

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

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Biblical Word of the Month - Seder

By: Jeff A. Benner

Continuing the Hebraic view of "order" we will examine the Hebrew root סדר. The word סדר (seder) is found in Job 10:22 "A land of darkness is like a darkness of death and without order, and the light is like darkness". This imagery is reminiscent of Genesis 1 where the heavens and the earth were in total darkness, a state of chaos. The creative power of God then "ordered" (through words as in an order and in action through the arranging of the creation) the world into a state of "order".

Another Hebrew word derived from this root is סדרה (sederah). While this word is written with a shin (The shin with the "s" sound instead of the "sh" sound), it is etymologically related to words spelled with the samech (as in סדר). The word sederah means a "row", an ordered arrangement of something such as the boards of a fence. Again we see this work in the creation narrative where all of the plants, animals, water, sky, sun, moon, etc. are placed in their proper arrangement.

There are a couple of common modern Hebrew words from the root סדר. The first is the Passover "Seder". The meal served on Passover is called a "seder", literally meaning an "ordered arrangement". The entire Passover meal is like a symphony of many parts

making one harmonious sound. The second is the "sidur". This word is often translated as "prayer book" but is literally an "ordered arrangement" of prayers.

Name of the Month - Eber

By: Jeff A. Benner

Abraham is the first person called a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13) in the Biblical text. What does the name Hebrew mean and where does it come from? Abraham's G,G,G,G,G Grandfather was Ever (or Eber) "And Arpachshad bore Shalch who bore Ever" (Genesis 10:24). The Hebrew spelling of the word Hebrew is עברי and the Hebrew spelling of Ever is עבר. When the letter ם is placed after a name it means "one belonging to the family of ..." and in this case a Hebrew is one who belongs to the family of Eber. By definition, a Hebrew is one who is descended from Ever and this would include Abraham as well as his brothers Nahor and Haran. While the lineage's of Nahor and Haran seem to disappear, probably absorbed into other cultural groups, only Abraham and his descendents remain Hebrews to this day.

The root עבר means to "cross over" or "pass through". As names play a very significant role of the ancient peoples of the Near East, this name and its meaning is indicative of Abraham and his descendents. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were nomads who by definition are ones who travel or pass through many lands on their nomadic journey. In Genesis 12:6 we read (From the KJV) "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." The phrase "passed through" is the Hebrew verb עבר (the same word as the noun/name Eber).

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