, frightened of the struggle,
Be with me, my Staff and my Lamp,
Hold out a lantern of courage,
Fortify me, let me persevere.

Mark this day with Your kindness,
Reassure my search for wholeness;
Give me patience as I take small steps,
Guide and vouchsafe my journey.

Other Liturgical Additions

For Healing From Trauma⁴

The day always comes when your body learns to live with the trauma life has sunk into your bones, learns to let blood pool alongside the broken and jagged fragments of your singular shattering. Healing is not as we imagine: there is no seamless return to who you were before. Help us to trust that the day will arrive when you become one again with the heart you felt torn away from, borne back by blessing, by the source of life that moves between each pulse.

For Those Living With Chronic Illness⁵

May the one who blessed our ancestors, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, bless all those with chronic illness and help them to endure. Lift up their spirits and give them strength to embrace both joy and sorrow. Help their friends and caregivers know their own strengths and weaknesses, and the common humanity shared with those to whom they offer comfort. We remember

³ By Debbie Perlman in Address, Richard F., *Caring for the Soul R'fuat HaNefesh: A Mental Health Resource and Study Guide*, New York: UAH Press, 2003, page 24.

⁴ By Jaqui Shine in Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 40.

⁵ By Jeffrey Lilly in Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 40.

Jacob's limp, Moses' speech impediment, Leah's weak eyes, and all that contributed. Grant courage, faith, and joy to all who bear chronic illness and to all who love them. Amen.

For Ongoing Therapy⁶

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart move me through pain and into connectedness with others.

When I reach beyond the darkness within, You meet me halfway -

Let me not project the judgment and impatience of my guarded heart unto others. But may it be Your will, God, as I strive forward into uncomfortable territory, that I be blessed with openness and understanding that I long to give, and that I am so afraid to receive.

P'tach libi b'Torahtecha.

Open my heart to Your words.

Recovering from Mental Illness⁷

I know better that to claim that I'm cured. Victory over this enemy, with whom I often collaborate, is probably not final. But I am better today that I've been in some time, and I know what I can do if it starts getting bad again, and for this I thank God.

Give Me Your Hand (a responsive reading)

⁸When all seems dark and the darkness is harsh, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When I cannot see light even in the brightest day, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When you are tired and every breath is heavy, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When my words do not grasp the depth of yearning in my soul, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When your feelings are overwhelming or dulled, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When I am confused and don't know what to do, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

So that we may be together, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

Please feel free to add your own desire to which we can all respond: GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

For Caregivers⁹

Source of Comfort, bless those whose tender hands and weary backs, whose loving hearts and busy legs, care for those of our world who are in need. May Your spirit fill them with strength and courage. Be with them in joy, laughter, and when their task seems more than they can shoulder. God of Blessings, bless the caregivers of the world, as You bless those they lovingly attend.

⁶ By Anna Lichtenberg (Chana Harei-Orr) in Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 41.

⁷ By Dana Vinicoff Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 41.

⁸ Rabbi Eric Weiss, based on text from Talmud Bavli, Berachot 5b and inspired by sermon by Rabbi Susan Lippe, Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills, titled "A Jewish Response to Mental Illness" delivered June 21, 2002 / 11 Tammuz 5762, <http://www.jewishhealingcenter.org/MI/Give%20Me%20Your%20Hand.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2013).

⁹ By Andrew Ramer in Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 42.

On Coming Out of Dark Places¹⁰

Creator,
I have been in such dark places
a flashlight was useless
I have felt fear
no words could comfort me
I seemed lost
and yet
through Your compassion and lovingkindness
I am here, now.
Blessed are You
the Guardian of all
who carries me
to a safe place.

Many worship leaders insert the following Psalms, regularly into healing services:¹¹ Psalms 27:1-5, Psalms 30:2-12, Psalm 42:2-6, Psalm 77:2-10, Psalm 88:2-19, Psalm 103:1-5, Psalm 116:1-9, Psalm 121, and Psalm 142:2-8.

¹⁰ By Kevin Johnson in Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds, *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*, San Francisco: Sha'har Zahav, 2009, page 41.