This past month marked my one year anniversary in the Rabbinate. It was one year ago, this June 3rd that I ascended the steps of the bimah in the Historic Plum Street Temple, in Cincinnati and was made a Rabbi. Its kinda a funny thing how they make Rabbis you study all manner of things for five or six years. Work countless hours dissecting and discerning the intricacies of complex Rabbinic Texts, you intern in congregations, you are mentored by great and learned rabbis, then thrust into student congregations, with a rabbi's manual and a phone number of a not so near by rabbi in case of emergency, with the terrifying instruction, "Be their Rabbi". Then one Saturday morning, another rabbi places his hands upon your head, holds you tight, says a blessing and poof you're a rabbi, and everything you do counts.

All it takes is three Rabbis to serve as a Rabbinic court *(Bet Din)*and a blessing and you're a Rabbi. Its not even a big complex blessing at that, but a very simple, and familiar blessing, the Birkat HaKohanim, or Priestly Blessing. The one all of the clergy at Temple Judea give to each of our B'nai Miztvah students as we stand before the open ark each Shabbat.

Thus it begs the question, what makes this beautiful, but rather common place blessing so powerful that it can make someone a Rabbi, let alone sanctify a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. A similar question was asked of the Talmudic Sage, Rabbi Elezar ben Shamua. His students turned to him one day and asked, how was it that he had merited such a long life? To their question he replied, that he attributed his long life to a number of things. One, he never used the synagogue as a short cut, by which he meant that he never stepped over his students sitting on the floor as he was tying to get to his seat on the bima (he went around), and two and this he felt was the main reason he had been blessed with such a long life. Wherever he was required to recite the Priestly Blessing, he would stop for a moment <u>before</u> and recite another prayer silently to himself. He would say, "Blessed are you God, ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with the holiness of Aaron and commanded us to bless your people Israel with love."

It is in this small passage from the Talmud that we find the answer to the question, how could such a familiar and frequently used blessing, make one a Rabbi. The answer of course is it is not the words of the blessing itself that create the change, but the intention, the *kavanah*, the emotion behind the blessing that imbues it with such power.

What makes a blessing, truly a blessing is when we realize that we offer it, not from ourselves to another, but from God, through us, to those we care for and love. When we bless as an extension of God's holiness, then the words don't even really matter, the blessing is carried not in the voice, or the hands, but it is transmitted, from heat to heart and soul to soul. That's what I felt a year ago this month, and it is what I hope our B'nai Mitzvah students every Saturday from our Clergy. May we too always be so blessed as to bless one another with such a feeling of intention, as though our hands and hearts God brings blessing to each of us.

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