

Bible Study Hebrew Word Meanings

Michael Heiss—December 3, 2011

What we're going to try to do is to answer about four or five questions that have arisen in the last several months or couple of years. I'm not sure they've been fully answered, so I'm going to do my best to do just that. They all involve the Hebrew, so therefore, they all involve the Old Testament. As you all know, Greek is *Greek* to me, so I leave that to Fred. I will do my best to take care of the Hebrew.

I. **Appointed Seasons:**

The first question deals with Genesis 1:14. It's talking about the story of creation: "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide between the day and the night, and let them be for signs, and for appointed seasons, and for days and years.'" You'll notice we translated this *appointed seasons*. Most translations will simply have the word *seasons*. Why did we do that? *For a very specific reason!*

Look in the center margin and you will see a star—the third one—"or set times which are the Feasts and Holy Days of God." How do we know that? How would you look in v 14 and see *appointed seasons* and know that this includes the Holy Days; that God has this in mind to start with. In the English you would now know, but in the Hebrew you would know. That's what we have to do.

This Hebrew word in v 14 is 'muodim'—comes from the singular 'muod'; the 'im' is always the plural form in the masculine. So, 'muodim' does indeed mean *seasons* or *set times*. But how do you connect this with the Holy Days?

We're going to go to the chapter where all the Holy Days are—Leviticus 23:1: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, "Concerning the appointed Feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be Holy convocations, even these are My appointed Feasts"' (vs 1-2).

Verse 4: "These *are* the appointed Feasts of the LORD, Holy convocations which you shall proclaim in their appointed seasons."

Feast—Lev. 23:6, 34, 39, 41

Feasts—Lev. 23:2, 4, 37, 44

Feasts & Seasons—Lev. 23:4

The meaning of these three words that are translated from Hebrews will give us the answer.

Feast (singular) 'chag'—meaning *feast* or *festival*. You can read about the Feast of Unleavened

Bread, the Feast of Tabernacles and it's 'chag'—clearly a *festival* or *feast*. You might think of *festival* more than *feast*, because a *feast* would always imply physical food. The Day of Atonement is a 'chag' but it's not a physical feast; it's a spiritual feast.

Feasts (plural) (v 2) God starts out concerning the *appointed feasts*. This would be the plural of feast—right? *In the English, yes! In the Hebrew, no!* They are two separate words, both translated feast or feasts. That's correct and it's a legitimate, honest, correct translation. It just doesn't give you to full import.

Remember what we read in Gen. 1:14—seasons. What Hebrew word was that? *Muodim!* What Hebrew word do you suppose is translated from the word *feasts*? *Muodim!* It's the same Hebrew word. So, *season* and *festival* are interconnected. When God says, 'These are My Feasts' He's saying, 'These are My *muodim*.' In Gen. 1:14 God said that 'these are for times and seasons.' We see a direct connection.

Remember John Henry, the steel-driving man, this connection is so strong John Henry with his hammer could not break it. Then we see the word *seasons* (v 4). What Hebrew word does that come from? *Muodim!*

God says something to us once, that should be sufficient—once is enough! If He says it twice in the Bible, you really sit up and take notice. But when He says it twice in the same verse, you really sit up and take notice. What is God saying?

First of all, let's understand the meaning of the word 'muod.' It means *an appointment, a fixed or set time to fix upon by agreement or appointment; to meet at a stated time*. What are God's Holy Days? *Holy convocations, an appointed time to meet!* God is saying Gen. 1:14 that the sun and moon are going to be used to establish the seasons—that is the 'muodim.' God had His Holy Days in mind all along from the beginning. It's just that He didn't so state it. All the events had not yet transpired for Him to establish them, but He had them from the beginning.

There's a German saying: *so soon, so late smart!* Well, when you start reading it in the Hebrew, you can see it. I was lazy and it took me a while before I had read it in the Hebrew. Then I could properly answer Fred's question. There's a definite statement.

What God is saying is, 'These are My appointed, set times' but He didn't say which days they were. He just says 'My appointed, set times and you shall observe them in their appointed, set times. What are their appointed, set times? *Read the whole chapter of Lev. 23!*

- The 14th day of the 1st month, that's the set time for the Passover.
- The 15th day of the 1st month, that is the set time for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And we can go all the way through.

What is one of the biggest sins that Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, ever committed. He committed two big ones and Israel never recovered from that.

Remember the story of Solomon. Unfortunately, he forgot the advice of his father David who told him in 1-Chron. 'if you forsake God, He will forsake you.' Solomon forgot that, unfortunately.

After Jeroboam received the kingdom from God, what did he do? 1-Kings 12:32: "And Jeroboam ordered a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the Feast that *is* in Judah...." He did not observe the days in *their set time!* Israel never recovered; there was never a righteous king in Israel. It is never recorded of a king in Israel where God said, 'and he did that which was right in the eyes of God.' In Judah, yes, there were some righteous kings, but none in Israel!

That will show you how we arrived at the connection between Gen. 1:14 and God's Holy Days.

II. The Concept of Face to Face:

Genesis 32:30
Exodus 33:17-23
Judges 6:22

We have Jacob, Moses and Gideon. We're not going to talk very much about Gideon (Judges 6:22), but we are going to talk some about Jacob. Jacob is one of the most interesting figures in the entirety of the Old Testament. In fact, we know as much of Jacob's life as we know about anybody else's. In fact, we know even more.

- We know when he was born.
- We saw him growing up.
- We saw him trick Esau.
- We saw him have to leave to go to Laban, Rebecca's brother, to turn away the wrath of Esau.
- We saw him get married.
- We saw him come back, back to Isaac.

- We see him eventually go down into Egypt to be reunited with his son Joseph.

There's a lot of information about Jacob. Jacob is a man who saw God *face-to-face!* It's interesting in the Hebrew, the word for *face* is in the plural—'phnim al phnim'—*face to face*. It's like the English word *sheep*—one sheep, two sheep, ten sheep. I don't know why *sheep* is in the plural form. 'Phnim' is *face, face-to-face*.

The word means *inside*. When you go to Israel and you want to meet the Minister of the Interior, the Secretary of State (Mrs. Clinton in this case) takes care of the outside; somebody else, the Secretary of the Interior, secretary of *faces*, secretary of *inside*. Why? *Because the face is the window to the whole being, to the whole person!*

Look at your finger, your hand, is it expressive? Does it tell you anything? *No, I don't think so!* Look at your foot, does it tell you anything? *No!* Look at your face. The eyes sparkle, the teeth smile, grimace, anger, joy. The face is inside to inside—*face-to-face, being to being*.

That is why I'm just an old stick in the mud, but I think it's a mistake for all this texting to be going on. Don't get me wrong texting is a great tool. I really love it; I think it's wonderful. But when all you do is text, text, text, you really don't communicate. You can't see how the other person is receiving your ideas.

We're going to look at Jacob, Genesis 32. This is when Jacob is on his way back to meet His father and, of course, Laban is in hot pursuit. Genesis 32:21: "And the present went over before him.... [He was sending presents to Esau] ...And he himself lodged that night in the camp. And he rose up that night and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok" (vs 21-22).

Verse 24. And Jacob was left alone. And a Man wrestled there with him until the breaking of the day. And when *the Man* saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob's thigh became out of joint as he wrestled with Him. And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' And *Jacob* said, 'I will not let You go except You bless me.' And He said to him, 'What *is* your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.'" (vs 24-28).

Who was this man? Do you think you or I would just ask anyone off the street to bless us? *I don't think so!* Jacob *knew* who this was. This was no ordinary person. Who would have the authority to

say "...Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men..." This was no low-level angel either. This is the Angel of the Lord, or in essence, God Himself in human form. God could have wiped out Jacob any time, but He definitely, deliberately withheld Himself and Jacob held on. That's one reason God loved Jacob so much, because he wouldn't give up.

Verse 29: "And Jacob asked and said, 'I pray You, reveal Your name.' And He said, 'Why do you ask after My name?' And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, *saying*, 'For I have seen God face-to-face, and my life is preserved'" (vs 29-30).

'Peniel' means *face of God!* That place was called *face of God*, because he saw God face-to-face. Wouldn't it be nice if we could see God face-to-face? *In a way we can!*

The next individual we're going to look at is Moses, Exodus 33:11, and we'll see what God says about Moses. "And the LORD would speak to Moses face-to-face, as a man speaks to his friend..." Obviously, this was not all the time God coming in physical form, but directly communicating. God so respected Moses and so loved Moses that there was an intimate connection, an intimate relationship. This was His physical form.

Now, the spiritual form *no*. That you have drop down to v 17: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'I will do this thing also that you have spoken, for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.' And he [Moses] said, 'I beseech You, show me Your glory.'" (vs 17-18). Moses wanted to see God in His full glory. God said, 'Moses, I can't do that. You can't see My face and live. But because you have been so faithful and loyal and because I love you so much':

Verse 20: "And He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live.' And the LORD said, 'Behold, *there is* a place by Me, and you shall stand upon a rock. And it will be, while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by'" (vs 20-22).

I don't know how anybody can say that God has no form, when He says, 'You cannot see My face and live, but I'll show you My back parts.' I'm sorry, I do not get that; I never have.

But, when God said he spoke face-to-face with Moses, God did not come down as a man and meet with Moses. He was so close to Moses that it was as though it were face-to-face. Who else would God say, 'Moses, get away from this people, let me destroy them'? And Moses stands in the breach

holding his hands up and says, 'God, You can't do that!' Who else could do that? God could have said, 'Get out of here, Moses, leave Me alone.' He didn't do it; He respected Moses. Moses said, 'God, You can't do this, Your name will be *mud*, the nations will say that You failed, You did not bring this people up, You lied to them.' So, God said, 'Okay, Moses, I agree, but I will still visit their sin upon them.' This was Moses who could stand in the breach. That's why it is said, 'God spoke to him as it were face-to-face.'

You can read in Judges 6:22 where an 'Angel of the Lord' appeared to Gideon, and was also a face-to-face meeting. A fascinating concept!

Remember, *we're talking about an intimate relationship*, and that's very important—inside to inside.

III. The Eyes of Leah:

It's always been asked in Genesis 29:17—this is a comparison of Leah and Rachel. "And Leah had *lovely* soft eyes, but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored." What does it mean that her 'eyes were tender or soft.' Many translations have it *weak*, that her eyes were weak. But the Hebrew word means a little different than that. This word means *soft, tender, delicate*. Her eyes were the most distinguishing feature of her body.

Rachael, on the other hand, was a 'ten' a Bo Derek, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, coming on down maybe a Christy Brinkley, Angelina Jo Lee, Jennifer Lopez, a Victoria Secret model. She was a 'va-va-vavoom!' She was gorgeous, drop-dead to look at.

Leah, on the other hand, wasn't. But she had the most incredible eyes that you can imagine. Not weak in the sense of near-sightedness or stigmatism. No, no, no! Not at all! She could see, but they were distinctive. In fact, the rabbis called it '*soft blue eyes*.' Where they got the 'blue eyes' I don't know. Or *tender blue eyes*.

The *Shocken Bible* by Rabbi Fox, calls them *delicate*. It reminds me, in a way, of a girl I used to know at Drake University. This was a very nice girl, very attractive. She had the most beautiful blue eyes I've ever seen. Let's face it, when you're 18-22 years old and you're a guy and you're in college, there are certain parts of the female anatomy that get more attention than others. In this case it was her eyes. Everybody I knew talked about her eyes.

This was Leah, she had incredibly adorable eyes. That's what it's talking about here. It's not talking about *weak* or *near-sighted*. In fact, Steve Lawrence had a song years ago: *Pretty Blue Eyes*. That's really what Rachel was. The Hebrew word is

‘rkuth’—meaning *tender, soft*.

Just a couple of examples of the same Hebrew word. We don’t need to wax eloquent over it. Genesis 18:7: “And Abraham ran out to the herd and brought a calf, tender and good....” Same Hebrew word. Not *weak*, just tender, desirable. It does not mean *near-sighted*. It just means *a very distinctive eye*.

- 2-Kings 22:19 talks about the king whose ‘heart was tender.’
- Genesis 33:13
- Deuteronomy 28:56

This is just to show you it’s a physical comparison. The eyes of Leah vs the body of Rachel.

IV. Turn or Return—‘shubu’ or ‘eshibu’:

Exodus 14:2—this is where God tells Israel to *turn* in their march out of Egypt. “Speak to the children of Israel that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal Zephon. You shall camp before *it* by the sea.”

The term ‘turn’ can mean *turn back* literally; *turn left*; *turn right*. We have ‘repentance’ means *to turn*. Depending on how you’re looking at it, when you turn *from* something, you’re turning to something. Or you can be turning *away from* this and *toward* that.

The Shocken Bible translates Exodus 33:7 *turn toward*. Are we emphasizing what you’re *turning toward* or what you’re *turning away from*? Some individuals have thought that this is not really right, that it really means *turn back*. But the Hebrew does not mean *turn back* the same way you were going. It can mean that, but it doesn’t have to mean that. It simply means *turn*.

Let me give you the classic Scripture for that one: Ezekiel 14:6. We’re not talking about anybody marching anywhere. “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Repent and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”’” The same word twice.

Actually you can read it where it will say *repent*. You could substitute *repent*; it’s the same thing. He’s saying twice in the same verse, *repent!* That’s ‘shubu’—*turn*. But turn where? It just says ‘turn you from your evil ways’—whichever way you were going—‘and come to Me.’

Here we’re not marching anywhere. God is saying to feel bad, realize that you’ve done wrong, now ‘come to Me.’ It doesn’t necessarily mean that Israel was marching in one direction and when God says to turn, they went back the opposite direction. It

doesn’t necessarily have to mean that. You could be going north and God says turn east. You could be going north and God says turn to go west. It just says turn. That’s all the Hebrew means and you have to know from the context whether it means east, north, south or west—whichever. The definite emphasis is in ‘shubu’ and ‘eshibu’—the Hebrew is very similar in *repent* and *turn*.

I just wanted to clarify that because I have been asked why we translated that *turn* and not *turn back*. It doesn’t necessarily mean *turn back*.

V. A force in motion—‘ruch’:

I know this can be confusing with the words, but they’re very significant. Psalm 104:29: “You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth” (vs 29-30).

The word for ‘breath’ and the word for ‘spirit’ come from the same Hebrew word: ‘ruch’—*a force, any moving force*. Whether God’s Spirit moving, the wind moving, pulsating, hovering, fluttering, brooding—it’s always in motion. Let’s look at some classic Scriptures to demonstrate that.

Genesis 1:2: “And the earth was without form and void, and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God **moved** upon the face of the waters.” The ‘ruch’ of God moved upon the face of the waters—once again, it’s moving. This word ‘moved’, the Hebrew word which is translated *moved* is used only twice in the Old Testament. That’s it, *twice!*

Deuteronomy 32:11: “As an eagle stirs up her nest, **flutters** over her young...” Same word, *to be moving* over the waters is like an eagle *hovering, fluttering, brooding, protecting*. It’s all of that, *in motion*. Remember, ‘ruch’ is always a force in motion, whether spirit essence or physical essence, it doesn’t matter. It’s always moving.

We translated Spirit ‘ruch’ in Psa. 104:30 because it was talking about God sending forth His Spirit—*spirit essence*. But when you talk about physical, you’re talking about wind.

If in the Hebrew we were translating the New Testament and there ‘came a sound of as a mighty rushing wind’—‘ruch.’ It said of Jesus that they saw the ‘Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.’ That’s the Spirit ‘ruch’—that’s how you would translate it, because ‘ruch’ means *force, always a moving force*.

Going back to Psa. 104:29—it’s talking about *breath*. The reason we translated it *breath* was that it’s *force that’s going within*. You inhale, you

exhale—that is air moving which is like wind. But you wouldn't say *wind*.

In the movie *The Ten Commandments* the historical setting wasn't quite right. You know the so-called courtier that comes in, 'oh, praise and long live the king' and so forth and the Pharaoh says, 'Ah, the old windbag.' Hot air coming out! It's *wind*, only we call it *breath* because it makes more sense.

Remember in Job 32:8 that there's a 'spirit in man'—'ruch'—translated *spirit*, because it is a *spirit force*, it's not a physical force; it is a *spirit* in man.

Isaiah 40:13: "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD..."—'ruch' In this case we translated it 'Spirit' because it's an essence coming from God, that makes it Spirit. If it's just a physical force, we call it *wind*.

The "cool of the day":

Remember the Garden of Eden? Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and in Genesis 3:7: "And the eyes of both of them were opened..." [v 8] ...And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..."

What is the 'cool of the day'? What does that mean? Would you believe the 'ruch' of the day? Perhaps we could have said the *breezy* or the *windy* time of the day, because apparently [speculation]—because I don't know what it was like there in the Garden, I don't know the topography, when the wind blew and didn't blow—there was this time of the day when the wind tended to blow more than at other times. God was walking at the *cool of the day*.

Why did the English translators translate this as *cool* and we go along with it? *Very simple*: England, Switzerland, Europe is in the Northern Hemisphere where the wind blows it tends to be cooler. Maybe if you were translating this in North Africa with the hot wind blowing off the Sahara Desert you might not have translated it 'cool.' Here we sometimes get the Santa Anna winds and that's not too cool either.

But in general it's *cool* so they translated it *in the cool of the day*, but really it's the *windy* or *breezy* time of the day. It's interesting because it's 'ruch' because it's blowing, it's moving. That is a point that I wanted to get across: 'ruch' is a moving force where the spirit power or wind. The Spirit of the Lord can come; wind can come.

A couple of Scriptures that are not all conclusive but is 'ruch':

- Gen. 8:1—when the wind came on the ark of Noah and the wind blew

- Gen. 41:6, 23, 27—the dream that Pharaoh had and the wind blew and blasted the crops
- Exo. 14:21—the night before they went across the Red Sea and the 'might east wind' came.

We translated it in Psa 104:29 *as breath* because it was a physical force, but in v 30 it was *spirit essence* from God to renew the earth. That's why 'ruch' is translated *spirit*.

VI. Earthy Concept:

You know the history of Israel as given in the book of Judges; it's one sorry mess after another. Over and over again, Israel went whoring after other gods. God would raise up a judge, deliver them, they would have rest for 30 or 40 years and then go right back.

Judges 3:14—God delivered them: "So, the children of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man.... Ehud made himself a dagger which had two edges, a cubit long". [This was a pretty good sized knife I want you to know.] ...And he brought the present to Eglon, king of Moab. And Eglon was a very fat man." (vs 14-17)

He got up to the king, v 20: "And Ehud came to him. And he was sitting *in* the cool roof room which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, 'I have a message from God for you.' And he rose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. And the hilt also went in after the blade. And the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly. And the dung came out" (vs 20-22)—or the dirt came out.

What is this? Can you spell bowel movement? This is what it is! When that knife went in, things started to move. I remember asking myself: Does this have to be here? Was it necessary? *When God describes something, He describes it as it is!* It's not for the faint-hearted. It's interesting! It's very, very earthy.

None of this is required for salvation. But if we can get some of these Hebrew concepts it makes it come alive more. God is very descriptive in what He puts in the Bible. When you rely on an English translation of a Greek or Hebrew word—you have enough for salvation, yes—but the intricate meanings of it, the connections, are what makes it come alive.

Hopefully, that will give you a little more insight into some of these phrases and concepts.

Scriptural References:

Appointed Seasons:

- 1) Genesis 1:14
- 2) Leviticus 23:1-2, 4
- 3) 1 Kings 12:32
 - Leviticus 23:6, 34, 37, 39, 41, 44
 - 1 Chronicles

The concept of face to face:

- 1) Genesis 32:21-22, 24-30
- 2) Exodus 33:11, 17-18, 20-22
 - Judges 6:22

The Eyes of Leah:

- 1) Genesis 29:17
- 2) Genesis 18:7
 - 2 Kings 22:19
 - Genesis 33:13
 - Deuteronomy 28:56

Turn or Return—‘shubu’ or ‘eshibu’:

- 1) Exodus 14:2
- 2) Exodus 33:7
- 3) Exodus 14:6

A force in motion—‘ruch’

- 1) Psalm 104:29-30
- 2) Genesis 1:2
- 3) Deuteronomy 32:11
- 4) Isaiah 40:13
- 5) Genesis 3:7-8
 - Job 32:8
 - Genesis 8:1; 41:6, 23, 27
 - Exodus 14:21

Earthy concept: Judges 3:14-17, 20-22

Also referenced: *Shocken Bible*

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