

Bite Size Bible Study

Shalom #181 By Pastor Lee

It always increases our understanding of a scripture to know what the word we are reading in our language was translated from in its original language.

Translating from one language and culture to another is difficult and often there are nuances lost in that translation.

A case in point is the word in our Bibles – “peace”. Whenever we read this word we think of what peace means in our language and culture.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines peace as:

1. The absence of war or other hostilities.
2. An agreement or a treaty to end hostilities.
3. Freedom from quarrels and disagreement.
4. Public security and order.
5. Inner contentment; serenity.

But the majority of the time when we read this word in the Bible it is translated from the Hebrew word *shalom* (Strong’s 7965). *Shalom* occurs over 230 times in the Old Testament alone, and is overwhelmingly translated by an English word related to “peace” or a synonym of it.

Shalom can have many definitions but they all boil down to being in a state of wholeness.

While the word can mean peace, it means so much more. Some of our English words that describe *shalom* are:

- completeness,
- health, welfare,
- soundness (in body),
- safety, tranquility,
- prosperity,
- quietness, contentment,
- friendship,
- relationships (with people and God),
- blessings (to/from people and God).

*Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek **peace** and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry;*

Psalm 34:13-15 NIV

Try reading these verses several times and instead of reading **peace** substitute one of the words in the list above. Doesn’t that bring a whole new dimension to the verses?

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27 NIV

“What I am leaving with you is shalom — I am giving you my shalom. I don’t give the way the world gives. Don’t let yourselves be upset or frightened.

John 14:27 CJB

What is Jesus leaving with them? Peace – *Shalom*: All of the things in the list above. Try reading these two translations of the verse and consider all of what Jesus is leaving with them.

It is said that within every believer is *shalom* that comes from God Himself. It is not a self-satisfied false *shalom* that ignores suffering, but a compassionate *shalom* that longs for God’s *shalom* to be present with everyone and motivates action to help bring it about. (Remember that most Hebrew nouns are associated with some kind of action.) This is what is supposed to be meant when we greet someone with the word *Shalom*. It conveys our desire that they be complete, healthy and in relationship with God.

Every Advent season the following verse is read. There is a lot in this one verse but how many understand just how deep the meaning is?

*For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us;
dominion will rest on his shoulders,
and he will be given the name [shem – reputation]
Pele-Yo’etz [Wonder of a Counselor]
El Gibbor [Mighty God]
Avi-’Ad [Father of Eternity]
Sar-Shalom [**Prince of Peace**]* Isaiah 9:5 CJB

Sar-Shalom the **Prince of Peace**. Now that we understand a little better what that peace is, we can have a better understanding of the ONE who brings and gives us that peace.

Since we only have the Greek Language version of the New Testament, we need to be a little more careful in translating the word peace – *eirēnē*. This word in Greek doesn’t have the range of meanings that it does in Hebrew.

However, that said, since almost all of the New Testament was written by Jewish people, living in a Jewish culture, we can likely assume that in their minds the Hebrew meaning was there in their writings.

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