



Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat June 7, 2008 / Sivan 4, 5768

Parashah #35

Torah: *Naso* (Elevate), *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 4.21-7.89

Haftorah: *Shof'tim* (Judges) 13.2-25

Suggested Messianic Writings: *Yokhanan* (John) 12.20-36

Shalom,

Contained within this Parashah are the few short verses from B'Midbar 6.24-26 of the Birkat Kohanim, the High Priestly Blessing, also known as the Aaronic Blessing or Benediction. Let's begin with verse 22: "Adonai said to *Moshe* [Moses], 'Speak to *Aharon* [Aaron] and his sons, and tell them that this is how you are to bless the people of Israel: you are to say to them,

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְיָ וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּהּ

Y'va-rekh'kha Ah-do-ni v'yeesh-m'reh-kha

Adoni bless you and guard you.

יָאֵר יְיָ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַיִּחַנֶּךָ

Ya-ayr Ah-do-ni pa-nav ay-lehy-kha vee-khu-neh-ka

Adoni make His face shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.

יִשָּׂא יְיָ פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

Yee-sah Ah-do-ni pa-nav ay-lehy-khah

v'yah-saym l'khah shah-lom

Adoni turn [lift up] His face to you and give you shalom."

'In this way they are to put My name on the people of Isra'el, so that I will bless them.'"

This very important blessing, still pronounced around the world today, is "the only remaining vestige¹ of the *Kohen's* (Priest's) Temple service," according to Rabbi Nosson Scherman in the ArtScroll booklet on the Birkat Kohanim.

If we look a little closer, we see that there are actually three blessings within this blessing. It would seem that the first blessing – *Adoni bless you and guard you* – refers primarily to material prosperity. This is because the phrase speaks of blessing and then a protection after receiving the blessing; a material blessing can be subject to outside danger in one form or another – i.e., anything from robbery to severe weather, to anywhere in between. The blessing here is pretty much general, not stating how much or in what way. It would vary depending upon the need of the individual or group.

Adoni make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you – this refers more to a spiritual blessing, particularly of spiritual growth and increase in Godly wisdom. The root of יָאֵר *ya-ayr* is אֹר *or*, light. Among the definitions Strong gives for *or* is, "set on fire." *May Adoni "set you on fire,"* this is a sure sign of spiritual growth. Even greater than receiving material blessing is the blessing of receiving wisdom from HaShem; this is a goodly part of spiritual growth, of His face shining upon us. The Jewish Rabbi *Sha'ul* (Saul, also known as Paul²) expounds on the wisdom of HaShem versus the wisdom of man in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 18-31, with statements such as, "For the message about the execution-stake is nonsense to those in the process of being destroyed, but to us in the process of being saved it is the power of God... For God's 'nonsense' is wiser than humanity's 'wisdom'." And *Ya'akov* (Jacob), the blood-brother of Yeshua, wrote that "The wisdom from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful, kind, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (*Ya'akov/James*³ 3.17). The root of *be gracious* is חָנַן *kha-nahn*, which means, "to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior." To think that the Creator of the Universe would do that to us is quite mind-boggling.

The third blessing – *Adoni turn His face to you and give you shalom* – is a prayer for Adoni to suppress His anger, according to Rashi, meaning that even though our basic nature is sinful, we should ask HaShem to allow His "mercy to triumph over judgment" (*Ya'akov* 2.13). One's face is indicative of one's attitude; one tends to look away when hurt or angry, so if we ask HaShem to turn His face to Israel, and us, we are asking Him to look at us and show that He is not angry at us. And in turn, in spite of our own unworthiness, we can turn our face to Him and receive His Fatherly love, as He sees us through the blood of Yeshua. Then we

don't have to cry as David did in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 13.2(1), "How long will You hide Your face from me?" Rather it will be, as David later said in *Tehillim* 27.8, "Your face, Adonai, I will seek." That verse does *not* say "Your face is *all* I will seek," for Scripture is full of references to the *hand* of HaShem being mighty and caring for us. However, we must be careful, on the other hand (no pun intended), to *not* seek His hand only. The ArtScroll booklet on the Birkat Kohanim states that, "All the pleasures of this world are not true blessings, because people become bored with them and every thinking person comes to realize that life must have some purpose greater than the accumulation of money and enjoyment."

It seems to me that these three lines of blessing are progressive; we *first* learn to seek His hand of blessing and protection, and as we see that in action, then we press in to seek His face and grace, as He turns His goodness to us. And then, whether through adversity or favor, we with spiritual eyes will see His loving care in action. It is only from *Sar Shalom* (the Prince of Peace) we receive complete *shalom* – which is "peace, tranquility, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity."⁴ That is our reward as we serve Him, for as Yeshua promises in our Yokhanan reading this week, in 12.26, "My Father will honor anyone who serves Me."

When the whole blessing is pronounced, He then desires to put upon Israel, and us, His name. That means He wants to bestow blessings upon us from His very essence, from all that He is in His person and His work.

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – *Sha'alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B'rakhot v'todah rabbah
(Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you
into heaven, will come back to you in just the
same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1.11 CJB)

¹ Vestige: "A visible sign of something that no longer exists" (Webster's definition).

² I've noted this before, but Sha'ul, or Saul, did not change his name to Paul when he "started Christianity." The Greek of Acts 13.9, normally translated as "Saul, also known as Paul," or similar is literally, "Saul, the [one] also Paul..." After encountering Yeshua, Sha'ul remained a Messianic Jew throughout his life and ministry, as noted in Acts 23.6, where he declared some time later, while on trial for his faith in Yeshua, "I *am* a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees..." He did not start a new faith or religion. Gentile believers are invited to be grafted into the Messianic Kingdom of Israel, and that is all that was intended. And here we must note that not all Pharisees were "bad." When Yeshua scolded them, the proper translation is as found in the CJB, "Woe to you *hypocritical* Pharisees," as in Matthew 23 for example. Rather than trying to convert the Jewish people to Christianity, as so many missionaries try to do, we should rather let our lives in Yeshua be an example and pray for them to have some sort of a "Sha'ul encounter" with the living Mashiakh.

³ "James" is not a Hebrew name, but the name of Ya'akov/Jacob was changed to please the King of England, who was supporting the King James translation.

⁴ From the CJB glossary.