AMIDAH

The traditional Amidah follows here. Directed meditations begin on page 725. A short Amidah can be found on page 730. The Amidah is traditionally recited while standing, beginning with three short steps forward and bowing left and right, a reminder of our entry into the divine presence. For additional readings see pages 737-738, 740-748, 752-759.

Open my lips, Beloved One,
and let my mouth declare your praise.

1. AVOT VE’IMOT / ANCESTORS

Blessed are you, The Ancient One, our God, God of our ancestors,

God of Abraham        God of Sarah
God of Isaac           God of Rebekah
God of Jacob           God of Rachel
and God of Leah;

__________________________________________

COMMENTARY. A. J. Heschel has said, “The term, ‘God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’ is semantically different from a term such as ‘the God of truth, goodness, and beauty.’ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob do not signify ideas, principles or abstract values. Nor do they stand for teachers or thinkers, and the term is not to be understood like that of ‘the God of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling.’ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not principles to be comprehended but lives to be continued. The life of one who joins the covenant of Abraham continues the life of Abraham. For the present is not apart from the past. ‘Abraham is still standing before God’ (Genesis 18:22). Abraham endures forever. We are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” In this same spirit, we are also Sarah and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah. L.W.K.

KAVANAH. The introductory words (Psalm 51:17) of the Amidah contain a paradox of divine and human power. Our ability to be whole, upright, free, and fully alive grows as we acknowledge and appreciate an infinitely higher source of power in the universe. This allows us to be receptive. By acknowledging our human vulnerability, we open our hearts to the support, compassion, and faithfulness available around us. S.P.W.
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"The Prayer, is the central prayer of the worship service. The language and manner of reciting the Tefillah offer insights into the place of the individual in communal prayer. When the Tefillah is recited privately, each individual stands (hence the name Amidah, "standing") and addresses God in a sustained conversational way. Calling God "you" indicates intimacy and immediacy. Nevertheless, the individual prays with the communal voice: "We acknowledge you," "Bless us," "Grant us peace." The Mishnah provides the structure within which additional prayers and petitions are placed. Even an individual's private needs have importance within the communal context.

Throughout the centuries the pursuit of meaningful communal prayer has led to variations in the Amidah. These variations reflect the attitudes and beliefs of different prayer communities. In the ongoing pursuit of meaningful prayer for a Reconstructionist prayer community, changes have been introduced into this Amidah, most notably in the first two of the seven berahot which comprise the Shabbat Amidah. The first berahah has been expanded to include the matriarchs along with the patriarchs as exemplars of God's presence in human lives. By concentrating on examples of healing forces and life-sustaining rains, the second berahah acknowledges God as the power that sustains life. The traditional emphasis on God's ability to resurrect the dead has been replaced here by a celebration of God as the power that sustains all life.

S.S.
great, heroic, awesome God, supreme divinity, 
imparting deeds of kindness, begetter of all; 
mindful of the loyalty of Israel’s ancestors, 
bringing, with love, redemption to their children’s children 
for the sake of the divine name.

*On Shabbat Shuvah add:* 
(Remember us for life, 
sovereign who wishes us to live, 
and write us in the Book of Life, 
for your sake, ever-living God.)

Regal One, our help, salvation, and protector: 
Blessed are you, KIND ONE, 
the shield of Abraham and help of Sarah.

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ה枣庄 sarah. The biblical term *ezer* has two meanings, “rescue” and “be strong.” It is commonly translated as “aid” or “help.” It also has the sense of power and strength. In Deuteronomy 33:29, *ezer* is parallel to נחום, majesty. Eve is described as Adam’s *ezer kenegdo*, a power equal to him, a strength and majesty to match his. Thus *magen avraham* (shield of Abraham) and *ezrat sarah* (help of Sarah) are parallel images of power and protection.

R.S.A.

KAVANAH. God is experienced as יהוה, helper, every time our thought of God furnishes us an escape from the sense of frustration and supplies us with a feeling of permanence in the midst of universal flux.

M.M.K. (ADAPTED)
In each age
we receive and transmit
Torah.
At each moment
we are addressed by the
World.
In each age
we are challenged
by our ancient teaching.
At each moment
we stand face to face with
Truth.
In each age
we add our wisdom
to that which has gone before.
At each moment
the knowing heart
is filled with wonder.
In each age
the children of Torah
become its builders
and seek to set the world firm
on a foundation of Truth.

R.M.S.
2. GEVUROT / DIVINE POWER

You are forever powerful, ALMIGHTY ONE, abundant in your saving acts.

In summer: You send down the dew.

In winter: You cause the wind to blow and rain to fall.

In loyalty you sustain the living, nurturing the life of every living thing, upholding those who fall, healing the sick, freeing the captive, and remaining faithful to all life held dormant in the earth. Who can compare to you, almighty God, who can resemble you, the source of life and death, who makes salvation grow?

(On Shabbat Shuvah add: Who can compare to you, source of all mercy, remembering all creatures mercifully, decreeing life!)

Faithful are you in giving life to every living thing. Blessed are you, THE FOUNT OF LIFE, who gives and renews life.

3. KEDUSHAT HASHEM / NAMING THE HOLY

Holy are you. Your name is holy. And all holy beings hail you each day. Blessed are you, AWESOME ONE, the holy God.

(On Shabbat Shuvah conclude: the holy sovereign.)

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COMMENTARY. We acknowledge the presence of God in the natural rhythms of passing seasons. Our awareness of wind, rain, and dew as daily miracles also serves to remind us that the purity of these gifts, so vital for our survival, must be maintained by human watchfulness. In thanking God for air and water, we assert our commitment to preserving them as sources of life and protecting them from life-destroying pollution. The mention of rain or dew follows the two-season climate of Eretz Yisra’el; summer extends from the first day of Pesah until Shemini Atzeret, and winter until the following Pesah.

A.G.
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On Shabbat Shuvah add:

(מו' יבנהו אב תרהמיס ובר יגנרי לחיים ברהמיס)

וּגְאִאְמָה אוֹתָהּ לְהָתִיוּת בֵּלָהּ: בֹּרְאָה אַתָּה יְהוָה מַחְיָה בַּלָּהּ

(כּוֹרְשׁ הַחַשֶּׁם)

אַמְתָּה כּוֹרְשׁ בֶּשָּׁהָ כּוֹרְשׁ וְקָדְשׁוֹתָהּ בֵּכֵל לוֹ בָּלָהָ כּוֹרְשׁ: בֹּרְאָה

אַמְתָּה יְהוָה נָאָל כּוֹרְשׁ:

← (On Shabbat Shuvah conclude: הָפְלַח כּוֹרְשׁ)
4. KEDUSHAT HAYOM / THE DAY’S HOLINESS

You sanctified the seventh day, your signature upon completion of the heavens and the earth. You made it most blessed of all days, declared it holiest of times. Thus is it written in your Torah:

Heaven, earth, and all their beings were finished. God completed on the seventh day the work that had been done, and ceased upon the seventh day from all the work that had been done. God blessed the seventh day and set it apart. For on it God had ceased from all the work that had been done in carrying out Creation.

Our God, our ancients’ God, take pleasure in our rest. Enable us to realize holiness through your mitzvot, give us our portion in your Torah, let us enjoy the good things of your world, and gladden us with your salvation. Refine our hearts to serve you honestly. Help us to perpetuate, Dear One our God, your holy Shabbat, with love and joy. Let all Israel, and all who treat your name as holy, rest upon this day. Blessed are you, Sacred One, source of the holiness of Shabbat.

DERASH. We ask God to remove the impurities that have collected in our minds so that we might be truthful enough to serve God. What are these impurities, these false coverings? They are the myth of isolation, the denial of interrelatedness, the prideful pretense that we are alone and abandoned in the cosmos. S.P.W.

DERASH. The creation of the world is not completed so long as we have not fulfilled our creative function in it. M.M.K.

Heaven... Creation (Genesis 2:1-3).
KAVANAH. Through our observance of Shabbat, we shall come to know God as the source of salvation. In that state of being, our powers are harmoniously employed in the achievement of worthwhile aims.

M.M.K. (ADAPTED)

COMMENTARY. One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *kadosh*, a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and the majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

It is indeed a unique occasion at which the word *kadosh* is used for the first time: in the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time. “And God blessed the seventh day and made it *kadosh*. “ There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of *kedushah*, holiness.

A.J.H.
5. AVODAH / WORSHIP

Take pleasure, Gracious One, our God, in Israel your people; lovingly accept their fervent prayer. May Israel’s worship always be acceptable to you.

(When Shabbat coincides with a Rosh Ḥodesh or Festival, add: Our God, our ancients’ God, may our prayer arise and come to you, and be beheld, and be acceptable. Let it be heard, acted upon, remembered—the memory of us and all our needs, the memory of our ancestors, the memory of messianic hopes, the memory of Jerusalem your holy city, and the memory of all your kin, the house of Israel, all surviving in your presence. Act for goodness and grace, for love and care, for life, well-being and peace, on this day of

On Rosh Ḥodesh: the new moon.
On Pesah: the festival of matzot.
On Sukkot: the festival of sukkot.

KAVANAH. Prayer itself is the divinity.

PINHAS OF KORETZ

הזכורת ימה משל מארק / the memory of messianic hopes. We assert our faith in the coming of a messianic age, a time when justice will reign and all humanity will be united in recognition of the one God. Even in our people’s darkest hour, this vision of the future strengthened us as we faced both life and death. However distanced we may be from the more naïve aspects of belief in the person of messiah, the vision of a transformed future remains our guide, just as we know that the vision will become reality only if our deeds reflect it.

A.G.
When Shabbat coincides with a Rosh Hodesh or Festival, add:

**On Rosh Hodesh:**

**On Pesah:**

**On Sukkot:**

The external mouthing of words alone cannot move us. It is the inward flame of devotion that brings our prayer close to God. Indeed, as the Hebrew phrasing vividly conveys, a passionate longing for godliness can exist among those unable to express that feeling in words. The phrase *lahav tefilatam*, “the flame of Israel’s prayer,” recalls that feeling of *kitlahavut*: the “in-burning” flame of passionate devotion. To attain *kitlahavut* in prayer is to soar with the rapturous ecstasy of divine communion, to access the infinite and be aflame with the nearness of God.

A.G./M.P.

99 / AMIDAH
Remember us this day, All-Knowing One, our God, for goodness. Favor us this day with blessing. Preserve us this day for life. With your redeeming, nurturing word, be kind and generous. Act tenderly on our behalf, and grant us victory over all our trials. Truly, our eyes turn toward you, for you are a providing God; gracious and merciful are you.)

And may our eyes behold your homecoming, with merciful intent, to Zion. Blessed are you, The Faithful One, who brings your presence home to Zion.

6. HODA’AH / THANKS

We give thanks to you that you are The All-Merciful, our God, God of our ancestors, today and always. A firm, enduring source of life, a shield to us in time of trial, you are ever there, from age to age. We acknowledge you, declare your praise, and thank you for our lives entrusted to your hand, our souls placed in your care, for your miracles that greet us every day, and for your wonders and the good things that are with us every hour, morning, noon, and night. Good One, whose kindness never stops, Kind One, whose loving acts have never failed—always have we placed our hope in you.

KAVANAH. So long as the Jewish people is linked in communion with the eternal, it can look forward to an eternal life for itself. M.M.K. (ADAPTED)

KAVANAH. Gratitude is the overwhelming experience of the person of faith. Faith stimulates gratitude, and the practice of gratitude expands faith. We experience thankfulness when we know that our lives are safe within God’s protection. We trust that the future is assured. We need not consume our days in fear and anxiety. We are released. We can marvel at the daily wonders.

S.P.W.
DERASH. The insights of wonder must be constantly kept alive. Since there is a need for daily wonder, there is a need for daily worship. The sense of the “miracles which are daily with us,” the sense of the “continual marvels,” is the source of prayer. There is no worship, no music, no love, if we take for granted the blessings or defeats of living . . . . The profound and perpetual awareness of the wonder of being has become a part of the religious consciousness of the Jew.

A.J.H.
(On Hanukah add: For the miracles, for the redemption, for heroic acts, for saving deeds, for consolations, all of which you have enacted for our ancestors at this time of year in days gone by—as in the days of Matthew, son of Yoḥanan, Hasmonean High Priest, and Matthew’s sons: a wicked Hellenistic government arose against your people Israel, forcing them to shun your Torah and to leave off from the laws your will ordained. And you, in your abundant mercy, stood up for Israel in their hour of distress. You pressed their claim, exacted justice for them. You delivered armed might to the weak, the many to the power of the few, the wicked to the power of the just, the vicious to the power of those occupied with Torah. You made known your name that day, and made it holy in your world. And for your people Israel you enacted great deliverance, as in our own time. Afterward, your children came into your Temple’s inner room. They cleared your sanctuary, purified your holy place, kindled lights inside your holy courtyards, and established these eight days of Hanukah, for giving thanks and praise to your great name.)

For all these things, may your name be blessed and raised in honor always, sovereign of ours, forever.

(On Shabbat Shuvah add: And write down for a good life all the people of your covenant.)

Let all of life acknowledge you! May all beings praise your name in truth, O God, our rescue and our aid. Blessed are you, The Gracious One, whose name is good, to whom all thanks are due.←

SHABBAT MA’ARIV / 102
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On Hanukah add:

(On Shabbat Shuvah add: 

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7. BIRKAT HASHALOM / BLESSING FOR PEACE

Grant abundant peace eternally for Israel, your people. For you are the sovereign source of all peace. So, may it be a good thing in your eyes to bless your people Israel, and all who dwell on earth, in every time and hour, with your peace.

(On Shabbat Shuvah add: In the book of life, blessing, peace, and proper sustenance, may we be remembered and inscribed, we and all your people, the house of Israel, for a good life and for peace.)

Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, maker of peace.

The Amidah traditionally concludes with bowing and taking three steps back.

אַהֲוָּה כּל יוֹשֵׁבֶת חַבַּל / and all who dwell on earth. According to the sages, every Amidah must conclude with a prayer for peace and an acknowledgement of God as the power that makes for peace. Inclusion of the words “and all who dwell on earth” proclaims that Israel desires the blessing of peace, not for itself alone, but for all humanity. S.S.

עֶמֶשׁ חָשָׁל / Maker of peace. This ancient version of the prayer for peace in its most universal form was assigned in the traditional liturgy to the ten days of teshuvah. During the year the text read, “who blesses your people Israel with peace.” In our times, when life has been transformed by the constant threat of global destruction, the need of the hour calls for the more universal form of the prayer throughout the year. A.G.

KAVANAH. God is shalom. God’s name is shalom, everything is held together by shalom. ZOHAR

My God, you are salam peace.
Peace comes from you goes back to you.
Let us live in peace and with peace.
You are great and generous. SIDI SHEIKH MUHAMMAD AL JEMAL

SHABBAT MA’ARIV / 104
Shalom rav al yisra’el ameha tasim le’olam.
Ki atah hu melekh adon levolah.
Vetov be’eyneha levareh et ameha yisra’el
ve’et kol yoshvey tevel
be’ol et uvehol sha’ah bishlomeha.

On Shabbat Shuvah add:

(Besefer hayim bera’ah veshalom ufarnasah tovah
niza’her venikatev lefaneha
anahnu vehol ameha beyt yisra’el
lehayim tovim ulshalom.)

Bareh atah adonay osey hashalom.

The Amidah traditionally concludes with bowing and taking three steps back.
ELOHAY NETZOR/A CONCLUDING MEDITATION

Dear God, protect my tongue from evil, 
and my lips from telling lies. 
May I turn away from evil 
and do what is good in your sight. 
Let me be counted among those who seek peace. 
May my words of prayer 
and my heart's meditation be seen favorably, 
BELOVED ONE, my rock and my redeemer. 
May the one who creates harmony above 
make peace 
for us and for all Israel, 
and for all who dwell on earth. 
And say: Amen.

COMMENTARY. The Talmud lists examples of twelve personal meditations that could follow the Amidah. If this one does not speak to you, compose your own, or stand or sit in silent meditation. 

NOTE. Like the opening verse of the Amidah, this prayer employs the singular and deals with the power of words. But here the concern is for words between people, not for those directed to God. Some people find it easier to talk to God than to talk to others.

KAVANAH. Sin is the failure to live up to the best that is in us. It means that our souls are not attuned to the divine—that we have betrayed God.

M.M.K. (ADAPTED)

ויודע... והנהLEE / May... redeemer (Psalm 19:15).
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Yihyu leratzon imrey fi vehegyon libi lefaneха adonay tzuri vego’ali.
Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya’asheh shalom aleynu ve’al kol yisra’el ve’al kol yoshvey tevel ve’imru amen.