

נשא

NASO/ELEVATE Bemidbar/Numbers 4:21-7:89

This week's parasha contains one of Torah's most **familiar** blessings, the **priestly blessing** from **Bemidbar 6**:

יהוה bless you and keep you

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ

יהוה make **His face shine** upon you, And be **gracious** to you

יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ

יהוה lift up **His face** upon you, And give you **peace**

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

In **Jerusalem**, the **Israel museum** contains a remarkable tiny **fragment of parchment** containing these **15 Hebrew words**. What is so extraordinary about this parchment is that it is the **oldest surviving fragment of biblical literature**. It comes from the era of the **First Temple**, built by **King Solomon**. It is so old that it is **not written** in the **Hebrew alphabet** as we know it today, which **dates** from the **Babylonian exile**, but rather it is in the **ancient Semitic script** – the **oldest alphabet known** to mankind.

The **literary structure** of the **Aharonic blessing** is **precise**, reading as if it **builds up** with יהוה's **overflowing love**. Notice the **various patterns** and **significant numbers**:

- **First line**: 3 words, 15 (3 x 5) letters
- **Second line**: 5 words, 20 (4 x 5) letters
- **Third line**: 7 words, 25 (5 x 5) letters

There are actually **three blessings** within the blessing. As explained by the commentators, the **first blessing** (**יהוה bless you and keep you**) is a **general blessing for earthly prosperity**. The explanation for this is because **first** there is the **blessing**, and then there is a **protection (keep)** after receiving the blessing. An **earthly blessing** can be **threatened** by anything from **storms** to **thieves**. יהוה can also "**keep**" us by **protecting us from pride** in our **own success**. **Wealth** can become a **stumbling block** and **dull our gratefulness** towards the **Almighty**. This is why we must **remember** to be **thankful** and in turn **bless יהוה**:

*Devarim 8:10 "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall **bless יהוה** your Elohim for the good land which He has given you.¹¹ " Beware that you do not forget יהוה your Elohim by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,¹² "lest -- when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;¹³ "and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you*

have is multiplied;¹⁴ "when your heart is lifted up, and you forget יהוה your Elohim who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

Perhaps the **first blessing** – *May יהוה keep you* – could be thought of as “*May יהוה keep the blessing from turning into a curse!*”

The **second blessing** (יהוה make His face shine [ya'ar - נִאָר] upon you and be gracious to you), points to a **spiritual blessing**.

The **most intimate contact (face to face)** between the **children of Israel** and יהוה occurred on **Mount Sinai**:

Devarim 5:4 "יהוה talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire.

This **experience** was **never to be forgotten**:

Devarim 4:9 " Only take heed to yourself, and **diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen...on the day you stood before יהוה your Elohim in Horeb...**

The **opposite** of being “**face to face**” with יהוה is to have **His “face hidden”**:

Psalm 102:2 **Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; Incline Your ear to me; In the day that I call, answer me speedily.**

The **root** of the word for “**make shine**” (ya'ar - נִאָר) is אָר (or), which means “**light**.” We could say the **request** is for the **Holy One** to “**set us on fire**”, a sure sign of **spiritual growth**:

2 Timothy 1:6 **And for this reason, I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of Yah which is in you...**

When יהוה's **face shines on us**, it causes **us** to **shine**, thereby **glorifying Him** and **making His ways known** on the **earth**:

Matthew 5:14 "You are the **light** (אָר - or) of the world....¹⁶ "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The **parent root** of the word for **gracious** (chanan - נָחַן) is נָח (chane), which means “**grace**”. In his book **Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible**, **Jeff Benner** gives the following **pictographic definition** of נָח:

“The **pictograph** for נָח is a **picture of a wall**. The ך is a **picture of a seed** meaning “**to continue**.” Combined these mean “**wall continues**.” A **nomad's camp** consisted of **many family tents**, which make up the **clan camp**. The **camp** can have as many as **fifty tents** or more

in it. The **tents** are placed in a **circular configuration**, forming **one continuous wall surrounding the camp.**”

Benner continues in his **definition** of “gracious” (רַחֻם):

“Within this **wall** is the **family clan**, a place of **freedom, compassion and beauty**. An **encampment of tents**. **To give or show beauty, grace or mercy to another.**”

It is as if the **blessing** is to bestow upon **Israel the Almighty’s Presence**, that He might **dwell among them**. This is **true grace!**

The **third blessing** (רַחֻם *lift up His face upon you and give you peace*), according to **Rashi**, is a **prayer to the Almighty** for Him to **suppress His anger** and allow His **mercy to triumph over judgment**, thereby bringing us into a **relationship of “peace” with Him**:

James 2:13 ... Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Micah 7:18 Who is El like You, Pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.

Yeshua is the **Prince of Peace** and it is **through Him** that we have been given “**peace**”:

Colossians 1:20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

The **verse following the Aharonic blessing** concludes the chapter:

Bemidbar 6:27 "So they shall put My Name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

His **Name**, **יהוה**, representing **His character** and **all of His attributes** was to be **placed upon His set-apart people, Israel**. **Revelation** also tells us of a coming day when **His servants will see His face** and His **Name** will be **imprinted on them**:

Revelation 22:4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

Okay, just “one more thing.” In the Torah, we read a **description** of the **first Tabernacle worship service** where **Aharon lifts up his hands** and **blesses** the people:

Vayikra 9:22 Then Aharon lifted his hands toward the people, blessed them...

In **Temple times**, **Talmud** tells us that the **priests** would **lift up their hands** over the people while pronouncing the **Aharonic blessing**. When they did this, they **spread their fingers apart** in such a way as to make the **shape of the ancient letter, shin** (שׁ). Traditionally, this is the **abbreviation** for “**Almighty El**” (El Shaddai - אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי). By making the **sign of this letter** while **lifting their hands** and **pronouncing the blessing**, they were in a way “**putting His Name on the children of Israel**”.

Did Yeshua ever say the **Aharonic blessing**? We do find Him **blessing His disciples** just before He **ascended into heaven**:

*Luke 24:50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He **lifted up His hands** and **blessed** them.*

It seems that **Yeshua's way of blessing His disciples** is consistent with the way that the **priests blessed the children of Israel**. However, isn't this a **problem**, since Yeshua was **not a priest** from the **earthly line of Levi**? It is in the book of **Hebrews** where we find our **answer** to this **dilemma**. **After His resurrection, Yeshua WAS a priest**. Of course He was **not an Aharonic priest**, but He served in a **higher priesthood** that served the **eternal priesthood of Yah** in the **heavenlies**:

Hebrews 7:14 For it is evident that our Adonai arose from Judah, of which tribe Moshe spoke nothing concerning priesthood.¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.¹⁷ For He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)

In his article on the **Priestly Blessing** in **Messiah Magazine** (Issue 91), **D. Thomas Lancaster** speaks of the **tradition** of the **congregation looking down** when the **priest lifted his hands** to do the **Aharonic blessing**. **Lancaster** goes on to tell what it may have been like **when Yeshua lifted His hands to bless the disciples with the priestly benediction**:

"The disciples were probably very familiar with the custom of lowering one's eyes when the priests lifted their hands. Upon seeing the Master raise His nail-scarred hands and hearing Him begin to chant the priestly blessing over them, the disciples would have been quick to avert their eyes and look down at the ground. As their eyes fell upon Yeshua's nail-scarred feet, they would have been amazed to realize that those feet were no longer touching the ground. As Yeshua blessed them, He ascended up into the sky, rising to take His place as priest in the Heavenly sanctuary. The Gospel of Luke says, 'While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven' (Luke 24:51)."

We can be **thankful** that **today our High Priest continues to bless us** and make **intercession** for us in the **heavenly throne**. It is **through Him** that we attain that **perfect peace**:

2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Adonai of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. Adonai be with you all.

Baruch HaShem יהוה!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle