



Sicha Summary

Chelek 18 | Nasso | Sichah 4

The Verse:

In *parshas Nasso*, the Torah introduces the Priestly Blessing: “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying: So shall you bless the children of Israel, say (*amor*) to them: ‘May G-d bless you and guard you....’” (*Bamidbar* 6:23-23)

The Rashi:

Say (amor) to them — (the word *amor* is in the same form as) *zachor* — remember, and *shamor* — safeguard. In Old French, “*disant*.”

Say to them — in a manner that all of them will hear.

Say (amor) — this word is spelled in full (with the letter *vav* — אָמַר) to imply: do not bless them in haste and distraction, but rather, with concentration and with a full heart.

The Explanation:

Rashi’s first comment addresses the following question:

If the verse had simply said, “So shall you bless the children of Israel, **say** (*amor*),” we would understand the verb “say” to be denoting ongoing activity, meaning, this is how the *Kohanim* should be blessing the people. But by adding the word “to them (*lahem*),” the phrase becomes “say to them” which is in the form of a command. Yet, the word *amor/say* is not vowelized in the imperative form (*emor/say*) but as a verb denoting ongoing activity (*amor/saying*). So, is the phrase “saying to them” a command (as implied by “to them”) or a description of an ongoing activity (as implied by “saying”)?

Rashi resolves this by offering two examples of verbs in the continuous form that are still clearly used as imperatives:

“*Say to them* — (the word *amor* is in the same form as) *zachor* — remember, and *shamor* — safeguard...”

The Torah uses these continuous verb forms to command us to remember and guard the Shabbos. Rashi cites these examples to demonstrate that a command can be issued with the continuous verb form.

Specifically, Rashi cites both words to make his case because each has a strength and a weakness. The *mitzvah* to remember Shabbos is continuous — we are to constantly think about Shabbos. Therefore, the use of the continuous form makes sense in that context. But the Priestly Blessing is not performed constantly; it is to be given either on festivals or daily, but it is not something done constantly. The *mitzvah* to guard the Shabbos, however, is actively fulfilled only on Shabbos. Yet, the Torah still uses the continuous verb form to command us to safeguard the Shabbos. Thus, it is clear that when something is performed at intervals, such as a weekly Shabbos, or a daily Priestly Blessing, it can still be commanded with the continuous verb form.

Yet, refraining from work on Shabbos is technically constant — because as long as a person does not work on Shabbos, he guards it, and when he works during the week, he is also not working on Shabbos — while actively remembering Shabbos is most applicable only on Shabbos itself. Therefore “remembering” Shabbos also bears out that an active *mitzvah* performed at intervals can still be commanded with the continuous verb form.

Rashi’s second comment addresses a question prompted by his first comment: If the Torah is not prescribing any specific time for the Priestly Blessing with the phrase “say to them,” why does the Torah have to say this at all? Why isn’t the beginning of the verse, “So shall you bless the children of Israel...,” not enough? Rashi comments:

“Say to them — in a manner that all of them will hear.”

This clause is not just commanding the *Kohanim* to bless the people, but it also defines the intention that should accompany the blessing. Even though the text of the blessing is in the singular — “May G-d bless **you**” — nevertheless, the *Kohen* must offer his blessing with the intention that the individual is part of a greater whole, “all of them will hear.”

This leads to Rashi’s third comment: Maintaining this tension between the individual and the community can lead the *Kohen* to “haste and distraction.” Therefore he must be reminded to bless them with “with concentration and with a full heart.”

The Deeper Dimension:

The two examples Rashi cites in his first comment, “remember and safeguard,” also serve as an introduction to the meaning of the blessings themselves. Rashi interprets the first two clauses as two parts of one blessing, one proactive and one preventative: “*May G-d bless you — your possessions shall be blessed. And watch over you — that no thieves shall attack you and steal your money.*” Similarly, the final two clauses: “*May G-d raise His countenance toward you — by suppressing His wrath, and grant you peace.*” G-d will provide wealth and protect it; and He will provide peace by suppressing His anger.

As a preface to this, Rashi invokes another example of one concept comprising a proactive and preventative element. You can “remember” Shabbos only if Shabbos is “safeguarded” and protected.

This dichotomy filters down to a person’s spiritual work. In the terms of the Priestly Blessing, it must simultaneously be given to the individual and to the community. The individual expresses his unique spiritual identity (proactive), and the community is where the individual integrates his identity in the collective (preventative).

