

Shiur L'Yom Chamishi¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Naso:*** **Numbers 6:22-27**
 Haftarah: **Judges 13:15-23**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 21:25**

This is how you are to bless B'nei Yisrael ...
[Numbers 6:23]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 67:1-7;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #6, *B'racha* [The Petition for Blessing]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...*
Daber el-Aharon v'el-banav l'emor - *prophecy to Aharon and his sons, saying ...* ***koh***
tevarachu et-B'nei Yisra'el – *this is how are you to bless B'nei Yisrael* **Numbers 6:22-23a.**

Has a wise, humble diplomat of the Kingdom of Heaven ever pronounced a blessing over your life? Have you ever had your potential for goodness envisioned, appreciated, declared and activated by one who has the patience to look beyond your present attitude, behavior, and drama and see you through your Heavenly Father's eyes? Well, the appointed time has come! Welcome to the aliyah of *Ha-B'racha* – i.e. the *Blessing*. So ... what will you do with the blessing you are about to receive? Are you ready to lift your head, elevate your thoughts, words, and behavior patterns, and walk in that blessing? Are you willing to let that which will be spoken over you reshape everything about you? Are you willing to carry the sweet fragrance of that blessing into all the places the Holy One exposes to your influence? Or would you rather release complaints, imprecations, and curses over your neighborhood, community, nation, and world? Are you willing to release a blessing from the Creator over every human being He allows you to impact? Or would you rather release outrage over their opinions, criticism of their performance, and condemnation of their sin, their shallowness, and their thinly veiled paganism?

Choose a side, Dear One. Out of the same mouth cannot – or at least should not - proceed both blessing and cursing. **James 3:10.**

The Innate Hunger of Man for the Creator's Fatherly Blessing

The words “*May the Holy One bless and keep you*” are designed by the Holy One to constitute much, much more than just a pleasant benediction with which to

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conclude a religious service. As did our forefathers before us, and as will our children and children's children after us, we all have a desperate need to be blessed by the One Who Created Us – the One Who Knows us best, and Who Loves us most. Receiving blessing from our Father is an absolutely critical component of the Divine-Encounter Empowered Lifestyle. Each human being, you see, has a gaping hole in his or her soul that only our Heavenly Father's Blessing can fill. The All Wise, All Compassionate One purposely created us with that hole. That hole is His secret weapon. It is essential to His Redemptive Plan. He knows that our deep need for His Blessing will eventually cause us to seek Him – even if we initially do so for selfish purposes. He is completely confident that once we seek Him, and receive His Blessing we will hunger for more. One by one His Goodness, His Mercy, His Kindness, His Brilliance, His Beauty, and His Majesty will capture our hearts. More and more will we long to know, commune with, and serve Him. He is unflinchingly self-assured in this regard. After all, He programmed each of us with the need to draw near to Him at appointed times, to bow our heads and bend our knees before Him like a child, and to receive the lifegiving Touch of His Hand, and to tremble under the gentle power of the words of blessing that emanate from His Mouth. Only as we learn to absorb the precious life-nutrient our Heavenly Father's blessing entails can we hope to effectively navigate through – much less overcome and transcend - the heart-numbing wilderness experiences of life. Deep down virtually every human being wants very much – indeed, needs very much - to be 'blessed'. You do, don't you? Of course you do. So do I. So do all our children, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. And so does every single stranger we encounter along the sidewalks, highways, hallways, elevators, and shopping aisles of life. After all, the longing to be blessed is a universal longing of the human heart. Many of us even whisper 'bless you' involuntarily when someone around us sneezes. Human beings are actually programmed by our Creator to have this longing. That is why the first words the human being ever heard the Holy One speak were words of blessing. Immediately after telling us that the Holy One created man in His own image, Torah informs us the Creator "blessed them". And how did the Creator release this blessing? He released the blessing with the very Words of His Mouth. He declared over them:

***Be fruitful; multiply;
fill the earth,
and subdue it [i.e. bring out its potential/make it beautiful and fruitful];
have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air,
and over every living thing that moves on the earth.***
[Genesis 1:28]

Many today would publicly deny - with vehemence if not cursing - that the kind of blessing they so intensely covet has anything whatever to do with the Holy One of Israel. But they protest too much. Such denials represent nothing more than the

product of [a] years of eating a steady diet of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and [b] experiencing enough man-made religion to get a bad spiritual taste in their mouth. Let those making such protests even once taste the richness and energizing power and intimate tenderness of the blessing of 3 the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov and ... well, let's just say that such denials and protestations will evaporate into ecstatic praise.

As the Psalmist says '*taste and see - the Holy One is good!*' That said, however, wanting – indeed *longing deep inside* - to be blessed is one thing, and *receiving blessing* and *responding to it appropriately* are another thing altogether. How does one make the transition from *longing* to *enjoying*, from *hungering* to *experiencing*? From *pondering*, to *embracing and carrying*? What are *the keys*? What are *the requisites*? What is *the process*? Let us take some time to explore and meditate on *the great Divine mystery of the blessing process*.

One hears the word 'blessing' tossed around in religious circles all the time. It is 'here a blessing, there a blessing, everywhere a blessing ... *yada, yada, yada*'. As a result, the word 'blessing' is so overused and misused in such circles as to have almost lost any spiritual substance. It is, for many people, just another meaningless religious *cliché* to be slung around indiscriminately like breadcrumbs off a table. Many who hang around the halls of religion have therefore become so familiar with the idea of being blessed that at most the mention of it produces a low-level twinge of a warm fuzzy feeling. But blessing is supposed to be *substantially more than that*. The prospect of receiving a blessing from our Divine Bridegroom in Heaven should – because it is Divinely designed to - absolutely STIR OUR SOULS. We should – are Divinely programmed to - thirst after our Bridegroom's blessing *as a deer pants for water*. Our souls can be satisfied with nothing less. But alas our *flesh* is always hoping to convince them otherwise.

The soul's passionate hunger for the blessing can be and often is drowned out - temporarily at least – by the din of voices that constantly step forth to hawk their crafty wares aimed at our flesh. "Come on, have some 'Fun'!" they say. "You need to do what all the 'Cool' People are doing!" they cajole. "You need to support the movements and causes that the trendy celebrities are talking about!" they wheedle. "You've got to hang out where the 'Popular' People go!" they inveigle. "You need to learn how to party!" they complain.

Ever since the Garden of Eden the Serpent's main line of attack on the human being has always been the promise of instant sensual gratification. That false promise is his *anti-blessing venom* of choice. He absolutely hates – and even more fears – the Holy One's blessing upon mankind. And so he is intent on drowning it

out, deflecting it from those for whom it is intended, and replacing it with his own message – the deceptive half-truth of instant sensual gratification.

Unfortunately the serpent is in no wise lacking for modern day co-conspirators in his malicious *anti-blessing* quest. The *high gloss* moguls of advertising, merchandizing, entertainment, media, secular music, and social networking daily repackage and rehash the same old empty but seductive hiss of the serpent in our ears. They bring us face-to-face with the serpent's false promise of instant sensual gratification at every crossroads, storefront, ticket-office, and checkout stand - as well as at and between every commercial break. They constantly try to convince the human beings over and through whom the Holy One wants to release blessings that the ultimate purpose of life is not to receive and walk out one's life in the Holy One's blessing but to get as much sensual gratification as possible *right now*.

This is the defensive strategy through which the serpent tries – sometimes very successfully - to counteract the Divine strategy of blessing. You see, Dear Reader, the purpose of the blessing of the Holy One is to establish you in your unique identity. The serpent cannot have that! So, in order to confuse and destroy the confirmation and establishment of *identity* in human beings he bombards the intended recipients of the blessing with his instant sensual gratification message. If the serpent and his co-conspirators can convince a human being he/she needs to try to be like someone else [i.e. the 'cool' people, the 'hot' people, the 'popular' people, or the 'rock stars'] you see, **THEY CAN – AT LEAST FOR AWHILE - KEEP THAT HUMAN BEING FROM BECOMING THE AMAZING, UNIQUE SON OR DAUGHTER OF GOD THAT THE HOLY ONE CREATED THE PERSON AND PUT HIM OR HER ON EARTH TO BECOME!**

The strategy of the sensual gratification message is to conceal our *Divinely ordained Purpose* from us and to thwart our *Divinely Ordained Mission*. The first purpose of the blessing of the Holy One, therefore, is to empower us to fulfill our *Divinely ordained Purpose* and succeed in our *Divinely ordained Mission*.

The goal of the propaganda machine that spits out the sensual gratification message is first to cause us to veer off the pathway that leads to our Divine Destiny - and then to obstruct our way back to that pathway as much as possible with debris, illusion, misinformation, camouflage, and I.E.D.'s. The second purpose of the blessing is therefore to point us in the direction of and guide us toward our *Divine Destiny*.

The blessing of the Holy One is always holding out a life-preserver of hope for anyone and everyone who awakens to reality enough to realize he or she has been serpent-bit.

The Blessing is YOU-SPECIFIC in operation; hence it is IDENTITY-RESTORING. The blessing is creative and full of wisdom and revelation; hence it is PURPOSE-DEFINING and MISSION-EMPOWERING. The Blessing is FUTURE-FOCUSED; hence it is DESTINY-UNLEASHING.

Consider our ancestor Ya'akov and his twin brother Esav. The youngest of the twins born to Yitzchak and Rivkah, from youth Ya'akov would stop at nothing - including deception - to receive the blessing. Esav on the other hand ... well, Esav would stop at nothing to get instant sensual gratification. First we saw Ya'akov hungering for his father Yitzchak's blessing; he easily negotiated the purchase of this blessing from Esav by exploiting Esav's insatiable, unbridled appetite for sensual gratification. A bowl of lentil soup, and the deal was struck.

When, on the way back home with much wealth after two decades in Lavan's house, a much older Ya'akov again chose blessing over material things. He wrestled with the Angel of the Holy One all night, and suffered the potential loss of all material things as well as his own life and health, saying "*I will not let you go unless/until you bless me!*" **Genesis 32:26.**

All his life Ya'akov hungered for this mysterious thing called 'blessing' the way most people today, in Esav-like frenzy, lust for fleeting and unsustainable things like acceptance, affirmation, romance, rush, wealth, power, a sense of safety and security, and any number of recipes of tasty red porridge which the material world promises but never quite seems to deliver. If Ya'akov earnestly coveted blessing from his earthly father, should we not with even more fervor and ardor seek the blessing of our Divine Bridegroom - the Source and Author of all blessings?

The All-Wise, All-Good, All-Creative Genius Behind the Blessing

The Holy One is not a lawgiver – He is a *Creator*. He is not looking for someone to *judge and condemn* – He is looking for someone upon whom to *lavish His amazing love*. He is not looking for someone to *steal the joy of life from* – He is looking for someone upon whom to *heap precious gifts*. The Holy One is not looking for someone to *rob of identity and unique creativity* – He is looking for someone who will let Him *bring their true identity and their unique creativity into focus and full operation*. It is the Holy One's earnest desire at all times to *bless* each person with whom He is in covenant – and to inspire such persons to then turn around release showers of blessings into Creation. He absolutely delights in

blessing ordinary men and women with all goodness from His Heavenly storehouses.

As mentioned above the Holy One has therefore been *speaking blessings over mankind since He created our species*. **Genesis 1:28**. Whatever the circumstances of your family or your health at the time of your conception and natural birth, and whatever you made of the opportunity, the truth is that you were ***born blessed***, were born ***to be blessed***, and were ***born to be to others a fountain of rich, pure blessing*** designed to fill the earth with that which brings life, health, meaning, purpose, and peace, and bringing all things under the Dominion of the Kingdom of Heaven. The release of fountains of Divine Blessing into the Created realm was the essence of the call of Avram. For in Genesis 12:2 -3 the Holy One proclaimed to him:

***I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.***

The Release of Blessing as Part of the Kohen's Function

Do you remember our study of parsha *Sh'mini*? In connection with the eight-day inauguration ceremony held for the *Mish'kan*, *Sh'mini* recorded the following:

Aharon raised his hands toward the people, and he blessed them
[Leviticus 9:22]

Immediately after this first 'Aharonic Blessing' Torah tells us:

***Then the glory of the Holy One appeared to all the people,
and fire came out from before the Holy One
and consumed the korban olah and the fat on the altar.
When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.***
[Leviticus 9:23-24]

With what specific words did Aharon bless the people? What words from the mouth of Aharon 'released' the glory – and the fire - of the Holy One upon the occasion? We were not told the answer to these questions in parsha *Sh'mini* – or anywhere in the book of Leviticus. But we WILL be told in today's aliyah of parsha *Naso*. In fact, today's short Torah aliyah will have only one subject: *the words with which Aharon was instructed to "bless" B'nei Yisrael*. This blessing is a major part of what it means to 'lift up the head' of the members of the Redeemed Community – which, as we have been discussing all week, is the focus and theme of parsha *Naso*.

Introducing Birkat Ha-Kohanim [i.e. The "Priestly Blessing"]

Most of us who have the delight of regularly participating in a traditional *Erev Shabbat* [Friday night] home ceremony know by heart the blessing we read in

today's aliyah. Those of us the Holy One whom has honored with the unbelievable privilege of becoming fathers gather our families around us every *Erev Shabbat* and, after we have welcomed the Shabbat together by lifting the cup of blessing to the Holy One and by breaking and sharing the double portion of bread we conclude the blessings we speak over our families with *these very words*².

Y'varecheicha Adonai v'yish'mereicha

May the Holy One bless you and zealously cherish and keep watch over you

Ya'er Adonai panav eleicha v'chuneika

May the Holy One's Face shine upon you and shower you with empowering favor

Yisa Adonai panav eleicha

May the Holy One lift up His countenance upon you

v'yasem lecha shalom³

*and may He give you wholeness, wellness,
security, abundant provision, and peace*

[Numbers 6:24-26]

The pronunciation of this blessing over our wives and children is a wonderful thing. Even over absent children – children at college or in the military, or perhaps grown with households of their own - even over the most stubborn of prodigals - this blessing is spoken every Friday night, and it resounds through the distance and rests upon those children - wherever they are, whatever they are doing, and whether they know it or not. Such is the power of the blessing that is the very Word of the Holy One, the Master of the World.

What's the Big Deal About a Blessing?

What's the big deal? Why is a blessing so important, you may ask? Why did *Ya'akov* [Jacob] go to such trouble to get the "blessing" *Yitzchak* [Isaac] had intended for *Esav* [Esau]? Isn't a blessing *just words*? In English thought perhaps. In Greek philosophy certainly. In any other language most likely. But in Biblical Hebrew, in *these words* – oh, no! These *words* contain the very creative and prophetic power of the Holy One Himself! The word our English Bibles translate as "bless" is *barak*⁴. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in the creation story,

² The blessing is also recited in the standard prayer service used in most synagogues, after the chanting of the *Amidah/Shemoneh Esrei*. Also, by tradition, each *Sukkot* descendants of the *kohanim* gather at the *Kotel* [Western Wall] in Jerusalem and pronounce the blessing over the worshippers.

³ It is recorded that in the time of the Second Temple, when the *kohanim* would bless the people, they would raise their hands over their heads and make a space between the third and fourth fingers of hands, such that their fingers formed the Hebrew letter *shin*. When the *kohanim* recited the blessing, actually pronouncing the four-letter Name of the Holy One, it was said that the *Shekinah* of the Holy One would rest on their hands.

⁴ *Barak* is *beit, resh, chet*. Strong's Hebrew word #1288, it is pronounced *baw-rawk'*.

after the Holy One caused fish and other sea creatures as well as birds and other winged creatures to come into existence. According to Genesis 1:22 at that point:

*The Holy One blessed [barak] them, saying,
Be fruitful; and multiply; and fill the waters in the seas,
and let fowl multiply in the earth.*

Later in the creation story we find two more usages of this verb. In Genesis 1:28 the Holy One opened communion with the species of man with a *b'racha* over the man and woman He had created from the dust of the earth and placed in the garden. The full quotation is as follows: *And Elohim blessed [barak] them, and Elohim said unto them, Be fruitful; and multiply; and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.* Then in the final episode of the Creation saga the Holy One employed this Hebrew verb once more, this time in connection with an interval in time – the Seventh Day. For Torah tells us: *And Elohim blessed [barak] the seventh day, and made it holy: for on it He rested from all His work of creating.* Genesis 2:3.

To understand the Hebraic concept underlying the verb *barak*, and not be limited by preconceived notions or dictionary definitions, it behooves us to look at what these three situations in which the Holy One employed the verb *barak* have in common.

The Environment of the Blessing

In each case mentioned above we have a common situation – a very close interaction – indeed an *intimate conversation* – between the Holy One and an aspect of His creation. Yes, the Holy One created *time* as well as aquatic life, birds, angels, and man. The Holy One has not “stepped back”, as it were, and withdrawn His Presence from His Creation – He is *very close to it, hovering over it and jealously protecting it* as one would jealously protect his newborn child.

This provides a perfect picture of the proper environment in which the blessing is to be spoken. On *Erev Shabbat* fathers and mothers strive to *reproduce that very environment* in our homes, for the members of our household. We know that emotional walls and barriers that have come up in and between us over the week - through physical separation, busy-ness, inevitable ‘space-sharing’ conflicts, etc. We know those have to be broken down by love, acceptance, forgiveness, and mutual submission to the Holy One before this blessing can be spoken with full impact and meaning. We have to make an effort to put aside those walls and barriers, and to enter into – and lead our children into – the Divinely ordained and modeled *environment of blessing*.

The Essence of the Blessing

Before the Holy One “makes *b'racha*” over each of His creations they are inanimate - mere substance. In their nascent state they are mere form and tissue, with *no purpose or destiny*. As the Holy One “makes *b'racha*” over these creations, however, they are infused with something of the Holy One’s eternal essence – and thereby receive *purpose* and *destiny*. Once blessed by the Holy One, the things the Holy One created are no longer mere “substances” passively responding to stimulation. Once blessed, things the Holy One created – like aquatic and aviary life, man, and Shabbat in our discussion - are enabled and empowered to *take an active role in the Holy One’s eternal plan for Creation*.

Once blessed, they are *released into the fullness of their potential*. By the *b'racha* of the Holy One they receive the capacity to not only *reflect His glory* in their own unique and special way right now but to *fulfill His Divine Plan to make their lives meaningful, joyous, and eternal*.

This then is the picture that we should see whenever the Holy One uses the word “bless”. First, remember the *closeness* and *intimacy* between the One who blesses and the one who receives the blessing. The Hebrew people captured this aspect of blessing in the home *Erev Shabbat* ceremony. Husbands place their *tallit* [prayer shawl] around them and their wives, and speak enablings (the *Eishet Chayil* – i.e., Virtuous Woman - passage of Proverbs 31, for instance) over them, in the intimacy of the chuppah made by the *tallit*. Fathers gather their sons and daughters around them, and lay their hands lovingly upon them, and pronounce empowering prophetic words [ending with the ‘Aharonic blessing’ which we study today] over them. While a blessing [Hebrew, *b'racha*] can – indeed should - be pronounced over an absent spouse or child, it of course reaches its *fullest impact* when spoken *in intimacy*, face-to-face, eye to eye, heart to heart, spirit to spirit.

The Effect of the Blessing

Furthermore, note the *effect* of the blessing. Everyone who receives this blessing is *changed, energized, empowered, and enabled*. The Holy One tells us plainly in Numbers 6:27 that when the *Kohanim* pronounce this blessing, it will have a profound and spiritual effect:

V'samu et-shemi al-b'nei Yisra'el

You will thus place My name upon the descendants of Yisrael [Israel]

v'ani avarachem

and I will bless them.

What exactly does it mean to an individual, or a family, or a nation, to have the ‘name’ of the Holy One placed upon them? The Hebrew verb our English Bibles

translate as ‘place’ in the phrase ‘*place my name upon the children of Israel*’ is **samu**, a pronoun-suffixed form of the verb root *suwm*, *sin*, *vav*, *mem sofit*. To *suwm* means *to put something or someone in a pre-determined and prepared receptacle or strategic location*. The first Biblical usage of this verb root is found in Genesis 2:8, where we are told that The Holy One prepared a Garden [Eden], and *suwm* [strategically placed] Adam therein. Then, the Garden of the Holy One was the receptacle, and Adam was what was placed there. In Numbers 6:27 the receptacle is ‘B’nei Yisrael’, and what is *suwm* [strategically placed] in that receptacle is *the Name of the Holy One*.

Which Divine Name is *suwm*-ed upon the people in question? Is it *yod-hey-vav-hey*? Is it *Elohim*? Is it *El Shaddai*? Is it *El Elyon*? Is it ‘the Holy One⁵’? Torah does not specifically say. The answer is probably ‘all of the above’. And it probably also includes all elements of the ‘Name’ pronounced by the Holy One Himself upon Moshe, when Moshe was hidden in the cleft of the rock on *Har Sineh* and Torah tells us:

*Then the Holy One descended in the cloud and stood with him there,
and proclaimed the name of the Holy One.
And the Holy One passed before him and proclaimed,
"The Holy One, the Holy One is God, merciful and gracious,
longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,
keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,
by no means clearing the guilty,
visiting/taking inventory of the lingering effects of the iniquity of the fathers
upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."*
[Exodus 34:5-7 (author’s translation)]

By virtue of the pronunciation of the blessing, which references the Name *yod-hey-vav-hey* times, that Name actually *enters the soul and spirit of the blessed person or persons, resides there, and transforms its surroundings* – the way Adam was intended, instructed, and empowered to transform the Garden. The Name of the Holy One becomes, it seems, part of the *spiritual DNA* of B’nei Yisrael.

What’s In A ‘Name’?

Hebraically, a name is much more than a title or convenient moniker by which one is identified or called. A name, to a Hebrew, contains/expresses the dominant characteristics and essence of the person or thing. By placing the Holy One’s Name upon the recipient/prepared receptacle, the blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 *imparts into the one who is blessed a part of the dominant characteristics and essence of the One who blesses*. The blessing thereby releases the one who is blessed from restrictions – and enables, empowers, and energizes the one blessed

⁵ See, e.g.: II Kings 19:22; Job 6:10; Psalm 78:41, Psalm 89:18; Proverbs 9:10 and 30:3; Isaiah 1:4, 5:19, 10:20, 12:6, 30:15 and 43:3 and 14, 54:5, 55:5, and 60:9 and 14; Habakkuk 3:3; and I John 2:20.

to actively participate in life, in intimate relationship with the One who blesses, and according to a beneficial plan, rather than to passively endure life alone, or wander aimlessly and purposeless.

In today's aliyah the Holy One thus provides for His people – of all generations – *to receive the same enablement, empowerment, energizing, and changing as He pronounced over man and woman at Creation (before the Fall)*. Because of what happened on Mt. Sinai, when the Holy One's betrothed, in immaturity and fear, asked for an intermediary [Exodus 20:18-22], the Holy One instructs the blessing to be imparted through an intermediary – Aharon and/or his descendants. The blessing is therefore commonly referred to as the "Aharonic blessing", or the "priestly blessing". But it is not Aharon who blesses the people. He is merely the intermediary – the conduit as it were. He is only speaking the exact words the Creator of the Universe put in his mouth. The blessing is the Holy One's, and His alone. What is received through the communication of the blessing is not received from Aharon, but from the Father of the Heavens Himself. It is therefore not *Aharon's* essence that is imparted through the blessing – it is *the Holy One's* essence, along with the Holy One's energy, the Holy One's enablement, and the Holy One's empowering.

The Priceless Treasure, and Timeless Gift

The blessing set forth in today's aliyah is thus a priceless treasure for all of the Holy One's People. With these exact words the Holy One directs Aharon and his sons to 'bless' the people He is calling forth to serve as His Kingdom's Royal Ambassadors to the nations and peoples of the earth. He wants our focus to be constantly refocused upon six primary things/tasks: [1] walking in His *Empowerment*; [2] enjoying and trusting in His *Protection*; [3] accurately reflecting the expressions and emotions of *His Face*, [4] dispensing His *Grace/Graciousness*, [5] Spreading *His Radiant Beauty* throughout the world; and [6] and modeling to the world the *Wholeness and Serenity* in which man was designed - and is through Covenant called and empowered - to walk.

The blessing He wants Aharon and his sons to speak over us is a timeless gift to His Creation. Into it the Holy One designed and wove six separate Hebrew verbs, making up *six separate elements of blessedness*. These six things should characterize the lives of those who are in covenant with the Holy One. These six things are the '*new creation genome*' of the Holy One's redeemed. These six things are all the Holy One's people need to make their lives purposeful, and to achieve their Divine destiny.

What it Means for the Holy One to ‘Bless’ Us

The first Hebrew verb is the one our English Bibles translate as bless. The Hebrew verb is *barak*. This verb is discussed in earlier portions of this aliyah. It means to *release from restrictions and limitations*. To *barak* someone or something means to *infuse the object of blessing with unlimited potential and empowerment*.

May the Holy One *barak* you, Dear Reader! And may you eat, drink, sleep, live, and thrive in *His Empowerment*!

What it Means for the Holy One to ‘Keep’ Us

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as keep is *sh'mar*⁶. This verb root means to *cherish, highly value and prioritize, diligently defend, guard, keep vigilant watch over/concerning, defend, protect, preserve whole and intact, and to maintain inviolate of corruption, distortion, or dilution*.

And the Holy One God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep [i.e. sh'mar] it.
[Genesis 2:15]

This first usage is Genesis 2:15 describes what the Holy One wanted Adam to do with the garden after he began to ‘dress’⁷ it – namely, after it was ‘dressed’, to *cherish it, to treasure it, to nurture it, to carefully guard and keep watch over it, to stay with it, and dwell in it, and make its Divine Destiny his highest priority*.

May the Holy One do this with you, Dear Reader! May you be His treasure. May He cherish you, and nurture you, and carefully guard and keep watch over you. May He stay with you, and dwell in you, and make your Divine Destiny His highest priority. And may you always expect, enjoy, and trust confidently in His watchful eye and His Fierce Protection.

What it Means for the Holy One to ‘Make His Face Shine’ Upon Us

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as shine is *ohr*⁸. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 1:15, where it describes what the heavenly bodies [stars, planets, moons, etc.] were designed to do to illuminate our world. They are designed to *ohr* it. They are designed to either *generate* light [stars] or *reflect* it [planets, moons], and in either case to transmit it usward. And not only does the *ohr*-ing of these heavenly bodies *illumine things around us*, it actually *changes us*. Our bodies, you see, have both *a physiological as well as a spiritual reaction to Light*.

⁶ Sh'mar is *shin, mem, resh*, Strong's Hebrew word #8104, it is pronounced *shaw-mar'*.

⁷ The Hebrew verb so translated is *abad*, which is a fascinating word to study in its own right, but beyond the scope of this particular commentary.

⁸ Ohr is *alef, vav, resh*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #215.

Ohr is energy. Energy acts upon matter. The *ohr* of the Holy One's *countenance* [i.e. *Panew* – Face - implying a reflection of innermost being and essence] *acts upon* you – impacting not only your body, but your mind, your soul, and your spirit.

The *ohr* of the Bridegroom's Face is *warming energy*. The *ohr* of His Countenance is *healing energy*. The *ohr* of His Face is *soothing energy*. The *ohr* of His Face is *restorative energy*. The *ohr* of His Face is *constantly renewing energy*. The *ohr* of His Face is *empowering energy*. Hence Shaul of Tarsus could say to the followers of the Messiah in the city of Corinth:

... we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Holy One, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Ruach of the Holy One.

[II Corinthians 3:18]

Have you ever watched a houseplant grow *toward* its source of light? It is as if every fiber of the plant's being is stretching out, reaching out for, and basking in, the light. May that be the way you are with the *ohr* of the Holy One's Face, Beloved!

Bask in His glow. Shine like the sun, moon and stars⁹. And wherever you go, may you accurately reflect all the expressions and emotions of His Beautiful Face.

What it Means for The Holy One to 'Be Gracious' To Us

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as **be gracious to** is *chanan*¹⁰. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 33:5, to describe the gift of a wife and of children to a man. The Holy One *chanan*'s us wives and children *as a grace-gift!* Why? Because the Holy One recognized that '*it is not good for man to be alone*'. *Chanan* basically means *to give a person what he or she really needs*. It is a Hebraic *covenant* word, and is thus unlike the English words 'mercy' or 'grace', which are necessarily humanistic and soulish in approach, perspective, duration, and quantity. A *chanan* release is not something the Holy One does out of pity or benevolence, or because He is 'feeling generous' one day. Nor is it something He is moved to release by our prayers or fasting. *Chanan* is simply what the stronger covenant partner in a covenant commits himself or herself to give to strengthen the weaker covenant partner, and enable the weaker covenant partner to reach his or her potential, and fulfill his covenant undertakings and enjoy his covenant benefits.

⁹ I say this on the authority of Daniel 12:3, which declares that "*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.*" I also say this on the authority of Shaul of Tarsus, who exhorted the followers of Messiah in Philippi to "*... become blameless and harmless, children of the Holy One without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. . . .*" **Philippians 3:15-16.**

¹⁰ Chanan is *chet, nun, nun sofit*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #2603.

Chanan is simply whatever it takes for people called into Covenant to overcome and transcend their life-challenges.

May the Holy One give you whatever it takes to bring you to the point of full covenant participation and enjoyment, and to the fulfillment of your destiny. And in all you say and do, may you be a *dispenser* of His Grace/graciousness as well as a *recipient* of it!

What it Means for The Holy One to ‘Lift Up His Countenance’ Upon Us

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as **lift up** is *nasa*¹¹ [the root verb of the name of our *parsha ha-shavua, Naso*]. As we have discussed previously, the first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 4:13. *Nasa* means *to transcend the flames* and *to experience spiritual reality as it is*.

May the Holy One cause you to experience – and fill your lives with – spiritual reality as it is [on earth as it is in Heaven]. And may you spread the Radiant Beauty of his lifted countenance throughout the world!

What it Means for the Holy One to ‘Give Us Peace’

The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as **give** is *suwm*, Strong’s Hebrew word # 7760. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 2:8, to describe what the Holy One did with the garden of Eden – He *suwm*-d Adam into it! We would normally say ‘place’ or ‘set’ or ‘establish’.

What does the blessing say the Holy One *suwm*’s? Into what are we to be places, set, or established? In English we say peace. The Hebrew word, however, is *shalom*, and it is so much more than ‘peace’. *Shalom* is wholeness, wellness, completion, purposeful living, joy, abundant provision, harmony, safety, security, and covenant enjoyment – and the ripple effects of harmony and fruitfulness those things engender! May you not only experience for yourself the wholeness and serenity in which man was designed and is through Covenant called and empowered to walk – may you model all these things to the world!

A Mansion with Many Rooms . . . and Much Treasure

Imagine that you receive a call from a lawyer and find out you have just inherited a *six-bedroom mansion*. Imagine that the lawyer tells you that the Will under which are inheriting this mansion states that a separate treasure is hidden in each of the six bedrooms. I dare say, you will not just drive by the street address and say “that’s a neat house”. I think most people would want to go through each story of the house, bedroom-by-bedroom, carefully, searching with great intensity for the hidden treasure.

¹¹ *Nasa* is Strong’s Hebrew word #5375.

Let your study of the six “treasure rooms” of the Holy One’s Blessing over His people be as thorough! Give careful thought to each of the six elements of blessing (one corresponding to each Hebrew verb-phrase). And this Shabbat, when the head of the house pronounces this Blessing, savor the treasure you have found in each room of your inheritance. As our Rabbi said: *In My Father’s House are many rooms*

Questions for Today’s Study

1. In order to get started on today’s study:

[A] List the six separate verbs/verb phrases included in the blessing.

[B] In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up each one-word verb included in the blessing. [Hint: you will have to use the King James Version to be able to use Strong’s]. Write the KJV words, the Hebrew words, and, in your own words, write Hebraic concept-definitions for each verb.

[C] In connection with the verb phrase “*The Holy One Bless you*” read Genesis 28:3-5 [Yitzchak blessing Ya’akov], Psalm 128, Psalm 1:1-3, and Deuteronomy 28:2-13. Write what you think this verb-phrase means.

[D] In connection with the verb-phrase “[*the Holy One*] *keep you*” read Psalm 17:8-14 and I Sam. 2:9. Write what you think this verb-phrase means.

[E] In connection with “*make His face shine upon you*” read Psalms 31:16, 44:3, 80:1-3, 7, 19; 119:135, and Job 29:21-25. Write what you think this verb-phrase means.

[F] In connection with “*be gracious unto you*” read Genesis 43:29 [Yosef’s blessing of Benyamin], Psalm 119:29, Psalm 25:16-18, and Colossians 3:12-14. Write what you think this verb-phrase means.

[G] In connection with “*lift up¹² His countenance upon you*”, what do you think this verb-phrase means?

[H] In connection with “*give you peace*”, read John 14:27, Philippians 4:6-7, II Thessalonians 3:16, and Colossians 3:15.

2. What do you think verse 27 means? [Hint: look up the word translated “name” in Strong’s and in the Jewish Encyclopedia of Symbols. Also read Exodus 34:5-8 before answering. Keep in mind that a number of sages have, for centuries, taught that the Holy One’s “name” [Hebrew, *shem*] is His Torah, because *shem* means not only “name”, but also “essence”, “characteristics” and “attributes”, and the Torah is the fullest expression we have of the essence, characteristics and attributes of the Holy One.]

⁴ The Hebrew verb our English Bibles translate as **lift up** is *nasa* [the root verb of the name of our parsha], Strong’s Hebrew word #5375. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 4:13, to describe what Kayin felt he must do to his sin [of murdering his brother Hevel].

3. In today's Haftarah Shimshon's earthly father continues the interaction with the Angel of the Holy One about which we have been reading.

M'noach said to the angel of the Holy One, "I pray you, let us detain you, that we may make ready a kid for you."

*The angel of the Holy One said to M'noach,
"Though you detain me, I won't eat of your bread;
and if you will make ready a korban olah, you must submit it to the Holy One."
For M'noach didn't know that he was the angel of the Holy One.*

*M'noach said to the angel of the Holy One, "What is your name,
that when your words happen, we may honor you?"*

*The angel of the Holy One said to him, "Why do you ask after my name,
seeing it is wonderful?" So M'noach took the kid with the korban minchah [meal-offering],
and made approach to the Holy One with it on the rock:
and [the angel] did wondrously, and M'noach and his wife looked on.
For it happened, when the flame went up toward the sky from off the altar,
that the angel of the Holy One ascended in the flame of the altar:
and M'noach and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground.*

*But the angel of the Holy One did no more appear to M'noach or to his wife.
Then M'noach knew that he was the angel of the Holy One.*

M'noach said to his wife, "We will surely die, because we have seen God."

*But his wife said to him, "If the Holy One were pleased to kill us,
he wouldn't have received a korbanot olah and minchah at our hand, neither would he have
shown us all these things, nor would at this time have told such things as these."*

[A] What did the "man" say when M'noach wanted to feed him?

[B] What did the "man" say when M'noach asked him his name? What do you think he meant?

[C] What miraculous thing convinced M'noach he was not dealing with an ordinary man?

[D] In Hebrew, the response the "man" gave when M'noach asked him his name was *Pil'iy*, meaning "Wonderful". The same Hebrew word (translated in the same way) is found as someone's name in Isaiah 9:6. Whose name is this?

4. We have only one verse to read in the Brit Chadasha [renewed covenant] today - Acts 21:25. In this verse the Messianic leaders in Jerusalem tell Shaul of Tarsus [Paul] that he should instruct *Goyim* [non-Jews] who accept Yeshua to abstain from four specific things:

*[C]oncerning the Goyim who believe, we have written our decision
that they need not learn and practice all of Torah before being admitted to fellowship,
but these things they must immediately begin to keep themselves from:
food offered to idols, blood,
strangled things, and sexual voyeurism.*

[Rabbi's son paraphrase]

[A] What are the four things from which goyim who accept Yeshua as Messiah are to immediately begin to abstain?

[B] Are any of these four things a part of Torah? If so, cite the book, chapter and verse where each is found in Torah.

[C] Read Acts 15:19-21, 28-29. Why do you think this was the decision of the Messianic leaders?

*May the Holy One bless you, Beloved! May you be released from restrictions,
And everything that hinders you from intimacy with the Holy One
And from fulfilling your Divinely-created destiny and purpose,
And may you be empowered, enabled, and energized to walk out His Torah,
And thereby take His Name wherever you go.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 67:1-7

*May the Holy One be merciful to us, bless us,
And cause his Face to shine on us. Selah.
That Your way may be known on eretz,
and Your yeshu`ah among all nations,
Let the peoples praise you, O Holy One.
Let all the peoples praise you.
Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
For you will judge the peoples with equity,
and govern the nations on eretz. Selah.
Let the peoples praise you, O Holy One.
Let all the peoples praise you.
The eretz has yielded its increase.
The Holy One, even our own God, will bless us.
The Holy One will bless us. All the ends of the eretz shall revere Him.*