



A Jewish Spiritual Companion for Surgery

Guide Me Along the Way

*With Resources for Patients, Family Members,
Friends, Clergy, and Health-Care Professionals*

by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW
with Rabbi Aaron M. Lever

A Resource from The National Center for Jewish Healing—
A Jewish Connections Program of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Inc.

The National Center for Jewish Healing (NCJH) is a resource center dedicated to helping Jewish communities meet the spiritual needs of Jews living with illness and loss. Our goal is that no Jew be alone during times of illness and loss, and that the wisdom and support of the Jewish tradition and community be made accessible and meaningful.

NCJH sponsors conferences and educational programs for rabbis, cantors, mental health and health-care professionals, and volunteers, and produces helpful, inspiring publications, including *The Outstretched Arm*, a quarterly newsletter. NCJH nurtures the growth of the Jewish Healing movement by supporting the efforts of local healing centers, synagogues, Jewish community centers, and Jewish family service agencies through networking and consultation.

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As there are representations of God's name throughout this book, please treat it with proper care and respect.

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Introduction

Dear Reader:

Anyone who faces a surgical procedure encounters a variety of intense emotions, from fear, anxiety, and resentment, to relief, joy, and renewal. This booklet is designed to guide patients, their families, and caregivers through the surgical journey, by drawing on support from the Jewish tradition and community. *Guide Me Along the Way* includes Biblical as well as contemporary psalms, blessings specific to surgery and central to the healing process, and activities and stories to aid in coping and recovery.

A few notes about using this book:

- We have organized this book around seven stages, from "Preparing to Move from Home to Surgery" to "Integrating the Experience Into Your Life Story." Think of these seven stages as stepping-stones on the path to healing. Of course, we each move through the surgery experience at our own pace, with our own unique challenges and resources. And as each journey has its own surprising turns and moments, you are sure to find one juncture more "healing" or challenging than another.
- Some may find the contents of any given chapter immediately applicable for prayer and meditation, while others may want to digest the texts' meaning privately or with family, friends, chaplains, rabbis, cantors, etc. Please consider the resources in this book not as much a script to follow but as a menu or library from which to select. Our goal is to provide a Jewish spiritual vehicle for moving through the varied experiences entailed in undergoing surgery.
- Approach this book as a Jewish spiritual companion – which may combine elements of a friend, teacher, guide, support, sparring partner, or escort. Allow yourself to draw on what you need when you need it.
- Judaism has always understood healing as requiring connection to community. For those who are connected to one, we hope that this book will serve as an additional resource for you and your community. For those less connected, we hope that this companion will strengthen a bridge to support from the Jewish community.

We pray that your journey through surgery will prove healing and life-enhancing, and that your spirit will be strengthened in knowing that our tradition and our community are there for you. We wish you *r'fuah shleimah*, a healing of wholeness, a complete healing – of mind, spirit, and body.

—RABBI SIMKHA Y. WEINTRAUB, CSW
Rabbinic Director, National Center for Jewish Healing

—RABBI AARON M. LEVER
Rabbinic Intern

CHAPTER 1

Preparing to Move from Home to Surgery

Undergoing surgery is a lot like a journey. Before embarking, it is a good idea to take stock of where you are, where you are going, and to name for yourself what you may be feeling. You may be filled with a combination of emotions: fear, hope, anger, anticipation, loneliness, anxiety, relief – to name just a few.

Some people find that guided imagery exercises can help them direct their energies in a positive, life-affirming manner, enabling them to cope better with the anxieties and stresses that may accompany surgery. If you feel you may benefit from this, seek out the professionals in your community – medical, mental health, clergy, etc. – who can provide this kind of guidance and support.

Before leaving home for surgery, you might choose some special objects to aid in your spiritual recovery – for example, ritual objects (a *kiddush* cup, a *mezuzah*), jewelry (a *chai* pendant, something belonging to a deceased relative), particular cassette tapes or CDs, religious texts (a Bible or a prayer book), a piece of artwork, and so on. Since many medical centers cannot guarantee the safety of such valued possessions, you might arrange for a close friend or family member to bring the special item(s) when they visit a day or two after the surgery.

In the Jewish tradition, one recites the prayer, *T'filat HaDerekh* ("The Traveler's Prayer"), before traveling a great distance. As you begin your journey into surgery, you may want to draw strength from this prayer. We offer you a creative translation of the traditional traveler's prayer, along with a contemporary psalm for healing. (Page 6).

T'filat HaDerekh (Prayer for the Way)

As we set out on our journey, may it be your will,
O Ever-present God,
that we be guided on the paths of well-being
and protected from all harm and evil on the way.
Bless the work of our hands and grant us grace,
lovingkindness and compassion
in your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us.
Blessed are You, O Ever-present,
who hearkens to prayer.

Reprinted with permission from *Siddur Hadesh Yameinu/Renew Our Days: A Book of Prayer and Meditation*, by Rabbi Ron Aigen.

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Learning to Relax

When the doctor said that the bean-shaped lump on my neck, one finger down from my right ear, had to be biopsied, I was more concerned about the surgery than about what he would find. I was certain that I had some kind of blocked gland. It certainly wasn't Lymphoma – at least that is what I thought then.

I was afraid that when the anesthesiologist would put me to sleep, I would have an allergic reaction and never wake up. Or, in an alternative, the anesthesiologist would go to the bathroom in the middle of my surgery and I would be brain-dead when he returned. (This has happened. I have read court cases about similar problems.)

That week, I stuffed my normally hectic schedule even fuller so I wouldn't have time to think about the upcoming surgery. We smiled our way through a friend's son's *bar mitzvah* and then again, through a dinner party at our house which I had planned weeks earlier. There were meetings I hadn't intended to go to that I attended. At night, I dropped into bed, too exhausted to think. I clung to my husband as I drifted off to sleep.

I made certain that everyone involved with my surgery knew that I was an attorney. I wanted them to be extra careful with the knife as they would be cutting on my neck. I wanted them to make certain that the anesthesiologist went to the bathroom on his own time, before he put me under.

Finally, it was the night before the surgery. I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned and turned and tossed. Nothing my husband said was able to help me relax. He held me tight and told me he loved me. I tried to believe I would come safely through the operation, but I couldn't put my mind at ease.

Now, three years and many treatments for non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma later, I relax by putting myself in the hands and protection of God. But back then, I didn't know that that was how to survive the terror that preceded surgery or chemotherapy. I had to learn to trust that my well being was in other hands, and to be thankful when I came back to consciousness.

– JANYCE KATZ

Please note: The spelling of the word 'God' was modified in this piece for editorial consistency.

JANYCE C. KATZ, ESQ., an Assistant Attorney General in the state of Ohio, has received many awards for her activism – most recently the John Shrack Award from the Franklin County Consortium for Good Government; an NCJW award and fund named after her for advocacy for women and children; and the best prize, husband Mark Glazman.

One Hundred Forty-Two: A Prayer for Healing

Strengthen me, Holy One, on my journey through illness;
Steady my steps on this difficult path.
Bring me through signposts of remedies and therapies,
Secure in Your guidance as I face these changes.

You are my Strength and my Hope,
The Author of my healing.
You are my Promise and my Courage,
Guiding my helpers as I move toward healing.

Guard the encouragement of simple improvements,
Every day praising Your loving concern.
Make me Your partner, Divine Physician,
Restoring me for Your Name's sake.

From Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise. Copyright © 1998 by Debbie Perlmán.

DEBBIE PERLMAN is psalmist-in-residence at Beth Emet — The Free Synagogue in Evanston, IL, and author of *Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing & Praise*. A 22-year cancer survivor, she lives with disabilities resulting from treatment.

The Wagon Bears the Burden

A wagon driver passed another man who was struggling along, bent under the burden of a heavy sack.

"Care for a ride?" the wagon driver asked.

"Thank you, thank you," responded the man, accepting the invitation with gratitude and loading himself and his package onto the wagon.

A short while later, the driver glanced back and saw that his passenger was still struggling to bear the sack on his shoulders.

"Why don't you put your load down, my friend?" he asked.

"Oh, no, kind sir," replied the man. "It is quite enough that I have imposed on you to ride in your wagon! I do not wish to add even more to your load!"

"Brother!" said the driver. "Once you are on my wagon, it makes no difference whether you carry the sack or put it down. Either way, my wagon will bear the burden."

After a moment of hesitation followed by a sigh of relief, the man put down his massive bundle, letting the driver and the wagon bring him toward his destination.

CHAPTER 2

Before Surgery

The night — or anytime — before surgery can be a time of heightened vulnerability, anxiety, and stress, as well as a special opportunity for openness, intimacy, comfort, and reassurance.

The following prayer is part of the traditional Jewish bedtime ritual, *K'riat Sh'ma Al HaMitah*. We pray that God may shelter us all throughout our lying down.

Hashkivenu (Lie Us Down)

הַשְּׁכִיבֵנוּ ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְחַיִּים	Lie us down, Adonai our God, in Peace; and raise us up again, our Ruler in Life.
וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ וְתִקַּנְנוּ בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ	Spread over us Your shelter of peace; guide us with Your good counsel; and save us out of Your mercy, for Your own Name's sake.
וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדֵּנוּ וְהַסֵּר מֵעֵלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב דֶּבֶר וְחָרֶב וְרָעַב וְיָגוֹן	Shield us; remove from us every enemy, plague, sword, famine, and sorrow.
וְהַסֵּר שָׁטָן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ וּמֵאַחֲרֵינוּ וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנוּ	Remove all adversaries, all evil forces from before us and behind us, and shelter us in the shadow of Your wings.
כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ וּמַצִּילֵנוּ אַתָּה כִּי אֵל מְלֶךְ חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם אַתָּה	For You are our guarding and saving God, yes a gracious and compassionate God and Ruler.
וּשְׁמֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבואֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם מִעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם.	Guard our going out; guard our coming in. Give us life and peace, now and always!

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One:
A Song for Comfort Before Surgery
For H.J.L.

Listen!

Because I know You will hear me
As I fear this unknown I must enter,
Surrendering my self, my authority,
If only for a brief while.

Listen!

Because I know You will hear
As I praise You at this season
Spreading warmth of renewal over cold earth,
Even as my soul's chill is warmed.

Listen!

Because I know You are there:
Hearing me,
Warming me,
Renewing me,
Leading me through this time
To a place of health and vigor.

Reaching Inside for Faith

*A*fter weeks of worry, or overnight in a flash flood of pain, here I am in a hideous hospital *shmatah* (they call this a “gown?”), sitting in a Muzak-filled waiting room or lying on a gurney trying to find God in the cracks on the ceiling. I’m waiting my turn to enter the O.R. I try to pass as reasonable/brave/stoic despite my fear-frozen bones and flaming cheeks; despite the dread crawling all over me like a huge hairy spider. I’m afraid of the IV, afraid of the anesthesia, afraid of the pain, afraid of the operation – I’m afraid.

I ricochet between being utterly business-like – as in, “Let’s get this over with”... and wanting my mommy like an inconsolable toddler. One moment I have total faith in my top-of-the-line surgeon; the next, I wonder how any normal person could eat an early breakfast, go to the office, cut somebody open, and call it a good day’s work. My sane self reminds me over and over again why the operation is essential, and what the best outcome promises in terms of my health. My other sane self has to hold onto my Significant Other for dear life just so I don’t run shrieking from the hospital, *shmatah* and all.

I try to reach down inside myself for faith that the very same God who promises that I will tread safely on lions and serpents will also shelter me beneath Her broad white wings; and while I want to hold onto that promise in this whirlpool of terror, sometimes I just simply cannot. I’m too afraid; frozen and flaming with fear. That’s when I need someone to help me pray in something other than a child’s abject, wordless babble.

– © ELLEN SCHECTER

ELLEN SCHECTER has published more than 20 books for children, and has written, produced, and created award-winning television and interactive media programs for adults and children alike. She is currently at work on *Straw Into Gold: A Memoir of Healing*. Schecter lives in New York City with her husband and two children.

How exposed and vulnerable so many of us feel with surgery, and how perilous this unprotected, susceptible state can seem. Psalm 139 may help us to reframe this predicament and find a source of solace and support. The psalmist begins with a deep personal address to God – expressing a sense of being understood and confident – while voicing a concern about "enemies" (which, for our purposes, may refer to diseases, unhealthy behaviors, pain, difficult treatments, etc.). There's an acknowledgment of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God, who recognizes and attends to our words and thoughts. The psalmist concludes with a request to continue the intimate relationship with God, and to be directed and supported through life's challenges.

Psalm 139

1. *For the leader, of David, a psalm:*
You, Adonai,
have looked closely at me
and know me.
2. You know if I sit down,
when I stand up.
You understand my thoughts from afar.
3. You observe my walking,
my reclining –
You are familiar with all my ways,
with every detail of my conduct.
4. There is no word on my tongue
That You do not know well!
5. Before and behind
You encompass me;
You lay Your Hand on me.
6. Beyond my knowing, it is a mystery;
I cannot fathom it,
heights my mind cannot reach.
7. Where can I escape from Your Spirit?
Where can I flee from Your presence?
8. If I soar to Heaven, You are there;
If I descend to Sheol, You are there, too.
9. If I fly to the point where the sun rises,
if I come to rest in the West, across the seas,
10. There, too, Your Hand would still guide me,
Your Right Hand grasping me.
11. If I asked Darkness to cover me,
and Light to become Night around me –
12. Darkness is not dark for You,
Night lights up as day,
Yes, Light, to You, is as Darkness!
13. You created my inner being—
You who put me together in my mother's womb;
14. I thank You and praise You
for all these wonders,
the wonders of myself,
the wonders of Your works,
which my soul knows so well.
15. My frame of bones
was not hidden from You –
shaped in a secret place,
knitted together in the recesses of the earth.
16. Your Eyes
saw my unformed limbs;
Every future action—
all recorded in Your book;
Days listed –
each and every one –
formed and figured.
17. El/God –
How precious, how weighty, how difficult
are Your Thoughts,
How impossible to count Them!
18. I start to count Them –
They outnumber the grains of sand,
and, if I were to end,
You would still be with me.
19. Eloha –
Kill wickedness!
Murderous men of blood – leave me!
20. They blaspheme You, plotting!
They cheapen and falsify Your Thoughts.
21. Those that hate You, I despise—
I loathe those who defy You;
22. I hate them with a total hatred;
They are my enemies.
23. El –
Look closely at me,
Know my heart.
Probe me,
Know my thoughts.
24. See if I follow a hurtful path –
and guide me
in the Way that is Everlasting.

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The following prayer, probably 200 years old, is attributed to Maimonides, the 12th century physician, rabbi, philosopher, and Jewish legal codifier. Many physicians have adopted this prayer as a regular meditation before practicing their art. Feel free to share this prayer with the health-care professionals who are working with you.

Physician's Daily Prayer

Almighty God—

You have created the human body with infinite wisdom.

In Your eternal providence,

You have chosen me

to watch over the life and health of Your creatures.

I am now about to apply myself to the duties of my profession.

Support me in these great labors that they may benefit humankind.

For without Your help, not even the least thing will succeed.

Inspire me with love for my art and for Your creatures.

Do not allow thirst for profit,
ambition for renown and admiration
to interfere with my profession.

For these are the enemies of truth
and can lead me astray

in the great task of attending to the welfare of Your creatures.

Preserve the strength of my body and soul

that they may ever be ready to help

rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend.

In the sufferer let me see only the human being.

Enlighten my mind that it may recognize what presents itself

and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden.

Let it not fail to see what is visible

but do not permit it to arrogate to itself

the power to see what cannot be seen

For delicate and indefinite are the bounds

of the great art of caring for the life and health of Your creatures.

May no strange thoughts divert my attention

at the bedside of the sick

or disturb my mind in its silent labors.

Grant that my patients may have confidence in me and my art

and follow my directions and my counsel.

When those who are wiser than I wish to instruct me,

let my soul gratefully follow their guidance

for vast is the extent of our art.

Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness.

Let me be contented in everything

except the great science of my profession.

Never allow the thought to arise in me

that I have attained sufficient knowledge,

but vouchsafe to give me the strength and the ambition

to extend my knowledge.

The art is great,

but the mind of man is ever-expanding.

I now rise to my calling.

The Late Uncle

Once, in a town in Eastern Europe, a Jew needed to have some surgery. Her doctor was able and willing to do the operation, but required a special piece of equipment which was not available locally. It had to be brought from another town, some distance away.

It became clear that the woman had an uncle living in that other town, who would be happy to travel the distance and bring the tool with him, in order to help his niece and lend emotional support to her and her family. The only problem was that he was a notorious procrastinator, and was always late to family functions of any kind – joyous, sad, or mixed.

Through a messenger, the woman's doctor relayed all the instructions to her uncle – what to get, where to get it, how to transport it, and most of all, when to arrive. He allowed significant leeway in the schedule so that the uncle's inclination to be tardy would not interfere with the important surgery.

The day of the procedure arrived. One hour, two, three, soon five hours passed...and no uncle. The woman, her surgeon, and all the friends and family members began to pull their hair out.

When he finally walked in, six hours late, it was all they could do not to turn the knife on him! The room, which had begun the day with mounting nervousness, was now overlaid with thick rage and resentment.

It was then that a young rabbi, who happened to be observing it all, took the doctor, patient, and family aside, and said:

"Friends! I've seen this before. In a spiritual confusion, when this man was born, some of his time was inadvertently distributed to others, who, in their lives, have been habitually, even extremely, early. But there is a remedy!"

As the woman was being readied for her surgery, the rabbi had her uncle lie down on a bed, gathered the attendees all around, and instructed them all to "give him some minutes" by placing their hands on him.

In a matter of minutes, the uncle rose and thanked everyone, expressing how he had never felt so valued and supported. From her bed, the woman called out, "What a remarkable family! I'm ready, doctor!" And they began to chant psalms and wordless melodies as the surgeon performed his holy work of healing.

Adapted from "The Man Who Was Always Late," in *The Dream Assembly: Tales of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*, collected and re-told by HOWARD SCHWARTZ, Nevada City, CA: First Gateways Printing, 1999.

CHAPTER 3

During Surgery

As surgery is underway, there are at least two arenas to focus on — the operating room and the waiting room. At this dramatic moment, we offer a few words for the surgeon and patient, and some options — both traditional and contemporary — for family members and friends.

One Hundred Twenty-Six: A Prayer Before Surgery

For S.L.N.

Stand near, Blessed Healer!
With precision of Divine creation,
Bind and bless,
Seal and straighten,
Heal and make whole.

Stand near, Blessed Healer!
Stand near guiding precise hands
To do Your mending,
Revising life for Your sake.

From Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise. Copyright © 1998 by Debbie Perlman.

One Hundred Twenty-Five: In the Surgical Waiting Room

For B.G.

Giving my worries over to the waiting,
I step into this apartment of now
You build for me,
A resting place for just these times.

You construct it of hope and memories,
Of great heaving sobs and noisy laughter
That we have collected in equal parts
And stored away to pay this mortgage.

It is a perfect place to just exist,
To read the same sentence again and again,
To start at telephones' jangle,
To lean against Your loving arm.

In this room You guide me, Blessed Healer,
You fortify my strength for this waiting;
In this room You calm me to courage
For the weighted days and nights to come.

From Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise. Copyright © 1998 by Debbie Perlman.

Finding Comfort

*M*odern medicine not only offers us painless surgery – it offers us sleepless surgery. But it's not really painless; for what the body cannot feel, the soul and psyche still suffer. And "procedures" feel far more frightening awake than asleep. My pulse thickens and tears burn just remembering...

I say good-bye to my loved one and go alone into the unexpectedly dowdy O.R. Scoured of identity, I lay me down on what looks like my Nana's ironing board. They focus so keenly on my defective body part that they forget about me – the patient who was a person only five minutes ago. I feel more alone amid that profusion of medical personnel and high-tech equipment than I've ever felt anywhere else on this planet.

IV, blood pressure, EKG: they monitor everything but terror and loneliness. So I keep lonely vigil over those strange pulls and tugs. What's taking so long? Is it cancer? Am I still alive? Or am I watching myself die? Not since family car trips do I want to ask "How much longer?" so often. But if I speak, will anyone listen?

I search for You, God, in these chilly rooms. And I find You in the weary, compassionate faces of the orderlies who wheel me on squeaky wheels and promise to pray for me. I find You in the gentle, whispering voices of the nurses who call me by name and stroke my face during the worst of it. I find You in the eyes of the kindest doctors who pause for a moment to make sure I'm not too frightened. And I find You in the blessed sleep that comes to claim me when it's over; when I can let go and rest under Your wide wings.

– © ELLEN SCHECTER

El Na R'fa Na La
(Moses' Prayer for His Sister, Miriam)

When Miriam was stricken with a skin affliction in the desert, Moses cried out to God with passionate and spontaneous urgency: "*El Na R'fa Na La!* God, please! Heal her, please!" (Numbers 12:13). As your loved one undergoes surgery, you may feel the need to do something in the spirit of Moses' emotional plea for immediate healing:

For a woman:

אֱ-לֹהִים נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ:

El Na R'fa Na La!

God, please! Heal her, please!

For a man:

אֱ-לֹהִים נָא רַפֵּא נָא לוֹ:

El Na R'fa Na Lo!

God, please! Heal him, please!

Some Psalms express hope and confidence, and others offer complaint and protest, emerging out of a sense of despair. Here we give you one of each.

Psalm 16 (Psalm of Hope)

1. A *mikhtam* of David, among his golden words:
Watch over me, El/God,
for I seek refuge in You.
2. You said Adonai:
"You are my Master,
but my good fortune is not Your concern.
3. "Rather, the holy ones on the earth –
You care for them,
and for the great ones
whom I should emulate –
4. "When their pain multiplies,
they know to speedily turn to another.
But I cannot even pour their libations
because of guilt,
I cannot even lift their names to my lips."
5. Adonai is my Lot, my Portion,
mine by right;
my Cup,
You sustain my destiny.
6. As the pains of labor somehow turn into pleasant
sensations –
so, too, I must appreciate
the beauty of my inheritance.
7. I will bless Adonai, Who counsels me
though at night my conscience afflicts me.
8. I keep Adonai before me continually,
because of God-Who-is-my-Right-Hand,
I will not stumble.
9. So my mind/heart are happy,
my whole being is joyful;
even my body may rest secure.
10. For You will not abandon my soul
to the world of the dead,
You will not let one who is devoted to You
see devastation.
11. Give me directions on life's road,
let me know the way of life.
With Your Presence
I may be filled with joys,
with delights
from Your Right Arm
forever.

Psalm 6 (Psalm of Complaint)

1. To the Chief Musician, on *Neginnot*, on the Eight-Stringed Harp, a Psalm of David.
2. Adonai,
Do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Do not chastise me in Your rage!
3. Be gracious to me, Adonai,
for I am languishing/desolate;
Heal me, Adonai,
For my bones are trembling.
4. My whole being is utterly terrified,
...and You, Adonai, how long?
5. Return, Adonai, free my soul;
save me out of Your kindness,
6. for in death
there is no mention of You;
in the grave,
who can thank/praise You?
7. I am worn out
with my groaning/sighing;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I melt my couch with weeping.
8. My eye is dimmed from anger/grief;
it has aged because of all my foes.
9. Depart from me,
all you evildoers;
Adonai has heard
the voice of my weeping!
10. Adonai has heard my supplication;
Adonai will accept my prayer.
11. All my foes
will be ashamed and utterly terrified;
they will turn back,
instantly ashamed.

**Thirty-Five:
At Diagnosis**

For A.I.G.

Sit beside me, O Eternal:
Comfort my soul.

At the clamoring bell of news revealed,
You listen with me,
Hearing my disbelief,
Absorbing my gasp of fright.

Wait beside me, O Eternal:
Comfort my soul.

Recall to me my cherished memories
To bring me forward through adversity,
To stretch from then to now to beyond,
Beckoning to a future You will guard.

Walk beside me, O Eternal:
Comfort my soul.

Help me find the broken pieces,
Gathering them to my trembling hand,
Raw materials for my future life.
Let me find Your hand in this design.

Watch beside me, O Eternal:
Comfort my soul.

Reform me to a different vessel:
Altered by dark fires of fortune,
Hardened in an unknown kiln,
Burning away the superficial.

Wrap me in Your healing light.
Wrap me in Your healing care.

Help from the Healer of Hanipole

An ill man was told to undergo a somewhat risky medical procedure, and approached his Rabbi, the Rabbi of Czernobl, for advice, support, and blessing.

"I suggest that you consult with the great healer, the Professor in Hanipole," the Rabbi advised. (In Europe, the most competent and acclaimed physicians held professorships in medical schools.)

Now, Hanipole was a tiny village, and when the man arrived there, he discovered that not only was there no medical school, there was not even

a doctor in the whole community! He returned to Czernobl, totally bewildered.

"There is no Professor in Hanipole," he told the Rabbi. "Why, they have no doctor at all!"

"Then what do the residents of Hanipole do when they get sick?" the Rabbi inquired.

"What can they do, Rabbi?" the man replied. "All they can do is lift up their eyes and voices to God, to heal them."

"Ah, hah! That is what I thought. Seek help from the One who heals the people of Hanipole."

CHAPTER 4

Recovery After Surgery

Having made it through surgery, the voice of deep gratitude blends with a fervent appeal to be healed, for the operation has addressed the illness yet also requires its own recovery and resolution. What a strange limbo the recovery period is, physically, emotionally, and spiritually: The effort it takes to get from bed to bathroom... The great dependence on drugs, professionals, and/or dear ones, and the alternating needs/desires to be helped and to be left alone. One may feel impelled to revisit and explore what one has just been through – but lack the strength or perspective to do more than simply rest and cope. For many, the most accessible and effective spiritual practice is silence and breathing. For others, a wordless melody might be of help.

We offer two resources for this juncture of beginning recovery. The first is the *Modeh Ani*, the first prayer uttered by the observant Jew upon waking in the morning. The second, Psalm 30, has been used for the re-dedication of a synagogue. It may be quite fitting for someone seeking to reassemble and redirect himself/herself after the blessing and the impact of surgery.

Modeh Ani (I Thank You)

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ	<i>Modeh a-ni l'fa-nehkha</i>
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם	<i>Meh-lekh hai v'ka-yahm</i>
שֶׁחֲזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה	<i>sheh'heh'heh-zarta bi nish-ma-ti b'hem-la-</i>
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.	<i>rabba eh-mu-na-tehkha.</i>

I thank You, God, Creator of life, eternal One,
for restoring my soul with love, filled with Your eternal trust.

Psalm 30
(A Psalm of Gratitude)

1. *A mizmor/psalm; a song of dedication of the House/Temple of David.*
2. Adonai, my God
I extol You
for You have lifted me up
and not allowed enemies to rejoice over me!
3. Adonai, my God
I cried out to You
and You healed me.
4. Adonai
You lifted my *nefesh*/my being from Sheol.
You revived me from descent into the Pit.
5. Sing out to Adonai,
all who are devoted, full of *hesed*/lovingkindness –
praise/give thanks to God's holy name.
6. For God is angry but a moment;
life is God's favor!
Weeping may linger for a night,
But at dawn, joyful singing rises up!
7. In my tranquil moments, I said,
"I will never be shaken,"
8. for You, Adonai, as You please,
You made me firm as a mighty mountain,
and when You hid Your presence,
I was terrified.
9. To You, Adonai, I call
and to Adonai, I appeal:
10. "What gain is there in my blood,
what value in my descent to the grave?
Will dust thank/praise You?
Can it recite Your truth,
Declare Your faithfulness?"
11. *Sh'ma*/Hear, Adonai,
have mercy on me!
Adonai – be my help!"
12. You turn my lament into dancing;
You undo my sackcloth and gird me with joy!
13. So that my whole being sings praises to You,
so I am not silent,
Adonai, my God,
I will thank/praise You forever.

One Hundred Thirty: Recovering

Gasping beneath this waterfall of illness,
Frozen limbs straining,
Lungs pushing against the crash,
Heart crying out with rapid beats.

Gasping, Sacred Healer, frantic
To whisper Your name,
To grasp blessing and power
And raise it above me in shelter.

Torrents overwhelm me,
Drown me in foaming water.
My hand moves, reaching, rising
To protect my face.

Turn to me, Holy One!
Turn back the blasting water,
The pain and sadness,
The shuddering of chances lost.

Turn to me, Sacred Healer!
Multiply my tiny motions
To bring my passage
To dry land.

Recovery by Candlelight

The glowing Shabbat candles greeted me as the orderly wheeled me into the dark hospital room from the recovery room. Their golden light surprised and delighted me, penetrating my grogginess. I felt warmed and welcomed as my friend Elisabeth intoned the Sabbath blessings for me, "*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha-olam...*" No matter that I couldn't drink the fruit of the vine, or taste the challah. The improvised Shabbat table on the hospital room counter, with its real candles*, healed me like nothing else.

Elisabeth and Rachel had not been sitting idle in the waiting room during the waning hours of the late January afternoon. Later I discovered they pestered the nursing staff on my floor until they gained entrance to my room. Again, bending the rules with their love, they "checked into" my room ahead of schedule and went to work arranging the tablecloth, flowers, candles, pictures and other inspirational "tchotchkes" I had requested.

My room was transformed, out of time and space, into Shabbat.

— DEBORAH BUCKLEY

*Little did I realize what a feat my (non-Jewish) friend, Barbara, had accomplished by convincing the (also non-Jewish) hospital ombudsman that the real candles were of paramount importance to my Sabbath celebration. Electric Shabbat candles are the rule in any hospital, but in Portland, Oregon in 1992, where Jewish chaplains were few or nonexistent, no one had even heard of them!

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Mi Sheberakh
(A Prayer for Healing)

One of the central Jewish prayers for those recovering is the *Mi Sheberakh*, which expresses a holistic view of human nature, praying for physical cure as well as spiritual healing, asking for blessing, compassion, restoration, and strength. Traditionally offered in synagogue during the reading of the Torah, it may also serve as a meditation to be offered by family, friends, doctors, nurses, chaplains, social workers, and so on. Perhaps patients might also offer a personal version of the *Mi Sheberakh* for those who care for them, since healing is multi-directional, and care-giving individuals require support and blessing as well.

מִי שְׁבֵרַךְ
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה
הוּא יְבָרְךָ וְיִרְפָּא אֶת הַחֹלִים

May the One who blessed our ancestors –
Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah –
bless and heal the one who is ill:
_____ son/daughter of

הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
יִמְלֵא רַחֲמִים עֲלֵיהֶם
לְהַחְלִימָם וּלְרַפְּאֵתָם
לְהַחְיִיקָם וּלְהַחְיִוֹתָם

May the Holy One, the fount of blessings,
shower abundant mercies upon him/her,
fulfilling his/her dreams of healing,
strengthening him/her with the power of life.

Merciful One:
Restore him/her,
Heal him/her,
Strengthen him/her,
Enliven him/her.

וְיִשְׁלַח לָהֶם מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה
רְפוּאַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאַת הַגּוּף
בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
הַשָּׂתָא בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Send him/her a *r'fuah shleimah*/a complete healing,
a healing of spirit and a healing of body –
together with all who are ill,
among all the people of Israel and all humankind,
soon, speedily, without delay,
and let us all say: Amen!

The Treasure (Or Reb Eizik, Son of Reb Yekel's Shul)

Rabbi Bunam used to tell young men who came to him for the first time the story of Reb Eizik, son of Reb Yekel of Cracow:

After many years of great poverty, which had never shaken his faith in God, Reb Eizik dreamt that someone advised him to look for a treasure in Prague, under the bridge which leads to the king's palace. When the dream recurred a third time, Reb Eizik prepared for the long journey and set out for Prague.

But the bridge was guarded day and night, and he did not dare to start digging. Nevertheless he went to the bridge every morning and kept walking around it until evening. Finally the captain of the guards, who had been watching him, asked in a kindly way whether he was looking for something or waiting for somebody. Reb Eizik told him of the dream which had brought him to Prague from a faraway country.

The captain laughed. "And so, to please the dream, you wore out your shoes to come here!

As for having faith in dreams...if I had it, I would have got going long ago, when a dream once told me to go to Cracow and dig for treasure under the stove in the home of a Jew...Eizik, son of Yekel – that was the name! I can just imagine what it would be like...how I would have to try every house over there, where half the Jews are named Eizik, and the other half Yekel!" And he laughed once again.

Reb Eizik bowed, traveled the long distance home, dug up the treasure under his stove, and used his fortune to build the House of Prayer, which is now called "Reb Eizik Reb Yekel's Shul."

"Take this story to heart," Rabbi Bunam used to add, "and make what it says your own: There is something you cannot find anywhere in the world, not even at a tzaddik's, and there is, nevertheless, a place where you can find it."*

*A particularly righteous, pious individual.

CHAPTER 5

Returning Home

As you embark on the trip home, it is a good idea to find the best way to say “thank you,” particularly to those individuals (chaplains, doctors, nurses, physicians’ assistants, administrators, social workers, occupational and physical therapists, custodians, and so on) who made your surgery as comfortable as possible. In some settings, it is perfectly fine to arrange for a simple group gift, such as a box of cookies. In other cases, a warm embrace is deeply appreciated. You may choose to write something — a thank-you letter, a prayer, a poem — to express your gratitude. The word “Judaism,” after all, is related to the Hebrew word for “thanks.”

A special way to ease the transition from hospital to home is to keep something — the I.D. bracelet, a snapshot of the medical staff — that reminds you of how far you’ve come. These mementos, like that long list of post-op instructions you’ll take home, are a tangible way for you to recall your “odyssey”.

Can one go home again? Even if one is fortunate enough to return to one's own beloved domicile — enjoying its familiarity, intimacy, resources, textures, smells, and so on — one may also feel a false or disrupted sense of comfort, as if one's personal castle has been invaded by some unwelcome intruder. Find your own words to express and expand the relief and reassurance that you need and have, and to work through the dissonance or disbelief that may accompany your return.

One Hundred Thirty-One: Going Home

Strengthen me, Holy One, on my walk from illness.
Even as You gave courage
As the children fled from Egypt,
Open the sea to my steps.

Like a Hebrew slave,
I have sojourned in pain;
Under whips of illness and despair,
I have shed my tears of bitterness.

Show me again the path of freedom,
Speeding toward a Promised Land
Of wholeness and health,
Creating my completeness for Your sake.

Bring me up through recovery,
Through remedies and therapies,
To an altered yet acceptable life,
Again rejoicing in the commonplace.

Then will my songs fill this recovered shore,
Where my mind will dance for joy
At my deliverance,
Singing Your praises, Holy One, singing new songs.

Home Sweet Home

I was so grateful to be going home after my seven-week stay in the hospital. I was also very terrified. But when I got up and started walking out of that room that had become my womb, all I could think about was how grateful I was to be going home. I no longer took anything for granted. I had changed. The seasons had changed. Everything had changed. I had entered the hospital in the middle of winter and was leaving in early spring.

I could feel spring in the air and I felt as fragile as all the new growth. I was overwhelmed by my feelings of vulnerability and frailty. I knew I had to immediately start finding ways to feel connected to life, rather than continue to feel perched on the sidelines. The sensual pleasures – the gift of being able to touch and feel the world outside my hospital room – were intense, and this immediately started helping me to re-connect. This would also help me recover my sense of strength and resilience.

My home felt so big and overwhelming in those first few days – I could barely negotiate the trip to and from our kitchen, bedroom, and living room. And, of course, there were all the ways I still felt “broken” – I still had to deal with medical devices and the physical evidence etched on my body. It was my husband’s love and acceptance, his physical embrace of me just as I was, that brought a flood of tears and the hope that I would gradually heal and would find a new sense of wholeness.

– SUSAN J. ROSENTHAL

A Southern California native, SUSAN J. ROSENTHAL lives in New York City, where she is a social worker. Having faced life-threatening illness as a young adult, she has developed innovative peer-support programs and became a “Bat Torah” at age 50. Rosenthal embraces her discovery of the spiritual treasures in Judaism.

The First Shabbat Home

The first Shabbat after surgery may seem both redundant — “All I’m doing is resting, all week long!” — as well as intensely welcome — “At last, transcendence!” It may feel like the first Shabbat ever — with some blend of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety — or it may underscore one’s finally coming home and returning to normalcy, or both! Whatever one’s experience, Shabbat has the promise of contributing to our healing, individually and collectively, through its emphasis on relationship, reaching for the Divine, restoring the spirit, and taking a break from relentless productivity. As the noted Russian-born Hebrew essayist, Zionist, and philosopher Ahad Ha’Am (pen name of Asher Ginzberg, 1856-1927) explained, “More than Israel has kept the Shabbat, the Shabbat has kept Israel.” Psalm 92 is known as “The Song for the Day of Shabbat.”

Psalm 92

1. A *mizmor*, a psalm, with musical accompaniment,
a song for the day of Shabbat:
2. It is good
to thank/praise Adonai,
to sing to Your name, *Elyon*/Most High One!
3. To declare, at daybreak, Your *Hessed*/Lovingkindness,
Your *Emunah*/Faithfulness, every night.
4. On a ten-stringed harp,
on a wind-filled psaltery,
voices merging with a lyre!
5. For You have made me happy by Your deeds;
at the works of Your hands, I will celebrate/shout for joy!
6. How great are Your deeds, Adonai!
Your plans/designs are so subtle, profound!
7. A boor cannot know,
nor can a fool understand,
8. that though the wicked may flourish like grass,
and all workers of violence may blossom,
they will ultimately be destroyed forever!
9. But You — You remain exalted/on high, Adonai, for all
time!
10. Surely, Your enemies, Adonai,
Surely, Your enemies will perish;
all evildoers will be scattered.
11. You raise my horn high, like that of a wild ox;
You anoint me with fragrant, freshening oil.
12. My eyes will see the defeat of my watchful foes;
My ears will hear the downfall of evildoers who rise up
against me.
13. The *tzaddik*/righteous one blooms like the date-palm;
thriving like a cedar in Lebanon;
14. planted in the house of Adonai,
in the courtyards of our God they flourish!
15. They will still yield fruit in old age;
Fat and fragrant, full of sap and freshness they remain!
16. Attesting that Adonai is upright,
my Rock in Whom there is no injustice!

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One Hundred Seventy-Five:
Kabbalat Shabbat

Gather the healing light of Shabbat,
Fold it around me, Blessed Healer;
Reflect the sparks of returning health,
Returning home to Your kind regard.

Let this be a day of rest
From the pain and fear that has held me;
Let the work of worry be set aside,
Respite from hard duties.

Ease me with knowledge of Your creation,
Recreate my wholeness for Your sake;
Ease me with sighs of Shabbat gladness,
Please to surround and support me.

Stems out of Scratches

A king once owned a large, beautiful, flawless gem, of which he was justifiably very proud, for it had no equivalent anywhere in the world.

One day, the gem dropped and acquired a deep scratch. The king summoned the most highly skilled jewelers and offered a great reward for anyone who could remove the imperfection from his treasured jewel.

But alas, none could repair the damaged gem, and the king was deeply depressed.

After some time, a gifted lapidary came to the

king and promised to make the rare gem even more beautiful than before the mishap. The king, impressed with this expert's confidence, entrusted his precious stone to his care.

With superb artistry the craftsman engraved a lovely rosebud around the imperfection — the scratch now becoming a strong and graceful stem of the flower.

Some say the king balked at first, but soon renewed his appreciation for his treasure, which now embodied not only its past beauty, but new possibilities and directions.

CHAPTER 6

Returning to the Community

It is perhaps a "daunting blessing" to return to the community after surgery. On the one hand, to reconnect with friends, fellow congregants, co-workers, even strangers may signal a return to normalcy, a comfortable renewal of the "same-old same-old." But the legacy of the trauma, radical shifts in one's sense of the world, the difficulty others may have in understanding one's experience, and the like, may present new challenges and require new or "dusted-off" skills. Few, if any of us, can re-acclimate in one dramatic moment; we should, rather, re-enter step-by-step as dictated by individual circumstances and situations.

Birkat HaGomel
(A Blessing for Making It Through)

We offer you this blessing which is recited by those who have returned safely from a long journey, recovered from a serious illness, or survived a life-threatening crisis. This blessing is traditionally said by the individual or by someone close to him or her in synagogue at the reading of the Torah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַגּוֹמֵל לְחַיִּים טוֹבוֹת
שְׂגַמְלָנִי כָּל טוֹב.

מִי שְׂגַמְלָךְ כָּל טוֹב
הוּא יִגְמְלָךְ
כָּל טוֹב סְלָה.

The recovering individual, or someone close to him or her, says:

*Praised are You,
Adonai our God,
Who Rules the universe,
showing goodness to us beyond our merits,
for bestowing favor upon me.*

Those present respond:
*May God who has been gracious to you
continue to favor you
with all that is good.*

Translation by the Rabbinical Assembly. Copyright © 1997.

Transliteration:

The recovering individual, or someone close to him or her, says:

Barukh Ata Adonai

Elohenu Melekh HaOlam

HaGomel l'hayavim tovot

Sheh-g'malani kol tov.

Those present respond:

Mi Sheh-g'mol-kha kol tov,

Hu yig'mol-kha kol tov, Selah.

The Subtle Nuances of Community

Every patient is different, and every surgery has its own secrets — its pains and its triumphs. Here, I speak as a heart patient who has been through "it" twice (with 20 years in between, so don't despair) — as well as having had some other surgical "adjustments" from time to time.

The speed with which one enters the world of the heart patient is in sharp contrast to the moderate pace with which one returns home. In advance of heart surgery, one can almost feel "ganged up on" by doctors who are eager for you to get on with what they believe to be inevitable. All of a sudden you are a patient, but there is not quite that "all of a sudden-ness" when you try to get back to life.

I was only 41 when I had my first heart surgery, and I was in the most vigorous time of my professional life, planning to have a second child, pretty robust-looking before a mild yet painful heart attack that set the whole *Had Gadya* machine in motion. Somehow, having that heart attack made the following experience more tolerable. I see from some of the folks I work with that they have had heart surgery without benefit of scary symptoms that can get you past the initial resistance to being cut open.

None of my specific memories is as important as the overall grateful feeling that "health surely comes," to paraphrase the Jewish healing prayer on Shabbat, and that "God has surely healed" by helping the hands of surgeons, physicians, and nurses and the counsel of friends and rabbis. But when will the helping hands of family get in the way of your independence? When will those helping hands no longer be available? When will the hands of your spouse stroke you into arousal that you knew before? A lot of doubts and concern about such things.

Early and funny sensations: I noticed the world with such acuity that I was able to tell people things about their own environments that they had never noticed. It made me a good museum visitor for a while, but doctor-friends resented being told precisely how it felt to be treated by their staffs. Cars seemed to speed by as I — in a state of Alfred E. Neuman cool — couldn't understand where they could be going in such a hurry. I recall a beloved lay leader who had been so supportive, waiting at the door of my office on the day I returned to work, with the request that the first thing I had to attend to was to review a Sabbath liturgy he had written for his brotherhood. So many memories of incompleteness and of folks being out of sync with where I was. But amidst these memories were sentimental moments: posters saying "Welcome Back, Cutter"; colleagues walking with me every day at lunch hour instead of sitting in restaurants, folks offering to drive me to appointments, people listening cheerfully to what now must have been boring discussions of the details of my surgical safari.

Each time I have been ill, I have treated myself to slow recovery and long breaks in the afternoon where I could browse a bookstore, take a nap, pretend that I didn't have to be anywhere. I find that my colleagues complained no more about my missing my responsibilities within the institution than they do when I am well and go to all the meetings with my nagging, hectoring voice.

I don't believe that there are easy resolutions to the contradictions of returning home. Much to be desired, home is not always as safe as the hospital; yet it becomes such a haven after a while that any need to return to the hospital can be fraught with despair and confusion. Home is the locus of greatest support (I can attest to that with a wife who has lived through this for more than twenty years), but it is also the locus of bills and obligations and whatever tensions are part of real life. What a welter of contradictions are our homes today, with cell phones and faxes and having to get our children up and out into the world. What a wonderful combination of battlefield and harbor are the worlds we inhabit in our non-surgical lives.

— RABBI WILLIAM CUTTER, PH.D.

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Thinking about the caregivers who helped us, we acknowledge the burden we have laid on them through our times of need. We are grateful for their loving care.

Twenty-Eight: For Caregivers

Show me how to offer hope.
Open Your hand with the colors of faith
That I might begin to fill in spaces
To strengthen another's life.

Show me how to offer comfort.
Point out Your nesting place,
Feathered against adversities
That wound those I love.

Show me the direction
When I am lost,
Searching to help,
But finding no paths.

Show me tolerance,
When I weary of helping,
And a long dreary day
Stretches toward a restless night.

You place before us life and love;
Show us endurance.
You place before us healing and hope;
Show us persistence.

Reach deep within me, Eternal Strength,
And bring my strength to consciousness.
Pull it around us:
Let it radiate with Your power,
Let it guide our way.

Rabbi Elhanan's Parable of the Farm

One day, a "citified" man who knew next-to-nothing about agriculture approached a farmer and asked to be taught about farming. The farmer led him to his field and asked the urban dweller what he saw.

"Beautiful land...lush grass...so pleasing to the eye," the visitor responded, and then stood aghast as the farmer plowed the grass under and turned the flowing green field into a choppy mass of brown ditches.

"Why did you ruin the field?" the man demanded.

"Patience. You'll see," said the farmer. He then showed his guest a sack full of plump kernels of wheat, and said, "Tell me what you see."

The visitor described the nutritious, inviting grain, and then watched in shock as the farmer seemed to ignore their beauty and wholesomeness, and, as he walked up and down the furrows, dropped the kernels and covered them with clods of soil.

"Are you out of your mind?" the man demanded. "First you destroy the field, and now you ruin the kernels?"

"Patience. You'll see."

Time passed, and once more the farmer took his guest out to the field. This time they saw endless, straight rows of green stalks sprouting up from each of the furrows. The visitor smiled.

"I apologize, my friend," said the visitor to the farmer. "Now I understand what you were doing. The field is, indeed, more beautiful than ever. The art of farming is truly remarkable."

"No," replied the farmer. "We're not done yet. Patience."

More time elapsed and the stalks became fully grown. The farmer arrived with a large, sharp sickle,

and vigorously chopped them all down. As the visitor watched in horror, the orderly field becoming a vast mound of destruction. In time, he was somewhat relieved to see the farmer wrap the fallen stalks into large bundles and decorate the field with them. But later, the farmer took the bundles to another place and beat and crushed them until they were just a mass of straw and loose kernels. Then, he separated the kernels from the chaff and piled them up in a huge mound.

Throughout, he told his protesting visitor from the city, "We are not done. You must be patient... have more patience."

The farmer came with his wagon and piled it high with grain, driving it to the mill. There, the beautiful grain was ground into formless, choking dust.

"You've taken grain and made it into dirt!" cried the man.

"Patience...patience," came the reply.

The farmer put the dust into sacks and took it back home. He mixed some with water so that, at least to the visitor, it resembled white mud. The farmer shaped the "mud" into a loaf, a beautifully formed one at that – which made the visitor smile. But not for long – for the farmer fired up a raging oven and put the loaf into it.

"Now I know you are insane," said the man. "After all this hard work, you're going to burn it?"

"Certainly I have told you before to be patient."

Finally, the farmer opened the oven and removed the freshly baked bread, crusty and brown, with an aroma that made the visitor's mouth water.

"Come," said the farmer, leading him to the kitchen, where they washed their hands, said a blessing, cut the bread, and enjoyed several liberally buttered slices.

"Now," said the farmer, "now you understand."

Adapted from *Tishah B'Av – Texts, Readings and Insights*, compiled by RABBI AVROHOM CHAIM FEUER and RABBI SHIMON FINKELMAN, Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1992. Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman was a noted scholar and educator who perished in the Kovno ghetto in 1941. He related this tale to a group of fugitive Jews who came to him for support, inspiration, and comfort.

CHAPTER 7

Integration

We are fortunate when we can return to who we were while integrating our surgical experience into our life story. Very often, it is difficult for family and friends to understand the quality and depth of our journey, its perilous turns and life-enhancing blessings.

Try to find your own images and words to express how your operation affected your life – and, as time moves ahead, where your life now places your surgery.

Psalm 126 is a Psalm of Return, opening with a reference to the Jews' return to Zion from the exile following the cataclysmic destruction of the First Temple in the first century BCE. This return is experienced not only as a physical restoration but as a spiritual ascent. In fact, it is such a profound and wondrous transition that it leaves the returnees feeling as if they are in a dream (verse 1). The psalmist expresses the laughter, praise, and joy that stirs in their hearts (verse 2) as they undergo a renewal and revivification that resembles streams of water enlivening parched desert land (verse 4).

But perhaps most powerful and poignantly relevant to the challenge of integrating surgery into one's life story is the expression of purpose and direction articulated in the last three verses of the Psalm: "Those who sow with tears shall reap in joyous song!"

Psalm 126

1. *A song of ascents, of going up.*

When Adonai returns the returnees to Zion,
we shall be as dreamers.

2. Our mouths will be filled with laughter,
our tongues loaded with songs of praise, of joy!
It will be said among the nations,
'Adonai has done great things for these people!'

3. Adonai has done, and will do, great things for us;
We are glad, grateful! And we shall rejoice!

4. Return, Adonai, all our captives,
Restore our fortunes,
Like rivulets streaming in,
Through the arid land of the Negev.

5. Those who sow with tears shall reap in joyous songs!

6. He will go along weeping, carrying the bag of potent seeds,

7. but he will come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves!

The Three-Part Blessing of the Ancient *Kohanim*/Priests (Numbers 6:24-26)

In the Biblical book of Numbers, God ordains that the *kohanim*, the priests, should invoke God's name, relaying God's blessing to the people via a three-part blessing. To this day, in traditional Jewish circles, the descendants of *kohanim* offer this blessing to the congregation. In all corners of Jewish life, this powerful blessing continues to resonate with its prayers for protection and sustenance, for light and grace, for favor and wholeness — for peace. What follows is the traditional blessing with some added focal words for meditation and reflection, inserted in italics. Patients, family members, friends, health-care professionals, and, of course, rabbis and cantors may turn to this moving resource for inspiration and prayer.

Blessing/Meditation

יְבָרֶכֶךָ ד' וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָּךָ.

Y'va-reh-kh-kha Adonai v'yish-m'reh-kha:

May Adonai bless you and protect you.

Safety

Integrity

Trust

יָאֵר ד' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיְחַנְּנֶכָּךָ.

Ya-air Adonai panav ey-leh-kha vi'hu-neh-ka:

May Adonai illumine the Divine Presence for you, extending *hen/grace* to you.

Light

Memory

Insight

יִשָּׂא ד' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם.

Yi-sa Adonai panav ey-leh-kha v'ya-seim l'kha shalom:

May Adonai lift you up with the Divine Presence, granting you *shalom/peace*.

Reintegration

Reconnection

Wholeness

The Strength of Experience

When I was 19 years old, I broke my neck in a diving accident in the tidewater area of Eastern Maryland. I had misjudged the depth of the low tide, and only a few feet below the water's surface, my forehead collided with a solid floor of sand. Two vertebrae were shattered and I went into shock. Until the ambulance arrived, I underwent the most emotional episode of my life. It was a period that I could not measure by minutes or hours – or however long it was before the medics finally came to my aide – but only by feelings, of fear and of peace, as if with my very life I was drifting off to some kind of departure.

I was lucky. I survived the accident. I survived the extended hospital stay and the subsequent months of living in careful confinement with my body in traction, watching the days pass and waiting with tried patience for the broken bones of my spine to heal.

Nine months later, I was back on my feet. I was grateful for my recovery, but I was even more eager to return to my life. Amazingly, as the years passed, an experience that had so overwhelmed my existence became at best an extended anecdote I would sometimes tell to friends.

Nearly 20 years later, I am still trying to integrate the experience of my accident into my life. I find that writing about it, revisiting it in detail, is a good place to start that integration. At the age of 19, I recovered from an accident that almost killed me, but it's taken me this long to fully appreciate how the accident and recovery both affected my life. I feel the humility of someone who has experienced first-hand the fragility of life, of someone who is eternally grateful that by the grace of God, I survived.

How small we are indeed, and how lucky I am to be alive.

But I also recognize the need to celebrate myself as a hero, a hero to myself, one with the resiliency, strength, and courage to survive such a trauma. After all, in the honoring of God, there is plenty of room for the celebration of the self. Integrating the experience of my accident into my life means never letting go of the experience itself, and never letting go of the strength I unbelievably found in myself to see the experience through. It is finally our strength alone that buoys us through a physical crisis; to recognize and honor that strength is to possess it for the life that follows recovery.

– HOWARD SOLOMON

HOWARD SOLOMON is a writer who lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Karen, and their cat, "The Chubs." He teaches playwriting at the University of Rochester.

One year ago, one's body, mind, spirit — one's whole being — was challenged to confront surgery, with all the treatments, ramifications, complications, surprises, and changes it may have entailed. As we look back, we are struck by how rich (and, perhaps, complex) a resource one's memory is, enabling us to both revisit an experience and reframe it as new life-chapters unfold. We review our steps with a salad of emotions — awe, grief, hope, gratitude, rage, relief, and so on — but the very process of retrospection may further insight, perspective, and acceptance.

One Hundred Thirty-Two: One Year Later

For M.L.:

In that instant, Holy One,
Goading me to choose life,
Hovering, guiding skilled hands
As I hovered, questioning my choice.

In these instances, day by day,
Goading me from terror and doom,
You hover by my right hand,
You steady my left hand.

This is a day for remembrance.
This is the day, where slowly facing
The changes and hurts, I reach out
To replace brokenness with Your touch.

These are the years for remembrance,
Holding memories as guideposts
To future uncertainties,
Held firm with love and faithfulness.

Gather the choices and days;
Gather new routines and restlessness
To transform this enormity
With courage of Your care.

All Kinds of Shapes

There once was a man who loved shapes — triangles, squares, ovals, rectangles, diamonds — you name it, he loved it. He didn't care much what color they were or what they were made out of — what mattered to him was that they have smooth edges so one could easily determine what kind of shape they were. (That way, he figured, when you needed a triangle, you'd just open your triangle drawer and pull one out.)

As the months and years of his life went by, he collected many, many beautiful shapes, and could barely keep up with organizing them all. Some even got misplaced or lost, there were so many!

But now and then, he was given an odd shape — sometimes very jagged and strange — and he didn't know what to do with it. Some of them he threw away, some he stored next to the most similar kind of shape, and others he put in a "miscellaneous"

compartment, figuring that, at some point, he'd know what to do with them. Still others he left out, lying around, not knowing what to do with them at all.

One night, many decades later, as his life was drawing to a close, he dreamt that all these odd shapes were, themselves, part of a very, very big shape — that they all fit together neatly into one huge piece. When he woke up, he rushed to gather all these odd shapes, and in a short time, he found that, indeed, they were part of a beautiful whole. When he finished fitting them together, besides forming a perfect shape, the image of everyone who had touched his life was discernible — all his family, friends, neighbors, teachers, co-workers, and so on.

He never tired of studying this great puzzle until his last day of life, clutching it as he breathed his last breath.

CHAPTER 8

Other Prayers of Healing

In a certain sense, almost any prayer is a "prayer of healing," if it helps one reconnect to God, to profound hopes and wishes, to history and community, and so on. We offer the following handful of prayers from the daily Jewish liturgy as helpful resources in confronting surgery, treatments, and recovery. They also provide a taste of what the Jewish prayer book has to offer for those who may not be familiar with its riches.

Asher Yatzar (Who Formed) For the Functioning of the Body

This ancient blessing, unusually graphic and poignant, was composed for use after going to the bathroom, and was ultimately incorporated into the morning prayers offered soon after waking. It blends a deep sense of gratitude with a striking awareness of creatureliness, a consciousness of vulnerability with a statement of the dignity in being created in the Divine image. At once intimate and universal, this blessing merges an acknowledgment of mortal fragility with God's providential care.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה
וּבְרָא בוֹ נְקָבִים נְקָבִים
חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים.

Blessed are You,
Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who formed human beings with Wisdom,
creating pores, orifices, hollows, and holes,
openings, cavities, channels, and ducts...

גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ
לְפָנֶי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ
שֶׁאִם יִפְתַּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם
אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם
אֵי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם
וְלַעֲמוֹד לְפָנֶיךָ.

It is clear and established
before Your Throne
that if one should open
or another should close
it would be impossible to endure and to
stand before You.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ד'
רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר
וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

Blessed are You,
Adonai,
who heals all flesh,
performing wonders.

Elohai N'shamah
(My God, the Soul: Sensing the Divine Spirit Within)

This prayer may be seen as a complement to the preceding page's *Asher Yatzar*, with its focus on the body. Exploring the nature of our souls and spirits as related to, and reflective of, the One God, we express how our lives transcend the limits of physiology and this physical life, connected to the Eternal Source.

אֱ-לֹהֵי	Elohai/my God-
נְשָׁמָה שְׁנַתַּתְּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא. אֵתָהּ בְּרָאתָה אֵתָהּ יִצַּרְתָּהּ אֵתָהּ נִפְחַתָּהּ בִּי וְאֵתָהּ מְשַׁמְרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי וְאֵתָהּ עֲתִיד לְטֹלָהּ מִמֶּנִּי וְלְהַחְזִירָהּ בִּי לְעֲתִיד לְבֹא.	The soul you have given me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me, You guard it within me. You will, in the future, take it from me, and restore it to me at a future time.
כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהַנְּשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ ד' אֱ-לֹהֵי וְאֱ-לֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי רַבּוֹן כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲדוֹן כָּל הַנְּשָׁמוֹת.	So long as this soul is within me, I acknowledge/thank/praise You, Adonai, My God, God of my ancestors, Master of all creation, Sovereign of all souls.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' הַמְחַזֵּיר נְשָׁמוֹת לְפָגְרִים מְתִים.	Praised are You, Adonai, who restores the soul to the lifeless and exhausted.

This prayer of thanks and appreciation for our whole being is part of the central Amidah prayer, recited three times a day.

Modim (A Prayer of Gratitude)

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ,
שְׂאֵתָה הוּא ד'
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

We acknowledge and proclaim
that You are Adonai,
our God and God of our ancestors
eternally, throughout all time!

צוּר חַיֵּינוּ,
מָגֵן יִשְׁעֵנוּ אַתָּה הוּא.
לְדוֹר וָדוֹר

You are the Rock of our lives,
the Shield of our salvation,
You are this One in every generation.

נוֹדָה לָךְ,
וְנִסְפַּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ,
עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ,
וְעַל נְשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ,
וְעַל נִסֶּיךָ שְׂבָבְכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ,
וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ
שְׂבָבְכָל עֵת,
עֶרֶב וְבֹקֶר וְצַהֲרָיִם.

We thank you,
We praise You —
for our lives which are in Your hand,
for our souls which are in Your charge,
for Your miracles which are with us every day,
and for Your wonders and kindnesses that are
always there,
morning, noon, and night.

הַטּוֹב
כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ,
וְהַמְּרַחֵם
כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶּיךָ,

Good One —
Your mercy never runs out!
Compassionate One —
Your lovingkindness endures!

מִעוֹלָם
קוֹיֵנוּ לָךְ.

Eternally
Our hope is in You.

This blessing for healing appears in the middle of the central Amidah prayer, recited three times each day by traditional Jews. It is appropriate to turn to it morning, afternoon, and evening. Many Jews weave in the names of people they know in need of healing as part of a personalized expression of hope and concern.

R'faeinu (The Daily Blessing for Healing)

רְפָאֵנוּ ה' וְנִרְפָּא,	R'faeinu/Heal us, Adonai,
הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ	and we shall be healed;
וְנִשְׁעָה	Save us
כִּי תִהְיֶה לָּנוּ אֶתָּה.	and we shall be saved;
וְהַעֲלֵה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה לְכָל־מְכוּתֵינוּ.	for You are our Praise.

וַיְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ	May it be Your will,
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,	Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,
שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מִהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,	To lift up a complete and perfect healing,
רְפוּאָת הַגִּבּוֹשׁ	to _____,
וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף,	a healing of body and spirit,
לְ _____ בֵּן/בַּת _____ בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.	a healing of all our wounds.

כִּי אֵל	For You are a Ruler
מְלֶכֶךְ רּוֹפֵא	Who heals
נֶאֱמָן	with faithfulness/trust/reliability/mercy//
וְרַחֲמָן אֶתָּה.	compassion.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'	Blessed are You, Adonai,
רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי	Healer of the sick
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.	among Your people Israel.

The Sh'ma needs little introduction, as so many Jews are familiar with its affirmation of the Oneness of God. Note how this prayer calls upon us to listen, to fully attend – to truly perceive the Oneness of All, the interconnectedness of all life.

Sh'ma (Oneness—The Timeless Jewish Affirmation)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ד' אֶחָד.

Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!

The following two prayers conclude the central Amidah prayer with the fundamental yearning for peace and wholeness:

Sim Shalom (A Prayer for Peace)

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם,
טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה,
חַן וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים,
עֲלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ.

Sim Shalom BaOlam: Place Peace in the World
Goodness and Blessing
Grace and Lovingkindness and Mercy
over us,
over Israel,
over all people,
over Creation.

בְּרַכְנוּ אֲבִינוּ,
כְּלָנוּ כְּאֶחָד,
בְּאוֹר פְּנִיךָ;
כִּי בְּאוֹר פְּנִיךָ
נָתַתָּ לָנוּ, ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
תּוֹרַת חַיִּים
וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד,
וְצְדָקָה
וּבְרָכָה
וְרַחֲמִים,
וְחַיִּים
וְשְׁלוֹם.

Bless us, dear Parent,
— all of us as One —
with the Light of Your Presence
because by that Light
You gave us, Adonai our God,
the Torah of Life
and a Love of *Hessed*/Tender Lovingkindness,
Tz'dakah/Justice and Righteousness
and Blessing
and Mercy
and Life
and Peace.

וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ
לְבָרְךָ אֶת
עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה
בְּשִׁלּוֹמְךָ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה,
ד', הַמְּבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשְׁלוֹם.

May it please You
to bless Your people
Israel and all Humankind —
at this time and every time,
at this hour and every hour —
with Your Gift of Peace.
Amen.

Shalom Rav (Abundant Peace)

שְׁלוֹם רַב
עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ
תָּשִׂים לְעוֹלָם,

Place Abundant Peace
on Israel Your People,
Always and Forever,

כִּי אַתָּה
הוּא מְלֶכֶךְ אֲדוֹנָי
לְכֹל הַשְּׁלוֹם,

For You are
the Majestic One,
Source of All Peace,

וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ
לְבָרְךָ אֶת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּכָל עֵת
וּבְכָל שָׁעָה
בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ.

and it is Good in Your Eyes
to Bless Your People Israel
in every age, every season,
at every juncture, every hour,
with Your Peace.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה,
ד',
הַמְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּשָׁלוֹם.

Blessed/Bountiful are You,
Adonai,
Who Blesses this People Israel
with Peace.

CHAPTER 9

Eighteen Healing Activities

As part of your re-entry into life, transform activities that may seem mundane by dedicating them to your process of healing – celebrating the everyday and appreciating simple acts of daily living.

Healing Activities and *P'sukim* from *Tehillim*: Words of Psalms in/as Jewish Meditations for Healing

Words of psalms can be valuable tools in refocusing, centering, and quieting oneself, as a kind of Jewish mantra. Some people post a verse, phrase, or even just a word from a psalm on their office computer screen so they can freely turn to it in the course of a workday. Others make an audiotape of a psalm or a piece of psalm in order to play it back while sitting in a quiet, undisturbed setting, or even while jogging, driving, shopping, and so on. More than just another stress-reduction technique, these meditative practices bring the Sacred into the everyday, marrying text with context, bringing Torah into life and life into Torah.

People dealing with illness, suffering, and loss often turn, quite naturally, to the resources of the world around them for spiritual healing. It helps them to restore a damaged connection to Nature, to reassert that despite everything, they are still *ba'alei hayyim* (active possessors of life), and to renew precious moments of life within Creation. To name, concretize, and sanctify these activities, and to bridge the worlds of the senses with that of the spirit in a conscious manner, Biblical *p'sukim*/verses may be joined with the actions – before, during, and/or after the experience.

What follows are 18 "healing activities" that are joined with 18 *p'sukim*/verses. These verses of psalms represent meditations that are meant to accompany, not replace, traditional blessings which are connected with many of these activities. For some of these activities, there may be no traditional blessing and the verse may serve as a *kavvanah*/dedication.

When hand-washing:

Erhatz b'ni-kayon kappai, va-a-sov'vah et mizba'hakha, Adonai

I wash my hands in purity, and encircle Your altar, *Adonai!*

(PSALMS 26:6)

When candle-lighting:

Ki Ata ta'ir neiri, Adonai, Elohai, ya-giah hosh-ki.

It is You who lights my candle; *Adonai*, my God, illumines the darkness.

(PSALMS 18:29)

When planting seeds or nurturing plants:

V'haya k'etz sha-tul al pal-gei mayyim,

Asher piryo yi-ten b'ito, V'a-leihu lo yi-bol,

V'khol a-sherr ya'aseh yatz-liah.

Like a tree planted alongside streams of water,
which will yield its fruit in season, whose foliage will not fade,
and all it undertakes succeeds.

(PSALMS 1:3)

When stroking a pet:

Tov Adonai lakol, v'rahamav al kol ma'asav
Adonai extends Goodness to all;
Adonai's Compassion reaches all creatures.
(PSALMS 145:9)

When breathing slowly:

Kol ha-n'shama t'hallel Yah;
Kol ha-n'shama t'hallel Yah;
Let every breath praise Yah/God,
Let every breath praise Yah/God!
(PSALMS 150:6, TWICE)

When baking, cooking, etc.:

No-ten lekhem l'khol ba-sar,
Ki l'olam hasdo!
God gives food to all flesh
with steadfast love that is eternal.
(PSALMS 136:25)

When walking:

Horeini Adonai darkeh-kha
A'halekh ba'amitehkha
Ya-heid l'va-vi l'yir-ah sh'meh-kha.
Teach me, Adonai, Your Way,
I will walk in Your truth;
Make my heart one/whole, in awe of Your Name.
(PSALMS 86:11)

When chanting, singing, playing musical instruments:

Shiru lo, Zamru lo, Sihu b'khol nifl'o-tav
Sing to God, Compose songs, Play instruments for God –
Tell all about God's wondrous acts!
(PSALMS 105:2)

When walking through the woods:

Ya'aloz saddai v'khol asher bo,
Az y'ra-n-nu kol atzei ya'ar!
Let the fields and everything in them exult;
All the trees of the forest will shout for joy!
(PSALMS 96:12)

When taking in rain, snow, climactic shifts:

A-ta heitzav-ta kol g'vulot aretz,
Kayitz va-horef a-ta y'tzar-tahm.
You fixed all the boundaries of the earth,
Summer and winter – You made them!
(PSALMS 74:17)

When watching clouds roll by:

Ha-sha-mayim sha-mayim lA-donai – V'ha-aretz na-than liv-nei a-dahm.
The heavens belong to Adonai – but the earth Adonai gave to humankind.
(PSALMS 115: 16)

When enjoying bodies of water:

Asherr lo ha-yam v'Hu a-sa-hu,

V'ya-beh-shet yadav yatzaru.

God's is the sea, God made it;

The land — God's Hands fashioned.

(PSALMS 95:5)

When joining in sunrises or sunsets:

Mi-mizrah sheh-mesh ahd m'vo-o

M'hu-lal shem Adonai!

From the east, where the sun rises, to where it sets,

Adonai's Name is praised!

(PSALMS 113: 3)

When handling or exploring rocks:

Even ma'asu ha-bonim ha-y'ta l'rosh pinah.

The stone rejected by the builders became the chief cornerstone!

(PSALMS 118:22)

When touching items of tactile import/value:

Potei-ah eht Yadekha, u'mas-bia l'khol hai ratzon.

You open Your Hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

(PSALMS 145:16)

When looking at art and architecture:

Im Adonai lo yivneh vayit, shav amlu vonav bo;

Im Adonai lo yishmar ir, shav shakad shomer.

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain;

unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

(PSALM 127:1)

When painting, sculpting, making crafts, etc.:

Vi-hi no-ahm Adonai Elohenu alenu

u-ma'asei yadenu ko-n'na alenu

u-ma'asei yadenu ko-n'nehu!

And let the beauty of Adonai our God be upon us;

and establish the work of our hands upon us;

○ prosper it, the work of our hands!

(PSALM 90:17)

When gazing at crowds and passersby:

Od-kha b'kahal rav, b'am atsuv a-ha-l'lehka.

I will give You thanks in the great congregation;

I will praise You among a great many people.

(PSALM 35:18)

In Your Own Words

קְחוּ עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־ה':

“Bring with you words and return to Adonai.”

(HOSEA 14:3)

We have given you many words. You may want to compose your own prayer or record some of your own thoughts, feelings, and wishes.

