



A TIME TO MOURN

**A Simple Collection of the World's Great
Spiritual Prayers, Poems, Stories, and Blessings
to Comfort the Soul in Grief**

Aaron Zerah

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A PERSONAL NOTE ABOUT THE BOOK

In our hearts, we all know that in times of grief and mourning there is simply nothing that can be said.

Still, throughout the ages, people from every place on the earth have, like you and I, wrestled with the reality of death and loss. Out of this struggle, prayers, stories, poems, and wisdom teachings have arisen that traditionally have brought comfort and peace to the soul.

In *A Time to Mourn*, I have brought together a small collection of sacred writings to share with you. My prayer is that this book may be a blessing to you and all with whom you share it.

In Kindness,

Rev. Aaron Zerah



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A TO Z SPIRIT PUBLISHING

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To Every Thing There Is a Season

**To every thing
there is a season,
and a time to every purpose
under the heaven.**

**A time to be born,
and a time to die;
a time to plant
and a time to pluck up
that which is planted.**

A time to kill,

**and a time to heal;
a time to break down,
and a time to build up.**

**A time to weep,
and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn,
and a time to dance.**

- FROM BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

(1)



Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.**

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

**Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.**

- FROM GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

(2)



Beyond Grief and Sorrow

**The living self is the image of the Supreme Being.
It is neither old nor a child;
Neither it suffers pain, nor in death's snare is caught;
It is not shattered nor dies.**

**In all time it is pervasive.
It feels not heat nor cold;
Neither has it friend nor foe;
It feels not joy nor sorrow.**

**All is its own; to it belongs all might.
It has neither father nor mother;
Beyond the limits of matter
Has it ever existed.**

**Of sin and goodness
It feels not the touch —
Within the heart of each being
It is ever awake.**

**O Lord, Thou art the glory of all kings,
The flag bearer of true faith.
Beyond grief and sorrow,
Thou adorn and sustain the universe.**

- TRADITIONAL SIKH PRAYERS

(3)



Such Is the Spirit

**As a man lays aside
His worn-out clothes
And taking on new ones**

Says, "I will wear these today,"

**So does the spirit
Cast off its fleshy garb,
Once worn-out, and
Take residence anew.**

**The spirit no weapon can reach,
No fire can burn,
No water can drown,
No hot wind can wither.**

**Invulnerable, ever present, immovable,
This is the spirit.
Knowing the spirit to be so,
Can you still grieve?**

- FROM TRADITIONAL HINDU STORY

(4)



This Life a Thing of Beauty

**The traveler has reached the end of the journey!
In the freedom of the Infinite
he is free from all sorrows;
the fetters that bound him are thrown away,
and the burning fever of life is no more.**



**Life is so fragile,
no more than a bubble
blown to and fro by the wind.
How astonishing to think that
after an out-breath there will
be an in-breath, or
that we will awaken after a night's sleep.**



**This life, you must know as the tiny
splash of a raindrop,
a thing of beauty that disappears even
as it comes into being.**

- TRADITIONAL BUDDHIST WISDOM TEACHINGS

(5)



Secret of Heaven and Earth

After the death of his wife, Chuang-tzu was visited by his friend Hui-tzu who came to offer condolences. Chuang-tzu was sitting on the ground, drumming on a wooden bowl and singing loudly.

Hui-tzu cried out: “You've lived a long life with your good wife. You've even seen your eldest son grow up. It's bad enough you do not show a single tear for her, but to sing and drum is just too much!”

Chuang-tzu answered: “This is not so. I am an ordinary man and when my wife died, I grieved. Then I remembered that she had an existence before this birth. Matter was added to the spirit and she was born. So it is clear to me now that the change that brought my wife to be born is the same change that brought her to die. It is as natural as the movement of the seasons. Winter follows summer and summer follows spring. To cry out and moan while my wife is peacefully asleep in the great chamber between heaven and earth would be contrary to the natural way, of which I cannot claim ignorance. And so, I forbear.”



As rivers have their source in some far-off fountain, so the human spirit has its source. To find this fountain of spirit is to learn the secret of heaven and earth.

- TRADITIONAL TAOIST WISDOM TEACHINGS

(6)



Like a River with No End

**The great Tao flows
Like a flooding river everywhere.
It does not give birth,
Yet from it all things take life.**

**From it all things are provided
Yet it lays no hold on them.
As it is part of all,
It may be considered small.
As all things come to meet in it,
It may be considered great.**

**It makes no claim to greatness,
But simply keeps flowing
Like a river with no end.
In this, its greatness is found.**

- TRADITIONAL TAOIST WISDOM TEACHING

(7)



O Death, Where Is Your Victory?

Listen, I tell you a mystery:

**We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed —
in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.**

**For the trumpet will sound,
the dead will be raised imperishable,
and we will be changed.**

**For the perishable must clothe itself
with the imperishable,
and the mortal with immortality.**

**When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable,
and the mortal with immortality,
then the saying that is written will come true:**

Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

- FROM FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

(8)



In Every House

Kisa Gotami had an only son, and he died. In her grief she carried the dead child to all her neighbors, asking them for medicine, and the people said: “She has lost her senses. The boy is dead.”

At length Kisa Gotami met a man who replied to her request: “I cannot give you medicine for your child, but I know a physician who can.”

And the girl said, “Pray tell me, sir: who is it?” and the man replied, “Go to Sakyamuni, the Buddha.”

Kisa Gotami repaired to the Buddha and cried, “Lord and Master, give me the medicine that will cure my boy.”

The Buddha answered, “I want a handful of mustard seed.” And when the girl in her joy promised to procure it, the Buddha added, “The mustard-seed must be taken from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent, or friend.”

Poor Kisa Gotami now went from house to house, and the people pitied her and said, “Here is mustard-seed; take it!” But when she asked, “Did a son or daughter, a father or mother, die in your family?” they answered her, “Alas! the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our deepest grief.” And there was no house but some beloved one had died in it.

Kisa Gotami became weary and hopeless, and sat down at the wayside, watching the lights of the city, as they flickered up and were extinguished again. At last the darkness of the night reigned everywhere. And she considered the fate of men, that their lives flicker up and are extinguished. And she thought to herself: “How self-centered am I in my grief! Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads the one who has surrendered all such self-centeredness to immortality.”

Putting away the attachment of her affection for her child, Kisa Gotami had the dead body buried in the forest. Returning to the Buddha, she took refuge in him and found comfort in the dharma, the right path, which is a balm that will soothe all the pains of our troubled hearts.

- TRADITIONAL BUDDHIST STORY



Our Weighty Sorrow Turned to Joy

O Brahman, Supreme One,

You are the fire.

You are the sun.

You are the air.

You are the moon.

You are stars in the heavens.

You are the Supreme One.

You are woman and man.

You are the young man and the maiden.

You are the old one holding feebly to the staff.

You turn your face to all.

We fail to remember our oneness with you

And become lost in our frailty.

Full of sorrow are we,

But we have only to look closely on your face

And know you to be as we are.

O, Lord, you are most worthy of our worship.

Beholding your great glory,

O, Supreme One, all our weighty sorrow

Is turned to joy.

Feeling your divine presence,

Beholding you within our very self,

To us comes peace, eternal peace.

- FROM TRADITIONAL HINDU PRAYER

(10)



A Very Present Help

**God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.**

**Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth give way
and the mountains fall
into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.**

**There is a river whose streams
make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.**

**The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

- FROM PSALM 46

(11)



I Lift Up My Eyes

**I lift up my eyes to the mountains —
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip —
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you —
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm —
he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.**

(12)



Now See Me Arise

**When you bear my burial litter
On the day of my death,
Do not fancy that my heart
Stays here in this world.**

**Do not cry for me, saying
“How sad, how sad!”
That's falling in with the devil
And that would truly be sad.**

**Seeing me, readied to be buried
Don't wail, “He's gone.”
Lowering my body into the grave
Don't say your goodbyes.**

**The tomb is only a veil covering
The union of paradise;
You've witnessed my descent**

Now see me arise.

**Are the sun or moon
Injured as they set?
My death appears to you
As a setting; it is, rather, the dawn.**

**Do you think the tomb
Is a prison?
It is the freeing
Of the soul.**

**Has there been a seed
Sown in the earth
That has not one day
Come to flower?**

- POEM OF RUMI (SUFİ MYSTIC)

(13)



The Lament of Job

Why did I not perish at birth,

**And die as I came from the womb?
Why were there knees to receive me
and breasts that I might be nursed?
For now I would be lying down in peace;
I would be asleep and at rest...**

**Why is light given to those in misery,
And life to the bitter of soul,
To those who longed for death that does not
come, whose search for it more than for hidden treasure,
Who are filled with gladness
and rejoice when they reach the grave?**

**Why is life given to a man
Whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?**

**For sighing comes to me instead of food;
my groans pour out like water.
What I feared has come upon me;
what I dreaded has happened to me.
I have no peace, no quietness;
I have no rest, but only turmoil.**

- FROM BOOK OF JOB



I Wait for You

My father, where are you going?

I go to the great forest;

Walking, I go.

Why are you going? Who is with you?

I go for the sweet corn.

Alone, I go.

Come back soon.

Crying, I wait for you.

Mourning, I wait for you.

Amidst the trees where you go,

A dark black flag

blows in the wind.

In the meadow you cross,

The grass parts and

flower-caps are revealed.

How cold-hearted is the heart

In leaving the dove.

- TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN SONG



Stand Upon the Earth

**Then know that God has wronged me
and drawn his net around me.**

**Oh, that my words were recorded,
that they were written on a scroll,
that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead,
or engraved in rock forever!**

**I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.**

**And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes — I, and not another.**

How my heart yearns within me!

- FROM BOOK OF JOB



The Dead Are Never Gone

When death came to the world, people sent the dog as their messenger to Chuku to ask if the dead could be brought back to life and return to their homes. The toad, who was an enemy of the people, heard them give the dog his instructions and hurried to see Chuku himself.

The dog did not take the straight path to Chuku, but rather tarried a little and thus the toad was the first to reach Chuku with a message from the people about death. He told Chuku that people had no wish after dying to live the life they had lived and return to their homes.

Chuku agreed to let it be as the people desired. When the dog came with the real message, Chuku was steadfast and would not change what he had spoken. So a human returns to the world with a different body and new ways of life.

- TRADITIONAL AFRICAN STORY



**Those who are dead are never gone.
They are in the breast of the woman.
They are in the child who is wailing,
And in the firebrand that flames.**

The dead are not under the earth.

**They are in the fire that is dying.
They are in the grasses that weep.**

**They are in the plaintive rocks.
They are in the forest and they are in the house.**

The dead are not dead.

- TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SONG

(17)



Blessed Be the Name

**Let us make great and holy
The Name of God throughout the world
Which God has willed and created.**

**May the kingdom of God
Come in your lifetime, and
During your days,**

**And in the lifetime of
The whole family of Israel,
Speedily and soon may it come.**

Amen, we say Amen.

**May the great Name of God
Be blessed from eternity
To eternity.**

**Let us bless and let us praise;
Let us cry out and let us raise up;
Let us honor and let us set on high
The Name of the Holy One —**

**Blessed be the Name of the Holy One!
Beyond all praise and songs is God.
Beyond all offers of honor and consolation
That can be spoken
In this world.**

Amen, we say Amen.

**May the great peace of heaven
And the gift of life come to us and
All the family of Israel.**

Amen, we say Amen.

**May the peace of the Holy One
Come to be upon us and
All of the family of Israel.**

Amen, we say Amen.

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER OF MOURNING



Come Back to Your Home

Thus Isis calls:

**Come back to your home,
Come back to your home!**

**Your enemies are no longer,
O, good king, come back to your home
That you may see me once more!**

**I am your sister who loves you.
May you not part from me again
O, beautiful one of youth.**

**Come back to your home at once!
When I no longer see you
I bemoan in my heart.**

**My eyes seek to find you
I search to cast my eyes
Upon you.**

**The faces of gods and men
Look to you when they see me
And so they weep.**

**To the highest heaven
I cry and weep for you
But you do not hear me.**

- ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LAMENTATION

(19)



Teach Us to Count Our Days

**Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You turn people back to dust,
saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”
A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.**

Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death —
they are like the new grass of the morning:
In the morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and withered.
We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.
Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

- FROM PSALM 90

(20)



The Spirit Magnificently Bright

When his friend Yen Hwei died, Confucius wept bitterly and his followers said,
“You are all shaken up.”

Confucius said, “Am I all shaken up? But if I don't feel all shaken up at the death

of this person, for whom else shall I ever feel shaken up?”



All that lives comes to die, and dying, the soul returns to the earth. Hidden below, the flesh and bones decompose and form the earth of the fields.

But the spirit emerges magnificently bright and illustrious. The airs surrounding death which engender feelings of sadness are but the subtle manifestation of the essential spirit of our ancestors and all things.



If we don't know life, how can we know death?

- WISDOM TEACHINGS OF CONFUCIUS (ANCIENT CHINESE PHILOSOPHER)

(21)



Not Far from Me

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

**Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?**

**My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer
by night, but I find no rest.**

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;

you are the one Israel praises.
In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
“He trusts in the Lord,” they say,
“let the Lord rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.”

Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast.
From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.
Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.
Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;

**they pierce my hands and my feet.
But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.
For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.**

**Those who seek the Lord will praise him —
may your hearts live forever!**

- FROM PSALM 22

(22)



The Lord Is My Shepherd

**The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**

**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul.**

He leadeth me in the paths

**Of righteousness for
his name's sake.**

**Yea, though I walk through the valley
Of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil.**

**For thou art with me,
Thy rod and thy staff
they comfort me.**

**Thou preparest a table before me
In the presence of mine enemies.
Thou anointest my head with oil.**

**My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
Me all the days of my life.**

**And I will dwell in the house
Of the Lord forever.**

- FROM PSALM 23

(23)



Deep Peace

**Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.
Amen.**

- TRADITIONAL CELTIC CHRISTIAN PRAYER



**I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining.**

**I believe in love
even when feeling it not.**

**I believe in God
even when he is silent.**

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER

(24)



Remember Me

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals — one on his right, the other on his left.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

- FROM GOSPEL OF LUKE

(25)



How Long Shall My Heart Be Afflicted?

**O goddess of men, O goddess of women, you whose
counsel none may learn,
Where you look in pity, the dead live again,
the sick are healed.
The afflicted are saved from affliction,
beholding your face!
I, your servant, sorrowful, sighing, and in distress
cry unto you.
Look upon me, O my Lady, and accept my supplication,
Truly pity me and hearken unto my prayer!
Cry unto me “It is enough!” and let their spirit be appeased!
How long shall my body lament, which is full of
restlessness and confusion?
How long shall my heart be afflicted, which is full
of sorrow and sighing?**

- ANCIENT BABYLONIAN LAMENTATION

(26)



In the Land of the Living

**The Lord is my light and my salvation —
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life —**

of whom shall I be afraid?

**For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.**

**Hear my voice when I call, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.**

**Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.**

**Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.
I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.**

**Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.**

- FROM PSALM 27



The Spirit Path

Moon-by-Gone's daughter, Pine Song, had gone away with Fire Spirit on the Spirit Path and was lost forever. But Moon-by-Gone's son, Handsome Lake, yet lived, and so the old chief found it easier to accept her death.

Handsome Lake had been married for less than a moon at the time Pine Song had gone, when his wife also died. But Handsome Lake was not like his father; he could not accept that his wife, whose loveliness he had so briefly enjoyed, was gone. Moon-by-Gone had the light of the evening fire to bring him good memories of his daughter, but Handsome Lake had only a sleeping blanket, the memories and smells of which only made greater his grief.

For many nights, his moaning echoed that of the wind-blown trees. One night, he awoke before the light of the sun and began to walk. Away from the village, he walked, heavy with sorrow, and he walked long into the day. He heard far-off voices, like a whisper coming through the dark pine forest, and he followed them long past the setting of the sun. He came to a still lake, bathed in silvery-blue light of the just-risen moon.

Handsome Lake, his mind so lost in sadness, had walked the spirit path, the path to death. Across the lake, he saw what looked like people, shadows moving among the trees. He cried out many times to them but no one answered. At last, his voice gone, he whispered softly to himself, "Can it be so far to the other side that my calls do not reach them?"

This whisper the people of the shadows did hear and one said, "I hear one of the people of the dream time." And they sent a canoe to bring Handsome Lake to them. When he stepped on the shore, Handsome Lake saw the vision of his wife, dressed in deerskin and white as the moonlight. Great happiness overcame them both and they embraced as if they would never again be parted.

At last it came time to eat, but Handsome Lake's wife warned him, "If you eat our food, you will not go back to the dream time." So, without eating, later that night

Handsome Lake and his wife lay down together under their blanket but she could sleep only out in the chilly night air. He was cold to the bone. Handsome Lake realized in order to live they must leave the shadow people and return to the village.

Together, they slipped away unnoticed, found a canoe and began paddling from the misty shore. “No one will follow,” Handsome Lake’s wife assured him, “for we are taking the way to the dream time.” They found the spirit path, the path of death, and returned through the dark pine-forest to the village.

When Handsome Lake came to his father’s Lodge, Moon-By-Gone was relieved and joyful to see his missing son. Handsome Lake told all the people of his travels and happily talked of his good luck in returning his wife to his side. They smiled politely and spoke only to him.

Finally, Handsome Lake said, “Father, why do you not welcome us? Do you not see I have returned with my wife?” Moon-By-Gone answered gently, “On a lonely and hard path, my son, you have traveled. It is good to rest now and relieve your heart.”

In the cold night, once again Handsome Lake’s wife threw off the sleeping blanket. She desired to make love with him in the open, not underneath the robes as is the way of the people. He argued with her, but at last relented. Dismayed, Moon-By-Gone got up and quietly left the lodge, crying to himself, “My poor boy believes he has found his wife in the moonlight.”

So Handsome Lake did not find peace in the lodge of his people. When the sun returned to the sky, Handsome Lake and his wife once again took the spirit path across the silvery-blue lake. There, he and his wife slept on top of their sleeping blanket out in the chilly air.

He no longer thought of returning to the lodges where people dream they are alive. In his heart, Handsome Lake found peace.

- TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN STORY



God Hears Your Sighs

**Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into his hands,
To his sure truth and tender care
Who earth and heaven commands.**

**Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey:
He shall direct thy wandering feet,
He shall prepare thy way.**

**Thou on the Lord rely,
So safe shalt thou go on;
Fix on his work thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.**

**No profit canst thou gain
From self-consuming care;
To him commend thy cause; his ear
Attends the softest prayer.**

**Give to the winds thy fears;
Hope, and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears;
God shall lift up thy head.**

- TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN HYMN



My Heart Now Heals

**O, Ubbiri, who shrieks in the forest
O, dear daughter Jiva,
Come back to your senses!**

**The world is but a crematorium
In which countless daughters, Jiva,
Full of life once are at last burnt up.**

**For which one are you grieving?
The arrow concealed in my heart
Is now removed.**

**The agony of my loss and
The pain that nearly made me faint
Have left me.**

**Pacified is my craving mind
I turn to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha
And my heart now heals.**



My Friend Has Gone Forth and Left Me

**My friend, my adopted brother,
Chaser of asses of the mountain, panther of the plain,
Enkidu, my friend, my adopted brother, panther of the plain...**

**We who traveled everywhere and ascended the mountain,
We who seized the bull of Heaven and slaughtered him,
We who cast down Humbaba that dwelt in the cedar forest...**

**Now what dream is it that has taken possession of you?
You have turned dark and hear me not.**

**I weep for Enkidu my friend,
Like a woman wailer I lament woefully.**

**He, the axe of my side, the strength of my arm,
The sword of my girdle, the expression of my face,
The raiment of my feasts, the bestower of my pleasure...**

My friend has gone forth and left me.

- FROM ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIAN MYTH

(31)



Therefore I Have Hope

**And I said, my strength and my
hope is perished from the Lord;
remembering mine affliction and
my misery, the wormwood and the gall,
my soul hath them still in remembrance
and is humbled in me.**

**This I recall to my mind; therefore have I hope.
It is of the Lord's mercies
that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.
They are new every morning:
great is thy faithfulness.**

**The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;
therefore will I hope in him.**

**The Lord is good unto them
that wait for him,
to the soul that seeketh him.
For the Lord will not cast off forever.**

**But though he cause grief,
yet will he have compassion
according to the multitude of his mercies.
For he doth not afflict willingly
nor grieve the children of men.**

- FROM BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

(32)



Like a Hero Going Home

**Live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart.
Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.
Seek to make your life long and of service to your people.
Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide.
When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your
strength.
Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living.
If you see no reason to give thanks, the fault lies in yourself.**

**When your time comes to die, be not like those
whose hearts are filled with fear of death,
so that when their time comes they weep and pray
for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way.
Sing your death song, and die like a hero going home.**

- WISDOM TEACHING OF CHIEF TECUMSEH (NATIVE AMERICAN)

(33)



Tears Like the Morning Dew

Eos, the bringer of dawn, was the daughter of the immortal Titans, Hyperion and Theia. She was lovely and beholding her, Ares, the God of war, came to love her. The Goddess Aphrodite, the lover of Ares, was angered and in spite moved Eos to find love from then on with young mortals.

Eos' greatest love was for Tithonus. Desiring to live with him forever, she beseeched Zeus to make the beautiful young man immortal. In her passion, Eos forgot to request that Zeus bestow as well the boon of eternal youth that she and all the gods enjoyed. And so Tithonus, like all men, grew old and shriveled and his form changed to that of a cricket.

Their son Memnon, the king of Ethiopia, did not inherit immortality, and he was killed. Eos persuaded Zeus to grant immortality to Memnon in the underworld; yet so sad was Eos that her son no longer lived on the earth, she mourned and wept profusely. Her tears, forever after, appear as the morning dew.

- ANCIENT GREEK MYTH



Then I Will Return

Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, 'My father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan." Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'"

Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do."

So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him — the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt — besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen.

When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning." That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.

So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.



Only a Short Visit

As it is told, a man made a long journey to seek the wisdom of a renowned rabbi in a far away land.

When he arrived at the rabbi's house, he was much surprised to see that it was nothing more than a room. There, the rabbi sat on a bench at a small table surrounded only by the numerous volumes of books he continually pored over in study.

The seeker asked, "Good rabbi, where are all your furnishings? Where are all your belongings?"

Without pause, the rabbi answered, "Tell me, where are yours?"

"Where are mine?" said the startled man. "But I only came here for a short visit."

"So did I," the rabbi said.

- TRADITIONAL CHASSIDIC JEWISH STORY



You have made my days a mere handbreadth;

the span of my years is as nothing before you.

Everyone is but a breath,

even those who seem secure.

(36)



With Wings Like Eagles

**Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.**

**Why do you complain, Jacob?
Why do you say, Israel,
“My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God”?**

**Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.**

**Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;**

**but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

- FROM BOOK OF ISAIAH

(37)



See How He Loved Him

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

- FROM GOSPEL OF JOHN

(38)



The Earth a Refuge

**Slip into the Earth your mother,
Who opens wide with goodness.
May she, ever-young and soft to the devout
Keep you from destruction.**

Rise lightly, O Earth and do not oppress.

**Be open and easy and tenderly
Cover him as a mother
Enfolds her child within her robe.**

**May the earthly clouds above him
Provide a home of comfort and
Let it be a refuge
For him forever.**

**For you, I make a mound of earth.
In doing so, may I be kept safe from harm.
May the Creator preserve your tomb
And may Yama, the God of Death,
Build you here a fine mansion.**

- TRADITIONAL HINDU PRAYER

(39)



What Is My Own Life This Day?

**O Son, my son!
I climb the mountain and
Light a fire there**

To the spirit of my son.

**And in great sadness
There, I say, my son
What is my own life this day,
For you have gone?**

**My son, my son
Into the earth we softly
Lay you in the robe
Of a chief.**

**With all the ornaments
Of a warrior
You dwell in the land
Of the spirit.**

**That which you have done
Is with you.
There, surely, the corn
Fills the ear once more!**

**Son, my son
I am here.
I am the empty corn-stalk
The seed-gathers seeing from a distance**

**Leave standing in the field
Son, my son
What is my own life this day,
For you have gone?**

(40)



Draw Out the Arrow of Sorrow

**As ripe fruits are early in danger of falling,
so mortals when born are always in danger of death.**

**Mark! While relatives are looking on and lamenting deeply,
one by one mortals are carried off, like an ox that is led to the slaughter.**

**Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind;
on the contrary, his pain will be the greater and his body will suffer.**

**He will make himself sick and pale, yet the dead are not saved by his lamentation.
He who seeks peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation, complaint, and
grief.**

**He who has drawn out the arrow and become composed will obtain peace of mind;
he who has overcome all sorrow will become free from sorrow, and be blessed.**

(41)



My Soul Thirsts

**As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.**

**My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”**

**Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?**

**Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my savior and my God.**

- FROM PSALM 42



Unending Love and Mercy

**God of all consolation,
in your unending love and mercy for us
you turn the darkness of death
into the dawn of new life.
Show compassion to your people in their sorrow.**

**Be our refuge and our strength
to lift us from the darkness of this grief
to the peace and light of your presence.**

**Your son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
by dying for us, conquered death
and by rising again, restored life.**

**May we then go forward eagerly to meet him,
and after our life on earth
be reunited with our brothers and sisters
where every tear will be wiped away.**

- TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN PRAYER



With the Holy Angels

As mineral of the earth
I died and came to be a plant.
As a plant I died
And an animal arose.

As an animal I died
And I came to be a human.
Why should I be afraid?
When, by dying, have I suffered loss?

Again, surely, I will die
As a human, and come to fly
With the holy angels.
Yet, even the exalted state

Of angels I must transcend.
Everything but God ceases to exist;
When I surrender my angelic soul,
I come to be something of which
The mind can not take hold.



Where Can I Go from Your Spirit?

**Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.**

**Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**

**If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.**

**If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;**

**the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.**

- FROM PSALM 139

(45)



My Cry Reached God's Ears

**I love you, Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock,
my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock,
in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

**I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.
The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called to the Lord;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.**

**It is God who arms me with strength
and keeps my way secure.**

- FROM PSALM 18

(46)



The Birds Gave Up Their Singing

Idun was the goddess of the turning seasons, from icy winter to the sweet warmth of spring and thus neither was born nor died. She was the guardian of the magic apples of Asgard, and gave the gods these fruits from her basket to eat so that they might remain forever powerful and young.

The husband of Idun was Bragi, god of poetry and speech, who some say was none other than Odin himself, the god of victory and death. One time Idun climbed Yggdrasill, The World Tree — the same on which Odin hung himself and sacrificed an eye to gain knowledge of all things — so that she too might see with true sight. To see better, she moved out on a distant branch of the tree and becoming dizzy, fell to the very depths of Niflheim, the place of the dead. Here the goddess Hel ruled and the dead were entirely subject to her.

Bragi, and all the gods of Asgard, were dismayed greatly by the disappearance of Idun and ventured to the bitter realm of Niflheim to meet her. But by the time they arrived (and this took a while for they had believed at first Idun was simply on a journey), Idun had succumbed. She could no longer bear the terrible and never-ending cold nor the horrific sights she was compelled to see. Her whole body shook with shivers and sobbing.

Bragi took a white wolfskin and covered Idun for warmth. He asked the others to leave them. Until she was restored and ready to return to Asgard, he would stay

with her. While Idun and Bragi dwelled in the underworld, the earth was smitten by frost and the birds above gave up their singing.

- TRADITIONAL NORSE MYTH

(47)



Moses Faces the Angel of Death

Moses and the children of Israel escaped Egypt and began their journey through the desert to the Promised Land. Then, Moses asked God to answer a single question for him: “When will I die?”

God simply said in reply: “You will die on a Friday.” So when Friday came, Moses dressed in his grave clothes and watched for the Angel of Death to come. For many years Moses did this each Friday, but yet he lived. So finally Moses stopped putting on his shroud and preparing for the Angel of Death to take him. He lived as a man lives and forgot what God had told him.

Eventually, Moses became an old man of one hundred and twenty, but his eyes were still bright and his strength was undiminished by age. One Friday, walking to do his prayers on Mount Sinai, Moses saw a strange young man who called out to him in a strange voice: “Moses, peace be unto you.” Moses immediately became afraid and asked, “Who are you?” And the young man said, “My name is Suriel. You know I am the Angel of Death, Moses, and I come now for your soul.”

Moses begged not for himself, but only for a little time to say goodbye to his family and Suriel agreed to meet Moses' request. So Moses rushed down the mountain to the Israelite's dwelling place in the desert. He could not decide which tent to enter first, his mother's or his wife's, when he heard a voice say, “Go see your mother Yocheved, then Zipporah, your wife.”

Moses embraced Yocheved, kissed his mother one last time, and left her to see his

wife and sons. When Moses told them he was about to die, Zipporah and the children's faces were stricken with grief. They sobbed so much that Moses started to cry, too.

Then God asked Moses, "Do you cry because you now desire to live and not to die, or are you, Moses, afraid of death?" Moses said to God, "My father, Amram is dead. Jethro, my father-in-law is dead also and so is Aaron, my brother. Who will be left to take care of my family when I too am gone?"

God answered Moses, "Do you not remember how I took care of you when you were but an infant, floating in the basket your mother, in hopes of helping you escape death, then set in the swirling waters of the Nile? Your children, I too will care for."

God then commanded Moses to lift once more the holy rod over the Sea of Reeds, just as Moses had done to make the waters part and free the Israelites forever from their slavery in Egypt. Moses did and out from the sea came a great stone. When Moses took up the rod again and broke the stone, two worms, one very large and the other tiny, came out. The tiny one shouted, "Praise be to God for he has remembered even a tiny worm like me who lives in a rock at the very bottom of the sea!" God then said, "Look, Moses, if I remember a tiny worm like this, so surely will I remember to take care of your children."

Moses stepped outside the tent of his wife and children and began walking. On the path, he saw three young men digging a grave and asked them, "For whom do you dig this grave?" The three young men were not young men at all, but angels like Suriel, the Angel of Death. They answered simply, "For God's beloved."

"I will help you then," Moses said and joined in the digging. The angels said, "We are not sure the grave is the right size yet. The one we are about to bury has a body very much like yours. Would you go down in to the grave so we can tell if it is the right size?" So Moses threw himself into the grave and then he came face to face with Suriel, the Angel of Death.

"Peace be with you, Moses," said Suriel. "Peace be with you," answered Moses and then he died.

The angels then buried him and to this day no one knows where is the grave of Moses, the beloved of God.

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH STORY



Peace Upon the Prophet Muhammad

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, was stricken with an illness, and although he continued to lead prayers for many days, he finally weakened and retired from the task. The Companions, accustomed to the Prophet's great strength and energy, could not imagine his time to die was nearing.

Although the Prophet had spoken of his death to them, and readied himself for it by making amends for any injury even unwittingly he may have done to them, a great despondency came upon their hearts. Each day brought the sun anew, but the Companions saw only darkness and no light.

The soul of the Prophet was about to leave its bodily form and go to its creator. His breathing became difficult and yet he warned the faithful against “worship of the graves of prophets.” His eyes began to close and he said, “To my Friend the Highest of the High, to my Friend the Highest of the High.” And the Prophet died.

At the mosque, the assembled Companions, who were hoping for the Prophet's recovery, were stunned to hear of his death. 'Umar was utterly astonished and overcome with grief. He stormed out of the mosque, sword in hand, and threatened to kill anyone who said the Prophet was dead. Many of the Companions felt that Muhammad, like Moses, could not go without completely fulfilling his mission.

At last, Abu Bakr, the Prophet's dear friend and father-in-law, was found and told the news. He went directly to the Prophet's house and then, once informed of the truth of the Prophet's death, straight to his body. He removed the covering of the Prophet's face and bent down to kiss his forehead. His heart filled with love and grief, he declared, “God is the true witness. Death will come only once upon you.”

When Abu Bakr came upon 'Umar in the mosque, 'Umar intended to slay him. But Abu Bakr spoke the words of the Qur'an; “And Muhammad is only a messenger. Verily, all messengers have passed away before him. If then he die or be slain, will you turn back on your heels?” 'Umar and the rest of the Companions, lost in grief, began to return to their senses. Abu Bakr spoke once more: “Let them know who worship God that God still lives and will ever live.”

(49)



Our Heart Blossoms and Opens Petals

Here on earth so speak our hearts.

My friends, if we were to live always!

My friends, where is the land where we do not die?

Shall I travel to that land?

Is my mother living in that land?

Is my father living in that land?

Life is born to this earth

And given to us for a brief time

So briefly does the glory live.

We come here to sleep,

We come here to dream,

Not truly to live on the earth.

We are as the grass of springtime,

Waving beautifully,

Bringing forth buds.

**Our heart, our body, like a flower
Blossoms and opens petals,
Then but wilts and withers away.**

- TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN SONG

(50)



With Songs of Praise on My Lips

**With Truth moving my heart,
With Best Thought inspiring my mind,
With all the might of spiritual force within me,
I kneel in homage to Thee, my Master,
With the songs of Thy loving praise ever on my lips!**

**And even at the last when I shall stand
At Thy Gateway as a supplicator,
I shall hear distinct the sweet echo of
My prayers from Thy Abode of Songs.**

- TRADITIONAL ZOROASTRIAN PRAYER



Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

**Do not let your hearts be troubled.
You believe in God; believe also in me.**

**My Father's house has many rooms;
if that were not so,
would I have told you that
I am going there
to prepare a place for you?**

**And if I go and prepare
a place for you,
I will come back and take you
to be with me
that you also may be where I am.**

**You know the way
to the place where I am going.**



The disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us of our end and how it will be for us.” Jesus said to them, “Have you found the beginning so that you seek to know the end? Where the beginning is, there is the end. Blessed is the one who finds a place in the beginning; such a one will know the end and will not know death.”

- FROM GOSPEL OF THOMAS (APOCRYPHAL CHRISTIAN TEACHING)

(52)



Above the Seas of Sorrow

Ceyx, the son of Lucifer, the bearer of light, married Alcyone, the daughter of Aeolus, King of the Winds. The two loved each other with great devotion and were never of their own volition separated.

There came a time, however, when Ceyx, a Thessalonian king, was summoned to take a distant sea journey. Alcyone was deeply sorrowful and frightened, for she had from early childhood in her father's palace seen the dreadful power of the winds upon ships at sea. She pleaded with her husband not to go, and that having failed, begged to join him. “Whatever comes upon us,” she said, “I can endure if we are together.”

Ceyx loved Alcyone as much as she loved him, and his heart was much moved. Yet, he would not allow Alcyone to risk such a perilous voyage. Alcyone was compelled to relent and when Ceyx departed, she watched heavy-hearted on the shore.

That evening, a terrible storm arose. All of the heavens seemed to fall upon the sea and the sea seemed to be leaping up to the heavens. The sailors in Ceyx's ship were crazy with fear of their lives, but Ceyx thought only of Alcyone. Happy that she was safe, he spoke her name as the waters came over him.

Alcyone, day after day, waited hopefully for her husband's return. She wove two beautiful new robes, one for Ceyx, and one for herself so that she would be most lovely when she first greeted him. And each day, she offered prayers to the gods, the goddess Juno most of all, for Ceyx. Juno, touched by Alcyone's prayers for her long-dead husband, had a message sent to Somnus, the God of Sleep and bid him bring Alcyone a dream revealing the truth. Somnus aroused his son Morpheus, who could assume any human form, to take on the face and form of Ceyx, and thus appear to Alcyone in her slumber.

Wet and unkempt, he came to Alcyone and said: "Poor wife, look, I am here. Alcyone, I am dead. There remains no hope for me, but give your tears to me. Let me not go down to the land of shadows unwept." Alcyone, in her dream, reached out to grasp him. She cried out to the phantom, "Wait, I will go with you," but her cry succeeded only in awakening her. She knew of a certainty then her husband was dead.

"So sad he appeared," Alcyone thought to herself. "He has perished and soon I shall as well. Can I dwell here while he is thrown about in the sea? I will come to you, dear husband; I may no longer live."

At the first light of day, Alcyone went to the very place of the shore from where Ceyx had embarked so long before. Looking to the sea, she saw far off something drifting toward her. Nearer and nearer it came until Alcyone could see clearly, to her horror and grief, it was the body of Ceyx, her beloved husband. She leaped into the deep water to reach him, but she did not sink. Wondrously, Alcyone was flying over the sea, her new-found wings carrying her aloft. The gods, in kindness, had changed her into a bird. Ceyx, too, became a bird and together they soared over the sea. Thus they are always seen, flying over the waves of the sea.

- TRADITIONAL ROMAN STORY



The Sun Does Not Rise There

How sad is the descent into the Land of Silence.

**The wakeful one sleeps, he who did not
Sleep at night lies still forever.**

**The mockers say that the dwelling-place
Of the inhabitants of the West
Is deep and dark.**

**The place has no door,
No light to illuminate it,
No north wind to refresh the heart.**

**The sun does not rise there,
But they lie every day in darkness.
Those in the West are cut off.**

**They exist in misery and
One is loathe to join them,
Where eternally they dwell in a place of darkness.**

- ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LAMENTATION



From Darkness Lead Me to Light

As a man passes from dream to wakefulness, so does he from this life to the next.



Even as a caterpillar, on reaching the tip of a blade of grass in taking the next step, draws itself up toward itself, so does this self, having cast off this body and having dissolved its ignorance in taking the next step, draw itself together.



As a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, transforms it into another newer and more beautiful form, even so this self, casting off this body and dissolving its ignorance, makes for itself another newer and more beautiful form.



**From the unreal lead me to the real.
from darkness lead me to light.
From death lead me to immortality.**

- TRADITIONAL HINDU WISDOM TEACHINGS



Some Day

**Some day the Great Chief Above
will overturn the mountains and the rocks.
Then the spirits that once lived
in the bones buried there
will go back into them.**

**At present those spirits live
in the top of the mountains,
watching their children on earth
and waiting for the great change
which is to come.**

**The voices of these spirits can be heard
in the mountains at all times.
Mourners who wail for their dead
hear spirit voices reply,
and thus they know
their lost ones are always near.**

- TRADITIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN WISDOM TEACHING



How the Mighty Have Fallen

After the death of Saul, David returned from striking down the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days. On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor.

"Where have you come from?" David asked him.

He answered, "I have escaped from the Israelite camp."

"What happened?" David asked. "Tell me."

"The men fled from the battle," he replied. "Many of them fell and died. And Saul and his son Jonathan are dead."

Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan:

A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel.
How the mighty have fallen!

Mountains of Gilboa,
may you have neither dew nor rain,
may no showers fall on your terraced fields.
For there the shield of the mighty was despised,
the shield of Saul — no longer rubbed with oil.

Saul and Jonathan —
in life they were loved and admired,
and in death they were not parted.
They were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.

Daughters of Israel,
weep for Saul,

**who clothed you in scarlet and finery,
who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.**

**How the mighty have fallen in battle!
Jonathan lies slain on your heights.
I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;
you were very dear to me.
Your love for me was wonderful,
more wonderful than that of women.**

**How the mighty have fallen!
The weapons of war have perished!**

- FROM SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

(57)



King David's Grief for His Child

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.”

After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

On the seventh day the child died. David’s attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, “While the child was still living, he wouldn’t

listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.”

David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. “Is the child dead?” he asked.

“Yes,” they replied, “he is dead.”

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

His attendants asked him, “Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!”

He answered, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon.

- FROM SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

(58)



Why Do You Forget Us?

**Remember, Lord, what has happened to us;
look, and see our disgrace.**

Joy is gone from our hearts;

our dancing has turned to mourning.

The crown has fallen from our head.

Woe to us, for we have sinned!

Because of this our hearts are faint;

because of these things our eyes grow dim.

Why do you always forget us?

Why do you forsake us so long?

Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return;

renew our days as of old.

- FROM BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

(59)



Butterfly Souls

Once there lived a young man, Sakuni, whose life was devoted to gardening. He married a young woman who shared his affinity and they cared only for each other and the plants in their garden. In their middle age, a son was born to them who blessedly inherited his parents' love of flowers and gardens.

When the son was yet a youth, within days of each other, the old couple died. The son tended the plants in his parents' garden even more carefully than before for he

felt in those plants were the very spirit of his dead parents.

That spring the son saw two butterflies who came each day to visit the flowers in the garden. The son was a gentle soul who cherished butterflies and the flowers on which they alighted.

As spring became summer, the son dreamed one night that his parents returned to their garden, together looking tenderly at each plant in it as they had done when they were living. Then, in the dream, the parents turned into a pair of beautiful butterflies.

In the morning, the son found the same pair of butterflies fluttering among the flowers in the garden and he knew that in those butterflies resided the souls of his dear parents.

- TRADITIONAL JAPANESE STORY

(60)



Still an Open Question

The Mullah Nasreddin was considered by some to be a saint and by others to be a fool. His wife simply chose to make the best of her marriage to such a man.

One day, the Mullah was crossing an old cemetery and contemplating things divine, as he was wont to do, when he dropped like a shot into an open grave. He began to ponder the nature of death and asked himself: “How would it feel to really be dead?”

Deep in thought, the Mullah was roused by a noise that seemed very near to him. “It’s the Angel of Death coming for me!” the Mullah reckoned but as he was not taken away then and there for holy judgment, Nasreddin decided to listen more carefully to the sound. It was, in truth only a passing caravan, but nonetheless the poor Mullah was so startled by the whole incident that he jumped out of the grave,

tripped and fell hard on the ground. This succeeded in so unsettling the entire line of camels that they instantly fled in all directions. It cost the camel-drivers a great deal of time and trouble to track down their only recently docile beasts, and so to punish the transgressor they gave the Mullah a thorough thrashing.

It was very late when he, at last, arrived home and encountered his wife at the door. Seeing the sorry state of affairs her wayward husband was in, she resignedly let him in and asked, “What happened to you? Why are you so late?”

Nasreddin replied matter-of-factly, “I have been dead.” His wife could not help herself and said, “All right, then, what is it like?”

“Well,” replied Nasreddin, “it's all right unless you upset the camels!”

- TRADITIONAL SUFI STORY

(61)



What Is My Strength?

If only my anguish could be weighed
and all my misery be placed on the scales!
It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas —
no wonder my words have been impetuous.

The arrows of the Almighty are in me,
my spirit drinks in their poison;
God's terrors are marshaled against me.
Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass,

**or an ox bellow when it has fodder?
Is tasteless food eaten without salt,
or is there flavor in the sap of the mallow?
I refuse to touch it;
such food makes me ill.**

**Oh, that I might have my request,
that God would grant what I hope for,
that God would be willing to crush me,
to let loose his hand and cut me off!**

**Then I would still have this consolation —
my joy in unrelenting pain —
that I had not denied the words of the
Holy One.**

**What strength do I have, that I should still hope?
What prospects, that I should be patient?
Do I have the strength of stone?
Is my flesh bronze?
Do I have any power to help myself,
now that success has been driven from me?**

- FROM BOOK OF JOB

(62)



The Paths of Life

**It is not given to any soul to die,
save by the leave of God,
at an appointed time.**

**Whosoever desires the reward
of this world,
We will give him of this.**

**And whosoever desires the reward
of the other world,
We will give him of that.**

And We will recompense the thankful.

- FROM THE QUR'AN (HOLY BOOK OF ISLAM)



**Be not thou afraid when one waxeth rich,
When the wealth of his house is increased;
For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away;
His wealth shall not descend after him.
I have the Lord always before me;
Surely He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.
Thou makest me know the path of life;
In Thy path is fullness of joy,**

In Thy right hand bliss for evermore.

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER

(63)



The Blissful Passing of the Buddha

The Blessed One, accompanied by a large congregation of priests, drew near to the further bank of the Hirannavati river, and to the city of Kusinara, and the sal-tree grove Upavattana of the Mallas; and having drawn near, he addressed the venerable Ananda: “Be so good, Ananda, as to spread me on a couch with its head to the north between twin sal-trees. I am weary, Ananda, and wish to lie down.”

“Yes, Reverend Sir,” said the venerable Ananda to the Blessed One in assent, and spread the couch with its head to the north between twin sal-trees. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side after the manner of a lion, and placing foot on foot, remained mindful and conscious.

Now at that time the twin sal-trees had completely burst forth into bloom, though it was not the flowering season. Heavenly Erythrina flowers fell from the sky, and also heavenly sandal-wood powder fell from the sky.

Then the venerable Ananda entered the monastery, and, leaning against the bolt of the door, he wept, saying: “Behold, I am but a learner and not yet perfect, and my Teacher is on the point of passing into Nirvana, he who was so compassionate to me.”

Then the Blessed One addressed a certain priest, saying: “Go, O priest, and say to the venerable Ananda from me, 'The Teacher calleth thee, brother Ananda.'” And the venerable Ananda being seated respectfully at one side, the Blessed One spoke to him as follows: “Enough, Ananda, do not grieve, nor weep. Have I not already told you, Ananda, that it is in the very nature of all things near and dear unto us

that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? How is it possible, Ananda, that whatever has been born, has come into being, is organized and perishable, should not perish?"

Then the Blessed One addressed the priests: "And now, O priests, I take my leave of you; all the constituents of being are transitory; work out your salvation with diligence."

Thereupon the venerable Ananda spoke to the venerable Anuruddha as follows: "Reverend Anuruddha, The Blessed One has passed into Nirvana."

- TRADITIONAL BUDDHIST STORY

(64)



Come Dance the Colors

**I came to share a drink
With my friend.
I could not see him.**

**O death, the one who takes away life
And allows no pleading
In your court,**

**The day comes when I will again see my friend.
I will see him
For I also walk toward death.**

**I tell you about the drinks you are drinking.
What happiness you have from them
Leaves with you.**

**I tell you about the pipes you are smoking.
What contentment you have from them
Leaves with you.**

**Come dance the colors of life.
Come dance for one
Who loved pleasure and now is dead.**

- TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SONG

(65)



So I May Share Their Sorrow

Soyen Shaku, the abbot, each morning took a walk accompanied by his companion from the monastery to the nearby town. One day, as he passed a house, he heard a great cry from within it. Stopping to inquire, he asked the inhabitants, “Why are you all wailing so?” They said: “Our child has died and we are grieving.”

The abbot without hesitation sat down with the family and started crying and wailing himself. As they were returning to the monastery, the abbot's companion asked, “Master, is this family known to you?” “No,” the abbot answered. “Why

then, Master, did you also cry?” The abbot said simply, “So that I may share their sorrow.”



Master Hui-neng one day assembled his monks and declared: “I have chosen to leave the world this next month.” Many of the monks broke into tears. The master said, “For whom are you truly weeping? Are you concerned because you are not certain I know my destination? I would not depart from you in this way if I did not know. You cry because you do not know the natural essence. It is not born and does not die. It neither comes nor goes. If you realized this truth, you could not bring forth tears.”



Satsujo was a devoted student of Hakuin, a renowned master, for many years. When her granddaughter died, Satsujo could not withhold her sorrow. She wailed loudly.

A neighbor, an elder himself, came to cajole her. “Why do you cry such a flood of tears? Don't you know what people will say if they hear someone like you, a student of Master Hakuin on the way to enlightenment, mourning your grandchild so sorely? How about toning it down!”

Satsujo scowled at her neighbor and shouted, “You old blockhead, why do you come preaching to me? My tears do more for my granddaughter now than bringing flowers or lighting incense and lamps!”

- TRADITIONAL ZEN BUDDHIST STORIES



Your Own True Heart Shall Be with You

**You shall cross in the ferryboat and
Shall not turn back.**

**You shall sail on the flood waters and
Your life shall start afresh.**

**Your Ba, your living soul
Shall not depart from your body and
Your Ba shall become divine
With the blessed dead.**

**Your Ba shall take shape
As a heron or a swallow,
A falcon or a bittern,
Whichever pleases you.**

**Your own true heart
Shall be with you.
You shall penetrate the netherworld and
You shall go up to the sky.**

- ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PRAYER

(67)



I Go from You to You

O God, another night is passing away,
Another day is rising —
Tell me that I have spent the night well so I can be at peace,
Or that I have wasted it, so I can mourn for what is lost.
I swear that ever since the first day You brought me back to life,
The day You became my Friend,
I have not slept —
And even if You drive me from your door,
I swear again that we will never be separated,
Because You are alive in my heart.

- POEM OF RABIA (SUFY MYSTIC)



I am a fountain, You are my water.
I flow from You to You.

I am an eye, You are my light.
I look from You to You.

You are neither my right nor my left.
You are my foot and my arm as well.

I am a traveler, You are my road.
I go from You to You.



Release Me from the Pain

**On your many-colored throne, immortal Aphrodite,
Daughter of Zeus,
Weaver of traps,**

**Do not, I beg you,
Oppress my heart
With grief and sorrow!**

**But come, as before,
Hearing my far-off call.
You listened,**

**And leaving your father's house,
In your golden chariot
Yoked with that lovely richly-feathered sparrow,**

**Carried through the sky and
Alighted swiftly on the dark earth.**

Then, you, blessed one,

**Smiling, that smile on your ageless face,
Asked once more what I am suffering
And why I call on you again.**

**Come now!
Release me from this terrible pain!
That for which my heart most longs**

**Make it so in fullness.
And you, yourself, as an ally
Be with me.**

- FROM POEM OF SAPPHO (ANCIENT GREEK POET)

(69)



I Am Not Afraid

**He is the eternal Lord who reigned
Before any being was created.
At the time when all was made by his will,
He was at once acknowledged as King.**

**And at the end, when all shall cease to be,
The revered God alone shall still be King.
He was, he is, and he shall be
In glorious eternity.
He is One, and there is no other
To compare to him, to place beside him.
He is without beginning, without end;
Power and dominion belong to him.
He is my God, my living Redeemer,
My stronghold in times of distress.
He is my guide and my refuge,
My share of bliss the day I call.
To him I entrust my spirit
When I sleep and when I wake.
As long as my soul is with my body
The Lord is with me; I am not afraid.**

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER

(70)



Shine for Us in the Sky

O, good king come to your home.

**Your two sisters are beside you
Protecting your funeral bed and
Calling out to you in tears.**

**You see our tenderness;
Speak with us, O King, our Lord!
Expel all grief which
Is in our hearts.**

**It is life for us
To behold your face.
May your face not turn from us;
O, good king, we behold you**

**And our hearts are joyful.
Shine for us in the sky
Every day we cease not
To behold your rays of light.**

- ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LAMENTATION

(71)



We Can Never Be Separated

Who is whose mother? Who the father?

All relationships are nominal, false.

Ignorant man! Why do you babble

As in a dream?

Know, by conjunction made by God,

By His Ordinance,

You have come into the world.

All from one clay are made;

In all one light shines.

One breath pervades all; what point is any

Weeping over another?

Man wails over the loss of what he calls his:

Know, the Self is not perishable.



God is sitting inside you,

Nearer than your hands and feet.

The distance between you and God

Is as thin as an insect's wing.

We can never be separated from God,

Neither at birth nor at death.

- TRADITIONAL SIKH PRAYERS



May They Rest

**As for man, his days are as grass,
As for the flower of the field, so he flourishes.
For the wind passes over it, and is gone,
And the place thereof knows it no more.**

**But the loving kindness of the Lord
Is eternally upon them
That revere Him, and His righteousness
Unto the children's children.**

**May God remember the soul of my beloved ones
who have been called to eternal rest.
May their soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life.
May they rest in peace.**

Amen.

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER



**What earthly pleasure remains unmixed with grief?
What glory stands unshaken on earth?
All things are flimsier than shadows,**

**All things are flightier than dreams.
One moment only, and
Death shall supplant them all.
But in the light of thy countenance,
And in the sweetness of thy beauty,
Give rest unto him whom thou hast chosen,
O merciful Lord Jesus Christ.**

- TRADITIONAL EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRAYER

(73)



God Alone Suffices

**I hear a voice
Which speaks somewhat of love.
Many days have I wooed her
But never heard her voice.
Now I am moved
I must go to meet her,
She it is who bears grief and love together,
In the morning, in the dew is the intimate rapture
Which first penetrates the soul.**

- PRAYER OF MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG (CHRISTIAN MYSTIC)



**Trust in God
Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you.
All things pass.
God never changes.
Patience achieves
All it strives for.
He who has God
Finds he lacks nothing,
God alone suffices.**

- PRAYER OF TERESA OF AVILA (CHRISTIAN MYSTIC)

(74)



They That Are Faithful in Love

**But the souls of the just are in the hand of God,
and the torment of death shall not touch them.
In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die,
and their departure was taken for misery,**

and their going away from us, for utter destruction.

But they are in peace.

**And though in the sight of men they suffered torments,
their hope is full of immortality.**

**Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well-rewarded
because God hath tried them
and found them worthy of himself.**

**As gold in the furnace he hath proved them,
and as a victim of a holocaust he has received them,
and in time there shall be respect had to them.**

**The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro
like sparks among the reeds.**

**They that trust in him
shall understand the truth;
and they that are faithful in love
shall rest in him.**

- FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM (APOCRYPHAL CHRISTIAN TEACHING)

(75)



No Longer to Grieve

The chief wife of the King Kitamba died. He was so grief-stricken in his heart that he mourned day after day after day. Kitamba commanded that all the people mourn as he did and so no one was allowed to speak out or make loud sounds in the village. The village elders objected, but the King would not relent until his wife was returned to him.

The elders, desiring to relieve the people, went to see the healer. He consented to help and had a grave dug inside his house. He told his wife to dress in mourning clothes for he and their son would enter the grave and journey to the underworld. Once they were down in the grave, it was to be filled in and she was to water the grave each day.

In the underworld, the healer and his son came upon the village of the queen, King Kitamba's wife. She asked them where they were from and the healer told her of her husband's great grief. The queen pointed to a man and asked the healer if he knew the man. The healer did not know him so the queen told him that the man was Death, who captures us all.

She then pointed to another man who was bound and captive and asked if this man was known to the healer. He was the image of King Kitamba. The queen said he would die in a small number of years. She said that when a person dies, that person can never come back. The queen then gave the healer her armlet to show he had truly been to the land of the dead.

While the healer and his son had been gone, the healer's wife poured water every day on the grave. When they returned to the earth, the grave started to crack open and her husband and son came through. The healer received a payment from the elders who took the armlet to Kitamba and told the healer's story to the King. He saw the queen's armlet and knew the story to be true. He called the people and told them they were no longer to grieve.

- TRADITIONAL AFRICAN STORY



Take Me to Everlasting Life

**My God, the soul You have given me
is pure, for You created it.
You formed it and You made it life within me.**

**You watch over it within me,
but one day you will take it from me
to everlasting life.**

**My God and God of my fathers,
as long as the soul
is within me,**

**I will declare that You are the master of all deeds,
the ruler of all creatures
and the Lord of every soul.**

**Blessed are You, Lord,
who brings the dead
into everlasting life.**

- TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRAYER



House of the Spirit

**You grieve where no grief is necessary.
The wise-hearted mourn neither for the living
Nor for the dead.**

**You and I and all who have
Come to be here have always been
And will never cease to be.**

**Beyond birth and death are the spirit.
Death does not touch it,
Though the house of the spirit seems to die.**

**The end of birth is death;
The end of death is birth.
As it is so ordained.**

What is there to bring sorrow?

- FROM TRADITIONAL HINDU STORY



You Have Turned My Mourning into Dancing

**O Lord, thou hast brought up
my soul from the grave;
thou hast kept me alive,
that I should not go down to the pit.**

**For his anger endureth but a moment;
in his favour is life.
Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning.**

**Thou hast turned for me
my mourning into dancing.
Thou hast put off my sackcloth,
and girded me with gladness.**

**To the end that my glory may sing
praise to thee, and not be silent,
O Lord my God, I will give thanks
unto thee for ever.**

- FROM PSALM 30



A Blessing of Peace

**The Lord bless you
and keep you.**

**The Lord make his face
shine upon you
and be gracious to you.**

**The Lord turn
his face toward you
and give you peace.**

- FROM BOOK OF NUMBERS

(80)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An ordained Interfaith Minister, Rev. Aaron Zerah honors the wisdom found in all peoples and traditions of the world. From early childhood his parents, both Holocaust survivors, showed (and continue to show) him the power of acceptance and love and the way to live in joy and peace. Rev. Zerah currently lives in the lovely town of Sechelt, British Columbia (near Vancouver) with his fifteen-year-old daughter, Sari, who is the delight of his life.



REMEMBRANCE

This book is offered in gratitude, honor, and remembrance of my parents, Joseph and Bronia Krause, whom I love always.