

Both Ends of the Book

Your Whole World

What Is It?

חַלֵּד

cheled age, duration of life, the world

“Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together!” Psa 49:1-2 ESV

At first read most of us would think of inhabitants of the “world” as people all over the planet, no matter where they live. Whether it is Fiji or Antarctica, doesn’t matter. It is people living in the world.

But that is not correct for the Hebrew word used here.

In Hebrew there are different words for “world” but in English we have one. When a guy says, “She’s my whole world” it carries a different meaning than when someone says “I have traveled the whole world” or “This world is a mess!” Unfortunately we have our one word: world. And in Western Greek thinking concept is important, how something looks in the moment takes precedent. However in Hebrew thought, function is more important than concept, and what something does across time is how it is described.

So what happens in Bible translating, is that Greek thinking takes over Hebrew thought. To the Greek, knowledge is most important and right thinking and right doctrine feed the soul. In Hebrew thinking, the concrete is most important through what can be touched, tasted, seen smelled or heard, and what is done is of the utmost importance.

In Psalm 1:3 it reads regarding a righteous man “He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.” Tree, leaf, streams of water, and fruit are all concrete terms used to describe the righteous man.

Then in Psalm 103:8 we read “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” These all appear to be abstract terms, but that is how the translation is done, or we would not get what is being said. In America we were raised with a Western Greek mindset. A pencil is yellow, many sided, has lead on one end and an eraser on the other. In an Eastern Hebrew mindset a pencil is what you write with.

So what is translated slow to anger in Hebrew is literally “long nose.” What? When someone gets angry their nostrils flare, so if God is of a “long nose” it takes a lot to make his nostrils flare. So he is long to flare his nostrils gets rendered “slow to anger” to adapt to our thinking. But remember according to Psalm 103:7 “He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.” Both ways and acts are actions, not thoughts.

Because of these two main differing worldviews, much gets lost in the translation. Like slow to anger, or compassionate which is related to the noun for womb, the home of compassion in Hebrew life.

So, in comparison to *cheled* from Psalm 49, Psalm 9:7-28 uses a different word. "But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness." World in this case is *'ôlâm* which refers to a long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, and finally world. Like being enthroned forever.

How do you get world out of time? You enter the Hebrew worldview where time and creation exist together, as in Genesis 1:14 where we find the movement of the cosmos around us marking time. No planet, no stars, no universe, no existence of time. According to Genesis 1:14, time is measured by the movement of the objects in the heavens.

1 Chronicles 16:30 uses another word. ". . .tremble before him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved." This time the word is *têbêl* which simply means world, but carries the sense of the world being stationary - firmly fixed as a place upon which we can act. Like God, it is firm in its existence, as he is the one who established the world. So in this sense we are given a place to act - a world firmly established. Concrete again.

So in this study the word for world, *cheled* gets translated as "life in Job 11:17 "And your life will be brighter than the noonday" which is literally "and noondays will rise up *cheled*."

In Psalm 39:5 "Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you" is literally "behold span of a hand you have put days of me and *cheled* of me like nothing in front of you."

In psalm 89:47 "Remember how short my time is!" is simply literally "Remember (a command) I how *cheled*."

This is world in the sense of how we spend our time, what we do, what is important to us evidenced overall by what we do with the time we have. It is this sense of world, like at the beginning of this study we had a young man saying "You have to meet her, she is my whole world." Anxious? That is your world. Fearful? That is your world. Faithful?

So our life and how we choose to live it is our world. Therefore our world relates to the span of our life and what we did with that, what we give our time to, how we live.

Psalm 49:1-2 follows with "Why should I fear in times of trouble. . ." v. 5.

When you have read Psalm 49, you can wrap up the entire Psalm with this one text:

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Rom 8:32 "Truly no man can ransom another" (Psa 49:7) but with our ransom through his Son we have abundance in all things. He is our world.