

Numbers 6:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,

Analysis

This verse introduces the Aaronic benediction, commanding Aaron and his sons to pronounce blessing upon Israel. The Hebrew verb 'barak' (בָּרַךְ, 'bless') signifies more than mere well-wishing—it conveys empowerment, enrichment, and divine favor actively bestowed. God Himself prescribes the precise words and manner of blessing, demonstrating that true blessing flows from divine authority, not human invention. The phrase 'On this wise' establishes the exact formula that follows in verses 24-26, emphasizing liturgical precision in worship. This divine authorization transforms priestly words into channels of God's actual blessing—the priests speak, but God blesses. The benediction's threefold structure (verses 24-26) corresponds to the Trinity and represents complete, comprehensive blessing. This verse establishes the principle that God mediates blessing through appointed representatives, foreshadowing Christ our High Priest who blesses all who come to the Father through Him (Hebrews 7:25).

Historical Context

Numbers 6:23 appears within the wilderness period legislation, following instructions about Nazirite vows and preceding the tribal offerings at the tabernacle's dedication (approximately 1446-1406 BC). The Aaronic priesthood had recently been established following the Exodus and Sinai covenant. Ancient Near Eastern cultures widely practiced priestly blessings, but Israel's benediction was unique in being divinely prescribed word-for-word rather than left to human creativity. The blessing was pronounced regularly in tabernacle and later temple

worship, becoming central to Jewish liturgy. Evidence from the Ketef Hinnom archaeological discovery (7th century BC) shows the Aaronic benediction inscribed on silver amulets, demonstrating its early and widespread use in Israel. The blessing continued in synagogue worship and remains central to Jewish liturgy today.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's prescription of exact blessing words demonstrate the importance of biblical fidelity in worship?
2. What does the priestly role as channel (not source) of blessing teach about Christian ministry today?
3. How does the Aaronic benediction's threefold structure reflect Trinitarian theology?
4. In what ways does this passage anticipate Christ's high priestly ministry of blessing His people?
5. How should we balance liturgical precision with authentic, heartfelt worship in our churches?

Interlinear Text

אֶל	אֶהְרֹן	וְאֶל	בְּנֵי י	אָמַר	כֹּה
Speak	unto Aaron		and unto his sons	saying	On this wise
H1696	H413 H175	H413	H1121	H559	H3541
תְּבָרֵךְ וְ	אֶת	בְּנֵי י	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל	אָמַר	לָהֶם:
ye shall bless		and unto his sons	of Israel	saying	
H1288	H853	H1121	H3478	H559	H0

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 23:13 (Blessing): The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.

Deuteronomy 21:5 (Blessing): And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

Hebrews 7:1 (Blessing): For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 Corinthians 13:14 (Parallel theme): The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Genesis 47:7 (Blessing): And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Genesis 48:20 (Blessing): And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

2 John 1:3 (Parallel theme): Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.