

טועמיה - חיים

לחיות עם הזמן בשבת קודש

Parsha Matot Masai 5788

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The bracha

Our parsha begins with rebukes, for example:

איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאככם וריבכם.¹

How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering!

Moshe reminds us of the sin of the spies, the appointment of judges and more. Before all of this he gives us an amazing bracha

ה' אלהי אבותיכם יסף עליכם ככם אלף פעמים ויברך אתכם כאשר דבר לכם.²

May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers like you a thousand fold, and bless you as He promised you.

The placing and the content of this bracha are an important lesson for the introduction to the book of Devarim, and the parsha we read always in the week before Tisha BeAv, the day we all pray will become not of mourning but of happiness.

The first lesson is before rebuking someone we should bless him. Let's look at the wording, why "as you" (ככם). Why not just "May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousand fold"

Moshe is describing the lowest ebbs of our history, the golden calf, the spies, peor, but still he blesses us "as/like you". This is an important lesson. In Shir Hashirim we read

כלך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך.³

Every part of you is fair, my darling, There is no blemish in you

This is a difficult wording – who after saying "you are beautiful" would say "you have no blemishes"? it ruins the compliment.

Rav Kook explains that a person is only willing to accept criticism, if he knows that the critic thinks "Every part of you is fair", that he loves the whole, and as such wants to tell you about the particular blemish out of love. That the rebuke comes out of true love of the other.

¹ דברים א', י"ב.

² שם י"א.

³ שיר השירים ד', ז'.



It is ok to rebuke. Sometimes we are like children who don't like criticism. Why? Because sometimes we are worried it will lead to more and more criticism. This is often not what happens, but even so it how we feel.

"May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers like you a thousand fold" – like you, as you are now, " Every part of you is fair"

Two other things are mentioned in the bracha: Firstly , "The Lord, God of your forefathers". We are sons and daughters of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaacov, this is our inheritance, and no sin can take it away from us. This is a fitting bracha from Moshe, who after the sin of the golden calf, said

זָכַר לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדְּיָי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בְּךָ וַתְּדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֲרָבָה אֶת זַרְעֲכֶם כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם...⁴

Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven

The second point is the wording "and bless you as He promised you" if "as he promised" why does Moshe limit it to a thousand fold?. Rashi asks

אמרו לו - 'משה, אתה נותן קצבה לברכתנו?, כבר הבטיח הקב"ה את אברהם 'ושמתי את זרעך כעפר הארץ אשר אם יוכל איש למנות את עפר הארץ גם זרעך ימנה' (בראשית יג, טז), אמר להם - 'זו משלי הוא, אבל הוא יברך אתכם כאשר דבר לכם'.⁵

MAY HE ADD TO YOU A THOUSAND TIMES AS MANY MORE AS YOU ARE — What is the force of saying further: AND MAY HE BLESS YOU EVEN AS HE HAS SPOKEN CONCERNING YOU? But the explanation is: They said to him, "Moses, you are setting a limit to our blessings (only a thousand times)! The Holy One, blessed be He, has already made a boundless promise to Abraham (Genesis 13:16) "... if one can count [the dust of the earth, then can thy seed also be counted]"! Moses replied to them: This (a thousand times) is from me (it is my blessing); but may He bless you even as He has spoken concerning you!"

We must try and understand Rashi, If Hashem has given an unlimited bracha, why does Moshe add his own smaller one?

This is the key to understanding the bracha. Moshe is telling us "That Hashem is blessing you unlimitedly, that is obvious. Even Bilaam knew that Am Yisrael are here for ever. I will give you the bracha of the infinite inside the finite, the unlimited inside limits. Some of the limits will be very harsh, such as the rebukes. Even so, the bracha I will give you as Moshe (from Hebrew to pull up and out (למשוח) will allow you to pull yourselves up from the low place you may find yourself. This bracha will allow us to deal with the most mundane and low matters as "The Lord, God of our fathers" blesses us that he will "increase your numbers like you"

May we see the realization of the bracha, with the complete redemption in our days, truly soon.

⁴ שמות ל"ב, י"ג. www.sefaria.org
⁵ רש"י, דברים שם.