

Numbers 6:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

Analysis

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee. This opens the magnificent Aaronic benediction, one of Scripture's most beautiful blessings. The divine name YHWH (Yahweh) begins each of the three blessings, emphasizing that blessing flows from God's covenant character. The verb "bless" (barak, בָּרָךְ) means to endue with power for success, prosperity, and well-being—comprehensively providing what is needed for abundant life.

"Keep thee" (shamreka, שָׁמַרְךָ) means to guard, protect, watch over—like a shepherd keeping his flock. This protective keeping encompasses both preservation from evil and positive guidance toward good. God's blessing is not passive good wishes but active, powerful provision and protection. The combination of blessing and keeping covers both positive bestowal and negative prevention, ensuring comprehensive divine care.

This benediction was to be pronounced upon Israel by the priests, God's appointed mediators. Through Aaron's sons, God Himself blessed His people—the priests merely spoke the words, but God provided the reality. This anticipates Christ our great High Priest who blesses all who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). The triple structure (three blessings) suggests completeness and corresponds to the Trinity's work in blessing believers.

Historical Context

This passage from **Nazirite Vow and Priestly Blessing** must be understood within its ancient Near Eastern context. The wilderness period (approximately 1446-1406 BCE using early Exodus chronology, or 1290-1250 BCE using late chronology) represents a formative period in Israel's national and spiritual development. Archaeological discoveries from Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia provide important background for understanding Israel's experiences.

The organizational structures described here reflect common ancient Near Eastern administrative practices while being uniquely adapted to Israel's theocratic covenant. Egyptian, Hittite, and Mesopotamian texts reveal similar census procedures, military organization, and priestly systems. However, Israel's tabernacle-centered arrangement with YHWH dwelling among His people was unprecedented—most ancient peoples built temples as homes for gods, not portable sanctuaries for a God who journeyed with His people.

The Sinai wilderness, a harsh environment of rocky mountains and desert valleys, could not naturally sustain a population of 2-3 million people. Israel's survival required continuous miraculous provision—manna, water, and preserved clothing (Deuteronomy 29:5). This setting deliberately forced dependence on God, preventing self-sufficiency and requiring daily trust in divine provision.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage's emphasis on consecration deepen your understanding of God's character and His work in His people's lives?
2. In what specific ways can you apply the principles of Nazirite vow to your current life circumstances and spiritual journey?

3. How does this passage anticipate Christ's person and work, and how does seeing Christ in this text transform your understanding and application?

Interlinear Text

בָּרוּךְ יְהִי הָאָמֵן
bless The LORD thee and keep
H1288 H3068 H8104

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (References Lord): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:7 (Parallel theme): And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Jude 1:24 (Parallel theme): Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Isaiah 42:6 (References Lord): I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

John 17:11 (Parallel theme): And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Psalms 91:11 (Parallel theme): For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

Psalms 134:3 (Blessing): The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

Ruth 2:4 (Blessing): And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

Psalms 17:8 (Parallel theme): Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

1 Samuel 2:9 (Parallel theme): He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

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