



English Readings for Friday Evening Services

The readings in this Siddur have been collected from a variety of sources. Some of them have unknown authors. If you have information as to the author of a reading or meditation, please let the leader know, so we can correct the error in the next edition.

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Opening Readings

I AM A JEW

I am a Jew because my faith demands no abdication of the mind.

I am a Jew because my faith demands all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because wherever there is suffering, the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because wherever there is despair, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because the message of our faith is the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because the promise of our faith is a universal promise.

I am a Jew because for the Jew, the world is not completed; people must complete it.

I am a Jew because for the Jew, humanity is not fully created; people must complete it.

I am a Jew because the faith of the people Israel places humanity above nations, above Judaism itself.

I am a Jew because the faith of the people Israel places above humanity, image of the divine, the Oneness of God.



You and your brother or sister share the same parents. Yet even though your parents are obviously the same people to you and your sibling, give or take a few year, pretty much the same home, same values, social milieu, how remarkable that your relationships with them are profoundly different. The rules of your respective parent-child relationships are poles apart. What you must do to be a good son or daughter is different from what your brother must do. It is like that with religious traditions too. Though we all share a common “parent,” the “rules” of how we must be faithful to that relationship vary from one person and one religion to another. Each is true and holy and proper. Indeed for one person to try to be a good child according to the rules of his brother or sister would be a disaster.

-Lawrence Kushner



Within its bounds Shabbat is one of the surest means of finding peace in the war-torn realms of the soul. It is one of the basic institutions of humanity – an idea with infinite potentiality, infinite power, infinite hope. Through the Sabbath, Judaism has succeeded in turning its greatest teachings into a day. Out of a remote world of profound thought, grand dreams, and fond hopes – all of which seem so distant, so intangible and so unrealizable – the Sabbath has forged a living reality which can be seen and tasted and felt at least once a week.

-Erich Fromm

We sit here newly gathered

Before the face of our God
 Joining together this evening
 To worship the Holy One
 And to make holy our lives.

How shall we begin the search
 To reach the sacred part
 Of ourselves where rests
 The essence of all that is good?

By stopping
 Stopping our concern for those things
 That divert us all week long...
 At least for the brief moments
 Of our Shabbat eve and
 Opening ourselves to hear the message
 O so silent, carried to us
 By the still, small voice of God.



Sabbath Reflections

We have gathered here this Shabbat to worship and reflect upon the meaning of our lives, and to rediscover that wise purpose without which, our ancestors believed, no one can live.

Shabbat is a day of freedom and peace, a celebration of life and creation. It is the end of the week and its beginning. It is the moment of pause; the refilling of the empty vessel; the renewing of the spirit. It is time to rest, rejuvenate and to reflect upon the universality of life and the common goals of all humanity.

Shabbat is the celebration of the family. It brings us together not as islands unto ourselves, but as a family, a community, a nation. From this, family values are born, love is created and charity is endowed with meaning.

There are days when we seek things for ourselves and measure failure by what we do not gain. On the Sabbath we seek not to acquire but to share.

There are days when we exploit the nature as if it were a horn of plenty that can never be exhausted. On the Sabbath, we stand in wonder before the mystery of creation.

There are days when we act as if we cared nothing for the rights of others. On the Sabbath, we are reminded that justice is our duty and a better world our goal.

This is the reason we have gathered together this morning, both family and friends, to worship, celebrate and share the gifts of this Shabbat... day of wonder, day of peace.

-Author Unknown

Readings for the Blessings For Shabbat over the Candles and Wine

These lights
are only flickering flames.

Yet flames
illumine
our uncertain steps.

Flames purify and renew,
soften and refine;
they brighten and make warm.

Flames remind us
of Sabbaths long past,
and of their beauty
that delighted our hearts.

May they inspire us
to work
for the Great Sabbath of peace.



Blessed is the match that kindles the Sabbath lights.
Blessed is the home that reflects the glow of Shabbat.
Blessed is the heart that radiates the warmth of Shabbat.



As these Shabbat candles give light to all who behold them, so may we, by our lives, give light to all who behold us. As their brightness reminds us of the generations of Israel who have kindled light, so may we, in our own day, be among those who kindle light.

-Gates of the House



May our Hearts be lifted,
our spirits refreshed,
as we light the Sabbath candles.

-Marcia Falk



It is better to light just one little candle; all you need is a tiny spark.
*If we all gather hands, so the world will be free,
the wonderful dawn of a new day we'll see,
And if everyone lights just one little candle, what a bright world this will be.*

On this day
we would see the world

in a new light.

*On this day
we would add new spirit
to our lives*

On this day
we would taste
a new time of peace.

*We would rest
from desire for gain,
ambition for things.*

We would raise our eyes
to look beyond time and space
toward eternity.

*O may we
come to see the world
in a new light.*

As it is written:
“Let a new light shine upon Zion,
and may it be our blessing
to see its splendor.”



Blessed is the match

Blessed is the match that is consumed in kindling a flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret depths of the heart.
Blessed are the hearts that know when 'tis honor to cease.
Blessed is the match that is consumed in kindling a flame.

Another week of work is ended;
again Shabbat brings welcome peace.

We pause from our labors

to let Shabbat give another dimension to our lives.

These Sabbath candles are symbols
of the holiness we seek.

Their brightness dispels gloom
and lights a path to faith and hope.

Their glow reminds us of the sacred bonds
that link us to our people over space and time.

Their radiance summons us
to fulfill our people's mission:

To cast the light of freedom, justice, and peace
upon all the world.



The cup of Kiddush wine
Is our symbol of Sabbath joy:

Joy in the remembrance of Creation;
Joy in the remembrance of our Liberation;
Joy in the remembrance of the Revelation.

The cup of Kiddush wine
Is our symbol of Sabbath holiness:

Holiness conferred by God;
Holiness embodied in our Heritage;
Holiness sought in each generation.

In joy and prayerful thanksgiving,
We raise our cup of Kiddush wine:

Let us serve the Lord with gladness,
As we sanctify the Sabbath,
And bring blessing to our lives.

-H.J. Matt and B. Saul

Let us bless the source of life
that ripens the fruit on the vine
as we hallow the seventh day—
the Sabbath day—
in remembrance of creation,
for the Sabbath is first

among holy days,
recalling the exodus
and the covenant.

-Marcia Falk

Kabbalat Shabbat

A Psalm in Praise of the Shekhinah for Shabbat

Praise Her,
 most awesome of the mighty!
 Revere Her,
 She is a woman of the people.
 Adore Her,
 She is clothed in love.
 Laden with vitality,
 Her lips are sweet.
 Life is in Her mouth.
 When we see Her,
 our rejoicing becomes full.
 She is glorious;
 She is beautiful.
 Her eyes glisten like the morning star;
 Her face shines like the sun.
 Her hair shimmers like the golden
 moon.
 She is a woman of the people;
 with Her is their counsel.
 The fate of all the living She holds in
 Her hands;
 She protects the day and guards the
 night.
 She opens the heavens to life,
 the earth to seed and flower.
 She is all women –
 Virgin, Mother, Crone,
 Creator and Peacemaker,

Servant and Consecrator of Wisdom.
 She keeps the hearth fires bright
 and heals the soul of Her people.
 Power is in Her hands;
 compassion is in Her heart.
 Praise Her when you come upon Her name:
 Tehom, Coiled Serpent Woman;
 Elat Hashachan, She who Ascends with the Dawn;
 Shaddai, Many-breasted Woman,
 Whose milk overflows;
 Achoti Calah, Sister Whole unto Herself;
 Em Ham'rachemet, Mother Whose Womb Is
 Compassion;
 Malchat Shamayim, Woman of Endless Skies;
 Dayenet HaEmet, Seal of Truth;
 Yehoya, Spiritwind Woman;
 Elohim, SheHe in Love with Life;
 Shekhinah, Beloved Friend
 She is the breath of all living;
 wild horses dance around Her moon.
 Power is in Her hands,
 love is in Her heart.
 Praise Her
 when you come upon Her name
 singing inside you
 Y'la la la la la la la la la la



These are the obligations without measure, whose reward, too, is without measure:

*to honor mother and father;
 to perform acts of love and kindness;
 to attend the house of study daily;
 to welcome the stranger;
 to visit the sick;
 to rejoice with bride and groom;
 to console the bereaved;
 to pray with sincerity;
 to make peace when there is strife.*

And the study of Torah is equal to them all, because it leads to them all.

-Gates of Prayer

Prayer is never repeated.
*the quality of each day's prayer
 is unlike that of any other.*

This is the inner meaning of the Mishnah's words:

*"One whose prayer is rigid
prays without supplication."*

This can be seen even in the thoughts
that distract us from true prayer;

They too are different every day.

Each day and its prayer,
each day and its distractions

-from Your Word is Fire – edited by Green and Holtz



To be said to women:

A woman of valor—seek her out,
for she is to be valued above rubies.

Her husband trusts her,
and they cannot fail to prosper.

All the days of her life
she is good to him.

She opens her hands to those in need
and offers her help to the poor.

Adorned with strength and dignity,
she looks to the future with cheerful
trust.

Her speech is wise,
and the law of kindness is on her lips.

Her children rise up to call her blessed,
her husband likewise praises her:

‘Many women have done well,
but you surpass them all.’

Charm is deceptive and beauty short-
lived,

but a woman loyal to God has truly
earned praise.

Give her honor for her work;
her life proclaims her praise.

-from Proverbs 31

To be said to men:

Blessed is the man who reveres the Lord,
who greatly delights in God's commandments!

His descendants will be honored in the land:
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

His household prospers,
and his righteousness endures for ever.

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
for the one who is gracious, compassionate, and just.

He is not afraid of evil tidings;

his mind is firm, trusting in the Lord.

His heart is steady, he will not be afraid.

He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;

his righteousness endures forever;

his life is exalted in honor.

-from Psalm 112

Shema and its Blessings

Ma'ariv Aravim

God, our Creator and Creator of the world, we sing Your praises in every season.

Your presence is know to us in autumn, when shimmering golden leaves catch our eye; we stand in the hushed forest and are filled with awe.

You cover us with a blanket of soft white snow, as a mother her child.

The fresh awakening of spring stirs within us a gladness. Each spring You give us rebirth; we are cleansed as the earth in a spring rain.

And summer's full blossoming and gentle breezes is an overflowing of joy and beauty.



Ahavat Olam

Hear, O Israel, posterity of ancient sages and antecedents of future generations.

Let us pay attention to each and every one of us.

We fragment You and the world you have created, making gods of the splinters.

We devote ourselves to Art and Beauty;

we glorify Reason and Technology;

We venerate Success and Money;

we put our faith in Politics and Power;

We enshrine Love and Happiness, Charity and Justice,

Ritual and Israel.

Help us to see that you are the whole from which these were split.

In truth, there is only You.

Hear, O Israel, The Eternal One is our God, the Eternal God is One.

-Covenant of the Heart



GRANT US PEACE

Lord God of test tubes and blueprint

*who joined molecules of dust
and shook them 'til their name was Adam,*

Who taught worms and stars how they could live together,

*Appear now among the parliaments of conquerors
and give instructions to their schemes*

Measure out new liberties so none shall suffer

from his father's color or the credo of his choice;

*Post proofs that brotherhood is not so wild a dream
as those who profit by postponing it pretend;*

Sit at the treaty table and convey the hopes

of little people through expected straits,

*and press into the final seal a sign that peace
will come for longer than posterities can see ahead,*

That man unto his fellow man shall be a friend for ever.

-Norman Corwin

Shelter of Peace

Give us a place to rest, Adonai, our God,
 And peace.
 Help us, O Sovereign, to stand up to life.
 Spread over us Your shelter of peace.
 That through Your good counsel, we might be repaired.
 Liberate us from the place we are
 That we might fulfill the meaning of Your name.

Bring us into the shelter
 In the soft, long evening shadows
 Of Your truth.
 For with You is true protection and safekeeping
 And in Your presence is royal acceptance and gentle love.

Watch over us as we go forth.
 Prepare for us as we return.
 Spread over us Your shelter of peace
 And over all we love
 Over our Jerusalem
 And Yours.



When the sun rises and the night falls,
 when spring follows close on the heels of winter,

*Let us remember God's promise
 that the rhythms of earth will uphold life forever.*

When we sail, like Noah, on uncertain seas,
 in a wooden boat no bigger than a toy;

*When we fear, like Noah, that the end may come,
 if not to all life, then to us,*

When we look for small signs of hope,
 a green leaf, or the branch of an olive tree.

*Let us remember the bow that spans the retreating
 rain-clouds, and the promises that God still keeps for us,
 that seed time and harvest shall not cease.*

Then we can give thanks to God
 for the fruitful earth, our dwelling place,
 for God's blessings, bright as the rainbow
 in the shining sky.

All things bright and beautiful,
 All creatures, great and small,
 All things wise and wonderful,
 The Lord God made them all.

-Ruth Brin

Each little flower that opens,
 Each little bird that sings,
 He made their glowing colors,
 He made their tiny wings.

The tall trees in the greenwood,
 The meadows where we play,
 The rushes by the water
 We gather every day –

He gave us eyes to see them,
 And lips that we may tell
 How great is God Almighty,
 Who has made all things well.

-Cecil Francis Alexander



“Shema Yisrael” escapes my lips. My eyes closed and heart open, these words envelop and caress. Hearing my voice echoes and joined by the voices of hundreds, I praise God’s oneness and through that my own Judaism. “Shema Yisrael” escapes from my lips, and my belief in Adonai is proclaimed.

But then comes the hard part.

This was always the hardest commandment for me, and I think this was done intentionally. “V’ahavta.” And you shall love. Other commandments are a little easier. Do this. Don’t do that. But “v’ahavta?” “And you shall love?” A commandment of feeling? I don’t know about that.

My eyes open after the shema, and see the people around me.

Surrounded by dedication and passion, encompassed in a spiritual cocoon of emotive warmth, the words flow as always. “Bechol Levavch.” “With all your heart.”

Looking around, I see what it means. And it is not so hard anymore. For in this spirituality, I find myself and my mission. In this room, I find the love for which I search.



Love God with everything you have: your heart, your soul, your strength. These words I give you here and now, take them to your heart. Teach them to those who follow you. Speak of them often: at home, at work, and on the road; at the beginning of the day and at its end. Hold them like a sacred chant that whispers inside you, spilling out into song. Feel the words in you fingertips, keep them at the front of your mind, in the small space above your eyes. Let them guide your vision to rest in new places; let them soothe and disturb you. Look up occasionally; the words will appear everywhere in the place you call home.

O God,
 we all stood at the mountain’s base
 and we swore ourselves to your commands.
 Though Moses stuttered horribly,
 we all listened with utmost care
 to every Torah word.

It was so good to be gone from Egypt!

But now we are slaves again,
and Mitzvahs are slow to be done.

Be patient with our outward hesitation.
We have not forgotten the Agreement;
You are not alone.

-Danny Siegel



I Shall Sing to the Lord a New Song

I, Miriam, stand at the sea
and turn
to face the desert
stretching endless and still.
My eyes are dazzled
The sky brilliant blue
Sunburnt sand unyielding white.
My hands turn to down wings.
My arms
reach
for the sky
and I want to sing
the song rising inside me.
My mouth open
I stop.
Where are the words?
Where the melody?

In a moment of panic
My eyes go blind.
Can I take a step
Without knowing a
Destination?
Will I falter?
Will I fall?

Will the ground sink away from under me?

The song still unformed –
How can I sing?

To take the first step –
To sing a new song –
Is to close one's eyes
and dive into unknown waters.
For a moment knowing nothing risking all –
But then to discover

The waters are friendly
The ground is firm.
And the song –
the song rises again.
Out of my mouth come words lifting the wind.
And I hear
for the first
the song
that has been in my heart
silent
unknown
even to me

–Ruth H. Sohn

How many rivers we have crossed since we crossed the Jordan:
The River of Babylon and the flooding Nile,

*We passed over the Rubicon and the Rhine
the Danube and the Volga,*

We sailed oceans only to cross other rivers:
the Mississippi, the Amazon, the Ganges...

*And when we crossed each river, we wrote the words,
we wrote them on scrolls and in books,*

We translated them into seventy languages,
and more than seventy as our rabbis instructed us,

*No longer shepherds nor growers of vines and figs,
we transmuted our understanding of this Teaching,
to make it clear, distinct, in every time,*

in every place, across every river.

And still we struggle, now where the words were first written and in every other land where we live to make this Torah distinct for ourselves and for Jews everywhere.

-Ruth Brin



God our creator, teach us to love freedom as we love life.
Make us understand that only when *all* are free can *we* be free.
Let none be masters and none be slaves.
Then shall we sing as our people did
when they were freed from Pharaoh's grip:

Before the Amida

THE GIFT OF SPEECH

Almighty God, withdraw Your ancient curse of Babel,
Remove from us the confusion of tongues.

For we have built radar towers and trusted in them,
Bombs and missiles, and put our faith in them.

Curse us no more with dumb power,
Remove us from these speechless weapons.

Bless us with the blessing of language
So there can be speech even among those who are angry.

Bless us with the blessing of understanding
So even prejudiced people can understand.

Grant us the divine power of words, Holy One,
That we may speak with our brothers and sisters.

Open their ears that they may hear us,
Open their hearts that they may understand us.

Open their mouths that they may answer,
Open our ears and our hearts that our mouths may respond.

O return all Your children speech –
that we may once more speak together as a peaceful family

-Ruth Brin



Dear God,
Open the blocked passageways to you,
the congealed places.

Roll away the heavy stone from your well as you servant Jacob did when he beheld his beloved Rachel.

Help us open the doors of trust that have been jammed with hurt and rejection.

As you open the blossoms in spring,
Even as you open the heavens in storm,
Open us to feel your great, awesome, wonderful presence.

Somewhere our of time
In the mystery of time
Somewhere between memory and forgetfulness,

Dimly though
 I remember how once I stood
 At Your mountain trembling
 Amid the first and the thunder.
 How I stood there, out of bondage
 In a strange land and afraid.
 And You loved me and You fed me
 And I feasted on Your words.
 And, yes, I can remember
 How the thunder was my heart
 And the fire was my soul.
 O God, I do remember.
 The first burns in me anew.
 And here I am, once more
 A witness to that timeless moment.
 Present now in the light of Your Torah
 I am reborn.



For forty days and forty nights, Moses sat alone on the mountaintop, in prayer and meditation, preparing himself for the parting of the Curtain, and the laying on of hands.

God laid big callused Hands on Moses's shoulders. God became known to Moses in a very private way – there was no thunder or dark clouds or lightening or booming voices this time – it was silent on top of the mountain. Moses neither spoke nor was he spoken to for the entire forty days and forty nights on the mountaintop, and the Presence settled within Moses and filled him with fire, and light.

When Moses was ready, he descended from the mountain. He was overflowing with light from the Presence which had settled within him. The people were stunned when they saw him – like a lighthouse he looked. Moses stood on a rock and looked out over the throng, his eyes cast light like beacons in the night, like lanterns, everyone was quiet. Moses began to speak, softly...

“My people...” the words choked in his throat. He had lost his voice on the mountaintop. He looked at his people and then turned his light inward, and for a quiet time all the children of Israel did the same, and for a time the desert was as quiet as the floor of the sea.

-Jim Stone Goodman

Our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah, a heritage has come down to us along all the painful paths our people has travelled.

Our God and God of our mothers, God of Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel, Deborah, Hannah, and Ruth, a heritage has come down to us.

When others worshiped gods indifferent to goodness, our mothers and fathers found the One whose law unites all people in justice and love.

A heritage of faith has come down to us out of the life of our people.

When knowledge was the secret lore of princes and priest, our sages opened their doors to all who sought understanding.

A heritage of learning has come down to us out of the life of our people.

-Gates of Prayer



When Israel prays, they do not pray all at once.
 Rather each congregant prays by himself or herself,
 first one, then the other.
 After all the congregations furnish all their prayers,
 the angel who oversees prayer
 takes all the prayers that were said in the synagogues,
 and makes them into a crown,
 and places them on the head of the Holy One.

-Exodus Rabbah 21:4

Before Silent Prayer

Do not think the words of prayer as you say them go up to God.
It is not the words themselves that ascend; it is rather the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven.
 If your prayer consists only of words and letters, and does not contain your heart's desire – how can it rise up to God?

-Nahman of Bratzlav



“The Little Boy and The Old Man”

Said the little boy, “Sometimes I drop my spoon.”
 Said the little old man, “I do that too.”
 The little boy whispered, “I wet my pants.”
 “I do that too,” laughed the little old man.
 Said the little boy, “I often cry.”
 The old man nodded, “So do I.”
 “But worst of all,” said the boy, “it seems
 Grown-ups don’t pay attention to me.”
 And he felt the warmth of a wrinkled old hand.
 “I know what you mean,” said the little old man.

-Shel Silverstein



Rivers belong where they can ramble,
 Eagles belong where they can fly,
 I’ve got to be where my spirit can run free,
 Got to find my corner of the sky.



Prayer made the difference

I got up early one morning, and rushed right into the day,
 I had so much to accomplish, that I didn’t have time to pray.
 Problems just tumbled about me and heavier came each task,
 “Why doesn’t God help me?” I wondered. God answered, “You didn’t ask.”
 I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day turned out grey and bleak,
 I wondered why God didn’t show me. God said, “But you didn’t seek.”
 I tried to come into God’s presence, I used all my keys in the lock,
 God gently and lovingly chided, “My child, you didn’t knock.”
 I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering they day,
 I had so much to accomplish, that I just had to take time to pray.

A loving parent does not show genuine love by telling a child, “do whatever you want.” That would indicate love, but lack of concern and abdication of responsibility. The truly loving parent says to the

child, "I care very much about you, and although I cannot live your life for you, I want you to have the benefit of my experience."

Jews understood from the beginning that Judaism did not leave them to find the way through life alone and unaided. It offered advice, insight, and experience. It was out of God's love and concern for Israel that Torah came into being so that instead of stumbling blindly, we might be aided by its principles, take heed of its warnings, and draw closer to God.



Rabbi Shneur Zalman asked a disciple: Moshe, what do we mean when we say 'God'? The disciple, taken aback, was silent. He asked a second and a third time. Finally, he said: Why are you silent? Because, came the reply, I do not know. Shneur Zalman rejoined: Do you think I know? And yet I must say it. I must say: God is...

-18th Century Chasidic Tale



Around The Corner

Around the corner I have a friend,
 In this great city that has no end,
 Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
 And before I know it, a year is gone.
 And I never see my old friends face,
 For life is a swift and terrible race,
 He knows I like him just as well,
 As in the days when I rang his bell.
 And he rang mine
 if, we were younger then,
 And now we are busy, tired men.
 Tired of playing a foolish game,
 Tired of trying to make a name.
 "Tomorrow" I say "I will call on Jim"
 "Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
 But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes,
 And distance between us grows and grows.
 Around the corner!- yet miles away,
 "Here's a telegram sir"
 "Jim died today."
 And that's what we get and deserve in the end.
 Around the corner, a vanished friend.

-Henson Towne

Before Torah Reading or D'var Torah

Enlighten our eyes to the Divine lessons of our tradition,
attach our hearts to the imperatives of our faith
and let our minds be one to love and venerate all that is good, high and holy.

The Torah is the best efforts of our people at addressing the universal human condition.
It is the touchstone from which we move forward and to which we return again and again
From the Torah we learn of the unity of our people and of the single-mindedness of their quest for truth.

-Rabbi Isaac M. Wise



Judaism is a process of ongoing commentary. To be a Jew is to be a student. To be a self-affirming Jew is to love and study Torah. It is no small matter that the rabbis considered study equal in value to all the other mitzvot combined as one. We are a people devoted to a text... We can affirm this fully without denying the human origins of the Torah. We can celebrate it along with recognizing the fallibility of the text, along with agonizing over its moral imperfections, its ancient, rather than modern, sensibilities. A fallible text is one all the more in need of commentary, our way of bringing our past into the present before we hand it on to those who will create the future... As we struggle to add to tradition, to reshape it for each new generation, the text is also given a chance at reshaping us, at making a real demand on the way we think and live.

-Rabbi Arthur Green



Torah may be compared to a beautiful and stately maiden who is secluded in an isolated chamber of a palace, and has a lover of whose existence she alone knows. For love of her he passes by her gate unceasingly and turns his eyes in all directions to discover her. She is aware that he is forever hovering about the palace and what does she do? She thrusts open a small door in her secret chamber, for a moment reveals her face to her lover, then quickly withdraws it. He alone, none else notices it; but he is aware it is from love of him that she has revealed herself to him for that moment, and his heart and soul and everything within him are drawn to her. So it is with Torah, who discloses her innermost secrets only to them who love her... Hence, people should pursue the Torah with all their might, so that they might come to be her lovers.

Zohar, II, 99A



This is what Rabbi Leib, son of Sarah, used to say about those rabbis who expound the Torah: "What does it amount to – their expounding the Torah! A person should see to it that all his actions are a Torah and that he himself becomes so entirely a Torah that one can learn from his habits and his motions and his motionless clinging to God."

-Martin Buber

If you study Torah in order to learn and do God's will, you acquire many merits, and not only that, but the whole world is indebted to you.

You will be cherished as a friend, a lover of God and of people.

It clothes you with humility and reverence; it enables you to become righteous and saintly, upright and faithful.

It keeps you far from sin, and brings you near to virtue.

You benefit humanity with counsel and knowledge, wisdom and strength.

It gives you a commanding personality and an ability to judge.

Its secrets are revealed to you. You become like a gushing fountain, like a never-failing river.

You are modest, slow to anger, and forgiving of insults; and it magnifies and exalts you above all things.

-Rabbi Meir, Pirkei Avot 6:1



Rabbi, if a child is born with two heads
which head should wear the yarmulke
on which head the tefillin?

Some say the right head and some
say the left. All quote Torah.

Some say both heads, just in case.

But if a man is born with two heads
he is always confused. He never knows
on which head to wear the yarmulke.

Two heads and only two eyes.
He walks toward himself
in the old cemetery, where the rabbis
are buried. There seems to be some
disagreement: some are saying
we are dead, others, we are alive,
some say both, all quote Torah.

-Rodger Kamenetz



Even in Torah study the main reward is reserved for the deed, and whoever does not practice what he preaches would have done better if he kept silent and refrained from lecturing. The Gemara (Berachot 17a) states: “The goal of wisdom is repentance and good deeds; thus a man should not study Torah and Mishnah and then proceed to abuse his father, mother, or teacher, or anyone superior in wisdom or age.” Furthermore, “whoever says ‘I value Torah learning alone’ (without practice), does not value Torah learning either.” (Yevamot 109b) Indeed, “pleasant are the teachings which come from those who practice them.” (Tosefta, Yevamot 8)

Rabbi Pinhas Kehati

Rabbi Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Yehuda haNasi, said: It is good to study Torah and engage in a worldly occupation, for exertion in both causes sin to be forgotten. And all study of Torah which is not combined with work ultimately come to naught and causes sin.

-Pirke Avot 2:2



Rabbi Tarfon and the elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nitza’s house in Lydda, when this question was raised before them: Is study greater, or practice? Rabbi Tarfon answered, saying: Practice is greater. Rabbi Akiba answered, saying: Study is greater, for it leads to practice. Then they all answered and said: Study is greater, for it leads to action.

-Talmud, Kiddushin 40B



The myriads of letters in the Torah stand for the myriads of souls in Israel. If one single letter is left out of the Torah, it becomes unfit for use; if one single soul is left out of the union of Israel, the Divine Presence will not rest upon it. Like the letters, so the souls must unite and form a union. But why is it forbidden for one letter in the Torah to touch its neighbor? Because every soul of Israel must have hours when it is alone with its maker.

-Martin Buber



When God hears arguments about his book,
he is happy like any successful author
he knows all controversy will bring him
more readers, he doesn't mind.

The beards of the rabbis flap over the scrolls.
Black beards, white beards, beards streaked and striped,
flapping. In the darkening skies they lift
the scrolls safe from history, and zigzagging
they freely interpret the past. From below
it appears they are flying
this way, then that, but actually they are
tracing a straight line through God's
curved wrath. And those who live free of
interpretation, who think they are walking
on positive paths, are paving over
the Garden of Eden with every step.

-Rodger Kamenetz

May your eyes sparkle with the light of Torah,
and your ears hear the music of its words.
May the space between each letter of the scrolls
bring warmth and comfort to your soul.
May the syllables draw holiness from your heart,
and may this holiness be gentle and soothing
to you and all God's creatures.
May your study be passionate,
and meanings bear more meanings
until Life itself arrays itself to you
as a dazzling wedding feast.
And may your conversation,
even of the commonplace,
be a blessing to all who listen to your words
and see the Torah glowing on your face.

-Danny Siegel

Mourner's Kaddish

Remember to always say what you mean. If you love someone, tell them.
Don't be afraid to express yourself. Reach out and tell someone what
they mean to you.

Because when you decide that it is the right time, it might be too late.

Seize the day. Never have regrets.

And most importantly, stay close to your friends and family, for they have helped make you the person
that you are today.



MERCY ME

Like the quiet dawn
which creeps over whispering lawns
embracing the crannies of creation.

*Like the blue essence of a new-borne flame
which radiates dancing light and life-heat
into dark shadows, into dripping icicles.*

Like muted dreams through hazy suns
Like the love of a mother, a perennial flower
Like a soft smile, like a shared glance.

*Like water, clear water, slim and wide
which tip-toes into corners and fields
waking them into new forms and shapes.*

Like wordless praise which comes from space eternal
and finds its target nurturing endless ripples
and sets of dominos, gently spilling forward.

*Like camouflage, invisible and eye-catching
Like thoughts of brilliance and peace
Like divine presence, wary and unaware.*

Like all these things –
forgiveness, too, can be silent.

When I die, if you need to weep, cry for someone walking on the street beside you. And when you need
me, put your arms around others and give them what you need to give me.
You can love me most by letting hands though hands and souls touch souls.

You can love me most by sharing your *simchas* and multiplying your *mitzvot*.
 You can love me most by letting me live in your eyes and not in your mind. And when you say Kaddish
 for me, remember what our Torah teaches:
 Love doesn't die, people do.
 So when all that's left of me is love, give me away.



In My Life

There are places I'll remember all my life,
 though some have changed.
 Some forever, not for better.
 Some have gone and some remain.
 All these places had their moments,
 With lovers and friends I still can recall.
 Some are dead and some are living,
 In my life, I've loved them all.
 But of all these friends and lovers,
 There is no one compared with you.
 And these memories lose their meaning
 When I think of love as something new.
 Though I know I'll never ever lose affection
 For people and things that went before,
 I know that I'll often stop and think of them.
 But in my life, I'll love you more.

-The Beatles

Concluding Readings

CHOSEN PEOPLE

Why am I different from all others?
 I cried in my loneliness, and a thousand children's voices piped,
Why are we different from all other people?
 But there are no two stones alike in all the universe of pebbles.
Not two leaves on any tree are just the same, nor animals, nor birds, nor people.
 Difference is the mark of the hand of the Creator
And evolution is God's handiwork.
 Each of us is meant to be ourselves
And each people to be great in its own way.
 We are different in a universe of differences
Swimming in the moving waters of history.
 We Jews want to be in a warm current in an icy river,
We want to create a climate for living things.
 Let us have courage to be thankful for our differences,
Let us pray for strength to accept our obligations.

-Ruth Brin



Some people see things
 As they are
 And say why...
 I dream things
 And say why not
 I am not afraid of tomorrow
 For I have seen yesterday
 And I live for today.



A rabbi and a soap-maker once went for a walk together. The soap-maker said to the rabbi: "What good is Judaism? After thousands of years of teaching about goodness, truth, justice, and peace, after all the study of Torah, and all the fine ideals of the Prophets, look at all the trouble and misery in the world! If Judaism is so wonderful and true, why should all this be so?"

The rabbi said nothing. They continued walking, until he notices a child playing in the gutter. The child was filthy with soot and grime. "Look at that child," said that rabbi. "You say that soap make people clean, but see the dirt on that youngster. What good is soap? With all the soap in the world, that child is still filthy. I wonder if soap is of any use at all."

The soap-maker protested, and said, "But Rabbi, soap can't do any good unless it is used!"

"Exactly!" cried the rabbi. "So it is with Judaism. It isn't effective unless it is applied in daily life and used!"

Sometimes I think
 When I look at a sunset
 Or when I stare too long at the stars in the skies
 What am I doing?
 What do I believe in?

And am I out here all alone?

Often I wonder
 When I sit in the silence
 And when darkness creeps in and puts out the light
 What are my dreams?
 And will I fulfill them?
 And what will tomorrow bring?

So many questions
 I search for the answers
 And with each day that passes, more questions, more questions.
 I just go on waiting
 What else can I do
 Until I am sure of my part.

-Author Unknown



Existence will remain meaningless for you if you do not penetrate into it with active love and if you do not in this way discover its meaning for yourself. Everything is waiting to be hallowed by you; it is waiting to be disclosed in its meaning and to be realized in it by you. For the sake of this your beginning, God created the world. Meet the world with the fullness of your being and you shall meet God. If you wish to believe, love! They who love bring God and the world together.



Some time ago we looked ahead,
 wide-eyed and full of fascination,
 Hearing words like “when you’re older”
 and feeling way too small.
 And we’d smile and wipe the tears away
 silently whispering... “someday.”
 Childhood started with Dr. Seuss
 and this is where the story ends.

Playful dreams changed to idle things
 as we seemed to waste the time away.
 I can still hear the echoes words chiding me,
 singing, “look at how much you’ve grown.”
 And I’d smile and wipe the tears away

silently waiting for... “someday.”
 Childhood started with Dr. Seuss,
 And this is where the story ends.

We found our way around the place called
 home,
 while we stared to notice all the love.
 Feeling the words like, “I love you,”
 And we’d smile and wipe the tears away
 silently putting off... “someday.”
 Childhood started with Dr. Seuss,
 and this is where the story ends.

And yet the story continues...

Meditations, Theology, Philosophy



*If you wish to travel far, travel light.
Take off all your envies, unforgiveness,
selfishness, and fears.*

-Glen Clark

*The defect of equality is that we only
desire it with our superiors*

-Henry Beque

*Yesterday is history, the future is a
mystery, but right now is a gift, that's
why they call it the present.*

-author unknown

*Are we the fools for being surprised that
a silence could end with no sound?*

-Dar Williams

*Yesterday is history,
the future is a mystery,
but right now is a gift,
that's why they call it the present.*

-unknown

*"Convictions are greater enemies of
truth than lies."*

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*

"God is in the details."

-Einstein

*The only way the magic works is by
hard work. But hard work can be fun*

-Jim Henson

*Our task must be to... [widen] our
circle of compassion to embrace all
living creatures and the whole of nature
in its beauty.*

-Albert Einstein

*God gives every bird its food, but He
does not throw it into the nest.*

-J.G. Holland

*Every friend represents a world in us, a
world possibly not born until they*

*arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is
born.*

-Anonymous

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new
landscapes, but in having new eyes.*

-Marcel Proust

*"If you're in favor of freedom of speech, you're in favor
of freedom of speech for the views you don't like."*

-Noam Chomsky

*"Just as the strength of the Internet is chaos, so the
strength of our liberty depends upon the chaos and
cacophony the unfettered speech the first amendment
protects."*

-Federal Judges: Dolores Sloviter, Ronald Bukwalter,
Stewart Dalzell

*"I should not talk so much about myself if there were
any body else I knew as well."*

-Thoreau, *Walden*

*"All that lives must die, passing through nature to
eternity."*

-William Shakespeare

*"Sometimes people walk away because they want to be
alone. But sometimes people walk away because they
want to see if anyone cares enough to follow."*

-author unknown

*"I wanted only to try to live in accord with the
promptings which came from my true self. Why was that
so very difficult?"*

-Hermann Hesse

*"We tend to think there is a single reason for
everything, when actually there are many. Thinking
with integrity demands being open to all the sides of any
question and living with contradiction"*

-author unknown

*"Our true goal is through the hall of mirrors. Or at
least that is the path."*

-author unknown

"Why do you want to open the outside door when there is an inside door? Everything is within."
 –author unknown

"Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who only dream by night."
 –Edgar Allen Poe

"A penny will hide the biggest star in the universe if you hold it close enough to your eye"
 –Samuel Grafton

"I'd rather be an optimist and a fool, than a pessimist and right."
 –author unknown

"Whatever you do, trample down your abusers and love those that love you"
 –Voltaire

"Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts"
 –O.W. Holmes

"I always knew I'd look back at the times I cried and laugh, but I never knew I'd look back at the times I laughed and cry"
 –author unknown

"Study, though you may forget, though you may not fully understand."
 –Talmud, Avodah Zarah 19a

"You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes."
 –Winnie the Pooh

"After awhile you learn that what you really are is all the experiences and all the thoughts you've ever had and all the people who have touched your life, no matter how briefly."
 –author unknown

"Learn a little, then meditate a lot on what was learned, then apply what learning survived the meditation to see if it works"
 –H. P. Blavatsky

"Instead of viewing difficult events as stressful, view them as redirections and good will come of them"
 –Bernie Siegel, MD

"The true ideal is not opposed to the real, but rather lies in it"
 --James Russell Lowell

*"If I am not for myself, who is for me?
 And when I am only for myself, what am I?
 And if not now, when?"*
 –Hillel

"Get yourself a teacher; acquire a friend to study with you."
 –Joshua ben Perachya, Pirkei Avot 1:6

"The Shabbat is a weekly exercise in profound living. The greatest sin of humans is to forget that they are royalty."
 –Adapted from A.J. Herschel

"Each night before going to sleep, forgive whomever wronged you."
 –author unknown

"He who forgives... will himself be forgiven."
 –author unknown

"Turn the Torah over and over, for it contains everything."
 –Ben Bag Bag, Pirkei Avot 5:2

"One who studies gladly for a single hour learns vastly more than one who studies glumly for hours."
 –Chaim of Valozhin

"Great is study, for it leads to love"
 –Ahad Ha'am

"When deeds exceed learning, learning endures; but when learning exceeds deeds, it does not endure."
 –Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, Pirkei Avot 3:12

“buoyant thoughts, to be said, must marry words made of lead”

“Truth is as subjective as reality. Still, as a storyteller, I am fascinated by how a person's sense of consciousness can be so transformed by nothing more magical than listening to words, mere words.”

– X Files



In each of us, two natures are at war—the good and the evil.
All our lives the fight goes on between them, and one of them must conquer.
 But in our own hands lies the power to choose—what we want most to be we are.

–Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde



We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed.
As in filling a vessel drop by drop there is at last a moment which makes it run over;
 so in a series of kindnesses, there is at last one which makes the heart run over.

–Fahrenheit 451



Could I meet one who understands all...
 Without word, without search,
 Confession or lie,
 Without asking why,

I would spread before him, like a white cloth,
 The heart and the soul...
 The filth and the gold.
 Perceptive, he would understand.

And after I had plundered the heart,
 When all had been emptied or given away,
 I would feel neither anguish nor pain,
 But would know how rich I had become.

Seasons of Love

Five hundred, twenty five thousand six hundred minutes,
 Five hundred, twenty five thousand moments so dear.
 Five hundred, twenty five thousand six hundred minutes,
 How do you measure, measure a year?

In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee.
 In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife.
 In five hundred, twenty five thousand six hundred minutes,
 How do you measure a year in the life?

How about love?
 How about love?
 Measure in love.

Seasons of love,
Seasons of love.

Five hundred, twenty five thousand six hundred minutes,
Five hundred, twenty five thousand journeys to plan.
Five hundred, twenty five thousand six hundred minutes,
How do you measure the life of a woman or a man?

In truths that she learned or in times that he cried,
In the bridges he burned, or the way that she died.
It's time now, to sing out, though the story never ends.
Let's celebrate remember a year in the life of friends.

Remember love.
Measure in love.
Seasons of love.

-from RENT by Jonathan Larson



Take a quiet period of meditation to ask your heart about service. Let yourself sit and be silent for some time. When you are ready, pose the following questions inwardly to yourself. Pause after each one and give your heart time to answer, allowing a response from the deepest levels of your compassion and wisdom.

Imagine yourself five years from now as you would most like to be, having done all the things you want to have done, having contributed in all the things you want to contribute in the most heartfelt way. What is your greatest source of happiness? What is the thing you've done of which you are the most proud? What is the contribution you've made to the world that brings your heart the most satisfaction? To make this contribution to the world, what unworthiness would you have to relinquish? To make this contribution to the world, what strengths and capacities would you have to recognize in yourself and others? What would you have to do in your life today to begin this service, this contribution?

Why not begin?

Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield

Some Ideas about God

God in the Bible

“According to the Bible, even though we cannot see God or describe God in human terms, we can easily recognize God’s presence in the world through the beauty of human nature and God’s influence in history.”

Finding God pg. 11



God in Rabbinic Literature

“Though the Rabbis took the existence of God for granted, we begin to see in the Rabbinic literature attempts to ‘prove’ the existence of a universal God. According to one Midrash, an unbeliever came to see Rabbi Akiba and asked him: ‘Who created the world?’ Rabbi Akiba said: ‘Who made the garment which you are wearing?’ The other replied: ‘Obviously a weaver!’ ‘Prove it to me,’ said Rabbi Akiba. ‘What proof can I show you? Don’t you know that a weaver makes clothes?’ ‘And don’t you know,’ Rabbi Akiba answered, ‘that God is the Creator of the universe?’ When Rabbi Akiba’s students asked that he explain his reasoning better, he said: ‘Just as a house implies that a builder built it, so the world makes known God as the one who created it.’ ”

Finding God pg. 25



God According to Philo

“Philo’s God is far above and beyond our universe, to “transcendent” in philosophical terms. Though the human mind is able to understand something about God’s *activities* in the world, such as the workings of nature which we can see with our own eyes, God as an entity remains totally beyond our limited comprehension. God is different from us in every conceivable way. Therefore, God cannot be defined in human terms, nor can God be described by language. God is simply unknowable. In fact, Philo argues that ‘God alone has an accurate knowledge of God’s own nature.’

According to Philo, God is the ‘Soul’ of the universe, the universal Mind, the greatest cause of everything there is. Even though beyond both time and place, God totally fills the universe.”

Finding God pg. 45

God According to Maimonides

“How do we know that God exists? Maimonides repeats Aristotle’s ‘cosmological’ argument. The ‘proof’ begins with the observation that every object in the world is moved by another. When, for example, Z moves, it is because it is affected by Y; and Y causes the move, because of the impact of X. This, however, cannot go on forever. Ultimately, there must be a being which starts the process of motion, without being moved itself. This first ‘unmoved mover’ is God. In the words of Maimonides:

It is as if you say: this stone, which was in motion, was moved by a staff; the staff was moved by the hand; the hand by tendons; the tendons by muscles; the muscles by nerves; the nerves by natural heat; and the natural heat by the form that subsists therein, this form being undoubtedly the first mover.

Guide, II, 1

If one were to project this movement all the way up to the cosmic scene, one would end up with a universal mover—and that is God.”

Finding God pg. 56



God According to Spinoza

“To explain the existence of matter in the world, Spinoza reasoned that matter had to come from God, the source of all things. Therefore, there must be only one substance, and that substance is God.

Besides God no substance can be granted or conceived.

The Ethics, I, 14, p. 54

In other words:

Whatever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be or be conceived.

The Ethics, I, 15, p. 55

Thus, for Spinoza, God is not the Creator of the universe; God and the universe are synonymous. The laws of nature were not established by God as an outside agent; they are the acts of God.”

Finding God pg. 81

God According to Buber

“People have always tried to create images of God. However, these ideas represent only our attempt to grasp the inexplicable when we encounter God. God cannot be defined, described, or proven. God can only be ‘met.’

We do not have to abandon our daily activities in order to encounter the Divine. True to his Chasidic background, Buber taught that we can meet God in the ordinary activities of daily life, if only we enter into a genuine dialogue with others. In this spirit, he told the following story:

The Rabbi of Kotzk once asked: ‘Where is the dwelling place of God?’ His learned students laughed. ‘What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of God’s glory?’ The rabbi answered his own question: ‘God dwells wherever a person lets God in!’

Finding God pg. 91

God according to Gottlieb

A Meditation on the Feminine Nature of Shekinah

Shekinah is She Who Dwells Within,
 The Force that binds and patterns creation,
 She is Birdwoman, Dragonlady, Queen of the Heavens,
 Opener of the Way.
 She is Mother of the Spiritworld, Morning and Evening Star,
 Dawn and Dusk.

She is the Mistress of the Seas, Tree of Life,
 Slivery Moon, Fiery Sun.
 All these are Her names.
 Shekinah is a Changing Woman, Nature herself,
 Her own Law and Mystery.
 She is cosmos, dark hold, fiery moment of beginning.
 She is dust cloud, nebulae, the swirl of galaxies.
 She is gravity, magnetic field,
 the paradox of waves and particles.
 Shekinah is unseen dark, invisible web,
 Creatrix of complex systems,
 expanding, contracting, spiraling, meandering,
 The beginning of Wisdom.
 Shekinah is Grandmother, Grandfather, Unborn Child.
 Shekinah is lifeloving itself into being.
 Shekinah is the eros of life, limitless desire,
 Cosmic orgasm, wave upon wave of arousal,
 hungry and tireless, explosive and seductive,
 the kiss of life and death, never dying.
 Shekinah is home and hearth, root and rug,
 the altar on which we light our candles.
 We live here, in Her body.
 She feeds multitudes from Her flesh,
 Water, sap, blood, milk, fluids of life, elixir of the wounded.
 Shekinah is the catalyst of our passion,
 Our inner Spiritfire, our knowledge of self-worth,
 Our call to authenticity.
 She warms our hearts, ignites our vision.
 She is the great turning round,
 breathing and pulsating, pushing life toward illumination.
 Womb and Grave, End and beginning.
 All these are her names.

-She Who Dwells Within
 Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

Popular Inspiration

Fingerprints

Though you are God of History
and earthquakes and thunder and tidal waves,

Though I do not doubt your majesty and power,
your magnitude and your abstractness,

Though you are hallowed far beyond my imaginings,
so that I can hardly exalt You or sanctify You,

*Still I think of you as the "God of my fathers and mothers;"
Surely my grandparents believed you guided their feet
when they carried the peddler's pack.*

*And surely You put the twinkle
In their eyes when they spoke of their lives.*

*You put the righteousness in my parents' souls,
like a burning star, and laughter in their mouths, a bubbling spring.*

*Surely it was You who set in the heart of my little child
pity for a small stray dog,
and You who gently held my child's hand to pet it.*

God of my fathers and my sons, my mothers and my daughters,
you mark us with your fingerprints;
courage and righteousness, laughter, gentleness and pity.

I see your imprint, to cherish it.

Adapted from Ruth Brin
in Harvest: Collected Poems and Prayers



It has been written that "the astonishing thing about human beings is not so much their intellect and bodily structure, profoundly mysterious as they are. The astonishing and least comprehensible thing about people is their range of vision; their gaze into the infinite distance; their lonely passion for ideas and ideals...for which they will stand until they die, the profound conviction they entertain that if nothing is worth dying for, nothing is worth living for."

Every human being is endowed by his Maker with two eyes.
*With one he is expected to look at his neighbor, fastening his gaze on his virtues,
his excellences, his desirable qualities.*

With the other eye, he is to turn inward to see his own weaknesses, his imperfections, and his shortcomings, in order to correct them.

-Israel Salanter



Many people fear nothing more terribly than to take a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion. The tendency of most is to adopt a view that is so ambiguous that it will include everything, and so popular that it will include everybody. Not a few men who cherish lofty and noble ideas hide them under a bushel of fear of being called different.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



When God made the world,
God made it full of light;
the sun to shine by day,
the moon and stars by night.

God made it full of life:
lilies, oaks, and trout,
tigers and bears,
sparrows, hawks, and apes.

*And God took clay
from earth's four corners
to give it the breath of life.
And God said: This is very good!*

Man, woman, and child.
All are good.
Man, woman, child resemble God.

*Like God, we love.
Like God, we think.
Like God, we care.*



In life, you discover that people are called by three names:

One is the name the person is called by his father and mother, one is the name people call him, and one is the name he acquires for himself.

The best one is the one he acquires for himself.

I am alone. Standing in front of two paths, wondering which one to take. They both look identical, but they go in opposite directions, they lead to opposite destinations. How can I know which one to choose? How can I tell which one is right or which is wrong?

There have been many times in my life, where I have had to decide which road to take. I sometimes choose the one that's worn and used, or I follow the one brand new, unexplored.

My decisions have been affected by those around me, and my heart has sometimes steered my mind, but my decisions have a meaning, they give my life direction. And when I come upon two roads, I make a choice and continue on my journey.

You have powers you never dreamed of.

You can do things you never thought you could do.

There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations in your own mind as to what you cannot.

Don't think you cannot.

Think you can.



When God created the world, God made everything a little bit incomplete.

Instead of making bread grow out of the earth, God made wheat grow so that people might bake it into bread. Instead of making the earth of bricks, God made it of clay so that people might bake the clay into bricks.

Why? So that people could become God's partner in the task of completing the work of creation.



Most people in the world live hectic lives merely trying to survive for one more day.

They are powerless to evoke change, let alone, help others.

That is why those of us who can make things better must do so. And, if we do not, we are depriving ourselves of perhaps the greatest opportunity life can offer: to help change the world, and, in turn, give true meaning to our lives.



Sensing the Miracle in Our World

The sense for the "miracles which are daily with us," the sense for the "continual marvels," is the source for prayer. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or defeats of living. No routine of the social, physical, or physiological order must dull our sense of surprise at the fact that there is a social, a physical, or physiological order. We are trained in maintaining our sense of wonder by uttering a prayer ... to pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery which animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments.

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

THE WORLD IS MINE

Today upon a bus, I saw a pretty girl with golden hair,

I envied her, she seemed so gay, I wished that I could be so fair

But then, when she arose to leave I saw her hobble down the aisle.

She had one leg and used a crutch

And yet, she passed me with a smile.

Oh! God forgive me when I whine.

I have two legs, the world is mine.

And then I stopped to buy some sweets

The lad who sold them had such charm.

I talked with him, he seemed so glad,
 if I were late, 't would do no harm.
 And as I left he said to me,
*"Please come again, you've been so kind.
 It's nice to talk to folks like you, because you see,"*
he smiled, "I'm blind."
*Oh! God forgive me when I whine.
 I have two eyes, the world is mine.*

A pretty child with eyes of blue
 He stood and watched the others play.
 It seemed he knew not what to do.
 I stopped a moment, then I asked,
 "Why don't you join the others dear?"
*He looked ahead without a word
 and then I knew he could not hear.
 Oh! God forgive me when I whine.
 I can hear the world is mine.*

With legs to take me where I'd go,
 With eyes to see the sunset glow,
 With ears to hear what I should know.
*Oh! God forgive me when I whine.
 I'm blessed indeed, the world is mine.*

– Adapted from Syd Wiseberg



Since age two I've been waltzing up and down with the question of life's meaning. And I am obliged to report that the answer changes from week to week. When I know the answer, I know it absolutely; as soon as I know that I know it, I know that I know nothing. About seventy percent of the time my conclusion is that there is a grand design. I believe that the force that created life is betting that human beings will do something quite wonderful – like live up to their potential. I am influenced largely by Blaise Pascal and his wager. Pascal advises us to bet on the toss of a coin that God is. If we win, we win eternity. If we lose, we lose nothing.

-Maya Angelou

Miracles

Why, who makes much of a miracle?
 As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
 Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
 Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
 Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the water,
 Or stand under trees in the woods,
 Or talk by day with anyone I love, or sleep in the bed at night with anyone I love,
 Or sit at table at dinner with the rest.

Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,
 Or watch honeybees busy around the hive of a summer fore-noon,
 Or animals feeding in the fields,
 Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,

Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so quiet and bright,
 Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring;
 These with the rest, one and all, and to me miracles,
 The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
 Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
 The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the wave—the ships with men in them,
 What stranger miracles are there?

-Walt Whitman



Look at this day,
 For it is life,
 The very life of life.
 In its brief course lie all
 The realities and verities of existence,
 The bliss of growth,
 The splendor of action,
 The glory of power –

For yesterday is but a dream,
 And tomorrow is only a vision.
 But today, well lived,
 Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
 And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day.

-Sanskrit Proverb

The Future

The future is ours to create-
 What a terrifying thought!
 Who are we to be entrusted with such a mission, such a challenge, such a responsibility?

How do we know what to do?
 Where do we start?

We call upon our heritage-
 Rich and embracing,
 Filled with love and support
 Never defeating, always reassuring,
 It strengthens us in mind, body and soul.

Foremost in our thoughts -
 Not to disappoint those who came before us,

Those who sanctioned us with the precepts
 To do what is right,
 To help those in need,
 To be sensitive to the feelings of others,
 To refrain from hurting anyone.

The future is ours to create -
 what an exhilarating prospect!
 What a challenge!
 What a responsibility!

God, help us to know what to do.
 Guide us, nurture our strength and
 Sustain our courage.



Never Be Afraid to Dream

If it was not for dreams, where would we be?
 In our visions of the future, there would be nothing to see.
 There would be nothing to long for, nothing to reach
 From our dreams we both learn and teach.
 Dreams are what keep us going,
 When the path we are now on seems to be slowing.
 Don't let your dreams slip away,
 For they may all come true some day.
 So, as bad as life may sometimes seem,
 Never be afraid to dream.

The Puzzle

There must have been a time when you entered a room and met someone and after a while, you understood that unknown to either of you, there was a reason you had met. You had changed the other, or he had changed you. By some work or deed or just by your presence the errand had been completed. Then perhaps you were a little bewildered or humbled and grateful. And then it was over.

Each lifetime is the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.
 For some there are more pieces.
 For others, the puzzle is more difficult to assemble.
 Some seem to be born with a nearly completed puzzle.
 And so it goes.
 Souls going this way and that.
 Trying to assemble the myriad parts.

But know this. No one has within themselves
 All the pieces to her puzzle.
 Like before the days when they used to seal
 Jigsaw puzzles in cellophane. Insuring that

All the pieces were there.

Everyone carries with him at least one and probably
Many pieces to someone else's puzzle.
Sometimes they know it.
Sometimes they don't.

And when you present your piece
Which is worthless to you,
To another, whether you know it or not,
Whether she knows it or not,
You are a messenger from the Most High.



The Most Vital Thing In Life

When you feel like saying something
That you know you will regret,
Or keenly feel and insult
Not quite easy to forget,
That's the time to curb resentment
And maintain a mental peace,
For when your mind is tranquil
All your ill-thoughts simply cease.

I have plenty of time

I went out, God,
People were coming and going, walking and running.
Everything was rushing: cars, trucks, the street, the whole town.
People were rushing not to waste time.
They were rushing after time.
To catch up with time, to gain time.
Good-bye sir, excuse me, I haven't time.
I'll come back, I can't wait, I haven't time.
I must end this letter – I haven't time.
I'd love to help you, but I haven't time.
I can't accept, having no time.
I can't think, I can't read, I'm swamped, I haven't time.
I'd like to pray, but I haven't time.
You understand, God, they simply haven't the time.
The child is playing, he hasn't time right now ... later on...
The young married has his house, he has to fix it up. He hasn't time ... later on...

And so all people run after time, God.
They pass through life running hurried, jostled, overburdened, frantic, and they never get there.
They still haven't time.

In spite of all their efforts, they're still short of time.
Of a great deal of time.

God, You must have made a mistake in Your calculations.
The hours are too short, the days are too short, our lives are too short.

You who are beyond time, God, You smile to see us fightin it.
And You know what You are doing.
You make no mistakes in Your distributions of time to people.
You give each one time to do what You want him to do.
But we must not deface time, waste time, kill time,
For time is not only a gift that You give us
But a perishable gift,
A gift that does not keep.

God, I have time.
I have plenty of time,
All the time You gave me.
The years of my life,
The days of my years,
The hours of my days,
They are all mine,
Mine to fill quietly, calmly
But to fill completely to the brim.

-Michael Quoist

The path a person chooses to follow is like a sidewalk. Where one sidewalk ends, a new one emerges, newly paved and untraveled. Each sidewalk symbolizes a new dimension of one's life.

What one makes of that path is what they choose the path to be. Though other individuals may be encountered along one's journey, no two people will share the same experiences.

In essence, the path one follows will determine the future.



What is a leader?

Leadership is a quality which is difficult to define. Your election to an office does not automatically make you a leader.

Just because you do a lot of work does not make you a leader either.

A leader has the ability to encourage others to work. A leader has the ability to organize people and work with people.

A leader knows how to get co-operation and does not do all the work. He or she helps his or her friends and co-workers to learn the process of planning and working.

Leadership qualities are not inborn. They must be worked for and developed. A leader accomplishes a job, but he or she should be accomplishing a lot more at the same time.

A leader should be learning and growing and maturing as he or she helps others do the same.

-Author Unknown



Life is a journey, like a meandering stream that skips over rocks and branches on the way to a mountain lake.

Sometimes we, too, encounter obstacles on our path, but we reach pools of contentment.

Nature gives us beauty, joy, and peace.

Let not the worldliness of the times diminish nature's simple joys. Let us pause in our hurried lives to contemplate Your infinite wonders, and to know ourselves.

God, grant us the wisdom to preserve that which has been entrusted to us so that our children, and our children's children, will be free to find nature's solace.

-Covenant of the Heart

Roads go ever ever on,
 Over rock and under tree,
 By caves where never sun has shone,
 By streams that never find the sea;
 Over snow by winter sown,
 And through the merry flowers of June,
 Over grass and over stone,
 And under mountains in the moon.

Roads go ever ever on
 Under cloud and under star,
 Yet feet that wandering have gone
 Turn at last to home afar.
 Eyes that fire and sword have seen
 And horror in the halls of stone
 Look at last on meadows green
 And trees and hills that have long known.

-JRR Tolkein



Each of us has a name
 given by God
 and given by our parents

Each of us has a name
 given by the mountains
 and given by our walls

*Each of us has a name
 given by our stature and our smile
 and given by what we wear*

*Each of us has a name
 given by the stars
 and given by our neighbors*

Each of us has a name
 given by our sins
 and given by our longing

*Each of us has a name
 given by our enemies
 and given by our love*

Each of us has a name
 given by our celebrations

and given by our work

*Each of us has a name
 given by the seasons
 and given by our blindness*

Each of us has a name
 given by the sea
 and given by
 our death.



A person may be known by three things –
 by her cup,
 by her pocket,
 and by her anger.
 And some say:
 Also by her laughter.

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of each other, above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends and also for the countless souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of others, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.



The Affirmation from RENT

There's only us,
 There's only this,
 Forget regret or life is yours to miss.
 No other road,
 No other way,
 No day but today.

The heart my freeze, or it can burn,
 The pain will ease if I can learn:
 There is no future,
 There is no past,
 I live this moment as my last.

There's only us,
 There's only this,
 Forget regret or life is yours to miss.
 No other road,
 No other way,
 No day but today.

There's only yes,

Only tonight.
 We must let go, to know what's right.
 No other course,
 No other way,
 No day but today.

I can't control my destiny; I trust my soul.
 My only goal, is just—to be.

There's only now,
 There's only here,
 Give in to love,
 Or live in fear
 No other path,
 No other way,
 No day but today.

Havdalah

The candle's multiple wicks remind us of all qualities. We have the power to create many different fires, some useful, others baneful. Let us be on our guard never to let this gift of fire devour human life, sear cities and scorch fields, or foul the pure air of heaven, obscuring the very skies. Let the fire we kindle be holy. Let it bring light and warmth to all humanity.

Wine gladdens the heart. In our gladness, we see beyond the ugliness and misery which stain our world. Our eyes open to unnoticed grace, blessings till now unseen, and the promise of goodness we can bring to flower.

-Gates of the House



Cups without wine

Cups without wine are low things
 Like a pot thrown to the ground
 But brimming with the juice, they shine
 Like body and soul.



A tree in blossom

Fragrance is the most mysterious of them all. So subtle. Sensual. Unavoidable. Fleeting. You cannot help breathing. Encountering aroma.

The path I take to the synagogue winds through a small park in the center of town. And in the middle of the park is a tree that blooms with thousands of white clustered blossoms. The branches droop with the weight of their flowers. And if you walk under the tree, you must bend down and wind this way and that to avoid the foliage. The tree and the blossoms are everywhere. You only see a few inches ahead of you. As if on wheels you glide through the lush spring. And then you are out of it and it is gone.

But more than anything, it is the fragrance that envelops you. For maybe a minute or so, there is only the sensation of smell. You cannot see or feel or taste or touch. If only you could bask in this air forever,

Join the tree in her seductive perfumed holiness. But you cannot. You are only a traveler. And then you are out of it and it is gone.

But you cherish the affair and yearn to walk that way again. What began with the mystery of fragrance has become a gateway.

Our God and God of Our fathers and mothers, as we take leave of the Sabbath Queen, we thank you for the joy and rest which this Sabbath day brought us. May it be your will that the coming week be a week of gladness and satisfaction, of health and achievement for us. As we inhale the sweet fragrance of the spices, we pray that the day ahead may bring sweetness to our lives and the lives of our dear ones. May the blessed influence of Queen Sabbath linger on until we greet her again next Sabbath eve.



A light that is shown to each soul before it enters the world and a light that those who have come very close to death and returned, tell of seeing.

A light that flickers at the conclusion of each Shabbat amidst the twisted wicks of the Havdalah candle.

A light in which we can re-envision our own ultimate transformation.

In other words, a light by which we can experience our creation and our Creator.

And toward which we yearn as does a plant for sunlight, as our ultimate destiny and fulfillment.

It is as if the One - who is Light -
Left a trace of One's self in the creation at the beginning,
A souvenir, to see if it would grow.



Separating Ourselves

Havdalah is not for the close of Shabbat; it is for all the days.

Havdalah means: separate yourself from the unholy; strive for holiness.

Havdalah means: separate yourself from fraud and exploitation; be fair and honest with all people.

Havdalah means: separate yourself from indifference to the poor and the deprived, the sick and the aged; work to ease their despair and their loneliness.

Havdalah means: separate your self from hatred and violence; promote peace among people and nations.

May God give us understanding to reject the unholy and to choose the way of holiness.

May God who separates the holy from the profane inspire us to perform these acts of Havdalah.

-Gates of the House