

AHAVAH RABA VS AHAVAS OLAM

Both Ahavah Rabbah and Ahavas Olam express our feelings and yearnings regarding the Torah. The difference between these two blessings may be explained in light of two factors:

1. We avoid obligatory petitionary prayer at night. Since there was no sacrificial service in the Temple at night, the Halacha follows the opinion of Rebbe Yehoshua in Berachos 27b, that the evening prayer [namely, Maariv] , although permissible, is not obligatory.
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2. The respective symbolic distinctions between the morning and evening.

In the morning, we have not yet fulfilled our learning potential for that day. We therefore request that Hashem:

enable us to listen, learn, teach, observe, perform and uphold all the words of your Torah with love [meaning, with constancy, with unswerving devotion]. Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah and enable our hearts to cling to Your mitzvos, and unite our hearts to love and fear Your Name...

In the evening, the assumption is that the foregoing petitions have been fulfilled and that we have therefore successfully accomplished the learning challenges for that day. Now our petition is that:

when we lie down and rise up we speak within Your laws [נשיח בחוקיך], and we rejoice within the words of your Torah and your mitzvos forever.

In other words, once we have internalized the Torah's facts and lessons, our task is to integrate them into our lives, with the results being two-fold:

נשיח בחוקיך: Our conversation should emanate from within the context
- the culture - of a Torah-informed and a Torah-driven life.

ונשמח בדברי תורותיך ובמצוותיך לעולם ועד: Our Torah-informed lives
should fill us with שמחה. Particularly in Sefer Devarim, the Torah
consistently evokes the concept of *simcha* in association with being in
Hashem's presence. Our lives are infused with boundless significance
precisely because God is concerned that we devote ourselves to the
realization of His values. And that significance - in the eyes of the Creator
- precipitates the highest possible joy.

ושמחת לפני ה' אלוקיך