

Vidui Confessional End-of-Life Prayer

While we never know the exact moment of our death and always pray for healing, there are times when we feel the end may be near and we want to reconcile ourselves to the Divine, others around us and even to ourselves. To say the *Vidui* (confessional prayer) is to admit our years in this world are limited, but we should not feel that by saying these words, we are “hastening our own death.” Indeed, many have recited these words and lived many more years. While traditionally the ill person says the *Vidui*, there are times when an individual is no longer able to speak and someone else should say this prayer on their behalf.

We suggest you perform this ritual in a safe, distraction-free space, surrounded by people who can share feelings as they feel comfortable. It is appropriate to express love and gratitude, ask for forgiveness and grant forgiveness when possible. (You also may add Psalms 23, 91, 121 and 130.) Finally, before saying the *Vidui*, one may wish to say goodbye by bestowing blessings on those present. While you may want a rabbi or chaplain to attend, you do not need one to create a sacred moment.

We have provided two versions of the *Vidui*. The first is an abbreviation of parts of the traditional prayer and the second is a contemporary version, building and expanding on these notions. (You can use both.) In both instances, the *Vidui* concludes with the recitation of the *Shema*, connecting us to our People, our eternal values and our God.

Traditional Vidui

מודה אני לפניך ה' אלהי ואלהי אבותי שרפואתי
ומיתתי בידך. יהי רצון מלפניך שתרפאני רפואה
שלימה ואם אמות תהא מיתתי כפרה על כל
חטאים ופשעים שחטאתי ושעויתי ושפשעתי לפניך
ותן חלקי בגן עדן וזכני לעולם הבא הצפון לצדיקים.

*Modeh ani lefanecha Adonai elohai v'elohei avotei, sherefuati
u'mitati beyadecha. Yehi ratzon milfanecha, shetirpa'eni
refuah sheleimah. Vim amoot tehei mitati kappara al kol
chataim, v'avonot, u'peshaim shechatati, veshe'aviti, u'shepashati
lefanecha, veten chelki began eden, v'zakeni l'olam haba
ha-tzfaun latzaddikim.*

I acknowledge before You, Adonai, my God and God of my ancestors, that my recovery and my death are in Your hands. May it be Your will to heal me completely. And if I die, may my passing be an atonement for all the sins that I have committed, and grant me my portion in *Gan Eden*, and allow me to merit the World to Come, which has been reserved for the righteous.

אל נא רפא נא לי

El na refah Nah Li.

Please God, please heal me.

Contemporary Vidui

(Add the correct pronouns, such as first person “I,” if the patient is reciting.)

Our God and God of our ancestors, may our prayers come fully before

You! Do not disregard our request. Accept our plea in mercy and compassion, as we turn now to You in trust and hope. You are the Source of life and death; all life is in Your hands. Although we would desire more years of “*refuah shlema*” — full health and healing — we know all are mortal. We pray for the *refuat haguf* — healing of body — if this is Your will; and may there always be *refuat hanefesh*, the healing of spirit.

As (my or person’s name) life approaches its end, I/we pray I/he/she/they may go in *shalom*, a feeling of fulfillment and peace. Being mortal, we are aware that we have shortcomings. Grant forgiveness to me/him/her/them for all errors and mistakes I/he/she/they has made in my/his/her/their life, though they may be many. There may be feelings of regret and remorse for things done, or left undone, that may have caused pain or hurt in others. Yet I/we know also of my/his/her/their good deeds. Let us both ask and receive forgiveness from one another.

Protector of all who are in need, grant strength of spirit to family and friends — all who are bound up together in the bond of love — and for all who are suffering and in pain. You are the compassionate parent to orphans and the loving guardian of the widowed. Into Your hands do we commit my/name’s soul. You are *Dayan Ha’Emet*, the Judge of Truth.

כִּי מַלְאַכְיֹו יִצְנֶה-לְךָ לְשֹׁמְרָיִךְ בְּכָל-דַּרְגָּיִךְ

Ki malakhey yetzaveh lach, lishmorkha b’chol d’raktekha.

May angels be appointed for you to guard you on all your life paths.
In Your hand lies my/name’s spirit.

All conclude with the *Shema*.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה אֶחָד

Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.

Hear, O Israel: God is our Lord, God is one.

Contemporary version adapted from Vidui by R. Sam Seicol



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