

Welcome!

Take a deep breath, and ground yourself in this place and time. Close your eyes for one moment.

Open your eyes and greet your *chevruta*. Introduce yourself!

Offer them gratitude for their presence.

Commit to bringing fresh eyes, compassion, and an open heart to this process.

Offer this blessing for studying torah or a blessing from your own heart:

we experience your blessing, holy one of all time and space, in this opportunity to become aware of holiness through getting busy with words of torah	baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok v'divrei torah	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֹסֵק בְּדִבְרֵי-תוֹרָה
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Aleinu is on the longer side. Read through the text, outloud. Set your own pace as a group. Read through and discuss as you go, and/or choose a path from the bottom to apply to a few lines or the piece as a whole.

Notice if discomfort arises and sit with it. Name your questions, challenges, hopes, and understandings.

Let the text speak to you and see where it takes you.

Sefaria translation	Rabbi Jill Hammer Translation	Transliteration	Hebrew
It is our obligation to praise the Master of all	It is upon us to praise the source of all	Aleinu leshabeach la-Adon haKol	עָלֵינוּ לְשַׁבַּח לַאֲדֹנָן הַכֹּל
to ascribe greatness to the Creator of the [world in the] beginning:	To offer up abundance to creation's driving force	laTet g'dulah l'yotzer b'reshit	לָתֵת גְּדֻלָּה לְיוֹצֵר בְּרֵאשִׁית
that He has not made us like the nations of the lands	Who made up a part of the divine among all the peoples on the earth,	She'lo asanu k'goyei haAratzot	שֶׁלֹא עָשָׂנוּ כְּגוֹיֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת
and has not positioned us like the families of the earth	and made us holy beings among all the beings on the globe	ve'lo samanu k'mishpachot haAdama	וְלֹא שָׂמָנוּ כְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה
that He has not assigned our portion like theirs	Who gave us a divine purpose along with all peoples	She'lo sam chelkeinu kahem	שֶׁלֹא שָׂם חֶלְקֵנוּ כָּהֶם
nor our lot like that of all their multitudes.	And intertwined our fate with all the multitudes	VeGoraleinu k'chol hamonam	וְגוֹרְלֵנוּ כָּכֹל הַמוֹנָם:
<i>For they prostrate themselves to vanity and nothingness, and pray to a god that cannot deliver.</i>		<i>She'hem mishtachavim laheivel v'reik, u'mitpal'lim al el lo yoshia</i>	שֶׁהֵם מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לַהֶבֶל וְרִיק וּמִתְפַּלְלִים אֶל אֵל לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ,
But we bow, prostrate ourselves, and offer thanks	We bend and bow in gratitude	VaAnachnu korim uMistachavim uModim	וְאֲנַחְנוּ כּוֹרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וּמוֹדִים
before the Supreme King of Kings,	Before the Ground of All, who guides all guides and teaches all teachers,	Lifnei Melech Malchei haM'lachim	לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים

the Holy One blessed is He	the Holy One of Blessing	haKadosh Baruch Hu.	הַקְדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא
Who spreads the heavens, and establishes the earth	Who spreads out the sky and roots the earth	She hu note shamaim veYosed aretz	שֶׁהוּא נוֹטֵה שָׁמַיִם וְיוֹסֵד אֶרֶץ
and the seat of His glory is in heaven above	Who makes a home in the starry heights	UMoshav yekarov bashamaim mima'al	וּמוֹשָׁב יְקָרוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל
and the abode of His invincible might is in the loftiest heights.	And manifests divine presence in the depths of the cosmos	USh'chinat uzo b'govhei m'romim	וּשְׁכִינַת עֲזוֹ בְּגִבְהֵי מְרוֹמִים
He is our God, there is nothing else.	That one is God, and there is nothing but That	Hu Eloheinu ein od	הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵין עוֹד
Our King is true, all else is insignificant	True is that Reality, and all in included in Its Being	Emet Malkenu efes zulato	אֱמֶת מַלְכֵנוּ אָפֶס זולָתוֹ
as it is written in His Torah: And You shall know this day	It is written in our sacred writings- know this day	KaKatuv B'Torato v'yadata hayom	כַּכְּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתוֹ וַיֵּדַעַת הַיּוֹם
and take into Your heart	meditate in your heart	vahashevotah el levav'cha	וְהִשְׁבֹּתָ אֶל לִבְבְּךָ
that Adonoy is God in the heavens above and upon the earth below;	The Breath of Life is divinity. Skyward and earthward,	Ki Adonai Hu HaElohim BaShamaim MiMaal VeAlHaaretz Mitachat	כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת
there is nothing else.	nothing but That exists.	Ein Od	אֵין עוֹד:

We therefore put our hope in You, Adonoy our God	Therefore we hope, Indwelling One	Al kein nekaveh lecha Adonai Eloheinu	עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
to soon behold the glory of Your might	To perceive the glory of your strength	Lirot M'heirah B'tiferet Uzecha	לְרֹאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתִפְאֶרֶת עֲזֶכָּךְ
in banishing idolatry from the earth	That cycles of violence be removed from earth	L'ha'avir Gilulim min Ha'aretz	לְהַעֲבִיר גִּלּוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ
and the false gods will be utterly exterminated	And tyrants be cut off from their sources of power	V'haeililim Karot Yikareitun	וְהָאֱלִילִים כָּרוֹת יִכָּרְתוּן
to perfect the world as the kingdom of Shadai	That embodying Your nurturing presence we act to heal the world	L'takein Olam v'malchut Shadai	לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שַׁדַּי
2 And all mankind will invoke Your Name	So all beings will feel Your essence within	V'chol B'nei Vasar Yikru Vishmecha	וְכָל בְּנֵי בָשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בִשְׁמֶךָ
to turn back to You, all the wicked of the earth.	And all the lost ones will return to You	L'hafnot Eilecha Kol Rishei Aretz	לְהַפְנוֹת אֵלֶיךָ כָּל רֹשְׁעֵי אָרֶץ
They will realize and know, all the inhabitants of the world,	And all dwellers on earth will know You in their being	Yakiru V'yeidu kol Yoshvei Teivel	יִכִּירוּ וַיֵּידְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּיבֵל
that to You, every knee must bend, every tongue must swear [allegiance to You]	All separate existence will surrender to You, and all language will articulate Your name	Ki Lecha Tichra Kol Berech Tishavah kol Lashon	כִּי לָּךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בֶּרֶךְ תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לָשׁוֹן

Before You, Adonoy, our God, they will bow and prostrate themselves,	Before You, God, all barriers fall away, all walls fall	L'fanecha Adonai Eloheinu Yichr'u V'yipolu	לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכָּרְעוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ
and to the glory of Your Name give honor.	As all discover Your essence at the core of things	V'lichvod Shimcha Y'kar Yiteinu	וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקָּר יִתְּנוּ
And they will all accept [upon themselves] the yoke of Your kingdom,	Let all accept the word of becoming Your Presence	Vikablu Chulam et ol Malchutecha	וַיִּקְבְּלוּ כָלֶם אֶת עַל מַלְכוּתְךָ
and You will reign over them, soon, forever and ever.	That Your Reality manifest in us now and always	V'timploch Aliehem M'heirah L'olam Vaed	וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד
For the kingdom is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory,	For the All and all of its parts are Yours, and so it has been and always will be, glory without end	Ki Hamalchut Shelcha Hi U'l'olmei Ad Timloch B'chavod	כִּי הַמַּלְכוּת שְׁלֹךְ הִיא וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד
as it is written in Your Torah: Adonoy will reign forever and ever.	Your Torah proclaims the Infinite is greater than time	Kakatuv B'toraecha Adonai Yimloch L'olam Va'ed	כָּכָתוּב בְּתוֹרַתְךָ יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד
And it is said: And Adonoy will be King over the whole earth	The Breath of Life encompasses the whole earth	V'ne'emar V'hayah Adonai L'melech al kol Ha'aretz	וְנֹאמַר וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ
on that day Adonoy will be One and His Name One.	This and every day, the Divine is One and its Presence in us One	Bayom Hahu Yihyeh Adonai Echad U'shemo Echad	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְהוָה אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

1. ...but why?

Here are some facts about Aleinu. ([from this article on my Jewish learning!](#))

For each, dig a little deeper, with the suggested questions and your own:

Most scholars credit the third century Babylonian sage Rav as the author of Aleinu. Rav also wrote the Malchuyot section of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, which focuses on g?d's sovereignty. Opening the Malchuyot section is where Aleinu first appears.

Why this prayer for Rosh Hashanah? What connections do you find?

Aleinu grew in popularity in the Middle Ages, and was added to the end of all the services.

Why did Aleinu become popular at this time in Jewish history? Why this time and not other times? Why this prayer and not other prayers?

The line italicized in the text (for they prostrate themselves etc) was eventually removed from many prayerbooks. In the Middle Ages, it was often removed so by law or church decree, as it angered the dominant Christians. Many Jewish communities omitted it themselves out of fear.

Why was this line deemed the most controversial? How does this make you feel?

“When reciting the end of this line, Jews used to spit, because “emptiness” and “spit” share the same Hebrew consonants (reysh and koof). Some synagogues were even constructed with special spittoons in their pews, designated for this part of the service.”

Why spit at this line? Why this choreography? What might it have accomplished for the pray-er?

Early Reform prayerbooks took out Aleinu all together. Newer liberal prayerbooks offer multiple options, and/or expansive translations.

Why? What problem is being solved here? What do you think of their solution? What would your solution be?

2. Zooming in

Scan the prayer text in Hebrew or English.

What is a phrase, or single word, that stands out to you? Repeat it, turn it over in your mind.

Why did it catch your eye at this particular moment? How does it make you feel?

Close your eyes- breathe in and out, repeating the word slowly, like a mantra, aloud or in your heart. Be present with it.

3. Translation Lab

Choose a line. Perhaps one you feel discomfort around. Using the two translations provided, plus your own experience, ideas, and artistry, write your own translation together. How does it feel to write your own English?

4. Liturgical Advice

If this prayer text could give you a piece of advice, what would it be?

(you can imagine it as a fortune cookie fortune, a self help book, a TedTalk title, etc.)

If you lived according to that advice, how would your life be different?

If we all lived according to that advice, how would the world be different?