

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine

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Biblical Word of the Month - Bara

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 ברא (BaRA) is a child root formed out of the parent by adding the letter ברא. As a verb this word is used 46 times in the Hebrew Bible. Below are just a couple of these occurrences in the KJV translation (the underlined word is the translation of the word ברא).

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? (1Sa 2:29)

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Ps 51:10 or 12 in the Hebrew Bible)

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; (Ecc 12:1)

The first thing to remember when researching the original meaning of a word is that you need to find the "concrete" meaning of the word. Since "create" is an abstract it would be a foreign concept to the ancient Hebrews. We find the concrete meaning in 1 Samuel 2:29 which are "fat". The actual word in this passage is lehavriyackem (LHBRYAKM). The L means "to", the H makes the verb causative (make), BRA is the root, Y (placed between the R and A is also part of the causative form and the KM is "you" (plural) or yourselves". Literally this word means "to make yourselves fat".

Now let's see how this meaning applies to the other verses listed. In Genesis 1:1 it does not say that God "created" the heavens and the earth, instead he "fattened" them or "filled" them. Notice that the remaining chapter is about this "filling" of the heavens with sun, moon, birds and and the "filling" of the earth with animals, plants and man.

The "Create in me a clean heart" of Psalms 51:10 would better be translated as "fill me with a clean heart".

The passage in Ecc 12:1 translates this verb (which is in the participle form meaning "one that fattens/fills") as "Creator" but the truth is that this word is in the plural form and they should have at least translated it as "Creators". This is often a problem when relying on a translation as the translator will often "fix" the text so that it makes more sense. But as this word means to fatten or fill, this should be understood as "fatteners" or "fillers". I believe this verse is speaking about the "teachers" (ones who fill you with knowledge) of your youth.

Name of the Month - Jerusalem

By: Jeff A. Benner

The place name Jerusalem (pronounced yerushalaim in Hebrew) is a combination of two words. The first is "yeru" meaning "flow". This word has several applications such as the flowing of water in a river, the throwing of something as being flowed out of the hand or as the flowing of a finger in the sense of pointing out the way one should go. This last use is the use in the name yerushalaim. The shalayim is from the word shalam meaning complete and whole (the word Shalom is also derived from shalam, while it is usually translated as peace it more means to be complete or whole). When these two words are put together they mean something like "pointing the way to completeness".

Question of the Month – Right-Left?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: Why is Hebrew written from right to left?

A: In ancient times writings were done on stone with hammer and chisel. A right handed person will hold the chisel with the left hand and the hammer with the right hand. For this reason it needs to be written from right to left because of the angle of the equipment. When clay and parchments were used the direction remained the same but was also written from left to right. The direction the letters faced would indicate the direction it was to be read. By about 400 BCE the directions became standardized. The Greeks used the left to right while the Semitic people used the right to left.

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