

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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'OLAM' AND 'AION'

In the previous study it was noted that the Greek word *aion* is found 128 times in the New Testament. From this fact alone we can conclude that in every passage where it is found there is truth about something that is conveyed by this word. It follows then that if we do not know what this word means, we cannot know what the Spirit of God is seeking to tell us.

The non-investigative reader of the *King James Version* is usually inclined to be satisfied that it means "ever" in the 71 passages where it is so translated, and that it means "world," "age," "eternal," and "world without end" in the 51 other passages where it is so rendered. However, with this the true Bible student can never be satisfied. He has chosen the way of truth, and he is no longer willing to accept the inadequate renderings of capricious translators.

Those who have done any work in etymology (the science of discovering word meanings) will know that somewhere among those 128 occurrences there has to be definite clues as to the basic meaning of this word. When these clues are put together they will give us the basic meaning or the foundation upon which every form and usage of this word rests, and we can be thankful that we are not shut up to these 128 occurrences for our information.

It has already been pointed out in the previous study that when it became essential for the Spirit of God to select a word from the Greek language to serve as the equivalent of *olam* in quotations from the Old Testament, the word *aion* was selected and so used by the verbally inspired writers. This will be seen when Psa. 112:9 is compared with 2 Cor. 9:9, Psa. 45:6 with Heb. 1:8, Psa. 110:4 with Heb. 5:6, and Isa. 40:8 with 1 Peter 1:5.

Applying the principle of divine interchange we can say with assurance that *aion* and *olam* are exact equivalents. And since *olam* is found 418 times in the Old Testament, it could well be that many clues as to the meaning of both of these words

may be found in these occurrences. Thus we have 536 passages or sentences to work with, and if the meaning of these words cannot be found in this multitude of divine usages, then we may as well give up and admit that there is no way of ever knowing the true meaning of either of these expressions.

Over forty years ago with the help of *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance* I carefully marked every passage in the Old Testament where *olam* is found. I wrote in the word, linking it up with the word or words that were used in translating it. I did this in order to be reminded every time I read, studied, taught, or used these passages in any manner that the word *olam* was in it and that it may provide some clue that could lead to an understanding of this word. Since then I have transferred these markings to two other Bibles, due to the fact that constant use soon wears out a book.

Through the years my conviction grew that the word *perpetual* seemed to express the sense of *olam* in many passages. The KJV translators had used this 21 times, and I found in teaching that I was regularly offering the word *perpetual* or the words *in perpetuity* when I came upon many passages where *olam* was found. However, this did not fit in numerous occurrences, so I decided that *perpetual* was an extended, developed, or enlarged meaning of the basic idea contained in *olam*. Then as I meditated on *perpetual* I realized that this word always conveys the idea of ever-moving, going on and on, without stopping, ever-flowing. Furthermore, the idea of flowing might be the very essence of the word *olam*.

It was at this same time that I was coming to see that there is in the Bible a stupendous revelation of truth concerning which I had collected many bits and pieces, but these had never coalesced into a definite body of truth. As these began to merge I realized that they made up a great general truth that permeates the Word of God, yet it is one that has been sorely neglected and only partially understood. It is a revelation that has to do with God's character, something He has revealed about Himself, that He is a flower, and this can probably be best called, "the truth of the ever-flowing God."

The God revealed in the Bible is set forth as a giving God; therefore, He is the Giver; the ever-giving one, Who gives to all life and breath, Who if He ever stopped giving for a second, all things in existence would cease to be (Acts 17:25). Our God is a loving God, the ever-loving One, therefore He is the Lover. Our God is a saving God; therefore He is a Savior, the ever-saving One, Who stands in perpetuity as Savior of the world, the Savior of mankind, your Savior and my Savior.

These are glorious truths which most believers know in some degree and hold them to be true. But greater and more important than all these is the fact that our God is a flowing God, therefore, He is the Flower, the ever-flowing God, of such nature that if He ceased to flow He would cease to be God. Thus, it is not strange that Abraham,

after he straightened out certain difficulties with Abimelech over a well of water (Gen. 21 :25-33), called upon the name of the LORD, the *olam* God, the ever-flowing God, Who was far more important than any well of water. (In Hebrew, a language deficient in adjectives, nouns in the construct state are often used as adjectives.)

It was from clues such as these along with many other indications that my conviction grew that the basic, essential idea in *o/am* was *flow*, in the sense of ever-flowing. This still had to be tested in every occurrence to make sure that there was no occurrence that flatly contradicted it. This was a long but very pleasant task that even yet is not finished.

At this point it needs to be carefully noted that the basic idea that sets forth the essence of a word is never a complete definition that can be used as a translation. It is actually "the thread that runs so true," to borrow from Jesse Stuart the line which he immortalized in his pleasant book under the same title. (From an old mountain poem, used in a game played in the schoolyards of Kentucky and West Virginia: "The needle's eye that doth supply, the thread that runs so true.") The basic idea underlying a word will lead us into a truer understanding of every occurrence.

This principle can be seen in an occurrence of *o/am* where the passage is emphasizing the blessings that were to come upon Joseph, and his aged father spoke of "**the utmost bound of the everlasting hills**" (Gen. 49:26). In understanding this passage, the thread that runs so true must be recognized, and this would lead us to see that Jacob was speaking of "**the ever-flowing hills.**" And if it should seem strange to describe hills as "ever-flowing," let it be remembered that God had promised to bring Israel into "**a land flowing with milk and honey**" (Ex. 13:5). If a land can flow, then hills can do the same.

In studying the word *a/am* one soon gets the impression that this word is also the descriptive name of a future period of time, one that is called this because of its characteristics, even as a certain season of the year is called "spring" because of that which characterizes it. For example, in Exodus 15:18 we read: "**Jehovah shall govern for the *olam* and beyond.**" Again in Psalm 45:6 we read: "**Thy throne O God is for (in regard to) the *olam* and beyond.**"

That a coming period of time characterized by certain forces and characteristics should be called "the *olam*," presents no problem to the one who has learned from Scripture the truth concerning the coming kingdom of God, a period of divine government, produced in its entirety by the zeal of the LORD of hosts (Isa. 9:7).

The Biblical revelation concerning the kingdom of God is that it is a condition produced upon this earth by blessings that flow out from God. This is seen in Psa.

46:4 where we are told: **"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High."** This passage is part of a great prophecy. It is related to a time when God will speak from heaven (46:6), cause wars to cease to the end of the earth (46:9) and exalt Himself among the nations and in the earth. This is all produced by God Himself, coming to the earth as a great river, dividing into many streams, carrying its manifold blessings to the ends of the earth. This river is an *o/am* (flower) producing many lesser *olams* (outflowing streams), all of which produces upon earth a time which is properly called by the designation of that which produced and characterizes it, the *o/am*.

The truth of the outflowing God grows constantly as we examine the Old Testament. See Psalm 36:7-9; Isa. 32:13-15; 33:20,21; Isa. 44:3; 45:8; 66:12; Amos 5:24. The last passage cited is most impressive, giving us a picture of the divine forces that produce the coming eon: **"But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."**

Volumes could be written on the truth of God flowing out and flowing down. However in our limited space enough has been set forth to demonstrate the concept of God as the out flowing One is prominent in the Old Testament. It is a concept that is woven throughout all its pages and one that carries on through the New Testament. And the word that was chosen by the Spirit of God to symbolize, encompass and express this vast concept was the Hebrew word *o/am*. This word is applied to that which produces as well as that which is produced. Even as a *flood* produces a *flood*.

The idea of "outflowing" is the thread that runs so true through every occurrence of the word *o/am* and continues on through the word *aiōn*. In many passages this knowledge will bring great beauty and new meanings. Note this is Psalm 9:7 where we are literally told: **"Jehovah shall sit as a King outflowing."** Compare this with all the monarchs who sit as kings inflowing, who receive but never give. Consider also Psalm 29: 10: **" Jehovah sits upon the flood; yea, Jehovah sits as King outflowing."** And since *o/am* is found in the plural in Psalm 145:13, I understand this to be telling us: **"Your kingdom (government) is a kingdom (government) of many outflowings."** So, there will not only be "showers of blessing," there will be rivers of blessing. Praise the Lord!

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