



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Blessing for a Contrite People

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## 1.

“VAYEVARCHEIM” — THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

“Aharon lifted his hands... and he blessed them, ויברכם. He then descended {from the altar} after offering<sup>1</sup> the *chatas*.”<sup>2</sup> Rashi quotes the word, ויברכם, and comments: “{The blessing Aharon recited was} Birkas Kohanim:<sup>3</sup> *May He bless you; may He shine; may He raise....*”<sup>4</sup>

The source for Rashi’s interpretation is in *Toras Kohanim* (as commentators<sup>5</sup> on Rashi’s commentary note). And in several places, the Talmud<sup>6</sup> explains that some laws concerning Birkas Kohanim are derived from the verse, “Aharon lifted his hands... and blessed them.”

However, as Ramban asks, we need to clarify: Since Rashi’s aim is to explain the **plain meaning** of Scripture {*pshat*}, how is it possible, according to *pshat*, to explain that the term, ויברכם, **here**, refers to Birkas Kohanim? After all, the verses comprising this blessing, “May He bless you; may He shine; may He raise,” are said only later in *parshas Naso*?

To answer, Ramban<sup>7</sup> proposes that even though the section of Birkas Kohanim was written in the Torah much later, Birkas Kohanim was **communicated** beforehand, prior to our verse, “Aharon lifted... and he blessed

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<sup>1</sup> {Often translated as “a sin offering,” a *chatas* was brought for the violation of specific sins.}

<sup>2</sup> *Vayikra* 9:22.

<sup>3</sup> {“Birkas Kohanim” literally means “the blessing of the kohanim,” and refers to the formula of the entire blessing. This blessing is actually composed of three “expressions,” or “sub-blessings,” which begin with three respective phrases Rashi mentions here in his commentary. When a kohen actually recites Birkas Kohanim, this is known as “*nesias kapayim*,” lit., “raising of the hands,” since the kohanim, when formally reciting this blessing, lift their arms, etc. In common usage, however, Birkas Kohanim is used for both meanings.}

<sup>4</sup> *Bamidbar* 6:24-26.

<sup>5</sup> R. Eliyahu Mizrachi; et al.

<sup>6</sup> *Megillah* 18a; *Sotah* 38a,b; *Tamid* 7:2; et al.

<sup>7</sup> On our verse; likewise, this is the answer given by *Korban Aharon* in his commentary on *Toras Kohanim*, ad loc; see also *Ibn Ezra* on *Bamidbar* 6:21, 7:1; *Bachya*, *ibid*, 7:1.

Ramban also gives another answer here (at the end of his remarks. Likewise, this other answer is presented as his only approach in his commentary on *Bamidbar* 6:23): “Here, Hashem gave the command regarding it... to be said on this day; whereas later, He gave this blessing to Aharon and his descendents forever.” (See later, Section 2.) However, this second answer is difficult from the perspective of *pshat*, because {if Hashem had given this command here}, why doesn’t Scripture mention Moshe had commanded Aharon to recite this blessing (as Ramban himself notes here)? And it {this second answer} is particularly difficult {according to *pshat*} in light of **Rashi’s commentary** on *Vayikra* 8:11 (and see Ramban, ad loc.).

them.” As the Torah says immediately **after** the section of Birkas Kohanim,<sup>8</sup> “On the day that Moshe finished erecting the Mishkan,” which took place on the eighth day of the Mishkan’s inauguration.<sup>9</sup>

However, it would be very strained to suggest that **Rashi**<sup>10</sup> also interprets the passage this way. Were this the case, Rashi would have informed us somewhere<sup>11</sup> that the section of Birkas Kohanim was not written in the chronological order of the events (citing the principle:<sup>12</sup> “In the Torah, there is no before and after”).

And if in Rashi’s opinion the section of Birkas Kohanim was **not** conveyed until much later when it was written, then why does Rashi not explain (like Ramban) that the term ויברכם, here, does not refer to Birkas Kohanim but to some other blessing that Aharon said after concluding his service the first time? (This would resemble King Shlomo’s blessing given at the inauguration of the *Beis HaMikdash*.)<sup>13</sup>

## 2.

### QUESTIONS ON RASHI’S INTERPRETATION

Some commentators<sup>14</sup> explain that because only Aharon, and not Moshe, blessed the Jewish people here, this proves that ויברכם refers to Birkas Kohanim. In contrast, regarding the blessing mentioned immediately afterwards, it says:<sup>15</sup> “**Moshe and Aharon** came... and **they blessed** the nation.”

From this difference, it is understood that **this** blessing {in verse 22} only involved Aharon. Accordingly, Rashi explains that the blessing recited was

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<sup>8</sup> *Bamidbar* 7:1.

<sup>9</sup> See Rashi on *Bamidbar*, *ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Ramban implies that he interprets **Rashi** this way, but this approach is difficult, as discussed.

<sup>11</sup> As *Ibn Ezra* and *Bachya*, *loc. cit*.

<sup>12</sup> Cited by Rashi in several places (*Bereishis* 6:3; 35:29; *Vayikra* 8:2; **et al.**).

<sup>13</sup> *Melachim I* 8:54, *et passim* (cited by Ramban here).

<sup>14</sup> *Maskil L'Dovid*, *ad loc*.

<sup>15</sup> *Vayikra* 9:23.

Birkas **Kohanim**, “since on that day Aharon was installed into his sacred service {in the Mishkan}, he was also installed into giving the Priestly Blessing,<sup>16</sup> which is like a service.”<sup>17</sup>

But although this blessing was perforce linked specifically with Aharon, nonetheless, to assert that the blessing here was Birkas Kohanim is problematic. Not only is this interpretation difficult because only later in *parshas Naso* is the commandment regarding Birkas Kohanim given, but the following questions can also be raised:

- a. If this was Aharon’s installation into giving the Priestly Blessing, there ought to have been an explicit commandment about it, exactly as Moshe had commanded Aharon regarding the other inauguration services that Aharon performed that day.
- b. The Priestly Blessing is a positive mitzvah incumbent upon every kohen.<sup>18</sup> If so, why didn’t all the **sons** of Aharon take part in reciting Birkas Kohanim here? They should have done so either as part of the installation, as discussed, or as their observance of a positive mitzvah. (After all, Aharon’s sons had participated in Aharon’s other activities on this day.)<sup>19</sup>
- c. On the eighth day of the Mishkan’s inauguration, **Moshe** also served as a kohen, as we know, since Rashi already commented that on this day, “they were all **equivalent** in performing the priestly service.”<sup>20</sup> True, Moshe did not need to be **installed** in the service of the Priestly Blessing,<sup>21</sup> but why did he not take part in Priestly Blessing on that day? (This question is especially irksome considering that, according to Rashi,<sup>22</sup> **Moshe** executed all the [regular] daily sacred services also on the eighth day of the inauguration, and not Aharon.)

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<sup>16</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*nisias kapayim*,” i.e., Birkas Kohanim.}

<sup>17</sup> {*Maskil L’Dovid*, loc. cit.}

<sup>18</sup> As it says explicitly in *parshas Naso* (6:23), “Speak to Aharon and **to his sons**.”

<sup>19</sup> *Vayikra* 9:9, 12, et passim.

<sup>20</sup> On *Shemos* 40:31; and similarly, *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> For according to Rashi, in his Torah commentary, after the eight days of inauguration, Moshe no longer served {as a kohen in the Mishkan}. (Rashi on *Shemos* 4:14 — “*ve’atah ha’levi*.”)

<sup>22</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 40:31 — as elucidated in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, p. 225 ff.

### 3.

THREE TERM IN *BIRKAS KOHANIM* CORRESPOND TO THREE TYPES OF SACRIFICES

After the words, “Birkas Kohanim,” Rashi adds (as noted above): “May He bless you; may He shine; may He raise...”

This is perplexing, as commentators ask:<sup>23</sup> To what end does Rashi need to add these words? Even a child<sup>24</sup> knows that Birkas Kohanim comprises these three clauses.

Even if we were to assume, with difficulty, that Rashi does not rely on a novice student of Scripture to know this since he still hasn’t learnt about it in Chumash, Rashi should have just said, “May He bless you, etc.” Why does Rashi **detail** {the key verbs of} all three blessings?

Some commentators<sup>25</sup> say that the three clauses, “May He bless you; may He shine; may He raise...,” correspond to the three types of sacrifices mentioned in the verse — a *chatas*,<sup>26</sup> an *olah*, and a *shelamim*.<sup>27</sup>

[The blessing<sup>28</sup> {beginning with the words} “May He bless you” contains the clause, “and may He protect you,” which refers to Divine protection from transgression, ensuring that we do not have to bring a **chatas** sacrifice. “May He **shine**” corresponds to an *olah* sacrifice, which is offered for “harboring an unsavory thought,” “a sin that involves the mind, which **illuminates** a person.”

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<sup>23</sup> *Sifsei Chachamim* and *Maskil L’Dovid*, ad loc.

<sup>24</sup> After all, the text of Birkas Kohanim is said **every day** in the Morning Blessings. (This is the custom of the French (*Berachos* 11b, *Tosafos*, s.v. “*shekvar*”) and likewise, it is found in the siddur of **R. Amram** {Gaon}, as cited in *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 48.) Also, Birkas Kohanim is heard in the repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei* in the *Shacharis* prayer (and on Shabbos, also in the repetition of the *Musaf* prayer), and recited by the kohanim themselves on the Festivals, etc.

<sup>25</sup> *Sifsei Chachamim*. *Maskil L’Dovid* answers that “the word, ויברכם, implies just a single blessing {clause}” (and therefore, Rashi needs to tell us that there were actually three {clauses}), but this answer is problematic.

<sup>26</sup> {Respectively, a sin-offering; a voluntary-offering; and a peace-offering.}

<sup>27</sup> See also *Baal HaTurim*, *Paneach Raza*, and *Shach on the Torah*, ad loc. It is interesting to note that Aharon also brought a *minchah* offering (*Vayikra* 4:17), yet the *minchah* is not mentioned here in Scripture (as the question is raised here by *Riva*, *Tur HaAruch* and *Paneach Raza*).

<sup>28</sup> {The connection between the three clauses of blessing in Birkas Kohanim and the sacrifices as explained in} the above paragraph is based on the writings of the *Minchas Yehudah* (whose words are cited in brief in *Sifsei Chachamim* here).

And the phrase, “May He **raise**” {begins the final sub-blessing}, which ends with the clause, “and may He give you peace, **shalom**,” corresponds to a **shelamim** sacrifice — “which **implants**<sup>29</sup> **peace** in the world.”]

From this we learn that the blessing here (unlike King Shlomo’s blessing) was Birkas Kohanim, since its blessings specifically are well-matched with the sacrifices mentioned in the verse.

Nonetheless, it would be **very** strained to construe Rashi’s interpretation this way, since the allusion is very subtle. If Rashi had meant this, he would have certainly noted this **explicitly**.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.

“HE DESCENDED” — FROM ON TOP OF THE ALTAR

Afterwards, Rashi quotes the words, “he descended,” and explains: “From on top of the altar.”

We need to clarify: The verse says explicitly, “he descended **after offering the chatas**.” As explained earlier, the *chatas* was “performed” on the altar. If so, what novelty does Rashi introduce by commenting, “from on top of the altar,” since this is self-understood from the verse itself?

Some commentators<sup>31</sup> explain that Rashi intends to forestall a reader from mistakenly thinking that Aharon descended from the altar **after** giving his blessing.

— Such a supposition would be difficult: What is the point of telling us of Aharon’s descent; obviously, after completing everything, he descended? —

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<sup>29</sup> According to **Rashi** on *Vayikra* 3:1; see Rashi on *Shemos* 29:22.

<sup>30</sup> As Rashi does in his commentary on *Bereishis* 14:18; 15:9; 24:22; **et al.**

<sup>31</sup> *Maskil L'David*, ad loc; see *Sifsei Chachomim*, ad loc. (in the name of *Nachlas Yaakov*).

Rather, Rashi tells us that Aharon descended “from on top of the altar” where he had offered his sacrifices. (And the sacrifices were offered **before** Aharon blessed the Jewish people, as chronicled earlier in the *parshah*.) This is what Scripture means when it says, “Aharon raised his hands... and blessed them.” When? “Immediately **after** he descended the altar after offering their sacrifices.”<sup>32</sup>

This interpretation accords with how *Toras Kohanim* understands the verse:<sup>33</sup> “This is an out-of-order verse, and by rights, Scripture meant to say, ‘He descended after offering... and the peace-offering {followed by,} Aharon raised... and blessed them.’” (The idea of “an out-of-order verse” is also found in Rashi’s Torah commentary in *parshas Shemos*.)<sup>34</sup>

However, this interpretation is very problematic:<sup>35</sup>

(To start with, the idea of “an out-of-order verse” does not fit smoothly with understanding Scripture according to *pshat*. Therefore, if Rashi’s commentary on this verse was predicated on the idea of “an out-of-order verse,” Rashi would have said so **explicitly** [similar to his commentary in *parshas Shemos*, referenced above]. But additionally, the main difficulties are the following:)

- a) In the words, “from on top of the altar,” which **Rashi** appends to the wording of the verse, we see **no allusion** to anything, just an explanation that Aharon’s descent was “from on top of the altar.” And **this** fact is readily understood from the verse, as explained above, “he descended **after offering the chatas...**”

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<sup>32</sup> The words of *Maskil L’Dovid*, ad loc.

<sup>33</sup> Also, this is the sequence of events as presented in Talmud Jerusalem, “*Taanis*,” ch. 4, halachah 1; see also *Ibn Ezra*, ad loc (“he had already descended”); *Chizkuni*; et al.

<sup>34</sup> *Shemos* 4:20 (“That which comes first and that which follows are not recorded precisely {in chronological order} in Scripture”) — as cited in *Sifsei Chachamim*. However, the choice of this source in Rashi is problematic, as in several places in his commentary, Rashi uses the term “out-of-order verse” (or something similar) — *Bereishis* 2:19; *Shemos* 2:5; 16:20; 27:4; **et al.**

<sup>35</sup> {In the original, “*tzarich iyun gadol*, תצ"ר צד”; lit., “requires much analysis.”}

b) Conferring a blessing is not part of the service carried out in the altar. Therefore, if the entire clause, “he descended...,” would have been omitted, we would also have understood that Aharon’s blessing of the people took place (after he concluded his service on the altar, as the verse explicitly says; consequently) after his descent “from on top of the altar.”<sup>36</sup>

## 5.

### A BLESSING IS REQUIRED AT THE CONCLUSION OF AHARON’S SERVICE

The solution for all the above: When Rashi says: “ויברכם — Birkas Kohanim,” he means simply **just this** — Aharon did not recite this blessing as a **mitzvah** (of Birkas Kohanim, which was first conveyed in *parshas Naso*).

Rather, Aharon — who wished to bless the Jewish people at the conclusion of his service, as explained later — elected (on his own) to bless the Jews by reciting (these verses from) Birkas Kohanim.<sup>37</sup> He chose to recite Birkas Kohanim because its contents are germane to the matters concerning which Aharon wanted to bless the Jews.

(For this reason, Rashi specifies that the Aharon’s blessing consisted of the three clauses: “may He bless you; may He shine; may He raise.” These three clauses express the substance of Aharon’s blessing, as explained in Section 7.)

The nature of the blessing Aharon wished to confer to the Jewish people is understood **straightforwardly** (according to Rashi’s interpretation):

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<sup>36</sup> Even though according to its straightforward meaning, Scripture doesn’t say where in the *Mishkan* Birkas Kohanim took place, to say that it happened from on top of the altar makes no sense.

<sup>37</sup> although the verses that comprise Birkas Kohanim were not yet communicated {until later, in *parshas Naso*, as discussed}. This phenomenon {of accessing (a part of Torah) before it was revealed} resembles what we find (also in **Rashi’s commentary** on the Torah — *Bereishis* 26:5; 32:5; **and in several places**) that the *Avos* fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given. Also, Rashi on *Bereishis* 7:2 says that Noah learnt Torah. Further elaboration is beyond the scope of this discussion.



The purpose of the Mishkan was to serve as a place where Hashem would dwell. As the verse says **explicitly**,<sup>38</sup> “Make a Mikdash for Me and **I will dwell** among them.” To achieve that goal, the (regular) services on the Eighth Day of the Inauguration (as described in *parshas Pekudei*)<sup>39</sup> did not suffice. Rather, to achieve this goal required (as described at the beginning of our *parshah*)<sup>40</sup> — “**This** is what Hashem has commanded you to do in order that the glory of Hashem may appear to you.” The intent of this command (as **Rashi** explains)<sup>41</sup> was the sacrifices and service of **Aharon**, because “he is [...] worthy and important... for through his sacrifices and his service, the Shechinah will rest among you, and you will know that Hashem has chosen him.”

Accordingly, we understand why Aharon blessed the Jews upon concluding his service:

When the building of the Mishkan was completed, we see Moshe blessed the Jewish people:<sup>42</sup> “May His presence indeed rest on your handiwork.” Meaning, he blessed them that by fulfilling Hashem’s command to “make for Me a Mikdash,” they would elicit His presence to dwell among them. Understandably, since Aharon’s service on the eighth day was **the** service which was suppose to actualize the indwelling of the Shechinah, the conclusion of the service called for a blessing (and prayer) for the service to be effective, and to actually bring about the indwelling of the Shechinah.

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<sup>38</sup> *Shemos* 25:8.

<sup>39</sup> *Shemos* 40:23, 25, 27, 29 (and **Rashi’s commentary**).

<sup>40</sup> *Vayikra* 9:6; see, *ibid.*, v. 4, and Rashi’s commentary.

<sup>41</sup> Rashi on *Vayikra* 9:23.

<sup>42</sup> *Shemos* 39:43 {Rashi, *ad loc.*}.

## 6.

### A GENERAL BLESSING AND A SPECIFIC BLESSING

Seemingly, the above proposed explanation has a problem: Immediately after Aharon's blessing, it says,<sup>43</sup> "Moshe and Aharon came... and blessed the people." Rashi comments: "They said, '*May the graciousness of Hashem our G-d be upon us.*'"<sup>44</sup> "May the Shechinah rest in the works of your hands." Now if the purpose of Aharon's blessing was to engender the indwelling of the Shechinah, why was another blessing needed?<sup>45</sup>

This is not a problem, however, because the blessings concerned two different matters:

Aharon's blessing was tied to **his particular** service, to actualize his **service** in bringing about the indwelling of the Shechinah. **To this end**, the formula of Aharon's blessing was apropos (as explained in Section 7).

However, the joint blessing recited by Moshe and Aharon afterwards — "May the graciousness of Hashem our G-d be upon us. May the Shechinah rest **in the works of your hands**" — was a **general** blessing said to conclude all the *work* and *service* of the Mishkan **as a whole**, as expressed in the blessing's two parts: "May the Shechinah rest **in the works of your hands**" — in the *work* performed by the Jews to build the Mishkan. "May the graciousness of Hashem our G-d be **upon us**" — in the *service* performed during **all eight** days of the Mishkan's inauguration.

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<sup>43</sup> *Vayikra* 9:23.

<sup>44</sup> *Tehillim* 90:17.

<sup>45</sup> As *Maskil L'Dovid* questions, ad loc.

## THE THREE POINTS IN AHARON'S BLESSING TO THE JEWS

The reason that the special service of Aharon was required to effect the indwelling of the Shechinah in the Mishkan was that the indwelling of the Shechinah depended on obtaining complete<sup>46</sup> atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf.

(Rashi **already** pointed out this dependency in his remarks<sup>47</sup> explaining why the Mishkan is called “Mishkan of the Testimony”: “Testimony for Israel that the Holy One overlooked the incident of the Golden Calf on their behalf, for He rested His Shechinah among them.” And as Rashi remarks on the subsequent verse that when the Jewish people saw that after seven days of inaugurating the Mishkan, the Shechinah still had not come to rest, they complained:<sup>48</sup> “All the trouble we went to so that the Shechinah would rest among us, and we would know that the sin of the Golden Calf was atoned for on our behalf! {Now we see it was all for nothing.}”)

And this is what Aharon achieved by **his** particular service. Therefore, the first sacrifice offered by Aharon was “a young **calf** for a **chatas**.”<sup>49</sup> Rashi comments:<sup>50</sup> “To inform {Aharon} that through this calf, the Holy One grants him atonement for the Golden Calf he {Aharon} had made.”

This is the significance of the three clauses in Rashi's words: “May He bless you; may He shine; may He raise.” These words of Birkas Kohanim express the three matters on which Aharon focused on his blessing:

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<sup>46</sup> In general, “the Holy One was placated toward Israel joyfully and wholeheartedly; and He said to Moshe, ‘I have forgiven in accordance with your words,’” on Yom Kippur (**Rashi** on *Shemos* 33:11). On the other hand, even after the Eight Days of Inauguration, complete atonement was not achieved, as “on the day that I make an accounting, I shall bring their sin to account... (*Shemos* 32:34, and Rashi, ad loc.).

<sup>47</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 38:21.

<sup>48</sup> Rashi on *Vayikra* 9:23.

<sup>49</sup> *Vayikra* 9:2; note, too, *Shemos* 29:1, and Rashi, ad loc.

<sup>50</sup> {Ibid., ad loc.}

1. “**May He bless you**” — May Hashem bless you: Of **primary** importance is that the blessing came not from **Aharon**. For were this the case, a complaint could be lodged: Since Aharon was implicated in making the Golden Calf, how could **he confer** the blessing that (the indwelling of the Shechinah come about because) Hashem would grant atonement for the incident with the Calf? Rather, Aharon asked **Hashem<sup>51</sup> Himself** to bless the Jews (“May He bless you”). And the substance of the blessing:
  
2. “**May He shine**” — May the indwelling of the Shechinah, the illumination from Above, take place. As Rashi<sup>52</sup> explains the term, “*shine...* — May He show you a smiling face, a radiant face.” And in order for the indwelling of the Shechinah and the shining face to happen, Aharon asked:
  
3. “**May He raise, רָאָה**” — May Hashem be a “Forgiver, נוֹשֵׂא, of iniquity,”<sup>53</sup> as Rashi comments:<sup>54</sup> “*May He raise* — May He **suppress His anger**” and atone for the incident with the Calf.

## 8.

### THE SPECIAL BLESSING CONFERRED ON THE ALTAR

Based on the above explanation, Rashi’s intent in his next gloss is also clear: “*He descended* — from on top of the altar.”

Rashi simply means to say that only then (**after** blessing the Jewish people) did Aharon descend from the altar, since he had given his blessing while **on the altar**.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Note *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Tefillah (Nesias Kapayim)*,” ch. 15, par. 7; *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 128; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*, par. 52.

<sup>52</sup> *Bamidbar* 6:25.

<sup>53</sup> *Shemos* 34:7.

<sup>54</sup> *Bamidbar* 6:26.

<sup>55</sup> See also *Abarbanel*, *ad loc* (“according to **pshat**”); *Tzror Hamor*, *ad loc*. Likewise, this is evident in *Sotah* 38b, see there. *Malbim*, *ad loc* (sec. 16) writes that this is the view of *Toras Kohanim*, see there.

And with this remark, Rashi also makes it clear that when he said (in his previous gloss) that Aharon blessed the people with Birkas Kohanim, Rashi didn't mean that his blessing was in fulfillment of the (future) **mitzvah** of *nesias kapayim*.<sup>56</sup> If this had been the case, Aharon would not have given the blessing from the altar.<sup>57</sup> Rather, this was a special blessing of Aharon's, which came as a continuation of (and conclusion of) his **present-day service** on the altar. (And as explained, his blessing was that his earlier service should be effective.) Consequently, he recited the blessing in **immediate proximity** to the service, for which reason he was still on the altar.<sup>58</sup>

This is the point that Rashi wishes to emphasize in his comment: “*He descended* — from on top of the altar”:

When learning the verse, “He descended after offering the *chatas*,” it may seem that Scripture simply means to tell us that Aharon had concluded his **service** (with his sacrifice of the *chatas*, etc.). Such an understanding of the verse, however, would be difficult: Aharon had already finished bringing his sacrifices, so why does Scripture say (for the first time) **here** that “he descended...”?

Rashi explains Scripture means (not to tell us that “He descended **after offering the chatas...**” — that Aharon finished the **service** — rather,) that “He descended **from on top of the altar**”: Scripture means to underscore that only after Aharon had blessed the people did he descend **from the altar**. (It is as if the verse had stated, “He descended from on top of the altar.”) And the subsequent phrase in the verse, “from after offering the *chatas*..” is stated parenthetically to clarify Aharon's reason for having ascended the altar. (He had done so in order to offer the *chatas*, and so forth — not for the **purpose** of giving his blessing.)

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<sup>56</sup> {See fn. 2.}

<sup>57</sup> Because *nesias kapayim* took place on the steps of the Entrance Hall {in the Temple} (*Tamid* 7:2), so obviously, even from the lens of *halachah*, in the Mishkan, too, *nesias kapayim* would not have taken place on the altar.

<sup>58</sup> See *Abarbanel* and *Tzor Hamor*, loc. cit.

## 9.

### AHARON'S BLESSING IS FOREVER

Based on the above, clearly, we cannot deduce what Rashi maintains (according to *pshat*) was the designated time for reciting Birkas Kohanim in the future. Was it to be said *before* or *after* the burning of the limbs (of the *tamid* offering)?

After all, Rashi's point is that Aharon had chosen to recite Birkas Kohanim (*not* to fulfill the **mitzvah** of Birkas Kohanim) but its purpose was to meet a need associated with that **particular** day — related to (and as a culmination of) concluding his special service of the Eighth Day of the Inauguration, as explained.

On the other hand, although Aharon's blessing was composed especially for this day, nonetheless, this blessing has an **everlasting influence**<sup>59</sup> on all future generations — because Aharon's service, which included this blessing, effected (as explained in Section 5) the (return of the) indwelling of the Shechinah down here in our world (after the Shechinah's withdrawal because of earlier transgressions).<sup>60</sup> Aharon's service accomplished this indwelling such that from that time and onwards, the Shechinah is found (specifically) in the lower realms, **always**.

The power of Aharon's blessing is there for us always — even at night<sup>61</sup> and even in the Diaspora (where *nesias kapayim* does not take place daily),<sup>62</sup> etc. And his blessing gives us the power to endure the darkness of exile, and also to bring about again the **revelation** of the Shechinah. {We will then witness the renewed fulfillment of the Divine promise:} “I will dwell among them,” in the third *Beis HaMikdash*. May it be built speedily in our days, literally.

— Based on a talk delivered on *Shabbos parshas Shemini*, 5734 (1974)

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<sup>59</sup> {In the original, “*peulah nimsheches*”; lit., “an ongoing action.”}

<sup>60</sup> See *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 12, par. 6; ch. 13, par. 2; et al.

<sup>61</sup> Although *nesias kapayim* does not take place at night (Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 47, par. 7).

<sup>62</sup> See Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 128, par. 57.