

The Shabbat Morning Amidah

Prayer

Rabbi Ami taught: One's prayer is answered only if one takes one's heart into one's hands, as it is said, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands" (Lamentations 3:41).

—BABYLONIAN TALMUD

One should pray as a beggar knocking on a door and wish for a time of generosity.

—based on HAYIM IBN ATTAR

Prayer is for one's soul what nourishment is for one's body. The blessing of one's prayer lasts until the time of the next prayer, just as the strength derived from one meal lasts until another.... During the time of prayer, one cleanses the soul of all that has passed over it and prepares it for the future.

—YEHUDAH HALEVI

Songs to God not only express joy; they express pain as well. There is no greater prayer than pouring out one's heart over the distance one feels from God.

—SHALOM NOAH BERZOVSKY

A transliteration of the opening *b'rakhot* of the Amidah may be found on page 466. When a minyan is present, some communities repeat the Amidah after it is recited silently; others recite the first three blessings (including the *Kedushah* on page 161) aloud and the rest of the Amidah silently. The Amidah concludes on page 166.

ADONAI, open my lips that my mouth may speak Your praise.

First B'rakah: Our Ancestors

With Patriarchs:

‡ *Barukh atah* ADONAI, our God and God of our ancestors,

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, great, mighty, awe-inspiring, transcendent God, who acts with kindness and love, and creates all, who remembers the loving deeds of our ancestors, and who will lovingly bring a redeemer to their children's children for the sake of divine honor.

With Patriarchs and Matriarchs:

‡ *Barukh atah* ADONAI, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, God of Sarah, God of Rachel, Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah, great, mighty, awe-inspiring, transcendent God, who acts with kindness and love, and creates all, who remembers the loving deeds of our ancestors, and who will lovingly bring a redeemer to their children's children for the sake of divine honor.

On *Shabbat Shuvah* we add:

Remember us for life, Sovereign who delights in life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, God of life.

תפילת העמידה לשבת

A transliteration of the opening *b'rakhot* of the Amidah may be found on page 466. When a minyan is present, some communities repeat the Amidah after it is recited silently; others recite the first three blessings (including the *Kedushah* on page 161) aloud and the rest of the Amidah silently. The Amidah concludes on page 166.

אֲדוֹנָי שְׁפִתַי תִּפְתָּח, וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

With Patriarchs and Matriarchs:

‡ בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, וְאֱמֹתֵינוּ. אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה, וְאֱלֹהֵי רַבֵּקָה, אֱלֹהֵי רְחֵל, וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה, אֱלֹהֵי הַנְּדוּל הַגְּבוּר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֶל עֲלִיּוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חֲסִדִים, טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה הַפֶּל הַזֶּה, חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמִבֵּיא גּוֹאֵל לִבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.

With Patriarchs:

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On *Shabbat Shuvah* we add:

זְכֵרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מֶלֶךְ הַפֶּזַח בַּחַיִּים, וְקַחְבֵּנוּ בְּסֹפֵר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַן יִזְכְּרֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵים הַיּוֹם.

AMIDAH. The Amidah, literally "the prayer said while standing," is a moment of personal meditation and is also known as the "Silent Prayer." It always contains three introductory *b'rakhot* and three concluding *b'rakhot*. On Shabbat and festivals, a middle *b'rakah* focuses on distinctive themes of the day. Before the Amidah begins we take three steps forward, approaching God's presence. (If there is no room, we first take three steps backward.)

ADONAI, OPEN MY LIPS אֲדוֹנָי שְׁפִתַי תִּפְתָּח 51:17, where prayer is exalted over sacrifice. Rabbi Yohanan (3rd century) recommended that this verse precede the Amidah (Talmud of the Land of Israel, Berakhot 4:4).

BENDING THE KNEES AND BOWING. Bowing is both a symbolic acknowledgment that our prayers are to God and also a sign of humility on our part. We stand up straight when we reach God's name, however, for we speak to God face to face (Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 12a). The Talmud records disagreement about how deeply one should bow: some say that one should fully bend over, some that one should feel one's spine bending, and others that one should bow only one's head (Berakhot 28b). The Talmud confined bowing to the beginning and end of this first *b'rakah*, as well as to the beginning and end of the next-to-last *b'rakah*, which thanks God for the gift of life (Berakhot 34a). The sign indicates the place to bow.

GOD OF ABRAHAM אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵנוּ. God uses this language when first addressing Moses, at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5-6). Its inclusion here at the beginning of the Amidah may remind us of the focus and attentiveness that we need to sense God's presence.

REDEEMER גּוֹאֵל. Judaism's messianic impulse reminds us that the world, as broken as it sometimes appears, is ultimately perfectible; God's teachings, carried out by us, will help the world achieve such perfection. Some liberal prayerbooks use the word *ge'ullah*, "redemption," in place of "redeemer," to de-emphasize the role of any single individual in facilitating the world's healing.

REMEMBER US זְכֵרְנוּ. This brief prayer is the first of four additions to the Amidah during the Ten Days of Repentance. Each of the four phrases of this short addition ends with the word *hayim*, "life."