

**Tree of Life, Pittsburgh**

English Acrostic by Alden Solovy / Interpretive Hebrew Acrostic by Rav. Aytan Kaden and Elyssa Moss-Rabinowitz

Original English	Hebrew Interpretation	English Retranslation
<p>Tree of Life, Revive our souls, Enrich our days, Entreating Your blessings. O, God of Peace, Fill our hearts with comfort, Letting Your Torah shine, In the fullness of our love. Faith in You, our God, Eternal Source of blessings.</p> <p>Praying for healing In the depths of despair, Thanking God for the survivors, Thanking God for the first responders, Sorrow crushing our hearts, Bereaved beyond belief, United in our love, Returning to You in faith, God of Israel, Healer of generations.</p>	<p align="center">עץ חיים צויתנו לבחר בחיים<sup>1</sup> חדש את ימינו<sup>2</sup> יחד לבבנו והאר עינינו בתורתך<sup>3</sup> ישא פניו אלינו ברחן ובשלום<sup>4</sup> מקור החיים והברכות.</p> <p align="center">פתחנו שפתותינו בתפלה<sup>5</sup> יה, ממעמקים קראנו אליך<sup>6</sup> טוב להודות<sup>7</sup> עם הנצולים ועבור המצילים סומך ה' לכל הנפלים וזוקף לכל הכפופים<sup>8</sup> ביגון ובכאב התאחדנו ושבנו עדיך באמונה מתוך אהבתנו אחד לשניה רפאנו ונרפא<sup>9</sup> גמל עלינו כל טוב סלה<sup>10</sup></p>	<p>Tree of Life, You have commanded us to choose life Renew our days Unify our hearts and enlighten our eyes in Your Torah Let God's Countenance shine upon us in grace and peace Source of Life and Blessings.</p> <p>We have opened our lips in prayer, O, God, we called to You from the depths It is good to give thanks with the survivors and on behalf of the responders God supports all who stumble, and makes all who are bent stand straight In despair and pain we have unified And we have returned to you in faith through our love one for another Heal us and we shall be healed Grant us all good, selah.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Based on Deuteronomy 30:19 – ובחרת בחיים - a call to choose the righteous path associated with life.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Eicha / Lamentations 5:21. After a tragedy and destruction we turn to God with hope and trust that God bless us with new days and the strength and courage to build those days. This line is also familiar from the service of returning the Torah to the Ark.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the blessing before the Sh'ma in the morning prayers. This blessing stresses that God showered upon us Divine love in giving us the Torah.

<sup>4</sup> Based on the priestly blessing – Numbers 6: 22-27. The quote here is based mostly on verse 26.

<sup>5</sup> The opening to each Amida prayer. Before we can pray, we ask God for assistance in formulating the words we are about to utter.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Tehillim / Psalms 130:1 – a cry to God from the depths

<sup>7</sup> Two words borrowed from Psalms 92:2 – It is good to give thanks to God, to tell in the morning of God's kindnesses and of God's faithfulness throughout the nights. In the darkness of tragedy there were those who stepped forward in great kindness.

<sup>8</sup> Psalms 145:14

<sup>9</sup> Taken from the prayer for healing from Amidah – which is in turn based on Jeremiah 17:14

<sup>10</sup> Based on the traditional blessing "hagomel" for those who have been rescued from harm; certainly an appropriate statement for the congregation who suffered from this heinous attack.

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<p>Tree of Life,          Redeemer of Israel,          Enliven this moment with healing,          Enliven this moment with hope.          Oh, Rock of Israel,          Forget not the Jews of Pittsburgh.          Let Your love flow          In the days ahead          For justice and peace          Everlasting.</p>	<p>עץ חיים          צור ישראל וגואלו<sup>11</sup>          חוסה נא וְחַנּוּנוֹ<sup>12</sup>          יִשְׁפְּנוּ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ<sup>13</sup> צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט<sup>14</sup>          י-ה, שְׁמֹר צֵאתֵנוּ וּבֹאֵנוּ בְּפִיטְסְבוּרְגַּ וּבְרַחֲמֵי תֵיבֵל          מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם<sup>15</sup></p>	<p>Tree of Life          Rock of Israel and its redeemer          Spread compassion and grace upon us          Righteousness and justice should dwell within us          God, guard our comings and goings here in Pittsburgh and throughout          the world          From now and for eternity.</p>
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<sup>11</sup> The terms צור ישראל appears in Tanach, for example in Samuel II 23:3 referring to God as the steady guiding Rock. In modern times the terms have become associated with the State of Israel and the Prayer for the State opens: אבינו שבשמים צור ישראל וגואלו – Our Father in heaven, Rock of Israel and its redeemer. This reference therefore links the Jews of Pittsburgh to an even farther, wider community.

<sup>12</sup> Borrowed loosely from the liturgical poem Yedid Nefesh – Rabbi Elazar Azikri – Safed, 16<sup>th</sup> cent. The poem describes the love between God and the Jewish people.

<sup>13</sup> Based on Exodus 25:8. In this passage God commands the people to build the tabernacle. If it is done so correctly it will become a venue for God to dwell among the people.

<sup>14</sup> Based on Genesis 18:19. When God chooses to tell Abraham of the plan to overturn Sodom it is precisely because God has seen Abraham as one who will teach his offspring the ways of righteousness and justice. So too, we can see ourselves as following in Abraham's footsteps.

<sup>15</sup> The final lines are based on the second blessing after the Sh'ma of the nighttime – השכיבו – in this prayer we speak of the fear of the travails of night (in this case metaphoric not just literal), such as attacks of animals and other predators. We request that God embraces us in a Sukkat Shalom.