

May Hashem bless you and keep watch over you. (6:24)

The various commentators render their interpretations of the *Birkas Kohanim*, priestly blessing. *Rashi* cites the *Sifri* that views the blessing as a reference to material bounty. "May Hashem grant that you be triumphant over your enemies and that your crops and business ventures succeed. May your possessions increase, and may Hashem guard these possessions from thieves."

In short, the blessing of "*Yevarechecha*," May (Hashem) bless you, refers to receiving abundance, while the blessing of "*Veyishmerecha*" is a prayer that we be able to retain our blessing. The *Midrash Tanchuma* supplements the blessing with an invocation that our increase in material wealth be used properly and that it not be the cause of our own self-destruction. "May He protect you from temptation, lest the material aspects of the blessing lead you into sin".

The greatest blessing, when in the hands of a simple or weak person, can easily turn into a curse. One can lose -- or even worse -- if he uses his blessing improperly. Money can be the primary motivating factor catalyzing an individual to sin. There is a reason for material abundance. It certainly is not sent to us for self-indulgence and self-gratification.

The *Midrash* offers a second interpretation that contends that the blessing of "increase" refers to progeny. Hashem will bless us with children who will devote themselves to the *Torah*. **Horav Boruch Sorotzkin, zl**, suggests that the *Midrash Tanchuma's* interpretation of "*Veyishmerecha*," that we should make use of our "increase" for the correct and proper purpose, applies similarly to the blessing of offspring. Indeed, the blessing of children is a very special one, but it is also a challenge. It demands that one accept the enormous responsibility of raising a child according to *Torah* dictate. How often do parents impose their own shortcomings on their children? The father who unfortunately feels he has not succeeded in life, may try to relive his life through his son, at times inflicting his own idiosyncrasies upon his child. An alternative approach is demonstrated by the parent who wants to see his child "get ahead in the world", devoting the majority of his educational endeavor to secular pursuits, relegating *Torah* study to a distant second place. Finally, there is the parent who is simply incompetent as a parent and probably not much better as a human being. He reneges his responsibility as he lives a lifestyle that reeks of double-standard. Then he "wonders" why his child "goes off the *derech*," becomes alienated from *Torah* Judaism. This dual blessing has so much meaning. If we are blessed with children, we must rise to the challenge, accepting the responsibility that accompanies the territory called Jewish parenting.