

Numbers 6:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

Analysis

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The second line of the Aaronic blessing intensifies the imagery with God's "face shining" upon His people. In Hebrew thought, the face represents the person—God's face shining indicates His favorable attention, approval, and pleasure. When a king's face shone upon a subject, it meant favor and acceptance. Divine disapproval is described as God hiding His face (Psalm 27:9).

The shining face imagery may allude to the theophanic glory that shone from God's presence in the tabernacle and later filled the temple. God's face shining means His glorious presence illuminating lives with guidance, joy, and blessing. This connects to Psalm 4:6, "LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us," and anticipates the ultimate revelation of God's glory in Christ's face (2 Corinthians 4:6).

"Be gracious" (chanan, חָנָן) expresses God's unmerited favor—grace given not because we deserve it but because of God's character. Grace flows from God's sovereign choice to show compassion and mercy. This gracious disposition toward His people underlies all covenant blessings. The combination of God's favorable presence (face shining) and gracious disposition (being gracious) assures believers of both God's attention and His kindness.

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 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

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

רֹאֵה נָתַן יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה
shine The LORD make his face H413 upon thee and be gracious
H215 H3068 H6440 H2603

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 80:19 (References Lord): Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Psalms 119:135 (Parallel theme): Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

Psalms 31:16 (Parallel theme): Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

Psalms 67:1 (Grace): God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.

Daniel 9:17 (References Lord): Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

Psalms 80:7 (Parallel theme): Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Exodus 33:19 (Grace): And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

Malachi 1:9 (Grace): And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

Genesis 43:29 (Grace): And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

John 1:17 (Grace): For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

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