

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Protecting Those Who Protect Us

MEANING: The simple translation of the prayer

On the righteous, on the devout, on the elders of Your people the Family of Israel, on the remnant of the scholars, on the righteous converts and on ourselves—may Your compassion be aroused, Hashem, our G-d, and give goodly reward to all who sincerely believe in Your Name. Put our lot with them, and may we never feel ashamed, for we trust in You. Blessed are You, Hashem, Mainstay and Assurance of the righteous.

על הצדיקים ועל החסידים,
ועל זקני עמך בית ישראל
ועל פליטת סופריהם,
ועל גרי הצדק, ועלינו, יהמו
רחמיך ה' אלקינו, ותן שכר
טוב לכל הבוטחים בשמך
באמת, ושים חלקנו עמהם
לעולם ולא נבוש כי בך
בטחנו. ברוך אתה ה', משען
ומבטח לצדיקים:

WORD TO THE WISE: Meaning within the word



This blessing in Shemoneh Esrei mentions five different groups of people—צדיקים the righteous, חסידים the devout, זקני בית ישראל the elders of Your people the Family of Israel, פליטת סופריהם the remnant of the scholars, and גרי הצדק the righteous converts.

because they are a small group. Alternatively, the “remnant of the scholars” refers to those who teach Torah to young children (*Rokeach*, Volume 1, page 344).

Regarding the גרי הצדק—righteous converts to Judaism—Rabbi Yonathan Eibeshutz (*Sefer Yaaros D'Vash*, Volume 1, *Drasha* 1) writes: “Definitely in our time, the convert, who, in a world of depravity realizes the real truth, is like *Avraham Avinu* who recognized Hashem in a world of darkness. We are required to love him and to pray very much for his benefit. Let him not turn back because his turning to Judaism is too difficult.”

The פליטת סופריהם—remnant of scholars—refers to the scholars who transfer the Oral Torah from generation to generation (*Avodath Yisroel*). They are described as the “remnant”

THEME:

An essential concept of the prayer

Our Greatest Asset

By reciting a special prayer for Torah scholars, we acknowledge that they are the vital link that keeps Torah alive from generation to generation.

INSIGHT:

Deeper meanings of the theme

Our Heart and Soul

Several prayers have been instituted on behalf of Torah scholars. During the weekdays we say the *Kaddish d'Rabbanim*, in which we pray for the Rabbis. Even on Sabbath, when we do not pray for our individual needs, we still say *Yekum Purkum* for Torah scholars: “May salvation arise from Heaven — Grace, kindness, mercy, long life and ample livelihood, heavenly assistance, physical health, good vision, children who are alive and well, children who do not interrupt or withdraw from the words of Torah — for our masters and rabbis, the holy association in the land of Israel and the Diaspora...”

Torah scholars are the heart and soul of the Jewish people. Think about the impact of, Heaven forbid, losing just one Torah scholar, and realize that there is something you can do for them right now. You can pray for them and plead with G-d to protect them and shower

them with His kindness (From *With Hearts Full Of Faith*, Rabbi Mattisyahu Saloman, ArtScroll, page 82).

In today's times, when we no longer have towering Torah scholars as we did generations past, we must cherish the contribution of each and every Torah scholar in our midst. We mourn when they are gone, and we should also pray for their welfare when they are still among us.

R' Yonasan Eibeschutz (*Ibid*) makes a special comment about praying for our Torah scholars:

“It is our obligation to pray for the benefit, welfare and vigor [of Torah scholars], for they are the guardians of Torah and the custodians of the authentic tradition, the Oral Torah, and we depend on them. If we would not have Torah scholars, Heaven forbid, we would not have life itself. ...Therefore, we are obligated to pray for them, because we live in their protective shadow.”

VISUALIZE:

Images that bring the prayer to life

Keeping the Flame

People with an interest in natural medicine are aware of the vast natural pharmacy that grows in the South American rainforests. Hundreds of species of plants, leaves, berries and bark have curative properties that were once known to the native tribes of the area. Some of these natural cures are still used, and some have made their way to modern laboratories where they are developed



into pharmaceuticals. Yet a vast amount of this wisdom has disappeared. As modernization transforms the native societies, there are fewer people willing and able to spend years absorbing this intricate knowledge from their elders. Thus, their curative wisdom is lost.

Like these tribes, the Jewish people possess curative

wisdom. Our Torah is the cure, not only to the physical ills of life, but to the spiritual ills which are at the root of every difficulty and challenge Hashem sends our way. If Torah wisdom were lost, Heaven forbid, the world would be lost as well. We pray that Hashem support and protect our Torah scholars so that they will be able to continue absorbing and passing along the vast wisdom that has been entrusted to the Jewish people.

Try This!

▶ One of the greatest merits a person can achieve is to support a Torah scholar. Think of a Torah scholar you personally know and respect. When you say this prayer, have the intention that with your words, you are “writing a check” to support him in his *avodas Hashem*.

Did You Know

▶ **Worthy Prayers**

One may insert personal requests in each of the middle blessings of Shemoneh Esrei, in the blessing of *Shema Koleinu* or in *Elokai Netzor*. The Chayei Adam (cited in *Mishnah Berurah*, *Siman* 122:8), emphasizing the importance of adding personal requests to *Elokai Netzor*, states:

“It is appropriate and worthwhile for every person to pray each day specifically for his own financial needs, and other practical parts of life, and that his children should be Torah scholars and that all his descendants should be G-d fearing people... And if he cannot phrase these thoughts in the Hebrew language of prayer, let him say his thoughts in his own language, as long as it comes from the depths of his heart.”