

# Ancient Hebrew Research Center

## Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine

*April, 2005*

*Issue #014*

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### **Biblical Word of the Month - Faith**

By: Jeff A. Benner

*Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith.* (Habakkuk 2:4 - ASV)

What does it mean to have "faith" from an Hebraic perspective? In our western minds faith is a mental exercise in knowing that someone or something exists or will act. For instance, if we say "I have faith in God" we are saying "I know that God exists and do what he says he will do".

The Hebrew word for faith is אמונה (emunah - Strong's #530) and is an action oriented word meaning "support". This is important because the Western concept of faith places the action on the one you have faith in, such as "faith in God". But, the Hebrew word אמונה places the action on the one who "supports God". It is not a knowing that God will act, but rather I will do what I can to support God. This idea of support for the word emunah can be seen in Exodus 17:12.

*But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon*

*it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady (emunah) until the going down of the sun.*

It is the support/emunah of Aaron and Hur that held of Moses' arms, not the support/emunah of Moses. When we say "I have faith in God", we should be thinking "I will do what I can to support God".

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### **Name of the Month - Canaan**

By: Jeff A. Benner

The name Canaan refers to the son of Ham, the son of Noah as well as the descendants of Canaan who settled the land west of the Jordan river. The Hebrew for this name is נֶנֶק pronounced kena'an. It is derived from the root כָּנַע (Kena) meaning "to be brought down by a heavy load". By extension this word can also mean subdue or humble. Canaan and his descendents are continually being "brought down". Canaan was cursed by Noah and his descendents were subdued and conquered by Israel as God had promised in Deuteronomy 9:3.

*Know therefore this day, that Jehovah thy God is he who goeth over before thee as a devouring fire; he will destroy them, and he will bring them down before thee: so shalt thou drive them out, and make them to perish quickly, as Jehovah hath spoken unto thee.* (ASV)

The phrase "Bring down" is the Hebrew word כָּנַע (Kena) in the context of the conquest of the Canaanites. God used Israel to "bring down low" (Kena) the people who are "brought down low" (Kena'an).

The word נֶנֶק (kena'an) can also mean a "merchant" as in Hosea 12:7 (verse 8 in the Hebrew Bible) as a merchant is one who carries heavy loads.

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### **Question of the Month – Plurals?**

By: Jeff A. Benner

**Q:** Why are some Hebrew words plural but translated in the singular?

**A:** Hebrew plurals can be either quantitative (more than one) or qualitative (great, large, prominent). For example the singular word "elo'ah" means God (or more literally mighty one). The plural form is "elohiym". This plural form can be more than one god or one great god. In fact, in Genesis 1:1 it says "in the beginning elohiym (plural) created..." In Hebrew the verb matches the verb in number and gender and the Hebrew word behind

"created" is "bara" literally meaning "he created" (singular masculine). Therefore, the context of the verse will often indicate whether the noun should be translated as a plural or a singular.

Some Hebrew words are always written in the plural form such as panim (the plural form of paneh) which means "face" (probably through the idea of the prominent part of the body). The word shamayim (heaven) is another example of a word that is always written in the plural.

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### **Verse of the Month – Genesis 1:27**

By: Jeff A. Benner

וַיְבָרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ  
And God said, Let us make man in our image (ASV)

#### **וַיְבָרָא (vay-yeev-rah)**

The word ברא (bara) is a verb, literally meaning "to fatten" as well as "to fill". It is often translated as "create" as in this verse as well as in Genesis 1:1 but the concept of "creating" is a western abstract and not the true meaning of ברא. When the י (Y) is prefixed to the verb it identifies the subject of the verb as masculine and singular (he) and the verb tense as imperfect (will fill). The first letter prefixed to the word is the ו (V) meaning "and". When this letter is prefixed to a verb it switches the tense of the verb. In this case the perfect tense verb becomes imperfect. The word ויברא would literally be translated as "and he filled".

#### **אֱלֹהִים (eh-lo-hiym)**

The root of this word is אלוה literally meaning "strength" and "power" and is usually translated as God or god (a powerful one). The ים is the masculine plural suffix. The word אלהים can be translated as "gods" (quantitative plural) or as "God" (qualitative plural) in the sense of being a very powerful god. As this noun follows the verb we know that it is the subject of the verb, the "he" in the word ויברא.

#### **אֶת (et)**

This word precedes the definite object of a verb telling us that the next word is "what was filled". This word is a grammatical tool used in Biblical Hebrew and has no equivalent in English and is therefore never translated.

## הָאָדָם (ha-ah-dahm)

The first letter, ה (H), is a prefix meaning "the". The word אָדָם (adam) means "man" and is also the name of the first man - Adam. Because it is prefixed by the article ה, we know that this word should be translated as "man" rather than Adam.

## בְּצַלְמוֹ (beh-tsahl-mo)

The word צֶלֶם (tselem, the mem is written as ם when at the end of a word, and as ם otherwise) is an outline or form of an original and comes from the parent root צַל (tsal) meaning "shadow". A shadow is also a representation of an original. The prefix ב (B) means "in" or "with". The suffix ו (O) means "of him" or "his".

The following is a literal rendering of this verse from its Hebraic meaning.

And the Great Powerful One filled the man with a representation of himself

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