

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA. 55: 1 0    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### WHAT DOES 'AION' MEAN?

Every word has a history, and in the case of Biblical words there is much truth to be gained by searching it out. We have already considered in earlier studies that the word *aion* was the word selected by the Holy Spirit to be used as the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word *olam*, and to carry on the truth being revealed by this word. And we have seen that "the thread that runs so true" through every occurrence of *olam* is the idea of ever-flowing.

The student may at first feel it is impossible to relate in any way some occurrences of *olam* to the idea of out-flowing or ever-flowing, but this is usually due to having taken a quick glance at the passage. I do not hesitate to say that there is no occurrence of *olam* that cannot in an honest manner be related to this basic idea.

As an example of the thread of truth that runs through a family of words let us consider the word *purse*, indicating the bag which my lady carries. Does this have any relationship to the *bursa* in my shoulder that at one time flared up into *bursitis*? And is it also related to *pursing* the lips, or to the famous Bourse, the French stock exchange? At first glance one might say no, but the fact is that they are all closely related, and the thread that runs through all of them is the idea of *hide*, that is, a stripped-off skin.

It seems that it all started with the Greek word *bursa*, and the equivalent Latin word, both of which mean *leather*. This filtered into the French as *bourse*, which means *purse*, a leather sack in which money is placed, and became the name of the French stock exchange. And since we have little sacks in our shoulders, these are called *bursas*. Furthermore, when we contract our lips into folds and wrinkles, it resembles a money bag when the strings are pulled and this is called pursing the lips. So, as different as some of these words seem to be from one another, there is an essential thread that runs through all of them.

Since *aion* was selected by divine inspiration to express the word *olam* in New Testament quotations of passages containing this word, it is then normal to expect that

the same basic idea of *flowing* should be found in every occurrence. However, let it be understood that I am not suggesting that *aion* be translated flow, flower, or flowing in any occurrence. In translating I will always use the anglicized forms *eon* and *eonian* to render noun and adjective, but I will know from long and careful study what these words mean. In Eph. 2:2 where the KJV reads "**the course of this world,**" I will translate it "**the eon of this world**" but will know that it means "**the flow of this world.**"

The history of the word *aion* is utterly fascinating, and it is why this word was selected to express and represent the word *o/am*. Thayer says that *The Etymologicum Magnum* (a book giving the derivations of all Greek words) states that *aion* is so connected with *aemi* (to breathe) that it denotes properly that which causes life, vital force. Thus, the earliest history of this word shows its use in relationship to that great out-flowing of life which constantly comes from God, apart from which nothing can live. It is even as Paul declared the universal truth: "**In Him we live, and move, and have our existence**" (Acts 17:28).

However, this word was not originally spelled *aion*, but *ainon*, which in the course of time became shortened to *aion*. In the New Testament this spelling persists in a place name that is given as *Aenon* in our versions. In John 3:23 we read: "**And John was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there.**" As already noted the Greek spelling of this name is *Ainon*, which all lexicons agree means a spring, that is, a free-flowing fountain of water. This is a positive proof that the original word had in it the meaning of ever-flowing.

The word *aion* is found in the Latin as *aevum*, which, according to Thayer, "is *aion* with the Aeolic digamma" (The digamma was a letter of the original Greek alphabet representing a sound that approximated the English w, which early fell into disuse. It was called "digamma" because of its resemblance to two capital gammas placed on top of each other.) Thus when *aion* was carried into the Latin it became *aevum*, and was used to denote a cycle of time. It is from this we get our word *age* which we use to designate a period of time dominated by some central figure or clearly marked feature. It is evident that when the Latin made use of *aevum* to denote cycles of time, he did so because he viewed time as flowing onward in cycle after cycle.

In today's world there are numerous geographical names that come from *aion*. The name *Avon* is given to several rivers in Great Britain, the most famous of these being the one on which Shakespeare's town of Stratford is located. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* declares that this name is of Celtic origin, appearing in Welsh (very frequently) as *afon*, in Manx as *aon*, and in Gaelic as *abhuinn* (pronounced *avain*). It appears more or less disguised in a vast number of river names all over the Celtic area of Europe. In the British Islands it appears in such forms as Evan, Aune, Anne, Ive,

Cuney, Inney: in France as Aff, Aven, Avon, Aune; in Italy as Avenza and Avens; in Portugal as Avia; in Spain as Avono. These are all names of rivers, that is, of flowing waters, and they all trace back to a common ancestor, the Greek word *aion*. This is most fitting since the original word meant a *flow-er*. I have hyphenated the word in this occurrence so that it will not be confused with foliage or blossoms.

The elements of the word *aion* bear out this definition, but of this we cannot be sure, due to disputes over its origin. Etymologists think that the *ai* portion is actually *aei*, an adverb which means always, and is used in Scripture in the sense of perpetually or incessantly. The *on* portion is the Ionic and Doric spelling of *Dun*, which is another adverb. Liddell and Scott declare this is used to continue a narrative, and Thayer says it is often used as a conjunction indicating that something follows from another necessarily. All writers will recognize the importance of keeping the composition flowing, and how simple it would be to attach the sense of flow to this word. Thus in the word *aion* we have the sense of always-flowing, just as we also have the sense of something flowing in our word *then*. For example: "He walked through the door, then turned."

Classical Greek writers used the word *aion* in what seems to be strange ways, yet all of these become quite clear when we know that the idea of flow or flowing is basic in this word. They used it as a descriptive name for the spinal cord. This has always been quite puzzling, but now it is clear and also forms an excellent illustration.

Since the brain is ever-flowing, from the moment of conception to the moment of death, it is the most important eon in our bodies. Its messages pour into the brain stem (another eon) and from it to the spinal cord (another eon) which also flows out in nervous impulses to other nerves (also eons) which continue to other nerves until they have reached their extremity. Thus, it can be seen that such terms as "the eon," "the eon of the eon," "the eon of the eons," and "the eons of the eons" could all be applied to the system that operates in the human body. This should certainly help us to understand these terms in connection with that marvelous system that will be in existence when God governs the world.

One of the most important uses of *olam* and its companion word *aion* in the Bible is as a name or descriptive title for that condition of things which will be manifest upon this earth when God's government, the kingdom of God, becomes a reality. In many places in the New Testament this entire period of time is simply called the eon. This is not at all strange since that condition of things upon the earth is produced by God in Christ flowing out and flowing down in many streams, each one producing its beneficent effect upon the earth and those upon it.

Many passages in Scripture will speak clearer than ever before when we realize that in many places "the eon" is another name for "the kingdom of God." If God's government should come today, bringing in this glorious eon, there are many who would perish in relationship to it. There is no place in the coming eon for such as those described in 1 Cor. 6:9-10. God will determine (judge) who among the living will be allowed to continue to live in that time of the outflow of His blessings (2 Tim. 4:1).

**Jesus Christ said: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he may be dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall by no means be dying in respect to the eon"** (John 11:25,26). The words "he that believeth" and "whosoever believeth" are all-inclusive. I do not hesitate to put myself into this passage. If I should be dead when God assumes sovereignty, then I will be raised, and this because I have believed in Him. If I am living, then I am in no danger of being eliminated from that eon to come, and this too will be because I have believed in Him. Believers have the guarantee of life in the coming eon. This is the promise of eonian life.

There is much more to be considered, yes, that needs to be considered From experience I know that some will actually resent the fact that I did not do all the work for them. To these I say, "Get your pick and shovel and go to work. There is a lot of digging to do and much rubbish and rubble to be removed."

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