

א בִּסְל תּוֹרָה!

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ברכת כהנים Not Translating

By Eitan Orkaby '27

There is a מצוה, everyday, for כהנים to bless בני ישראל. The תורה tells us that they must say "יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ: יֵשָׁא ה' וּפָנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִשְׁעָם לָךְ שְׁלֹם" "Hashem should bless you and protect you. Hashem should shine His face upon you and be gracious to you. Hashem should lift His face to you and give you peace" (במדבר ו:כ"ד-כ"ו). In מגילה כ"ה:א it says that this praise is read out loud but not translated, in front of a congregation. Why not? What makes this פסוק different?

First we must explain the translation in the first place. It used to be, and still is in Yemenite shuls, to translate each פסוק after it is read into Aramaic. This was done so that the congregation could understand the תורה that was being read.

In מגילה כ"ה:א there is a list of places which are read but not translated. This list (only of תורה) is: the deed of ראובן, the second golden calf mention, and the blessing of the כהנים. The גמרא answers that we do not read portions of the תורה that embarrass the characters in them. For example, the deed of ראובן was not something that he was proud of, and since there is no later mention of his repentance, or punishment, translating the deed for the congregation would only lead to his shaming. This is also the case by the second golden calf mention, as there it talks about how אהרן made the golden calf and this would embarrass him. If this were the reason, why would the blessing of the כהנים not be translated? There is

nothing that could embarrass anyone, as no one but Hashem is mentioned?!

The גמרא simply mentions "יִשְׁא" "lift," which רש"י explains to be a warning to make sure no one accidentally thinks that Hashem has a face to lift. And if the פסוק is not translated people would not know what to be confused about in the first place. While this explanation works, what about the other mentions of Hashem having a body? When the elders are by הר סיני they "וַיַּחֲזֹּוּ אֶת-הָאֵלֱקִים" "and they viewed G-d" (שמות כ"ד:י"א). How could they see G-d?

One could suggest that this phrase is read and translated since this is on such a different level, of being able to see G-d, that people would assume that this is simply a metaphor for coming extremely close to G-d's presence. This answer could also work by בני ישראל's exodus from Egypt, where Hashem takes them out "בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה" "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (דברים ה:ט"ו). It is extraordinarily clear that this is a metaphor for Hashem taking us out Himself, as He didn't use His hand in our exodus, as he has no hand. However, it is difficult to come up with a metaphor for the blessing of the כהנים, and, therefore, we do not translate it.

Nowadays, with more Hebrew speakers, it seems that not translating a פסוק does not do anything; people will still understand the פסוקים that are read. Even in a Yemenite shul people would still understand the פסוקים even without translation. Maybe, then, the lack of translation is not what the point of not translating is. Maybe the reason is to highlight a פסוק that was not translated, so that people will ask the Rabbi why

this is the case. When they do so, the Rabbi can also explain why Hashem's face is mentioned here even though G-d has no face. This works in a Yemenite shul with regular translations. In other shuls, however, people would have to go to the rabbi every time a confusing פסוק is read so that he can explain it to them, as no פסוק would be highlighted so clearly.

At the end of the day, it is exceedingly important that we try to understand the תורה, even when it is confusing, so that we do not come to blaspheme and say the G-d has a body.

The נשיאים and Their Gifts

By Ethan Ravid '27

This week has the longest פרשה, but the second half of the פרשה is repeating lines about how, day after day for 12 days, each prince from each tribe brings a bunch of sacrifices to the משכן for Hashem. First, the princes bring a smaller gift for the לווים.

"וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־קֶרְבָּנָם לִפְנֵי ה' שֵׁשׁ־עֶגְלֹת צֶבֶר וְשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֵי בָקָר עֶגְלֹה וְעֶלְ־שְׁנֵי הַנְּשִׂאִים וְשֹׁר לְאֶחָד וַיִּקְרְבוּ אוֹתָם לִפְנֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן: "and they brought their offering before Hashem: six draught carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two chieftains and an ox for each one. And they had brought them before the משכן (ג). After this, they then bring a big one that takes up the rest of the פרשה. It starts with the פסוק "וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נְשִׂיא פסוק: "Hashem said to משה: Let them present their offerings for the dedication of the altar, one chieftain each day." (ג) Why do the princes feel they need to give 2 gifts, and one each for one day, and not all at once?

The שור famously says one leader per day. To pay tribute to the presidents, each one will have his day,

and even their chapters were written for each one, so that they would not envy each other who could write the first chapter and write, "So-and-so did, and so-and-so did." The problem is that this does not line up because earlier in the תורה we see people picking favorites. We know that with our אבות, there were always favorites. Hashem before עקידת יצחק, said "your son, your only son, the one you love, יצחק." Also, יעקב picks יוסף over all his other sons. Furthermore, if this were true, then they all could have brought the gifts on the same day.

I would like to suggest that this is to teach us a lesson, that it's not about who is first or who brings the most, but it is who can come in on the last day and deliver. נחשון, who came on the first day, found it was easier for him than for ענן, who came on the last day. Imagine after 11 days of the same gift, you need to represent your tribe and bring the same gift as them. The strength and love of G-d it takes to still do it. This is also true about a מנין. We don't make a big deal after the first 9 guys come to a מנין, but only the 10th who completes it.

None of the מצוות we do today, we are the first to do. Hundreds, if not thousands, if not millions of Jews have done them before us. It is easy to say I don't need to do this, or someone else will do it for me. What the Princes are trying to teach us is that it is important that we are responsible and take accountability, and we do what we need to do, even when others do it before us, because we might just be the final push towards greatness.



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EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Avi Abbett '25
Eitan Orkaby '27

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