



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Say To Them

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## 1.

### THREE COMMENTS

Regarding the command of *birkas kohanim*,<sup>1</sup> the verse says,<sup>2</sup> “So shall you bless the Children of Israel, say to them.” Rashi explains:

**Say, אָמַר, to them** — Similar to “זָכוֹר, remember” and “שָׁמוֹר, safeguard.” In Old French, “*disant*.” **Say to them** — so that all of them will hear. **Say** — the word is spelled in full<sup>3</sup> {to imply}, do not bless them hurriedly and in a frenzy, but rather with concentration and with a whole heart.

In his three explanations, Rashi quotes the words from the verse — “say to them” (twice) and “say” (once). This signals that each explanation offers insight into a different aspect of the quoted words.

We need to clarify:

In his first two glosses, Rashi *also* explains the word לָהֶם, “(say) to them,” and in his third gloss, Rashi only explains the word, “say.” Accordingly, Rashi should have placed his third explanation (“*Say* — the word is spelled in full”) first, before the other two explanations.

This order of placement shows that, although each of these explanations offers a distinct idea, they need to be taught in this order. Meaning, the question that the third explanation addresses only arises after the previous two.

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<sup>1</sup> {The priestly blessing.}

<sup>2</sup> *Bamidbar* 6:23.

<sup>3</sup> {It is spelled with a *vav* — אָמַר, rather than אַמַּר.}

## 2.

### HOW OTHERS UNDERSTAND RASHI

The commentators<sup>4</sup> clarify Rashi's first explanation — “Similar to “זָכוֹר, remember” and “שָׁמֹר, safeguard” — as follows: Rashi seeks to answer a question. The verb אָמַר is not in the imperative form {צִוּוּי} but in either the present tense or the infinitive form {מְקוֹר}.<sup>5</sup> Under the אָ, there is a *kamatz*, and not a *segol* {אָמַר} (or a *chirik*, with a ו suffix — אָמְרוּ).

Therefore, Rashi explains — according to the way some commentators<sup>6</sup> understand his commentary — that אָמַר here is, in fact, not an imperative; rather, it is in the **present** tense. This is no exception, similar to זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר. The word אָמַר in the present tense (when used in the context of a command) indicates that it must be said constantly. As Rashi has explained previously regarding זָכוֹר,<sup>7</sup> “Take to heart to remember **always**....”

Other commentators,<sup>8</sup> however, understand that although the verb form of אָמַר (with a *kamatz*) is not in the imperative but the infinitive absolute — Rashi explains (similar to the above discussion) that the Torah in other places also uses the infinitive form to express a command: “similar to זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר” — they are written in the infinitive form although they are in fact commands.

According to these explanations of Rashi, the following questions arise (in addition to further questions): Since Rashi explains only the word “say, אָמַר” why does he also quote the words “to them, לָהֶם” instead of writing more concisely, “Say, אָמַר — similar to זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר.”

Additionally, we need to clarify: Why does Rashi cite two examples זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר? Why is זָכוֹר or שָׁמֹר alone insufficient?

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<sup>4</sup> See *Gur Aryeh*; *Sefer Zikaron*; *Be'er Mayim Chayim*; *Be'er Rechovos*; et al.

<sup>5</sup> {In Hebrew grammar, this is known as the “*makor*” form; in English grammar, as “infinitive absolute.”}

<sup>6</sup> *Rabbi Eliyohu Mizrachi*, commenting on Rashi here.

<sup>7</sup> *Shemos* 20:8.

<sup>8</sup> See *Gur Aryeh*; *Sefer Zikaron*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*; *Be'er Rechovos*; et al.

### 3.

#### SAY TO ALL OF THEM

In Rashi's second gloss, "*Say to them* — so that all of them will hear," Rashi's intent, on the face of it (as commentators explain) is that one should not think that *kohanim* may recite *birkas kohanim* when they are alone, even though the congregation cannot hear them. Instead, the *kohanim* are obligated to "*say to them* — so that all of them will hear."

But we need to clarify:

a) Whichever way we look at this issue, it seems difficult: If Rashi learns this from the word, "**לָהֶם, to them** — so that all of them will **hear**," he did not need to also quote the word "say" in his caption. On the flip side, if Rashi's proof is also from the word "say," in that the "saying" must be done (in a way that reaches) "to them," then {the focus on the speakers and not the listeners} should have been reflected in Rashi's wording, similar to the wording used by the Gemara<sup>9</sup> — the *kohanim* must say *birkas kohanim* "in a loud voice." (This explanation is, still, seemingly, more plausible, since it fits better with the subject of the verse, i.e., what the *kohanim* say, and not what the Jewish people hear.)

b) Since Rashi intends to negate the notion that *kohanim* may say *birkas kohanim* **when they are alone**, why does Rashi not say this explicitly, as do *Sifri*<sup>10</sup> and the Gemara? (This would be like how he clarifies and explains, "do not bless them hurriedly...") Ostensibly, Rashi should say this explicitly based on a *kal vachomer*:<sup>11</sup> If *Sifri* and the Gemara — which are taught to "a ten-year-old {who begins} studying Mishnah,"<sup>12</sup> and (moreover) to "a fifteen-year-old {who begins} studying Gemara" — had to clarify that "say to them" means that the *kohanim* should not bless the people in a whisper or when they are alone,

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<sup>9</sup> *Sotah* 38a.

<sup>10</sup> Commenting on this verse.

<sup>11</sup> {*Kal Vachomer* — Lit., "light and heavy," *kal vachomer* is a Talmudic logical proof, whereby a strict ruling given in a lenient case demands a similarly strict ruling to be given in a more stringent case; alternatively, a lenient ruling in a stringent case demands a similarly lenient ruling in a lenient case.}

<sup>12</sup> {*Pirkei Avos* 5:22.}

certainly Rashi should have stated this clearly for the “five-year-old {who begins} studying Scripture.”<sup>13</sup>

c) Why does Rashi use the wording, “**all of them** (will hear),” without clarifying to whom he refers? Granted, this explanation of Rashi is a continuation of the verse, “So shall you bless the Children of Israel, say to them,” however, this obviously does not include all the Jewish people all over the world, but only the Jewish people who are present. Rashi should have said, similar to the wording used by *Sifri*, “so that the entire congregation (i.e., those people who have gathered there) should hear,” or the like.

#### 4.

#### QUESTIONS ON THE THIRD GLOSS

Rashi’s third gloss: “*Say* — the word is spelled in full {to imply} do not bless them hurriedly and in a frenzy, but rather with concentration and with a whole heart.”

We need to clarify:

a) As mentioned several times, the nuance of whether a word is spelled **full** or **deficient**<sup>14</sup> is irrelevant in *pshat*,<sup>15</sup> and Rashi does not **need** to address it. On the contrary, in the vast majority of places in *Chumash* where a word is spelled either full or deficient, Rashi does not address this matter unless there is a difficulty in *pshat* that is addressed and resolved by the word being spelled full or deficient. Thus, in our case, we need to clarify: What is the difficulty in *pshat* **here** that is resolved by the word being spelled in full?

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<sup>13</sup> {Rashi wrote his commentary on *Chumash* to resolve difficulties that a 5-year-old student would encounter in understanding the simple meaning of a verse.}

<sup>14</sup> {I.e., with or without a *vav*. In orthography, known as *plene scriptum* and *defective scriptum*, respectively.}

<sup>15</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment. Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

b) Why would we even think that the *kohanim* should bless the Jewish people “hurriedly and in a frenzy,” requiring the verse to refute this notion?

The Midrash says:<sup>16</sup> “Hashem said to the *kohanim*: Do not — because I told you to bless the Jewish people — bless them {as though you are doing so} under duress and in a frenzy. Rather, bless them with concentration of the heart.” The simple explanation (as the commentators<sup>17</sup> explain): Since Hashem delegated the responsibility of blessing the Jewish people to the *kohanim*, the *kohanim* might hurry and shout.<sup>18</sup>

But we cannot assume that Rashi meant this, because if that was his intention, he should have said so clearly.

Additionally, it is obvious why this explanation does not fit well with *pshat*, since we have already learned of the command, “Love your fellow as yourself.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, just as the *kohen* would certainly not want to be blessed hurriedly, but he would want to be blessed with intention and with a whole heart, so, too, he will certainly bless the Jewish people in the same way.

We also cannot suggest that the reason we would assume that the blessings would be conferred hurriedly, and in a frenzy, is as follows: Since Hashem instructed the *kohanim* to bless the Jewish people, they might become overwhelmed when doing so, or something similar.

This cannot be the case. For if it was necessary to state explicitly that a person must fulfill Hashem’s command without a frenzy, etc., the Torah should have addressed this potential problem immediately, in the context of the first mitzvos that Hashem commanded (in *parshas Bo*, etc.), and not only in conjunction with the mitzvah of *birkas kohanim* in *parshas Naso*.

c) What is Rashi getting at by his nuanced wording that includes both terms, “hurriedly and in a frenzy,” and what is the source for this?

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<sup>16</sup> *Midrash Rabbah*, “*parshas Naso*,” ch. 11, sec. 4 (end); *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*parshas Naso*,” sec. 10.

<sup>17</sup> See *Matnos Kehunah* and the commentary of Harav Zev Volf Einhorn.

<sup>18</sup> *Matnos Kehunah*, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Vayikra* 19:28.

d) The same question can be asked regarding the two terms Rashi uses on the positive side, “with intention and with a full heart.” {What is the meaning and source of these two terms?} This question is even more emphatic considering that the Midrash writes only one term, “with intention of the heart.”

## 5.

### THE INFINITIVE FORM IMPLIES CONSTANT

The explanation for all the above: Rashi’s proof that the explanation of the word אָמַר is like that of זָכוּר and שָׁמַר is derived from the words, “say to them, אָמַר לָהֶם.” For this reason, Rashi quotes both words:

Had the verse written, “So shall you bless the Jewish people, say,” we would have interpreted the verse simply that “say” is not an imperative but the infinitive form of the verb. Thus, the meaning would be: Thus should you bless the Jewish people, to say — “May Hashem bless you....”

But since the verse says, “say *to them*,” this is the form of a command, similar to the verse, “He shall not make himself impure *by them*,”<sup>20</sup> which appears just above; and there are several similar instances.

However, in this case, the following question arises: Why is the word אָמַר written in the infinitive form (with a *kamatz*) and not in the imperative form (with a *segol* {אָמַר}, or אָמַר)?

The **infinitive** form and {the imperative form, i.e.,} a command to perform an **action** are two very different ideas, because the infinitive form precludes action.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> {Bamidbar 6:7.}

<sup>21</sup> For elucidation of this subject, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, p. 135, et passim.

Addressing this issue, Rashi therefore explains that although “say to them” is, in fact, an imperative, it can be written in the infinitive form (אָמַר with a *kamatz*), “similar to שָׁמֹר and זָכוֹר.” Just as in the case of שָׁמֹר and זָכוֹר, the intention is that of a command, and yet the Torah writes them in the infinitive form because the infinitive form refers to something that is constant, as Rashi explains there.<sup>22</sup> The same applies to the command “say to them.” It is likewise written in the infinitive form to show that *birkas kohanim* is something **constant**.

## 6.

### WHY WE NEED BOTH

On this basis, we can also appreciate why Rashi needs to bring two proofs, both from זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר. The proof from זָכוֹר alone is insufficient because for the Torah to use the infinitive form to indicate a command makes sense in the context of זָכוֹר, since the Torah requires us to continuously remember {Shabbos}. As Rashi says,<sup>23</sup> “Pay attention to **always** remember...” (By saying this, Rashi does not mean specifically an act of remembrance, but to pay attention, “**to always remember.**”) This is not something that is confined to a specific time.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the command, “say to them” — in *birkas kohanim* — does not mean to recite this blessing continuously; it is only recited at set times during the year. Even were we to conclude that according to *pshat*, *birkas kohanim* must be said every day, this still would (be only once a day,<sup>25</sup> and thus, it would) not be as continuous as זָכוֹר.

Therefore, Rashi also brings the proof from שָׁמֹר, “observe.” Since Rashi writes simply “זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר,” and does not indicate which זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר he is referring to, it stands to reason that he is referring to the terms זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר that we have already learned {earlier in the Torah} and which are thematically connected. This, then, must refer to זָכוֹר and שָׁמֹר in the context of Shabbos.

<sup>22</sup> {Rashi on *Shemos* 20:8 — “זָכוֹר... pay attention to always remember the day of Shabbos.”}

<sup>23</sup> {Rashi on *Shemos* 20:8.}

<sup>24</sup> See Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 128 par. 57, and the sources cited there.

<sup>25</sup> See Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 128 par. 1, and other sources.



Observing Shabbos is not a continuous activity; it only applies on Shabbos. Nevertheless, the command {to observe Shabbos} is written in the infinitive form (שמור with a *kamatz*), which alludes to something that is constant. This proves that the infinitive form can be used even regarding an activity or concept which is done consistently at specific times, even though it is not performed continuously.

However, the proof from שמור alone is inferior to the proof from זכור alone. The reason: Observing Shabbos is not something active, but something passive {i.e., refraining from forbidden activities on Shabbos}. Thus, we might have presumed that the infinitive form is appropriate specifically in relation with Shabbos because although **fulfilling** שמור applies at a certain time (specifically, on Shabbos day), the passive construct of שמור is present during every moment of this span of time. Moreover, it even applies during the weekday, because even (in a person's work) during the week, he does not break *Shabbos*.

Therefore, Rashi's first and primary proof is זכור, which is an active mode of remembering. Consequently, it is not as constant as the passivity of שמור, and yet the Torah still writes this command {זכור} in the infinitive form.

We can apply the same reasoning to the clause “say to them, אָמַר לָהֶם.” Although *birkas kohanim* is not performed constantly, but only at specific times, since, however, it has a constant set time — whether at certain times of the year, or every day — the infinitive form, which connotes constancy, fits. This is like the word “constant, תמיד” in the context of the *menorah*,<sup>26</sup> due to it being lit every night (even though it did not burn for an entire twenty-four hours).

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<sup>26</sup> See Rashi on *Shemos* 27:20, s.v., “*tamid*” {“(Since it burns) every night, it is called ‘constant.’”}; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 52; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 99.

## 7.

### A LOT TO KEEP IN MIND

In light of this, we need to clarify:

a) Since the Torah, at any rate, does not establish here a set **time** for *birkas kohanim*, what do the words, “say to them” add, after the verse already stated, “so shall you bless the Children of Israel”?<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps we would mistakenly understand that “so shall you bless” is optional; or, when you want to bless the Jewish people, “**so** shall you bless” — you should bless them in this way [using the following wording]. For this reason, the Torah immediately adds “say to them” to point out that *birkas kohanim* is a command.

But this answer is problematic because if this answer was valid, the order should have been reversed: First the Torah should state the general command of *birkas kohanim* {“say to them”}, and then (the detail) “**so** shall you bless” — the text of the blessing.

b) Furthermore, the phrase, “say **to them**” (not only seems superfluous but also) seems to contradict the formula of the blessing. The formula is all in singular:<sup>28</sup> “May Hashem bless *you* and protect *you*; ...deal kindly and graciously with *you*; ...lift His countenance to *you* and grant *you*....” In contrast, “say **to them**” is plural.

This is Rashi’s proof that here, not only is the command for the *kohanim* to speak these words and to bless the Jewish people being referred to, but also something relevant to “**them**” — to the Children of Israel who hear the blessing — “so that all of them will hear.”

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<sup>27</sup> See also *Maskil L'Dovid*, ad loc.

<sup>28</sup> {Hebrew has distinct second-person pronouns for singular and plural.}

The explanation:

In fact, *birchas kohanim* is singular. Meaning, the *kohanim* bless every Jewish person as an individual. On the other hand, the *kohanim* need to bless the Jewish people “so that **all of them** will hear.” In other words, the individual being blessed and all the other people — “**all of them**,” as a whole — need to **hear** how the *kohanim* are blessing each individual.

On this basis, we can also appreciate why, specifically after offering this explanation, Rashi focuses on the word “say,” and explains, “Do not bless them hurriedly and in a frenzy.” Since many elements need to be done simultaneously — the *kohen* needs to bless, with intent, **every** person as an individual, as well as blessing and having intention for the people as a whole — this may cause the *kohen* to bless them, “hurriedly,” i.e., he will rush through the blessing: “May Hashem bless you,” literally, bless **you** (directed at each person who is a part of “all of them,” **individually**). Since the *kohen* must also have in mind the next person, and the next person, etc., and also have “all of them” in mind {this will cause him to rush through the blessing. Additionally} he may become frenzied, “*ubehalut*,” etymologically related to the word “*bahul*, panicked” (and *balul*, confused) — he will become overwhelmed (and confused) by the many intentions.

Therefore (Rashi says) that the word “say” is spelled in full, because here the verse must especially emphasize that the *kohen* say the words fully and completely, i.e., “with concentration and with a whole heart.” The *kohen* must have the **intention** for every individual, as well as for everyone as a whole, and without being confused, but “with a whole heart.”

Meaning, a *kohen* might think: “Since I need to bless an entire congregation of Jewish people, I will bless each one with a ‘portion’ of my heart.” The Torah therefore instructs him, “with a whole heart” — he must bless every Jew wholeheartedly.

## 8.

REMEMBER AND OBSERVE ARE ALSO ONE

From “the wine of Torah”<sup>29</sup> in Rashi’s commentary:

Rashi brings two examples regarding the clause, “say to them” {to explain its grammatical form} — “similar to זָכוּר and שָׁמֹר.” These two examples not only clarify the meaning of the **words** “say to them,” but they also serve as an introduction to *birkas kohanim*:

Rashi<sup>30</sup> explains the phrase, “May Hashem bless you,” to mean: “your possessions should be blessed”; and the following phrase, “and protect you,” to mean: “bandits should not come against you to take your property.” (Rashi then explains at length how this is the case regarding people of flesh and blood:) “For one who gives a gift {to his servant, he cannot protect it from all other people; and once robbers come against him and take the gift from him} what benefit does he have from this gift? But Hashem is both the giver and the guardian.” Rashi’s lengthy explanation “and once robbers come against him and take the gift from him, **what benefit does he have from this gift?**” seems superfluous. This is obvious. What does Rashi add to our understanding by saying this?

The answer: By offering this explanation, Rashi emphasizes that “bless you” and “protect you” are not two separate ideas, but one blessing. The blessing is that “your possessions should be blessed” by Hashem protecting your possessions. For without Hashem’s protection, “what benefit does he have from this gift?” Meaning, Hashem blessing you {without providing security} offers the recipient no benefit. It is not a blessing.

The same applies to, “May Hashem lift His countenance to you and grant you peace.”<sup>31</sup> These two blessings are not distinct ideas, but one blessing

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<sup>29</sup> {The deeper ideas in Torah.}

<sup>30</sup> {Rashi on *Bamidbar* 6:24.}

<sup>31</sup> {*Bamidbar* 6:26.}

composed of both the positive and the negative. When can Hashem, “grant you peace”? Only when Hashem will “lift His countenance to you,” meaning, when “He will withdraw His anger.”<sup>32</sup>

For this reason, Rashi explains the clause, “say to them” (say the blessings) “similar to זָכוֹר and שְׁמוֹר.” זָכוֹר and שְׁמוֹר in the context of Shabbos are not two distinct ideas but one (to the extent that they were uttered simultaneously).<sup>33</sup> When is the זָכוֹר complete? When it is accompanied by the שְׁמוֹר — Shabbos observance. In a similar manner (Rashi explains) “say to them”: Every blessing that the *kohanim* bestowed upon the Jewish people comprises the positive and the guarding (the negative); they are one, as discussed. In other words, the blessing, “Hashem will bless you that your possessions should be blessed,” is bestowed such that “He is the giver and He is the **guard**.”<sup>34</sup> Precisely in this way is the blessing complete.

In his subsequent remarks, Rashi says, “*Say to them* — so that all of them will hear.” Rashi delineates the preparations and steps needed to be undertaken in order to receive the blessing in this manner: one blessing consisting of both the positive and the negative — the guarding. This will happen when the Jewish people (and similarly, the intentions of *kohanim* in their blessing) incorporate two modes: the positive — the blessing is said in the singular, to everyone individually, both from the perspective of the *kohanim* conferring the blessing, and from the perspective of the Jewish people hearing and experiencing it. On the other hand, {the second mode also needs to be incorporated, as alluded to by Rashi's proviso} “so that **all of them** will hear.” Every individual realizes that the blessing is being given {not just to him but also} to (another Jew and to) all the other Jewish people, as discussed. This realization is an expression of the negative mode (and is engendered by it). It expresses *bittul* and the negation of his self-centeredness {by focusing instead on others}.

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<sup>32</sup> Rashi on *Bamidbar* 6:26.

<sup>33</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 20:8.

<sup>34</sup> {The word שְׁמוֹר means to protect or to guard.}

Then, when “all of us are as one,”<sup>35</sup> this will serve as the vessel for Hashem to “bless us, our Father.”<sup>36</sup> So much so, we will receive the all-encompassing blessing, “and He will grant you peace,”<sup>37</sup> which is “equal to all the blessings.”<sup>38</sup> And finally, we will reach the consummate blessing, the coming of Moshiach, whose name is “**Shalom** {peace}.”<sup>39</sup> For then, “I will transform the nations {to speak} a pure language, so that they all proclaim the name of Hashem, and serve Him with united resolve.”<sup>40</sup> “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem as water covering the seabed.”<sup>41</sup>

— Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Naso*, 5730 (1970)

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<sup>35</sup> {Siddur, “*Sim Shalom*” at the conclusion of the *Amidah*.}

<sup>36</sup> See *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 32.

<sup>37</sup> {*Bamidbar* 6:26; conclusion of *birkat kohanim*.}

<sup>38</sup> **Rashi** on *Vayikra* 26:6.

<sup>39</sup> End of *Derech Eretz Zuta*, ch. “*HaShalom*.”

<sup>40</sup> *Zephaniah* 3:9; *Rambam*, “*Hilchos Melachim*,” ch. 11, at the end.

<sup>41</sup> *Yeshayahu* 11:9; *Rambam*, *ibid.*, ch. 12, at the end.