



February 2019

Shevat~Adar I 5779

Teruah



*A strong, vibrant community with a spiritual heart
embracing Jewish life and its diversity.*

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Affiliated with the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ)

Charities Commission Registration Number CC29542

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Opinions expressed in Teruah do not necessarily represent the views of Beth Shalom Board of Management.

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President's message February 2019

Hi all.

It seems like ages since I attended the UPJ Biennial convention in Melbourne. I had intended to share an update in my December message (the convention was 15-18 November), but the terrible incident in Pennsylvania took precedence. And then Teruah took well deserved break over January.

Fortunately, the convention was so well done that I have no problem remembering most everything that went on (if you want to know what I have conveniently forgotten, feel free to ask Chris Shiller, Julie Dick or Debbie Miller - they were my partners in crime!).

For those of you who don't know, the UPJ Biennial is an opportunity for all of the members of the UPJ to get together. There are Moetzah meetings for rabbis and a president's meeting where the presidents of the member congregations can get updates and share information. There are plenary sessions where all conventioners attend the same lectures and a full schedule of smaller sessions that attendees can choose from. And in between all of the meeting and sharing, there was great food and lots of socializing.

Besides Australia and New Zealand, there were UPJ members from as far away as Indonesia, Hong Kong, China and Japan. I was especially proud to be part of the New Zealand contingent which numbered 15 including members from Beth Shalom, Temple Sinai and the Waikato Jewish community. We even managed to find time to get together as a group to discuss issues specific to our corner of the world.

One of the highlights for me was the plenary session led by the keynote speaker, Rabbi Larry Hoffman. He led the entire group through a session where we examined our own temples' vision statements and he then challenged us to rethink and rewrite them. This really resonated with me coming on the heels of our survey and on the eve of our setting up focus groups.

I will be very honest - I was not sure about attending the UPJ Biennial. It was not something that I thought I would enjoy. I am passionate about Beth Shalom, but I wasn't sure how that would translate to the bigger stage. Let me say here, for you all to hear, I had a blast! I learned lots of new things, I sang with ruach, I met heaps of fantastic people, and I made sure that New Zealand was noticed for all of the right reasons! The next meeting is in Sydney in 2 years time. I know it is ages away, but I'm already looking forward to it. And how cool would it be if we had 30 participants from New Zealand there....

B'shalom,

Debbie

UPJ Biennial Melbourne 2018, summary and photos. Save the date 5-8 November 2020 in Sydney.

The UPJ Biennial, hosted more than 220 attendees from around the UPJ region (which covers Australia, New Zealand and Asia), with additional representatives from the UK, Israel and the USA.

The program, themed "Making Progress" and furthering the work begun at our previous Biennial with Dr Ron Wolfson, featured Rabbi Dr Lawrence A Hoffman as the scholar-in-residence. Rabbi Larry led inspiring plenary sessions titled "How We Pray is Who We Are: The Message of the Prayer Book" and "Returning Home: Mission Driven but Sh'ma Inspired", and workshops allowed participants to focus on specific interests and how they related to his presentations.

Panel discussions on "Israel as our Spiritual Homeland" and "Jewish Demography: Pathways, Bridges and Stumbling Blocks" with experts in their fields were also featured.

WUPJ President Danny Freeland generously shared his knowledge and music throughout the conference. The learning was extraordinary and was complimented by fun and festive social events, including an opening cocktail party and an aviation-themed Saturday night gala.

A "taster" for the Shir Chadash Music Conference, to be held on 12-14 July 2019 in Geelong, was offered by our talented Music Network, led by Cantor Michel Laloum and Judy Campbell, with special guest song leader Marshall Voit.

The Friday night Shabbat service and dinner were graciously hosted by Temple Beth Israel, and the weekend was capped off with participation in Mitzvah Day activities on Sunday afternoon.

We hope our UPJ community will save the date for our next Biennial to be held on 5-8 November 2020 in Sydney - we'd love to see you there!

For the three-part video produced by **"The Shtick"** [click here](#) **(CHECK LINK)**



Benjamin Meijer Verbrugge and Rachel Lung Agustini (United Indonesian Jewish Community)



From left: Pam Spiegel, Maureen Barton, Rabbi Allison Conyer and Ruth Trytell (Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue)



From left: UPJ President Roger Mendelson, WUPJ President Rabbi Danny Frelander and Sue Mendelson



Temple Beth Israel Vice-President Judi Cohen and Peter Cohen



Andrew and Penny Jakobovits (Temple Beth Israel)



UPJ President Roger Mendelson and Biennial Chair Dr Robert Sward



John Rosenbloom (Hobart Hebrew Congregation)



Louise Ward and Michael Shnukal (Temple Shalom Gold Coast)



Shelley and Rabbi David Kunin (Jewish Community of Japan)



Janet Henrie and Larry Lockshin (Beit Shalom Synagogue, Adelaide)



From left: Maxine Silbert, Jordan Werner-Hall and Mili Haber (Netzer)



Joanne Loewy Irons (left) and Rabbi Kim Ettlinger (Temple Beth Israel)



Immediate past chair Kelvin Ratnam with three lovely North Shore Temple Emanuel ladies: President Gwen Harrison, Program and Admin Manager Pauline Lazarus and Temple Administrator Lynne Michel



UPJ Treasurer Sally Castle (centre) with Sue and David Esterman (Temple Sinai, Wellington)



Rabbi Adi Cohen (Temple David, Perth)



From left Alex Lehrer (President, Emanuel Synagogue), UPJ Vice-President Brian Samuel, and Robert Hershan, immediate past president of Temple Beth Israel



From left: Regina Bron (Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism), Sue Morgan (Temple Beth Israel) and Debbie Swiatek (Beth Shalom, Auckland)



Rabbi Danny Freeland



Rabbi Larry Hoffman "in action"!



Rabbi Larry Hoffman "in action"!

Coming up in February ...

- **Friday 1 February**, we will have our first pot luck dinner for the year after our Erev Shabbat service. Please bring a non-meat dish or dessert to share.
- **Sunday 17 February, Sunday School Term 1 commences.** Sign up online or **contact the office.**
- **Sunday 17 February 2019. Introduction to Judaism classes commence.** Sign up online or contact the [office](#) to enrol.
- **Wednesday 20 March**, come along for our Purim service and megillah reading. The Hebrew School children will do a Purim Spiel then we will party. Costumes or masks all part of the Purim fun. More information to follow.
- **PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING A NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEM FOR THE TZEDAKAH BOX.**



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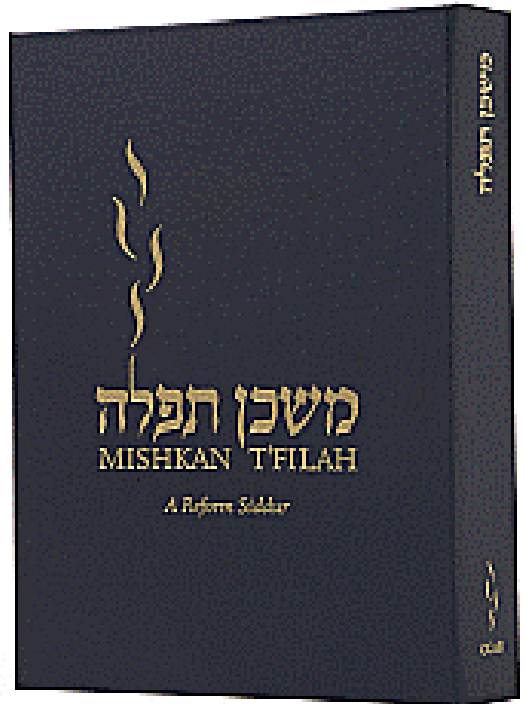


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THE COMMUNITY NEEDS US – WE NEED YOU.

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to contribute to your community then please
contact the CSG using the details above.**

[Click for service roster here](#)



Prayer for Healing Group

A group of Beth Shalom members has commenced, to think of and pray for individuals in our community, who are in need of healing.

The idea is that this group is not an organised group or minyan. Simply, caring people who, when made aware of the need, help healing with the power of prayer.

And that families in distress might receive comfort from the knowledge that this is taking place.

Caring for the unwell is part of being a community.

For those interested, I can supply articles: "The Jewish Way in Healing", and some scientific research on the positive power of prayer in healing.

If you wish to be part of this group

Or, if you know of someone who is unwell that would appreciate our prayer

Please contact Leon Goldwater or Christine O'Brien at shul office

Leon: ldgoldwater@gmail.com 020 403 88054

Christine: office@bethshalom.org.nz 524 4139

The Buzz

Tu B'Shevat Sunday 20 January 2019

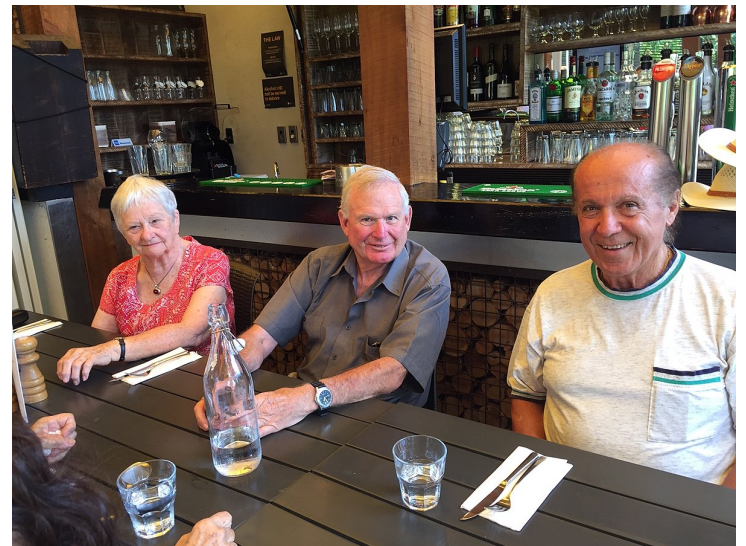
A delightful Tu Beshevat Seder took place under our grape vine and next to our Biblical Garden on Sunday 20 January. As part of our celebration of the Birthday of Trees we invited participants to donate to the JNF Blue Box. We are delighted to report that we have bought 6 trees to be planted in Israel through the Jewish National Fund.



In January, we were honoured to have a visit by Cantor Farid Dardashti and his wife Sheila.



We spent a wonderful day showing them some sights round Auckland. They had one day stop in Auckland on their cruise to NZ. They loved seeing the gannets at Muriwai. We had lunch with some of the Beth Shalom Westies at the Black Cottage Cafe in Coatesville before going to meet our President, Debbie Swiatek, at Kohimarama. In the evening we really enjoyed Cantor Farid's presentation of how an Iranian teen tv idol became an Ashkenazi cantor in the US. Thank you so much Farid and Sheila for giving us this wonderful opportunity.



The tradition of Torah study has built up a tradition of questioning and clarifying which is simply an incomparably rich skill to cultivate.

by Clive Lawton from myjewishlearning.com

By Jewish standards, the question “Why study Torah” is a very new one.

For a couple of millennia, studying Torah was just a given for male Jews. Of course you’d learn it – or at least read it in bite-sized chunks every Shabbat in synagogue, in a never-ending [cycle](#) where not only was the yearly reading finished and then immediately begun again on the [Simchat Torah](#) festival, but each week’s chunk was trailed on Shabbat afternoon with a little preview of the following week’s portion.

But this is the 21st century, and just because something has been done for millennia by millions of our forebears isn’t reason enough for us to do it any more. So what might be the reasons now?

We’ll need to do a bit of defining first. After all, there are two key words in this question which are not as obvious as they might look – Torah and study.

The word Torah means a multiplicity of things, which in itself might be a cause to study it at least a bit. After all, even if you choose to reject Torah as an important part of your Jewishness, it makes sense to know what it is you are rejecting, if only in outline.

At its simplest, Torah is the text of the first five books of the (Jewish) Bible. But Torah for Jews always meant something more than that. Together with the plain text comes a wealth of [commentary](#), tradition, extensions and challenges which are known as the Oral Torah and can be found in the great rabbinic texts – the [Talmud](#), the [Midrash](#) and the still unfolding library of commentary and quest from a vast variety of viewpoints.

Now, study. Many sincere Christians who read the Bible regularly simply sit and contemplate the text. Frequently, such Bible study involves clarification and the addition of information from the historical record that outline the customs of the time or set the narrative in context. In terms of the Jewish Bible, they will pick out those bits that seem most telling for them – a rich story or an important teaching.

But that’s not the Jewish way. Go into any synagogue of any stripe and look at the Bibles that are used to follow the Torah reading during the service. Pretty well invariably, it will have the Hebrew text, translated into the vernacular as literally as possible, accompanied by a whole host of commentary.

Jews do not read the text bald. The act of reading involves the act of study. Every text of Torah is an invitation to wonder and argument. Torah is never simply obvious. The fundamentalist way is, “If that’s what it says, then that’s what it means.” The Jewish approach has always been, “If that’s what it says, then what does it mean?” Each reading demands an explanation.

This is what is meant by study. By all means, use your own intellectual resources. After all, the Torah belongs to every Jew. But let us also be honest about our own limitations. Do not think that everything you can think is everything that can be thought. The thoughtful Jew, the humble scholar, can stand on the shoulders of giants and use their thinking too.

So study in this sense involves exploration, challenge, questioning, entering into a conversation with the voices of the our past and our global present.

In the end, that's the how of Torah study. Now to the why.

To be simply utilitarian about it, the mind training involved in teasing out a text, checking the authenticity of our understanding of the translation, and digging as deeply as possible into the implications and consequences of each line has been shown to be of massive intellectual and educational value to students through the ages.

It is not as a result of genetics that Jews have regularly shown themselves to be successful scholars. It's nurture, not nature. The tradition of Torah study has built up a tradition of questioning and clarifying which is simply an incomparably rich skill to cultivate. It won't necessarily get you a job, but it might well get you ahead.

But studying Torah gives much more than that. The first book is a magnificently complex record of (often disastrous) human relations. A close study of Genesis will tell you everything you need to know about family dynamics and how to get them wrong. It stretches and challenges our understanding of human responsibility and the order of the world. It goes over and over how spouses might behave toward each other and how siblings, parents and children can mess up – and sometimes come right too.

The remaining four books of the Torah are a close study in how to organize a society. It is not for nothing that the founding fathers of America as well as the early British parliamentarians who challenged the concept of the divine right of kings looked to the "Old" Testament, not the "New," to find guidance for how a society should be organized.

The demand for Jews to care for the stranger – the most repeated injunction in the whole Torah – has not yet been fully grasped in all its implications by us, let alone the rest of humanity. The laws of inheritance, damages, social responsibility, warfare, property, inclusion, environmental care – you name it, it can be found in the Torah and the commentaries that arise therefrom.

After all that, oddly, the text finds time to digress too. The strange fable of the talking donkey comes out of nowhere and yet gives the Jews our eternal identity as the "people which dwells alone." We see God himself challenged by a bunch of women and realizes that they're right and he'll have to rethink things. We find the apparently unnecessary injunction to "choose life" (doesn't everyone anyway?) until we reflect on the daily news and find it isn't so at all.

The Torah asks us to consider miracles – what they are, if they exist, and how they work. It warns us not to trust miracle-makers, and yet 21st century folk are still easily misled. It describes a world in which virtue is not the sole province of the Jews or even of Jewish leaders. The good are sometimes Jewish and sometimes not. And certainly it offers a world where Jews are often backsliding and of poor quality. Even Moses fails a final test. Yet, despite all of this it continues to play an optimistic and upbeat tune.

This essay can only scratch the surface of what there is in Torah which might compel us to study it. But in the end, it boils down to this: Why would you choose to be an ignorant Jew? Surely you owe yourself – and the friends you can study it with – a better fate than that.

Clive Lawton is the co-founder of Limmud and its senior consultant. He works worldwide both within and without the Jewish community on issues of educational and community development, diversity management and organizational growth. He is currently also CEO of the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

12 Years to Change

Beth Shalom is central to my way of affecting the world. If you want to change the world, they say you should start first with yourself and move out from there. So, my first step should be with my family and then my extended family.

Beth Shalom is my Jewish family here in New Zealand and therefore it is to you that I appeal when I say we need to think of change. We need to partner with our extended family, the Jewish community throughout New Zealand to be a force for the greater good.

The latest scientific research which has come out says that if we do not institute a plan for change, radical change in the next 12 years, we are looking at the end of the planet as we know it and the future for our children.

I put forth "The Change Begins with Me":

- Plant a billion trees in NZ (the lungs of the earth). Let's volunteer to plant the trees as a community.
- Plant a garden and sustain your family on your produce (transported goods are a huge source of pollution).
- Change your diet to a primarily vegetarian/vegan diet.
- Raise chickens for eggs and composting making a closed circle for your family's waste.
- Buy second-hand to reduce consumption and production.
- Invest in alternative energy- solar, wind, both in the personal and public sphere.
- Choose to walk, bike or take public transportation or carpool.
- Choose environmentally friendly vacations and activities, clean up a beach, carry a garbage bag with you to collect rubbish when you hike.
- Do not buy produce or goods wrapped in plastic.

"Breshit Bara Elohim et Hashamyim and et Haaretz". In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earthand on the 7th day God rested.

We have been gifted with an incredibly wondrous Earth and God is resting on the seventh day.

"Lo Beshamayim He" Not in Heaven.

The solution to our problems and the responsibility for its solution is not in heaven. It is in our hands. God has gifted us with the greatest wisdom, the Torah, a pathway to justice. We need to take it into our hands and plan a future for the children of the earth. We shall be a light unto the nations. Now it is our time to shine. Let's make real changes that model what a nation can do.

Sunday School Update



Sunday school is starting again this year on **Sunday February 17th**.

We had a parent/teacher meeting last year. You spoke and we listened. I am very happy to say that many of the changes you asked for we have instituted.

- You asked that we have a curriculum planned for the year and we have been busy planning one so you all know what topics we will be discussing each week and can search/find it online.
- You asked that there would be a take home workbook so the parents can keep up with the work the students are doing in class. We plan to have two workbooks, one for class and one to take home with a copy of what happened in class and a chance to review and do it at home with your child.
- And we are happy to welcome to our team of teachers Asher Assaraf who was a substitute Hebrew teacher last year and got rave reviews, so we asked him to come on board this year to teach Bet and Gimmel Hebrew.
- And Pam Miller an amazing regular service leader at Beth Shalom will be coming on board to teach our Bar/Bat Mitzva class, service leading Hebrew class.
- In addition, we have Carol McCracken and Tami Harris returning, who are going to do a job share for Kita Bet and Gimmel classes with an amazing and inspiring curriculum.
- Stav Rogel our Shlichah is going to be teaching kita aleph. Planning on learning a lot of songs (she is an amazing singer) and lots of fun games specially imported from her kibbutz, (with Rivka Thomas as her substitute teacher).
- Bnei Mishna is still in the planning stages but we look to have an amazing set of speakers that will make our post bar/bat mitzva students really think about modern issues which affect teens.

I am very excited to be a part of a real creative and dynamic team and I hope you will make every effort to support them. All our teachers are volunteers and some of them do not have kids in the Sunday school, but they do this job because they believe that the youth are important, and that education is key to our future. Parents and caregivers please make every effort to volunteer your help and your skills to make this a vibrant and engaging year.

- Please come on time to tefillot (services), stay for the service as personal example is important.
- Please take home their homework books and review the materials which will help immensely for your child to progress.
- Please return your homework books every week.
- Please come and attend our closing circle when our students share what they learned and sing Hatikvah.
- Please notify us if your child will be absent.
- Please stay at Beth Shalom and hang out have a drink and a biscuit. We want our students to see that you feel like Beth Shalom is your home.
- Let us know if you are willing to substitute teach, what skills you have and interests or any expertise you can share with the students.

B & B BITES: ON THE DEATH OF PARENTS by Ian Morrison

My father died unexpectedly in early 1991, just 36 hours after I'd returned to New Zealand from a month-long trip to the UK, much of which had been spent in his company.

Thanks to my very supportive boss, I was able to fly back to Britain immediately, to attend the funeral and sit shiva for a week with my family.

When I returned to New Zealand for a second time and finally returned to work, a colleague bounded over and asked whether I'd had a nice time. Assuming that he didn't know about my second trip, I mentioned briefly that my father had just died and that this had cast a pall over things.

You could have knocked me down with the proverbial feather when my colleague, apparently unfazed, responded by asking: "Yes, I know that but how did the rest of the trip go?"

Perhaps the most famous exemplar of tasteless remarks is the mythical one that goes; "Apart from that, Mrs Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?". Well, this was my Mrs Lincoln moment and it left me uncharacteristically speechless.

Subsequently, I've often reflected on exactly why my colleague responded in so ostensibly callous a way. He wasn't normally a callous or superficial person and I'm sure he wouldn't have spoken thus had, God forbid, a partner or child just died.

But perhaps he didn't think of the death of a parent as in the same category. After all, it's something most of us experience, probably twice in our lives. Yet, even so, it's normally a traumatic event. And it's not necessarily any the less traumatic when a parent has lived a long and full life and death is not unexpected.

How could it not be traumatic? Our parents loom large in our thoughts and experiences from our earliest moments. They nourish our minds, as well as our bodies, helping us define our identities, values and sense of who we are. When they depart, that sense of self can be thrown into turmoil, with nothing seeming quite as it was before.

Moreover, in some ways, our sense of loss and disorientation can be even more severe when a second parent passes away. Suddenly, you're literally an orphan and may well experience an inner loneliness and sense of vulnerability that you hadn't felt previously. Moreover, you are also a newly minted member of the older generation and possibly more conscious than before of your own mortality.

Fortunately, our ancient faith has provided us with a subtly humane pattern of rituals and practices that can help soften the blow of bereavement and help us confront the inescapable realities of grief in a way that eventually allows us to emerge stronger and wiser.

And when we've been through this experience, we may well be better able to comfort and support others, as they, in turn, confront the inevitable passing of their parents. We will have a better instinct for what to say and what not to say. And we may also sometimes sense that sitting in silence can be more eloquent than any words we have to offer.



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Applications are open to students in year 12 or 13 in 2019.



Some Challenges of Biblical Hebrew Chris Milton

Introduction

I recently leyned the maftir from Torah portion Vayechi. This presented a curious feature in the form of two juxtaposed verbs, pakod yifkod **פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד**, with the same root: p-k-d **פָּקַד**. Specifically, they are found in both Genesis 50:24 and 25. My curiosity aroused, I checked several English translations of the Bible to discover that the translation did not match the doubled verb at all. The 1917 Jewish Publication Society Tanach translation of this reads:

And Joseph said unto his brethren: "I die; but God will **surely remember you** [pakod yifkod etchem], and bring you up out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying: "**God will surely remember you** [pakod yifkod Elohim etchem], and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." (Genesis 50:24-25 bold and Hebrew transliteration added.)

On the face of it the first verb seemed to be treated as if it were an adverb, "surely" and the second verb was translated as "remember" (in many other English translations it is translated "visit"). When I checked the doublet pakod yifkod using an online Modern Hebrew translator it translated these words as an adjective and a noun respectively - "a commanding officer." Pakod, however, is not an adjective, and yifkod is not a noun. If, on the other hand, these words are individually translated online in Modern Hebrew they retain their status as verbs and pakod yifkod translates as: "command, he will command." (In this case, when used as separate words, grammatically speaking, pakod is a singular masculine imperative word, i.e. an instruction or command, **whereas** yifkod is a singular masculine third person future tense word.) Both of these literal Modern Hebrew translations are nonsensical in terms of the whole Biblical text and context and posed a substantial puzzle to me. This was especially so when I came to write my drash in which I wished to address the way these very words may link the end of Genesis to the first part of Exodus (because a similar doublet occurs in the burning bush incident.)

Checking various translations of the Bible, I found that many of the Christian translations, e.g. the American Standard Version, as well as two non-Christian recensions and translations, namely the old Greek version of the Bible, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch in English translate these words as "surely visit." I realised that a literal modern Hebrew translation of these words is senseless! Further investigation showed the reasons for this.

Firstly, the **doubling of the verb in this way** has a particular grammatical function in Biblical Hebrew that it only very rarely has in Modern Hebrew. This grammatical function is called the “infinitive absolute.” Apart from this grammatical function, doubling words in this way has a midrashic meaning as well. (I shall say more about both of these below).

Secondly, words formed from the root p-k-d **פָּקַד** of the verb doublet above may mean something quite different in Biblical Hebrew from their common Modern Hebrew meaning. In Biblical Hebrew the root, in this context, refers to “remember” or “visit” whereas in Modern Hebrew the root is generally related to “command” (likewise I shall say more about that below too).

Archaic grammar - the infinitive absolute

Hebrew belongs to the Northwest Semitic language group which includes languages such as Canaanite, Ugaritic, and Phoenician. The “infinitive absolute” is an exclusive feature of archaic Northwest Semitic languages such as Biblical Hebrew. It is formed by the doubling of certain verbs. Steven Fassberg^[i] (2007) notes that the infinitive absolute also occurs in other Northwest Semitic sources, notably, in the El-Amarna letters and in Ugaritic texts from the fourteenth century BCE, in Phoenician inscriptions from the tenth century BCE, in Moabite from the ninth century BCE, in Old Aramaic from the eighth century BCE, as well as Hebrew from the seventh century BCE. The infinitive absolute occasionally occurs in Greek and Latin (although they are not Semitic languages), but these instances actually derive from Biblical Hebrew. The infinitive absolute has mostly dropped out of use in post-Biblical Hebrew including Qumran Hebrew. Several Israeli first language Modern Hebrew speakers I have spoken to do not seem to even know of the existence of the “infinitive absolute.”

What is the function of the infinitive absolute? Its function is quite complicated^[ii] but linguistically it is mostly used in Biblical Hebrew to add emphasis to a verb and to express intensity or certainty of verbal action, so, in the case of pakod yifkod we can translate the two words together as meaning “surely remember” or “surely visit.”

Midrashic meaning

In post-Biblical times the doubling of verbs based in the root p-k-d **פָּקַד** was also understood to have a non-linguistic function. Rashi says, in his commentary on Exodus 3:18 (where he refers back to Exodus 3:16): “And they will hearken to your voice: As soon as you say this expression [“I have surely remembered you...,” **פָּקַד פָּקַדְתִּי אֶתְכֶם**] to them, they will hearken to your voice, for this password was transmitted to them from Jacob and from Joseph, that with this expression they will be redeemed^[iii].” The notion of a password is expanded in Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer 48 where the doubling words starting with certain letters serves as a code about redemption^[iv].

According to a midrash found in Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, the words pakod pakadeti form a password that would be spoken by the person who was to redeem Israel from Egyptian enslavement. Of course peh, which is the relevant letter here, is not the only letter that is doubled in the Torah, in fact, there are five according to the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 47: chaph, mem, nun, peh and tzade. This password was said to have been given to Abraham, apparently at the time of the Covenant of the Pieces in Genesis 15:1-15.

As the legend goes, Abraham passed the secret of the password on to Isaac who passed them on to Jacob who in turn passed it on to Joseph. Joseph shared the code words with his brothers at the time of his death in Egypt. This knowledge was then transmitted to Asher who handed the secret down to his daughter Serach. According to the Tanach (Exodus 3:16) when Moses encounters God in the burning bush God says to him: "Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them: The Eternal, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I surely remembered [pakod pakadeti פָּקַדְתִּיךָ] you, and have seen that which is done to you in Egypt." Moses duly does this and Serach, who would have been more than four hundred years old, recognized the password, pakod pakadeti. She then confirmed that Moses had truly been sent by God.

However one looks at it, an infinitive absolute/doubling of the verb based in the root of p-k-d as found in Genesis recurs in Exodus. So, what was written as "God will surely remember you" in Genesis 50:24 and 25 becomes God saying "I surely remembered you" in Exodus 3:16. This forms a bridge between the texts of Genesis and Exodus.

Challenges to the translation and understanding of words based in p-k-d פָּקַד

In addition to the infinitive absolute, i.e. doubling of the verb, there is a question of just how to translate and understand words with the root p-k-d פָּקַד. Words based on this root can have many, varied and interesting meanings, even in Biblical Hebrew. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says that, in Biblical Hebrew, the root may form words that mean: to attend to, visit, muster, and appoint.

Rabbi Marcus Jastrow's work[\[v\]](#), A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi and the Midrash Literature, is the definitive dictionary of older Hebrew. The entry for p-k-d פָּקַד in this dictionary is lengthy and complex but includes the following three meanings: to visit, to remember and to command.

First language Modern Hebrew speakers tend to understand words based on this root as relating to the last of these - command or commander - but not the other meanings.

How can we understand this shift in meaning? The simple answer is that the meaning of words changes over time. Although the interval between Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew is thousands of years we do not have to look that far back to see a change in meaning in English. Take for instance the word "cute." Today this means charming in an endearing way. This is not how the word started out. In its original form it was the word "acute" which means to be sharp or quick witted. It was then shortened to "cute" although earlier on an apostrophe was used in place of the missing "a." In America in the 1830s, it changed its meaning and came to mean attractive, pretty or charming in an endearing way. This is how most people use it today. Sometimes it is still used in its original manner in phrases like "don't get cute with me", meaning "don't get clever with me."

Another example is the English word "cool." In ninth century Old English it was spelt *cōl* and meant "not warm" (but usually not as severe as cold). In addition it figuratively a person was calm and unperturbed by emotions. Scholars are not sure exactly when its meaning shifted but probably sometime in the nineteenth century "cool" came to mean a generally admired aesthetic of attitude, behaviour, appearance and style. By the 1920s "cool" was firmly established in this last meaning.

So, to return to the Hebrew root p-k-d, I suspect that there has been a convergence over time, from multiple possible meanings in Biblical Hebrew to a more limited meaning, mostly referring to "command", in Modern Hebrew.

Pakod yifkod versus zachor

For the purposes of my drash on Vayechi, I specifically found it useful to have the root p-k-d refer to "remember" because that reference served to thematically link the end of Genesis to the early part of Exodus. However, this introduces a further issue because there is another, better known, Hebrew word that is used for "remember" - zachor זָכַר. The word pakad פָּקַד, which is also based in the root p-k-d, does indeed refer to "remembering." We first find it used this way in Genesis 21:1 when Sarah is recalled with *pakad*. On the other hand, in a quite analogous situation Rachael, in Genesis 30:22, is recalled with zachor, so the situation is not unambiguous. The view of a famous nineteenth century Hebrew grammarian, the Malbim[[vi](#)], is helpful in understanding this. According to the Malbim, words based in the root p-k-d specifically mean to remember in order to do something for the person that you remember, as opposed to zachor זָכַר which means to remember as it is normally used, i.e. to have in mind. This is exactly what we find in the link between Genesis 50:24-25 and then in Exodus 3:16: God remembers the Children of Israel in order to do something for them, namely to redeem them from slavery.

Conclusion

In summary, it is worthwhile to note that simplistic Modern Hebrew translations of Biblical Hebrew can be very misleading and just plain wrong. Studying Torah is a fascinating but challenging activity, one which calls for some knowledge of ancient languages, commentary and Midrash, and it is wise to be cautious of the oft false friend of common sense.

[i] The Infinitive Absolute As Finite Verb And Standard Literary Hebrew Of The Second Temple Period
<https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004164048.i-250.18> part pdf at:
https://brill.com/previewpdf/book/edcoll/.../Bej.9789004164048.i-250_005.xml

[ii] https://uhg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/infinitive_absolute.html

[iii] https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9864/jewish/Chapter-3.htm#showrashi=true

[iv] Kuhr, M.D. (2012). The Lion Cub of Prague: Thought, Kabbala, Hashkafa from Gur Arye. Jerusalem/New York: Gefen Publishing House Ltd <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=aooaqaXM370C&pg=PA27&lpg=PA27&dq=pakod+pakadeti+pirkei+d%27rabbi+eliezer&source=bl&ots=>

[v] Rabbi Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903) was a Reform rabbi in Philadelphia. Despite the fact that there have been new discoveries in linguistics since he published it, and despite being a Reform rabbi, his dictionary is still widely used, even in Orthodox circles.

[vi] The Malbim's full name was Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser and he was born in 1809 and he died in 1879, in the Ukraine.

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