

# EVENING SERVICE

**Kavvanah:**  
Beginning to Pray  
Where do I begin? Where do I find God? How do I begin to pray?

There is a *tzelem*, an image of God, implanted in me. The image of God is found in myself, in whom God breathes *nishmat hayyim*—the divine breath of life. In each of us is a *n'shamah*, a soul whose origin is God. In prayer, I enter into the deepest parts of my self, discover who I am, and touch God's presence.

—HAROLD SCHULWEIS  
(adapted)

• **God and Nature: An Interpretive Translation**  
Beloved are You, eternal God, by whose design the evening falls, by whose command dimensions open up and aeons pass away and stars spin in their orbits. You set the rhythms of day and night; the alternation of light and darkness sings Your creating word. In rising sun and in spreading dusk, Creator of all, You are made manifest. Eternal, everlasting God, may we always be aware of Your dominion. Beloved are You, Adonai, for this hour of nightfall.

—ANDRÉ UNGAR

## Bar'khu: The Call to Worship Together

*We rise as we are called by the leader's words of invitation to prayer. The leader bows when saying the word bar'khu/praise and stands straight when reciting the name of God. Similarly, the congregation bows at the word barukh/praise and straightens to full height at the recitation of God's name.*

*We rise. Leader:*

פָּרְסֵה אֲדֹנָי לְפָנֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמַח בְּעַבְדֶּיךָ.

*Congregation, then the leader repeats:*

פָּרְסֵה אֲדֹנָי לְפָנֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִשְׁמַח בְּעַבְדֶּיךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

*Barukh Adonai ha-m'vorakh l'olam va-ed.*

**Here is the transliteration.**

*We are seated.*

## First Blessing Before the Sh'ma: Nature as a Reflection of God's Blessings

*Barukh atah ADONAI*, Ruler of space and time,  
Whose word brings the evening dusk,  
Whose wisdom opens the gates of dawn,  
Whose understanding changes the day's division,  
Whose will sets the succession of seasons and arranges the stars in their places in the sky,  
Who creates day and night,  
Who rolls light before darkness and darkness away from light,  
Who makes day pass into night,  
Who distinguishes day from night,  
*ADONAI Tz'va-ot* is Your name.  
Living and ever-present God,  
May Your rule be with us, forever and ever.  
*Barukh atah ADONAI*, who brings each evening's dusk.

*U-ma-avir yom u-mevi lai'lah*

*u-mavdil bein yom u-vein lailah,*

*Adonai tz'va-ot sh'mo.*

*El hai v'kayyam tamid yimlokh aleinu l'olam va-ed.*

*Barukh atah Adonai, ha-ma-ariv aravim.*

It is something the congregation is supposed to say and...

# ערבית

**THE SH'MA AND SURROUNDING BLESSINGS**  
קריאת שמע וברכותיה. The Arvit evening service always includes two climactic moments: the Sh'ma and the Amidah, the silent personal prayer. On Yom Kippur, Kol Nidrei precedes and S'lichah and Viddui prayers of forgiveness and confession follow this core.

Blessings surround the Sh'ma and serve to interpret the themes enunciated in the biblical verses that make up the Sh'ma itself. Two blessings precede the Sh'ma: the first reflects on God's presence in the cycles of the day and seasons, and the second acknowledges God's love represented by the gift of Torah, God's instruction as to how we should live. Two blessings also follow the Sh'ma: the first speaks of redemption and the other deals with our concrete

concerns for safety in the darkness of night. The three paragraphs of the Sh'ma stand in the middle of these four blessings. The recitation of the Sh'ma preceded and followed by a blessing is mentioned in the very earliest rabbinic description of the priestly service in the Second Temple (Mishnah Tamid 5:1).

**BARUKH ATAH ADONAI** יהוה אתה יהוה. This first blessing before the Sh'ma acknowledges the experience of God through witnessing the natural cycles of time. Now, at this first touch of darkness, we are asked to attend to the rhythms of time, to day and night to cycles of life, and to the flow of time. Some of our liturgical texts reflect the biblical and rabbinic understandings of the universe, which include a flat earth and gates in heaven for the entrance and exiting of the sun. These ancient images may remind us of the sense of awe we feel when we contemplate the wonders of the universe.

**ADONAI TZ'VA-OT** יהוה צבאות. In the ancient world, the sun, the moon, and the stars were all seen as divine powers. Biblical monotheism demolished these ancient gods and they were then depicted as handmaidens of God, God's army. Thus this term alludes to God's mastery of all the forces of the universe.

**CREATES** בּוֹרָא. The word בּוֹרָא, "creates," is used as a verb in the Bible, but only when the subject is God, emphasizing the mystery of creation. Expressing the same thought as this prayer, the prophet Isaiah (40:26) remarks, "Lift high your eyes and see: who created these? The One who can count all the hosts and can call each by name, so mighty and powerful that no one is forgotten."

The squiggly tells us we are supposed to bow.

*We rise. Leader:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹיָה הַמְבָרֵךְ.

*Congregation, then the leader repeats:*

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הוֹיָה הַמְבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

This text is bolded so...

*We are seated.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹיָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר בְּדַבְרוֹ מַעְרִיב עֶרְבִים,

בְּחַכְמָה פּוֹתֵחַ שְׁעָרִים,

וּבִתְבוּנָה מְשַׁנֶּה עֵתִים,

וּמַחְלִיף אֶת הַזְּמַנִּים,

וּמְסַדֵּר אֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם בְּרִקְיעַ כְּרִצּוֹנוֹ.

The hollow red triangle tells us where the cantor will start chanting or singing after a period of silent prayer.

בוֹרָא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה,

גּוֹלָל אוֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אוֹר.

וּמַעְבִּיר יוֹם וּמְבִיא לַיְלָה,

וּמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה,

יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ.

אֵל חַי וְקַיָּם, תְּמִיד יִמְלוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹיָה, הַמְעַרֵּב עֶרְבִים.