

Ancient Hebrew Research Center

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Word of the Month - Unclean

By: Jeff A. Benner

To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten. (KJV, Leviticus 11:47)

In a previous issue (033) we examined the Hebrew word טהור (tahor, Strong's #2889) meaning “clean,” where we found that it meant something free from dirt or impurity. Now, let’s take a look at the word טמא (tamey, Strong's #2930) meaning “unclean.” Something that is “tamey” is dirty or “polluted.” This can be a literal pollution as from eating something that can bring on a disease or illness or it can be a moral pollution such as through sexual immorality as we see in Genesis 34:2 where the word “tamey” is translated as “defiled.”

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. (KJV)

Interestingly, both words, tavor and tamey, begin with the same letter, a tet (ט). The ancient pictographic picture for this letter is a picture of a basket -  and can mean “surrounding” or “contained.” Do we surround ourselves with cleanness or dirtiness?

Name of the Month - Asher

By: Jeff A. Benner

The next son of Jacob in our series is Asher.

And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher. (KJV, Genesis 30:13)

Within this verse are three words, all from the same root. The first is the word אושר (‘osher, Strong's #837) meaning “happiness” and is translated as “happy” in the verse above. The second is the verb אשר (a.sh.r, Strong's #833) meaning “to be happy” but is translated as “blessed” above. The third is of course the name אשר (asher, Strong's #836), pronounced ah-sheyr in Hebrew.

However, Hebrew word definitions are not always so simple. In the following verse the same Hebrew verb אשר (a.sh.r) is used where it is translated as “go.”

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. (KJV, Proverbs 4:14)

The verb אשר (a.sh.r) literally means “to go in a straight line.” This can be a literal meaning such as in Proverbs 4:14 where the image being given is one walking straight toward evil, or as we might say “making a bee line for...” It can also be used in a figurative way as in Genesis 30:13 in the sense that if you are being straight (doing what is right), you will be happy.

Question of the Month – Like a Lion?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: Why do some translations have “like a lion” in Psalm 22:18 while others have “they pierced?”

A: The Hebrew word in the Masoretic Hebrew text is “ka'ariy” which is the prefix “ka” meaning “like” and the word “ariy” meaning “lion,” hence the translation “like a lion.” However, the Hebrew letters yud (y) and waw (u) are very similar, especially in the ancient Hebrew script, and are almost indistinguishable. Therefore, some believe this

word was originally “ka’aru” instead of “ka’ariy.” The word “ka’aru” would be the verb “ka’ar” meaning "to dig" (but interpreted as pierce) with the suffix “u” meaning “they,” hence the translation “they pierced.”

Verse of the Month – Genesis 2:1

By: Jeff A. Benner

In the last issue we concluded our series on the 10 commandments. I will now begin a series on the “creation” account found in Genesis chapter 2.

וַיִּכְלֹוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם :

And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. (ASV)

וַיִּכְלֹוּ (vai-khu-lu)

This base word is the verb כלה (kalah) meaning “to finish” or “complete.” The prefix ו and the suffix ו identify the verb tense as imperfect - will finish - and the subject of the verb as third person, masculine, singular - they will finish. The prefix ו means “and” and also reverses the tense of the verb – and they finished. Most verbs ending with the letter ה (h), drop this letter when conjugated. As we have seen in many examples, each verb identifies the tense of the verb (perfect or imperfect) but each verb also identifies its voice (active, passive or reflexive). An example of an active verb would be “they finished.” A passive verb would be “they were finished.” And a reflexive verb would be “they finished themselves.” The “u” in the middle of the word identifies this verb as passive so it should be translated as “they were finished.”

הַשָּׁמַיִם (ha-sha-ma-yim)

This is the word שמים (shamayim) meaning “skies.” The prefix ה means “the” – “the skies.”

וְהָאָרֶץ (ve-ha-a-rets)

This is the word ארץ (erets) meaning “land.” The prefix ה means “the” and the prefix ו means “and” – “and the land.”

וְכָל (ve-khol)

This is the word כל (kol) meaning “all.” The prefix ו means “and” – “and all.”

צְבָאָם (tse-va-am)

The base word is the noun צבא (tsava) which literally means “army.” The suffix מ is the third person masculine pronoun – “them.” When combined this word means “armies of them” or “their armies.”

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

and the skies and the land and all their armies were finished.

In following issues we will continue with this chapter.

Mechanical Translation Excerpt - Genesis 4:13-17

For details on this new translation see the web site at
<http://mthb.ancient-hebrew.org>

13 and “Qayin [Acquired]” said to “YHWH [He exists]”, my iniquity is too magnificent to lift up, **14** though you cast me out today from upon the face of the ground and I will be hidden from your face and I will exist in the land, staggering and nodding and it will come to pass all of the ones finding me will kill me, **15** and “YHWH [He exists]” said to him, because of this, all of the ones killing “Qayin [Acquired]” will be made avenged sevenfold and “YHWH [He exists]” set in place to “Qayin [Acquired]” a sign for all of the ones finding him to not hit him, **16** and “Qayin [Acquired]” went out from before “YHWH [He exists]” and he settled in the land of “Nod [Wander]”, eastward of “Eden [Pleasure]”, **17** and “Qayin [Acquired]” knew his woman and she conceived and she brought forth “Hhanokh [Dedicated]” and he existed a builder of a city and called out the title of the city “Hhanokh [Dedicated]” like the title of his son,

AHRC Website Excerpt – The Aleph

The original pictograph for this letter is a picture of an ox head -  representing strength and power from the work performed by the animal. This pictograph also represents a chief or other leader. When two oxen are yoked together for pulling a wagon or plow, one is the older and more experienced one who leads the other. Within the clan, tribe or family the chief or father is seen as the elder who is yoked to the others as the leader and teacher.

The Modern name for this letter is aleph and corresponds to the Greek name alpha and the Arabic name aleph. The various meanings of this root are oxen, yoke and learn. Each of these meanings is related to the meanings of the pictograph . The root aleph () is an adopted root from the parent root el () meaning, strength, power and chief and is the probable original name of the pictograph .

The  is a shepherd staff and represents authority as well as a yoke (see the letter Lam). Combined these two pictographs mean "strong authority". The chief or father is the "strong authority". The  can also be understood as the "ox in the yoke". Many Near Eastern cultures worshipped the god , most commonly pronounced as "el" and depicted as a bull in carvings and statues. Israel chose the form of a calf (young bull) as

an image of God at Mount Sinai showing their association between the word  and the ox or bull. The word  is also commonly used in the Hebrew Bible for God or any god.

The concept of the ox and the shepherd staff in the word  has been carried over into modern times as the scepter and crown of a monarch, the leader of a nation.

These modern items are representative of the shepherd staff, an ancient sign of authority, and the horns of the ox, an ancient sign of strength.

In Modern Hebrew this letter is silent but was originally used as the vowel "a" as well as a glottal stop. The Greek letter "alpha" derived from the "aleph" is also used for the "a" sound.

The Early Semitic pictograph  was simplified to  and  in the Middle Hebrew script and continued to evolve into the  in the Late Hebrew script. The Modern Hebrew letter  developed out of the Late Semitic. The Middle Semitic was adopted by the Greeks to be the letter "A" and carried over into the Roman "A". The Middle Semitic script  became the number "1" we use today.

This article, as well as the other letters of the Hebrew alephbet,
is located on the web site at

http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/3_al.html

Editorials

Do you have a comment or personal insight into the articles in the issue of the E-Zine? If so, [let us know](#).

Corrections

Did you find any errors needing correction in the articles in the issue of the E-Zine? If so, [let us know](#).

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The Living Words-Volume 1 by Jeff A. Benner

Reading a translation of any book is just not the same as reading it in its original language and is adequately stated in the phrase "lost in the translation." When-ever a text is translated from one language to another it loses some of its flavor and substance. The problem is compounded by the fact that a language is tied to the culture that uses that language. When the text is read by a culture different from the one it is written in, it loses its cultural context. A Biblical example of this can be found in the Hebrew word tsur which is translated as a rock - "He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalm 62:2, KJV). What is a rock and how does it apply to God? To us it may mean solid, heavy or hard but the cultural meaning of the word tsur is a high place in the rocks where one runs to for refuge and defense, a place of salvation. "The Living Words" is an in-depth study into the Ancient Hebrew vocabulary and culture of the Bible replacing the flavor and substance that has been removed from us.

Additional information and ordering details are available through the bookstore.

<http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/bookstore>

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