

Avot v'Imahot Our Ancestors

The *Avot v'Imahot* refers to our Jewish progenitors—the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs. The formula, “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob; God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel, and God of Leah” reminds us of the long history of our people. Through these words, we are reminded that we are also descendants of the Maccabees, the Sages of the Talmud, those who suffered in the Crusades, the great rabbis through the ages, those who perished in the Holocaust, and those who built the modern State of Israel.

By invoking our ancestors, the *Avot v'Imahot* is the moral link between the generations, reminding us that our individual actions affect the whole community.

The *Avot v'Imahot* also encourages us to examine our concepts of what God means. As no two people interpret poetry in the same way, so too does each person have a unique concept of God. Just as each of our ancestor's relationship with God was different, it is natural and proper that each of us now creates our own relationship with God.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב.
אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָה, אֱלֹהֵי רִבְקָה, אֱלֹהֵי רָחֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי לֵאָה.
הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל עֶלְיוֹן,
גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים,
וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חֲסֵדֵי אֲבוֹת וְאִמּוֹת,
וּמְבִיא גְּאֻלָּה לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה.
מְלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמַגֵּן.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מֶגֶן אַבְרָהָם וְעִזְרַת שָׂרָה.

*Ba-rukh a-tah Adonai, Eh-lo-hey-nu vey-lo-hey a-vo-tey-nu v'ee-mo-tey-nu,
eh-lo-hey Av-ra-ham, eh-lo-hey Yitz-khak, vey-lo-hey Ya-a-kov.
Eh-lo-hey Sa-rah, eh-lo-hey Riv-kah, eh-lo-hey Ra-khel vey-lo-hey Ley-ah.
Ha-eyl ha-ga-dol ha-gee-bor v'ha-no-rah, Eyl el-yon,
go-meyl kha-sa-deem to-veem,
v'ko-ney ha-kol, v'zo-kher khas-dey ah-vot v'ee-ma-hot,
u'mey-vee g'u-lah liv-ney v'ney-hem l'ma-an sh'mo b'a-ha-vah.
Me-lekh o-zeyr u-mo-shee-a u-ma-geyn.
Ba-rukh a-tah Adonai, ma-geyn Av-ra-ham v'ez-rat Sa-rah.*

Praised be our God, the GOD OF OUR FATHERS AND OUR MOTHERS:
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob;
God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Rachel and God of Leah;
great, mighty, and awesome God, God supreme.
Ruler of all the living, Your ways are ways of love.
You remember the faithfulness of our ancestors,
and in love bring redemption to their children's children for the sake of Your Name.
You are our Sovereign and our Help, our Redeemer and our Shield.
We praise You, Eternal One, Shield of Abraham, Protector of Sarah.

The Berditchever Rebbe, a leader of Hasidim, explained to his followers, "Those who seek God in prayer and in the deeds of their lives will receive in return the strength to serve God further." This can be interpreted to mean that those who seek God through prayer and performing *mitzvot* can find new strength, hope and courage through God's inspiration and love. Performing *tzedakah*, acts of righteousness, gives strength at times of suffering by causing us to focus our energy on those who are less fortunate and are needy, thereby providing new insights and fortitude to our own lives. We are taught that when we give of ourselves to others, it is as if we received from God the ways and means to heal and free ourselves from what ails our own souls.

The *Gevurot* reminds us of God's mercy through wondrous deeds that provide for the needs of every living thing. Tradition holds that God's mercy extends even after death.

Origins found in Psalms 145:14, 146:7–8; Daniel 12:2; and I Samuel 2:6.

Gevurot God's Might

אַתָּה גִּבּוֹר לְעוֹלָם, אֲדֹנָי, מַחֲיָה הַכֹּל אֶתָּה רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

A-tah gee-bor l'o-lam, Adonai, m'kha-yey ha-kol a-tah, rav l'ho-shee-ab.

(winter) מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם.

Mah-sheev ha-roo-akh oo-mo-reed ha-ga-shem.

(summer) מוֹרִיד הַטֵּל.

Mo-reed ha-tahl.

מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחֶסֶד, מַחֲיָה הַכֹּל בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים,

סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא חוֹלִים, וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים,

וּמַקְיֵם אֲמוּנָתוֹ לִישְׁנֵי עָפָר.

מִי כִמְדוּךְ בַּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת? וּמִי דוֹמָה לָךְ?

מִלֶּךְ מַמִּית וּמַחֲיָה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה.

וְנֶאֱמַן אֶתָּה לְהַחְיֹת הַכֹּל. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מַחֲיָה הַכֹּל.

M'khal-keyl kha-yeem b'khe-sed, m'kha-yey ha-kol b'ra-kha-meem ra-beem,

so-meykh nof-leem, v'ro-feh kho-leem, u-ma-teer a-soo-reem,

oom-ka-yeym eh-moo-na-to lee-shey-ney a-far.

Mee kha-mo-kha ba-al g'voo-rot? U-mee do-meh lakh?

Me-lekh mey-meet oom-kha-yeh u-matz-mee-akh y'shoo-ah.

V'ne-eh-mahn a-tah l'ha-kha-yot ha-kol. Ba-rukh a-tah Adonai, m'kha-yay ha-kol.

ETERNAL IS YOUR MIGHT, O God, and great is Your saving power.

(winter) You cause the wind to shift and rain to fall.

(summer) You rain dew upon us.

In love You sustain the living; in Your great mercy, You sustain us all.

You uphold the falling and heal the sick; free the captive,

and keep faith with Your children in death as in life.

We praise You, Eternal One, the Source of life.

Who is like You, Master of Might? Who is Your equal?

O Eternal of life and death, Source of salvation. Praised be You, O God, You give life to all.

קדושה

Kedushah

Sanctification

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ,
וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יִהְיֶה לְךָ סֵלָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

*A-tah ka-dosh v'shim-kha ka-dosh,
ook-do-sheem b'khol yom y'ha-l'lu-kha se-lah.
Ba-rukh a-tah Adonai, he-Eyl ha-ka-dosh.*

YOU ARE HOLY, Your Name is holy,
and Your holy ones declare Your glory day by day.
Blessed is Adonai, the Holy God.

ONCE THERE WAS A TRAVELER. One night, tired and hungry,
he stopped at a lovely, spacious farmhouse, and asked to stay the night.
Turned away, the traveler noticed a small house across the field.
Its occupant welcomed the traveler, saying,
“You may stay if you are willing to put up with what we have.”
Two very small rooms, no rug on the floor, no window shades,
and not a piece of furniture worth more than a few dollars.
There was a bed, a rickety table, an old stove, and a few broken chairs.
Upon leaving the next morning, the traveler told a friend,
“My host had nothing, and gave me half ... and we both had abundance!”
—Anon.