AMIDA (Berakha 17) Prayers or sacrifices?

This blessing, *birkat ha'aboda*, inaugurates the third section of the Amida known as *hoda-a*, 'gratitude'.

Here, we express our gratitude to God for having chosen us and giving us the privilege to serve Him.

Serving God includes keeping His commandments and worshiping Him. God's worship consists of two elements: prayers (tefila) and sacrifices (qorbanot).

In this blessing we first ask God to accept us and our prayers:

May You, HaShem our God, accept Your people Israel and attend to their prayers Then, we beseech God to restore His House, the Bet haMiqdash, where we will offer our sacrifices the way our ancestors did two thousand years ago.

*And restore the Holy service to the Sanctuary of Your house*Now, in the Bet haMiqdash, there were sacrifices and also prayers. As it is written in Yesha'ayahu (56:7) "For My house [the Temple in Jerusalem] will be called a House of Prayer for all nations" , After the destruction of the second Bet haMiqdash, 68 CE, prayers replaced the sacrifices. This is not to say that during the time of the Bet haMiqdash people did not pray. Actually, it seems that at the individual level very little changed after the Bet haMiqdash. The main change took place in the public services: the establishment of minyan, public prayers, bet hakeneset, etc.

Accordingly, we convey our aspiration to offer again both, our sacrifices and prayers.

So that You will accept lovingly the sacrifices given by the

people of Israel and their prayers,

God chose our ancestors out of unconditional love (see Debarim 7,7). Now, we ask God to consider us too, worthy of that privilege. To love us as He loved our fathers. To accept our prayers as He accepted the prayers of our ancestors. Even though we might not be meritorious as our fathers, who were able to serve God in the Bet haMiqdash. That is the meaning of the next statement:

And You, with Your great mercy, care for us and accept us…

Finally, we express our wish to see in our own days the return of God's presence to Zion and Jerusalem, to embrace us again as the People He has chosen, to serve Him.

and may our eyes see Your return to Zion….. AMEN.