

Bibliographical citation

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Abstract

Blessings and curses are complex notions suggesting the close relationship between verbal activity and reality.

The speeches on blessings and curses in the Pentateuch are uttered by God or human beings on different occasions. The study of the rhetoric of these speeches reveals that the blessings and curses are caused by a number of factors, and they are supposed to be fulfilled in some way or other. The speeches of blessings and curses in extra-biblical texts provide us with a general idea of how people in ancient times understood blessings and curses and used them to their advantage. The study of blessings and curses as cross-cultural and religious phenomena shows that people perceived blessings and curses as powerful levers for affecting people on different occasions.

The study of blessings and curses – i.e., on what grounds does someone (who is it?) say something (what is it?) to somebody (who is it?), causing something (what is it and when is it going to materialize?), and more importantly: *how* does he or she say it – enables us to derive a special *grammar* of curses and blessings, which contributes to a better understanding of the mechanism of blessings and curses in the Pentateuch and in extra-biblical sources.

In the Pentateuch blessings and curses appear as an engagement of divine will and presuppose objective reality. They represent two alternatives or two modes of existence, as rhetorically underlined in Deut 28. The blessings and curses come directly from God, and in some cases they are administered by human figures, endowed with divine power. In extra-biblical sources blessings and curses appear primarily as human wishes of well-being or ill-being, and some even look like magical incantations. The deities function as *executors* of blessings and curses invoked by human figures.

The particular stylistics of blessing and curse in both materials (biblical/extra-biblical) reflect a certain kind of theology and anthropology.

The key words: blessing, curse, promise, threat, sanction.