

Concepts

Baruch She'amar

The Talmud teaches that "One should first recount the praises of God, and then pray" (*Brachot 32a*). To fulfill this requirement, a tradition developed of reciting psalms before Shacharit (the daily morning service). That section of the morning service became known as P'sukei D'Zimrah or "Verses of Song."

Baruch She'amar is the first prayer in P'sukei D'Zimrah and because of this important status we stand for it. The writing of Baruch She'amar is said to be by the Men of the Great Assembly approximately 2400 years ago, who said the prayer "fell from heaven." Baruch She'amar contains a series of phrases in which we bless seven aspects of God. We first praise God for creating the world with merely a word. God is also praised for:

- maintaining creation
- having compassion on the earth and all its creatures
- rewarding those who follow God's ways
- being eternal
- rescuing people from danger, both moral and physical

The second part of the prayer conveys the point that we are overflowing with a need to praise God and to thank God for the wonders of life. We acknowledge that God is infinitely greater than we can begin to understand.

Because Baruch She'amar is such an old prayer it helps us understand what our ancestors believed about God. Baruch She'amar implies a God much more actively involved in the lives of the Jewish people. While we believe God has these characteristics and abilities, today's Reform Judaism believes we are partners with God in making these things happen. As individuals we each have aspects of godliness within us and therefore we take an active role in making all this come about, like maintaining God's creation and having compassion for others.

1. What do you think "creating the world with merely a word" means?
2. This prayer is about praising God. What might you add to the list?
3. What are your images of God?

Baruch She'Amar

בָּרוּךְ שֶׁאָמַר וְהָיָה הָעוֹלָם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא.

Blessed is God who spoke and the world came into being, blessed is God.

בָּרוּךְ עֹשֶׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית, בָּרוּךְ אוֹמֵר וְעוֹשֶׂה.

Blessed is God who maintains creation, blessed is God who speaks and does.

בָּרוּךְ גּוֹזֵר וּמְקַיֵּם, בָּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל הָאָרֶץ.

Blessed is God who decrees and fulfills, blessed is God who has mercy on the earth.

בָּרוּךְ מְרַחֵם עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת, בָּרוּךְ מְשַׁלֵּם שְׂכָר טוֹב לִירְאָיו.

Blessed is God who has mercy on the creatures, blessed is God who rewards well those
who revere God.

בָּרוּךְ חַי לְעַד וְקַיֵּם לְנֶצַח, בָּרוּךְ פּוֹדֶה וּמַצִּיל, בָּרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ.

Blessed is God who lives forever and endures to eternity, blessed is God who redeems
and rescues, blessed is God's name.

בְּשִׁבְחוֹת וּבְזִמְרוֹת, נְגַדְלֶךָ וְנִשְׁבַּחְךָ וְנִפְאָרְךָ

With praises and songs we will exalt, praise, and glorify you

וְנִזְכִּיר שְׁמֶךָ, וְנִמְלִיכְךָ, מְלִכְנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

And we will mention your name and proclaim your reign--our Ruler, our God.

יְחִיד, חַי הָעוֹלָמִים, מֶלֶךְ מְשֻׁבָּח וּמְפָאָר עַד עַד שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל.

Unique one, lifegiver of the universe, ruler whose great name is eternally praised and
glorified.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מֶלֶךְ מְהֻלָּל בְּתִשְׁבְּחוֹת.

Blessed are you God, who is lauded with praises.