

## Jewish Mindset – Birkat Kohanim

### Introduction: Birkat Kohanim

Today's I want to share something with you that you hear every week at the end of service known as the Birkat Kohanim or better known as the Aaronic Benediction.

Torah Blessing:

**Num 6:22** Adonai said to Moshe,

**Num 6:23** "Speak to Aharon and his sons, and tell them that this is how you are to bless the people of Isra'el: you are to say to them,

**Num 6:24** 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha. *[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]*

**Num 6:25** Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka. *[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favor.]*

**Num 6:26** Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom. *[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]'*

**Num 6:27** "In this way they are to put my name on the people of Isra'el, so that I will bless them."

example - Torah Blessing: We recite prior to Torah study and after Torah study concludes. When we begin having Torah services, we will do the same.

So just what is a blessing?

By definition:

- To consecrate or sanctify, meaning to set apart
- To request or bestow divine favor from Adonai
- To bestow good upon someone, some place or something
- To extol as holy
- To protect or guard from evil

We just read the blessing that is recited before and after the reading of Torah.

Using the definitions, we have been blessed or set apart by Adonai who has given us Torah. As such, He has also bestowed good upon us, that being His Torah.

We are stating that Adonai is extolled as holy because He is King of the Universe and as such all things are created from Him and come from Him.

In receiving Torah, it is implied that we are to follow Adonai's instruction joyfully because it is a blessing that comes from Him and Him alone.

**Exo 19:7** Moshe came, summoned the leaders of the people and presented them with all these words which Adonai had ordered him to say.

**Exo 19:8** All the people answered as one, "Everything Adonai has said, we will do." Moshe reported the words of the people to Adonai.

## **The power to bless!**

In the beginning, the only one with the authority and power to bless was Adonai...

- He blessed Adam and Chavah – be fruitful and multiply
- He blessed Noach and his sons when they left the ark
- He blessed Avraham for whom received the power to bestow blessing upon others

**Gen 12:2** I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing.

**Gen 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Going back to our definition, in each of these instances, good is being bestowed upon people

Even though Avraham was given this power, He didn't directly bless Yitz'chak since he didn't want to also bless Ishmael. Adonai stepped in and blessed Yitz'chak

**Gen 25:11** After Avraham died, God blessed Yitz'chak his son, and Yitz'chak lived near Be'er-Lachai-Ro'i.

The power to bless was transferred to Yitz'chak who would go on to bless Ya'akov (Genesis 27:30)

Ya'akov would go on to bless his 12 sons before he died (Genesis 48 & 49)

In essence, this privilege to bless was a special family gift given by Adonai.

When the children of Israel grew so large that they would become their own nation Adonai appointed His own representative who would be instilled with the power to bless the people – Aaron, his sons and their decedents.

**Num 6:22** Adonai said to Moshe,

**Num 6:23** "Speak to Aharon and his sons, and tell them that this is how you are to bless the people of Isra'el: you are to say to them,

No other people, whether it be the head of the family or first born would have this authority and power...only the priests as Adonai's appointed representative would be able to bestow blessing upon the people.

This blessing that I recite to you is one that is to be received by hearing and ultimately embracing it.

It is not the priest nor I (or the Pastor / Teacher or Leader) who are blessing you or securing a blessing for you, but are invoking a blessing that comes only from Adonai. It is He that bestows...

**Exo 33:17** Adonai said to Moshe, "I will also do what you have asked me to do, because you

have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

**Exo 33:18** But Moshe said, "I beg you to show me your glory!"

**Exo 33:19** He replied, "I will cause all my goodness to pass before you, and in your presence I will pronounce the name of Adonai. Moreover, I show favor to whomever I will, and I display mercy to whomever I will.

When, where and how Adonai will bless is solely His decision – consider the last part of v. 19

When and how often this blessing were to be given are not stated in Torah.

Based on tradition, the Priests would:

- Bless the people in connection with the daily sacrifice during the Second Temple period
- Bless the people during the feasts

A few insights regarding the structure of its composition:

When looking at the carefully constructed structure of this blessing, it is a poem that consists of three lines:

- First line – 3 words; Second line - 5 words; Third line – 7 words – building a crescendo (a gradual loudness)
- The Divine Name for which is represented by Adonai is the second word of each line
- First clause and last clause are representative of the last line of Psalm 29

**Psa 29:11** May Adonai give strength to his people! May Adonai bless his people with shalom!

**Num 6:24** 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha. [*May Adonai bless you and keep you.*]

### **Bless You:**

- Understood by the sages as a material blessing
- If it were only spiritual, there would be no need for "keeping / guarding
- May Adonai provide for your needs – Matthew 6:31 - 34

**Mat 6:31** "So don't be anxious, asking, 'What will we eat?,' 'What will we drink?' or 'How will we be clothed?'

**Mat 6:32** For it is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.

**Mat 6:33** But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

**Mat 6:34** Don't worry about tomorrow — tomorrow will worry about itself! Today has enough tsuris already!

## **Keep You:**

- To protect you / guard you and the material blessings you have received

As Adonai provides material blessings He also guards them from those who may rob.

Other thoughts:

- Guarding of one's soul in relation to the material blessing received:
  - guard against material blessings becoming stumbling blocks and idols in our lives (Exodus 20:17)
  - Sha'ul expands upon this – Romans 7:7 – 12
  - guarding our hearts in terms of what we have received and how we choose to use it.

Also: Blessed with the understanding that material wealth is fleeting while spiritual wealth is eternal.

Messiah tells us to pursue treasure that comes from the Kingdom of Heaven,

**Mat 6:19** "Do not store up for yourselves wealth here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and burglars break in and steal.

**Mat 6:20** Instead, store up for yourselves wealth in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and burglars do not break in or steal.

**Mat 6:21** For where your wealth is, there your heart will be also.

**Num 6:25** Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka. [*May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favor.*]

## **His face to shine on you:**

In ancient near east culture, a king granted favor to his subjects by allowing them an audience with them. To have an audience with the king was understood as "to see light on his face" whereas to "hide his face" (no light on his face) was to deny access. In applying this to Adonai:

- His desire is to have a relationship / communion with His children
- He walked with Adam and Chavah and communed with them directly.
- He enlightens us with His presence, which we have in the Tenach, so that we come to know and understand Him and ultimately what His will is for us.

**Psa 36:7** How precious, God, is your grace! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings,

**Psa 36:8** they feast on the rich bounty of your house, and you have them drink from the stream of your delights.

**Psa 36:9** For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Likewise, the light that is Adonai is found in Yeshua, after His encounter with the woman

brought to Him, caught in adultery, He made the following statement:

**Joh 8:12** Yeshua spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life."

### **Show you His favor:**

To receive an audience with the King of the Universe, even though we have no merit to request such an audience can be nothing but favor, grace and mercy conveyed

We recited that earlier during the Avenu Malkenu prayer.

To come into His presence is solely because He has invited us.

**Num 6:26** Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom. [*May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.*]

### **Lift up His face toward you:**

- An idiom meaning to smile (face drop = frown or show sorrow)
- When one smiles towards you, they are pleased with you.
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### **Give you peace:**

- An idiom meaning to give friendship
- In doing all this, you would be considered a friend of Adonai, just as Avraham and Moshe.

Adonai doesn't limit His relationships to a select few, but to all who receive. This blessing is for all the people of Israel to be received.

In order for this blessing to be received...there are conditions:

**Lev 26:3** " 'If you live by my regulations, observe my mitzvot and obey them;

**Lev 26:4** then I will provide the rain you need in its season, the land will yield its produce, and the trees in the field will yield their fruit.

**Lev 26:5** Your threshing time will extend until the grape harvest, and your grape harvesting will extend until the time for sowing seed. You will eat as much food as you want and live securely in your land.

**Lev 26:6** " 'I will give shalom in the land — you will lie down to sleep unafraid of anyone. I will rid the land of wild animals. The sword will not go through your land.

In order to receive this blessing which is part of the covenant made with Israel, you must be in relationship, because this blessing is upon the people of Israel

**Num 6:27** "In this way they are to put my name on the people of Isra'el, so that I will bless them."

What does it mean to put one's name on something?

- Establish ownership (a deed)
- Establish identity
  - A birth certificate is the first thing that legally establishes your identity
  - Other forms of identification confirm identity

The children of Israel belong to Adonai for His Name is placed on them...establishing ownership

The children of Israel are identified as Adonai's people

**Deu 7:6** For you are a people set apart as holy for Adonai your God. Adonai your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his own unique treasure.

**Deu 7:7** Adonai didn't set his heart on you or choose you because you numbered more than any other people - on the contrary, you were the fewest of all peoples.

**Deu 7:8** Rather, it was because Adonai loved you, and because he wanted to keep the oath which he had sworn to your ancestors, that Adonai brought you out with a strong hand and redeemed you from a life of slavery under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

**Deu 7:9** From this you can know that Adonai your God is indeed God, the faithful God, who keeps his covenant and extends grace to those who love him and observe his mitzvot, to a thousand generations.

- Establish authority

**Mat 9:6** But look! I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He then said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your mattress, and go home!"

**Mat 9:7** And the man got up and went home.

**Mat 9:8** When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck and said a b'rakhah to God the Giver of such authority to human beings.

Just as Yitz'chak transferred the authority to Ya'akov his son, so to Adonai instilled His authority to Yeshua.

**Mat 28:18** Yeshua came and talked with them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

**Mat 28:19** Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh,

**Mat 28:20** and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always, yes, even until the end of the age."

To claim you have a relationship with Yeshua and not one with the Jewish people does not

make sense.

You have accepted and embraced the New covenant Adonai made with them.  
You have received the promises of that New covenant through Messiah, who is one of them.  
Yet you have no relationship with the people of the covenant.

Just because many have yet to accept or embrace this promise, doesn't mean we are not to embrace them.

I am going to close with a statement from Rabbi Avie Gold's book Birkat Kohanim:

“ May HaShem bless you...” When God blesses man, it is a bestowal of health, success, and prosperity, both material, and spiritual. When man blesses God, his blessing may be defined as thanksgiving, respect, praise, or prayer. And when man blesses his fellow, he expresses his wish that God bestow beneficence upon the blessed individual. Birkas Kohanim is an example of the third category.”

When man blesses God, it means that one bows his knee, and more importantly, his heart in submission. However, when God blesses man, as the Birkas Kohanim states, according to the ancient rabbis, it is a blessing of prosperity, material possessions, crops, provision, and most importantly, the blessing of God’s compassion expressed in forgiveness of sins and peace.