AMIDA, ELEVENTH BERAKHA: The End of a Broken Judicial System

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Restore our judges as at the beginning, and our political leaders as in the [good] old times,
And [so You will] remove from us suffering and anguish,
And reign over us, soon, You, HaShem, only You, with kindness and mercy, with righteousness and justice
Blessed are You, HaShem, the King who loves righteousness and justice.

To understand this Berakha (blessing) we must understand its context. First, let us remember that in this section, and for the next four berakhot, our requests are made not as individuals but as the "People of Israel". Secondly, that these requests (to return to Israel, to see Jerusalem rebuilt, etc.) are our highest national, we might say "messianic", aspirations. Third, it is possible that these blessings are presented in the order in which these events are to occur in messianic times: for example, first we will return to Israel, then Yerushalayim will be rebuilt, etc.
Let us now return to our Berakha.
Restore our judges as at the beginning, and our political leaders as in the [good] old times …
Like the previous Berakha, the text and ideas of this blessing is taken from the prophet Yesha'ayahu. In the first chapter of his book Yesha'ayahu explicitly states that the destruction of Yerushalayim and of the Bet haMiqdash, and the exile of the Jewish people, will come as a result of: oppression, theft, scam, crime and the corruption of judges and political leaders. This is what the Prophet of Israel said in 1:23:
"The judges [of Jerusalem] are corrupt, they are friends of thieves. In exchange for money and gifts they declare the

innocent guilty, they mistreat the orphan, and deny aid to the widow." Toward the end of this text (1: 26-27), Yesha'ayahu concludes with a message of hope, which has to do with our future redemption. *"I [HaShem] will restore Your judges as in the days of old, and Your rulers as in the beginning. Once that happens, [Jerusalem] will be called [once again] the city of righteousness, the City of honesty. 27 Sion [Yerushalayim] will be redeemed by justice, and those who repent [will be redeemed for practicing] righteousness. "*

And so you will remove from us suffering and anguish …
Now we understand better that the suffering this Berakha refers to, is that of the victims of a corrupt system of justice: the deprived and the unprotected, the poor, the widows, the orphans. Corruption kills, and injustice brings uncountable suffering. Unlike the corrupt judges, the true judges and leaders of Israel, such as King David, knew that, according to the Tora, their first mission was to assist the poor and the needy, and to defend those who have no one to defend them .
And reign over us, soon, You, HaShem -only You!- with kindness and mercy, with righteousness and justice…
What do we mean by "*Reign* over us … *only You* (□□□□)"? In the Tora the "King" (melekh) also fulfilled the role of Judge; he was the Supreme Judge, the last judicial instance. In this blessing we are asking to have the merit of being judged by honest judges and ruled by leaders with integrity. In other words: Humans! How is it then that we ask to be governed *exclusively* by HaShem, to be our King and Supreme Judge? It is almost as saying: YOU judge us, without proxies! This Berakha teaches us a very important lesson: that when our judges and political leaders are guided by the Laws of the Tora, as in the time of King David, it is as if we are governed "directly" by HaShem, since by observing the Tora, we are following His will And His words.

Summary: The previous Berakha deals with the return of the Jewish people to our *land*, while this Berakha refers to the return of *justice* to the People of Israel. It also teaches us that as long as we do not have a system of justice guided by

the Tora, we will not have attained our complete Geula (redemption) even if we are living in the land of Israel. Only when the Divine system of justice is restored, we can speak of a true normalization of the Jewish people. As we mentioned yesterday: □□□□□ □□□□ □□ □□ ,□□□□□ □□□□ ,□□□□□ □□. “The people of Israel, living in the Land of Israel, ruled by the Tora of Israel.”

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and

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