

The Doctrine of Bârak^{e1}

Introduction: I must admit that I enter into this particular study with some trepidation, and for 3 reasons: (1) this word occurs well over 300 times in the Bible; (2) this is the name of the church I go to, so I need to get this right; and (3) I will have to deal with the idea of us *blessing* (bârak^e) God.

Topics		
Pronunciation and Spelling	Meanings	Passages
The earliest occurrences of bârak ^e		Conclusion
Charts, Maps and/or Doctrines		
	The Meanings of Bârak ^e	

1. **Pronunciation and spelling:**
2. **Meanings** already attributed to :
 - a. KJV renderings: *to bless; blessed; to salute, to curse, to blaspheme, to kneel, to congratulate, cursed, to praise, to thank.*
 - b. Strong's renderings: properly *to kneel*; by implication *to bless* God (as an act of adoration), and (vice-versa) man (as a benefit); also (by euphemism) *to curse* (God or the king, as treason). Strong's #1288.
 - c. BDB translations:
 - i. *to bless, to kneel*
 - (1) (Qal)
 - (a) *to kneel*
 - (b) *to bless*
 - (2) (Niphal) *to be blessed, bless oneself*
 - (3) (Piel) *to bless*
 - (4) (Pual) *to be blessed, be adored*
 - (5) (Hiphil) *to cause to kneel*
 - (6) (Hithpael) *to bless oneself*
 - ii. (TWOT) *to praise, salute, curse*
 - iii. BDB #138.
 - d. Gesenius translations:
 - i. *To bend the knees; to kneel down.* This appears to be given as the basic meaning of bârak^e.
 - ii. *to invoke God, to ask for a blessing, to bless*
 - iii. Niphal (used in the reflexive sense): *to bless oneself* (see Hithpael)
 - iv. Piel: *to invoke God, to praise, to celebrate, to adore, to bless* [God] [which is done on bended knee]; *to bless* [used of men towards one another]; *to invoke blessings* [on anyone in the name of God]; *to bless* [as God, men and other created things]; this is often used as the result of divine favor: *to cause to prosper.* God is said to bless inanimate things, *to make them to prosper, to be abundant* (Ex. 23:25 Job 1:10 Psalm 65:11 132:15 Prov. 3:33). This verb is used to *salute* [anyone, by invoking a blessing upon them—1Sam. 15:13]. Used as a salutation to ask of another's welfare (1Sam. 25:14 2Kings 4:29 Prov. 27:14). This is also used in a bad sense, *to curse*; i.e., *to imprecate some evil* [on someone by calling upon God]. 1Kings 21:10 Psalm 10:3 Job 1:5, 11 2:5 31:30.
 - v. Pual: *to be blessed, to be praised; to be caused to prosper* [by God].
 - vi. Hiphil: *to cause [camels] to kneel down* [to rest and/or to drink]. Gen. 24:11.
 - vii. Hithpael: *to bless oneself* (Deut. 29:18).
3. **Cognates:** *a knee* (Strong's #12900; *blessing* (Strong's #1293).

¹ Dude!

4. **Passages:** What is quite nice is, in the book of Genesis, we will get a pretty complete understanding of this word, and in such a way that, context will indicate the meaning of *bârak*^e.
- blessed*, 176 occurrences in the KJV: Gen. 1:22, 28 2:3 5:2 9:1 9:26 12:3 17:20 22:18 24:1, 27, 31, 35, 48, 60 25:11 26:4, 12, 29 27:23, 27, 29, 33, 41 28:1, 6, 14 30:27, 30 31:55 32:29 35:9 39:5 47:7, 10 48:3, 15, 20 49:28 Ex. 20:10–11 39:43 Lev. 9:22–23 22:6, 12 23:11, 20 24:9–10 Deut. 2:7 7:14 12:7 14:24 15:14 16:10 28:3–6 33:1, 13, 20, 24 Joshua 17:13–14 22:6–7, 33 24:10 Judges 13:24 17:2 Ruth 2:19–20 3:10 4:14 1Sam. 2:20 15:13 23:21 25:32–33, 39 26:25 2Sam. 2:5 6:11–12, 18 7:29 13:25 18:28 19:39 22:47 1Kings 1:48 2:45 5:7 8:14–15, 55–56, 66 10:9 1Chron. 13:14 16:2 16:36 17:27 26:5 29:10, 20 2Chron. 2:12 6:3–4 9:8 30:26–27 31:8, 10 Ezra 7:27 Neh. 8:6 9:5 11:2 Job. 1:10, 21 31:20 42:12 Psalm 18:46 28:6 37:21–22 41:13 45:2 49:18 66:20 68:19, 35 72:17–19 89:52 106:48 113:2 115:15 118:26 119:12 124:6 128:4 135:21 144:1 147:13 Prov. 5:18 20:21 22:9 Isa. 19:25 51:2 61:9 65:23 66:3 Jer. 17:7 20:14 Ezek. 3:12 Zech. 11:5
 - bless*, 116: Gen. 12:2–3 22:17 26:3, 24 27:4, 7, 10, 19, 25, 31, 34, 38 28:3 32:26 48:9, 16, 20 49:25 Ex. 12:32 23:24–25 Num. 6:23–24, 27 23:20, 25 24:1 Deut. 1:11 7:13 8:10 10:8 14:29 15:4, 10, 18 16:15 21:5 23:20 24:13, 19 26:15 27:12 28:8, 12 29:19 30:16 33:11 Joshua 8:33 Judges 5:9 Ruth 2:4 1Sam. 9:13 2Sam. 6:20 7:29 8:10 21:3 1Kings 1:47 1Chron. 4:10 16:43 17:27 23:13 29:20 Neh. 9:5 Psalm 5:12 16:7 26:12 28:9 29:11 34:1 63:4 66:8 67:1, 6–7 68:26 96:2 100:4 103:1–2, 20–22 104:1, 35 109:28 115:12–13, 18 128:5 129:8 132:15 134:1–3 135:19–20 145:1–2, 10, 21 Prov. 30:11 Isa. 19:25 65:16 Jer. 4:2 31:23 Haggai 2:19
 - blesseth* 8: Gen. 27:29 Num. 24:9 Deut. 15:6 Psalm 10:3 Psalm 107:38 Prov. 3:33 Prov. 27:14 Isa. 65:16
 - salute* 4: 1Sam. 13:10 1Sam. 25:14 2Kings 4:29
 - blessest* 3: Num. 22:6 1Chron. 17:27 Psalm 65:10
 - curse* 3: Job. 1:10–11 (2) Job. 2:5 Job. 2:9
 - blaspheme* 2: 1Kings 21:10 1Kings 21:13
 - kneel* 2: Gen. 24:11 Psalm 95:6
 - abundantly* 1: Psalm 132:15
 - blessing* 1: Gen. 22:17
 - congratulate* 1: 1Chron. 18:10
 - cursed* 1: Job 1:5
 - down* 1: Gen. 24:11
 - kneeled* 1: 2Chron. 6:13
 - praise* 1: Judges 5:2
 - praised* 1: Psalm 72:15
 - saluted* 1: 2Kings 10:15
 - thanked* 1: 2Sam. 14:22
5. A good place to start with the verb is Gen. 24:11: **And he made the camels kneel outside the city, by a well of water at the time of the evening, the time that women go out to draw.** This is the only Hiphil us of *bârak*^e, and it clearly means *to cause to kneel, to make kneel*. Somewhere in the back of my dusty mind, I have some sort of remembrance about the camel's knees and that they somehow do not bend, so I check my World Book Encyclopedia, and it explains how a camel gets on its knees to rest, which involves bending the front knees first and then the back ones.² We can go through all the various sets of meanings, and this is the only meaning which makes any sense. Since Abraham's servant is the one doing the action of the verb, but it is the camels who are kneeling, the Hiphil (causative) stem seems to be the most apropos. Abraham's servant *causes* the camels *to kneel*.
6. The next thing we ought to look at are the earliest occurrences of *bârak*^e: I am hopeful that I can come to reasonable meanings for *bârak*^e from the earliest chapters of Scripture, which should set the meaning for us. As I go through the book of Genesis, the meanings of this word become pretty clear.
- First of all, the basic meaning of *bârak*^e is *to kneel before; to bless*.
 - The use of *bârak*^e seems to be, in one sense, an indication that one believes in Jesus Christ. It is as if the person is saying, *I am a believer in Jesus Christ*; but, in the Old Testament, this would mean *I am*

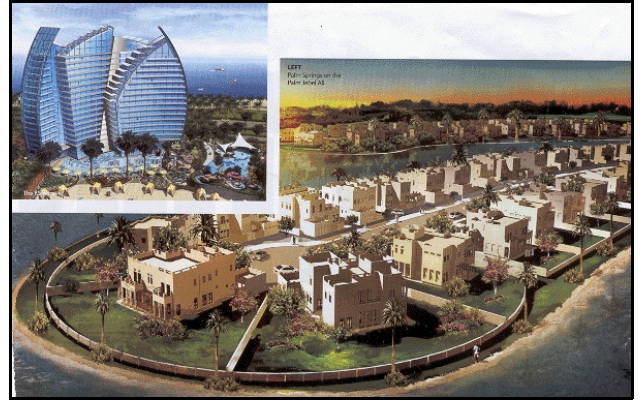
² *The World Book Encyclopedia*; ©1983 by World Book, Inc.; Vol. 3, p. 66.

a believer in Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Jews. The person is expressing praise and adoration toward God, or he is asking for God to bless the one to whom he is speaking, but the implication appears to be that this person is a believer in Jehovah Elohim, and therefore, in a sense, making a public declaration of faith.

c. Piel (intensive) Stem (I am listing the Piel stem first, because this is the first stem which bârak^e is found in):

i. Gen. 1:22: **And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas; and let the birds multiply in the earth.** This is the first occurrence of bârak^e, and, quite obviously, there is no kneeling involved nor is there any kind of worship involved of any sort. God would not worship His own creation. Here bârak^e is tied to fish and birds multiplying (having lots of baby birds and baby fish). God blessing the fish and the birds means that He has created them to breed and to have more birds and fish; and to increase abundantly.

ii. Gen. 1:28: **And God blessed them [the man and the woman]; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the seas, and over birds of the heavens, and over all beasts creeping on the earth.** God's blessing has to do with not just having children, but by having dominance over the earth, which was restored for the inhabitation of man. We have a lot of examples of how man has subdued the earth, but to me, one of the most amazing is the city of Dubia. I have a picture of the manmade islands and one of the structures of Dubia, and recommend for your pleasure:



http://www.lutecium.org/www.jp-petit.com/humour/Dubai/villas_palm.gif

<http://www.lutecium.org/www.jp-petit.com/humour/flouzeland.htm>

for more photos of this incredible city. Here is a website of a guy selling condos in Dubia: <http://www.condohotelcenter.com/alerts/dubai.htm> It is amazing to see these photos and to recognize this is man ruling over and subduing the earth. Gen. 5:2 is part of a genealogy of Adam: **He created them male and female, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day when they were created.** The idea is, *to make abundant, to make prosperous*, (both from Gesenius); and let me suggest *to provide for in great abundance*. When God blesses us, this indicates that He has provided for us in great abundance. God places before us goals, aspirations, material things, right man or right woman, family, our right job, and these are all blessings to us. We tend to think of this in the realm of time, like God is checking us out and decides one day, "Hell, I'll just drop a million dollars on Charlie Brown because he has been pretty damn good." However, what God has done is, He provide for us in eternity past. By the 6th day of restoration, everything for our lives had been laid out for us. The most important event of human history had already been set into motion, even though Adam and the woman had just been completed. We find the cross spoken of in Gen. 3 18 Psalm 22 Isa. 53, to name just a few places. God already had set things in motion; they just had to come to pass.

(1) Now, so you don't get all wonky on me, what God set into motion took into account every decision which you and I would make from our own free will. God knowing what we would think and decide in eternity past affected what things He set into motion with respect to us. However, God does not, at any time, change the function or modify the function of our free will. What we choose to do emanates from our fully functioning free will. Now, this does not mean that God does not encourage us from time to time with both doctrine and discipline. God exposes us to both of these things, but the decisions we make come from our own free will. If you have a child, you know that spanking that child is, now and again, going to help steer him in the right direction. However, you will never get that child's old sin nature completely under control. No matter what you do as a parent, every child has free will, and sometimes they are going to exercise this free will in very unpleasant ways. As parents, we learn what our children will and won't do; we can predict much of their behavior; and a good

- parent can exercise some control over his child, although never complete control. Some children are going to learn some lessons the hard way. In order to understand God's dealings with us, this is best illustrated with our relationship to our own children. End of digression.
- (2) Back to the topic at hand, we find the same use of *bâarak*^e in Gen. 9:1, where God blesses Noah.
- iii. Gen. 2:3 **And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because He rested from all His work on it, which God had created to make.** Interestingly enough, we are getting another use of the verb *bâarak*^e early on in Genesis. God is blessing a certain day and setting it aside. This is a day during which God does not create anything or do anything. Since God is omnipotent, He cannot be tired. He rests because He completed what He wanted to do. Looking through the definitions given above, only Gesenius seems to make a reasonable stab at *to celebrate*. When you complete a project, it is normal to celebrate the completion of that project. Hell, if I mow the lawn on a hot day, I'll sometimes celebrate that with a beer.
- iv. Gen. 12:2–3: **And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great; and you will be a blessing** [noun cognate of this verb]. **And I will bless those who bless you, and curse the one despising you. And in you all families of the earth shall be blessed** [Niphal stem]. Here, the verb clearly means *to bless, to make prosperous* [Gesenius meanings; compare Gen. 17:20 24:1]. This introduces the idea of Gentiles *blessing* Jews, which would imply the meanings *to treat with respect, to treat with deference*.
- v. The meanings *to bless, to make prosperous* are clear in Gen. 24:35: **And Jehovah has blessed my master much, and he is great. And He has given to him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and male slaves and slave-girls, and camels and asses.**
- vi. Men bless other men. Or, in this situation, Rebekah's family blessed her as she left to meet Isaac, her husband to be. **And they** [Rebecca's family] **sent away their sister Rebekah, and her nurse, and Abraham's slave and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her, Our sister, may you become myriads of thousands, and may your seed possess the gate of ones hating them** (Gen. 24:59–60). This use of *bâarak*^e indicates that they desire or wish for Rebekah *blessing, happiness, prosperity, and children*. It is reasonable to suppose that they are invoking or enjoining God for these blessings. See also Gen. 27:23.
- vii. There seems to be a specialized use of this term where *blessing* a person is more than just wishing them good luck in the future. Since all blessings come from God, perhaps this is a semi-formal way of *asking that blessings be given to someone else by God*. Gen. 27:23: **And he did not know him, because his hands were like the hairy hands of his brother Esau. And he blessed him.** Here, Jacob and his mother felt it was important for Isaac to officially bless Jacob. So, it is much more than simply saying, "Hey, I hope things go good for you." Gen. 27:1–29 is all about Jacob deceiving his father Isaac in order to receive a special blessing from Isaac. This story seems to carry with it some sort of exclusivity as well as the expectation of blessing being bestowed. *To invoke or enjoin God for blessings [prosperity, happiness] for another*.
- viii. *Bâarak*^e is used as a greeting and as a goodbye. One example of it being used as a greeting is Ruth 2:4: **And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless you.** When saying goodbye: Gen. 47:10: **And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.** See also 2Sam. 6:18
- ix. There is an unusual Piel use of *bâarak*^e:
- (1) Job 1:5: **And it happened, when the day of feasting had gone around, Job would send and sanctify them. And he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt sacrifices according to all their number. For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. This, Job always did.**
- (2) In the first chapter of Job, Satan as God to put His hand against Job, and see how Job reacts. Job 1:11: **"But put out Your hand now, and touch against all that is his, and see if he will not then curse You to Your face."** When this did not work, Satan told God to make Job physically ill, and notice Job's reaction. Job 2:5: **"But indeed put out Your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face."**
- (3) When these things came upon Job, his wife had advice for him: Job 2:9: **And his wife said to him, "Are you still holding fast to your integrity? Bless [curse?] God and die!"**

- (4) These uses are not confined just to the book of Job. 1Kings 21:10: **And set two men, sons of worthlessness, across from him; and they shall testify of him, saying, You have **cursed** God and the king. And they shall bring him out and stone him; and he shall die.** 1Kings 21:13: **And there came in two men, sons of Belial, and sat before him. And the men of Belial witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth **blasphemed** [cursed? blessed?] God and the king. And they carried him out of the city and stoned him with stones so that he died.**
- (5) Barnes suggests the following: *The word rendered “blaspheme” [or “curse”] is that which commonly means “bless.” The opposite sense of “cursing,” seems, however, to be required here and in Job 1:5, 11 2:5. Perhaps the best explanation of the bad sense of the original word is to be found in the practice of blessing by way of salutation, not only on meeting, but also on taking leave (Gen. 47:7, 10). From the latter custom the word came to mean “bidding farewell to,” and so “renouncing,” “casting off,” “cursing.”*³
- (6) Clarke writes: *Many think that the word בָּרַךְ (barach) signifies both to bless and curse; and so it is interpreted in most Lexicons: it is passing strange that out of the same word proceeds blessing and cursing; and to give such opposite and self-destructive meanings to any word is very dangerous. Parkhurst denies that it ever has the meaning of cursing, and examines all the texts where it is said to occur with this meaning; and shows that blessing, not cursing, is to be understood in all those places.*⁴
- (7) Perhaps we might simply understand this use to mean *to bid farewell to*. However, its use in 1Kings 21:10–13 (quoted above) seems to be harsher than that.
- d. Qal (common) Stem:
- i. The first difficult passage is Gen. 9:26, which is also the first occurrence of this verb in the Qal stem: **He [Noah] also said, “**Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant.**”** The circumstances around this phrase is, Noah is cursing Canaan and he is blessing Jehovah Elohim. Now, this is a more difficult phrase to deal with: we can reasonably understand how God can bless us, but how do we bless God? Here, we must go back to the original meaning of this word, which is *to kneel before*, which indicates some kind of worship is involved. However, this just does not quite fit the context. However, the Piel offers the meanings *to celebrate, to praise, to adore*, and these meanings seem apropos here.
 - ii. The Qal passive participle is used in Gen. 24:26–27: **And the man bowed and worshiped Jehovah. And he said, **Blessed be Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who has not left off His kindness and His truth with my master, I being in the way, Jehovah guided me to the house of the brother of my master.**** Essentially, here, the servant is blessing God as a result of answered prayer. Again, the meanings offered in the Piel seem to be apropos here: *to celebrate, to praise, to adore*.
 - iii. The Qal passive participle is found in the same chapter, but used in a different way: **And he said, **Come in, blessed of Jehovah! Why are you standing outside? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels**** (Gen. 24:31). Here, *blessed of Jehovah* means that he is a believer in Jehovah Elohim. This is one who has received blessing from God, which indicates a relationship with God.
 - iv. We find the Qal passive participle used with God blessing man, we understand this to mean *to bless, to be made prosperous, to be made to have many children*. Gen. 26:29.
 - v. There are times when the use of this verb indicate someone has believed in Jesus Christ. Ex. 18:10–12: **And Jethro said, **Blessed be Jehovah who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt, and from the hand of Pharaoh; He who delivered the people from under the hand of Egypt.** Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all the gods; truly, in the way in which He acted proudly against them. And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread before God with Moses' father-in-law.**
- e. Niphal (passive) Stem:
- i. The first time we find bârak^e in the Niphal stem is Gen. 12:3, where a promise is given from God to Abraham, which includes the statement: **And in you [Abraham] all families of the earth shall be**

³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Kings 21:10.

⁴ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Kings 21:10.

blessed. *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant.* These meanings can be arrived at by simply applying the Niphal (passive) stem to the meanings which we have already observed; and to reasonably apply these meanings to the verb in this context. We have a similar reading in Gen. 28:14.

- f. Hithpael (intensive reflexive) Stem:
 - i. Gen. 22:18: **And in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed My voice.** Although the Hithpael is primarily used in the reflexive sense, here it is obviously used in the passive sense and quite similar to the Niphal meanings above: *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant.* However, the Hithpael actually draws attention to this verb here, and, being intensive, I think that we can reasonably assume that the blessing referred to here goes far beyond simple human blessing. Here we are speaking of eternal blessing to be received by all the nations of the earth because of the Seed of Abraham, which Seed is Jesus Christ. See also Gen. 26:4, 12.
- g. The Pual uses are not found in the book of Genesis. The Pual is the passive stem of the Piel, making it the passive, intensive stem.
 - i. *To receive blessing; to receive divine favor; to be given prosperity and/or abundance.* See Num. 22:6: **And now please come, curse this people for me, for it is stronger than I. Perhaps I will prevail, that we may strike them, that I may drive them out from the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.**
 - ii. This also appears to refer to *blessing, prosperity and abundance from God.* Deut. 33:13: **And of Joseph he said, Blessed of Jehovah be his land, with the best of the heavens, for the dew, for the deep crouching beneath;...**
 - iii. This can be used of God by man, and therefore, it means God should *receive the bowing of the knees, the worship, and the obeisance* from man. Job 1:21: **And he said, I came naked out of my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away. Blessed be the name of Jehovah.**
7. **Conclusion:** Bârak^e has the following reasonable meanings, based upon the work above:
 - a. Some general comments:
 - i. First of all, the basic meaning of bârak^e is *to kneel before; to bless.*
 - ii. The use of bârak^e seems to be, in one sense, an indication that one believes in Jesus Christ. It is as if the person is saying, *I am a believer in Jesus Christ;* but, in the Old Testament, this would mean *I am a believer in Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Jews.* The person is expressing praise and adoration toward God, or he is asking for God to bless the one to whom he is speaking, but the implication appears to be that this person is a believer in Jehovah Elohim, and therefore, in a sense, making a public declaration of faith.
 - b. Qal (common) Stem:
 - i. *To bend to knee; to bless*
 - ii. When addressed toward God, *to celebrate, to praise, to adore; to bend the knee to* (Gen. 9:26).
 - (1) This is found in the Qal passive participle, used in this way because God has answered prayer (Gen. 24:27).
 - iii. The Qal passive participle is used in the phrase *blessed of Jehovah* (in Gen. 24:31) to indicate that a person is a believer in Jehovah Elohim, witnessed to because Jehovah has blessed him. At the very least, this may be understood that Jehovah has blessed him with salvation.
 - iv. We find the Qal passive participle used with God blessing man, we understand this to mean *to bless, to be made prosperous, to be made to have many children.* Gen. 26:29.
 - v. The use of the word bârak^e could indicate that a person was a believer in Jehovah Elohim. Ex. 18:10–13.
 - c. Piel (intensive) Stem:
 - i. *To bless* [in the sense of giving creatures the ability and the desire to procreate in abundance] (Gen. 1:22, 28 22:17).
 - ii. *To bless* [in the sense of man using all his God-given resources to subdue the earth; more generally, to make grand use of God's provisions] (Gen. 1:28).
 - iii. *To make abundant, to make prosperous,* (both from Gesenius); and let me suggest *to provide for in great abundance* (Gen. 1:28 5:2 17:20 22:17 24:1, 31, 35 25:11).

- iv. *To celebrate* [i.e., the Sabbath] (Gen. 2:3).
- v. *To bless; to treat with respect; to give due deference* (Gen. 12:3 with reference to Gentiles blessing Jews). This set of meanings can be reasonably derived from the fundamental meaning *to bend the knee to*; and to extrapolate from this, Gentiles relating to Jews in the sense of *blessing* them.
- vi. The Piel is used of man blessing God in the sense that it means *to celebrate, to praise, to adore; to bend the knee to* (Gen. 24:48).
- vii. One person blessing another person means *to wish a person blessing, happiness, prosperity, and children*. See Gen. 24:60. 27:23 however, there is more to this word than one person asking nice things to happen to another. Gen. 27 contains a story about Isaac blessing Jacob (who pretended to be Esau in order to get this blessing). That deceit would be used to get blessing, indicates that Jacob receiving the blessing of Isaac is quite important. Gen. 27:1–29. So, there is more to this than simply *to bless; to wish for blessings for someone; to ask God to give special blessings and abundance to another*. This story seems to carry with it some sort of exclusivity as well as the expectation of blessing being bestowed. *To invoke or enjoin God for blessings [prosperity, happiness] for another*.
- viii. Bârak^e is used as a greeting and as a goodbye. Ruth 2:4 Gen. 47:10 2Sam. 6:18
- ix. There are problem verses: 1Kings 21:10, 13 Job 1:5, 11 2:5 Psalm 10:3 where bârak^e (found in the Piel) is translated by some as *curse*. Others suggest that the common meanings may be applied. Since this word is used in a farewell (Gen. 47:7, 10; and how many people, when they say good bye to you, say, “God bless”), it is suggested that it means *to bid farewell to, to greet*. Barnes makes this suggestion, affirming that bârak^e may be rendered *to curse: Perhaps the best explanation of the bad sense of the original word is to be found in the practice of blessing by way of salutation, not only on meeting, but also on taking leave (Gen. 47:7, 10). From the latter custom the word came to mean “bidding farewell to,” and so “renouncing,” “casting off,” “cursing.”*⁵ In the verses named, it is quite difficult to render bârak^e to mean *bless* when it clearly appears to mean *curse, blaspheme* in 1Kings 21:10, 13.
- d. Niphal (passive) Stem:
 - i. *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant* (Gen. 12:2).
- e. Hithpael (intensive reflexive; reflexive of the Piel) Stem:
 - i. *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant*. Gen. 26:4, 12.
- f. The Pual uses are not found in the book of Genesis. The Pual is the passive stem of the Piel, making it the passive, intensive stem.
 - i. *To receive blessing; to receive divine favor; to be given prosperity and/or abundance*. See Num. 22:6.
 - ii. This also appears to refer to *blessing, prosperity and abundance from God*. Deut. 33:13.
 - iii. This can be used of God by man, and therefore, it means God should *receive the bowing of the knees, the worship, and the obeisance* from man. Job 1:21.

It may be helpful to also list this as a doctrine, so that I can place these conclusions in with any chapter which I have exegeted. What is found below is identical to the conclusions above.

The Meanings of Bârak^e

1. Some general comments:
 - a. First of all, the basic meaning of bârak^e is *to kneel before; to bless*.
 - b. The use of bârak^e seems to be, in one sense, an indication that one believes in Jesus Christ. It is as if the person is saying, *I am a believer in Jesus Christ*; but, in the Old Testament, this would mean *I am a believer in Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Jews*. The person is expressing praise and adoration toward God, or he is asking for God to bless the one to whom he is speaking, but the implication appears to be that this person is a believer in Jehovah Elohim, and therefore, in a sense, making a public declaration of faith.
2. Qal (common) Stem:

⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Kings 21:10.

The Meanings of Bârak^e

- a. *To bend to knee; to bless*
 - b. When addressed toward God, *to celebrate, to praise, to adore; to bend the knee to* (Gen. 9:26).
 - i. This is found in the Qal passive participle, used in this way because God has answered prayer (Gen. 24:27).
 - c. The Qal passive participle is used in the phrase *blessed of Jehovah* (in Gen. 24:31) to indicate that a person is a believer in Jehovah Elohim, witnessed to because Jehovah has blessed him. At the very least, this may be understood that Jehovah has blessed him with salvation.
 - d. We find the Qal passive participle used with God blessing man, we understand this to mean *to bless, to be made prosperous, to be made to have many children*. Gen. 26:29.
 - e. The use of the word bârak^e could indicate that a person was a believer in Jehovah Elohim. Ex. 18:10–13.
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3. Piel (intensive) Stem:
- a. *To bless* [in the sense of giving creatures the ability and the desire to procreate in abundance] (Gen. 1:22, 28 22:17).
 - b. *To bless* [in the sense of man using all his God-given resources to subdue the earth; more generally, to make grand use of God's provisions] (Gen. 1:28).
 - c. *To make abundant, to make prosperous*, (both from Gesenius); and let me suggest *to provide for in great abundance* (Gen. 1:28 5:2 17:20 22:17 24:1, 31, 35 25:11).
 - d. *To celebrate* [i.e., the Sabbath] (Gen. 2:3).
 - e. *To bless; to treat with respect; to give due deference* (Gen. 12:3 with reference to Gentiles blessing Jews). This set of meanings can be reasonably derived from the fundamental meaning *to bend the knee to*; and to extrapolate from this, Gentiles relating to Jews in the sense of *blessing* them.
 - f. The Piel is used of man blessing God in the sense that it means *to celebrate, to praise, to adore; to bend the knee to* (Gen. 24:48).
 - g. One person blessing another person means *to wish a person blessing, happiness, prosperity, and children*. See Gen. 24:60. 27:23 however, there is more to this word than one person asking nice things to happen to another. Gen. 27 contains a story about Isaac blessing Jacob (who pretended to be Esau in order to get this blessing). That deceit would be used to get blessing, indicates that Jacob receiving the blessing of Isaac is quite important. Gen. 27:1–29. So, there is more to this than simply *to bless; to wish for blessings for someone; to ask God to give special blessings and abundance to another*. This story seems to carry with it some sort of exclusivity as well as the expectation of blessing being bestowed. *To invoke or enjoin God for blessings [prosperity, happiness] for another*.
 - h. Bârak^e is used as a greeting and as a goodbye. Ruth 2:4 Gen. 47:10
 - i. There are problem verses: 1Kings 21:10, 13 Job 1:5, 11 2:5 Psalm 10:3 where bârak^e (found in the Piel) is translated by some as *curse*. Others suggest that the common meanings may be applied. Since this word is used in a farewell (Gen. 47:7, 10; and how many people, when they say good bye to you, say, "God bless"), it is suggested that it means *to bid farewell to, to greet*. Barnes makes this suggestion, affirming that bârak^e may be rendered *to curse: Perhaps the best explanation of the bad sense of the original word is to be found in the practice of blessing by way of salutation, not only on meeting, but also on taking leave (Gen. 47:7, 10). From the latter custom the word came to mean "bidding farewell to," and so "renouncing," "casting off," "cursing."*¹ In the verses named, it is quite difficult to render bârak^e to mean *bless* when it clearly appears to mean *curse, blaspheme* in 1Kings 21:10, 13.
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4. Niphal (passive) Stem:
- a. *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant* (Gen. 12:2).
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5. Hithpael (intensive reflexive; reflexive of the Piel) Stem:
- a. *To be blessed, to receive blessing; to be made prosperous; to be made abundant*. Gen. 26:4, 12.
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6. The Pual uses are not found in the book of Genesis. The Pual is the passive stem of the Piel, making it

The Meanings of Bârak^e

the passive, intensive stem.

- a. *To receive blessing; to receive divine favor; to be given prosperity and/or abundance.* See Num. 22:6.
- b. This also appears to refer to *blessing, prosperity and abundance from God.* Deut. 33:13.
 - i. This can be used of God by man, and therefore, it means God should *receive the bowing of the knees, the worship, and the obeisance* from man. Job 1:21.

¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Kings 21:10.

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