

The Hebrew Corner

Metals are frequently mentioned in scriptural passages in the Tanach, not only for their structural usage and monetary value but also for their prophetic significance. In fact, a metal is mentioned in Chapter 2 of Genesis, concerning the river that ran out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10-12):

“And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.”

Gold in Hebrew is zahav (זהב, zah-HAHV), so we have in verse 12: oo-zahav ha-aretz hah-hoo tov (וזהב הארץ ההוא טוב, oo-zah-HAHV hah-AH-rechts hah-HOO TOHV), or “the gold of that land is good.” Note: putting a ה (hey) in front of a Hebrew noun, is equivalent to putting the English “the” in front of an English noun; it is the definite article. A question that a student of the bible may have at this point is, why the information about gold in Havilah is given in this passage, when the passage is describing the Garden of Eden, and the provision God was giving to Adam. The answer is not apparent, and would be a good topic for further study.

Metals are also used symbolically in the Tanach, such as in the following passage (Deuteronomy 4:20):

“But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.”

Iron in Hebrew is barzel (ברזל, bahr-ZEHL), and here the “iron furnace” is a symbolic reference to the harsh bondage that the Israelites were subjected to in Egypt.

In the Tanach, we also see that metals can be used to symbolize people, as on the case of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:20):

“And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.”

Brasen is the adjective used to describe something made of brass. Brass in Hebrew is n'hoshet (נחשת, nuh-CHOH-sheht), which can also mean bronze or copper. The Lord here is stating that Jeremiah will be given strength to resist and withstand the people of Judah, using brass as a figure of strength.

Metals appear in the Tanach in prophecy as well. Silver has been used over the years as currency, even in biblical times, and it appears in the following passage (Zechariah 11:8-13):

“Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. And I said unto them, If ye think

good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

Silver in Hebrew is kesev (כֶּסֶב, KEH-sehv), which can also refer to currency. In Matthew 27, we are presented with the fulfillment of this prophecy (Matthew 27:1-8):

“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.”

The priests clearly did not know who Jesus, our Yeshua, was, or they would not surely not have valued his life at thirty pieces of silver. Hosea 4:6 is applicable here:

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

But Yeshua, showing his perfect love, prayed to God for the people who had him crucified (Luke 24:34):

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

It is astonishing that Jesus himself was the intercessor for the people who put him on the cross, but this exemplifies his character in a dramatic way.

May you grow in grace during the month, and become more like Jesus every day. God bless all.