**13. A Prayer for Tzadikim (The Righteous)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Show compassion Adonai, our God, for the righteous, for the pious, for the elders of Your people, the House of Israel, and to the remnant of their sages, and to righteous converts, and to us.  And give a good reward to all who truly trust in Your name.  And let our lot be with them forever, that we will not be ashamed that we have put our trust in you.  Blessed are You, Adonai, who is the support and trust for the righteous. | עַל הַצַּדִּיקִים וְעַל הַחֲסִידִים.  וְעַל זִקְנֵי עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשרָאֵל.  וְעַל פְּלֵיטַת סופְרֵיהֶם.  וְעַל גֵּרֵי הַצֶּדֶק. וְעָלֵינוּ.  יֶהֱמוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ ה' אֱלהֵינוּ.  וְתֵן שכָר טוב לְכָל הַבּוטְחִים בְּשִׁמְךָ בֶּאֱמֶת.  וְשים חֶלְקֵנוּ עִמָּהֶם לְעולָם וְלא נֵבושׁ כִּי בְךָ בָטָחְנוּ.  בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מִשְׁעָן וּמִבְטָח לַצַּדִּיקִים: |

**The Placement of this Blessing in the Amidah**

In blessing 11 we asked God for justice. In blessing 12 we asked God to get rid of the wicked. Here, we ask God to protect the righteous. It is as if we are saying that the wicked (or perhaps our own inadequacies, our "wickedness") is what prevents pure justice from leading to a world where our leaders are righteous. We ask God to "let our lot be with them"—we want them, and not the wicked to be our leaders, the people whom we look up to. But to do that, we, together with God, must first pave a path such that wickedness and bad people do not prevent good people from thriving in the world.

**Questions about the prayer:**

* When you recite this prayer, do you think of specific people? Whom? People you know? Famous people?
* The prayer seems to urge us not to think of ourselves as "the righteous" because later we add "and us"? Why shouldn't we consider ourselves righteous?
* Why do we ask for "support" for the righteous? What's so hard about being righteous? Why does a good person need support?
* What is the meaning of "being ashamed" in this prayer? Why would be ashamed? Are you sometimes embarrassed by your beliefs? Are you sometimes embarrassed when you try to do the right thing?

**The Place of the Convert in Judaism**

Interestingly, in this prayer we specifically mention "righteous converts" people who convert to Judaism and then lead righteous lives.

* Why do you think we go out of our way to mention "converts"?
* Might this have something to do with prayer 12 where we prayed against people who convert out of Judaism?
* There are many famous converts in the Bible, including Abraham and Sarah, Yitro (Moses's father-in-law) and Ruth.
* Think about what you know about these people? What drew them to Judaism?
* Think about the people you know who have converted? What drew them to Judaism?

**A Midrashic Parable About Converts (in Two Versions)**

God loves converts:

To what is this similar: A king had a flock of goats that went to the field every day and returned at dusk. One day, a deer joined the flock and grazed with the goats. When the flock returned to its pen, the deer would go with it, and when the flock went out to graze again, the deer would go with it.

People said to the king, “This deer joined the flock and grazes with it. Every day he goes out with the flock and returns with it.” The king loved the flock (especially the stag) and put it in the care of a good shepherd, who did not let anyone mistreat it; when he returned (home from his daily affairs), he told the shepherd to give the flock something to drink. He loved it very much.

The shepherd said (to the king), “My Lord, you have so many goats, you have so many lambs, and you have so many kids, yet you do not order me to take special care of them. But you do order me to take special care of the deer.”

**Version 1:**

The king replied, “The flock, as you might expect, will graze in the field, go out in the morning and return at night, but deer sleep in the desert and are not in the habit of living with people. Shouldn’t I be grateful to this deer, who left the wide desert and the other animals and came to live in my house?”

Likewise don't we need to be grateful to the convert who left his family, his ancestral home, his people and came to us. Therefore, be very careful how you treat a convert.

**Version 2** (in this version the shepherd loves the deer; there is no king):

The shepherd explained to the people why he favored the deer: I had to perform many kinds of labor for my flock until they grew up: I took them out in the morning and brought them back in the evening. But this one, who grew up in the wilderness and forests, came into my flock on his own. Should I not love him very much?

Likewise God said: I had to do a lot of work for Israel. I brought them out of Egypt, lit the way for them, sent down the manna for them, made the well gush up for them, and encompassed them with clouds of glory before they were willing to accept my Torah. But this one came on his own. He is therefore deemed by Me the equal of an Israelite, even of a Levite.

**Questions about the Midrash**

* What is there about converts that the author of the midrash admires?
* Think about the converts that you know. How do they compare with those Jews born as Jews that you know? What do you admire about these people?
* With all of this in mind, why do you think we especially include converts in this prayer about the righteous?