

God Promises to Respond When We Speak These Biblical Words

One of the things I enjoy most is finding things that connect my faith with the faith of those around me. Over the years, I have had the honor of speaking in congregations nationally and internationally. As I do, I pay attention to the different aspects of the services I attend both Jewish and Christian because I am a firm believer that what unites us is more powerful than what divides us. Throughout my journeys, I noticed that of all the prayers spoken in the various denominations, there is one that is incorporated in some way by more congregations than any other. This prayer is short but extremely meaningful, and more than just meaningful, this prayer is powerful.

In Hebrew, it is called the *Birkat Kohanim*; in English, it is known as the priestly blessing or the Aaronic benediction. One of the things that makes this prayer so beautiful is that it comes directly from the Bible. It is 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!”

Another reason this prayer is so powerful is that this prayer was commanded by G-D to be prayed by the priests over the children of Israel. So when we say this prayer, we are not simply reciting beautiful words, we are in fact obeying a direct commandment from G-D.

But the beauty and power of this prayer goes even deeper and is even more powerful than just quoting Scripture and being

obedient to a commandment. But in order to understand the power provided in these words by G-D Himself, we must read the verse that comes before this blessing and the verse that comes after.

“Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying: Thus you are to bless Bnei-Yisrael, by saying to them:” (Num. 6:23).

As we look at these words, notice that Aaron’s sons were commended to Bless Bnei-Yisrael (the children of Israel), not just to say a prayer over them. Look closely the verse says to “bless them” by “saying to them.” One might simply conclude that just the act of saying these words over the children of Israel would be the blessing spoken of in verse 23. But I think if we view it that way we will rob ourselves of the deeper understanding and the deeper blessing available.

Let’s take a look again at what Aaron was actually commanded to say.

“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!” (Num. 6:24-26).

Verse 24 says G-D wants to bless and keep Israel. Verse 25 says G-D wants to have a joyous expression when He looks at Israel and be gracious to them. Finally, verse 26 says G-D wants to look upon them and grant the shalom; peace and completeness.

These words are amazing, loving expressions of a Father toward His children. Aaron was commanded to speak these words over the children of Israel, to remind them that this is the desire of G-D’s heart towards His people Israel. As awesome as this truth is, we cannot end there. Because if we end there, we will miss the understanding of the power that was placed into

the hand, or more accurately, the mouths of the priests of Israel. To see this, we have to look at Number 6:27: "In this way they are to place My Name over Bnei-Yisrael, and so I will bless them."

Notice what G-D said would happen if Aaron and the priests would speak these words. They would place G-D's name over the children of Israel. This expression means they would place G-D nature and character upon Israel. Another way to say this would be that by Aaron and the priests saying this prayer Israel would understand the nature and character of G-D.

The result of understanding G-D's nature and character is that G-D would be able to respond by blessing Israel. The Old Testament G-D isn't an ogre looking for a reason to show his vengeance and wrath. He is a kindly Father who wants nothing more than to look upon His children with love and make sure they have peace and blessings. He wanted Israel to understand this so much He commanded the priests to proclaim it over Israel.

You may be asking yourself, *So what does this has to do with me today? Aaron is long gone, and there is no priesthood.* Well, to find the answer, takes a moment to visit 1 Peter 2:5: "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua."

And 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Which quote Exodus 19:6: "So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation. 'These are the words which you are to speak to Bnei-Yisrael.'"

So if we learn to speak these biblical words with the right heart and understanding, G-D promises He will respond by

blessing His people. {eoa}

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