

# *A Brief Service to Remember Those Who Have Died of COVID-19*

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Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk would say:  
“There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.”<sup>1</sup>

## **An *El Malei Rachamim* for Those Who Have Died of COVID-19**

Today, we said, *Ashamnu*...  
Today, we said, “We have sinned.”  
Today, we say, *ashamnu*,  
“We have sinned.”

In his visions, Ezekiel the Prophet saw  
A valley, a valley full of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

The ground was dry, so dry,  
And God promised to breathe  
The breath of life  
Back into you . . .

Today, today we say,  
*Ashamnu*, “We have sinned.”

We have sinned against the poorest among us,  
The ones with less education,  
The ones without insurance,  
The so-called essentials,  
The ones with less space to live and to breathe.

God, You know the ways in which we missed the  
mark.

God, You know the number of nameless graves  
we had to dig,

God, You have seen us run out of tests,  
respirators, and masks.

Today, today we say, “we have sinned.”  
For the ones who lost  
Their lives already  
We can do little

Than raise our voices,  
And cry to You:

### *OPTIONAL:*

*We place a bowl of water next to the Yizkor candles,  
A bowl of handwashing, of cleaning, of bitter water,  
And tears*

Raise their souls,  
To unity.

Bind them, hold them,  
Carry them on Your wings.

Breathe into the gaps of our wisdom, our means,  
and our compassion,

וַזָּרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים, *V'zarakti aleichem  
mayim t'horim* . . . (Ezekiel 36:25)

Sprinkle clean water upon us, help us clean  
ourselves;

Let water moisten the valleys, the bones, and  
the graves . . .

Forgive us, redeem them,  
Raise us to You.

<sup>1</sup> *Mishkan HaNefesh: A Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2015), 597.

## *El Malei Rachamim*<sup>2</sup>

<i>El malei rachamim,</i>	אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים,
<i>shochein bam'romim,</i>	שׁוֹכֵן בְּמְרוֹמִים.
<i>hamtzei m'nuchah n'chonah</i>	הַמְצֵא מְנוּחָה גְבוּרָה
<i>tachat kanfei hash'chinah —</i>	תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה
<i>im k'doshim ut-horim</i>	עִם קְדוֹשִׁים וְטְהוֹרִים
<i>k'zohar harakia mazhirim—</i>	כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזַהְרִים
<i>l'nishmot yakireinu</i>	לְבִשְׁמוֹת יַקִּירֵינוּ
<i>shehal'chu l'olamam.</i>	שֶׁהֲלָכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם.
<i>Baal harachamim yastireim</i>	בְּעַל הָרַחֲמִים יִסְתִּירֵם
<i>b'seiter k'nafav l'olamim;</i>	בְּסִטְרָם כְּנַפְיוֹ לְעוֹלָמִים,
<i>v'yitzror bitzror hachayim</i>	וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצִרְוֹר הַחַיִּים
<i>et nishmatam.</i>	אֶת נִשְׁמָתָם.
<i>Adonai — hu nachalatam.</i>	יְיָ הוּא נַחֲלָתָם.
<i>V'yanuchu b'shalom al mishkavam.</i>	וַיְנַוְחוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכָּבָם.
<i>V'nomar: Amen.</i>	וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.

Merciful God,  
God Most High:  
Let there be perfect rest  
for the souls of our loved ones who have gone into eternity.  
May they find shelter in Your presence among the holy and pure  
whose light shines like the radiance of heaven.  
Compassionate God, hold them close to You forever.  
May their souls be bound up in the bond of life eternal.  
May they find a home in You.  
And may they rest in peace.  
Together we say: *Amen*.

2. *Mishkan HaNefesh: A Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2015), 598.

## Tears<sup>3</sup>

Oh, for the world.  
Oh, for our children.  
  
cover me, hold me, God.  
but don't wipe my tears.  
they have to follow their course.

## A *Yizkor* Prayer for Those Who Have Died of COVID-19

Merciful God, God Most High,  
May You remember all those  
Who died of COVID-19,  
Of old age and known preconditions,  
And those who died  
Entirely surprised  
By the terrible fragility  
Of our human bodies.

With love we repeat the words  
Of an old *Yizkor* book:  
“I had a dream. I returned to the town of my childhood. Everyone there was still alive!”<sup>4</sup>  
Dreamers we are,  
Of a world in which  
You are still alive,  
Living among us, going about the life  
We once knew as normal.

May your memory be a blessing  
And a reminder,  
To shelter those who are fragile,  
Even in times of fear.

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3. Rabbi Menachem Creditor, in *When We Turned Within: Reflections on COVID-19*, ed. Menachem Creditor and Sarah Tuttle-Singer (self-published, 2020), 325. Used with permission.

4. Emanuel Kopelov, “Memories from Yurburg, the Town of My Birth,” in *The Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Yurburg, Lithuania*, Joel Alpert (ed.), Assistance to Lithuanian Jews, 2003. Available online at: [https://books.google.com/books?id=WFS0T95E\\_HkC](https://books.google.com/books?id=WFS0T95E_HkC)

## Mourner's Kaddish<sup>5</sup>

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meih raba, b'alma di v'ra  
chiruteih. V'yamlich malchuteih b'chayeichon  
uvyomeichon, uvchayei d'chol beit Yisrael —  
baagala uvizman kariv; v'imru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'meih raba m'varach l'alam ul-almei almaya.  
Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpaar v'yitromam v'yitnasei  
v'yit-hadar v'yitaleh v'yit-halal sh'meih d'kudsha —  
b'rich hu — l'eila mikol birchata v'shirata,  
tushb'chata v'nechemata daamiran b'alma;  
v'imru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya, v'chayim aleinu v'al  
kol Yisrael; v'imru: Amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav, hu yaaseh shalom aleinu,  
v'al kol Yisrael v'al kol yoshvei teiveil; v'imru: Amen.*

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא, בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְרָא  
כְּרַעוּתָהּ. וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן  
וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן, וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמַּן קָרִיב. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעֵלְמֵי עֲלְמֵיָא.  
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא  
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקָדְשָׁא,  
בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעֵלְמָא מְכָל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא,  
תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאִמְרֵיךְ בְּעֵלְמָא.  
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שָׁמַיָא, וְחַיִּים עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל  
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוֵמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ  
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

*May the Source of peace bestow peace on all who mourn,  
and may we be a source of comfort to all who are bereaved.  
Amen.*

May God's great name come to be magnified and sanctified  
in the world God brought into being.  
May God's majestic reign prevail soon in your lives, in your days,  
and in the life of the whole House of Israel;  
and let us say: *Amen*.

May God's great name be blessed to the end of time.

May God's holy name come to be blessed, acclaimed, and glorified;  
revered, raised, and beautified; honored and praised.  
Blessed is the One who is beyond all the blessings and hymns,  
all the praises and words of comfort  
that we speak in the world;  
and let us say: *Amen*.

Let perfect peace abound;  
let there be abundant life for us and for all Israel.  
May the One who makes peace in the high heavens  
make peace for us,  
all Israel,  
and all who dwell on earth;  
and let us say: *Amen*.

5. *Mishkan HaNefesh: A Machzor for the Days of Awe, Yom Kippur* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2015), 606–7.