

Service for the Receipt of a New Diploma or Document of Ordination

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Psalm 121

A song for ascents.

I turn my eyes to the mountains;
from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Eternal,
maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot give way;
your guardian will not slumber;

See, the guardian of Israel
neither slumbers nor sleeps!

The Eternal is your guardian,
the Eternal is your protection
at your right hand.

By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

The Eternal will guard you from all harm;
God will guard your life.

The Eternal will guard your going and coming
now and forever.

Kavannah

This moment is bittersweet.

The bitter: I am haunted by persistent visions of what might have been. No reconciliation is perfect, and no repentance truly removes the sting of all that has gone wrong.

The sweet: I never thought that I would see the day when these harms were acknowledged. I did not expect to experience the attempt to set things right.

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת

אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל-הַהָרִים מֵאֵן יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:

עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:

אֵל-יִתְּן לַמּוֹט רַגְלִי אֵל-יָנוּם שֹׁמְרִי:

הַגֹּדֵל לֹא-יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:

יְהוָה שֹׁמְרִי יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינִי:

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יַכְכָּה וְיָרֵחַ בַּלַּיְלָה:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל-רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ:

יְהוָה יִשְׁמַר-צֵאתְךָ וּבואֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:

Like Jacob, I am reminded that there has been so much in my life that has gone well. On the shores of the Jabbok he exclaimed:

קִטְנִי מִכָּל הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הַאֲמֻת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-עַבְדְּךָ כִּי בְמִקְלִי עָבַרְתִּי אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה הֵייתִי לְשָׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת:

I am unworthy of all the kindness that You have so steadfastly shown Your servant: with my staff alone I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. (Genesis 32:11)

Like Jacob, I have been subject to peril, and I have survived. I have found my way.

Birkat Hagomelet

נְבָרָךְ אֵת עֵין הַחַיִּים, הַגּוֹמְלֵת לְחַיִּים טוֹבוֹת, שְׁגַמְלָנִי כָּל טוֹב.

N'vareich et ein heichayim ,hagomelet l'chayavim tovot, sheg'malani kol tov.

Let us acknowledge the source of life, who has bestowed good things on the culpable, who has bestowed all goodness upon me.

Those present respond:

מִי שְׁגַמְלָךְ טוֹב הוּא יִגְמְלָךְ כָּל טוֹב סְלָה.

Mi sheg'maleich tov hu yig'maleich kol tov selah.

May the One who has bestowed goodness upon you continue to bestow goodness.

The Receipt of the New Document

Moses received the Torah at Mount Sinai.
He transmitted it to Joshua.
Joshua in turn passed it to the elders,
And the elders to the prophets.
The prophets transmitted the Torah to the Sages of the Great Assembly.
The Sages taught three things:
Be deliberate in judgment,
Raise up many disciples,
And protect the integrity of the Torah. (Pirkei Avot 1:1)
This document links Sinai to this very moment,
in its transmission of authority,
And it continues now as it has in every generation.

[The new document should be unrolled or unwrapped so that it may be viewed.]

The Decommissioning of the Old Document

This earlier document included serious errors.
These errors have since been corrected.
Though this document does not attest to my full truth,
It has served as a bridge, enabling us to arrive at this day.
I now mark it as no longer valid.

[Cut a small strip from the lower corner, to indicate that the document is no longer active.]

Burning the Remnant

I hereby set to flame the torn corner of the invalid document,
To free myself of the burden of its errors.

[Light the small strip so that it may be consumed by fire, or alternatively, bury it.]

Affixing the Document

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהַגִּיעַנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam,
shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

Sources:

The text of Psalm 121 and Genesis 32:11 appearing in English and Hebrew is from Sefaria.org.

Birkat Gomlah is an adaptation of the blessing formula that appears in Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings* (1996, 2017)

The English text in the “The Receipt of the New Document” is adapted from the ritual for *L'chol Z'man V'eit* (2015), installing a rabbi in the CCAR Life-Cycle Guide.

The text of *Shehecheyanu* appearing in Hebrew, transliteration, and English is from *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur* (2007)