

Memorial Prayer for Victims of the Holocaust

To Be Recited on Asarah B'tevet at the Torah Service

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים, דִּין אֱלֹמְנוֹת¹ וְאָבִי יְתוּמִים,¹ אֵל נָא תַחֲשֶׁה² וְתִתְאַפֵּק²
לְדַם יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּשְׁפַךְ כַּמַּיִם.³ תֵּן מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה עַל כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה, בְּמַעְלוֹת
קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּזֶהר הַרְקִיעַ מְזַהְרִים, לְנִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁל שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת
רַבּוֹת אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים, יְלָדִים וְיְלָדוֹת, שֶׁנִּהְרְגוּ וְנִשְׁחָטוּ
וְנִשְׂרְפוּ וְנִטְבְּחוּ וְנִחְנְקוּ וְנִקְבְּרוּ חַיִּים בְּיַד הַצּוֹרְרִים.

כְּלֵם קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים, וּבְהֵם גְּאוּנִים וְצַדִּיקִים, אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן וְאֲדִירֵי הַתּוֹרָה,⁴
בְּגֵן עֵדֶן תְּהִי מְנוּחָתָם.⁵ בְּעַל הַרְחָמִים יִצְרָר בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת־נִשְׁמָתָם,
יִי הוּא נִחְלָתָם,⁶ וְיִזְכֹּר לָנוּ⁷ עֲקֻדָתָם,⁸ וְיַעֲמֵד לָנוּ⁹ וּלְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל זְכוּתָם.¹⁰
אֲרָץ אֵל תִּכְסֵי דָמָם, וְאֵל יְהִי מְקוֹם לְזַעֲקָתָם.¹¹
בְּזְכוּתָם נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשׁוּבוּ לְאַחֲזָתָם,¹² וְהַקְדוּשִׁים לְזִכְרוֹן תָּמִיד—
נְגִיד יִי צְדֻקָתָם.¹³ יְבוֹאוּ שְׁלוֹם וְיִנוּחוּ עַל מִשְׁכְּבָם,¹⁴ וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן.

God, full of compassion, defender of widows¹ and protector of orphans,¹ do not stand idly by² or restrain² Yourself in the face of the blood of the people Israel that was poured out like water.³ Grant secure rest upon the wings of the Divine presence, in the heights of the holy and the pure who shine like the radiance of heaven, to the souls of six million of the people Israel—men and women, boys and girls—slain, slaughtered, burned, butchered, strangled, and buried alive at the hands of the enemies. They all were holy and pure. Among them were learned and saintly, master scholars and giants of Torah learning.⁴ May their eternal rest be in the heavenly Garden of Eden.⁵ May the Compassionate One bind up their souls in the bond of everlasting life. Adonai is their hereditary portion.⁶ May Adonai count⁷ their sacrifice⁸ to our credit, and may their merit¹⁰ protect us⁹ and all the people Israel. Earth, do not conceal their blood; let there be no resting place for their outcry.¹¹ By their merit may the dispersed of the people Israel return to the land of their heritage.¹² May these martyrs be a reminder at all times; may Adonai be aware of their righteousness always.¹³ May they reach restful peace.¹⁴ Let us say: Amen.

1. Based on Psalm 68:6, אָבִי יְתוּמִים וְדִין אֱלֹמְנוֹת, “the father of orphans, the champion of widows.”
2. Based on Isaiah 64:11, תַּחֲשֶׁה וְתַעֲנֵנוּ עַד מָאֵד, “At such things will You restrain Yourself, Adonai, / Will You stand idly by and let us suffer so heavily?” Isaiah pleads with God for action to end Israel’s suffering.
3. Alludes to Psalm 79:3, וְאֵין קוֹבֵר, “Their blood was shed like water around Jerusalem, with none to bury them,” a description of events surrounding the destruction of the Temple.
4. אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן וְאֲדִירֵי הַתּוֹרָה (literally: “Cedars of Lebanon, nobles of Torah”) are the opening words of a classic *kinah* (lamentation poem) from the liturgy of Tish’ah B’Av. It describes the murder of great rabbis of the Talmudic period.
5. The heavenly Garden of Eden to is referred as the eternal reward for the humble, in Mishnah Avot 5:20.
6. Alludes to Deuteronomy 10:9, הוּא נְחֻלָּתוֹ, “Adonai is [the tribe of Levi’s] inheritance.” The tribe of Levi, dedicated to the service of God, was given no portion of the land of Israel.
7. Recalls Nehemiah 5:19, זְכַרְה־לִי לטוֹבָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עַל הָעָם הַזֶּה, “Remember to my credit all that I have done for this people.”
8. Literally: “their binding.” Alludes to Abraham’s binding (עֲקֻדָּה) of his son Isaac for sacrifice (Genesis 22) in the service of God.
9. Literally: “stand by us,” as in בְּשַׁעַת דְּחָקוֹ, “they do not stand by a person in an hour of need” (Mishnah Avot 2:3).
10. A meritorious person can protect others. The Talmud explains: וְאֵין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת דְּחָקוֹ . . . “Is it wooded or not? [Numbers 13:20] . . . See if there is a man there whose years are the years of a tree and who protects his generation like a tree” (Bava Batra 15a). The kabbalistic, sixteenth-century Se’udah Shelishit song אֵל מִסְתַּתֵּר contains the phrase זְכוּת אֲבוֹת יִגֵּן עָלֵינוּ “may the merit of our ancestors protect us.”
11. Based on Job 16:18, אֲרָץ אֵל תִּכְסֵי דָמִי, וְאֵל יְהִי מְקוֹם לְזַעֲקָתִי, “Earth, do not cover my blood; / Let there be no resting place for my outcry!” When Cain murdered Abel, the ground “opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood”; later, “your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10–11).
12. Alludes to Leviticus 25:13. In the Jubilee year, תָּשׁוּבוּ אִישׁ אֶל אֲחֻזָּתוֹ, “each of you will return to your possession.”
13. Literally: “may their righteousness appear before Adonai,” in contrast to Psalm 109:15, יִהְיֶי נְגִיד יִי תָּמִיד, “may Adonai be aware of [his ancestors’ sins] always.”
14. Based on Isaiah 57:2, יְבוֹאוּ שְׁלוֹם, יְנוּחוּ עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם, “He shall come to peace, / They shall rest on their resting places.”