

WITH LOVE

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The Torah's longest portion - Naso - contains the great blessing of the Kohanim. The nation's Kohanim were not only commanded to serve in the Bet HaMikdash but were also required to bestow blessing on the Jewish people with the three unique verses contained in this week's parashah. G-d's desire to bless His people was directed through His servants the Kohanim. The Sefer Hinuch says: It is our task to make ourselves worthy of His goodness and to ask His Chosen ones to speak the words He assigned to them for our benefit.

The blessing that the Kohanim recite before doing the commandment is different than all other blessings we say prior to misvah performance. Others blessings say: "Who sanctified us with His commandments" while here the Kohen says: "Who sanctified us with the holiness of Aharon". Another difference is that here we say: "to bless His people WITH LOVE" while in all other blessings concerning misvot we only mention the physical act required for misvah performance [to eat, to hear, to don etc.] It would seem that love is an essential ingredient in fulfillment of Hashem's wishes.

Aharon Hakohen was an individual unique amongst the 3 million who traversed the desert after the exodus from Egypt. "Lover of peace, a pursuer of peace; lover of mankind and one who worked to bring them closer to Torah" is the way he is described by our sages. On his breastplate the names of all the tribes were inscribed signifying unity of the Chosen People. In the blessings of Moshe Rabenu at the end of his life we see that each tribe had unique characteristics and talents. Each pursued a different aspect in the service of G-d. Yet, like the spokes of a wheel, their diversity met at the hub - dedication to Torah and the G-d who granted it as a heritage to the people of Israel. Throughout his life Aharon brought people together by teaching and living love of one's brother. Disputes between neighbors and spats between spouses were resolved through his wisdom and love.

On the other hand, Aharon was the head of all the Kohanim - the one who wore special garments of honor and who entered the inner sanctuary on the holiest day of the year - Yom Kippur - in order to pray on behalf of the forgiveness and the well-being of the masses. This required a higher level of Kedushah - sanctity - not only of the people - but even the holy family of Kohanim.

It was Aharon's perfect service, his dedication to his brethren and his unifying love that earned his offspring the right to bear the privilege of blessing the people. When the Kohanim of later generations went up to bless they preceded the misvah performance with a blessing that expresses the root of their honor. The sanctity of Aharon and the love he showed his people. This is the blessing Kohanim recite until this day. All should learn that the traits of Aharon should be practiced

by all so that we may have Hashem smile down upon His children and prompt redemption speedily and in our days. Amen

Shabbat Shalom.

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