

**אַהֲבָה רַבָּה אֶחֱבָתֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
 חִמְלָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּתְהַרְחֵת חִמְלָת עָלֵינוּ.
 אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵנוּ בַעֲבוּר אֲבֹתֵינוּ [וְאָמוֹתֵינוּ]
 שְׁבִטָתוּ בָה וְתַלְמִידָם חֲקִיקִים חַיִים,
 בְּפָנֵינוּ תַחְפְּנוּ וְתַלְמִידָנוּ.
 אָבִינוּ הָאָב הַרְחָמָן הַמְרָחָם,
 רָחָם עָלֵינוּ וַתֵּן בְלֵבֵנוּ לְהִבְין וְלְהַשְׁבִּיל
 לְשָׁמַע לְלִימָד וְלִלְמָד לְשֻׁמֶר וְלְעַשְׂוֹת
 וְלִקְיָם אֶת־בְּלִדְבִּיר תַלְמִיד תּוֹרַתְך בְּאַהֲבָה.**
**וְהִאר עִינֵינוּ בְתּוֹרַתְך
 וְדַבֵּק לְבֵנוּ בְמִצּוֹתְיךָ
 וַיַּחַד לְבֵבֵנוּ לְאַהֲבָה וְלִירָא אֶת־שְׁמְךָ
 וְלֹא גִבּוֹשׁ לְעוֹלָם וְעַד.
 בְּיַיִשְׁמָם קָדְשָׁךָ הַגָּדוֹל וְהַבּוֹרָא בְּטָהָנוּ
 בְּגִילָה וּבְשִׁמְמָחָה בְּשִׁוּעָתָה.**

(Gather Tzitzit in Right Hand) Some gather their tzitzit before reciting this line:

**וְהִבְיאָנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם מִאַרְבָּע בְּנֹפּוֹת הָאָרֶץ
 וְתַזְלִיבָנוּ קָוָמִיות לְאַרְצֵנוּ
 בְּיַיִשְׁמָם פּוּעָל יְשִׁועָת אֶתְהָ,
 וּבְנוּ בְּחִרְתָּה מִפְלִיעָם וְלִשְׁוֹן,
 וְקַרְבָּתֵנוּ לְשֻׁמֶר הַגָּדוֹל סָלה בְּאִמְתָה,
 לְהֽוֹדּות לְךָ וְלִיחְדָּךָ בְּאַהֲבָה.
 בָרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הַבּוֹחֵר בְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבָה.**

of the “Written Torah” and the “Oral Torah,” the latter referring to the teachings of the Midrash, Mishnah, and Talmud—and even to “whatever new teaching a student of wisdom might impart until the end of time” (Leviticus Rabbah 22:1). In this prayer, “Torah” embraces the widest meaning: the laws of life—all those teachings that instruct us concerning a full ethical and religious life.

TO UNDERSTAND AND DISCERN . . . OBSERVE, FULFILL, AND PERFORM לְהִבְין וְלְהַשְׁבִּיל . . . לְשֻׁמֶר וְלְעַשְׂוֹת וְלִקְיָם . . . This sequence implies that study is intimately linked with action—indeed, that study should lead to action.

GATHERING THE TZITZIT. Many observe the custom, originating in the late Middle Ages, of gathering the four *tzitziyot* (plural of *tzitzit*) of the *tallit* while reciting the words “bring us safely from the four corners of the earth,” thus symbolizing Israel’s unity and ingathering. The *tzitziyot* are then held through the third paragraph of the Sh’mah, and kissed when reciting the word *tzitzit* (which appears three times in that paragraph). By this practice, we indicate that we are lovingly undertaking to observe these words of Torah, and we hope that our commitment to strive for holiness will lead to greater unity. We are also gathering within us all our positive intentions.

YOU HAVE LOVED US DEEPLY אַהֲבָה רַבָּה. The Hebrew root *alef-hei-vet*, meaning “love,” appears six times in this passage (both as the noun and a verb). Reuven Hammer points out that three of them speak of our love for God and three speak of God’s love for us. While reciting this *b’rakhah*, the worshipper can anticipate the seventh occurrence, which is found in the first paragraph of the Sh’mah: “You shall love Adonai your God.”

AVINU MALKEINU אָבִינוּ מֶלֶךְנוּ. Literally, “our father, our king.” The pairing of the two words emphasizes that God is at once both intimate as a close relation and distant as a monarch. The word *av*, “father,” suggests the image of God as source or progenitor, and therefore it may also be translated as “creator.”

LAWS OF LIFE חֲקִיקִים. The word “Torah” encompasses many different meanings. In its most limited usage, it refers to the Five Books of Moses. But in a larger sense it refers to all of Scripture, and even to all of later Jewish teaching. Thus, the rabbis of the Talmud spoke