

The Viduy Confession Prayers

By Zalman Goldstein

The returning of one's soul to G-d at the end of its journey in this world is probably the most profound moment in a person's life. It is for this purpose that our sages prepared a special set of prayers called *Viduy*, "Confession," to be recited before one departs from this world. These prayers evoke G-d's mercy, and bring great atonement upon the person.

Viduy reminds us that what really matters is our relationship with G-d and with our fellow man, and not material possessions or accomplishments. It is a truly powerful message for everyone.

Preparing for the Viduy

One should not delay reciting Viduy out of fear that it may be a bad omen. Many people have recited the Viduy and gone on to live many long years. In fact, saying the Viduy is helpful for one's recovery, as sincere repentance brings merit to the person and can nullify a severe decree from Heaven.

It is best for Viduy to be recited with a clear mind. Therefore, one should say it before he becomes too weak. If one cannot speak, he may say the Viduy in his heart.

Below are some laws concerning the recitation of the Viduy. However, it is a good idea to seek the guidance of a competent rabbi in these final moments.

- Viduy is recited by both men and women of any age.
- It is recited on any day, even on Shabbat and Jewish holidays and on days when *Tachnun* (supplications of forgiveness) are not recited.
- Before reciting the Viduy one should endeavor to ask forgiveness from those whom he may have caused pain or hardship.

- It is advisable to clear the room of crying relatives so that one may concentrate fully on his prayers.
- It is customary to wash one's hands ritually before reciting Viduy. Take a large cup of water in the left hand, pour it over the entire right hand, covering up to the wrist. Take the cup in the right hand, and pour it over the entire left hand, covering up to the wrist. Repeat two additional times.
- Men should wear a *Kippah* or *Yarmulka*, and a pair of *Tzitzit* (four-cornered garment with ritual fringes). Some also don a *Gartel* (special prayer sash).
- If the person's children are present, he should exhort them to follow the ways of the Torah.
- Once Viduy is recited, and death seems imminent, one should not leave the person alone. Those who remain with the person should recite Psalms for his recovery.

The Viduy Prayers

While there are various customs concerning the order of the Viduy prayers, or different additions, the underlying theme remains the same. We have presented a common format below. One may also add prayers or Psalms as one wishes.

Try to recite the entire Viduy. If it is not possible, say at least from *Adon Olam* onwards. If one is even further pressed, one should recite the verses from *Shema Yisroel* onward. The least one should do is say "*Let my death be an atonement for my sins,*" and recite the verse of Shema. (these prayers are to be found in [Prayers for the Final Moments](#))

Hebrew and Transliteration:

Modeh ani l'fönechö,
 adonöy elohai, vay-lohay avosai,
 she-r'fu-ösi b'yödechö umisösi
 b'yödechö. Y'hi rötzon mil'fönechö,
 she-tirpö-ayni r'fu-öh sh'laymöh,
 v'im ömus, t'hay misösi cha-pöröh al
 köl chatö-im va-avonos uf shö-im
 she-chötösi v'she-övisi v'shepösha-ti
 l'fönechö, v'sayn chelki b'gan
 ayden, v'zakayni lö-olöm habö
 ha-tzöfun la-tzadikim.

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ,
 יי אֱלֹהֵי, וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי,
 שְׂרַפּוּתִי בְיָדְךָ וּמִיתוּתִי
 בְיָדְךָ: יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ,
 שְׂתַרְפְּאֵנִי רַפּוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה,
 וְאִם אָמוּת, תְּהֵא מִיתוּתִי כַּכֶּרֶה עַל
 כָּל חַטָּאִים וְעוֹנוֹת וּפְשָׁעִים
 שְׁחַטַּאתִי וְשַׁעֲוִיתִי וְשִׁפְשָׁעֵתִי
 לְפָנֶיךָ, וְתֵן חֶלְקִי בְּגֵן
 עֵדֶן, וְזַכְּנִי לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא
 הַצֶּפוֹן לְצַדִּיקִים:

Elo-haynu vay-lohay avosaynu,
 tövo l'fönechö t'filösaynu,
 v'al tis-alam mit'chinösaynu,
 she-ayn önu azay fönim uk'shay oref
 lomar l'fönechö adonöy el-ohaynu
 vay-lohay avosaynu, tza-dikim
 anachnu v'lo chö-tönu, avöl
 anach-nu va-avosaynu chötönu.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
 תָּבֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ,
 וְאַל תִּתְעַלֵּם מִתְחַנְּנֵנוּ,
 שְׂאִין אָנוּ עֵיזֵי פָּנִים וְקָשֵׁי עַרְף
 לוֹמַר לְפָנֶיךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, צַדִּיקִים
 אֲנַחְנוּ וְלֹא חַטָּאֵנוּ, אֲבָל
 אֲנַחְנוּ וְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ חַטָּאֵנוּ:

Ösham-nu, bögadnu, gözalnu,
 dibarnu dofi. He-evinu, v'hirsha-nu,
 zad-nu, chömas-nu, töfal'nu sheker.
 Yö-atznu rö, kizavnu, latz-nu,
 mörad-nu, ni-atznu, sörar-nu, övinu,
 pösha-nu, tzörarnu, ki-shinu oref.
 Rösha-nu, shichas-nu, tiavnu, tö-inu,
 ti-tö-nu. Sarnu mimitz-vosechö
 umi-mish-pötechö ha-tovim v'lo
 shövöh lönu. V'atöh tzadik al köl
 habö ölaynu, ki emes ösiso,
 va-anachnu hirshö-nu.

אֲשַׁמְנוּ, בְּגַדְנוּ, גּוֹזְלֵנוּ,
 דִּבְרָנוּ דּוֹפִי: הֵעָוִינוּ, וְהִרְשָׁעְנוּ,
 זָדֵנוּ, חֲמָסְנוּ, טַפְלָנוּ שֶׁקֶר:
 יַעֲצָנוּ רָע, כּוֹזְבֵנוּ, לֹצְנוּ,
 מְרֹדְנוּ, נֹאֲצָנוּ, סָרְרָנוּ, עֵוִינוּ,
 פִּשְׁעָנוּ, צָרְרָנוּ, קָשִׁינוּ עַרְף:
 רִשְׁעָנוּ, שְׁחַתְנוּ, תַּעֲבָנוּ, תַּעֲיָנוּ,
 תַּעֲתָעָנוּ: סָרְנוּ מִמְצוּתֶיךָ
 וּמִמְשַׁפְּטֶיךָ הַטּוֹבִים וְלֹא
 שׂוּה לָנוּ: וְאַתָּה צַדִּיק עַל כָּל
 הַבָּא עֲלֵינוּ, כִּי אֱמֶת עֲשִׂיתָ,
 וְאֲנַחְנוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ:

Translation:

I acknowledge before You, Lord my G-d and the G-d of my fathers, that my recovery and my death are in Your hands. May it be Your will that You heal me with total recovery, but, if I die, may my death be an atonement for all the errors, iniquities, and willful sins that I have erred, sinned and transgressed before You, and may You grant my share in the Garden of Eden, and grant me the merit to abide in the World to Come which is vouchsafed for the righteous.

Our G-d and G-d of our fathers, may our prayers come before You, and do not turn away from our supplication, for we are not so impudent and obdurate as to declare before You, Lord our G-d and G-d of our fathers, that we are righteous and have not sinned. Indeed, we and our fathers have sinned.

We have transgressed, we have acted perfidiously, we have robbed, we have slandered. We have acted perversely and wickedly, we have willfully sinned, we have done violence, we have imputed falsely. We have given evil counsel, we have lied, we have scoffed, we have rebelled, we have provoked, we have been disobedient, we have committed iniquity, we have wantonly transgressed, we have oppressed, we have been obstinate. We have committed evil, we have acted perniciously, we have acted abominably, we have gone astray, we have led others astray. We have strayed from Your good precepts and ordinances, and it has not profited us. Indeed, You are just in all that has come upon us, for You have acted truthfully, and it is we who have acted wickedly.

One may add the "Long Confession" found in the Yom Kippur prayer book.

Following the Confession, recite the following:

Ri-bono shel olöm, רְבוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם,
y'hi rötzon mil'fönechö יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
she-yih-yeh shöloom m'nuchösi. שְׂיִהְיֶה שְׁלוֹם מְנוּחָתִי :

Master of the universe, may it be Your will that my passing be in peace.

**Concentrate strongly on G-d and His unity, and on the event of the giving
of the Torah on Mount Sinai.**