

# Jewish Prayers for the Final Moments of Life

By Zalman Goldstein

## Between Two Worlds

The time between life and death is considered extremely sacred in Jewish tradition. On one hand, the passage marks the conclusion of the soul's journey on earth. On the other hand, death heralds the beginning of the soul's eternal life in Heaven.

Kabbalah teaches that at the moment of passing, every positive thought, word, or deed that occurred during the person's life is concentrated into a pristine spiritual light. This light is revealed to the world and in the Heavenly spheres, where it continues to shine and have an effect on those above and below.

## Prayers for the Final Moments

### 1) Psalm 121

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

Shir la-ma-alos, esö aynai el	שִׁיר לַמַּעְלוֹת, אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל
he-hörim, may-ayin yövo ez-ri.	הַהָרִים, מֵאֵין יְבֹא עֲזָרִי:
Ez-ri may-im adonöy, osay	עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְיָ, עֲשֵׂה
shöma-yim vö-öretz. Al yi-tayn	שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ: אֵל יִתֵּן
la-mot rag-lechö, al yönum	לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ, אֵל יָנוּם
shom'rechö. Hinay lo yönum v'lo	שֹׁמֵרְךָ: הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא
yishön shomayr yisrö-ayl.	יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
Adonöy shom-rechö, adonöy	יְיָ שֹׁמֵרְךָ, יְיָ
tzil'chö al yad y'minechö.	צִלְּךָ עַל יַד יְמִינֶךָ:
Yomöm ha-shemesh lo ya-keköh,	יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא יִכָּכֶה,
v'yöray-ach ba-löylöh. Adonöy	וַיִּרַח בַּלַּיְלָה: יְיָ
yish-mör'chö mi-köl rö, yishmor es	יִשְׁמָרְךָ מִכָּל רָע, יִשְׁמֹר אֶת
naf-shechö. Adonöy yish-mör	נַפְשֶׁךָ: יְיָ יִשְׁמֹר
tzays'chö uvo-echö may-atöh	צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ, מֵעַתָּה
v'ad olöm	וְעַד עוֹלָם:

*Translation:*

A Song of Ascents.

I lift my eyes to the mountains — from where will my help come?

My help will come from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot falter; your guardian does not slumber.

Indeed, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your protective shade at your right hand.

The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will guard you from all evil; He will guard your soul.

The Lord will guard your going and your coming from now and for all time.

## 2) Psalm 130

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

Shir hama-alos, mima-ama-kim  
k'rösichö adonöy. Adonöy  
shim-öh v'koli, tih-yenöh  
öz-nechöh ka-shuvos l'kol  
tacha-nunöy. Im avonos tish-mör  
yöh, adonöy mi ya-amod. Ki imchö  
ha-s'lichöh, l'ma-an tivöray. Kivisi  
adonöy kiv-söh naf-shi, v'lidvöro  
ho-chöl-ti. Naf-shi la-donöy,  
mi-shom'rim la-boker, shom'rim  
la-boker. Ya-chayl yis-rö-ayl el  
adonöy, ki im adonöy ha-chesed  
v'har-bay imo f'dus. V'hu yif-deh  
es yis-röayl mi-kol avonosöv.

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, מִמֵּעַמְקִים  
קָרָאתִיךָ יְיָ: אֲדֹנָי  
שְׁמָעָה בְּקוֹלִי, תִּהְיֶינָה  
אָזְנוֹיךָ קֹשְׁבוֹת לְקוֹל  
תַּחֲנוּנָי: אִם עֲוֹנוֹת תִּשְׁמַר  
יְיָ, אֲדֹנָי מִי יַעֲמֹד: כִּי עִמָּךְ  
הַסְּלִיחָה, לְמַעַן תִּגְרָא: קוֹיִתִי  
יְיָ קִוֵּיתָה נַפְשִׁי, וְלִדְבָרוֹ  
הוֹחֵלְתִי: נַפְשִׁי לְאֲדֹנָי,  
מִשְׁמָרִים לְבִקְרָה, שְׁמָרִים  
לְבִקְרָה: יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל  
יְיָ, כִּי עִם יְיָ הַחֶסֶד  
וְהַרְבֵּה עֲמוּ פְדוּת: וְהוּא יִפְדֶּה  
אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו:

*Translation:*

A Song of Ascents.

Out of the depths I call to You, O Lord.

My Lord, hearken to my voice; let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas.

G-d, if You were to preserve iniquities, my Lord, Who could survive?

But forgiveness is with You, that You may be feared.

I hope in the Lord; my soul hopes, and I long for His word.

My soul yearns for the Lord more than [night] watchmen [waiting] for the morning, wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is kindness; with Him there is abounding deliverance.

And He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

### 3) Psalm 91

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

Yo-shayv b'sayser el-yon,  
 b'tzayl sha-dai yis-lonön. Omar  
 la-donöy mach-si um'tzudösi, elohai  
 ev-tach bo. Ki hu ya-tzil'chö mi-pach  
 yökush, mi-dever havos. B'ev-röso  
 yösech löch v'sachas k'nöföv tech-seh,  
 tzinöh v'sochayröh amito. Lo sirö  
 mi-pachad löy-löh, may-chaytz yö-uf  
 yo-möm. Midever bö-ofel ya-haloch,  
 mi-ketev yöshud tzö-höröy-im. Yipol  
 mi-tzid'chö elef ur'vövö mimi-nechö,  
 aylechö lo yigösh. Rak b'ay-nechö  
 sabit, v'shilumas r'shö-im tir-eh. Ki  
 atöh adonöy mach-si, el-yon sam-tö  
 m'o-nechö. Lo s'uneh ay-lechö rö-öh,  
 v'negah lo yik-rav b'ö-hö-lechö. Ki  
 mal-öchöv y'tzaveh löch, lish-mör'chö  
 b'chöl d'rö-chechö. Al kapa-yim  
 yisö-un'chö, pen ti-gof bö-even  
 rag-lechö. Al sha-chal vö-fesen  
 tid-roch, tir-mos k'fir v'sanin. Ki vi  
 chöshak va-afaltay-hu, asag-vayhu ki  
 yöda sh'mi. Yikrö-ayni v'e-enayhu,  
 imo ö-nochi v'tzörö, achal'tzayhu  
 va-achab'dayhu. Orech yömim  
 asbi-ayhu, v'ar-ayhu bi-shu-ösi.

יֵשֵׁב בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,  
 בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן: אָמַר  
 לִי מַחְסֵי וּמְצוּדָתִי, אֱלֹהֵי  
 אֲבֹטְחָ בּוֹ: כִּי הוּא יִצִּילֵךְ מִפַּח  
 יָקוּשׁ, מִדְּבַר הַיּוֹת: בְּאַבְרָתּוֹ  
 יִסֶּךְ לְךָ וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו  
 תִּחְסֶה, צְנָה וְסִחְרָה אָמַתּוֹ: לֹא תִירָא  
 מִפַּחַד לִילָהּ, מִחֶץ יְעוֹף  
 יוֹמָם: מִדְּבַר בְּאִפְלֵ יְהִלְךָ,  
 מִקָּטָב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים: יִפֹּל  
 מִצְדָּךְ אֶלְךָ וּרְבָכָה מִימִינֶךָ,  
 אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגֹּשׁ: רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ  
 תִּבְיֵט, וְשַׁלַּמְתָּ רַשְׁעִים תִּרְאֶה: כִּי  
 אַתָּה יְיָ מַחְסֵי, עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמֹתָ  
 מְעוֹנֶךָ: לֹא תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רַעַה,  
 וְנִגַּע לֹא יִקְרַב בְּאַהֲלֶךָ: כִּי  
 מְלֹאכְיוֹ יִצְוֶה לְךָ, לְשִׁמְרֶךָ  
 בְּכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ: עַל כַּפָּיִם  
 יִשְׁאוּנֶךָ, פֶּן תִּגּוֹף בְּאַבְן  
 רִגְלֶךָ: עַל שַׁחַל וּפְתָן  
 תִּדְרֹךְ, תִּרְמַס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין: כִּי בִי  
 חָשַׁק וְאַפְלִטָהּ, אֲשַׁגְּבֶהּ כִּי  
 יָדַע שְׁמִי: יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהּ,  
 עָמוּ אֲנֹכִי בְּצָרָהּ, אֲחַלְצֶהּ  
 וְאֲכַבְּדֶהּ: אַרְךָ יָמִים  
 אֲשַׁבֵּיעֶהּ, וְאִרְאֶהּ בִּישׁוּעָתִי:

*Translation:*

You Who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, Who abides in the shadow of the Omnipotent,  
 I say [to you] of the Lord Who is my refuge and my stronghold, my G-d in Whom I trust,  
 that He will save you from the ensnaring trap, from the destructive pestilence.  
 He will cover you with His pinions and you will find refuge under His wings; His

truth is a shield and an armor.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day,  
the pestilence that prowls in the darkness, nor the destruction that ravages at  
noon.

A thousand may fall at your [left] side, and ten thousand at your right, but it  
shall not reach you.

You need only look with your eyes, and you will see the retribution of the  
wicked.

Because you [have said,] "The Lord is my shelter," and you have made the  
Most High your haven,

no evil will befall you, no plague will come near your tent.

For He will instruct His angels in your behalf, to guard you in all your ways.

They will carry you in their hands, lest you hurt your foot on a rock.

You will tread upon the lion and the viper; you will trample upon the young lion  
and the serpent.

Because he desires Me, I will deliver him; I will fortify him for he knows My  
Name.

When he calls on Me, I will answer him; I am with him in distress, I will deliver  
him and honor him.

I will satisfy him with long life, and show him My deliverance.

#### 4) Adon Olam

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

Adon olöm asher mö-lach,	אָדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ,
b'terem köl y'tzur niv-rö.	בְּטֶרֶם כֹּל יִצְוֹר נִבְרָא:
L'ays na-aso v'chef-tzo kol,	לַעֲשֵׂת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחִפְצוֹ כֹּל,
azai melech sh'mo nikrö.	אֲזַי מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא:
V'acharei kich-los ha-kol, l'vado	וְאַחֲרַי כְּכֹלֹת הַכֹּל, לְבַדּוֹ
yim-loch norö. V'hu hö-yöh v'hu	וְיִמְלֹךְ נִוְרָא: וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא
ho-veh, v'hu yih-yeh b'sif-öröh.	הָוָה, וְהוּא יְהִיָּה בְּתַפְאֲרָה:
V'hu echöd v'ayn shay-ni,	וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שְׁנַי,
l'ham-shil lo l'hach-biröh.	לְהַמְשִׁיל לוֹ לְהַחְבִּירָה:
B'li ray-shis b'li sach-lis,	בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תַכְלִית,
v'lo hö-oz v'hamis-röh. V'hu	וְלוֹ הָעֵז וְהַמְשָׁרָה: וְהוּא
ayli v'chai go-ali, v'tzur chevli	אֵלַי וְחַי גּוֹאֲלִי, וְצוֹר חֻבְלִי
b'ays tzöröh. V'hu nisi	בְּעֵת צָרָה: וְהוּא נְסִי
umö-nos li, m'nös kosi b'yom	וּמְנוּס לִי, מְנַת כּוֹסֵי בְיוֹם
ekrö. B'yödo af-kid ruchi,	אֶקְרָא: בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי,
b'ays ishan v'ö-iröh. V'im ruchi	בְּעֵת אִישָׁן וְאַעֲיָרָה: וְעַם רוּחִי
g'vi-yösi, adonöy li v'lo irö.	גּוֹיָתִי, יְיָ לִי וְלֹא אֵינְרָא:

*Translation:*

Lord of the universe, Who reigned  
before anything was created —  
at the time when by His will all things were made,  
then was His name proclaimed King.  
And after all things shall cease to be,  
the Awesome One will reign alone.  
He was, He is,  
and He shall be in glory.  
He is one, and there is no other  
to compare to Him, to consort with Him.  
Without beginning, without end,  
power and dominion belong to Him.  
He is my G-d and my ever-living Redeemer,  
the strength of my lot in time of distress.

He is my banner and my refuge,  
 my portion on the day I call.  
 Into His hand I entrust my spirit,  
 when I sleep and when I wake.  
 And with my soul, my body too,  
 the Lord is with me, I shall not fear.

## 5) Ana B'choach

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

Önö, b'cho-ach g'dulas y'min'chö,	אָנאָ, בְּכַח גְּדֻלַּת יְמִינְךָ,
tatir tz'ruröh. Kabayl rinas am'chö,	תַּתִּיר צְרוּרָה: קַבֵּל רִנַּת עַמְּךָ,
sag'vaynu, taharaynu, noröh.	שִׁגְבֵנוּ, טַהַרְנוּ, נוֹרָא:
Nö gibor, dor'shay yichud'chö,	נָא גִבּוֹר, דּוֹרְשֵׁי יַחֲוּדְךָ,
k'vövas shöm'raym. Bö-r'chaym	כְּבִבַת שְׁמַרְם: בְּרַכֶּם
taharaym, rachamay tzid'kös'chö	טַהַרְם, רַחֲמֵי צְדָקְתְךָ
tömid göm'laym. Chasin ködosh,	תָּמִיד גְּמִלִם: חֲסִין קְדוֹשׁ,
b'rov tuv'chö nahayl adö-sechö.	בְּרוּב טוֹבְךָ נִהַל עֲדָתְךָ:
Yöchid, gay-eh, l'am'chö p'nay,	יָחִיד, גָּאֵה, לְעַמְּךָ פְּנֵה,
zoch'ray k'dushösechö. Shav-ösaynu	זוֹכְרֵי קְדוּשַׁתְךָ: שׁוּעֵתָנוּ
kabayl, ush'ma tza-akösaynu,	קַבֵּל, וּשְׁמַע צַעֲקֹתָנוּ,
yoday-a ta-alumos. Böruch shaym	יִודַע תַּעֲלָמוֹת: בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם
k'vod mal'chuso l'olöm vö-ed.	כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

*Translation:*

We implore you, by the great power of Your right hand, release the captive.  
 Accept the prayer of Your people; strengthen us, purify us, Awesome One.  
 Mighty One, we beseech You, guard as the apple of the eye those who seek  
 Your Oneness.  
 Bless them, cleanse them; bestow upon them forever Your merciful  
 righteousness.  
 Powerful, Holy One, in Your abounding goodness, guide Your congregation.  
 Only and Exalted One, turn to Your people who are mindful of Your holiness.

Accept our supplication and hear our cry, You Who knows secret thoughts.  
Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.

## 6) V'al Ken Ne'kaveh

*Hebrew and Transliteration:*

V'al kayn n'ka-veh l'chō	וְעַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לְךָ
adonōy elo-haynu, lir-os	יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְרֹאוֹת
m'hayrōh b'sif-eres uzechō, l'ha-avir	מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֶרֶת עֲזֶךָ, לְהַעֲבִיר
gilu-lim min hō-ōretz v'hō-elilim	גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהָאֱלִילִים
kōros yikōray-sun, l'sakayn olōm	כָּרוֹת יִכְרְתוּן, לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם
b'mal'chus shadai, v'chōl b'nay vōsōr	בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדַי, וְכָל בְּנֵי בְשָׂר
yik-r'u vish'mechō, l'hafnos ay-lechō	יִקְרְאוּ בְשִׁמְךָ, לְהַפְנוֹת אֵלֶיךָ
kōl rish'ay öretz. Ya-kiru v'yay-d'u kōl	כָּל רִשְׁעֵי אָרֶץ. יִכִּירוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל
yosh'vay say-vayl, ki l'chō tichra kōl	יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל, כִּי לְךָ תִכְרַע כָּל
berech, tishōva kōl löshon. L'fōnechō	בָּרֶךְ, תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לְשׁוֹן. לְפָנֶיךָ
adonōy elo-haynu yich-r'u v'yipolu,	יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ וַיִּפּוּלוּ,
v'lich'vod shim'chō y'kōr yi-taynu,.	וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקְרֵי יִתְנֶנּוּ,
vi-kab'lu chulōm alay-hem es ol	וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָלֵם עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת עוֹל
mal'chusechō, v'simloch alay-hem	מְלְכוּתְךָ, וְתִמְלוֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם
m'hayrōh l'olōm vō-ed, ki	מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, כִּי
ha-mal'chus shel'chō hi, ul'ol'may ad	הַמְּלְכוּת שְׁלֶךָ הִיא, וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עֶד
tim-loch b'chōvod, ka-kōsuv	תִּמְלוֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד, כַּכֹּסֵוֵב
b'sorösechō, adonōy yim-loch l'olōm	בְּתוֹרַתְךָ: יְיָ יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם
vō-ed. V'ne-emar, v'hō-yōh adonōy	וָעֶד. וְנֶאֱמַר: וְהָיָה יְיָ
l'melech al kōl hō-ōretz, ba-yom	לְמֹלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם
ha-hu yih-yeh adonōy echōd	הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְיָ אֶחָד
ush'mo echōd.	וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

*Translation:*

And therefore we hope to You, Lord our G-d, that we may speedily behold the splendor of Your might, to banish idolatry from the earth and false G-ds will be utterly destroyed; to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty. All mankind shall invoke Your Name, to turn to You all the wicked of the earth.



Then all the inhabitants of the world will recognize and know that every knee should bend to You, every tongue should swear [by Your Name]. Before You, Lord our G-d, they will bow and prostrate themselves, and give honor to the glory of Your Name; and they will all take upon themselves the yoke of Your kingdom. May You soon reign over them forever and ever, for kingship is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory, as it is written in Your Torah: The Lord will reign forever and ever. And it is said: The Lord shall be King over the entire earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His Name One.

## 7) The Shema and Verses of Unity

*At the very last moments, all present, including the person himself (if possible), recite the following passages aloud, and with intense concentration:*

Sh'ma yisrō-ayl, adonōy יי שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, יי  
elo-haynu, adonōy echöd. יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יי אֶחָד :

*translation:* **Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One.**

Recite the following verse in an undertone:

Böruch shaym k'vod mal'chuso בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ  
l'olöm vö-ed. (Say three times.) לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד : (ג"פ)

*translation:* **Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever. (Say three times.)**

Recite the following verse out loud:

Adonōy hu hö-elohim. (Say seven times.) יי הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים : (ז"פ)

*translation:* **G-d is the Lord. (Say seven times.)**

Adonōy melech, adonōy mölöch, יי מֶלֶךְ, יי מְלֹךְ,  
adonōy yim-loch l'olöm vö-ed. יי יְמִלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד :

*translation:* **The Lord is King, the Lord was King, the Lord will be King forever and ever.**