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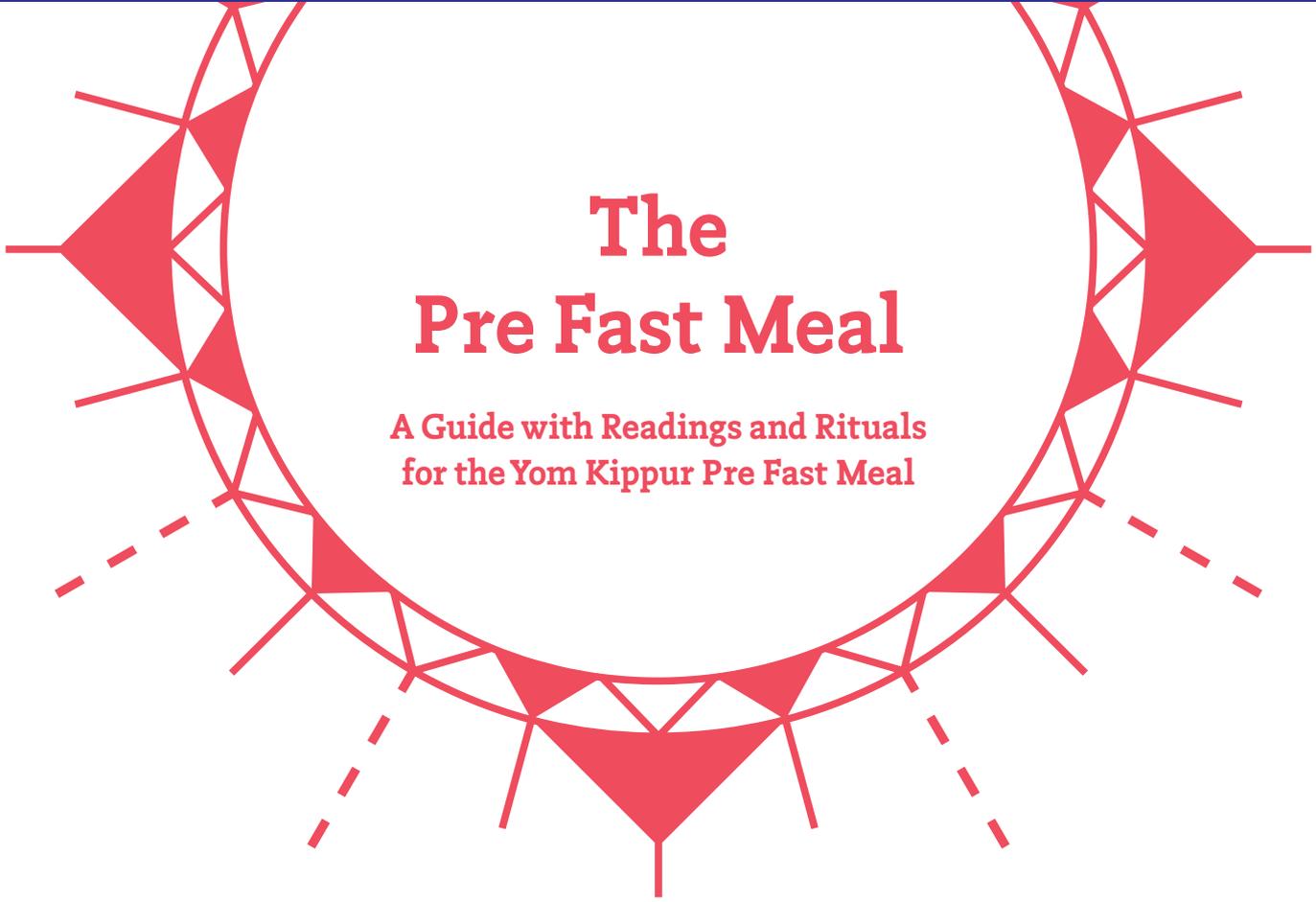


OSHMAN
FAMILY
JEWISH
COMMUNITY
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TAUBE KORET CAMPUS
FOR JEWISH LIFE



YOM KIPPUR

**A GUIDEBOOK WITH READINGS AND RITUALS
FOR THE PRE FAST MEAL
AND FOR THE BREAK FAST MEAL**



The Pre Fast Meal

A Guide with Readings and Rituals
for the Yom Kippur Pre Fast Meal

The sun is setting and Yom Kippur is about to begin. Yom Kippur is translated as “The Day of Atonement” and this title tells you a little about what the next 25 hours will bring. Yom Kippur is a day meant for individual and communal introspection and is an opportunity in the Jewish year for offering forgiveness to yourself and others. There are many ways to set the tone for this kind of day. Fasting is one tool we use. This guide also suggests other rituals that might serve to make the day meaningful as well. Since the holiday is bookended by two meals, you can spend time at these dinner-gatherings evoking the holiday’s mood and themes.

As you sit down to eat this evening’s meal, perhaps before a daylong fast, you can take a few moments to set the tone for the upcoming day. Maybe you have time for a phone call to a loved one, someone from whom you want to ask forgiveness for something that happened last year. Or, perhaps you have a few private regrets that are on your mind. Now is the time to write them down on paper. And if you want, rip that note to shreds. (Or burn it! Or throw it in water!) You and your family and friends can even do this act together before you sit down to eat.

A big meal awaits with your favorite Jewish foods to sneak in before the sun sets. But tonight, the dishes will taste different as you imagine their serving as the energy you will need for the next day’s challenging work on yourself and your relationships.

When you sit down at this pre-holiday meal tonight, you and your family and friends have the opportunity to get ready for the day to come. This guide provides some readings and rituals that can help you feel the spirit of the holiday.

Whatever tomorrow brings, tonight is still yours for the making.



A Selection of Readings

These poetic excerpts are meant to evoke some of Yom Kippur's most important themes. We suggest you read them aloud or to yourself when you are about to sit down to eat.

The waters cannot return in repentance
The waters cannot return in repentance
To where would they return?
To the faucet, the sources, the ground,
the roots, the cloud, the sea, into my
mouth?
The waters cannot return in
repentance, every place is their seas
days of old, their waters of old,
every place a beginning and end, and a
beginning.

Yehuda Amichai

Guiding Questions:



How is the symbolism of water used in this poem?

What might the waters teach us about our own capacity for repentance?

Guiding Questions:



What is the relationship between memory and reflection?

How can we use the past to create the future?

Remorse—is Memory—awake—
Her Parties all astir—
A Presence of Departed Acts—
At window—and at Door—

Its Past--set down before the Soul
And lighted with a Match—
Perusal—to facilitate—
And help Belief to stretch—

Emily Dickinson

Out of nothing I became a being,
and from a being I shall be
nothing -- but until then
I rejoice, a mote in Your world,
a spark in Your seeing.

Charles Reznikoff

Guiding Questions:



How might we acknowledge the cycles of life today in particular?
How do you imagine Yom Kippur's demonstrating the complicated truth of a person's simultaneous significance and insignificance?

Is this the fast I desire: a day for men to starve their bodies? Is it bowing heads like a bulrush and lying in sackcloth in ashes? Do you call that a fast, a day when the LORD is favorable? No! This is the fast I desire: to unlock the chains of wickedness, and to untie the cords of the yoke! To let the oppressed go free! To break off every yoke! It is to share your bread with the hungry and to take the wretched poor into your home. When you see the naked, to clothe him. And not to hide yourself from your own kin.

(Isaiah 58:5-7, traditionally read in synagogues on Yom Kippur)

Guiding Questions: What are some of the injustices in our community and world today that need to be addressed? How can we use Yom Kippur to bring attention to rectifying those injustices?





Blessings Before the Meal

Yom Kippur is sometimes called in Hebrew “Shabbat Shabbaton,” “Sabbath of Sabbaths,” the idea being that Yom Kippur is the holiest Sabbath of all. We suggest reciting the traditional Shabbat blessings at the start of Yom Kippur’s pre-fast meal in order to welcome the holiday into our homes. We invite you to use these traditional blessings or alternatives, or words of your own, or no words at all.

Blessing of the Children/Friends

Traditionally, the person saying the blessing places two hands on the heads or shoulders of those receiving the blessing. Holding hands works too.

יְבָרְכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

May God bless you and guard you (Alternative: My you find blessings and protection from all who love you)

יְאֵר יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וְיַחֲנֶנֶךָ

May God show you favor and be gracious to you (Alternative: May you find favor and grace in this world)

יִשָּׂא יי פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵי וְיִשֵּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

May God show you kindness and grant you peace (Alternative: May you experience kindness and peace.)

Blessing over the Candles

Traditionally, two candles are lit.

Those reciting the blessing might cover their eyes.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שַׁבָּת

Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who sanctified us with the commandment of lighting Shabbat candles.

Alternative: Blessed be the memory of our ancestors who passed on to us traditions of sanctifying life and time, and of lighting the candles of Shabbat.

Blessing over the Wine

Traditionally, the wine cup is held and raised during the blessing.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Alternative: Blessed be the world that produces such fruit, and the hands that labored to turn such fruit into wine.

Blessing over the Bread

Traditionally, a braided, round challah is used, but any bread will do.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who has brought forth bread from the earth.

Alternative: Blessed be the world that produces such grain, and the hands that labored to turn such grain into bread.



Some Traditions For You To Try

Tashlich

Before Yom Kippur begins, it is traditional to throw pieces of bread into a body of water. Each piece of bread represents a regret from the past year. When the bread dissolves in the water, we imagine that our regrets are dissolving too. Before you sit to eat your pre-fast meal, you might gather together and write your regrets on notes of paper. You can then rip the notes and throw them into water (or burn them if you prefer) to symbolize a new start for a new year.

Removing the Challah

When you finish eating, you can take the bread off your dinner bread plate and put it out of sight. On the empty bread plate, lay some books and cover these with a cloth, as you would cover challah with a cloth. Leave the covered books in the center of the table. This can be a symbol for you that we honor this day not with food and drink, but with words - with study and prayer, with apologies and intentions.

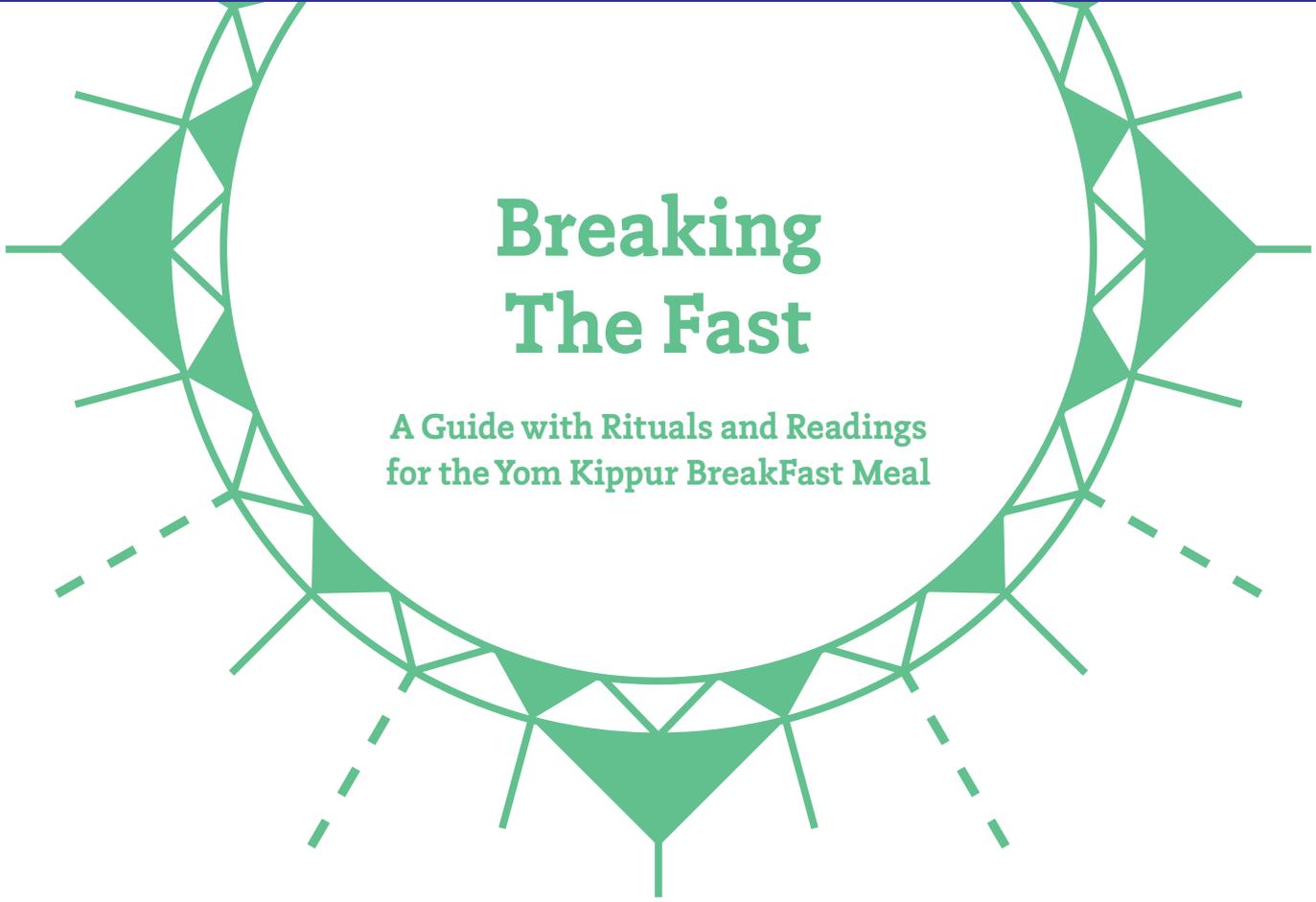
Standing at the Threshold

It is told of the radical secular Hebrew writer, Yosef Hayim Brenner, that he would walk to synagogue on Yom Kippur with his friend, the Hebrew writer, Shai Agnon, and with the Rabbi, Rav Avraham Yitzkhak HaCohen Kook, but that Brenner himself would not in fact enter the house of worship. Instead, he would stand in the doorway between the street and the prayerful congregation, watching and listening but never crossing into the space of the religious. We might take this as a precedent in our own contemporary secular Jewish lives—we may not feel comfortable in synagogue, but to be a secular Jew is to stand on the threshold between multiple worlds. This then is something we might do as a Yom Kippur ceremony itself: to stand in the doorway as a ritual symbol of our feelings of betwixedness.

Kol Nidre

If you are not planning to attend Yom Kippur services, you might still want to read the famous poem that opens the Yom Kippur prayers. The “Kol Nidre” poem is surprising: it actually annuls all the vows that we are about to make! “Kol Nidre” protects us in case we are not able to fulfill our intentions. The poem is an opportunity to remind ourselves that even our best laid plans can often not work out. We are still human, after all. Forgive yourself too.

All vows we are likely to make, all oaths and pledges we are likely to vow, or swear, or consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves between this Yom Kippur and the next Yom Kippur, we publicly renounce. Let them all be relinquished and abandoned, null and void, neither firm nor established. Our vows are no longer vows, our prohibitions are no longer prohibitions, and our oaths are no longer oaths.



Breaking The Fast

A Guide with Rituals and Readings
for the Yom Kippur BreakFast Meal

You are just moments away from breaking the fast! Yom Kippur Break Fast is often a celebratory gathering, centered on the meal. It is a time dedicated to eating with family and friends. Whether you have fasted or not, before you dig in, consider taking just a few minutes to make sure you close out the holiday with purpose. This Break Fast guide provides readings and rituals that can help you bring in this brand new year in a way that honors the day's worth of fasting and reflection that you are about to complete.

This meal is a transition from one "honored moment" to another "honored moment" -- in this case, to transition from the Day of Atonement to your whole year to come. In these final seconds, you acknowledge that both states of being are worth your attention and care.

If you fasted (however you "fasted"), take a moment before you eat that first bite of food for a final reflection. Say to yourself: "I did it. It was hard. And now I need my strength. I want to make sure I can be my best self in this next year."

May it be a good year for us all.



A Selection of Readings

This poem is meant to evoke some of the themes of the Yom Kippur closing service, called Ne'ilah. We suggest that you read this poem, aloud or to yourself, before breaking the fast.

Open Closing

rise come
twrd the site
that I will show you
from whence you departed

twrd the site.
open closing
to my mother & me
& I came to be.

Avot Yeshurun

פְּתִיחַ נְעִילָה

קם בא
אל המקום
אשר אראך
ממנו יצאתך

אל המקום.
פתיח נעילה
לי ולאמי
ואני נלדתי.

אבות ישורון

Option to Discuss:



What is the significance here of the metaphor of rebirth? What is the relationship between opening and closing? Between birth and death? How might you intend to implement these themes in your new year?

Prayer

Teach me, my God to bless, to pray
on the secret of a withered leaf, on the glisten
of a ripe fruit,
on this freedom: to see, to feel, to breathe,
to know, to wish, to fail.

Teach my lips blessing and song of praise,
renewing your time each morning, each night,
lest my day today be as yesterday
lest my day be for me simply habit.

Leah Goldberg

תפילה

למדני, אלהי, בָּרַךְ וְהִתְפַּלֵּל
על סוד עֵלָה קָמַל, על נְגִה פְּרִי בָּשֵׁל,
על הַחֲרוּת הַזֹּאת: לְרֵאוֹת, לְחֹשׁ, לְנִשְׁם,
לְדַעַת, לְיַחַל, לְהַבְשִׁיל.

למד את שִׁפְתוֹתַי בְּרִכָּה וְשִׁיר הַלֵּל
בְּהִתְחַדֵּשׁ זְמַנְךָ עִם בְּקָר וְעִם לַיִל,
לְבַל יִהְיֶה יוֹמֵי הַיּוֹם בְּתַמוּל שְׁלִשׁוֹם.
לְבַל יִהְיֶה עָלַי יוֹמֵי הַרְגָּל.

לאה גולדברג



Blessings Before the Meal

Since Yom Kippur is understood to be the “Shabbat Shabbaton” (Sabbath of Sabbaths), we conclude our ritual practice - before breaking the fast - by saying Havdalah, a ceremony that creates separation between the holiday and our daily lives. You might use a lighted candle, a cup of wine, and any scented spice. You might choose to use these traditional words or blessings of your own.

Blessing over the Wine

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine

Alternative: Blessed be the world that produces such fruit, and the hands that labored to turn such fruit into wine.

Blessing Over the Spices

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בְשָׂמִים

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of many kinds of spices

Alternative: Blessed be this world which has such a beautiful diversity of scents, and we are grateful for our ability to appreciate them.

Blessing Over the Fire

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fire's light

Alternative: We are grateful for the atoms and energy of the universe that produce this fire and our ability to enjoy its light and warmth.

Blessing of Distinction

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמְּבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל, בֵּין אֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, (בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּים), בֵּין יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשָׂה, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, הַמְּבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל

Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Who distinguishes between the sacred and the profane, between light and darkness, (between Israel and other people of the world), between the seventh day and the six days of the week. Blessed are You, Who distinguishes between the sacred and the profane.

Alternative: We are thankful for our capacity to make distinctions among different times, places and things. May we use this capacity to sanctify special times, and bring sanctity into ordinary times. May we use this capacity to add meaning to our lives and repair the world, to unite and not to divide.



Some Traditions For You To Try

The following suggested traditions are meant to bookend the traditions that opened our holiday. These acts might symbolize a closing of the work of reflection of the past 25 hours, and are meant to usher in a good start to a new year.

“A Gitn Kvitel!” (A Good Note!)

Traditionally, Jews believe that the “judgement” for the new year is sealed on Yom Kippur, and that our fates for the upcoming year are “written” in The Book of Life. However, the Zohar tells us that this “verdict” is not in fact delivered for another 8 days after Yom Kippur! So then, between the close of Yom Kippur and the close of Sukkot (the holiday following Yom Kippur), there is still a possibility of altering the judgment.

There is a hassidic custom during this time to greet other Jews with the Yiddish phrase “a gitn kvitel!” meaning “a good note!” A “kvitel” (pl. kvitlekh) is a small piece of paper containing a petitionary note or request, a prayer or blessing. For hundreds of years, Jews have had the tradition of placing kvitlekh in the cracks for the western wall, with the hope that God will read and answer them. When we say the words, a “gitn kvitel,” we wish that our family and friends will be “well-written,” that their “note” will contain a good verdict in the year to come. We are also simultaneously suggesting that there is always room for us to write a small note in hopes of alteration.

Writing Our Own “Kvitlekh”

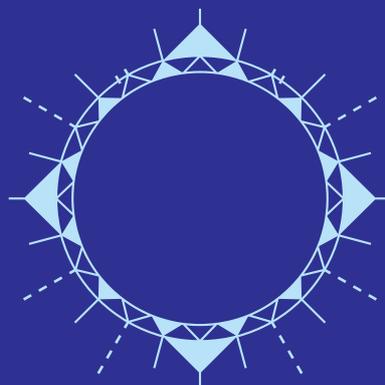
With this tradition in mind, we might write our own notes of hope and addendum in the minutes/hours/days/weeks following Yom Kippur. But instead of putting these notes in the Western Wall, we slip them between books on the shelf that we’re likely to pull out during the year so that, when we do, we are reminded of the intentions we set.

The Journey Onward

We invite you to end this ceremony with the traditional Tfilat HaDereh, The Traveler’s Prayer, which wishes safety for the journey ahead, or with the poem “Prayer” by the modern secular Hebrew poet Leah Goldberg, or by offering blessings to yourself and one another as you journey into a new year.

The Traveler’s Prayer:

May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that You lead us toward peace, guide our footsteps toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace. May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush along the way, and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to earth. May You send blessing in our handiwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May You hear the sound of our humble request because You are God Who hears prayer requests. Blessed are You, Lord, Who hears prayer.



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