

The Living Words

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~~ Creation ~~

The first verse of Genesis begins, according to most modern translations, “In the beginning God created.” According to most theologians, the word “create” is understood to mean “to make something out of nothing.” This definition is an abstract concept with no concrete foundation and is therefore not a Hebraic concept. To discover the original meaning of the Hebrew behind this English word, we will need to take a close look at the Hebrew word **בָּרָא** *bara* ^[H:1254], the word behind the English word “create.”

In Genesis 2:7 it states that God “formed” man. The Hebrew word translated as “formed” is the verb **יָצַר** *yatsar* ^[H:3335] and is best understood as the process of pressing clay together to form an object such as a figurine. We can plainly see from this verse that man was made from something; however, in Genesis 1:27 we read, according to most translators, “God created man.” As we have discovered, man is made from something, therefore the word “create” in Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:27 cannot mean to make something out of nothing.

If the word **בָּרָא** *bara* ^[H:1254] does not mean “create” then what does it mean? By examining other passages where this word appears, we can begin to uncover its true meaning¹.

¹ This is a good practice to get into for any Hebrew word study you may be doing.

*Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves **fat** (bara) with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?*

1 Samuel 2:29 (KJV)

Believe it or not, the word *bara* is translated as “fat” in the verse above and is the original concrete meaning of this word. What does it mean in Genesis 1:1 when it literally says, “God fattened the heavens and the earth”? When an animal is chosen for the slaughter, it is placed in a pen and fed grain so that it can be fattened, or “filled up.” This idea of “filling up” is now more relevant to the next verse.

Because the land was empty and unfilled

Genesis 1:2

With a better understanding of the word *bara* we can now see the meaning of Genesis 1:27.

*And Elohiym **filled** (bara) the man with his image, with his image he **filled** (bara) him, male and female he **filled** (bara) them.*

The Hebrew word translated as “image” above is **צלם** *tselem* ^[H:6754] meaning an outline of a shadow, a representation or image of the original. Once God “formed” the man, he filled him up with a representation of himself, and according to this verse, his image is “male” and “female.” We are comfortable calling God a “he” and assigning masculine attributes to him but the fact is, he is male and female, not in appearance, but in function. In a previous section, we caught a glimpse of his feminine characteristics with the word *shaddai*.

