

Appreciating Biblical Blessing (*bərākāh*) as Life (*ḥay*): An Interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:19 and Its Implication for Eternal Life-Bound Christians Today

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Introduction

Two of the most commonly used concepts that also double as the most subjectively interpreted concepts are “Blessings” and “Curses”. In Biblical and even extra-Biblical setting, mention of, or reference to blessings and curses also abound. These words are so related that the understanding of one could throw light on the appreciation of the other. But these concepts are part of everyday life. Everyone wants blessings and tends to run away from curses. Among these two concepts, “blessing” has become the more invoked.¹ But the problem is that one person’s blessing may not constitute blessing for another. Given that this concept of blessing makes more meaning within the context of religion; and granted that references to it in the Scriptures abound in different passages, this research, seeking to unveil the Biblical understanding of “blessing” has chosen to analyse Deut. 30: 19 based on its interesting appeal to life as a conceptual synonym of blessing.

This research is therefore a response to the need to understand biblical “blessing” along the more spiritual, more meaningful, and more enduring path of “life”. The objective of this study is to examine, towards discovering from the point of view of the Bible, what “blessing” entails. The research will explore *if*, *why* and *how* “blessing” could be appreciated as “life” and *what* implications this could have for Christians and, by extension, even non-Christians today.

The method is both exegetical and analytical in such a way that the findings of exegesis would benefit the analysis of the concept of blessing as understood today. The distinctive part of this research is the

¹ This may not be unconnected with the convention that Blessing exudes a “positive” feeling while a curse ordinarily exudes a negative feeling.

implication and application of its findings by seeking to establish some correspondence between “life” *ḥay* (as a synonym of “blessing” (*bārāḱāh*) and “eternal life” as *terminus ad quem* for Christians.²

Explication of Terms

The following terms and concepts are used contextually in this work and they need some explanatory notes: *Blessing*; *Curse*; *Life* and *Christians*.

Blessings: Generally, blessing would centre around the divine favours received from God or man. But in this context, we are referring to Blessing (*bārāḱāh*) as found and used in the Bible especially in Deut 30: 19 where the idea is more about divine favours given as a reward to conforming believers. However, the full import of this “blessing” is still a subject of focus in this research.

Curse: Even though this may not come as a major or separate concept in this research, the study of a word like “blessing” immediately generates the need to examine its antonym. Curse in the Bible (*qālālāh*) has to do with the “judgment” and ill-fate of the non-conforming believers. When used in this research, it will strictly be as the opposite of blessing and a deprivation of divine favours.

Life: In this research, “life” *ḥay* will be used in two ways. It will primarily be seen as a value of positive and enduring generation. It will also be studied sometimes as the principle of beatific vision.

Christians: Even though the conventional understanding of Christians as followers of Christ and adherents of the Christian religion still upholds here, the overall use of “Christians” in this research is a delimitation of the scope from all believers (especially from the Jewish Religion forming the contextual basis of the research) to “Christians” as a small and specific target-group. By Christians is meant a group of believers in Christ other than just mere membership in a Christian Church. “Belief” here has to do with disposition, listening to, and acting according to the commands of God. In this case, “Christians” here refers technically to

² Ordinarily, Christians believe that every believer is “heaven bound” where heaven is understood as the experience of “eternal life” or “eternal bliss”. If Deuteronomy projects “blessings” as “life”, is this eternal life? Whether yes or no, what implications would this have for Christians? Would these conclusions benefit non-Christians?

responsible believers in God. It is in this understanding that the findings of this research would benefit even non-Christians.

Literature Review

There are related literature to the focus of this research. This supports the fact that just as the Scriptures have many references to the fact of *Biblical Blessing* and *Curses* and also references to *Life*, many scholars have also sought to understand the import of these concepts as used in the Scriptures. The fruit of this quest is a reasonably enormous scholarship on each of these concepts. However, the consideration of one as related to another in the context undertaken by this present researcher is not only a new ground but it is a needed endeavour as can be confirmed below.

Biblical blessing (*bārāḱāh*) is conventionally understood as God's way of favouring man. "The Hebrew word *barak* means literally "to kneel," and when used in this context, it indicates a relationship between man, who adores God by kneeling, and God, who benefits men with His presence".³

The idea of benefitting men with God's presence is the most popular understanding of biblical blessing. This is captured by scholars like Craigie.⁴ In Deuteronomy, a list of blessings is given to Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 28-30). Scholars have also tried to bring up interpretative scholarship on this list of blessings. Tony Abram talks of the five blessings from Deuteronomy;⁵ and Lenchack brings out the aspect of *choice* in being part of this blessing.⁶ Most of the commentaries centre

³ Compelling Truth website, "Biblical Blessing" accessed online from <https://www.compellingtruth.org> on 12th September 2018.

⁴ P. C. Craigie, "The Book of Deuteronomy" *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976). As used in the Book of Deuteronomy, see also Ronald E Clements, "The Book of Deuteronomy" in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, NIBC Vol. II, Ed. Leander Keck et al (Nashville: Abingdon, 199) 268-552.

⁵ Tony Abram, "Five Blessings from Deuteronomy!" in *Sermon Central*, Posted on 15th September, 2010. Accessed on line from <http://www.sermoncentral.com> on 27th September 2018.

⁶ Timothy A. Lenchak, "Choose Life!" *A Rhetorical Critical Investigation of Deuteronomy 28,69–30,20* AnBib 129 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993).

around and emphasize more the imminence of such divine favours.⁷ While these scholarly inputs are meaningful and even helpful as a starting point to this research, they lack basically the contextual interpretation of these concepts and their relevant application today. This is a serious gap that this research intends to fill. One notices the same thing with all other concepts associated with this research. Scholarship also abounds on *Curses* (*qālālāh*) in the Bible and especially in Deuteronomy. The same thing with *Life* (*ḥay*). All these are treated individually by many scholars but there is little or no interconnected treatment of the concepts to discover the import of the Bible in using them. Where such interconnectedness can be perceived, it is mainly between blessings and curses.⁸

Most scholars treat “Blessing” as God’s favours stemming from obedience and in that light only see curses as God’s punishment stemming from disobedience.⁹ The treatment of the meaning of these concepts by themselves and in association with other considerations has remained a serious lack that calls for attention. This work rises to supply that gap by examining the relationship between “Blessing” and “Life” and going further to appreciate the import of that relationship for contemporary relevance. It is in bridging this gap that the significance of this work lies.

It is therefore safe to say that even though previous scholarship abounds, and they actually treated the concepts of Blessing, Curse, Life etc.,¹⁰ their

⁷ See Ronald E. Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy” 268-552; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 244-281; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy I-II (Anchor Bible (AB) 5*; New York: Doubleday, 1991); and P. D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster, 1990).

⁸ Deuteronomy Chapter 28 details a long list of “blessings” and “curses”. Many of the scholars who research on them tend to ignore the important aspect of life and death defining the choice of blessings or curses.

⁹ Some of the many works on blessings in isolation include: G. Larry Lenning, *Blessing in Mosque and Mission*, (Pasadena, CA; William Carey, 1990); Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK “to bless” in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); Derek Prince, *Blessing or Curse: You can Choose* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Chosen Books, 1990); Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the life of the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

¹⁰ See Werner H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction* (Mumbai: St. Paul Press, 2015); and, J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (UK: Intervarsity Press, 1993).

approach and focus were different. The interconnectedness and contextual application were absent. The strength of this research is its accommodation of further analysis of the context to bring out the interconnectedness of “blessing” with “life” and also explore the implications of this “blessing-life” interconnectedness for Christians today.

Conventional Understanding of “Blessing” and Life” in General

In order to appreciate any peculiarity or uniqueness in the definition of “Biblical Blessing”, it is important to situate this research against the background of the conventional understanding of “blessing” and “life”. In general, blessing is usually perceived as anything, action or situation that translates into benefits received as full or partial, merited or unmerited favour from an external source, most always identified with God or in some cases man. Blessing can be merited as in a reward and it can also be unmerited as in a graceful favour from God. In today’s usage, especially for believers, blessing has come to be associated with anything good, favourable and pleasurable. The issue with this conventional understanding of blessing is that the tendency is there for a dangerous and risky subjective interpretation of what constitutes blessing. If and when the pleasure of the beneficiary is accepted as a major factor, then, the problem would be that one man’s pleasure (and perceived blessing) could be another man’s displeasure and “curse”.¹¹

This conventional tendency to define concepts by individualized judgment modules is also a challenge when one considers the contemporary understanding of the concept “life”. Among other shades of understanding, “life”, most unfortunately, has come to be associated with “*pleasure*”. But this would not have been a big issue if not that the *pleasure* here most often refers to physical pleasure.¹² But life cannot

¹¹ There is need for some objectivity in what is understood and what should be understood as blessing. Individual judgment should give room to objectivity. In this case, there is still the need to examine the true import of “blessing” as used in the Bible.

¹² In modern times, it is not uncommon to hear young people exchange pleasantries with “slangs” like: “You are still enjoying life...” Even an obese “killing” himself with a pot of red meat over bottles of Beer and Gin and Ice cream could even receive the compliment of “enjoying life...”. The true understanding of what life is must be sought outside this subjectivity.

only connote physical pleasure. There must be a higher and better appreciation of life as blessing and this deeper meaning is what this research seeks to unravel.

Blessing in the Bible

In the Bible, “Blessing” is generally “the outworking of God’s love”.¹³ The word “blessing” is attested in many ways in the Bible both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. However, given the primary focus of this research, emphasis will be placed on the OT understanding of this word.¹⁴ Prominent among the many usages of the word “blessing” is the reference to words like *bārāḱāh* and *esher*. There are various other instances where blessing is mentioned directly or indirectly in the Bible. It is attested in its root (*brk*) about 415 times in the OT. It is used as *piel* 214 times to translate “to bless”. As *qal* passive participle, it is used 61 times to translate “Blessed”. It is also used to translate “to kneel” as an expression submission and obedience.¹⁵ Blessing is also expressed as *esher*. This indicates a state of happiness as expressed, for example, in Psalm 1. This is the blessedness that is taken up in the NT and captured in the Beatitudes in the Greek *makarios*.¹⁶ But scholarly speaking, the word “Blessing” is more commonly attested to in the OT by the Hebrew *bārāḱāh*. It connotes increase, growth and consequent happiness. In the OT, “Blessings given by God or human beings can be either a speech act (benediction) or a bestowal of material goods (benefaction)”.¹⁷ The Scripture also attests to different context of usages of the word

¹³ Fritz Goerling, “Barakah (as Divine Blessing) as a Bridge in Manding Languages (Especially in Julia of Côte d’Ivoire)”, *Journal of Translation*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2010).

¹⁴ Even though the emphasis of our research falls within the OT, it is interesting to note the significant progression from the use and understanding of the word in the OT to its use and understanding in the NT.

¹⁵ Cf. “*bārāḱāh*”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* accessed electronically from Bible Works 9, Norfolk, VA: Bibleworks LLC, 2013

¹⁶ Compelling Truth website, “Biblical Blessing” accessed online from <https://www.compellingtruth.org> on 12th September 2018. Just as the NT Greek *makarios* defines the OT Hebrew *esher*, the NT Greek *eulegeo* also defines the OT Hebrew *bārāḱāh*.

¹⁷ Fritz Goerling, “Barakah (as Divine Blessing) as a Bridge in Manding Languages (especially in Julia of Côte d’Ivoire)”, *Journal of Translation*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2010).

“blessing”. Sometimes, God blesses humans. At other times, humans bless either God or humans or both.¹⁸ Among these occurrences in the OT, Blessing is directly mentioned as *bārākāh* for about 6 times in the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 11:27, 29; 28:8; 30:1, 19; 33:1). In these passages the word *bārākāh* appears to retain a consistent connotation – *empowerment, enrichment or the bestowal of good*.¹⁹ It is in such a situation that this research intends to find the route to the understanding of the true import of the word especially as used in Deut 30: 19.

Life in the Bible

Again, the focus here would be on the use and understanding of life in the OT. In this case the prominent word is *ḥay*. This word is from the common Hebrew root that connotes “to live, revive or be quickened”.²⁰ The Hebrew *ḥay* as used here is both an adjective suggesting the words “alive”, “living”, or “afresh;” and sometimes used as a noun. This root is prominent in the OT. Sometimes, the Hebrew *ḥay* is often referred to in the plural form *ḥayîm* and this underscores the meaning of life when lived as a communality of support.

It is important to note that the OT talks of “life” more as an experience than as an intrinsic abstract reality. Life is seen as the ability to exercise one’s ability and potentials to the fullest.²¹ In the OT generally, “life is decided by a right relationship to the righteous standards of the word of God. Moses places the people in a state of having to decide between life and death by laying the Word of God before them (Deut 30: 15-20). Israel is called upon to choose life”²²

¹⁸ The idea of blessing ordinarily reflects God as source (cf. Genesis 12). But sometimes man blesses. In blessing God, man is praising or thanking God but in blessing other human beings, he is wishing that God would favour such beings directly or indirectly through fellow humans like himself (cf. Gen 14: 18-20).

¹⁹ Cf. A. Murtonen, “The Use and Meaning of the Words *l’ārek* and *b’rakah* in the Old Testament”, *Vetus Testamentum* (VT) 9, 161ff.

²⁰ Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the life of the Church*, 37ff.

²¹ Cf. “*ḥay*”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) accessed electronically from Bible Works 9, Norfolk, VA: Bibleworks LLC, 2013.

²² Cf. “*ḥay*”, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) accessed electronically from Bible Works 9, Norfolk, VA: Bible works LLC, 2013.

Exegesis of Deuteronomy 30:19

In order to have a systematic analysis leading to a meaningful interpretation of the passage above, it is important to access the passage from the point of view of the language of study.

Passage in Hebrew:

ha 'iḏōtī bākem hayyōwm 'eṭ- haššāmayim wə'eṭ- hā'āreṣ haḥayyīm wəhammāwet nāṭattī ləpāneḵā, habbārāḵāh wəhaqqəlālāh; ūbāḥartā baḥayyīm, ləma'an tiḥyeh 'attāh wəzar'eḵā.

Passage in English

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live,

Analysis of Text

There are no textual issues in this verse. Scholarship upholds the originality of this passage except for very minor variants that, definitely, are a result of generations of scholarly pre-compilation editing.

One can also see the historical background of the passage as instructive. This address most likely belongs to the middle of the 6th century BC. “It is closely contemporaneous with the book of Lamentations and displaying many connections with the edited collection of Jeremiah’s prophesies which bears a Deuteronomic stamp”.²³ The remote background is the call to covenantal obedience, but the proximate background reveals that this is one of those Mosaic instructions given after establishing the terms of the covenant with God and as Israel was about to enter the land. Moses put it up to the people to appreciate the necessity of choice and its consequences.²⁴ This verse represents a central motif in the OT and especially in Deuteronomy.²⁵ While God

²³ Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy”, 268-552.

²⁴ See Commentary of Deut 30:15-20 in *The Jewish Study Bible*, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (eds.) (New York: Oxford, 2004).

²⁵ For more on Deuteronomy and the role of Moses in shaping the Deuteronomic agenda, see Gerald Emem Umoren, “Divine Justice in Want of Mercy: Deuteronomy 34: 1-8 and its Implications”, Bernard Ukwuegbu et al (eds.), *Mercy and Justice in the Bible: Acts of*

desires to remain in a relationship with His people, attitude to the terms of the covenant is what guarantees blessings or otherwise. The focus of this analysis is still to determine what this blessing constitutes.

Structurally, this verse contains some parallelism and also reveals the centrality of some words and concepts. It can be analysed structurally in three parts: Part one is what this researcher would call “a reminder of/call to conscious responsibility”. Part two is what this research would also call “options of choice”, and Part three is “Advice on responsible choice”.

Part One: A reminder of/call to conscious responsibility.

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today”.

Part Two: Options of choice

“... that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses”.

Part Three: Advice on responsible choice.

“Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

The advantage of this tripartite arrangement has revealed the centrality of the parallelism and the concepts being transposed: “Life and death; Blessings and curses”. It is the formal and general analysis of this that will establish the import of the type of blessing anticipated in this passage.

There is so much about choice here. The challenge is not just *seeing* what to choose but *knowing what to choose*.²⁶ Detailed analysis would seek to examine the two concepts as transposed in each case: life and death, blessings and curse (*bārāḵāh*=Blessing; *qalālāh*=Curse; *ḥay*=Life; *māweṭ*=Death). But when contra-posted, life *ḥay* corresponds with blessing *bārāḵāh* (and vice versa) and death *māweṭ* corresponds with a curse *qalālāh*. Put better, life is blessing, and death is curse.

Many questions come to mind at this point: Against the background of the above, in what does Biblical blessing consist especially when defined

the Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria (CABAN), vol 9 (Port Harcourt: Hysab, 2017) 13-26.

²⁶ See Prince, *Blessing or Curse: You can Choose*, 23ff.

in relationship to “life”? Blessing, as used in this passage, definitely, encompasses a number of things. Primarily it is presented as a divine favour. Calling “heaven and earth to witness” is a reference to the ultimate reality of divine majesty, which has no bounds. God is involved and blessings as divine reward can only come from Him. There are two clauses that need analysis here: “Blessing and life” and “blessing as life”. But there is need to know about blessing and life before one examines blessing as life. The first one: *Blessing and life* are presented here as divine favours to be seen as a reward for covenantal obedience. This is in contraposition to *Curse and death* which also would constitute divine punishment and judgment for covenantal disobedience. The word *bərāḱāh* is used here to denote the divine endowment of “good things”. Seen from the Hebrew etymology of *barak*, *bərāḱāh* it could connote “to kneel” and “when used in this context, it indicates a relationship between man, who adores God by kneeling, and God, who benefits men with His presence”.²⁷

The issue is what constitutes this “favour” or this “benefit” from God. This passage identifies it as “*life*”. Further questions, which abound, include whether this “favour” is physical or spiritual and by implication, whether the life referred to here is physical or spiritual. However, going by the context of usage of *hay* (which is both a noun and an adjective), life here originates as a physical reward but also accommodates some God-man relational benefit that gives it more credibility. It is physical *life* that has the ability to be *alive*. This ability and capacity of a sustained kind of favour defines the blessing that is referred to in this passage.

Interpretation of Text

Following from the above analysis, it is evident that this passage is Moses’ recommendation to Israel to choose wisely. This wise choice can only be an option for covenantal obedience which would come with divine blessing associated with life as a concept and a relationship of wellbeing. Blessing in this passage therefore could be interpreted as a synonym of God’s divine and unlimited favours. These favours are to be understood and appreciated as life - an endowment of divine

²⁷ Compelling Truth website, “Biblical Blessing” accessed online from <https://www.compellingtruth.org> on 12th September 2018

refreshment. An action is proposed. The consequence of the action is identified, and the nature of that consequence is hereby uncovered. The action is the choice of obedience to the covenant terms. The consequence of such obedience is blessing (divine favours) and the nature of such blessing is life. The idea of bringing in “descendants” gives this type of blessing a futuristic value meaning that it will last. This research can paraphrase the passage thus: *Choose to obey the covenant and you will be blessed with life in abundance and in generations to come.*

Appreciating Biblical Blessing (barāḵāh) as Life (ḥay)

After the above analysis and interpretation of the text, this research would benefit more from a hermeneutical appreciation of Biblical Blessing as life. Our passage of study clearly correlates blessing to life. This correlation already offers Biblical scholarship the direction for appreciating the blessing of God. If Blessing in this context has to do with the divine reward for covenantal obedience, there is need to appreciate what this reward consists in. The meaning of the parallelism evident in this passage is that this desired blessing constitutes life. If Biblical blessing here constitutes life, it is therefore important to know what this life entails in order to appreciate the nature, import and extent of this blessing.

The word, life – *ḥay* – as used in this passage must have a deeper meaning. Consistent with the general appreciation and use of the word in the OT, life here connotes the fullness of refreshment, fulfilment and continued endowment and benefit as a consequence of some good deed. This is opposed to death (*māwet*), also meaning the realm of the death understood in Hebrew thought to be a consequence of sin.²⁸ The two aspects that must be appreciated here are: (a) Life is a consequence of and a reward for good relationship with God, (b) Life, considered as a divine blessing entails not only the experience of re-freshness and re-vitality but also the locale relationship with the author of life Himself. From this point of view, it could be safe to assume that *life* is not only a consequence but a guarantee and a confirmation of divine *blessing*. In

²⁸ See Lenning, *Blessing in Mosque and Mission*, 35ff; Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK “to bless” in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 62f.

this way, divine *blessing* has come to be defined by the attainment of this *life* (*hay*).²⁹

There is need to understand, appreciate and consider Biblical *blessing* primarily as something necessarily expressible in *life*. *Life* is the ultimate and most meaningful expression of Biblical *blessing*.

Evaluation

Having come this far in this research, a lot points to the fact of the problem of ambiguity and, at best, confusion in the right appreciation of the nature of divine blessing. This research has been a systematic examination of the meaning and nature of Blessing especially as seen in Deut. 30: 19. It is clear that the conventional understanding of Blessing departs substantially from the Biblical understanding of blessing. This research, having examined both situations, has found out that Biblical Blessing, as correlated in the passage of study with life, can only reach its full manifestation in the feeling and experience of life and the life-giver. Considerable effort has been made to analyse, define and interpret the concept of life as used here and indeed in contemporary religious circles. This interpretation portends useful implications, especially for today's Christians. This research has proved to be very relevant considering the centrality and importance of the concepts of *blessing* and *life* in Biblical scholarship and in religion today. This examination has not only reduced – if not eradicate – the ignorance and confusion hitherto associated with the concept of *blessing and curse* in the Bible, it has redirected renewed focus towards the relevant appreciation of Divine blessing as Life. The conclusion of this research, on one hand, still leaves room for more considerations and on another hand, could provoke new concerns for scholarship in related areas.

Research Findings

- ❖ Blessing is a reward of humans by God for covenantal responsibility

²⁹ The attainment of life would be complete as a divine blessing only when it is experienced in the context of divine reward by the life giver.

- ❖ Life is the ultimate and most meaningful expression of Biblical blessing
- ❖ “Blessing *and* life” could better be seen as “Blessing *as* life”

Implications

Judging from the findings above, it is clear that this passage does not only introduce a deep dimension in the understanding of the correlation between blessing and life, it also provides a new platform to appreciate the progression from the OT understanding of life as primarily physical to the NT appreciation of life as primarily spiritual. Above all, this appreciation of life as both a feeling and an experience of the subject and object of such blessing has implications for many, especially for the Christians of the present age who, in keeping with the NT, see and anticipate every action to be a journey towards eternal life. This introduces the need to examine, analyse and project the findings of this “blessing/life” correlation to benefit and improve the conduct of today’s Christians.³⁰

Recommendations

In order to sustain the didactic and pragmatic-related findings of this research, the following recommendation, drawn, as answers to research proposals and fruits of this and related study, are proffered as suggestions.

1. There should be renewed catechesis on the nature, need and implications of divine blessing.
2. Parents, schools and superiors should de-emphasize the conventional tendency to project pleasure as “life”.
3. All believers should emphasize more the usage of the inclusive word “life” to stand for “reward” in the context of whatever religion one belongs.

³⁰ For more on the fruits of this exegesis and the position of the Church, please see Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the life of the Church*.

4. The idea of blessing as a rewarding encounter of a benevolent God by an obedient believer should be emphasized to young people from the early stage of their life.
5. Christians should appreciate the concept of *life* as a bridge between the OT and the NT understanding of *Blessing*.

Conclusion

The human individual, endowed by God with freewill, is a subject and an object of choice. Some choices constitute a blessing, but others constitute a curse. Deuteronomy 30: 19, as an OT passage, does not only capture this aspect of choice; it also points to the needed interpretation of the words - blessing, curse, life and death in the Biblical context. Life is a choice just as death could also be a choice. But both come as a consequence of either blessing or a curse. In the course of this research, it is found out that Blessing can only be an endowment of favours from a rewarding God to humans and that this blessing is not only to be seen as life but to be understood as a life-giving experience. This research has also confirmed that life, as used in this passage, can mean the act or principle of sustenance as well as the relationship to the sustainer. The use of “life” in Deut 30:19 has formed a bridge to the understanding of the use of the word “life” by Jesus Christ in the NT (John 4:10ff.; 10:10). Blessing is manifested in “Life”. This “Life” is not just physical but also spiritual. This finding has made this research effort a very relevant one for “eternal life-bound Christians today as it affords the understanding that the OT’s understanding of “life” is not a departure from but a continuity to the one objective appreciation of “Blessing” and “Life” in the Bible.