

the specific preparation of the Levites for their work in the service of the tabernacle. The fifth is an account of the first great memorial Passover, one year after the event which the Passover memorializes, and a statement of new regulations in connection with it.

a. The formula for blessing the congregation (6:22-27)

This brief section presents a formula for the priests to use in blessing the congregation. Verses 22 and 23 introduce it, and verse 27 gives a concluding promise. The blessing itself consists of three verses, 24-26. It is one of the most beautiful and best-known sections of the book of Numbers.

Those who deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch generally divide these five books into documents, claiming that more primitive passages are found in the early documents, and that the later ones, which are supposed to be more spiritual and less anthropomorphic, were written at a much later time. They place this section in the latest document which they call 'P'. Therefore it is worth noting that, with all its spirituality, the blessing contains statements which are markedly anthropomorphic, e.g., the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee (25,26). This illustrates the fact that anthropomorphism is not inconsistent with spirituality. In fact, true spirituality must recognize the personality of God, and personality can hardly be described to a human being in terms other than those drawn from human life.

The blessing consists of three verses, and there is a noticeable progress in them. Verse 24 is rather general: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. Keep (Heb. shamar) would be better rendered in modern English as 'guard' or 'protect'; it refers to physical well-being, and prevention of trouble from external sources. It is the first and lowest stage