

Dvar Torah- Naso

“They shall place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael, and I shall bless them.”
(6:27)

The Gemara (Sotah 38a) asks: How do we know that Hashem desires the blessing recited by the kohanim? The Gemara answers by quoting our verse.

R' Shmuel Shmelke Guntzler z"l (1834-1911) explains: The Gemara teaches that one should not daven in Aramaic because the angels who examine whether our prayers are worthy of reaching Hashem's throne don't understand that language. But, one may daven in Aramaic in the presence of a sick person because the Shechinah is present at the head of the patient's bed.

The Gemara (Sotah 33a) says similarly that one may daven in Aramaic with a tzibbur / congregation. R' Avraham ben David z"l (Ra'avad; died 1198) observes that the reason is the same: because the Shechinah is present there.

R' Guntzler continues: The Gemara relates that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai sent his son to two other sages to receive their blessing. When the son returned, he reported that they had cursed him, saying, in Aramaic, “May you sow and not reap, etc.” Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai explained to his son that they had, in fact, blessed him: “May you have children who won't die young, etc.” But why did they bless him in such a roundabout way? And, why doesn't the Gemara ask, as it does in other places, why they were permitted to pray/bless in Aramaic?

R' Guntzler answers: The Gemara teaches that, since the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash, the Shechinah is to be found in the midst of those who study halachah. It was obvious to the Gemara that the sages to whom Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai sent his son were engaged in such study; thus, the Shechinah was with them and it's not necessary to ask

why they could daven in Aramaic. (As for why they gave Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's son a roundabout blessing, commentaries explain that they wanted Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai to have to interpret the blessing so that it would be as if he had blessed his son also.)

We learn from the above that one's prayers don't always merit reaching Hashem's throne. This answers another question as well: Why do we seek the prayers or blessings of tzaddikim?

R' Guntzler explains that one who needs something—for example, good health—can pray in two different ways: (1) that he be given good health for his own needs, or (2) that Hashem's desire to do good for people be fulfilled. The latter prayer is more likely to be accepted, and we therefore seek the blessing of tzaddikim who know how to pray in that way.

Similarly, when the kohanim bless the nation, they should have that intention in mind: "They shall place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael"—i.e., they should have in mind the best interests of My Name, so-to-speak—then, "I shall bless them," for no angel would block such a prayer from reaching Hashem's throne!

This is the meaning of the midrash with which we began: How do we know that Hashem desires that Bnei Yisrael be blessed by the kohanim? From the fact that He promises to answer that prayer.