

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

A Time of Integrity

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

Restore our judges as in earliest times and our counselors as at first; remove from us sorrow and groaning; and reign over us—You, Hashem, alone—with kindness and compassion, and justify us through judgment. Blessed are You, Hashem, the King Who loves righteousness and judgment.

השיבה שופטינו

כבראשונה, ויעצינו כבתחילה, והסר ממנו יגון ואנחה, ומלך עלינו אתה ה' לברך בחסד וברחמים, וצדקנו במשפט. ברוך אתה ה', מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט. (בעש"ת - המלך המשפט)

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word

In this blessing, we ask Hashem השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה, ויעצינו כבתחילה “restore our judges as in earliest times and our counselors as at first” [to their prior levels of greatness]. Immediately thereafter we request “and [Hashem] remove from us sorrow and groaning.” יגון, sorrow results from actual want or pain, arising from difficulties like poverty hunger or destruction. אנחה, groaning, refers to inner turmoil such as worry, depression or fear (Vilna Gaon, cited in The Complete ArtScroll Siddur).

removing from us sorrow and groaning, teaches that with the return of the Judges of former eras, our “sorrow and groaning” will end. The Gemara (Shabbos 139a) teaches that if you see a generation with many troubles, examine the deeds of the judges of Israel in that generation—for misfortune that comes to the world is on account of the judges of Israel. *Iyun Yaakov* (ibid) explains that under normal circumstances, G-d’s mercy protects the Jews from the full force of His punishment. However, that is when His Shechinah (Divine Presence) is in their midst—which comes about when judges adjudicate properly (see Shabbos 139a). When judges are corrupt and adjudge improperly, Hashem’s Shechinah departs and we are left to His strict justice.

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

Restoring Integrity

Restoring the true justice of the Sanhedrin is a prerequisite of redeeming the Jewish people.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

The Value of Honesty

In the previous blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, we asked G-d to gather together all the exiled Jews and to redeem us. In this blessing, we pray that Hashem restore the “judges as in earliest times”—the Sanhedrin, the highest court of Jewish law. As the *Rambam* teaches, Mashiach will not come until the Sanhedrin is back in its place. (*Sefer Yaaros D’Vash*, Volume 1, *Drasha* 1).

The coming of Mashiach is dependent on the restoration of justice and on the pervasive honesty which results from such justice. The *Sefer Mitzvos HaGadol* (the *Smag*, *Mitzvas Asei* 74) explains that honesty and integrity are prerequisites to Mashiach because the Final Redemption is to be a sanctification of Hashem’s name. He states:

“In the future, when the Holy Blessed One will redeem the Jewish people, the nations of

the world will say, ‘He has acted justly, for they are truthful people, and the Torah of truth is in their mouth.’ But if the Jewish people deal dishonestly with the nations of the world, they will say, ‘Look at what the Holy Blessed One has done. He has chosen for Himself thieves and swindlers! ...Why should G-d perform such miracles for them?’”

This would be a terrible *chillul Hashem*, a desecration of His Holy Name, and G-d will not allow it. Therefore, He will weed out all the thieves, swindlers and liars so that an honest “remnant of Israel” is left. These are the people who will emerge triumphantly from exile, because these are the people whose salvation will bring honor to His Holy Name. (Adapted from *With Hearts Full of Faith*, Rabbi Mattisyahu Salomon, ArtScroll, pages 136 -141)

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

Quality Control

In Brickville, the building inspector is a thorough and honest man. He upholds the town’s building code to the letter. When he grants a Certificate of Occupancy, it is an iron-clad guarantee that the building is safe and sturdy. Contractors in Brickville therefore insist on quality materials from their suppliers and cut no corners in their building projects.

In Strawville, however, contractors speaking among themselves say that the building



inspector “will work with you.” The contractors are in a never-ending contest to see who can cut the most corners without failing inspection. Drains are just a little too narrow. Wood is just a little too thin. Strawville contractors concur that only a fool would spend the money on actually meeting the standards of the local building code.

When people can rely on high, consistent standards,

they have a sound basis upon which to build their world. When the Torah’s laws are correctly applied; the innocent are protected and the would-be wrongdoer harbors no hope of succeeding. Honesty pervades. However, when corruption and loopholes abound, people are willing to “try their luck” with the system. Honesty turns into naiveté and right and wrong lose their definition. Thus, only the highest form of human justice – the Sandhedrin – can set the stage for a world in which Hashem and His Torah reign supreme.

**Try This!**

► Think of a person to whom you turn for advice – a Rav or mentor – who you feel has the insight, compassion and perspective to guide you correctly. Think of a world guided by people like that when you say the words השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה.

**Did You Know**

► A Parent’s Prayer

Last week’s “Did You Know” explained that a person is allowed to insert personal prayers in the blessing of *Shema Koleinu* (*Shomei’a Tefillah*). The *Chazon Ish* (*Kovetz Igeres Chazon Ish*; also cited in *Sefer Techinos b’Lashon HaKodesh*, page 57) composed a personal prayer for the success of a child in Torah study:

יהי רצון מלפניך שתרחם על (שם הבן ואמו) ותהפוך את לבבו לאהבה וליראה את שמך ולשקוד בתורתך הקדושה. ותהסיר מלפניך כל הסיבות המונעות אותו משקדת תורתך הקדושה ותכין את כל הסיבות המביאות אותו לתורתך הקדושה, כי אתה שומע תפילה ברחמים. ברוך אתה ה', שומע תפילה.

“May it be your will, that You have mercy on my child (name and the mother’s name) and turn his heart around to love and fear Your Name and to dedicate himself to the study of Your holy Torah, and take away all the factors which hold him back from Torah study, and provide all the causes which will bring him closer to learning Your holy Torah.”