### A Ceremony for Winter Solstice

# gathered and arranged by Rabbi Everett Gendler

(The room in which the ceremony is to take place should be dimly lit, perhaps by a single lighted candle.

Desirable ceremonial objects include:

an oil lamp with olive oil; a candelabrum, preferably seven-branched, with beeswax candles if available; if Hanukkah, a Hanukkiah with candles; if Shabbat, a pair of Shabbat candlesticks with candles.)

At the dark of the year we acknowledge the darkness with a poem, with verses from Scripture, and with a song.

## The poem:

This is the dark of the year. Sun dies and earth dies. Flame sinks low. Hope dies and will dies At the dark of the year.

Only the moon rides clear
In the dark of the year;
Makes strange the known,
Loosens the unknown--Bushes hunched one with its shadow--In darkness is fear.

They say one conquered death, Therefore no fear At death of sun and earth In the dark of the year.

They say! They say! What do we know? The ancient death is here. It's always now at the dark of the year. Only the moon rides clear. (1)

# Some verses from Scripture:

On that day, says the Eternal God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight.

God sent darkness, and made the land dark...

the sun will be dark at its rising...

And if one look to the land---only darkness and distress, and the light grows dark with clouds.

"Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness?" We wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. (2)

A song:

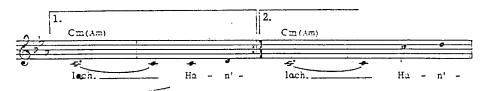
# Hanshamah Lakh

The soul is Yours, the body Your work; compassion, please, on Your handiwork! ARTING NOTE ( Sente )















Sun dies...earth dies...hope dies...will dies...flame sinks low... Let us re-kindle the flame.

"You shall command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn continually." (4)

(The olive oil is poured into the lamp and the lamp is lighted.)

It is written: Pure olive oil beaten for the light---We shall be beaten and bruised, but in order to glow, not to grovel. (5)

Praise the Eternal, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

For God strengthens the bars of your gates; the Eternal blesses your children within you.

God grants peace within your borders;

God fills you with the finest of wheat.

The Eternal sends out a command to the earth; the Divine word runs swiftly,

Giving snow like wool, scattering frost like ashes.

God hurls down ice like crumbs---

who can stand before such cold?

God sends out a word and melts them, making the winds blow and the waters flow.

Thus God declares the Divine word to Jacob, Divine statutes and ordinances to Israel. (6)



The [seven -branched] candelabrum is lighted with the following blessings:

BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM, A-SHER NA-TAN LA-SECH-VI VI-NA L'HAV-CHIN BEN OR U-VEN CHO-SHECH.

You abound in blessings, Eternal our God, Source of all Creation, giving Your feathered creatures sense to sing at dawn and dusk, and giving all Your creatures sense to distinguish light from darkness.

BA-RUCH A-TA A-DONAI, E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM, HA-MA-CHA-LIF ET HA-Z'MA-NIM.

You abound in blessings, Eternal our God, Source of all Creation, changing the seasons at fitting times.

BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM, SHE-HE-CHE-YA-NU V'KI-Y'MA-NU V'HI-GI-YA-NU LA-Z'MAN HA-ZE.

You abound in blessings, Eternal our God, Source of all Creation, having kept us alive and having sustained us that we might reach this season. (8)



4

The menorah is the outflowing manifestation of God's power, the Light-Stream shining forth from God to man, but most properly shining back to God, beyond man's power to comprehend...the many-named single streaming outflow of God's nature.

The function of this stream from God is that it permeates all things, as the creative and cohesive force in the universe.

A man-made menorah, or a light which a man can kindle, is of course inferior to the light of God: it is as when a man has invited a king to eat with him, and puts out all his best, only to find that the light and the other furnishings which the king has brought with him put all he has to shame, so that the man wants to hide his poor utensils.

But the king will not allow him to do so, and uses the man's equipment rather than his own. So God came in the Shekhinah when Moses made the lamp. (9)

Pigkis spil itus

BA-RUCH O-SE V'RE-SHIT Blessed is the Crafter of Creation.

ブルーカベラン アブルマラ

B'OR-CHA NIR-E OR In Your light we see light. (10)

(If Hanukkah, light the Hanukkah candles with appropriate blessings and songs. If Shabbat, light the Shabbat candles with appropriate blessings and songs.)

At Winter Solstice, let us now celebrate this season with a poem from William Blake and additional verses from Scripture.

#### TO WINTER

o WINTER! bar thine adamantine doors: The north is thine; there hast thou built thy dark Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs, Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.

He hears me not, but o'er the yawning deep 'Rides heavy; his storms are unchain'd, sheathed In ribbed steel; I dare not lift mine eyes, For he hath rear'd his sceptre o'er the world.

Lo! now the direful monster, whose skin clings
To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks:
He withers all in silence, and his hand
Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

He takes his seat upon the cliffs; the mariner Cries in vain. Poor little wretch! that deal'st With storms, till heaven smiles, and the monster Is driv'n yelling to his caves beneath mount Hecla.

(11)

# And from Scripture:

From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?

The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail?

God thunders wondrously with the Divine voice,

doing great things that we cannot comprehend.

For to the snow God says, 'Fall on the earth';
and the shower of rain, God's heavy shower of rain,
serves as a sign on everyone's hand,
so that all whom God has made may know it.

Then the animals go into their lairs,
and remain in their dens.

From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds.

By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. (12)

And now in conclusion...

Some Scriptural verses of encouragement:

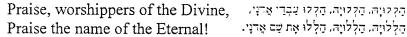
those who lived in a land of deep darkness---

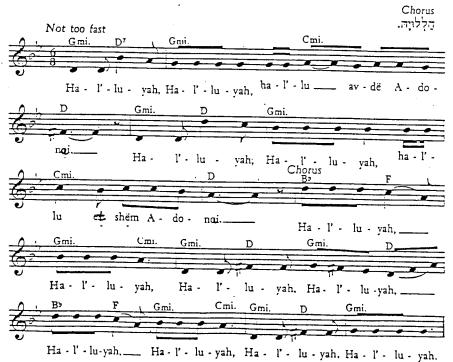
on them light has shined. (13)

And a song:

### HAL'LUYAH

Halleluyah!





### Sources

- (1) Toby Bretell, December 22, 1965 (from Harvest, 1966)
- (2) Amos 8:9; Psalm 105:28; Isaiah 13:10, 5:30; Job 37:19; Isaiah 59:9 (Translations are from the New Revised Standard Version with some further gender modifications.)
- (3) Shlomo Carlebach
- (4) Exodus 27:20
- (5) Martin Buber: <u>Ten Rungs</u>
- (6) Psalm 147:12-19
- (7) Harry Coopersmith: The New Jewish Song Book
- (8) The seasonal adaptation from the Evening Service of ha-mach-a-lif et ha-z'ma-nim is that of Rabbi Neil Kominsky.
- (9) Erwin R. Goodenough: Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period
- (10) Berachot 59b; Psalm 36:10
- (11) William Blake: "Poetical Sketches," Miscellaneous Poems
- (12) Job 38:29-30, 22; Job 37:5-10
- (13) Jeremiah 13:16; Isaiah 58:10, 45:3, 9:1
- (14) Coopersmith, ibid.