Dr. G.E. Lier
University of Johannesburg. South Africa

E-mail: gelier@uj.ac.za

TRANSLATING ברך IN JOB 2:9- A FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

ABSTRACT

This study makes use of the *Functionalist Translation* approach in the translation of ברך in Job 2:9 in line with Christiane Nord's *Model of Literary Communication* to demonstrate how early translators' cognisance of the language and culture of the source text may have influenced the way they translated ברך in Job 2:9. The premise of this paper is that the translators began to render ברך in Job 2:9 conversely when they were no longer familiar with the culture of the Hebrew source text. The study aims to demonstrate that a functionalist approach in literary translation may assist with the translation of enigmatic texts in the Hebrew Scriptures to produce a target text that takes into account the source-culture inventory and appropriately communicates the translated text to the target-culture perspective.

1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

A literal translation of the imperative בָּרֵךְ in the Hebrew source text ברך אלהים ומת at Job 2:9 reads, "bless God and die".[1] However, most modern bible translations have accepted the converse translation (antimony) "*curse* God and die" as normative.[2]

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1 The lexical meaning of the root ברך is "to bless". Exceptions in Bible translation are literal translations such as Green's Literal Translation (LITV) and Young's Literal Translation (YLT); however, see also the Afrikaanse Ou Vertaling (AOV).

2 Converse translation is sometimes used in targumic rendering (cf. Lier 2017:628). Blank (1950-1951:83-85) refers to the converse translation as a euphemism, which he attributes to the author, not to a later scribe.

Among ancient bible translations, the Peshitta interprets Job 2:9 with the negative connotation of צחא לאלהא ומות "*curse* God and die" (Mitchell 2015:13). Against this, Targum Job preserves the literal sense of the Hebrew verb בְּרֵךְ in its paraphrase בריך מימרא דייי ומית "*bless* the Memra of the LORD and die".[3] The Vulgate similarly retains the literal sense of בְּרֵךְ and renders "*benedic* Deo et morere".[4] With regard to the Old Greek, Johan Cook (2010:275-284, emphasis added) notes, "it *avoids* referring to 'cursing God'" when it renders the ambiguous occurrence of בְּרֵךְ at Job 2:9 with ἀλλὰ εἰπόν τι ῥῆμα εἰς κύριον "Now say some word to the Lord". Cook concurs with Marcos (1994:257) and Heater (1982:35-36) that this addition comes from the hand of the translator (cf. also Mangan 2002:227).

Emanuel Tov (2001:272) is inclined to take the verb בְּרֵךְ "to bless" in Job 2:9 (and likewise in Job 1:5, 11; 2:5; 1Kgs 21:10, 13) as a euphemism for "to curse" inserted by early scribes. He agrees with Ibn Ezra's remark on Job 1:5 that בְּרֵךְ is "a substitute term and it means the opposite" based on the assumption that a blessing is contextually not appropriate. On the other hand, he does not rule out that, according to C. McCarthy's proposal (1981:191-195) in these six verses, the original authors may have used a euphemism. Tov concludes, "in that case, *no* scribal change was involved."

Overall, bible translations demonstrate that the incidence of בְּרֵךְ in Job 2:9 in the Hebrew source text presented translators with an interpretative conundrum from earliest times. The problematic appears to arise from the somewhat random use of the verb ברך in the book of Job (Seow 2013:66). On the one hand, the literal meaning of "blessing" fits logically into the context of Job 1:10, Job 31:20, and Job 42:12, but when the same verb is used in the contexts of Job 1:5, 11 and Job 2:5, 9 scholars find that the translation "to bless" is not tenable.

Some scholars have attempted to solve the problem of translating בְּרֵךְ in ברך אלהים ומת (Job 2:9) from the intra-textual aspect of assessing the role of Job's wife either negatively or positively (Magdalene 2006:209;

However, the term "euphemism" normally refers to a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing. The translation "curse" is hardly a mild substitute for ברך.

3   A search into a complete lexicon entry of the root ברך in The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon © (http://cal.huc.edu/) does not show a single instance where it is translated with the converse meaning, "to curse".

4   The root meaning of the latin verb *benedic* has the connotations "say, declare, state; allege, declare positively; assert; plead (case); talk/speak; make speech; play (instrument); pronounce, articulate, utter; mean; name/call; appoint, fix/set (date); designate, declare intention of giving" (BibleWorks 9).

Linafelt 1996:154-72; Bechtel 1995:203-204; Cheney 1994:62-67; Weiss 1983:30; Andersen 1976:81; Buttenwieser 1922:155-156). Studies from a feministic perspective have mostly sought to reread the controversial figure of Job's wife from a more positive understanding (e.g. Camp 1985:87; Schindler 2006:24-36; Magdalene 2006:209-258; Grams-Benítez 2011:1-16; Gravett 2012: 97-125; Pardes 1992:150-151).

Giancarlo Toloni (2015:199-223) provides an insightful analysis of the two opposing lines of research relating to the reading of Job 2:9, starting with the traditional, more negatively connoted interpretations by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim exegetes. After this he enters into a critical debate with various scholarly views and then goes on to propose correctly that "l'apporto del traduttore fu sostanzialmente un'interpretazione" (i.e. the translator's contribution was essentially an interpretation) rather than a mere rendering of the Hebrew. The above brief comparison of the Hebrew source text profile with several target text profiles of Job 2:9 shows that earliest bible translations either retained the literal sense of בֵּרֵךְ or they rendered circuitously, to avoid making God the object of a curse. Modern non-literal translations generally interpret בֵּרֵךְ to mean "curse".

The three main dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew-Clines, BDB, and HALOT- give the impression that ברך is euphemistic for ארר or קלֵל in the context of 1Kings 21:10, 1Kings 21:13, Psalm 10:3, Job 1:5, 11, and Job 2:5, 9. The entry in Clines (1995:268) provides only limited information with respect to the piel of ברך stating that it usually has the sense of "bless" and rarely "curse God, king" at 1Kings 21:10,13; Psalm 10:3; Job 1:5,11, and Job 2:5,9. BDB (1907:139) has the following entry: "*bless*, with the antithetical meaning *curse* (Thes) from the greeting in departing, saying adieu to, taking leave of; but rather a blessing overdone and so really a curse as in vulgar English as well as in the Shemitic cognates". HALOT similarly records that "בֵּרֵךְ is euphemistic for ארר, קלֵל". In addition, it refers to the studies of "Geiger *Urschrift* 267f; Nöldeke *Neue Beitr.* 98; Fschr. Hempel 97f : Yaron VT 9:90".[5] Significantly, in these studies the determination for the sense of ברך at 1Kings 21:10,13; Psalm 10:3; Job 1:5,11, and Job 2:5,9 is more complex than Clines, BDB, and HALOT present it to be.

In Geiger's opinion (1857:267), cursing is falsely attributed to Job or expected of him against his will. For this reason, Geiger proposes (1857:268), it transforms into the opposite, "blessing" בֵּרֵךְ. In the same way, at 1Kings 21:10 and 13, Naboth is innocent; Geiger therefore argues (1857:268),

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5   Nöldeke's reference in HALOT erroneously refers to 98; it should read 89.

es hinderte daher, selbst im Munde solcher Zeugen ein Solches von
ihm auszusagen, und man änderte den Ausdruck...Vom frommen
Dulder nur vermuthungsweise derartiges auszusagen, verletzte das
Ohr und der Ausdruck wurde umgewandelt.

Geiger reasons (1857:268-269) that the association of a curse with the
name of God awakened a horror in the listeners and for this reason an
effort was made to alleviate the expression of the curse. Geiger (1857:269)
continues to discuss a demonstration of this practice in Psalm 10:3. He
points out that the immediate connection of the term of abuse to the name
of God was so disturbing that נאץ was likewise transmuted into ברך; but
here, where the villain is mentioned, this change could not assert itself.
Rather, the original reading remained alongside the emendation, and so
we read both words next to each other.

Hempel (1925:67-109) argues from the context of the ancient Israelite
perception of blessing and curse where the formulaic pronunciation of
God's name denoted the demonstration of his power to the degree that
curses were repudiated by a blessing formula. Exodus 22:27 appears to be
the source for forbidding the curse against the deity and the imprecation
of the nāsī'. Hempel (1925:93) attributes the euphemistic sense of בֵּרֵךְ to its
use in the prologue of Job whose entire structure postulates its ambiguous
meaning, where 1Kings 21:10 - an old, certainly pre-Deuteronomistic
narrative - may well have constituted the underlying norm. Hempel
concludes (1925:104) in reference to Job 31: "Der Fromme flucht überhaupt
nicht" (the pious does not curse at all).

Nöldeke (1910:89) attributes the euphemistic sense of בֵּרֵךְ to the editors,
stating that there is no euphemism of the authors ("so ist da zwar kein
Euphemismus der Verfasser, wohl aber der Verbesserer"). Yaron (1959:90)
is likewise concerned with the question of editorial changes. He cautions
against interference when "a text is not as blunt and straightforward as it
might have been" adding that one would need to prove in each case that
the word or words criticized are *not* from the hand of the author, but an
editorial emendation. Concerning the euphemistic substitution of בֵּרֵךְ for
the expression "to curse" or "to blaspheme", Yaron submits (1959:90)
there is no proof for the assumption that is due to subsequent emendation.

The studies of Geiger, Hempel, Nöldeke, and Yaron demonstrate that the
euphemistic rendering of בֵּרֵךְ with "curse" is not as simple as the three main
dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew present it to be. It should be remembered
that people write dictionaries and therefore even what appears to be set in
stone, should be revisited in line with new methods of investigation.

The premise of this paper, therefore, is that translators began to render בֵּרֵךְ in Job 2:9 conversely when they were no longer familiar with the culture of the Hebrew source text.

2.   RESEARCH APPROACH

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the functionalist approach can assist with the translation of בָּרְכֵּ in Job 2:9

> to produce a functional target text which conforms to the requirements of the initiator's brief and which is acceptable in the target culture (Naudé & Gelderbloem 2009:197).

Functionalism in literary translation entails a top-down approach, which moves from the macro-level focus on context (ideology and socio-cultural factors), to the medial-level focus on stylistics, to the micro-level focus on textual linguistic features (Fang, Song & Wu 2008:285; Steiner 2005:490).

An important aspect that plays into the functionalist approach is how *familiar* the text world is for the readers, for them to identify with fictional characters and situations. According to Gutt's *Relevance Theory* (1991:123; 2000:129), it is not only *what* the writer intends to convey, but also *how* it is conveyed. If the translation function or *skopos* of the target text therefore is that it should have the same function and effect the writer intended to convey in the source text, the translator will need to manipulate terminology, syntax, style, and language in the target text to achieve this aim (cf. Nord 1997:89-90; Reiss 1971:42). [6]

The translation function or *skopos* of this study is to adapt the target text for a contemporary English-speaking target-culture to create awareness and understanding of the meaning of the clues in the book of Job, which the writer/author placed in the source text for the audience of his time (cf. Naudé & Gelderbloem 2009:196-197). This *skopos* will act as a guide "to determine which source text elements may be preserved and which elements require a measure of adaptation" (Naudé & Gelderbloem 2009:197).[7]

On a macro-level, the study first analyses the extra-textual and intra-textual factors in the source-culture of the book of Job. Next, on

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6   Newsom (1995:177) notes, "The most important trend in reading Job is the shift from a historical-critical to a literary paradigm."

7   In line with Nord's *Looping Model of the Translation Process* (1991:34, fig. 5). Nord (1997:82-84) argues that literary translation is an intercultural communicative act where the source text offers information, which the translator must always take into account.

a medial-level, this source-culture situation will be reprocessed to the analysis of the source text by identifying how the writer used style and stylistic devices to communicate his objective. Stylistic devices are clues/signs that the writer intentionally incorporates to convey meaning. Nord (1997:23) notes that signs are conventional and thus culture-specific. The producer and receiver therefore need to come to some kind of agreement about the meaning of the clue/sign that the stylistic device communicates, so that the intended goal of the writer is preserved for the translation *skopos* to be realized (cf. Nord 1997:23).

Lastly, on the micro-level of linguistics, the study will transfer translation relevant source text elements (i.e. stylistic device/s) in the book of Job, which are identified on the medial level, by way of target text synthesis to the target - culture situation. This entails:

- discerning how the imbedded stylistic device in the source text *coheres* with other sentences, paragraphs and sections in the rest of the text to convey the intended message of the writer (cf. Thompson 2004:179; Norås 2013:35);

- establishing the culture-specific meaning of the stylistic device in the source text from the way it holds together grammatical and lexical relationships (Norås 2013:27, 32; Thompson 2004:8-9; Nørgaard 2003:15; Nord 1997:68, 138; Gutt 1991:163); and

- marking the translation in such a way that the culture-specific meaning of the *cohesive* device can be understood by the target-culture in line with the meaning the writer intended it to have so that the target-culture can experience the particular intended text effect (cf. Nord 2011:32-44).

The ultimate aim is for the source text and target text of Job to cohere intertextually (cf. Nord 1991:24).

3.   TRANSLATING ברך IN JOB 2:9 THROUGH A FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

In the following, the study moves from the macro-level focus on context (ideology and socio-cultural factors), to the medial-level focus on stylistics, to the micro-level focus on textual linguistic features in order to establish a functional translation of Job 2:9, keeping in mind the translation *skopos* as defined above (see 2).

3.1   Macro-level: Ideology and socio-cultural factors

In the Hebrew canon, the book of Job has its place between Psalms and Proverbs among the Writings (*Ketuvim*) in accordance with its literary character.[8] Most scholars date the final form of Job sometime within the exilic or early post-exilic period, between the seventh and fifth centuries BCE, but there is no hard data for it (Balentine 2006:13; Murphy 1999:6).[9] The presence of elements of deculturalization, like the reference to an *unspecified* time in which *a* man called Job lived in the land of Uz, makes it difficult to assign the book to a single social setting (Wolfers 1995:73-75). Consequently, the sociocultural environment loses some of its relevance for text reception since the issues of suffering and personal responsibility in Job are in a sense timeless (cf. Murphy 1999:6).

Job's ideology bears witness to the crisis of Israelite Wisdom teaching. The fact that Job incurs God's enmity for no reason at all shatters the presupposition that God's justice and righteousness are the basis of the God-ordained order of the world (Spiekermann 2011). In Job's world, the innocent suffer and the wicked thrive, and seemingly, the cry for help goes unanswered (Balentine 2006:3). This ideology fits the aftermath of the Babylonian exile when the justice of God and suffering of the innocent gave rise to critical questions (Balentine 2006:13). The tension between Job's protest against mistreatment and his fear of God contributes to the characteristic ambiguity of this book.

The crisis of wisdom thought in earlier wisdom literature, such as is found in the book of Job, stands in contrast with and is resolved in the later wisdom books of Proverbs (4th century), the Hebrew version of Sirach (2nd century), and the Wisdom of Solomon (1st century). These later books, respectively, personify wisdom, exemplify the wise as righteous, and emphasize the righteousness and justice of God (Spiekermann 2011). This means that the source-culture reality of the text world of the book of Job, which reflects the aftermath of the Babylonian exile, was different from later target-cultures realities for whom the justice and righteousness of God was a given. For instance, Rabbinic Judaism sets forth a theological system that is orderly and reliable, where God is always good and the world order is best embodied when sin is punished and merit is rewarded (Neusner 2002:84-104).

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8   When the source text makes use of particular words, it presupposes specific cultural factors.

9   Parallels for Job's dialogue form and motifs from nature exist in Sumerian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian literary works, where the righteous suffer in the form of laments and are restored. See the Sumerian Job (c. 1750 BCE), the Mesopotamian Job (c. 1000 BCE), and the Egyptian Job (20th -18th centuries BCE) (Kutsch 2011; Balentine 2006:6; Murphy 1999:7-8).

Albeit that the crisis of wisdom thought in Job was resolved in formative Judaism, it may again be a relevant perspective for the translation *skopos*. In today's world, it appears that once more, the innocent suffer and the wicked thrive and for many believers their cry for help seemingly goes unanswered. From this perspective, modern readers may identify with Job in their own lives and find deep consolation from commonalities with his plight. This makes Nord's observation (1997:86-87) applicable for the translation *skopos* of Job, namely that the presence of elements of deculturalization in it makes the distance from the text world approximately equal for source-text and target-text readers.

3.2   Medial-level: style and stylistic devices

The author of a literary text decides which stylistic devices he wants to incorporate into the text to communicate his message to his audience. Stylistic properties of the source text provide *clues* that guide its receivers to the author's intended interpretation (cf. Gutt 1991:127). They create a sense of unity or *cohesion* in a text from the manner in which they form links among the underlying ideas. Stylistic devices are culture-bound and therefore may not be similar for source- and target cultures. Therefore, the translator needs to examine the source text for communicative clues in the form of stylistic devices and determine which source text elements are significant to preserve, and which elements require adaptation.

Communicative clues may be unusual or striking devices and include repetition and alliteration (Norås 2013:35; Boase-Beier 2004:276-287). Norås points out (2013:32, emphasis added):

> In literary texts, and especially poetry, the individual words are carefully chosen, and the meaning is to a large extent tied up in the actual words. However, the literal meanings of the actual words are not necessarily what the author intended to convey. The words in poetry are often chosen for their *semantic ambiguity*, and therefore it can be difficult to apply systemic functional labels to the constituents in a clause. As we have seen, for instance, a verb can fit into two or even three different Process types, depending on the interpretation.

Norås' observations above are particularly relevant for the book of Job-most of which reflects a clear binary poetic structure (cf. Jacobson 2017:181, 357-358, 811). In the book of Job the Hebrew root ברך is used nine times, six times within the prologue of Job 1-2 and an additional three times in Job 29:13, 31:20, and 42:12. In the prologue, two occurrences are routinely translated with the normal meaning "bless" (1:10, 21), and four are conventionally translated with the opposite meaning "curse"

(1:5, 11, 2:5, 9), while the last three occurrences in Job 29:13, 31:20, and 42:12 are all translated with "bless". Although all of the six occurrences in the prologue fall outside the poetic sections of Job, their *semantic ambiguity* in the Hebrew source text is striking.

From the structured manner in which the root ברך occurs six times in the prologue of Job, it appears the writer did so consciously (cf. Thompson 2004:8-9). Samuel Balentine points out that the ambiguity in the meaning of "bless" in Job may be more than a "mere linguistic peculiarity". He adds that each time the word "bless" occurs in the prologue, the reader must discern whether the meaning is "bless" or "curse". The reader has to follow Job through a long journey of repeated reconsideration of what it means to bless God and to be blessed by him before he comes to the final occurrence of "bless" at the end of the book in Job 42:12 (Balentine 2006:49; cf. Seow 2013:65). This suggests that the writer intentionally chose the six occurrences of the verb ברך in the prologue as a *clue* to cohesively link to the final use of ברך in the epilogue in Job 42:12, to reveal his aim. Tod Linafelt (1996:154), therefore, is correct when he observes that the apparent ease with which interpreters have unanimously determined the euphemistic sense of ברך in Job, is illusory.[10] Indeed, there is little doubt that the ambiguous use of ברך in Job is purposeful. The question now is how to retain the ambiguity of ברך in translation so that the intended goal of the writer is preserved for target-culture readers.

3.3   Micro-level: Linguistic Cohesion

E. Gallagher (2013:3) notes that the different meanings of an ambiguous word can be disclosed from clusters of closely related words in a text.[11] The *semantic ambiguity* of the piel stem ברך is observable from its repeated use in six word clusters in the prologue of the Hebrew source text of Job. This repetition alerts the reader to reflect on the connotation ברך has within the various word clusters wherein it appears:

(i) אוּלַי חָטְאוּ בָנַי וּבֵרֲכוּ אֱלֹהִים בִּלְבָבָם"Perhaps my children have transgressed [inadvertently] and *blessed* God [sinfully] in their hearts" (own translation) (Job 1:5) (cf. Good 1990:50-51).[12] The closely related word cluster suggests

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10   Regarding the two occurrences of "euphemistic" uses of the Hebrew root ברך in 1 Kings 21 outside the book of Job, Linafelt (1996:154) observes that they "prove to be as much a result of narrative artistry as scribal piety".

11   A word that has many clusters of closely related neighbours has a high degree of ambiguity (Gallagher 2013:9-10).

12   Among the pre-exilic period, the earliest notion of sin is indicated with the use of the Hebrew verb חטא as failure of an action to achieve an end or goal inherent

a *negative* connotation for ברך. Job's concern was that his children might have sinned in some minor transgression during the time of their festivity (cf. Linafelt 1996:163). Lacking repentance in the face of sin, praise offered to God amounts to improper praise, which is equivalent to "cursing" or despising God. Job's sacrifice for his children was therefore in keeping with his pious nature (Linafelt 1996:163).

(ii) מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו בֵּרַ֫כְתָּ"You *blessed* the work of his hands." (Job 1:10). The closely related word cluster suggests a *positive* connotation for ברך. The Satan motivates that Job serves God for a good reason. God placed a hedge around Job, his household, and around everything he owned. He blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions increased in the land.

(iii) אִם־לֹא עַל־פָּנֶיךָ יְבָרֲכֶךָּ "Surely, he will not *bless* you to your face?" (own translation) (Job 1:11) Alternatively, if the particle אם־לא is translated as simple particle of asseveration, the Hebrew text אם לא על פניך יברכך can be rendered in the sense of an emphatic challenge, "He will certainly not bless you to your face". All the same, the closely related word cluster expresses a *negative* connotation for ברך. The Satan argues if God removes his hedge of protection from Job, then "Job would respond in kind. When blessed, Job will bless. And when cursed, Job will curse" (Balentine 2006:54).

(iv) יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ"May the name of the LORD be *blessed*." (Job 1:21). The closely related word cluster suggests a *positive* connotation for ברך. Job expresses his assertive blessing in the context of the cumulative calamities. While he tears his robe and shaves his head in a ritual act of mourning, Job remains persistently reverential, prostrating himself before God in worship (cf. Balentine 2006:56-57).

(v)   אִם־לֹא אֶל־פָּנֶיךָ יְבָרֲכֶךָ"Surely, he will not *bless* you to your face?" (Own translation) (Job 2:5) (cf. iii above). The closely related word cluster echoes Job 1:11 in expressing a *negative* connotation for ברך. The context is the Satan's challenge to God: if God allows him to afflict Job's flesh and bone, Job would respond by cursing God.

vi) בָּרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים וָמֻת "*Bless* God and die!" (Own translation) (Job 2:9). The closely related word cluster has left interpreters of two minds regarding the denotation for ברך, depending upon how they evaluate the character of Job's wife (cf. Balentine 2006:63). The conventional interpretation renders the imploring command of Job's wife ברך אלהים ומת euphemistic with "*curse* God and die", echoing the Satan's speech in 1:11 and 2:5 (Balentine 2006:63). A euphemistic translation of ברך in Job 2:9 entails that Mrs. Job

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in its own activity (Breyfogle 1912: 542-560; Linafelt 1996:163).

is a negative, even sarcastic person, someone who identifies with the Satan, expecting Job to fail.

Feminist approaches have taken a more sympathetic stance on the person of Mrs. Job. Gerald West's interpretation (1991:111-112) exemplifies the viewpoint that Mrs. Job was likely to have been a theologically sophisticated person. If Job's wife was religious, a negative interpretation of ברך makes no allowance for the tragedy she and Job suffered (Magdalene 2006:210-211; Schroer 1995:56-58; Schweitzer 1996:32-38; Alden 1993:66; West 1991:107-131).

Magdalene (2006:224) makes a convincing case that Job's health was drastically deteriorating as consequence of the tragedy that befell him (Job 16:16b; 17:1b, c, 11-14; 30:16a, 19b, 23). For this reason, Job's wife forced him to confront the possibility of death (cf. also Bechtel 1995:203-204). Imminent death in the context of Scripture is accompanied by the blessing that a dying person evokes from his descendants (Gen 48:21; 49:28; Deut 33:1). Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann note (1997:279) that for people in the ancient Near East the final "farewell" before death was of supreme importance (see Gen 27; 48; 49; Deut 33). They add that in the case of such a "farewell" and "well-wishing", the piel form of the verb ברך seems to acquire an expressly factitive sense; the original intention of the custom was that "through the pronouncement of bārûk one makes the addressees bārûk" (cf. also Hempel 1925:91). In Job 29:13, we find further evidence for the dying evoking a blessing: בִּרְכַּת אֹבֵד עָלַי תָּבֹא "The blessing of the perishing comes on me" (YLT). It is therefore reasonable to interpret Mrs. Job's appeal to her husband to *bless* God in the face of death, in the biblical cultural context of blessing God when dying. Nonetheless, contrary to what his wife believes, Job is not convinced that he is dying. He will not have himself talked into a mind-set of capitulation to his plight. As reflected in his later speeches in the book, Job resists death on the argument that he is innocent because he made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1) and is of upright character. In his reasoning he therefore is worthy of life, "Let God weigh me in accurate scales and He will recognize my integrity" (Job 31:6).

4.   TARGET TEXT SYNTHESIS TO THE TARGET-CULTURE SITUATION

Remarkably, the six occurrences of ברך in the prologue demonstrate a consistent pattern of alternating between a negative and positive denotation, each of which is disclosed from its closely related word cluster. This pertains throughout with the exception of Job 2:9 where interpreters

are in two minds regarding the negative or positive sense of ברך. However, in keeping with the alternating pattern between a negative and a positive connotation for ברך as evidently intended by the author, it is reasonable to translate ברך with "bless" in Job 2:9 from a functionalist approach. As argued in section 3.3, this interpretation also corresponds to the biblical cultural context of blessing God in death.

Furthermore, the lexical cohesion between ברך אלהים (Job 2:9) and the similar expression ברכו אלהים (Job 1:5) implicitly highlights how God's blessings and curses hinge on the congruence between human speech and uncompromising fear of God (cf. Breyfogle 1912). While Job's speech is a reflection of his pious heart, it appears the talk of his children was not consistent with their walk. This phenomenon indicates a close association between God's "blessing" and human speech: God's activity can be actualized through human speech; it can be ignited by it. Job's ultimate restoration links to God's acceptance of his prayer and appraisal of his speech in comparison with that of his three friends, "I will surely accept his prayer and not deal with you as your folly deserves. For you have not spoken the truth about Me, as My servant Job has" (Job 42:8). God's favourable inclination towards Job can ultimately be witnessed from Job 42:12 וַיהֹוָה בֵּרַךְ אֶת־אַחֲרִית אִיּוֹב מֵרֵאשִׁתוֹ "And the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning".

5. CONCLUSION

Tod Linafelt rightly discerns (1996:158) that the conflicted meaning of ברך in each occurrence is a reflection of the complexity of the book as a whole. This conflict is further evident from Job 29:13, 31:20, and 42:12 where the author continues to make use of the root ברך (cf. Linafelt 1996:157-162). The ongoing tension between blessing and cursing in the book of Job is paralleled in Deuteronomy 30:15, linking it to the choice between life and death, "Look, I have given before you today [the choice between] life and goodness, death and wickedness" (own translation).[13] This tension aligns with the core testimony in Scripture of YHWH's faithful sovereignty and the counter testimony of YHWH's sovereign fidelity (Pyeon 2003:213; Brueggemann 1997:117-403).

From a functionalist translation approach, it is therefore incumbent to translate ברך with "blessing" in each instance as suggested in 3.3 so that the target text holds a similar semantic ambiguity as the source text does, to alert the reader to the implicit clues the author intended to convey to his audience. In conjunction with this, this paper suggests that it is reasonable

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13   רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַטּוֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת־הָרָע׃

to render ברך in Job 2:9 with "bless" as opposed to the general reading in English target texts of "curse" in order for the source text and target text of Job to cohere intertextually.

Keeping in mind the premise of this paper - that translators began to render ברך in Job 2:9 conversely when they were no longer familiar with the culture of the Hebrew source text - the target text should aim to retain the stylistic devices of the source text so that the intended goal of the writer is preserved for the translation *skopos.*

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