

**ENGLISH DERIVED FROM  
HEBREW; WITH GLANCES  
AT GREEK AND LATIN**

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English Derived from Hebrew; With Glances at Greek and Latin by R. Govett

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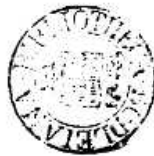
# English Derived from Hebrew;

WITH

GLANCES AT GREEK AND LATIN.

BY

R. GOVETT.



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THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
DERIVED FROM THE HEBREW.

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CHAPTER I

PROFESSOR MAX MULLER, in his lectures on language, having shown that several of our common English words are derived from the Sanscrit, it struck me to inquire, What would be the result of tracing the obligations of the English language to the Hebrew? And, having gone into this matter to some extent, I now believe that *English is derived from the Hebrew.*

Dean Alford supposes that the Celtic, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, and Spanish jointly contribute some five per cent. of words to our native tongue. As the result of my inquiry, I should be inclined to say that there are not five per cent. of SAXON words which cannot be traced to HEBREW. I wish, however, not to theorize, but to present the reader with examples, from which he can deduce his own conclusions.

In this first part I do not write for the learned; being assured that the question can be easily understood, and will prove interesting to every English reader. Hence I give not the Hebrew letters, but the correspondent Roman ones.

SECTION I.

I propose in this chapter to give specimens of the derivation of our names of ANIMALS from the sacred language.



What is the Hebrew name for *the Hare*? ARNBIT.\*<sup>1</sup> Now may not these letters at once hint to us, whence our name of an allied animal is derived? Reverse the order of the A and the R, and you have RANBIT, whence our word RABBIT evidently comes.

What is the Hebrew for the terrible *serpent*, deceiver of our race? NaHHaS.<sup>2</sup> Change the last letter to the foremost place, and you have our SNAKE. Hence too, by A prefixed, we get the Latin *Anguis*, and the Greek *Echis*, the letter N being dropped, as it is very often in Hebrew. If the Scripture be true, we might expect *this* word to be retained; and so it is. The Greek word for the viper is *Aspis*, whence our word *Asp*. It comes from the Hebrew ZP'A<sup>3</sup> transposed; which also signifies a viper.

Whence comes the word BOA, familiar to us as the name of the destroying Boa Constrictor? From the Hebrew AP'O,<sup>4</sup> which means *a viper*. These letters transposed make P'OA; whence *Boa*. The letters B, P, and F, are perpetually interchanged in their passage from one language to another. From the same Hebrew word comes our English "EFT," a small creature of the lizard kind. And probably the Latin VIPERA comes from the same root; the F or V being prefixed to the commencing vowel. The *Adder* proceeds from 'ATAr,<sup>5</sup> "to encircle," and is derived from its coiling itself into a series of circles.

The LION in Hebrew is LeBLAW.<sup>6</sup> The B is dropped in English, Latin, and Greek. And we have Leo in Latin. Perhaps we might say that the B is transferred to the end, and becomes N.

Whence comes our English word KITTEN?<sup>7</sup> From the Hebrew QuiToN, which signifies "*a little one*." That which the Hebrews applied generally, we have, singularly enough, appropriated to the young of the cat alone.

\* I give the letters simply; not according to the Masoretic pointing; adding in smaller type the vowels supplied.

<sup>1</sup> קטן. <sup>2</sup> לביא. <sup>3</sup> עטר. <sup>4</sup> אפע. <sup>5</sup> צפע. <sup>6</sup> נחש. <sup>7</sup> ארנבת.

Whence is derived our word CAMEL? From the Hebrew GeMeL,<sup>1</sup> which signifies the same animal. Here the G of the Hebrew becomes changed into the C or K of the English, Latin, and Greek.

What is the derivation of the word ELEPHANT? It comes from the Hebrew ELcPH,<sup>2</sup> which means an ox. But how is an elephant like an ox? I answer, The termination "ant" carries with it, most probably, the word which denoted the difference between it and the common ox. We naturally, on seeing a new creature, associate it with one familiar to us. Some of the South Sea Islanders, as Williams has informed us, had never beheld a European, or the animals with which we are familiar. Hence, as he observes, "On seeing the goats, they called to their companions to come and look at the wonderful *birds* with great *teeth* upon their heads." So with us, "the cock of the woods" and "the wood-cock" are very different birds from the common barn-door cock. This same Hebrew word was the origin of the Greek *Elaphos*, 'a stag.' And it is very remarkable that we find the same combination of "ant," and "elaph" in the ANTELOPE. I am not clear what is the meaning of "ant."

The Hebrew SHoor, and the Chaldee TOOR signify an ox; whence we obtain our English STEER.<sup>3</sup> The name of the Jerboa arises from the Hebrew ZHeB'O,<sup>4</sup> which means a *hyena*. The Chaldee adds the R.

Our word BADGER is derived from the Hebrew 'ACBaR,<sup>5</sup> which means a *mouse*. By transposition we have BACaR, whence "Badger" easily springs.

Whence have we the word GIRAFFE?<sup>6</sup> From the Hebrew 'GaRaPH, which signifies "the neck;" and every one who has seen that creature, knows that its great peculiarity is the enormous elongation of its neck.

Whence are derived our words GOAT and KID? From two different pronunciations of the Hebrew GiDI,<sup>7</sup> which signifies that animal in the sacred tongue. Our expression "the

גדי. ערף. עבבר. צבע. שור. אלה. גמל.

*giddy heights*" perhaps springs from the remembrance of the lofty pinnacles of rock to which these creatures climb. The heights to which the mountain goats climb, produce in us the sensation of "giddiness."

Whence is derived the word ZEBRA? From the Hebrew ZēBI,<sup>1</sup> which signifies a roe-buck. The "R" in the midst, and the "A" at the end come from the Chaldee, which frequently adds these letters. Indeed, the R occurs so often in English, where it is not found in the Hebrew, as to make it most probable that the Hebrew came to us through the Chaldee.

The DOE clearly is traceable to the TOA,<sup>2</sup> or antelope.

## II.

But let us now turn to some examples of BIRDS.

We have two names of birds spelt differently, but of the same radical base. COOT and KITE. These are off-shoots, I doubt not, from the Hebrew QuAT.<sup>3</sup> (I retain the English letter Q to represent the Hebrew Koph or Quoph, though I suppose it was generally pronounced K.) Probably also our CAR is derived therefrom, though whence the confusion arose, it would be difficult to determine, without the history of Gen. xi. The meaning of the Hebrew word is "*the pelican,*" or *cormorant*.

The Hebrew speaks of a bird called INSOP.<sup>4</sup> This is supposed to be a water-fowl of some kind. The Septuagint renders the word, *ibis*; our translators, "the great owl." But whatever its original signification, it is the parent of our word SNIFE, a bird fond of marshy places. This is an instance of the Saxon love of brevity. Two syllables in the Hebrew are contracted into one in English. This principle appears often.

Whence is derived our English DOVE? From the Hebrew DOoB;<sup>5</sup> which signifies *to murmur*. The B was frequently pronounced V. Sometimes also it was changed into P and PH, as I have noted above.

דוב. ינשוף. קואת. תוא. צבי.