

Why This Priestly Blessing Straight From Scripture Has More Power Than You Realize

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

If you grew up in church, you’ve heard this before. The Priestly blessing (Num. 6:24-25) makes its appearance in many different Christian traditions, from Lutheranism to the Catholic Church. It’s most commonly used as the closing benediction and without it, a service may feel incomplete.

At the same time, we must be sure to not miss the blessing’s unique significance for us Christians. Warren M. Marcus, author of *The Priestly Prayer of the Blessing*, proves just how important it is by breaking down exactly what the words mean.

The Lord Bless You

The Hebrew word for “bless” is *barakh*, which means to “kneel,” “bless” or “praise.” As the Lord blesses us, we are to fall to our knees and respond with humble hearts.

“The first portion of the Priestly Prayer of the Blessing involves G-D our Father making Himself available to each of us,” Marcus says. “It demands a response: Do we ignore Him?”

The LORD Keep You

This usage of the word keep is not to be confused with keeping the commandments. Marcus draws on how *shamar* means so much more:

“It carries the idea of guarding. A shepherd in the wilderness would build a corral to protect his sheep from predators.”

The LORD keeps us from danger and protects us from the enemy. Furthermore, nothing can separate us from God, “neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow” (Rom. 8:38b).

The LORD Make His Face to Shine Upon You

When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You. Your face, LORD, I will seek” (Ps. 27:8).

As Christians, we are encouraged to seek God and pursue an intimate relationship with Him. But God also gives us the way to doing so by turning His face and making Himself available to us.

Or, the Hebrew word for shine, means ‘light divided from the darkness.’ Marcus explains how in Hebraic thought, light is order and darkness is chaos.

He says, “Just as YHWH [God] said at creation, ‘Let there be light,’ to bring to order that which was set in darkness and chaos, so too this occurs when we can spiritually see His face (*panim*) because His face is the source of illumination—of light.”

The LORD Be Gracious Unto You

When we study how the Hebrew word for “gracious” (*chanan*) is used in the Bible, we see a picture of true grace. Even when the children of Israel rebelled, God still blessed them. In the same way, God loves us despite our failures and flaws.

Marcus says, “This prayer isn’t based on how good or how perfect you are. The children of Israel weren’t deserving of this, and neither are we.”

The LORD Lift His Countenance Upon You

The Hebrew word for countenance (*panim*) is plural because it speaks to the whole behavioral actions of a person, the “entire being.” God provides all of Himself to us. He is not a

distant idea but a fully divine person with thoughts, judgments and emotions.

In the same way God is for us with His entire being, we are also called to be for God with our entire being. We must love the LORD our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might see (Deut. 6:5).

The LORD Give You Peace

Shalom, or peace, is probably one of the most well-known Hebrew words within Christian circles, and it means so much more than the absence of chaos. Its main meaning is “to restore something and make it even better than its former or original state.”

Marcus reflects on what *shalom* means for our relationship with God:

“He restores us to a right relationship with Him through the gift of forgiveness and justification. He is able to restore our earthly relationships. And He can even restore days and years that have been lost to the effects of sin.”

This article is based on The Priestly Prayer of the Blessing (Charisma House, 2018) written by Warren M. Marcus. Marcus is a Messianic Jewish believer and an avid student of the Bible, specializing in the Jewish roots of Christianity. He is ordained as a Spirit-filled evangelist in the Southern Baptist denomination. He serves as vice president of Sid Roth's Messianic Vision Inc., where he oversees the production of the weekly It's Supernatural! TV show. Marcus has also produced The Great North American Revival DVD series and the award-winning animated children's series SuperBook and Flying House. He also produced the highest-rated religious TV special of all time, Don't Ask Me, Ask God, featuring Michael J. Fox, Ned Beatty, and others.