The first berachah/blessing of the Amidah/’Standing’ Prayer (Sim Shalom, Shabbat Shaharit, p.354)


Ha’el, ha-gadol, ha-gibbor, v’ha-norah el el-yon, gomel chasadim tovim, v’konei ha-kol, v-zocher chas-dei avot, u-mei-vee go’eyl liv-nei v’nei-hem l’mi’an shemo b’ahavah.

Melech o-zeir u-mo-shee-ah u-ma-gein. Baruch atah, Adonai, Ma-gein Avraham [u’fo-keid Sarah].

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors—God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob [God of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah].

The God who is great, mighty and awesome, most high God, who bestows loving kindness, Creator of all, who remembers the loyal acts of the ancestors and will send a redeemer to their children’s children in love, for such is his way.

Sovereign, Support, Redeemer and Shield! Blessed are you, Adonai, shield of Abraham [and provider to Sarah].

This is the first berachah/Blessing of the Amidah/’Standing’ Prayer which is a sequence of berachot/blessings at the core of public and private worship.

The Amidah is built of three units of berachot/blessings: Praise, Petition and Thanksgiving. On Shabbat and holidays, the ‘Petition’ unit is replaced by a unit appropriate for the celebration. Only on the weekdays is the ‘Petition’ section deemed fitting. In any event, every Amidah begins the same way, with the above berachah/blessing.

This berachah/blessing is a moment of introduction in which we present ourselves as the descendants of ancestors whom God favored. We offer praise interwoven with a reminder of the mutual loyalty of God and our ancestors throughout the generations, a loyalty that precipitates not only good deeds in the world, but promises to bring about redemption.

Of all the berachot/blessings of the Amidah, only this one begins and ends with “Baruch atah/Blessed are You…” In every other case, it is only the concluding statement of each berachah/blessing theme that begins, “Baruch atah/Blessed are You…”