



SERMON NOTES

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“The Priestly Blessing”

Today we are going to discuss a portion of scriptures we all have known, heard, and have some understanding about. This is a prayer and probably one of the most well known prayers in the Bible. Even funerals are known to end in these words.

Speaking of prayer and funerals, a man and a friend are playing golf one day at their local golf course. One of the guys is about to chip onto the green when he sees a long funeral procession on the road next to the course. He stops in mid-swing, takes off his golf cap, closes his eyes, and bows down in prayer.

His friend says: "Wow, that is the most thoughtful and touching thing I have ever seen. You truly are a kind man."

The man then replies: "Yeah, well we were married 35 years."

The popular verses we will review today are recited as a benediction at the end of church and synagogue services.

In 1979, a silver amulet was discovered by archaeologists in a Jerusalem tomb. Inscribed on the silver foil, which dates to the seventh century B.C., were the words of this benediction, making this the oldest known quotation from Scripture. Here on this scroll was the blessed name of YHWH in paleo-Hebrew. For a link to this article click [HERE](#)

http://www.wwyd.org/images/YHWH_SILVER-SCROLLS.jpg

The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.

This prayer is found in Numbers 6:24-26.

For Christianity this is the final benediction which is spoken at the end of worship services. For Judaism this is the “priestly blessing” which is proclaimed with a special hand gesture before the congregation is dismissed. At the end of Jewish worship services a kohen or priest rises and extends his hands to recite this blessing. The kohen makes his fingers into the shape resembling the windows of heaven. They split their fingers so there are 5 spaces: one space between the thumbs, a space between the thumb and first finger of each hand, and a space between the second and third finger of each hand. This hand gesture was made popular by the Jews Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner in the Star Trek movies.

We are told that YHWH looks through these hands as though peering through the “lattice” formed by the hands of the Kohanim, referencing the verse in the Song of Songs 2:9 – “My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart . Behold, he stands behind our wall. He looks in through the windows. Peering through the lattice.”



In the Hebrew, this is called the “Aharonic b’racha” or literally “aharon’s blessing.” Some refer to this as the “B’rachot HaKohanim” or literally “the Priestly Blessing.” These two verses hold great truth and meaning.

The “Aharonic B’racha” shouldn’t be reserved only for the end of our worship times. Instead it should be studied, understood, and utilized in our daily walk of faith. YHWH transfers great power to us as we learn and apply His word.

To better understand this portion of Torah or ANY section of Scripture, we must return and study the original Hebrew language. Indeed, the Sages of Judaism have said that this blessing should only be recited in the “kadosh lashon” or “holy tongue.” To express this prayer in any other language would be like singing the American National Anthem with a mouth full of bubble gum.

As we study this prayer let us examine its purpose, meaning, and benefit. To begin, let’s read this in context from Numbers 6.

“22 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying, 23 *Speak to Aharon and to his sons, saying, This is the way you shall bless the children of Yisrael, saying to them,* 24 *YHWH bless you, and keep you: 25 YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you: 26 YHWH lift up His countenance upon you, and give you shalom. 27 And they shall put My Name upon the children of Yisrael; and I will bless them.*”

*In the Hebrew, this prayer reads -
Yevarech'cha YHVH v'yishmerecha.
Ya'er YHVH panav eleycha viyechuneka.
Yissah YHVH panav eleychha veyasem lecha shalom.*

יברכך יהוה וישמרך:
יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנך:
ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום:

Purpose

This prayer is all about understanding YHWH’s blessing! He has commanded His blessing on and to us –

Tehillim / Psalms 133:3

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descends upon the mountains of Tzion: for there YHWH commands the bracha / blessing, even chayim le-olam-va-ed / life forever. Shalom be upon Yisrael!” Concerning the nation of Yisra’el, YHWH gets involved and offers His blessings!

YHWH has proclaimed and even “commanded” this blessing upon us. The “aharonic b’racha” was given to set the nation of Yisra’el apart as the blessed seed of the righteous!

By simply being the nation WE are blessed! Don’t doubt it – “If you belong to Messiah / Christ then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise,” Galatians 3:29. We are blessed because we are YHWH’s chosen people – 1 Peter 2:9. **There were NO preconditions for this blessing other than being the nation of Yisra’el. This blessing is absolute and unconditional!** The Encyclopedia Judaica says, “The priestly blessing does not simply call for YHWH to bless out of his goodwill. Rather, the blessing calls for YHWH to have an attitude of goodwill toward the persons blessed. The benefit which the blessing called upon YHWH to bestow does not consist of fertility, prosperity, or dominion, but YHWH’s favor itself. “

This is not some magical practice on the part of the priests, nor do the priests have some power over the divine. The text makes it very clear that while the priests may pronounce the words of blessing, it is YHWH who does the actual blessing

This blessing is one of the best examples of the ultimate use of the power of speech. **Life and death is in the power of the tongue.**

One reason this blessing was given was to place the Name of YHWH upon the nation. The nation is reminded of YHWH’s greatness as the priests recited this prayer.

Meaning

There are many deep insights from examining this portion in the Hebrew.

*Yevarech’cha YHVH v’yishmerecha.
Ya’er YHVH panav eleycha viyechuneka.
Yissah YHVH panav eleychha veyasem lecha shalom.*

יברכך יהוה וישמרך:
יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנך:
ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום:

Here, the Hebrew letter ‘yod’ appears 13 times. This is highly symbolic. 13 is the number of mercy and grace. In Exodus 33 we can read about the 13 attributes of

mercy or in Hebrew the “Shelosh Esreh Middot.” To learn more about this, read the teaching “Have Mercy” by [CLICKING HERE](#).

<http://www.emetministries.com/Have%20Mercy!.pdf>

In Gematria, 13 is equal to the word “ahava” or “love.” **This shows that YHWH was commanding HIS “ahava” to us through this prayer.** We know that “YHWH so loved the world that He gave His only son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life,” John 3:16. The Hebrew letter “yod” is also a picture of a hand. Y’shua’s hands and feet were pierced when He gave His life as a sacrifice. **The connection is clear – the Aharonic b’racha is equal to love which equal to YHWH Himself. Therefore proclaiming this blessing upon someone is akin to speaking the essence of YHWH upon that person and showing them the love of Y’shua. Clearly this is a foreshadow of Y’shua’s sacrifice.** To prove this, we must look at WHEN this b’racha was given. The priests were not commanded to speak this until AFTER the crushing of the two tables of Torah given to Moshe. It was AFTER the sin with the golden calf that YHWH gave this b’racha. This shows that even though we sin, YHWH has addressed our sin with the b’racha of Y’shua. We must share this blessing with others and point them to Y’shua’s sacrifice – John 3:18.

This prayer is composed of three parts that each contains two individual blessings. Also, the name of YHWH appears 3 times.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "A strand of three cords is not easily broken"

The sections of this prayer start small and then build with meaning and power.

The blessing also has a simple structure, of YHWH + paired verbs: bless – keep, shine – grace, and lift – peace. Each phrase is a bit longer and a bit more expansive and detailed than the previous one. It has been said that, “The progression in the number of words mirrors the outward movement and flow of YHWH's blessing through the single priest to the broader community.”

The first line of the priestly blessing is asking YHWH to bless and keep us; that is, to do good for us, protect us, sustain us, provide for us and rescue us from all evil and distress. **It’s a blessing for the physical!**

Yevarech’cha YHVH v’yishmerecha.

The first sentence is three words long in Hebrew and is considered to be a blessing for material success. “YHWH shall bless you and watch you.”

We are told that the priest invokes YHWH's goodness to grant material prosperity and guardianship. Not only should you get an increase, but this increase should be protected.

YHWH will return, "that which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten," Joel 2:25.

YHWH's blessing is meant to be kept or stolen BUT shared.

YHWH does want to bless you with material wealth! Just look around and see that **YOU ARE WEALTHY**. Whatever you have is your wealth! And your wealth is given for you to use and to bless others with.

A blessed person has a generous spirit and is always pouring out blessings. It is only when we empty ourselves that YHWH can fill us again! A person who does not empty their vessel of their blessings has no room for additional blessings that YHWH would offer us each day. You also need to make sure your blessings are not leaking away from debt, problems, waste, etc. A person whose vessel for reception has a "hole" in it cannot receive or give blessings. They are always empty for the wrong reasons. One minister tells the story of one of the first churches he served as a youth minister. They had a fund called the Emergency Fund and it had \$100 in it. They told him that he could use the fund at his discretion, provided he dispensed the money according to the conditions. So he asked, "What are the conditions?" The chairman of the committee said, "You are not to give the money to anybody who is in need as a result of laziness, drunkenness, or poor management." The young minister said, "Well, what else is there?" Far as he knows they still have the money.

We are to use the blessings YHWH has given us wisely. We are to share with the body our physical blessings. And we are to share the blood of Y'shua with the lost.

Rambam said in Tefillah 15:7, "Do not wonder, "What does this blessing from ordinary people accomplish?" The blessing is not really dependant of the Kohanim, but rather on YHWH. The verse says, "They will place My name upon the Hebrew people, and I will bless them." The Kohanim need only do what they were told to do. Then YHWH will bless The Hebrew people as He desires to."

The first line of this blessing is all about physical prosperity and being a vessel to share His goodness. The second blessing is **five** words long and is a blessing for spiritual development and spiritual growth. YHWH wants our spiritual life to GROW and not stay stagnant. **He does not ant us to be luke warm!** We are to be empowered with the zeal of YHWH and share His message with others.

Ya'er YHVH panav eleycha viyechuneka.

25 YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

With this portion of the prayer we are receiving divine light from the very face of YHWH.

This is a blessing to be successful in learning Torah. This is a blessing for intellectual and spiritual advancement. Rashi explains the shining of YHWH's face as a beaming, friendly expression. He paraphrases, "May YHVH show you a smiling face." YHVH is looking toward us, paying attention to us and taking note of us. YHWH lifts up His face upon in order to show us grace or mercy. This phrase is also found in Psalm 31:16 and 80:3. The Newer Testament provides another facet with **John 1: 7**, "For the Torah was given by Moshe; its unmerited favor and emet came by Y'shua the Moshiach."

As we learn the Torah we see our need for YHWH's grace.

25 YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The Torah we learn, the more we should realize our sinfulness. This is one purpose of the Torah! Rabbi Sha'ul / Paul said in Romans 7:7 that he "had not know sin but by the Torah." 1 John 3:4 shows us that "sin is transgression of the Torah." The Torah defines sin and shows us our sinfulness. The wages of sin is death – the decree has been made that because we have sinned, we deserve eternal death. The gift of YHWH is eternal life – Y'shua took our place and died for us so that we could have eternal life. **NOW, we must allow the Torah to "shine upon us" and illuminate our path.** "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," Psalm 119:15. Our lives are changed by his amazing grace when YHWH shines his face upon us through His Torah!

Psalm 19:7, "The Torah of YHWH is perfect, converting the soul." **The Torah converts our soul to be unified with YHWH and more like Him!** "YHWH showed His love / grace / face to us in this way, while we were still sinners Y'shua died for us," Romiyah / Romans 5:8. This is clearly seen in Isaiah / Yesha'yahu 30:18, "YHWH longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you."

This blessing of spiritual enlightenment comes from the very face of YHWH. Remember that the Torah says that "no man shall see YHWH and live." YHWH lifts up his face upon us and we hear and obey the very words from His mouth – the Torah. As this happens we do not live. We die to ourselves and our ways. No man

shall see YHWH and live could also be understood to mean that “no man shall hear and obey the Torah of YHWH and live in the flesh.”

Finally, the blessing of shalom is given to us. The peace / shalom of YHWH passes all understanding. This peace is greater than physical wealth or spiritual knowledge. This final sentence is seven words long. Of course seven is a symbolic number of completions.

Yissah YHVH panav eleychha veyasem lecha shalom.

The result of YHWH's blessings of abundance and spiritual knowledge should be peace. **This peace comes directly from the FACE of YHWH.** Remember that the blessing for wealth is only three short words. The prayer for spiritual help is five words. The blessing for peace has seven words. “Material prosperity is fairly easy to come by; its blessing consists of only three words. Spiritual and intellectual enlightenment is more difficult, and therefore it requires two more words, a total of seven. However, peace is the most difficult to realize, it requires the most words, a total of seven words.”

Peace is a fruit of the spirit. In the Hebrew, the word for peace is “shalom.” This well known phrase literally means “wholeness.”

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines "shalom" as, "to be well, happy, complete, in good health, prosperous, to be whole, and wholly." The events of Luke, chapter 8 shed some interesting light on this. “But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment; and immediately her issue of blood stanchd. And Yahshua said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, 'Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest thou, Who touched Me?' And Yahshua said, 'Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me.' And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, 'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made the whole; go in Shalom,'” – verses 42-48.

In this story, the woman with the issue of blood received her healing as she touched the tzitzit (fringes) upon the garment of the Messiah. Her faith led her to reach out for the Savior, and the end result was her healing. Not only did the flow of blood stop; she was also completely made whole. Don't miss this. She was healed and made whole. She had found the Messiah. The void in her soul was now overflowing

with shalom. Her life was now filled with Him. The woman had come face to face with the Prince of Peace, Yahshua Sar Shalom, and she would never be the same. By the power of Shalom we can walk in faith amidst the troubles of life. Through His Shalom we can make it though a bad day or a string of terrible events. The book of Ephesians proves how this is possible. "He is our Shalom, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." -- Ephesians 2: 14. Our shalom is the presence of Master Yahshua. It is Him. Nothing more and nothing less. He is our peace. **The Prince of Peace is our wholeness. He is the one that completes us.** To illustrate this, a Jew who accepts Yahshua as Messiah is often called "completed Jew." Rav Sha'ul wrote, "For YHWH was pleased to have all the fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making shalom through His blood, shed on the execution stake," -- Colossians 1:19, 20.

This blessing is for each of us. It was spoken to the nation corporately but is phrases in the singular. May YHWH bless YOU.

Benefit

The benefits of this blessing are abundant. We can have physical abundance, spiritual growth, and shalom forevermore. The price has been paid and our ticket to YHWH's goodness waits for us. WE must choose to walk in His blessing. We must recognize that we are truly "too blessed to be depressed." This Christian cliché is absolute truth. This is how YHWH sees us!

Let us now forget the additional commandment at the end of this verse. "They shall invoke / put My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them," Numbers 6:27. The priests were called to put the name of YHWH upon the people. **ONE way they could do this was through reciting this blessing during times of worship.** Sadly both Judaism and Christianity have failed at this precept.

The Jewish priests and religious leaders shrouded the name in mystery and forbid its use. Some insist that the name was ONLY spoken on Yom Kippur and only during this blessing. Christianity has inherited the same lies and calls upon "god" or "lord" without any distinction being made of any certain "god" or "lord." Jeremiah 16:19, "Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit."

HIS NAME ENDURES FOREVER!

Psalm 135:13, "Your Name, O YHWH, endures forever, Your fame, O YHWH, throughout all generations."

Exodus 3:15, “And Elohim said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My Name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.”

Hosea 12:5, “Even YHWH Elohim of hosts, YHWH is His memorial.”

The correct Name is very important to Yahweh, it is Who He Is.

Isaiah 42:8, “I am YHWH: that is My Name: and My honor I will not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Remember that the Aharonic B'racha was to be spoken by the priests. Their mouths would pronounce this blessing. A priest's mouth is to be surrounded by a beard as Yisraelites are commanded not to shave their facial hair. It is from the mouth that the priest commands the blessing from YHWH.

With this verse in mind, let's turn to the Psalms to grasp another meaning of the b'racha. Psalm 133:1-3, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the YHWH commanded the blessing-- life forever.”

Here we see that unity is like the precious anointing oil used to set Aharon apart. Unity is key to this walk of faith. We must decide to meet and agree with one another in unity. At the congregation we should put personal differences and personal convictions aside and come together in unity. We should submit to leadership, support leadership, and work with leadership to accomplish YHWH's will. There is no such thing as the perfect congregation or the perfect rabbi or teacher. You will never find a group that has it “all together” or a teacher who is 100% doctrinally correct. Instead of seeking perfection we should seek unity and a leader with a heart that longs after YHWH. With unity comes trust. Trust is NOT supporting the leader when you agree with him. Trust is supporting the leader when you DON'T agree with him. Y'shua prayed for this type of relationship in John 17. This is the real Master's prayer – he wanted us to be unified! Do you trust your leadership? Have you submitted yourself to a local congregation? Unity is like the oil of anointing that fell from Aharon's beard.

What else came from the priest's beard? This blessing of YHWH and the name of YHWH! We see another connection in Song of Solomon 1:3, "Your Name is as anointing oil poured forth." YHWH's name is like the anointing oil. His name is power. His name is powerful. His name and His blessing is what changes us to be made in His image. **We learn in Isaiah 10:27, that the "anointing breaks every yoke."**

Whatever is holding you back or causing you pain is broken by the anointing / by the name of YHWH! We should take hold of this blessing and His name and begin to expect! We should start expecting good things to happen! We should see ourselves as blessed and lay hold of the promises that YHWH has set before us. Romans 4:21 states that Avinu Avraham was fully persuaded that what YHWH had promised, YHWH was fully able to accomplish. We too must be determined to believe YHWH and recognize our lives as blessed beyond all measure.

One Chassidic Rebbe taught the following: "Thus shall you bless the Children of Israel — bless the Hebrew people as you find them. Do not look for the best or the most important, nor for the greatest scholars or righteous men, for every Israelite deserves to be blessed."

Remember that this is the priestly blessing that was to be spoken by a kohen. In the Bible and in Judaism a person is born a priest. In the true faith we are all BORN AGAIN as priests of YHWH as seen in Exodus 19 and 1 Peter 2:9. We are to use, speak, pray, sing, and meditate upon this blessing. **May we walk in His way and know that we have been blessed from the very face of YHWH!**