

*continued*

Read forward, the word affirms what follows: credal statements spelling out the implications of the Sh'ma; each statement is preceded by the word *emet*, thus articulating a kind of Jewish creed. Read backward, it refers to God, who is identified with truth.

The phrase is based on the words of Jeremiah, "Adonai is true (*Adonai emet*), is truly the living God, and the sovereign of time and the world" (10:10). Additionally, another biblical meaning of the word *emet* is steadfastness or faithfulness. In this interpretation, what is affirmed is that God will always be present for us.

#### TRULY THIS TEACHING IS CONSTANT אֶתְمָתָה נִיצַב.

Reuven Kimelman, a contemporary liturgical scholar, contends that the "teaching" referred to in this assertion is the Decalogue, which originally preceded the recitation of the Sh'ma in the ancient synagogue. The recitation of the Decalogue was dropped from the liturgy because the rabbis were afraid that people would consider only those com-

אמֶת אֱלֹהִי עָזֶל מִלְבָנָנוּ, צָרֵר יַעֲקֹב מִגְנָן יְשֻׁעָבָנוּ.

לְדוֹר וְדוֹר הִיא קִים וְשָׁמוּ קִים, וּכְסָאוּ נְבוֹן.

(Kiss and release Tzitzit) **וּמְלָכָתוֹ וְאַמּוֹנָתוֹ לְעֵד קִימָתָה.**

וְדָבָרִיו חִים וְקִים, גָּאָמְנִים וְגִנְחָמִדים,  
לְעֵד וְלְעוֹלָמִי עָזֶל מִלְבָנָנוּ, עַל אָבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ]  
וּעַלְיָנוּ, עַל בְּנֵינוּ וְעַל דָּרוֹתֵינוּ, וְעַל בְּלָדָרוֹת  
זֶרֶע יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדָּיו, עַל הַרְאָשׁוֹנִים וְעַל הַאַחֲרׁוֹנִים  
דָּבָר טֹב וְקִים לְעוֹלָם וְעַד,  
**אֶתְמָתָה חָק וְלֹא יַעֲבֵר.**

◀ **אֶתְמָת שָׁאַתָּה** הִוא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהִי אָבוֹתֵינוּ  
[וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ], מִלְבָנָנוּ, מֶלֶךְ אָבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ],  
פָּאֵלָנוּ גָּאֵל אָבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ], יוֹצְרָנוּ, צָרֵר יְשֻׁוּעָתֵנוּ,  
**פָּזְדָּנוּ וּמָצִילָנוּ מֵעוֹלָם שְׁמָה, אֵין אֱלֹהִים זֹולָתָה.**

עַזְרָת אָבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ] אַתָּה הִוא מַעוֹלָם,  
מִגְנָן יְמוֹשֵׁיעַ לְבָנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּכָלְדָּזָר וְדוֹר.  
בָּרוּם עָזֶל מַוְשָׁבָה,  
וּמְשִׁפְטָר וְצִדְקָתָה עַד אֲפֵסִי אָרֶץ.  
אֲשֶׁרִי אִישׁ שִׁישְׁמָע לְמִצְוֹתֶיהָ  
וְתֹרּוֹתֶךָ וְדָבָרֶךָ יְשִׁים עַל לְבָבוֹ.  
אֶתְמָת אַתָּה הִיא אָדוֹן לְעַמָּה  
וּמֶלֶךְ גָּבָור לְרִיבָם.  
**אֶתְמָת אַתָּה הִיא רָאשׁוֹן, וְאַתָּה הִיא אַחֲרׁוֹן,**  
**וּמְבָלָעְדִּיךְ אֵין לְנוּ מֶלֶךְ גּוֹאֵל וּמוֹשֵׁיעַ.**

mandments as obligatory, as many Christians did. In its current context, the liturgical affirmation refers to the constancy of the entire Torah.

**HELP OF OUR ANCESTORS** עַזְרָת אָבוֹתֵינוּ [וְאַמּוֹתֵינוּ]. Two contrasting theological concepts are at work in this blessing. The first emphasizes the value of personal observance of Torah and mitzvot ("Blessed are the ones who attend to Your mitzvot . . ."); the second emphasizes communal redemption and the need for God to destroy oppression, with the exodus from Egypt serving as a paradigm for all future redemptions. The first is non-violent, speaking of personal practice and virtue through performing acts of love and care; the second insists that God must war against evil in order to root it out. These two views echo a talmudic argument as to whether the future redemption will be achieved peacefully or will come through war.

**TRULY, YOU WERE AT THE BEGINNING AND YOU WILL BE AT THE END** אֶתְמָת, אַתָּה הִיא רָאשׁוֹן, וְאַתָּה הִיא אַחֲרׁוֹן. A similar expression, "I am the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end," is quoted three times in the Christian testament. The wording of this prayer may have been deliberately polemical at the time it was written in antiquity, and intended to oppose Christian theological claims, which were emerging as a rival to Judaism.