The Hebrew Alphabet and Culture

Introduction to the Ancient Hebrew Culture

By Jeff A. Benner

A language is closely tied to the culture of those who speak the language. In the case of the Hebrews who were a nomadic people of the Near East, their language is closely connected to their nomadic culture. Each Hebrew word describes an action that can be seen in the nomadic journeys of the Hebrews through the wilderness.

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

It is simply assumed by most people that 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 that we can better understand how the mind of the Hebrew works. Understanding how the Ancient Hebrew thought is crucial in proper Biblical understanding. If we are to interpret the Biblical text according to our way of thinking then the interpretation will be contaminated with modern Greco-Roman thinking.

In my many 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 the speakers and writers belong to. When reading the bible, whether in Hebrew, English or any

other language, it is essential that it be read through the eyes and mind of the Hebrew culture and not one's own culture. To illustrate this lets look at Isaiah 40:22.

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

From our own culture we could conclude that 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. But, this perspective, as accurate as it may be, must be ignored and instead 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 is a word or thought that cannot be related to one of the five senses; hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste. However, each Hebrew word is related to a concrete idea, a substance of action. A good illustration of the differences is the word anger which, from a modern perspective, is an abstract idea. The Hebrew word for anger is אף aph [639] but literally means "a flaring of the nostrils in anger," a substance of action. In fact, the word אף aph [639] is also the same Hebrew word for the nose. Throughout this book you will be challenged to cease thinking abstractly and instead open your mind to the concrete meaning of words as they were understood from an Hebraic perspective.

Function

Hebrew thought is more concerned with function whereas we, and our Greco-Roman thought, are more concerned with appearance. When we read the Biblical text we are constantly creating a mental image of what the text is describing but 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 its function by telling us that this ark is very large and capable of transporting a very large load of animals.

When keeping these three keys in mind while reading the text you will begin to approach the bible from a Hebrew perspective rather than from the Greek perspective we have all been taught since birth.

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

By Jeff A. Benner

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 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.

Introduction to the Hebrew New Testament

By Jeff A. Benner

The New Testament, or B'riyt HaHhadashah in Hebrew, was written by Hebrews, for Hebrews and within an Hebraic Culture. While the only New Testament manuscripts known to exist are written in Greek, with the possible exception of the book of Matthew, the evidence suggests that much of it was originally written in Hebrew and afterwards translated into Greek.

While there are many textual evidences to support this theory, Matthew 5:3 is a good example of this.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Greek word for "poor" is ptochos and means one who is destitute, afflicted, and lacking. What this verse is literally saying is "Blessed are the ones destitute/afflicted/lacking in the spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This does not make any sense. However, if we translate the Greek word ptochos into Hebrew we have the word aniy which also means destitute, afflicted and lacking. More literally the Hebrew word aniy means "bent down low" such as a poor person who is destitute. But, this Hebrew word can also mean one who is humble, in the same sense of bending down low.

Now, if we translate the Hebrew back into English we have, "Blessed are the humble in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." By understanding this passage from its Hebrew background, we are able to better interpret the New Testament Bible.

The Characteristics of the Hebrew Alphabet
By Jeff A. Benner

In our modern English Alphabet each letter represents a sound. Each letter in Ancient alphabets represented much more, pictograph (picture), syllable (name), mnemonic (meaning) and phonetic (sound). This unique relationship between the characteristics of the Hebrew letters are used to assist in reconstructing the original Hebrew alphabet and in turn will assist in root and word definitions and relationships.

Pictograph:
Each letter is a picture representing something concrete. The Ancient Hebrew pictograph represents a mouth.

Mnemonic:
The mnemonic meaning of a pictograph is the extended meanings related to the pictograph. For example, the pictograph has the extended mnemonic meanings of speak, blow and open. These mnemonic meanings most often are related to the pictograph by their function rather than appearance.

Syllable:
Each pictograph is associated with a single syllable of two consonants. This syllable is also the name of the pictograph. The name of the pictograph is "peh" and is also the Hebrew word for "mouth."

Phonetic:
The first letter of the syllabic name provides a singular sound for the purpose of forming words and sentences. The phonetic value of the pictograph is "p."

History of the Hebrew Alphabet
By Jeff A. Benner

The bible states that before the flood there was only one language. When God spoke the universe into existence he used a language. When he spoke to man he used the same language. When the first man, Adam, spoke to the animals (giving them their names) he used the same language. Adam then taught it to his wife Hhava (Eve) and his children. His children then taught it to their children and down through the generations until the Tower of Babel, at which time God came down and confused their languages.

It is interesting to note that the Tower of Babel occurred around 3,000 BCE, the same time that the Sumerian and Egyptian cultures arose. The Hebrews, Sumerians and Egyptians all used the same style of pictographic writing. Is it possible that all of these pictographs come from an original proto-alphabet prior to the Tower of Babel?

Alphabet

Let us look at the Hebrew letter "aleph," the first letter of the Hebrew Alephbet, to see the evolution from Hebrew to our own English alphabet.

Approximately 4,000 years ago the original picture for the letter aleph was the head of an ox. About 3,000 years ago the picture was simplified and around this time the Greeks adopted this alphabet for their own use and the Hebrew/Semitic aleph became the Greek letter alpha. The Greek alpha continued to evolve into its modern form. The Romans then adopted the Greek alphabet which is the alphabet used today to write English.

Let us look at the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter beyt, which follows a very similar progression.

Numbers

The ancient cultures did not have a separate numbering system as we do, but instead used their alephbet to double as their numbering system. The aleph represented the number 1. The Arameans of Babylon also used the same Semitic/Hebrew alphabet but evolved separately from Hebrew. The first nine letters of this Aramaic/Hebrew alphabet eventually became our numbers one through nine. Below is the progression of the letter aleph and beyt from their original pictograph to our numbers one and two.

The Hebrew Origin of the English (Latin) Alphabet
By Jeff A. Benner

Most are aware that our English language uses the Latin alphabet which has evolved out of the Greek alphabet. What most are not aware of is that the Greek alphabet evolved out of the Ancient Hebrew Alphabet. Below is a chart comparing our own English letters (slightly altered to see the similarities) with the original Hebrew letters.

Ancient Hebrew							Modern Hebrew		
Early	Middle	Late	Name	Picture	Meaning	Sound	Letter	Name	Sound
		א	El	Ox head	Strong, Power, Leader	ah, eh	א	Aleph	silent
		ב	Bet	Tent floorplan	Family, House, In	b, bh(v)	ב	Beyt	b, bh(v)
		ג	Gam	Foot	Gather, Walk	g	ג	Gimal	g
		ד	Dal	Door	Move, Hang, Entrance	d	ד	Dalet	d
		ה	Hey	Man with arms raised	Look, Reveal, Breath	h, ah	ה	Hey	h
		ו	Waw	Tent peg	Add, Secure, Hook	w, o, u	ו	Vav	v
		ז	Zan	Mattock	Food, Cut, Nourish	z	ז	Zayin	z
		ח	Hhet	Tent wall	Outside, Divide, Half	hh	ח	Chet	hh
		ט	Tet	Basket	Surround, Contain, Mud	t	ט	Tet	t
		י	Yad	Arm and closed hand	Work, Throw, Worship	y, ee	י	Yud	y
		כ	Kaph	Open palm	Bend, Open, Allow, Tame	k, kh	כ	Kaph	k, kh
		ל	Lam	Shepherd Staff	Teach, Yoke, To, Bind	l	ל	Lamed	l
		מ	Mem	Water	Chaos, Mighty, Blood	m	מ	Mem	m
		נ	Nun	Seed	Continue, Heir, Son	n	נ	Nun	n
		ס	Sin	Thorn	Grab, Hate, Protect	s	ס	Samech	s
		ע	Ghah	Eye	Watch, Know, Shade	gh(ng)	ע	Ayin	silent
		פ	Pey	Mouth	Blow, Scatter, Edge	p, ph(f)	פ	Pey	p, ph(f)
		צ	Tsad	Man on his side	Wait, Chase, Snare, Hunt	ts	צ	Tsade	ts
		ק	Quph	Sun on the horizon	Condense, Circle, Time	q	ק	Quph	q
		ר	Resh	Head of a man	First, Top, Beginning	r	ר	Resh	r
		ש	Shin	Two front teeth	Sharp, Press, Eat, Two	sh	ש	Shin	sh, s
		ת	Taw	Crossed sticks	Mark, Sign, Signal, Monument	t	ת	Tav	t

Handwriting the Hebrew Letters

Refer back to these helps during each lesson if you would like to learn how to write each Hebrew letter by hand.
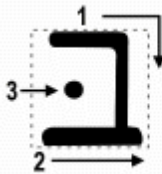
I would like to thank John J. Parsons who has designed these handwriting helps.

Aleph

The numbered arrows show the order and direction for drawing the lines (the gray rectangle indicates the letter proportions in a graph paper cell).
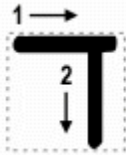
Beyt

Note that the second line extends past the vertical line to the right.

Gimel

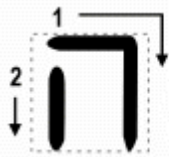The numbered arrows show the order and direction for drawing the lines (the gray rectangle shows the letter proportions in a graph paper cell).

Dalet

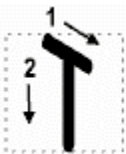Note that the first line extends past the vertical line to the right.

Hey

Note that there is a gap between the top of the horizontal line and the second vertical stroke.
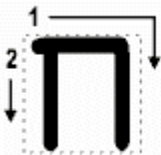
Vav

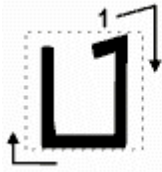Note that there is a slight left-to-right incline in the horizontal stroke.

Zayin

Note that the first stroke slightly descends from the left to right.
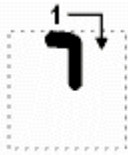
Hhet

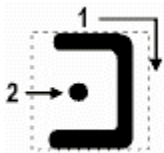Note that the first stroke "overhangs" the vertical second stroke.

Tet

Note that the initial horizontal stroke slightly ascends from the left to right before descending.

Yud
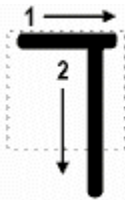
Note that the stroke descends only about halfway toward the baseline.

Kaph

A single stroke, like a backwards "c" is used to form this letter.

Final Kaph

Note that Khaf Sofit resembles a Dalet except that the second stroke descends well below the baseline of the text.

Lamed

Note that the first stroke extends above the line and inclines from left to right.

Mem

Note that there is a gap at the bottom left of the letter.

Final Mem
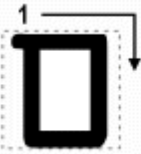
Note that Mem Sofit resembles a Samekh except that it is more box-shaped.

Nun

Nun is about half the width of the letter Kaf.

Final Nun

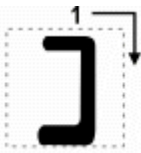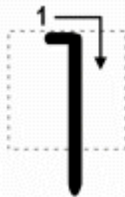Note that Nun Sofit resembles a Vav except that it descends below the baseline.

Samehh
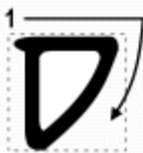
Note that the top stroke has an "overhang" on the left.

Ayin
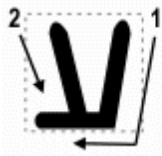
Note that the second stroke descends to the right of the end of the first stroke.

Pey
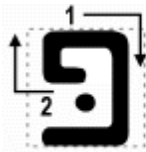
Most people form this letter using two separate strokes.

Final Pey
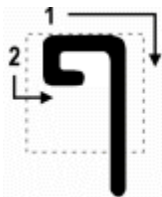
Note that Fey Sofit resembles the standard letter Fey except that it has a "tail" that descends below the baseline.

Tsade
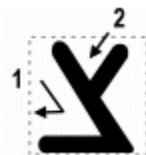
Note that the second stroke descends from the right and meets the first stroke about halfway.

Final Tsade
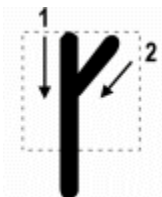
Note that Tsade Sofit resembles the standard letter Tsade except that it has a "tail" that descends below the baseline.

Quph
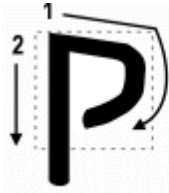
This letter looks like the English letter "p." Note that the second stroke descends below the letter's baseline. Note the "gap" between the end of the first stroke and the second stroke.

Resh
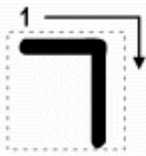
This letter looks a little like a backwards English letter "r." Be careful not to confuse this with the letter Dalet.

Shin
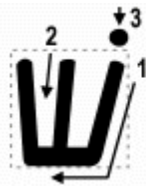
Two strokes are used to create this letter.

Tav
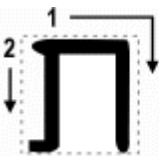
Note that the first stroke overhangs the second stroke, and that the second stroke has a small "foot" that goes to the left.

Hebrew Words

By Jeff A. Benner

Each root represents an action, an object that reflects the action and an abstract derived from the action of the object. The action is referred to as a verb while the object and abstract are referred to as nouns. The root 𐤔𐤀𐤋(BRK) is the foundation to the verb 𐤔𐤀𐤋(pronounced barak) meaning "to kneel" (action) and the noun 𐤔𐤀𐤋(pronounced berek) meaning "knee" (object). The noun 𐤅𐤔𐤀𐤋(pronounced berakah) is derived from the root and can be a gift (object) or the abstract concept of a "blessing" in the sense of bringing a gift on bended knee.

On a frequent basis we attach a meaning of a word from the bible based on our own language and culture to a word that is not the meaning of the Hebrew word behind the translation. This is often a result of using our modern western thinking process for interpreting the Biblical text. For proper interpretation of the bible it is essential that we take our definitions for words from an Ancient Hebraic perspective. Our modern western minds often work with words that are purely abstract or mental while the Hebrew's vocabulary was filled with words that painted pictures of concrete concepts. By reading the Biblical text with a proper Hebrew vocabulary the text comes to life revealing the authors intended meaning.

While the Hebrew word beriyt means "covenant" the cultural background of the word is helpful in understanding its full meaning. Beriyt comes from the parent root word bar meaning grain. Grains were fed to livestock to fatten them up to prepare them for the slaughter. Two other Hebrew words related to beriyt and also derived from the parent root bar can help understand the meaning of beriyt. The word beriy means fat and barut means meat. Notice the common theme with bar, beriy and barut, they all have to do with the slaughtering of livestock. The word beriyt is literally the animal that is slaughtered for the covenant ceremony. The phrase "make a covenant" is found thirteen times in the Hebrew bible. In the Hebrew text this phrase is "karat beriyt". The word karat literally means "to cut". When a covenant is made a fattened animal is cut into pieces and laid out on the ground. Each party of the covenant then passes through the pieces signifying 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 (see Genesis 15:10 and Jeremiah 34:18-20).

Excerpts from the Ancient Hebrew Lexicon

The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the bible is a new and unique lexicon that defines each Hebrew word within its original Hebraic perspective rather than from our own modern western perspective. The lexicon also groups together all related roots and words for more effective word studies. Below are a few selected entries from the lexicon.

AB - Father tent pole, fruit, desire, enemy

EL - God yoke, ox, oath, power, oak, teach

AT - Mark plow, arrive, you, with

BaHh - Slaughter knife, sacrifice, choose, firstfruit

BaL - Flow stream, trumpet, empty, flood

BeN - Son straw, build, understand, white

BaR - Grain wing, fat, covenant, clean, cross over

GaL - Round wheel, redeem, infant, circle, shave, bullock

GaN - Garden shield, steal, thief, treasure

GeR - Stranger chew, fear, scratch, sweep, cast out

DaM - Blood silent, red, man, ground, east, ancient

DaN - Rule quarrel, lord, base, judge

DaR - circle order, generation, dwell, word, wilderness, flock, arrange

HaB - Love gift, give

Hal - Shine praise, tent, distant, here

Zan - Harvest mattock, feed, hear, ear, weapon

ZaR - Spread span, vomit, gush, seed, sorcery

HhaL - Bore hole, pierce, sick, dream, engrave, craftsman

Thar - Unclean contain, clean, village, prey, guard

YaD - Hand throw, praise, Jew

YaR - Throw fear, river, teach, rain

KaL - Whole complete, kidney, bride, food, restrain, able

KeN - Root stand, base, firm, priest, gather

KaR - Bowl dig, dance, pit, examine

LeB - Heart think, thirst, flame

LaK - Walk messenger, travel, king, stick

MaH - Sea what, linger

MaL - Speak word, fill, mix, circumcision, cut,

MaN - Firm number, craftsman, pillar, right, kind

MaR - Bitter weak, lamb, pit, quick, exchange, rebellion, rub, pain

NaB - Fruit prophecy, flourish

NeR - Light plow, flow, music

SaK - Cover booth, hedge, benefit, wage, dwell

SaR - Rule noble, lord, bind, knead, correct, remain

'eD - Repeat witness, appointment

'aL - Yoke work, rise, lift, leaf, master, transgress, youth, rejoice

'aN - Eye watch, afflict, cloud, spring

PaL - Plead pray, judgment, dark, perform, distinct

PaR - Bull break, fruit, crush, burst, village, hoof, tear

TSaR - Enemy trouble, press, neck, oil

QaL - Shepherd voice, light, gather, sling, shame

QeN - Nest zealous, possess, song

RaHH - Path travel, millstone, wind, moon, aroma, dawn, trade

RaSH - Head begin, inherit, poor

SHaR - Cord happy, remain, straight, song, prosper, twist

SHeM - Breath desolate, guilt, smell, rain, pant, oil, hear

TaM - Fill whole, wonder, mature, seal

GHaR - City dark, blind, forest, cloud

Hebrew Word Studies

By Jeff A. Benner

Torah

Letters (Root of the Tree)

Pronunciation: "R"
Picture: Head of a man.
Culture: The head is seen as the top of the body and can be the top or head of anything such as the body, time, mountaintop, rank, etc. This letter can also represent a man.
Meaning: Man

Pronunciation: "Y", when used as a consonant, "I" when used as a vowel.
Picture: An arm and closed hand.
Culture: The closed hand represents the idea of work, throw, make, etc.
Meaning: Working hand

Parent Root (Trunk of the Tree)

Pronunciation: "YaR"
Picture: Hand of man.
Meaning: The work of a man's hand.

Child Root (Branches of the Tree)

Pronunciation: "Ya-RaH"
Meaning: This root has the more specific meaning
of the "throwing of the hand of man".
Comments: This child root is derived from the parent root
"YaR," is formed by placing the vowel "aH" after it.

Words (Leaves of the Tree)

Pronunciation: "MoW-ReH"
Meaning: A Moreh is 'one who throws from the hand'. This can be the 'archer' who throws the arrow, or a 'teacher' who throws the finger in the way the student is to go.
Comments: Nouns are derived from the root by making one or two changes to the original root. The noun 'morey' is made by adding a mem to the front of the word. When the first letter of the root is a yad and a prefix (in this case a mah) is added, the yad is replaced by the vowel "waw" (ow sound).
Reference: Exodus 12:49

Pronunciation: "ToW-RaH"
Meaning: Torah is "what is thrown by the Moreh". This can be the 'arrow' from the archer or the 'direction' (teachings and instructions) from the teacher. The true Hebraic understanding of "Torah" is "instructions" and "teachings" such as from a father to his children.
Comments: Another noun is formed the same way except that a 'Taw' is placed at the front of the word instead of a 'Mah', we then have the word 'Torah'.
Reference: Proverbs 5:13

The Tower of Babel
By Jeff A. Benner

When studying the origins of ancient languages, the Biblical account of the Tower of Babel must be considered. When was this Biblical account first written? Was the Tower of Babel fact or fiction?

Let us begin by examining the written account of the Tower of Babel as found in the book of Genesis. Below is Genesis 11:1-10 according to the King James Version.

> 1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Did the actual Tower of Babel exist? Within the land of Sumer are many structures called Ziggurats meaning "high". The Ziggurats have names such as; "Temple of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth", "Temple that Links Heaven and Earth", "Temple of the Exalted Mountain", "Temple of Exalted Splendor", and "Temple of the Stairway to Pure Heaven". The Ziggurats were built with sun dried bricks, burnt bricks and bitumen mortar. These Ziggurats may not be the "Tower of Babel" but are most likely replicas of an older original.

When was this account written? There have been two possibilities proposed by scholars. The first is that the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy were written by Moses placing the writing around 1500 BCE. The second possibility is that it was written by a Jewish scribe or priest sometime around 500 BCE.

Regardless of the actual date of the writing, the question of the origin of the story remains. In ancient near east cultures, family and national historical accounts were meticulously and accurately passed down from generation to generation orally. Did the writer of the Genesis account record a traditional story or was it fabricated.

The Genesis account identifies the land of "Shinar" as the location of the Tower of Babel. This is the land of "Sumer" where many ancient documents of the Sumerians have been discovered. Within these documents are stories paralleling many of the Genesis accounts including creation, Noah and the flood as well as the confounding of the languages.

> "In those days, the lands of Subur (and) Hamazi, Harmony-tongued (?) Sumer, the great land of the decrees of princeship, Uri, the land having all that is appropriate(?), The land Martu, resting in security, The whole universe, the people in unison (?) To Enlil in one tongue [spoke]. ... (Then) Enki, the lord of abundance, (whose) commands are trustworthy, The lord of wisdom, who understands the land, The leader of the gods, Endowed with wisdom, the lord of Eridu Changed the speech in their mouths, [brought (?)] contention into it, Into the speech of man that (until then) had been one.
>
> (translation from "The Babel of Tongues: A Sumerian Version" by Kramer, S.N., Journal of the American Oriental Society 88:108-11,1968)

The Sumerian documents which include this account date back to about 3,000 BCE. Clearly, the account of the confusion of languages dates back long before the written Biblical record. The Biblical author of the Genesis account was in fact writing a traditional story and was not a fabrication on his part.

According to the Biblical account, all mankind migrated and settled in the land of Sumer after the flood. After the confusion of languages, the people scattered. If this were true, this amazing story would have been passed down from generation to generation throughout all of the different peoples and carried with them to their new settlements.

The Genesis stories including creation, the fall of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, Noah and the flood, the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages have been found in hundreds of cultures throughout the world such as the accounts below.

Central America: And as men were thereafter multiplying they constructed a very high and strong Zacualli, which means "a very high tower" in order to protect themselves when again the second world should be destroyed. At the crucial moment their languages were changed, and as they did not understand one another, they went into different parts of the world. (Reference: Don Fernando de Alvara Ixtlilxochitl, <u>Obras Historicas Mexico</u>, 1891, Vol. I, p. 12.)

Polynesia: "But the god in anger chased the builders away, broke down the building, and changed their language, so that they spoke divers tongues." (Reference: R. W. Williamson, <u>Religious and Cosmic Beliefs of Central Polynesia</u> Cambridge, 1933, vol. I, p. 94.)

American Indian, Crow: "Then Little Coyote did something bad. He suggested to Old Man that he give the people different languages so they would misunderstand each other and use their weapons in wars... Old Man did what Little Coyote said, and the people had different languages and made war on each other." (Reference: Jane Garry and Carl Rubino, <u>Facts About the World's Languages</u> H.W. Wilson, 2001)

The Biblical account of the origin of languages cannot simply be dismissed as fiction as the facts above prove. All legends, traditions and myths are based on historical facts. Over time, they evolve and are adapted to the current culture. By comparing all related legends, traditions and myths, the common threads are signs of the original historical fact. In the case of the confusion of languages, the common thread is that many languages mysteriously appeared out of one language.

Hebrew and Non-Hebrew Names of Genesis
By Jeff A. Benner

In ancient times the name of a person was a word or phrase, taken from their language, characteristic of that person. As an example the name Adam means "man" in the Semitic language since Adam was the first "man". Eve means "life" because Eve is "the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20). Below is a list of the names, and their meanings, found from Genesis chapter one to chapter five. Each of these names are of Semitic origin as the words used within the names are Semitic words.

Adam's lineage
to Noah

Adam	=	man	**Jared**	=	descend
Seth	=	appointed	**Enoch**	=	teach
Enosh	=	mortal	**Methuselah**	=	his death sends
Cainan	=	fixed	**Lamech**	=	despair
Mahaleel	=	praised of God	**Noah**	=	comfort

Adam's wife and
other children

Eve	=	life
Cain	=	strike
Abel	=	vain

Descendants of
Cain

Enoch	=	teach
Irad	=	sequester
Mehjael	=	smooth of God
Methushael	=	man of God
Lamech	=	despair

Lamech's wives
and children

Adah	=	witness	**Jubal**	=	stream
Zillah	=	shade	**Tubal Cain**	=	bring a strike
Jabal	=	stream	**Naamah**	=	beauty

Noah's three
sons

Shem	=	name
Ham	=	hot
Japheth	=	expansion

According to the Biblical account Noah and his three sons and their wives escaped a catastrophic flood in a boat. At some point after the flood, the descendants of Noah began to build the "Tower of Babel". At which time God came down and confused their languages and the "Tower" was abandoned and the people scattered across the land, "each to his own tribe and language". This event occured sometime after the birth of Shem, Ham and Japheth's children. Below is a list of the names of their descendants as found in Genesis chapter ten.

Descendants of
Shem

Arphachsad	=	foreign	Uzal	=	unknown
Asshur	=	success	Obal	=	foreign
Aram	=	highland	Sheba	=	foreign
Elam	=	hidden	Havilah	=	circle
Lud	=	foreign	Almodad	=	foreign
Salah	=	Spear	Hazarmeveth	=	death village
Hul	=	circle	Hadoram	=	foreign
Mash	=	foreign	Diklah	=	foreign
Uz	=	consult	Abimael	=	father full
Gether	=	unknown	Opher	=	unknown
Eber	=	flock	Jovav	=	howl
Peleg	=	river	Serug	=	wreath
Joktan	=	little	Nahor	=	snore
Reu	=	friend	Terah	=	unknown
Sheleph	=	pull	Abram	=	father lifted
Jerah	=	moon			

Descendents of
Ham

Cush	=	foreign	Amorite	=	speaker
Mitsraim	=	borders	Hivite	=	village
Phut	=	foreign	Sinite	=	thorn
Canaan	=	humble	Zemarite	=	wool
Seba	=	foreign	Hayilah	=	circle
Sabtah	=	foreign	Raamah	=	thunder
Sabtechah	=	foreign	Nimrod	=	foreign
Ludim	=	foreign	Anahim	=	foreign
Lehabim	=	flame	Naphtuhim	=	foreign
Pathrusim	=	foreign	Sidon	=	fishery
Cashuhim	=	foreign	Jebusite	=	trodden
Heth	=	terror	Girgasite	=	unknown

Arkite	=	gnaw		**Havilah**	=	circle
Arvadite	=	refuge		**Philistim**	=	roll
Hamathite	=	wall		**Dedan**	=	unknown
Sheba	=	foreign		**Caphtorim**	=	circle

Descendants of Japheth

Gomer	=	complete		**Ashkenaz**	=	unknown
Madai	=	foreign		**Riphath**	=	foreign
Tubal	=	foreign		**Togarmah**	=	foreign
Tiras	=	fearful		**Elishah**	=	foreign
Magog	=	unknown		**Tarshish**	=	foreign
Javan	=	wine		**Kittim**	=	unknown
Meshech	=	foreign		**Dodanim**	=	unknown

When we examine all the names of Adams descendants to Noah's children, we find that all of the names are of Semitic origin. From Noah's grandchildren to the time of Abraham we find that the names are Semitic as well as of "foreign" origin indicating a language unrelated to the Semitic language. These names of "foreign" origin begin to appear at about the same time as the construction of the "Tower of Babel" where God confuses their languages.

Since all of the names up to the time of the "Tower of Babel" are of Semitic origin it is most likely that the Semitic language existed from Adam to the "Tower of Babel". It is possible that these names were translated into Semitic names because the writers of these accounts were Semitic, but if this were true, why didn't they translate the other names which are of "foreign" origin?

Based on this evidence it would appear that the Semitic language was the first language of man.

Learning: The Five Methods of Learning Hebraicly
By Jeff A. Benner

There are several Hebrew words which can be translated as "learn" into English. When we read the English text we will often come across words like learn, teach, instruct, discipline and chastise, but as we will see, these words do not give us an accurate meaning of these words from a Hebraic perspective and some of the meaning is "lost in the translation".

The Hebrew language is centered around the life of desert dwellers who live their lives as shepherds and farmers. In order to really understand the Hebrew words for learning, we will be looking at them as they did 4000 years ago.

Alaph

Oxen were very important to desert dwellers as a source of power, much as the tractor is to the modern farmer today. The Hebrew word for an ox is "eleph". A closely related word is "alaph" meaning; "to yoke together."

When two oxen were placed together in a yoke for plowing, an older more experienced ox is placed alongside a younger inexperienced ox. The younger would then learn by association and example from the older. Hence, the word eleph can also mean "to associate with" or "to learn by example".

A man yoked to another will learn by example from the other. A child will also learn from his parents only by observing the actions of the parent. This can be either in a positive or in a negative way.

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn [alaph] his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. (Proverbs 22:24,25)

Lamad

The lemad is the staff of a shepherd used to direct and control the flock. The verb lamad means "to direct" or "to learn by showing the direction".

Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn [lamad] to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach [lamad] them to their children." (Deuteronomy 4:10)

Yarah

The next word we will look at is "yarah" meaning, "to throw" such as a rock or arrow as in the following passage:

And I will shoot [yarah] three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. (1 Samuel 20:20)

This can also be a figurative "throwing of the finger" meaning to point as in the following passage:

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed [yarah] him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them. (Exodus 15:24,25)

It can also mean "to learn by pointing out the way".

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach [yarah] them. (Exodus 24:12)

It is the responsibility of the parent to point the way to the children. This means all aspects of life, by pointing the way to God, a career, a moral lifestyle, etc. When a rock is shot from a sling, it is shot at a target. Likewise, the direction which a parent points out to his child must be at a target. This target is always obedience to God.

Shanan

The next word which we will look at which is usually translated as learn or teach is "shanan". This word literally means "to make pointed, or to sharpen" such as a knife or sword.

When I sharpen (shanan) my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. (Deuteronomy 32:41)

A dull knife will not cut. Hence, we take our knife and sharpen it on a stone so that it will be ready to perform the work it must do properly. This sharpening process is careful and sometimes time consuming. "Shanan" can also refer to the careful sharpening of your children's skills.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt *teach them diligently* (shanan) unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Yasar

The word "yasar" literally means "to turn the head" or "to turn to another direction". This word can be translated as chastise or discipline.

Correct (Yasar) thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.
(Proverbs 29:17)

In summary, the five Hebraic methods of learning are:

Alaph	To learn by yoking	Association (Metacognition)
Lamad	To learn by goading	Instruction (Knowledge Development)
Yarah	To learn by pointing	Direction (Life Coaching)
Shanan	To learn by sharpening	Skills (Gift Development)
Yacar	To learn by chastisement	Discipline (Character Development)

Fire and Man
By Jeff A. Benner

And the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

The Hebrew word for fire is "אש" (esh). Derived from this two letter parent root is the three letter child root "איש" (iysh) meaning "man". Not only are these two words related by their letters, they are also related in meaning. To re- discover this relationship between fire and man let us begin by seeing the "creation" of fire from the ancient Hebrews perspective.

In ancient times before the invention of lighters and matches, fire was made with a "bow drill" and tinder. The tinder is any fine organic material such as dried grass or inner bark fibers. The bow drill consisted of four parts, the fireboard, bow and string, rod and handle. The fireboard was made of a

flat board with a v-shaped cut at the edge of the board. The bow and string is constructed similar to an archers bow. The rod is a round stick pointed at one end and rounded at the other. The handle is a flat round board.

Fine tinder is compressed into a ball and layed on the ground. The fireboard is placed on top of the tinder with the v-shape cut over the tinder. The string of the bow is wrapped once around the rod and the pointed end of the rod is set on the fireboard over the v-shaped cut. The handle is placed on top of the rod. One hand holds the handle while the other hand moves the bow back and forth in a sawing motion. This action causes the rod to spin back and forth on the fireboard.

As the rod spins on the fireboard fine wood dust is shaved off the rod and deposited in the v-shape cut on top of the tinder. The friction of the two woods rubbing also created heat causing the dust to become very hot. After a short time working the fire drill smoke will begin to rise from the heated dust. The fireboard is carefully removed leaving the pile of smoldering dust on the tinder. The Tinder is picked up and enclosed around the dust and the fire maker blows on the dust increasing the heat. The dust then ignites the tinder creating fire.

Let us now look at passage in Genesis in light of the ancient form of making fire.

Genesis 2:7

Creator	Firemaker
And the LORD God	And the fire maker
formed the man from the dust of the ground	formed a man of dust on the tinder
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life	and he blew into the tinder the breath of life
and the man became a living soul.	and the man became a living fire.