Ancient Hebrew Research Center

Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine

March, 2011   Issue #058

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Biblical Word of the Month - Grace

By: Jeff A. Benner

Most theologians will define "grace" as "unmerited favor." But we must be careful not to interject a theological bias into the text. So first we need to understand what the English word "grace" means outside of theology. The dictionary provides two basic definitions for grace.

    1. Elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion or action.
    2. Mercy; clemency; pardon

Because the Hebrew language is vastly different from English, we need to examine the Hebrew meaning of this word to see if one or both English definitions are appropriate definitions for the Hebrew word translated as grace.

The Hebrew word translated as grace is חן (*hhen*, Strong's #2580) and is a two-letter parent root. In order to uncover the original meaning of this word it is important that we first examine each of the roots and words that are derived from this parent root.

From חן (*hhen*) comes the verbal root חנה (*Hh.N.H*, Strong's #2583), spelled exactly the same except with the addition of the letter ה (*h*) at the end. The following verse provides a good example of the meaning of this verb.

> And Isaac departed thence, and <u>pitched his tent</u> in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. (KJV, Genesis 26:17)

This verb means "to pitch a tent" or "to camp." The noun derived from this verb is מחנה (*mahhaneh*, Strong's # 4264).

> And it came between the <u>camp</u> of the Egyptians and the <u>camp</u> of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. (KJV, Exodus 14:20)

When we think of a camp we think of tents scattered about in a general area, but the camps of the Ancient Hebrews was a little different as the picture below demonstrates.

The tents were set up in a sort of circle and these tents serve as a "wall" separating the inside of the camp from the outside. At this point it would be helpful to examine the pictographic Hebrew script that was used to originally write the word חן (*hhen*). The first letter is the letter *hhet*, which was written as ᴀ and is a picture of a wall and having the meaning of "separation" as the wall separates the inside from the outside. The second

letter is the letter *nun*, which was written as ➘ and is a picture of a sprouting seed having the meaning of "continue" as the seed continues a lineage to the next generation. When these two letters are combined they mean "the wall that continues." The tents in the picture above are a wall that continues around the camp.

A second verbal root derived from the parent root חן (*hhen*) is חנן (*Hh.N.N*, Strong's #2603), spelled exactly the same except with the addition of the letter ן (*n*) at the end. This verb is often translated as "to be gracious" or "have mercy," however these are abstract terms and do not help us understand the meaning of this verb from an Hebraic perspective, which always relates words to something concrete. One of the best tools to use to find the more concrete meaning of a word is to look at how that word is paralleled with other words in poetical passages. In the following verses the translation of the verb חנן (*Hh.N.N*) will be underlined and the word that it is paralleled with will be in bold.

> *<u>Have mercy</u> upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, **heal** me; for my bones are vexed.* (KJV, Psalm 6:2)

> *Hear, O LORD, and <u>have mercy</u> upon me: LORD, be thou my **helper**.* (KJV, Psalm 30:10)

> *But thou, O LORD, <u>be merciful</u> unto me, and **raise** me **up**, that I may requite them.* (KJV, Psalm 41:10)

> ***Be merciful** unto me, O God, **be merciful** unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make **my refuge**, until these calamities be overpast.* (KJV, Psalm 57:1)

> *O turn unto me, and <u>have mercy</u> upon me; **give** thy **strength** unto thy servant, and **save** the son of thine handmaid.* (KJV, Psalm 86:16)

Through this process we find that this Hebrew verb is paralleled with such ideas as healing, help, being lifted up, finding refuge, strength and salvation (literally rescue). From a concrete Hebraic perspective, חנן (*Hh.N.N*) means all of this, which we can sum up with "providing protection." Where does one run to for protection? The camp, and now we see how חנה (*Hh.N.H*), the camp, and חנן (*Hh.N.N*), protection, are related. Now we need to see how these words are related to the parent root חן (*hhen*).

> *A gift is as a <u>precious</u> stone in the eyes of him that hath it...* (KJV, Proverbs 17:8)

In this verse, the Hebrew word חן (*hhen*) is translated as "precious," something of beauty and value.

> *A <u>gracious</u> woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.* (KJV, Proverbs 11:16)

In this verse the "grace," or "beauty," of the woman is contrasted with the strength of a man.

> *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.* (KJV, Proverbs 31:30

Again, this Hebrew word is being paralleled with "beauty." This "beauty" is something that is precious and graceful, which is exactly how the Hebrews would have seen the "camp of protection," a graceful and precious place."

Let us know return to our original definition of the English word "grace."

1. Elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion or action.
2. Mercy; clemency; pardon

While these definitions do apply to the Hebrew word חן (*hhen*), they do not completely convey the full emotion and spectrum of the Hebrew word. This is the problem with translating Hebrew into English. The English vocabulary is limited in how it can express the full meaning of a given Hebrew word.

Modern Word of the Month - Letter

By: Jeff A. Benner

The word "letter" is written with four different "letters": L/l, E/e, T/t and R/r. These letters are Latin in origin, which was in turn taken from the Greek. The Greek in turn was taken from the Semitic (which includes Hebrew) alphabet. In fact, when we look at these four letters from the Semitic alphabet we see a very close resemblance.

L/l
E/e
T/t
R/r

While many will recognize the word alphabet as coming from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet: alpha and beta, it is less known that the Greek names for the first two letters are in turn derived from the first two letters of the Semitic alphabet: aleph and bet.

The Modern Hebrew word for a "letter" is אות (*ot*, Strong's #226, the plural form is אותיות / *otyot*). This word can be found in the following passage.

Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a <u>mark</u> on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. (KJV, Genesis 4:15)

Is it possible that the "mark," the אות, was an actual "letter" of the Semitic alphabet? Let's take a look at another passage that uses the word "mark."

And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a <u>mark</u> upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. (KJV, Ezekiel 9:4)

Again we have Yahweh placing a "mark" on a person, but this time it is not the Hebrew word אות, but instead the word תו (*tav*, Strong's #8420). This is another Hebrew word that means "mark," but it is also the 22nd and last "letter" of the Hebrew alphabet, which in Modern Hebrew is written as ת, and as ✝ in ancient times. Is it possible that the אות (mark) Yahweh placed on Cain is the אות (letter) ✝?

Name of the Month - John

By: Jeff A. Benner

In the Greek New Testament the name John is written as Ἰωάννης (*Ioannes*). This is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name יוחנן (*yohhanan*, Strong's #3110), which is a name found in the Old Testament.

And the sons of Josiah were, the firstborn <u>Johanan</u>, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. (KJV, 1 Chronicles 3:15)

The name יוחנן (*yohhanan*) is a compound name consisting of two words, יו (*yo*) and חנן (*hhanan*). חנן (*hhanan*) is a verb mean "he provides protection" (for greater detail on the meaning of this verb see the "Biblical Word of the Month" above). The word יו (*yo*) is universally accepted as a form of the name יהוה (*YHWH/Yahweh*). When these two words are combined we have the meaning "Yahweh provides protection."

Question of the Month–One speech?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: Why are the plural words דברים אחדים (devarim ehhadim) in Genesis 11:1 translated as a singular "one speech?"

A: The first thing that we have to recognize is the types of words in this phrase. The word דברים is the plural form of דבר meaning a "word," the plural form, דברים, therefore means "words." The second word is אחדים, the plural form of אחד, which is frequently translated as "one." But what we must also recognize is that אחדים is an adjective, a word that modifies the word before it - דברים. In Hebrew, every adjective must match the number (singular or plural) of the noun it is modifying. So grammatically, if דברים is plural, the word אחד must also be plural - אחדים. The word אחד does not always mean "one" but also "unified." So now we can translate דברים אחדים as "unified words," which is a way of describing "a common language" or speech. Therefore, "one speech" is a fair translation of this Hebrew phrase.

Verse of the Month–Genesis 2:17

By: Jeff A. Benner

וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בְּיוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת׃

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (ASV)

וּמֵעֵץ (u-mey-eyts)
The base word is עץ (eyts) meaning a "tree" and is prefixed with the letters ו (u) meaning "and" and מ (m) meaning "from"–and from [the] tree.

הַדַּעַת (ha-da-at)
The base word is דעת (da'at) meaning "knowledge" and is prefixed with the letter ה (h) meaning "the"–the knowledge.

טוֹב (tov)
This word means "function" (though often translated as "good").

וָרָע (va-ra)

The base word is רע (ra) meaning "dysfunction" (though often translated as "bad" or "evil") and is prefixed with the letter ו (va) meaning "and"–and dysfunction.

לֹא (lo)

This word means "not" and often precedes a verb, negating the action of that verb.

תֹאכַל (to-khal)

The base word is the verb אכל (A.K.L) meaning "to eat." It is prefixed with the letter ת (t), which identifies the tense of the verb as imperfect–will eat, and the subject of the verb as 2nd person, masculine, singular–you will eat. Because of the word לֹא (lo), which precedes this verb, the action is negated–you will not eat.

מִמֶּנוּ (mi-me-nu)

The base word is ממ (mim), which means "from" and is suffixed with the letters נו (nu), which can mean "him" or "us," the context will help to determine which meaning is being used. In this case it is "him"–from him.

כִּי (kiy)

This word means "for" or "because."

בְּיוֹם (be-yom)

The base word is יום (yom) meaning "day" and is prefixed with the letter ב (b) meaning "in"–in [the] day.

אֲכָלְךָ (a-khal-kha)

The base word is the verb אכל (A.K.L) meaning "to eat." It is suffixed with the letter ך (ka), which identifies the tense of the verb as perfect–eat or ate, and the subject of the verb as 2nd person, masculine, singular–you eat or you ate.

מִמֶּנוּ (mi-me-nu)

The base word is ממ (mim), which means "from" and is suffixed with the letters נו (nu), which can mean "him" or "us," the context will help to determine which meaning is being used. In this case it is "him"–from him.

מוֹת (mot)

This is an infinitive verb (simple action with no tense or subject) meaning "die."

תָּמוּת (ta-mut)

The base word is the verb מות (M.W.T) meaning "to die." It is prefixed with the letter ת (t), which identifies the tense of the verb as imperfect–will die, and the subject of the verb as 2nd person, masculine, singular–you will die. This verb is used twice, a common means of emphasizing the action of the verb–you will surely die.

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

And from the tree of the knowledge of function and dysfunction you will not eat, because in the day you eat from him you will surely die.

In following issues we will continue with this chapter.

Mechanical Translation Excerpt - Genesis 9:17-25

17 and "Elohiym [*Powers*]" said to "No'ahh [*Rest*]", this is the sign of the covenant which I made rise between me and all of the flesh which is upon the land, **18** and the sons of "No'ahh [*Rest*]", the ones going out from the vessel were "Shem [*Character*]" and "Hham [*Hot*]" and "Yaphet [*Wonder*]" and "Hham [*Hot*]", he was the father of "Kena'an [*Lowered*]", **19** these three are the sons of "No'ahh [*Rest*]" and from these all of the land scattered, **20** and "No'ahh [*Rest*]", a man of the ground, pierced and he planted a vineyard, **21** and he gulped from the wine and he became drunk and removed his cover in the midst of her tent, **22** and "Hham [*Hot*]", the father of "Kena'an [*Lowered*]", saw the nakedness of his father and he told his two brothers in the outside, **23** and "Shem [*Character*]" and "Yaphet [*Wonder*]" took the apparel and they set it in place upon the shoulder of the two of them and they walked backward and they concealed the nakedness of their father and their faces were backward and the nakedness of their father they did not see, **24** and "No'ahh [*Rest*]" awoke from his wine and he knew what his small son did to him, **25** and he said, spitted upon is "Kena'an [*Lowered*]", he will exist as a servant of servants to his brothers, **26** and he said, "YHWH [*He exists*]" of the powers of "Shem [*Character*]" is respected and "Kena'an [*Lowered*]" will exist a servant to that one, **27**   "Elohiym [*Powers*]" will make "Yaphet [*Wonder*]" spread wide and he will dwell in the tents of "Shem [*Character*]" and "Kena'an [*Lowered*]" will exist a servant to that one, **28** and "No'ahh [*Rest*]" existed after the flood three hundred and fifty years, **29** and all of the days of "No'ahh [*Rest*]" existed nine hundred and fifty years and he died,

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

AHRC Website Excerpt–Pseudepigrapha

The word Pseudepigrapha is Greek meaning false (pseude) writings (grapha) and is applied to a group of books which have been excluded from the canon of scripture because they were considered "false." But who decides what is true and what is false?

What belongs in the canon and what does not? The answer is the leaders of the religion, whether it is the Rabbis in Judaism or the Priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Books were accepted or rejected based on their agreeability with their doctrine and not on the content itself. In some cases books of the Pseudepigrapha have been part of the canon but removed later because of a change in doctrine and in some churches around the world they are still part of their canon. Many of the books in the Psuedepigrapha actually augment the Biblical text and define difficult passages. Some books, such as the book of Jasher is actually mentioned in the Bible (Joshua 10:13). Other books have been completely lost such as the "Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (Numbers 21:14) which were no doubt removed and destroyed by someone who felt that it is a "false writing."

This article is located on the web site at
http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/44_home.html

What's New

We are always adding new material to the AHRC and Mechanical Translation websites; here is what is new on these websites.

Transliteration of the Torah
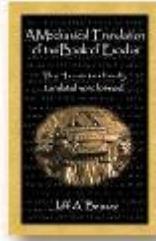
New Testament Greek to Hebrew Dictionary

Editorials

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Corrections

Did you find any errors needing correction in the articles in this issue of the E-Zine? If so, let us know.

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