

# 'Bless', 'Blessed'

**English definition<sup>①</sup> of 'bless'** verb tr. - past & past participle 'blessed' / of a priest, etc who pronounces words, esp. in a religious rite, asking for favor; to ask God to look upon favorably / to consecrate (esp. bread & wine) sanctify by the sign of the cross. To call God holy to adore. To attribute one's good fortune to (an auspicious time), one's fate etc. To thank - 'bless the day I met...' / to make happy or successful. also a euphem. curse or damn. An exclamation of surprise, pleasure or indignation, gratitude etc. Exclamation to a person who just sneezed.

**'blessed'<sup>②</sup>** - consecrated, revered, fortunate (RC Church - title given to a dead person as an acknowledgement of his or her holy life) beatified. Bringing happiness, blissful.

**Etymology<sup>③</sup> - 'bless'** (the origin, formation and development of 'bless')  
bless - bles make holy, hallow; hold or call holy; pronounce or make happy. A purely English formation from OE (Old English) blētsian, bledsian, blōedsian :- \*blōoisōjan, from 'blooan' BLOOD the etymological meaning being 'mark so as to hallow with blood'; the sense development was influenced by its being used to translate Latin 'benedicere' and Greek 'eulogein' in Christian use (originally - speak well of or to, but used to render Hebrew 'bārak' bend the knee, worship bless God etc.) and by its association with 'bliss'. (bliss is etymologically UNRELATED to bless.)<sup>④</sup>

The development of the current use 'bless' (blesse) OE to Middle Eng from the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>④</sup>. The words connotations of 'happiness' & 'well being' were influenced by 'bliss'. (Also 'happiness' from 'happy' from 'hap' - chance or luck.<sup>④</sup>)

①, ② The Oxford American Dictionary and Language guide 1999, Oxford University Press N.Y.

③ The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology 1966 Oxford University Press. NY

④ John Ayto, dictionary of word origins 1990, Arcade publishing. NY

# 'Bless' & 'Blessed' in the New Testament (KJV) and the Greek words 'εὐλογ-' & 'μακαριος'

Two different Greek words were used to translate the English 'bless'/'blessed'. For example:

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"  
[here - "Blessed" is the Greek word 'μακαριος' makarios]

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus..."  
[here - "Blessed" is the Greek word 'εὐλογητος' eulogeetos]

This is how the 'εὐλογ-' words are used in the NT

εὐλογεω	40 times as a verb*	Strong's # 2127
εὐλογητος	8 times as an adjective	' # 2128
εὐλογία	16 times as a noun	' # 2129

εὐ (strong's 2095) good, well + (33056 & 3004) λογ/λεω  
(to say, speak, reckon, tell...)

The use of the verb falls under a few of these:

- 1) "Bless those that curse you" - the response of a believer to evil (see Mt 5:44, Lk 6:28, Rom 12:14, 1 Cor 4:12, 1 Peter 3:9 etc.)
- 2) Jesus blessing food / bread etc before feeding the multitudes (see Mt 26:26 Mt 14:19, Mk 14:22, Lk 9:16, 24:30 also Mk 6:41 & 8:7)
- 3) The cup of blessing (communion), The children, of Christ, in the womb of Mary, dedicated as a child in the temple etc

The use of the adjective - εὐλογητος all 8 times used ONLY of God - Not of Man! see Luke 1:68, Mk 14:61 Romans 1:25 Romans 9:5, 2 Cor 1:3, 11:31, Eph 1:3 & 1 Peter 1:3.

The use of the noun - εὐλογία for: bounty in 2 Cor 9:5 describing / giving - sowing also 'the cup of blessing' 1 Cor 10:16 Communion.

\* The high number of verbal uses will be important when compared to 'makarios' and its verbal occurrences/uses.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance  
1990 T. Nelson, TN

Makarios in the NT:

μακαριζω	2 times as a verb	strong's <sup>5</sup>	3106
μακαριος	50 times as an adjective		3107
μακαρισμος	3 times as a noun		3108

Vine's<sup>6</sup> concise dictionary of the bible - "makarios" - from 'mak' / Makro large or lengthy & arios - that which is pleasing - perhaps related to ἀρεσκω - to be agreeable (akin also 'lift up')

μακαριζω as a verb used by Mary, The Mother of Jesus (Lk 1:48) that she will be called 'blessed' and by James 5:11 "Behold we count them happy which endure."

The Adjectival use of 'μακαριος' is exemplified in Matthew 5:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 also Mt 11:6, 13:16, 16:17, 24:46 etc.

The Noun is being represented by "blessedness". (All 3 times)

Summary of 'εὐλογ-' & 'μακαριος' usage - clearly suggests the εὐλογ- words being used for verbal ACTION (40 times) more than as a noun or adjective, and μακαριος being used primarily for its adjectival force. (50 times)

The Adjective of the 'makarios' is describing the state or condition of a man (mankind / women etc) but the Adjective εὐλογητος is only being used to God (doxological) Used by man of God.

The Latin Vulgate used 'benedictus' = grk- εὐλογ- staying in harmony with "good words or speech" - bene-(good) dictus from dicere - to speak or say. As for 'makarios' in the Latin - 'beati' was used (some of our English words from the 'beati' stream beautiful, beauty, beau, bonus, bounty) from 'beatus' bless or happy - past participle of the Lt verb 'beare', relative of bellus & embellish / beare + ficare = to make happy. © Etymologist John Ayto "hap' from - chance or luck."

To better understand 'εὐλογ-' & 'μακαριος' we will look at the LXX (septuagint) Grk version of the Old Test. including Apocrypha<sup>c 200-300 BC</sup> and move into the Hebrew and semitic meanings (semasiology) semantics or segregative?

LXX - εὐλογ- & μακαριος = Hebrew brk בָּרַךְ & 'asr אָשַׁר

The Pattern used in translation is overwhelmingly clear.

εὐλογ- finds its counterpart brk בָּרַךְ and μακαριος with 'asr אָשַׁר.

Examples such as Psalm 103:1 (LXX):

'Εὐλόγει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν Κύριον.' ('Bless the Lord o my Soul...')

Hebrew - brk → בָּרַךְ - KJV 'Bless' \*NIV uses 'Praise'  
verb Pi'el, Imperative 2 person F.S

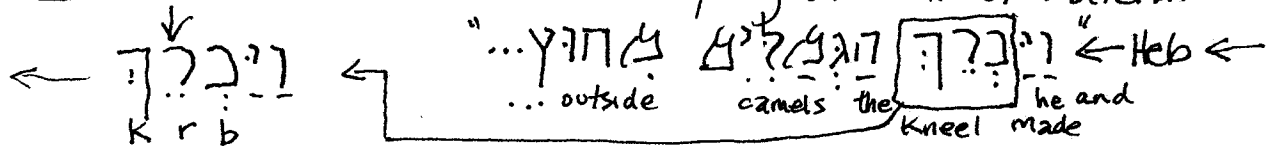
and Psalm 84:4 (LXX)

'μακάριοι οἱ κατοικοῦντες...' ('Blessed are they that dwell...')

Hebrew - 'āsr → אַשְׁרֵי noun masc. plural & construct meaning 'āsr is attached to those who dwell...

Brk extends into various semitic languages and will have some diverse meanings.

The Classical Arabic بَرَكَ barakā (verb & noun). بَرَكٌ primarily and almost exclusively connotes "the lying or kneeling down of the camel" <procubuit camelus> the description of this action. "The great brutes fall stiffly with a sob upon both their knees and under doubling their crooked hind legs they sit ponderously down upon their haunches. Then shuffling forward one or the other fore knee, with a grating of the harsh gravel under their vast carcass weight, settle themselves. ⑥ - such is the action of barakā. This understanding is not completely removed from the Hebrew OT. In Gen 24:11 "And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water..."



In the evolution of the Arabic word 'brk' also carried the idea of 'to be firm, steadfast, to remain.'

In the Ethiopic 'brk' በረከ carries from the Amharic, the verb used of a tree or plant weighed down by its fruit. In Ge'ez, በርከ "Knee", and does not always carry the idea of kneeling or genuflecting ⑦, Although በረከ in Amharic may mean to submit oneself.

This meaning of submitting or kneeling is also found in the Hebrew OT in Isaiah 45:23 "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." brk በርከ

Hebrew בָּרַךְ b'erek (brk) (see NT equiv. Philipprans 2:10-11)

As for the Hebrew we find several scholars who say that Brk means the following:

Dillmann<sup>8</sup>, Gesenius<sup>9</sup>, Nestle<sup>10</sup> - 'brk' means to genuflect, kneel before God, but these scholars were not unanimous as to the signification & origin. My observation is the lack of distinguishing the Creator blessing his creature (His Method, Means) vs. the creature (mankind) worshipping God (his method, Means)<sup>11</sup>

Bate<sup>12</sup> fancied both God and the human mind as bending down in the act of blessing. I would say God condescends from the heavens, from the Supreme and Superior to 'brk' - bless mankind - the Hebrew word image is of a person's complete body & being 'bending down' not just the mind.<sup>13</sup> Burger<sup>14</sup> - in a benediction, the recipients bended their knees as a sign of humility and gratitude towards the giver of the blessing. Jastrow<sup>15</sup> - the evolution of 'brk' "was to care out, to hollow, to chose" Many scholars also say that 'brk' had two distinct meanings - to kneel and to spread out or expand, with the traditional association of kneel & bless 'brk' the Hebrew word *b'erekâ* → pool of water, place where animals (camels etc) and people might kneel to drink.

'Brk' occurs 398 times in the OT.

71 times in the Qal (Qal is the simple active stem - verb) 'Blessed' (be)

233 times in the Pi'el (Pi'el is the intensification of Qal)

71 times as a substantive

3 times in the Niphal, 13 times Pual 7 times Hithpa'el = 398 times

Noteworthy - 'Brk' appears in Genesis 88 times vs. 'asr' only 3 times.

### A) How God 'blessed' in the Old Testament:

In Genesis 1:22 "God blessed them" refers to what He has just created in Gen 1:21 "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good → 1:22 "And God blessed them"... SAYING > be fruitful and multiply...

... וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְבָרְכֶם  
 say to God them וַיְבָרַךְ he and

God said. He spoke, his words to his creation. Genesis 1:28 will be the same pattern except it is upon Mankind. The addition for Adam is not only to be fruitful and multiply but replenish the earth.

We can immediately see Gods blessing is not 'luck' or a mere expression for hopes of good fortune, and interestingly commands of blessing in the imperative Be fruitful! multiply! replenish! etc. This is God declaring upon his creation the power of His word to be realized.

Gen 5:2 "Male and female created he them; and blessed (brk) them and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

This becomes important After the Noachic covenant and blessing (the Noachic blessing to "be fruitful, multiply & replenish Gen 9:1-2 is essentially the Adamic blessing) But when we get to Abram the addition to the blessing includes a great name. In Gen 5:2, the blessing God gave pertained to their name, at this time they were the revered creation and the highest named (other than God) (This can only be the culmination of Phil 2:9 ("wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name"))

The Patriarchal blessing given to Abram in Gen 12:2

- 1) I will make thee a great nation
- 2) I will bless thee
- 3) And make thy name great
- 4) and thou shalt be a blessing
- 5) I will bless them that bless thee
- 6) Curse him that curseth thee
- 7) And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed

Blessings of the Patriarchs Gen 12:2, 22:17-18 Gen 26:4, 28:14 etc...

The Blessings of God were specific in the sense of Gen 17:18.

"Abraham said unto God 'O that Ishmael might live before thee'"

Essentially Abraham is requesting that Ishmael BE the promised blessing. God specifically says in Gen 17:16 "And I will bless her and give thee a son also of her."

God repeats himself in Gen 17:19 "Sarah thy wife (specifically) shall bear thee a son indeed; thou shalt call his name Isaac and I will establish my covenant with him..." He names Isaac, giving him a name... The blessing as divine power of fertility is a large part of the book of Genesis. Westermann<sup>(16)</sup> concludes "the blessing that confers the power of fertility is inseparable from creation where the creator is the one who blesses and the created living being has the power to reproduce itself because of the blessing."<sup>(6)</sup>

God blessed, first by speaking directly to those he chose to bless and then, in (directly) thru the line of primo-geniture, whereby the patriarch passed on the blessing thru the laying on of hands or pronouncement.

God condescended to 'bless' his creation, but here we must distinguish 'blessing'(s) coming from God to Man vs. Man offering up blessings to God.

For Example, Deuteronomy 28 - "for obedience" to God's word "these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee... (if you will listen/hear be obedient) you will be blessed in the city & in the field, the fruit of your body, of your ground, fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and flocks of thy sheep." Also "Blessed thy basket and kneading trough..." You'll be blessed coming and going, your enemies destroyed - They'll come against you one way and flee from you seven ways; blessing on your barns, and all you set your hand to. He will bless you in your land... establish you a holy people, called by the name of the Lord & all will be afraid of you. You'll be plenteous in goods, rain for your land, bless the work of your hands so that you will lend and not borrow. You will be the head & not the tail, above and not beneath. (also see) Deut 28:15 - 68 (curses for disobedience)

### Man 'blessing' God

2 Chronicles 6:12-14 @v13 "and upon it he stood (Solomon) and kneeled down : ] ] ] ' ] (brk) upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel spread forth his hands toward heaven and said..."

Psalm 95:6 carries the same idea - "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel (berekah)"

Psalm 134:1-3 'Behold bless (brk) ye the LORD all ye servants of the LORD lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless (brk) the LORD... that made heaven & earth bless (brk) thee out of Zion.

And again Psalm 104:1 "Bless the LORD O my soul..." brk

The emphasis is speaking good words God-ward - other examples - Men blessing Men (priesthood) 'brk' as a salutation in Ruth 2:4

In 'Brk' we find a rich sense of gratitude in speaking good words God-ward. The idea of worshipping God on bended knee - where the creature stops its movement - bringing himself to the ground - perhaps as dust to dust or in reverence and humility with arms extended (reaching out to God in adoration)

I hope to show briefly why 'Brk' & 'ʿasr' are NOT synonymous.

God can be 'brk' and can bestow 'brk' BUT God is Never 'asr' '705'.

KJ translators used 'blessed' or 'happy' for 'asr'. (hence, the reason for including a brief etymology on the word 'happy' page ①). If 'asr' denotes "luck or chance" by virtue of the origins of happy this can't be something that would require God. Therefore we must AVOID translating ʿasr as mere "happy" or 'happiness' which also lends to an emotive description - which could/can change as our emotions do. ʿAsr usually is attached to a construct and many times that construct contains words like trust, faith, refuge, shelter, confidence... That means ʿasr is dependant upon the verbal action of trusting, obeying, etc God.

ie: Blessed is the man who trusteth in thee Ps 84:12

see Psalm 2:12, 34:8, 40:4, 65:4, 84:4, 5, 12, 89:15, 112:1, 128:1, 144:15, 146:5 Prov 8:32, 8:34, 16:20 Isa 30:18 etc.

ʿAsr in the NT = makarios will be primarily adjectival 50 times (5 other uses)

Someone who has 'trusted' / 'faithed in the Lord becomes ʿasr 'blessed' and therefore is able to speak 'brk' ʿEzroq - good words - going beyond the circumstance that is seen - (One couldn't speak good words God-ward without being 'asr - the very act of proclamation on a regular basis places a person in a state or condition of 'asr.



Bibliography from pages 5-8

- ⑧ Dillmann, "Marginalien und Materialien" (Tubingen 1893) (page 78)
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- ⑩ In Realencyklopädie /theol und Kirche (1861)
- ⑪ & ⑬ © M. Scott 2010
- ⑫ Theasaur. Syriac Oxford 1879-1891 (Oxford)
- ⑭ In Realencyklopädie. /theol und Kirche 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (page 1)
- ⑮ M. Jastrow Dictionary Talmud/Targumim Judaica Press NY 1996
- ⑯ C. Westermann, John Knox Press GA 1979 => what Does the OT say about God.