Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History[1]
A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology

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In the Old Testament documents there are a number of references or allusions to the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:24-26. One can therefore conclude that the priestly blessing plays a significant role in Old Testament literature generally. However, echoes of this blessing are especially frequent in the book of Psalms.[2]

The obvious cross-references to Numbers 6:24-26 in the Psalter confirm the cultic setting of the words of the blessing as is clear from the formulation of the priestly task in Numbers 6. However, one should note an important difference between psalms that allude to Numbers 6:24-26 and the text of Numbers 6:24-26 itself. Numbers 6:22-27 clearly distinguishes between the words to be spoken by the priests (Num. 6:24-26) and the act of blessing itself, which is to be performed by Yahweh. Shortly after the blessing formula is given, the text adds in verse 27[3]:

"Thus they [i.e. the priests] will put my
Name on the sons of Israel,   וְשָׂמוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

but I am the one who will bless them."   וַאֲנִי אֲבָרֲכֵם:

But the same clear distinction of responsibilities cannot be found in echoing the language of the Psalms. That fact may make the reader cautious. With every psalmic text that refers to Numbers 6:24-26, one faces the question of how the echoes of the priestly benediction are to be understood. Are they to be taken as a wish, a confident statement of fact (either past or present), a prayer, an intention, an obligation--which?

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[1] The authors thank Professor Emeritus John H. Stek for reading the manuscript and for helping with matters of English style.

[2] For the request for and promise of a divine blessing see: Pss 3:8[9]; 5:12[13]; 28:9; 29:11; 109:28; 115:12-13, 15; 128:5 (יְבָרֶכְךָ יַהֹוָה); 129:8; 134:3 (יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהֹוָה); etc. For the request for and promise of divine protection see: Pss 12:7[8]; 16:1; 17:8; 25:20; 34:22; 37:28; 41:3; 86:2; 97:10; 116:6; 121:3,5, 7 (יִשְׁמָרְךָ) and 8; 141:5; 145:20 and 146:9. For the manifestation of the Lord's radiant countenance see: Pss 4:6[7]; 31:16[17]; 67:1[2]; 80:3[4], 7[8], 19[20]; 119:135; etc. For the request for grace and favor see: Pss 4:1[2]; 6:2[3]; 25:16; 31:9[10]10; 41:4[5],10[11]; 51:1[3].; 56:1[2]; 57:1[2]; 86:3; 119:58. For peace (שָׁלוֹם) see: Pss 125:5 and 128:6.

[3] Cf. P.A H. De Boer, "Numbers VI 27," *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982): 3-13.

All these options are reflected in the treatment of Psalm 67 in commentaries and translations. This psalm contains the strongest parallels to the sacerdotal benediction in the Psalter. Verse 2 uses three (out of six) key verbs from Numbers 6:24-26, but, as the following synoptic comparison shows, presents them in a slightly different order:

Psalm 67:2	Numbers 6:24-25
אֱלֹהִים יְחָנֵּנוּ [a]	24[a] יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה
וִיבָרְכֵנוּ [b]	. . .
יָאֵר פָּנָיו אִתָּנוּ [c]	25[a] יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ
	וִיחֻנֶּךָּ [b]

God, may he be gracious to us	May Yahweh bless you. . .
and bless us;	May Yahweh cause his face to shine
may he make his face shine towards	to you
us.	and may he be gracious to you.

Moreover, verses 7b-8a also repeat the key verb יְבָרְכֵנוּ from verse 2b, but, as will be demonstrated, interpreters and translators do not agree about the translation of this *yiqtol* (=imperfect) verb.[4]

The setting reflected in Psalm 67 may indeed be the temple cult, but, unlike the blessing proper in Numbers 6:24-26, the words of blessing in verses 2, 7b-8a are not on the lips of the priest(s) pronouncing blessing on the people. Instead, the speaker is identified with the recipients of the blessing and prays on their behalf: "May God bless us." Moreover, the context refers to "all the nations" (v. 3b) and "all the peoples" (vv. 4b, 6b) and speaks of the land and its harvest (v. 7a).

From the exegetical literature on Psalm 67, one can readily discern two interrelated basic questions that a translator and exegete face here: First, in what mood are the pertinent clauses of this psalm speaking?[5] Second, how does one combine the different expressions: Is it a prayer for a blessing for Israel,[6]

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[4] Frank Crusemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, WMANT, 32 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 200; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 40.

[5] Cf., Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 154-55; Beat Weber, "Psalm LXVII: Anmerkungen zum Text selbst und zur Smilie von W. Beyerlin," *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1993): 561.

[6] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 40. Cf.J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen: Vertaald en Verklaard, 14 Psalm 42-106*, COT (Kampen: Kok, 1958), 177-78; A A Anderson, *The Book of Psalms, I, Psalms 1-72*, NCeB (London: Oliphants, 1972),479,480; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 155; Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 277; etc.

an open invitation to the nations to join the songs of praise,[7] or a communal hymn of thanksgiving for the blessing of a good harvest?[8] A survey of modern translations shows great variation in the answers given.

To address these basic issues, we will first present the Hebrew text of the psalm with a translation and grammatical observations. Then we will review representative translations of vv. 2, 7, and 8. These translations will be the starting point for further linguistic and exegetical analysis, undertaken to find interpretive controls in the text itself. Thereafter, related exegetical and theological matters will come under consideration.

1. Hebrew Text and Translations

1.1. Hebrew Text of Psalm 67, Translation, and Grammatical Observations

Clause Type[9] *and "Actors"*	*Translation*	*Text*	
nonverbal	To the choir leader. With strings.	לַמְנַצֵּחַ בִּנְגִינֹת	Ps 67:1a
	A Psalm. A hymn.	מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר:	Ps 67:1b
3 sg. masc. + 1 pl. suf.			
X-yiqtol	God, may he show mercy to us,	אֱלֹהִים יְחָנֵּנוּ	Ps 67:2a
we-yiqtol	and may he bless us.	וִיבָרְכֵנוּ	Ps 67:2b
O-yiqtol	May he make his face shine upon us	יָאֵר פָּנָיו אִתָּנוּ	Ps 67:2c
	("Sela")	סֶלָה:	Ps 67:2d

[7] N. A. van Uchelen, *Psalmen, deel II*; POT (Nijkerk: Callen bach, 1977), 184. Cf. Generale Synode der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, *Klare Wijn. Reklenschap over geschiedenis, geheim en gezag van de Bijbel's* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1967), 93 (English translation: *The Bible Speaks Again: A Guide from Holland*, Commissioned by the Netherlands Reformed Church, trans. Annebeth Mackie [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969], 78).

[8] Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*,[4] HKAT (GOttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 280. Cf., Rudolf Kittel, *Die Psalmen: Ubersetzt und erklart* (Leipzig: A Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914), 247 (*Erntedanklied*); Elmer A Leslie, *Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 111; William R Taylor, 'The Book of Psalms," in *Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955),4:349; Petrus Johannes Nicolaas Smal, *Die Universalisme in die Psalms* (Kampen: Kok, 1956), 107; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 472; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:185; 2:20 ("with a prayer for the future" [67.2]); Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1969), 2:195; Franz Marius Theodore de Liagre Bohl and B. Gemser, *De Psalmen: Teksten Uitleg* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G. F. Callenbach, 1969), 112; J. P. M. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen: uit de grondtekst vertaald en uitgelegd* (Roermond: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1971), 1:385; etc.

[9] For the abbreviations of the various clause types consult the following key:

X-yiqtol: Subject-yiqtol	W-X-yiqtol: 1-subject-yiqtol
O-yiqtol: yiqtol on front position	Cj.-yiqtol: any conjunction -yiqtol
X-Qatal: Subject -qatal	

3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suf.

ל *+inf cstr*	so that your way is known on earth,	לָדַעַת בָּאָרֶץ דַּרְכֶּךָ	Ps 67:3a
elliptic	(your salvation among all the nations.	בְּכָל־גּוֹיִם יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ׃	Ps 67:3b

3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suI.

O-yiqtol Let the peoples praise you, God!	יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים	Ps 67:4a
O-yiqtol Let all the peoples praise you!	יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים כֻּלָּם׃	Ps 67:4b

3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suf.

O-yiqtol	Let them rejoice	יִשְׂמְחוּ	Ps 67:5a
we-yiqtol	and shout (for joy), the nations	וִירַנְּנוּ לְאֻמִּים	Ps 67:5b
Cj.-yiqtol	for you judge the peoples with equity	כִּי־תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים מִישׁוֹר	Ps 67:5c
W-X-yiqtol	and lead the nations on the earth.	וּלְאֻמִּים בָּאָרֶץ תַּנְחֵם	Ps 67:5d
	("Sela ")	סֶלָה׃	Ps 67:5e

3 plur. + 2 sg. masc. suf.

O-yiqtol	Let the peoples praise you, God!	יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים	Ps 67:6a
O-yiqtol	Let all the peoples praise you!	יוֹדוּךָ עַמִּים כֻּלָּם׃	Ps 67:6b

3 sg. fem + 3 sg. masc + 1 plur. suf.

X-Qatal	The land having yielded its harvest,	אֶרֶץ נָתְנָה יְבוּלָהּ	Ps 67:7a
O-yiqtol	may God, our God, bless us.	יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃	Ps 67:7b

3 sg. masc. + 1 plur. + 3 plor. suf.

O-yiqtol	May God bless us	יְבָרְכֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים	Ps 67:8a
we-yiqtol	so that all the ends of the earth may revere him.	וְיִירְאוּ אֹתוֹ כָּל־אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ׃	Ps 67:8b

Our main reason for undertaking a close analysis of Psalm 67 springs from the interrelatedness of the linguistic and theological questions that bear on the translation of its last two verses. As will be demonstrated, the existing translations of Psalm 67:2, 7, and 8 show that remarkably different choices have been made in the rendering of the verbal forms of the Hebrew text. Three different verbal forms are at issue: the *qatal* (perfect) verb נָתְנָה ("it has given ") in verse 7 a; the clause initial *yiqtol* (imperfect; modal) verbs יָאֵר ("may he make shine ") in verse 2c and יְבָרְכֵנוּ ("may he bless us") in verses 7b and 8a; and the *wᵉyiqtol* (modal) verbs וִיבָרְכֵנוּ ("and may he bless us") in verse 2a and וְיִירְאוּ ("and may they fear") in verse 8b.

1.2. Survey of Representative Translations of Psalm 67:2, 7, and 8

Both newer and older translations exhibit great variation in which they render these forms. Except for Hermann Gunkel,[10] Diethelm Michel,[11] Walter Beyerlin,[12] Bernardus Dirk Eerdmans[13] and Elmer A Leslie,[14] all translations presented below render the verbs of verse 2 with some kind of modality. However, their treatment of the *yiqtol* verbs in verses 7b and 8 differ greatly. Apparently, most translators feel no need to translate the clause initial *yiqtol* verb יְבָרְכֵנוּ in verses 7b and 8a in the same manner as the clause initial shortened *yiqtol* verb יָאֵר in verse 2c.

*Some translations of verses 2 (*yiqtol*), 7 (X-qatal;* yiqtol*) and 8 (*yiqtol*):*
Commentaries:
[1] Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette[15]
2:     Gott sei uns gnadig, und segn' uns,
       Er lasse sein Angesicht gegen uns leuchten.

       . . .
7:     Die Erde gibt ihren Ertrag; Uns segnet Gott,
       unser Gott.   *present - present*
8:     Uns segnet Gott. Und ihn furchten alle Enden
       der Erde.   *present - present*
[2] Franz Delitzsch[16]
2:     Elohim sei uns hold und segne uns,
       Er lasse leuchten sein Antlitz bei uns--. . .
7:     Der Erde hat gegeben ihre Frucht--Segnen wird uns
       Elohim user Gott[17]   *perfect - future*
8:     Segnen wild uns Elohim, und furchten werden ihn
       alle Enden der Erde.   *future - future*

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[10] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 280.

[11] Diethelm Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen*, Abhandlungen zur Evangelischen Theologie,1 (Bonn: H. Bouvier u. CO Verlag, 1960), 115-16.

[12] Walter Beyerlin, *Im Licht der Traditionen: Psalm LXVII und CXV: ein Entwicklungszusammenhang,* Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 45 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 40.

[13] Bernardus Dirk Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalms*, Oudtestamentische Studien, 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1947),21.

[14] Leslie, *The Psalms*, 111-12.

[15] Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen nebst beigefuhrter Ubersetzung*; ed. G. Baur (1811[1]; reprint, Heidelberg: Mohr, 1856), 355.

[16] Franz Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar uber die Psalmen. Erste Halfte: Psalm I-.LXXII[3]* (Leipzig: Dorffling und Franke, 1873), 459-60.

[17] Francis Bolten (Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955],2:239) translates Delitzsch's German translation of v. 7b as a present: "Elohim our God doth bless us."

 [3] Hermann Gunkel[18]

2:      Jahve war uns gnadig und segnete uns,[19]
        lieB leuchten sein Antlitz bei uins. . .

7:      das Land gab seinen Ertrag, uns segnete 'Jahve,'
        unser Gott.   *past - past*

8:      'Jahve' segnete uns; so sollen ihn ehren alle Enden
        der Erde![20]   *past -modal (obligation)*

[4] Bernard us Dirk Eerdmans[21]

2:      Elohim is merciful unto us and blesseth us
        and causeth his face to shine with us. . .

7:      The earth has yielded her increase, Elohim our God
        blesseth us.   *past - present*

8:      Elohim blesseth us, so all the ends of the earth
        fear him.   *present -modal (result)*

[5] Elmer A. Leslie[22]

2:      God has been gracious to us and blessed us,
        and caused His face to shine upon us . . .

7:      The earth has yielded its produce: God, our God,
        has blessed us;   *past - past*

8:      God blesses us, and all the ends of the earth shall
        fear Him.   *present -modal (obligation)*

[6] Artur Weiser[23]

2:      May God be gracious and bless us
        and make his face to shine upon us . . .

7:      The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God,
        blesses us.   *perfect -present*

8:      May God bless us! Let all the ends of the earth
        fear him!   *modal- modal (wish)*

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[18] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 280.

[19] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 281, emends the *yiqtol* verb יְחָנֵּנוּ to a *qatol* חַנַּנוּ, and the following *w^e yiqtol* verb וִיבָרְכֵנוּ to a *wayyiqtol* וַיְבָרְכֵנוּ. For a similar position see: Taylor, "The Books of Psalms," 4:352.

[20] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 281, argues that the meaning of the *yiqtol* verbs יְבָרְכֵנוּ in vv. 7b-8a is determined by the *qatol* verb נָתְנָה in v. 7a. In his judgment, these *yiqtol* verbs may be read as poetic aorists or emended to read בֵּרְכָנוּ (cf. KeBler).

[21] Eerdmans, *The Hebrew Book of Psalm*s, 21.

[22] Leslie, *The Psalms*, 111-12.

23 Weiser, *The Psalms*, 472.

[7] Hans-Joachim Kraus (German edition)[24]

2:      'Jahwe' sei uns gnadig und segne uns,
        er lasse sein Antlitz leuchten bei uns. . .

        . . .

7:      Das Land gab seinen Ertrag. Es segnete uns 'Jahwe,'
        unser Gott!   *past -past*
8:      Es segnete uns 'Jahwe';   *past*
        und es sollen ihn furchten alle Enden der Erde!   *modal (obligation)*

[8] Hans-Joachim Kraus (German Fifth Edition; English translation)[25]

2:      May 'Yahweh' be gracious to us and bless us,
        may he let his countenance shine among us. . .

        . . .

7:      May the land yield its increase! May 'Yahweh,' our God,
        bless us!   *modal- modal*
8:      May 'Yahweh' bless us; Let all the ends of the earth
        fear him![26]   *modal- modal*

[9] Jan Ridderbos[27]

2:      God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,
        Hij doe zijn aanschijn bij ons lichten. . .

        . . .

7:      Het land zal zijn opbrengst geven,   *perfect of confidence*
        God, onze God, zal ons zegenen,   *future*
8:      God zal ons zegenen, en alle einden der aarde
        zullen Hem vrezen!   *future - future(?)*

[10] N. A. van Uchelen[28]

2:      God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,

        . . .

7:      het land geeft zijn opbrengst, God,onze God,
        zegent ons.   *present - present*
8:      God zegene ons, opdat de einden der aarde
        Hem vrezen.   *modal (wish)*

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[24] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen, L Teilband*, BKAT, XV/I (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960), 461.

[25] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 39.

[26] Beyerlin, *Im Licht der Traditionen*, 10, n 29, critiques Kraus' failure to justify grammatically the jussive reading of v. 7a.

[27] J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, 2: 177.

[28] N.A. van Ucbelen, *Psalmen*, *deel II*, POT (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1977), 182.

[11] J. P. M. van der Ploeg[29]

2:      God zij ons barmhartigen zegene ons,
        Hij late zijn Aangezicht over ons lichten. . .

        . . .

7:      Het land heeft zijn oogst gegeven: God, onze God,
        schonk ons zegen   *past -past*
8:      God zegene ons; 0 mogen alle einden der aarde
        Hem vrezen!   *modal - modal (wish)*

[12] Walter Beyerlin[30]

2:      *Jahwe* segnet uns gnadiglich,
        ist uns wohlgesinnt, was unsere Pflugscharen betrifft. . .

        . . .

7:      Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben.   *perfect*
        Es segnet uns Jahwe, unser Gott.   *present*
8:      Es segnet uns Jahwe.   *present*
        Also mussen ihn furchten alle Enden der Erde.   *modal (obligation)*

[13] Diethelm Michel[31]

2:      Gott ist uns gnadig und segnet uns;
        er laBt sein Angesicht bei uns leuchten. . .

        . . .

7:      Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben,   *perfect*
        es segnet uns Gott, unser Gott.   *present*
8:      Es segnet uns Gott,   *present*
        furchten mussen ihn alle Enden der Erde.   *modal (obligation)*

[14] Mitchell Dahood[32]

2:      May God have pity on us and bless us;
        may he cause his face to shine
        may he come to us.

        . . .

7:      May the earth yield her produce,[33] may God, our
        God, bless us.   *precative perfect -modal*
8:      May God bless us, all the ends of the earth revere him.   *modal (wish)*

[29] van der Ploeg, *Psalmen*, 1:385.

[30] Beyerlin, *Im Licht der Traditionen*, 40.

[31] Diethelm Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung in den Psalmen*, Abhandlungen zur Evangelischen Theologie, 1 (Bonn: H. Bouvier u. CO Verlag, 1960), 115-16. Cf. Crusemann, *Studien zur Formgeschimte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, 201.

[32] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, 17 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), 126.

[33] Dahood, *Psalms II*; 129, reads the *qatol* verb נָתְנָה as a precative perfect. cf., *NJPS*; Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a New Translation* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969),787; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:480-81.

[15] Marvin E. Tate[34]
2:      May God be gracious and bless us;
        may he make his face to shine among us. . .

        . . .
7:      The earth yields its harvest!   *perfect of experience*
        Continue to bless us, a God, our God.   *progressive jussive*
8:      May God bless us-And all the ends of the earth
        will fear him!   *modal - future*
Bible Translations
[16] RSV
2:      May God be gracious to us
        and make his face to shine upon us. . .

        . . .
7:      The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God
        has blessed us.   *perfect - perfect*
8:      God has blessed us; let all the ends of the
        earth fear him!   *perfect - modal (wish)*
[17] NEB
2:      God be gracious to us and bless us,
        God make his face shine upon us. . .

        . . .
7:      The earth has given its increase and God, our God,
        will bless us.   *perfect - future*
8:      God grant us his blessing that all the ends of the
        earth may fear rum.   *modal - modal (purpose)*
[18] REB
2:      God be gracious to us and bless us,
        God make his face shine upon us. . .
7:      The earth has yielded its harvest. May God, our
        God, bless us,   *perfect - modal*
8:      God grant us his blessing that all the ends of the
        earth may fear him.   *modal - modal (purpose)*
[19] NIV (cf., KJV)
2:      May God be gracious to us and bless us
        and make his face shine upon us. . .

        . . .
7:      Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God
        will bless us,   *future - future*
8:      God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will
        fear him.   *future - future*

[34] Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 153.

[20] NRSV (cf., NJB)

2:      May God be gracious to us and bless us
        and make his face to shine upon us. . .

        . . .

7:      The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God has
        blessed us;   *perfect -perfect*

8:      May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the
        earth revere him.   *modal- modal (wish)*

[21] NAB

2:      May God be gracious to us and bless us;
        may God's face shine upon us. . .

        . . .

7:      The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God,
        blesses us.   *past -present*

8:      May God bless us still; modal (wish)
        that the ends of the earth may revere our God.   *modal (purpose)*

[22] NBG

2:      God zij ons genadig en zegene ons,
        Hij doe zijn aanschijn bij ons lichten. . .

        . . .

7:      De aarde gat haar gewas, God, onze God
        zegent ons;   *past - present*

8:      God zegent ons opdat alle einden der aarde
        Hem vrezen.   *present -modal (purpose)*

[23] KBS 1975

2:      God zij ons genadig, Hij zegene ons, . . .

        . . .

7:      De aarde gaf haar gewas: God onze God wil
        ons zegenen.   *past - modal (wish)*

8:      Hij wil ons zegenen, God. . . .   *modal (intention)*

[24] KBS 1995

2:      Wees ons genadig, schenk ons uw zegen, God, . . .

        . . .

7:      De aarde brengt haar vruchten op; God, onze
        God zegent ons.   *present - present*

8:      God regent ons;. . .   *present*

This variety of translations is an invitation to reconsider some closely inter-related questions in the reading of this psalm:

The linguistic question: Is Hebrew syntax really so free that almost "anything goes"? That may be more or less the traditional point of view, but if that is the case, it poses a real problem for translators. On what can or should translators base a choice?

The literary question: Is the interpretation and the translation of the psalm a matter of literary genre or of grammar and linguistics? Those who view the psalm as a hymn of praise or as a song of thanksgiving for a harvest tend to slight grammar and translate the clauses that speak of blessing (w. 2, 7b-8b) in the past or perfect tenses. This dominant form-critical approach, however, poses a problem for linguists.

The theological question: Is the translation to be decided on the basis of the theological point of view the translator has adopted relative to the psalm? One may, for example, hold the view that according to the text of this psalm the blessing of the land yielding its harvest can in and by itself be enjoyed by people--whomever and whenever. Or one can hold the view that the blessing of God here in focus is connected with Israel's position in the world among other nations, her unique relationship with God, and therefore cannot be rightly, understood apart from Israel's history--apart from Torah and prophecy, exile and return. This approach poses a problem for the exegete since the psalm seems to explain God's blessing by two very different themes ('you [God] judge the peoples with equity," v. 5c, and "the land has yielded its harvest," v. 7a) and the connection between these two is left unclarified.

It is interesting to note that already in much earlier exegetical work, for instance in de Wette's commentary, this difference of opinion existed. According to de Wette, Psalm 67 is a general hymn that praises God and asks for his blessing.[35] Therefore, in his comment on the verb נָתְנָה in verse 7a he adopts a present translation, "gives," and rejects J. Hitzig's[36] past translation, "gave," on the grounds that a past translation would make the psalm a song of thanksgiving for the harvest:[37]

7. Gives] *Hitzig*: gave, as if the Psalm were a harvest song (cf., Ps. 65, 10).38

For the purpose of this article, it is important to underscore that the only warrant that de Wette's comment offers for the rejection of Hitzig's translation is the observation concerning the psalm's genre: It is not a song of thanksgiving for a harvest. He presents no discussion of the verbal forms as such. However, why would a translation of the *qatol* verb נָתְנָה in the past tense automatically turn the psalm into a thanksgiving song for a harvest?

[35] de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*. In the introduction to his commentary de Wette mentions Ps. 67 with other hymns (p. 3): "Hymnen, in welchen Jehova gepriesen wird, . . . 3) als VolksGott,Ps. 47. 66. 67. 75" ("Hymns, in which Jehovah is praised, . . . 3) as the God of the nations, Ps.. 47; 66; 67; 75"). In his exposition of Ps. 67 (p. 355), he Writes: "Ein Hymnus auf Jehova, ohne besondere Veranlassung, warscheinlich fur den Tempel bestimmt. Bitte um Gnade fur das Yolk Israel, damit die fremden Nationen Jehova erkennen (Vs. 2.3)" ("A hymn to Jehovah, without a specific occasion, that was apparently designed for the temple. A prayer for grace on behalf of the people Israel, so that the foreign nations recognize Jehovah").

[36] J. Hitzig, *Die Psalmen. Historisch-kritische Commentar nebst Ubersetzung* (Heidelberg, 1835).

[37] de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 356.

In any case, de Wette's negative evaluation of Hitzig's past translation of the *qatol* verb נָתְנָה clearly demonstrates that the first person to face the difficulties of grammar and theology in Psalm 67 is the translator. Any translator who chooses one of the renderings presented above (§ 1:2)—of which, with the exception of the REB (# 18), in our opinion, have difficulties in handling consistently the syntax of mood and tenses--runs the risk of determining the theological understanding of the psalm before his readers have even a chance to formulate it themselves.

In the textual analysis that follows, we will search for linguistic arguments that support the translation already proposed above (§ 1.1). This linguistic data will also be helpful for exegetical analysis of the text in general. In section three, we will return to the issue concerning the relationship of blessing, harvest, and history.

2. Textual Analysis

For the linguistic and the exegetical analysis of Psalm 67, it is important to give close attention to its syntax, its literary form, and the actors involved. Of special interest is the use made of verbal forms and the clause type of verse 7a.

2.1. Linguistic Data
2.1.1. Compositional Structure

In his form-critical analysis of Psalm 67, Hermann Gunkel suggested that the text of the psalm is incomplete. He felt that the refrain of verses 4 and 6 should be added again at the end.[39]

Older and more recent rhetorical analysis, however, has observed the concentric structure of verses 4 through 6, with verses 4 and 6 framing verse 5.[40] In

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[38] Ibid. "7. Gibt] Hitzig: gab, als ware der Ps. ein Emtelied (cf., Ps. 65, 10)."

[39] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 281. cf. Bernhard Duhrn, *Die Psalmen*, KHKAT (Leipzig: Verlag van J .C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1899), 174; de Liagre Bohl and Gemser, *DePsalmen*, 33; Leslie, *The Psalms*, 112; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms: Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text*, vol. I, *Psalms 1- 72* (Dublin: Browne and Noland Ltd., 1953), 285; Taylor, 'The Book of the Psalms," 4:349.

40 Cf., Nils W. Lund, "Chiasmus in the Psalms, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 49 (1933): 289; idem, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschicthe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 97-98; Grusemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte*, 199-200; R. L. Alden, "Chiastic Psalms (II): A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 51-100," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19 (1976): 194-95; Peter van der Lugt, *Strofische Structuren in de Bijbels Hebreeuwse Poezie: de geschiedenis van het onderzoek en een bijdrage tot de theorievorming omtrent strofenbouw van de psalmen*, Dissertationes Neerlandicae Series Theologica (Kampen: Kok, 1980), 304; Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 155 (he refers to Crusemann); Beyerlin, *Im Licht der Traditionen*, 10-13 and 40; Weber, "Psalm LXVII," 559-561;W. S. Prinsloo, "Psalm 67: Harvest Thanksgiving Psalm, (eschatological) Hymn, Communal Prayer, Communal Lamentor . . .?" *Old Testament Essays* 7 (1994): 238; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., 'The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 4:939; etc.

identical words, verses 4 and 6 repeat the wish that God's praise extend to the peoples. The reason why is given in verse 5, the pivotal verse of the psalm: The nations should praise and shout for joy because God judges them with equity and leads them.[41] The concentric structure in the psalm can be elaborated further. The echoes of the priestly blessing are restricted to the beginning of the psalm (v. 2) and its end (v. 7b-8a). So these verses, in turn, frame the central block of verses 4 through 6 to form the following concentric structure that focuses attention on verse 5 as the centerpiece of the psalm:[42]

        2a God, may he show mercy to us,

        b and may he **bless us**.

A   c May he make his face shine upon us

        3a | (so that your way is known on earth (אֶרֶץ),

        b your salvation among all the nations (גּוֹיִם).

  B   4a Let the peoples (עַמִּים) praise you, God!

          b Let all the peoples (עַמִּים) praise you!

            5aLet them rejoice

    C   b and shout (for joy), the nations (לְאֻמִּים)

         c   (because you judge the <u>peoples</u> (עַמִּים) with equity

         d   and lead the nations (לְאֻמִּים) on the earth (אֶרֶץ).

  B'   6a. Let the <u>peoples</u> (עַמִּים) praise you, God!

         b   Let all the peoples (עַמִּים) praise you!

        7a The land (אֶרֶץ) having yielded its harvest,

A'   b may God, our God, **bless us**.

        c May God **bless us**

        d so that all the ends of the earth (אֶרֶץ) may revere him.

It is important to observe that within this rhetorical architecture of the psalm a number of shifts occur. In verses 2 and 7 through 8 the same set of actors is present. The participants are "He" (God) and "us." In verses 3 to 6, the idiom and the set of actors is different: "You" (God) and "they" (the nations). This change in idiom and in the set of actors makes a comparison with the text of the Aaronic benediction of particular interest. As here, so in Numbers 6:24-26, the blessing is located in a context of two main actors. In Numbers 6:24-26, the actors are "Yahweh" and "you" (singular!), the individual members of the community of Israel. In Psalm 67, however, the two main actors are identified as "God" /"He" and "us" (verses 2, 7b-8). Moreover, it is important to note astrik-

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[41] The concentric structure of vv. 4-6 is supported by the symmetrical sequence of the seven-fold references to "the peoples": לְאֻמִּים . . . עַמִּים . . . לְאֻמִּים . . . עַמִּים (v. 4). . . עַמִּים (v. 5). . . עַמִּים . . . עַמִּים (v. 6). Cf. Paul R Raabe, *Psalm Structures: A Study of Psalms with Refrains*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 104 (Sheffield: jSOT Press, 1990), 200.

[42] Beyerlin, *Im Licht der Traditionen*, 13 and 40; McCann, Jr., "The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," 4:939.

ing double shift in actors in verses 3 to 6: from "God"/"He" to "you" ("God") and from "us" (Israel) to "they" (the nations). This arresting shift means that the dialogue of Israel and God is continued by the direct address "you," while at the same time the role of the other actors on stage, the nations, is emphasized. The nations should see the blessing, understand, rejoice, and revere. With references to "the earth," "the nations," "the peoples," and "all the ends of the earth" in verses 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8b, the stage has been greatly enlarged.

Thus while the echo of the priestly blessing in verse 2 may suggest a liturgical setting, the psalm neither mentions the priest, whose role it was to pronounce the blessing, nor the Name to be laid on the children of Israel, as Numbers 6:27 prescribes. Clearly, the scene is much broader than the liturgical moment of the priestly blessing. The psalm can better be regarded as a song of the community in response to a particular blessing experienced in history.

In view of the above observations, the importance of verse 8 becomes known. Already in verse 7b the psalm returns to the first set of actors: May "He" bless "us." However, in verse 8 one finds the combination of all the actors on stage: "May God bless us, that all the ends of the earth (they) may fear Him!" Thus while the rhetorical composition of the psalm may indeed have a concentric structure, the shift in the set of actors means that the concluding verses of the psalm (vv. 7b-8) do not merely repeat its opening lines (vv. 2-3). Rather, it ends by integrating the roles of all the actors.

That still leaves one special clause, namely, verse 7a: 'The land has yielded its harvest." What is the meaning of this clause in this context? To whom is this message directed? The *qatol* form of the verb נָתְנָה is of particular interest and could contain the clue to the psalm's interpretation. How is it to be understood? Is it to be read as referring to the past (Gunkel: expressive of thanksgiving), to the present (de Wette: expressive of present experience of blessing), to a wish (NEB: expressive of a prayer for blessing), or to a certain future as the NIV suggests? Before we can address that question, we need to examine the syntax of the text as a whole.

2.1.2. Clause Types and Verbal Forms

The text of Psalm 67 is dominated by the use of *yiqtol* and *w^{e}yiqtol* verbal forms (fourteen clauses out of nineteen--leaving aside two cases of סֶלָה) a majority of them (eleven) occupying the initial position in their clauses. A special difficulty with the translation of *yiqtol* verbal forms is the fact that one does not always find sufficient morphological clues to decide in a particular text whether these are indicative or modal verbs. With first-person verbs, one may find the form extended by a הָ, the so-called cohortative. With other verbal lexemes, one may meet the shortened form of the second- or third-person *yiqtol* the so-called jussive (as in יָאֵר פָּנָיו; v. 2c). However, in the case of the usual *yiqtol* verbal form, such as יִשְׂמְחוּ (v. 5b) and יְבָרְכֵנוּ (vv. 7b, 8a), modality is not morphologically marked.

Alviero Niccacci has suggested that one should search for *syntactical* marker of modality in addition to the morphological ones.[43] In our judgment, two of the syntactical markers of a modal *yiqtol* verb that he proposes apply to the text of Psalm 67-first, when the third-person *yiqtol* form occupies the initial position in a clause (e.g. יוֹדוּךָ vv. 4 and 6), and second, when the *yiqtol* is continued by a *w^e yiqtol* (as in vv. 2b, 5b and 8b). We are aware that with poetry one has to be careful, since syntax may be overruled by a particular rhetorical design, such as fronting or chiasm. We believe, however, that the syntactical markers Niccacci has identified are valid for the interpretation of Psalm 67.

We have already pointed out that most translations quoted above (§ 1.2) accept modality in their reading of verse 2. The problems are with verses 7b and 8a, where, in spite of the fact that the same *yiqtol* verbal form יְבָרְכֵנוּ occupies the initial position in each clause, translations differ widely. The identical verb is rendered "has blessed," "did bless," "may X bless," "blesses," and "will bless." This variety in translation leads to the conclusion that the lack of morphological marking has clearly been taken as an opportunity to translate in accord with one's exegetical preferences. In our view, that is not a valid practice. To warrant this judgment, we will focus the reader's attention on verse 7a.

Verse 7a is a crucial clause for the translation and interpretation of Psalm 67. Apart from it, one could read this psalm as a prayer for God's blessing and an invitation to all nations to praise him because of his blessings. However, its presence cannot be ignored--both what it states and its linguistic form is unexpected.

We must first consider the clause type that verse 7a represents. Here the subject (אֶרֶץ, "earth," "land"), rather than the verb (נָתְנָה, "she gives") is in the clause initial position, and this verb has a *qatol* form in distinction from the vast majority of *yiqtol* and *w^e yiqtol* verbal forms. In fact, it is the only *qatol* verb employed in Psalm 67! Why does this fronting of the subject occur, and why is the *qatol* verbal form used?

Next we need to consider why the subject אֶרֶץ stands here without the definite article such as is implied in the pointing of this noun in verses 3a (בָּאָרֶץ, "on the earth") and 5d (בָּאָרֶץ). This fact, together with the combination of "earth" and "harvest" suggest that with the word אֶרֶץ a new entity is being introduced. Verses 3a and 5d speak of the earth as the habitation of peoples, but in verse 7a, the noun refers to cultivated land, to soil or ground yielding its har-

[45] A Niccacci, "A Neglected Point of Hebrew Syntax: Yiqtol and Position in the Sentence," Studium *Biblicum Franciscanum, Liber Annuus* 37 (1987): 7-19. For other opinions see: H. Jagersma, "Some remarks on the jussive in Numbers 6:24-26" in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala (Fs. J. P.M. van der Ploeg),* eds. W.C. Delsman, J. T. Nelis, J. R T. M. Peters, W. H. Ph. Romer, A. S. van der Woude, AOAT Bd., 211 (Neukirchen-Vluyn:NeukirchenerVerlag, 1982), 131-36; and Ch. Hatav, *The Semantics of Aspect and Modality: Evidence from English and Biblical Hebrew*, SLCS: Studies in Language Companion Series, 34 (Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997), 152-6.1. Cf. Klaus Seybold, *Der aaronitische Segen. Studien zu Numeri 6,22-27* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1977), 22-23.

vest. So we have the statement about "the[44] land has yielded its harvest" placed between two exclamations, "Let all the peoples praise you!" (v. 6b) and "May God bless us!" (v. 7b).

The translations presented above (§ 1.2) show that usually not much attention is being paid to these important linguistic details. Rather, the translations have been based on general literary or theological considerations:

As was noted above, de Wette's comments on Hitzig's translation of the qatol verb נָתְנָה in verse 7a demonstrate that Psalm 67 was already at that time interpreted in terms of a ceremony of thanksgiving on the occasion of the summer harvest.[45] Later Gunkel classified the psalm as a song of thanksgiving for a harvest festival (ErnteDanklied).[46] To support this classification, Gunkel was forced to resort to textual emendation of the *yiqtol* verbs of verse 2.[47]

A more theological variation to the concept of a grain harvest is the idea that the psalm refers to eschatological times when all peoples will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for worship[48]--a "harvest" for the God of Israel.[49] Now, although one need not exclude such a reading out of hand as an option in the psalm's later employment, it does not offer much help for linguistic analysis of the text. Translations based on this view also render both the *qatol* and the *yiqtol* verbal forms of verse 7 in the present tense, as if there were no difference here both in verbal form and clause type.

2.2. "Beyond Form Criticism": Linguistic Analysis

It is clear that a premature interest in the psalm's literary genre and its location in the history of religion or a premature conclusion as to its theological import do not encourage close attention to language and grammar as the source of basic clues for proper reading. Of course, most exegetes would not deny that methodologically a linguistic analysis of a text should be given priority over theological interest. It is generally acknowledged that analytical examination of the language of a text precedes interpretation. Nevertheless, in practice all interpreters face the difficulty of when arid how to combine analysis and interpretation. We do not wish to suggest that we will provide the final answer to this complex issue, but we do want to demonstrate one way to move from linguistic analysis to theological interpretation.

[44] In English one cannot avoid introducing the use of the definite article before "land."

[45] de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 356.

[46] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 280. For a discussion of Gunkel's position see Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 40.

[47] Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 281. For a critique see: Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 40.

[48] Suggested, among others, by van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, 2: 184. Buttenweiser, *The Psalms*, 787, also reads Ps. 67 as an eschatological hymn.

[49] H. A Wiersinga, *Zendingsperspectief in het Oude Testament* (Baarn: Bosch & Keuning, 1954), 76.

To that end, we will first search the Old Testament for linguistic parallels to the text of verse 7a, using the Bible software program *Quest*.[50] Using this computer-search software, we will be concerned to find two types of parallels: (1) texts with the same or similar idiom (analogies of a lexical type); and (2) texts with the same or similar grammatical clause type (analogies of a syntactic type) .

2.2.1. Lexical Parallels

To discover lexical parallels to Psalm 67:7a, a "query" was composed that requested verses that have the verb נָתַן, "to give," followed by a maximum of two words, one of which is to be פְּרִי, "fruit," or יְבוּל, "produce," "harvest."[51] A reversed order of the elements was also allowed. The result of the search was the following collection of lexical parallels, which, for reasons of space, are listed without their full contexts:

Then the land will yield its fruit	וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ פִּרְיָה	Lev 25:19
And the land will yield its harvest	וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָה	Lev 26:4
And your land will not yield its harvest	וְלֹא־תִתֵּן אַרְצְכֶם אֶת־יְבוּלָה	Lev 26:20
And the soil will not yield its harvest	וְהָאֲדָמָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָה	Dt 11:17
And the land will yield its harvest	וְהָאָרֶץ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָה	Ez 34:27
And the land will yield its harvest	וְהָאָרֶץ תִּתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָה	Zech 8:12
(The) land has yielded its harvest	אֶרֶץ נָתְנָה יְבוּלָה	Ps 67:7
And our land will yield its harvest	וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָה:	Ps 85:13

The expression אֶרֶץ נָתְנָה יְבוּלָה in Psalm 67:7a appears to be closely related to two groups of texts. The first of these consists of texts from the *Torah*: Leviticus 25:19 (which concerns the year of Jubilee) and Leviticus 26:4, 20 and Deuteronomy 11:17 (which concern the blessings and curses of the covenant that are contingent on Israel's obedience or disobedience of Yahweh's commandments) .The clustering of the words *earth, harvest*, and *blessing* found here is also present in Psalm 67, but the connection with the commandments of the Torah is not. What, then, about the second group of texts, namely, Ezekiel 34:27, Zechariah 8:12, and Psalm 85:12[13], texts in which a successful harvest belongs to traditional prophetic expectations associated with the renewal of Israel's life after their return from exile?[52]

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[50] E. Talstra, C. Hardmeier, J. A Groves, eds., *Quest: Electronic Concordance Applications for the Hebrew Bible* (data base and retrieval software) (Haarlem: NBG, 1992).

[51] Quest applies a particular type of "queries" that the user can compose with the help of a subroutine. For details see the manual: J. A Groves, H.J. Bosman, J. H. Harmsen, E. Talstra, *User Manual Quest: Electronic Concordance Application for the Hebrew Bible* (Haarlem.. NBC, 1992), 1-128.

[52] Cf. Hos. 2:21-22 [23-24]; Isa. 4:2; 30:23-25; Jer. 31:12; Ezek. 36:29-30.

Ezekiel 34:20-31 announces that God will act as a judge and will appoint a new shepherd to Israel, namely, "My servant David" (vv. 23, 24). In this way, God will bring peace and security (vv. 25, 27) to his people. Verse 26 also makes an explicit reference to "blessing." Rains will bring their blessings (v. 26) and, as a result, "the trees of the field will yield their fruit and the land will yield its harvest" (v. 27; cf., Lev. 26:4, 20).

The promise of Ezekiel 34:27 should be compared with Psalm 85:.12[13]:

Indeed, Yahweh will bestow what is good,   גַּם־יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוֹב   [a]

and our land will yield its harvest.   וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָהּ:   [b]

But an even stronger analogy is present in Zechariah 8:9-13.

This portion of Zechariah's prophecy is framed bywords of encouragement "Let your hands be strong" (v. 9) and "Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong" (v. 13). The new generation is summoned to reflect upon earlier prophetic words spoken when the temple was being rebuilt (v. 9). Before that time there were no benefits produced for humans or animals (v. 10). However, now (v. 11) a new time will begin. God will give prosperity. Verse 12 describes the new beginning as follows:

because a seed of peace   כִּי־זֶרַע הַשָּׁלוֹם   [a]

the vine will yield its fruit,   הַגֶּפֶן תִּתֵּן פִּרְיָהּ   [b]

the ground will produce its harvest,   וְהָאָרֶץ תִּתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ   [c]

and the heavens will drop their dew.   וְהַשָּׁמַיִם יִתְּנוּ טַלָּם   [d]

and I will cause the remnant of this people   וְהִנְחַלְתִּי אֶת־שְׁאֵרִית הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה   [e]
to possess all these things.

The opening words of this verse (כִּי־זֶרַע הַשָּׁלוֹם, "because a seed of the peace") are difficult. A. S. van der Woude transposes the definite article · הַ from הַשָּׁלוֹם and attaches it as a pronominal suffix to זֶרַע (זַרְעָהּ, "her seed").[53] The result is a nonverbal clause: זַרְעָהּ שָׁלוֹם ("haar zaaizaad gedijt," "her seed is fruitful").[54] In spite of the difficulties,[54] the general thrust of the clause cannot be missed. It is clear that "the vine will yield its fruit (הַגֶּפֶן תִּתֵּן פִּרְיָהּ), the ground will yield its harvest (וְהָאָרֶץ תִּתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ), and heavens will give their dew" (v. 12). Then Judah and Israel will become a blessing to the nations (v. 13: וִהְיִיתֶם בְּרָכָה; cf. Hag 1:10; 2:19)-a theme elaborated in verses 20-22.

The analogies with postexilic prophecy in terms of both lexical data and the actors involved suggest another reading of Psalm 67 than that it is just a general liturgical text expressing the community's gratitude for a good harvest. The prophetic words speak of a new beginning. After the return from exile and the

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[53] A.S. van der Woude, *Zachariah*, POT (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1984), 142.

[54] For a defense of the Massoretic Text, See: R Hanhart, *Sacharja*, BKAT Dodekapropheton, 7.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), 517, 525, 535. Hanhart translates זֶרַע הַשָּׁלוֹם as "Same des Friedens" ("seed of peace").

restoration of the temple, a good harvest is a sign of hope, confirming that, indeed, a new time has begun. It may well be, therefore, that we have in Psalm 67 an echo of this prophetic word: "The land has yielded its harvest," now may God bless us (cf. Zech. 8:13), and may it be visible to all the nations. It should be recalled that Leviticus 26:42 also promised that after the devastation and exile God would remember the land.

If the analogy of Psalm 67 to the prophetic word in Zechariah 8:12, based on lexical and syntactical comparison, is accepted as plausible, we must return to the question of how to read the *qatol* verbal form of Psalm 67:7a and how this reading would influence the analysis of the *yiqtol* verbal forms in verses 7b and 8a. The question is: Are they to be translated as past, as present, or as jussives in accordance with the same verbal forms in verse 2?

2.2.2. Syntactical Parallels

To propose a solution to this question, it is necessary to find other instances of clauses in the Old Testament that have a syntactical structure similar to Psalm 67:7: a fronted noun followed by a *qatol* verb in the first clause and a *yiqtol* verb in the next clause. For that, a computer search was made based on the following query: a noun, a *qatol* verbal form, a maximum of two words, and a *yiqtol* verbal form. This search, under the constraint of a noun in the initial position, yielded only a small number of texts: but some were found. Comparing them appears to warrant the conclusion that a *qatol-->yiqtol* sequence constitutes a syntactical pattern to be rendered: "when A has happened, B will or should happen."[55]

Two examples suffice to illustrate this sequence. The first example is Amos 3:8:

Has a lion roared,	אַרְיֵה שָׁאָג [a] *qatol*
who would not be afraid?	מִי לֹא יִירָא [b] *yiqtol*
Has the Sovereign LORD spoken,	אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דִּבֶּר [c] *qatol*
who would not prophesy?	מִי לֹא יִנָּבֵא: d *yiqtol*

The second example is Ezekiel 33:16:

Has he done right and justice;	מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה עָשָׂה [c] *qatol*
he shall surely live.	חָיוֹ יִחְיֶה d *yiqtol*

If one removes the constraint of the fronted noun, one finds more instances of the *qatol-->yiqtol* type. A few examples are: Psalms 46:7; 56:5; and 77:17.

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[55] Cf., Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commtmtar uber die Psalmen*, 1:461; Weber, "Psalm LXVII,"561. Weber reject Beyerlin's present-tense translation ofvv. 2, 7b-8a because it is based on the textual emendation of the *yiqtol* verb יָאֵר in v. 2c (p. 8) and, in line with the interpretation of the *qatol - yiqtol* sequence proposed in this article, renders v. 7 as: "Das Land hat seinen Ertrag gegeben-Jahwe, unser Gott, moge uns wiederum/weiterhin segnen" ("The land has yielded its harvest-may Yahweh, our God, bless us once more/again").

The examples found in Amos 3:8 and Ezekiel 33:16 demonstrate the distinct possibility that a *yiqtol* clause following a *qatol* clause can express a modality. That means that also in Psalm 67:7 and 8 it is possible to translate according to the syntactical rule proposed by Niccacci, namely, that a modal use of a clause initial *yiqtol* verb (v. 8a) is corroborated by the *w^{e}yiqtol* following it (v. 8b). Therefore, the *yiqtol* verbs in verses 7 and 8 can be translated modally in a way similar to verse 2.

^{7}a The land having yielded its harvest,	*perfect*
^{b} may God, our God, bless us.	*modal*
^{8}a May God bless us	*modal*
^{b} so that all the ends of the earth may revere him.	*modal (purpose)*

The fronting of the indefinite noun אֶרֶץ implies the introduction of a new actor in the text or-in case the actor is known already-an explicit turn to the actor's role.[57] As was noted above (§ 2.1.2), it is "earth" as land that God causes to yield a harvest. This explicit reference is reflected in the proposed translation: "The land having yielded. . . ."

It seems to us that the lexical and the syntactical data can be joined to assist in the interpretation of Psalm 67. A clear analogy to the text of Zechariah 8 is present. The new times, the time of renewal has begun, as is signaled by the fact that a new harvest has been given. May God now continue to bless his people, and may the nations see it and understand what is happening.

We find it of considerable interest that a similar explanation is already mentioned in de Wette's commentary. In his introduction to Psalm 67, de Wette[58] refers to the work of Heinrich Ewald.[59] And Ewald translates verses 7 through 8 with modality:

The earth already gives its fruit: may God, our God, bless us!

May God bless us, so that all earth's bounds may fear him.[60]

and he comments[61]:

From the close ver. 7 it is further clear that such high wishes were formed precisely in a time when the new settlement was snatched from imminent

[56] Cf, REB; J.J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms: A New Translation with explanatory notes for English readers*, 9th ed. rev. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901), 279.

[57] C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A Naude, J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*; Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), § 47.2.b (p. 347).

[58] de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 335.

[59] Heinrich Ewald, *Die poetischen Bucher des Allen Bundes. Erster Theil. Algemeines uber die hebraische Poesie und uber das Psalmenbuch* (Gottingen: VandenHoeck und Ruprecht, 1839). English translation: G. Heinrich A. v. Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. E. Johnson (London: WillIams and Norgate,1880).

[60] Ewald *Die poetischen Bucher*: 372 (translation mine) The German reads: "Erde gibt schon ihre Frucht: segne Gott uns, unser Gott! segne Gott uns, dass ihn furchten alle Erdengrenzen.

[61] Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 2:199.

distress by an unexpectedly rich harvest, (therefore plainly enough at the time of Haggai, see above on Ps. cxxvi) and this first blessing might serve as pledge for the further greater ones.

As noted earlier, de Wette himself assigns a rather broad cultic function to Psalm 67, even while mentioning some other views, including that of Ewald. His comments on Ewald's views are too short, however, to know precisely what he thinks of them. He writes:

Ewald considers the Psalm to be a pronouncement of the priestly blessing from the postexilic time of restoration, with a view to the expectations of the new colony, on the occasion of a plentiful harvest."[62]

As should be clear from the preceding discussion, it is our view that Ewald's understanding of the text can be supported. We would emphasize, however, that the focus is not just on a particular harvest in and by itself. The connection with the prophetic texts makes clear that the important theme is a harvest experienced as a sign for Israel's new future among the nations.

3. Interpretation: Text, Methodology and Theology
3.1. Linguistic Data

Relating Psalm 67:7 to postexilic prophecies of renewal, especially to the text of Zechariah 8, helps to find a theological position for the psalm where "blessing," "harvest" and "history" are connected in a meaningful way. Our proposal is to view the psalm in a theological frame of reference similar to the situation found in postexilic prophecy. There one finds the same extended set of actors as in Psalm 67:8 interacting on one stage in relationship to God's blessing, namely, God, Israel, the peoples, the earth, the harvest.

When one takes account of what has been observed concerning the syntactical and lexical relationships of Psalm 67:7 with the texts of Ezekiel 34:27 and Zechariah 8:12, the first conclusion to be drawn is methodological. It becomes apparent that translators and exegetes "do not live by assumptions about literary genre alone." We emphasize not alone. It is a matter of priority. Analysis of the linguistic features of a text should be done first--both lexical and grammatical.

If one reads Psalm 67 bringing immediately to bear certain assumptions about the history of religion and cult, one may end up missing the point of what the composition as a whole is expressing. Of course, with the linguistic approach we are arguing for one is making assumptions as well. The basic assumption is that related texts exhibit related idiom, grammar, and actors.

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[62] de Wette, *Commentar uber die Psalmen*, 356. "Ewald halt den Ps. fur eine Ausfuhrung des priesterlichen Segensspruchs aus der Zeit der Wiederherstellung nach dem Exil, mit Rucksicht auf die Hoffnungen der neuen Colonie, auf Anlass einer reichen Ernte (Vs. 7)."

The combination of these elements is important. It is not enough merely to be able to register a number of identical words. In combination, however, these linguistic data provide an effective starting point in textual analysis.

3.2. Discourse and History of Religion

By locating Psalm 67 in a recurring cultic ceremony and explaining it as a song of praise on the occasion of a harvest, one turns the contents of the text into a general one. Then it merely says: God did bless us; may all nations see it and be impressed. From this presupposed cultic setting one proceeds immediately to interpretation. The text's setting is then the interaction of cult and harvest season.

A more formal linguistic and syntactical comparison of Psalm 67 with other texts in the biblical corpus follows a reverse path. First, one undertakes an analysis of the text and a comparison with other texts. That makes it possible to analyze the text as one that participates in a discourse, as a text that takes a stand in a particular theological dialogue. The psalm's text can be analyzed in the theological context of postexilic prophecy in Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah. One can also compare parallels of Psalm 67:5 and 8 with Isaiah 52:10, Psalms 96:13 and Psalm 98:8. Such comparisons produce what one could call a literary-theological setting of the text.

Assigning the text to a particular time and place, if possible at all, is much more a matter of hypothesis. For a complete interpretation, that needs to be tried also,[63] but it is a second step in the exegetical procedure. One could, for example, assume a cultic setting in the second temple where the priestly blessing was pronounced, as is described in the book of Ben Sirah, chapter 50:20-21. The high priest Simon blessed the community using the Name of God in accordance with the text of the priestly blessing. The Septuagint version of Sirah speaks of the Name, but refers to God with the word **kurioj** ("Lord"). Simon "gave the blessing of the LORD (**dounai eulogian kurion**) using the name of the LORD (**en onomati autou**).[64] Psalm 67 may have been sung at a similar occasion, but, of course, this cannot be more than a hypothesis.

However, the exegetical task should properly begin by locating a text first in the biblical corpus, rather than first in the context of religio-historical assumptions. As we see it, the exegetical procedure chosen determines whether one reads Psalm 67 in terms of a "harvest" as the occasion for an annual harvest festival or a particularly significant "harvest" in Israel's history.

[63] Cf., H. G. Jefferson, 'The Date of Psalm LXVII," *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 201-5.
[64] Cf. Seybold, *Der aaronitische Segen*, 15.

3.3. Reading in Canonical Context: Interpretation and Theology

A positioning of the text in terms of theological discourse, rather than an assignment of the text to a cultic setting of ancient religion, will allow modern readers to interact with the text and to address questions of theological importance. The main questions the text of Psalm 67 evokes are about the relationship of Israel and the nations and about the nature of God's blessing. What kind of blessing is expressed by the successful harvest referred to in verse 7a: a blessing in accordance with the creation order or a blessing of historical significance? The empirical referent of the declarative statement in Psalm 67:7a is clear: The land has yielded its harvest. The question is: How does one interpret the meaning of this successful harvest?

In their interpretation, exegetes may decide to concentrate on a blessing of God that is experienced as part of the regular pattern of creation (Gen 1:11; cf. 8:22). That is how Kraus reads Psalm 67 in his commentary.[65] According to him, verses 7 and 8 refer to the experience of the ground yielding its fruits, and this should give reason for a universal recognition of the God of Israel among the nations.[66] Since the setting of this text is a cultic ceremony, Psalm 67 is to be sung as a response of the community to the priest's pronouncement of the Aaronic blessing.

Kraus' interpretation implies that the emphasis is on God as creator and as judge and as ruler of the world (verse 5). The nations are dependent on the same creator as Israel. They will see the salvation and blessing by God and be joyful and reverently acknowledge him.[67]

Two arguments can be raised against this view. First, it would be the only case in the list of harvest texts (§ 2.2.1.) with such a direct focus on creation. The other texts all belong to the idiom of covenantal blessing and curse or the prophetic idiom of renewal after the exile. Second, as the translations presented above (§ 1.2) demonstrate, this theological view requires a nonmodal reading of the *yiqtol* verbal forms of verses 7 and 8. However, this disturbs the composition of the psalm, since in verse 2 most translators continue to accept modality expressed by the *yiqtol* forms.

The linguistic data discussed above call for an interpretation of Psalm 67 that concentrates on the experience of blessing in a specific historical setting. The prayer for God's blessing and the wish that God's praise extend to the peoples belong together based on experienced history--a new beginning made after the exile. The prophetic words of Zechariah 8:12 provide the theological

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[65] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 41-42. To be fair to him, however, one should note that, like Delitzsch, he (p. 42) also claims that every harvest is a fulfillment of the promise in Lev 26.4.

[66] Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 42.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 500.

framework for arriving at an interpretation of life in a new situation. That the "land has yielded its fruits" is a signal. Dearly God still cares, so may he continue to give his blessing.

How would the nations fit into this history? Walter Brueggemann, in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, offers a proposal.[68] He assumes a certain shift in the actors of the psalm. In verse 2, "May he bless us" refers to Israel, but in verses 7 through 8, "may he bless us" includes the "the peoples" as well.

This extension of "us" is an interesting suggestion. One might suppose that when Psalm 67 is sung in a Christian church the congregation is actually performing the reading suggested by Brueggemann. In our judgment, however, this extension belongs to the reception of the text rather than to its interpretation. To be sure, as regards the nations, Psalm 67 comes close to statements that can be found in Zechariah 8. There, in verse 23, we are told that other peoples will address members of the restored Jewish community and say to them, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you." But they still say "you" and not "us."

However, even if we are not prepared to follow Brueggemann and read the nations into the psalm as part of the "us," the moment does come when we get involved. Even so, we are not involved as participants in the text but as its new readers. Also, as modern readers, our main challenge in the psalm's interpretation remains for us to find the proper balance among blessing, harvest, and history. Reading and singing requires awareness of our full tradition. Singing Psalm 67 implies that one cannot call a successful harvest a blessing without knowing one's history--the history of Israel and the history of the Christian community.

We should not mistake success in and by itself for salvation or blessing. Experience with history and prophecy helps to explain the harvest as a sign. It is a sign that God's history with his people goes on. Equally importantly, it is a sign that God's history goes on not exclusively with his own people. The function of this signally important harvest is to catch the attention of the nations and move them to recognize and praise God. The particular history of God and Israel is meant to become a blessing for all--as the prophecy of Zechariah 8 announces.

The words of Psalm 67 about God's blessing constitute the point were creation and history are in touch.[69] The sphere of human experience is not just an arena of daily competition and of good luck or bad luck. It is the area wherein God gives his signs as an invitation to participate in his particular history with Israel, the church, and all mankind.

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[69] Cf. the interesting paper on "blessing" as a theological theme on the edge of "nature" and "history" by H.-P. Muller: "Segen im Alten Testament. Theologische Implikationen eines halb vergessenen Themas," *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche* 87 (1990): 1-32.