

Vidui for Coronavirus

By Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner



The Vidui serves as a final prayer of atonement for a dying person, and a final at-one-ment; the traditional liturgy places the soul of the dying in God's hands. According to Jewish law, Vidui is said when death seems imminent, and may be spoken by the dying person, their family members, or a rabbi.

Below is a Vidui written for Jews who are losing a beloved to a plague, and who may not be able to be physically present or close to their loved one.

Take a cup of water in your left hand, pour it over your entire right hand, covering up to the wrist. Take the cup in your right hand, and pour it over your entire left hand, covering up to the wrist. Feel your feet connected to the floor. And breathe.

God Nowhere and Everywhere,
God of grounding and water and air,
God Who still hears the echoes of my ancestors and their prayers:
Hear mine now.

Hear my heartbreak as my words reach up to You,
Angry and agonized and afraid.

See how my arms are empty when all I need is to hold my loved one
_____ (name) in the moments before their death.

I am not reconciled to their loss. There is no part of me that rises up to bless
You now.

And still, I know that You are with me: You are the Source; You are the ground
and the water and the air; You are the filaments that link me to every other
mourner in this moment. You are the rope that binds me to my loved one,
_____ (name), and reminds me that my life, my memories, and my soul
are bound up with theirs.

_____ (name) has been my ground and my water and my air. To be
sharing none of these with them at this time, as they leave this world, is beyond
what I should bear.

And still I bless and acknowledge the Source of All, Who granted me the gift of
growing with them, knowing them, and loving them up to and through this
moment.

Their lives were full. My heart is full. And my heart is breaking.

I know that their life and their death is in Your hands. May they be blessed with
life, O God. And if they will die, when they die, shelter them in Your arms and
carry them gently into the wideness of All That Is To Come.

Hear me now, as I cry out to You:

Shma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.

Hear, O Israel, we who wrestle with God and with life and with loss:

God grounds us and carries us and reminds us that we all are One.

Amen.

Prayer