

In this sedra we have the famous three-fold blessing of the cohanim (6:24-26):

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| (1) <b>The Lord bless you and keep you.</b>                                   | יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ                             |
| (2) <b>The Lord make His face shine upon you,<br/>and be gracious to you.</b> | וַיֵּאָר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ<br>וַיַּחַנֶּךָ              |
| (3) <b>The Lord lift up His countenance to you,<br/>and give you peace.</b>   | וַיִּשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ<br>וַיִּשָּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם |

Notice the buildup both in the length of the three verses, from three words to five words and finally seven words, and in the promises made from the simple blessing to the final statement of being given peace.

Rashi, on the other hand, explains these three verses as consisting of essentially of one continuing theme, that of material well-being and possessions.

On “Bless you” - he explains that this means with wealth & possessions.

On “Keep you” - he says that thieves will not come to take your wealth. This is because one who is given a gift is always worrying that thieves may come and steal it, so he has no enjoyment from the gift, however the Lord promises that He will guard over this wealth that He will give you, so that you will enjoy it.

“Shine His face upon you” – show you a glad face, a shining face, to increase your enjoyment of the wealth.

“Be gracious to you” - give you grace, חן , charm, favour.

“Lift up His countenance to you” – cover his anger, even if you do wrong, He will not be angry with you, you will still enjoy the wealth He gave you.

However, we can also explain these verses another way, which brings us back to the theme of the buildup over the verses.

“Give you grace” – this can also mean enjoyment, peace of mind and contentment.

“Give you peace” – the word שְׁלוֹם can be read to mean that you will be at peace, in your mind – without concerns – with your family and friends – because of the grace. We also say in Hebrew מַה שְׁלוֹמְךָ – how are you ? meaning how is your health, so to give you שְׁלוֹם also means to give you good health.

Finally we talk about שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת family harmony and peace, where everyone gets on with each other.

Thus the final verse of “giving you peace” can be understood as representing all these different aspects of blessing which the Lord will give us via his agents the cohanim (Priests – the descendants of Aharon).

May we indeed be blessed with all these things when we receive each day the three-fold blessing from the cohanim.