

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT NASO

14-15 JUNE | 9 SIVAN

## An Insight into the Oldest Prayer



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Jerusalem is home to many of the Jewish people's cultural and religious treasures, such as King David's water tunnels (built by King Hezekiah in around 700 BCE) and of course, the Kotel (Western Wall). Just 900m away from Israel's seat of government, the Knesset, lies an equally impressive building: the Israel Museum. The museum documents, through artifacts and scrolls, the journey of the Jewish people in Israel, the tragedies of exile and the triumphant return to *Medinat Yisrael* (the State of Israel). Famously, the museum is home to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other historical texts. However,

there is an even older manuscript there. Two tiny silver amulets contain possibly the oldest prayer still in use amongst all Jewish people worldwide. The prayer is written in an ancient Hebrew script and contains the Priestly Blessings, as first introduced this week in Parashat Naso.

Is it not incredible that the very piece of Jewish literature in which it says, "May God... keep you", is in fact the oldest known Hebrew manuscript - more than 500 years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls!

On the evenings of Shabbat and Festivals, parents bless their children. The first line to sons blesses them to be like Ephraim and Menashe, meanwhile the first line blesses daughters to be like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. To both children, the priestly blessing is then recited. Indeed, this ancient blessing has been passed down

from generation to generation, representing the continuity of *Am Yisrael*, the Jewish people.

Similarly, the physical journey of the ancient amulets bearing this text represents the continuity of *Am Yisrael*. The texts were written in an ancient version of Hebrew around 2700 years ago. The amulets were believed to have been used in the ancient Kingdom of Judah, but have made a redemptive return to Jerusalem. Similarly, over the past 2700 years and despite all the tragedy and triumphs that *Am Yisrael* has gone through, we are able once again to return to Jerusalem, speaking our revived national, cultural and religious language, and once again able to combine our modern successes in architecture, culture and science with our age-old custom of *Birkat Kohanim* (Priestly Blessings), in our eternal capital Jerusalem.

## Word Reshuffle

Can you unjumble these letters to make sense of the words below?

1. sano

5. lodste yarper

2. kratib nomikah

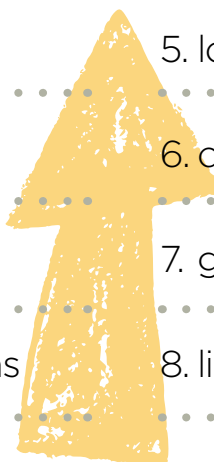
6. cieatnn behrew

3. urjasemel

7. gink vidda

4. idfray gihnt lebsgsins

8. lirsea



Answers: 1.Naso 2.Birkat Kohanim 3.Jerusalem 4.Friday Night Blessings 5.Oldest Prayer 6.Ancient Hebrew 7.King David 8.Israel