

The Oldest Bible Verse Found

22Again Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 23“Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying: Thus you are to bless Bnei-Yisrael, by saying to them: 24‘Adonai bless you and keep you! 25Adonai make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you! (Cf. Romans 1:7: “To all those in Rome, loved by God, called to be kedoshim: Grace to you and shalom from God our...”) 26Adonai turn His face toward you and grant you shalom!’ 27In this way they are to place My Name over (KJV, put My Name upon)Bnei-Yisrael, and so I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

The oldest complete fragment of *Torah* (dated >400 years before the Dead Sea Scrolls) is the *Aaronic Benediction*. In 1979, the oldest copy of this verse was found accidentally at a dig site in Israel. The late Gabriel Barkay was one of the most well-known archaeologists in Israel, famous for foundational role in the Temple Mount sifting project. However, when he was a doctorate student he was conducting an excavation at a necropolis outside the Old City in Jerusalem. The site was in the *Valley of Hinnom (Ketef Hinnom)* near St. Andrew’s.

At first, Barkay’s crew found British Mandate period guns and Ottoman period coins. They found the threshold of an intact church from 500 CE. Then they came upon a crematorium for a Roman army. Eventually, they reached the layer of First Temple period tombs. According to Barkay, he hosted a youth archaeology club at the site in 1979. A 12-year-old boy named Nathan was a particular annoyance. He kept asking questions and shadowing Barkay too closely. Barkay gave Nathan an unimportant task to keep him busy. He wanted the boy to clean out a cave and prepare it for a photographer. Instead, Nathan found a hammer and decided to strike the ancient flooring. At least, they thought it was flooring. It turned out to be a ceiling for a concealed chamber underneath. The chamber dated back to the 6th century BCE. It contained intact pottery, jewelry, and precious stones. They also found *two small silver amulets*. These were charms worn on a necklace. Inside the amulets were *miniature silver scrolls*. It took the antiquities authorities 3 years to open the silver scrolls. Once they did, they found tiny ancient Hebrew letters. It was the *Priestly Blessing!*

The silver scrolls are the earliest occurrence of a biblical text in an extra-biblical document. They predate the Dead Sea Scrolls by 500 years. The discovery challenged biblical critics who argued for a late authorship of the *Torah*. This find showed that the chronicling of biblical texts happened long before the exile to Babylon. The amulet also contained the *oldest biblical text referencing the tetragrammaton*.

The meaning of text in Hebrew is way MORE than what the English renders because English is abstract but Hebrew is concrete. Praying anything in Hebrew (and especially the Aaronic Benediction) affirms that we are in the *Father’s hands* and because of it we are *healed, sleep insomnia* gone, *provision* comes, etc. Here are some keys. **Key 1:** This is the **ONLY prayer the Father Himself wrote**. **Key 2:** Hebrew has far **deeper meaning** than the English. When prayed in Hebrew it releases **power and impartation**. **Key 3:** a Jewish Cohen Gadol must pronounce it over you. *Yeshua* is that **High Priest**. **Key 4:** the prayer was always chanted in Hebrew. Let me expound (and unpack) this for you:

Yevarechecha Adonai: “The Lord bless you.” May ***YHVH your heavenly Father*** (He who is {exists}) ***barech*** (kneel) before you, so He can respond with the covenant response of ***hineni*** to give you His **undivided attention** (Ian in his message ‘*A Covenant of Worship*’ on March 11, 2012 defined ***hineni*** as the covenant response of ‘*You have my full attention and nothing is distracting me. Everything that I am and have is at your disposal.*’) The good ***Father kneels before His child*** (you) with hands extended in order to minister and bestow His covenant comfort, His covenant gifts and His covenant promises to you!

Ve-Yishmerecha: “and keep you.” (This is the future vav-conversive form of *shamar*, to guard). May *YHVH your heavenly Father* (He who is {exists}) *guard* (military guarding, what Adam was supposed to do in the Garden over his wife) you with a hedge of protection (*His embrace*) that prevents Satan and all your enemies from harming your body, soul and spirit, mind will and emotions, and your loved ones and all your possessions.

Yaer Adonai Panav Eilecha: “May the Lord make His face to shine over you.” May *YHVH your heavenly Father* (He who is {exists}) *illuminate (Reveal)* with the wholeness of His being toward you (*Yaer* comes the verb *OR*, to produce light) and *panav eilecha* means literally ‘in your face’ – bringing you to order so you will fulfill your God-given destiny and purpose because of His Revelation.

Vi-chunecha: “And be gracious unto you.” May *YHVH your heavenly Father* (He who is {exists}) provide you with *perfect love and fellowship* (never leaving you) by giving you sustenance, provision and friendship. This is where He says to you *“You are my son (daughter) and I am well pleased”* (the same He said to *Yeshua* at the Jordan: *‘You are My Son, whom I love – with You I am well pleased!’ (Luke 3:22)*. Later in Matthew He said: *“This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” (Matt. 17:5)*.

Yissa Adonai Panav Eilecha: “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you.” May *YHVH your heavenly Father* (He who is {exists}) lift up (*nassah* means to lift up and carry) and carry His FULLNESS of being toward you (bringing everything that He is to your disposition), supporting you with His divine embrace and His entire being. He will *carry you like the shepherd carries his lambs* and like the pictorial of *Yeshua* where there is only one set of footprints.

Veasem Lecha Shalom: “And give you peace.” Shalom means much more than absence of war or being still. May *YHVH your heavenly Father* (He who is {exists}) set in place all you need to be whole and complete so you can walk in victory, moment by moment, by the power of His Holy Spirit. May *He give you supernatural health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfection, fullness, rest, harmony, as well as the absence of agitation and discord*.

Verse 27 concludes Chapter 6: *“So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”* The priests were the medium but *Yah Adonai Our Elohim* was the one actively blessing his people. What does *‘I will put my name upon them’* mean? To put His Name (*shem*) upon you means to *place on you His character, Power, and Authority*, i.e., an *impartation*. The only thing exalted more than His Name is *Torah*. When He breathed upon the man in Genesis the Hebrew word used is *nashem* – He imparted from His own being life to Adam. *The Almighty* put a mark upon Cain *‘...so that anyone who found him would not strike him down’ (Gen. 4:15)*. How much more does *the impartation of His Name upon you mean?*

At the onset of the pandemic, Chris Brown, Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes and Steve Furtick released a song adaptation of the *Aaronic Benediction*. The song, *The Blessing*, quickly became the worship anthem for the global church during very difficult times. Mr. Baldwin played us the song for the first Men’s Meeting of 2020.

Clearly we can have an *intimate relationship with the Father through this prayer*. Here is the missing link. We are in a *fatherless generation* but have access to the *Heavenly Father* but are we not going take advantage of it? Oh yes we are! *Shabbat Shalom!*