



Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Devarim | Sichah 3

The Verse:

May G-d, the G-d of your forefathers, add to you a thousandfold as many [descendants] as you presently number, and may He bless you, as He spoke concerning you! (*Devarim* 1:11)

The Rashi:

May... add to you a thousandfold as many as you presently number – Why did Moshe reiterate, “And He will bless you, as He has spoken concerning you?” The Jews said to him, “Moshe, you are limiting our blessings by blessing us that our numbers will be multiplied only a thousandfold]. The Holy One, blessed is He, already promised to Avraham (*Bereishis* 13:16), ‘so that if a man will be able to count [the dust of the earth, so will your seed be counted]!’” Moshe replied to them: “This [blessing of a thousandfold] is mine, but He will bless you as He spoke concerning you!” (Sifrei)

The Questions:

- 1) The source for Rashi’s comment is in the Sifrei. The Sifrei, however, begins directly with the Jewish people’s argument to Moshe. Why does Rashi begin his commentary with a question about Moshe reiterating Hashem’s blessing?
- 2) What is the purpose of Moshe’s limited blessing once G-d has promised to bless them without limit?

The Explanation:

According to the Sifrei, the Jewish people’s claim was as follows: G-d’s blessing was not that there would be an infinite number of Jews, but simply

that they would be so plentiful that it would close to impossible to count them, like the dust of the earth which is finite, yet impossible to count. Moshe's blessing of a "thousandfold" severely limited G-d's blessing. This was their complaint.

According to Rashi, however, this complaint is not justified in the straightforward reading. If the Jewish people were to multiply a "thousandfold," they would number close to two billion people, an astonishing number. Thus, in quantity, there is not necessarily a large gap between G-d's blessing and Moshe's blessings — both promise an enormous increase. Moshe's words themselves, therefore, do not provide a strong textual basis for the back and forth between the Jews and Moshe.

It is only the continuation of the verse, "and may He bless you, as He spoke concerning you," that implies a reiteration of Hashem's blessing, that sparked a conversation between the Jews and Moshe about his blessing.

Even though Moshe's blessing still promised that the Jewish population would be huge, it was the fact that Moshe gave a number itself that perturbed the people. G-d's blessing was without number, but Moshe specifying a number implies limitation.

Moshe's response was to say that, in his world — the world of human perception — he could not fathom infinity. G-d's blessing had to be contained within a number when Moshe gave it. But in G-d's world, there can be blessings without number.

The Deeper Dimension:

Moshe is associated with the Divine attribute of *binah*, which is a dimension where limitation is tangible. G-d's blessing is associated with the Divine attribute of *chochmah* which is a dimension where limitation is present but imperceptible. Therefore, Moshe's blessing was constrained by a number, while G-d's blessing was not.