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**A Prayer for Release**

*[Please note: the language on this first page—designed for family and loved ones to recite—is an adaptation of the traditional Jewish Vidui, final confessional, organized around Dr. Ira Byock’s Four Things that Matter Most. It is intended as a framework, an opening for a sincere conversation. Please personalize as appropriate.]*

**Please forgive me.**

I know that I have made mistakes and caused you pain. I ask now for your forgiveness.

**I forgive you.**

I don’t want to hold resentment, nor do I want you to hold guilt. We are all more than our worst moments. I forgive you.

**Thank you.**

I treasure the many blessings you have given me.  Your presence in my life has informed who I am and who I will become. You will always be with me.

**I love you.**

I love you, and that love transcends death. I will not let you disappear from this world. Your presence, your love will be with me always.

***I release you.***

You have given so much in this world. May God now guide your soul toward peace, and may your spirit reverberate for generations to come. May you be forever bound up in the bond of life.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יהוה אֱלֹהֵֽינוּ, יהוה אֶחָד

[Shema](https://www.ritualwell.org/glossary/4/letters#term339) Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai ehad.

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

Deuteronomy 6:4

 מִן־הַ֭מֵּצַֽר קָרָ֣אתִי יָּ֑הּ עָ֝נָ֗נִי בַמֶּרְחָ֣ב יָֽהּ

*Min hametzar karati Yah, anani bamerhav Yah.*

Out of the narrowness I cried out to You,

You answered me with expansive possibility.

Psalms 118:5

**Final Words: Abbreviated Vidui**

*(Excerpted from the traditional Jewish vidui, final confessional.*   
*This can be said by the person dying, or on their behalf.)*

Holy One, my soul and body are in Your hands.

The soul You gave me is pure:

You created it, formed it, breathed it into me

and kept it safe in me until now.

My healing and even my death are in Your hands.

If it is time for me to transition from this world--

whether today or in the coming days–

Grant me and the beloveds of my heart, whose souls are bound with mine,

the grace to accept this turning of the wheel of life.

I forgive all who harmed me in my life.

May their hearts be at ease,

as I release all anger and pain from them into the dust of the earth.

And just as I have forgiven,

so may I be forgiven all my shortcomings, missteps or failures of judgment.

Please let me be remembered for my goodness and my love.

May my spirit shine as the brightness of the firmament.

Accept my soul in love.

Even as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me.  
With these last breaths, I surrender my spirit.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יהוה אֱלֹהֵֽינוּ, יהוה אֶחָד

יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים. יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים. יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים

*Sh’ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai ehad.*

*Adonai haElohim, Adonai haElohim, Adonai haElohim*

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

**Final Words: Vidui**

*(Full text of the traditional Jewish vidui, final confessional.*   
*This can be said by the person dying, or on their behalf.)*

אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי וִאמוֹתַי, שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי

מוֹדֶה / מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה

שֶׁנִשְׁמַתִי וְגוּפִי מְסוּרִים בְּיָדֶךָ

אֱלֹהַי, נְשָׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי טְהוֹרָה הִיא:

אַתָּה בְרָאתָהּ, אַתָּה יְצַרְתָּהּ, אַתָּה נְפַחְתָּהּ בִּי,

וְאַתָּה שַׁמְּרָהּ בְּקִרְבִּי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

*Elohei v Elohei avotai v’imotai sh’ma b’koli*

*Modeh / Modah ani l’fanekha, M’kor haHayim,*

*shenishmati v’gufi m’surim b’yadekha.*

*Elohai, n’shamah shenatata bi — t’horah hi:*

*Atah v’ratah, atah y’tzartah, atah n’fahtah bi,*

*v’atah m’sham’rah b’kirbi ad hayom hazeh.*

My God and God of those who came before me: please, hear me now.

I acknowledge before You, Source of Blessing,   
that my soul and body are in Your hands.

Holy One, the soul You gave me is pure:

You created it, formed it, breathed it into me

and kept it safe in me until now.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, אַב הָרַחַמִים,

שֶׁתִּרְפָאֵנִי רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה

וּכְּשֶׁאֶעֱבֹר מֶעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, אִם הַיּוֹם אוֹ בָּזְמַן עָתִּיד לָבוֹא,

תְּחָנֵנִּי וְקְרוּבֵי הָלִבִּי, שֶׁמִתְּחַבְּרִים עִם נִּשְׁמָתִי,

לְּהַסְכִּים אֶת פְּנִיַית שֶׁל גַלְגַל הַחַיִים הַזּאת

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Av harahamim*

*Shetirfa-eini refuah sheimah.*

*Uk’she’evor meolam hazeh Im hayom o bazman atid lavo,*

*l’haskim et p’niyat shel galgal hahayim hazot.*

May it be Your will, Source of Compassion,

that You grant me complete healing.

But when I pass from this world – whether today or in a time to come –

grant me and the beloveds of my heart, whose souls are bound with mine,

the grace to accept this turning of the wheel of life.

לְפָנֶיךָ אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן, מְכַפֵּר עָוֹן וְלֹא מַשְׁחִית

אֲנִי סוֹלֵחַ / סוֹלַחַת כָּל שֶׁהֵרֵעוּנִי בְּחַיַי

תִּהְיוּ רְגוּעוֹת לִבּוֹתֵיהֶם

וָאֲשַׁלֵחַ מִמֵנִּי כָּל כַּעַס וּכְאֵב מֵהֵם לְתּוֹךְ אֵפֶר הָאָרֶץ

כְּשֵׁם שֶׁסָלַחְתִּי לְאֲחֵרִים,

כֵּן תִּסְלַח לִּי מִּכָּל הַחֲטָאִים שֶׁלִי

*L’fanekha El rahum v’hanun, m’khapeir avon v’lo mash·hit,*

*ani solei·ah/solahat kol sheheirei·uni b’hayai.*

*Tiyu r’gu·ot liboteihem*

*vashalei·akh mimeini kolka’as ukh’eiv meiheim l’tokh eifer haaretz.*

*K’sheim shesa’akhti l’aheirim,*

*kein tislah li mikol hahata·im sheli.*

Before You, God of Mercy and Grace, who pardons iniquity and does not destroy, I forgive all who harmed me in my life.

May their hearts be at ease,

as I release all anger and pain from them into the dust of the earth.

And just as I have forgiven,

so may You forgive me all my shortcomings.

*[We now recite the traditional confessional from Yom Kippur:]*

אָשַֽׁמְנוּ. בָּגַֽדְנוּ. גָּזַֽלְנוּ. דִּבַּֽרְנוּ דֹּֽפִי.

הֶעֱוִֽינוּ. וְהִרְשַֽׁעְנוּ. זַֽדְנוּ. חָמַֽסְנוּ. טָפַֽלְנוּ שֶֽׁקֶר.

יָעַֽצְנוּ רָע. כִּזַּֽבְנוּ. לַֽצְנוּ. מָרַֽדְנוּ. נִאַֽצְנוּ. סָרַֽרְנוּ. עָוִֽינוּ. פָּשַֽׁעְנוּ. צָרַֽרְנוּ. קִשִּֽׁינוּ עֹֽרֶף.

:רָשַֽׁעְנוּ. שִׁחַֽתְנוּ. תִּעַֽבְנוּ. תָּעִֽינוּ. תִּעְתָּֽעְנוּ

*Ashamnu. Bagadnu. Gazalnu. Debarnu dofie.*  
*Heh’vinu. Vehirshanu. Zadnu. Hamasnu. Talphanu Sheker.*  
*YaAtznu Rah. Kizavnu. Latznu. Maradnu. NieAtznu.*

*Sararnu. Avinu. Pashanu. Tzararnu. Kisheinu Oref.*

*Rashanu. Sheihatnu. Ti’ahvnu. Ta’inu. Ti’tanu.*

בִּזְּכוּת זֶה, תִּשְׁמוֹר אֶת נִּשְׁמָתִי בְּשָׁלוֹם

וּתִּזְהַר נַפְשִׁי כְּזוֹהַר הַרָקִיעַ לְעוֹלָמִים

אֲנִי מַאֲמִין / מַאֲמִינָה בְּאֶמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה שֶׁתְּקַבֵּל נִשְׁמַתִי בְּאַהֲבָה

גַּם כִּי אֵלֵךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמָוֶת

לֹא אִירָא רָע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי

בְּיָדְךָ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי פָּדִיתָה אוֹתִי יהוה אֵל אֱמֶת

*Biz’khut zeh, tishmor et nishmati b’shalom*

*utiz·har nafshi k’zohar harakia l’olamim.*

*Ani maamin / maaminah be·emunah shleimah shet’kabel nishmati bahavah*

*Gam ki eilekh b’gei tzalmavet*

*lo ira ra ki atah imadi.*

*B’yadkha afkid ruhi paditah oti Adonai El emet*

By this merit, preserve my soul in peace;

may my spirit forever shine as the brightness of the firmament.

I believe with perfect faith that You will accept my soul in love.

Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil for You are with me.  
Into Your hand I surrender my spirit: You redeem me, God of Truth.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יהוה אֱלֹהֵֽינוּ, יהוה אֶחָד

יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים. יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים. יהוה הָאֱלֹהִים

*Sh’ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai ehad.*

*Adonai haElohim, Adonai haElohim, Adonai haElohim*

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

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָֽד

*Shema Yisroel Adonai Elohainu, Adonai ehad (1x)*

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

*Baruch Shem Kevod Malkhuto L’olam Vaed (3x)*

יְהוָה הוּא חָֽאֱלֹהִ֑ים

*Adonai Hu Ha Elohim (7x)*

*(based on translation from Rabbi David Markus)*

**Late Fragment**

And did you get what  
you wanted from this life, even so?  
I did.  
And what did you want?  
To call myself beloved, to feel myself  
beloved on the earth.

*Raymond Carver*

**Some Guidelines in Navigating End of Life**

**When Death is Imminent**

*The guiding principle during this time is that the individual, in their dying chapter, holds a special status, in which they are treated as a living person in all respects.*

* When possible, **the dying person recites the *Vidui,* above, the confessional prayer, or loved ones recite it on their behalf.**
  + We have provided above multiple options above, depending on the particular needs of the individual and family.
  + **If the dying person is unable to recite this confessional, someone may recite the *Vidui* on their behalf.**
  + NOTE: Do not delay in reciting the vidui because you’re unsure of how imminent the death might be. **The *vidui* can be recited multiple times** over the course of the closing chapter of a person’s life.
* **In the final moments of life, one is known as a *goses*,** which means "dying," or "moribund." This word is derived from the sound emitted as the chest cavity narrows. It is taught that the *Shehinah* (Divine Presence) stands at the head of the *goses,* and therefore there is a sanctity around the *goses*:
  + One should **speak directly to the *goses***, rather than about them, especially in their presence. Address them by name when possible, and speak in gentle tones.
  + **Assume that the *goses* can hear and understand you**, even if it may appear that they cannot.
  + If at all possible, **a person who is dying should not be left alone.**
  + Limit conversations in the room to those that meet the needs of the dying person.
  + When possible, **leave the room to eat, drink, or discuss extraneous matters.**
  + If possible, **open the windows** in the room where the *goses* is lying to create a sense of permission for the person’s soul to depart when ready.
* According to Jewish tradition, **we do not take any action that would hasten a person's death.** At the same time, **we do not needlessly extend a person’s life**, when death is imminent.
* **When death is imminent, a rabbi should be notified** to offer moral support to the family and to the dying person, praying with them and offering practical counsel and assistance.
* **The presence of loved ones** brings necessary and important psychological comfort to the *goses,* and can help meet the emotional needs of those who love them. Remember that death is a part of life.
* **Psalms and prayers may be recited to ease the loved-one's passing.** Psalms 23, 91, 103, 121, 130 and 139 are particularly appropriate. Singing, telling stories, background music may all be comforting.

**After Death Has Occurred**

*The main principle regarding the care of the body following death is the honoring the dignity of every person.*

* Upon death, the words ***Baruch Dayan Ha-Emet* (May the True Judge be Blessed)** is recited.
* **The *met*, the deceased, should not be left unattended.** Ideally, from the time of death, people take turns doing *sh'mira* (keeping watch over the body) until the *Hevra Kadisha* or the funeral director arrives.
* **Close the eyes and mouth of the *met*, the deceased,** and straighten the limbs when possible.
* **Cover the *met* with a sheet.**
* **Place a lit candle near the head** of the *met* (not done on *Shabbat;* on *Yom Tov,* kindle from a pre-existing flame).
* If possible, **orient the body so that the feet face the doorway.**
* **Medical personnel may remove tubes and needles** after the death.
* If there are **organ donation arrangements,** honor the *goses's* wishes when possible.
* If possible, **open the windows** in the room where the *met* is lying.
* **Contact the rabbi** or **synagogue** to begin to make funeral and shiva arrangements.
* Contact the **significant family members or companions** of the deceased to inform them of the death.

*Adapted from:* <https://dc.jewish-funerals.org/pending-just-and-after-death>

*For more resources, see: https://ikar.org/pray/mourning/.*