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I love the Amidah. But it's taken me years to begin to hear what it has to say to me. I know Judaism is complicated for everyone, but it's really complicated for me.

I wasn't raised Jewish. I am not at ease with many ideas that are mainstream in the Jewish community. And Judaism is such a white context, and I am not white: I mostly identify as Native Hawaiian, but also as Chinese, and Hawaiian and Chinese practices often seem to clash with Jewish ones. Even though worshipping with you at Shir Tikvah is deeply meaningful to me, I have not converted to Judaism. But in the Amidah, I sometimes find a door to a Judaism that speaks to me.

It starts with *avot v'imot*, with ancestors: "Blessed are you, Adonai, our G-d and G-d of our fathers and mothers," the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, and Leah, a G-d who "remembers the love of our fathers and mothers."

That is so moving for me. I come from people who honor and venerate ancestors, who welcome their presence into our homes, who speak to their spirits. In the Hawaiian culture, *kūpuna* and *'aumāku*a are living, spiritual ancestors.

They are compassionate and intimate presences in our lives. These spirits are family; we are related to them. Some of them are recent ancestors, and we know their names. Others are more distant, so we don't. But they are family, and so we can feel comfortable with them. Their ethics can guide us, help us find a good direction.

And so naming Adonai as the g-d of the ancestors, a g-d who remembers the ancestors' love, is powerful for me. I know, it's ironic: Adonai was not the g-d of those ancestors of mine. They were not part of the people named in the Amidah, the house of Israel. But invoking that ancestral connection strikes a powerful chord in me anyway. It opens me to the wisdom of the *birchot* that follow in the Amidah, to thanking Adonai for Adonai's blessings, and to asking for those blessings and guidance in the future. Once again in my life, ancestors have opened a door. Now, ancestor talk is tricky: it can lead down paths that are narrow, racist, and nationalistic. It can lead to the dangerous claim that some people have special rights because their ancestors came from a particular religion or race. Many Israelis and Americans have twisted talk about ancestors in terrible directions.

But hopefully for all of us, the ancestors can open a door to this prayer and through this prayer. Hopefully, in this prayer we can ask for G-d's help in making a community and a world beyond narrowness, racism, and nationalism. I think that would make the ancestors very proud.