



Talit covered

kohanim

pronounce

"The Blessing"

in Jerusalem

*Live on Priestly
Blessing video!*

Dear Mishpochah (Family) in Messiah,

June 2000: A Month to Bless

Is someone you know graduating? Getting married? Celebrating an anniversary? Moving to another city or state? Bless them. As believers we have received a commandment to bless others in the name of Yeshua...our friends and family (I Peter 3:9), our enemies (Matthew 5:44), and those who persecute us (Romans 12:14).

One of the most powerful ways to bless someone is by **speaking** blessing to them. When we're not sure what blessing would be appropriate, there is one blessing that God has given us in His Word that is a "blessing of blessings" and is **always** in order. It's called the Birkat HaKohanim, the Priestly Blessing, and is found in Numbers 6:24-26. The **Complete Jewish Bible** by Dr. David H. Stern translates this special blessing as follows:

Y'varekh'kha ADONAI v'yishmerekha.

May ADONAI bless you and keep you.

Y'er ADONAI panev elekha 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 Lord told Moses that Aaron and his sons, the *kohanim* (priestly family), would put God's name on the people of Israel and then God would bless them.

This *bra'cha* (blessing) continues to be pronounced by Jewish "priests" all over the world. It is the only continuing link to the daily Temple service that existed in Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago. In Israel it is still pronounced at morning services. It is also pronounced on special occasions such as weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, Shabbat and on the major Jewish holidays.

Who can say this special "Bra'cha"?

While this holy blessing can only be pronounced in traditional Judaism by the descendents of Aaron, the High Priest, in New Covenant Judaism it can be pronounced by any true believer in Yeshua, who sees him or herself as part of the Holy Priesthood spoken of in I Peter 2:9: *"But you are a chosen people, **the King's kohanim**, a holy nation, a people for God to possess!..."* For this reason, Messianic Jews, and many Christian pastors as well, pronounce the Birkhat HaKohanim as part of their worship services.

Not long ago, Neil attended a men's retreat, and was delighted to find that one of the leaders was a friend from years back whom he'd had little contact with. During the course of the weekend, this man, Tom, was notified that his son had just died. Neil was asked to pray for Tom... in Hebrew. The only thing that came to his mind was the Birhat HaKohanim. Tom was deeply touched. God's **shalom** flooded his soul and eased his pain.

The Blessing Found

In 1973, an Israeli archaeologist excavating First Temple period tombs found two small scrolls of pure silver on which were inscribed in tiny letters the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24-26. These are the oldest Biblical quotations in existence (dated 7th Century BCE), 400 years older than the earliest Biblical text found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

It has been determined that 2,600 years ago, the Priestly Blessing was worn around the neck on a leather strap hanging close to the heart. Now **you** can wear this blessing also! The Bible Society of Israel has reproduced the scrolls that were found and made a necklace of sterling silver bearing the same inscription. We purchased one for our oldest son Jonathan and gave it to him for his Bar Mitzvah a couple of years ago. On our recent trip to Israel we purchased a small quantity of them for **you**, so that you might give this **Jewish jewel** as a gift to someone dear to your heart. This is a great way to impart a blessing that will go on and on. Each sterling silver Priestly Blessing pendant (appropriate for male or female) comes gift boxed with an 18" chain and a paper explaining the blessing and its history. Order while supplies last!!

The Kohanim Found!

If the Priestly Blessing is only pronounced in traditional Jewish synagogues by the kohanim, one might wonder: "How is this possible since all genealogical records were destroyed with the Temple in 70 A.D.?"

Our God is an awesome God! He reveals hidden things. He has made sure that the sons of Aaron are still recognizable. In 1955 a man named Karl Skorecki, a "Kohen" and a nephrologist by profession, was sitting in an Orthodox synagogue in Toronto. As he watched his fellow kohanim called to the Torah, an idea popped into his head. Priestly status is obtained through one's father and since the Y-chromosome is passed from father to son, there should be shared DNA sequences among kohanim if their ancestry led back to a single man.

He initiated worldwide research among Jewish males who identified themselves as kohanim. He found conclusive evidence that members of the Aaronic priesthood carry in their male chromosome a set of DNA sequences found **ONLY** in Jewish priests distinguishing them not only from other Jews, but from everyone else in the world. This shows that God has sustained His priesthood so that He could bless His people through them.

Another amazing discovery is the Lemba, a black-skinned, Bantu-speaking tribe in southern Africa who circumcise their males, do not eat pork, observe one day of the week as holy, and

consider themselves to be Jews. When DNA specialists began their survey of the Lemba, they discovered that the frequency of the priestly gene in the Lemba was nearly the same as among the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews of Israel. This priestly gene has not been discovered in any other people group that has been surveyed.

The Blessing: Hands and Feet

The Priestly Blessing is traditionally pronounced with bare feet since in the Bible the removal of shoes is associated with holiness (Exodus 3:5). The Priestly Blessing is a holy blessing. The one who recites it is not the one who blesses, but rather **God Himself**. That makes the blessing holy. The one who recites the blessing is an instrument through whom the blessing of God is conveyed.

Hands are to be clean when this blessing is pronounced (see Ps. 24:3-4). It is customary for the Levites to wash the hands of the kohanim before they pronounce the blessing. The hands of the priest are then lifted up "*neslat kapayim*" (based on Lev. 9:22) and the fingers positioned in a specific way, forming a kind of lattice (and the letter V). If you've ever seen Star Trek, you've seen the hand position! Leonard Nimoy, the Jewish actor who played the Vulcan officer incorporated the Priestly Blessing into the Vulcan parting salutation because as a boy he was fascinated with it. So... "Live long and prosper" is actually based on Numbers 6:24-26.

Content of the Priestly Blessing

The Priestly Blessing is a three-fold blessing. It is brief, but eloquent. It is phrased in the singular as a personal b'racha, and consists of fifteen Hebrew words arranged in three sentences of three, five, and seven words. The number of words increases as does the significance of the divine favor prayed for. "*The Lord bless thee and keep thee.*" God is sovereign and the source of all blessing. This verse speaks of physical blessings. God watches us, guards us, and protects us in dangerous situations and gives us success in our daily lives.

Verse 25 deals with the soul, and with mental and emotional wholeness. It's a blessing of enlightenment, of Torah study, of mental health, of favor. When God's face shines upon us, our faces shine as well (Exodus34:29). It's wonderful to bask in the light of His love.

The final verse deals with the spirit. Shalom is the highest and the greatest gift. Shalom involves the TOTALITY of well being, wholeness and completeness in every way. As Messianic Jews we know that our Messiah is the Sar Shalom spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. The use of SHALOM as a word of greeting comes from its position as the last word in this blessing. When we greet with SHALOM, we are giving someone an abbreviated Priestly Blessing!

Priestly Blessing: Video & Art

One of our recent **Jewish Jewels** television programs is called "Priestly Blessing." The teaching in the program is basically the same as this newsletter, however, there is much more in the video including wonderful interviews with Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Cahn (a *Kohen*), who pronounced the Priestly Blessing in India and Cuba, Stan Cohen, a *Kohen* who is now a new creation in Messiah, Jonathan Settel blessing children at Temple Aron HaKodesh with the Priestly Blessing, and singing Holy Ground. Last but not least, we visit the Western Wall where kohanim pronounce the Priestly Blessing once a year at Sukkot over the nation of Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Order your own copy of the "Priestly Blessing" **Jewish Jewels** television program and then whenever you need a blessing, you can put a tape in your VCR and allow Neil and Jamie, Jonathan Settel and Jonathan Cahn to pronounce the Priestly Blessing over you!

On the Priestly Blessing program, we offer a full color rendering of the Priestly Blessing by Messianic artist Michael Friedman. It's a great gift or addition to your home. Rabbinic tradition connects the 60 Hebrew letters that comprise the Priestly Blessing with the 60 warriors that guarded King Solomon from the terror of the night (Song of Songs 3:7-8). Why not put the blessing on your bedroom wall and allow THE WORD OF GOD and its power to guard you while you sleep?



May Adonai bless you and keep you. May Adonai make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; May Adonai lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Shalom, B'Shem Yeshua, Amen.

*P.S. EVERY Jewish Jewels T.V. Program is
available on video cassette: A GIFT THAT
MINISTERS!*