

Christian Faith and Practice Through...Blessing

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26

This is another article, for those of us who are new to lifestyle of submission to the entire Word of God, on how to apply some of the teachings of the Word to everyday life. Though not intended as a complete guide on everything the Word has to say, these articles give you a pretty good start in the right direction. Blessing should be a fun subject, and would that blessing YHVH and each other was a more common occurrence, both in prayer and in person.

The word bless (and related words blessing, blesses, blessed) is mentioned in the first five books of the Bible alone around 160 times. Without a doubt YHVH desires to bless us and for us to bless each other. The Hebrew word is *barach* (bah-rock "bless") or *barachah* (bah-rock-ah "blessed or blessing"). The "ch" is made in your throat and is called a guttural, for obvious reasons. Blessing isn't a command, compared to what we normally think of as a command, but there are a few instructions for some occasions. For instance, in Deuteronomy 8:10 the Father tells us to bless Him after we eat.

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you." NASB

Notice that we bless the Father, not the food. I don't know how it got changed around to where people bless the food, but maybe it's from a misunderstanding of what Yahshua (Jesus) did before feeding the 5,000. It is recorded that He said a blessing (for instance in Matthew 14:19), but He was blessing the Father. I suppose it really doesn't matter if you bless Him

before you eat in addition to after you eat, because we should bless Him all the time anyway. It's just that we tend to forget to bless Him after we have what we want. There is a subtle difference between blessing Him when we are hungry and blessing Him after our stomach is full. Sort of like we'll say anything to get what we want but totally forget Him after we got what we want. Do you understand?

Another place where blessing instructions are found is in the reference used at the head of this article, Numbers 6:24-27. This has been called the Aaronic or Priestly Blessing (or Benediction), and it was used to bless the people of Isra'el. Even though it was given to Aaron and his sons (the priests), I believe that we can use it to bless each other with because not only are we supposed to be kings and priests (I Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10), but we are also descended from Isra'el, if for no other reason than by faith through the promise given to Abraham. Tim Hegg has an excellent article on this blessing on his website ([http://www.torahresource.com/English Articles/Aaronic Ben.pdf](http://www.torahresource.com/English%20Articles/Aaronic%20Ben.pdf)). You will need the Adobe Acrobat reader program also available for free on the site (www.torahresource.com).

Our Father says that we will receive blessings if we obey His Word (Deuteronomy 28:1-15), and curses if we do not (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Notice that the list of curses is longer than the blessings. Notice also that I am using the corporate "we" here, including us with Isra'el, because we are descendants (or offspring) of Isra'el through adoption in the Messiah, and there is to be only one Law for all God's people (Isra'el). Besides, Torah is universal in nature; it is good instructions for holy living that apply everywhere.

Blessings are associated with life in several places, such as Deuteronomy 30:19,20.

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." NASB

To be blessed does not always mean that we receive an object, like a gift or a prize. It is more like we experience an increase and fullness of life and fruit. This is directly connected to the Presence of YHVH. The Hebrew word *kalal* (kah-lahl) is translated into English as "curse," but the meaning is "withdraw." So to be blessed is to have the presence of YHVH (and the life or increase that comes with It), while to be cursed is to have Him withdraw (a terrible thought), which eventually causes decay and death. When we fill ourselves with His Words by hearing and obeying, He "draws near" and we experience the fullness of His presence, which is Life. When we disobey, He "withdraws" and we experience decay and death. Yahshua says in

John 10:10.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." NASB

Fortunately, death is not an instantaneous process, and we are given plenty of time to repent in most cases. He seems reluctant to withdraw (sort of like the picture of the *Shekinah* (glory) leaving the Temple starting at about Ezekiel 9) and returns instantly if we repent. But if we don't repent the process continues.

"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'" (Malachi 3:7 NASB)

We return to Him by returning to His statutes (the Law), and when we obey them we receive the blessing of the Father returning to us. This is the meaning James tries to get across:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8 NASB)

When the Father blesses us He is granting His presence wherein there is abundant life and fruitfulness. When we bless YHVH, we are actually acknowledging to Him and to any others listening that His Word has not returned void and that It has accomplished (or will accomplish) that which He sent It to do, that is, bear fruit. In this sense Yahshua (Jesus) is a blessing from YHVH, His Abundant Life. When we bless each other we are in essence asking for the Father to bless with His presence and fruitfulness. All blessings come from YHVH, and cannot be imparted without His presence and submission to Him. Some blessings are bestowed simply because of processes the Father already set up (like natural laws of growth). For instance, a farmer can plant seed and harvest a crop even if he does not acknowledge or obey God. If this same farmer were to skip sowing in a Sabbath year he might even be blessed somewhat because he has followed the Word. But true abundant life and blessings only occur in a relationship with YHVH.

I do not mean to imply that being blessed by YHVH means that everything always goes well for those of us who follow Him. But appearances can be deceiving even in apparently negative circumstances. For instance, the farmer may suffer a severe setback (like a hailstorm), but that does not

mean God abandoned him. It could be that He moved in a way that was momentarily uncomfortable, but produced long term gain that can't be seen right away. One of the most obvious examples I can think of to illustrate this principle is the death of our Messiah. He suffered and died a most agonizing death, but that death meant life everlasting for those of us who hear and obey. There are also many blessings that belong to Yahshua because of His obedience to the Father in this matter.

The age-old question of "why do bad things happen to good people;" or the corollary "why do good things happen to bad people?" might pop up here. But there are at least two things on which to inquire further: are we sure of our definitions of good and bad? God measures good and bad differently than people do. For instance, having a lot of money might seem like a blessing (good), but in my experience it is not a good thing in most cases. Good and bad things from our perception don't necessarily mean the same thing from God's. Blessings mean far more than just a good event, while curses are far worse than just a bad event.

Another Hebrew word for blessing is *esher* (eh-share, happiness). This word means a blessing that is received for doing something, like the happiness that comes from doing a good deed. If the word "blessed" in Matthew 5 were to be translated into Hebrew, it would be the word *esher* (or *asherei*). It essentially means that happiness is gained for the characteristics displayed. When we please our Father by right behavior, He blesses us by increasing our fruit (as in the fruit of the Spirit). Yahshua (Jesus) is saying in Matthew 5:3-12 that happiness comes from being the type of person that is poor in spirit (humble), mourns, is gentle, hungers and thirsts for God (righteousness), is merciful, pure, a peacemaker, and persecuted for doing right. This happiness is the result of being in right standing with God, and

the person who displays these qualities has that happiness. People can be blessed in the sense of *esher*, but not YHVH, because He does not stop being "happy" like we do. He does not change (Malachi 3:6). Without doing a huge word study I think this is also the same as having shalom, which is not the absence of hardship or suffering but the presence of God.

Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances. Those who follow after wickedness draw near; they are far from Your law. You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth. Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever. (Psalm 119:149-152)

When YHVH blesses, His blessings are all one way, from Him to us. We can bless Him by obedience to His Word, which is the meaning of not letting His word return void (literally means without life or fruit or increase). So go ahead and bless the socks off of yourself and everybody else by obedience to His Word and by desiring the same for the entire world. Below are some blessing phrases you can learn and say as the occasion warrants. First is a transliteration of the Hebrew to help you pronounce it, then the English translation.

Blessing for food (or bread)

Baruch ha tah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha olam, ha-motzee lechem meen ho-o-retz

Blessed are you O Lord our God, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Blessing for drink (wine)

Baruch ha tah, Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha olam, bo-ray p'ri ha-go-fen

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

The Aaronic (or Priestly) Blessing

Y'va-reh-ch'cha ADONAI v'yish-m'reh-cha

The LORD bless you, and keep you

Ya-eir ADONAI pa-nav ei-leh-cha vi-chu-neh-cha

The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you

Yi-sa ADONAI pa-nav ei-leh-cha

The LORD lift up His face upon you

V'ya-saym l'cha sha-lom

and give you peace.

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not

have the life. I John 5:12 NASB

May the Father bless you and keep you
Bruce Scott Bertram