

# The Amidah Paraphrased

## *- Introduction - The Partnership*

***Adonai (Master), open my lips and my mouth will speak Your praises.***  
(Psalm 51:17)

We begin the *Amidah* by recognizing our total dependence upon God and our partnership with G-d. Although we pray to God we also pray *with* God. Our very ability to speak to Him is coming from Him this very moment.

When you say, “*Adonai*, open up my lips,” contemplate how all your 17 facial muscles miraculously work with perfect coordination to shape your lips to express every letter and syllable. How wondrous is the ability to speak! Who taught you to do that? Who empowers you to do that? *Adonai*—the Master Self.

When you feel God’s presence in your every move—how truly it is He who opens your mouth—your mouth will automatically speak His praises. These praises will not only be *about* Him, but mysteriously you will experience these praises coming *from* Him. When you align your will with His will, you become His mouthpiece and His presence will reverberate in every word from your mouth.

***Master, You open up my lips*** ...I know this prayer is a partnership between us—You open my mouth with Your wisdom and skill ***and my mouth will*** then automatically ***speak Your praise***—**let me use my power of speech** to exalt You and as Your mouthpiece to channel Your glorious presence.

***-1-***

## ***God: The All-Loving***

*In this first praise we acknowledge that God is personal, ever-present and loving. We pray with confidence because we know He cares. He shields us from His overwhelming presence so that we can have our own presence, so we can stand before Him, express ourselves and enjoy a loving relationship.*

***Blessed be You, YHVH*** ...May You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, who is personal and ever-present, be abundantly manifest as *Eloheinu*—**our God**, Creator and Judge—caring about us, empowering us and responding to our choices and deeds ... ***and*** may You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, be abundantly manifest as ***the God of our fathers***,

***the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob***, reassuring us that even if we are unworthy, in the merit of our forefathers, You are listening to our prayers and giving us individual attention as You did for them. May You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, be abundantly manifest as ***the Great, Mighty and Awesome Divine Power, the lofty Supreme Power***; the Ultimate Force behind the universe, beyond all personification, Who nonetheless personally ***nurtures us with good kindness*** as our loving parent (without detracting from our self-worth) ***and*** while being lovingly ***possessive of all***. ***And*** may You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, be abundantly manifest as One who ***remembers*** (cherishes) ***the kindness of our forefathers*** towards Him ***and***, in appreciation, ***brings a redeemer to us, the children of their children***, to restore our self-worth, ***lovingly, for the sake of His name*** so that we can become His significant other, empowered to comfortably address Him by name. May You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, be abundantly manifest as ***a King who helps*** us, His nation, ***and saves*** us, even when we don't deserve it, ***and shields*** us from Your overwhelming and all-pervasive presence so that ***we can enjoy*** a loving relationship with You. ***Blessed be You, YHVH ...*** May You, Ultimate Timeless Reality, be abundantly manifest as the ***Shield of Abraham***, concealing Your endless presence, so that we can retain our own presence in Your presence and confidently stand before You in prayer just as did Abraham, who was the first to stand before You, assert himself in prayer and enjoy a personal and empowering relationship with You.

*The more we believe and acknowledge this truth about God, the more we will experience Him as such in our life.*

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## ***God: The All Powerful***

*In this second praise we affirm that God not only cares about us but He is also able to help us. However, we also acknowledge that God's help may come over time because He is committed to the gradual process of the life cycle. Knowing this we will pray with trust and patience.*

***You are forever powerful, God ...***even when things look chaotic and out of control, You are still in charge. ***You revive the dead ...*** even when things look totally hopeless, You can miraculously revive even the dead. ***You are abundant in your salvation ...*** even if I am not worthy to receive what I'm about to ask for, You can overcome Your own attribute of justice ***and answer my prayer***. ***You bring the dew and rain ...*** ***Just as You bring the dew and rain in its time and in proper measure, You overcome Your inclination to shower us with blessings, and instead, bring blessings to us with restraint, at the right time and in the right increments.*** Although we pray with confidence, we also pray with patience because we know that ***You gratuitously support life***, which is a life-long process. Everyday ***You compassionately revive the dead***, waking us each morning from our sleep (a kind of death). ***You lift up the downfallen***, energizing us to arise from our beds. ***You heal the sick, enabling our bodily functions.*** ***And You free those who are bound up***, empowering us to move about freely. And just as we know this to be true and experience this daily, we know

that **You fulfill Your commitment to those who sleep in the dust**—who are literally dead. **You are a King who causes death and brings about life** at the same time, **and causes salvation to grow**. We will never despair because we know that salvation is a growth process. Although seeds deteriorate in the ground, what seems to be death to us is actually the beginning of a flourishing new life. And we know that **You are committed to reviving the dead**. **Blessed be You YHVH** ...May You be abundantly manifest Yourself **as one who revives the dead**.

*The more we believe and acknowledge this truth about God, the more we will experience Him as such in our life.*

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### **God: The All Mysterious**

*In this third praise we accept that although we just described God as all-loving and all-powerful He truly transcends all descriptions and limitations. We affirm that there is none other than Him—no one else to turn to for help but Him. We acknowledge that our existence and relationship with Him is a complete mystery; He is paradoxically both beyond us and yet manifest within us. These truths inspire us to pray with passion, wonder and awe.*

**You are Holy** ... You transcend all descriptions and limitations. You are beyond all and within all. You are absolute eternal existence. There is no one else but You **and** yet, paradoxically, **Your name is Kadosh**—You have a name which necessitates the existence of others who can call to You. Although there is no one else but You, mysteriously, we somehow exist, relate to You and address You as *Kadosh*. **And the holy ones** (angels and those of us who fulfill the command to be *kadoshim*) **each and every day eternally praise You**. Not only are we able to enjoy a relationship with You, we can become holy like You and partake in Your absolute eternal existence. And we will forever exalt You with endless praise because we will never fully capture in words Your incomprehensible holiness—how You are the holy of holies, the One Holy who includes us, the many holies. **Blessed be You, YHVH** ...May You be abundantly manifest **as the Power of the Holy** (transcendent of all limitations).

*The more we believe and acknowledge this truth about God, the more we will experience Him as such in our life.*

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### **Grant us the power to pray**

*In this first request we ask for daat which is the purpose of all intellectual pursuit—the power to know and want what is truly worth wanting. Daat empowers us to make our prayers real.*

*After three blessings of praise it would be inappropriate to suddenly switch to making requests. Therefore, we start with a praise and end with a request, gradually and humbly transitioning from praising God to petitioning God.*

**You grace Adam** (people who already have foresight and insight) **with daat**, the power to know and want what is truly worth wanting. **And You** even **teach Enosh** (mortals who only have foresight but lack both *daat* and *bina*), **bina** (insight). However, we are less than an *Adam* and an *Enosh*. We, therefore, humbly ask: **Grace us from Yourself** with **daat** (knowing), **bina** (insight) **and** even **heskeil** (foresight). Grace us with the wisdom to know and want You. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...** May You be abundantly manifest as the one **Who graciously bestows** right now **daat**, the power to know what to want, the ability to make our prayers real.

*The more we believe that God is always sharing His wisdom with us, and the more we sincerely want to be enlightened, the more His wisdom can penetrate us and inspire us to pray with clarity and sincerity.*

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## ***Empower us to Return to You***

*The overall theme of the Amidah is our desire to return and reconnect with God in teshuva. The subsequent requests are rooted in this one basic desire, expounding upon it in detail. We pray for a personal, national and global return to God, as well as God's return to us.*

*In this request we address God as our Father and our King, expressing, more than before, a sense of our own significance and stature in God's presence. If God is our Father, then we are His children. And if God is our King, then we are His kingdom. Since there is no such thing as a king without a kingdom, we and our prayers are indeed important to God. With each passing request of the Amidah, we feel more and more confident to stand before God and make requests of Him. To pray effectively, we need more than belief in God—we also need to believe in ourselves; we need to believe that we are worthy to pray.*

**Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah ...** As our compassionate Father, get us back on track by gently teaching us Your Torah so that we can actualize ourselves as Your children and live in tandem with Your ideals and values. Hopefully, we will choose to do the work we need to do. But if we don't, then **bring us close, our King, to Your work**. Use a little more force. Show us what we need to do to actualize ourselves as Your royal subjects, **empowered as your emissaries**. Put Your Torah into action and transform this world from a wild jungle into Your holy kingdom. But, if we still don't change to take action, then **return us in complete teshuva before You ...** do whatever it takes to get us to come back to You. More than just knowing the Torah's principles and doing Your work, we want to achieve complete *teshuva* and always experience ourselves as "before You"—to be fully present in Your presence. Empower us to be completely attuned and lovingly responsive to Your call to us in every situation, so that we will not only live according to the commandments given at

Sinai but also fulfill the **unique mission inherent in** each moment of our lives.

***Blessed be You, YHVH ...*** May You, God, be abundantly manifest as ***the One who wants teshuva***, as the One and Only Wellspring from which flows at this very moment the desire for *teshuva*—for individual, national, global and divine return. We acknowledge that the very desire for *teshuva* that we are expressing now and will express in the upcoming requests is really a manifestation of Your own will for *teshuva*.

*The more we believe that God is the source of all will for teshuva, and the more we sincerely desire personal, national, global and universal teshuva, the more our prayers will channel His will to affect change.*

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## ***Forgive Us***

*Our first request was for daat (the power to realize what we want), because without daat, we cannot pray. Our second request was for teshuva (return to God), the root of all the other requests. We now ask for selicha (forgiveness) and mechila (pardon) which are the first steps in the journey of teshuva. Our misbehavior has violated our relationship with God, and for this, we need to ask forgiveness. However, our deliberate wrongdoings have also incurred consequences which need God's pardon.*

*Unlike the requests for daat and teshuva, here we make a case for our right to ask this "because You are one who pardons and forgives." This bold move indicates a change in our stature—an added degree of self-worth and empowerment. We feel more able to fulfill the purpose of the Amidah—to confidently stand in God's presence and enjoy a personal loving relationship with Him.*

***Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned ...*** As Your children, we are expected to act in a way that is honorable and becoming of You. When we do wrong, our actions reflect poorly on You. Although we are an expression of You, created in Your image, we have not acted accordingly and betrayed that privilege. We have been disrespectful and ungrateful; we have violated Your love for us. ***Pardon us, our King, for we have willfully sinned.*** We have not only done wrong but intentionally rebelled and, therefore, also deserve to suffer serious consequences. **But,** we ask You as our Father to forgive us for violating Your love and giving You a bad name. We also ask You to pardon us as our King because we have caused damage to Your kingdom and should rightfully pay the penalty, but because You are the King, You have the power and jurisdiction to overrule any legal consequences we have incurred. We know that we can make these requests ***because You are one who pardons and forgives;*** this is who You are, this is what You do. Consider our wrongdoing as an opportunity for You to make manifest Your attributes of forgiveness and pardoning. We are not asking You do it for our sake—we know we don't deserve that. Rather, forgive and pardon us for Your sake, to reveal Yourself. Our sins afford You the possibility to

display Your power to forgive and pardon, to show us Your unconditional love. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...**May You, God, be manifest as, **the abundant gracious forgiver.**

*The more we believe that God always seeks to forgive us, and the more we sincerely want His forgiveness, the more we will experience His loving forgiving presence embracing and filling us.*

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### **Grant Us Personal Redemption**

*Even though we've asked for forgiveness and pardoning, we still do not feel good about ourselves. We are failures and suffer self-inflicted spiritual pain by living conflicted lives when what we think, do and say do not match our true selves. Therefore, we ask God to **heal** our afflicted grieving soul, redeem us and restore our self-respect.*

*As compared to the meek and humble formulation of the first two requests, and the only slightly more asserting third request, here we boldly assert, "Behold our afflictions, take up our grievances." Although we are asking God to restore our lost self-worth, we nonetheless feel powerful enough to say to God, "Behold!" This is because we are asking for God's own sake, as the prayer continues, "and redeem us quickly for Your name's sake," implying: "so that we can confidently stand before You and call to You."*

**Behold** (pay attention and empathize with) **our afflictions.** We not only betrayed You but also ourselves. We were not only disrespectful to You but to ourselves. Because we committed a wrong, we now feel bad about ourselves. Who we are on the outside is not who we really want to be on the inside. Therefore, we are conflicted and afflicted. **Take up our grievance.** Estranged from our soul's natural desire, we now suffer much inner torment and psychic distress. We are no longer at home with our inner selves; we are lost in our self-imposed spiritual exile. **And redeem us quickly ...** we recognize that forgiveness alone cannot fix the damage we have done to our self-worth, we need personal redemption, recovery and renewal of our self-respect and self-esteem. We ask that You do this **for Your name's sake.** If we remain afflicted souls who are unworthy to call to You, then Your name becomes irrelevant and the purpose of creation is lost. You created the world for the sake of Your name so that others can call to You and enjoy a loving relationship with You. Therefore, we ask You, God, to redeem us, help us regain our self-respect so that we can confidently and comfortably call to You, stand in Your presence and fully return to You in love. We also have a mission to spread Your name to the rest of the world and teach others that they, too, can call to You. If, however, we feel like failures, where will we get the confidence to fulfill our destiny? Therefore, we ask You, God, to redeem us for Your name's sake, so that we can not only enjoy a loving relationship with You but also

accomplish our mission of promoting Your name in the world. Do this **because You are a strong redeemer**, and this is an opportunity for You to reveal this truth about Yourself. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...**May You be manifest as one **who is redeeming Israel** right now.

*The more we believe that God is always restoring our self-worth, and the more we sincerely want personal redemption, the more His blessings for renewal and empowerment can penetrate us.*

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### **Heal us, Your nation**

*Once we have asked for the power to know what to want (daat), the power to change (teshuva), forgiveness (selicha) and personal redemption (geula) we now ask for healing and health (refuah). We ask God to heal us from the spiritual and physical ailments our transgressions have caused us, and not only as a matter of personal concern—we ask also as members of God’s nation in the interest of Israel’s national strength and well-being so that we can fulfill our national destiny to spread God’s name.*

*The particular formulation of this request is also very significant. Here, for the first time we address God by the name YHVH, His personal name—not just in the form of the blessing, but directly—“Heal us, YHVH.” Equate this to calling your mother or father by their first name! The use of YHVH in our request indicates that we have taken another step up in our self-confidence. We can now stand even straighter and stronger in the presence of God.*

**Heal us** of any mental disorders, **YHVH** (as only You can) **and we** (without any diminishment to our self-worth) **will be healed. Save us** from any spiritual dangers (as only You can) **and we will be saved.** You are the Master of all healing and deliverance. Even the best of doctors and the most advance medicine are only agents channeling Your healing power and deliverance. We can only be healed and saved *through* them but never *by* them. God, heal and save us **because You are our praise;** our health and well-being is vital to You. When we are mentally or spiritually sick, we cannot not properly praise You and successfully spread Your name in the world. **And bring complete healing to all of our physical wounds, because You are a Divine King, Healer who is committed and compassionate.** You are not only our Healer, but also our King, and we are Your nation. If Your nation is wounded and weak, then this reflects badly on You as our King. You need us to be healthy and strong. Without us, Your Kingship cannot be manifest in all its glory. Empower us with good health so that we can fulfill our national mission on earth—to make Your majestic presence known to all. **Blessed be You YHVH ...**May You be manifest **as one who is healing the sick of His nation Israel** right now.

*The more we believe that God (and only God) is always healing us, spiritually and physically, and the more we want to be sincerely healed, the more His blessings for health can penetrate us.*

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### ***Revitalize the Land of Israel***

*Our transgressions not only damage our personal and national well-being, they also damage the fertility of the land. We, therefore, ask God to revitalize the productivity of Land of Israel in preparation for our national renaissance as we return from the exile.*

*Here, for the first time in the Amidah, we ask God to do something just for us. We ask Him to bless the year “on our behalf” with no mention of benefit to Him (“for Your name’s sake”). We also for the first time address God as “YHVH Eloheinu.” The Divine name YHVH reminds us that God is the Ultimate Timeless Reality. The name Eloheinu, however, tells us that He is our personal God and He cares about us. These textual nuances reflect a significant increase in our experience of self-worth and God’s love for us.*

***Bless on our behalf, YHVH, our God, this year and all its various produce for good***, but only if it will bring us true goodness. Let not prosperity corrupt us and lead us away from You. ***And give blessing [or give dew and rain as a blessing] on the face of the earth.*** But again, only if we are ready, and it will lead us to true abundance ***and we are satiated with Your goodness***; only when we experience prosperity as Your goodness—as Your loving gift to us—will it truly satiate us, otherwise it’s a curse. ***And bless our year like the good years. Blessed be You, YHVH ...*** May You, God, be abundantly manifest as the one ***who is blessing the years***, so that we always feel satiated by Your goodness as manifest in prosperity. In this way our nation’s physical renewal and return to the Land of Israel will truly be part of a national spiritual return to God.

*The more we believe that prosperity is always and only coming from God, and the more we sincerely want it to lead us back to God, the more blessings of prosperity penetrate our lives to inspire national teshuva and redemption.*

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### ***Bring Us Back to Our National Home***



*We continue to focus on matters concerning national teshuva and ask God to return us to our homeland. Only in the Land of Israel can we fulfill our national destiny to be a holy nation (not just holy individuals) and a light unto the other nations.*

*We begin this prayer with a phrase—“Sound the great shofar.... Lift up a banner”—which sounds a little more like a demand compared to the humble requests we started with. And we want our return to be no less than a fanfare celebration accompanied by a great shofar and a flying banner. We want to leave the exile proudly, not as bent over Jews who would have preferred to stay in the Diaspora. We want to joyfully return in anticipation of reclaiming our national independence and fulfilling our mission.*

***Sound the great shofar for our freedom ...***awaken us to our national identity and purpose. As long as we are in exile, we are a religion, but not the priestly nation we were meant to be. Only in Israel, our homeland, are we free to fulfill our national destiny. ***Lift up a banner and gather in our exile,*** not as unwanted refugees but as proud Jews, leaving in a joyous parade and with great fanfare, celebrating our long awaited return to our home where we can finally actualize our national dream. ***And gather us in from the four corners of the earth*** to finally take our rightful place on earth to become a light unto the nations, a model state inspiring global change. ***Blessed be You, YHVH ...*** May You, God, be abundantly manifest as one ***who is gathering in the dispersed of His nation Israel*** right now.

*The more we believe that God is always redeeming us from our exile, and the more we sincerely want to return as a nation to our land, the more the blessings for national redemption can penetrate and become manifest in the events of history.*

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## ***Restore Our Statehood***

*In the interest of national teshuva we first asked that we, as members of the nation, be healthy, we then prayed that the Land of Israel yield its produce and prepare for our nation's return home, and now, we express our longing for the re-establishment of the Jewish State where God's supreme reign is obvious, where the people are guided by His values and ideals.*

***Restore our judges as at the start and our advisors as in the beginning*** when the State of Israel was governed by leaders and guided by advisors who embodied Torah ideals and values, by people who humbly acknowledged God as the Supreme Sovereign. ***And remove from us sorrowful sighing and groaning,*** the grief we endured in the exile under the reign of wicked tyrannical rulers, as well as the anguish we suffer now from corrupt leadership in Israel. ***And You, God, alone, reign over us.*** Bless the State of Israel to be a Holy Kingdom under Your sovereignty and guided by Your Torah. Protect us from becoming just another secular state governed by irreverent rulers and man-made laws. And You, God, alone, govern us in the unique

way that only You can, with both **kindness and compassion**. **And** yet ultimately **may we be justified through justice**. We are not asking for freebees. We want to get what we deserve; we want to merit what You give us. However, when we are unworthy, please be kind. And when we fall so low that we deserve just the opposite of what we ask, then please, God, be compassionate; overrule Your attribute of justice and grant our request anyway. However, in the end, we want to be justified through justice and retroactively earn what we previously received in kindness or compassion. Let us make up for our debts over time, so that we can restore our national self-worth, stand before You with integrity, and fully enjoy a relationship with You. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...** May You, God, be abundantly manifest as a **King who loves righteousness and justice**. May Your Kingdom, the State of Israel, be a model state that makes it abundantly clear to all that You are a lover of righteousness and justice, law and order, and may it inspire all others to act in kind.

*The more we acknowledge God as our Sovereign Leader and a Lover of righteousness and justice, the more His loving presence and guidance will become manifest in the daily affairs of our national life.*

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### ***Subdue Insurgents who Threaten Our Independence***

*After requesting the re-establishment of a Jewish State, exemplifying God's love for law and order, we now ask God to protect the state from rebels who seek undermine our independence and sabotage our national redemption. This request should be said with tremendous love for God and not hate for people. It expresses our hope that evil—not evil ones—be cast from the earth, that God's enemies and those who sin against Him be subdued and return to Him in teshuva.*

**And as for the slanderers**, undercover apostates and those who vilify their fellow Jews to foreign governments, **may there be no hope**, so that, realizing this, they stop scheming against us **and may all the evil** (not the enemy himself, but only his evil deeds) **in one moment be lost**. Motivated by our love for You and not because of personal vendetta, we ask: **and may all Your enemies be quickly cut off** from any backing or support that sustains their wickedness, so that they will quickly capitulate in defeat. **And all the deliberate sinners, quickly uproot** (cause them to lose their footing and falter), **break down, crush and subdue** (progressively humbling them towards total surrender and *teshuva*) **quickly in our time**. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...** May You be abundantly manifest God, **who breaks enemies and subdues deliberate sinners**.

*The more we believe that God is always breaking enemies and subduing sinners, and the more we sincerely want to free ourselves from their threat, the more the blessings for national stability can penetrate and become manifest in our national life.*

## ***Restore Religious Leadership***

*After completing our requests for our nation's physical revival, (prosperity of the land, the in-gathering of the people, statehood and protection from rebels), we now express our concern for our nation's spiritual revival. The State of Israel does not just provide for our nation's physical needs, it also serves to fulfill God's universal goals. The physical State of Israel is also meant to be a spiritual state of consciousness—a holy wellspring of inspiration for the whole world. Judges and advisors address our nation's physical prosperity, but tzaddikim and chassidim are spiritual leaders who inspire us towards spiritual growth and the fulfillment of our national mission. Tzaddikim and chassidim remind us that the State of Israel does not exist for the sole purpose of marketing hi-tech, diamonds, or agricultural products. Rather, we have returned to our land to nurture within us and export to the world emunah—dedication to the ways of God.*

***On the tzaddikim (righteous), on the chassidim (devout), on the elders of the remainder of Your people the family of Israel, on the remnants of the academy of their scholars, on the righteous converts—all those who radiate the joy of living a life dedicated to actualizing Torah values and ideals—and on ourselves, may Your compassion be aroused, YHVH, our God, and give a visible good reward to all those who trust in Your name truly, so that we can clearly recognize the benefits to those who enjoy a vibrant relationship with You, constantly calling Your name, inviting You into their lives and communing with You daily. And we will then naturally desire that You put our portion among them forever. And then we will no longer have to feel ashamed that in You we put our trust but not in Your name. Unlike the tzaddikim who trust in Your name, we had just relied on You and, therefore, did not properly actualize ourselves to contribute efforts of our own. We forgot that You empowered us to call Your name, confidently standing before You and determining with You, as Your covenantal partners, our future. Blessed are You, YHVH ... May You, God, be abundantly manifest as one who is a trust and an assurance to the tzaddikim.***

*The more we believe that God is always supporting the tzaddikim, and the more we sincerely want to be inspired by them and take our place amongst them, the more the blessing of the tzaddikim can become manifest to inspire a national spiritual renaissance.*

## ***Rebuild Jerusalem***

*Jerusalem isn't just another city in Israel. Jerusalem is the spiritual wellspring for the Jewish nation—and indeed for the whole the world. We begin this blessing with “**And Jerusalem**” because our request for the restoration of Jerusalem is a continuation of the prayer for tzaddikim. Whereas the tzaddikim inspire our people to become a Torah nation, Jerusalem inspires our people to become an exemplary spiritual nation—a light unto the nations of the world. It is through Jerusalem that the whole world enjoys a personal ongoing connection to God, as the psalmist wrote: “From Zion will come forth the Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem.”*

*Until now we prayed to God, but in this request we begin to pray for God. We ask God to come back to Jerusalem, dwell there and establish the throne of David as a precursor to global redemption.*

***And to Jerusalem, Your city** where Your presence was once most manifest, **may You return in compassion, and dwell therein as You promised.** We know that just as we were exiled by our wrongdoings, God, You too were exiled by our wrongdoings—Your presence is no longer manifest here. We now ask that You also come home, that Your presence once again be manifest in Jerusalem and from there to the whole world. **And build it, soon in our days, into a binyan olam**—an “eternal building” that lasts for eternity and a “building of eternity” which embodies eternity—where we can sense Your timeless presence. **And the throne of David, establish within it** as a precursor to global redemption when the whole world will feel Your presence everywhere. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...** May you be abundantly manifest God as one **who is building Jerusalem** right now.*

*The more we believe that God is always building Jerusalem as His center from where global redemption will unfold, and the more we sincerely want to Jerusalem to be that spiritual epicenter, the more the blessings for global redemption can become manifest.*

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### ***Expedite the Messianic Process***

*In the last prayer we asked that Jerusalem house the throne of David and become the launching headquarters for a worldwide spiritual renaissance. We now request the coming of the Messiah, the offspring of David, who will bring about global teshuva, a time when nations will not longer war with each other, and everyone will live according to the Torah's values and ideals.*

*In this prayer, however, we not only express concern for global salvation, but also for God's own redemption. At this point in the Amidah, our confidence has evolved to a very high level. We began the Amidah requesting personal redemption. We then*

*turned our concerns toward national redemption, and finally toward the redemption of the world at large. But now we pray for the salvation of God Himself.*

*May the offspring of David, your servant, flourish quickly, but not appear too suddenly. May his coming be like a growing flower, giving us time to appreciate the process and be prepared. **And enhance his pride with Your salvation**—our salvation that comes from You and Your salvation that happens to You—**because for Your salvation** (and not just our own) **we have hoped for all the day**. Because we transgressed Your will, we banished Your presence from our lives. **May the coming of the Messiah be accompanied by** Your salvation, when Your exiled presence will be restored on earth and acknowledged by us all. **Blessed be You, YHVH ...** May You be abundantly manifest God as one **who is causing the flourishing of salvation** (ours and Yours) right now.*

*The more we believe that God is always causing the flourishing of salvation, and the more we sincerely want salvation—His and ours—the more the blessings for an all-inclusive salvation can become manifest.*

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## ***Hear and Receive Our Prayers***

*This request is the culmination of all our previous requests. The prayer ends, “Blessed Be You, YHVH, Who hears prayers”—not “who answers prayers.” To know that God hears our prayers and cares about us is redemption itself. We only ask that God not send us away empty-handed, that He assure us that indeed He is our compassionate King. Our only real request is, “God, I just want to feel close to You. I know that You are listening, and I know that You will answer. I don’t know if I’ll get the answer I asked for, but that doesn’t matter, because all I want is to feel You in my life.”*

*Rather than starting with, “Listen to our words,” we assert, Shema koleinu “Listen to our voices.” In other words, “Regardless of what we say, listen to us. Just our voice should be enough for You to give us Your attention.” This is indeed a bold statement. It is difficult to imagine that our little voice holds any significance to God and yet it does—because God loves us.*

*Listen to our voices, YHVH, our God, have pity and compassion upon us. Receive as our gift to You, **with compassion and with will, our prayers**. Our gift to You, God, is our earnest **desire** to receive Your gifts, because the more receptive we are to Your blessings, the more You can give them to us. And please listen and accept our prayers **because You are a Divine Power who hears prayers and supplications**. We ask that You hear our prayers for Your sake—not ours—because when Your love for us is manifest, Your purpose for creation is fulfilled. **And from before You, our King, don’t send us away empty-handed ...**even a small indication that You are with us is enough because all along we really have but one desire—to feel Your presence. Our King, answer our meager request for Your sake, **because You listen to the prayers of***

***Your nation Israel with compassion.*** Otherwise, it will appear as if You don't care about Your own kingdom. ***Blessed be You, YHVH ...*** May You be abundantly manifest God as one ***who hears prayer*** right now. The only answer we really need to all our prayers is to know that You listen and care.

*The more we believe that God is always hearing us and caring for us, and the more we sincerely want to feel His loving presence in our lives, the more this truth becomes manifest.*

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## ***Return to Zion***

*Each request of the Amidah clarifies and awakens our desire to receive God's goodness. Our prayers, so to speak, give Him pleasure, because only when we hunger for His goodness can His blessings flow into our lives. However, more than His blessings for wisdom, health, prosperity etc., God greatest gift to us is His very Presence—to know that He is all there is and to feel completely one with Him. The sacrificial offerings **once empowered** us to awaken and express from deep within us our desire to completely give ourselves over to Him and experience His loving presence embrace and fill us. **We ask to have them restored.***

*Having previously asked for individual, national and global return to God, we now pray for God's complete return (His teshuva), "May we see (literally) with our eyes Your return to Zion." We ask this, because God promised us, "Return to Me and I will return to You."*

***Take pleasure YHVH, our God, in Your nation Israel and their prayers ...***Your pleasure comes from giving Your goodness to us and that is only possible when we truly want and pray to receive Your goodness. ***And return the service to the chamber of Your house and may the fire of Israel and their prayers, offered with love, be received with will.*** We know that prayer is only a prelude to an even greater pleasure we can give You, because of an even greater gift that we are able to receive from You. Therefore, please restore to us the sacrificial service of the Temple which ignites within us our innate burning desire to not only receive Your blessings but Your presence. The sacrificial service gave expression to our passion to give our lives completely to You, to remove the physical barriers of flesh that set us apart from You, recognizing that there is nothing but You, that we exist *within* You, a part of You. We will then experience ourselves completely subsumed and filled with Your loving presence. ***And may the service of Israel, Your nation, always be pleasing,*** always wanting Your loving presence. ***And may we see with our eyes Your return to Zion.*** We have already prayed for our personal return, the return of our nation and a global return to You, God. However, we now pray for Your complete return, the manifestation of Your complete presence in Zion, so much so that we will literally see You with our very eyes when everything and everyone is filled with Your presence. ***Blessed be You, YHVH, who is returning His Divine Presence to Zion.***

*The more we believe that God is always returning His Divine Presence, and the more we sincerely want to see Him in our lives, the more this truth becomes manifest.*

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## **Thank You**

*After our long list of requests, as we begin to bring closure to the Amidah, we acknowledge that it is truly befitting that we only give thanks to God and never complain. We remind ourselves that God is always in control, He is the Good and the Compassionate, and His kindness is never ending. He forever loves us and only seeks our best interest. Although we prayed for what is missing in our lives, we now affirm our trust in God and express our gratitude. We know that our days are filled with constant miracles and that the opportunity to simply call God's name is itself the greatest wonder and the highest good.*

*As we previously discussed, the Amidah empowers us to stand before God and enjoy a loving relationship with Him. With every request we experience an increased sense of inner strength and divine significance; we become more and more confident and assertive. After growing in stature in God's presence and standing more and more erect through 17 benedictions, we finally bow again in this blessing. We hit our peak with the previous blessing when we prayed God to return to Zion from His exile. And we asserted that we want to see Him with our very eyes and receive His presence within our midst. However, at this point we must balance out the possible dangerous side-effect of the boldness thus expressed and humbly bow to nullify any trace of possible arrogance. The goal of the Amidah is to stand confidently, yet also humbly, before God.*

*The Amidah reflects the paradox of Jewish life. We must balance ambitious efforts to affect change with humble acceptance and trust in God. Life is a dialectical dance between assertion and surrender.*

*This prayer, known as Modim ("Thank You") is not a contradiction. It simply reflects the paradox of Jewish life. In Modim, we affirm, "Yes, God, we have asked for many things, but we also know that everything in life is exactly on target and completely good. Thank You."*

**We thank You because You are He** ... Because we feel comfortable with the divine, we address God as "You," but we now must acknowledge that God is still a "He"—beyond us. We thank God for this paradoxical closeness and distance, because if He were too close we would lose ourselves, and if He were too far we would lose Him.

**We thank You** (using the feminine form of "You" here) ... we thank You for being feminine—receptive to, and affected by, our prayers—**because You are really He** (masculine). You, God, are ultimately the one who affects us, and we are the affected

recipients of your blessings. Even our power to affect Your presence in our lives through our prayers comes from You. You are the **Rock of our lives**, upon which we are completely dependent and yet also the **Shield of our salvation** protecting us from losing our sense of personal significance. **We thank You and we speak Your praises, for our lives are in Your hands and our soul is in Your charge. And for all Your miracles everyday that are with us, and for Your wonders and Your goodness in every time—morning, evening and afternoon. The Good, because Your compassion has never ended, and the Compassionate, because Your kindness has never ended. We have always put our hope in You. And above all, may Your name be blessed and exalted, our King, forever and ever.** May all the wonders and miracles in our lives not only fill us with gratitude but always inspire us towards greater awareness of Your name. May we always remember that we can readily call to You and You are always there for us. **And may all life thank You forever and genuinely praise Your name.** We hope that that the whole world will acknowledge and thank You, that all people join us in genuine praise of Your name and receive the joyous gift of Your presence in their lives **You, who are the Power, who is our salvation and our help** ... just to feel Your presence is “our salvation.”

**Blessed be You, YHVH** ...May you be abundantly manifest, God, because **‘the Good’ is Your name.** The very ability to call out to You and feel Your presence in our lives is the real goodness **and it is pleasurable and befitting to thank You.** To recognize our dependence on You and Your involvement in our life is pleasurable. Despite the fact that in our prayer we asked for things we felt were missing in our lives, we know that in truth is it befitting that we only and always thank you. In fact, we should be grateful even for those very things that we feel are missing.

*The more we believe that just to call God’s name is the ultimate good, and the more we sincerely want to feel His presence, the more this truth becomes manifest.*

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### ***Bless Us with Peace of Mind***

*The Talmud teaches that peace is the only container that can receive and hold our blessings. Sadly, we often meet people who, although they appear to have everything, lack the peace of mind to enjoy their blessings—they have no peace within themselves or with others. We, therefore, conclude with a request for peace—the power to receive and enjoy the blessings we asked for. We ask God to bless us with the light of His face, because when we glow with Godliness and see a holy radiance on the face of others, we feel inner peace and activate global peace.*

**Place peace** upon us, both inner peace and peace with others, as well as **goodness and abundance**, because inner peace requires a balance of feeling good about ourselves and yet also feeling abundant continual personal growth. And also **charm and kindness and compassion**, because peace with others requires a character blend of



charming inclusiveness that makes us attractive and trustworthy to others—a giving spirit and a warm compassionate heart. Bring all this *upon us and all of Israel, Your nation* ... as Your nation may we embody the full meaning of Your peace. *Bless us our loving Father, all of us as one person with the light of Your face.* Bless us in the same personal face-to-face manner that you blessed us at Sinai, when we stood united as one person with one heart. And bless us with the light of Your face so that our faces will be radiant with Your light and likeness—peace reigns supreme when it is obvious to each other that we are all Your children, created in Your likeness. We know we can accomplish this *because* along *with the light of Your face, You gave us, YHVH, our God, the Torah of Life*—instructions for living and all the divine ideals and values it empowers us to achieve—*the love of kindness, righteousness* (the power to judge others favorably), *blessing* (the power to increase Your light and reveal the divine presence that fills and unites us), *compassion, life and peace.* *And may it be good in Your eyes to bless Your nation Israel at every time* (good times and seemingly bad times), *and in each moment with Your peace*—not just tolerance or a cease-fire, but “Your Peace,” which is the power to respect, encourage and nurture individuality and diversification while bringing harmony and unity. *Blessed be You, YHVH ...* May you, God, be abundantly manifest as one *who is blessing His nation Israel with peace* right now.

*The more we believe that God is constantly blessing us with peace, and the more we sincerely want peace, the more God's peace comes to us and to others.*

### **- Concluding Requests - May I be Aligned with Your Will**

*May Your will become my will and may my will be in accordance with Your will*, so that I am aligned with You, wanting what You want to give me, *and may this will be reflected in the words of my mouth* (what I was able to put in words) *and the meditations of my heart* (emotions that are beyond words), *before You, YHVH, my Rock* (before whom I humbly surrender) *and my Redeemer* (before whom I stand empowered).

### **Empower Me to Put my Prayers into Action**

*My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully.* Protect me from violating my partnership with You and wasting the precious power of speech on bad talk. *And those who curse me may my soul be silent.* Protect me not only from instigating slander and lies but also from reacting badly to insults or any form of verbal abuse towards me. May my soul be quiet that I not get drawn into anyone's negativity and feel any need to lash back. *May my soul be like dust to all*, unnoticed like the dust of the earth, not seeking to draw attention to myself, so that no one will even bother to curse me. And yet like the dust of the earth, if stepped upon, may I remain indestructible, strong and ever-present. *Open my heart with Your Torah.* May my prayers inspire me to want to know more and do more—to learn more of Your

Torah and aggressively pursue opportunities to serve You better. I also ask that I hear You speak to me when I learn Your Torah and experience Your Torah open my heart not just challenge my mind. ***And may my soul run after your commandments***, driven by the most elementary force within me—always anxious to do more. ***As for all those who are plotting against me, nullify their counsel and disrupt their plans.*** Protect me from those who plot to harm me and seek to derail me from my pursuits in Torah and its commandments.

***Do this for Your name's sake.*** Protect me and empower me so that I can build and promote Your name recognition in order to inspire others to acknowledge Your presence in their lives. ***Do it for the sake of Your right hand***—see this as an opportunity to manifest Your kindness—for the sake of the Jewish People who are Your right hand-man, ready to do Your work in the world. ***Do this for the sake of Your holiness***, so that I can do my job to reveal Your holiness. ***Do it for the sake of Your Torah***, in order to actualize Your values and ideals on earth. ***For the sake of releasing Your beloved*** from all forms of bondage, ***save Your right hand and answer my prayers.*** Until now I asked You to do it for Your sake, but now I ask that You do it for my sake because I am Your beloved, Your right hand-man.

***May the words of my mouth*** (what I was able to put in words) ***and the meditations of my heart*** (feelings that are beyond words) ***become my will in Your presence, God, my Rock and Redeemer.***

*Take three steps starting with your left foot to express your reluctance to walk away from this incredible experience. And while you say the following words keep in mind that peace already exists and it is only a matter of time when it will be manifest for us on earth.*

*Bow to the left: **He who is** constantly **making peace in His highest realm ...**  
Bow to the right and confidently acknowledge: **He will make peace for us ...**  
Bow straight ahead and conclude with: **and for the entire people of Israel. Amen.***

## ***-Final Prayer- Bless Us to Serve You***

*As meaningful and uplifting our prayers can be, they still fall short of the ultimate Jewish experience. We must remember that our Jewish life is incomplete until the Temple is rebuilt; it is only then that we will enjoy our unique and personal understanding of Torah and serve God with total awe.*

***May it be Your will, YHVH, our God, and the God of our fathers that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days, and give us our portion in Your Torah, so that we may serve You with awe as in the days of old and as in former years. And may the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to God as in the days of the past and as in former years.***

