

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine

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Biblical Word of the Month - Bar

By: Jeff A. Benner

When studying the Tenach/Old Testament each word must be understood through its Hebraic understanding. Too often we use Webster's Dictionary or own understanding of a word to interpret the passage. What do the words create, covenant, choice and pure mean to you when you read them in your Bible? Did you know that all of these words are related to each other in the Hebrew, meaning they all come from the same root and have a common meaning?

We often think in abstracts, something that cannot be seen, heard, felt, smelled or tasted. A good example of an abstract thought is "purity". Can you draw a picture of purity? Can you smell, taste or hear it? The ancient Hebrews were concrete thinkers and in order to understand a word from their perspective you must understand it in its Hebraic concrete understanding.

The Hebrew vocabulary is a root oriented system beginning with two letters combined to form a "parent" root. By adding other letters (in a specific fashion) new roots and words are formed out of the "parent". In this series of the "word of the week" we will be looking at the parent root "BaR" and its offshoots.

This parent root was written as  in the ancient pictographic Hebrew script. The first letter (reading from right to left) is the picture of a tent floor plan and means “house” or “family”. The second letter is the head of a man and means “head”. When combined these two letters mean “family of heads” and is the Hebrew word for “grain”. Grains consist of a head with a cluster of seeds and grains consist of a variety of species including barley, wheat, etc. – families of heads.

Name of the Month - Seth

By: Jeff A. Benner

Seth is the third son of Adam. This name is pronounced "sheyt" and is a root word meaning "to set something in place". Adam's family was continued through his son Seth as Abel (hevel) was killed and Cain (qayin) expelled from the family. This idea of "continuing" is often expressed as "established" in English translations and concepts but is understood and "setting something in place" in Hebrew thought. If I establish a business, I am setting in place. But, there is another possibility to the meaning of the name Sheyt (Seth). The more literal meaning of the word "sheyt" is "buttocks", the place where you sit. This poses an interesting question. Did Adam name this portion of the body after his son or did he name his son after this body part? Could this be a clue into the personality of Seth? This was meant more as fun than actual literalness but I am always reminded of what one Rabbi once said, "If you are studying the Bible and not laughing, you are doing something wrong". In my studies with friends we often get some real good laughs and I believe this help in Biblical learning as it helps you to remember things as well as enjoy it.

Question of the Month – Jew/Hebrew?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: What is the difference between the name "Jew" and the name "Hebrew"?

A: The name "jew" is pronounced "yehudiy" in Hebrew and means "from the family of Judah". The first occurrence of the name "Jew" is in the book of Esther. Judah was one of the 12 sons of Jacob and anyone descended from Judah was a Yehudiy. The nation of Israel split into two nations, Judah (consisting of descendants of Judah, Benjamin and some Levites) in the south and Israel (consisting of the other 10 tribes) in the north. Those living in Judah became known as Yehudiy. When the northern tribes of Israel were taken into Assyrian captivity, all that remained was Judah, the yehudiyim (the Jews). The "Jews" were then taken into Babylonian captivity and later returned to the land of Israel but still called the yehudiyim as they are known by to this day.

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The name Hebrew is of unknown origin but many, myself included, believe that is a reference to the descendents of "Eber" which would include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his sons. Therefore, by definition the Jews are Hebrews (descended from Jacob) as well as Jews (from the nation of Judah).

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Jeff A. Benner

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