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Biblical Word of the Month - Obey

By: Jeff A. Benner

> *You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him.* (RSV, Deuteronomy 13:4)

The Hebrew word behind the English word "obey" is the verb שמע (*Sh.M.A*, Strong's #8085). In reality, there is no Hebrew word that means "obey," in the same sense as it does in English. While I do not believe it is necessary to learn Hebrew to be able to understand the Bible from an Hebraic perspective, it is important that we learn to read the Bible from an Hebraic perspective. In other words, our definition of Biblical words should not come from an English dictionary, but rather from a Hebrew dictionary.

When we hear the word "obey," we assume the English definition "to comply with or follow the commands, restrictions, wishes, or instruction of another." While this definition may very well apply in this passage, it would not in the following passage where I will translate the Hebrew verb שמע as "obey."

> *And YHWH obeyed your words…* (Deuteronomy 1:34)

Just as there is no Hebrew word meaning "obey," there also is no English word for שמע. While this Hebrew verb is often translated as "hear," it means much more than just a hearing or listening, it more means to "hear and respond appropriately." When the Bible says that Moses "heard" YHWH, it means that he heard him and then he acted upon what he heard. When the Bible says that YHWH heard the people, it means that he heard them and then he acted upon what he heard.

Modern Word of the Month - Gender

By: Jeff A. Benner

All languages use "gender" in its grammar. In English, the word "he" is a masculine gender pronoun, the word "she" is a feminine gender pronoun and the word "it" is the neuter gender pronoun.

The Hebrew word for "gender" is מין (*miyn*, Strong's #4327) and is the word used in the following verse.

> *And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their <u>kind</u>, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so.* (ASV, Genesis 1:11)

In Hebrew, there are only two genders, masculine, זכר (*zakar*, Strong's #2145), and feminine, נקבה (*ne-qey-vah*, Strong's #5347). While most nouns in English, such as land and sky, are neuter nouns, in Hebrew all nouns are either masculine or feminine. The Hebrew word ארץ (*e-rets*, Strong's #776), meaning "land" is feminine and the word שמים (*sha-ma-yim*, Strong's #8064), meaning "sky" is masculine.

> *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes...* (KJV, Genesis 3:6)

In this verse, the English translation uses the neuter pronoun "it" because the word "tree" is a neuter noun. However, in Hebrew, the masculine gender pronoun הוא (*hu*, Strong's #1931) is used because the Hebrew noun עץ (*eyts*, Strong's #6086), meaning "tree," is a masculine gender noun.

Name of the Month - Mishael

By: Jeff A. Benner

> *And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, <u>Mishael</u> he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.* (RSV, Daniel 1:7)

The name Mishael מישאל (*miy-sha-eyl*, Strong's #4332) is two words. The first word is מי (*miy*, Strong's #4310) meaning "who." The second word, שאל, is the prefix ש meaning "like," and the noun אל (*eyl*, Strong's #410) meaning "mighty one," but usually translated as "god." Combined, these words mean "who is like the mighty one."

Question of the Month – the Letter Hey?

By: Jeff A. Benner

Q: What does the letter 'hey" mean when it is added to a word?

A: The letter *hey* (ה *h*) may be added to a word for seven different reasons.

1. The most common use of the letter hey is when it is prefixed to a word and is called the "definite article" and is used similarly to our English word "the." This prefix is used twice in Genesis 1:1 where the phrase הַשמים ואת הָארץ (<u>ha</u>shamayim v'et <u>ha</u>'arets) is translated as "<u>the</u> skies and <u>the</u> land."

2. The letter *hey* is also prefixed to a word to identify a question and is called the "interogative hey." In Exodus 16:4 is the verb הַילך (ha-yey-leykh). The verb ילך (yey-leykh) would be translated as "he will walk," but הַילך (<u>ha</u>-yey-leykh) would be translated as "will he walk?"

3. The letter *hey* is frequently used as a suffix for the singular feminine pronoun (her). The Hebrew word ידי (yadey) means "hands," but the word ידיהָ (yadey<u>ah</u>), as found in Genesis 16:9, means "<u>her</u> hands."

4. Another use of the letter *hey* as a suffix is the "directional hey" and is used to identify direction. The Hebrew noun ארץ (erets) means "land," but the word ארצהָ (arts<u>ah</u>), as found in Exodus 4:3, means "<u>unto</u> the land."

5. The "paragogic hey" expresses additional emphasis, or some change in the sense, of a word. The Hebrew verb ואלך (v'eylekh) means "and I will walk," but ואלכהָ (v'eylekh<u>ah</u>), as found in Genesis 30:25, means "that I may walk."

6. Another common use of the letter *hey* is to make a masculine noun feminine. An example of this can be found in Exodus 21:29 where we have the phrase איש או אשה (iysh 'o iysh<u>ah</u>). The word איש (iysh) means "man," but the word אשה (iysh<u>ah</u>) means "woman."

7. When the letter *hey* is suffixed to a verb, it identifies the subject of the verb as feminine singular. While the verb אמר (amar) means "he said," the word אמרה (am'r<u>ah</u>), as found in Genesis 16:13, means "she said."

Verse of the Month – Genesis 3:3

By: Jeff A. Benner

וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ־הַגָּן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְּעוּ בֹּו פֶּן־תְּמֻתוּן :

but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. (ASV)

וּמִפְּרִי (u-mi-pe-riy)

The noun פרי (pe-riy) means "fruit." The prefix ו (u) means "and" and the prefix מ (mi) means "from" – "and from the fruit."

הָעֵץ (ha-eyts)

The noun עץ (eyts) means "tree." The prefix ה (ha) means "the" - "the tree." This noun, and the noun before it, form a construct, therefore, in the translation, the word "of" will be placed between the two nouns.

אֲשֶׁר (a-sher)

This is a common Hebrew word meaning "which" or "who".

בְּתוֹךְ (be-tokh)

The word תוך (tavekh or tokh) means middle, center or among. The prefix ב means "in".

הַגָּן (ha-gan)

The base word is גן (gan) meaning "garden." The prefix ה means "the" – "the garden." This noun, and the noun before it, form a construct. Therefore, in the translation, the word "of" will be placed between the two nouns.

אָמַר (a-mar)

The word אמר (A.M.R) is a verb meaning "to say". The absense of any prefix or suffix identifies the subject of the verb (the next word) as masculine singular and the tense of the verb as perfect - "he said."

אֱלֹהִים (e-lo-hiym)

The base word is אלוה (e-lo-ah), which is commonly translated as "God" or "god," but more literally means "one of power and authority." The suffix ים (iym) is the masculine plural so this word means "gods" or "ones of power and authority." However, this plural noun is often used as a name for YHWH. Because this is being used as a name, it should be transliterated as "Elohiym" rather than translating it with the English word "God."

לֹא (lo)

This is the Hebrew word meaning "no" or "not." This word is often placed before a verb to place the action of that verb in the negative.

תֹאכְלוּ (tokh-lu)

The verb אכל (A.K.L) means "to eat". The combination of the prefix ת (to) and the suffix ו (u) identify the subject of the verb as masculine plural (you) and the tense of the verb as imperfect. This verb is translated as "you will eat," but because the word לֹא preceeds it, it will be translated as "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.

וְלֹא (ve-lo)

The prefix ו (ve) means "and" and the word לֹא (lo) means "no" or "not" and negates the action of the following verb.

תִגְּעוּ (tig-u)

The verb נגע (N.G.Ah) means "to touch," but when this verb is conjugated, the letter נ is dropped. The combination of the prefix ת (to) and the suffix ו (u) identify the subject of the verb as masculine plural (you) and the tense of the verb as imperfect. This verb is translated as "you will touch," but because the word לֹא preceeds it, it will be translated as "you will not touch."

בּוֹ (bo)

This word is the prefix ב (b) meaning "in" and the suffix ו (o) meaning "him."

פֶּן (pen)

This word is a conjunction meaning "otherwise."

תְּמֻתוּן (te-mut-un)

The verb מות (M.W.T) means "to die," but when this verb is conjugated, the letter ו is dropped. The combination of the prefix ת (to) and the suffix ו (u) identify the subject of the verb as masculine plural (you) and the tense of the verb as imperfect. This verb is translated as "you will die," but because of the suffix ן (n), called the "paragogic nun," which intensifies the action of the verb, it will be translated as "you must die."

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

And from the fruit of the tree, which is in the center of the garden, Elohiym said, you will not eat from him and you will not touch in him, otherwise you must die.

Mechanical Translation Excerpt - Genesis 14:1-10

14:01 and it came to pass in the days of "Amraphel [*Speaker of judgement*]" king of "Shinar [*Country of two rivers*]", "Aryokh [*Tall*]" king of "Elasar [*El is noble*]", "Kedarla'omer [*Attack for sheaves*]" king of "Elam [*Ancient*]" and "Tidal [*Breaker of the yoke*]" king of "Goyim [*Nations*]", **14:02** they did battle with "Bera [*With dysfunction*]" king of "Sedom [*Secret*]" and with "Birsha [*With wickedness*]" king of "Ghamorah [*Rebellion*]", "Shinav [*Teeth of father*]" king of "Admah [*Red ground*]" and "Shemever [*Character of wing*]" king of "Tseviim [*Gazzells*]" and the king of "Bela [*Swallow*]", she is "Tso'ar [*Tiny*]", **14:03** All of these coupled to the valley of the "Sidim [*Fields*]", he is the sea of the salt, **14:04** twelve years they served "Kedarla'omer [*Attack for sheaves*]" and the thirteenth year they rebelled, **14:05** and in the fourteenth year "Kedarla'omer [*Attack for sheaves*]" came and the kings which were with him and they hit the ones of "Rapha [*Heal*]" in "Ashterot-Qaraniym [*Growths of two horns*]" and the ones of "Zuz [*Creature*]" in "Ham [*Roar*]" and the ones of "Eym [*Terror*]" in "Shaweh-Qiryatayim [*Plain of cities*]", **14:06** and the one of "Hhor [*Cave dweller*]" in their mount of "Se'iyr [*Hairy*]" as far as "Eyl-Paran [*Post of decoration*]" which is upon the wilderness, **14:07** and they turned back and they came to "Eyn-Mishpat [*Eye of judgement*]", he is "Kadesh [*Set apart*]", and they hit all of the field of the one of "Amaleq [*People gathered*]" and also the one of "Emor [*Sayer*]" settling in "Hhats'tson-Tamar [*Dividing the palm tree*]", **14:08** and the king of "Sedom [*Secret*]" went out and the king of "Ghamorah [*Rebellion*]" and the king of "Admah [*Red ground*]" and the king of "Tseviim [*Gazzells*]" and the king of "Bela [*Swallow*]", she is "Tso'ar [*Tiny*]", and they arranged with them a battle in the valley of "Sidim [*Fields*]", **14:09** with "Kedarla'omer [*Attack for sheaves*]" the king of "Elam [*Ancient*]" and "Tidal [*Breaker of the yoke*]" the king of "Goyim [*Nations*]" and "Amraphel [*Speaker of judgement*]" the king of "Shinar [*Country of two rivers*]" and "Aryokh [*Tall*]" the king of "Elasar [*El is noble*]", four kings with the five, **14:10** and the valley of "Sidim [*Fields*]" was wells of tar and the king of "Sedom [*Secret*]" and "Ghamorah [*Rebellion*]" fled and they fell unto there and the remaining ones fled unto the hill,

For details on this new translation see the web site at

http://www.mechanical-translation.org

AHRC Website Excerpt – MT Possible?

I have been told that a word for word translation is not possible as each word can have several meanings and the context will determine how each word is to be translated. I have found that this is not exactly true and it is possible to translate each word the same each time it occurs. However, the problem is that we need to understand the Hebrew vocabulary from an Hebraic perspective. To demonstrate this philosophy, let me use the English word branch as an example.

What is a branch? I suppose that most of us would think of the branch of a tree such as in the sentence below.

> *The bird landed on the branch.*

Now examine the word branch. in the following sentence.

> *The bank said there is a branch on 1st Street.*

Notice that the same word is used, but the context shows a different application for this word. The word branch can also be used a the branch of a river, a family line or a branch of science.

The literal meaning of the word branch is a division or section.

The Hebrew word for a branch is מטה (mateh, Strong's #4294) and is used in the following passages.

> *Exodus 4:17 - and you will take this branch [staff] in your hand*

> *Exodus 31:2 - The son of Hur, from the branch [tribe] of Judah*

> *Isaiah 9:3(4) - For you have broken the yoke of his burden, and the branch [yoke] of his shoulder*

Now let's look at a Hebrew word where the connections may not be as obvious. Each of the following passages have the Hebrew word איל (ayil, Strong's #352) meaning, someone or something that is strong and large in stature, a "buck."

> *Exodus 15:15 - the bucks [chiefs] of Moab*

> *Exodus 29:16 - and you will slaughter the buck [a male from the sheep or goats]*

> *Ezekiel 40:16 - and their bucks [posts] within the gate*

Isaiah 61:3 - they will be called bucks [trees] of righteousness, a planting of YHWH

As demonstrated, a "Mechanical," word for word, translation is possible, but it will require the reader to learn the vocabulary of that translation from an Hebraic perspective rather than from an English perspective.

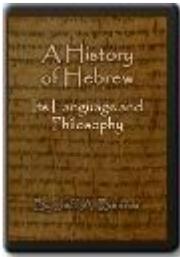This article is located on the MTHB web site at

http://www.mechanical-translation.org

AHRC Update

New web content, articles, books, videos and DVDs produced by AHRC as well as any new events.

The *Mechanical Translation* website has been completely re-written and updated. The main revision to the website is a download page where each volume (11 total) of the *Mechanical Translation of the Torah* project can be downloaded in PDF format. Be aware that these volumes are still being added to and revised, but we are making available to you what is currently available to assist you in your Biblical studies.

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A History of Hebrew: Its Language and Philosophy (DVD)

by Jeff A. Benner

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