

## Intro

I grew up being taught that when someone sneezes, you respond with, " ... ".  
That was how polite society operated.  
I had no idea what it meant.  
I thought everyone did it.  
I had some vague notion it had some Biblical connection  
In any case, you were rude if you didn't say it.  
Or I felt guilty if I didn't say it, like a sin.

Ever thought where it came from?  
There are a number of theories:

Apparently some people thought that when you sneezed,  
Your soul came out and was therefore vulnerable for a brief moment  
so saying "bless you" offered some protection.  
This dates back a long time too, and comes from a period before people  
realised nose tickles were just an issue with the body.

Or  
Or some feared evil spirits used these moments to rush into the body.  
And "bless you" could save you from an eternity being ruled by the devil.

Or  
You can believe that it originated in Rome when the bubonic plague **was** ravaging Europe.  
Sneezing **was** one the plague's main symptoms, and it **is** believed that Pope Gregory  
suggested that a tiny prayer in the form of saying, "God **bleess you**" after a sneeze would  
protect the person from death.

Or  
There was once a school of thought that people actually DIED for a brief  
moment when they sneezed and uttering "bless you" apparently encouraged the heart to  
start beating again.

Yes, who needs medical intervention when you can just say a quick phrase to  
make someone well?

In German we say, "Gesundheit", which means health.  
In some Asian **cultures** such as Korean and Japanese **cultures**, the common practice of  
responding to **another** person's sneeze **does** not exist.  
If they do respond they would say something like, "live to be a 100 years old"  
Or, "Take care, drink more water".

## 1) Blessings?

Then one day I actually started reading the Bible

There is a term the Bible uses hundreds of times from the book of Genesis right through to the book of Revelations

That term or expression is to bless or to be a blessing

What is a blessing?

If you ask the man in the street what they thought a blessing was they would probably use expressions like:

"I've been blessed with a new job, car, salary increase ..."

"I'm blessed to have the children, wife, husband, home ... that I have"

"We are blessed to live in Capetown, with it's mountains, vineyards, sea, V&A ..."

All the while, implying indirectly without saying the words, but that God is smiling on us in these particular circumstances, usually connected to a material increase or comfort or the avoidance of some catastrophe.

So what does the word "blessing" or "to bless" mean.

It can get complicated.

The OT uses at least three different words.

And within those three words there are shades of meaning to further blur our understanding.

But let's try.

### 1) 'ăš-rê - heightened state of happiness

Isa 30v18

*Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;  
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.*

*For the LORD is a God of justice.*

**Blessed** 'ăš-rê *are all who wait for him!*

You are blessed if you wait for the Lord.

You are in a heightened state of happiness

### 2) bā-răk - invoking divine favour (Isa 51v2, Isa 61v9)

Isa 61v8-9

*"For I, the LORD, love justice;*

*I hate robbery and wrongdoing.*

*In my faithfulness I will reward my people  
and make an everlasting covenant with them.*

*<sup>9</sup>Their descendants will be known among the nations  
and their offspring among the peoples.*

*All who see them will acknowledge*

*that they are a people the LORD has **blessed** bā-răk."*

The Lord has imparted on them His divine favour.

And at the occasion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem when Ezra was reading the Book of the Law and the Israelites responded with an example of the third word:

3) **berā-kā(h)** - the excellence of a person or thing

Neh 9v5

**"Blessed** *bā-rāks* *be your glorious name,*  
*and may it be exalted above all blessing* *berā-kā(h)* *and praise.*

Now we get to the NT

Believe it or not, there are at least three Greek words

1) **makarios** - happy or fortunate

Mat 5v3

**"Blessed** *makarios* *are the poor in spirit,*  
*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

So, I'm happy or fortunate when ... my state is one of being "*poor in spirit*".

2) **eulogeō** - to speak well of or act kindly towards

Rom 12v14

**Bless** *eulogeō* *those who persecute you; bless* *eulogeō* *and do not curse.*

Speak kindly or speak well of those that are persecuting you, don't curse them.

3) **eulogia** - divine favour

Rom 15v28

*I know that when I come to you,*  
*I will come in the full measure of the blessing* *eulogia* *of Christ.*

Paul is going to arrive filled to the brim with all the divine favour of Christ that he has received.

So

That's bit of background to our series.

An introduction.

Words are not always as simple as they seem and certainly not when you start digging around another language.

## 2) Blessed

Today I want to talk about the blessing flow.

It's like a river.

We have spoken about beforehand about how God's plan for Mankind is like a river and we get called to join Him in the Living Water of His river

I think that river is called the Blessing River.

Let me share with you why I think that.

The first instance of the word blessing is in Genesis.

### Gen 1v22

*So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

*<sup>28</sup>God **blessed** <sup>bā·rāk</sup> them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

The fact that we are now masters at recognizing the different types of the word 'bless', makes the reading of these passages a little clearer.

The word used here is *bā·rāk* - invoking divine favour.

This makes sense because it's God doing the blessing and He has blessed Mankind.

He has given them His spiritual favour

Here is a better definition:

**"He spoke words invoking divine favor,  
with the intent that Mankind will have favorable circumstances at a future time"**

God gave them the potential to do a spiritual task

With His divine blessing.

Yet they did not believe God or trust God and followed their own wisdom

And got thrown out of the Garden.

Then God resets the process with Noah

### Gen 9v1

*Then God **blessed** <sup>bā·rāk</sup> Noah and his sons, saying to them,*

*"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*

Guess which word God used.

That's right, *bā-răk* - invoking divine favour.

He is blessing Noah with divine favour because He has future plans for him.

The same plans as previously

Then Noah got drunk.

And broke covenant faithfulness.

Then God turned his attention to Abram and we see the same words appear.

Gen 12v2

*"I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will **ble**ss *bā-răk* you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a **ble**ssing *berā-kā(h)*.  
<sup>3</sup>I will **ble**ss *bā-răk* those who **ble**ss *bā-răk* you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be **ble**ssed *bā-răk* through you."*

In a nutshell, God says that He is bestowing His divine favour onto Abram.

So that this divine favour can be bestowed onto all the peoples on the earth

Through this excellent and awesome state one is in, when endowed with divine favour.

Then God affirms it again a bit later.

But then He adds something interesting.

He gives us an idea of what it looks like, living under this God cloud of divine favour.

Gen 18v18-19

*Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,  
and all nations on earth will be **ble**ssed *bā-răk* through him.  
<sup>19</sup>**For**  
I have chosen him,  
**so that**  
he will direct his children  
and his household after him  
to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just,  
**so that**  
the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."*

And here is where our thinking can get skewed.

Being blessed in this way, favoured by God, can look like a one time event.

Like being baptised.

Done and dusted, life continues.

(Spoke about it in our FG on Wed.

Cannot be a one time event because as humans we tend to default back to our old Egyptian states)

But here already we can see what God's intentions are.

The Bible teaches us that, like Abraham has been blessed by God

For a reason

He chose Abraham

So that ... something happens ... to him

He is not just a conduit through which the rest of the world gets blessed

No, **he** must direct his children and his household

To do what?

To be the icon, the image

To keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right

Every moment of every day

**So that**

God will bring about for Abraham what He promised him.

Have you thought what's the opposite of that was, like Adam and Eve and Noah demonstrated.

**No keeping the way ... no continuation of the promise.**

And then came the final test.

God told him to sacrifice his son Isaac

He obeys and is barely stopped by the angel.

This is what God says to him.

Gen 22v15-18

*The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup>and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that **because you have done this** and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup>I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup>and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, **because you have obeyed me.**"*

The flow in this one is difficult to miss.

"Because you have done this"

"I will surely bless you"

"Because you have obeyed me"

And if you're still doubting.

Here is the final nail.

God speaks to Abraham's son Isaac and reiterates that all nations on earth will be blessed ...

Gen 26v5

***because Abraham obeyed me  
and did everything I required of him,  
keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.***

I mentioned in the beginning about how God's plan for Mankind is like a river  
That has been flowing since the beginning and we get called to join Him in the Living Water  
of His river  
The Blessing River.  
How do we stay in the water?  
Through obedience.

### 3) Blessing

And that is where **WE** are today.  
In a state of having bestowed on us, God's divine favour.  
We are blessed

Let's say for a moment we did not have the NT  
And you had to build your whole relationship with God on what we have discussed up to  
this point.

What would you know?

Adam and Eve, the original recipients of the blessing were not a good example because  
God's plan was not followed the way He had commanded because they disobeyed.

Noah was given the same blessing, he got drunk.

Then came Abraham.

Updated blessing, with more detail.

Gen 12

*"I will bless you" ... "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"*

How?

Remember Gen 18

*"He will direct his children and his household after him"*

Through example

*"By keeping the way of the Lord by doing what is right"*

And knowing what God commanded in the first place.

Being blessed ... as we are ... implies living a life so that those around you will be blessed.

Gen 22v15

*"Because you have obeyed me" ... "all nations on earth will be blessed".*

**Let's say you were Abraham** and the whole spiritual future of mankind rested on you.

On your obedience.

On how well you understood what God has been saying to you

On how well you listened in sermons

On how detailed your notes were

And if you fail, you take the whole of Mankind with you.

How does that make you feel?

How would that change your outlook?

How you structure your day?

How you would raise your children?

How you would related to your spouse and your friends?

How that would affect your circle of friends?

How would that affect the size of your circle?

It suddenly gives the NT a whole new light.

Because God has not changed.

Nor has His plan.

We are blessed, God's divine favour rests on us because it first rested on Abraham

And like Abraham believed God and obeyed Him

We are to be a blessing to our circle of influence.

How can I be a blessing?

Blessings are visible.

Those that are blessed exhibit some of the characteristics:

Mat 5v3-10

<sup>3</sup>**Blessed** are the **poor in spirit**,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>**Blessed** are those who **mourn**,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>**Blessed** are the **meek**,  
for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>**Blessed** are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**,  
for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>**Blessed** are the **merciful**,  
for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup>**Blessed** are the **pure in heart**,  
for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>**Blessed** are the **peacemakers**,



*for they will be called children of God.*  
<sup>10</sup>**Blessed** *are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,*  
*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

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To follow

Summary

So what is it mean to be blessed

I'm blessed when I recognize the spiritual good brought on by the Gospel

I bless when I share my transformed life, that spiritual good with others