

Blessings of the Shema, Fourth Meeting "True and firm"

True and firm

אֱמֶת וְיִצִיב וְנִכּוֹן וְקִיָּם וְיִשָּׁר וְנֶאֱמָן וְאֱהוּב וְחֻבֵּיב וְנִחְמַד וְנִנְעִים וְנוֹרָא וְאֲדִיר וּמְתִקָּן וּמְקַבֵּל וְטוֹב
וְיִפְהַּ הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד: אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם מְלֶכֶנוּ, צוֹר יַעֲקֹב מִגֵּן יִשְׁעָנוּ. לְדוֹר וָדוֹר
הוּא קִיָּם וְשִׁמוֹ קִיָּם וְכִסְאוֹ נָכוֹן וּמְלֻכוֹתוֹ וְאַמּוֹנָתוֹ לְעַד קִיָּמָתוֹ: וְדִבְרָיו חַיִּים וְקִיָּמִים וְנֶאֱמָנִים
וְנִחְמָדִים לְעַד וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים. עַל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. עָלֵינוּ וְעַל בְּנֵינוּ וְעַל דּוֹרוֹתֵינוּ. וְעַל כָּל דּוֹרוֹת זָרַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֶּיךָ:

עַל הָרֵאשׁוֹנִים וְעַל הָאַחֲרוֹנִים דְּבָר טוֹב וְקִיָּם. בְּאֱמֶת וּבְאַמּוֹנָה חֵק וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר:
אֱמֶת שְׂאֵתָה הוּא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. מְלֶכֶנוּ מְלֶךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ גּוֹאֵל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. יוֹצְרֵנוּ
צוֹר יִשׁוּעָתָנוּ. פּוֹדֵנוּ וּמְצִילֵנוּ מֵעוֹלָם הוּא שְׂמֵךְ וְאִין לָנוּ עוֹד אֱלֹהִים זוֹלָתְךָ סֶלָה:

True and firm, established and enduring, right, faithful, beloved, cherished, delightful, pleasant, awesome, mighty, perfect, accepted, good and beautiful is this faith for us forever. True is the eternal God, Our King, Rock of Jacob, Shield of our salvation. He exists and His name exists through all generations. His throne is established, His kingship and faithfulness endure forever. His words live and persist, faithful and desirable forever and all time. So they were for our ancestors, so they are for us, and so they will be for our children and all our generations and for all future generations of the seed of Israel, Your servants. For the early and the later generations this faith has proven good and enduring forever, true and faithful, an immutable law. True, You are the Lord: our God and God of our ancestors, our King and King of our ancestors, our Maker, Rock of our salvation, our Deliverer and Rescuer: this has ever been Your name. There is no God but You.

* Excerpts below from the (soon to be published) commentary on the Siddur by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz:

There is an ancient custom that is mentioned in the Mishna to add the word *emet*, true, to the phrase “I am the Lord Your God” [Numbers 15:41]. We thereby declare that God is the absolute Truth, as in the verse from Jeremiah: “the Lord God is true” [10:10].

The blessing starts with our internal acceptance of the commandments that appear in Shema: faith in God, Torah study, the observance of the mitzvot, and the love and fear of God. After having verbalized these commands in fulfillment of the mitzvah of the

recitation of Shema, we next declare that the words of the Torah and the mitzvot are acceptable to us and desired by us, and we give thanks for the very fact of our bond with the Holy One, blessed be He. The words of praise and glory in this blessing are repeated in various forms, in order to emphasize over and again our belief in the words of the Torah, and our willingness to accept them in practice and to identify with them emotionally. The Sages of Israel have noted that certain numbers of words in this blessing are deliberate: the fifteen words of praise from “firm” to “beautiful” correspond to the fifteen steps in the Temple between the Women’s Courtyard and the Israelite courtyard, upon which the Levites stood and praised God with songs, and also to the fifteen Songs of the Ascents in the book of Psalms [chapters 120–134; see e.g., *Sukka* 51b]. Similarly, the word “truth” is repeated in this blessing eight times, a number that symbolizes the wholeness of this world together with the Word-to-Come.

עֲזַרְתָּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֵתָהּ הוּא מַעֲוֹלָם. מִגֵּן וּמוֹשִׁיעַ לָהֶם וְלִבְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר. בְּרוּם
עוֹלָם מוֹשְׁבָךָ. וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ וְצִדְקוֹתֶיךָ עַד אַפְסֵי אֶרֶץ:
אֱמֶת אֲשֶׁרִי אִישׁ שִׁשְׁמַע לְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ. וְתוֹרַתְךָ וְדִבְרָרְךָ יְשִׁים עַל לְבוֹ:
אֱמֶת שְׂאֵתָהּ הוּא אֲדוֹן לְעַמֶּךָ. וּמֶלֶךְ גִּבּוֹר לְרִיב רִיבִים לְאַבוֹת וּבְנִים:
אֱמֶת אֵתָהּ הוּא רֵאשׁוֹן וְאֵתָהּ הוּא אַחֲרוֹן. וּמִבְּלַעֲדֶיךָ אֵין לְנוּ מֶלֶךְ גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשִׁיעַ:
אֱמֶת מִמִּצְרַיִם גְּאֻלְתָּנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ. מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים פְּדִיתָנוּ. כָּל בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם הִרְגָתָּ וּבְכוֹרְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
גְּאֻלְתָּ. יָם סוּף לָהֶם בְּקַעַת. וְזָדִים טִבְעַת. וְיָדִידִים עָבְרוּ יָם. וַיִּכְסּוּ מֵיִם צָרִיחֶם אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא
נִוְתָר:
עַל זֹאת שִׁבְחוּ אֱהוּבִים וְרוֹמְמוֹ לֹאֵל וְנִתְּנוּ יְדִידִים זְמִירוֹת שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבְּחוּת בְּרִכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת
לְמֶלֶךְ אֵל חַי וְקַיִם. רֵם וְנֹשֵׂא. גְּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא. מְשֻׁפָּל גְּאִים עַדֵי אֶרֶץ. מִגְּבִיָּה שְׁפָלִים עַד מְרוֹם.
מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים. פּוֹדֶה עֲנּוּיִם. עוֹזֵר דְּלִים הַעוֹנֶה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַת שׁוֹעֵם אֱלִיוֹ. תְּהַלּוֹת לֹאֵל
עֲלִיוֹן גּוֹאֵלִם בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּמְבוֹרָךְ. מִשָּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָךְ עָנוּ שִׁירָה בְּשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה וְאָמְרוּ כָלֵם:
מִי כִמְכָה בְּאֵלִים ה' מִי כִמְכָה נְאֻדָּר בְּקִדְשׁ. נוֹרָא תְּהַלֵּת עֲשֵׂה פְּלֹא:
שִׁירָה חֲדָשָׁה שִׁבְחוּ גְּאֻלִּים לְשִׁמְךָ הַגְּדוֹל עַל שְׁפַת הַיָּם יִסְדּוּ כָלֵם הוֹדוּ וְהִמְלִיכוּ וְאָמְרוּ:
ה' יְמֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:
וְנֹאמֵר גּוֹאֵלֵנוּ ה' צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. קִדּוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', גְּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Exodus from Egypt

You have always been the help of our ancestors, Shield and savior of their children after them in every generation. Your dwelling is in the heights of the universe, and Your judgments and righteousness reach to the ends of the earth. Happy is he who obeys Your commandments and takes to heart Your teaching and Your word. True, You are the Master of Your people and the mighty King who pleads their cause. True, You are the first and You are the last. Besides You, we have no king, redeemer or savior. From Egypt You redeemed us, Lord our God, and You delivered us from the house of slaves. You killed all their firstborn, but You redeemed Your firstborn. You split the Red Sea and drowned the arrogant; You took Your beloved ones across. The water covered their foes; not one of them was left. For this, the beloved ones praised and exalted God, the cherished ones sang psalms, songs and praises, blessings and thanksgivings to the King, the living and enduring God. High and exalted, great and awesome; He humbles the haughty and raises the lowly, freeing captives and redeeming those in need, helping the poor and answering His people when they cry out to Him. Praises to God the Most High, the Blessed One who is blessed. Moses and the children of Israel recited to You a song with great joy, all exclaiming: "Who is like You, Lord, among the mighty? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, performing wonders?" with a new song, the redeemed people praised You name at the shore of the sea. Together they all gave thanks, proclaimed Your kingship and declared: "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Rock of Israel! Arise for the help of Israel. Deliver, and You promised, Judah and Israel. Our Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is His name, the Holy One of Israel. Blessed are You, Lord, who redeemed Israel.

* Excerpts below from the (soon to be published) commentary on the Siddur by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz:

From here we move on to the main part of the blessing: Praise for God's redemption of Israel in all eras, past and present alike. At the heart of the passage is an elaboration of sorts to the conclusion of the passage of Shema dealing with ritual fringes: "who brought you out of the land of Egypt" [Numbers 15:41] – that is, a description of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, with a special focus on the parting of the Red Sea, since these are the greatest miracles of all time, and they highlight the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, differentiates between Israel and the rest of the world.

The blessing of redemption serves as preparation for the *Amida* prayer, because the recognition that God has the ability to redeem us and even desires this outcome is what gives us the faith and strength to approach Him in prayer. Every prayer is in essence a prayer for redemption – small or large, of the world or of one’s soul – which is why the Talmudic Sages said that there is a unique virtue to juxtaposing redemption to prayer [see *Berakhot* 4b; 9b]. Accordingly, one should not pause between the words “who redeemed Israel” and the *Amida* prayer.