

So, shall you bless Bnei Yisrael, say to them. (6:23)

When we think of blessing, two forms come to mind: *Bircas Kohanim*, the Priestly blessing; and the *brachah* of a *tzaddik*, holy, G-d-fearing Jew. What is the difference in the structure and efficacy of one over the other? One would think – a blessing is a blessing. Does it really matter who is rendering the blessing? *Chazal* appear to address this question. The *Midrash (Tanchuma, Naso 10)* notes that the word *emor*, say (*emor lahem*) is written *malei*, full (with a “vov” as opposed to an “O” vowel sound). *Chazal* derive from here that the blessing rendered by the *Kohanim* should not be hasty, or as if they had been compelled to act against their will; rather, the *Kohanim* should bless the Jewish People with religious devotion of the heart, so that the blessing will achieve full efficacy. Therefore, the Torah writes *emor*, say, with a vov (full) as if to intimate to the *Kohanim*, “Bless your fellow with a full heart.”

Horav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, zl, expands on this *Midrash*, drawing a distinction between the blessing rendered by a *tzaddik* and the blessing of the *Kohanim*. He relates a vignette concerning the meeting of two *Admorim*, *Horav Avarahm Yaakov, zl, m'Sadiger*, and *Horav David, zl, m'Tolna*. While these two Torah giants were sitting together, a *chassid* approached, raised a *becher*, goblet, of wine and made a *l'chaim*. The *Sadigerer* blessed him, saying, “*Du zust haben ful gut*, you should be blessed with much good (fortune).” The *Tolner* asked, “Why do you wish him only *rav tuv*, much good? Why not *kol tuv*, *alless gut*, all good?”

The *Sadigerer* replied, “From Whom does a person derive the power to bless another Jew? He receives this ability from Hashem, Who lends a “portion” of His infinite power to those who are G-d-fearing. Thus, the ability to bless is only a miniscule portion invested in him from Hashem. Therefore, one cannot say – *kol tuv*, all good, since he only has access to the portion granted to him by Hashem.” As he spoke, the *Sadigerer* turned to *Horav Uri Kohen, zl*, and said, “You, however, are different. Since you are a *Kohen*, you have the capacity for extending your blessing (from *rav tuv*) to *kol tuv*. This is because, concerning *Kohanim*, the Torah writes, *Koh sevarchu*; “So, shall you bless,” with a power similar to Hashem, Whose power is unlimited. *V'samu es Shemi*, “And place My Name,” which implies, “Make the *brachah* as if My Name were on it, which means: All – a full blessing.”

In summation: the *Sadigerer* posits that a *tzaddik's* blessing is based upon the power which Hashem has apportioned to him. This blessing cannot be greater and more encompassing than that which he is allotted. He can only render partial good/*rav tuv*. A *Kohen*, however, whose blessing is “similar” to Hashem’s blessing, has increased power to grant full blessing – *kol tuv*. *Rav Teichtal* applies this thought to explain the *Tanchuma* which states that Hashem insisted that *emor*, say, be spelled *malei*, full, with a vov. Hashem thereby intimates to the *Kohanim*, “Do not render blessing like an ordinary Jew who is only able to deliver partial blessing. As *Kohanim*, you are to bless as I bless, with a full blessing. Therefore, *emor* is written with a vov, to indicate the unique power of the *Kohen's* blessing.