



Matir Asurim ["The One Who Frees Captives"] connects Jewish spiritual, cultural, and communal resources and people experiencing incarceration or re-entry.

## Divrei Matir Asurim

Matir Asurim Words/Matters -- April 2024/Nisan 5784

Inside readers, please send responses to news shared here, additional thoughts on MA operations, or Torah Explorations:

- through outside MA pen pal, if you have one;
- through postal mail: Matir Asurim, PO Box 18858. Philadelphia, PA 19119;
- by emailing [matirasurimnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:matirasurimnetwork@gmail.com);
- or contact Divrei Matir Asurim's editor at [ethreporter@gmail.com](mailto:ethreporter@gmail.com).

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With the new month of Nisan, Jews turn our thoughts to the festival of Passover and preparing for holiday. One part of that preparation is getting ready for a week without "leavening" (yeast-based food):

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to YHVH, and on the fifteenth day of that month YHVH's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. -- Leviticus 23:5-6

You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Mitzrayim hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Mitzrayim as long as you live.

For seven days no leaven shall be found with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall be left until morning. -- Deuteronomy 16:3-4

For much of human history, there was no safe way to save older grain products, so it was common to use up last year's harvest before the new one arrived. For Jews, that clearing out was also a spiritual practice:

Jewish tradition instructs us that in this season of new growth, it is time to clean out the cobwebs and crumbs from the corners of our home and hearts. We go to the corners of our hearts and clean out that which keeps us stuck in narrow places....

While the work of Tishrei [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur] is often focused on personal and interpersonal renewal, Nisan invites a focus on collective revolution and renewal, and an orientation of life and work toward greater visions for collective liberation. The harvests of Tishrei feed what we build in Nisan, the visions dreamed in Nisan guide our personal work in Tishrei.

In this way, living in the spiral of Jewish time creates mutually reinforcing processes: our individual bodies' healing and freedom are possible only in the context of collective and communal healing and freedom; our collectives and communities are made up of diverse, holy bodies that deserve liberatory love and care. In Nisan, we celebrate the ways in which all of our freedom is possible and close at hand. -- p.198, *For Times Such As These: A Radical's Guide to the Jewish Year*, Rabbi Ariana Katz and Rabbi Jessica Rosenberg (2024) (Line breaks added for easier reading)

## Matir Asurim Organizational News

### Organizers' Meeting

We are now meeting once every six weeks. The last meeting was March 17.

The March meeting looked at big picture challenges and more immediate matters.

We considered what kind of advance planning could help MA respond to whatever next big crisis comes our way. Some response will be basics, such as making sure every member -- inside and outside -- has at least one person to contact in event of an emergency. We also looked at structures for ensuring that work continues when one or more members' capacity for a task changes.

More immediately, MA agreed to two courses of action in April: 1) a Passover-related educational project for our full mailing and 2) co-sponsoring a Passover-related event supporting a regional and national collaboration.

1) The educational materials will provide resources on Passover and Jewish support for incarcerated people. Writing from some inside members is included. Materials are being shared through an outside mailing list. The idea is to strengthen Jewish learning, raise awareness, help build MA's care network, and inspire new related efforts.

2) MA agreed to co-sponsor an event planned for April 16 highlighting the generational impact of incarcerating mothers. (The event has since been cancelled.) MA is exploring possible sharing of materials, including previous Passover mailings, as part of the collaboration.

Here's information about the main organizers of the event MA agreed to co-sponsor:

**Families for Justice as Healing (FJAH)** is led by incarcerated women, formerly incarcerated women, and women with incarcerated loved ones. FJAH seeks to end the incarceration of women and girls. It was founded in 2010 inside the federal prison for women in Danbury, CT. When founder Andrea James was released in 2011, she carried FJAH back to her home community of Roxbury, MA. FJAH continues to expand and evolve. Focus remains on incarcerated mothers and the impact on their children, in the New England (U.S.) states.

**The National Council** for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls organizes beyond the New England region "to end incarceration of women and girls and create the infrastructure for the systems in support of building healthy, thriving people and communities." The national #FreeHer Campaign raises awareness and aims to shift opinion away from incarcerating girls and women and toward investing in "true public safety, transformation, and healing."

Families for Justice as Healing

National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls

100R Warren Street, Roxbury, MA 02119

info@justiceashealing.org 617-992-7185

### Working Groups

Resource Group is preparing a "Judaism 101" package for mailing soon. Penpal Group continues to match and support writing pairs. Finance group reports that last year's funds are sufficient now for mailings and other regular work, but MA will soon need additional fund-raising; the working group is considering grant applications as well.

NEXT ORGANIZERS' MEETING: May 5.

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--- **Memorial, Healing and Special Concern, Celebration** ---

Submit items for future editions (use contacts above, page 1). Categories include:

- shares concerns for healing of all kinds,
- recalls teachers and loved ones whom death has taken from us, and
- marks milestones and celebrations.

**Recent Execution Loss:**

March 20: **Willie James Pye**, Georgia  
April 4: **Michael Smith**, Oklahoma

**Executions Scheduled:**

April 9: **Brian Dorsey**, Missouri

**Shloshim:**

**Joseph I. Lieberman**, died March 27. (b. 2/24/42)

US Senator for Connecticut (1989-2013). Was clear that his family was "observant," not "orthodox" and active in Keshet Israel (Modern Orthodox) synagogue while in DC. Candidate for vice president in 2000 (first Jewish candidate of a major party for US presidential race)

**Memorial:**

**April 18. Albert Einstein** (3/14/1879 - 4/18/1955)

Widely considered a genius in adult life, Einstein spoke very late as a child and struggled with learning challenges. For his first years in the U.S. after fleeing Nazi Germany, he was unable to get a teaching job; later, he headed important research projects and taught at Princeton University (New Jersey). Theoretical physicist, credited with important concepts and philosophies. Contributed to creation of the atom bomb; later co-authored anti-nuclear arms manifesto. He wrote that he related to Judaism as "a community of tradition," rather than practice or belief.

**Special Concern:**

**Baltimore and the Key Bridge.**

The Key Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland (US) collapsed in an accident on March 26. Several construction workers were still not found, presumed dead in early April. There will be long-term impacts on transportation, economy, and communities inside the city and beyond. Many who regularly cross that bridge are affected emotionally by the crash as well.

**Healing:**

All suffering community and state violence in US, Canada, and around the world.  
All seeking healing of spirit, repair of personal conflicts, and healing of body.

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## Calendar Notes

Nisan begins April 8-9. Passover: April 22 (eve) through April 29 or 30.

Omer: April 23 (eve) - June 11.

Weeks of the Omer:   **1)** April 23 - 29   **2)** April 30 - May 6   **3)** May 7 - May 13  
**4)** May 14 - 20   **5)** May 21 - 27   **6)** May 28 - Jun 3   **7)** Jun 4 - June 10

Special dates leading up to Passover:

**Shabbat Zachor** [memory] right before Purim, includes readings about Amalek, Deut 25:17-19 and 1 Sam 15:1 or 2-34. Amalek relates to the Book of Esther and many other ideas about Jews' enemies.

**Shabbat Parah** [cow] adds Numbers 19:1-22, a reading on the Red Heifer Temple purification ritual.

**Shabbat HaChodesh** [month], adds Exod 12:1-20, on the new month and sacrifice of Passover

**Shabbat HaGadol** [big], adds Malachi 3:4-24; right before Passover, this Shabbat used to be one of two in which a rabbi would give a "big" sermon to help communities prepare for important holidays.

**Passover:** The Shabbat during Passover adds a reading of *Shir HaShirim*, the Song of Songs

## Schedule of Leviticus/Vayikra Torah Reading

<i>Hebrew title</i> [English]. Chapters: verse	Civic date. Hebrew date for Shabbat portion is read	Special PASSOVER-RELATED Shabbats
<b>Vayikra</b> [He called ]. <i>Vayikra/Lev</i> 1:1 - 5:26	March 23. 13 Adar 2	SHABBAT ZACHOR
<b>Tzav</b> [Command]. Lev 6:1 - 8:36	March 30. 20 Adar 2	SHABBAT PARAH
<b>Shmeni</b> [Eighth]. Lev 9:1 - 11:47	April 6. 27 Adar 2	SHABBAT HaCHODESH
<b>Tazria</b> [She bears seed]. Lev 12:1 - 13:59	April 13. 5 Nisan	
<b>Metzora</b> [Infected one] Lev 14:1 - 15:33	April 20. 12 Nisan	SHABBAT HaGADOL
Passover Day 5. Exodus 33:12 - 34:26	April 27. 19 Nisan	SHABBAT PESACH
<b>Acharei Mot</b> [after the death]. Lev 16:1 - 18:30	May 4. 26 Nisan	
<b>Kedoshim</b> [Holy] Lev 19:1 - 20:27	May 11. 3 Iyar	
<b>Emor</b> [Say] Lev 21:1-24:23	May 18. 10 Iyar	
<b>Behar</b> [On the mountain] Lev 25:1-26:2	May 25. 17 Iyar	
<b>Bechukotai</b> [In my laws] Lev 26:3 - 27:34	Jun 1. 24 Iyar	[End of Leviticus/Vayikra]

**NOTE:** Torah Explorations follow themes of recent and upcoming weekly readings, but they do not exactly match the reading calendar.

Some Torah Explorations relate to holiday readings or other seasonal themes.

## **TORAH EXPLORATIONS: *Passover and the Omer***

Beginning on the second night of Passover, the period called "the Omer" continues for seven weeks until the next festival, Shavuot. Shavuot is not given its own date in the bible. Instead, Leviticus 23 tells us to count seven weeks from Passover and then to observe the harvest festival on the next day. Biblical instructions involved bringing an "omer" -- a measure of grain -- to the Temple every day for that period. Once the Temple was destroyed (70 CE), practice shifted to other ways of counting those dates.

The basic rabbinic command is to recite Leviticus 23:15-16 (see below), offer a blessing, and count.

Over the centuries quite a few additional spiritual practices have developed for the Omer period. Some link festival themes: from escaping *Mitzrayim* (Passover), moving toward Revelation (Shavuot). Some focus on the journey, moving day-by-day and week-by-week in a direction, such as healing from trauma or learning something new. Many focus on attributes of God and how we can imitate them:

- *chesed*: compassion, kindness
- *gevurah*: strength, limits
- *tiferet*: beauty, balance
- *netzach*: power, everlastingness
- *hod*: gratitude, humility
- *yesod*: foundation, plan
- *malchut*: leadership, presence

No special citation for material on this page, which can be found in many sources.

Other practices are to recite Psalm 67 and to pray, each of the 49 days, for liberation of captives.

### **Omer Steps:**

**Intention:** Here I am ready and prepared to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the Omer, as it is written in the Torah:

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat,\*\* from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the wave-offering [*omer*], you shall count seven full weeks.

Until the day after the seventh Shabbat, you shall count fifty days, until you bring a new gift to the Eternal. (Leviticus 23:15-16)      \*\*Long ago, this "Shabbat" was set as Passover Day Two

### **Blessing:**

Blessed are you, Eternal One our God, source of all life, who has made us holy with your *mitzvot* and commanded us concerning counting the Omer.

**Count:** Note that the count is both Seven WEEKS (Lev 23:15) and fifty DAYS (Lev 23:16):

One day of the omer...six days of the omer...12 days of the omer, making one week and five days;  
...42 days of the omer, making six weeks....48 days of the omer, making six weeks and six days...

### **Prayer for Captives**

In remembrance of the Exodus from *Mitzrayim*, we pray that You release all whose bodies and spirits remain captive and enable us to extend Your outstretched arm in the process of liberation.

## TORAH EXPLORATIONS: Passover and the Omer (cont.)

Some Omer practices include Psalm 67 (translation: Jewish Publication Society, 1917):

לְמַנְצַח בְּנִגִּינָת, מְזֻמֹּר שִׁיר.	(1) For the leader; with instrumental music. A psalm. A song.
אֱלֹהִים, יְחַנְּנוּ וַיְבָרְכֵנוּ; יָאֵר פְּנֵיו אֶתְנוּ סֵלָה.	(2) May God be gracious to us and bless us; may God show us favor, selah
לְדַעַת בְּאֶרֶץ דְּרָכָה; בְּכָל-גּוֹיִם, יִשׁוּעָתָהּ.	(3) that Your way be known on earth, Your deliverance among all nations.
יְדוּדָה עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים: יְדוּדָה, עַמִּים כָּל	(4) Peoples will praise You, O God; all peoples will praise You.
יִשְׂמְחוּ וַיִּרְנְנוּ, לְאֲמִים: כִּי-תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל; וְלְאֲמִים, בְּאֶרֶץ תִּנְחַם סֵלָה	(5) Nations will exult and shout for joy, for You rule the peoples with equity, You guide the nations of the earth. Selah.
יְדוּדָה עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים: יְדוּדָה, עַמִּים כָּלֵם.	(6) The peoples will praise You, O God; all peoples will praise You.
אֶרֶץ, נִתְּנָה יְבוּלָהּ; יְבָרְכֵנוּ, אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ.	(7) May the earth yield its produce; may God, our God, bless us.
יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים; וַיִּירָאוּ אוֹתוֹ, כָּל-אֲפֹסֵי-אֶרֶץ.	(8) May God bless us, and be revered to the ends of the earth.

Psalm 67 is related to spring and harvest, so shares themes with Passover and Shavuot. It also links to the Omer for that reason. In addition, Psalm 67 has seven verses (not counting the introduction: "For the leader; with instrumental music. A Psalm. A Song"). It also has 49 words in Hebrew, again, not counting the introduction. So, it matches the Omer's seven weeks and 49 days.

Seven is an important number in the bible. Some examples:

- Seven branches on the menorah, described in Exodus 25;
- Seven days of Creation, and of our week -- Genesis 1 and 2;
- Seven years to the Shmitah, the sabbatical year -- Leviticus 25;
- Seven times seven years to the Jubilee, debt release, year -- also Leviticus 25;
- Seven days for Passover and Sukkot festivals -- Leviticus 23.

All these sevens are linked back to the seven weeks of the Omer. And also to the seven attributes of God -- sometimes called "*sefirot*" -- listed above, p.5. For some folks, this is just an odd note, maybe interesting, maybe not. For some it's the basis for meditation during the Omer. See the graphic on p.7 -- just an accident, not meant to be a symbol :) -- which shapes the words of Psalm 67 into a menorah. (Alt text: Ps. 67:2-8 verses, one each for the 7-branch menorah, with verse 1 along the top and part of the long verse 5 making the menorah's base/stand.) Annotations pointing to each verse added.

The image is from a bible commentary printed in Italy in 1656. The menorah is created with "micro-calligraphy" -- a Jewish art-form using Hebrew text to form an image. This image was found on a source-page shared by Rabbi Nelly Altenburger on the text platform, Sefaria.

TORAH EXPLORATIONS: Passover and the Omer (cont.)

לֹמֵן מִזֶּזֶב זְנִי < (Intro)  
זֶן תִּמְזָ מוֹר שִׁיר Verse 1

Verse 2 > Verse 3 > Verse 4 > Verse 5 > Verse 6 < Verse 7 < Verse 8 <

אֱלֹהִים יִזְעַזְעֵי וְיִבְרַכְכוּ יֵאֵר פְּעֻלַּי פְּעֻלַּי  
לְהַעֲזֵת בְּאַרְיֵי דְרַבְּךָ בְּכָל צְוִים יִשְׁמַעְתֶּם  
יִדְוֹךְ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יִדְוֹךְ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים  
יִשְׁמַעְתֶּם וְיִרְצֶנּוּ לְאַמִּים כִּי תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים מִיִּשְׁוֹר  
יִדְוֹךְ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יִדְוֹךְ עַמִּים כֹּלִם  
אַרְיֵי צְתָנָה יִבּוֹלְהוּ יִבְרַכְכוּ אֱלֹהִים יֵאֵר  
יִבְרַכְכוּ אֱלֹהִים וְיִירְאוּ אֱוֹרְתוֹ כֹּל יִאֲפֵס יֵאֵר

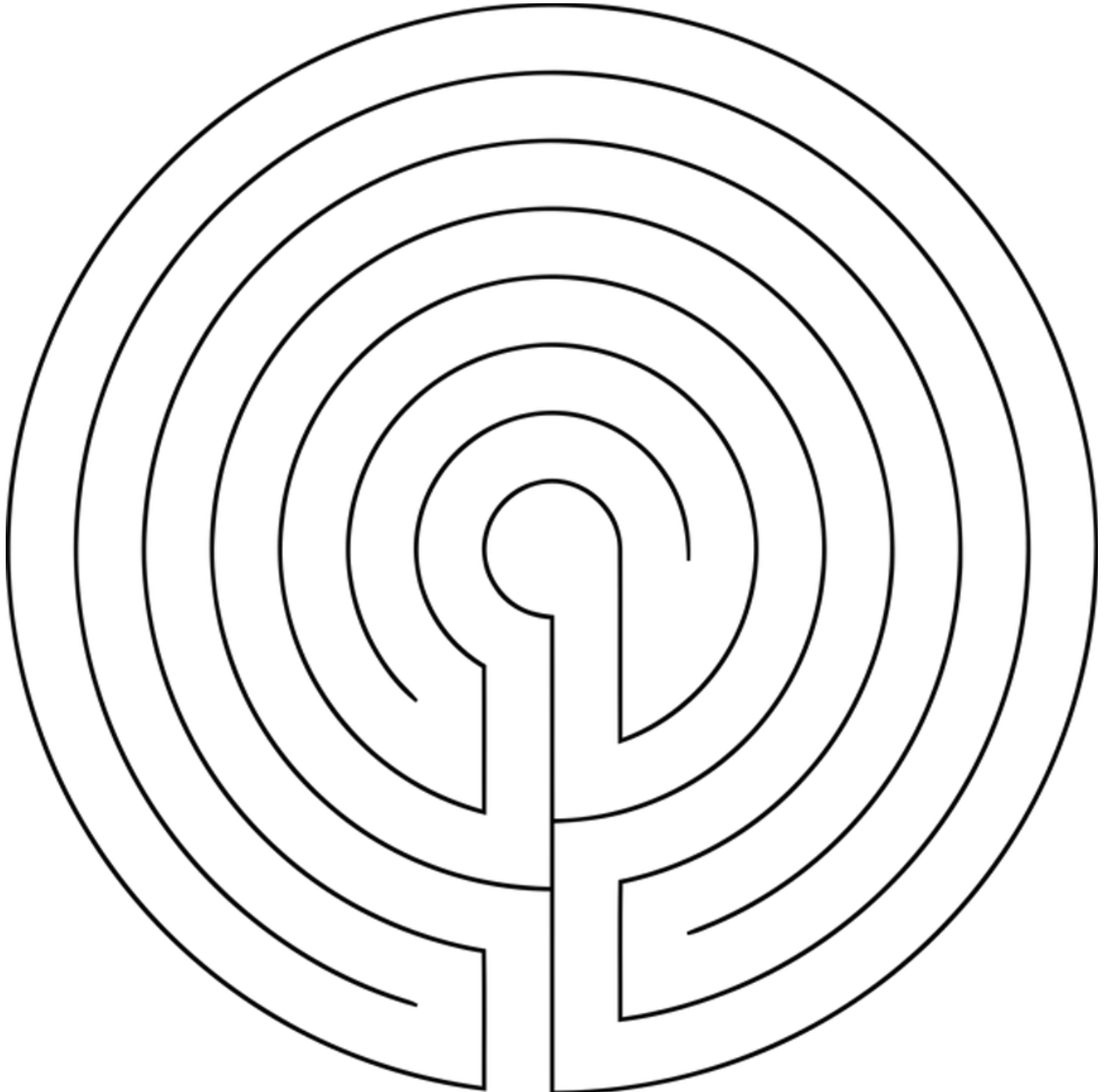
וְלֵאמִים בְּאַרְיֵי תִזְזֹזִים סֵלָה

< Verse 5 cont.

***TORAH EXPLORATIONS: Passover and the Omer (cont.)***

Some Jews use a labyrinth to help in meditation. Sometimes, the focus is on seeking a personal center or finding a way out of confusion. For the Omer, the path can include attributes on page 5, words from Psalm 67, or a favorite text about liberation.

It is recommended to use the non-dominant hand to trace a path, "walk," a finger labyrinth.



( Image by Gordon Johnson, via pixabay )



## **TORAH EXPLORATIONS: *Passover Yizkor/Yizkereh***

A memorial prayer is included at the end of four Jewish Festivals: Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. For Passover, this is traditionally recited on the final, 7th or 8th day, of the festival. Gathering as a group to remember loved ones and share grief is an important part of communal prayer. But "*Yizkor/Yizkereh*" can also be recited on one's own. (Mourner's Kaddish is traditionally recited only with a minyan of ten present; the memorial prayer does not require a minyan.)

Introduction to "*Yizkor/Yizkereh*" from Matir Asurim's

### **"Toward Freedom" 5783 (2023) haggadah**

Yizkor is a memorial prayer said for the deceased. In Jewish practice, mourning is both an individual and collective experience. With the Yizkor prayer, we come together as a community, across time and space and we use our prayer to grieve.

In Hebrew, the word Yizkor means, "God will remember", and in this prayer we call on God to remember the souls of our relatives, friends, comrades, and community members who have passed on. When we pray Yizkor, we renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved ones, honoring their beloved spirits.

Traditionally, we say the Yizkor prayer on the eighth day of Pesach. The Pesach holiday asks us to consider our cyclical journeys between narrowness and expanse, between oppression and freedom. Saying this prayer on

Pesach reminds us that our liberation requires us to remember where we come from, to honor those whose lives and legacies we rest upon. Honoring ancestors is not always simple—many of the people we have loved and lost are complex people, with complex relationships, tinged with sorrow, pain, heartbreak. Many of the people whose memories we honor left this world too soon, were touched by the violence of dominance and empire. Be gentle with yourselves when you say this prayer. Remember that you are not alone, Jews stretched out across Turtle Island (North America) are saying this prayer with you, in our grief, in our pain, in our struggles as we continue to circle towards freedom together.

In addition to saying the Yizkor prayer, it is customary to light a yahrtzeit candle, a special candle that burns for the length of an entire day, to memorialize our departed loved ones. This candle illustration can be used to write names of those you wish to remember or draw on to dedicate it to those no longer with us.



## ***Yizkor/Yizkereh options***

**Options in Hebrew and English. Any words of one's heart are always appropriate, however.**

Even when we are in physical community, the prayer is recited individually, by each person for their own loved ones. We name the person we have lost and their relationship to us:

- "May God remember my father, [name]..."
- "May God remember my partner, [name]..."
- "May God remember my friend, [name]..."

In some cases, a whole group might be sharing some losses, but the prayer is still singular, with each person naming "my teacher." The collective experience is also personal.

Even when we are on our own in reciting "*Yizkor/Yizkereh*" at a particular moment and place, we are part of a larger festival gathering...as also noted in Introduction above. Wherever we pray, we join a bigger community in recalling loved ones and holding one another in loss. The personal experience is also collective.

Wherever we may be, it is important to name our loved ones in ways that honor their memory and to address God in a way that works for us.

The prayer is usually called "*Yizkor*" in Hebrew, and its first words are often translated as "May God remember..." Hebrew verbs include gender in a way that English does not, however. So, "*yizkor*" is really "may HE remember..." Using the nonbinary "*Yizkəreh*" instead allows us to call on the divine, without using "He" or "She."

Traditional Hebrew also refers to a departed loved one as "he" or "she" throughout the prayer. Prayerbooks regularly include two versions: "for a female" and "for a male." Nonbinary Hebrew offers a way to remember loved ones who did not use "he" or "she." The version below offers common (nonbinary) singular, feminine, masculine, and common plural.

*Siddur Davar Ḥadash* is a non-denominational, inclusive prayerbook in Ashkenazi tradition. *Davar* = "word" or "thing." *Ḥadash* (or *chadash*) means "new." *Siddur* = "prayerbook."

## **Sources for *Yizkor/Yizkereh* introduction, illustration, and prayer text**

The "*Toward Freedom*" haggadah was prepared by Sarit Cantor, Jordana Rosenfeld and Cece Berkovic on behalf of Matir Asurim in 2023. The full document can be downloaded from the Resources section of Matir Asurim's website, along with an earlier version, created in 2022. *Toward Freedom* is adapted and expanded from a haggadah originally written and compiled by Chaplain Orev Reena Katz haKohenet and distributed in the federal prisons of southern Ontario, on the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, HuronWendat, Mohawk, Odawa, and Mississauga of New Credit in Williams, Treaty 57 and 13 territories.

*Siddur Davar Ḥadash* is an inclusive, non-denominational prayerbook in the Ashkenazi tradition. The work is being assembled by brin solomon [it/itself], a composer and musician. "Mx solomon has no specific training in siddur making, nor does it have any advanced degrees in Hebrew studies; it's just an idealistic trans Jew who got tired of waiting for someone else to make the prayerbook it wanted to see in the world and decided to do the thing itself."

In terms of Hebrew grammar, Mx solomon modified and expanded the work of the Nonbinary Hebrew Project, started a few years ago by Lior Gross [they] and Ayal Rivlin [he].

The entire *Siddur Davar Ḥadash* is shared on-line without charge and (with a few noted exceptions -- none copied here) without copyright. The work is self-published in New York City and was first released in 2021 (5781). Volume I: Shabbat and Festivals was last revised 31 March, 2024. It is on-going.

*Yizkor/Yizkereh* options cont.

**More notes on language in *Siddur Davar H̄adash*:**

**Nonbinary language.** *Siddur Davar H̄adash* uses nonbinary Hebrew for people and God. The system used by brin solomon is built on, but differs from, the Nonbinary Hebrew Project grammar.

**Images for people and God.** The siddur avoids language that assumes everyone can see or hear or stand and makes some changes to common images for divine-human relationships.

***Yizkereh* pronouns.** The common-singular English translation uses "their" but adds the suggestion that the pronouns used by the person being remembered [ze, ne, it, etc.] should be used instead, if different.

***Yizkereh*, *tz̄adaqah*, and pledges.** The version below uses "I will pledge *tz̄adaqah* as a memorial for their soul [*endov tz̄adaqah b̄'ad hazkarat nishmateh*]." The untranslated "*tz̄adaqah*" can be "righteousness" or "justice," sometimes "charity." Some translations focus on doing justice in the loved one's name, others on financial contributions -- either way, the point is some kind of action in the world that keeps the loved one in the "bond of life." Some versions add "without making a vow" to the pledge.

*Siddur Davar H̄adash* offers Hebrew characters, Hebrew transliteration, and English. For ease of sharing, below is just the Hebrew transliteration and the English. Let us know if the text with Hebrew characters would also of use, and we'll see what can be shared for the next festival.



Some of our losses have been with us for many years. Some losses are quite new.

*Yizkereh* unites us in many stages of grief.

Some of us have memories of of elders reciting memorial prayers for their loved ones -- for relatives we knew in our youth or for people long gone and unknown to us.

Some of us have no such experiences.

*Yizkereh* joins us to a stream of mourners, stretching out long before us and far into the future -- wherever we are entering.

**May the we all find comfort  
in our shared journey of  
personal memory, grief, and prayer.**

## *Yizkereh (May God Remember)*

### **Introductory Meditation**

*ZOKHÉREH mah adam  
vateidā'óhe*

*bet enosh vatəhashəvóhe.*

*Adam lahével damáteh  
yaméihe kətzeil oveir.*

*Babóqer yatzítzeh vəhaláfeh  
la'érev yəmoləleh vəyavəsheh.*

*Tashéiveh isheh ad daka  
vatómreh shuvol bənol Adam.*

*Limnot yaméinu kein hodéi'eh  
vənavi lənav həkhamah.*

MEMORY KEEPER, what is a human  
that You have noticed one,

A child of mortals, that You have considered one?

A human is like breath,  
its days like a passing shadow. (Ps 144:3–4)

In the morning, it sprouts up and is renewed,  
in the evening it is cut off and withers away.

You will return a person to atoms,  
and You said, "Return, human children!"

To number our days rightly You must teach us!

And we will bring a heart of wisdom to be.

(Psalm 90:6,3,12)

### **Remembrance of specific loved ones:**

#### **Common (nonbinary)**

*Yizkəreh Elohim et nishmat*

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and name of deceased]

*shehaləkkeh lə'olame.*

May God remember the soul of

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and name of deceased]

who has gone to their\* eternity.

*Hinəni endov tzədaqah  
bə'ad hazkarat nishmateh.*

*Ana təhi nafsheh tzərurah  
bitzrur haḥayim*

*uthi mānuḥateh kavod*

*sov'eh səmaḥot et panéikhe*

*nə'imot biminəkhe nətzaḥ amein.*

Here I am: I will pledge tzədaqah  
as a memorial for their\* soul.

May their\* soul please be bound  
in the bond of life,

and may their\* rest be glory,

sated with joy in Your presence,

pleasantness by Your right hand forever. Amen!

\*use the individual's pronoun, instead of "they," in the English if appropriate

## ***Yizkereh (May God Remember) cont.***

### **Feminine**

*Yizkəreh Elohim et nishmat*

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

*shehaləkhah lə'olamah.*

May God remember the soul of

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

Who has gone to her eternity

*Hinəni endov tzədaqah*

*bə'ad hazkarat nishmatah.*

*Ana təhi nafshah tzərurah bitzrur haḥayim*

*uthi mānuḥatah kavod*

*sov'eh səmaḥot et panéikhe*

*nə'imot biminəkhe nétzah amein.*

Here I am: I will pledge tzədaqah  
as a memorial for her soul.

May her soul please be bound in the bond of life,  
and may her rest be glory,  
sated with joy in Your presence,  
pleasantness by Your right hand forever. Amen!

### **Masculine**

*Yizkəreh Elohim et nishmat*

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

*shehalakh lə'olamo.*

May God remember the soul of

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

Who has gone to his eternity.

*Hinəni endov tzədaqah*

*bə'ad hazkarat nishmato.*

*Ana təhi nafsho tzərurah bitzrur haḥayim*

*uthi mānuḥato kavod*

*sov'eh səmaḥot et panéikhe*

*nə'imot biminəkhe nétzah amein.*

Here I am: I will pledge tzədaqah  
as a memorial for his soul.

May his soul please be bound in the bond of life,  
and may his rest be glory,  
sated with joy in Your presence,  
pleasantness by Your right hand forever. Amen!

### **Common (nonbinary) Plural**

*Yizkəreh Elohim et nishmot*

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

*shehaləkhū lə'olamal.*

May God remember the souls of

[relationship of the deceased to the one praying  
and their name]

Who have gone to their eternity.

*Hinəni endov tzədaqah*

*bə'ad hazkarat nishmoteihel.*

*Ana tihyéinah nishmoteihel tzərurot*

*bitzrur haḥayim*

*uthi mānuḥatal kavod*

*sov'eh səmaḥot et panéikhe*

*nə'imot biminəkhe nétzah amein.*

Here I am: I will pledge tzədaqah  
as a memorial for their souls.

May their souls please be bound  
in the bond of life,  
and may their rest be glory,  
sated with joy in Your presence,  
pleasantness by Your right hand forever. Amen

## More Passover Materials

In addition to the Yizkor selection included this month, last month's **Divrei Matir Asurim** included selections from Matir Asurim Passover resources. There are more resources available in the two versions of the *Haggadah*, a guidebook for the seder and thoughts to help prepare for the holiday, prepared in 2022 (5782) and 2023 (5783). Anyone with internet access -- including your chaplain or a contact on the outside -- can download and print the materials free of charge from the Matir Asurim website.

As noted in the 5783 Matir Asurim edition:

The *Hagaddah* is designed to provoke questions, to get us to think in new ways, to lure us into the stories through song and collective ritual. Although preparing traditional foods and gathering with others can be a helpful way to ground yourself in the spiritual meanings of the holiday, you can still celebrate Pesach if you are alone and/or have limited control over the food available to you.

How did this month's *Divrei Matir Asurim* work for you?

This month's pages have more Hebrew than usual and some complicated layouts as well as some illustrations for meditation and study.

What was helpful? What didn't work? Let us know.

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*Divrei Matir Asurim* is available in three formats: straight text for copying into emails; formatted text for copying/printing for postal mail; and on-line (with some internet links for those who can access them).



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### Who We Are

We are a collection of Chaplains, Rabbis, Cantors, Kohanot/Hebrew Priestesses, advocates, activists, volunteers, loved ones of incarcerated people, and people with direct experience of incarceration. We are an all volunteer group who began meeting in 2021. We live and work across Turtle Island, in territories, cities, and rural settings of the US and Canada.

### Vision

We are striving toward a world free from oppression, where aspects of social identity like race, class, and gender no longer limit our safety, opportunities, and agency to live into the fullness of our sacred potential.

We are striving toward a world where individuals are mutually accountable to one another and where wrongdoing is addressed through reparative and transformative justice, guaranteeing the human dignity of all parties.

We are striving toward a world where all people are provided with the conditions for healing trauma and for *teshuvah* (repentance/restoration), surrounded by resources, guidance, and social support networks.

We are striving toward a world where nobody is isolated and everyone has opportunities to connect to something larger than ourselves—whether to community, culture, or spirituality. Within that world, we envision a Judaism that is radically welcoming and accessible to all seekers.

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*Divrei Matir Asurim* is a publication to promote religious education and solidarity among members and all interested.

If not otherwise noted, content is provided by V. Spatz, an outside member of Matir Asurim. Please consider sharing your own and providing your feedback.