

Hebrew Language

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Keep It Simple Stupid

We have all heard that saying, at one time or another, but today it is not used that often because we have become so sensitive in our lives, not wanting to offend anyone. Still, for the readers sake I will say that I do not apply the principle, “Keep it simple stupid”, to the reader but to myself. Hoping I have not offended anyone of a sensitive nature, and I want you to know that this is not going to be a long drawn out study in languages. It be my goal to “keep it simple”, and if I can understand it I think others will too.

Many are coming to a Hebrew view of religion, being challenged by the growing influence of the Hebrew Root Movement, the Messianic Movement, and the Sacred Names Movement. All of these challenge the Christian Church view concerning the God they worship or do not worship. Jews for Christ has been around for as long as I can remember. The Hebrew Root Movement (HRM) not so long but gaining in popularity, while the Sacred Names Movement became prominent in the 50’s and grew on through the 60-70’s and then seemed to stall. All of these movements will tell you they can trace their heritage back to the Apostles. Right now, however, it is the HRM that is enjoying the greatest growth.

These groups put a heavy emphasis on the Hebrew Language, going to the Hebrew Dictionaries and Commentaries heavily. Some even treat the Hebrew Language as if it is a Holy Language, or the “pure language” of our Creator.

It will be evident, however, from this simple examination and study of the Hebrew Language to make clear the Hebrew Language is not the Language of Heaven and that there are many variations of this language and that the Hebrew of today, Modern Hebrew, is of fairly modern origin.

It is the purpose of this study/article to remind the reader that truth is in the Christian and the Hebrew Bible – the message is there, no matter what language you are reading it in. We need to remember the scholars of the Hebrew language, for the most part, reject our Savior as Messiah. They, to varying degree deny the Messiah, YaHshua (His Jewish Birth Name) as Savior, some Hebrew (Jewish) sages deny Him in rather violent and repugnant words. But, for the sake of the reader I will not get into that, in this study I would like to make the point; that to go to the deniers of our Faith and acceptance of YaHshua (Yeshua, Yehoshua, Yahushua, Joshua) as Savior and the promised Messiah of the Hebrew writings is a mistake. Not that you shouldn't and not that we cannot learn a lot about the times and meanings and even uncover some real nuggets of truth, but that we should not rely too heavily on the Jewish Scholars or dare to make them the Specialist of our Faith.

The true Hebrew Language, that language Moses wrote in and the people of Israel spoke and that the God of Heaven wrote out Himself, commandments on stone, handed over to Moses all those things HE, YaHWeH, had spoken to the people having escaped Egypt (Ex 31:18). Written by the very finger of God Himself, handed over to Moses – but wait – that language no longer exists. Called Paleo Hebrew, all that is left of it is a few fragments and His Name. His Paleo Hebrew Name was handed down from scribe to scribe in writings over millenniums. The scribes copying any text in the current language that contained His Holy Name would stop when coming to His Name and write it out in the old letter characters handed down. This practice has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as other ancient scrolls, but the language itself has been lost.

The loss of this language led the collectors of knowledge, around 200 years before the birth of our Savior, YaHshua, the Greeks and Romans to call together a group of 70, as the story goes, Jewish religious leaders somewhere around Alexandria to put together a Greek version of the Hebrew Writings before they were completely gone, as the Jewish/Hebrew populations were not long speaking this language. Thus was born the Septuagint (Latin, meaning seventy or seven something) upon which all Modern day Jewish translations are based.

How reliable is the Hebrew Language? It is as reliable as any language. Let's have a brief look at the language so many rely on for study. Please, don't mistake what I am trying to convey here – the scholars of Hebrew, Jewish or non-Jewish can be very useful

in your research and study, but they are not the end all, and the language YaHWeH used when communicating with Moses and the writing of the LAW or Torah, was not in the language of Heaven, but of man, a language the people of Israel spoke for 400 years under Egyptian rule. Even the name of Moses is of Egyptian origin, and only adopted – adopted into Hebrew? Really, it would not be hard to imagine a people living so closely with a dominate society to adopt the language of that dominate society. It is very likely that the Israelite people were not speaking the ancient Hebrew language of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and Esau. After 400 years of domination it most likely that when the children of Israel left Egypt they spoke Egyptian, in whatever dialect it may have been at the time. Then, when they returned to Canaan it is well known the people of Israel picked up and began to use various words and phrases found in the Canaanite languages and dialect from the region they returned to. For example, Baal, was not the name used for an Egyptian god and yet we find this name, and terms surrounding this Canaanite god throughout the Hebrew writings. This also demonstrates how easily the people of Israel adopted neighboring languages as their own. All the time they spent wandering in the wilderness it would be a good guess they spoke the same language as the Egyptians. Still, the Hebrew language from Abraham is lost, he, being a true Hebrew, a people but the people from the north the land of Canaan.

Remember, Jacob a child of Isaac had two wives and from these came 12 children who then became known as Israelites. After these 12 tribes of families came out of Egypt others, not of Israel, had joined with them. Caleb and his family being but one example.

Caleb in Joshua 14:14 and Numbers 32:12 is identified as a member of the Kenezite family of people (Gen 15:19) and adopted into the Israelite tribe of Judah (Num 13:6). Caleb stood with Joshua (YaHshua) in their report of the people they spied on in the land of Canaan. Caleb was given an area of land around Mt Hebron as his birthright because of his loyalty to YaHWeH. So, where is this Kenezite family now? Mixed in with the Jewish side of Israel, would be my guess. He and his family are but one example of a non-Israelite become part of Israel the people commonly called the Jews of today.

Some still want to argue that the Jews of today are really Hebrews but the Hebrew are only a part of what we call Israel or Jews. This, of course, is a forced truth revealed to us in Col 3:9-11 where we are told that as converts and professing YaHshua as our

Savior there is "...neither Jew nor Greek...". Here is a question: Was Abraham, an Israelite? Remember, it is to Abraham we become linked in Faith, as the Father of the Faithful. He was a Hebrew, but not an Israelite, not a Jew. The Israelites may have come from his blood but he did not come from them. Only those out of the line of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, can be called Israelites and of these there were 12 tribes and with the division of Joseph tribe, after the 400 years Egyptian domination they became 13 tribes – Joseph's inheritance split between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

With all of this in the background of history over thousands of years we can understand why a new language will come to the People of the Living God at the return our King and Savior, YaHshua. A prophetic word, a promise and the time of this promise is not now but still in the future. The context sets the timing of this event –

(Zep 3:8-9) Therefore wait you upon me, said the LORD (YaHWeH), until the day that I rise up to the prey(aim my attack): for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the YaHWeH, to serve Him with one consent.

Some very strong and powerful words here and the sense of this tell us this has not happened yet. Still, some insist the Hebrew language of today is the fulfillment of verse 9 as they ignore verse 8.

It is my contention that our Lord and Savior wants us to hear the message, hear His words and the words of His Apostles in the letters *they wrote* to the church (ecclesia), (John 17:20) in whatever language we may be speaking or hear by the sound of whatever dialect it may be. One exception would be His Name – names do not change. The lettering may change to support and identical pronunciation of a name across different languages but the phonetic value of the name should remain the same. Sadly, this does not always happen. Our Lord's birth name was never lost and has always been with us in a transliterated form from the original Aramaic pronunciation. We have always had His birth name in the family of names among humans. The Old English transliteration of His Name is found in the English translations as Joshua. In the New Testament Christian writings, however, His Name was CHANGED. What,

changed to Greek, Latin, what? None of these, as the name JESUS is not Latin, and it is not Greek, and it is not really English – English letters, true, but this name was placed in the King James version of the Christian writings around 400 years ago and seems to have come out of thin air.

Yes, you can see a transformation of His Name beginning with the Greek transliteration, and then into the Latin, IESVS, and so on but the real change came when the letters changed in pronunciation and the true transliteration of our Lord's Name was not correct. This lack of scholarly oversight led to a completely different name. Even though the translators had His Name in the Hebrew Bible and transliterated as JOSHUA, which was pronounced as YaHshua, or even Yoshua, at the time of the KJV translation they reject the use of this Name, His birth Name and opted to create a different name altogether.

With a little bit of filler information let's go back to the subject at hand, the Hebrew language, knowing it is not the "pure" language of Heaven. After all, if it were there would be no need for our Lord to do what He says He is going to do in Zephaniah 3:9

It is interesting to note the meaning of the Prophet Zephaniah's name: ZephanYaH, is to say, YaH has hidden. Perhaps He has deliberately hidden from the world His Name so He can restore it later, in a pure form. Only a few, by comparison, recognize our Lord's true Name. We have His birth name as close as possible to date and when the Pure language is come, it will be interesting to see how close we are. One thing is certain, the name "Jesus" is not where close, it is not an equivalent it is completely different and a better choice is Joshua, if there is no other choice.

Hebrew Language A Holy Language?

Mizrahi Hebrew: A Persian form, Middle East variations and many different dialects.

Shephardi Hebrew: Origins around the times of Medieval Europe with those speaking this form claiming it to reflect a more ancient connection to the original language than even the Hebrew and Aramaic of the first century.

Aramaic Hebrew: I add this not as a legitimately recognized category but as an observation of my own. Our Lord and his Apostles spoke in the Aramaic dialect their time. Paleo and other ancient Hebrew languages had been lost. This, as mentioned before, gave rise to the creation of the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Hebrew

writings some 200 plus years before our Messiah. They spoke and wrote in Aramaic, a branch of the Semitic languages and the main speaking language of the Middle East. Yes, Greek was a main language too, just like English is spoken in nearly all European countries and other countries the world over as a language of commerce, but each nation having its own language, and preferring to communicate in their own language, as opposed to the English. Anyone having traveled to Europe knows this to be true. Even people that can speak English fluently will sometime respond to you only in their native language. With some there is certain resentment to being forced to use a different language form their own. True today and more so in First Century Judah. Don't be fooled by the propaganda that has been forced down the throats of believers for centuries now – that the original writings of the Gospels were in Greek. Certainly there were some original Greek writings but these writings came from lost manuscripts and letters “originally” written in Aramaic. Greek is an original copy of the Original writings and copy of early writings. May the Letter to the Romans was written in Greek originally, but the majority of the original letters and the words of our Lord we most certainly in Aramaic, a Semitic language of the Middle East that is cousin to the Hebrew and language of the Canaanite with a bit of Egyptian thrown in.

Biblical Hebrew: Biblical Hebrew, sounds like what we are looking for, right? Ah, Biblical Hebrew, but wait, as it turns out, this is the language of Canaan, the language of the Canaanites. This is a lost language that has been pieced back together from a lot of archeology. What it proves is not the language Moses spoke but a language pretty much lost as the people of Israel mixed with the people of Canaan. Abraham starts out as a Hebrew moving into Canaan and dealing with them almost exclusively, so we can be pretty sure he learned their language. Then all the people of Israel, with a Canaanite based language, mixed with some Hebrew, are in Egypt for 400 years, then back to Canaan and after living as hill people for some time, a new people come into the coast and take over the lush valleys, the Philistines.

By the time our Lord enters Jerusalem we have the introduction of Latin, the Roman language and the language of commerce, the Greek language. So, where is the Biblical language by this time? Lost and the reason for the creation of the Septuagint, and not by order of any Hebrew or Jewish conclave but by order of the Romans to preserve some history. Divine hand, maybe?

Hebrew Grammar: It seems to me that Wikipedia has this covered in one short sentence: *“The Masoretes in the 7th to 11th centuries laid the foundation for grammatical analysis of Hebrew. As early as the 9th century Judah ibn Kuraish discussed the relationship between Arabic and Hebrew. In the 10th century, Aaron ben Moses ben Asher refined the Tiberian vocalization, an extinct pronunciation of the Hebrew Bible.”*

This “grammatical analysis of Hebrew” takes place in the 7th to the 11th centuries. That is a good 700 to 1100 years after the birth of our Savior. Just keeping things in perspective. If you want to really get into this and maybe get really confused, or bored you can go to this link -- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_grammar -- but I think the point has been made.

Hebrew Alphabet: Again, it is convenient to go to Wikipedia to demonstrate how the origin of originals is like chasing after the wind: *“The **Hebrew alphabet** (Hebrew: אָלֶפֶת עִבְרִית^[a], alefbet 'Ivri), known variously by scholars as the **Jewish script**, **square script**, **block script**, is used in the writing of the Hebrew language, as well as other Jewish languages, most notably Yiddish, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic. There have been two script forms in use; the original old Hebrew script is known as the paleo-Hebrew script (which has been largely preserved, in an altered form, in the Samaritan script), while the present “square” form of the Hebrew alphabet is a stylized form of the Aramaic script. Various “styles” (in current terms, “fonts”) of representation of the letters exist. There is also a cursive Hebrew script, which has also varied over time and place.”*

We see it is a real mixture of selected forms and from various older sources. Samaritan script, call and “altered form” is the basis for the Modern Hebrew known as the “square” form. Nothing original about it as this word, “original” is used on convincing the lay-person we have the “original writings” when, in fact, we do not.

Modern Hebrew: Modern Hebrew, also called New Hebrew, came about by the work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, around the 19th and 20th century. Modern Hebrew along with Modern Arabic is the two official languages of Modern Israel. A New language and many Hebrew bibles are based on and written in this language. So, what if the Hebrew Roots people and other Christians think it is the language of the Bible, the Holy Language?

Why is this important? Well, for one, our Savior was in a battle over words with the Pharisees of His day. His continual corrections had to do with what was being said in

Scripture and what it meant, but the Pharisees and others of the religious leaders wanted to argue over words and sayings, missing the message, missing the lesson in the words. Many times the genius of our Savior's response to their word for word, hard translation of the writings was found in good old "common sense". They had made such a religion out of the words they began to worship the words as opposed to what was being said and meant. By the hard word the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the scribes and elders say the law of hate, and eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, missing the message – to render equally. But this was taken to mean, literally and eye for an eye and to this day leads some down a path of hate and revenge. Our Lord makes it plain that their use of the words was wrong and the as people we are to treat others as we would like to be treated. He did not change the words but the meaning, the original meaning and intent.

Time after time our Lord, YaHshua, made these small and large adjustments, not to the word but to their thinking and in each case they were baffled and could not respond. They had used the "hard" version of the "word" to control the people, to solidify their positions as leaders.

Agree or Disagree

Some, I am sure, will not agree with this and some will but either way I do hope all will gain from this simple minded look at the Hebrew Language. I enjoy looking at the Hebrew Dictionary, like Strong's, and the Word Study Dictionary, for deeper meanings and looking for possible trip ups the translators may have made, but this is not my religions and it will not be until we experience His return and we are given a "pure language" a language which we can use to all call on Him in harmony, as one voice. What a day that will be, but that day is not today. First this earth will have to suffer many twists and turns before we will all see that the way of man is not the way.

Peace, Dan

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