

A·ha·vah rab·bah a·hav·tá·nu,
A·do·nai E·lo·héi·nu.
Chem·lah g'do·lah vi·tei·rah cha·mál·ta a·léi·nu.

A·ví·nu mal·kéi·nu,
ba·a·vur a·vo·téi·nu she·ba·t'chu v'cha,
va·t'lam·m'deim chuk·kei chay·yim,
kein t'chon·néi·nu u·t'lam·m'déi·nu.
A·ví·nu, ha·av ha·ra·cha·man,
ham·ra·cheim, ra·cheim a·léi·nu.

V'tein b'lib·béi·nu l'ha·vin, u·l'has·kil,
lish·mó·a, lil·mod, u·l'lam·meid,
lish·mor, v'la·a·sot, u·l'kay·yeim
et kol div·rei tal·mud to·ra·té·cha, b'a·ha·vah.

V'ha·eir ei·néi·nu b'to·ra·té·cha,
v'dab·beik lib·béi·nu b'mitz·vo·té·cha,
v'ya·cheid l'va·véi·nu
l'a·ha·vah u·l'yir·ah et sh'mé·cha.

V'lo neiv·vosh l'o·lam va·ed,
ki v'sheim kod·sh'cha
ha·ga·dol v'ha·no·ra ba·tách·nu,
na·gí·lah v'nis·m'chah bi·shu·a·té·cha.
*Gather tzitzit for the Sh'ma while reciting
"mei-ar-ba kan-fot – from the four corners"*

Va·ha·vi·éi·nu l'sha·lom
mei·ar·ba kan·fot ha·á·retz,
v'to·li·chéi·nu ko·m'mi·yut l'ar·tzéi·nu,
ki Eil po·eil y'shu·ot Át·tah.

אַהֲבָה רַבָּה אַהֲבַתְּנוּ,
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ.
חֵמְלָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּתְּרָה חֵמְלָתְךָ עָלֵינוּ.

אָבִינוּ מִלְּפָנָיו,
בְּעֵבוּר אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבְטָחוּ בְּךָ,
וַתְּלַמְּדֵם חֻקֵי חַיִּים,
כֵּן תַּחַנְּנֵנוּ וַתְּלַמְּדֵנוּ.
אָבִינוּ, הָאֵב הָרַחֲמָן,
הַמְּרַחֵם, רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ.

תָּן בְּלִבְנוּ לְהַבִּין, וּלְהַשְׁכִּיל,
לְשִׁמְעַ, לְלַמֵּד, וּלְלַמֵּד,
לְשִׁמֹר, וּלְעֲשׂוֹת, וּלְקַיֵּם
אֶת כָּל דִּבְרֵי תִלְמוּד תּוֹרַתְךָ, בְּאַהֲבָה.

וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ,
וְנִבְּק לִפְנֵי בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ,
וְיַחַד לְכַבְּנוּ
לְאַהֲבָה וּלְיִרְאָה אֶת שְׁמֶךָ.

וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד,
כִּי בְּשֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא בְּטָחָנוּ,
וְנִגְיֵלָה וְנִשְׁמָחָה בִּישׁוּעַתְךָ. ←

*Gather tzitzit for the Sh'ma while reciting
"מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת" – from the four corners"*

וְהַבִּיאֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם
מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ,
וְתוֹלְכֵנוּ קוֹמְמִיּוֹת לְאַרְצֵנוּ,
כִּי אֵל פּוֹעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת אַתָּה.

With great love do You love us,
Adonai our God.
You shower overflowing compassion on us.

Loving parent, compassionate ruler,
because our ancestors trusted in You
You taught them life-sustaining rules.
May You make Your teachings
and Your compassion
accessible to us as well.

May we have the willingness to understand,
to follow, to learn, to teach,
to observe, and to fulfill lovingly
all the teachings of Your Torah.

May we gain enlightenment through Your Torah.
May we internalize Your precepts.
May we integrate our understanding of You
so that we love and revere You simultaneously.

Because we trust in You
and Your redemptive power,
we will never experience rejection,
but we will rejoice in Your salvation.

*Gather tzitzit for the Sh'ma while
reciting "from the four corners:"*

You will bring us
from the four corners of the earth,
gathering us in peace and dignity in our land,
for You work salvation in amazing ways.

GUIDEPOSTS

Second B'ra·chah. Ahavah Rabbah: God as Loving Presence. Ahavah rabbah, the second of the two blessings before the Sh'ma, speaks of God as the One who loves the Jewish people. The prayer describes three ways in which that love is manifest – compassion, guidance, and presence.

Compassion: God cares about us and what happens to us.

Guidance: God helps us find direction for our lives by means of the Torah.

Presence: When we believe that God is with us, when we act as if God is with us, then God is with us – helping us deal in dignity with whatever life brings.

Since we invite God into our lives only when we are walking along a spiritual path, this prayer focuses on God's gift of the Torah – the symbol of God's eternal and abiding love for us – and on how important it is for us to appreciate and accept this gift, and to understand it and apply it to find spiritual direction for our own lives.

PERSPECTIVES

1 Our motivation: Love or fear of God?
Should our service to God be motivated by love (ahavah) or awe (yirah), which in this context can be better translated as "fear"? We might translate this ancient question into contemporary terminology: Should we be motivated by our desire to do the right thing or by our concerns over the consequences of our actions? Should we come close to God because we want to feel at one with the One, or because we don't want to be apart from God? The traditional answer to this question is that both motivations are valuable. This is expressed concisely and beautifully here in the phrase "v'yacheid l'avéinu l'ahavah ul'yirah et sh'mécha" (literally, "unify our hearts to love and fear Your Name"). Since the heart was then considered the seat of intellect, the phrase is translated here "integrate our understanding."

[U-vá-nu va-chár-ta mi-kol am v'la-shon. |
U-vá-nu va-chár-ta la-a-vo-da-té-cha.]
V'kei-rav-tá-nu l'shim-cha ha-ga-dol sé-lah be-e-met,
l'ho-dot l'cha u-l'ya-che-d'cha b'a-ha-vah.

Ba-ruch At-tah A-do-nai,
[ha-bo-cheir b'am-mo Yis-ra-eil b'a-ha-vah |
o-heiv am-mo Yis-ra-eil].

וּבָּנוּ בְּחֵרְתָּ מִכָּל עַם וְלִשְׁוֹן. |
וּבָּנוּ בְּחֵרְתָּ לְעִבּוּדְךָ. |
וְקִרְבַּתָּנוּ לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל סֵלָה בְּאַמֶּת,
לְהוֹדוֹת לְךָ וּלְיִחְדָּךְ בְּאַהֲבָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי,
[הַבּוֹחֵר בְּעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה |
אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל].

¹ [You have chosen us from all peoples. |
You have chosen us to serve You.]
You have given us this path of grasping
Your true essence, so that we may lovingly
declare You One and make You One.
Blessed are You, Adonai,
² [You lovingly choose Your people Israel |
You love Your people Israel].

ALTERNATIVES

¹ **Brackets.** The first alternative is the traditional text, reflecting the view of Israel as the “chosen people.” The second alternative reflects the idea that we were not chosen because we were better than other peoples, but rather that we were called to serve God in our own way. Others may prefer to omit this sentence entirely.

² **Brackets.** The first alternative is the traditional text; the second alternative is the traditional closing of the corresponding prayer in the evening service.