

The Bible's Most Unique Character

In the book of Numbers, we are introduced to many biblical characters; however, many people never really come to know the Bible's most famous character. In order to introduce this character to you, I would like to take a look at one of the most familiar series of verses in the Bible. These verses have become known as the Aaronic Blessing, found in Numbers 6:24-26 (TLV):

“Adonai bless you and keep you! Adonai make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you! Adonai turn His face toward you and grant you *shalom*!”

For thousands of years, these words have been recited in synagogues and churches around the world. Yet the true meaning and purpose of this famous text is rarely taught or understood.

While it is true that Adonai (The Lord) wants to bless and keep the children of Israel, and while it is also true that Adonai wants to make His face shine on the children of Israel, Adonai also does want to be gracious to the children of Israel and turn His face toward them and grant them *shalom*. However, while each of the above statements are true and are the desire of Adonai toward His people Israel, the purpose of these words is much larger than this simplistic surface understanding of these words that were commanded to Moses to be spoken by Aaron and all of the priests of Israel over the children of Israel.

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In general, when people pray these words or sing these words, they do so focusing on the awesome blessings included in these three verses. Yet, they miss something more awesome and

powerful because they don't include the verses preceding and following these words. While the words of Numbers 6:24-26 are important, the fullness of the actual blessing can't be understood without including verses 22, 23 and 27.

Numbers 6:22-23 says: "Again Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying: Thus you are to bless *Bnei-Yisrael*, by saying to them..."

In verses 22-23, Moses is commanded to speak to Aaron and his sons and say, "Thus you are to bless the children of Israel by saying to them." Notice that it isn't the words that they are to speak that are the blessing, but rather that they would be blessed because these words were being spoken to them. In other words, the blessing isn't what is said in verses 24-26, the blessing is the result of those words being spoken to them. Once we understand that the blessing is not the words found in verses 24-26, we can see and understand why Numbers 6:27 is included in this commandment from G-D.

"In this way they are to place My Name over *Bnei-Yisrael*, and so I will bless them" (Num. 6:27).

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In verses 22-23, we see that G-D commanded Moses to tell Aaron to bless the children of Israel by speaking the words of verses 24-26. But, it isn't until we read verse 27 that we actually learn what the blessing spoken of in verse 23 is, and it isn't simply G-D doing the really nice things for Israel that we read in those verses. The real blessing is that by speaking these words, the priests would place G-D's name over the children of Israel.

When the Bible speaks of "a name" it doesn't mean the letters and sounds that make up a word, by which we refer to someone. It actually means the character and nature of the person being

spoken about. In other words, when G-D said that by speaking the words of Numbers 6:24-26 over Israel, then the people would have G-D's character and nature spoken over them. G-D's name isn't about the syllables and sounds that we read in a Hebrew word; it is about who G-D truly is.

When we understand this truth about what the blessing actually is, we find that it isn't a prayer for G-D to do nice things for His people. Nor is it a statement that G-D may do nice things for His people. The blessing is much more than either of those. The blessing is that G-D really, really, really wants to do nice things for His people. It is G-D's nature to bless, to keep, to make His face shine, to be gracious, to look toward His people and to bring peace.

Right in the middle of G-D going through intricate, detailed instruction for Israel concerning how they should worship Him and detailing what happens when they fall short of keeping His commandments, G-D stops for a moment and commands Moses to command Aaron and all those priests that would follow him, to bless Israel by saying over and over how much G-D wants to be a loving and grace-filled Father to them. Not because the children of Israel earned it or deserve it, but because that is who G-D is. The Aaronic blessing was to be spoken over Israel so the character of G-D would be the Bible's most unique character.

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