NASO: The blessing of the Kohanim

Birkat Kohanim is the blessing that HaShem bestows upon us through the Kohanim. This blessing appears in our Perasha, NASO and consists of three biblical verses (pesuqim), organized in a very precise mathematical progression: the first pasuq has 3 words and 15 letters, the second 5 words and 20 letters, and the third 7 words and 25 letters.

Each pasuq consists of two blessings for the recipient of the blessing.

Verse 1: Material blessing and good health.

Verse 2. Wisdom and Grace

Verse 3. HaShem's attention and peace.

□ □□□□□ The first pasuq says: "May HaShem (= God) bless you and protect you."

Which means: May HaShem grant you all the material blessings you need (yebarekhekha), a house, food, clothing, etc. In the second blessing (veishmerekha) we ask that HaShem protect us from diseases or accidents. These blessings complement each other: we need money to buy food, clothing, etc. But we also need the blessing of good health, one of the few things that cannot be acquired with money. Obviously, a blessing is not a magic formula. To receive this and the other blessings we need to become an appropriate recipient of that blessing. We have to merit it and we have to make our effort and stay healthy, drive our cars with care, and do everything possible to avoid any kind of accidents, etc.

□ □□□ The second pasuq says: "May HaShem enlighten you with His presence and favor you."

The subject of this Pasuq is not material but rather intelctual blessings. “May HaShem enlighten you” means that we expect HaShem to help us and inspire us to obtain a very special type of wisdom, the wisdom to understand the Tora. The biblical words “May HaShem enlighten you” □□□ allude to that spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. The second blessing of this verse is □□, grace or favor: HaShem to bless us with a good character, to inspire us to be loved by people, to find grace in the eyes of others. The first blessing refers to our spiritual and intellectual talents. The second to what is called today “emotional intelligence,” the blessing of being accepted and loved by the people around us.

□ □□□ The third pasuq says:” May HaShem direct His Presence toward you and grant you peace. ”

Our rabbis explained that there is no greater blessing for the Jewish people than peace □□□□. We Jews do not aspire to destroy our enemies and control the world. Our aspirations are noble and very simple. We only ask to live in peace. In order to serve our God, fulfilling His Tora in our own land, Israel. These are ALL our national aspirations.

Returning to the first part of this berakha, it literally says: “May HaShem direct His “Face” towards you.” Obviously God has no “face”. Our rabbis explain that this expression means: “May HaShem pay attention to you.” This is probably the most important blessing. Let’s explain it with a simple example. What must I do to deserve this extraordinary privilege? What do I have to do to make God direct His face / His attention to me? Imagine a class in a huge auditorium with hundreds of students. Everyone came to listen to a lecture that will be given by a very famous teacher. Upon entering the auditorium the teacher looks at the audience and welcomes everyone. But suddenly he stops and looks at one of the students, someone sitting in the fifth row. The teacher fixes his eyes on him for a few seconds, smiles at him, and greets him with his hand. At the end of the lecture the other

students approach the privileged student and ask: Why did the teacher turn his face towards you, why did he pay a special attention to you? The student responds: “It is because during last year I have read his books, I exchanged some emails with him, asked him some questions and tried to contact him by phone” .

If we want to be the recipients of this blessing, if we want to be identified by HaShem and deserve His special attention, “We must be known by Him”, by studying His works and connecting with Him as often as we can. Thus, we will become an appropriate recipient all His blessings.