

**RESPECTING THE NAME**  
**A Devotional Meditation from**  
**Exodus 20:7; Numbers 6:22-27; Jeremiah 31:31-37, 46:27-28; Ezekiel 39:25-29;**  
**Luke 20:19-20; Galatians 3:29**  
Albert J. McCarn  
July 10, 2021

A high point of Christian worship during the very hard year of 2020 was “The Blessing.”\* Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes of Elevation Worship released the song at just the right time to bring encouragement to struggling believers around the world. The lyrics are based on a significant blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26 –

The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and  
be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and  
give you peace.

This is called the Aaronic Blessing because God commanded that Aaron and the priests of Israel use these words when blessing the people. Here is the passage in context:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,  
The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.  
So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and  
I will bless them.

Numbers 6:22-27 NRSV

Notice the significance of God’s command. This is not just any blessing, but the Creator’s specific instruction for how His anointed priests are to *place His holy Name on the covenant people He has chosen*. That is why this priestly blessing is said daily in synagogues and Jewish assemblies around the world.

There may be some who question the validity of this Jewish practice. If the Jews were exiled from the Promised Land after they rejected the Messiah, then surely this no longer applies to them, or so the reasoning goes. But is that consistent with what God says? Consider this passage, proclaimed at the time the Babylonians were about to destroy Judah, the last independent kingdom of Israel in ancient times:



“High Priest of Israel,” illustration from [The Jewish Tabernacle and Priesthood](#), George C. Needham, Library of Congress, 1874.

---

\* A video of “The Blessing” is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6aygmvmzM4>.

“But you, fear not, Jacob My servant, nor be dismayed, O Israel. For behold, I will save you from afar, your offspring from the land of their exile. And Jacob will return and be at peace and secure, no one frightening him. Fear not, Jacob My servant”—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—“for I am with you. I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, but I will not make a full end of you. I will discipline you with justice, but will not utterly destroy you.” (Jeremiah 46:26-28 TLV)

This is a word of hope from Jeremiah. Another word of hope delivered about the same time comes from Ezekiel:

Therefore thus says *ADONAI Elohim*: “Now I will restore Jacob from exile, when I have compassion on the whole house of Israel. I will be zealous for My holy Name. They will bear their shame and all their disloyalty by which they broke faith with Me, when they were living securely in their land, with no one making them afraid. When I have brought them back from the peoples and have gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, I will be sanctified in them in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am *ADONAI* their God, since it was I who caused them to go into exile among the nations and I who will gather them back to their own land. I will never again leave them there. I will never again hide My face from them. For I have poured out My *Ruach* upon the house of Israel.” It is a declaration of *ADONAI*. (Ezekiel 39:25-29 TLV)

Passages like these indicate God is still working with and through the nation of Israel to bring redemption to the whole world. The Jewish people, who are the heart of Israel, still have a place in His plans. What puzzles us on the Christian side of the family is how this works. All we know is that the promises given to Israel apply to us now, which is true. As Paul explains, we are part of the nation of Israel once we proclaim allegiance to Israel’s Messiah and King. In Christ we are Abraham’s seed and heirs to the Covenant God made with Abraham, and through him with Israel, the nation he fathered. Thus it is right for us to pronounce the Aaronic Blessing ourselves. This is the New Covenant, which Messiah Yeshua Himself proclaimed, according to Luke:

And when He had taken *matzah* and offered the *bracha*, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, given for you. Do this in memory of Me.” In the same way, He took the cup after the meal, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 20:19-20 TLV)

But what exactly is the New Covenant? We go back to Jeremiah for the answer:

“Behold, days are coming”—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” It is a declaration of *ADONAI*. “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—“I will put My *Torah* within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will each teach his neighbor or each his brother, saying: ‘Know *ADONAI*,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.” It is a declaration of *ADONAI*. “For I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:30-33 (31-34) TLV; see also Hebrews 8:8-12)

Our Redeeming God brought us into this New Covenant through the atoning work of His Messiah. This Covenant is actually the renewal of the Covenant He made with Israel, which is why it has no expiration date, as Jeremiah's next words explain:

Thus says *ADONAI*, who gives the sun as a light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars as a light by night, who stirs up the sea so its waves roar, *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* is His Name: "Only if this fixed order departs from before Me"—it is a declaration of *ADONAI*—"then also might Israel's offspring cease from being a nation before Me—for all time." Thus says *ADONAI*: "Only if heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then also I will cast off the offspring of Israel—for all they have done." It is a declaration of *ADONAI*. (Jeremiah 31:34-36 TLV [35-37])

Notice that our Redeemer God says His Name is at stake in this matter. This is the heavenly equivalent of a man betting his life on his ability to live up to a promise. Our Creator deems humanity so important that He is willing to risk everything on His ability to come through with His promise of redemption. The question is whether we believe and trust Him.

Do we believe He will fulfill His promises to Israel?

Do we trust Him that He is somehow still working through the Jewish people because they are the visible remnant of God's Covenant Nation of Israel?

Do we believe the Aaronic Blessing is still in effect, and that the Name of the Almighty is still on the Jewish people, as it is on all who are connected with them in this Covenant Nation?

There is no requirement that we understand all this. In fact, we probably will not understand it on this side of eternity. However, if we believe, then we can and should understand something of our role in this process, which has not always been good.

For two thousand years, our history – the history of the church – has included a continuous pronouncement of curses on the Jewish people.

Knowing what we now know, what might that mean in God's eyes in light of this commandment?

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain. (Exodus 20:7 NKJV)