

## If a Secular Jew Prays Does It Make a Sound?

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### Affirmation Before Kol Nidre (Mahzor)

By the authority of the court on high and by the authority of this court below, with divine consent and with consent of this congregation, we grant permission to pray with those who have transgressed.

### Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel HaCohen (c1240-1298 CE)

(Tracted Yoma, Shivat Yamim 147)

We enter the synagogue and lift the ban on praying with those individuals who violated communal decrees even if those individuals have not asked that the bans be lifted. [As is written in Kritut 6b] 'in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida, any fast that doesn't include the sinners of Israel is not a true fast...'

### Kol Nidre (All Vows)

All vows, prohibitions, oaths, consecrations, vows that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves - from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, may it come upon us for good - regarding them all, we regret them henceforth. They are all released, abandoned, cancelled, null and void, without power and without standing. Our vows are not vows; our consecrations are not consecrations; and our oaths are not oaths.

### "By Divine Consent" | By Rivka Miriam

By divine consent and by consent of this congregation  
By consent of the heavens below, by consent of heavens above  
Out of the memory of the creaking of the locked gate  
Out of memory of the open lips of the child when he asked-

We grant permission to be silent here in this prayer  
To keep our lips shut, without releasing another word  
To stand silent in mercy, in will, in fear and awe  
To wrap our tongues in white drought

Like a fresh shroud  
And like a bride's gown  
That our silence be made tight and pure and like stone,  
And strong and standing, like a city built firmly,  
Until the hour of Neilah.

### הצהרה לפני "כל נדרי"

בישיבה של מעלה ובישיבה של מטה, על דעת המקום, ועל דעת הקהל, אנו מתירין להתפלל עם העבריינים.

### הרב מרדכי בן הלל הכהן

(מסכת יומא, פרק שבעת ימים, רמז תשכה)

ונכנסים לבית הכנסת, ומתירין חרם להתפלל עם כל איש אשר עבר על גזירת הקהל אפילו אינו מבקש שיתירו לו; (כריתות ו"ב) דאר"ב שמעון חסידא כל תענית שאין בה מפושעי ישראל אינה תענית ...

### כל נדרי

כָּל נְדָרֵי וְאָסְרֵי וְשְׂבוּעֵי וְחֲרָמֵי וְקוֹנְמֵי וְקוֹנְסֵי וְכַנּוּיֵי, דְּאֵנְדְּרָנָא וְדְּאֵשְׁתַּבְּעָנָא, וְדְּאֵחְרִימָנָא וְדְּאֵסְרָנָא עַל נְפְשֵׁתָנָא. מִיּוֹם כְּפוּרִים זֶה עַד יוֹם כְּפוּרִים הִבָּא עָלֵינוּ לְטוֹבָה. בְּכֻלְהוֹן אֵיחְרֻטָנָא בְּהוֹן, כְּלָהוֹן יְהוֹן שְׂרוֹן, שְׂבִיקִין שְׂבִיתִין בְּטֻלִין וּמְבֻטְלִין, לֹא שְׂרִירִין וְלֹא קִימִין. נְדָרָנָא לֹא נְדָרֵי וְאֵסְרָנָא לֹא אָסְרֵי וְשְׂבוּעָתָנָא לֹא שְׂבוּעוֹת.

### על דעת המקום ועל דעת הקהל | רבקה מרים

עַל דְּעַת הַמָּקוֹם וְעַל דְּעַת הַקֶּהֶל  
עַל דְּעַת רְקִיעַ שְׁמַתַּחַת, עַל דְּעַת רְקִיעַ שְׁמַעַל  
מִתּוֹךְ זְכוּרוֹן הַחֲרִיקָה שֶׁל הַשַּׁעַר שֶׁנִּנְעַל  
מִתּוֹךְ זְכוּרוֹן שְׁפִתֵי הַיָּלֵד הַפְּשׁוּקוֹת כְּשֶׁשָּׂאֵל –

אֲנוּ מִתִּירִים לְשִׁתֵּק כָּאֵן אֶת זוֹ הַתְּפִלָּה  
לְנֹצֵר פִּינוּ מִתְּאִפֵּק, לְבִלִּי הוֹצֵא עוֹד מִלֵּה  
לְדָם בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן וּבְמוֹרָא וּבְדַחֲלִילָה  
לְעֻטוֹת לְשׁוֹנְנוּ בִּיבֶשׁ לְךָ

כְּתִכְרִיָּה צַח

וְכֻמוּ בְּגַד כְּלָה

שְׁתַּבְּנָה דוּמִיָּתְנּוּ קְפוּצָה וּבְרָה וְאַבְנִית

וְעִזָּה וְעוֹמְדָת, כְּעִיר בְּנוּיָה עַל תֵּלָה

עַד שְׁעַת הַנְּעִילָה.

### Invitation | By Shel Silverstein

If you are a dreamer, come in,  
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,  
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...  
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire  
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.  
Come in! Come in!

### I Proclaim with Complete Faith | Yehuda Amichai

I proclaim with complete faith  
that prayers came before God  
prayer created God  
God created man  
and man creates prayers  
that create God who creates man.

### Yom Kippur | Yehuda Amichai (Translated by Rick Black)

Yom Kippur without my father and without my mother  
is not Yom Kippur.  
From the blessing of their hands upon my head  
only the tremor remains like the tremor of a motor  
that has not stopped even after their death.  
My mother died just five years ago.  
She is still caught in the bureaucratic process  
between the heavenly offices above and the paperwork below.  
My father, who died long ago, has already been resurrected  
in other places but not in my place.

Yom Kippur without my father and without my mother  
is not Yom Kippur.

Therefore I eat in order to remember  
and drink in order not to forget  
and arrange the vows  
and classify the oaths by time and degree.

By day we cried out, "Forgive us,"  
and in the evening we cried, "Open the gates of heaven for us,"  
but I say forget for our sake, forget us, leave us be  
at the time of the locking of the gates, for the day is done.  
The last rays of sunlight are shattered  
in the synagogue's stained-glass window.  
The sunlight is not shattered,  
we are shattered,  
the word "shattered" is shattered.

### הזמנה | של סילברסטיין

אם אתה בחולמים, בוא שב!  
כל חולם חלומות, כל הוזה ומנחש,  
כל רואה דמיונות, מרכל ומלחש,  
כל שקרן וגוזמן מוזמן אל האש,  
לבדות ספורי בזים מן הלב.  
בוא שב! בוא שב!

### אני אומר באמונה שלמה | יהודה עמיחי

אני אומר באמונה שלמה  
שהתפלות קדמו לאלהים  
התפלות יצרו את האלהים,  
האלהים יצר את האדם  
והאדם יוצר תפלות  
שיצרות את האלהים שיוצר את האדם.

### יום כיפור | יהודה עמיחי

יום כפור בלי אבי ובלי אמי  
הוא לא יום כפור.  
מברכת ידיהם על ראשי  
נשאר רק הרעד, כמו רעד מנוע  
שלא פסק גם אחר מותם.

יום כפור בלי אבי ובלי אמי  
הוא לא יום כפור.  
לכן אני אוכל כדי לזכור  
ושותה כדי לא לשכח  
ומסדר את הנדרים  
וממין את השבועות לפי זמן ומדה.

ביום צעקנו "סלח לנו",  
ובערב צעקנו "פתח לנו"  
ואני אומר שכח לנו, שכח אותנו, הנח לנו  
לעת נעילת שער כי פנה היום.  
אור השמש האחרון נשבר  
בחלון הצבעוני של בית הכנסת.  
אור השמש לא נשבר,  
אנחנו נשברים,  
המלה "נשברת" נשברת.

## From "Jerusalem 1967"

Yehuda Amichai

On Yom Kippur in 1967, the Year of Forgetting, I put on my dark holiday clothes and walked to the Old City of Jerusalem. For a long time I stood in front of an Arab's hole-in-the-wall shop, not far from the Damascus Gate, a shop with buttons and zippers and spools of thread in every colour and snaps and buckles. A rare light and many colours, like an open Ark. I told him in my heart that my father too had a shop like this, with thread and buttons. I explained to him in my heart about all the decades and the causes and the events, why I am now here and my father's shop was burned there and he is buried here. When I finished, it was time for the Closing of the Gates prayer. He too lowered the shutters and locked the gate and I returned, with all the worshippers, home.

## מתוך "ירושלים 1967"

יהודה עמיחי

ביום כיפור בשנת תשכ"ח לבשת  
בגדי חג כהים והלכתי לעיר העתיקה  
בירושלים,  
עמדתי זמן רב לפני כוך חנותו של ערבי,  
לא רחוק משער שכם, חנות  
כפתורים ורוכסנים וסלילי חוטים  
בכל בצע ולחצניות ואבזמים.  
אור יקר וצבעים רבים, כמו ארון-קודש פתוח.  
אמרתי לו בלבי שגם לאבי  
הייתה חנות כזאת של חוטים וכפתורים.  
הסברתי לו בלבי על כל עשרות השנים  
והגורמים והמקרים, שאני עכשיו פה  
וחנות אבי שרופה שם והוא קבור פה.  
כשסיימתי הייתה שעה נעילה.  
גם הוא הוריד את התריס ונעל את השער  
ואני חזרתי עם כל המתפללים הביתה

## From *Night* by Elie Wiesel

One day, as we returned from work, we saw three gallows, three black ravens, erected on the Appelplatz. Roll call. The SS surrounding us, machine guns aimed at us: the usual ritual. Three prisoners in chains – and, among them, the little child, the sad-eyed angel. The SS seemed more preoccupied, more worried, than usual. To hang a child in front of thousands of onlookers was not a small matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was pale, almost calm, but he was biting his lips as he stood in the shadow of the gallows. This time, the Lagerkapo refused to act as executioner. Three SS took his place. The three condemned prisoners together stepped onto the chairs. In unison, the nooses were placed around their necks. "Long live liberty!" shouted the two men. But the boy was silent. "Where is merciful God, where is He?" someone behind me was asking. At the signal, the three chairs were tipped over. Total silence in the camp. On the horizon, the sun was setting. "Caps off!" screamed the Lageralteste. His voice quivered. As for the rest of us, we were weeping. "Cover your heads!" Then came the march past the victims. The two men were no longer alive. Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish. But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing... And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished. Behind me, I heard the same man asking: "For God's sake, where is God?" And from within me, I heard a voice answer: "Where is He? This is where – hanging here from these gallows..."

### **Rabbi Elimelech and the Tailor** *(As told by S. Y. Agnon in Days of Awe)*

Once, on the eve of Yom Kippur, a group of students asked the great Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk what a pious Jew should do on Erev Yom Kippur. "If you want to know," the rabbi replied, "go to the tailor living on the outskirts of town."

So the students travelled to the tailor's house, and peered through his window. At first, they were bored watching the usual holiday preparations and rituals. But late that night, once the house was quiet, the tailor went to the closet and took out a notebook. Holding the book high over his head, the tailor declared, "Master of the Universe, now the time has come for You and me to reckon our accounts, to tally our sins for the past year." And so the tailor began to list each and every sin he had committed the previous year, each of which was recorded in the notebook. Then he went back to the closet, put the notebook away, and took out a much larger, heavier, thicker notebook. Struggling, trying to hold up the notebook, the tailor declared, "Oh God, first I recounted all my sins. Now I list yours." And the tailor began to list all the suffering, all the tragedy in the world. And then the tailor continued, "Master of the Universe, in truth it appears you owe me more than I owe you. But I'd rather not keep strict accounts. This is a time of forgiveness. So why don't I just forgive you, and you forgive me." He then poured a glass of brandy, made a blessing and said aloud "L'chaim, Master of the Universe! We forgive one another for what we have sinned, and all our sins, both mine and yours, are annulled, as if they never were." He then drank and ate a festive meal.

The students returned to their rabbi and told him what they saw and heard. They recounted what awful and chutzpah-ful things the tailor had done before God. The rabbi replied to them: "Know that the Holy Blessed One Himself comes to hear the words of the tailor every year, which are said so purely and simply, and because of his words, peace is kept in the world."

### **The Flute**

Meir was a good boy. He always listened to his parents and helped out around the house, but no matter how hard he tried, he wasn't able to speak. Instead of going to school, Meir tended his father's cows. Every morning he led them to a meadow, where he would take out his flute and play them the most beautiful tunes. When he put his flute away, the cows knew it was time to go home.

Meir was thirteen when his father took him to the Ba'al Shem Tov on Yom Kippur. "Maybe the presence of such a great man will do Meir some good," his father thought. For a while, it even seemed to work. Meir was excited to be in the same synagogue as the Ba'al Shem Tov, but he was also very sad that he didn't know how to pray.

As the long service came to an end, Meir had an idea. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out his flute and began to play. "This is how even I can pray," he thought proudly, and played a note as strong as he could. No one agreed, though; in fact, the entire congregation was outraged. How dare this boy disturb their prayers?

They jumped up from their seats to throw Meir and his father out of the synagogue. Even the Ba'al Shem Tov rushed toward them.

The Baal Shem Tov looked at Meir and hugged him. "Thank you," he said. "All Yom Kippur I wondered whether our prayers would be answered. We said all the words, but we lacked the passion. Then I heard your flute, so simple and sincere, and I knew our prayers would be answered."

The Ba'al Shem Tov turned to the congregation. "I see you've risen to thank this boy. After all, his flute opened the Gates of Heaven to our prayers."

## “And whom, may I ask, is the addressee”? | Muki Tsur (Yom Kippur, 2009)

To whom are we sending these letters of ours? What is the prayer’s address? Who is the sender? Who is the recipient? Are there indications within the prayer of an identification with that which we are not -- speech in the framework of love towards the other? Perhaps prayer flows from the human encounter between fragile human beings whose hearts know many crevices, and who admire the distant lights of a star.

Is responsibility towards the other revealed through prayer -- the other being the root of responsibility? Does prayer foster sensitivity to the other? Or is prayer a soulful reflective experience that highlights the place in which the pray-er stands, and through which she requests salvation for herself, regardless of those around her? Salvation for her, being the release and infinite enlargement of the self, through a refusal to stand behind the other, given that responsibility is the ability to stand behind your own actions. Is prayer about “standing before”, in advance of “standing behind”? But then again, standing behind (*me-achorei* מאחורי) is the root of responsibility (*achrayut* אחריות).

Everything points us towards the need for a dialogue, one that is also a human encounter. With the text as the point of departure.

But what text? Is the sanctified text the uncontested point of departure? Is no other text worthy? When we pray, will we study the text as a historical document that will teach us to listen precisely to the reality that surrounds us, and to discover, through a quest for the reality that informed the text in its own time, our need to read our own reality and the moral demands that it raises? Or must the text be raised as it was handed down through the generations, with no concern for the different stations through which it passed. This stemming from an assumption that the large distance allows the text to be read more as an open interpretation, which then allows it to be transformed into a mirror for every agitated soul, or to be sung as a soothing song that through awesome words will accompany those souls who have been asleep for a while

We mustn’t say all the words without believing in a single one of them, just as we mustn’t lock away the prayer books out of fear that we will get caught by the faith police that roams the neighbourhoods. We must be those who aspire not to be an obstacle in the path of those who seek, so that they not lose man, despite his weakness.

We must draw fully from music, art, theatre, art, literature, and traditional prayer books; from the stories of the chassidim and the stories of the mitnagdim, from Natan Alterman and Lea Goldberg, from Abba Kubner and Dahlia Rabikovitch, from Haim Nahman Bialik and the labour of gathering and creativity.

Martin Buber said that you don’t create culture through a pre-made plan. It will not flourish that way. But he said this in his seventies. As a young man, he dared put up an art exhibition at the Zionist Congress, to show us and the citizens of Zionism, that culture always suffers from a long pregnancy. It too comes through a moment of decision, a moment of will and daring. In a pregnancy, many are the fears; the sense of the future is strong yet too mysterious, it must not be rushed in an artificial way. One must prepare birth certificates so that it will be possible to nurture growth and repair.

## Who Established The Daily Prayers? Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 26b

It was stated: Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said: the prayers were instituted by the Patriarchs. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: the prayers were instituted based on the daily sacrificial offerings

It was taught in a *baraita* in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, and it was taught in a *baraita* in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

It was taught in a *baraita* in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina: Abraham instituted the morning prayer, as it is stated: "And Abraham rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood (*'amad* [עמד] [before the Lord])" (Genesis 19:27), and, the verb standing (*'amida* [עמידה]) means nothing other than prayer (tfilah תפילה), as it is stated: "And Pinehas stood up (*vaya'amod* [ויעמוד] and prayed (*vayfalel* [ויפלל] (Psalms 106:30).

## Leah Goldberg - "Prayer"

Teach me, my God to bless, to pray  
on the secret of a withered leaf, on the glow of a ripe fruit,  
on this freedom: to see, to feel, to breathe,  
to know, to wish, to fail.

Teach my lips blessing and song of praise,  
renewing your time each morning, each night,  
lest my day today be as yesterday  
lest my day be for me simply habit.

## מי תיקן את התפילות? תלמוד בבלי, ברכות כו"ב

איתמר, רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמר:  
תפילות אבות תקנום.

רבי יהושע בן לוי אמר: תפילות כנגד  
תמידין תקנום.

תניא כוותיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא,  
ותניא כוותיה דרבי יהושע בן לוי.

תניא כוותיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא:

אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית, שנאמר:  
"וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום  
אשר עמד שם", ואין "עמידה" אלא  
תפלה, שנאמר: "ויעמד פינחס  
ויפלל".

## לאה גולדברג - "תפילה"

לְמַדְנִי, אֱלֹהִי, בְּרַךְ וְהַתְּפַלֵּל  
עַל סוּד עֵלֶה קֶמֶל, עַל נֶגֶה פְּרִי בָּשֵׁל,  
עַל הַחֲרוּת הַזְּאֵת: לְרֵאוֹת, לְחֹשֶׁשׁ,  
לְנֶשֶׁם, לְדַעַת, לְיַחֵל, לְהַכְשֵׁל.

לְמַד אֶת שְׁפָתוֹתַי בְּרִכָּה וְשִׁיר הַלֵּל  
בְּהַתְחַדֵּשׁ זְמַנְךָ עִם בִּקְרָה וְעִם לַיִל,  
לְבַל יִהְיֶה יוֹמֵי הַיּוֹם כְּתִמּוּל שְׁלִשׁוֹם.  
לְבַל יִהְיֶה עָלַי יוֹמֵי הַרְגֵּל.