

Mordekhi's Drash for Shabbat May 26, 2007 / Sivan 9, 5767

Parashah #35: *Naso* (Take/Elevate), *B'Midbar* (Numbers) 4:21-7:89

Haftarah: *Shof'tim* (Judges) 13:2-25

Suggested *Messianic Writings* reading: *Yochanan* (John) 17:1-26

Shalom,

The Parashah begins with the counting, or elevating the heads, of the clans within the tribe of Levi; these particular clans were assigned specific duties involved with the service and movement of the Tabernacle. Following this are laws pertaining to relationships between people, and a section dealing with the law for jealous husbands who suspect infidelity in their spouse. Undoubtedly, much could be said here concerning the "marriage" between HaShem and Israel.

B'Midbar (Numbers) 6 deals with the rules for one who desires to take the vow of a *nazir* (Nazirite), in order to totally separate himself unto HaShem. In chapter 7, we learn that on the day Moshe finished setting up the Tabernacle and for twelve days thereafter, one tribe per day brought offerings for the dedication of the altar, items that were designated for usage in the Tabernacle by the *Levi'im* (Levites) as they ministered unto HaShem.

What we want to look at for this drash is *B'Midbar* 6:24-26, the short passage that is known by various titles – *Birkat Kohanim* (High Priestly Blessing); the Aaronic Blessing; or, the Aaronic Benediction. Two more titles are known in the Hebrew: *N'siat Kapeyim* (Raising the Hands), alluding to the position of the Kohen's hands while reciting the blessing; and *Aliyah LaDukhan* (Ascending the Platform), referring to the location in the Temple from where the blessing was bestowed.

The *Birkat Kohanim* is the blessing that was given by the *Kohen HaGadol* (High Priest) to the people of Israel as a special blessing from HaShem. This blessing has survived the passage of time, and is still a very powerful blessing; it truly is the blessing of HaShem. Rabbi Nosson Scherman notes that of all the duties and rituals performed by the *Kohanim* (Priests) in the Tabernacle and the later Temples, this blessing is the only item that remains. It is known within Judaism that the Levites are essentially the only tribal members who have retained a tribal identity following the exiles. For example, more likely than not, someone with a name such as Cohen, Cohn, Cahn, Levi, or forms thereof may in fact be a descendant of a *Kohen* (Priest) or of the tribe of Levi. When a Messianic believer with such a name chants or sings the *Birkat Kohanim*, there is a special anointing, at least in the few times I have been privileged to hear such.

B'Midbar 6:24-26, from the CJB:

Y'varekh'kha ADONAI v'yishmerekha.

[May ADONAI bless you and keep you.]

Ya'er ADONAI panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May ADONAI make his face shine on you and show you his favor.]

Yissa ADONAI panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom.

[May ADONAI lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

The rabbis have noted that the three lines seem to represent the three Patriarchs. Blessing one – *May ADONAI bless you and keep you* – is a blessing for offspring, and is perhaps an allusion to the promises given to Avraham by HaShem, "I shall make of you a great nation" (*B'reshet* / Genesis 12:2), and "I shall surely bless you and greatly increase your offspring like the stars of the heavens and like the sands of the seashore" (*B'reshet* 22:17). This blessing also can refer to material prosperity, and may you be blessed with the wisdom to know how to use your prosperity. Also, may ADONAI specifically bless you with the blessings of *D'varim* (Deuteronomy) 28:1-14. May ADONAI keep (safeguard, protect) you so that the blessing does not become a curse if used improperly. Alternatively, may ADONAI keep you so that what may seem a curse is in reality a protection. In this vein, many of you know our friend Jim, who had a herniated disk in his back and had received numerous prayers for healing but the back pain did not go

away. As it has turned out, the back pain kept Jim from over-exerting, thus in reality preventing a heart attack some time before the need was discovered for a multiple bypass surgery.

Blessing two – *May ADONAI make his face shine on you and show you his favor* – symbolizes *Yitz'khak* (Isaac), whose 180 years surpassed Avraham's life by 5 years and *Ya'akov's* (Jacob's) by 33 years. This blessing can also refer to the spiritual blessings of Torah knowledge and inspiration. The scriptural usage of "face" refers to all that someone is in their person and their work. The Hebrew word for face is *pah-neh*, and can also be translated as "presence." Many believe that the term in the Tanakh, "The Presence of ADONAI" refers specifically to Yeshua. Messianic believers know that Yeshua, as part of the mysterious *ekhad* (unity in one) of G-d, is also known as the Living Word, the Living Torah. *Mishlei* (Proverbs) 6:23 says that Torah is a light; Yeshua called Himself the Light of the world. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 119:105 declares, "Your word is a lamp for my foot, and a light on my path." To know the Word and to know THE Word is to gain the favor of ADONAI – "Happy the person who finds wisdom, the person who acquires understanding" (*Mishlei* 3:13).

Blessing three – *May ADONAI lift up his face toward you and give you peace* – pictures Ya'akov, who arrived *shalem* (in peace) at Shechem after his reunion with *Esav* (Esau), and his night of wrestling with "the Angel of G-d" (see Genesis 33:18). This blessing can also refer to G-d's compassion above and beyond what one deserves. One's face gives an indication of his attitude toward another. Anger, surprise, shock, fear, joy, love – all these and more can be seen in the face. Someone with anger may not even look directly at his enemy. For ADONAI to turn His face to Israel, and to us, indicates that ADONAI is not angry. As for "give you peace," it does not mean simply the absence of war, or that you will only meet kind, loving, gentle, peaceful people everywhere you go. The Hebrew word *shalom* has a much deeper meaning than the English word *peace* can convey. The CJB glossary gives the definition of *shalom* as, "peace, tranquility, safety, well-being, welfare, health, contentment, success, comfort, wholeness and integrity." When you greet someone with "Shalom!" you give them a powerful blessing, for words truly do carry weight into the spiritual realm. Therefore, when ADONAI blesses with *shalom*, it is indeed a powerful blessing.

If you don't feel like you are being particularly blessed at this time, at all times, or at any time, look back again to blessing one. We noted that the promises referred to Avraham. The promise is expounded upon in Hebrews 6:14-15, "[ADONAI] said [to Avraham], 'I will certainly bless you, and I will certainly give you many descendants;' and so, after *waiting patiently*, Avraham saw the promise fulfilled" [emphasis mine]. The great chapter of *Yeshu'ahu* (Isaiah) 40, after beginning with encouragement to "comfort my people," ends with the promise that "those who *wait* upon ADONAI shall renew their strength, they will soar aloft as with eagles' wings; they will run and won't grow tired, they will walk and not become weary." Of course, we wait on ADONAI by serving Him, not by crashing on the couch, waiting for Him to do something for us.

B'rakhot (blessings) upon you as you wait upon ADONAI. And for an additional blessing, read *Yochanan* (John) 17, a *Birkat Kohanim* blessing from THE High Priest.

[The majority of notes for this study are from the ArtScroll booklet on the Birkat Kohanim, *The Priestly Blessings*.]

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

Mordekhi (Marc) & Yisraela Carmela (Teresa)

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)