

Peace Readings

Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 37 (left side)

The following is the last passage of the Mishnah, which thus concludes with the word shalom, "peace."

Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta said: The blessed Holy One found no vessel that could contain blessing for Israel except that of peace, as it is written; "Adonai will grant strength to God's people; Adonai will bless them with peace." (Psalm 29:11)

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 64a - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 37 (left side)

Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Rabbi Hanina: Students of Torah increase peace in the world, as the prophet Isaiah said; "All your children shall be taught by Adonai, and your children shall increase peace." Do not read the word as *banayikh*, "your children," but rather as *bonayikh*, "your builders."

May those who love your Torah find great peace; may they not stumble.

May there be peace within your walls, tranquility in your citadels.

For the sake of my brothers, and sisters, and friends, I pray for peace in your midst.

For the sake of the house of Adonai our God, I seek your welfare.

May God grant strength to God's people; may God grant God's people peace.

The Canopy of Peace, the Sukkah of Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 45 (left side) - In reference to the *Second B'rakah after the Sh'ma*: Peace in the Night

Peace comes to us in the recognition that when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, when we recognize that we cannot control everything, redemption can be achieved. The central image in this prayer is the "*sukkah* of peace." The *sukkah* is a fragile structure, open to the elements. Peace is pictured not as a temple, solidly built, gilded, perhaps ornate, but rather as created out of the most fragmentary of materials, leaving us vulnerable and at risk.

Who blesses Your people Israel with peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 51 (right side)

The *midrash* notes, "Great is peace, for all prayers conclude with pleas for peace." (Leviticus Rabbah 9:9) Just as the *Amidah* concludes with a prayer for peace, so too do the Grace After Meals, the Priestly Blessing, *Kaddish Shalem*, the Mourner's *Kaddish* and the evening *Sh'ma* and Its Blessings. Similarly, the entire *Mishnah* concludes with the word *shalom*, noting that God "could not find any vessel that could contain Israel, except that of peace." (*Mishnah Uktzin* 3:12) Peace enables all blessings to be fully appreciated and enjoyed.

Pursuing Peace - Tractate Derekh Eretz - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 51 (left side)

Hezekiah taught: Great is peace, for all other *mitzvot* of the Torah are conditional: "If you see..." (Exodus 23:5) "If you meet..." (Exodus 23:4) "If you happen upon..." (Deuteronomy 22:6) If the circumstance comes your

way then you must perform the *mitzvah*, but if not, there is no obligation to fulfil it. But regarding peace it is written, “Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:15) Seek peace wherever you find yourself, and pursue it in other places, as well.

Shalom Rav by Tamara Cohen - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 51 (left side)

Spread Your Peace over us like a vast quilt crafted by strong and patient hands.

Plant it deep within us like a million seeds claiming life in the heart's moist soil.

Grant it now.

To those born Your people, to those who have walked winding paths to become so;

to those still burdened by history, to those with no memory of want or fear;

grant a generous peace.

To those who reach for it through the steady breath of the body;

to those who grasp for it in a child home from the reserves;

to those on the streets for the rights of others; to those on guard for the safety of their own;

with abundant gentle blessing,

Master of Peace,

kiss all of us goodnight.

Two Kinds of Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 54 (left)

The Hasidic master Nahman of Bratzlav distinguished between two kinds of peace. The first is peace within one's self, which arises out of a sense of awe and humility. The second kind of peace derives from prayer - a vision of universal peace, when there shall be peace in all the world.

Peace - Leviticus Rabbah - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 165 (left)

Hezekiah said in the name of Hori: Great is peace, for regarding all the journeys of the Israelites in the desert it is written that they journeyed in contention and encamped in contention. But when they came to Mount Sinai they encamped as one, as it is written, “And Israel encamped there.” (Exodus 19:2) The Torah does not say

“the children of Israel” but rather “Israel,” to teach you that there were no differences but they came there as one. The Holy One then said: “This is the hour that I can give the Torah to My children.”

Be Like the Students of Aaron - *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 165 (left)

Hillel would teach: “Be like the students of Aaron: loving peace and pursuing peace, loving every living being and drawing them near to the Torah.” What would Aaron do? When two people were fighting with each other, he would go and sit near the first and say, “My child, you should only know how disturbed and embarrassed your friend is about having offended you,” and thus his anger would be quieted. Then Aaron would go to the second one, sit next to him and say, “My child, I've just spoken to your friend and you should realize how disturbed and embarrassed he is about having offended you.” And Aaron would sit with him until his anger had dissipated. When the two met, they would hug each other and kiss. That is why it is written that when Aaron died, the entire house of Israel mourned for thirty days, (Numbers 20:29) But when Moses died it does not say the whole house of Israel mourned.

***Shalom to All* - by Nathan Sternhartz - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 169 (left)**

Avinu Malkenu, Master of Peace, help us and strengthen us so that we always strive for peace. May there be harmony among all people, their companions, and friends. May there be no discord among the members of my family. You who establish peace above, extend peace upon us and the whole world. May we draw close to You and Your Torah in truth and may we all be bound together, carrying out Your will wholeheartedly. Master of Peace, bless us with peace.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, Adonai, my rock and my redeemer.

“A new day dawns...” by Norma U. Levitt - From *Covenant of the Heart*

A new day dawns, a day of hopes and dreams,
Plans built on faith we cherish, goals we share.
We pray for courage to act as prophets dare
The way, to serve and care.

For peace, for human needs, for freedom's rights;
For people, Torah, and for God's evolving word;
For women joined in action and in light
By deeds we fashion and by mandates heard.

In every age, our people faced a foe,
From Inquisition to the ovens of death.
Forced from their lands as refugees they go
In fear, or stay with labored breath.

Dear God, we pray that challenged in our day, we will stand firm,
Cherishing our faith, our future we affirm.

“Each generation is challenged...” by Francine Gottlieb - From *Covenant of the Heart* (1999)

Each generation is challenged to pursue peace.

Some meet that challenge better than others.

If peace eludes us, we must ask if it is because of circumstances beyond our control,
or because our attitudes interfere with its realization.

When we are cynical instead of idealistic, do we not interfere with peace?

We work for peace when we believe it is an ideal.

When we are filled with despair instead of faith, do we not interfere with peace?

We gain the strength for peace by joining with others.

To those who claim that peace is not possible, Judaism says:

People who believe in nothing, change nothing for the better.

We must risk believing in peace and work for its achievement.

This is our legacy from the past

This is our gift to the future.

“A Prayer for Peace” - by Rabbi Naomi Levy - from *Talking to God*

Let us live in peace, God.

Let children live in peace, and homes free
from brutality and abuse.

Let them go to school in peace, free from violence
and fear.

Let them play in peace, God, in safe parks, and safe
neighborhoods; watch over them.

Let husbands and wives love in peace, in marriages
free from cruelty.

Let men and women go to work in peace, with no
fears of terror or bloodshed.

Let us travel in peace; protect us, God, and the air,
on the seas, along whatever road we take.

Let Nations dwell together in peace, without the
threat of war hovering over them.

Help us, God. Teach all people of all races and
faiths, and all the countries of all over the world, to
believe that the peace that seems so far off is in
fact within our reach.

Let us live in peace, God. And let us say,
Amen.

Seventh *Berakhah*: Peace - by Rabbi Amy Eilberg - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 229 (right side)

Why is Jewish liturgy so suffused with prayers for peace? Is prayer for peace, a set of pious words, an abstraction or ideal that can never be realized? Rather, the rabbis taught that the pursuit of peace is a *mitzvah* without beginning or end, to be unremittingly practiced every day with those near to us and those at a great distance. The prayer for peace reminds us to pursue reconciliation in our lives: inside ourselves; with loved ones, neighbors, and colleagues; with community members and fellow citizens; and in our engagement with people across the world. As God is holy, we are to emulate God's holiness. As God is peacemaker, so too are we to serve the cause of peace everyday in the midst of our lives.

Shalom: Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 229 (left side)

How distant peace seems - both inner peace and outer peace. How torn we are by our emotions, our desires, our competitiveness. Yet having prayed for wholeness, having expressed our gratitude, having spent Shabbat at rest, perhaps for a moment we can savor our own quiet breath and make peace with the world around us.

Shalom: Peace - Leviticus Rabbah - Siddur Lev Shalem, page 229 (left side)

Our Rabbis taught: Great is peace, for the Messiah will begin by speaking of peace, as the prophet Isaiah (52:7) says, "How beautiful upon the hilltops are the footsteps of the messenger declaring peace." (Leviticus Rabbah 9:9)

“Shalom: Peace” - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 229 (left side)

A true peace,

not an armistice, not a

covenant of non-

interference,

but understanding and

compassion

if not love.

Struggle for the sake of

accomplishment,

not for rivalry or

competition.

Let fulfillment and attain-

ment be the order of the

day, and may death

come only as a blessing.

Shalom: Peace - A Meditation - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 229 (left side)

May the spirit of Shabbat remain with us throughout the week. May we have the strength, the courage, and the resilience to do what we need to do and what only we can do. Amidst the work we set out to accomplish in the world, may we find sustenance for our souls, that we may be faithful partners in God's creation, instruments of healing and peace.

Abundant and Lasting Peace - *Shalom Rav* - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 278 (right side)

The Hebrew word *shalom*, "peace," comes from the same root as the word *shalem*, which means "whole." The peace that is prayed for here is more than the end of war - that, of course, would, in itself, be a blessing - but rather a moment in which each of us can feel whole, and can feel the wholeness of humanity and of the universe.

Who blesses Your People Israel with Peace - *Hamivarech et amo Yisrael b'shalom* - Siddur Lev Shalem,
page 278 (right side)

The peace that descends on the people Israel exemplifies the peace that shall descend on the whole world.

Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 278 (left side)

Commentators remark that as we pray for peace, we should not let go of that which preys on us, that we not be consumed by anger.

“Peace” - by A. M. Klein - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 278 (left side)

Oh accept, accept, our
 thanks for the day's
 three miracles, of dusk,
 of dawn, of noon, and
 of the years which with
 Thy presence are made
 felicitous.

Grant us - our last
 petition - peace, Thine
 especial blessing,
which is of Thy grace and
 of the shining and turn-
 ing of Thy Face.

“Shalom” - by Denise Levertov - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 280 (left side)

A man growing old is going
down the dark stairs.
He has been speaking of the
 Soul...
Of dreams
burnt and the bone.

He looks up
to the friends who lean
out of light and wine
over the well of stairs.
They asked his pardon
for the dark they can't help

...

“It's alright,” answers
the man going down,
“it's alright - there are many
avenues, many corridors of
 the soul
that are dark also.
Shalom.”

Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 299 (right side)

There are two versions of the final blessing of the *Amidah*, the prayer for peace. In the afternoon and evening services, the blessing is a general prayer for peace. The other version of this blessing more closely reflects the Priestly Blessing; it is recited in those services (such as *Shacharit*) during which priests in the Land of Israel would bless the congregation at the point of the service.

Who blesses Your People Israel with Peace - *Hamivarech et amo Yisrael b'shalom* - *Leviticus Rabbah* - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 299 (right side)

The *Amidah*, like many other prayers, concludes with a prayer for peace. In the words of the midrash, "Great is peace, for all the prayers conclude with pleas for peace." (*Leviticus Rabbah* 9:9)

Peace - *Leviticus Rabbah* - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 299 (left side)

Bar Kappara said: Great is peace, for even those on high require peace, as it is said, "May the one who creates peace on high bring peace to us." If those on high—among whom there is no hatred, no enmity, no jealousy, no rivalry, no grudging eye—need peace, all the more so to human beings, among whom there are all such traits.

Peace - by Rav Nachman of Braszlav - Siddur Lev Shalem, page 299 (left side)

The whole world is full of quarrels: among the nations, and every city, and every home, among neighbors, in the workplace. No one realizes that the day that has passed will never return, and each day one draws closer to death. How does one find time to waste on quarrels? Therefore, everyone should take this to heart and learn patience and not waste one's days in quarrels, large or small. One should restrain one's emotions and anger and live in peace with all.

Prayer for Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 313 (left side)

Each of the festivals serves as a reminder of the way we are to pursue peace. On Pesah, we learn that peace is dependent on ending the oppression of one people by another; on Shavuot, that it demands proper study and practice, for the way of Torah is the way of peace; and on Sukkot, that the pursuit of Peace demands persistence - the long march and the desert that precedes arriving at the Promised Land.

“Adonai, our world is sustained...” by Ruth Perelson - From *Covenant of the Heart* (1999)

Adonai, our world is sustained when each of us ignites Your Divine Spark within us.

Together we strive for *SHALOM* - that which makes us whole and holy.

We ask Your blessings for continued strength to help keep Your Spark aglow - in all our communities:

... for our country where we flourish in freedom

... for Israel where we pray that every anniversary may be celebrated in peace

... for our congregation where we share our strengths to do your will.

May you look upon us with continued favor.

“Who am I as a Jewish woman?...” by Helene H. Waranch - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2000)

Who am I as a Jewish woman?

A mother

A wife

A daughter

A friend

A boss

A volunteer

whose inner soul is searching -

searching for God within us all.

especially within myself.

To find goodness, love and understanding

To come to peace with my love of family and self

To take time to smell the flowers

To listen and to hear

To understand the hurting within me.

Searching and reaching for an equilibrium - a peace

God - give me strength

to search

to be open

to understand

to live with who I am

to move forward in my life

and to find peace.

“Prayer for Peace” - by Debra B. Darvick - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2000)

Grant us strength, God,
to bring peace to Your world.

Guide our hands to dismantle injustice;
hone our ears to hear others' cries.
blunt our tongues from uttering malice
blind us not, God, open our eyes.

Then can we reach out in friendship;
our hearts will listen for pain.
Then will we speak only kindness;
and we'll walk without apathy's cane.

Grant us strength, God,
to bring peace to Your world.

“Peace” - by Naomi Stanway - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

What is Peace?

Is it good?

Is peace the quiet that settles when snow falls?

Or is it a smile between sisters,

Is peace knowing your parents are safe,

Or knowing your children are healthy?

Is peace simply old enemies laughing together,

Or does peace have a meaning?

Is it earned deserved and rewarded ?

Is it found?

Everyone must have their own idea of peace.

For some it may be to be able to express individuality without being teased,

For others it may be sitting on a summer evening,

By a lake with someone they love,

Whatever peace is,

Whatever we think it is,

Anyone should be able to experience it,

A child, a teenager, a parent,

We should all work to make everyone's peace,

A reality.

“PEACE” - by Debbi Josephson - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

Present God, be our help and hear our prayers,

Eliminate now and forevermore the fears that threaten to harm us,

Adonai, as we hold You close in our hearts and our heads understand that

Constant is our devotion and trust for You and You for us

Eternal is the bond between *Adonai* and the People Israel.

“To have a vision...” - by Susan S. Winograd - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

To have a vision, one need not see;

One has to feel, one has to be.

The light that glows, grows from within;

Never to darken, never to dim.

An inner light that keeps on living;

Whose flame increases with each act of giving.

A *mitzvah* is giving, a *mitzvah* is sharing.

To bring hope and joy, to bring love and caring.

And eternal light to brighten the heart;

To enlighten the soul and that is just part:

To lift up the spirit, to ease the pain;

With each loving deed, Judaism will gain.

A light to guide us through all our days;

To correct the errors of our ways.

A light to make things hateful cease,

A vision that leads to lasting world peace.

“Oseh Shalom” - by Barbara D. Holender- From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

Oseh Shalom

Giver of peace,
teach us to see ourselves
in the face of the Other,
that we may learn to be
patient with fault
generous with love
sparing with anger.
Help us to understand
that our little lives
are potent with great good,
that we are healers in Your image,
that reaching out in need of you
to others more in need
we find You near.

Give us the grace
simply to be kind.

Then peace must surely come
to dwell among us.

“Jerusalem Shawl” - by Judith Price - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

and there came from the flocks
of Moses and Abraham, wool
for the threads of Jerusalem

and there came from the wells
of Sarah and Rachel, water
for the threads of Jerusalem

and there came from the labors
of Rebeckah and Leah, flax
for the thread of Jerusalem

and there came from the wisdom
of David and Ruth, strength
for the threads of Jerusalem

and there came from the tears
of warriors and survivors, compassion
for the threads of Jerusalem

and there came from the laughter
of generations of children, colors
For the threads of Jerusalem

threads intertwined for Peace

“A Prayer for Israel” - by Linda Zoll - From *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005)

May you be a light unto the nations, O Israel,
shine across the universe.

We rejoice in Israel's beauty.
Red mountains watch over lush fields.
Ancient temple walls echo the prayers
of countless generations.

We praise Israel's commitment to all who seek refuge
in the land of our ancestors.
With joy and compassion,
Israel welcomes the stranger.
We remember the brave souls who built our homeland.
Their toil made the desert blossom and cities rise.
Just as Joshua and his flock labored in that holy land,
our people struggle to keep Israel strong.

We thank God for the land of Israel, a precious gift.
We pray for God's blessing of peace, a precious gift.

Grant Peace - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 354 (right side)

Every Jewish prayer service ends with a prayer for peace. The midrash says that peace is one of the names of God (*Sifrei* Numbers 42).

Peace - Menahem Mendel of Kotzk - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 354 (left side)

True peace is not a simple yielding, giving in, or giving up, but true peace comes after prolonged struggle; such a peace is lasting.

Prayer for Peace: An Interpretive Rendering - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 354 (left side)

O God from whom all peace flows, grant serenity to Your people with love and mercy, life and goodness for all. Shelter us with kindness, bless us with tranquility at all times and all seasons. We praise You, God, whose blessing is peace.

“Wildpeace” - Yehudah Amichai (translated by Chana Bloch) - *Siddur Lev Shalem*, page 452 (left)

Not the peace of a cease-fire,
 not even the vision of the wolf
 and the lamb,
 but rather
 as in the heart when the
 excitement is over
 and you can talk only about a
 great weariness.
 I know that I know how to kill,
 that makes me an adult.
 And my son plays with a toy
 gun that knows
 how to open and close its eyes
 and say Mama.

A peace
 without the big noise of beat-
 ing swords into plough-
 shares,
 without words, without
 the thud of the heavy rubber
 stamp; let it be
 light, floating like lazy white
 foam.

A little rest for the wounds -
 who speaks of healing?
 (And the howl of the orphans
 is passed from one genera-
 tion
 to the next, as in a relay race;
 the baton never falls.)

Let it come
 like wildflowers,
 suddenly, because the field
 must have it: wildpeace.

