AMIDA (Berakha 01). God, our protector

The ‘amida consists of nineteen blessings, or short prayers which end with a blessing. The first blessing of the Amida is called “Abot”, which literally means “fathers”, in allusion to our ancestors or founding fathers, Abraham, Yitshaq and Ya’aqob. This blessing belongs to the first section of the ‘amida: “Praise”. Our first prayer to God, before we ask anything from him, consists in praising Him for protecting us, the Jewish people.

We affirm that HaShem watched over Abraham, Ytshaq and Ya’aqob. We also describe with three words what we can grasp of God’s protective powers. We say that God is Great, Powerful, and Awe-Inspiring (=*Gadol, Gibbor, Nora*), there is no power beyond His control (*el-‘elion*). HaShem uses these powers with kindness (*gomel hasadim tobim*) to guard us, and ensure our continuity.

We state that because of the merit of our ancestors (*zokher hasde abot*), God grants us His present protection and our future redemption (*umebi go-el*).

We also affirm that God promised (*lema’an shemo*) our ancestors that He will never allow the Jewish people to disappear. He will never abandon us because He loves us (*beahaba).* See Deut 7:7.

God protected us even before we became a nation. When we were just the family of Abraham or an incipient tribe. Then, we were extremely vulnerable. In this berakha we are not asking God for protection. We are also not declaring that God will protect every Jew just by virtue of being a Jew. God’s protection of the individual is not the subject of this blessing. We claim that God guaranteed our survival as the People of Israel, and we praise Him for delivering that, for keeping us alive as a nation, against all odds.

Finally we state that God is our King (*melekh*). HaShem is a special King. He is not a king who demands His subjects to serve him for his own sake, but a King who cares about His subjects: us. A King ready to help (*ozer*) when we request His assistance. A King who rescues when we are in trouble

(*moshia'*). A King who shields us (*magen*) from perils, dangers and hazards, which we are not even aware of.
We finalize this prayer by blessing (=acknowledging) God for enabling the survival of the Jewish people, since the times of Abraham Abinu (*magen Abraham*).