

A Ritual Guide for *Abortion & Miscarriage Care*

Rituals matter. They can help ground and mark us at times of change and transition. They can connect the mundane and less-mundane moments in our lives to who we are — to our heritage, to our tradition, to what we hold sacred, and to God (if that language resonates for you). Rituals can hold space for our feelings and experiences while providing a mechanism for us to own, express, and offer those feelings and experiences out to the divine, to the universe. Rituals can also be ways of claiming as holy moments and acts not always seen in our society as holy — like taking ownership of one's body, like having an abortion — even for those who have complex feelings about accessing that care.

This guide provides Jewish ritual context to those who are accessing abortion or experiencing miscarriage. Included are basic scripts, resources, and suggestions.

Since each person and experience is unique, it's possible that not all of these resources will feel appropriate to your situation. We encourage you to use what works for you and omit what doesn't, without guilt, shame, or stigma. Please feel free to tweak, edit, or adapt this guide to best suit your needs. The Additional Resources section at the end contains additional practical supports.

If you have an abortion, there is no one right way to feel about it. Your feelings may change over time (or they may not). It is our hope that, regardless of your story of pregnancy endings, Jewish ritual can provide you with validation and grounding as you process your experience.

Contents

Before

During

After

Beyond

Additional Resources



National Council of Jewish Women

The following rituals are designed to honor you as you move forward in the process of pregnancy ending. Again, we encourage you to use what speaks to you in whatever format you desire. Our suggestions are just that — suggestions. Every person experiences abortion and/or miscarriage differently. Therefore, every person will be drawn to different modalities of ritual.

If your pregnancy ending includes the loss of a wanted pregnancy, [these poems](#) by Rabbi for Repro Rabbi Rachel Barenblat may be a solace in your journey.

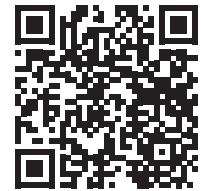
You might want to say a prayer

ופרוש עלינו סכת שלומך

Transliteration: *Ufros Alienu, sukat shlomekha*

English: Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.

If you'd like to pray with music, [here](#) (or with QR code) is a tune that is sometimes used, sung by Rabbi for Repro Rabbi Julia Andelman.



Addition to prayer:

May I find, through this process, hope, courage, and acceptance.
 I have chosen to affirm my life and move beyond this narrow place.
 May I be protected during this sacred moment.
 May I find [within myself/from the Divine Source] strength and love in my journey.

Poetry as Prayer

Sometimes poetry can be a form of prayer. Perhaps this poem, “Threshold,” by the poet Maggie Smith from her collection *Goldenrod*¹, may resonate as something to read, hold, and/or recite:

Threshold by Maggie Smith

You want a door you can be
 on both sides of at once.

You want to be
 on both sides of here

and there, now and then,
 together and—(what

did we call the life
 we would wish back?

The old life? The before?)
 alone. But any open

space may be
 a threshold, an arch

of entering and leaving.
 Crossing a field, wading

through nothing
 but timothy grass,

imagine yourself passing from
 and into. Passing through

doorway after
 doorway after doorway.

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You might want to say a blessing

Rabbis for Repro Advisory Board member Rabbi Ruti Regan writes,

“Even in areas where abortion remains legal, we all live in a culture that devalues the lives and wellbeing of women and anyone who can get pregnant. The Torah offers an alternative perspective: We are all created *b'tzelmo*, in God's image. We are required to value our own lives and our own wellbeing. Sometimes, for any number of reasons, that means having an abortion. We, created fully human in God's image, are the ones who are in a position to know when it is time to end a pregnancy. No matter the circumstances in which you need abortion care, you're someone, and you matter. This *brakha*/blessing can be a powerful way to affirm your own humanity in the face of dehumanizing stigma.”

The blessing, with traditional language:

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם שעשני בצלמו.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam sh'asani b'tzelmo.

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God, Ruler of Time and Space, who has made me in the divine image.

The blessing, with feminine-God language:

ברוכה את ה' שכינתינו רוח העולם שעשתני בצלמה.

Brucha at Yah Shechinatinu Ruach HaOlam, sh'astani b'tzelmah.

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God, Indwelling Presence of Time and Space, who has made me in the divine image.

Whether you're managing your pregnancy ending at home or traveling for your procedure, you are a part of the greater Jewish community, and you are not alone. Below are several ways you might find helpful to connect.

For those traveling

Many people recite the *Tefillat HaDerech* — the Travelers' Prayer — anytime they leave their town. We have created an adapted version of this prayer for those who are traveling out of town or out of state to receive abortion or miscarriage care.

***Tefillat HaDerech* for Those Traveling for Abortion or Miscarriage Care**

by Naima Hirsch Gelman

יהי רצון, ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואמותינו, שתביא אותנו בדרך שלום, שנגיע ליעדנו בשלום ועז, ושתחזירנו בידיעת כוחנו ועם היכולת למצוא רפואה. יהי רצונך שתגן עלינו מכל העומדים בדרכנו, שתדריך צעדינו לבטיחות, ושתדריך את כל מסייענו. יהי רצונך שנקבל חסד ורחמים מכל הנקרים בדרכינו, ושתפילתנו תקבל. אל נא שמע נא שמע קולינו. ברוך את ה', השומעת תפילותינו.

Transliteration:

Yehi ratzon, Adonai eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, she-tavi otanu b'derech shalom, she-nagiya l'adenu b'shalom v'oz, v'she-tachazireinu b'yidiyat kocheinu v'im ha-yecholt l'mtzoh refuah. Yehi retzonach she-tagen aleinu mi-kol ha-omdim b'darkeinu, she-tadrach tza'adeinu l'betichut, v'she-tadrach et kol mesiyanu. Yehi retzonach she-n'kabel chesed v'rachamim mi-kol ha-nekrim b'darkeinu, v'she-tefilateinu titkabel.

El na shema na, shema koleinu.

Baruch at Adonai, ha-shoma'at tefilateinu.

English:

May it be Your will, our God who is the God of our ancestors, that You lead us on a path toward peace. May it be Your will that we arrive at our destination in peace and with strength and return with the knowledge of our resilience and ability to heal. May You protect us from all who stand in our way and guide our footsteps towards safety. May You guide those who empower us and care for us during this time. May we receive kindness and compassion from all who see us, and may our prayer be heard.

Please, God, hear the sound of our humble request.

Blessed are You, God, Who hears our prayers.

For anyone receiving care — especially for those self-managing abortions or miscarriages at home

A Prayer

The *Misheberach l'Cholim*, the prayer for the sick, is a moment to pray for the health and wellbeing of our loved ones. Many Jewish communities recite this prayer on Shabbat, and some communities announce the names of people in the community in need of healing during chronic illness, recovery from surgery, or any other affliction. Because a pregnancy ending is a type of medical experience, you may use this prayer while preparing for an abortion or completion of miscarriage, during the process, and/or during recovery. You may prefer to recite this on your own behalf or to invite your loved ones to recite it for you in the days surrounding your pregnancy ending.

A note on the Hebrew and Transliteration: Words with a slash between them offer different options for pronoun usage, since cis women, nonbinary people, and trans men are all among those who need access to care for pregnancy endings. The order in the Hebrew is feminine/nonbinary/masculine endings.

מי שברך אמתינו שרה רבקה רחל ולאה ואבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב הוא יברך את החולה/ת/ה² ———
בת/מבית/בן ———. הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליה/ו להחלימה/ו ולרפאתה/ו ולהחזיקה/ו ולהחיותה/ו.
וישלח לה/ו מהרה רפואה שלמה, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף, בתוך שאר חולי ישראל וחולי יושבי טבל,
השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב. ונאמר אמן:

Transliteration:

Mi Sheberach Imoteinu: Sarah, Rivka, Rachel v'Leah, v'Avoteinu: Avraham, Yitzhak, v'Yaakov, Hu yivarech virapei et ha-cholah/ha-cholet/ha-choleh _____ bat/m'beit/ben _____. HaKadosh Baruch Hu yimalei rachamim aleha/alav/aleheh, l'hachlimah/l'hachlimeh/l'hachalimo, u-l'rap'otah/u-l'rap'oteh/u-l'rap'oto/, l'hazikah/l'hazikeh/l'hachaziko, u-l'chay-otah/u-l'chay-oteh/u-l'chay-oto. V'yishlach lah/leh/lo bim-hera r'fuah shlemah, r'fu-at hanefesh u-r'fu-at hagoof, b'toch sh'ar cholei Yisrael v'cholei yoshvei tevel, hashta ba'agalah u-vizman kariv, v'no-mar, Amen.

English:

May the One who blessed our ancestors — Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — bless and heal the one who is ill: _____ child of _____.
May the Holy Blessed One overflow with compassion upon them, to restore them, to heal them, to strengthen them, to enliven them. The One will send them speedily a complete healing — healing of the soul and healing of the body — along with all the ill, among the people of Israel and all humankind, soon, speedily, without delay, and let us all say: Amen!

Guided Meditations

Meditation on Miriam's Well

This is a meditation based on the concept of Miriam's Well, which according to traditional Rabbinic lore, accompanied the Jewish people in their forty-year sojourn in the desert following the exodus from Egypt. It is an adapted version of a meditation by Ariel Neshama Lee, [published in Ritualwell](#).

You can listen to a guided version [here](#) (or with QR code).



² All Non-Binary Hebrew forms use the Non-Binary Hebrew Project's system. <https://www.nonbinaryhebrew.com/grammar-systematics>

Take a few moments to become comfortable. Close your eyes. Let your body relax. Shake out any tightness, constriction, or tension. Pay attention to your breathing. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly, taking in cleansing oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide. As you breathe out, imagine that all that represents tightness and constriction within your body is released through your breath on a thin film of gray smoke. As you breathe in, imagine that you are breathing in cleansing light. Do this four times, each time becoming more and more relaxed and letting go of any tightness or anything that is restricting you. Feel anything that constricts you, anything that holds you back, leave each part of your body. Feel this happening in your feet, your legs, your hips, your abdomen, your heart, your arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head. Feel all the tension leave as deep relaxation takes its place.

Close your eyes and visualize a goblet. Notice the shape of the goblet. Note what it is made of, the texture of its surface. Note its color. Note how light is reflected on its surface. Now take the goblet and hold it in your hands near your heart. As you look down into the goblet, note that it is filled with water. Note the color of the water and how light sparkles and shimmers on its surface.

Now envision individual droplets of this water; each droplet contains all the colors of the rainbow – yellow, orange, red, green, blue, purple. Each droplet shimmers and captures the light around it like a mirror. Envision these shimmering droplets becoming smaller and smaller until they are so small that you cannot see them with the naked eye. They blend and merge into one body of clear, crystal water. Now envision the goblet filled to the brim with this pure, clear, crystal water. Now lift the goblet to your lips and take a sip of the water. Note that it is cool, refreshing, quenching your thirst.

Feel the microscopic droplets of water as they are absorbed into your body and become part of your blood, flowing through your arteries and veins, penetrating every cell, becoming one with you. Feel this cleansing water as it flows through your body like a river, bathing every cell. Feel this water as it washes every cell clean, carrying away any fatigue, heaviness, or pain. As this water travels through your body, imagine that it is dissolving what does not serve you now, from within you and around you. Imagine that the water fills you with vibrant energy. The vibrant energy from this water brings with it renewal, empowerment, and wholeness to you and to everything and everyone around you.

Now envision the water in the goblet rise to the brim and overflow and become a beautiful, cascading waterfall. Follow the path of this waterfall as it merges first with a river, then a lake, and then with the ocean. These are living waters, *mayim chayim*. These are waters of restoration.

Legend says that when our ancestors traversed the desert, they never lacked for water. Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, was named as a prophet in the Torah; and Rabbinic legend teaches that as she traveled with the Israelites in the desert, after leaving Egypt, a magical well given on her behalf accompanied them, providing water, healing, and sustenance. Miriam's Well was an ever-flowing source of life, strength, abundance, and healing.

You now can see, can breathe with, your *kos revayah* — your overflowing cup. Like Miriam's Well, your cup is ever-flowing and abundant. Know that these waters of hope and wholeness are there for you whenever you need them. Know that you can go back to this place — with the waters of restoration and wholeness — any time you are in need of it.

Hold onto this image as you now become aware once more of your breath and the boundaries of your body. As you take a few deep breaths, become aware of the gentle rise and fall of your chest. Become aware once more of your presence in the room. Then, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Meditation on the Water's Edge

*This meditation was developed by Ashley Peterson.
You can listen to a guided version [here](#) (or with QR code).*



Begin by closing your eyes. Allow your breath to slow.
Let the muscles of your face relax. Relax your forehead, eyes, jaw.
Allow your shoulders to relax away from your ears. Take a slow, deep breath, gently filling your lungs. Slowly breathe out. Take one more breath, this time slowing your inhale even more. Pause. Slowly release the breath.

In your mind's eye, visualize a body of water. What do you see? Is it still water, maybe a pond, or a lake? Is it moving, like a stream or river? Is it vast, perhaps an ocean?

Find a spot near the edge of the water where you feel safe. You might be alone, or near others. Take off your shoes if you can and want to. Feel the soil, sand, or rock beneath your feet, or sit and run your hands along the ground. Breathe in. Breathe out. Ask yourself, what sensations do I feel beneath my feet, or in my hands? Is the ground cold? Damp? Is it firm? Warm? Is it soft?

Breathe in. Breathe out. Notice the sounds of the water and the air surrounding you. Look around at life at the water's edge. What plants, flowers, insects, or animals do you notice? Name them, one by one. Name yourself. You are a welcome and honored part of this ecosystem, connected by the water you share in your very cells. You are not alone.

Step into the water with your bare feet, or sit near the water's edge and place your hands in the water. What sensations do you feel? Is the water moving? Is it still? Is it warm, cool, freezing? Is it gentle or forceful? How does the energy of the water align with the energy you feel inside right now? Does feeling the water's energy shift your own? Do you want it to?

You don't have to know the answers to these questions right away, or at all. Just being here is enough. You are enough.

Stay here at the water's edge as long as you like.
Breathe in. Breathe out.



Havdalah

[NCJW After Roe Havdalah](#) (also available with QR code)

Note: This Havdalah ritual was framed to mark the larger communal separation of times between one moment in history and another, but you can absolutely use it or adapt it to mark the separation between one moment in your own personal history and another.



Poetry as Prayer

You may also like, in addition to or instead of the Havdalah ritual or other post-abortion rituals, to simply hold this haiku by the poet and playwright Sarah Ruhl close by. It is from her book, *Love Poems in Quarantine*.³

How Holy by Sarah Ruhl

How holy, that day
follows night. And how holy,
that night follows day.

Mikveh

Note: If you have questions about mikveh in general or about navigating your visit, please contact action@ncjw.org and we would be happy to connect you with a Jewish Clergy for Repro member who can support you or answer any questions you may have.

Immersing yourself in a [mikveh](#), a Jewish ritual bath, can be incredibly healing for some people and could provide closure after your abortion. Consider attending a mikvah in your area. ([Here](#) is a list of mikvaot that are explicitly open to people of all backgrounds and genders, and [here](#) is a list of more mikvaot that abide by traditional *halachic*, or Jewish legal, requirements.) You can use this guide to move through the ritual.

These are the [traditional mikvah blessings](#) that are said when one immerses in a mikveh.

Jewish tradition teaches that there should not be any barriers between you and the water during your immersion. This includes clothing, removable jewelry, makeup, tangled hair, etc. Preparing for mikveh is a private moment for you to be in your body as it is right now and acknowledge the physical, emotional, or spiritual transitions you are going through. Many people use this time to relax in a bath or take a luxurious shower. We invite you to prepare for mikveh however you see fit. Below are some suggested *kavvanot*, or intentional mantras, to ground your experience of preparation:

- *Hineni*. I am here. *Hineni*. Here I am. *Hineni*. I am here, taking care of myself. I am here, honoring this transition, honoring this moment. *Hineni*.

³ Reprinted with permission from the author.

- My existence is sacred. I am created in the image of the Divine, *b'tzelem Elohim*. My body is sacred.
- I am grateful for my body and how it sustains me. I am grateful for my ability to journey to and through this moment. I recognize the good within me, *hakarat hatov*.

Acknowledging Pregnancy Endings: An Immersion Ceremony

This ceremony was created by Matia Rania Angelou, Deborah Issokson, and Judith D. Kummer for [Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters](#). It was adapted by Matia Rania Angelou and Lucy Starer Marshall, then slightly adapted further by National Council of Jewish Women.

Intention / Kavanah

To be read at the mikveh's edge before entering the water:

Be with me, God, as I prepare to immerse in acknowledgment of my [miscarriage/abortion/pregnancy ending].

Let the *mayyim hayyim*, the living waters of this mikveh, wash over me and soothe me.

Help me find peace as I [affirm my decision/grieve my loss/make space for all that I am feeling in this moment] in the healing waters of the mikveh.

Immersion

First Immersion

Slowly descend the steps into the mikveh waters and immerse completely so that every part of your body is covered by the warm water. When you emerge, recite the following:

אלהי נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא

*Elohai, n'shamah shenatata bi tehora hi.*⁴

My God, the soul you have given me is pure.

Second Immersion

Take a moment to bring to mind what you truly need in this moment. Take a deep breath and exhale completely while gently immersing for a second time. When you emerge, recite the following:

May the One who blesses all, bless and heal me now.⁵

Bless me with _____ as I continue life's journey.

May I be healed and renewed in body, mind, and spirit.

ופרוש עלינו סכת שלומך

*Ufros aleinu sukkat sh'lomecha.*⁶

Spread over us the shelter of Your peace.

⁴ From the Elohai neshama prayer in the morning liturgy.

⁵ Whatever your emotional and physical experience with this abortion, it is appropriate to pray for healing after a medical procedure. It may also feel correct to you to pray for emotional or spiritual healing as well.

⁶ From the Hashkiveinu prayer in the evening liturgy.

Third Immersion

Relax, and let your body soften, as you slowly and completely immerse for the third time. When you emerge, recite the following blessing:

ברוך אתה, הי אלהינו, מלך העולם אשר קדשנו בטבילה במים חיים.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam asher kidshanu bi-t'vilah b'mayyim hayyim.

Blessed are you, God, Majestic spirit of the Universe who makes us holy by embracing us in living waters.⁷

A Closing Intention

Kavanah/Intention

As I leave these healing waters, I thank You, God, for Your blessings.

May I honor my decisions and accept the changes during this time of transition.

May I feel supported and renewed as my life story unfolds.

Opportunities for Communal Ritual

Birkat haGomel is a blessing that is said in the presence of a *minyan*, or ritual quorum of ten Jewish adults. It is recited by those who experienced a potentially life-threatening moment, which includes things that we often see as commonplace, such as an international flight or childbirth. Abortion and miscarriage are medical experiences that can have both physical and mental effects on the person having it; therefore, *Birkat haGomel* is a fitting ritual.

The traditional synagogue setting may appeal to you as a place to honor your pregnancy ending, or you may prefer someplace more private. Either way, *Birkat haGomel* is a moment to gather with your support network and name that you have undergone a significant medical — and perhaps, for you, personal — transition. To hear the blessing pronounced, go [here](#) (or follow QR code link).



You recite:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם הגומל לחיבים טובות שגמלני כל טוב

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-gomel l'chayavim tovot she-g'malani kol tov.

Blessed are You, God our God, who rewards the undeserving with goodness, and who has rewarded me with goodness.

Your community responds:

מי שגמלך כל טוב הוא יגמלך כל טוב סלה

Mi shegamalech tov, Hu yig'malech kol tov, selah.

May the One who rewarded you with all goodness reward you with all goodness forever.

⁷ Created by Mayyim Hayyim Ritual Creation Team, 2004.

No matter when or how your pregnancy ended, consider taking time to honor your lived experience. The suggestions below are available to you whenever you're ready.

Honor Your Experience

You might want to honor and/or mark the time of your pregnancy ending by performing an annual ritual. For those who have experienced abortion, an annual ritual could provide an opportunity to honor your body, your spirit, your resilience, and those who are in the fight for abortion access, especially those who are harmed by lack of access now.

How you feel about your pregnancy ending, what it means to you now, and what it will mean to you over the unfolding of years may be different from the experiences of others who have also experienced pregnancy endings. Your feelings are valid.

Consider making space for your own experience of this time.

Shehechyanu

This blessing acknowledges the spiritual weight of being in the present moment. Shehechyanu is often recited during a moment of newness, such as wearing new clothing, moving into a new home, and during lifecycle events. It is also traditionally recited during the first night of many Jewish holidays, including Hanukkah, Rosh HaShanah, and Sukkot, among others. By reciting Shehechyanu at the same moment each year, we acknowledge that this year is different from the previous and all that we have learned about ourselves and the world. It can be an acknowledgment of resilience—a declaration that you're still here, despite everything—a celebration of all that you have been able to do and become, a combination of these things, or something else. You may choose to recite this blessing immediately before or after your abortion, or you may want to recite it as a yearly practice.

ברוך אתה הי, אלוהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, shehechyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, God, who has given us life, sustained us, and allowed us to arrive in this moment.

The song [“We Rise” by Batya Levine](#) can be a musical reminder of your strength and place in our shared tradition.



Honor Others Seeking Abortions

Say a prayer for those denied abortion care.

A Prayer For Those Denied Abortion Care, written by Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg

May you be safe—

May a canopy of safety and peace, health and care cover you,
Despite everything you are now forced to endure.

May you find ways to own your body,
Your agency, and your dignity
Despite everything the government has taken from you.

May you be surrounded by a community of caring hands
And loving hearts, who can hold you.

May you always know you are holy, sacred,
And your will — your autonomy — matters,
And should be respected as such.

May you be protected in all ways,
Able to weather the material, physical,
emotional and spiritual hardships
That come your way.
May you find within yourself resilience,
Strength, and bravery.

May you know you are not alone.

Additional Suggestions

Donate

Consider making a donation to the organization that provided your abortion care and/or your local abortion fund to ensure others have access to care. Consider supporting the [Jewish Fund for Abortion Access](#) to help further both systemic change and to support those doing the work on the ground.

Share

If and/or when you're ready, consider sharing your story. [WeTestify](#) offers an [abortion storytelling guide](#). If you'd like, and if you're ready, you can share your story [here](#), through the Jewish Women's Archive's abortion story project, in partnership with NCJW.

Additional Resources

Additional ritual and prayers

[Ritual](#) for those who have miscarried

[Prayer](#) for those who have miscarried

[Poem](#) for courage

[Blessing](#) for choosing your life

For direct assistance with abortion care:

[National Network of Abortion Funds](#)

[National Abortion Federation](#)

[I Need An A](#)

Discover more about how Judaism views abortion:

[The Torah of Reproductive Justice](#)

[My Religion Makes Me Pro-Abortion](#)

[Abortion and Reproductive Justice: A Jewish Perspective](#)



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[NCJW.org](https://www.ncjw.org)

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