

Word Study
Of

שְׁאֲרִית

From Genesis 45:7

Hebrew III
Dr. Paul Overland

5-02-04
Chris J. Kinner

1. Statement of word, proposed etymology, and basic meaning.

The word selected for study **שְׂאֲרִית** appears in Genesis 45:7 and is translated as “remnant” in most modern Biblical translations. This is a noun usage and appears in the feminine singular form. The root of this word is **שָׂרַף**, this word can also be found in a number of semantic languages including Aramaic, Syrian and Arabic. Its meaning in a general sense refers to the amount of produce that is left over from a larger whole that was disposed of.

2. Summary of Range of Meaning.

This term ranges in scripture from the Qal usage in I Sam. 16:11 meaning “remain” to the Niphal verb usage which is often used in participle form and is translated “be left over or survive” as in Isaiah 4:3. The Hifal form is causative and can be stated as “leave over or spare.” The most frequent use of the Hifal form is used in connection with the destruction of living beings. This can be seen repeatedly in the story of the extermination of the inhabitants of Canaan by Joshua (Josh. 8:22, 10:28 ff).

The root refers not only to human entities, such as Noah and his family (Genesis 7:23), but also to nonhuman entities, money (Gen 47:18), blood (Lev. 5:9), land yet to be taken (Josh 13:1), cities (Jer. 34:7) and gleanings (Isa. 17:6). The reference of this root to human entities usually is found to convey the meaning “survive” from a variety of threats. This context can be used to provide both a positive and negative aspect to this term. When used with a negative participle, it can be used to express total loss and meaninglessness, “not a man remained” (Josh 8:17). [לֹא־נִשְׂאֲרָה] The positive aspect can be displayed through the use of the noun “root” in conjunction with “remnant” as found in Isaiah 14:30. [שְׂרִישׁוֹ וְשְׂאֲרֵיתוֹ]

3. Illumination from parallel usages.

שְׂאֲרִיָּה appears 66 times in the Old-Testament. It is translated as remnant - 44 times, rest - 7 times, survivors - 7 times, remain and remaining - 4 times and descendant, last and left each once.

While the verbal form of שָׁאַר can be used to designate a single person, the noun form is always used to specify a group. The usage of שְׂאֲרִיָּה is often used to designate the remnant of a foreign nation. The Amalekites (I Chron. 34:9), the Philistines (Amos 8:1) and Moab (Isa. 15:9) are a few examples of this usage. The usage here expresses the utter destruction and painful dissemination with emphasis on complete insignificance. Conversely, in connection with the remnant of Israel, the noun form expresses the positive aspect of the salvation of God's people as found in Amos 5:15.

“אִילֵי יִחְנַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׂאֲרִית יוֹסֵף” Amos 5:15 b
“Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph”.

Assuming a bias to the positive connotation of “remnant” in Genesis 45:7 as it directly pertains to the preservation of Israel, one can search for parallel usages which reflect the preservation of God's people. This trail leads us first to the earliest use of this term in the Bible (Genesis 7:23b), where Noah and his family are considered a remnant in the flood account. The prophets Amos (as previously noted), Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also speak of the remnant in a similar usage. Isaiah 37:32 states “For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” Isaiah also states in a similar usage that the Lord will redeem a remnant of His people in Isaiah 11:11.

4. Conclusion: Summary of Enriched meaning.

The theological impact of the interpretation of “remnant” in this verse can be clearly viewed in the following passages. Some emphasize the historical remains, saved from disaster, while others emphasize the faithful who were spared by God.

- Genesis 45:7 –

NIV

7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

NRSV

7 God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

NASB

7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

KJV

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

NKJV

7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

ENKV (Enhanced New Kinner Version)

7 God sent me before you to [rescue you from disaster] the ‘faithful remainder’ [of God’s chosen people, Israel] on the earth, and to keep alive many survivors [your offspring].

Verses Cited

(In order of appearance)

Genesis 45:7

7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

I Samuel 16:11

11 So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

Isaiah 4:3

3 Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

Joshua 8:22

22 The men of the ambush also came out of the city against them, so that they were caught in the middle, with Israelites on both sides. Israel cut them down, leaving them neither survivors nor fugitives.

Genesis 7:23

23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

Genesis 47:18

18 When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land.

Leviticus 5:9

and is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering.

Joshua 13:1

13:1 When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the LORD said to him, "You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

Jeremiah 34:7

7 while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah that were still holding out--Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in Judah.

Isaiah 17:6

6 Yet some gleanings will remain, as when an olive tree is beaten, leaving two or three olives on the topmost branches, four or five on the fruitful boughs," declares the LORD, the God of Israel.

Joshua 8:17

17 Not a man remained in Ai or Bethel who did not go after Israel. They left the city open and went in pursuit of Israel.

Isaiah 14:30

30 The poorest of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety. But your root I will destroy by famine; it will slay your survivors.

I Chronicles 4:43

43 They killed the remaining Amalekites who had escaped, and they have lived there to this day.

Amos 8:1

8:1 This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit.

Isaiah 15:9

9 Dimon's waters are full of blood, but I will bring still more upon Dimon -- a lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon those who remain in the land.

Amos 5:15

15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Isaiah 37:32

32 For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 11:11

11 In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.

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Handout

“not a man remained” (Josh 8:17). [לא־נִשְׁאַר]

“אוֹלֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׂאֲרֵית יוֹסֵף” Amos 5:15 b
“Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph”.

3 types of groups referred to as remnants (שְׂאֵר) in the Old Testament.

1. Historical - Survivors of natural disaster or catastrophe
(Genesis 14 – secular army destroyed remnants survive)
2. Faithful – Those of faith saved from God’s judgment
(I Kings 19:17-18 – Elijah and the 7,000 who did not bow to Baal)
3. Eschatological – Recipients of the everlasting kingdom
(Isaiah 9:1-7 prophesy of the messiah)

Significance of the “Remnant”, compels us to trust God...

1. For security from natural disaster.
2. To be faithful in His love for us and securing grace (as we love Him).
3. as we receive the eternal kingdom through our Remnant, Jesus.

“The serious importance of truly loving God”

Further study of the “remnant” in the New Testament

Romans 11:1-5

Matthew 5:13

Romans 9:25-33 – Paul quotes from Hosea and Isaiah. Saving a remnant from among the Jewish people was still a part of God’s method to redeem His people.

The Big Question:

Do you belong to the (שְׂאֵר) Remnant?