

Exegetical Notes, Numbers 6:22-27

“Aaron's Blessing”

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Numbers 6:22-27

Verse 22-23

Then YHWH said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:'"

- What follows these words is what is historically called the Aaronic Benediction. It is the blessing which Aaron and his sons are to pray over the people of Israel.
- There are three stanzas to the blessing. Each stanza contains two thoughts. The thoughts in each stanza are written so that the second thought explains or illustrates the first.
- Written evidence documents the use of this prayer of blessing back to the seventh century before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Verse 24

"“YHWH bless you and keep you;”"

- Each stanza begins with the pronouncement of the divine name, YHWH. Thus there is a tri-fold pronouncement of the name of the one who imparts the blessing.
- The word bless means to make happy or to give joy. Happiness is found in the Lord's keeping, that is, knowing that we are held in his hands, protected and safe

Verse 25

"“YHWH make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;”"

- Literally, may God smile on you. May he favor you with his grace rather than with his judgment. May he give you what you do not deserve, grace, as opposed to what you have earned, judgment.

Verse 26

““YHWH turn his face toward you and give you peace.””

- May God not turn his back on you to ignore you and to show his disfavor with you. Instead may he look on you and smile (verse 25). When God looks at you, you feel a sense of deep well-being. You know that all is well with your soul. That peace is "Shalom", the sense of well being that comes from being in God's keeping (verse 24).

Verse 27

"So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

- Three times in the blessing the name of God is pronounced over the people of Israel. As they stood with their heads bowed to receive the blessing, Aaron and the priests, "put the name YHWH on the people of Israel."
- This marks Israel as God's people and that is, in and of itself, blessing!

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