Prayers written by Temple Beth-El members inserted into the Western Wall. Jerusalem, Israel (July 2014). Photo credit: Eva Sax-Bolder.

This siddur for Tisha b'Av includes sources both traditional and modern. In the merit of the peacemakers of history and our own day, may this siddur arouse the heart and soul to the power of Tisha b'Av. May all who use this siddur turn the descent of Tisha b'Av into a light-filled ascent of return and renewal.

This siddur contains holy text: please handle it with respect and dignity.

29 Tammuz 5774 • July 27, 2014
– David Evan Markus
Entering Tisha b'Av

Tisha b'Av recalls many tragedies of Jewish history – destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem, the Crusades, repeated exiles, and the "final solution" of the Holocaust. In our own day, Tisha b'Av beckons us into the darkness of inner exile, so we can emerge into the Season of Teshuvah, the Season of Return.

Enfolded in community, we invoke the depth of Tisha b'Av for the sake of rising anew. Our descent tonight is for the sake of ascent tomorrow.

Invocation (*Rachel Barenblat*)

As Tisha b'Av approaches,  
We begin our descent  
toward the rubble.

Our hearts crack open  
and sorrow comes flooding in.

Help us to believe  
that tears can transform,  
that redemption is possible.

The walls will come down:  
open our eyes, give us strength  
not to look away.

Responsive Reading *(adapted from Lam. 2; Ps. 130)*

Zion sits on the earth, her song silenced. We cast dust on the head, girded as in sackcloth, our heads bowed down to the ground.

*Our eyes are spent with tears, our bowels grumble. Our livers are poured onto the dust because of the destruction.*

Children and babies fall in the streets.

*Their souls are poured onto their parents’ bosoms.*

What comfort is there for this, when ruin is great like the sea?

*Prophets warned of vanity and foolishness. They warned that falsehood and conceit would bring bondage.*

Others hiss and wag their fingers saying, "These are the chosen ones called perfections of beauty, joys of the whole earth?"

*Enemies hiss and gnash their teeth saying, “We will swallow them up. Let them have no pity.”*

Our hearts cry out to God. Zion’s walls of protection lay in ruins.

*Our tears flow like rivers. We have no rest in body or soul.*

We cry out in the night. We pour out our hearts like water. Our hands rise up for the lives of our young, the poor faint in hunger.

*Must we eat our young? Must young and old lie in the streets? Must young men fall by the sword, slain in anger without mercy?*

On this appointed day, You call us into the terror at all sides. The walls are smashed.

*On this appointed day, You call us into the depths. Out of the depths, we call.*
**Vulnerable** (*Hannah Senesh*)

Oh Lord, my God!
I pray that these things never end:
The sand and the sea,
The rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens,
The prayer of the heart.

אֵלִי, אֵלִי:  
לְעוֹלָם יִגָּמֵר  
שֶׁלֹּא, וְהַיָּם  
הַחוֹל וְהָאָדָם  
הַמַּיִם  
שֶׁל רִשְׁרוּשׁ,  
בְּרַק,  
תְּפִלַּת.

**Psalm 130** (*adapted from Zalman Schachter-Shalomi*)

From the deepest place within me, I call out to You.  
God, hear what is in my voice.

*Hear my pleading tone. Were You to look for imperfection who could stand it? Who could stand it?*

You are so generous with pardon, but we fear to seek it.

*Still I hope, God. My very soul hopes for it:  
Please send me Your loving word.*

Among the watchers for the dawn, my God, I yearn for Your grace to end my darkness.

*Israel looks to You, God, who are so gracious. So easily You can free all of us. Lift us from all our brokenness.*
Community in Exile

"Wherever Israel was exiled, God's Shechinah (indwelling Presence) went with them. They were exiled to Egypt, and Shechinah went with them, as in, 'Didn't I reveal Myself to your ancestors in Egypt?' (1 Sam. 2:27). They were exiled to Babylon, and Shechinah went with them, as in, 'For your sake I was sent to Babylon' (Is. 43:14). And when Israel is redeemed in the future, Shechinah will go with them."

–Talmud, Avodah Zarah 29a

The Merciful One will cover iniquity and not forever destroy.
Soon may God withdraw anger and not arouse such rage.

Barchu et Adonai ham’vorach!

Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va’ed!

Bless God, the Blessed One!
Blessed is God, the Blessed One, forever and ever!

Night of Change

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, sovereign in all space-time, that by Whose word night falls, in wisdom opening gates, in discernment shifting cycles and changing the seasons, ordering the stars in their supernal paths – all by God’s will. Creator of day and night, rolling light from darkness, and darkness from light; causing day to pass and bringing on night, separating day from night – this is the Name of the Lord of Hosts.

Living and eternal God, always be our Sovereign forever and ever.
Blessed are You, Adonai, causing night to fall.
Enduring Love

With enduring love You loved the House of Israel. You taught us Torah and mitzvot, decrees and decisions. And so, Adonai our God, in lying down and rising up, we meditate on rejoicing in Your word and mitzvot forever. They are life and the length of day, focus for good living always.

Never withdraw Your love from us as long as worlds endure.
Blessed are You, Adonai, Who loves the people Israel.

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

Blessed is the glorious Name of God's majesty forever and ever.

Love Adonai your God with all your heart, all your soul, all you have.
Set these words that I command you this day on your heart.
Teach them to your children: speak of them as you dwell in your home and walk on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up.
Bind them as a sign on your hands and as symbol before your eyes; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
Watch out! Don’t let your hearts turn to serve other gods and bow down to them, for cosmic anger will turn on you. Heaven will close, sustenance will cease, and the earth will not produce bounty. Speedily you will feel chased from the goodness that God gave you.

Your God is Truth.

Redemption Poem (Mark Nazimova)

What did they think
as the waters rose up their legs,
chilling their hearts,
advancing toward their open mouths?

We continue to walk
here, now.
One foot at a time –
on our better days, forward.

Alone, I cannot
reach the far shore
without drowning

But somehow I don't go under.
The person to my right holds me up.
Something I cannot see
holds him up.

Blessed is the Source of Help
so often unexpected.
I step forward:
The sea is vast.
Seeing God’s power, they sang thankful praise to God’s Name. Receiving God’s majesty, Moses, Miriam and the Children of Israel joyfully answered You with song, all of them saying –

**Who is like You among the powers, Adonai?**
Who is like You, resplendent in holiness, awesome in praise, doing wonders?

Your children saw Your majesty split the sea before Moses. They answered saying, "This is my God!"

God will reign forever and ever!

As it is said: God redeemed Jacob and rescued him from a power stronger than his own. Blessed are You, Adonai, Redeemer of Israel.
Pursuit and Protection (David Markus)

Too often the world turns upside down: destruction and exile haunt us again and again.

Too often aggression and violence dim the human spirit. Crusades and genocides inflict losses beyond measure.

Even the thickest walls cannot always protect us.

Even our innermost sanctuaries see devastation.

We crave to know why, to be protected from onslaught.

We yearn to be tucked in at night and wake to new life.

We crave the cradle of Your peace and wise counsel.

Save us for Your Name’s sake. Shield us: remove from us enmity, plague, sword, famine and grief.

Remove all blocks to the flow of spirit. Shelter us in the shade of Your wing, for You are our protector and rescuer.

Gracious and compassionate One, bless our going and coming, for life and peace, now and forever.

Ufros aleinu sukkat shlomecha.
Shalom.

Spread over us a sukkah of peace: Shalom.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Eternal keeper of Israel.
Reader's Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified
Be the Great Name
In this world that God's will created,

And may God reign
In our life and days,
And the life of all the House of Israel,
speedily and soon,

And we say, Amen.

May the Great Name be blessed always and forever.

May the Great Name be
blessed, praised, glorified,
raised, exalted, honored,
uplifted honored, and lauded:

Blessed Be!

Higher than all the blessings and praises we ever could utter.

And we say, Amen.
Prelude to the Amidah *(David Markus)*

My God, so near and tonight seeming so far away,

Be with me during moments of darkness,
   pain, destruction and exile.

Help me find holy stillness even amidst rubble,
   serenity amidst loneliness, hope amidst despair.

Open my mouth and, even now,
   My lips will declare Your praise.

Silent Meditations of Encounter

Ancestors and elders
   Divine power restoring the lifeless
      Holiness beyond and holiness within

Wisdom and discernment
   The "still, small voice" promising our return
      Forgiveness with boundless compassion

Solidarity in redemption
   Healing in body, heart, mind and spirit
      Sufficiency amidst uncertainty and change

Ingathering of the excluded
   Justice and fairness
      Protection from slander and attack

Goodness for the righteous
   Peace in Jerusalem, within and everywhere
      Salvation

Knowing that prayers are received and heard
   Sensing God's presence
      Gratitude and peace

-10-
ברוך אתה עליון, ואלוהים, אבותינו, מתנותינו אלוהים, בבניינו, ובחכמים, מעמדתך, ובירושלים, שבצאתך, ובחכמים, מקדמים, והם מחזיקים, וא машיבים, ובחכמים, ויקרא, ודרכך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, והם מחזיקים, וא машיבים, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובחכמים, וברוך אתה, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובזה ударך, ובצאתך, ובחכמים, ובז
Closing Meditation

May the words of my mouth
And the meditations of my heart
Be acceptable to You, God,
My Rock and my Redeemer.

Oseh shalom bim’romav
Hu ya’aseh shalom aleinu
V’al kol Yisrael.
V’imru, amen.

May the One who makes peace in the heights
Make peace among us and among all God-wrestlers.
And we say, Amen.
At the First Aid Station
(Toge Sankichi, excerpt)

Ah!
How fresh and lovely you all were
A flash of time ago when you were
School girls, a flash ago.
Who could believe it now?
From the murky, quivering flames
Of burning, festering Hiroshima
You step, unrecognizable
even to yourselves.
You leap and crawl, one by one
Onto this grassy plot,
Wisps of hair on bronze bald heads
Into the dust of agony

Why have you had to suffer this?
Why this, the cruelest of inflictions?
Was there some purpose? Why?
You look so monstrous,
But could not know
How far removed
You are now from mankind
You think: Perhaps you think,
Of mothers and fathers,
Brothers and sisters,
Could even they know you now?
Of sleeping and waking,
Breakfast and home,
Where the flowers in the hedge
Scattered in a flash
And even the ashes now have gone.

Thinking, thinking, you are thinking
Trapped with friends
who ceased to move, one by one,
Thinking when once you were a
Daughter – a daughter of humanity.

God Has Pity on
Kindergarten Children
(Yehuda Amichai)

God pities kindergarten children.
He has less pity on school children
and on grownups no pity at all,
He leaves them alone, and
sometimes they must crawl on all
fours in the burning sand
to reach the first–aid station
covered with blood.

But perhaps He will watch over true
lovers and have mercy on them and
shelter them like a tree over the old
man sleeping on a public bench.

Perhaps we too will give them
the last rare coins of charity
that Mother handed down to us
so that their happiness may protect
us now and on other days.
After the Fall (Rachel Barenblat)

The Mishna says
senseless hatred
knocked the Temple down

not the Romans with their siege engines –
or not only them, but
our ancestors too

who slipped into petty backbiting
ignored Shabbat
forgot how to offer their hearts

we’re no better
we who secretly know we’re right
holier-than-they...

after every shooting parents weep
and we’re too busy arguing
motive to comfort them

across the Middle East parents weep
and we’re too busy arguing
borders to comfort them

in our nursing homes parents weep
shuddering and alone
and we’re too busy —

even now what sanctuaries
what human hearts
are damaged and burned

while we snipe at each other
or insist we’re not responsible
or avert our gaze?
Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.

*We hung our lyres on the willows in its midst.*

For there, those who carried us away captive required of us a song, and those who tormented us required of us mirth, saying,

"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"  But how can we sing God’s song in a foreign land?

If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy....

Happy shall he be, who repays you for what you have done to us!

Happy shall he be, who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock.

Grief *(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)*

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless  
That only men incredulous of despair  
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air  
Beat upward to God’s throne in loud access  
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,  
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
Of the absolute heavens. Deep-hearted man, express  
Grief for they dead in silence like to death –  
Most like a monumental statue set  
In everlasting watch and moveless woe  
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:  
If it could weep, it could arise and go.
Book of Lamentations: Chapter One

1 How lonely sits the city: once full of people, she became as a widow! Once great among the nations; the princess of states now is a vassal!

2 She weeps bitterly at night: her tears are on her cheeks. Among all who love her, none comforts her. All friends betray her, now enemies.

3 Judah went into exile in affliction and servitude. She dwells among the nations but finds no rest: all her pursuers overtook her in distress.

4 Zion's paths mourn: none comes to appointed feasts. All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh, her young are afflicted, and she is bitter.

5 Her adversaries lord over her; her enemies prosper, for God afflicted her for her many sins. Her infants are taken captive by the enemy.

6 From the daughter of Zion all splendor is departed. Her princes are like deer finding no pasture, without strength before the pursuer.

7 In days of affliction and miseries, as her people fell into enemy hands, Jerusalem remembered all her pleasant things she had in days of old. None helped her: adversaries saw her and chiding her destruction.
Jerusalem grievously sinned, becoming loathsome. All who honored her now despise her, seeing her defilement. Even she sighs and turns from herself.

Her filth was in her skirts; she did not care about her end so she fell astonishingly, lacking a comforter. O God, behold my affliction, for the enemy is so great!

The adversary spread its hand on all her precious things. She saw nations enter her sanctuary whom You forbade in her inner sanctum.

All her people sigh, begging bread: they gave their wealth for food to revive their soul. See, O God, and consider how abject I've become.

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold, see if anyone hurts as I do! My pain was brought on me by God afflicting me in anger.

On high God sent fire into my bones: it prevails against them. God spread a net for my feet and tripped me, making me faint all day.

The yoke of my sin is bound by God's hand, knit and set on my neck. God caused my strength to fall, delivering me into hands of those against whom I cannot rise.
15 God spurned all my mighty defenders, calling an assembly against me to crush them. Like a wine press, God crushed Judah's daughter.

16 For these things I weep. My eyes runs with water: too far from me is any comfort for my soul. Children are desolate: the enemy prevails.

17 Zion spreads her hands but none comfort her. God commanded Jacob adversaries against him: Jerusalem is a bleeding woman among them.

18 God is just, for I rebelled at God's word. I beg you, all peoples, hear and behold my sorrow: even my strongest youth went into captivity.

19 I called to my lovers but they deceived me. My priests and elders perished in the city, while they sought food to revive their souls.

20 God! See my distress: my bowels grumble, my heart turns inside me, for I grievously rebelled. Outside the sword cuts: home is as death.

21 They heard me sigh: none comfort me. My enemies heard my trouble, glad that You did it. Bring the day You announced so they be like me.

22 Let their evil come before You and do to them as You did to me for all my transgressions, for my sighs are many and my heart is sick.
The joy of our heart has stopped: our dance is turned into mourning.

The crown has fallen from our head: woe to us that we have sinned!

For this, our heart is faint: for these things, our eyes are dark.

On the desolate mountain of Zion, foxes prowl.

You are God, forever seated on Your throne for all generations.

Must You seem to forget us forever and forsake us for so long?

Turn us toward You, God, and we will be returned: renew us as in days of old.

For You utterly rejected us: Your anger feels so great against us.

Hashiveinu Adonai eilecha v’nashuva
Chadeish yameinu k’kedem.

Turn us toward You, God, and we will be returned:
Renew us as in days of old.

-19-
Mourner's Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified is the Great Name in this world that God’s will created. May God reign in our life and days, and the life of all the House of Israel, speedily and soon. And we say, Amen.

May the Great Name be blessed always and forever.

May the Great Name be blessed praised, glorified, raised, exalted, honored, uplifted, honored and lauded: Blessed Be! Higher than all the blessings and praises we ever could utter. And we say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven and life for us and all Israel. And we say, Amen.

May the One who makes peace above make peace for us, for all Israel, and for all who dwell on Earth. And we say, Amen.
Return Again (Shlomo Carlebach)

Return again, return again,
Return to the land of your soul. (2x)

Return to who you are, return to what you are,
Return to where you are born and reborn again. (2x)

Dust and Stars (Talmud, Megillah 16a)

This people is likened to the dust and likened to the stars.
When they go down, they go down to the dust. When they rise up, they rise up to the stars.

Psalm 121: A Song of Ascents

I lift my eyes unto the mountains
From where, from where will my help come? (2x)
My help will come from the One,
Maker of heaven and earth.

Higher and Higher

Lord, lift me high, lift me high, lift me high,
Lord, lift me high, lift me higher. (2x)

Higher and higher...

Lord, let me pray, let me pray just one prayer,
Lord, let me pray just one prayer. (2x)

Higher and higher...