



Institute for Jewish Spirituality™

Cultivating Mindfulness. Deepening Connection. Enlivening Jewish Life.

Prayers to Recite Before Voting

Below we offer three prayers from which to choose. We recommend reciting your prayer/s of choice immediately before casting your ballot as a way to ground your *kavvanah* (intention) for voting. The first was written by Rabbi Sam Feinsmith of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. The second, an improvised variation on the *Kaddish*, was composed by the beloved eighteenth-century Hasidic teacher Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev as a protest against the Czar. The third is a prayer for peace composed by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, another influential Hasidic teacher and a contemporary of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. If the length of the first prayer is a hindrance, you may choose as your prayer a few paragraphs that speak to your heart.

A Prayer to Recite Before Voting

Rabbi Sam Feinsmith, October 2020

O Majestic One—

I stand humbly before You to cast my vote for President of the United States of America, members of the United States Congress, and our elected judges and officials. May those elected to office recognize that they have come to power not to subjugate, dominate, or oppress those with whom they disagree, but to hallow and serve Your great name, YHVH, the Great Oneness of Being, through compassionate acts of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

O You Who are Peace—

I cast this ballot with a profound recognition that my vote stands to magnify or tarnish your sacred signet, which is peace. And so, I ask You to be here with me in body, heart,



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mind, and spirit as I undertake this sacred act. Guide me with Your trustworthy counsel, strengthen me with Your power, and soften my heart with Your compassionate love.

O Healer of the Brokenhearted—

During a time of great sickness, overwhelming anxiety, growing suffering, and crippling poverty sweeping through our land, may my vote serve as a healing balm, empowering us and our leaders to move forward with deep reverence and compassion for the precious and fragile human lives you have given us.

O Great Wholeness—

During a time of growing division, hatred, prejudice, and violence in our country and abroad—all of which threaten to erode the democratic institutions that are the pride and glory of our country—may my vote sow empathy, mutual understanding, reconciliation, and harmony among us. May it awaken us all to the truth that each one of us is a unique and irreplaceable cell in Your vast divine Body, each essential for the health of the whole. And may it thus support us to abandon our desire to dominate, subjugate, eradicate, debase, or do violence to any part of You.

O Unfathomable Mystery—

Regardless of the outcome of this election, during a time when so many of us are digging in our heels, clinging to one-sided beliefs, presumptions, and preconceptions about how things ought to be, and hiding behind the safe confines of our little echo chambers, may I commit to being less concerned with being right and more concerned with promoting peace. May I nurture a beginner's mind, an "I don't-know-mind," one free from preconceptions and open to responding to the need of the hour with immediacy, curiosity, receptivity, and spacious love.



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O Breath of Life—

Regardless of the outcome of this election, during a time when so many cry out, “I can’t breathe!”, may I commit to pursuing justice on behalf of those who have carried the oppressive yoke of brutality, degradation, and dehumanization for far too long. For it is You who, even while creating us in a glorious rainbow of skin tones and hues, stamped each of us with the dignity of Your sacred image and instilled in us the same breath.

O Great Mother—

Regardless of the outcome of this election, and during a time when Mother Earth—who sustains us all in each moment with grace, loving-kindness, and compassion—calls out for relief from the ravages of her children’s neverending greed and the pain of global scorching, may I commit to cultivating *histapkut*, a sense of *I-have-enough-ness* that releases me from interminable cycles of greed and acquisitiveness.

O Forgiving One—

Regardless of the outcome of this election, I know deep down that I have been part of the problem, too often consumed and blinded by my own fear, hatred, prejudice, and reactivity; distracted by my pursuit of comfort; and lulled by my own willful ignorance and complacency. Even as I decry the ravages of division, bigotry, injustice, and climate change, I cannot claim innocence, and so I pray for your forgiveness and steadfast guidance in returning me to a good, life-sustaining path for the benefit of all the citizens of this country and our world.

O Purifying Fire—



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Regardless of the outcome of this election, it is my sincere wish to not add fuel to the fire of hate that has erupted in our country. For this is a time when the problems we face require cooperation and good will. And so, as I cast this vote, I pray that my heart and mind may be purified from any confusion, ignorance, deception, fear, hatred, ill will, cynicism, self-righteousness, pride, or greed. Instead, let my motives be directed toward peace, clarity, compassion, hope, humility, healing, and reconciliation. For I do not cast this ballot to sow more hatred, competition, ill will, division, and enmity, but to magnify and sanctify Your great name alone.

Amen.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's *Kaddish*

Good [day] to You, Lord, Master of the universe,
I, Levi Yitzhak, son of Sarah of Berdichev,
I come to You with a *din Torah* (a legal claim) from Your people Israel.
What do You want of Your people Israel?
What have You demanded of Your people Israel?
For everywhere I look it says, "Say to the Children of Israel."
And every other verse says, "Speak to the Children of Israel."
And over and over, "Command the Children of Israel."
Father, sweet Father in Heaven,
How many nations are there in the world?
Persians, Babylonians, Edomites.
The Russians, what do they say?
That their Czar is the only ruler.



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The Prussians, what do they say?
That their Kaiser is supreme.
And the English, what do they say?
That George the Third is sovereign.
And I, Levi Yitzhak, son of Sarah of Berdichev, say,
“Yisgadal v’yiskadash shmei raboh–
Magnified and sanctified is Thy Name.”
And I, Levi Yitzhak, son of Sarah of Berdichev, say,
“From my stand I will not waver,
And from my place I shall not move
Until there be an end to all this.
Yisgadal v’yiskadash shmei raboh–
Magnified and sanctified is only Thy Name.”

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, A Prayer for Peace

Lord of Peace, Majestic One to whom peace belongs. Maker of Peace, Creator of all that is:

May it be Your will to put an end to war and bloodshed on earth, and to spread a great and wonderful peace over the whole world, “so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

May we merit to always hold firm to the attribute of peace,
So that a great and true peace will arise between each of us and our fellow...
And may no division come between people, even in our hearts.



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May each of us love and pursue peace, always, truly, and wholeheartedly.

May we never hold onto division in any form, even directed at our detractors and opponents,

May we never shame anyone, whether small or large in stature.

And may we truly merit to fulfill the commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18)—with all our heart, body, soul, and means—that we may fulfill the verse, “I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone; I will give the land respite from vicious beasts, and no sword shall cross your land” (Lev. 26:6).

You who are Peace, bless us with peace.