



Likkutei Sichos

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I Will Turn To You

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1.

A PARABLE AND QUESTIONS

On the verse,¹ “I will turn to you, I will make you fruitful, and I will increase you,” Rashi quotes the words, “I will turn to you,” and explains: “I will turn away from all My duties² to pay your reward. To what can this be compared? To a king who hired workers, etc., as recorded in *Toras Kohanim*.”³

We need to clarify:

a) What is missing in our understanding of the clause, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward” that prompted Rashi to explain it using the parable of “a king who hired workers, etc.”?

b) On the other hand, if something is lacking in our understanding of this clause, how does the parable (of a king who hired workers...) help? Seemingly, the parable contributes nothing to Rashi’s own explanation {“I will turn away from all My duties...}!

c) Furthermore, earlier, in *parshas Acharei*,⁴ regarding the prohibition of eating blood (and similarly, in *parshas Kedoshim*,⁵ regarding the prohibition of offering one’s children to *Molech*),⁶ Rashi offers an interpretation similar to what he says here (but in a negative context): “*I shall direct My face* — My attention. I turn away from all My duties and deal with him.” There, Rashi does **not** add a parable.

d) Concerning the parable itself: Rashi says, “To what can this be compared? To a **king** who hired workers.” Seemingly, not only a king hires workers. (Even when a king does so, it has nothing to do with his stature as a king.) Any person can hire (and ordinary people have hired) workers. Rashi

¹ *Vayikra* 26:9.

² {In the original Hebrew, “עסקי”; the term, “Hashem’s duties,” will be discussed in detail in Sec. 8, below.}

³ {*Toras Kohanim*, “*Bechukosai*,” ch. 2, sec. 5. The rest of this parable will be quoted in Sec. 2, below.}

⁴ *Vayikra* 17:10.

⁵ *Vayikra* 20:3.

⁶ {An ancient form of pagan worship where the worshippers would pass their children between two fires.}

should have said, “This can be compared to someone who hired workers,” who then turns away from all his duties and pays the worker who did the most work.

2.

PUBLIC AND INDIVIDUAL AFFAIRS

We can answer these difficulties by prefacing with a question: Rashi already explained the meaning of the idioms, “I shall direct My face,”⁷ “*ve’nasati panai*,” and similarly, “I shall direct My face,” “*va’ani etain es panai*”:⁸ “I turn away from all My duties....” Why, then, does Rashi repeat the same explanation? [Moreover, specifically in those instances that Scripture uses the wording, פני, “My face” (in those cases, one may mistakenly think that this word, פני, is a linguistic derivative (only) of the word, פנים, a face) is it necessary for Rashi to clarify that “I shall direct My face,” or the like, means, “My attention. I turn away from all My duties.” But here, since the verse says, “I will turn, ופניתי, **to you**, אליכם {plural, in Hebrew},” the meaning is clear}.⁹ And automatically, we understand the verse to mean that Hashem turns away from His other duties.]

Seemingly, the explanation is as follows: In *parshas Acharei*, regarding the prohibition of eating blood (and similarly in *parshas Kedoshim*, regarding the prohibition of offering one’s children to *Molech*), the verse is speaking about a single individual. Thus, we appreciate the novelty of Rashi’s explanation: “*I shall direct My face* — My attention; I turn away from **all My duties** and deal with **him**.” That is, Hashem, so to speak, turns away from dealing with public affairs, and deals with the individual.

⁷ {*Vayikra* 17:10.}

⁸ {*Vayikra* 20:3.}

⁹ {Since the indirect object, “to you,” is *plural* (in Hebrew), the verb, ופניתי, cannot possibly mean literally, Hashem’s (metaphorical) face, because that only would make sense if directing one’s face to a *single* individual. See next note.}

In contrast, our *parshah* discusses the Jewish people collectively: “I will turn **aleichem** {to you, in plural}.”¹⁰ Regarding this scenario, we can ask: What does Hashem mean when He says, “I will turn away from **all My duties** (as opposed to “from **other** duties”) to pay your reward”? Do Hashem’s duties, initially, not also include looking after the Jewish people to reward them for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos?

To address this question, Rashi needs to explain again in our *parshah* that “I will turn to you” means, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward” (even though the verse refers to the Jewish people collectively). And this concept becomes clear through the parable of “a king who hired workers, **etc.**,” as recorded in *Toras Kohanim*.” *Toras Kohanim* continues:

... who hired many workers, and among them there was one worker who worked for him for many days. The workers came to claim their wages, and this worker came with them.

The king said that first he would calculate what he owes the “many workers” and pay them, and then “I will turn to you.” The same holds true in the analogue: Similarly, “The Jewish people claim their reward from Hashem¹¹ in this world, and the nations of the world claim theirs. And Hashem says to the Jewish people: ‘My children, I will turn to you...’; but for you,¹² in the future, I will make a great reckoning with you.”

We learn from the parable: a) There are other workers whom Hashem needs to remunerate, and this task is among Hashem’s duties; b) the nations of the world are “**many** workers,” but the Jewish people, one nation, are **one** worker; c) the reward that Hashem gives the nations of the world is a material reward in This World, unlike the Jewish people’s reward, which is spiritual, in the World to Come, as the commentators explain.¹³

¹⁰ {This nuance is imperceptible in the English language for the English word ‘you’ can be used both in the plural and singular context. However, in the original, “*aleichem*,” means “to you,” plural; whereas, “*eilecha*,” would mean “to you,” singular.}

¹¹ {In the Hebrew original, “*ha’makom*”; often rendered in English as “the Omnipresent.”}

¹² {Referring to the nations of the world. Although Hashem prioritizes settling payment with the Jewish people (*turning* to them), He reassures the nations of their great reward, which they will receive in This World.}

¹³ See *Korban Aharon* and *Malbim*, commenting on the *Midrash*.

This also explains: a) How the wording, “I will turn away from all My **duties**” makes sense in the context of rewarding the Jewish people collectively. Hashem’s “duties” include rewarding the many nations. But, “to pay your reward” is a different and unique type of reward unlike “all My duties,” for Hashem has to “turn aside” from This World to the World to Come; and b) why Rashi offers a parable of “a **king**...” — because the reality of “hiring **many** workers” is **typically** more frequent with a king.

However, it is difficult to say that this explanation is the simple meaning of Rashi’s commentary. If this would have been the case, Rashi should have quoted the phrase “many {workers}, and among them there was one worker...” (or at the very least he should have included the word “**many** [workers]”) from the *Toras Kohanim*, which would have been an essential support to his interpretation {had Rashi meant as explained above}. He would not have sufficed with just alluding to this by only writing, “etc., as recorded in *Toras Kohanim*.”

Therefore, we must conclude that the primary reason compelling Rashi to offer the explanation, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward,” can be found in the words that Rashi does quote, “To what can this be compared? To a king who hired workers.” (The other details of the parable offer no **novelty** in terms of clarifying *pshat*; therefore, Rashi suffices with alluding to them with just, “etc., as recorded in *Toras Kohanim*.”)

3.

BE FRUITFUL AND PROLIFERATE

Next {in his commentary}, Rashi quotes, “I will make you fruitful,” and explains: “With fruitfulness and proliferation, רביה.” And on the words, “and I will increase, הרבית, you,” Rashi explains: “with a dignified posture.”¹⁴

We need to clarify:

¹⁴ {In the original Hebrew, “*koma zekufa*”; lit., “upright standing.”}

In *parshas Bereishis*,¹⁵ Rashi defines the term “Be **fruitful**” as, “one {creature} begets one offspring, **but no more**,” and he defines “**proliferate**” as “one begets many.” As such, how can Rashi explain “I will make you fruitful” in our verse to also mean “proliferation”?

Some commentators¹⁶ suggest that in our verse, we cannot define these words as they are defined in *parshas Bereishis*. “Be fruitful” itself is not a blessing (as every creature **naturally** reproduces). Since our *parshah* discusses Hashem’s **blessings** to the Jewish people, we must say that “I will make you fruitful” also includes “proliferation.” Therefore, the clause “and I will increase you” must mean not proliferation quantitatively but qualitatively — “with a dignified posture.”

But this is difficult to understand:

What exactly is the blessing of, “*I will make you fruitful* — with fruitfulness and **proliferation**”? Seemingly, “one begets many” is also not a blessing designated specifically for Jewish people (for this blessing was also given to the nations of the world).

4.

WRONG LOCATION

The explanation for all the above:

The difficulty with the clause, “I will turn to you”: If we understand the clause, “I will turn to you” the same way as we understand the clause, “I will direct My face” in *parshas Acharei* (and as “I will direct My face” in *parshas Kedoshim*) — “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward” — then this verse should have been placed at the **beginning** of the *parshah*. This verse should have introduced all the Divine promises in our *parshah*, immediately

¹⁵ *Bereishis* 1:22.

¹⁶ See *Be'er Yitzchak* commenting on Rashi here. See also *Re'em*, here.

following the opening verse, “If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them.”¹⁷ (Alternatively, the verse could appear after all the promises as a **conclusion**) as, in fact, is the case in *parshas Acharei* (and *parshas Kedoshim*).

But the Torah places this verse in the middle of its account of the promises and the reward for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos. This seems to show that the clause, “I will turn to you” in our *parshah* does not mean, “I will turn away from all My duties, etc.” Rather, it connotes a specific and unique reward for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos.

Therefore, Rashi needs to clarify that here, **too**, the verse means, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.” Then, Rashi explains why this verse appears in the middle of the *parshah*, and not at the beginning its account of the blessings and rewards, with the parable of “a **king** who hired workers” (as we will explain).

5.

KINGS DON'T HIRE

An average person, or even a {government} minister, needs to **hire** workers (for pay). This makes sense because he cannot compel them to work.

But why would a **king** need to **hire** workers? He rules and governs the entire country. Every one of his subjects must perform and carry out the will of the king and his commands.

On this basis, it is understood that in the parable, we are not talking about tasks that the country's citizens must perform for the king (or those that are for the betterment of the country). (**These** kinds of tasks would have been performed before the king had to hire workers.) Rather, we are talking about additional tasks that are **not** obligated or compelled by the king (or {essential}

¹⁷ {Vayikra 26:3.}

for the country). Therefore, in order for these tasks to be fulfilled, the king needs to hire workers and remunerate them (generously).

The same applies in the analogue: The *parshah* begins, “If you will go in My statutes.” This means, as Rashi explains, “**you shall toil** in Torah” **more** than is required by the basic mitzvah of Torah study. Similarly {Rashi explains}: “*And observe My commandments* — toil in Torah **in order to safeguard** and fulfill...”

This manner of observing Torah and mitzvos — surpassing Torah’s requirements — is similar to (the parable of) “**a king who hired workers**,” who perform the type of work that the citizens of the country are not obliged to undertake.

Thus, we can appreciate that they deserve a supplemental and special reward for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos in this manner.

6.

APPROPRIATE REWARD

Now we can also appreciate why the Torah says, “I will turn to you,” in the middle of the section.

Since “you will go in my statutes...” means additional “toil in Torah,” it automatically includes obligatory Torah study. As the verse says explicitly, “and observe my commandments” (which also includes all mitzvah observance [and Torah study, as a whole]). Thus, the Jewish people receive two types of reward for going “in My statutes...”: a) The reward for their basic observance of Torah and mitzvos (in a regular manner, as **obligated**); and b) the special reward for **toiling** (in Torah), i.e., performing Torah and mitzvos and doing so with an added extra.

Parallel to this, the Torah then mentions two types of reward: First the Torah mentions the reward for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos in a regular manner, which **in general** is the reward that “I will grant your rain **in its time...**”¹⁸ Subsequently, after mentioning this reward, in the **middle** of this section, the Torah mentions the second type of reward (for **toiling** in Torah):¹⁹ “**I will turn to you.**” For *avodah*²⁰ performed in the manner of **toiling** in Torah, etc., the Jewish people are given a new and higher level of reward, a reward in which {Hashem says:} “**I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.**”

“**I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward,**” cannot be said regarding the first type of reward, which is given for fulfilling Torah and mitzvos in a regular (obligatory) manner, since the nations of the world also receive (a similar type of) reward for fulfilling the Seven Noahide²¹ Laws²² (and for studying the relevant laws of Torah that they are obligated to fulfill).

In contrast, the unique reward for the *avodah* of **toiling** in Torah, etc. (similar to the **king who hires**, etc.,) is not bestowed upon the nations of the world. Therefore, **these** blessings are conferred as described by the verse, “*I will turn to you* — I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.”

[However, Rashi quotes the wording of the *Toras Kohanim*, “a king who hired **workers**,” in plural — indicating that the king also **hired** others (i.e., gentiles). Meaning, in the analogue, that gentiles can also go beyond the letter of the law (and as a result, they also receive a special reward).

Rashi only says this because among the nations, there are **righteous** gentiles who do more than is demanded of them. But even **this** *avodah* is entirely incomparable to the extra *avodah* of the Jewish people who toil in Torah. Therefore, the reward of the Jewish people is extraordinary in that “I will turn away from **all My** duties to pay **your reward.**” (Meaning, Hashem turns

¹⁸ {Vayikra 26:4.}

¹⁹ {Vayikra 26:9.}

²⁰ {Divine service.}

²¹ {Noahides are gentiles who accept the seven universal laws of morality. See:

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/62221/jewish/The-7-Noahide-Laws-Universal-Morality.htm}

²² See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” end of ch. 8: “And he has a portion in the World to Come.”

to another type of reward that is even different from His “duty” of recompensing the righteous gentiles.)]

7.

FRUITFUL PLUS SOMETHING MORE

On this basis, we can also understand Rashi’s subsequent remarks: “*I will make you fruitful* — with fruitfulness and proliferation.” This verse is not referring to a usual reward, but to the additional, special reward (reflected by the phrase, “I will turn **to you**”). This reward is granted only to the Jewish people (not to the nations of the world). Therefore, we cannot say that “I will make you fruitful” means fathering offspring, and “I will increase you” means proliferation, since this blessing can also be given to gentiles. So we must say that “I will increase you” is a remarkable and unusual blessing which is only given in line with {Hashem’s promise}, “I will turn to you.”

Accordingly, Rashi understands that the clause, “I will make you fruitful,” **itself** means (not only fathering offspring, but) also the ability to proliferate — “one begets many.” Meaning, not only does the expression, “I will make you fruitful,” include both fathering offspring and proliferation (begetting one, and then begetting many), but there is a novelty within the blessing of fruitfulness itself. Meaning, this fruitfulness itself is in a manner that reflects “increase.”

The fruitfulness conferred to gentiles only ensures that “one begets **one**” but not that their offspring also have the ability to reproduce; the male may be sterile (or the female may be barren). In contrast, the blessing to the Jewish people, “I will make you fruitful,” ensures that from the outset, even when “one begets one,” the “one” child reflects the quality of a “**plurality**,” ריבוי (“proliferation,” רביה) since this “one” will have progeny until the end of time. This is like the verse regarding Avraham:²³ “I caused his seed to **proliferate** and I gave him (an **only** son) Yitzchak.” Through Yitzchak, there was a great

²³ *Yehoshua* 24:3.

proliferation. [The other blessing also given to the nations of the world, “one begets many,” **literally**, will certainly also apply to the Jewish people.]

Since “I will make you fruitful” already includes “proliferating” (quantitatively), we must conclude that the words that follow {in the verse}, “and I will increase you,” come to add something qualitatively (as explained in Section 3). Furthermore, this addition is specifically in line with {Hashem’s promise}, “I will turn to you.” Therefore, Rashi says, “*And I will increase you*, והרביתי — with a dignified posture.” Meaning, not only will the promise that “the older one, רב, will serve the younger”²⁴ be realized, but moreover, on account of, “I will turn to you,” the younger one will experience, “I will increase you.” As a result, will attain the stature of the “older one,” possessing “a dignified posture.”

8.

DUTY, *EISEK*

Seemingly, however, this explanation is not altogether smooth. Rashi’s **wording**, “I will turn away from **all My duties** to pay your reward” (as opposed to “My other duties,” or the like) shows that **this** payment of the reward is **not at all** among “My (Hashem’s) duties.” We need to clarify: Why would rewarding the Jewish people not be included among Hashem’s duties?

Therefore, we must conclude that “I will turn to you” expresses a deeper idea than just the usual effort entailed by a “duty.”

We will understand this by first clarifying the definition of a “duty” and its deeper connotation: A duty is a **secondary** matter in which a person is engaged that is **not** reflective of him **as his own person**.²⁵ Meaning, involvement in a duty reflects a person’s shift downward from his core identity.

²⁴ Bereishis 25:23.

²⁵ {In the cryptic Yiddish original, “*far zich*.”}

The same applies to Hashem, so to speak: Hashem Himself is completely beyond being drawn {into the worldly realm} and manifesting Himself. Therefore, all Heavenly outflow and emanations that come from Hashem are called, “My duties,” for they descend from a category of G-dly light²⁶ that can be emitted and descend {into the world}.

This, then, explains the meaning of, “I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward”:

Creation of the worlds, and even reward and punishment in the usual manner, even concerning the Jewish people, emanates from G-dly light and revelation. Therefore, all this is included among Hashem’s “duties.” (Meaning, Hashem’s Essence constricts itself into a mode of effusion, in the ten *sefiros*.)²⁷

However, when the Jewish people engage in *avodah* that reflects the ideal of “**toiling** in Torah” beyond what is required based on Hashem’s command — when a person performs Torah and mitzvos not as a “duty” which is done using only the revealed faculties and externality of his soul, but by investing the **innermost parts** {פנימיות} of his soul (for this reason, he does more than he is obligated) — it elicits a parallel response from On High, in that, “I will turn {רפנית} to you.” Hashem turns to the Jewish people with His innermost and essential Self (beyond G-dly light and revelation — “I will turn away from all My duties”) to the point that Hashem and the Jewish people become one.

9.

WHO CAN BE A GIVER

Another consideration in this discussion:

A created being by definition is a recipient, and this applies to the loftiest of all created beings. Even the loftiest G-dly lights and revelations also share this

²⁶ {“Light,” as used in Chassidus, connotes Divine revelation and manifestation. For a comprehensive explanation of this term, see “Mystical Concepts in Chassidism” (by Rabbi Immanuel Schochet) p. 41 ff.}

²⁷ {*Sefiros* are Divine emanations. There are ten *sefiros*, which are various phases in the manifestation of Divinity.}

general characteristic in that they receive from that which is higher than them. (As a result, they all cannot truly become givers.²⁸) True giving — with no receiving — is only a property of Hashem’s Essence itself.²⁹

Therefore, when the Jewish people learn Torah and perform mitzvos as they were commanded, they remain “recipients” — they receive and follow Hashem’s commands. When the Jewish people toil in the Torah, however, doing more than Hashem’s commands obligate, they (also) become givers, because they exert themselves and act **using their own abilities**. In this way, the Jewish people become similar to their Creator. Meaning, in a Jew below, in this world, his source in Hashem’s Essence is revealed. As a result, the reward also derives from Hashem’s **Essence**: “*I will turn to you — I will turn away from all My duties to pay your reward.*”

Therefore, this reward (“I will turn to you”) manifests firstly in {Hashem’s promise}, “*I will make you fruitful — with fruitfulness and proliferation,*” because this is **giving**. For (besides the fact that reproduction is an expression of Hashem’s infinite power,³⁰ furthermore) when this blessing comes because of Hashem’s promise of “I will turn to you,” the fruitfulness itself is expressed in “fruitfulness and proliferation.” This is like what was discussed above,³¹ Namely, every **individual**, single birth that occurs also reflects infinitude because it extends until the end of time.

10.

HASHEM’S ESSENCE

But we still need to clarify: **Following** {Hashem’s promise}, “I will turn to you,” the verse describes various forms of reward in numerous materialistic matters. What does **material** abundance have to do with turning His **Essence** to the Jewish people?

²⁸ {In the original Hebrew, “*mashpia*”; an “influencer.”}

²⁹ See *Or Hatorah, Vayikra*, p. 494 ff.

³⁰ See *Likkutei Torah, “Shir Hashirim,”* 40a; the beginning of “*Hemshech Samach Tisamach*” 5657; et al.

³¹ {In Section 7.}

The answer: Were the verse referring to a reward of Divine light and Heavenly outflow in the class of the infinite (or at least in the class of revelation) — which cannot be revealed below in their pristine quality and rank, except through *tzimtzum*³² and diminution — then a greater and loftier blessing would mean a loftier revelation of **spirituality**.

“I will turn to you,” however, derives from Hashem’s Essence, which is not circumscribed by any parameters. Therefore, the blessings are conferred also (and specifically) in materialistic matters — an abundance of material goodness in a manifest and revealed way with no constraints,³³ reflective of Hashem’s Essence.

11.

FINAL QUESTION

However, the following remains not altogether smooth:

a) True, deriving from Hashem’s Essence, the blessing (also) is given as material abundance. But of what significance is this material reward in comparison with {Hashem’s promise}, “I will turn to you,” with His Essence, whereby a Jew becomes one entity, so to speak, with Hashem’s Essence?

b) Rashi even explains {Hashem’s promise}, “I will turn to you,” in the context of “**your reward**.” Meaning, this, too, is a **reward**. Seemingly, reward refers to something given as compensation for work, but the worker and the “king who hired” him remain two separate entities.

This is difficult to understand: Had the reward been in the form of G-dly revelations, this would make sense, because just like it is impossible to “express” Hashem’s Essence in them (unless His Essence is poised for effluence and contraction), so, too, these G-dly revelations cannot penetrate a Jew’s essence, to

³² {The contraction and withdrawal of Divine light.}

³³ {In the original Hebrew, “*tzimtzumim*”; pl. of *tzimtzum*; see above fn.}

become one entity with him. However, this reward — “I will turn to you” — concerns Hashem’s **Essence** {which becomes one entity, so to speak, with the Jew}; how is the wording “to pay your **reward**” appropriate?

12.

A LITTLE SELF HIDING SOMEWHERE

The explanation:

There are two methods by which a person can engage in the *avodah* of toiling in Torah itself — which reaches the innermost part and essence of the soul.³⁴

a) He performs the *avodah* prompted by the essence of his soul, but he still makes calculations and pursues an aim — he wants to become one with Hashem’s Essence. Since **his own** will plays a part in this *avodah*, this shows that he has room left for something other than Hashem’s Essence. There is a “he” who desires to become one with Hashem’s Essence.³⁵

b) He performs the *avodah* without calculations, and without an objective — not even becoming one with Hashem’s Essence. (Rather, his only objective is to fulfill Hashem’s will.) Consequently, this *avodah* has no limits. This type of *avodah* leaves room for nothing other than Hashem’s Essence.

Corresponding to these two methods of *avodah* are the two manifestations of {Hashem’s promise:} “I will turn to you”:

When a person engages in the first method of *avodah* — where room for himself (which desires to become one with Hashem’s Essence) still remains, albeit in a small measure — then {the promise}, “I will turn to you” (i.e., the

³⁴ See *Maamar “Vatem Tihyu Li”* 5660; et al.

³⁵ Similar to what it says in *Tanya*, ch. 35, “Even if he is a great *tzaddik*, worshiping Hashem with awe and a ‘love of delights’... he is an autonomous being who fears Hashem and loves Him.” See also, *ibid.*, ch. 37 (48a).

union of Hashem's Essence and the Jewish people that comes about through toil in Torah) manifests in a way that the Jew keeps his sense of "self." This is called "reward."

[Therefore, Torah details the material rewards that come about on account of the promise, "I will turn to you," since space for his self-centered existence remains, filling **his** needs — even material ones — has a measure of importance.]

However, when a Jew performs this *avodah* consummately without pursuing an aim or purpose, then the promise, "I will turn to you" is also given optimally, as this section of our *parshah* **concludes**, "I led you **erect**³⁶ {קוממיות}."³⁷ Meaning, Hashem's "stature {קומה}" and the Jewish people's "stature {קומה}"³⁸ become **one** — the Jewish people and the King alone.

— Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Behar, Bechukosai* 5737 (1977)

³⁶ {The plural form of "קומה" in a descriptive construct; hence, the translation "erect."}

³⁷ {*Vayikra* 26:13.}

³⁸ Each of these two statures (קומה) are included in one word — "קוממיות."