

דבר אל אהרן ואל בניו לאמר כה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: So shall you bless the children of Israel, saying to them (*Amor Lahem*)" (Bamidbar 6:23). Rashi says 1) *Amor* is similar in form to *Zachor* and *Shamor* (in the Ten Commandments); 2) *Amor* is written in the full form (with a *Vav*), [to teach us] that they should not be in a hasty or bewildered state when they bless the people, but rather they should bless them with the proper intent and with a full heart.

Why did Rashi compare the form of the word *Amor* to that of *Zachor*? *Zachor* is the infinitive form (the root form of the word). The imperative form (*Tzivuy*) would be *Zichor*. If Gd was commanding us to keep the Shabbos or to remember the Shabbos, why not use the imperative form of the word, *Zichor*, *Shimor*? Rashi (Shemos 20:8) says that the infinitive form teaches that one must always be thinking of Shabbos. Rashi quotes the opinion of Shammai to set aside the choicest objects encountered during the week for Shabbos. The Gemara (Baytza 16a) says that Hillel had a different approach, in that he would dedicate all his actions to the glory of Gd and use the best that he had available before Shabbos. Even though we have a principle that we always accept the opinion of Beis Hillel, Rashi and the Rambam agree with the opinion of Shammai, because in this case Shammai's opinion matches the commandment as written in the Torah. *Zachor* teaches that no matter what day of the week it might be, one must always think of, and look forward to, Shabbos.

In the section of ברכת כהנים, the Torah says *Amor Lahem* and not *Emor Lahem*. From the use of the infinitive form instead of the imperative form, we learn that once a Kohen is עולה לדוכן, goes up to bless the people, he retains a perpetual obligation to bless the people whenever he is asked to. (This is Rashi's opinion, Tosfos disagrees, see Sotah 38a). This perpetual obligation to bless the people is similar to the perpetual obligation to constantly remember the Shabbos. That is why the form *Amor* is used, similar to the use of the form *Zachor*.

Why does Rashi note that *Amor* is written in the full form, with a *Vav*? Prior to blessing the people, the priests recite a blessing that Gd sanctified them and commanded them to bless the people with, or through, love, באהבה. It would appear from the text of this blessing that the true fulfillment of the biblical obligation to bless the people requires that they do it with (or through) love. (Note: I would suggest that this echoes a similar idea of the Rav in which he interprets the letter *Bays* in the word ביום in the verse כי ביום הזה יכפר אליכם (Vayikra 16:30). ביום does not mean on the day of Yom Kippur. Rather it indicates that by complying with and experiencing the essence of the Day of Atonement, עצמו של יום הכפורים, through an

attitude of contrition, regret and repentance, the day of Yom Kippur will be the vehicle through which you will attain atonement. Similarly, if the priest can be moved though a feeling of love for his fellow Jews, to bless them with a clear and joyful mindset and without reservation, Gd will ultimately concur with and confer those blessings on His chosen people.)

The Shulchan Aruch notes that a priest who is in mourning for one of the 7 close relatives, does not bless the people during the Shiva period. The Rama extends this, and says that a priest who has lost a parent should not *Duchen* for the full year extended period of mourning. (See Orach Chaim 128:43, and see paragraph 44 regarding the requirement that the priest must be בשמחה, in a joyous mood, to participate in ברכת כהנים.) Had *Bircas Kohanim* been a Mitzvah of simple recitation of some text, it should have been treated the same as Tefila and Krias Shema, which are Mitzvos that the mourner must fulfill despite his depressed frame of mind. Apparently the requirement to perform ברכת כהנים באהבה prevents the Kohen mourner from being עולה לדוכן.

The Rama (ibid) rules that in the diaspora, the Kohanim do not perform ברכת כהנים daily because they are preoccupied with thoughts of daily survival and the need to earn a living, [which precludes them from fulfilling their obligation with its proper intent]. We do not find that similar pre-occupation removes the obligation to recite קריאת שמע or to pray on a daily basis. The word *Amor* teaches that there is a biblical obligation to perform this Mitzvah באהבה, which is different than other Mitzvos. The fulfillment of באהבה requires the priests to bless the people with the proper intent and with a full heart, and not to bless them in a hasty or perfunctory manner or in a bewildered mood. This precludes ברכת כהנים on a daily basis in the diaspora. However on festivals that are associated with joy and שמחה, the obligation to bless the people applies in the diaspora as well. The Rama notes that the blessing should be done in Mussaf, in closest proximity to the end of the service so as to connect it with the joy and שמחה of the holiday felt by the people (perhaps in connection with the תפלת מוסף after סעודת יום טוב).

In summary, the perpetual obligation to bless the people indicated by *Amor* (similar to *Zachor*) is connected to the obligation to bless them באהבה. *Amor* teaches that the Kohen must always be ready to bless the people based on this perpetual obligation, just like the Jew must always think of Shabbos. *Amor* also teaches that it must be done through אהבה, that this perpetual obligation can only be fulfilled when the Kohen is of a clear frame of mind.

© Copyright 2019 Rabbi Josh Rapps. Permission to distribute this summary for individual use, with this notice, is granted. Distribution through electronic or printed media without the author's permission is prohibited.