

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine

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Biblical Word of the Month - Barah

By: Jeff A. Benner

In this issue we are continuing the study of the Parent Root בר and the roots and words which are derived from it.

The Hebrew root ברה (BaRaH) is a child root formed out of the parent by adding the letter ה. This root has the meaning of "eat" as seen in the following verse. "And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David swore, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down." (2 Samuel 3:35) The noun הביר is formed by adding the letter י and has the meaning of "meat", or what is eaten. When meat was eaten by the Hebrews it was the choicest and fattest of the stock. For this reason the word BaRaH can also mean "choice" or "to choose" - "And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me". (1 Sam 17:8).

Another word derived from the root ברה (BaRaH) is the word ברית (BaRaH). This word literally means "meat" but is always translated in most English translations as covenant. In the times of the Ancient Hebrews a covenant was consummated by choosing a choice

and fat animal from the herd or flock and sacrificing it. This may also be the meaning behind the English word "consummate" as in "consume" a sacrifice. In most English Bibles is the phrase "make a covenant". The Hebrew word translated as "make" is the word "karat" which actually means "cut" hence "karat beriyt" is literally "cut the meat". The sacrifice was literally cut into two pieces and each party of the covenant would pass through the pieces. This signified the idea that if either party violated the covenant, the other party had the right to cut them into two pieces. This imagery of the cutting of pieces can be seen in Genesis 15. Interestingly Israel, who did violate the covenant, was divided into two nations - Israel and Judah.

Name of the Month - Noah

By: Jeff A. Benner

The name Noah (pronounced Noach where the "ch" is pronounced hard as in the name Bach) comes from the verbal form of the word "nuach" meaning "rest" as we see in Genesis 5:28 "This one (Noach) will bring us rest (nuach) from our work and from the toil of our hands, from the ground which YHWH had cursed." What is the type of rest that Noah will bring? Often our English words lack the true meaning of Hebrew words (actually they always do). Sometimes they are completely opposite. Our English understanding of rest is not the same as the ancient Hebrews.

A related word Nuchah can help shed some light on the meaning of nuach. Nachah is usually translated as "guide" or "lead" (again the English does not fully convey the Hebrew essence of nachah) as in the following verses; Exodus 13:21 "YHWH went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead (nachah) them on the way." Exodus 32:34 "Now go, lead (nachah) the people (Israel) to the place I spoke of". God will lead (nachah) them to the land of promise which is a place of rest (nuach).

Since nachah is etymologically related to nuach and noach, it is related in meaning also. Nachah has the broader meaning of "to lead to a rest" as we see in God's promise that he would lead Israel into the land.

The role which Noah played prior to the flood was as a leader, one who will guide others to a rest, a rest from the toils and troubles of the days prior to the flood.

Question of the Month – God's Gender?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: Why does the bible refer to God as being Male? How did the Hebrews view God's Gender and why?

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A: In English we use masculine (he), feminine (she) and neuter (it). But, in Hebrew all things are either masculine or feminine, there is no neuter. So, we may say "it is a tree" in Hebrew it would be "hu ets" (he is a tree). All things in Hebrew are either masculine or feminine. God is neither male nor female but he is both. This may sound contradictory but the Hebrew mind often seems contradictory from our perspective of western thought.

In Genesis it states that God created both male and female in his image, I do not believe this is speaking in physical terms but in character. The male received half of God's character while the female received the other half, hence marriage is the bringing of the two together to make a whole. Since God has the character or quality of both male and female it is grammatically mandated that it be identified in the masculine form for the following reason.

The Hebrew word for boy is yeled, the Hebrew word for boys is yelediym. The Hebrew word for girl is yal'dah and the Hebrew word for girls is yeledot. But if the group of children is boys and girls you always use the masculine form yelediym. The masculine form always takes over if the group is of both masculine and feminine.

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