

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

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Biblical Word of the Month - Messiah

By: Jeff A. Benner

The Hebrew word משיח (mashiach/mah-shee-ahch - where the "ch" is pronounced hard as in the name Bach - Strong's #4899) is usually transliterated as Messiah. Let us first examine how this word is transliterated and translated. In the Tenach/Old Testament this word is usually translated in the English as "Anointed One" and occasionally transliterated as "Messiah". In the Greek Septuagint (LXX) this Hebrew word is translated with the Greek word "christos" and is transliterated as "Christ".

The root word of meshiyach is the verb mashach (Strong's #4886) meaning "to anoint". In the ancient Hebrew culture is customary to pour oil on the head of one who is being given a position of authority. This practice is called "anointing". One of the most common misunderstandings about meshiyach is that there is only one, but the Tenach identifies several. The word is used 39 times and just a few of these are listed below.

Leviticus 4:3 If the anointed (mashiach) priest (kohen) sins bringing guilt to the people....

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1 Samuel 24:6 And he (David) said to his men, YHWH forbid me if I should do this thing to my lord (Saul) the anointed (mashiyach) of YHWH

1 Chronicles 16:22 Do not touch my anointed (mashiyach), my prophets do not harm.

I chose these three passages for one reason, it demonstrates, from an Hebraic perspective, who are mashiyach. The Priests, Kings and Prophets of Israel are the mashiyach of Israel, they are the ones who are anointed as men of authority.

While the original meaning of the word mashiyach is applied to one who is actually anointed with oil, it by extension can also refer to anyone who holds an office of authority whether they were anointed or not. The Tenach identifies Cyrus, the King of Persia as a mashiyach.

Isaiah 45:1 Thus says YHWH to his anointed (mashiyach) Cyrus (the King of Persia)...

Without going into the controversy about who the coming mashiyach (Messiah) was, is or will be, our purpose here is to understand the Hebraic concept of who and what a mashiyach is. This will give us a foundation within or our own studies about the mashiyach.

Name of the Month - Egypt

By: Jeff A. Benner

In almost every case, a person or place name in the Bible which we know it by is a transliteration of the Hebrew. For instance the English Jerusalem is from the Hebrew Yerushalem, Israel from Yisrael, and Methuselah from Metushelach. This is not the case with Egypt. The Hebrew word for Egypt is מצרים (mitsrayim / meets-rah-yeem). The first occurrence of this name is in Genesis 10:6 - And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim (mitsrayim), and Phut, and Canaan. (KJV). Mizraim is the grandson of Noah and evidently settled in the land that came to be known as Mitsrayim to the Hebrews and Egypt to us today.

The root to this name is צר (tsar Strong's #6862) meaning "pressed in" and can be translated several different ways; "enemy" as one who presses in; "trouble" as a pressing in; "strait" as a canyon with the walls pressing. A common method of forming nouns is to add the letter "mem" to the front of a root. In this case the "mem" is placed before the root forming the noun מצר (metsar Strong's #4712). The prefixed "mem" can be understood as "what is...", hence metsar means "what is pressed in" and is usually translated as trouble or straits. The suffix of the name mitsrayim is the masculine plural suffix ים. The normal pronunciation for this suffix is "eeym", usually a multiple plural, but can also be "yeem" and is the double plural as in the name mitsrayim.

The name mitsrayim can be interpreted many different ways; two straits (possibly referring to the two sides of the Nile river), double straits, two enemies, double pressing, or even double trouble. While we cannot determine for certain what this name original meant, we can see some interesting parallels between Egypt and their relationship with the nation of Israel.

Question of the Month – Resources?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: How did the ancient Hebrews use their natural resources?

A: The early Hebrews were a nomadic people, living in tents traveling from pasture to pasture with their flocks and herds. Their flocks provided much of their needs. The hair of their goats, black in color, was spun into panels for making tents. Their tents, being black in color, kept the air inside the tent cool. It was constructed with a very low profile because of the strong desert winds. The meat from the goats and sheep were used for food and was always served when visitors came to the tent. Milk from the goats and sheep was commonly drank and also made into cheese. The skins of the livestock were turned into leather and were used for various things such as water bags, sandals, bags, etc. The wool from the sheep was used for clothing and blankets. Grains were also a large staple of the Hebrews. They would often stay in one area long enough to plant grains which was made into breads. Other foods harvested included grapes, dates, pomegranates, and melons. One of the best passages in the Bible showing the life of the nomadic Hebrew is found in Genesis 18:1-8.

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Jeff A. Benner

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