

Rabbi's Article II

Time for a Blessing!

Upon the completion of Aharon's offerings in the *Tabernacle*, on the day of his inauguration, the verse states (-Leviticus 9:22), "And Aharon lifted up his hands towards the people and blessed them. He then descended from preparing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering," upon which Rashi comments, "And blessed them': With the blessing of the kohanim (-see Num. 6:22-27): Yivorechicha (May G-d bless you), Yoer (May G-d make His face shine), Yisa (May G-d lift His face)."

There are commentaries that see the Rashi's source to be the *Torat Kohanim*, which refers to Aharon literally performing G-d's commandment in *Book of Numbers* to the *Kohanim* to give *Priestly Blessings* (-[Link](#)), to the point that there are laws concerning the *Priestly Blessing* that we extrapolate from this verse. However, Rashi only explains the, "Simple Meaning of the Scripture," for the (-Ethics Chapter 5, Mishna 22), "Five years is the age for the study of Scripture." Hence, as Nachmanides (-[Link](#)) asks, "How can Rashi say that Aharon performed that which G-d will only command far later, in the *Book of Numbers*?!"

--Nachmanides answers that the verses aren't written in order, and that the verse in *Numbers* was really said by G-d at this point of time in *Leviticus*, by the inauguration of the *Tabernacle*, and brings proof from the verse in *Numbers* following this commandment (-ibid 7:1), "And it was that on the day that Moses finished erecting the Tabernacle." However, Rashi would have to at least told the student the rule (-See Rashi, Genesis 35:29), "There is no order of earlier and later events (chronological order) in the [narrative of] *Torah*?!"

--Other say that Rashi's reasoning is because, here Aharon alone is giving the blessing, while right after (-Leviticus 9:23) the verse states, "And Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting... and blessed the people," hence, this blessing must be one uniquely to Aharon the *Kohain*, being that on this day the *Kohanim* were inaugurated in all their services, including the *Priestly Blessing*!

However: (i) Every *Inauguration of a service*, was specifically commanded by G-d to Moses, and we don't find such a commandment concerning the *Priestly Blessing*? (ii) Why weren't Aharon's sons, also *Kohanim*, doing the *Priestly Blessing* with their father? (iii) Rashi (-Exodus 40:31) states that for the days of the inauguration Moses was a *Kohain*, as well. Hence, Moses too, should have been giving the *Priestly Blessings*?

Another question on this Rashi: Why does Rashi conclude with listing the first words of all three verses of the *Priestly Blessing*? Even if Rashi was concerned that the, "Five years is the age for the study of Scripture," doesn't know the *Priestly Blessing*, first listed in the *Book of Numbers*, Rashi would then usually just list the first word of the *entire blessing*, followed with an, "etc.?"

--Some say that these three verses, "Yivorechicha, Yoer, and Yisa," are specifically connected with the types of sacrifices that Aharon just offered: (i) *Sin Offering* -Yivorechicha (May G-d bless you and protect you): "Protect you, from sin." (ii) *Burnt Offering*, which is an atonement for *Evil Thoughts* -Yoer (May G-d shine His face upon you and favor you), "Sin of the mind, which (the mind) causes the shine of man." (iii) *Peace Offering* - Yisa (May G-d raise His countenance toward you and grant you peace)." And this is the proof that Aharon's blessing was not a general blessing, like that of King Solomon, at the inauguration of the *Holy Temple*. Hence, Rashi brings these words as his proof that it was the *Priestly Blessing*.

However, it is extremely difficult to say that Rashi, in his, "Simple Meaning of the Scripture," means such a *fine* alluding, without even pointing it out to the student?

The next Rashi on the verse is, "He then descended': From the altar."

Question: The verse itself states, "He then descended from preparing the sin offering," and the place of the *Sin Offering* is upon the *altar*, hence, what is Rashi's intention?

--Some say that being that the verse states the, "He then descended'," after the, "and blessed them," therefore, Rashi comes to tell us that Aharon did not do his blessing upon the altar and then come down, but that, first Aharon came down from the altar, and then immediately did the blessing.

However: (i) This would mandate that we say, "the verse is transposed." And even though Rashi himself has used this rule, however, a. only in extreme situations, and b. expressed explicitly, since it is contrary to, "Simple Meaning of the Scripture"! (ii) From Rashi's words, "from the altar," there isn't even a hint to anything other than what the verse itself is saying?! (iii) The *Priestly Blessing* is not a service done by the *altar*, and therefore, without Rashi telling us, we would have understood that Aharon did the *Priestly Blessing* after he descended from the altar?!

The Explanation: When Rashi says, "And blessed them': With the blessing of the kohanim," Rashi means this in its most simplest sense, that Aharon chose the verses of what was to become the *Priestly Blessing*, but not that Aharon was performing the obligatory service of a *Kohain* to do the *Priestly Blessings*! Why did Aharon choose specifically these three verses? Because, they embody exactly what Aharon wanted to bless Israel with, at the time, while he was upon the altar, just having done his *Sin Offering*! Being that the purpose of the *Tabernacle* was (-Exodus 25:8), "(And they shall make Me a sanctuary) and I will dwell in their midst," and Moses told Aharon, "This is the thing (the offerings and services of *Aharon*) G-d has commanded; do [it], and the glory of G-d will appear," hence, it is understood why Aharon is now blessing Israel! We see, when the entire Tabernacle was finished (-Exodus 39:43), that Moses had to bless (which is also a prayer) Israel, "May it be His will that the *Shechinah* should rest in the work of your hands," in order for G-d's, "and I will dwell in their midst," to happen. Therefore, Aharon understood that when he is performing the offerings of, "This is the thing... and the glory of G-d will appear," he had to give a blessing (which is also a prayer) for the mission of, "I will dwell in their midst," to be fulfilled! --Moses and Aharon would afterwards give an all encompassing blessing, but Aharon is now giving a particular blessing.

In order for Aharon's service to bring the, "I will dwell in their midst," Aharon must first obtain complete atonement for the sin of the *Golden Calf* from G-d. Therefore, Aharon chooses these specific three verses for his blessing (prayer) upon the altar, after he offers the *Sin Offering*: (i) "Yivorechicha -May G-d bless you and protect you": Being that Aharon was involved with the sin of the *Golden Calf*, hence, Aharon states that this is not about him, but about, "May G-d bless you!" (ii) "Yoer -May G-d shine His face upon you and favor you": That the, "Shine His face upon you and favor you," be that of, "a pleasant, radiant countenance." And for this to happen, Aharon continues with, (iii) "Yisa," which also includes the meaning of (-Exodus 33:7), "Noiseh (forgiving) iniquity," as Rashi defines the blessing of, "Yisa -May G-d raise His countenance toward you," to mean, "by suppressing His wrath."