

מגילת אסתר מסורת הרב
Megillat Esther Mesorat HaRav



Note on the Cover Design

The front cover depicts “King Ahasuerus hears of Mordecai in the book of records,” from *The Bible Picture Book* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, c. 1880).

Adorning the back cover is the image of a small nightingale, one of the most musical of all songbirds. This artistic motif is an allusion to the Soloveitchik family name, which in Russian means “little nightingale.” The Soloveitchik family are Levites, and legend has it that the origin of the name harks back to the family’s sacred role as Levites in the Beit HaMikdash, gracing the service with song that accompanied the *korbanot*.

מגילת אסתר מסורת הרב

MEGILLAT ESTHER MESORAT HARAV

WITH COMMENTARY ON MEGILLAT ESTHER
AND THE MA'ARIV EVENING SERVICE
BASED ON THE TEACHINGS

OF

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

EDITED BY

Simon Posner, Eliyahu Krakowski and
Moshe Genack

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MEMHR1

In Loving Memory of
Irving and Beatrice Stone

who dedicated their lives
to the advancement of Jewish education.
We are proud and honored to continue
in their legacy.

Dedicated by
Their Children, Grandchildren,
and Great-Grandchildren

Cleveland, Ohio



שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטוש תורת אמך
(משלי א, ח)

In Loving Memory of Our Parents
Alexander and Rose Shapiro
אלקנה בן משה יהודה לייב ופערל ז"ל
רייזל בת יעקב הלוי וצירל ז"ל

Samuel and Frances Schreiber
שמעון בן יוסף זאב וברכה מרים ז"ל
פייגע בת יעקב שרגא ושרה ז"ל

Who taught and raised their family
to follow in the ways of Torah

Dedicated by
Irwin and Ruth Shapiro



In Loving Memory of Our Mother

Sara Anne Lehmann

שרה בת יצחק משולם פייש וחיה חנה איידל מושקוביץ ז"ל

Born SatuMare 1925, buried Jerusalem 2017

Escaping the horrors of Europe in 1941, our mother went on to become a pioneering international businesswoman, writer, painter and family matriarch. Beautiful, smart and fearless, Esther HaMalka was her role model. "ומי יודע אם לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות" was her credo. Our mother lived a life filled with *hesed* and imbued with *bitahon*.

In Loving Memory of Our Father

Manfred Raphael Lehmann

ר' מנשה רפאל בן החבר חיים ופיגא ז"ל

Born Stockholm 1922, buried Jerusalem 1997

An *Ish Eshkolot* who inspired us with his absolute faith in God and in *hashgaha peratit* in history. A true *Ohev* and *Yodea Sefer* whose depth of passion, breadth of interests and brilliant intellect were a continuous inspiration. *יגעת ומצאת תאמין* (*Megilla* 6b) was his guiding principle for our lives, always recognizing that our own struggles and efforts in pursuit of our lives' goals must be infused with *bitahon* in *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*. In all that he did, he dedicated himself to his family, Torah, and the people of Israel.

In Loving Memory of Our Brother

James Harald Lehmann

חיים מנחם בן מנשה רפאל ושרה ז"ל

Born New York 1950, buried Jerusalem 1982

Celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, reading Megillat Esther on Purim, 1963
A loving, joyful, gentle, brilliant soul, Jamie was the embodiment of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. The legacy of our parents is enriched by the soul of their beloved son. He is missed more every day.

Dedicated by

Yitzchok and Barbie Lehmann Siegel and Family

In Loving Memory of Our Parents

Rabbi Yitzchok and Bluma Singer

הרב יצחק אהרן בן הרב ר' אליהו ז"ל

בלומא בת ר' ישראל אריה לייב ז"ל

Our Father was Rabbi of the Bialystoker
Synagogue and a renowned תלמיד חכם

Our Mother was a true אשת חיל

In Loving Memory of Our Uncles

Rabbi Dovid Singer and Rabbi Joseph Singer

הרב דוד בן הרב ר' אליהו ז"ל

הרב יוסף משה בן הרב ר' אליהו ז"ל

Both were scholars of great erudition

Dedicated by

Baruch and Susie Singer, Eli and Rivki Singer

Nussie and Ruchy Singer, Yossi and Suri Singer, Sruly Singer



In Tribute to

Rabbi Menachem Genack and Rabbi Simon Posner

In appreciation of all they do for OU PRESS,
the Orthodox Union, and *Klal Yisrael*.

Dedicated by

A Friend

In Loving Memory of Our Parents

Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus

יוסף שמואל בן בנימין ז"ל

גיננדל בת משה יעקב ז"ל

Dedicated by

Moshael and Zahava Straus

Daniel and Joyce Straus



ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר

(אסתר ח, טז)

In Honor of Our Children

Jeremy and Carli

Corey and Gemma

Jessie

Jolie

May you always have the *emunah* to see the hand of
Hashem in your lives and to follow in His ways.

May you and *Klal Yisrael* be blessed with light and gladness,
joy and honor.

Dedicated by

Tim and Ria Levart

In Tribute to
Maury Litwack

for his outstanding service to the Jewish community in spearheading
the effort for government assistance to our schools.

In the footsteps of Esther and Mordekhai,
he has employed political action with selfless
dedication and consummate skill.

Dedicated by
Simcha and Pesh Katz



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PREFACE

Megillat Esther, a study in contrasts and a melange of seemingly random events, mirrors the inherent existential tension of the Jewish experience. The contours of the story are well known. The coarseness of Ahasuerus is contrasted to Esther's purity; Haman's irrational hatred of the Jews is juxtaposed to Mordekhai's selfless devotion to the community. The Jews are well integrated into an ethnically diverse Persian society; overnight they are singled out and selected for genocide. A lottery, the epitome of arbitrariness, seals the Jews' fate. The king orders the execution of his queen on the advice of his minister and hangs his prime minister at the urging of his queen. A mindless beauty contest that has all the trappings of buffoonery results in a simple Jewish girl being plucked from anonymity and ending up in the right place at the right time to save the Jewish people. The king's insomnia saves Mordekhai from the gallows in the nick of time and plants the seed in Ahasuerus' mind that Haman may not be as loyal as he would like the king to believe. As each layer of Megillat Esther unfolds, the list of seeming coincidences, improbable occurrences, and dramatic reversals grows. To any perceptive observer, the studied randomness highlights the unseen presence of the Almighty, the master choreographer controlling all that occurs.

Megillat Esther is the sole book of Tanakh in which God's name is not mentioned. This too can only be understood as an irony which confirms His pervasive, but hidden, presence. What on the surface seems to be merely a story of ambition, lust, and political intrigue, with its own dynamic, in fact has a deeper, unseen reality. God, though hidden from view, is ever-present and guiding all that transpires. Indeed, etymologically, the name Esther is related to the Hebrew word for "hidden" as in "*l'hastir*." According to the Midrash (*Esther Rabba*, 3:10), whenever Megillat Esther mentions "*hamelekh*, the king," the explicit reference is to Ahasuerus, but the implicit reference is to the King of Kings who, unbeknownst to Ahasuerus, is moving the saga to its inevitable conclusion.

So much of Jewish history shares the same existential precariousness which underlies the Megilla's narrative, and can be comprehended ultimately only by acknowledging God's role in history. By any rational standard, when one views the span of Jewish history, the destruction of

the two Temples, numerous exiles, and endless persecutions, the continued existence of the Jewish people is an anomaly. What is the nature of these events? Are they random occurrences subject only to the laws of history? If so, how does one explain the survival of the Jews and the vitality of the contemporary Jewish world? Ultimately, the historical record can be understood only by realizing that God, who may deliberately hide His presence, controls events and spreads His protective wings over us.

After all is said and done, what is the nature of Purim and the theme of Megillat Esther? Is the story a cause for unrestrained celebration or is it a cautionary tale which should command our sober attention? Consistent with the existential uncertainty that pervades the entire Megilla, the answer is both. The Rav, sensitive to the dialectic that often emerges from Halakha, expounded on the inherent duality of Megillat Esther and the holiday of Purim. In discussing the requirement of reading the Megilla twice, once on the evening of Purim and then again the following morning, the Gemara (*Megilla* 4a) quotes two proof texts. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi cites the verse from Psalms, “O my God, I call by day but You answer not, and at night and there is no surcease for me” (Ps. 22:3), while Rabbi Ḥelbo in the name of Ulla brings a different verse from Psalms, “So that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent; O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever” (Ps. 30:13). The Rav notes that these two verses are contradictory, yet each expresses a dimension of Megillat Esther. The verse cited by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi comes from Chapter 22 of Psalms, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” and reflects the cry of total despair. Our Sages tell us that Esther recited this Psalm on her way into Ahasuerus’ inner court, entreating the Almighty when all hope was lost. Diametrically opposed is the verse cited by Rabbi Ḥelbo, which expresses jubilation and an unceasing hymn of praise and thanks to the Almighty. The Rav further notes that the Gemara’s dictum (*Megilla* 14a) that the reading of the Megilla is equivalent with the recitation of Hallel, is consistent with Rabbi Ḥelbo’s view. The Rav explains that both verses are accurate characterizations of Megillat Esther. The Megilla is both a *tze’aka*, a cry of distress arising from insecurity and fear, and *shira*, a hymn of joy that marks Purim as no less an occasion for celebration than the other festivals on which Hallel is recited.

The Rav highlights several *minhagim* which confirm this nuanced view of Purim. Rav Amram Gaon recounts (*Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, Goldschmidt, p. 104) that the accepted practice in the *yeshiva* on Purim was for the *shaliah tzibbur* to descend before the *Gaon* and the *Av Bet Din* and the leaders and the entire *yeshiva* to plead profusely and to recite *Taḥanun*. Rav Natronai Gaon was of the opinion that *Lamnatze'ah* should be recited on Purim. The *Shulḥan Arukh* (Rema, O.H. 695:2) states that one should eat *zer'onim*, seeds, on Purim as a remembrance of the *zer'onim*, a food eaten in exile, that Daniel ate in Babylonia. The Gemara, as well (*Megilla* 13a), notes that Esther ate *zer'onim* in Ahasuerus' palace, signaling her anxiety. All of these, posits the Rav, are clear indications of the elements of melancholy and distress which are themes in the *Megilla* that coexist with the dominant themes of joy and celebration.

The Rav also points to the commingling of Ta'anit Esther with Purim. The fast of Ta'anit Esther does not end until after the reading of the *Megilla* on Purim night. We would have expected that the fast would end, as all other fasts, with the conclusion of the day at *tzet hakokhavim*. Yet we continue to fast during reading of the *Megilla*; we fast while reciting the equivalent of Hallel, further emphasizing the uneasy coexistence of the disparate elements underlying the evening's observance.

There are no two days in the Jewish calendar more dissimilar than Purim, a day of frivolity and feasting, and Yom Kippur, a day of awe and fasting. Yet the *Zohar* comments (*Tikunei Zohar*, *Tikun 21*) that the Biblical name for Yom Kippur, *Yom Kippurim*, can be read *Yom k'Purim*, "a day like Purim." Having more in mind than a simple play on words, the *Zohar* is pointing to a common theme shared by both the sacred Yom Kippur and the joyous Purim. Both holidays revolve around a lottery. The central dramatic motif in the Purim narrative is Haman's lottery which decided the date of the Jews' extermination, a motif whose message is that fate is ultimately arbitrary. On Yom Kippur, the central ritual is the *Avoda*, the service in the Temple, and it is a lottery which determines the fate of two identical sacrificial goats, one to be offered to the Almighty on the altar and whose blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, and the other to be ignominiously cast off a precipice in the desert. Although Purim and Yom Kippur are very different in tone, they express the same theme. What may seem haphazard, ruthless, a mere lottery, can be transformed

into holiness with the realization that the Almighty is behind the scenes directing all that transpires.

This relationship of Yom Kippur and Purim is highlighted in our High Holiday liturgy. The Tur and Avudraham point out a linguistic parallel between the *Yamim Noraim Amida* and Megillat Esther. Each of the three paragraphs of the third *berakha* of the *Amida* begins with the word “*u’vekhen*.” This echoes Esther’s statement, “*U’vekhen avo el hamelekh asher lo kadat*,” expressing her willingness to risk her life by approaching Ahasuerus without first being summoned. Just as Esther felt fear and trembling before petitioning Ahasuerus, we too feel a sense of foreboding in approaching the Almighty on the *Yamim Noraim*.

There is another way in which Yom Kippur and Purim are similar. Both are days of *matan Torah*, the giving of the Torah. On Yom Kippur, the second tablets of the Ten Commandments were brought down by Moses from Mount Sinai. Purim also has the attributes of a day of *matan Torah*. The Megilla states (9:27), “קִיְמוּ וְקַבְּלוּ הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל זְרָעָם,” they established and accepted, for themselves and for their children,” which the Gemara interprets as a reacceptance of the Torah akin to that of Mount Sinai (*Shabbat* 88a). Maimonides states (*Hilkhot Megilla* 2:18) that Megillat Esther, alone among the Books of the Prophets and Sacred Writings, will not be nullified when *Mashiah* comes, but, just like the Five Books of Moses, will continue to exist forever. In fact, from the description of the Megilla as “words of peace and truth” (Es. 9:30), the Gemara derives (*Megilla* 16b) that the Megilla scroll requires *sirtut*, the straight ruled lines etched into the parchment, in the same manner as “the truth of Torah itself.”

The equation of Purim and Yom Kippur confirmed by the halakhic identity of the Megilla with the *Sefer Torah*, further amplifies the common message that emanates from both days, that only Torah can give meaning and direction in the face of chaotic events, and that if one does not view the world through the prism of Torah, then all will appear arbitrary, nihilistic, and mere happenstance.

The Rav points to another statement in the Gemara that highlights Purim’s dual nature. The Gemara comments (*Megilla* 19a) that Megillat Esther is referred to as both a letter (*iggeret*) and a book (*sefer*). A “*sefer*” is written on parchment and is designed to last; it is durable and connotes permanence. An “*iggeret*” is intended only to transmit a communication;

◀ it is ephemeral

it is ephemeral and meant to be discarded. Megillat Esther, notes the Rav, shares both of these qualities. On one level, it seems to be an interesting, but not very significant, narrative of a palace intrigue. It is an *iggeret*, a record of no lasting importance. On a deeper level, Megillat Esther is also a *sefer*, a profound book that expresses the fundamental principles of our faith, a book that testifies to our belief in Divine Providence even in the depth of the night of despair, when all hope seems lost.

It is singularly appropriate that the commentary of the Rav graces this edition of Megillat Esther, for the Rav, more than any other modern Jewish thinker, articulated and addressed the existential tensions which confront the Jew and characterize his struggle to find meaning in what appears to be an arbitrary universe. The Rav devoted his life to grappling with the most troubling questions confronting the Jew – the existential loneliness that besets the man of faith, the dialectical tension in which the man of halakha exists. The Rav addressed these and other similar issues in both his halakhic and philosophical works. For the Rav, the goal was not to find answers to the questions but to live within the tension and the dialectic, and the only way to accomplish this was through Torah. The ultimate response is that Torah gives meaning to an otherwise absurd existence.

OU PRESS is proud to present, together with Koren Publishers Jerusalem, *Megillat Esther Mesorat HaRav*. As with our other *Mesorat HaRav* publications, the Rav's commentary consists of excerpts from the Rav's published writings as well as from audio tapes of the Rav's lectures and *shiurim*, personal notes of *shiurim* taken by students of the Rav, and published *sefarim* written by students of the Rav. Also following the pattern of other of our *Mesorat HaRav* publications, we have included a section of *Reshimot*, more extensive presentations of the Rav's analysis of halakhic material than the discussions included in the commentary. Portions of the commentary which are taken from the Rav's published writings are followed by their respective sources. The other portions of the commentary, not followed by a source, are taken from the Rav's lectures, *shiurim*, and classes which he conducted over the years, many of which have been transcribed by his students and others and published. We extend thanks to Dr. Arnold Lustiger, editor of *Derashot HaRav*, and Rabbi David Schreiber editor of *Noraos HaRav*, for consenting to inclusion of material from

their works in the commentary and the *Reshimot*. We acknowledge with thanks Rabbi Mikhel Shurkin, author of *Harerei Kedem*, whose work also served as a source for sections of the commentary and the *Reshimot*. Most of the commentary on *tefillat Ma'ariv* is from the *Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur* which was edited by Dr. Arnold Lustiger, and we extend our appreciation to Dr. Lustiger.

Many dedicated individuals were involved in the preparation of this volume. My esteemed friend, Dr. Joel B. Wolowelsky, was the prime mover of the project over the course of several years, as he has been for so many other of the *Mesorat HaRav* projects, and provided the guidance and impetus to bring it to successful fruition. Rabbi Moshe Genack had the primary responsibility for assembling and editing the *Reshimot* and also assisted in the compilation of material for the commentary. Also involved in the preparation of the *Reshimot* were Rabbis Yosef Abraham, Shalom Baum, Daniel Besser, Ari Brandwein, Gad Buchbinder, Shaya First, Sholom Licht, Jeffrey Muehlgay, Yaakov Richter, Etan Schnall, Gil Student, Yaakov Taubes, and Ezra Zanger. Rabbi Elyahu Krakowski, Associate Editor of OU PRESS, was in charge of the meticulous review and editing of the manuscript as it went through numerous drafts. Thanks as well to Debra Bree of OU PRESS for her assistance in preparation of the manuscript. Rabbi Simon Posner, Executive Editor of OU PRESS, was responsible for all aspects of the editing and production of this edition. I acknowledge as well Koren Publishers Jerusalem, our partners in this project, under the able leadership of Matthew Miller, for their outstanding work in editing, typesetting, and producing this edition.

Special thanks go to my colleague, Rabbi Steven Weil, Senior Managing Director of the OU. Rabbi Weil has consistently championed the dissemination of the Rav's works and the preservation of his legacy. Rabbi Weil has provided an extraordinary degree of encouragement and assistance to OU PRESS in its efforts to bring the Rav's writings to the public eye. The lay leadership of the OU has always fostered the efforts of OU PRESS, and I extend gratitude to Rabbi Julius Berman, Chairman of the OU PRESS Commission, and Moishe Bane, President of the Orthodox Union, for their support, as well.

This project could not have been realized without the generous support of our sponsors. We are grateful to the Weiss family and the other

members of the extended Stone family for their generosity, and we thank, as well, the Katz, Lehmann Siegel, Levart, Shapiro, Singer, and Straus families for their assistance. All those who participated in this project can be justifiably proud of their contribution to *Klal Yisrael* which this volume represents.

Menachem Dov Genack
General Editor
OU PRESS

תפילת מעריב

TEFILLAT MA'ARIV

Ma'ariv for Purim Night

On Motza'ei Shabbat some have the custom to sing Psalm 144 and Psalm 67 before the Ma'ariv Service (page 140).

יְהוָה רַחוּם He is compassionate.

Ps. 78

He forgives iniquity and does not destroy.

Repeatedly He suppresses His anger, not rousing His full wrath.

LORD, save! May the King, answer us on the day we call.

Ps. 20

BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA

The Leader says the following, bowing at "Bless," standing straight at "the LORD"; the congregation, followed by the Leader, responds, bowing at "Bless," standing straight at "the LORD":

Leader: **BLESS**

the LORD, the blessed One.

Congregation: Bless the LORD, the blessed One,
for ever and all time.

Leader: Bless the LORD, the blessed One,
for ever and all time.

blessed," that is, His explicit name. And although we do not explicitly utter that name, we do invoke it here.

We similarly invoke that name when we say Kaddish because the response "יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ, May His great name be blessed," is akin to the statement "בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלְכוּתוֹ...," which is the required response upon hearing the Ineffable Name in the Temple (see Mishna, *Yoma* 3:7). As a result, the recitation of Kaddish also requires the presence of a *minyan*.

מעריב לליל פורים

and לְדוֹד, בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה צוֹרֵי יהוה מוצאי שבת *On*
 תפילת ערבית *before* מוזמור שיר לְמַנְצַח בְּנִינֹת

תהלים עח

וְהוּא רַחוּם, יְכַפֵּר עוֹן וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִית
 וְהִרְבֵּה לְהַשִּׁיב אָפוֹ, וְלֹא־יַעִיר כָּל־חַמַּתּוֹ:
 יהוה הוֹשִׁיעָה, הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם־קִרְאָנוּ:

תהלים כ

קריאת שמע וברכותיה

קהל ה' יהוה יְהוָה, בְּרַכּוֹ, *says the following*, bowing at *the* קהל ה'
 followed by the שליח ציבור, *responds*, bowing at *standing straight at*

שִׁיר: בְּרַכּוֹ
 ד

אֶת יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ.

קהל: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

שִׁיר: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְהוָה *Bless the Lord*. This phrase can be said only in the presence of a *minyan* (quorum of ten men) because it constitutes a *davar shebikedusha*, a responsive prayer which fulfills the imperative to publicly sanctify God. Interestingly, though, no explicit mention of *kedusha*, holiness, appears here.

A prayer qualifies as a *davar shebikedusha* when the explicit, ineffable name of God is invoked. Thus, when we are invited here to “Bless the LORD, the blessed One,” we are called upon specifically to bless God’s name “which is

בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
 who by His word brings on evenings,
 by His wisdom opens the gates of heaven,
 with understanding makes time change and the seasons rotate,
 and by His will orders the stars in their constellations in the sky.
 He creates day and night,
 rolling away the light before the darkness,
 and darkness before the light.

- ▶ He makes the day pass and brings on night,
 distinguishing day from night:
 the LORD of hosts is His name.
 May the living and forever enduring God rule over us for all time.
 Blessed are You, LORD, who brings on evenings.

אָהַבְתָּ עוֹלָם With everlasting love
 have You loved Your people, the house of Israel.
 You have taught us Torah and commandments,
 decrees and laws of justice.

not be erased, while according to Rabbi Yose, it is not a divine name but a reference to the nation of Israel. Rabbi Yose translates אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל as “the LORD of Israel.” The other Sages disagree with Rabbi Yose because the divine name אֱלֹהֵי cannot be part of a possessive phrase. According to them, אֱלֹהֵי cannot be of anything. They understand the words אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל as two divine names, meaning “אֱלֹהֵי, who is יִשְׂרָאֵל.” (*And From There You Shall Seek*)

דְּבָרֵי חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים *Decrees and laws of justice.* Man, no matter what persuasion, faith or ideology, indignantly condemns the murderer and the act of murder. Yet, what about a situation so vividly illustrated by Dostoevsky in his novel *Crime and Punishment*? The book depicts a cruel, miserly old woman, a loan shark sucking the blood of those unfortunates caught in her web, a person who evicts the old and frail on a winter day in sub-zero temperatures. Portrayed in sharp contrast is a brilliant young student who cannot afford to continue his medical studies and who hopelessly watches as his sister is sold into white slavery and exiled. A loan of a few hundred rubles could have remedied his situation, yet the old woman refuses to advance him the money. In a moment of despair the student kills the miser. Do we have the right to condemn the student? Should we consider such a murder a crime? Yet, the Almighty has forbidden murder, whatever the motive.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר בְּדַבְּרוֹ מְעַרֵּב עַרְבִים, בְּחֻכְמָה פּוֹתַח שְׁעָרִים
 וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים וּמַחְלִיף אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים
 וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת הַפּוֹכְבִּים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרַקִּיעַ פְּרָצוֹנוֹ.
 בּוֹרֵא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה, גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר
 וּמְעַבֵּיר יוֹם וּמַבְיֵא לַיְלָה, וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ.
 אֵל חַי וְקַיִם תְּמִיד, יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, הַמְעַרֵּב עַרְבִים.

אֶהְבֵּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ אֶהְבֵּת
 תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, אוֹתָנוּ לְמִדָּת

Blessed are You... who by His word... The blessings which form the prologue and epilogue to *Keriat Shema* constitute a commentary to the Shema itself. As such, the reading of the Shema and its blessings form one whole integrated entity. Each motif of Shema is isolated from the complex experience, elucidated and expressed in the form of a hymn or entreaty. The *berakhot* do not add any new elements that the Shema itself does not contain. Rather, they take an implicit motif and unfold its meaning and sense. What is merely implied in Shema is explicated and interpreted by the *berakhot*. When we examine carefully the content of the *berakhot* we discover that each one corresponds to one section of the Shema. The first *berakha* incorporates the motif of the first section of the Shema: the unity and kingship of God. The second *berakha* takes up the idea of revelation and the giving of the Law and thus develops the main theme of the second section of the Shema: the acceptance of divine authority and the commitment to the realization of the religious norm and the fulfillment of the commandments. And finally, the third *berakha*, which follows Shema, constitutes the liturgical correlate of the third section of the Shema, whose motto is the exodus from Egypt, redemption. (*Worship of the Heart*)

יהוה צבאות שמו *The Lord of hosts is His name.* The Sages and Rabbi Yose debate whether the term *צבאות*, once written, may be erased (*Shevuot* 35b). According to the Sages, *צבאות* constitutes a divine name and therefore may

Therefore, LORD our God, when we lie down and when we rise up we will speak of Your decrees, rejoicing in the words of Your Torah and Your commandments for ever.

- ▶ For they are our life and the length of our days; on them will we meditate day and night.
- May You never take away Your love from us.

Blessed are You, LORD, who loves His people Israel.

The Shema must be said with intense concentration.

When not with a minyan, say:

God, faithful King!

The following verse should be said aloud, while covering the eyes with the right hand:

**Listen, Israel: the LORD is our God,
the LORD is One.**

Deut. 6

Quietly: Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and all time.

prayer (Amida) is termed by the same halakha and Aggada as *avoda shebalev*, service of the heart; that is, worshiping God. Worship as service, or as acceptance of a yoke, occurs not through cultic ceremonies and formal service, but via an inner paradoxical movement of the soul. This movement includes both a flight to God and a withdrawal from Him. The full realization of the commandments of Shema and *tefilla* thus manifests itself in the great heterogeneous religious experience. Because this movement is subjective, the halakha taught us that in both cases, in reading the Shema and reciting *tefilla*, intention (*kavana*) is not a mere modality, expressing just the “how” of the mitzva-fulfillment as in other mitzvot, but rather is identical with the very substance and essence of the commandment. (*Worship of the Heart*)

אֱלֹהֵינוּ One. When we affirm God’s unity, we intend to state that in His dual role as Creator of the world and as Legislator of the moral norm, He is One. His word made heaven and earth spring into existence, and the same word founded the moral law, the Torah. The bird in its flight, the flower opening its leaves toward the sunlight, the tumbling pebbles and the sea waves transmitting energy all carry out a divine ethical command. Judaism found God both in the cosmos and in the conscience, in natural and in moral necessity, and uncovered oneness in both realms. (*Worship of the Heart*)

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְבוֹד מְלֻכּוֹתָ *Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom.* The Talmud (*Pesahim* 56a), explaining the presence of this hymnal refrain after the first