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# Meditations from Siddur Birkat Shalom

*Janet Berkenfield*

*From the Meditation on the Sh'ma:*

Israel, hear that God is one.  
Blessed is the name of God's radiant presence forever.

Love God with everything you have: your heart, your soul, your strength. These words which I give you here and now, take them to your heart. Teach them to those who follow you. Speak of them often: at home, at work, and on the road; at the beginning of your day and at its end. Hold them like a sacred chant that whispers inside you, spilling out into song. Feel the words in your fingertips, keep them at the front of your mind, in the small space above your eyes. Let them guide your vision to rest in new places; let them soothe and disturb you. Look up occasionally, the words will appear everywhere in the place you call your home...

And God said to us: Israel, speak with one another. Take action from My thoughts and give voice to the longings of My heart. Choose ways to fashion My laws and to obey them, and in doing so, let yourselves draw closer to your source. Gather up some things that will remind you of Me, things that speak of the earth and the sky, solid and shimmering, light sand and

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blue air. Perhaps the reeds moving in the wind, a bird's feather and a small polished stone, white narcissus with blue hyacinth. Whatever these things may be, agree upon them. Choose them together and be one people. Love Me, observe My commandments and be holy. I am your God; I have brought you out of Egypt again and again. Seek to know Me; I am your God.

### *From the Meditation on the Amidah*

I arise to praise You, My creator; the source of my being, the spark of my soul. Every part of me sings these words, even without my knowing it. My limbs sustain me; my hands find the page in my book; my eyes search; my breath responds. I dream Your dreams with every part of me. I arise here in this place, I am alert. I say You are one and I remember.

Do You remember? Do You remember me?

I come from Sarah and Abraham: I have a steadfast heart.

From Isaac and Rebecca: I am a planner.

From Rachel and Jacob and Leah: I am beautiful and homely  
and I struggle with my unruliness.

I look backwards and forwards, I wonder at my mistakes.

I am with every one of my people remembering.

I think up new ideas, and they terrify me.

I grow strong in my resolution.

My rigidity breaks down into hundreds of particles,  
seeds of promise.

I am the rush of this prayer's breath to Your lips from mine.

And Your words come back to me in unexpected places.

