



Torah Study Text: Genesis 11:1-9

After the well-known narrative of Noah and the ark in Genesis chapters 6-9, and a genealogy of the descendants of Noah in chapter 10, the Torah presents the narrative of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. This is the biblical account of the creation of different languages and the scattering of different peoples across the face of the earth.

Read the Hebrew below to see how many of the words you can recognize. This passage does contain words, Hebrew roots, and grammatical concepts that have not yet been introduced. Underline or circle the words, roots, endings, and prefixes that you already know.

וַיְהִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים: ² וַיְהִי בְּנֹסְעִים מִקֶּדֶם
וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְּקָעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שִׁנְעָר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם: ³ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ
הֵבֵה נִלְבְּנָה לְבָנִים וְנִשְׂרָפָה לְשִׂרְפָּה וְתִהְיֶה לָּהֶם הַלְּבָנָה לְאֶבֶן
וְהַחֲמֵר הִיָּה לָהֶם לְחֵמֶר: ⁴ וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֵבֵה נִבְנֶה־לָּנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל
וְרֵאשׁוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה־לָּנוּ שֵׁם פֶּן־נִפּוּץ עַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ⁵ וַיֵּרֶד
יְהוָה לִרְאוֹת אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה הֵן עַם אֶחָד וּשְׁפָה אֶחָת לְכָלָם וְזֶה הַחֲלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה
לֹא־יִבְצֵר מֵהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: ⁷ הֵבֵה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שֵׁם
שְׁפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שִׁפְתֵי רֵעֵהוּ: ⁸ וַיִּפֹּץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם
עַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּחְדְּלוּ לְבַנֹּת הָעִיר: ⁹ עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל
כִּי־שָׁם בָּלַל יְהוָה שִׁפְתֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הִפִּיצָם יְהוָה עַל־פְּנֵי
כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

neath each word. Using your knowledge of the building
 following is ...
 meanings of the words provided below, translate this passage into clear English sentences.
 Write your translation on the lines following the text. This selection includes some grammati-
 cal forms and vocabulary that have not yet been introduced. You will need to rely, in part, on
 the translations provided.

וַיְהִי ²	אֶחָדִים:	וּדְבָרִים	אֶחָת	שָׁפָה	הָאָרֶץ	כָּל-	וַיְהִי
and [it] was	one	and words/ speech	one	language	the earth/ land	all	and [it] was

שִׁנְעָר	בְּאֶרֶץ	בְּקֶעָה	וַיִּמְצְאוּ	מִמְּקוֹדֵם	בְּנִסְעָם
Shinar	in land	valley/ plain	they found	from east	in/with their journeying/ migrating

הָבָה	רֵעֵהוּ	אֶל-	אִישׁ	וַיֹּאמְרוּ ³	שָׁם:	וַיֵּשְׁבוּ
come	his companion/ neighbor	to	man	and they said	there	and they settled/dwelt

לְאֶבֶן	הַלְבֵנָה	לָהֶם	וַתְּהִי	לְשַׂרְפָּה	וְנִשְׂרַפָּה	לְבָנִים	נִלְבְּנָה
for stone	the brick	for them	and [it] was	to burning	and let us burn	bricks	let us make

לְנוֹ עִיר	נִבְנֶה	הָבָה	וַיֹּאמְרוּ ⁴	לְחֹמֶר:	לָהֶם	הָיָה	וַיְהִי חֹמֶר
city for us	let us build	come	and they said	for mortar	for them	was	and the bitumen

Vocabulary

Locate each of the following words in the Torah Study Text: Genesis 11:1-9.

one <i>m</i>	—	אָחַד
one <i>f</i>	—	אֶחָת
friend, companion, fellow, neighbor <i>m</i>	—	רֵעַ
stone <i>f</i>	—	אֶבֶן
city <i>f</i>	—	עִיר
head, top, beginning <i>m</i>	—	רֵאשׁ
there	—	שָׁם

Notes on the Vocabulary

1. In Hebrew, the word "one" acts as an adjective, with four forms:

f pl אֶחָדוֹת *m pl* אֶחָדִים *f sg* אֶחָת *m sg* אָחַד

The plural forms can sometimes be translated as "a few" or "some."

2. The word רֵעַ has a range of meanings. The idiom אִישׁ...רֵעֵהוּ, which appears in our Torah Study Text in verses 3 and 7, can be translated as "one...another."



The basic meaning of the root י-ש-ב is "sit," "settle," or "dwell." This root follows the ■ ■ ו ■ participle pattern. The following are the four participle forms:

f pl יוֹשְׁבוֹת *m pl* יוֹשְׁבִים *f sg* יוֹשֶׁבֶת *m sg* יוֹשֵׁב

The perfect and imperfect forms can be found in the verb charts in the back of the book.

The root י-ש-ב appears only once in this chapter's Torah Study Text:

(verse 2)

and they settled/dwelt there

—

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם

The following words, both ancient and modern, are derived from the root י-ש-ב. The first root letter י drops out in some words formed from this root.

chairperson

—

יוֹשֵׁב רֵאשׁ

population, settlement	—	יָשׁוּב
sedentary	—	יָשִׁיב
sitting, residence, session, yeshivah (<i>Jewish religious academy</i>)	—	יְשִׁיבָה
colonization	—	יְשִׁבּוֹת
seat, abode, residence, moshav (<i>cooperative settlement</i>)	—	מוֹשָׁב
settler	—	מְתִישֵׁב
resident, inhabitant, sojourner	—	תּוֹשָׁב
seat, dwelling	—	שֵׁבֶת
base, pedestal, chassis (<i>of a vehicle</i>)	—	תּוֹשֵׁבֶת



The basic meaning of the root **בִּנְיָה** is “build.” This root follows the **■ ■ ו ■** participle pattern. It is slightly irregular, because the final root letter is **ה**, which disappears in some verb forms. The following are the four participle forms:

f pl בּוֹנוֹת *m pl* בּוֹנִים *f sg* בּוֹנָה *m sg* בּוֹנֵה

The perfect and imperfect forms can be found in the verb charts in the back of the book.

The root **בִּנְיָה** appears three times in our Torah Study Text, in verses 4, 5, and 8:

(verse 4)

Come, let us build for us a city

—

הָבֵה נְבִנֶה-לָּנוּ עִיר

(verse 5)

that the children of humankind had
built

—

אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם

(verse 8)

they ceased to build the city

—

וַיַּחְדְּלוּ לְבַנֹּת הָעִיר

The following words, both ancient and modern, are derived from the root בִּנְיָה. The last root letter ך drops out in some words formed from this root.

structure, building	—	בְּנִין
built-up	—	בְּנוּי
construction	—	בְּנִיָּה
structure, formation, format	—	מְבִנָּה
structural	—	מְבִנִּי
Yavneh (<i>ancient city—Jewish center after the fall of Jerusalem</i>)	—	יְבִנָּה
model, pattern, image	—	תְּבִנִּית

4. Read and translate the following groups of words.

_____ רַע טוֹב .b	_____ אִישׁ אֶחָד .a
_____ אָח וְרַע	_____ אִשָּׁה אַחַת
_____ אִשְׁתַּרְעָהּ	_____ רוּחַ אֶחָד
_____ דָּם רַעַף	_____ יוֹם אֶחָד
_____ פָּנֵי רַעַף	_____ יָמִים אֶחָדִים
_____ רֹאשׁ הָאֲנָשִׁים .d	_____ אָבֵן גְּדוֹלָה .c
_____ רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	_____ אֲבָנִים גְּדוֹלוֹת
_____ רֹאשׁ הַגּוֹיִים	_____ אֲבָנִים אֶחָדוֹת
_____ רֹאשׁ רַעָהּ	_____ לֵב אָבֵן
_____ רֹאשֵׁי הַגְּבוּרִים	_____ אֲבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
_____ שָׁם .f	_____ עִיר הַנְּבִיא .e
_____ שָׁם הַנְּשִׁים	_____ עִיר הַצֶּדֶק
_____ הַמֵּים אֲשֶׁר שָׁם	_____ עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ
_____ מִשָּׁם	_____ עוֹבְדֵי הָעִיר
_____ הָאוֹר מִשָּׁם	_____ יוֹשְׁבֵי הָעָרִים

5. Identify the root of each of the following participles, and whether the participle form is masculine or feminine, singular or plural. Translate the meaning of the root.

m/f	sing/pl	Translation	Root	Participle
_____	_____	_____	_____	בוֹנִים
_____	_____	_____	_____	עוֹשִׂים
_____	_____	_____	_____	עוֹבֵד
_____	_____	_____	_____	יוֹשְׁבִים
_____	_____	_____	_____	מְחַיֶּה