


Thanks for the Food, an interpretive translation | ברכת המזון of the Birkat Hamazon by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

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/zalman

A REACHING UP SONG

שיר המעלות:

We dream
How God will bring us back to
Zion.
Then shall we laugh again.
Then shall we sing again.
Then shall it be said abroad:
“How great it is!
Look at what God has done for
them!
If God had done the same for
us,
We too would be glad.”

בְּשׁוֹב יְיָ אֶת-שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן
הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים:
אִזּוּ יִמְלֵא שְׂחֶק פִּינוּ
וְלִשְׁוֹנְנוּ רִנָּה
אִזּוּ יִאֲמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם
הַגְדִּיל יְיָ לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם-אֱלֹהֵי:
הַגְדִּיל יְיָ
לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ
הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים:

O God! Why don't You bring us
back?
As you bring back water
To the dried-up Negev
streams?

שׁוֹבָה יְיָ אֶת-שְׁבִיתָנוּ
כְּאֶפְיקִים
בְּנֶגֶב:

Yes we will trust. We sowed
with tears
We will reap with song.

הַזְרַעִים בְּדַמְעָה
בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ:

Those who go, casting out
seeds,
Sometime feel like weeping.
Yet on they go, always trusting,
That they shall come back
singing,
Bearing in the harvest sheaves.

הַלֹּוֹךְ יִלְוֶהוּ וּבְכֹה נִשְׂא מִשָּׂדֶה-הַגֵּזֶרַע
בְּאֵיבָא
בְּרָנָה
נִשְׂא אֶלְמַתָּיו:

[At Wedding Feast include]

Remove all pain, all wrath take
wing
Then even ones who are mute
will sing
Guide us aright and far from
sin
As we join in praising Aaron's
kin

דְּוֵי הַסֵּר וְגַם חֲרוֹן,
וְאִז אֵלֶם בְּשִׁיר יְרוֹן,
נַחֲנוּ בְּמַעֲגְלֵי צַדִּיק,
שְׁעָה בְּרַכַּת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן.

INVITATION AND CONSENT

זִימוֹן לְבִרְכַת הַמִּזוֹן

Leader:
Havey-rai n'va-reyekh.
Friends, let us give praise.

חֲבֵרֵי נְבָרְדָּא!

Response:
*Y'hi sheym Adonai m'vorakh
mey-ata v'ad olam.*
May God's name be praised,
now and forever

יְהִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרָךְ מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם: (תהלים קיג:ב)

Leader:

*Y'hi sheym Adonay m'vorakh
mey-ala v'ad olam.*

*Bir'shut havey-rai, n'vareykh
Eloheynu*

she-akhalnu mi-shelo.

May God's name be praised,
now and forever.

With your consent, friends, let
us praise God,
of whose food we have
partaken.

יְהִי שֵׁם יי מְבָרָךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם: (תהלים קיג:ב)
בְּרִשׁוֹת חֲבֵרֵי נְבָרְךָ [אֱלֹהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכָלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ.

Response:

*Barukh Eloheynu she-akhalnu
mi-shelo uv'tuvo hayinu.*

Praised be our God of whose
abundance we have partaken
and by whose goodness we live.

בָּרוּךְ [אֱלֹהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכָלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ
וּבְטוֹבוֹ חַיֵּינוּ!

Leader:

*Barukh Eloheynu she-akhalnu
mi-shelo uv'tuvo hayinu.*

Praised be our God of whose
abundance we have partaken
and by whose goodness we live.

בָּרוּךְ [אֱלֹהֵינוּ] שְׂאֲכָלְנוּ מִשְׁלוֹ
וּבְטוֹבוֹ חַיֵּינוּ!

Together:

Barukh hu u-va-rukh sh'mo.

Praised be God, and praised be
God's name.

בָּרוּךְ הוּא וּבָרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ.

THANKS FOR THE FOOD AND ITS
NOURISHMENT

Praise, yes, praise is Yours, O
God,
Ruler of all time and space,
Who every day invites the
world
To the feast of love, goodness
and compassion:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַזֶּה אֶת הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ בְּטוֹבוֹ
בְּחֵן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים

You feed us—and we earned it not;
You sustain us—and we deserved it not;

You so abundantly overwhelm
us with
Your Goodness.
Food you provide for all Your
creatures
Whom You love so abundantly.

הוּא נִתֵּן
לָחֶם
לְכָל-בָּשָׂר
כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ (תהלים קלז:כה):

And because you are so good to
us,
We have never lacked
sustenance in the past
And we believe that we will
never lack food
In the future.

וּבְטוֹבוֹ הַגָּדוֹל
תָּמִיד לֹא חָסַר לָנוּ
וְאֵל יַחֲסַר לָנוּ מְזוֹן
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

This You do for Your own
repute
That You may be known as:
The one who sustains,
The One who supports,
The one who provides food for
each
creature's needs.

בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל:

בְּאִמּוֹר: פּוֹתַח אֶת-יָדָךְ
וּמְשַׁבֵּיעַ לְכָל-חַי רֶצֶון (תהלים קמה:טז):

For Your feast is prepared for
all,
And Your table is set for all;
You know well what each one
needs,
For You did create all.

כִּי הוּא זֶן
וּמְפָרֵס לְכָל
וּמְטִיב לְכָל וּמְכִין מְזוֹן
לְכָל בְּרִיּוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא.

Therefore do we praise and.
thank You,
the One who nourishes all.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
הַזֶּן אֶת הַכֹּל.

THANKS FOR THE EXODUS,
THE TORAH, THE HOLY LAND-
AND FOR THE JOY OF EATING

We thank You, Adonai our God,
because You settled
our ancestors in a land
desirable and good and wide.

נֹדַה לְךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַל שֶׁהִנְחַלְתָּ
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה

You removed us, Adonai our
God, from the straits
and narrow places of Egypt,
and freed us from being
at home in servitude.

ועל שהוצאתנו יי אלהינו
מארץ מצרים
ופדיתנו מבית עבדים

We thank You for the promise
sealed in our flesh,
For the Torah teaching which
You impart to us,
And for the limits of conduct
which
You made us know;
For life,
for beauty,
for love,
with which You are so
generous.

ועל בריתך שחתמת בבשרנו
ועל תורתך שלמדנו
ועל חקיך שהודעתנו
ועל
חיים
חן
וחסד
שחוננתנו

And we thank You for the joy
of eating which
You grant us while You
nourish us, everyday,
every moment.

ועל אכילת מזון
שאתה זן ומפרנס אותנו תמיד בכל יום
ובכל עת ובכל שעה.

THANKS FOR THE GOOD EARTH AND HER
PRODUCE

For all this, Our God,
We worship and thank YOU,
Whose name is praised
By ever new expressions of life.

ועל הכל יי אלהינו
מודים לך
ומברכים אותך ותברך שמך
בפי כל חי תמיד לעולם ועד:

We do this to fulfill Your
command which states:
“Eat Your fill praising Adonai
your God
for the earthy goodness which
the Almighty
so freely gave to you.”

כפיתוב:
ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את-יי אלהיך
על-הארץ הטבה
אשר נתן-לך (דברים ח:י):

Therefore we say:
Praise to You O God
for the earth and for its food.

ברוך אתה יי
על הארץ ועל המזון.

AS A MOTHER WOMBS HER CHILDREN IN
MERCY

Have pity, O God, on
Israel Your people
Jerusalem Your city;
Zion Your glory's shrine
And the heir to David's throne.

רחם יי אלהינו
על ישראל עמך
ועל ירושלים עירך
ועל ציון משכן כבודך
ועל מלכות בית דוד משיחך

And pity the Holy House
The Temple Of Grandeur
Where it was so easy
To call upon You.
Our God, Source of our being,
Mother, Father, Provider,
Sustainer,
You nourish and support us,
Yet still allow us our
independence.

ועל הבית
הגדול והקדוש
שנקרא
שמך עליו:
אלהינו
אבינו רענו [בשבת: רוענו]
זוננו פרנסנו וכלכלנו והרויחנו
והרוח לנו

O God, keep us free from needs
that enslave us.
Permit us not to depend on
gifts, handouts or loans.
For even when others offer
help, what they give is
little and the indignity is great.

י אלהינו מהרה מפל צרותינו ונא אל תצריקנו
י אלהינו לא לידי מתנת בשר ודם
ולא לידי הלואתם

But may we only rely
On Your full, broadly open
hand,
So we never lose self-respect,
Nor suffer shame or disgrace.

כי אם
לידך המלאה הפתוחה הקדושה והרחבה
שלא נבוש
ולא נבלם לעולם ועד.

WHEN WE ALSO GIVE THANKS
FOR THE SABBATH'S REST

[בשבת:]

In commanding us You share
your will with us.
In commanding us You impart
in us the strength
to fulfill the commandment.
We thank You for the
commandment of the seventh
day
the great Shabbat, the holy
Shabbat, this Shabbat.
A great day it is, holy it is, a
day in which we
live Your presence.
We rest on it; we relax on it, we
enjoy its peace;
Loving You all the more for the
limits You set
on our actions by Your will.
On this day of rest—may there
be no pain,
no worry, no anguish, stress or
sighing.
On this Sabbath day open our
eyes to the vision
of the consolation of Zion, and
the upbuilding
of Jerusalem, Your holy city.
For you are at liberty to freely
give liberation
and consolation.

רְצֵה
וְהַחֲלִיצֵנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
וּבְמִצְוֹת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת
הַשַּׁבָּת הַגָּדוֹל וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ הַזֶּה.
כִּי יוֹם זֶה גָּדוֹל וְקְדוֹשׁ
הוּא לְפָנֶיךָ
לְשַׁבֵּת בוֹ וּלְנוּחַ בוֹ
בְּאַהֲבָה כְּמִצְוֹת
רְצוֹנָךְ.
בְּרְצוֹנָךְ הִנֵּיחַ לָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁלֵמָה תְּהֵא אֶרְרָה
וְיִגֹּן וְאִנְחָה בְּיוֹם מְנוּחָתָנוּ
וְהִרְאָנוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בְּנִחְמוֹת צִיּוֹן עִירָךְ וּבְבִנְיָן
יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר קְדְשְׁךָ
כִּי אַתָּה הוּא בְּעַל הַיְשׁוּעוֹת
וּבְעַל הַנְּחָמוֹת.

WHEN WE CELEBRATE
HOLY SEASONS

Our God and God of our
ancestors,
May this prayer we offer to
You,
Rise and come and reach You,
Be noted and accepted and
Heard by You;
Be remembered and acted
upon:

As You become aware of us
As You remember us.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
יַעֲלֶה
וַיָּבֵא וַיִּגִּיעַ
וַיִּרְאֶה וַיִּרְצֶה
וַיִּשְׁמַע
וַיִּפְקֵד וַיִּזְכֹּר

זְכוּרֵנוּ
וּפְקֻדוֹתֵנוּ

You remembered our parents,
You will remember the
Mashiach
David's son,
You are mindful of Jerusalem
Your city,
You are mindful of Israel
Your people.

וַיִּזְכֹּרֶנּוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
וַיִּזְכֹּרֶנּוּ מְשִׁיחַ
בֶּן דָּוִד עֲבֵדְךָ,
זְכוּרֵנוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם
עִיר קְדֻשָׁךְ,
וַיִּזְכֹּרֶנּוּ כָּל עַמְּךָ בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְפָנֶיךָ,

Allow them all to find their
way
To goodness, to grace, to
kindness,
to mercy, to life, and to peace.

לְפָלִיטָה
וּלְטוֹבָה וּלְחַן וּלְחֶסֶד
וּלְרַחֲמִים וּלְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם.

New Moon Day
Pesach
Sukkot
Shemini Atzeret
Shavuot
Rosh Hashana

ראש החדש
חג המצות
חג הסוכות
שמיני חג עצרת
חג השבועות
ראש השנה

Think well of this day
Be mindful on it for our
blessing

זכרנו יי אלהינו בו לטובה [אמן].
ופקדנו בו לברכה [אמן].
והושיענו בו לחיים טובים [אמן].

Grant us the good life on it.

And as concerns such matters
as
salvation and mercy
Pity us, be kind, save us, be
gentle,
For our eyes look to You—
Divine, Majestic One
Yet also Kind and Gentle.

ובדבר
ישועה ורחמים
חוס וחסנו ורחם עלינו והושיענו,
כי אליך עינינו,
כי אל מלך
חנון ורחום אתה.

WE REMEMBER OTHERS AS
WE REMEMBER JERUSALEM

We ate and drank
Yet we forget not that
there is exile, destruction,
famine, fear and want.
Please, forget us not,
But in remembering us,
Remember all in want.

וגם שאכלנו ושתינו
חרבן ביתך הגדול והקדוש לא שכחנו

אל תשכחנו לנצח
ואל תזנחנו לעד
כי אל מלך גדול וקדוש אתה

Make this world
A place of holiness,
Now in our lifetime,
As you rebuild Jerusalem
Praised are you, O God,
Who in building up mercy
Builds Jerusalem.
Amen—do as we believe!

וּבְנָה
יְרוּשָׁלַם
עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ
בְּמִהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
בִּנְיָה בְּרַחֲמָיו
יְרוּשָׁלַם.
אָמֵן.

WE THANK YOU FOR ALL
THAT YOU ARE TO US

Praise, yea praise to You, O
God,
Source of our being
Merciful Mother
Mighty Father
Powerful Ruler
Redeeming Creator
Holy Artist,
Jacob's Sanctifier,
Guiding Shepherd,
Israel's Shepherd,
Sovereign who is good to all.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הָאֵל
אָבִינוּ
מִלְכֵנוּ
אֲדִירָנוּ בּוֹרְאָנוּ גֹאֲלֵנוּ יּוֹצְרֵנוּ
קְדוֹשָׁנוּ קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב
רוֹעֵנוּ
רוֹעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל
הַמֶּלֶךְ הַטּוֹב וְהַמְּטִיב לְכָל

In Your goodness you do not
discriminate,
Doing good day by day
according to that day's needs.
So You did act out of goodness
in the past,
And so will You deal with us in
the future.

שְׁבֹכֵל יוֹם וַיּוֹם הוּא הַטֵּיב
הוּא מְטִיב
הוּא יֵיטִיב לָנוּ:

You give of Your Self,
You gave of your Self,
You will give of Your Self
Freely and completely
kindly and mercifully
generously and abundantly
to save us,
to prosper us,
to bless us,
to redeem us
to console us
to sustain and support us—
in mercy, life and in goodness,
while not diminishing
the good You hold in store for
us for eternity.

הוּא גִמְלָנוּ
הוּא גּוֹמְלָנוּ
הוּא יְגַמְלָנוּ לְעַד
לְחַן
לְחֶסֶד
וְלִרְחֻמִּים וְלִרְוַח
הַצֵּלָה
וְהַצִּלָּה
בְּרָכָה
וְיִשׁוּעָה
נְחֻמָּה
פְּרִנְסָה וְכִלְכֵּלָה
וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם וְכֹל טוֹב
וּמְכֹל טוֹב
אֵל יַחְסְרָנוּ.

WE PRAY FOR THE MESSIANIC AGE AND
TIMES OF PEACE

Compassionate One!
Help us
so that we may be worthy of
being alive
when Mashiach finally arrives.
Grant strength and loving
kindness to Mashiach,
to David's descendants,
to the very ends of time.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִזְכֵּנוּ לַיְמֵי מָשִׁיחַ
וְלַחַיִּי
עוֹלָם הַבָּא:

O God!
We know that You can make
peace on high:
That is not too difficult.
Grant peace to us and to all
Israel:
That is more difficult:
Grant us peace!

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו
הוא יַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל כָּל
יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵלָה.
וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.

INVOCATION FOR THE FUTURE

Harahaman Hu

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ. הוא

Kind-hearted One!
Rule over us always.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Caring One!
Be involved with our heaven
and on our earth.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִתְבָּרֵךְ בַּשָּׁמַיִם
וּבָאָרֶץ:

Feeling One!
You who are praised from one
generation to the next,
Take pride in us always.
May our lives honor You
in this world and in the next.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִשְׁתַּבַּח
לְדוֹר דּוֹרִים
וְיִתְפָּאֵר בְּנוֹ לְעַד לְנֶצַח נְצָחִים
וְיִתְהַדָּר בְּנוֹ לְעַד
וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים:

Merciful One!
Grant us an honorable
livelihood.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִפְרֶנְסֵנוּ בְּכָבוֹד:

Warm-hearted One!
Break the restraints that make
us strangers. Lead us home
with dignity.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִשְׁבּוֹר עַל גְּלוֹת מֵעַל צְוֹאֲרֵנוּ
וְהוא יוֹלִיכֵנוּ קוֹמְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ:

Generous One!
Send abundant blessing to this
home and to this table.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִשְׁלַח בְּרָכָה מְרֻבָּה
בְּבַיִת הַזֶּה וְעַל שֻׁלְחַן זֶה שְׂאֵבְלָנוּ עָלָיו:

One who grants
Pleasant Surprises
Send Elijah the prophet-of
blessed memory-
To bring good news of
liberation
and consolation.

הַרְחֵמֵנוּ.
הוא יִשְׁלַח לָנוּ
אֶת אֵלֵיָּה הַנָּבִיא
זְכוֹר לְטוֹב,
וְיַבְשֵׁר לָנוּ [בְּמִהְרָה] בְּשׂוֹרֹת טוֹבוֹת יְשׁוּעוֹת
וְנִחְמוֹת:

Compassionate One!
Bless and protect all of us,
our loved ones and our
families,
our endeavors and our
possessions.

הַרְחֵמֵנו.
הַרְחֵמֵנו הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת-[אָבִי מוֹרִי] בְּעַל הַבַּיִת
הַזֶּה וְאֶת-[אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי] בְּעֵלֶת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה
אוֹתָם וְאֶת-בֵּיתָם וְאֶת-זְרָעָם
וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם:

May we all be blessed
like Abraham—with everything
like Sarah—with faithfulness
like Isaac—by everyone
like Jacob—in every way
like Rachel—with warmth
like Leah—with love.^[2]
And to all this let us say, Amen!

אוֹתָנוּ וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָנוּ,
כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּתְבָּרַכְנוּ אֲבֹרָהּם בְּכֹל (בראשית כד:א),
שָׂרָה בְּאֵמוּנָה,
יִצְחָק מִכָּל (בראשית כו:לג),
יַעֲקֹב כָּל (בראשית לג:יא),
רָחֵל בְּאַהֲבָה,
לֵיאָה בְּחֶסֶד,
כֵּן יְבָרֵךְ אוֹתָנוּ כָּלְנוּ יַחַד בְּבִרְכָה שְׁלֵמָה. וְנֹאמֵר
אָמֵן.^[1]

Sublime One!
Interpret our act as prompted
by
good intentions, as an act of
surrender, worthy of blessing
from You.
And even if we are not deemed
worthy,
then accept our act of
thanksgiving
as a kind favor on Your part.
O Helping God!

בְּמָרוֹם יִלְמְדוּ עָלֵיהֶם וְעָלֵינוּ זְכוּת,
שֶׁתְּהֵא לְמִשְׁמַרְת שְׁלוֹם,
וְנִשָּׂא בְּרָכָה מֵאֵת יְיָ וְצִדְקָה
מֵאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

May we ever be found pleasant
and wise
by you God
and by all our fellow human
beings.

וְנִמְצָא חֵן וְשִׂכָּל טוֹב
בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים
וְאָדָם.

WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER BEFORE
LEAVING THE TABLE

Fear Our God, you who make
God holy!
Fearing only God, what will
you lack?
Those who are self-sufficient,
like young lions,
May starve in relying on their
own strength.

יִרְאוּ אֶת־יְיָ קְדוֹשׁ
כִּי אֵין מַחְפּוֹר לִירְאָיו:
כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ
וְרַעְבוּ
וְדַרְשֵׁי יְיָ
לֹא־יִחְסְרוּ כָּל־טוֹב: (תהלים לד:י-יא)

But those who seek Only God
Shall not lack all that is good.

Give thanks to God who is so
good,
Whose kindness is ever wise to
the world.

הוֹדוּ לַיְיָ כִּי־טוֹב
כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ: (תהלים קמה:טז)

Blessed are they who trust in
God,
For God will ever be their
guarantor.

בְּרוּךְ הַגֹּבֵר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּיְיָ
וְהָיָה יְיָ מִבְּטַחוֹ: (ירמיהו יז:ז)

I was young, now I'm old
Yet never saw a Zaddik so
forsaken
That their child seeks only
bread.

נָעַר הָיִיתִי גַם־זִקְנָתִי
וְלֹא־רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק נֶעְיָב
אוֹרְעוּ מִבְּקֶשׁ־לֶחֶם: (תהלים לז:כה)

How can this be? How could this happen?
Surely blessings will be heaped on those
Who are really righteous, fair and just.

May what we ate
be a source of satisfaction
What we drank
A source of health
What we left a source
a source of blessing.

מָה שְׁאָכַלְנוּ
יִהְיֶה לְשִׂבְעָה
וּמָה שְׁשָׂתִינוּ
יִהְיֶה לְרְפוּאָה
וּמָה שְׁהוֹתֵרְנוּ
יִהְיֶה לְבִרְכָה

According to Scripture:
“The host set food before
them,
They ate and left enough for
others,
As God has spoken.”^[3]

וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם
וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיֹּותרוּ
כַּדְבַר יְהוָה.

God will surely give strength to
our people
God will bless our folk with
SHALOM!

יְיָ עֹז וְלַעֲמוֹ יִתֵּן
יְיָ וַיְבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם: (תהלים כט:יא)

The style by which Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, z”l translated Jewish liturgy in English was neither literal nor idiomatic, but highly interpretive and interspersed with his own ḥiddushim (innovations). Showing Reb Zalman’s translation side-by-side with the Jewish liturgy helps to illuminate his understanding of the liturgy — it’s deeper meaning as well as how it might be

communicated to a contemporary audience. In the version I have prepared above, I have set the interpretive translation of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, z”l side-by-side with the liturgical Hebrew that may have inspired it. In several places, Reb Zalman’s formulation departs from the traditional Ashkenazi nusah. Where there is no Hebrew, we can more easily observe where Reb Zalman has expanded upon the blessing. Still, my work was not exhaustive and I appreciate any corrections to the nusah (liturgical custom) of the Hebrew that may have inspired Reb Zalman’s interpretation in English.

The interpretive translation of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, z”l was first shared online by Gabbai Seth Fishman at his website, [Jewish Renewal Chassidus](#).

[±] Notes

.1 I’ve adapted the Hebrew attributes of the *Imahot* according to Reb Zalman’s formulation in English, ←
טוב (בראשית כד:טז) טבת (בראשית יב:טז), תיב (בראשית יב:טז) which might predate Harry P. Solomon’s formulation of ←
for Sarah, Rivkah, Raḥel, and Leah, respectively, published in *Reconstructionist* in March of טוב (בראשית כד:טז), ←
1988, “Including the Matriarchs: A Proposal for Birkat ha-Mazon.”—Aharon Varady

.2 Where is Rivka in Reb Zalman’s Imahot formulation? Perhaps it was a mistake in the girsah ←
(manuscript)? We don’t know. If you do, please [contact us](#).

.3 Kings 4:42-44. (Thanks to Hannah Rocha for identifying the verse.) cf. Ruth 2:14 2 ←

Thanks for the Food, an interpretive translation of the “ברכת המזון | Birkat Hamazon by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi” is shared by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi with a [Creative Commons Attribution-](#)



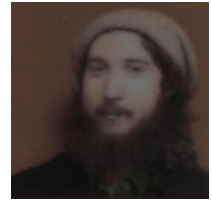
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Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Rabbi Dr. Zalman Meshullam Schachter-Shalomi, affectionately known as "Reb Zalman", (28 August 1924 – 3 July 2014) was one of the founders of the Jewish Renewal movement. Born in Żółkiew, Poland (now Ukraine) and raised in Vienna, he was interned in detention camps under the Vichy Regime but managed to flee the Nazi advance, emigrating to the United States in 1941. He was ordained as an Orthodox rabbi in 1947 within the ḤaBaD Hasidic movement while under the leadership of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, and served ḤaBaD communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut. He subsequently earned an M.A. in psychology of religion at Boston University, and a doctorate from the Hebrew Union College. He was initially sent out to speak on college campuses by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, but in the early 1960s, after experimenting with "the sacramental value of lysergic acid", the main ingredient in LSD, leadership within ḤaBaD circles cut ties with him. He continued teaching the Torah of Ḥassidut until the end of his life to creative, free and open-minded Jewish thinkers with humility and kindness and established warm ecumenical ties as well. In September 2009, he became the first contributor of a siddur to the Open Siddur Project database of Jewish liturgy and related work. Reb Zalman supported the Open Siddur Project telling its founder, "this is what I've been looking

forward to!" and sharing among many additional works of liturgy, an interview he had with Havurah magazine in the early to mid-1980s detailing his vision of "Database Davenen." The .Open Siddur Project is proud to be realizing one of Reb Zalman's long held dreams



(Aharon N. Varady (transcription

Founding director of the Open Siddur Project, Aharon Varady is a community planner (M.C.P.) and Jewish educator (M.A. J.Ed.) working to improve stewardship of the Public Domain, be it the physical and natural commons of urban park systems or the creative and cultural commons of Torah study. His work on the adoption of Open Source strategies in the Jewish community has been written about in the Atlantic Magazine, Tablet, and Haaretz. Aharon Varady studied environmental planning and planning history at DAAP/University of Cincinnati, and the intersection of theurgy, experiential education, and ecology at the Davidson School of Education/JTSA. Here at opensiddur.org, he serves as hierophant, welcoming new users, adding new posts, and keeping the site up-to-date. If you find any mistakes in his translations or מסורת transcriptions, please let him know. *Shgiyot mi yavin, Ministarot Nakeni* (Who can know all one's flaws? From hidden errors, correct me" (Psalms 19:13" נְקִי