

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Title: *The Meaning of Maḥolah/Maḥol in the Old Testament*

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Advisor: Carlos Mora, ThD

A The study is primarily interested with the words מַחֹל(וֹת) "double flutes" and מַחֹל "flute" as they appear in the phrases בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחֹלָה, "with hand drums and with double flutes" and בְּתַף וּמַחֹל, "with hand drum and flute." Most of modern studies have concluded that these expressions refer to "dancing" and "dances" based on theoretical etymologizing. On the contrary, this study shows that these phrases have to say more about women's musical performances than the mere bodily movement.

The method used in this work does not take into account the form of perceptible words, but its linguistic and functional orientation. The terms מַחֹלָה and מַחֹל were investigated on the basis of their function in relationship to other elements in the text.

The phrases identify 2 main musical instruments' tradition first coined by Miriam and Israelite women at the Sea of Reeds (Exod 15). The morphosyntactical relationship considers the way words relate to each other and how certain sets of a pair of words influence the semantic fields of both terms in the pair. This helps to specify how the plural מַחֹל(וֹת) is mostly in overlapping synonymy with percussion instruments (e.g., מְנַעֲנָעִים, "rattles" [2 Sam 6:5]; מְצַלְתִּים, "cymbals" [1 Chr 13:8]) and with the chordophone בְּנֵרוֹת, "harps" (Isa 30:32). Likewise, the singular מַחֹל is ordinarily substituted within the pair by another instrument: the בְּנֹר, "harp" (Gen 31:27; Job 21:12; Pss 81:3; 149:3) or with הַלֵּיל, "(family of) flute" (1 Sam 10:5; Isa 5:12).

As a paradigm, every word functions in a field or a group of words, that is its semantic field. All of this militates for the understanding of *מְחֹלִל-מְחֹלֵל* as a syntagmatic relationship of instruments. In this sense, the relations of the slots occupied by the second term in the pair are always substituted with another instrument of music, but never with any body movements. This paradigm found in the pair used to translate the term under study sets rules on how to recognize when it means a body movement or the actual musical instrument.

Title: *The Priestly Blessing: An Exegetical and Intertextual Study of Numbers 6:22-27*

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Scholars have interpreted Num 6:22-27 twofold: (a) blessing is the manifestation of material benefits, and (b) blessing occurs within a personal and spiritual relationship with God, which however should result in material benefits. However, the question about blessing in terms of a divine-human relationship without material benefits bestowed upon humans has not been addressed.

In Chapters 2 and 3, this dissertation offers a detailed exegetical and intertextual study of the Hebrew text of Num 6:22-27 and considers the verb “to bless” in relation to each of the verbal expressions of the poetic section of the passage (vv. 24-26). The study shows that the verb *ברך*, “to bless” is a verb of speech meaning “to speak well of or speak good to” someone or something; it entails a testimony of appreciation indicating a positive divine-human relationship even in the absence of material manifestations and benefits. Blessing in Num 6:22-27 is a speech-act process combining benediction and benefaction. The verb “to bless” not only overshadows the entire pericope with its tripartite structure but it also relates to the other verbal expressions of the poetic section (vv. 24-26) in terms of amplification and intensification based on synonymous, semantic, and syntactic parallelism.

The intertextual study in this dissertation (see Chapter 3) shows that the Priestly Blessing is intricately related to the Sinaitic covenant

and to the sanctuary services, rites, festivals, and animal sacrificial system given to Israel to teach them God's plan of salvation. Each expression of the formula of blessing links with sanctuary language and speaks of its services expressing the concept of salvation.

Chapter 4 discusses the theological implications of the Priestly Blessing. The first implication is about God who dwells among His people and is at the center of Israel's physical and spiritual life. God is revealed to be the God who is faithful to His covenant, who dwells in the midst of His people through His presence in the sanctuary, He blesses, protects, forgives, reconciles and restores broken relationships, gives peace, and saves by His gracious and compassionate love. In conclusion, blessing in Num 6:22-27 is about God's saving acts of graciousness towards His people.