

Blessing in Action  
A study into the verbal forms  
of the Priestly Blessing  
with special attention to  
its genre, structure and to parallel texts  
mainly from a syntactical perspective.

Thesis Presented to  
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## Dankwoord

Mijn dank gaat uit naar de volgende personen. Marjo Korpel hartelijk dank voor de begeleiding, in het bijzonder op het moment waarop ik vast liep. Arie Uyterlinde, hartelijk dank voor de wijze lessen. Marlies en Jonathan hartelijk dank dat jullie het hebben volgehouden als ik weer met de “skipsie” bezig was. Bovenal gaat mijn dank uit naar God. Soli Deo Gloria.



Wer Großes will, muß sich zusammenraffen;  
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister

---

*Sonette*

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

## Voorwoord

Voor u ligt mijn masterthesis over de Hoge priesterlijke Zegen uit Numeri 6 en dan in het bijzonder de werkwoorden van deze zegen. Voordat ik aan dit project begon wist ik niet dat het schrijven van een thesis zo moeilijk kon zijn. Mijn oorspronkelijke opzet was anders. Deze bleek echter, zeker op de gedetailleerde manier waarop ik het wilde aanpakken, veel en veel te ambitieus. Toen ik mij realiseerde dat mijn thesis de omvang zou krijgen van een proefschrift en dat ik op deze manier nog enkele jaren nodig zou hebben, heb ik contact opgenomen met Marjo Korpel. Op haar aanraden heb ik er toen één hoofdstuk uitgenomen om dit om te werken naar een thesis. Het resultaat ligt voor u. Dat betekent wel dat de opzet minder systematisch is dan ik had gewild en dat het geheel wat onsamenhangend kan overkomen. Ook methodisch had één en ander beter doordacht kunnen worden. U zult een veelheid aan appendices vinden. Dit is gedaan om de thesis zelf niet al te lang te laten worden. Toch wilde ik u als lezer dit materiaal niet onthouden.

## Leeswijzer

Bij wijze van leeswijzer hier een vermelding van de belangrijkste elementen van deze thesis. Hoofdstuk 1 geeft informatie over hoe de thesis is opgezet en is dus belangrijk. Van hoofdstuk 2 zijn vooral 2.1 tot en met 2.4 van belang. Van hoofdstuk 3 is vooral 3.1 interessant. Voor de hoofdstukken 4 en 5 geldt dat bij het lezen van de samenvattingen de belangrijkste elementen van het onderzoek wel naar voren komen. Het gaat om sectie 4.8 en voor hoofdstuk 5 om samenvatting van 5.1 die begint op bladzijde 70, om sectie 5.2 en de samenvattingen van 5.3, 5.4 en 5.5 die respectievelijk beginnen op bladzijde 79, 85 en 91. En verder natuurlijk hoofdstuk 6 in zijn geheel, vooral de conclusie 6.3.

Alle vertalingen in deze thesis zijn van mijzelf, tenzij anders is aangegeven.

## Preface

Before you is my Master's thesis on the Priestly Blessing from Numbers 6, focussing in particular on the verbs of this blessing. Before this project started I did not know that writing a thesis that could be that difficult. My original intent was quite different and proved way to ambitious, especially because of the detailed way I wanted to tackle it. When I realized that my thesis was growing out of proportion and that I would need some more years to complete it (if continuing on the road taken), I panicked and consulted with Marjo Korpel. She advised to take out one chapter and rework it into a thesis. This is what I did and the result is the thesis that is before you. The whole has become less systematic, less coherent and less methodical than I would have liked. The attentive reader will find a multitude of appendixes. This has been done to reduce the size of the thesis proper. Still the material might interest the curious reader and thus it is added.

## Reading Guide

By way of a reading guide the most important elements of this thesis will be mentioned here. Chapter 1 provides information on how the thesis is set up and is therefore important. From Chapter 2 especially section 2.1 to 2.4 are important. From Chapter 3 section 3.1 is interesting. For Chapters 4 and 5 it would be enough to read the summaries because they provide all of the key elements of the research. These are the Sections 4.8 and the summary of 5.1 beginning on page 73, section 5.2, and the summaries of 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 respectively, starting on page 82, 88 and 94. And of course the whole of Chapter 6, especially the conclusion in section 6.3.

All translations are my own, unless otherwise mentioned.

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## *Nomenclature*

- ACC Accusative, in Hebrew often תּאֲ
- ACT Active
- ADVM Adverb of manner
- ALL Allative, in Hebrew often לְאֲ “to”
- BHS Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: 4th edition
- BH Biblical Hebrew
- CAUS Causative i.e. belonging to the *hip<sup>c</sup>il* binyan
- CNST Construct
- CO Coordinator
- DAT Dative, in Hebrew often לְאֲ
- DEPV Dependent verb form i.e. *wəqāṭal* form of the verb form
- IMP Imperative
- IMT Interlinear Morphemic Translation
- INFA Infinitive absolute
- INFC Infinitive construct
- INTS Intensive i.e. belonging to the *pi<sup>c</sup>el* binyan
- JUSS Jussive i.e. short form of *yiqṭōl* conjugation
- MT Masoretic Text
- NARR Narrative (tense) i.e. gloss for wayyiqṭōl conjugation

NPRF	Nonperfective i.e. <i>yiqṭōl</i> form of the verb
N	Nomen
OBJM	Object marker
PL	Plural
POSS	Possesive
PREP	Preposition
PRN	Pronoun or Pronomen
SUPS	Suppressive, in Hebrew often על “upon”
Coh	Cohortative
Hiph	Hiphil
Hit	Hithpael
Imp	Imperative
Ind	Independent
InfA	Infinitive Absolute
InfC	Infinitive Construct
ipf	Imperfect sometimes used to indicate the <i>yiqṭōl</i> form of the verb
Jus	Jussive
Ni	Niphal
Obj	Object
p	Plural
Pass	Passive
Prn	Pronoun or Pronomen
Ptc	Participle Absolute
Qtl	<i>Qaṭal</i> form of the verb, also called perfectum
s	Singular

Subj Subject

Suf Suffix

Way *Wayyiqṭōl* form of the verb, also called imperfectum consecutivum

WeQt *Weqatal* form of the verb, also called perfectum consecutivum

Wey *Weyiqṭōl* form of the verb

Yqt *Yiqṭōl* form of the verb, also called imperfectum

## *Statement of the Problem*

The LORD bless you and He protect you;  
the LORD make His face to shine upon you  
and He be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up His face upon you  
and He give you peace.

---

Num 6:24–25

### **1.1 Introduction**

The words of the Priestly Blessing are probably among the best known verses of the Hebrew Bible. Of course some passages may still be better known like the Decalogue (Exod 20:1–17), the Shema (Deut 6:4–9) and a verse like Gen 1:1. Because some religious communities, both Jewish and Christian, still use the Priestly Blessing in the liturgy, at least people from these communities are familiar with these words.

But familiarity is no guarantee for understanding. Even if these words were self evident to the ancient Israelites, they are not for people living in the twenty first century. Korpel (1990) pointedly raised the question of what we are to understand by the shining of the face of the LORD (p. 2). And of course this question might as well be asked for the lifting of His face.

In comparison to the expressions involving the face, the meaning of the other phrases in the Priestly Blessing, about *blessing*, *protecting*, *being gracious*, and *giving peace*, at first glance may seem to be more obvious. Indeed most people familiar with the Priestly Blessing may well have an idea of their meaning. But what exactly does it mean when YHWH *blesses*, *protects*, *is gracious* and *gives peace* to someone? How are these concepts related? What do these concepts mean for the relationship between YHWH and his people? And what does it mean for the priests to speak these words? In other words: What is the theology behind the Priestly Blessing?

## 1.2 Research Question

In this thesis an attempt will be made to partly answer these questions. The limitations of this thesis prevent an answer *in extenso*. To restrict the possible field of inquiry, the main focus of this thesis will be on the verbs as used in the priestly blessing. The verbs in particular are important for the Priestly Blessing . Indeed: “Der Segen wird in seinen sechs Teilen von den Verben bestimmt” (Seybold, 2004, p. 25). This leads to the following research question:

What is the meaning of the verbs in the Priestly Blessing, as found in Numbers 6:24-26, when considered in their mutual coherence, within their textual context and in relation to the genre of the Priestly Blessing .

## 1.3 Definitions and Limitations

### Meaning

The concept of *meaning*, mentioned in the research question, has been the object of a lot of philosophical enquiry. As the focus of research will be on the meaning of verbs, some linguistic will be involved in this thesis. Basically, the view of meaning taken is that of *Cognitive Linguistics*, a school of thought that views language as a cognitive phenomenon that is not to be separated from other cognitive phenomena.

Meaning within Cognitive Linguistics is equated with *conceptualisation* or *cognitive content*. Put very simply: a word does not refer to an entity but to our conceptualisations of entities. The *form* of a linguistic unit is able to evoke *conceptualizations*. Or, put the other way around, *conceptualisations* can be expressed in linguistic units. Langacker (2008, p. 30) prefers the term *conceptualisation* over the term *concept* because of the dynamic character of meaning.

Conceptualization is broadly defined to encompass any facet of mental experience. It is understood as subsuming novel and established conceptions; (1) not just “intellectual” notions, but sensory, motor, and emotive experience as well; (3) apprehension of the physical, linguistic, social, and cultural context; and (4) conceptions that develop and unfold through processing time (rather than being simultaneously manifested)” (Langacker, 2008, p. 30).

When meaning of a word is equated with conceptualisations that are associated with the word trying to ascertain meaning for a word is trying to reconstruct what conceptualisations were associated with it. When we try to reconstruct these conceptualisations, the question could be raised how this can best be done, especially for a dead language like Biblical or, if one prefers, Classical Hebrew. It is however not possible to discuss this in detail here, for that would overburden this thesis with theoretical considerations of linguistic nature.

The point of departure taken here is that comparing use of a word in one passage with the use of the same word in another passage can be used to identify possible associations with the word that can function explicitly in one context and maybe implicitly or backgrounded in another context. This kind of research may help to get an idea of the domain or domains of knowledge in which the word functioned.

This kind of research does not yield sharp definitions of word. Indeed when meaning is conceptualisation related to a word meaning must of necessity be vague. So the purpose of this thesis will not be to sharply define the verbs used but rather to explore the use of the verb in other passages and its possible connotations and associations.

Of course no claim is made that these associations were always present or were present for every language user (cf. Steen, 2007, p. 10–13). Instead the question can be posed in a much more modest way: “What conceptualisations may with more or less plausibility have been related to these verbs in their present literary context?”

## **Textual Context**

The verbs in the Priestly Blessing will be studied within their present *textual context*. Of course this is a broad concept, and could be taken to include the biblical book of Numbers, the Pentateuch, and the Hebrew Bible as a whole. Here the term is meant to refer to the immediate context of the pericope. Of course some wider context will be involved. There will be some discussion of the preceding and following chapters. But no attempt will be made to identify the structure of either Numbers or greater literary units, for this is not feasible. But the verbs will be studied by comparing them with verbs used elsewhere within the Hebrew Bible.

## **Meaning, Diachrony and Synchrony**

Describing the meaning of the verbs of the Priestly Blessing within their present textual context excludes a *fully diachronic* approach. By *fully di-*

*achronic* I mean tracing both the history of the text and the verbs (and the connected ideas) in their respective contexts, back to their inception up until their present form and function (including their *Wirkungsgeschichte* and history of interpretation). These are the kind of issues traditionally taken up by source, redaction, form, tradition and other forms of historical criticism. This approach would result in a description of meanings connected to this text through various periods in history.

The main reason for refraining from this kind of inquiry is that it is too complicated. It would entail arguing for a view on the history of ancient Israel, on the development of the Pentateuch as a whole, on the development of the book of Numbers in particular, on the history of the passage in question and it would include a diachronic linguistic analysis of the verbs. Ideally it would also include a discussion of theoretical, methodological and historiographical stances that are taken. Accounting for these is all too often disregarded in biblical studies (R. D. Miller, 2006). However it is only in the light of solid principles that data can be interpreted and weighed.

Conclusions reached by a full diachronic approach need not necessarily be more plausible than those reached by an approach which does not try to date the material. If strict criteria for evidence are applied, conclusions often will have to end in a *non liquet*. If on the other hand criteria are loosened the hypothetical character of the conclusions often increases exponentially. Especially so, if without reserve, hypothesis is piled upon hypothesis.

Instead of trying to reconstruct meanings for the verbs in the Priestly Blessing at different times in history, the approach chosen, focusses mainly on the *Endgestalt* of the Priestly Blessing in its present textual context. When parallel passages are discussed they will not be dated either.

This, of course, is not to argue that issues of history are unimportant. A synchronic approach still needs to be sensitive to historical issues and complexities in several respects. First of all the *Endgestalt* has to be put in historical context in some way, for this see appendix C. Further more, it is acknowledged that there are a host of possible difficulties when material from, arguably, different periods in time and from different historical contexts is brought to bear on each other. Especially the well known phenomenon of semantic shift poses a problem for the approach taken here.

By firmly attending to literary context an all too easy conflation of material can hopefully be prevented to a satisfying degree. On the other hand, since all of the material is taken from the Hebrew Bible itself, it can be supposed to be at least distantly related. Of course comparing different passages will often yield more more contrasts than commonalities. But contrasts may also help to gain understanding and ascertain meaning for a given text, or, in this case for the verbs used in the text.

Although a historical reconstruction is not the point of departure, identifying relations between texts, whether dis-analogies or analogies, might help to propose relations of relative chronology. This fits with an approach as proposed by Talstra (2002b) which basically starts with what he calls exploring “structure and strategy” of the text. Only after these explorations, proposals for historical reconstruction can be made (p. 273). This further step however will not be taken here.

## Semantic and Pragmatic Meaning

Within linguistics a distinction is often made between *semantics* and *pragmatics*. Roughly speaking semantics is usually understood as having to do with the “type of meaning [...] intrinsic to the linguistic form containing it” whereas pragmatics has to do with “the interaction between the linguistic form of an utterance and the context in which it is uttered” (Trask & Stockwell, 2008, p. 253). Within Cognitive Linguistics a distinction between semantic and pragmatic aspects of meaning is not rejected, but it is denied that an exact boundary between the two is possible. In any case it can not be drawn on an *a priori* basis (cf. Langacker, 2008, p. 39–43).

The current study seeks to be sensitive to meaning elements with various levels of context specificity. But it does not set *a priori* criteria for distinguishing these elements. Conclusions about these elements can only be drawn by analysing and comparing different text and their context.

## 1.4 Some Theoretical Background

In his recent overview of the development of lexical semantics Geeraerts (2010) remarks: “cognitive semantics is arguably the most popular framework for the study of lexical meaning in contemporary linguistics” (p. 183). Although he hastens to add that this is only the case for theoretical and descriptive linguistics, not for applied linguistics.

The reason for taking some clues from this framework is not in the first place that it is popular, but because it might be of help in studying a dead language like Biblical or Classical Hebrew. Insight into cognitive principles behind modern languages or even language in general can probably also help to understand languages no longer spoken.

Within Cognitive Linguistics, words, and other linguistic units, are basically viewed as a combination of *form* and *meaning* (cf. Taylor, 2002, p. 20). This means that form and meaning can not be studied separately.

Linguistic units can be either smaller or larger than words. When linguistic units can be divided into constituent parts they are called constructions. The smallest meaningful unit would be the morpheme. Morphemes combine to form words, which combine to form expressions, which combine to form sentences and these combine to form discourse.

But constructions are more than a sum of their parts. When for instance two linguistic units combine into a construction, this construction not only has a new form, in that there is now a relation between the two units within a new unit, but this newly formed construction also has a meaning which is more than a simple sum of its parts. For the different elements have been brought in a specific relation and this relation is meaningful itself. An important principle in learning a language is probably abstraction over repeated instances of constructions (Tomasello, 2003).

Take as an example the following phrase: וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן (Lev 10:12) and compare it with this phrase: וַיְדַבֵּר אַהֲרֹן אֶל-מֹשֶׁה (Lev 10:19). These sentences differ in both form and in meaning and it is clear that the difference in form results in a difference in meaning. Still they can be described as instances of a same construction:

[ENTITY-SPOKEN-TO]-אֶל- [SPEAKER-singular] וַיְדַבֵּר

The construction itself, improperly speaking, adds meaning to the words. In turn, this construction can be considered to be an instance of an even more abstract construction like:

[Obj]-אֶל- [Subj] [Verb]

Thus constructions can be considered to exist in a taxonomy ranging from the concrete to the abstract. All this may seem to be stating the obvious, but starting with the basic assumption that constructions are pairings of form and meaning, implies that it is impossible to maintain a sharp distinction between syntax and the lexicon. Instead a *morphology-lexicon-syntax continuum* is proposed (cf. Langacker, 2008, p. 15).

The description of constructions thus far may suggest that constructions are defined by their parts. However Croft (2001), by contrast, argues that: “the parts take their significance – that is, are categorized – by virtue of the role that they play in the construction as a whole” (p. 48). Such a view implies that when the meaning of words is the object of research, it may be not only be helpful, but even necessary, to study the constructions in which they appear, or put more traditionally: their syntax. This is why syntax will receive some attention in this thesis.

## 1.5 Relevance

The Priestly Blessing has been the object of research from quite different angles. It is of course discussed in all commentaries on Numbers. Of course some discussion of the verbs can also be found there.

Whether the verbs have jussive or modal meaning has been a point of discussion more than once (cf. e.g. Talstra, 2002b) often in connection with the proposal by Jagersma (1982) that the verbs have indicative instead of modal meaning. Some discussion on connections between the verbs has been the concern of amongst others Fishbane (1983); Knierim and Coats (2005); P. D. Miller (1975).

Korpel (1989) has summed up passages in the Hebrew Bible which contain words from the Priestly Blessing in parallelism, although not necessarily in the same parallelism as in the Priestly Blessing . The material provided calls for a study into how these words are related in the parallelisms of these analogical texts and an evaluation of what bearing such relations may have for the interpretation of the Priestly Blessing. The present study will take another path though, because of its linguistic orientation.

Of course the verbs of the priestly blessing have also been studied separately. The results of this research can be found in various lexicons, theological dictionaries and the like. Probably the most complete treatment of both the Priestly Blessing and its verbal forms and expressions can be found in Seybold (2004). He deals with most major issues of the Priestly Blessing , both exegetical and historical. His approach can well be called comprehensive in this respect. He mentions quite a few of the available parallel and analogical passages as found within the Hebrew Bible. In addition he provides some passages found in the Ancient Near Eastern world that provide background for the Priestly Blessing.

Seebass (2006) regards the work of Seybold (2004) as “superior to other explanations” because of “the precision with which he described nearly every word of the pericope” (p. 37). Indeed Seybold’s description is quite thorough, but because his approach is thematic he is not always involved in all of the details. Given the purpose and comprehensiveness of his approach this is quite appropriate. For instance he seems to regard the verb בָּרַךְ as the most important verb of the blessing: “Das Kernelement des aaronitischen Segens scheint die Formel »Es segne dich Jahwe« gewesen zu sein” (p. 39). Probably for this reason, he quite extensively discusses this verb. His discussion of the verb הִגֵּן is much more limited, although he mentions it a few times.

A study focussing on the verbs of the Priestly Blessing , by comparing them with analogical or parallel passages, where the selection of texts is based on the constructions in which the verbs occur is not available yet. Let alone

a discussion on how these passages can contribute to some of the exegetical issues of the Priestly Blessing . This study seeks to fill this gap.

Thus the current study mainly differs from earlier studies in respect to its focus, namely the verbs, and the method applied, a method inspired by a construction grammatical framework in which the importance of constructions or syntax is recognized.

## 1.6 Method and Scope

In order to identify some issues and dimensions of the meaning of verbs in their mutual coherence, close attention will be paid to the syntactical constructions in which the verbs appear. From a construction grammar perspective, this of course includes their morphology.

The next step will be to compare the verbs as found in the Priestly Blessing with verbal forms as they are found in parallel passages, attending both to the context in which they occur and the meaning of the verbs in these contexts, and to questions of syntax. Of course some exegesis of these parallel texts is required. This however will be limited to a minimum because of the limits imposed on this thesis.

Often in concordance research, not all of the passages in which a same root occurs can be taken into account and thus a selection has to be made. This study proposes a criterion for selecting parallel texts, namely by the morphological and syntactic forms of the roots, in other words, the constructions in which they appear.

Of course this criterion does not guarantee that all relevant texts are discussed, it does not even guarantee that the text discussed are really relevant. Still it seems that no other criterion for selection can provide this guarantee. For instance limiting the selection to either Numbers, the Tetrateuch or the Pentateuch does not give this guarantee either. In fact the current study can be seen as an experiment whether or not such criteria yield relevant parallels for concordance research.

The theoretical foundation of this thesis, namely a construction grammar perspective, gives reason to suppose that a selection on the basis of syntax may yield relevant results. For, as we have seen, from the viewpoint of this framework syntax is meaningful, in other words, contributes to conceptualisation. Thus this criterion for selection may help to get an overview of how a word is used, with what other linguistic units it is combined, and what role it plays within these constructions. The parallel texts thus found may help in exploring intertextuality.

The only construction grammar approach to Biblical Hebrew to date, combined with the only frame semantics approach to date, seems to be the study by Shead (2007). Such an approach is open to extension by (statistical) *collostructional analysis* as proposed by Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003) and Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004). Their approach is basically a method of ascertaining in what measure lexical items are attracted to certain constructions. All these methods can give valuable insights into semantics of constructions.

But these methods will not be used here. Indeed the approach taken here can not even be properly called a construction grammar approach for two or three reasons. First because the object of research is not the constructions themselves. Also the level of analysis and comparison of the constructions will be very limited. Instead the constructions are primarily used as a criterion to find texts which are compared to each other.

Neither is a specific approach to constructions chosen or used. Two of the most widely known are Radical Construction Grammar (Croft, 2001) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008). Both of these seek to approach constructions on their own terms. Both have developed a specific set of instruments. It is not feasible to explain and apply such theories and their set of instruments here.

Thus the approach taken is not so much a constructional approach, rather it is an approach that is informed by construction grammatical considerations. Traditional syntactical terminology will be used. For reasons of presentation a difference will often be made between pre-verbal and post-verbal elements, but this is not based on theoretical considerations.

The scope of this thesis could be extended by taking in both a full diachronic perspective and a full construction grammar perspective. Of course the focus of research could also be broadened by giving more attention not only to the verbs, but to each and every word as found within the Priestly Blessing. This is not feasible.

## 1.7 Thesis Overview

The object of research is the meaning of the verbs of the Priestly Blessing within their present context. Thus, first of all, the textual context of these verbs will be established. This will be done in chapter 2. Here also some discussion on both structure and genre of the text will be found. Its general context within the ancient Near East will be sketched by discussing some parallel texts.

In chapter 3 several issues will be considered that can be related to the syntax of the pericope, this is relevant not only because linguistic constructions are an important element in this study, but also because of the fact that coherence between the verbs, as mentioned in the research question, is a function of both structure, syntax and semantics.

In chapter 4 the parallel passages for the verb בָּרַךְ will be discussed, in chapter 5 the parallel passages for the other verbs. In chapter 6 the information from previous chapters will be combined and discussed and it will be used to answer the question.

## *Text and Context*

### 2.1 Delimitation of the Pericope

Delimiting the pericope is not very problematic. The preceding pericope clearly ends with 6:21. After that verse a *petucha* is found in BHS . Thematically this verse ends a pericope with instructions for a Nazirite, which was begun in 6:1. It functions as a summarizing verse (cf. Ashley, 1993, p. 148). The words found in 6:22 almost invariably introduce a new pericope in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.<sup>1</sup> The verses 6:23–27 are the content of what YHWH says to Mozes. Thematically 6:22–27 is a unity about blessing (ברך) the children of Israël. Num 6:27 is the last verse of the pericope. After that verse there is again a *petucha*.<sup>2</sup> The first words of verse Num 7:1 (וַיְהִי) introduce a new pericope. The theme then changes to the tabernacle (הַמִּשְׁכָּן).

### 2.2 Macro Textual Context

There is no consensus about the exact organization of the broader textual structure in which this pericope is found. Different levels of textual organization may be proposed. This pericope is, of course, part of what has been traditionally called the book of Numbers. But since it is not entirely clear how and when the limits of the book of Numbers were set, it is not clear how important these limits are for discerning textual units at higher levels, and whether for instance macro units can extend across the limits traditionally set for the biblical books.

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<sup>1</sup>Within these books the formula וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה is always combined with אֶל-מֹשֶׁה with the exception of Num 18:8, where the LORD speaks to Aaron. Outside of these books it is twice combined with אֶל-מֹשֶׁה namely in Deut 32:48 and 2 Chr 33:10. The only other verses in the Hebrew Bible where this phrase: וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה is found are Deut 2:17; 4:12; Josh 20:1; 2 Kgs 21:10; 1 Chr 21:9. The formula is always found at the beginning of a verse with the exception of Lev 1:1.

<sup>2</sup>After the other verses of this pericope with the exception of verse 22, a *setuma* is found.

For example Dorsey (1999) argues for a macro structure which comprises the last chapter of Leviticus and extends into Numbers, namely Lev 27:1 to Num 10:10. Without entering into a detailed discussion of the arguments of this particular proposal, it indeed seems unwise to separate the text of Numbers as it stands from the preceding text. For instance the fact that Numbers starts with a *waw* suggests that there is a connection with the preceding book of Leviticus.

Traditionally the first five books of the Hebrew Bible are taken together as the Torah or the Pentateuch. It is often supposed that the structure found within this unit is purposefully set up and that, consequently, the whole Pentateuch may be regarded as a literary unit. Alternatively other overarching literary units are proposed, like the Hexateuch, Tetrateuch and, more recently, the Enneateuch (cf. e.g. Ska, 2006, p. 1–9 and Koorevaar, 2006, 2008).

The issues connected to identifying literary structures are numerous. There are all kind of issues from a theoretical and methodological point of view, for instance what textual structures qualify as evidence for literary structures. What structures are identified will have repercussions for possible reconstructions of the history of the text. (And the other way around, views on the history and of the origin of the text will influence the identification of literary units.) Structure influences our understanding and exegesis of the text at different levels.

The place of a pericope within a larger literary unit is related to its function within the argument of this unit and consequently partly determines its meaning. For instance Dorsey (1999) argues that the unit of Lev 27:1 to Num 10:10 has a chiasmic structure with Num 6:22–27 at its center. Although he does not comment on the function of the pericope within the larger structure, the central place he assigns it, would probably make it pivotal for the interpretation of the entire unit.

Ideally the literary structures of the larger units should be analysed in order to do full justice to the interpretation of the pericope. This, unfortunately, is too complex and would require too much discussion.<sup>3</sup>

The larger the units taken into account the more issues are involved. Leaving the question of Pentateuch as a literary unit aside, some attention will have to be paid to the first part of the book of Numbers. “It is especially

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<sup>3</sup>Compare for a discussion from a mostly synchronic perspective e.g. Steiner (2003) and the references given there. Of course many, many more references could be added here, especially if diachronic, that is, source critical and redaction critical publications would be taken into account. Two quite recent bundles which give some insight into the current state of debate are Römer and Schmid (2007) and Römer (2008).

difficult to determine the structure” (Ska, 2006, p. 35) of the book of Numbers and consequently diverse proposals for its structure are made. For this see the commentaries and the works already mentioned. The most recent discussions are found in Achenbach (2003); Artus (2007, 2008); Brodie (2008); Fistill (2007); Frevel (2009); Knierim and Coats (2005); Lee (2003).

There is some consensus that the first greater unit within Numbers runs up to 10:10 (Lee, 2003, p. 3-4).<sup>4</sup> The division of pericopes within Num 1:1–10:10 does not seem to be extremely problematic. Most of the commentaries give roughly the same division. However it is more difficult to discover a clear structure within this unit.

A rough division can be proposed that at least puts a break after chapter four. In the first four chapters the main theme is mainly the counting of the people and of the Levites. The grouping of the people stands within the broader framework of preparation for their march which will be described from Num 10:11 onwards. The first four chapters are mainly descriptive. Num 5:1 starts a new prescriptive section, which ends at Num 6:27.

According to Milgrom (1990) the “common denominator” of these prescriptions “is the prevention and elimination of impurity from the camp” (cf. Budd, 1984, p. 54 and also Artus, 2007, 2008). Davies (1995, p. 43) critiqued this view “because 5:5–10 do not tell of a case of impurity, and the purity is certainly not the main subject of the Nazarite Vow” (Seebass, 2006, p. 46).

However these objections have limited validity. Take for instance the fact that sinning (a nomen from the root **חטא** used in Num 5:6) and its consequent guilt and atonement (the root **כפר** used in Num 5:8), are treated directly after the impurity (root **טמא**) dealt with in 5:2. Should no importance whatsoever be attached to this? It seems that within the theology of Numbers both impurity and sin have a negative effect on the relationship of the people with YHWH. They at least are incompatible with his presence (cf. Num 5:3b). Likewise (Seebass, 2006) will have to differentiate between holiness and purity, for he will have to argue that the **קדשים**, the holy things mentioned in Num 5:9–10, probably a kind of donations to the priests, are not, or not really, related to issues of purity.

Even if this is the case, they can not be denied to be connected to the related theme of dedication. The devotion or dedication that YHWH requires from His people is a theme connecting the verses 5:1–10, as is the removal of hindrances that prevent this dedication. In much the same way, although

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<sup>4</sup>Fifty-four out of seventy-four publications “agree that 10:11 is the beginning of a new unit of Numbers at its highest level” (Lee, 2003, p. 3) and another three of these seventy-four agree “on 1:1-10:10 as an uninterrupted literary unit” but not on the highest level of structure, for they see it as “a subsection of the first part, which runs through 25:18” (n. 8, p. 4).

the theme of purity may not be the main subject of the Nazarite vow, it is a theme which surfaces in Num 6:6,9–12. There, by the way, impurity (see the use of the root **טמא** in 6:9,12) and sinning (see the use of the root **חטא** in 6:11) are also connected.

Although purity and impurity may not be the “common denominator” of Num 5–6, it is a theme linking the separate pericopes. Indeed when Seebass (2006) argues that “the need of the priestly expert” (p. 48) is what binds 5:1–6:27 together, this does not exclude the theme of purity and impurity. For are not such issues the priests’ expertise *par excellence*?

According to Seebass (2006) the following section, Num 7–8, also has to do with “the Levites and priests as experts”. The fact that Num 7 is descriptive instead of prescriptive, is a reason to suppose that it starts a new unit. It is a point of discussion where this unit ends: At 7:89, at the end of chapter 8, at 9:1–14 or at 10:10? No definite answer to this question has to be given here, but at least some issues should be considered in order to establish the context of the pericope.

Num 7 describes the twelve tribes bringing sacrifices for the inauguration of the altar (7:88). Milgrom (1990) groups this chapter together with Num 8:1–4 and Num 8:5–26 to form a descriptive section about “making the cult operative” (p. 52). Budd (1984) proposes that the first larger section ends with 9:14 instead of 10:10. Likewise Seebass (2006) proposes that 9:14–10:10 signals “the beginning of the march” (p. 51). At the other hand, the units 9:15–9:23 and 10:1–10:10 are still connected to the tabernacle and to the cult. Which is also true for the Pascha held in 9:1–9:5 and the connected regulations in 9:6–9:14. All in all the macro structure after Num 7 is not entirely clear (cf. further e.g. Lee, 2008).

A parallel can be proposed between 6:1–22 and 7:1–88 in that both ceremonies mention a succession of days and are about devotion or dedication to YHWH. In that case the section in 6:22–27 may be placed there to suggest some reciprocity between the blessing of and dedication towards YHWH (cf. Sturdy, 1976, p. 54 and Gispen, 1959, p. 117). This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that the blessing closes a section concerned with the purity of the camp. Achenbach (2003, p. 511) states that the people can only receive the blessing after impurity has been dealt with. The blessing is placed exactly there where it should be “nach Auffassung der theokratischen gesonnenen, priestlichen Bearbeiter” (p. 511).

Within the broader literary unit of 1:1–10:10 the theme of holiness is important (cf. also Dorsey, 1999, p. 79–80) and within 5:1–6:21 the theme of purity is prominent. Connected to these themes is the role which the *Levites* and the *Priests* play within the community of the *children of Israel*. This can be characterized as a kind of mediating and atoning role between YHWH and

the community. Cole (2000, p. 147) points out some elements of their role and status: they are “given wholly to YHWH” (3:9; 8:14,16), they are substitutes for the firstborn (3:11–13,41–41; 8:16,18–19) which is connected to the Exodus motif (3:12–13,8:17), and they are the only ones who can handle holy things (3:10,38;8:19). In other words, the broader section contains a description of what Budd (1984) calls “the community as a priestly theocracy” (p. 20) (cf. Achenbach, 2003; Artus, 2007, 2008). The blessing by the priests is entirely in line with this theme of mediation.

## 2.3 Structure and Translation

No extensive account for the structure of the pericope itself is needed here, for this see Korpel (2003). Suffice it to distinguish between the framework of verses 22–23 and 27 and the blessing itself in 24–26 which is a canticle of three strophes (Korpel, 2003, p. 80-81). The framework is tied to the blessing proper by the repeated verb בָּרַךְ (Fishbane, 1983, p. 115ab) by the Name YHWH and by the verb שִׂים. The words בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and the verb בָּרַךְ tie the framework together.

The structure of the pericope given in table 2.1 is the result of combining the structure given by Korpel (2003, p. 82) with the syntactical analysis by Talstra (2002b, p.53–54). For the translation see also appendix A, for textual criticism see appendix B.

### Structure of the Blessing

Seybold (2004) mentions the increasing length of the verses and in this respect talks about a “Stufenbau” (p. 23).<sup>5</sup> This increase in length is visible in the counting of the words (3-5-7), the consonants (15-20-25) and syllables (12-14-16). For this see Korpel (2003, p. 80) who questions the importance of such counting for determining structure. Ashley (1993) thinks that this increase in length gives the impression “of a stream of blessing that begins as a trickle but flows ever more strongly” (p. 151). Ragins (2006) not only notes a kind of crescendo – this indeed is to be admitted – but even attaches symbolic importance to the number of words, seven being the number of fullness, which he connects with the last word of the blessing, שְׁלוֹם which, he argues, designates all-encompassing well being.

Korpel (2003) argues that the many variations on this blessings, found e.g. in Ketef Hinnom, Qumran, Pseudo-Jonathan and other rabbinic writings, would mean that, if a numerical pattern is present, “from an early date on

<sup>5</sup>His free association with a Ziggurat (p. 24) somehow undercuts his credibility.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:	22aA
“Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying:	23aA
‘In this way will you bless the children of Israel,	23bA
you shall say to them:	23bB
«The LORD bless you	24aA
and He protect you.	24aB
The LORD make His face to shine towards you	25aA
and He be merciful to you.	25aB
The LORD lift up His face towards you	26aA
and He establish peace for you.»’	26aB
So they shall put my Name upon the children of Israel	27aA
and I will bless them.”	27aB

Table 2.1: Structure and Translation

people apparently did not realise that they were destroying a nice numerical pattern” (p. 80).<sup>6</sup>

But adapting a text, by definition, is giving it another structure. How much of the original structure is left depends on the thoroughness of the revision. These new structures may or may not work with certain regular patterns of words, syllables, maybe even consonants, depending on the goal the adaptor has with his adaption. If a new pattern is created, the adaptor did not destroy but change the pattern. Of course such adaptation might be more or less successful. Indeed if no new pattern is created, the adaptor could be accused of “destroying” a pattern. There indeed is a possibility that the adaptor was not aware of the pattern in the first place, as hinted at by Korpel (2003). But there is another possibility as well. Maybe the adaptor actually was well aware of a nice pattern, but was not the least interested.

The words of the blessing in any case seem to be ordered according to

<sup>6</sup>This seems to presuppose that the authors of those works were editing the blessing as known in MT. Indeed Korpel (1989) convincingly argues that a shorter form “does not justify any conclusion as to what would have been the more original form” (p. 8). The Ketef Hinnom scrolls may well be an adaption of the Priestly Blessing, which becomes the more likely if a late date for these scrolls is accepted.

a certain pattern, mainly caused by repetition of certain words, namely the Name YHWH (3x: 24aA,25aA,26aA) and (connected to the second and the third occurrence of the Name) the words פָּנָיו אֱלֹהִים (2 x viz. 25aA,25aA). The other repetitious element is the suffix second person masculine singular.<sup>7</sup> Of course there is also a repeated *waw*.

Because of the name YHWH and the *waw* it would be most obvious to propose a schema: AB-A'B'-A''B''. In principle this is correct, but it is a little bit reductionistic. It misses out on some other features of the pattern. Table 2.2 shows at a glance that two out of six cola do not end with a suffix, namely the first and the last: 24aA and 26aB. In a sense they do end with the suffix but they respectively have the name YHWH and the word שלום behind the suffix. So 24aA and 26aB can be said to bracket the four other cola. The remaining cola obviously show parallels: 24aB parallels 25aB and 25aA parallels 26aA.

A more complicated structure can be characterized by using more letters, not referring to a colon but to parts of a colon characterized by (a combination of) repeated structural elements. This can be seen in the first two columns<sup>8</sup> of table 2.2. Behind<sup>8</sup> the lettered cola-parts are the numbers of syllables the specific part has. The name YHWH, which is central to the blessing, has been counted separately, this is why B' has a pattern of 2 + 5 syllables.

		יהוה	יברכך	24aA	(2)	B	(5) A
			וישמרך	24aB			(5) C
אלוה	פניו	יהוה	יאר	25aA	(5) + (2)	B'	(2) A'
			ויחנך	25aB			(5) C'
אלוה	פניו	יהוה	ישא	26aA	(5) + (2)	B'	(2) A''
	שלום	לך	וישמך	26aB	(2)	E	(5) C''

Table 2.2: Formal Structure of Verses 24-26.

The point of this analysis is not to argue that the blessing has a “nice numerical pattern”, but somewhat less fanciful, that due to its repetition it has certain rhetorical effects. As Seybold (2004) remarks: “Der Text is spürbar auf einen Sprechrhythmus hin angelegt. Die einzelnen Zeilen entsprechen Atemzügen, die immer länger werden ... So entsteht ... eine natürliche Steigerung” (p. 24). In this structure and content seems to work together. Fishbane (1983)

<sup>7</sup>For some discussion on why the suffix is singular see appendix E.

<sup>8</sup>the table should be read from right to left

claims: “the PB climaxes with its reference to the gift of *šālōm*, the favor of peace or well-being” (p. 117a). The blessing issues in peace, or as (Seybold, 2004) puts it: “Was mit dem »Segnen« in Gang kommt, endet im »Frieden«” (p. 28).

The formal analysis, as given in table 2.2 should be complemented with a semantic analysis. Knierim and Coats (2005) argue that verse 24 spans “the totality of sustained human life”, whereas the next two verses can be viewed “as a parallelistic expression which indicates how blessing and protection are given” (p. 94).

This matches with another possible pattern of words, namely a pattern that emerges when the words are not counted per verse but per colon. This yields the following pattern: 2-1-4-1-4-3. If the first two cola are counted together, this yields a chiasmic patterning of words namely: 3-4-1-4-3. It seems that taking the first two cola together goes against the cantillation marks, for a *Ṭiphā* separates cola 24aA and 24aB, just like it separates cola 25aA and 25aB. However the argument is not that these are not separate cola, but simply that the words in these cola should be counted or at least grouped together. Positing a chiasmic pattern is not to deny a parallelistic pattern. An interesting example in this respect is Psalm 23 which has both parallelistic patterns and a chiasmic pattern (M.C.A. Korpel, personal communication, May 30, 2011).

The chiasmic pattern which arises would make the mercy of YHWH central to the blessing. In the next ring (25aA and 26aA) the face of YHWH would be central. Strikingly the last word of 24(aB) and the first word of 26aB, though verbs from different roots, both share almost the same combination of consonants: **וישמ**. That is: if the difference between *sin* and *shin* is disregarded. Indeed, the acrostic Psalms show that Hebrew poets often did not make this difference when it suited them. For instance the acrostic Psalms 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 112; 145 only use *shin* in the acrostic sequence, whereas Psalm 111:10 only has a *sin*. Psalm 119 has a *sin* in verse 161 and 162, and a *shin* in verse 163-168.

Within the chiasmic pattern the words having **וישמ**, take a mirror position, being the third word and the third-last word. This supports the connection between the first two word and the last two words. As already noted, the blessing of YHWH, explicitly mentioned in the first word, results in peace, the last word of the blessing. This yields a link between the central words of line 24 and 26aB: the name YHWH and the word **יְלֵ**. As can be seen in table 2.3, representing this chiasmic structure, the word which was to be expected instead of **יְלֵ** would be YHWH. In fact the blessing connects the thrice mentioned Name of YHWH to “**יְלֵ**”, that is, the one(s) being blessed, as is explicitly stated in Num 6:27. Milgrom (1990) identifies the first and

the last cola as “an envelope around the poem that summarizes its essence” pointing to Psalms 29:11b (p. 51): **בְּשָׁלוֹם אֲתִעַמּוּ יְבָרֵךְ יְהוָה**.

<b>וישמרדך</b>	<b>יהוה</b>	<b>יברכך</b>	24	(12=5+2+5)	A
<b>פניו אליך</b>	<b>יהוה</b>	<b>יאר</b>	25aA	(9=3+2+2+2)	B
	<b>ויחנך</b>		25aB	(5)	C
<b>פניו אליך</b>	<b>יהוה</b>	<b>ישא</b>	26aA	(9=3+2+2+2)	'B
<b>שלום</b>	<b>לך</b>	<b>וישם</b>	26aB	(7=2+2+3)	'A

Table 2.3: Chiastic Structure of Verses 24-26.

Of course all kind of objections can be made against this pattern. For instance that on the smaller silver scroll of Ketef Hinnom (KH2) this pattern is destroyed. However some sort of chiasm could still be present on this silver plate, since its pattern would be: 3-4-3, not 3-3-3 like Korpel (2003, p. 80) suggests. Could it be that the scribe of the silver scroll intentionally made the utterance “YHWH make His face to shine over you” to be central?

Berlejung (2008, p. 220) supposes a protective function for these silver scrolls (p. 221–222). She refers to Keel (1995, p. 140) who claims that in Mesopotamia and Egypt gold and silver are considered as colors of the sky, the sun or the moon. She also sees a relation between the utterance YHWH *make His face to shine over you* and “lunar-solar” connotations. On this basis, among other arguments, she argues that “a shiny piece of silver with the Name of Yahweh and an effectively working text on it, should secure the share of its bearer in the heavenly light” (p. 220).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in that case, it would not be strange for the utterance YHWH *make His face to shine over you* to be central, within a chiastic structure.

Another word of caution is in place here: since the version of the blessing as found on the silver scrolls functions within a broader composition, the structure of this complete text should be the object of structural study. The lacunae in the text render this problematic.

## Structure of the Framework

The framework of the Priestly Blessing should also be analysed. It seems impossible to extend the chiastic pattern to verse 23b and 27. Even if the claim of Cole (2000, p. 129) would be true, namely that the counting of words

<sup>9</sup>All quotes from Berlejung (2008) are translated from German.

can be extended to the concluding verse: verse 27. He argues it has 8 words and 18 syllables. In my count it has 19 syllables.

Although not part of the chiasmic pattern, still a kind of mirror pattern can be discerned between verse 23b and 27. The words **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** function as a kind of pivot. The verbal forms of **בָּרַךְ** provides an *inclusio*. Consequently the cola 23bA and 27aB are linked, in 23bA the priests are commanded to bless the people, in 27aB YHWH promises to bless the people Himself. There is also a connection between 23bB and 27aA. In 23bB YHWH commands the priests to speak to the children of Israel, in 27a this speaking is explained as the putting of the Name of YHWH on them. This structure is represented in table 2.4.



Table 2.4: Mirror Pattern of Verses 23b-27.

## 2.4 Genre

Knierim and Coats (2005, p. 95) identify the whole unit as belonging to the genre of *instruction* or *priestly da'at*. Because of verse 22, this instruction is embedded within *narrative*.

### Blessing

The form of the Priestly Blessing proper is, of course, the genre of blessing. But what does this mean? How can the genre of blessing be distinguished from other genres? And can (sub)genres of blessing be distinguished? Indeed what would the priests be doing when they are blessing the people, as they are instructed to do? Is it a wish, a prayer or an indirect command? Or because the priest obviously speaks in the Name of YHWH, could it possible be a kind of promise?

There is an fairly large amount of literature on the subject of blessing and the “closely related” subject of curse (Swartz, 2005, p. 187 as cited by Hymes, 2007, p. 2, n. 4) as found not only within the Hebrew Bible, but also in the Ancient Near East (cf. among many others Aitken, 2007; Brichto, 1963; De Bruin, 1997; Crawford, 1992; Hillers, 1964; Leuenberger, 2008b;

Mathys, 2010; Mitchell, 1987; Murtonen, 1959; Scharbert, 1958; Schottroff, 1969; Vetter, 1974; Wehmeier, 1970).

Seybold (2004), following Landsberger (1928-1929/1972), takes the concept of “good word” as a kind of “basic idea” connecting different forms and meanings of blessing, whether related to greeting, thanksgiving or congratulation. And thus he takes this concept to function as a guide in exploring these different forms, contexts and meanings. Standing over and against the curse, or “bad word”, the “good word” either works by itself or by the power of the gods (Seybold, 2004, p. 30).

Setting up a typology for different blessings is quite complicated and thus no attempt will be made here (see for some preliminary discussion appendix D.) Instead some characterisations of the Priestly Blessing by different scholars will be presented here.

## Characterisations of the Priestly Blessing

Seybold (2004) argues that the Priestly Blessing can not be a performative utterance. In that case he would expect a perfect form (p. 28, 60, n. 4). Janzen (2006) takes the exact opposite position, and argues in favour of a performative interpretation. He sees a connection between the words of Gen 1: “Let there be X, and there was X” (p. 26) and sees an echo of Gen 1:3 where X is light. He calls the Priestly Blessing the “primal human speech act ... a mediated renewal of God’s cosmos-ordering performative speech. Each time it is performed and received, there is ... a new creation again being wrought out of chaos” (p. 32). He tries to root this understanding in the theology of P and the Tetrateuch, seeking a middle ground between “automatic magic ... and utterances that, for all their form as performative speech, are in themselves barren of efficacy” (p. 35).<sup>10</sup> He compares the Priestly Blessing to what he calls the act of “mediated construction of the tabernacle” quoting Exod 25:8 and Ps 78:69. He talks about “the human mediation of God’s unmediated grace” (p. 36).

Knierim and Coats (2005, p. 95) reject an interpretation of the Priestly Blessing as a magical word. Talstra (2002b) excludes both magical and performative speech act interpretation by stating: “The words do not have power on their own” (p. 77). Indeed within the context of Num 6 the 27th verse can be regarded as an argument against a magical interpretation, however the Ketef Hinnom amulets, with their version of the Blessing, are frequently interpreted as means of apotropaic magic.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Seybold (2004, p. 44) by the way also mentions a relation with the theology of P and its divine word of blessing (Wortsegen) found in Gen 1.

<sup>11</sup>Recently Smoak (2011) has argued that the psalms contain “reflexes of apotropaic

Seybold (2004) identifies the Priestly Blessing as “Segenwunsch” (e.g. p. 39). Likewise Knierim and Coats (2005, p. 95) identify it as a *blessing wish* or *wish for blessing*. And while the blessing is addressed to Israel, they at the same time view it “as a request for a gift of Yahweh on its behalf”. They claim that since it is a wish that YHWH acts on behalf of his people, it does not really matter to whom it is formally addressed.

Talstra (2002b) seems to reject the term *wish* when he states that “the text does not have the modus of a wish, for the liturgy is an event: the Name is pronounced by the priests and thus laid upon the people” (p. 77). He describes the blessing as “good words addressed to someone, the effectuation of which lies with God” (p. 55). Thus it is not the unqualified declaration of a fact either.

Westermann (1985) distinguishes between “Segensverheißung”, promise of blessing, and “Segenserteilung”, imparting of blessing. The first refers to promises of some future state, as can be found for instance in Gen 12:1–3 and Num 24:4–7 (Westermann, 1985, p. 91–92). These kind of blessings for him are connected to the works of YHWH in history. This he puts over and against YHWH’s continuing blessing: “ein stilles, stetiges, unmerklich fließendes Handeln Gottes, das nicht in Augenblicken, nicht in Daten festzuhalten ist” (p. 88). According to Westermann (1985) the blessing used within the liturgy is more like this last kind of blessing. Thus the Priestly Blessing would be “Segenserteilung”, an imparting of the blessing. He considers it to be essential that it consists in “Wort und Handlung” like a sacrament (p. 95).

P. D. Miller (1975) characterizes the Priestly Blessing primarily as prayer “for God’s providential care” (p. 248). He bases his interpretation on the distinction by Westermann, but argues that “the interaction of these dimensions of the divine activity for the sake of human life is seen in the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6” (p. 248). For a (theological) repudiation of P. D. Miller (1975) see Talstra (2002a).

An important aspect with respect to interpreting the genre is the modality of the verbs used here. Leuenberger (2008a, §1.2.) points to an “Unterscheidung von indikativischem Segensspruch und jussivischem Segenwunsch” made by Gunkel and Begrich (1966, p. 293 ff.). When this form of speech is used within songs of lament they call it “Wunschbitte”, when used in blessing they call it “Segenwunsch”. They propose an origin in the courtly domain, because of the avoidance of use of both “I”, direct speech and the imperative (as summarized by Seybold, 2004, p. 59).

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formulae” (p. 75) on the basis of similarities in language with the silver scrolls and similar amulets.

Although Seybold (2004) rejects classification as prayer (p. 60) he retains the idea of address. But it is an indirect appeal to the deity, it is as if “a mediator is entrusted with a request to the deity”<sup>12</sup>. So it is a kind of recommendation “Empfehlung” (p. 60). He eventually classifies it as a *liturgical-ritual blessing* (p. 40) somehow comparable to Deut 28:3–5 and Ps 134:2, the Urigallu-prayer for new year and incantations as found in the Umwelt (see section 2.5), and “in a certain sense” with 1 Sam 2:20, 2 Sam 6:18ff. and 1 Kgs 8:56ff. (p. 41).

### Sitz im Leben

As regards the *Sitz im Leben* of blessing formulae in general, they certainly are “not confined to the cult” (Knierim & Coats, 2005, p. 96). Blessing formulae were used in different situations, compare for instance Gen 9:1; 14:18–19; 24:60; 27:25–30; 47:10; 48; 49:28 and see appendix D.

According to Leuenberger (2008a, § 3.2.1.) blessing, more generally taken, probably has its original *Sitz im Leben* in situations of greeting (Gen 32:23ff. and Kuntillet °Ajrud 8-10) or taking leave (Deut 28:3ff., Gen 27). Seybold (2004), following Schottroff (1969), thinks that the *brwk*-formula, which is only documented for Israel, has its roots in situations of greeting and nomadic relationships. Its function was to provide or strengthen solidarity and thus was automatically transferred to the relationship with God. He thinks the *pi<sup>c</sup>el* form probably developed out of this *brwk*-formula pointing to Ruth 2:19 and Judg 5:24 (Seybold, 2004, p. 32).

Seybold (2004) eventually characterizes the Priestly Blessing as a form of speech “between appeal and address, wish and request” and thinks this form of speech was developed in situations of greeting, congratulation, blessing, curse, incantation, magic spell, and the giving of names, pointing amongst others to 1 Sam 3:17, Gen 30:24; 31:49, Judg 6:31ff, Jer 28:6; 42:3, 2 Sam 2:6 and 1 Chr 12:18. Further he suggests that it could have deep roots within an ancient magical understanding of words (p. 59). *Formgeschichtlich* he recognizes different forms within the Priestly Blessing : a greeting formula (vs. 24aA), liturgic epiphany formula (vs. 25aA) and law terminology (vs. 26aB). The other clauses he classifies as protection, mercy and election sayings. These last ones are mainly elements of liturgic speech (p. 70).

Levine (1993) likewise states that “expressions of blessing drawn from social and official contexts, originally having no bearing on the cult, provided the discrete components of the fixed liturgical benedictions”(p. 237). Cole (2000) takes issue with this, by raising the question “How does one define the

<sup>12</sup>ein Vermittler mit der aufforderung an die Gottheit

parameters of cult or cultic usage?” (p. 128). He warns against drawing too sharp a division between cultic and non-cultic usage, that according to him is difficult to make and maintain for ancient cultures.

When it comes to the Priestly Blessing as a whole, the primary use seems to be the official liturgy. Maybe the priests also used it in other rituals, for instance to bless individuals. But as the silver scrolls from Ketef Hinnom show, at least at a certain moment in history, some variations of it were used outside of the official cultic liturgy. Although the scrolls are found at a burial site, their prime purpose was probably to be worn, by the individuals for whom they were made, when they were still alive (cf. Berlejung, 2008).

Knierim and Coats (2005) state that “the setting of the blessing in Num 6:24-26 must be sought at the conclusion and culmination of communal worship ...and before the worshipping pilgrims were sent on their way home” (p. 96). For this Leviticus 9:22-24, where a culmination of the liturgy is described, is often invoked as evidence. This connection goes back to the Talmuds and Mishnah (Achenbach, 2006, §3.1.). The texts from the Psalter also seem to support this hypothesis. For instance, Psalm 134, the last of the songs of Ascent(s), ends with a blessing formula. Horst (1947, p. 25) proposes that the Priestly Blessing was pronounced instead of a disclosure of the image of the god. This was something that happened in other liturgies in the ancient Near East (as cited by Seybold, 2004, p. 62).

## 2.5 Intertextuality

### Tradition criticism

The blessing proper, according to Knierim and Coats (2005) is “a unique systematic condensation of various elements” found in the tradition history of blessing “in Israel and the Ancient Near East. With the exception of its last clause, all other clauses are in essence found throughout the tradition history of blessing” (p. 95). According to Seybold (2004) it is build from “vorgeprägtes Formelgut aus kulturellem Bereich” (p. 25).

No attempt will be made to reconstruct the transmission history for the various expressions. Often arguments for relative chronology of texts are vacuous (cf. section 1.3). Most of the Psalms are probably younger than the Priestly Blessing. So when similarities are found between Psalms and Priestly Blessing it seems most logical to suppose influence of the Priestly Blessing on the Psalm or dependence of the Psalm on the Priestly Blessing. The other possibilities are that they go back to a common tradition or, which is more unlikely in light of the composition of the Priestly Blessing, that the Priestly

Blessing has been influenced by the Psalm(s). However it is hard to either prove or disprove the exact relationships between these texts. Indeed similar expressions “may as much derive from common metaphorical usage as from the PB as the direct source” (Fishbane, 1983, p 116A).

Leuenberger (2008a, 2008b) tries to reconstruct a historical development of the phenomenon of blessing. It is not possible to discuss his entire proposal here. But his proposal of the stream of tradition in which he fits the Priestly Blessing will be summarized here. He dates the texts attested in Ketef Hinnom to the late 7th century B.C. (§3.4.) and the Priestly Blessing to the 5th century B.C. and he argues that the last is an “Erweiterung” of the former (Leuenberger, 2008a, §3.7). He fits both texts in a tradition going back to an inscription found in *Khirbet el-Qōm* dated around 700 B.C., and even further back to epigraphical material found in *Kuntillet °Ajrud* dated to around 800 B.C.

These two lines are from Khirbet el-Qōm:

- (2) *brk . ’ryhw . lyhwb*  
 (3) *wmšryb . l’šrth . hwš’lh*

Line number 2 can be translated as: “Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh” (Hadley, 1987a; Shea, 1990) or “Blessed is Uriyahu unto YHWH ” (Margalit, 1989). Line number 3 must mean something like: “from his enemies, by his(?) Asherah, he saved (by?) him” (cf. Hadley, 1987a). O’Connor (1987) takes the *lamed* to be a vocative marker (p. 225) and thus translates “May you bless Uriah, O Yahweh, And from his enemies, O Asherata, save him” (p. 228) or, alternatively: “You have blessed Uriah, O Yahweh. O Asherata, may you save him from his enemies.” (p. 229) Leuenberger (2008a, §1.2.) takes the position that in sentences with a human subject the *lamed* combined with the name of a god designates the implicit effectual cause (*Wirkursache*), or affiliation (*Zugehörigkeit*).

In Kuntillet °Ajrud the following text is found inscribed on pithos A:

- (1) *’mr . ’[.]w [.] b[.]k . ’mr . l’jhl[.] wljw’sb . wl[.] brkt . ’tkm .*  
 (2) *ljhw b . šmrn . wl’šrth .*

(Kuntillet °Ajrud 8, Leuenberger, 2008a, §3.2., cf. Hadley, 1987b, p. 182).

This can be translated: *...says: say to Yehal[...] and to Yo°asah and to ...: I bless you by/for/to YHWH of Samaria and by/for/to (his?) Asherah.*

Pithos B has the following text:

- (0) [ʔ]mr (1) ʾmryw ʾ(2)mr l . ʾdny  
 (3) ḥšlm ʾ[t] (4) brktk ly(5)ḥwb [tmn] (6) wl[ʾrth . yb](7)[rk . wyšmrk]  
 (8) [wyby . ʾm . ʾdn](9)[y...k]

(Kuntillet °Ajrud 9, Leuenberger, 2008a, §3.2., cf. Hadley, 1987b, p. 185).

Translation: (0) [s]ays (1) *Amaryaw: sa*(2)*y to my lord: (3) Peace [to you?] (4) I bless you by/for/to Y*(5)*HWH [of Teman] (6) [and by/for/to his(?) Asherah. He bl](7)[ess and keep you] (8) [and he be with my lord ...].*

Another part of text found on pithos B is as follows:

- (1) [brkt ...] *lyḥwb htmn . wlʾrth .*  
 (2) [...]*kl ʾr . yšʾl . mʾl<sup>13</sup> . ḥnn [...]* *wntn lh yḥw klbbh*

(Kuntillet °Ajrud 10, Leuenberger, 2008a, §3.2., cf. Hadley, 1987b, p. 187).

The first line can be translated: (1) *[I bless ...] by/for YHWH from the Teman and his(?) Asherah.* The first words of the second line can be translated as: (2) *...whatever he asks from.* But then there are several options. Where Leuenberger (2008a, §3.2.) reads *mʾl* (*from god*), Hadley (1987b, p. 187) reads *mš* and thus translates: “from a man” (p. 187). Leuenberger (2008a) sees the next word *ḥnn* as a modifier of the word god, and thus translates: “vom gütigen Gott” (§3.2) whereas Hadley (1987b) reads it as a verb, thus translating: “may it be favoured” (p. 187). The last part of the sentence can be translated: *and give to him YHW (sic!) according to his heart.* The form YHW may be a variant on YHWH.

Especially the wordings used in the texts from Kuntillet °Ajrud resemble the words used in the Priestly Blessing. Maybe the use of **ברך** and **שמר** (Kuntillet °Ajrud 9,7-8) is most remarkable, for next to the Priestly Blessing the only biblical text where these words are found is Gen 28:14–15, where they are in external parallelism Korpel (1989, p. 5).

As the dating of the texts from Kuntillet °Ajrud seems to be relatively uncontested, a conclusion that can be drawn from this is that some of the terminology used in the Priestly Blessing is quite old.

<sup>13</sup>Hadley (1987b, p. 187) instead of a lamed reads a *šîn*.

## Wirkungsgeschichte and History of Use and Interpretation

Of course it is only possible to draw a meaningful distinction between Traditions-geschichte and Wirkungsgeschichte to the extent that it is possible to give a relative chronology for texts related to the text under scrutiny. And even if a relative chronology can be setup, this only helps to argue for possibilities or probabilities of influence of these texts on one another.

Most scholars agree that Psalm 67 is dependent on the Priestly Blessing as found in Numbers 6. Fishbane (1983) argues that “clustering of terminology leaves no reasonable doubt as to the source” (p. 116A). But although it increases likeliness of dependency, such clustering of terminology is not really sufficient evidence for it, neither does it establish priority of the one text over the other. (For a more nuanced phrasing of this issue and more nuanced arguments see Seybold, 2004, p. 63.)

The main reason scholars accept dependency is probably that they take Psalm 67 to be relatively late, most of the time it is classified as post-exilic. Compare for instance Achenbach (2006) who not only claims that Psalm 67:2 goes back to the Priestly Blessing, but that it also demonstrates “the universal importance of the divine blessing of Israel for the nations” (§3.1.) Compare for a similar interpretation of this Psalm Talstra (2002b, p. 57–58, 282–292).<sup>14</sup>

Liebreich (1955) understood the Psalms of ascents to be dependent on the Priestly Blessing . Fishbane (1983) also treats Psalm 4 and Malachi 1:6–2:9 as reinterpretations and thus dependent on the Priestly Blessing .

Achenbach (2006, §3.1.) discusses the scrolls from Ketef Hinnom, 1 QS II,2-4, Sirach 50:20-21 as *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Both he and Seybold (2004, p. 16) mention that in the old synagogues the Priestly Blessing was used after the *Amidah* or *Shmoneh Esreh*.

Fishbane (1983) also regards the *Benedictus* Luke 1:67–79 a “reinterpretation” of the Priestly Blessing. He points to the *Sim Shalom* prayer, part of the *Amidah*, which “is nothing short of an exegetical paraphrase of the old biblical blessing” (p. 120B). For more on the history of interpretation, see Seybold (2004, p. 50ff.).

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<sup>14</sup>An interpretation of this Psalm in which the עַמִּים are the tribes of Israel and the אֶרֶץ is the land of Israel is unlikely, but not impossible beforehand, Talstra (2002b) does not consider this possibility.

## Some (More) Data from the Umwelt

Cohen (1993) and Fishbane (1983) have pointed to Akkadian parallels of the Priestly Blessing. Their aim is mainly to decide whether the Priestly Blessing consists of six separate actions (Fishbane, 1983) or three actions with consequences (Cohen, 1993). Fishbane (1983) mentions two texts. Among them there is a 9th century *kudurru*-inscription in which king Nabu-apla-iddina gives revenues to priest Nabu-nadin-šun, and turns his shining countenance to the receiver of the gift (p. 117A).

Cohen (1993) discusses “semantic equivalents”. According to him Numbers 6:25aA has to do with the “delight happiness, joy” of God when “looking upon the worshipper with His beaming countenance manifesting His grace and friendly concern” (p. 230).<sup>15</sup> He finds an Akkadian parallel *panī nummuru* and points to other idiomatic expressions of joy in both Hebrew and Akkadian, a couple of them having to do with the *liver* or the *heart*.

The expression of Num 6:26aA, mentioning the parallels Deut 28:50 and Ps 4:7, he connects to the expression *incline the ear* (Ps 17:6; 31:3). He sums up Akkadian parallels that, according to him, all mean “to show special concern for” or “to pay special attention to” (p. 234): *panī nadānu*, *direct the face towards*, *rēša šuqqû*, *lift the head towards*, *panī subburu*, *turn the face towards*, *lēta nadû*, *incline the cheek towards*, *kišāda subburu*, *turn the neck towards* and *rēša našû*, *to lift the head towards*.

He also points to Ugaritic parallels (p. 231,n 11) that were already given by Korpel (1990, p. 2-3). In the Ugaritic letter KTU 2.13:17-18 we find: *w pn mlk nr bn*, *and the face of the king shone upon us*, compare Prov 16:15 *b’wr pny mlk byym*, *in the light of the face of the king is life*. In the Ugaritic letter KTU 2.16:9-10 we find *wpn špš nr by*, *and the face of the Sun shone upon me*. The *Sun* there is an Hittite or Egyptian king.

Keller (1998) has proposed an “Egyptian analogue” dated to the First Intermediate Period (c. 2134-2040):

The Great One shall Praise you  
The face of the Great God will be Gracious over you  
He will give you pure bread with his two hands (p. 40).

She argues that “progress from the general to the particular” (p. 340) is a parallel, as is the use of 3-5-7 words. All this might be purely coincidental, but use of the expression with *face* indeed is a parallel.

<sup>15</sup>For this he points to Ps 31:17; 67:2; 80:4,8,20; 119:135 and with human subject Eccles 8:1 and to Gruber (1980, p 557–565). In fact Gruber (1983), on the basis of Akkadian parallels, translates Numbers 6:26 as “May the LORD smile upon you, and may He give you well-being”.

Seybold (2004) mentions still other Ancient Near Eastern texts that resemble the Priestly Blessing in one way or another. He points to an ancient letter from the Old Babylonia period that wishes for life, health, protection and luck from the gods, and uses the word *šulmu*. A letter from the Amarna period wishes that the gods accompany the receiver. In neo-Assyrian letters “May the Gods bless you” functions as greeting formula (p. 36).

He also mentions prayers: a precative Akkadian saying, pertaining to the cult: “sie mögen annehmen, erhören, segnen die Stadt Assur, mögen segnen das Land Assyrien, mögen segnen den König, unseren Herrn” (p. 37); a prayer for New Year’s day, by Babylonian Urigallu-priest, before opening the temple: “Give peace to your city Babylon! To Esagila, your home, turn your countenance! To the Babylonians, your clients, cause deliverance!” (p. 37); a prayer from an incantation priest that uses jussive forms: “Ea freue sich über dich, Damkina, die Göttin des Ozeans, erleuchte dich mit ihrem Antlitz, Marduk, der große Aufseher der Igit, erhebe dein Haupt!” (p. 37); an incantation when a new home is build: “Bless this home, that NN, son of NN, has build” (p. 38)

Seybold (2004) sees a pattern in these parallels in which formulaic language is extended and adapted in keeping with specific situations. In comparison the Priestly Blessing is rather general and abstract. Central is not a specific situation but are the Name of YHWH and the *you* addressed (p. 40-41).

A blessing wish also mentioned by Seybold (2004) is the *ex voto* stela of Yehawmilk of Byblos, from the fifth or fourth century B.C. Here we find a context of dedication, which is interesting with regard to the macro context of the Priestly Blessing. Part of this text is reproduced here as given by Leuvenberger (2009, p. 12) together with his translation:

(7) *yḥwmlk mlk gbl lrbty b’lt gbl kmʕ qr’t ʔt rbt*

Yehawmilk, king of Byblos, for my mistress, the Lady of Byblos: As I called to my mistress,

(8) *b’lt gbl wšm’ ql wp’l ly n’m tbrk b’lt gbl ʔyt yḥwmlk*

the Lady of Byblos, she heard (my) call and rendered me peace. The Lady of Byblos will/may bless Yehawmilk,

(9) *mlk gbl wtḥww wt’rk ymw wšntw ʔl gbl k mlk šdq b’ wtn*

king of Byblos, and she will/may keep him alive, and she will/may

prolong his days and years over Byblos, for he is a righteous king.  
And will/may give

(10) [lw brbt b]ʹlt gbl ḥn lʹn ʹlnm wlʹn ʹm ʹrʃ z whin ʹm ʹr (11) ʃ z

[him the mistress, the L]ady of Byblos favour in the eyes of the gods  
and in the eyes of the people of this land and favour <for> the people  
of this la(11)nd

According to Seybold (2004) the analogies of this text with the Priestly Blessing, are that Phoenician *brk* is also a jussive form, and the context of cult and dedication (p. 38). Another analogy could be found in the word *favor* or *grace*: *ḥn* (line 10). This is the more remarkable since we have seen the word *ḥnn* in Kuntillet ʿAjrud 10,2. So it seems the Priestly Blessing is not the only text that connects the theme of blessing and favour or mercy.

## Iconographic material

In addition to the data from the Umwelt some remarks on iconography are in order.<sup>16</sup> Leuenberger (2009) discusses both the artefact from *Khirbet el-Qōm* and the stela of Yehawmilk. In both the hand plays a role. He both tries to answer the question what the depicting of the hand means, and how it is related to the texts.

This iconographic material fits with Lev 9:22: “Then Aaron raised up his hand” (Ketib) or: “hands” (Qere) “toward the people and he blessed them”. The ketib may well be original, since both artefacts the blessing has to do with one hand. In any case these artefacts can be viewed as indications that blessings were often accompanied by the raising of the hand (cf. also Seybold, 2004, p. 67). Of course the question could also be raised, what this gesture accompanying the blessing meant. This is more of an anthropological question, but can not be discussed here.

## 2.6 Anthropology, Sociology, Institutions

In the text, the pronouncement of the blessing is the prerogative of the priests. This is also the case in texts like Deut 10:8 and 21:5. De Vaux (1986) characterizes the priests as mediators between God and man (p. 235). Although

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<sup>16</sup>Here treated under the heading of *Intertextuality* mainly for practical reasons. But this is also justified theoretically, since in iconography an image is considered as a sign that needs to be interpreted, in this respect images are not fundamentally different from texts, and indeed can be considered as texts in their own right.

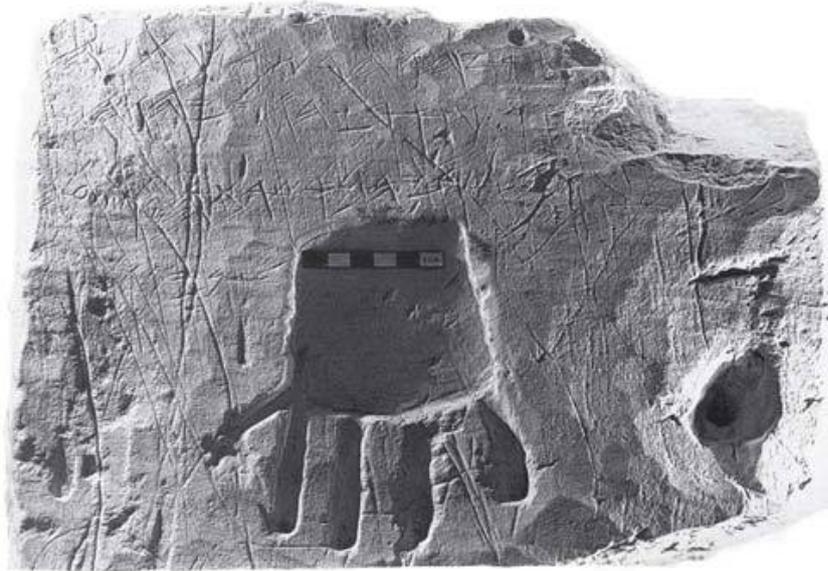


Figure 2.1: Artefact from Khibet el-Qōm.  
Taken from Leuenberger (2009).

he does not mention blessing as an act of mediation it may well be classified like that. Seybold (2004) at least compares the priest to a mediator, “Vermittler”, who recommends the people to God (p. 60). Could it be that the Priestly Blessing had an element of intercession, the priest representing the people before God? The opposite movement, also noted by Seybold (2004), seems to be more prominently present: “the priest speaks and acts as a representative of his God in the execution of the greeting- and farewell ceremony in the sanctuary” (p. 61).

Pedersen (1940/1991b) only discusses the Priestly Blessing shortly. It can be summarized in the following quote: “Light of the divine countenance means life ...Life, blessedness, and peace are the values which Yahweh bestows ...” (p. 448). But he has written quite extensively on the concept of blessing in general (Pedersen, 1926/1991a). He connects blessing to the concept of *soul*. This last concept is rather important for him to understand the psychology and culture of the ancient Israelites. At the risk of oversimplifying his description of soul: it is basically a being with certain characteristics, or “an entirety with a definite stamp” (p. 103). Even a stone can be said to have “the quality of a soul”, for “all is living which has its peculiarity and so



Figure 2.2: Stela of Yehawmilk from Byblos.  
 Taken from Leuenerger (2009).

also has its faculties” (p. 155).<sup>17</sup>

The soul “is a whole saturated with power” and this power “makes the soul grow and prosper, in order that it may maintain itself and do its work in the world. This vital power, without which no living being can exist, is called by the Israelites *berākā*” (p. 182). It “comprises the power to live in its deepest and most comprehensive sense. Nothing which belongs to action and to making life real can fall outside the blessing” (p. 199). The emphasis on life and power is also found in the definition of blessing given by Leuenberger (2008a): “to bless is an act and/or expression aimed at the safeguarding and enhancement of life (*Lebenssicherung und Lebenssteigerung*): it conveys a blessing, that is salvific power (*heilschaffende Kraft*)”

According to Pedersen (1926/1991a) the action of blessing means “to communicate ... strength of soul. He who blesses another gives him something of his own soul” (p. 200). In his view this most probably also applies to the Priestly Blessing, for blessing can also be transferred by what he calls “the word of blessing” (p. 200). This word has a certain strength, which

depends upon the power that the word possesses to hold the real contents of a soul. By means of the word something is laid into the soul of the other, but behind the word stands the soul which created it. He who himself is not possessed of the blessing can create nothing in others (p. 200).

“The blessing connects the souls ...because it consists in a communication of the contents of the soul.” (p. 201). This is why “when people meet, they bless each other” (p. 202). Likewise “when friends separate, they bless each other in order to confirm the fellowship” (p. 202). “Great assemblies, cultic or non-cultic must necessarily conclude with a blessing, so that every one may take away with him the strength of the community” (p. 203).

Supposedly Pedersen (1926/1991a) would regard the question whether the strength communicated by the Priestly Blessing derives from the soul of the priest or from YHWH, as a false dilemma. Maybe a comparison can be made with the case of Gideon, who heard the words: “Go in thy might that thou hast! There is no question of any distinction between the strength of Gideon and that of Yahweh” (p. 195). Someone who is blessed is full of power, “from him who is filled with blessing, power must radiate in all directions”

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<sup>17</sup>Other themes discussed by Pedersen (1926/1991a) that might be of interest for interpreting the Priestly Blessing are the *name* mostly of human beings (p. 245–259), *peace and covenant* (p. 263–310) and *peace and salvation* (p. 311–335). These will be left aside for the moment.

(p. 199). So probably Pedersen (1926/1991a) would argue that the priests have capacity to bless because they are blessed.

He stresses the blessing as a capacity of the soul itself. And “the blessing cannot be taken back, because it is not idle breath” (p. 200) as can be seen in the story of Jacob and Esau. This however does not mean that blessing works automatically. It “can only take effect when he who pronounces it can put real strength into it, and when the person blessed is susceptible” (p. 200). Balaam for instance can not curse but only bless the Israelites because cursing and blessing has to be “in harmony with reality” (p. 200).

The blessing “has its roots in something which partly loses itself in mystery” (p. 194). “When all is said and done, it rests in powers which lie behind all human capability. When a man is blessed it may also be expressed in the way that God is with him” (p. 194). The blessing “is concentrated in Yahweh, therefore one can only have blessing in harmony with him” (p. 194).

## 2.7 Summary and Implications

A chiasmic structure is here proposed for the Priestly Blessing. In such an *abc'b'a'* pattern there is a relation between the *a* and *a'* and between *b* and *b'* part. This relation most of the time is not limited to formal aspects, but often has meaningful aspects also. Likewise the central or pivotal part *c* is often central with respect to meaning. This is to be corroborated by the analysis in the following chapters.

Parallel terminology (*brk, šmr, ḥnn, pnh, šlm*) found in extra-biblical texts shows that the themes of the Priestly Blessing were present in the context of the Ancient Near East. More detailed comparative research might throw more light on both similarities and differences between different texts. From the extra biblical material it also becomes clear that the “good word” of blessing could function in different contexts.

The opinions on the character and genre of the Priestly Blessing are divided, as are the opinions on the closely related issue of what the priests would be doing when they would be pronouncing the Priestly Blessing. Are they requesting blessing, wishing for blessing, commending the people for blessing, communicating or transferring blessing, or something in between or all of these? Maybe analysis of parallel texts can throw more light on this issue. When parallel texts from the Hebrew Bible will be discussed, the genre of these texts can not be determined in detail, but it will be helpful to pay some attention to this aspect when noting their contexts. (The issue of genre will be taken up both in the next and in the concluding chapter.)

## *Some syntactical Issues*

### **3.1 Syntactic and Semantic Relations**

The cola 24aB, 25aB and 26aB all start with a *waw*. This *waw* somehow connects the action described in these cola to the preceding cola. This raises the question how the A and B cola are connected. In other words: What is the meaning of the *waw*?

According to Knierim and Coats (2005): “The clauses are not synonymous, and the sentences do not belong to the hendiadys type ... the second clause in each sentence refers *either* to a specific aspect already implied in the first act *or* to a different act in addition to the act mentioned in the first” (p. 93, emphasis added). Then the question remains “whether such additional acts represent logical or chronological consequences of or complementation to the first act” (p. 93–94). In other words: Is the *waw* coordinating or subordinating? And if it is subordinating, what kind of subordination are we talking about?

Fishbane (1983) gives two options for the *waw*. It is either “copulative” (p. 115A) resulting in a simple “and” (p. 116A) connection, thus yielding “six separate actions” (p. 115A). This is also the position of Knierim and Coats (2005) who conclude to “six different acts” (p. 94). The other option is that the *waw* is consecutive and indicates some kind of result or consequence to the first act (cf. e.g. Van der Merwe, Kroeze, & Naudé, 2002, p. 172). According to Cohen (1993) the blessing has “three composite actions, each reflecting a benevolent Divine attitude towards the worshipper together with its concomitant practical consequence” (p. 228). Because of the Ketef Hinnom version of the blessing he admits that apparently every “consequence clause” can be matched up with every “attitude clause” (p. 236).

P. D. Miller (1975) has a similar position. He approvingly cites Noth, who viewed the second part as a consequence, and Mays (1963) who stated: “The first part of each line invokes God’s personal act upon his people ... The last part of each line states the reality or content of the blessing evoked” (p. 79, as cited by P. D. Miller, 1975, p. 243). He recognizes that this is

complicated for verse 24, but explains that 24aA is an “all-inclusive petition” and all of the following cola “are an explanation” of this first colon. He then concludes to a structure with “the first clause of each line invoking God’s movement towards his people, the second clause his activity on their behalf” (p. 243). However it is not entirely clear why “being merciful” in 25aB would describe an “activity” on behalf of the people, whereas “blessing” in 24aA would describe an “attitude”.

## Horizontal, Vertical and Diagonal Relations

These discussions make it clear that several relations and issues are involved. With a view to analysis, Seybold (2004) helpfully distinguishes between a horizontal, a vertical and a diagonal axis. The horizontal axis is the relation between the A and B parts of the verses. This is the relation that is expressed by the *waw*. The vertical axis would be the relationship between all A parts of the verses, and maybe, also between all of the B parts of the verses. Seybold (2004) defines the diagonal axis as the relation between the first word and the last word.

These relationships should be clarified, as this is one of the aims of this thesis and of the following chapters. Since this thesis proposes a chiasmic structure, in principle, there are two diagonal axes. First and foremost the axis Seybold (2004) talks about, running from top right to bottom left (see table 2.3), including the verb **ברך** and the nomen **שלום**, but also including the verb **חנן** (25aB). The other axis that could be proposed, would run from top left to bottom right and include the verbs **שמר** (24aB), **חנן** (25aB) and **שים** (26aB). But this axis would run counter to the direction of reading and to the flow of the text. Indeed the other axis seems to be much more important. Thus the axis running from top left to bottom right will be disregarded.

The proposed chiasmic structure prompts us to especially look into the following relationships: between 24aA and 24aB, part of the horizontal structure, between 25aA and 26aA, part of the vertical structure, and a relationship between 26aB and 24 as a whole, which is partly captured by the diagonal structure, and partly by the vertical structure (24aB-26aB) and horizontal structure (24aA-24aB).

Several pieces of information may help to clarify these different relations. As the horizontal relation is the semantic relation between the A and B colon, this relation can be clarified by first clarifying the semantics of the separate cola and then clarifying the relation between these clauses. The next chapters might contribute to such clarification. The clarification of all relations, whether horizontal, vertical, diagonal or chiasmic, might benefit

from comparison with parallel texts, especially those texts in which one or more of the terms as found in this text are found. If more terms are found the relation they have in the parallel text might help to illuminate the relation in the Priestly Blessing .

The problem of the horizontal and vertical relations can also be approached from the perspective of Hebrew Poetry. From this perspective questions about the nature of the parallelism involved can be raised, for instance how the different parallelisms encountered in these texts can be qualified and classified. As was already mentioned in section 1.5 there are a lot of texts mentioned in the article of Korpel (1989) that can not be taken into consideration, but if texts selected by syntactical criteria also happen to have parallelism, this of course has to be accounted for.

## Verb Types

Still another line of evidence is open. Both Cohen (1993) and P. D. Miller (1975) both seem to suggest that a question of categorisation is involved, for they propose that the verbs in these verses fall into categories which match up with the A and B cola. The A cola would express “attitude” or “movement” and the B cola would express “action”. Such a categorization of verbs is a question of verb typology. A well know distinction, often made in Hebrew Grammars, is that between stative and dynamic verbs. But more fine grained distinctions are possible.

A recent construction grammar approach to this matter is Croft (to appear). He explains:

Events as experienced by human beings in the world are construed to possess certain temporal, qualitative and causal (force-dynamic) properties. These properties are encoded as part of the meanings of words, namely verbs, and tense-aspect and argument structure constructions. Events as we experience them have an aspectual and force-dynamic potential to be conceptualized in a variety of ways. This aspectual potential is manifested in the variability in how events are lexicalized and the variability in how their structure is realized in grammatical constructions, within and across languages. The symptoms of the semantic potential of events, as humans experience them, are the patterns and constraints on the mapping from meaning to form in tense-aspect and argument structure constructions. As linguists, we may use the grammatical patterns that we observe across and within languages

to infer the semantic structure of events and their potential for alternative construals. Croft (to appear, chapter 10, p. 1)

Applying the method proposed by Croft to the verbs and construction of the Priestly Blessing could possibly illuminate their semantics and help answer the question of their relations. This can not be pursued here, since it would require too much theory. For a classification of the verbs based on a theory related to construction grammar see Appendix F.

### Morphology

A very basic way of categorizing verbs shows that there is reason to doubt, or at least to not accept without further evidence, that the categories of the verbs concur with the A and B clauses, namely an analysis by morphology. And while it is clear that morphology only very partially determines meaning, this is at least the level at which most analysis will have to start. The only clauses that match morphologically are 24aB and 25aB, where both verbs are *yiqtol* form of the *qal* and both have a suffix. In contradistinction the verb in 26aB does not have a suffix, but a suffix has been attached to a preposition, also a second object is added to the verb. Clause 24aA has a *pi<sup>c</sup>el*, here designated as an intensive, 25aA has a *hip<sup>c</sup>il* or causative, whereas clause 26aA has a *qal*. Of course this does not disprove the suggestion by Cohen (1993) and P. D. Miller (1975) but it should evoke some caution.

## 3.2 Jussive Form and Force

Of the six verbs used in 6:24–26 only two are jussive in form, namely those found in 24aA יָאֵר and in 26aB וְיִשֶׁם (Talstra, 2002b, p.55; Seybold, 2004, p. 27). It does not seem to make much sense to argue that the two jussive forms express, for instance a wish, whereas the other forms express an indicative. This will be the reason that all scholars consulted on the issue agree that all of the verbs in 6:24–26 express the same *modality*. And although Jagersma (1983) argues that they all have indicative meaning, it is most likely that they all have jussive meaning (cf. e.g. Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 566). Seybold (2004) argues against performative meaning – “By this the LORD blesses you” – for in that case he would expect a perfect form. He also argues against indicatives with future meaning, for in that case he would expect a participle or nominal sentence.

Next to that, it has been convincingly argued that not only the jussive or short form of *yiqtol* but also its longer form can have jussive meaning. König (1897, p. 76–79), for instance, already noted that the long form of the

*yiqtol*, which he called *yaqtul simplex*, can be jussive in meaning, which he called *yaqtul gravatum* (cf. Callaham, 2010, p. 34). All standard grammars recognize this.

Even if Jagersma (1983), following the lectio of the Samaritan Pentateuch in 24aA, is correct in arguing that all verbs are long forms of *yiqtol*, this does not exclude jussive meaning. On the other hand, jussive forms sometimes seem to “communicate no modal nuance at all” (Callaham, 2010, p. 35). That is: theoretically it is possible that all of the verbs within the priestly blessing express indicative meaning (what Jagersma (1983, p. 125) argues for).

## Jussive Force

If we agree that jussive meaning is expressed by all of the verbs, the question remains: What does it mean to be jussive in meaning? And what does it mean in this case? The standard grammars of Biblical Hebrew agree that the jussive is an expression of “all the nuances of the will: from a superior to an inferior – command, exhortation, advice, invitation, permission; from an inferior to a superior – wish, prayer, request for permission etc.” (Joüon & Muraoka, 2006, p. 348). So in case a jussive is directed from a superior to an inferior, it is related to the imperative, or a real jussive, namely a command. And in the case it is directed from a from an inferior to a superior it could express either a wish, optative mood, or a prayer or request, precativ mood. This general rule as formulated above seems to rule out the possibility that a superior would express either a wish or a request to an inferior, in these cases it would immediately become an imperative.

It is not entirely clear whether the jussives in the Priestly Blessing are directed from a superior to an inferior or from an inferior to a superior. Formally the Israelite is addressed and not YHWH. It is clear that the priest is inferior to YHWH, but is he superior to the Israelite? While the Israelite is the formal addressee no action is explicitly required from him or her. It could be argued that indirectly or implicitly YHWH is addressed, as for instance Seybold (2004) seems to do. The speaker (first person) is not present in the text, the text is directed to a second person, but is about a third person, who is the subject and whose attention is presupposed.

Waltke and O’Connor (1990) remark that “a jussive directed to the divine realm (explicitly or implicitly) may be a benediction or a malediction” (p. 568). When this is taken to be true, it still leaves open the question what semantic force such a benediction or malediction would have. Is it a wish (optative), a prayer (precativ), a command (imperative)? Or, like Seybold

(2004) suggests, something in-between? And, because the priest obviously speaks in the Name of YHWH, could it possibly a kind of promise?

## Modality

To broaden the question: What *modality* do these verbs express? Linguists disagree both on how to define modality and on how to classify and distinguish different types of modality (cf. e.g. Frawley, Eschenroeder, Mills, & Nguyen, 2006; Portner, 2009). One of the problems is that “the inventory of modal meanings is not stable across languages” (McShane, Nirenburg, & Zacharski, 2004, p. 57). Still cross-linguistic typologies for modality have been proposed (cf. De Haan, 2006).

The typology by Palmer (1986) has been applied to Biblical Hebrew by Gianto (1998). He distinguishes two basic types of modality: *epistemic*, “concerned with the necessity or possibility of the truth of the proposition and some other subjective attitudes towards it” and *deontic*, having “to do with the realization of what is said in the propositions” (p. 185). Deontic modality sometimes is also called *root* modality. For instance Langacker (1991) distinguishes epistemic modality which serves to “indicate the likelihood of the designated process” and root modality where “there is additionally some conception of potency directed toward the realization of that process, i.e. some notion of obligation, permission, desire, ability, etc.” (p. 272, as cited by Mortelmans, 2005, p. 871).

The attempt of Gianto (1998) to apply the framework of Palmer (1986) should be approached with caution. Palmer (2001) revised this basic distinction by proposing another basic distinction, namely: “between modal expressions concerning either propositional assertions or contingent events” (Callahan, 2010, p. 22). And for instance Mortelmans (2005) cautions that outside of Europe most languages do not have items that “express both root and epistemic meaning” (p. 883, n. 6).

To understand the further distinctions Gianto (1998) makes, we should first understand the categories he uses for his definitions. *Event* “is that which is predicated in a proposition”. It “can be characterized as factual or non-factual, as imposed or desired etc.” Within in a matrix clause<sup>1</sup> events are called primary, in a subordinate clause they are called secondary. *Source* “is what characterizes the event as factual or non-factual or imposed or desired” (p. 186). “In primary events, the source is the speaker ... in secondary events, the source is the subject of the matrix clause” (p. 187). *Participant* “is the one responsible for the actuality or nonactuality of an event. In primary

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<sup>1</sup>A superordinate clause minus its subordinate clause (Chalker & Weiner, 1998, s.v.).

events, the participant is the subject ... In secondary events, the participant is both an argument in the matrix clause and the subject or agent of the subclause” (p. 187).

**Deontic Modality** According to Gianto (1998) the jussive can have deontic as well as epistemic uses. Regarding its deontic use he distinguishes five “nuances of volition that can be expressed” (p. 193). Two of these can be straightaway excluded for the verses under discussion: *permissive*: “the event is permitted to some participant” and *ablative*: “the source declares that the event is within the ability of some participant” (p. 194). It is quite evident that the priest does not declare that YHWH is permitted or able to bless the people.

A third possibility can be excluded with reasonable probability, namely *obligative* use, where “the source requires some participant to perform an event” (p. 193). Since the priest is performing the blessing as a command of YHWH, the priest can only with some difficulty be said to be the source requiring YHWH to perform the mentioned actions. There is indeed an obligation that YHWH takes on Himself when he promises to bless the people in 6:27. In this sense, maybe, the priests can be said to demand Him to do so. Still, it certainly isn’t obvious that this is the modality of the verbal forms.

The *precative* use, in which “the speaker requests the addressee to do something” (p. 193) is possible, but only when it is accepted that while YHWH is not addressed directly, the priests, in addressing the Israelites, implicitly address the LORD. In the *optative* use “the speaker desires the accomplishment of an event on the part of some participant” (p. 193). This would fit with the LXX, which translates all of the six verbs with an aorist optative.

Indeed an optative (or wish) seems to be the most common interpretation of these verbs. But Talstra (2002b) is reluctant to qualify a blessing as a wish. He not only remarks that modality can be used to express other forms of volition (p. 75), he also points out the character of religious language, and states that a blessing and a wish are different “by nature” (p. 55).<sup>2</sup> In his view a blessing cannot be a performative utterance or a simple declaration (like “YHWH blesses you”). He tries to capture both aspects by defining a blessing as “good words addressed to someone” (a kind of declarative part) “whose effectuation lies with God” (p. 55) (an optative part). “The priest indeed has the command and the authority to pronounce the blessing, that is: to lay the Name upon the people. But that is not an act of magic: actually giving the blessing is a prerogative God has reserved for himself” (p. 59).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>All quotes from Talstra (2002b) are translated from dutch.

<sup>3</sup>As we will see he translates Num 6:27 as follows: “They must lay my Name on the

**Epistemic Modality** Gianto (1998) offers two other possibilities. He claims that the jussive can also express epistemic modality. First he mentions *declarative* modality, where “the source identifies the event as certain” (p. 194). For this he adduces Exod 7:9. In translation: “... Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh” after which follows: “יְהִי לְתַנִּין”. These Hebrew words Gianto (1998) translates as: “it will certainly become a serpent” (p. 194). This example at the same time informs us about what Gianto (1998) means by *declarative*. It is not a simple indicative. The example is not a declaration about something which is actual, for the becoming a serpent is future. Neither is the example about something which is unqualified, a condition has to be met, namely throwing the staff down before Pharaoh.

A problem here is that Gianto (1998) adduces only one example as a basis for postulating this use of the jussive. This is rather thin evidence, which has to be supplemented by more examples. The basis for the other form of epistemic modality he proposes is even more flimsy. In expressions with *assertive* modality “the source thinks or believes that the event is true”. The examples Gianto (1998) adduces are unconvincing. He explains Ps 98:7: “Let the sea roar” as “yea, Sea roars!” (p. 194). And Ps 33:8: “Let the whole earth fear before the LORD”, he explains as: “indeed, the whole earth fears” (p. 194) before the LORD.

Although the evidence for these forms of modality of the jussive can be said to be rather weak, the suggestion that other forms except volitional modality could be expressed by the short form of *yiqtol* is worth investigating. If other declarative (or assertive) jussives can be found within the Hebrew Bible, the semantic distinction between long form *yiqtol* and short form *yiqtol* would break down further. If enough evidence could be gathered, maybe a case could be made for the blessing to have the kind of declarative or assertive force which Gianto (1998) defines. More research on this issue is needed.

**Commissive Modality** Maybe the category of *commissive* modality as mentioned by Palmer (2001, p. 72) should also be taken into account. He defines this, depending on Searle (1983, p. 166), as: “where we commit ourselves to do things.” This he classifies as a form of deontic modality. Callaham (2010) states that commissive modality:

“deals exclusively with first-person expressions. Speakers use commissives to indicate commitment either to do something or to refrain from doing something. The conditioning factor of obliga-

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Israelites, but I am the one that blesses them” (p. 54).

tion is external to the subject in the sense that the act of pledging to do something concretely obligates an actor” (p. 166).

When only first-person expressions can be said to be commissive, this excludes the blessing under consideration. It is not the speaker, the priest, who commits himself to do something. Neither does it seem to be the case that the simple pronouncement of the blessing obligates the subject, YHWH to bless. The words of 23–27 are said to be spoken by YHWH (verse 22), in that sense the words of the blessing (24–26) represent an expression of intention or will on the part of YHWH (viz. to bless His people). Maybe the pious Israelites were able to discern some *intentional* or *promissory* force, when the priests by way of proxy blessed the people in the Name of YHWH. But to relate this to the jussive form of the verbs might very well be stretching the evidence too far.

## Modality, Genre and Context

The modality of the verb seems to be either the optative mood, thus expressing a wish or hope or some kind of (indirect) imperative mood. Clearly this issue is related to the genre of the text. In a sense modality is a question of interpretation. To better understand what it means for the text to be a wish or to express hope, several pieces of information should be attended to, among others, the semantics of the word בָּרַךְ and other words from the same wordfield (cf. Aitken, 2007), parallel texts, the genre, and of course the present context. The next chapter will discuss the verb בָּרַךְ, albeit in a very limited way. As texts with parallel constructions will be discussed, attention will also be given to the modality of the verbs.

### 3.3 Syntax of Verse 27

A problem arising in verse 27 is how to interpret the first verbal form of the verse. Whether the imperative reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch or the *wəqatal* reading of MT is accepted in both cases a sequential reading, in the sense of temporal sequence, is impossible. The pronouncement of the blessing is, or at least includes, the putting of the Name of YHWH on the children of Israel.

The *wəqāṭal* can be taken as a kind of summary, restating “briefly an event or act previously described in detail” (De Boer, 1982, p. 5). According to (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990) the *wəqatal* usually denotes “either a consequent or an explanatory imperfective situation” (p. 537). So the act of blessing is

either explained or its consequence is spelled out: *So they will put my Name on the children of Israel*. Since the *weqatal* can be considered to be a continuation of the infinitive absolute found in verse 23b, which has imperative force, it may well carry on this imperative meaning: *So they shall/must put my Name on the children of Israel*.

De Boer (1982) suggests that the *weqatal* form can also be taken as “a conditional sentence” (p. 5), and thus the verse should be translated something like: *And when they shall put my Name upon the children of Israel, then I will bless them*. This would connect the action of the priest quite directly to the action of YHWH. Indeed the *yiqtol* used here in the second clause, refers to a future act. In these cases it is often somehow contingent on the preceding clause (cf. Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 511-512). Not that the action of the priest is construed as a strict precondition, neither does the emphasis seem to be on either temporal simultaneity or temporal succession of the act of the priest and the act of YHWH, but still the actual blessing by YHWH is here connected to the act of the priest.

This of course presupposes that the actions of the priest and YHWH are distinct. According to Talstra (2002b) they are somehow construed in opposition, and he opts for an adversative translation: “They must lay my Name upon the Israelites, *but* I will bless them” (p. 54, emphasis added). Given the use of the emphatic pronoun, this is a justifiable point of view.

However the verse seems to posit a much more positive relation between the act of the priest and the act of YHWH. The blessing by YHWH is not independent of the laying of the Name upon the Israelites by the priests. To the contrary, the two are connected in this verse. It seems that the blessing is the appointed *means* by which YHWH blesses them. As Achenbach (2003) puts it: “Indem der Priester den Namen Gottes über dem Volk ausspricht, wird es als Gottes Eigentum seines Segenswirkens teilhaftig”. Levine (1993) formulates, a bit more reservedly: “the priests opened the door to the granting of blessings by God” (p. 228). In this connection he points to Exodus 20:24, which he translates “At every cult site where *I allow my name to be pronounced* (*ʿašer ʿazkîr ʿet šemî*), I will arrive where you are, and grant you blessing (*ûbēraktîkâ*)” (p. 228). Still, Talstra (2002b) is correct that verse 27 excludes a mechanical or magical interpretation of the blessing, for it distinguishes quite clearly between the act of the priest and the act of YHWH.

Still another interpretation of the verse under discussion is possible. De Boer (1982, p. 4) points to rabbi Yishma<sup>c</sup>el, who was of the opinion that the suffix of אֲבִירָם in verse 27 does not refer to the Israelites but to the subject of the previous sentence, viz. the priests. In other words: because the priest did not bless themselves YHWH promises to do so. But it is more likely that the suffix refers to the nearest possible referent. More importantly, this interpretation

would not explain the emphatic pronoun, and consequently is to be rejected.

## The verb בָּרַךְ

### 4.1 Introduction

The root בָּרַךְ occurs as a *piel* *yiqtōl* in verse 6:23,24 and 6:27. A *piel* form of בָּרַךְ occurs 233 times in the Hebrew Bible in 208 verses (idem Leuenberger, 2008a, §2.1).<sup>1</sup>

Table 4.1 lists the constructions used in these verses.<sup>2</sup>

	Post	Verbal	Pre	Object	Subj	Colon	
S3mp+ל	InfA(אמר)	Obj+את	Yqt2mp	בַּה	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶהְרֹן	23b
	Subj	S2ms+Yqt3ms			יְהוָה	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	24aA
		S3mp+Yqt1ms	וְאֲנִי		יְהוָה	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	27aB

Table 4.1: Overview of בָּרַךְ within the Pericope

The overview of different constructions in table 4.1 gives rise to some interesting questions. One of them is whether there is a difference between the *blessing* done by the priests in colon 6:23b and the *blessing* done by YHWH in cola 6:24aA and 27aB? Both humans and deities can function as the subject of בָּרַךְ. But does a change in subject, change the meaning of the verb?

Within the present context it seems that the blessing done by the priests *consists in* the speaking of words, the blessing done by YHWH evidentially

<sup>1</sup>The root בָּרַךְ occurs 330 times in a verbal form in 289 verses, 71 occurrences are passive participles in Qal, 13 forms are Pual, 7 are Hithpael, 3 are Nifal. Three times the root בָּרַךְ presumably means *to kneel*: Gen 24:11 (Hiphil), Ps 95:6 (QalYqt), 2 Chr 6:13 (QalWay). All statistics given in this thesis, unless otherwise noted, are the result of searches in BibleWorks 8.0 on the Groves-Wheeler Westminster Hebrew Old Testament Morphology database 4.10 (WTM). It must be noted that although this database follows BHS quite closely (including e.g. Ketib Qere) it does not include its critical apparatus. So other databases may sometimes yield other results.

<sup>2</sup>The table is to be read from right to left. The designations *Pre* and *Post* refer what goes before and what follows the verb.

entails more, as can be gathered from the blessing itself. Maybe this interpretation can be corroborated by comparing with other texts found within the Hebrew bible.

## 4.2 Method of Selecting Parallel Passages

In a sense the constructions described in table 4.1 are arbitrary. As we have seen (section 1.4) constructions range from the level of the morpheme to the sentence and beyond, for discourse structures can also be approached as constructions. The level of research chosen in table 4.1 is what is traditionally called the sentence.

But we have also seen that constructions range over various levels of abstraction or conversely, concreteness (section 1.4). Consequently constructions can be described at different levels of concreteness. The second last element in the construction in Num 6:23b can be described (in traditional terminology) as a form of the verb **אמר**, as an infinitive, as an infinitive absolute, or as an infinitive absolute of **אמר** (depending on what features of the construction we are interested in).

This, of course, is important when we want to find texts for comparison on the basis of constructions. The level of description will determine what set of parallel texts we end up with. It is important to be conscious of the decisions made. Because the focus here is on the verb **ברך** of course this verb (in *piel*) should be part of the construction to be used for finding parallel texts. The element **נה** from Num 6:23b is not included because there is only one other occurrence of **נה** with **ברך** directly following it,<sup>3</sup> namely Josh 17:14 (see appendix G).

## 4.3 **ברך** and **אמר**

The first set of texts discussed in parallel to verse 6:23b are texts which have constructions that combine a form of **ברך** *piel* with a nota objecti and with a form of the verb **אמר** following in sequence. An overview of these verses is given in table 4.2.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The sequence of words is not always part of a construction, sometimes combinations of constructions can change the sequence of words.

<sup>4</sup>This dataset created by doing a BibleWorks proximity search which yielded: Gen 1:22,28; 24:60; 28:1,6; 48:15; 2 Sam 6:20; 14:22; 1 Kgs 1:47; 8:55. Gen 28:1,6 and 2 Sam 6:20 have been disregarded, because the connection between **ברך** and **אמר** was considered too low.

Construction	Object	Subject	Verse
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + Subj + Suf3mp אַת + Way3ms <sup>b</sup>	creatures <sup>c</sup>	אֱלֹהִים	Gen 1:22
Subj + Suf3mp אַת + Way3ms Subj + Suf3mp ל + (אמר)Way3ms	<sup>d</sup> זָכַר וּנְקָבָה id.	אֱלֹהִים id.	Gen 1:28
+ Obj אַת + Way3mp Suf3fs ל + (אמר)Way3mp	רַבָּקָה	אָחִיהָ וְאִמָּהָ <sup>e</sup>	Gen 24:60
(אמר)Way3ms + Obj אַת + Way3ms	יוֹסֵף <sup>g</sup>	יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>f</sup>	Gen 48:15
(אמר)Way3ms + Obj אַת + Way3ms	הַמְלֶכֶד	יוֹאָב	2 Sam 14:22
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + Obj אַת + InfC + ל + Subj	<sup>h</sup> הַמְלֶכֶד דָּוִד	עַבְדֵי הַמְלֶכֶד	1 Kgs 1:47
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + קוֹל גְּדוֹל + Obj אַת + Way3ms	כָּל־קֵהֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל	שְׁלֹמֹה <sup>i</sup>	1 Kgs 8:55

<sup>a</sup> לאמר in this table is always ל + InfC of אמר

<sup>b</sup> When not otherwise specified verbal forms are ברך *piel*.

<sup>but</sup> All forms of אמר in this table are *qal* binyan.

<sup>c</sup> See Gen 1:21 for the list.

<sup>d</sup> male and female Gen 1:27

<sup>e</sup> her brother and her mother Gen 24:55

<sup>f</sup> i.e. another name for Jakob Gen 48:14

<sup>g</sup> Joseph here means the two sons of Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh, see Gen 48:14.

<sup>h</sup> in full: אֲדֹנָיִנוּ הַמְלֶכֶד דָּוִד. The servants are said to bless David, but their wish pertains to Solomon, viz. that God may make his name more famous and his throne greater than Davids.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Kgs 8:55

Table 4.2: ברך followed by אַת and אמר

The verses in table 4.2, except for Gen 1 if it is regarded as poetry, are found within narrative texts. Numbers 6:22–27 is legislative text, but embedded within narrative. In two of the verses from table 4.2 God is the subject blessing His creatures, (viz. Gen 1:22,28). In all other cases humans are blessing humans.

In all verses of table 4.2 the verb **אמר** introduces direct speech. Table 4.3 gives the syntactic constructions with which this direct speech starts. Second Samuel 14:22 is left out, because it is not entirely clear if the words of Joab to the king should be taken as the content of the blessing: “Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, for the king has done the word of his<sup>5</sup> servant.” This might be the content of **ברך**, if it means PAYING HOMAGE or PRAISING<sup>6</sup>

## Modality

As can be seen in table 4.3 in both Gen 1:22 and Gen 1:28 the beginnings of the blessings three times have a *qal* imperative masculine plural, addressed to the ones being blessed: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill” either the waters (vs. 22) or the earth (vs. 28). The earth is also mentioned in Gen 1:22 for this verse continues by an imperative to the birds to multiply on earth.<sup>7</sup> In Gen 1:28 the human beings are commanded to “have dominion” over the animals blessed in Gen 1:22. Strictly speaking this command seems to be part of the blessing.

It is tempting to connect these imperatives to Gods act of creating by speaking. This connection however seems to be absent in the blessing pronounced in Gen 24:60, which also starts with an imperative (Qal 2fs), being addressed to Rebekah:

Our sister, you must become	אַחַתְּנוּ אֶתְ הַיְי
thousands of multitudes,	לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָה
and (may) your offspring possess	וַיִּרְשׁ זִרְעֶךָ
the gate of those who hate them	אֶת שַׁעַר שֹׂנְאָיו

Strikingly, there is no mention of God or gods in this blessing. This departs from the main pattern of table 4.2: the other blessings spoken by human beings all mention the deity. Of course when God pronounces the blessing in Gen 1:22,28 he need not mention himself. Possibly the absence

<sup>5</sup>Qere: your

<sup>6</sup>The words appearing in small capital letters denote concepts.

<sup>7</sup>וְהָעוֹף יִרְבַּ בָּאָרֶץ

(Note that both verses end on the word **ארץ**.)

Phrase <sup>a</sup> and Construction	Verb (V)	Addressee and Subject <sup>b</sup>	Verse
פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הַמִּים בַּיָּמִים X <sup>c</sup> אֵת + V + ו V + ו + V	QalImp mp	creatures id.	Gen 1:22
פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ X <sup>c</sup> אֵת + V + ו V + ו + V	QalImp mp	<sup>d</sup> זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה id.	Gen 1:28
אֲחַתְּנוּ אִתָּהּ הִיא לְאֵלֶיךָ רַבָּה X <sup>c</sup> ל + V + Subject <sup>e</sup> + Addressee	QalImp fs	אֲחַתְּנוּ <sup>e</sup> אִתָּהּ	Gen 24:60
... <sup>h</sup> יְבָרַךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים Obj + אֵת + V + Subj	Yqt3ms	<sup>g</sup> <sup>h</sup>	Gen 48:16
יִטַּב אֱלֹהֶיךָ <sup>j</sup> אֶת־שֵׁם שְׁלֹמֹה מִשְׁמֶךָ X <sup>c</sup> אֵת + Subj + V	HiphJus3ms	<sup>i</sup> דָּוִד אֱלֹהִים	1 Kgs 1:47
בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן מְנוּחָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל ... אֲשֶׁר + Subj + V	QalPassPtcmsa	יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>k</sup> יְהוָה <sup>l</sup>	1 Kgs 8:56
... יְהִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִמָּנוּ Suf1cp + עִם + Subj + V	QalJus3ms	יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>k</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	1 Kgs 8:57

<sup>a</sup> The first part of the utterance expressing the blessing.

<sup>b</sup> The subject below the addressee is the syntactical subject of the blessing phrase.

<sup>c</sup> X = entity that is neither object nor subject of blessing

<sup>d</sup> male and female Gen 1:27

<sup>e</sup> Syntactically speaking the IndPrn2fs אִתָּהּ is the subject of the sentence

<sup>g</sup> Jakob is said to bless Joseph, i.e. his sons: Ephraim and Manasseh Gen 48:14

<sup>h</sup> This sentence is preceded by three subject sentences in apposition:

הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק  
הָאֱלֹהִים הָרַעָה אֹתִי מֵעוּדֵי עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
הַמְּלַאֲךְ הַגָּאֹל אֹתִי מִכַּלְרֵעַ

Probably the “messenger” in the last phrase is the God mentioned in the first.

<sup>i</sup> David is addressed, but the blessing pertains to Solomon.

<sup>j</sup> Qere: אֱלֹהִים

<sup>k</sup> כַּלְקָהֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל

<sup>l</sup> Syntactically speaking YHWH is the subject of the first clause, since the Ptc is Pass He is not the active person.

Table 4.3: Constructions in direct speech utterances of blessing

of God in the blessing in Gen 24:60 has no particular significance, but it is remarkable. In the next clause the subject changes nonetheless to a third person plural (“your offspring”) and the imperative is carried further by a *yiqtōl* form, probably with jussive meaning. This connection between jussive and imperative is not that remarkable since a jussive can be described as an imperative or an “indirect command to the 3rd person” and (Van der Merwe et al., 2002, p. 71) an imperative can be considered as a jussive or a direct wish to the 2nd person.

A different kind of connection between imperative and blessing can be found in Gen 28:1–6. These texts were left out of table 4.2, mainly because the content of the blessing mentioned in Gen 28:1 is found in Gen 28:3–4 after a *direct speech command* introduced in both Gen 28:1 and Gen 28:6 with the verb צוה *pi<sup>c</sup>el* (to command) together with אמר. The first sentence of the direct speech command found in Gen 28:1–2 is repeated by way of summary, and makes up the whole of direct speech, in Gen 28:6: “Do not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan”.<sup>8</sup> The contents of the blessing succeeds the contents of the command, and although this need not be conditional, it at least seems that command and blessing are closely related.

In table 4.3 when the imperative is used creatures, including humans, are addressed; when the jussive or *yiqtōl* is used God is the acting subject. This has to do with the fact that in the latter cases God is not addressed, at least not directly. In 1 Kgs 8:56 a participle passive is used, this participle also seems to have imperative force. Strictly speaking, the utterance of Solomon is not restricted to Israel, and could be interpreted as a general declaration that everybody and even everything must praise YHWH, still the words are addressed to the congregation of Israel and may therefore be regarded as having *obligative* modality, in that the source (Solomon) requires some participant (the congregation of Israel) to perform an event, namely praising YHWH (cf. section 3.2). The participle form is chosen to indicate the continuity of the desired action: YHWH must be praised continuously.

Thus the verbs in table 4.3 are characterised by modal forms, either imperative or jussive. Genesis 48:16 has a long *yiqtōl* form, but this can also be taken as having modal meaning. This verse is followed by what seems to be prophecy in Gen 48:19. Maybe an argument can be set up for some future meaning (maybe even for declarative modality as it was encountered in section 3.2).

Of course it must be remembered that the texts in table 4.2 and 4.3 are only a selection of all blessing formulae in the bible. Still in this table

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<sup>8</sup>Meaning: “from among the Canaanite women”.

imperative or jussive meaning seems to be present in all cases. This seems to be a strong argument to reject the indicative meaning proposed for the verbs in the Priestly Blessing by Jagersma (1983, p. 125).

## Introductory Formulæ

Another common feature of the diverse blessings represented in table 4.2 are the constructions introducing the blessings which are all formulated as direct speech. Gen 1:22 uses an *infinitivus constructus* of אָמַר with לְ. This construction resembles that of 1 Kgs 1:47 and 1 Kgs 8:55 which also use לְאָמַר. Gen 1:28 uses a *wayyiqtol* and the object being blessed is referred to again by use of לְ with suffix. This repetition causes more emphasis on the object, and it seems that in vs. 28 the object is more prominently construed as being spoken *to*. In Gen 24:60 the *wayyiqtol* with לְ with suffix is also used. The word אָחֵתְנִי used there to start the blessing is most probably to be taken as a vocative since it is followed by an independent pronoun second person feminine, which is the subject of the verbal phrase. This combination of vocative and independent pronoun also emphasizes the recipient of the blessing.

The direct speech of 1 Kgs 1:47 starts with a jussive verb followed by the subject which is God. This resembles Num 6:24, introduced by an infinitive absolute, in which the *yiqṭōl* is also followed by a divine subject: YHWH. The construction in 1 Kgs 8:56 differs in that the verb used, although it is בָּרַךְ like in Num 6:24, is a participle passive. Thus YHWH is the One being blessed, or praised instead of the One Who blesses.

From these texts it is not entirely clear what meaning can be attached to different constructions used to introduce a blessing, in other words, whether there is a difference in grammatical construal, and what this difference would mean. It seems that a אָמַר *wayyiqtol* with לְ emphasizes the one being addressed. Further research into this construction as compared to the לְאָמַר construction could possibly bring to light further semantic nuances.

## 4.4 Again בָּרַךְ and אָמַר

To extend the previous set of texts, the other texts that combine בָּרַךְ and infinitive of אָמַר, but that do not have a *nota objecti*, are given in table 4.4.

In Gen 48:20 Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh. He uses a blessing formula with another blessing formula embedded. He says: “may Israel bless by you, saying...” (if taken as a wish) or: “by you will Israel bless, saying...”. This sentence introduces the embedded blessing: “May God make you like

Construction & Phrase <sup>a</sup> & Translation	Object	Subject	Verse
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + ביום ההוא + Suf3mp + Way3ms <sup>b</sup> <sup>a</sup> לאמר + Subj + Yqt3ms + <sup>e</sup> Suf2ms+ב ישמך אלהים באפרים ובמנשה May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh	them <sup>c</sup>	אביו <sup>d</sup> ישראל <sup>f</sup>	Gen 48:20
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + Suf3ms+ב+לבב + HitWeqt3ms שלום יהיה לי כי בשררות לבי אלך <sup>i</sup> I will have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart <sup>i</sup>		<sup>g</sup>	<sup>h</sup> Deut 29:18
<sup>a</sup> לאמר + Subj + Suf3ms+Qtl3ms + אשר Obj + QalPtcPass msa	them <sup>j</sup>	יהוה <sup>j</sup>	Isa 19:25

<sup>a</sup> לאמר in this table is always ל + InfC of אמר

<sup>b</sup> Verbal forms unless otherwise noted ברך *piel*

<sup>c</sup> אפרים and מנשה

<sup>d</sup> “his father” referring to the father of Joseph Gen 48:19

<sup>e</sup> The preposition ב with suffix can be designated as a prepositional object. It is singular, probably referring to Joseph, but it embraces both Ephraim and Manasseh as being the sons of Joseph.

<sup>f</sup> Here most likely the people of Israel are meant. At the same time Jacob is called Israel in this chapter, so some kind of pun may be intended.

<sup>g</sup> Hithpael has reflexive meaning, thus the object is the subject

<sup>h</sup> People mentioned in the preceding verse (who turn their heart “away from the LORD ” to serve gods of other nations etc...)

<sup>i</sup> The next words of the verse are left out, although they may belong to the words spoken.

<sup>j</sup> ישראל אשור מצרים mentioned in Isa 19:24

<sup>k</sup> יהוה צבאות

<sup>l</sup> “Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands and my possession Israel”:  
עמי מצרים ומעשה ידי אשור ונחלתי ישראל

<sup>n</sup> Phrase here means: the direct speech of the blessing

Table 4.4: לאמר and ברך no nota objecti

Ephraim and Manasseh.” To bless “בָּרַךְ” (by you) can be taken to mean that they will “bless referring to you”, since the meaning seems to be that Ephraim and Manasseh will be blessed in such a way that they will become known for the blessing God has given them. Their blessing will become exemplary. Consequently anybody blessing someone will refer to this blessing as a kind of ideal blessing, a golden standard. So this verse designates three agents: Jacob blesses Joseph; Israel (as a collective) blesses by referring to Joseph; and third, it is wished that God makes the one addressed by Israel “like Ephraim and Manasseh.” That would also be an act of blessing.

We here have direct speech embedded within direct speech. The verbal forms used in this direct speech do not have jussive form. As was noted in connection with Gen 48:16 these verses are related to the prophetic utterance in Gen 48:19.

The LXX has εὐλογηθήσεται, an indicative future passive 3 person singular: “by you will Israel bless”. This may go back on different vocalisation,<sup>9</sup> and would indeed fit the context. But a wish is equally well possible. In the embedded direct speech the verb (וַיְשֹׁם) almost certainly has jussive meaning, and must be read as a wish.

In Deut 29:18 someone, although hearing the words of the curse of the covenant<sup>10</sup> blesses (בָּרַךְ) herself or himself, saying: “I will” (or “May I”, if interpreted as a wish) “have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart”. Here בָּרַךְ may have a meaning which is related to PRAISE, the person might be wishing or hoping or promising oneself peace, or the person may be praising or boasting oneself. Clines (2009, p. 56) proposes a meaning of “strengthening” oneself.

In Isa 19:25 it is YHWH who pronounces a blessing and thus blesses. The blessing starts with a *qal* participle passive, as we have seen in the blessing in 1 Kgs 8:56. The contrast between the two texts is that in Isa 19:25 the meaning of the verb seems not to be so much related to praise but to prosperity and wellbeing, although it is not exactly clear from the context what blessing entails here. Of course the participle can be taken to have indicative meaning: “Blessed is my people, Egypt and Assyria, the work of My hands, and my possession Israel”. But it could also have some imperative meaning: “Blessed must be my people”. Indeed volitional force seems to fit the context better than a simple observation.

<sup>9</sup>Hamilton (1995, p. 639) proposes a Niphal and says that either Hiphil is also possible, as is a Pual, like BHS proposes.

<sup>10</sup>דְּבַרְיָה אֱלֹהִים, being “the warnings of judgement attached to” the covenant (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980, s.v. אֱלֹהִים).

## Some Themes

The blessings pronounced by humans can be grouped by socio-hierarchical interaction or by *Sitz im Leben*, we see family members blessing family members (Gen 24:60; 48:15; 48:20), subordinates blessing the king (2 Sam 14:22, 1 Kgs 1:47), king Solomon blessing the “whole assembly of Israel” (1 Kgs 8:55), and we see someone blessing him or herself (Deut 29:18).

The blessings by God (Gen 1:22,28) and the family blessings (Gen 24:60; 48:16) share a common theme of multiplication of offspring. In Genesis 48:16 Jacobs wishes that his name, and the name of his fathers may be carried on in the sons of Joseph. The theme of the name somehow connects this text to 1 Kings 1:47 where the servants of David wish to him that God may do good to or make good the name of Solomon even more than the name of David. The theme of the blessing in 1 Kings 8:55 next to the praise of YHWH is mainly his presence among his people and their heartily obedience of Him. The theme of the presence of YHWH is also present in Num 6. These two texts both have officials, the former a king, the later a priest, blessing the congregation of Israel.

## 4.5 בִּרְךְ second person

In Num 6:23–27 we find a second person plural (6:23b), a third person singular (6:24aA) and a first person singular (6:27aB) of בִּרְךְ (cf. table 4.1). Num 6:23b is the only text in which בִּרְךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl occurs in the second person plural. An overview of the second person singular forms of בִּרְךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl is found in table 4.5.

### Magical Or Not?

In Num 22:6 Balak requests Balaam to curse Israel. Obviously he thinks highly of the power of Balaams words, for he says: “for I know that whom you bless will be blessed and whom you curse will be cursed”. This seems to imply that not all religious practitioners have this power. It could so happen that person A curses B but B is still blessed. This is what the psalmist of Ps 109:20 prays for.

Balaam himself will make it clear that he can only bless or curse as YHWH sees fit. In the narrative this is repeatedly made clear (Num 22:8; 22:18; 22:20; 22:35; 22:38; 23:8; 23:12; 23:20; 23:26; 24:13). The theology of these chapters shows clearly that YHWH is the source of blessing, and that human beings are not able to bestow or communicate curse or blessing against His will. Hymes (2007) argues that within the structure of Numbers these chapters are a kind

Construction	Object	Subject	Verse
PualPtc-msa <sup>b</sup> + Yqt2ms <sup>a</sup> + אַשֶׁר + אֵת	<sup>d</sup>	<sup>c</sup> בְּלַעַם	Num 22:6
Suf3ms + Yqt2ms + לֹא + InfA + גַּם	“him” <sup>e</sup>	בְּלַעַם	Num 23:25
Suf3ms + Yqt2ms + לֹא	<sup>f</sup> אִישׁ	גִּיחֲזִי	2 Kgs 4:29
Subj + Suf2ms+Yqt3ms + וּכְיִ	גִּיחֲזִי	אִישׁ	2 Kgs 4:29
Suf1cs + Yqt2ms + InfA + אִם	“me” <sup>h</sup>	<sup>g</sup> אֱלֹהִים	1 Chr 4:10
Subj + Obj + Yqt2ms + אֶתְּהָ + כִּי	צַדִּיק	יְהוָה	Ps 5:13
Yqt2ms + Obj	<sup>j</sup> צִמְחָה	<sup>i</sup> אֱלֹהִים	Ps 65:11
Yqt2ms + וְאֶתְּהָ	<sup>l</sup>	“you” <sup>k</sup>	Ps 109:28

<sup>a</sup> When not otherwise specified in this table the root is בִּרְךְ and binyan is *pi<sup>c</sup>el*.

<sup>b</sup> a means *absolute*

<sup>c</sup> Num 22:24: בְּלַעַם בְּזֶבְעוֹר פְּתוּרָה אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַנְּהָר

<sup>d</sup> The object is the first part of the construction “the one whom you will bless”: אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תְּבָרֵךְ.

<sup>e</sup> referring to the people (עַם) of Jakob/Israel (Num 23:20–24)

<sup>f</sup> meaning: anyone

<sup>g</sup> to whom this prayer (?) is directed (1 Chr 4:10)

<sup>h</sup> referring to עֲצָבִי

<sup>i</sup> “God of our salvation” Ps 65:6 אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ

<sup>j</sup> צִמַח (growth) + Suf3fs. The suffix refers to הָאָרֶץ in Ps 65:10.

<sup>k</sup> יהוה Ps 109:27 here designated by PrnInd2ms

<sup>l</sup> the psalmist himself, calling himself “your servant”: עַבְדְּךָ (Ps 109:27b)

Table 4.5: בִּרְךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl second person

of counterpoint to the Priestly Blessing, or at least that there is a relation between the end of chapter 6 and the chapters 22, 23 and 24.

The text from 2 Kgs 4:29 is of a rather different character. A boy has died. The prophet Elisha orders his servant Gehazi to take the staff of Elisha and lay it on the child, in order to raise him from the dead. If he meets someone on the way he must not בִּרְךְ and when someone בִּרְךְ him, he must not answer. This is sometimes explained as a need for speed, Gehazi must not even take time to greet people, for TO GREET seems to be the meaning the verb takes here. But Pedersen (1926/1991a) explains it differently. He suggests that the staff itself is blessed and contains strength, as was the case with the staff of Mozes (p. 170). This blessing had to be kept “intact” and should not be ceded or confused “by having other souls mixed up in it with

greetings” (p. 201). The text however does not unequivocally state that the staff has been blessed. If this is the correct explanation of the text, what then does it mean that Gehazi fails to bring back the child to life? Might it be read as some kind of criticism on the idea that staffs can have any power?

## Prayer

An example of using the verb בָּרַךְ in a request can be found in 1 Chr 4:10. Jabez asks God to bless him. The construction is a infinitive with a finite form of the verb, which has an “intensifying effect” and is often used to express “modal nuances” or in “orders and admonitions” (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 587). Jabez wishes for an extension of territory, that the hand of God will be with him, and that He will take care that evil will not hurt him. These are themes with which blessing is more often associated. First Chronicles 4:10 does not have an imperative, but it is at least a very urgent request or petition for blessing. This can be viewed as a form of either precative or obligative modality (as defined in section 3.2).

Another request for blessing is found in Psalm 109:28, although in a different context. The psalmist talks about his adversaries (שֹׁטְנָי Ps 109:20, שׂוֹטְנָי Ps 109:29). The *piel* yiqṭōl of קָלַל can be considered to have permissive modality. So the psalmist tolerates that his enemies are cursing, the object of cursing most probably being the psalmist himself. But against this cursing he asks YHWH to bless (sc. him). The antithesis between the blessing and cursing is strengthened by a second antithesis, namely between *them* and *you*, the independent pronouns being explicitly mentioned. The psalmist tolerates the cursing *if only* YHWH will bless. In that case the cursing of the enemies of course will not harm him in any way. Quite the opposite, as is expressed in the second part of Ps 109:28, the adversaries stand up (sc. against the psalmist) and they will be ashamed (root: בּוֹשׁ) but the psalmist will rejoice (root: שִׂמְחָה). There is, of course, a contrast with the first part of the verse, at the same time the second half of the verse can readily be interpreted as the result of the blessing of YHWH.

A connection between joy and blessing can also be found in the last line of Ps 5 (viz. Psalm 5:13). This verse either gives a reason (because/for) or describes the time (when) of the abundant joy and singing of the people trusting YHWH and loving His Name (as described in Ps 5:12). Psalm 5:13 seems to stress the fact that blessing is the work of YHWH because it starts with כִּי־אֲתָהּ. Thus YHWH is addressed with a personal pronoun. The כִּי continues the prayer of the previous verses. The yiqṭōl forms of the previous verse, verse 12, should obviously be taken to have precative modality. Verse 13 kind of describes a precondition for verse 12, and thus the yiqṭōl forms

in verse 13 seem to express a form of contingency Waltke and O'Connor (1990, p. 510–511). When, or because, the LORD will bless the righteous and His goodwill (רְצוֹן) will be around them like a large shield, thus offering protection, they will rejoice like described in the previous verse. Blessing is here connected to protection. Other connected elements are: joy, the Name of YHWH, and goodwill.

## Descriptive

In Ps 65:11 the people are being blessed indirectly. The direct object of blessing is the earth and more particularly its crop. Dry ground in the Near East is hard, but God makes it soft by showering waters, and its growth is being blessed by God. Gods blessing is here connected to abundant rain and resulting crops. The text most probably is plainly descriptive.

## 4.6 More Texts with בָּרַךְ and a Nota

In 9 verses בָּרַךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl is followed directly by a nota objecti, including Num 6:23, 1 Chr 4:10; Gen 48:16, verses already encountered. In two, namely Ps 16:7; 34:2, YHWH is the object of blessing or rather praise. The remaining texts can be found in table 4.6.

Construction	Subject	Object	Verse
Suf2ms + אַת + Yqt3ms + S	אֵל שְׁדֵי	Jakob	Gen 28:3
...+ Suf2mp + אַת + Yqt3ms + ו	יְהוָה <sup>a</sup>	כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>b</sup>	Deut 1:11
בְּשָׁלוֹם + Obj+אַת + Yqt3ms + Subj	יְהוָה	עַמּוֹ	Ps 29:11
Yqt3ms	יְהוָה		Ps 115:12
Obj + אַת + Yqt3ms		בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל	
Obj + אַת + Yqt3ms		בֵּית אֱהֲרֹן	

<sup>a</sup> אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵכֶם in apposition

<sup>b</sup> Deut 1:1

Table 4.6: בָּרַךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl followed by a nota objecti

**In Gen 28:2** Isaac commands Jacob to go to Paddan-aram to find (take לָקַח) a wife there. Isaac expresses the wish: “And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and make you many that you may become an mass of nations. May He give to you the blessing of Abraham; to you, and to your offspring with you, to posses the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham” (Gen 28:3–4). No jussive forms of the verb are found, but optative meaning is most likely. That Isaac here blesses Jacob is remarkable, since in the previous chapter Gen 27 Jacob (disguised as Esau) tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing already. So why bless Isaac again? The blessing formulae from Gen 27 and Gen 28 are quite different. In Gen 27 the blessing is mainly about the abundance of of harvest (Gen 27:28) and the subjection of his brothers (Gen 27:29). The last feature seems a bit ironic, for because of his taking of this blessing he is in danger that his brother will kill him (Gen 27:41). The blessing of Esau (Gen 27:39–40) somehow seems to mirror that of Jacob (Gen 27:28–29). The emphasis in Gen 28:3–4 is entirely different, and seems to be more in line with a family blessing: there is reference to a forefather, to wit Abraham, to offspring and to possession of land.

**In Deut 1:11** Moses expresses a wish for Israel: “May the LORD, God of your fathers, add to you, like you are now thousand times more, and bless you as he has said to you.” The first verb is jussive (יִסַּף). Although not introduced as such it can be identified as blessing formula. Noteworthy is Moses reference to what is said, that is what is promised, by YHWH, namely to bless Israel. The theme of blessing and promise are connected here. This blessing again has to do with multiplication.

**Psalm 29:11** is the last verse of this Psalm, that is about the voice of YHWH which is connected to thunder (רעם vs. 3). Remarkable, in connection to the Priestly Blessing, is the oft repeated Name of YHWH in this Psalm. Verse 10 speaks about God as King. Verse 11 at first seems to be only weakly connected to the preceding Psalm. But it could well be that the Psalm climaxes in this verse. The *yiqtōl* form can be read as a modal and thus express a blessing wish: “May YHWH give strength to his people, may YHWH bless His people with peace”. This would be entirely in line with other uses of בָּרַךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* *yiqtōl* we have encountered. But it might also be read “in association with” the “persistent (present) perfective form” of the previous verse (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 505). Although the *yiqtōl* here follows a *wayyiqtol*, this form in turn follows a *qatal* form. And we know that a *wayyiqtol* may continue a “persistent perfective” (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 559-560). In this case the *yiqtōl* form expresses (not an one off action,

but) a habitual or gnomic aspect, expressing a general truth: “YHWH gives strength to his people, YHWH blesses His people with peace”. Craigie (1983) still sees a different possibility and gives a translation: “The Lord will give protection to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace!” (p. 242). He takes the preceding *wayyiqtol* to be a *weyiqtol*, a waw plus a “simple” *yiqtōl* form (p. 243). Although Craigie (1983) does not use the term his translation also has the gnomic aspect. Indeed a future translation might express this gnomic aspect better. So the meaning of the verb in this verse is either modal or gnomic. Gnomic meaning seems to be most in line with the rest of the psalm and especially with verse 29:10.

Another phenomenon that is of interest, is the connection made in this verse Ps 29:11 between the strength YHWH gives to his people and blessing. Craigie (1983, p. 243) argues that *עז* here means protection. In Num 6:24 blessing is connected to *שָׁמַר* which may also have the element of protection. But a more striking parallel to Num 6 is the mention of *שְׁלוֹם*. As this verse says that YHWH blesses his people with peace. As we have seen *blessing* is the first, and *peace* the last word of the priestly blessing.

**Psalm 115** In Ps 115:12 a jussive sense is possible for the *yiqtōl* forms because verse 14 has a jussive form (*יִסַּף*). But the *yiqtōl* forms follow a *qatal* form of the verb *זָכַר*: “The LORD remembers us” or “The LORD has remembered us”, and thus most probably carries on this confession, having gnomic meaning: “He will bless, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron”.

The mention of the house of Israel and the house of Aaron in parallel is a link to the first chapters of Numbers, for, as we have seen, the relation between the people of Israel as a whole and the Levites and priests is an important theme in these chapters. It even calls to remembrance the interpretation by rabbi Yishmael who argued that the object of blessing in Num 6:27 were the priests, that is the sons of Aaron. The parallel between the house of Israel and Aaron is also found in the verses 9–10 of Psalm 115.

A third element in added to this parallel is the group of “those who fear the LORD ” (*יִרְאֵי יְהוָה*) (Ps 115:11,13).<sup>11</sup> This could either be taken as a summarizing identification of the house of Israel and priests together or as a third group. It may already have the sense of proselytes, though Allen (1983, p. 109) judges this to be unlikely. Even if we suppose a cultic setting (with possible antiphonal responses) for this Psalm (cf. Allen, 1983, p. 109), the

<sup>11</sup>In verse 13a “He will bless those who fear the LORD”, the *יִרְאֵי יְהוָה* are not preceded by a nota objecti. This might have something to do with the second part of the verse which follows in apposition: “the small with the great”.

question remains if there are certain theological presuppositions behind the mentioning of these three parallel elements.

The fact that YHWH is identified as the Helper (עֹזֵר) and Shield (מָגֵן) of the groups to be blessed (Ps 115:9–11) is another link to Num 6:22–27, for these words are quite clearly related to the theme of protection.

As was already said, verse 14 has a jussive form יִסֶּף: “May YHWH add to you, to you and to your children”. But verse 15 starts with a *gal* participle passive followed by an independent pronoun אֲתֶם (the syntactical subject) and the syntactical object (the semantic subject, because of the passive form): לִיהוָה.<sup>12</sup> As we have seen the participle passive can express modality and thus be taken to express a wish “May you be blessed by the LORD” continuing the mode of verse 14, thus expressing optative modality.

Maybe this could also be a candidate for declarative modality where the source, the speaker in verse 14–15, identifies the event, the multiplication and the blessing, as certain: “The LORD will (certainly) add to you, to you and to your children. You are (certainly) being blessed by the LORD, who created heaven and earth”. This translation is proposed in the King James version and in the Dutch Statenvertaling.

## 4.7 *Pi<sup>c</sup>el* Yiqṭōl Third Person with Suffix Second Person

There are 21 verses with a בָּרַךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* yiqṭōl third person with a suffix of the second person as found in Num 6:24a<sup>13</sup> The text already treated (2 Kgs 4:29) and the text in which YHWH is the object of praise (Ps 145:10) or (presumably) curse (Job 1:11; 2:5) will not be discussed. In the remaining texts either God or YHWH is the subject of the verb with the exception of Gen 27:4,10,25 where Jacob is the subject. Or rather: his soul, for Jacob himself uses the phrase “that my soul may bless you” (Gen 27:4,25). In verse 10 it is Jacob, construed as “your father” by Rebekah.

**In Gen 49:25** we find the words שְׂדֵי וַיְבָרְכֶךָ within discourse that, in its literary context is characterized both as a foretelling of future events (Gen 49:1), but also as blessing (Gen 49:28). Genesis 49:25 can be interpreted as a wish (e.g. Wenham, 1994, p. 455) or as having indicative future meaning

<sup>12</sup>Which is followed by a sentence in apposition: “who made heaven and earth”, and thus syntactically speaking is part of the object.

<sup>13</sup>Gen 27:4,10,25; 49:25; Num 6:24; Deut 14:24,29; 15:4,10; 16:10,15; 23:21; 24:19; Ruth 2:4; 2 Kgs 4:29; Job 1:11; 2:5 Ps 128:5; 134:3; 145:10; Jer 31:23;

(e.g. Hamilton, 1995, p. 681), and thus translated either as: “From the God of you father - and may he help you, and the Almighty - may he bless you” or: “From the God of you father and he will help you, and the Almighty he will bless you”. The text continues: “with blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep that lie down below, blessings of the breast and the womb”. This evidently has to do with fertility. The theme of help (root עזר) precedes the theme of blessing in this verse.

**Deuteronomy** In all of the texts from Deuteronomy (14:24,29; 15:4,10; 16:10,15; 23:21; 24:19) YHWH is referred to as YHWH “your God”. The constructions or phrases containing the *pi<sup>c</sup>el* *yiqṭōl* are all subordinate clauses that start with כִּי (Deut 14:24; 15:4,10; 16:15) or with לְמַעַן (Deut 14:29; 23:21; 24:19) or with אֲשֶׁר (Deut 16:10).<sup>14</sup> In all of these texts blessing has to do with abundance of produce of land and industry and is connected to giving of this abundance to the LORD and to fellow human beings. Deut 23:21 is not about giving, but about *not taking* interest from brothers, that is fellow Israelites. This fits the general pattern of being generous instead of greedy.

**Psalms 128:5 and 134:3** are both verses from Psalms of Ascent(s). They both have the phrase “The LORD bless you from Zion”, probably with optative modality. Psalm 134 has to do with the sanctuary or “house of the LORD ” (vs. 1) and receiving the blessing of the One who made heaven and earth. Psalm 128 may well be regarded as a brief overview of themes ancient Israelites would understand to fall under blessing: fertility both resulting in produce and children, reaching old age and getting all other forms of good and prosperity, both personally and for Jerusalem and Israel in general. The Psalm ends with a wish for שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל. The verb בָּרַךְ is also found in verse 4 in *pual* *yiqṭōl* . In this verse the form has indicative meaning: “Behold, for in this way will the man be blessed who fears the LORD”. This *yiqṭōl* form is followed by the בָּרַךְ *pi<sup>c</sup>el* *yiqṭōl* form of verse 5. That in turn precedes a *qal* imperative, however imperative meaning seems a little out of place here: “See the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!” An imperative may also express a wish (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 571-572): “And may you see ...”. And in this case it could also by *heterosis* have become “a promise or prediction to be fulfilled in the future, made more emphatic and vivid than would be the case were the prefix conjugation used” (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 572): “And you will see ...”. This last option seems to be most in line with the assurance given in verse 4.

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<sup>14</sup>Compare appendix H.

**In Ruth 2:4** Boas greets his reapers, saying: “The LORD be with you”.<sup>15</sup> They reply “The LORD bless you”. The verb does not have jussive form, but most probably has optative meaning. The wishes of Boas and his reapers are reciprocal and can be considered to be similar in meaning, so that the presence of the LORD and His blessing can be considered to be connected here.

**Jeremiah 31:23** is a promise by YHWH that after the exile, in Judah and its cities this formula will be used again: “The LORD bless you, righteous pasture, holy hill”, probably a wish spoken to Mount Zion. This seems to be the only *pi<sup>c</sup>el* *yiqṭōl* form of בָּרַךְ with a suffix second person singular in which not people but a thing is blessed, although it might be the case that the pasture and the hill stand for the people dwelling there.

## 4.8 Conclusions for בָּרַךְ

It must be kept in mind that the following conclusions pertain to a limited set of texts and thus necessarily have limited validity.

**Formulae** When God blesses by an act of direct speech, this direct speech is imperative (Gen 1:22,28) or can be interpreted to have imperative force (Isa 19:25). Human beings also use an imperative when pronouncing a blessing, this only seems to be the case when (maybe even because?) no deities are involved (Gen 24:60).

In blessing formula when God is the one who is to bless, often jussive forms are used (although not for the word בָּרַךְ) (Deut 1:11; 1 Kgs 1:47; 8:57). Often modality can be, and sometimes has to be, supposed (Gen 28:3–4; Deut 1:11; Ruth 2:4; Ps 128:5; 134:3; Jer 31:23). This might even be the case when a blessing formula occurs in a context with prophetic tendencies (Gen 48:16,20; 49:25), although this is not entirely clear. An optative meaning often seems to be most logical (Gen 28:3–4; Deut 1:11; Ruth 2:4; Ps 128:5; 134:3; Jer 31:23). Sometimes a *yiqṭōl* form of בָּרַךְ might be a kind of promise or prediction, maybe Ps 128:5 would be the strongest case for this. When a *yiqṭōl* form of בָּרַךְ follows a *qāṭal* form of a verb it seems best to suppose a kind of gnomic aspect (Ps 29:11; 115:12).

The *yiqṭōl* form of בָּרַךְ is also used precatively (1 Chr 4:10; Ps 109:28; Ps 5:13). In these cases the deity is addressed directly.

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<sup>15</sup>Seybold (2004) notes an interesting variant from the Syriac version: “Peace (שָׁלוֹם) be with you”

The story about Balaam makes it clear that YHWH is the only source of blessing, people can not dispense blessing at will.

**Themes** The Priestly Blessing is connected to Ps 29:11 by the mention of peace and repetition of the name of YHWH. The theme of peace can also be found in Deut 29:18.

Seybold (2004) remarks that outside of Num 6:24 there is no “eindeutiger Beleg, der Segnen und Schützen Jahwes begrifflich zusammenbindet” (p. 43). But then he mentions Deut 28:3 and Ps 121:8 to show that blessingwishes “can be formulated as prayers for protection” (p. 43) and he points to Deut 28:3–6 as an example of how “protection of life” is the content of blessing that is realised by “growth and prosperity” (p. 43).

The verses discussed also show that there is a connection between blessing and protection. Although the verb שמר is not used explicitly, images of protection are often used (e.g. verses 1 Chr 4:10; Ps 5:13; 29:11; 109:28; 115:9–11). For example the word strength עז that can also be linked to this theme. Other themes occur that can be connected to protection, like superiority over people who might threaten your existence (Gen 24:60; 27:29; Ps 109:28–29) and the theme of help (Gen 49:24; Ps 115:9–11). There also is some connection between blessing and the presence of YHWH (Ruth 2:4; 1 Chr 4:10; 1 Kgs 8:55) and between blessing and his goodwill (Ps 15:13).

A theme not mentioned by the Priestly Blessing is the oft occurring theme of fertility in a broad sense, entailing both multiplication of offspring and fertility of the earth (Gen 1:22,28; 24:60; 27:28; 28:3; 48:16–20; 49:25; Deut 1:11<sup>16</sup> Ps 65:11; 115:14; 128). Since this theme is so often mentioned in connection with blessing, it might well functioned somewhere in the background of the minds of the ancient Israelites either reading, pronouncing or hearing the Priestly Blessing. Having offspring in turn is connected to the living on of ones name, even after one has died (Gen 48:16; 1 Kgs 1:47). Still another theme is the possession of land (Gen 28:4; Josh 17:14; 1 Chr 4:10). In the Psalms we encounter the blessing of YHWH as a reason for joy (Ps 15:12–13; 109:28).

Mostly it is people being blessed, but we also encountered blessing for the sprouts of the earth Ps 65:11 and for a pasture on a hill Jer 31:23 (which both are eventually a blessing for people). If the staff found in 2 Kgs 4:29 should be taken to be blessed, the blessing evidently did not help very much.

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<sup>16</sup>And the other texts from Deuteronomy: 14:24,29; 15:4,10; 16:10,15; 23:21; 24:19.

## *Other Verbs*

### 5.1 שמר

The verb שמר in *qal* with a suffix second person singular<sup>1</sup> occurs in ten verses (Gen 28:15; Exod 23:20; Num 6:24; Ps 91:11; 121:3,5,7; Prov 4:6; 6:24; 7:5). An overview of the verses can be found in table 5.1.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Protection in three texts from Proverbs**

The last verses of the table, Prov 6:24 and Prov 7:5, are very similar, both having a final clause (*lamed* and InfC) In both the apprentice is to be protected, either for the evil (6:24) or for the strange/adulterous (7:5) woman. The second halves of these verses are also similar in that the woman is designated with the word נְכָרִי (foreigner/adulteress) and in that she is accompanied by the root חלק (flattering). However the wording and constructions used are different (for instance: lips/tongue in 6:24 versus words in 7:5). Still, on the basis of the similarity between those verses, a relation can be supposed between the subjects of these verses: the “command”, “torah” and “reproofs” in Prov 6:23 are closely connected with “wisdom” and “understanding” in Prov 7:5. Both are means to find one’s way through life. Also compare for instance the use of מְצוּהָ in Prov 4:4.<sup>3</sup> If the commands, torah and reproofs can be brought under the more broad theme of wisdom, it can be concluded that in the verses in table 5.1 the one keeping the person designated by the suffix is either YHWH (Gen 28:15; Ps 121:3,5,7,8), although sometimes by means of (an) angel(s)/messenger(s) (Exod 23:20; Ps 91:11) or it is “wisdom” (Prov 4:6; 6:24; 7:5).

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<sup>1</sup>A suffix second person plural is never attached to this verb.

<sup>2</sup>Because שמר occurs often in Ps 121, the second part of Ps 121:7 and Ps 121:8 are also included in table 5.1.

<sup>3</sup>An, admittedly quite far fetched, connection between Prov 6:23 and the Priestly Blessing is that in both *light* אור is connected to protection, as might also be the case in Prov 4:18,19.

	Post	V <sup>b</sup>	Pre	Obj <sup>a</sup>	Subj	Verse
QalYqt2ms	הַלָּךְ + הַלָּךְ אֲשֶׁר + בּוֹ בַּלְּבָבָהּ דָּרַדְרָה בּוֹ	S+WeQtlcs S+InfC+ל S+InfC+ל	וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי עֹמֵד הָיָה אֲנֹכִי שׁוֹלֵחַ מַלְאָךְ לְפָנָי כִּי מַלְאָכֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ לִיָּךְ	Jacob People of Isr.	יְהוָה מַלְאָךְ מַלְאָכֶיךָ	Gen 28:15 Exod 23:20 Ps 91:11
Suf2ms+Drd+Pl+Bo	מִן + בְּלִבָּבְךָ מִן + בְּלִבָּבְךָ מִן + בְּלִבָּבְךָ	S+Ptc-msc S+Ptc-msc S+Ptc-msc	אֶל + נוֹם אֶל + נוֹם אֶל + נוֹם	אֶל אֶל אֶל	יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה	Ps 121:3 Ps 121:5 Ps 121:7
Suf2ms+Gn+Psh+Obj	מִן + בְּלִבָּבְךָ אֶת + גִּבְעוֹתַי אֶת + גִּבְעוֹתַי וְעַד-עֵלְיָם	S+Yqt3ms Yqt3ms Yqt3ms	Subj Subj Subj	אֶת-תְּעוֹבֶיךָ אֶת-תְּעוֹבֶיךָ אֶת-תְּעוֹבֶיךָ	יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה	Ps 121:8 Ps 121:7 Ps 121:8
... + רַע + מִן + אֲשֶׁר + רַע	מִן + אֲשֶׁר + רַע מִן + אֲשֶׁר + רַע מִן + אֲשֶׁר + רַע	S+Wey3fs S+InfC+ל S+InfC+ל	Provs Provs Provs	בְּיָדְךָ בְּיָדְךָ בְּיָדְךָ	יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה	Prov 4:6 Prov 6:24 Prov 7:5

- <sup>a</sup> Objects referred to by the suffix attached to the verb **שמר** that is: the addressee.  
<sup>b</sup> S = Suffixes attached to the form of **שמר** are all 2nd person masculine.  
<sup>c</sup> See discussion of this table in the main text.  
<sup>d</sup> son (of father) (Prov 4:3; 6:20; 7:1) might not designate a blood tie, but relation teacher-pupil.  
<sup>e</sup> Prov 6:24 is the goal of the **נָךְ**, the **תּוֹרָה** and the **תּוֹכְחוֹת מוֹסֵר** in Prov 6:23.

Table 5.1: The verb **שמר** with suffix 2nd person singular

In Prov 6:24; 7:5 the object to be kept *from* (מִן) is an adulterous woman. In Prov 4:6 no object to be kept *from* is mentioned. In a sense the construction found in this verse resembles the use of שמר in the Priestly Blessing more, because of the weyiqṭōl form and because in both verses no further adjuncts are added to the verb and suffix. PROTECTION or KEEPING in both verses is not further specified. This raises the question whether שמר always has to presuppose a threat, even if no specific threats to be kept from are mentioned either explicitly or are referred to in the context the verb is used in. Maybe in such cases the entire set of possible threats can be supposed to function in the background. This would bring Prov 4:6 close to Ps 121:7, where the set of all possible threats is made explicit as: *all evil*.

From context however there is reason to suppose that in Prov 4:6 the object the pupil needs protection from, is in line with the woman in Prov 6:24; 7:5. Prov 4:6 is a conditional promise: “Do not leave her (i.e. wisdom) and she will guard you (שמר), love her and she will watch over you (נצר)”. The pupil is here led in the “way of wisdom”, “the paths of rightness” (Prov 4:11). By contrast the pupil is warned against the threat to go on “the path of the wicked”, “the way of the evil” Prov 4:14–15. In Prov 4:23 a nomen derived from שמר is related to the verb נצר (also used in parallel in Prov 4:6). Translated very literally Prov 4:23 goes: “from all (things that need) guard(ing) (מִשְׁמָר), watch (נצר) your heart, for out of it (are) the streams (תּוֹצְאוֹת lit. *outgoings*) of life”. The following verse, Prov 4:24, says that “crookedness of mouth” (עִקְשׁוֹת פֶּה) is to be put away (סור Hiphil) and “deviation of lips” (לְזוּת שִׁפְתַּיִם) is to be put away (רחק). This seems to contrast with the not leaving (עזב) of wisdom in Prov 4:6. The context suggests that the thing to be protected or kept from is immorality mainly.

## Protection in two texts from the Pentateuch

When שמר is used with ב in table 5.1 this designates *where* the person protected will be protected or safeguarded: “in/on all (sc. places/ways) that you go” (Gen 28:15), “in/on the way” (Exod 23:20), “in/on all your ways” (Ps 91:11).<sup>4</sup>

These three texts can all be characterised as promise. They all seem to share the idea of protection on the way. Both Gen 28:15 and Exod 23:20 start with הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי, although a *waw* precedes in Gen 28:15. These words stress the certainty of the promise of protection given in these verses. Strikingly in both verses a Hiphil infinitive form of the verb בוא with a suffix second

<sup>4</sup>Maybe it is possible that in this last verse, the word *ways* gets some metaphorical tones, as is the case elsewhere, for instance in Prov 3:6 where *ways* stands for activities undertaken.

person masculine is used with a preposition אֶל and the place where the person addressed will be brought: *this land* (Gen 28:15) and *the place that I have prepared* (Exod 23:20), which turns out to be the land (Exod 23:23,29–31).

In Exod 23:20 YHWH *sends* his Messenger (מִלְאָךְ - singular) in Ps 91:11 he *commands* his messengers (מִלְאָכָיו - plural). It is by these that He provides protection. By contrast in Gen 28:15 the protection is not mediated. He promises to be with Jacob (“I am with you”) and to protect him (“And I will protect you”).

**Genesis 28:15** is part of a much larger promise YHWH makes to Jacob. This promise is closely related to the blessing formula we have seen in Gen 28:3–4. In Gen 28:13 YHWH, referring to Abraham, promises to give the land to Jacob and his seed/offspring (cf. Gen 28:4). In Gen 28:14 He promises to multiply his seed/offspring (cf. Gen 28:3). Here we also find a sentence spoken earlier to Abraham: “and in you will be blessed all clans of the earth, and in your seed/offspring” (Gen 28:14). Promise and blessing are clearly connected.

**In Exod 23:20** protection seemingly has to do with the enemies (Exod 23:22,27–28). This protection is received on the condition of being obedient to the Messenger. The somewhat enigmatic warning is added that “He will not pardon your transgression, for my Name is in him (בְּקִרְבּוֹ)” (Exod 23:21). On the condition of not serving other gods (Exod 23:24) a promise of blessing and of removal of sickness is made: “I will bless your bread and your water, and I will take away (Hiphil סור) sickness from your midst” (Exod 23:25). In the following verse protection against threats to fertility is promised: prevention of miscarriage (Ptc Piel שכל) and bareness (עקר). He also promises long life (Exod 23:26) and to bring them in the land (Exod 23:20,27–33). Most of these themes are associated with blessing in other texts.

## Protection in two Psalms

**Psalm 91** is entirely determined by the theme of protection. Threats and means of protection alternate in this Psalms. Especially in the beginning of the Psalm YHWH is given names that describe Him as a means of protection. Verse 91:1 talks about protection: “the shelter (סֹתֵר) of the Most High” “the shadow (צֶל) of the Almighty”. The psalmist calls YHWH “my refuge (מְחַסֵּי)” (Ps 91:2,9), “dwelling place (מְעוֹן)” (Ps 91:9) and: “my stronghold (מְצוּדָתִי)” and expresses trust (Ps 91:2). In verse 4, YHWH protects by “his pinion (בְּאַבְרָתוֹ)” and “his wings (כַּנְּפָיו)”. “His faithfulness is a shield (צָנָה) and buckler (סֹתֵרָה)” or “sheltering wall” (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005, p. 426).

Verse 3 starts a part of the Psalm that can be read as a promise. It promises deliverance (*hip<sup>c</sup>il* נצל) “from the bird trap of the fowler” (מפח יְקוּשׁ) and “from the pestilence of destruction” (מִדְּבַר הַזֵּוֹת).<sup>5</sup> Tate (1990) thinks that “the language is metaphorical for all kinds of traps and threats from enemies and from natural causes” (p. 454). The threats, not to be feared, in verse 5 and 6 are: “terror (פַּחַד) of the night”, “the arrow (חֶץ) that flies by day”, “the pestilence (דְּבַר) that goes in darkness”, “the destruction (קָטַב) that lays waste at noon”. Verse 7 seems to refer to dying.

Ps 91:10 promises: “no evil (רָעָה) will befall you, a plague (נִגְעָה) will not come in your tent”. The promise of the protection by angels/messengers Ps 91:11 entails that they will carry the person so that he will not bash his foot (Ps 91:12) and even threads and tramples lions and serpents (Ps 91:13).<sup>6</sup>

The Psalm again ends positively with a promise of deliverance (פלט), exaltation or lifting up high (שׁוֹב), answer to prayer, presence (“I will be with him”) in trouble (צָרָה), deliverance (חֲלַץ), honor, long life and salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) (Ps 91:14–16). Some of these themes are connected to blessing elsewhere.

Whereas in Ps 91:3–8,10–13 someone is addressed (use of second person masculine singular) in Ps 91:14–16 someone is spoken about (use of third person masculine singular). A characteristic of the person to be protected is that he loves God, and knows his Name (Ps 91:14)

In both Ps 91 and Ps 121 the person protected can be described as *someone who trusts YHWH*, for we find a confession of trust both in Ps 91:2,9 and Ps 121:2.

**Psalm 121** is a Song of Ascents, quite closely related to Ps 91. The verb שמר is used 6 times in Ps 121: 3 times with a suffix (Ps 121:3,5,7), 3 times without (Ps 121:4,7,8), three times as a participle (Ps 121:3,4,5), three times as a *yiqtōl* third person masculine in two verses (Ps 121:7,8). Two times a suffix is attached to a participle that is used in a substantival manner. This causes the suffix to get possessive meaning: “your protector/keeper” (Ps 121:3,5). The participle without suffix, standing between the two with a

<sup>5</sup>What does a bird trap have to do with pestilence? Tate (1990, p. 448) follows another vocalisation: מִדְּבַר, “word” or “thing of destruction”. Hossfeld proposes that, if a meaning “thorn, sticker” exists for דְּבַר (s.v. II, Köhler, Baumgartner, & Stamm, 2001, vol. 1, p. 212), this could refer to the “arrow point (or the thorn with which the bird was killed)” (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005, p. 427) and thus this verse “plays on the dangers that threaten birds” (p. 430). He does not explain to what dangers threatening humans this might refer.

<sup>6</sup>The question can be raised to what extent the language about the foot and lions and serpents is to be understood metaphorically.

suffix, is in construct state: “the protector of Israel” (Ps 121:4). In this way the psalmist identifies “the protector of Israel” with “your protector.”<sup>7</sup>

Psalms 121 starts with the source of help (עֵזֶר) also encountered in relation to blessing (see section 4.8, Gen 49:24; Ps 115:9–11). Connected with the promise of protection in Ps 121:3 is the promise of the foot that is kept from tottering. This reminds of the protection of the foot against bashing in Ps 91:12. In Ps 121:5 YHWH is identified as “your shadow (צֶלַל) on your right hand”. This, probably among other things, indicates the nearness of YHWH. It reminds of Ps 91:1 where the person protected is in the shadow of YHWH. Verse 6 speaks about protection against the sun and the moon.<sup>8</sup> Maybe *shadow* is a means of protection here in one way or another.

In Ps 121:7,8 no suffix is added. The objects protected here are “your soul”, that is the whole person: his life and anything that belongs to him (Ps 121:7), and: “your going out and your coming in” (Ps 121:8). Allen (1983, p. 152) explains this as the going in and out of town for daily work, but admits that it could have to do with travel to and from a sanctuary, for instance for the festivals. If this last interpretation is correct, this is vaguely reminiscent of the protection on the way as seen in Gen 28:15; Exod 23:20 and most of all Ps 91:11. Probably “going out” and “coming in” should be taken as a merism, thus including all actions done between the “going out” and “coming in”.<sup>9</sup> To this merism, another merism, a prepositional clause of *time*, is added: “from now and to eternity”.

## Summary for שמר

A meaning TO PROTECT seems to fit all of the texts discussed. For these text it goes that in Proverbs the source of protection is *wisdom*, the thing to be protected from is mainly immorality. In all other texts YHWH is the source of protection. This protection is either mediated by one or more messengers (Exod 23:20; Ps 91:11) or it is direct (Gen 28:15; Ps 121). All of these texts can be characterized as promises. In all of these texts protection has to do, more or less, with the way one goes (Maybe the protection of the foot in Ps 91:12 and Ps 121:3 can be connected to this theme).

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<sup>7</sup>This reminds of the question of the relationship between individual and collective in ancient Israel, a question that also has some bearing on the Priestly Blessing, see appendix E.

<sup>8</sup>The moon was clearly considered to be able to have negative effects, maybe illness (Matt 4:24; 17:15 as suggested by Allen, 1983, p. 152).

<sup>9</sup>This would bring its meaning close to “all of your actions”, this resembles the possibility of interpretation offered in footnote 4 for *all of your ways* in Ps 91:11.

In the texts from the Pentateuch the promise of protection is accompanied by other promises: to bring in the land and (remarkably) of blessing (either for “all clans of the earth” in Gen 28:14 or for “bread and water” in Exod 23:24). A promise for the multiplication of offspring is found in Gen 28:14, in the same vein, a promise that there will be no miscarriage and bareness is found in Exod 23:26.

A promise for the presence of YHWH can be found in Gen 28:15 (“I am with you”) and in Ps 91:15 (“I will be with him”). The reference to the shadow in Ps 121:5 may also be read in this light (cf. Ps 91:1). Long life is promised in Exod 23:26; Ps 91:16; protection against diseases in Exod 23:25; Ps 91:6,10.

## 5.2 שים

There are some texts in the Hebrew Bible in which a combination of a form of שים and שלום is found. In 1 Kgs 2:5 it is said about Joab that “he has put/placed/assigned blood of war (דְּמֵי־מִלְחָמָה) in peace (בְּשָׁלֹם)”. This utterance is somewhat of a crux (cf. e.g. Koopmans, 1991, p. 447–449) and since שלום in this verse is probably not the direct object of the verb as it is in Num 6:26 this verse will be disregarded.

In Isa 60:17 the verb is followed by פְּקֻדָּתָךְ, *your overseer/oversight* and שלום. If the first noun, פְּקֻדָּתָךְ, is the direct object, then this would mean that “your overseer” is *appointed to be peace(ful)* or *to have peace*, and in the next colon, your taskmasters (*are appointed to have*) *righteousness*. If on the other hand שלום is the direct object, then “Peace” is personified and appointed as overseer of the city, and in the next colon Righteousness is appointed as your taskmasters.<sup>10</sup> This last option is preferred by modern commentators (cf. Koole, 1995, p. 249).

In Ps 147:14 we find a participle masculine singular of שים with “your borders” (גְּבוּלֶיךָ) connected by a maqqef. This, most probably, means that peace is set onto, or appointed to or established for “your borders”. Thus this text is congruent with Isa 60:17, albeit that in Ps 147:14 peace is not personified. In this Psalm the establishment of peace is directly linked to blessing. In the previous verse, Ps 147:13, we find that YHWH not only strengthens the bars of your gates, a clear image of protection, but also that he blesses “your children in your midst”. Because of the explicit mention of children, the idea of blessing is here connected to offspring. So the multiplication and fertility aspect of blessing is present. This is also visible in the second colon of verse

<sup>10</sup>The word here translated as taskmaster is a participle plural of נָגַשׂ. Indeed, it might seem a little strange to appoint a singular entity as a plural entity, but it is not impossible.

14 where YHWH “satisfies you with the fat (or: finest of) wheat”, a picture of abundance and quality.

A set of texts could be studied in which a form of **שׁוּב** is followed by **ל** with a suffix and in turn followed by a noun. This set of texts can be found in appendix I. In most of these texts the **ל** is a **ל** of interest or (dis)advantage. This also seems to be the case in Num 6:26aB: YHWH establishes peace *for* or *to the advantage* of the people addressed.

The focus of this thesis is on the verbs, but some attention must be given to the noun **שָׁלוֹם** here, because of its importance. Next to Num 6:26 there are four verses in the Hebrew Bible in which **ל** plus suffix is followed by **שָׁלוֹם**. Two of these, 1 Sam 25:6 and Isa 27:5, differ from Num 6:26 however, in that the grammatical unit actually ends with the **ל** plus suffix, the following unit starting with **שָׁלוֹם**.

In 1 Sam 25:6 the **ל** with suffix is part of the expression: “and all (**וְכָל**) that is to you (**אֲשֶׁר-לְךָ**)”, meaning: “all that you have”. David by his servant wishes Nabal peace: “And thus you will say to the living (**לְחַיִּי**): Peace to you, and peace to your house, and peace to all that you have” (1 Sam 25:6). The word peace also occurs in the previous verse, 1 Sam 25:5: “... and when you come to Nabal, ask (*gal* **שאל**) him concerning peace (**לְשָׁלוֹם**) in my name.”

In Isa 27:5 **שָׁלוֹם** is followed by **ל** plus suffix, instead of the other way around. In this verse **שָׁלוֹם** stands over and against battle or war (**מִלְחָמָה**) as found in Isa 27:4. In Isa 27:4 YHWH says that if someone would set or give Him thorns and thornbushes, he would march in war against “her” and burn “her”. Here “her” probably refers to His vineyard. The one “setting”, or “giving”, the thorns, can be interpreted as the vineyard himself or maybe as someone tending the vineyard. In Isa 27:5 it is probably this person who is the subject of the sentence, either: “let him seize My protection”, or: “let him make firm in My protection”, followed by: “so He would make peace with (regard to) Me, peace would he make with (regard to) Me.” Since the first verb in this verse is a jussive, the last two verbs are sometimes interpreted likewise: “let him make peace with (regard to) Me, peace let him make with (regard to) Me”. In the last phrase **שָׁלוֹם** is fronted to receive extra emphasis. The **ל** in this verse shows that the peace made or created relates specifically to YHWH. So peace here has a relational aspect expressed by the **ל**.

In Judg 21:13 it is said about the congregation (**עֵדָה**) that “they spoke to the children of Benjamin ... and they proclaimed (**קרא**) peace to them”. This proclamation has to do with a war, as described in Judg 20. In this case the **ל** with suffix designates the goal of proclamation rather than the goal of peace.

In Jer 29:7 YHWH, as the God of Israel, commands the exiles to seek

(דרש) the peace of the city to where they are exiled, and to pray for it. The reason YHWH gives for this is: “For in her peace there will be peace for you.” Here peace seems to have a general meaning of welfare.

### 5.3 אור

The verb אור occurs 34 times in 34 verses in hiphil. In 7 of these verses, Num 6:25 excluded, it occurs with the nomen פְּנָה. An overview of these texts can be found in table 5.2.

In all verses in table 5.2 God is the subject except for Eccles 8:1 where it is *the wisdom of (a) man* that “makes his face shine” (p. 278). According to Seow (1997) this means “that wisdom causes one to have or to put on a pleasant appearance”. This interpretation fits with the next sentence: “and the strength of his face is changed”. Seow (1997, p. 278) takes “strength of face” to mean impudence (see his commentary for more discussion).

In 5 out of 6 other texts, in which God is the subject, the verb is an imperative and the noun פְּנָה has a suffix second person masculine singular. These texts all are addressed to God, and thus are a form of prayer. The exception is Ps 67:2 where the verb is a *yiqṭōl* form, most probably with modal meaning. Thus this verse can be regarded as a wish, but it is closely connected to prayer as found in the following verse Ps 67:3.

### Psalm 67

As we have seen (chapter 2) this Psalm is often considered to be dependent on the Priestly Blessing, mainly because the verbs in this verse are a subset of the verbs in the Priestly Blessing. In Ps 67:2 they occur in this order: (1) חנן, (2) ברך, (3) אור. In the Priestly Blessing the first four verbs are: (1) ברך, (2) שמר, (3) אור, (4) חנן.

This simple observation raises some questions:<sup>11</sup> For instance, why is שמר left out? Of course, this could simply be because it did not fit the subject matter of this Psalm.

Another question concerns the order of the verbs. If a link to the Priestly Blessing was intended why would the order of the verbs be changed? Why

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<sup>11</sup>A question that need not concern us here is why the Name of YHWH, quite central to the Priestly Blessing, would be edited out. This issue is complicated, because it is closely related to the issue of the Elohist Psalter. This can evidently not be handled here (cf. a.o. Burnett, 2006; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2003; Joffe, 2001, 2002). If this Psalm has universalistic tendencies, as proposed by Talstra (2002b), could the more generic designation אֱלֹהִים be considered to be more fitting than the more particular Name YHWH?

Clause	OPP <sup>a</sup>	Subject Construction <sup>b</sup>	Verse
אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה NiCoh1cp י+1 + F2 + HI+1 + 1p+HI Subj + Subj		אֱלֹהִים Ps 80:4	
אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה NiCoh1cp י+1 + F2 + HI+1 + 1p+HI Subj + Subj		אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת Ps 80:8	
וְהָאֵר אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁיבֵנו הָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה NiCoh1cp י+1 + F2 + HI + 1p+HI Subj + Subj		וְהָאֵר אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת Ps 80:20	
וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ עַל-מַקְדְּשֶׁךָ הַשְׂמֵם לִמְעַן אֲדֹתָי מַקְדְּשֶׁךָ הַשְׂמֵם אֲדֹתָי + OPP + עַל + F2 + I+1		אֲדֹתָי Dan 9:17	
הָאֵרָהּ פְּנֵיךָ עַל-עַבְדְּךָ הַלְשִׁיעִי בְּחַסְדְּךָ 2+דָּקָד+ב + 1s+HI י+1 + OPP + עַל + F2 + d1	עַבְדְּךָ	יְהוָה / אֱלֹהִים <sup>c</sup> Ps 31:17	
תְּכַתֵּם אֹדָם תְּאָאֵר פְּנֵי וְעַל פְּנֵי לְשׁוֹן PualY3ms + שְׂנֵא + F3 + וְעַל + 1 + F3 + Y3fs + Subj	תְּכַתֵּם אֹדָם	תְּכַתֵּם אֹדָם Eccles 8:1	
אֱלֹהִים יִחַנְנוּ וְיִבְרְכֵנו יְאֵר פְּנֵי אֲתָנּוּ 1p+ת + F3 + HY3ms + 1p+PielWey3ms בּוֹרַד + 1p+QalY3ms חַנּוּן + Subj	אֲתָנּוּ	אֱלֹהִים Ps 67:2	

<sup>a</sup> The object of the first prepositional phrase belonging to the verb אור

<sup>b</sup> H = Hiphil, I = Imp-m, Y = Yqt, F2 = Suf2ms+ת, פְּנֵיךָ = Suf3ms+ת, F3 = Suf3ms+ת, 1s = Suf1cs,

1p = Suf1cp, 2+ = S2ms+, 3+ = S3ms+,

<sup>c</sup> as found in Ps 31:15

<sup>d</sup> Paragogic ת

פְּנֵיךָ אֵר with אור Table 5.2:

not simply start with the verb **ברך**? Would this not fit the subject of the Psalm, which is largely about blessing, even better? Or is the Psalm actually more about the grace of God, shown and experienced in blessing? Could the order of the verbs be related to the concentric structure of the Psalm as proposed by Talstra (2002b, p. 57, 282–292)? Indeed, a case can be made for verse 5 as the centre of the Psalm because verse 4 parallels verse 6. But is there a parallel between verse 2-3 and 7-8? Maybe a link can be proposed between the position of **הנג** in Ps 67:2 and its proposed pivotal position in the Priestly Blessing? If it is assumed that Psalm 67 is dependent on the Priestly Blessing, did the position of the verb **הנג** in the Priestly Blessing play a role in the decision of the psalmist (or editor) to start the Psalm with this verb? Certainly this may be too fanciful. Maybe other considerations played a role like content, theology, rhythm, or other things?

Since Ps 67:2 uses three out of six verbs also used in the Priestly Blessing, a question of importance to the research question, would be: What is the relation between the verbs in Ps 67:2? What does it mean for the relation between those verbs that they occur in a different order in both texts?

Zenger suggests that in the Priestly Blessing, **הנג** “is a strengthening explication of the metaphor ‘of the shining of the face’” (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005, p. 155). Whereas in Ps 67:2 “the sequence of the three verbs ... is meant to be understood as a series of events” (p. 155). The verb **הנג** would here mean “an active, personal showing of favor on the part of YHWH, in which YHWH out of the fullness of his riches gives generously, or as king bestows a special sign of favor” (p. 155). Zenger seems to view **ברך** as a kind of explanation to **הנג** (the *waw* thus having explicative force) for adding **ברך** makes it “clear that this is not a matter of a single such sign, but of an enduring favor that aims at all fullness and joy of life in” (what could be summarized as) all dimensions of existence (he points to: Lev 26:3–13–; Deut 28:1–14; Gen 49; Deut 33) (p. 155). He, by the way, contrasts **ברך** with the saving acts of God in history, blessing is “aimed at a healthy and happy *condition* of nature and society” (p. 155, emphasis original).

The second half of the verse, according to Zenger, expresses the wish that the shining face of God would be “in the gift of blessed life in such way that blessed Israel can be perceived as a visible sign of God’s presence in this world, and this in such a way that it will be recognized and acknowledged by all the peoples of the earth ... (v. 3)” (p. 155). This is related to Zenger’s explanation of the difference between **אל** used in Num 6:25aA and **את** used in Ps 67:2. According to Zenger the preposition **אל** “emphasizes the personal addressee(s) of this ‘gift of light’ and its dynamic aspect” whereas **את** (with) “underscores that the community of Israel is the place or space in which God’s ‘light’ in a sense remains and where it is evident that it can be beheld there”

Hossfeld and Zenger (2005, p. 155).

Thus the form of **אור**, asyndetically connected to the preceding clause, would add a new action of God to the action in the first half of the verse described by **הנן** and (maybe explained by) **ברך**. This first action(s) would be preconditions (or maybe means) to the action described by the third verb.

If dependency of Ps 67:2 on the Priestly Blessing is granted, it seems most probable to presuppose that the psalmist was not randomly changing the order of the verbs, but had reasons to do so. Neither will he have randomly decided to keep these three verbs. The explanation of Zenger, maybe could explain why the verb **הנן** was not kept in its place, namely to enable a connection between the shining of the face and Ps 67:3, but it does not really explain why **הנן** was not put second but first.

Zenger does not give any arguments to suppose a clarifying character for the connection between **הנן** and **ברך**. And other types of connections could be proposed. For instance **ברך** could be a consequence of **הנן**: “May God be merciful to us and (*so/thus/therefore*) bless us”. This issue will, for the moment, be left undecided. Still, with a view to the Priestly Blessing, it is remarkable that these verbs are here connected by a *waw* in this order.

## Psalm 80

The three first texts from table 5.2 occur in Psalm 80, namely in a thrice repeated utterance which is changed a little bit every time it is repeated. The change being in the subject of the sentence, in verse 4 it is **אֱלֹהִים**, in verse 8 it is **אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת** in verse 20 it is **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת**. This last verse has another small change: the *waw* preceding the verb **אור** is left out.

The verb **אור** appears as a *hip<sup>il</sup>* imperative, after a *hip<sup>il</sup>* imperative of the verb **שוב** (*bring back, restore*) and before a *nip<sup>al</sup>* cohortative of the verb **ישע** (*be saved*). This, a cohortative after imperative + imperative, “signifies purpose or result” Waltke and O’Connor (1990, p. 577). Thus the last verb can be translated either resultative: “and so we will be saved”, or as a purpose: “so that we may be saved”.

Zenger interprets **השיבנו** as “bring it about that we may return to that condition of fullness of life and well-being that you had given us *before* this present situation of distress” (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005, p. 314, emphasis original). This does not seem to pertain to external conditions only, but at the same time is “a question of restoration of the original relationship to God” (p. 314). Indeed the actions described by the imperatives are closely related. The shining face of God, in any case, is an important aspect of the restored condition the psalmist asks for. Only when God performs both actions (**שוב** and **אור**) salvation will be accomplished.

The shining of God's face is connected to salvation here. This theme is more broadly present in this Psalm. In Ps 80:3, there is a request to God (construed as the Shepard of Israel, רֵעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, in Ps 80:2) to “rouse his strength (גְּבוּרָה) and come to salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) for us”.<sup>12</sup>

Two conditions, one in which the face of God is shining and one in which it is not, are described in this Psalm. In Ps 80:5–7 the present state and condition of the people is described. YHWH, God of hosts, “smokes” (עָשָׁן) against the prayer of his people (Ps 80:5), most probably a sign of his anger, and thus standing over and against the shining of His face. This results in tears (Ps 80:6), in contention with neighbours and in being in derision by the enemies (Ps 80:7). The verses 9 to 12 describes the previous state and situation of the people under the image of a fertile vine. Verses 13–14, continuing the imagery, describe their present desolate state, being victim to enemies.

Verse 15 is again a prayer request directed at אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת consisting of four imperatives. The first is a *qal* imperative of שׁוּב. Instead of returning or bringing back the people, God Himself is here asked to return (or turn around). Asyndetically connected to this request is a *hip<sup>ci</sup>l* imperative, requesting that God looks down (נִבֵּט) from the heavens (מִשְׁמַיִם). The last two imperatives, both starting with *waw*, request God to *see* (*qal* רָאה) and to *attend to* (*qal* פָּקֵד) his vine. The verbs נִבֵּט and רָאה both have to do with seeing.<sup>13</sup> They somehow seem to parallel the shining of the face. The verb פָּקֵד is a saving action of God on behalf of his people and so resembles the resulting salvation of Ps 80:4,8,20.

In Ps 80:16 “the son whom you have made strong for yourself” is introduced. Verse 18 is a request that the hand God may be with this “man of you right hand” and “the son of man, whom you have made strong for yourself”, with as a result that “we will not turn away from you” (Ps 80:19a). In Ps 80:19b a request for life can be found (*pi<sup>ci</sup>el* imperative חִיָּה) in order that “we may call upon your Name”. Thus the shining face of YHWH, God of hosts, is connected with protection by his hand, life and calling upon His Name.

One aspect not yet mentioned is that in this Psalm no prepositional phrase is connected to the shining of the face of God, no object at which the light of Gods face is directed or that receives this light is made explicit in Ps 80:4,8,20. But since in these verses a suffix first person plural is attached to the first imperative and the cohortative following the verb אֹר is first person plural, implicitly the object would be “us”.

<sup>12</sup>Is there a relation between the shining of God's face in Ps 80:4 and His “shining forth” (*hip<sup>ci</sup>l* יָפֵעַ) in Ps 80:2?

<sup>13</sup>Zenger connects this verse to YHWH seeing the misery of his people as described in Exod 3:7,16–17 (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2005, p. 316).

## Psalm 31 and Daniel 9

Two texts from table 5.2 have a prepositional phrase connected to אור starting with על (instead of אל in the Priestly Blessing, and את in Ps 67). This preposition על does not have a suffix but is connected to nouns: in Dan 9:17 this is the מִקְדָּשׁ הַשָּׁמַם, the sanctuary that is devastated, and in Ps 31:17 it is to *your servant* (i.e. the speaker).

In Ps 31:17 the shining of the face is connected to deliverance (*hip<sup>il</sup> נצל*) out of the hands of the enemies (found in the previous verse Ps 31:16) and to salvation (*hip<sup>il</sup> imperative ישע*, cf. Ps 80) “by your loving kindness/covenant faithfulness (בְּחַסְדְּךָ)” (Ps 31:17). A remarkable phrase is found in Ps 31:21 where it is said to YHWH (Ps 31:18) “you hide” (*hip<sup>il</sup> yiqṭōl* second person masculine סתר) those that fear you (Ps 31:19 “in the hiding place (בְּסִתְרֵךָ) of your face from the conspiracies of man”. Here the face of YHWH is connected to protection against enemies.

Daniel 9:17 is part of a prayer by Daniel. In Dan 9:16 he prays for Jerusalem: “O Lord, in agreement with all your righteous acts, let your anger and your rage turn away (*qal* jussive third person masculine singular שוב) from your city Jerusalem”. The shining of the face in the following verse stands in opposition to this anger and rage. To this request a confession of guilt is added. The guilt is the reason “Jerusalem and your people are a reproach (חֲרָפָה) for all (who are) around us”, a remarkable parallel with Ps 31:12.

In Dan 9:17 Daniel prays that God will hear (*qal* imperative שמע) his prayer and make his face to shine over the devastated sanctuary. To this a reason is added: “because of the Lord”, most probably not the reason why the sanctuary is devastated, but why God should cause his face to shine over the sanctuary, and thus often translated as “for your own sake”.<sup>14</sup> Daniel 9:18 starts with four imperatives: “incline (*hip<sup>il</sup> נטה*) your ears and hear (*qal* שמע) and open (*qal* פקח) your eyes (עין) and see (*qal* ראה)”. The object for God to see is the city “your Name is called over”. Daniel advances the Name as an argument for God to hear and see, and he adds the basis for prayer: not “our righteous acts” but “your great mercy (רַחֲמִים)”. Dan 9:19 again starts with a request to hear (*qal* imperative שמע), and ends with both reasons given in Dan 9:17 and Dan 9:18: “because of God, for your Name is called over your city and over your people”.

Thus verses 17,18,19 are parallel somehow, both starting with a petition to hear and ending with reasons for God to answer prayer. Where verse 17 mentions the shining of the face upon the devastated (שָׁמַם) sanctuary, verse

<sup>14</sup>I think these words can be read Messianic, but I will make no attempt to defend this, for it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

18 mentions the opening of eyes and seeing of “our devastations” (שָׁמַם)<sup>15</sup> and “the city ...”. In this passage the shining of the face, because of a parallel text, is again connected to looking, as is the case in Ps 80.

Whereas the preposition אֶל means *to, into or toward*, עַל means *on, upon, above*. This probably means that Ps 31:17 and Dan 9:17 construe the light of the face of God as coming from above. That YHWH looks down from above is probably the idea behind Dan 9:18. By contrast the expression as found in Num 6:25 does not entail the fact that the light comes from above, it simply comes toward the target, since אֶל does not express the plane of movement as clearly as does עַל, most of the time the movement seems to be horizontal, although vertical meaning also seems possible given Gen 22:12 and Josh 5:14.<sup>16</sup>

## Summary for אור

The shining of the face in general has to do with pleasantness (Eccles 8:1). Disregarding the Priestly Blessing the expression occurs either in prayer (Ps 31:17; Ps 80:4,8,20; Dan 9:17) or as a (blessing) wish (Ps 67:2) that is very closely connected to prayer (Ps 67:3).

In Ps 67:2 the shining of the face is asyndetically connected to the verbs חָנַן and בָּרַךְ, where בָּרַךְ follows חָנַן and is connected by a *waw*. This order of verbs differs from that in the Priestly Blessing. In Ps 67 the shining of the face of God is *with* human beings (use of the preposition אִתּוֹ, *with* instead of אֶל, *toward*, as used in the Priestly Blessing). The presence of God’s shining face thus seems to be noticeable to others Ps 67:3. So although 3 verbs from the Priestly Blessing appear in Ps 67:2 their connections there and thus their use and meaning seems to differ slightly from the Priestly Blessing.

In both Ps 31:17 and Ps 80:4,8,20 the shining of the face is explicitly connected to *deliverance* (יִשְׁע) from a deplorable state where enemies (Ps 31:16,21; Ps 80:7,13–14) are part of the problem.

Whereas in Dan 9:17 the condition of the people is also deplorable, no explicit mention of deliverance is made. The prayer in Dan 9:4–22 is directed more toward confession and forgiveness of sin. Daniel prays that God will turn away his anger and rage (Dan 9:16) will hear and make his face to shine (Dan 9:17), would hear and see the devastation of his people (Dan 9:18) and would hear and forgive (Dan 9:19).

Both Ps 31:12 and Dan 9:16 characterise the situation of the supplicant as a situation of reproach (חִרְפָּה).

<sup>15</sup>Or: “that we are devastated”: *qal* participle plural + suffix first person plural.

<sup>16</sup>See appendix J.

In Dan 9:17 the shining of the face stands over and against anger (אָר) and rage (חֶמָה) in Dan 9:16. A similar contrast can be found in Ps 80:4–5 where the shining of the face stands over and against “smoking” (עָשָׂן) against the prayer of the people. If it is correct that Ps 80:4,8,20 parallels Ps 80:15, and that Dan 9:17 parallels Dan 9:18, then in both passages the shining of the face parallels the looking down of God on His people.

In Ps 31:17 the shining face of God is connected to his חֶסֶד (loving kindness or covenant faithfulness) which is a means or reason for deliverance. In Dan 9:17 the Lord (אֲדֹנָי) (Himself) Who is put forward as a reason for the shining of the face over his devastated sanctuary, as are his Name and his great mercy (רַחֲמִים) for looking down on the devastation of people and city (Dan 9:18).

Thus it seems that Ps 31:17, Ps 80 and Dan 9:17 share the idea that God looks down positively upon his people (whether collectively or individually) in a doleful situation, giving them deliverance, restoring their condition. In a sense Ps 67:2 stresses the same desired condition, for there the wish is that the light of Gods face will be positively present with his people, visible in their blessed situation.

## 5.4 נשא

For the discussion of this verb some verses have been picked in which a person lifts his or her own face, because this also is the case in the Priestly Blessing, where YHWH lifts his own face. These verses have been summed up in table 5.3. A lot of verses have been left out that might help to clarify the verb נשא as used in the Priestly Blessing. The transitive use of the expression נשא combined with פָּנָה, where the face of *another* person is *lifted up* or *taken up* (or maybe: *accepted*) has a connotation of *to favor*, both in the sense of *to show favor to*, as well as in the sense of *to benefit*. This benefiting can also get the meaning of *to show partiality*.<sup>17</sup>

In all of the texts found in table 5.3 a preposition accompanies the construction. In three texts the preposition אֶל is used, as is the case in Num 6:26, namely 2 Sam 2:22, 2 Kgs 9:32 and Job 22:26. In Deut 28:50 the preposition ל is used and Ps 4:7 uses עַל. The preposition מִן is used in Job 11:15.

**In Deut 28:50** we find a parallel between lifting the face and mercy, or rather not lifting the face and not showing mercy. The verse is about a nation (גוֹי) hard (עָז) of faces (פְּנִים). They are sent by YHWH to punish Israel. This nation does “not lift up (נשא) faces toward (ל) the old and the young they do

<sup>17</sup>For a, not necessarily exhaustive, overview of texts that can be studied in order to clarify this transitive use, see appendix K.

Post	<sup>a</sup>	Pre	Subject	Verse
פָּנִים לְזָקֵן	Yqt3ms	לֹא	גוֹי	Deut 28:50
פָּנֵי אֶל־יֹאָב אֶחָיִךְ	Yqt1cs	וְאֵיךְ	Abner	2 Sam 2:22
פָּנָיו אֶל־הַחֲלוֹן	Way3ms		Jehu	2 Kgs 9:32
פָּנֶיךָ מִמוֹם	Yqt2ms	כִּי־אָז	Job	Job 11:15
אֶל־אֵלֹהֶיךָ פָּנֶיךָ	Yqt2ms		Job	Job 22:26
עָלִינוּ אֹר פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה	Imp-ms		יְהוָה	Ps 4:7

<sup>a</sup> The verbal form of נשא, all verbs are *gal*

Table 5.3: נשא his or her own face

not favor.” The faces lifted here, most probably, belong to the people making up the nation. Not lifting up the face toward someone implies not looking to someone thus totally disregarding someone. The thrust of the verse seems to be that when this nation will exterminate and destroy the people of Israel (שמד Deut 28:48,51; אבד Deut 28:51) they will do so indiscriminately, not making an exception for the old, because they are old, nor showing mercy to the young, because they are young. Here the meaning of *not lifting the face* tends in the direction of *disregarding, not pitying*. This points to a positive meaning for the expression as used in the Priestly Blessing, along the lines of: *paying regard to* or *pitying*.

**In 2 Kgs 9:32** we find a wayyiqṭōl form of נשא. Jehu concretely turns his face toward the window, where Jezebel is standing. Presumably Jezebel is standing higher for she looks down (שקף) from (בַּעַד) the window, and Jehu orders the eunuchs, that look down (שקף) toward (אֶל) him (2 Kgs 9:32), to throw Jezebel down (שמט) and they obey (2 Kgs 9:33). Thus נשא here seems to express a concrete spatial movement upwards, but since it entails that Jehu looks towards Jezebel, it might also expresses a form of looking towards. This kind of literal use might be the underlying basis of the metaphorical use of this expression.

**Second Samuel** 2:20 describes how Asahel persistently pursues Asahel. Abner warns Asahel to “turn aside”. He does not (2 Sam 2:21). Then Abner warns Asahel again: “turn aside from behind me” (2 Sam 2:22). He adds two questions: “Why would I strike you to the ground? And how would I lift my face toward (אֶל) Joab, your brother”. The implication seems to be that when

Abner kills Asahel there will be no way Abner will be able to lift up his face toward his brother Joab, that is: since Joab, because of blood feud, will have to kill Abner a good relationship between Abner and Joab will be impossible.

The expression as used in 2 Sam 2:22 has to do with the (impossibility of a) good relationship of the participants. In this respect the use of the expression here is similar to the expression in the Priestly Blessing. There seems to be a difference though. For in Num 6:26, it is the One lifting His face, namely YHWH, that is positively disposed.

Indeed if Abner kills Asahel, it will be impossible for Abner to lift his face to Joab because Abner cannot be positively disposed to Joab: he has to fear Joab's wrath. However the thrust of the expression seems to be that Joab cannot be positively disposed toward Abner, because he will have to kill him.

The possible relationship between the expression as used in the Priestly Blessing and in 2 Sam 2:22 cannot be researched any further here. The only conclusion that will be drawn here is that if these expressions are related, there seems to be a reversal of roles. An attempt to visualize this can be found in table 5.4.

Role	Num 6:26	2 Sam 2:22
Subject lifting face	YHWH	(not) Abner
Goal toward whom face is lifted	people	(not) Joab
Subject of positive disposition	YHWH	(not) Joab
Positively disposed toward	people	(not) Abner

Table 5.4: Possible roles in 2 Sam 2:22 and Num 6:26

The expression of lifting the face in 2 Sam 2:22 is somehow reminiscent of the expression of the *lifting up of the eyes* as it is found for example in Ps 123:1. The psalmist looks towards God, and the goal is that YHWH would have favor or be merciful (נָחַם) Ps 123:2. Abner would not be able to do something like that in regard to Joab. The not-being-able-to-lift-up-the-face, as will be the case for Abner with regard to Joab when he kills his brother, seems to be connected to a certain measure of shame.

**Job 11:15** is part of a speech by Zophar. In the previous verses he has admonished Job: “When you prepare your hart and spread out toward Him your hands, if iniquity is in your hand put it far away, and do not let dwell in your tents injustice” Job 11:13–14. In verse 15 he then describes the result of such course of action: “For/Indeed/Surely then, will you lift up your face נָחַ (without or: out of) defects and you will be firm and you will not fear”.

The preposition מן here can be *ablative* (Waltke & O'Connor, 1990, p. 212-213) thus designating motion away from מום, meaning *away from* or *out of* מום. It can also be *privative* (Waltke & O'Connor, 1990, p. 214) thus meaning *without* or *free from* מום. Another question is whether מום translated as *defects* here designates the moral defects, or the physical defects Job is suffering.<sup>18</sup> This last interpretation is not at all impossible because of the next verse is about forgetting (שכח) trouble or misery (עמל) that will only be remembered as waters that have passed away (Job 11:16).

Combining the two possible meanings of the preposition with the two possible meanings of the noun leads to four possible meanings.<sup>19</sup> A meaning *without physical defects*, which seems to be not very likely, a meaning *out of moral defects* is not impossible. The most likely options, however are that an ablative meaning combines with a physical meaning: *out of physical defects* and for a privative meaning to combine with a moral meaning: *without moral defects*.

In the last instance the meaning of ממום moves in the direction of: *without shame*. This reminds of the use of the expression in 2 Sam 2:22 where it might be shame or a kind of moral defect, namely killing ones brother, that would prevent lifting up the face. Job 11:16 however does not mention the direction or goal toward whom the face will be lifted. In the case of a meaning *without moral defects* it might be the intention of the writer for the reader to supplement God as the goal towards Whom the face is lifted up, parallel to the hands that are spread out in His direction in Job 11:13. Such a silent or backgrounded addition of the goal is less necessary if an ablative meaning *out of physical defects* is correct, the direction in that case may well be undefined. In the case of a meaning *out of moral defects* God might be the direction.

**Job 22:26** is part of a speech of Eliphaz. His admonition in Job 22:23 resembles that of Job 11:14, for he says: “If you return to the Almighty, you will be built, (if) you put far away injustice from your tent” (Job 22:23). The next verses, Job 22:24–25, are a bit cryptic: “And put in the soil (precious ore of) Bezer and in/among the rock(s) of the wadis (gold of) Ophir, and the Almighty will be your (precious ore of) Bezer, and eminent silver for you.” The meaning of those verses may be that Job has to “reassess what constitutes his greatest good ...symbolized by returning ‘gold’ to the places where it properly belongs so that God may once again become his most prized possession” Balentine (2006, p. 350). Like Job 11:15, Job 22:26 starts with

<sup>18</sup>Or, as Balentine (2006, p. 189) suggests: both.

<sup>19</sup>Of course there are more if the expression can indeed mean both moral and physical defects at the same time.

כִּי־אָז: “For/Indeed/Surely then, you will delight (yourself) in the Almighty and lift up toward God your face”.

Here the lifting of the face toward God stands in parallel to delighting (*hithpael* ענג) in the Almighty. The lifting of the face is connected to the hearing of prayer by God in Job 22:27: “You will pray to him and he will hear you and your vows you will repay to him”. The fact that God hears prayer somehow indicates a positive relation to the one offering prayers. This mainly seems to be because of absence of moral obstacles. It seems that the lifting of the face toward God in Job 22:26 closely resembles the expression of the lifting of the face in 2 Sam 2:22. And, as we have seen, it is at least possible to interpret Job 11:15 along the same lines.

What might also be relevant in connection to the Priestly Blessing is the following verse Job 22:28, since this verse seems to paint a picture of success and prosperity: “You will decide a thing and it will stand for you, and over your path (דֶּרֶךְ) will shine (נגה) a light (אור)”.

**The body of Ps 4** starts with a prayer: “In my calling, answer me God of my justice. In distress you have given relief to me<sup>20</sup>. Show favor (חנן) and hear my prayer” Ps 4:2. Next the psalmist turns to people who reproach them (vs. 3) they should know that YHWH has set apart a חֲסִיד, a pious/godly man, and: “YHWH will hear me in my calling to Him” (Ps 4:4).

It is not entirely clear how verses 5 and 6 are to be interpreted. Since both of these verses consist of a series of imperatives addressed to a plurality it seems to be most logical to understand them as being addressed to the same persons that were addressed in the previous verses (thus e.g. Craigie, 1983, p. 80-81). But maybe these verses should be read as a kind of general advise. Verse 5 admonishes: “Tremble and<sup>21</sup> do not sin, speak in your heart on your bed and<sup>22</sup> be silent”. The trembling here should probably be interpreted as a trembling from anger (thus already LXX). Verse 6 exhorts: “Slaughter sacrifices of righteousness and trust in YHWH”.

Verse 7 quotes many (רַבִּים) as saying: “Who will show (*hip<sup>c</sup>il* ראה) us (any/some) good?” This question of despair seems to stand over and against the attitude of trust commended in the previous verse (6). It could be that the rest of verse 7 should be read as a continuation of the quote. It has been proposed that the rest of the verse should be translated something like: “the light of your face has fled from us YHWH”. Most of the time the rest of the verse is taken as an answer of the psalmist and the verb נסה used is taken to

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<sup>20</sup>lit. made room for me

<sup>21</sup>or: but

<sup>22</sup>or: but

be a form of **נשא** (Craigie, 1983, p. 78). The answer of the psalmist to the hopeless question would then be a prayer to YHWH: “Lift over us the light of your face, YHWH.” In this expression it is not the face of YHWH that is lifted, but the light of his face. This has been viewed as a kind of combination of colon Num 6:25aA and Num 6:26aA from the Priestly Blessing (e.g. Fishbane, 1983, 116B), then instead of the verb **אור** there is a noun of the same root and instead of the preposition **אֶל** there is a preposition **עַל** etcetera.

If the prayer is the psalmist answer to the question of despair, the lifting of the light of YHWH’s face can somehow be equated with showing good things. Or alternatively, if the other variant is to be preferred, the fleeing of the light of His face can be seen as a cause for the impossibility of someone showing any good. One way or the other there clearly is a relation between the light of His face and the showing of good.

The next verse, Ps 4:8, seems to be a confession of what YHWH has done in the past for the psalmist: “You have given joy in my heart, more than when their grain and must abound”.<sup>23</sup> This remark is followed by what most likely is a continuation of prayer<sup>24</sup>: “In peace let me both lie down and sleep, for you, YHWH, alone, causes me to dwell in security” (Ps 4:9). The use of the word peace here of course calls into remembrance the Priestly Blessing. Peace and security are linked in this verse.

## Conclusion for **נשא**

On the basis of the foregoing evidence no far reaching conclusions can be drawn for the verb **נשא** as found in the Priestly Blessing. It is clear from the context that in combination with the other words used, it expresses a positive relation between YHWH and the people being blessed.

The expression as used in the Priestly Blessing seems to be quite unique. In that 2 Sam 2:22 and Job 22:26 (and possibly Job 11:15) use the expression in a different manner. In those cases the lifting of the face seemingly has to do with freedom from obstacles whether moral or related to shame or otherwise from the side of the one lifting the face toward the one to whom the face is lifted.

Both uses of the expression may go back to a more literal meaning as found for instance in 2 Kgs 9:32 and simply having to do with seeing the person in whose direction the face is lifted. And thus the meaning of the expression as found in the Num 6:26 might have to do with YHWH looking

<sup>23</sup>Does this imply that the light of the face of YHWH is a cause for joy?

<sup>24</sup>Cohortative may be a form of self-encouragement, but that does not fit with the address of the last part of the verse.

positively towards his people, thus coming quite close to the expression about the shining of the face found in Num 6:25.

The most illuminating verse is probably Deut 28:50 where the expression stands parallel to the verb חנן to show favor or mercy, and where it seems to mean something like paying regard to or to take pity on.

## 5.5 חנן

A verbal form of חנן occurs 78 times in 72 verses. An overview of all *qal yiqṭōl* forms is given in table 5.5.

Post	Construction <sup>b</sup>	Pre	Object	Subject <sup>a</sup>	Verse
אֶת־אֲשֶׁר	WeQt1cs			יהוה	Exod 33:19
	Yqt1cs	אֶת־אֲשֶׁר		יהוה	Exod 33:19
	3mp+Yqt2ms	לֹא	<sup>d</sup>	<sup>c</sup>	Deut 7:2
	Yqt3ms	וְנָעַר לֹא	נָעַר	גּוֹי	Deut 28:50
Subj	1cs+Yqt3ms <sup>e</sup>		David	יהוה	2 Sam 12:22
Subj	1cs+WeQt3ms <sup>f</sup>		David	יהוה	2 Sam 12:22
Obj	Yqt2ms	אֵל	כָּל־בְּגֵדֵי אֹן	יהוה	Ps 59:6
	1cp+Yqt3ms	Subj	us	אֱלֹהִים	Ps 67:2
	1cp+Yqt3ms+שׁ	עַד	us	יהוה	Ps 123:2
	3ms+Yqt3ms	לֹא	עַם	יִצְרוּ	Isa 27:11
	2mp+InfC+ל	Subj	you	יהוה	Isa 30:18
	f2ms+Yqt3ms	InfA	you	יהוה	Isa 30:19
Obj Subj	Yqt3ms	אֹנִי	שְׂאֲרֵית יוֹסֵף	יהוה	Amos 5:15
	1cp+Wey3ms		us	אֵל	Mal 1:9
Obj	2ms+Yqt3ms	Subj	בְּנֵי	אֱלֹהִים	Gen 43:29

<sup>a</sup> If יהוה is the subject Names in apposition are left out.

<sup>b</sup> All verbs *qal binyan*

<sup>c</sup> The people of Israel

<sup>d</sup> The seven nations mentioned in Deut 7:1

<sup>e</sup> Ketib

<sup>f</sup> Qere

Table 5.5: חנן *qal yiqṭōl*

In table 5.5 human beings are always the object of favor. Most of the time YHWH or God is the subject of the verb, except for Deut 7:2 and Deut 28:50. It is remarkable that in both these verses the subject of the verb is a nation

*not* showing mercy on another nation. Two other verses also, are explicitly about not showing mercy, but in that case by YHWH: Ps 59:6 and Isa 27:11.

### Not Showing Mercy

In Deut 7:2 the people of Israel have to exterminate the seven nations living in Canaan (mentioned in Deut 7:1). Here not being merciful stands in parallel with to smite (*hip<sup>c</sup>il* נכה), to utterly ban or destroy (InfA and *hip<sup>c</sup>il* חרם), and to not make (*qal* כרת) a covenant (בְּרִית).

As we have already seen in Deut 28:50 a nation sent by YHWH as a punishment does not “show mercy to the young” probably meaning that they will be exterminated.

In Ps 59:6 the psalmist asks YHWH to visit (קִיץ) all the nations and not to show mercy on all those that treacherously practice iniquity. It seems that the nations and the ones practicing iniquity are here more or less identified. “Visiting” (קִיץ) can be taken to mean: to visit with punishment. What this punishment entails in this case, can be deduced from context. In Ps 59:12ff. the psalmist asks not to kill (הרג) the people called *my treacherous watchers* (בְּשִׁרְרֵי) in Ps 59:11 who are most probably to be identified with those who practice iniquity from Ps 59:6. Instead of being killed, they should be shaken or disturbed or scattered (נוע) and brought down (ירד). They must be captured (לָכַד Ps 59:13) and finished (בלה Ps 59:14) and wander about (נוע) for food (Ps 59:16).

Isaiah 27:11 (the second half of the verse) speaks about people or a nation having no understanding, therefore He who made them will not have compassion on them (רחם) and He who formed them will not show mercy or favor to them. As Blenkinsopp (2000) remarks “This is one of the more obscure pericopes in the book” (p. 376). It seems that not having mercy here stands in the context of judgment and punishment.

### Malachi 1:6–2:9

In this context YHWH is not pleased with the priests and the sacrifices they bring. As Fishbane (1983, 118A-120A) has shown, some elements from the framework and from the Priestly Blessing as found in Num 6 are used or alluded to in Mal 1:6–2:9. An example would be reference to the Name of YHWH that the priest have to lay upon the people according to Num 6:27. In Malachi however the priests despise his Name (Mal 1:6), but He will make His Name great and it will be feared (Mal 1:11,14). If the priests will not give honor (כְּבוֹד) to His Name, he will send the curse (מְאָרָה) upon them and even curse (ארר) their blessing (בְּרָכָה) (Mal 2:2). For YHWH had made a covenant

with Levi of life (חיים) and peace (שלום), he feared YHWH and stood in awe before His Name (Mal 2:5).

And, as Fishbane (1983, 118A-119B) argues, other words found in the Priestly Blessing are here used “punningly” with “irony and sarcastic nuance” (119A). He even calls the passage from Malachi “a veritable contrapuntual inversion of the sound and sense of the official PB” (p. 119B-120A). This is somewhat of an overstatement. Undeniably there are links between Mal 1:6–2:9 and the Priestly Blessing, and it is likely that these were intended by the prophet, but these links are allusions, certainly not full scale inversion. In fact it seems that the prophet carefully avoids to direct an inversion of the Priestly Blessing. Probably the Priestly Blessing would be sacred to the prophet also, for it presumably is part of the covenant with Levi to which the prophet calls the priests back. The problem is with the priests: they are the ones negating the Priestly Blessing.

In Mal 1:8 the rhetorical question is raised whether the governor (פֶּחָה) would be happy with the blind, lame and sick animals the priest offer to YHWH: “will he be pleased (רצה) with you, or will he lift up (נשא) your faces?” In Mal 1:9 the same question is raised but now for YHWH, starting with an imperative: “And now, entreat (Piel imperative חלה) the face of God, and will He favor you (חנן) this coming from your hands, will He lift up from you (מִכֶּם, or maybe: *because of you*) faces?” The last phrase, translated (too) literal as: *from you faces*, seem to stand in parallel to *your faces* in Mal 1:8, and could well mean the same thing, but the construction is remarkable.<sup>25</sup>

Here the verb חנן stands parallel both with the expression of the lifting up of faces, but also with the verb רצה being pleased. It stands over and against what YHWH says in Mal 1:10b, and what can be regarded as an answer to the questions just raised: “For me there is no delight (חֶפְזִי) in you, says YHWH Tzebaoth, neither am I pleased (רצה) (by) the gift/sacrifice from your hands.” So here the verb חנן has to do with being pleased or not.

### **Punishment and (Uncertainty of) Favor**

**In 2 Sam 12:16** David is found fasting and weeping in the hope that YHWH will restore his sick child. The child’s sickness and resulting death are a punishment because of David’s sin by which he has given cause of scorn for YHWH (2 Sam 12:13–14. In 2 Sam 12:22 he gives the reason for his fasting and weeping, his train of thought has been: “Who knows, YHWH may be gracious/favorable to me and (so that) the child will live”. Here the verb חנן has to do both with a concrete favor and stands over and against punishment.

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<sup>25</sup>This is an issue for further research.

**Amos 5** is mostly about the judgement of YHWH. A theme this passage has in common with Mal 1 is that YHWH is not pleased (רצה) with the sacrifices made (Amos 5:22). In Amos 5:14 there is a call to search (דרש)<sup>26</sup> “good and not evil, in order that you may live, and thus YHWH God-Tzebaoth will be with you, as you say”. The next verse gives the same assurance, but seemingly less categorical: “Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate, perhaps (אולי) YHWH God-Tzebaoth might show favor חנן to the remnant of Joseph. The verb stands in parallel to the presence of YHWH with the people, and it functions against the background of impending doom. There still is a possibility that the judgment of YHWH will not be executed if the people will do what the prophet says, so the verb stands over and against judgement and punishment.

### Assurance of Favor

**Isaiah 30:19** is an utterance of assurance, following a passage of judgment (Isa 30:12–17). “For the people in Zion will dwell in Jerusalem, you will weep no more”, but “YHWH will show favor (חנן) to you at the sound of your cry, when He hears it, He will answer you” (Isa 30:19). This verse is connected to the preceding verse Isa 30:18: “Therefore YHWH waits (חכה) to show favor to you (חנן), therefore YHWH raises (רום) to show mercy to you (רחם), for YHWH is a God of justice, happy (אשרי) are those who wait (חכה) on Him.” It is not entirely clear what it means for YHWH to wait (for the proper time?) to show favor, neither what it means that He raises (Himself?) to show mercy. But it is quite clear that showing favor and showing mercy are in parallel in Isa 30:18 and this is connected to the fact that YHWH is a God of justice. In Isa 30:19 the showing of favor entails that YHWH hears and answers the cries of His people.

**Exod 33–34** is what could be called the aftermath of the episode of the golden calf (Exod 32:1–6). The background of these chapters is the rage or wrath (אף) of YHWH (Exod 32:10) and His punishment or smiting (נגף Exod 32:35). Over and against this anger and punishment stands the expression *find* (מצא) *favor in the eyes of* that surfaces repeatedly in these chapters (Exod 33:12,13,16,17; 34:9).

In Exod 33:13 the theme of finding favor in the eyes of YHWH is closely connected to the way (דִּרְךָ) of YHWH, in Exod 33:14,15 to the “going” (הֵלֵךְ) of the face of YHWH, traveling together with his people. In Exod 33:16 YHWH Himself going *with* the people, is (the only) evidence for the finding of favor.

<sup>26</sup>This somehow continues the theme of searching (דרש) YHWH occurring in Amos 5:4,6.

In Exod 34:9 the expression connected to favor is the face of YHWH going *in the midst* of the people. Favor is connected to the presence of YHWH.

This connection is also found in Exod 33:19 where YHWH says to Moses that He will show favor to whom He will show favor, and that He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion (2 x רחם). This utterance, that seems to be an expression of His freedom to do as He pleases, is a response to the question of Moses in Exod 33:18, if YHWH will show his glory (כבוד).

In Exod 33:19 YHWH promises to show His טוב. It is not entirely clear whether this is the same as His כבוד. For when He says in Exod 33:20 that no one can see His face and live, this verse at least suggests that there is at least some part of this כבוד that Moses will not see. In Exod 33:22 He states that His כבוד will pass by (עבר) Moses will see His back parts (אחריים) but not His face (Exod 33:23). In Exod 34:4 YHWH takes position in a cloud (ענן) and in Exod 34:6 He passes by (עבר). These are all expression of the presence of YHWH. These themes are also found in Exod 33:10: the “pillar of cloud (ענן)” and in Exod 33:11: YHWH and Moses speaking face to face.

In Exod 34:6 we find חנון (merciful) as a designation for YHWH, in parallel with רחום (compassionate) and ארך אפים (slow to anger) and “full (רב) of חסד (covenant love) and אמת (faithfulness)”. The word חסד is repeated in Exod 34:7. There it is added that YHWH forgives iniquity and transgression, at the same time visiting iniquity of the fathers on the children. In Exod 34:9 Moses uses the fact that he has found favor in the eyes of YHWH as an argument for the forgiveness of the iniquity of the people and as an argument for YHWH to possess them.

### Prayer and Wish for Favor

As we have already seen, Ps 67:2 starts with a prayer for favor and the connection is made with blessing. Because of Ps 67:3 there is a connection with knowing the way (דרך) of YHWH by the nations (גוים). This is faintly reminiscent of Exod 33:13 where Moses adduces that he has found favor in the eyes of YHWH as an argument for YHWH to show his ways: “if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight” (ESV). Strangely enough the finding of favor in Exod 33:13 seems to be both the beginning and the goal of the process.

**In Ps 123:2** the psalmist confesses dependence on YHWH. Like the eyes of servants or maidservants look to the hand of their master or mistress so the people are looking to YHWH until He will have favor on them. This confession issues in prayer in Ps 123:3 “Have favor on us, YHWH, have favor on us” (חנון)

imperative). This request is supported by the argument, given in Ps 123:3–4: we are greatly filled with contempt (בִּזּוּז) and mocking (לְעֵג). This seems to imply that when YHWH would show favor the contempt and mocking would be over.

In both Exod 33:13, Ps 123:2–3, Isa 30:19, Mal 1:9 and 2 Sam 12:22 there is some connection to prayer. This is also the case in Ps 67:2–3 although Ps 67:2 is more of a wish for favor, as is Gen 43:29: “May God show favor to you, my son” as spoken by Joseph to Benjamin. For more on this verse see appendix L.

### Conclusion for חָנַן

In all the verses considered, with the notable exception of Ps 67:2 and the possible exception of Ps 123:2 the verb חָנַן seems to function against a background of judgement and punishment, although this background is sometimes more and sometimes less pronounced. In the examples where the verb is negated, no mercy or pity is shown (Isa 27:11) but often quite destructive actions are performed instead (Deut 7:2; 28:50, Ps 59:6).

When used for YHWH general speaking the verb has to do with the positive attitude of YHWH. The verb often stands in parallel to compassion רַחֵם (Exod 33:19; 34:6, Isa 27:11, Isa 30:18–19). It is connected to being pleased רָצָה (Amos 5:22, Mal 1:8–9) and with delight חִפְּץ (Mal 1:10)

The positive attitude or favor of YHWH issues in His presence (Amos 5:14, Exod 33:19), His answer of prayer (2 Sam 12:22, Isa 30:19, Ps 123:2) His acceptance of sacrifices (Amos 5:22, Mal 1:9) (maybe His protection Gen 43:29) and His blessing (Ps 67:2, probably Gen 43:29).

## *Discussion and Conclusion*

### 6.1 Genre Revisited

As has become clear in chapter 4 the verb בָּרַךְ when used in a blessing often can be taken to have optative meaning. This is an argument for the position of Knierim and Coats (2005, p. 95) who label the Priestly Blessing as a blessing wish.

But this term should not be understood wrongly. A blessing wish is evidently more than simply an expression of a desire<sup>1</sup> in which there is no ground or reason to expect any of the things desired, where it remains to be seen or where it is doubtful whether these things will come to pass. Indeed if the term *wish* is taken in this way, the term should be repudiated for the Priestly Blessing.

Knierim and Coats (2005, p. 95) rightly hint at an element of anticipation present in the blessing. The fulfillment is certain because YHWH has authorized this blessing and because of the *promise* made in verse 27.

However they draw a sharp distinction between the genre of blessing, *promise* and *prediction*. The difference is that “the certainty of its fulfillment” is left open by the words of the blessing. “Its future fulfillment depends entirely on the independence of the divine giver of the blessing” (p. 95) and not on the priests. They can only pronounce a wish, “though clearly authorized”, they are “subject to theocratic authority” (p. 95).

The Priestly Blessing both has an element of the independence of YHWH and it has an element of expectation. Probably this is mainly because of the command and the promise found in its literary context. This may give it a unique character within the Hebrew Bible. Comparing the Priestly Blessing with for instance 1 Kgs 8:54—62 that is also set in a liturgical context, there seems to be a difference in expectation. For instance Solomon formulates positively: “The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers”, but

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<sup>1</sup>Some languages even have a *desiderative* mood (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desiderative\ mood>).

also negatively: “May he not leave us or forsake us” (1 Kgs 8:57). This might be illustrative for less certainty in expectation.

Indeed it is correct to stress, with Knierim and Coats (2005), that the actual imparting of the blessing is done not by the priests but by YHWH and thus totally dependent on Him. The priests no more had the distribution of blessing in their power as had Bileam (cf. Num 23:20), even if Balak says to him: “I know that whom you bless will be blessed” (Num 22:6. But still the act of the priest (the laying of the Name upon the people) and the act of YHWH (the actual blessing) are connected in verse 27 by way of YHWH’s promise. In this sense the idea of Westermann (1985) that the Priestly Blessing imparts the blessing has an element of truth.

The optative might not only express a wish but also hope and thus have a level of expectation and anticipation. The priests are not only wishing for blessing, but also hoping for it. And, as representatives of YHWH, they also seem to express some intention or will on His part to bless the people. Since they have His promise for it, there is an element of anticipation that YHWH Himself will enact the blessing. This fits with the remark by Knierim and Coats (2005) that the intention of the blessing in its *Sitz im leben* was “to assure the assembled congregation corporately and individually, of Yahweh’s promise” (p. 96).

## Conclusion

The Priestly Blessing is more than the expression of a desire. Because of its optative mood and context, it can best be described as a wish with a strong element of anticipation, that may be positioned near to both prayer (precative mood) and to the assurance of promise (declarative mood?).

## 6.2 Semantic Relations Between the Verbs

In section 3.1 the possible dimensions of the relations between the verbs have been discussed together with the proposals by P. D. Miller (1975) and Fishbane (1983). Here some other proposals will be discussed and evaluated in light of the material as found in chapter 4 and 5.

### Luther, Delitzsch, Ringgren

Seybold (2004) discusses the interpretation of Luther, Delitzsch and Ringgren. Luther thought that verse 24 was about “physical life and goods” and thus pointed to God the Creator and Sustainer. Verse 25 would be about

“spiritual being and the soul” about “eternal life” and of course about grace (*gratia et donum*) (p. 52). Verse 26 would be about “comfort” and strengthening against the devil and sin. Luther connects the verses to the Trinity.

Franz Delitzsch who in these verses discovered an increasing intimacy of the relation with God, a increasing closeness of God to people (Seybold, 2004, p. 53). In verse 24 God is above and beyond and the people are object. In verse 25 a relationship of reciprocity is established, in which God condescends like a king (cf. Prov 16:15). In verse 26 God has come on the same level as man. The favored one (vs. 25) becomes the loved one, who receives peace as result of this love, where peace is mainly rest for the soul. The verbs represent supranatural impulses we experience, when the look of love is directed at us, and our heart ignites in reciprocal love (Seybold, 2004, p. 53).

Helmer Ringgren viewed the Priestly Blessing as a sacramental blessing in a cultic setting. Verse 24 gives the epitome or prototype of cult-mediated salvation, verse 25 names the ground and supposition, namely goodwill and grace of YHWH, verse 26 summarizes the effect of the blessing as an all-embracing harmony of the relations of life (Seybold, 2004, p. 54).

## Seybold

According to Seybold himself the A and B parts of the verses roughly describe “an act and it’s effect”<sup>2</sup> or consequence. The verb שמר is “the explication of the theological concept” expressed by ברך and “the application to the everyday life of the person addressed” (p. 44).

Analysing the vertical dimension, Seybold (2004, p. 45) identifies the A parts of the verses as statements having to do with personality, for they mention the most personal of all, namely the face, and the name. He argues that all three A-parts “designate aspects of greeting”: the phrases describe “special moments of personal encounter, granting (*Gewährung*), turning towards” (p. 45). He explains 25aA as “the friendly expression and the bright glowing look of understanding”<sup>3</sup> of YHWH and 26aA as “an interested, committed and emotional looking at” (p. 46) and thus as His “full attention and affection (*Zuwendung*)” (p. 45). So it seems Seybold (2004, p. 45) would agree that there is a parallel between 25aA and 26aA in that both have to do with looking at.

In the B parts of the verses the terminology of the personal sphere is abandoned, as far as the subject is concerned<sup>4</sup> and that the terms used represent “general and indefinite” concepts (p. 45). Those he appropriates to the

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<sup>2</sup>eine Handlung und ihre Wirkung

<sup>3</sup>freundliche Miene und den hell leuchtenden Blick des Einverständnisses

<sup>4</sup>Die Bezugssphäre des Persönlichen ist — was das Subjekt angeht — aufgegeben

sphere of “human existence”. The B parts represent the dimensions in which the divine action is to come into effect: “the protection from the outside world, access to the deity and the salutary order of community” (p. 46). He explains that analogical to other expressions with שים the expression of 26aB can be translated as “es bestimme Jahwe für dich שלום (als dein Schicksal)”, that is: “May YHWH ordain שלום as your fate/alotment/destiny” (p. 46).

Impressive as this analysis may seem, there are some problems with it. Indeed the verb ברך occurs in greetings, and 25aA and 26aA are both metaphorical expressions using the personal element of the face. An argument why ברך would be more “personal” than חנן, שמר or שים with שלום is missing. Neither does it become clear why ברך would be more “general and indefinite” than the verbs from the B parts of the verses, neither why the protection would only be “from the outside world” and why peace only has to do with “the salutary order of the community”. Indeed חנן has to do with access to the deity, but it also seems to say something about the attitude of YHWH. And although it might be true that the expressions found in 25aA and 26aA originated in encounter, the analysis in chapter 4 and 5 provides no reason to suppose that these expressions (in other contexts) necessarily kept a connotation of encounter.

For verse 26 Seybold (2004) points to related expressions: נשא עין אל, which according to him means “choose, elect, desire” (p. 47). He also points to the expression שים פנים אל which, according to him, means something like “make a front against”. This last expression and the expression שים שלום, “Heil setzen, Frieden stiften, Ordnung verfügen” (p. 47), he assigns to “traditional legal terminology”. On this basis he states that the first part of this verse is an appeal to a personal choice and to a decision to act and this terminates in a legal settlement (“Setzung”, “Rechtsakt”, “Verfügung”) or peace settlement. He connects these ideas to political and legal proceedings and sees in it an analogue to the Babylonian celebration of “Schicksalsbestimmung”. This, although not impossible, is all quite hypothetical. Indeed, as we have seen in section 5.2, it is possible that peace has a relation aspect, as seems to be the case in Isa 27:5.

Seybold (2004) further argues that the *shining of the face* in verse 25 is cultic terminology (p. 48,n. 11) and that it means *being heard in prayer* in Akkadian (p. 48,n. 12). As we have seen in section 5.3, the expression is used in prayer or blessing. But it is not clear if a designation *cultic* would be equally valid. Indeed there is a connection to the hearing of prayer in Dan 9:17. But an interpretation of the expression as *being heard in prayer* is probably not entirely appropriate, rather the shining of the face seems to be a either result or precondition to the hearing of prayer.

Thus he concludes to three courses of action: YHWH’s meeting, hearing of

prayer and decision or resolution (*EntschlieÙung*) and he distinguishes three modes of effect: protection, favour (*Gnadenerweis*), peace making. He further identifies three areas of impact: everyday life in its being threatened, the religious life with its possibilities and grants, and the social life in the instability of its structures (*Ordnungen*) (p. 49).

The identification of the three areas of impact seems to be too pronounced. It is not clear how these areas of life can be distinguished. For instance would persons in the ANE distinguish between every day life and religious life? Or can these areas be thought to overlap? And indeed would the instability of the structures of social life not also be one of the threats to everyday life? Indeed there might be a parallel between verse 24 and 26aB, in that 24aB speaks about protection which relates to threats to security and 26aB speaks about peace which has to do, amongst other things, with security from threats. It should be noted further that restricting שְׁלוֹם to the social sphere, most probably, is too limited. As was discussed in 5.2 שְׁלוֹם might well tend in the direction of general welfare (e.g. in Jer 29:7 and 1 Sam 25:5–6).

## Chiastic Pattern

All of the verbs used in the Priestly Blessing somehow have to do with the relation between YHWH and his people, they all express some kind of movement from YHWH to his people. This personal relation surfaces most clearly in verse 25 and 26aA, the inner core of the chiasm. The expressions in 25aA and 26aA are parallel in form, but as was suggested in the analysis (see section 5.3 and 5.4) both expressions may have to do with YHWH looking to his people. Where in 25 the expression found in 25aA and 25aB are parallel, in Deut 28:50 we see that the expression in 26aA can be parallel to 25aB. Thus these three expressions are in relatively close connection.

The analysis of chapter 4 and section 5.1 has shown that there are links between the verb בָּרַךְ and שָׁמַר. For instance the theme of protection is sometimes found in the context of בָּרַךְ (section 4.8) and blessing is sometimes promised in connection with protection (section 5.1). But other themes are also found in the context of both verbs like the offspring, long life and the presence of YHWH. Maybe it could be proposed that in the Priestly Blessing what is established by בָּרַךְ is kept by שָׁמַר. What is blessed and protected maybe could be described as life in general.

On the basis of the analysis there seems to be another link, namely between the verb בָּרַךְ and the word שְׁלוֹם (section 4.8). Both words have to do with prosperity. A link between שָׁמַר and שְׁלוֹם could be that both express an element of security. Thus it seems to be the case that the semantics of the words underscore the chiastic pattern proposed in chapter 2.

## 6.3 Conclusion

The research question as formulated in section 1.2, namely “What is the meaning of the verbs in the Priestly Blessing, as found in Numbers 6:24-26, when considered in their mutual coherence, within their textual context and in relation to the genre of the Priestly Blessing?” can be answered as follows:

The verbs in the Priestly Blessing can be roughly divided in two groups. The first group of verbs are those found in verse 24 and verse 26aB. These verbs are mainly about the condition YHWH establishes and preserves for his people. Both the expressions in verse 24 and the expression in 26aB have to do with prosperity in all kind of ways. The use of these verbs in the Priestly Blessing seems to be more general and abstract than in other biblical texts. Various concepts are associated with these words in other verses. The verb **ברך** is often associated with fertility, offspring, protection, strength, superiority and joy. The verb **שמר** is linked with the way one goes, blessing, offspring, long life, health. The expression **שִׁמְשֹׁלֹם** seems to be an expression, not only of absence of war, but of prosperity and security in general and it may also include an element of good relations.

The other group of verbs form the core of the chiasm. These verbs are all mainly about a positive personal relation between YHWH and his people. The expressions in verse 25aA is often related to deliverance from misery. The verb **הגן** often stands over and against judgement and punishment. The expression as found in 26aA also has to do with YHWH looking in favour toward his people.

The semantics of the verbs confirm a chiasmic pattern for the Priestly Blessing. The outer shell of the Priestly Blessing has to do with the beneficial actions of YHWH towards his people, the inner core has to do with his positive attitude toward them. The Priestly Blessing is a blessing wish, an expression of hope, and thus gives an assurance that YHWH will perform these actions and have these attitudes toward His people.

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## Appendix A

# Translation

Here follows an interlinear morphemic translation (IMT) of the Priestly Blessing and its textual framework. This format is often used in linguistics to represent texts. A description of how to use this format for Biblical Hebrew is given by Anstey (2006). However the format followed here is mainly that of Shead (2007). For instance wayyiqṭōl is designated by NARR, *yiqṭōl* is designated by NPRF or nonperfective, the *pi<sup>c</sup>el* is designated as INTS or intensive, in accordance with Shead (2007, p. xvi-xviii).

22aA וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר  
*wayě-dabbēr yhwh ʿel-mōšeh*  
 CO.NARR-speak.ACT.3MSG yhwh.N ALL-Moses.N

*lē-ʾmōr*  
 by.PREP-say.INFC  
 “And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying:”

23aA דַּבֵּר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-בָּנָיו לֵאמֹר  
*dabbēr ʿel-ʾahārōn*  
 IMP.speak.ACT.2MSG ALL-Aaron.N

*wě-ʿel-bān-āy-w lē-ʾmōr*  
 CO-ALL-son.N-PL-PRN.POSS.3MSG by.PREP-say.INFC  
 “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying:”

23bA כֹּה תְבָרְכוּ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
*kōh tě-bārāk-û ʿet-bēn-ê*  
 thus.ADVM NPRF-bless.INTS-2MPL ACC-son.N-PL.CNST

*yisrāʾēl*  
 Israel.N  
 “In this way will you bless the children of Israel<sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup>Or, instead of *children of Israel*: *Israelites*

23bB אָמַר לָהֶם  
*'āmôr lā-hem*  
 say.INFA DAT-PRN.3MPL  
 “you shall say to them:”

24aA בִּרְכֵךְ יְהוָה  
*yě-bārek-ēkā* *yhwh*  
 JUSS-bless.INTS.3MSG-PRN.2MSG yhwh  
 “YHWH bless you”

24aB וַיִּשְׁמְרֵךְ  
*wě-yi-šmēr-ekā*  
 CO-NPRF-protect.ACT.3MSG-PRN.2MSG  
 “and He protect you”

25aA יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ  
*yā-’ēr* *yhwh pān-āyw*  
 NPRF-light.CAUS.3MSG yhwh face-PRN.POSS.3MSG

*'ēlē-kā*  
 towards.ALL-PRN.2MSG  
 “YHWH make His face to shine towards you”

25aB וַיַּחַנֵּךְ  
*wi-y-ḥunn-ekā*  
 CO-NPRF-mercy.ACT.3MSG-PRN.2MSG  
 “and He be merciful to you”<sup>2</sup>

26aA יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ  
*yi-śśā'* *yhwh pān-āyw*  
 JUSS-lift.ACT.3MSG yhwh face-PRN.POSS.3MSG

*'ēlē-kā*  
 towards.ALL-PRN.2MSG  
 “YHWH lift up His face towards you”

26aB וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם  
*wě-yā-śēm* *lē-kā* *śālôm*  
 CO-NPRF-put.ACT.3MSG DAT-PRN.2MSG peace.N  
 “and He establish peace for you”

<sup>2</sup>or: “and He have mercy on you”

27aA וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
*wě-śām-û* *’et-šēm-iy*  
CO.DEP-put.ACT-3MP ACC-Name.N.PRN.POSS.1MSG

*‘al-bēn-ê* *yisrā’el*  
SUPS-son.N-PL.CNST Israel.N

“So they shall put my Name upon the children of Israel”

27aB וְאֲנִי אֲבָרַכְכֶם  
*wě-’ānî* *’ă-bārāk-ēm*  
CO-PRN.1MSG NPRF.1MSG-bless.INTS-PRN.3MPL  
“and I will bless them”

## Appendix B

# *Textual Criticism*

Parker (2008) has defined textual criticism as “the analysis of variant readings in order to determine in what sequence they arose” (p. 159). Sometimes readings can be considered with relative certainty to be corruptions. When this is not the case, the task of the exegete is not only to decide on temporal priority but also to determine which influence variants have on the meaning of the text. The textual criticism conducted here will be limited to short discussion of the variants found in the apparatus of BHS .

**verse 23bB.** Instead of the infinitive absolute אָמַר the apparatus of BHS proposes to read an infinitive construct לְאָמַר (in which case the MT would be the result of haplography, for the preceding word has a lamed at the end) or an imperative form אָמְרוּ (in which case the text of MT would be the result of metathesis). The reason for this emendation seems to be that only here in MT an infinitive absolute form of אָמַר occurs without a finite form of a verb.<sup>1</sup> However the infinitive absolute may be used here instead of a command form or instead of a participle (Waltke & O’Connor, 1990, p. 593–594, 597). Budd (1984) remarks that “MT may be unique, but is not untenable” (p. 75). The mere uniqueness of a grammatical construction which neither causes the text to be unintelligible nor is grammatically impossible, is not enough reason to propose *variae lectiones*.

**verse 25aA.** Von Galls edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch has an hiphil indicative form יֵאִיר instead of the jussive form יִאָר. Jagersma (1983, p. 127) points to Greek versions where a lectio επιφανει (indicative active future) is found. For instance in Chrysostom and the inscription found in Thessalonica, to these can be added the Coptic versions like the Bohairic (Tov, 1999, p. 514).<sup>2</sup>

The Septuagint has the same lectio as MT. This lectio can also be found in the smaller silver scroll from Ketef Hinnom (KH2): “Although the *yôd* is

<sup>1</sup>The other occurrences of the infinite absolute אָמַר are 1 Sam 2:30 and Jer 23:17.

<sup>2</sup>Renberg (1999) also mentions Severian of Gabala, Λόγος περὶ τοῦ κατὰ Μωϋσέως ὀφειώς (Gabalitanus, ca. 400/1859, column 514).

partially lost in the lacuna at the right edge, sufficient traces remain to make its identification secure. The other letters are clear...” (Barkay, Lundberg, Vaughn, & Zuckerman, 2004, p. 67). For the greater silver scroll (KH1) the only letter that is clear is the *resh*, the *aleph*, fitting with MT, has to be reconstructed (cf. Barkay et al., 2004, p. 61). A similar text that could be of some importance here is 1QS 2:1-9 which has **וַיֵּאָר** (Talstra, 2002b, p. 62). On the basis of this data it can be proposed that the lectio from MT is older than that of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Maybe the latter lectio is an interpretation of the former.

**verse 25aB.** The Syriac version instead of **וַיַּחְנֵךְ** (a *qal waw* copulative prefix form of **חָנָה**) has *wnhjk* or **וַיַּחֲיֶךְ** (a *piel waw* copulative prefix form of **חָיָה**) which can be translated as *and preserve you* or *and let you live* (sc. in prosperity). The lectio of MT is most probably older. It is more probable that the Syriac version has misread **חָיָה** for **חָנָה** instead of MT misreading **חָנָה** for **חָיָה**. Maybe the *yod* was misread for a *nun*, for instance because part of the *nun* fell away. This is more probable than a pen of a scribe slipping so that a *yod* could be misread for a *nun*. When the word had become badly readable the probability of guessing **חָיָה** is higher than **חָנָה**, that is: if the frequency of the use of words in the Hebrew Bible is a measure by which the commonness of a word can be established, for in the Hebrew Bible the verb **חָיָה** is almost twice as common as the verb **חָנָה** in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>3</sup>

**verse 27aA.** Von Galls edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch instead of **וְשָׂמוּ** (a *wəqāṭal* or *qal waw* consecutive suffix conjugation, 3rd person plural) has **וְשִׂימוּ**, which is probably a *qal* imperative plural. The former is translated: *they will put*, the latter: *you must put*. In the former case the sentence is at the same level as 23aA and thus it is spoken by YHWH to Moses. In the latter case the sentence is at the same level as 23bB. In that case these words belong to the words which Moses has to speak to Aaron and his sons (cf. De Boer, 1982, p. 3). Both are perfectly possible. It is not possible to tell whether the *yod* was left out or added.

**verse 27.** The LXX puts verse 27 directly after verse 23. Talstra (2002b, p. 59) notes that in this way the words from verse 27 become a kind of interruption. Indeed in this lectio the position of the words of the verses 24–26 seems to become a bit awkward. The Greek inscription from Thessalonica

<sup>3</sup>A BibleWorks search yields 287 hits in 259 verses for all verbal forms of **חָיָה** and 144 hits in 136 verses for all verbal forms of **חָנָה**.

has the words of verse 27 at the same place as MT (Tov, 1999), the same is true for the Samaritan Pentateuch.

It is tempting to conclude on this basis that the lectio LXX is a corruption of the text. However that leaves the arrangement of LXX to be explained, which is by no means easy. Talstra (2002b) points out that there are Greek manuscripts “which do not have” the words of verse 27 “anymore” (p. 59). This suggests that for Greek manuscripts the lectio having the words of verse 27 is older than the lectio missing these words. This, however, is not self evident.

At the same time he argues that “the arrangement of the Greek text” confirms “the suspicion, that the Hebrew verses 24–26 originally existed independently of the words about the Name in verse 27” (p. 59, cf. Korpel, 2003, p. 78). Of course it may be that the verses 24–26 circulated independently, but Talstra (2002b) does not make it clear how the lectio of LXX can be an argument to prove this. Maybe because verse 27 was a later addition, which consequently had to receive a place in the LXX also?

If the lectio of MT is older the placement of verse 27 could be an intentional replacement. However, it is difficult to guess the intention for this replacement. De Boer (1982) suggests that the “transposition shows acquaintance with the problem of deciding of which sentence vs. 27 is the continuation” (p. 3). If the lectio of MT is older the replacement could also originate in an incidental skipping of the verse. Adding a verse as a gloss afterwards can easily result in displacement. This is hypothetical and may be less likely than an intentional reordering.

**verse 27aB.** The LXX has ἐγὼ κύριος instead of יהוה. Does this go back to a Hebrew *vorlage* which had יהוה behind יהוה? Indeed a construction יהוה + יהוה + yiqtol is not impossible (Isa 41:17; Ezek 12:25; 34:24). At the other hand it is possible that LXX added κύριος to make it more explicit that this was said by the LORD (and not by Mozes). Since it does not seem probable that either proto-MT or MT would leave out a significant word like יהוה, probably MT is older.

## *Some Historical Issues*

Gray (1903) assigns the introductory formula to the blessing to the Priestly source (P). It is not entirely clear where he draws the line between the introductory formula and the blessing proper, because the reference he gives for the formula is “v. 21,22a” (p. 71), which is obviously a mistake or a misprint since verse 21 is the last verse of the former pericope. The introductory formula rather would be verse 22 and 23a. It is not entirely clear whether the verses 23b and 27 also belong to the introductory formula in the opinion of Gray (1903).

Whether or not a Priestly source is accepted, most scholars will probably date the introductory formula as post-exilic. Gray (1903) recognizes that the blessing itself is probably “pre-exilic in origin” (p. 71) and probably “actually used in the temple at Jerusalem before the Exile” (p. 72). He suggests it could be a “product of the period of the Josianic Reformation”, but it could also “be considerably earlier” (p. 72).

Budd (1984) points to Kellermann (1970) who sees verse 22-26 as a unit but verse 27 as a later addition. Maybe to counteract a mechanical or magical interpretation of the blessing proper? Budd (1984) himself argues that both verse 22, 23 and 27 come from the author-redactor (the terminology is mine). He calls verse 27 “an halakhic comment on the significance of the priestly blessing” (p. 75). But as we have seen verse 23b and 27 show a mirror pattern. If this is intentional, which is quite reasonable to suppose, and if the verses 23b and 27 are a later addition to the blessing proper, then it is most likely that both 23b and 27 were added at the same time.

Budd (1984) does not make it clear why his position should be accepted, he even fails to mention arguments which either necessitate or give cause for supposing that the blessing proper (verses 24-26) was originally separate from the framework of verse 23b and 27. The opposite position seems to be possible, for instance Seebass (2006) argues that “only vv. 22-23a show later priestly language” (p. 51).

Indeed the verses 23b-27 may have existed earlier and the introductory formula (22-23a) may have been added later. The commanding-framework including the blessing proper might have had an independent existence within

the priestly community before the introductory formula was added by an author-redactor, fitting it either into a previous collection of laws or directly into the book of Numbers.

This hypothesis is fully compatible even with a conservative theory of the origins of the Pentateuch. Cole (2000) argues for “a Mosaic origin for much of the material” of Numbers (p. 34). Ashley (1993) more cautiously states: “Moses may be seen as having a key role in the origin of some of the material in Numbers, though we have no way of knowing how much of it goes back to him” (p. 7).

Franz Delitzsch (1882) argued that the origin of the Priestly Blessing was “pre-Davidic [...] on account of its influence on the Psalms” (Gray, 1903, p. 72). Von Ewald (1865/1869) “referred it to the Mosaic period on account of its antique simplicity” (Gray, 1903, p. 72). The argument of Delitzsch only has validity if both Davidic origin of the Psalms is accepted and if it is accepted that the Priestly Blessing influenced the Psalms and not the other way around. The argument of “antique simplicity” by (Von Ewald, 1865/1869) does not really hit the nail on the head; especially not if a quite complex chiasmic pattern, as proposed above, is accepted.

Indeed it will be quite hard to make a case for a Mosaic origin of the blessing. If the chiasmic pattern of the blessing is accepted this will only complicate things. If this is also supposed to go back to Moses, at least an original in some sort of proto-Hebraic script must be presupposed.<sup>1</sup>

A pre-exilic date for the blessing proper has found some supporting evidence in some early datings of the silver scrolls found at Ketef Hinnom. For instance Barkay et al. (2004) argues for a dating to the late pre-exilic period (cf. also Waaler, 2002). However this dating is contested (cf. e.g. Berlejung, 2008, esp. p. 212). If the most early dating is accepted, this at least corroborates a pre-exilic *origin* of the priestly blessing. Because the smaller scroll (KH2) does not have cola 25aB and 26aA, it does not, without further ado, prove pre-exilic *existence* of the Priestly Blessing, at least not in the form found in Num 6:24–26. Of course a discussion is possible whether the texts from Ketef Hinnom are contractions or the text from Numbers is an expansion of some original (cf. Levine, 1993, p. 238–241). Even if a later date should be accepted for the silver scrolls, these scrolls may point to an early date for the Priestly Blessing. Use of this formula on these scrolls, probably having an apotropaic function, makes it plausible that these formula were somehow established (cf. Waaler, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup>This is not to say that this is impossible, or that I do not believe the testimony of the text itself. In fact I do. But it is simply to acknowledge, as a matter of honesty, that I do not see any credible way to corroborate this testimony.

Determining the *terminus post* and *ante quem* is, of course, dependent on what is accepted as evidence. The earliest possible *terminus post quem* would probably be ca. 1450 B.C. This date can be reached by accepting the text as a reliable account of a historical event, and by accepting the earliest proposed date for the Exodus (cf. Walton, 2003).

If the Ketef Hinnom texts are accepted as a shortened form of this text, the *terminus ante quem* for the blessing proper still depends on the dating of the scrolls. Some indications for a *terminus ante quem* for the blessing proper connected to the command framework (23b and 27) can possibly be taken from 1QS 2:2b–4. If this text can be taken as a variation on the priestly blessing from Num 6:24–26 as Talstra (2002b, p. 62) does, the introduction to this text 1QS 2:1b–2a can be considered to be faintly reminiscent of Num 6:23b, namely:

(Talstra, 2002b, p. 62) והכוהנים מברכים את כול אנשי גורל אל

And the priests shall bless all man of the inheritance of God

These words may be derived from the text of Numbers. And it would fit with a *terminus ante quem* for the whole book of Numbers, as proposed by Cole (2000, p. 28), who states that “the present form of the Book of Numbers dates at least to the second century B.C.” (p. 28). This he infers from the Septuagint and from fragmentary evidence, like the fragments of Numbers found in Qumran. Of course the argument from the Septuagint is only valid if it is accepted that a LXX translation of Numbers was in existence in the second century B.C.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Clancy (2002), discarding some sources, finds no evidence for a Greek translation before 150 BC, but compare Fernández Marcos (2000, p. 260ff).

## *Different Kinds of Blessing*

Seybold (2004) finds “almost all varieties” (p. 31) of blessings formed with *brk* in the book of Ruth. Ruth 2:4 is an example of a greeting situation. Boas greets the reapers working on the field, saying: “The LORD be with you”.<sup>1</sup> They reply “The LORD bless you”.<sup>2</sup> Ruth 3:10 is an example of someone, namely Naomi, expressing acknowledgement and thanks. She says to Ruth: “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter”.<sup>3</sup> According to Seybold (2004) at the same time the person spoken to is recommended to the deity by praising her. Ruth 4:14 is an example of a *brwk*-Praise formula: “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer”.<sup>4</sup> Blessing wishes can be spoken on behalf of someone not present: “May he be blessed who took notice of you”<sup>5</sup> (Ruth 2:19) and: “May he be blessed by the LORD, who did not neglect his kindness to the living and the dead”<sup>6</sup> These examples indeed give some impression of different uses of blessing formulæ. However this overview is too limited. In any case it is not clear in which of these categories the Priestly Blessing would fit.

Leuenberger (2008a, 2008b) has made a quite thorough historical reconstruction of the development of blessing formulæ and blessing theology in ancient Israel. He concludes that there is a thorough change in blessing theology in the course of history and tries to trace changes regarding the one who blesses (gods, YHWH, humans), the receiver of the blessing (god, human, single person, people, peoples, objects), the expression (wish, fulfillment), the context (greeting, private religion, official religion), content (land, fertility, wealth, welfare, salvation), the domain (this life versus afterlife) and the conditions (keeping of the law versus no conditions).

These dimensions might well prove useful in distinguishing different (sub)genres of blessing. Other dimensions mentioned by Leuenberger (2008a) are (gram-

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<sup>1</sup> יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם.

<sup>2</sup> לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה.

<sup>3</sup> בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ לַיהוָה בְּתוֹי.

<sup>4</sup> בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לְךָ גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם.

<sup>5</sup> יְהִי מְכִירְךָ בְּרוּךְ.

<sup>6</sup> בְּרוּךְ הוּא לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָזַב חֶסְדּוֹ אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַמֵּתִים.

matical) form, situation or *Sitz im Leben* and function, the content, the event, procedure and performance (e.g. actions, gestures and/or words), the manner of mediation of blessing between the subject and object, the structure of argument, whether blessing and curse are put in opposition. And he notes that probably more elements could be distinguished.

## *Suffixes and Singular Address*

The repetition of the suffix is remarkable. Seybold (2004) says: “Eine so oft und so kurz nacheinander wiederholte direkte Anrede begegnet sehr selten” (p. 26). What is also remarkable is that the blessing seems to be addressed to the single Israelite, which is suggested by the use of the suffix second person masculine singular. According to De Boer (1982) this could be because Num 6:24–26 “originated in individual practice” (p. 11). P. D. Miller (1975) thinks that the singular expresses “both the intimate and personal character of the relationship between the Lord and the recipients of the blessing.” To this he adds that in this way the blessing became sort of multifunctional and could be used both for individual and corporate blessings (p. 243).

Ashley (1993, p. 150) points out that many blessing use second person masculine singular. But examples can be found of second person masculine plural, third person masculine singular and mixes of second and third person. Maybe a rationale for these differing forms of address can be found. Do blessings addressed to a plurality or to a third person serve different purposes? Do they have another character? These questions can not be pursued here.

The second person masculine singular is also the form of address for the Decalogue (Exod 20:1–17 and Deut 5:6–21).<sup>1</sup> The relationship between individual and community can be brought into the discussion here. For instance the idea of *corporate personality* as brought forward by Wheeler Robinson (1935/1981). A discussion of this idea and the objections brought forward against it can not be entered here, for such a discussion see Mol (2002).

Another, more simple, explanation is possible. In such cases the singular could be used simply to make the address more personal, as was already proposed for the Decalogue by Philo (in his *Περί των δεκα λόγων*, X): “the man who receives an admonition as if addressed to himself personally is more inclined to obey it” (Philo, ca. 50/1855, p. 144; cf. Ginzberg, 1928/1998, p. 40, n. 216).

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<sup>1</sup>It is possible to argue that the Decalogue, and maybe other portions of apodictic law, “originated in individual practice” also. But what to make of the phrase in which YHWH reveals Himself as “the One who brought *you*” (second person masculine singular) “out of Egypt” (Exod 20:2)?

A remark by Porter (1965) that “there seems little reason to depart from the picture ... that the law operated on the basis of the individual rather than the group, and was concerned to fix individual guilt and inflict individual punishment” (p. 379), may *mutatis mutandis* apply to the priestly blessing. It might simply be concerned to fix an assurance on the individual of YHWH’s presence, favour and protection.

## Appendix F

# *Event Schemas*

Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 269–301) present a quite simple typology of verbs that is in line with a construction grammar approach. This classification is based on the distinction between conceptual entities and conceptual relations. Verbs often express (one or more) relations between conceptual entities. The function a conceptual entity has in a situation is called a thematic role. On a high level of abstraction there are several of such roles. Radden and Dirven (2007) distinguish *theme* (T), the entity “that is more passively involved in a situation”, sometimes also called patient or object (p. 270),<sup>1</sup> *location* (L), *goal* (G), *possessor* (P), *experiencer* (E), *cause* (C), *agent* (A) and *recipient* (R). These roles combine to form the event schemas defined in

Event Schema	Role Configuration	Example
states	T-{T}	<i>be true, resemble sth.</i>
processes	T-{T}	<i>go wrong, shine</i>
location	T-L	<i>be here</i>
motion	T-G	<i>go somewhere</i>
possession	P-T	<i>have, acquire sth.</i>
emotion	E-C	<i>like sth.</i>
perception	E-T	<i>see, notice sth.</i>
action	A-T	<i>break sth.</i>
self-motion	A-G	<i>go somewhere</i>
caused-motion	A-T-G	<i>send sth. somewhere</i>
transfer	A-R-T	<i>give someone sth.</i>

Table F.1: Role Configurations within Event Schemas.  
Adapted from Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 298)

table F.1. “This list is, of course, not exhaustive” (p. 298).

It must be noted that Levin and Hovav (2005, p. 35–50) heavily criticise such “semantic role list” approaches because the definition of roles is often problematic. They give an overview of and discuss other possible approaches to verb typology or categorization, that can not be discussed or used here.

### Provisional Analysis

A very provisional analysis of the blessing using these categories leads to the following hypothesis. Both clause 24aA en 24aB seem to fit an action schema: A-T where YHWH is the agent and the “you”, that is, the person to which the words are directed, is the theme. Clause 25aA is rather complex. It seems most logical to classify YHWH again as an agent, His face may be said to be the theme, and the “you” can be said to be either the location or the goal. This would make clause 25aA fit with a caused-motion schema: A-T-G.

Verse 25aB seems to express an attitude *being merciful to someone*. There is no category for attitudes within this typology. But it seems that *being merciful* can be considered either as a characteristic of a person, or as a state. *Being merciful to someone* adds another relation between this state and the someone who could be considered the goal of this state or characteristic. That would lead to a definition of attitude as: T-T-{G}.

Caution is needed here, since maybe P. D. Miller (1975) is correct in supposing that  $\text{יְהוָה יִרְחֶמֶן}$  describes an action. In other words it might express concrete deeds of mercy rather than express an attitude. This interpretation of the verb  $\text{יְרַחֵם}$  needs to be checked against parallel passages.

Within clause 26aA YHWH can be designated as the agent, the face is the theme and the people could be described as either the location or the goal, so this might fit a caused-motion schema: A-T-G. Verse 26aB can be interpreted as a transfer scheme including an actor (YHWH) a recipient (you) and a theme (peace). But this should not be taken in a way that peace is something YHWH has and then transfers to the ones being blessed. In fact it seems to be more probable that (a state of?) peace is established, brought about or created *for* or *on behalf* or *to the benefit of* the one being blessed. Maybe this might fit a caused motion scheme, or some new schema could be proposed, something like a caused state schema A-T-{T}, that would be a subschema of an action.

This analysis thus yields a pattern as shown in table F.2. This would fit the proposed chiasmic structure quite well, the outer ring (24-26aB) being YHWH’s beneficial action or deeds towards his people, the next ring (25aA,

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<sup>1</sup>That the theme is sometimes called object does not mean that the theme is always the object in the classical syntactical meaning of the word.

Colon	Event Schema
24aA	action
24aB	action
25aA	caused motion
25aB	attitude ?
26aA	caused motion
26aB	action / caused state (?)

Table F.2: Proposal of Used Event Schemas

26aA) being YHWH's motion towards his people, and the core (25aB) being YHWH's attitude towards them.<sup>2</sup>

Of course this analysis is very preliminary and not unproblematic. It should be corroborated, at the least, by more analysis of the constructions used and their semantics. And this analysis should not be limited to these clauses of the Priestly Blessing, but should be conducted throughout the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, a full construction grammar approach would be preferable.

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<sup>2</sup>Of course if the lectio of the Syriac version is accepted in verse 25aA, that would change this pattern, and it would probably make the core an action also. But this might as well be regarded as an argument against this lectio. That is: the lectio of the Syriac version would be a misunderstanding of a more original lectio.

## Appendix G

### *כֹּה followed by a verb*

When we select texts in which כֹּה is followed by a verb X followed by an infinitive of אָמַר, other elements in-between being allowed except a verb Y. It turns out that the only verbs which occur as verb X are בָּרַךְ (viz. Num 6:23) and the verb אָמַר itself.<sup>1</sup> This of course does not prove anything.

When כֹּה is directly followed by a verb in most cases (499 times) this is the verb אָמַר, 5 times it is the semantically related word דָּבַר. Other verbs also directly follow כֹּה but much less frequent than אָמַר.

The combination כֹּה with רָאָה occurs 4 times<sup>2</sup>, with הָיָה 2 times, בָּרַךְ 2 times, and a single occurrence for דָּבַק, נָתַן and עָנָה.

Twelve verses have a construction which functions as an oath formula: כֹּה + form of עָשָׂה + X + waw + כֹּה + form of יָסַף.<sup>3</sup> There are 14 other verses in which כֹּה occurs with a form of עָשָׂה directly following it.<sup>4</sup>

The only other occurrence of כֹּה with בָּרַךְ is found in Josh 17:14, where the tribe of Joseph complains to Joshua of having not enough land for they are a numerous people because they are thus far blessed by YHWH.<sup>5</sup> This is interesting in that כֹּה + בָּרַךְ is here used with YHWH as subject, while in Num 6:32b humans are subject. In Num 6:32b the כֹּה points forward, while in Josh 17:14 it seems to point backwards.

There are 16 verses in which כֹּה is not followed by a verb directly.

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<sup>1</sup>A search yielded the following texts: 1 Kgs 20:5; 2 Kgs 19:10; 2 Chr 10:10; Isa 37:10 Jer 11:21; 23:38; 28:2; 29:25; 30:2; 44:25; Ezek 25:3; 25:8; Hag 1:2; Zech 6:12; 7:9

<sup>2</sup>Amos 7:1; 7:4; 7:7; 8:1 all the same hiphil form and God or YHWH as subject showing the prophet something.

<sup>3</sup>Here X can be either ל + suffix + אֱלֹהִים (1 Sam 3:17; 2 Sam 3:35; 19:14; 1 Kgs 2:23; 20:10; 2 Kgs 6:31) or the other way around אֱלֹהִים + ל + Nomen (1 Sam 25:22; 2 Sam 25:22) or just אֱלֹהִים (1 Sam 14:14; 1 Kgs 19:2) or YHWH + ל + Object (Ruth 1:17; 1 Sam 20:13)

<sup>4</sup>Num 8:7; 32:8 Deut 7:5 Josh 6:3; 6:14 1 Sam 11:7; 17:27; 27:11 2 Chr 19:9; 19:10; 24:11 Jer 5:13 Ezek 23:39 Amos 4:12

<sup>5</sup>To express this they use a quite difficult to translate utterance:

וַאֲנִי עֹסֵרְב עַד אֲשֶׁר-עַד-כֹּה בְּרַכְנִי יְהוָה.

Appendix H

## *Blessing in Deuteronomy*

In table H.1 an overview can be found of *piel* forms 3rd person masculine of **ברך** with suffix 2nd person masculine. The *S* means subject, the *V* is *piel* *yiqṭōl* 3rd person with suffix 2nd person masculine.

Construction	Text
S2ms+PielQt13ms + S + <b>כִּי</b>	Deut 2:7
S2ms+PielWeQt3ms	Deut 7:13
PielWeQt3ms	Deut 7:13
S + S2ms+PielQt13ms + <b>אֲשֶׁר</b>	Deut 12:7
S + V + <b>כִּי</b>	Deut 14:24
S + V + <b>לְמַעַן</b>	Deut 14:29
יהוה + V + InfA + <b>כִּי</b>	Deut 15:4
S2ms+PielQt13ms + S + <b>כִּי</b>	Deut 15:6
S + V + <b>כִּי בְגִלְלֵי הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה</b>	Deut 15:10
S + S2ms+PielPf3ms + <b>אֲשֶׁר</b>	Deut 15:14
S + S2ms+PielWeQt3ms	Deut 15:18
S + V + <b>אֲשֶׁר</b>	Deut 16:10
S + V + <b>כִּי</b>	Deut 16:15
S + V + <b>לְמַעַן</b>	Deut 23:21
S2ms+PielWeQt3ms	Deut 24:13
S + V + <b>לְמַעַן</b>	Deut 24:19
S2ms+PielWeQt3ms	Deut 28:8
S + S2ms+PielWeQt3ms	Deut 30:16

Table H.1: *Piel* **ברך** 3rd Person with Suffix 2nd Person Deuteronomy

## Appendix I

### שים

Table I.1 gives an overview of all verses that have a verb שים followed directly by ל plus suffix, followed directly by a noun. This rule excludes verses where these elements occur in a different order. No verses seem to exist in which a ל plus suffix construction, belonging to the verb שים precedes it. In the table verses are excluded where a noun (sometimes connected to other elements) occurs in between the verb and the ל plus suffix construction, as is the case in 1 Sam 2:20; 9:20 and Job 7:20. Verses in which a verb שים, followed directly by ל plus suffix, followed directly by a preposition plus a noun are also excluded, as is the case for Gen 43:32; 1 Sam 8:11; 1 Kgs 20:34; Isa 21:4. Of course verses in which שים is followed by ל with a noun annexed, might be relevant for the semantics of שים plus ל constructions, but a selection had to be made.

It turns out that the *binyan* of the verb in this construction is always *gal*. In one instance in table I.1, the verb has a suffix, namely in 1 Sam 18:13 where Shaul appoints David (designated by the suffix attached to the verb) *as* a commander of thousand for himself, that is: for Saul himself (designated by the suffix attached to the ל). By contrast in 1 Sam 8:12 it is the commander of thousand that is the direct object that is appointed. In 1 Sam 8:5 and Hos 2:2 it is also a leader (king and head, respectively) that is appointed. In these cases the suffix connected to ל is reflexive, that is, it points to the subject. Another text in which the suffix attached to ל is reflexive, is Jer 31:21. There a command is found to set up תַּמְרוּרִים (presumably guideposts or signposts) “for yourself.” Judges 8:33 is similar to 1 Sam 18:13 in that someone is appointed as something. But in Judg 8:33 the “something” is designated by the preposition ל: The people of Israel appoint Baal-berith for themselves as god.

The entities designated by the noun following the ל plus suffix construction in table I.1 mostly function as object, with the exception of Dan 1:7 and Judg 9:25, where the noun is the subject.

In 2 Sam 7:23 and 1 Chr 17:21 God establishes a NAME for Himself, the ל plus suffix is reflexive. This approximately means that God makes his name *renowned* or gets *honor* for Who He is. These verses are the only verses from the table in which the suffix attached to the ל does not refer to a human

being, but to God.<sup>1</sup>

In Dan 1:7 it is the “commander of the eunuchs” who “appoints” names to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Zariah (designated by lamed-suffix). The meaning of the expression as used in this verse differs from that in 2 Sam 7:23 and 1 Chr 17:21, in that Dan 1:7 is not about establishing a name one already has, but about the appointment of new names.

A text showing that a name can be influenced negatively is found in Deut 22:14 where a man puts up wanton deeds on behalf of a woman, or lays them upon her. The parallel phrase in this verse says that he “brings out upon her a bad name”.

In Josh 8:2 an ambush is established, set or laid, namely against the city Ai at the command of the LORD: “lay an ambush for you” (reflexive) “against the city, from behind her”. In Judg 9:25 “the leaders of Shechem put against him (namely Abimelech) ambushed (men), on the hilltops”.

In Gen 45:7 a remnant is set or established on earth for the brothers of Joseph. In both Exod 15:25 and Josh 24:25 “a statue and a rule” is set.<sup>2</sup> In Exod 21:13 God appoints a place for the people to which a murderer by accident may flee. Isaiah 47:6 is a negation: Babylon is here charged for not showing (putting) mercy to the people of God.

Taking the classification of Waltke and O’Connor (1990, p. 205–212) for the use of ל it seems that most of the time in the construction as described above the ל to which a suffix is attached is a lamed of interest or (dis)advantage, it indicates either a beneficiary or maleficiary, depending on whether an action is positive or negative Zúñiga and Kittilä (2010).

Maleficiaries would be designated in Deut 22:14; Josh 8:2; Judg 9:25; and beneficiaries in: Gen 45:7; Exod 15:25; Josh 24:25; Judg 8:33; 1 Sam 8:5; 8:12; 18:13; 2 Sam 7:23; 1 Chr 17:21; Isa 47:6; Hos 2:2; Dan 1:7.

In 2 Sam 12:20 bread is set up or served for David, it seems not entirely impossible to take the ל as spatial, indicating the location where the bread is served: to him. But it seems to be equally probable to take David as a beneficiary.

In 2 Kgs 11:16 and its parallel text 2 Chr 23:25 hands are laid or put or set on Athalia. Although this has a negative effect on her. *Athalia* is no maleficiary, for this can best be taken as spatial, ל marking a location.

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<sup>1</sup>Since God can be classified as a person, the suffix always refers to a person.

<sup>2</sup>in both texts this is accompanied by a location. In Exod 15:25 by the preceding םֶשֶׁׁ, there in Josh 24:25 by the following םֶשֶׁׁׁ, in Shechem.

Rest <sup>e</sup>	ל+d	Verb <sup>c</sup>	Pre	b	Object <sup>a</sup>	Subject	Verse
נבן + לָעוּר מַאֲתִירָהּ	2ms	Imp-3ms		s	אָרֶב		Josh 8:2
נבן + לָעוּר מַאֲתִירָהּ + עַל רֹאשֵׁי הַהָרִים	3ms	Way3mp		s	מֵאֲרָבִים	בַּעֲלֵי שָׂקִים	Josh 9:25
נבן + לָעוּר מַאֲתִירָהּ + לָאֵלֶיהֶם	3mp	Way3mp		s	גְּרִית בַּעַל		Judg 8:33
נבן	3ms	Qt3ms	שָׁם		חֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט		Exod 15:25
נבן + בְּשָׂקִים	3ms	Way3ms			חֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט		Josh 24:25
נבן	3fs	Way3mp			יָדִים		2 Kgs 11:16
נבן	3fs	Way3mp			יָדִים		2 Chr 23:15
נבן	3fs	WeQt3ms			עֲלִילַת דְּבָרִים		Deut 22:14
נבן + בְּאָרָז	2mp	InfC+ל			שְׂאֲרֵית		Gen 45:7
נבן	3mp	Qt12fs	לֹא		רְחֻמִּים		Isa 47:6
נבן	3ms	Way3mp			לָחֶם		2 Sam 12:20
נבן	2ms	WeQt1cs			מְקוֹם		Exod 21:13
נבן	1cp	Imp-3ms	עֲתֶרָה		מְלֶכֶד		1 Sam 8:5
נבן	3mp	WeQt3cp		s	רֹאשׁ אֶחָד		Hos 2:2
נבן	3ms	InfC+ל+ו		s	שָׁם		2 Sam 7:23
נבן	2ms	InfC+ל		s	שָׁם עֲדֻלֹת וְנִרְאוֹת		1 Chr 17:21
נבן	3ms	InfC+ל+ו		s	שָׁרֵי אֲלָפִים		1 Sam 8:12
נבן	3ms	Way3ms+Su3ms		s	Suffix of verb		1 Sam 18:13
נבן + לָעוּר מַאֲתִירָהּ	3mp	Way3ms			שְׂמוֹת	שֵׁר הַסְּרִיסִים	Dan 1:7
נבן + לָעוּר מַאֲתִירָהּ + לָדוּנְיָאֵל בְּלִשְׁאֲעָר	-	Way3ms			שְׂמוֹת		Dan 1:7
נבן	2fs	Imp-3ms		s	תַּמְרוֹתֵיהֶם		Jer 31:21

- <sup>a</sup> The object that is put, or established, or ...  
<sup>b</sup> If ל+Suffix refers to the subject this column has an s.  
<sup>c</sup> All verbs are in *gal*.  
<sup>d</sup> ל + Suffix  
<sup>e</sup> Everything following ל + Suffix

Table 1.1: ל followed by ל with a suffix followed by a noun

## Appendix J

# אל על

A quick look at other texts in which a form of the verb<sup>1</sup> אור is combined with על shows that the movement of the light in all these cases is down from above. This of course is no surprise, given the meaning of the preposition.

In Gen 1:15,17 the *luminaries in the expanse of the heavens* (are caused to) shine (*hip'il*) upon the earth, here the light evidently comes from above. In Exod 25:37 seven lamps are made for the lampstand, or menorah (Exod 25:34, and they are mounted (*hip'il* עלה, lit: made to go up) and “they shall cause (them) to shine upon the region across (על-עבר) in front of her (פְּנֵיהָ)”, or: “the space in front of it” (NAS, ESV). Here also the direction of shining is down upon and thus from above, corroborated by the verb עלה.

Compare three texts from Ezekiel (1:9; 1:12; 10:22) where we find:

אֶל-עֵבֶר פְּנֵיו יֵלְכוּ

“they went to the region across their face”, that is: “straight ahead” (NAS: Ezek 10:22) or “straight forward” (NAS, ESV). Here the movement stays on the horizontal plane.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Texts with the noun אור are disregarded e.g. Job 36:32; 37:2; Isa 9:1.

<sup>2</sup>Pun intended.

## Appendix K

### נשא

The tables given here are the result of a BibleWorks proximity search of a verbal form of נשא followed by פנה but not a form of לפנה. For table 5.3 as found in chapter 5 a selection has been made from table K.1 and K.2.

Post	<sup>c</sup>	<sup>b</sup>	Pre	Who <sup>a</sup>	Subject	Verse
אֶל-הַחֲלוֹן	3ms	Way3ms		Jehu	Jehu	2 Kgs 9:32
גַּם לְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה	2ms	Qt11cs	הִנֵּה	Lot	<sup>d</sup>	Gen 19:21
מִמּוֹם	2ms	Yqt2ms	כִּי-אָז	Job	Job	Job 11:15
	2ms	Yqt3ms	אוּ + הֵ	people	פְּחָתָךְ	Mal 1:8
	2fs	Way1cs		Abigail	David	1 Sam 25:35
	1cs	Yqt3ms	אוּלִי	Jakob	Ezau	Gen 32:21
אֶל-יֹאבָב אֶחָיִךְ	1cs	Yqt1cs	וְאֵיךְ	Abner	Abner	2 Sam 2:22

<sup>a</sup> The person referred to by the suffix

<sup>b</sup> The verbal form of נשא, all verbs are *gal*

<sup>c</sup> The suffix attached to פנה

<sup>d</sup> Probably God, it could also be a “man”, or angel (cf. Gen 19:16,18)

Table K.1: נשא and פנה plus suffix

Post	Verb	Pre	<sup>a</sup>	Subject	Verse
אֶל-אֵלֹוֹהַ פָּנִיךְ	Yqt2ms		Job	Job	Job 22:26
וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת-פָּנָיו אֵיבֹב	Subj Way3ms		Job	יְהוָה	Job 42:9
מִכֶּם פָּנִים	Yqt3ms	זאת הֵ	you	God	Mal 1:9
עָלִינוּ אֹר פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה	Imp-ms		יְהוָה	יְהוָה	Ps 4:7

<sup>a</sup> The person whose face is lifted or taken up.

Table K.2: נשא and פנה but other words in between

Maybe Deut 28:50, found in table K.3 can also be interpreted reflexively,

That is why it has been added to table K.1 and K.2. But it should also be discussed in relation to the other texts given here.

Post	<sup>b</sup>	Pre	<sup>a</sup>	Subject	Verse
רָשַׁע	InfC		רָשַׁע	-	Prov 18:5
בְּתוֹרָה	PtcA+ו		-	priests	Mal 2:9
	PassPtc+ו		-	-	Isa 3:3
	PassPtc+ו		-	-	2 Kgs 5:1
	PassPtc+ו		-	-	Job 22:8
	PassPtc+ו		-	-	Isa 9:14
אִישׁ	Yqt1cs	אֶל-נָא	אִישׁ	Elihu	Job 32:21
דָּל	Yqt2ms	לֹא	דָּל	people	Lev 19:15
כָּל-כֹּפֵר	Yqt3ms	לֹא	adulterer	husband	Prov 6:35
	Yqt3ms	לֹא	-	God	Deut 10:17
לְזִקֹן	Yqt3ms	לֹא	-	nation	Deut 28:50
שָׂרִים	Qtl3ms	לֹא	שָׂרִים	God	Job 34:19

<sup>a</sup> The person whose face is lifted or taken up.

<sup>b</sup> The verbal form of נָשָׂא, all verbs are *gal* and the word פָּנָה either singular or plural

Table K.3: נָשָׂא and פָּנָה no suffix

## Appendix L

### *Joseph and his Wish for Benjamin*

In Gen 43 Joseph meets his brothers, but they do not know that it is Joseph, they sold long ago. Joseph, probably testing their honesty and their love of money, has the money they bought food with return to them. There might be a link between this money and the money they sold Joseph for (Gen 37:28).

Having found the money they are scared Gen 42:35. They take it back to Joseph, who says to them: “Peace to you, do not fear” (Gen 43:23). In Gen 43:27 he asks about the welfare or peace of his brothers, and about the welfare or peace of their father and if he is still alive. To which they reply: “You servant our father has peace and still has live” (Gen 43:28). In Gen 43:29 Joseph meets his brother Benjamin, after inquiring if he is the youngest brother he says: “May God show favor to you, my son”. After this he hastens out of the room to cry.

Why does Joseph specifically wish for God to favor Benjamin? Why not: “May God bless you” or: “May God give you peace”? Of course every answer to this question must be tentative. From a psychological point of view, the story is quite realistic. Joseph having been sold by his half-brothers, sees his youngest brother standing between the other ones, this elicits his wish: “God show favor to you, my son.” Maybe there is an idea in this wish of God preventing that Benjamin would suffer the same hardship he had suffered?

Maybe the wish of God showing favor on him has some proleptical relation to the role of Benjamin in the rest of the story. In Gen 43:34 Benjamin gets a share of food five times as much as of the other brothers. (Maybe to test whether the brothers are still jealous, cf. Gen 37:4,11?) Next, Joseph has his cup put in the sack of Benjamin Gen 44:2. The brothers, thinking that none of them has the cup, say that he must be killed in whose sack it is found Gen 44:9. When it is found with Benjamin, they all return to Joseph and Judah wants to take Benjamin’s place Gen 44:33.

But the wish of Joseph also seems to refer back. In Gen 42:20 Joseph has commanded them to bring their youngest brother, that is Benjamin, in order to prove that they are not spies (Gen 42:16). His brothers, unaware that Joseph understands every word, because there is an interpreter between them (Gen 42:23) say to each other: “Truly, we are guilty on account of our

brother, for we saw the distress of his soul, in his seeking of favor (הִתְפַּאֵל *hithpael*) from us, but we did not hear him, on account of this, this distress has come upon us” (Gen 42:21).