

אהבת עולם בית ישראל עמך אהבת.  
 תורה ומצות חקים ומשפטים אותנו למדת.  
 על-כן יי אלהינו בשכבנו ובקוימנו נשיח בחקיקה.  
 ונשמח בדברי תורתך ובמצותיך לעולם ועד.  
 כי הם חיינו וארך ימינו ובהם נהנה יומם ולילה.  
 ואהבתך אל תסיר ממנו לעולמים.  
 ברוך אתה יי אהב עמו ישראל:

*Ahavat olam beyt yisrael am-ḥa ahavta,  
 Torah u-mitzvot, ḥukim u-mish-patim otanu limad'ta.  
 Al keyn Adonai Eloheynu,  
 B'shoḥ-beynu u-v'ku-meynu nasi-aḥ b'ḥukeḥa,  
 V'nismaḥ b'divrey torateḥa u-v'mitz-voteḥa l'olam va-ed.  
 Ki heym ḥa-yeynu v'oreḥ ya-meynu,  
 U-va-hem neh-geh yomam va-laila.  
 V'aha-vat-ḥa al tasir mimenu l'olamim,  
 Baruh ata Adonai, oheyv amo yisrael.*

#### TO BE REMINDED

The Shema is often called "the best-known prayer of Judaism;" yet it makes no request of God. Rather, it affirms that God is One.

Its recital is not needed by God—who needs no reminder of the Divine Unity. It is needed by us; we must be reminded that God is One!

We must be reminded that only God is to be worshiped; or else we might worship idols, or power, or wealth, or prestige, or any of the other false gods—which can claim people today as easily as they did three thousand years ago.

To worship something means to devote all that one possesses, all of one's talents and energies, to this end.

Thus, a person who worships power may sacrifice honor for power, may neglect family for power, or may destroy character for power.

Thrice daily we recite the Shema, so that we may be reminded that there is but One God, to whom we should be totally devoted.

(Based on F. M. Isserman, A.N.S.)

**AHAVAT OLAM—Signs of God's love: Torah and Mitzvot**

With everlasting love You have loved the House of Israel,  
Teaching us Your Torah, its Mitzvot, laws, and judgments.

Therefore, when we lie down and when we rise up,  
We shall speak of Your Commandments,  
And rejoice forever in Your Torah and in Your Mitzvot.

For they are our life and the length of our days;  
On them we will meditate day and night.

May Your love never depart from us!  
Praised are You, O Lord,  
Bestower of love upon Your people Israel.

**WITH EVERLASTING LOVE**

*Before the Shema we are reminded of God's "everlasting love" for us.  
After the Shema (in V'ahavta), it is we who are called upon to love God.*

God's love came first. Because of this love, God endowed us with the capacity to love—and gave us the Torah, the ultimate gift of love!

Through the Torah, we have found the purpose for which to live, and the strength and inspiration with which to live.

Morning and night, our prayers remind us of God's love, so that we may be moved to "love the Lord," and let the spirit of Torah guide our lives.

**A PRELUDE TO THE SHEMA**

*The six Hebrew words which constitute the Shema are the first words of prayer which we are called upon to teach our children. They are the last words to be uttered at life's end.*

Each time we recite the Shema, we declare our belief in the One, invisible, and incomparable God.

Each time we recite the Shema, we take upon ourselves the obligation to love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls—and to live faithfully in accordance with God's commandments.

Each time we recite the Shema, we link ourselves to countless generations of Jews who steadfastly recited these sacred words; and we recall those who uttered these words as they prepared to surrender life itself rather than embrace an alien faith.

Each time we recite the Shema, we reaffirm that One God is the Parent of us all; and that *all* of God's children are related by a bond which transcends differences of origin or belief.

Each time we recite the Shema, we proclaim our creed, and hear a call for noble living, in the presence of the Lord, our God.