

THE BLESSING!

(Scripture: Numbers 6:22-26)

Num. 6:22-26. 22Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, In this way you shall bless the sons of Israel. You are to say to them: 24The LORD bless you, and [i]keep you; 25The LORD cause His face to shine on you, And be gracious to you; 26The LORD lift up His face to you, And give you peace. 27So they shall [m]invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and then I will bless them.”

Introduction:

I would like to share different passages that may be relevant to our time.

I want to point out an interesting passage about health first:

Numbers 5:1-3. 1Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp everyone with leprosy, everyone having a discharge, and everyone who is unclean because of contact with a dead person. 3You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they do not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.”

Isolation, and quarantining is not something new. It is needed at times. When we have any contagious disease, it is better to self-quarantine, even if it is just cold, cough or fever. But unfortunately, our work demands our presence, no matter how sick we are. The manager may insist that they may gain productivity in the short run, but in the long run, they lose because many people get sick in the long run.

Numbers 5:6,7. , 6 Speak to the sons of Israel: When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against the LORD, and that person is guilty, 7then [a]he shall confess [b]his sin which [c]he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it a fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged.”

But if there is no one to give for restitution, he must do it through sacrifice of a ram in the temple, and the portion goes to the priest.

Restitutions is an important part of law. If we hurt someone accidentally or deliberately, we must pay the restitution.

The law of the Nazarites.

Numbers 6:2-4. 2 Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, When a man or woman makes [a]a special vow, namely, the vow of a [b]Nazirite, to live as a Nazirite for the LORD, 3he shall abstain from wine and [c]strong drink; he shall [d]consume no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh

or dried grapes. 4All the days of his consecration he shall not eat anything that is produced from the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin.

The Hebrew word for nazirite is “nazir”. It means consecrated or devoted. But it is erroneously linked with nazirite, or Nazarenes, and with Jesus as Nazarene. Jesus was never a nazirite. He did drink wine and perhaps grape juice also. But it is possible, John the Baptist was a nazirite.

Let us take a quick look at the nazirite vow before we talk about the blessing.

Nazirite vow

Numbers 6:5-8. 5 All the days of his vow of consecration no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled which he lives as a Nazirite for the LORD; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long. 6 All the days of his life as a Nazirite for the LORD he shall not come up to a dead person. 7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his consecration to God is [e]on his head. 8 All the days of his consecration he is holy to the LORD.

No razor on his head or the beard. It was voluntary and carried out for a specific period.

He cannot come near a dead body, even if it is his own parents or siblings or children or his own wife.

He is considered holy, and he is separated unto God.

We as Christians are Nazirites in our own way. We make a vow through the waters of baptism saying that we will die to sin and live for Christ alone. But this vow is not for a period, but for life eternally.

Romans 12:1,2. 1 I beseech[a] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your [b]reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Our God has given us a higher calling and has declared us holy because of His son Jesus Christ. We must take our baptism vow seriously and live for Him who died for our sins.

Numbers 6:13-15. 13 Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his consecration are fulfilled: he shall bring [h]his offering to the entrance of the tent of meeting. 14 And he shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb a year old without defect as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb a year old without defect as a sin offering, one ram without defect as a peace offering, 15 and a basket of unleavened

loaves of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering.

The nazirites will end their vow with expensive sacrifices. Sometimes, we become confused over all these different kinds of sacrifices. I would like to simplify these sacrifices so that you may understand every time you hear these words.

We may be familiar with **sin offering**, (for the sins of commission and omission, and sins that were committed knowingly as well as unknowingly), **Burnt offering** always stands for complete offering of ourselves! (a symbol of total surrender). The **peace offering** stands for reconciliation with God and finding peace with Him. We were hostile against God, when we engage in sinful activities, our sin offering pays the penalty for it, the burnt offering symbolizes our surrender, and peace offering tears down the walls of hostility. The **grain offering** and **drink offering** stand for thanksgiving offering!

Numbers 6:18. 18The Nazirite shall then shave his consecrated head of hair at the entrance of the tent of meeting and take the consecrated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings.

Finally, the nazirite vow ends when he shaves his head off.

Samson was a nazirite all his life. His strength he lost not because his hair was shaven, but because his nazirite vow was violated.

Paul also took nazirite vow, but when he went to offer sacrifices to end his vow, he was arrested, and taken under Roman custody.

Now let us look at the blessing passage!

Numbers 6:22-26. 22Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, In this way you shall bless the sons of Israel. You are to say to them: 24The LORD bless you, and [!]keep you; 25The LORD cause His face to shine on you, And be gracious to you; 26The LORD lift up His face to you, And give you peace. 27So they shall [m]invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and then I will bless them.”

The blessing!

The Lord teaches Moses about blessing the Israelites.

The Lord! YHWH. YEHOVAH.

All three times same Hebrew word.

It comes three times. The Jews feel that there is some mystery behind this threefold, “the Lord”. But Christians think that it points to the mystery of Trinity. But in my humble opinion, it gives the emphasis that it is from the Lord that all blessings flow!

It is the Lord who will bless you and keep you, protect you and preserve you!

It is the Lord who will cause His face to shine upon you.

It is the Lord that lifts up His countenance upon you.

We may spiritualize this passage as we please, but what does it mean exactly in its historical context? The meaning becomes straight forward if we read this passage as what God intends, and what God can, and what He will do! Insert the “will” part, and it gives us clear meaning of this passage.

The Lord will bless you and keep you.

The Lord will cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord will lift His face, or countenance upon you and give peace!

What does it mean, to cause His face to shine upon you or to lift His face to you? To understand God turning His face toward us we should look into God’s response toward the wicked. He hides His face from the wicked. He turns His face away from them. He moves far away from them. But with His people, He will turn His face toward them. He will cause His face to shine upon them and glorify them through His Shekinah. The Lord will lift His face to look at you as a mother would look at her baby with deep love in her heart. He will look toward you to protect you as the pupil of His eyes. He will constantly look toward you to keep your heart at peace by sending His Spirit of peace and show you that tender loving kindness!

The Hebrew word for “bless” is “Barak” (pronounced as “bawrak”). This one word can take up various forms (technical jargon for these forms called “piel form” in Hebrew depending upon the context). The Hebrew word barak means to kneel as seen in Genesis 24:11. Abraham’s servant Eliezer goes to Nahor to find a virtuous woman for Isaac. He made the camels kneel before a well! The word here Bawrak. It is an appropriate meaning for us if we say, “we bless you Lord!” It will mean then, we kneel before you Lord, we will serve you, we will surrender our life as a gift and bless you!

But what about God saying to Abraham, I will bless you? God cannot kneel before a man! However, when written in this Hebrew so called ‘piel form’ it takes the meaning of showing respect (usually translated as bless) as seen in Genesis 12:2, God tells Abraham, “I will bless you”. There is another related word to Bawrak..... it is “berakhah” meaning a “gift or present”. From this we can see the verb barak. It is to bring a gift to another while kneeling out of respect. The extended meaning of this word is to do or give something of value to another. God "respects" us by providing for our needs and we in turn, respect God by giving him of ourselves as gift and serving Him all the days of our lives.

Jesus came as a gift from heaven, and God blessed us indeed through His Son!

Philippians 2:5-11 is my favorite passage. Jesus, even though He was in the form of God, equal with God, He voluntarily emptied and humbled Himself, took the form of a

slave, served His Father and us, became obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross!

Jesus indeed blessed the Father by emptying Himself, humbling Himself to become one of us as human, became a bondservant or slave, and was obedient to His Father even unto death.

(There are 4 great topics in this one little passage: emptying oneself (Gk. kenosis), humility, servant hood, obedience. Perhaps, we can use this passage as our retreat passage, and you could prepare some inspirational thoughts concerning any one of these four topics for five to ten minutes share it among us to edify us. Ask God to speak to you, write it down, and share with us! I would like to hear what the Lord has to say through all of us!).

Going back to Bawrak, God did bless us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who emptied Himself, humbled Himself, served us to meet all our needs, obeyed His Father even unto death, died for our sins, and rose again for justification. God did bless Abraham's descendants through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. He did bless us through the eternal life, and the promise land, which is in Heaven. God has fulfilled His promise through Jesus Christ, His Son.

Now it is our turn to bless our Redeemer. Can we bless our God also in return? Let us examine ourselves and prepare ourselves for the table.

Let me summarize the important points:

Conclusion:

1. Take your health warnings seriously and quarantine.
2. Restitution is an important part of the law. Remember Zacchaeus, how he was willing to reimburse fourfold!
3. Our nazarite vow is waters of baptism, and it is for eternity.
4. God will bless us, but we must bless Him also by kneeling before Him and offering our life to Him totally!

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