

Ashreinu

אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ, מַה טוֹב חֶלְקֵנוּ, וּמַה נְעִים גּוֹרְלֵנוּ, וּמַה יָפֵה יְרֻשָׁתֵנוּ. אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ,
שֶׁאֲנַחְנוּ מְשַׁכְּיָמִים וּמַעְרִיבִים, עֶרֶב וּבֹקֵר, וְאוֹמְרִים פְּעַמִּים בְּכָל יוֹם: שְׁמַע
יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְיָ אֶחָד:

Ash-rei-nu ma tov khel-kei-nu, u-ma na-im go-ra-lei-nu, u-ma ya-fa y'ru-sha-tei-nu. Ash-
rei-nu, she-a-nakh-nu mash-ki-mim u-ma-a-ri-vim e-rev va-vo-ker, v'om-rim pa-a-ma-yim
b'khol yom: sh'ma yis-ra-el, a-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu, a-do-nai e-khad.

We are happy. How good is our portion and how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful our heritage. We are happy that we rise early and stay late (in the house of study), morning and evening, and we proclaim twice each day: Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

D'rash

We are happy. How good is our portion and how pleasant our lot, and how beautiful our heritage—*Our inheritance has taught us that our purpose in life is to make a difference, to leave more than we found, to make the world a better place for those who come after us. Our history has taught us that, despite the pain, it is better to be among the persecuted than the persecutors. We are happy that we rise early and stay late (in the house of study), morning and evening—***We are fulfilled learning and teaching, not satisfied with answers unless they beget questions, never tiring of Torah and the prospect of turning it over and over to discover new lessons. And we proclaim twice each day: Listen Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One—***With our eyes covered to avoid distractions, we proclaim, not only for ourselves but for all who may listen and learn, especially Jews, not only what we believe but what we can be and do. That one Divine Intelligence is minding the creation, and that its governance can be known even while its Creator remains hidden in its infrastructure, confirms that although we are little more than dust, we are given the power to remake the world in God's image. This, then, is the One God that offers hope; the One God to which we are devoted above the "gods" of position, possessions, prestige, and power; the One God Who has given us the Torah blueprint for creation that enables us to find our way.*

Iyun Tefilla

WITNESS FOR HEAVEN*

To be a witness
For heaven you have to
Reach
For the last letter
Of sh'ma
And the last letter
Of ekhad
And hold on
To all that is
between.
It's a stretch,
I know,
But you can do it.
To be a witness,
You have to teach

What you hold.
For to hold what
You learn
And not to teach
Is to wear knowledge
Like a jewel
In a headdress,
Good only
For parades
Of the self.
To be a witness
Is to hold on
To the future.

* The last letter of sh'ma (ayin) and the last letter of ekhad (dalet) together form the word עד (witness). "Everybody who utters it [the Sh'ma] stands as a witness of God to himself and to the world." (S.R. Hirsch)

Go to <http://www.gatherthepeople.org> for more congregational development and organizing tools.

© 2007 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah