

Liturgical Responses to a Pandemic
Crafting Comfort for Those We Serve
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A.Traditional Liturgy Reframed:

1. Hashkiveinu during the Pandemic by Rav Jeffrey Astrachan

This evening, we join with the rest of the world in praying for a quick and positive end to the crisis in which we find ourselves. We pray for those who are sick and dying, and for those tending to their care.

We pray for their families, and for those who are most anxious about getting sick.

We pray for leaders faced with making difficult choices with lasting consequences.

We pray for students whose hopes for celebrating their accomplishments have been thwarted.

We pray for all those in the work-force who have been – and who will be – directly impacted by the need for social-distancing.

Tonight, I offer a prayer that comes to us from our liturgy, which we call “*Hashkiveinu*.” It is a nighttime prayer that asks God for protection and blessing. It seems fitting to offer these words tonight:

Grant, O God, that we lie down in peace, and raise us up, our Guardian, to life renewed. Spread over us the shelter of Your peace. Guide us with Your good counsel; for Your Name’s sake, be our help. Shield and shelter us beneath the shadow of Your wings. Defend us against enemies, illness, war, famine and sorrow. Distance us from wrongdoing. For You, God, watch over us and deliver us. For You, God, are gracious and merciful. Guard our going and coming, to life and to peace evermore.

2. Offered on Livestream before *Mi Shebeirach* Rabbi David Lyon
Congregation Beth Israel, Houston

Together, Again.

For those who are alone, find comfort with us and in God’s presence
For those with a spouse or partner, gain strength from each other
For those with children, know patience with them and love them more
For those with grandchildren and great-grandchildren, keep them in your heart for their sake

For everybody in our circle of families and friends, may we find our way, again, to share life's moments --- may they only be joyful --- and always, together.

3. U'rchatz in a time of COVID- 19 by Rabbi Debra Hachen,

This year, the symbolic washing of the hands in a basin of clean water has taken on new meaning. Yes, our seder table is an altar; our prayers an offering hearkening back to the priests of the Temple centuries ago. Yet that altar – the plates and dishes and foods laid out so carefully – need protection. Even our own hands are capable of physically bringing danger or illness or death into our homes.

Holy One of Blessing, bless our hands this night and through the weeks ahead. Let us learn to use them not only to keep ourselves and others healthy, but to do the tasks that are still within our grasp.

These are the hands that have turned ordinary acts into sacred ones: cleaning our homes, teaching our children, collecting or creating masks for those in need, typing messages of comfort to family and friends, dropping off food to those more isolated than ourselves.

Bless these hands.

These are the hands that are longing to hold the hands of loved ones closed off in nursing homes or assisted living or memory care or hospitals.

Bless these hands.

These are the hands that now have time to tend a garden, turn the pages of a book that sat too long on a shelf, sort through old photos, knit a gift for others.

Bless these hands.

O Sustainer of Life, the one who makes hope possible even in dark times, bless our hands that when the time comes to emerge again into the world, we may extend them more gently to stroke the face of a grandparent or grandchild or partner or lover. Let our hands be instruments of your compassion and love in this imperfect world.

4. A Blessing for Washing Hands During a Pandemic By Trisha Arlin, Copyright © 2020, triganza.blogspot.com. Used by permission.

As we wash our hands
We pray,

Blessed is the Soul of the Universe,
Breathing us in and breathing us out.
May our breaths continue

And our health and the health of all
Be preserved
In this time of sickness and fear of sickness.
Holy Wholeness,
We take as much responsibility for it as we can
By observing the obligation to wash our hands,
Using lots of soap and hot water,
Thoroughly:
For as long as it takes to say this prayer.
Amen

5. The Power in Our Hands – Rabbi Zoe Klein Miles 3/13/2020 (sermon on separate file)

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, vitzivanu al netilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, *Adonai* our God, Eternal One, who has sanctified us through your commandments, and has commanded us concerning the washing of the hands. Each time we wash our hands during this time of caution and care, let us remember we are no different than the ones who washed their hands before stepping into the sacred Tent of Meeting. Let us dedicate our deeds to righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and mercy. Let us reach out to each other with empathy and understanding, in new and creative ways. Let us use our hands to pick up the phone and call an older relative or neighbor to wish them a *Shabbat Shalom*, or to text an old friend and wish them peace and comfort. Let us enter the virtual Tent of Meeting, and use our hands to build real, meaningful connections.

6. On Washing our Hands by Jewish healer Dori Midnight which was shared today by the Jewish Women's Archive:

We are humans relearning to wash our hands. Washing our hands is an act of love. Washing our hands is an act of care. Washing our hands is an act that puts the hyper-vigilant body at ease.

Washing our hands helps us return to ourselves by washing away what does not serve.

Wash your hands like you are washing the only teacup left that your great grandmother carried across the ocean, like you are washing the hair of a beloved who is dying, like you are washing the feet of Grace Lee Boggs, your auntie, Audre Lorde, Mary Oliver... you get the picture.

Like this water is poured from a jug your best friend just carried for three miles from the spring they had to climb a mountain to reach like water is a precious resource made from time and miracle.

7. *Alternate Mishberach* by Rabbi Bickhardt

Prayer for Doctors, Nurses and Medical Personnel (Adapted from a Chassidic Prayer for Healing)

May he who blessed our patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and our Matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, who fashioned us in his own image, bless we pray you, our doctors and nurses and all those whom you have called to study and practice the art of healing the sick and the prevention of disease and pain. Give them continued strength, fill them with understanding, logic and insight to perform healing of the body, mind and soul in your name, Protect them from the illnesses that they themselves strive to heal, prolong the energies of their work, that they may sustain and relieve those who are afflicted. O Lord, our Rock and Salvation, lead us speedily from despair to hope, from fear to trust and from the dread of death to the celebration of life. May this prayer of mine come before You at a favorable time. And may this be Your will, Amen.

8. *Healing from Coronavirus* by © 2020 Alden Solovy and tobendlight.com.

Source of healing,
Cast the light of health and well-being
On those who've been exposed to coronavirus,
Those who have contracted the disease
And those -- God forbid -- who contract the disease in the future.
Bless them, protect them and bring them speedily to full recovery.
Bless all who are ill
With healing of body
Healing of soul
And healing of spirit.

Baruch atah Adonai, m'kor chayim.
Blessed are You, Adonai, Source of Life

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9. A Shabbat Prayer for Healing and Lighting Candles in the Era of Coronavirus,
Rabbi Leah Doberne-Schor serves [Beth Israel Congregation in Florence, S.C.](#)

The Torah recounts that during their journey in the wilderness, the Israelites were guided by a pillar (of cloud by day and of fire by night) that represented God's presence in their midst. When the pillar moved, they moved, and when the pillar stopped, they stopped.

It occurs to me that for a good portion of their 40-year journey, that pillar must have been stopped, guiding our ancestors to stay in place. In those moments, the purpose of the journey was not in physical walking, but in active waiting.

These times of stopping were fundamental to our ancestors' journey, including allowing time for Miriam to heal or for the building of the Tabernacle.

These days, in the face of the coronavirus, life as normal has halted. With the exception of those on the front lines providing health care and sustenance, most of us have been ordered to stop our regular interactions and activities, and to wait.

Our ancestors turned to that pillar for strength and support in their time of waiting; so too, can we turn for help in these unprecedented times.

Below is a prayer that might be recited as we light the Shabbat candles.

Dear God,
We ask that You be there for us,
as you were for our ancestors,
a pillar in our midst.

Help us to turn to You, O God,
for guidance during these troubled times.
Give us strength for the weeks ahead.

Help us to reach out in love and compassion to one another,
to support those who are ill,
unable to leave their homes,
or who are struggling financially.

Be with our doctors and caregivers,
our nurses and scientists,
as they are working to develop a cure
and care for those who are ill.

Be with all who are ill and their families,
offering them Your compassion.
And, we pray, Your healing.

Be with our leaders.
Guide them to wise decisions
in these troubled days.

Be with us O God.
Help us to find the inner strength
to be patient when our nerves are tested.

Be our Still Waters
when we are surrounded by fear
and anxiety.

Be our Rock, to Whom we can turn
and give our worry and fears.

Be our Shelter.
Guide our steps
and keep us safe.

Help us to feel Your presence in these times of change.

As we light the candles this Shabbat,
each in our own homes,
may our kindled lamps,
each its own point of light,
join as the stars in the heavens --
a community together
welcoming Your Shabbat Peace
Your Shabbat Love
Your Shabbat Joy
into our homes,
Your day of rest that together we welcome
more than ever before.

10. End-of-Life Support/Making an End-of-Life decision/Viddui by Rabbi Shira Stern (Mishkan Refuah, CCAR Press, 2013 p.75)

Adonai, please help us as we face this terrible decision. Bring us close to You so that we feel less alone. Holding on and letting go are two impossible opposites, and yet here we stand, at the bedside of the one we love so much, trying to do both.

Please, God, take _____ gently, enfold him/her/them under your protective wings and care for him/her/them always, even as we tried to do in life. Give us strength as we prepare to meet the world without him/her/they and guide us as we face the days ahead.

(*Sh'ma* in English/Hebrew)

11. Viddui for Coronavirus, by Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner

The *Viddui* serves as a final prayer of atonement for a dying person, and a final at-one-ment; the traditional liturgy places the soul of the dying in God's hands.

According to Jewish law, *Viddui* is said when death seems imminent, and may be spoken by the dying person, their family members, or a rabbi.

Below is a *Viddui* written for Jews who are losing a beloved to a plague, and who may not be able to be physically present or close to their loved one.

Take a cup of water in your left hand, pour it over your entire right hand, covering up to the wrist. Take the cup in your right hand, and pour it over your entire left hand, covering up to the wrist. Feel your feet connected to the floor. And breathe.

God Nowhere and Everywhere,
God of grounding and water and air,
God Who still hears the echoes of my ancestors and their prayers:
Hear mine now.

Hear my heartbreak as my words reach up to You,
Angry and agonized and afraid.

See how my arms are empty when all I need is to hold my loved one _____(name)
in the moments before their death.

I am not reconciled to their loss. There is no part of me that rises up to bless You
now.

And still, I know that You are with me: You are the Source; You are the ground and
the water and the air; You are the filaments that link me to every other mourner in
this moment. You are the rope that binds me to my loved one, _____(name), and
reminds me that my life, my memories, and my soul are bound up with theirs.

_____ (name) has been my ground and my water and my air. To be sharing none
of these with them at this time, as they leave this world, is beyond what I should
bear.

And still I bless and acknowledge the Source of All, Who granted me the gift of
growing with them, knowing them, and loving them up to and through this moment.

Their lives were full. My heart is full. And my heart is breaking.

I know that their life and their death is in Your hands. May they be blessed with life,
O God. And if they will die, when they die, shelter them in Your arms and carry them
gently into the wideness of All That Is To Come.

Hear me now, as I cry out to You:
Shma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.
Hear, O Israel, we who wrestle with God and with life and with loss:
God grounds us and carries us and reminds us that we all are One.

Amen.

12. A Reflection for Receiving the Coronavirus Vaccine, by Rabbi Rebecca Kamil

As we move from darkness to light
May we take this vaccine as a sign of what is to come
A world reopened and renewed
Embracing family and friends
Gathering together in joy
May we also be mindful of what has been
The lives lost
The sorrow felt
And may the past and present intertwine
Giving us hope for the future.

13. Prayer on the COVID Vaccine by Rabbi Karen Reiss Medwed

With gratitude and thanksgiving to The Healer of broken hearts and restorer of broken bones, appreciation and thanks for inspiring the medical teams and scientists granting them the wisdom, knowledge and expertise to prepare this vaccine for all of us. May it be your will that with my vaccination I will be granted the ability to heal and keep safe humankind and be granted the privilege to fulfill the mitzvah of one who saves a life. Blessed are you Healer of all who are sick. © Rabbi Karen Reiss Medwed

14. A Prayer for Receiving the COVID Vaccine by Rabbi Naomi Levy

I have been praying for this day and now it is here!
With great excitement, a touch of trepidation
And with deep gratitude I give thanks
To all the scientists who toiled day and night
So that I might receive this tiny vaccination
That will protect me and all souls around this world.
With the pandemic still raging I am blessed to do my part to defeat it.
Let this be the beginning of a new day,
A new time of hope, of joy, of freedom
And most of all, of health.
I thank You, God, for blessing me with life
For sustaining my life
And for enabling me to reach this awe-filled moment.

Amen

15. On Receiving a Vaccine By Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein

I thank You

For the wisdom of the scientists
For the courage of the trial volunteers
For the strength and compassion of the health care professionals
For the patience of the delivery workers
All who have brought us to this moment.
For our bodies,
Our finely balanced networks
Capable of blessing You
May this vaccine offer protection.
May it offer strength.
May it offer hope

May the one who hears prayers and requests, hear my prayer. I am about to be given a vaccine to protect me against the novel Coronavirus which has claimed so many lives this year. I am concerned. I know this vaccine might have side effects, and I pray for the strength and grace to handle any that I experience, and to accept that all medications and vaccines have potential side effects.

Give me the wisdom to trust my instincts and my body, that I will know when to be concerned. Help my mind to be calm and to trust in this medication and its healing capabilities.

Divine Healer, I am grateful for those whom you have endowed with the knowledge and ability to create vaccines and medications that can protect us against or slow the progress of devastating diseases. I am grateful for my doctors and practitioners who care for me body and spirit.

May this medication/vaccine bring me healing, and may I be granted peace of mind in the knowledge that I am sheltered beneath the God's wings.

16. Mishberach, By Rabbi Aaron Starr, based on Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 60a and the Morning liturgy

May it be Your will, Heavenly Healer, that this endeavor be for healing and may You grant healing to me, to my loved ones, to my nation, and to all who are in need. Fill me with a sense of gratitude for all who create, distribute, and deliver this vaccine, and for all those who work for the health of individuals and our communities. Empower me to care in good health ever more deeply for others. Blessed are You, Holy One, Healer of all flesh, sustaining our bodies in wondrous ways.

17. Intention When Receiving COVID-19 Vaccine, by Rabbi Deborah Miller

With gratitude for
the wisdom of the scientists
the courage of the clinical trial volunteers
the dedication of the thousands of leaders and workers
who made it possible for me to receive it
May this vaccine
protect me from this virus
bring peace of mind to those who hold me dear
give me strength to continue to care for those who
depend on my professional skills and
compassionate presence.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive,
sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of all, who is good and
bestows good.

Blessed are You,
Who heals all flesh and performs wonders.

B. Original Responses to the Pandemic:

1. Prayer of Hope and Courage by Rabbi Lynn C Lieberman, BCC Community Chaplain Jewish Family Service of St Paul

Holy One, who dwells above, alongside, within; May Your presence come close to
each of us in this time of confusion, fear, and dismay. We ask You, *Shechinah*, to
spread Your wings of shelter over each of us, over all humanity; Protecting us,
guiding us, nurturing us, sustaining us in this time of great uncertainty.
El Olam, continue to guide us and sustain us as we encounter each day ahead,
providing for us the resilience and resolve to live into yet another day.

Adonai, God of all Generations, continue to bring courage, strength and wisdom; to
the hands and hearts of all those who care for us in hospitals, in stores, in care
centers.

My God, thank you for Your presence in my life and the lives of all both near and far.
May the One who creates peace, bring peace and wholeness to all creation. Amen.

2. Unsung Heroes - Cantor Alane S. Katzew, BCC and Edits by Joanne Fink

There are unsung heroes.
Those who comfort and guide us, as the fallout creeps beyond the hospital walls and
we must bury our dead.

We, grief stricken, weep for the loss of life.

These unsung heroes
Retrieve bodies at midnight,
Transport them to the mortuary,
Prepare them for burial, and dig their graves.

We struggle to adjust.

These unsung heroes
Adapt with overnight flexibility to new realities:
Enforce the limit of ten,
Police the six-foot distance,
Learn and facilitate technology, for virtual funeral guests the world over.

We cope with these uncertain times.

These unsung heroes
Tirelessly labor in the shadows,
Scant notice taken of their prodigious kindness, or the dignity they offer for
our final goodbye.

To our unsung heroes,
We witness your sacred service now exponentially increased by the crushing
number of lives lost. Your calls for reinforcements from colleagues They help
carry the unbearable load.

For you, our unsung heroes, who continue to provide hope and healing for
others We offer thanks. We are grateful for the burdens you shoulder, For the
glimmers of light you shed, the compassion you provide. We praise you, our
unsung heroes, for your care and dedication, in the face of this pandemic.

3. A Prayer for Essential Workers, by Chaplain Ilisia Kissner

May the One who blessed our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekkah,
Jacob, Rachel and Leah, bless and protect all those who work on our behalf:
The healthcare workers who bring healing and compassion to the ill,
The first responders who run towards danger to keep others safe,
The farmers and farm workers who produce and harvest our food,
The food service workers who prepare our food and keep our grocery stores
stocked,
The people who deliver our mail and packages,
The transit workers who keep public transportation running,
The people who teach our children from a distance,
The social workers and therapists providing mental health services,
The funeral directors and clergy working around the clock to bury the dead with
dignity, The chaplains providing spiritual care at end of life,
All those who risk their health and safety to provide essential services,

May they and their families be safe, May we never again take their work for granted.
May we all join together to repair our broken world.

4. Prayer for Health Care Providers by Rabbi Ayelet S. Cohen, March 2020

May the One who blessed our ancestors Bless all those who put themselves at risk to
care for the sick: Physicians and nurses and orderlies Patient transporters, hospital
cleaning staff, and security guards, Technicians and home health aides, EMTs and
pharmacists [And bless especially _____ who is in need of healing]

Who navigate the unfolding dangers of the world each day,
To tend to those they have sworn to help. Bless them in their coming home and
bless them in their going out.

Ease their fear.

Sustain them.

Source of all breath, healer of all beings, Protect them and restore their hope.

Strengthen them, that they may bring strength;

Keep them in health, that they may bring healing.

Help them know again a time when they can breathe without fear.

Bless the sacred work of their hands.

May this plague pass from among us, speedily and in our days. --- Rabbi Ayelet S.
Cohen, March 2020

5. A Prayer for Medical Scientists by © 2020 Alden Solovy and tobendlight.com.

God of wisdom,

Bless medical scientists and researchers around the world

With insight and skill, dedication and fortitude,

As they combat coronavirus,

So that their work yields knowledge and understanding,

Speedily finding a vaccine, treatments and deterrents to its spread.

Source of life,

Grant public health and government officials

The strength to act swiftly and decisively,

With compassion and understanding,

In service to humankind,

Fighting this outbreak

And the other diseases that still plague the planet,

Diseases threatening the lives of our brothers and sisters,

Nations and communities,

Young and old.

Rock of Ages,

Bring an end to disease and suffering,

So that all may know

Your compassion and Your grace.

Baruch atah Adonai, rofeh chol basar, umafla laasot.

Praised are You God, healer of flesh, maker of wonders. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

6. A Prayer for Those Who Help by By Susan Feldman, from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*. Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

May the One who blessed and led our forebearers give countenance unto those who provide help for the ill and troubled among us. May they be filled with fortitude and courage, endowed with sympathy and compassion, as they give strength to those at their side. May they fight against despair and continue to find within themselves the will to reach out to those in need. And in their love of others, may they feel the blessing of community and the blessing of renewed faith.

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7. A Medical Practitioner's Prayer by By Rabbi Eric Weiss, from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*. Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

God, uniquely created in Your image, I have used my gifts and talents, my training and experience, to bring my skills to support healing. As I begin this procedure/examination, may I fully appreciate that the work of my hands reflects the work of Yours. May my attentiveness reflect the trust placed in me by each patient, my colleagues, and You. May my work reflect the best I have to offer from the depth of my mind and soul. May the blessing of life and love be ever present to my patients and myself. Amen.

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8. Emergency Board Meeting Invocation in a Time of COVID-19, by Rabbi Cy Stanway

We are taught in the Midrash that when the Jews were escaping the Egyptians after their redemption from slavery, they stood on the edge of the Sea of Reeds and were unsure if it was safe to cross even though God had miraculously split the waters. It was not Moses or Aaron who would enter first. But who would it be? It was, the Midrash tells us, a man name Nachshon ben Aminadav who was a leader in the tribe of Judah and who, over the course of his life and his descendants' lives were important figures in their own eras.

Nachshon, the Midrash tells us, simply jumped into the mud of the sea and led by example, faith in purpose, and inspired others to cross on to the other side with him at the helm.

The extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in during this global crisis make us as a board and the leadership of this temple the Nachshon ben Amindavs. We enter the sea of temple unknowns: how to run a service, how to teach a class, how to visit the sick, how to work in the many ways with our congregants, our staff, our lay leaders.

And yet, though it is unknown in so many ways, we cross the sea of unknowns because we have faith that we will emerge as a temple leadership who led by example, who still inspired, who still created a virtual space for community.

We will emerge out of this crisis with the knowledge that each of us did the very best imitation of Nachshon we could. And we are confident that God will look upon our efforts as say, 'Behold, it is good.'

We pray that our bodies, our patience and our faith that everything will be well is strengthened day to day. Amen

C. Responding to our Feelings During a Pandemic:

1. On Anxiety by Rabbi Chaim Stern, from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*. Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis..

Adonai, You abide though all things change. I am anxious and fearful, and I turn my heart to You, looking to You and leaning on Your strength.

It is written, "Blessed is the one whose strength is in You." Bless me now with faith and courage. Help me to feel that You are with me, steadying and sustaining me with the assurance that I am loved. Be with me and bring me hope, that in the days to come, my aspirations may be fulfilled for my good and the good of those I love who depend on me.

Banish my fears with the sense that You are always present, to uphold and sustain me, as it is written, "Have no fear, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with the power of My righteousness ." (Isaiah 41:10). Amen.

2. When Fears Multiply by By Rabbi Hershel Matt, from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*. Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis

When fears multiply

And danger threatens;
When sickness comes,
And death confronts us—
It is God's blessing of shalom
That sustains us
And upholds us,
Lightening our burden,
Dispelling our worry,
Restoring our strength,
Renewing our hope—
Reviving us.

Originally appeared as "Hashkiveinu " in Raayanot 3, no. 2 (Spring 1983) © by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. Used by permission.

3. End-of-Life Support/Making an End-of-Life decision by Rabbi Shira Stern
(Mishkan Refuah, CCAR Press, 2013 p.75)

Adonai, please help us as we face this terrible decision. Bring us close to You so that we feel less alone. Holding on and letting go are two impossible opposites, and yet here we stand, at the bedside of the one we love so much, trying to do both.

Please, God, take _____ gently, enfold him/her/them under your protective wings and care for him/her/them always, even as we tried to do in life. Give us strength as we prepare to meet the world without him/her/they and guide us as we face the days ahead.

(Sh'ma in English/Hebrew)

4. Do not steal, by David Balto

We understand
You told us with awe and wonder, with thunder, and lightning and a heavy cloud
You told us
You were in the smoke and fire
Moses' face radiant
You told us our commandments
Commandment number 8, lodged so quickly between "no adultery" and "false testimony"

Lo tignov; do not steal

Do not steal?

So Almighty one, who we praise so completely with endless words of wonder, with songs of glory
Almighty one, how much theft have we endured in the past year?
How much?
Over 100 million people sickened; over 2.3 million lives taken; numbers that just grow endlessly.

The word unfathomable ceases to have meaning
Each life stolen
And for those touched by each one of the lives, a parent, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend, a colleague, a neighbor
Their love is stolen
All of those parts of our humanness stolen
And so much more

The chance to care for our loved one, frail, elderly sick, alone
The chance to be present when they die
The chance to bring them to their resting place and place dirt on their grave
The chance to be together to share and magnify joy
The chance to celebrate a birth, a graduation, a wedding
The chance simply to be in one another's presence
The human touch, to be held
To be held
All of this is stolen
And when so much is stolen, when we can not be even mostly human, what happens to our souls?

Almighty one,

Our words can not describe your greatness and your strength
Our words can not describe the depth of our sorrow

Let us dispense with words of praise and glory and be fully present with the simple sorrow of things stolen

"When a person robs his fellow even the value of a *perutah* [penny], it is as though he had taken his life away from him, as it is said, 'So are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain, which takes away the life of the owners thereof' ([Proverbs 1:19](#))" ([Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 119a](#)).

5. Prayer for God's Love By Rabbi Rami Shapiro, from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*. Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

We are loved

by an unending love.
We are embraced
by arms that find us
even when
we are hidden from ourselves.
We are touched
by fingers that soothe us
even when
we are too proud for soothing.
We are counseled
by voices that guide us
even when
we are too embittered to hear.
We are loved
by an unending love.
We are supported
By hands that uplift us even in
the midst of a fall.
We are urged on by eyes that meet us
even when
we are too weak for meeting:
We are loved by an unending love.
Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled . . .
ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;
we are loved
by an unending love.

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6. Prayer for Going Home by Rabbi Shira Stern from *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides* . Copyright © 2013 by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

How I yearned for this –
Returning home
Returning to life unfettered by hospital regimen
Returning to me.
Watching over me as I find my pace,
My peace
My power to heal.

Adonai, guard my coming and coming, to life and peace, evermore.