

The Wonders of the Priestly Blessing

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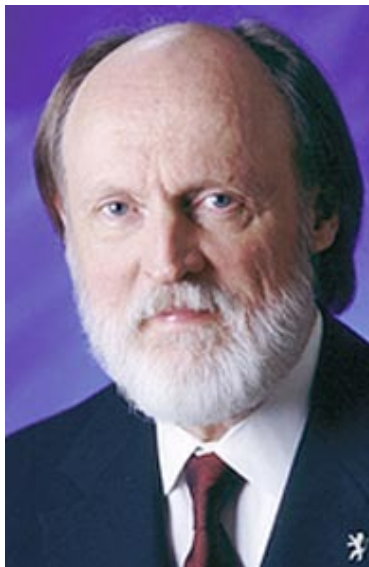
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Receiving the Priestly Blessing **(Session One)**

by Dwight A. Pryor (1945-2011)

Center for Judaic-Christian Studies

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Dwight: Good morning. Shabbat Shalom. Would you stand in honor of our God? We're assembled here this morning, this beautiful Shabbat morning, as the church, to render our due appropriate and reasonable service unto the True and Living God - The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I'd like to begin this morning reading a few verses from Psalm 104. Why don't you just listen and let's make this a prayer.

The psalmist begins, "*Barakhi Nafshi et Adonai...*" Blessed be the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, You are very great. You are clothed with honor and Majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a

tent. You set the beams of your chambers on the waters. You make the clouds your chariots. You ride on the wings of the wind. You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your Ministers. O Lord, how manifold are Your works. In wisdom you have made them all. May the glory of Adonai endure forever. Made the Lord rejoice in His works. So I will sing to Adonai as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have "being." May my meditation be pleasing to Him, for I rejoice in Adonai. *Barakhi Nafshi et Adonai*. Hallelujah. Bless the Lord, O my soul...Hallelujah." Let us all say, "Amen."

Congregation: Amen.

Dwight: Thank you. Be seated. The text for our study this morning, and also, God willing next week in a two-part series, is taken from the book of Numbers. I would like you to turn there with me. Numbers, *Bamidbar*, chapter 6, and let's begin reading with verse 22. Numbers 6:22: "The LORD said to Moses, 'Say to Aharon (Aaron) and his sons, thus in this manner shall you bless the people of Israel - You shall say to them, 'The LORD, Adonai, bless you and keep you. The LORD, Adonai, make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The LORD, Adonai, lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.'

So shall they put My Name upon the people of Israel and I will bless them. *Ani avar'kheim...*I will bless them." Notice, of course, that in verses 24, 25 and 26, we have a threefold invocation of the Name, THE LORD; and it's in all caps which tells you that in Hebrew this originally was, "Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey"...Y-H-W-H - that Name - the particular, *personal* Name that God disclosed to Moshe, of which we'll say more in a moment. Three times His Name is invoked, because, as he makes very clear, He is going to be the blesser. And so, we invoke the Name of the blesser.

Now, in Hebrew, these are very famous words! Many of you know them. I will say them for you slowly so it will be recorded in case you do wish to memorize this. It's a lovely passage to memorize and to utilize in your own personal lives. Beginning with verse 24...

Y'varechecha Adonai v'yishm'recha

Ya'er Adonai panav elecha v'chunekha

Y'sa Adonai panav elecha v'yasem lecha Shalom



This memorable threefold blessing or benediction has played a central, liturgical role for both Jews and Christians through the centuries. Today and next week, I want to examine some of the mysteries of this so-called “priestly benediction.” We’re going to look at it in a broad scope. First of all, historically: what the Bible says about it, how it was utilized in the Temple, how it was utilized in the synagogue, and how it is utilized in Jewish culture today. Then we’re going to open it up and examine it word by word, to try to understand some of the clear meaning and hints of hidden meaning that are incorporated into this marvelous, liturgical blessing.

In Hebrew, even perhaps as you’ve sensed as I was reading it, it has a certain cadence that makes it noteworthy. It’s a cadence crescendo of three, five, and seven words, respectively. Verse 24 is three words in Hebrew. Verse 25, five words in Hebrew. The concluding phrase, verse 26, is seven words. We have this cadence crescendo of three, five, and seven words, and the emphatic use of repetition, such as *Adonai, Adonai, Adonai*. It’s rhetorically impressive, but actually, it’s very simple in its structure. I think we can say that its simplicity, actually, is its strength. It has a certain memorable quality to it, a certain strength of rhetorical exclamation.

Now, scholars differ in their interpretation of this priestly benediction. Specifically, as to whether it consists of six actions that The Lord is going to do on your behalf, or three actions. For example, one can read this: the ‘the’, the connecting conjunction, here as meaning, “In order to,” or, “In this way,” or, “By.” For example, “May the Lord bless you by keeping you. May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you by being gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His face upon you,” or, “Show you favor by giving you peace.”

Some believe that’s the intent; so it’s actually three essential actions that God is doing on your behalf. The more traditional interpretation is that there are six actions, so the ‘the’, the connecting conjunction, here is read as “and,” “The Lord bless you and keep you,” (two actions) “Cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.” (two more) “Lift up His face toward you and give you peace”...six (total) actions (in all). Up until actually just a few weeks ago, this Priestly Blessing in Hebrew was the oldest known biblical text ever discovered by archaeologists in the land of Israel.

They found one inscribed on a piece of silver that was rolled up. Very fine silver. It dated to the First Temple period. Actually, there were two of these little filigree amulets. The priestly benediction was inscribed upon them, and then people would wear them around their neck as an amulet. They date to the seventh or early sixth century BC and were found in a burial cave in the South of Jerusalem in 1980. (Now)...the priestly benediction, the *Birkat Kohanim* as it's prescribed in Hebrew, dates back to Biblical times.

But, just as with many other aspects of Judaism, it has been faithfully passed down from generation to generation, and is still widely used in both synagogues and Jewish homes today. How was it used historically? Let's look at what the Bible says about this. Within the Torah, the Pentateuch, there are three passages that speak of this benediction. Then in the historical books of Chronicles and Joshua, there are two additional references. We have a total of five texts in which the Bible comments on the use of this priestly benediction. Let's look at them.

They're significant because they set a precedent for subsequent use. The *Birkat Kohanim* basically means the "Blessing of the Kohens." A *Kohen* ("Ko-hain") is a priest in Hebrew, and this is the blessing of the priests, the *Kohanim* (in the plural). It is a Jewish prayer that was first recited by Aaron (*Aharon* in Hebrew), the High Priest. We see this in Leviticus chapter 9 - if you would like to turn there - verse 22, Leviticus 9:22. "Aaron lifted up his hands" - note that - "Aaron lifted up his hands" in verse 22 - "toward the people and blessed them."

He came down after sacrificing the Sin Offering, the Burnt Offering and the Offering of well-being, or the Shalom Offering. Verse 23: "Moses and Aaron entered the Tent of Meeting and then came out and blessed the people. The glory of Adonai appeared to all the people. Fire came out from Adonai and consumed the Burnt Offering and the fat upon the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell upon their faces."

The second reference is found in Deuteronomy 10:8: "At that time, Adonai set apart the Tribe of Levi" - the Levites, we call them - "and he set them aside to do the following." Note what they are asked to do. Number one, to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. Number two, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him. Number three, to bless, in His Name, the people. Therefore, Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred. Adonai, the LORD, is his inheritance, as the LORD, your God, promised him."

You know, of course, the 12 Tribes, when they entered the promised land, where 11 of the 12 Tribes were each allotted a territory. The Tribe of Levi was not given a territory because their portion, as it were, is the LORD. They're called to be *Kohanim*, priests. The priestly families all come from the Tribe of Levi. There are other Levites from the

Tribe of Levi that are not priests, per se'. But the whole Tribe is called to be servants unto the LORD. As priests, in effect, they minister on behalf of the people to the LORD, and on behalf of the LORD to the people.

God set them aside, specifically as we read in verse eight, to bless in His Name. The third reference in the Torah (is) Deuteronomy 21:5: "Then the *Kohanim*, the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward; for Adonai, your God, has chosen them to minister to Him and to pronounce blessing, to pronounce blessings in the Name of Adonai." Again, the essential duties of the *Kohanim* consist, on the one hand, of ministering to the LORD; and on the other hand, in the Name of the LORD, to bless His people, His covenant-elect people.

Now let's look at the book of Joshua - the last two references in the Hebrew scriptures - to the blessing. In Joshua 8:32 we read that they're in the presence of the people of Israel. Joshua wrote upon the stones a copy of the Torah of Moses, which he had written. And all Israel's sojourners, as well as the home-born, with their elders, officers and judges, stood on opposite sides of the Ark before the Levitical priests, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Adonai. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal.

Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded that they, namely the priests, the tribe of Levi, "...should bless the people of Israel. Afterward, he read all the words of the Torah, the blessings and the curses, and according to all that is written in the book of the Torah." The last reference is found in 2nd Chronicles, chapter 30. This is speaking of the time of King Hezekiah. It's a time of renewal in Israel. The people have forsaken idolatry. For the first time, in a long time, they're keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread - of *Pesach*.

Notice verse 26, 2nd Chronicles 30:26: "There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, son of King David of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem." Verse 27: "Then the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voice was heard. Their prayer came to God's Holy dwelling in heaven." In the midst of this divine visitation, in response to national repentance, the people are blessed by the priest and the Levites. Indeed, their voice was heard even by God in His Holy dwelling in heaven. Here we have now examined the scriptural references to the blessing.

I want to look for a few moments now at how this blessing was actually incorporated into the Temple liturgy, the Temple built by Solomon. First of all, the *Birkat Kohanim*, the priestly benediction, was one of the central features of the Temple service in Jerusalem...one of the most impressive, one of the most central, liturgical acts of the

whole order of service. (This) liturgical text, Numbers 6:24-26, is the only liturgical text that is recorded in the Torah. It was to be recited in the Temple day in and day out.

A person came to the Temple bearing gifts, offerings, sacrifices - but one left the Temple having received God's gift, namely, the blessing. One came bearing gifts, one left bearing a blessing. Indeed, Psalm 24:5 describes this. It says, "The one who brings an offering unto the LORD shall receive or carry, or bear away a blessing from Adonai."

Now, there were many priests who were engaged in this, and many rules stipulating how this blessing was to be recited, and under what circumstances. First of all, in the Temple, the blessing was spoken daily after the sacrifice of the morning offering. Secondly, in the Temple, when the priests recited this blessing, they would not say *Adonai*. They would actually pronounce the 'Tetragrammaton' *Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey* - YHWH. They would actually pronounce that Sacred Name. They would do it very distinctly when uttering the blessing.

The priest continued pronouncing this Tetragrammaton, as it's called - the four letters - even in the temple, all the way up somewhere into the third or second century BC. The Talmud says, "...after the death of Simon the Just" the Name was no longer pronounced, "...so that no man who was not respected and worthy might learn it." Somewhere about 200 years before Yeshúa, this Name was no longer recited by the priest in conjunction with the daily offering.

Now, when they recited the blessing, the three portions were spoken without pause. At the close of the benediction, the people would respond with this declaration: "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity." We'll see in a moment the manner in which this is done, changed in the synagogue. But here, when the priests pronounced the blessing, they recited it without a pause. In conclusion, the people responded, "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity."

Next, the priestly blessing was always uttered with uplifted hands, even as we saw with Aaron, even as we saw with the Levites and priests. In the Temple service, the priests would raise their hands above their heads, and hold their hands in a very distinctive configuration, very similar to what some of you know as the Vulcan salute, if you're familiar with Star Trek. When Leonard Nimoy - when they began recording that series - he felt that there should be some distinctive action the Vulcan would do or say when greeting people. Drawing upon his own Jewish childhood, he took that posture of the hand, and raised it, and of course, his version of the blessing was, "Live long and prosper."

Now, I'll talk more about this configuration of the hands in just a moment. The point is, the blessing was always uttered with uplifted hands and directed towards the people. It

was always uttered while the priests were standing. The priests would face the congregation out of respect for the people, but the congregation was not allowed to look at the priests while the blessing was being uttered. Why? Lest their attention be drawn to the priests - rather than to the Blessor.

Their attention should not be distracted, and their devotion should not be disturbed. They would hide their eyes or cast their eyes downward, in order not to gaze upon the priests as they recited the blessing over them. The priests were required to remove their leather sandals when they ascended the platform to pronounce the blessing, and to wash their hands before uttering the blessing. Finally, the blessing always was spoken in Hebrew.

You'll notice in verse 23, it said: "Thus shall you bless them, [Hebrew language]. In this manner, shall you bless them." That was (clearly!) understood by the priests to mean only using these *exact words and language*. The blessing was pronounced in Hebrew and in a loud voice so that all the congregation could hear. After all, faith comes by hearing. Now, somewhere after the destruction of Solomon's Temple, after the exile to Babylon, there emerged the community meeting called synagogue, *Kneset*. Many of the functions that previously were performed in the Temple now become performed in the synagogue. You only had one Temple, but you had many synagogues in every city, in every town of any significant size.

How was the priestly benediction, the *Birkat Kohanim*, utilized in a synagogue? First of all, the reader, the one who's leading the congregation, before reciting the blessing, praised, "Our God, and God of Our Fathers blessed us with the threefold blessing, which is in the Torah, written by Moses thy servant, spoken by Aaron and his sons the priests, thy holy people." In the Talmud, this *Birkat Kohanim*, the ceremony of blessing the people, is called *Nesiat Kapayim*, the raising of the hands, because Aaron raised his hands in reciting the blessing.

The hands are raised up in the same manner in the Temple during the priestly blessing, with the fingers appropriately separated. Not counting your thumb, the first and second fingers are joined together, then the third and fourth fingers are joined together with a space in between. Then, of course, a space between the thumb and the first finger. Then they touch at the thumb and first finger.

In the Jewish way of thinking, the hands are viewed in 'effect' as a lattice through which the light of the *Shekinah* from Heaven shines down through the hands, through the lattice, upon the people. This image of the two hands in the posture of the Kohanim is very common in Jewish culture. You see it, for example, engraved on gravestones, you see it in objects of ecclesiastical art, imprinted on books, et cetera. Now, lest the people

might gaze at the priest during the blessing, which would distract them from the Blessing Himself, the custom arose of covering the head, and usually the hands as well, with the *tallit*.

The priest performing the blessing in the synagogue would raise his hands in this specified posture, but cover his hands and his head with his *tallit*, his prayer shawl. He would stand in front of the ark, where the Torah scrolls are kept, and with heads covered and hands upraised, the priest recites the blessing over the congregation. The person reciting the blessing says the prayer slowly, the three-verse blessing. All the other *Kohanim* who may be present in that synagogue service respond in unison, repeating it word by word after him.

Unlike in the Temple, in which the blessing was recited without interruption, in the synagogue the custom was to recite phrase number one, then a pause. At that pause, the congregation would say, "Amen". Phrase two, "The Lord causes His countenance to shine upon you and be gracious to you." The congregation would respond, "Amen." Phrase three, "The Lord lift up His face, and give you Shalom" - "Amen." The word *Amen* ("Ah-main") in Hebrew means "It is certain, it is so, it is true." It's your affirmation of having received the blessing. (One) custom became legislation in the Talmud - that it was forbidden to gaze upon the priest during the chanting of the blessing. Therefore, typically, the male members of the congregation assembled on the Shabbat morning service will take their own *tallit*, their own prayer shawls, and pull them over their own heads during the blessing so as not to gaze at the priests. If a man has children, his sons with him, for example, the children will stand under the father's prayer shawl.

I have a very dear Jewish friend who, many years ago, gave me a lovely statue of a father with his little boy standing beside him. The father has the *tallit* raised over his head, covering his son. What a beautiful image this is! The son stands at the side of his father, covered under the wings of righteousness and receives the blessing of the LORD! Indeed...not only is it a beautiful image of a father's role, but many Jewish men will testify that it's one of the most precious memories they have from their childhood and a synagogue service.

Now, regarding when and how often to recite the benediction, there are various customs that vary from region to region, country to country, and sometimes from synagogue to synagogue. The Ashkenazim, the European Jews, typically have one tradition; the Sephardim, the Middle Eastern Jews, typically have a different tradition. Today in Jerusalem, in its synagogues, the benediction is recited every day - every morning following the prayers. In America, typically, this benediction is recited only on the

occasion of the three (great) pilgrim Festivals: Passover, Shavuot/Pentecost, Sukkot/Tabernacles...and on Yom Kippur.

In the synagogue, unlike in the ancient Temple, the term *Adonai* is (always) substituted for the Tetragrammaton. *Adonai* means LORD, so that the Sacred Name ("YHWH") is not pronounced (out loud). By the way, in common daily parlance, devout Jews won't even say the name *Adonai*. It has taken on a (certain/preferential) sanctity just like the representation of Yod Hey Vav Hey. In common parlance or conversation, an orthodox or devout Jew will simply use "HaShem" - The Name. When you say "*Baruch HaShem*" - "Blessed be the Name" - it's just another (alternative) way of saying, "Blessed be God." So, in the synagogue for the reading of Scripture, and in the (regular) recitation of the *Birkat Kohanim*, *Adonai* is (always) substituted for "Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey."

Indeed, the main (thematic) idea of the priestly blessing pivots around the Name of God, *HaShem*. That Name is to be put upon "The children of Israel." And because of the centrality of the Name to the blessing, the Divine Name is repeated three times. Remember in verse 27 of Numbers 6, the LORD said, "...and you will put My Name, My *Shem* upon them. You'll put My Name - and then I, the Source of Blessing, will bless them."

The central activity that's going on here is, in some way, God's Name - His personal, particular and Supreme Name - is put upon, placed upon, imputed upon - you...and *that* is the blessing, because it comes from Him! What is this Name? Well, most of you know the essentials of it, so I don't need to go into great detail. But there are some who may not know and may be confused about it. Indeed, there is a lot of confusion. The key text, of course, is in Exodus chapter three, God announces (that) He's going to send Moses to Pharaoh. Moses objects, (saying) "Who am I that I should go?"

Exodus 3:12 is a key text. God said, "I will be with you. I will be with you and this is the sign for you that I've sent you. When you've brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God, worship God on this mountain." Of course, that's being spoken from the Burning Bush. Moses said, "Well, okay, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers sent me', they'll say, 'What is His Name - His *Shem*?'"

In verse 14 Moses says, 'What shall I say'? God says, in its most literal meaning in Hebrew, "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE." Although, it is also appropriate to translate it as "I AM THAT I AM." In ancient Biblical Hebrew, you don't have the same tense system (operating) as we do, or even as you have in modern Hebrew - you don't have a simple, past, present, future, et cetera. There's a lot going on here, but the basic meaning is "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE," or "I AM WHO I AM or THAT I AM."

Verse 15: "Say this to the people of Israel, 'Adonai, Yod-Hey-Vav-He, the LORD, the God of your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has sent me to you (saying) 'This is my *Shem*, My Name forever, and thus Am I to be remembered through all generations.'" How sad it is that probably 99% of the Christian world today does not even know this Name. They may know it in a corrupt form as "Jehovah" or "Yehova." Yet, when they read the Scriptures and see the English-translated word LORD, the vast majority have never been taught that that actually is "Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey" - such as in "The LORD is my shepherd" from Psalm 23 as *Adonai Roi*. YHWH is a particular name, a personal name, not a title. It's a name. He is (also) Ēl 'Elyōn, "God Most High" - that's a title. He IS "Yod Hey- Vav-He"... that's His Name.

What's in a name? Well, in Hebrew, a name conveys identity, the distinctive essence of a person, and official authorization. To 'do something in someone's name' means you're authorized, appointed to do that. When God was asked for his Name, He doesn't just give an ordinary name, but makes an ontological declaration full of Divine mystery. This Name, which has been analyzed endlessly, means "The One Who Was, Who Is and Who Is to come." It means "The One who causes all else to exist." It means "The Self-Existent One." God alone has ultimate Being, and this Name speaks of His ultimate Being.

In Hebrew, every one of these four letters, *Yod Hey Vav Hey*, is, in effect, a breath letter: Ya / Ha / Va / Ha. God is a source of breath, of life. Tell them that "Ya-Ha-Va-Ha" has sent you. Not only does it mean "I AM," but it also means "I'll be there for you." One scholar has rendered it "I AM HE Who Endures." Another scholar has rendered it "I AM THE ONE Who Is Present." God is the Source of all being. *Haya* is the form of the verb "to be" in causative form. This speaks to God Who brings everything into existence!

We must be careful here about not getting too abstract in this, because it's also a particular name and a personal name. The basic meaning is something to the effect of "I will be there," the only other serious scholarly challenge to this meaning of *Yod Hey Vav Hey* - which by almost 99% of the scholars is believed to have been pronounced something like "Yahweh." There is one scholar who argues that it was probably closer (in meaning) to "He Will Be." To God alone belongs UNlimited, UNconditional Being - He Will Be!

Now, we cannot be absolutely certain of how this name was pronounced, because as we just noted, for at least two centuries before Yeshua it was no longer pronounced in common parlance. You must understand that at the time it was given to Moses, it was commonly pronounced. When the Commandment says, "You shall not take or bear the Name of the LORD, your God in vain," it had reference to this name. When you swear an oath by my (His) Name, keep it. If you make an oath or a pledge in my (His) Name -

and (if) you break that oath - you will have defamed My Name, and the Commandment says you shall not do that.

"You should not use My Name lightly" - it's what the text literally means. Don't "carry" or "bear" my name lightly. Well...the sanctity became so great that, for the fear of in any way treating it too lightly, the custom arose of not speaking it at all out of respect for God. This Commandment doesn't have anything to do, per se' with cursing, as we have normally/culturally interpreted it. Although clearly, that would be an example of treating God's Name lightly!

Now, the name "Yah" is known in Scripture. It's used in the Psalms as a name for God. You see and hear it every time you say, "Hallelu-Yah." There are songs that literally begin, "Yah...something or other...? This is the (...) first half of the Name "*Yah-Weh*." You also (commonly) see it as a suffix in many proper names. How about Zechariah, literally meaning "God remembers." And (it is) with the name Nehemiah, "Yah comforts."

Scholars assumed that Yah was a short form of Yahweh and was sometimes used just to represent the entire name. The last bit of evidence we have are Greek inscriptions of the name *Yahweh* as it was pronounced. A Greek transliteration, if you will. It's very close to the pronunciation of Yahweh. "I am who I am. I will be what I will be. I am the self-existent one that causes all else to exist. Moses, get over it. I'll be there for you. Get your mind off yourself. Trust in me."

Now Isaiah 42:8 is a fascinating passage. The LORD says the following. "I am Yahweh. That is my Name, and my (G)lory or My (H)onor, I will not give to another. *Ani Adonai*, I am Adonai, that is my name. I'll not give my glory or honor to another." However, if we go to Philippians chapter two, (...) speaking of Jesus and the mind of Messiah, that He should take on humility - the one who did not grasp at His equality with God, but humbled himself, et cetera, et cetera - what does it say in verse nine of Philippians two? "God has exalted him to the highest place"...and what? "...given Him the Name that is above every name." But, as Isaiah quotes, God is saying, "I will not give My Name to another." If God says, "I'm not going to give My Name to another," but Philippians says He has given unto *Yeshua*/Jesus the "Name above every name" - how do we reconcile this? Very simply - He didn't give it to 'another'! He gave it to His Son, who is essentially One with Him, One in essence and substance, plural in persons and will. "I'll not give my name."

When this early hymn (was) recited by the Jewish believers in the first 'church,' the Jewish (body of Messiah) church...when they quoted He had "given Jesus the Name above every name," they immediately would connect that with Isaiah 42:8. Then they go

on to (... quoting) Isaiah 45, which says, "...at the Name of Yahweh, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess..." This is the high Name. This is the Sacred Name!

Well, I need to wrap this up just by saying the blessing was used in the Temple, the blessing was used in synagogues, and it was the unique privilege of the priest to use it in that form. It also became widely used in Jewish homes. Remember at Mount Sinai, God says to Israel, the *B'nai Israel*, the 'sons of Israel,' "You shall be for me, a kingdom of priests, *Kohanim*." Remember that passage? Peter quotes it now in reference to you and me: "A Holy nation." The father is a priest, even though he may not be of the Tribe of the Levi, and He may not be a Kohen.

By the way, do you know this fascinating discovery (from) a couple of years ago? Scientists discovered that within DNA there's a unique marker associated only with descendants of the *Kohanim*. You can actually determine genetically who is a Kohen and who is not.

This practice (of blessing) was extended then to the priesthood (role) of the father within his (own) home. Every Shabbat, the father recites this blessing over his children. That is your privilege as well.

Now, next week, we'll pick this up and begin examining word by word the meanings, and then draw various spiritual and practical implications and applications of this. Remember this - the overriding theme here - the centrality of God's Name and His disposition to bless you. Notice, there's been NO condition imposed upon Israel like "You must do this, this and this, then the priest will bless you." It's an unconditional blessing that tells us an enormous amount about the Father. This blessing is all about Him, His Name and His disposition to show favor to His children...and you are among those children! Thank you, Jesus.

[00:50:41] [END OF AUDIO]

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