

Bite Size Bible Study

Bless / Worship #186

By Pastor Lee

Today we have two more Hebrew words that get translated to our English words that fail to communicate the whole of the original idea.

Bless / Barak

This verb "*barak*" literally means, "to kneel". However in one form it means, "to show respect". You can see the connection when someone is presented to a king or royalty. They bow the knee and lower their head in respect of the office.

In the 5th day, when God looks upon the creatures of the air and sea that He created:

Then God blessed (barak) them, saying, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the water of the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." Genesis 1:22 CJB

Not surprisingly, ***bārak*** has a related and similar-sounding noun, ***berākāh***, pronounced *ber-ah-KHA*), meaning "blessing." The two words appear together in the blessing of Abram seen in Genesis 12:2–3:

*"I will make of you a great nation, and I will **ble**ss you, and make your name great, so that you will be a **ble**ssing. I will **ble**ss those who **ble**ss you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be **ble**ssed."*

In at least one special instance in Job 2:9, ***bārak*** is used as a euphemism in place of its exact opposite—the word "curse"—in order to avoid having the words "curse" and "God" appear next to one another (in an effort to avoid any possible violation of the commandment against using the LORD's name in vain).

Here Job's wife, exasperated by the disasters that have devastated their family, is frustrated at Job for continuing to remain faithful to a God who would allow such disaster to befall such a truly righteous man as her husband. At one point she exclaims, *"Do you still persist in your integrity? **Curse** God, and die."* However, the word translated in most Bibles as "curse" in Job 2:9 is actually the word ***bārak***, or "bless."

An extended meaning of this word is "to give something of value to someone". God respects us, *barak*, by providing our needs. We respect, *barak*, Him by faithfully serving Him.

Worship / Avad

When we hear the word "worship," the picture most of us have is of people singing in church, maybe with their hands in the air, or maybe a church band playing a familiar "worship" song. We mostly view worship as a part of a church service when everyone sings. In our modern culture "worship" is often reduced to a category of music. But there is much more to it than that.

One of several Hebrew words for worship is the word *avad*, which means "to worship" but also means "to serve" and "to work."

In the story of the Exodus, Moses tells Pharaoh that he needs to let God's people go so they can *avad* Him. The word here gets translated as either "worship" or "serve" God.

Adonai said to Moshe, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Here is what Adonai says: "Let my people go, so that they can worship, avad, me." Exodus 7:26 CJB

{Maybe you saw this and I just missed it. I always thought that God intended the Israelites to go into the desert and worship him and then return. But because of Pharaoh's resistance they opted to never to return after they left.

The use of this word *avad* clears up my wrong interpretation. From the beginning God was not intending for them to return to Egypt but to leave to become a new nation. Possibly Pharaoh saw this too and was reticent to losing his workforce.}

The word *avad* is also used when God tells the people about the Sabbath, saying, *"Six days you shall avad, but on the seventh day you shall rest"* (Exodus 34:21, ESV). Here the word *avad* is translated in our Bibles as "work."

Consider the implication here: God does not want us to worship Him just one day of the week at church, and then work the other six days of the week. He wants us to serve and worship (*avad*) Him every day, even as we work (*avad*).

Worship is far more than just a short time at church. When we're at work, in our office, or our classroom, God says we can serve and worship Him. Everything we do can be an offering of worship to the God we serve.

How would our attitudes and behavior change toward school, work, home life and church if we saw it as a time of *avad*, which included work and service as well as a part of our worship?