

# The Jewish Parent Page

Each issue of Volume IX of *The Jewish Parent Page* will focus on b'rachot, the blessings of Jewish life, that are connected thematically to the Jewish holidays. For more information on the holidays and how to celebrate them, access past volumes of *The Jewish Parent Page* at [urj.org/educate/parent](http://urj.org/educate/parent).

Passover—  
15-22 Nisan

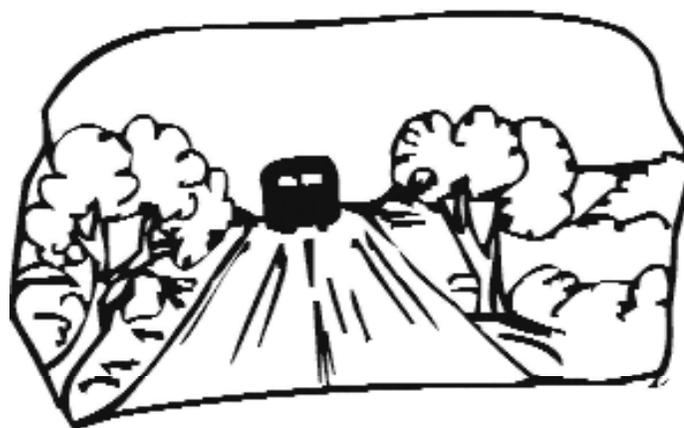
*“The Eternal One  
shall guard  
your coming  
and your going  
from this time  
forth and forever.”—  
Psalm 121:7*

VOL. IX, NO. VI • PASSOVER

## The Traveler's Prayer

### Connections

Passover marks the Israelites' great migration from Egypt and back to the Promised Land. The journey down to Egypt began more than 400 years earlier when Jacob left with his family during a time of devastating famine. They traveled to Egypt at the invitation of Jacob's son Joseph, who was serving as an agent of Pharaoh. Egypt saved the small, nomadic clan of Israelites (which at the time numbered 70 individuals), but generations later, a new pharaoh arose who did not know of Joseph. The Israelites had increased greatly in number, and the Egyptians—concerned that this people would overwhelm them—decided to control and enslave the Israelites. At the end of the 430th year, the children of Israel left the Land of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and a journey of 40 long years in the wilderness began.



Jews always have been a traveling people, whether by chance or by choice. Beginning with the Torah portion *Lech L'cha* in the book of Genesis, God tells Abraham to leave the country of his birth to find a new land and a better life in what will become the Promised Land. Exodus chronicles the story of Passover, and the journey to escape famine becomes a journey to escape slavery. With the fall of the First Temple, the Jewish people are removed forcibly from the Promised Land by the Babylonians—although they return a few generations later to reclaim the Land. After the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, the Jews are taken to all the lands of the Roman Empire. These migrations spread the Jewish people to every corner of the earth.

Our journeys did not stop with the Roman conquest. In search of new lands and new freedoms, many Jews left Europe—looking to America or other countries that would offer them refuge. Some resettled the Land of Israel. These journeys have continued into our day with the mass exodus of Russian Jews and with the aliyah to Israel of the Ethiopian Jews. We are a people on the move.

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## **B'rachot, Blessings: Their Meaning and Message**

A traveling people need a traveling prayer. *T'filat Haderech*, or "a prayer for the road," was developed by the Rabbis. It is a blessing for protection while on a journey. The blessing is said for journeys that are a distance of at least one Persian mile, or approximately three standard miles. The traditional blessing is written in the first person plural, for it says in the Talmud that we always should connect ourselves with the entire Jewish community. Perhaps the Rabbis were expressing the notion that there is safety in numbers. It is precisely when we set off on a journey that we want to remind ourselves of the community to which we are connected.

### **Family Discussion**

1. What steps does your family go through to get ready for a trip or vacation? Develop a list, with each family member contributing a step.
2. What wishes and hopes does each family member make when going on a trip or vacation? Add them to the list.
3. Does any item on the list mention traveling safely, being safe at the destination or returning home safely? Review the list together.
4. How might your family's wishes and hopes before the journey be like a blessing or prayer?
5. Read the two versions of *T'filat Haderech* at the end of this issue to see how concerns of traveling in safety are addressed. What ideas in these prayers express your feelings? Which ideas surprise you?
6. Decide as a family how to incorporate *T'filat Haderech* into your family's travels.

## **Family Activities for *T'filat Haderech***

- Take one of the written versions of the *T'filat Haderech* and have your children design a decorated cover for it. Make enough for each car in your family. Place it in the glove box of your car and incorporate it into your own carpool ritual.
- During the Passover seder, when the Haggadah describes the Israelites leaving Egypt, talk about why the Israelites would need a blessing like *T'filat Haderech*. Remember that they trudged for 40 long years in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land! Imagine you, your family and seder guests leaving Egypt; write your own prayer.
- Another Jewish tradition to ensure the safety of someone on a journey is to give the traveler money to distribute as *tzedakah* at his or her destination. The rationale is that someone on a mission to perform such a mitzvah will be protected. Set aside some of your family's *tzedakah* to give to family and friends on their journeys and to take along on yours. Before going on a trip, consider local places at your destination where you might make a donation.

## **A Jewish Family's Bookshelf**

Carry *T'filat Haderech* (and many of the other blessings we've learned about in this volume of *The Jewish Parent Page*) in your pocket. Order daily blessing cards at [urjpress.com](http://urjpress.com); enter item number 658752 into the search window at the top of the page. Give them out at your Passover seder.

The stories below tell tales of Jewish travelers and wanderers and the challenges they faced along the way. They also would make great *afikoman* prizes at your seder.

*The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela* by Uri Shulevitz Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005 (Grades 4-8)

*Nothing Here But Stones: A Jewish Pioneer Story* by Nancy Oswald, Henry Holt and Co., 2004 (Grades 4-8)

*Zayda Was a Cowboy* by June Levitt Nislick Jewish Publication Society of America, 2005 (Grades 4-7)

## **Get Woven Into the Jewish Web**

Get *T'filat Haderech* for your PDA. Try this version from Penticon Technologies: [www.penticon.com/moadon.html#tefillot](http://www.penticon.com/moadon.html#tefillot)

Incorporate *T'filat Haderech* into the life-cycle event of getting a driver's license. Here's a ceremony from [Ritualwell.org](http://Ritualwell.org): [www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/adolescence/driverslicense/IINewDriver.xml](http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/adolescence/driverslicense/IINewDriver.xml)

## **Shiru Shir Chadash Sing a New Song**

Two artists interpret *T'filat Haderech*:

- Doug Cotler, on his album *A Rose in December*
  - Hanna Tiferet, on her album *Olamama*
- Both are available on the artists' Web sites or [www.soundswrite.com](http://www.soundswrite.com).

# T'filat Haderech The Traveler's Prayer

Version I (From *On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home*, page 143)

יהוה ישמר צאתך ובואתך מעתה ועד-עולם.

*Adonai yishmar tzeitcha uvo-echa mei-atah v'ad olam.*

"The Eternal One shall guard your coming and your going from this time forth and forever." (Psalm 121:7)

God within and beyond me, your presence pervades the world. Whenever I go, You are near to me. "If I take up the wings of the morning, and dwell on the ocean's farthest shore, even there Your hand will lead me, Your strong hand will hold me." (Psalm 139:9-10)

Now that I begin a new journey, I turn to You in confidence and trust, for You have always been a light to my path. May I go forth in health and safely reach my destination. May this journey not be in vain; and let me return in contentment to my home and my dear ones. Then will my travels be truly blessed. Amen.

ברוך אתה, יי, שומר הנוסעים.

*Baruch atah Adonai shomer hanosim.*

We praise You, O God, Protector of wayfarers.

Version II (From *Siddur Sim Shalom*, page 713)

יהי רצון מלפניך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו,  
שתוליכינו לשלום ותציעינו לשלום ותסמכנו לשלום,  
ותגיענו למחוז חפצנו לחיים ולשמחה ולשלום, ותחזירנו  
לביתנו לשלום. ותצילנו מכל-אויב ואורב ואסון  
בדרך ומכל-מיני פרעניות המתרגשות לבוא לעולם.  
ותשלח ברכה במעשה ידינו, ותתננו לחן ולחסד  
ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל-רואינו. ותשמע קול תחנונינו,  
כי אל שומע תפלה ותחנן אָתָּה. ברוך אָתָּה יהוה שומע  
תפלה.

*Y'hi ratson mil'fanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu shetolicheinu l'shalom v'tatsideinu l'shalom v'tism'cheinu l'shalom, v'tagineinu limchoz cheftseinu l'chayim ulsimchah ulshalom, v'tachazireinu l'veiteinu l'shalom. V'tatsileinu mikaf kol oyeiv v'oreiv v'ason baderech, umikol minei furanuyot hamitragshot uva-ot la-olam. V'tishlach brachah b'ma-asei yadeinu v'titneinu l'chein ulchesed ulrachamim b'einecha uveinei chol ro-einu. V'tishma kol tachanuneinu ki El shomei-a t'filah v'tachanun atah.*

*Baruch atah Adonai shomei-a t'filah.*

May it be Your will, Eternal One our God and the God of our ancestors, to guide us in peace, to sustain us in peace, to lead us to our desired destination in health and joy and peace, and to bring us home in peace. Save us from every enemy and disaster on the way, and from all calamities that threaten the world. Bless the work of our hands. May we find grace, love and compassion in Your sight and in the sight of all who see us. Hear our supplication, for You listen to prayer and supplication. Blessed are You, Eternal One, who hears prayer.