

יהי
זכרם
ברוך

Mourning Black Lives and Police Violence

a JFREJ ritual toolkit

Introduction

This toolkit is an offering of prayer, ritual, and action for mourning Black lives lost to police violence and racism. It is structured after the following Jewish phases of mourning, acknowledging the natural course of grief and bereavement:

Shiva *The first seven days following the burial of the deceased*

Shloshim *The first thirty days following the burial of the deceased*

Yahrzeit *The anniversary of the deceased*

Yizkor *A moment to remember the deceased during Jewish Holidays*

The intention of this toolkit is to provide both immediate support for the bereaved as well as sustained practices to honor the memory of Black Lives lost through suggested offerings of prayer, ritual, and action. The prayers and rituals listed are offerings for Jewish communities to incorporate into their communal prayer services. Please adapt these offerings in ways that are most meaningful for your community.



COVER: YEHI ZICHRAM BARUCH / MAY THEIR MEMORY BE A BLESSING
CALLIGRAPHY BY ARIELLE TONKIN

REBECCA KATZ

שבועה SHIVA

PRAYER

El Maleh Rahamim with the inclusion of names of Black people lost to racism (*Appendix 1*)

Kaddish with the inclusion of names of Black lives we mourn (*Appendix 2*)

RITUAL

Light a *Yahrzeit* candle in your home and/or communal prayer spaces.

Kriyah is a physical embodiment of mourning by tearing ribbon or clothing. Tear a cloth when these tragedies occur at an appropriate space in services, perhaps before reciting *Kaddish* or *El Maleh Rahamim*.

ACTION

Make a Shiva call to Black families and communities in mourning. Find out where to send food to or make donations for food to be delivered to the families in mourning.

Organize a 7-day fundraising drive for [bail funds](#) and [mutual aid funds](#).

שלוש SHLOSHIM

PRAYER

Psalms 23 (*Appendix 3*)

El Maleh Rahamim with the inclusion of names of Black people killed by police/lost to racism (*Appendix 1*)

Kaddish with the inclusion of names of Black lives we mourn (*Appendix 2*)

RITUAL

Light a *Yahrzeit* candle in your communal prayer space.

ACTION

Host a day of learning in memory of the Black lives we mourn. Share stories of the people who have died to illuminate their humanity. We often lose sight of the lives and stories behind the names.

יארצייט Yahrzeit

PRAYER

Psalms 23 (*Appendix 3*)

El Maleh Rahamim with the inclusion of names of Black people killed by police/lost to racism (*Appendix 1*)

Kaddish with the inclusion of names of Black lives we mourn (*Appendix 2*)

Unetaneh Tokef for Black Lives (*Appendix 4*)

RITUAL

Light a *Yahrzeit* candle in your communal prayer space.

ACTION

Create a calendar of Yahrzeit dates to honor Black lives lost. (*See Appendix 5 for a list of dates*)

Organize a memorial day by volunteering or fundraising a drive for [bail funds](#) and [mutual aid funds](#) (or other appropriate funds).

יזכור Yizkor

PRAYER

El Maleh Rahamim with the inclusion of names of Black people lost to racism (*Appendix 1*)

Kaddish with the inclusion of names of Black lives we mourn (*Appendix 2*)

Unetaneh Tokef for Black Lives (*Appendix 4*)

RITUAL

Light a *Yahrzeit* candle in your home and/or communal prayer spaces.

Kriyah is a physical embodiment of mourning by tearing ribbon or clothing. Tear a cloth when these tragedies occur at an appropriate space in services, perhaps before reciting *Kaddish* or *El Maleh Rahamim*.

ACTION

In tradition with pledging tzedakah in the Yizkor prayers, consider making a donation to organizations in memory of Black Lives.

Appendix: #SayTheirNames

suggested prayers to include
in synagogue / prayer services



REBECCA KATZ

1. EL MALEH RAHAMIM with the inclusion of names of Black people lost to racism

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים המצא מנוחה נכונה
תחת כנפי השכינה. במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר
הרקיע מזהירים את נשמות כל אחינו

*[Black people killed by police
and racist vigilantes]*

אנשים, נשים וטף שנטבחו ושנחנקו ושנשרפו
ושנהרגו. בגן עדן תהי מנוחתם, אנא בעל הרחמים
הסתירם בסתר כנפך לעולמים. וצרר בצרר החיים
את נשמותיהם ה' הוא נחלתם, וינוחו בשלום על
משכבותיהם. ונאמר אמן

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace
in your sheltering presence, among the holy and
pure, whose radiance is like the heavens, to the souls
of all the Black people killed by police or by racist
vigilantes: men, women, and children. May their
memory be a blessing, and may they rest in paradise.
God of mercy, may they find eternal shelter beneath
your sheltering wings, and may their souls be bound
up in the bond of life. God is their portion. May they
rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

(from Siddur Lev Shalem)

2. KADDISH with the inclusion of names of Black people lost to racism

This Kaddish, traditional Jewish prayer said for those who have died and to bring comfort to those in mourning, is adapted following a model that was created to uplift those lost in the Holocaust/Shoah. The Kaddish itself is in ancient Aramaic (not Hebrew) and is transliterated. As a resource, [here](#) is one well researched, but not comprehensive, list of names of numerous Black people killed by the police.

Adapt the example below for what is of most meaning in your community:

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash George Floyd
sh'mei raba Breonna Taylor
B'alma di v'ra chirutei Tony McDade
v'yamlich malchutei, Jamel Floyd
b'chayeichon uv'yomeichon Sandra Bland
uv'chayei d'chol beit Yisrael, Eric Garner
baagala uviz'man kariv. Philando Castile
V'imru: Michael Brown
Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varach, Bettie Jones
l'alam ul'almei almay. Tamir Rice
Yitbarach v'yishtabach Akiya Gurley
v'yitpaar v'yitromam v'yitnasei, Mary Truxillo
v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh Tyree Crawford
v'yit'halal India Kager
sh'mei d'Kud'sha Lamontez Jones
B'rich Hu, Billy Ray Davis
l'eila min kol birchata v'shirata, Janet Wilson
tushb'chata v'nechemata, Victor Manuel Larosa
daamiran b'alma. Alteria Woods
V'imru: Alton Sterling
Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama Atatiana Jefferson
raba min sh'maya, Akia Gurley
v'chayim aleinu Walter Scott
v'al kol Yisrael. Demarcus Semer
V'imru: Natasha McKenna
Amen.*

Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu, v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru: Amen.

May the one who creates peace on high bring peace to us and to all people. And we say: Amen.

עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן



3. PSALM 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד	A psalm of David.
יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר:	The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
בְּנֵאֻת דֶּשֶׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי	He makes me lie down in green pastures;
עַל־מֵי מְנוּחֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי:	He leads me to water in places of repose;
נַפְשִׁי יִשְׁוֹבֵב	He renews my life;
יְנַחֲנֵי בְּמַעַגְלֵי צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:	He guides me in right paths as befits His name.
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צִלְמוֹת	Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,
לֹא־אִירָא רָע כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי	I fear no harm, for You are with me;
שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֶתְךָ הֵמָּה יְנַחֲמֵנִי:	Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שִׁלְחֹן נֶגֶד צָרָרִי	You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
דִּשְׁנָתְךָ בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי בֹּסֵי רוּחִי:	You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant.
אֲךָ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי	Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my
וְשָׁבְתִי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:	life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.

4. UNETANEH TOKEF FOR BLACK LIVES

by Imani Chapman

Each day we hazard our Black lives in the Court of the White World

We know our worth

Yet the white world is judge-self-appointed

We pass before you to be counted

12.5 million bodies stolen

1.8 million mercifully avoided your shores

Stolen shores, stolen land

10.7 million arrived unsafely

...times 401 years

...times infinite human indignities

...times 35 of a human being

We now number 47.8 million

In the morning it is written and by curfew it is sealed

- Who shall die while jogging (#AmaudArbery)

- Who shall die while relaxing in the comfort of their home (#BothamJean #AtatianaJefferson)

- Who shall die while seeking help after a car crash (#JonathanFerrell #RenishaMcBride).

- Who shall die while holding a cellphone (#StephonClark).

- Who shall die while decorating for a party (#ClaudeReese).
- Who shall die while leaving a party (#JordanEdwards #SeanBell)
- Who shall die while enjoying music (#JordanDavis).
- Who shall die while selling music... trying to may a way outta no way (#AltonSterling).
- Who shall die while sleeping (#AiyanaJones)
- Who shall die while worshipping the Lrd (#Charleston9).
- Who shall die while for a traffic violation (#SandraBland).
- Who shall die while coming from the store (#MikeBrown and #TrayvonMartin).
- Who shall die while playing cops and robbers (#TamirRice).
- Who shall die while lawfully carrying a weapon (#PhilandoCastile, #FreddieGray).
- Who shall die while on the shoulder of the road with car problems (#CoreyJones #TerrenceCrutcher).
- Who shall die in the first hours of the new year (#OscarGrant).
- Who shall die while shopping at Walmart (#JohnCrawford).
- Who shall die while cashing a check in peace (#YvonneSmallwood).
- Who shall die while reading a book in their own car (#KeithScott).
- Who shall die while taking a walking with their stepfather (#CliffordGlover).
- Who shall die while reaching for their wallet (#AmadouDiallo).
- Who shall die while running away (#WalterScott).
- Who shall die while asking a cop a question (#RandyEvans).
- Who shall die while begging for their life, a breath (#EricGarner #GeorgeFloyd).
- Who shall die by the effects of supremacy, greed, and apathy
...who by beast, indeed

“But repentance, prayer and charity temper judgement’s severe decree”

“But repentance, prayer and charity avert judgement’s severe decree”?

But *turning*, *connection* and *giving*, these return us to our Gd?

Whose repentance? Whose prayer? Whose charity?

Temper, please temper

Temper already! Temper...

For sins against Gd, the Day of Atonement brings forgiveness; for sins against one’s fellowman, the Day of Atonement brings no forgiveness till he has become reconciled with the fellowman he wronged.

“the Day of Atonement brings no forgiveness

till he has become reconciled with the fellowman he wronged.”

When will you atone? How will you atone?

For you, like us, will be judged.

You, like us, will return to dust.

5. YAHRZEIT DATES

Ramarley Graham
FEBRUARY 2, 2012

Amadou Diallo
FEBRUARY 4, 1999

Amoud Abery
FEBRUARY 23, 2020

Trayvon Martin
FEBRUARY 26, 2012

Brionna Taylor
MARCH 13, 2020

Rekia Boyd
MARCH 21, 2012

Freddie Gray
APRIL 12, 2015

George Floyd
MAY 25, 2020

Tony McDade
MAY 27, 2020

David McAtee
JUNE 4, 2020

Delrawn Small
JULY 4, 2016

Alton Sterling
JULY 5, 2016

Philando Castile
JULY 6, 2016

Sandra Bland
JULY 15, 2013

Eric Garner
JULY 17, 2014

Michael Brown
AUGUST 9, 2014

Emmett Till
AUGUST 28, 1955

Eleanor Bumpers
OCTOBER 29, 1984

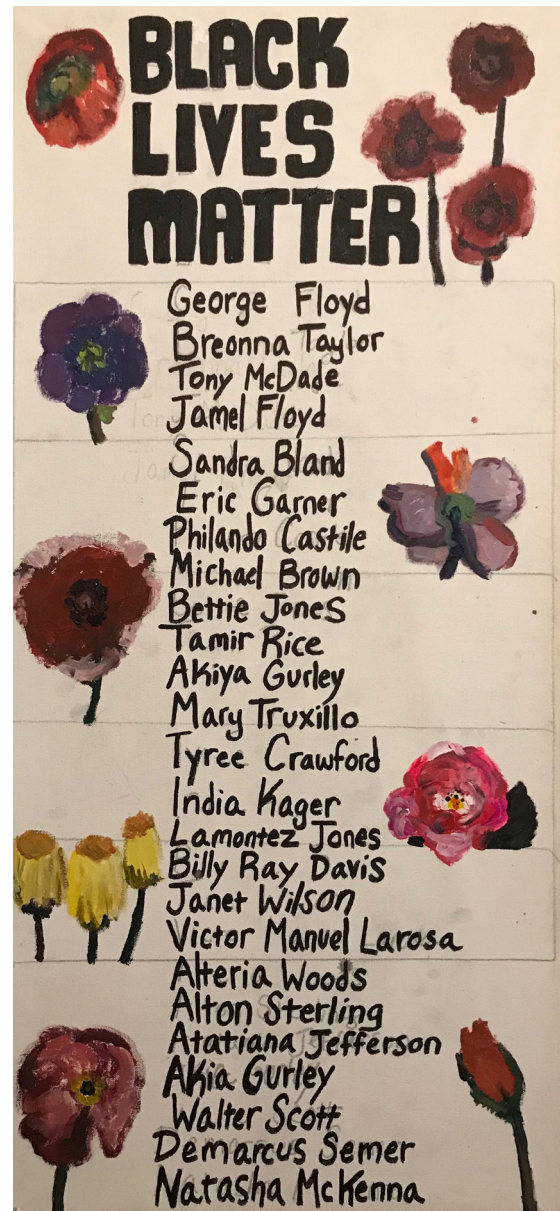
Tanisha Anderson
NOVEMBER 13, 2014

Akai Gurley
NOVEMBER 20, 2014

Tamir Rice
NOVEMBER 22, 2014

Sean Bell
NOVEMBER 25, 2006

Malissa Williams
NOVEMBER 29, 2012



LAURA WEIL

Ritual Team

This ritual was crafted by Ruben
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Meirav Ong, and Hannah Rosner

Design Team

This booklet was designed by Samantha
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JEW^ס FOR BLACK L^סVES