

Instructor: Professor Suzy Silk

Name of Student: Mark Ampah

Topic: Analysis of a Hebrew Word

The Hebrew word being studied in this write up is “Shalom”. The word “Shalom as a noun means “peace; completeness; welfare; health.”¹ It also means “unharmful” and “unhurt”.² In John 16:33 (NKJV) “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”³ The NIV puts it this way; “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”⁴ The KJV has it as “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”⁵ One other translation of the Bible, the English Standard Version (ESV) prefers to say it this way, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”⁶

In examining these translations, it becomes clear that “Peace” appears in all the translations, and it communicates an idea in the Bible.

“Shalom” is a Hebrew word, and it comes from the root word “Shalam” which means to be safe in mind, body, or estate.⁷ It also connotes the idea of being “complete”. “Shalam” is a

¹Strong, James *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, “Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary” (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 280

² Ibid., 280

³ *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, NKJV (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2013), 1471

⁴ *Life Application Study Bible*, NIV (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 1774

⁵ *The Holy Bible*, KJV (Apapa, Lagos: Bible Society of Nigeria, 2014), 1349

⁶ *The Holy Bible*, ESV (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011)

⁷ Strong, James *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, “Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary” (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 282

verb. Other meanings of the word “Shalam” include, pay; peace; recompense; reward; render; restore; repay; perform; good; end; requite; restitution; finished; again; amends; full; perfect; and prosper.⁸

Perfection and completeness is primarily attributed to God. He is deficient in nothing; His attributes are not marred by any shortcomings; His power is not limited by weakness.⁹

Thus, Shalom which comes from “Shalam” is a noun which suggests that this perfection or completeness is found only in God. The word “Shalem” as an adjective means “complete” or “perfect”. When God made a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, in verse 16, He told Abram that “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete”.¹⁰ This suggests that the iniquity of the Amorites has not reached “Shalam.”

However, in Nehemiah 6:15, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.”¹¹ This implies completeness – “Shalam”. Thus, the wall was completed. “Shalam” could also mean the one whose heart is not perfect. King Solomon failed to meet this requirement because “... his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”¹² This scripture contrast the heart of King Solomon with the heart of David who had a “perfect” heart.

The Hebrew word “Shalom” as we have seen from the above reflects different meaning depending on its usage. “Shalom” experienced is multidimensional, complete well-being –

⁸ Ibid., 282

⁹ Ibid., 282

¹⁰ Ibid., 282

¹¹ Ibid., 282

¹² Ibid., 282

physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. It flows from all of one's relationships being put right with God, within oneself and with others.¹³ It also denotes reconciliation with God.¹⁴ God can give us "Shalom" (Peace) with himself or remove it.¹⁵ Jeremiah 16:5 NKJV "For thus says the LORD: "Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people" says the LORD, "lovingkindness and mercies...."¹⁶ Keller remarked that "sin disrupts "Shalom."¹⁷

The word "Shalom" is used in the Bible in different situations. For instance,

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11, NKJV). In this case the word "peace" or "shalom" implies "safety and welfare".

"Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Timothy 1:2, NKJV)" This idea of "peace" or "shalom" is a "salute" and "prosperity".

"Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age (Genesis 15:15, NKJV)." This idea of "shalom" means "rest safely". It also suggests "tranquility", "at ease", or unconcerned".¹⁸

"So, David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat

¹³ Keller, Timothy *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, "Shalom" (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 2693

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2693

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2693

¹⁶ *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, NKJV (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2013), 986

¹⁷ Keller, Timothy *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, "Shalom" (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), 2693

¹⁸ Strong, James *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, "Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary" (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 280

bread at my table continually” (2 Samuel 9:7). This idea of “David restoring the land of Saul” is “shalam”.

In examining the original verse in John 16:33 (NKJV) “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” This suggest that in the world there is lack of peace or there in no “shalom”. “Shalom” means “Peace”¹⁹ and this kind of “Peace” comes from only Jesus Christ. The world cannot provide “Shalom”. This “peace” or “shalom” is indicative of a prosperous relationship between two or more parties.²⁰ In this case, God offers “shalom” to His people.

“Peace” or “Shalom” is important because we live in a world bedeviled with troubles, problems, difficulties, uncertainties, and an assurance of “peace” is what people need. The original Hebrew word “Shalom” provides assurance of wellbeing and hope in life. Sometimes life challenges become so unbearable that people who can’t deal with them take their lives or commit suicide. There are people of all backgrounds who commit suicide - the poor, the rich, CEO or ordinary workers, men, women, adult, and children. When all hope is lost, then life becomes meaningless. Therefore, the promise of “Shalom” gives hope, courage, strength, and determination to persevere in life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveal that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for ^{1a}instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

¹⁹ Strong, James *The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, “Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary” (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 280

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 280

In conclusion the Hebrew word “shalom “or “peace” gives the assurance that people need in this troubling world. Hearing this word from God gives hope and assurance of wellbeing in the world.

Reference

1. Keller, Timothy *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, “Shalom” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), Keller, Timothy *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, “Shalom” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015)
2. *Life Application Study Bible*, NIV (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011)
3. Strong, James *The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, “Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary” (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010)
4. *The Holy Bible*, ESV (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011)
5. *The Holy Bible*, KJV (Apapa, Lagos: Bible Society of Nigeria, 2014)
6. *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, NKJV (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2013),