

Eitz Chayim hee: Returning the Torah to the Ark. (Siddur Sim Shalom, p.426)

וּבְנַחַה יֵאמֶר: שׁוֹבָה יְהוּה רַבְבוֹת אֶלְפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. קוֹמָה יְהוּה
לְמִנּוּחֶתָּה, אִתָּה וְאֲרוֹן עֲנֶה. כִּהְנִיָּה יִלְבְּשׁוּ-צַדִּיק, וְחִסִּידֶיךָ
יִרְנְנוּ. בְּעִבּוֹר דָּוִד עֲבָדְךָ, אֵל תֵּשֵׁב פְּנֵי מְשִׁיחֶךָ. כִּי לָקַח טוֹב
נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִּי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ.
עַץ חַיִּים הִיא לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ, וְתוֹמְכֶיהָ מְאֹשֶׁר.
דַּרְכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי-נְעִם, וְכָל-נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם.
הַשִּׁיבֵנו יְהוּה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ בְּקֶדֶם.

Eitz chayim hee la'machazikim ba v'tom'che-ah m'u-shar
D'rache-ah dar'chei no-am v'chol n'tee-vo-teh-ah shalom
Ha-shee-vei-nu Adonai eilecha v'na-shuva chadesh yamei-nu k'kedem.

*It is a tree of life for those who grasp it,
and all who uphold it are blessed. (Proverbs 3:18)*
Its ways are pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. (Proverbs 3:17)
Help us turn to You, and we shall return.
Renew our lives as in days of old. (Lamentations 5:21)

With these three biblical verses—the first two from Proverbs, the last from Lamentations—we bid farewell to the Torah as we return it to the Ark/Aron Kodesh.

The Proverbs verses (Proverbs 3:18 and 3:17) do not celebrate Torah, per se, but Wisdom. For the ancient Rabbis, Wisdom—that “*tree of life for those who grasp it*” whose “*ways are pleasantness*” and whose “*paths are peace,*”—could mean nothing less than Torah.

The last of these three verses is the penultimate verse of Lamentations (5:21). That book, an account of the tragic destruction of Jerusalem and the first Temple, concludes on a chilling and lonely note. The Rabbis, however, refused to tolerate a bitter end and ordained that in the reading of Lamentations the last verse of the book be followed by its preceding verse—a plea for making the old new again..