

## Helpful Hints on Hebrew

The only Hebrew I know, as the saying goes, is the man who has the tailor shop around the corner. And this doesn't help much toward understanding the Hebrew language, because usually he doesn't know it either. But *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* comes to my rescue for whatever I, personally, can gain of the meaning of Hebrew terms.

Strong's is a listing of every word in the Bible in the main concordance section, with a Hebrew/Chaldee dictionary and a Greek dictionary in the back of the book. Though there are other features in it, these are the significantly useful parts. Many people think a concordance is only for locating a verse in the Bible, and certainly it is useful toward that end. But the dictionary sections have proved to be the most useful to me, particularly the Hebrew dictionary, for it is the only way I have to enter into some of the Old Testament word meanings.

All except a small portion of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but Jeremiah 10:11, Daniel 2:4 to 7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26 were evidently recorded in the Chaldean (or Aramaic) language. It is closely related to Hebrew, but different, I am told. The purpose for this change of language in these Old Testament books is beautifully illustrated in Daniel. To quote from Terry's *Biblical Hermeneutics*:

Daniel, who received an early and thorough training in the tongue of the Chaldeans, is the first biblical writer who formally employs this dialect in sacred composition. After having narrated in Hebrew the successful training of himself and his three companions, he passes in the second chapter to an account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and from verse 4, where the Chaldeans begin their address to the king: "O king, forever live!" This being the very language in which all the conversation of the court was carried on, its use here gives to Daniel's narrative a life-like reality, and is a monumental evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the record. Only a writer of Daniel's time and position, and bilingual as he was, would have written thus. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a God-given vision of world empire, and of its final overthrow by the power and kingdom of God; and the dream and its interpretation were written down in a language then common alike to the people of God and to the mightiest empire of the world. The succeeding narratives of the golden image and the deliverance of Daniel's three companions (chapter 4), Belshazzar's feast and sudden overthrow (chapter 5), and Daniel's deliverance from the lions' den (chapter 6) were also recorded in the language of the empire, for they were written for the world to know...but when, in the eighth chapter, the prophet passes to visions of more special import to his own people, he resumes in Hebrew. (1)

### Using Strong's Concordance

So our concordance has a Hebrew/Chaldee dictionary, but how does one make use of it? Let me illustrate one way we can use it. In Genesis 11:26 I encounter the name "Abram" for the first time, and in Genesis 17:5 I see that God changes his name to "Abraham."

No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:5).

So I sense there is meaning in both of these names, and my curiosity leads me to check the Hebrew dictionary

in Strong's Concordance. I look under *Abram* in the main concordance section (on page 12) and find under Genesis 17:5 the verse I'm checking with a number 87 on the right hand margin. This is a reference number to the Hebrew dictionary (page 8) in the back of the book. So I turn there, making sure I don't mistake it for the Greek dictionary adjoining it (which has the numbers italicized to distinguish it from the Hebrew dictionary), and I find this:

*"Abram, ab-rawm; contr. (contraction) from 48; high father; Abram, the original name of Abraham."*

I check 48 on the previous page to see the longer form of the word, meaning the same, *high father*. I follow the same procedure with *Abraham* and find under 85 on page 8 of the Hebrew dictionary:

*"Abraham, ab-raw-hawm; contraction from 1 and an unused root (probably meaning to be populous); father of a multitude."*

Then I turn back to 1 (on page 7) and find that *ab* is a primary word meaning *father*. So I have learned a little Hebrew, and returning to the verse I'm investigating, I observe that this little bit of research correlates with the explanatory clause, "for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations" in Genesis 17: 5.

You say, "I could have understood that much from the English text," and it's true that sometimes our research doesn't add much to our understanding. But then, when we come to "Abba, father..." in Romans 8:15 we are able to recognize that Paul is lapsing back into his familiar Hebrew (or Aramaic) vocabulary which takes the mystery out of *Abba*. However, the real value of the study of this word shows up when we read God's promise to Abraham:

Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore...and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...(Gen. 22:17,18 NASV).

Here we see how his name Abraham (father of a multitude) really applies. By implication his will be an earthly family (depicted by "sand"), a heavenly family (depicted by "stars"), and universal blessing to all nations through his seed which is Christ (see Gal. 3:16 NASV). For even further emphasis we find the same promise repeated in Genesis 15:5 and restated to Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 26:4 and 32:12. So our investigation of the Hebrew meaning of Abraham's name really pays off. He is indeed "father of a multitude," both physically and spiritually.

I have outlined this simple, step-by-step procedure because I have found that many do not know the availability of this information in the concordance, or how to dig it out. And though the rewards may be minimal on some occasions at other times we will discover a wealth of information.

For other salient features of the Hebrew, I have turned to my dear friend and fellow-pastor, David Roper, who is a real "pro" on biblical Hebrew. Listen to what he has to say regarding this phase of Bible interpretation. And I'll be learning along with you, for this data will be new to me, too.

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## **What Every Bible Student Needs to Know about Hebrew**

**by David H. Roper**

The books of the Old Testament, as I'm sure you've been told, were written mainly in Hebrew. There are, however, some short sections set down in the Aramaic language, as Bob Smith has already pointed out.

Aramaic occurs in the Old Testament because it was the language of the Jewish exiles. From the seventh century B.C. on it was the official court language first of the Babylonian and then of the Persian Empires. It is

understandable, then, why Aramaic occurs in books that have their setting in the period when the Jews were exiled from their land. It is important to know, however, that although Hebrew and Aramaic are different languages they are in the same family--the Semitic language group--and thus have many common characteristics. (Grammarians describe them as "cognate" languages because they share a common parent language.) For practical purposes, then, we can view them in the same way. When we refer to the Hebrew language in this study, we are, in effect, referring to the language of the Old Testament.

## **Semitic Languages**

Since we've raised the issue of a family of languages to which Hebrew is related, it might be helpful to elaborate on this connection. To do so explains, for example, how the patriarchs could communicate so freely with the native population of Canaan. That communication is clearly indicated in the Old Testament. You may have wondered about it yourself. The answer is actually quite simple--they all spoke essentially the same language. There were dialectical differences, to be sure, but the evidence from the ancient literature sources of Israel's neighbors (the Phoenicians, Moabites, Canaanites, and so on) indicates that they all used Canaanite dialects closely related to Hebrew and they could have communicated without any significant language barrier.

The family of Semitic languages is usually divided into three groups, according to their geographical distribution: Northeast Semitic, Southwest Semitic and Northwest Semitic. The Northeast Semitic branch is called Akkadian and, generally speaking, was the language of the Assyrians and Babylonians, and the Southwest branch embraces Arabic. The Northwest Semitic language group is by far the largest, comprising the previously mentioned *Aramaic* language that was originally spoken in Aramea (later Syria) and a number of dialects usually termed *Canaanite*. The people in Phoenicia, Canaan, Edom, Moab, and, apparently, even portions of Sinai, all used some form of this Canaanite language.

It may surprise you to learn that Hebrew is derived from the Canaanite branch of the Northwest Semitic family. In fact, Hebrew is called in the Bible the "language of Canaan" (Isa. 19:18). We do not know what language the patriarch Abraham spoke when he came from Haran (we can reasonably assume it was an early form of Aramaic) but, apparently, after settling in Canaan he adopted the local Canaanite dialect which became the basis for Israel's national language.

What this means, then, is that Hebrew belongs to an extensive language family spoken throughout the near East from Syria to the Sinai Peninsula and from the Mediterranean Sea to Mesopotamia. Furthermore, since all the nations in this region were bound together linguistically, we should expect to find other cultural and literary parallels, and indeed they do exist. All these so-called Semitic peoples were, in fact, united by a more or less common culture. Israel, as a nation, did not stand in cultural isolation, nor did her literature. There are thousands of documents from the near East that have some bearing on our understanding of the language of the Old Testament; new meanings for rare biblical words are being discovered and many obscure references are being cleared up. And this information is increasingly available even to the non-specialist. We'll refer to some of these sources later.

## **Hebrew Thought Patterns**

The difficult thing about Hebrew from our perspective is simply that it is a Semitic or Eastern language, quite different from any of the Indo-European languages familiar to us. Most of us here in the West have at least dabbled around with Spanish, Latin, or French in our school days, but unless we've taken an Arabic language course we've never encountered anything quite like Hebrew. Certainly the script is peculiar. It reads from right to left, and there are a host of other rather obvious disparities. However, the real difference is less obvious, and it is this difference that is the real crux of the matter: *Hebrew is a vehicle for expressing a uniquely Eastern viewpoint*. The problem then, is not merely one of understanding another language, but of understanding another way of looking at life and things. It is this point that most English readers do not fully appreciate. There are many specialized language tools which can be used to define terms and better understand nuances of meaning, but these in themselves are inadequate, simply because they can't reproduce this cultural dimension. In fact, I don't know that it can be adequately reproduced. The only way to fully understand a people is to get fully involved in their language, literature, and customs. Unfortunately, that just isn't possible for most folks. Few have the time or inclination to learn the requisite number of dead Semitic languages and then immerse

themselves in the literature. (Some who did, it appears, never came up!) There are, however, some basic perspectives which, when maintained, will enable anyone to more fully appreciate and more accurately interpret the Old Testament. These, I believe, are as follows:

### *1. A Different Way of Looking at an Action*

Hebrew verb tenses are odd things--at least they are from our point of view. They made perfectly good sense to the Semite-on-the-street, I'm sure, but, apparently, they were more concerned with the *mode* or *manner* of an action rather than the time when it occurred. Or to put it another way, they were not so much interested in *when* an action took place as in its *state of completion* --whether it was complete or incomplete. Properly speaking, then, Hebrew verb tenses are not tenses at all. They rather indicate "aspect" (a phase of action) as the grammarians say. In English we usually think in terms of strict time sequences. If I say, "I went to Oregon on my vacation," any English-speaking person hearing these words would understand that the action occurred in the past; not so the Hebrew, however. He evidently did not think in those strict categories. He could view that action as completed (and thus perhaps in the past), or still going on, or not yet begun, but apparently nothing beyond those aspects of action mattered! Let's see how it works.

### **Hebrew Perfect and Imperfect Verbs**

1. Hebrew verbs indicate two "aspects" of action. The Hebrew *perfect* viewed the action as complete; the *imperfect* represented it as incomplete, repetitive or continual. Normally the translators render the Hebrew perfect as an English past tense and the imperfect as an English present or future tense. There is really no other way to handle the problem in translation, but we have to understand that the Hebrew author was not thinking in those strict, temporal categories. For the Hebrew the action was complete or incomplete; time was almost irrelevant, and that is the way we have to learn to view the action. For example, Genesis 12:1 reads, "Now the Lord *said* to Abram, 'Go from your country'...." That verse has occasioned a lot of controversy because of a supposed conflict with Stephen's statement in Acts 7:3 indicating that this call occurred *before* he migrated to Haran. The Genesis passage, on the other hand, makes it appear that the call came *after* he reached Haran.

Once you understand the Hebrew verb system, however, the apparent conflict vanishes. The point of the statement in Genesis 12:1 is simply that the action *occurred*. It was completed at some point in time--the actual sequence of events is irrelevant. We could, therefore, translate the verb as an English pluperfect, "The Lord *had said* to Abram..." and make perfectly good sense out of the sequence of events. There are, of course, numerous examples in the Old Testament, since almost every sentence contains at least one verb, but perhaps you've seen enough now to gain a general impression. The important question to ask yourself in each case is, "What *a* spect of action does the author have in mind?" (5)

### **But There's More to It...**

One qualifying note: To clarify this matter I have vastly oversimplified it. The Hebrew verb is actually far more complex than I've presented it. At times, for example, the Old Testament writers, contrary to expectations, will indicate a *future* action by employing a *perfect tense verb*. They do so when they intend to represent these future actions as completed *in the thought of the speaker*. In other words, they *conceive* those actions as accomplished fact though *the action has not* yet taken place. Numbers 17:12 is a good example: "The people of Israel said to Moses, 'Behold, we have perished, we have died, *we have all died*'" (literal translation). In other words in their mind they were as good as dead. We would say, "We are done for." This same idiom occurs in contracts and treaty stipulations, i.e., Genesis 23:11, "I give you the field," (though the field was not yet in Abraham's possession) and especially in promises made by God (Genesis 15:18, "To your descendants *I have given* this land" literal translation).

The most vivid use of this verb form is in the prophetic material, where the event or scene which the prophet describes is depicted as having already been realized. In his mind the event, though yet future, is deemed "as good as done." For example, Isaiah 5:13 literally reads, "My people *have gone* into captivity" (obviously they had not in Isaiah's time).

English readers may find it difficult to identify these "prophetic perfects" from our English translations.

However, you should be aware of this grammatical feature since it can occasionally affect our interpretation of prophetic statements. At times the translator may inadvertently mistranslate one of these verbs to indicate action in past time. The impression, : thus, is that this is an action which has already occurred--as if it were an historical event, whereas in fact it is not. It is a *prediction*, but the prophet sees it existing in the future in a completed state. Isaiah 10:28-32 is a case in point.

He has come against Aiath,  
He has passed through Migron;  
At Michmash he deposited his baggage,  
They have gone through the pass, saying,  
"They have made a lodging place in Geba."  
Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.  
Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim!  
Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth!  
Madmenah has fled.  
The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.  
Yet today he will halt at Nob;  
He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion,  
the hill of Jerusalem (Isa. 10:28-32 NASV).

Most translations take these verbs in the past tense. It is obvious, however, from the context, that the action is yet future. Isaiah is predicting the line of march which an invading army (Assyria) will take on their trek southward to besiege Jerusalem, an event yet future from Isaiah's standpoint, yet the attack is so certain in the prophet's mind that he treats it as an accomplished fact. Even without a knowledge of Hebrew you should be able, in most cases, to spot this prophetic use of the perfect. *Any past tense verb in a context of future tense verbs may be a prophetic perfect.* You should at least consider that possibility. In the passage mentioned above, for example (Isa. 10:28-32), the verb in the paragraphs before and after are in the imperfect and thus are translated as English future tenses. The abrupt shift in tense at verse 28 should tip you off to the presence of this feature. Watch for it.

## 2. Understanding Hebrew Sentence Formation

Sentence formation in ancient Hebrew was, as the grammarians say, paratactic. By that they mean that the Hebrew simply connected whole strings of sentences using the conjunction "and." This literal translation of Genesis 1:1 is a good example of this tendency: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth *and* the earth was without form and void *and* darkness was on the face of the deep *and* the spirit of God was brooding over the waters *and* God said 'let there be light *and* there was light....'" Only rarely did they subordinate clauses or phrases as we do in English. Ancient Hebrew did possess various articles capable of expressing precise subordinate relationships (the conjunctions "in order that," or "but" occur, for example), but for the most part the simple "and" served to convey those ideas.

As a connective between clauses "and" may mean simply "and" (if the idea of clause A is *coordinate* with the idea of clause B) or "but" (if the idea of B stands in *opposition* to that of A), or "in order that" (if B explains the *purpose* of), or "so that" (if B is the *result* of A) or "while" (if B is the *attendant circumstance* of A), and so on.

In other words the "and" in Hebrew simply operated as a plus sign, linking idea B with idea A and left it to the reader to put them in proper relationship to one another. There is even some recent thinking that the Hebrew "and" is not a conjunction at all but simply a way of introducing the next idea --a "presentative" they call it--like the French "voile" ("behold!" or "here it is!"). For example, in Hebrew, all the following sentences are, connected by "and." Yet note what a variety of relationships can be expressed in these literal translations:

Elijah went to show himself to Ahab *when* (and) the famine became severe in Samaria. ( 1 Kings 18: 2)

Oh Lord, you have searched me *so that* (and) you know me intimately (Ps. 139:1).

He (the servant of the Lord) was oppressed *even though* (and) he was submissive (Hebrew: "bowed down") (Isa. 53:7).

Again, we could multiply examples, but perhaps these verses are enough to give you some understanding of this grammatical feature and a new way of looking at sentence structure. When you see "and" in an Old Testament text, learn to look for other possibilities. In some cases the translators may have linked two thoughts as coordinate sentences when in actual fact some other relationship is intended. Ask yourself: Can I insert here "but," "so that," "in order that," "when," "while," or other subordinating conjunctions? That question may lead you to a new and significant insight.

### 3. *Understanding Evocative Imagery*

Hebrew is a language rich in imagery. The Semitic people in general were not given to abstract definition and precise delineation of ideas, but rather to eloquent symbolism and imagery. The language was, therefore, a powerful medium for touching and moving the emotions. Hebrew lacks the ability of most Indo-European languages to express subtle shades of meaning. For instance, Latin is far more concise and thus the proper medium for legal terminology, while Greek is better suited to the delicate shades of theological meaning found in the New Testament. But Hebrew has a force of its own--a remarkable ability to evoke enduring mental images by use of powerful symbols. It's this characteristic that I call *evocative imagery*. The images in the Old Testament come from a number of sources but are drawn principally from the physical features of the Near East (the flora, fauna, and topography of that region); the customs and habits of the people (cf. Jer. 2: 13; Isa. 5: 1,2; 40:26); and Israelite or pagan worship.

It may surprise you to learn that some of the most powerful symbols are taken right out of pagan cult terminology and from their myths and legends. For example, the sea monster frequently referred to in the Old Testament and variously named (Rahab, Leviathan, Tannin, and so on) is taken directly from Near Eastern mythology (See Mary K. Wakeman's *God's Battle with the Monster, a Study in Biblical Imagery*). The *theology* of the Old Testament, of course, is radically different from that of pagan literature, but many of the symbols and figures are shared in common.

Be aware of this characteristic in the Old Testament and try to focus on the *image* that the writer wishes to convey instead of the specific details of the passage. It's not that the details are unimportant; every aspect of scripture has its own importance. However, there is a big picture being painted and you ought to stand back and look at the whole in order to grasp the full intent of the author.

For example, note this lovely lyric interlude in Isaiah's prophecy:

When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,  
and their tongue is parched with thirst,  
I the Lord will answer them,  
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.  
I will open rivers on the bare heights,  
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,  
and the dry land springs of water.

I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;  
I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together;  
that men may see and know,  
may consider and understand together,  
that the hand of the Lord has done this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it (Isa. 41 :17-20).

Can you picture this scene in your mind? It's clear, I believe, what Isaiah is saying about God's provision for the exiles' needs. Truth graphically portrayed in this way has an intensity and emotional impact that mere words or abstractions could never produce. As another example note Isaiah's description of the fall of Babylon:

Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the earth a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.  
For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light.  
I will punish the world for its evil,  
and the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,  
and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless.  
I will make men more rare than fine gold,  
and mankind than the gold of Ophir.  
Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will be shaken out of its place,  
at the wrath of the Lord of hosts  
in the day of his fierce anger.  
And like a hunted gazelle,  
or like sheep with none to gather them,  
every man will turn to his own people,  
and every man will flee to his own land.

Whoever is found will be thrust through,  
and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.  
Their infants will be dashed in pieces  
before their eyes;  
their houses will be plundered  
and their wives ravished (Isa. 13:9-16).

Babylon fell in 538 B.C., so this is a prophecy which has been historically fulfilled and thus we have a reference point for interpreting the imagery. The cosmic disorder described here did not actually occur--at least there are no historical references to the heavens trembling and the earth being shaken out of its orbit. Instead, we see that the intent of the author is not to give a precise description of events but rather to paint a vivid mental image of the political and personal upheaval and turmoil that accompanied the fall of Babylon. Learn to "see" the Old Testament in this way.

#### 4. *Interpreting Symbols and Figures of Speech*

A characteristic closely related to evocative imagery is the extensive use of figures of speech in the Old Testament. No language has a word for every idea. That's one of the weaknesses of language, and biblical Hebrew in particular suffers in this regard, since it has such a limited vocabulary. In addition, there is, as we have indicated, a tendency in Hebrew to express ideas symbolically rather than abstractly. Thus, the authors of the Old Testament rely extensively on figurative language. We must therefore learn to recognize some of their frequently-employed figures of speech. Some of these have been mentioned previously, but their application to Old Testament Hebrew is particularly significant.

a) *Euphemism* --the substitution of an inoffensive or mild expression for one that might offend or suggest something unpleasant.

Isaiah 57:8--"You loved their bed. Their 'hand' you gazed at" (for illicit sexual desire).

b) *Metonymy* --the use of a concrete term for another more abstract idea.

Isaiah 22:22--"Then I will set the key (way to gain access) of David on his *shoulder* ..." (as a burden, or heavy responsibility).

c) *Synechdoche* --a use of the whole for a part or a part for the whole.

Isaiah 53 :10--"If he would render up his *soul* (himself) as a guilt offering "

d) *Merism* --a form of synechdoche where a totality is expressed by two opposites.

Genesis 1 :1--"In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the *earth*" (i.e., the universe).

e) *Personification* --The representation of inanimate objects or abstract objects as endowed with personal attributes.

Isaiah 35 :1--"The *wilderness* and the *desert* shall be glad..."

f) *Apostrophe*-- a turning away from one's audience to address directly a person or thing, or an abstract idea or imaginary object (frequent in prophetic books).



g) *Hyperbole* --an exaggeration used for emphasis. Isaiah 34:1-17 (Description of the destruction of nations).

h) *Irony* --The intended implication is opposite the literal meaning of the words.

Isaiah 41:23 (Addressed to idols)--"Indeed, do good or evil that *we may* anxiously look about us and fear."

j) *Simile* --one thing, action or relationship is explicitly compared with something else ("as" or "like").

k) *Metaphor* --a word or phrase used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy.

Isaiah 1:10--"Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom (Jerusalem)."

l) *Hendiadys* --a stylistic device in which two coordinate terms are joined by "and" to convey a single concept.

Genesis 3:16--"I will greatly multiply your *pain* and *childbirth*" (i.e. "painful childbirth").

m) *Anthropomorphism* --the representation of God in the form of, or with the attributes of, a man.

Isaiah 7:18--"And it shall come about that the Lord will *w*histle for the fly which is at the sources of the rivers of Egypt."

n) *Anthropopathism* --the ascription to God of the emotions and passions of man.

Psalms 2:4--"He who sits in the heavens will *laugh*."

o) *Zoomorphism* --the representation of God in the form of,

or with the attributes of, the lower animals.

Psalms 63:7--"In the shadow of thy *wings* I sing for joy."

There are other less frequently used symbols in the Old Testament. E. W. Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House) will give you a more complete listing. Those listed here, however, are the figures of speech you will encounter most often in the Old Testament and, once understood, will give you a greater appreciation for the Hebrew mind and the image-producing faculty of the Hebrew language. Again, you need to bear in mind that the purpose of the author is to produce a vivid mental picture rather than convey a merely abstract concept. Keeping that purpose in mind will prevent you from going beyond the intent of the author.

Now for a word about *words* and how to define them. Unfortunately, there are fewer tools in Hebrew for the non-specialist than there are in Greek, but there are some available and you should learn how to use them. They can help you get beyond the English translations to the meaning of the Hebrew texts underlying them. They are:

### 1) *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*

An exhaustive concordance of the Bible contains every word found in the Bible and indicates where each word occurs. 1 Strong's concordance is based on the *English text* and more particularly that of the Authorized Version (King James Version). It's really very simple to use and correctly utilized can give you a richer understanding of any word found in scripture. For example, let's look at a term taken from another of Isaiah's prophecies, the well-known "Suffering Servant" passage in Isaiah 53. Verse 53:5 reads in part: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." If we wanted to know the meaning of the term "wounded" we could look up the word in Strong's Concordance; it occurs on page 1192. Under the entry "wounded" we would find the clause containing that word by Isaiah 53:5. In the right hand column we'd find a number (in this case 2490) which would be found in the "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary" at the back of the

concordance. There, opposite the number 2490, we read "chalal--to bore, etc." That might give us some food for thought!

2) *The Index to Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, (Moody Press)*

This is a new addition to our catalogue of Hebrew books useful to the English reader and in my opinion the best source. Unfortunately, it involves the most expense since it requires the purchase of a companion volume: *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (Clarendon Press: Oxford). However, these two volumes are by far the most valuable set of books you can possess for the purpose we're describing.

Let's follow the process using the same word (wounded) in Isaiah 53:5. The Index is based on the *New American Standard Bible*, so in every case we will have to determine the exact word used in that translation. If we then turn to the section of the *Index* on Isaiah 53:5 (it occurs on page 354) we would find the appropriate verb indicated by its root form, with a page number where that verb occurs in the *Lexicon* by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (p. 319b). There we would find the proper entry with the definition "bore, pierce" and the translation at Isaiah 53:5 "pierced, wounded because of our transgressions." Thus, we have arrived at the essential meaning of the term normally translated "wounded." It apparently refers to a puncture wound of some type, and so takes on added significance in view of the events of the crucifixion.

### Some Final Tips

1 ) Italics in most translations do not indicate emphasis but omission. The italicized words do not occur in the Hebrew text but rather were added by the translators in an attempt to clarify the meanings. Try reading a text without the italicized words to get the force of the original text.

2) The personal name of God, Jehovah, or more properly, Yahweh, is normally translated "LORD," with each letter capitalized. The term of respect, "Lord," or as we would say, "sir," is spelled "Lord" with only the first letter capitalized. The generic name for God, "Elohim," is always translated, "God." Note, for instance, the translations of Genesis 1 and 2 and the careful distinction made in the use of the names of God.

### References:

1. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 109.

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