

INTERPRETER'S COMMENT

Why was this interpretation of the Word of God created? The answer really is very simple. Those of us who did not grow up with Biblical Hebrew, the Holy Language, as a living language find it very difficult to appreciate the nuances and poetry in the words of Torah. This lack of fluency in the language causes confusion for many. Too, the great Jewish teachers and commentators, who were very well versed in the language, often disagreed as to their understanding of God's meaning, or they expanded the thoughts of those who commented before them. This, again resulted in apparently conflicting translations and commentaries.

More than that, even the simple meaning of these Hebrew words is not always easily understood by even those who have studied the language. The reason, again, is very simple. God placed within His Words of Torah many levels of meaning, for us to extract as the times dictate. This often leaves us bewildered, wondering what we are learning from the Torah. Thus, this book.

In some ways, this work follows in the tradition of Targum Onkelos, written for the Aramaic-speaking Jewish world of the Second Temple period. But this is not really a definitive English translation, nor a complete explanation of the written Torah. It is an attempt to bring together thoughts and commentaries of many of our Sages so as to make sense of what often is language strange to our ears. At the same time, it is incomplete. Hints, alternative explanations, historical discoveries each bring new understandings and levels of understandings. That being the case, this work is incomplete, merely a starting point for understanding God's Word.

What are shown in this work as quoted statements are meant to offer the sense, not the direct words of the speaker. It is, if my skill has been applied well, a readable, consistent, understandable presentation of every single *pasuk* (sentence) in the Torah based on one or more readings of the revered commentators who have maintained and clarified the stream of understanding starting with the teaching of the Torah by Moses at Mt. Sinai. Where comments differ greatly I have selected either one that made the most sense to me within the simple context of the actual Torah text, or I merged ideas in a way that made sense to me. In either case, I tried as much as possible to make the language easily understood while allowing the English language to “speak” to you in its own unique majestic manner.

I have also chosen to transliterate names (Chava/Eve) and terms (tzaraas/leprosy) where the names or terms in the Hebrew have an important meaning in themselves and common English usage in other Biblical translations clearly are inaccurate or misleading.

As understandable as it may be, this work is no substitute for the many commentaries in a variety of languages that have sought to tease out the countless levels of meaning merely hinted at here. I pray that God has given me the wisdom to select properly and to present clearly. I pray that in the words I have chosen, I have not introduced unintended or confusing ideas. I pray that God gives to you the ability to receive through my words the love of the Words of His Torah and creates in you the want to probe ever more deeply into its teachings.

THE NAMES OF GOD

We name things to identify them to others and to provide a shortcut to knowing “all” about them. When we say a lion is a cat we automatically know many of its characteristics because it is a cat. At the same time, we know special characteristics about the creature we call “lion” over and above its being a cat. We can talk about a lion to someone who, with this knowledge of the name “lion” and the name “cat”, can immediately bring to mind an understanding of this creature with a great deal of detail even though few, if any, words of description were spoken.

But, God is different. He has no category. He has no bodily nature. He can't be seen. There is nothing that can be compared to Him from which to draw out a description of God. All English translations call God “God”. There is no other name in English that works. Thus, the English word “God” is totally inadequate, for it tells us nothing about God.

The original Hebrew, the Holy Tongue, has many different words, names and phrases that refer to God. In English they are all translated, “God”. Thus, anyone reading an English translation of the Bible will lose significant understanding. God's actions when He is making Himself known as “Creator and Ruler” are understood very differently from when He is making Himself known as “Source of Mercy”, even though His actions may be the same in each case.

In order to overcome this limitation of the English language, each time a name/descriptive term of God changes in this Targum, I explain how, in that instance, a specific, limited characteristic of God's nature is being emphasized.

Where that term is part of the Torah text it is *italicized*. Where it is an added explanation it is placed between parentheses and *(italicized)*. Every subsequent use of the English name “God” holds that understanding until there is a change and a new explanation is presented and *italicized*. It is important for the reader to take note of this, since the name “God” may extend several pages unchanged in the Hebrew.

For example:

BERESHIT / GENESIS – VAYERA

20-17 ~ Avraham prayed to God, the God whom he knew was the Only God, the Creator of all existence. Then God (*in His nature as Creator and Ruler*) healed Avimelech and his wife and slave girls, so that they would be able to have children. **20-18** ~ For God (*in His nature as Source of Mercy*) had stopped all childbearing in Avimelech’s house because of Avraham’s wife Sarah.

21-1 ~ When the time came that God had told Sarah would come, God did for her as He had promised. **21-2** ~ Sarah became pregnant, and she gave birth to Avraham’s son, even as old as he was. It was exactly at the time that God (*in His nature as Creator and Ruler*) had promised to him. **21-3** ~ Avraham gave the name Yitzchak to his son whom Sarah had borne, this name noting his unusual birth, for the name means “he will laugh”. **21-4** ~ Avraham circumcised his son Yitzchak when he was eight days old, just as God had commanded him.

SOURCES FOR THE INTERPRETATIONS

These commentaries and Biblical translations were themselves the products of their author's own insights arising from centuries of transmitted wisdom from Rambam, Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Sforno, Malbim, Saadia Gaon, Vilna Gaon, Abarbanel, and hundreds of other sages and teachers of Torah, filling thousands of volumes.

Chumash – The Gutnick Edition – With Rashi's Commentary,
Targum Onkelos, Haftoras and Commentary anthologized from
Classic Rabbinic Texts and the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Compiled and Adapted by Rabbi Chaim Miller

Published and Distributed by Kol Menachem

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Pentateuch and Haftorahs

Edited by Dr. J. H. Hertz The Soncino Press

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The Pentateuch – Translation and Commentary

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

Judaica Press, Ltd

English translation by Yitzchak Levy

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The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary – A Linear Translation into
English

Rabbi Abraham ben Isaiah and Rabbi Benjamin Sharfman in
collaboration with Dr. Harry M. Orlinsky and Rabbi Dr.
Morris Cherner

S. S. & R. Publishing Company, Inc.

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The Torah Anthology – MeAm Loez

Rabbi Yaakov Culi

Moznaim Publishing Company

Translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan

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The Orot Sephardic Shabbat Siddur

General Editor Rabbi Eliezer Toledano

Orot, Inc.

English translation by Rabbi Avraham

Kleinkaufman

The result in this Targum is that it may combine more than one commentary within the same sentence, woven together in a way that removes what would otherwise appear as contradictions.

BERESHIT / GENESIS – GENESIS

Understanding this Holy Book

Targum Americana, as much as is possible in English, maintains the majesty of the Holy language of the Torah. It is not a translation but an interpretation, verse by verse, based on over 2,000 years of understandings offered by its original interpreters and the great later Jewish Sages and commentators.

Study of this work is not a substitute for learning Torah in the original Holy Language. Learning Torah without the clarifications of the Sages and commentators surely will lead to gross errors in understanding.

BERESHIT / GENESIS – GENESIS

GENESIS 1-1 ~ There was God, and there was no “before God” and there was no “other God”. And God (*in His nature as Creator and Ruler*) created a beginning, an existence of void and emptiness. And within this He created spirituality and matter. **1-2** ~ And the matter had no specific form because it existed in a chaotic state. Throughout its depth it was dark and only God, in the form of a Spiritual wind, moved within the matter. **1-3** ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “Let there be light”, He willed “light” into being, and light came into existence within the matter. **1-4** ~ God was content with the light He had created, and He gathered the light and He gathered the darkness to create a separation between the light and the darkness. **1-5** ~ God fashioned words and with these words He called to the light and named it “Day”. And He fashioned words and with these words He called to the darkness and named it “Night”. The evening and the morning were thus established as one day.

1-6 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “There shall be a sky.” He willed “sky” into being. **1-7** ~ He formed the sky within the matter He had created so as to establish a firmament separate from the matter that would become the earth. **1-8** ~ God named the sky “Heaven”. An evening passed and a morning came, and so a second day was completed.

1-9 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “The matter which is under the heaven shall be gathered into one place and dry land shall be seen”, it happened as He willed it. **1-10** ~ He named the dry land “Earth” and He named the gathered waters “Seas”. God was content with what He had gathered together. **1-11** ~ God fashioned words and

with these words: “The earth shall send forth vegetation”, it happened as He willed it. 1-12 ~ Plant life of every kind, seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees producing their particular fruits with seeds came out of the earth, each according to how God had willed it. God was content with the vegetation from the earth that He had willed. 1-13 ~ An evening passed and a morning came, and so a third day was completed.

1-14 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “There shall be lights as stars in the heavenly expanse of the sky,” it happened as He willed it. These lights He made as a division between the day and the night. And by His Words He established these lights as signs to fix distance and position on the earth and as markers of the time of festivals and of cycles of days and years.

1-15 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “They shall be lights emanating from the heavenly expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, lights for illumination and for the growth of life,” it happened as He willed it. 1-16 ~ God thus established two large lights in the heavenly expanse of the sky, the larger to illumine the day and the smaller to illumine the night together with the stars.

1-17 ~ God placed them in the heavenly expanse of the sky to shine on the earth, 1-18 ~ to illumine the day and the night and to create a separation of the light from the darkness. 1-19 ~ God was content with the lights that He had willed. An evening passed and a morning came, and so a fourth day was completed.

1-20 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “Let swimming creatures fill the waters. Let flying creatures fill the skies”, it happened as He willed it.

1-21 ~ God created the huge swimming creatures, the ordinary swimming creatures, the creatures that fly and the creatures that move upon the land. God was content with these creatures that He had willed. 1-22 ~ God blessed His creations with this blessing: “Produce offspring and increase your species. Swimming creatures, fill the waters of the seas with your species. Flying creatures, fill the land, upon which you rest from your flying, with your species.” 1-23 ~ An evening passed and a morning came, and so a fifth day was completed.

1-24 ~ God fashioned words and with these words: “Upon the earth there shall be various species of creatures: livestock, other land animals, and crawling creatures”, it happened as He willed it. 1-25 ~ Of these various species of His creations: livestock, other land animals, and crawling creatures, God was content with these land creatures that he had willed.

1-26 ~ God fashioned words and with these words He announced to the Host of Heavenly creatures which He had created: “Let us make a representative on the earth of ourselves in a form and with abilities to be worthy of Us, to emulate Us, as if in Our likeness. They shall have superiority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock animals, every creature that moves upon the earth, and over every thing of the earth.” 1-27 ~ This is the way God created man. As if in the likeness of God did God create man; with the nature of male and female did He create man.

1-28 ~ God blessed man, His creation, with these words: “Be fertile and fill the land and control it according to your needs. Prevail over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every living creature that moves upon the land.”

1-29 ~ God fashioned words and, as if speaking, said to the man He had created: “I have given to you as food every vegetation that produces seed and every fruit tree whose fruit produces seed. 1-30 ~ And to every creature which moves upon the earth and every bird that flies in the sky, all these having a living spirit, I have given to them as food all growing green vegetation of the earth”. And so it happened as He willed it. 1-31 ~ God was even more content with the creations that He had willed. An evening passed and a morning came, and so the sixth day was completed.

2-1 ~ The creation of all the universe, heaven and earth and all their components, were completed. 2-2 ~ Now it being the seventh day, with all His work of creation being completed, God ended all His tasks of creation, as if He were resting. 2-3 ~ God then blessed this day and declared it to be a holy day. It was a special day to God for on this day He directed all of the creations he had made to continue to function according to the nature He had placed within them.

2-4 ~ These are the recorded events of the day in which God (*in His nature as Source of Mercy as well as Creator and Ruler*) completed the heaven and the earth. 2-5~All forms of wild vegetation did not yet exist on the earth, for God (*in His nature as Creator and Ruler*) had not yet created rain to fall upon the earth to cause vegetation to sprout. And God (*in His nature as Source of Mercy as well as Creator and Ruler*) had not yet created man to work the ground, which would improve the growth of vegetation. 2-6 ~ Then a mist was caused to rise up from the earth and it watered the entire surface of the ground.

2-7 ~ Now, from the dust of the earth God formed the figure of man. But it had no life until God breathed into the man’s body, through his

nostrils, the breath of life, a soul. This was more than an animal soul, different from that which brings life to all living creatures 2-8 ~ To the east (Eden) God planted a garden into which He placed the man he had formed. 2-9 ~ God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that is pleasing to look upon and good to eat, and the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

2-10 ~ A river flowed from the east (Eden) to water the garden. From there it divided and became four large rivers. 2-11 ~ Before the Great Flood which changed the face of the earth, the name of the first river was called Pishon. It flowed around the land called Chavilah, where much good gold is easily found.

2-12 ~ Also found there are other precious minerals and stones. 2-13 ~ The name of the second river was called Gichon, which flowed around the land called Cush. 2-14 ~ The third river was called the Tigris, which flowed to the east of Assyria, which is known as Iraq. The fourth river was called the Euphrates.

2-15 ~ God took the man He had made and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and protect it. 2-16 ~ God gave the man a commandment, saying: "You may take as food to eat from every tree in the Garden 2-17 ~ except from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, for in the day that you eat from that Tree it will be the day of your death."

2-18 ~ God said to himself (so to speak), "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him." 2-19 ~ Now, God had formed from the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky. He now brought to the man these living creatures to see what he

would name each of them. Whatever the man would call each living creature, that would be its name from that time onward. 2-20 ~ The man named each of the animals that were fit as livestock, each of the birds of the sky, and every other creature God had created. But the man did not find among all these living creations a helper fit for him.

2-21 ~ And God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. He took a portion from the side of the man, one part of the man's nature, then closed the flesh and it appeared as it had been. 2-22 ~ God fashioned a woman from the flesh He had taken from the side of the man, and He brought her to the man. 2-23 ~ The man said, "At last. This creation is from my own flesh and bones. She shall be called Woman because she was taken from Man." 2-24 ~ It is therefore meant to be that a man shall leave his father and mother and be united with a woman as his wife, and they shall become as one creation.

2-25 ~ It was during this time that both the man and the woman were naked in front of each other, but there was no embarrassment between them.

3-1 ~ Of all the wild beasts that God had created none was as cunning as the serpent. The serpent asked the woman, "Even if God (*Creator and Ruler*) had warned you, why should you not eat from all of the trees of the garden?" 3-2 ~ The woman then answered the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the garden. 3-3 ~ But of the fruit that is in the midst of the garden, God said: 'Do not eat from it nor even touch it, for you will then die.'"

3-4 ~ The serpent answered the woman, "No – it really is not certain that you will die. 3-5 ~ For God knows that on the day that you eat

from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God and His spiritual creations, knowing what is good and what is evil.”

3-6 ~ The tree was tempting to her sight and the woman sensed that the tree was good for food and that eating from it would lead her to greater understanding. So she took of its fruit and ate it, and gave it also to her husband and he ate it. **3-7** ~ New thoughts suddenly became clear to them, and they now understood that they were naked. So, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

3-8 ~ Now a breeze raised up throughout the garden and they heard within the breeze the voice of God (*in His nature as Source of Mercy as well as Creator and Ruler*). And the man and the woman moved in among the trees and sought to hide themselves from God. **3-9** ~ God called out to the man and said, “Where are you – what are you trying to accomplish?”

3-10 ~ “I heard your voice in the garden” replied the man, “and I was afraid of You because I was naked. So, I hid myself.” **3-11** ~ Then God asked, “Who told you that you are naked?” Again God asked, “Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat?” **3-12** ~ And the man then replied to God, “The woman that you gave to me, she is the one - she gave me the fruit and then I ate it.”

3-13 ~ God said to the woman, “What have you done?” The woman replied, “The serpent confused me; he deceived me and I ate the fruit.”

3-14 ~ Then God said to the serpent, “Because you did this, out of all the livestock and all the wild beasts I have created, you will be

uniquely cursed. On your belly you will move about and dust you will eat all the days of your life. **3-15** ~ I will place within you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, a revulsion towards each other. Now that you will be so close to the ground, the man will attack you at your head and you will attack the man at his heel.”

3-16 ~ To the woman God said, “Your life will have much suffering and you will have pregnancies which will not be easy, for it will be with suffering that you will bring forth children. Your husband will be the center of your life; he will be ruler within your household.”

3-17 ~ And to the man He said, “You listened to the words your wife spoke to you and you then ate from the tree about which I had warned you. Well, then, I now curse the ground because of you. Your food will come directly or indirectly from the ground, and it will not come easily. **3-18** ~ As you work the ground growing green vegetation for food you will be constantly fighting thorns and thistles to gather its yield.

3-19 ~ “By the sweat of your brow will you prepare your food until your time to return to the earth. As you came from the earth so shall you return to the earth, for you are merely dust and to dust shall you return.”

3-20 ~ The man called his wife by the name “Chava” (*Life*) because she was the mother of all life.

3-21 ~ God made garments of animal skins for the man that He called Adam and for his wife, with which He then clothed them.

3-22 ~ God said to His spiritual creations: “These which I have created from the dust of the earth have become like one of us in knowing what is good and what is evil. Now they must be prevented from taking fruit from the Tree of Life, lest in eating from it they come to live forever.” 3-23 ~ God thus ordered mankind to leave the Garden of Eden, and from this time on man must work the ground from which he was formed. 3-24 ~ He drove them away from the Garden and stationed spiritual beings waving gleaming swords, Cherubim, to guard the path to the Tree of Life.

4-1 ~ The man and his wife Chava were intimate with one another and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She gave him this name because, she said, “I have acquired (*kanisi*) a man with the help of God, who is the Source of Mercy.

4-2 ~ She gave birth a second time, to Cain’s brother, and she gave this son the name Havel. Havel became a shepherd, while Cain tilled the soil.

4-3 ~ Now, there came a time that Cain brought to God an offering gathered from his crops. 4-4 ~ Havel, too, brought an offering, carefully selected from the very best of the firstborn of his flock. But God acknowledged only Havel’s offering. 4-5 ~ To Cain and to his offering God paid no attention. At this, Cain became extremely upset and depressed. 4-6 ~ Then God said to Cain, “Why are you so distressed? 4-7 ~ Are you not aware that when you do good, I show you favor; and if you do not do good, this is sin and its consequences I lay out before you? Yes, sin is enticing, but it is within your power to conquer it.” 4-8 ~ Cain met his brother and they talked at length about what had happened. Sometime later, when they were together in the field, Cain suddenly attacked his brother Havel and killed him.

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