

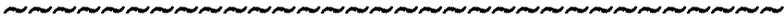
The Living Words
Volume One

*A study of Hebrew Words
and Concepts from the
Old and New Testaments*

Jeff A. Benner

The Living Words - Volume One

A study of Hebrew words and concepts from
the Old and New Testament



By Jeff A. Benner

Cover design by Jeff A. Benner. Cover photo by Denise Benner

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"The Living Words, Volume One," by Jeff A. Benner.

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For Ha-v-v

My wife Denise whom God "has privileged me with"

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Introduction

The Three Keys

Which would you prefer—a can of raviolis zapped in a microwave or a ravioli dinner served at a four-star Italian restaurant? Both can provide sustenance and fill your belly but one of them is a much more memorable experience. The differences between these two meals are the differences between the Hebrew text of the Bible and an English translation. An English translation can provide sustenance, but when the text is studied from a Hebraic perspective, the text comes alive.

A people's language and the culture of those who speak the language are closely related. In the case of the Hebrews, who were a nomadic people of the Near East, their language and their nomadic culture are closely connected. Each Hebrew word describes an action that one can see in the nomadic journeys of the Hebrews through the wilderness.

All modern-day translations of the Bible are written from a very Western perspective and have erased the original Hebraic, Eastern, perspective of the original words in the text. Once the Hebraic-ness of the text is restored, a common theme can be found rising to the surface throughout the Bible—our nomadic migration through the wilderness of life.

Most people simply assume everyone everywhere thinks in pretty much the same manner. This could not be farther from the truth. In fact, the thinking processes of different cultures are as different as day is from night. In this book, we will be examining Hebrew words and ideas so we can better understand how the

mind of the Hebrew works. Understanding how the Ancient Hebrew mind operates is crucial to proper Biblical understanding. If we are to interpret the Biblical text according to our way of thinking, the interpretation will be contaminated with modern Greco-Roman thinking.

In my years of research into the language of the Bible, I have discovered three keys to proper interpretation of the words and ideas within the text.

Culture

The Hebrew language, as is the case with every language, is closely tied to the culture in which the speakers and writers belong. When reading the Bible, whether in Hebrew, English, or any other language, it is essential to read it through the eyes and mind of the Hebrew culture and not one's own culture. To illustrate this, let's look at Isaiah 40:22.

It is he... that stretches out the heavens as a curtain

From our own culture, we could conclude this is a reference to the creation of the stars, which we know to be giant balls of burning gas billions of miles from us. This perspective, as accurate as it may be, must be ignored—instead, this verse needs to be understood from Isaiah's perspective of the heavens. Inside the goat-hair tent of the Hebrews, the roof is black but the gaps between some of the fibers of the material allow for pinholes of light to penetrate through, giving the appearance of stars in the black sky. For this reason, the Hebrews saw the night sky as God's tent stretched out over the world—his family.

Action

Our modern languages are the product of a Greco-Roman world where abstract words are prolific. An abstract idea is a word or thought that cannot be related to one of the five senses: hearing, sight, touch, smell, or taste. However, each Hebrew word is related to a concrete idea, a substance of action.

And Jonathon rose up from the table with a burning nose...

1 Samuel 20:34

As you can see, from a literal translation of this verse, the idea of Jonathon's nose being on fire is a very concrete action, whereas the King James Translation, from a western perspective, is very abstract.

So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger...

1 Samuel 20:34 (KJV)

A “burning nose” is a substance of action and clearly is a good illustration of the differences between Hebrew and Greek thought. The Hebrew word for nose is **אף** *aph* ^[H:639]¹ but can also mean “a flaring of the nostrils in anger,” a substance of action. Throughout this book, you will be challenged to cease from thinking abstractly, and instead you will be asked to open your mind to the concrete meaning of words as they should be understood from a Hebraic perspective.

¹ Each Hebrew and Greek word will be identified in Hebrew or Greek followed by a transliteration in italics and its Strong's indexing number in brackets.

Function

Hebrew thought is more concerned with function whereas our Greco-Roman thought is more concerned with appearance.



How would you describe a pencil? You would probably describe it as “long and yellow with a pointed end.” Notice that we like to use adjectives to describe objects. However, in Hebrew thought, verbs are used much more commonly, and a pencil would be described as something you write with, a description of its function rather than its appearance.

When we read the Biblical text we are constantly creating a mental image of what the text is describing. However, the original author is not describing an image of appearance—but an image of function.

and this is how you are to make it, the length of the vessel is three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

Is this description telling us what the ark looked like? Not at all. It is describing the function by telling us this ark is very large and capable of transporting a very large load of animals.

Keeping these three keys in mind while reading the text, will allow you to begin approaching the Bible from a Hebrew perspective rather than from the Greek perspective, a perspective we have all been taught since birth.

Translations

There are many factors that go into a translation which are invisible and unknown to the reader of the translation. Most Bible readers assume the English translation of the Bible is an equivalent and exact representation of the original text. Because of the vast difference between the Ancient Hebrews' language and our own, as well as the differences in the two cultures, an exact translation is impossible. The difficult job of the translator is to bridge the gap between the languages and cultures. Since one can translate the Hebrew text many different ways, the translator's personal beliefs will often dictate how the text is translated. A translation of the Biblical text is a translator's interpretation of the original text based on his own theology and doctrine. This forces the reader to use the translator's understanding of the text as his foundation for the text. For this reason, readers will often compare translations, but are usually limited to Christian translations. I always recommend including a "Jewish" translation when comparing texts, as this will give a translation from a different perspective. Yes, it will be biased toward the Jewish faith, but Christian translations are biased toward the Christian faith as well. A comparison of the two translations can help to discover the bias of each.

The translator's task is compounded by the presence of words and phrases whose original meanings have been lost. In these cases, the translator will attempt to interpret the words and phrases as best as possible based on the context of the word and the translator's opinion of what the author was attempting to convey. When the reader of the translation comes across the translator's attempts at translating the difficult text, the reader almost always makes the assumption the translator has accurately translated the text. The following passage will give an example of some of the difficulties the translators face when attempting to

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convert the Hebrew text into an understandable English rendering.

Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and set the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

Genesis 6:16 (RSV)

The above translation seems very clear, concise and understandable. The reader would have no problem understanding the meaning of the text and assumes this translation adequately represents the original text. Behind this translation lies the Hebrew, which must be a translator's nightmare. Below is a literal rendering of the same verse according to the Hebrew.

"A light you do to an ark and to a cubit you complete it from to over it and a door of the ark in its side you put unders twenty and thirty you do."

This is not an isolated case, but occurs continually throughout the Biblical texts. In order to assist the English reader, the translator has supplied words, phrases, and even whole sentences to enable the reader to understand the text. The reader is rarely aware of the difficulties in translating a certain passage and assumes the translator has accurately translated the text.

If you're ready, let's dig deep into the soil of the Hebrew language and see if we can find the gems hidden within it.

Lord and God

Lord

This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

Psalm 35:22 (KJV)

In this verse, the word “lord” appears twice, once in all upper case letters, “LORD,” and the other with only the letter “L” in the upper case, “Lord.” First we will examine the word “Lord.”

The Hebrew word אָדוֹן *adon* ^[H:113] is one who has authority over another or as it is usually translated, a “lord” and is used in the Bible for both men and God. However, from a Hebraic perspective, a “lord” is not one who simply rules over another, but rather one who provides for and protects those under his charge. At this point, a little Hebrew grammar is in order to help understand what the Hebrew behind the word “Lord” really means.

When the suffix י *iy* is added to the end of a noun, it means “of me” or “my,” so אֲדוֹנַי² *adoniy* means “lord of me” or “my lord.” When the suffix ים *iyim* is added to the end of a noun, it makes the noun plural, so אֲדוֹנַיִם *adoniym* means “lords.” If the ם *m* is

² The ך and ך are both the same letter “nun.” The form ך is used when it comes at the end of a word.

dropped from אֲדֹנָיִם, we have אֲדֹנָי *adonai*³ meaning “my lords.” In the verse above, the word “Lord” is אֲדֹנָי *adonai* ^[H:136] which literally means “my lords.” In this sense, the writer is using it as a proper name, commonly used in the Bible for God.

The word “LORD,” in all upper case letters, is not even related to the word אֲדֹנָי *adon* ^[H:113], it is the name יְהוָה *YHWH* ^[H:3068].

Each Hebrew name is a Hebrew word with meaning. For instance, the name אָדָם *adam* ^[H:120] is the name of the first human, but *adam* is also the Hebrew word for “human.” The name *YHWH*, traditionally pronounced as Yahweh⁴, is also a Hebrew word, the verb הָוָה *hawah* ^[H:1933], meaning “to exist” and prefixed with the letter ך (y) meaning “he.” Thus יְהוָה (*YHWH*) means “he exists” and as a word would be pronounced as *ye’huw* or *yih’weh*⁵.

Did the original writers of the New Testament use the name “Yahweh” in their original text of their manuscripts? Let’s check the evidence.

The LORD (Yahweh) says to my lord (adonai) "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool."

Psalm 110:1 (RSV)

³ The “ai” is pronounced like the “ai” in aisle. This word is spelled the same as אֲדֹנָי *adoniy*, meaning “my lord,” but pronounced differently.

⁴ While “Jehovah” is the more recognized pronunciation for the name, it is not a true possibility. A European influence of the Hebrew language applied the letter “J” to the Hebrew letter ך y and a “V” to the Hebrew ך w.

⁵ Since the original pronunciation of the name cannot be known for certain this book will use the name “Yahweh,” which most are familiar with.

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In this verse, we again have the two names for God, *Yahweh* and *adonai*. Below is the Hebrew for Psalm 110:1 from the Masoretic text⁶.

נָאִם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי שֶׁב לְמִינִי עַד אֲשִׁית אִיבִיךָ
הָרֶם לְרִגְלֶיךָ

Reading from right to left, the second word is *Yahweh* and the next word is *la'adonai* (to my lord). Two thousand years ago, a group of Jewish scholars (seventy by tradition) composed a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible for the Jews living outside of Israel who no longer spoke Hebrew. This translation is known as the Septuagint (or LXX, the Roman numerals meaning “seventy”). Below is the Septuagint’s translation of Psalm 110:1.

εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ⁷ μου καθοῦ ἐκ
δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἀνθῶ τῶν εὐχθρῶν σου
ὑποποδίων τῶν ποδῶν σου

Reading from left to right, the third word in the top line is κύριος *kurios* ^[G:2962], meaning “lord,” the translators’ translation for the name *Yahweh*. The fourth word is also *kurios* and is used by the translators for the Hebrew word *adon* as well.

⁶ The nikkudot (vowel pointings), the dots and dashes above and below the letters, were invented by the Masorites for pronouncing the vowels. They are not in the original Hebrew text.

⁷ The noun identified as Κύριος (kee-rios) or Lord is shown with multiple spelling variations within the Greek texts: Κύριος, Κυρίω (kee-ri-o), Κύριον (kee-rion), Κυρίου (kee-ri-oo), and Κύριε (kee-rie). In the Greek language, a noun must agree with its grammatical function in a sentence. To achieve this you address the suffix with variations of spelling. Note that this all stems from the same root of Κύριος.

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Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Matthew 22:44. Below is the Greek text of this Matthew passage.

ειπεν ο Κυριος τω Κυριω μου Καθου εκ
δεξιων μου εως αν θω τους εχθρους σου
υποποδιον των ποδων σου

Notice that the Greek Septuagint and the Greek Matthew are identical. This clearly shows that the Greek book of Matthew was using the Greek Septuagint as its source for quoting the book of Psalms.

In the latter 1400's, a Jewish scholar by the name of Shem Tov wrote a document called Even Bohan (touch stone) to counter Christian missionaries. He included as an appendix a Hebrew copy of the Book of Matthew. The grammatical and textual evidence of this document suggests that this is an ancient version, and possibly a copy, of an original Matthew written in Hebrew.

Let's examine Matthew 22:44 as it appears in the Shem Tov Hebrew.

נאם ה' לאדוני שב לימיני עד אשית אויביך
הדרום לרגליך

Here the Hebrew is identical⁸ to the Hebrew in Psalm 110:1 with the words *Yahweh*⁹ and *adon* intact. This shows that the Hebrew

⁸ The Shem Tov does not include the nikkudot so the letter ך is used in some words in place of the nikkud (singular of nikkudot) and is the only difference between the Hebrew of Psalm 110:1 and Matthew 22:44.

⁹ The name יהוה is represented by the abbreviation יה (the ך identifies the word as an abbreviation) in the Shem Tov Matthew as it is customary within Judaism to not use the name except in sacred documents.

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book of Matthew was using the Hebrew text as its source for quoting the book of Psalms.

Did the original writers of the New Testament use the name Yahweh in their original text of their manuscripts? Based on the evidence above, the answer is yes, the original book of Matthew did include the name *Yahweh*. The quotation of Psalm 110:1 found in the Hebrew text of Matthew was copied from the Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1. But, when the book of Matthew was translated into Greek at a later point, the translators copied Psalm 110:1 from the Greek Septuagint which had replaced the name *Yahweh* with the Greek word *kurios*.

The above examination of the Hebrew and Greek texts of Psalms and Matthew is also helpful in answering a long debated argument. Many have theorized that since Old Testament quotations in the Greek New Testament are from the Greek Septuagint and not the Hebrew text, this is a proof the New Testament was originally written in Greek and not Hebrew. However, as we have seen, the Hebrew text of the New Testament used the Hebrew text of the Old Testament when quoting, but when that Hebrew text of the New Testament was translated into Greek, they simply used the Greek Septuagint for the quotations since it had already been translated.

God

While we may read an English translation of the Bible, it was not originally written in English. This may sound like a pretty obvious statement, but an unfortunate fact is that almost all readers of the Bible read it as if it were written in English. We cannot define the words in the Bible from an English dictionary. Rather, we must take our definitions of Biblical words from a Hebrew dictionary, and the word “God” is no exception. From

this point on, you can take everything you know about every word in the Bible and toss it out the window as you are about to learn a whole new way of thinking.



While we know God is not a man and does not have an earthly body, when most of us hear the word “God” we usually have an image similar to Michelangelo’s painting of God (left) or from the many pictures we have been exposed to since childhood.

The dictionary defines the English word “God” as “A being conceived as the perfect, omnipotent, omniscient originator and ruler of the universe, the principal object of faith and worship in monotheistic religions¹⁰.” While this definition may agree with our modern western perspective of who God is, this definition has nothing to do with how the Ancient Hebrews perceived who God was. If our goal is to read the Biblical text from the Ancient Hebrew’s perspective, then we must define the word God from a Hebraic perspective, and not from Michelangelo or an English dictionary.

¹⁸ *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high **God**.* ¹⁹ *And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high **God**, possessor of heaven and earth:* ²⁰ *And blessed be the most high **God**, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy*

¹⁰ God. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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*hand. And he gave him tithes of all. ²¹ And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. ²² And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high **God**, the possessor of heaven and earth*

Genesis 14:18-22 (KJV)

The Hebrew word אֵל *el* ^[H:410], translated above as “God,” was originally written as אֵל in the Ancient Hebrew pictographic script. The first letter (from right to left) is an ox head¹¹ representing strength and the second is a picture of a shepherd staff¹² representing authority. In ancient times, a king would wear the horns of an ox as a sign of his strength and carry a staff as a sign of his authority. Both symbols, the horns and the staff, have survived to modern times as the crown,¹³ with its points representing the tips of horns and the scepter representing the shepherd staff. When the meaning of these two pictographic letters are combined the original definition of the word אֵל *el* ^[H:410] is found—one of strength and authority—“the mighty one¹⁴.”

¹¹ The name of the letter א is aleph and is related to the word אֵלֶף *eleph* ^[H:504] meaning ox.

¹² The name of the letter ל is lamed and is related to the word מַלְמַד *malmad* ^[H:4451] meaning staff.

¹³ The word crown is probably derived from the Hebrew word קֶרֶן *qeren* meaning “horn.”

¹⁴ I will continue to use the Standard English words throughout this book, such as “God,” but you will want to begin to associate the Hebraic meaning of these words rather than the defective English definitions.

The Ancient Hebrews considered the yoke as a “staff of the shoulder” (see Isaiah 9:4). When plowing a field, a farmer would place two oxen in a “staff”—one was the older and more experienced and the other the younger and less experienced. The younger would learn from the older. Again, the two pictographic letters, the ox and the staff, are found in this image of action. This concept of “learning through association” can be found in the Hebrew word אֵלֶךְ *alaph* ^[H:502] or אֵלֶךְ in the pictographic script and contains the same two pictographs.

The Hebrews did not perceive God as some great omnipotent entity but as “the mighty one,” the older ox in the yoke who teaches them, the younger ox in the yoke.

Judges

*If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the **judges**, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.*

Exodus 22:8 (KJV)

A judge is one who possesses great “power” and “authority.” The Hebrew word behind the word “judges” in the passage above is אֱלֹהִים *elohiyim* ^[H:430], the plural form of the word אֱלֹהָ *elo'ah* ^[H:433]. You may notice the first two letters of this word is the word אֵל *el* ^[H:410], meaning “mighty one,” which we discussed in the last section. Because the word *elo'ah* is derived from *el*, they are very similar in meaning.

The word *elo'ah*, “one of power and authority,” can also be applied to God or any other god.

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*Oh that I might have my request; and that **God** (elo'ah) would grant me the thing that I long for!*

Job 6:8 (KJV)

*Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty, even he whose might is his **god** (elo'ah).*

Habakkuk 1:11 (ASV)

The word **אלהים** *elohiym* ^[H:430], the plural form of **אלוה** *elo'ah* ^[H:433], is frequently used as a proper name for Yahweh, the creator of heaven and earth.

*These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth in their filling¹⁵, in the day that Yahweh **Elohiym** made the earth and the heavens.*

Genesis 2:4

The “power and authority” of Yahweh can be, and is, passed on to others as we see in the following verse.

*And Yahweh said unto Moses, “See, I have given¹⁶ you **Elohiym** for Pharaoh: and Aaron your*

¹⁵ Using the translation “filling” for the Hebrew verb **ברא** *bara* ^[H:1254] will be discussed later.

¹⁶ Most translations read “See, I have made you Elohiym” implying God is allowing Moses to act with his authority, but this is not the meaning of the Hebrew which states that God “gave” it to Moses.

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brother will be your prophet.”

Exodus 7:1

What does Yahweh mean by “See I have given you”? Is there something physical about Moses that Yahweh gave to him which could have been “seen” showing his “power and authority”? In our discussion of the word **𐤀𐤋** *el* ^[H:410], we learned this word represented horns of power and the staff of authority. Did Moses also have these symbols?

*And Yahweh said to [Moses], “What is this in your hand?” And he said, “A **staff**.” And he said, “Cast it down to the ground” and he cast it down to the ground and it became a serpent and Moses fled from before it.*

Exodus 4:2,3

Yahweh took an ordinary staff of a shepherd, turned it into an instrument of power and authority and gave it to Moses to do great miracles. We do know Moses did carry a staff representing his authority, but what about the horns?

*And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that **the skin of his face shone** by reason of his speaking with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, **the skin of his face shone**; and they were afraid to come nigh him.*

Exodus 34:29,30 (ASV)

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In this verse, we find there was a physical change in Moses which created fear in the people. Was it just a light coming off him that generated this fear? No—as we shall see, the above translation “skin of his face shone,” is a poor translation of the Hebrew. The Hebrew word translated as “shone” is קָרַן *qaran* ^[7160]¹⁷, which literally means “to have horns.”



Interestingly, many paintings and sculptures of Moses depict him with horns such as in Michelangelo's sculpture of Moses.

It has been speculated the “horns” on Moses' face are “rays” of light that shone from his face, hence the translation we read in all English Bibles. However, there are other Hebrew words meaning “to shine” and if that was what the author had intended, he would have used one of those. Instead, he deliberately chose to use the word *qaran* to show Moses was indeed one of power and authority. This is an example of my reasons for desiring a “mechanical” and “literal” translation of the Hebrew Bible, so the reader can read the text without the translators' bias being interjected into the text.

In my book *His Name is One* I go into detail about the different names of God. In the next section, I am taking an excerpt from that book.

¹⁷ This is the verb form of the noun *qeren* meaning horn. (see Psalm 69:31).

El Shaddai

And when Abram was ninety nine years old and the LORD appeared to Abram, and he said to him, I am El Shaddai, walk before me, and be perfect.

Genesis 17:1

In the previous section, we have discussed the meaning of the word אֱלֹהִים *el* ^[H:410], as found in אֱלֹהֵי שָׂדָי *el shaddai*, and will now focus on the word שָׂדָי *shaddai* ^[H:7706]. Most Bible translations translate this word as “Almighty.” Many times a translator will not translate a Hebrew word literally because the literal meaning would mean nothing to the Western mind, and in some cases would actually be offensive to the Western reader. Such is the case with the word *shaddai*. The use of the word “Almighty” by the translator is his attempt at translating the text in a manner that will make sense to the Western reader as well as retain some of the meaning of the original Hebrew word.

The root for this word is שָׂדָי *shad* ^[H:7699] which in its original pictographic script appeared as שָׂדָי. The שָׂ *sh* is a picture of the two front teeth and has the meaning “sharp” or “press” (as from chewing) as well as “two.” The דָּ *d* is a picture of a tent door meaning to “hang” or “dangle” as the fabric or skin of the door hangs or dangles down from the top of the tent.

The combined meanings of the שָׂ and דָּ would be “two danglers.” The goat was a very common animal within the herds of the Hebrews. It produces milk within the udder and is extracted by the goat kid by squeezing and sucking on the “two” teats “dangling” below the udder. The function of these teats is to provide all the necessary nourishment for the kids, as they would die without it. The Hebrew word *shaddai* also has the meaning of a “teat.” Just as the goat provides nourishment to its kids through

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the milk, God nourishes his children through his milk and provides all the necessities of life. This imagery can be observed in the following passage.

“And I will come down to snatch him [Israel] from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring him up from that land to a functional and wide land to a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Exodus 3:8

The word *shaddai*, meaning teats, is often coupled with the word *el*, meaning mighty one, creating the phrase *el shaddai*, literally meaning the “mighty teat.” Hence we can see the translator's reluctance to literally translate this phrase in this manner and instead using the more “sanitized” God Almighty.

Heaven and Earth

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 meaning¹⁸.

¹⁸ This is a good practice to get into for any Hebrew word study you may be doing.

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*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 צֶלֶם *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*.

Heaven

The Hebrew word for “heaven” is שָׁמַיִם *shamayim* ^[H:8064]. There is some debate over the origins and meanings of this word, but there are a few common theories.

1. *Shamayim* may be a plural noun derived from שָׁמָה *shamah*, a root not found in the Biblical text, possibly meaning “lofty.”
2. It may be a plural noun derived from the root שָׁמַם *shamam* ^[H:8074] meaning “desolate,” in the sense of a dry wind blowing over the land drying it out.
3. It may be the Hebrew word מַיִם *mayim* ^[H:4325], meaning “water” with the prefix שׁ *sh* meaning “like.” This would make the meaning of *shamayim* “like water.”
4. Another possibility is it is a compound word from the words שָׁם *sham* ^[H:8033] meaning “there” and מַיִם *mayim* ^[H:4325] meaning “water” forming the definition of “there is water.”

Aside from the debate over the origins of the word, it is clear the word is commonly used in the Biblical text for “sky.” Frequently this word is used in conjunction with the word אֶרֶץ *erets* ^[H:776] meaning “land” representing the whole of creation and the domain of God.

*In the beginning God created **the heaven and the earth.***

Genesis 1:1 (KJV)

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*And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of **heaven and earth**.*

Genesis 14:19 (KJV)

A common phrase in the book of Matthew is “kingdom of heaven or, as it is found in the Hebrew Matthew מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם *mal'kut shamayim*.

During the first century the word *shamayim* was used as a euphemism for the Hebrew word *elohiyim* (God). The phrase “kingdom of heaven” is not speaking of a “place,” where the kingdom is, but “who” the kingdom belongs to—the “kingdom of God.” Only the book of Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” while the other gospels use the phrase “kingdom of God¹⁹.” One can see this when the many teachings of Yeshua²⁰ recorded in the book of Matthew and Luke are compared. Here is one example.

*But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the **kingdom of heaven**.*

Matthew 19:14 (KJV)

¹⁹ The Greek text of Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of God” five times but when these verses are compared to Shem Tov’s Hebrew text of Matthew we find either “kingdom” or “kingdom of heaven.”

²⁰ The name Jesus is a Latin transliteration of the Greek name *iesus* which is a Greek translation of his original Hebrew name Yeshua. Because he was a Jew with a Hebrew name I prefer to use this rather than the Greek name he has become known by.

*But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the **kingdom of God**.*

Luke 18:16 (KJV)

Earth

The Hebrew word often translated as “earth” is אֶרֶץ *erets* ^[H:776] but is more frequently translated as “land” which is the more literal meaning of the word. The word *erets* may refer to land in general or a specific piece of land, or region, such as in the “land of Israel.”

This word comes from the root רָץ *rats* ^[H:7518] meaning “fragment.” When a clay pot is broken it is not wasted. The broken fragments, called ostrakon, are commonly used for writing letters, receipts, messages, etc. To the left, is an example of such an ostraca²¹.



Did the Ancients view the earth as “fragments” in the sense of regions, or did they have the knowledge that the land of the earth was divided up into fragments, known to us as tectonic plates?

²¹ This ostraca, the singular form of the word ostrakon, found in the ancient city Lachish, contains a message from Yo’ash, the military governor of Lachish during the Babylonian siege as recorded in Jeremiah 34:7.

Ground

A different Hebrew word exists for the “ground” or “soil” of the earth.

*And Yahweh Elohiym formed the human of dust from the **ground** (adamah)...*

Genesis 2:7

The Hebrew behind the word “ground” is אֲדָמָה *adamah* ^[H:127] and is related to the Hebrew word אָדָם *adam* ^[H:120], which is also found in the sentence above where it is translated as “human.” Hebrew authors loved to use similar sounding words together such as seen in the sentence above. Here is another example.

*And he said, what did you do? The voice of the **blood** (dam) of your brother is crying out to me from the **ground** (adamah).*

Genesis 4:10

Throughout the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, these word puns can be found. They can also be found in the New Testament, but only if the Greek is translated back into Hebrew. One of these many word puns can be found in Matthew 3:9.

*God is able of these **stones** to raise up **children** unto Abraham.*

The Greek word for stones in this passage is λιθων *lithon* ^[G:3037] and the word for sons is τέκνα *tekna* ^[G:5043]. However, when these two words are translated into Hebrew, we have אֲבִיּוֹת *eveniyim* ^[H:68] for stones and בָּנִים *beniyim* ^[H:1121] for sons.

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*God is able of these **stones** (eveniyim) to raise up **children** (beniyim) unto Abraham.*

Light

“In the beginning...” there was darkness and chaos, so God’s first act was to shed some light on the subject to bring about some order.

And Elohiym said, let there be light, and light existed.

Genesis 1:3

The Hebrew word **אור** or ^[H:216], meaning “light,” comes from the verbal root **אור** or ^[H:215], meaning “to illuminate.” When we are searching for an idea and it suddenly comes to us we say, “the light came on,” meaning we have become enlightened. The verb *or* can have this meaning as we see here.

*...The directions of Yahweh are pure, **enlightening** (or) the eyes.*

Psalm 19:8

Hell

*The sorrows of **hell** compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.*

Psalm 18:5 (KJV)

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In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word שְׁאוֹל *she'ol* ^[H:7585] is translated as either “hell” or “grave” or in some translations, it is transliterated as “Sheol.” What is *she'ol* and how did the Ancient Hebrews of the Old Testament perceive it? As I have said before, in order to better understand a word, it is essential to look at its root and other related words.

The verbal root of the word שְׁאוֹל *she'ol* ^[H:7585] is שָׁאַל *sha'al* ^[H:7592] and is used almost 200 times where it is usually translated as “asked” such as we see in Genesis 24:47.

And I asked (sha'al) her and said...

Why do we ask questions? We are looking for information that is currently unknown to us. This word, “unknown,” is the key to understanding the root שָׁאַל *sha'al* ^[H:7592]. The word שְׁאֵלָה *shi'eylah* ^[H:7596], a noun derived from שָׁאַל *sha'al* ^[H:7592] is also related to the idea of “unknown” such as can be observed in Job 6:8 where it is translated as a request.

*Oh that I might have my request (shi'eylah); and
that God would grant me the thing that I long for!*

(KJV)

The word שְׁאוֹל *she'ol* ^[H:7585] is the place where one goes when they die. The question is, did they understand this to be simply the grave where one is buried or another place one goes after they die—the underworld? This is a difficult question for one to answer, because the Hebrew Bible never really defines *she'ol*. There is evidence, however, that the Hebrews understood *she'ol* to be more than just the grave. First, the word קֶבֶר *qever* ^[H:6913] is the Hebrew word meaning the “grave.” Second, most scriptures using the word *she'ol* imply a place other than the grave. An example can found in Genesis 37:35.

*and all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him but he refused to be comforted and he said, because I will go down to my son, unto **she'ol**, in mourning and his father wept for him.*

In this account Jacob believed a wild beast had eaten his son Joseph. As Joseph's body could not possibly be in a grave, Jacob knew that he would be with him somewhere—*she'ol*.

The Ancient Hebrews did not know where, or even what, *she'ol* was. To them it was an “unknown” place, hence its relationship to *sha'al* meaning “unknown.” Ancient Hebrews never speculated on something unknown—to them it was simply “unknown” and left at that. But one with a Greek mindset always desires to know the unknown. It is our Greco-Roman western mindset that needs to know where and what *she'ol* is.

In the New Testament, we find three words translated as “hell.” The first is γέεννα *geenna* ^[G:1067]. When the New Testament was translated into Greek, the translators transliterated rather than translated some Hebrew words into Greek. An example of this is the word ἀλληλουία *hallelouia* ^[G:239], a word found in Revelation chapter 19, and is a transliteration of the Hebrew word הלל-לו-יה *halelu-yah* ^[H:1984 & 3050] meaning “Praise²² Yah.” The Greek word *geenna* is a transliteration of two Hebrew words, גַּי *gai* ^[H:1516], meaning “valley” and הַנּוֹם *hinnom* ^[H:2011], a place name of uncertain meaning. *Gai hinnom* or “Valley of Hinnom” is the name of a valley outside Jerusalem. In the days of Yeshua the “Valley of Hinnom” burned continually with fires that consumed the garbage and dead animals dumped there by the inhabitants of the city.

²² For a more Hebraic meaning of the word “praise” see page 30.

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*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell** (geenna), into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

Mark 9:43 (KJV)

The idea of a “fire” being associated with *she’ol* is unique to the New Testament and no such reference will be found in the Old Testament. Apparently, the fires of hell is a concept introduced into the Hebrew culture from an outside source, possibly while Israel was in Babylon during their captivity.

The second word translated as “hell” in the New Testament is *αδης hades* ^[G:86]. This is the Greek word used in the Greek Septuagint for the Hebrew word *she’ol*. *Hades* is used in the New Testament in the same sense as the Hebrew *she’ol*, the place of the dead, the underworld. However, in the New Testament *hades/she’ol* is first described as a place of torment.

*And in **hell** (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

Luke 16:23 KJV

The third word translated as hell is *ταρταροω tartaroo* ^[G:5020] and is found only once in the Bible.

*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to **hell** (tartaroo), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*

2 Peter 2:4 (KJV)

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The word *ταρταρος* *tartaros*²³ comes from Greek Mythology and was a deep abyss and a place of torment where the Greek gods banished their enemies. The use of this word in the New Testament is a clear case of a Greek influence on the New Testament text.

Praise

The verbal root *הלל* *halal* ^[H:1984] means to “shine” as we see in Isaiah 13:10:

*For the stars of heaven and their constellations
will not **shine** (halal) light*

This same word is also translated as “praise” as in Psalm 117:1:

***Praise** (halal) Yahweh, all you nations! Extol him,
all you peoples!*

In our western minds, we see no connection between “shine” and “praise,” but in the Hebrew mind they are one and the same thing. Before we can see the ancient connection between these two concepts, we need to look at the original pictographic script once used to write the word *halal* which was *הלל*. This word is derived from the parent root²⁴ *הל* (*hal*) where the letter *ל* is a picture of a man with his arms raised up looking and pointing at an amazing sight. The letter *ה* is a shepherd staff which is used to move the flock toward a direction. When combined, these two letters mean to “look toward.”

²³ The verb *tartaroo*, from the noun *tartaros*, means “cast into tartaros.”

²⁴ A two-letter root that all three-letter roots are derived from.

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Since the beginning of time, men, including the Nomadic Hebrews, have used the stars as their guide for traveling. They are shining lights that are “looked toward” to guide one on the journey. While we can be sure that the word *hal* originally means a “star,” I believe that it was specifically the North Star. Because of the rotation of the earth, all of the stars make a circular motion in the sky. The only exception is the North Star, which remains fixed at one point in the center of the moving stars due to its position directly above the North Pole²⁵.



Throughout the Bible, the writers portrayed our life as a journey as can be seen in the following verse.

And you shall warn them of the customs and the teachings and make known to them the path they are to walk in and the works which they are to do.

Exodus 18:20

²⁵ Today, the North Star is Polaris (because of its position over the North “Pole”), but star positions change over time and in the days of Abraham the star Thuban was the North Star.

The fuller Hebraic meaning of “Praise Yahweh” is that we are to “look toward” Yahweh, the fixed and constant shining light, as our guide on our journey through life.

Firmament

*And God said, Let there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.*

Genesis 1:6 (KJV)

The word **רָקִיעַ** *raqiya* ^[H:7549], translated as firmament, comes from the root word **רָקַע** *raqa* ^[H:7554] which can be found in several passages including Isaiah 40:19.

*The sculpture is poured by the craftsman and he **overlays** (raqa) the cast with gold and castings of silver chains.*

Raq was the process of hammering out a piece of gold or other metal into thin plates which was then applied to a carved or cast image as we read in Numbers 16:39.

*And El'azar the priest took the copper censers, which they brought near and were burned and they were **hammered out** (raqa) into plates for the altar.*

Here, the phrase “hammered out” is again the verb root **רָקַע** *raqa* ^[H:7554]. The word **רָקִיעַ** *raqiya* ^[H:7549], as found in Genesis 1:6, is literally a “hammered out sheet.” Some scientists have speculated that before the flood a thick sheet of water surrounded the earth high in the atmosphere. It is then possible that the opening of the

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windows of heaven which brought down the floodwaters²⁶ is the collapse of this “hammered out sheet” of water. It is also theorized that the sheet of water would have filtered out harmful radiation from the sun and contributed to the longevity of life on the earth prior to the flood.

²⁶ Genesis 7:11

Time and Space

East

In the Ancient Hebrew vocabulary, words used to describe distance and direction are also used to describe time. As an example, the Hebrew word for east is קדם *qedem* ^[H:6924] and literally means “the direction of the rising sun.” While we use north as our major orientation, such as in maps, the Hebrews’ major orientation was the east and the other three compass points were oriented to the east. If you face east and raise your right hand straight out to your side, your arm would be pointing south. The Hebrew word for the “right hand” is ימין *yamiyn* ^[H:3225] and the word for “south” is תימן *teyman* ^[H:8486]. Both of these words are derived from the root ימן *yaman* ^[H:3231], meaning “to go to the right.”

The word קדם *qedem* ^[H:6924] is also the word used for the past or ancient time. In order to understand why “east” and “past” are related, we need to understand how the Ancient Hebrews perceived the past and the future.

Past and Future

The hand gesture, usually referred to as the “thumbs up,” conveys the idea of “good” while the “thumbs down” means “bad.” You are probably aware that these gestures have their origin in the gladiatorial games where Caesar would give one of these gestures to the conquering gladiator to convey his desire for the fate of the defeated, but you may not be aware of the original meanings behind these gestures.

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If Caesar gave the “thumbs up,” which was actually pointing to the throat, and not up as we mistakenly think, it signaled the gladiator standing above the defeated to put his sword through the throat, to kill him. On the other hand, if he gave the “thumbs down” he is signaling the gladiator to throw his sword to the ground, to spare the defeated.

As you can see, over the last two thousand years, the meanings of thumbs up and thumbs down have reversed in meaning. We have already seen a few examples of how different Hebrew thought is from our own Modern Greek way of thinking, but is it possible at times our modern way of thinking is opposite of Hebrew thought? Let’s look at an example that shows that it can be.

In our way of recollecting time, we view time as a line or road. On this road the past—where we have already walked—is behind us, and the future—where we have not yet walked—is in front of us.

If we examine some Hebrew words related to time, we can get a clue on how the Ancient Hebrews perceived the past and the future.

The Hebrew word for tomorrow is **מחר** *mahhar*²⁷ [H:4279] from the root **אחר** *ahhar* [H:309] meaning “to be behind.” The Hebrew word for yesterday is **תמול** *temol* [H:4136] from the word **מול** *mul* [H:8543] meaning “in front.” As you can see, in Hebraic thought, they perceived the past (yesterday) as in the front while the future (tomorrow) as behind. It is not that they saw themselves walking the road of time backwards—in fact, they did not see time as linear, but as cyclical. They perceived their history, the past, as

²⁷ The “hh” in transliterated Hebrew words is pronounced hard like the “ch” in the name Bach.

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events that can be seen, therefore in front, while the future cannot be seen. Therefore, it is behind and out of view.

As directions are oriented to the east and the east is “in front,” the word קדם *qedem* ^[H:6924] can mean east (in space) as well as the past (in time).

Eternity



When looking off into the far distance, it is difficult to make out any details. What is beyond the horizon cannot be seen. This is the concept behind the Hebrew verb עלם *alam* ^[H:5956] meaning “to be beyond the horizon,” “to be beyond view” or “to hide.” The noun עולם *olam* ^[H:5769], derived from this verb, means the “horizon” or “out of sight.”

*Before the mountains were brought forth and you formed the land and the world, from **horizon** (olam) to **horizon** (olam) you are God.*

Psalm 90:2

As previously mentioned, words used for space, such as we see in the verse above, can also be used for time. In the verses below,

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the word עולם *olam* ^[H:5769] can mean “a long time” in the past or the future.

*...Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river
a long time ago (olam)...*

Joshua 24:2

*I despise it, I will not live for a long time (olam)
for my days are vanity.*

Job 7:16

The word *olam* is frequently translated as “eternity” or “forever” with the mistaken understanding that it means a continual span of time that never ends—forever. However, in the Hebrew mind, this word simply means “beyond the horizon,” “a very distant time.”

The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

Exodus 15:18 (KJV)

A common Hebrew phrase in the Bible is לעולם ועד *l' olam va'ed* ^[H:5769 and H:5703] which is translated as “for ever and ever” in the verse above. More literally, from a Hebraic perspective, this phrase means “to the distant horizon and again.” When this translation is applied to the above verse, it can mean, “Yahweh will reign to the horizon and beyond” or “Yahweh will reign for a distant time and beyond” or even both.

Flesh and Bone

Flesh

בֶּשֶׂר *basar* ^[H:1320] is the Hebrew word for “flesh,” the skin or meat of animals or man; and when used in the phrase “all flesh” it means “all mankind.” The verbal root of this word can be found in the following passage where it is translated as “proclaim the good news.”

*The spirit of Adonai Yahweh is upon me because Yahweh has anointed me to **proclaim the good news** (basar)...*

Isaiah 61:1

What does “flesh” have to do with “proclaiming good news”? Simple—when one proclaimed good news, such as the arrival of a new baby or visitors, or some other celebration, an animal was slaughtered and “flesh” was served.

Bones

*And the human said, this one is **bone** of my **bones** and flesh of my flesh because of this he called her woman because this was taken from man.*

Genesis 2:23

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Bone in Hebrew is **עצם** *etsem* ^[H:6106]. The parent root of this word is **עץ** *eyts* ^[H:6086]²⁸ meaning a “tree.” The connection between these two words is obvious—the bones are the tree of the body. Another derivative of *eyts* is **יעץ** *ya’ats* ^[H:3289], a verb meaning “to counsel.” The participle form of this verb²⁹, **יועץ** *yo’eyts*, is a counselor, one who is a tree, in the sense of support and firmness, to another.

Man

Previously we discussed the word **אדם** *adam* ^[H:120], which I have translated as “human,” whereas most translations use the word “man.” The reason I chose “human” over “man” is because there is another Hebrew word meaning “man” and that is the word **איש** *iysh* ^[H:376]. The word *iysh* is derived from the root **אנש** *anash* ^[H:605], meaning weak and frail. When the writer of the text wishes to refer to “man” from the perspective of “humankind,” in the sense of being related by blood, he chooses the word *adam* because of its roots being in the word **דם** *dam* ^[H:1818] meaning blood. On the other hand, if he wishes to refer to “man” and his mortality, then he would chose *iysh* because of its roots being in the word *anash* meaning weak and frail (mortal).

In the previous section, we read Genesis 2:23, which states that the human (*adam*) called her woman “because” she was taken from man (*iysh*). Just as the English word “woman” contains the word “man” within it, the Hebrew word for woman, **אִשָּׁה** *iyshah*

²⁸ The **צ** and **ץ** are both the same letter, “tsade.” The form **ץ** is used when it comes at the end of a word.

²⁹ The participle is a Hebrew verb form denoting an action such as making or one of action such as a maker.

[H:802], contains the Hebrew word *iysh* “because” she was taken out of *iysh*.

Face

The Hebrew word פָּנִים *paniym* [H:6440] means “face” but with a deeper meaning than just the front part of the head. The first clue that there is more to this word than simply meaning “face” is that it is a plural word, as indicated by the suffix םִ *ym*. In English, nouns denote inanimate objects and only if one adds a verb can the noun take on animation. Hebrew nouns, on the other hand, denote objects of action. The action behind *paniym* is the expression of emotion and personality in the face, and since we have an infinite number of “faces,” the Hebrew word is plural. Our second clue that there is more to this word can be read in the following passages.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

Exodus 33:1-3 (KJV)

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In these verses, we are told that Yahweh refused to go with Israel to take them to the Promised Land because they were stiffnecked and he would kill them. He would send an angel³⁰ to go with them instead. A few verses later, we are given another description of this “angel.”

And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Exodus 33:14 (KJV)

The Hebrew word behind the word “presence” is *paniym*, the face, and is a description of the angel mentioned previously. The angel has the same personality as Yahweh and therefore is the “face of Yahweh.”

We see this same concept in Yeshua’s teaching about himself and the father.

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him. Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied. Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me;

³⁰ For more on what an angel is from a Hebraic perspective see the study “Messenger” on page 113.

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or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

John 14:7-11 (RSV)

Heart

The English word “heart” can be a concrete concept, meaning the organ that pumps blood, or an abstract concept, meaning an emotion such as love or kindness. The Hebrew word **לֵבָב** *levav* ^[H:3824] and its parent root **לָבַב** *lev* ^[H:3820] also concretely mean the heart organ. However the abstract concept behind these words is “thought” rather than “emotion” as can be seen in the following verses from the King James Version.

*Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy **mind** (levav), and thou shalt think an evil thought:*

Ezekiel 38:10 (KJV)

*But I have **understanding** (levav) as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?*

Job 12:3(KJV)

*Let men of **understanding** (levav) tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me.*

Job 34:34(KJV)

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*For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into **mind** (lev).*

Isaiah 65:17(KJV)

The original pictographic script for the word לב *lev* ^[H:3820] is לט. The first letter, ט, represents the shepherd staff ³¹ and is a sign of “authority” and the second letter, ל, represents the house or tent ³² meaning “within.” When combined, these pictographs mean “the authority within.” The “authority within” us is the heart, the mind, but Jeremiah 17:9 gives us the following warning about our minds.

*The **mind** (lev) is crooked above all things, it is sick, who can know it?*

The connection between a thought and the heart and its evil inclination can also be found in Genesis 6:5.

*Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great in the land and all the imaginations of the thoughts of his **heart/mind** (lev) is only evil all the day.*

In Deuteronomy 6:5 we are told to keep our minds and thoughts on God alone.

³¹ The name of the letter ט is lamed and is related to the word מלמד *malmad* ^[H:4451] meaning staff.

³² The name of the letter ל is beyt and is derived from the word בית *beyt* ^[H:1004] meaning house.

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*And you shall love Yahweh your Elohiym with all your **heart/mind** (lev) and with all your soul and with all your resources.*

Western thought considers the mind more rational than the heart. So, translations which treat lev as heart, with the abstract concept meaning an emotion such as love, may be misleading.

Kidneys

One of the most frustrating aspects of the English translations of the Bible available to us is their complete lack of consistency in translation of Hebrew words. In our previous discussion concerning the heart, we should be able to assume, whenever we see the word “heart” in a translation, it is the Hebrew word **לֵב** *levav* ^[H:3824] or **לֵב** *lev* ^[H:3820], but as we shall see this is not the case.

*Examine me, O Jehovah, and prove me; Try my **heart** (kilyah) and my **mind** (lev).*

Psalm 26:2 (ASV)

The Hebrew word behind the word “heart” in this translation is **כְּלִיָּה** *kilyah* ^[H:3629] while behind the word “mind” is the word **לֵב** *lev* ^[H:3820]. The word **כְּלִיָּה** *kilyah* ^[H:3629] means the “kidneys,” and this is the seat of emotion in Hebrew thought.

Intestines

*I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my **heart**.*

Psalm 40:8

So, what is the Hebrew word behind this word “heart,” לב *lev* ^[H:3820] or כליה *kilyah* ^[H:3629]? Neither. This is the Hebrew word מערה *me’ah* ^[H:4578] literally meaning the “intestines.” In Hebrew thought this is the seat of the unconscious mind, instinct.

Several years ago I was driving with my family through town. As I came up to an intersection and saw the traffic light was red, I began braking to come to a stop. My wife looked at me and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “It’s a red light” and she said, “No, it’s green.” Just then, a car from our right flew through the intersection. While our light was in fact green, his was red. If I had continued on the path I was going and seen the light as green, we would have been in the intersection as the other driver ran the red light. Why did I see a red light when it was actually green? I believe the *me’ah*, the unconscious mind, is where God speaks to us. The problem is, in our normal routine of life, we listen with our ears and mind, not our *me’ah*.

Stomach

The Hebrew word חי *hhai* ^[H:2416] is usually translated as life, but how did the Ancient Hebrews perceive “life”? A clue can be found in Job 38:39.

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*Will you hunt prey for the lion and will you fill the **stomach** (hhai) of the young lion?*

Job 38:39

Hhai is concretely the “stomach,” but in the abstract it means “life,” as in the verse below.

*In the six hundredth year of the **life** (hhai) of Noah...*

Genesis 7:11

What does the stomach have to do with life? In our culture, it is very uncommon for anyone to experience true hunger, but this was an all-too-often experience for the Ancient Hebrews who lived a nomadic lifestyle, always in search of food and water. To them a full stomach was a sign of life.

Breath

The Hebrew word for “breath” is **נשמה** *neshemah* ^[H:5397], but the meaning of this word goes far beyond the simple exchange of air in the lungs in Hebraic thought. To the Ancient Hebrews, the breath is the character of the individual. This is apparent in a related word, **שם** *shem* ^[H:8034], the parent root of the word *neshemah*.

*And Solomon’s wisdom was greater than all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. and he was wiser than all the men, more than Eytan the Ezarite and Heyman and Kalkol and Darda the sons of Mahhol and his **character** (shem) was in all the nations around.*

1 Kings 4:30,31

The character of Solomon, specifically his wisdom, was so great that all the people in the nations around them knew it. In Hebraic thought, breath is the essence of the individual, the character of the individual that makes him unique.

The word *shem* is frequently translated as “name.”

*And he called his **name** (shem) Noah saying, this one will give comfort from our work and from the toil of our hands from the ground which Yahweh cursed.*

Genesis 5:29

The name נח *no'ahh* ^[H:5146] (Noah) means “rest” and was given to him because he will give נחם *nahham* ^[H:5126], meaning comfort. These two Hebrew words are both derived from the same parent root, נח *nahh*, and because they are both derived from the same root they are also related in their meanings—rest and comfort. A “name” identifies the “character” of the individual, as we see with Noah, whose character and name is “a bringer of rest/comfort.”

Many times I have heard people comment, “יהוה *Yahweh* ^[H:3068] is God’s name while אלהים *elohiym* ^[H:430] is his title.” This is similar to saying, “the word “king” is a title and “David” is a name.” Hebrew does not make a distinction between a “name” and a “title” as both are *shem*, descriptive of one’s character. The word מלך *melek* ^[H:4428], meaning king, describes the character as “one who reigns” and דוד *daviyd* ^[H:1732] describes the character as “the beloved one.” The name יהוה *Yahweh* ^[H:3068] describes his character as “He is existing” while אלהים *elohiym* ^[H:430] describes his character as “the one of power.”

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With a proper Biblical understanding of the word “name,” passages in the New Testament take on a new light.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do...

John 14:13 (ASV)

Is this verse saying whenever we pray we should conclude the prayer with “in the name of Jesus”? Not really. In Hebrew, “in” can also mean “with.” Also, if we replace the word “name” with “character,” a completely new perspective of this verse is revealed.

And whatsoever ye shall ask with my character, that I will do...

Yeshua is saying if we ask what he would ask, then he will do it.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21 (KJV)

While there are many verses that can show an original Hebrew behind the Greek Matthew, this verse is one of the best to demonstrate this. Just as we saw in the example of Noah’s name being connected with his character of comfort, we see the same formula here, not in the Greek or English, but only in the Hebrew. The Greek name for Jesus is Ιησους *Iesous* ^[G:2424] but

his Hebrew name is יֵשׁוּעַ *Yeshua* ^{[H:3442]33} meaning, “he saves.” Below is a translation of this verse from the Shem Tov Hebrew Matthew.

And she brought forth a son and she called his name “he saves” (Yeshua) because “he will save” (yoshia) his people from their iniquity.

Soul

My first exposure to Hebrew was with an English translation of the Bible, a concordance and Strong’s dictionary. Using these tools a door into a new world was opened to me—the world of the Ancient Hebrews. However, I became quickly frustrated with the English translations, which rarely translated one Hebrew word consistently. When I did a study on the word “soul,” I found it was the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh* ^[H:5315], but I discovered this one word was translated in the King James Version as any, appetite, beast, body, breath, creature, dead, desire, fish, ghost, heart, life, lust, man, mind, one, person, pleasure, self, thing, will, and soul. I think you get the picture.

At this point I determined if I was really going to be able to study the Bible correctly, I must learn the language for myself.

I had always assumed only humans had a soul, but I discovered translations often influence how we interpret Biblical concepts.

³³ The Greek *Iesous* is a transliteration of the Hebrew *Yeshua*. The Greek language has no “Y” or “Sh” so they are replaced with the “I” and “S.” The final “s” in *Iesous* identifies the name as masculine.

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*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a **living soul**.*

Genesis 2:7 (KJV)

*And God said, Let the earth bring forth the **living creature** after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.*

Genesis 1:24 (KJV)

According to these two verses, man is a “*living soul*” and animals are “*living creatures*.” However, when these two phrases are read in the Hebrew, they are identical; **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** *nephesh hhayah* ^[H:5315 and H:2416]—“a living soul.”

So, what is the soul? The dictionary gives the following definition. “The spiritual nature of humans, regarded as immortal, separable from the body at death, and susceptible to happiness or misery in a future state.”³⁴ In most cases people will understand the soul through this definition. But, as I have so often stated, our interpretation of Biblical words should be from a Hebraic perspective, not a modern Western one.

In the Hebrew mind, we are composed of a multiple of entities: flesh, bone, breath, mind, emotion, organs, etc. The soul is the whole of the person, the unity of the body, breath, and mind. It is not some immaterial spiritual entity; it is you, all of you, your whole being or self. This idea of the soul is used in our own

³⁴ Soul. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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language such as when the number of persons on a aircraft or ship are identified as souls, as in “one hundred souls on board.”

Family and Home

Tent

The nomadic tent was constructed by weaving black goat's hair into panels about three feet wide and the length of the tent. If the tent was required to be made larger, they would sew in additional panels. As each panel aged and began to break down from exposure to the sun, it was replaced with a new panel. As a general rule, one panel was replaced each year.

Many similarities exist between these panels of the tent and the family members themselves.

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

Isaiah 54:1,2 (KJV)

The phrases highlighted in the passage above literally describe what happens when the family size becomes larger with the addition of children. Just as new members are added to the family to increase its size, new panels are also added to the tent to increase its size.

The new tent panels are black in color, just like the hair on the children. The hair on the head of older members turns white after

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many years, just as the panels of the tent begin to turn white over the years from exposure in the sunlight.

Just as the older members of the family die and are replaced with newborns, the older strips of the tent are removed and replaced with new panels.

Because the tent is continually being renewed, year after year, with the addition of new panels as needed, the tent literally lasts forever and in the same way, the lineage of the family residing within the tent continues generation after generation.

*And Isaac was forty years old when he took
Rebekah to wife...*

Genesis 25:20

The phrase “forty years old” is an English translation of the Hebrew **בן ארבעים שנה** *ben arba'iyim shanah* which is literally translated as “a son of forty years.” Because of the many similarities between the tent panel and the sons of the family, it appears that the Hebrew word **בן** *ben* ^[H:1121] meaning “son” may also be the Hebrew word for the tent panel. If this is true, then the Hebrew phrase *ben arba'iyim shanah* could be translated as “forty years of tent panels” and as one panel was replaced each year, it could serve as a type of calendar.

The Hebrew word for a tent is **אהל** *ohel* ^[H:168] and is derived from the parent root **הל** (*hal*) meaning a distant shining light or a star used to navigate by³⁵. Late one day I was hiking in the mountains near where I lived. In the dark I made it back to my car, which was parked high over a large valley. Down in that

³⁵ This root was discussed in greater detail under “Praise” on page 30.

valley, I could see a campfire about five miles away. It really amazed me how that small light could be so visible at such a distance. A nomad that has been out with his flock all day could use the campfire near the family tent as his guide for returning home.

Camp



A nomadic camp might have as many as fifty tents, all members of the extended family and their servants. This was “home,” a place of serenity, beauty, love, compassion and protection. These descriptions are the meaning behind $\eta\eta$ *hhen* ^[H:2580]³⁶.

A very common style of writing found in the Bible, especially in Psalms and Proverbs, is a form of poetry called parallelism where the writer expresses one idea in two or more different ways using synonyms. When doing Hebrew word studies, this is very beneficial, as the synonyms of the word you are studying will help to define that word. Here are a few examples where we will see the word $\eta\eta$ *hhen* ^[H:2580] being paralleled with some of the

³⁶ This word is usually translated as “grace” but this abstract word has no place in a Hebrew text.

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descriptions provided in the paragraph above. The underlined words are also parallels.

*She will give to your head a wreath of **hhen**, a crown of **splendor** she will deliver to you.*

Proverbs 4:9

*The doe is **loving** and the female goat is **hhen**...*

Proverbs 5:19

***Hhen** is a deception and **beauty** is a vapor...*

Proverbs 31:30

When reading an English translation of the Bible, an English dictionary is somewhat useless. Instead, one needs to examine the Hebrew word behind the English to find the real meaning of the word. The same is true for the Greek translation of the New Testament. When working with words in the Greek New Testament, we need to find the Hebrew word behind the Greek and take our definitions from it. A common New Testament word is $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ *hharis* ^[G:5485] and while this word is usually translated as “grace,” such as in “unmerited favor,” we need to take our definition from the Hebrew which is the word *hhen*.

*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the **grace** (*hharis*) of God was upon him.*

Luke 2:40 (KJV)

A more Hebraic view of this verse is the child grew in the “beauty of God,” he received love, compassion and protection from God.

Derived from the parent root **חנן** *hhen* ^[H:2580] is the verbal root **חנן** *hhanan* ^[H:2603] with the same meaning as *hhen*. Another verbal root derived from *hhen* is **חנה** *hhanah* ^[H:2583] meaning “to camp” or “encamp” and its noun **מחנה** *mahhaneh* ^[H:4264] meaning “camp.” The verb *hhanah* and the noun *mahhaneh* can be found in the following verse.

*And the sons of Israel **encamped** (hhanah) each to his **camp** (mahhaneh) and each to his standard, to their army.*

Numbers 1:52

Family

The word **משפחה** *mishpahhah* ^[H:4940], meaning family comes from the root **שפח** *shaphahh* ³⁷, meaning “to join.” The family is a group joined together where each role in the family serves a specific function to keep the family joined together. Each Hebrew word used for the different members of the family provides insight into their specific roles.

Mother

The Hebrew word for mother is **אם** *eym* ^[H:517]. In the original pictographic script this word was written as . The first

³⁷ This root is not found in the Biblical text and therefore has no Strong's number associated with it.

letter, the , is a picture of an ox head representing strength³⁸. The second letter, the , is a representation of water³⁹. The two letters give us the meaning of "strong water." Ancient peoples would boil animal skins in water and as the skin broke down a sticky thick liquid formed at the surface of the water. They would remove this thick liquid and use it as a binding agent—glue or strong water." The mother is the one who "binds" the family together.

Father

The Hebrew word for father is  *av* ^[H:1]. In the original pictographic script, this word was written as . The first letter is also the picture of an ox. The second letter, the , is the picture of the tent or house where the family resides⁴⁰. When combined, these letters mean "the strength of the house." The father is the one who provides strength to the family.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Galatians 4:6 (KJV)

³⁸ The name of the letter  is aleph and is derived from the word  *eleph* ^[H:504] meaning ox.

³⁹ The name of the letter  is mem and is derived from the word  *mayim* ^[H:4325] meaning water.

⁴⁰ The name of the letter  is beyt and is derived from the word  *beyt* ^[H:1004] meaning house.

Because the word Αββα *avva* ^{[G:5]41} is an Aramaic word meaning “father,” it has been claimed that this is proof that the first century Jews spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew. Actually the Aramaic word for father is אב *av* ^[H:2], the same as the Hebrew. The word *avva* is a term of endearment for a father in both Aramaic and Hebrew similar to our use of “daddy” or “papa.” The Greek text for “Abba, Father” is Αββα ο πατηρ *avva o patir* and in Hebrew this would be אבא האב *abba ha'av*—Papa the father.

Son

The Hebrew word for son is בן *ben* ^[H:1121]. In the original pictographic script this word was written as אב. The first letter, the א, is the picture of the tent or house where the family resides. The second letter, the ב, is the picture of a seed. The seed is a new generation of life that will grow and produce a new generation; therefore, this letter means “to continue⁴².” When combined, these two letters mean “to continue the house.” The sons continue the lineage of the family.

The Hebrew word *ben* is related to the word בנה⁴³ *banah* ^[H:1129] meaning “to build” and אבן *even* ^[H:68] meaning “stone.” Just as a building is “built” by adding “stones,” the parents “build” a family by adding “sons.”

⁴¹ written as Abba in modern translations.

⁴² The name of the letter א is nun and is derived from the word נון *nun* ^[H:5126] meaning continue.

⁴³ The ב and ך are both the same letter “nun.” The form ך is used when it comes at the end of a word.

Boy

The Hebrew word for “boy” is יָלֵד ^[H:3206] *yeled* and the feminine form of this word is יָלֵדָה ^[H:3207] *yal'dah*, “girl.” Both of these words come from the verbal root יָלַד ^[H:3205] *yalad* meaning “to bring forth” and usually used in the context of bearing children.

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt **bring forth** (yalad) children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

Genesis 3:16 (KJV)

Another verse worthy of a look at is Genesis 20:17.

*So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they **bare** (yalad) children.*

(KJV)

While the Hebrew word behind the word “bare” is the verb *yalad*, translators added the word “children” which does not exist in the Hebrew text. Because of the translator’s insertion of this word, the reader assumes Abimelech’s punishment by God was that his women could not “bear children.” However, there is another interpretation of this verse. First note God healed not only the women but Abimelech as well as is stated in the verse above, “and God healed Abimelech...”

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man,

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for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

Genesis 20:3 (KJV)

Here God tells Abimelech, because of his sin, he is a dead man, and evidently the punishment is something that causes death, possibly an illness, but definitely not the inability to bear children. Now, let's look at verse 17 again but this time with a literal translation from the Hebrew text.

*And Abraham interceded to Elohiym and Elohiym healed Abimelech and his woman and his maid servants and they **brought forth** (yalad).*

It is my opinion that they were constipated.

Paths and Journeys

Path

Because the Bible was written by Hebrews, whose history and culture are of a nomadic, agrarian society, the words, ideas and concepts within it relate to this perspective. Instead of reading the Bible from our modern western view, we need to put our feet in their sandals and read the text as if we live within that nomadic culture.

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways (derek), and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice

Deuteronomy 26:17

A nomad's life consists of following paths from one water hole and green pasture to the next. The word for a path, or way as in the verse above, is דֶּרֶךְ *derek* ^[H:1870] and as we shall see with the following word studies, much of what we thought about God's law and commands is from a Greek perspective and not from the Hebrews'.

Law

The most common word translated as "law" in the Hebrew Bible is the word תּוֹרָה *torah* ^[H:8451] and is derived from the Hebrew root word יָרָה *arah* ^[H:3384] meaning to cast or throw out as can be seen in the following verses.

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*Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he **cast** (yarah) into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.*

Exodus 15:4 (KJV)

*And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I **shoot** (yarah). And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.*

1 Samuel 20:36 (KJV)

This idea of “throwing” is also extended to the idea of “throwing a gaze in a particular direction” or to “point.”

*And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD **shewed** (yarah) him a tree...*

Exodus 15:25 (KJV)

As a teacher points out the way his student is to go, this word is also extended to the idea of “teaching.”

*And that ye may **teach** (yarah) the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

Leviticus 10:11 (KJV)

Two nouns found in the Biblical text are derived from the verbal root *yarah*. One is **מורה** *moreh* ^[H:3384] meaning “teacher,” the one who points out the way. The other is **תורה** *torah* ^[H:8451] meaning “teachings,” the direction pointed out by the *moreh*.

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*I did not listen to the voice of my **teachers** (moreh)...*

Proverbs 5:13

*My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the **teachings** (torah) of your mother.*

Proverbs 1:8

To interpret the Hebrew word *torah* as “law” is about the same as interpreting the word father as “disciplinarian.” While the father is a disciplinarian, he is much more, and in the same way *torah* is much more than “law.”

A parent’s *torah* is a set of teachings, or instructions, to train and bring the children to maturity, to set them on the correct path. If the child is obedient to the instructions and guidance, he receives praise. If the instructions are violated out of disrespect or defiant disobedience, the child receives punishment. However, if the child desires to follow the instructions out of loving obedience but falls short of the expectations of the parent, the child is commended for the effort and counseled on how to perform the instructions better the next time. In contrast to this, a “law” is a set of rules that if not observed correctly will result in punishment and there is no room for teaching.

God, as the father of mankind, gives his children his *torah* in the same manner.

*Happy is the man whom you, Yah, discipline, and from your **teachings** (torah) you teach him*

Psalms 94:12

Command

An English definition of a command or commandment is “to direct with authority” or “to give orders” as a general does to his troops.

*And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these **commandments** (mitsvah) before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.*

Deuteronomy 6:25 (KJV)

Is the meaning of the Hebrew word **מצוה** *mitsvah* ^[H:4687], as found in the passage above, a command? Is God our general giving us an order to obey? Or is the Ancient Hebrew understanding of this word something different?

*And we departed from Horeb and walked through all that great and fearful wilderness which you saw by the path of the mountain of Amorites just as Yahweh our God **directed** (tsavah) us and we came unto Qadesh Barnea.*

Deuteronomy 1:19

The word “directed” above is the verb **צוה** *tsavah* ^[H:6680], the root of the word *mitsvah*. While translators usually translate this word as “command,” an abstract word, the more Hebraic definition is “to direct,” a concrete concept meaning “to show or point out a path.” God is not a general barking orders but a guide. He is our guide and his *mitsvah* is his direction to us to lead us on his path as can be seen in several passages from Psalm 119.

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*With all my heart I will seek after you, you will cause me to not stray from your **directions** (mitsvah).*

Verse 10

*I will run the path of your **directions** (mitsvah) because you have widened my heart.*

Verse 32

*Lead me in the pathway of your **directions** (mitsvah) for in it is my delight.*

Verse 35

*I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek your servant so that I don't forget your **directions** (mitsvah).*

Verse 176

The Biblical Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word *mitsvah* is εντολη *entole* ^[G:1785] and is a combination of the word εν *en* ^[G:1722], meaning “in” or “with,” and τελος *telos* ^[G:5056] meaning “end” or “goal.” *Entole* literally means “with a goal” and is very similar to our Hebraic understanding of the *mitsvah* as a direction.

Yeshua was asked a question in regards to the *mitsvah*.

*Rabbi, tell us, what is the great **direction** (entole/mitsvah) which is in the teachings (torah)? He said to him, “‘And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart.’ This is the first, the second is like it, ‘And you shall love your neighbor*

*as yourself,' and upon these two **directions** (entole/mitsvah) all the teachings hang, and the prophets."*

Matthew 22:36⁴⁴

Sign

Related to the verb *tsavah* (to direct) and the noun *mitsvah* (direction) is another set of words with similar meaning. The root **צִי** *tsiy* ^[H:6716] is a nomad⁴⁵, one who travels the desert in search of water and pastures for the flocks. From this root comes two words **צִיָּה** *tsiyah* ^[H:6723] meaning a dry land or desert, where nomads roam, and **צִיּוֹן** *tsiyon* ^[H:6725] meaning a landmark. The nomad uses various landmarks, including mountains, rivers, oases, and rock outcroppings to navigate from location to location.

One “landmark” in the desert stands out more in the Biblical text than any other. It is the landmark that points out the directions and teachings we are to follow.

and many people will go and say, "come, we will go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the Elohiym of Jacob and he will teach us from his paths and we will walk in his ways because from

⁴⁴ This translation is from the Shem Tov Hebrew Matthew.

⁴⁵ This word is used in the Biblical text for a “ship,” a nomad of the seas.

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Zion (tsiyon) the teaching will go out and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem."

Isaiah 2:3

The name "Zion" in Hebrew is צִיּוֹן *tsiyon* ^[H:6726], the very same word meaning "landmark."

If we are going to follow the path God has directed us in, then we will need to use Zion, the mountain of God, as our landmark to point the way of his teachings.

Wicked

*Better is a little that the **righteous** hath Than the abundance of many **wicked**. For the arms of the **wicked** shall be broken; But Jehovah upholdeth the **righteous**.*

Psalm 37:16,17 (ASV)

These two words, righteous and wicked, are paralleled together as antonyms many times throughout the Biblical text. What is a righteous or wicked person? These two words are abstract in meaning and therefore we will need to find their original concrete meanings in order to uncover their true meaning in Hebraic thought.

The Hebrew word רָשָׁע *rasha* ^[H:7563] is the word translated as "wicked" in the above verse. It comes from the verbal root רָשַׁע *rasha* ^[H:7561], which concretely means "to walk away from the path" and can be found in the following passage.

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*For I have guarded the path of Yahweh and I have not **walked away** (rasha) from my God.*

2 Samuel 22:22

I recall a backpacking trip where I was following a trail many miles in the backcountry. While paying more attention to the scenery than the trail itself, I found myself lost from the trail. While this is a somewhat common occurrence among hikers and backpackers, there are occasions when people have lost their lives after becoming lost. The word “wicked” is a poor translation of *rasha* as the Hebraic meaning is simply someone who has walked away from the path. There are two ways to leave a trail—by accident, which we may call an error, or on purpose, which we may call defiance. Both of these are *rasha* and have the same result.

Righteous

*The fear of the **wicked** (rasha), it shall come upon him; And the desire of the **righteous** (tsadiyq) shall be granted. When the whirlwind passeth, the **wicked** (rasha) is no more; But the **righteous** (tsadiyq) is an everlasting foundation.*

Proverbs 10:24,25 (ASV)

In contrast to *rasha*, צַדִּיק *tsadiyq* ^[H:6662], usually translated as righteous, is one who pays attention to and remains on the trail. A related word, צֶדֶקָה *tsedeqah* ^[H:6666], is usually translated as righteousness, but concretely this word means “the trail one walks.”

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*And the **trail** (tsedaqah) will be for us if we are careful to follow all these **directions** (mitsvah) to the face of Yahweh our God just as he directed (tsavah) us.*

Deuteronomy 6:25

Throughout the Bible, God has given his directions pointing out the trail, but in order to keep from getting lost, we must keep our eyes on the trail.

Repent

We usually perceive repentance as a “feeling” of sorrowfulness and while this is one sign of a repentant person, there is far more to repentance.

*Therefore house of Israel, I will judge each according to his path declares Adonai Yahweh, **turn and come back** from all your rebellion and iniquity will not be your stumbling*

Ezekiel 18:30

The phrase “turn and come back” is **שובו והשיבו** *shuvu v’hashiyvu* in the Hebrew. The first word, **שובו** *shuvu*, is the Hebrew verb **שוב** *shuv* ^[H:7725] meaning “to turn.” The second word is **השיבו** *ha shiyvu* and is the same verb **שוב** *shuv* ^[H:7725] but written in the causative form where it would mean “make a turn.” The first word, *shuvu*, can be interpreted as “stop and turn away” from the iniquity and the second word, *ha shiyvu*, can be interpreted as “come back” to the path you should be following.

I mentioned previously my experience of finding myself lost from the trail I was following. Once I realized my mistake, I “stopped and turned around” and looked for where the trail should be. Then I headed for it and I eventually did “come back” to the trail. This same analogy can also be applied when we find ourselves lost from God’s path.

Spirit

Can you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste a spirit? If you answer “no,” then we need to look deeper for a more concrete meaning behind the Hebrew word. The word frequently translated as “spirit” is רוּחַ *ru’ahh* ^[H:7307] and just a quick search of this word in the Hebrew text will reveal its concrete meaning.

*And Elohiym made a **wind** (ru’ahh) pass over the land and the water subsided.*

Genesis 8:1

Here we see the word *ru’ahh* translated as a “wind.” Because we can hear and feel the wind, we know we are on the right track for finding the original Hebraic meaning of this word. A “wind” can be the wind on the land, such as we see in the verse above, but it can also be the “wind” of Yahweh.

*By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made and by the **wind** (ru’ahh) of his mouth all their armies.*

Genesis 8:1

And of man.

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*The burden of the word of Yahweh is upon Israel declares Yahweh, he stretches out the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth and he forms the **wind** (ru'ahh) of man that is within him.*

Zechariah 12:1

The “wind” of God and man is the “breath,” but from a Hebraic perspective, the breath is not just the exchange of air in the lungs, it is the person’s driving force, which directs and leads him on his journey through life. As we have already seen, an examination of related words and the roots of a word help to paint the picture of their original concrete meaning. So, let’s do that with the word *ru'ahh*.

The parent root is רָחַח *rahh* and while this word/root is not found in the Biblical text, several other roots and words derived from it are. The word אָרַח *arahh* ^[H:732] means “to travel,” יָרַח *yere'ahh* ^[H:3394] is the “moon” and רָחַח *rehheh* ^[H:7347] is a “millstone.” What do wind, traveling, moon and millstone all have in common? They each have to do with following a prescribed path. The wind follows the same path each season, a traveler follows a path, the moon follows the same path in the sky, and a millstone also follows a prescribed path.

When we live according to our “wind” we follow the path of destruction, but if we live according to God’s “wind” we follow the path of life.

*And I will give you a new heart and a new **wind** (ru'ahh) I will give within you, and I will cause the heart of stone to be removed from your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will give my **wind** (ru'ahh) within you and I will make you*

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*walk in my statutes and my judgments you will
preserve and you will do them.*

Ezekiel 36:26,27

Wilderness

We will begin this study with three Hebrew words, each coming from the same root דבר *davar* ^[H:1696]. They are דבר *davar* ^[H:1697] meaning “word,” דבורה *devorah* ^[H:1682] meaning a “bee” and מדבר *mid’bar* ^[H:4057] meaning a “wilderness.” Because each of these words is derived from the same root, we know they are all related in meaning. So, what do “words,” “bees,” and “wilderness” have in common? Order. Words are arranged in an ordered format to create sentences, a beehive is a colony of insects that live in a perfectly ordered society, and the wilderness is a place of order where all organisms of life live in perfect balance and harmony.

Every summer, millions head off for the great outdoors, the wilderness. Why? Because there we can get away from the hustle and bustle of civilization (adequately described as the “dog eat dog” world) and enjoy the peace and quiet found only in the wilderness.

While often overlooked, the wilderness plays a key role in the Bible. When God called Abraham out of Ur and Moses out of Egypt he brought them out of a lush river of agriculture into the wilderness to live as nomads. God also brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness before their entry into the Promised Land. However, Israel rebelled against God, so he

had them wander in the wilderness for another forty years. Once Israel entered into the Promised Land, God set one week aside each year for the festival of Sukkot⁴⁶ when all Israelites were to return to the wilderness and live in a סֹכָה *sukkah* ^[5521]. Throughout the Bible, we find people living as nomads in the wilderness. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived their entire lives as nomads, and prior to becoming the king of Israel, David lived as a nomadic shepherd.

God is a God of order and as a place of order, the wilderness is the best place to learn about who and what God is. Even Yeshua knew this.

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Matthew 14:23 (KJV)

And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Matthew 15:29 (KJV)

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 6:12 (KJV)

⁴⁶ The plural form of the word *sukkah* meaning a temporary dwelling used by the nomads for shelter.

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And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

Luke 9:28 (KJV)

If the wilderness is a place of order, the cities were considered a place of chaos. The Hebrew word for “city” is עיר *iyr* ^[H:5892] and just a cursory look at words related to this one reveals its close relationship with darkness. ער *ar* ^[H:6145] is an enemy, עור *ur* ^[H:5787] means blind, יער *ya'ar* ^[H:3293] is a forest as a dark place, שער *sho'ar* ^[H:8182] is offensive or vile, סער *sa'ar* ^[H:5591] is a storm, ערב *arav* ^[H:6150] is to grow dark and ערפל *arphel* ^[H:6205] is a thick darkness.

Fruit and Food

Bread

*With the sweat of your brow you will eat **bread** (lehem)...*

Genesis 3:19

Bread dough is placed on a table and is kneaded by hitting it with the fists, rolling it back and forth, picking it up and turning it over, and... Kind of sounds like a fight, doesn't it? Actually, the Hebrew noun **לֶחֶם** *lehem* ^[H:3899], meaning "bread," comes from the verbal root **לָחַם** *lahham* ^[H:3898] meaning to "fight."

*Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and **fight** (lahham) against us, and so get them up out of the land.*

Exodus 1:10 (KJV)

Could this also be because we have to fight the ground to bring up the crop, fight the grain to remove the husk from the seeds, fight the seeds to turn them into flour, and fight the dough to make the bread?

Tassels

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Hebrew language is its clear connection between a word and its illustrative meaning. The

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Hebrew word **ציצית** *tsiytsiyt* ^[H:6734] is a good example of this relationship.

*38 Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them **fringes** (tsiytsiyt) in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the **fringe** (tsiytsiyt) of the borders a ribband of blue: 39 And it shall be unto you for a **fringe** (tsiytsiyt), that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: 40 That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.*

Numbers 15:38-40 (KJV)

From the above passage we learn the **ציצית** *tsiytsiyt* ^[H:6734], translated as “fringe,” are worn on the four corners of the garments. The standard dress of the Hebrews was a rectangular piece of cloth with a hole in the center for the head and was worn similar to a modern poncho. A sash was then tied around the waist to secure the garment. The fringes were then tied to each corner, border in the KJV translation, of this garment as reminders of God’s commands for his people.

Below is an example of a *tsiytsiyt* used today on the Tallit⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ A four-cornered garment with the *tsiytsiyt* tied to each corner worn today by Orthodox Jews in order to observe the command of Numbers chapter 15.



The word *tsiytsiyt* is derived from the noun **צִיץ** *tsiyts* ^[H:6731] and the verb **צָצַח** *tsuts* ^[H:6692], both of which can be found in the following passage.

*And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and **bloomed** (*tsuts*) **blossoms** (*tsiyts*), and yielded almonds.*

Numbers 17:8 (KJV)

When I first began studying the word *tsiytsiyt*, I pondered the connection between *tsiytsiyt*, meaning fringe, and *tsiyts*, meaning blossom, and wondered if the fringe originally looked like a blossom. I then reminded myself I was concentrating on the physical appearance of these objects, a Greek way of thinking, and had forgotten the Hebrews were concerned with function. When I realized the function of a blossom was to produce fruit on a tree, I was amazed to discover this was the exact same function of the *tsiytsiyt*, to produce fruit within the man.

But his delight is in the teachings of Yahweh and in his teachings he meditates day and night, and he will be like a tree planted by streams of water which gives his fruit in its season

Psalms 1:2,3

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The function of the fringe, according to Numbers 15:38-40, is to *remember the commandments*, the teachings of God, which according to Psalm 1:2,3, is like producing fruit.

According to the book of Matthew, Yeshua also wore these fringes.

*And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the **hem** of his garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

Matthew 9:20 (KJV)

The Septuagint uses the Greek word *κρασπεδον* *kraspedon* [G:2899] for the Hebrew word **צִיִּצְיֹת** *tsiytsiyt* [H:6734] in Numbers 15:38. In the passage from Matthew above, the Greek word for “hem” is the same word, *kraspedon*, and literally means “fringe.” The final evidence showing that Yeshua did in fact wear *tsiytsiyt* is found in the Shem Tov Hebrew text where we find the Hebrew word *tsiytsiyt* in Matthew 9:20.

The woman knew if she just touched his fringe she would be healed. Why? Because she knew of the prophecy in Malachi 4:2:

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings

(KJV)

The Hebrew word meaning “wing” is **כַּנָּף** *kanaph* [H:3671] but it is also the word for a “corner,” as in the corners of a garment. The woman grabbed hold of his *tsiytsiyt*, which were tied to the “corners” of his garment because she knew that he had healing in his “corners.”

Another word in the Malachi verse I would like to address is, the word “sun.” Is this a reference to the worshipping of the sun god? I don’t think so. The Hebrew word for the sun is שֶׁמֶשׁ *shemesh* ^[H:8121] and is closely related to the Aramaic word שַׁמַּשׁ *shamash* ⁴⁸ meaning “servant.” Notice these two words are spelled identically. Only the vowel sounds are different. Could the author of the Malachi passage have intended the meaning “servant of righteousness” rather than “sun of righteousness”?

Wisdom

One aspect of the Hebrew language that fascinates me is its complex system of letters, roots, and words. The parent root חָמַם *hham* ^[H:2525], meaning “heat,” and its derivatives demonstrate this unique system.

The word *hham* appears as  in its original pictographic script. The letter  is a picture of a wall which “separates” one side from another⁴⁹. and the letter  is a picture of “water”⁵⁰. Combined, these two letters literally mean “separate water.” When “heat” (*hham*) is applied to water, we have evaporation, or a “separating of water.”

⁴⁸ While this word is not found in the Hebrew Bible or the Aramaic portions of it, its verbal root is used in Daniel 7:20 where it means “to serve.”

⁴⁹ The name of the letter  is *hhets* (*hhets* in Modern Hebrew) and is derived from the word חֵיץ *hheys* ^[H:2434] meaning a wall.

⁵⁰ The name of the letter  is *mem* and is derived from the word מַיִם *mayim* ^[H:4325] meaning water.

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The following Hebrew words are all derived from the parent root root **חמ** *hham* ^[H:2525].

חמת <i>hhey met</i> ^[H:2573]	skin-bag
חמה <i>hhey mah</i> ^[H:2529]	cheese
חמה <i>hham mah</i> ^[H:2535]	sun
חמס <i>hham as</i> ^[H:2554]	to shake
חמד <i>hham ad</i> ^[H:2530]	to crave/desire
חמיץ <i>hham ats</i> ^[H:2556]	to sour

While we can plainly see the root **חמ** (*hham*)⁵¹ at the beginning of each of these words, what may not be as plainly seen is how the meanings of each of these words are related.

Soured (**חמיץ**) milk was placed in a skin-bag (**חמת**) that was set out in the heat (**חם**) of the sun (**חמה**) and shaken (**חמס**). The natural enzymes in the skin-bag causes the “water to separate” (**מח**) from the milk forming the delicacy (**חמד**) cheese (**חמה**).

So, what does all of this have to do with wisdom? First, **חמ** is the root of the Hebrew word **חכם** *hhakham* ^[H:2450] and is, secondly, related to the idea of “separating,” as this word means “one who is able to separate between what is good and bad.” This one word can be translated as either “skill” when applied to a craftsman, or as “wise” when applied to a leader or counselor.

⁵¹ The **ח** and **ח** are both the same letter “mem.” The form **ח** is used when it comes at the end of a word.

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*and now send for me a man of **skill** (hhakham) to work in gold...*

2 Chronicles 2:7

*Provide for yourselves **wise** (hhakham) men and understanding and knowing for your tribes and I will set them as rulers over you.*

Deuteronomy 1:13

A verse found in the book of Isaiah has a very interesting connection between **חמאה** *hheyimah* ^[H:2529] (cheese) and a **חכם** *hhakham* ^[H:2450], a person who is able to separate from the good and the bad, a wise man.

And he will eat cheese (hheyimah) and dates⁵² to know to reject the bad and choose the good.

Isaiah 7:15

There appears to be a physical connection between cheese and wisdom as this passage indicates that eating cheese can bring about wisdom.

Covenant

While the Hebrew word **ברית** *beriyt* ^[H:1285] means “covenant,” the roots of the word and its cultural background are helpful in understanding its fuller meaning. This word comes from the root

⁵² The Hebrew word **דבש** *devash* ^[H:1706] can mean dates or honey.

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ברָה *barah* ^[H:1262] meaning “to select the choicest meat.” This meaning is also found in other nouns derived from this root. The word ברֹת *barut* ^[H:1267] means “meat” and בֵּרִי *beriy* ^[H:1274] means “fat” in the sense of choicest.

The word בְּרִית *beriyt* ^[H:1285] is literally the choicest, fattest, animal that is slaughtered for the covenant ceremony.

*Now therefore come thou, let us make a **covenant** (beriyt), I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.*

Genesis 31:44 (KJV)

The phrase “make a covenant” is found thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible where the word “make” is the Hebrew word כָּרַת *karat* ^[H:3772] meaning “to cut.” Literally, the phrase “make a covenant” means, “cut the choice pieces of meat.” When a covenant is made, the fattened animal is cut into two pieces and laid out on the ground; each party of the covenant then passes through the pieces. This symbolic act signifies to both parties that if one of the parties fails to meet the agreement, then the other has the right to do to the other what they did to the animal.

And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their

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dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

Jeremiah 34:18-20 (KJV)

While the nation of Israel was encamped at Mount Sinai, God entered a covenant with them wherein Israel promised to obey the commands of God and God promised to protect and watch over Israel. Countless times over the years following the institution of this covenant, Israel failed to abide by the covenantal agreement. Just as the animal of the sacrifice was cut in two pieces, Israel was also cut in two for their unfaithfulness to the covenant by being cut into two nations—Israel and Judah.

Support and Order

Believe

*And he **believed** in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Genesis 15:6 (KJV)

What does one mean when saying, “I believe in God”? The dictionary defines “believe” as “To accept as true or real⁵³.” Is a belief in God simply knowing God exists and he is who he says he is? Not from a Hebraic perspective. The Hebrew behind this word has absolutely nothing to do with the English definition given above. Instead, it is a very concrete concept that can be experienced through the senses and not the mind.

The Hebrew word behind the translation “believe” is the verb אָמַן *aman* ^[H:539]. Just a simple cursory look at the various ways this word has been translated indicates that there is much more to this word than just knowing that something exists. The King James Version uses the following translations for the verb *aman*: believe, assurance, faithful, sure, established, trust, verified, steadfast, continuance, father, bring up, nurse, be nursed, surely, stand fast, and trusty.

The basic meaning behind the Hebrew word *aman* is “to support” as can be seen in the following passages.

⁵³ Believe. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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*And bring your younger brother to me and he will be a **support** (aman) for your words and you will not die and they did this.*

Genesis 42:20

*And Naomi took the child and placed him in her bosom and she was for him for a **supporter** (aman - as a nurse).*

Ruth 4:16

*And your house will be **supported** (aman) forever and your kingdom will be before you for an eternity, your throne will be firm for an eternity.*

2 Samuel 7:16

*My mercy will guard him forever and my covenant will **support** (aman) him.*

Psalms 89:28

*And I will thrust him like a tent peg in a place of **support** (aman)...*

Isaiah 22:23

This last passage is an excellent illustration of the concrete understanding of this word. Firm ground is chosen as the site for setting up a tent so when the tent pegs are driven into the soil, the firm ground will “support” the tent even in a strong wind. In this same way, Abram “supported God.”

Now, let’s look at Genesis 15:6 in its context.

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*And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he **believed** (aman) in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Genesis 15:5,6 (KJV)

At first glance, and from a Greek perspective, it appears that the word “believe” is referring to Abram’s knowledge that God will follow through with his promise to provide him many descendants, but as we shall see this is not what is meant by Abram’s “belief.”

God’s promise to Abram that he would have many descendants was repeated to Abram’s son Isaac.

*And I will make your descendants numerous like the stars of heaven and I will give to your seed all these lands and all the nations of the land will be blessed through your seed because Abraham **heard** (shama) my voice and obeyed my charge and my commands and my decrees and my teachings.*

Genesis 26:4,5

The verb שָׁמַע *shama* ^[H:8085] means “to hear.” When the Bible speaks of “hearing” the voice of God, it means “pay attention to what is spoken and respond.”

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The word *shama* is also found in a passage often called the “*sh’ma*⁵⁴.”

Hear (*sh’ma*), *O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD*

Deuteronomy 6:4 (RSV)

This word was used as a sort of motto in ancient Israel and is found inscribed on many objects such as the broken piece of pottery (left) and coin (right) in the images below.



The word *shama* is a synonym of *aman* as can be seen in the following passage.

*And Moses answered and he said, "They will not **support** (aman) me and they will not **hear** (shama) my voice..."*

Exodus 4:1

⁵⁴ The imperative form (Hear!) of the verb *shama* and the first word in the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4.

Why did God promise to give Abram many descendents? Because Abram was obedient to the voice of God, as indicated in Genesis 26, and Abram supported God as indicated in Genesis 15.

Will you “support” God through your actions (a Hebraic perspective) or only through your mind (a Greek perspective)?

Faithful

*And the hands of Moses were heavy and they took a stone and placed it under him and he sat upon it and Aaron and Hur held his hands, one on each side, and his hands were **firm** (emunah) until the going down of the sun.*

Exodus 17:12

In this verse we find a derivative of the verb אָמַן *aman* ^[H:539] which we previously defined as “to support.” The Hebrew word translated as “firm,” in the verse above, is אֱמוּנָה *emunah* ^[H:530] meaning “set firm in place” or “supported,” and clearly demonstrates the concreteness of the meaning of Hebrew words through an action.

This word is often translated as “faithful” or “faithfulness” which is defined in an English dictionary as; “Adhering firmly and devotedly, as to a person, cause, or idea; loyal.⁵⁵” In the

⁵⁵ Faithful. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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following passage, replace the word “faithfulness” with “firmness” and the Hebraic context of the verse comes alive.

*I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy **faithfulness** (emunah) to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy **faithfulness** (emunah) shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy **faithfulness** (emunah) also in the congregation of the saints.*

Psalm 89:1-5 (KJV)

Order

The parent root דָּר *dar* does not appear in the Biblical text, but by examining other words derived from this root, we discover that it has the meaning of “order.”

*The land dark as midnight, The land of the shadow of death, without any **order** (seder), And where the light is as midnight*

Job 10:22

This is the only Biblical occurrence of the word סֵדֶר *seder* [H:5468], but nouns derived from this verb are used in the Hebrew language today. The Passover service and meal is called a *seder*, an ordered arrangement. Also, the word *sidur*, the Jewish prayer book, is composed of an ordered arrangement of prayers.

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*All these being men of war, that could **order** (eder)
the battle array...*

1 Chronicles 12:38 (ASV)

Here the word עדר *eder* ^[H:5737] is used for the order of a battle arrangement.

In a previous discussion, we looked at the root דבר *davar* ^[H:1696] and the words derived from it, all having the concept of order behind them.⁵⁶

*Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy
memorial, O LORD, throughout all **generations**
(dor).*

Psalms 135:13 (KJV)

Another word derived from the parent דר *dar* is the Hebrew word דור *dor* ^[H:1755], usually translated as “generation.”

From a western view, a generation is the time from the birth of one man to the birth of his children. We perceive each generation as a linear timeline, with a beginning and an end. The Hebrew mind, however, sees time as circular where each generation is one circle of time and each of the following generations are overlapping circles, like a spring seen on edge. There is no beginning and no end. This circular view of time is perceived as order.

The phrase “all generations,” found in the verse above, is דור לדור *le dor vador* in Hebrew and is literally translated as “to a

⁵⁶ See “Wilderness” on Page 72.

generation and a generation, a Hebraic idiom meaning “time after time.”

In the ancient pictographic script, the root דָּר *dar* is written as דָּר. The ר is a picture of a tent door⁵⁷ and has the meaning of an “in and out” or “back and forth” movement. The ד is the head of a man⁵⁸. When combined, these mean “the movement of man” and is very descriptive of a generation from a Hebraic perspective as the movement through the circle of one man’s life. The next generation is the movement of his son’s life through the following circle.

Holy

On special holidays we put on our special clothes for services and when we return home we get out the special dinnerware for a special meal. These special items are not for ordinary uses but are set aside for a special occasion or purpose. It is this concept that is behind the Hebrew verb קָדַשׁ *qadash* [H:6942] and the nouns קֹדֶשׁ *qodesh* [H:6944] and קָדוֹשׁ *qadosh* [H:6918] that are derived from it.

⁵⁷ The name of the letter ר is dalet and is derived from the word דַּלַּת *delet* [H:1817] meaning a door.

⁵⁸ The name of the letter ד is resh and is derived from the word רוֹשׁ *rosh* [H:7218] meaning a head of a man.

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*And God blessed⁵⁹ the seventh day and **set it aside for a special purpose** (qadash)...*

Genesis 2:3

*And he said, Do not come near here, slip off your sandals from your feet because the place where you are standing upon is ground **set aside for a special purpose** (qodesh).*

Exodus 3:5

*And you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a nation **set aside for a special purpose** (qadosh).*

Exodus 19:6

When these words are translated as “holy,” the original Hebraic meaning is removed and replaced with an abstract word that conveys the idea of pious, perfect or sinless. But the Hebraic concept of these words is about the position of a person or object and does not necessarily have to be a “holy” position. Two other nouns, קדש *qedesh* ^[H:6945] and קדשה *qed'shah* ^[H:6948] also derived from the verbal root קדש *qadash* ^[H:6942] and have a meaning far from pious, perfect, or sinless.

*There will not be a **female prostitute** (qed'shah-feminine form) from the daughters of Israel and there will not be a **male prostitute** (qedesh-masculine form) from the sons of Israel.*

Deuteronomy 23:17

⁵⁹ For a more Hebraic meaning of this word see “Bless” on page 122.

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This command is forbidding the practice of Israel's neighbor's who had prostitutes, a person set aside for a special purpose, within their temples for "ceremonial" purposes.

Occurring three times in the Old Testament and much more frequently in the New Testament is the phrase "holy spirit." As our definitions of words in the New Testament must come from the Hebrew, we will first examine this phrase as it appears in the Old Testament.

*Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy **holy Spirit** from me.*

Psalm 51:11 (RSV)

The Hebrew translated as "holy spirit" is רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ *ru'ahh qad'sh'kha*⁶⁰ [H:7307 & 6944]. Previously we have defined *ru'ahh* as a noun meaning "wind" or "breath."⁶¹ Above we defined *qodesh* as a noun meaning someone or something that is "set aside for a special purpose" or "a special one."

First, recognize in English the word "holy" in "holy spirit" is an adjective describing the word "spirit." However, in the Hebrew the word *qodesh* is a noun, not an adjective. Therefore, the phrase *ru'ahh qad'sh'kha* should be translated as "the breath of your special one" or "the character of your special one." Even if the word *qodesh* were being used as an adjective, the grammar of the sentence also prevents it from being translated as "holy spirit" because the word *ru'ahh* is feminine while the word *qodesh* is

⁶⁰ The word *qad'shekha* is the word *qodesh* with the suffix *kha* meaning "your."

⁶¹ See "Spirit" on page 70.

masculine. In Hebrew grammar, the gender of an adjective must match the gender of the described noun.

So, why do all the translations have “holy spirit” instead of “spirit of the holy one”? This is an appropriate place to bring up another problem with modern translations of the Bible. Most Bible believers are aware that the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, but most Bible believers make the wrong assumption that the translators used the Hebrew text for their translations as their foundation. The evidence suggests that the translators relied more heavily on the Septuagint for their translation than the Hebrew text itself such as this example shows.

The Hebrew phrase *ru'ahh qodesh*, from Psalm 51:11, translates as πνεύμα το αγιον *pneuma to agion* in the Greek Septuagint. This Greek phrase means “the holy spirit/wind” where the word “holy” is an adjective. This same Greek phrasing is also found in the New Testament.

*"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit** and with fire.*

Matthew 3:11 (RSV)

If we translate the Greek of this verse back into Hebrew we have “the breath of the special one” and this is exactly what we find in the Shem Tov Matthew.

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*And John answered all of them, In truth I am here, baptizing you in the days⁶² of repentance, but another comes mightier than I whose sandal I am not worthy to untie, he will baptize you with the fire of the **breath** (ru'ahh) of **the special one** (qadosh)⁶³.*

This more Hebraic sense of the “breath of the special one” also helps to shed some light on an often misunderstood verse in the book of John.

*And when he said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, Receive **the breath of the special one**.*

John 20:22

Who is this “special one”?

*Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the **Spirit of God** [the breath of Elohiym] ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the **Holy Spirit** [the breath of the special one].*

1 Corinthians 12:3 (RSV)

⁶² The Hebrew for “in the days” is **בַּיָּמִי** *bemai*. When this book was translated into Greek, this word was probably mistaken for **בַּיָּמִים** *bayamim* meaning “with water.”

⁶³ Also note the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew. The Greek has “he will baptize you with the holy spirit and with fire” while the Hebrew has “he will baptize you with the fire of the *ru'ahh qadosh*.”

In perfect Hebrew poetry, Paul parallels the “breath of Elohiym” with the “breath of the special one.”

Peace

When we hear the word peace, we usually associate this with an absence of war or strife, but as is the case with a lot of English translations of Hebrew words, this association does not adequately define this Hebrew word.

The Hebrew word often translated as peace is שלום *shalom* ^[H:7965] which is derived from the verbal root שלם *shalam* ^[H:7999].

By looking at the context of this word as it is used in the Biblical text, we can get a better understanding of its meaning.

*And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely **pay** (*shalam*) ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.*

Exodus 21:35,36 (KJV)

In this passage the verb *shalam* is translated as “pay” in the context of “replacing” or “restoring” one dead ox for the equivalent price of a live one due to negligence. The verb *shalam* literally means “to make whole.” Once the owner of the ox loses his ox, he is no longer whole or complete. But, when the owner of the violent ox “replaces” the ox, the original owner is “restored” or “made whole.”

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The noun **שְׁלוֹם** *shalom* ^[H:7965] has the same basic meaning as can be seen in the following verse.

*And they answered, Thy servant our father is in
good health (shalom), he is yet alive...*

Genesis 43:28 (KJV)

In this passage *shalom* is translated as “good health” in the sense of being whole and complete. In Genesis 43:23 we find the greeting **שְׁלוֹם לָכֶם** *shalom lekhem*, usually translated as “peace to you” but more literally means, “May you be whole and complete in health and prosperity.” Yeshua used this same greeting when he met with his disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:36 and John 20:19). This same greeting is used in modern Hebrew as well.

Another form of greeting in modern Hebrew is **מַה שְׁלוֹמְךָ** *mah sh'lom'kha*⁶⁴. This Hebrew phrase translates into English as “how are you” but more literally means “what is your wholeness.” The next time you greet others with *shalom alekha*⁶⁵ or *mah shlom'cka* recognize that you are not just saying “peace” or “hello” or “how are you,” you are wishing complete wholeness on that person.

⁶⁴ The suffix *kha* is the second person masculine singular while the suffix *khem*, as used above, is the second person masculine plural.

⁶⁵ The Biblical Hebrew word *lekhem* literally means “to you (plural)” while *alekhem*, the more common word used today in Hebrew, means “upon you (plural).”

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*Pray for the **peace** (shalom) of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*

Psalm 122:6 (KJV)

The phrase “pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” *shalu shalom yerushalam* in Hebrew, is not speaking about an absence of war (though that is part of the meaning of *shalom*), but that Jerusalem, and by extension all of Israel, be complete and whole, having all they need to be the nation God desired them to be. This goes far beyond the idea of the English word “peace.”

This Hebraic meaning of the word *shalom* sheds some light on a passage that has confused many scholars.

*And if the house be worthy, let your **peace** (eirene/shalom) come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your **peace** (eirene/shalom) return to you.*

Matthew 10:13 (KJV)

The Greek word εἰρήνη *eirene* ^[G:1515], used in the passage above for “peace,” is an abstract word. Peace, from a Greek or English perspective, cannot come, go, or return. However, by using the concrete meaning of the Hebrew definition of this word, the confusion is removed. The wholeness of a person, their *shalom*, can refer to their well being but can also refer to much more, including their possessions, resources, teachings, and companionship. In a very literal way, the wholeness of a person can enter a house as well as leave it.

Good

*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very **good**.*

Genesis 1:31 (KJV)

What did God mean when he said, “It was very “good””? Was it pleasing to his eye? The Hebrew word טוב *tov* ^[H:2896] is best translated as “functional,” rather than “good.” God saw his creation functioning properly or, as we might say, worked like a well-oiled machine.

Whenever you see the word “good” in your Bible, replace it with the word “functional” and you will be surprised at how much it enhances the understanding of the verse.

Bad

The antonym of the word *tov* is רע *ra* ^[H:7451]. While this word is frequently translated as “evil” and occasionally “bad” it is best translated as “dysfunctional.”

*He shall not alter it, or change it, a **functional one** (*tov*) for a **dysfunctional one** (*ra*), a **dysfunctional one** (*ra*) for a **functional one** (*tov*).*

Leviticus 27:10

In our western way of thinking, we see “good” as something to be pursued and “bad” as something to be avoided, a moral dichotomy. However, in the Hebrew mind of the Biblical authors, *tov* and *ra* are not moral issues but a balance, like the positive and negative ends of a magnet.

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*and from the ground Yahweh Elohiym made spring up all the trees, beautiful in appearance and functional for food. And the tree of life was in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of **function** (tov) and **dysfunction** (ra).*

Genesis 2:9

Up to the point where Adam and Eve ate from the “tree of the knowledge of function and dysfunction” they had only experienced “function,” but they were in a state where they could not understand the concept of “function.” Why do some foods taste “good” to you while others taste “bad”? Because you are able to compare the one with the other. If all your life you had eaten only one food, you would not be able to make an opinion on its taste, since you would have nothing to compare it to. Not until Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, and thereby violated God’s instructions, could they really know “function” as they had now experienced “dysfunction.”

*For Elohiym knows that in the day you eat from it that your eyes will be opened and you will be like Elohiym knowing **function** (tov) and **dysfunction** (ra).*

Genesis 3:5

*And Yahweh Elohiym said behold, the man is like one of us knowing **function** (tov) and **dysfunction** (ra)...*

Genesis 3:22

Notice God is a God of function and dysfunction. We have read about God creating function in the first chapter of Genesis, but have we read about God creating dysfunction? Sure we have, we

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just don't usually think in these terms when reading the Bible. In Genesis chapter 6, God brings a flood that virtually destroys the entire creation, bringing the world into a completely dysfunctional state.

Forming light and filling the darkness, making wholeness and filling dysfunction, I am Yahweh doing all of these

Isaiah 45:7

Perfect

I begin this study with a comparison of two people, Jacob and Job.

*And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a **plain** man, dwelling in tents.*

Genesis 25:27 (KJV)

*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was **perfect** and upright, and one*

Job 1:1 (KJV)

From these two verses, we could conclude that Jacob was plain, just an ordinary person, nothing special, but Job, on the other hand, was rather extraordinary as he was “perfect.” What you might find interesting is the word “perfect” in Job 1:1 is a translation of the Hebrew word תָּמַם ^[H:8535] but so is the word “plain” in Genesis 25:27. So why isn't Jacob considered

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“perfect” by the translations just as they did with Job? This is another case of translators relying on the Greek Septuagint for their translation rather than the Hebrew text itself. The Greek uses the word ἀμεμπτος *amemptos* ^[G:273], meaning “blameless,” for Job and the word ἀπλους *haplous* ^[G:573], meaning “simple,” for Jacob.

The word תם *tam* ^[H:8535] can be best defined as “mature in thought and action” and is the parent root of the verb תמם *tamam* ^[H:8552] meaning to be whole, finished or completed. From this verb comes the word תמיים *tamiym* ^[H:8549].

*Thou shalt be **perfect** (tamiym) with the LORD thy God.*

Deuteronomy 18:13 (KJV)

Can one be perfect? From a Greek perspective, no, because everyone has his faults, but in Hebraic thought there is no concept of “perfect.” A better translation of the verse above is;

*You will be **complete** (tamiym) with Yahweh your Elohiym*

Unity and Trust

Unity

The Hebrew word **אֶחָד** *ehhad* ^[H:259] is often translated as “one” but a more Hebraic definition would be a “unit” as can be clearly observed in the following verse.

*Therefore a man will leave his father and mother
and cling with his wife and they will be for a flesh
unit (ehhad).*

Genesis 2:24

The Western mind sees “one” as only singular, void of any connection to something else. For instance, “one” man is an individual entity to himself, just as “one” tree is an entity to itself. To the Ancient Hebrew mind, nothing is “one,” all things are dependent upon something else. A man is not “one,” but a unity of body, bones, flesh, organs and blood. The man is also in unity with his wife and family as well as with the larger *community*. Even a tree is a unity of roots, trunk, branches, and leaves, which is also in unity with the surrounding landscape. “One” year is a unity of seasons.

The first use of *ehhad* is found in Genesis 1:5 where “evening” and “morning,” two states of opposite function, are united to form “one” day.

*And there was evening and there was morning,
one day.*

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It should be noted the use of the Hebrew word *ehhad* in this verse is rather intriguing. Days two through seven are identified by their cardinal number—second, third, fourth, etc. The only exception to this is the “first” day which does not use the cardinal number ראשון *rishon* ^[H:7223] meaning “first” but instead uses the ordinal number *ehhad*. I am of the opinion this day is a summary of all of creation, a unity of the days of creation being expressed as the separation of light and darkness. The Hebrew mind does not view time in a linear fashion as we Westerners do but as cyclical. The seven days are not meant to be a “timeline” of events but a poetic description of God’s work.

With all of this said, we do find the Hebrew word “ehhad” meaning “one” in the sense of individuality.

*And Elohiym said, the waters under the sky will be gathered to **one** (ehhad) place...*

Genesis 1:9

I have theorized in the Ancient Hebrew language there was another word to represent the ordinal number “one” and the word *ehhad* was solely used for a unit that exists within a unity. But over time, the original Hebrew word for “one” went into disuse and the word *ehhad* was used for a unit as well as the number “one.” This would not be a unique occurrence, as languages are constantly evolving, words are dropped and added, and definitions and usages change over time. However, there are some textual evidences to support this theory.

The number twelve is written in Hebrew as שני עשר *sheney asar*, literally translated as “two ten.” We would then expect eleven to be written as אחד עשר *ehhad asar* and we do find that in some verses, but we also find עשתי עשר *ashtey asar* such as in the following verse.

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*And on the third day **eleven** bullocks...*

Numbers 29:20 (KJV)

The word עשתי *ashtey* ^[H:6249] means “one” but is only used in the context of “eleven.” It would appear *ashtey* was the original word for “one” but was replaced by *ehad*.

How does all this relate to the two natures of man, the physical and the spiritual, such as we see in the following verse?

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalm 24:3,4 (KJV)

Our western mind perceives “clean hands” as physical and “pure heart” as spiritual, but what is “spiritual”? The dictionary defines this word as “Having the nature of spirit; not tangible or material.⁶⁶” By definition, the “spiritual” is nonphysical, and since all Hebraic thought is founded in the physical, there is no such concept of “spiritual” in the Hebrew mind. The above passage is a Hebrew parallelism, expressing “one” idea in two (or more) different ways. To the Hebrew mind, clean hands (an idiom for innocence) is the same as a pure mind (also an idiom for innocence). The author is not creating a dichotomy of physical and spiritual but expressing innocence in two different ways.

⁶⁶ Spiritual. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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*I and the father are **one**.*

John 10:30 (RSV)

While the Greek text uses the word εἰς *heis* ^[G:1520] meaning “one” we must take our definition from the Hebrew word *ehhad* since he was speaking in Hebrew and not Greek. What Yeshua is saying is he and the father work together as a unit, with the same purposes and goals. Yeshua also desired this same unity with his disciples as we see in his prayer to his father.

*That they may all be **one** (heis/ehhad); even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be **one** (heis/ehhad) even as we are **one** (heis/ehhad).*

John 17:21,22 (RSV)

Trust

Three Hebrew words are translated as “trust,” but the word “trust” is an abstract word whereas the original Hebrew words are very concrete in their meanings.

*The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will **trust** (hasah)...*

Psalms 18:2 (KJV)

This is the word חָסָה *hasah* ^[H:2620] meaning “to lean on someone or something.” If you are hiking with a group of your

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friends and sprain your ankle, you are going to lean on one of your companions to help you out of the wilderness. According to this verse, we can lean on God when things get tough.

*In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my **trust** (betahh); I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

Psalm 56:4 (KJV)

This is the word **בטח** *betahh* ^[H:982] with the concrete meaning “to cling.” A related word, **אבטיח** *avatiyahn* ^[H:20], is a melon which clings to the vine. Even though the melon is huge, just as our problems seem to be, the vine is very small. We may not see God, but he is our strength, the one who nourishes us just as the vine nourishes the melon.

*My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they **trust** (yahhal).*

Isaiah 51:5 (KJV)

This is the word **יחל** *yahhal* ^[H:3176] and is sometimes translated as “trust” but more frequently as “hope.” This word does not mean to wonder if something will happen and “hope” it does, but to “know” something will happen. We do not hope God will protect us, we “know” he will. In the above passage, the image of holding onto God's arm for support can be seen. The word for the arm is **זרוע** *zero'ah* ^[H:2220] and is a Hebraic euphemism for “strength,” from the strength in the arm. This passage is saying the people will know God's strength will save them.

Notice that each of these three Hebrew words we have just discussed—*hhasah*, *betahh*, and *yahhal*—all have one letter in

common, the letter ן (hhet). In the ancient Pictographic script used to write Hebrew, this letter appeared as **𐤍**, a picture of a wall⁶⁷. What is the function of a wall? Ancient cities had a wall surrounding them to protect the city from invaders. The walls of a structure not only protect the occupants from the elements outside, but also support the roof of the structure. As we can see, the function of a wall is to protect and support, which is also the meaning behind the three Hebrew words translated as “trust.”

Love

In our modern Western culture, love is an abstract thought of emotion, how one feels toward another, but the Hebrew word **אהב** *ahav* ^[H:157] goes much deeper than simple emotion.

The parent root of this word is **הב** *hav*. While this root is not found in the Biblical text, a couple of other derivatives are. The word **הבהב** *havhav* ^[H:1890], a noun meaning “gift” and **יהב** *yahav* ^[H:3051], a verb meaning “to provide,” help to supply the fuller Hebraic understanding of **אהב** *ahav* ^[H:157].

We do not choose our parents or siblings, but they are instead given to us as a gift from above, a privileged gift. Even in the Ancient Hebrew culture, one’s wife was chosen for him. It is our responsibility to provide and protect those privileged gifts. As a verb, the Hebrew word **אהב** *ahav* ^[H:157] means “to provide and protect what is given as a privileged gift.” We are to love God, neighbors, and family, not in an emotional sense, but in the sense of our actions.

⁶⁷ The Hebrew word for a wall is **חֵטְ** *hhets* ^[H:2434] and was the original name for this letter.

Know

The name of the Hebrew letter ד is dalet, from the Hebrew word דלת *delet* ^[H:1817] meaning “door.” This letter was originally written as  in the ancient pictographic script and is a picture of the tent door. In a previous discussion, we learned that this letter meant to “hang” as the door “hung” down from the roof of the tent. Each Hebrew letter has more than one meaning, and this letter can also mean back and forth or in and out movement as the door is used for moving in and out of the tent. The name of the Hebrew letter ע is ayin, from the Hebrew word עין *ayin* ^[H:5869] meaning “eye.” This letter was originally written as  in the ancient pictographic script and is a picture of an eye. When these two letters are combined, the Hebrew parent root עד, *dea* ^[H:1843], is formed, meaning “the back and forth movement of the eye.” When something is carefully examined, one moves the eye back and forth to take in the whole of what is being examined. In the Ancient Hebrew mind, this careful examination is understood as knowledge and experience on an intimate level.

*Do you **know** (yada) the balancings of the clouds,
the wonderous works of complete **knowledge**
(dea)?*

Job 37:16

The verb ידע *yada* ^[H:3045] is derived out of this parent root and carries this same meaning of an intimate knowledge. This verb is commonly used in reference to the marital relations of a husband and wife.

*And Adam **knew** (yada) Eve his wife; and she
conceived, and bare Cain...*

Genesis 4:1 (KJV)

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Do you know God? Not in the casual sense of awareness, as implied in the English sense of knowledge, but in a close and intimate relationship?

*And those **knowing** (yada) your character will trust in you for you will not leave those seeking Yahweh.*

Psalm 9:11

God certainly knows us in this manner.

*Will not God search this, for he **knows** (yada) the secrets of the heart.*

Psalm 44:21

Do we know God in this same manner? Do we know the heart of God?

*And by this we may be sure that we **know** him, if we keep his commandments.*

1 John 2:3 (RSV)

The above verse is being translated from a western perspective, but if we translate it through the mind of the Hebrews, we get a slightly different perspective.

*And by this we may be sure that we have an **intimate relationship** with him, if we preserve⁶⁸ his directions⁶⁹.*

⁶⁸ See "Keep" page 124.

Lie

A man's wife comes to him and asks, "How do you like the new dress I just made?" He can see from her expression she loves the dress and is proud of her work, but he personally does not like it. How does he answer her? Most of us would agree he is in a difficult situation. If he says "I don't like it" he will crush her, and if he says "I love it" he is lying and guilty of sinning. We have all faced such dilemmas and are often unsure of the correct course of action. Believe it or not God himself was faced with the same dilemma.

And Sarah laughed to herself saying "after I am withered up and my lord is old will I have pleasure?" And Yahweh said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh saying, "Will I indeed bear children when I am old?"

Genesis 18:12,13

Is what Sarah said to herself the same as what Yahweh told Abraham that Sarah said? Not at all. First of all, Sarah's comment had to do with pleasure while God told Abraham it had to do with child bearing. Secondly, Sarah said Abraham was old while God told Abraham Sarah said she was old. Is Yahweh telling Abraham a lie? It would appear so, but this would contradict what we are told in Numbers 23:19.

*God is not a man and cannot **lie** (kazav)...*

⁶⁹ See "Command" page 64.

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In order to clear up this confusion, we need to understand what a “lie” is from a Hebraic perspective. The Hebrew word translated as “lie” in Numbers 23:19 is the verb **כָּזַב** *kazav* ^[H:3576] and is also used in the following verses where it is translated as “fail” and “vain.”

*And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters **fail** (kazav) not.*

Isaiah 58:11 (KJV)

*Behold, the hope of him is in **vain** (kazav): shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?*

Job 41:9 (KJV)

The word *kazav* does not literally mean “lie” as we know it, but actions or words that are void of purpose or function, causing failure or disappointment. If Yahweh had told Abraham exactly what Sarah said, which were words void of any purpose or function, he would have caused great disappointment in Abraham. From a Hebraic perspective, the truth would have been a *kazav*. Therefore, God told Abraham what he needed to say in order to maintain unity and harmony within the family.

Going back to Numbers 23:19, this verse is literally stating that “God is not a man and cannot say anything that is void of purpose or function.” In other words, by removing the double negative of that verse (which by the way is poor English but good Hebrew) the verse is saying, “Every word that comes from God is not filled with void and purpose.”

Rest and Work

Messenger

What has always perplexed me is why the translators of the Bible see the need to translate one Hebrew word with two or more different English words when there is no grammatical or contextual need to do so. Note the different translations of the Hebrew word מַלְאָךְ *malak* ^[H:4397] in the following passage.

*And Jacob went on his way, and the **angels** of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim⁷⁰. And Jacob sent **messengers** before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.*

Genesis 32:1-3 (KJV)

According to the translation above, Jacob came upon a camp of “supernatural beings” of God and then sent his own “men” to his brother Esau. But according to the Hebrew text, these events should be interpreted slightly different as the word “angels” and “messengers” are the very same Hebrew word—*malak*. Either Jacob came upon a camp of men who were messengers of God and sent them to his brother Esau, or he came upon a camp of

⁷⁰ The Hebrew word for “host” is מַחֲנֵה *mehhaneh* ^[H:4264] meaning “camp,” therefore he calls the name of that place מַחֲנַיִם *mehhanayim* ^[H:4266] meaning “two camps.”

“supernatural beings” of God and he sent them to his brother Esau.

In the verse above, the first use of the word *malak*, translated as angels in the King James Version, is translated in the Septuagint with the Greek word *αγγελος* *aggelos* ^{[G:32]⁷¹}. The second use of the word *malak*, translated as messengers in the King James Version, is translated in the Septuagint with the Greek word *αποστολως* *apostolos* ^{[G:652]⁷²}. It is clear the King James and most modern translators were using the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew for their translation of the text.

Another example of the translator’s use of the Septuagint over the Hebrew can be found with the word “Manna,” the bread from heaven. The Hebrew for this word is simply *מַן* *man* ^[H:4478], but the Septuagint uses *μαννα* *manna* ^[G:3131]. Because of this, we call it *manna*, from the Greek, rather than *man*, from the Hebrew.

Why do the translators “trust” the Greek more than the Hebrew? Why use a translation to make a translation when the original Hebrew is available? Because the translators, and their readers, are Greek thinkers and are more comfortable with the Greek than the Hebrew.

Getting back to the Hebrew word in the text above, what is a *malak*? Literally, the word means “one who is sent by another to do his business.” It is related to another Hebrew word, *מְלָאכָה* *melakah* ^[H:4399], meaning business.

⁷¹ This is the origin of the word angel.

⁷² This is the origin of the word apostle, meaning messenger or sent one.

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*And on the seventh day Elohiym finished his **business** (melakah)...*

Genesis 2:2

Are the *malak* of God, who perform the business of God men or supernatural beings or both? Technically speaking, anyone doing the business of God is a *malak*. This can include men,

*Then Haggai, the **messenger** (malak) of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, says the LORD.*

Haggai 1:13 (RSV)

As well as God himself,

*...The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has led me all my life long to this day, the **angel** (malak) who has redeemed me from all evil...*

Genesis 48:15,16 (RSV)

Service

While the word מלאך *malak* ^[H:4397] is one who does business for another in the sense of an employee, the word עבד *eved* ^[H:5650] is one who serves another in the sense of a slave, and is derived from the verbal root עבד *avad* ^[H:5647] meaning "to serve as a slave." We understand a slave as one forced against his will to work for another such as we see with Israel in Egypt.

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*So they made the people of Israel **serve** (eved) with rigor, And they made their lives bitter with hard **bondage** (avodah⁷³)...*

Exodus 1:13,14 (RSV)

There is another type of slave, what we might call a bondservant, one who is forced to work for another to pay off a debt owed or one who chooses to place himself under the authority of another in exchange for something, such as we see with Jacob who offers himself as payment for Laban's daughter (Genesis 29:18).

*And Moses, the **slave** (eved) of Yahweh, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of Yahweh.*

Deuteronomy 34:5

Moses was, in the truest sense of the word, a slave to Yahweh. From his first encounter with Yahweh at the burning bush until his death, he never walked away from God. Sure, he erred and made his mistakes, but he always served God in the best way he could. It is interesting to note that he is never called "a slave" until the time of his death, almost as if the only way he could prove his loyalty was to remain in the service of Yahweh until his death. Moses' successor Joshua is also called "a slave of Yahweh" but again, not until after his death (Joshua 24:29). Only one other individual is called "a slave of Yahweh" in the Bible:

⁷³ The noun עבֹדָה *avodah* [H:5656] is a noun derived from the verb *eved*.

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“...A Psalm of David, the **slave** (eved) of Yahweh...”

Psalm 18:1

Sabbath

*Six days you will **serve** (avad) and do all your **business** (melakah).*

Exodus 20:9

In this verse are the two words we have just reviewed, עָבַד *avad* [H:5647], meaning serve, and מְלָאכָה *melakhah* [H:4399], meaning business. Just as God did his business in six days, he directs Israel to do the same.

*But the seventh day is the **shabbat** of Yahweh your Elohiym, you will not do any business...*

Exodus 20:10

The word שַׁבָּת *shabbat* [H:7676] is always transliterated as “sabbath” and most assume it is simply a name for the day of the week and are unaware this word has a meaning. It is derived from the verb שָׁבַת *shavat* [H:7673] meaning “to cease or stop.” The noun shabbat is a time of ceasing and, as stated in the above verse, the seventh day is a time for ceasing business. This verse also states it is the “shabbat of Yahweh Elohiym” in reference to Genesis 2:2.

*And Elohiym finished his business which he did on the seventh day and he **ceased** (shavat) in the seventh day from all his business which he did.*

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The word “ceased” in this passage is the verb *shavat*, the root of the word *shabbat*.

We previously studied the Hebrew verb שׁוּב *shuv* ^[H:7725], meaning “to turn.” The parent root to this word is שָׁב *shav* and would have been written as שָׁב in the ancient pictographic script. The שָׁ, a picture of teeth⁷⁴, represents the idea of pressing as when pressing on food with the teeth when chewing. The בָּ is, as we have previously examined, a picture of the nomadic tent. When combined, these mean to “press to the tent/house” or “return.” This parent root is also the root of the word שַׁבָּת *shabbat* ^[H:7676] with the letter תָּ. This letter is written as † in the pictographic script and represents a sign or mark⁷⁵ as well as a covenant.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Exodus 31:16,17 (ASV)

On the seventh day, Israel “returns (שָׁב) to the covenant (†).”

⁷⁴ The name of the letter שָׁ is shin and is derived from the word שֵׁן *sheyn* ^[H:8127] meaning tooth.

⁷⁵ The name of the letter † is tav and is derived from the word תָּ *tav* ^[H:8420] meaning mark.

Salvation

*The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my **salvation** (yeshuah):*

Exodus 15:2 (KJV)

The Hebrew word translated as “salvation” is **יְשׁוּעָה** *yeshuah* [H:3444]. While we usually think of “salvation” as something in the future, the context of this word in most Biblical uses is about the present. The context of the verse above is Israel’s “salvation” from the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Exodus 15:1 (KJV)

The Greek mind focuses on the future ignoring the present, while the Hebrew mind focuses on the present ignoring the future.

Many people have had a problem with Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12.

*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own **salvation** with fear and trembling.*

(RSV)

Once the word salvation is understood from a Hebraic perspective, the problem goes away. Paul is simply telling them they need to work out their own problems on their own.

Savior

Many who are embracing the Hebrew language of the Bible will often use the Hebrew words for key Biblical words rather than the English. Some of these key words have been presented here including *shalom* instead of peace, *torah* instead of law, *elohiym* instead of God and *emunah* instead of faithful. While I believe this to be a great idea, I often see some errors in how the Hebrew is applied and the word for “savior” is an example.

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

Isaiah 43:11 (KJV)

If you look up the word “savior” (or saviour as it is used in the King James Version) in a concordance, you will be provided Strong’s Dictionary #3467, which is the Hebrew word **יָשָׁע** *yasha* ^[H:3467]. Because of this, many believe the Hebrew word for savior is *yasha*. While I encourage the use of concordances and Strong’s Dictionary to help one get to the original Hebrew text behind the English, it is important to know that they have their limitations. If readers are not aware of these limitations, misinterpretations can occur.

A couple of other problems exist with Strong's dictionary. It was written over a hundred years ago, and we have learned much about the Hebrew language since then. Also, the dictionary is written from a very western Christian perspective and does not convey Hebrew thought very well. All this aside, it is still a great

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tool for investigating the Hebrew language behind the English translations.

Getting back to our discussion on the word “savior,” the word **ישע** *yasha* ^[H:3467] is a simple verb meaning “to rescue” or “to save.” When this verb is changed to **מושיע** *moshi’ah* a more complex verb is formed, specifically the hiphil participle. A hiphil verb is causative— “cause to save.” A participle changes the verb to a noun— “one who causes to save,” a “savior.” Strong’s does not have the ability to convey all the possible different nuances of a word, so keep this in mind when working with it.

Blessings and Curses

Bless

Most Hebrew roots consist of three letters and can be written as a noun or a verb, but both are related in meaning. A good example is the root בִּרְךְ which can be used as a noun, בִּרְךְ *berek* ^[H:1290], meaning “knee” or as a verb, בִּרְךְ *barak* ^[H:1288], meaning “to kneel.” Both the noun and verb form can be seen in the following passage.

*...and **kneeled** (barak) down upon his **knees** (berek) before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven*

2 Chronicles 6:13 (KJV)

Additional nouns are developed out of the root by adding specific letters to the root, the most common being the addition of the letter ה to the end of the root, such as in the word בִּרְכָה⁷⁶ *berakah* ^[H:1293]. This word is a gift or present and is related to the root through the idea of bending down to the knee and presenting a gift to another. Each verb also has the ability to slightly change in meaning by changing the “form” of the verb. The “piel” form of the verb בִּרְךְ *barak* ^[H:1288] literally means “to bend the knee to present a gift.” These definitions are the original concrete meanings of these words, but you will recognize them more

⁷⁶ The כ and ך are both the same letter “kaph.” The form ך is used when it comes at the end of a word.

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easily by the abstract words the translators usually use to translate them.

*And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one **blessing** (berakah), my father? **bless** (barak) me, even me also...*

Genesis 27:38 (KJV)

A more literal translation of this verse would read as;

*And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one **gift** (berakah), my father? **Kneel down and present me a gift** (barak), even me also...*

While I prefer to use the concrete definitions of Hebrew words, I am not implying the Ancient Hebrews were void of any abstract thought. On the contrary, the Hebrew language is filled with abstract thought, but the difference between Hebrew and Greek abstracts is Hebrew abstracts are related to something concrete while Greek abstracts are not.

A “blessing” from Greek thought is a pure abstract with no foundation in the concrete, but from a Hebraic perspective a “blessing” is any action or object that is presented out of respect to another.

*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a **blessing** (berakah), that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

Malachi 3:10 (KJV)

Curse

*And I will **ble**ss (barak) them that **ble**ss (barak) thee, and **cur**se (arar) him that **cur**seth (arar) thee...*

Genesis 12:3 (KJV)

We have already discussed the word “ble^s.” Now let’s look at the word “cur^se.” The Hebrew word is אָרַר *arar* ^[H:779] and it literally means “to spit upon.” When the above verse is read in its pure concrete form, the passage takes on a new vision.

*And I will **kneel down to** (barak) them that **kneel down to** (barak) thee, and **spit upon** (arar) him that **spits upon** (arar) thee...*

Keep

*And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and **keep** my commandments.*

Exodus 20:6 (KJV)

In the context of this verse, most would equate “keep” with “obedience,” but if we look at other verses using this word, we will see that this is a poor interpretation of this word.

*The LORD bless thee, and **keep** thee:*

Numbers 6:24 (KJV)

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I don't think any of us would interpret the word "keep" as "obey" in this verse. So, what does this word mean from a Hebraic perspective?

The original picture painted by the Hebrew word שָׁמַר *shamar* ^[H:8104] is a sheepfold of thorns. When a shepherd was out in the wilderness with his flock for the night, he would gather thorn bushes to erect a corral to place his flock to protect them from predators. This protecting hedge of thorns is the picture behind the Hebrew word *shamar*, better translated as "preserve" or "guard," than "keep" as we can see in the following verse.

The LORD will preserve (shamar) him, and keep him alive...

Psalm 41:2 (KJV)

Just as God preserves his people, it is his people's responsibility to preserve his word. For thousands of years, his scribes have painstakingly copied the text by hand in order to preserve it from generation to generation. We also preserve his word by keeping it in our minds and following it, as well as teaching it to our children (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Break

*Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath **broken** his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.*

Numbers 15:31 (KJV)

Just as the word "keep" does not mean "obey," the word "break" does not mean "disobey."

At harvest time the grain that has been gathered is thrown onto the threshing floor where it is tread upon by oxen, breaking open the hulls and releasing the seeds. This image is the background to the Hebrew word פָּרַר *parar* ^[H:6565], which is better translated as “trample” than “break.”

These two words we just examined, *shamar* and *parar*, relate to one’s attitude toward the commands. A child who disobeys his parents and is genuinely apologetic shows honor and respect to his parents. But, a child who willfully disobeys with no sign of remorse has trampled on his parents’ teachings and deserves punishment.

Worship

The word “worship” is defined as “the reverent love and devotion accorded a deity, an idol, or a sacred object; the ceremonies, prayers, or other religious forms by which this love is expressed⁷⁷.”

When we read the word “worship,” such as in the verses below, we apply the above definition to it.

*And the man bowed down his head, and
worshipped the LORD.*

Genesis 24:26 (KJV)

⁷⁷ Worship. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

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So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:31 (KJV)

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Psalm 29:2 (KJV)

As I have stated many times but is worth repeating, when we read the Bible we must define our words from a Hebraic perspective, not from an English dictionary. Unfortunately, when we see the word “worship” in the Bible, we automatically assume the above definition, causing a misinterpretation of the Biblical text. Would you apply the English definition of worship in the verse below?

*And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did **obeisance**, and kissed him...*

Exodus 18:7 (KJV)

Probably not, but the Hebrew behind the word “worship” and “obeisance” in all four passages above are the very same word **שָׁחָה** *shahhah* ^[H:7812]. This word has nothing to do with what we would call “worship”; however, its literal meaning can be seen in the following verse.

*And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he **bowed** (*shahhah*) himself with his face toward the ground;*

Genesis 19:1 (KJV)

Again we have a case where the translators chose different English words to translate one Hebrew word depending on the context. This action causes the reader to draw conclusions in the text that were not originally intended by the author. Whenever the Hebrew word *shahhah* is used as an action toward God, the translators translated it with the word “worship.” But, when this same Hebrew word is used as an action toward another man, the translators used the word “obeisance” or “bow down.”

The concrete meaning of *shahhah* from a Hebraic perspective is getting down on the knees with the face to the ground to show high respect to God or another person.

Pray

Words like “holy” and “worship” are what I call religious words—invented words with religious connotations that have nothing to do with the Hebrew language of the Bible. Prayer is another one of these words.

*So Abraham **prayed** unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.*

Genesis 20:17 (KJV)

In our modern religious culture, prayer is a communication between man and God. While this definition can be applied to some passages of the Bible, such as in the verse above, it is not a Hebraic definition of the Hebrew word פָּלַל *palal* ^[H:6419] which is “to fall down to the ground in the presence of one in authority pleading a cause,” “to intercede.” This action can be seen in Isaiah 45:14 where the Sabeans fall down and make supplication to Cyrus.

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*...and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make **supplication** (palal) unto thee...*

(KJV)

I remember when I was in Sunday School we were taught that “praying” to God was more like “talking” to him like we do with a friend. So, what is the Hebrew word for “talking”? That would be דָּבַר *davar* ^[H:1696].

And Yahweh talked with Moses face to face just as a man talks with his friend.

Exodus 33:11

This verse brings up an interesting dilemma when we compare Exodus 33:11 with Exodus 33:20.

And [Yahweh] said, you cannot see my face because man cannot see me and live.

In one verse, we have Moses talking with God face to face, but just a few verses later God tells him no man can see his face and live. Is this a contradiction in the text? I don't think so. If you will recall in our discussion on the word “face,” we looked at a couple of other verses from this same chapter.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go

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up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

Exodus 33:1-3 (KJV)

We also read later in the chapter:

And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

Exodus 33:14 (KJV)

Yahweh is not going to lead Israel to the Promised Land but instead sends his “face” to lead them. The “face” can, in Hebraic thought, be another person who acts with the same personality as the sender⁷⁸. This “face” is identified as a messenger of Yahweh in verse 2; therefore the “face” of Yahweh is synonymous with the “messenger” of Yahweh. Apparently, in Exodus 33:11, Moses is talking with Yahweh but in Exodus 33:20 he is speaking with the “face” of Yahweh.

Fear

Fear is an abstract concept, but the Hebrew words translated as “fear” have a more concrete definition behind them. The first root we will examine is פִּחַד *pahhad* ^[H:6342].

⁷⁸ See the discussion on “Face” on page 40.

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***Fear** (pahhad - noun)) came upon me, and trembling, and caused all my bones to **shake** (pahhad - verb).*

Job 4:14

In this verse, the word “fear” is the noun פֹּחַד *pahhad* ^[H:6343] meaning “shaking,” while the word “shake” is the verb פָּחַד *pahhad* ^[H:6342] meaning “to shake.”

The second Hebrew root is יָרָא *yara* ^[H:3372]. In the following verse, we will see that this verb means “fear” in the sense of what we would consider fear.

*And he said, I heard your voice in the garden and I **feared** (yarah) because I was naked and I hid myself.*

Genesis 3:10

In the next verse, we see the same Hebrew word in a more positive context.

*You will **revere** (yarah) Yahweh your Elohiym and you will serve him and in his name you will swear.*

Deuteronomy 6:13

Many would conclude from these two passages this Hebrew word has two different meanings, fear and reverence. This assumption is made with many Hebrew words, but this is caused by an understanding of the Hebrew vocabulary from a non-Hebraic perspective. Each Hebrew word has only one meaning but can have different applications. The literal concrete meaning of *yara* is a “flowing of the gut,” which can be applied to “fear” or “reverence.” Have you ever been so scared or been in the

presence of something so amazing that you could feel it in your gut? This “feeling” is the meaning of this word. The Hebrews were a very emotional people, and in many cases their words are describing a “feeling,” rather than an “action.”

*The **fear** (yirah) of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*

Proverbs 9:10 (KJV)

The word “fear” in the this verse is the noun **יראה** *yirah* ^[H:3374], derived from the verb *yarah*. The common understanding of this verse is if one is afraid of or in great awe of Yahweh, he will have wisdom, but as we shall see, this is not consistent with its use in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew for “fear of the LORD” (as found in the verse above) is written with two nouns, **יהוה יראת** *yirat*⁷⁹ *Yahweh*. When a noun precedes another noun, the first noun is in the construct state, meaning it is connected to the second noun—two words together forming one concept. An example of a construct noun can be found in the phrase **אלהים מלכות** *malkut elohiym* (kingdom of God).” Notice the first noun, “kingdom,” belongs to the second noun, “God.”

Below is a complete list of construct phrases from the book of Genesis where the second word in the construct is “Yahweh.”

The Word of Yahweh (Genesis 15:1)

The Voice of Yahweh (Genesis 3:8)

The Face of Yahweh (Genesis 4:16)

The Name of Yahweh (Genesis 4:26)

⁷⁹ When a feminine noun ending with the letter **ה**, such as *yirah*, is used in the construct state, the **ה** is converted to a **ת**, in this case it becomes *yirat*.

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The Eyes of Yahweh (Genesis 6:8)
The Garden of Yahweh (Genesis 13:10)
The Angel of Yahweh (Genesis 16:7)
The Way of Yahweh (Genesis 18:19)
The Mount of Yahweh (Genesis 22:14)

You will notice in every instance the first word in the construct (word, voice, etc) belongs to the second word of the construct (Yahweh). So, why do we think the word “fear” in the construct phrase “fear of Yahweh” is “our” fear and not Yahweh’s? We know God cannot “fear,” but as pointed out previously, the Hebrew verb *yara* literally means “to flow out of the gut.” Now the question becomes, “What flows out of the gut of Yahweh?”

Let’s look at two other constructs, which will shed some light on what “the fear of Yahweh” might be.

*But his delight is in **the law of the LORD**; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*

Psalm 1:2 (KJV)

The Hebrew for “the law of the LORD” is תּוֹרַת יְהוָה *torat Yahweh*. We previously defined the word תּוֹרָה⁸⁰ *torah* [H:8451]⁸¹ as teachings. It is derived from the verb יָרָה *yarah* [H:3384] meaning “to throw” (in the sense of flowing) and is closely related to the verb *yara* which we are currently examining. Not only are they related in the sense both are from the same parent root, יָרָה *yar*, but they are also related by definition.

⁸⁰ *Torat* is the construct form of the feminine noun *tora* (see previous footnote).

⁸¹ See page 61.

The second construct is found in Judges 3:10.

And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him...

(RSV)

In the construct רוּחַ יְהוָה *ru'ahh Yahweh* we find the word *ru'ahh*, meaning wind (another type of “flowing”), which can also mean the character⁸² of an individual.

What flows out of the gut of Yahweh? His teachings and his character. Now, let's take another look at Proverbs 9:10, but this time from a Hebrew perspective.

*The **flowings**⁸³ of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom⁸⁴: and an intimate relationship⁸⁵ with the special one⁸⁶ is understanding.*

⁸² See page 70.

⁸³ *Yirah* - the teachings (*torah*) and character (*ru'ahh*).

⁸⁴ *Hhakhmah* - the ability to distinguish between good and bad, see page 79.

⁸⁵ *Yada* - see page 109.

⁸⁶ *Qadosh* - see page 91.

Application

Could you imagine watching the news one evening and the news anchor states, “A major earthquake hits, causing extensive damage and loss of life,” then moves onto the next story. No video, no details, no location, nothing. You would be quite mystified, wouldn’t you? Well, this is exactly what translating one Hebrew word for one English word is like, as each Hebrew word is rich with meaning that cannot be expressed with only one English word.

We will be examining several verses of scripture, word by word, looking for the deeper meaning behind the Hebrew that has been lost in our English translations.

Hear O Israel

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 6:4,5 (RSV)

Hear: (שמע *shama* ^[H:8085], pg. 87) - This word means “to hear” but with the Hebraic idea “to pay attention to what is being spoken and act upon it.” When Israel “hears” the directions of God, they agree to act upon them (they obey his words). When God “hears” the pleas of Israel in bondage in Egypt, he acts upon them (he rescues Israel).

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LORD: (יהוה *Yahweh* ^[H:3068], pg. 8) - The name meaning “he exists.”

God: (אלהים *elohiym* ^[H:430], pg. 12) - While this word is often translated as “God,” we must recognize that the idea behind a “god,” any “god,” is a Greek concept. The Hebrew word means “judges” in the sense of one with great power and authority.

One: (אחד *ehhad* ^[H:259], pg. 104) - The use of the word “one” in this verse is commonly interpreted to mean that there is only “one” God. However, from a Hebraic perspective, this verse is stating that Yahweh is in unity with himself. A good example of this is the pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. A cloud and fire are opposites—one provides coolness and shade and the other heat and light. Yet they work together to preserve the people during the day and the night.

Love: (אהב *ahav* ^[H:157], pg. 109) - Love is not an emotion: it is an action. The context of this word in the text indicates that we are to “love” God with our actions, not with our emotions.

Heart: (לבב *levav* ^[H:3824], pg. 43) - The heart in Hebrew thought is the thoughts of the mind, not an emotion as we would relate to the word heart. In this passage, we are informed how to “love” Yahweh—by keeping all of our thoughts focused on him.

Soul: (נפש *nephesh* ^[H:5315], pg. 50) - Literally the whole of the person. First we are told to love Yahweh with our minds, now with all of our bodies, our wholeness.

Might: (מאד *me'od* ^[H:3966]) - This is a very interesting word, especially in the way that it is used in this context. This word is used throughout the Hebrew text as an adverb, intensifying a verb, and is usually translated as very, greatly, or much. This is the only time this word appears as a noun and is best translated as “muchness.” This idea of muchness is expanding on the previous

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two ways we are to love Yahweh, first with our mind, then with our body, and now with everything we have.

Now that we have examined each word in this passage, to uncover their original meanings in the Hebrew culture, let's translate it with a more Hebraic flavor.

Israel, pay careful attention and respond: Yahweh is our power and authority, Yahweh works in unity with himself: and you shall act upon your love to Yahweh your power and authority with your thoughts and mind, with your entire body and with all the muchness that you have.

The Aaronic Blessing

*The LORD **ble**ss you and **ke**ep you: The LORD make his **face** to **sh**ine upon you, and be **grac**ious to you: The LORD lift up his **countenance** upon you, and **g**ive you **pe**ace.*

Numbers 6:24-26 (RSV)

Each of the Hebrew words behind the English in this passage is filled with images, lost when translated into the English language. When we examine each of these words from their original meaning, the message in the passage comes alive.

Bless: (ברך *barak* ^[H:1288], pg. 123) - This verb is written in the piel form, literally meaning "to kneel down and present a gift in respect to another."

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Keep: (שָׁמַר *shamar* ^[H:8104], pg. 125) - This verb comes from the corral of thorns erected by a shepherd while out at night with his flocks and is best translated as “guarding” and “preserving.”

Face: (פָּנִים *paniyim* ^[H:6440], pg. 41) - The face reflects the many different moods, emotions, and thoughts of the person. This Hebrew word can mean the face but also the “presence” or the “wholeness of being” of an individual.

Shine: (אָרַר *or* ^[H:215], pg. 27) - This verb means “to give light” or “to shine” and is equated with bringing about order as light illuminates or reveals what has been dark.

Gracious: (חָנַן *hhanan* ^[H:2603], pg. 55) - A nomad’s camp consisted of many family tents, arranged in a circle, and was viewed as a place of beauty. Not just the appearance of beauty but the action, a place of warmth, love, friendship, community and sustenance. This verb is the expression of these concepts.

Countenance: (פָּנִים *paniyim* ^[H:6440], pg. 41) - This is the same Hebrew word as before meaning “face.”

Give: (שָׂיַם *siym* ^[H:7760]) - This Hebrew verb means to “set down in place.”

Peace: (שָׁלוֹם *shalom* ^[H:7965], pg. 97) - This noun is derived from the verbal root *shalam* meaning to “restore” in the sense of replacing or providing what is needed in order to make someone or something whole and complete. The noun *shalom* is used for one who has, or has been provided, what is needed to be whole and complete.

With the Hebraic understanding of each of these Hebrew words, we can better understand the true meaning of the Aaronic blessing as it was understood by the Ancient Hebrews.

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Yahweh will kneel before you presenting gifts, and he will guard you with a hedge of protection, Yahweh will illuminate the wholeness of his being toward you, bringing order, and he will provide you with love, sustenance, and friendship, Yahweh will lift up the wholeness of his being and look upon you, and he will set in place all you need to be whole and complete.

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