

The Amidah

Rabbi Steven Morgen, Congregation Beth Yeshurun

- 1 **Replaces the private and public sacrifices** that were brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. **Private** = individual silent Amidah. **Public** = repetition of Amidah in presence of a minyan.
- 2 **Private audience with God.** What would you say to God? Amidah provides a structure.
- 3 Sometimes called the **Shemonah Esreh** = 18 blessings (now 19) fixed by 120 elders - Megillah 17b.
 - a. But originally only the “seal” was fixed. The introductory paragraph was fluid, composed by *Shaliah tzibbur* – prayer leader.
 - b. Same three opening blessings and same three closing blessings for every Amidah.
 - c. Middle blessings vary: Shabbat and festivals have only one middle blessing declaring the day to be holy. Weekday Amidah has 13 blessings in the middle (= 19 total).
- 4 **There is some choreography:** Begins with “Texas three-step.” As if physically entering God’s court room. (God is, of course, everywhere. So this is just for us to “get our heads” into that place.) Concludes with backing away from God’s presence while bowing. (As was customary in Royal Audiences.) Kedushah also has choreography (see below).
- 5 **Avot**
 - a. Introducing ourselves in God’s court. Coming before God not only as individual, but also as member of people who has long history of relationship with God – through Patriarchs (AND Matriarchs)
 - b. God of history.
 - c. “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob” quote from Exodus 3:6, cf. 3:15
 - 1) Moses’ first encounter with God at burning bush: so also means for us “God of Moses”
 - 2) Indicates reverence we should have when reciting it (Moses took off his shoes, etc.)
 - 3) Perhaps indicates opportunity for revelation if we allow it – Moses “turned aside to see the bush” our opportunity to stop and turn aside and tune in to God.
 - 4) Each had individual relationship to God, hence “Elohai” is repeated. We can meditate on those different relationships as we recite blessing, including Matriarchs, and including our own unique relationship with God
 - d. "Great, mighty and awesome" from Moses (Deut. 10:17, read context!) and decreed by Men of Great Assembly - no more, no less - Megillah 25a
 - e. “God most high, creator of heaven and earth” Gen. 14:19, Melechtzedek blessing to Abraham after victory
 - f. “Shield of Abraham” Gen. 15:1
7. **Gevurot**
 - a. God’s powers – even over death, the most miraculous power

- b. Dispute between Sadducees and Pharisees over **resurrection**. No wonder made resurrection prominent in this early blessing. Sadducee would not be able to be prayer leader. The concept is not really found in the Torah as the Pharisees insisted. (Sanhedrin Chapter 10:1 - "All Israel have a portion in the world to come - except ... one who does not believe that resurrection is found in the Torah.")
- 1) Deuteronomy commands us not to consort with dead. King Saul does. (I Sam. 28:8-19) So there seems to be some belief in a life after death in the Bible.
 - 2) But on the other hand, Psalms say “the dead do not praise you”. (Ps. 115:17)
 - 3) Is our ancient reluctance to dwell on life after death a reaction to Egyptian death-worship?
 - 4) But concept of Life After Death comes back into Judaism more strongly in Second Temple times, perhaps as result of Maccabean persecution by Greeks. (See II Mac. 7:9, 12:43-45) Not clear there whether it is bodily resurrection, though. But later Pharisees assert it is. Maimonides says this is just a phase and we will die again – and go back to Spiritual Afterlife.
- c. Many today are troubled by literal reading of this text. Reform Judaism changes wording to “gives life to everything.”
- ◆Can interpret “giving life to the dead” as Spiritual Afterlife rather than resurrection.
 - ◆Perhaps we can give a modern interpretation of this phrase as creating the first life from inanimate objects.
 - ◆Perhaps immortality through progeny, or through the deeds we have done, creations of our minds and spirits, and inspirations we have given to others.
 - ◆Perhaps daily renewal of life is referred to (note that bringing rain in winter is inserted in this prayer – indicates renewal of life *is* part of the prayer because the rains bring renewed life to plants, trees, etc. after they have "died" in cold of Winter)
- d. Perhaps can say we just don’t really understand what exactly this might mean, as we don’t understand many details in complex universe, and this is just a symbol, words that convey a direction of thought, not a definition. God’s power extends beyond the realm of life and death, “the meaning and significance of human life extends beyond the realm of this earth and this universe.” (Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, p. 168)
- e. Also lists other powers of God: enumerating the “acts of lovingkindness” referred to in first blessing. We imitate God in doing these (see Talmud *Sota* 14a) Core of this enumeration of God's acts of kindness based on Psalm 146:7-8.

8. Kedushah

- a. Holiness, awesome, transcendence. Wonder of mysterious presence. Like Jacob’s ladder (Gen. 28:17). Not God in history (Avot) or in nature (Gevurot) but God in God’s essence. Incomprehensible by humans, yet experienced.
- b. Repetition of Kedushah (different for different days, and different countries) based on three biblical passages:

- 1.) **Isaiah 6:1-7** (Etz Hayim pp. 452-453) Isaiah is commissioned to be God's Messenger (Prophet) and sees God's Throne Room. Angels with six wings, **fluttering about God's throne**. "And one would call to the other and say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of Hosts. The whole world is filled with his Presence.'"
- 2.) **Ezekiel 1:1-28, 3:12** (Etz Hayim pp. 1321-1324) Ezekiel is commissioned to be God's Messenger (Prophet) and sees God's Throne Room. Angels have four faces: human, lion, eagle, ox. (v. 10) **Two legs fused together** into one. (v. 7) "Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound: 'Blessed is the Presence of the LORD, in His place.'" (3:12)
- 3.) **Psalms 146:10** "The LORD will reign forever, your God, o Zion, [will rule] from generation to generation. Praise the LORD." (Sim Shalom p. 97) Inserted here by author of Keddushah as prayer for Messianic era to begin. Now that we have experienced God's Presence in intimate way, we desire for this Presence to be manifest in OUR world all the time. (See the context of this verse in the prayer – especially the paragraph above it.)

We imitate the angels in heaven in the two prophetic visions. (Bouncing on our heels = fluttering. Legs fused together.) Perhaps Psalms verse (see its context) tells us we too can be angels when we do God's will here on earth. And in doing so we make God's holiness manifest here in this world.

- c. Mystics used these verses to attempt to ascend to heaven, to come close to God. While prayerbook is for the masses, and therefore mysticism (which is dangerous if not done properly) was left out of prayerbook, this prayer comes closest to that aspect of Judaism. Like doing Kabbalah in "Safe Mode."
 - d. God is source of holiness, but we are commanded to be holy like God. (Lev. 19) (See again *Sotah* 14a: We attempt to imitate God's moral and ethical qualities).
 - e. Keddushah then represents reaching the heights of God's throne, making an intimate connection with God. But then returning to earth and this world having been commissioned by God (as Isaiah and Ezekiel were) to bring peace, justice and kindness into it.
9. **First three blessings correspond to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** "Shield of Abraham." Isaac and resurrection (from binding of Isaac story). Jacob experiences God's holiness when dreamed of ladder to heaven.
10. **Last Three Blessings**
- a. **Retzeh** – Accept our prayers in the sincerity with which they were offered. (Replaces prayer of Priest in Temple that sacrifice should be accepted in sincerity in which it was offered.)
 - b. **Modim** – Thank you God for the wondrous miracles that you provide every day – evening, morning and afternoon.
 - c. **Grant Peace to the World.** Based on Priestly Blessing (Number 6:24-26) Priestly blessing concluded the Temple ritual. So, here, it concludes the Amidah.

Open my mouth, O Lord, and my lips will proclaim Your praise.

Praised are You, Lord our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, great, mighty, awesome, exalted God who bestows lovingkindness, Creator of all. You remember the pious deeds of our ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children's children because of Your loving nature.

You are the King who helps and saves and shields. Praised are You, Lord, Shield of Abraham.

Your might, O Lord, is boundless. You give life to the dead; great is Your saving power.

Your lovingkindness sustains the living, Your great mercies give life to the dead. You support the falling, heal the ailing, free the fettered. You keep Your faith with those who sleep in dust. Whose power can compare with Yours? You are the Master of life and death and deliverance.

Faithful are You in giving life to the dead. Praised are You, Lord, Master of life and death.

We proclaim Your holiness on earth as it is proclaimed in heaven above. We sing the words of heavenly voices as recorded in Your prophet's vision:

Kadosh kadosh kadosh Adonai tzeva'ot, m'lo khol ha-aretz k'vodo. Holy, holy, holy Adonai tzeva'ot. The whole world is filled with His glory.

In thundering chorus, majestic voices resound, lifted toward singing seraphim and responding:

Barukh k'vod Adonai mi-m'komo.

Praised is the glory of the Lord throughout the universe.

Throughout Your universe reveal Yourself, our King, and reign over us, for we await You. When will You reign in Zion? Let it be soon, in our time and throughout all time. May Your glory and holiness be apparent to all in Jerusalem Your city, from generation to generation, eternally. May we see Your sovereignty, described in David's psalms which sing Your splendor:

Yimlokh Adonai Y'olam, Elohayikh tziyon Y'dor va-dor. Halleluyah.

The Lord shall reign through all generations; your God, Zion, shall reign forever. Halleluyah.

We declare Your greatness through all generations, hallow Your holiness to all eternity. Your praise will never leave our lips, for You are God and King, great and holy.

Praised are You, Lord, holy God.

1 ארְבֵי שַׁפְתֵי תִפְתַּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ. Psalm 51:17

Ex. 3:6 אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ
Deut. 32:6 אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֱלֹהֵינוּ
Gen. 15:9 עֲלִיּוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים וְקוֹנֵה תֵּכֵל, הוֹפֵךְ חַסְדֵי אֲבוֹת
ומבִּיא גּוֹאֵל לְבָנָי כְּנִיָּהֶם לְמַעַן שְׂמוּ פִּאֲתָבָה.

Psalm 151:1 מְלֶכֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמְגוֹן. פְּרוּךְ אֲמֵת יֵהוּה מְגוֹן אֲבֹתֵינוּ.

2 אֲמֵת גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם אֲרֵבִי, מַחִיָּה מַחִיָּה אֲמֵת רַב לְהַדְוִיעַ.

Psalm 67:8 מְבַלְבֵּל חַיִּים בְּחַסֵּד, מַחִיָּה מַחִיָּה בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ
נּוֹפְלִים וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים וּמַחִיָּה אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקַיֵּם אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי
עַפְרָי. מִי כִמּוֹךָ בְּעַל גְּבוּרֹת וּמִי דוֹמָה לָךְ, מְלֶכֶךְ מַחִיָּה וּמַחִיָּה
וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה.

וְנִאֲמָנוּ אֲמֵת לְהַחֲיוֹת מַחִיָּה. פְּרוּךְ אֲמֵת יֵהוּה מַחִיָּה טַהוֹרִים.

3 נִקְרָא אֶת-שִׁמְךָ בְּעוֹלָם, כִּשְׁם שַׁמְקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹתוֹ כִּשְׁמֵי מְרוֹם,
כַּפְתּוֹב עַל יַד גְּבִיאָה, וְקָרָא זֶה אֵל זֶה וְזֶה וְזֶה.

Leviticus 6:3 קְרוּשׁ קְרוּשׁ קְרוּשׁ יֵהוּה אֲבָחוֹת, מְלֵא כֶּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ.
אוּ בְּקוֹל רַעַשׁ גְּדוֹל אֲרִיר וְחֹזֵק מְשַׁמְעִים קוֹל, מִתְנַשְׂאִים
לְעַמַּת שְׂרָפִים, לְעַמַּתְם בְּרוּךְ יֵהוּה לְאֲמָרוֹ:
פְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד יֵהוּה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ.

Psalm 146:3 מִמְּקוֹמוֹךָ מְלַכְנֵנוּ חוֹפִיעַ וְהַמְלִיךָ עָלֵינוּ, כִּי מַחֲסִיבִים אֲנִיחֵנוּ לָךְ.
מַחִי מִתְמַלֵּךְ בְּצִיּוֹן, בְּקִירוֹב בְּנִמְיֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד תִּשְׁבוֹן.
תִּתְנַצֵּל וְתִתְקַדְּשׁ בְּתוֹרָה וְרוֹשְׁלִיִּים עֵינֶיךָ לְדוֹר וָדוֹר וּלְנֶצַח
נְצַחִים. וְעֵינֵינוּ תִרְאֶינָה מִלְּכוּתְךָ, בְּדָבָר הָאֲמוֹר בְּשִׁירֵי עֲגוּף,
עַל יְהִי דוֹר מְשִׁיחִים צְדִיקָה.
Psalm 146:3 וּמְלֶכֶךְ יֵהוּה לְעוֹלָם אֲלֶקְיָהוּ עֵינֵינוּ לְדוֹר וָדוֹר, תִּלְלוּנָה.

לְדוֹר וָדוֹר נְגִיד גְּדֹלָה וְלִנְצַח נְצַחִים קְדַשְׁתָּהּ נִקְדַּשְׁתָּהּ. וְשִׁבְחָהּ
אֲלֵהֵינוּ מִפִּינוּ לֹא יִמּוּשׁ לְעוֹלָם וָעַד, כִּי אֵל מְלֶכֶךְ גְּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ
אֲמֵת.
פְּרוּךְ אֲמֵת יֵהוּה הָאֵל הַמְּקוֹדֵשׁ.

Accept the prayer of Your people Israel as lovingly as it is offered. Restore worship to Your sanctuary. May the worship of Your people Israel always be acceptable to You.

May we witness Your merciful return to Zion. Praised are You, Lord who restores His Presence to Zion.

We proclaim that You are the Lord our God and God of our ancestors throughout all time. You are the Rock of our lives, the Shield of our salvation in every generation. We thank You and praise You morning, noon, and night for Your miracles which daily attend us and for Your wondrous kindnesses. Our lives are in Your hand; our souls are in Your charge. You are good, with everlasting mercy; You are compassionate, with enduring lovingkindness. We have always placed our hope in You.

For all these blessings we shall ever praise and exalt You.

May every living creature thank You and praise You faithfully, our deliverance and our help. Praised are You, beneficent-Lord to whom all praise is due.

Reader adds:

Bless us, our God and God of our ancestors, with the threefold blessing written in the Torah by Moses, Your servant, pronounced by Aaron and by his descendants, kohanim, Your holy people.

May the Lord bless you and guard you.
May the Lord show you favor
and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you kindness
and grant you peace.

Congregation:
Ken y'hi ratzon.
Ken y'hi ratzon.
Ken y'hi ratzon.

Grant peace to the world, with happiness and blessing, grace, love, and mercy for us and for all the people Israel. Bless us, our Father, one and all, with Your light; for by that light did You teach us Torah and life, love and tenderness, justice and mercy, and peace. May it please You to bless Your people Israel in every season and at all times with Your gift of peace.

Praised are You, Lord who blesses His people Israel with peace.

17 רצה יהוה אלהינו בעמך ישראל והתפלגם, והשב את-התעבורה לךביר ביימך, והתפלגם פאתה תקבל פראון, ותהי לראון תמיד עבדות ישראל עמך.

והתעורר עינינו בשוקה לציון ברחמים.
ברוך אתה יהוה המהוויר שבינתו לציון.

18 מורים אנהנו לך שאמה הוא יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו לעולם ועד, צור חיינו מנו ושענו אמה הוא לדור ודור. נורה לך ונספר מהלכה, על חיינו המסורים בךךך ועל נשמותינו המקודות לך ועל נפיה שבכל-יום עמנו ועל נפלאותיה וטובותיה שבכל-עת, ארב נקצר וצחמים. הטוב פי לא בלך רחמיה, והמרתם פי לא תמו חסדיה, מעולם קיינו לך.

ועל כלם והתברך והרחמם שמך מלפני תמיד לעולם ועד.

וכל חמים יודוך סלה, ויהללו את-שמך באתם, תאל ושועתנו וצונתנו סלה. ברוך אתה יהוה הטוב שמך ולך נאה להודות.

Reader adds:

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, ברבנו בברכה המשלש, בתורה הבהרה על ידי משה עבדך, האמורה מפי אהרן וכוהנים, עם קדושה, באמור:

ברכה יהוה וישמרה.
יאר יהוה פניו אליך ורחם.
ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום.

Congregation:
Numbers 6:24-26

שים שלום בעולם, טובה וברכה, חן וחסד ורחמים עלינו ועל כל-ישראל עמך. ברבנו אבינו בלנו באחד באור פנה, פי באור פנה נמת לנו, יהוה אלהינו, חורת חיים ואהבת חסד, וצדקה וברכה ורחמים וחיים ושלוה. וטוב בעיניך לברך את-עמך ישראל בכל-עת ובכל-שעה בשלום.

ברוך אתה יהוה המברך את-עמו ישראל בשלום.