



Likkutei Sichos

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Fusion

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1.

HASHEM AND MOSHE BLESSING

On the verse,¹ “May Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times as many {descendants} as you {presently number} and bless you as He has spoken of you,” the Midrash says:²

The Jewish people said, “Our teacher Moshe! Hashem did not limit our blessings, but you say, ‘a thousand times.’” Moshe said to them, “That which I have blessed you is of my own; when the Holy One comes, He ‘will bless you as He has spoken of you’” (i.e., a blessing with no limit).

A well-known question:³ What did Moshe’s blessing add? The blessing of “a thousand times” is certainly included in, and insignificant, when compared with Hashem’s unlimited blessing. How much more so must this be the case considering that “included two hundred *dinars*⁴ are one hundred.”⁵

Some commentators answer:⁶ Hashem’s blessing was conditional and materializes only if the Jewish people fulfill Torah and mitzvos. In contrast, Moshe’s blessing was unconditional.

This fits well with the Gemara’s⁷ comments on the verse,⁸ “*The number of the children of Israel... which cannot be measured and cannot be counted* — Here, it refers to a time when the Jewish people fulfill the will of Hashem (then they will be innumerable); there, it refers to a time when the Jewish people do not fulfill the will of Hashem.” Meaning, the Jewish people are blessed with a limited blessing (a number) even when they **do not** fulfill Hashem’s will.

¹ *Devarim* 1:11.

² *Devarim Rabbah*, ch. 1, sec. 13; see similarly in *Targum Yonasan ben Uziel* on the verse; *Sifri*, on this verse and on *parshas Behaaloscha* 10:36; see Rashi on the verse.

³ See the commentators on Rashi, *Sifri*, and *Devarim Rabbah*; et al.

⁴ {Ancient currency.}

⁵ *Bava Kamma* 74a.

⁶ *Gur Aryeh*; *Levush HaOrah*; *Be'er Mayim Chaim*; *Devek Tov*; et al.

⁷ *Yoma* 22b.

⁸ *Hoshea* 2:1.

However, Hashem's unlimited blessing ("cannot be counted") applies only when the Jewish people carry out Hashem's will.⁹

[Put differently:¹⁰ Moshe's blessing materializes in the present era, whereas Hashem's blessing will come to fruition in the Future Era. This dovetails well with what the Midrash says:¹¹ "In this world, they have a number... but in the Future Era, the Jewish people will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted."]

However, according to the wording of the Midrash, here, in our *parshah*, the difference between the two blessings is only that one blessing is "my own," whereas one is from "the Holy One," but both will materialize during the **same** period. Meaning, even when Hashem's unlimited blessing is realized, there is still room for the benefit conferred by Moshe's limited blessing.

Furthermore, this is **conclusively evident** from Rashi's unelucidated statements, quoting the Midrash without adding any explanation. It is understood, therefore, that Rashi confirms that this midrashic exposition, as it stands, conforms to *pshat*.¹²

This also agrees with the *pshat* of the verse, "The number of the children of Israel... which cannot be measured and cannot be counted." The *pshat* of this verse seems to refer not to two independent periods. Rather, the verse implies that the "**number** of the Jewish people" will materialize at the same time that the blessing, alluded to by the verse, "which cannot be measured and cannot be counted," comes to fruition.

⁹ *Sifri Devei Rav*.

¹⁰ *Chiddushei Upeirushi Maharik; Maskil LeDavid*; et al.

¹¹ *Bamidbar Rabbah*, sec. 2, ch. 14.

¹² {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." Although there are many levels of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

2.

PLACE FOR BOTH

Analogous to this conclusion that Moshe's limited blessing was not nullified in the face of Hashem's blessing, we find a similar concept in the blessing, "May Hashem... add to you" itself, according to the way the Midrash¹³ explains this verse:

Add to you... as you— Why did Moshe phrase his blessing in terms of "adding"? It is because Hashem's additions are greater than the principal.

(The Midrash brings numerous examples of this.)

Ostensibly, this is difficult: If Hashem's additions are "**greater** than the principal," why does the Torah of truth call the previous blessing "the **principal**" (relative to the "additions")? Seemingly, this principal portion, being less than Hashem's additions, should become **subordinate** and not the principal anymore?

This itself proves that, although "Hashem's additions are greater than the principal," the previous blessing is not nullified. Furthermore, it is called the "**principal**" relative to Hashem's additions.

3.

NUMBER, AND CANNOT BE COUNTED

We will clarify the above by first further clarifying the earlier cited teaching of our Sages: "Here, it (the phrase 'which cannot be measured and cannot be counted') alludes to a time when the Jewish people fulfill the will of Hashem; there, it ('the number') alludes to a time when the Jewish people do not fulfill the will of Hashem."

¹³ *Devarim Rabbah*, commenting on this verse; *Bereishis Rabbah*, sec. 61, par. 4.

Blessings are elicited only through the *avodah*¹⁴ of Jews. Thus, understandably, even the limited blessing, “the **number**” (similar to Moshe’s blessing, “add to you a thousand times as you”) is contingent upon the Jewish people’s *avodah*. But this *avodah* is imperfect, and so those performing the *avodah* are referred to as those who “do not fulfill the **will** of Hashem.” This is similar to Kayin who **offered** a sacrifice to Hashem, and, in fact, brought his sacrifice first. Only afterwards, “Hevel **also** brought.”¹⁵ However, Kayin brought his offering “from inferior produce.” In a similar vein, although definitely superior to Kayin’s sacrifice, this obviously holds true regarding any limited *avodah*. Since the *avodah* is “measured” and “numbered,” the person performing the *avodah* is not (doing and) eliciting Hashem’s **will**, which is beyond limitation.

The two elements of “number” and that “which cannot be measured and cannot be counted,” also have a parallel on a loftier level. The Alter Rebbe explains¹⁶ that within the context of consummate *avodas* Hashem, “number” refers to the performance of mitzvos. Six hundred and thirteen mitzvos were given to the Jewish people, with the condition that “you shall not add... or detract from it.”¹⁷ [Similarly, every mitzvah has its specific measurements and parameters.] Such *avodah* is limited. The phrase, “which cannot be measured and cannot be counted,” {within this context of consummate *avodas* Hashem} alludes to the *avodah* of *teshuvah*. The *avodah* of *teshuvah* transcends the continuum of Creation¹⁸ and exceeds all boundaries.

¹⁴ {Divine service.}

¹⁵ *Bereishis* 4:3,4.

¹⁶ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Bamidbar*,” s.v., “*vehaya mispar Bnei Yisrael*” (6a ff.; 7c ff.).

¹⁷ *Devarim* 4:2; *Devarim* 13:1; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 138, fn. 8.

¹⁸ {In the original, “*seder hishtaleshelus*,” which refers to the chain-like descent of spiritual worlds until this physical world. Each “world” denotes a complete realm of existence, and reflects its proximity to or distance from Divine revelation.}

4.

INFINITE FINITE

As discussed above, the simple explanation of the verse, “The number of the children of Israel... which cannot be measured and cannot be counted,” is (not that these two elements are separate and independent, but) that the number itself presents in a manner “which cannot be measured and cannot be counted.”

This leads us to understand that the same applies to, “number,” and, “cannot be counted,” in terms of *avodas Hashem*. Meaning, that even the idea of “number” is connected with the excellency alluded to by the term, “cannot be counted”: True, mitzvos are numbered and limited. Nevertheless, by performing them, a Jew becomes “one who performs the **will** of Hashem.” Meaning, he elicits Hashem’s supernal desire that is beyond limitation. It “cannot be counted.”

[The difference between the two types of *avodah*: Through the *avodah* of mitzvos, the unlimited outflow does not radiate openly, because this *avodah* is not overtly beyond limits. However, because the *avodah* of *teshuvah*, overtly (i.e., from the perspective of the person doing the *avodah*) is an *avodah* beyond limits, the revelation of that “which cannot be measured and cannot be counted,” also extends in an overt manner.]

The explanation: Mitzvos are Hashem’s will. Just as Hashem’s existence is infinite, so, too, is His will infinite. Therefore, mitzvos draw down Hashem’s infinite will (which cannot be counted).

Even the fact that mitzvos are measured and limited does result from an externally imposed limitation on the G-dly light elicited through the mitzvos. Rather, Hashem imposed measurement, so to speak, so that His **infinite** will is drawn down specifically when a person does a finite action. Furthermore, Hashem limited Himself in a (measured) manner so that an action can absorb it

like a vessel and light.¹⁹ Since this limitation is not externally imposed on Him, rather *Ein Sof*²⁰ limits itself (in the lexicon of *Chassidus*: a self-imposed measure and limitation²¹), it is not a genuine limitation.

[On the other hand, this limitation is necessary. The world is a finite existence, which cannot receive unlimited G-dly light. Were it to experience the infinite G-dly light, it would cease to exist. Since the *avodah* of Torah and mitzvos is intertwined with the existence of the world, mitzvos must have measurements and limitations.]

This is the meaning of the verse, “The number of the children of Israel... which cannot be measured and cannot be counted.” The “number” of mitzvos is not a true limitation, for mitzvos bring down and contain the unlimited element of that which “cannot be counted.”

5.

THE FUSION

We need to clarify:

The purpose of mitzvos is to draw down G-dly light that is **not** limited. As such, why did Hashem make things in this way? Namely, *avodah* can be performed only in a world that **cannot** handle the G-dly light, and therefore, the limitations of mitzvos are needed to enable the infinite will of Hashem to be infused into a finite world?

The explanation:

True, mitzvos were given to people to perform in this lowly physical world and in a finite fashion. But this is not because the mitzvos needed to descend into this world and the world has the deficiency of being limited. Meaning, the

¹⁹ {*Oros* and *kelim*, lit., “lights and vessels.” In Kabbalah, the *sefiros* (divine emanations) consist of “lights,” channeled through “vessels” that define and modulate their effect upon Creation.}

²⁰ {*Ein Sof*, lit., “the Infinite,” referring to the infinite dimension of G-dliness.}

²¹ {In the original, “מדידה והגבלה עצמית.”}

world can only absorb the G-dly infinite light if the light first clothes itself within the measurement and limitation of mitzvos. Rather, the reason is because the ultimate advantage is (not) found (in the infinite, “cannot be counted,” **in and of itself**, but) in merging the finite and the infinite. The “number” itself is elevated and unites with that “which cannot be measured and cannot be counted.” Specifically, this dynamic demonstrates the power of Hashem’s Essence, which is beyond both the finite and the infinite.

As a result, this process can only occur by the “essential measurement”²² of the *Ein Sof* Essence: From the perspective of divine light and revealed G-dliness, finite and infinite are two **different** things. Only through the “measurement” of the *Ein Sof* **Essence** is the **fusion** between finite and infinite possible. This is similar to the idea that “the place of the Ark is not included in the measurement.”²³ According to the **Torah**, the ark has specific dimensions — “its length was two and a half cubits”²⁴ — but the very space itself was, “**not** included in the measurement.”²⁵

This, then, also explains how Moshe’s blessing was not superseded by Hashem’s **infinite** blessing. For the ultimate purpose is not to obliterate the finite, but on the contrary, to fuse the finite and the infinite.

Therefore, Moshe first blessed the Jewish people, “May Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times as you.” Meaning, Creation (limitation) should reach its consummate state, the multitude of a thousand times. Following this, when Hashem will come, His unlimited blessing descends into **this very** blessing itself. The Jewish people become (not only a multitude within the parameters of Creation, but) an infinite multitude.

²² {In the enigmatic original, “*medida atzemis.*”}

²³ *Yoma* 21a.

²⁴ *Shemos* 25:10.

²⁵ {Based on that measurement, the Ark should not have fit inside the hall. The Holy of Holies measured twenty cubits by twenty cubits, and a *Beraisa* teaches that there were ten cubits of space on either side of the Ark. Therefore, it was only through a miracle that the Ark could fit within the confines of the Holy of Holies.}

6.

BLESSED

On this basis, we can explain something that the Previous Rebbe pointed out. He said that many times, his father (the Rebbe Rashab) would add a word when quoting the Midrash,²⁶ “Hashem desired to have, for Himself, a dwelling place in the lower realms.” He would add the word “blessed” (“to have, for His **blessed** Self, a dwelling place in the lower realms”).

Ostensibly, we need to clarify: True, whenever Hashem’s name is said, we must add words of praise.²⁷ But we find nowhere else that the *Rebbeim*²⁸ would add the word “blessed,” or something similar, to Hashem’s name, when quoting a statement of our Sages that mentions Hashem’s name.

Therefore, we must conclude that there is a unique connection between Hashem being “blessed,” and, “Hashem desired to have, for Himself, a dwelling place in the lower realms.”

The following is the explanation:

The concept of “a dwelling place in the lower realms” comprises two ends of a spectrum: The term “dwelling” connotes a place where Hashem’s blessed and infinite Essence and Being is present (similar to a person who expresses his true self in his home).²⁹ The phrase, “in the lower realms,” refers to this world, “the lowest... with nothing lower than it,”³⁰ i.e., a place of limitation in the fullest sense. Thus, a Divine dwelling place in this world epitomizes the fusion of finite and infinite.

How can the lower realms, which is finite, become a dwelling place for Hashem’s blessed and infinite Essence, while at the same time remain in existence? This is addressed by the Rebbe Rashab’s addition of the word

²⁶ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36; see *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Naso*,” sec. 16, “*Bechukosai*,” sec. 3; *Bamidbar Rabbah*, sec. 13, ch. 6.

²⁷ *Yoma* 37a.

²⁸ {The seven leaders of the Chabad movement, from the Alter Rebbe to our Rebbe.}

²⁹ *Or HaTorah*, “*Balak*,” p. 997; et al.

³⁰ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36.

“blessed.” The idea of a dwelling place for Him will be explained by first understanding the concept of “blessed” — a blessing.

7.

FROM BEYOND TO INSIDE

The explanation:

The difference between a blessing and a prayer is that a blessing draws down that which already exists in a root and source state. In contrast, a prayer creates a **new** will — “May it be the will” — something new that did not exist in its root and source.

But this only holds true of a human blessing. In contrast, Hashem’s blessing also has the advantage of a prayer, since He is not confined by the {intrinsic} limitations of a person who is blessed. Hashem’s blessing can create something new, beyond the source of a created being.

In other words, Hashem’s blessing incorporates two ends of a spectrum: These blessings “reach” higher than the source of a created being, beyond the continuum of Creation, and infuse into the world below this G-dly light, this **blessing and effusion** (from Above **to below**). Meaning, the G-dly light outside the continuum of Creation is drawn into a **created being**, which exists inside the continuum of Creation.

This explains the addition of, “Hashem desired to have, for His **blessed** self, a dwelling place in the lower realms.” The reason why the lower realms can become a home for Him — for His Essence — is explained by understanding what **Hashem’s blessing** is. What does “**blessed**” accomplish? It draws what is **outside** the continuum of Creation **inside** the continuum of Creation.

8.

THE CREATED BEINGS MAKE IT HAPPEN

But the following question remains:

Only **Hashem** can fuse the finite and infinite (for He transcends both). Why then is this connected to the *avodah* of a **created being**? Seemingly, the limited *avodah* {of a human being} (in its own right) can only elicit finite G-dly light.

The explanation (as discussed many times):³¹

Hashem does not want sublime revelations to be gifted to people in the manner of “bread of shame.”³² Therefore, all manner of supernal outflow — even that which is beyond the sphere of created beings — are connected with and dependent upon people’s *avodah*.

Therefore, although “a dwelling place for Him in the lower realms” comes from Above as a gift, created beings must first “provide some satisfaction”³³ to the One who bestows the gift. Only then does He bestow the gift.³⁴ Meaning, first there must be the consummate *avodah* {so far as possible} by created beings. Only afterwards is an outflow revealed from beyond the source of created beings.

This also explains the purpose of *birkas kohanim*.³⁵ The *kohanim* bless the Jewish people on Hashem’s behalf with a blessing that is **higher** than the continuum of Creation. Seemingly, if Hashem wants to bless the Jewish people, why does He need to do it through the *kohanim*, empowering them to bless the Jewish people? Hashem can just bless the Jewish people Himself!

But the answer is, as discussed:

³¹ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, p. 1132 ff.; *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 73 ff.

³² {See *Talmud Yerushalmi, Orlah*, ch. 1, *halachah* 3: “He who eats from his neighbor’s {food without deserving it}, is ashamed to look at his neighbor.”}

³³ *Hemshech Vekacha*, sec. 68; *Hemshech 5666*, p. 131; et al.

³⁴ See *Meggilah* 26b; *Gittin* 50b; *Bava Basra* 156a.

³⁵ {The blessing that the *kohanim* are commanded to confer upon the Jewish people.}

Hashem's ultimate intention is that even the blessings and Heavenly outflow that come from higher than the continuum of Creation should descend by means of people's *avodah*, through {human beings living in} the lower realms.

9.

PRINCIPAL

On this basis, we can understand why Moshe's blessing was necessary in addition to Hashem's. Moshe's blessing brings the people to the consummate state that a created being can reach. This, then, also brings about the consummate state, as it were, of Hashem's blessing, which is unlimited (and it is not "bread of shame").

This also explains the wording, "Hashem's additions are greater than the **principal**." Since the {the Jewish people in the} **lower realms** draw down "Hashem's additions" by means of their *avodah*, they and their blessings are called "**principal**," for they are the primary element and the cause for "Hashem's additions."

10.

TYING BACK TO RASHI

All the above is of the "wondrous matters" contained in Rashi's commentary, which quotes the aforementioned text of the *Sifri* and the Midrash. What is the simple meaning of Rashi's commentary (according to *pshuto shel mikra*)?³⁶

³⁶ See the previously published *sichah* {vol. 19, *Devarim* 3} for further elaboration.

Rashi explains that Hashem's blessing here refers to the promise,³⁷ "so that if one can count..." Rashi thereby connects this idea with the idea alluded to by the verse,³⁸ "Has anyone counted...?" When will this occur? Rashi explains, "according to the *Targum*," who says that the time for this will be when "the Jewish people will inhabit the entire world"³⁹ — in the Future Era.

— Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos, parshas VaYishlach*, 5729 (1968)

³⁷ *Bereishis* 13:16.

³⁸ {*Bamidbar* 23:10, which is part of Bilaam's prophetic blessing of the Jewish people, which can be interpreted as meaning: "Who can count the descendents of Yaacov, as they are numerous as the dust."}

³⁹ *Targum Onkelos* on *Bamidbar* 23:9.