

This Shabbat Shuva I'd like to talk about spirituality. It is a word that frightens many people, as it seems new-age-y, or post-new-age-y. My goal will be to discuss spirituality in ways that are grounded and hopefully relevant, even to those who may recoil when hearing the word. In the process I hope this discussion will shed light on what we try to do at the Bayit – especially during life cycle events and tefillah. We begin with observations about spirituality in life and then, more specifically, in prayer.

SPIRITUALITY IN LIFE

My working definition of spirituality is rather simple. Spirituality means having consciousness of the moment, while recognizing God's role in that moment. In simple terms, spirituality is being in the moment while feeling God's presence. In this sense, spirituality is a form of encounter, both with our own consciousness and with the Creator of all life.

One of the most important concepts in the Torah is found at the end of Deuteronomy when God declares **הַעֲדוֹתַי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ הַחַיִּים** – “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today, that I have set before you life and death, the

blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

In many belief systems, the goal is to limit physical pleasure in this world so that one can merit true life in the next world. In contrast, Judaism maintains that what counts most is this world. Judaism places the highest value on life as we know it. As such, choosing life means engaging with the world – the world of doing, acting, fixing, repairing and redeeming. For Rabbi Soloveitchik, this is the credo of “*halakhic man*.”

אין ההלכה מעוניינת בעולם טרנסצנדנטי כלל וכלל. העולם הבא הוא עולם שקט ושאנן, שכולו טוב ושכולו ארוך ושכולו נצח, שאדם מקבל בו שכר המצוות, שעשה בעולם הזה. ברם אין קבלת שכר פעולה דתית, ולפיכך מבכר איש ההלכה את העולם הריאלי על פני ההוויה הטרנסצנדנטית, כי הרי כאן יכול אדם ליצור ולפעול ולעשות פרי ושם אין בידו לשנות שום דבר.

The *halakhah* is not at all concerned with a transcendent world. The world to come is a tranquil, quiet world that is wholly good, wholly everlasting, and wholly eternal, wherein a man will receive the reward for the commandments which he preformed in this world. However, the receiving of a reward is not a religious act; therefore, halakhic man prefers the real world to a transcendent existence because here, in this world, man is given the opportunity to create, act, accomplish, while there, in the world to come, he is powerless to change anything.

The sentence from Deuteronomy which implores us to choose life includes the mandate that we do so *hayom – today*. The Torah portion in which the word *hayom* appears is generally read on the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah or between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On the High Holy Days, we end the service with the prayer *hayom*, repeating that refrain over and over. On these awesome days, we remind ourselves that the challenge of life is to live every day fully, to be conscious of each moment as it unfolds.

We live in a world of memory and anticipation. So absorbed are human beings in remembering the past and being concerned about the future that the moment is fleeting and rarely experienced. We sing about “Yesterday” and “Tomorrow” but rarely about “Today.” Even when we are experiencing important events, we are often too excited or worried about what is yet to happen; in the process of waiting for the next moment we fail to experience the power of the present.

The Talmud records an account of Alexander the Great asking the Sages of Israel the following question. מה יעביד איניש ויחיה “what should a person do to live.” The Sages respond, ימית עצמו, “let him mortify himself [‘kill himself’ with study and hard work].” Commenting on this passage, Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik suggests that Alexander the Great was asking, “What is the secret to life?” In Rabbi Soloveichik’s reading, the Sages respond, “let every individual imagine that death is imminent,” that the moment being experienced is one’s last. In this way, Rabbi Soloveichik explains, the Sages inspired us to live life more fully.

Rabbi Soloveichik’s teaching reminds us of the story of the rabbi who told a student who had strayed: “Fear not. If you repent, even at the last moment of life, all is forgiven.” The student was at first relieved. After thinking about it, however, he became alarmed, and asked his teacher, “but how do you know which moment is the last you will live?” “That’s my point,” the rabbi said, “live every moment as if it’s your last.”

The rabbi’s intent was clearly not to burden his student with fear of death, but to encourage him to live every moment in a qualitative way – never taking life for granted. This idea is echoed in the words of the Ibn Ezra,

אדם דואג על איבוד דמיו ואינו דואג על איבוד ימיו, דמיו חוזרים ימיו אינם
חוזרים.

“A person is concerned about the loss of money and not the loss of days. Money can be replenished; days cannot.”

This is the message of Thornton Wilder's famous American play *Our Town* about a young woman who dies at a young age. After her death, the woman, named Emily, is given the opportunity to revisit any day of her life. In a magnificent scene, she's allowed to view her twelfth birthday. The dead Emily, watching the living Emily, calls out to her, but cannot be heard. The poignant narrative reads:

Mrs. Webb:

Well, now, dear, a very happy birthday to my girl and many happy returns. There are some surprises waiting for you on the kitchen table...

But birthday or no birthday, I want you to eat your breakfast good and slow. I want you to grow up and be a good, strong girl...

Emily (*with mounting urgency*):

Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me. Mama, fourteen years have gone by. I'm dead. You're a grandmother, Mama. I married George Gibbs, Mama. Wally's dead, too. Mama, his appendix burst on the camping trip to North Conway. We felt just terrible about it – don't you remember? But, just for a moment now, we're all together. Mama, just for a moment, we're happy. Let's look at one another...

Mrs. Webb:

Your father has a surprise for you...don't know what it is myself. Sh – here he comes.

Mr. Webb:

Where's my girl? Where's my birthday girl?

Emily:

I can't. I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another.

She breaks down sobbing.

I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back – up the hill – to my grave. But first: wait! One more look.

Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by Grover's Corners...Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you.

Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? – every, every minute?

The idea that spirituality is attained by living every instant of life consciously is hinted at in the very first question God asks Adam. Adam has just disobeyed the divine command and eaten from the tree. God appears and asks, *ayeka* – “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9)

Commentators throughout the ages have noted that God obviously knew where Adam was. *Ayeka*, however, may be understood as a question God asks, not just of Adam, but of all of us – are we aware of our surroundings; are we fully appreciative of all that we experience; are we absolutely immersed in every nuance of life.

Thus, the first step in spirituality is choosing life in all of its minutia. It is becoming fully conscious of the I, and, by extension, the moment the I is experiencing. There are many who believe spirituality is an escape from the world. But in Judaism, spirituality is inextricably connected to experiencing each moment that is occurring on the earthly plane.

Heightened consciousness of moment has its dangers as it can lead one to feel a sense of self-importance, to become totally self-absorbed. This is sometimes referred to as “spiritual narcissism.” I sensed this many years ago when visiting a Swami who was leading a spiritual retreat. I had gone because I knew many Jews were amongst his followers, and I wanted to find out why they found him so attractive. In fact, his approach to spirituality was, for me, quite alarming. He spoke of how in his moments of spirituality, he felt all the love of the world compressed into his being, even as he had the capacity to have emanate from himself endless love to all of humankind. Here, he crossed the line, as spirituality for this Swami was an extolling of self – all was centered around him.

The corrective to the pitfalls of “spiritual narcissism” is the second half of our definition. Spirituality is not only having consciousness of the moment,

but recognizing God's indispensable role in inspiring and sustaining the moment being experienced. The human being may be in the moment but it is God who generates it, nourishes it, and supports it throughout. The human being is a central player, but it is God who is in the center. Whatever the human being experiences it ought to be with the humble recognition that everything comes from God.

In certain ways, spirituality is counter-intuitive. While it involves consciousness of moment, it is not the human being who is its key player, but God. And while it involves experiencing the moment, one should be ready to let it go. In December 1943 Rabbi Milton Steinberg suffered a heart attack. After weeks of recuperating indoors, he was permitted outside. He reflected on the joy he felt when crossing the threshold, walking outside greeted by the sunlight. "How precious is the sunlight," he wrote, "but alas, how careless of it are men." "I was reminded," he concluded, "to spend life wisely, not to squander it."

Yet Rabbi Steinberg, who would have us open our eyes to the world's wonders and hold them close, places great importance on knowing when one moment has ended and another one begun. In his words:

Nothing can be more grotesque and more undignified than a futile attempt to hold on. Let us think of the men and women who cannot grow old gracefully because they cling too hard to a youth which is escaping them. Of parents who cannot let their children go free to live their own lives. This then is the great truth of human existence. One must not hold life too precious. One must always be prepared to let it go.

Feeling the presence of God may be the pathway to being in the moment, while recognizing the inevitability that nothing lasts forever. When taking into account that God created the world, it follows that everything in it is infinitely precious. And so, we ought to embrace it, warmly, tightly. However, when considering that whatever is in the world ultimately belongs to God, it is easier to let go, because these things do not belong to us. While we've been blessed to enjoy them for a limited time, we know they are on loan. In Rabbi Milton Steinberg's words:

And when God takes from us we know it will not be lost. The beauty of the world, its sunrise and sunset; the shades of a leaf; the ripple of the soft lake water; the music of a symphony orchestra; the smile of a child; the dreams of a loving couple; the wisdom of the older adult will be placed in God's trust who stands behind us all. There is pain in termination, but no anxiety. When these experiences leave us, they will be given to someone more wise, more beautiful and more blessed.

Rabbi Steinberg calls his essay, "To Hold With Open Arms." Perhaps it can be suggested that in spirituality one ought not "hold on" to the moment,

rather one should “be in” the moment. “Holding on” could involve a constant fear that the moment will soon pass, thereby blocking its full experience. “Being” is a healthy, more natural flow, allowing for a graceful and gentle embrace of the moment at hand.

Being in the moment is not simple, as it makes many people uncomfortable. We are, by and large, not happy coming face to face with who we are: our physical beings, our emotions, our relationships, our inner essence. When challenged to encounter our inner “I,” we often feel vulnerable; it is a place we often do not want to be.

For example, a wedding of spiritual meaning, where aspects of love are touched upon, may conjure up for some the inadequacies of their own marriages. Or personal reflections from a mourner may stir deeply buried feelings among friends or family members, forcing them to confront emotions they’d rather not face.

Virtually nothing of meaning comes easily. Because spirituality is potentially exhilarating, it is equally daunting. All we can do is be sensitive to the challenges of maintaining consciousness of the moment while

carefully forging ahead. Yet, this is easier said than done. Halakhah may serve as a guide in this task, with its system of laws that encourage and sometimes compel one to fully experience the moment.

Note the Mishnah which declares that a groom should not recite *Shema* on his wedding night, is based on the principle of העוסק במצוה פטור מן המצוה – “One who is preoccupied with a mitzvah is exempt from performing other mitzvot [at the same time].” (Mishnah Berakhot 2:5) Bride and groom should be so immersed in the moment that even if they could find time to say *Shema*, they should not. Here the *halakhah* insists that the new couple not be distracted from full concentration on each other.

Similarly, during *shiva*, the mourner may be prohibited from learning Torah so that he or she is free to fully experience the emotions that arise upon the loss of a loved one: אסור לקרות בתורה ונביאים וכתובים ואסור לשנות במשנה תלמוד – הלכות אגדות – “It is forbidden to read the Torah, Prophets and Writings, and it is forbidden to learn the Mishnah, Talmud, Halakhah and Aggadah.” (Tur, Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 384)

Thus, the *halakhot* of lifecycle events serve as a foundation for their spiritual counterparts. Often, *halakhah* is seen as constricting, limiting one's spirituality; we become so involved in the minutiae of *halakhah* that it blocks our connection to God. We must remember that *halakhah* is the base, giving wings to the spiritual moment, helping us to encounter God Himself.

SPIRITUALITY IN TEFILLAH

Our general definition of spirituality – being in the moment while feeling God's presence – applies to tefillah. Here again, the *halakhah* serves as a base, allowing one to fly rather than to be weighted down. Let us consider the different categories of *kavvanah* in tefillah – intent in prayer – and suggest its spiritual counterpart.

Personalizing Tefillah

There is a category of *kavvanah* called *kavvanah la-tzeit bah* which involves focusing prior to the formal beginning of tefillah. On a purely halakhic level it is the conscious intent to fulfill God's command that is required before performing a mitzvah, *le-kayeim ba-zeh ka'asher tzivah Hashem*. (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim, 60:4)

On a spiritual plane, preparatory prayer involves silence. Not the silence of absence of words, but a silence which is above words, transitioning from speechlessness to verbiage – connecting us to God. In the words of Dr. Michael Fishbane:

There are two kinds of silence. One of these is natural silence, and is characterized by the absence of noise. It is a modulation, a diminishment, a negative valence. The other kind of silence is spiritual, and is characterized by potentiality and anticipation. We sense this every time we watch a conductor or an ensemble gesture slightly just prior to the production of sound; and we also sense it during moments of self-collection and focus before something of significance is said to another person. With respect to music, anticipatory silence helps prepare the self to hear sound sounding; for it focuses attention on the transition from silence to sound. With respect to deliberate speech, silence conveys the ethical potential of words; for it sharpens the transition from inwardness to worldly expression. Prayer may also stand at this juncture of silence and speech.

Spirituality requires incubation – a slow gradual development until it reaches full blossom. Most often the spiritual moment does not happen in an instant – it swells slowly, gaining momentum, and then, gushing like a well-spring it reaches higher and higher. It is often a silence that is pregnant with words – waiting, waiting to burst forth. The greater the build-up the more intense the spiritual experience.

A powerful example of this preparatory type of tefillah are the moments just before Kol Nidre. There is a silence in the synagogue as the kahal rises, the Ark is opened, and the ba'al tefillah stands, ready to recite the first words of *al da'at hamakom*. It's an experience of holy preparatory silence— not void, but saturated with meaning.

So, too, the Unetaneh Tokef prayer. There we say *u'beshofar gadol yitakah, ve-kol demamah dakah yi'shamah*. The great shofar is sounded, but the still voice is heard. The word *demamah* is that instant before prayer. It is not empty, but full. There is an expectation as the angels hurry about – *u'malakhim ye-ha-feizun* – waiting, waiting for the Day of Judgment to begin.

Understanding the Words

There is another aspect of kavvanah which involves *peirush ha-milot* which includes reading, translating and personalizing the words. (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim, 101:1) Reading and translating means, quite literally, going through the liturgy text and comprehending its meaning. Personalizing involves pondering the text with the goal of transforming the tefillah into a spiritual experience.

Consider the many prayers in the High Holiday service that deal with the longing for redemption; the hope that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Perhaps the most central is the Avodah of the Yom Kippur service, wherein we yearn for the Temple to be rebuilt. Here, on a personal level, one might think of a powerful redemptive moment, when one truly felt the hand of God.

In recent years, when reciting these prayers, I've been thinking about our eldest grandson, Gilad, who together with his family lives in Israel. Gilad is now preparing to enter the army. Often in conversation I would seek out whether Gilad, who just a few years earlier made aliyah, was emotionally and spiritually ready for army service. One Friday night as Shabbat began, Gilad and I stood together on a hill overlooking Jerusalem. Turning to me, he said, "Look how beautiful Jerusalem is. And it is my merit to do my small share in protecting Jerusalem and all of Israel." I asked Gilad what he hopes to do in the army. He did not hesitate, "I want to be a fighter." "Why"? I asked him. "Why not seek out something easier, like a desk job"? Turning to me, Gilad's eyes mirrored a deep spirituality as he replied: "Sabi Avi, Israel has done so much for me. I want to give back." Tears flowed down my cheeks. I embraced Gilad and thanked God for allowing me to experience this spark of redemption.

And yet, the tears are not only tears of joy and *nahat*, but trepidation. Redemption, even echoes of redemption, comes with a price. Never will I

forget the comment my daughter Elana – Gilad’s mother – recently made to me. “Abba” she said, “I will be the mother of a soldier for the next twenty five years.” What Elana meant was that Gilad is the first of nine children (seven boys), the youngest just born. I often think of Elana’s words during prayer.

Standing Before God

Not only is awareness of God required before a mitzvah’s performance, and not only is it important to understand words, but as Rabbi Chaim ha-Levi Soloveitchik of Brisk notes, during tefillah it is important to recognize that one stands before God – *she’omed lifnei Hashem*. (Hiddushei Rav Chaim Ha-Levi, second commentary in the volume.)

We may gain a glimpse of how one encounters God when considering how human beings encounter each other. A sentence in the Book of Proverbs points us in the right direction:

כמים הפנים לפנים
כן לב האדם לאדם

As face answers to face in water,
So does one man’s heart to another. (Proverbs 27:19)

Rashi explains:

המים הללו שאדם צופה בהן ורואה בהם פנים כפניו
אם הוא שוחק הם שוחקות
ואם הוא עוקם הם עקומות
כן לב האדם לאדם אחר
אם הוא אוהב את זה גם הוא אוהבו
ואם הוא שונא את זה גם הוא שונאו

Like water upon which one gazes and sees his reflection.

If he's pleasant and gracious the reflection is such,
and if he is pained and angry, the reflection is such.
So, too, is one's heart in sync with one's fellow person.
If one loves the other, the other loves him;
if he hates the other, the other hates him.

Rashi's comments are not airtight. Love and for that matter hatred are emotions that are sometimes not returned. It is rather a teaching, it is good advice – in most cases feelings are reciprocated.

Rashi may be intimating a further teaching. As water reflects one's face, so, too is a friend's heart a mirror of one's own. The more honest and real we are with the other, the more likely the other will be honest and real with us. The gateway to knowing the other is the revealing of self. Herein may lie the secret to feeling God's presence. Intimacy involves taking off masks and revealing the inner self. To the degree we open up to God, God opens up to us. As Rabbi David Aaron writes:

If you want to encounter Hashem's [God's] essence, then you have to be willing to expose your own essence to Hashem. Hashem can only reflect what you're presenting. If you present yourself with genuineness, with authenticity – your beauty in truth – then you reveal your essence and the essence of Hashem will be revealed to you. You have to be real to see the Real.

And that's the way it should be throughout Yom Kippur. Walls should come down as we reveal ourselves completely and wholly before God. Perhaps then we will be open enough to encounter God's presence – *ka-mayim panim el panim*.

Offering Farewell

While there is no specific halakhic category of *kavvanah* after prayer, spirituality plays a primary role in the way one offers farewell to the tefillah experience.

By its very definition spirituality has no borders – it is overflowing. From a homiletical perspective, the Hebrew word for spirituality רוּחַנִיּוּת (*ruhniyut*) is associated with the word רוּחַ (*ruah*) which can be vocalized *revah* – width or distance. It involves living in the moment and then widening it, lengthening it, feeling its shadow cast forward.

Prior to tefillah there is silence of anticipation, during tefillah there is silence of meaning, after tefillah – after the final words – there is silence of beyond. It's that moment after completing a riveting book or gripping movie or powerful personal experience that one is still, absolutely still, taking the

moment in, digesting it, integrating it, feeling the warmth of its emanations which hopefully remain forever.

Consider the tradition of welcoming the Shabbat with the singing of Shalom Aleichem. We sit around the Shabbat table greeting and blessing the Shabbat angels, even as we ask that they bless us. And then, something remarkable. We conclude by bidding the angels farewell. There was a time when our children were younger, that they refused to sing the words of farewell. (Indeed, in some Sephardic circles, the paragraph of *tzeitkhem* is not said.) With the language of innocence, they argued “we’ve just said hello to the angels, why now say goodbye?”

Our children were not the only ones struggling with offering farewell. It is told that the saintly Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, one of the greatest rabbis of his time, would rise from his Shabbat table as he sang *tzeitkhem leshalom* (“go in peace”). He’d slowly walk to the door escorting the angels out. Opening the door, he would look outward as he longingly, silently and spiritually waved his hand in a farewell gesture.

Knowing how to say goodbye is difficult. How does one say goodbye to a beloved friend, to an intense experience, to life itself. Sometimes I feel we've made far greater inroads in learning how to greet than to bring moments to a close.

In this spirit, Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Levi who argues that there is a correspondence between the three daily meals and the morning, afternoon and evening service, adds the following:

ומתמדת עליו ברכת התפלה עד עת תפלה אחרת, כהתמדת כח סעודת היום עד שיסעוד בלילה. וכל אשר תרחק עת התפלה מהנפש היא הולכת וקודרת במה שפוגע אותה מעסקי העולם.

The blessing of one prayer lasts till the time of the next, just as the strength derived from the morning meal lasts till supper. The further his soul is removed from the time of prayer, the more it is darkened by coming in contact with the worldly matters.

Here, the Kuzari is suggesting that the spiritual lift of tefillah continues beyond the service. This may be the base of the halakhah that one should leave the prayer experience slowly as the Talmud proclaims:

אמר רב הונא
היוצא מבית הכנסת
אל יפסיע פסיעה גסה

Rav Huna said:
One who leaves the synagogue
should not do so with long strides.

After sharing Rabbi Kook's custom of waving goodbye to the angels on Friday night, Daniella Grunfeld, a wonderful congregant, shared with me that when her children were younger, she would accompany them to their school bus. As they boarded, she'd wave goodbye. But instead of doing so in the normal fashion, she reversed her fingers, motioning towards herself as if imploring her children to stay near. Even as she said goodbye, she was declaring, I love you, come closer, come closer. As tefillah ends, we and God do the same.

Just last week, my wife Toby lost her mom. As we stood in front of the Cargo Terminal of ELAL singing Eishet Chayil, a metal door came down. Slowly, slowly it descended, and soon, as much as we tried, she was gone. That's the way I feel as the Ark is closed after Neilah – the Final Service. It's hard to say goodbye.

For many, Yom Kippur is a burdensome day – one cannot wait until it is over. But real Yom Kippur is so beautiful, one doesn't want it to end. Much like Dani's metaphor – we ought to try to leave Yom Kippur waving bye-

bye backwards, as we implore God and call out – “the day has been extraordinary, may we feel the spillover for weeks and months to come.”



As darkness falls and Shabbat Shuva ends, I offer a reading by Matt Fenster, which is an example of how tefillah can become spiritual. It combines spirituality of anticipation with spirituality of meaning, Godliness and farewell. Matt died a very young man this past year, of terrible cancer. Even as he was dying, he dedicated his last months to doing good. He became a paragon of acknowledging God for the blessings we receive, whatever one’s lot in life.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד ה' רָעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר - God is my shepherd, I shall not lack.
I never have lacked.

בְּנֵאֻוֹת דְּשֶׁא יִרְבִּיצָנִי עַל מֵי מְנַחֵחַת יִנְהַלְנִי - In lush meadows He lays me down, beside tranquil waters He leads me.

This year I have been able to feel a peace that I had not previously known -- in Hebrew, "nachat ruach."

נִפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב - He restores my soul
Which I believe is eternal.

יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי צְדָק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ - He leads me on paths of justice for His name's sake.
I can only hope that I have followed these paths more often than I have shunned them.

גַּם כִּי אֵלֶּךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא אִירָא רָע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי - Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

Throughout this ordeal, I have never been afraid. Perhaps it is because I am a person of faith? Or maybe I am too simpleminded to recognize the magnitude of the loss that I am facing?

יְמִשְׁעֵנִי הַמָּזָה וְיִנְחֵמֵנִי - Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
I interpret God's "rod" and "staff" to be my family and friends, respectively.

תַּעֲרַף לְפָנַי שִׁלְחֹן נֶגֶד צַרְרֵי - You prepare a table before me in view of my tormentors
I think about the tables in my life. . . my childhood dinner table . . . breakfast before school with my kids at a cafe table . . . the seder table . . . the table from which I read the Torah in synagogue.

דִּישְׁנָתָּ בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי - anointed my head with oil
I was brought up to believe I was special and could accomplish anything that I wanted.

כּוֹסֵי רִוְיָהּ - my cup overflows.
A phrase I have uttered to myself each Friday night before the words of Kiddush.

אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית ה' לְאָרְךָ יָמִים -
May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of God for eternity.
Although I am saddened by what I will miss, the days with which I have been blessed have been full.