

Did you know this? The earliest, most ancient archaeological discovery containing the name of God (Yahweh) was found in a Judean burial cave (25) at Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem, in 1979. The discovery was two tiny silver scrolls. *Show pic.* The scrolls date to ~7th century B.C. It took archaeologists three years to unroll. And, they are believed to be the oldest surviving text of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible.

What does it say? It's Aaron's blessing. Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV) says, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." Aaron and his sons were told to put God's name upon the people and bless them. Leviticus 9:22a (ESV) says, "Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them."

The Lutheran Cyclopedia says (Yes, there is such a cyclopedia!) this, "Aaron's blessing was used in Temple and synagogue at the end of the liturgical part of the service. This benediction was used in the early church and was retained by Luther as the only one commanded by God. It conveys to the assembly of God, which has accepted the salvation of God in the means of grace, the blessing of the Triune God."

Today, let's look at... *The Lord bless you and keep you.* In these three Hebrew words (The English has seven.), the Lord's blessing and keeping are placed upon and pronounced to God's people, us. *barak* means

“to abundantly bless”. *shamar* means “to keep, guard, preserve, and watch”. They are temporal and eternal, physical and spiritual. They are God’s words of promise to us! Hear **Psalm 21 (ESV)** on the matter.

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

Today, **1. Welcome God’s blessing!** “Lord” is spoken three times and “you” six times. Believe it. Say it, “The Lord bless ME and keep ME.” **2. Wear God’s blessing!** The scroll found in 1979 was an amulet. Wear God’s name as your identification mark! **3. Witness God’s blessing!** **2 Corinthians 1:20a (ESV)** says, “All the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus.” Someone you know needs to hear these words from God!

Let’s pray, Lord, **1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)** says, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Lord, You daily and richly bless us and keep us. Help us welcome and wear this blessing. Also, help us witness this blessing to our family, friends, those foreign to us, and even our foes. Amen.