

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

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Biblical Word of the Month - Shemesh

By: Jeff A. Benner

This Hebrew word is first found in Genesis 15:12;

As the sun (sms shemesh - Strong's #8121) was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram; and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him.

This word is also found in another verse which is often interpreted with difficulty because of its difficult use of the word.

But for you who fear my name the sun (sometimes written as 'Sun' in some translations) of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. (Malachi 4:2)

When read quickly, or when spoken, many read, or hear, this as 'son of righteousness.' What, or who, is this sun? In the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible the vowel sounds

are added to the text by placing dots and dashes underneath the Hebrew letters. But since the original Hebrew Bible did not have these letters all that originally existed as שמש (sh.m.sh). In Aramaic, a sister language to Hebrew and often very similar in its vocabulary, the Hebrew word shamash (same Hebrew spelling - sms) means 'servant.' Could this have been the word intended by the author - 'servant of righteousness?'

There is a possible cultural connection between shemesh (sun) and shamash (servant) in that the Ancient Hebrews may have seen the sun as the servant to the earth as it is necessary for all life to exist.

Name of the Month - Issachar

By: Jeff A. Benner

In English this name is usually spelled as Issachar and pronounced i-sha-car or i-sa-car. The Hebrew is spelled יששכר and is pronounced yees-sa-kar. But, the strange spelling of the word (the use of the two ss) implies a very different pronunciation, probably yees-sas-kar, yeesh-shas-kar or yesh-shas-kar. The meaning of the name depends on the actual pronunciation of the word. We know that the final word is sakar and means a wage or reward (a payment for work or a service). The question is the first word, is it yees, yeesh or yesh? If it is yees then it means "he lifts up." There is no Hebrew word yeesh but may be a short form of the word iysh meaning "man." Yesh is a Hebrew word meaning "there is." Therefore the three possible translations of יששכר are "he lifts up a wage," "man of the wage" or "there is a wage."

Question of the Month – His or its?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: In the original King James Version of Exodus 25:31, the pronoun "his" is used five different times to describe the Menorah. Why was "his" changed to "its" in every other Bible version I could find?

A: It is interesting that the KJV would use "his." Let me begin by explaining how pronouns work in Hebrew. All nouns in Hebrew are either masculine or feminine. For instance, father (av), light (or) and tree (ets) are masculine and mother (eym), faith (emunah) and soul (nephesh) are feminine. Pronouns used for these words would also be masculine or feminine. Below are some examples

hu av = he is a father

hiy eym = she is a mother

These translations make sense in English but when working with nouns that have no gender in English it is a little different. For instance, the phrase "hu ets" would literally be translated as "he is a tree" but because this is poor English the translators would change it to "its a tree."

Now let's look at Exodus 25:31. The noun that the pronouns refer to is the Hebrew word menorah. Menorah is a feminine word. The KJV has "his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers." The Hebrew is "yereykhah, veqanah, geviyeyah, kaphtoreyah, uphraheyah." Notice that each of these words end with "ah" and is the pronoun "her." So, it should be translated as "her branches, her bowls, her knops, and her flowers" or "its branches, its bowls, its knops, and its flowers."

Why the KJV chose to use the masculine pronoun "his" is beyond me.

Verse of the Month – Exodus 20:8

By: Jeff A. Benner

זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ :
Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (ASV)

זָכוֹר (za-khor)

The base verb is זָכַר *z.k.r* meaning "to remember." The addition of the letter ו and its pronunciation indicates that this verb is written in the infinitive (simple verb not identifying a subject) - remember.

אֶת (et)

This word identifies the following word as the direct object of the verb.

יוֹם (yom)

This word means day, either a whole day or just daylight hours.

הַשַּׁבָּת (ha-shab-bat)

The word שַׁבַּת *shab-bat* literally meaning "a day of ceasing/rest" and is derived from the verb שָׁבַט *shavat* meaning "to cease." Usually this word is translated as shabbat or sabbath. The prefix ה means "the."

לְקַדְּשׁוֹ (le-qad-sho)

This base verb is קָדַשׁ *q.d.sh* and is usually translated as "holy" but more literally means "to set apart for a special purpose." The prefix ל means "to" or "for" and the suffix ו

means "him" but since it is in reference to the shabbat it would usually be translated as "it."

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

Remember the day of ceasing to set it apart for a special purpose

In following issues we will continue with this chapter.

Mechanical Translation Excerpt - Genesis 2:1-10

1 and the sky and the land and all of their armies were finished, **2** and Elohiym finished in the seventh day his occupation which he did and he ceased in the seventh day from all of his occupation which he did, **3** and Elohiym respected the seventh day and he set him apart given that in him he ceased from all of his occupation which Elohiym fattened to make, **4** these are the birthings of the sky and the land in their being fattened in the day Yihweh of Elohiym made land and sky, **5** and all of the shrubs of the field before existing in the land and all of the herbs of the field before springing up given that Yihweh of Elohiym did not make it precipitate upon the land and without a human to serve the ground, **6** and a mist will go up from the land and he will make all of the face of the ground drink, **7** and Yihweh of Elohiym molded the human of powder from the ground and he exhaled in his nostrils a breath of life and the human existed for a being of life, **8** and Yihweh of Elohiym planted a garden in Eden from the east and set in place there the human which he molded, **9** and Yihweh of Elohiym made all of the trees spring up from the ground being a craving to appearance and functional for nourishment and a tree of the life in the midst of the garden and a tree of the discernment of function and dysfunction, **10** and a river going out from Eden to make the garden drink and from there he will be divided apart existing to four heads

For details on this new translation see the web site at
<http://www.mechanical-translation.org>

AHRC Website Excerpt – Nomads

Many Biblical characters, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and others, lived a nomadic lifestyle. A nomad lived in tents and traveled from location to location in search of water and pastures for their livestock.

The Wilderness

The home of the nomad was the wilderness often dry and arid but with an occasional oasis, river, water basin and pastures. The nomad was at much home in the wilderness as we are in our own environment. He also knew the area which he traveled in very well. He knew where all the water sources were, where pastures were located at different times of the year and all the landmarks which directed him on his travels.

Rain is the most important element to the nomad as without it, he, his family, his flocks and herds cannot survive. Each area received rain at different times of the year and in different locations. It was the chief's responsibility to ensure that they were at the right places at the right times. The rains may be locale providing water and pasture but may also be very distant. These distant rains would flood the rivers causing them to overflow and watering the grounds near the rivers within their area of travels.

This article continues at http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/33_nomadic.html

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