

### God of Our Ancestors

The God we know seems so much greater, so much vaster, than the God of former generations. The universe we live in is so much more known and charted; we measure distances in light years and send persons and machines coursing through space. The lenses through which we see the small as well as the vast have forever changed our way of viewing the world; the pace at which we seek and find knowledge has changed our way of learning. To say “our God and God of our ancestors” is to assert that the One of whom we speak in such an age is the same One as the God of small-town Jewish scholars and shopkeepers of a hundred years ago. This is no small admission, no small act of humbling, for such as ourselves.

—ARTHUR GREEN

### Life to the Dead

A Hasidic master taught: There are parts of ourselves that have become deadened. When we pray this blessing we should ask ourselves, “What part of myself needs to be awakened? What should I be concerned with, that I have forgotten?”

### With Patriarchs:

You are the sovereign who helps and saves and shields.

† *Barukh atah ADONAI*, Shield of Abraham.

### With Patriarchs and Matriarchs:

You are the sovereign who helps and guards, saves and shields.

† *Barukh atah ADONAI*, Shield of Abraham and Guardian of Sarah.

### Second B'rakhah: God's Saving Care

You are ever mighty, ADONAI—  
You give life to the dead—  
great is Your saving power:

*From Sh'mini Atzeret until Pesah:*

You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall,  
[*From Pesah until Sh'mini Atzeret, some add:*  
You cause the dew to fall.]

You sustain the living through kindness and love, and with great mercy give life to the dead,  
You support the falling, heal the sick, loosen the chains of the bound, and keep faith with those who sleep in the dust.  
Who is like You, Almighty, and who can be compared to You?  
The sovereign who brings death and life and causes redemption to flourish.

*On Shabbat Shuvah we add:*

Who is like You, source of compassion, who remembers with compassion Your creatures for life?

You are faithful in bringing life to the dead.  
*Barukh atah ADONAI*, who gives life to the dead.

*When the Amidah is recited silently, continue on page 162 with "Holy are You."*

### With Patriarchs and Matriarchs:

מִלְךְ עוֹזֵר וּפּוֹקֵד וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגַן.

† בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מִגַּן אַבְרָהָם וּפּוֹקֵד שָׂרָה.

### With Patriarchs:

מִלְךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגַן. † בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מִגַּן אַבְרָהָם.

אַתָּה גְּבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדָנִי, מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

*From Sh'mini Atzeret until Pesah: מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרֵד הַגִּשְׁמִים, מוֹרֵד הַפֶּלַח.*  
[*From Pesah until Sh'mini Atzeret, some add:*

מְבַלְבֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד, מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמֵים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמְתִיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקַוֶּה אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישׁוּעֵי עַפְרָי, מִי כְמוֹךָ בַּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת וּמִי דוֹמֶה לָךְ, מִלְךְ מְמִית וּמְחַיֶּה וּמְצַמִּיחַ לִישׁוּעָה.

*On Shabbat Shuvah we add:*

מִי כְמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחֵמִים, זוֹכֵר יַצּוּרֵי לַחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים, וְנֹאֲמָנוּ אַתָּה לְהַחְיִית מְתִים, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים.

*When the Amidah is recited silently, continue on page 162 with "bring death and life."*

**SHIELD OF ABRAHAM** מִגַּן אַבְרָהָם. This phrase is derived from Genesis 15:1, the first time we hear Abraham speak to God. There Abraham—the paragon of faith—expresses to God his fears, skepticism, and insecurity about the fulfillment of God's promises. Authentic prayer may encompass feelings of doubt as well as faith, challenge and frustration as well as praise and gratitude. Some who include the matriarchs at the beginning of this prayer conclude with this ending, so as not to change the received wording of the conclusion of a *b'rakhah*.

**GUARDIAN OF SARAH** וּפּוֹקֵד שָׂרָה. Or: “the one who remembered Sarah” (after Genesis 21:1). We, who stand here today, are the fruit of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah.

**SUPPORT THE FALLING** נֹוֹפְלִים. After Psalm 145:14. For centuries, human rulers have defined “power” as the ability to exert control over others, often through the threat of physical injury. Quite differently, God's power is described here as manifested as *hesed*, love and generosity, especially to those who are most vulnerable. The other attributes describing God in this paragraph are also taken from biblical texts: Exodus 15:26 (“heal the sick”), Psalm 146:7 (“loosen the chains of the bound”), and 1 Samuel 2:6 (“brings death and life”).

**GIVES LIFE TO THE DEAD** מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים. Over the millennia, many Jewish perspectives on the afterlife have been proposed. Many sages (including Saadia Gaon, 10th century, and Maimonides, 12th century) caution against speculation about the specific implications of the doctrine of bodily resurrection of the dead. They understand it to be an articulation of God's supreme power: God cares even for the dead. Some moderns understand that the lives of those who died before us are a part of the stream of life, continuing to affect us, though we can never know precisely how.