

On the loss of vision:

וְהָאֵר עֵינַיִנוּ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ

Open our eyes to your Torah.

(From the paragraph before the shema in shakharit)

Though my world may be dark, help me to see that it is also filled with great light and beauty. Adonai/God/Creator/Source of Life, help me to see what I might have never seen before—or known to look for. Help me to see the world with my hands, with my ears, with my nose, with my tongue, with my heart. Open my heart to the wisdom of Torah and the beauty of kindness and compassion. Allow me to be human in my vulnerability and to radiate light even as I can no longer see it with my eyes.

הַנְּשָׁמָה לְךָ וְהַגּוּף פְּעֻלָּתְךָ.

The soul is Yours, the body is Your creation.

(From the kol nidrey liturgy)

Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College is dedicated to realizing Jewish tradition's vision of later life as a season of splendor (*hiddur*), through professional education, scholarship and innovative spiritual resources.

RRC is the rabbinical training institution of Reconstructionist Judaism.

On the loss of the ability to speak:

שְׁמַע ה' קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנֵנִי.

Lord, hear my voice when I call;

be gracious to me, and answer.

(Psalm 27:7)

Adonai/God/Creator/Source of Life, hear my distress, my loneliness and my anger, though I cannot use my mouth to pour them out to you. Answer my calls, though they are silent. Help me to understand that my tongue is just one tool of expression. Speaking is much easier than hearing words; give me the strength to listen to the world and to those who speak to me. Allow me to remember that the *shema* commands that I love You with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my might; I do not need my voice to fulfill Your *mitzvot*.

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Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
1299 Church Road, Wyncote, PA, 19095-1898
Phone 215.576.0800, ext. 152
E-mail hiddur@rrc.edu

www.hiddur.org

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When the Body Begins to Fail: Reaching Out in Prayer

by Tamara Arnow



Hiddur הידור

THE CENTER FOR AGING AND JUDAISM

Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism is pleased to offer this collection of original prayers by Tamara Arnow, a participant in our Shades of Gray seminar. The prayers are designed to offer support and inspiration to individuals facing the challenge of physical decline. Innovative spiritual resources such as these are an important part of our work—drawing on Jewish tradition to transform the culture of aging.

Recite this passage first, then continue with relevant prayer/s that follow.

Adonai/God/Creator/Source of Life, help me to find the strength to acknowledge that my soul and my body are miraculous gifts. Allow me to accept, with willingness and gratitude, the _____ years you have already given me to inhabit my body. Help me to understand that my body's failings are not my own failings, that my pain is not punishment. Though I may not have control over my body, remind me that control was never ultimately mine. Open my heart and free my voice to share my suffering with You and with those around me, so that I may feel compassion and community surrounding me.

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(From the kol nidrey liturgy)

On general weakening of the body:

אֵל-תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי לְעֵת זְקֵנָה כְּכֹלֹת כְּחֵי אֵל-תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי.

*Do not cast me off in old age;
when my strength fails, do not forsake me.*

(Psalm 71:9)

Adonai/God/Creator/Source of Life, do not forsake me, though my body seems to be abandoning me, declining without my permission. Keep me from loneliness and isolation even as I grow weaker. My weakness does not define me, just as my strength did not. Help me to find new sources of strength in myself even as my body weakens.

הַנְּשָׁמָה לְךָ וְהַגּוּף פְּעֻלָּתְךָ.

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On a decline in mobility:

הוֹרֵנִי ה' דְּרַכְךָ אֱהַלְךָ בְּאַמְתְּךָ.

*Teach me Your way, God,
I will walk in Your truth.*

(Psalm 86:11)

Adonai/God/Creator/Source of Life, help me to realize that although I cannot walk, I can still move forward. Open my senses so that I may hear, smell, see, touch and taste the world around me in new ways. Help me to realize the value of being still. Allow me to mourn the loss of my independence, but allow me the courage to know that I do not need to walk with my feet to walk in Your ways.

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