

The Hebrew Corner

This month's study differs from previous studies in that we will focus primarily on learning some Hebrew vocabulary. To do this, we will examine a well-known passage from the book of Ecclesiastes, from the pen of King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8):

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”

First of all let's start with a word repeated 29 times in the above passage. This is the Hebrew word *eyt* (עת, AYT), whose only meaning is *time*, as translated above. The passage, after the first verse, follows a repetitive verse structure, in which we see *eyt* (*a time*) followed by *v'eyt* (ועת, vuh-AYT, *and a time*). Contrasting ideas A and B, with a lamed (ל) prefix (translated as *to*) forming the two parts of the structure. This gives the pattern “*eyt l'A v'eyt l'B*,” or a time to do A, and a time to do B, that is repeated throughout the passage.

Starting with verse 2, we have a comparison of pairs of verbs,

beginning with laledet (*to be born*), which is a form of the verb yalad (יָלַד, yah-LAH'D) which means to bear, bring forth, or give birth. This is contrasted with the verb moot (מוֹת, MOOT) which means *to die*. This is followed by ta'at, from the verb nata (נָטַע, nah-TAH) meaning *to plant*, contrasted by aqor (עָקַר, ah-KOHR) meaning *to pluck* or *root up*. As we can see, the contrasts are very sharp. Next comes harog (הָרוּג, hah-ROHG) which means *to kill* or *slay*, compared with refo, from the verb rafa (רָפָה, rah-FAH) which means *to heal*. This verb is used in the Tanach to refer to God, as in Adonai (יהוה) Rafa (*the LORD who heals*), in Exodus 15:26. Next is p'rots (פָּרוֹץ, puh-ROHTS), *to break down* or *break through*, contrasted with benot from the verb bana (בָּנָה, bah-NAH), *to build*. Then we have b'kot from the verb baka (בָּכָה, bah-CHAH), *to weep*, contrasted with sahoq (שָׁחַק, sah-CHOHK), meaning *to laugh*. Next is s'pod (סָפַד, suh-POHD), *to mourn* or *lament*, compared to r'qod (רָקַד, ruh-KOHD), *to dance* or *skip*. Next is hashleek (הִשְׁלִיךְ, hahsh-LEEK), *to throw* (stones), as compared to k'nos (כָּנוּס, kuh-NOHS), *to gather* (stones). Here Solomon is perhaps trying to convey the throwing or slinging of stones as in warfare, as compared to the gathering of stones for building. Next is haboq (חָבַק, chah-BOHK), *to embrace*, compared to r'hoq (רָחַק, rah-CHOHK), *to keep distant* (from embracing). Next is baqesh (בָּקַשׁ, bahk-KAYSH), *to seek* (KJV translates as get), compared to abed (אָבַד, ahb-BAYD), *to lose* or *cause to stray*. Then we have sh'mor (שָׁמַר, shuh-MOHR), *to keep*, contrasted with hashleek (repeated from verse 5), *to throw* (away). Next is q'roah (קָרַע, kuh-ROH-ah), *to tear* or *rend*, opposite t'por (תָּפַר, tuh-POHR), *to sew together*. Then we have hashot from the verb hasha (חָשָׂה, chah-SHAH), *to be silent, inactive, or still*, contrasted with daber (דָּבַר, dah-BAYR), *to speak*. Next is ehov, from the verb ahav (אָהַב, ah-HAHV), *to love*, opposite s'neh (שָׂנֵא, suh-NAY), *to hate*. Finally, the

only nouns that are compared are milhama (מלחמה, mihl-chah-MAH), war or battle, contrasted with shalom (שלום, shah-LOHM).

This whirlwind tour of the beginning verses of Ecclesiastes 3 has yielded a Hebrew vocabulary of 1 conjunction, 1 prepositional prefix, 25 verbs, and 3 nouns. If you commit these to memory, you will have learned at least 29 new Hebrew words (perhaps you already knew shalom!). In closing, to give you one more Hebrew word (a noun), the best time to receive Jesus (Yeshua) as your savior, and to allow God to take control of your life, is, in Hebrew, ata (עתה, ah-TAH), meaning *now!* Have a great month, and once again, as I am writing this on Saturday, Shabbat Shalom to you!