

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

NASO—Numbers 6:22-27

MA'AMIDO AL HaSHALOM—Leading Others to PEACE

...Key KOSHI...

*HOW is the third-leg of the Birkat Kohanim the ultimate fulfillment of blessing?
HOW does the 'blessing of peace' happen?*



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

<p>6:22] The Eternal One spoke to Moses: 23] Speak to Aaron and his sons: Thus shall you bless the people of Israel. Say to them: 24] The Eternal bless you and protect you! 25] The Eternal deal kindly and graciously with you! 26] The Eternal bestow [divine] favor upon you and grant you peace! 27] Thus they shall link My name with the people of Israel, and I will bless them.</p>	<p>וַיִּדְבֹר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר :²² דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר כֹּה²⁴ תְּבָרְכוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמֹר לָהֶם : ס בְּרַכְּכֶם יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ :²⁵ ס ס יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנְדֶּךָ :²⁶ ס ס יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לָךְ²⁷ שְׁלוֹם :</p>
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בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוֵּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
 Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. —R' Avi Fertig

V.22-23 *The Lord spoke to Moses: Speak to Aaron and his sons saying: So shall you bless the people of Israel*
ETZ HAYIM... These six verses contain perhaps the most familiar words in the Book of Numbers. In many traditional synagogues, descendants of the Kohanim pronounce these words as a blessing on the congregation. In their capacity as modern equivalents of kohanim, rabbis and cantors commonly invoke it for b'nai mitzvah, a bride and groom, or the closing benediction of services. Parents use it to bless their children at the Shabbat table.

Do human beings have the power to bless other human beings? R' Ishma'el teaches that the Priests do indeed bless the people. [BT Hullin, 49a] The TANCHUMA suggests that when the Priests aspire to bless the people, God endorses their efforts and joins in, making their blessing authentic. RASHBAM, however, interprets that when the Priests invoke God's blessing, God responds in bestowing the blessing.

V. 24-26 *The Lord bless you and keep you...*

The Lord deal kindly with you and be gracious unto you...

The Lord bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace.

BACHYA...The blessings flow from below to above, blessing the material realm, the realm of wisdom, then the spiritual realm of God's most perfect peace.

RAMBAN...The blessings flow from above to below, for the first part of each is on a heavenly plane "May the Lord bless, May the Lord illuminate, May the Lord lift..." In contrast to the latter part of each, focused on man.

GILLMAN...The blessing is the entryway to Divine dialogue. "How long, O Lord, will you ignore me? How long will you hide Your face from me?...Look at me; answer me!" To look at someone is to acknowledge that other person's presence, to acknowledge the relationship, as opposed to turning away.

V.26 *The Lord lift up His Face to/upon you and give you peace*

B'MIDBAR RABBAH... But does "The Lord lift up His Face"...in the sense of showing partiality? Surely it has been stated: "For the Lord-God is supreme, the God [asher lo yissa panim] who does not lift His Face..." So the Holy One explains: Just as they show Me partiality—lift their faces to Me, so will I lift My Face towards them. How so? As it is written in Torah: "When you eat and are satisfied, then you shall bless..." [Deut 8:10] Whereupon a Jew sits with his family to give thanks, to bless, even if the repast was inadequate—even if it was not satisfying. Still, they show Me partiality and turn their faces to Me and bless...[Berachot, 20b] So, too, "The Lord will lift up His Face..."

RASHI... "The Lord will lift up His Countenance upon you..." This is *Panim*, related to *Paniti*, in the expression "I will look with favor upon you." [Lev 26:9]...which is, in essence "I will turn to you." When God shows no favor the Hebrew idiom used is "asher lo yissa Panav—He will not lift up his face." [Deut 10:17] God lifts up His Face to the face of those He loves, as Lev. 26:9 goes on to say: "...I will look with favor upon you...and maintain My covenant with you."

MUNK... The final word of this blessing, *Shalom*, is also the final word in several key prayers. [The Tfilah, Birkat HaMazon, Kaddish]. Likewise, in the listing of sacrificial offerings [Lev 7:37] the *Shlamim*—the *Peace-Offering*, is cited last. So we see, peace is the ultimate and supreme goal, since the *Sh'lamim* is intended to restore relationship between God and His creation, between man and his fellow, between the individual and his conscience. Peace remains the great universal ideal, and achieving that ideal depends upon the will of humankind and the blessing of the Holy One.

NECHAMA... The third blessing, according to many commentators, culminates in the merging of the previous two...If our rabbis are right in asserting that each subsequent blessing transcends its precursor in the measure of its bounty, what does "Yissa—lift up" improve upon "Ya'er—shine on"? ...It is obvious that in our context the "lifting up of God's Countenance" implies His favour and compassion...HIRSCH regards the final blessing as the climax, since both worldly and spiritual possessions [blessings 1 & 2] are means to an end. The third blessing, "Yissa Adonai Panav Eylecha" is not a means to obtain some thing, but aim at the ultimate end. The whole of life with its bustle and tumult...even attaining material and spiritual wealth...are only instruments to God's Service.

PIRKEI AVOT... R' Shimon ben Halafta said: The Holy One found no vessel that could contain Israel's blessing except peace, as it is said: "In the Lord's wish to give enduring strength to Israel, the Lord blessed His people with peace." [Ps. 29:18] R' Levi taught: Peace is precious, for our blessings conclude with peace, and so too the Priests' blessing ends, "and grant you peace." This is to teach us that none of the blessings avail at all unless peace accompanies them...R' Joshua said: Great is peace, for the Holy One is called "Peace," as it is written, "So Gideon built an altar there and called it Adonai-Shalom, and to this day it stands..." [Judges 6:24]

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

ALAN MORINIS...

What can we learn about peace from Aaron, the *kohen gadol*, the high priest? ...It was his task to connect every segment of the people into a single and united whole. Division and enmity were inimical to national unity., so he had to work hard to minimize the forces of conflict and maximize the forces of harmony and peace.

Shalom shares its linguistic root with the word *Shalem*, which means whole...Peace is the outcome of having brought all the components of a situation to a condition of wholeness, and that is what Aaron did—forging a disparate and fractious people into a single unit....Real peace flows from wholeness, and only when we bring about a unification of the parts do we achieve true peace. From this perspective, peace is not its own goal but a byproduct of having done what is necessary to repair a situation...If we want real peace, we have to pursue it via the route of working for justice, truth and repair....Our teaching talks of “leading others to peace.”...The lesson is that your own spiritual growth depends on you reaching out...Leading people in the direction of peace means encouraging them to acknowledge what is broken and helping them fix that broken piece...We have a role to play in helping others make their relationships—whether in the family or the community, the workplace or nation—whole, so that peace emerges from the unification of the parts.

This is not an easy task...Wholeness can only come about when each party takes ownership of his or her own contribution to the problem and does something about it. In leading others to peace, we begin by encouraging our friends not just to avoid blaming each other, but also to find the humility to examine whether something in their attitude or behavior might merit attention in order that the broken might be made whole...Being humble opens the door to peace...

Action that is *l'shem shmayim*—in the name of heaven, has no ulterior motive or ego involved...Arguments that are not ‘in the name of heaven’ may end in victory for one side and a cessation of hostilities, but will not likely give rise to true wholeness and lasting peace.

Psalm 34:15 tells us to “Seek peace and pursue it.” Peace can be elusive and must actively be chased to be realized. This method of transformation calls on us to take the initiative to help others make the effort. [[With heart in Mind](#), pgs. 215-218]

The S’FAT EMET... [R’ Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger, aka The Gerer Rebbe]

“*May the Lord lift His face up to you.*”

The Midrash quotes a seemingly contradictory verse, “*For He will not lift His face to you...*” [Deut 10:17] and reconciles them by saying one applies when Israel does God’s will and the other when Israel does not. But...when one is doing God’s will, what need is there for God to “lift His face?” Does God need to show favor, since the blessing is earned by the deed? The point is that the Holy One of Blessing accepts our little bit of service as though it was great. That is what the Midrash means when it says “As they lift their faces towards Me, I will lift My face toward them.” Just as a person rejoices in any good deed, great or small, so does the Creator rejoice, accepting our offering with a smile...

And just this is the meaning of “*and give you peace.*” SHALOM—*Shleymut*—that is wholeness, the inner truth. Within even the smallest bit of light, All is there. That is why it is called Shalom, for God is the Wholeness of All. And when Israel recognizes it has this wholeness, even a tiny ray of light can illumine their lives.

SOD...Helping the soul-light shine...Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your I

Rabbi LARRY HOFFMAN...Note well how God's blessings cascade down upon us: not directly, but through each other. For the priests blessed the people only after the *Chazan* blessed them. And How was the *Chazan* empowered? By the people, of course, as Jewish law makes clear that the *Chazan* is the *Shaliach Tsibur*—"the agent of the congregation." The universe of created things thus constitutes its own ecosystem in which blessing circulates among us. Those who give will never run out. For the very act of blessing renews the spiritual resource of the giver. Thus, in the end, says the priestly benediction, we will find peace—shalom—derived from *shalem*, meaning *fullness*. For that is our lot: in blessing others to find ourselves replenished, to know the fullness that is life—the unlimited supply of blessing which is our sole Source of light...

Prof ARNIE EISEN... In the first of the benedictions, God guarantees the essential conditions for human fulfillment: life and the goods necessary for life. The second blessing reminds us that it is up to us to take the reflected light of God's glory that shines from our faces—the inner light that animates and ensouls us—and bestow it upon others. Faces receive light as bodies receive food. The source is divine, the agency human. All Israel can do this, not only priests; all human beings, not only Israel. If there were no holding back, no care for the well-being ultimately in God's care, we would attain the third blessing: God's "face [would be perpetually] raised to us." God would stand with Israel, be numbered with humanity, as the Israelites "raised their heads" to be counted in the census. The wording in the Hebrew is exactly the same in both cases: a symmetry of divine and human standing opposite one another, reflecting each other's activity and light.

This truly is peace, fulfillment, want of nothing—an unattainable ideal that is the very opposite of the desire and discontent that abound in the Book of Numbers. It is a degree of blessing which—exactly like the promised land—can be known to us, if we live right, but can never actually be possessed once and for all. There is no going back to paradise. But access to the Promised Land, hope of it, enables one to transcend the basest practices of the wilderness.

[[Taking Hold of Torah](#)]

...CONSIDER...

WHO in your life is most in need of "peace" ...?

HOW might your turning to face another be a Source of Light?

WHAT blessing can you share that might enable the gift of Shleymut/Shalom?