

Alternatives to Kaddish and Bār'chu for sub-quorate prayer groups

Taken from *Seder Rav Amrām*

Translated, pointed and annotated by Michael Grant

Jewish communal prayer is traditionally recited in the presence of a *minyan*, a quorum of ten adults. When a minyan is not available, certain prayers—Kaddish, Bār'chu and Kedusha (along with reading from the Torah with blessings)—cannot be recited. Today's custom is not to say anything here when there is no minyan present, but I was fascinated to discover the first ever *siddur*, the ninth-century *Seder Rav Amrām*, gives versions of each of these (with no explanation) for the solo davener.

I thought it might be nice to make these texts available for small prayer groups, where not having a minyan is a real possibility; so they can use them as a study resource to fill the slightly awkward gap not being able to recite Kaddish or Bār'chu can leave, or to recite them in part or entirety.

I will be extending this resource in a piecemeal fashion as I translate more texts, and will not commit here to how many I will provide; this first version contains only the first text in the book.

Notes on the translation

Every time I translate from Hebrew, I have to deal with the inevitable gendering of God language in the source text. Imagery from both genders is used in the Bible and in our liturgy to depict aspects of God, but the balance is overwhelmingly masculine, and this skews our perception of God. Following Maimonides' negative theology, I don't believe we can say that God is masculine or feminine; and I have for about a decade followed those who try to avoid using gendered pronouns when referring to God. But whereas one can craft one's own sentences to avoid the need for pronouns, this becomes harder when translating a text. For this document, I have used "[God]" in the translation to indicate where a gendered pronoun was found in the Hebrew.

I make no claim that these translations are accurate; if you find mistakes in them, please feed them back to me at: roadrunner@michael-grant.me.uk.

Kaddish L'yāḥid #1

For everything may the name of the Sovereign of Emperors, the Holy One, Blessed be [God], be magnified, praised, glorified, exalted and raised up, in the worlds that [God] created, this world and the world to come, according to [God]'s will and according to the will of all [God]'s people Israel. Rock of the Worlds, Lord of all creatures, God of all souls, Who dwells in the spaces on high, the Dweller in the heaven of heavens of old, Whose holiness is on the Throne of Glory, and Whose holiness is on the Ḥayoth.

Therefore may [God]'s name be sanctified in us in the

עַל הַכֹּל יִתְנַדֵּל וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר
וַיִּתְרוֹמַם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי
הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא. בְּעוֹלָמוֹת
שָׁבָרָא. הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְהָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.
כְּרָצוֹנוֹ וְכְרָצוֹן כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל. צוּר
הָעוֹלָמִים אֲדוֹן כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת אֱלֹהֵי כָּל
הַנְּפֹשׁוֹת הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּמִרְחָבֵי מְרוֹם הַשּׁוּבָן
בְּשֵׁמִי שְׁמִי קָדָם. קְדוּשָׁתוֹ עַל כִּסֵּא
הַכְּבוֹד וְקְדוּשָׁתוֹ עַל הַחַיּוֹת.

וּבְכֵן יִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמוֹ בְּנוֹ לְעֵינֵי כָּל חַי

eyes of all life, and we will say before [God] a new song as it is written, “Sing to the LORD a new song for [God] has done marvellous things;”¹ and it is said, “Sing to God, sing praises to [God]’s name: extol [God] that rides upon the heavens by [God]’s name Yāh,”² and we will see [God] eye to eye upon the return to [God]’s abode, as it is said, “For they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.”³ Let the glory of the LORD be revealed and let all flesh see [God] together, for the mouth of God has spoken.

And now, please, let the strength of the LORD be magnified as You have spoken,⁴ saying, “Because the LORD has sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”⁵ “Remember Your compassion, LORD, and Your lovingkindness, for they have been ever of old.”⁶ “I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and [God] heard me out of [God]’s holy mount, Selah.”⁷ “The LORD is well pleased for [God]’s righteousness’ sake; [God] will magnify the law, and make it splendid.”⁸

Rabbi Ishmael said:⁹ “Sasnegir,¹⁰ Prince of the [Divine] Presence, said to me, ‘My friend, sit at my bosom, and I will you what will take place concerning Israel.’ I sat at his bosom, and he looked at me and wept, with the tears running down from his eyes and falling on me. I said to him, ‘Splendour of my Glory! Why are you weeping?’ He replied, ‘My friend, come: I will bring you in and will make known to you what has been stored for them, for Israel the people of holy ones.’ You [sic] took me by the hand and brought me in to the rooms of rooms and to the stores of stores and to the treasuries. He lifted up the ledgers, and opened and showed me

וְנֹאמֵר לְפָנָיו שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ כַּכְּתוּב שִׁירוּ
 לַה' שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ כִּי־נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה,¹ וְנֹאמֵר
 שִׁירוּ לְאֱלֹהִים זְמִירוֹ שְׁמוֹ סִלּוֹ לְרוֹכֵב
 בְּעֶרְבוֹת בְּיַהּ שְׁמוֹ,² וְנִרְאָהוּ עֵינַי בְּעֵינַי
 בְּשׁוּבוֹ אֶל נְהוּהוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר כִּי עֵינַי
 בְּעֵינַי יִרְאוּ בְּשׁוּבוֹ ה' צִיּוֹן.³ וְנִגְלָה כְבוֹד
 ה' וְרָאוּ כָּל בָּשָׂר יַחְדָּו כִּי פִי ה' דִּבֶּר.

וְעַתָּה יִגְדַּל נָא פִּי ה' כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ⁴
 לֵאמֹר. וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי יָד עַל כַּסְיָהּ מִלְחָמָה
 לַה' בְּעַמְלֵק מִדּוֹר הַדּוֹר.⁵ זְכוֹר־רַחֲמֶיךָ
 ה' וְחַסְדֶיךָ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם הֵמָּה.⁶ קוּלִי
 אֶל־ה' אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִתֵּהר קָדְשׁוֹ סֵלָה.⁷
 ה' חַפֵּץ לְמַעַן צְדָקוֹ וַיִּגְדֵּל תּוֹרָה
 וַיִּאֲדִיר:⁸

אָמַר רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל⁹ סָח לִי סַסְנִגִּיר¹⁰
 שֶׁר הַפְּנִים יְדִידִי, שָׁב בְּחִיקִי וְאָנִיד לְךָ
 מַה תִּהְיֶה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. יִשְׁבַּתִּי בְּחִיקוֹ וְהָיָה
 מִסְתַּכֵּל בִּי וּבּוֹכָה וְהָיוּ דְמָעוֹת זּוֹלָגוֹת
 מֵעֵינָיו וַיּוֹרְדוֹת עָלַי. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ הַדָּר
 זֵיוִי מִפְּנֵי מַה אַתָּה בּוֹכָה, אָמַר לִי בּוֹא
 וְאֶכְנִיסְךָ וְאוֹדִיעֶךָ מַה נִּגְנְזוּ לָהֶם
 לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עִם קְדוּשִׁים. תִּפְשְׁנִי בְיָדֵי
 וְהִכְנִיסְנִי לְחֲדָרֵי חֲדָרִים וּלְגַנְזֵי גַנְזִים
 וְלֵאזְצָרוֹת, נָשַׁל הַפְּנִקְסִין וּפְתַח וְהִרְאֵנִי

1 Psalm 98:1.

2 Psalm 68:4.

3 Isaiah 52:8.

4 Number 14:17.

5 Exodus 17:16.

6 Psalm 25:6.

7 Psalm 3:5.

8 Isaiah 42:21.

9 This passage is taken from *Heichaloth Rabbati*, a text of the Merkava mysticism of the first millennium CE, noch.

10 Possibly. I have no idea how to point this name. It appears with a variety of spellings, for example סַסְנִגִּיר, in variants of this text, and I have not been able to confirm a pointing by googling.

letters written about troubles, each worse than the last. I said to him, ‘Splendour of my Glory, whom are these for?’ He replied, ‘For Israel.’ I said to him, ‘Are Israel are able to withstand these?’ He replied, ‘Come tomorrow and I will show you troubles worse than each other, [different] from the first ones.’

“The following day I entered to the rooms of rooms and he showed me that those fated for captivity would undergo captivity, and those fated for famine, famine, and those fated for plunder, plunder¹¹. I said to him, ‘Has Israel alone sinned [to deserve such punishment]?’ He said to me, ‘Every day hard decrees are renewed against them, but directly Israel enter into synagogues and study houses and answer “Amen. May the great Name be blessed for ever and eternity,”¹² these [decrees] are not permitted to come out of the rooms of rooms.’”

Who does not make splendid the Sovereign of Splendour? Who does not bless the Sovereign Who is to be blessed? Whoever does not exalt the Sovereign Who is to be exalted? Who does not beautify the Sovereign Who is to be beautified? Who does not cause to reign the Sovereign of Kings? Who does not praise the Sovereign who is to be praised? Who does not sanctify the Sovereign Who is to be sanctified? May [God]’s name be sanctified forever and eternity, for every day great deeds are stirred up¹³ from before the Holy One, Blessed be [God], each more excellent than the last. [God is] happy with us in the hour of prayer of [God]’s children: Behold, you have taught how great is the strength of the Holy One Who holds back troubles, and the Holy One, Blessed be [God] is joyous.

אגרות כתובות מצרות משוננות זו מזו. אמרתי לו הדר זיווי, הללו למי. אמר לי לישראל, אמרתי לו ויכולין ישראל לעמוד בהן. אמר לי בוא למחר ואראך צרות משוננות מן הראשונות.

למחר הכניסני לחדרי חדרים והראני אשר לשבי ואשר לרעב לרעב ואשר לבזה לבזה. אמרתי לו וכי ישראל לבד חטאו. אמר לי, בכל יום מתחדשות עליהם גזרות קשות מאלו, וכיון שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין אמן יהא שמייה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמא. אין מניחין אותן לצאת מחדרי חדרים:

מי לא יאדיר למלך האדיר, מי לא יברך למלך המבורך, מי לא ירום למלך המרום, מי לא יתדר למלך המהודר, מי לא ימליך למלך המלכים, מי לא ישבח למלך המשובח. מי לא יקדיש למלך המקודש, יתקדש שמו לעד ולנצח, שבכל יום גבורות ונפלאות מתרגשות מלפני הקדוש ברוך הוא מעולות משוננות זו מזו ושמח בנו בעת תפלת בניו. הא למדת כמה גדול כח הקדיש שמעבב הצרות ומשמח הקדוש ברוך הוא:

11 Paraphrase of Jeremiah 15:2.

12 The central response of the Kaddish.

13 Translation uncertain.

Bār'chu L'yāhid

This is presented as a replacement of Bār'chu for the solo davener, but as much of the content instead refers to the Kedusha, you may consider this unsuitable for use in an evening service.

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless [God]'s holy name.¹⁴ May the name of the Sovereign of Emperors, the Holy One, blessed be [God], be blessed and praised and glorified and exalted and raised up; and exalted beyond every blessing and prayer. Sing unto God, sing praises to [God]'s name: extol [God] that rides upon the heavens by [God]'s name Yah, and rejoice before [God];¹⁵ for [God] is first and [God] is last, and apart from [God] there is no god. May the name of the glory of [God]'s kingdom be blessed forever and ever.

R. Akiva said:¹⁶ Every single day one angel stands in the middle of the firmament [during] the morning service, and commences by saying: “The LORD reigns, the LORD reigned, the LORD will reign forever and ever”; and all the troops of on high answer after it until it reaches “Bārchu”. When it reaches “Bārchu”, there is one Ḥayā¹⁷ there whose name is Israel, and with “Israel” engraved on its forehead, [sc. concerning which?] an ?ascent,¹⁸ Ezekiel said “The Ḥayā which I saw below the God of Israel.”¹⁹

And an ?ascent: David said, “[God] rode upon a cherub, and flew: yea, he flew upon the wings of the wind;”²⁰ and [the Ḥayā] bore up the Throne and stood in the midst of the firmament, and said with a raised voice, “Bless the LORD Who is to be blessed,” and all the bands on high answer after it, “Blessed is the LORD Who is to be blessed forever and ever.”

בְּרָכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־ה' וְכָל־קִרְבִי אֶת־שֵׁם
קִדְשׁוֹ: ¹⁴ יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר
וַיִּתְרוֹמַם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא שְׁמוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי
הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא. וּמְרוֹמָם עַל
כָּל־בְּרָכָה וּתְהִלָּה, שִׁירוּ לְאֱלֹהִים זְמִירוֹ
שְׁמוֹ סִלּוּ לָרֶכֶב בְּעֶרְבוֹת בְּיַהּ שְׁמוֹ
וְעֲלוּ לְפָנָיו, ¹⁵ שֶׁהוּא רִאשׁוֹן וְהוּא אַחֲרוֹן
וּמִבְּלַעֲדָיו אֵין אֱלֹהִים, בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד
מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

אָמַר ר' עֲקִיבָא, בְּכָל־יוֹם יוֹם מִלְּאָךְ
אֶחָד עוֹמֵד בְּאֲמֻצֵּי הַרְקִיעַ שְׁחֵרִית
וּפּוֹתֵחַ וְאוֹמֵר ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' יִמְלֹךְ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, וְכָל גְּדוּדֵי מַעְלָה עוֹנִין
אֲחֵרָיו עַד שְׁמַנְיֵעַ לְבָרְכוּ. כְּשִׁמְנֵי־עַ
לְבָרְכוּ, חִיָּה אַחַת יֵשׁ שֵׁם שְׁשֻׁמָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְחֻקּוֹק עַל מִצְחָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְעֲלֶיהָ אָמַר
יְחֻזְקָאֵל הַחִיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי תַּחַת אֱלֹהֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹⁹

וְעֲלֶיהָ אָמַר דָּוִד וַיִּרְכַּב עַל כְּרוּב
וַיַּעֲף וַיֵּרָד עַל כַּנְּפֵי רוּחַ, וַנּוֹשָׂאֵת אֶת
הַכִּסֵּא וְעוֹמְדַת בְּאֲמֻצֵּי הַרְקִיעַ וְאוֹמְרַת
בְּקוֹל רֶם בְּרָכוּ אֶת ה' הַמְּבוֹרָךְ, וְכָל
גְּדוּדֵי מַעְלָה עוֹנִין אֲחֵרֵיהָ בְּרוּךְ ה'
הַמְּבוֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

14 Psalm 103:1

15 Psalm 86:4.

16 The opening part of this text appears to be a paraphrase of *Heichalot Rabbati* 31.

17 A class of angel; literally “living being”.

18 Translation uncertain, corrections welcome. *Et passim*.

19 Ezekiel 10:20.

20 Psalm 18:10

While the speech has not yet ceased from their mouths, the holy Seraphim fill the universe with noise, and say with a great and raised voice, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; the whole world is full of [God]’s glory.”²¹ While the speech has not yet ceased from their mouths, the holy Ophanim²² roll themselves and tremble, and cause the whole world to tremble, and say, “Blessed is the glory of the LORD from [God]’s place.”²³

עַד שֶׁלֹּא יִגְמֹר הַדְּבָר מִפִּיהֶם, שְׂרָפֵי
הַקֹּדֶשׁ מְרַעִישִׁים אֶת הָעוֹלָם וְאוֹמְרִים
בְּקוֹל רָם וְגָדוֹל, קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ הִ'
צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ.²¹ עַד
שֶׁלֹּא יִגְמֹר הַדְּבָר מִפִּיהֶם, הָאוֹפָנִים
מִתְגַּלְגְּלִים וְרוֹעֵדִים וּמְרַעִידִים כָּל
הָעוֹלָם וְאוֹמְרִים, בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד הִ'
מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:²³

And the same Ḥayā, while all the ministers of on high, and all the Ṭafsarim,²⁴ and all the troops and all the camps and all the retinue of on high approach, [the angel] says to the Ḥayā whose name is Israel, “Hear O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is One.”²⁵

וְאוֹתָהּ חַיָּה, עַד שֶׁנִּגְשִׁים כָּל שְׂרָי
מֵעֵלָה וְכָל טַפְסָרִים וְכָל גְּדוּדִים וְכָל
מַחֲנֹת וְכָל פְּמִלִּיא שֶׁל מֵעֵלָה, אוֹמְרֵת
לְחַיָּה שֶׁשְּׂמָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הִ'
אֵל הַיְיָ הִ' אֶחָד:

This teaches how great is the power of “Bārchu”, that it derives from the arrangements of on high, and even the angels use it to bless their Creator.

הָא לְמִדַּת כְּמָה גְּדוֹל כַּח בְּרָכוּ
שֶׁהוּא מִטַּכְסִּי מֵעֵלָה, שֶׁאֲפִילוּ
הַמְּלָאכִים מְשַׁתְּמָשִׁים בּוֹ וּמְבָרְכִים
לְבוֹרָאם:

Come and see how beloved it is of the Holy One, blessed be [God], that Israel say before [God] Kedusha²⁶ For behold, [God] has enlightened those that descend from the Chariot²⁷ to teach us in which manner²⁸ we should say before [God] Kedusha.

בּוֹא וּרְאֵה כְּמָה חָבִיב לְפָנַי הַקָּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא מֵה שִׁישְׂרָאֵל אוֹמְרִים לְפָנָיו
קָדוֹשׁ, שֶׁהֲרִי הַזֶּהִיר לְיוֹרְדֵי מְרַכְבָּה
לְלַמְּדֵנוּ בְּאֵיזָה עֲנָן נֹאמֵר לְפָנָיו קָדוֹשׁ:

It is incumbent upon us to enlighten and bring pleasure to our Creator, and to raise [sc. the Kedusha] before [God] as a pleasing odour [of incense].

וַיֵּשׁ לָנוּ לְהַזְהֵר וּלְעֲשׂוֹת נַחַת רוּחַ
לְיוֹצְרֵנוּ וּלְהַעֲלוֹת לְפָנָיו לְרִיחַ נִיחוּחַ:

And thus [God] said to them: “Blessed are you to heaven and earth, ye descenders from the Chariot, if you tell My children what I do in the morning prayer and in the

וַיִּכַן אָמַר לָהֶם: בְּרוּכִים אַתֶּם לְשָׁמַיִם
וּלְאָרֶץ יוֹרְדֵי מְרַכְבָּה אִם תֹּאמְרוּ

21 Isaiah 6:3.

22 A class of angel; literally “wheels.”

23 Ezekiel 3:12.

24 Another class of angel, literally “commanders”. Interestingly, it’s a loan word, via Akkadian, from Sumerian (alongside Egyptian, the oldest known language), where *dub-sar* means “tablet writer.” (In the Bible, the word means “scribe”.)

25 I really don’t need to footnote this one, do I?

26 Lit. “Holy!”; *et passim*.

27 I.e. mystical initiates. The Chariot in question is the one seen by Ezekiel in his vision of God.

28 My translation uncertain.

afternoon prayer at the hour that you say Kedusha before Me. Teach them, telling them: Lift up your eyes to the firmament opposite your synagogue when you say Kedusha before Me, for I take no pleasure in My world like at this hour, when your eyes are lifted up to My eyes, and My eyes look upon your eyes at the hour when you say Kedusha before me. For the voice that issues from your mouths at that time sets [itself] in order and goes up before Me as a pleasing odour.

וְתִגִּידוּ לְפָנַי מַה שְּׂאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה בְּתַפְלַת
 שְׁחֵרִית וּבְתַפְלַת הַמִּנְחָה בְּשַׁעַת שְׂאֲתֶם
 אֹמְרִים קְדוֹשׁ. וְלִמְדוּ אוֹתָם וְאָמְרוּ
 לָהֶם. שְׂאוּ עֵינֵיכֶם לְרִקִיעַ כְּנֹגַד בֵּית
 הַתְּפִלָּתְכֶם בְּשַׁעַת שְׂאֲתֶם אֹמְרִים לְפָנַי
 קְדוֹשׁ. שְׂאִין לִי הַנְּאֻה בְּעוֹלָמִי כְּאוֹתָהּ
 שַׁעַת שְׂעֵינֵיכֶם נְשׂוֹאוֹת לְעֵינַי. וְעֵינַי
 מְבִיטוֹת בְּעֵינֵיכֶם בְּשַׁעַת שְׂאֲתֶם אֹמְרִים
 לְפָנַי קְדוֹשׁ. שְׂהַקּוֹל הַיּוֹצֵא מִפִּיכֶם
 בְּאוֹתָהּ שַׁעַת סוֹדֵר וְעוֹלָה לְפָנַי כְּרִיחַ
 נִיחּוּחַ:

“And they solemnly affirmed for you what is the testimony that you see when I make the countenance of the face of your Patriarch Jacob which is engraved to Me on My Throne of Glory:²⁹ That when you say Kedusha before Me I bend My knee upon it and embrace and kiss and hug it,³⁰ and put My hand on My arms three times, like [the count of] how you say Kedusha before Me, according to the word where is said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole world is full of [God]’s glory.’”

וְהֵעִידוּ לָהֶם מַה עֲדוֹת אֲתֶם רוֹאִים
 שְׂאֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה לְקִלְסֹתֵר פְּנֵי שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב
 אֲבִיכֶם הַחֲקוּקָה לִי בְּכֹסֵא כְבוֹדִי.
 שְׂבִשְׁעַת שְׂאֲתֶם אֹמְרִים לְפָנַי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי
 כּוֹרַע עָלֶיהָ וּמְנַפֵּף וּמְנַשֵּׁק וּמְחַבֵּק אוֹתָהּ.
 וְיָדַי עַל זְרוּעוֹתַי שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים כְּמוֹ
 שְׂאֲתֶם אֹמְרִים לְפָנַי קְדוֹשׁ. כְּדָבָר
 שְׂנֹאֲמֵר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ הִ' צְבָאוֹת
 מְלֵא כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

29 My translation is a little uncertain; however the concept that the face of Jacob is engraved in the Throne of Glory is to be found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, so I’ve not got that completely wrong!

30 ~~And call it George~~. Sorry, that was my inner Looney Tunes fan coming out. Go watch “The Abominable Snow Rabbit” if you’ve no idea what I’m on about.